

Mount Vernon Gazette

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MOUNT VERNON'S HOMETOWN NEWSPAPER • A CONNECTION PAPER

AUGUST 20, 2009

Career Firefighter of the Year

Garrett is a 4th generation descendent from Gum Springs community.

BY GERALD A. FILL
THE GAZETTE

Friends and colleagues praised Captain William A. Garrett, a 19-year veteran of the Fairfax County Fire Department, during last week's awards ceremony where he was honored as the county's Career Firefighter of the Year.

Garrett's current assignment as station commander for Fire & Rescue Station 11, Penn Daw, is a position he sought because, he said, it is one of the largest and busiest fire stations in the county and the station's jurisdiction includes the community where he grew up and where his parents and other members of his family continue to live: Gum Springs.

In his acceptance speech, he discussed his community's place in American history going back to 1833, when the Gum Springs land was purchased by West Ford, a freed slave, who founded and named the community after the Gum trees which lined the Little Hunting Creek area and where travelers would water their horses.

At the ceremony, senior fire officials came to the podium to discuss Garrett's accomplishments, leadership abilities, dedication to his profession, energy, and community service.

Garrett L. Dyer, Deputy Fire Chief - A Shift, said, "Captain Garrett is always prepared".... "his off duty efforts in giving back to the community make him very special" "he is a positive influence



PHOTO BY GERALD A. FILL/THE GAZETTE

Captain William A. Garrett, station commander, Fire & Rescue Station 11, Penn Daw, was named 2009 Career Firefighter of the Year in Fairfax County.

on the men around him; an excellent role model."

Garrett's longtime personal friend and mentor, Deputy Fire Chief Duane M. Dodwell, said, "Bill has always been a dedicated and committed firefighter, and we are all proud to say that he is one of us. He is an outstanding mentor and motivator; he is an inspiration to all who come in contact with him."

Fire Chief Ronald L. Mastin in presenting the Career Firefighter of the Year Award to Garrett said, "It is with great pleasure that we honor a department member whose outstanding service and selfless dedication are in keeping with the highest traditions of the Fairfax County Fire and Rescue Department."

Garrett's wife, Fairfax County Police Officer Lauretta Garrett said, "He is a wonderful husband, father, and firefighter" ... "He is a strong-minded person and despite bumps in the road at times he never loses faith ... he always perseveres even when he is stretched thin."

Garrett first met his future wife in a bank; she had briefly passed out due to dehydration,
SEE GARRETT, PAGE 3

Bio

Captain William A. Garrett
Station Commander 11, Penn Daw

Age: 39

Education: Graduate, West Potomac High School; attended Northern Virginia Community College; George Mason University, pursuing a Bachelors degree with a major in Spanish.

Marital Status: Wife: Lauretta; Children: Joshua, Whitney
Resident of Centerville

Awards: Mount Vernon-Lee Chamber of Commerce Company Officer Award, 2008; Gum Springs Civic Association "Rising Star" Award, 2009

Community Volunteer Activity: Toys for Tots; Fire Department Safety Program to elementary school students; mentor program: Gum Springs Community Center, Graham Road elementary school, Fort Hunt elementary school; volunteer counselor, vacation Bible school.

Roaring Thunder Or Noise Pollution?

Resolution under consideration would require motorcycles to bear EPA labels.

BY MICHAEL LEE POPE
GAZETTE

Every year, a pack of motorcycle enthusiasts descend on the region for a motorcycle rally known as Rolling Thunder for Memorial Day weekend. They roar around the capital region as a trib-

ute to American war heroes. But are their bikes too loud?

After this year's Roaring Thunder, an effort to encourage motorcycle enthusiasts to be quieter was launched from the Sulgrave neighborhood in Mount Vernon. The endeavor led to a two-page resolution that is now being considered by the Mount Vernon Council of Citizens' Associations. The plan was initially considered by the Environment and Recreation Committee, and has now been sent to the Public Safety Committee.

"As it's currently written, the resolution is all over the place," said Dallas Shawkey, chairman of the Public Safety Committee. "It's

SEE NOISE, PAGE 6

No Sovereign Immunity

Civil suit against Perry need only prove simple negligence.

BY GERALD A. FILL
THE GAZETTE

Fairfax County District Court Judge R. Terrence Ney ruled Aug. 12 that former Fairfax County Police Officer Amanda Perry is not entitled to sovereign immunity under Virginia law when she stands trial in the civil suit filed by the family of the late Ashley McIntosh.

Judge Ney's ruling means that the McIntosh family will only be required to prove simple negligence in the civil suit trial set for February 2010.

Mother of the late Ashley McIntosh, Cynthia McIntosh-Colasanto said, "I am very pleased by the outcome."

Perry is accused of gross negligence in the \$6 million civil suit by the family of Ashley McIntosh, a Fairfax County teaching assistant, who was killed on Route 1 in a fatal crash on Feb. 12, 2008. Perry traveled through a red light without her siren on and did not slow down. The incident took place at the corner of Boswell Avenue and Route 1 while on her way to a report of a fight between several people taking place at the Giant Food store in the Beacon Mall shopping center.

The McIntosh family asserted that Perry was grossly negligent in her duties for the following reasons:

* Perry failed to check her computer screen or to radio the dispatcher to verify the nature of the emergency throughout her approximately five-mile trip north on Route 1. Testimony in court by the dispatcher verified that the emergency assignment had been downgraded twice in a short period of
SEE IMMUNITY, PAGE 6

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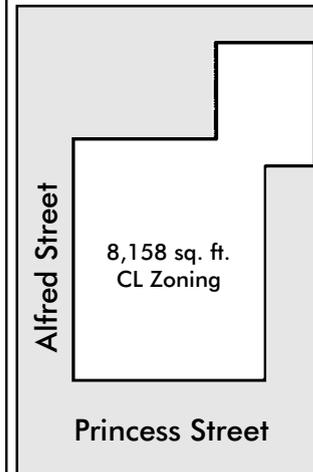
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Curb Appeal

\$7-million renovation of Martha Washington moving forward.

BY MICHAEL LEE POPE
THE GAZETTE

When the Martha Washington Library was originally constructed in 1969, asbestos was considered to be the best available insulation and boxy brick structures were considered to be modern. That was also a time when libraries served as important repositories for the kind of information that can now be easily accessed on a cell phone. Today the building is closed as the library undergoes a \$7-million renovation, its day-to-day operation relocated to temporary space that was once part of a Krispy Kreme.

"The role of the library is certainly evolving," said Barbara Rice, director of the Martha Washington Library. "People still come in looking for books, of course. But they also come in to use the Internet to find a job."

The old Martha Washington was

passed its prime. The building was dated and obscured and all but invisible from the street. The structure has numerous code violations and inefficiencies. Meeting rooms were used for storage, and employees had to share desks because space was at a premium. Access to the Internet was limited to four computers, and the overall design of the library felt outdated and stale.

"It was dark and enclosed and hidden," said Derek Norton, an architect who is leading the redesign of the building. "It wasn't welcoming at all."

"When this library is done, it will be the gem of the community."

— **Barbara Rice, director, Martha Washington Library**

PLANS FOR RENOVATING Martha Washington date back almost a decade. But the original designs where shelved when funding could not be secured. Renovation

plans were given new life in 2004, when county voters overwhelmingly supported a bond referendum to refurbish six Fairfax County libraries. Since then, Oakton Library and the



COURTESY OF RITTER ARCHITECTS

An architect's rendering of what the renovated Martha Washington Library will look like next summer when it opens after a \$7 million renovation.

Burke Center Library have already completed restoration. Meanwhile, Martha Washington is one of four that are still undergoing massive renovation despite the fact that the county is facing a \$315-million shortfall next year.

"When you have a downturn, libraries become more important because people use them to find resources for search for jobs or information," said Susan Thorniley, vice chairwoman of the Fairfax County Board of Trustees.

"And when you look at the libraries that are being renovated, they're 40 years old or more and they were just not adequate for the changing role of the libraries and the technology that's needed."

The \$7-million renovation at Martha Washington will expand the existing 10,000 square feet to 17,000 square feet, adding several new rooms for quiet study, group study and community meetings. The large meeting room will be expanded from a capacity of 50 to

75, and the number of available computers with access to the Internet will increase from four to 24. Part of the building will be dedicated as a children's area, and staff members will no longer have to share desks and computers.

"This library is an important part of our community, especially during difficult economic times," said Mount Vernon District Supervisor Gerald Hyland. "And when you have a project with bonded fund

SEE LIBRARY, PAGE 7

Garrett Named Career Firefighter of the Year

and he attended to her. Sometime later he came in contact with her again when she was in her police uniform and he remembered the bank incident and recognized her. Thus began their relationship.

Q&A

After the awards ceremony, Garrett returned to duty at Station 11. He discussed his career, his faith, and his love of the work that he says "was the work I was called to do."

Q: Tell me about your family, where you grew up, where you attended school?

A: I am the youngest of seven children raised in the Gum Springs community. My parents still live there. I attended school for two years at Fort Hunt High School; then when it was closed I attended and graduated from West Potomac High School. I played varsity basketball at West Potomac and that experience of being a part of a team I think had an impact on my thinking later when I became a volunteer at the local fire station in my com-

munity. I enjoy the friendships one develops as part of a fire and rescue squad. Our effectiveness and safety is dependent on the trust and teamwork of the Fire & Rescue squad you are a part of; just as the importance of teamwork on a basketball team.

Q: You spoke today at the ceremony about your faith in God and during your acceptance speech you recognized in the audience, Bruce Black, the minister of the church you and your family attend; Fairfax Church of Christ. Clearly your faith is an important part of your personal life. How does your faith contribute to your life as a firefighter?

A: I have a strong belief that I became a firefighter because I was called by God to this job. Only one brother is involved as a volunteer firefighter. None of my sisters or anyone else in my immediate family is a firefighter; no one pushed me into this career; however, it seemed even at an early age I was destined to be a firefighter. The one person I can point to that helped me find my way is my dad. I

have always had a good relationship with him and he was very instrumental in my breaking away from some bad influences going on in the neighborhood when I was a teenager. My first experience with the fire department was as a volunteer. I truly believe that I was called by God to be a firefighter. My faith helps me to inspire others in our management of emergencies and in our day to day activities at the Station.

