

Great Falls CONNECTION

Great Falls residents watch the grand finale of the fireworks display that capped off a day of festivities on July 4.

Finale to Day of Festivities

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Classic Novel Becomes 'Classic-Style Musical'
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To have community events listed in the Connection, send to greatfalls@connectionnewspapers.com. Deadline is Friday.

SATURDAY/JULY 11

Free Circulation Day, 9 a.m. – 1 p.m., at Unity of Fairfax (next door to Oakton Library): Sharing abundance with the world. Free give and take yard sale. Browse and take what calls to you. 2854 Hunter Mill Rd., Oakton, Va.

TUESDAY/JULY 14

Dranesville Pedestrian Task Force Public Meeting, 7 p.m. at the McLean Community Center, 1234 Ingleside Ave., McLean. The Task Force will present its preliminary findings, answer questions and listen to discussion and concerns from those attending the meeting. The

Task Force is to study the McLean downtown Community Business Center, and make recommendations for how it can become safer and more accessible for pedestrians and bicyclists. Feedback from the community will be incorporated into the final report, scheduled to be presented this October. Contact Supervisor Foust's office at 703-356-0551, TTY 711 or at dranesville@fairfaxcounty.gov, Doug Potts at 703-893-3505 ext. 17 or at dpotts@gimbertassociates.com.

ONGOING

The Oakton High School Dance Team is offering a Dance Camp for students entering grades 1-9. This year, the camp will be held July 28-30 at Oakton High School. For more information, go to www.oaktonathletics.org

REAL ESTATE NOTES

To have real estate information listed in the Connection, send to greatfalls@connectionnewspapers.com or 7913 Westpark Drive, McLean, VA 22102. Deadline is Friday.

Beth Putman was the top producer and the top lister at the Great Falls Long & Foster office. Michelina Queri was the agent with the most new listings (seven) and Ali Saghafi was the top seller.

Weichert Realtor's Erin A Mendenhall and the Mclean/Old Dominion office individually were recognized with regional awards for industry success in 2008. Neighborhood specialist Mendenhall led the region in new homes sales for the year. Addition-

ally, under the leadership of manager Steve Gaskins, the entire sales team led the region in listings sold, sales, resales and combined units. Mclean/Dolley Madison's office and several employees were also recognized. Pamela "Penny" Yerks led the region in dollar volume, new homes dollar volume, new home listings, and resale dollar volume for the year. J.D. Callander lead the region in listings, resales listings, listings sold, combined units, and resale revenue units for the year. Additionally, under the leadership of manager Janet Hewitt, the entire sales team led the region in dollar volume, new homes dollar volume, listings, new home listings, resale listings, and resale dollar volume.

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THE CONNECTION
NEWSPAPERS

Concert on the Green



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July 12, 2009
Village Centre
6:00-8:00 pm

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The Gardiner family and a neighbor enjoy a picnic while waiting for the fireworks to begin. From left are Hana, 4; Mari, 7; Kent, Allison Granstedt and Susan.



From left, gold sponsors Sharon and Jeff Rainey pose with silver sponsors Sam Thompson, John Keats and Richard and Mary Kelly. Jeff Rainey has chaired the Fourth of July celebration for the last six years.

PHOTO BY JOAN PIFER

Finale to Day of Festivities

Great Falls gathers at Turner Farm Independence Day evening.

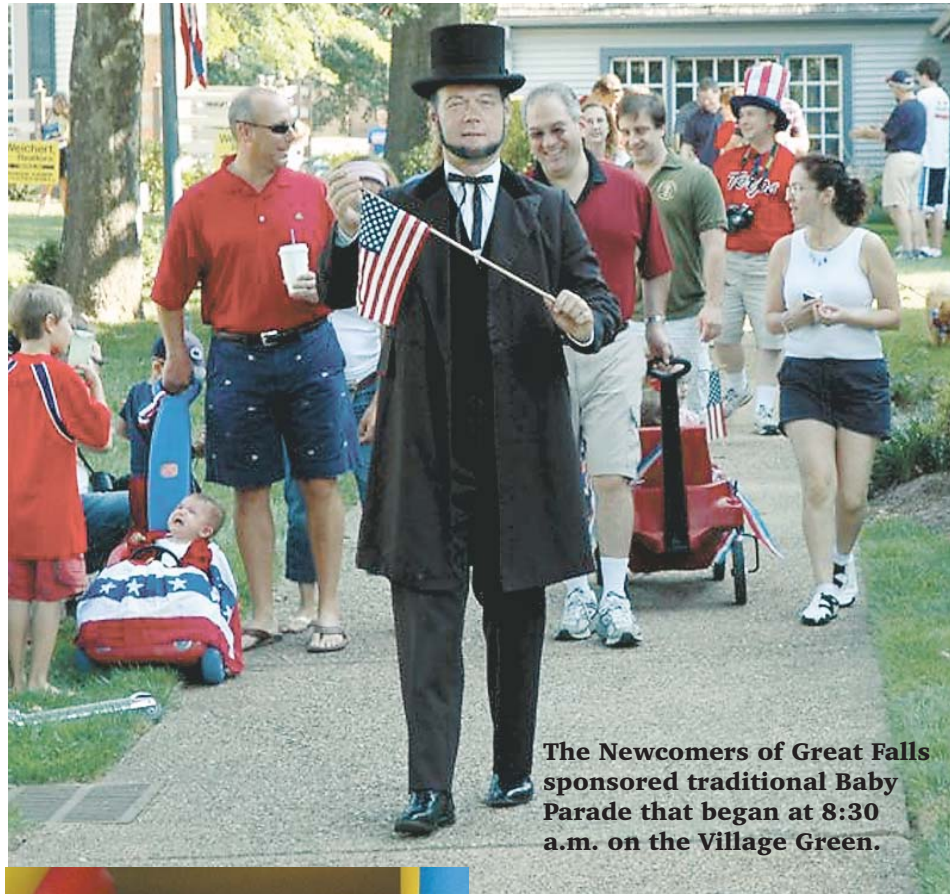
Children climbed the rock tower, raced through an inflatable maze and played other games. Adults ate, drank and caught up with their neighbors.

As dusk fell on July 4, three fields at Turner Farm Park were packed with Great Falls residents awaiting the fireworks display that would cap off a day of festivities in the community.

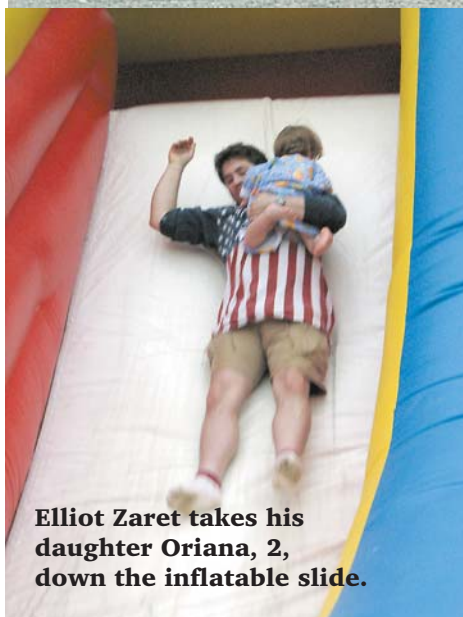
The day began with an early-morning ceremony at the Great Falls Freedom Memorial, followed by a 5K run-walk, a baby parade and community parade, games and amusements on the Village Green and a blood drive.

