

# Springfield CONNECTION

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# Ready for School

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PHOTO BY MARIE FRENCH/THE CONNECTION



Volunteers record Kathy Benitez son's weight while her daughter looks on at Partnership for Healthier Kids' free physicals event on Aug. 8.

## Saving Souls, Saving Money

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## Local Church Finds New Way To Save

**St. Mark's Lutheran Church installs new geothermal heating and cooling system.**

BY JUSTIN FANIZZI  
THE CONNECTION

**W**hen the economy slows and belts are tightened, a logical solution is to get creative and find ways to beat the recession. With their backs against the wall, the folks at St. Mark's Lutheran Church did just that, and in turn, became trailblazers within the faith community.

Faced with the need for an entirely new heating and cooling system, but limited in options by the cost, St. Mark's turned to Shenandoah Sustainable Technologies (SST) to help with their energy issues. As a result, St. Mark's has found itself "going green" with the installation of a new geothermal heating and cooling system, the first such system at any church in Virginia.

"Our current system was 40-years-old, and it would have been half a million dollars to replace it with a traditional system," said Alice McRorie, project manager for the church. "So, we looked to a new system that is costing us our current utility bills and gives us a more efficient building."

According to Zach Fettig, president of SST



A plot of land directly behind the church is the site for the drilling.

and lifelong St. Mark's member, SST became involved when he heard that the church was in need of a new heating and cooling system. Specializing in sustainable energy, Fettig knew that installing a traditional system would be too much for the church's already-stretched budget. So, he submitted a proposal to the church on how his company could install an energy-efficient, state of the art system that not only works as effectively as a traditional system, but also is much less expensive. After a

couple of weeks of internal debate, the church decided to go ahead with SST's proposal and install the "green" system, which has been proven effective at sites like SST's "Freedom House," a retrofitted model home maintained and lived in by James Madison University students in Harrisonburg.

The geothermal heating and cooling model, which has existed for several years but has only recently becoming popular, leverages the earth's own energy to help heat and cool water at minimal cost. Ac-

**"We're not only helping the environment, but we're helping our people, too."**

— Alice McRorie, project manager, St. Mark's Lutheran Church

ording to Fettig, holes are drilled into the ground, and wells are built. Then, a water and antifreeze solution is pumped through the wells, where at a certain depth, the temperature remains constant at 59 degrees.

When warm or cool air is needed, the water temperature only needs to be changed by a central unit from 59 degrees, instead of a much more extreme temperature, thereby using less energy. The temperature-adjusted water is then brought to the building, where each room has its own control console.

"We knew that the church was in dire need of a replacement [system] but had limited options," Fettig said. "I couldn't just sit back and let the church pay what they were going to [for a traditional system]."

In addition to saving a great deal of money up front, with SST covering the cost of installation, the church also received an unintended benefit when construction began on May 11. While drilling the 375-foot holes for the wells, the sub-contractors discovered that the church was sitting on

SEE GEOTHERMAL, PAGE 5

## Seeking a Second Opinion on Fairfax County Budget

**Citizen Budget Committees to provide input on FY2011 budget for county supervisors.**

BY JUSTIN FANIZZI  
THE CONNECTION

**D**uring his campaign, Supervisor John Cook (R-Braddock) ran on a platform of civic engagement and community involvement. Several months later, he is taking another step toward that goal, as he followed the lead of fellow board members and created the Braddock District Citizen Budget Committee.

The committee, formed weeks ago, was created in an effort to leverage the expertise and experience of the district's citizens in order to provide valuable input to the board of supervisors on the budgetary issues facing the county in FY 2011.

"The committee will take advantage of the folks we have around here," said Chris Craig, chairman of the Citizen Budget Committee. "Not many counties across the country have the level of expertise and experience that we do here, in terms of volunteers."

Initially, Cook reached out to Craig, founder of Sparks & Craig, LLP and a long-time friend, to head the committee, with a directive for Craig to recruit the rest of the committee. Soon, nearly 30 people agreed to join the committee, including several business leaders, community activists and typical citizens who are accountants, contractors and lawyers among other professions. In addition, the committee will also be forming subcommittees that will be focusing on specific aspects of the budget so that an intensive analysis will occur.

The aspects that the committee will be tackling are issues that both Cook and the citizens on the committee have identified as significant for the formulation of next year's budget. According to Susan Data, director of the county's Department of Management and Budget, the county is already facing an estimated shortfall of \$92 million for the FY 2011 budget. Since much of the fat in the budget was cut to overcome last year's shortfall, any reductions would have

to be carefully vetted. So, Craig and the committee will start with analysis of the school system's budget, since the majority of the budget is allocated to the county's schools.

Cook has also identified the tumbling real estate assessments as an area of concern for the upcoming fiscal year. Cook said that assessments are predicted to fall 18 percent,

**"Not many counties across the country have the level of expertise and experience that we do here."**

— Chris Craig, chairman, Braddock District Citizen Budget Committee

and as a result, less tax money will be coming from homes and businesses. So, Cook will also look to the committee to find ways to reduce spending to compensate for decreased county revenues.

"Hopefully, the committee will come up with some ideas that are different from what the prevailing ideas may be," Cook said. "They'll take an independent look at county government and see what they can recommend."

The value of Citizen Budget Committees

has already been realized in other districts, as Supervisor Jeff McKay's (D-Lee) has shown. McKay handpicked his committee last year to review the FY 2010 budget, and it ended up meeting every other Saturday for four hours for nine months. According to McKay, since the budget is such an expansive issue, it only helped to have citizens with prior expertise provide additional

in-depth analysis and input.

"[Citizen Budget Committees] are absolutely vital," McKay said. Some of the issues they found in the budget were valuable in finding savings. The budget is so enormous, sometimes we lose sight of the things that affect the everyday citizen."

Since the Braddock committee's inception, it has already met twice.