Q: What is the most satisfying thing about your job?

A: The appreciation of people we help. Caring for and calming people who are panicked, injured, or sick. The thank you I get from those I have helped and knowing that I made a positive difference in their lives.

Q: What are some of your more memorable experiences as a firefighter?

A: I have delivered two babies. Also, I served on a Task Force that traveled to Mississippi to help communities devas-

SEE GARRETT, PAGE 7



PHOTO BY GERALD A. FULL/THE GAZETTE

Captain William A. Garrett with wife Lauretta and children Joshua and Whitney.



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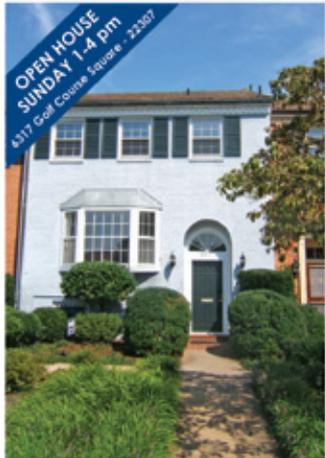
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NEWS

Sex Charges Go to Grand Jury

The criminal charges against a former youth sports coach are moving forward in the legal system. He is John E. Hamilton of 14120 Gabrielle Way in Centreville's Centre Ridge community.

On May 22, Fairfax County police charged him with one count of aggravated sexual battery and three counts of taking indecent liberties with a child by a person in a custodial or supervisory relationship. The complainant was a boy Hamilton coached in 1997, in the Fort Hunt Youth Athletic Association, when the boy was 12.

And on June 5, police charged Hamilton with two counts of sodomy after two other people, one now 19, the other, 28, alleged that Hamilton sexually assaulted them when they were younger, lived in Mount Vernon's Hollin Hall area and were coached by Hamilton. On Friday, July 24, in Juvenile and Domestic Relations Court, all six charges against him were certified to the grand jury for possible indictment.



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Working on Land Use

Committee to present analysis of public comments on APR nominations.

BY GERALD A. FILL
THE GAZETTE

Under the leadership of Kahan Dhillon, Jr., a Special Committee on Strategic Planning established by the Mount Vernon Council of Citizens Associations (MVCCA) has for the first time in recent memory conducted a workshop to perform land use planning, analysis, and draft a set of Area Plan Review nominations.

The APR nomination process enables citizens to comment on possible changes to the county's Comprehensive Plan. By law the Comprehensive Plan must go through a public review process at least once every five years. The Comprehensive Plan is the county's vision for where and what type of residential, commercial, retail, industrial, office, mixed use development shall take place. Changes in the Comprehensive Plan require a vote by the Board of Supervisors.

The committee is now analyzing the results of the workshop and preparing to present the results for public review and comment Aug. 22 prior to submitting the committee's APR nominations to the MVCCA for its approval on Sept. 10.

According to Dhillon, the work by his committee has already accomplished in several months what normally takes approximately two years to complete — namely a transparent, organized area plan review, convening a public workshop to gather ideas and suggestions from the public, and planning the rest of the public input and analytical process.

The committee has developed an educational video entitled "Planning 101" which is available to the public through the MVCCA Web site: www.mvcca.org/strategy.

Dhillon pointed out that there are now approximately seven APR nominations under active consideration by his committee which would, if approved by the MVCCA, the Planning Commission, and the Board of Supervisors, would have a long term — 5-10 years — effect on zoning and development in the Route 1 corridor. The APR nomination review process is still open and the committee will consider public comments on the nominations at the Aug. 22 meeting at Mt. Vernon High School. The Strategy Committee will make a formal pre-

Key Players

Key organizations impacting land use planning and zoning in Mt. Vernon include:

- ❖ Mt. Vernon Council of Citizens Associations (MVCCA)
- ❖ Mt. Vernon - Lee Chamber of Commerce
- ❖ Southeast Fairfax Development Corporation
- ❖ South County Federation of Citizens Associations

Get Involved

Mt. Vernon citizens may comment on proposed Area Plan Review (APR) nominations — changes — to the county government's Comprehensive Plan by attending a Special Committee on Strategic Planning (SCSP) meeting, Saturday, Aug. 22, in the Mount Vernon High School theater auditorium, 8:30 a.m.-1 p.m.
See www.mvcca.org/strategic.htm.

sentation of the pending nominations at the meeting. A partial list of the sites to be presented include: North Gateway site: Route 1 immediately south of the 495 overpass; both the east and west side of Route 1; Kings Crossing and Route 1 site which is being considered for development by Walmart; and Smitty's Lumbertaria site on Route 1. Each of these properties' consolidated parcels under review is 10 acres or more in size.

Land Use Revisions

Here is a chronology of upcoming events for Mt. Vernon citizens' public input and information about the Area Plan Review (APR) nomination process to revise the Comprehensive Plan.

- ❖ Aug. 22: Mt. Vernon High School Auditorium, 8:30 a.m. – 1 p.m. MVCCA follow-up review of previously submitted APR nominations; opportunity for public review, comment, and additional nominations

- ❖ Aug. 24: Mt. Vernon Governmental Center: Strategic Planning Committee meeting to review and analyze public input.

- ❖ Aug. 31: Mt. Vernon Governmental Center: Strategic Planning Committee meeting to formulate recommendations to the MVCCA.

- ❖ Sept. 7: Mt. Vernon Governmental Center: MVCCA Board review of APR nominations.

- ❖ Sept. 10: Whitman Middle School Auditorium: MVCCA presidents' vote on APR nominations.

- ❖ Sept. 16: MVCCA submits approved APR nominations to the county Department of Planning & Zoning.

- ❖ October – December: P & Z staff screening and analysis.

- ❖ January 2009 – May 2010: P & Z Task Force formulation of staff reports submitted to Planning Commission.

- ❖ June 2010: Planning Commission public hearings; submission of recommendations to the Board of Supervisors

- ❖ July 2010: Board of Supervisors public hearings; mark-up; vote on revisions to the Comprehensive Plan

Sources: Department of Planning & Zoning, Fairfax County Government; MVCCA Special Committee on Strategic Planning

Sovereign Immunity Rejected

FROM PAGE 1

time and that there was no longer an emergency situation but Perry failed to check on the status of the emergency assignment. Furthermore, the McIntosh attorneys questioned whether the initial assignment from the dispatcher required an emergency response. They pointed out that there was no indication that there was a threat to someone's life that would have warranted traveling at a high speed going through a red light.

* Perry did not follow the police academy training manual or standard operating procedures when responding to an emergency call. Emergency operating procedures required her to use her emergency equipment at all times (flashing lights, siren), and to slow down when entering an intersection if the light is red. Police cruiser film and computer data presented at the trial demonstrated that she did not.

Perry's defense, presented by her attorney, David Fadula, primarily revolved around the police department's emergency response "general orders" language authorizing a police officer to use discretion "when reasonably necessary" to turn off emergency equipment if the officer, in his/her discretion, determined that there was a need to turn off the equipment in order to fulfill the assignment. Perry's attorney repeatedly invoked this language when defending her decision to turn on and then off the emer-

gency equipment (siren) prior to and when she drove through the Boswell Avenue and Route 1 intersection.

Perry testified that she believed she was on a category 2 emergency call. She admitted that she used the emergency equipment only intermittently in order to get by cars impeding her ability to quickly get to her assigned destination on Route 1.

In her testimony she characterized her use of emergency procedures as "hybrid" emergency operating procedures. The police academy training officer, Thomas Beckman, was asked by the McIntosh lead attorney, Tom Curcio, if he was familiar with the term "hybrid" emergency operating procedures. Beckman responded that he had never heard of the term. At the conclusion of Beckman's testimony Judge Ney asked Beckman to restate to the court if the police department's "General Orders" (operating procedures) required police officers to use their emergency equipment at all times. Beckman, repeating his earlier testimony, said yes, at all times. He further elaborated by saying police operating procedures require a police officer to immediately discontinue their pursuit of an emergency response call if they are unable to keep their emergency equipment on at all times. He mentioned this in response to Perry's testimony that she was unable to turn on her siren before the crash occurred.

Acting on Motorcycle Noise

FROM PAGE 1

got to be more pointed."

The draft resolution begins by claiming that "most owners of street motorcycles install illegal exhaust systems" that produce 10 to 100 times noise emissions allowed by federal, state and local regulations. Aside from being illegal, the resolution says, the modifications also produce hydrocarbon air pollution. The document also points to a number of "negative health effects" from chronic exposure to noise, including hearing damage, increased stress, cardiovascular disease, decreased rates of learning, lack of sleep and a general decrease of well-being.

"Certain segments of the population are particularly sensitive to this illegal and intrusive noise, including but not limited to children with autism, veterans with post-traumatic stress disorders, young children and people who work at night and sleep during the day," the resolution says.

The resolution concludes by urging the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors to change the current county ordinance to require motorcycles to use exhaust-system labeling issued by the Environmental Protection Agency. The document also asks the supervisors to impose a fine structure similar to one operational in Boston, where violators are fined \$300 for each offense. The resolution also asks for the superintendent

of the George Washington Parkway and the commander of the Fort Belvoir base to require EPA labeling on motorcycles.

"I think this is foolish," said Duane Dreer, salesman at Cycle Sports on Richmond Highway. "Most of the people who drive motorcycles think loud pipes save lives because you know its presence is there."

Dreer said most motorcycles come from the factory as quiet as a typical car, but the vast majority of motorcycle riders prefer their bikes to be much louder. So they are almost always modified in some way, such as swapping mufflers to install a slip-on exhaust. These devices provide a wide range of options, making the bikes anywhere from 10 times noisier to 100 times as loud.

"Sure there's always somebody who's going to take it too far," said Dreer. "But I think we've got bigger things to worry about than this." Part of the resolution is aimed at the Fairfax County Police Department, which would presumably be held responsible for enforcing the requirement for EPA labeling. The draft resolution accuses police officers of personally owning illegally equipped motorcycles. It also suggests that the official motorcycles used by police officers on duty are too loud.

"To my knowledge, there are no county motorcycles operating with any illegal equipment," responded Fairfax County Police Department spokesman Don Godhardt.

