



PHOTO CONTRIBUTED

'Going Back And Visiting Friends'

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Approved

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From Village
Centre to
International Stage

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NEWS



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Bryce Gillies

Man Dies In Grand Canyon

Bryce Gillies was found in remote area of North Rim.

On the morning of Saturday, July 25, search teams found the body of McLean High School graduate Bryce Gillies on the North Rim of the Grand Canyon, according to press releases from the National Park Service. Rangers had been searching for him for days.

The Park Service received a call from Gillies' father on the evening of Tuesday, July 21, saying that the 20-year-old Northern Arizona University student had left for the Deer Creek-Thunder River area of the canyon on the previous Saturday after reading about the trip in a magazine. He had planned to return on Monday but did not, the father said.

The next morning, rangers found Gillies' car parked at a trailhead between the developed area of the North Rim and the Tuweep section of the canyon. Gillies had not filed for a backcountry permit.

With no knowledge of his plans, search teams covered a large area, from the Deer Creek area to Tapeats Creek and down to the river, press releases said. On the morning of July 25, searchers discovered personal items, including a backpack, in the remote Bonita Creek drainage area and narrowed their search.

They found Gillies at about 9:30 a.m. at the top of a 100-foot drop, less than half a mile from the confluence of Bonita Creek and the Colorado River.

About 50 National Park Service personnel, as well as volunteers with the Grand Canyon and two other area parks, participated in the search.

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NEWS



Lainey Fallon pounds rice into mochi, which is used to make rice cakes, while Mike Clemson and Lili and Clayton Barber look on.



PHOTOS CONTRIBUTED

Students and parents pose for a picture atop Mount Misen on Miyajima Island.

'Going Back and Visiting Friends'

Families of Great Falls Elementary Japanese Immersion Program students visit Japan, familiar faces.

BY MIKE DICICCO
THE CONNECTION

For Lisa Hodge and several other Great Falls Elementary parents and graduates, last month's trip to Japan wasn't the first. "This time, it felt like we were going back and visiting friends," Hodge said.

Graduating students of the school's Japanese Immersion Program and their families have been making a summer trip to Japan for a number of years, but when Hodge took the trip four years ago with her older child's class, former Prime Minister Shinzo Abe's wife Akie introduced the group to the Eisugakkan School in Fukuyama. The two became sister schools and an exchange program began the next summer.

Now, Hodge said, Great Falls Elementary has spent four years forging relationships with the Japanese school and the former first couple. Each spring, Japanese teens from the Eisugakkan School stay with Great Falls families, and the Great Falls Elementary graduates spend two nights of their time in Japan with families of Eisugakkan students.

Hodge's son Corey, who just graduated from Great Falls Elementary, said he hoped the children of the family he had stayed with would stay at his house one day, although he said they probably wouldn't be old enough for another eight years or so. His older brother and sister also went along on the trip, staying with another family, whose daughter will visit the Hodges' house in March.

Another older sibling along for the trip was Simone Unwalla's sister Alexis, who revisited the family she had stayed with three years ago. Their daughter had then stayed at her house in Great Falls two years ago. "So it was really cool to see them again," Alexis Unwalla said.

Lisa Hodge said the relationships formed on the trips often continued and gave the students another reason to improve their Japanese language skills and another opportunity to use the language. And, she said, "It's an awesome experience when you're studying a language to see the country where the language is used and be able to use it in that country."

Corey Hodge said the parents in the family he stayed with knew a lot of English, but their children, who were 5 and 6, knew

"Their baseball games are just like ours, but the crowd is, believe it or not, more into it than we are."

— Daraius Unwalla

only a little. However, he said, between their English and his Japanese, they were able to communicate.

He said the home stay was one of his favorite parts of the trip. The family he stayed with took him to a barbecue at a cousin's house, a museum and a festival. The museum included a replica of an ancient Japanese village, while the festival featured celebrants with drums on their shoulders and about 20 people carrying a large, unidentified golden object. "And they looked like they were going to collapse," he said.

Other highlights, he said, included a visit to the wooded and temple-studded island of Miyajima and climbing the nearly 1,100-foot Tokyo Tower, even though he is afraid of heights.

SEE LANGUAGE, PAGE 10

Builder Celebrates 30 Years of Business

Great Falls Construction Company focuses on green technology, efficiency.

BY KENNETH BURCHFIELD
THE CONNECTION

The Fairfax County population has nearly doubled since 1979, and its residents have experienced three different recessions in that period. But throughout the last 30 years, the Great Falls Construction Company has remained focused on home construction for area residents.

"We're certainly proud of the record" that the company has created, chairman Roger Blattberg said.

The construction company specializes in custom home building in the Northern Virginia area, according to Blattberg. It performs design-builds, in which the

company both plans out and constructs homes, and land purchase evaluations.

"We're quite diversified, and that's a good [thing]," Blattberg said. The company also does home renovations.

Although the Fairfax County region has expanded as a whole, the chairman said that "the character of Great Falls hasn't changed," and that the construction process has not deviated much for the company over the last 30 years. One important development, however, has been the adoption of environmentally friendly technology in home design.

"We really all have to get on board this green revolution," Blattberg said. He mentioned solar hot water heating, improved insulation and geothermal heating as com-



PHOTO CONTRIBUTED BY THE GREAT FALLS CONSTRUCTION COMPANY
The Great Falls Construction Company has performed design-build construction, in which they both plan and build new homes.

ponents of green construction. The advantages of an environmentally friendly home, according to Blattberg, go beyond the en-

vironment, as "people enjoy the benefits of [a] more efficient house."

SEE 30 YEARS, PAGE 11

Mortgage Fraud

U.S. District Court Judge Anthony J. Trenga sentenced Richard A. Forde, 51 of Great Falls, last week to 42 months in prison for a mortgage fraud scheme.

Forde, also known as Euburn Richard Forde, was ordered to pay \$1.11 million in restitution.

Forde, an educational consultant, owned a residence on Leigh Mill road in Great Falls, and fraudulently obtained a \$3.9 million mortgage loan from Lehman Brothers Bank so Alladean M. Allobaidy could buy property from Forde.

Court records state that Forde was in bankruptcy at the time of the sale to Allobaidy, and the two, along with mortgage broker David Freelander, withheld information about the financial terms of the sale in the loan application, according to Dana Boente, U.S. Attorney for the Eastern District of Virginia. When the mortgage went into default, a Lehman Brothers Bank affiliate reclaimed the property and sold it at a \$1.1 million loss.

