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Meet the Artist

NEWS, PAGE 3

**Vicki Blum of Clifton
teaches painting
classes at the Lorton
Arts Center.**

PHOTO BY ROBBIE HAMMER/THE CONNECTION
CALENDAR, PAGE 10 ❖ SPORTS, PAGE 12 ❖ CLASSIFIED, PAGE 16

Clash Over Boundaries

NEWS, PAGE 3

Stallion Wrestlers Win District

SPORTS, PAGE 12

Bulova Sworn In

Democrat won special election by slim margin.

BY JULIA O'DONOGHUE
THE CONNECTION

Former Braddock District Supervisor Sharon Bulova (D) was sworn in as the Fairfax County Board of Supervisor's newest chairman at the county government center Feb.

6. Bulova defeated Supervisor Patrick Herrity (R-Springfield) by 1,217 votes, a margin of less than 2 percent, in a special election for the countywide seat three days earlier. She replaces now U.S. Rep. Gerry Connolly (D-11), who left the office to join the U.S. Congress in early January.

A 21-year county board veteran, Bulova serves as chair of the board's budget committee and was a founder of the Virginia Railway Express (VRE), a commuter train to Washington, D.C. with stations in southern and central Fairfax.

In opening remarks at the swearing in ceremony, Fairfax County public information officer Merni

Fitzgerald also said Bulova had "championed the redevelopment of Tysons Corner as an environmental project," while serving as Braddock District supervisor.

AS CHAIRMAN, Bulova has her work cut out for her in 2009. Fairfax County must close a projected \$650 million budget hole in the annual budget that begins in July.

Approximately 75 percent of the local government's revenue comes from real estate taxes and the county's property values have fallen significantly. The supervisors would have to raise the real estate property tax rate 14 to 15 cents just to keep county revenue at the same level as last year.

According to Bulova, residents should brace themselves for some cuts to county services, though Fairfax will try to take care of its most vulnerable citizens.

"We will adopt changes that will bring our budget into equilibrium. ... [But we] need to take care of those among us who our help now more than ever," said the new

chairman at the swearing in ceremony.

"Working together, we will come through these

"Working together, we will come through these difficult financial times."

— Fairfax Chairman Sharon Bulova (D-At-large)

SEE BULOVA, PAGE 7

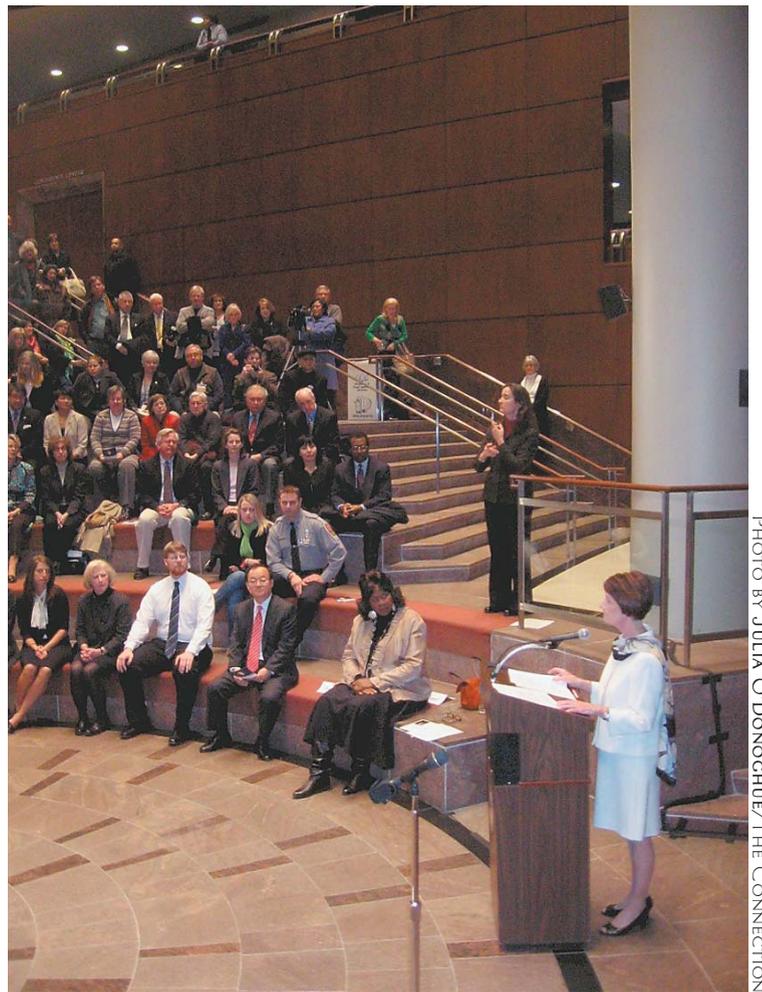


PHOTO BY JULIA O'DONOGHUE/THE CONNECTION

A large crowd showed up to see Sharon Bulova sworn in as the new Fairfax County chairman Feb. 6.

A princess is a delicate thing...



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Portrait of an Artist

Once a law student, Vicki Blum is now at the head of the art class.

BY AMBER HEALY
THE CONNECTION

Whether in her Clifton home or a classroom in Herndon or Lorton, Vicki Blum is making the world a brighter place. Using a contrasting palette of warm and cool oil paints, she finds a dab here and a swish there can make a world of difference.

A painting teacher for only a short time, Blum divides her time between two of Fairfax County's newest haven for artists: ArtSpace in Herndon and the Workhouse Arts Center in Lorton.

"What a bonanza for this area," she said of her classrooms and the gallery space they provide for herself and her students. "It's all really fantastic."

The whole Northern Virginia area has an abundance of artistic talent, Blum said, from the artist groups in Great Falls where she got her start, to the Torpedo Factory where she took some early classes. Even in her Clifton backyard, Blum has helped the talent in her own community, helping to coordinate last year's art show and in the planning of the town's barn dances each fall for the past several years.

Blum started painting about 12 years ago,



"I started taking one class and never looked back."

— Vicki Blum

PHOTO BY ROBBIE HAMMEN/THE CONNECTION

SEE PORTRAIT ARTIST, PAGE 15 Artist Vicki Blum of Clifton helps Meg Baber of Lorton in a class at the Lorton Arts Center on Feb. 8.

Parents Object to Boundary Proposal

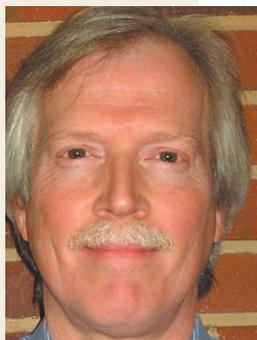
"The Lorton Station Home Owners Association is being divided by [the school system's] plan."

— Michelle Flick, Lorton Station Elementary parent



"The staff recommendation fails Halley because ... it does not achieve demographic balance across all of the member schools."

— Joe Denehy, Halley Elementary parent



Storck, Bradsher say they will ask for adjustments.

BY JULIA O'DONOGHUE
THE CONNECTION

Several parents are protesting a proposal to shift students from Lorton Station Elementary to Halley Elementary as part of the South County elementary schools boundary study.

Fairfax County Public Schools is undergoing elementary school redistricting to accommodate the opening of the new Laurel Hill Elementary School next fall.

Many residents showed up to a public hearing Jan. 29 to complain about the school system's staff recommendation for the new boundaries, which they said does not resemble previous redistricting proposals floated before the community.

During a work session Feb. 9, Fairfax County school board members Dan Storck (Mount Vernon) and Liz Bradsher (Springfield) said they anticipated trying to make decisions to the staff recommendation before they and other board members make a final decision about the new boundaries.

"To leave schools over capacity is not ideal, Mr. Storck and I will be offering an amendment," said Bradsher.

The Fairfax County School Board is scheduled to vote on the new South County elementary school boundaries Feb. 19.

UNDER THE staff boundary recommendation, families living in Lorton Station South and the Gunston Square area would move from Lorton Station Elementary to Halley Elementary.

Several parents in both schools communities are upset by this recommendation, stating that the move would split the Lorton Station community and lead to overcrowding at Halley.

Many also said they did not understand why students currently attending Lorton Station would have to travel past three schools closer to their homes to attend Halley.

"These same were moved from an overcrowded Halley a mere six years ago to attend a school closer to where they live. They will be bused past the school they call their own, back to an overcrowded one far from their homes and community," said Kathryn Buchholz, a Halley parent opposed to the staff recommendation.

Several Halley parents also argued that their school should be left under its capacity because new development and growth is likely to take place near it.

"While most communities in this study are built out, there is still plenty of buildable land near Halley.

SEE SCHOOL, PAGE 5

Eight Years for Lorton Man

True, Antonio Wilson helped the prosecution convict two of the co-defendants in the Chantilly Prime Mart robbery.

But the judge couldn't ignore his prior criminal record and the violence of the offense. On Friday, Feb. 6, in Fairfax County Circuit Court, Wilson, 27, of 9500 block Greencastle Lane in Lorton, was sentenced to eight years in prison.



Antonio Wilson

POLICE PHOTO

"This defendant, along with Rickey Price, went into the Prime Mart on June 22, 2007," said Assistant Commonwealth's Attorney Mark Sullivan. "Rickey had a taser and both were wearing masks and bandanas. Rickey shocked the clerk three times and he went down. Wilson secured the door and helped get the money from the register and the back room — \$30,000 total."

Wilson's DNA on a bandana recovered afterward led to his arrest, and he eventually admitted that he and three others committed the robbery. Now all four have been convicted.

On Oct. 3, 2008, Robert F. Price, 31, of Springfield, received a year in prison. His brother Rickey, of no fixed address, will be sentenced March 6. Devin Manigo, 31, of Chantilly is facing a possible 25 years behind bars when he's sentenced in April.