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## Kingstowne House Fire

A house fire in Kingstowne displaced a family of five Thursday, Aug. 6.

According to the Fairfax Fire and Rescue Department, units responded to a house fire at 5703 Shropshire Court at approximately 8:40 a.m. Firefighters encountered heavy smoke coming from the second floor of the single-family, two-story home upon arrival. Firefighters set up several hose lines and quickly extinguished the fire in the upstairs bedroom.

During their search of the home, firefighters came upon more than 30 non-poisonous snakes and other reptiles in the home. Several of the snakes perished in the fire.

All of the occupants escaped unharmed. The two adults and three children were displaced and are receiving assistance from the Red Cross. Police Department Animal Control officers assisted firefighters and the homeowner with the reptiles. According to investigators, the fire, which caused an estimated \$90,000 of damage, was accidental, caused by an extension cord.

## Maryland Police Charge Local with Soliciting Minor

A Springfield man was charged with soliciting a minor after he allegedly had sex with a 14-year-old girl he met online.

According to the Fairfax County Police Department, the victim and the 23-year-old suspect met online and after conversing online for a week, agreed to meet in person. On Tuesday, July 28, at approximately 2 a.m., the suspect allegedly picked the girl up from her home in Montgomery County, Md. and drove her to his residence in Springfield, where they reportedly engaged in sexual acts. The victim's mother woke up to find her daughter missing and phoned local police to report it.

"They had known each other for about a week," said police spokesman Officer Tawny Wright. "I can say with certainty that law enforcement was not aware of the relationship until that day, but we're not sure if the mother knew."

Several hours later, the suspect allegedly returned the victim to her home, whereupon Montgomery County Police notified the Fairfax County Police Department and Fairfax County detectives took over the investigation. On Wednesday, Aug. 5, the suspect, Stephann Kamau of Luce Court, was arrested and charged with carnal knowledge of a child between 13 and 15-years-old and use of a communication device to solicit a minor. He was additionally charged with failure to appear in court for an unrelated offense.

Detectives ask anyone who may have had similar contact with Kamau to report it to the police. Anyone with information is asked to contact Crime Solvers by phone at 1-866-411-TIPS/8477, e-mail at [www.fairfaxcrimesolvers.org](mailto:www.fairfaxcrimesolvers.org) or text "TIP187" plus your message to CRIMES/274637 or call Fairfax County Police at 703-691-2131.

## Break for Caregivers

Grandparents, aunts, uncles and other relatives raising a child for another family member can drop off the children at the Mott Community Center in Fairfax, Saturday, Aug. 15, from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m., to play and learn with water activities. There'll be free activities for children, 3-12, who are Fairfax County residents, and lunch and snacks will be provided. Pre-registration is required at 703-324-3517; TTY 703-222-9693. The community center is at 12111 Braddock Road, just off the Fairfax County Parkway. This service is offered via Kinship Care, a joint project between the county's Department of Family Services and Fairfax County Public Schools.

Partnership for Healthier Kids offers free school physicals Saturday, Aug. 15, 8 a.m.-12 p.m., at Springfield Health Center, 8136 Old Keene Mill Road, Springfield. To make an appointment, call 703-698-2550.

# Prescription for Success

## Partnership for Healthier Kids provides free school physicals.

BY MARIE FRENCH  
THE CONNECTION

**K**athy Benitez cajoled her 2 year-old son to focus his gaze on the paper towel dispenser. "Look, they're washing their hands," said Benitez, as the physician examined each of her son's eyes. Tapping on the pictures, which detailed the proper way to wash hands, the mother of two kept his attention away from the light shining in his eyes.

The physical performed by the pediatrician was just part of the comprehensive checkup Benitez's two children received Saturday, Aug. 8, during the Partnership for Healthier Kids (PHK) at the South County Health Center. Another session will take place Saturday, Aug. 15, 8 a.m.-12 p.m., at Springfield Health Center, 8136 Old Keene Mill Road, Springfield. To make an appointment, call 703-698-2550.

Virginia law requires proof of a recent physical examination and recent immunizations for diphtheria, tetanus, whooping cough, polio, measles, mumps and rubella before a child can enroll in school. This can be difficult for parents to provide if their child is uninsured.

PHK has been offering free school physicals to uninsured children for seven years. With the help of more than 100 volunteers, the entire second floor of the Health Center located on Richmond Highway was committed to this event on Saturday.

"It's specifically for uninsured kids who are entering school for the first time," said Jill Christensen, program manager of PHK. Whether they are starting kindergarten or the Head Start program, or they just moved to the area with their families, children up to sixth grade are welcome.

The volunteers enjoyed interacting with the children. Pfc. Brandon Jumonville was one of four Marines who came from Fort Belvoir to help out. "I have two kids at home, so it's good to be around the kids," said Jumonville.

"They're cute. It's nice seeing them come in," said Sharon Jackson, a first-year volunteer. "It's a very nice experience. I enjoy being out here."

Everyone involved tried hard to put the young children at ease, whether it meant chatting with them or letting them skip stations that made them nervous and then having them come back later. "We have a lot of repeat volunteers who come every year to donate their time," said Christensen.

The event is promoted primarily through the schools, as well as online and through other community resources. Benitez, who had lived in Virginia before, knew her children might need some immunizations. "I looked online and made some phone calls," said Benitez. "They told me about this."

Although appointments are much preferred, the event does take walk-ins. First, the families must fill



PHOTO BY MARIE FRENCH/THE CONNECTION

**Kathy Benitez brought her two children to the Aug. 8 Partnership for Healthier Kids event so that they could get a physical.**

out some paperwork. Then they are assigned a volunteer escort to guide them through the vision screening, hearing test and height and weight measurements. After those are done, the parents speak to Christensen and her staff from PHK.

"The goal is, first to get them their physical so they can start school and second, to get the kids enrolled in a primary medical program," said Christensen.

