

Great Falls CONNECTION

Celebrating Diversity At Cooper Middle

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Engebretson Wins Fellowship

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Preparing to present a traditional Indian dance during International Festival activities at Copper Middle School on March 12, Pallavi Rudraraju, warms-up before taking the stage.

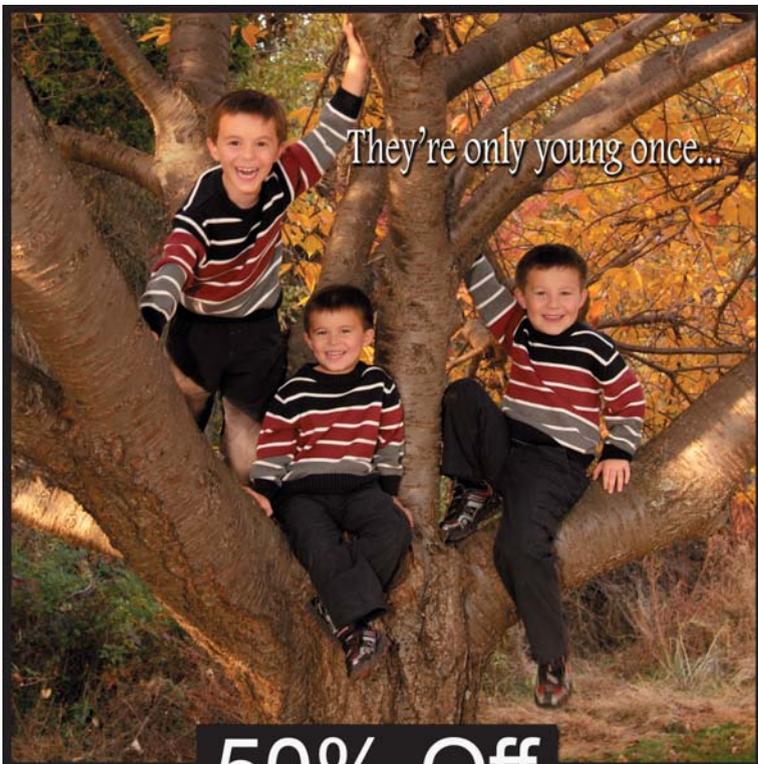
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PHOTO BY MIKE DICICCO/THE CONNECTION



From left, President Jim Luce, Glenn Youngkin, Robb Watters and Rod DeArment form a panel to question county officials regarding real estate assessments.



PHOTO BY JACQUELINE LECKER

West Point Senior John Kreidler leads a discussion on ethics in regards to cheating.

Answers to Assessment Questions

Great Falls residents, citizens association question county officials on real estate assessments.

BY MIKE DICICCO
THE CONNECTION

Last year, Sandra Diefenderfer's home assessment jumped by 125 percent.

"We had to make some real lifestyle changes to come up with another \$20,000 in real estate taxes," she said. She appealed the decision to the county's Board of Equalization of Real Estate Assessments, but the board found that the house had been undervalued for the last 15 years.

All of this, she said, was the result of the sale of one house in her neighborhood. She said she thought an extenuating personal circumstance, such as the long-term undervaluation of a house and the resulting, unexpected jump in taxes, should be taken into account by the county's assessors.

Diefenderfer was one of a crowd of Great Falls residents that packed the Grange on Tuesday, March 10 to talk with Fairfax County Department of Tax Administration Director Kevin Greenleaf and Supervisor John Foust (D-Dranesville) about real estate assessments.

"There seems to be some consternation in this community about real estate assessments and how they are assessed," said Robb Watters, who sat on a panel of Great Falls Citizens Association members that

Appeal an Assessment

To discuss a home assessment with Department of Tax Administration staff, call 703-222-8234 (TTY: 703-222-7594). To download an appeal form or to learn more about the appeals process, visit www.fairfaxcounty.gov/dta/realestatetax_assessappeal.htm. Appeals may also be submitted to the Board of Equalization (BOE) of Real Estate Assessments. To learn about filing with the BOE, call 703-324-4891 or visit www.fairfaxcounty.gov/boe. The BOE filing deadline is June 1.

questioned Greenleaf and Foust on the matter.

GREAT FALLS was the only area in Fairfax County where the average home value rose, albeit slightly, in the 2008 assessments. This year, the average assessed value of a house in the area fell by about 7.4 percent, while assessments countywide dropped by 12.55 percent. It was the slightest drop in assessed real estate values in the county and left the average assessment in Great Falls at \$1,017,799.

Since Fairfax County Executive Tony Griffin has proposed a tax rate hike of about 14.7 percent for the coming fiscal year, this would likely mean another rise in taxes for most Great Falls residents, while the average tax bill countywide would remain about the same. The proposed rise in the rate is from 92 cents to \$1.05.5 per \$100 of assessed value.

"The code of Virginia does not allow me any latitude to make an assessment based on the personal situation of a property owner," Greenleaf told Diefenderfer, adding that factoring in personal circumstances could easily become problematic. He also

said his office would never assess a home based on the sale of one other house but would look at the sales of all comparable homes in the area.

Watters said he had received some 40 e-mails from neighbors during the lead-up to the meeting and that there was a near-unanimous belief among Great Falls residents that the community with the highest property values in the county was being used as a "cash cow" for the county.

Greenleaf pointed out that other high-end areas, such as Fairfax Station and Clifton, had also seen a relatively small decrease in assessments. "My office is in no way trying to pick on Great Falls or use it as a cash cow," he said. Rather, he said, assessments were made based on sale prices from the previous year, with the county's average assessment usually coming in at 91 to 94 percent of the average sale price from the year before.

Some Great Falls residents would have preferred that the county had held their assessments steady while only slightly increasing the tax rate, Watters said, and he wondered whether the tax rate would come back down if assessments rose again in the future.

Greenleaf said he was legally obligated to assess the true value of homes and that the Board of Supervisors had no authority to direct him to inflate assessments in order to keep down the tax rate. "My office does not look at the budget needs of the county," he said.

IN RESPONSE to the question about future tax rates, Foust said, "If assessments go up precipitously, then the tax rate would come down."

Debating Ethics Dilemmas

West Point cadets lead 108 area juniors' discussion.

BY JACQUELINE LECKER
PUBLIC AFFAIRS INTERN, FORT BELVOIR

A recent survey on high school ethics found that within the preceding year, 30 percent of students had stolen from a store and 64 percent had cheated on a test. To confront this problem, 11 West Point cadets lead 108 juniors, chosen for their leadership qualities, from 33 area high schools in the second annual Leadership and Ethics Conference at George Mason University.

In the keynote speech, Lt. Gen. Dave Palmer presented the history of George Washington and Benedict Arnold.

"For two people so similar, why were their legacies so different? One was a traitor, and the other the father of our nation. The answer is character. Your destiny is determined by the strength of your character," said Palmer.

The students then broke off into eight groups, each led by a cadet. "I liked that the cadets led the discussion. They were very engaging, nice, and we could really relate to them because of their age," said Corinthia Evans from Mount Vernon High School.

Each group discussed four vignettes taken from recent news events or everyday school

SEE HOME, PAGE 7

SEE JUNIORS, PAGE 8

Woman's Club Focuses on Health

With an eye toward the importance of women's health, the Great Falls Woman's Club opens its monthly meeting to all women of the community, Friday, March 20, 1-4 p.m., at the Great Falls Library meeting room. Sandy A. Ibrahim, M.D. of Partner MD located in McLean, will give a talk. She is a family practice specialist with a research background in cardiovascular function, the human genome project, namely identification and sequencing of the cystic fibrosis gene, and in the studies leading to the ECMO heart-lung machine. Ibrahim has specific treatment interests in endocrinology, allergies, women's health, disease prevention and mood disorders/counseling. A question and answer period will round out her visit.

Part two will be a talk and demonstration presented by Dr. Laurie Sherman and Dr. John Evans of Opus Arts Institute for Holistic Health. Sherman is a nationally recognized expert in public health, as well as an instructor of gentle restorative yoga. In addition to a holistic health practice, Sherman is a well-known local artist who creates crystal/gemstone jewelry, focusing on necklaces and bracelets. Evans is a former professor of health sciences at Georgetown University and a long-time practitioner of acupressure, reflexology and chi kung, which is akin to simple tai chi. After the program Sherman's jewelry will be available for purchase.

Town Hall Meeting at Langley High

Del. Margi Vanderhuy (D-34), Del. Jim Scott (D-53) and Sen. Janet Howell (D-32) present a town hall meeting on Saturday, March 28 from 10 a.m. to 12 noon, in the Langley High School Cafeteria, 6520 Georgetown Pike, McLean. Citizens will have the opportunity to discuss the recently concluded General Assembly session and expectations for the April 8 veto session when the legislature reconvenes to consider Gov. Tim Kaine's (D) vetoes and his proposed amendments to bills passed in the regular session.

Langley Students In All-Virginia Chorus

Ten Langley High School juniors and seniors plus three alternates were selected among the 24 students from Fairfax County to participate in the All-Virginia Chorus. The following Langley students will be attending the event in Massaponax on April 23-25:

Soprano I - Caroline Dunigan and Chelsea Raitor; Soprano II - Sara Rainey; Alto I - Rachael Bumsted, Ariana Gover-Chamlou and Laruen Bailey-Alternate; Alto II - Arianna Zell; Tenor II - Sean Fischer, Adam Check and Justin McKay-Alternate; Bass I - Parul Goldberg and Ben Koppier-Alternate; Bass II - Robert Higgins.

