

Churchill Road Rallies to Protect School Budget

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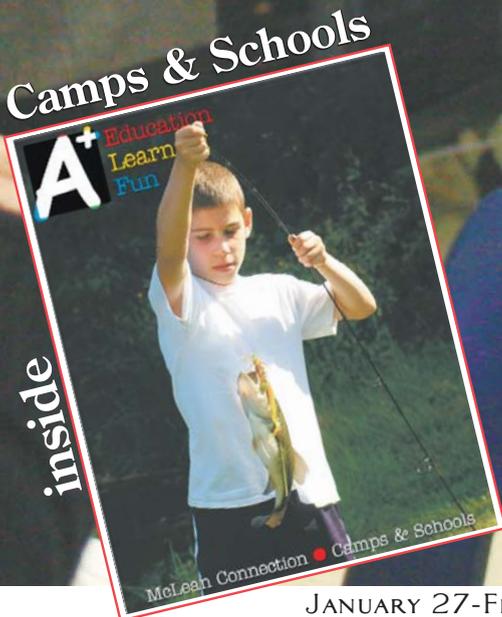
Commission Approves Vinson Hall Expansion

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Job Creation As Job #1

RICHMOND DIARY, PAGE 2

Del. Barbara Comstock (R-34) discusses the General Assembly session at Town Hall meeting at the Longfellow Middle School last Saturday. In this week's Connection, Comstock writes about her first week in Richmond.



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Job Creation as Job #1

Freshman delegate reflects on first week in Richmond.

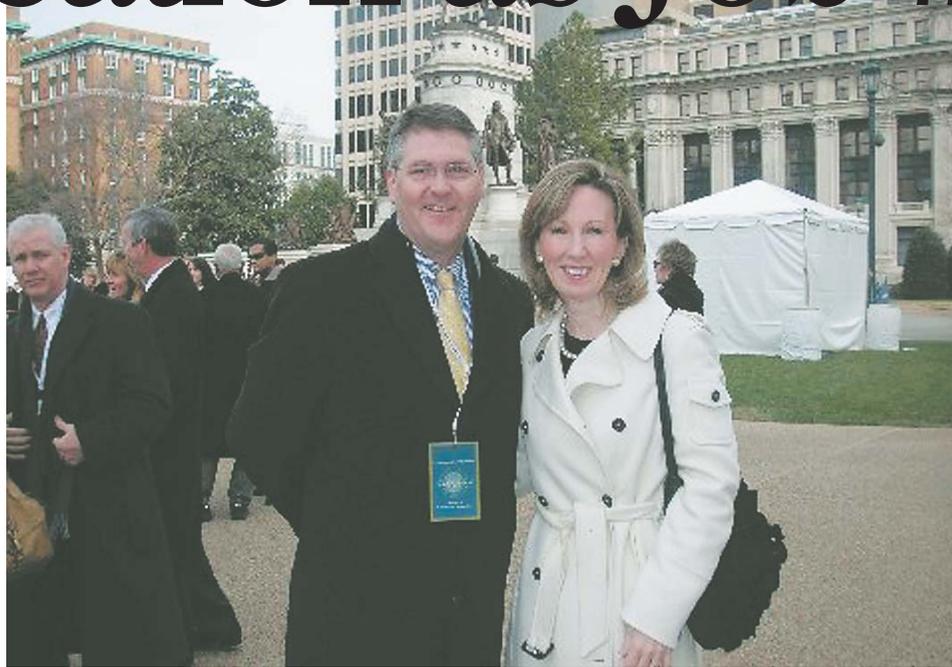
BY BARBARA COMSTOCK
STATE DELEGATE (R-34)

It was an honor to join the oldest continuous legislative body in the New World on Wednesday, Jan. 13 when I was sworn in to the Virginia House of Delegates as the representative for the 34th District of Virginia. On Sunday, Jan. 17, we were able to have a second ceremonial swearing in for family and friends in the House Chamber. I was honored to have, as our special guest, our former Del. Vince Callahan, who provided 40 years of distinguished service as our delegate before his retirement in 2007. Over the Inaugural weekend, we were delighted to join with so many of our Northern Virginia friends and neighbors who came to Richmond.

STANDING inside our Commonwealth's Capitol, a building designed by Thomas Jefferson, with the cornerstone laid by Patrick Henry, you can't help but see and hear the echoes of our past. The hardship we face today is put into perspective by the history and tradition of this institution and the challenges faced by our founding fathers.

In Gov. Robert McDonnell's (R) Inaugural Address on Jan. 16, as well as in his address to the General Assembly the following Monday, he made clear that job creation and the economy will be Job #1. Strengthening Virginia's economy and expanding our job-friendly environment will in turn ensure that we have the resources to adequately fund education, transportation, health care and core services. The governor made clear that he does not want to further add to the state tax burden during this tough economy where families and businesses have to do more with less. This sentiment was reinforced last week by a 97-0 vote by the entire House of Delegates, against the large tax hike that former Gov. Tim Kaine (D) included in his final budget.

Gov. Kaine's budget bequeathed a dire financial situation with a \$4 billion shortfall. The budget has many structural imbalances that have developed over the years and many of the cuts made to date have been one time cuts or budget gimmicks such as pushing payments from the end of December to January, instead of fundamental budgetary and government reform and reprioritizing of our budget. However, what I believe is the worst item imposed by Gov. Kaine on Fairfax County was the unexpected and unprecedented freeze on the education formula. This formula determines how much state funding Fairfax County receives



Del. Barbara Comstock (R-34) with husband Chip in Richmond for the Gov. Robert McDonnell's (R) swearing in.



On Sunday, Jan. 17, family and friends attended the second ceremonial swearing-in in the House Chamber. Del. Barbara Comstock (R-34), middle, is pictured with her daughter Caitly Comstock; mother and father Sally and John Burns; and son Peter Comstock.



Del. Barbara Comstock (R-34), third from left, poses with Caren Merick of McLean, niece Megan Rapuano and Lisa Gable of Middleburg, Va.

for our schools based on ability to pay and his budget exacerbated this already unfair formula resulting in a loss of \$60 million for Fairfax County in order to save \$30 million for the state. Most, if not all, of the Northern Virginia delegation support reversing this freeze and support budget amendments for that purpose. The Fairfax Chamber of Commerce and a business coalition have joined us in this bipartisan effort and we will be working with them to fight this proposal. Sunday night, Jan. 24, I joined many of our active and involved parents at Churchill Road Elementary School along with Supervisor John Foust (D-Dranesville) to discuss their concerns about this issue.

ADDITIONAL EFFORTS I will focus on include: helping small business with tax relief and providing tax incentives and investments to attract top jobs to Virginia; making Virginia the energy capital of the East Coast; providing transportation solutions that prioritize congestion relief and protect Georgetown Pike; protecting the weakest among us who depend on institutionalized care or at home care, and finding better solutions for treating and tracking the growing and debilitating incidents of Lyme Disease.

