

Great Falls CONNECTION

Kathy Huff of the Conscious Bean is one of many Great Falls business owners who have gone to lengths to court local customers by responding to the desires of the community.

One Graceful Duckling

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Buying into 'Buy-Local'

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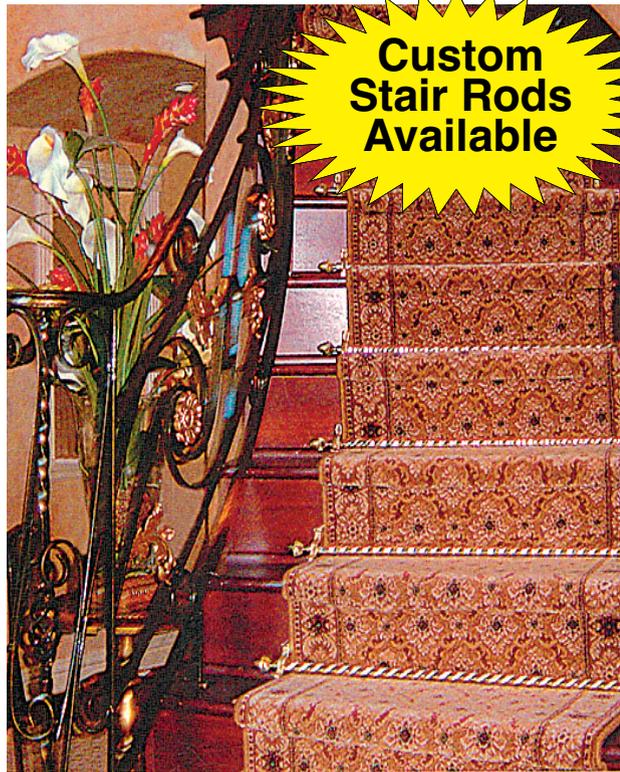
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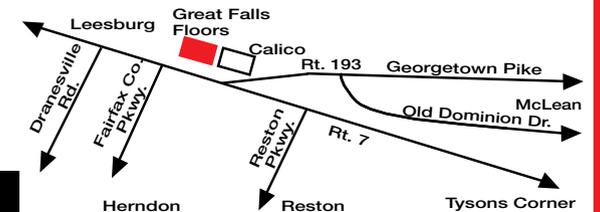
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NEWS

Buying into 'Buy-Local'

As movement seems to take hold, GFCA, BPA consider joining forces.

BY MIKE DICICCO
THE CONNECTION

As the branch manager at Washington First Bank, Mike Vandergrift has been working with the Great Falls Business and Professional Association for almost two years to encourage residents to spend their money in Great Falls and help local businesses network. "The business community in Great Falls has been a little bit challenged," he said. "It seems like we're losing businesses."

Meanwhile, Kathleen Murphy and Sue Bennett have been spearheading a buy-local movement through the Great Falls Citizens Association (GFCA) for about three years. "Wanting to stay semi-rural requires local, independent small businesses," Murphy said.

In the last few months, the two organizations have begun talks about joining forces in a buy-local campaign.

"I see the citizens association as a great avenue of support," Vandergrift said. "I think it would behoove us to get together with them and use their communications ability." He noted that the association had also carried out considerable research on shop-local movements.

A FEW YEARS AGO, the group brought in speakers and conducted focus groups to educate residents about how other communities succeeded in remaining semi-rural, Murphy said. One answer was to support small, local business.

Major chains often are not inter-

"Wanting to stay semi-rural requires local, independent small businesses."

— Kathleen Murphy, GFCA

ested in locations along roads with traffic counts as low as Georgetown Pike and other Great Falls roads, Murphy said. Meanwhile, residents prefer small businesses so that the commercial areas don't look like every other strip mall. "The uniqueness is coming from the smaller scale," she said.

The GFCA started an annual meeting in which local business owners



PHOTO BY MIKE DICICCO/THE CONNECTION

Ginny Sinclair, right, and employee Tiffany Horairy have succeeded by running the store only for Sinclair's love of the work.

could tell each other about their businesses and bring their best customers to testify. "We wanted to make local residents aware of the dedication of local businesses to serving their needs," she said. Last December's meeting was a joint affair with the Business and Professional Association (BPA), which has also started hosting networking breakfasts.

Murphy said the movement seemed to be taking hold, with a number of local businesses reporting increases in traffic.

One example of a business dedicated to meeting the community's needs, she said, was the Old Brogue, which added Katie's Coffee House after the 2020 survey showed a desire for a coffee shop. Murphy noted that the coffee house also invited local artists to show their work there.

Old Brogue owner Mike Kearney agreed that business owners needed to do more than implore residents to patronize them. "As merchants, in order for locals to support you, you've really got to get the pulse of the community," he said.

For the first 15 years that Kearney was in business, he said, he didn't live in Great Falls and relied on customers from Sterling and Reston to supplement his client base. However, in the years since, he has become more involved with the community and seen an increase in local traffic, he said.

Kearney started the Great Falls Charitable Foundation, which collects donations and distributes them to local causes. Last year, he took over the fledgling Great Falls Farmers Market when it was floundering and got it moved to a more prominent location in the Village Centre. The coffee shop, with an average guest check of \$3, is not about making money, he said. It was intended to

create a sense of community to keep people in town. Kearney said he would like to see more popular restaurants in town to help form a nucleus that would draw customers.

He said another local merchant who went to lengths to develop a relationship with the community was the recently opened wine shop Maison du Vin.

IN THE SHOP, which opened in August, two tasting machines offer free samples of 16 different wines, and the selection in the machines rotates regularly. "This is a great way to discover new stuff," said proprietor Vital Hiek. He said the shop also prides itself on finding inexpensive, quality wines. "Our best seller is \$6.99," he said, adding that the second most popular choice costs only \$3 more. "Those are the types of things we're good at finding, and people really appreciate it."

On Saturdays, Maison du Vin offers free tastings, paired with food. Last Saturday, it was complementary oysters and Muscadet. "No other wine store would do this," Hiek said. The shop also hosts private events for companies, where guests pay only for hors d'oeuvres and staff time. The wine is free. "The benefit we get out of it is more exposure for us," Hiek said.

The shop hosts free wine seminars on Wednesdays, and it also offers free delivery. Even after hours, Hiek said, in the case of a "wine emergency," customers can call his cell phone and request a delivery, as he only lives about a block from the store.

So far, he said, the business model has been well received, but he said he still thought he needed to tap into more of the population.

Another example of establishing bonds with customers, Kearney said, was Grandmother's Back Room, owned by Ginny

SEE BUYING LOCAL, PAGE 7

Scams Blossom in the Spring

Police advice: take precautions against scam artists.