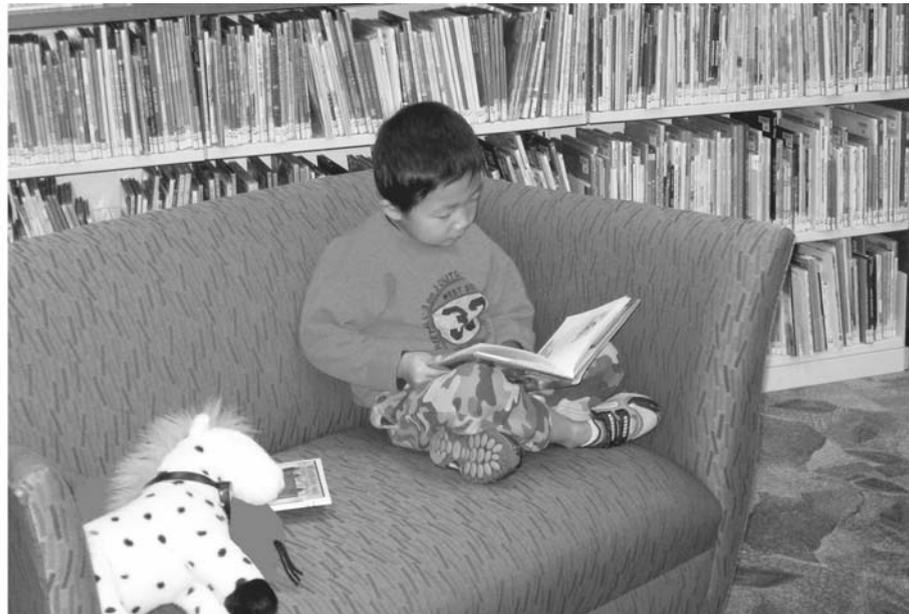
Guest Speaker at Optimist Club

David Borowski, executive director of Flicker of Hope Foundation, will be speaking to the Great Falls Optimist Club on Thursday, March 19 at 6:30 p.m., at the Great Falls Grange. Members of the public are welcome to attend.

Borowski and his wife Kerry, of Vienna, established Flicker of Hope Foundation to provide burn survivors with scholarship assistance and a peer support group for them and their families. Borowski was burned on over 70 percent of his body at the age of 6 weeks. A scholarship offer made by his home state enabled him to receive both bachelor's and master's degrees in economics and finance. He is now a director in the Finance Division of Freddie Mac. Borowski's goal is to ensure, through the Foundation, that burn survivors receive the same opportunity to pursue post-secondary education.

"We are delighted to have this opportunity to learn more about the Foundation and the work the Borowskis are doing not only in the burn community, but with firefighters and school children as well," said Optimist Club President Lisa Jackson.

Those interested in joining the Great Falls Optimist Club or volunteering at specific events, should contact President Lisa Jackson at 703-421-7125 (LJackson@tfsinc.com) or Membership Chair Joda Coolidge at sandjcoolidge@verizon.net. Contributions can be mailed to P.O. Box 233, Great Falls, Virginia 22066. For more information, visit www.greatfallsoptimist.org.



Andy Huang of Great Falls reads on one of the sofas recently purchased by the Friends of Great Falls Library for the library's children's area.

PHOTO CONTRIBUTED

Read Together at Library

New furniture for parents and children donated.

The Friends of the Great Falls Library recently purchased two small sofas for the library's children's area so that parents can sit with their children and read to them.

Branch manager Daniela Dixon said the new furniture fit with the library's goals. "Promotion of early childhood literacy and love of books is a central part of the library's mission," Dixon said.



Pictured, from left, Ethel Shafer and Robert Jacobin of The Studio in Great Falls, and Doris Leadbetter of Keller Williams Realty present a donation of \$1,100 to Lisa Jackson, president and Linda Thompson, vice president of the Great Falls Optimist Club. They raised the funds through the sale of White House Christmas Tree Ornaments.

CONTRIBUTED

\$1,100 Check for Great Falls Optimists

For the second year in a row, Doris Leadbetter of Keller Williams Realty donated the proceeds of her White House Christmas Tree Ornament sales to the Great Falls Optimist Club. This year, joined by the considerable efforts of Ethel Shafer and Robert Jacobin of The Studio in Great Falls, the donation totaled \$1,100 from the sale of more than 300 ornaments.

Leadbetter said she selected the Optimist Club again because it was on of her favorite organizations. "I also have fond memories of the time our son competed in an Optimist Club oratorical contest," she said.

Leadbetter has sold White

House Christmas ornaments every year since 1998, donating the proceeds to different charities throughout the years. One year, she selected the firehouse. Another year a local woman fighting skin cancer. Many years, local youth athletic teams were the beneficiaries.

The Leadbetter Team, of Great Falls, will also be supporting the Great Falls Spring Festival, organized by the Optimist Club and scheduled for Sunday, May 17, 11:30 a.m. to 4 p.m.

"We decided to earmark a significant portion of her donation to support the Jay O'Connor Fund for Youth Soccer, which supports young people in Reston who need

financial assistance in order to participate on athletic teams. Doris has a special place in her heart for that Fund, and her donation couldn't have come at a better time," said Club President Lisa Jackson.

Those interested in joining the Great Falls Optimist Club or volunteering at specific events, should contact President Lisa Jackson at 703-421-7125 (LJackson@tfsinc.com) or Membership Chair Joda Coolidge at sandjcoolidge@verizon.net. Contributions can be mailed to P.O. Box 233, Great Falls, Virginia 22066. For more information about the Club, visit Web site at www.greatfallsoptimist.org.

PEOPLE

Great Falls Residents Wins Fellowship

Jessica Engebretson of Great Falls, a senior at Swarthmore College and a former student of Great Falls and Forest Edge Elementary Schools, Kilmer Middle and TJSST, has received a Watson Fellowship to travel for a year internationally engaged in a project that she has created.

Engebretson's project, "Producing Peace: Radio and Reconciliation in Post-Conflict Societies," explores the experiences of Indonesia, Rwanda and Liberia.

"During the course of my Watson year, I plan to dig into the ways that radio programming can promote peace and reconciliation in post-conflict societies," Engebretson said. "By working with local producers on everything from serialized soap operas to policy talk shows, I hope to begin to understand the ways that radio can help knit back together communities recovering from violence."

The Thomas J. Watson Foundation awarded 40 fellowships to college seniors of unusual promise for a year of independent exploration and travel outside the United States. In addition to their



Jessica Engebretson

CONTRIBUTED

academic achievements, Watson Fellows have been leaders on- and off- campus.

"The awards are long-term investments in people, not research," said Cleveland Johnson, director of the Watson Fellowship Program and a former Watson Fellow. "We look for persons likely to lead or innovate in the future and give them extraordinary independence

to pursue their interests outside of traditional academic structures. Watson Fellows are passionate learners, creative thinkers and motivated self-starters who are encouraged to dream big but demonstrate feasible strategies for achieving their fellowship goals. The Watson Fellowship affords an unequalled opportunity for global experiential learning."

BULLETIN BOARD

To have community events listed in the Connection, send to greatfalls@connectionnewspapers.com. Deadline is Friday.

WEDNESDAY/MARCH 18

League of Women Voters. 7:30-9 p.m., George Mason University, Johnson Center, 4400 University Drive, Fairfax. To celebrate "Sunshine Week", the League of Women Voters of the Fairfax Area is sponsoring a panel discussion of "Open and Transparent Government: Do We Expect Too Much or Not Enough?" The discussion will feature panelists such as Sen. George Barker, Del. Thomas Rust, Eliot Waxman, an educator from Oakton High School; Tom Moncure, Counsel for George Mason University and Amy Gardner, reporter from The

Washington Post. E-mail league@lwv-fairfax.org to reserve a seat. Call 703-658-9150.

THURSDAY/MARCH 19

New Providence Republican Women Meeting, 7 p.m. at the Oakton Library, Meeting Room 1, 10304 Lynnhaven Place, Oakton. Speaker is Anthony Bedell, Chairman of the Fairfax County Republican Committee. 703-591-7368.

SATURDAY/MARCH 21

Careers in Education. 10 a.m.-1 p.m., The Women's Center, 127 Park St. N.E., Vienna. A panel will explore the qualifications needed and the many options that teachers/educators have classroom teaching, tutoring, corporate training, counseling and educational

administration. \$55/person, \$45/Center Circle Donors. Call 703-281-2657 to register.

Foster Care Training. 9:30 a.m.-5:30 p.m., Northern Virginia Family Service, 10455 White Granite Drive, Suite 100, Oakton. The Northern Virginia Family Service is holding a free 3-week training course for prospective Foster Parents. Attendance does not obligate participants to become foster parents, nor does it guarantee placement. Visit www.nvfs.org or call Ginny Snaider at 703-219-2184 to register.

Special Education. 9 a.m.-1 p.m., 1952 Gallows Road, Conference Room, Vienna. A presentation entitled "Special Education and IEPs: What To Do When the School Says No!" will be given in this workshop for parents and advocates. Free. E-mail info@thearcofnova.org or call 703-532-3214 x101 to register.

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PROPOSED NEW ISSUE

Ratings: Fitch: AA
Moody's: Aa3
S&P: AA-

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OPINION

Fair Market Value?

Many concerns about assessing properties in Northern Virginia this year.

Less than a month ago, Fairfax, Arlington and Loudoun counties, and the City of Alexandria, like other local governments, mailed each property owner a new assessment of the fair market value of the property.

What is your home's fair market value?

Most homeowners probably believe that the fair market value of their home is what they could sell it for in a reasonable period of time right now — say putting it on the market this week and allowing 30-60 days. How much would that be?

It's a tough question this year, with values dropping by more than 12 percent on average in Fairfax, nearly 15 percent in Loudoun, less than 5 percent in Alexandria

EDITORIAL

and about 2 percent in Arlington.

The tax assessors base their decisions on the sales of "comparable" properties that sold in 2008, sometimes earlier. But with the number of sales down dramatically, there are sometimes very few "comparable" sales. In Fairfax County, the majority of sales are foreclosures.

But the assessors have decided that foreclosures should not be taken into consideration

as a comparable sale.

This is questionable, and the exclusion of foreclosure sales likely inflates the value of many, if not most, properties. If houses in your neighborhood have sold in foreclosure for dramatically reduced prices, does that affect the value of your house? You know it does.

The value on the piece of paper sent to your house will determine the amount of property tax you owe this year, based on the tax rate which in most places will not be precisely set until April.

