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Riding With Santa

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Enjoying a carriage ride with
Santa Claus in Cabin John
on Sunday is Tyler of
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Too Late To Preserve Farmhouse Site?

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Pennyfield Lock Farmhouse Set for Demolition

Historians and preservationists hope to rebuild structure that once housed lock keeper's family.

BY AARON STERN
THE ALMANAC

After years of debate over its future, the Pennyfield Lock farmhouse is slated to be torn down sometime this winter. When exactly it will happen will be determined by weather, work crew schedules, and whether or not a local historical preservation group can reach a lease agreement with the National Park Service to take control of the historic structure.

Built over 120 years ago, the building was already in disrepair when its foundation was badly compromised in the floods of 1996. Today it is surrounded by mesh fencing and signs forbidding visitors from approaching. In conjunction with the Maryland Historical Trust, the National Park Service decided that the building's demolition is necessary because it is a potential threat to the public and beyond the point of possibly being renovated, said Kevin Brandt, the superintendent of the C&O Canal National Historical Park. Brandt said there is no tight timeframe to tear down the building but that it will



The Pennyfield Lock farmhouse at Pennyfield Lock in the C&O Canal National Historical Park is slated to be torn down by the National Park Service. Built originally in the 1870s the structure was already in disrepair when its foundation was compromised by the 1996 floods.

likely be done some time this winter after the ground freezes in order to get maneuver the necessary heavy equipment more easily.

"While we hate to see historical structures come down, the structures are so dilapi-

dated that even if you wanted to restore them you'd have to start over at the foundation and rebuild them," Brandt said.

Starting over at the foundation is what both the park service and a group of local historians and preservationists acknowl-

edge is needed. Leaders of Historic Medley, a group that works to preserve historic buildings and structures in Western Montgomery County, began negotiating with the

SEE TOO LATE, PAGE 6

New CEO, New Direction at MCHS

Group finds new leader and is set to elect new board members on Dec. 16.

BY AARON STERN
THE ALMANAC

The Montgomery County Humane Society will hold its annual meeting on Tuesday, Dec. 16 where the six current board members will vote to elect as many as five new board members. They will also reflect on a turbulent year during which the organization weathered a storm of controversy surrounding fund-raising and general operations that resulted in the resignation of chairman and president of the board JC Crist.

On Monday, Dec. 8 the group reached an agreement with Chris Bombaugh to serve as the organization's new CEO and president. That dual title was one of the controversies that surrounded Crist — board members said his dual role afforded him too

much power — but Bombaugh's title is for fund-raising purposes only. Bombaugh will only be in charge of the Montgomery County Humane Society staff, while the actual head of the board of directors will be a newly-created supervisor position, said boardmember Jo Ann Hoffman, the organization's treasurer.

"One of her major skills is in development and fund-raising," said Hoffman of Bombaugh, the former head of Silver Spring's Chamber of Commerce. "We're just tickled."

The upcoming elections are typically a formality, and Hoffman said she expects all six candidates to be elected by the board. The meeting will be a chance to look ahead to the future and will be the starting point for a new beginning, said Hoffman. It will also be a chance to reflect on the past.

In little more than six months, more than half of the board of directors stepped down, its membership dwindling from 13 to 6. At least three departing members cited con-

flicts with Crist and a lack of confidence in his leadership as their reasons for resigning. They also claimed a lack of clarity regarding the group's finances and that getting complete, detailed financial statements about the Humane Society's finances was next to impossible.

IN THE TWO YEARS that Crist ran the Humane Society the organization's cash and equivalent assets fell by nearly 50 percent, from \$1.8 million in 2005 to just over \$900,000 in 2007. During the same time period, contributions dropped by more than 40 percent in the same time span, from just over \$235,390 to \$140,541. During that time the organization boasted annual placement rates of adoptable animals near 95

percent, and euthanasia rates fell as well — in fiscal year 2008 the shelter put down 1,039 animals, 30 percent fewer than it did the year preceding Crist's ascension — but

SEE NEW CEO, PAGE 7

Acorn Shortage

Bad news for hungry wildlife.

Last year was a very good time to be a squirrel. This year, not so much. There are at least 10 species of oak tree in Montgomery County and last year as many as three of them — the white oak, red oak, and chestnut oak — had what are called mast years, bumper crops of production that are believed to be a means of propagation for the trees. The animals that eat acorns — squirrels, flying squirrels, deer, mice and turkeys — can't eat all of the nuts that fall in such a year so many of the remaining ones sprout.

"Last year being a mast year the trees probably need a year or more to

SEE ACORN, PAGE 6

Churchill, Whitman, Wootton Honored

Winston Churchill, Walt Whitman, and Thomas S. Wootton High Schools — the three public schools that serve Potomac — have been awarded gold medal status, placing them among the top 100 high schools in the nation in a new U.S. News & World Report ranking of America's best high schools.

Whitman was ranked 44th in the nation, Wootton was ranked 54th, and Churchill was ranked 57th. They were the only three schools in Maryland to receive gold medal rankings.

U.S. News & World Report, in collaboration with Standard & Poor's School Evaluation Services, analyzed academic and enrollment data from 21,069 public high schools. The study was inspired by a Newsweek magazine ranking — which uses the Challenge Index to rank schools based on Advanced Placement or International Baccalaureate tests taken.

Santa Rides Again

Santa Claus is coming to the neighborhoods of Potomac thanks to the men and women of the Cabin John Park Volunteer Fire Department.

Beginning Friday, Dec. 12, Santa will visit all the neighborhoods of Potomac atop a decorated fire truck and collect toys for donation to children by way of the National Center for Children and Families.

