

CONNECTION

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Raim Kim, Grade 4, Mantua Elementary School, Fairfax, Va.,
Davide Lorenzi, Art Teacher



Children's & Teens'
Connection 2024

Planners Eye Aging Section of Franconia

Residential and affordable housing dominate plans discussed.

PHOTO BY FAIRFAX COUNTY

BY MIKE SALMON
THE CONNECTION

Change has been slow to come in Franconia but it's picked up speed lately, with the Franconia Triangle Study, which is focused on a triangle of land bordered by Franconia Road, Beulah Street and Grovedale Drive.

Currently there are gas stations, small houses, a church, and a government building that houses the Franconia District Supervisor's office and the district police station, and the Franconia Museum. Next summer, Supervisor Rodney Lusk (D-Franconia) is moving to a new government building that's under construction about two miles away. The current aging building is being eyed for 120 affordable apartments.

Other additions for the Franconia Triangle include 63 townhouses, 30 multi-family units and retail sites facing Franconia Road.

This was all laid out at a community meeting Tuesday, Dec. 10

at a community meeting in the John R. Lewis High School cafeteria, where residents gathered to hear the plan. It was also available via Zoom. Katrina Newton of the Fairfax County Department of Planning and Development fielded questions from the audience along with Supervisor Lusk.

This meeting is following the initial consideration from April 11, 2023, when the Board of Supervisors authorized the consideration of a Plan amendment for Recommendation Area #3 of the S-9 Beulah Community Planning Sector, the county website said.

Currently, this triangle of land supports many community services that are needed in a well-rounded residential area. That includes restaurants, dry cleaning, veterinarian services, childcare, fire station and more. Some of these services will be included in the new configuration, but some will not and will require traveling outside this



immediate area.

According to Supervisor Lusk the area will need wider sidewalks along Franconia Road followed by intersection improvements at

Beulah Drive.

The next step for this plan is with the Board of Supervisors where they will look at the plan language. There are many more steps after

that before it is implemented.

For more information, look under Plan Amendment SSPA 2023-IV-2S on the county planning website.



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CHILDREN'S AND TEENS' CONNECTION 2024

The art and writing of local students is always a bright spot. We offer many thanks to the art teachers who guided these artists and compiled the art to appear here, and the English and Creative Writing teachers who inspired their students to write poetry, essays and short stories.

We heard from students who have partic-

ipated in this edition for many years, and from teachers who also have compiled their students' art over the years, and in some cases from different schools and even school systems. We have homeschool families who have also made the Children's & Teens Connection or Gazette an annual tradition.

Take some time to browse this edition, it

is full of gems.

You can find the other Children's and Teens' editions by going to <http://www.connectionnewspapers.com/PDFs/> and then scrolling down to Children's. Thanks for reading.

Now the Connection will be on a break until after the New Year, with the exact week

we'll be back to be determined by ad revenue and other factors, but likely Jan. 8 or 15.

In the meantime contact us, for advertising, contact debfunk@@connectionnewspapers.com or sales@connectionnewspapers.com. For content, contact me mkimm@connectionnewspapers.com.

Merry Christmas

“Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.”

The pages of the Connection, both paper and web, have been full of holiday spirit beginning before Thanksgiving. Amazing group and individual efforts to help the needy, holiday parades, Santa arriving by boat, Santa arriving by horse-drawn carriage, Santa arriving by fire engine, Santa arriving by motorcycle, tree lightings, Menorah lightings (coming soon), stories of giving, secular celebrations, religious celebrations. Shopping locally. Giving locally. It's been a holiday extravaganza.

Christmas is about the birth of Jesus Christ. Whether you believe the Christmas story literally or in

spirit, you know it is the story of joy, hope and love, with the promise of redemption.

It is also about embracing the teachings of Jesus: to love thy neighbor as thyself; to help the needy; to feed the hungry and clothe the poor; to care for the sick; to invite and welcome strangers; to treat others as you would have them treat you.

Matthew 7:12:

“So in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you, for this sums up the Law and the Prophets.”

Matthew 25:35-40:

“For I was hungry and you gave

me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.”

“Then the righteous will answer him, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?’

“Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.”

HERE IS the verse relating the birth of Jesus from the Bible, Luke 2: 4-19:

“And Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judaea, unto the city of David, which is called Bethlehem; (because he was of the house and lineage of David). To be taxed with Mary his espoused wife, being great with child. And so it was, that, while they were there, the days were accomplished that she should be delivered. And she brought forth her firstborn son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger; because there was no room for them in the inn.

“And there were in the same country, shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. And, lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them: and they were sore afraid. And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people.

“For unto you is born this day in

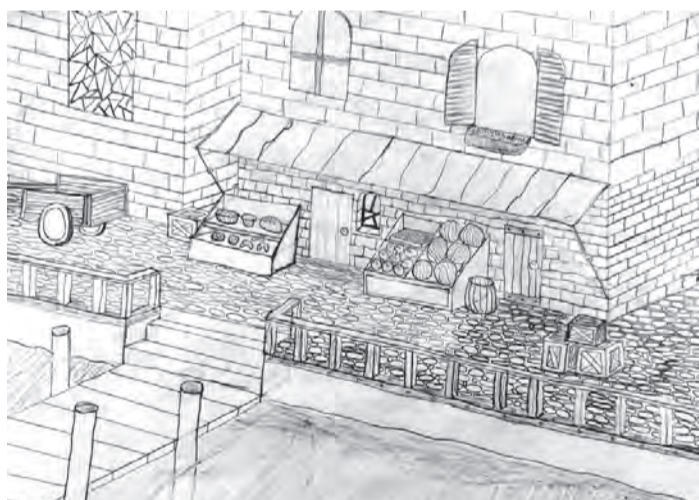
the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord. And this shall be a sign unto you; Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger.

“And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men.

“And it came to pass, as the angels were gone away from them into heaven, the shepherds said one to another, ‘Let us now go even unto Bethlehem, and see this thing which is come to pass, which the Lord hath made known unto us.’ And they came with haste, and found Mary, and Joseph, and the babe lying in a manger. And when they had seen it, they made known abroad the saying which was told them concerning this child. And all they that heard it wondered at those things which were told them by the shepherds.”

Merry Christmas to you.
And Happy Holidays.

— MARY KIMM
MKIMM@CONNECTIONNEWSPAPERS.COM



Drawing is by Ian Long grade 6



The bear is by Selag Yoon grade 6

Wakefield Forest Elementary School

JULIA D. LOPRESTI,
FULL TIME ART TEACHER
FOR GRADES K-6.

Henry Hutton,
6, Grade 1,
Alexandria,
Green Hills,
Digital Art |
Lane
Elementary ,
Alexandria, VA



Lane Elementary School

XENA MORALES,
ART TEACHER

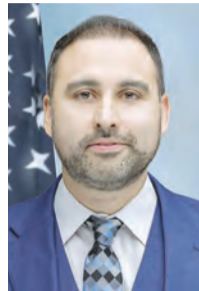
Cassie Thursavain, 11,
Grade 6,
Springfield,
Bamboo
Garden, Digital
Art, Newington
Forest
Elementary,
Springfield, VA



Controversy Erupts over Fairfax City Manager's Firing

Deputy city manager and police chief leaving in January.

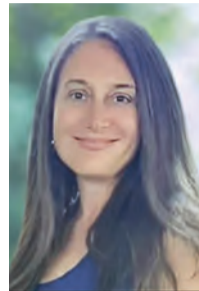
BY BONNIE HOBBS
THE CONNECTION



Laszlo Palko



Catherine Read



Stacy Hall

Two top administrators in Fairfax City's government are leaving, and the chief of police is retiring. Deputy City Manager Valmarie Turner is heading for a more prestigious job in Roanoke, Police Chief Erin Schaible had already planned to retire (see sidebar) – and City Manager Laszlo Palko was fired.

Palko's termination set off a firestorm of questions and controversy among residents not knowing why he was let go after just seven months on the job. But since it's a personnel matter and was discussed in a closed session of City Council, neither the councilmembers nor the mayor are legally allowed to talk about it in public or to reveal the reason or reasons behind his firing.

They took that action last Tuesday, Dec. 10, by a vote of 4-2, following that night's Council meeting. Councilmembers Billy Bates, So Lim, Tom Ross and Jon Stehle voted yes. (Bates was recently reelected; the other three chose not to run for reelection). Kate Doyle Feingold and Jeff Greenfield – who both recently lost their bids for reelection – were the two “no” votes.

Palko was officially terminated “without cause” via the “convenience” clause in his contract, meaning that an employee may be let go when he or she is seemingly no longer a good fit for the job. Fairfax Mayor Catherine Read later explained it by simply saying, “The City Manager serves at the pleasure of the Council.”