Sullivan told Judge David Schell last week that the brothers pleaded guilty "based upon [Wilson's] testimony and cooperation," and that a jury found Manigo guilty "in large part, because of Wilson's testimony." Saying Wilson came forward without any sentencing agreement for himself, Sullivan asked Schell to show him leniency.

Defense attorney Roger Nord said it only took Manigo's jury about two hours to convict him, so Wilson's testimony was "very important to the commonwealth." He said his client was originally from Georgia, moving here five years ago because his stepfather was ill.

"In Georgia, he had no trouble with the law," said Nord. "He was a security guard in a mall and helped foil a robbery at a Red Lobster. When he moved up here, his trouble started and he was convicted of speeding to elude, assaulting a police officer, receiving stolen property and probation violations."

Still, Schell was puzzled. "Can you tell me how he went from a security guard thwarting crimes to committing his 11th and 12th felony convictions?" he asked.

"That's a good question, Your Honor," said Nord. "After his stepfather passed away, things went downhill for him. He got involved with a girl, had a couple children and started hanging around with the wrong crowd. Then Robert Price recruited him for the robbery, and he didn't fully think about the possible consequences."

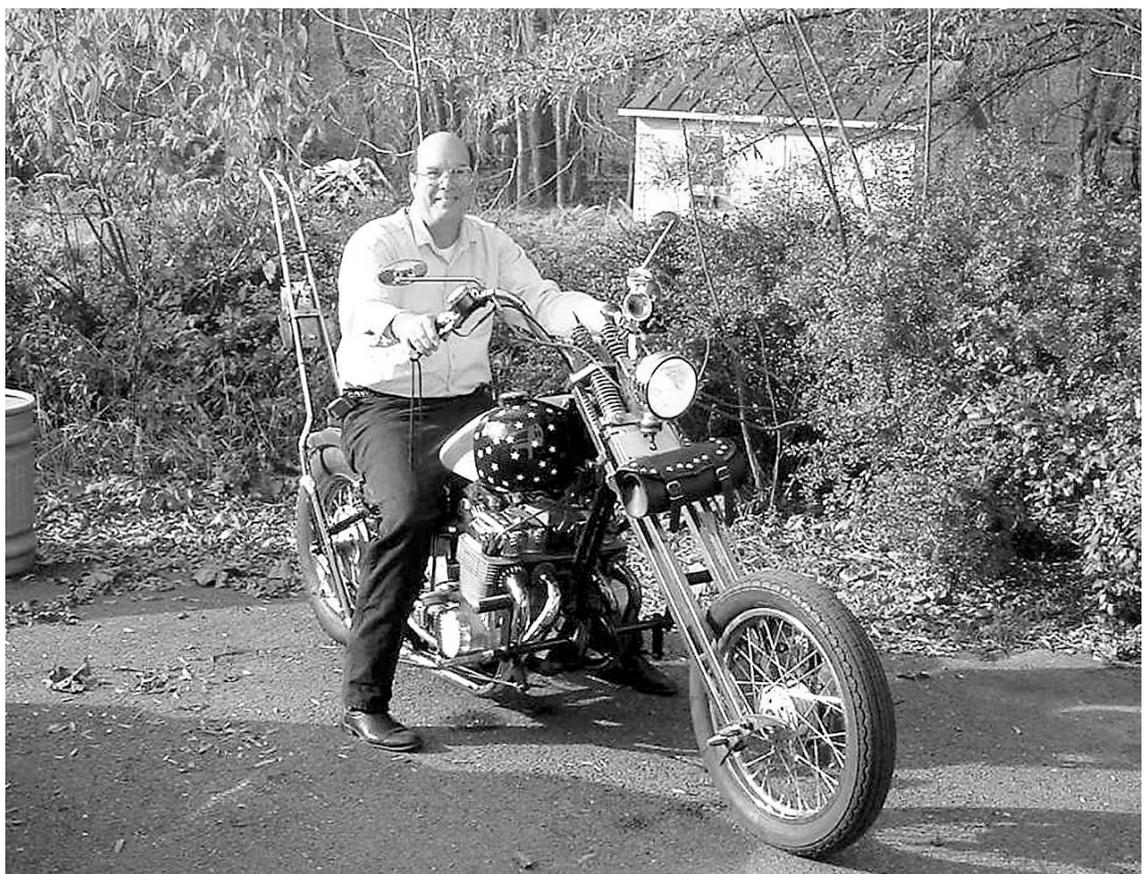
Standing to apologize before being sentenced, Wilson said, "I take full responsibility for my actions." And Schell asked him, "What turned you from a law-abiding security guard into a criminal?"

"Mistakes on my part," said Wilson. "There's no excuse."

The judge said he took Wilson's cooperation into consideration, but said "This was a planned crime in which the victim was stunned with a taser, robbed, tied up and left."

Noting Wilson's prior record and the nature of this crime, Schell then sentenced him to 10 years in prison, suspending all that time, for the abduction offense, and 10 years in prison, with two years suspended, on the robbery charge. He also placed Wilson on five years active probation following his release.

— BONNIE HOBBS



FAMILY PHOTO

A 30-year resident of Clifton, Richard King was quick to pitch in when asked. He also was a motorcycle and scooter enthusiast.

Clifton Mourns Richard King

Longtime town resident was frequent volunteer, friend to all.

BY BONNIE HOBBS
THE CONNECTION

Richard Warden King loved the Town of Clifton, so it was fitting that on Monday he was laid to rest in the town cemetery, with family and friends there to bid him farewell. King, 61, died Friday, Jan. 30, of leukemia.

"He was just such a big, lovable guy," said Town Council member Deborah Dillard. "I don't know anyone who didn't like him. He loved it when [years ago] my husband and I strolled our daughter Emily down his street at night. He'd say, 'Isn't this a great place to raise kids?'"

King lived a couple houses down from Clifton Mayor Tom Peterson, and the two became fast friends. "Whenever Clifton needed a volunteer for something, it was Richard," he said. "On Clifton Day and for the Wine Festival, Halloween Haunted Trail, the Holiday Homes Tour and the Horse Parade judging, he let us use his field for parking."

Dillard said he also let local equestrians and the Northern Virginia Therapeutic Riding group use his land for free and made it a point to keep it mowed so the horses wouldn't trip.

KING LIVED in Clifton nearly 30 years and had served on the Town Council and Architectural Review Board. He volunteered at Clifton Day and other town events and ran the chili cookoff during the an-

nual Clifton Lions Labor Day Car Show.

Peterson said King, a Vietnam veteran, "had a million stories, and my wife Jean and I probably heard half of them. He and his wife Diane would sit on our patio, telling stories. And everybody in Clifton will always remember him riding his motorcycles. This big guy, over 6 feet and more than 200 pounds, riding his little Vespas."

Resident Michelle Stein knew King 10 years and called him "one of the kindest men I've ever met and the only one I've been on a motorcycle with. We rode in the Fourth of July parade. I'm going to miss him terribly."

Chuck Rusnack, a friend of King's since 1982, described him as "a colorful character, bigger than life." Recalling when one of his teenage sons bought a 1962 ambulance, Rusnack said King was always under the hood, helping him work on it.

"One day, it was parked on an incline, the brakes gave out and it headed downhill, straight through Richard's fence and into his field," said Rusnack. "The boys thought he'd yell at them, but he just told them, 'Don't worry about it. I have so many fence posts and rails, I'll have it fixed in a day.'"

The Kings were still newlyweds — March 12 would have been their one-year anniversary — and friends spoke of how happy Diane made Richard. The couple met in July 2005 at the Sunset Grill in Annandale. He was there for the music and she went to hear a local band she knew from the 1980s.

"We just hit it off, right away," Diane King said. "He was so kind and generous. He loved to tell stories and I loved to listen to them. We dated three years before getting married. When we first met, he rode motorcycles and he taught me how to ride. I got my own bike and we'd ride with a group called

"The man had a heart of gold."

— Tom Peterson,
Clifton mayor

SEE MEMORIES, PAGE 7

WWW.CONNECTIONNEWSPAPERS.COM

NEWS

School Boundary Plan

FROM PAGE 3

Halley will be the school to absorb that future growth," said Jill Howard.

THE SCHOOL SYSTEM had slightly adjusted its boundary recommendation from what it had last presented to the public in response to concerns about overcrowding at Gunston Elementary in an earlier iteration, said Denise James, a school system facilities staff member.

In terms of student travel time, James said the staff boundary recommendation actually improve on earlier versions, which students from more neighborhoods farther from their homes.

"We thought the overcrowding at Halley would be manageable," she added.

BUT LORTON STATION parents said the staff boundary recommendation would hurt not only people who have elementary school-aged children in their area but the greater Lorton Station community.

Lorton Station South and Gunston Square are part of the large Lorton Station Homeowners Association. To send those communities to a different elementary school would wreck the area's sense of cohesiveness, said several parents.

"We share community facilities such as a clubhouse, swimming pools and a library. We socialize together, share public transit facilities, and, up until now, attended school together," said Jeremy Weber, a Gunston Square resident.

According to Lorton Station parent Greg Schuckman, who would not be moved as a result of the staff boundary recommendation, his community would prefer to retain Lorton Station South and Gunston Square.

Schuckman added that the school system could keep Lorton Station South and Gunston Square students at their current school without the risk of overcrowding if certain programmatic changes were made.

If the school system implemented some "home based" gifted and talented services at Silverbrook, some Silverbrook families might choose to keep their children at that school, instead of sending them to the gifted and talented center at an overcrowded Lorton Station. The school system could also move the autism services located at Lorton Station and Gunston elementary schools to another nearby facility and free up space in the Lorton Station building, he said.

SCHOOL SYSTEM staff did tell the school board that they were looking into being able to add "Level IV services" – a program that allows children to take accelerated classes at their home school – at Silverbrook, though they worried about the program's impact on the relatively small gifted and talented center at Lorton Station.

Staff also appeared wary when Storck suggested allowing students from outside Silverbrook's boundary to "pupil place into the school" for the gifted-and-talented student classes.