In addition, when Forde went into bankruptcy, he, Freelander and bankruptcy attorney Leslie W. Lickstein caused several liens to be placed on the property without permission from the bankruptcy court. The liens were paid off with settlement money, which should have been available to pay off creditors in the Forde bankruptcy case, according to Boente, Joseph Persichini Jr., of the FBI's Washington Field Office, and W. Clarkson McDow Jr., United States Trustee.

A federal jury convicted Forde in February 2009 of conspiracy, bankruptcy fraud and bank fraud.

Lickstein, a former president of the Northern Virginia Bankruptcy Bar Association, was sentenced to 12 months and one day in prison on Aug. 30, 2007. Allobaidy, the buyer of the property, was sentenced on April 27, 2007, to 15 months in prison and Freelander, the mortgage broker, was sentenced on Sept. 22, 2008 to 48 months in prison.

The FBI investigated the case, which was prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorney Thomas H. McQuillan and Special Assistant U.S. Attorney Dennis Early of the Office of the United States Trustee.

— KEN MOORE

Two Charged in Mailbox Incident

Fairfax County Fire and Rescue Department fire investigators charged two 19-year-old McLean residents, of Fox Hall Road and of Hazel Lane, with placing and exploding an incendiary device in a mailbox, Friday, July 24, 2009: one was charged with manufacture and use of a fire bomb or explosive device, burning or destroying personal property valued at less than \$200 and carrying a concealed weapon, while the other was charged with manufacture and use of a fire bomb or explosive device.

The improvised incendiary device was placed in a mailbox resulting in less than \$200 in damage to the mailbox.

BULLETIN BOARD

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

THURSDAY/AUG. 6

Lunch with Congressman Frank R. Wolf, 10th District of Virginia. 11:30 a.m. at the Hilton Washington Dulles Airport. Wolf will present his 2009 Report to the Committee for Dulles. info@committeefordulles.org.

Ken Cuccinelli for Attorney General Fundraiser. 6-8 p.m. at 4710 Benjamin Cross Court, Chantilly. \$100. 703-766-0635 or NorthernVirginiaGOP.com.

MONDAY/AUG. 10

Breakfast Reception for Barbara Comstock, Candidate for Delegate for 34th District, with Newt Gingrich. 8 a.m. at

6038 Crimson Court, McLean, hosted by The Hon. Peter Fitzgerald and Lisa Vogt. \$100. Reserve at 703-201-7776 or gretchen@gretchenmoss.com. Visit www.comstockfordelegate.com.

THURSDAY/AUG. 13

Vienna Tysons Chamber of Commerce Monthly Lunch. 11:30 a.m. at Fleming's Prime Steakhouse & Wine Bar, 1960-A Chain Bridge Road, McLean. Speaker: John Gilstrap, author of No Mercy. 703-281-1333 or www.vtrcc.org.

Republican National Hispanic Assembly Convention with RNC Chairman Michael Steele, former Commerce Secretary Carlos Gutierrez and Bob McDonnell. Crowne Plaza Tysons Corner, 1960 Chain Bridge Road, McLean. \$150. 202-984-9153 or NorthernVirginiaGOP.com.

NEWS

Great Falls Optimist Club, Officers Honored

The Great Falls Optimist Club and its officers were honored recently by Optimist International for successes during the past year. The Club received both Honor Club and Distinguished Club awards for completing several successful projects and for significantly increasing the size of its membership.

On hand for the award presentations were Fairfax County Supervisor John W. Foust (D-Dranesville) and Past Optimist International Vice President David Griffiths. "There is no way the county could do everything that organizations like yours provide to the community," Foust said. "We are very appreciative of all the services and activities you provide."

The Great Falls Optimist Club is a child-centered non-profit organization that focuses on supporting, encouraging and challenging children to reach greater heights. A voluntary organization, the club is always interested in welcoming new members and volunteers. Among the many annual family-oriented events sponsored or assisted by the club are the Spring Festival and Egg Hunt, the Fall Spooktacular at Halloween, and the Fourth of July celebration in Great Falls.

Anyone interested in joining the Great Falls Optimist Club or volunteering at specific events may contact President Calvert Thompson at 571-212-2982, Calvert@CalvertRejuvenations.com; or Membership Chair Mindy



CONTRIBUTED

Supervisor John Foust (D-Dranesville) presents the award to past Club President Lisa Jackson.

Mitchell, mindy@bigplanet.com. Contributions can be mailed to P.O. Box 233, Great Falls, VA 22066.

For more information about the club, visit www.greatfallsoptimist.org.

New Officers Elected

The Great Falls Optimist Club elected the following slate of officers for 2009-2010: Calvert Thompson, president; Dan Smith, vice president; and Julie Casso, vice president for youth programs. Scott Coolidge was appointed secretary and Eve Chapman was appointed to a second term as treasurer. Joda Coolidge will assume the new position of director of community outreach while Mindy Mitchell will continue as director of membership and Candace Campbell will continue as director of public relations.

"The Club has grown considerably during the past few years, and taken on new and significant projects. We've been able to support a wide range of wonderful programs ranging from Reach for



CONTRIBUTED

Calvert Thompson

mentum in the year ahead," said Calvert Thompson.

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If interested in joining the Great Falls Optimist Club or volunteering at specific events, contact President Calvert Thompson at 571-212-2982 (Calvert@CalvertRejuvenations.com) or Membership Chair Mindy Mitchell at mindy@bigplanet.com. Contributions can be mailed to P.O. Box 233, Great Falls, VA 22066. For more information about the Club, visit its Web site at www.greatfallsoptimist.org.

NEWS



PHOTO BY MIKE DICICCO/THE CONNECTION

Language regarding setbacks along Georgetown Pike ended up getting scrapped, but the Comprehensive Plan now recognizes Georgetown Pike's official historic status.

Great Falls Plan Changes Approved

Supervisors pass five changes to area's plan.

At its July 13 meeting, the Board of Supervisors approved five amendments to the county's Comprehensive Plan regarding the Great Falls area. The amendments were the result of a months-long process, beginning with residents' nominations for changes to the plan, which then worked their way through a citizen task force and the Planning Commission. Most amendments that made it to the supervisors' desks were modified along the way.

Unlike most proposed plan amendments, almost all of those suggested for Great Falls were not to enable new development but were aimed at protecting the environment and the character of the community.

The one exception is the addition of language to the Comprehensive Plan encouraging the exploration of possible sites for a community center in Great Falls.