But it's definitely not the norm for Fairfax City to fire its City Managers. In fact, it's just the opposite. According to former Mayor David Meyer, who was an eight-year Councilmember, “Since the City's inception in 1961, we have had generally longer-tenured City Managers. No previous City Manager has been terminated.”

“I note that, in some jurisdictions in some parts of the United States, relieving the top executive does occur more frequently, and this can be an occupational risk in the career field of senior public administrators,” added Meyer. “However, until now, this has not been the circumstance with the City of Fairfax.”

Indeed, Bob Sisson was Fairfax's city manager for 27 years – more than a quarter century. And following Sisson, Rob Stalzer held the post for five years, retiring in March of this year, after a 43-year career in public service. Palko began his stint the next month, serving for nearly eight months.

During the two general-comment periods that were part of last week's Council meeting, two people spoke about Palko's potential firing. One of them, Susan Kuiler, ran unsuccessfully for mayor against Read in November. The other, Stacy Hall – who supported Kuiler during her campaign – won her election to Council.

Kuiler said she'd heard a rumor that the mayor was going to fire Palko and had the votes to do it. If true, she said, “This is despicable, dishonorable and unsportsmanlike. Such a decision should have been deferred to the new Council.”

Hall agreed. “I'm speaking as an incoming councilwoman and on behalf of my colleagues [on the Council

cil taking office in January 2025] Rachel McQuillen, Anthony Amos and Tom Peterson,” she said. “We understand a closed session will soon be held to discuss personnel matters. We believe significant decisions about personnel changes should not be made by an outgoing Council.”

But since the new Council hasn't yet taken office, it doesn't have all the facts about why this action was taken. Indeed, later on, in response to Hall's comments, Read said, “We can't discuss a personnel matter outside of closed session. And right now, the [incoming Council members] are just private citizens.”

Kelly O'Brien, City resident and former planner with Fairfax City, regularly informs her fellow residents about their local government happenings, including its Planning Commission and Council meetings. She does so via her “Fairfax 411” Facebook page; and on Wednesday, Dec. 11 – the day after the meeting – she posted the following:

“Last night, the Fairfax City Council voted to terminate the contract of City Manager Laszlo Palko without cause. While this decision may feel abrupt, I believe it reflects the Council's responsibility to address leadership concerns for the betterment of our community. It's important to clarify a few points:

*The current Council has the authority to make this decision, as they are still in office until the new Council is sworn in.

❖ The incoming Council will have the opportunity to hire a new City Manager and shape the City's future direction.

❖ Personnel decisions like this often involve confidential matters that we, as the public, are not privy to. Speculating about the reasons without complete information is unfair to all parties involved.

“Personally, I am glad the Council took action. I had concerns about Mr. Palko's leadership and was dissatisfied with my interactions with him. While change can feel unsettling, I see this as a necessary step to right the ship and ensure our City is on a stronger path forward.

“For now, Deputy City Manager Valmarie Turner will serve as Interim City Manager until her departure in January. The incoming Council will be tasked with selecting a new leader to guide us into the future. Change is never easy, but I trust it is the right decision for Fairfax City.”

THE RESPONSES to her post were both pro and con. For example, Jennifer Gear wrote, “What horrible timing to such a decision. Also, a bad look and unprofessional for the City [not] only to fire somebody during the holiday time but also to do it disregarding what the incoming City Council wanted, which was to defer the decision.”

However, Evie Ifantides wrote, “Good idea for the new Council to start fresh hiring a manager and a

Fairfax City Police Chief Schaible Retiring

Valmarie Turner to become Roanoke's City Manager.

BY BONNIE HOBBS
THE CONNECTION

After nearly five years as Fairfax City's Police Chief, Erin Schaible is retiring. And Fairfax's Deputy City Manager Valmarie Turner will be heading to Roanoke to become its new City Manager.

children, said, “I look forward to spending time with my family.”

Fairfax Mayor Catherine Read said the City has not yet started a search for her replacement.

Turner

Valmarie Turner was Fairfax City's first-ever Deputy City Manager, and she brought almost three decades of local government experience to the job. She began her new position in October 2023 and worked directly with then City Manager

Rob Stalzer on a variety of tasks critical to the smooth and efficient operation of the City.

Turner formerly worked for Loudoun County, where she was the assistant county administrator since 2017. She also served as Loudoun's acting director of Finance and Procurement. On Dec. 2, Roanoke's City Council unanimously approved Turner's employment agreement and appointed her as City Manager. She'll start her new job there in mid-January.

According to The Roanoke Tribune, Mayor Sherman Lea said Roanoke had “a strong pool of qualified applicants and Ms. Turner rose to the top. I'm confident she'll work well with the new Mayor and Council to further improve the quality of life in Roanoke.”

In that story, Turner said she was looking forward to “working with City staff and City Council to implement its vision for the City of Roanoke. I'm excited about this opportunity to serve the residents of Roanoke and appreciate the confidence that City Council has shown in me.”

“We're excited to welcome Val Turner to the City of Roanoke,” added Councilmember Trish White-Boyd. “Her demeanor and experience impressed Council with many

Schaible

Although Schaible announced her retirement the same day as Fairfax's former City Manager Laszlo Palko's termination became public, Schaible said it was purely a coincidence. She also stressed how pleased she was to have served as the City's chief of police.

Schaible came to the City with 28 years' experience as a police officer in Fairfax County, retiring as a lieutenant colonel in December 2019. A few months later, in February 2019, she began her job as Fairfax City's new police chief – the first woman in the City's history to hold that position.

“Since becoming Chief of Police, I have been honored

to lead a dedicated and talented department that strives to serve the citizens and business owners of the City of Fairfax with professionalism and compassion,” she said.

“During my tenure, we were able to expand our K-9 program, expand our bike team, establish a cadet program to help with recruiting and retention, become a part of a regional drone program, create a community response team for people experiencing crisis, and add three full-time positions to the department.”

Furthermore, she added, “Serving as Chief of Police for the City of Fairfax has been a privilege, and I will sincerely miss the members of this department and the City of Fairfax community. My final day in the office is Jan 3.” Schaible, who has a husband and four



Erin Schaible



Valmarie Turner

SEE RETIRING, PAGE 7

SEE CONTROVERSY, PAGE 7



Paris Baguette

Holiday treats are on display at a newly opened Paris Baguette. Euna Lee, a former software consultant with 15 years of experience in London, is making a career change to bring the popular bakery-café concept to 6811 Bland St. in Fairfax County. The new Paris Baguette location had a soft opening on Nov. 15, with a Grand Opening event slated for Dec. 14

PHOTO BY SUSAN LAUME

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TERRA CENTRE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL, BURKE Kristin Bauersfeld, Art Teacher



Elena Lin, grade 6, Burke, Identity Map, mixed media on paper | Terra Centre Elementary School, Burke, VA, Kristin Bauersfeld, art teacher, ES



Ava Franco, grade 6, Burke, Identity Map, mixed media on paper | Terra Centre Elementary School, Burke, VA, Kristin Bauersfeld, art teacher, ES



Jade Herod, grade 6, Burke, Identity Map, mixed media on paper | Terra Centre Elementary School, Burke, VA, Kristin Bauersfeld, art teacher, ES



Paloma Abosaid, grade 4, Burke, Crazy Fuzzball, colored pencil on paper | Terra Centre Elementary School, Burke, VA, Kristin Bauersfeld, art teacher, ES



Eva Lloyd, grade 6, Burke, Vivid Dream, earthenware clay and glaze | Terra Centre Elementary School, Burke, VA, Kristin Bauersfeld, art teacher, ES



Jordyn Perdue, grade 6, Burke, My Spirit, earthenware clay and glaze | Terra Centre Elementary School, Burke, VA, Kristin Bauersfeld, art teacher, ES



Wiley Nicolls, grade 5, Burke, Contour Line Self Portrait, ink on paper, | Terra Centre Elementary School, Burke, VA, Kristin Bauersfeld, art teacher, ES



Porcelain Vase by Nora Yuan



Zentangle Hill by Emma Yuan



Katherine Johnson Portrait by Nora Yuan

MOSAIC ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Emma Yuan, 11 years old, 6th grade, City of Fairfax, Mosaic Elementary School, Mrs. Cho, Art Teacher

Nora Yuan, 9 years old, 4th grade, City of Fairfax, Mosaic Elementary School, Mr. Guzman, Art Teacher



Colin Sitter, grade 5, Burke, Italian Chef, earthenware clay and glaze | Terra Centre Elementary School, Burke, VA, Kristin Bauersfeld, art teacher, ES



Breathing Fresh Air by Emma Yuan



Silent Night by Nora Yuan



Snowy Fun by Nora Yuan

Controversy Erupts over Fairfax City Manager's Firing

FROM PAGE 4

deputy [manager].”