CRIME REPORT

Activities reported by the Sully District of the Fairfax County Police Department through Feb. 6.

COMMERCIAL BURGLARY/ARREST
4300 block of Henninger Court.

Two men were arrested for burglarizing the Chantilly Donuts store, 4394-E Henninger Court, on Friday, Jan. 30. Some time between 11:30 p.m. that night and 12:55 p.m. the next day, the two men broke into the store and stole some computers,

cash and checks. The police investigation revealed that the men tried to cash a stolen check at a check cashing store nearby. Officers responded and discovered the stolen

SEE CRIME, PAGE 9

"The staff's recommendation addresses the issue of overcrowding at Gunston Elementary and will provide some much needed relief."

— Kimberly Kern, Gunston Elementary PTA

"The making of community schools is just one way to make South County a better place and we have the opportunity to do that now."

— Denis Krein, Halley Elementary parent

They said they did not normally allow students to place into a school because it offered "Level IV services."

Some school board members also appeared concerned about the general expansion of "Level IV services" in elementary schools.

The school board is currently reviewing their policy regarding "Level IV services" and elementary gifted and talented services, deciding whether it is necessary for the school system to keep both programs.

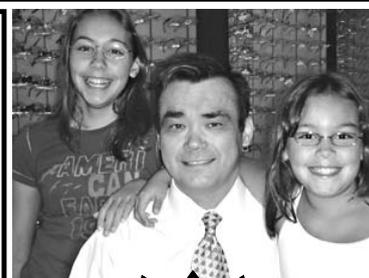
"I am hoping we are not moving toward using 'Level IV services' to accommodate boundaries," said school board member Phil Niedzielski-Eichner (Providence), who added that a new "Level IV services" program at Silverbrook would increase the school system's overall operational costs in a year when there is a budget shortfall.

Even if a gifted and talented program could not be added to Silverbrook, Schuckman and others would prefer to retain Lorton Station South and Gunston Square at their school, rather than seeing those students bused to Halley.

"We feel that retaining our community outweighs the need to bring our school under capacity," said Schuckman.



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PEOPLE

Montgomery Writing the First Chapter

New principal begins building foundations of Laurel Hill elementary school.

BY DEREK B. JOHNSON
THE CONNECTION

For most principals, leaving a post at an established school to help build a brand new one from the ground up might represent a rather large, unwanted headache. For Suzie Montgomery, it's the ultimate dream job.

A principal for the last four years at Anthony Lane Elementary School in Alexandria, Montgomery began work Feb. 1 in the same capacity at the new elementary school

on Laurel Crest Drive in Lorton. Scheduled to open in September, the school presently has no staff, teachers, furniture or equipment. In fact, it doesn't even have a name yet, a process Montgomery said would begin

with community input meetings in March.

The next six months will involve countless hours spent interviewing candidates for teacher and administrative positions as well as purchasing electronic whiteboards, desks, tables and projectors to fill up classrooms. Montgomery, who will spearhead that process, said she would draw upon her experience as a technology specialist nearly a decade ago when she helped open Fort Belvoir Elementary School.

"It was something that I was successful at," she said. "Hopefully, I can bring this community together to create a really good place for kids."

Montgomery also plans to study other new schools in the county with identical or

reversed floor plans to see what choices other principals have made in the same situation.

ORIGINALLY from Dayton, Ohio, Montgomery has lived in Fairfax County for 20 years. Her husband served in the Air Force, and as a cost analyst for the Air Force, she was given an opportunity to "travel the world." Her first interaction with children came as a daycare employee, an experience she said began her turn toward education. Since then, she has served in a variety of

educational positions at public schools, including four years at Lane Elementary and two years as assistant principal of Saratoga Elementary School in Springfield.

Lisa McNamee, assistant principal

at Lane Elementary, said Montgomery's ability to make her staff feel like they're part of the process was one of her strengths as a leader.

"Even though we all have our own vision and mission, Suzie makes everyone a part of it," said McNamee. "She is a very effective leader because of her collaborative nature."

McNamee also said the differences between opening a new school and dealing with the year-to-year challenges at an older school are not as stark as some might think.

"Each year as I've been here, there are always new and fresh ideas, new practices, new foundations that you need to lay. Everything is consistently changing," she said.

"Hopefully, I can bring this community together to create a really good place for kids."

— Suzie Montgomery



PHOTO BY DEREK B. JOHNSON/THE CONNECTION

Suzie Montgomery, former principal at Anthony Lane Elementary School in Alexandria, was hired as principal at the new elementary school in Laurel Hill.

Montgomery said reaching out to her new community and conducting a rigorous search for staff would be two of her top priorities coming into the job. The latter may be the more work intensive of the two, but the former may also prove difficult, as Montgomery won't know who exactly her community is until school boundaries are determined later in March. In the meantime, she has conducted several meet-and-greets with groups of parents and has attended nearby homeowner's associations meetings to introduce herself.

"So at least there's somebody in the school now that they know," Montgomery explained.

Christine Morin is a representative from the Laurel Hill Education Committee, a citizens' group and a community liaison to the new principal. Morin said members of the community would be willing to help move

furniture and equipment into the new school to make the process easier.

"A lot of our neighbors helped when South County Secondary [School] was created. That's what we'll be doing [at the elementary school site] as well," she said.

Overall, Morin said the organization was happy with the process, including the hiring of Montgomery and pointing to the fact that the school is currently ahead of schedule to open in September.

"I think it's been great. We've had communication up and down throughout the whole process," she said.

As for filling out staff positions, Montgomery said finding the right chemistry is particularly important at a new school.

"Normally, when a teacher comes into a school, there's an established team. That won't be the case here," she said. "We'll be looking for people to work together."

MILITARY NOTES

Air Force Airman Rashion L. Walker has graduated from basic military training at Lackland Air Force Base, San Antonio, Texas. Walker is the son of Raymond and Christine Walker of Gunston Commons Way, Lorton and a 2008 graduate of Hayfield Secondary High School.

Army Spec. Peter A. Hermes has graduated from the Infantryman One Station Unit Training at Fort Benning, Columbus, Ga. The training consists of Basic Infantry Training and Advanced Individual Training. He is the son of An-

thony Hermes of Meadow Crossing Way, Fairfax Station, and nephew of

Kathy Seale of Moulton, Texas. Hermes is a 1997 graduate of Paul VI High School and received a bachelor's degree in 2005 from Marymont University in Arlington.



Rashion

Michael Hughes has contracted with the Army ROTC for a four-year college scholarship at the University of North Dakota-Grand Forks. He is a 2008 graduate of West Springfield High School, and the son of Christopher P. and Marguerite Hughes of Gunston Commons Way, Lorton.

COLLEGE NOTES

Fairfax Station residents **John Cewe, Lauren Ching, Katherine Clark, Brittany Clarke, Kristin Ford, John Gerlach, Melissa Gildon, Andrea Kopstein, Jamie McGaha, Matthew McHarg, Gre-**

gory Miller, Sara Riddle, Jared Sronce, Matthew Sullivan, Larson Thune, McKinzie Ward and Lauren Westbrook have been named to the fall 2008 dean's list at James Madison University in Harrisonburg.



PHOTO BY MICHAEL ROYTEK

Inauguration Scouts

Three local Boy Scouts volunteered at Barack Obama's Inauguration on Tuesday, Jan. 20, in Washington, D.C. From left, Alan Lambert, Scout executive of the National Capital Area Council Boy Scouts of America, is briefed early on Inauguration Day by Scouts Azraf Ullah of Herndon; Will Danning of Fairfax and Hamza Hoope of Sterling on the Boy Scouts' flag distribution plan.

Memories of Richard King

FROM PAGE 4

The Wednesday Night Crew, which meets every Wednesday night at Kilroy's in Springfield and raises money for Inova Children's Hospital and Toys for Tots."

RICHARD KING also supported veterans, especially wounded soldiers. He and his wife participated in the annual Rolling Thunder motorcycle ride, going from Patriot

Harley-Davidson in Fairfax to Washington, D.C.

"He also loved riding scooters," Diane King said. "He has an Atomic Fireball, a limited-edition scooter commemorating Atomic Fireball candies. It's painted red with flames."

The Kings also hosted the annual Clifton Christmas tree bonfire, when all the families in town brought their Christmas trees to King's 5-acre backyard.

At the recent bonfire, Richard King was unable to enjoy the festivities. He was tired and didn't feel well, before Christmas, and thought he had the flu. He entered Inova Fair Oaks Hospital, Dec. 30, with pneumonia and kidney stones but, later that morning, doctors said he had leukemia in his bone marrow.

"He'd had Hodgkins in the mid-'80s," said Diane King, adding that the disease had gone into remission. "He was treated by radiation therapy, which compromises your immune system forever." Still, when he was diagnosed with leukemia, she said, "We

thought, 'We'll fight this thing. You beat cancer before and you can do it again.' He had chemotherapy, but never recovered. On Jan. 30 at 1 a.m., he passed away."

Now, she said, cards and flowers have been pouring in from their motorcycle and chili friends, town residents and her co-workers at FEMA where she does IT support. She's comforted knowing how well-liked her husband was by everyone who knew him.

"He was one of a kind. The man had a heart of gold, and he's really going to be missed," said Peterson.

Bulova

FROM PAGE 2

difficult financial times. ... The darkest hour is just before the dawn," she added.

THOUGH FACING a tough situation, Fairfax County's economy is also resilient, according to Bulova.

Hilton Hotels recently decided to move its headquarters to Fairfax over other local jurisdictions. The military's Base Realignment And Closure process will also bring new jobs and economic development to the southern part of the county, said Bulova.

As chairman, Bulova will also push for the extension of Metro rail west in the Interstate 66 corridor and the expansion of VRE services, she said.

HERRITY, whose father served as board chairman in the 1970s and 1980s, attended Bulova's swearing-in ceremony.

