

THE CONNECTION

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



Performers with NextStop Theatre Company's The Festive Follies awaiting their moment at the 2024 Herndon Holiday Tree Lighting and Sing-Along.

ENTERTAINMENT, PAGE 20 ♦ CLASSIFIEDS, PAGE 22

PHOTO BY MERCIA HOBSON/THE CONNECTION

Serving People Experiencing Homelessness

PAGE 3

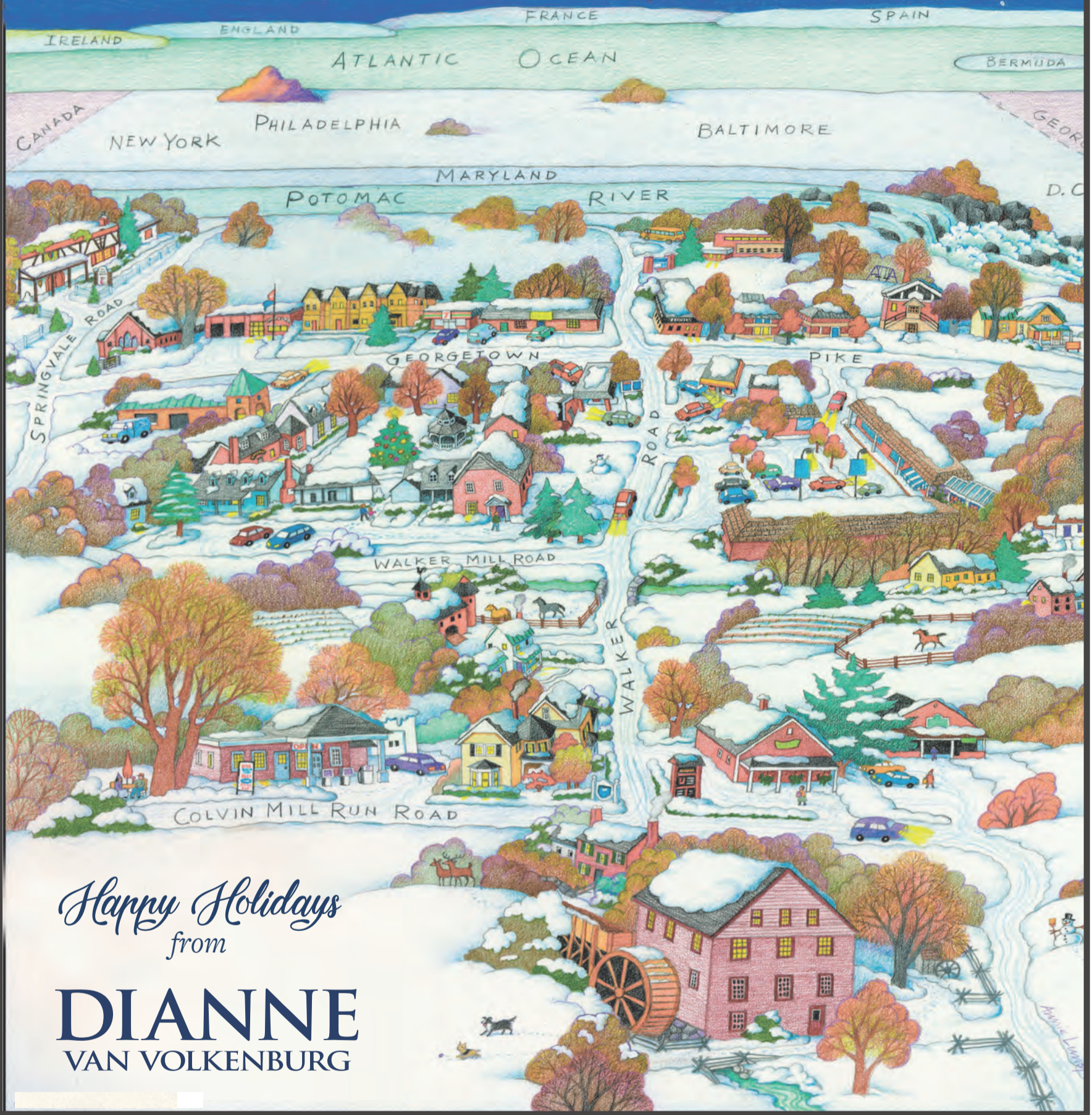
Is It Too Early to Talk Budget?

PAGE 5

Endless Holiday Fun

PAGES 12-15, 18-19, MORE

GREAT FALLS



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from

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Restonstrong Entrenched Supporting Neighbors Experiencing Unsheltered Homelessness

Interview with NPO's co-founder.

BY MERCIA HOBSON
THE CONNECTION

Permanent supportive housing is the key to ending chronic homelessness. According to Fairfax County, in May of 2024, it received resources in the form of 300 new housing vouchers over the next three years and three new staff positions at the Fairfax County Redevelopment and Housing Authority to operate the program and construct permanent supportive housing projects.

Yet program gaps remain on the mission to end homelessness, especially for those individuals who are unsheltered. As 2024 comes to a close, Sarah Selvaraj-D'Souza, co-founder of Restonstrong, offered updates of the nonprofit's past, current and future initiatives. The BIPOC-led community action organization addresses basic human needs, sustenance and rest while seeking to break the cycle of homelessness for those who are unsheltered.

Restonstrong is a young, nonprofit organization founded in 2022. The goal of the 100 percent volunteer-powered 501(c)(3) nonprofit is not to replicate services already provided to Reston residents, such as those by the nonprofit Cornerstones, which turned 50 in 2020, but to support and fill gaps wherever possible.

Restonstrong has gained recognition for its boots-on-the-ground service to the most vulnerable residents of Reston, those experiencing homelessness who are unsheltered.

In a Dec. 5, hourlong interview with The Connection, Selvaraj-D'Souza discussed the challenges faced by the former community of 40 unsheltered people experiencing homelessness after they peacefully disbanded their encampment at The Hill in Reston, located on a wooded parcel behind Inova Emergency Center on Baron Cameron Avenue. Selvaraj-D'Souza described the individuals as "drifting," having lost their emotion-



MERCIA HOBSON / THE CONNECTION

Celeste, who found herself experiencing unexpected homelessness, which led her at times to sleep in her car, volunteers to pack up clothing for distribution by Restonstrong.



MERCIA HOBSON / THE CONNECTION

Having left the temporary housing, Celeste turns the key to open the door on her new permanent housing.



PHOTO BY MERCIA HOBSON / THE CONNECTION

Steve, a former resident of The Hill tent encampment in Reston, displays his recyl'Art paintings in the dining room of his temporary housing.

al resources as everyone "dispersed."

The Connection has covered Restonstrong initiatives for the last two years, most recently, their support of The Hill encampment, the largest in Fairfax County. In the spring of 2024, when the hypothermia shelter closed on March 31, Restonstrong set up 20 new single-person tents on a wooded parcel known as The Hill and brought in supplies, anticipating 40 people at the encampment. People came, and people stayed.

However, on Aug. 27, Fairfax County posted no trespassing notices, and the encampment peacefully self-disbanded by the posted formal closure date of Sept. 10, with county police present but no arrests. The county closed The Hill to make way for a land swap as the Board of Supervisors envisions redeveloping the property from a collection

SEE RESTONSTRONG, PAGE 16



MERCIA HOBSON / THE CONNECTION

Steve gifted his handcrafted Enchanted Woodland Forest Fairy Cottage to the owners of the temporary housing in Reston, which he, Celeste, and Charles lived in for two months awaiting permanent housing. Charles has yet to receive permanent housing.

Cornerstones: Hope for Tomorrow for So Many

Thousands of individuals and families served.

BY MERCIA HOBSON
THE CONNECTION

Cornerstones, the nonprofit organization and contracted provider based in Reston has "purposely worked to strengthen the local community and help individuals and families living in crisis." And they help not only those who are unsheltered and homeless but all who

come to them for assistance. Cornerstones assists families and individuals in rebuilding their self-sufficiency, resilience, and hope.

"In addition to serving unhoused Reston residents, Cornerstones' Embry Rucker Community Shelter staff and case managers provide critical support to a broader community of individuals and families experiencing homelessness or at risk of

homelessness," Cornerstones said.

Cornerstones engages in continuing efforts to support former residents of the Reston encampment, The Hill, who are now utilizing the County's Temporary Overnight Shelter and working with their case managers to secure safe and affordable housing.

Cornerstones provided statements, data and answers to The Connection's questions via email, lightly edited for length and clarity:

Fairfax County contracted providers, like Cornerstones and advocacy organizations like Restonstrong, recognize that there are county-wide strategies and requirements for coordination.

When the county moved to close the encampment, Cornerstones was fortunate to work with the Office to Prevent and End Homelessness, Restonstrong, and the residents of the Hill encampment to help people successfully transition to the tem-

SEE CORNERSTONES, PAGE 17

Will Fairfax City Change its Election Cycles?

Mayor, Council weigh possibility of four-year, staggered terms.

BY BONNIE HOBBS
THE CONNECTION

No one's saying they have to do it. But Fairfax City Mayor Catherine Read wants City Council members to consider whether they want to change Fairfax's election cycle. And if so, she believes the voters should have the final say in the matter.

She brought up the issue during the Council's Dec. 3 work session and presented its history in the City. Read also placed it into the context of today's November elections and explained why she believes it's a good idea to examine it again.

In 2013, the City Charter Commission developed a list of suggested changes to the City's charter, including four-year terms – instead of two, as now – for its elected leaders. The following year, a referendum about it was on the ballot during Fairfax's regular, May election.

"In that election we had 6,848 total votes cast," said Read. "And of that number, 4,604 people voted against it and 2,244 people voted for it, so the measure was defeated. I bring this up because we don't have May elections anymore. We have November elections – and the City wasn't asked whether we wanted them [then]. The General Assembly decided they'd be in November."

Fairfax's election last month for mayor and City Council members was its second held in November. And both times, local voter turnout was much greater than in its May elections (when presidential candidates weren't on the same ballot).

