

THE CONNECTION

CENTRE VIEW ♦ Chantilly ♦ Great Falls ♦ Herndon ♦ McLean ♦ Oak Hill ♦ Oakton
Reston ♦ Vienna ♦ Burke ♦ Fairfax ♦ Springfield ♦ Fairfax Station ♦ Lorton ♦ Clifton

The South Lakes Choral sings in front of the Reston Holiday Parade Tree 2024 at the Reston Town Center Ice Skating Pavilion.

Let the Magic Begin

PAGE 8

PHOTO BY JOHN LOVAAS
OPINION, PAGE 4 ♦ ENTERTAINMENT, PAGE 11-13 ♦ CLASSIFIEDS, PAGE 14

Local LEGO Guinness Record

PAGE 3

Military Mondays Coming to End

PAGE 10



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Offered for...\$1,375,000

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BEST WASHINGTONIAN 2024

SOLD!



2049 Rockingham Street
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SOLD!



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SOLD!



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SOLD!



6813 Tennyson Drive
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SOLD!



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SOLD!



2910 Cleave Drive
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 \$910,000

SOLD!



1313 Merrie Ridge Rd
 McLean, 22101
 \$1,637,500

Curious what your home is worth? Call to chat with JD and Ed today!



All wrapped up but no room under the tree.



The Giving Machine looks similar to a candy vending machine.

Giving Machines Unveiled on Giving Tuesday

BY MIKE SALMON
THE CONNECTION

Tysons recently hosted a new type of gift giving this holiday season in the form of a computerized machine called the “Giving Machine.” The machine enables the user to “swipe their card and donate products and services to charities in the DVM and around the world.”

“We are excited to offer Giving Tuesday opportunities for people visiting the Giving Machines at Tysons,” said Lisa Bartolomei, the director and spokesperson for the Giving Machines in the D.C. area. “These activities will directly impact people in the DMV. Whether it be tying a few knots on a quilt for a refugee or veteran, writing a card to someone who has blessed your life, or donating an item for the amazing local or international charities in the Giving Machines, it is sure to be a wonderful way to celebrate Giving Tuesday,” she added.

At Tysons this week, the machines were set up outside the AMC Theaters and are sponsored by The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Users can choose from 30 items to donate with the machine, and the local charities they can donate to include the Catholic Relief Services, House of Ruth, Mentos International, REACT DC, Volunteers of America Chesapeake & Carolines, Willing Warriors, and Young Doctors Project. The items sent with the machine cost between \$15-\$150 and 100 percent of the donation goes to the selected charities.

The Giving Machines were launched in 2017 and are now available in 32 states and 11 nations around the world. Tysons launched the Giving Machines on Giving Tuesday which is the Tuesday after Thanksgiving in the United States. It is touted as a “global generosity movement unleashing the power of people and organizations to transform their communities and the world.”

PHOTOS BY MIKE SALMON/CONNECTION



The ribbon is cut on many Giving Machines around the country.

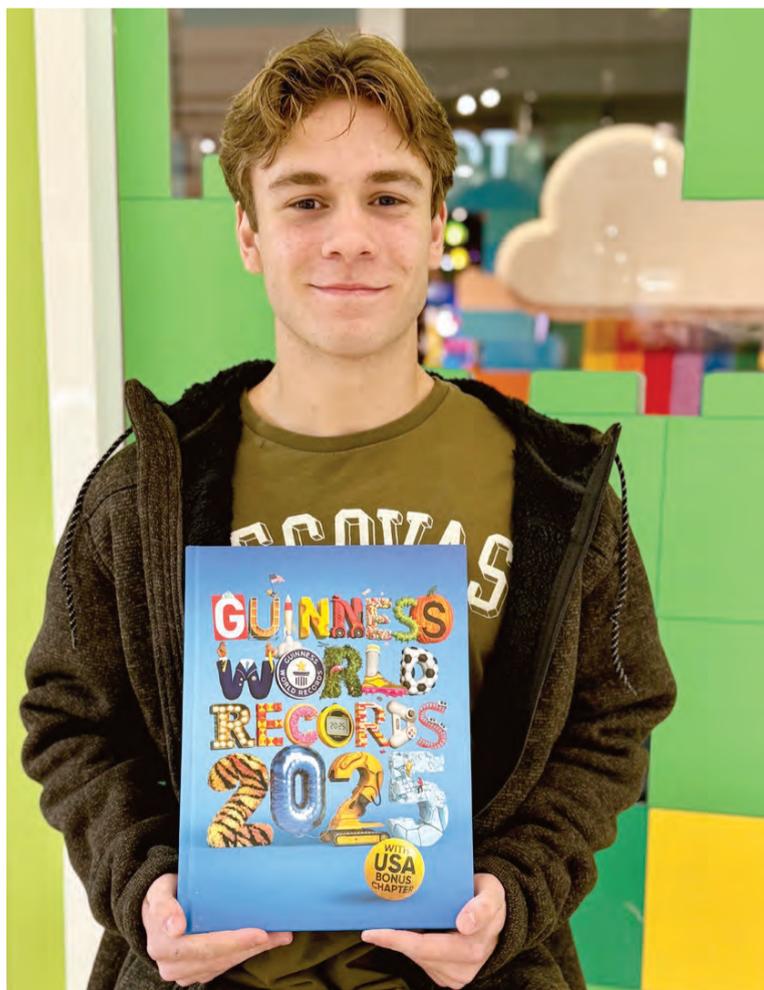


PHOTO BY SUSAN LAUME/THE CONNECTION

Sebastian Haworth highlighted in Guinness 2025 record book

WWW.CONNECTIONNEWSPAPERS.COM

Guinness World Recognition Includes West Springfield Senior

Local teen’s Titanic record not sunk yet

BY SUSAN LAUME
THE CONNECTION

The excitement of achieving a world record often can be quickly supplanted by the ambitions of the next record trier. But for our local Guinness World Record holder, Sebastian Haworth, two years after his successful attempt, is still the fastest LEGO Titanic builder in the world. And to add to his prestige, the teen was selected from 66,000 active record holders as a featured record-holder in the Guinness World Records 2025 edition.

The West Springfield student describes his reaction about his latest Guinness recognition as, “a little surprised.” Now in his senior year, Haworth is busy checking college possibilities, and competing in cross country and track and field, for his school’s team. He is also finishing up the paperwork documenting his Eagle Scout project. He built standing garden beds at the St. Martin de Porres Senior Center in Alexandria, and leveled gardens there. He says of record setting, “I wouldn’t do it again because of the long process and I have no time now.”

Haworth has an eye toward pursuing an engineering degree at the United States Air Force Academy, or Virginia Tech. And although he doesn’t have time for

large LEGO models, he still enjoys a smaller building kit.

In the two years since his record achievement, the Titanic model’s 9,090 piece count has been supplanted as the second largest LEGO model by a new Eiffel Tower LEGO kit with 10,001. LEGO’s World Map remains the largest model ever issued, with 11,695 pieces.

In 2025’s edition, Guinness features additional record-holders in their renowned annually published collection. This year marks the 70th anniversary of the record journal. Haworth shares the limelight with a varied collection of celebrities, including: Taylor Swift, with multiple records, including Most Album of the Year Grammys (4); Diana Armstrong, for longest fingernails on a pair of hands (4 feet 6.7 inches); LeBron James, for most NBA points (40,036); Barbie, for best selling doll, (lifetime estimate, more than 1 billion); Sweetie, for the longest tail on a miniature horse (5 feet, 11 inches); and another Virginian, Border Collie Leonard Lee, for most basketball slam dunks by a dog in one minute (22) set in Chantilly.

For more on Haworth’s record setting effort, see The Connection, “West Springfield Freshman Set Guinness World Record,” May 26, 2022; and “It’s Guinness Official, January 19, 2023.

OPINION

Public Safety Data and You

BY DAN STORCK
MOUNT VERNON DISTRICT SUPERVISOR

Like many of us, the Fairfax County Police Department (FCPD) continues to use new technology to improve and enhance its operations, support its officers and protect all of us. A few years ago, the department launched a new Open Data Portal to proactively provide valuable crime statistics to those who live and work in our community as well as members of the media. However, as this was organized by police station district, not by magisterial district, it only told part of the story. With this in mind, I have been asking FCPD leadership to provide public access to crime data and information for many years. I am pleased to share that after much work with the County GIS teams and data analysts, last month, the department unveiled new filters for the data portal that provide statistics specifically for the Mount Vernon District, as well as the other magisterial districts.

The open portal is easy to use and understand. Go to: <https://www.fcpcod.org/>. This is your gateway to understanding police activity in Fairfax County. Here you'll find a wealth of



information and insights into law enforcement activities in Fairfax County. The platform offers transparent access to various datasets, including incident statistics and demographic analyses. You can explore trends, patterns and community safety metrics to better understand FCPD's efforts in ensuring public security and fostering trust within the community.

Once on the site, you can choose from four dashboards which are updated every five minutes. The statistics in the dashboards show year-to-date information with a comparison to

the previous year. You can look at information for the entire County, police station or magisterial district. To see Mount Vernon District data, choose Mount Vernon in the "Select by Magisterial District" dropdown menu near the top. You can also sort by year and type of crime.

One of the best examples of FCPD using technology to improve our public safety is the License Plate Reader (LPR) technology. In only two years of implementation, LPRs have significantly enhanced investigative efforts and solved hundreds of complex cases, including malicious woundings, attempted rapes, burglaries and other offenses, as well as recover 43 firearms and locate 30 critical missing people.

Other examples of new technology include our body-worn camera program and speed cameras in school and construction zones.

Fairfax County continues to be the safest jurisdiction of our size, and that is largely due to our proactive department using the deployment of new technology and advancements to keep us all safe. However, we all know it is our officers in blue who make all the difference and we appreciate all they do for us everyday.

Be Part of the Children's and Teens' Edition

Our annual Children's Connection and Children's Gazette have been a long-standing tradition. We are once again welcoming contributions from children, youth, and teens in public and private schools, as well as homeschooled, after-school care, and other programs, art and writing classes,

and from individuals.