The warm weather brings out more than just flowers as scam artists take to the streets of McLean to cheat senior citizens out of big money. Posing as tree trimmers or driveway sealers, they prey on vulnerable homeowners, often stealing checkbooks or money from the house while the owner is distracted. Unlicensed and uninsured, they offer unreasonably low prices for their work, but later raise the prices to overcharge for shoddy or non-existent work. Citizens can take some simple precautions to protect themselves from these scam artists and help the police put them out of business [see the sidebar].

The scams begin when the homeowner answers a door-to-door canvas by the scammer who offers to do work for a low price. Usually based out of an unmarked pickup truck, the one or two scammers solicit your business. The pitch may be that a tree needs trimming, the asphalt driveway needs sealing or the chimney needs work. They may even claim to have already performed some repairs and want payment. A low price is quoted (perhaps a few hundred dollars), but after the work begins, they come back with a "re-estimate" at a much higher amount, usually in the thousands. Elderly victims may not be willing to contest the new price and will pay. Other times one scammer may distract the victim while the other scammer enters the house from another door and takes valuables. Generally, the owners do not discover until much later that checks from their checkbook have been written and cashed by the scammer.

The homeowner can begin to protect him or herself by demanding to see the license and bonding of the worker. Without a contractor's or solicitor's license, the scammer cannot sell anything. They rely on their "cold call" approach to surprise or shock the owner into accepting their offer. Without insurance or bonding, the scammer may prey upon the homeowner's insurance for injuries occurring while on the job. In addition, the job being requested is often ill defined without a written contract, so that the quantity and quality of work, the materials, and the payment schedule (for partial payments as some work is completed) are subject to disagreement.

The primary goal of the scams is to obtain direct payment of the high price for the substandard job. The secondary goal is to gain entrance to the owner's house for the purposes of stealing money, valuables or a checkbook. The distraction may come in the form of engaging the homeowner in the front yard while a cohort enters the house through a side or back door. Alternately, the scammer may request a drink of

SEE POLICE, PAGE 8

WEEK IN GREAT FALLS



Freedom Hill Flag Chairman Pam Curtin, far left, presents a new American flag to Daniela Dixon of the Great Falls Library as chapter regent Michelle Fontaine Meehan and her daughter, Clare, look on.

DAR Presents Flag To Great Falls Library

Freedom Hill, the McLean-based DAR chapter, was quick to respond when it received a call from the Great Falls Library about its need for a new American flag. Pam Curtin, the chapter's flag chairman, along with chapter regent Michelle Fontaine Meehan and Clare Meehan of the Children of the American Revolution presented a new flag to the library. Daniela Dixon represented the Great Falls Library at the ceremony.

Like other chapters in the National Society of the Daughters of the American Revolution, Freedom Hill is active in promoting the proper use of the flag and in helping community organizations replace and properly retire worn flags. Chapter members can also provide brochures on flag etiquette and other information about the flag. For additional information, visit the group's booth at McLean Day or contact it its Web site, www.freedomhilldar.org.



Pictured, from left, are Adalene 'Nene' Spivy of Great Falls, Tamara Ashford of Alexandria and Janice 'J.J.' Ketzle of Chantilly from the Junior League of Northern Virginia (JLNV).

Representing Area in Junior Leagues Conference

Create the Future' was the theme of the Association of Junior Leagues International Inc.'s (AJLI) 87th Annual Conference, which took place April 23-25, in Atlanta, Ga. Adalene 'Nene' Spivy of Great Falls, Tamara Ashford of Alexandria and Janice 'J.J.' Ketzle of Chantilly represented the Junior League of Northern Virginia (JLNV). They joined hundreds of delegates from leagues in four countries to share ideas, recognize accomplishments and develop leadership skills, all focused on The Junior League Mission of improving communities through the effective leadership of trained volunteers. The Junior League of Northern Virginia is an organization of women committed to promoting voluntarism, developing the potential of women and improving communities through the effective action and leadership of trained volunteers. More information can be found at www.jlrv.org or by calling 703-442-4163.

NEWS



PHOTOS BY MIKE DICICCO/THE CONNECTION

Waterlilies, bulrushes, frogs and dragonflies from Margaret Haddad Ballet Studio's upcoming production of "The Ugly Duckling" strike various poses.

One Graceful Duckling

Haddad Ballet Studio performs "The Ugly Duckling" this Saturday.

Tickets and Times

"The Ugly Duckling" will show at South Lakes High School, 11400 South Lakes Drive, Reston at 2 and 7 p.m. on Saturday, May 9. To order tickets, call 703-759-3366.

dancers fall into that category and "The Ugly Duckling's" roster of characters falls short of that number, dancers will personify not only ducks and farm animals and the occasional fox or crow, but also bees, dragonflies, water lilies, wheat fields, stars, the moon, rain drops, icicles, cherry blossoms and many other roles normally consigned to inanimate props or backdrops.

The passage of time, and therefore the signs of the seasons, plays a prominent role in the story.

"This is all about characterization," Haddad said. "It's not easy

to be a bulrush." Although some of the dancers were not initially thrilled to learn that they would be playing cornflowers or snowflakes, Haddad said, they are now excited to be in the show. "They thrive on it and they love to perform and it gives them so much confidence and enjoyment," she said.

The production entails more than 200 pieces of costume, which Haddad designed and the studio's ladies and mothers put together.

Preceding "The Ugly Duckling" will be a few brief performances by the older girls, including "Warsaw Concerto," "Earth, Wind and Fire" and "Liebestraum." "That's to give the older girls something more sophisticated to work to achieve," Haddad said.

— MIKE DICICCO



Dancers personify everything in the story, even rain and the river.

COMMUNITY

Nine students from Great Falls Elementary School received awards for their poetry.



PHOTOS CONTRIBUTED

Woman's Club Honors Young Poets

Great Falls Woman's Club hosted its 27th Annual Poetry Contest and Luncheon on April 24 at a Great Falls Country Club. The contest took place in partnership with Great Falls Elementary School and demonstrates the mutual support of a commitment to poetry and the language arts with the enhancement of each student's creative process.

Nine students from Great Falls Elementary School received

awards for their poetry. The students, parents, teachers, Principal Ernest Leighty and Vice-Principal Barbara DeHart attended the event along with members of the Great Falls Woman's Club.

First, second and third grade winners had been selected from grades four, five and six. Each student delighted the audience as they read their poems. Three cash prizes were awarded in each grade.

Winners of the 2009 HGFWC Poetry Contest include:

Fourth Grade Division: First Place, Taylor Shenk; Second Place, Kristina Mitchell; and Third Place, Lauren Lateef.

Fifth Grade Division: First Place, Caroline Bryan; Second Place, Regan Herberg; and Third Place, Patrick Dunne.

Sixth Grade Division: First Place, Harris Lateef; Second Place, Sandy Tweeten; and Third Place, Sophie Roberts.



GFWC members Diana Harper and Alyx Hazard with GFWC President Judy Smith.