My committee assignments include the Transportation Committee, the Science and Technology Committee and General Laws Committee. These assignments will help me address many of the pressing needs of our area. I am particularly pleased that Northern Virginians have important seats at the table of the new Cabinet including two constituents I am honored to represent:

- ❖ Secretary of Technology, Jim Duffy (34th District resident)
- ❖ Secretary of Trade and Commerce, Jim Cheng (34th District resident)
- ❖ Secretary of Health and Human Resources, Dr. Bill Hazel
- ❖ Secretary of Transportation, Sean Connaughton
- ❖ Secretary of Natural Resources, Doug Domenech

This past Saturday morning, Jan. 23, many of you joined Sen. Janet Howell (D-32), Del. Jim Scott (D-53) and me at a Town Hall meeting at Longfellow Middle School. I would like to thank what was a very active and vocal group of citizens who discussed and debated the challenges facing our Commonwealth and our budget.

I appreciate hearing your concerns and encourage you to contact my office at any time. I can be reached during the General Assembly session at 804-698-1034 or Del. Barbara Comstock, P.O. Box 406, Richmond, VA 23218 or you can e-mail me at delbcomstock@house.virginia.gov. Also please visit my Web site at www.DelegateComstock.com where you can fill out our online 2010 Legislative Survey.



PHOTOS BY MIKE DICICCO/THE CONNECTION

Parents crowd around one of the tables offering petitions, pre-written letters to local representatives and contact information for state legislators.

Churchill Road Rallies To Protect School Budget

Parents protest freeze in state funding formula, push for local taxing authority and keeping cuts out of classroom.

BY MIKE DICICCO
THE CONNECTION

Outside Churchill Road Elementary Sunday evening, Jan. 24, about a dozen students waved signs bearing slogans like “Stop class size increase,” “Local tax authority” and “Don’t freeze the LCI,” several of them shouting the phrases they were displaying. In the school’s gym, parents gathered around three tables, signing petitions and picking up contact information for state legislators. By the time the school budget rally got underway, the gym was packed with families.

PTA President Cat Lippman told the crowd the PTA was pushing the state, the county and the School Board to keep as much money going into Fairfax County classrooms as possible.

Earlier this month, Superintendent Jack Dale proposed a budget for the coming fiscal year that would cut \$104.8 million in costs and 600 job positions. Class sizes could increase again, and programs like all-day kindergarten, elementary school foreign language immersion, elementary school band and strings, and others could be eliminated.

LAST MONTH, before leaving office, Gov. Tim Kaine (D) proposed that the state’s Local Composite Index (LCI) be frozen, at a time when adjusting the index on schedule would bring an additional \$61 million to Fairfax County schools.



Backed by students, Churchill Road PTA President Cat Lippman addresses the families that packed the school’s gym Sunday evening.

The Local Composite Index, Lippman explained, determines how much school funding each jurisdiction gets from the state, based on property values, income levels and other factors. “Because Fairfax County is considered a wealthy county, we have not received much funding from the state,” she said. However, due to declining property values, the county and other Northern Virginia jurisdictions would have received more state money for schools this year.

Lippman said Northern Virginia legislators were opposing the freeze in funding calculations but were outnumbered in the General Assembly by representatives of districts whose school systems would benefit from Kaine’s suggestion. However, she said the

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PHOTOS BY STEPHANIE KNAPP/THE CONNECTION

Area residents meet state legislators at the Longfellow Middle School last Saturday.

State Legislators Meet Constituents

The area legislators — Virginia Dels. Jim Scott (D-53) and Barbara Comstock (R-34) and State Sen. Janet Howell (D-32) — met area residents last Saturday at the Longfellow Middle School to present their legislative agenda and hear citizens’ concerns and ideas for this year’s Virginia General Assembly Session. A range of issues, from off shore drilling to snow

piled in handicapped parking spots to raising cigarette taxes, was discussed. A major issue on many people’s minds was the concern of budget cuts in public schools. A student from McLean High School came to explain the negative ramifications of these cuts, noting that the schools’ indoor track program was proposed to be cut next year.



Delegates Jim Scott (D-53) and Barbara Comstock (R-34) and State Sen. Janet Howell (D-32) discuss the General Assembly Session.

BULLETIN BOARD

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

1333 or www.vtrcc.org.

TUESDAY/FEB. 9
National Association Active and Retired Federal Employees Monthly Meeting. 1:30 p.m. at the Vienna Community Center, 120 Cherry St. S.E., Vienna. Stories of Yesteryear: Members Profile with Don Wiesnet, Elaine Fitzpatrick and Gayle Reed. 703-698-1838 or shirleykeyes@aol.com.

THURSDAY/FEB. 11
VTRCC Valentine’s Luncheon. 11:30 a.m. at the Maplewood Grill, 132 Branch Road, Vienna. 703-281-

TUESDAY/FEB. 16
VTRCC Monthly Mixer. 5:30 p.m. at the Lebanese Taverna, Tysons Galleria, 1840G International Drive, McLean. 703-281-1333 or www.vtrcc.org.

FRIDAY/FEB. 19
VTRCC Brown Bag University. 12 p.m. at the Fairfax County Economic Development Authority, 8300 Boone Blvd. #450, Vienna. 703-281-1333 or www.vtrcc.org.
Republican Club of Greater Reston Annual Lincoln-Reagan Dinner. Hidden Creek County Club, Reston. 703-406-9740.

Man and Woman Robbed Outside Store

Two people were robbed outside the Checks Cashed store, located at 2929 Gallows Road #103, on Saturday, Jan. 23. A 60-year-old woman, an employee of the store, was waiting for her 68-year-old husband to pick her up around 8:30 p.m. When she got into the car, two men ran up and one of them pointed a gun at them. The two suspects pulled each victim out of the car and demanded money. One suspect took personal property from the male victim's pocket.

The suspects fled before they could obtain anything else from the victims. They left in a silver or beige four-door sedan northbound on Gallows Road. The victims did not require medical attention.

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 your message to CRIMES/274637 or call Fairfax County Police at 703-691-2131.

Beltway Ramp Closes Friday Night

The ramp from the southbound Interstate 495 Capital Beltway to southbound Dolley Madison Road (Route 123) will close overnight, Friday, Jan. 29, between midnight and 5 a.m., so crews can remove barriers.

Drivers will be directed to use the other three ramps of the cloverleaf to access southbound Route 123. Instead, take the exit to northbound Route 123, then use the entrance ramp to northbound Interstate 495, and immediately exit again to southbound Route 123.

Police will be onsite to direct traffic. Detour signs will also be in place.

I-66 Lane Shift Rescheduled to Next Friday Night

Construction crews will be slightly shifting the lanes of Interstate 66 eastbound from just west of the Dulles Connector Road (Route 267) interchange and Great Falls Street, overnight on Friday, Jan. 29. Between 10:30 p.m. and 5 a.m., the right and center through lanes will be closed, and then between 5 a.m. and 9 a.m. early Saturday morning, Jan. 30, they will re-open those lanes and close the left through lane to complete the lane shift.

1st Stage To Donate to Haitian Relief

1st Stage in Tysons Corner will donate 20 percent of ticket sales to the American Red Cross Haitian relief efforts during the opening weekend of its new production, "By the Bog of Cats", Feb. 5-7. Tickets are available at www.1stStageTysons.org/cats.

"We want to join the community in helping support Haitian relief efforts," said artistic director Mark Krikstan. "We hope that our audience will want to join us in helping Haiti deal with nature's catastrophe even as they enjoy this performance." "By the Bog of Cats" tells a timeless, heart-rending story of love and abandonment in rural Ireland populated by misfits, ghosts and witches.

Performances are Fridays at 8 p.m. Saturdays at 2 p.m. and 8 p.m. and Sundays at 2 p.m. and 7 p.m. The production runs through Feb. 28.