His race with Bulova is the closest high-profile countywide contest between a Democrat and Republican in several years. The last two Fairfax County chairmen, both Democrats, won their seats by a larger margin than Bulova did last week.

Herrity said the election results proved that not all residents are pleased the direction of the county's leadership in recent years.

"I am going to continue to stand up for what I believe in. ... Clearly, there is a difference of opinion in the county," he said.

BULLETIN BOARD

TUESDAY/FEB. 17

Greater Springfield Chamber of Commerce Diversity Committee, 9-10 a.m. at the United Central Bank, 6400 Brandon Ave., Springfield. The Diversity Committee focuses on the needs of small, minority- and woman-owned businesses. 703-866-3500.

TUESDAY/FEB. 24

Clifton Town Planning Commission, 7:30 p.m. at the Clifton Town Hall. 703-923-3500.



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FAIRFAX STATION/LAUREL HILL CONNECTION ♦ FEBRUARY 12-18, 2009 ♦ 7

THE COUNTY LINE

Getting Started on Start Times

School Board asks for answers on impact to athletics.

BY JULIA O'DONOGHUE
THE CONNECTION

Fairfax County School Board members pushed staff to answer questions about the impacts of changing school start times as they launched a community outreach effort this week.

The School Board is considering moving back start times for older students, in part because research suggests it is beneficial for teenagers to start school later so they don't need to rise so early. With current start times, high school and secondary school buses pick students up shortly after 6 a.m.

The proposal would also affect the start times for several elementary schools since Fairfax County Public Schools uses the same buses in three different shifts to carry the entire student population to school.

Currently, Fairfax schools start between 7:20 a.m. and 9:25 a.m., with most high schools in the "first tier" of school start times, beginning before 8 a.m. Under the new proposal, which could go into effect next year, all schools would start between 7:50 a.m. and 9:40 a.m., with no high school classes getting under way earlier than 8:30 a.m.

The school system hopes to get feedback from the public on the proposal at seven community dialogues scheduled for Feb. 24, 25 and 26.

They are also encouraging residents to fill out a new survey about the bell schedule change, which can be found at <http://www.fcps.edu/news/start>.

The School Board expects vote on the bell schedule proposal in early March.

FOR YEARS, a group of citizens have been advocating for the later high school start times, attending nearly every school board meeting and signing up to provide public testimony on a regular basis. They formed the organization SLEEP, which stands for Start Later for Excellence in Education Proposal, and collected thousands of signatures in support of their cause.

But recently, community members wary

Community Dialogues on Bell Schedule Changes

The School Board will hold public meetings about proposed changes to school start times. Note multiple locations on each night.

FEB. 24, 7 P.M. – 9 P.M.

Annandale High School, Longfellow Middle School, Oak View Elementary School

FEB. 25, 7 P.M. – 9 P.M.

Herndon High School, Rocky Run Middle School

FEB. 26, 7 P.M. – 9 P.M.

Providence Elementary School, Whitman Middle School

of the initiative, particularly those who have concerns about its impact on high school activities like sports, have started to organize in opposition to later start times.

They formed advocacy organizations like WAKE (Worried About Keeping Extracurriculars) and SOS (Save Our Sport). Many are particularly concerned how later start times might impact the high school swim program.

DURING A WORK SESSION Feb. 9, some School Board members pressed staff for answers regarding the later high school start times' effect on "late buses," which provide transportation for students participating in sports and other programs after school.

Get Involved

Fill out a new survey about proposed bell schedule changes at <http://www.fcps.edu/news/start.htm>. A list of current start times and proposed start times for every school in the county is available at the same site.

The school system's transportation department was unable to give specifics on the later high school start times impact on "late bus runs." But transportation official Linda Farby said the buses would need roughly 30 more minutes to come back to the high schools after their traditional afternoon drop-offs.

Instead of elementary schools, several middle schools would be among the last dismissals in the school system each day and buses would have to complete longer routes before coming back to pick up students at high school late for sports events or other activities, said Farby.

"The answer is yes it will delay late bus service," she said of the proposal to change the bell schedule.

THE SCHOOL SYSTEM could also face a shortage of bus drivers if the high school start times — and therefore the high school "late buses" — were pushed back since some employees are not willing to work the later hours, according to Farby.

Farby also left open the possibility that the school system could be forced to lease or rent more vehicles to help with "late bus" transportation if the existing fleet was not able to accommodate the later transportation schedule by itself in a timely manner.

Under the current proposal, the school system would save money if it switched to later school start times, though the need to rent or lease more buses could affect the estimates of the proposal's cost savings, according to staff.

School Board member Kathy Smith (Sully), who has been skeptical of the proposal to change the bell schedule, said officials also have no way of modeling how the new bell schedule would interact with traffic patterns.

"This model does not and cannot tell you the effect of being in traffic," said Smith.

Some school staff said it is also difficult to judge the impact a bell schedule change could have on high school sports travel, given that team schedules are likely to

change if the proposal takes effect next year.

For example, in order to accommodate the later high school start times, more games and sporting events are likely to take place on Saturday, said school officials.

But School Board members generally supportive of the bell schedule change said staff should provide more specific information, not just speculation, about the impact the later high school start times would have on after-school activities like sports.

"I think it is a mistake to go into town hall meetings without any more information. ... [The information on late buses] should be made available to the public," said School Board member Kaye Kory (Mason).

"I would say if we don't have the facts together, then we don't do the public meetings," said School Board member Tina Hone [At-large] of the community dialogues scheduled for later this month.

FURTHER DISCUSSION of the public meeting format revealed how touchy the issue of a bell schedule change has become for the school system and School Board members.

Officials are taking pains to record an introduction to the issue of bell schedule changes that will be played at all public meetings on the topic, so that there is no differentiation between the staff presentations at each session.

"We have tried to do so that it is not biased in any way," said School Board member Liz Bradsher (Springfield).

"That is why we are taping the introduction, so everything can be the same across the board," said School Board member Tessie Wilson (Braddock).

Yet there was some question at the School Board's work session about what type of role the "science of teenage sleep" should play in the recorded presentation.

In general, School Board members who support the bell schedule change thought studies linking later high school start times to better teenage health and academic performance should play a larger role in the video. But others, who are skeptical of the proposal, said they had not seen any evidence that there was link between high school start times and academic performance.

"I have never seen a correlation between later start times and student achievement," said Smith.

"If there is not an impact on learning, then why are we even looking at this?" replied School Board member Phil Niedzielski-Eichner (Providence) to Smith's statement.



Some Fairfax County residents feel high school students have to be on school buses too early in the morning.

PHOTO BY JULIA O'DONOGHUE/THE CONNECTION

COUNTY NOTEBOOK

County Tax Rate Over The Years

Fairfax County faces a projected deficit of approximately \$650 million next year and several supervisors had admitted the county will probably have to increase the real estate property tax rate to close the budget gap.

If the supervisors wanted to hold county revenue — and the average residents' real estate tax bill — to its 2008 level, they would have to increase the tax rate approximately 14 to 15 cents per \$100 of assessed value, the highest single real estate tax rate increase of the last 30 years.

But even with a 14 to 15 cent increase, the real estate tax rate would still only be \$1.03, significantly lower than any rate approved by the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors from 1978 to 2005.

Still, most residents have seen their actual real estate tax bill nearly double since 2000, even as the tax rate has continued to go down every year. The tax rate — at its lowest in 2007 and 2008 — did not provide much tax relief, given that most residents were still paying much more to the local government for their home or commercial property than they had in years past.

The following is a chart of the Fairfax County real estate tax rate and the amount it has fluctuated annually since 1978:

FAIRFAX COUNTY REAL ESTATE

Tax Rates per \$100 of Assessed Value

Year	Tax Rate	Annual Fluctuation
1978	\$1.74	
1979	\$1.64	(\$0.10)
1980	\$1.54	(\$0.10)
1981	\$1.54	\$0.00
1982	\$1.51	(\$0.03)
1983	\$1.47	(\$0.04)
1984	\$1.47	(\$0.00)
1985	\$1.46	(\$0.01)
1986	\$1.39	(\$0.07)
1987	\$1.35	(\$0.04)
1988	\$1.32	(\$0.03)
1989	\$1.30	(\$0.02)
1990	\$1.19	(\$0.11)
1991	\$1.11	(\$0.08)
1992	\$1.11	\$0.00
1993	\$1.16	\$0.05
1994	\$1.16	\$0.00
1995	\$1.16	\$0.00
1996	\$1.16	\$0.00
1997	\$1.23	\$0.07
1998	\$1.23	\$0.00
1999	\$1.23	\$0.00
2000	\$1.23	\$0.00
2001	\$1.23	\$0.00
2002	\$1.23	\$0.00
2003	\$1.21	(\$0.02)
2004	\$1.16	(\$0.05)
2005	\$1.13	(\$0.03)
2006	\$1.00	(\$0.13)
2007	\$0.89	(\$0.11)
2008	\$0.89	\$0.00
2009	\$0.92	\$0.03

CRIME

FROM PAGE 5

property inside a car parked outside and took the suspects into custody. The vehicle was also seized for transporting stolen property. Ramiro Gomez, 22, of the 14500 block of Trans World Ave. and Anibal Lopez, 34, of the 4000 block of Chantilly Road, both in Chantilly, were transported to the Fairfax County Adult Detention Center and charged with burglary and grand larceny.

LARCENIES

- 14300 block of Grape Holly Grove.** Hand tools stolen from vehicle.
- 6300 block of Multiplex Drive.** Cash stolen from business.
- 14400 block of Newton Patent Court.** Tools and compressor stolen from vehicle.
- Paddington Lane/Palmerston Square.** Tool box stolen from vehicle.
- 6200 block of William Mosby Drive.** GPS unit and credit cards stolen from vehicle.

VEHICLE THEFTS

- 13900 block of New Braddock Road.** 1999 Honda Civic.

Activities reported by the Franconia District of the Fairfax County Police Department through Feb. 6.