As for Palko, himself, he gave an audio statement to The Fairfax Independent, a small newspaper that promoted the candidacies of Kuiler and the incoming Council candidates. In it, he thanked Doyle Feingold and Greenfield for “everything they’ve done for the City and for me” and said he’d “miss working with the City employees. This City is blessed with tremendous talent and dedication in its workforce.”

He further said how excited he was about the incoming Council members and thanked them for supporting him. Palko claimed that “disgraceful politics is now undermining the interests of [the City] residents.” And he also mentioned the possibility of him being reinstated by the new Councilmembers in January, since they’d have a 4-2 majority against the two Democratic-supported Councilmembers, Bates and newcomer Stacey Hardy-Chandler.

When asked if the new Council could rehire Palko if it so desired, Read replied, “The incoming Council members will have the opportunity to choose who they feel will best serve the City.”

City Councils don’t often arbitrarily terminate people. So it’s likely that there’s more to Palko’s firing than the current Council is able to state publicly because it is a personnel matter. Additionally, people with deeper knowledge of his termination have confirmed that politics had nothing to do with it.

If Palko does apply again to become Fairfax’s City Manager, at that time, the new Council will learn the full picture behind his dismissal. Although, even then, that will still remain privileged information since it regards a personnel matter. And just because the residents at large won’t know the reason why he was fired doesn’t mean there wasn’t one.

Meanwhile, a City employee agreed to talk to The Connection about this situation, provided that person’s identity was not revealed. Here are that employee’s comments:

“With only a few months under his belt, Palko never had the opportunity to complete a budget cycle or see project implementation through. While it is impossible to know where restructuring and changes to operations would have gone, things did shift towards committees and data analytics.

“Given such a narrow timeframe, it is hard to infer what his management style was leading to. Ideally, there would have been a greater effort in the past

seven months to work with staff to resolve many of the challenges the City faces, and greater emphasis on moving forward with the strategic plan.

“Municipal employees should stay clear of local politics; we work with everyone and for the residents. Our mission is to consider the long-term delivery of services based on sound financial decisions, to ensure safety, and to be stewards of the City’s resources.

“Despite the situation – which was surprising to staff, and we still do not understand the details – residents and businesses should know that there are women and men dedicated to serving this community, and that their dedication will not be deterred. We are a part of the community, and we are proud of our community.

“Streets will be plowed, trash will be collected, and firefighters and police will keep the community safe. The statements we have recently seen following the City Council action speak of a divisiveness that cannot exist in administration.”

November’s mayoral and Council elections were contentious, as well, and involved a slate of so-called “independent” candidates including Kuiler, Hall, Amos, Peterson and McQuillen aligning themselves against Read and her fellow Democratic candidates. Given that, plus the added animosity generated by Palko’s firing, one might expect the working relationship between Read and the new Council members to be tense and uneasy, at best, once they take office in January. But, said Read, “I have to believe we’ll find our way together as a group.”

Police Chief Schaible Retiring

FROM PAGE 4

issues facing the City such as economic development, affordable housing and homelessness. She has an excellent reputation as a leader, a team builder and someone who builds collaborative relationships with stakeholders in the community. We’re certain Val will be an asset to the Roanoke Valley.”

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HOLIDAYS

PHOTOS BY BONNIE HOBBS/THE CONNECTION



PHOTO COURTESY OF KELLY O'BRIEN

Flanking modern-day Santa Claus (Mike Davis) are Victorian Mrs. Claus and Santa (Brenda and David Born).



Thierry Noumessi has fun watching his son Lior, 2-1/2, decorate a cookie.



Melany Hearin poses with her daughter Valentina, 2 (on right) and friend Maya McGrew, 3.

Celebrating with Santa and a Holiday Market

Children enjoyed eating cookies, making Christmas crafts and taking photos with Santa, last Saturday, Dec. 14, in Fairfax City's Old Town Hall. Meanwhile, outside, visitors enjoyed live entertainment and vendors during week two of the Holiday Market.



Enjoying the cookie party are Skylar Schaya, 20 months, and parents Joe and Elyse.



Otto Ballenger, 4, proudly holds the Christmas decoration he made.



The Morgan Legacy Academy of Irish Dance performs at Old Town Square.



Coloring are (from left) Arjun Talati, Rishik Methwani, Prisha Talati, and Luca and Leo Huang. Looking on are Vijay and Priti Methwani (Rishik's parents), holding their children Ivaan and Sharvil.



Vendor Sarah Ellis of Woolen Waves sells colorful, handmade socks and more.



Caron Learneded of Art by Caron offering her handmade, mosaic-tile art.



Sherry Keagy of Pup My Style offers dog accessories, including these scarves.

CHILDREN'S CONNECTION

Orange Hunt Elementary School

WRITING

The Christmas Adventure
By Luke Hoenle
Age 11
Sixth Grade
Orange Hunt Elementary School
Teacher: Brenda Patrick

The Christmas Adventure
By: LUKE HOENLE

Once, there were three gingerbread brothers named Fred, Bob, and Frank. Bob and his brother Fred, stepped outside of their house one day and were going to play tag. "It is unusually warm outside," said Bob. "I agree," said Fred. Then, they heard the soft sound of panting just behind them. Bob and Fred slowly turned around, and what they saw sent them sprinting in opposite directions. "A wolf!" screamed Fred. Bob ran to the right and the wolf was on his heels. Bob ran as fast as his little cookie legs could take him. Then, when Bob was at the point where he thought all hope was lost, he found a ditch right under a tree that he was just small enough to fit in. Bob dove into the ditch and the wolf tried to stop, but was sent skittering across the dirt sending a spray of it everywhere. The wolf tracked back his footsteps to where Bob was, and tried to paw him out. Bob could see the slobber dripping from its razor-sharp teeth. After what felt like an eternity (but was really just five minutes), the wolf finally gave up. He wandered in the direction Fred went. Bob snuck out of the ditch and, with the cover of the trees, snuck past the wolf in Fred's direction. When Bob reached Fred's location, they reunited with a hug.

Then, Bob pushed Fred away and told him that the wolf was coming in his direction. Fred's eyebrows knitted with concern. "Follow me," said Fred. They started their trek through the woods and stopped at a tree that looked pretty normal to Bob. Then, when he looked closer, he saw an odd-looking dent in the tree a little ways up. Bob followed his older brother up the tree towards the dent. When they reached it, Fred knocked three times against the tree and the dent appeared to be a door, which opened to a secret room inside the tree. Fred knocked on the door three times and it closed shut. "This should be a good enough hiding spot to get away from that wolf," said Fred. Bob nodded in agreement and looked around the room. He couldn't believe his eyes! It had all of the special things that Fred had stolen from him and his little brother, Frank! "So this is where you put all of the stuff you stole from me and Frank," said

Bob. "Hey, if you're going to act like this then I can just kick you out," said Fred. I saved your life by the way," Fred added. "I'd like to see you try to kick me out!" Bob said. And with that, Fred walked over to the wall, knocked on it three times, and pushed Bob out into the cold. "Good-bye," said Fred, as he knocked on the tree three times and the door slid shut. He heard a latch lock as Fred locked Bob out.

Bob was filled with a mix of anger and worry. He began to descend to the bottom of the tree. There, he quietly wandered alone in the woods. After ten minutes, Bob felt like his head would explode. He kept thinking that any second now the wolf would leap out at him. Bob tried to find something that he recognized but everything looked the same. Finally, when Bob thought all hope was lost, he found an odd looking evergreen tree that was reddish. He remembered that this tree was close to a trail he had made to get to his house. Before he passed the corner, Bob sighed with relief. But when he rounded the corner, the wolf was standing in between him and his house! "Oh no!" Bob thought. He frantically searched for a spot to hide but couldn't find one. He could not think of any plan and was in the open where the wolf would easily be able to attack him. Then, the wolf lunged at him. All he could do was go with his gut. Bob slid under the wolf's legs and sprinted to his front door. He opened it and slammed it shut on the wolf and called, "I'm home!"

Christmas Disaster
By Emily Swain
Age 11
Sixth Grade Orange Hunt Elementary School
Teacher: Brenda Patrick

CHRISTMAS DISASTER
By: EMILY SWAIN

Here's a story about how I became a part of William's Christmas!

All I wanted was to be put in someone's living room, decorated, and spread joy. All of the other big Christmas trees get picked. Why not me?

As I was pondering this, a big deep blue car approached where I was growing. The door to the car opened to reveal a human. The human walked to the back of the car and pulled out something. This was my moment! I was getting picked! The human got closer and I realized it was a man. He brought the suspicious item to my trunk and pushed forward. OWWWWWWWWWW!! I fell forward after my sense of standing was destroyed.