Nadia Lateef is a member of GFWC and a volunteer at the poetry contest.

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OPINION

Hopeful Home Sales

First time homebuyers get shot at affordable homeownership; domino effect helps all homeowners.

A look at the records of more than 1,000 homes that sold in March, 2009 in our area offers a glimpse of a sales at the top and bottom of the market.

In March in Northern Virginia, hundreds of homes, mostly condos and townhouses, sold for less than \$250,000.

About half or more of these were likely foreclosures or distressed properties, but all movement in the real estate market is a good sign, clearing out inventory.

Many of the families whose homes sold and closed in March are now able to move up in the market; there are unusually good prices available on homes at all entry points right now.

In the City of Alexandria, at least five townhouses sold for under \$250,000, with more than two dozen condominiums selling for under \$200,000. At the other end, five homes sold for more than \$1 million.

In Arlington, 14 sales closed for under \$200,000, and 14 more between \$200,000 and \$250,000. There was movement at the high end too, with the sale of one condominium for \$5.65 million, plus eight more homes selling for more \$1 million in March alone.

Looking for a single family home under

\$200,000? Among the nearly 50 March sales under \$200,000 in Sterling were a dozen single family detached homes, with many more under \$300,000.

More than 20 townhouses sold in Herndon for under \$200,000.

In Mount Vernon, the top home sold for \$2.65 million, while nearby a variety of bargains sold for remarkably low prices in the Route 1 corridor, including 29 condos and townhouses for under \$100,000. Twenty more condos, townhouses and duplexes sold in March in the area for between \$100,000 and \$200,000.

In Reston, one condo sold for \$1.1 million, while there were 13 sales of condos and townhouses for under \$200,000.

In Burke, 15 homes sold for under \$250,000 in March, mostly townhouses.

In Centreville in March, 22 townhouses sold for under \$200,000.

In Springfield in March, there were 31 sales

of condos and townhouses for under \$250,000.

In Fairfax Station and Clifton, 22 homes sold for more than \$500,000, with two sales over \$1 million in March. In Lorton in March, 10 townhouses sold for under \$200,000.

In Great Falls, only one home in March sold for less than \$500,000, but there were five homes sold for more than \$1 million.

In McLean, one home sold for \$3.4 million, with eight more homes selling in March for more than \$1 million. A handful of condos sold in McLean for under \$250,000.

In Vienna, eight homes sold in March for more than \$1 million, while nine condos and townhouses sold for under \$300,000.

For specific addresses and home sales by town for March, see <http://www.connection-newspapers.com/article.asp?article=%20328003&paper=%2059&cat=228>. April home sales will be posted after May 20.

— MARY KIMM,

MKIMM@CONNECTIONNEWSPAPERS.COM

In the Interests of Public Health

While it's a huge topic for discussion, no one really has any idea what the future holds for us and the so-called swine flu. It's reasonable to predict that in the next few weeks, it will turn up in Northern Virginia.

With the Centers for Disease Control calling for the closing of schools where cases are confirmed, we might well be facing one or more schools that are unexpectedly closed.

But we question whether such a policy is considering all aspects of public health. When an elementary school, for example, is closed, how do families that depend on two incomes

or single parent families cope? In any less affluent area, what percentage of children might be home alone because parents have no sick leave or vacation time?

In middle school, students are nominally more able to be home alone for some period of time, but we know there are consequences to unsupervised adolescents in terms of risky behavior.

Let's take the actions necessary to stem a crisis, but let's not lose sight of other risks in the process.

— MARY KIMM,

MKIMM@CONNECTIONNEWSPAPERS.COM

Protecting Homeowners

BY BILL MIMS
ATTORNEY GENERAL OF VIRGINIA

The number of home foreclosures in Virginia rose from 24,000 in 2007 to 68,000 last year. As of December 2008, about 20 percent of all homeowners nationwide owed more on their house than its current market value.

These economic realities breed those who wish to prey on homeowners. Reports of such unscrupulous persons posing as mortgage loan modification or foreclosure prevention companies have risen across the nation in recent years. The last thing distressed Virginians need is to be misled by opportunists.

In a phony counseling scam, someone tells you that he can help you negotiate a workout deal or refinancing with your lender if you pay him first. In the end, they take your money and do nothing.

Our office worked to craft new laws, which go into effect July 1, to protect homeowners. One such law will amend the Virginia Consumer Protection Act to make it clear that mortgage foreclosure operators are not permitted to charge advance fees for mortgage foreclosure prevention transactions. Homeowners can protect themselves by avoiding a business that:

- ❖ guarantees it can stop the foreclosure process, no matter what your circumstances
- ❖ instructs you not to contact your lender, lawyer or credit counselor
- ❖ collects a fee before providing any services
- ❖ requires you to make mortgage payments to it as opposed to



DONATED PHOTO

**Attorney General
Bill Mims**

your lender or servicer.

All Virginians facing foreclosure are encouraged to work directly with your lender or servicer to see whether a loan modification or other relief is possible. Virginians also may consult with a HUD-approved foreclosure

avoidance counselor, or in the alternative, the Homeownership Preservation Foundation's HOPE Hotline, toll-free at 1-888-995-HOPE.

Consumer protection is an important statutory duty of the Office of the Attorney General, and our staff can help. In an age of increased consumer issues, we all must continue to be educated and vigilant.

LETTERS Timeframe Is 75, Not 45 Days

To the Editor:
I am writing in response to the letter to the editor from a P Butler in McLean entitled ["Wrong Way To Gain Name Recognition," Great Falls Connection, April 29-May 5, 2009].

This letter claimed it was illegal to put up signs "until 45 days before the June 9 primary election" and criticized our campaign for doing so. In fact, the law states that the timeframe is 75 days not 45 days. The permit form states: "no signs shall be erected earlier than seventy five (75) days prior to the nomination, election or referendum."

I won't address the other gratuitous and inaccurate characterizations in the letter, but I appreciate The Connection acknowledging the inaccurate premise of this letter. And in the future, we appreciate

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THE CONNECTION

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Buying Local Takes Hold

FROM PAGE 3

Sinclair. "She does it because she loves the people," he said.

This turns out to be literally true, as Sinclair said she paid the two girls who help her run the gift and clothing shop for infants and children, but not herself. "I don't take any money from the store because it's a joy for me," she said.

Sinclair has operated the shop for 14 years but has lived in Great Falls for 42 years. She recalled the many small shops that had populated Great Falls Village Centre when it was new. Now, only a few shops remain.

"I think one thing is that [residents] think if it's a little place it's got to be a boutique, and it isn't true," she said, noting that she sells quality products at prices lower than the malls. She said she had seen some businesses assume that Great Falls residents were in the market for expensive goods and then go under.

However, Sinclair said her sales have increased this year.

"Something's taken hold," she said.

Murphy said that Great Dogs of Great Falls and the Conscious Bean coffee shop were two businesses that had opened with the community's desires in mind and in response to the shop-local movement and 2020 Vision survey.

