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Festivals of Fun

October is home to Alexandria's
Oktoberfest celebrations.

FESTIVALS, PAGE 3



SHOPPING

Cherished Store Closes

For more than two decades, Olsson's had a distinct personality with a waterfront view.

BY MICHAEL LEE POPE
GAZETTE PACKET

Most chain bookstores tend to have a universal appeal. Not Olsson's, the beloved chain of Washington bookstores that shut its doors last week.

Each of the local chain's five locations had its own distinct atmosphere, and Alexandria's store certainly had a personality all its own. Part of its charm came from its historic setting. The retailer was located in an old waterfront warehouse that was originally built by a prominent local family that operated a flour mill in a village west of the city known as Cameron. Yet for many of the longtime customers who frequented the Union Street bookstore, the employees who staffed the store were a knowledgeable source of information and a friendly community of book-lovers.

"They were alternative, but not too alternative," said Dr. David Charney, who estimated that he brought about 2,000 books at the Old Town Olsson's since the store opened more than 20 years ago. "The one word I would use to describe the store was 'homey' because it didn't have a corporate feel to it."

The bookstore abruptly shut its doors on the last day of September, with no advance warning to longtime customers and no closeout clearance sale of merchandise. A press release dated Sept. 30 and posted to the Olsson's Web site announced that all of the chain's Washington stores would be closing immediately. Although the business had been operating under "chapter 11" bankruptcy protection since July, the written statement indicated they would be petitioning the United States Bankruptcy Court in the District of Maryland for a "chapter 7" liquidation.

"Although it is certainly a sad day for us, I can rejoice in all the great memories of my life in retail in Washington," said John Olsson, principal owner. "Through it all, our best and brightest served Washington's best and brightest with love and distinction. I'm very proud of what we accomplished."

THE STORE'S precarious financial situation had become increasingly bleak over the past few months, and company officials finally concluded that keeping the store open was no longer viable. Olsson's had been granted Chapter 11 protection over the summer to work on an aggressive reorganization plan involving selected store closings and large cuts in overhead costs. Yet even closing the Penn Quarter location was not enough to pull the company out of the red.

"We were losing money just by staying open," said Olsson's general manager Stephen Wallace-Haines. "In the end, all the roads towards reorganization led to this dead end: we did not have the money required to pay for product in advance, to collect reserves to buy for Christmas, and satisfy the demands of rent and operational costs."

The Olsson's chain was established in 1972 and grew to as many as nine retail stores in the Washington, D.C. metro area with sales over \$16 million a year and as many as 200 employees. The five that closed last week were in Old Town, the Reagan National Airport, Arlington Courthouse, Crystal City and Dupont Circle. Despite the increasing popularity of

online book retailers, industry experts say the brick-and-mortar retailers will remain a vital part of the industry.

"Retailing has taken a turn for the worst lately, particularly for booksellers because there's such a low profit margin," said Eileen Dengler, executive director of the New Atlantic Independent Booksellers Association. "But big chains are not going to give you the kind of customer service you get from an independent bookstore, and people are moving more toward shopping local again."

FOR MANY CUSTOMERS, the building itself was the main attraction. From the second floor, book-browsers could admire the great oak beams that seemed to create a cathedral-like atmosphere over rows and rows of fiction and nonfiction titles.

And the information desks had been painstakingly constructed from timbers saved during a late 20th-century renovation.

City records indicate the warehouse was constructed in 1916 by the Roberts family, which operated a grain, feed and agricultural products in the city for 89 years. Because it is one

of the few remaining buildings from the seaport days, the structure has a significance that preserves an important part of the city's history.

"The building where Olsson's was located is particularly important because it shares an alley with Fitzgerald warehouse, which is the oldest and most important building left on the waterfront," said Alexandria Archeologist Pam Cressey. "This building and a few others on South Union Street are all that's left from the heyday of Alexandria's port."

Archeological research conducted on the building several years ago revealed that the current warehouse building replaced an earlier structure that had been demolished in the early 20th century. The Roberts family, which operated the warehouse, used it to store flour, hay, grains, straw and poultry supplies. The building passed through a series of owners until 1962, when Dockside Sales opened a retail location in the building. Olsson's opened the bookstore there in the early 1980s. Business owners in the neighborhood say they are concerned about the number of empty storefront locations along lower King Street.

