

Au Pairs
In Demand

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Elyse Richardson of
Langley volleyball is
this year's Liberty
District Volleyball
Player of the Year.

Operation
Kid
Comfort

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Sports Rituals - Bringing Teams Together

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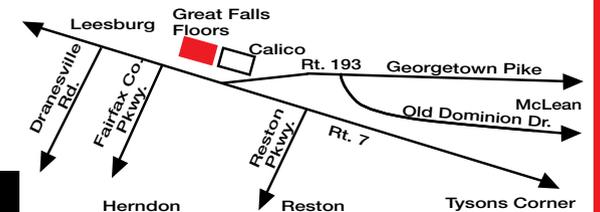
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Operation Kid Comfort

Something for children to hold onto.

BY BRIDGET ALLEN
THE CONNECTION

It's not certain who said, "War is Hell." Yet, the families of soldiers who serve in the Iraq and Afghan wars are certain of one thing: the phrase is true, especially for the children. That's why Operation Kid Comfort — a program where volunteers make quilts for children whose family members are deployed — is so important.

Susan Simms, manager, branch/corporate relations for the Armed Services YMCA in Alexandria, explains the program, its technical aspects and its popularity: "Operation Kid Comfort started at Ft. Bragg/Pope Air Force Base in Fayetteville, N.C., in 2003, as part of the Armed Services YMCA [ASYMCA]. Since 2004 the program went from being at a single site to several sites across the country. Volunteers are taught the basic steps of quilt making, how to crop and scan pictures, how to prepare the fabric and how to use other necessary equipment. Photographs of the deployed parent are placed onto the quilts via "photo-transfer;" the photos of the family member, or photos with the children and the family members are scanned into a computer, printed, and then placed onto the fabric."

OPERATION KID COMFORT has proven so popular that the demand exceeds the number of quilts available. Two volunteers Giselle Schneider and Karen Mudry Avil explain their involvement with the program, and why it's so special to them.

"I learned about the program by reading a newspaper article and I've been working with Operation Kid Comfort for about 2 1/2 years," Schneider said. Even then, juggling the responsibilities of motherhood, work and other volunteer responsibilities, the Great Falls resident, still made time for the OKC program. When asked why she committed to such time-consuming and labor intensive volunteer work, she seemed oblivious to the physically challenging aspects involved, instead she emphasized the personal reasons, that caused her to become a volunteer for Operation Kid Comfort.

"I can empathize with the feelings of loss a child has when they are separated from a parent ... I was separated from my father for two years when we came to this country as refugees. I can still recall wishing I had a picture of my dad to hold close to my heart during thunderstorms, or just when I felt lonely. Having my dad's picture near would have been a great comfort to me. Through the OKC program, the quilt or pillow a child receives has pictures of the child and their parent."

Mudry Avil a homemaker also from Great Falls tells how her friend's suggestion became her own labor of love for Operation Kid Comfort: "I heard about the program from my neighbor, Giselle Schneider, who had a son in the Marines. I asked her if there was anything I could do to benefit her son or the Marines and she said I could help her make quilts."

SINCE THAT TIME, Mudry Avil has also been with



One of the quilts produced by Giselle Schneider for Operation Kid Comfort.



Giselle Schneider of Great Falls with Cathy and Nathan Jung, who received the quilt at the 9-11 National Day of Service and Remembrance at the RFK Stadium.

More

To learn more about Operation Kid Comfort, visit the Web site at: <http://www.asymca.org/Programs.aspx?pgmID=28&mid=27>, or e-mail Susan Simms at ssimms2asymca.org.

the program for the last two and a half years, "I set a goal of making two quilts per month but right now I am working on 13 quilts." What's her reason for sticking with such arduous volunteer work? "To help the military in a small way compared to what they do for our country," she said.

Schneider and Mudry Avil aren't the only dedicated people working with Operation Kid Comfort. More than 200 volunteers met in a recent three-hour quilt-making marathon at RFK Stadium on Sept. 1. Hosted by Greater DC Cares, the leading and largest coordinator of volunteerism in the greater-Washington area, as part of a 9/11 National Day of Service and Remembrance, many other people discovered and fell in love with the program that provides big quilts, for children to hold on to when their parents are away at war-time.



Anne DiFronzo, local coordinator for Cultural Care Au Pair program in Great Falls, with Christina Schwartz, au pair from Austria.

Au Pairs In Demand

Families find the program an affordable childcare option.

BY ANNE DIFRONZO
LOCAL CHILDCARE COORDINATOR

One consequence of the current economic crisis is that more mothers are working. More new moms are remaining in the workforce and at-home mothers who had decided to put their careers on hold are having to return to work. With an increase in dual income households comes an increase in the demand for quality childcare.

In some cases, this rising demand is driving up childcare costs. According to a recent report by the National Association of Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies, the price of child care is rising faster than the average rate of inflation. The report, which provides typical prices of child care in centers, reveals that over the course of a year, the average price of full-time center care increased an average of 6.5 percent, almost three times the rate of inflation and more than increases in healthcare and college costs. Escalating childcare costs is having the greatest effect on the nanny business. A recent Wall Street Journal article estimated that full time nanny hiring is down between ten to thirty percent.

One childcare program, however, has been able to meet the growing demand for childcare with an affordable option for working parents. Cultural Care Au Pair is a childcare and cultural exchange program based in Cambridge, Mass. that places au pairs across the country including au pairs in Great Falls. Demand for au pairs is growing. Data from the U.S. Department of State, which regulates the au pair program, shows that nearly 22,000 au pairs came to the United States last year, up 44 percent from 2004. With

hundreds of available, qualified au pairs, Cultural Care is able to meet the needs of families looking for quality childcare.

"Although the demand for au pairs is strong, we understand that affordable childcare is an economic necessity for our current and potential host families," said David Fougere, president of Cultural Care Au Pair. "We have taken some major steps to help families in these tough economic times. While other au pair programs and other types of childcare are raising their fees, we are holding our prices at 2008 levels for 2009. We have also adjusted our payment plan and reduced the initial deposit so the upfront costs are more manageable. And, we will be offering greater discounts to both new and repeat families throughout the year so many families will be paying even less than they paid last year."

Here in Great Falls we have seen an increased interest in the au pair program among local families. If you have two or three children, there really is no comparison: The cost of the program is about \$340 per week and that's per family, not per child. Au pairs can provide up to 45 hours per week of child care, which works out to be less than \$7.50 per hour, regardless of how many children you have.

The families are looking at more than just the costs. In this current economic climate people are looking for flexibility as well as affordability. Cost conscious parents need to be creative with their childcare solutions as parents take on additional jobs or work longer hours. The au pair program is an attractive option because it allows parents to set a schedule that works for them on a weekly basis,

SEE PROGRAM, PAGE 5



Transturtles at Regional Tournament Award Ceremony, from left: Andy Tan, Neeraj Prasad, Jake Cui, Nikhil Sakhamuri, Kunal Shroff, Namita Dongre and Dhriti Vij, with coach Kuldeep Prasad.

Transturtles Team Goes to State Championships

First Lego League (FLL) Team Transturtles, Division 1, #5312 of Colvin Run Elementary School, with the team members from Great Falls and Vienna, made it to the State Championship at the FLL Smart Move Tournament on Nov.14 at Forest Edge Elementary in Reston.

According to the First Lego League of Virginia, approximately 10,000 teams registered with them. Out of the 100 teams that have been selected, five teams will make it to the World Championship.

STD Recreates the Nutcracker Club

The School of Theatrical Dance in Great Falls is staging its fourth annual production of “Christmas Eve at The Nutcracker Club” on Saturday, Dec.12 at 7 p.m. and Sunday, Dec. 13 at 1 p.m. at the Waddell Theater, NVCC, Loudoun Campus. Tickets are \$20 at the door.

The setting is a Christmas Party at a USO Club in the 1940s. The show is a mixed program of ballet, tap, jazz and modern dance performed by students, faculty and guest artists.

The program opens with a contemporary ballet, “Heralds of Winter,” set to George Winston, and moves on to Act I inside the Club, where you are treated to an ensemble of tappers to “Opus One.” After the party guests leave, the tree comes to life with “Tinsel,” a dazzling dance to “Don’t Mean a Thing, if You Ain’t Got That Swing.” In Act II, the variety ranges from “The Waltz of the Boughs,” set to Tchaikovsky, to a haunting piece by Wim Mertens, which sets the stage for “The Steadfast Tin Soldier” and the “Ballerina Doll.”

Meet Santa At the Mill

Enjoy an old-fashioned evening of family holiday fun. Visit Santa in the mill and see the country Victorian Christmas tree. Join the costumed member of the 49th Virginia Infantry as they sing carols around the campfire. Other activities include holiday crafts and roasting marshmallows. Shop in the unhurried atmosphere of the 19th century Colvin Run General Store for holiday gifts. Cost: \$6 (ages 3 to 93). Model Train Display. Fun for all ages. Watch as G-gauge trains wind their way through a miniature western town in the Colvin Run Barn. Free.

Saturday, Dec.19, 11a.m.-4 p.m. and Sunday, Dec. 20, 11 a.m.-4 p.m. at the Colvin Run Mill Historic Site, 10017 Colvin Run Road in Great Falls. 703-759-2771.



PHOTO COURTESY/LANGLLEY VOLLEYBALL

Langley’s Elysse Richardson, this year’s Liberty District Volleyball Player of the Year, keeps her teammates at a fever pitch with hand slaps during Saxon matches.