Local governments' budgets, the amount of money they have to fund schools, public safety, libraries and many other services, depend directly on how much the homes in each jurisdiction are worth, based on the tax rate. This is more so in Virginia than in many other states where localities have more leeway in choosing sources of revenue. Localities in Virginia are more dependent on property taxes because the General Assembly has strictly limited their access to other taxes. In Virginia, because it is a "Dillon Rule" state, localities only have exactly the power that the General Assembly has bestowed on them.

YOU CAN APPEAL your assessment, but the deadlines are fast approaching and the bur-

den of proof is entirely on the homeowner. You will need to be prepared to cite comparable sales from 2008 that justify your view of your home's fair market value. There are two possible steps to appeal, first to the local department of tax administration, then to each locality's Board of Equalization. The Board of Equalization is independent of the tax assessors office; it is made up of citizens appointed by the governing board.

IN FAIRFAX COUNTY, the deadline to appeal to the Department of Tax Administration is April 3, and appeals to the next level must be postmarked no later than June 1. The second deadline could well roll around before a homeowner gets an answer to the administrative appeal, so it's important to engage in both processes at once. See <http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/dta/> for instructions and information.

We want to hear from you; please share your opinion of your assessment, or any experiences you have in appealing your assessment.

— MARY KIMM,

MKIMM@CONNECTIONNEWSPAPERS.COM

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Clarification of Setbacks

To the Editor:

The recent article ["Setbacks on Pike Encouraged," Great Falls Connection, March 11-17] regarding efforts to preserve and protect the historic significance and scenic beauty of Georgetown Pike with additional guidelines for development continues the Connection's commitment to effectively inform the public of what can often be arcane and obscure land use matters but yet of significance to our community's character.

We do wish to clarify two elements of what is generally an accurate report of the process to date. First, the Comprehensive Plan does not already call for "setbacks of 100 to 150 feet" along the stretch of the road that lies in McLean, but rather to "limit densities" within that distance. The concepts are fundamentally different in their application to property development although each may serve to protect the scenic and historic character of the Pike. The "limit densities" approach was suggested for Great Falls; however, the APR Task Force is recommending use of the "setback" approach without prescribing a specific distance.

Also, it should be noted that the language is proposed for inclusion in the Comprehensive Plan. The issue referred to in the article regarding a subdivision lot on Aziza Court is regulated by the County's Zoning and Subdivision Ordinances. Because the Comprehensive Plan serves as a general guide rather than a specific regulation, we commend the supervisor's office for also recommending re-evaluation of the applicable ordinances. Although the proposal to add language to the Comprehensive Plan predated the construction of the subject home and is intended to support the Pike's state and national scenic and historic designations the two efforts are complimentary and together will strengthen its protection.

Thank you for your continuing coverage of issues such as this of importance to our community.

Eric Knudsen & Joan Barnes
Great Falls Citizens Association
Transportation Committee Co-chairs

Illusion of A Free Lunch

To the Editor:

The editorial "A Million Trees?" [Connection, March 11-17, 2009]

comments on the destruction of over 2 square miles of mature trees and wildlife habitat caused by the HOT-lanes project, and remarks that local residents as well as elected officials were surprised at the extent of the tree clearing and other work. Small wonder that they were surprised. This, like all other Public-Private Partnerships, has been hurried through without public hearings, without an Environmental Impact Statement and without financial transparency. VDOT and its partner, in this case Fluor-Transurban, were able to move very quickly, unencumbered by requirements for consultation and environmental analyses.

While this and other Public-Private Partnerships side-step many honored processes in our government, they are actually legal,

based on legislation passed by the Virginia General Assembly in 1995 as a way to entice private companies to pay for construction projects instead of using tax revenue. Now, in retrospect, we may want to reconsider this illusion of a free lunch. We were unpleasantly surprised by the extent of damage to our environment, but more surprises loom ahead. In the event of cost-overruns, or lack of sufficient profit for the private partner, Virginia taxpayers will pay. When developers and VDOT alone make all construction and financing decisions, we citizen taxpayers may not like what they decide. This could be the time to reconsider the Public-Private Transportation Act.

Linda Burchfiel
McLean

Write

The Connection welcomes views on any public issue. The deadline for all material is noon Friday. Letters must be signed. Include home address and home and business numbers. Letters are routinely edited for libel, grammar, good taste and factual errors. Send to:

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Home Assessments Debated

FROM PAGE 3

Panelist Rod DeArment said that last year, his assessment had jumped by 26 percent, and he had appealed the decision. Eventually, the county had revalued the house to about what DeArment had estimated it was worth. "Is that just an uncommon case that I had?" he asked, to which the audience responded with a chorus of nos.

"Virginia recognizes that it's not a perfect process," Greenlief said, and he encouraged any residents who thought their assessments were incorrect to file an appeal.

DeArment said he had been "outraged" when the county had increased the values of residents' land and decreased the values of their houses in last year's assessments, noting that the decision seemed "entirely arbitrary" and had undermined many homeowners' confidence in the assessment process.

"It was not our finest hour," Greenlief said. However, he added, residents' total assessments were the same amount they would have been otherwise. While the county assesses the property as a whole,

the state requires that the total be broken down to land and house values. Switching the two "is not going to change the sum of the pie," Greenlief said. Nonetheless, he assured that it would never be done again. "It actually applied accepted standards, but it didn't pass the smell test," he said.

David Spencer noted that the three houses that had been sold in his neighborhood in 2008 had gone for far less than their 2008 assessment.

Greenlief said this was because the 2008 assessments were based on 2007 home sales, creating a lag between assessment and sale price. "All this is evidence of, in my mind, is that the market is in decline," he said.

Ralph Apton said assessors should look only at the last quarter of the previous year when the market is changing rapidly.

"We do try to focus heavily on the third and fourth quarter," Greenlief said, but he noted that his office had to look at the entire year's sales in order to have enough data to make a decision.

Panelist Glenn Youngkin wanted to know what would hap-

pen to the tax rate next year if assessments countywide continued to drop. Foust did not rule out the possibility of another increase.

FOR THE COMING fiscal year, the Board of Supervisors was forcing 15 percent cuts in all departments except schools and was freezing salaries, Foust said. The proposed tax rate hike was to make up the remaining difference. For the next fiscal year, the board planned to restructure the county government to save more costs, he said, adding that Greenlief's department had done the best job of proposing its own cost-saving structural changes for the coming year and could serve as a model for the county.

"That's not to say the tax rate won't go up," he said, noting that the county was unlikely to cut services much further than the cuts being proposed for the coming year. In difficult economic times, he said, the demand for county services spikes. While companies are scaling back their operations because business is down, he said, "Our business is through the roof."



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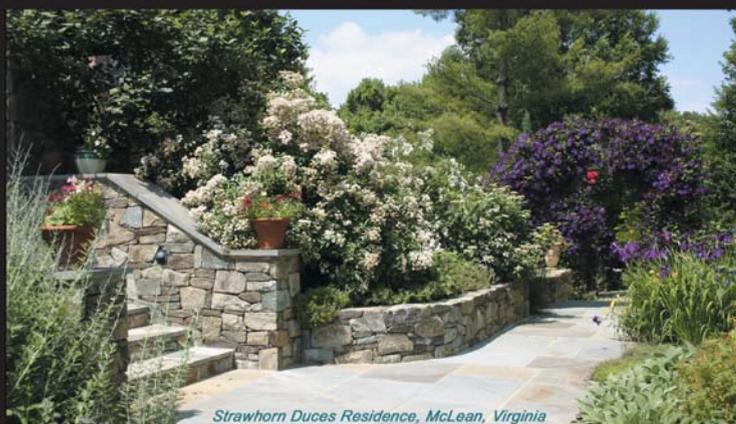
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VIEWPOINTS

Colin Cannon,
McLean High School

"Cheating has become the norm in this area. Competition in Northern Virginia to get into colleges is so high that people do whatever it takes. It's become regular, and everyone just lets it go."

"Today I learned not to be afraid to talk about things, to meet new people, and share your opinion. Don't feel guilty, come clean. You don't want to live with a bad decision even if there are consequences."



What is the ethical issue of the day, what have you learned today?

— DANIELLE LANDAU & MERRILL ROTH

Paula Novacki,
Langley High School

"Lying is a big issue, because I feel like it can be so broad, from a white lie to something that can put someone in imminent danger. One lie leads to another, leads to another."

"I've learned that leadership and ethics are two different things. One can be a leader without ethics. There are bad people in the world that can still be considered good leaders."



Lauren Hurlburt, 16,
Marshall High School

"I also feel that substance abuse is the most relevant ethics issue right now. As people get older drugs become more available; you need to stand up for what you believe in even if doing so pulls you out of your comfort zone. I have learned how to be a strong leader. I know how to go through the whole decision making process."



Elizabeth Gauf,
Madison High School

"A big issue is the decision between staying loyal to your friends versus what's legal. For instance, if you saw your friends cheating. I think a lot of teens face that controversy."

"I learned the importance of character and staying true to what you value in your decisions so that you can make the right one."



Caroline Beury, 16,
Oakton High School

"The current drinking laws are a big issue for people in our area. Teenagers are having trouble deciding when to step into difficult situations. Many kids are comfortable going to a party where there is drinking but drinking and driving then becomes an issue. Today's program forced me to question my morals and rethink what I would do in pressure-centered circumstances."



Juniors Discuss Ethics Dilemmas

FROM PAGE 3

life. Should you turn in a friend who cheated on a test? "Is someone really your friend if they ask you to jeopardize your morals?" asked Steve Hojnicky, a senior at West Point.

With no "approved solutions," only principles, each group presented a skit based on the vignettes, showing how to apply what they had learned to make ethical decisions every day.

"Today, I learned sometimes ethical issues go beyond just right and wrong. It's OK to disagree," said Ashley Brigham, of West Springfield High School.



PHOTO BY JACQUELINE LEIKER

Juniors from Northern Virginia high schools practice skits based on ethical dilemmas.

The West Point class of 1979 hosts the event annually. "We want to send seeds out to the schools.

These students will be able lead by example," said Carl Cecil, co-chairman of the conference.