If the children are eligible, PHK tries to get them enrolled in Medicaid or the State Children's Health Insurance Program (SCHIP). If they are not eligible for those programs, Christensen and her staff link them up with other resources in the community.

"Our success rate for days like these when we see the families in person is really high," said Christensen. "It depends on every event. If the families come today with the documentation, which is what we request of them, then we can usually get them enrolled."

Benitez, who moved to the area from Texas less than two weeks ago, brought the documents she was asked to bring when she made her appointment. "They actually have got it started," said Benitez. "They did everything."

The idea to offer free school physicals originated in Springfield, where nine years ago a group of churches saw that a need for them existed in the community. The churches were St. Christopher's Episcopal, St. Bernadette Catholic, Messiah United Methodist, Prince of Peace Lutheran, St. Mark's Lutheran and Westwood Baptist.

Lynn Knox of St. Christopher's Episcopal has lived in Springfield for 35 years and has been involved since the beginning of the program.

The churches gather the school supplies for the children, and Knox organizes it. "You should see the room at St. Christopher's that's just loaded with school supplies," said Knox. "There are seven churches that provide backpacks and school supplies or funds for me to run around and buy them."

The free school physicals are offered in Falls Church, Mount Vernon, Springfield and in two locations in Prince William County. While other physicals are

SEE PHYSICALS, PAGE 4

# Geothermal Heating and Cooling

FROM PAGE 3

400 feet of granite, which according to Fettig, is a fantastic energy conductor. As a result, costs became even lower, as less energy would be needed to maintain the water temperature underground.

"We knew this was the right thing to do, not just for economics, but to care for Creation," said Senior Pastor Michael Taylor.

"And Mother Earth gave us a surprise gift. We wound up 'sitting on the rock.' [It was] 400-foot deep granite."

For approximately 20 years, the church will make its energy payments, which will be the same as its existing utility bill, to SST, which will officially own the system until the final payment is made. In the meantime, SST will recoup its installation outlay by the profits it makes on the energy bill.

McRorie said that even though the church is paying the same amount of money per month, it saves money by not having to come up with the capital to buy and install a new traditional system, and then once the 20 years are over, it will save even more because the bill will be dramatically less.

"We're not only helping the environment, but we're helping our people, too," McRorie said. "This was definitely the way to go."

## MILITARY NOTES

**Navy Petty Officer 3rd Class Felix A. Sankersingh**, son of Deborah F. Edwards of Springfield, was recently designated a Seabee combat warfare specialist with Naval Mobile Construction Battalion Five, Port Hueneme, Calif. Sankersingh is a 2002 graduate of Lake Braddock Secondary School and joined the Navy in January 2007.

**Navy Seaman Apprentice Ciara D. Johnson**, a 2007 graduate of Hayfield Secondary School, recently completed U.S. Navy basic training and was meritoriously promoted to her current rank at Recruit Training Command, Great Lakes, Ill.

## Physicals

FROM PAGE 4

organized by various groups, "Ours is very definitely church supported," said Knox.

Knox enjoys the events and is pleased at the way the idea has spread. She especially enjoys the appreciation and the behavior of the children. "When they come to us they are polite, appreciative and their parents are delighted," said Knox.

Last Saturday, most of the forms were filled out for her, and Benitez was well on her way to having both of her children receive health insurance. "It's better than having to make an appointment and do it all myself," said Benitez.

After meeting with the people from PHK, families proceeded to the physical examination and from there to wait for immunizations. Children also receive a backpack filled with school supplies and a helmet.

Over the past few years, PHK has given nearly 2,000 free school physicals to the uninsured with the help of the Fairfax County Health Department.

Charles Yehob brought his four boys to Saturday's event. The volunteers helped to keep his group together as they traveled to the different stations. "It's good for me that there is somebody to help," said Yehob. "I appreciate it."



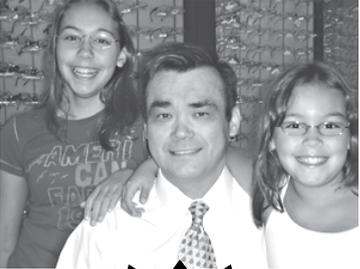
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# OPINION

## Seeking More Facts from Police

Candidates for Attorney General, General Assembly should encourage more openness from police.

In Virginia, police are entitled to withhold virtually all information from the public. Broad exemptions for police in the state laws pertaining to freedom of information requests leave it to the police themselves to decide what information from police reports of incidents and arrest can and cannot be released. The result is that the public has virtually no access to actual police reports.

Jody Donaldson, spokesman for the Alexandria Police Department, sums up succinctly: "We have a blanket policy to use the exemption in all cases."

This does not serve the public good.

IN MOST states, the public and the press can

access the actual reports filed by the police on the scene of an incident, with narrow exceptions — to protect the names of victims of sexual assault or undercover officers, for example.

In Virginia, the public, the press and even defendants facing charges based on those reports have no rights to see the actual reports. Instead they can request a "summary" of the report. There are few requirements or standards for providing information in these summaries. The summary of the suppressed document, known as "criminal incident information," includes a "general description" of the criminal activity, the "general location" and "general description" of the

### More

Read Michael Lee Pope's story on suppression of police reports at [www.ConnectionNewspapers.com](http://www.ConnectionNewspapers.com)

injuries.

There is no reason for this level of secrecy and obfuscation. Law enforcement agencies that serve the public would be well advised to be open with the public and the press, providing direct access to police reports and documents unless there is a specific compelling reason to redact some information to protect a victim, witness or law enforcement officer. No one would argue to release documents that might endanger someone.

"The exemption for police reports is overly broad, and it should be narrowed," Ginger Stanley, executive director of the Virginia Press Association told Connection reporter Michael Lee Pope. "But police and sheriff associations have very powerful lobbyists, and they do not want this to change," Stanley added.