Bringing Teams Together

Whether wacky or common, local high schools’ squads need a rallying cry.

BY RICH SANDERS
THE CONNECTION

When Phil Tiller’s Oakton High cross country teams break out the brilliant gold warm-up jackets, it’s more than just a little bit special.

The nifty, pre-race gold tops – actually, a brilliant yellow – carry the school name, Oakton, etched on the back in large burgundy letters. They are worn annually, along with black warm-up pants, only at the start of the postseason, starting at districts and on through states.

The tradition began in 1998 when Oakton running legend Jim Hill, a former state cross country champion for the Cougars in the 1970s, gifted the warm-ups, both tops and bottoms, to Tiller and the Oakton team. Sure enough, the Oakton boys captured the state title, their second straight, that first year in which they showcased the warm-ups. Since then, Oakton runners have sported the warm-ups every year for the autumn’s most important late season meets.

Tiller hands the jackets and pants out to his top runners the week prior to the start of districts. And ultimately, a few weeks later when the season is completed, the Oakton athletes reluctantly have to give the warm-ups back to the coach. They are not for the runners to keep, but a tangible symbol of inspiration for the program’s use from year to year.

“Jim Hill has been a friend to the Oakton program for years,” said Tiller. “The warm-ups are an awesome thing. They get to wear those gold jackets and that’s a huge deal to them. They wear them with great pride. I kind of think of Jim as a founding father of the team.”

The high school experience is all about learning and forging relationships – whether in the classroom during the school day, or as part of the after school math or Spanish clubs, or out on the athletic fields of play as part of a school sponsored team. One of the most vital benefits of the teenage years spent in high school is learning how to bond with fellow students. In athletics, such bonding can sometimes become engrained as part of a team’s sports ritual.

Often, on game days, high school sports teams have

their own pre-contest rituals to bring them closer together and get them emotionally charged. Participation in sports teaches unity and trust, and one way of exhibiting these positive traits is for teams to observe a rallying cry of sorts. It can be anything from attiring gleaming, new warm-ups for the postseason, to girls’ softball teams singing in unison from their dugouts during games, to teams gathering in a huddle moments prior to the start of action and screaming, ‘victory, victory,’ together.

High school sports is an emotionally charged endeavor and teams seek to release that pent up energy in a positive, constructive way to relieve the building nervous tension before an opening kickoff, first pitch or start of a race.

MADISON’S GIRLS’ field hockey team, prior to warm-ups and 90 minutes before home games, spend their time in the school parking lot. They find some open space, get one of the team members’ cars and turn up the car stereo full blast. With the music blaring, the players dance around the car and do what’s known as a “break down cheer,” in which they clap their shin guards. This home game ritual is known simply as the “Car Dance” to the Warhawk players.

“It’s a pre-game tradition and they carry it on year to year,” said Madison coach Meghan Punaro. “They do the cheers and dances to get them pumped up for the game. They love doing that.”

Punaro does not mind, as long as the girls, by the start of the evening’s game, are focused to play good field hockey.

“My thing is, you can do all that as long as they come back and are mentally ready to play,” she said. “After they do [the car dance] we meet as a group, focus on goals and get ready to actually play.”

Madison, car dance and all, had a good season, going 12-8 and qualifying for the Northern Region playoffs.

Punaro said girls’ sports teams in particular have traditions of preparing for contests in such spirited, enthusiastic ways.

“Teams have traditions to get them pumped up and ready to go,” said Punaro, a former McLean High field hockey player who went on to play the sport for four years at Mary Washington University. “The [pre-game ritual] is the same thing every time. It’s consistent. In college we always played pre-game music and warmed up in a precise order. Some of the music really got us pumped up, very high en

“Elysse tries to get the kids fired up every game.”

— Susan Shifflett

MILITARY

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

Air Force Maj. **Park D. Ashley** is returning to the U.S. after a deployment in support of Operation Enduring Freedom. Ashley, a security assistance officer with 18 years of military service, is normally assigned to the 82nd Aerial Target Squadron at Tyndall Air Force Base, Fla. He is the son of Clarence and Clara Sue Ashley of Beach Mill Road, Great Falls, a 1985 from Langley High School, and a 1990 graduate of the Georgia Institute of Technology, Atlanta.

Keith A. Tooley has been commissioned as a second lieutenant in the U.S. Army after successfully completing the Army ROTC program and graduating with a bachelor's degree from West Virginia University. Tooley is the son of Jean D. Reimers of Donmore Drive, Great Falls and is a 2004 graduate of Langley High School.

Constance Lynne Solina was promoted to U.S. Navy Lieutenant Commander on Sept. 3. Currently with the Functional Integration Management and Training Directorate for the Center for Seabees and Facilities Engineering, she previously served in Iraq with the 4th Naval Mobile Construction Battalion in 2007, earned a civil engineering degree from Purdue University and a masters of environmental engineering from the University of Texas, Austin. Solina is the daughter of Pamela Beck Danner and David L. Danner of McLean, and a 1996 graduate of Langley High School.

Program Promotes Cultures, Languages

FROM PAGE 3

provides in-home care for their children and introduces children to other cultures.

The Greenspan family recently turned to the au pair program not only for the affordability but also for the flexibility and exposure to other cultures that the program offers. Jill Greenspan, a real estate executive with three school aged children, said, "As our kids were getting older and our careers becoming more demanding, we needed more flexibility than our nanny could provide. Also, having studied abroad and traveled internationally, we recognize the importance of exposing our children to other cultures and languages."

Anne DiFronzo is local coordinator for Cultural Care in Great Falls.

To Learn More

Local families interested in learning more about the au pair program can contact Anne DiFronzo at 703-268-6686 or visit www.culturalcare.com for additional information on the Cultural Care Au Pair program.



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31st Annual

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Sunday, December 6, 2009 10am-4pm

The Herndon Community Center will host over 100 arts and crafts vendors offering unique gifts, holiday decorations and handmade items.

Refreshments available.
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PEOPLE

Lapins Completes Doctor of Music Degree

Alexander Lapins completed his doctor of music degree in tuba performance at Indiana University Jacobs School of Music on Nov. 12. He also has a masters of music from the University of Michigan and a bachelor of music from James Madison University. He is an alumnus of McLean High School (1995) studying under band director James Kirchenbauer, Longfellow Middle School and Chesterbrook Elementary School. His parents Aldis and Susan Lapins live in Fairfax County.

This fall, Alexander Lapins joined the faculty of Northern Arizona University Flagstaff, Ariz., where he is instructor of applied tuba and euphonium and is a member of the faculty Elden Brass Quintet. Also an instructor at the Blue Lake Fine Arts Camp in Michigan, Alexander Lapins has previously taught at the University of Indianapolis, Indiana State University, Indiana University, University of Michigan All-State Program at Interlochen, Detroit Symphony



Alexander Lapins

Civic Orchestra and French Woods Fine Arts Camp.

Formerly principal tubist of the Lafayette and Terre Haute symphony orchestras and the Columbus (Ind.) Philharmonic, Alexander Lapins was a first-call studio musician in Indianapolis. He has had fellowships at the Tanglewood Music Center (Massachusetts) and the Henry Mancini Institute (Los Angeles), and has performed in China, Austria, Peru, Italy, and with the Chicago, Charleston SC, Indianapolis Chamber, Indianapolis Symphony, and Cincinnati Symphonic Orchestras.

Alexander Lapins credits the Fairfax County Public School system with preparing the foundation for his career.

You and Your Family Are Invited!

Friday, December 4, 2009, 6-8 p.m.
to the 19th Annual
Great Falls Village Centre
Christmas Tree Lighting

Festivities will be held behind the
Post Office, near the Big Christmas Tree!

10 a.m. - 6 p.m.: Holiday Shopping
& Open House

6-7 p.m.: Christmas Carolers

6:30 p.m.: Santa arrives with Mrs. Claus
to Light the Tree

7:30 p.m.: Live presentation of
Nativity Setting



Dear Great Falls:

Welcome to our 19th annual Tree Lighting celebration. Mark your calendars, the event will begin at 6:00 p.m. on Friday, December 4th. As always there will be holiday fun for the whole family.

For the children, we will have a petting zoo and pony rides (provided by Old Mine Ranch) that will begin at 7:00 p.m. immediately after the tree lighting ceremony. Of course, Santa and Mrs. Claus will grace us with their presence at 6:30 p.m. Children who visit with Santa will receive an old-fashioned sleigh bell courtesy of Tricks of the Trade. Jenny Berman from Ashton Imaging will be taking photos of children with Santa as scrapbook and photo album keepsakes.

We also have the live presentation of Christ's birth at 7:45 p.m. to remind us all what Christmas is really about. Beautiful Christmas music will be sung by The Langley Madrigal Singers and Christ the King Choir throughout the evening. Teel Construction will provide hot cider.

For the adults, the Great Falls Village Centre will host our annual Holiday Shopping Open House from 10:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. Each year, these one-of-a-kind shops open their doors to shoppers with Christmas treats, cookies, hot chocolate, and/or coupons to make your holiday shopping easier and more enjoyable. So if you do not like the crowds or the long drive to the big shopping centers, shop local and enjoy a calm, relaxing Christmas shopping experience.

In closing, on behalf of the entire Great Falls Village Centre, I would like to thank all of those who participate in keeping this special tradition going year after year.