Each year, local residents and businesses pitch in to sponsor the Great Falls Fourth of July celebration. Those who donate \$500 or more are entitled to spots in the sponsors' area, adjacent to the field where the fireworks are launched.

There, Michael Vandergrift, branch manager of gold sponsor WashingtonFirst Bank, said sponsorship was a way "to continue the support of this great community we have here." And, since WashingtonFirst is relatively new to Great Falls, he said the event



The Newcomers of Great Falls sponsored traditional Baby Parade that began at 8:30 a.m. on the Village Green.



Elliot Zaret takes his daughter Oriana, 2, down the inflatable slide.



PHOTOS BY MIKE DICICCO/THE CONNECTION

Nikki Pope, 11, and Jake White, 8, climb the rock tower that was set up at Turner Farm.

Baby Parade Award Winners

The Baby Parade Award Winners include: Katie Turner- Paul Revere Award, Brooke Krupnick-Abigail Adams Award, Dylan Davis-Martha Washington Award, James McIntyre -George Washington Award, Dorothy Young-Most Virginian Award, Drew Srirstras-Patrick Henry Award, Todd and Dylan Siekman-Yankee Doodle Dandy Award, Claire Kim- Betsey Ross Award, Natasha Sidki- Lady Liberty Award, Owen Sherrill-Thomas Jefferson Award, Ella Sherrill- Youngest Patriot Award, Danielle Krupnick- John Adams Award, and Ashleigh Watkinson-First Family Award.

gave him a chance to continue getting to know the neighbors.

Gold sponsors donated \$1,500 or more. "Everyone works so hard at it, and everyone has a good time," said Eric Partee, a longtime gold sponsor. "We enjoy doing it. It's a lot of fun."

— MIKE DICICCO

Traveling Players Present Festival

After four weeks of learning classical theater and Shakespearean English, rehearsing, practicing movement and vocalizing, and fending off ticks and mosquitoes, Traveling Players teen ensembles will present a festival of three classical plays on Friday, July 17 at The Madeira School, McLean. The outdoor festival features performances of Moliere's "The Imaginary Invalid" and "The Bourgeois Gentleman," and Shakespeare's "All's Well That Ends Well."

The schedule:

5 - 7 p.m. - "The Bourgeois Gentleman" and "The Imaginary Invalid;"

7- 8 p.m. - Picnic dinner (bring your own);

8- 9:30 p.m. - "All's Well that Ends Well" (High School Ensemble).

Guests may want to bring picnic items, lawn chairs, insect spray and flashlights. Camping chairs will be available for rent. On Aug. 7, Traveling Players' most experienced performers will perform "Macbeth" at Riverbend Park. This performance is also free and open to the public.

For more information, visit www.travelingplayers.org or call 703-987-1712.

Starshine Theater Starts Rehearsals

Starshine Theater of Great Falls is now enrolling the cast of its summer stage play, "The Adventures of Tom Sawyer and Huckleberry Finn." Boys and girls ages 7 through 19 will portray dramatic character roles in the show. Action/stage battle, dance and singing roles are also available for those interested. The workshop is continuing its "Teen Actor~Mentor" rehearsal assistant program. Boys and girls entering grades 9 through college may serve as assistants throughout the two weeks of rehearsals, while also enjoying dramatic character roles in the play's performance. Rehearsals begin July 20 at The School of Theatrical Dance in the Great Falls Village Center, and the full-production show is performed onstage Aug. 1 at The Waddell Theater, Northern Virginia Community College, Sterling Campus. For details, contact Patricia Budwig, play director at 703-790-9050 or StarshineTheater@aol.com

Pedestrian Task Force Hosts Public Meeting

The Dranesville Pedestrian Task Force will conduct a public meeting at the McLean Community Center, 1234 Ingleside Ave. on Wednesday, July 14, at 7 p.m. The Task Force will present its preliminary findings, answer questions and listen to discussion and concerns from those attending the meeting.

Supervisor John W. Foust (D-Dranesville) appointed the Task Force in the late summer of 2008 to study the McLean downtown Community Business Center and access to it and make recommendations for how they can become safer and more accessible for pedestrians and bicyclists. The Task Force, chaired by Doug Potts, has been meeting monthly since September of last year and has examined nearly every street in downtown McLean. Feedback from the community will be incorporated into the final report, which will be presented to Foust this October.

"Pedestrian and bicyclist safety is a growing issue in Fairfax County as more residents walk and ride for health and economic reasons," said Foust. "The Dranesville Pedestrian Task Force's event will highlight the pressing need to make McLean more accessible to residents who want to be less reliant on the automobile."

For more information, contact Foust's office at 703-356-0551, TTY 711 or by e-mail at dranesville@fairfaxcounty.gov, Doug Potts at 703-893-3505 x17 or by e-mail at dpotts@gimbertainassociates.com.

NEWS

Toll Increase Supports Metrorail

Toll revenue will be used to finance 52 percent of Metrorail Extension.

BY JULIA O'DONOGHUE
THE CONNECTION

Reston resident Brian D'Silva said fee increases are unlikely to affect his use of the Dulles Toll Road, which stretches 12 miles from the northwestern edge of Fairfax County to the Capital Beltway.

The federal government employee receives a subsidy that already helps offset the cost of his commute to downtown Washington, D.C. Usually, he takes the toll road's express bus service to and from the West Falls Church Metro station in any case so he doesn't pay the toll to get to work every day.

For all of his other toll road trips, D'Silva is supportive of a higher fee if it helps in getting the 22-mile Metrorail extension to Dulles International Airport and beyond in Loudoun County.

"If that is what it takes to get Metro out here, that is what it takes. We want to be sure Metro actually comes out here in the next three years," said D'Silva, who thinks the subway extension would help with local traffic congestion.

OVER THE NEXT three years, the Metropolitan Washington Airports Authority appears likely to raise rates on the Dulles Toll Road from 75 cents to \$1.50 at the main gate and 50 cents to 75 cents at the ramp gates.

At the main gate, the fees are likely to go up incrementally, increasing 25 cents each year in 2010, 2011 and 2012. The 25-cent price jump at the ramp gates is likely to be implemented in 2010, said airport authority officials.

The airports authority board of directors will take a vote on the new tolls in November but is leaning heavily toward this short-term fee structure, which the authority officials shared with the Dulles Corridor Advisory Committee June 23.