— MARY KIMM

[MKIMM@CONNECTIONNEWSPAPERS.COM](mailto:MKIMM@CONNECTIONNEWSPAPERS.COM)

## Governor Leads in Difficult Times

Virginia ahead of national economic curve.

BY DEL. MARK SICKLES  
D-43

Everywhere in America, state and local governments are scrambling to maintain balanced budgets in the face of the faltering economy and shrinking revenues. California just began issuing IOUs to the state's vendors. Other states are drastically cutting funding for special education, Medicaid and other critical services. In the worst budget crisis since the Great Depression, Virginia has managed to stay well ahead of the national curve thanks to the leadership and sound management of Gov. Tim Kaine (D) and his administration.

Revenues to state and local government vary widely in tandem with the business cycle. Unlike our federal cousins, however, our budget must be balanced. The 2009 version has been even more challenging than in 2004, when Gov. Mark Warner (D) led the effort to save our triple A bond rating and plug a structural shortfall in the budget caused the economy and an expensive, new \$1 billion program to pay 70 percent of everyone's local property tax on automobiles. In both cases, the governor was forced to make difficult decisions about how to meet a revenue shortfall while continuing to provide essential government services. Like Gov. Warner in 2004, Gov. Kaine rose to the challenge and continues to lead in a way that is keeping Virginia far ahead of other states in these challenging times.

Leading by example, Gov. Kaine volun-

tarily offered to take a 5 percent pay cut and reduce his staff and office budget by \$1.4 million. He set realistic expectations for our revenues and did not promise more than he could deliver as the free lunch crowd often attempts to do (e.g., see VDOT's year 2000, or 2001, six-year program). The governor and his staff worked to bring people together, integrate the federal stimulus money and pass a budget that maintains important investments in education, health care, and job training without raising taxes.

In 2004 and 2009, Govs. Warner and Kaine demonstrated the type of results-oriented leadership that has resulted in Virginia being named the best state for business, the best managed state and the best state in which to raise a child. While the people of our Commonwealth are still struggling in the midst of this recession, Virginia is positioned well to weather the storm and continue moving forward.

One key component of a healthy state economy is the governor's ability to attract new business to the state. Gov. Kaine has been a true ambassador for the our economy, using incentives from the Governor's Opportunity Fund to negotiate for the relocation of major companies and to create jobs in the Commonwealth. Over the past couple of years, for example, he has helped bring Audi/Volkswagen North America and Hilton Hotels to Fairfax County. He has led efforts downstate to bring Rolls Royce, Canon and SRA to Virginia. These investments create jobs and generate the revenue we need to pay for K-12 education, higher

education, a health care safety net, and public safety while keeping our budget balanced.

As we near another statewide election and voters prepare to choose Gov. Kaine's successor, Virginia Republicans have sharpened their attacks and increased their frequency. But voters should remember eight years of fiscal sanity and practical governing that was put in place beginning in January 2002. It can be measured against the House rejection of \$125 million in Virginia's federal recovery funds intended to help struggling Virginians provide for their families while they look for similar new work, or train for a 21st century job.

**GOV. Kaine** has also fought hard for Virginia's fair share of the federal recovery plan. His leadership has helped fund hundreds of projects that create jobs across the Commonwealth — including all four of the needed interchanges at the missing link of the Fairfax County Parkway in South Fairfax, the desperately needed grade separated access ramps at Fair Lakes Parkway at the Fairfax County Parkway, the Route 28 road and rail separation in Manassas and the replacement of the decrepit bridge on Route 50 in Arlington County at Courthouse Road. By scraping together scarce funds from several sources, his administration will soon begin widening Route 50 in Western Fairfax and Loudoun County.

Gov. Kaine's steadfast leadership will leave our next governor in better fiscal condition than will be found in most every other state next January.

## THE CONNECTION

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# County Budget Input

FROM PAGE 3

According to Craig, the first meeting was an orientation of sorts, with Cook providing words of encouragement and taking questions from the citizens. At the second meeting, Data was brought in to give a presentation on how the budget process works, how the budget has evolved since 2000 and gave a forecast for FY 2011. Additionally, she took myriad questions from the committee and also provided a plethora of documents containing all information relevant to the budget process.

**CRAIG SAID** that the Braddock committee's next meeting is Aug. 19. School Board Vice Chairman Tessie Wilson (Braddock) will be in attendance to provide information on the School Board's budget and that the committee hopes to bring other county officials into future meetings, as well. In the meantime, however, the subcommittees will work to provide at least preliminary recommendations to Cook by December.

McKay said that the Lee District committee is currently on a break after devoting so much time and energy to the FY 2010 budget last year. However, McKay said that he expects to reconvene the committee next month so that it can start devising ways that could help the county cut into the projected FY 2011 shortfall.

Both Cook and McKay have expressed an interest in maintaining their district's citizen budget committee at least for the next few years, or until economic conditions improve. Utilizing the public's expertise, they said, will always prove invaluable in dissecting any important issue facing the county.

"No single supervisor can solve all aspects or find the inherent deficiencies in the budget," McKay said. "It shows that we have sophisticated and educated citizens in this county and not involving them would be a tremendous waste."

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# GI Bill Puts College in Veterans' Reach

Obama appears at Fairfax university to roll out new veterans benefits package.

BY JULIA O'DONOGHUE  
THE CONNECTION

**H**aving grown up in the area, Jacobo Flores returned to Northern Virginia after serving four years of active duty in the U.S. Marine Corps.

While on active duty, he earned an associate's degree through a community college extension site at one of his military bases. Now Flores wants to get an undergraduate degree in civil engineering, so he enrolled at George Mason University in Fairfax.

The process of getting his college diploma has been slow going. Flores, already older than your typical college student, has not been able to take a full course load at Mason because he also has to work full time to support himself.

In recent years, service members and veterans have received some financial assistance if they decided to go back to school. But the extra help is usually not enough to cover the cost of both tuition and student living expenses. Like Flores, most end up working full time while taking classes.