"Part of my business plan is the

"As merchants, in order for locals to support you, you've really got to get the pulse of the community."

— Mike Kearney, Old Brogue owner

local thing," said Linda Waitkus, owner of Great Dogs, which offers grooming, food, treats, toys, leashes and other dog supplies. A Great Falls resident, she knew the community had a large dog population.

Waitkus also took the number of people in the community, compared it to the national percentage for dog ownership and calcu-

lated that Great Falls could support such a store. She made sure her prices were competitive with similar shops in Tysons Corner and Reston.

Since Waitkus opened in November, she said, traffic has exceeded her expectations. "I think people are appreciative of the fact that they can buy local at a good price," she said.

Waitkus also said she thought customers appreciated the store's dogs-welcome policy.

In order to establish herself as part of the community, Waitkus took the top sponsorship for the coming Spring Festival.

"I think we have a wonderful neighborhood ... and people are desirous to support local businesses if they get what they want in price and product," Waitkus said.

She noted that all her publicity thus far had come from word of mouth. "That's one of the things we have to do as a community."

SEE GREAT FALLS, PAGE 16



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SCHOOL NOTES

Send School Notes to greatfalls@connectionnewspapers.com. Deadline is Friday.

Letters written by journalism students at **Cooper Middle School** were sent to President Barack Obama and are included in the book "Dear President Obama: Letters of Hope From Children Across America." Students were encouraged to address their individual concerns, ask difficult questions, and congratulate him. Five Cooper Middle School students will have their complete letters published in the book, and 17 will have excerpts of their letters included.

Lamvy Le of Langley High School was named a Gold Award winner and **Ashley Goh** of Marshall High School and **Jennifer Phan** of Falls Church High School were named Silver Award winners at the National Scholastic Art Awards.

Alexandra Sandlin of Kilmer Middle School was named a Gold Award winner and **Ashley Goh** of Marshall High School, **Jennifer Phan** of Falls Church High School and **Brendan Logue** of Thoreau Middle School were named Silver Award winners at the National Scholastic Art Awards.

Student journalists from Oakton High School won awards at the Journalism Education Association/National Scholastic Press Association Spring National High School Journalism Convention. The school's newspaper, "The Oakton Outlook," won Best of Show in the newspaper 17+ pages category with Editors **Matt Johnson, Ethan Doyle,** and **Danielle Holstrom** and advisor **Chad Rummel** accepting the award. The yearbook, "Paragon," won Best of Show in the yearbook 325+ pages category, with editor **Leeann Elias** and Rummel

accepting. Johson, **Nathan Smith,** and **Anthony Barba** won awards in the Write-Off Contest.

The **Oakton High School Dance Team** is holding tryouts at Oakton High School on May 5-7, 2009. For more information, go to www.oaktonathletics.org and click on "dance team."

Mina Noorbakhs, a Vienna native and graduate of George C. Marshall High School, won third place in the art/illustrations category in the Virginia Press Association's College Newspaper Contest for her work on Virginia Tech's Collegiate Times.

Erin Ellis, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Mervyn I. Ellis of McLean, and **Bennett Silverman**, son of Dr. and Mrs. Robert A. Silverman of McLean, were named to the Winter Term 2009 Dean's List at Choate Rosemary Hall in Wallingford, Conn.

Police Alert against Scam Artists

FROM PAGE 3

water or to use a bathroom. Once inside, any distraction allows one or more of the scammers the freedom to look for valuables.

The scams can take several forms and the participants can even claim to be working for the county or the power company. The most common is the tree trimming pitch. The scammer appears to notice some trees that need work and offers a low price to cut them. Later, while the work is underway,

the owner is approached with a new assessment of the amount of work that is required. The price is inflated and the owner may feel obligated to continue with the work. Another type of scam is the driveway sealer who offers a very low price. The owner gets an apparently sealed asphalt driveway, but in reality, used motor oil has been poured on the driveway, ruining the asphalt and killing any adjacent grass. The repair expenses to fix this mess greatly out-

weigh any savings offered by the cheap price of the sealing job. A third type of scam is the spring cleanup offer, in which "fertilizer" is spread and "chemicals" are sprayed. In fact, little good is done for the landscape and the owner's money is wasted. Finally, there is the chimney or roof repair scam. Again, a low price is the lure, but the work is of poor quality or perhaps not even performed.

—WALTER LAZEAR

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LETTERS

Health Hazard At Marshall High

To the Editor:
 Given the current emphasis on hand washing, it is encouraging to learn that we will be voting on a school bond. Perhaps the wording for the bond could be adjusted to include all schools that have spring-loaded faucets in the wash rooms. Marshall High School is an example where faucets in the wash rooms make it virtually impossible for students to wash their hands because one hand must be pressing down on the spring-loaded

faucet to make the water run. I don't understand why over the years parents have not been loudly protesting this health hazard.

Betty Stacey
 McLean

FROM PAGE 6

ate that The Connection usually does make it a practice to print the entire name of those submitting letters to the editor so your readers know who is providing such information.

Sean Harrison
 Campaign Manager
 Comstock For Delegate

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Vote on McLean Day
2009 MCC Governing Board Election
Saturday, May 16, from 10:30a.m. to 5 p.m.
Lewinsville Park, 1659 Chain Bridge Road
Your Vote is Your Voice!

All qualified residents of the McLean Community Center district (Small District 1A—Dranesville) are encouraged to vote for members of the 2009-2010 MCC Governing Board.

- You need not be registered to vote in the general election.
- Proof of residence, such as a driver's license, is required.

Vote now by absentee ballot and avoid the crowds!
View the candidate statements on the Center's Web site:
www.mcleancenter.org. Call the Center or E-mail "mail@mcleancenter.org" to request a ballot package be sent to your home. Or, stop by the Center at 1234 Ingleside Avenue, and pick one up. Completed ballots must be received by close of business (11 p.m.) on Wednesday, May 13, to be counted.

The McLean Community Center
703-790-0123/TTY: 711
Sign Up for E-mail Updates:
www.mcleancenter.org

CALENDAR

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/MAY 6

Pork and Pinot Noir. 6:30 p.m., Wildfire Restaurant Tysons Galleria, 1714 U International Drive, McLean. \$65. Contact 703-442-9110 or www.wildfirerestaurant.com for reservations.

Photo Journey to Africa. 7 p.m., Great Falls Library, 9830 Georgetown Pike, Great Falls. Join Great Falls Friends as Barb and Ken Chen share their journey to Zambia, Botswana and South Africa through photographs. Call 703-757-8560.

Jammin' Juniors. 12:30 p.m., McLean Central Park, 1468 Dolley Madison Blvd., McLean. Billy Jonas performs as part of a series for children ages 2-5. Free. Call 703-790-0123.