We publish images of all types of visual art forms, from drawing, painting, printmaking, and graphic design to sculpture, extended media, crafts, and more. We welcome written works such as poetry, essays, opinion pieces, and short stories.

Visit <http://www.connection-newspapers.com/PDFs/> and scroll down to the Children's Edition to see last year's editions. Our plan is for the Children's Connection/Gazette to publish as part of the edition for the week of Dec. 18, 2024.

Submission Directions

1. Artwork should be photographed or scanned and provided in jpeg format. These can be submitted via Google Drive. Writing should be submitted in text format (docx or Google Docs) or pasted in the body of an email. We ask that all submissions be digital so they can be sent through email.

2. Identify each submission as follows:

...

Artwork example

Sean Murphy, 12, Grade 7, Springfield, Summer Morning, watercolor on parchment | Irving Middle School, Springfield, VA, Elizabeth Carr, art teacher, MS

Writing example

Martina Alvarez, 17, Junior, Alexandria, I'm Not Just a Teen, essay | Mount Vernon High School, Alexandria, VA, Gratia Rodriguez, English Teacher, HS

3. Please email your submissions by 6 p.m. on Wednesday, Dec. 11, 2023, [Earlier is Better] to Editor Mary Kimm at kimm.mary@gmail.com and fill in the Subject Line as Children's Connection 2024. If you are sharing via Google Drive, please share to kimm.mary@gmail.com

Submit a Letter to the Editor

To submit a letter to the editor, email editors@connectionnewspapers.com or via the following form <http://www.connectionnewspapers.com/contact/letter/>

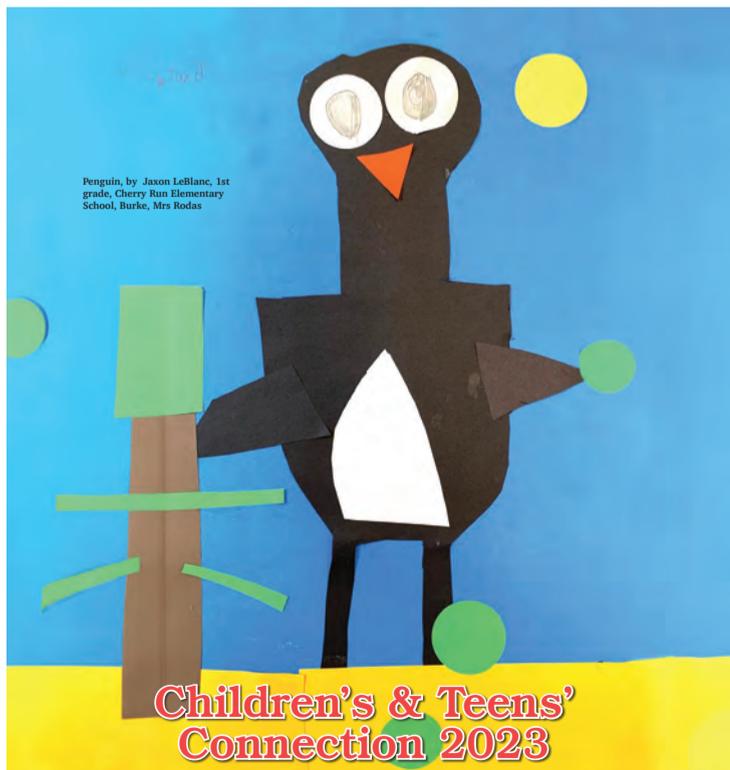
Ideally, letters will be original, about local issues and less than 300 words. Please submit letters by noon Friday before publication week, although letters received on Mondays can be considered. Letters must include your first and last name, home address and a phone number. Letters are routinely edited for libel, length, grammar, good taste and accuracy.

Your name and town will be published with your letter, other personal information will not be shared. If you are a student, your school name, age and grade will also be published.

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CONNECTION

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An independent, locally owned weekly newspaper delivered to homes and businesses.

Published by
Local Media Connection LLC

1606 King Street
Alexandria, Virginia 22314

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Whether they are returning from a vacation to Italy or a trip to the grocery store, our residents love coming home to Vinson Hall Retirement Community – where government or military association is no longer required! From friendly faces and exciting social activities to an experienced team on your side, discover the endless possibilities of a first-rate retirement.



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Gateway signs on the Commuter Garage pedestrian bridge announce Springfield as a place for those traveling east and west near the highway mixing bowl, for which area is well known



Four boundary gateway signs, like this one on Backlick Road, mark entry points into commercial business areas

Springfield As A Destination

Revitalization brings sense of place.

By SUSAN LAUME
THE CONNECTION

Have you noticed Springfield lately? New gateway signs are up marking boundaries which were previously, at best, indistinct. They may have allowed you to really “see” the area as a place for the first time. In the past, most would have been challenged to point to the start and stop points of the familiarly named territories of Springfield, Franconia, West Springfield and Burke.

Springfield is not a town, but a “census-designated” place within Fairfax County. It’s also a named magisterial district and a commercial business center. It has a large mall, Springfield Town Center, a Metro station, and a concentration of hotels. It’s business area, targeted for revitalization by Fairfax County planners, encompasses about 250 acres. Multi-family housing units are limited here, without such development in recent years. Lack of new housing availability may partly explain why the 31,399 population, recorded in the 2020 census, was up



Seeking a distinct logo, planners and committee members drew from the landmark Veteran’s Bridge

only slightly from about 30,000 in the prior census ten years ago.

Nearly 20 years ago, in 2006, a study commission noted Springfield’s “undefined boundaries ... lack of a clear identity.” A study panel in 2008 recommended establishing “a unified identity ... through signage, gateway treatments, branding ...” According to community revitalization program manager Douglas Loescher, It took the more recent opportunity of having funding, provided by the Springfield commuter garage project, to include dollars for the recommended signage on the pedestrian bridge over Old Keene Mill Road. Other revi-

talization effort opportunities, such as brick sidewalks and lighting, are captured as businesses build or improve, such as when Lidl opened its store.

The new gateway signs help to establish a sense of place. Loescher credits the idea to put the town sign on the new pedestrian bridge, a very visible part of Springfield, to Board of Supervisors Chairman Jeff McKay. Four additional gateway signs were funded separately by Fairfax County as part of its economic development strategy. The four signs are installed at points of entry to the area commercial districts, including along Old Keene Mill, Franconia, and Backlick



Springfield logo’s diamond shape and colors mirror these found on the Veteran’s Bridge

Roads, and Frontier Drive. All currently planned gateway signs are up, with landscaping around the signs to be completed in Spring 2025.

Although funding was the most significant hurdle to overcome, there also was no existing Springfield logo for the branding effort when it began. Four years ago, the County contracted a firm for assistance and formed a

SEE SPRINGFIELD, PAGE 7

DEL RAY ARTISANS HOLIDAY MARKET

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NEWS

SCREENSHOTS [HTTPS://VSP.VIRGINIA.GOV/ACTIVE-ALERTS/](https://vsp.virginia.gov/active-alerts/)



Williams is possibly driving a silver Toyota Tacoma, Virginia plate WXA-8604

Critically Missing Adult

Police search for 80-year-old man.

On behalf of the Fairfax County Police Department, the Virginia State Police issued a critical missing adult alert on Saturday evening, Nov. 30. The Fairfax County Police Department is searching for Robert Howard Williams, an 80-year-old white man who weighs 180 pounds and is 5'11". He has gray hair and brown eyes.



Robert Howard Williams at-risk/missing person: 80 years old, 5'11", 180 pounds, gray hair, brown eyes

Virginia State Police report that Williams was last seen in Falls Church, Virginia, around noon on Nov. 25 in the 2100 block of Westmoreland Street. His clothing is unknown. Williams may be driving a silver 2008 Toyota Tacoma registered in Virginia (WXA-8604). The investigating agency determined that his disappearance poses a

credible threat to his health and safety.

If seen, call 9-1-1. Contact the FCPD [24/7 dispatch] with any information about William's whereabouts at 703-691-2131. Find complete information at <https://vsp.virginia.gov/activealerts>.

— MERCIA HOBSON

Springfield

FROM PAGE 6

steering committee to develop and review ideas. Members included the Greater Springfield Chamber of Commerce, the Springfield Civic Association, the Monticello Woods Civic Association, the Springvale Civic Association, and the Virginia Department of Transportation. Loescher says a community workshop and an online survey received nearly 1,000 responses.

The adopted diamond design and colors partially mirror the design on the landmark Veteran's Bridge. The colors on the new commuter garage reflect some of the same colors, with adaptation to meet Highway Administration standards. Using the design and colors throughout, on signs, banners, and benches is expected to promote a cohesive identity to the area, favorable to attracting people

to live and do business here.

Expect the population and number of businesses to grow, as redevelopment of the Town Center continues to create an urban village. Construction is underway now along Spring Mall Drive to build 400 plus multi-family housing units. A new suites-type hotel, with 170 rooms, is approved for the Loisdale Drive section, Loescher says, "on a timeline determined by the developer".

Those interested in watching the progress have a perfect birds-eye view from the new Springfield Commuter Garage rooftop park. The new facility provides a perspective from a height for the newly revitalized Springfield.

To review the Springfield-Franconia market study, see <https://www.fairfaxcountyed.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/Springfield-Franconia-Market-Study.pdf>



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Let the Magic Begin: Reston Holiday Parade 2024

Leila Gordon, Grand Marshall

MERCIA HOBSON
THE CONNECTION

The Reston Holiday Parade has been a day-after-Thanksgiving tradition since 1992. This year, as the parade prepared to once again travel down Market Street in Reston Town Center on Friday morning, Leila Gordon, executive director of Reston Community Center (2008-2024), made herself comfortable on the rear deck of a convertible. Gordon had been named the 2024 Grand Marshall for her significant contributions to the community and connection to the parade.

Robert Goudie, executive director of Reston Town Center Association which partners with Reston Community Center and Boston Properties, said that the holiday events are about hope and community.