"We are working to make ends meet," said Flores, who lives in Fairfax and has been working for a federal contractor during the day.

**BUT AUGUST** brought big changes to Flores and other people who recently served in the U.S. Armed Forces.

The Post-9/11 GI Bill took effect this month and the legislation dramatically increases the educational benefits extended to members of the military who have served at least three months of active duty since Sept. 11, 2001.

The federal law guarantees that most current members of military and veterans from the post-9/11 era can attend any in-state university or college for free.

Those who want to attend a private undergraduate program or graduate school will receive an amount of money equal to that of the most expensive public undergraduate program in the state where their private school is located.

A few private schools and graduate programs have also entered into a special partnership with the Veterans Administration and will provide additional funds to help cover more of their higher tuition costs.

Those who qualify for the new GI benefits also receive a housing allowance, which varies depending on the location of the university and the number of dependents the person has. In some cases, these educational benefits can be transferred to

spouses or children of military personnel.

"This is huge. It is going to make a tremendous difference. ... I am going to be able to quit my job and go to school full time," said Flores, who expects to earn his degree over the next two years if he can take a full schedule of classes.

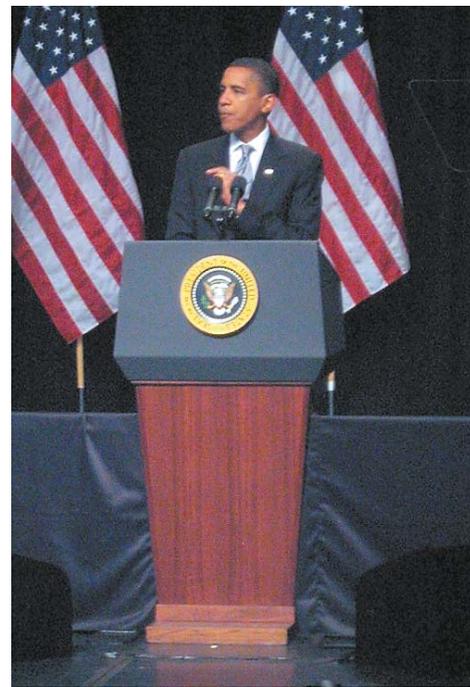
Under the new GI Bill, many veterans enrolled at Mason will receive over \$1,000 more every month for expenses, said Joshua Lawton-Belous, a Vienna native who served as a medic in Iraq.

For example, Lawton-Belous, a Mason senior, said he received \$1,400 monthly to help cover both his tuition and living expenses during previous semesters.

But with the new GI Bill, Lawton-Belous no longer has to worry about covering tu-

**"I think a lot more people will be looking at school as an option."**

— Jacobo Flores,  
GMU Student Veteran

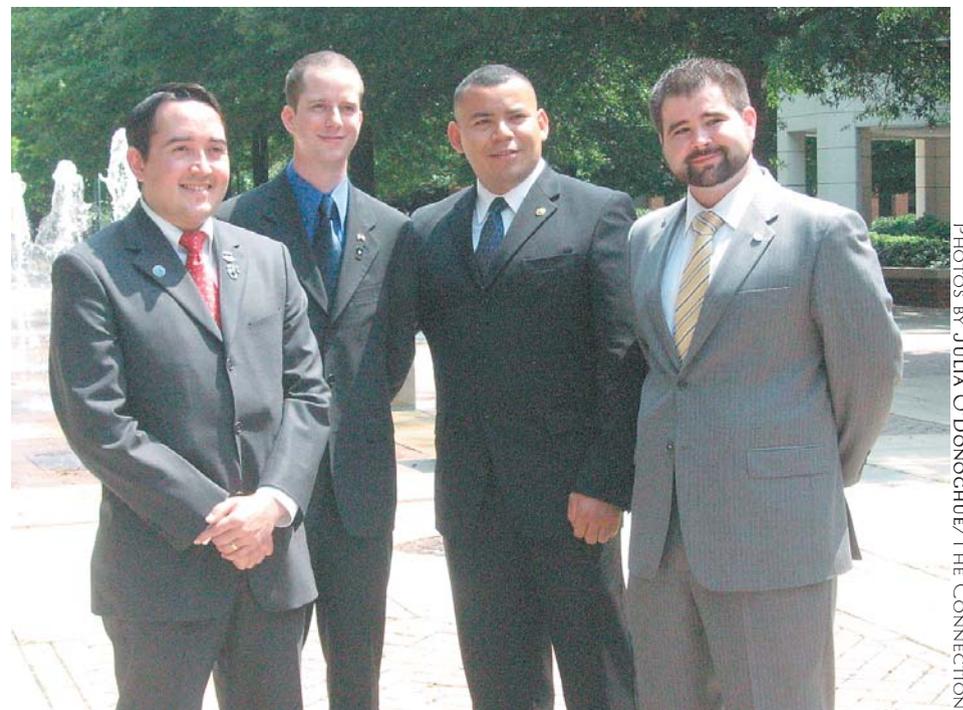


**President Barack Obama and Vice-president Joe Biden celebrated the enactment of the Post-9/11 GI Bill at George Mason University Aug. 3**

ition costs at all. He will also get \$1,000 each semester for textbooks and about \$1,900 monthly to cover housing and other living expenses.

"A lot of veterans are well aware of the differences between the old GI Bill and the new GI Bill. Some have been putting off school until now because they knew it was coming," said Lawton-Belous, who leads the university's Student Veterans Association.

**VIRGINIA'S VETERANS** have their own representatives to thank for the new benefits.



PHOTOS BY JULIA O'DONOGHUE/THE CONNECTION

**Jonathan Zapien, James Martin, Jacobo Flores and Joshua Lawton-Belous are among the several hundred students at George Mason University who could reap the benefits of a new Post-9/11 GI Bill, which covers the cost of an undergraduate degree for many veterans and active members of the military.**

The new GI Bill was the first piece of legislation U.S. Sen. Jim Webb (D-Va.) introduced after he was sworn into office in 2006. One of Webb's top priorities, the GI Bill finally passed in 2008.