The schedule is as follows:

❖ **Friday, Dec. 12:** Arrowood, Seven Locks Hills, Burning Tree Estates, Rose Hill Estates, Laurel Hill, Stonehurst Center, Smithfield

❖ **Saturday, Dec. 13:** Bannockburn, Bannockburn Estates, Al Marah, Wilson Knolls (partial only)

❖ **Sunday, Dec. 14:** West Bethesda Park, Oakwood Knolls, Locust Ridge, Cohasset, Bradley Park, Burning Tree Valley, Bradley Hills Grove

❖ **Monday, Dec. 15:** Cabin John Park, Cabin John, Evergreen, Congressional Country Club Estates

❖ **Tuesday, Dec. 16:** Congressional Manor, Carderock Springs, Clewerwall (neighborhood), Glengarry, Carderock, The Palisades

❖ **Wednesday, Dec. 17:** Mountain Gate, Eagle Rock, Natelli Woods, Potomac Ranch, River Falls, Fawsett Farms

❖ **Thursday, Dec. 18:** Beallmount, Potomac Hunt Acres, Lake Potomac, Beall Mountain Potomac, Stoney Creek Farm, Saddle Ridge, Potomac Hunt Acres, Potomac View Estates, Tara, Alvermar Woods

❖ **Friday, Dec. 19:** Fox Meadow, River Oaks Farm, Potomac Farm Estates, Potomac Hills, Potomac Manors, Great Falls Estates Potomac Falls Estates

❖ **Saturday, Dec. 20:** Avenel, Williamsburg Estates, River Roads Estates, Concord, "The Village", Williamsburg Gardens

❖ **Sunday, Dec. 21:** Potomac Village, Camotop, Falconhurst, McAuley Park, Kentdale Estates, Bradley, Bradley Boulevard Estates, Bradley Farms, Congressional Forrest Estates

Dec. 22 and 23 will be weather make-up days, and the toys collected during Santa's rides will be donated on Dec. 24. Presents may be brought to either Cabin John Park VFD Station and we the fire department is requesting donated toys for children from 4 to 16 this year.

Minority Legislative Breakfast

The 8th Annual Minority Legislative Breakfast will be held Dec. 15, 7:30 a.m. to 9:30 a.m., at the Bethesda Marriott Hotel in Bethesda.

The Hispanic Chamber of Commerce Montgomery County, African American Chamber of Commerce of Montgomery County and Asian American Political Alliance host this event to discuss legislative issues that have an impact on the minority business community of Montgomery County and to develop a common agenda presented as legislative priorities every December.

For more information go to: <http://mlbmd.wordpress.com/register/>

NEWS



Local residents take a carriage ride with Santa Claus in Cabin John on Sunday afternoon. Carriage rides with Santa are an annual event at the mall.

Riding With Santa

Jack, Kevin, Riley and Maeve McGuire of Potomac took a carriage ride with Santa Claus at the Cabin John Mall on Sunday afternoon.



PHOTOS BY ROBBIE HAMMER/THE ALMANAC

Berliner Elected Council Vice President

Selection makes Berliner first District 1 Councilmember to hold position, puts him in line for presidency next year.



Berliner

BY AARON STERN
THE ALMANAC

The Montgomery County Council last week unanimously elected Councilman Roger Berliner (D-Potomac, Bethesda, Chevy Chase) to serve a one-year term as the Council's next vice president, making him the first District 1 representative elected to that position.

"That's a plus for District One," said Berliner.

The Council also unanimously elected Phil Andrews (D-Rockville, Gaithersburg) to a one-year term as Council president, and Berliner

said that he will work with Andrews to help the new president in his duties of setting the legislative agenda for the Council.

"Phil and I will work together in a way ... [that] will be much more of a team [than previous president-vice presidential tandems] and we're already acting as a team," said Berliner, who was elected to his first term in November 2006. Berliner currently serves on the Health and Human Services Committee and on Transportation, Infrastructure, Energy and Environment Committee, where he is the lead member for energy and

environment issues

Tough times are ahead as the County grapples with a projected deficit of \$450 million next year, and in assuming the top leadership post Andrews said the road ahead would not be

easy. "The Council will work closely with the County Executive to eliminate the deficit by cutting spending, and not by raising tax rates or by exceeding the charter limit," said Councilmember Andrews in a statement. "Hard times force hard choices and present the opportunity to reconsider fundamental assumptions about what the County does and how the County does it," he said. "The County cannot sustain simultaneously the size of the current workforce and provide the level of pay increases employees expect

SEE BERLINER, PAGE 9

Feldman To Advise Obama's Transition Team

State Del. Brian Feldman (D-15) last week was tapped to serve as an advisor to president-elect Barack Obama's transition team in the U.S. Department of Justice.

Feldman worked for 13 years in the Department of Justice as a tax litigator before getting into politics in 2001 and served as an Obama delegate to the Democratic National Convention last summer. Exactly what he is doing Feldman is not permitted to say — part of the job description is that he's sworn to 100 percent secrecy — but he will be a busy man the next couple of months.

In addition to his day job as a private practice attorney, Feldman was already spending time gearing up for what will be a challenging 426th Session of the Maryland General Assembly that kicks off Jan. 14.

With the state facing steep fiscal restraints Feldman said he will be challenged in his role as the head of the Montgomery County Delegation to Annapolis to ensure

that his constituents are not disproportionately affected by any spending cuts.

Now add his duties with the Obama transition team and, these, days life is busy for Feldman.