Merry Christmas and Happy Holidays to all.

The Great Falls Village Centre

gfvcca@aol.com o 703-759-2485

Great Falls Village Centre 2009 Holiday Open House

Join us for our annual Holiday Open House Friday, Dec. 4 from 10 a.m. - 6 p.m. Holiday Shop and Visit with our Merchants: Adeler Jewelers, Cathy's Corner, Maison du Vin, Grandmother's Back Room, Jinny Beyers Studio, The Falls Salon and Tricks of the Trade. Please see below for special holiday offering. We are located at the corner of Route 193 (Georgetown Pike) and Walker Road, Great Falls, Virginia. For further information, please call 703-759-2485

Adeler Jewelers - Please Join Us & Save!

Holiday Countdown to Savings begins November 5th and runs through Christmas Eve. All inventory in stock is 30% off.

Cathy's Corner - Something for Everyone!

Loilita Holiday Glassware, Vera Bradley Bags and Stationery, Holiday Photo and X-Mas Cards, Jewelry, Fun Cool Tops. Monograms available on a wide variety of items. Stop by for a sample of Great Falls Garden Teas.

Grandmother's Back Room - Heartwarming for Children! Christening Gowns, Plum Pudding, Sarah Louise & Hartstrings Holiday Dresses, Webkinz, Gund & Ganz Animals. Young Colors, Winter Outerwear on sale.

Falls Hardware - Winter Survival Store!

Holiday Lights & Decorations, Tree Stands, Sleds, Ice Melt, Snow Shovels and More.

Falls Salon - Holiday Beauty!

Offering Gift Certificates (issued for dollar amounts or services) and many Stocking Stuffers.

Jinny Beyer Studio

The Store features Jinny Beyer Fabrics, Kits, Patterns and Books. Gift Items Available in Pewter and Silver, as well as unusual Christmas Ornaments.

Maison Du Vin - Fine Wine Shop!

Vast selection of Wines, Craft Beers and
Gourmet Food Items.

Tricks of the Trade - Make it Merry & Warm! Lambskin Gloves for men and women in earthtones, Bridle Leather Belts and Sheepskin Slippers.

COMMUNITY

MCC Presents Holiday Craft Show

Event showcases 80 artisans and crafters from 12 states.

McLean Community Center's (MCC) annual Holiday Crafts Show will take place Dec. 4-6. Show hours are Friday, Dec. 4, 11 a.m.-6 p.m.; Saturday, Dec. 5, 10 a.m.-7 p.m.; and Sunday, Dec. 6, 11 a.m.-4 p.m. Show admission is \$2 for adults, \$1 for children up to 13, and is good for all three days of the show. The center is located at 1234 Ingleside Ave.

Now in its 27th year, the juried show provides one of the most rewarding shopping experiences in the area. Original designs, reasonable prices, handcrafted American made goods rule the show. "Eighty crafters makes this the largest and most diverse show we've had in our 27-year history," said Sam Roberts, MCC special events director. "All the artisans are onsite during the show. This allows patrons to meet them in person, discuss their work and place custom orders many which can be ready by Christmas."

Among the artisans participating in this year's show is Francine Heckert (Dough Boys) of New Mexico, who will personalize her whimsical character ornaments for out of flour dough. New this year is Susan Watson (Midsummer Night's Meadow Farm) of Maine who raises the rare Cotswold sheep and shears the wool to make her colorful rugs. Patsy Fann (Playful Puppets, Inc.) of Great Falls returns with her pup-

pets that can actually swallow. Two craft guilds are also participating, Foothills Spinners and Weavers, who have been with the show for years, and newcomers Alexandria Glass Artists. Middleburg Creamery, a favorite all summer at the McLean Farmers Market, offers holiday ice cream pies. Visitors will also find hand-painted children's clothing and accessories, hand-carved bowls, pottery and fine porcelain, traditional and modern art, holiday greenery, florals, stained glass, handcrafted teddy bears, New England-style traditional quilts, gourmet foods and custom jewelry suitable to a wide variety of tastes and budgets.

Free performances by local music ensembles will set the tone. Longfellow Middle School's Choral Ensemble, McLean High School ensemble, the McLean Youth Orchestra Flute Ensemble and the Chantilly High School Choir will perform seasonal favorites throughout the weekend. A variety of

entrees, snacks, desserts and beverages will be for sale courtesy of Bertucci's Italian Restaurant, Tysons Corner.

Discount admission coupons are available on the Center's Web site: www.mcleancenter.org/special-events. For more information, call the Center at 703-790-0123, TTY: 711, or visit: www.mcleancenter.org/special-events.



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Every year between Christmas and New Year's, the Great Falls Connection turns its pages over to the contributions of local students. We are seeking artwork, photography, poetry, opinions, short stories and reflections. We welcome contributions from public schools, private schools and students who are home schooled.

E-mail to: PhotoM@connectionnews-papers.com, or mail or deliver contributions to 1606 King St., Alexandria, VA 22314. Please be sure to include the student's name, age, grade, school and town of residence along with each submission. For information, call 703-778-9410.

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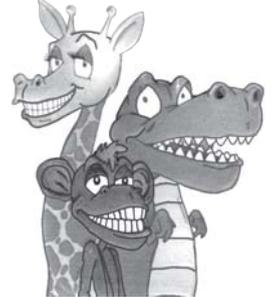
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OPINION

Support Your Local Businesses

Shop locally, it has never mattered so much.

Economically, things do seem a bit brighter out there. We hear anecdotal reports from some local retailers and others that traffic is up.

Small retail shops are part of what defines our community. Their livelihood depends on the livability and quality of the neighborhoods around them. A small business owner pays attention to every detail in his or her business in a way that no chain can.

Frequently, it is the local retail or service person who is active in fund raising for local charities, for fire and rescue service, for local schools and in organizing holiday events. They know how important local traffic issues can be. They have a lot at stake.

Still, it's a different world than it was one or two holiday seasons ago, and many families, even families who feel financially secure, are approaching this holiday season differently than in the past. We want to do things more simply, we want what we do to be less harmful to the environment, we want our children to learn the pleasure of receiving and being grateful without being overwhelmed.

Still almost all of us will be doing some significant holiday shopping in the next month. While you're at it, be sure to spend a portion

of your shopping dollars close to home.

One way to be sure holiday shopping comes with some holiday spirit is to do a portion of the shopping in some of the area's locally owned stores. There is special holiday ambience available by shopping in the heart of a town that is decked out for the season.

Local retail stores, mom-and-pop stores, face some of the toughest challenges imaginable right now. The costs of being in business have

grown tremendously while revenues are not.

Competition from Big Box stores, expanded shopping malls and shopping online make the holiday shopping season all the more important to locally-owned retailers.

Everyone will do some of their shopping at the mall. In this area, almost everyone will do some shopping online.

But local shoppers should be sure to save some shopping time and dollars for local stores.

Shop Great Falls Campaign Launched

The Great Falls Business and Professional Association has launched "Shop Great Falls," a community wide campaign designed to promote local businesses and stimulate sales during the holiday shopping season. Calling on residents to "Think Locally, Act Locally and Shop Great Falls," the GFBPA is seeking to raise the profile of local retailers and other businesses within the community and encourage holiday shopping closer to home.

From mid-November until Dec. 24, shoppers can visit any participating business and enter to win one of three Great Falls Gift Baskets, each containing hundreds of dollars in merchandise, gift certificates and free services exclusively from local providers. Most participants will also be offering special Shop Great Falls incentives and other limited-time

opportunities during the campaign.

"We felt it was important in these difficult economic times for the GFBPA to get out front and actively promote the individual small businesses that serve our community," said Ralph Lozaro, GFBPA president. "People are looking for value, now more than ever, and we wanted to give local businesses a platform to spotlight the selection and savings available right here at home."

"Even if many residents feel they already know the local businesses," said Lozaro, "we wanted to give them reason to visit again and experience anew what their hometown business community has to offer."

For more information, contact Mark von Keszycki at 571-294-5972 or visit the GFBPA Web site at www.greatfallsbpa.com.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Shooting the Messenger In Traffic Debate

To the Editor:

I would like to respond to your Nov. 25 article, "Residents Protest Additional Turn Lane" and the published letter from Jan McCarthy entitled, "Horrible Plan Threatens Pike. I think each of you has missed an important point. I also attended the recent presentation by VDOT at Reston's Aldrin Elementary School, but I heard a very different message. As you pointed out, the purpose of the meeting was to advise the local community on how they intended to deploy \$36.6 million of federal, state and county funding to, in VDOT's words, "help relieve congestion during peak hours, improve air quality, and improve the road's operation and safety," within and around the intersection of Georgetown Pike, Leesburg Pike and Seneca Road (Routes 193, 7 and 602 respectively.) Like my neighbors, I was shocked to learn that their plan involves the widening of Georgetown Pike, at one place to nine lanes, including two each merging from and into Georgetown Pike from Route 7.

An irate crowd of perhaps 150 local citizens implored the VDOT presenter, and the local elected officials who attended, to please understand that our community cannot possibly tolerate the resulting impacts on our scenic and historic byway, Georgetown Pike. "Surely," more than one attendee asked, "the VDOT engineers couldn't possibly have experienced traffic on Georgetown Pike as we have." To great applause, one listener suggested that the best solution was to simply do away entirely with the turning lane from Route 7 onto eastbound Georgetown Pike.