Honoring Garrett

FROM PAGE 3

tated by Hurricane Katrina. But all of my work is important.

Q: What does receiving this award mean for you personally?

A: This is the highest award that a career firefighter can receive. In a larger sense it validates me in the eyes of my peers. I feel I am now fully a part of the spirit and traditions of the firefighting profession. I am humbled and honored by it.

Also, I have always looked at myself as an extension of the Gum Springs community. My receiving this award sends a signal to those in my community and to everyone that if you have faith and work hard you can realize your personal and professional goals.

Q: So what is in your future? What are your plans?

A: I am very happy professionally in what I am doing now as Station 11 Commander. I have been attending night school at

By the Numbers

There are 1,400 firefighters in the Fairfax County Fire & Rescue Department. Station 11, Penn Daw, where Captain William Garrett is the station commander, has 60 firefighters on duty. Five are women. The station operates three shifts and is on call 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

George Mason University and will soon receive a bachelor's degree with a major in Spanish. Also, I have two wonderful children (Joshua, Whitney) and my beautiful wife Lauretta to enjoy and care for; and I look forward to continuing my church and community volunteer work. My attitude is to live every day to the fullest, be thankful for the opportunities afforded me, and to be thankful for the blessings of God. As for my future professional plans I will leave it up to my superiors to determine whether or not they feel I am worthy of greater responsibilities in the department.

Library Renovation

FROM PAGE 3

ing, the last thing you want to do is stop what you're already started."

ALEXANDRIA-BASED Ritter Architects designed the renovation, which encloses the existing brick exterior in several volumes of glass and steel. The old masonry will be used for a meeting room, but elements of steel will be worked into the design. A new reading area and stacks of books will be enclosed in a wall of glass. A serpentine wall of corrugated metal will lead visitors from the front door through the building.

"One of the problems before was that you hardly even noticed the building from the street," said Norton, who lives in the nearby Hollin Hills neighborhood. "When

you drive by, you'll be able to see into the building and through the building."

During the renovation, a temporary outpost has been set up at 6328 Richmond Highway. Operations there are restricted by space, although it hosts a book club and a preschool group. Patrons can find about one-third of the collection there, with library officials carefully selecting titles they think will be in high demand. William Shakespeare's "Romeo and Juliet" is there, but "The Tempest" is not. Danielle Steele is on the shelves, but not Thomas Pynchon is in storage.

"We had to use our instincts as to what would be popular," said Rice. "When this library is done, it will be the gem of the community."

Fatal Crash on Sherwood Hall Lane

A 27-year-old man died in a single-vehicle crash on Sunday, Aug. 9. Police were called to the area of Sherwood Hall Lane and Evening Lane around 7:30 a.m. They located a 2003 Ford Explorer and its sole occupant on the side of the road.

An investigation determined the driver, Travis L. Harris, was driving west on Sherwood Hall Lane when he drifted toward the shoulder and jumped the curb. His SUV left the road and

struck a tree. Harris was transported to Inova Mount Vernon Hospital; he died a short time later. Alcohol was not a factor in the crash.

Anyone with information is asked to contact Crime Solvers by phone at 1-866-411-TIPS/8477, e-mail at www.fairfaxcrimesolvers.org or text "TIP187" plus a message to CRIMES/274637 or call Fairfax County Police at 703-691-2131.

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OPINION

Public Options

Government jumps into business for a variety of reasons.

While private options of this amenity are plentiful, they are so expensive that they are out of reach for many even in our affluent area.

So government has jumped in to offer the opportunity at greatly reduced prices, making it available to almost everyone. It's not clear what the impact of the public option has been on the private businesses involved.

We're talking, of course, about golf courses.

Joining a private country club can cost tens of thousands of dollars in original membership fees, plus thousands in annual fees.

But around Northern Virginia, there are many public options for golf, some nationally acclaimed, where one can swing the clubs around 18 holes for under \$30.

Offering access to recreational facilities at cost well below private options is a common activity for local governments. Water parks, indoor and outdoor pools, indoor and outdoor

tennis are all available in our area at reduced prices via government involvement. Recreation centers provide an affordable alternative to health clubs.

Localities offer summer day camps of many varieties, all at a fraction of the cost of private camps.

Public colleges and universities offer lower cost tuition than private colleges and universities.

EDITORIAL

Publicly owned historic sites and park facilities compete with restaurants and banquet halls to host weddings and other events.

Do these public options hold down the prices at private camps, private colleges, private country clubs? That's unknown, but what we do know is that the public options make many things affordable and accessible to people who would not be able to afford them otherwise.

Meanwhile people continue to pay a premium for the amenities, services and added value and availability of the private options, keeping those businesses in business.

Local 'Public Options'

For public recreational opportunities, see:

- ❖ Northern Virginia Park Authority, <http://www.nvrpa.org/>
- ❖ Fairfax County Park Authority, <http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/>

Governments are also offering a private option for many things that previously have been strictly free public goods. One example is roads.

A private company is widening the Beltway, 495, from the Virginia side of American Legion Bridge to the Springfield Mixing Bowl. When it's finished, drivers will have the option to pay a significant toll to the company to ride in the "High Occupancy Toll" lanes to avoid the crowded but free lanes. Vehicles with at least three occupants will be able to ride in the new lanes for free.

— MARY KIMM,

MKIMM@CONNECTIONNEWSPAPERS.COM

From Recent Graduates, Some Advice

BY A. L. WILLIAMS
THE GAZETTE

As summer comes to a close, stores have begun to advertise back-to-school sales; students are anticipating their course-load and new set of teachers, and preparing to get back into the routine of the school year. The anticipation of the new year brings a mixture of excitement, and questions about what will be in store for the upcoming year.

Starting the year with a clean slate, it would be nice to experience it mistake-free; chances are that won't happen. "Evidence is now strong that the brain does not mature until the early 20's and that is relevant because these parts govern impulsivity, judgment, planning for the future and foresight of consequences," said Dr. Ruben Gur, neurophysiologist and director of the Brain Behavior Lab at the University of Pennsylvania. Some of the mistakes we make are bigger than others, and can have a negative impact on an aspect of our lives, while others are minor and insignificant. Regardless, as the saying goes, we can always learn from our mistakes. Sometimes however, it would be nice not to have to make each and every blunder to get the message. Being a teenager and going through high school is a prime time to slip up, but it is also one of the most exciting times of young-adulthood — something you would not want to miss because you were too busy worrying about the unknown.

ONE TEEN'S VOICE

Alfonso Smith, Mount Vernon High School counselor, said that the most common mistake he realizes among high school students is "students who go through four years and blow off the first two. They just go through the motions and then come junior or senior year, they realize that all four years really are important — including the two they neglected. Every year counts."

For rising-freshman and rising-seniors and everyone in between, a little help is always useful (though

we as teenagers are not the quickest to ask). The following testimonials from 2009 graduates who are leaving the community to go off to college, give some insight into the reality of the high-school experience and share some life lessons. Everyone has different experiences and therefore has something unique to share.

So at the end of the summer when you are sending off and wishing luck to your 2009 graduates, take away a lesson they learned:

"They say the years spent in high school are the best you'll have. Believe me, you won't agree. High school is the training ground for college, which is training for the rest of your life. There will be all-nighters, and tests you don't study for, teachers with crazy demands, and drama, lots of drama. But you will survive. And now looking back it's not the exhaustion and stress that I remember most. It's the friends I've made and the crazy things we did. The teachers who pushed me and inspired me have made me into a stronger person than I ever thought I could be. My advice is to do as much as you can. Take courses you are interested in, join sports, balance the hard work you do in the classroom with experience. Classroom learning will only get you so far. Freshmen, ignore the drama. It doesn't really matter. Seniors, savor every moment because even now with the ink still fresh on my diploma I find it hard to believe my life could possibly be any better than the four years I spent in high school."

— KIM CRAWFORD,
RADFORD UNIVERSITY '13

"You're only given one shot at living the high school experience. While I was at West Potomac High School, I had great teachers, coaches and classmates. Some of my fondest memories were on the football, swim and crew teams. Participating in these sports brought me to exciting events like the Stotesbury Cup Regatta in Philadelphia, Penn., Crew nationals in Oak

SEE FROM RECENT GRADUATES, PAGE 19

LETTERS

Scary Aspects To Health Reform

To the Editor:

Disturbing provisions of a possible government run health care system being considered by Congress prompted me to write this letter. I wonder what would have happened to me with my recent medical problem if the government run system was law and I couldn't deal directly with my doctors.

In mid-June 2009, my gall bladder was removed because it was affecting my digestive system and pancreas, a vital organ for life. I first went to the hospital emergency room (ER) with severe unbearable stomach pains. After doing some tests, the ER doctor suspected it was my gall bladder. I was admitted to the hospital for two days for monitoring of my inflamed pancreas and treatment.

My primary specialist doctor ordered several tests that confirmed the ER diagnosis and my gall bladder had to be removed. All the tests and treatment occurred over a six week period during which time I lost 20 pounds from 180 to 160. I feel good since my operation and have gained 10 pounds.

Would a government run health system allowed me, a senior citizen, to see a doctor and have all the necessary tests and surgery? Would my age and cost be a de

SEE LETTERS, PAGE 19

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OBITUARY

Dorothy Breuninger Grigsby Winters

A witness to President Franklin Delano Roosevelt's "Day of Infamy" speech before a joint session of Congress on Monday, December 8, 1941, has died.

Dorothy Grigsby Winters was a 21-year old secretary for an Illinois congressman the day she found a seat in the Visitors' Gallery of the Capitol Building to hear FDR's declaration of war on Japan at the conclusion of his momentous address to the nation.

Her fiancée, 23-year-old Leigh "Early" Cosart Winters, a 1940 U.S. Naval Academy graduate, was a gunnery officer aboard the carrier USS Enterprise, based in Pearl Harbor. That day, and for several weeks after, she did not know if he was alive or dead.

The Enterprise, which was 90 miles from the port when the Japanese attack began, remained at sea for several days.

As the war raged on, she often saw the President, walking with the aid of hand crutches, as he visited congressional offices. "Everyone knew he was crippled," she said. "There was no need to talk about it." Washington was a small, cozy town then. What happened there, stayed there. Photos stamped "top secret" were often delivered to her boss from various government agencies during the war. She viewed the graphic images of victims of the Nazi concentration camps years before they were released to the public.