"This became law because of Jim Webb's leadership. Period," said former U.S. Sen. John Warner (R-Va.), during the formal unveiling of the new GI Bill on Mason's campus Aug. 3.

Webb, in turn, said Warner was a key political ally when it came to getting the benefits package through the Senate. As senior Virginia senator and former chairman of

the Armed Services Committee, Warner's persuaded several colleagues, including several key Republicans, to support the new GI Bill, said Webb.

President Barack Obama, who spoke at the Mason ceremony, was also one of the post 9/11 GI Bill's co-sponsors when he was a U.S. senator. In his speech at the event, Obama likened the benefits package to the one given to veterans following World War II.

"[The World War II] GI Bill was the backbone of the largest middle class in history. ... It meant going to college was no longer a novelty," said Obama, who added his own grandfather used the GI Bill to get his undergraduate degree.

Warner, a World War II veteran, also took advantage of the GI Bill.

"When I joined the Navy, I hadn't finished high school. ... The GI Bill gave me an engineering degree. I would not be standing here today if it weren't for the GI Bill," he said.

**"I would not be standing here today if it weren't for the GI Bill."**

— U.S. Sen. John Warner (R-Va.)

Webb graduated from the U.S. Naval Academy, and is a Vietnam veteran. The senator made his opposition to the Iraq War a centerpiece of his campaign four years ago. During the campaign, Webb wore the combat boots of his son Jimmy, a marine who served in Iraq.

Lawton-Belous said veterans on Mason's campus are grateful for the work Webb and Warner did to expand their education benefits.

"It is just not that often that two politicians who represent you do something that has such a huge impact on your life," he said.

**VIRGINIA RESIDENTS** are likely to benefit disproportionately from the Post 9/11 GI Bill.

According to the 2007 U.S. Census, about 13.4 percent of the commonwealth's adults are veterans, the fourth highest percentage of any state nationwide. By comparison, only about 10.4 percent of American adults are veterans.

Not only are there more people with military connections in Virginia but the commonwealth's veteran population is more likely to have been active duty since September 2001 than those in other states, according to the U.S. Census.

While only 7.2 percent of American veterans were on active duty during the last eight years, about 15 percent of Virginia

# CALENDAR

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

## FRIDAY/AUG. 14

**The United States Navy Band.** 7:30 p.m. Lake Accotink Park, 7500 Accotink Park Road, Springfield. 703-324-SHOW.

**Kingstowne Farmers Market.** 4-7 p.m. at Kingstowne Town Center behind the Sunoco Gas Station.

**JAXX 15th Anniversary!** 9 p.m. at Jaxx Nightclub, 6355 Rolling Road, West Springfield. TBA, 94' Mentality, Frayz, Sensylla, Zoe, TBA. \$10 in advance, \$12 day of show. 703-569-5940 or jaxxroxx.com.

### Evening at the Pond: Local

**Reptiles.** Children 3 and older will see local reptiles up close from 7:30-9 p.m., at Hidden Pond Nature Center, 8511 Greeley Blvd., Springfield. A walk in search of these cold-blooded creatures will follow. \$5 per person. Call 703-451-9588 to reserve.

## SATURDAY/AUG. 15

**JAXX 15th Anniversary.** 9:30 p.m. at Jaxx Nightclub, 6355 Rolling Road, West Springfield. TBA, Switch56,

Division, TBA. 21+. \$10 in advance, \$12 day of show. 703-569-5940 or jaxxroxx.com.

**Kinship Respite Day.** 10 a.m.-3 p.m., at the Gum Springs Community Center, 8100 Fordson Road, Alexandria and the Mott Community Center, 12111 Braddock Road, Fairfax. A chance for grandparents (and other relatives) who are raising a child for another family member to enjoy a rare day off while providing a fun day for the children. The children will enjoy planned water activities with the theme, "A Day of Backyard Water Play - Let the Learning Flow." Children ages 3-12, who are residents of Fairfax County or the cities of Fairfax or Falls Church, can participate in the free program. Registration is required by Monday, Aug. 10. Lunch and snacks will be provided. 703-324-3517, TTY 703-449-1186. For reasonable ADA accommodations, 703-324-7723, TTY 703-222-9452.

**Video: Butterflies.** View a free video on the world of the "flying flowers" of the insect world, butterflies, 10-10:30 a.m., at Huntley Meadows Park & Visitor Center, 3701 Lockheed Blvd., Alexandria. 703-768-2525.

**Nature Night Hike.** Hikers 7 and older will learn the nocturnal activities of the residents in the surrounding woods at Lake Accotink

Park from 8:30-10 p.m. Meet at the Visitors Center, 7500 Accotink Park Road, Springfield. Bring a flashlight. \$5 per adult and \$3 per child under 16. To make prepaid reservation, call 703-569-0285.

**Nature in Your Hands.** 12-3 p.m. Stop by the marina deck at Fountainhead Regional Park for a live animal display. Learn about the habits of some of our smaller native wildlife. A naturalist will have live snakes, turtles, frogs and maybe even more. Fountainhead Regional Park is located at 10875 Hampton Road, Fairfax Station. 703-250-9124. Free.

**Explore the Night.** 8-9:30 p.m., at Fountainhead Regional Park, 10875 Hampton Road, Fairfax Station. Join us at Fountainhead for an exploration into the night life of the park. Learn about local nocturnal animals through a short talk and hike onto the trails at Fountainhead. Bring good walking shoes and water. Reservations required. Call 703-250-9124. Free.