"It was 59 percent [turnout] in 2022, and 70 percent, I believe, this year," said Read. "So I'd like to talk about – with this Council and the next one – whether introducing four-year, staggered terms is something we should look at. The reason is that you'd never have every single person on the Council



BONNIE HOBBS/THE CONNECTION

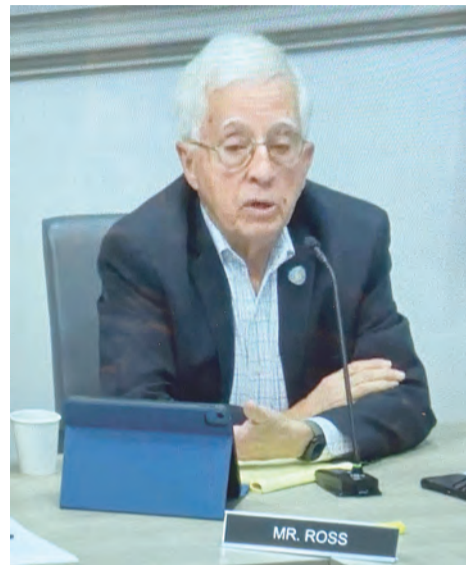
Catherine Read discussing possible four-year, staggered elections.

– and possibly the mayor – turned over, all at once."

Indeed, in the City's recent election, Read was re-elected to her second, two-year term. But with three of the current six Councilmembers choosing not to run again, and another two not being re-elected, just one – Billy Bates – has any experience in this office or immediate familiarity with the variety of issues that came before the Council during his first term.

Read said the possibility of increasing the term lengths matters to her because "we are engaged in long-term projects here in the City. Some of them take 10, 15 years to complete. An example is [the mixed-use] Scout on the Circle where, by the time the ribbon was cut, [former Mayor and Councilmember] David Meyer was the only person left [in office] who was there at the beginning. It took 14 years."

So, said Read, "Whether or not you think the possibility of turning over the City's entire dais every two years is in the City's best interest, I simply want to ask this Council its thoughts on staggered, four-year terms and suggest to the next Council that we ask the voters through a referendum to consider this again. The next election is the governor



BONNIE HOBBS/THE CONNECTION

Tom Ross explains his position on the issue.

election in 2025, and there'll be a high voter turnout."

In response, Councilmember Jon Stehle said, "No Council should change the way elections are done without asking the voters what they want. And I hope the next Council takes seriously what they want to do about this."

"A four-year, staggered term allows people to look at things in a longer context than just two years and [examine] the long-term needs of the community," said Councilmember Tom Ross. "There are issues facing the City that not only have grown in complexity, but also in the amount of time they take to go through the process [to become a reality]. And there's a tremendous advantage in having people on the Council who are experienced and have knowledge of past history [of the City and its projects]."

Furthermore, he added, "When you only have two years, within a year, you're thinking about whether to run again – and it can color your decisions and how you look at things before the Council. Four years would give Councilmembers a longer opportunity to plan, serve and make decisions, without having to worry about running for re-election within a very short timeframe."

But that's not all, said Ross. "Running for office isn't easy," he explained. "There's a lot of work, money, time and personal sacrifice that goes into campaigning. And again, having continuity and collective memory on the Council would benefit the City. And with staggered terms, voters would still vote for Council members every two years."

Councilmember So Lim said, "I don't really like four-year terms; maybe three years. Have a referendum and let the voters decide. And three years would remove our elections from the nastiness of the presidential elections." However, Ross later noted that even three-year terms would eventually hit a presidential election cycle.

Meanwhile, Councilmember Kate Doyle Feingold wanted things to remain as is. "We have a lot of stability in our City government," she said. "I think two-year terms are fine. Candidates care deeply about their community and have other personal and professional experiences to bring to the table. Four-year terms really sound daunting; I think two years are a lot easier to commit to. But we need more discussion and community engagement [about this issue]. We need to hear from the residents, not just plop it on the ballot."

As for Bates, he noted that different jurisdictions in Northern Virginia vary in the term lengths they have for their elected leaders. And, he added, "I believe Fairfax voters should be given that choice."

Ultimately, Read summed up her thoughts on the matter. "How can you make an informed choice if you don't know what the options are and haven't considered their pros and cons?" she asked. "So I just wanted to start this conversation and have it be open-ended. Nobody's opinion is right or wrong; it's just how you see the benefits or value, or not."

"All of this is just food for thought. My intention is to get people to think [about it] and to have conversations. And eventually, perhaps, we could ask the voters – once they feel they're in a position to make an informed choice – to decide whether we want to keep it the way it is or do something different."

NEWS BRIEFS

Holiday Fun in Fairfax City

A variety of holiday events are on tap in Fairfax City:

❖ The Fairfax Players will present their Winter Cabaret this Friday, Dec. 13, at 6:30 p.m., at Fairfax High School, 3501 Lion Run. It's a free event.

❖ The second weekend of the Holiday Market is slated for Friday, Dec. 13, from 5-8 p.m.; Saturday, Dec. 14, noon-6 p.m.; and Sunday, Dec. 15, noon-5 p.m., in Old Town Square, 10415 North St. To see the list of vendors who'll be there, go to <https://www.fairfaxva.gov/government/parks-recreation/special-events/holiday-market>.

❖ On Sunday, Dec. 15, from 2-5 p.m., in Old Town Square, people may participate in Paws and Claus. They're encouraged to bring their pets dressed in their holiday finery to have their pictures taken with Santa.

❖ Fairfax City's Main Street Community Band will perform a concert, "Home for the Holidays," on Sunday, Dec. 15 at 4 p.m. at Katherine Johnson Middle School, 3801 Jermantown Road. Free tickets are at www.fairfaxband.org.

❖ The City of Fairfax Band, along with the Fairfax Choral Society, will present a musical program, "Christmas in Fairfax." It's set for Sat., Dec. 21, at 7 p.m., at Fairfax High. Free tickets are at www.fairfaxband.org.

❖ A Chanukah Celebration is planned for Wednesday, Dec. 25, from 5:30-7:30 p.m., in Old Town Square. Rabbi Sholom Deitsch of Chabad Lubavitch of Northern Virginia will light the menorah. Everyone is invited to attend the ceremony, enjoy live entertainment and partake of jelly doughnuts, potato latkes and hot chocolate.

Car Seat Inspections on Dec. 19

Parents may get their children's car seats inspected on Thursday, Dec. 19, from 5-8:30 p.m., outside the Sully District Police Station. It's at 4900 Stonecroft Blvd. in Chantilly. Inspections are done on a first-come, first-served basis. Participants should install the child safety seat themselves so the inspection can be performed. The seat will be properly re-installed if necessary, and parents will be taught how to install the seat properly. Everyone is eligible. Another car-seat inspection is scheduled for Jan. 16, at the same place and time.

Comstock Declines to Proceed with Downtown Herndon Redevelopment

Comstock Herndon Venture LC delivered to the Town of Herndon notification of the company's election not to proceed with construction of the downtown redevelopment project on Dec. 6, 2024.

Comstock's notice letter cited higher costs and less favorable financing than expected, making the overall project "economically unfeasible," with a legal structure that had "become overly complicated."

"Although this agreement did not work out as planned, we continue to believe in the significant redevelopment potential of Herndon's downtown," said Interim Town Manager Chris Martino. "We appreciate the patience of the Herndon community throughout this process."

In 2016, the Town issued an RFP for redevelopment of approximately 4.675 acres of town-owned land for a mixed-

use town center project, arts center, and associated parking. Two responses were received and Comstock Herndon Venture, LC was selected by the Town Council following public input. The Town and Comstock Venture, LC entered into a Comprehensive Agreement defining responsibilities of both parties for the redevelopment of the parcel in the downtown on Nov. 1, 2017.

The property was transferred to Comstock in December, 2020, followed by multiple contractual delays. Tuesday, Dec. 10, 2024 was the final expected deadline extension.

The town's webpage will continue to be maintained, at Herndon-va.gov/Downtown

— MERCIA HOBSON



SCREENSHOT VIDEO

Nov. 26 Budget Committee meeting of the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors and School Board, FY 2026 Fiscal Forecast

Something Has to Give

County's FY 2026 Budget Forecast is not looking good.

BY MERCIA HOBSON
THE CONNECTION

The end of November's Fairfax County Board of Supervisors and School Board Budget Committee Meeting on the FY 2026 Budget Forecast did not bring holiday cheer. Held on Nov. 26, Chairman Jeff McKay said, "This is not a budget presentation. This is a budget forecast."

"I think what we're going to see here is some worrisome numbers and some challenges we have ahead of ourselves, but one challenge we don't have is plenty of time between now and when we adopted a budget to work on these issues," McKay said.

The presentation would detail a combined net projected budgetary shortfall of nearly \$300 million for the upcoming year (FY2026), or \$292.7 million.

McKay asked School Board Chair Karl Frisch if he had anything to say before the presentation. "Fairfax Education Unions, the exclusive bargaining agents for our instruc-

tional and support employees, has ratified the contract stemming from our tentative agreement, with 98 percent of union members supporting the contract," Frisch said. He added that it was the first collectively bargained contract in FCPS in about half a century and that it would come to the school board as a new business in January and for a vote in February.

"Obviously, this news will impact budget conversations, but as Chairman McKay indicated in his opening, we are at the most preliminary of stages in this conversation when it comes to the economic enrollment and revenue forecasts that we're all learning about today," Frisch said.

Christina Jackson, chief financial officer of Fairfax County; Leigh Burden, assistant superintendent of Financial Services, FCPS; Phil Hagen, director of Fairfax County Department of Management and Budget; and Bryan Hill, county executive, provided input. Jackson kicked off the presentation by stressing that things are going to change and that it is very early in the budget process.

Declining nonresidential (office) property values, rising employee compensation costs, and limited revenue growth are driving Fairfax County's projected FY 2026 budget gap. County revenues are estimated to increase

SEE BUDGET, PAGE 23

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NEWS



DECEMBER 13, 14, 15

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NATIVE HERITAGE

PHOTOS BY LUIS APONTE



Raven Brightwater Custalow and Christopher Lee Custalow from the Eastern Woodland Revitalization.



Christopher Lee Custalow talks with library patrons.

Celebrating Heritage: Fairfax County Public Library's Annual Native American Celebration

BY LUIS APONTE

During the weekend of Nov. 23-24, the Fairfax County Public Library hosted its third annual Native American Heritage Celebration. Spearheaded by Information Services Librarian Luis Aponte, the event has grown over the years, expanding from a single library branch to four: Centreville Regional, Pohick Regional, Reston Regional, and Oakton libraries. This year's celebration featured an authentic cultural presentation and dance demonstration by the Eastern Woodland Revitalization, a nonprofit organization dedicated to preserving and revitalizing the traditional knowledge and practices of Eastern Woodland tribal communities.

Representatives from the Mattaponi Tribe — Raven Brightwater Custalow and Christopher Lee Custalow — shared their ancient history, traditional dances and crafts with the community. This immersive cultural event captivated attendees, providing a unique opportunity to learn about and appreciate Native American heritage.

"At Eastern Woodland Revitalization, our passion is derived from the spirit of our ancestors who guide our mission of promoting cultural awareness and understanding while preserving and celebrating the rich history and traditions of our tribal communities," said Raven.