The next thing I knew, I was being shipped off on top of a car. We slowed to a stop in front of a huge, beautiful Mansion. The man got out of the car and unhooked the ropes securing me to the top. Another man came out of the house and helped lift me inside.

"Pleasure doing business with you, Mr. Williams." The man who cut me down said to the other man- Mr.

SEE ORANGE HUNT WRITING, PAGE 10



Public Notice

Updated weight limits on Virginia bridges and culverts

In accord with state and federal law, the Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) has imposed new or changed existing weight restrictions and installed new signage indicating the updated weight restrictions on the following bridges and culverts (structures) in Virginia within the last 30 days.

Jurisdiction	Highway	Route #	Road Name	Structure	Posted Date
GRAYSON	8878	678	FOX CREEK ROAD	MIDDLE FOX CREEK	12/2/2024
GRAYSON	8755	58	HIGHLANDS PKWY	STREAM & CATTLE PASS	11/19/2024
LEE	10775	600	ROUTE 600	BLACKWATER CREEK	11/19/2024
BRUNSWICK	3662	613	GILLS BRIDGE ROAD	NOTTOWAY RIVER	11/14/2024
LEE	10759	70	ROUTE 70	POWELL RIVER	11/13/2024
BEDFORD	2798	680	MURRELLS GAP ROAD	SHEEP CREEK	11/13/2024

The list above is not a comprehensive list of all structures with weight restrictions in the Commonwealth but shows only structures that have new or changed weight restrictions within the last 30 days. The list contains only basic structure identification and location information and the date the new or changed weight restriction and signage became effective.

For a full listing of all bridge and culvert weight restrictions with detailed information about specific structures, including location data and actual weight limits, visit vdot.virginia.gov and navigate to Traffic and Travel/For freight operators/Truck restrictions. This page references a posted structures report and a GIS map tool that contain detailed information about restricted structures in Virginia. To receive email notifications regarding new or updated weight restrictions for structures statewide, complete the sign-up form on the web page.

Notices regarding bridges and culverts with new or updated weight restrictions are published monthly by VDOT. For additional information or questions, please contact haulingpermits@vdot.virginia.gov or the Load Rating Program Manager, Manjil Devkota at 804-786-4064.

The Virginia Department of Transportation is committed to ensuring that no person is excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any of its programs or activities on the basis of race, color, or national origin, as protected by Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. If you need further information on VDOT's Title VI Program or special assistance for persons with disabilities or limited English proficiency, please contact the Virginia Department of Transportation's Title VI Program Specialist at 804-786-2730 or corina.herrera@vdot.virginia.gov.

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Orange Hunt Elementary School, Springfield, VA.

Maureen Kieffer, Art Teacher
Leona Hyatt, Art Teacher



Evan Daffan, Grade 6, Springfield-Orange Hunt Elementary School



Grant McIlvaine, Grade 5, Springfield-Orange Hunt Elementary School



Lillian Cleary, Grade 3, Springfield-Orange Hunt Elementary School



Riley Welsh, Grade 2, Springfield-Orange Hunt Elementary School



Xuan Nguyen, Grade 6, Springfield-Orange Hunt Elementary School



Zohair Kazimi, Grade 6, Springfield-Orange Hunt Elementary School



Almira Ogun, Grade 3, Springfield-Orange Hunt Elementary School



Gia Villanueva, Grade 2, Springfield-Orange Hunt Elementary School



Milena Bu, Grade 1, Springfield-Orange Hunt Elementary School



Chloe Ann Senoren, Grade 1, Springfield-Orange Hunt Elementary School



Zerina Kesinovic, Grade 1, Springfield-Orange Hunt Elementary School



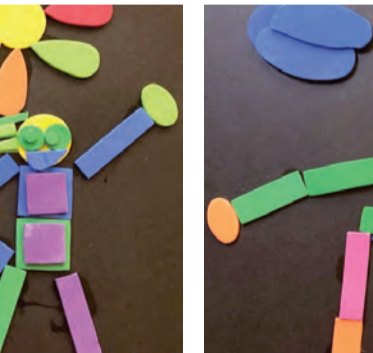
Lina Cha, Grade 4, Springfield-Orange Hunt Elementary School



Owen Ball, Grade 4, Springfield-Orange Hunt Elementary School



Ethan Senoren, Grade 1, Springfield-Orange Hunt Elementary School



Cayden Morton, Grade 1, Springfield-Orange Hunt Elementary School

Orange Hunt Elementary School WRITING

FROM PAGE 9

Williams. "Of course! See you next year?" Mr. Williams asked. "Yep." The man replied, then left in his blue car. "Honey, who's at the door- oh. The Christmas tree. It's beautiful!" said a woman coming down the stairs. I could only assume it was Mrs. Williams. "It sure is." replied Mr. Williams. "Well, I'll set it up in the living room then".

I was placed in a bucket of water in the living room. Mr. Williams wrapped a red Christmas tree skirt around my stump. He left the room to get something. An Orange cat walked by, side eyeing me. Apparently, the cat decided I was not worth its time, and walked away. Just as I was waiting patiently, three kids pushed into the room. The kids all looked about eight. "Wow. Pretty." one of the

kids said, talking about me.

"Thank you." I replied, forgetting that no one can know I can talk. The kids gasped. "Oh no. Please don't tell your parents that I can talk."

"We promise." said the only kid that was a girl.

"Thank you." I replied with gratitude.

"All right! Kids, are you ready to decorate?" Mr. Williams said, holding a big box of decorations.

"YESSSSSS!" They all yelled in

unison.

They unstuck the branches that were still intertwined, wrapped lights around me, put garland and tinsel, ornaments, and hung candy canes. I felt so special. Just then, Mrs. Williams walked in the room and started a fire in the fireplace. "That looks amazing. Keep up the good work!"

"She's a she." said the young girl.

"Now, Kate, we don't know that," Mrs. Williams said to the little girl.

"Yes, we do! She told us!" said one

Laurel Ridge Elementary School KATE PARSONS, ART TEACHER



Alicia Silva, 5, Grade K, Fairfax. House in Season Collage. Laurel Ridge ES. Ms. Parsons art teacher



Gevenieve Smith. 10. Grade 5, Fairfax, A Special Place and Haiku Collage. Laurel Ridge ES. Ms. Parsons art teacher



Eleni Shipley, 10, Grade 5, Fairfax Land Transformation, Painting, Laurel Ridge ES. Fairfax, Ms. Parsons art teacher



Miranda Steiner, 11, Grade 6, Fairfax, A Special Place, Monochromatic Collage, Laurel Ridge ES, Ms. Parsons art teacher



Everett Hansen, 9, Grade 4, Fairfax Three Figures In Motion, Painting, Laurel Ridge ES, Fairfax, Ms. Parsons art teacher

Cherry Run Elementary School, Burke ART TEACHER MELANIE RODAS



Jane Lundin, grade 4, Burke, Mandala, watercolors and ink on paper, Cherry Run ES, Burke, VA, Art Teacher, Melanie Rodas



Kyle Brock, grade 6, Burke, Eco Animal Reduction Print, ink on paper, Cherry Run ES, Burke, VA, Art Teacher, Melanie Rodas



Lena Danosos, grade 4, Burke, I See a Song, oil pastels on paper, Cherry Run ES, Burke, VA, Art Teacher, Melanie Rodas



Rose Johnson, grade 4, Burke, Cubism Pop-Art Self Portrait, colored pencil on paper, Cherry Run ES, Burke, VA, Art Teacher, Melanie Rodas

I smell the Christmas dinner, from a mile away.

I pass by the church, The cars swish and sway. Sleeping through the night, waiting for my gifts.

Waking up slowly, My head slowly lifts.

CHRISTMAS TOWN

By: YAZLIN ARNEZ

'Tis the season of Christmas, holiday cheers, and a month of jolliness. The elf sits on top of the fireplace while the presents rest on the ground. The night is quiet but mighty. The stars shine bright like the Northern Lights spotlighting the people. Kids rest soundly, clutching on to their Holiday Wishes, and mothers and fathers await the laughter and joy on Christmas Morning while wrapping up their gifts.

When you visit the town, you see snow on the ground, as clear as to see your own reflection. The town is filled with Carols, while the Best Bun Bakeries finish warming up sweet pastries to enjoy on Christmas Day. Stores start closing for the night, flipping their "open" sign to the back. Street lights go on as the night begins to settle in officially. The snow falls gracefully like feathers in the sky. The moon glistens with beauty as it shines on the beautiful and festive Christmas Town.

As you adventure further, you can hear the tip toes of a White Bearded Man, who especially likes cookies, on the roof ops. The hooves of deer go "click clack click clack" on the deep snow. This is when the animals truly come alive! Squirrels climb trees up and down in order to hunt for food, while raccoons dig into trash cans.