Correction

The article "Balancing Act" [McLean Connection, Jan. 13-19] should have stated that every Saturday from November through March, the practice meets at St. Luke Catholic School Gym and every Saturday from April through October in McLean Central Park on the outdoor basketball court behind the Dolley Madison Library. The article should have also stated that Warren Conner has been conducting T'ai Chi classes for 35 years. For more information on these free practices visit www.FreeTaiChi.org.

NEWS



PHOTO CONTRIBUTED

The Planning Commission approved Vinson Hall Retirement Community's plans to add a new building that is to contain 100 independent living units.

Commission Approves Vinson Hall Expansion

Neighbors express mixed feelings of respect for facility, wariness of development.

BY MIKE DiCICCO
THE CONNECTION

After several minutes of testimony by McLean Citizens Association (MCA) Planning and Zoning Committee Co-Chair Mark Zetts, planning commissioners still weren't sure whether the association supported or opposed an expansion of Vinson Hall Retirement Community. Hesitating, Zetts said the group opposed the facility's application to add 100 independent living units to its current 169 units, although he said he wished the question "didn't have to be so black-and-white."

The feeling was typical of many of Vinson Hall's neighbors, who have repeatedly voiced their respect for the military retirement community and called it a considerate neighbor, while remaining wary of its proposed expansion. The MCA and the Franklin Area Civic Association had sought an agreement that Vinson Hall would not propose any further expansion in the future, but at its Jan. 21 meeting, the Planning Commission unanimously passed a recommendation that the facility's application be approved with no such stipulation.

"Vinson Hall provides an affordable home for our seniors, who in turn contribute to the diversity and fabric of the community."

— Elizabeth Lodal,
Vinson Hall Board of Directors

UNDER ITS CURRENT ZONING, Vinson Hall is allowed to have up to 276 independent living units, in addition to its 49 assisted living units, and county staff had recommended that the expansion be approved.

Zetts noted that Vinson Hall had listened to neighbors' concerns and responded with changes to its proposal, including reducing the additional floor space from 250,000 to about 220,000 square feet, making the proposed building less visible from Kirby Road and changing the landscaping. He acknowledged that senior living facilities were a priority and that the market demanded large units. Knowing that the expansion would likely be approved, he said, neighbors had pushed for an agreement that

no further expansion would be sought. An amendment to the county's Comprehensive Plan might be in order, he said.

Zetts said residents of nearby neighborhoods would be "shocked" by the new building's visibility. "The old building is pretty much buffered by trees. This is not," he said.

"We regard Vinson Hall as a fine organization and a good neighbor," said Steve DelBianco, speaking on behalf of the Franklin Area Citizens Association. However, he noted that the retirement community had applied in 2008 for a plan amendment that would allow up to 350 independent living units on the site, leading neighbors to believe that further expansion would still be in the works. "It's bad enough to be suspicious, but it's downright frightening when your suspicions show up in writing," he said, adding that neighbors wanted assurance that this expansion would be the last.

"You want them to give up their rights to participate in land use activity in Fairfax County," said Planning Commissioner Janet Hall (Mason), adding that she did not think this would be fair. She said the commission could only con-

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A Tale of Two Markets

The best of times, the worst of times for local real estate market.

BY KAREN BRISCOE

The famous opening line of "A Tale of Two Cities" by Charles Dickens is, "It was the best of times, it was the worst of times." The residential real estate market for McLean and Great Falls in 2009 has a similar theme, depending on the price range. I shall now tell "A Tale of Two Markets" and my opening line is, "It is the best of times in McLean and Great Falls for homes priced under \$1.25 million and it is the worst of times for those priced above."



In McLean and Great Falls, the overall number of transactions went up in 2009 by 14.1 percent over 2008. However, the significance of "A Tale of Two Markets" is evident when broken down by price range. The number of sales under \$1.25 million is up by 25.9 percent, which is the "best of times," and the number of sales over \$1.25 million is down by 18 percent, which is the "worst of times."

In my view, the reason the upper bracket market (anything over \$1.25 million) has suffered so much in 2009 is twofold. First is the issue of mortgage funding. It is perhaps obvious and may go without saying, but everyone is not independently wealthy to pay cash for a home in McLean or Great Falls. Most home purchasers have to obtain financing from a lender. In this market area, the upper limit for conforming loans from Freddie Mac and Fannie Mae for 2009 (and continuing for 2010) is \$729,750. If you add the typical buyers' down payment of 20 percent to the maximum conforming loan amount of \$729,750 you get about \$900,000 as the purchasing power for the majority of buyers in the market. To purchase anything more than \$900,000 means that the buyer would have to come up with a larger down payment and/or pay higher jumbo rates. Other mortgage options are only now coming out allowing for financing up to \$1 million, with 20 percent down, yielding maximum purchasing power of typically \$1.25 million in 2009. Even today, the best mort-

gage option is 15 percent down payment up to a purchase price of \$1.47 million. Any purchase price above that usually requires a larger cash down payment. Further, once the loan is greater than \$1 million, the interest on the portion of the loan over \$1 million is not tax deductible (always check with your tax advisor for specifics).

The second issue is supply. There are fundamentally fewer buyers for the upper bracket homes, therefore that supply hasn't been absorbed and continues to not be absorbed by the market. Thus, inventory continues to build. Basic economics underscores that when there is more supply than demand, prices go down.

From year-end data as illustrated by the chart, homes that would have sold for more than \$3 million in 2008, probably sold between \$2 million to \$3 million in order to find a buyer. The homes that sold between \$2 million and \$3 million in 2008 moved to the lower end of that range or sold below \$2 million in order to be able to sell. And down it went.

What is my prediction for 2010? I believe that it will be more of the same. While I feel that we are at the bottom of the trough in the under \$1.25 million market in McLean and Great Falls, I anticipate that we will not recover the prices of the peak of the market until at least 2012 or 2013, if even then.

One of the themes of "A Tale of Two Cities" is the plight of the peasantry under the aristocracy, which led up to the revolution. "A Tale of Two Markets" has a similar theme in my view. Housing prices escalated in 2004-06 to levels that even the average affluent person couldn't afford. The fundamental reality is that not everyone is independently wealthy. As long as the majority of the buyers in the market are dependent on obtaining financing at the conforming loan level, the upper bracket real estate market will be obtainable to only a very few and is dependent on what financing the banks can offer. When there is a limited pool of qualified buyers in one portion of the market, that market segment is forced to shrink in order to survive. It shrinks by lowering the price to what the market will bear.

The author is the principal, Huckaby Briscoe Group, Keller Williams in McLean.

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1527 Brookhaven Drive	\$1,649,000	Sun. 1-4	Mark McFadden	Coldwell Banker	202-333-6100
1025 Spring Hill Road	\$1,799,000	Sun. 1-4	Nina Assefi	Remax	703-728-7171

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	>\$3 Mil	\$2-3 Mil	\$1.25-2 Mil	\$750k-\$1.25 Mil	<\$750k
2008					
22101	16	20	60	111	144
22102	10	18	25	39	169
22066	7	8	47	72	41
Total:	33	46	132	222	354
	Combined Total: 211			Combined Total: 576	
	All Sales 2008: 787				
2009					
22101	3	29	52	142	184
22102	7	7	22	51	204
22066	3	12	38	80	64
Total:	13	48	112	273	452
	Combined Total: 173			Combined Total: 725	
	All Sales 2009: 898				



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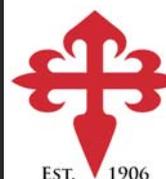
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"In addition to our prayers, the people of Haiti are in great need of our compassion and assistance."