I have lived, worked in and enjoyed Great Falls for about 40 years, during which I have watched our local community expand from under 700 households to well over 7,000, and have led both our citizens' and business' associations. I believe your writers are shooting the messenger. VDOT is trying to mitigate problems not of their creation. Our county and state engineers are simply doing the best they can to correct a problem for which only our neighbors and we are responsible. By "we" I refer to the more than 3 million of us who currently reside in and travel between Fairfax County and our neighbor-

ing jurisdictions of Loudoun, Arlington and Montgomery counties, and Washington, D.C., all victims of illogical concentrations and distributions of households, jobs and other destinations.

I often describe Great Falls as "an island of tranquility in a sea of development." Like it or not, we do live at a strategic crossroads of job locations, service centers and homes. The price we pay for our tranquil lifestyle and pristine natural setting, including that of our historic and scenic byway, is that we quite willingly forego some of the benefits and efficiencies of modern infrastructure. We choose to accept potentially polluted and inadequate wells, often-foul septic odors, less than optimum response time by emergency services and, yes, a choked road network. Indeed, we cherish Georgetown Pike because it was designed for the traffic that flowed on it two centuries ago, not that of the present.

The proposal to simply close the means of entering our community from Route 7 at Georgetown Pike ignores the inevitable fact that it would only move traffic from that intersection to the next one, Utterback Store Road. Traffic is of an organic nature, flowing along the paths of least resistance.

Whenever reality, or perception, suggests a viable shortcut, drivers will take advantage of it. By way of example, the traffic light recently installed at River Bend Road and Georgetown Pike, while compromising the historic character of the Pike, was nevertheless justified by safety concerns. Reportedly, it has already contributed to increased traffic volumes on Beach Mill and River Bend Roads due to greater efficiency of merging traffic at this former choke point. Thus, east-west traffic through our community will forever be "adjusted" to utilize not only Route 7 but also increasingly Georgetown Pike, and Beach Mill and River Bend Roads, until each becomes equally unbearable.

So where do we go from here? I would suggest that we really have no alternative but to accept gridlock until there are effective changes of our resources and behaviors. The prospects of mass transit and the widening of a limited access Leesburg Pike will likely use all our available public funding. Changes in personal and corporate behavior will help, including increased telecommuting, flexible hours, carpooling and ride sharing. An increase of gas prices

SEE LETTERS, PAGE 19

THE CONNECTION

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NEWS DEPARTMENT:
To discuss ideas and concerns,
Call: 703-778-9410
e-mail:
greatfalls@connectionnewspapers.com

Kemal Kurspahic
Editor ♦ 703-778-9414
kemal@connectionnewspapers.com

Mike DiCicco
Community Reporter
703-778-9441
mdicicco@connectionnewspapers.com

Julia O'Donoghue
Education & Politics
703-778-9436
jodonoghue@connectionnewspapers.com

Ken Moore
Courts & Projects
kmoore@connectionnewspapers.com

Rich Sanders
Sports Editor ♦ 703-224-3031
rsanders@connectionnewspapers.com

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Editor & Publisher
Mary Kimm
703-778-9433
mkimm@connectionnewspapers.com

Editor in Chief
Steven Mauren
Managing Editors
Michael O'Connell, Kemal Kurspahic
Photography:
Robbie Hammer, Louise Krafft,
Craig Sterbutzel
Art/Design:
Geovani Flores, Laurence Foong,
John Heinly, Wayne Shipp,
John Smith
Production Manager:
Jean Card

CIRCULATION: 703-778-9426
Circulation Manager:
Linda Pecquex
circulation@connectionnewspapers.com

CONNECTION NEWSPAPERS,
L.L.C.
Peter Labovitz
President/CEO

Mary Kimm
Publisher/Chief Operating Officer
703-778-9433
mkimm@connectionnewspapers.com

Jerry Vernon
Executive Vice President
jvernon@connectionnewspapers.com

Wesley DeBrosse
Controllor

Debbie Funk
National Sales
703-778-9444
debfunk@connectionnewspapers.com

REAL ESTATE



Networking co-host Donna Paton pictured with photographer Hisham Ibrahim.

To have real estate information listed in the Connection, send to greatfalls@connectionnewspapers.com. Deadline is Friday.

Donna Paton of Paton Real Estate, LLC and Richard Moroscak Jr. of 1st Commonwealth Bank of Virginia co-hosted a Networking Happy Hour at the McLean office of Paton Real Estate, LLC. on Nov. 11, 2009 to announce new 100% agent compensation plan. The event was catered by Sweet Leaf of McLean. In attendance were real estate agents from several companies, builders, clients, friends, and local business owners. An artist, Edelwiess Calcagno, was on hand to explain her "cubism style" work which will be on display at Paton Real Estate, LLC for the next few months. A photographer Hisham Ibrahim was also in attendance. Calcagno agreed to keep the art gallery set up for

future fundraising events. The artist is offering 50% from silent auctions on selected items to raise money for charities sponsored by Paton Real Estate, LLC.

Bruce Green, regional vice president of Weichert, Realtors announced that Sepideh Farivar, J.D. Callander and the McLean/Dolley Madison office were recognized for industry successes in October.

Farivar led the company for dollar volume and she also led the region for resales. Callander led the region for resale dollar volume. The entire sales team led the region for resale dollar volume. The region comprises offices located throughout Virginia.

The McLean/Dolley Madison branch, located at 1313 Dolley Madison Blvd., can be reached at (703) 760-8880.

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CALENDAR

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

THURSDAY/DEC. 3

Great Falls Womens' Club 7th Annual Bridge Jamboree. 9:30 a.m. at Christ the King Lutheran Church, 10550 Georgetown Pike, Great Falls. The proceeds will support the GFWC Scholarship Fund and gift cards for the Fairfax County Shelter for Abused Women and Children. \$40, including continental breakfast and lunch. Prizes will be awarded. Reserve with Karen Magley, 11608 Holly Briar Lane, Great Falls, VA 22066.

Schooner Fare. 8 p.m. at Wolf Trap Foundation for the Performing Arts, 1624 Trap Road, Vienna. Maritime folk-pop and original compositions. \$25. 703-938-2404 or www.wolftrap.org.

Hansel and Gretel. 7 p.m. in the McLean High School auditorium. Engelbert Humperdinck turned Hansel and Gretel into an opera in 1893, which was followed by a great number of adaptations. Admission is free. Donations will benefit the MHS Choral Department.

The McLean Project for Arts will hold an Opening Reception and Juror's Talk for *As Likely As Not: Sculpture by Alex Bay and R. L. Croft*, 7-9 p.m. at the Emerson Gallery, McLean Community Center, 1234 Ingleside Road, McLean. 703-790-0123. The exhibit continues through Jan. 9.

FRIDAY/DEC. 4

Schooner Fare. 8 p.m. at Wolf Trap Foundation for the Performing Arts,

1624 Trap Road, Vienna. Maritime folk-pop and original compositions. \$25. 703-938-2404 or www.wolftrap.org.

Virginia Opera: The Daughter of the Regiment. 8 p.m. George Mason University Concert Hall, 4400 University Drive, Fairfax. \$44-\$86. 703-993-8794.

Hansel and Gretel. 7 p.m. in the McLean High School auditorium. Admission is free. Donations will benefit the MHS Choral Department.

SATURDAY/DEC. 5

Person L, John Nolan and Brian Bonz. 9 p.m. Jammin' Java, 227 Maple Ave. E., Vienna. \$10 advance/\$12 day of show. 703-255-1566 or jamminjava.com.

The Vienna Choral Society: Hallelujah! A Christmas Concert. 7:30 p.m. at the Vienna Baptist Church, 541 Marshall Road S.W., Vienna. Handel's Messiah Part I and seasonal favorites. \$18 adults, \$14 seniors and children. viennachoralsociety.org or 703-255-5508.

Children's Holiday Shopping. 10 a.m.-2 p.m. at Colvin Run Mill General Store, 10017 Colvin Run Road, Great Falls. Volunteers help children find the perfect gift. Free wrapping. 703-759-2771 or www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/crm.

Colvin Run Ballroom Dance. At Colvin Run Schoolhouse, 10201 Colvin Run Road, Great Falls. Live music by Arrow. Dance lesson 8 p.m., dancing 9-11:30 p.m. \$15 dance, \$5 lesson. 703-795-2003 or www.colvinrun.org.

The 20th Annual Model Train Display. 10 a.m.-5 p.m. at the Fairfax Station Railroad Museum, 11200 Fairfax Station Road, Fairfax

Station. Many different gauge model trains will be running in the main building, caboose and on the grounds. Enjoy hot chocolate and a gingerbread man. \$5 adults, \$1 children. 703-425-9225.

The Smart Split: Legal Aspects of Separation and Divorce. 10 a.m. at McLean Government Center, 1437 Balls Hill Road, McLean. \$45 non-members, \$35 members. www.thewomenscenter.org or 703-281-2657.

Our Lady of Good Counsel Church 5th Annual Holiday Bazaar. 10 a.m.-5 p.m. in the parish's De Sales Hall, 8601 Wolftrap Road, Vienna. 703-896-7424 or development@olgcv.org.