After a long restful night, Christmas has come! Kids squeal out of bed, almost knocking down doors as they wake parents up! Town Shops flicker their lights to brighten up the day! The big Christmas Tree in the middle of the town glimmers like a glow stick. Families enjoy Christmas music, food, games, prayers, and television as they join together to not only do these things, but to do it as a family.

Now always remember, Christmas isn't just about the presents or the pastries, but also a beautiful holiday that brings people together for joy and festiveness. So 'tis the season of December, the holidays, loved ones, and happiness!

of the little boys. "Now, Andrew, that doesn't make sense." replied Mrs. Williams.

"But it's true. Why don't you believe us, mommy?" chimed in another of the little boys.

"I'll have to see myself." Said Mrs. Williams.

"Kids and their imaginations." Mr. Williams said to Mrs. Williams. "After the William family ate dinner, the kids came up to me and introduced themselves.

"I'm Kate." said the girl. "I'm Andrew." said one of the boys. "Peter. What's your name?"

I didn't know. I had never been asked this question before. "Uhm," I stumbled over my words, "Can you name me? I don't know my name." "Hm...mmmmmm," Said Kate. "Joy." Suggested Andrew. "I love it." I said.

..... Christmas Eve, 10:30 at night

The William family opened the front door and filed in, talking about how peaceful Mass was.

"Okay kids, let's put out the milk and cookies and get to bed." Mrs. Williams said.

"Goodnight, kids! Please don't wake us up before 8:00 AM." Mr. Williams reminded the children.

"We won't. Goodnight." the kids responded, then climbed the stairs to their bedrooms.

"I'm excited for Christmas," Mrs. Williams said to Mr. Williams.

"Christmas is my favorite holiday." Mr. Williams said, then followed the kids up the stairs.

I sighed. So far, my first Christmas has gone extremely well. Just then, the same Orange cat from my first day strutted into the room. It looked around suspiciously and launched itself at me. It dug its paws into my branches and tore off some pines,

shattering precious ornaments in the process. It knocked over my water bucket, water fizzing out the lights. I struggled to stay standing, but then the demonic cat bit off a whole entire branch. What was with this beast? Did it just crawl up from the fiery pits of the underworld????

I thrashed and swayed, trying to keep my balance. I couldn't ruin this Christmas for the Williams. "Get off of me!" I shouted at the devil, "Why must you torture me?"

The cat momentarily stopped attacking me. "You smell like trees," said the cat with 100% confidence.

"I sincerely apologize for smelling like my own species." "That means a lot, man."

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"I sincerely apologize for smelling like my own species." "That means a lot, man."

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making sure they didn't see the presents before the morning. "Thank you, Santa." I said before he left.

"You're welcome, Joy." He replied. The next morning was wonderful. The parents seemed to be confused as to what happened to the tree, but didn't say anything. The kids got wonderful presents and Peter very much enjoyed his legos.

Overall, my first Christmas was awesome (and a little chaotic).

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The Wrapping Paper

By: OLIVIA MERRBACH

Age 11

Sixth grade Orange Hunt Elementary School Teacher: Brenda Patrick

THE WRAPPING PAPER

By: Oliva Merrbach

Do you know how boring it is to sit on a shelf for a month straight? Especially in a Walmart, The Christmas music is terrible! It was Christmas Eve and there was no way that this roll of wrapping paper was going somewhere. Then I saw a frantic woman running toward me! She picked me up and started running but stopped short. I thought to myself "Please don't put me back, Pleeeeeease." But she shrugged and kept going. Phew. I got to her car in a shopping bag and she put me in the trunk.

We arrived at a house with a big tree in the yard, the grass was perfectly mowed and the poofy green bushes had Christmas lights on it! This was Christmas heaven, wait, does that mean that I DIED!? Oh no. We got inside and I was put in an office with boxes of toys, water bottles, and books. She set me down on a hard wooden desk with sharp scissors, a roll of clear duct tape, and a Barbie doll. When she left the scissors

leapt up and said "Hi, I'm Blunt Tip, welcome to the Taylor residence." "Hello!" I said timidly. The tape greeted me, "Greetings, I'm Scotch Painter!" and then spoke the Barbie, who was hilariously inaudible. Ok I am not dead, phew. The woman came back in and we fell on the Oak desk. She laid the Barbie down in front of her and started wrapping her with me, MY wrapping paper!!! She cut the end of my paper. It felt like someone had tapped me on the shoulder. She taped the doll up and it was perfect, a small box with red Wrapping paper with glittering Green Christmas trees on it. She did the same thing with toys and books. Then my roll was out, but I had eyes everywhere on every gift.

She carried me down to the living room where I was placed under a prickly, green tree. Then I saw a child peak around the corner. She had long brown hair and Reindeer pajamas. She looked just like her mom. All of my presents were placed under the tree with other presents that had the most beautiful wrapping. Then as quiet as a mouse, the girl came over and she picked up the Barbie doll and shook it hard. She did it with a few more gifts as well. Then in the middle of the night I heard something. I tried to look near the door, but I saw nothing. Was it a ghost? I've heard of stories where a ghost came into someone's house and stole all the presents under the tree!!! Then I saw... SANTA!!! He put his sack on the ground and out came the most gorgeous roll of wrapping paper. Then he took an Xbox and wrapped it with the beautiful wrapping paper, and left.

I woke up the next morning to a kid ripping up my wrapping paper. It did not hurt, but he was excited about the play station inside. I felt

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DECEMBER 19-25, 2024

DECEMBER 19-25, 2024

DECEMBER 19-25, 2024

DECEMBER 19-25, 2024

MANTUA ELEMENTARY SCHOOL



Hana Trump, Grade 4, Mantua Elementary School, Fairfax, VA, Nathalie Shirley, Art Teacher



Labelle Ma, Grade 6, Mantua Elementary School, Fairfax, VA, Nathalie Shirley, Art Teacher



Dia Hwang, Grade 1, Mantua Elementary School, Fairfax, VA, Nathalie Shirley, Art Teacher

Lees Corner Elementary School



Julia Fry, 10, Grade 5, Fairfax, Nike Pears, colored pencils and ink pen, Lees Corner Elementary School, Fairfax, VA, Ms. Howard, Art Teacher, ES



Mary Brooks Simoenaux, Grade 5, Mantua Elementary School, Fairfax, VA, Nathalie Shirley, Art Teacher



Bethany Yee, Grade 5, Mantua Elementary School, Fairfax, VA, Davide Lorenzi, Art Teacher



Raim Kim, Grade 4, Mantua Elementary School, Fairfax, VA, Davide Lorenzi, Art Teacher



Cecilia Tsang, 9, Grade 4, Fairfax, Past, Present, Future, and Beyond, markers and ink pen, Lees Corner Elementary School, Fairfax, VA, Ms. Howard, Art Teacher, ES



Declan Burns, Grade 2, Mantua Elementary School, Fairfax, VA, Nathalie Shirley, Art Teacher



Brooke Fahrendorff, Grade 3, Mantua Elementary School, Fairfax, VA, Nathalie Shirley, Art Teacher



Sophia Pham, Grade 6, Mantua Elementary School, Fairfax, VA, Davide Lorenzi, Art Teacher



Samuel Zheng, Grade 3, Mantua Elementary School, Fairfax, VA, Nathalie Shirley, Art Teacher

WHITE OAKS ELEMENTARY SCHOOL



Claire Yao, 10, Grade 5, Burke, Two Me, acrylic, White Oaks Elementary School, Burke, VA,



Claire Yao, 10, Grade 5, Burke, Tree, marker and color pencil, White Oaks Elementary School, Burke, VA

Fairhill Elementary School



Emma Vuong, 12, Grade 6, Fairfax, Personal Symbol, print, Fairhill Elementary School, Fairfax, VA, Linda Kaplan, art teacher, ES

CHILDREN'S AND TEENS' CONNECTION

Sui Art Studio



Gabriel Pu Cor, 9, Grade 3, Sunflower Collage, mixed media



Kennedy Campbell, 8, Grade 3, Sunflower Collage, mixed media



Redmond Salas, 8, grade 3, Sunflower Collage, Mixed media



Sincy Velasquez Gonzalez, 10, Grade 5, Still Life, Watercolor



Julius Zhu, 5, Grade 1, Fairfax, "My Library," Sui Art Studio, Vienna, Va, Yan Sui, Art Teacher



Jacqueline Marquez Mendoza, Typical Day Narrative Drawing, marker

Bailey's Upper Elementary

ART TEACHER:
SUZY SCOLLON

Dilan Sanchez Mancianca, 10, Grade 4, Typical Day Narrative Drawing, Marker



Joliet Zhu, 7, Grade 2, Fairfax, "Welcome to My Room," Sui Art Studio, Vienna, Va, Yan Sui, Art Teacher