— Charles Mann, Inova Health System Board Member



"Luciana and I have worked with the Community Coalition for Haiti and we ask you to join us in supporting the humanitarian efforts that are under way."

— Robert & Luciana Duvall



"We all need to take swift action to make sure that relief reaches the people of Haiti as quickly as it can."

— Darrell Green, NFL Hall of Fame

Photo by © Cameron Davidson



'Embracing the Dream' at McLean Community Center

'Embracing the Dream, Celebrating Our Blues Heritage,' presented by the McLean Community Center on Sunday, Jan. 17, brought a diverse crowd together to celebrate the legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Program participants included, from left, Dr. Ed Jackson Jr., executive architect of the Washington, D.C. Martin Luther King Jr., National Memorial Project Foundation, Inc.; Rev. Dr. Robert F. Cheeks Jr., pastor of Shiloh Baptist Church, McLean; Rev. Todd A. Brown, pastor of First Baptist Church of Chesterbrook, McLean; Julie Rasmussen, executive director of the McLean Community Center; Michael Hill, bandleader of Michael Hill's Blues Mob and Supervisor John Foust (D-Dranesville), posing around a rendering of the Martin Luther King Jr., National Memorial's Stone of Hope.

McLean High Graduate Performs in 'Grease'

David Ruffin, a 1998 graduate of McLean High School, has been performing with the national tour of "Grease" since early December 2008 and will be performing in the role of Kenickie in the run at the National Theatre in Washington, Feb. 9-21. A 2003 graduate of Northwestern University, with degrees in vocal performance and drama and a certificate in musical theater, he also understudies the role of Danny, the male lead.



David Ruffin



Long Term Care Report Presented to Foust

Citizens representing Fairfax County's Long Term Coordinating Council (LTCCC) recently paid a visit to Supervisor John W. Foust's (D-Dranesville) office in McLean to present a report entitled 'Creating Partnerships and Building Community' authored by The Long Term Care Coordinating Council. The report highlights the accomplishments of the 45 member Council in 2009. Pictured, from left, are Christine Hyland, executive director, Life Circle Alliances (LCA); Kay Larmer, board vice chair, LCA; Foust; Myles Nienstadt, executive director, Evergreen Senior Care, Inc; and Roscanne Rodillosso, member of the Long Term Care Coordinating Council Health Care Advisory Board. For more information www.lifecirclealliances.org.

Neighbors Wary of Future Expansion

FROM PAGE 4

sider the proposal before it at the moment, and any future applications to expand would be subject to due process. "If they want to come forward with other applications, that's their right as a participant in Fairfax County," she said.

"This has come up lots of times on lots of cases," said Planning Commissioner James Hart (At-large), remarking that if language prohibiting further growth were crafted, Vinson Hall could simply apply for a special exception to have it changed.

Planning Commission Chairman Peter Murphy (Springfield) said residents older than 60 were now the county's fastest growing demographic, and facilities to house them were necessary.

Commissioner Jay Donahue (Dranesville) said the county attorney and others had advised the commission that a contract limiting future density was a poor idea and possibly illegal.

"There are simply no plans beyond the plans we have before you tonight," said Greg Riegle, the attorney representing Vinson Hall.

Although he could not predict the future, he said, the application before the commission was not "phase one of two." Riegle said Vinson Hall might be willing to work on a plan amendment limiting future growth.

REAR ADM. KATHY MARTIN, the retirement community's CEO, said the Baby Boomer generation was creating a high demand for relatively large retirement quarters. With independent living units ranging in size from 400 to 1,270 square feet, she said, Vinson Hall had a waiting list for its larger quarters.

Residents and board members of Vinson Hall spoke on behalf of the retirement community and what Elizabeth Lodal called "a much-needed expansion." A neighbor and board member, as well as a former school principal, Lodal said she had seen the retirement community's positive impact on the surrounding area, with senior citizens tutoring students, children volunteering at Vinson Hall and grandparents able to live near their children and grandchildren. "Vinson Hall provides an afford-

able home for our seniors, who in turn contribute to the diversity and fabric of the community," she said.

Karl Fontenot, president of the Vinson Hall Residents Association, said the retirement community puts very little traffic on the roads, with a bus system that regularly takes residents to local shopping areas and on recreational trips. He said his wife had not driven in 3 1/2 years, while he drove only to medical appointments and his grandchildren's school activities. "I'm not really an exception. There are a lot of people like this," he said.

Steve Loftus, chair of the board of trustees for the Navy Marine Coast Guard Residence Foundation at Vinson Hall, said the facility was also opening its independent living units not only to retired military officers but now to retirees from the Department of Defense, NASA, the CIA, the Foreign Service and other agencies, meeting the demand for senior living for a wider segment of the population.

The county Board of Supervisors will make the final decision on the Vinson Hall expansion.



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OPINION

Time for Civil Redistricting

Governor campaigned on non-partisan redistricting; now is time for proposals in General Assembly.

The U.S. Census is underway, an every-10-year process that attempts to count every single person in the United States at their home address. From the results of the count come a nearly infinite number of critical decisions. The way those decisions are carried out have consequences for every one of us.

One of those decisions is the redrawing of political lines for all political offices, including the General Assembly, U. S. Congress and local offices. In Virginia, the current process allows the political party in charge to draw the lines.

Proposals in the Virginia General Assembly could lead to a change in politics and democracy here. The measures would establish the Virginia Redistricting Commission to redraw Congressional and General Assembly district boundaries without the bitter partisan hatchet that has characterized Virginia's process under each party in the past.

Tradition in Virginia holds that the ruling

party decides how to redraw the lines around political districts after each census. The process in the past has involved the majority party using its power without any checks or balances to create districts that protect incumbents of the majority party and try to force out incumbents of the minority party.

EDITORIAL

The losers in the process are the citizens of Virginia, who first find themselves in political districts that make little sense geographically or in terms of communities of interest. They then find that even if they are unhappy with their elected officials, the gerrymandering has created districts that have killed any competition between parties, and that each party strongly discourages any primary challenges.

The result: most voters have far less choice in who represents them than they should.

There are probably hundreds of ways to set up a commission or non-partisan board that would take the politics out of the process.

House Bill 323, introduced by Del. Ken Plum

Summary of Redistricting Bill

"Bipartisan Redistricting Commission created. Establishes a seven-member temporary commission to prepare redistricting plans in 2011 and each tenth year thereafter for the House of Delegates, state Senate, and congressional districts. Appointments to the Commission shall be made one each by the four majority and minority party leaders of the House and Senate and by the state chairmen of the two major political parties. Those six appointees shall appoint the seventh member and chairman of the Commission. If they cannot agree, they shall submit the names of the two persons receiving the most votes to the Supreme Court for the Court to select the chairman. The Commission will prepare plans and submit them as bills to the General Assembly. The General Assembly shall then proceed to act on the bills in the usual manner. The bill provides for Commission comments on plans as they change in the legislative process. It also spells out the standards and process to be followed by the Commission in preparing plans, including limitations on the use of political data and opportunities for public comment on the plans."