Development-related amendments were proposed for the McLean, Vienna and Herndon areas of the Dranesville District, but only those regarding Great Falls made it to the Board of Supervisors. The APR Task Force will be reconvened in the fall to consider amendments regarding possible future developments around the planned Route 28 Metro station southwest of Herndon, which were deferred.

The Comprehensive Plan does not have the force of zoning and is usually consulted only in the case of an application for a rezoning or special exception.

— MIKE DICICCO

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OPINION

Emphasis on Lyme Well Placed

Containing Lyme disease is important to health locally.

With the explosion in the local population of deer comes a smaller but significant explosion in cases of Lyme Disease. Lyme is transmitted to humans from deer by way of a bite from a deer tick.

Deer ticks are tiny, and most often go unnoticed. The first symptoms of Lyme disease are often a fever, flu-like aches and headache. Sometimes victims exhibit a red ring or bulls eye pattern, presumably around the original tick bite. When treated early with antibiotics, most people recover fully.

But untreated early, the disease can be complex and difficult, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: "After several

months, approximately 60 percent of patients with untreated infection will begin to have intermittent bouts of arthritis, with severe joint pain and swelling.... In addition, up to 5 percent of untreated patients may develop chronic neurological complaints months to years after infection." This can include problems with concentration and memory.

One of the obstacles to early treatment is the lack of a reliable diagnostic test for Lyme disease.

U.S. Rep. Frank Wolf (R-10th), chairman of the bipartisan House Lyme Disease Caucus, announced an increase in the CDC's budget for Lyme disease by more than \$3.6 million to \$8.9 million. In particular the funding will encourage the CDC and NIH to develop more accurate diagnostic tests for Lyme, as well as more research, record keeping and education.

The seriousness of the problem locally was evidenced when more than 300 people turned out for an informational meeting on Lyme disease Wolf held last year.

For more, see cdc.gov/ncidod/dvbid/Lyme.

EDITORIALS

well-articulated plan by this point in the process.

To be fair, Deeds' transportation "plan" appears under the issue of economic plan: "Work with the General Assembly and local stakeholders to design and pass a long-term, multimodal, statewide, creative transportation proposal in his first year as governor." To say this lacks substance is a bit of an understatement.

More to come, no doubt.

Meanwhile, Bob McDonnell (R) has proposed a detailed transportation plan which actually offers little more, because it includes no new source of revenue. McDonnell's plan

mostly appears to call for shifting money from other priorities to transportation, also not much of a plan. Judge for yourself at www.bobmcdonnell.com.

More to come, no doubt.

Be sure that you're registered to vote; besides statewide races for governor, lieutenant governor and attorney general, all 100 seats in the House of Delegates are on the ballot Nov. 3. To check on your registration, see www.sbe.virginia.gov and click on voter information.

— MARY KIMM,

MKIMM@CONNECTIONNEWSPAPERS.COM

Hoping for Better

We've mentioned before that we're suffering from election fatigue and the summer doldrums, so like most people, we're not ready to focus on coming races in November. But given the crisis state of transportation funding, one could hope for more from the Republican and Democratic candidates for governor.

Creigh Deeds' (D) Web site, www.deedsforvirginia.com, offers a quick link to "Issues," but transportation does not appear as one of his issues. One might assume that a contentious primary process would have forced Deeds to have a

magnet for visitors from across the country and around the world. This summer you can visit some of the nation's best tourist attractions without breaking the bank.

Our beaches are so popular you are likely to run into your neighbor at the taffy shop. Consider a side-visit to the Virginia Institute for Marine Science in Gloucester Point where you can hear about our centuries old watermen culture and learn how to help protect our precious Chesapeake Bay.

Williamsburg, Jamestown and Yorktown attract visitors from every continent, but if you wander off the beaten path you can visit some of the James River Plantations, and explore lifestyles of a bygone era. In central Virginia, Thomas Jefferson's Monticello and James Madison's Montpelier offer more than tours of famous houses; they give us insights into the people and the ideas that inspired our country's founding. And nearby vineyards are as scenic as their European counterparts.

For another part of our heritage, drive down Skyline Drive or try the Old Fiddlers Convention, which takes place the second week of August every year since 1935 in Galax, Va. The renown Barter Theatre in Abingdon, also in southwestern part

of the state, features plays all summer long. Theater lovers often stay at the famous 19th century Martha Washington Inn.

Whether you like the water park at Busch Gardens or prefer rafting at one of our scenic state parks, we have many recreation destinations for families who enjoy camping and outdoor activities too, from the ocean to the mountains.

Even with time or budget constraints, you can have lots of fun right here in Fairfax County. Visit our beautiful parks and waterfronts, or historic destinations like Mount Vernon, Gunston Hall or the Claude Moore Colonial Farm at Turkey Run in McLean. The friendly experts at "Visit Fairfax" in Tysons Corner can help you plan a memorable "staycation," and you'll save a bundle on gas and motel fees.

We are blessed in Virginia to live in a state with a rich and varied history and so much natural beauty. This summer you can discover places that others travel long distances to enjoy — and some that "typical" tourists often miss. This summer, why not enjoy a real escape while you boost our own dynamic tourism industry too.

Bon Voyage — or if you prefer — y'all come!

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Protect the Bay

To the Editor:

Summer for my family used to mean heading out to the Chesapeake Bay with a fishing pole and some swimming trunks. This summer, however, looks as though it will be an aberration. Bay pollution, now reaching unbearable heights, has resulted in more beach closures and no-swim advisories than any other previous year. Fish are getting sick, and the Bay's oysters are on the precipice of complete extinction. Dead zones created by urban runoff make it impossible for the ecosystem to thrive. The consequences of our careless behavior are obvious and plentiful, but the solutions are not so easy to decipher.

The Clean Water Act is not meeting its goals, thanks to laxity on the part of the EPA and other agencies. I urge Virginian politicians to take a more rigid stand on protecting our area's most precious resource. Perhaps then, summer can be a time of enjoyment and relaxation again, instead of a time of worries about deadly pathogens or endangered fish species.

Shefali Hegde
McLean

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This Summer See Virginia

BY MARGI VANDERHYE
STATE DELEGATE (D-34)

With August upon us we are about to see the annual vacation exodus from Washington and Northern Virginia. Life slows down, traffic lightens up and bags get stuffed with casual clothes, the book you've been meaning to read and toys for kids of all ages.

This summer, the struggling economy remains a concern not only for families that want an escape from the routine but also for the tourism industry that worries about people just deciding not to escape at all. Fortunately, we don't have to choose between a great escape and a frugal "staycation." In beautiful Virginia, we have options for every budget and enough destinations that you can fill an itinerary without leaving the state — or even the county!