Angie Rivas Canalez, 11, 5th grade, Figure Study, Oil Pastel



Ayli Vasquez Romero, 10, Grade 5, Still Life, Watercolor



Claire Harlambakis, 9, Grade 4, Sunflower Close-up, Watercolor



Angie Martinez Canales, 9, Grade 4, Sunflower Close-up, Watercolor



Joliet Zhu, 7, Grade 2, Fairfax, "We Are Friends," Sui Art Studio, Vienna, Va, Yan Sui, Art Teacher



Daisy Gonzalez Lopez, 10, Grade 5, Figure Study, Oil Pastel



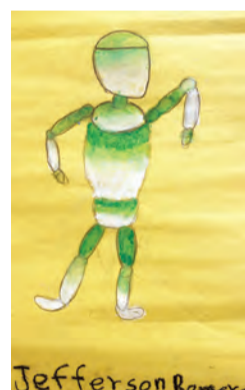
Neymar Romero, 10, 5th grade, Figure Study, Oil Pastel



Easton Snyder, 10, Grade 5, Figure Study, Oil Pastel



Ayli Vasquez Romero, 10, Grade 5, Figure Study, Oil Pastel



Jefferson Romero, 10, Grade 5, Figure Study, Oil Pastel



Happy Reading Time, Joliet Zhu, 7, G2, Fairfax, Yan Sui Art Teacher

Zucchini

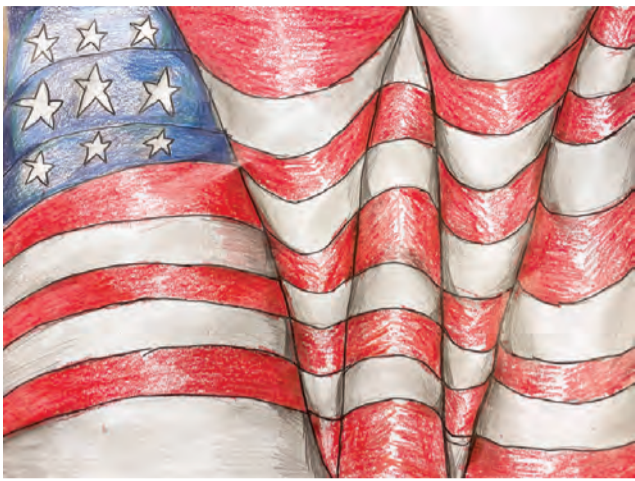
By Alex Cho
8th grade, Frost Middle School, Fairfax
Emma Harries, English Teacher

Oh, cursed zucchini, bland and uninspired
You mock me with your tasteless flesh
A vegetable impostor, pretending to be food
Your unassuming appearance belies your true nature
A sneaky invader of garden beds
Multiplying faster than rabbits on caffeine

No matter how we try to disguise you
In casseroles, soups, or even disguised as pasta
Your blandness shines through like a beacon of disappointment
You mock my attempts at culinary creativity
Laughing silently as I struggle to make you palatable
A green monstrosity of culinary mediocrity
Oh zucchini, you vegetable villain
You haunt my cooking
A reminder that not all vegetables are created equal



Julius Zhu, 5, Grade1, Fairfax, "Dinosaur in My Heart," Sui Art Studio, Vienna, Va, Yan Sui, Art Teacher



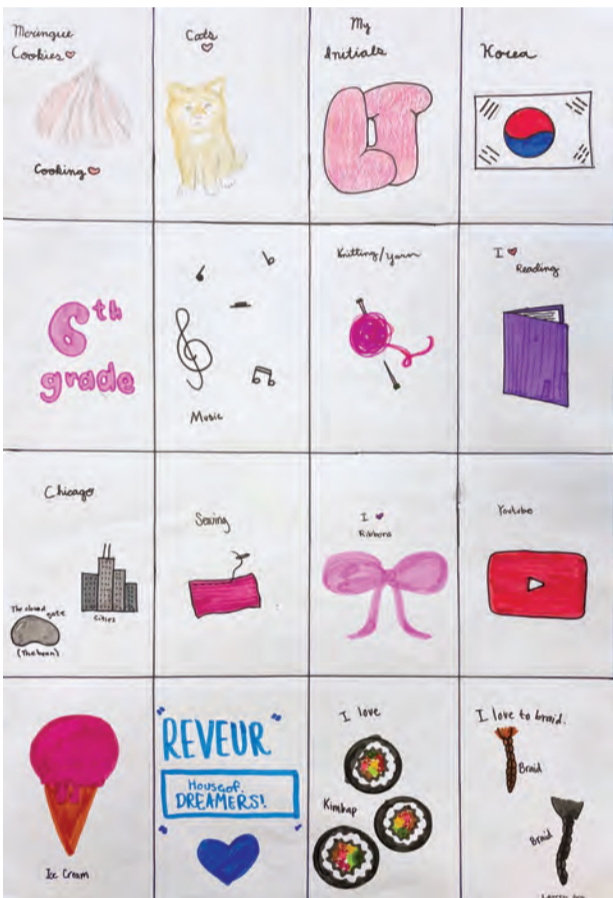
Sabrina Smith, 6th grade, American Flag, Colored pencil on paper



Masa Abou Alkhir, 4th grade, Playground Design, paper collage



Stella Kim, 4th grade, Playground Design, paper collage



Konan Jeon, Grade 9, Fairfax, Fly PUNCH! KAPOW! "Youch!"

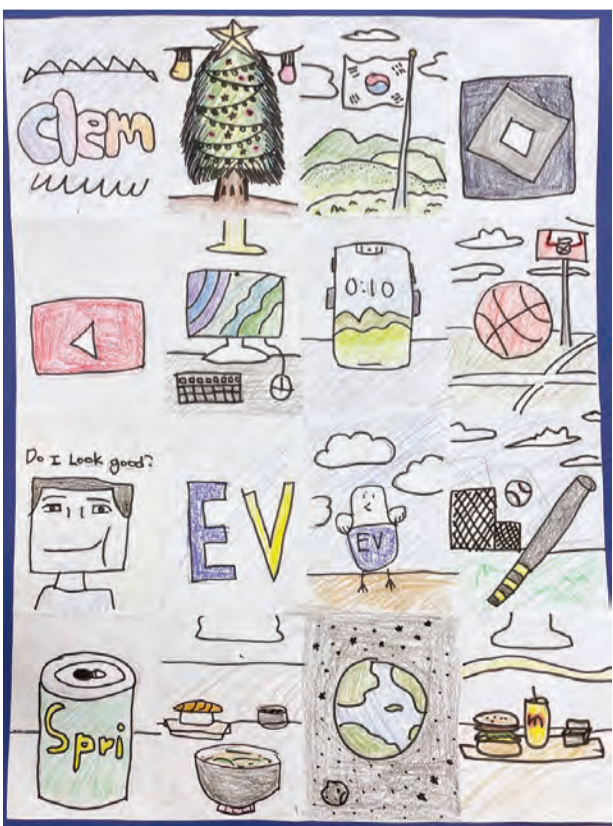
Woodson High School
LESLIE O'SHAUGHNESSY, ART TEACHER, HS



Lauren Jun, 6th grade, All About Me Squares, mixed drawing media



Tyler Lim, Grade 11, Fairfax, The Essence of Construction



Clem Seungho Bae, 6th grade, All About Me Squares, Colored pencil on paper

Maggie Johnston, Grade 9, Fairfax, Hard Work, pen and ink on drawing paper,



JoonWon Lee, 16,
Junior, resident of Fairfax

Thomas Jefferson High School for Science and Technology
Alexandria, VA, Sherwood Williams,
English Teacher, HS

My name is JoonWon Lee. I am a junior at Thomas Jefferson High School for Science and Technology. I enjoyed reading the Children's Connection every year, which led me to participate numerous times over the course of the last few years. I am very excited to share my poem to the Children's Connection once again. This poem represents my inner "garden" of memories, a garden that roots me down and prevents my conscious and soul from drifting apart. I hope to give readers a sense of fulfillment and hope towards themselves.