SOURCE: <http://leg1.state.va.us/lis.htm>

(D) of Reston, and Senate Bill 626, introduced by Sen. Jill Holtzman Vogel (R) pave the way for real reform and integrity in the political process.

— MARY KIMM,

MKIMM@CONNECTIONNEWSPAPERS.COM

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Off-Shore Drilling Makes Sense

To the Editor:

Virginia's new governor, Bob McDonnell (R), has spoken frequently of tapping into known reserves for oil and gas off of Virginia's coastlines. He talked about it all during his campaign, and now as governor, he mentioned it several times this past week.

Opponents to offshore drilling say many things that are flat wrong. First, they say there is no oil or gas off our coastlines. But, huge reserves have been proven to exist through seabed exploration by the oil and gas industry. Why would these companies risk their own resources to drill in dry areas?

Second, the canard is being used that drilling in these areas will impact the Navy's operations off our coastlines. As a retired naval officer, I spent several years in ships of the U.S. Atlantic Fleet cruising the waters up and down the eastern seaboard and back and forth across the Atlantic Ocean. There is a vast ocean out there, and in no way, will a relatively small drilling area impact at-sea operations of the U.S. Navy. Except for a small, special area in the Caribbean Sea with a flat sandy bottom that is conducive

for underwater acoustic testing, one large section of ocean is as good as the next for training and operations of our Atlantic Fleet.

Thirdly, opponents try the worn out reason that oil and gas spills will cause environmental disasters. That's true if we had spills. But we do not. In the Gulf of Mexico during Hurricanes Katrina and Rita in 2005, not one drop of oil or gas spilled from the literally hundreds of oil and gas rigs. Why not? It's because the technology has improved so much so that rigs and pipeline infrastructure can be buttoned up tighter than a drum when the need arises.

Finally, drilling for oil and gas off of the Virginia coastline makes good common sense for the 3 E's: energy, economy and employment. It will boost Virginia's, and thereby our nation's, energy supply; it will spur economic development which will increase state revenues that can be used for transportation and education; and it will produce jobs, jobs, jobs, that so many Virginians and Americans are hurting for right now.

Howie Lind
McLean

Adjust the Local Composite Index

To the Editor:

Gov. Robert McDonnell (R) has the opportunity to act on principle and reverse the LCI freeze proposed by former Gov. Tim Kaine (D). This freeze unfairly targets Northern Virginia school systems and will result in degraded schools, lower property values, and a lower incentive for businesses to locate in Northern Virginia.

Virginia's school funding formula, the Local Composite Index (LCI), is designed to equalize school funding in Virginia. A county's LCI is based on property and sales tax revenues. Schools in less affluent, often more rural, areas receive a higher share of state funding for their school systems, while schools in higher-income areas are rightly expected to provide more of their own funding and thus receive a lower amount of money from the state. The average share of state funding for Virginia school districts is 48 percent. By contrast, Northern Virginia schools receive about 19 percent of their funding from the state.

Under the LCI, tax revenues from high-income counties in Northern Virginia are redirected to school systems downstate. Northern Virginia has accepted this education formula although we do not benefit from it directly. We recognize that funding less affluent school districts benefits the entire

Commonwealth. It is the right thing to do.

The LCI is scheduled to be adjusted this year. Because real estate values in Northern Virginia have dropped over the past few years, and school enrollment has increased, Northern Virginia schools expected some relief from a funding formula that does not usually benefit us. If the LCI were adjusted this year to reflect the current economic situation, Fairfax County's LCI would be .71, a tiny adjustment that would bring our school system \$60 million in a year in which our school system faces a \$176 million budget shortfall. To be clear, Fairfax County would still pay 71 percent of our school budget. Our state share would remain well below the state average.

But the LCI is frozen. The freeze targets Fairfax, Loudoun, and Prince William counties, locking Northern Virginia into, in the words of State Sen. Chap Petersen (D-34), "a real estate market that no longer exists." Northern Virginia schools are not asking for a handout from the state, we are just asking for our fair and relatively small share of the state funding that our own tax revenues provide. Gov. McDonnell should take a principled stand and lift the freeze.

Kristen Fennel
Vienna

THE CONNECTION

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McLean

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FAITH

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

McLean Presbyterian Church is holding the worship service at 9:15 a.m. and 11 a.m. During these services, the church also offers a variety of adult education classes, as well as children's ministry program and student ministries gatherings. The church also invites the public to informal and more intimate Saturday Night Service, which meets in the Fellowship Hall at 5:30 p.m. every Saturday. The worship music is provided by Saturday night band and the message is the same as Sunday morning but with opportunity for more interaction with the pastor. Childcare and children's programs are provided for infants through 2nd grade.

McLean Presbyterian Church is located at 1020 Balls Hill Road in McLean. For more information visit www.mcleanpres.org or call church office at 703.821.0800.

Universalist Congregation of Fairfax, 2709 Hunter Mill Road, Oakton, will show 'Until The Violence Stops' at 7:30 p.m. on Friday, Jan. 29. The film is a documentary about how the play The Vagina Monologues grew into an international grassroots movement called V-Day to stop violence against women and girls. Donations accepted to benefit V-Day Oakton 2010. 703-716-0150 or www.uucf.org.

Maggie Page, of Vienna, is beginning a one-year service assignment with Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) in southeastern Europe as a teacher's assistant. Page has a bachelor's in studio art

from St. Olaf College, Northfield, Minn. She is associated with Emmanuel Mennonite Church, Shoreview, Minn. Page is serving through MCC's SALT - Serving and Learning Together - program for young adults from Canada and the U.S. who volunteer outside both countries. MCC is a relief, development and peace organization of Mennonite and Brethren in Christ churches in Canada and the U.S. For more information on MCC, visit mcc.org. For more information on the SALT program, visit mcc.org/salt.

Episcopal Church Women of St. Thomas Episcopal Church Lace & Grace Tea, 2 p.m. Saturday, Feb. 13. With a variety of tea delicacies and sweets, and live music by local instrumentalists, at St. Thomas Episcopal Church, Hudson Hall, 8991 Brook Road, McLean. A portion of the proceeds will benefit Alternative House in Vienna. \$30 per person. Reserve tickets at 703-442-0330. Group sales welcome. 703-272-7796 or mollieregan@verizon.net.

Emmaus United Church of Christ will offer the lecture series "Nurturing the Body through Nutrition." Classes will be 7 p.m. in the parlor of Emmaus Church, 900 East Maple Avenue, Vienna. Free and open to the public. Contact Dana Krauskopf, 703-272-8675 or hamanasi@bellsouth.net, or Marsha Komandt, 703-938-1264 or mgkomandt@verizon.net.

❖ Monday, Feb. 8. Learning to Reconnect to Your Body in Healthy Ways: Weight Management.

❖ Monday, Feb. 22. Learning to Reconnect to Your Body in Healthy Ways: Energy Enhancement.

❖ Monday, March 8. Sugar: The Unsweet Truth.

❖ Monday, March 29. Food is Medicine.

McLean Bible Church, 8925 Leesburg Pike, Vienna, will host

LifeWay Women's Going Beyond with Priscilla Shirer, at 7 p.m. on Friday, Feb. 26 and 9 a.m. on Saturday, Feb. 27. Shirer encourages women to go beyond everyday life to walk with Christ. Tickets are the two-day event are \$45. Register at www.lifeway.com/goingbeyond or 800-254-2022.