She died in her sleep Friday, Aug. 7, 2009. Mrs. Winters was 89 years old. Arrangements are being made for a gravesite ceremony in Arlington National Cemetery at 10 a.m., Tuesday, Sept. 8, 2009. A reception to honor her memory will be held Monday, Sept. 7, 2009, at the Everly-Wheatley Funeral Home, 1500 West Braddock Road, Alexandria, 703-998-9200 www.everlyfuneralhomes.com.

In lieu of flowers, the family suggests memorial contributions be made in Mrs. Winters name to the Leigh "Early" Winters, Class of 1940 Scholarship Fund, U.S. Naval Academy Alumni Association, USNAF Gift Processing, 291 Wood Road, Annapolis, MD 21402, with checks made payable to U.S. Naval Academy Foundation.

Mrs. Winters' late December birth at a hospital across the street from her grandparents' Capitol Hill house disrupted a game of bridge her mother, Dorothy Breuninger Grigsby, and father, Walter Grigsby, were playing at the home with another couple.

An only child, she was raised in Brooklyn while her father worked as an engineer on the Holland Tunnel, connecting lower Manhattan to New Jersey. He was later involved in the design of early refrigerated display units for commercial businesses. She graduated six months early from Erasmus Hall High School, near Prospect Park. Her father died suddenly of pneumonia in 1936, several days after staging an elaborate Sweet 16 party for his daughter at his Army Reserve Unit's armory. His passing in the midst

of the Great Depression forced his widow and daughter to return to Washington, to live with his in-laws. While her mother trained for a job with an IRS office at 14th Street and Pennsylvania Avenue, Mrs. Winters abandoned plans to attend Katherine Gibbs School for Secretaries in New York. She attended the Washington School for Secretaries, instead. Until her later years, she continued to take notes in stenography.

She loved working on Capitol Hill. She was paid a salary of \$100 a month and worked in the only building in Washington that had air-conditioning.

Mrs. Winters was employed first by Harold K. Claypool (D-Ohio), who served in the U.S. House of Representatives from Jan. 3, 1937 to Jan. 3, 1943. Her next employer was Frank Leander "Sunny" Sundstrom (R-New Jersey), who served as a congressman from Jan. 3, 1943 until Jan. 3, 1949. She left his employ shortly after her husband returned from the war.

With her tall, slim figure and a face that resembled Disney's Snow White, Mrs. Winters was graced with head-turning looks but was dissuaded from modeling by her disapproving, very Victorian mother. She did not go unnoticed among the nation's lawmakers. Mrs. Winters was voted "Prettiest Secretary on the Hill" by the congressmen.



Dorothy B. Grigsby Winters in 1983.

She met her future husband when he cut in on her at a dance at the Naval Academy. Though she spotted him at subsequent events, he did not recognize her until she wore the same dress a second time. When he decided to ask her to marry him, he picked the wrong spot to do it — the Annapolis Fish Market, now the Market Place building.

"Will you wear my ring," he asked, pushing a class miniature on her finger, "so I can get the other girls off my back?"

She looked at it. "It doesn't fit," she said, handing it back.

At the Ring Dance a few weeks later, he convinced her that he was serious.

He married her Aug. 29, 1942, during one of his wartime leaves, giving her only nine days notice to pull a wedding party together. He was late getting to the church — and she refused to go until word came that he had finally arrived at the altar.

The couple was married 54 years. Cdr. Leigh Winters died Jan. 12, 1997.

During his military career, the Navy transferred the couple to Newport News, Va.; Northern Virginia; San Diego, Calif.; Port Au Prince, Haiti; and Istanbul, Turkey. Mrs. Winters served the role of "Navy wife," hosting social functions for military officers, diplomats, foreign dignitaries and the occasional Soviet spy during the family's stays

SEE WINTERS, PAGE 17

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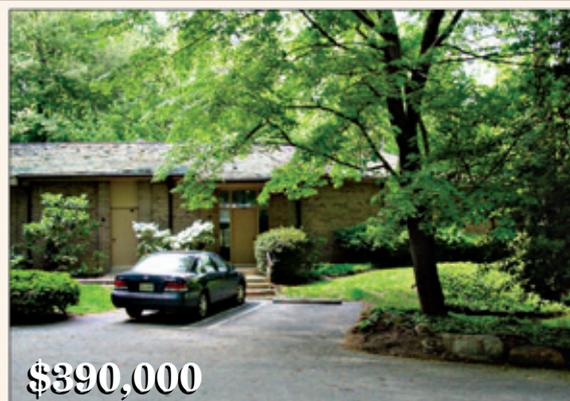
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Far Away Places is what you see from this 16th floor jewel

Three bedrooms, three baths and over 2100 square feet of space in which to roam. Rare find, plus Montebello's amenities with indoor/outdoor pools, tennis bowling, restaurant, shuttle to Metro and more... **\$639,500.** (Units may be sold separately. Call for pricing.)



Lois M. Delaney, CRB, CRS

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www.AllsportsGP.com

E

ARTS ♦ ENTERTAINMENT ♦ LEISURE

Jane Austen Ball Held at Gadsby's Tavern Museum

Gadsby's Tavern Museum on North Royal Street was transported back to the 1790s last Saturday, Aug. 15 with the Jane Austen Ball. With live music, people dressed in period attire and danced the same English Country dances that were popular way back then. In the late 18th and early 19th centu-



Teresa Kitchen



Jane Peese greets her partner on the dance floor in Gadsby's Ballroom.

ries, Gadsby's Tavern was the center of social and political life in Alexandria and the new Federal City of Washington. The tavern served as the premier gathering place for residents — including George Washington — and visitors to eat, drink, learn and influence history.



Lynn McAleer, Marilyn Court and Nancy Hadley.



George Kitchen leads Cathleen Zaret and Elizabeth and Eleanor Fulham in a right-handed star.

PHOTOS BY LOUISE KRAFFT/GAZETTE



Mack Gross, Paul and Lorianne Nelson-Carter and Diane Dukta.

CALENDAR

E-mail announcements to the Gazette, gazette@connectionnewspapers.com. Photos and artwork are encouraged. Deadline is Thursday at noon for the following week's paper. Call Steve Hibbard at 703-778-9412 with questions.

THROUGH AUG. 23

Bel Cantanti Opera Summer Music Festival.

Two-week program for young professionals. Held in Westminster Presbyterian Church in Alexandria. The festival will end with two performances of Donizetti's L'Elisir d'Amore and a performance of selected opera scenes and arias. Contact auditions@belcantanti.com to schedule an audition and reserve an audition slot. Call 301-266-7546.

THURSDAY/AUG. 20

Polka, Polka, Polka. 6:30 p.m. Free. Concert under the stars. At the Paul Spring Retirement Community, 7116 Fort Hunt Road, Alexandria. Call 703-768-0234.

Papermaking. 7-8:30 p.m. Do-it-yourself recycling! An evening for adults to learn how to recycle paper into pulp and create new sheets. Handmade paper makes beautiful cards, books and collages. Visit www.artatthecenter.org for details.

The Reverie Jazz Trio. 7-9 p.m. Will perform early jazz standards and forgotten favorites in a style reminiscent of a bygone era. At the Torpedo Factory Art Center, part of the Thursday Nite Local Spotlight series. At 105 N. Union St., Alexandria. Call 703-838-4565 or go to www.torpedofactory.org.



THURSDAY/AUG. 20

The Reverie Jazz Trio. 7-9 p.m. Free. The Reverie Jazz Trio will perform early jazz standards and forgotten favorites in a style reminiscent of a bygone era while bringing back the great melodies and emotion exemplified by the great jazz and blues music of the 1930's, 1940's and early 1950's. At the Torpedo Factory Art Center, 105 N. Union St., Alexandria. Call 703-838-4565.

AUG. 20-22

"Vanities" by Jack Heifner. At 8 p.m. A comedy directed by Herb Tax. From high school cheerleaders to independent women, follow Mary, Joanne, and Kathy through high school, college and into the "real" world ... and laugh yourself silly in the process! Featuring Natalie Christina (Mary), Carla Francischetti (Joanne), and Pamela Sabella (Kathy). At The Lyceum in Old Town Alexandria, 201 S. Washington St., Alexandria. \$15/general admission; \$10/seniors, students, retired or active military. Call 703-615-6626, www.zemfirastage.com.

FRIDAY/AUG. 21

Great Waves Aloha Day. 3-8 p.m. Come celebrate the 50th anniversary of Hawaii becoming a state at Great Waves Aloha Day at Cameron Run Regional Park in Alexandria with discounted admission. The event also includes a free lei for the first 200 guests and a free gift for the first 100 kids. Visit www.nvrpa.org or call 703-960-0767.

Civil Rights Sit-In. 10 a.m. Students from Samuel W. Tucker Elementary School will participate in the 70th anniversary of the Civil Rights Sit-In at the Alexandria Library, Barrett Branch, 717 Queen St., Alexandria. The day was Aug. 21, 1939. Call 703-519-3498.

City of Fairfax's Saxophone Quartet. 7:30 p.m. At Grist Mill Park, 4710 Mt. Vernon Memorial Hwy., Alexandria.

SATURDAY/AUG. 22

Kayak Trip — Historic Alexandria Waterfront. 8-11 a.m. Hosted by NVTC. Tour meets at Belle Haven Marina. Wear clothes and shoes that can get wet. For reservations, write to kayak@nvct.org or call 703-354-5093 x26. Seats are only reserved upon confirmation from NVCT. Cost \$30/person.

Adult Chorus Auditions. 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. With the Alexandria Choral Society for August 2009, under new Artistic Director, Brian Gendron. All dates by appointment only. For details and/or to schedule, email: AlexandriaChoralSociety@gmail.com.

A Dog's Life Storytime. Ages 3 and up. 11:30 a.m. Sit and stay in our storytime corner as we read and sing all about our favorite animal pals. Free. Hooray for Books! Children's Bookstore, 1555 King St., Alexandria. Call 703-548-4092.