"I think that it's an exciting time for the country and for those of us who are fortunate enough to be part of the transition it's exciting and it's a privilege," said Feldman.

Feldman has been rumored as a potential Democratic challenger to incumbent Comptroller Peter Franchot in 2010, but Feldman was mum when asked about any such future intentions.

"That [is] two years away and not something that I'm spending a lot of time thinking about right now," he said.



Feldman

— AARON STERN

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Too Late To Save Farmhouse Site?

FROM PAGE 3

National Park Service nine years ago to take control and responsibility for the reconstruction and operation of the historic Pennyfield structures.

“THE LEASE put together with the Park Service ... just never got completed due to the bureaucracy,” said Steve Goldberg, president of Historic Medley. “It was a fairly complicated issue of, OK, you rebuild the buildings and what do you do with them?”

Ideas have ranged from using the farmhouse as a hostel for hikers, a place to hold small concerts, or a concession stand for park visitors.

“When you’re dealing with history and you’re dealing with government you have to be a little patient,” said Perry Kapsch, a past president of Historic Medley. Kapsch and Goldberg said they are holding out hope that a deal for the lease can be reached before the Park Service removes the structure so that the interior of the building can be analyzed and documented and so that historic artifacts like hardware and sal-

vageable wood can be reintroduce into a replacement structure.

Built originally in the 1870s, the four structures were once home to a fishing camp that was a favorite of President Grover Cleveland, said Kapsch. Named for the Pennyfield family who ran the lock — the exact spelling of which is debatable, Kapsch said — the farmhouse’s last tenant was a woman who raised sheep on the land. She vacated the property in the 1970s, but due to the lease agreement the Park Service didn’t assume operational control of the property until the early 1980s, said Brandt. At that point the building was already in poor disrepair and unlivable, and the cash-strapped park didn’t have the funds to repair it.

Structures like the Pennyfield farmhouse used to be much more common along the C&O, said Kapsch. Over the years flooding and the Park Service’s inability to maintain them and its decision to let the park renaturalize itself has led to the demise of many of them. This is one that Kapsch said she hopes can be preserved, even if it is as a historical reconstruction sometime in the future.



PHOTO BY AARON STERN/THE ALMANAC

The Pennyfield Lock farmhouse is off-limits to visitors but remains a potential safety hazard to trespassers. Park officials and preservationists agree that it is beyond the point of rehabilitation.

“There used to be lots of them anywhere, but to have buildings along the Canal is a big deal because so many of them have been lost,” she said.

Acorn Scarcity

FROM PAGE 3

recover to produce a normal amount of acorns,” said Geri Drymalski, a naturalist at the Locust Grove Nature Center in Cabin John Regional Park. Acorns can be found on the ground this year, but not without a fair bit of rummaging.

That’s bad news for the animals. Most years of tree species in the fall lead to high reproduction rates of the animals that rely on them the following spring; tired out trees the following year mean a dearth of acorns and subsequently hard times for the wild things below.

“The following year [of a mast year] with a lack of food a lot of these animals are not going to be able to survive,” said Drymalski.

Most years come along every three to five years and affect all of the trees of a given species in the same region at the same time, said Drymalski. And in addition to last year’s bumper crop from some oak species, a late frost this year may have killed buds or newly forming acorns, she said. Either way, local four-legged nut-dependents are experiencing boom-and-bust times that many upright walkers can relate to.

This is likely to cause many animals to get resourceful. Deer will chew down saplings and venture into yards more often looking for a meal, while squirrels will be more likely to scrounge around birdfeeders and hunt for dogwood berries, crabapples, hollies and other nuts like hickory nuts and walnuts, for which this year was a good year, Drymalski said.

There was a time when humans would have been more concerned with an acorn shortage. Native Americans had many uses for acorns, and recipes still exist today, from breads to stews.

“They’re a very good source of protein, which makes them such a good source of food for wild animals,” Drymalski said.

— AARON STERN

Bishop O'Connell High School

A place that still wishes its friends a Merry Christmas.

NEWS

New CEO At MCHS

FROM PAGE 3

former board members questioned the validity of those statistics, suggesting that they may have increased by broadening the definition of an unadoptable animal.

After Crist's resignation, the Humane Society hired consultant Nick Gilman to take temporary charge of the organization, but complications did not end there. At least two incidents occurred when former board members were alerted to trouble with the organization's heating system that left animals in the main rescue shelter shivering for warmth, prompting the County to step in and meet with the Humane Society leadership.

Then the historic building on a property in Aspin Hill owned by the Humane Society, further clouding the future of that facility that houses a pet cemetery, and in August, Steve Dickstein, the head of Montgomery County's Animal Services division that works in tandem with the Humane Society resigned after less than a year on the job after having previously expressed to The Almanac frustrations with the County bureaucracy.

FORMER BOARD members like Rob Blizard have continued to deride an opaque accounting process [see Blizard's letter on page 8] and Bombaugh will be charged with negotiating a new contract with Montgomery County and heading the organization back towards sound financial footing in hard economic times. Part of that task will be to find a way to utilize the group's property in Aspin Hill, its overflow rescue shelter in Rockville, and a thrift store that Hoffman said has been more lucrative than ever as the economy has gone south.

"Chris has got a big nut to crack but she's very anxious to get on with this," said Hoffman. "We've been doing well. We've had a few hurdles [and] we still have people out there that are not happy with us but we're hanging in there."

THE ELECTION meeting will be held at the Potomac Community Center Tuesday, Dec. 16 from 7 to 9 p.m. The meeting is open to the public though only MCHS members in good standing can vote.