Christmas Craft Fair. 10 a.m.-4 p.m. at Unity of Fairfax, 2854 Hunter Mill Road, Oakton. Jewelry, photography, artwork, herbal pillows, woven items, preserves, floral arrangements, CDs, books and more. 15% of the proceeds will benefit Unity of Fairfax and Unity Life Center. www.unityoffairfax.org for directions.

Doc Watson with David Holt and Richard Watson: Hills of Home. 8 p.m. George Mason University Concert Hall, 4400 University Drive, Fairfax. \$21-\$42. Youth through grade 12 half price. Pre-Performance Discussion held 45 minutes prior to the performance. 703-993-8794.

Opera Recital: Amahl and the Night Visitors. 8 p.m. George Mason University Harris Theater, 4400 University Drive, Fairfax. \$20 adult, \$15 students and seniors. 703-993-8794.

Holiday Bazaar. 10 a.m.-3 p.m. at LANK School (Lake Anne Nursery Kindergarten), 12021 North Shore Drive, Reston. Crafters and vendors, bake sale, raffle and children's crafts. Free Admission.

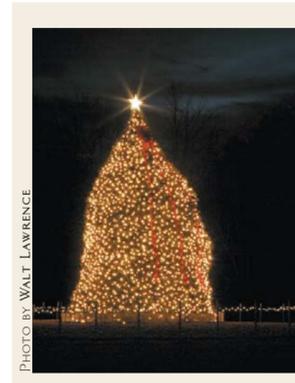


PHOTO BY WALT LAWRENCE

bethwomery@verizon.net.

Christmas Tree Lighting at Great Falls Village Centre

The whole community is invited to the 19th Annual Great Falls Christmas Tree Lighting at the Village Centre on Friday, Dec. 4, 6-8 p.m.

- There will be holiday fun for the whole family:
- ❖ Petting Zoo and pony rides begin at 7 p.m., immediately following the three lighting ceremony.
- ❖ Santa and Mrs. Claus appear at 6:30 p.m.
- ❖ There is also going to be the live presentation of Christ's birth at 7:45 p.m.
- ❖ The Langley Madrigal Singers and Christ the King Choir will sing Christmas music throughout the evening.

For the adults, the Great Falls Village Centre will host traditional Holiday Shopping Open House from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m.

SUNDAY/DEC. 6

The Master Singers of Virginia with From Chant to Carol: Christmas Music based on Gregorian chant and plainsong. Lecture 6:15 p.m., concert 7 p.m. at the Church of the Epiphany, 3301 Hidden Meadow Drive, Herndon. \$18 for adults, \$15 students and seniors in advance. www.msva.org or 703-655-7809.

Children's Holiday Shopping. 12-4 p.m. at Colvin Run Mill General Store, 10017 Colvin Run Road, Great Falls. 703-759-2771 or www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/crm.

Mary Fahl at 7 p.m. **Todd Sheaffer and Greensky Bluegrass** at 9:30 p.m. Jammin' Java, 227 Maple Ave. E., Vienna. 703-255-1566 or jamminjava.com.

The 20th Annual Model Train Display. 12-4 p.m. at the Fairfax

Station Railroad Museum, 11200 Fairfax Station Road, Fairfax Station. Many different gauge model trains will be running in the main building, caboose and on the grounds. \$5 adults, \$1 children. 703-425-9225.

Chanukah Boutique. 9 a.m.-1 p.m. at the Northern Virginia Hebrew Congregation, 1441 Wiehle Ave., Reston. Judaica Shop with menorahs, soap, wooden pens, fused glass, ribbon and jeweled sandals, scrapbooking products, Israeli crochet necklaces and leather belts, cigar box purses and more. Gift wrapping available. Free admission. 703-437-7733.

Greater McLean Chamber of Commerce 13th Annual Reindog Pageant, at McLean Baptist Church, 1367 Chain Bridge Road, McLean. Register at 12:30 p.m.; the fee is 2 cans of dog food for local animal charities and the Fairfax County Animal Shelter. The pageant runs from 1-3 p.m. followed by the **WinterFest Parade** at 4 p.m. Dogs

traditionally parade in holiday attire for contest prizes and have a photo opportunity with Santa. Prizes for small, medium and large dogs, as well as best in show. Pet services, vendors and rescue organizations will attend and each participant receives a goodie bag. 703-356-5424 or events@mcleanchamber.org.

Dog Whisperer. 5:30 p.m. at George Mason University Patriot Center, 4400 University Drive, Fairfax. Event includes Washington Humane Society Blanket & Towel Drive, where individuals are encouraged to bring new and gently used blankets and towels to the venue beginning at 3:30 p.m. Tickets \$39.50-\$150, at www.ticketmaster.com or at 703-573-SEAT. 703-993-3000 or www.patriotcenter.com.

Virginia Opera: The Daughter of the Regiment. 2 p.m. George Mason University Concert Hall, 4400 University Drive, Fairfax. \$48-\$98.

Pre-Performance Discussion held 45 minutes prior to the performance. 703-993-8794.

MONDAY/DEC. 7

Children's Holiday Shopping. 1-4 p.m. at Colvin Run Mill General Store, 10017 Colvin Run Road, Great Falls. 703-759-2771 or www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/crm.

Dom Flemens (Carolina Chocolate Drops). 8 p.m. Jammin' Java, 227 Maple Ave. E., Vienna. \$10. 703-255-1566 or jamminjava.com.

American Politics in a Post Racial America, with Michael K. Fauntroy. 7 p.m. George Mason University Concert Hall, 4400 University Drive, Fairfax. Free. 703-993-8794.

TUESDAY/DEC. 8

Colvin Run Community Center Weekly Dance. 7 p.m. at Colvin Run Schoolhouse, 10201 Colvin Run Road, Great Falls. \$10. www.colvinrun.org.

The Vienna Choral Society: Celebrate! Holiday Music for the Family. 4 p.m. at the Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Fairfax, 2709 Hunter Mill Road in Oakton. Adults \$18, seniors \$14, children free. viennachoralsociety.org or 703-255-5508.

Jimmy Gnecco and Adam Kowalczyk. 8 p.m. Jammin' Java, 227 Maple Ave. E., Vienna. \$15. 703-255-1566 or jamminjava.com.

Transitioning Your Career: Keeping Finances in Check. 7 p.m. at The Women's Center, 127 Park St., N.E., Vienna. \$35 non-members, \$25 members. www.thewomenscenter.org or 703-281-2657.

WEDNESDAY/DEC. 9

Line Dancing Classes for Active Seniors. 11 a.m. at the Vinson Dominion Hall, 6251 Old Dominion Drive, McLean. Join a new community program designed for age 55 and over. Free. Wear low heels and comfortable shoes. Registration required. 703-442-9075, TTY 711.

DC101 Festivus with Weezer, Jack's Mannequin and Motion City Soundtrack. 7 p.m. at the George Mason University Patriot Center, 4500 Patriot Circle, Fairfax. \$49.50. Tickets are available at www.ticketmaster.com or 703-573-SEAT. www.dc101.com or www.patriotcenter.com.

John Cowan's Christmas Show. 7:30 p.m. Jammin' Java, 227 Maple Ave. E., Vienna. \$15 advance/ \$20 day of show. 703-255-1566 or jamminjava.com.

Reclaiming Your Future: Financial Planning during Separation and Divorce. 7 p.m. at The Women's Center, 127 Park St., N.E., Vienna. \$45 non-members, \$35 members. www.thewomenscenter.org or 703-281-2657.

Flutopia and GMU Flute Choir Concert. 8 p.m. George Mason University Concert Hall, 4400 University Drive, Fairfax. Free. 703-993-8794.

THURSDAY/DEC. 10

Issa and Leslie Alexander. 8 p.m. Jammin' Java, 227 Maple Ave. E., Vienna. \$20. 703-255-1566 or jamminjava.com.

Artist Talk With Alex Bay and R.L. Croft. 7 p.m. at the McLean Community Center, 1234 Ingleside Ave., McLean. Featured artists from the *As Likely As Not* exhibition. Free. Reserve at info@mpaart.org or 703-790-1953.



Here's What's Happening at MCC



27th Annual McLean Holiday Crafts Show

Friday-Sunday, Dec. 4-6
Fri.: 11 a.m.-6 p.m.; Sat.: 10 a.m.-7 p.m.
Sun.: 11 a.m.-4 p.m.
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We have a wide variety of classes, day trips and activities to warm the winter months.



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The Campagna Center

39th ANNUAL SCOTTISH CHRISTMAS WALK WEEKEND

December 4 - 5, 2009

Parade: Saturday, December 5 at 11:00 am

Presented by The Junior Friends of The Campagna Center, The Saint Andrew's Society of Washington, D.C., and the City of Alexandria.

- Scottish Walk Parade
- A Taste of Scotland
- Heather & Greens Sales
- Holiday Designer Tour of Homes
- Children's Tea Party
- A Christmas Marketplace (Friday Only)

The entire Scottish Christmas Walk Weekend—including the Scottish Walk Parade—is hosted by The Campagna Center. All of the weekend proceeds benefit The Campagna Center's programs, helping children in Alexandria arrive at school ready to learn and ensuring their academic success. We rely on gifts from individuals and businesses to continue providing these outstanding services. For more information on how you can contribute to The Campagna Center's efforts, please visit www.campagnacenter.org or call (703) 549-0111.

For more information visit www.ScottishChristmasWalk.com or phone (703) 549-0111. Weekend events are Metro-accessible.