The Mattaponi Tribe, based in King William County, Virginia, represents one of the oldest continuously inhabited tribal reservations in the United States, established in 1658. Raven, who was born and raised on this historic land, and Chris, who is Cherokee, shared stories passed down through generations. These included the tribe's role in the Powhatan Confederacy, which once ruled Tsenacommacah, meaning "a dense-



Representatives from the Mattaponi Tribe, Raven Brightwater Custalow and Christopher Lee Custalow, making a presentation for Native American Heritage Month.

ly populated area," encompassing most of what is now Tidewater Virginia. Chris explained how the Powhatan greeted European settlers and how the arrival of colonists shaped the Mattaponi people's history, resilience and ongoing efforts to preserve their culture.

A highlight of the event was a series of videos demonstrating different styles of Native American music, such as the Mi'gmaq Honor Song. This drum-based song was written by an elder to help bring a tribal community engulfed in civil war back together. The expression and power of music to bring people together is a universal practice among tribal nations and a lovely expression of goodwill and unity, creating bonds that transcend language and background.

The Fairfax County Public Library's commitment to lifelong learning has shined through this event, which combined cultural education with community engagement.

These programs are part of a broader mission to promote inclusiveness and provide opportunities for all community members to expand their knowledge and appreciation of diverse cultures.

Another highlight was a demonstration of dances featured at powwows, a popular celebration and gathering of Native American communities that includes dancing, singing, food and crafts. For example, Chris explained that men's and women's Fancy Dancing are the athletes of their world, featuring fast-paced, athletic movements and colorful costumes covered in feathers.

"I thought it was great," said attendee Peter Hogan. "I was impressed by the acrobatics. I also learned about the official tribes in Virginia — I didn't know about that."

Events like these not only foster cultural appreciation and educational enrichment, but also strengthen connections between neighbors. By preserving and promoting cul-



Corn Husk Doll Craft

tural heritage, libraries play a vital role in ensuring that the richness of shared history is passed down to future generations.

To learn more about the Eastern Woodland Revitalization, visit www.easternwoodlandrevitalization.org. For more information about Fairfax County Public Library programs and services, visit www.fairfaxcounty.gov/library.

About the author:

Luis Aponte is an information services librarian at Centreville Regional Library, a branch of Fairfax County Public Library.

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St. Christopher's Living Nativity



St. Christopher Episcopal Church's live nativity scene is a holiday staple in Springfield.

Over on Hanover Street, St. Christopher's Episcopal Church continued their annual tradition of hosting the Holy Family's nativity of Jesus on their lawn, surrounded by several friendly animals. The Leuthy's played the major family roles again this year, with three-year-old Nicholas filling in as infant Jesus. Organizers explained that the congregation's two infant members were out of town; though no one seemed to notice Nicholas might have aged out of the part.

Moses the camel was the mainstay of the animal contingent for the event. Moses fit in without a hitch and entertained with smiles for selfies. He also was filling in for another player this year, camel Delilah. Delilah was busy smiling at another park. Moses' smile and camera posing proved equally engaging. Who can't be melted by toothy camel grin?

— SUSAN LAUME

PHOTOS BY SUSAN LAUME
THE CONNECTION



Proud "mom" Jennifer Canton, of Bar C Ranch, smiles as she shows off her young camel, Moses.



Of all the nativity animals, the camel, receives the most attention from admirers.



Doug Gudakunst, Shepherd #8, identifies most with 20-year-old Dandelion, the Donkey, saying, "We can both be a little stubborn."



Congregation member Laura Kirk, invited friends Bella Bell and Lily Kennedy to see the spectacle and admired the sheep with their thick fleece

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HOLIDAYS



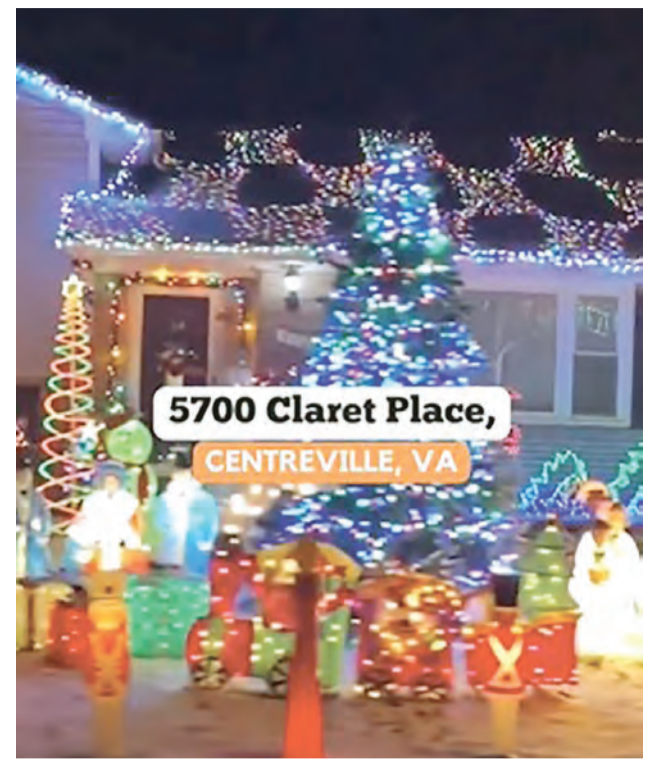
**2733 Oakton Park Ct.,
VIENNA, VA**

All lit up in Vienna.



**10108 Marshall Pond Rd.,
BURKE, VA**

This one is on a pipe stem in Burke.



**5700 Claret Place,
CENTREVILLE, VA**

In Centreville, there's lights on the roof in case the space shuttle passes by.

Visit Fairfax for History, Mild Weather, and Christmas Lights

PHOTOS CONTRIBUTED

No more driving aimlessly, there's a route laid out for the good stuff, see www.fxva.com

BY MIKE SALMON
THE CONNECTION

Riding around in mid-December looking for houses with way too many lights, plastic Santas and north stars on the chimney is the thing to do for some, and scenes around Fairfax County promise not to disappoint this year.

And now you don't even have to ride around aimlessly, although that is all the fun for some. Visit Fairfax has done the legwork and posted their findings on social media for all to see.

In Alexandria, the tour starts on Collingwood Road where there is a home that was the winner of ABC's Great Christmas Light Fight in 2018 and TLC's Invasion of the Christmas Lights in 2009. Apparently in the last few years, it was not decorated because the owner took a spill hanging up lights, but now he has returned with his ladder and extension cords to do it up right.

Up the road in Springfield on Ontario Street, the inflatable characters have taken over, and the small yard is full of snowmen, Santas, Mickey Mouse, Grinch and more. Over in Burke, go to Marshall Pond Road for the Christmas Village, which requires a little walking there say. Here there are seven homes on a pipestem driveway that make up Santas Village.

Vienna has four stops for the light seekers, and these are on Lawyers Road, Beulah Road (not Beulah Street), Oakton Park Court and Drexel Street. They've even got a video in Vienna, and urge seekers to turn to 89.7 FM for a soundtrack too. It "offers a world of enchantment, with surprise guests, a winter wonderland setting, and a magical musical medley," their description says. Pretty high tech too.

There are highlight houses in Centreville, Lorton and Chantilly on the tour.

Visit Fairfax does have a few disclaimers, though. They "lovingly refer to these displays as 'tacky' in the most endearing sense of the word — truly these displays are pieces of art and are testaments to the owners' hard work and dedication in an otherwise very busy season! Also, as a reminder — these are private properties, so please respect the owners' homes and stay out of the light display and yard when visiting and do not block driveways," it says.

Overall, the lights are a positive, said Ali Morris. "It's a beautiful way for people to spread joy and love during the holiday season and we're very happy to help promote that type of holiday spirit," she said.

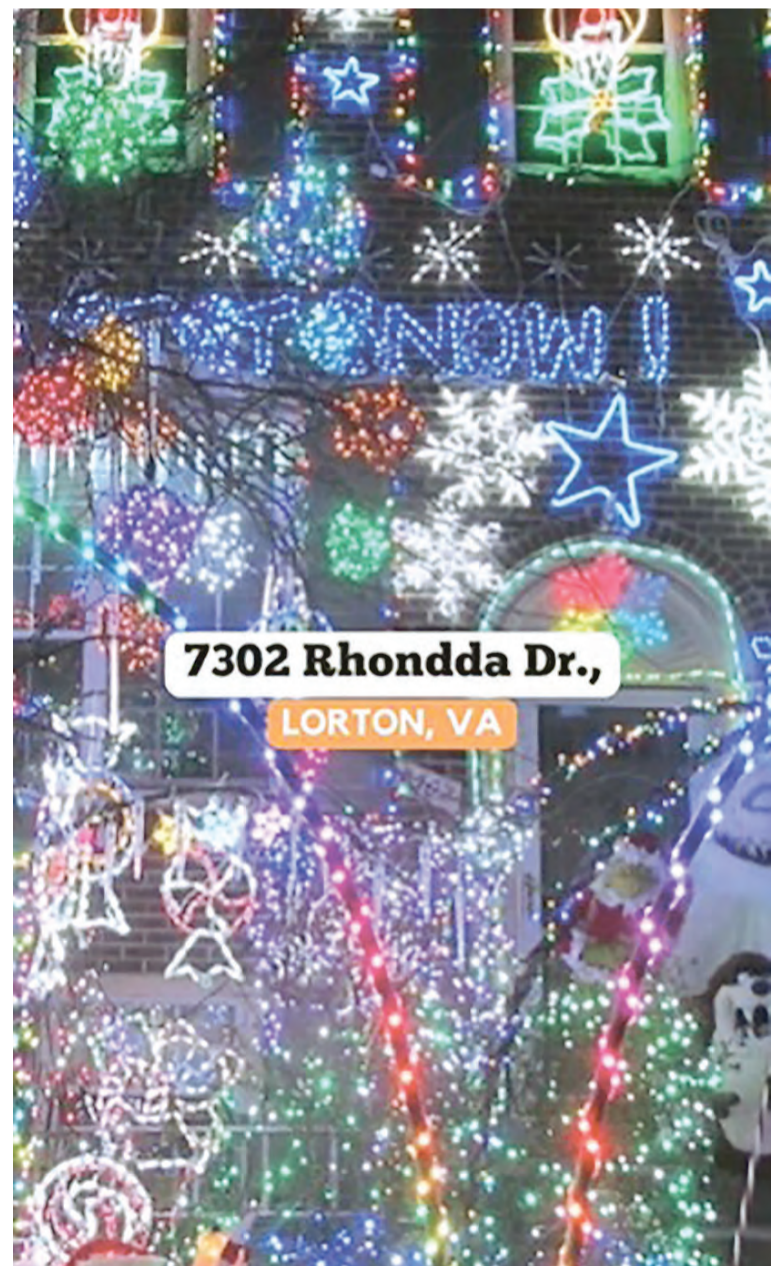
Hollywood Holiday

Hollywood had taken on going overboard on the Christmas lights on several occasions. Remember "Christmas with the Kranks"? Or even Ron Howard's "How the Grinch Stole Christmas." One resident of Whoville is armed with a Christmas lights gun, shooting the lights up on the rooftop. Sure beats falling off the ladder and getting a ride in the Christmas ambulance.