"And who better embodies those aspirations for Reston than Leila [Gordon]? In this season of gifts and thanks, there have been few gifts to this community more special, or anyone deserving of more thanks, than Leila," Goudie said. "So while RTCA is always excited to be a presenting sponsor of this beloved event, Leila being marshal and celebrating the partnership we have forged with RCC under Leila's leadership made this year's event extra special and meaningful."

Gordon said that for more than 40 years, she has attended events in Reston that have deeply moved her. However, nothing thoroughly prepared her for this day. Gordon described the "utter joy" she felt on parade day 2024 "in Reston's beautiful downtown — Reston Town Center — and among its beautiful, diverse, happy, and spirited people."

"My heart filled to overflowing with gratitude for the privilege it has been to be part of this extraordinary community and the immense honor it was to be the 2024 Reston Holiday Parade Grand Marshal," Gordon said.

Guests to Reston Town Center enjoyed the parade's dancers, musician's, floats, and Macy's-like giant balloons that welcomed Santa and Mrs. Claus in a horse-drawn carriage and culminated in a tree lighting ceremony that evening by Reston Town Center Association, Reston Community Center and Boston Properties ushering in the winter holiday season. The celebration's other events included the train and carriage rides, ice skating, shopping, and more throughout the day.

"It's the best parade in the country without a doubt," posted Fairfax County Board Supervisor Walter Alcorn (Hunter Mill).

The Reston Holiday Parade perennially earns a spot in USA Today's top ten parades, drawing spectators from across the region. It is a testament to the community's dedication and enthusiasm.



SCREENSHOT

Reston Holiday Parade 2024 is about to roll with Grand Marshal Leila Gordon, executive director of Reston Community Center 2008-2024. Gordon officially retires on Dec. 13, 2024.



SCREENSHOT FACEBOOK

Once in a Time Parties, D.C., a professional character entertainment company, spreads holiday cheer at the award-winning Reston Holiday Parade



SCREENSHOT FACEBOOK

Reston-Herndon Little League; the parade is all about community.



PHOTO BY JOHN LOVAAS

The man of the hour, Santa, arrives at Reston Town Center accompanied by Mrs. Claus during the annual Reston Holiday Parade 2024.



SCREENSHOT YOUTUBE

GottaSwing Dancers are having a fantastic time making every step count down as they travel the parade route down Market Street in Reston Town Center.

Holiday Stroll on Church Street in Town of Vienna

Family, friends and festivities galore.

— MERCIA HOBSON



Live music sets the stage in preparation for the tree lighting in the Town of Vienna.

PHOTOS INSTAGRAM TOWNOFVIENNAVA



Roasted marshmallows keep everyone warm and toasty with fire pits strategically placed.



PHOTO FACEBOOK

Stuff the Reston Association bus to feed hungry students and families

The "Stuff the RA Camp Van" part of Reston Community Center's Thanksgiving Food Drive. They collected over 600 pounds of food and donated it to the SLHS Food Pantry, which provided support to over 200 families and hundreds of students from South Lakes High School and Langston Hughes Middle School. <https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/neighborhood-community-services/stuff-the-bus>

— MERCIA HOBSON



PHOTO BY MERCIA HOBSON/THE CONNECTION

Herndon Reston Rotary Club Collects Food and Hygiene Products

Rotary Satellite Club of Herndon/Reston collects food and hygiene products on Saturday, Nov. 23. From left) Addison Zeigler, 16 of Interact Rotary, Peggy O'Reilly, Rotary Club member, Barbara Glakas, donor, and Sydney Zeigler, 17, of Interact Rotary.

— MERCIA HOBSON

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BOLD POSSIBILITIES

BALANCED APPROACH

Military Monday Dinners To End After 18 Years

Last dinner in Great Falls, Dec. 9, supports Stop Soldier Suicide

BY MERCIA HOBSON
THE CONNECTION

Month after month, year after year, Bob Nelson Sr. and the Bob Nelson Real Estate Team have been hosting Military Appreciation Monday Dinners, mainly at The Old Brogue in Great Falls, Va. Funds raised at the monthly dinners, generally held in two sittings, supported different nonprofit military organizations.

'All good things come to an end.' On Monday, Dec. 9, after approximately 180 dinners spanning 18 years, Nelson and the team will host their farewell 'salute' and hopefully their top fundraising effort of Military Appreciation Mondays. Funds raised from this event will help support Stop Soldier Suicide, the only national nonprofit organization focused solely on solving the issue of suicide among U.S. veterans and service members.

U.S. Army veteran Nick Black, a Fairfax County Public School alum of Langley High School, co-founded Stop Soldier Suicide with veterans Brian Kinsella and Craig Gridelli in 2010. The urgency of veteran suicide was evident to them, driving their mission to address this complex problem.

According to Stop Soldier Suicide, "The key to preventing suicide is to identify, understand, and address the underlying issues — things like financial strain, post-traumatic stress and other mental health issues, and difficulties navigating the transition from military to civilian — before they escalate to a point of crisis."

The organization's mission is to "Reduce service member and veteran suicide by using enhanced data insights, focused client acquisition, and suicide-specific intervention services." Stop Soldier Suicide evaluated data from the 2019 National Violent Death Reporting System to better understand the attributes and life circumstances of veterans who died by suicide using firearms. According to Stop Soldier Suicide, nearly half of all veterans own one or more firearms. The majority of them say they do so as a form of protection. But each day, 17 veterans die by suicide, and 12 of those include a firearm.

In an interview with The Connection on Monday, Dec. 2, Nelson confirmed that individuals from Virginia are eligible for services by Stop Soldier Suicide, "The organization works with various counselors nationwide to provide necessary counseling services," he said.

Nelson shared an email to him from Crystal Clark, National Donor Engagement at Stop Soldier



CONNECTION FILE PHOTO BY NANCY NELSON
Bob Nelson (left) and World War II Veteran Howard Jester, 90, participate in Military Appreciation Monday on Jan. 8, 2017 at the Old Brogue.



SCREENSHOT STOP SOLDIER SUICIDE
Nick Black,
Stop Soldier Suicide



SCREENSHOT STOP SOLDIER SUICIDE
Crystal Clark,
Stop Soldier Suicide

Suicide. In it, Clark considered that as people gathered around the table for Thanksgiving 2024, she found herself reflecting on her immense gratitude for the work they do at Stop Soldier Suicide.

Writing to Nelson, Clark said, "Your commitment is a beacon of hope, reminding those who've served our nation that they are not alone. Together, we are saving lives and giving families the gift of more memories, more laughter, and more time. ... Because of you and your supporters, families across the country will be able to break bread with their moms, dads, sisters, and brothers—loved ones who are still here today because of the lifesaving impact you've made possible. ... Thank you for being a part of this mission," wrote Clark.

If you or a veteran you know is in crisis, call 984-207-1513 to reach Stop Soldier Suicide.

Or call the Veterans Crisis Line at 988 and Press 1, or text 838255. Help is available 24/7, and you don't have to be enrolled in Veterans benefits or health care to connect with caring, qualified responders.

To donate to Stop Soldier Suicide, visit <https://stopsoldiersuicide.org/donate>.

Not Just a Number Act

On Nov. 18, the U.S. House of Representatives passed the Not Just a Number Act, bipartisan legislation introduced by U.S. Rep. Gerry Connolly (D-VA) to require the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) to take a more comprehensive look at the factors that best prevent veteran suicide. The legislation was passed as part of the Senator Elizabeth Dole 21st Century Veterans Healthcare and Benefits Improvement Act by a vote of 389-9, with 34 not voting.

Connolly said in a news release that veteran suicide is a "complex problem that requires a holistic approach. ... But as it stands now, the VA is limited in the data it can use to study and ultimately prevent veteran suicide. This issue is too important for the VA to be operating with one hand tied behind its back."

<https://connolly.house.gov/news/documentsingle.aspx?DocumentID=6164>

Connolly said that the Not Just a Number Act "requires the Department of Veterans Affairs to expand its scope when studying veteran suicide data. ... Instead of focusing solely on VA health care utilization, the bill mandates a more holistic approach, considering factors such as education, job training, housing, and other relevant socioeconomic factors. This approach will allow for a more comprehensive understanding of the complex, interconnected factors that contribute to veteran suicide and will paint a more accurate picture of the multifaceted challenges our veterans face, enabling us to develop more effective support systems and interventions."

Text of the Senator Elizabeth Dole 21st Century Veterans Healthcare and Benefits Improvement Act, which includes the Not Just a Number Act, is available at https://connolly.house.gov/uploaded-files/hr_8371.pdf.

Security Clearance and Mental Health

Stigmas exist around mental health and the security clearance process. However, changes have been made by the Defense Counterintelligence and Security Agency (DCSA) to national security clearance application forms, and its presentations destigmatizing mental health care should reassure service members. It's rare for mental health to result in a denied security clearance or to adversely impact a current clearance.

On May 28, 2024, as part of mental health awareness month, Dr. Michael Priester, Chief Behavioral Scientist with the Defense Counterintelligence and Security Agency's Adjudication and Vetting Services spoke to military students and staff at the JAG school (Judge Advocate General's Legal Center and School) located on the University of Virginia's Charlottesville campus.

"If you feel you could benefit from talking to a mental health professional or using medication, you can do so without fear this will impact your ability to hold a security clearance," Priester said. "People think they're going to lose their clearance, or be considered unable to hack it, if they seek mental health treatment. ... In reality, less than one percent of people who failed to gain a clearance or lost their clearance eligibility, did so solely based on a psychological condition," the Defense Visual Information Distribution System reported Priester as saying.

DCSA is America's Gatekeeper, "safeguarding the nation as the premier provider of integrated security services — national security is our mission, people are our greatest asset."