"Empty stores are depressing," said Bob Lorensen, adding that three nearby three other nearby businesses have recently closed. "It's a challenging time to be in retail, and we're definitely stressed."

"Through it all, our best and brightest served Washington's best and brightest with love and distinction. I'm very proud of what we accomplished."

— John Olsson, principal owner of Olsson's Books and Records

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FESTIVALS

Oktoberfest Is In The Air

Hundreds celebrate the German tradition at local festivals.

BY ALISSA FIGUEROA
GAZETTE PACKET

This year marks the 175th Oktoberfest celebration in Munich, Germany. The event, which runs from Sept. 20 through Oct. 5, is the world's largest fair, attracting about six million visitors from across the globe. Area residents don't have to cross the Atlantic, however, to take part in the Bavarian tradition. There are several Oktoberfest events happening around the beltway this year, though they might not resemble the original 19th century celebration.

The first Oktoberfest was held to celebrate the wedding of Crown Prince Ludwig (later to become King Ludwig I) to Princess Therese of Saxony-Hildburghausen on Oct. 12, 1810. The residents of Munich were invited to participate in the day's festivities, held on the fields in front of the city's gates.

The featured event was a horse race, which was held again the following year, marking the beginning of the annual festival. In 1811, an agricultural show was added in the hopes of offering a boost to local farms. Though the horse race has since been abandoned, the agricultural tradition continues with the Bavarian Central Agriculture Festival taking place every third year.

The festival most people picture when they hear the word "Oktoberfest" originated in 1896, when sparse beer stalls were replaced with tents sponsored by Bavarian breweries.

Today there are 14 tents at the festival,

offering a total of 100,000 seats. In addition to beer, the halls serve traditional Bavarian treats like *wurstel* (sausage), *reiberdatschi* (potato pancakes) and *haxn* (knuckle of pork). According to the city of Munich's official estimates, in 2007 approximately 6,940,600 liters of beer and 142,253 pairs of pork sausage were consumed.

The modern day festival also takes place mostly in September, although the last few days always fall in October. This change was made shortly after the festival's inception to take advantage of the warmer weather.

Here in northern Virginia, Oktoberfest season is well underway. On Saturday Oct. 4 Arlington residents marked the event with an all-afternoon celebration at Shirlington

Village. The Capitol City Brewing Company, which has a location on the Village's main strip, brought more than 30 micro-breweries from across the mid-Atlantic region. Revelers (who consisted of mostly young adults) purchased

tickets that allowed them to sample hundreds of beers.

The *Washington Sanger Bund*, a choral group that performs traditional German music throughout the DC metro area, sold food at the festival to raise money for their group.

"We sing wherever people understand German," said German-born chorus member Gretel Dahncke. "It is important to keep the German language alive in America," she added.

In addition to four different kinds of sausages, sauerkraut, pretzels and German pastries, Oktoberfest attendees could also

enjoy the sounds of the Edelweiss Band and watch the Apline Dancers perform traditional dances.

Roland Zeender is founding member, musical director and keyboardist with the Edelweiss Band.

"I like the atmosphere," he said. "People seem to let their hair down and have a good time."

Other community groups joined in the celebration at Shirlington as well. The library offered a children's program, which included fall-inspired arts and crafts and games, and an Arlington voter registration

team was out getting last-minute registration forms completed for the Monday deadline.

Further south another Oktoberfest celebration took place. At Fort Belvoir, families enjoyed dozens of carnival rides and autumn-themed games as well as food and entertainment.

Marsha's Country Store, in Lorton, provided produce, fruit, preserves and other treats from local farms across the region.

The Philadelphia German Brass Band and Elbe-Musikaten performed traditional Ger-

Upcoming Oktoberfest Events

If you missed out on this weekend's revelry, don't worry, there are still chances to celebrate Oktoberfest in the area:

- ❖ Rustico Restaurant, located at 827 Slaters Lane in Alexandria, is hosting an Oktoberfest celebration on Saturday, Oct. 18 that features German beer, food and live entertainment. Family members of all ages are invited and proceeds will benefit the Capitol Area Food Bank.