The organization will seek public comment on the new rates during hearings scheduled for later this summer. Residents will also be able to comment on the toll increase vote through the airports authority's Web site and other



PHOTO BY JULIA O'DONOGHUE/THE CONNECTION

Drivers on the toll road are likely to see a 75 cent increase at the main gate and 25 cent increase at the ramp gates on the Dulles Toll Road over the next three years.

Who Is Paying For What?

The following is a break down of where Metropolitan Washington Airports Authority is getting the money to finance the construction of the Metrorail extension to Dulles International Airport and Loudoun County. The airports authority provided the information for a June 23 meeting with the Dulles Corridor Advisory Committee.

Source	Amount of Money Contributed	Percentage of Total Cost Covered
Dulles Toll Road Users	\$2.77 billion	52.6
Federal Government	\$900 million	17.1
Fairfax County*	\$848 million	16.1
Commonwealth of Virginia	\$275 million	5.2
Loudoun County	\$252 million	4.8
Metropolitan Washington Airports Authority	\$215 million	4.1
TOTAL	\$5.26 billion	100

* Nearly all of the money provided by Fairfax County for the Metrorail extension came from a special tax exacted on landowners who own property around the proposed rail line and stand to benefit financially from the extension.

means through the end of October.

THE PROPOSED RATES would increase the average toll for a vehicle from 60 cents in 2009 to \$1.10 in 2012 and provide more money to help finance the Metrorail extension to Dulles International Airport and Loudoun County, according to Jim Taylor, the airports authority's financial consultant.

Overall, toll road revenue is expected to pay for 52.6 percent of the \$5.26 billion rail project. In order to produce enough revenue to support the Metrorail construction debt, toll roads rates will have to increase no matter what.

According to an airports authority presentation, the gross toll road revenue will have to rise from \$65

million in 2008 to \$87 million in 2010 and \$220 million in 2020 to support the Dulles Metrorail project.

"The tolls will make some people unhappy. Some people are already unhappy but we have to keep our eye on the prize," said Douglas Koelemay, a member of the Commonwealth Transportation Board, which oversees some of Virginia's transportation spending. Koelemay is also a member of the Dulles Corridor Advisory Committee.

Over the next three years, the toll increases are not significant enough that the airports authority expects people to look for alternative routes into the city center, said Taylor.

SEE TOLL ROAD, PAGE 11

Wolf Hits Campaign Trail with McDonnell

U.S. Rep. Frank Wolf joins gubernatorial hopeful Bob McDonnell in McLean.

Former attorney general and Republican gubernatorial hopeful Bob McDonnell couldn't have picked a better place to kick off a day of door-knocking. The McLean Family Restaurant in downtown McLean was packed for the lunch hour when the candidate strolled in with U.S. Rep. Frank Wolf (R-10) at his side.



Bob McDonnell, center, and U.S. Rep. Frank Wolf (R-10) chat with Greg and Heather Powell at the McLean Family Restaurant last Wednesday afternoon.

PHOTO BY MIKE DICICCO/THE CONNECTION

Wolf made an ideal campaign sidekick, a longtime Republican congressman who remains widely popular in a district that has trended bluer in recent elections. While many of his colleagues were ousted, Wolf won reelection last year by more than 22 percentage points.

After shaking hands and introducing themselves to every diner in the restaurant, stopping occasionally to chat, the two politicians hit the streets to spend the day knocking on doors and meeting voters across McLean.

In November, McDonnell will face off against Democratic State Sen. Creigh Deeds of Bath County for the governorship. McDonnell narrowly defeated Deeds in the race for attorney general in 2005, with a margin of 360 votes.

— MIKE DICICCO



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No Texting While Driving

Virginia's new law banning drivers from texting while driving went into effect on July 1, and no one can argue that anyone should be behind the wheel of a moving car while they type or read information on a cell phone.

It's clear, given the state of transportation funding in Virginia (there is none) that we can all expect to be spending more time in traffic.

My new commute into Old Town Alexandria includes traversing almost the entire length of the George Washington Memorial Parkway. (Alternatively, I can traverse nearly the entire length of the Beltway between the American Legion and Woodrow Wilson bridges.)

The GW Parkway is a beautiful drive, with views of the Potomac River; the road is still lined with forests, and a variety of birds sail overhead.

Over the course of a week, the trip invariably includes some time at a standstill, usually for one of several road improvement sites, at the "hump-back" bridge, and at Spout Run,

to name two.

Most commutes via auto in Northern Virginia probably include periods of standing still each week.

For the sake of productivity, it might make sense to amend Virginia's new anti-texting-while-driving law slightly for drivers actually stopped in traffic. Drivers over 21 who are in cars that are actually standing still (and in "park") should be allowed to use their phones for texting or checking email or even looking up traffic cameras to see what the hold up is.

EDITORIALS

New Law on Drunk Driving

Also beginning on July 1, 2009, drivers who have been convicted of driving under the influence in Virginia twice within a 10-year period are required to use ignition interlock devices for a minimum of six months.

This is an improvement over current Virginia law that mandates the same for drivers

twice convicted of driving drunk within five years.

Mothers Against Drunk Driving identifies ignition locks as an effective tool in the battle against drunk driving, with studies showing that they reduce repeat drunk driving offenses by 64 percent. The interlock device requires that a driver blow into the equivalent of a breathalyzer before the car will start.

The Washington Regional Alcohol Program cites statistics from the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration: Drunk drivers killed in traffic crashes are eight times as likely to have a prior conviction than fatally injured sober drivers. People whom have been arrested for drunk driving are at greater risk for a future traffic fatality, and the risk increases with the number of drunk driving arrests.

In 2007, 378 people died in alcohol-related crashes in Virginia's roadways. Virginia recorded 28,787 convictions for driving under the influence in 2007.

— MARY KIMM,

MKIMM@CONNECTIONNEWSPAPERS.COM

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Lower Assessments, Higher Tax Rates

To the Editor:

Earlier in the year, like many homeowners in Northern Virginia, I assumed that this year's real estate taxes for my home would be less than last year's. I read in the papers that assessments would be lowered. However, upon inquiry, I learnt from the Fairfax County Department of Taxation that although assessments would be lower the tax rate would go up and I must wait for a notice in mail to know exactly how much I would have to pay in July and December.

July is upon us and I have not received the notice. I still do not know my real estate tax liability or the tax rate for this year. I presume it would be significant, even higher than last year because of the increase in the tax rate. More importantly, for many homeowners in the county whose homes are appraised at or above the median level, coming up with \$2,500 to \$3,000 as half yearly taxes in July will be a sudden financial hardship in these tough economic times. Several among them are out of jobs or reduced to one family income, or seniors living on limited income. I wonder why they have not sent notices early in May or June enabling

them to prepare for this payment thereby easing their financial burden.

Couldn't the county do at least this much for its law-abiding citizens?

Vijay Alsi
Vienna

Host Families Needed For Exchange Students

To the Editor:

It is that time of year again. The ASPECT Foundation is looking for host families for exchange students coming to the United States for the upcoming school year, 2009-10. Openings are available in most schools in our area.