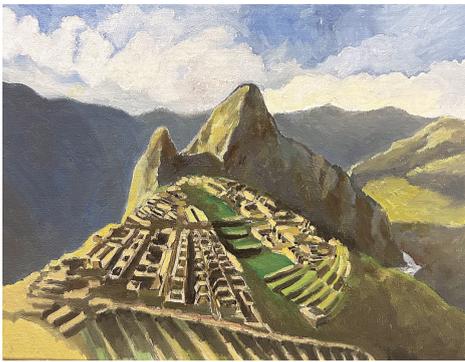
Disqualification for security clearance, based on seeking mental health treatment, is highly unlikely based on data from millions of security investigations at every security level reviewed by the Defense Counterintelligence and Security Agency goes to DCSA.

DCSA, whose mission is to ensure anyone receiving a Department of Defense security clearance is "reliable, trustworthy, of good conduct and character, and of complete and unwavering loyalty to the United States," analyzed more than 7.7 million cases that went to DCSA reviewed from 2013 to 2023. Barely 1/100th of 1 percent of cases that resulted in denials or revocations were due to psychological health and additional conditions.

"Seeking mental health support does not pose a risk to gaining or keeping a national security clearance but experiencing a mental health crisis could. In fact, seeking support can help you resolve underlying mental health issues that could negatively affect you, your family, or your career," states Health.mil, the official website

SEE SECURITY CLEARANCE AND MENTAL HEALTH, PAGE 14

NEWS



Machu Picchu, Peru, by Saul Cieza, from Chantilly, is a vibrant oil-on-canvas painting.

PHOTOS CONTRIBUTED



Odaybea Morrow of Oakton displays a gemstone necklace she created in her studio.

Local Artists at Capital Art and Craft Festival Winter 2024

Coming to Dulles Expo Center, Dec. 13-15.

BY MERCIA HOBSON
THE CONNECTION

Two Fairfax County artists are among the more than 300 juried artists, artisans and craftspersons of all media whose works are for sale at the Winter Capital Art and Craft Festival, produced by event management company SPARGO Inc. and returning to the Dulles Expo Center from Dec. 13-15.

Saul Cieza of Chantilly is a first-time exhibitor at the festival with his bold and vibrant oil-on-canvas paintings. Oakton-based jewelry designer Odaybea Morrow is a seasoned artist whose creative designs mix gemstones and precious metals in innovative settings. Her work gives a fresh viewpoint on the world of jewelry creation.

"There's no more special holiday gift than something made by an artist's hands," said Capital Art and Craft Show manager Judy Spargo. "That kind of gift is, literally, one of a kind."

Cieza's works reflect his love for nature and human achievements. Born in a country that treasures Machu Picchu, the 15th-century Inca city located in the Eastern Cordillera of southern Peru, Cieza's works are a testament to his passion. They do not concentrate on a single style but rather celebrate his diverse interests and inspirations. "I try to explore different perspectives to project the elements of the world around us," Cieza said. Shoppers can find Cieza at Booth 343.

For Morrow, 2024 is her third year showcasing her jewelry at the Winter Capital Art and Craft Festival as a local artist. Morrow will present some of her newest designs at Booth 643. Morrow says making jewelry releases her creative energies, which are influenced by intrinsic designs found in nature and years of living in Africa, Central Asia, and Europe. She uses an array of techniques. "My work, which is made with precious metals and gemstones, is distinctive in its use of textures and rich colors. It is a process of ebb and flow with moments of utter frustration during the process and moments of absolute fulfillment when a piece, in its final stage, resonates with someone and brings them joy," says Morrow.

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The Winter Capital Art & Craft Festival, taking place at Dulles Expo Center, will include more than 300 juried artists and vendors, including Oakton's own Odaybea Morrow. Seated at her jeweler's workbench, she uses a loupe to check the precision and quality of her distinctive gemstone piece.

The Capital Art and Craft Festival offers diverse art and craft treasures, from paintings and prints to pottery and decor. Whether shoppers are fans of woodworking, glass art, clothing/textiles, photography, or mixed media, there's something for everyone at this event, even a tasty treat.

Take a break and enjoy a drink from a beverage artist, or stop by one of the specialty vendors showcasing foods, such as a sweet taste of Europe, at The Passionate Baker, which features pastries made from scratch. Then, before you leave, be sure to stop by one of the booths of natural, handcrafted, small-batch products, such as honey made from Virginia bees at Edgewood Apiaries & Farm, to take home with you.

The festival is open to the public, and parking is free and plentiful. Tickets are available now, and discounts are available for senior citizens; children under the age of 12 are admitted at no charge. Tickets are valid for all three days. Show hours at the South Hall are from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. on Friday and Saturday and 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. on Sunday. Admission is \$10 online and \$12.00 in person. Visit www.CACF.art.

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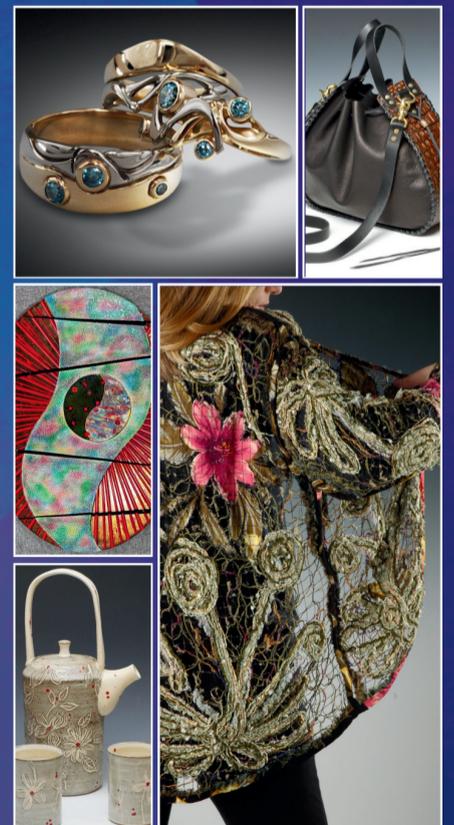
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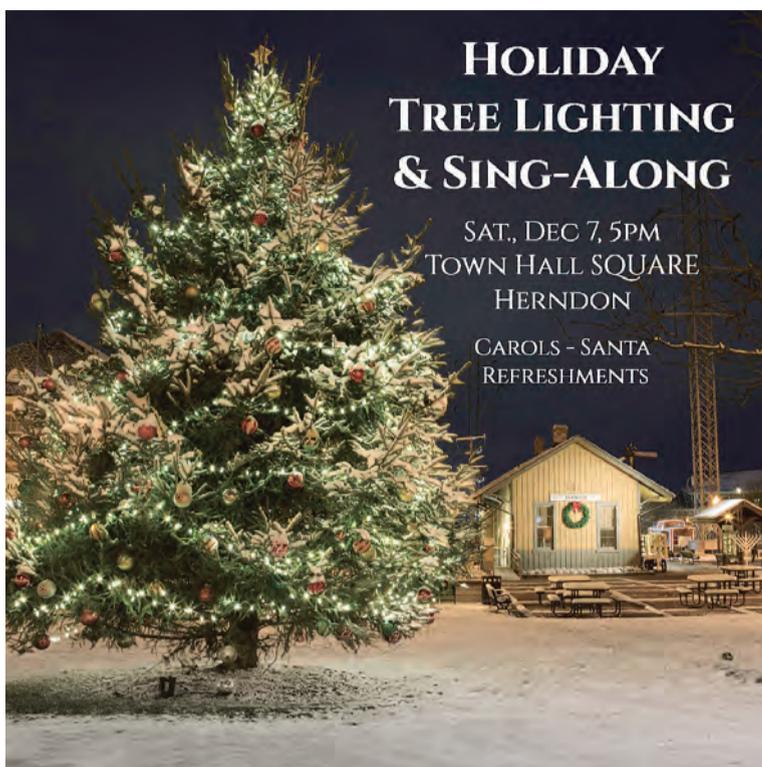


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ENTERTAINMENT



HOLIDAY TREE LIGHTING & SING-ALONG

SAT., DEC 7, 5PM
TOWN HALL SQUARE
HERNDON

CAROLS - SANTA
REFRESHMENTS

The Herndon Holiday Tree Lighting and Singalong takes place on Saturday, Dec. 7, 2024 in Herndon.

THROUGH JAN. 12, 2025 10th Annual Glass International.

At Workhouse Arts Center, Vulcan Gallery, 9518 workhouse Way, Lorton. Workhouse Arts Center is proud to present the 10th Annual Glass International, an exhibition highlighting the depth and breadth of contemporary functional and sculptural glass art. In celebration of Workhouse Arts' 10th year exhibiting glass from artists throughout the United States, in 2024, they opened eligibility to include artists working internationally.

FRESH EVERGREEN WREATHS AND DECORATIONS

Assistance League of Northern Virginia (ALNV) is partnering with Lynch Creek Farm to offer a variety of fresh evergreen wreaths and decorations for your home or as holiday gifts. ALNV, a non-profit providing assistance to needy students across the region, will receive 15% of the proceeds from your order. Use the following link to place your order: <https://tinyurl.com/LynchCreekBeauty> To order by phone, call 1-800-426-0781 and mention our campaign ID #9630516. Orders will be sent directly to your selected recipients. The deadline for submitting orders is December 15, 2024.

VIENNA HOLIDAY GUIDE

The Vienna Business Association (VBA) is hosting a Vienna Holiday Guide for local business and nonprofit promotions through Jan 1, 2025. You will find events, promotions and fundraisers for many local organizations. Organizations are encouraged to add their promotions for holidays, Small Business Saturday and the Church Street Stroll. You can view it online or download it here: <https://viennabusiness.org/vienna-holiday-guide>

POTOMAC HARMONY CHORUS IS SEEKING SINGERS

If you enjoy holiday music, this is for you. Potomac Harmony Chorus will be rehearsing holiday classics during November and December

and you can sing along! No experience necessary! No cost! Just a love of music required! They sing a cappella, are an open and safe environment for women and non-binary singers, and love what they do. Singing brings joy, so come get some! Contact Jackie Bottash at JackieBottash@gmail.com.