QC Design School has a list of no-no's for holiday decorating and "Overloading on Lights," is number two on their list. "Too many lights can be overwhelming and distracting. Not to mention it might just blow your electrical bill through the roof," QC said. Instead they recommend that "less is more," and the focus should be one or two small spots around the house.

But when you're driving around looking for the best Christmas light displays, you know that more is more. Just maybe not if you live next door.

<https://www.fxva.com/blog/post/where-to-find-the-best-tacky-christmas-lights-in-fairfax-county/>



**7302 Rhondda Dr.,
LORTON, VA**

Décor in Lorton.

NEWS



SCREENSHOT REPGERRYCONNOLLY

U.S. Rep. Gerry Connolly (center) takes part in the groundbreaking celebration of Residences at Government Center II, a 279-unit development for low to moderate income households.

Residences at Government Center II Groundbreaking, Mon. Dec. 9

BY MERCIA HOBSON
THE CONNECTION

The Fairfax County Board of Supervisors, the Fairfax County Redevelopment and Housing Authority (FCRHA), Lincoln Avenue Communities, Virginia Housing, the Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development, and other project partners celebrated the groundbreaking of Residences at Government Center II on Dec. 9.

The affordable housing community for households with low to moderate incomes is located in the Braddock District, represented by Supervisor James R. Walkinshaw (D). It is on county-owned property adjacent to the Fairfax County Government Center. Approximately 65 percent of the units will have two- or three-bedrooms.

"Today, I had the honor of speaking at the groundbreaking for the Residences at the Government Center II, a project that will build 279 units of affordable housing right on county-owned land. I was proud to champion the first Residences when I was Chairman of Fairfax County," posted U.S. Rep. Gerry Connolly.

According to the development plan and design by Lincoln Avenue Communities, there will be two five-story residential buildings with some surface parking and underground parking. The building orientation frames a series of public and private spaces for residents and others to congregate. The current design expects to designate 15 percent of the units as ADA-accessible, and Universal Design practices included wherever possible. Environmental features include EarthCraft Gold Green Building Certification, solar panels, and electric vehicle charging.

According to the timeline, the developer anticipates completing construction in February 2026.

The company's submitted request for proposal describes the development plan of Lincoln Avenue Community for the project as a "connection," creating an environment that brings people together. The design's visual focal point is a 15,000-square-foot service hall dubbed "Fairfax One."

The project will help the county fulfill its commitment to producing and preserving affordable homes. The goal is to create a minimum of 10,000 affordable homes by 2034.

Pedestrian, 14, Killed in Burke

Detectives from FCPS Crash Reconstruction Unit are investigating a pedestrian fatality that occurred in Burke.

On Dec. 4, at 6:15 p.m., officers responded to the intersection of Old Keene Mill Road and Sydenstricker Road in Burke for a crash involving a pedestrian.

Preliminarily, CRU detectives determined that a 14-year-old pedestrian attempted to cross Old Keene Mill Road and walked into the westbound lanes. The driver of a Ford Fusion struck the pedestrian while traveling westbound on Old Keene Mill Road. The juvenile

was transported to the hospital in life-threatening condition and died from injuries sustained from the crash later that day. The driver of the Ford Fusion remained on scene.

Alcohol and speed do not appear to be factors for the driver. The circumstances surrounding the crash are still being investigated.

Detectives would like to speak to anyone who may have information about this case. Please call the Crash Reconstruction Unit at 703-280-0543. Tips can also be submitted anonymously through Crime Solvers by phone – 1-866-411-TIPS (866-411-8477)

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ICE!

A CHARLIE BROWN CHRISTMAS

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For Family Outings, Try Some Northern Virginia Sites

BY GLENDA C. BOOTH
CONNECTION NEWSPAPERS

When holiday guests descend and hosts need a break, you might suggest they try some Northern Virginia, off-the-beaten path spots that might be less crowded than the traditional Washington-area landmarks.

Antique “Pharmaceuticals”

You cannot buy leeches today, (except possibly as an artificial lure on Amazon) but at the Stabler-Leadbeater Apothecary Museum in Alexandria you’ll learn that these blood-sucking worms were stored in jars of water for blood-letting. When the apothecary operated here from 1805 to 1933, “pharmacists” ground down things like seeds and leaves with a mortar and pestle to make around 100 medicinal and beauty products, before prescriptions or governmental regulations. They also concocted beauty products like “toilet soap” and “flesh vanishing creams” to cover blemishes.

Local Archaeology

Budding archaeologists can glean clues to the past at Alexandria’s Archeology Museum by screening dirt for minute bones and shells. Exhibits explain that archaeologists since 2015 have excavated four ship hulls, part of the city’s maritime heritage. Archaeologists have analyzed backyard trash and privies to understand how our ancestors lived.

The Slave Trade

Alexandria’s Freedom House Museum is part of a former complex where Isaac Franklin and John Armfield ran one of the largest slave trading companies in the country in the 19th century, sending enslaved men, women and children to the Deep South. Exhibits tell the personal stories of trafficked people and the struggle

for equality.

Civil War Defenses

Fort Ward, built in 1861 in Alexandria, was a 35-acre installation viewed then as a model of military design and one of the best-preserved of the “ring of forts” around Washington, known as the Defenses of Washington. The fort once had up to 3,000 soldiers and 36-gun emplacements.

Still standing are around 90 percent of the fort’s earthwork walls and an 1865 gate. There’s an officer’s hut replica and a museum displaying over 2,000 artillery objects, maps and drawings associated with the Civil War.

On Dec. 14, from 12 to 4 p.m., re-enactors will celebrate Christmas in a Union encampment, Civil War-style, including a costumed Santa in patriotic garb.

Fort Marcy, a National Park Service property in McLean, was built to protect Leesburg Pike and Chain Bridge, a key river crossing. It had a perimeter of 338 feet and 18 guns, a 10-inch mortar and two 24-pounder Coehorn mortars. Today’s visitors can see earthwork walls, trenches and magazine dugouts.

Suffragists’ Success

In Lorton’s Occoquan Regional Park stands the only suffragist memorial in the country to honor women who fought for the Constitutional right to vote from 1848 to

1920, the Turning Point Suffragist Memorial. Suffragists, called “the Silent Sentinels,” picketed on the White House sidewalk, here represented by replica White House gates. The plaza spotlights three key leaders with life-size statues:

Alice Paul, Mary Church Terrell and Carrie Chapman Catt. Nineteen stations chronicle the 72-year campaign that culminated in ratification of the 19th amendment to the U.S. Constitution.

SEE FOR FAMILY, PAGE 11



PHOTO BY FAIRFAX COUNTY PARK AUTHORITY

The circa 1811 mill at Colvin Run links history to your kitchen with fresh ground grits, flours, cornmeal and buckwheat.



PHOTO BY FAIRFAX COUNTY PARK AUTHORITY

Mill staff feeds corn kernels into the grain hopper to be ground into cornmeal.



PHOTO BY FAIRFAX COUNTY PARK AUTHORITY

Water from Colvin Run flows down the mill race to turn the waterwheel that powers the gears of the mill which operate three sets of grinding stones, grain elevators and sifting machinery.



OFFICE OF HISTORIC ALEXANDRIA

Soldier reenactors singing carols at Fort Ward in Alexandria.



OFFICE OF HISTORIC ALEXANDRIA

On Dec. 14, from 12 to 4 p.m., reenactors at Fort Ward will celebrate Christmas in a Union encampment, Civil War-style, including a costumed Santa in patriotic garb.



A sign displayed in the Gum Springs Historical Society Museum.



Ronald Chase, Executive Director, in front of the Gum Springs Historical Society Museum.



The Laurel Grove School Museum between Franconia and Springfield.

For Family Outings, Try Some Northern Virginia Sites

FROM PAGE 10

National Airport's Plantation and Museum

Rarely noticed among Reagan National Airport's 860-acre infrastructure stands a triangular brick wall protruding from a grassy knoll next to garage A, the remains of an 18th and 19th-century plantation, called Abingdon. The wall was probably a kitchen or dependency that had a two-sided hearth.

Also remaining is the foundation of a Georgian-style, two-story house built by the Alexanders, former owners. The house had a central hallway with a parlor on each side.

In the corridor connecting Terminals A and B is the airport's exhibit hall, which displays a model of the original terminal and memorabilia from the airport's original dining room.

African-American School

Two miles west of the Beltway on Beulah Street sits an unassuming white building, the 1884 Laurel Grove School Museum, the only surviving one-room school built for African Americans in Northern Virginia.

Items like blackboards, wooden and wrought iron desks, a wood stove and oil lamps are 1920s typical classroom furnishings.

African-American Museum

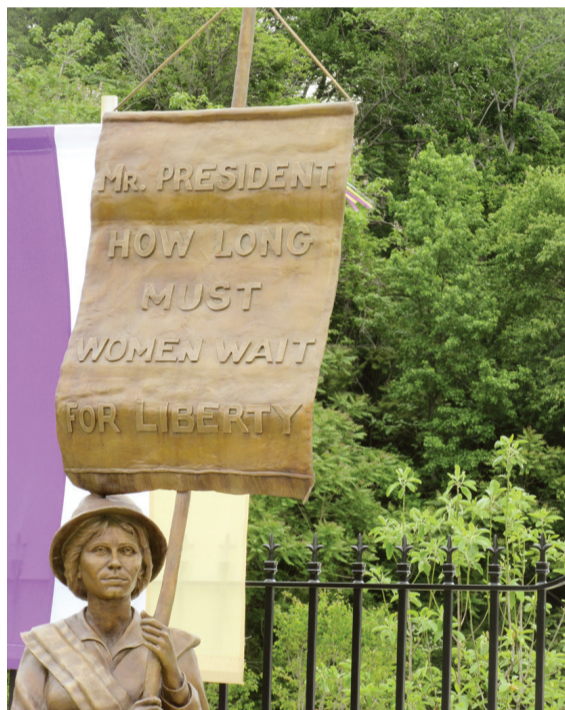
The Gum Springs Museum is a three-room collection relating the history of this free African-American community started by West Ford, a man enslaved by George Washington. Artifacts like figurines from a former barber shop on U.S. 1, photographs of locals and a 12-pound iron shot from the Civil War found on a nearby farm tell this historic community's history.