- ❖ St. Aidan's Episcopal Church at 8531 Riverside Road is also celebrating Oktoberfest on Saturday, Oct. 18 between the hours of 3 and 7 p.m. There will be pumpkin decorating, games and German food.

- ❖ The Lee-Fendall House Museum at 614 Oronoco St. in Alexandria is hosting a Beer Tasting on Sunday, Oct. 19. Sample beers and paint your own mug. Call 703-548-1789 for tickets.



PHOTOS BY ALISSA FIGUEROA/GAZETTE PACKET
Kids enjoy the rides at Fort Belvoir's Oktoberfest celebration this past weekend.



The Edelweiss Band plays a polka at Shirlington this past weekend.

man polkas and waltzes all weekend for attendees munching on hamburgers, hot dogs and baskets of fries.

A face-painter and clown were at the Kinder Korner, providing entertainment for the under-5 crowd.

Susan Ray and Alison O'Quinn have brought their families to the festival for many years.

"It's nice that the carnival has little-kid friendly rides," said Ray, whose children are five and three years old.

Both moms appreciated the fact that the festival offered something for family members of all ages.

PHOTO BY ALISSA FIGUEROA/
GAZETTE PACKET

ON THE COVER: Darlene Warner of Woodbridge traveled to Shirlington to participate in Oktoberfest.

E Staff

Editor: Rebecca Halik
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CALENDAR

E-mail announcements to the Gazette, gazette@connectionnewspapers.com. Photos and artwork are encouraged. Deadline is Thursday at noon for the following week's paper. Call Rebecca Halik at 703-917-6407 with questions.

ONGOING

On Mondays, Sept. 8 through Dec. 1 from 9:30 to 10:30 a.m., the Green Spring Gardens located at 4603 Green Spring Road, will be having **Yoga for Gardeners** for adults. The program will offer a series of classes featuring the Vinyasa method to increase your flexibility, strength, and endurance for gardening. \$ 66/ six-class sessions. For more information and to register call 703-642-5173.

Visit **George Washington's Distillery & Gristmill** through Oct. 31 from 10 a.m.-5 p.m. See how whiskey got started. \$4/adult; \$2/child. Get discounts with admission to Mount Vernon Estate. Visit www.mountvernon.org for more.

Take a **seasonal walking tour** from 10 a.m.-5 p.m. at Mount Vernon Estate. This 30-minute tour explores a variety of contributions. Free. Visit www.mountvernon.org for more.

Every **Tuesday and Thursday** through October from 5- 8 p.m. at Hotel Monaco Alexandria, enjoy **Doggie Happy Hour**. Enjoy doggie treats and human treats.

Join City archaeologists and trained volunteers for an exciting program for kids of all ages at **Alexandria Archaeology Family Dig Days**. Monthly Family Dig Days will be held from 1:30 p.m. to 3 p.m. on the

grounds of the George Washington Masonic National Memorial, 101 Callahan Drive, in Alexandria. The 2008 dates are on Saturdays: Oct. 18. \$5/person and spots fill up fast. Call 703-838-4399 or visit www.alexandriarchaeology.org to reserve a spot.

On **Sundays** from noon-5 p.m., visit the Waterfront and see **history-inspired performances** near the Torpedo Factory; do a "meet and greet" of early Alexandria residents and travelers near the Waterfront and lower King Street. Free. Visit www.historicalexandria.org for more.

On Mondays, Oct. 27, and Nov. 24 at 2 p.m. Green Spring Gardens will be having **Family Story Time** for children of all ages where there will be stories and activities. Free. For more information visit www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/gspg

On Mondays Sept. 8 through Oct. 27 from 2 to 4 p.m., the Green Spring Gardens will be having **Let's Grow kid's Gardening Program** where kids will enjoy sprouting seeds, growing vegetables, planting, flowers, exploring soil and other out door fun. \$ 70 /student. For more information and to register call 703-642-5173.