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FROM PAGE 4

ergy. But in college we didn't have as much of the cheers."

PETE SHERRY, head cross country coach at Herndon High School and a former professional runner, said the way his girls' and boys' teams prepare for races differs. The Hornet boys, a couple of minutes prior to the start of a race, will gather in a team huddle and get down on one knee. With arms around one another, one of the senior team captains - Jack Jasper or Alex Anthony - will give encouraging words. Cross Country, while an individual sport in some regards, is a great team sport as well where runners, often during the race itself, will encourage their teammates and often run in packs for strategy and morale.

"It's a real cool tradition," said Sherry, of the boys' pre-race huddle, coaches excluded. "I've never been involved with that. But I say, 'lets keep the tradition going.'"

One year, as a team gift, the Herndon boys presented Sherry with a framed picture of them in one of those pre-race huddles. The coach still cherishes it.

The Herndon girls, on the other hand, utilize what Sherry calls a "wacky cheer" in which team members will respond to their coach's calls. Sherry will say, "It's cold today," and the runners, in unison, will answer, "we don't care." Or Sherry will cry out, "we're tired today" or "its muddy today," to which the girls will give the same "we don't care" answer.

"It kind of gets all the negative energy out," said Sherry. Then with a laugh, the coach said, "Parents will just hear "we don't care," and ask them why they are saying that."

Sometimes, sports rituals are low-key. At McLean High, the football team will settle for dinner and a movie in the hours leading up to a Friday night game. Players are not necessarily required to watch the movie.

"It's a quiet time," said McLean defensive coordinator Greg Sullivan. "Kids can curl up and watch the movie or go to sleep."

But there are times the players really get into the movies. If the Highlanders are set to meet an especially physical team, they might watch NFL highlights in order to help them get into a bone crunching mindset. Or if McLean is going up against a particularly tough opponent, head coach Jim Patrick's coaching staff might elect to show a movie along the lines of "Miracle on Ice," the story of the Herb Brooks-coached, 1980 U.S. underdog men's hockey team that took the Olympic gold.

When McLean went 0-10 last year, Sullivan said the coaches used movies like "Miracle on Ice," to help encourage and motivate them to keep working hard.

"Last year we couldn't find enough movies to band together," said Sullivan, of what was a trying season. "We wanted them to keep that belief that things would get better. They would come in each Monday at practice ready to fight and ready to go."

Things have gotten better for the Highlanders, who were 5-4 and in Div. 5 region playoff contention going into the final week of the regular season.

SPEAKING OF FILMS, Susan Shifflett, the Langley girls' volleyball coach, recalled her 2007 region champion Saxons watching the movie, "300," on its

bus ride down to states in Richmond. The action film, depicting outmanned Spartan soldiers in their battle against super power Persia, was not Shifflett's type of movie - lots of graphic battle scenes. But the Saxons got a charge out of it.

"I don't watch bloody movies," said Shifflett, with a chuckle. "But as a team it brought them together. It was something they could carry with them into the match."

When it comes to an actual match, Shifflett's squad has a real life firecracker - senior Elysse Richardson - who helps keep the Saxons revved up before and throughout a contest. Langley fans are used to seeing Richardson, recently named this year's Liberty

District Player of the Year, running alongside the Saxons' team bench and giving her teammates hand slaps.

"Elysse tries to get the kids fired up every game," said Shifflett. "She runs up and down the bench slapping hands. She runs up and down and screams the whole time. It brings a sense of togetherness for the kids on the bench and the kids in the game. She's just a bundle of energy, it's just her personality. She keeps that up through the whole match."

Richardson said she started her running bursts along the bench during Langley's region title season two years

"So much of it is my team. They push me at practices and are so encouraging."

— Elysse Richardson

ago.

"At the end of that [2007] regular season I started doing it," said Richardson, who plays setter and libero position (defense) for the Saxons. "It fires me up. I love high energy and I feel it helps the team. They are laughing and it relaxes everyone. It is kind of goofy. Everyone seems to enjoy it so I keep doing it."

Richardson epitomizes team spirit. Her reaction, on gaining Player of the Year honors, was that her teammates deserved the credit.

"It was an honor and a surprise I didn't expect," she said. "So much of it is my team. They push me at practices and are so encouraging."

South Lakes boys' cross-country coach Kevin Donovan said team rituals can be simple. It's all about learning the importance of teamwork and encouraging one another.

"Our teams will get together and watch TV or go to a restaurant together before a big race," said Donovan, whose Seahawk boys' finished second at the recent Liberty District championships. "[At races] team members will cheer the runners on. That does help you when you have teammates cheering for you."

ONE OF THE MORE interesting pre-game sports rituals takes place in Ashburn and centers on a rock. The large mass of stone, painted maroon, is stationed several yards behind the near side football end zone at Broad Run High School. Before the Spartans, the defending state AA football champions, enter the field for home games, they meet around the rock. There, one of Broad Run's leaders, backup linebacker Christian Ruberwa, gathers the team together for a quick team inspiration time. The rock symbolizes the team's solid unity as a team.

There is always room for good old fashioned, high school sports enthusiasm. Langley's Shifflett welcomes the excitement level sports rituals generate. As far as she's concerned it's almost impossible to get overly charged to compete in the sport you love.

"I've never had a team too excited to play," said Shifflett. "Volleyball is such a game of momentum. If you can keep your team on a high it's a great thing."



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In Great Falls, Salome, 703-778-9421, or salome@connectionnewspapers.com

In Vienna, Don, 703-778-9420, or donpark@connectionnewspapers.com

In McLean, Trisha, 703-778-9419, or thamilton@connectionnewspapers.com

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

FAITH

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

Vienna Baptist Living Nativity. 6 p.m. on Sunday, Dec. 20, at Vienna Baptist Church, 541 Marshall Road, S.W., Vienna. Angels, kings, shepherds, the Holy Family, live farm animals and more. Stay for hot drinks and cookies in the Fellowship Hall. 703-281-4400 or www.vbc-va.org.

Vienna Assembly of God: Blessing of the Carols. 10:30 a.m. on Sunday, Dec. 13 at 100 Ayrhill Ave. N.E., Vienna. Scripture readings, songs, and drama will be presented by people of all ages representing all the ministries of the church. 703-938-7736 or viennaag.com.

HAVEN of Northern Virginia offers a variety of free bereavement support groups, meeting on a weekly basis. Contact 703-941-7000 or www.havenofnova.org for schedules and registration information.

The Jewish Social Services Agency (JSSA) offers a variety of support groups for those with emotional, social, and physical challenges. Contact Gary Axelrod, 301-610-8309 or gaxelrod@jssa.org, or www.jssa.org.

Vienna Baptist Church, 541 Marshall Road, Vienna, is celebrating the 400th birthday of Baptists. Sunday service is at 11 a.m.; Sunday Bible Study, 9:30 a.m. 703-281-4400 or www.vbc-va.org.

McLean Bible Church Fitness Class at Body & Soul fitness. Balance is key, energy is renewed, strength is gained, and friendships are formed. Mondays 9:15 a.m. and Fridays 9:45 a.m. Childcare is free for registered students. E-mail bodyandsoul@mcleanbible.org for more information.

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

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

A Centering Prayer Group meets Fridays, 9:30 a.m. at Andrew Chapel United Methodist Church, 1301 Trap Road, Vienna. The hour includes a brief reading related to Centering Prayer, followed by a 20-minute prayer period. E-mail Martha Thomas at mmthomas211@hotmail.com or call the church at 703-759-3509.

The Jewish Federation of Greater Washington and the Jewish Outreach Institute offer the Mothers/Parents Circle, an umbrella of free educational events and resources. Jewish rituals, ethics and the creation of a Jewish home, regular meetings and group Shabbats and holidays. Participants include Sha'are Shalom, Congregation Beth Emeth, Temple Rodef Shalom and the Jewish Community Center of Northern Virginia. ShalomDC.org.

Vienna Assembly of God has a ministry to children on Wednesdays, 7-8 p.m. at the corner of Center N and Ayr Hill Avenue, N.E. Children's Church on Sundays also available. 703-938-7736 or www.ViennaAG.com.

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Langley High Orchestras Present 'From Russia with Love'

The Langley High School Orchestras will partner with Langley's World Language Department to present "From Russia With Love" on Tuesday, Dec. 8. The concert will begin at 7:30 p.m. in the Langley High School auditorium. The concert is free, and the public is invited to attend.

This concert will celebrate the culture of the region by featuring student emcees and musicians. The evening will also feature a performance by the Ukrainian gypsy dance troop, Fantaziya.

Orchestral music includes Rachmaninoff's "Waltz

and Romance," Tchaikovsky's "Waltz of the Flowers" from "The Nutcracker," Shostakovich's "Festive Overture," Glinka's "Russian and Ludmilla," Rimsky Korsakoff's "Scheherazade" and "Slava," and Gliere's "Russian Sailor Dance" from "The Red Poppy."

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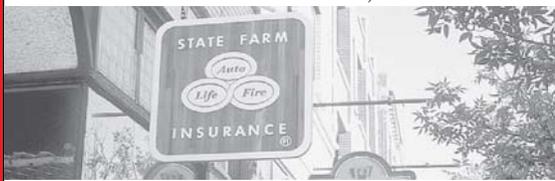
SCHOOLS



Great Falls ES Lego Team Goes to State Championships

Lego Craze from Great Falls Elementary came in first place for Teamwork at the First Lego League Regional Tournament in November 2009 and was third place overall. The team will be heading to James Madison University in December to participate in the State Championships. Team members include, from left, Lucas Collazo, Nico Tablett, Andrew Wantula, Alex Fishman, James Bollinger, Chase Wikberg, Ian Moran and Andy Entis. Team Coaches are Maura Bollinger, Ira Entis and Terry Wikberg.