Grist Mills

Great Falls has a 19th-century, water-powered grist mill in the Colvin Run Mill Historic Site that still makes stone-ground grits, corn meal, flour and buckwheat on site. Docent-led tours explain that water emerges from Colvin Run and today flows through a tunnel beneath the road to eventually tumble over the water wheel. Santa will be there Dec. 14 and 15.

George Washington's Grist Mill, built in 1771, produced 5,000 to 8,000 pounds of flour and cornmeal a day and is still producing. Visitors can watch the water wheel make the top stone grind grain on the stable bottom stone and study the mechanics as the miller explains how to achieve the desired grain.

Both use the continuous milling process designed by inventor Oliver Evans.



The Turning Point Suffragist Memorial.

Firefighting of Old

Before building a firehouse in 1774, Alexandria required everyone to have a bucket and to form brigades to extinguish fires. Today, Alexandria's Friendship Firehouse Museum, representing 1871, recalls the Friendship Fire Company, featuring a hand-pumped, suction Rodgers engine with hoses, a step up from bucket brigades and got water from wells and wooden hydrants. There's also an 1830 hand-cranked pumper with a rotary engine, dubbed the "Coffee Grinder."

Visitors can also learn about firefighting of old at the Manassas Volunteer Fire Company Museum, a company started in 1892. The museum spotlights four antique firetrucks, including two gleaming Buffalo Triple Combination pumpers, a 1929 and a 1947, and a 1966 diesel-fueled Seagrave which still runs with a manual transmission. Without a roof, firefighters had a 360-degree view.

Other artifacts include a chicken-wire-type "stretcher" called a "Stokes basket" for evacuating people, a round-bottomed bucket and a round life net with a red bullseye onto which, ideally, a panicked person would land when jumping from a burning building.

Check the sites' websites for addresses, hours and events.



A Civil War cannon at Fort Marcy, one of Washington's "ring of forts."



The Turning Point Suffragist Memorial honors those who fought for women's right to vote.



Bottles displayed at the Stabler-Leadbeater Apothecary. Some have their original contents.

Fairfax's Fun-Filled Festival of Lights and Carols

Fairfax City's annual Festival of Lights and Carols was Saturday, Dec. 7, in Old Town Square.



UUC's Voices of Hope choir performs the song, "My Favorite Things."



People of all ages enjoy toasting marshmallows for s'mores.



Singing "Frosty the Snowman" is Girl Scout Unit 55-6 of Fairfax City.



Logan Burns feeds the sheep at the event's petting zoo.



Tai Rosebure of Family of Nuts offers flavored nuts, nut butters and dried fruits.

PHOTOS BY BONNIE HOBBS/THE CONNECTION



Vendor Jennifer Knight of New Wing Studio sells aprons for children and adults, kitchen towels and hand-drawn designs.



Posing with her mom, Kyung Lee (on left), is bit bakery owner Jinny Lee, offering handmade, organic cookies in Korean and American flavors.



Sandra Marino creates painted ornaments on wood for her business, Art by Marino.



Liz Dunn makes and sells polymer-clay earrings and Christmas barrettes.



From left, the Bowles sisters, Emma, 6, and Nora, 8, with their balloon animals.



The Diaz siblings, (from left) Noah, 9; Gabby, 3; and Isabella, 8; decorate a gingerbread house to be donated to a family shelter, while dad José watches.



Under Director David Porter, GMU's Tuba and Euphonium Ensemble plays "Away in a Manger."



The Daniels Run Elementary Singers and Fairfax Choral Society members perform "Rockin' Around the Christmas Tree."



The Da Capo Choir of the Fairfax Choral Society.



The Lyric Choir of the Fairfax Choral Society sings "Winter Walk."



Playing "An English Christmas" on handbells are the Revolution Ringers of the Unitarian Universalist Congregation (UUC) of Fairfax.



Elf Betty and Santa watch, as children Rafael, 1, and Sofia, 3, enjoy the wonders of Christmas, with parents Nicholas and Paola (not pictured) Ballasey of Lorton



Connector elves Renda Dailey, Hanna Darr and Nicole Dailey assist families outside the Santa bus, one of three holiday buses decorated for the Winter Fest event

Winter Fest, Connector Style

At the new Springfield Commuter Parking Garage, the facility's first event was underway. Holiday-theme wrapped buses, decorated inside and out, provide convenient service for Santa Claus and Mrs. Claus while in town to connect with area children.

Those not discussing promoting their place on the nice list or sharing information on their favorite toys, entertained themselves with a variety of crafts, artistry, and puzzles. Food trucks and holiday music kept energy levels high for all.

— SUSAN LAUME



Mrs Claus has her own decorated bus where she greeted children like, Cole, 2 1/2, and Taylor, 6, Hoopengardner of Fairfax



Mrs Claus takes a moment to hear the holiday wishes of Supervisor Rodney Lusk



Junior Mondschein, of Centreville, displays some early engineering skills, with mom Megan



Geo Aslanuyah Brady, 7 months, is wide-eyed taking in his first holiday events with dad, Erhan Uyah



Kids enjoy crafting some holiday decorations at Connector's Winter Fest



Bruce Lu with 5-year-old Bastian, of Lorton, came dressed with holiday spirit

HOLIDAYS

Enjoying Holiday Events

Burke Lake Park turns into a Nordic village for the holidays.

BY SUSAN LAUME
THE CONNECTION

Making his early pre-Christmas eve appearances by bus and rail, Santa could be found at multiple locations this early December. Perhaps eschewing the sleigh to rest the reindeer for the big night? The busy elf could be found, among other spots, visiting Springfield Town Center, near a huge, sparkling tree and peppermint sticks; at the Springfield Commuter Garage, aboard his decked out bus; and at Burke Lake Park, near the roasted marshmallow fire; everywhere taking note of the wishes of children.

Burke Lake Park turns into a Nordic village for the holidays.

Santa took up residence while in town and entertained visitors in his own cabin. The smell of wood smoke wafted through the village paths as marshmallows roasted, competing with the aroma of peppermint as children completed candle making crafts. Many a squirrel nose and birds gliding overhead must have pointed to the cabin where kids were making sunflower butter seed cones for wildlife treats.

Meanwhile the ever favorite attraction of the park's miniature railroad was transporting passengers through the woods. The rail's normal path was the sight of some unusual inhabitants. Santa apparently includes dinosaurs for his own transportation, as well as his usual reindeer.



PHOTOS BY SUSAN LAUME
The park's popular miniature train traveled through a holiday themed landscape.



Burke Lake Park was transformed into a Nordic village for its holiday event



The Burke Lake train departs full of holiday adventure travelers



Jack and Hannah Idso, ages 5 and 4, try out the animal cave



Strange creatures may be seen hurrying on their way in the wood this time of year at Burke Lake Park



Isabela Egan, 7, from Alexandria, makes a peppermint candle under the direction of Lily Wedderburn



The Lai family, Simon and Huang with Lukas, 2, visited Santa and his elf



Usually a Park Authority swim coach, Valeria Carvallo demonstrates making pine cone treats for wildlife

Restonstrong Supporting Neighbors

FROM PAGE 3

of irregularly shaped parcels, which are incompatible with next-door Reston Town Center and surrounding development, into a vibrant urban, mixed-use environment. The plan features office, residential and retail spaces, as well as multiple expanded public uses, including the Reston Regional Library, the Embry Rucker Shelter and Supportive Housing, and the North County Human Service Building.

“The encampment was a community,” said Selvaraj-D’Souza. “It was their home.” They lost their family — their social ties, friends, and protectors. Selvaraj-D’Souza said, “That tie, that society, that social animal that we are — that’s what they’ve lost [when the encampment disbanded].”

“They’ve become part of the long list of numbers that Fairfax County counts of folks who are some nights sleeping at the Temporary Overnight Shelter, some nights at the [Embry Rucker] shelter, and hypothermia, or some nights they’re sleeping outside. They’ve lost that sense of what this was ... a neighborhood,” Selvaraj-D’Souza said.

Selvaraj-D’Souza explained that Cornerstones, the service provider that operates the Embry Rucker Community Shelter, the North County Hypothermia Prevention Program, and the North County Human Services Temporary Overnight Shelter with Fairfax County, keeps Restonstrong informed about the status of the former encampment residents they support.

A member of Restonstrong, Mary Barthelson has a weekly call with Cornerstones. They go line by line, updating the housing status of encampment individuals by tent numbers, not names. According to Selvaraj-D’Souza, two years ago, a staff member at the Office of Supervisor Walter Alcorn compiled a list of encampment residents.

“We ask, ‘Are they lined up for housing? Are they having a conversation? Have they done the intake?’” Selvaraj-D’Souza said. “What the list allows Restonstrong to do is, if they see from the service provider that a former resident of The Hill is ‘not engaging,’ that the client has said they do not want housing or they refuse to take a shelter bed, Restonstrong members offer to have that conversation with the individual.”



MERCIA HOBSON/
THE CONNECTION

Sarah Selvaraj-D’Souza,
the co-founder of
Restonstrong



SCREENSHOT
CORNERSTONESVA.ORG

Kerrie Wilson, CEO,
Cornerstones



SCREENSHOT

Walter Alcorn



PHOTO BY MERCIA HOBSON/ THE CONNECTION

April 7, 2022- Members of the nonprofit organization Reston Strong pitch small tents outside the office of Supervisor Walter Alcorn (D-Hunter Mill) as temporary shelters for adults experiencing homelessness.

“There is a different relationship with Restonstrong than with the service provider [Cornerstones],” said Selvaraj-D’Souza. “We’re their advocates ... We’re able to get the truth. We’re able to push back and say, ‘You know, come on, you have to take whatever is offered to you, and then let’s look at how we make it work. Because right now,

being outside is not a solution for you,” Selvaraj-D’Souza said.

Selvaraj-D’Souza added that Restonstrong can provide additional resources and ask the unsheltered individuals, “What is your biggest challenge? Why are you refusing to

SEE HOMELESSNESS, PAGE 17



MERCIA HOBSON/ THE CONNECTION

Aug. 27, 2024- Fairfax County post no trespassing notices at the Reston encampment known as The Hill.



MERCIA HOBSON/ THE CONNECTION

Sept. 10, 2024- Residents of The Hill load their possessions into grocery carts and trailers to haul them elsewhere, and the encampment self-disbands.