Middle School Forum Addresses Teen Issues

The Safe Community Coalition (SCC) will sponsor the 13th annual Middle School Forum on Thursday, March 19, 9:45 a.m.-1:45 p.m. The goal of the program is to provide an open forum for seventh and eighth graders to discuss with their peers topics and issues concerning middle school students. Approximately 220 students from Cooper and Longfellow will be participating along with teen facilitators from the SCC Youth Advisory Council which is comprised of students from Langley, McLean and The Potomac School.

During the morning sessions, the seventh graders will discuss issues such as stress, healthy relationships, substance use and abuse, and cyber-ethics. They will develop presentations in the form of skits, rap, public service announcements, etc. about their areas of concern and strategies for dealing with the issues and present them in the afternoon. The eighth grade discussion ses-

sions will focus on transitioning to high school issues, starting with a panel of ninth and 12th graders who will share their experiences and take questions from the eighth graders. Then, they divide up into smaller groups for in depth conversations about some of their concerns. The discussion sessions will be led by trained high school facilitators from the Youth Advisory Council who will provide feedback about the forum upon its conclusion.

While the middle school students attend their respective discussion groups, parents, teachers, and other members of the community will have the opportunity to attend an adult forum where they discuss issues facing their children and exchange ideas.

The Middle School Forum will meet at the McLean Baptist Church, 1367 Chain Bridge Road, McLean. For more about the SCC, visit www.safecommunitycoalition.net.

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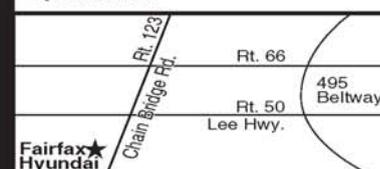
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SCHOOLS



Cooper Middle School students and family members try a variety of ethnic food from around the world during the school's annual International Festival on March 12.



Caitlin Rose and Laurel Blooh, students at Cooper Middle School, play a game of Finger Sumo at the school during the school's annual International Festival on March 12.

Celebrating Diversity at Cooper Middle

PHOTOS BY ROBBIE HAMMER/THE CONNECTION



Will Walter, an eighth-grader at Cooper Middle School, races around the gym as part of the Café Contest.



As part of the school's annual International Festival, Jeeyune Park and Inah Jung, dressed in traditional garb representing South Korea.



Anne Gent, representing Ireland, performed a traditional Irish clog at Cooper Middle School's annual International Festival in March 12.



Kevin Chin, an eighth-grader at Cooper Middle School, warms-up with his Chinese Yo-Yo, before performing at the school's International Festival on Friday night.

CALENDAR



The Russian National Ballet Theatre will perform twice at the George Mason Center for the Arts, dancing in 'Cinderella' on Friday, March 20 and 'Sleeping Beauty' on Saturday, March 21.

Send announcements to greatfalls@connectionnewspapers.com. Deadline is Thursday for the following week's paper. Photos/artwork encouraged. For additional listings, visit www.connectionnewspapers.com

WEDNESDAY/MARCH 18

Sonia & disappear fear. Eclectic world music. 8 p.m. at The Barns. Tickets \$18. Wolf Trap Foundation for the Performing Arts, 1645 Trap Road, Vienna. 1-877-WOLFTRAP.
Dave Barnes and Gabe Dixon Band. 7:30 p.m. at Jammin' Java, 227 Maple Ave. E., Vienna. \$15 advance, \$18 at the door. 703-255-1566 or jamminjava.com.
Book Discussion. 7:30 p.m. at the Great Falls Library, 9830 Georgetown Pike, Great Falls. Call for title. Adults. 703-757-8560.

THURSDAY/MARCH 19

Battlefield Band. 8 p.m. at The Barns. Traditional and contemporary Scottish music. \$22. Wolf Trap Foundation for the Performing Arts, 1645 Trap Road, Vienna. 1-877-WOLFTRAP.
Old School Freight Train CD Release. 7:30 p.m. at Jammin' Java, 227 Maple Ave. E., Vienna. \$15. 703-255-1566 or jamminjava.com.
Where Does Gold Come From: the Astronomical Origin of the Elements. 7 p.m. at the Great Falls Library, 9830 Georgetown Pike, Great Falls. Dr. Edward Murphy of the University of Virginia traces the history of a gold atom. Adults. 703-757-8560.
Adult Roundtable. 10 a.m., McLean Baptist Church, 1367 Chain Bridge Road, McLean. An "Adult Roundtable Middle School Forum" will be held by the Safe Community Coalition. Visit www.safecommunitycoalition.net.

FRIDAY/MARCH 20

Lara St. John, violinist. 8 p.m. at The Barns. \$35. Wolf Trap Foundation for the Performing Arts, 1645 Trap Road, Vienna. 1-877-WOLFTRAP.
The Russian National Ballet Theatre in "Cinderella." 8 p.m. at the George Mason Center for the Arts, on the Fairfax campus 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 Grand Tier III. Tickets are \$27-\$54. 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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Alden Theatre Box Office, call 703-573-SEAT or visit www.ticketmaster.com.

SATURDAY/MARCH 21

HAPA, contemporary Hawaiian duo. 7:30 p.m. at The Barns. \$25. Wolf Trap Foundation for the Performing Arts, 1645 Trap Road, Vienna. 1-877-WOLFTRAP.
The Russian National Ballet Theatre in "Sleeping Beauty." 8 p.m. at the George Mason Center for the Arts, on the Fairfax campus 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 Grand Tier III. Tickets are \$27-\$54. Age 12 and under, half price Charge by phone at 888-945-2468 or visit www.tickets.com. www.gmu.edu/cfa.
'It's All about the Cats' Adoption Day sponsored by Commonwealth Cat Rescue, Inc., 11 a.m.-5 p.m. at the Woodrow Wilson Library, 6101 Knollwood Drive, Falls Church Falls Church. 703-820-8744. Contact Chris C. Haslam, Commonwealth Cat Rescue, Inc. at 703-568-3600.
The Lion, The Witch and the Wardrobe. 3 p.m., Alden Theatre, 1234 Ingleside Ave., McLean. Watch local talent present this classic story. To purchase tickets, stop by the Alden Theatre Box Office, call 703-573-SEAT or visit www.ticketmaster.com.
Citrus Fruit Sale. 8 a.m.-6 p.m., at American Legion Post 270, 1355 Balls Hill Road, McLean. Pink Seedless Grapefruit, Valencia Oranges, and Honey Tangerines are featured. Pure Maple Syrup will also be available. Proceeds support local community youth, patriotic activities, and veteran needs. Visit web site

Valery Lloyd Watts. 7 p.m., at Vienna Baptist Church, 541 Marshall Road S.W., Vienna. Valery Lloyd-Watts, who has been hailed as the "world's most listened-to pianist," will perform live. Tickets: \$15/adults, \$10/seniors and students, free/children 2 and under. Call 703-734-0621 or e-mail harnesselway@aol.com.

The Lion, The Witch and the Wardrobe. 7:30 p.m., Alden Theatre, 1234 Ingleside Ave., McLean. Watch local talent present this classic story. To purchase tickets, stop by the Alden Theatre Box Office, call 703-573-SEAT or visit www.ticketmaster.com.

Spring Fashion Show and Luncheon. 12:30 p.m., Le Mistral Restaurant, 6641 Old Dominion Drive, McLean. Bloomingdale's unveils their Spring Collection and a representative from Estée Lauder presents the latest trends in skin care and make-up, door prizes will be raffled and the McLean Youth Orchestra will perform. Tickets: \$50; call 703-821-6646.

Meadowlark Gardens History. 1 p.m., McLean Government Center, 1437 Balls Hill Road, McLean. Meadowlark's Chief Horticulturalist Doris Rodriguez will focus on the daily collection and other major collections at the gardens. Free; open to the public. Call 703-534-7729.
Music from Oberlin. 7:30 p.m., Unitarian-Universalist Congregation of Fairfax, 2709 Hunter Mill Road,

www.mcleanpost270.org or call 703-356-8259.

SUNDAY/MARCH 22

HAPA, contemporary Hawaiian duo. 7:30 p.m. at The Barns. \$25. Wolf Trap Foundation for the Performing Arts, 1645 Trap Road, Vienna. 1-877-WOLFTRAP.
Todesbonden, Ephemeral Sun and Origin Theory. 7 p.m. at Jammin' Java, 227 Maple Ave. E., Vienna. \$10. 703-255-1566 or jamminjava.com.
The Academy of Ancient Music. 4 p.m. at George Mason University 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 3:15 p.m. on the Center's Grand Tier III. Tickets are \$24-\$48. Charge by phone at 888-945-2468 or visit www.tickets.com. www.gmu.edu/cfa.

Spring Fashion Show and Luncheon. 12:30 p.m., Le Mistral Restaurant, 6641 Old Dominion Drive, McLean. Bloomingdale's unveils their Spring Collection and a representative from Estée Lauder presents the latest trends in skin care and make-up, door prizes will be raffled and the McLean Youth Orchestra will perform. Tickets: \$50; call 703-821-6646.

Meadowlark Gardens History. 1 p.m., McLean Government Center, 1437 Balls Hill Road, McLean. Meadowlark's Chief Horticulturalist Doris Rodriguez will focus on the daily collection and other major collections at the gardens. Free; open to the public. Call 703-534-7729.
Music from Oberlin. 7:30 p.m., Unitarian-Universalist Congregation of Fairfax, 2709 Hunter Mill Road,

Oakton. The Darwin String Quartet will perform works by Beethoven and Mozart. Free. Call 703-893-9072 or visit www.oberlin.edu/alumni.

The Lion, The Witch and the Wardrobe. 3 p.m., Alden Theatre, 1234 Ingleside Ave., McLean. Watch local talent present this classic story. To purchase tickets, stop by the Alden Theatre Box Office, call 703-573-SEAT or visit www.ticketmaster.com.
Daylilies. 1 p.m., McLean Government Center, 1437 Balls Hill Road, McLean. The Northern Virginia Daylily Society will host a presentation on Meadowlark's history by Meadowlark's Chief Horticulturalist Doris Rodriguez. She will focus on the daylily collection and other major collections that can be seen when visiting the gardens. Free. Call 703-534-7729.