AUG. 22-23

Summer Dance Concert. CCP, a modern dance company based in Alexandria, will be staging a Summer Dance Concert, "dance4spaces," Saturday, Aug. 22 at 8 p.m., Sunday, Aug. 23 at 7 p.m. Choreography is by Danielle Greene, Alicia Luchowski, Mary Jo Smet and Janet Stormes. At Dance Place, 3225 8th Street NE, Washington, D.C. Call 202-269-1600.

SUNDAY/AUG. 23

Cambodian Community Day Festival. Noon-6 p.m. Celebrate Cambodian culture with entertainment by the Cambodian Mohoree Music Ensemble; classical and folk dances; and live band music and social dances. Exhibits include a showcase of the Angkor Wat Replica, and the Pailin and Tonle Sap regions. Family activities include folk games for children and adults, sports, and vendors offering traditional Cambodian and Asian food and beverages. At Ben Brenman Park, 4800 Ben Brenman Park Drive, Alexandria. Admission is free. Contact 571-218-9513.

Artist Trading Cards Swap. 2-4 p.m. Free. ATCs are 2.5" by 3.5" original works of art in any medium that are signed and dated by the artist and then swapped for other artist cards. Hosted by Del Ray Artisans at the Del Ray Artisans Gallery, 2704 Mount Vernon Avenue, Alexandria. Space is limited, so reserve a space by contacting Theresa Kulstad at 703-283-0399 or tkulstad@verizon.net. Directions at www.TheDelRayArtisans.org.

A Feast of Flowers: The New Haute Cuisine. 1-3 p.m. Edible flowers, fresh and cooked, add a



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9316
Heather Glen Dr
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Fantastic Price!
Classic Colonial
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interior featuring
glass walled

addition across the rear. Meticulously maintained 4 BR, 3 level home is loaded with special features & upgrades. Stunning custom addition overlooks beautifully landscaped yard & the most spectacular custom pool you'll ever find! Open Sun 1-4pm. S GW Pkwy, past estate, L Old Mt Vernon Rd, R Robertson Blvd, L Heather Glen.



JUST LISTED! **OPEN SUN!**

4401
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\$495,000
Special Value!
Spacious brick
home on gorgeous
half acre lot with
open floor plan,
hardwood floors,

family room with fireplace, covered parking & extra driveway space. Fabulous custom deck overlooks magnificent level grounds. Rare opportunity to find a well maintained Mt Vernon home for under \$500K! Open Sun 1-4pm. S GW Pkwy, past estate, R Old Mt Vernon, L Woodley, R Washington, L Jackson.



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1210
N Pegram St
\$1,351,500
Special Financing!
Interest rate as
low as 3.78% with
just 10% down
payment makes
Alexandria's most
exciting new

luxury home surprisingly easy to buy! Stunning home offers stately room sizes, open floor plan, 3 car garage and virtually every modern amenity. Nothing in Alexandria matches this home in terms of price & financing! Open Sun 1-4pm. I-395: E Seminary, R Pickett, R Pegram.



7501
Park Terrace Dr
\$1,300,000
Stunning!
Inspired by Frank
Lloyd Wright's
Prairie style, this
1.13 acre property
sits on a bluff

overlooking acres of parkland with seasonal river views! Heart of redwood features, large room sizes, high ceilings and expansive glass window walls capture the natural beauty of grounds. Off GW Pkwy, 3 miles from Old Town. (Adjoining 1.18 acre available for \$975,000).



PRICE SLASHED!

4307
Sheridan's Point
\$794,500
*Georgian
Colonial!*
Large Price
Reduction! Classic
updated Colonial
in prime Mt

Vernon location. Home has a combination of location, size and features typically only available in \$1,000,000+ homes! Three finished levels, open kitchen/family room, stunning master suite, two bonus rooms on lower level and dramatic sun room overlooking private fenced yard. Just off the GW Pkwy - easy commute to DC!



NEW PRICE!

9304
Allwood Drive
\$639,000
"Green" House!
Expanded and
updated, this
spectacular home
features uniquely
bright, open floor

plan, soaring cathedral ceilings and updated kitchen and baths. Expansion was done with carefully selected natural materials to minimize environmental impact. Prime location on large lot in the heart of Mount Vernon's nicest neighborhoods. "One of a kind" home!



JUST LISTED!

7913
Candlewood Dr
\$530,000
Backs to Park!
Expanded 5BR
home features
hardwood floors,
spacious eat-in
kitchen, formal

DR & 2 fireplaces. Stunning glass walled addition and custom screened porch overlook gorgeous lot bordering acres & acres of county parkland. Prime location just minutes from Old Town. There's nothing like it on the market!



9500
Ferry Hall
Court
\$1,450,000
Dream Home!
Builder's loss is
your gain!
Originally priced
at almost

\$2,000,000 - just reduced another \$300,000 to create a once in a lifetime opportunity! Stunning model offers the best of everything: open floor plan, high ceilings, 6BR, 6.5BA, 3 finished levels, top of the line kitchen & baths, 3 car garage and more!



WATERFRONT!

9516
Mt Vernon
Landing
\$2,900,000
Waterfront!
Waterfront homes
rarely become
available in Mt
Vernon on the

Potomac! Spacious custom Tudor was carefully crafted with the highest quality materials and planned with three levels of Pella window walls to maximize water views. 6BRs, 5BAs, full walk out LL and many rooms with dramatic river views.



STRATFORD LANDING!

8826
Camden Street
\$899,500
*Gorgeous
Setting!*
There's nothing
like it on the
market today -
fabulous new

Wakefield Home custom designed for this half acre lot overlooking acres of natural conservation land. Bright and open floor plan, high ceilings, granite countertops and two car garage. Pre-construction sale allows for maximum customization.



9411
Brambly Lane
\$975,000
Luxury Home!
Top quality
luxury home is
loaded with
custom features,
including:

exceptionally bright, open floor plan, high ceilings, gourmet kitchen, fabulous large family room, hardwood floors, elegant trim detail and the most spectacular master suite you'll ever find! This home is almost complete and ready for occupancy! Special financing is available.



CONTRACT!

9511 Mt Vernon Lndg
\$900,000



CONTRACT!

7107 Colgate Dr
\$598,900



CONTRACT!

6412 Potomac Ave
\$538,900



CONTRACT!

7114 Coventry Rd
\$548,500

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Alexandria / Old Town Historic District

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703.683.0400 ♦ FAX 703.683.1303



JUST LISTED!
OPEN SUN. 1-4

610 SOUTH WASHINGTON STREET
Alex / Old Town - \$1,495,000

Detached 3,300 sqft home w/3BR/4.5BA, chef's kitchen with Viking

appliances and granite counters, bird's eye maple floors throughout, sound system, finished basement with wet bar, roof deck w/FP, 2-car garage, and private backyard!



601 BASHFORD LANE, #3

Alex / Old Town - \$369,000

2BR/1BA loft home with large skylight offering an updated

kitchen with granite counters, stainless steel appliances, hardwood floors, W/D, completely renovated bath, fireplace & more!



Dayna Blumel / Kerry Adams 703.597.2252



OPEN SUN. 1-4

32115 WATER-SIDE LANE
Alex / South - \$499,000

BACKS TO WOODS! Fabulous cul-de-sac

location in Riverside Estates. 4BR, 2.5BA, 2 car garage very well maintained. Newer kitchen w/table space, baths, heat/air, windows. Huge rec room.



Brenda Jourdan 703.472.0406



NEW LISTING!
OPEN SUN. 1-4

2619 CHILDS LANE

Alex / Stratford on the Potomac - \$595,500

PERFECT 7! That's it, 7BR+4FBA! Sep office to work from home. Improvements incl: roof,

gutters, windows, shutters & more. DIR: from Alex/OT: south on GW Pkwy, R Collingwood, cross Ft Hunt, L Riverside, R Cavendish, L Childs



Leah Chapla 703.929.4875



7957 BOLLING DRIVE
Wellington - \$959,000

Custom designed & built! 4BR/3.5BA, gourmet kit w/wine cooler, den + office, custom closets. Fenced yd, brick patio. 2 car garage. Potomac River & bike trails.



OPEN SUN. 1-4

1100 NEAL DRIVE
Collingwood - \$649,900

Spacious, updated & renovated w/ new kitchen & baths, front porch, 2 car garage & deck. 5 finished lvls, 4BR/3FBA, FP & hardwoods.



JUST REDUCED!

1049 DALEBROOK DRIVE
Waynewood - \$475,000

3BR, 2BA, garage home w/ screened porch. Great opportunity to buy into Waynewood!

www.WaynewoodRealtors.com

Anita 202-460-1809 & Elke 703-967-7633



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Mary Rice Prosser 703.625.4461



NEW PRICE!
OPEN SUN. 1-4

6301 STEVENSON AVENUE #1003
Alexandria - \$171,711

GREAT VIEWS! 10th floor 1BR/1BA condo. Updated! Utilities in condo fee, walk-in closet.

DIR: from I-395, Duke

Street East, 1st R on Walker, R on Stevenson to bottom of hill on right.

Pictures: www.ijumani.com
Inderjeet Jumani 703.472.8804



712 WOLFE STREET
Old Town - \$649,500

WOLFE STREET GEM Circa 1820 historic plaqued 2BR/1.5BA end unit TH in heart of OT. New updated Granite / SS Kitchen w/ exposed Wood Beams, period Hutch, Old Pine Floors, Crown molding, large "6 over 6" windows bask rms in warm glows.

Philip G. Matyas
703.518.8727



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Alexandria - \$789,500

NEW HOMES starting at \$789,500 INCREDIBLE VALUE! **Delivery 90-110 days** Gorgeous stone front Colonial loaded w/charm. 4Br/3.5Ba, front porch, 2 car garage, gourmet kitchen w/ granite, hardwood floors.

Walk to park, pool, shopping restaurants! *Other lots / models available, please call for information:



Jill DiPasquale 571.436.8699



272 MURTHA STREET
Cameron Station - \$749,000

Stunning 4 level end unit "Randolph" model. 3BR, w/4th level Loft, Hardwood floors, 2 car garage, rec room with FP, eat-in Kitchen with center island, and a deck! Great community amenities! METRO shuttle!