THURSDAY/MAY 7

Kris Delmhorst. 8 p.m., Jammin' Java, 227 Maple Ave. E., Vienna. \$17. Call 703-255-1566 or www.jamminjava.com.

Catherine Claire Larson. 7 p.m., Great Falls Library, 9830 Georgetown Pike, Great Falls. Larson is author of "As We Forgive," based on experiences interviewing survivors of the Rwandan genocide. Free. Registration required; call 703-757-8560.

FRIDAY/MAY 8

"Crossing Delancy." 8 p.m., Vienna Community Center, 120 Cherry St. S.E., Vienna. Tickets available at the Community Center. 703-255-6360 or www.viennava.gov.

Meiko and Corey Chisel. 7 p.m., at Jammin' Java, 227 Maple Ave. E., Vienna. \$12. 703-255-1566 or www.jamminjava.com.

Evenout Reunion Show with Numa, 8 p.m., at Jammin' Java, 227 Maple Ave. E., Vienna. \$12. 703-255-1566 or www.jamminjava.com.

SATURDAY/MAY 9

"Crossing Delancy." 8 p.m., Vienna Community Center, 120 Cherry St. S.E., Vienna. Tickets are available at the Community Center. 703-255-6360 or www.viennava.gov.

Plant and Craft Sale. 9 a.m.-3 p.m., St. Thomas Episcopal Church, 8991 Brook Road, McLean. Annuals, flowering hanging baskets, handmade glass items, jewelry, scarves, pottery, handmade soaps and more. \$1 adults, children free. www.stthomasmcleva.org or 703-442-0330.

Red Grammer. 2 p.m., Alden Theatre, 1234 Ingleside Ave., McLean. Red Grammer will perform music for the whole family. \$12/person, \$8/district residents. Stop by the Alden Theatre Box Office or call 703-573-SEAT to purchase tickets.

Riverbend Park Plant Sale. 8 a.m.-1 p.m., Great Falls Grange Pavilion, 9818 Georgetown Pike, Great Falls. Proceeds help support summer staff and educational programs at Riverbend Park. Call Tim Hackman at 703-759-6414.

Living Wreath Workshop. 10 a.m., Meadowlark Botanical Gardens, 9750 Meadowlark Gardens Court, Vienna. Create a wreath using annuals on a moss frame. Topics include soil mixes, maintenance requirements and suitable plants. \$30. Reservations required; call 703-255-3631.

Politticks and Echo Boom. 10:30 p.m., at Jammin' Java, 227 Maple Ave. E., Vienna. \$10 in advance, \$12 at the door. 703-255-1566 or www.jamminjava.com.

SUNDAY/MAY 10

Life and Art of Tennessee Williams. 1 p.m., McLean Community Center, 1234 Ingleside Ave., McLean. Rick Davis on Tennessee Williams' major works. Free. 703-790-0123.

Night of the Living Shred with Joe Stump. 8 p.m., at Jammin' Java, 227 Maple Ave. E., Vienna. \$15. 703-255-1566 or www.jamminjava.com.

MONDAY/MAY 11

Read Around the World. 4 p.m., at the Dolley Madison Library, 1244 Oak Ridge Ave., McLean. Globetrotting games and books that travel. Age 6-12. 703-356-0770.

Open Mic Showcase hosted by Ron Goad. 7 p.m., at Jammin' Java, 227 Maple Ave. E., Vienna. 703-255-1566 or www.jamminjava.com.

TUESDAY/MAY 12

Fastball. 8 p.m., Jammin' Java, 227 Maple Ave., Vienna. Pop-rock. \$14/person. Call 703-255-1566.

Perspectives Speaker Series. 7:30 p.m., McLean Community Center, 1234 Ingleside Ave., McLean. Lisa Scottoline, author of legal thrillers set in Philadelphia, will speak. Each attendee will receive a free copy of her book, "Look Again." Free. Call 703-488-8336, TTY: 711.

Fastball "Little White Lies" CD Release with Nate Ihara. 8 p.m., at Jammin' Java, 227 Maple Ave. E., Vienna. \$15. 703-255-1566 or www.jamminjava.com.

Anthony Johnson. 12 p.m., Lutheran Church of the Redeemer Fellowship Hall, 1545 Chain Bridge Road, McLean. Anthony Johnson Jamaica's Ambassador to the U.S., will address the Rotary Club of McLean. Johnson will discuss the effects of the economic crisis on Caribbean countries. Visit www.mcleanrotary.org.

WEDNESDAY/MAY 13

George Stanford, Shane Gamble and Charlie Duda. 7:30 p.m., at Jammin' Java, 227 Maple Ave. E., Vienna. \$10 in advance, \$12 at the door. 703-255-1566 or www.jamminjava.com.

THURSDAY/MAY 14

Daryl Davis. 8-10 p.m., at The Old Town Hall, 3999 University Drive, Fairfax. 7:30 beginner lessons. \$10. 703-414-1745 or www.headoverheelsdance.com.

Terri Hendrix and Lloyd Maines. 8 p.m., at Jammin' Java, 227 Maple Ave. E., Vienna. \$15. 703-255-1566 or www.jamminjava.com.

FRIDAY/MAY 15

Enter the Haggis. 7:30 p.m. and 10 p.m., at Jammin' Java, 227 Maple Ave. E., Vienna. \$15. 703-255-1566 or www.jamminjava.com.

Classics for Brass. 7:30 p.m., St. Luke Catholic Church, 7001 Georgetown Pike, McLean. Classics for Brass showcases the Washington Symphonic Brass and trumpeter Vince Martino perform a range of brass favorites. \$30/adults, \$15/seniors and students. 703-356-0670 or www.wsbrass.com.

Bill Emerson and the Sweet Dixie Band. 6:30 p.m., Vienna Town Green, 144 Maple Ave. E., Vienna. Bring a lawn chair or blanket for seating. Free. 703-255-6360 or www.viennava.gov.

SATURDAY/MAY 16

Breezing Along the Boardwalk. 6-11 p.m., Sheraton Premiere at Tysons Corner, 8661 Leesburg Pike, Vienna.



"Shenandoah Morning" by Chris Rollins. The work of Chris Rollins, a Great Falls artist and photographer, will be displayed in an exhibition titled "Images and Reflections" May 4-30 at Great Falls Library, 9830 Georgetown Pike, Great Falls. A reception will be held Saturday, May 9. Contact 703-759-6873 or chrollins@cox.net.

All proceeds from this event will support the "Who Will Teach Them?" fund. \$200/person. Contact Monise Quidley or Sarah Caldwell at 703-941-8810 or www.phillipsprograms.org.

LEGO Building Competition. 12:30-3:30 p.m., Tysons Corner Center, 1961 Chain Bridge Road, McLean. Habitat for Humanity of Northern Virginia is hosting a LEGO building competition for youths between the ages of fifth-tenth grade. Participants are required to raise \$75 to participate in the event to support the work of Habitat for Humanity of Northern Virginia prior to the event. Call 703-521-9890, ext. 105.