LARCENIES

- 5200 block of Backlick Road.** iPod stolen from church.
- 7000 block of Braddock Road.** Purse stolen from vehicle.
- 7000 block of Brocton Court.** Laptop computer and wallet stolen from vehicle.
- 6000 block of Brookview Drive.** Computer stolen from vehicle.
- 6800 block of Commerce St.** Purse stolen from vehicle.
- 7000 block of Commerce St.** Cash stolen from business.
- 4500 block of Conwell Drive.** Battery stolen from vehicle.
- 5900 block of Coverdale Way.** Tires stolen from vehicle.
- 6200 block of Dana Ave.** Laptop computer stolen from residence.
- 6100 block of Franconia Forest Lane.** GPS unit stolen from vehicle.
- 7200 block of Jayhawk St.** Checkbook stolen from vehicle.
- 7400 block of Larne Lane.** Cash stolen from business.
- 7200 block of Old Keene Mill Road.** Wine and beer stolen from business.
- 5400 block of Peaceful Terrace.** Radio stolen from vehicle.
- 8000 block of Samuel Wallis St.** License plates stolen from vehicle.
- 7100 block of Silver Lake Blvd.** Toothbrush stolen from business.
- 8500 block of Terminal Road.** Wheels and tires stolen from vehicle.

VEHICLE THEFTS

- 5500 block of Harvey Lane.** 1994 Honda Accord.

Activities reported by the West Springfield District of the Fairfax County Police Department through Feb. 6

LARCENIES

- 8000 block of Alban Road.** Beer stolen from business.
- 5400 block of Anchor Court.** GPS unit, radio and camera stolen from vehicle.
- 4700 block of Commons Drive.** Rings stolen from residence.
- 5400 block of Crows Nest Court.** License plate stolen from vehicle.
- 5400 block of Leeway Court.** Cash stolen from residence.
- 5400 block of Midship Court.** GPS unit stolen from vehicle.

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8691 YOUNG CT	\$510,000	2/22 1-4	Long & Foster	Joel Lutkenhouse	703-425-8000
7741 CARRLEIGH PARKWAY	\$549,900	Sunday	Re/Max	Bruce & Tanya Tyburski	703-239-2525
8920 GRANDSTAFF CT	\$349,950	Sun 1-4	Weichert	Kathleen Quintarelli	703-862-8808
Kingstowne					
4400 EATON PL	\$712,500	2/15 1-4	Century 21	Michael Hetherington	800-727-6888
1 NEELY ANN CT	\$825,000	2/14&15 1-4	Coldwell Banker	Phyllis Patterson	703-518-8300
3103 MADISON HILL CT	\$580,000	2/15 1-4	McEneaney	Sally Harper	703-549-9292
6516 PARISH GLEBE LN	\$439,900	2/15 1-4	I-Agent Realty Inc	Carlos Reyes	703-470-5776
6851 ROLLING CREEK WAY	\$675,000	2/15 1-4	Weichert	Marianne Welds	703-868-1320
6866 ROLLING CREEK WAY	\$516,000	2/15 1-4	Weichert	Marianne Welds	703-868-1320
5306 SANDYFORD ST	\$549,900	2/15 1-4	Weichert	Joseph Davis	703 549 8700
Burke					
9262 SPRUCEWOOD RD	\$274,950	2/14&15 1-4	Weichert	Kathleen Quintarelli	703-862-8808
9737 IRONMASTER DRIVE	\$499,900	Sunday	Re/Max	Bruce & Tanya Tyburski	703-239-2525
10115 HOMAR POND DRIVE	\$925,000	Sunday	Re/Max	Bruce & Tanya Tyburski	703-239-2525
9529 WALLINGFORD DR	\$574,777	2/15 1-4	Re/Max	Bev Tull	703-963-0163
Fairfax Station/Laurel Hill					
7701 ROSE GATE CT	\$1,200,000	2/22 1-4	Keller Williams	Diane Lenahan	703-618-3858
13653 SOUTH SPRINGS DR	\$459,900	2/15 1-4	Coldwell Banker	Barbara Blumer	703-691-1400
7706 LAKELOFT COURT	\$819,900	Sunday	Re/Max	Bruce & Tanya Tyburski	703-239-2525
11451 QUAILWOOD MANOR DR	\$1,325,000	Sun 1-4	Keller Williams	Larry Askins	703-850-8176
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CALENDAR

LAUREL HILL/FAIRFAX STATION/CLIFTON CONNECTION ASSISTANT EDITOR PAULA FRIEDRICH
703-917-6459 OR SOUTH@CONNECTIONNEWSPAPERS.COM

Send notes to the Connection at south@connectionnewspapers.com or call 703-917-6459. Deadline is Friday. Dated announcements should be submitted at least two weeks prior to the event.

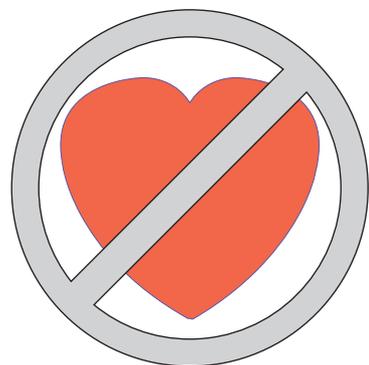
THURSDAY/FEB. 12

Micro Wrestling Federation. 9 p.m. \$15 in advance, \$20 day of show. Jaxx Night Club, 6355 Rolling Road, Springfield. 703-569-5940 or jaxxroxx.com.

Early Literacy Storytime for Parent and Preschooler, 11 a.m. at Lorton Library, 9520 Richmond Highway, Lorton. 703-339-7385.

Bees and Bee Boxes at Home, 7-8:30 p.m. at Huntley Meadows Park, 3701 Lockheed Blvd., Alexandria. Build and care for bee boxes. Ages 11 and up. Reservations required. \$6 per person. 703-768-2525.

"Hay Fever," 8 p.m. at George Mason University Black Box Theater, 4373 Mason Pond Drive, Fairfax. \$6, \$3 students and seniors. 703-993-2787



Be My Anti-Valentine at Burke Centre Library on Friday, Feb. 13.

or www.tickets.com.

FRIDAY/FEB. 13

Too Pure to Die, Thick as Blood and Estates. 5 p.m. \$10 in advance, \$12 day of show. Jaxx Night Club, 6355 Rolling Road, Springfield. jaxxroxx.com.

Lunch Bunch, 12 p.m. at John Marshall Library, 6209 Rose Hill Drive, Alexandria. Bring lunch for stories. Birth-5. 703-971-0010.

Ponderings: Animals and Superstitions, 4:30-6 p.m. at Hidden Pond Nature Center, 8511 Greeley Blvd., Springfield. Age 6-10. Reservations required. \$5 per child. 703-451-9588.

"Hay Fever," 8 p.m. at George Mason University Black Box Theater, 4373 Mason Pond Drive, Fairfax. \$6, \$3 students and seniors. 703-993-2787 or www.tickets.com.

Be My Anti-Valentine, 6 p.m. at Burke Centre Library, 5935 Freds Oak Road, Burke. Protest everything that's lame about Valentine's Day while partying with other teens. Food, prizes and a complete lack of cheesy sentimentality. Age 12-18. 703-249-1520.

Workhouse Arts Center's SPOT-LYTE Youth Theatre Ensemble with "Art of Murder," 7:30 p.m. in the Workhouse Arts Center Gallery W-16, second floor, 9517 Workhouse Way, Lorton. Spot-LYTE company members do all of the work involved, both onstage and off. \$10. 703-584-2900 or www.Workhousearts.org.

SATURDAY/FEB. 14

Friends Book Sale, 10 a.m. at Kingstowne Library, 6500 Landsdowne Centre, Alexandria. 703-339-4610.

Friends Used Book Sale, 10 a.m. at

Lorton Library, 9520 Richmond Highway, Lorton. 703-339-7385.
VITA Tax Assistance, 10 a.m.-1 p.m. at Kingstowne Library, 6500 Landsdowne Centre, Alexandria. 703-339-4610.

Animal Sweethearts Dance, 10 a.m.-12 p.m. and 2-4 p.m. at Hidden Pond Nature Center, 8511 Greeley Blvd., Springfield. Music, dancing, crafts and more. Reservations required. Age 3-8. \$6. 703-451-9588.

Winter Tree Trek, 1-3:30 p.m. at Huntley Meadows Park, 3701 Lockheed Blvd., Alexandria. Explore the woods and develop tree identification skills. Adults. \$6. For reservations call 703-768-2525.

Sherlock Bones, 1-3 p.m. at Huntley Meadows Park, 3701 Lockheed Blvd., Alexandria. Skeletons and self-guided activities. Free. 703-768-2525.

"Hay Fever," 2 p.m. and 8 p.m. at George Mason University Black Box Theater, 4373 Mason Pond Drive, Fairfax. \$6, \$3 students and seniors. 703-993-2787 or www.tickets.com.

Mid-Atlantic Great Dane Rescue League (MAGDRL), 12-2 p.m. at Felix & Oscar, 6671-A Backlick Road, Springfield. MAGDRL will be at Felix & Oscar on the second Saturday of each month. 703-866-0222 or www.nova-magdrl.org.

Workhouse Arts Center's SPOT-LYTE Youth Theatre Ensemble with "Art of Murder," 7:30 p.m. in the Workhouse Arts Center Gallery W-16, 2nd floor, 9517 Workhouse Way, Lorton. \$10. 703-584-2900 or www.Workhousearts.org.

SUNDAY/FEB. 15

N-Scale Model Trains Running at Fairfax Station Railroad Museum community room and caboose, 1-4 p.m. at 11200 Fairfax



N-Scale Model Trains will be running in the Fairfax Station Railroad Museum community room and caboose on Sunday, Feb. 15.

Station Road, Fairfax Station. Admission is \$2 per adult and \$1 per child. 703-425-9225 or www.fairfax-station.org.