Derick Hammond
703.519.0184



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Announcing Auditions for the 2009-2010 Season

Adult Chorus Auditions with new Artistic Director Brian Gendron

The 2009-2010 season will celebrate the 40th Anniversary of the Adult Chorus!

August 22 and August 29 from 11:00am - 5:00pm at Good Shepherd Lutheran Church
August 25 and September 1 from 7:00pm - 9:30pm at Good Shepherd Lutheran Church
For details and/or to schedule an appointment, please email: AlexandriaChoralSociety@gmail.com

Children's Chorus Auditions with Artistic Director Kevin Carr

The 2009-2010 season will celebrate the 10th Anniversary of the Children's Chorus!

September 10 and 11 from 6:30pm - 7:30pm at the Durant Center
For details and/or to schedule an appointment, please email: Kevin@AlexChoralSociety.org

All audition dates and times are by appointment only.

For additional information, please contact us at:

Alexandria Choral Society
Tel: 703/548-4734; Email: info@AlexChoralSociety.org
On the web at: www.AlexChoralSociety.org

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I'm Phillip Norris - Your Alex Neighbor



for probably as long as you've lived in Alex. My wife and I grew up here. I'm a finish carpenter w/28 yrs. experience.

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In addition to our award winning menu, we have added some popular specials that add variety for everybody taste.

Real food, for real people at reasonable prices.

Monday - Kids Night

Burger Night (Kids eat 1/2 price) Each child must be accompanied by adult having entree.

Tuesday - Greek Night

Lamb Marinated and Roasted for 3 hours,
Athenian Roast Chicken, Moussaka!

Wednesday - All American Night

Meatloaf, Chicken Fried Chicken, Va. Ham

Thursday - Italian Night

Lasagna, Chicken Alfredo, Calamari

Friday - Fish Night

Crab Cakes, Shrimp & Scallops over penne pasta with white sauce

Saturday -Steak and Chop Night

Prime Rib, Lamb, Surf and Turf, Pork Chops, and Moussaka

Sunday

Brunch served 7am - 2pm

Dine in or call ahead and your dinner will be ready for pick up.

Dinner hours 2:30-9:30pm
730 North Saint Asaph Street
Alexandria, VA 22314
(703) 548-1616

Ample Free Parking

THEATER



Emily Skinner takes on the role of Mae West in "Dirty Blonde."

More Than a Bio-Play

Mae West obsession is just the start in "Dirty Blonde."

BY BRAD HATHAWAY
THE GAZETTE

Signature Theatre has opened its 2009-2010 season. It is its 20th in Arlington and its first as the Tony-Award Winning Outstanding Regional Theatre in America. The first show is a three-person, multi-character play that is much more than a simple bio-play, even if it does cover the life and career of an iconic figure of the stage and screen.

"DIRTY BLONDE" tells the story of a pair of loners in the present who are fans of Mae West, a star of the past who appeared in such Broadway scandals in the 1920s as "Sex" and "The Drag" and hit movies of the 1930s including "She Done Him Wrong" and "I'm No Angel" with Cary Grant and "My Little Chickadee" with W.C. Fields. By combining the story of the emerging affection of this couple for each other with the history of West, playwright Claudia Shear manages to avoid simply presenting a biographical play while covering the interesting life of Miss West.

The play was a hit on Broadway in 2000 with Miss Shear playing the dual role of Mae West and the female fan. At Signature, it is Broadway-veteran Emily Skinner who takes on the roles. She is both touching as the young fan and an intriguing mixture of comic and tragic as the star herself both in

her prime and her dotage.

Hugh Nees is fabulous as the other young fan, a loner who is so obsessed with Mae West's memory that he made a pilgrimage to the California hotel where she lived in her last years, earning a chance to meet the star and, eventually, striking up something of a relationship with her. She bequeaths to him some of her gowns which leads to some unorthodox pleasures.

Nees carries the story of this rather sad young man through a number of stages as he suffers the loneliness of an outsider, experiences the thrill of a star-obsessed fan being acknowledged by the object of his fixation, and trepidation of the tentative efforts to strike up a relationship with a contemporary.

ROUNDING OUT the cast is the delightful J. Fred Shiffman who plays some of the men in Mae West's life. He can be a thoughtful friend one moment, a fellow vaudeville hooper the next and later West's abandoned husband.

This is "a play with music" and it features some of the vaudeville routines and songs of West's background. A single piano accompanies some of the scenes. In the small, 120-seat black box theater they call "The ARK" in Signature's two-theater complex in Shirlington, the sound of that piano sometimes overcomes the sound of the actors' voices but the problem doesn't last long.

Since the play involves events in

many locales, set designer Daniel Conway faced a real challenge in the small space which he solves in part through the use of projections on the back wall, visible through two frames fashioned as theater prosceniums. Helen Huang handled costume designs and went all out when it came to Mae West's costumes — luscious fabrics, spangles galore, glittering jewels and flashy boas, head-dresses and hats with plumes, feathers and more spangles.

◆◆◆

Brad Hathaway reviews theater in Virginia, Washington and Maryland as well as Broadway, and edits Potomac Stages, a Web site covering theater in the region (www.PotomacStages.com). He can be reached at Brad@PotomacStages.com.

Where And When

"Dirty Blonde" runs through Oct. 4 at Signature Theatre, 4200 Campbell Avenue in Shirlington. Performances are Tuesday - Wednesday at 7:30 p.m., Thursday - Saturday at 8 p.m., Sunday at 7 p.m. and matinees at 2 p.m. on Saturday and Sunday. Tickets are \$47-\$71. Call 703-573-7328 or log on to www.signaturetheatre.org.

CALENDAR

FROM PAGE 11

tasteful and healthful dimension to our tables. Hear about which flowers are edible and how to grow them. An English tea is included in this program. \$25. At Green Spring Gardens, 4603 Green Spring Road, Alexandria. Call 703-642-5173.

Summer Chamber Music Series. 3-5 p.m. Free. The Covington String Quartet. Washington Metropolitan Philharmonic Association. At The Lyceum, 201 S. Washington St., Alexandria.

TUESDAY/AUG. 25

Adult Chorus Auditions. 7-9:30 p.m. With the Alexandria Choral Society for August 2009, under new Artistic Director, Brian Gendron. All dates by appointment only. For details and/or to schedule, email: AlexandriaChoralSociety@gmail.com

WEDNESDAY/AUG. 26

Chevys Fresh Mex Fund-raiser. 11 a.m. to 10

p.m. For Tauxemont Cooperative Preschool. Dine at Chevys Fresh Mex in Mount Vernon Plaza on Richmond Highway and support the oldest cooperative preschool in Fairfax County.

THURSDAY/AUG. 27

The Jefferson Street Strutters. 7-9 p.m. Enjoy traditional jazz and American popular songs from the early years of the 20th century. At the Torpedo Factory Art Center, part of the Thursday Nite Local Spotlight series. At 105 N. Union St., Alexandria. Call 703-838-4565 or go to www.torpedofactory.org.

FRIDAY/AUG. 28

Sin Fronteras Offers South of The Border Performance. 7:30-8:30 p.m. Free mariachi performance is part of the Mt. Vernon Nights summer concert series. At Grist Mill Park, 4710 Mt. Vernon Memorial Hwy., Alexandria. Call 703-324-7469.



AUG. 27-OCT. 18

Musical of Musicals ("The Musical!") At MetroStage. The play is a funny parody of five Broadway composers, Rodgers and Hammerstein, Stephen Sondheim, Kander and Ebb, Jerry Herman and Andrew Lloyd Webber, with the music by Eric Rockwell, lyrics by Joanne Bogart, and book by Rockwell and Bogart. Both Rockwell and Bogart performed in the original New York production which began at The York Theatre Company before moving Off Broadway to Dodger Stages. It has been successfully presented on many stages across the country and in London and has a national Web site (www.musicalofmusicals.com). Performances are Aug. 27-Oct. 18, Thursdays and Fridays at 8, Saturdays at 5 and 8:30, Sundays at 3 and 7. Tickets are \$45-50. At MetroStage, 1201 North Royal St. Alexandria. Fully accessible, free parking, great dining. Call 800-494-8497 or go online to www.boxofficeickets.com. Call 703-548-9044.



Being in the Top 25 feels good.
KNOWING THAT WE HELPED THOUSANDS
 of women live healthier lives feels even better.

Inova Fairfax Hospital ranked #25 in the nation for gynecology services by *U.S. News & World Report*

Inova Alexandria Hospital ranked among top 5% of hospitals for women's services by independent healthcare-ratings organization HealthGrades Inc.

Inova Fairfax Hospital and Inova Alexandria Hospital ranked among the top 10% of hospitals in the country for women's stroke care by HealthGrades

U.S. News & World Report ranks Inova Fairfax Hospital Women's Center among the Top 25 gynecology programs in the nation for quality and outcomes.

It's no wonder we're ranked among the best. Inova's surgeons use minimally invasive techniques including daVinci[®] robotic-assisted surgery to help women get back on their feet faster, with smaller incisions and less pain.

Our gynecology cancer program is one of the region's most experienced, providing specialized care and access to the latest clinical trials to women with reproductive cancers.

And with our world-class pelvic-floor program, we help women stay active and confident.

We also have one of the largest and most advanced obstetrics programs in the country. Just ask the tens of thousands of happy mothers and fathers who have trusted us to bring their babies into the world.

That's the Inova difference – a commitment to innovative care, leading-edge technology and superior patient outcomes.

To learn more about Inova's women's services, visit inova.org/women.



Inova Health System is a not-for-profit healthcare system.

Calling All Wright to Read Volunteers and Students

Celebrating 30 years in Alexandria this September, we would love to hear from you if you were a Wright to Read volunteer or student from 1979-2001 and have a story to share.

Contact Leigh Hoyer at lhoyer@campagnacenter.org or call 703-549-0111 x 101

Alexandria
Gazette Packet

Serving Alexandria Continuously since 1784
 Celebrating Another Community Partnership



B&C Jewelers

56th Anniversary Sale

August 22 - Sept 12, 2009

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SCHOOLS

For Advanced Learners, Private Schools Try To Be Flexible

Lower student-to-teacher ratios make individualized teaching easier, they say.

BY JULIA O'DONOGHUE
THE GAZETTE

Alexa Williams knew her academic experience would be different when she transferred into Episcopal High School in 10th grade.