Saturday Jazz. 6:30 p.m., Vienna Town Green, 144 Maple Ave. E., Vienna. The James Madison High School Jazz Band performs. Bring a lawn chair or blanket for seating. Free. 703-255-6360 or www.viennava.gov.

Victorian Hanging Basket Workshop. 10 a.m., Meadowlark Botanical Gardens, 9750 Meadowlark Gardens Court, Vienna. Laurie Short, horticulturist, on filling a moss-covered basket with foliage and flowering plants. Topics include soil mixes, fertilizers, maintenance requirements and appropriate plants. \$30/person. Reservations required; call 703-255-3631.

SUNDAY/MAY 17

Asylum Street Spankers "Sausage Fest 2009." 8 p.m., at Jammin' Java, 227 Maple Ave. E., Vienna. \$17. 703-255-1566 or www.jamminjava.com.

Spring Hill Fun Run. 7:30 a.m., Spring Hill Elementary School, 8201 Lewinsville Road, McLean. Participate in the second-ever Spring Hill Elementary School 3K Fun Run. Open to all Spring Hill students, families, staff and friends. All students in third grade or younger must be accompanied by a registered adult.

GALLERIES

An exhibition entitled **"PENLAND: Great Artists, Great Teachers"** will be on display through July 17 at Habatat Galleries, 8020 Towers Crescent Drive, Tysons Corner. The exhibition features artists who have taught at Penland School of Crafts. Call 703-989-7110 or e-mail infoVA@habatatgalleries.com.

An exhibition by artist **Madeleine Chen** entitled "Time & Space" will be on display through June 5 at the Village Green Shopping Center, 513 Maple Ave. W., Vienna. Chen uses oil, water-color, collage, acrylic and Chinese brush. Call 703-319-3220, e-mail tmchen3@juno.com or visit www.viennaartsociety.org.

"Disambiguation: New Works," an exhibition of large-scale digital images by Franz Jantzen, is open at the Emerson Gallery at the McLean Project for the Arts, 1234 Ingleside Ave., McLean.

"Arches," an exhibition of studies of architectural spaces abstracted and executed in recycled wool by Roslyn Logsdon, is open at the Atrium Gallery at the McLean Project for the Arts, 1234 Ingleside Ave., McLean.

"Undone: New Work," an exhibition of portrait-based works translated to a larger scale using recycled fabric and stitching by Aliza Lelah, is open at the Ramp Gallery at the McLean Project for the Arts, 1234 Ingleside Ave., McLean.

\$15/person; return registration form (available at the school) and payment to the school or mail to Spring Hill Fun Run, 8201 Lewinsville Road, McLean, VA 22102. Same-day registration available. 703-506-3400.

Marshall Artz. 6:30 p.m., Vienna Town Green, 144 Maple Ave. E., Vienna. Bring a lawn chair or blanket for seating. Free. 703-255-6360 or www.viennava.gov.

Hosta Horticulture. 2:30 p.m., Falls Church Community Center, 223 Little Falls St., Falls Church. The Old Dominion Chrysanthemum Society presents Monty Cross, an expert in Hosta horticulture. Open to the public. Free. 703-560-8776.

The Rob Hornfeck Enterprise and Tribal Mind. 2 p.m., at Jammin' Java, 227 Maple Ave. E., Vienna. \$8. 703-255-1566 or www.jamminjava.com.

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MOTHER'S DAY PHOTOS



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Barbara Comstock, Caity Comstock, Julia Lanzara, Carla Lanzara celebrate Langley High School Graduation in June 2006 in Washington, D.C. Julia and Caity, a McLean resident, were both 17.



Great Falls residents Cynthia Alpert and daughter Erin, a graduate student at the University of Pittsburgh, after completing the Port Washington, N.Y. Thanksgiving Day 5-Mile Run. The photo was taken on Thanksgiving Day 2008 when the Alperks participated in the race with other family members while visiting Long Island for the holiday.



Mother's Day. Brunch Accordingly.

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May 10, 2009
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MOTHER'S DAY PHOTOS

Mother and son, Christopher and Martha Bota of Great Falls, pictured in Greece, summer 2008.



Bob and Cindi Harper of Great Falls submitted this picture of their daughter-in-law Amy with 6-month-old Leah Harper taken on Easter 2009. 'When our son Greg, Amy, and daughters Sophia and Leah visit us from their home in Chevy Chase, D.C., Amy says, It's truly over the river and through the woods.'



Aphrodite Hero of Stratford House in Reston and her grandson, Keenan Hero, 9, of Great Falls, at a piano recital in Reston.



PHOTO GALLERY!

"Me and My Mom"

To honor Mom on Mother's Day, send us your favorite snapshots of you with your Mom and The Connection will publish them in our Mother's Day issue. Be sure to include some information about what's going on in the photo, plus your name and phone number and town of residence. To e-mail digital photos, send to: PhotoM@connectionnewspapers.com

Or to mail photo prints, send to:
The Great Falls Connection, "Me and My Mom Photo Gallery,"
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PHOTO COURTESY/LANGLEY CREW

Members of the Langley High boys' rowing team celebrate a strong showing at the April 18 Winslow Regatta on the Occoquan. This Saturday, boys' and girls' Saxon boats will be competing at the Virginia Scholastic Rowing Championships on the Occoquan.

The McLean Highlanders

continued their winning streak with a recent 4-3 girls' softball victory over Thomas Jefferson. Although Jefferson gave McLean a battle, the Highlanders were able to win the Liberty District game in the eighth inning.

Earlier in the week, the Highlanders had faced South Lakes in a Monday, April 27 make-up game, winning the Liberty contest 15-4. McLean knocked around 18 hits on offense. Leading the attack were junior centerfielder Lauren

Sutherland, who scored twice and had two hits, and Megan Sullivan, who went 3-for-5

with a sacrifice fly.

The Highlanders faced South Lakes again on Tuesday night, April 28, winning 18-3. Junior shortstop Lauren McColgan had three hits, including two doubles, along with four stolen bases and three RBIs. Carolyn Gilbertson had two hits.

In another recent McLean game, the Highlanders defeated district opponent Stone Bridge, 3-2. In the third inning, McLean, trailing 2-0, tied the game on a two-run double into center field by Sutherland. The extra base hit plated both freshman left fielder Allison Wilhelm, who had singled earlier in the inning, and junior second baseman Brittany McCray, who had doubled.

Later, McLean broke the 2-2 tie with the winning run in the seventh inning when McColgan's sacrifice fly to left field scored sophomore Jamie Bell from third. Bell had doubled earlier before getting to third on a passed ball. Sutherland, the Highlanders' pitcher in the contest, tossed a

great game.