The Jewish Social Services Agency (JSSA) offers a wide 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.

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.

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.

SCHOOL NOTES

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

The 2010 Liberty District Theatre Festival begins at 10 a.m. on Saturday, Jan. 30 at George C. Marshall High School, 7731 Leesburg Pike in Falls Church. Eight schools will be allotted 45 minutes each for a one-act performance: Langley HS at 10 a.m., Thomas Jefferson HS at 10:45 a.m., South Lakes HS at 11:30 a.m., Stone Bridge HS at 1:15 p.m., McLean HS at 2 p.m., James Madison HS at 2:45 p.m., Fairfax HS at 3:30 p.m. and Marshall HS at 4:15 p.m. Contact 703-336-2134 or joe.swarm@fcps.edu.

Tips on Trips and Camps Fair, Saturday, Jan. 30 at The Potomac School, 1301 Potomac School Road, McLean. Camp Fair 1 p.m.; Panel Discussion on Foreign Language Programs 12:30 p.m. Summer overnight camps, travel, language or cultural immersion programs, community service, internships and more for children 8-18. Directors of various programs will attend. 703-345-0722 or meg@tipsontripsandcamps.com.

The Langley High School Wind Symphony will participate in the Music for All national festival in Indianapolis in March 2010. Music for All is an educational event for American high school bands, enabling them to perform for a knowledgeable audience, receive input from leaders in the performing arts, and take part in clinics.

Steven A. Christopher of McLean has been named to the headmaster's list at Virginia Episcopal School. Christopher is the son of Mr. and Mrs. Andrew M. Christopher.

Four Marymount University students from McLean, including history education major **Charles Abel**, business administration major **Sedinam Asem**, interior design major **Rebecca Leion** and fashion merchandising major **Julia Rouse**, have been named as national outstanding campus leaders and included in the 2009 edition of Who's Who among Students in American Universities and Colleges.

Matthew Thomas Valcourt has been named to Episcopal High School's academic honor roll for the first quarter of the 2009-10 school year. Valcourt is the son of Mr. and Mrs. Jeffery T. Valcourt of McLean.

Caroline Rothrock of McLean has been named to the fall 2009 dean's list at Ripon College of Ripon, Wisconsin. Rothrock, a sophomore global studies major, is the daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Gerald D. Rothrock of McLean.

Brigid Donovan, a senior at Saint James School of St. James, Md., has been named to the honors list for trimester 1. Donovan is the daughter of Mr. and Mrs. David Donovan of McLean.

Leah Gross of McLean has been named to the fall 2009 dean's list at Tufts University in Medford, Mass.

Gurden Batra of McLean has been named to the fall 2009 dean's list at the Georgia Institute of Technology in Atlanta, Ga.

Kathryn A. Anwyll of McLean has been named to the fall 2009 dean's list at McDaniel College of Westminster, Md.

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Arlington Assembly of God...703-524-1667
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Buddhism
The Vajrayogini Buddhist Center
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First Baptist of Ballston...703-525-7824
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Bloss Memorial Free Will
Baptist Church...703-527-7040

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Chabad Luvavitch of Alexandria-Arlington
...703-370-2774

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...571-271-8387

Saint Ann Catholic Church

SUNDAY LITURGY SCHEDULE:

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Sunday: 8:00, 9:30, 11:00 AM
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Saturday, 8:30 AM

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CALENDAR

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THURSDAY/JAN. 28

Five Local Chefs, Five Local Wines, Five Local Farms, One Local Cause: Loudoun Interfaith Relief. 6:30 p.m. \$150 all inclusive, with sparkling wine and hors d'oeuvres, followed by a five course menu with wine pairings. Live Music by Olivera Music Entertainment. Reserve at 540 822-9017 or info@patowmackfarm.com.

Al di Meola. 8 p.m. The Barns at Wolf Trap, Wolf Trap Foundation for the Performing Arts, 1624 Trap Road, Vienna. \$35. 703-938-2404 or wolftrap.org.

FRIDAY/JAN. 29

Turner to Cézanne: An Evening with Corcoran Director, President and Exhibition Curator Paul Greenhalgh. 7 p.m. at Alden Theatre, McLean Community Center, 1234 Ingleside Ave., McLean. 703-790-1953 or www.mpaart.org.

The Kennedys and Maura Kennedy's Solo CD Release. 7 p.m. Jammin' Java, 227 Maple Ave. E., Vienna. \$18. www.jamminjava.com.

Aspen Ensemble: The Discovery Series. 8 p.m. The Barns at Wolf Trap, Wolf Trap Foundation for the Performing Arts, 1624 Trap Road, Vienna. 703-938-2404 or wolftrap.org.

SATURDAY/JAN. 30

Sing Me Insomnia, The Goodnight Anthem and Struan Shields. 6 p.m. Jammin' Java, 227 Maple Ave. E., Vienna. \$12. www.jamminjava.com.

An Evening with Charlie Hunter. 9:30 p.m. Jammin' Java, 227 Maple Ave. E., Vienna. \$15 in advance, \$20 at the door. www.jamminjava.com.

Northern Virginia Country Western Dance Association. Luther Jackson Middle School, 3020 Gallows Road, Falls Church. Line dance beginning at 7:30 p.m., couples specialty dance at 8 p.m., open dancing 8:30-11 p.m. \$10 members, \$12 non-members, \$5 for ages 16-20 with student ID. website, www.nvwda.org or 703-860-4941. Michelle Singletary, with Power to Prosper: 21

Days to Financial Freedom. 1 p.m. Barnes & Noble Books, 7851L Tysons Corner Center, McLean. crm2238@bn.com.

Ingrid King, author of Buckley's Story: Lessons from a Feline Master Teacher. 11 a.m.-1 p.m. at Seneca Hill Animal Hospital Resort and Spa, 11415 Georgetown Pike, Great Falls. 703-450-6760.

John Eaton. 7:30 p.m. The Barns at Wolf Trap, Wolf Trap Foundation for the Performing Arts, 1624 Trap Road, Vienna. \$25. 703-938-2404 or wolftrap.org.

SUNDAY/JAN. 31

Martina McBride and Trace Adkins. 7:30 p.m. at the George Mason University Patriot Center, 4500 Patriot Circle, Fairfax. Tickets are \$49.75-\$69.75, available at all Ticketmaster locations or Phonecharge at 703-573-SEAT. 703-993-3000 or www.patriotcenter.com.

Pianist Audrey Andrist. 3 p.m. at the Alden Theatre, McLean Community Center, 1234 Ingleside Ave., McLean. Free. www.fairfaxcounty.gov/library/aldenconcerts.



Pianist Audrey Andrist will perform on Sunday, Jan. 31 at 3 p.m. at the Alden Theatre, McLean Community Center.

MONDAY/FEB. 1

Weeping Weeds & Veils: Victorian Mourning Customs. 7 p.m. Fairfax County Cemetery Preservation Association meeting, City of Fairfax Regional Library, 10360 North St., Fairfax. Free. 703-322-1811.

TUESDAY/FEB. 2

Alternative House: Open Door at the House. 8-9 a.m. at 2100 Gallows Road, Vienna. Alternative House offers counseling, shelter, neighborhood support and after school programs. Space is limited; contact Gina Cocomello at gina_cocomello@TheAlternativeHouse.org or 703 506-9191 or www.TheAlternativeHouse.org.