Students come to live with an American family and go to school. They get a better idea of us and how we live. Students come with their own insurance and spending money. The host family provides room, food and love. These students come as strangers and leave as a member of your family.

Please consider hosting a student. Call Robert or Kathleen Rawls for more information, 703-433-0362. The experience lasts a lifetime.

Kathleen Rawls
Sterling

Never Leave Child Alone in a Car

To the Editor:

On Saturday June 20, yet another child died of hyperthermia when left alone in a parked car. April Knight, 2, lived in Kentucky, and at the beginning of summer is already the 13th child in the U.S. to die in a hot vehicle this year.

How can we be sure this does not happen to the children and families in our own community?

The truth is summer may be a fun time of year, but it can present difficult, sometimes dangerous challenges for parents. From inconveniences like bug bites to tragedies like drowning and death, children themselves are often unaware of these issues or too young to understand. Fortunately, many of these accidents are preventable. As parents, babysitters and caregivers, it's our job to ensure that every child remains safe and healthy in the coming months. Taking a few moments to be aware of these situations is a small sacrifice to make for our children's wellbeing.

Parents might leave their children alone in a vehicle if they want to avoid waking a sleeping baby or getting the child out of and back into a car seat. But a child can get overheated quickly — it only takes 10 minutes for a car's temperature to increase 19 degrees Fahrenheit. Long lines or a broken register can

make a quick trip in the store unexpectedly longer; meanwhile, the vehicle is growing warmer. This and countless other safety issues for children in parked or running vehicles are very real and very dangerous. A child should never be left alone in a car.

Parenting can be tough at times, and summer safety issues pose a special challenge. Luckily, resources are available dedicated to helping parents make the season both fun and safe. Visit the Parent Resource Center on Stop Child Abuse Now (SCAN) of Northern Virginia's Web site at www.scanva.org and look for the feature on summer safety. Reading through tips on children in cars, preventing sunburns, water safety, finding supervision and other topics in our summer safety section is an easy way to increase your knowledge and prepare for this season. Take time to learn more now, and keep summer the fun-filled time it should be for you and your children.

Diane Charles
Executive Director
SCAN of Northern Virginia

Write

The Connection welcomes views on any public issue.

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PEOPLE

Langley High Junior Receives Award

Lea Mulder, a Langley High Junior, was honored on June 24, by Gospel Rescue Ministries (GRM), when they presented her with a named award: The Lea Mulder Youth Leadership Donor Award. Gospel Rescue Ministries, located in D.C, is a Christ-centered, faith-based, drug treatment program with services for sheltering and feeding the homeless, job training and employment assistance and other services that will facilitate re-entry into society.

Lea Mulder has been a fundraiser for GRM for over two years. Her interest

in GRM began during her 8th grade confirmation at McLean's Immanuel Presbyterian Church, under the guidance of Jim Stover, Director of Youth

Ministries. The youth group put their "faith into action," says Stover, by volunteering at the GRM homeless shelter in 2007. Mulder was moved by this initial experience and decided to raise monies for the Help the Homeless Walkathons, dedicating the dollars



Lea Mulder and Michael Cortese, President & CEO of Gospel Rescue Ministries (GRM) on the left and Dr. David Allen, Director of Treatment and President of the International Center for Addiction Support at GRM on the right.

to Gospel Rescue Ministries. She raised over \$4,000 by writing and calling friends, family and the McLean community to support the GRM mission. Recognizing her work, GRM decided to honor Mulder and inspire other youth by creating this award.

"It was Lea's heart and success that moved us. No other youth had done anything like this for GRM," said Marjorie Brown, GRM's Associate Director of Com-

munity Outreach. Mulder was surprised at the Gospel Rescue Ministries' Appreciation Reception when they announced the creation of this award in her name. When receiving the plaque, she said, "You touched my life and I am grateful to you all at GMU." Lea Mulder will present this award in the coming years to other young people who dedicate their time and talents to Gospel Rescue Ministries.



CONTRIBUTED

Hannah Schlesinger, 10, skating to 'Foggy Mountain Breakdown,' a program she will repeat in August at U.S. Figure Skating's National Showcase Championships.

McLean Sisters Skate with Stars

Hannah Schlesinger, 10, and her sister Becky, 6, both from McLean, skated with U.S. Ladies National Champion Alissa Czisny, top men's figure skater Parker Pennington and a cast of stars in Skate for Life, a benefit for Muscular Dystrophy research. The June 27 event in Cleveland, Ohio on raised tens of thousands of dollars for the Muscular Dystrophy Association. Hannah and Becky raised more than \$1,700 for the event this year and were featured solo skaters in a cast that included Czisny, Pennington, four-time U.S. silver medallist ice dancers Melissa Gregory and Denis Petukhov, six-time

Canadian National Champion Jennifer Robinson, five-time national medallist Tonia Kwiatkowski and other nationally-ranked skaters. The Skate for Life show paired figure skating with dance, as So You Think You Can Dance finalists Gev Manoukian and Sarah von Gillern performed on an island stage right next to the ice, often in tandem with the cast of skaters. For more information about the event, see <http://www.mdskateforlife.org/index.php>, where a video can also be purchased, with part of the proceeds going to benefit MDA. The event will also be available on demand at www.icenetwork.com.

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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

THURSDAY/JULY 9

Raptor Conservancy of Virginia. 2:30 p.m. at the Great Falls Library, 9830 Georgetown Pike, Great Falls. See these birds of prey and find out more about their place in the wild. Age 6-12. 703-757-8560.

FRIDAY/JULY 10

WD Miller Band at 7 p.m. and Viking's Bday Bash w/ PJtheViking, The Grenade, Young Enough, Static Brigade, TerrorDacel and CJ Mill at 10:30 p.m. At Jammin' Java, 227 Maple Ave. E., Vienna. 703-255-1566 or www.jamminjava.com.

"Shakespeare's R&J." 8 p.m. 1st Stage Spring Hill, 1524 Spring Hill Road, McLean. \$25/adults, \$15/students. 1-800-838-3006 or www.1ststagespringhill.org.

N50@Wolf Trap and Video Games Live! Jack Wall, Conductor. 8:30 p.m. at the Filene Center. Wolf Trap Foundation for the Performing Arts, 1645 Trap Road, Vienna. 1-877-WOLFTRAP. Tickets from \$20 to \$48.

SATURDAY/JULY 11

Billy Jonas, 11 a.m. and 2 p.m. at Jammin' Java, 227 Maple Ave. E., Vienna. \$10. 703-255-1566 or jamminjava.com.

"Shakespeare's R&J." 4 and 8 p.m. 1st Stage Spring Hill, 1524 Spring Hill Road, McLean. \$25/adults, \$15/students. 1-800-838-3006 or www.1ststagespringhill.org. N50@Wolf Trap: Hamlish

Conducts Hamlish. 8:15 p.m. at the Filene Center. Wolf Trap Foundation for the Performing Arts, 1645 Trap Road, Vienna. 1-877-WOLFTRAP. Tickets from \$20 to \$48.