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LET'S TALK Real Estate



by
Michael Matese

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Most real estate transactions involve some hesitation and questions on the part of the seller and the buyer. The real estate agent can provide answers or alternatives so that matters can be resolved and the sale concluded.

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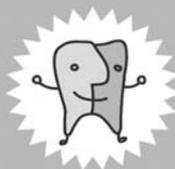
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OPINION



PHOTO BY MARY KIMM/THE ALMANAC

Snapshot

These deer were coping with the coldest weather of the year this weekend, near Rock Run Stream Valley Park in Potomac. Deer spend time in the winter foraging under leaves in the woods for acorns, but will find fewer acorns this year. This could send more of them across roads and into yards in search of tasty landscaping.

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Questions for Humane Society

To the Editor:

On Tuesday, Dec. 16, the Montgomery County Humane Society (MCHS) holds its annual meeting — an obligatory, but usually overlooked, event. This year, county animal lovers — particularly MCHS donors — should attend and ask board members how they will address the consequences to this 501c3 charity of leadership issues detailed in several newspaper articles earlier this year.

Attendees should demand answers to the following questions:

1. Are financial statements for fiscal year (FY) 2008, which concluded on June 30, ready for the meeting?

2. As noted in FY 2007 statements, why had cash and cash equivalents declined by 50 percent (from approximately \$1.8 million to approximately \$900,000) since FY 2005?

3. How much does the MCHS hold in cash and cash equivalents as of June 30, 2008?

4. As FY 2007 statements show, expenses for the MCHS's Wagging Tails thrift store were \$370,000 and revenue was \$390,000. This might appear to be a respectable five percent profit until one realizes that most, if not all, of the store's stock was not purchased merchandise, but donated items. Why not instead invest in a major gift program or direct mail solicitation program with a conservative estimated net return of 200

percent?

5. Why did the board allow the former president of the shelter's board to serve simultaneously as the CEO?

6. The MCHS received the eight-acre Aspin Hill pet cemetery as an asset transfer in 2007. Did the MCHS also receive an endowment to provide perpetual care of the cemetery as required in at least one of the transfer of title documents?

7. If an endowment was not received, then what is the current cost of the annual upkeep of Aspin Hill to MCHS?

8. The buildings at Aspin Hill have been condemned by Montgomery County, yet they are apparently on a historic register. This suggests that MCHS must restore these buildings to their original condition. For this scenario, what will be the cost to MCHS?

Rob Blizard
Gaithersburg

Rob Blizard is a former board member of the Montgomery County Humane Society.

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NEWS

Berliner

FROM PAGE 4

and continue to obligate future taxpayers to ever-larger retire health care and pension benefits. We need to scale down in a thoughtful and targeted way the size of the workforce, through normal workforce attrition and productivity improvements. We also need a thorough re-examination of County programs and benefit commitments for future employees.”

Council tradition dictates that the vice president becomes the president the following year. Berliner's election as vice president makes him the first District 1 representative to hold the post since Councilmembers were first elected to office by District in 1990; prior to 1990 all councilmembers were at-large candidates, said Steve Farber, the County Council's staff director.

Berliner's two District 1 predecessors - Betty Ann Krahnke (1990 to 2000) and Howie Denis (2000-2006) - were both Republicans on majority Democratic Councils. Potomac resident Gail Ewing was an at-large councilmember when she served as vice president in 1995 and president in 1996.

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CALENDAR

To have community events listed free in *The Potomac Almanac*, e-mail to almanac@connectionnewspapers.com. Deadline is Thursday at noon for the following week's paper. Photos and artwork encouraged. For more information, call 703-917-6407.

WEDNESDAY/DEC. 10

Afternoon Tea. Flutist Susan Bour and pianist Phil Bour are performing at 1 p.m. at the Mansion at Strathmore, 10701 Rockville Pike, North Bethesda. Prepaid reservations required; \$21 plus tax. Call 301-581-5108.

After Hours. Jazz vocalist Sarah Jones performs at 7:30 p.m. in the Mansion at Strathmore, 10701 Rockville Pike, North Bethesda. Tickets: \$15; call 301-581-5100.

FRIDAY/DEC. 12

Home Tours. Guided tours showing the history and personal stories of the Mansion at Strathmore, 10701 Rockville Pike, North Bethesda, 11 a.m.-3 p.m. Free. Call 301-581-5100.

Gospel Choir. The Soweto Gospel Choir performs at 8 p.m. in the Music Center at Strathmore, 5301 Tuckerman Lane, North Bethesda. Tickets: \$25-48; call 301-581-5100.

Contra Dance. The Friday Night Dancers presents traditional American dancing including contra dances, square dances, and waltzes at the Spanish Ballroom in Glen Echo Park. Contra dance lesson from 7:30-8:15 p.m., dance from 8:30-11:30 p.m. to live music. \$9/person. E-mail fdcontra@yahoo.com.

Used Book Sale. 9 a.m.-1 p.m. at Potomac Library, 10101 Glenolden Drive. Browse through hardback and paperback novels. Free. 240-777-0690.

SATURDAY/DEC. 13

Geology Hike. Join National Park Service Volunteers for a geology hike of the Billy Goat Trail from 1-3 p.m. Visit www.nps.gov/choh/.

Children's Tour. Children ages 5 and older, accompanied by an adult, go on a guided tour and do an art activity from 10:15 a.m.- 12:15 p.m. in the Mansion at Strathmore, 10701 Rockville Pike, North Bethesda. Reservations required; call 301-581-5100.