WEDNESDAY/FEB. 3

Gals in the Gallery. 7-9 p.m. at McLean Community Center, 1234 Ingleside Ave., McLean. With jewelry artist J.J. Singh. Donations accepted. 703-790-1953 or www.mpaart.org.

Buckwheat Zydeco, General Admission Dance. 8 p.m. at Wolf Trap Foundation for the Performing Arts, 1624 Trap Road, Vienna. \$22. 703-938-2404 or www.wolftrap.org.

Anger Awareness for Women. 7 p.m. Wednesdays through March 17 at The Women's Center, 127 Park St., N.E., Vienna. With Paula Donova, MSW, LCSW, TWC Therapist. \$175 non-members, \$155 members. Register at www.thewomenscenter.org or call 703-281-2657.

THURSDAY/FEB. 4

Fairfax High School Choral Department Cabaret Night. 7:30 p.m. at Fairfax High School, 3501 Rebel Run, Fairfax. Tickets cover admission, dessert and a beverage. \$10 adults; \$5 seniors, students or children over two years old. \$25 for a family of four. A separate raffle for gift baskets will also be available. www.fhschorus.net

The Persuasions. 8 p.m. at Wolf Trap Foundation for the Performing Arts, 1624 Trap Road, Vienna. \$25. 703-938-2404 or www.wolftrap.org.

FRIDAY/FEB. 5

Fairfax Symphony Valentine Pops Gala: Amore! An Evening of Italian Love Songs. At the Hilton McLean Tysons Corner, 7920 Jones Branch Drive, McLean. 6:30 p.m. silent auction and cocktail reception, 8 p.m. dinner, 9 p.m. FSO in concert with tenor Robert Pettilo and soprano Jeanine Thames. \$300 per person or \$3,000 per table, available by credit card at 703-563-1990, or by check to

Fairfax Symphony Orchestra, 3905 Railroad Ave., Suite 202N, Fairfax, Va. 22030.

www.fairfaxsymphony.org.
Black History Celebration. 3 p.m. at Historic Pleasant Grove Church, 8641 Lewinsville Road, McLean. Voices of Worship community choir to present a musical journey through African-American history, including a sing-along with the audience. Free admission. Museum viewing available. 703-893-9075 or www.historicpleasantgrove.org.

Yu Wei Chinese Dance Collection. 8 p.m. at the McLean Community Center, 1234 Ingleside Ave., McLean. www.mcleancenter.org.

Mark Morris Dance Group. 8 p.m. at George Mason University Center for the Arts, 4400 University Drive, Fairfax. With the area premieres of 'Visitation' and 'Empire Garden.' A pre-performance discussion, free to ticket holders, begins at 7:15 p.m. on the Center's Grand Tier III. \$22-\$44, available at 888-945-2468 or www.gmu.edu/cfa.

Stroke Comeback Center Fundraiser: the Benefits of Chocolate. 7:30 p.m. at Jammin' Java, 227 Maple Ave., Vienna. Live music, boutique of gifts, chocolate choices, food, open bar, and an auction of canvases painted by local physicians during the evening. 703-255-5221.

By The Bog of Cats. 8 p.m. at 1st Stage, 1524 Spring Hill Road, Tysons Corner. 1st Stage, Fairfax County's non-profit professional theatre, presents a loose retelling of Euripides' Medea, set in rural Ireland. Tickets \$25 adults, \$15 students. 703-854-1856 or www.1stStageTysons.org/cats.

Pianist Hiromi. 8 p.m. at Wolf Trap Foundation for the Performing Arts, 1624 Trap Road, Vienna. \$25. 703-938-2404 or www.wolftrap.org.

Artists' Reception. 7-9 p.m. at the Great Falls Foundation for the Arts Gallery, 1144-D and 1144-G Walker Road, Great Falls. 'Still Life Images' features works by the 16 members of the Artists' Atelier, and continues through Feb. 28. The Atelier and Gallery are open 12-4 p.m. Saturdays and by appointment. www.greatfallsfoundationforarts.org.

SATURDAY/FEB. 6

Cabaret Series: Jeri Sager. 7:30 p.m. at Wolf Trap Foundation for the Performing Arts, 1624 Trap Road, Vienna. Northern Virginia native and Broadway star Sager debuts at the Barns of Wolf Trap with her solo cabaret show, Broadway by Jeri. Accompanied by a four-piece band, Sager will re-create her roles in Cats, Les Misérables, and Evita. \$25. 703-938-2404 or www.wolftrap.org.

Mark Morris Dance Group. 8 p.m. at George Mason University Center for the Arts, 4400 University Drive, Fairfax. With the area premieres of 'Visitation' and 'Empire Garden.' A pre-performance discussion, free to ticket holders, begins at 7:15 p.m. on the Center's Grand Tier III. \$22-\$44, available at 888-945-2468 or www.gmu.edu/cfa.

Sonorus: Wizard Rock Festival. 11:30 a.m. Jammin' Java, 227 Maple Ave. E., Vienna. \$20. www.jamminjava.com.

Ballyhoo! and MOJO. 10 p.m. Jammin' Java, 227 Maple Ave. E., Vienna. \$10 in advance, \$13 at the door. www.jamminjava.com.

Chocolate Lovers Festival. 8 a.m.-5 p.m. at City Hall, 10455 Armstrong St. Taste of Chocolate, Chocolate Challenge, pancake breakfast, craft show and bake sale, children's activities and Chocolate Caper. Open Houses include the Fairfax Museum, Ford Building, Legato School and Ratcliffe-Allison House. www.chocolatefestival.net or 703-385-1661.

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NEWS

The red carpet and layout of the room all create the exhibit of work by Nicole Fall.



PHOTO BY
CHRISTY STEELE/
THE CONNECTION

McLean Project for the Arts Presents Three Artists

The McLean Project for the Arts opened a new exhibit on Thursday, Jan. 23 to remain on display until March 6. The opening reception drew a large crowd that enjoyed talks from two of the three artists exhibiting their work at the McLean Community Center.

The exhibit features work by three artists who all work with different media and express their life experiences through their art.

Nicole Fall is a teacher and sculptor based in the Baltimore area who combines ceramic, welded steel and cast bronze to create her distinctive sculptures. Her pieces examine themes of family, war, persecution, immigration and perseverance that stem from her personal experiences and her family history.

Terry Schupbach-Gordon is an artist from North Carolina who uses papermaking, etching and wood-cutting techniques to create one-of-a-kind books and intricately layered prints. Her work evokes difficult

emotions as well as joy and beauty through its layered and complex composition. Schupbach-Gordon is also a professional storyteller, a skill that allows her to deepen the meaning of each piece of artwork.

Gretchen Schermerhorn, a Maryland artist with a scientific background, combines handmade paper with printmaking and casting techniques. She employs techniques such as repetition and patterning to create shapes that hint at DNA coding, cell division and human relationships. This scientific aspect of her art is juxtaposed by the delicacy and organic nature of the pieces. Her art is displayed in the long, narrow entryway to the MPA gallery.

The exhibit will be on display until March 6. More information about the McLean Project for the Arts can be found at <http://www.mpaart.org>.

— CHRISTY STEELE

Parents Push for Schools' Funding

FROM PAGE 3

county's schools had "wide-ranging positive impacts well beyond Northern Virginia" and that cutting their funding would damage the region that generates the most money for the state.