The Washington Moroccan Club Youth Art Event: To celebrate President Obama's Inauguration and to honor the First Family, youth, ages 5-15, are invited to create a picture at the event inspired by the theme, "Welcome the Obama Family to the White House." Pictures will then be selected to present to the First Family. Refreshments and art supplies provided. Every artist awarded. 3-6 p.m. at the McLean Community Center, 1234 Ingleside Avenue, McLean, VA 22101

MONDAY/MARCH 23

Open Mic Showcase Hosted by Ron Goad. 7-10 p.m. at Jammin' Java, 227 Maple Ave. E., Vienna. \$2. 703-255-1566 or jamminjava.com.

TUESDAY/MARCH 24

That 1 Guy: unlike anything you have heard before. 8 p.m. at

Jammin' Java, 227 Maple Ave. E., Vienna. \$10 in advance, \$12 at the door. 703-255-1566 or jamminjava.com.

WEDNESDAY/MARCH 25

Taylor Carson, Matt York and Andrew Hoover. 7:30 p.m. at Jammin' Java, 227 Maple Ave. E., Vienna. \$10. 703-255-1566 or jamminjava.com.

Buddy Hatton. 7 p.m., Alden Theatre, 1234 Ingleside Ave., McLean. Watch "In Search of Shangri-La" with Alden favorite Buddy Hatton. \$8/district residents, \$10/others. Call 703-790-9223.

Cuaison Wine Dinner. 6:30 p.m., Wildfire Tysons Galleria, 1714U International Drive, McLean. Guest speaker Don Clemens joins with Wildfire's Executive Chef Steven Lukis. \$95/person. To view the menu, visit wildfirerestaurant.com or for reservations contact Michelle Bringham at 703-442-9110. °

THURSDAY/MARCH 26

Paul Thorn, gospel-inspired Americana. 8 p.m. at The Barns. \$20. Wolf Trap Foundation for the Performing Arts, 1645 Trap Road, Vienna. 1-877-WOLFTRAP.

White Burgundy and Pinot Noir. 6:30-8:30 p.m., Ritz-Carlton Tysons Corner, 1700 Tysons Blvd., McLean. A wine tour of France. Experience one of the most delicate grape varieties. **Garnet Rogers.** 7:30 p.m. at Jammin' Java, 227 Maple Ave. E., Vienna. \$15. 703-255-1566 or jamminjava.com.

SEE CALENDAR, PAGE 12

GALLERIES

The works of siblings Mohammad, Mostafa and Morteza Darehbaghi will be on display in the **Persian New Year Exhibit** starting Friday, **March 20** at Hermitage Design and Gallery, 6831 Tennyson Drive, McLean. The opening reception will be March 20, 5-8 p.m. Call 703-827-0066.

A **Painting Demonstration** by representational oil painter Denise Dumont will be held Saturday, **March 21**, 12:30-2:30 p.m. at the Ayr Hill Gallery, 141 Church St. N.W., Vienna. Dumont will create a painting

from start to finish of the local landscape in oil. Free. RSVP to 703-938-3880 or info@ayrhillgallery.com.

The **U.S. Geological Survey**, National Center Art Hallway, 12201 Sunrise Valley Drive, Reston, presents paintings by Pauline D. Lorfano **March 3-30**, Monday through Friday, 7 a.m.-6:30 p.m.

Drawings, collages, and sculptures by students of Great Falls Elementary School under will be on display in the Great Falls Library, 9830 Georgetown Pike, Great Falls, **March 3-**

31. On March 5, 3-5 p.m., an ice cream social to celebrate the students' art will be held in the conference room.

Exhibitions by Deanna Clayton and Keith Clayton will be on display March 5-April 20 at Habatart Galleries, 8020 Towers Crescent Drive, Tysons Corner. The opening reception will be March 5, 5:30-7:30 p.m. Habitat will also host "Habitat for Healing," a fundraiser for the Leukemia and Lymphoma Society. Donated pieces from several artists will be on display March 5-April 20. The pieces will then be auctioned off in a si-

lent auction April 7. Call 703-989-7110.

Ted Ramsey's new works, a show entitled "Planet Joy," will be on display March 7-April 1at Applegate Gallery & Custom Framing, 101 Church St. N.W., Suite C, Vienna.

Nature paintings by **Jola Noska** will be on display beginning **March 15** at the Vienna Arts Society Gallery, 513 W. Maple Ave., Vienna. The gallery is open Tuesdays-Saturday s, 11 a.m.-2:30 p.m. Call 703-319-3220.

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CALENDAR

FROM PAGE 11

FRIDAY/MARCH 27

Susan Werner with Madi Diaz. Folk and gospel. 8 p.m. at The Barns. \$22. Wolf Trap Foundation for the Performing Arts, 1645 Trap Road, Vienna. 1-877-WOLFTRAP.

Sex and Missiles, Feed God Cabbage, Mistaken For Strangers, Redline Addiction, The Rail, Shrine of the Silver Monkey, Combat Funk and The List. 6 p.m. at Jammin' Java, 227 Maple Ave. E., Vienna. \$8 advance, \$10 at the door. 703-255-1566 or jamminjava.com.

SATURDAY/MARCH 28

Michael Manring, bassist. 7 p.m. at

HEALTH NOTES

Health notes are for support groups, exercise classes, blood drives and similar events open to the public at no or minimal cost. Send information to greatfalls@connectionnewspapers.com. Deadline is Friday.

Yoga for Body and Spirit, Wednesdays from 9:15-10:30 a.m. at Immanuel Presbyterian Church, 1125 Savile Lane, McLean. The first class is free, each subsequent class is \$15 or 6 classes for \$75. Bring a yoga mat. www.ipcmclean.org.

Northern Virginia Stuttering Support Group, a support group for people who stutter meets the **third Tuesday** of the month at the Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Fairfax, 2709 Hunter Mill Road, Oakton, at 7:30 p.m. Call 703-319-8382 or e-mail

Jammin' Java, 227 Maple Ave. E., Vienna. \$15. 703-255-1566 or jamminjava.com.

Antiques Appraisal. 12:30-4 p.m., Freeman Store and Museum, 131 Church St. N.E., Vienna. Call the museum after 12 p.m. on Feb. 28 at 703-938-5187 to reserve. Only two items can be appraised per person and each item will cost \$10, or \$7.50 for Historic Vienna, Inc. members.

John Eaton, the music of the 1940s. 7:30 p.m. at The Barns. \$25. Wolf Trap Foundation for the Performing Arts, 1645 Trap Road, Vienna. 1-877-WOLFTRAP.

Laughing Pizza. 2 p.m., Alden Theatre, 1234 Ingleside Ave., McLean. Laughing Pizza is a real family band that creates original pop music for kids and their parents. Dad

virginia.nsa@earthlink.net.

The Greater Chesapeake and Potomac Blood Services Region of the **American Red Cross** is seeking volunteers to assist its blood collections staff at blood drives and blood donor centers. This position is offered to people who are 14 years of age or older. Training is provided. To register for training, call the American Red Cross Volunteer Office at 1-800-272-0094, ext. 1, or e-mail karloff@usa.redcross.org.

Great Falls Parkinson's Disease Support Group meets on the **fourth Tuesday** of each month at 7:30 p.m. at St. Francis Episcopal Church, 9220 Georgetown Pike. The Parkinson Foundation welcomes PD patients and family members. They are dedicated to mutual self-help and the enhancement of cop-

Billy and mom Lisa combine their skills as award-winning songwriters with their multi instrumentalist daughter Emily to create fun, inspiring music for the whole family. \$10/residents, \$14/others. Call 703-790-9223.

Mark Levin. 11 a.m., Barnes and Noble, 7851 Tysons Corner Center, McLean. Nationally syndicated radio host Mark R. Levin will sign his latest release, "Liberty and Tyranny: A Conservative Manifesto." Call 703-506-2937.

SUNDAY/MARCH 29

Local Matinee with Tieweb and Pat Sommer's Project. 2 p.m. at Jammin' Java, 227 Maple Ave. E., Vienna. \$8. 703-255-1566 or jamminjava.com.

ing skills for those with Parkinson's Disease. There is no fee. Call Glenn Lawrence at 703-406-2732.

Peer support group for survivors of clergy abuse and others affected by the abuse, on the last Wednesday of every month at 7 p.m., in the downstairs meeting room at the Dolley Madison Library, 1244 Oak Ridge Road, McLean. Meetings are sponsored by Voice of the Faithful-Northern Virginia affiliate. Contact Ellen Radday at 703-538-6128.

Living with Epilepsy Support Group for parents meets the 2nd Sunday of each month. 12:30 -1:30 p.m. at McLean Bible Church, Room 1410, 8925 Leesburg Pike. Call to register, 703-770-2942 or jackiemillsfernal@mcleanbible.org.

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Extra Hours at Clemyjontri Carousel

In response to growing demand, the Fairfax County Park Authority will provide five extra weekends of expanded carousel operations at the Clemyjontri Park, fully accessible playground located at 6317 Georgetown Pike in McLean.

Now children can visit each of the four thematic play areas, enjoy a picnic and also ride the carousel which will have a longer operating season and will stay open one hour later on weekends. The American Classic Carousel is the centerpiece of the park. Chariots, a spinning teacup and 14

prancing steeds await only the imagination of children. The carousel is recessed to ground level so that it is accessible for wheelchairs, allowing for easy transfers. The chariot is designed to allow for transfer to a seated position or to remain seated in the wheelchair.

The 2009 carousel schedule will run as follows:

v April 4 until May 24 from 9:30 a.m. until 6:30 p.m. — Weekends Only

v May 25 through Sept. 7 from 9:30 a.m. until 1 p.m. Weekdays; 9:30 a.m. until 6:30 p.m. on Weekends.

v Sept. 8 through Nov. 22 from 9:30 a.m. until 6:30 p.m. — Weekends Only

The park is open 7 a.m. until dusk daily. Both weekend and weekday fees for the carousel are now \$1.50 per ride.