Historic Mount Vernon will have special commemorative whiskey sets available for sale beginning **Aug. 4!** The set includes a shot glass and a 50 mL bottle of whiskey consisting of 11 different whiskey brands blended and aged at Mount Vernon in 2005. The gift sets are \$25 and are available for purchase in person with a valid ID at the *Shops at Mount Vernon* or George Washington's Distillery. Visit www.mountvernon.org or 703-780-

2000.

Beginning on **Monday, Sept. 15** and continuing weekly through **Monday, Nov. 17**, Gadsby's Tavern Museum will be hosting its fall session of **Tavern Toddlers**. Tavern Toddlers features a weekly open playtime on Mondays, excluding Federal holidays, between 10:30 a.m. and noon. Each week costs \$7 for a group of three, which must include one adult, and additional people are just \$3. Pre-registration is not required, and single or multiple passes can be purchased at the door. Gadsby's Tavern Museum is located at 134 North Royal St. For more information, call 703838.4242 or visit www.gadsbystavern.org.

THURSDAY/OCT. 9

Teen Volunteer Fair. 5-8:45 p.m. at Sherwood Library, 2501 Sherwood Hall Lane. Meet community organizations needing volunteers. Children ages 12-18. 703-765-3645.

Music Performance. Hear Lori Grigsby & Sandy Moyer perform with Patricia Cooper at The Athenaeum, 201 Prince St. \$10/person. Visit www.nvfaa.org or 703-548-0035.

Recycling Event. Drop off light bulbs, computers and peripherals and cell phones at Calvert Jones' headquarters, 5703 Edsall Road. Free. www.calvertjonesgreen.com for more.

Story Time. 10 a.m. or 3 p.m. at Beatley Library, 5005 Duke St. Children ages 3-5. Free. 703-519-5900 ext. 4.

Music Event. See Matt Wilson in "My Baby Grand" at the Carlyle Club. \$20/person. Reservations can be made at www.carlyleclub.com or 703-548-5953.

FRIDAY/OCT. 10

Lecture. Noon at Market Square, 301 King St. Hear Don Wallingford speak. Free.

Annual Memorial Service. 11 a.m. at Ivy Hill Cemetery, 2823 King St., Alexandria. Memorial service and wreath laying honoring the men and women of the Alexandria Fire Services. RSVP to cemetery@ivyhill.org or 703-549-7413.

Music Performance. 8 p.m. at Masonic Memorial, 101 Callahan Drive. Camerata will sing with the Singing Sergeants. Free. Visit www.usafband.af.mil or 202-767-5658.

Gallery Opening. 7-10 p.m. See "From our Trees Artistry is Revealed," a collaborative exhibit of work by members of the Del Ray Artisans and the Washington Woodworkers' Guild at the Del Ray Artisans Gallery, 2704 Mt. Vernon Ave. Free. Call 703-838-4827 or visit www.thedelrayartisans.org for more information.

Lunch Bunch. Noon at John Marshall Library, 6209 Rose Hill Drive. Children up to age 5 can bring a lunch and enjoy stories. Free. 703-971-0010.

Job Fair. 10 a.m.-2 p.m. at the South County Center, 8350 Richmond



Etsuko Hirose will perform a piano recital at 6 p.m. at the Lyceum, 201 Prince St. Benefits Japanese American Care Fund.

Highway, Alexandria. UCM diversity job fair. Bring resumes. Free.

Time for 2's. 10 a.m. at Beatley Library, 5005 Duke St. Children ages 24-36 months. Registration required, 703-519-5900 ext. 4.

Music Event. See Matt Wilson in "My Baby Grand" at the Carlyle Club. \$20/person. Reservations can be made at www.carlyleclub.com or 703-548-5953.

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SATURDAY/OCT. 11

Yard Sale. The Alexandria Jaycees will hold a yard sale from 7 a.m.-2 p.m. at Anthony T. Lane Elementary School, 7137 Beulah St. Free. Browse a variety of items. Vendors may register online at www.alexjaycees.org/yardsales.htm. For updated rain date information call 703-866-7171.

Perennials. Learn to Garden with Perennials and woody plants with The Green Spring Gardens located at 4603 Green Spring Road, Alexandria from 9:30 a.m. to 11 a.m. Design with Perennials: Time and Your Garden with Karen Rexrode. The class will combine both indoor and outdoor explorations. \$ 18/ adults. For more information and to register call 703-642-5173.