Author Jan Elvin, 11 a.m. at Books-A-Million, 1451 Chain Bridge Road. McLean. Elvin will sign and read from The Box From Braunau, her father's story of the Braunau slave labor camp in 1944. 703-356-3675.

Local band No Better Off will play acoustic roots music, blending folk, rock, bluegrass, blues and country. 6 to 8 p.m. Outdoors at the Palladium Civic Place Green, 1445 Laughlin Ave., McLean. Free. 703-288-9505. Kenny Day, 8 p.m. at the Great Falls Tavern, 9835 Georgetown Pike, Great Falls. 703-757-4770.

SUNDAY/JULY 12

"Shakespeare's R&J." 2 and 6 p.m. 1st Stage Spring Hill, 1524 Spring Hill Road, McLean. \$25/adults, \$15/students. 1-800-838-3006 or www.1ststagespringhill.org.

Reggae 2009! A Moment in Time, with Beres Hammond Culture featuring Kenyatta Hill & Lenya Wilks. 4 p.m. at the Filene Center. Wolf Trap Foundation for the Performing Arts, 1645 Trap Road, Vienna. 1-877-WOLFTRAP. \$25 lawn; \$40 in-house.

Great Falls Summer Concerts on the Green. Tom Principato - King of Blues. 6-8 p.m. at the Great Falls Village Centre.

MONDAY/JULY 13

Hey Monday, This Providence, The Friday Night Boys, The Bigger Lights and Stereo Skyline. 6 p.m. At Jammin' Java, 227 Maple Ave. E., Vienna. 703-255-1566 or www.jamminjava.com.

Monday Flicks. 11 a.m. at the Great Falls Library, 9830 Georgetown Pike, Great Falls. Bring a snack and enjoy a children's book on DVD. Call for titles. Age 3-5 w/adult. 703-757-8560.

TUESDAY/JULY 14

Mid-Atlantic Band Battle. 7 p.m. At Jammin' Java, 227 Maple Ave. E., Vienna. 703-255-1566 or www.jamminjava.com.

WEDNESDAY/JULY 15

Mid-Atlantic Band Battle. 7 p.m. At Jammin' Java, 227 Maple Ave. E., Vienna. 703-255-1566 or www.jamminjava.com.

The One-Man Band. 2:30 p.m. at the Great Falls Library, 9830 Georgetown Pike, Great Falls. Clap and sing along as Peter McCoy plays all your favorite instruments. All ages. 703-757-8560.

Book Discussion. 7 p.m. at the Great Falls Library, 9830 Georgetown Pike, Great Falls. Call branch for title. Adult. 703-757-8560.

THURSDAY/JULY 16

Children's Concert in the Park. 2-3 p.m. at Colvin Run Mill, 10017 Colvin Run Road, Great Falls. Spread a blanket under the trees and listen to the Fairfax Symphony Percussion Duo on a journey through "What is Rhythm?" Free. 703-759-2771.

Mid-Atlantic Band Battle. 7 p.m. At Jammin' Java, 227 Maple Ave. E., Vienna. 703-255-1566 or www.jamminjava.com.

FRIDAY/JULY 17

Luke Brindley and Parliament Hill. 8 p.m. At Jammin' Java, 227 Maple

Ave. E., Vienna. 703-255-1566 or www.jamminjava.com.

42nd Street. 8 p.m. at the Filene Center. \$20 - \$70. Wolf Trap Foundation for the Performing Arts, 1645 Trap Road, Vienna. 1-877-WOLFTRAP.

Wolf Trap National Park for the Performing Arts Junior Ranger Day, 12-3 p.m. Includes activity books, scavenger hunt and a variety of ranger programs with topics including costumes, musical instruments, recycling, puppets, and park history. Free; for ages 5-12. www.nps.gov/wotr/forkids or 703-255-1893.

SATURDAY/JULY 18

Claude Moore Colonial Farm 18th Century Summer Market Fair, 11 a.m.-4:30 p.m. at 6310 Georgetown Pike, McLean. Traditional dancing and singing. Muster with the Colonial Militia and try hands-on crafts. Enjoy local ale and porter at the Tavern. Period wares, food and beverages available. Costumed re-enactors, chickens, turkeys and more. Adults \$5, children 3-12 and seniors \$2.50. Weather permitting; call 703-903-9330 day of event. Free parking. www.1771.org/directions.htm.

42nd Street. 2 p.m. and 8 p.m. at the Filene Center. \$20 - \$70. Wolf Trap Foundation for the Performing Arts, 1645 Trap Road, Vienna. 1-877-WOLFTRAP.

Luke Brindley and Seth Glier. 8 p.m. At Jammin' Java, 227 Maple Ave. E., Vienna. 703-255-1566 or www.jamminjava.com.

"On the Bright Side" Exhibit and Artist's Reception. 3-6 p.m. at the Great Falls Library, 9830 Georgetown Pike, Great Falls. View over 20 oil paintings and drawings. 703-403-7435.

Classic Novel Becomes 'Classic-Style Musical'

Upcoming 'Oliver!' combines rich source material, memorable tunes.

By Mike DiCicco THE CONNECTION

Catchy songs, a fast-paced plot with a happy ending and lead actors with "very strong voices" will make the McLean Community Players' upcoming production of the musical "Oliver!" a fun summer show for the family, said co-director and choreographer Pam McCormack. "And cute kids. It's hard to stop cute kids."

Stage manager Doug Yriart called the show, which is a reworking of Charles Dickens' "Oliver Twist," a "classic-style musical," one that is full of memorable tunes, unlike some modern musicals that are sung more like opera. "The audience will leave with some of the songs stuck in their heads," he said.

"I love the music. I think the music's terrific," said Lyle Blake



PHOTO BY MIKE DICICCO/THE CONNECTION

Professional schemers, the Artful Dodger, played by Wesley Coleman, and Fagin, played by Lyle Blake Smythers, eyeball Forrest Brown's guileless orphan Oliver.

Smythers, who plays the criminal Fagin. He said the play had a combination of upbeat numbers and "beautiful" ballads.

SMYTHERS said he especially liked his character's songs, which are lively and humorous. The adult leader of the gang of boy pickpockets into which the young title character is lured, Fagin is conniving and dishonest but a likeable personality, making him "a loveable rogue" and a joy to play, Smythers said. "He's like a James Bond villain."

He said he had tried out for the role when the Arlington Players staged the play in 1985 but ended up in the chorus. "I've been waiting 24 years to do it and now I'm doing it."