Tourism is one of Virginia's most powerful industries, supporting hundreds of thousands of jobs and generating over \$18.7 billion in visitor spending in 2007. That same year, tourism provided \$1.2 billion in state and local taxes for Virginia's communities. With abundant natural beauty, historic landmarks, and recreation destinations, Virginia is a

PEOPLE



CONTRIBUTED

Alexandra Mahinka

Interning at Kennedy Center

The John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts selected Alexandra Mahinka of Great Falls for its internship program this summer as part of the Kennedy Center Institute for Arts Management.

Mahinka, daughter of Stephen Paul Mahinka and Nancy Marie Casper, is currently pursuing her Bachelor of Arts degree from Gettysburg College in Gettysburg, Penn. She is a member of Alpha Delta Pi Honor Society and has been recognized on the Dean's List.

As a trumpet player, Mahinka has performed in China, Greece, and Italy. She has also performed at Washington, D.C.'s Blues Alley. Mahinka plans to attend graduate school to study hospitality management.

While at the Kennedy Center, Mahinka is working with the major gifts office of development. The office secures annual gifts and works with Kennedy Center Trustees in order to raise funds for its annual campaign. Mahinka is gaining experience by participating in prospect identification, cultivation, solicitation, and is assisting with special events. Additionally, she is working with donor stewardship, including preparing materials for donor correspondence.

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's list for the second trimester at Ohio State University.

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CALENDAR

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

THURSDAY/AUG. 6

Wolf Trap National Park for the Performing Arts Junior Ranger Day. 12-2:30 p.m. Activity books, ranger-led programs including costumes, musical instruments, recycling, puppets, and park history. Free. For ages 5-12. www.nps.gov/wotr/forkids or 703-255-1893.

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

City of Fairfax Alte Kameraden German Band. 7:30 p.m. at Nottoway Park, 9601 Courthouse Road, Vienna. Bring a picnic dinner, blankets and lawn chairs. For rain cancellation, call after 6 p.m. 703-324-7469 or www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/performances.

FRIDAY/AUG. 7

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

The Vienna Youth Players in "Children of Eden." 7:30 p.m. at the Vienna Community Center, 120 Cherry St., S.E., Vienna. \$11 adults, \$10 students and senior citizens. 703-255-6360 or www.viennava.gov.

Picnic Night for Vienna area 6th, 7th and 8th graders and their families. 6 p.m. at Club Phoenix Teen Center, in the Vienna Community Center, 120 Cherry St., S.E., Vienna. Families are invited to bring a picnic dinner; each donation of canned food or clothing for a local charity earns a cupcake dessert; then teens can stay over for a movie and a best fuzzy slippers contest. 703-255-6360 or www.viennava.gov.

Ammar Malin and Ugly at 6:30 p.m.; **Melodine and Noah Woods** at 10 p.m. At Jammin' Java, 227 Maple Ave. E., Vienna. 703-255-1566 or www.jamminjava.com.

The Traveling Players in Macbeth. 7:30 p.m. at Riverbend Park, 8700 Potomac Hills St., Great Falls. Bring a chair or blanket to sit on. Refreshments and silent auction available. travelingplayers.pmailus.com.

NSO/Wolf Trap: Puccini La bohème. 8:15 p.m. at the Filene Center. \$25-\$42. Wolf Trap Foundation for the Performing Arts, 1645 Trap Road, Vienna. 1-877-WOLFTRAP.

SATURDAY/AUGUST 8
Ricardo Arjona, 8 p.m. at the George Mason University Patriot Center, 4400 University Drive, Fairfax. Tickets are \$40, available online at www.ticketmaster.com or via Phonecharge at 703-573-SEAT. www.patriotcenter.com.

The Vienna Youth Players in "Children of Eden." 7:30 p.m. at the Vienna Community Center, 120 Cherry St., S.E., Vienna. \$11 adults, \$10 students and senior citizens. 703-255-6360 or www.viennava.gov.

Dining skills and etiquette class for ages 13-17, 9:30-11:30 a.m. at the Vienna Community Center, 120 Cherry St., S.E., Vienna. Silverware savvy, American and continental eating styles, duties of hosts and guests, and many other dos and don'ts. \$40 for Town of Vienna residents and \$50 for out of town participants. 703-255-6360 or www.viennava.gov.

Hippiefest. 8 p.m. at the Filene Center. \$25-\$42. Wolf Trap Foundation for the Performing Arts, 1645 Trap Road, Vienna. 1-877-WOLFTRAP.

WEDNESDAY/AUG. 12
Multiple Sclerosis Support Group. 7 p.m. at the Vienna Presbyterian Church, 124 Park St., N.E., Vienna.

Girl Authority at 12 p.m.; **Gary Jules** at 7 p.m.; **Dreaming Of Eden, Aside Oceans, No Stars Over**



PHOTO BY ABIGAIL ALBRIGHT/THE CONNECTION

Part of The Alte Kameraden (The Old Comrades), the German Band unit of the City of Fairfax Band, during their outdoor concert at the Palladium at McLean. They will perform at Nottoway Park in Vienna on Thursday, Aug. 6.

California and more at 10 p.m.. At Jammin' Java, 227 Maple Ave. E., Vienna. 703-255-1566 or www.jamminjava.com.

Woven Green. 6 p.m. at the Paladium Civic Place Green, 1445 Laughlin St., McLean. Free. 703-288-9505.

The B-52s. 8 p.m. at the Filene Center. \$25-\$40. Wolf Trap Foundation for the Performing Arts, 1645 Trap Road, Vienna. 1-877-WOLFTRAP.

THURSDAY/AUG. 13
The Hot Society Orchestra of Washington, with dance music of the 1920s, 1930s and 1940s. 7:30 p.m. at Nottoway Park, 9601 Courthouse Rd., Vienna. Bring a picnic dinner, blankets and lawn chairs. Free. If there is a threat of bad weather call 703-324-SHOW after 6 p.m. for cancellation updates. www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/performances.

Erik Mongrain and Jimmy Robinson. 8 p.m. At Jammin' Java, 227 Maple Ave. E., Vienna. 703-255-1566 or www.jamminjava.com.

Financial Planning for Separation and Divorce. 7 p.m. at Investment & Resource Planning, 16060 Arrowhead Drive, Suite 310, Fairfax. \$45 non-members, \$35 members. www.thewomenscenter.org or 703-281-2657.