Lecture. 2 p.m. at Market Square, 301 King St. Hear Don Wallingford speak. Free.

Bazaar. 10 a.m.-4 p.m. at Woodlawn. Browse through quilts, hats, scarves and more. Free. Lunch will be available. 703-780-4000.

Dyke Marsh. 3 p.m. at Sherwood Library, 2501 Sherwood Hall Lane. Learn about the bird sanctuary, nature preserve and more. Free. 703-765-3645.

Book Sale. 10 a.m.-3 p.m. at Kingstowne Library, 6500 Landsdowne Center. Browse through a variety of titles and more. Free. 703-339-4610.

Murder Mystery Dinner. 7 p.m. at Gadsby's Tavern, 134 N. Royal St. Enjoy a three-course dinner and three murders. \$80/member; \$100/non-member. Register at www.gadsbystavern.org or 703-838-4242.

Alexandria Arts Safari. Noon-4 p.m. at Torpedo Factory Art Center, 105 N. Union St. Enjoy hands-on crafts,

scavenger hunts and more. Free. Visit www.torpedofactory.org or 703-838-4565.

Saturday Stories. 10:30 a.m. at Beatley Library, 5005 Duke St. All ages. Free. Registration required, 703-519-5900 ext. 4.

Music Lover's Festival. Noon-6:30 p.m. at Alleyne A.M.E. Zion Church, 1419 King St. Free.

Family Fall Festival. 10 a.m.-3 p.m. at Armistead L. Boothe Park, 520 Cameron Station Blvd. Free. Enjoy theater, music, activities, food and more. Free. 703-838-4686.

Jaycees Community Yard Sale. 7 a.m.-2 p.m. at Anthony T. Lane Elementary School, 7137 Beulah St. Browse toys, furniture, clothing and more. Free. Visit www.alexjaycees.org/yardsales.htm or 703-866-7171.

Community Fun Fair. 9 a.m.-3 p.m. at Woodlawn United Methodist Church, 7730 Fordson Road. Free.

Wee Ones Story Time. 10:30 a.m. at Hooray for Books!, 1555 King St. Children 2 and under. Free. Visit www.hooray4books.com or 703-548-4092.

Open House. 1-5 p.m. at Stabler-Leadbeater Apothecary Museum, 105-107 S. Fairfax St. Enjoy crafts, tours and more. Free. Visit www.apothecarymuseum.org or 703-838-3852.

SUNDAY/OCT. 12

Bazaar. 10 a.m.-4 p.m. at Woodlawn. Browse through quilts, hats, scarves and more. Free. Lunch will be available. 703-780-4000.

Music Performance. Hear Lucy Kaplansky perform a Jay Votel tribute show at 7 p.m. at Church of the Resurrection, 2280 N. Beauregard St. \$15/general; \$12/member. Visit

www.focusmusic.org or 703-501-6061.

Recital. 7 p.m. at the Alexandria Lyceum, 201 South Washington St. Hear soprano Rebecca Littig and pianist Frank Conlon perform classical pieces. Free. For information call 202-332-3133.

Native American Story Time. 11 a.m. at Hooray for Books!, 1555 King St. Children 2-6. Free. Visit www.hooray4books.com or 703-548-4092.

MONDAY/OCT. 13

Columbus Day Fast & Furiest 5k. 8 a.m. at Belle Haven Sailing Marina. Register at www.active.com or 703-966-7202.

Author Signing. 4-6 p.m. at Mount Vernon Estate Shops. Joseph Ellis will sign copies of his book "Founding Brothers." Free, but books must be purchased from Mount Vernon. Visit mountvernon.org or 703-780-2000.

TUESDAY/OCT. 14

One, Two, Three - Let's Go. 10:30 a.m. at Kingstowne Library, 6500 Landsdowne Center. Children ages 13-23 months can enjoy number stories and activities. Free. 703-339-4610.

Time for 2's. 10 a.m. at Beatley Library, 5005 Duke St. Children ages 24-36 months. Registration required, 703-519-5900 ext. 4.