**Exercise Paddle Adventure.** 4:30 p.m.-sunset at Pohick Bay Regional Park, 6501 Pohick Bay Drive, Lorton. Paddle trip with interval training and endurance. General good health required. Must be 18 or older. Kayak experience necessary. Call 703-339-

SEE CALENDAR, PAGE 11

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PHOTO COURTESY OF BOB WAHL

In the fifth inning of the Saturday, Aug. 8 Under Armour All-America Baseball Game, West Springfield pitcher Bobby Wahl allowed one hit and recorded a strikeout.

# One More Wahl in Wrigley

West Springfield pitcher Bobby Wahl travels to Chicago for showcase baseball game.

BY JASON MACKEY  
THE CONNECTION

**B**obby Wahl traveled approximately 1,400 miles by plane over the course of four days to produce three stats: one inning pitched, one hit and one strikeout. That's how Wahl's pitching line would've read had it been announced by the game's official scorer in Wrigley Field's press box.

But even though Wahl's statistical contributions to the Under-Armour All-America Baseball Game on Saturday, Aug. 8 were minimal, the memories from a weekend spent rubbing elbows with Cal Ripken Jr. and Ernie Banks, as well as pitching in one of Major League Baseball's most historic ballparks will last a lifetime.

"It was one of those things that didn't seem real at the time," said the right-handed Wahl, a rising senior at West Springfield who allowed a hit to the first batter he faced, which he erased with a double play before striking out the third hitter of the fifth inning.

Wahl was one of 36 players selected to participate in the game, which pitted Team One against Baseball Factory, and he was the only one from Maryland, Washington D.C. or Virginia. It's the second year for the game, which took place at Wrigley last summer as well.

About a month ago, Wahl fielded a call

from Steve Bernhardt, the executive vice president of baseball operations for Baseball Factory, a recruiting resource of sorts that combines instruction, tournament competition and college planning and placement.

And when Bernhardt asked Wahl to participate, it didn't take very long to produce an answer.

"[Bernhardt] gave me a call and asked if I wanted to participate in this and it was a sure yes, right away," Wahl said.

Besides pitching, Wahl excelled this season as a hitter at West Springfield, producing a .380 batting average with seven home runs and 29 RBIs for the reigning Patriot District and Northern Region champions. But, it's on the mound where Wahl has been most effective. In 62 innings this spring, Wahl recorded 101 strikeouts and had an ERA of 1.59.

His pitching has also been one of the primary reasons why Wahl has already committed to play baseball in the spring of 2011 at the University of Mississippi, joining Matt and Mike Snyder of Westfield. But for the time being, Wahl relished the chance to meet his childhood hero and experience something like pitching at Wrigley.

After arriving on Thursday around 12:30 p.m., Wahl checked into the team hotel. There, the players had an entire, over-sized room to themselves, and they spent the next few hours getting acquainted with one other

through ping-pong and video games.

A tour of Wrigley followed later that afternoon, with visits to the clubhouses included. For dinner, the players ate at the stadium and met Ripken to receive their game jerseys.

"He's always been my favorite player," said Wahl of Ripken, who set the record for consecutive games played when he played in his 2,131th straight game on Sept. 6, 1995. "It was real cool because I had never had a chance to meet him, and finally I was able to meet him and talk to him."

The next day, Wahl worked out with his teammates at Wrigley and received "everything you could ever want" in the way of Under-Armour practice gear. After lunch, there was supposed to be a home-run derby qualifying round but that was rained out, and the players finished off the evening by attending that evening's Chicago White Sox/Cleveland Indians game at U.S. Cellular Field.

On Saturday, Wahl lived the life of a big leaguer. He had breakfast at the ballpark. He took batting practice and some infield. He ate lunch at the ballpark. Following the home run derby, the game started and Wahl waited his turn in the bullpen, making small talk with some of the top pitchers from around the country.

"It was a great honor," said Wahl, who's one inning of work lasted less than 10 minutes. "Being [one of the] top 36 in the nation, it was something that I was extremely happy to be able to do. Being able to represent Virginia and the class of 2010, it was crazy. It was a great experience."

## WEEK IN SPORTS

### Academically Inclined

Kari Morrison is the career and season leader for ground balls as a women's lacrosse player at Virginia Tech, with 166 over a three-year career after transferring from Colgate and 65 during the 2008 season. She also ranks second in career saves (574) and third for saves in a season (207). But on Tuesday, Aug. 4, Morrison did something else remarkable as a Hokie when she made the All-Atlantic Coast Conference Women's Lacrosse Academic Team for the third straight time. A Bishop Ireton graduate and Springfield native, Morrison recently earned her degree in nutrition and exercise. Morrison, a goalkeeper, recorded 189 saves this past season with a save percentage of .467.

### Linza to Hayfield

On Thursday, July 30, Hayfield hired Jimmy Linza to succeed Scott Broyles as the head coach of its baseball program. Most recently, Linza spent five years at Mount Vernon High School (2001-05), winning three National District titles during that span. This past spring, Linza served as an assistant director of student activities at McLean. Linza has been a head coach for 19 years and, while at Mount Vernon, was named the 2005 Northern Region Coach of the Year for baseball. During a 24-year career, Linza has amassed a record of 229-104-6 (.684).

### Coach Wanted

West Springfield High School is looking for an assistant field hockey coach. Experience is a must. Practice times are 8-11 a.m., beginning Aug. 11, and 3-6 p.m. when school starts. Send resumes to director of student activities Andy Muir at [Andy.Muir@fcps.edu](mailto:Andy.Muir@fcps.edu).

### Basketball Camp

C.J. Vick and the Jewish Community Center of Northern Virginia will host a Preseason Youth Basketball Clinic Sept. 8-Oct. 20, on Tuesdays, from 5:30-7 p.m. All participants will receive detailed progress reports with individual feedback from the instructor. The clinic also features an end-of-season game on Sunday, Oct. 25 for all participants and family members. The cost for JCCNV members is \$170; cost for non-members is \$215. Registration must be completed prior to Sept. 15. To register, contact Allison Colman at [AllisonC@jccnv.org](mailto:AllisonC@jccnv.org) or 703-537-3052. Vick won two Patriot District titles at Lee and went on to have a successful career at Quinnipiac University.