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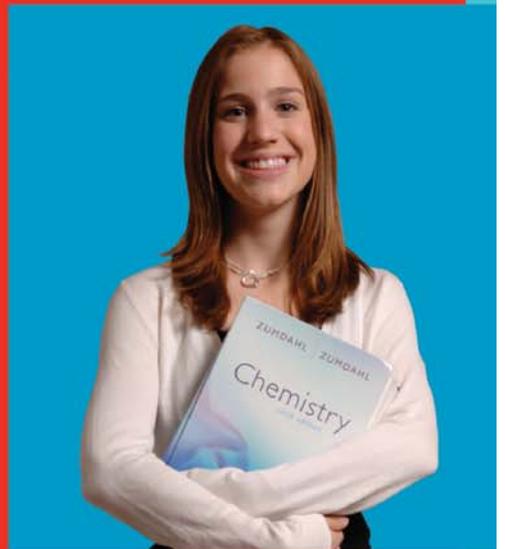
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The McLean High Athletic Boosters' Golf Classic fund-raising event took place Oct. 23, at the Reston National Golf Course. Shown here are Booze Allen sponsors, from right, Forrest Stieg, Kevin Dougherty, Michelle McCormick and Gerry Polumbi. The day of golf featured a best ball team format, awards, gift bag, lunch and appetizers after the tournament. Funds raised will go toward upgrades to McLean High athletic facilities, such as improvements to the stadium entrance, an asphalt walkway between the baseball and softball fields, re-surfacing of the tennis courts and the purchase of new scoreboards.



PHOTO COURTESY OF 10-UNDER NATIONALS

The 10-under Great Falls Nationals captured the championship of the Hardball Brawl Tournament in Ruther Glen, Va. on Nov. 7-8.

Oakcrest Captures League Volleyball Title

In the second year of its volleyball program, the **Oakcrest School of McLean** recently won the Potomac Valley Athletic Conference (PVAC) AA-Division with a dramatic win over rival Sandy Spring Friends School. The championship game took place at the Washington International School.

In its first match of the season, Oakcrest was shut out by Sandy Spring, 3-0. The team then went on to win its next five league matches. In early October, Oakcrest returned to Sandy Spring for a rematch. After losing the first two games, the Chargers regrouped and staged a major comeback behind senior Tori Jensen to win the match, 3-2. Jensen scored 13 of the 15 points needed to win the fifth tie-breaker game.

The Sandy Spring Friends and Oakcrest both finished the season with 11-1 records in the AA-Division of the PVAC and were named regular season co-champions. Due to a tie-breaker, Oakcrest was seeded No. 2 in the league tournament.

In the tournament semifinals, the Chargers defeated Queen Anne School, 3-0. Oakcrest, in its previous match, had beaten Barrie School, 3-0, in the quarterfinals.

On a Thursday night, Oakcrest and Sandy Spring met in the tournament championship match. Oakcrest spotted Sandy Spring the first game, losing 24-26. Shaking off their nerves, the Chargers came back and ran off the next three

games to win the match, 3-1. Jensen led the way with seven aces, 28 kills and eight blocks. Freshman Jackie Herrick had numerous sets that turned into winners. Jensen, for her efforts, was named tournament MVP. Junior Haley Featherstone made 43 passes over the match. In the second game, freshman outside hitter Janey North ran off seven straight service wins.

Oakcrest finished its first PVAC season at 15-1. Sandy Spring finished at 17-3, with two of their losses coming to Oakcrest.

In only her second year as Oakcrest head coach, Maggie O'Connor had a squad this year made up of just three experienced players, along with a number of newcomers who had little volleyball experience.

"A championship win is a huge accomplishment for any team," said O'Connor. "The fact that this is our first year in the league just makes it that much sweeter."

Jensen and Herrick were selected to the All-PVAC First Team. Featherstone was named to the Second Team. Jensen was also voted Player of the Year in the AA-Division. Jensen, a 6-foot-4-inch middle blocker, led the team and the league in kills, blocks, and service wins, and is being recruited by a number of college programs.

Oakcrest is an independent school for girls grades six-through 12, guided by the teachings of the Catholic Church. Oakcrest is located at 850 Balls Hill Road, in McLean.

The 10-under Great Falls

Nationals, a baseball developmental team designed to develop baseball players around the Great Falls/Langley High area in Northern Virginia, traveled to Ruther Glen, Va. on Nov. 7-8 to take part in the Hardball Brawl Tournament at the Virginia Sports Complex. Under manager Ryan Novak, the team lost its first game to the Petersburg Generals before reeling off four straight wins to gain the title. The wins came over Chesterfield Nationals, 3-2; VSC Academy, 9-1; the Virginia Stars, 5-4; and, in the championship game, the Petersburg Jr. Generals, 7-6.

All 17 Great Falls Nats' players played in each game, and it was a true team effort. The highlight moment of the championship game win came when center fielder Iain Muir caught a deep fly ball, then threw home to nail the base runner attempting to tag up from third base with the winning run. The 10-under Great Falls Nationals will now head into winter training, where they will be working with Madison High baseball coach Mark "Pudge" Gjormand two days a week. Members of the 10-under Great Falls Nationals are: Chase Beckett, Colter Carton, Timmy Conforti, Lucas Donlon, Colin Farrell, Tucker Farrell, Jared Helman, Patrick Kelley, Iain Muir, Bennett Norris, Kyle Novak, Chris Obolensky, Tommy O'Donnell, Michael Sevila, Jacob Shapero, Max Trautwein and Jason Volpicelli. The team's coaches are manager Ryan Novak and assistants Jim Volpicelli, Todd Norris

and Bruce Carton.

The Great Falls Nationals' program fields teams from U-10 through U-17 and is headed up by Jim Mraz.

The Northern Virginia Blaze U-18 girls' travel softball team, made up of players from all around Northern Virginia, captured the championship at the Winchester Fall Shakedown Tournament, on Nov. 7-8. The team was 6-0 for the weekend. On the back row, from left, are assistant Eric Cohen, assistant JJ Foster, Kayla Lherisse (Fairfax resident), Debbie Ward, Rachel Leonard (Arlington), Emmaline Lofaro (Centreville), Karysa McPherson (Falls Church), Hanna Joseck (Burke), Laura Jennings (Arlington), Karen Johnson (Clifton) and head coach Eric Snyder. On the front row, from left, are Nina Rodriguez (Reston), Natalie Eichner (Arlington), Courtney Conklin (Great Falls), Ali Cohen (Vienna). Not pictured is assistant Rick Schumann and player Liz Foster from Annandale.

The Herndon Hawks, an 11-under youth travel baseball team, will conduct tryouts on Dec. 13, at 2 p.m., at Diamond Sports Training (DST) in Sterling. The Hawks, members of the Old Dominion Baseball League, are looking for additional players. Parents of interested players should contact Coach Shawn Boynton at 703-615-1398, or at shawn.boynton@dcaa.mil.

George C. Marshall High

School has hired of **Luke Haen** as its new head men's tennis coach for the 2010 season. Haen is a social studies teacher at Marshall and is currently an assistant coach in the wrestling program. He competed in a number of sports in high school and ran cross country in college at the NCAA Division III level. Former head coach Stephen Moody will remain on staff this year to ensure a successful transition for the current student-athletes participating in the program.

The Marshall High Boosters will once again be sponsoring the Christmas Tree Lot in front of the school. Trees in a variety of types and sizes, wreaths and fresh garland can all be purchased. Need a stocking stuffer? How about some Marshall Spirit wear or the White House ornament. The tree lot will be open seven days a week until all trees are sold. Hours of operation are as follows: Saturdays and Sundays from 10 a.m.-7 p.m.; Mondays through Fridays from 5:30-8 p.m. All proceeds from the tree lot will go directly into the Marshall students' activities account, which sponsors 21 teams and a variety of clubs with the purchase of uniforms and equipment, field maintenance, capital improvements, and travel needs to competitions. In addition, the purchase of White House Christmas Ornaments will directly support Marshall's All Night Graduation Celebration. Contact Christmas Tree Chair Ellen Loszynski at ejloszynski@msn.com for any further information.



PHOTOS CONTRIBUTED

From left, actor John Geiger awaits his cue as Joe Dziekiewicz, whose character, Jake Laurents, plays the movies' protagonist, trades lines with cast member Robert Sams.

MCP Show Brings Art of Radio Onstage

'It's a Wonderful Life: A Live Radio Play' takes theatergoers back to 1946 as its studio audience.

BY MIKE DICICCO
THE CONNECTION

For their next performance, the McLean Community Players will give a stage presentation of a live radio broadcast version of a movie. "And the theater audience gets to be the studio audience, so they're kind of part of the experience," director Shayne Gardner said.

In "It's a Wonderful Life: A Live Radio Play," which will open next Friday, Dec. 11, a cast of just five stage actors play the radio actors who bring to life the movie's cast of about 40, as they present the Frank Capra Christmas classic to an imagined 1940s-era radio audience. "This is an actor's dream," Gardner said of the myriad characters per performer.