Tuesday Tots. 11 a.m. at Burke Branch Library, 4701 Seminary Road. Children ages 2-3. Free. 703-519-6000.

Mother Goose Time. 9:30 a.m. at Barrett Library, 717 Queen St. Ages 12-24 months. Free. 703-838-4555.

SEE CALENDAR, PAGE 7

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PHOTO BY CHUCK HAGEE/GAZETTE PACKET

Jean-Francois Chaufour outside Le Refuge.

Le Refuge Celebrates 25 Years

Colonial Old Town becomes a French bistro entering Le Refuge.

BY CHUCK HAGEE
GAZETTE PACKET

The year was 1983. His wife was pregnant with their second child. They had just returned from a trip to their native France, and he decides to purchase a French restaurant in Old Town Alexandria.

Twenty five years later that pregnancy, Anne-Cleire Chaufour, is now helping her father, Jean-Francois Chaufour, run one of the most successful French restaurants in the Washington Metropolitan area while his wife, Francoise, not only serves as the bookkeeper but also the chef when Chef Raphael is on vacation.

Its name is Le Refuge. It is located at 127 N. Washington St. It is the ultimate French restaurant — not only for its cuisine but also for its atmosphere and ambiance.

Their son Alexander Chaufour, 27, is the sous chef at Ruth Christ’s Steak House. To them, the restaurant business is definitely a family affair.

Prior to Chaufour acquiring Le Refuge, it had been a French restaurant named l’Estaminet. “We changed the name to Le Refuge because we felt it was more suited to what we wanted to convey in our atmosphere,” Chaufour said.

That atmosphere has been described by long-time devoted customers as “authentic French bistro,” particularly those from Europe who travel to the Washington area on a regular basis make it a must to visit Le Refuge. That is also how regular local patrons see it.

“We have friends from California who, when they travel here, the first thing they want to do is have dinner at Le Refuge. I’ve also taken visitors from Europe there and they say this is truly a French Bistro,” said Alex Kaznoff of Burke.

“My wife, Katherine, and I have been coming here for years. It’s one of our favorite restaurants in the Washington area,” he said.

“The regular menu is outstanding. And, their specialty menus during the holidays are really excellent. The cuisine is also complemented by a wine list that is excellent, not only in choice but also in

price,” Kaznoff said.

“We have been going there for over a decade and I have recommended it to many people over the years. It is reasonably priced and well worth it,” he said.

Chaufour acknowledged, “To keep a restaurant operating successfully for 25 years you have to do it right. This is a very competitive business.”

A resident of Springfield, Chaufour came to the Washington region in 1976 and worked in various restaurants prior to acquiring Le Refuge in 1983. “It’s been very successful and the business has always been steady,” Chaufour said.

“That is until the last three months. It seems like people are not eating out as much because of the overall economic situation. But, we have seen a slight improvement just recently,” he said.

CONFINED TO A single room, the restaurant seats 52. There have been a few extra seats added on the sidewalk for the summer months. “I really wanted to keep it small and intimate. If you have a big party you have to go elsewhere,” Chaufour said.

“You need a reservation on the weekends. But, on weekdays we take walk ins,” he said. Le Refuge is open for lunch and dinner Monday through Saturday and closed on Sunday. Lunch is served from 11:30 a.m. until 2:30 p.m. Dinner is served from 5:30 p.m. until 10 p.m.

Both the menu and wine list offer a wide array of selections. Some favorite menu offerings include rack of lamb, beef Wellington, frogs legs, and bouillabaisse. Seasonal favorites include venison, soft shell crabs, and, in the winter, cassoulet, a lamb stew with beans. There are usually daily specials at both lunch and dinner.

The seven page wine list is composed primarily of French selections with a few California reds interspersed. Most are priced from \$20 to \$40 per bottle.

Lunch prices range from \$11.95 to \$16.95. Dinner selections begin at \$18.95 and go to \$31.95. A wide array of hors d’oeuvres is priced from \$5.95 to \$8.95.

Reflecting on the last quarter century, Chaufour said, “I hope to go for another 25 years. We have many regulars and they all seem to really appreciate the way we operate as well as our food.”