SUNDAY/AUG. 9
The Vienna Youth Players in "Children of Eden." 1 p.m. at the Vienna Community Center, 120 Cherry St., S.E., Vienna. \$11 adults, \$10 students and senior citizens. 703-255-6360 or www.viennava.gov.

Folk Music with Cletus and Lori. 6:30 p.m. at the Vienna Town Green, 144 Maple Ave. E., Vienna. Free. Bring a lawn chair or blanket for seating. 703-255-6360 or www.viennava.gov.

Grey Eye Glances. 8 p.m. At Jammin' Java, 227 Maple Ave. E., Vienna. 703-255-1566 or www.jamminjava.com.

Johnny Mathis. 8 p.m. at the Filene Center. \$22-\$45. Wolf Trap Foundation for the Performing Arts, 1645 Trap Road, Vienna. 1-877-WOLFTRAP.

ERIK MONGRAIN AND JIMMY ROBINSON. 8 p.m. At Jammin' Java, 227 Maple Ave. E., Vienna. 703-255-1566 or www.jamminjava.com.

Financial Planning for Separation and Divorce. 7 p.m. at Investment & Resource Planning, 16060 Arrowhead Drive, Suite 310, Fairfax. \$45 non-members, \$35 members. www.thewomenscenter.org or 703-281-2657.

MONDAY/AUG. 10
Vienna area 6th, 7th and 8th graders Celebrate National S'mores Day. 5 p.m. at Club Phoenix Teen Center, in the Vienna Community Center, 120 Cherry St., S.E., Vienna. Free. Learn about the history of S'mores and enjoy those marshmallow, graham cracker and chocolate taste treats. Club Phoenix features a big screen TV, VCR, jukebox, CD player, video games, pool and ping pong tables and food area. 703-255-6360 or www.viennava.gov.

Classic Rock to Motown with the Sunny Daze Band. 6:30 p.m. at the Vienna Town Green, 144 Maple Ave., E., Vienna. 6:30 p.m. Free. Bring a lawn chair or blanket for seating. 703-255-6360 or www.viennava.gov.

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.

Mid-Atlantic Band Battle Finals. 8 p.m. At Jammin' Java, 227 Maple Ave. E., Vienna. 703-255-1566 or www.jamminjava.com.

TUESDAY/AUG. 11
Life Line Screening, beginning at 9 a.m. at Andrew Chapel United Methodist Church, 1301 Trap Road, Vienna. Package costs from \$139. Call 1-877-237-1287 or www.lifelinescreening.com for appointments.

Hippiefest. 8 p.m. at the Filene Center. \$25-\$42. Wolf Trap Foundation for the Performing Arts, 1645 Trap Road, Vienna. 1-877-WOLFTRAP.

WEDNESDAY/AUG. 12
Multiple Sclerosis Support Group. 7 p.m. at the Vienna Presbyterian Church, 124 Park St., N.E., Vienna.

Girl Authority at 12 p.m.; **Gary Jules** at 7 p.m.; **Dreaming Of Eden, Aside Oceans, No Stars Over**

From Village Centre to International Stage

Having grown up taking dance locally, former Great Falls resident debuts at Wolf Trap.

BY MIKE DICICCO
THE CONNECTION

In what she described as "a very nice twist of fate," Jamie Scott, who grew up taking dance lessons in her hometown of Great Falls, made her debut as a professional dancer right next door at Wolf Trap last month.

After training as an understudy with the Merce Cunningham Dance Company for 2 1/2 years, she was contracted to become a full member in July, and the troupe's next show happened to be at Wolf Trap on July 14. "It's really an honor to be onstage with these dancers," she said, adding that she had been watching the other members perform and longing to join them.

ON SUNDAY, JULY 26, she and the rest of the 13-member company had just wrapped up a week of performances at the Jacob's Pillow Low Dance Festival when

She recalled Scott as "a lovely dancer, a lovely person and com-

Cunningham died at the age of 90. Shows at Rockefeller Park, not far from the company's studio in West Village, Manhattan, were still scheduled for last weekend.

Some of Scott's previous dance teachers attended the performance at Wolf Trap. "It was a real pleasure to see her performing onstage, and her dance style is unmistakable," said Theresa D'Alessandro, owner of the School of Theatrical Dance in Great Falls. "It was just breathtaking."

D'Alessandro taught Scott until she was about 9, but she said her former pupil had been a standout even when she was very young. "Jamie was a very focused student, and there was no doubt that if she wanted to do something with dance, she would," she said. "You'd like to think you could teach anyone to dance, but the truth is, there's something dancers are born with that's unmistakable and Jamie definitely had it." She said Scott had always possessed the strength, flexibility, grace and body type she would need as a dancer.

Margaret Haddad of the Great Falls-based Haddad Studio of Classical Ballet said she was one of many in attendance at the performance who were proud to have had a role in Scott's formative years.

She recalled Scott as "a lovely dancer, a lovely person and com-

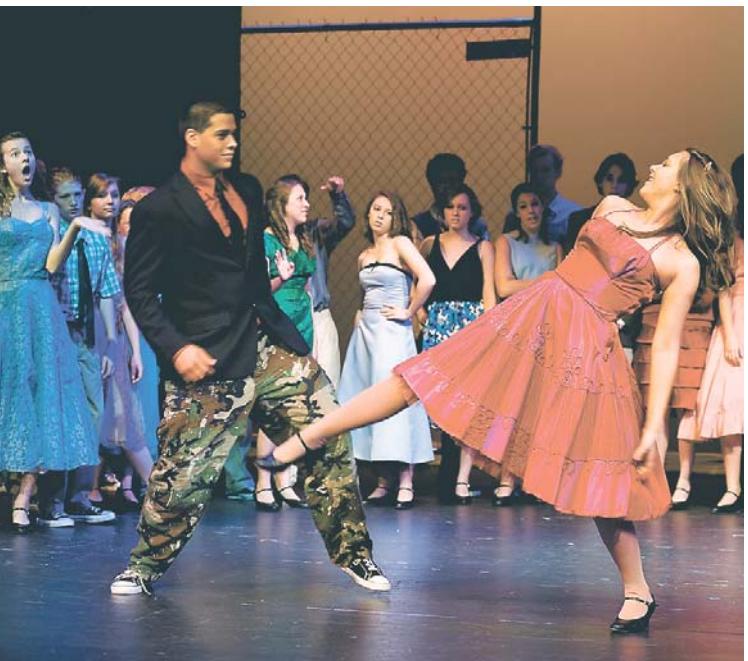
pany, followed by a high-profile world tour, a final performance in New York and the closure of the company.

designed to preserve Cunningham's work for future generations. However, according to the plan, Cunningham's death is to be

followed by a high-profile world tour, a final performance in New York and the closure of the company.