THRU JAN. 12, 2025

Winter Lantern Festival. At Tysons Corner Center, 8025 Galleria Drive, McLean. Thursdays to Sundays, 5-9:30 p.m. The Winter Lantern Festival is a must-see display of electrifying lights made from more than 1,000 handmade Chinese lanterns. Guests will enter and wander through a wonderland of light and color inspired by Chinese myths, legends, and zodiacs. Attractions will include a bounce house, sugar paintings, dino ride, interactive light swings, see-saws, tunnels, and many majestic creatures. Guests can also enjoy live entertainment by the Zigong Acrobatic Troupe, a new treat for this year, along with food, drinks and gifts.

THROUGH DEC. 30

LEGO Holiday Bricktacular. At LEGO Site, 6563 Springfield Mall, Suite 12004, Springfield. Families can enjoy a winter wonderland of activities, festive decorations, large Santa Mini Figure and more. A dedicated area in the attraction will inspire guests with various heart designs and inspire families to build a LEGO heart. Additional holiday experiences include the Mini World Washington, D.C. Winter Wonderland takeover featuring holiday scenes, Letters to Master Model Builder and meet and greet with a new Gingerbread Costume Character.

WEDNESDAY/DEC. 4

Holiday & Hearts Event. 7-8:30 p.m. At Fonts Books & Gifts, 626B Old Dominion Road, McLean. Five local authors will discuss their recent releases and the writing process in an evening panel discussion and signing event.

Meet authors:



Holiday ArtFest at The Arts of Great Falls

Friday Dec 6 from 6-8pm
Sat & Sun Dec 7-8 from 10am-5pm
The Art School & The Artists' Atelier
756 Walker Road, Suites C & D

Discover one-of-a-kind original artwork, beautifully crafted notecards, festive holiday ornaments, stylish scarves, cozy pillows, and a variety of other unique, handmade gifts by: Jill Banks (Oil Paintings) | Roberta Beasley (Mixed Media) | Cindy Grisdela (Fiber Arts) | Walt Lawrence (Photography) | Theresa Miller (Oil & Watercolor Paintings)

The Great Falls Holiday Art Fest takes place Dec. 6-8, 2024 in Great Falls.

Barbara Boehm Miller, When You See Her
Carolyn McBride, The Cicada Spring, Santa Overboard
Christine Gunderson, Friends with Secrets
Jennifer Milder, The Epilogue of August
Sharon J. Wishnow, The Pelican Tide
Each book shares a common thread of women navigating complex relationships, personal growth, and societal expectations, delving into themes of identity, resilience, and the enduring power of human connections.

WEDNESDAY/DEC. 4

Legislative Town Hall. 6:30 to 8 p.m. At Lake Anne Community Center, 1609-A Washington Plaza, Reston. State Senator Jennifer B. Boysko, Delegate Irene Shin, and Delegate Karen Keys-Gamarra will host a Town Hall on Wednesday, December 4, 2024, to provide constituents with updates on legislative accomplishments, initiatives from the past year and a preview of the upcoming legislative session. The event is open to the public. Constituents are encouraged to attend and participate.

THURSDAY/DEC. 5

2024 Holiday Homes Tour. Sponsored by The Woman's Club of McLean. The tour offers a delightful day of holiday cheer, as the Club welcomes our diverse McLean community to experience the celebration and customs represented in our four beautifully decorated homes. Tickets can be purchased for \$45.00 online (<https://shop.womansclubofmclean.org/>), or take advantage of the special price of \$40 at the local ticket outlets: Mesmeralda's Gifts of McLean, McLean Hardware, Karin's Florist in Vienna, and Great Dogs of Great Falls. To ensure a smooth experience, online ticket buyers can pick up their ticket entry at House No. 1 on the day of the event. Proceeds will benefit a number of community organizations, including the McLean Volunteer Fire Department.

DEC. 5-7

Winterfest. 5 to 9 p.m. At Brown's Chapel Park, Reston. Reston Association is proud to announce the return of Winterfest, a three-day event that's perfect to kick off the holiday season. New additions include live musical performances each night, an expanded Enchanted Forest, bigger light displays on the 'Light Up the Park' walk, a 'Grinch's Village', and a Santa Experience - all included in one spectacular event. Returning favorites are the Vendor Village for holiday shopping from local sellers, bonfires and smores, the pop-up bar, food vendors and more. Winterfest is free for all Reston Association members; admission is \$8 for non-members ages 3-17, and \$18 for non-members 18+.

DEC. 5-7

Used Book Sale. 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. At Richard Byrd Library, 7250 Commerce Street, Springfield. Preview sale, Wed., Dec. 4, 2 - 5 p.m. Entry fee \$10. General sale, Thu. - Sat., Dec. 5 - 7, 10 a.m. - 6 p.m., Free. Bag sale, Sun., Dec. 8, 12 - 2 p.m. \$5/bag. Choose from a wide variety of high-quality used books, CDs, and DVDs. Jump start your winter holiday gifts and by-the-fire reading at bargain prices. Thousands of like new books to choose from. The Friends of the Richard Byrd Library is a nonprofit all volunteer organization. Revenue supports library programming. For more information contact the Friends at rbfriends@gmail.com.

DEC. 5-8

Tysons Library Quarterly Book & Media Sale. At Tysons Pimmit Regional Library, 7584 Leesburg Pike, Falls Church. Dates: Thursday, 5 Dec., 10 a.m. - 5 p.m.; Friday, 6 Dec., 10 a.m. - 5 p.m.; Saturday, 7 Dec., 10 a.m. - 5 p.m.; Sunday, 8 Dec., 10 a.m. - 5 p.m. Bag sale. \$10 for a full grocery sack or half price if less. Large selection of books and media for all ages and interests. Visit <https://www.tysonslibrary-friends.org/>



The 2024 Holiday Homes Tour sponsored by The Woman's Club of McLean takes place on Thursday, Dec. 5, 2024 in McLean.

HOLIDAYS AT COLVIN RUN MILL

Embrace the spirit of yesteryear with festive activities at this historic site. Join us for lantern tours, a children's holiday shopping experience and meet Santa himself!

- * Holiday Lantern Tour: Dec. 6-7, 5:30 or 6:30 p.m., \$12
- * Children's Holiday Shopping at Historic Colvin Run: Dec. 7-8, 11 a.m.-2:30 p.m., \$7
- * Santa at the Mill: Dec. 14 (3-5:30 p.m.) & Dec. 15 (2-4:30 p.m.), \$10
- * Sensory-Friendly Santa at the Mill: Dec. 14 (12:30-2:15 p.m.) & Dec. 15 (11:30 a.m.-1:15 p.m.), \$40 per group (up to five in a group).

DEC. 6-7

Voce Chamber Singers Concert: Radiant Dawn. Friday at 7:30 p.m. Saturday at 4 p.m. At Church of the Holy Comforter, Vienna. Rediscover the cheer of the season with Voce Chamber Singers. The most popular program returns featuring Antonio Vivaldi's Gloria for soloists, choir, and chamber orchestra. Sing along with beloved choral works by Esmail, Rutter, and Willcocks that shine with the light of morning.

DEC. 6-8

Great Falls Holiday Art Fest. Friday from 6-8 p.m. Saturday and Sunday from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Explore three festive locations filled with incredible art, perfect for gifting or treating yourself this holiday season. Just look for the Nutcrackers to guide you. At the following three locations:
* The Grange, 9818 Georgetown Pike;
* The Artists Atelier, 756 Walker Road;
* The Artists on the Green, 776 Walker Road.

DEC. 6-15

"Commedia Christmas Carol." 8 p.m. Presented by Traveling Players in Tysons Corner Center, McLean. Adapted from Charles Dickens' haunting and heartwarming holiday classic, Commedia Christmas Carol tells the tale of Ebenezer Scrooge, an excellent man of business. To purchase tickets, and for more information about the show, visit <https://www.travelingplayers.org/performances/>

HOLIDAY ON THE FARM AT FRYING PAN FARM PARK
Celebrate the holidays with an evening of wagon rides, animal

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ENTERTAINMENT



The LEGO Holiday Bricktacular takes place Nov. 30 to Dec. 30, 2024 at the LEGO Site at Springfield Mall.



The Vienna Police Santa's Ride 2024 takes place on Tuesday, Dec. 10, 2024 in Vienna.

interactions and visits with Santa. Enjoy food, indoor activities, and cozy campfires. Dec. 6-7, Dec. 13-14, Dec. 20-21, 4:30-7:30 p.m., \$15 in advance, \$20 at the door.

WINTER WONDERLAND AT BURKE LAKE PARK
Climb aboard the Holiday Express for a train ride, spin on the Carollers Carousel, play Gingerbread Man Golf and savor s'mores by the fire. Meet Santa, sip hot chocolate and enjoy the season's warmth. Weekends: Dec. 7-8, Dec. 14-15, Dec. 21-22, 11 a.m.-5 p.m., \$15 in advance, \$20 at the door.

SATURDAY/DEC. 7
Living Nativity. 11:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. At St. Christopher's Episcopal Church, 6320 Hanover Ave., Springfield. Come meet Baby Jesus and pet Delila the Camel and other animals. Bring family and friends to enjoy the greatest story of all times and live music and refreshments. This event is free. If possible, bring a toy to donate. Donations of new or lightly used toys will be distributed to local organizations that help families in Springfield. All are welcome. Visit the website: <https://www.saintchristophers.net/>

SATURDAY/DEC. 7
Herndon's Holiday Tree Lighting and Singalong. 5-6 p.m. At Herndon Town Hall Square. Get into the holiday spirit as Santa rides in on his fire truck. Get ready to sing along with the Herndon High School Band and watch Mayor Sheila Olem light the holiday tree.

SATURDAY/DEC. 7
Alternative Gift Market. 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. At Unitarian Universalist Church in Reston, 1625 Wiehle Ave., Reston. Featuring 30-plus local and global charities. Get ready to embrace the spirit of giving at the 2024 Alternative Gift Market (AGM) and Craft Fair. This unique hybrid event combines the convenience of online shopping with the warmth of in-person connection, making it the perfect opportunity to share joy through socially conscious gift-giving this holiday season. Choose from a variety of donation packages that support local and global charities, like providing rent and utility bill assistance for just \$50, or emergency groceries for \$25. Visit uureston.org/agm.