In one of McLean's biggest games of the season, the Highlanders handed district rival Madison its first loss of the season, 2-0, a few weeks ago. McLean loaded the bases in the third inning before scoring the game's first run on a suicide squeeze bunt play, executed beautifully by batter Carolyn Gilbertson, McLean's junior catcher. Bell, who had earlier started the inning off with a single, scored on the bunt play.

McLean added its second run in the top of the seventh inning when McColgan, after getting into a run-down between third and home, slid safely into the plate to make it 2-0. Moments earlier, McColgan had belted a two-out double for the Highlanders before moving to third one batter later.

Sutherland, the McLean pitcher, retired the Warhawks in order in the bottom half of the seventh. The final out came on a pop out to shortstop McColgan. Sutherland pitched an amazing game, facing 27 batters, striking out five and allowing only five hits.

McLean collected 13 hits on way to a convincing 9-3 win over Liberty District rival Woodson on April 16. Then, the following day, the Highlanders won again, defeating cross-down district foe Langley. McLean junior pitcher Lauren Sutherland, in the Langley game, held the Saxons to just two hits. Both of those base hits came off the bat of Langley junior catcher Adrien Engle. Meanwhile, Langley junior pitcher Shannon Engle had a strong outing, allowing just four hits. McLean (9-3 overall, 5-1 district) was scheduled to play district games this week against Stone Bridge, Madison and Jefferson.

McLindon Set To Take His Game to Davidson

Langley senior has been a Saxon stabilizer at shortstop.

Jack McLindon, a senior at Langley High School, has signed a national letter of intent to play baseball for Davidson College (N.C.). The signing is the culmination of a recruiting process that saw McLindon attract the interest of a number of NCAA Division I programs.

"I decided early on that I wanted to go to a school that provided a top-notch education with a good baseball staff, facility and schedule," said McLindon. "Davidson met all my criteria and then some. I feel very fortunate that they are giving me this opportunity."

The switch-hitting McLindon received First Team All-Liberty District and Honorable Mention All-Northern Region honors a year ago after leading the Sax-



PHOTO COURTESY OF LANGLEY BASEBALL

Langley High baseball player Jack McLindon.

ons with a .411 batting average. As the Saxons' shortstop, McLindon had a .915 fielding percentage, handling 82 putouts and assists. He also averaged two strikeouts per inning as the team's relief pitcher closer with a fastball that reached 87mph.

This season, McLindon leads the Saxons with a .450 batting average and 10 runs batted in. He is again anchoring the infield at

shortstop and on the mound he is 1-0 with two saves and a 0.00 ERA. The senior-laden Saxons are 8-2 under the leadership of first-year Coach Kevin Healy and are among the top teams in the Northern Region.

During the summer and fall over the last two years, McLindon played for the Richmond Braves, an elite program that is comprised of top players from across the country. He joins an impressive list of Braves alumni who have received college scholarships or been drafted by major league teams.

Davidson is a highly selective independent liberal arts college for 1,700 students, located 20 minutes north of Charlotte in Davidson, N.C. The baseball team competes in the Southern Conference.

"I want to thank my family and all my coaches for helping me along the way," said McLindon. "I hope to have a great senior year for Langley and then make everyone proud of me once I get to Davidson."

The McLean High boys' lacrosse team ended its regular season with Liberty District losses to Marshall, 8-6, and Stone Bridge, 13-3. McLean senior co-captains Grayson Dahl, Tyler Quinn and Brad Mason continued to play strong and had outstanding seasons. Dahl, a fourth year varsity player for the Highlanders, had a particularly stellar season at the long-pole mid-field position. He is a two-time all-Liberty District selection and also made All-Region Honorable Mention last year. In the Fall Elite Lacrosse League, Grayson was voted by the coaches as one of the top 10 players in the league. Grayson recently signed to play college lacrosse at Division I Brigham Young University next school year.

The Madison High girls' softball team lost a tough Liberty District game at Marshall, 6-5, on April 22. Unfortunately, it rained throughout the game. Madison entered the sixth inning leading 2-1. But Marshall, after an error, a base hit and a wild pitch, was able to take a 3-2 lead into the seventh inning. In that final frame, Madison had four base hits in the driving rain and after a

Statesman error, was able to take a 5-3 lead. In the bottom half of the seventh, with field conditions becoming sloppy, Marshall was able to pull out the victory with the help of a hit batter, two Warhawk errors and a solid double to left to plate the tying and winning runs.

On offense for Madison, EmJ Fogel led the way, going 3-for-4, and Toni MacReynolds and Rachel Daul contributed two hits each. Sam Brady went the distance on the mound, giving up five hits, a walk and a hit batter. The loss dropped the Warhawks to second place in the district with four games remaining in the regular season. In its previous game, Madison came away with a 5-1 road win over district rival Langley. Brady started in the circle and pitched six innings, giving up her first earned run of the season in the first inning — a solo home run. She recorded seven strikeouts, no walks and scattered four hits. Nina Waters worked the seventh to preserve the victory.

Madison's defense had another great game, committing no errors on the night. Alexa Fleming made a running catch in right field. Laura Wolff, after catching a ball in center field, fired home to nail

a runner trying to tag-up. On offense, the Warhawks amassed 10 hits, with Ashley Meister and Kaila Conlon each getting two hits and Fogel collecting two RBIs. The win improved Madison's season record to 13-1.

The Sixth Annual George C. Marshall High Golf Tournament, which will benefit the school's football program, will take place on Sunday, May 17 at the 18-hole, par 71 championship Penderbrook Golf Club course. A shotgun start will get things underway at 1 p.m. The day of golf will feature contests in the following categories: hole-in one, closest to the pin, longest drive; and putting. Also, the event will include silent auctions and raffles, personalized carts and green fees, goodie bags, beverage carts, free round of golf coupons, registration snacks and a dinner immediately following the tournament. Cost for a single golfer is \$150 and \$500 for a foursome. Make checks payable to Marshall Football Boosters. Sponsors are wanted. For more information, contact Marshall football coach Bill Laphorn at William.Laphorn@fcps.edu, or call him at 513-349-5525.



Dream Keeper Performs at Conscious Bean

The band Dream Keeper will be playing at the Conscious Bean Coffee House every Saturday in May and June from 4-6 p.m. The Conscious Bean Coffee House is located at 10123 Colvin Run Road in Great Falls. Dream Keeper includes Jeannie Flinchbaugh on electric flute accompanied by singers and other musicians, usually a guitarist and/or keyboards. The group plays an eclectic mix of blues, folk, pop and classic rock with a love for improvisation, harmony and a few bad jokes.