The Virginia Opera and "Tosca," 2 p.m. George Mason University Concert Hall on the Fairfax campus of George Mason University, at the intersection of Braddock Road and Route 123. A pre-performance discussion, free to ticket holders, begins at 1:15 p.m. on the Center's Grand Tier III. \$44-\$98. Charge by phone at 888-945-2468 or at www.tickets.com. www.gmu.edu/cfa.

Nature Quest: Signs of Spring. 10 a.m. at Hidden Pond Nature Center, 8511 Greeley Blvd., Springfield. Ages 3-6. Reservations required, \$4 per

child. 703-451-9588.
Sherlock Bones, 1-3 p.m. at Huntley Meadows Park, 3701 Lockheed Blvd., Alexandria. Skeletons and self-guided activities. Free. 703-768-2525.

"Hay Fever," 2 p.m. at George Mason University Black Box Theater, 4373 Mason Pond Drive, Fairfax. \$6, \$3 students and seniors. 703-993-2787 or www.tickets.com.

TUESDAY/FEB. 17

Little Valentines, 10:30 a.m. at Kingstowne Library, 6500 Landsdowne Centre, Alexandria. Heartfelt stories and activities. Age 13-23 months with adult.

SEE CALENDAR, PAGE 11



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CALENDAR

FROM PAGE 10

Mother-Daughter Book Group, 7 p.m. at John Marshall Library, 6209 Rose Hill Drive, Alexandria. Call for the title and to sign up. Age 9-11 with adult. 703-971-0010.

VITA Tax Assistance, 6-8 p.m. at Kingstowne Library, 6500 Landsdowne Centre, Alexandria. 703-339-4610.

Evening Book Discussion, 7:30 p.m. at Kingstowne Library, 6500 Landsdowne Centre, Alexandria. "Three Cups of Tea" by Greg Mortenson. Adults. 703-339-4610.

Care With Dignity, 7 p.m. at Burke Centre Library, 5935 Freds Oak Road, Burke. Author Frank Fuerst discusses caring for his wife for 17 years. Book signing will follow. Adults. 703-249-1520.

WEDNESDAY/FEB. 18

Small Wonders, 10:15 a.m. at John Marshall Library, 6209 Rose Hill Drive, Alexandria. Stories, fingerplays and activities. Age 13-23 months with adult. 703-971-0010.

Practice Your English, 10:15 and 7:30 p.m. at Kingstowne Library, 6500 Landsdowne Centre, Alexandria. Conversation group for adults. 703-339-4610.

Lorton Book Club, 7:30 p.m. at Lorton Library, 9520 Richmond Highway, Lorton. "Kabul Beauty School: An American Woman Goes Behind the Veil" by Deborah Rodriguez. Adults. 703-339-7385.

Book Discussion Group, 7:15 p.m. at John Marshall Library, 6209 Rose Hill Drive, Alexandria. Call for title. Adults. 703-971-0010.

Needlework Group, 10:30 a.m. at Burke Centre Library, 5935 Freds Oak Road, Burke. Bring a project to work on in the company of other

needlecrafters. 703-249-1520.

THURSDAY/FEB. 19

South Fairfax Chamber of Commerce (SFCC) Kick-Off Meeting, 6-9 p.m. at Pane à Vino Restaurant, 9020 Lorton Station Blvd., Suite E, Lorton. SFCC brings together diverse business and civic leaders in Lorton, Laurel Hill, Newington, Fort Belvoir, South Springfield, Burke, Fairfax Station, Clifton, Occoquan and Woodbridge. Monthly meetings are at 7:30 p.m. on the second Tuesday of each month, at South County Secondary School, 8501 Silverbrook Road, Lorton, in the Media Center. All interested parties are invited to consider membership. www.SouthFairfaxChamber.org.

Make New Friends, 10:30 a.m. at Burke Centre Library, 5935 Freds Oak Road, Burke. Age 2-5 with adult. 703-249-1520.

FRIDAY/FEB. 20

L.A. Theatre Works and "The Great Tennessee Monkey Trial," 8 p.m. at George Mason University's Center for the Arts on the Fairfax campus at the intersection of Braddock Road and Route 123. Tickets are \$19-\$38. Charge by phone at 888-945-2468 or at www.tickets.com. www.gmu.edu/cfa.

Lunch Bunch, 12 p.m. at John Marshall Library, 6209 Rose Hill Drive, Alexandria. Bring lunch, listen to stories. Birth-5. 703-971-0010.

Greater Springfield Chamber of Commerce 11th Annual Mardi Gras Casino Night, 7-11 p.m. at the Hilton Springfield, 6550 Loisdale Road in Springfield. Prizes, food and fun. Area restaurants and caterers will be featured. Tickets in advance

\$55, at the door \$65. 703-866-3500. **Winter Night Hikes**, 7:30-9 p.m. at Lake Accotink Park, 7500 Accotink Park Road, Springfield. Reservations required. Adults \$5, under age 16 \$3. 703-569-0285.

SATURDAY/FEB. 21

VITA Tax Assistance, 10 a.m.-1 p.m. at Kingstowne Library, 6500 Landsdowne Centre, Alexandria. 703-339-4610.

Weekend Pohick Rangers, 10 a.m. at Hidden Pond Nature Center, 8511 Greeley Blvd., Springfield. First of a five-part program on decomposers, mammal tracking, freshwater ecosystems, nocturnal wildlife, reptiles and more. Reservations required. For ages 9-12. \$75. 703-451-9588.

Sherlock Bones, 1-3 p.m. at Huntley Meadows Park, 3701 Lockheed Blvd., Alexandria. Skeletons and self-guided activities. Free. 703-768-2525.

Wonderful Wetland Waterfowl, 2-4 p.m. at Huntley Meadows Park, 3701 Lockheed Blvd., Alexandria. Look for green-winged teals, pintails, swamp sparrows and more. For age 9 and older; children must be accompanied by an adult. \$6. 703-768-2525.

Metropolitan Jazz Orchestra, 8 p.m. at the George Mason Center for the Arts, on the Fairfax campus of George Mason University at the intersection of Braddock Road and Route 123. A pre-performance discussion, free to ticket holders, begins at 7:15 p.m. on the Center's Grand Tier III. Tickets are \$19-\$38. Age 12 and under, half price. Charge by phone at 888-945-2468 or visit www.tickets.com. www.gmu.edu/cfa.

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WEEK IN SPORTS

'Westfield Had Heroes'

Despite its best efforts, the Robinson wrestling team could not prevent the Westfield Bulldogs from winning their sixth consecutive Concorde District championship last Saturday at Chantilly High School.

"Westfield had heroes," said Robinson coach Bryan Hazard, whose team had four first-place finishers but still trailed Westfield, 225-209. "The kids that wrestled well wrestled great, and we still have work to do. We have a big week ahead of us."

Robinson will advance to this weekend's Northern Region tournament at Fairfax High School. The Rams have won 11 regional championships but none since 1991.

On Saturday, 103-pound Jake Smith started the action for Robinson, pinning Westfield's Brett Campbell 39 seconds into the match. Roman Perryman cruised an 11-1 win over Kyle Arnold of Westfield in the 135-pound final.

Ben Stallings, a 140-pounder who has missed the past two district tournaments because of a contusion in his lower back and a broken leg, pinned Harry Van Trees of Westfield at the 2:50 mark of the match.

"I worked my butt off all summer because I was not going to let injury stop me from getting this," Stallings said.

Sands Smith capped the day with a 3-1 decision over Ian Davies of Fairfax in the 215-pound final.

"Obviously, we wanted to come in and take the tournament, but it wasn't our year," Smith said. "We're going to work hard, have another good week of practice, come back and try our hardest this week."

South County Gaining Ground

When South County sophomore Sarah Chandler grabbed the baton as the anchor leg for the indoor track and field team's 4x200-meter relay, she was nowhere near the leader — Alex Abrahamson of West Springfield.

By the time Chandler zipped around the track at Episcopal High School on Saturday, Feb. 7, for the Patriot District indoor track and field championships, Chandler, though second, had made the race quite interesting.

"I think 'fighter' is probably synonymous with her name," coach Greg Rowe said. "She goes out there, and she will not let people beat her."

The South County girls team eclipsed the previous school record for points (38) scored in a district championship meet, garnering 53.5 and finishing fifth. Lake Braddock's girls team won its 21st indoor track and field title with 138 points.

Rowe also pointed to junior Tom Schafer's performance in the 3,200 (9 minutes, 55.02 seconds) as another encouraging sign for the boys team, which finished sixth with 27.5 points. Annandale was first with 98.

"The boys put out a great effort," Rowe said. "Two years ago [Schafer] was a 5:43-miler, and now he's a 9:55-two miler. I'm proud of what these kids have accomplished."

Young Stallions Surge

In only its fourth year, the South County swim and dive program tends to compare itself to some of the more-established programs in the area.

For instance, the boys team (4-3 this season in district dual meets) suffered a 189-126 loss to Lake Braddock last season but this year only lost by three points, while the girls team (5-2) turned an 83-point loss in 2007-08 into a 16-point defeat this winter.

"The school has a 'we-can-do attitude,' and I think it perpetuates to all sports," said coach Bo Jones, who was an assistant football coach on Mount Vernon's 1983 state championship team. "The kids believe that if they practice, they can catch up to the big schools that have been around for awhile."

SEE WEEK IN SPORTS, PAGE 13



PHOTO COURTESY STEVEN LAHR

South County's wrestling team won its first-ever Patriot District title by holding off Hayfield, 220-145.5, last Saturday at Annandale High School.

Stallions Smash District

After late-season loss, South County wrestlers earn first district crown.

BY JASON MACKEY
THE CONNECTION

Nothing says redemption quite like smashing bricks and eating Mexican food.

After a late-season loss to Patriot District rival Hayfield, South County wrestling coach Andy Jimmo called on a yearly tradition to shake his team from its funk. On Saturday, Feb. 7, he and his wife, Lynn Jimmo, invited the team into their home for a home-cooked meal of beef, chicken and steak tacos with the gotta-have it side dish of cheese dip.