THE ACTORS also create all the sound effects for the radio show, she said. "It's amazing how hard it is to make shoes sound like footsteps when they're not on your feet."

"Some of the things they do don't look anything like the noise they produce," said stage manager Doug Yriart, noting that the sound of someone walking on snow is recreated by crunching Corn Flakes, while a creaky door effect can be made with a bird call. "That's half the fun of this show is seeing how things you hear on the radio are actually done."

Gardner said the cast had worked hard to flesh out each of the story's many characters so that audiences would not get confused as they watched the actors switch from one persona to the next.

"That's been the main thing for me — exploring the characters behind the voices," said actor John Geiger, who plays radio announcer Freddy Filmore voicing a large cast of characters.

"They have to think differently or they don't speak properly," said Diane Sams, whose character, actress Lana Sherwood, plays most of the females and young boys in the story, including Violet Bick.

"When they start arguing with themselves, it's really fun to watch," Joe Dziekiewicz said of his fellow cast members. His character, Jake Laurents, gets to focus on a single role, that of George Bailey, the central character in Christmas tale. Dziekiewicz said his challenge was aging the character from a boy to a man over the course of the show, as well as keeping up with his moods. "He needs prozac bad," he said of the classic's main character.

For someone of her young generation, the show was not only entertaining but also educational, as it taught her how a radio program was put on, said Nancy Bryan, whose character, Sally Applewhite, plays Bailey's wife, Mary. "It kind of put me back in the 1940s, so it opened up this whole other era."

MUCH OF THE SCRIPT is taken verbatim from the movie, in which the main character, a generous but frustrated businessman is visited by an angel during a moment of despair on Christmas Eve. The angel shows him what his town and the world would be like if he had never been born, and he realizes how many lives he has affected.

The movie was never copyrighted, Yriart explained, but playwright Joe Landry altered some of the original script for length or to convey scenes that relied on visual cues. And, he said, "There are some interactions you'll notice going on in the background between the radio actors when they're not on the air."

"We're very definitely not recreating the movie," Dziekiewicz said.

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The Cancer Club



By **KENNETH B. LOURIE**

A club whose membership you don't want in. Heck, a club whose membership you don't ever want to be considered for. A club, though, that can make the ideal claim, as being truly indiscriminate. A club that will, in fact, not discriminate based on race, creed, color, ethnic or religious background or belief, country of origin, level of education (or lack thereof), sexual orientation or any other preference/persuasion one can imagine/create. However, it is a club that will not exactly invite you to join as much as it will tell you that you are a member. To sort of quote Groucho Marx, you might become a member regardless of whether you would refuse to join such a club simply because they invited you to join. In reality, you have no control, well, not total control. You're either in or you're out. And in my brief experience/membership, it is much better to be out than in.

Now that I'm in, though, it is indeed a club. One without walls and secret handshakes, but a club nonetheless. There aren't exactly meetings per se (although there are support groups) and there aren't exactly dues (although there are a lot of don'ts and shouldn't-anymores); nor are there membership drives or incentives to upgrade your membership. However, unlike many other clubs, once in, you're in for life; whether you're an active, under-treatment member or a formerly under treatment/inactive member. Moreover: membership, participation, attendance does not have its advantages. It's been my experience, diagnosis to date (nine months, approximately) that membership only offers disadvantages.

Sure, you meet wonderful, caring, nurturing, well-meaning health care professionals; as well as supportive, empathetic, similarly-struggling, cancer-diagnosed patients – some of whom you see regularly (depending on your infusion schedule). Others you see less frequently, sort of in passing (no pun intended), when scheduled appointments, scans, lab work, etc., cause you to be in the same place at the same time. And, of course, there is comfort in sharing, and knowing that you are not alone, and seeing familiar faces, even if they are faces you've seen when visiting (I use that term loosely) your oncologist or after receiving treatment, is soothing, sort of.

However, as important as feeling a part of something (that is so much bigger than you) and part of a group of similarly affected individuals is concerned, still, it's the being-alone time that can't be prevented. Being left with your own thoughts, in your own personal space – and time, is when the rubber really meets the road. Diversions and interactions with other cancer patients certainly help pass some of that time, and make that time less lonely and scary, but it's hard to hide from yourself (and you know where you live).

It's at the end of the day, literally and figuratively, when whatever you've gained or absorbed from these fellow club members needs to take root once again. Remembering what was said, what shared experience was recounted, what encouragement was expressed, what explanations and characterizations of treatments, protocols, procedures, etc. was discussed and most importantly, what appreciation of some of the pain and suffering you've endured, physically and mentally was understood, which is so helpful and so rewarding that, if I wasn't already a member, I'd try to form a club whose members were so likewise engaged.

Cancer is certainly not for everybody (thank God!), but for those of us already in the club, membership matters. I wouldn't say there are privileges, but there are possibilities.

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

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LETTERS

FROM PAGE 8

to above those even in Europe, more creative zoning mixes and the imposition of tolls, would each incentivize foster fewer and shorter commutes and us.

The one thing that won't help is for us to tilt at VDOT windmills. These folks are just trying to improve a terrible situation and prevent damage and injury, using the few tools available to them. We must remember that when federal, state and local funding support our roads, they are public. We

cannot restrict them to residents of one county, life style or neighborhood. The Loudoun County commuter to or from his or her work place in Montgomery County has as much right to transit Great Falls on Georgetown Pike as our residents have to use the public roads in those jurisdictions. We need to place the blame where it belongs: on ourselves, not those hapless folks at VDOT.

John G. Colby, AIA
Great Falls

Three Elements Of Success

To the Editor:

After reading the article "Comstock Wins in Close Race" [Great Falls Connection, Nov. 11-17, 2009], I wonder what makes people, like Steve Jobs or Barbara Comstock, successful. In my opinion there are three elements that must be met in order to be successful in life.

First is destiny, which is the occasion in which a series of events allow a person to reach their highest potential in order to achieve their need for something. Steve Jobs, when he was young, was educated when computers were beginning to be used. With soaring unemployment, weak economy and skyrocketing government spending, the government in Washington was paying more attention to their political agenda then managing these important issues. As a result, there was a need for somebody, like Barbara, to represent us in solving our local issues and to have our voice heard.

Second is vision. Once a need is defined, having a vision for the future will help a

person to fulfill or satisfy that need. In Steve Jobs' case, he emphasized the early need for enhanced graphical user interface for the computer. Similarly, Barbara understood the need to run for the candidacy on a platform that has a priority of creating jobs through a strong economy and better education.

Third is tenacity. This is very important in the cycle because a person needs to follow up on their vision and this consists of a lot of hard work. Barbara personally knocked on thousands of doors to listen to what people wanted in a candidate and to tell them what her vision is and what she is going to do when elected.

Mixing these three ingredients together is the key to success and Barbara demonstrated that she has these qualities, a vision and the tenacity to complete her goal, in addition to the capability to be a successful leader.

Gigel Marinescu
Great Falls

BULLETIN BOARD

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

TUESDAY/DEC. 8

League of Women Voters of the Fairfax Area. 7:45 p.m. at Patrick Henry Library, 101 Maple Ave., Vienna. Contact Ann, 703-938-7304. www.lwv-fairfax.org.

WEDNESDAY/DEC. 9

McLean Community Center Governing Board Combined Meeting for November and December. 7:30 p.m. at McLean Community Center, 1234 Ingleside Ave., McLean. Tax district residents (Small District 1A-Dranesville) who wish to speak during the "Citizen Comment" portion of the meeting are asked to call the Center at 703-790-0123, TTY: 711 to be placed on the agenda. www.mcleancenter.org.

League of Women Voters of the Fairfax Area. 10:30 a.m. at Star Nut Gourmet, 1445 Laughlin Ave., McLean. Contact Gail, 703-356-2851. www.lwv-fairfax.org.

THURSDAY/DEC. 10

Vienna Tysons Regional Chamber of Commerce Holiday Luncheon. 11:30 a.m. at the 2941 Restaurant, 2941 Fairview Park Drive, Falls Church. With the Madison High School Madrigals and Santa Claus. Bring unwrapped new toys to donate to Toys For Tots. Members \$40, non-members \$50. 703-281-1333 or www.vtrcc.org.

League of Women Voters of the Fairfax Area. 9:15 a.m. at 10022 Lochness Court, Vienna. Contact Bobby, 703-938-1486. www.lwv-fairfax.org.

You and Your Aging Parents Support Group. 7 p.m. at the Jewish Social Services Agency, 3018 Javier Road, Fairfax. Explore the aging process and share experiences as a caregiver. Discussion topics can include coping with illness, balancing multiple demands, managing difficult emotions, identifying appropriate resources and developing a care plan. Group meets on the second Thursday of every month. Register at 703-896-7910.

SATURDAY/DEC. 12

Fairfax Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA) Information Session. 11 a.m.-12 p.m. at Patrick Henry Library, Vienna. Contact Elisa Kosarin, Recruitment and Training Manager at 703-273-3526, ext. 22, ekosarin@casafairfax.org or www.casafairfax.org.

WEDNESDAY/DEC. 16

Parent Support Group for Young Adults Across the Autism Spectrum. 7 p.m. at the Jewish Social Services Agency, 3018 Javier Road, Fairfax. Monthly support group to discuss identifying community resources, building a support network and more. Register at 703-896-7910.

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