The teenager grew up in the Mount Vernon area and attended Fairfax County Public Schools her whole life. Attending Episcopal, a boarding school in the City of Alexandria, would be nothing like her ninth grade year at West Potomac High School.

But Alexa, who had always been a straight-A student, was unprepared for how much more challenging Episcopal's curriculum was.

"I got straight A's without trying to hard and I took four honors classes at West Potomac, which is the most you can take as a freshman," said Alexa, who had also gone through the honors program at Carl Sandberg Middle School and taken some pull-out "gifted and talented" classes at Fort Hunt Elementary School.

Alexa assumed that, even if she had to try a little bit harder in school, she would be able to earn all A's at Episcopal as well. She was wrong.

Even though she was giving it her all, Alexa's grades still dropped sophomore year

as she adapted to Episcopal's tougher academic standards.

"I had to take a grammar test at Episcopal and I completely failed it. I didn't even know what a gerund was," said Alexa, who had always considered English her best subject. At West Potomac, she had earned a numerical average of 100 percent in her ninth grade honors English class.

"I didn't really know how to study before Episcopal," she added.

Now headed into her senior year, Alexa's grades have gone back up and she has adjusted to Episcopal's higher academic standards. She is planning to take five Advanced Placement classes this fall, though she said most of her general education classes will also be challenging.

"I think the regular classes at Episcopal are equal to the honors classes at West Potomac," said Alexa.

FAIRFAX and Montgomery counties have robust and well-regarded public education programs for students who are motivated and academically advanced.

Both offer a range of educational options for students who are working above-grade level, including honors, Advanced Placement and International Baccalaureate courses. But the academic programs in the

two suburban school systems that are considered the most elite tend to be the "gifted and talented" centers, where qualified students have their own teachers and only take classes with each other.

In Fairfax, about 13 percent of the elementary and middle school students are enrolled in one of these special gifted centers at the elementary and middle school level. Out of the county's 12,900 ninth grade students, just 480 — including a handful from outside Fairfax County — were admitted to attend Thomas Jefferson High School for Science and Technology, Fairfax's only magnet program for the upper grades.

Montgomery County's gifted and talented centers are even more exclusive. The Maryland school system identified nearly 34 percent of its student population as "gifted" last year but just four percent of elementary school students, three percent of middle school students, and two percent of high school students attend the most exclusive

programs.

With few slots available, both Fairfax and Montgomery counties adhere to relatively rigid admissions standards when it comes to centers and schools for students identified as "gifted."

The two public school systems rely heavily on standardized test scores to determine who is initially "center eligible." Students who do not achieve a very high score on an aptitude test are usually not even considered for gifted center admission, though they can enroll honors and advanced placement courses at the middle and high school level.

LOCAL PRIVATE SCHOOLS take a very different approach to the education of academically advanced students and could offer an alternative to parents of high-performing students who are able to cover the tuition costs, which are typically well over \$20,000 per year.

SEE TEACHING, PAGE 22



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OBITUARY

Winters

FROM PAGE 10

abroad, plus managing their growing family of four girls and the household staff.

Prior to Cdr. Winters' retirement from the Navy in 1961, the couple and their children returned to Northern Virginia in 1959. They lived in a house in the Jefferson Park neighborhood of Alexandria, a four-bedroom house they purchased earlier, in the mid-1950s.

While her husband established himself as a local Realtor with Hicks Realty and, later, as a Realtor-Broker at Town & Country Realty, Inc., Mrs. Winters busied herself at home, raising their four children. When her husband began his own real estate firm, 4 Seasons Realty, Inc., she joined him as the company's vice president, office manager and bookkeeper. Together, the couple ran a successful business. They bought and sold numerous properties throughout Northern Virginia as investments. They "retired" again in the late 1980s.

As a couple, they were nearly inseparable. Her husband was his class secretary for nearly

three decades, handling correspondence, writing a monthly column for Shipmate, the alumni association magazine, and handling funeral details for classmates and their family members. Attending USNA Class of 1940 functions and other alumni events was a focus of their social life. A yearly highlight was a two-week family vacation at Sussex Shores the last two weeks in August. Later in their marriage, the couple began taking annual cruises. They traveled to Alaska and Asia. They also visited Pearl Harbor for the first time since World War II. The Winters were parishioners at St. Rita's Catholic Church in Alexandria and sent their children to area Catholic schools. Skilled at sewing, knitting and needlepoint, Mrs. Winters made all the children's uniforms, when possible, to save money. A steak dinner was served only once a year. She clipped coupons and collected S&H stamps.

Mrs. Winters was active for many years as a Meals On Wheels volunteer, delivering meals to several women each week; and regularly ironed linens for the church. She enjoyed her

sewing skills and made many couture-quality clothing for herself and her children.

Since 2002, she has resided near Ft. Belvoir, a resident of The Fairfax Lifecare Retirement Community.

Mrs. Winters is survived by her four daughters: Sandra Leigh Winters of Key Biscayne, Fla., and her spouse Stuart D. Ames; Wendi (nee Wendy) Winters of Annapolis, Md., and her spouse Tod A.J. Geimer; Dana Rengers of Alexandria, Va., and her spouse Ed Rengers; and Debra Winters of Yuma, Ariz. She is also survived by her seven grandchildren: John O. McElvey III, USN Petty Officer Winters Leigh Geimer, USNA Midshipman Phoenix Winters Geimer, Montana Winters Geimer, Summerleigh Winters Geimer, former U.S. Army Sgt. Robinson Leigh Williams, a veteran of the War in Afghanistan and Iraq, Danielle Rengers and Michelle Rengers, and three step-grandchildren David Ames, Jessica Ames and Jessica Rengers; two great-grandchildren Zachary McElvey and Riley Danielle Parham; and three step-great-grandchildren Madeleine and Grace Ames, and Ari Ames Blumenthal.

FAITH NOTES

E-mail announcements to gazette@connectionnewspapers.com. Deadline is Thursday at noon for the following week's paper. Photos and artwork encouraged. Call Steve Hibbard at 703-778-9412 with questions.

Two historic Alexandria churches — Meade Memorial Episcopal Church and Christ Church — will jointly present activities over three

weekends beginning Sept. 13-27. The activities will commemorate 140 years of ministry at Meade Memorial. Meade Memorial was created in 1869-1870 after 50 African American members of Christ Church — the church of Generals George Washington and Robert E. Lee — petitioned to establish a separate, independent church for Black Episcopalians. The commemoration will include the following activities:

❖ **Sunday, Sept. 13, 10 a.m.** - A celebration of mass will be held at Meade Memorial followed by a 4 p.m. jazz concert at The Lyceum (201 South Washington St., Alexandria). The jazz concert features nationally renowned pianist, Dick Morgan. The concert is free but donations will be accepted.

❖ **Friday, Sept. 18, from 7-11 p.m.** - Young people are invited to dance for Christ to the sounds of a local

disk jockey in the Meade Parish Hall. The price of admission is \$5.

❖ **Saturday, Sept. 19, 3-7 p.m.** Fort Ward Park (4301 W. Braddock Road, Alexandria; call 703-838-4848 Email: Fort Ward Museum and Historic Site) - Meade Memorial family, friends and the general public will continue to celebrate with a parish picnic. Hot dogs, hamburgers and more will be served to Meade members and their guests.

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Three Golfers Qualify for U.S. Senior Amateur

West, Tallent card 67,
King shoots 71.

BY MICHAEL K. BOHN
THE GAZETTE

Golf great Bobby Jones considered an 18-hole match an insufficient test of talent for players. He thought that 36 holes were needed to separate the good golfers from the also-rans.

At Mount Vernon Country Club on Thursday, 52 men attempted to qualify for the 2009 U.S. Senior Amateur. In this case, the best golfers did indeed rise to the top in only one round.

Two of the Washington area's finest senior amateurs — Marty West and Pat Tallent — claimed co-medalist honors. Each shot 3-under 67 on the mid-length Mount Vernon track, a par-70 course that demands good shot-making and course management. Weir King of Stuart, Fla., earned the third and

last spot with a 1-over 71.

A Vienna resident, Tallent has one of the best amateur golf resumes in the country. The Congressional member had anticipated that an under-par score would qualify for next month's national championship.

"I figured that a 67 or 68 would get a spot," he said afterward.

Tallent, 55, had four birdies during the round, but counted two par putts as the highlights.

"One was on the tough third hole, where the green is protected by a creek and a pond," he said. "That was a big boost."

West, 61, lives in Rockville, Md., and plays at Columbia. He also posted four birdies in his round and said afterward, "I only missed two greens. I'll take that anytime."

This was his sixth time to qualify for the Senior Amateur, and he has made it to the match play part of the championship on five occasions.

The Beverly Country Club in Chicago will host the U.S. Senior Amateur Championship Sept. 12-17.



PHOTO BY MICHAEL K. BOHN/THE GAZETTE

Pat Tallent, left, and Marty West, right, join U.S. Golf Association committee member Jerry Duffy after qualifying at Mount Vernon Country Club for the U.S. Senior Amateur.

PEOPLE NOTES

Bobbie Seligmann, a volunteer working with the Hollin Hills Civic Association of Alexandria, received the Generations United Outstanding Older Adult Volunteer Award at an awards dinner held during the organization's



15th International Conference in Washington, D.C. The award, presented by Michael Marcus, program officer for aging at the Harry

and Jeanette Weinberg Foundation, honors an individual age 60 or older who has made an outstanding contribution to an intergenerational program or has advocated for older adults and youth.

A lifelong volunteer, Bobbie Seligmann has lived, taught, and engaged in community service in the United States, Japan, and Germany. Seligmann,

a retired teacher, has been the Volunteer Coordinator at The Hollin Hills Civic Association for over 15 years.

In this capacity, she has created ties between the Hollin Hills Civic Association and its neighboring school. During the 15 years of her involvement, hundreds of school children and adult volunteers have had the opportunity to establish connections and benefit from tutorial relationships.

Huntley Meadows Park in Alexandria recently recognized several volunteers for outstanding contributions to the Park Authority's wetlands park. Huntley's volunteers contribute about 5,000 service hours each year.