Swing Dance. Enjoy a swing dance at the Spanish Ballroom in Glen Echo Park. Beginner Swing lesson from 8-9 p.m. and dance from 9 p.m.- 12 a.m. to live music. \$15/person. Call 301-340-9732.

The Nutcracker. The Puppet Co. will perform "The Nutcracker" at 6 p.m. at the Puppet Co. in Glen Echo Park. Tickets: \$25 (children under 2 free).

Winter's Eve. Enjoy live performances, holiday crafts for children and a hot

chocolate bar at the Holiday Art Show in the Popcorn Gallery in Glen Echo Park. 6-9 p.m. Free. Call 301-634-2222 or visit www.glenechopark.org.

Biennial Auction. 10 a.m.-1 p.m. at Potomac Community Center, 11315 Falls Road. Browse items by the Potomac Craftsmen Fiberarts Guild. Free. Visit www.potomaccraftsmenguild.org for more.

Book Sale. 9 a.m.-1 p.m. at Potomac Library, 10101 Glenolden Drive. Browse through paperbacks, hardbacks and more. Free. 240-777-0690.

Talk. 11:30 a.m. at Beth Shalom Congregation and Talmud Torah, 11825 Seven Locks Road. Robbie Berman will talk about organ donation. Free. E-mail office@bethsholom.org for more.

Pet Photos with Santa. 1-3 p.m. at Wagging Tails Thrift Store, 1310 E. Gude Drive, Rockville. Pets can take pictures by appointment. 240-483-2846.

Musical Plays. 4 p.m. at Wootton High School, 2100 Wooten Parkway, Rockville. See "Yertle and Myrtle: The Tyrant Turtles" and "Wayward Knight." Free. Visit www.childrock.org for more.

Community Shred Event. 8-11 a.m. at Montgomery County Fairgrounds in Gaithersburg. Bring sensitive documents to have them safely destroyed. Free. 240-777-8000.

SUNDAY/DEC. 14

Chamber Music. Robert Shafer and friends perform at 3 and 7:30 p.m. in the Mansion at Strathmore, 10701 Rockville Pike, North Bethesda. Tickets: \$25; call 301-581-5100.

Youth Orchestras. Maryland Classic Youth Orchestras performs at 3 p.m. in the Music Center at Strathmore, 5301 Tuckerman Lane, North Bethesda. Tickets: \$20/adults, \$8/children and seniors. Call 301-581-5100.

Contra and Square Dance. The Folklore Society of Greater Washington presents traditional American dancing including contra dances, square dances, and waltzes at the Spanish Ballroom in Glen Echo Park. Dance lesson from 7-7:30 p.m., dance from 7:30-10:30 p.m. to live music. \$12/non-members, \$9/FSGW members.

Hanukkah Happening. 4:30 p.m. at Har Shalom. Hear music, crafts, dinner and more. \$9/adult; \$6/child. 301-424-9318.

Pet Photos with Santa. Noon-5 p.m. at Posh Pooch, 8009 Norfolk Ave., Bethesda. Pets can take pictures by appointment. 240-483-2846.

MONDAY/DEC. 15

Afternoon Tea. Piano duo Hsien Ann-

Meng and Wei-Der Huang are performing at 1 p.m. at the Mansion at Strathmore, 10701 Rockville Pike, North Bethesda. Prepaid reservations required; \$21 plus tax. Call 301-581-5108.

Origami. Gretchen Schermerhorn and Yukie Kobayashi teach origami from 11 a.m.-1 p.m. in the Mansion at Strathmore, 10701 Rockville Pike, North Bethesda. Tickets: \$15; call 301-581-5100.

TUESDAY/DEC. 16

Afternoon Tea. Pianist Fran Hrastar is performing at 1 p.m. at the Mansion at Strathmore, 10701 Rockville Pike, North Bethesda. Prepaid reservations required; \$21 plus tax. Call 301-581-5108.

WEDNESDAY/DEC. 17

Afternoon Tea. Harpist Jo Morrison is performing at 1 p.m. at the Mansion at Strathmore, 10701 Rockville Pike, North Bethesda. Prepaid reservations required; \$21 plus tax. Call 301-581-5108.

Art After Hours. Zemer Chai, the 30-member Jewish Community Choir of Washington, D.C. performs at 7:30 p.m. in the Mansion at Strathmore, 10701 Rockville Pike, North Bethesda. Tickets: \$15; call 301-581-5100.

Book Discussion. 1 p.m. at Potomac Library, 10101 Glenolden Drive. Discuss "An Equal Music" by Vikram Seth. Free. 240-777-0690.

Book Signing. 7:30 p.m. at Audubon Naturalist Society, 8490 Jones Mill Road, Chevy Chase. Get copies of "City of Trees." Free. 301-652-3606.

THURSDAY/ DEC. 18

Winter Snacks for Animals. 10 a.m. at Locust Grove Nature Center, 7777 Democracy Blvd., Bethesda. Children 3 years and up can feed the animals. \$3/person. 301-299-1990.

FRIDAY/DEC. 19

Six String Sing-a-Long. A musical performance and sing-a-long of children's favorites with Ellis Woodward at the Cabin John Mall Atrium, 11325 Seven Locks Road, Potomac, 9:30 a.m.

Contra Dance. The Friday Night Dancers presents traditional American dancing including contra dances, square dances, and waltzes at the Spanish Ballroom in Glen Echo Park. Contra dance lesson from 7:30-8:15 p.m., dance from 8:30-11:30 p.m. to live music. \$9/person. E-mail fdcontra@yahoo.com.