Overflow parking is available at Langley Fork Park located just one-eighth of a mile from the park at 6250 Georgetown Pike. Due to safety concerns, park patrons are asked not to park along Georgetown Pike. The carousel does not operate in inclement or hazardous weather. For more information, call 703-388-2807.

VIEWPOINTS



Maria Cabrera, Mother—Arlington:

“It’s a really big park with many things to do. My son has a disability and this park is really easy to move around. Here he is entertained and can play for hours.”

— EMMA GONZALEZ

What Do You Like About Clemyjontri Park?



Christopher Hildebrand, age 4, Arlington:

“I love the Firetruck and I pretend that I drive with the steering wheel. It’s my favorite. I get to run around a lot.”



Katherine Strong, 4, McLean:

“I get to see my friends and play with them. I like it when they come and play with me. We get to run and play together with other kids too.”



Gianna Phillips, 5, McLean:

“Swings, swings, swings. I love the tire swings too. It’s really colorful and I meet my friends from school. I also like to look at the rainbow and I know when I’m bigger I will be able to climb the rainbow.”



Maxwell Phillips, 5, McLean (Gianna’s twin brother):

“There are a lot of fun things here. The swings are my favorite. I like all parks but this one is my favorite because I can play with friends.”

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When you visit one of these Open Houses, tell the Realtor you saw it in this Connection Newspaper. 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.

Great Falls

10605 Good Spring Ave	\$694,500	3/21 1-4	Stephanie White	Sothebys	703-489-5045
251 Carrwood Rd	\$1,399,000	Sun 1-4	Carol Jackson	Long & Foster	703-217-2163
11539 Tralee Dr	\$1,748,940	Sun 1-4	Rosalie Sarson	Weichert	703-934-0400
639 Nalls Farm Way	\$2,500,000	Sun 1-4	Carol Ellickson	Weichert	703-862-2135

Falls Church

7437 Timberock Rd	\$475,000	Sun 1-4	Eve Shapiro	Weichert	703-517-7511
7029 Haycock Rd #6	\$565,000	Sun 1-3	Kathryn D. Bellaschi	Long & Foster	703-790-1990
6502 Orland St	\$649,900	3/17 11am-1pm	Shirley Bishop	Coldwell Banker	703-734-7020
6795 Colby Crossing Way	\$1,175,000	Sat & Sun 12-4:30	Anne DiBenedetto	McEearney	703-790-9090
6799 Colby Crossing Way	\$1,299,000	Sat & Sun 12-4:30	Anne DiBenedetto	McEearney	703-790-9090

McLean

1504 Hampton Hill Cir	\$899,000	Sun 1-4	John Maucher	Weichert	703-472-6206
6304 Walden Woods Ct	\$1,545,000	3/22 1-4	Victoria Kilcullen	Washington Fine	703-915-8845
1342 Gunnell Ct	\$1,595,000	Sun 1-4	Gail Edie	WC & AN Miller	301-229-4000
1527 Brookhaven Dr	\$1,699,000	3/22 1-4	Mark McFadden	Coldwell	202-333-6100
1143 Daleview Dr	\$1,769,000	Sun 2-4	Marianne Prendergast	Long & Foster	703-873-5155

Vienna

9855 Snowbound Ct	\$489,900	Sun 1-4	Lynda O'Shaughnessy	Long & Foster	703-938-4200
9905 Montclair Ct	\$599,900	Sun 1-5	Walter Licht	Weichert	571-338-2487
1415 Beulah Rd	\$650,000	3/29 1-4	Lisa DeCarlo	Coldwell Banker	571-239-8690
2149 Red Vine Dr #75	\$689,000	Sat & Sun 12-4	David Mayhood	Mayhood Company	703-448-0400
2147 Red Vine Dr #76	\$699,000	Sat & Sun 12-4	David Mayhood	Mayhood Company	703-448-0400
8033 Reserve Way #43	\$699,000	Sat & Sun 12-4	David Mayhood	Mayhood Company	703-448-0400
10200 Westford Drive	\$699,000	Sun 12-4	Arthur DuHaime	Fairfax Realty	703-887-0439
10412 Hunters Valley Rd	\$1,900,000	Sun 1-3	Jeffrey Stein	Tranzon Fox	703-539-8111

Oakton

2984 Borge St	\$405,000	Sun 1-4	Debra Heft	Metro Area	
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To add your Realtor represented Open House to these weekly listings, please contact:

In Great Falls, Salome, 703-917-6467, or salome@connectionnewspapers.com

In Vienna, Don, 703-917-6466, or donpark@connectionnewspapers.com

In McLean, Lauri, 703-917-6460, or lauri@connectionnewspapers.com

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FAITH

Faith Notes are for announcements and events in the faith community. Send to greatfalls@connectionnewspears.com. Deadline is Friday.

Great Falls United Methodist Church at 10100 Georgetown Pike, Great Falls. 703-759-3705 offers "All Things New," an ecumenical worship service, every Wednesday at 6 p.m. Based on the Beatitudes of Jesus, for people affected by anger, fear, stress, dealing with rejection, credit abuse, drug/alcohol abuse, physical/sexual addiction or eating disorders.

Over 1,000 eighth graders, including students from McLean-based schools **Saint John the Beloved and Saint Luke**, will be encouraged to consider the Lord's call at the 14th Annual Eighth Grade Vocations Mass. The Mass encourages students to prayerfully seek their vocation as a religious, priest, consecrated or married person. "A vocation begins with Christ's love for you," said Father Brian Bashista, diocesan vocations director, "and that love for you is calling you — each of you — to a particular form of life." The Eighth Grade Vocations Mass will be held at Holy Spirit, Annandale on March 18. There are currently 32 seminarian and 56 men and women religious in formation from the Diocese of Arlington.

Redeemer Lutheran Church, 1545 Chain Bridge Road, McLean, is hosting its semi-annual consignment sale of baby, child and maternity items Friday, March 20, 7-9 p.m. and Saturday, March 21, 8-11 a.m. 703-356-3567.

McLean Women's Thursday Bible Study, at 9:15 a.m. The Book of

Proverbs will be the focus for the next 12 weeks. Contact Martha Wiles at 703-448-2020 or MarthaWiles@msn.com.

Vajrayogini Buddhist Center offers ongoing classes on meditation and Buddhist philosophy, Mondays at 7 p.m. at Unity of Fairfax, 2854 Hunter Mill Road, Oakton. \$10 per class. 202-331-2122 or www.meditation-dc.org.

The Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Fairfax, at 2709 Hunter Mill Road, Oakton chorale, a 60-voice adult choir, welcomes new members any time and meets Thursdays, 7:15 p.m.

The Circle of Music Makers meets the first Monday of the month, for those who can share a vocal or instrumental solo. Contact Judy Harrison at 703-281-4230, ext. 26, or jharrison@uucf.org. Joint Activities in Music at Sunrise is for preschoolers, kindergarteners, parents and residents of Hunter Mill Sunrise Assisted Living Center, on Wednesdays, 1-1:30 p.m. Contact Marsha Giusti at 703-425-1902 or giustim@juno.com.

McLean Bible Church Fitness Class at Body & Soul fitness. Balance is key, energy is renewed, strength is gained, and friendships are formed. Mondays 9:15 a.m. and Fridays 9:45 a.m. Childcare is free for registered students. E-mail bodyandsoul@mcleanbible.org for more information.

A **Centering Prayer Group** meets Fridays, 9:30 a.m. at Andrew Chapel United Methodist Church, 1301 Trap Road, Vienna. The hour includes a brief reading related to Centering Prayer, followed by a 20-minute prayer period. E-mail Martha Thomas at

mmthomas211@hotmail.com or call the church at 703-759-3509.

St. John's Episcopal Church supports over twenty outreach ministries, including SHARE, Habitat for Humanity, Martha's Table, and the Gen. Colin L. Powell Leadership Club at Macfarland Middle School in Washington D.C. Services at 7:45 a.m., 9 a.m., 11:15 a.m. and 7:30 p.m. St. John's Episcopal Church, 6715 Georgetown Pike, McLean. 703-356-4902 or www.stjohnsmclean.org.

The Jewish Federation of Greater Washington and the Jewish Outreach Institute offer the Mothers/Parents Circle, an umbrella of free educational events and resources. Jewish rituals, ethics and the creation of a Jewish home, regular meetings and group Shabbats and holidays. Participants include Sha'are Shalom, Congregation Beth Emeth, Temple Rodef Shalom and the Jewish Community Center of Northern Virginia. ShalomDC.org.

The Jewish Social Services Agency, 3018 Javier Road, Fairfax, offers a variety of family programs. Call 703-204-9100.

♦ **Just Chill: An Anxiety Management Group**, for ages 8-10. Wednesdays through Feb. 18 at 6 p.m.

♦ **Teen Talk: An Adolescent Adoption Series**, for ages 13-18. Tuesdays through Dec. 23 at 7 p.m. Pre-registration required.

♦ **Support Group for Parents of Young Adults with Asperger's Syndrome and Related Disorders**. Jan. 28 at 7 p.m.

♦ **Social Club for Young Adults with Asperger's Syndrome**. Call for a schedule of events and costs.

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Higher Tax Rate, Car Fee on Table

The Fairfax County Board of Supervisors set an upper limit for the residential real estate tax rate March 9 that leaves the door open for an average property tax increase on homeowners of approximately \$60 this year.

The supervisors have also put an annual vehicle registration fee back on the table after abolishing it three years ago. For the average car, the old fee was \$25, though the county board has given itself the leeway charge as much as \$33 in the next fiscal cycle. The supervisors will finalize the tax rate and vote on the car fee next month as part of the county budget.

The current property tax rate is 92 cents per \$100 of assessed property value. With this vote, the supervisors have given themselves the ability to raise it to a higher rate of \$1.05 per \$100 of assessed property value. They would also consider an additional 1.5 cent rate increase per \$100 of assessed value that would go directly to storm water management. The owner of a median-priced home at \$459,228 would pay property taxes of \$4,776 under this proposal.

Fairfax County executive Tony Griffin, who presented his budget proposal earlier this month, recommended the supervisors raise the property tax rate to \$1.04 per \$100 of assessed property value, plus the 1.5 cent increase for storm water management. He has also suggested adding a \$20 vehicle registration fee to help close the gap in next year's budget of approximately \$650 million.