-JOONWON LEE

Garden

A quiet stretch of earth
My soul awaits patiently
The seeds I carry
Each memory dropped into the soil
Flowers blooming where they fall
A golden daisy of a friend's laughter
A soft lavender of a warm morning
A bright marigold of courage
despite failure
A wild rose of fleeting moments of love
Etched into the scents and sights of spring
Roots reach deep to bind
The fragments of my passion
Holding me together
Through the storms of self-doubt
The fires of anger
The icy winds of loneliness
That threaten to consume
However
The rains of dread soften the earth for new life
The ash becomes rich soil that feeds vitality
Icy winds carve the edges
Sharpening my resolve
Shaping my strength
Wild, radiant, and unbroken
Grows my garden of memories

CHILDREN'S AND TEENS' CONNECTION

Eagle View Elementary School

SANDY JUNE,
ART TEACHER



Annika Morgan, 11, Grade 6, Fairfax, Super You!, Colored pencils on drawing paper



Andrea Pettin, 8, Grade 2, Fairfax, Duck Buildings, Watercolor



Isabelle Yoon, 7, Grade 2, Fairfax, Bugs_Insects, Collage



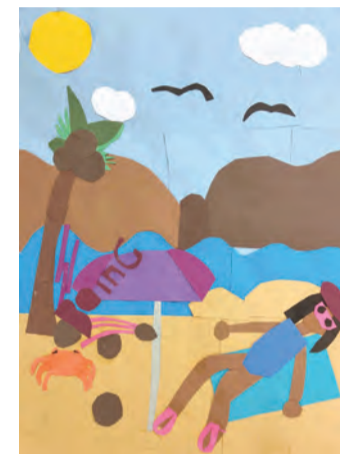
Miriam Gertz, 8, Grade 2, Fairfax, Out and About, Crayons on drawing paper



Papa Asamoah, 8, Grade 3, Fairfax, Guardian Creatures, Colored pencils on drawing paper



Loulwa Almarboei, 11, Grade 5, Fairfax, Global Shoes, Mixed media on drawing paper



Jedidiah Mbughuni, 11, Grade 6, Fairfax, Evocative Memory, Collage

Crestwood Elementary School ART TEACHER, ALICIA ROMAN



Kelita Leon Osorio, 5, kindergarten, Snowman



Annie Vo, 5, kindergarten, Snowman



Lan Do, 11, 6th grade, Peacock



Ayaan Mir, 11, 6th grade, Superhero



Ashly Granados, 6, kindergarten, Snowman



Fiza Faisal, 6, kindergarten, Snowman



Emeli Martinez, 11, 6th grade, Superhero



Cristian Ayala Maldonado, 6, kindergarten, Snowman

Willow Springs Elementary YANSHUN SUI, ART TEACHER



Kowkab Mahboobi 7, Grade 3, Clifton My Astronaut Dream, Oil pastels



Kowkab Mahboobi 7, Grade 3, Clifton Where there is a dream, there is hope, Color pencils

HOLIDAYS

Chanukah Celebration Is Planned in Fairfax City

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, sing Chanukah songs, enjoy live entertainment and partake of jelly doughnuts, potato latkes and hot chocolate. And children are always excited to see the sky-high ladder of a fire engine drop Chanukah gelt (gold-foil-wrapped chocolate coins) for them to catch and eat.

At last year's event, Deitsch told the crowd, "Each one of us can be a candle to chase away the darkness." He then urged attendees to "Bring light into your heart, bring light into your house, bring light into your community, and bring light into the world."

— BONNIE HOBBS



Rabbi Sholom Deitsch addresses the crowd at the 2023 celebration.



Some of the many people attending last year's menorah-lighting ceremony.

PHOTOS BY BONNIE HOBBS/THE CONNECTION

Celebrating with Santa and a Holiday Market



Visiting with Santa are parents Chris and Michelle Klos with son Caden, 5, and daughter Mackenzie, 2.



From left, Twins Novah and Adelyn Pokhrel, 4, visit Santa with Ariadne Pradhan, 22 months (in red dress).



Parents Ahmad Tbaileh and Claudia La Puente look on while daughter Alessia, 4, gets a hug from Santa.



Visiting Santa are the Steen brothers (from left) Stephenson, 2; Nathanael, 3; and Geoffrey, 7 months, with parents Joy (on floor, at left) and Sam.

PHOTOS BY BONNIE HOBBS/THE CONNECTION



The Jones siblings, (from left) Callum, 6, and Avery, 4, pose with Santa Claus.



The School of Rock of Haymarket performs "My Own Worst Enemy" by the band Lit.



The 7th Position Trombone Quartet playing "Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer."

ENTERTAINMENT



Saxophonist Lil' Maceo will be featured in "It's a Jazzy Christmas!" on Dec. 21, 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.

NOW THRU JAN. 12

Pieces of Us by HKS181 Exhibit.

At Workhouse Arts Center, Muse Gallery, W-16, Lorton. The Workhouse Arts Center is delighted to showcase Pieces of Us by HKS181, a deeply thought-provoking exhibition that examines the essential elements of growth and life that shape our existence. Through a unique blend of symbolism and urban artistry, Pieces of Us examines how sight, scent, and vision can trigger memories and evoke profound emotional connections. The works draw inspiration from the natural world, comparing the process of birds building nests to our human tendency to collect and preserve memories, emotions, and experiences. The use of decaying wood symbolizes the passage of time, encouraging viewers to reflect on its significance, while the incorporation of birdhouses prompts introspection about what we gather to create spaces we feel



A Holiday Celtic Concert will be held on Sunday, Dec. 22, 2024 at St. Andrew's Episcopal Church in Burke.

connected enough to call home. Visit www.workhousearts.org.

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>

THRU JAN. 12, 2025

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

THROUGH DEC. 30

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

with a new Gingerbread Costume Character.

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. 20-21, 4:30-7:30 p.m., \$15 in advance, \$20 at the door.

WINTER WONDERLAND AT BURKE LAKE PARK

Climb aboard the Holiday Express for a train ride, spin on the Carollers Carousel, play Gingerbread Man Golf and savor s'mores by the fire. Meet Santa, sip hot chocolate and enjoy the season's warmth. Weekends: Dec. 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.

SANTA IS COMING TO ANGELIKA MOSAIC
Santa is lighting up the lobby at the



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

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: 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:
• "Dr. Seuss' How the Grinch Stole Christmas" – Dec. 21 and Dec. 22 at 10 a.m.
• "Love Actually" – Dec. 18 at 7 p.m.

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.

NATIONAL MUSEUM OF THE MARINE CORPS CELEBRATES THE HOLIDAYS

The National Museum of the Marine Corps is hosting a Holiday Film Series – "Mickey's Magical Christmas: Snowed in at the House of Mouse": Dec. 22 at 1:30 p.m.

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.

SEE ENTERTAINMENT, PAGE 19

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Obituary



IN MEMORIAM
Rhea Boswell

Happy Heavenly Birthday, Mom. Not a day goes by that I don't think of you and miss your presence. Today, on your special day, I'm sending all my love to you. I celebrate the memories, laughter, and love you gave us all. You may not be here physically, but you will always live on in my heart. I hope you're surrounded by peace, joy, and light, as well as get to dance with John and Frank. Love you forever, Bonnie.

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ENTERTAINMENT



McLean Community Center Celebrating 50 Years

The McLean Community Center celebrates its 50th Anniversary on Saturday, Jan. 4, 2025 in McLean.

FROM PAGE 17

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-REDCROSS (1-800-733-2767) or 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.

SUNDAY/DEC. 22

Battle of Dranesville Remembrance. 7 p.m. At Dranesville Church of the Brethren, 11500 Leesburg Pike, Herndon. On Dec. 20, 1861, Confederate forces under J.E.B. Stuart clashed with Union troops under E.O.C. Ord near the intersection of the Georgetown Pike and Route 7. The two-hour battle, fought just five days before Christmas, was the first Union victory in the east. The Brethren, like the Quakers and Mennonites, are a historic peace church. Every year on the Sunday closest to the day of the battle, they hold a special service, honoring those who fell and praying for peace. They will have light refreshments and a small display of artifacts from the battle afterwards. For more information, call John Waggoner at 703-216-7036.

SUNDAY/DEC. 22

Holiday Celtic Concert. 4-5:15 p.m. At St. Andrew's Episcopal Church, 6509 Sydenstricker Road, Burke. The annual seasonal celebration with Karen Ashbrook, joined by multi-instrumentalist Paul Oorts, fiddler Andrea Hoag and vocalist Eileen

Estes. These four internationally-known performers have crafted a delightful program of Celtic songs and tunes to celebrate Christmas, winter and the New Year. The program has a wide selection of traditional and contemporary airs, jigs, and reels from Ireland, Scotland, the Isle of Man and Brittany. All donations from this concert will go to the local charities FACETS and ECHO. Visit the website: www.standrews.net

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.