THE TROUPE was scheduled to perform in Chicago and Champaign, Ill. in October and then head off for a six-week tour of Europe. The company had just finalized a Legacy Plan in June,

Teens Visit the 'West Side'
Summer workshop production sells out Alden Theatre.



PHOTOS BY LISA HELFERT PHOTOGRAPHY

A group of 40 teen actors, ages 13 to 17, presented a production of "West Side Story" at McLean's Alden Theatre on July 15 and 16. Paul Goldberg of Great Falls played the role of Tony, and Haley Mueller of McLean played Maria. Riff was played by Alex Lichtenstein, Anita by Amy Welch and Bernardo by Kevin Weir.

The show was sold out on the night of Wednesday, July 15 and filled almost 300 seats the following afternoon.

The performances were the culmination of the Musical Theatre Workshop, a four-week program that included scene work, music direction and choreography, as well as additional workshops in auditioning, stage combat and Latin dance. The program is distinct in that it allows participants to act in a full-length production, rather than a few chosen scenes, and includes professional sets, lighting

and costuming.

Director Meg Baber heads the Musical Theatre Workshop, as

Wendy Mueller. This is the second production for Baber and company, with last year's production of "Children of Eden."

Goldberg and artistic director

Wendy Mueller. This is the second

production for Baber and company,

with last year's production of "Chil-

dren of Eden."

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 Call Specific Agents to Confirm Dates & Times. 

Great Falls (22066)

503 Arnon Lake Dr	\$1,225,000	Sun 1-4	Anne Dibenedetto	Mcnearney	703-615-1897
322 Greenhill St	\$1,274,000	Sun 1-3	Samantha Bendigo	Prudential Carruthers	703-628-2420

Falls Church (22043)

7437 Timberock Rd	\$450,000	Sat 2-5 & Sun 1-4	Eve Shapiro	Weichert	703-517-7511
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McLean (22101, 22102)

1173 Dolley Madison Blvd	\$100,000	8/23 1-3	William Fox	Fox Residential	410-484-8618
6304 Walden Woods Ct	\$1,460,000	Sun 1-4	Victoria Kilcullen	Washington Fine	703-915-8845
1527 Brookhaven Dr	\$1,649,000	Sun 1-4	Mark McFadden	Coldwell Banker	703-216-1333
7224 Van Ness Ct	\$785,000	Sun 1-4	Jane Price	Weichert	703-628-0470

Vienna (22180, 22181, 22182)

9486 Virginia Center Blvd #112	\$329,000	Sat 12-4	Ann Kane	Ko-Am Realty	571-225-8031
10006 Donal Ln	\$895,900	Sun 1-4	Karen Kealoha-Bray	Long & Foster	703-626-1433
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9941 Blake Ln	\$445,000	Sun 1-4	Donna Moseley	Prudential Carruthers	703-623-5294
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To add your FREE Realtor represented Open House to these weekly listings, please contact:

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

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

In McLean, Trisha, 703-917-6462, or thamilton@connectionnewspapers.com

All listings are due by Monday at 3 p.m.

NEWS

Language of Friendship

FROM PAGE 3

Similar to previous years, the group began its tour of Japan in Tokyo, then visited Kyoto, Miyajima Island and Hiroshima City before making its way to Fukuyama to meet families from the Eisugakkan School.

Cindy Taylor, a parent who had never been on the trip before, said the highlight of the trip for her was visiting the Hiroshima Peace Memorial. "To me, it was so interesting and touching to see how this city that had been so devastated by war had been completely rebuilt," she said, adding that the city, its parks and its memorial were "beautiful."

"The city is so devoted to promoting peace that they've become a worldwide emblem for peace," Taylor said.

She, too, said Miyajima Island was one of her favorite stops. There, the group visited ancient temples, climbed partway up Mount Misen and met wild monkeys and deer that were so used to people that they would approach tourists, hoping for food. "You can imagine the island looked that way for thousands of years," she said.

Corey said the temples were impressively large. "And most of them had a big statue in them surrounded by a bunch of cool stuff like torches," he said, adding that visitors could often light a candle in honor of someone who had died.

The families also went to a baseball game in Tokyo, where the Yakult Swallows played against the Yokohama Bay Stars. "The Japanese love baseball," Taylor said, noting that the crowd, which was divided according to the team it supported, was raucous, but only when their team was up to bat. Supporters of the team in the field were silent.

In a rare appearance, the crown prince and the royal family were in attendance at the game, much to the delight of the crowd, Taylor said. When the game was over, the teams lined up and everyone faced the crown prince, with no one leaving until the royal family had left, she said. "It was like everyone just knew what to do."

Daraius Unwalla, another parent on the trip, said he had been impressed that fans of the team up to bat cheered constantly until their team was out, singing chants and opening and closing transparent umbrellas for half of every inning. "Their baseball games are just like ours, but the crowd is, believe it or not, more into it than



PHOTO CONTRIBUTED

Great Falls Elementary students pose with kindergarten students from the Eisugakkan School, who gathered to greet them in Japan.

we are," he said.

His daughter Simone said cheerleaders had also been present at the game and that beef and noodle soup was served instead of hotdogs. Also in Tokyo, Simone and some others had visited the Harajuku commercial district, known for its over-the-top teen fashion scene. There, she said, "Everybody wears these weird outfits."

She said this trip was more fun than the one she took with her family when her sister graduated from elementary school because she knew more Japanese, was with her friends and didn't get lost on the subway this time.

"That was a panicked morning," said her father Darius Unwalla, of his daughter's subway disappearance three years ago.

Her mother, Kristen Runke, said members of the group went to Harajuku early in the morning and watched it go from a quiet street to a bustling scene full of "people walking around in Little Bo Peep outfits" in the course of half an hour. "It was cool watching the whole street transform," she said.

Darius Unwalla said he had especially enjoyed the group's time in the city of Kyoto, which the Allies did not bomb because of its historic value. On his previous trip to Japan, he said, the group had not spent enough time there. This time, they happened to be there during a summer festival that included floats, arcade games, a wide variety of food and other attractions. "We weren't tourists anymore. We were just part of the crowd," he said.

Taylor said the group's hosts, as well as the people they ran into, were remarkably friendly and accommodating. "The Japanese are so gracious and welcoming," she said. "We were so warmly embraced everywhere we went."