Jimmo started the tradition about two years ago and likes to end each night — not before some Nintendo Wii on his 65-inch flat-screen TV — with an inspirational message. This year's tactic? A brick.

Each Stallion was to think of his biggest "burden" entering this past weekend's district tournament. They wrote their burdens or fears on a brick, and,

"I'm 34-years old, and I still carry burdens around."

— Andy Jimmo, South County coach

with administrative permission, carried them around the hallways of South County for the next four school days.

Some wrestlers felt a tinge of anxiety. Others felt

SEE UNBURDENED, PAGE 13

Rams Remain Optimistic

Boys earn seventh straight district title, girls get first since early 1990s.

BY JASON MACKEY
THE CONNECTION

A dual-meet loss to Oakton on Jan. 9 may have provided the only wake-up call needed for the Robinson boys swim and dive team, which has won the past six Virginia AAA state championships.

In swimming, like many sports, regular-season activities differ greatly from those of the postseason

and, according to head coach Tom Koucheravy, the Rams may have taken the Cougars a bit too lightly.

At the Feb. 7 Concorde District championships at Cub Run RECenter, Robinson woke up. The Rams swept the meet, with the boys team earning a 402-360 win over Fairfax and the girls lapping the Cougars, 434-324.5.

"At the beginning of the year, I said to them that this isn't a team where we have a big buffer of fast swimmers to help us out," said first-year coach Tom Koucheravy, who graduated from Robinson and had a prolific swimming career at nearby George Mason University.

"It has to come from everybody," Koucheravy said.

SEE SWIMMERS, PAGE 13

Swimmers Grab District Titles

FROM PAGE 12

“When we lost [to Oakton], it just became very apparent to them and they got a lot more serious.”

The boys team's title was its seventh consecutive and the girls won for the first time since the early 1990s. Both teams will advance to this weekend's Northern Region championships, with the finals scheduled for Saturday night at Oak Marr RECenter.

Robinson won two important relays — the 200- and 400-yard freestyle event. The 200-free relay team, which consisted of Robbie Munch, Daniel McGuire, Joe Zanellato and Geoff Bobsin, finished with a time of 1:27.70.

The 400-free relay team (Munch, Matt Osiecki, Zanellato and Bobsin) touched the wall with a time of 3:12.52. Munch also won the 50 free (21.79) and Cory Bowersox took first in the 1-meter diving event

with a score of 464.40.

Robinson's girls team benefited from Amanda Kendall's record-setting performance. Kendall set district records and posted first-place finishes in both the 50 free (23.67) and 100 butterfly (56.81).

Koucheravy acknowledged the obvious differences between a relatively low-key dual meet and the deafening atmosphere that exists at district, regional and state meets.

“Championship meets are always completely different than dual meets,” Koucheravy said. “There's always a completely different atmosphere to it with the idea that this is it or this can con-

tinue, and it puts you in a completely different state of mind.

“I feel like we're coming into [regionals] optimistic and with the idea that this is ours, or, if we don't focus, this is going to be someone else's.”

“Championship meets are always completely different than dual meets.”

— Rams coach Tom Koucheravy

WEEK IN SPORTS

FROM PAGE 12

South County proved that Saturday night, Feb. 7, at Lee District RECenter for the Patriot District championships, as the boys finished fourth with 265 points and the girls took third with 333.50.

West Springfield swept the meet.

Freshman Michael Herrman won the 100-yard butterfly with a time of 54.60 seconds, while sophomore Alison Smith and freshman MacKenzie Walsh each had top-three individual finishes and swam on two top-three relay teams.

Unburdened

FROM PAGE 12

significant pressure to perform up to their abilities or to wrestle a complete, six-minute match.

They literally eliminated their burdens with a sledgehammer after practice on Thursday before the tournament and figuratively did away with them by winning the school's first-ever district crown, edging Hayfield, 220-145.5.

“Burdens are bad things,” Jimmo said. “I'm 34-years old, and I still carry burdens around.”

“They carried the burden around with them,” Jimmo said, “and I know it doesn't sound like a big thing, but carrying a brick around for five or six days becomes a daunting task.”

Eight wrestlers made Saturday's set of final matches and four walked out of Annandale's gymnasium victorious, as Patrick Shaffer (103), John Fitzgerald (145), Patrick Fitzgerald (152) and Arash Katirai (171) all posted wins.

All 14 of South County's starters will advance to this weekend's Northern Region tournament at Fairfax High School.

“After that loss to Hayfield, our kids just grouped together and decided to put in that extra effort, and they were ready,” Jimmo said. “They battled back, wrestled to their potential and did a great job.”

“They carried the burden around with them.”

— Andy Jimmo, South County coach

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Right now, some of the guns sold at gun shows in Virginia are sold without the background check required of gun sales in any other official setting. This allows even convicted felons, stalkers with restraining orders against them, and people with documented mental health problems that could make them a danger to themselves or others a clear path to purchasing a firearm. There is no reason for this.

In November, at the "Nation's Gun Show" the Dulles Expo Center in Chantilly was the scene of record gun sales. It was an ebullient gathering of people with shared interests, and no doubt all but the tiniest percentage of participants were law-abiding, responsible people, fully qualified to own the guns they were buying. The record sales were motivated in part

Affront to families of Virginia Tech victims leaves option open for felons and people with documented mental illness to buy guns.

because of concern by some gun enthusiasts about new restrictions on some firearms that could come with Democratic control of Congress and the White House, and in part because of the recession.

EDITORIAL Why would those people want to run the risk that a tragedy like the one at Virginia Tech nearly two years ago that claimed the lives of 33 people would involve a gun purchased without a proper background check at the Nation's Gun Show?

FOR THE RECORD, the Virginia Tech shooter was able to buy his guns legally because his

name was mistakenly not included on the list of those excluded from gun ownership; he was previously ruled a danger to himself or others and should not have been able to buy from a licensed gun dealer. But if he had been excluded through normal means, he could have traveled a few miles from his home to the gun show in Chantilly in search of weapons he could buy without a background check.

IN ANY EVENT, legislation in the General Assembly that would have closed the gun show loophole is dead for this year. Only one Northern Virginia senator, Ken Cuccinelli, voted against closing the loophole.

Deficit Closer To \$4 Million

To the Editor:

Two important dates are coming up soon for (state) government in Virginia:

First, Tuesday is "Crossover Day" in the General Assembly. All of the bills that will be passed by the House and by the Senate must be sent over to the other chamber by midnight on Tuesday.

Second, this past Sunday the House Appropriations Committee and Senate Finance Committee will have presented their respective budgets. On Thursday, each chamber will have to pass a budget, days after it has been presented to the legislators and public.

It will be later in February before Virginia finds out how deep our current budget deficit goes. While the current projections (from December) are calling for a \$2.9 billion shortfall, I am not that optimistic. We know tax revenues have dropped off since the last budget estimate, so the only guessing left is how much that deficit grows. I expect it to be closer to \$4 billion.

When making so many tough budgeting decisions, we need as much useful information as we can get about our own budget.

One of the bills I introduced this year was Senate Bill 936 to make Virginia's budget more transparent to the public and legislators.

With today's technology, there is no reason why someone shouldn't be able to sit at their home computer, and be a few mouse clicks away from the budget of a particu-

lar agency or the cost of a VDOT project. That bill got out of the Senate this week.

As bad as the current economy is looking, I am hopeful that Virginians will use it as an opportunity to demand greater accountability and openness from their government. Astonishingly, one of my other transparency bills, SB 812, went down on nearly a party line vote. SB 812 was requested of me by Supervisor Pat Herrity (R-Springfield) as part of his local budget transparency effort. He discovered that Virginia law did not allow local governments to put their checkbooks online. My bill would have allowed local governments to put their checkbooks online, though it would not have required such action. This simple step is an important element in local budget transparency, but it will have to wait for next year to try again.

Please feel free to contact me with your thoughts and concerns.

Sen. Ken Cuccinelli II
R-37

Bills Move Forward

To the Editor:

As the chief patron of nearly 30 bills and resolutions, I have a full plate this session. My staff and I are working hard to keep up with the rigorous schedule that comes with a full legislative agenda, which includes countless committee meetings and conversations with advocates and opponents of

our legislation. I am pleased to report that as of the first week of February, six of my bills have passed the Senate, and many more have been approved in committees and are likely to pass the Senate. I welcome you to take a look at a few.

I am patroning a bill to create a private insurance plan specifically for children in child support cases. Currently, parents are required to purchase health insurance for their children if they can get it through their employers. Unfortunately, many of these parents cannot get such insurance and cannot afford to purchase an individual plan in the private market. Senate Bill 1237 would allow us to create a plan just for these children that would be affordable for families. Passage of this will decrease the number of uninsured children and those who have to go on Medicaid. The bill passed the Senate with unanimous support.

As I did last year, I have once again submitted a bill proposed by students from Centreville High School. Developed by two government students, Senate Bill 1502 would change the existing seat belt law. Adults in the back seat do not have to wear a seat belt even though they are 60 percent more likely to die in an accident if they are not belted. The proposed legislation would require passengers to wear seat belts regardless of age and seat position in a motor vehicle. Five students testified alongside me at the Senate Transportation Committee meeting on Jan. 29. The students' articulate and thoughtful presentation was instrumental in the success of this bill, which earned the support of

the Transportation Committee members. The bill passed the Senate on Feb. 5.

I introduced SB 1501 on behalf of some of Virginia's most vulnerable citizens. This bill will eliminate the waiting list for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities over the next 10 years. Currently, many of these individuals must wait for years in order to receive the services they require. I have been working with the ARC of Virginia on advocacy for this legislation. The bill has passed through the Senate Finance Committee. I anticipate this bill will pass the Senate this week.