Restonstrong Proposes Hybrid Plan for Local Center

Addressing homelessness, especially for unsheltered individuals, is a daunting task for a single organization or entity. There is a need to look beyond short-term solutions to sustainable housing solutions and use rapid housing-first approaches.

A collaborative cross-government commitment of multiple agencies and partners with different strengths supports much-needed housing supply, well-being support services, and a means of approaching a person’s needs

in the context of their relationships, support networks, community and connection to place.

As for a daytime community space, Selvaraj-D’Souza said that on Monday, Dec. 2, Restonstrong tested a model of a mixed community space through a BBQ ribs and wings dinner hosted by the organization at North County Government Center in Reston. The nonprofit organization invited its neighbors, with no exceptions: individuals experiencing homelessness, those unsheltered, and members and leaders of the local community at

large, to mix and mingle over dinner.

Selvaraj-D’Souza spoke highly of the success of the Lamb Center in the City of Fairfax and the Aotearoa/New Zealand Homelessness Action Plan. She discussed the notion that if Restonstrong combined the attributes to fit the Reston community, it could provide an innovative resource and approach to a daytime communal space for all.

“We tested it out on Monday night [Dec. 5] ... and hosted 67 people ... our first community dinner at the supervisor’s office, where he has a community room ...

They sat together, shoulder to shoulder with each other at the same tables. ... Every single person was happy, satisfied, grateful, and enjoyed a meal.”

“I was happy to open up my office’s community room for Restonstrong’s community dinners. They help to build connections, empathy and understanding among our neighbors and community, and I look forward to the continued success of these gatherings,” said Supervisor Walter Alcorn (D-Hunter Mill) of the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors.



SCREENSHOT RESTONSTRONG FACEBOOK

Volunteers for Restonstrong's Dec. 5 communal dinner pause in their preparation to serve 67 of their neighbors, those experiencing homelessness who are unsheltered to community corporate and organization leaders, and others.



PHOTO BY MERCIA HOBSON/ THE CONNECTION NEWSPAPERS

The North County Human Services Temporary Overnight Shelter TOS is located at 1850 Cameron Glen Drive in Reston. Cornerstones partners with Fairfax County to operate the North County Hypothermia Prevention Program.

Experiencing Unsheltered Homelessness

FROM PAGE 16

do the intake? What are you scared of?' ... Sometimes, the fear stems solely from the document itself," said Selvaraj-D'Souza. If the client agrees, a member of Restonstrong accompanies them to the intake.

Kerrie Wilson, CEO of the nonprofit Cornerstones and its affiliate, Cornerstones Housing Corporation, has led the organization since 2001. On the county leaders podcast, Wilson said, "We're partnering with Fairfax County on a strip of land that was unbuildable, but we're going to build 33 homes for people who right now are unsheltered living on the street. And we are going to be there with services and support them ... "And, you know, I can't wait till we cut the ribbon on that and welcome those folks."

Selvaraj-D'Souza expressed her gratitude and joy for the few former encampment residents who received permanent housing after The Hill disbanded. "We're so thrilled; Pops and Steve, we're happy for them," Selvaraj-D'Souza said.

She told how Charles and Steve of The Hill, later joined by Celeste, newly homeless and unsheltered, spent two months at an

interim temporary housing, an unoccupied furnished home in Reston whose owners offered it to Restonstrong for two months. She told how those clients, previously homeless and unsheltered, interacted with Restonstrong volunteers who came by with food and supplies or to chat and welcomed them into their temporary home. The volunteers noticed the residents' positive emotional growth and mental health changes over the two months they lived in stable housing.

Charles has yet to secure permanent housing. Steve moved into permanent housing on Nov. 25 after staying elsewhere between temporary housing and permanent housing through the efforts of Cornerstones. According to Selvaraj-D'Souza, his donated furniture will arrive on Dec. 10. Selvaraj-D'Souza said Restonstrong stepped in and provided furniture and supplies for him in the interim. Steve has no phone, car or computer. Celeste secured a low-cost apartment on her own and signed a six-month lease.

Many remain homeless and unsheltered this winter; Restonstrong's planned initiatives are on the horizon. Selvaraj-D'Souza described how people who are unsheltered had options for where to go during the day. They can go to the Reston Regional Library

when it is open and the Embry Rucker Shelter on drop-in days. There, they can access hot meals, laundry machines, and shower facilities. They can go to the Wellness Center for a few hours. All are within a block or two of the former encampment.

During the winter months of December through March, Cornerstones partners with Fairfax County to operate the North County Hypothermia Prevention Program at the Embry Rucker Shelter, one of three hypothermia prevention sites in Fairfax County. There is also the Temporary Overnight Night Shelter. Selvaraj-D'Souza said there is no consistency; no one location where they can be with their possessions, whether it is a tent, a sleeping bag, or a tarp tied together. There is "no home," she said.

Selvaraj-D'Souza discussed their "Hispanic neighbors with identification and documentation issues," who are not eligible for housing and cannot be placed on Cornerstones housing lists due to funding from federal programs. Although they can get a shelter bed, and the availability of the temporary overnight shelter "is a blessing" in that they are able to go in and sleep indoors, "there's a huge gap during the day of a safe and welcoming space they can go into from

7 a.m. to 5 p.m.," she said.

Restonstrong has new initiatives to provide support and advocacy for those experiencing homelessness and who are unsheltered. Restonstrong is working on a day drop-in solution for their "unhoused neighbors" and for members of the greater Reston community.

"It is one of our youth-led initiatives by our 15-year-old volunteers," Selvaraj-D'Souza said, adding that corporate executives are mentoring the students.

"They are in lease negotiations right now, very close to signing the lease for a space in Reston. This will be totally funded by Restonstrong and by volunteers in the community. It'll provide a warm, welcoming space, as well as food and laundry services down the line, clothing, books, and computer resources if they need things to be printed, a resume, or an application. Volunteers [will be] available to assist them ... and it will offer all kinds of classes, from resume writing and GED to candlemaking," Selvaraj-D'Souza said.

A significant second Restonstrong initiative—remains under wraps, but Selvaraj-D'Souza believes a public announcement is probable in 2025.

Cornerstones: Hope for Tomorrow for So Many

FROM PAGE 16

porary overnight shelter or other resources of their choice. The majority of individuals who were residing on the Hill at the time of the closure have utilized the temporary overnight shelter and other homeless services provided by Embry Rucker Community Shelter staff and partners

Data Requests:

The number of former Reston encampment residents who have successfully transitioned from TOS to housing: Three individuals who left the Hill and stayed at TOS have successfully transitioned into housing.

The number of former Reston encamp-

ment residents working with a Cornerstones' Embry Rucker Community Shelter case manager or Street Outreach staff: 15 individuals are currently engaged with our case managers and working toward their housing goals.

The number of former Reston encampment residents on track, working with Cornerstones, to move into affordable housing by the end of the holidays: Two individuals are expected to transition into housing before the end of the year, with six others closely following, likely moving in early next year.

Nine individuals from the Reston encampment have been housed so far, reflecting our continued commitment to addressing homelessness and helping indi-

viduals achieve housing stability.

In addition to serving unhoused Reston residents, Cornerstones' Embry Rucker Community Shelter staff and case managers provide critical support to a broader community of individuals and families experiencing homelessness or at risk of homelessness. In FY24, our Homeless Services Program served 1,122 people through a wide range of programs, including:

- ❖ Family and singles shelters
- ❖ The overflow hotel shelter temporarily supported 25 families this past year.
- ❖ Medical respite program
- ❖ Street outreach and drop-in services
- ❖ The Hypothermia Prevention Program is currently underway, along with overflow

shelters and cooling programs.

❖ Homelessness prevention and diversion

Cornerstones' work has yielded significant outcomes, including:

❖ 159 families with 323 homeless infants, children, and youth served (including four veteran households)

❖ 690 single individuals, including 37 veteran households, were supported.

❖ 134 households transitioned to permanent housing (51 families and 83 single individuals)

Additionally, Cornerstones serves 120,000 meals, snacks, and bagged lunches annually, with an estimated 30,000 additional meals provided to temporary overnight shelter guests this year.

2024 Herndon Holiday Tree Lighting and Sing-Along

hosted by Herndon Business Association and Dulles Regional Chamber of Commerce, Sat. Dec. 7



Local student performers, part of the NextStop Theatre Company's The Festive Follies, add a bit of nostalgia dressed in their costumes and awaiting their moment at the 2024 Herndon Holiday Tree Lighting and Sing-Along, hosted by Herndon Business Association and Dulles Regional Chamber of Commerce



A tree lighting is for all ages.

PHOTOS BY MERCIA HOBSON/THE CONNECTION



Santa hugs are the best hugs.



The Duffy family of the Town of Herndon: "We're here to see Santa."



Tour-goers line up to enter one of the featured homes on the Holiday Homes Tour of Herndon, 647 Spring Street. Members of the Herndon Historical Society served as docents at the home.

Herndon Holiday Homes Tour 2024, Sat. Dec. 7

The annual Holiday Homes Tour of Herndon took place on Saturday, Dec. 7. Organizers worked with the community to identify homes that represented differing architecture, home ages and holiday celebrations.

PHOTOS BY MERCIA HOBSON/THE CONNECTION



The home at 647 Spring Street is a "1923 Portland model kit home from the Lewis Manufacturing Company," and is owned by Brent and Dawn Klavon. According to the Fairfax County Historic Records Center in Fairfax City, 647 Spring Street was built in 1923.

COMMUNITY NEWS AT A GLANCE

— MERCIA HOBSON



PHOTO BY MERCIA HOBSON/THE CONNECTION

Volunteers are bundled up and ready for the Second Annual Stars & Stripes NOVA Committee Food and Clothing Donation.

Stars & Stripes NOVA Committee Food Donation

Kristen Ball, chair of the Stars and Stripes Nova committee, said volunteers of The Green Lizard Foundation would be distributing 20,000 pounds of food to several thousand people on Saturday morning, Dec. 7. Goya Foods, the Capital Area Food Bank, and local grocery stores contributed to the distribution. The committee supports veterans and first responders and is open to partnering with other organizations. The event aimed to provide nutritious food to those in need and did not require identification.

18th Annual Holiday Model Train by host The Herndon Historical Society held at Arts Herndon, Sat. Dec. 7



PHOTOS BY MERCIA HOBSON/THE CONNECTION

Maggie Miller, 2, needs a little balancing help from Grandpa to watch the model trains go by at the 18th Annual Holiday Model Train show by host Herndon Historical Society held at Arts Herndon.