That was buttressed by Kaznoff. “This is probably not only my favorite French restaurant in the Washington area, but also my overall favorite restaurant. And, with the holidays coming it’s even more of a treat,” he said.

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CALENDAR



Participate in the 13th annual Alexandria Arts Safari on Saturday, Oct. 11 at the Torpedo Factory. Visit www.torpedofactory.org for more.

FROM PAGE 5

Stories to Grow On. 11 a.m. at Barrett Library, 717 Queen St. Ages 2 and up. Free. 703-838-4555.

WEDNESDAY/OCT. 15

Fall Lecture Series. 7:30 p.m. at Gadsby's Tavern, 134 N. Royal St. Hear how billiards became important to tavern activities. \$12/lecture or \$30/series of 3. Visit www.gadsbystavern.org or 703-838-4242.

Small Wonders. 10:30 a.m. at John Marshall Library, 6209 Rose Hill Drive. Children ages 13-23 months can enjoy stories, fingerplays and activities. Free. 703-971-0010.

Small Wonders. 10:30 a.m. at Sherwood Library, 2501 Sherwood Hall Lane. Children ages 12-13 can enjoy stories and fingerplays. Free. 703-765-3645.

Pajama Party. 7 p.m. at Burke Branch Library, 4701 Seminary Road. Children ages 3-6. Free. 703-519-6000.

Mother Goose Time. 9:30 a.m. at Barrett Library, 717 Queen St. Ages 12-24 months. Free. 703-838-4555.

Stories to Grow On. 11 a.m. at Barrett Library, 717 Queen St. Ages 2 and up. Free. 703-838-4555.

THURSDAY/OCT. 16

Lecture and Book Signing. 7 p.m. at the Alexandria Black History Museum, 902 Wythe St. Join Dr. Seartha Smith-Collins, author of "The Road to Wisdom, Plain and Simple" for a discussion and book signing. Free. www.alexblackhistory.org or 703-838-4356 for more information.

Book Sale. Noon-9 p.m. at Duncan Library, 2501 Commonwealth Ave. Free. 703-838-4566.

Book Group. 7 p.m. at Beatley Library, 5005 Duke St. Discuss "Second Sex" by de Beauvoir. Free. 703-931-3559.

Story Time. 10 a.m. or 3 p.m. at Beatley Library, 5005 Duke St. Children ages 3-5. Free. 703-519-5900 ext. 4.

Bats. 4 p.m. at Barrett Library, 717 Queen St. Ages 3 and up. Free. 703-838-4555.

FRIDAY/OCT. 17

Book Discussion. 7:15 p.m. at John Marshall Library, 6209 Rose Hill

Drive. Call for title. Free. 703-971-0010.

Lunch Bunch. Noon at John Marshall Library, 6209 Rose Hill Drive. Children up to age 5 can bring a lunch and enjoy stories. Free. 703-971-0010.

Music Performance. 8 p.m. at Masonic Memorial, 101 Callahan Drive. Hear music for the tuba. Free. Visit www.usafband.af.mil or 202-767-5658.

Music Performance. 8 p.m. at St. Luke's Church, 8009 Fort Hunt Road. Hear music by the Ottone Ensemble and brass quintet. \$15/adult; \$10/student, senior; \$5/child. 703-765-4342.

Book Sale. 9:30 a.m.-6 p.m. at Duncan Library, 2501 Commonwealth Ave. Free. 703-838-4566.

Time for 2's. 10 a.m. at Beatley Library, 5005 Duke St. Children ages 24-36 months. Registration required, 703-519-5900 ext. 4.

Music Performance. 7:30 p.m. at the Lyceum, 201 S. Washington St. Hear music by Virginia Virtuosi. \$15/adult; 45/student, senior.

SATURDAY/OCT. 18

Craft Sale. 9 a.m.-2 p.m. at Hollin Hall Senior Center, 1500 Shenandoah Road. Over 30 crafters, silent auction, bake ale, lunch and more will be featured. Free. 703-765-4573.

Author Signing. 1 p.m. at Olsson's Books, 106 S. Union St. Julie Patton and Rita Holtz will sign "Historic Photos of Alexandria." 301-562-5912.