Swing Dance. Enjoy a swing dance at the Spanish Ballroom in Glen Echo Park. Beginner Swing lesson from 8-9

SEE CALENDAR, PAGE 11

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FROM PAGE 10

p.m. and dance from 9 p.m.- 12 a.m. to live music. \$15/person.

SATURDAY/DEC. 20

Family Solstice Hike. 11 a.m. at Locust Grove Nature Center, 7777 Democracy Blvd., Bethesda. Families can enjoy hikes and more. \$2/person. 301-299-1990.

Music Performance. 8 p.m. at the Music Center at Strathmore. Hear the National Philharmonic Chorale perform "Messiah." Tickets start at \$29. Children free. Visit www.nationalphilharmonic.org or 301-581-5100.

SUNDAY/DEC. 21

Christmas Music. The Washington Chorus performs at 5 p.m. in the Music Center at Strathmore, 5301 Tuckerman Lane, North Bethesda. Tickets start at \$15; 202-342-6221.

Waltz Dance. Enjoy a waltz dance at the Spanish Ballroom in Glen Echo Park. Beginner Waltz lesson from 3-3:30 p.m. and dance from 3:30-6 p.m. to live music. \$8/person. Call Joan Koury at 202-238-0230 or visit www.WaltzTimeDances.org.

Contra and Square Dance. Traditional American dancing at the Spanish Ballroom in Glen Echo Park. Dance lesson from 7-7:30 p.m., dance from 7:30-10:30 p.m. to live music. \$12/non-members, \$9/FSGW members.

Chanukah Menorah Lighting Celebration. 4:45 p.m. at Cabin John Shopping Center parking lot, corner of Tuckerman and Seven Locks Roads. Enjoy magic tricks, free food, music and more. Free. Visit www.LightTheMenorah.com.

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FINE ARTS

A **Holiday Art Show and Sale** will be held in the Popcorn Gallery in Glen Echo Park Saturdays and Sundays, **through Jan. 11**, 12-6 p.m. Exhibition will feature works by resident artists.

Work from **The Miniature Painters, Sculptors & Gravers Society of Washington, D.C.** is on display at the Mansion at Strathmore's Gudelsky Galley Suite from **December through Jan. 3**. All the work is original and must be rendered 1/6 or less than life size and the image may not exceed 25 square inches. Free. Visit www.strathmore.org.

Peruvian artist **Nebur Arellano** is displaying tapestries inspired by the indigenous cultures of her homeland at the Mansion at Strathmore's First Floor Galleries from **December through Jan. 3**. Free. Visit www.strathmore.org.

Alice Hui's wood fire stoneware, porcelain teapots and vases and sculptures both wheel-thrown and slab-built and **Jane Brashares'** handmade paper, natural dyes, and found objects such as sea glass, stones and weathered wood are on display at the Mansion at Strathmore's Invitational Galley from **December through Jan. 3**. Visit www.strathmore.org.

Potomac artist **Martha Lechner Spak** will have artwork on display in the Target Gallery's juried art show **from Dec. 11 through Jan. 11**. Target Gallery is located in the Torpedo Factory, 105 N. Union St., Alexandria. Free. Visit www.torpedofactory.org or 301-469-0189.

Joyce Zipperer's "Unmentionables ... Then and Now," a display of undergarments made of metal fabrics runs at

the Mansion at Strathmore, 10701 Rockville Pike, North Bethesda, from **Jan. 5-31**.

The 35th anniversary celebration of **the Potomac Vally Watercolorists** runs at the Mansion at Strathmore, 10701 Rockville Pike, North Bethesda, from **Jan. 10-Feb. 21**.

Yellow Barn Gallery at Glen Echo Park, 7300 MacArthur Blvd., Glen Echo. Free exhibits of emerging artist work and art sales. Each weekend features the work of a different artist. Every Saturday and Sunday from 12 - 5 p.m. Call 301-371-5593 or visit www.yellowbarnstudio.com.

The **Bethesda Art Walk** allows art lovers to visit downtown Bethesda's gallery community from **6-9 p.m. on the second Friday of every month**. Many galleries change exhibits monthly and hold receptions showcasing the featured artist in conjunction with the Bethesda Art Walk.

Glen Echo Pottery. Glen Echo Pottery maintains ongoing exhibits in the Glen Echo Pottery Gallery in Glen Echo Park, 7300 MacArthur Blvd., Glen Echo. These feature a special selection of work by resident artists, instructors and students. Every Saturday and Sunday from noon to 5 p.m. Call 301-229-5585 or visit www.glenechopottery.com.

Glassworks is the D.C. area's first glass school located in Glen Echo Park, 7300 MacArthur Blvd., Glen Echo. When classes are not in session, the studio is open for visitors to observe glassblowing and view the work of resident artist Rick Sherbert. 301-229-4184 or visit www.ricksherbertglass.com.

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PETS

Partnership for Animal Welfare (PAW) is an all-volunteer, not-for-profit group. To adopt an animal, volunteer or make a tax-deductible donation, visit www.paw-rescue.org, call 301-572-4729 or write to PAW, P.O. Box 1074, Greenbelt, MD 20768.



Skye

Skye is a 9 month, 35 pound, spayed, female collie mix. She is a rescue dog that still has puppy energy and a willingness to learn quickly. Skye will do best in a cat-free home and with an active adopter.



Dina

Dina is a 7-year-old, 40 pound, spayed, female Lab mix. She is healthy and happy. Dina is good on a leash, with children and other dogs. She will be happy in a cat free home.