Mimi Preda said she also enjoyed her character's moral ambiguity. Nancy is the girlfriend of Fagin's brutal criminal associate, Bill Sikes, but also develops a motherly affection toward the orphan Oliver. "I like that she's a little bit good and a little bit bad throughout the show," Preda said. She said she also sought out strong alto roles and had always wanted to play the

character. She added that the play not only has a strong musical score but also offered scenes of dialogue that the actors could "get into." Smythers said much of the dialogue retained its cockney, Dickensian flavor, and the classic source material brought a richness of plot and character development to the play.

Andrew Bolden, who plays Bill Sykes, said working on the play has been a learning experience. His true personality, his cast mates said, is the polar opposite of his angry, violent character. "It's been an interesting foray into villainy," Bolden said. "Throwing people around, hitting people, being mean. Hollering a lot. That's not typical for me." He said he had usually played comic relief characters. Bolden said he thought he had grown as an actor by "finding this other character, this scary person that I didn't know lived in me."

Like many of the adults, he said he also enjoyed working with the group of children in the play.

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Advertisement for McLean Orchestra Funfest & Cookout!!!. Features food, games, raffles, and live music. All proceeds benefit the McLean Orchestra & the McLean Youth Orchestra. Event on Saturday, July 18th at St. Francis Episcopal Church. Price: \$25 per person or \$50 per family.



Japanese immersion teacher Mamiya Worland looks on while Corey Hodge practices his chopsticks skills.



PHOTOS CONTRIBUTED

Sixth-grade Japanese immersion students practice their chopstick skills with Legos.

Chopsticks and Tatami Mats

Great Falls Japanese Immersion students prepare for their trip to Japan.

Graduating sixth-graders in Great Falls Elementary School's Japanese Immersion Program are preparing for their upcoming trip to Japan, which will run from July 10-20. The trip is the culmination of the students' six-year Japanese program at the school.

Ten families will travel to Japan,

along with Japanese immersion teacher and mentor Mamiya Worland. The group includes 10 sixth-grade students, 16 parents and 12 siblings.

As the day of their departure nears, the students have been participating after school in Worland's cultural training class, involving 15 hours of intensive study to prepare them for their trip and their

two-night home-stay visits with Japanese families. The cultural training reviews Japanese daily life, including mealtime, bathing, sleeping on tatami floors and doing chores. The class also provides instruction on how to communicate with Japanese people and how to travel in Japan with a group.

Highlights of the trip will in-

clude touring Tokyo, Kyoto, Hiroshima, Miyajima Island and Fukuyama. The families will enjoy a Geisha performance, a Japanese baseball game, a visit to the Peace Memorial Park and Museum in Hiroshima and tours of several temples. The students will also visit Eisugakkan Elementary School of the Kake Educational District in Hiroshima.



Jordan Parent, left, and Lainey Fallon work on photo albums to share with their host families in Japan.

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SCHOOL NOTES

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

Andrew W. Watson of Great Falls, a junior majoring in computer engineering in the College of Engineering, was one of 127 Hokie Ambassadors who volunteered for the Office of Undergraduate Admissions at Virginia Tech during the 2008-09 academic year.

Brittany Roellig of Great Falls, a 2007 graduate of Langley High School, has been named to the deans' list for the second trimester at Ohio State University.

Luke Parker, the son of Donald Parker of McLean was awarded a Bachelor of Arts degree from Earlham College during commencement ceremonies on Saturday, May 9. Parker majored in Psychology.

Peter Bryan, a freshman at George C. Marshall High School, was inducted into the National Society for High School Scholars at the Dirksen Senate Office Building in Washington, D.C. The keynote address was given by Claes Nobel, the NSHSS Chairman and Senior Member of the Family that established the Nobel Prizes.

NEWS

Toll Road Fees Likely to Increase

FROM PAGE 4

"It is below a level where you would start to see riders drop away," he said.

But toll road revenue has already declined slightly since 2006, in part because of a previous rate increase, according to the airports authority presentation.

Despite the initial drop off, the toll road revenue has stayed stable over the past three years, even in the midst of national economic downturn and an increase in gas prices. Taylor said this speaks to the strength of the toll road's revenue capacity because it indicates that several people will continue to use the road during financially tough times.

STILL, the two elected officials on the Dulles Corridor Advisory Committee appeared uncomfortable with the level of funding Dulles Toll Road users were being asked to provide for the Metrorail extension.

"Fairfax and Loudoun County will continue to press for more federal funding. I think the state needs to help out more too. Virginia stands to gain a lot from the economic development this project will generate," said Scott York (I), Loudoun County Board of Supervisors chairman.

Under the current payment structure for the rail extension, the federal government has provided \$900 million, approximately 17.1 percent of the project's funding, and Virginia has provided \$275 million, approximately 5.2 percent of the project's funding.

"There is federal funding for phase 1 [which extends to Reston] but for phase 2 [which extends to Loudoun], there is no federal funding," said Sharon Bulova (D-At-large), Fairfax County chairman.

Should the project receive more federal funding, Bulova would want to revisit the toll increases and see if they could be tempered, she said.

By taxing the landowners who stand to benefit from the rail extension, Fairfax County has raised \$848 million, covering about 16.1 percent of the Dulles rail cost. Loudoun County has chipped in \$252 million, about 4.8 percent of the cost.

Phase 1 of the project, which terminates in Reston and runs through Tysons Corner, costs \$2.75 billion. Phase 2, which extends to the Dulles airport and Loudoun, is estimated to cost \$2.5 billion.

Overall, the toll road is expected

to bring in \$2.8 billion for both parts of the project, according to the airports authority.

SOME TOLL ROAD users are upset about bearing the brunt of the Dulles rail construction costs.

"The majority of the toll road revenue will be used for non-toll road purposes. That amounts to a tax that has to be paid with after-taxes money," said Rob Whitfield, a Reston resident who is troubled by the financing of the Metrorail extension.

Whitfield said it is unfair that commuters who will be coming into Tysons Corner from the east or those who would get on the train at Metro stations in McLean and Vienna do not have to pay for the cost of the subway construction. Due to where they live, they do not have to use the toll road regularly but will still benefit from the project, he said.

Landowners in Tysons Corner, who would benefit financially from the four new Metro stations, and the federal government, whose employees and contractors would use the train to get to work,

should also contribute more money, he said.

"Can you think of anywhere else in the United States where such a relatively small group of people have to pay such a huge burden for a public project like this?" said Whitfield.

The Fairfax County supervisors are also concerned about the cost overruns that could occur on the Dulles Metrorail project and who would be asked to pay for them. In June, they asked the Fairfax County auditor to keep an eye on project change orders and other aspects of the Dulles Rail project that might increase the cost.

With the federal and state funding contributions currently capped, it is unclear where the extra money would come from should the Metro project go over budget. Some supervisors fear that Fairfax County taxpayers, not just landowners who stand to benefit from the project, would have to provide the extra financial assistance. But Dulles toll road users could also be asked to contribute more as well, should the project's costs escalate.

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SPORTS

Cable Caddies His Way to PGA

Once a star golfer at Oakton, G.W. Cable becomes full time caddy on PGA Tour.