Jo Hodgkin (Wolftrap), Chris Eckert (Wolftrap), Garrett Pan (Scout), Del. Ken Plum (D-36), Mimi Flaherty (Wolftrap), Gary Pan (NVTC, Wolftrap & Panacea Consulting), Jeremy Farber (PC Recyclers)



Garrett Pan by a stack of obsolete PCs

Pan Completes Eagle Service Project

Life Scout Garrett Pan recently completed his BSA Eagle Service Project entitled "Residential E-Waste Recycling Education 'n Action". Major supporters included key community environmental and technology leaders and organizations. The project coincided with the Earth Day commemoration helping to educate and promote action to help protect environment.

Pan is a Life Scout with Troop 55 of Great Falls, currently serving as the Assistant Senior Patrol Leader for the troop. He is a freshman at the Landon School of Bethesda attending an immersion program in China this summer and hopes to continue his efforts to avert the problems associated with improper E-Waste recycling and the detrimental impact on the environment.

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Great Falls Increasingly 'Buys Local'

FROM PAGE 3

Kathy Huff, owner of the Conscious Bean, said the desire for a coffee shop expressed in the 2020 survey cemented her decision to set up shop in Great Falls, as the Reston resident had been considering some other areas as well. Although Huff has made extensive efforts to respond to her customers' suggestions in the 10 months the shop has been open and is putting off her grand opening until fall to continue listening to the community, she has not had enough business to sustain the shop thus far.

"The people we have here are extraordinarily loyal. They love us and we've become part of their daily lives," she said. "But I don't see the community responding as a community."

Originally, the store was only going to be a coffee shop, but customers had asked for food as well, Huff said.

Now, soups, yogurt, sandwiches, salads, baked goods and other foods — all organic and from local sources — are available. French toast is on the way, in re-



PHOTO BY MIKE DICICCO
THE CONNECTION

Two wine-tasting machines in Vital Hiek's recently opened Maison du Vin have proved to draw customers.

sponse to further suggestions. "That's the big difference between a corporation and a business," Huff said.

THE STORE does not sell processed foods. "I have the best that you can get because it's real," Huff said. For example, she spent six months looking for a local baker who made everything from scratch with whole ingredients before deciding to partner with Patisserie Lille of Herndon. The eggs for the french toast will come from an Amish farmer.

"It resonates with everyone," she said. "It speaks to their soul."

The Conscious Bean, in accordance with its name, sources its coffee beans from organic farms with philanthropic track records.

The shop also carries locally made greeting cards and shows art by members of Great Falls Studios.

Huff said the store's location in Colvin Run Shopping Center could be part of the problem. Also, she said the signs she puts up along Leesburg Pike regularly disappear, along with signs advertising other Great Falls businesses. She said she had been told the culprit was a neighbor who wanted to discourage traffic on Colvin Run Road. Either way, Huff said she needed more of the community to turn

out. "They've got to, because we will have to go away if they don't."

Kearney said Vandergrift also exemplified the local business model. His bank is only a couple of years old, Kearney said, "but you can tell he has quite the love of the community."

Vandergrift said he tried to be a resource not only for clients, but also for other local businesses. "One of the things I love about being a banker is I really get to know about people's businesses," he said, noting that this allowed him to connect needs to suppliers. "If I bank for both of them, then I benefit as well, so it's a very win-win situation."

He is also about to play in the Great Falls Charitable Foundation's golf tournament, and the bank helps supply fireworks for the Fourth of July celebration each year.

Kearney said he thought the push to support local businesses was gaining traction, and he said he has seen a large influx of patronage in the last year. "I really do know a lot of loyal Great Falls residents," he said.

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Who, Me?



By **KENNETH B. LOURIE**

Among the many words that I don't know how to use in a sentence — or spell, either — is narcissistic; a word, a description, I've often heard, but usually not in a flattering way. So I've researched further. According to The American Heritage Dictionary, the definition of narcissistic is "excessive love of oneself." The derivation of the word narcissistic is Greek mythology, specifically having to do with a youth named Narcissus who was so in love with himself and his own reflection in a pond that he was with Echo (another character in Greek mythology), her unrequited love caused her to pine away until nothing but her voice remained, (but leaving a word and definition with which I/we are familiar). Simple enough, I suppose. But, is its proper use as a noun, an adjective, an adverb? And though, I guess I understand its meaning now, its use and placement in speech and print still escapes me.

Self-absorbed, self-indulgent, self-important; I can certainly use those "selves" in a sentence, but as a theme for an entire column, we'll see. If these three "selves" are indeed variations of the narcissistic theme, than I would say I have a much greater appreciation for their use and perhaps their abuse than previously understood. And the reason I even mention this is, due to the misconception of some (readers, friends and family), of the point/relevance of my columns. If they are relevant at all, meaning their content resonates with some reader, somewhere, its resonance has to do with what is written, not by whom it is written. Believe me, the last reason any of what I write about is important is because yours truly is writing it. Nothing could be further from the truth (actually, me claiming to be well-informed on a variety of topics, either domestic or international, would be further from the truth, but you get the idea, I'm sure). The truth is, I'm really Joe Schmo, enduring the same kinds of misfortunes, highs and lows, circumstances and situations, as everyone else. I'm not significant or unique or any more informed than everyone else; in fact, I'm probably less so.

Generally speaking, I'm not different that any of you regular readers, well maybe a little bit different. That difference being that I have the ability to string together words in a reasonably intelligent fashion (thanks to my editor) and I have a public forum (Connection Newspapers and our Web site, www.connectionnewspapers.com) in which to do so. As my brother, Richard, says, I am able "to churn out this dribble without too many blockages or 'encumbrances,' (one of my deceased father's favorite words, and yet another word I may not be using correctly), but a word I will use in a sentence, unlike narcissistic.

What I write about is only important if it rings true with the reader. It is absolutely not important because I'm ringing it. If anything that I write about is familiar to you, then you too can join the club, a club that, contrary to Grouch Marx's favorite line that he "would never join a club that would accept him as a member," is happy to accept any and all of you. The reason being, the more members that join the club, the more unity there will be. And if there is indeed strength in numbers, given our perfect storm-type world economy/events of the day: escalating unemployment, out-of-control oil, gasoline, home heating oil and natural gas prices, wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, terrorism threats, impossibly tight credit markets, bankruptcies of major corporations and all the implications and complications thereof, etc., we're probably better off knowing/reading that we are not alone. We're all in this together. It's not about me, it's about we!

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

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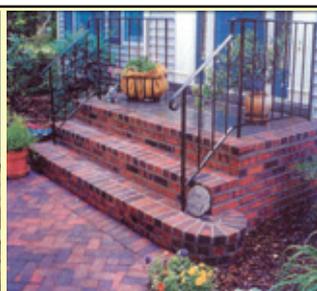
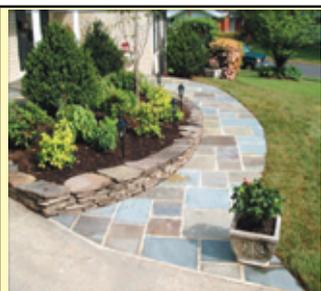
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