BULLETIN BOARD

To submit an item for the Civic Calendar, e-mail almanac@connectionnewspapers.com or fax the submission to 703-917-0991. Deadline is Thursday at noon two weeks prior to the event. For questions, call 703-917-6407.

WEDNESDAY/DEC. 10

Talk. 7 p.m., Harold Gans will talk about "Mystery of the Bible Codes: Scientific Research on the Discovery of the Hidden Codes in the Torah." \$18/lecture. Registration required, dawn@jewishroc.org or 301-468-3881. Takes place at JewishROC, 11304 Old Georgetown Road, Rockville. Visit www.jewishroc.org for more.

THURSDAY/DEC. 18

Child Safety Seat Inspection. 10 a.m.-1:30 p.m. at Fitzgerald's Auto Mall, 5501 Nicholson Lane. Free.

MONDAY/DEC. 22

Blood Drive. Beth Shalom Congregation and Talmud Torah, 11825 Seven Locks Road, Potomac, is sponsoring a blood drive with INOVA from 3-8 p.m. Call 301-279-7010 or email office@bethsholom.org to schedule a donation.

SATURDAY/JAN. 17

Registration Begins. Register for classes at Imagination Stage, 4908 Auburn Ave. All ages. Visit www.imaginationtheatre.org or 301-961-6060 for class schedule.

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Reconciliation

December 20, 9:30am-5:00pm
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6:00pm, 8:00pm
& 10:00pm

Christmas Day

8:30am, 10:45am
& 12:30pm
Mass in Korean, 5:00pm

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SPECTACULAR OPEN HOUSES

December 13 & 14



When you visit one of these Open Houses, tell the Realtor you saw it in the Almanac. For more real estate listings and open houses visit www.ConnectionNewspapers.com, click the Real Estate links on the right side.

Call Specific Agents to Confirm Dates & Times.

Potomac

11224 Broad Green Dr.	\$884,000	Sun 1-4	Ellen Cohen	Long & Foster	240-462-6000
9228 Copenhaven Dr.	\$875,000	Sat & Sun 1-4	Amy Lavine	Weichert	301-656-2500
1219 Fallsmead Way	\$795,000	Sun 1-4	Judith Casey	Long & Foster	240-482-7066
8816 Harness Trail	\$789,000	Sun 1-4	Leslie Friedson	Long & Foster	301-455-4506
9800 Tibron Ct	\$1,649,000	Sun 1-4	Leslie Friedson	Long & Foster	301-455-4506

North Potomac

10908 Cartwright Pl.	\$700,000	Sat & Sun 1-4	Beth Nathan	Weichert	301-718-4100
14028 Great Notch Ter.	\$442,000	Sun 1-4	Sunita Bagai	Long & Foster	240-401-5261
327 Inspiration Ln.	\$1,035,000	Sun 1-4	Angie Hashempour	Keller Williams	240-514-1500

Chevy Chase

7111 Woodmont Ave. #206	\$599,000	Sun 1-4	Wendy Banner	Long & Foster	301-356-9090
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Bethesda

7323 Arrowood Rd.	\$2,650,000	Sun 1-4	Susan Rusnak	Re/MAX	301-351-0342
6630 River Rd.	\$969,500	Sun 1-4	Hope Page	Long & Foster	301-215-6444
5301 Westbard Cir. #404	\$625,000	Sat 1-3	Lisa Marcais	Keller Williams	301-515-1155

To add your Realtor-represented Open House to these weekly listings, please call Kenneth Lourie

703-917-6475 or E-Mail the info to
Klourie@connectionnewspapers.com
All listings due by Monday at 3 pm.

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Wrestling's Coaching Pedigree

Churchill's new assistant is one of three former state champions to return as coach in recent years.

BY MARK GIANNOTTO
THE ALMANAC

Having been a three-time state wrestling champion while at Churchill from 2001-2004, former Bulldog assistant coach Danny April thought the transition from state title winner to coach last year would be easy.

But April, a "natural" on the mat according to Churchill head coach Mike Endler, soon realized that doing and teaching a move can be a far different and sometimes frustrating proposition.

It was on those nights when he grew discouraged that April would call up his good friend and two-time Churchill state champion (2002-2003) wrestler Brandon Shapiro to vent and get some coaching pointers.

It turned out to be a sign of things to come for Shapiro, who has taken over where April left off last season as the newest addition to the Bulldogs coaching staff this year.

"Shapiro helped me a lot last year," said April, who is finishing up his degree at the University of Maryland and pursuing a career in film. "I'd be frustrated with certain things and he'd calm me down. Every time I felt like I didn't accomplish anything ... he'd be that guy I would talk to."

The state champion lineage doesn't stop there, though. Current Watkins Mill coach Tim Lowe, who wrestled under Endler at Einstein, won state titles in 1998 and 1999, and also served as an assistant at Churchill from 2003-2006.

As the 2008-09 Montgomery County wrestling season got under way last weekend, Churchill is in the beneficial position of having a head coach in Endler who not only has coached three different state champions, he has also convinced all three to return as assistants under him.

And don't think the head coach overlooks what a luxury he has.

"It's awesome to just have a two-time state champion in the room," said Endler, who is starting his

Whitman Poised for Title Run on the Mats

As Whitman coach Derek Manon matter-of-factly lists what he has back from last year's regional champion Viking squad, it's easy to understand why conventional wisdom says his team should be the favorite heading into the Montgomery County wrestling season.

A year after going 16-1 and losing to eventual state champion Stephen Decatur in the state semifinals, Whitman returns 10 starters, including six state qualifiers — five of which finished in the top-six individually in their respective weight class at the state meet.