Hodge said the Eisugakkan

School had thrown "an enormous summer festival," including games, lessons in dance and food preparation, and traditional outfitts, in the school's gym to welcome their guests. "Visiting our sister school and having them go to such great efforts to make us feel welcome by putting on this summer festival was pretty overwhelming," she said. She noted that teachers and students from the school also had traveled to Tokyo to welcome the visitors when they arrived, and the former prime minister's wife had thrown a reception.

Taylor said the children had been well prepared to return the etiquette by Great Falls Elementary's Japanese immersion teacher Mamiya Worland, who taught them appropriate greetings and Japanese traditions like sleeping on tatami mats, attending public baths and using chopsticks. "I was really impressed with how at-ease the children were," she said. "They were really able to embrace the experience, I think, because they were prepared."

She said her son Andrew had not been nervous about leaving for a weekend with a family that spoke little English.

"They didn't speak a lot of English, so I tried to speak as much Japanese as I could," Andrew said. He said the family he stayed with had taken him to a shopping mall, an arcade, a barbecue and a paper plane museum. The museum, he said, "had really big planes."

Andrew said he had been thinking about dropping Japanese immersion classes the next year but decided after the trip to continue his study of the language.

In March, about 50 teens studying English at the Eisugakkan School will stay in Great Falls. Hodge said it was an unprecedented number.

FAITH

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

Northern Virginia Ethical Society presents "The Ethics of Harry Potter," Aug. 22 from 10 a.m.-1 p.m. at the Vienna Community Center, Vienna. Free. A copy of the curriculum, which covers ethical themes in all 7 Harry Potter books, is available for \$25 (individual) or \$50 (organization). For all ages; includes a discussion of ethical issues raised in the sixth book and movie. 703-876-9054 or ALAnderson@aya.yale.edu.

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

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

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

30 Years of Business

FROM PAGE 3

The last 30 years have not been challenge-free. The chairman said that "we've weathered downturns" in the market, including the 1980's recession, in which interest rates sharply increased. That event "had a chilling effect" on companies, Blattberg said. He added that a "severe downturn" occurred in 1990.

The recent economic troubles have presented problems of their own. Nevertheless, according to Blattberg, "We're beginning to . . . see signs of life in the market." The chairman is not sure how long the recovery will take, but says he is optimistic about the future of the economy.

As it looks back over 30 years, the company also has plans for the future. Blattberg would like for the business to become more efficient in the future, and says that company president Stacey Hoffman has assisted in that process. The chairman also stressed the need to remain accommodating to innovations in the construction industry.

"You can't get locked in the past," he said. "We have to be open to new ways of doing things."

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SPORTS

Swimmers Steal Spotlight at All Star Meet

New records set at end-of-season NVSL all stars meet.

By COLIN DAILEDA
THE CONNECTION

Spectators and coaches alike cheered wildly as 10-year-old Mattia Diop of McLean stepped up to the edge of the pool. He stared out at lane three through his airtight goggles, awaiting the start of the 50-meter breaststroke race. This was his event. He had been expected to win it all season. The problem was this was the Northern Virginia Swim League (NVSL) all-stars meet. Everyone he was racing against had been expected to win all season, too.

The buzzer sounded, and the competitors raced for the turn. Diop was no more than a nose ahead at the halfway point, the swimmer in lane four very much in the contest. With barely 10 meters to go, Diop glanced over. Was he still there? Right on his shoulder.

Diop poured it on for the finish. He slapped the wall, and immediately looked up at the time board. First place, he had done it. Diop leapt for joy, pumping his fist in the air.

The race may have been a close one, but tight competition has never scared Diop. He knows what he has to do to reach the wall first.

"I have to push harder," said Diop. "I like the competition. I always have."

Competition is something the NVSL has plenty of. Close to 600 athletes were vying for medals at the league's annual all-star meet on Saturday, Aug. 1, and it required a huge effort from both the league and host pool Broyhill Crest to make sure everything



Mattia Diop, 10, of McLean, middle, dives in during his 50-meter breaststroke race at this past weekend's NVSL All-Star meet.

ran smoothly.

"We give all our credit to the host pool first and foremost," said meet manager Jack Schaeffer. "They supply the majority of the manpower to put this meet on. They work tirelessly for months getting their pool ready."

The host pool's job is to prepare for the onslaught of swimmers and spectators. It is NVSL's job to select a good host, and make sure they know what goes into putting on such an event.

"You have to go through a process of actually applying to host a meet," said NVSL President Chris Loeser. "[Schaeffer] lets them know what kind of an effort it is and they go back to their board and say 'OK, are we willing to do this?'"

The league picked a winner this year.

"Broyhill Crest stood up to the task," said Schaeffer.

The host pool ran a smooth meet, helping the swimmers put on a show. The meet had it all, dominant individual perfor-

mances, close races and a few underdog stories.

When 12-year-old Connor Cason of Shouse Village stepped up to lane one for the 50-meter butterfly, he knew all too well about the boy two lanes to his left. Andrew Seliskar of McLean was the NVSL's fastest butterflier in the 11-12 year-old age group, and he was poised to prove that at the all-star meet.

Undeterred by Seliskar's reputation, Cason was in front through 25 meters.

"When I did my flip turn, I saw I was up front a little bit," said Cason, still grinning with excitement as he recounted the race. "I just took it home from there. I just had to [go] as fast as I could."

Cason kept up the speed from the first length, and let out a "Yes!" as soon as he hit the wall. It was the NVSL David over Goliath moment of the day.

But the Davids of the sports world rarely come out on top. Amanda Kendall, 18, went into the NVSL all-star meet already the



Swimmers practice their flip turns in advance of the NVSL All-Star meet held this past weekend.

PHOTOS BY COLIN DAILEDA/THE CONNECTION

owner of the league's 50-meter butterfly record. The Kings Ridge swimmer closed the day having set the bar even higher in the butterfly and captured the 50-meter freestyle record to boot.

"The freestyle was exciting because I broke a new record," said Kendall, whose last NVSL race was her record-setting butterfly swim. She also broke the 15-18 50-meter freestyle record that was previously held by Great Falls native and Yorktown graduate Katie Radloff. "I know this is my last NVSL meet ever so, got to go all out, you know? Leave everything in the pool, which I feel I've accomplished, so I'm happy."

Having set two records in the same meet, Kendall has much to be proud of. But so do the lesser-known swimmers, the ones in the first heat simply looking for a personal best time. Every athlete in attendance has had to wake up for practice during the week, and been up before the sun on Saturdays for meets. All those hours in the pool paid off by making it to the all-star event.