Supervisors chose to advertise a higher tax rate to give themselves flexibility. Griffin had suggested the board advertise a rate that was even higher, \$1.07 per \$100 of assessed property value.

"Between the time we advertised the tax rate and the budget mark up last year, we saw a \$40 million drop in the county. ... The economy is very volatile right now," said Fairfax County chairman Sharon Bulova (D.)

The board's two Republicans, supervisors Patrick Herrity (R-Springfield) and Mike Frey (R-Sully), opposed both measures.

In an interview, Herrity said he would have been supportive of setting the tax rate at a level that would ensure the average real estate tax bill would not go up this year.

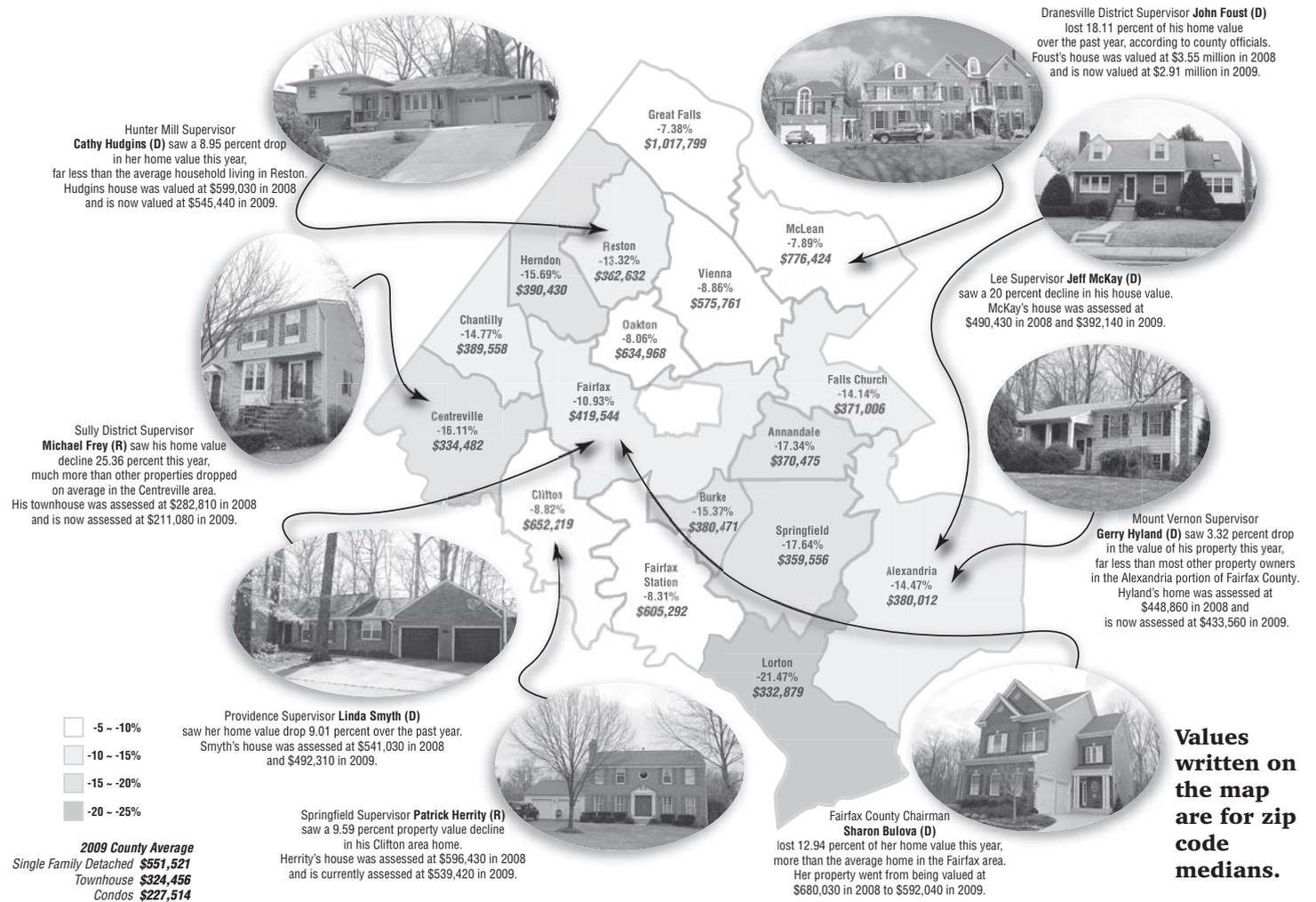
"We are in a critical time with our economy," said Herrity.

The Springfield supervisor added that many of the "revenue enhancements" Griffin has already proposed in his budget come in the form of increased fees, such as a higher price to participate in youth athletics.

— JULIA O'DONOGHUE

THE COUNTY LINE

MORE AT WWW.CONNECTIONNEWSPAPERS.COM



Values written on the map are for zip code medians.

How Much Is It Worth?

Assessments in question as fewer home sales offer fewer properties for comparison.

BY JULIA O'DONOGHUE
THE CONNECTION

Jeff McKay is very familiar with Groveton, his neighborhood off Richmond Highway near Huntley Meadows Park.

McKay's grandparents moved into his home when it was newly constructed in the 1940s and a member of the Lee District supervisor's extended family has always lived in the house. McKay bought the property himself 12 years ago after graduating from college.

So it came as a surprise to McKay when he looked up his real estate property assessment online and found many of the home sales used to determine his house's property value this year were located on unfamiliar streets.

Typically, Fairfax County tries to use home sales from a property's immediate neighborhood or subdivision to determine its value. In the case of McKay's home this year, they were factoring in home sales from Burgundy Village, a community several miles away in a different zip code, he said.

"Something different was done this year than we have done in the past," said McKay, a Democrat.

In 2009, 30 percent of Fairfax County's real estate assessments were calculated us-

ing home sales from "sister neighborhoods" as well as immediate communities, said Janet Coldsmith, director of the real estate division in Fairfax County's Department of Tax Administration.

County staff have always brought in home sales from other comparable neighborhoods to determine some property values but the practice was much more widespread this year, due to the downturn in the housing market, she said.

"We looked at similar neighborhoods and have looked at similar neighborhoods throughout the years but it has become more important this year. While there are still enough sales to value property, they are not as evenly distributed," said Coldsmith.

Fairfax County only incorporates "fair market" home sales into real estate property assessments. Foreclosures and other distressed sales are not supposed to factor into calculating property value for tax purposes. It can be difficult to determine home assessments in neighborhoods that have been hit hard by the foreclosure crisis and where few or no non-distressed sales have taken place, she said.

"It is standard appraisal practice to choose the best comparable properties that you have. If you don't have them in your immediate neighborhood, then you widen your search," said Coldsmith.

"When you start including other neighborhoods that are miles away in a different zip code, it becomes more difficult to try and figure out whether the properties included were fair or not," McKay said.

According to Coldsmith, the county does take geography into account when coming up with "sister neighborhoods" for assessment purposes. When looking for a comparison, they look for two neighborhoods of a similar price level and age as well as those with a similar housing stock, she said.

"We would be looking at what somebody going out to buy a house would be looking at. Someone looking to buy a house might be searching in two neighborhoods in same price range with the same type of housing," said Coldsmith. "Appraisal is a lot of judgment. It is not an exact science. There is a lot of judgment in there," she added.

But McKay differed. "There are not many homeowners who go out and say they want a rambler built in the 1950s. They go out and look for a house that is in a certain school district or on a certain transportation route. ... Is it better to base an assessment on a small number of sales or to really stretch and include properties that are a far distance away?" asked McKay.

The county has fielded fewer calls from angry property owners upset about their assessments, probably because most people saw a drop in their property value.

"So far, the call volume is down. We have gotten a few calls from some people who think their property value has fallen too far," said Coldsmith.

SPORTS

Langley Boys Likely To Be Among Region's Best

Brewer's lacrosse squad is coming off '08 season in which it captured Liberty title.

BY RICH SANDERS
THE CONNECTION

This year's Langley High boys' lacrosse squad is talented and team-oriented, according to veteran Saxons' head coach Earl Brewer. So, matching or bettering the success of last year's 12-4 outfit that captured the Liberty District title is certainly a possibility.

"I have very high expectations that they'll do a lot of the same things that last year's team did," said Brewer. "We have a lot of unselfish players who will give the ball up."

Last year's season ended with a tough 6-5 loss to eventual state runner-up Oakton in a second round Northern Region playoff game. The Saxons, who earlier that postseason had beaten Woodson, 8-3, in the district tournament championship game, and West Springfield, 11-2, in a first round regional playoff contest, barely fell to the talented Cougars.

"I know we were disappointed last year to lose to Oakton," said Brewer. "But Oakton was good. They lost to Chantilly in the state finals."



PHOTO BY CRAIG STERBUTZEL/THE CONNECTION

Langley head boys' lacrosse coach Earl Brewer is beginning his 15th season at the helm of the Saxons' program.

Brewer, in his 15th season at the helm of the program, has directed Langley to region championship games three times — in 1995, 1998 and 2005. The Saxons lost all three of those title game affairs.

"We're yet to win [a region championship game], but I'm always optimistic this will be the year," said the coach. "I think we're going to be an exciting team to watch. We're

"We have a lot of unselfish players who will give the ball up."

— Langley Boys' Lacrosse Coach Earl Brewer

quick and will get up and down the field."

LANGLEY, which will open the new season on Thursday, March 19, at Marshall High, will be led by its four team captains — seniors Trevor Shafran, Alex Devlin and twins Galen and Jeremy Kuney.

Shafran, a 6-foot-3 inch, 240-pound defender who has already committed to play the sport at the Naval Academy next school year, is coming off a junior season in which he earned First Team All-District and Second Team All-Region honors.

"He's just an all-around great athlete," said Brewer. "He has great speed, endurance and quickness and will [defend] the best attacker on the teams we play. Trevor loves that [challenge]. He's a good leader too, a good student and an all-around great kid."