By MICHAEL K. BOHN
THE CONNECTION

The golfer-caddy relationship is rare in sports. While pitchers and catchers collaborate closely every fourth or fifth game, they have other teammates on the field. The same is true for quarterbacks and centers. But in golf, the caddy doesn't just carry the bag, he measures yardages, reads putts, quiets the gallery, keeps tabs on the player's mental state and occasionally lines up the golfer before a shot. The most skilled PGA Tour caddies are indeed co-players.

The Tiger Woods-Steve Williams and Phil Mickelson-Bones MacKay teams are great examples of smoothly functioning and successful player-caddy teams. Fairfax native and third-year PGA Tour player Steve Marino hopes that he and his caddy — G.W. Cable of Oakton — can eventually emulate the success of those pairs.

Cable has been on Marino's bag for the past 12 months. Marino called him last June and asked him to caddy for last year's AT&T National. The two had known each other since their junior golf days in the 1990s, and Marino hoped a caddy change would help his play on Tour.

"I was working at Lakewood Ranch Country Club in Bradenton, Fla., when Steve called," Cable said last week at Congressional. "We agreed to a week-to-week try-out."

"I wanted to change it up and try a new caddy," Marino said last year. "So I gave him a call, figured I would get him out of



COURTESY OF MICHAEL K. BOHN

Oakton grad G.W. Cable tried several times to make the PGA Tour. Now he's caddying for longtime friend and Fairfax native Steve Marino.

the cart barn, so he wouldn't have to wash carts for a couple weeks."

THE DECISION looked sound when Marino held the lead, following a smooth 5-under 65 at last year's AT&T National. Although he faded down the stretch, finishing T-24, he and Cable meshed immediately. They have been together since. "I hope to stay with him as long as he plays on Tour," Cable said.

Theirs is a mutual admiration society. "G.W. is a great caddy," Marino told the media last week. "He's a very good golfer and he makes it fun out there. He helps keep it light and that's what I need."

Marino's plan seemed to be working at this year's AT&T National, at least through the third round. At the start of the final day, he stood at 4-under, six shots back of the

co-leaders, Woods and Anthony Kim. But he ballooned to a six-over 76 on Sunday and fell out of the hunt. Nonetheless, Marino is now 27th on the 2009 PGA money list with \$1.46 million earned so far.

A caddy's salary is commission-based, depending on how well their golfer does. Most make a base of between \$1,000 and \$1,500 a week, with a certain percentage of a golfer's earnings from week-to-week added on, a number that is contingent on a player's performance.

WHEN CABLE graduated from Oakton High School in 1995, his golfing resumé suggested a future as a Tour player, not one carrying golf bags. A three-time All-Met, Cable twice won the Frank Emmett Schoolboy, one of the Washington area's top junior tournaments. He also won an American



PHOTO BY ROBBIE HAMMER/THE CONNECTION

G.W. Cable came on as Marino's caddy at last year's AT&T National and has stuck on his bag ever since.

Junior Golf Association event in 1994 and gained honorable mention honors on the 1994 Rolex Junior All-American team.

Skipping college, Cable won the prestigious Dixie Amateur in 1997. He soon turned pro and, between club-pro jobs, wandered the wilderness of mini-tours. He unsuccessfully sought a PGA Tour card through Q-School several times. Although he played his way to the 2007 Q-School finals in December 2006, he fell short of qualifying for the Tour.

"By that point, my back was in terrible shape," Cable said. "I finally realized that I was never going to get to the Tour as a player." Cable had always taken a vicious swing at the ball. "I used to swing like a maniac," and he said that by late 2006, his body had simply worn down.

Cable rarely plays now, and when he does, it's usually casual matches with Marino during off weeks. He is single and lives in Sarasota, Florida. His parents left Oakton when they retired and now also live in Sarasota.

"I love being out here," he said at a spot near Congressional's bag room. "You can't beat the life."

VIENNA/OAKTON SPORTS BRIEFS

National Champions

The Fairfax Stars Gold, a U-11 girls' basketball team, which features players from Vienna, Oakton and Fairfax, defeated the Dayton Lady Hoopstars, 46-42, on Wednesday, July 1 to win the 2009 11-and-Under Girls' AAU Division I National Championship, which was held in Kenner, La. The Stars won the 10-and-Under Girls' AAU National Championship last year in Orlando, Fla. and entered this year as the No. 1 seed. They completed the season at 52-1, with the only defeat being a four-point loss to a team from Tennessee during the pool-play portion of the 52-team tournament. The Stars ran off five consecutive victories against the best teams in the country to take home the trophy.

Marshall Lacrosse Camp

Maximize your lacrosse learning with the best

camp price in the state. The Lady Statesmen lacrosse camp is designed for all levels of lacrosse players. Coach for George C. Marshall High School, Nicholle Depaz, provides a staff with high school, college club and NCAA D-I experience. This year Coach Depaz was selected to present, "5 Ways to quickly develop New Players to Lacrosse," at the 2009 U.S. Lacrosse Convention. Whether you are new to the sport or ready to take your game to the next level, Lady Statesmen Lacrosse Camp will challenge you this summer to get where you want to be.

George C Marshall High School will be hosting the Lady Statesmen Lacrosse Camp this summer on their new stadium turf field. The three-day camp begins July 30 and ends Aug. 1. The camp is for girls ages 8-16 and is \$125 for those who register before July 10. For an additional \$15, students can rent the equipment they need to learn the sport (goggles and a stick) for the duration of the camp.



COURTESY PHOTO

The Fairfax Stars include Breeja Wilkens, Marta Snizek, Lindsey Abed, Leeah Betourd, DeJanae Boykin, Lauren Turner, Sharon Hull, Karlie Cronin, Kelly Koshuta, Taylor Murray and Jessie Daguilh. They're coached by Jeff Boykin and assistants Kevin Hawkins and Kirsten Cronin.

“The extraordinary aspect of this award is that it was the residents of Chesterbrook who prepared the application.”

— Board President Judy Seiff

PHOTO BY LISA M. CONNORS/
OFFICE OF PUBLIC AFFAIRS, FAIRFAX
COUNTY GOVERNMENT

More than 30 Board members, residents and staffers attended the award presentation ceremony.



Chesterbrook Residences Receive ‘Best Practices Award’

Chesterbrook Residences, a mixed-income, assisted-living facility in Falls Church, was honored for its diversity-oriented housing program with a Commonwealth Council on Aging 2009 Best Practices Award.

Chesterbrook Residences was selected as the only statewide honoree in the “Housing” category from a competitive field of applicants. The honor was presented to Chesterbrook Residences, Inc. Board President Judy Seiff, Executive Director Marilen C. King, residents and other Board members during a ceremony at the Government

Center. More than 30 Board members, residents and staffers were in attendance.

The Commonwealth Council on Aging’s Best Practices Awards recognize model aging programs for innovation, cost-effectiveness, ease of replication as well as impact on the quality of life of older Virginians, their families and their caregivers.