SATURDAY/DEC. 7
Jingle on the Lake Christmas Festival. 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. At Lake Anne Plaza, Reston. Sponsored by the Lake Anne Washington Plaza Merchant Association (LAWPA). Join the Lake Anne and Reston Community for a day long holiday celebration, starring Santa himself, arriving with a decorated boat parade (made possible thanks to Reston Lakeside Cluster) and accompanied by Santa's elves on paddleboards! Rumor has it that the Grinch (played by talented theater student Josh Lewis) might attempt to steal Christmas again... but Santa (played by genial neighbor George Broderick) and the kids know how to deal with him...

Schedule:
8 a.m. Christmas Market
11:40 a.m. Lake Anne Elementary Choir
12 p.m. Boat Parade and Santa.
12:45 p.m. Vienna Singing Princesses
1:20 p.m. Sunrise Valley Elementary Choir
2:15 p.m. Reston Stars
3 p.m. Reston Conservatory Ballet
3:30 p.m. Ukrainian Christmas Songs

SATURDAY/DEC. 7
Breakfast with Santa. 8 - 9:30 a.m. At Tysons Corner Center in the Food Court on Level 3, McLean. Families are invited to join us for some up-close and personal time with Santa, by continuing its long-standing 'Breakfast with Santa' tradition. A complimentary catered breakfast, child-focused entertainment, and activities make this a family favorite and must-attend event during the Tysons Corner Holiday season. Sponsored by First Steps Academy and Apple Tree School. Visit the website: www.TysonsCornerCenter.com.

SATURDAY/DEC. 7
Squirrel Nut Zippers Christmas Caravan. 8 p.m. At GMU Center for the Arts, Fairfax. Swing into the holiday season with platinum-selling jazz-rock band Squirrel Nut Zippers. Serving up a boisterous blend of Delta blues, big band, klezmer jazz, and calypso sound in its holiday program Christmas Caravan, Squirrel Nut Zippers is sure to get audiences dancing along.

SATURDAY/DEC. 7
Holiday Homes Tour of Herndon. 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. The Holiday Homes Tour of Herndon started in 1979 as one of many events held in celebration of the town's centennial and has continued as an annual

event since 1985. The volunteer organized tour is a much-anticipated holiday event cultivating community to showcase all that is good, beautiful and the evolving history of Herndon. The Rotary Club of Herndon-Reston is pleased to volunteer at this year's event, showcasing "The Blue House." Volunteers are needed for shifts throughout the day. Visit www.HerndonRestonRotary.org.

DEC. 7-8
Children's Holiday Gift Shopping. 11 a.m. Ages 5-12 years. Children are accompanied by a secret shopper to assist them with purchasing holiday gifts at the Colvin Run Mill General Store. Assistants help wrap and tag gifts. Cost of gifts not included. Adults may tour the site and visit the Miller's House exhibit while waiting. Register at Fairfax County Park Authority ParkTakes.com web site.

DEC. 7-8
Holiday Train Show. Saturday 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.; Sunday noon to 4 p.m. At the Fairfax Station Railroad Museum, 11200 Fairfax Station Road, Fairfax Station. The Fairfax Station Railroad Museum will host its 33rd annual holiday train show with a multitude of model trains to include N (NTRAK), HO (PMC), LEGO, and G (WVMGRS) scales. The European Train Enthusiasts (ETE) group will display on Sunday. Santa is planning a stop on both days! Adults as well as children 13 and over - \$6; children 5 to 12 - \$3; 4 and under - free; museum members - free. Information on the museum and show can be found on the web: www.fairfax-station.org or call 703-425-9225.

DEC. 7 TO JAN. 12, 2025
Disney's The Hunchback of Notre Dame. Fridays and Saturdays at 8 p.m.; Sundays at 2 p.m. At Workhouse Arts Center, Lorton. The Hunchback of Notre Dame is based on the Victor Hugo novel with songs from the Disney animated feature. Set in 15th-century Paris, the musical tells the story of Quasimodo, the deformed bell-ringer who longs to be in the outside world. Held captive by his devious caretaker, the archdeacon Dom Claude Frolo, he escapes for the day, only to be treated cruelly by all but the beautiful Romani woman, Esmeralda. Quasimodo isn't the only one captivated by her free spirit, though - the handsome Captain Phoebus and Frolo are

equally enthralled. As the three vie for her attention, Frolo embarks on a mission to destroy the Roma - and it's up to Quasimodo to save them all.

SANTA IS COMING TO ANGELIKA MOSAIC
Santa is lighting up the lobby at the Angelika Film Center this season with his annual visit to the Mosaic District. Guests are invited to bring their children and have family photos taken with Santa. Moviegoers are also invited to get comfy cozy at Angelika Mosaic this season with the return of popular signature holiday showcases and new releases lighting up the big screen.

Santa at Angelika Mosaic:
Sunday, Dec. 8 - 11 a.m. - 8 p.m.
Thursday, Dec. 12 - 2:30 p.m. - 7:30 p.m.
Friday, Dec. 13 - 11 a.m. - 5 p.m.
Sunday, Dec. 15 - 10 a.m. - 8 p.m.
Friday, Dec. 20, Saturday, Dec. 21, Sunday, Dec. 22, and Monday, Dec. 23 - 11 a.m. - 8 p.m.
Tuesday, Dec. 24 - 11 a.m. - 3 p.m.
Pajama Party:
Every Saturday and Sunday, Nov. 30 - Dec. 21, at 10 a.m.
• "Arthur Christmas" - Nov. 30 and Dec. 1
• "Polar Express" - Dec. 7 and Dec. 8
• "Elf" - Dec. 14 and Dec. 15
• "Dr. Seuss' How the Grinch Stole Christmas" - Dec. 21 and Dec. 22
3 Weeks of Christmas:
The first three Wednesdays in December at 7 p.m.
• "Elf" - Dec. 4
• "It's A Wonderful Life" - Dec. 11
• "Love Actually" - Dec. 18

NATIONAL MUSEUM OF THE MARINE CORPS CELEBRATES THE HOLIDAYS
The National Museum of the Marine Corps is hosting a series of festive events to celebrate this year's holiday season. From classic holiday films to creative crafts and Santa visits, there are activities for everyone to enjoy. Admission to the Museum and parking are free, and all events are open to the public.

Holiday Film Series
* "The Nightmare Before Christmas": Dec. 7 at 11 a.m. and 3 p.m.; December 8 at 1:30 p.m.
* "Mickey's Magical Christmas: Snowed in at the House of Mouse": Dec. 14 at 11 a.m.; Dec. 17 at 1 p.m.; Dec. 22 at 1:30 p.m.
* "Dr. Seuss' The Grinch" (2018 version); Dec. 14 at 3:00 p.m.; Dec.

15 at 1:30 p.m.
Cookies, Cocoa, and Crafts
Families are invited to visit the Museum to create holiday memories on Saturday, Dec. 14, from 12 p.m. to 3 p.m. Kids may enjoy free cookies, hot cocoa and holiday-themed picture frame crafts on the Museum's second floor.
Santa Claus Visits: Santa Claus is paying a special visit to the Museum in his traditional red outfit on Dec. 14 from 1-4 p.m. and in his special camo suit on Dec. 17 from 2:30-4:30 p.m. Families may take free photos with Santa and enjoy holiday-themed activities.

SUNDAY/DEC. 8
45th Annual Herndon Holiday Arts & Crafts Show. 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. At the Herndon Community Center, 814 Ferndale Ave., Herndon. Featuring over 80 artisans, free reusable tote for the first 300 shoppers, perfect gifts for your loved ones.

SUNDAY/DEC. 8
Holiday Sip & Paint. 11:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. At The Winery at Bull Run, Centreville. Join in a delightful day of creativity and relaxation as you learn to paint the charming "Winter Barn" scene on your own blank canvas while sipping on delicious Bull Run Wines.

SUNDAY/DEC. 8
Traditional Celtic Music. 4:30 p.m. and 6:30 p.m. At The Old Brogue Irish Pub, 760-C Walker Road, Great Falls. Featuring Jody Marshall's Annual Holiday Celebration. Jody's sparkling hammered dulcimer, along with Paul Nahay's rock-solid piano and Jim Queen's versatile fiddle, deliver holiday spirit in repertoire ranging from beloved favorites to lesser-known gems. Tickets must be purchased in advance at <https://oldbrogue.com/celtic-concert-series-fall-2024> - \$21 plus tax general admission.

SUNDAY/DEC. 8
McLean Winterfest Parade. 3:30 p.m. On Old Chain Bridge Road, from Fleetwood Avenue to Elm Street, McLean. After a five-year hiatus, this beloved tradition will once again wind its way through downtown McLean, showcasing the vibrant spirit of our community. Local businesses, youth organizations, schools, non-profits, elected officials, and many more will come together to celebrate the season and delight spectators of all ages. Pre-parade entertainment, featuring local dance groups, will be presented at the Langley Shopping Center and will begin at 2:30 p.m. Visit www.mcleantday.org/winterfest

NOW THRU DEC. 8
Annual Toy Drive. At Workhouse Arts Center, 9518 Workhouse Way, Lorton (Bldgs. 16, 2, and 11). Annual Toy Drive in partnership with OAR NOVA to bring joy to local families impacted by the criminal justice system.