Many constituents have contacted us with your comments and opinions. I value these and thank you for your help. If you wish to let me know your views, call our office at 804-698-7539 or e-mail me at district39@sov.state.va.us.

Sen. George Barker
D-39

Write

The Connection welcomes views on any public issue.

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Portrait Artist Teaches at Workhouse

FROM PAGE 3

when she finished college classes and decided to re-engage in a favorite hobby.

"I've loved to paint and draw since I was a kid, and I took a few classes in college, but after graduating law school, I realized I wasn't happy," Blum said. She decided to do something just for her, and shortly thereafter she enrolled in a class at the Art League in Alexandria, better known as the Torpedo Factory. That was the end of her unhappiness.

"I started taking one class and never looked back," she said.

Soon, Blum was taking masters level courses, traveling for shows and classes and learning how to work through creative dry spells and difficult pieces.

"We had to do things over and over again and wipe it away and try it again," Blum said. "I became a much faster painter, I got comfortable using bolder strokes."

MOST OF Blum's work is divided between still lifes and portraits, some of which are done as commissioned pieces. The still lifes are often inspired by vegetables she grows in her backyard garden, but sometimes she has to paint from photographs due to the fragile and short lifespan of fresh vegetables.

"One time I wanted to paint these tomatoes I had grown, so I went out and picked them, leaves and all," Blum said. She had about three hours to set up the painting as she wanted it to look in the end, and the photos she took ended up providing the image she transferred to canvas.

"It was tricky, but it came out exactly the way I wanted," she laughed.

Using the bold, fast strokes she learned in that difficult class, Blum tries to paint in a realistic way, but uses a style similar to impressionist painters.

She hopes her students are enjoying her classes as much as she enjoying teaching them.

"When I decided to start, it was because folks asked me what they should do to fix their projects," she said. "It was so much fun. I loved looking at a project and saying, 'OK, this is what you need to do,' and seeing how the painting came together. I enjoyed the ability to show how not difficult it can be."

The classes in Herndon, on Thursday evenings, are for beginning and intermediate painters and center on a particular topic. Blum brings in various objects for her students to paint and helps them when they ask for her advice.

IN LORTON, the classes are structured a little differently. Students, for the most part, bring in projects they've already been working on, and Blum gives advice and offers suggestions to help bring the pieces to completion.

She's especially fascinated with the environment at the Workhouse in Lorton. Blum first visited the campus during its grand opening ceremonies in September and was



Vicki Blum gives some pointers to student Alex Kinchen.

impressed with the amount of interest the art space had created.

"The Workhouse is a great space to work in," she said. "The classrooms are right there next to the gallery and they're shaped just right, without any of the structural problems you find in other places. And the light's

"Portraits are very intense and you have to take a concentrated approach."

— Vicki Blum

wonderful."

Some day, when Blum has free time between teaching classes and her full-time job as a mortgage banking lobbyist — she admits it's been a "complex" job as of late — Blum would like to take a dance class at the Workhouse or branch out to paint landscapes.

"Every time I drive by the creek in Clifton, I'd like to jump out of my car, set up an easel and paint it," she said. "There's one area in particular, where the creek bends with fallen trees, but I know people love to paint the General Store."

She'd also like to do more portraits, where the strokes aren't as daring and the real challenge is making the final product resemble the subject.

"Portraits are very intense and you have to take a concentrated approach," she said. "With a still life, there's paint flying around. When you do a portrait, you can really en-

joy the concept of putting colors down."

In the meantime, Blum will continue teaching at both facilities and enjoy living in Clifton with her husband, Dave, a lifelong Clifton resident, and their son, David, 7, a student at St. Leo the Great Catholic School in Fairfax.

Blum muses that becoming a painter full time is a nice idea, but one of her former classmates and teachers, Kurt Schwarz, is convinced she could make the switch from part-time painter to full-time artist.

"She's a very hard worker, very dedicated," said Schwarz, whom Blum met at the Torpedo Factory more than a decade ago. "She's very talented with her color and her brush work. She's developed a technique of teaching where she starts a painting in a bit of an earth tone background and makes it work. It's a very individual style and I'm very proud of her."

Schwarz said Blum could very well make a full-time living as an artist if she wanted to, a vote of confidence not many artists will ever hear.

"I've been telling her for years to quit her day job if she wants to get serious about painting," he said. "I really think she could do it."

WHILE BLUM'S students would no doubt support her if she chose to paint full time, they would undoubtedly miss her optimism and sunny disposition.

"She is the definition of vitality," said Tricia Ratliff, a student in Blum's Herndon



Local artist Vicki Blum teaches painting classes at the Lorton Arts Center.

class. "I really think for her, the world is a happy place."

Ratliff likes the personal attention she gets from Blum's classes and the help she's received on her own projects.

"I haven't been able to find a class like this anywhere," she said. "If you're working on a project for a gallery exhibit, she coaches you to make the outcome more successful."

Blum has become a fixture in the Northern Virginia art scene; she is the Maryland and Virginia ambassador to the Portrait Society of America and is currently working on their annual conference in Reston later this spring. She's already hoping to be invited back to teach at both the ArtSpace in Herndon and the Workhouse in Lorton for the spring sessions.

"Teaching isn't something I set out to do, but I really enjoy it," she said.

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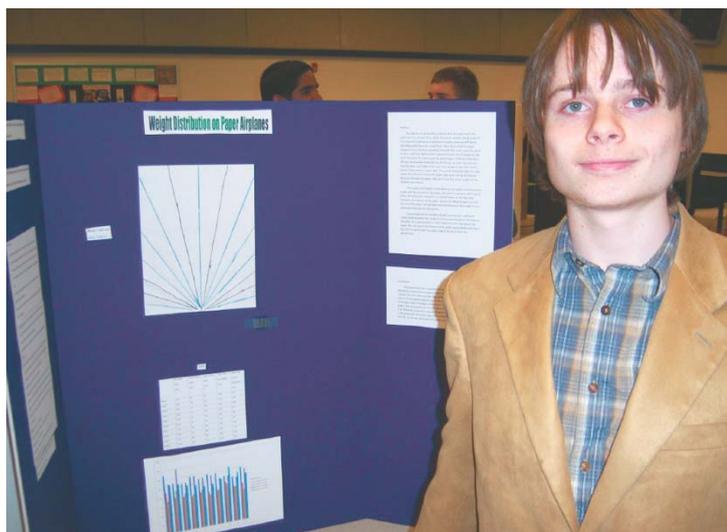
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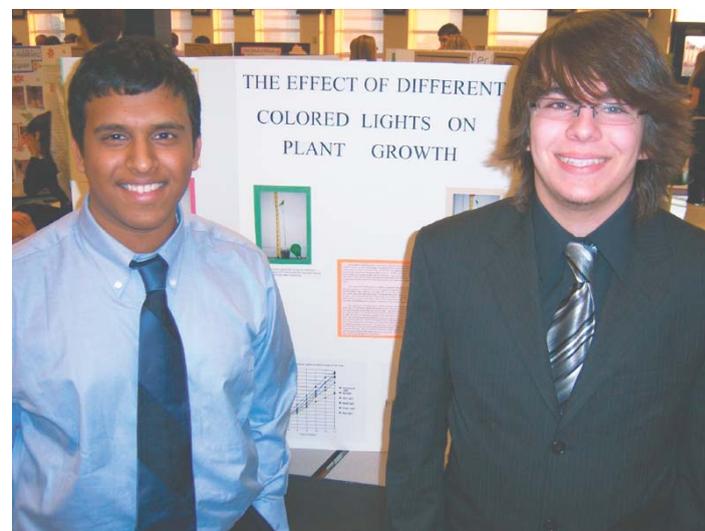
Brian Eckley and his project, Weight Distribution on Paper Airplanes.



Alicia Leninger and her project, How Much Fertilizer is Too Much?



Arrington Butler and Jennifer Oppong and their project, Permanent Markers and Chromatography Separation.



Ganesh Sosale and Matt Bucci and their project, The Effect of Different Colored Lights on Plant Growth.

Stallion Adventures in Science

South County students compete in fourth annual Science Fair.

Some 392 students took part in South County Secondary School's fourth annual Science Fair on Friday, Feb. 6. Some students worked in teams of two or three people on their projects. Forty-five judges determined the first-place winners, who will go on to compete in the Regional Science Fair March 27-29.

The following are first-place winners with their project titles:

Category — Animal Science, Behavioral Science and Biochemistry

First place — The Effect of Pre-Birth Learning on Cuttlefish — Timothy Higgins, Eric Morris

Category — Chemistry

First place — Best Method of Enzymatic Browning — Reema Singh and The Effect of pH Levels on the Growth of Crystals — Celina Than, Mahesh Yalamanchili, Miri Yoon

Category — Plant Science

First place — Effect of Sod Plants on Run-Off — Alexandra Collins, Antonio

Rodriguez and Moon on Growth of Silver Dragon Liriope — Nikki Chahal, Katrina Shah

Category — Engineering and Energy and Transportation

First place — Effect of Insulation on Temperature — Emily Lichstrahl, Michael Lichstrahl

Category — Environmental Science and Plant Science

First place The Effect of Gasoline Brand on Particulates — Jacquelyn Bruhn, Sterling Evans and Effect of chemical runoff on filtering — Matthew Egeland

Category — Cell and Molecular Biology, Medicine & Health and Microbiology

First place — Effect of Food on Physarum



Di'Nesha Beal and her project, Which Seed Grows Faster.

polycephalum Movement — Salma Nabi and Time of UVC Exposure on CO2 Production in Yeast — Cameron Gahres, Tyler Jones

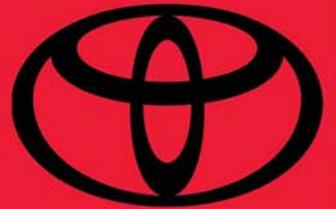
Category — Computer Science, Physics and Astronomy

First place — Hitting the Right Keys — Jasdev Singh, Nikhil Tuteja

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