SPORTS BRIEFS

DCCL All-Stars

At the 2009 Dominion Country Club League All-Star meet, on July 25-26, Westwood Country Club's Matt Callahan, 17, led all swimmers by winning three gold medals and breaking two league records. Callahan broke the 15-18 boys' 50-meter breaststroke league record, which had stood since 1994. He also broke the league's 15-18 boys' 50-meter backstroke league record with a time of 27.66. Laura Kellan also won three gold medals while Audrey Kellan, Krissy O'Malley and Kayla O'Malley each won two gold medals for Westwood. Erin Callahan and Palmer Lloyd also took a gold medal. Westwood swimmers taking silver and/or bronze were: Natalie Brendsel, Monica Brendsel, Stephanie Brendsel, Tom Fenninger, Connor Barrand, Alex Baca, Zach Roeder and Alec Dolton. Other top six finalists were: Will Roeder, Peter Dolton, Jeremy Timblin, Grace Fisher, Victoria Tilson, Bohe Hosking, Andrew Baca, Allison Harwick, Nathan Paolozzi, Mallory Brodnik, Tristan Timblin, Molly Anspach, Ryan Stumvoll, Johnny Lockard and Craig

Strasbourger.

The Hidden Creek Hurricanes finished off the season with several outstanding swims at the DCCL all-star meet as well. Sierra Jeter and Tiger Barbee once again led the way with first-place finishes in each of their individual events. Jeter took first place in the 11-12-year-old girls' 50-meter freestyle, 50 butterfly, and 100 individual medley. Barbee won the 13-14 boys' 50 free, 50 backstroke and 100 IM. Hidden Creek was also represented in the finals by Warren Breiseth, Ben Barbee, Carolyn Barbee, Grace Nalepka, Regan Glembocki and Kelly Dore.

Runner-Up at AAU Tournament

The 15-under Nova Cavaliers, a McLean/Falls Church based AAU Basketball team representing the Potomac Valley Region, recently finished runner-up at the Division III AAU Basketball National Championship at Boo Williams Sports Complex in Hampton, Va. The team, coached by Jerry Lin and Dan Reagan, was comprised of players from local high schools: Sango Amolo, Daniel Lewis, Kevin



Westwood's Matt Callahan broke two DCCL records this past weekend.

SPORTS BREIFS

FROM PAGE 12

Lastova and Thomas Van Wazer from McLean; Tristan Evans from Langley; and Julio Matondo, JD Robinson and Sachin Gangele from Falls Church. Other players were Sean O'Rourke, Mike James and Eddie Kedda from Freedom South Riding High School.

The team finished pool play with a 3-0 record and earned the first seed in bracket play over Basketball Stars of America (Pittsburgh), Speed City Chargers (Woodside, Va.), and Aiken Warriors (South Carolina). The prelims featured a key win over the Aiken Warriors in the final game of pool play, where Thomas Van Wazer led the team with a 16-point, four-rebound performance.

In the semifinal round, the Cavs faced off against Team Venom from Virginia and held on for an emotional 42-38 win to advance to the National Championship game. All nine players scored in the victory.

In the championship game, the Cavaliers struggled early on against Kingdom Athletes from Greensboro, N.C. before losing, 59-49. Sango Amolo led the team by averaging 13 points per game in the tournament. Although the Cavaliers fell short of winning the national championship, they made the best run in the program's five-year history.

NOVA Senior Olympics

Registration for the 2009 Northern Vir-



COURTESY OF JERRY LIN

The Nova Stars recently took second place at the AAU National Championships.

ginia Senior Olympics is up 20 percent over last year at this time, according to Betsy Bailey, the event's registration chairman. More than 25 indoor and outdoor events are scheduled to take place Sept. 12-23 at various venues throughout Northern Virginia. The registration deadline is Aug. 28 and the registration fee has remained at \$10. For more information, call 703-228-4721 or check the Web site at www.novaseniorolympics.com.

SCHOOL NOTES

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

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.

Andrew Paulson of Great Falls has been named to the spring 2009 dean's list at the Westminster Choir College of Rider University, Princeton, N.J.

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Time For A Rant



By KENNETH B. LOURIE

Recently I read in The Washington Post Sports section of the death of Sue Burns, 58, part owner of The San Francisco Giants. (As much as I'm trying not to think about death, I do find myself spending a bit more time perusing the Obituary section, although Ms. Burns' mention was found in the sports section.) The description as to the cause of her death was fairly ordinary and typical, I would imagine, unless you're a current and/or former cancer patient and in my case, a writer with a different, perhaps unique, perspective.

It read "Sue Burns ... died of complications of cancer." My initial reaction was sadness: that a woman so young, presumably with so much to live for (a part owner of a professional baseball team) died at age 58. Then Kenny the writer, the one with cancer reacted: Died of complications from cancer! How else do you die from cancer? The way you're supposed to? How is that, exactly? I'd like to know. I sort of have an interest in the answer/outcome. Moreover, so far as my first seven months as a known cancer patient are considered, how does one not have complications from cancer? That's all cancer is, a series of complications. The complications are not separate and apart from the cancer, that is the cancer doing its cancerous thing. To say one died from complications of cancer is akin to asking Mrs. Lincoln how she liked the play, aside from the assassination that is.

Perhaps I'm too close to the reported cause of Ms. Burns' death, however, to be an objective reader. Perhaps I'm too sensitive to the situation: someone dying in their 50s from cancer. But maybe not. Maybe I've just become knowledgeable enough, after my own diagnosis, to notice when a buyer is not being aware or in this case, when a cause of death is being complicated unnecessarily.

As a salesman, one of the most time-honored and respected adages for success is to "k.i.s.s." – keep it simple, stupid. So too might that advice apply to a reported cause of death. Cancer, in and of itself, is a sufficient cause of death; it need not be expounded upon for any kind of effect or newsworthiness. "Cancer" kills, it doesn't require a further explanation.

I realize that the reporting of Ms. Burns' death, located in the sports section within a six-column-inch box with other items of the day rather than in the obituary section (where it also may have appeared, but I never got that far), was likely not intended to be anything more than a simple statement of the semi-facts. Nevertheless, it seemed to minimize cancer as enough of a cause of death.

For those of us fighting this dreaded disease, and for the millions who have preceded us, it's more than enough. Cancer may not be for the weak of heart, and if it was, it wouldn't be a complication, it would be one of cancer's insidious tentacles reaching out to inflict its unique brand of pain. Death comes to us all.

Unfortunately, for cancer patients, it may come a bit sooner. And if it does, it ain't from no stinkin' complication; it's from the cancer, the mother of all complications.

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

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