Devlin, meanwhile, is coming off a junior season that saw him earn Honorable Mention All-District accolades. A three-sport athlete (basketball, football and lacrosse) at Langley, Devlin excels for Brewer's squad at a midfield position.

"He's kind of a throw-back midfielder," said Brewer. "He plays both ends of the field

equally well. In crunch time, I'd want Alex in the game on defense. He does really smart things. He works hard [both offensively and defensively] on his game."

The Kuneys bring talent and toughness to the Saxons' line-up. Galen Kuney will be a third-year-starting goalie for the Saxons this spring. He was both a First Team All-District and Second Team All-Region selection last year.

"As a sophomore [two years ago] he stepped up and won the job and has kind of gotten better every year," said Brewer. "He's quick and makes good decisions with the ball. His strength is his clears."

Jeremy Kuney is a solid midfielder. "He's a tough, hard-nosed kid who gets a lot of groundballs," said the coach. "He is physically tough and not afraid to stick his nose in there. He's a guy that leads by example and goes after it."

FOLLOWING this week's opener against Marshall, Langley travels next Wednesday to cross-town rival McLean. That evening will be a girls'-boys' double-header between the Saxons and Highlanders, with the girls' contest set to begin at 6 p.m. and the boys' game tabbed for about 7:30 p.m.

In a few weeks, Langley will participate in West Springfield's spring break tournament, set to take place April 6-8. The eight-team field will include Loudoun Valley, Broad Run (Dulles District), Potomac School (private school in McLean) and the host Spartans, who have a nifty turf field facility on which to play.

SPORTS ROUNDUPS

The veteran **Langley High girls' lacrosse team**, with seven returning seniors, is off to a great start with two preseason game wins. Langley's first scrimmage victory was a 15-9 win against Bishop Sullivan in Virginia Beach. The trip to the beach gave the Saxons a game under their belt and helped build team unity.

Langley, in its next scrimmage, won big over host Westfield High, 26-7. Langley head coach Richard DeSomma praised the girls for working hard over the winter and coming into the new season in great shape.

"My goal for the season is to use the great experience of the seven returning seniors to regain the Liberty District title which the team held in the 2006 and 2007 seasons," said DeSomma.

The returning seniors are Maggie Kovacs, Lee Quinby, Jesse Ryan, Sophie Spivack, Annie Swanson, Erin Wiltse and Katie Wingo.

Next school year, Kovacs will be playing Div. 1 collegiate lacrosse at the University of Oregon on a combined athletic-academic schol-

arship. There, she will study Human Physiology. Sophie Spivack, meanwhile, will be playing lacrosse on scholarship at the Savannah College of Arts and Design. And Katie Wingo will be playing field hockey for Georgetown University.

Following the two scrimmage wins, Langley was primed for the start of the regular season on March 12. And the Saxons won their season opener, defeating South County, 15-9. Langley exhibited its broad offensive fire power as seven girls contributed goals in the victory. Maggie Kovacs led the way with five goals and four assists, while Annie Swanson and Erin Wiltse each scored three goals with an assist. Elspeth McGarry, Lee Quinby and Torrie Zarella each had a goal and an assist, and Katy Wingo had one goal.

Langley's defense was solid throughout the game. Saxon goalie Mary Riley Pembroke had 15 saves.

DeSomma was delighted with the team's play.

"They did just what a team

should do," he said. "They like each other and they easily move the ball around the field because they trust each other. They assist each other and this lets them score. We had seven players score 15 goals and eight of the scores were off of assists. This kind of teamwork makes coaching a great job."

The Cardinal Girls Lacrosse league offers a year round program for girls from the fifth through eighth grades. Northern Virginia girls from areas including Great Falls, McLean and Leesburg are encouraged to try out. The organization will likely fill two teams per age group. Cardinals Girls Lacrosse, in its fourth year, is a non-profit, travel lacrosse organization. All the league money goes to uniforms, coaches and fields. The senior coach is the women's coach at Georgetown University, while the junior coaches are players or alumni from Catholic University, James Madison University, Virginia Tech or the University of Virginia. Practices are held at Our Lady of Good Counsel School in



PHOTO COURTESY/LANGLEY HIGH

Langley High senior Cassidy Banks recently signed a Letter of Intent to play soccer at the University of Miami. Along with currently playing for the Saxons, Banks is a member of the McLean Freedom club team.

Vienna. The league website is: www.cardinalgirlslacrosseclub.com.

The Marshall High School Boosters' Annual Mulch Sale to benefit the students at Marshall High will be held on Saturday, March 28. Mulch will be available to purchase at the school, or to be delivered to homes with a pre-or-

der purchase of 10 bags or more. Home deliveries will be March 27-28. (Pre-orders must be received by March 19). Catch Spring fever, dress up your gardens, and support Marshall High all at the same time. For more information, go to www.gcmboosters.org, or contact Sonnie Campos at vicepres@gcmhsboosters.org.

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Time Out Of Mind



By KENNETH B. LOURIE

Time Out Of Mind

After my mother's death, it took me over two months to finally write and send thank you notes to the friends who remembered my mother by making charitable donations in her name. And though I'm not particularly proud of the lack of initiative I showed in taking as long as I did to properly respond, I am still most appreciative of the extra effort and thoughtfulness these friends exhibited. As I wrote in the thank yous that I sent, it seemed like the loss of a second parent in two years sort of knocked the initiative right out of me (or maybe that was simply my mother not being around to remind me to do something). I remember experiencing a similar malaise after my father died in Dec., 2006. And though my mother was most definitely alive and well back then, I recall feeling a little unmotivated, a little empty, and not really seeing the point and/or significance in much as I tried to find a new routine now that my father was gone.

Moreover, given the fact that our mother was now widowed, without my father as her companion for the first time in over 65 years, my brother and I knew we still had major responsibilities, not exactly care and feeding since my father's caregiver, Maria, stayed on, but life full-filling nevertheless. And not that we were the least bit put off — or put upon, quite frankly — by the task at hand, it was more that we were fulfilling a role that, unbeknownst to us, we had been preparing for — and prepared for, our whole lives.

And for most of these past two years, we had fun doing it. As difficult as I know it was for my mother to live on without my father alive and in her life, it was really quite remarkable how she adjusted to the loss. Not exactly ambulatory and almost totally hearing impaired, she persevered, and almost always with good humor. Surrounded by pictures of my father as well as pictures of the two of them at various stops in their life, she was never far removed, physically, from reminders of what, for her, had been the most important responsibility in her life: her husband (my father) and her family. Yet, she was rarely morose; sad of course, in tears occasionally, but overall, happy to be alive and not "woeing" at all about her loss or physical limitations.

Mentally, she was as sharp at the end as she had been her entire life (so far as we ever saw) and as concerned about others (my brother and I) even as she lay in the bed in which she would eventually die, as she had ever been; still concerned about my brother's comfort (sitting vs. standing by the side of her bed) and whether or not we had eaten or were hungry. Amazing!

This was the second time that my brother and I have been witness to acts of love and unselfishness by our parents as they lie dying. Whatever lessons they sought to impart to us while they were alive pale in comparison to the lessons they taught us while they were dying.

My parents both died with dignity, class and concern for their family. At a time in their lives when it most assuredly should have been about them, they continued to try and make it about us. No wonder we miss them so much.

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

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Monday, March 30, 2009 At 11:00 a.m.

the following property being the property contained in said Deed of Trust, described as follows:

Lot 36, Section 4-C, Valewood Manor Subdivision, as the same appears duly dedicated, platted and recorded in Deed Book 5534 at page 1575, among the Land Records of Fairfax County, Virginia.

Commonly known as 3533 Valeview Drive, Oakton, Virginia 22124.

TERMS OF SALE: A deposit of \$5,000.00 or ten percent (10%) of the sale price, whichever amount is less, in the form of cash or its equivalent will be required of the purchaser at the time and place of sale; the balance of the purchase money being due and payable within fifteen (15) days after sale, time expressly being of the essence, with interest at the rate of 3.25 percent per annum from date of sale to date of settlement. Provided, however, that if the holder of the secured promissory note is the successful bidder at the sale, no cash deposit shall be required, and part of or the entire indebtedness, including interest and costs, secured by the Deed of Trust, may be set off against the purchase price.

Any defaulting purchaser shall forfeit the deposit and stand the risk and cost of resale.

Sale shall be made subject to all existing easements and restrictive covenants as the same may lawfully affect the real estate. Sale is further subject to mechanic's and/or materialman's liens of record and not of record. The property will be sold subject to all conditions, covenants, restrictions, rights of redemption of federal lienholders or encumbrances, and agreements of record affecting the same, if any.

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Additional terms and conditions of sale may be announced at the time of sale.

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CONTRIBUTED

The Forestville Elementary School's Book Club, sponsored by the fourth grade teacher Erin Loving, shown here, recently had a pot-luck dinner and the discussion on the 'Dead Man in Indian Creek' book.



Book Club at
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Margie Bylund,
Forestville Elementary librarian and a head of the school's media services, volunteers her time to make the school's Book Club a success.



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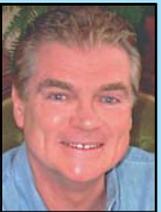
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Beautifully sited on 3.58 acres. Exquisite moldings. Soaring ceilings. Fabulous main-level master suite. Walk-out lower level with large "pub" bar, exercise room, media room and more. Gorgeous pool. Guest/pool house.

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Great Falls \$1,300,000

Overlooking River Bend Golf Course

Gracious Mediterranean Style Home On 1.93 acres. Pool, spa, sundeck, and pool house. Terracotta flooring. Arched passageways, and elegant finishes. Enormous yard with beautiful views of the 11th fairway.

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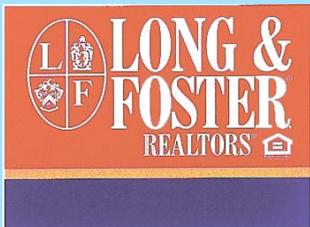


FAIRFAX \$579,900

COME SEE MY NEW LOOK

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Call Mary Anderson Cell:703-201-5394
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