“We want to replicate programs like Chesterbrook because of the positive impact on the quality of life of our seniors, their families and their communities,” said Gene Ecton Davis, chairman of the Best Practices Committee of the Council on Aging, while presenting the award.

Opened in November 2007, Chesterbrook Residences was nominated by its Resident Council, which is chaired by Marjorie Lohre, a long-time Northern Virginia resident. “We like everything about Chesterbrook. But the people, they are the best. Everybody is on a first-name basis. We keep track of each other and the volunteers are just wonderful,” she said.

“The extraordinary aspect of this award is that it was the residents of Chesterbrook who prepared the application. In it they specifically state how they have grown to love their new home and to appreciate the unique community partnership that helped

create a safe haven for them,” said Seiff, who also is a trustee of Temple Rodef Shalom in Falls Church.

Additionally, the Fairfax Board of Supervisors presented a certificate of recognition to Chesterbrook Residences. “It creates a feeling like home for residents, family and friends in a familiar place,” said Supervisor John W. Foust (D-Dranesville), who represents the area around the community.

Chesterbrook Residences-home to 109 residents in 85 private one-bedroom and 12 two-bedroom apartments-is the first and only mixed-income, assisted-living community in Fairfax County.

Babe Ruth League Announces All-Star Teams District play scheduled for July 8-12.

The McLean/Great Falls Babe Ruth league has announced its All-Star teams for the 2009 season. McLean/Great Falls has entered a team in the 13, 14 and 15 year old division, as well as fielding an Alliance Team. This year, the 14-year-olds will host the District tournament at Langley High School. The 13 year old All Stars will be hosted by Vienna Babe Ruth and will be played at Waters Field in Vienna, and the 15 year old team hosted by North Fairfax County Babe Ruth will be played in Herndon at Dulles Corner Field. The Alliance Team play has begun with McLean / Great Falls holding a 1 and 1 record as of July 3. District play for all the 13, 14 and 15 All Star teams will be July 8-12.

The 13 Year Old roster includes:

Will Bollinger , Nick Casso , Blake Coolidge , Josh Crummer , John DeFriest, Bryan Even, Yuhei Hashimoto, Cal Jadacki, Austin Jenkins, Jake McSteen, Cole Oldenburg and Kevin Wood.

The 14 Year Old roster includes:

Drew Balog, Colin Cantwell, Tommy Cresce, Andrew Culp, Thomas Dungan, Alexander Fishman, Greg Giordano, Nick Hallmark, Michael Kliska, Jonathan Korobkin, Phillip Morse, Matt Moser, Jonathan O’Connor, Matt Rollman and Will Thomas.

The 15U roster includes:

Anthony Baskin, Michael Byrne, Hardy Cox, Gray Decker, Donnie Eckrod, Nathan Flagg, Kevin Green, Brock Hunter, Michael Kelley, Bobby Klein, James Norden, David Paul, Daniel Richardson, Brian Ristig and James Vivenzio.

The Alliance roster includes :

Jeff Antetamaso, Joseph Aulisi, Cam Ayoub, Matthew Bielamowicz, Hunter Eckrod, Charlie Fitzner, Matthew Hansan, Cody Jones, Matthew McCreary, Vinnie Neri, Mark Ramsey, Michael Sanders and Timmy Sanson.

Helping Fight Breast Cancer

Nancy Kane, a sales associate at the Vienna Office of Weichert, Realtors, joined more than 3,000 participants in the Avon Walk for Breast Cancer Event that took place in May in Washington, D.C in May. In the fight against breast cancer, Kane raised over \$3,800 this year.

Kane joined her team, “Refuah Shlema” which means “Complete Healing” in Hebrew, after being inspired by her own battle with breast cancer. This was Kane’s third year participating in the event. The team walked a marathon and a half (39 miles) and raised over \$24,000 for local, regional and national breast cancer organizations throughout the weekend.

“There are so many women who have been affected by breast cancer. My team and I feel honored to have participated in an event like this because it gave us the opportunity to be proactive in the fight against this terrible disease. Together, we know we made a difference,” said Kane. “I walk this event each year in memory of my friends and family who have lost their fight against breast cancer and in honor of my friends who are still battling with it today.”

For more information visit <http://www.avonfoundation.org/>.



Nancy Kane of Weichert’s Vienna Office participated in the Avon Walk for Breast Cancer Event.

Nature? Nurture? Not Sure

By KENNETH B. LOURIE



Now I don't exactly know what to make of the following observation, but I am going to make it nonetheless. Our two cats, brothers Biscuit and Cappuccino – 3 years old come this September, rescued May 12, 2007 at approximately 7 months old – seem to be hanging around me (the one with cancer), touching me, maintaining body contact with me, staying in close proximity to me, more than they do with my wife, Dina. Not that they ignore her, either. Hardly. But they do seem to find me.

"The Buff Boys" are uniquely affectionate and attentive; in fact, at this very moment, Biscuit is lying on the dining room table, not two feet away from me as I write, back to me of course, but still within meowing distance. And not that I don't have a certain amount of animal magnetism, but the kind of attention I'm receiving from the cats who, as a breed are generally speaking not so instinctively inclined (certainly not in the same manner as dogs are), is somewhat unsettling. Unsettling, with respect to the alleged/presumed animal instinct to want to comfort the sick and dying. We noticed this behavior twice before: once with our previous cat, Smokey, who tended to our first rabbit, Pirate (who was sick at the time) by laying around her cage, making contact with it even, and currently with our two "newer" cats who likewise have tended to our current rabbit, Chester (again, by laying around his cage, literally) while he's had some health issues of late. Heck, for all I know, this is how animals communicate; perhaps they understand more than we do.

So what I occasionally take from this uncharacteristic attention and body contact is a sort of cross-species aid and comfort; an instinctive, centuries-old, attempt at healing the sick. And being that I'm sick, I am getting their attention, deservedly so, I may add (and I'll take as much as I can get, by the way). But how much attention is my concern, and is their attention, varying as it may be, reflective of something that either my oncologist doesn't know or hasn't told me, or something only the animal kingdom is privy to? And if it is the latter, then what am I doing writing this column? I should be under medical observation somewhere with doctors attempting to discern the cause of our cats' peculiar interest in my whereabouts.

But perhaps I'm overreacting. Perhaps the cats are simply exceptional in some intuitive, non-verbal method of connecting emotionally with people they see on a regular basis (who feed and water them, no doubt)? Or maybe the cats are merely expressing their gratitude and appreciation for our having "rescued" them and in turn providing them a permanent home (ours) where they can live in cozy comfort for the next 15 years or so? Or maybe they do know more than we give them credit for? Maybe I am sicker than either my doctor or I have admitted; I'd hate to believe that.

No, I choose to believe that our cats are loving and affectionate and they want to be around me as much as is "catly" possible. Thinking anything else would be unhelpful, and right now, given my rather precarious health situation, I can use all the help I can get; however, and from whomever.

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

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