Among those are seniors Aaron Norris (171 pounds), Eric Beverly (145 pounds) and Taylor Leighton (189 pounds), all of whom Manon expects to duplicate or improve upon great seasons of a year ago. But despite the gaudy numbers, there's one digit driving Manon and his squad this season: zero, as in the number of team or individual state champions the team had last year.

"They still have a lot to prove both individually and as a team," said Manon. "I think maintaining the idea that we've got to get better every single day is going to be our biggest challenge."



PHOTO BY MARK GIANNOTTO/THE ALMANAC
New Churchill assistant Brandon Shapiro demonstrates how to do an armbar on co-captain Ian Whittaker as the rest of the team watches. Shapiro won individual state titles for the Bulldogs in 2002 and 2003.

ninth season as head coach at Churchill.

ENDLER AND MEMBERS of the Bulldog wrestling team agree both Lowe and April were invaluable tools in practice, but there is a certain down-to-earth quality about their newest state champion turned mentor that has them excited for what may arise as a result.

While Shapiro's prolific high school career resulted in a stint on the West Virginia University wrestling team for a few seasons, things never came easily for him at Churchill.

After not wrestling his freshman year for personal reasons, Shapiro had a "good, but not great" season as a sophomore that ended in the regional tournament. As a junior, he struggled with his stamina while compiling another solid, but unspectacular record. But in the 2003 county tournament, something clicked for Shapiro, and he went on to win the county, region, and state titles. He then went undefeated as a senior and won a second-consecutive state crown.

"It was realizing there is no silver bullet answer to being good at anything," recalled Shapiro. "It just takes hard work and not taking shortcuts. It's a different work ethic and a different mentality and I want to instill that in these guys."

And it's the understanding that Shapiro was once just one of them that has the current crop of Bulldogs excited for what could be this winter.

"When he pushes us, he wrestles hard," said junior 145-pounder Cody Egan. "But when he's trying to teach us something, he gives us just the right amount of endurance to really push us to learn the move, instead of simply letting us do the move."

THE BULLDOGS OPENED their season on the right note last Saturday, defeating both Kennedy and Walter Johnson in a tri-meet.

And as was the case last weekend, Churchill will rely on their lower and middleweights all season as an inexperienced group of upper weights gets their bearings on the varsity level. Endler is expecting solid seasons from his two senior co-captains, Mike Chen (119 pounds) and Ian Whittaker (152 pounds), while junior Saam Tashayyod (135 pounds), sophomore Wesley Deaver (112 pounds), and freshman Jake Sutton (103 pounds) should impress in their first full season on the varsity team.

Churchill will compete along with Whitman, Wootton, and Bullis in the Mad Mats Tournament at Magruder this weekend.



Double-Double Bulldog Trouble

The Churchill girl's basketball team kicked off its regular season last Friday night with a 58-41 win over Springbrook. Leading the charge for the lady Bulldogs was the frontcourt tandem of seniors Alex Vassila and Marlena Phillips. Vassila had 15 points, while Phillips had a game-high 23 points, as both players posted double-doubles to open the season. Senior point guard Angela Biciocchi also came close to a double-double, chipping in 10 points in 9 assists. Pictured are Phillips and senior Kristy Tung double-teaming a Springbrook player along the baseline in the first half.

Wootton Passes Test

Sophomore propels Patriots over Blake on opening night.

MIKE WEINER
THE ALMANAC

Last year, the Wootton girl's basketball team had trouble generating points late in games to wrap up what should have been sure victories. But in coming from behind in their first game of the season last Friday night, the Patriots used an explosive 13-4 fourth quarter to outlast the Bengals of Blake High School, the defending 4A East division champions, 42-35.

Wootton, the two-time defending 4A West champions, trailed throughout the game before the decisive fourth quarter. Down by two going into the period, Wootton locked in on defense and began to cut down on the turnovers that plagued them in the first three quarters. While Blake struggled offensively, the Patriots took advantage, as sophomore center Gabby Flinchum had two critical baskets down the stretch before two free throws by Wootton's Jessica Welch sealed the victory.

"It took us a while to get out the first-game jitters," coach Maggie Dyer said. "The fourth quarter was just really great basketball for us."

Wootton's star player, Delaware-bound senior, Chelsea Craig, was mostly held in check offensively, but the other side of the Patriots' frontcourt, Flinchum, stepped in to help stifle the Blake offense in the fourth quarter while adding

her own offense as well. She finished with 16 points, shooting 78 percent from the field. She also grabbed nine rebounds and collected five blocks. It was the type of performance Wootton will need all season if the offense grows stagnant.

"Chelsea is a very unselfish player," Dyer said. "When she saw her shot wasn't falling she started to look a lot more to Gabby. Gabby stepping up for us was great, and hopefully we'll always have that person to step up."

IN THE FIRST HALF, Wootton struggled with Blake's stingy defense, and there was a sequence in the second quarter during which the Patriots turned the ball over on four-straight possessions. In that second quarter, Wootton scored just four points and committed the majority of their 21 total turnovers.

"I basically just told the guards to have confidence," Dyer said. "They handled the pressure much better in the second half."

Just five Patriot players accounted for the team's 42 points and Wootton shot below 40 percent from the free throw line. The Patriots front line of Flinchum, Craig, and Sarah Bolmer combined to shoot 5-for-20 from the charity stripe.

Wootton travels to Damascus for a game Tuesday night, after the Almanac's press time. The Patriots face Magruder on Thursday.

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