SUNDAY/DEC. 8
Traditional Celtic Music. 4:30 p.m. and 6:30 p.m. At the Old Brogue Irish Pub, 760-C Walker Road, Great Falls. Featuring Jody Marshall's Holiday Celebration. One of the top hammered dulcimer players in America, Jody Marshall

SEE ENTERTAINMENT, PAGE 15

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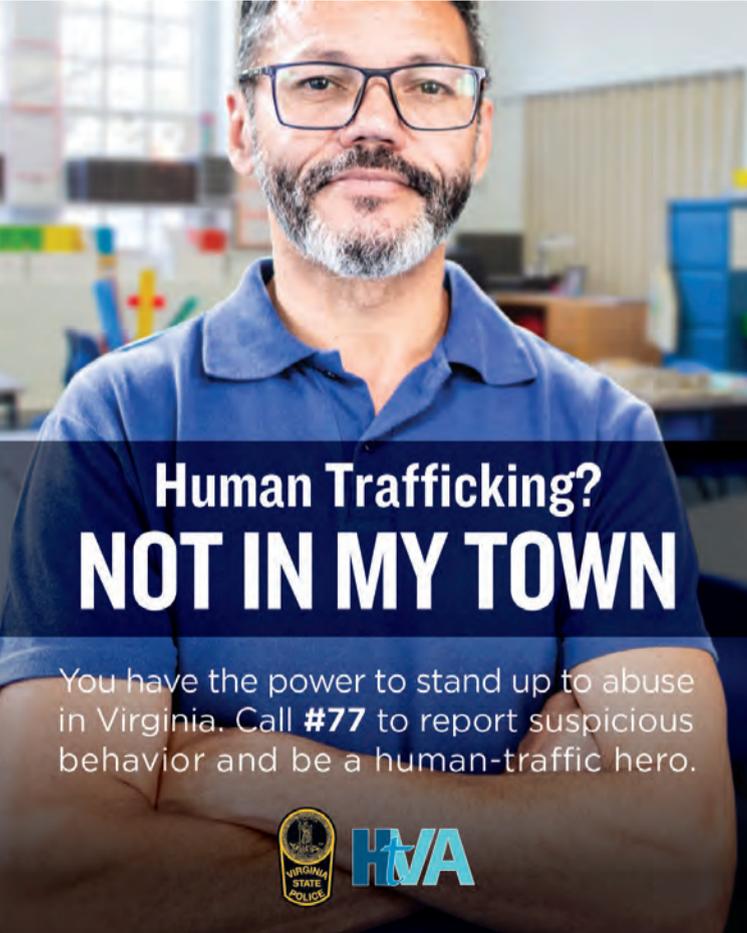
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Mrs. Jo's Petite Eats LLC trading as MRS. JO'S, 7940 Jones Branch Drive, McLean, Fairfax County, Virginia 22102. The above establishment is applying to the VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF ALCOHOLIC BEVERAGE CONTROL (ABC) AUTHORITY for a Mixed Beverage Restaurant to sell or manufacture alcoholic beverages. license to sell or manufacture alcoholic beverages. Erinn S. Roth, Owner. NOTE: Objections to the issuance of this license must be submitted to ABC no later than 30 days from the publishing date of the first of two required newspaper legal notices. Objections should be registered at www.abc.virginia.gov or (800) 552-3200.

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NEWS

**Security
Clearance and
Mental Health**

FROM PAGE 10

of the Military Health System. If you or someone you know is having a mental health crisis for active military and veterans, call the Military and Veteran Crisis Line and press "1", or text 838255, or chat with a live counselor on the Crisis Line website. For Spanish, press "2". Civilians can call 988 to reach the National Suicide and Crisis Linegoes to 988.org.

Resources:

Listen to the Federal News Network, The Mission Continues, Episode 6, the Federal Security Clearance process: https://federalnewsnetwork.com/podcast/the-mission-continues/episode-6-the-federal-security-clearance-process/?utm_source=megamenu&utm_medium=web&utm_content=podcasts&utm_term=resources

Mental Health & Security Clearance Fact Sheet:

https://www.dcsa.mil/Portals/128/Documents/pv/DODCAF/_resources/DCSA-Fact-Sheet_Mental-Health_Security-Clearances-Oct21.pdf

BULLETIN BOARD

Submit civic/community announcements at ConnectionNewspapers.com/Calendar. Photos and artwork welcome. Deadline is Thursday at noon, at least two weeks before the event.

VOLUNTEER YOUR TIME

Would you like to help a neighbor feel less lonely? Will you help someone get much-needed groceries? Form new connections and make a meaningful difference. Older adults in the Annandale, Falls Church, and Alexandria regions are waiting for volunteer social visitors and grocery shoppers. If you can give the gift of your time, consider providing invaluable support to someone in your community. Learn more about Volunteer Solutions at bit.ly/FXVSVOL or email VolunteerSolutions@FairfaxCounty.gov or call 703-324-5406.

SUPPORT GROUPS

Parent Support Partners, a service of the Healthy Minds Fairfax initiative, are all parents who have received training and are qualified to offer education, support and assistance at no cost to families or caregivers. They provide reliable information that families can use in decision-making and are familiar with services and resources that can help families in distress. Visit www.fairfaxcounty.gov/healthy-mindsfairfax or www.nami-north-ernvirginia.org/parent-peer-support.html.

Giving Season and Your Community Newspaper

Giving Tuesday is almost done, but it is giving season, and The Connection, Alexandria Gazette Packet, Mount Vernon Gazette and Potomac Almanac need your help to keep going.

One of the important functions of our weekly newspapers is to highlight the many organizations in the community that work to benefit those in need, people experiencing homelessness and families experiencing hunger and food insecurity.

You can see lists on our website of organizations with missions for the public good in many contexts. Helping hungry people. Providing health care. Working for the environment. Protecting animal welfare. Providing access to the arts. And more. These organizations and nonprofits are all addressing critical needs.

For our list for Fairfax County, click here. <https://www.connectionnewspapers.com/news/2024/dec/03/where-to-give-locally/>

For our list for Arlington, click here. <https://www.connectionnewspapers.com/news/2024/dec/03/arlington-non-profits-need-your-help/>

For our list for Alexandria and Mount Vernon, click here. <https://www.connectionnewspapers.com/news/2024/dec/03/where-to-give-locally-in-alexandria-and-mount-vernon/>

These lists have been developed over years and are updated regularly. If you see something we've missed or a listing that needs corrections, contact Mary Kimm, kimm.mary@gmail.com, with Give Locally in the subject line.

We also regularly write stories that feature the important work of these organizations and stories that show the need. For example <https://www.connectionnewspapers.com/news/2024/apr/10/intents-not-by-choice-but-lack-of-choices/>

On a lighter side, calendar editor Steve Hibbard has been expanding our calendars for entertainment and civic events. Right now, the calendars are chock full of holiday events. Here are two examples for the coming weeks, Fairfax County and Arlington.

<https://www.connectionnewspapers.com/news/2024/dec/03/fairfax-county-calendar/>

<https://www.connectionnewspapers.com/news/2024/dec/03/arlington-calendar/>

Newspaper advertising is lagging, leaving our revenue very short. Without getting more help ourselves, we won't be able to continue to showcase the community. Without help we won't be able to continue publishing.

We hope to research nonprofit status in coming months. We hope to invest in a more robust online presence, possibly saving some print costs. We hope to expand our coverage and reach. But right now we need help just to continue to do what we are doing. Please extend a portion of your Giving Tuesday generosity for your community newspapers.

You can donate to our GoFundMe campaign. <https://gofund.me/82995c2d>

You can mail a check made out to Local Media Connection or Alexandria Gazette Packet or Connection Newspapers or Mount Vernon Gazette, and mail it to 1606 King Street, Alexandria, Va. 22314

Feel free to contact us with questions.

A New World Record



By KENNETH B. LOURIE

Typically, an in-building task at your local MVA is not grounds for excitement/enthusiasm; you name the positive adjective. And this might apply whether you have an appointment or whether you're taking a number upon arrival and sitting in their ample waiting room. The MVA is rarely described as an in-and-out experience. It's known more as an "in" experience where the "out" comes much later. To survive the ordeal, aside from being 100-percent sure you have all your documents, all your signatures, all your proofs of identification, bring all your patience, too. Also, it might be further advised that you should pack a lunch, or at least a snack, because the likelihood that you'll be waiting long enough to get hungry is high.

With this opinion in hand – and head, I had reason for an in-building visit recently which didn't offer an appointment: returning license plates for a car we no longer owned and one which, if I understood MVA guidelines, entitled me to a one-year's registration refund: \$67.50. Furthermore, if I wanted to collect, showing up in person was the best way. Going to one of the MVAs self-service kiosks, or to one of their inside-the-MVA-building machines was not recommended. For me especially, the chance for operator error was also high. Therefore, I decided to go to the local MVA office and to quote my old friend and long-ago softball coach, Marty B. who used to implore our team whenever we needed to overcome some game-related issue to: "Suck it up, Line." (Our team's name was "The Fine Line." The roster included several architects.) Given the "adult beverages" consumed during these once-a-week games, our team's name should have been "The Blurry Line." There was no avoiding this issue however, I had to show up in person at the MVA and/or suffer the consequences. I could not conduct/complete my business otherwise. But since I was expecting a refund, I figured that in this rare case, the MVA was sort of paying me for my time. I also was hoping, naively, that completing this process in person might result in an immediate refund. Unfortunately, that was not the case. However, it eliminated any delay caused by yours truly attempting to do it myself. This way, I was guaranteed the process was proper and that the refund would be forthcoming. (I have experience in these matters. As such, I've learned, repeatedly, that often it's best left to the professionals.)

Brimming with anxiety and presumptive stress over the time yet-to-be-served, I got in my car and headed down the road. In preparation for the day ahead, I had filled my pockets with some bite-size Dove chocolates. Targeting a mid-morning arrival, thinking that it was off peak, I turned into the MVA lot and ever hopeful I drove to the front of their parking lot hoping for a miracle. And there it was, the closest available space to the building located between the handicapped parking spots and the one reserved for police officers. what my friend Sean describes as "rock star parking." I went in headfirst and didn't look back. Taking a deep breath, I not only parked the car but my patience too; I got out of my car and walked the 10-yards or so to the revolving front door and in I went.