SATURDAY/JAN. 4

MCC 50th Anniversary. 7 p.m. At The Alden Theatre, McLean Community Center, 1234 Ingleside Ave., McLean. The Governing Board and staff of the McLean Community Center (MCC) are inviting patrons to a special kickoff celebration for the center's 50th Anniversary. The event is free; however, patrons are asked to R.S.V.P. by sending an email to feedback@mcleancenter.org. The event starts a yearlong celebration, which includes the installation of two public art projects, a tree planting, and a large, communitywide festival in October. McLean Historian and former MCC Board member Carole Herrick will present a history talk highlighting the community efforts that brought about the creation of the center and its early history. A premiere showing of the center's newly created 50th Anniversary Commemorative Video and a celebratory



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

reception will follow. Visit mcleancenter.org.

WEDNESDAY/JAN. 8

Hands-Only CPR. 6:30-7:30 p.m. At the McLean Community Center, 1234 Ingleside Ave., McLean. McLean Volunteer Fire Department sponsored by MCA. Hands-only CPR is a simplified form of CPR that focuses on chest compressions without rescue breaths. It is recommended for use by people who witness an adult suddenly collapse in an out-of-hospital setting. Hands-only CPR increases the likelihood of surviving cardiac arrest by maintaining blood flow to vital organs.

JAN. 10-11

45th International Saxophone Symposium. At GMU's Harris Theatre, Fairfax. Friday, January 10 at 12 p.m.; Saturday, January 11 at 9 a.m. Free and non-ticketed

SUNDAY/JAN. 12

Chamber Music. 2 p.m. At McLean Community Center, 1234 Ingleside Ave., McLean. Featuring Junwen Liang, on piano. Originally from Nanning, China, Junwen Liang is already making his mark on the classical music scene. He has concertized at Weill Recital Hall at Carnegie and the Academy of Music in Philadelphia, won more competitions that we can begin to list and all while he has been pursuing his Performance Certificate at Peabody.

SATURDAY/JAN. 18

Collage Dance Company: "RISE Project." 7 p.m. At McLean Community Center, 1234 Ingleside Ave., McLean. Part of the

Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Day Celebration. Dr. King's powerful "Mountaintop Speech," which was delivered the day before he died, is the backdrop for this full-length neoclassical ballet. As we commemorate nearly 60 years since his passing, the work is both a reflection of what we have overcome and envisions where we go from here. Student dancers enrolled in MCC's dance program, led by Art in Motion, will have a guest role in this performance!

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.

SATURDAY/FEB. 1

Kiwanis Polar Dip. 2 p.m. At Lake Anne Village Plaza, Reston. The Kiwanis Club of Tysons is hosting its annual Kiwanis Polar Dip to raise money for organizations that benefit youth. The goal of the Kiwanis Polar Dip is to raise \$30,000 for Food for Neighbors and a variety of Kiwanis Youth Programs in the Fairfax County area. A portion will also benefit Camp Sunshine, a retreat for children with life-threatening illnesses and their families. Visit kiwanispolarip.org.

This Time The Cookie Didn't Crumble



By KENNETH B. LOURIE

Not that you all want/need to hear about my life or that what goes on (what I eat is the subject of this column) in it is of particular importance. Hardly. In fact, it's doubtful that any of it is relevant in your lives. But most of us eat food everyday and think of food every minute (you mean some of you don't?). Nevertheless, I thought I'd share a slice of my life that "plated" itself today. First, a little context:

We went away for the weekend to have turkey and fixin's with our oldest friends. They live in Ocean City, MD (Berlin, actually) so when we visit them it's for a couple of days. As I often joke about our stay - since it's Ocean City, it's "a two-night minimum" (per the typical hotel policy). This time, we stayed three nights. Given that Thanksgiving was/is on a Thursday, our friends who are still working, amazingly had both Friday and Saturday off so it made for a more sociable/available stay. Usually, their work schedules interfere. However, on this occasion, it did not so we were invited/stayed a bit longer than we otherwise would.

Since we were going away for three days and nights, it made little sense to stock/replenish our refrigerator/pantry with edibles and "drinkables." And when we got home Saturday afternoon (after arriving in Berlin Wednesday late afternoon) after enduring and semi unexpected delay crossing the Bay Bridge, the four hours-plus home sort of took the stuffing out of us and the last thing we wanted to do when we got home was to go back out to the supermarket/for dinner. "As such," to quote my 10th grade Western Traditions' teacher Mr. Roberts, we were not high, but we were certainly dry. The cupboard wasn't exactly bare but hardly was it or the refrigerator up to its usual standards. Therefore, to simplify our transition back to normalcy, we simply got "Take away" as the Brits say and decided to call it a night after we ate dinner and watched a movie.

Waking up in our own bed on Sunday morning, however, did nothing for our household/dietary needs. Most of which is my fault since I'm the shopper in the family. And later that Sunday, after not watching the Redskins/Commanders for three hours, whatever I did, oddly enough, had nothing to do with food and drink. And as of Monday real time, as I write this, I'm still stuck in neutral and the house is still empty, comparatively speaking.

Having provided three-fourths of this column as context I now finally segue to the point. Since I haven't gone shopping means that I haven't bought any chocolate. And that's a problem not just for me, but for millions of other people worldwide who crave it as much as I do, so I'm certainly not alone in this admission/predicament. A predicament of my own lack of doing so I have no one to blame but myself. And as I was contemplating my situation, thinking about where I might have/hid (Dina doesn't need to know everything) some chocolate in the house, I was reviewing - in my mind, all the locations in the house where I might have stored/hidden the object of my desire. Then I "double-downed" by going around the house opening drawers and cabinets to confirm and sure enough, I came up empty handed. Disappointed by my search, I sat back down in my office chair and thought of an odd/uncharacteristic place where only recently had I used as a new hideout. I then looked down to the right and pulled open my desk drawer and thought: "Wouldn't that be great/funny if there was some chocolate in this drawer that I completely forgot?" Forgot about because this drawer is too obvious/convenient a location and one that's hardly hidden at all so I would temp fate by using it. Well, at a loss/need for chocolate and only partially desperate, I opened the drawer and guess what? Paydirt! A half-full box of fudge-covered Oreos. "How'd that box get there?" I sort of thought (Knowing full well I was responsible; just in this instance, a tad forgetful.) Six cookies. What a reward for my poor planning. "I can't go on like this," I thought. I must go shopping. I can't rely on this kind of random good luck. I know it's said that even blind squirrel finds a nut. But it says nothing about the squirrel being stupid and ill-prepared.

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

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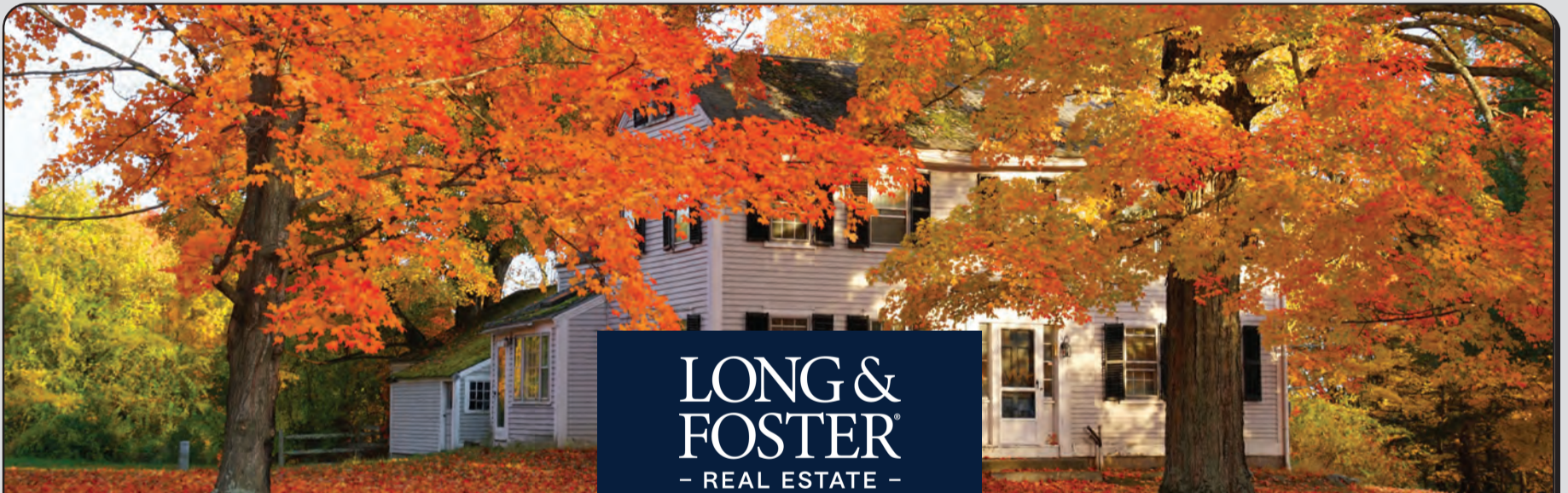
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