Connor, 5, and Avery, 2, of Herndon are obsessed with trains.



Leon and Juniper question Mount Joy's Allen Danielsen, of Lamps from the Attic, on Saturday, Dec. 7, about his "repurposed antiques into unique lighting" at the McLean Holiday Arts & Crafts Festival. Edna, Allen's wife, joins the conversation.

McLean Holiday Arts & Crafts Festival, Dec. 6-8

PHOTOS BY MERCIA HOBSON/THE CONNECTION



So much to see and choose from at the McLean Holiday Arts & Crafts Festival, a weekend that featured 80 regional artisans, according to Catherine Nesbitt, special events manager.

ENTERTAINMENT



Milk and Cookies with Santa will be held Saturday, Dec. 14, 2024 at the McLean Community Center.

FREE HOLIDAY LYFT RIDES

A local nonprofit organization announced that free safe rides will be offered to would-be drunk drivers throughout the Washington-metropolitan area during this holiday season. Offered by the Washington Regional Alcohol Program (WRAP), the 2024 Holiday SoberRide program will be in operation nightly from 10:00 p.m. until 4:00 a.m. from Friday, December 13, 2024 until Wednesday, January 1, 2025 as a way to keep local roads safe from impaired drivers. Each evening during this six-hour period, area residents ages 21 and older celebrating with alcohol may download the Lyft app to their phones then enter the SoberRide code in the app's 'Payment' tab (under the 'Add Lyft Pass' option) to receive their no-cost (up to \$15) safe transportation home. WRAP's separate 2024 Holiday SoberRide promo codes will be posted at 9:00 p.m. on December 13, 20 and 31 on www.SoberRide.com.

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



"L'Chaim II: A Tribute to the Jewish Legacy of Broadway (and Christmas)" can be seen on Sunday, Dec. 15, 2024 at the McLean Community Center.

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.

HOLIDAY ON THE FARM AT FRYING PAN FARM PARK

Celebrate the holidays with an evening of wagon rides, animal interactions and visits with Santa. Enjoy food, indoor activities, and cozy campfires. 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 Carolers 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. 14-15, Dec. 21-22, 11 a.m.-5 p.m., \$15 in advance, \$20 at the door.

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

WEDNESDAY, DEC. 11

Jingle & Jazz. 6-9 p.m. At The Lake House, 11450 Baron Cameron Ave., Reston. The Greater Reston Chamber of Commerce invites you to celebrate the season in style with its annual Jingle & Jazz celebration! This event is the perfect opportunity to gather with the Reston business community, indulge in festive entertainment, and toast to another year of shared successes. From raffle prizes to live music from the Reston Community Orchestra, this evening promises to be a highlight of the holiday season!

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:
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

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: shepherdscenar-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.

DEC 13-15

Capital Art & Craft Festival. 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

ENTERTAINMENT



Saxophonist Lil' Maceo will be featured in "It's a Jazzy Christmas!" on Dec. 21, 2024 at the McLean Community Center.



The Light Up McLean: Holiday House Decorating Contest runs Dec. 23, 2024 to January 5, 2025.

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

Breakfast With Santa. 9:30 a.m. to 11 a.m. At Vienna Volunteer Fire Department, 400 Center Street S, Vienna. Tickets \$10. Children 3 and under are free. Includes pancakes, sausage, bacon, juice coffee. Meet Santa. Visit www.vvfd.org.

SATURDAY/DEC. 14

Milk and Cookies with Santa. 10 a.m.-Noon. At McLean Community Center, 1234 Ingleside Ave., McLean. Meet and greet Santa and other holiday characters and enjoy cookie decorating and snowy crafts. Milk and hot chocolate will be served by an adult. All children participating must register. Note: Parental supervision is required for children ages 16 years and younger.

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

Mystery Lovers Unite. 1-3 p.m. At Reston Regional Library, 11925 Bowman Towne Drive, Reston. Some 22 crime writers from the Chesapeake Chapter of Sisters in Crime talk about their new books

and short stories published this year. Come hear about the new tales by Donna Andrews, Paul Awad, Kathleen Bailey, Kathryn Prater Bomey, Maya Corrigan, John DeDakis, Ginny Fite, Barb Goffman, Jeffrey James Higgins, Eleanor Cawood Jones, Libby Klein, Tara Laskowski, Con Lehane, Adam Meyer, Tom Milani, Kathryn O'Sullivan, Josh Pachter, Frances Schoonmaker, Shannon Taft, Art Taylor, Heather Weidner, and Stacy Woodson. Books will be available for purchase and signing. Visit Mystery Authors Extravaganza 2024 - Fairfax Library Calendar - Library Home (fairfaxcounty.gov)

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.

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!

- ❖ 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).

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 clas-

sic 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

- ❖ "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.

DEC. 14-15

The Nutcracker. 3 p.m. At Centreville High School, 6001 Union Mill Road, Clifton. Presented by Mia Saunders Ballet. This production is more than a performance—it's part of MSB's Season of Giving. All proceeds from the event will support the Centreville High School Drama Boosters' scholarship fund and the nonprofit CaringBridge, which connects families and caregivers with vital resources during health challenges. Tickets: \$12 are available online at www.MiaSaundersBallet.com

com or at the door.

SUNDAY/DEC. 15

"E'Chaim II: A Tribute to the Jewish Legacy of Broadway (and Christmas)". 2 p.m. At the McLean Community Center, 1234 Ingleside Ave., McLean. "E'Chaim" for Christmas!? Who do you think wrote all the best Christmas songs? Four Broadway singers return to The Alden for the sequel to their wildly popular "E'Chaim" performance last year. More than just stellar voices singing the best of Broadway's Jewish composers (everyone but Cole Porter), "E'Chaim II" traces the history of musical theater with the parallel history of Jewish Americans. But mostly, it's great music sung by great singers.

SUNDAY/DEC. 15

Burke Historical Society Meeting. 3-4:30 p.m. At Pohick Regional Library, 6450 Sydenstricker Road, Burke. Explore the rich history of Occoquan, Virginia at the December 15 meeting. The speaker will be Mayor Earnest Porta who has written a number of pieces on the history of this community to our south.

SUNDAY/DEC. 15

Gingerbread House Workshop. 11:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. At Davio's Northern Italian Steakhouse, 1902 Reston Metro Plaza, Reston. Children are invited to participate in a one-of-a-kind workshop with Davio's own pastry chef Chris Works who will lead the demonstration and workshop, teaching children how to decorate personalized gingerbread houses fit for the

North Pole! The event is \$55 per child (excluding tax and gratuity) and adult admission is free. Each participating child will receive one gingerbread house to decorate (with decorations included), hot chocolate and lunch. Visit: <https://davios.com/reston/events/childrens-gingerbread-house-workshop>

SUNDAY/DEC. 15

Holiday Charcuterie Building Workshop. 11:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. or 2:30-4:30 p.m. At The Winery at Bull Run, Centreville. Join private instructor and owner of The Grazing Board, Naomi, as you sip on delicious mimosas and wines while learning to craft a beautiful charcuterie display just in time for your holiday entertaining!

SUNDAY/DEC. 15

Free Holiday Concert. 4-5 p.m. At St. Paul's Episcopal Church, 3439 Payne Street, Falls Church. NoVA Lights Chorale, a mixed chorus based in Northern Virginia, will present a free concert. Ring in the Holidays with music from all over the world, plus many traditional favorites and a special singalong. Visit <https://novalightschorale.org>.

MONDAY/DEC. 16

Legislative Town Hall. 6:30-8 p.m. At McLean Community Center, 1234 Ingleside Ave., McLean. State Senator Jennifer B. Boysko and Delegate Rip Sullivan will host a Town Hall to provide constituents with updates on legislative accomplishments, initiatives from the past year, and the upcoming

SEE ENTERTAINMENT, PAGE 19

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Legals

PUBLIC NOTICE
AT&T proposes to modify their existing facility (new tip heights 78.7', 82', & 82.1) on the (building at 3407 Moray Ln, Falls Church, VA (20240780). Interested parties may contact Scott Horn (856-809-1202) (1012 Industrial Dr., West Berlin, NJ 08091) with comments regarding potential effects on historic properties.

An expert is someone who knows some of the worst mistakes that can be made in his subject and how to avoid them.
-Werner Heisenberg

Employment

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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

Free digital edition delivered to your email box. Go to connectionnewspapers.com/subscribe

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ENTERTAINMENT

FROM PAGE 17

legislative session. The event is open to the public. Constituents are encouraged to attend and participate. Question and answer period will follow the update by legislators.

TUESDAY/DEC. 17

“Join or Die” Film Screening. 6:30-9:15 p.m. At Pozez JCC Chaiken Auditorium, 8900 Little River Turnpike, Fairfax. Join in an inspiring evening of thought-provoking cinema and an engaging Q&A panel. With insights from leaders like Hillary Clinton, Pete Buttigieg, and many others, the film explores why our democracy is in crisis and how we can fix it together. Panelists include: Congressman Jamie Raskin (D-MD) Jennifer Rubin, Washington Post Opinion Columnist Alexandra Tureau Meyer, GatherDC Managing Director Jeff Dannick, Executive Director, Pozez JCC

WEDNESDAY/DEC. 18

Senior Movie Day, “The Fabulous Four.” 10 a.m. Movie Theater at Reston Town Center, Reston. Sponsored by the Reston Association. Coffee, donuts and OJ are provided and door prizes are distributed prior to the movie. Free for 55-plus; registration is not required. Just show up.

WEDNESDAY/DEC. 18

“Tokyo Godfathers.” 6:30 p.m. At the McLean Community Center, 1234 Ingleside Ave., McLean.

Shown in Japanese with English subtitles. In modern-day Tokyo, three homeless people’s lives are changed forever when they discover a baby girl at a garbage dump on Christmas Eve. As the New Year fast approaches, these three forgotten members of society band together to solve the mystery of the abandoned child and the fate of her parents. A heartbreaking, hilarious and highly original adult anime for the holidays. Rated PG-13; 92 minutes.

THURSDAY/DEC. 19

Matthew Bourne’s “Nutcracker!” 1 p.m. At the McLean Community Center, 1234 Ingleside Ave., McLean. Matthew Bourne’s delicious “Nutcracker!” is like no other, adored by critics and audiences alike. With family-sized helpings of Bourne’s trademark wit, pathos and magical fantasy, this filmed stage production is a scrumptious treat, influenced by the lavish Hollywood musicals of the 1930s. Not Rated; 87 minutes.