Octoberfest. 3-7 p.m. at St. Aidan's Episcopal Church, 8531 Riverside Road. Enjoy pumpkin decorating, food, auction and more. Free. Visit www.staidansepis.org.

Fall Harvest Family Days. 9 a.m.-5 p.m. at Mount Vernon Estate. Enjoy wagon rides, maze, games, music and more. \$13/adult; \$12/senior; \$6/child. Visit www.mountvernon.org or 703-780-2000.

Jesse and James with Mutts Gone Nuts. 11 a.m. at John Marshall Library, 6209 Rose Hill Drive. All ages can see juggling, comedy and more. Free. 703-971-0010.

Harambee Readers. 10:30 a.m. at Sherwood Library, 2501 Sherwood Hall Lane. Discuss "Are You Raising the Next Generation of Hoodlums?" Free. 703-765-3645.

Duct Tape Craft. 1 p.m. at Kingstowne Library, 6500 Landsdowne Center. Children ages 13-15 can make a duct

tape craft. Free. 703-339-4610.

Electronics Recycling Day. 10 a.m.-2 p.m. at Immanuel Church on the Hill. Bring computers, cell phones, televisions, toasters and other items. Free, but \$10 donation for data destruction services.

Flea Market. 9 a.m.-1 p.m. at Trinity United Methodist Church, 2911 Cameron Mills Rd. In addition to the flea market will be baked goods, a moon bounce, children's corner, collectibles, attic treasures and lunch. Proceeds go to local charities. 703-549-5500.

Art Reception. 5-8 p.m. See Lampwork artist **Andrew Brown's** trunk show at Arts Afire Glass Gallery, 1117 King St.

Book Sale. 9:30 a.m.-4 p.m. at Duncan Library, 2501 Commonwealth Ave. Free. 703-838-4566.

Saturday Stories. 10:30 a.m. at Beatley Library, 5005 Duke St. All ages. Free. Registration required, 703-519-5900 ext. 4.

Saturday Stories. 2 p.m. at Burke Branch Library, 4701 Seminary Road. All ages. Free. 703-519-6000.

Art Exhibit. The members of the Kingstowne Area Artists will display works from noon-5 p.m. at the Thompson Center, 6090 Kingstowne Village Parkway. Free.

Paws in the Park. 11 a.m.-1 p.m. at Montgomery Park at Montgomery and N. Royal Streets. \$10/family includes pets. Enjoy yoga for dogs, parades and more.

SUNDAY/OCT. 19

Beer Tasting. 2-5 p.m. at Lee-Fendall House Museum, 614 Oronoco St. Enjoy sampling beers, painting the glass and more. \$40/person. 703-548-1789 to purchase tickets.

Fall Harvest Family Days. 9 a.m.-5 p.m. at Mount Vernon Estate. Enjoy wagon rides, maze, games, music and more. \$13/adult; \$12/senior; \$6/child. Visit www.mountvernon.org or 703-780-2000.

Bridge Club. 4 p.m. at Sherwood Library, 2501 Sherwood Hall Lane. Beginners and advanced players age 12 and up can learn to play. Free. 703-765-3645.

Piano Recital. 6 p.m. at the Lyceum, 201 Prince St. Etsuko Hirose will perform a benefit concert for the Japanese American's Care Fund. \$25/person. E-mail carefund@gmail.com or 703-256-5223 for tickets or more information.



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Blessing of the Pets



Still feeding Maybell a bone, Ronnie Willett presents his pet to be blessed.



Nala, the cat, cautiously peers out from her cage at the dogs that are busy greeting each other.



Lauren Loesch talks to Rev. Davis about her pet hermit crab, Whirlpool. Whirlpool was the smallest of the animals at the ceremony.



Each of the animals received a certificate at the conclusion of the ceremony.



Kelsey Spurio brought her pet Chinchilla, Moonbeam to the blessing.



Animals enjoy meeting each other and getting blessed.

Saturday morning, the Rev. Scott E. Davis of Trinity United Methodist Church held the annual Blessing of the Animals in honor of St. Francis of Assisi.

PHOTOS BY
LOUISE KRAFFT/
GAZETTE PACKET