Three volunteers, known as the "Herbarium Ladies," were recognized as 2009 Ken Howard Volunteers of the Year. **Karla Jamir** of Alexandria; **Virginia Powers**, of Alexandria; and **Dorothy Raduazo**, of Alexandria, were honored for their teamwork in identifying, preserving and maintaining the park's herbarium. On a weekly basis, they spend hours walking the trails as well as making database entries and working with specimens.

The plants preserved in the herbarium accurately document changes in the park's plant communities over time and help provide the information needed to make sound resource management decisions.

Three others were named outstanding volunteers. **Adam Bucher** of Alexandria is involved with meadow burns, amphibian surveys, aquatic macro-invertebrate surveys, water quality testing and assisting with Eco-savvy and Wetland Awareness Day events.

Steve Lindblom, also an Alexandria resident, is active with programming, helps on invasive plant removals, park spruce-ups and renovating the bird feeding station. He also loves to build and has made new nest boxes for the park and for sales desk.

Another Alexandrian, **Kat Oches**, is a new program leader. This spring she led her own school groups on the trails and shared her enthusiasm for nature. This summer she will be helping with water quality monitoring.

If interested in learning more about volunteering at Huntley Meadows Park, call 703-768-2525 and ask for Ann Stat, volunteer coordinator.

SPORTS BRIEF

Basketball Training

Preseason basketball player development sessions are being directed by Mark Vincent. All workouts will be focused on skill development. Each session will include shooting techniques, shooting, ball handling, one-on-one moves, moving without the ball, reading screens, passing, defensive tech-

niques, defensive concepts, speed/agility, and the mental approach to the game. Each player must bring a notebook. There is a four-player limit for each workout. Location and time will be determined. For more information, e-mail markvincentbasketballcamps@gmail.com



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

All-Stars Riverside Gardens swim team sent seven swimmers to All Stars. Back row: Patrick Sullivan (free), Sean Heffernan (back & IM), Carly Stapleton (breast), Kevin Grant (free & breast). Front row: Adam Bloom (fly), Jonathan Letai (back & fly), Ryan Scott (breast). Riverside had a second place finish this season in Division 8.

From Recent Graduates, Some Advice

FROM PAGE 8

Ridge, Tenn. and other district and regional championships across Fairfax County. As a former school and class officer, and captain of the crew and swim teams for several years, I highly recommend that if you have the opportunity to participate in any leadership roles in sports, SGA and clubs, take full advantage of them as it builds life skills for your future. My advice for rising freshman is to apply yourself all four years to your academics and extra-curricular activities while still enjoying your last years of childhood. I couldn't have asked for a better high school or better times than what I experienced at West Potomac."

— GEN KOBAYASHI,
OLD DOMINION UNIVERSITY '13

"My most vivid memory of high school remains my first day. After seeing my peers flood campus in pinks and greens, plaids and polo's, I stripped my yellow tank top in exchange for a white polo in hopes of "fitting in." From that day forth, I was on a never-ending quest to reinvent myself in some way, always borrowing other girls' clothes, dying my hair, taking on different personas. However, as my confidence

grew with age, I discovered myself through refusal of social expectations around me. I loathed the conformity of my high school and found delight in my own individuality. If I could relive high school, I wish I would've known how boring it is to "fit in," and while people accept you for complying with social standards, they praise you for what unique characteristics you have to offer."

— CLAIRE BATTIS,
UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA '13

"From the moment I stepped in the front doors as a freshman to the moment I walked across the stage at graduation all I could think about was leaving and moving on to bigger and better things. While my high school experience was memorable and I wouldn't trade some of those memories for anything, the only thing that kept me going was the fact that I was going to leave and start my own life. To incoming freshmen and rising seniors I just want to say that you shouldn't let your desire to escape ruin your entire high school experience but rather use it to push you to do better things. It will certainly help you in the long run."

— SARAH CURZON,
VIRGINIA TECH '13

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

FROM PAGE 8

terrent? And, what would have happened to me if care and surgery was delayed or not provided? Scary!

The health care bill under consideration by Congress provides for a "Health Choice Commissioner" who will make decisions about what kind of health care and treatment we can get, if any, and when. The bill also provides that rationing could occur depending on the circumstances such as age and kind of care needed. There probably would be less priority given to senior citizens because of their age.

The bill also provides for government bureaucrats to provide end-of-life counseling. End-of-life and health care decisions are personal and family matters that shouldn't be encroached upon by any government bureaucrat.

Senior citizens who are sick don't need end-of-life counseling but encouragement to help them get well. After all they have contributed to society a long time and no outsider should interfere with personal decisions particularly end-of-life ones.

We shouldn't have any system that places the government between us and our doctors. Health is too precious to have the government bureaucrats tell us what is best including end-of-life decisions. That's very scary because it interferes with our personal free-

doms to choose and our precious liberties to do what we believe is right for our well being.

Call you U.S. representative and U.S. senators to express your views before the government run health bill is considered for a vote. Your future well being could depend on it.

Frank Medico
Mt. Vernon

Fix Health Care Now

To the Editor:

I have been following the healthcare debate for months. In fact, since President Truman made his proposal in 1945. Harry Truman had it right then and Barak Obama has it right now. I favored universal healthcare then and, after my experience in the armed services and years working at home and abroad, I still do.

My conclusion is that the Obama Administration proposals are sensible and long overdue. In particular, the creation of a public insurance corporation would be of great benefit to us all — whether Medicare beneficiaries, like my wife and myself, or those below Medicare age.

In view of the steadily escalating costs of healthcare insurance and the very few large commercial insurance providers, we need to introduce greater competition into the healthcare marketplace.

Only a public corporation which has as its goal the provision of affordable insurance for all rather than to earn a profit for executives and shareholders can perform this function. Only the competition from a public corporation will force private for-profit insurers to offer a better choice of insurance at lower prices. Competition would be far preferable to trying to eliminate present insurance carrier abuses by regulation.

Private insurers inevitably present a conflict of interest: they cannot both maximize income for their executives and share holders and provide the lowest cost and best coverage to those buying healthcare insurance.

It would appear that we are likely to get a healthcare bill that requires almost everyone to buy healthcare insurance with subsidies for small business owners and those with low incomes. This will be a bonanza for the private insurance industry. Some 47 million Americans who now lack insurance will be obliged to become insured. The insurance industry will, at the stroke of a pen, have 47 million more paying policy holders.

Is it any wonder that we need a public insurance carrier to compete with an already extraordinarily profitable and abuse laden healthcare insurance industry?

Thomas W. Fina
Alexandria

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FROM PAGE 16

"We don't label kids. We are opposed to the whole idea of children thinking of themselves as gifted and talented," said Robert Kosasky, head of school at St. Andrew's Episcopal School in Potomac.

Kosasky said St. Andrew's likes to emphasize persistence as over natural ability. They want students to know that if a person works hard enough, they can perform at a very high academic level, regardless of their innate aptitude.

Several other administrators made similar remarks about their school's philosophy and said that is why the standards for their advanced academic standards tend to be more flexible than the public school system.

For example, several private schools are more likely to let a child take an honors or accelerated course if the student is enthusiastic about the subject but even if he or she hasn't been identified as advanced in that area.

MANY INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS said they did not have a "cut off" score students must achieve on a standardized test to be accepted either to the school in general or into an honors class, like the public school systems do.

At The Potomac School in McLean, math is the only subject for which students are separated out into different classrooms by ability, and that separation does not happen until students reach the seventh grade.

But at Potomac, until ninth grade, there are no honors or advanced sections for courses like science, social studies or language arts, though students in one class section may be "grouped together" based on ability level, said Bill Cook, Potomac's assistant head of school for academics.

Cook would not answer whether Potomac considers all of its students gifted and talented.

"That is the kind of question I would rather not answer but we are blessed with an able constituency of families. That doesn't mean they are all brilliant though," said Cook.

MANY INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS also offer more opportunity for students who might be considered gifted in certain subjects areas but are not academically advanced across the board.

In both counties, elementary school gifted and talented centers take an "all or nothing" approach to education. Students are unable to enroll in gifted and talented center classes for just one class, like math, while working at or below grade level in another course, like language arts.

Those who are "center eligible" are assumed to be intellectually advanced in all core subject areas. In Fairfax, this is even true at the middle and high school level. For example, all English classes at Thomas

Jefferson are considered to be "honors" courses, even though the school focuses on science and technology.

Most private school administrators interviewed said it rare for any one student to be one of the highest achievers across all subject areas.

"We do not have a gifted and talented track. ... We find that students' performance in math and reading is not aligned at all. A child that is advanced in reading may not be advanced in math. In fact, they may need extra support in math," said Mimi Mulligan, admissions director and former teacher at Norwood School in Bethesda.

Even at Nysmith School for the Gifted, which uses I.Q. tests to help determine who is admitted, faculty do not find that students are working on a superior level in all academic courses.

"That is the exception. There are very, very few students who excel in all subject areas," said Ken Nysmith, who has been working at the Herndon school for about 25 years.

"Some of the children here are working on grade level in certain subjects," he said.

NYSMITH'S MOTHER, who taught in Fairfax County's gifted and talented program, originally started the school in the 1980s for kindergarten through second grade students, who were expected to feed into the local

gifted and talented center at Sunrise Valley Elementary School at third grade.

The school ended up expanding up to eighth grade at the suggestion of parents and families, Ken Nysmith said. Approximately 30 to 40 percent of the students who graduate from Nysmith end up attending Thomas Jefferson in high school, he said.

Like proponents of the gifted and talented centers in public schools, Nysmith said it is important for advanced students to be in a learning environment with their intellectual peers for social reasons.

In a program or school filled with gifted children, children who are exceptionally smart are not as likely to be picked on or isolated. They tend to feel more confident.

"The biggest benefit is that the children don't feel different," he said.

But even in a school focused on gifted children, Nysmith does not organize its class sections for most courses by ability level. Math is the only subject for which they separate out the more advanced students.

Instead, Nysmith faculty will teach children operating on several different grade levels in one classroom. For example, children in one science class could be working on three or four different lessons at the same time, said Nysmith.

One of the reasons private schools like Nysmith do not have to group students in classes by ability level is because of smaller class sizes with lower teacher-to-student ratios.

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— Mimi Mulligan, Norwood School

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