# CALENDAR

FROM PAGE 9

6104 for reservations (required), directions and other information. Cost: \$30 per person or group rate.  
**Movie Screening: "Shadow of the Moon"** 6-10 p.m., in Gallery W-16, second floor Workhouse Arts Center, 9601 Ox Road, Lorton. The movie chronicles the NASA Apollo Program between 1968 and 1972 through the words of the men that flew on the missions including Jim Lovell, Neil Armstrong and Buzz Aldrin. In addition to the movie screening, the Workhouse will also host Stan Lebar as a guest speaker from NASA's Goddard Space Flight Center. Tickets are \$10 and are available at

www.workhousearts.org

## SUNDAY/AUG. 16

**Walk with a Naturalist.** 10:30 a.m.-12 p.m., at Occoquan Regional Park 9751 Ox Road, Lorton. Join a naturalist for a guided hike along the scenic view trail at Occoquan Regional Park. Learn about the local plant and animal life and all the natural wonders outside in the Northern Virginia. Bring water, good walking shoes and binoculars if desired. Meet at the scenic view trail head by the first parking area on the right at Occoquan Regional Park. 703-690-2121. Free.  
**Paddle Adventure-Morning Tour.** 8

a.m.-12 p.m., at Pohick Bay Regional Park, 6501 Pohick Bay Drive, Lorton. Enjoy a morning park paddle tour on the water before the hustle and bustle of boaters. See eagles in the morning light as they hunt for the day. The trip will be led by a Potomac Overlook Park Naturalist. No experience is necessary. Call 703-339-6104 for reservations (required), directions. \$30.

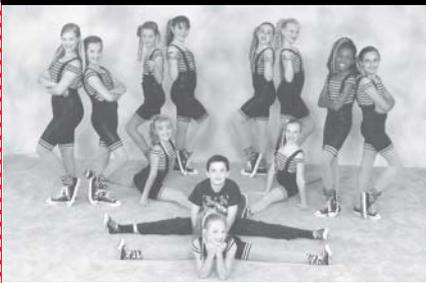
**N-Scale Model Trains** will be running in the community room and the caboose at the Fairfax Station Railroad Museum from 1-4 p.m. Admission is \$2 for adults and \$1 for children. The museum is located at 11200 Fairfax Station Road, Fairfax Station. 703-425-9225.

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Virginia Sen. Jim Webb (D) and former U.S. Sen. John Warner (R-Va.) worked together to get the Post-9/11 GI Bill passed in the U.S. Congress last year.

## New GI Bill at GMU

FROM PAGE 8

veterans have served during that time. Virginia veterans also tend to be younger. About 8.4 percent of American veterans are between 18 and 35, compared to about 12.6 percent of Virginia veterans.

But in general, Virginia veterans have been more likely to pursue higher education, with about 34 percent of earning a bachelor's degree or higher, compared to just 25 percent nationwide.

In Fairfax County, veterans are actually more likely to earn their bachelor's degree than the county's general population. According to the U.S. Census, about 70 percent of Fairfax's veterans have completed college, compared to just 58 percent of the county's residents overall.

**THE LARGE VETERAN** presence in Fairfax may have had an impact on George Mason University, which is particularly sensitive to the needs of the military community.

With the exception of Old Dominion University, which runs special online courses for active military personnel, Mason has the largest military and veteran population of any school in Virginia, said Michael Johnson, the school's director of military services.

Last year, Mason had 983 students who had special status through the military, including spouses and other dependents. At least 385 of those Mason students were veterans, said Johnson, who has been at the school for nine months.

Several student veterans at Mason said Washington, D.C. is a magnet for military and ex-military personnel alike because of job opportunities in national security and defense-related fields.

People currently in the military and veterans could also have found Mason particularly attractive because it is significantly cheaper compared than other four-year schools in the metropolitan area.

But Mason is also the only school in Virginia and one of only a handful of schools in the country that has devoted staff, like Johnson, to veterans and military person-

nel. The university created Johnson's position nine months ago at the suggestion of the campus' Student Veterans Association, which has a little over 70 members.

"Creating this brand new position shows a willingness to work with veterans. Especially when George Mason was facing budget cuts and was having to cut other positions, it was quite a statement," said Lawton-Belous.

According to Johnson, active members of the military and veterans have different needs than typical undergraduate students.

They usually are at least four years older than students fresh from high school and are paying their own way through college, which gives them a different perspective than a typical undergraduate.

For example, Reston resident Jonathan Zapien served in the Army's Special Forces for five years before coming to Mason to finish his undergraduate degree. The veteran, who enlisted in 2002 following the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks, works full time and is married to an American University law student.

Other differences exist as well. The military tends to instill a certain personal discipline in people, so veterans don't tend to struggle with time management as much as younger students, said Johnson.

**BUT STUDENTS** with a military background have their own set of issues. This year, Johnson secured a grant that would allow him to hire a psychological counselor to focus exclusively on Mason's military community.

Johnson expects that community colleges would see a larger influx of students at first. Johnson, who is a veteran himself, said the military has had to lower its standards in order to keep recruitment numbers for enlisted soldiers up and he suspects that a lot of people who want to take advantage of benefits are not prepared to enter a four-year school directly.

"I think a lot more people will be looking at school as an option. Guys who would think about re-enlisting may be looking to get out now," Flores said.

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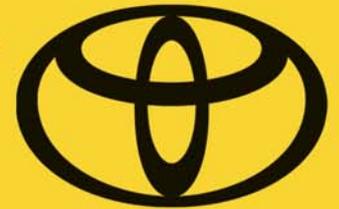
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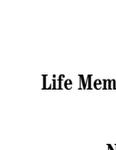
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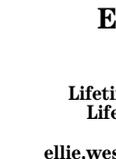
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