Once inside, I looked around to get my bearings. To my left were several self-service machines already backed up 5-plus deep. Ahead was the information station. There was one person in line and another in conversation with the MVA representative. I walked up to the desk and excused myself as I asked the employee where I go to turn in license plates on a car I no longer own. The man said: Right here." Super. I walked around the security rope and got in line. The person already at the desk finished his business as soon as I got in line. The man ahead of me stepped up to the desk and asked/said something. Whatever it was, it meant that he couldn't get any more help from this MVA employee. Within 30 seconds or so, the man was politely dismissed, and it was my turn. I told my license plate story as I handed them over to the MVA staffer. He took the plates and immediately began typing into his computer. Soon I heard the printer printing. The employee then handed me the receipt for my plates. The same receipt confirmed the refund. It said I would be receiving it in the mail in six to eight weeks. "Is that it, I asked?" "Yes," I was told and likewise politely dismissed. My task completed; I turned around to leave the building. I walked back out through the revolving doors outside to my car.

Incredulous at my amazing good fortune to be finished so quickly, I looked at my watch: Five minutes after I had arrived, the deal was done. I hadn't even started on the Dove chocolates yet. I think I'm going to call Ripley's. I need to have this experience documented for posterity. Otherwise, who would believe it?

Kenny Lourie is an Advertising Representative for The Potomac Almanac & The Connection Newspapers.

ENTERTAINMENT

FROM PAGE 13

has been performing for more than a quarter century. She is accompanied by Jim Queen on fiddle, banjo and vocals, Susan Queen on bass guitar and vocals, and Paul Nahay on piano, bringing us holiday favorites old and new. Visit jodymarshall.net

SUNDAY/DEC. 8

Santa Cares: A Sensory Friendly Experience. 9:30 – 10:30 a.m. At Tysons Corner Center, McLean. Tysons Corner Center is pleased to offer a Sensory Santa experience this Holiday season, providing a calm and welcoming environment for children with sensory sensitivities to enjoy a memorable visit with Santa. Visit the website: www.TysonsCornerCenter.com.

MONDAY/DEC. 9

Pet Nights with Santa. 6 – 8 p.m. At Tysons Corner Center in Santa's Chalet – Lower Level near Wasabi, in McLean. Tysons Corner Center invites your furry friend to dress in their holiday best for photos with Santa – Sponsored by the Veterinary Emergency Group. This beloved event has become a signature theme night during the Tysons Holiday season. Shoppers can bring their furry friends for memorable photos with Santa, along with treats and fun giveaways. Visit the website: www.TysonsCornerCenter.com.

TUESDAY/DEC. 10

Vienna Police Santa's Ride 2024. Santa and his reindeer are trading in their sleigh for motorcycles and joining Vienna police officers and other Northern Virginia agencies on a special detail – to bring holiday cheer to sick children in local hospitals. Residents who wish to support Santa's Ride can drop off



The Winter Lantern Festival takes place thru Jan. 12, 2025 at Tysons Corner Center in McLean.

new, unwrapped toys, games, books, and gifts at the Vienna Police Department, 215 Center St. S; the Vienna Community Center, 120 Cherry St., SE; or Vienna Town Hall, 127 Center St. S, during normal business hours (8 a.m.-4:30 p.m.). All items must be dropped off by 3 p.m. on Sunday, Dec. 8, 2024. On Tuesday, Dec. 10, police officers on motorcycles will escort Santa to local schools and government buildings to pick up the donated items and deliver them to hospitals and to community children in need.

THURSDAY/DEC. 12

December Lunch N' Life. 11:15 to 1 p.m. At Annandale United Methodist Church, 6935 Columbia Pike, Annandale. Hear Christmas Music performed by the Annandale High School Chorus, plus Guitarist, Art Hildebrand. Cost: \$15. Visit the website: shepherdscenter-annandale.org.

DEC. 12-29

"Laughs in Spanish." At 1st Stage, McLean. Step into the vibrant world of Miami's Wynwood arts district with a joyous and downright hilarious snapshot of

Cuban and Colombian-American culture. As Art Basel approaches, Mariana, the director of a swanky modern art gallery, faces a serious dilemma: her showroom has become an active crime scene. Part crime-comedy, part mother-daughter story, this play follows Mariana and her eccentric squad including her larger-than-life mother, a film and television star determined to save the show. Tickets can be purchased online at www.1ststage.org or by calling the 1st Stage box office at 703-854-1856.

DEC. 13-29

Aurora's Winter Circus Adventure. At Dulles Town Center, 21100 Dulles Town Circle, Suite 234, Dulles. Featuring world class artists from all over the globe, Aurora's Winter Circus Adventure will immerse your family into the holiday spirit while keeping you on the edge of your seat. The 90-minute extravaganza includes performances in aerial artistry, FMX stunt cyclists, tight-wire dances, comedians, and more, all made complete with a dazzling award-winning set and lighting design. Visit the website, WinterCircusAdventure.com,

or call the ticket hotline, (941) 870-7444.

CAPITAL ART & CRAFT FESTIVAL/DEC 13-15

Join 300+ artists and vendors, and thousands of attendees at the Winter Capital Art and Craft Festival. Enjoy shopping for beautiful one-of-a-kind art, jewelry, clothing, furnishings, pottery, décor, and more. www.capitalartandcraftfestivals.com

SATURDAY/DEC. 14

Historic House Tours. 10:30 a.m. to 12:15 p.m. At Sunrise at Silas Burke House, 9619 Burke Lake Road, Burke. The Burke Historical Society will lead free tours of the historic house located on the grounds of Sunrise at Silas Burke House. Tours are free and reservations are not required.

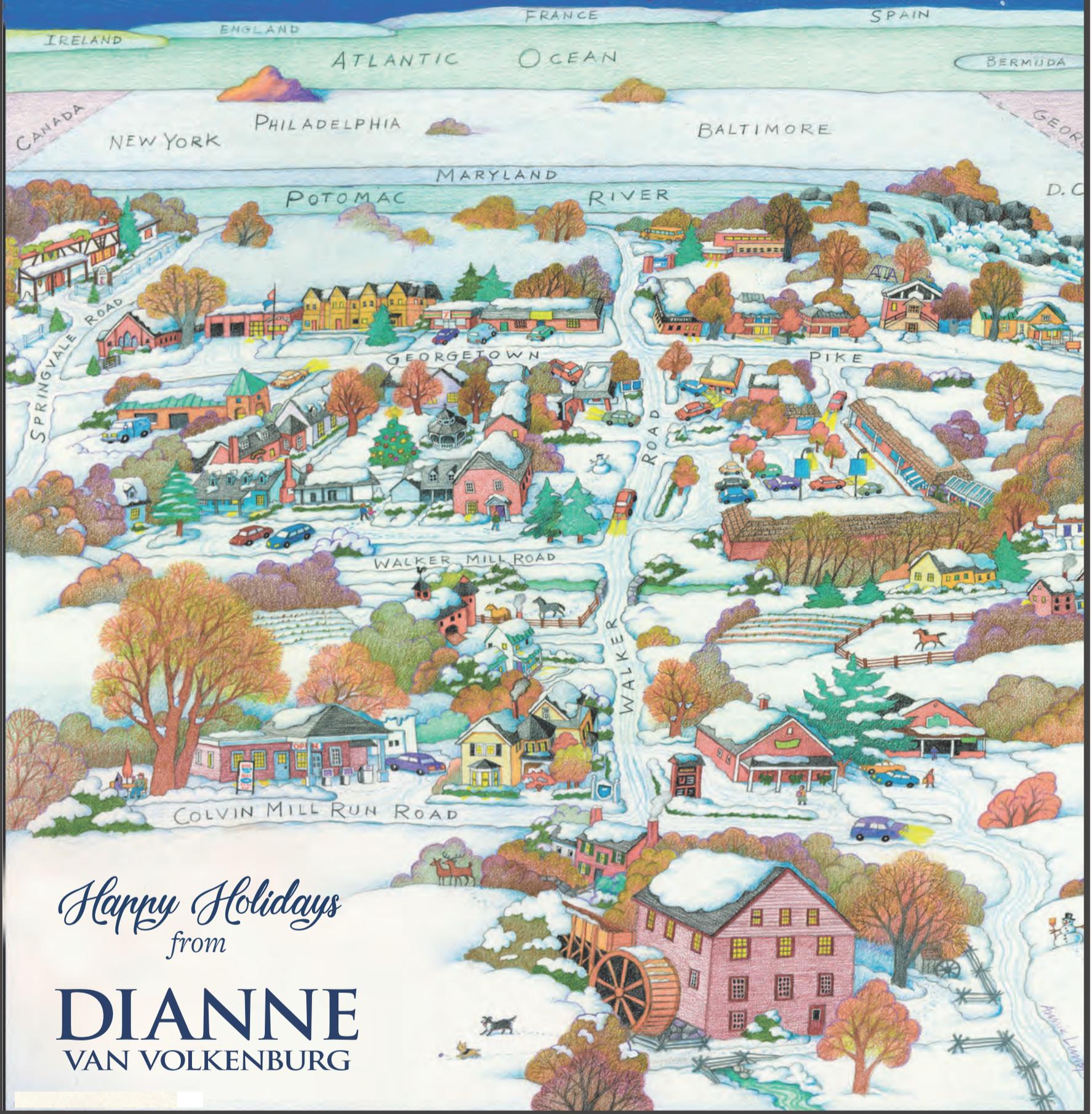
SATURDAY/DEC. 14

American Festival Pops Orchestra: Holiday Pops: Songs of the Season. 4 p.m. At GMU Center for the Arts, Fairfax. Holiday Pops: Songs of the Season returns under the baton of Artistic Director and Conductor Peter Wilson, the former senior enlisted music advisor to The White House who served as a Marine violinist for 30 years. Enjoy a festive evening of seasonal favorites designed for the entire family.

SATURDAY/DEC. 14

Holidays at Lake Accotink Park. Starts at 10 a.m. At 7500 Accotink Park Road, Springfield. Celebrate the holidays with family, friends and four-legged buddies over at Lake Accotink Park for a merry good time! Volunteer setup and decorations start at 10 a.m. and Santa arrives at noon. Enjoy holiday goodies, including treats for your pets, prizes and photos with Santa at the Lake Accotink Park Marina Pavilion.

GREAT FALLS



Happy Holidays
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