FRIDAY/DEC. 20

American Red Cross Blood Drive. 9 a.m.-3 p.m. At the McLean Community Center, 1234 Ingleside Ave., McLean. McLean Community Center is helping the American Red Cross with diverse blood donations! It is urgent for donors of all ethnicities to support patients in need. Join us and support the community with your lifesaving blood donation. Please call 1-800-RED CROSS (1-800-733-2767) or



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

visit RedCrossBlood.org and enter: “McLeanCC” to schedule an appointment.

SATURDAY/DEC. 21

“It’s a Jazzy Christmas!” 7 p.m. At the McLean Community Center, 1234 Ingleside Ave., McLean. “Spectacular.” “Amazing.” “Even better than expected.” With comments like this about last year’s “Jazzy Christmas,” not bringing it back would be like finding a lump of coal in your stocking. Saxophonist Lil’ Maceo, gospel violinist Eric Taylor and the rest of the gang join the stellar house band for an evening that will hit your holidays out of the park.

LIGHT UP MCLEAN:

HOLIDAY HOUSE

DECORATING CONTEST.

Contest Voting Runs Dec. 23, 2024-Jan. 5, 2025. The Light Up McLean Holiday Decorating Competition gives residents an opportunity to show off their homes in all their holiday splendor. Sign up to participate and then have friends and family vote for the best house in three categories:

Best Overall: An exceptionally attractive, unique and complete design that utilizes space and resources well.

Most Creative/Original: An exceptional use of creative ideas and lots of originality is evident in the design.

Best Holiday Theme: Utilizes eye-catching decorations that clearly communicate a fully conceptualized theme.

For more detailed information and to vote, visit oldfirehouse.org.

JAN. 24-26

Jurassic Quest. At Dulles Expo Center, 4320 Chantilly Shopping Center, Chantilly. Hours: Friday, Jan 24: Noon-6 p.m.; Saturday, Jan 25: 9 a.m.-6 p.m.; and Sunday, Jan 26: 9 a.m.-5 p.m. Jurassic Quest provides unforgettable adventure, transporting families through 165 million years of the Triassic, Jurassic and Cretaceous periods to roam among true-to-life versions of the creatures that once ruled the Earth. Loved by millions, Jurassic Quest is filled with the most hands-on activities, educational and fun event for families of all ages.

Open “Saysawho?”



By KENNETH B. LOURIE

Everybody, it seems, but not me. My name is not Damian Clark - from Humana. Nor is my name Cham - from eHEALTH.COM. Nor is it any number/variety of spokespersons representing any number/variety of insuring entities: “Medicare Advantage Partners,” “Reliance,” “Aetna,” “United Healthcare,” (Humana, eHEALTH) attempting to get my Medicare Advantage/“Open Season”/“Annual Enrollment” period (Oct. 15 - Dec. 7) dollars. That joyous occasion which precedes Christmas every year and can potentially bring all of us “additional benefits and cost savings” will soon be over. Not to mention peace of mind that we’re paying the least amount of dollars for the maximum amount of health insurance. Then, if the proper decisions have been made, we can live out our Medicare-covered years in relative insurance-coverage calm. And if the advertisements are any indication, as well as my own 20 years’ experience selling insurance, there are plenty of dollars being misspent and families being unnecessarily burdened by higher-than-necessary premiums and below average coverage. But thankfully, for any of you regular readers who watch as much television as I do - and who have been besieged by the repeated attempts to grab our Medicare-related dollars - and sense, the “Season” is coming to an end. By the time this column publishes (Dec. 11, 2024) your televisions will be returning to their regular advertising and nary a Medicare ad will be seen or heard. Now if that’s not a recipe for a merry Christmas than I don’t know what is? Because I must admit, I’ve just about reached my limit. I’m not exactly Robert Di Niro shooting the television in “Taxi Driver,” but I’m certainly swearing at it a lot.

In all sincerity, I feel sorry for all the seniors who don’t have the insurance and/or finance background that I have. This Medicare insurance business is like a minefield. One wrong step and your finances for the year you incur the cost (or however long it takes to pay off your unexpected medical/hospital expenses) could blow up your bank account and sever any hopes one has for a manageable retirement, money wise. I’ve made all these calls - years ago for my parents. Daunting doesn’t begin to explain my experience. If the language/jargon isn’t confusing enough, and the arithmetic isn’t overwhelming, the long waits over the phone may be the tipping point. I learned my lesson though. Before I would call, I would make sure I visited the bathroom and then got myself something to eat and drink as I waited. And maybe even sat in front of the television to occupy my time while did I wait. Because the last thing the recorded message advises over the phone is about that damn queue: your place in this hypothetical line of callers who called before you. If you decide to hang up, you lose your place in the queue. And if you thought waiting once was tedious, waiting twice as long or multiple times because you were ill-prepared/impatient for the ordeal is exponentially worse. Your patience can only endure so much. Very important, before you call one of these entities, clear your schedule. If you have another commitment, cancel it. Nothing is more important than resolving this Medicare insurance business. If you plan your wait, the process of waiting - or waiting for a call back, which takes just as long with no guarantee of a future contact (the system isn’t perfect) can be tolerable. However, if you don’t plan accordingly, you may suffer accordingly. Been there. Done that. Don’t want to do it again.

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

Budget Forecast Not Looking Good

FROM PAGE 5

by only \$127.9 million, and nonresidential property values are expected to fall by 1.3 percent.

That marks two consecutive years of declines driven by high office vacancies and rising operational costs.

Last year’s FY 2025 fiscal forecast noted a shortfall, too, slightly less, at \$284.5 million. The county addressed it by making changes to its income and spending, like raising the real estate tax rate by 3 cents, seeing an improved real estate projection, bringing back the personal property tax assessment ratio to 100 percent, getting greater investment income, lowering school compensation changes from 6 percent to 4 percent, adjusting county compensation with a 2 percent cost of living increase instead of 4 percent; a 10 percent market rate increase, and some minor adjustments.

The forecast included early estimates of available revenues based on current information and projections on existing tax rates. The most significant disbursement requirements included collective bargaining agreements, investments in employee salaries and benefits, and debt service requirements. The plan did not include additional investments in affordable housing and an increase in WMATA contributions.

Real estate projections show a steady demand, with an estimated 4.78 percent increase in residential assessments in FY 2026 as of November 2024, and a 0.51 percent increase in new construction.

School’s projected revenue is \$30.4 million, which includes \$23.7 million from the state and \$6.7 million from Fairfax City and other sources. However, with county revenues estimated to increase by \$127.9 million, there is a combined net projected budgetary shortfall of \$292.7 million.

Schools’ projected change from the FY 2025 approved budget is \$305.7 million. Implementing Virginia’s Joint Legislative Audit and Review Commission in full could provide an additional \$568.7 million from possible FY 2025 revenue sources. This unlikely event would result in an additional \$3,100 for each Fairfax County Public School student or local funding of over \$1,300 on the average real estate tax bill.

County agencies submitted reduction options totaling 10 percent of their budgets. The county is reviewing them and expects them to include program and service impacts, resulting in estimated reductions of \$33 million.

On Jan. 23, 2025, the FCPS Superintendent will present the FY 2026 Proposed Budget, and on Feb. 18, 2025, the

County Executive releases the FY 2026 Advertised Budget.

“It was disappointing that the blame for rising taxes was placed squarely on underfunding from Richmond rather than the 50 percent growth in our own budget over the last ten years,” posted Pat Herry (R-Springfield). “County officials have been complaining about [state] underfunding of schools since my Dad was in office and it is nothing new,” Herry wrote.

In 2026, the Board of Supervisors plans to consider a meals tax on food and drinks prepared at restaurants and grocery stores, which could range from 1 percent to 6 percent. The Senate Committee on Finance and Appropriations put the casino controversy on hold for SB 675 during the last legislative session, but that could resurface in 2026.

Revenue from either or both could generate much-needed funds for Fairfax County, as could the data center demand marching across Northern Virginia.

In 2022, tax revenue in Loudoun County from data centers totaled \$663 million. Fairfax, with a fraction of Loudoun’s data centers, collected \$20.28 million in data center revenue in 2022, according to FOIA request by DC News Now,

Higher property taxes could also add revenue, as would cuts in county spending.



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JD and ED Sold More Homes Last Year in 22101 Than Any Other Agent!

Per MLS

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Offered for...\$1,699,000

5850 Aspen Wood Ct, McLean

****Fabulous Opportunity**** to own a classic brick colonial in sought-after Chain Bridge Woods nestled on a beautiful .45 acre lot off a quiet cul-de-sac street! This wonderful 5BR/3.5BA home is ready for your updating/renovations. Featuring over 4300 sq ft with hardwood floors on main and upper levels. The main level includes a formal living and dining room; kitchen with breakfast room; large family room with fireplace and walk-out to back deck. The upper level offers a primary bedroom and bath with 3 additional BR's. Basement includes rec room, add'l BR and bath. 2-car garage. **Chesterbrook, Longfellow, McLean Schools!**

SOLD!



Offered for...\$1,699,000

1448 Highwood Drive, McLean

Discover this stunning classic 4BR/3.5 colonial home located in the highly coveted Chesterbrook Woods neighborhood. Nestled on a corner lot, this residence offers 3250 sq ft of beautifully finished living space on 3 levels. The main level features gleaming hardwood floors; formal dining room; living room w/ fireplace and walkout to deck; gourmet kitchen w/ breakfast bar and ss appliances; large family room w/ brick woodburning fireplace. Upstairs is the primary en suite with 3 additional BR's and hall bath. LL offers a spacious rec room; office; full-size bath; laundry room. Private level backyard! **Chesterbrook, Longfellow, McLean Schools!**

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FOR SALE!



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

6239 Kellogg Drive, McLean

GORGEOUS 5BR/3.5BA colonial home on 3 finished levels in sought-after Potomac Hills community! This welcoming home has a updated gourmet kitchen, dining area with bar area, and spacious living room with fireplace and walkout to back patio. Add'l walk-out to a covered private patio with skylights and ceiling fan from the dining room. The third level offers an updated private ensuite with a beautiful bath. There are 3 add'l BR's on this level with a hall bath. The first level features a family room or bedroom with a fireplace and updated bathroom. Private backyard w/ patio/decks. **Chesterbrook, Longfellow, McLean Schools!**

SOLD!



2049 Rockingham Street
McLean, 22101
\$4,350,000

Under Contract!



1940 Foxhall Road
McLean, VA 22101
\$1,474,900

SOLD!



311 Wrens Way
Falls Church City, 22046
\$1,080,000

SOLD!



6813 Tennyson Drive
McLean, 22101
\$2,550,000

SOLD!



1409 Layman Street
McLean, 22101
\$1,600,000

SOLD!



2910 Cleave Drive
Falls Church, 22042
\$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!