She said parents were also pushing for a local funding mechanism, such as a meals tax, and wanted to make sure the School Board kept any necessary budget cuts out of the classroom.

Invited to say a few words, Del. Barbara Comstock (R-34) said she thought the Local Composite Index had always treated the region unfairly, adding, "The one time they were going to start to favor us, they decided to change the rules." She said Northern Virginia could not be "continually asked to export all our tax dollars to other jurisdictions" while remaining the state's economic engine, and she said the region's entire delegation, regardless of party, would oppose the freeze in the LCI.

"The Board of Supervisors and the School Board are united on this issue," said Supervisor John Foust (D-Dranesville), noting that a "very strongly worded" letter had been sent to Gov. Bob McDonnell (R) and the state's legislators. "The unfairness is obvious. But, also, it's a huge policy mistake to do this," Foust said. He said all jurisdictions



PHOTO BY MIKE DICICCO/THE CONNECTION

From left, School Board member Janie Strauss (Dranesville), Del. Barbara Comstock (R-34) and Supervisor John Foust (D-Dranesville) were among the crowd that attended the school budget rally.

relied on the composite index being predictable and reliable. "We either have an LCI or we don't. If we do, we've got to play by the rules."

SCHOOL BOARD MEMBER Janie Strauss (Dranesville) said she liked the idea of more local taxing authority. As for the question of where to make cuts, she said the School Board would work with the community on that. "In the end, we will make decisions together as to how to spread the tax dollars around." Strauss said

Churchill Road had become "a poster child for oversized classes," and she encouraged parents to continue to push their representatives for funding. "Keep going at what you're doing. I applaud you," she said.

Parents at the rally were given contact information for all members of the House Finance Committee making decisions on the LCI freeze, as well as letters to send to the area's various representatives, and they were encouraged to sign petitions endorsing the agenda Lippman had laid out.

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SPORTS

PHOTOS BY CRAIG STERBUTZEL/THE CONNECTION



Langley's Catherine Plunkett (23) and her Saxon teammates will be home versus Stone Bridge this Friday night.

Wilson's Scoring Show Leads McLean Girls

In night of local basketball, Highlander girls and Langley boys come out victorious.

BY RICH SANDERS
THE CONNECTION

Melissa Wilson, a senior forward on the McLean High girls' basketball team, put on scoring exhibition during the Highlanders' 55-34 Liberty District home win over Langley Friday night, Jan. 22. The contest was the first part of a girls-boys' doubleheader between the cross-town rival schools. Langley won the nightcap boys' game, 56-35.

The bulk of the large crowd began entering the McLean gymnasium during the second half of the girls' game. That was good timing because that is when Wilson scored all 17 of her points in leading the Highlander girls to victory. By game's end, the place was nearly filled and fans had gotten a good look at a McLean team that is steadily improving as the season moves on.

"I think the past few games we've been playing much better and much more consistent," said McLean coach Mike O'Brien, whose team improved to 9-6. "The Langley game was another example of that."

It was McLean's third win over its last four games. The Highlanders, earlier last week, had won at district opponent Fairfax, 45-37, on Jan. 19 before winning again three days later over the Saxons.

Along with Wilson's big night against Langley, McLean also received a strong game from junior guard Andie Romness, who scored all 12 of her points in the first half as the Highlanders built a slim 22-20 halftime advantage. McLean outscored Langley 16-8 in the third quarter and 17-6 in the fourth quarter in a stellar second showing. Brittany McCraty, Erin Mundy and Caitlin Baker scored eight, seven and six points, respectively, in the win for McLean.



McLean girls' head coach Mike O'Brien will see his team host Marshall this Friday night.

"From the tip-off, we were consistent," said O'Brien, of his squad. "We dealt with some foul trouble in the first half but got through that."

Langley (5-11), under coach Tim Anderson, had good nights from senior forward Alexis Doherty (11 points), senior guard Kristen Kody (10) and senior forward Mary Riley Pembroke (8).

O'Brien said the environment, with the large, energetic crowd, made things extra exciting. He had concerns that his team might be hurt by nervous energy, but that was not the case.

"It's a great environment for kids to play in," said O'Brien, of the rival game against Langley. "We had good intensity and that helped our defense."

IN THE BOYS' GAME, Langley (13-2) remained unbeaten in district play with their 21-point win over McLean (6-10). Colin Jones led the Saxons with 17 points. Also for Langley, David Adams (9 points), Joey Kiffe (8) and center Austin Kriz (7) had good games. For the Highlanders, Phil Bouchard scored 12 points, Gordon Rogo had eight and Sango Amolo six.

The Saxons led 24-14 at halftime before outscoring the home team, 17-7, in the third quarter to pretty much put the game away. It was the sixth straight win for Langley, which improved to 8-0 in district play. The Saxons' last loss came to Centreville on Dec. 30.



PHOTO COURTESY/TEAM AMERICA

Team America's U16 boys' soccer team, which includes players from McLean, won a title in Philadelphia two weekends ago. On the front row, from left, are Danny Hinojosa and Robby Maffei. Second row, from left, 'Ohjay' Porteria, Edgar Zepeda, Bernardo Majano, Damaro DaCosta, Brandon Siles and Tyler Braxton. Third row, Brian Castellon, Mickey Belay, Hatzael Diaz Flores, Amardo Oakley, Ezra Williams and Zac Galiani. Back row, Coach Larry Dunn, Clinton Black, Branko Picavia, Jonathon Dunn, Franco Ponce de Leon, Martin Lopez and Coach Patrick DaCosta.

SPORTS ROUNDUP

Team America's U16 boys, an NCSL Division 1 soccer team comprised of players from McLean, Annandale, Arlington and Mount Vernon, captured a title at the 2010 National Indoor Soccer Championships, which took place over the weekend of Jan. 16-17 in Philadelphia. On Saturday morning, Jan. 16 Team America won preliminary round games against teams from New Jersey and Delaware, 16-1 and 12-1, respectively. On Sunday, the semi-finals round game against a formidable team from Michigan went down to the wire, with Team America coming out on top, 4-3. Later that same day, the locals enjoyed a sensational finals game against a well prepared and skillful team from Chicago, FC Gordito. The game went into sudden death, golden-goal overtime with two field players and one goal keeper for each team on the playing field. After a player on each team was removed from the game leaving a keeper and a field player per side, Team America persisted and was able to place a ball into the back of the net, just out of the reach of the Gordito's keeper. Team America won, 5-4, in the breathtaking finish.

The McLean Highlander boys' swim and dive team lost to Fairfax, 181-131, in a meet at Lee District on Jan. 8. Meanwhile, the McLean girls were victorious, 160-152, over the lady Rebels. McLean's Charlie Putnam was a triple winner for the Highlander boys,

while Colin Fitzgibbon and Bill Kim both won two events each. For the McLean girls, Eva Greene was a quadruple winner, Margaret Harlowe was a triple winner and double winners were Annie Springstein, Katie Yensen and Adrienne Harlowe.

The McLean girls prevailed over South Lakes, 184 to 124. Margaret Harlowe was a quadruple winner. Double winners were: Katie Yensen, Sarah Wilcox, Ellie Springstein, Annie Springstein and Adrienne Harlowe. The McLean boys' team fell to South Lakes, 160 to 145. McLean winners included Bill Kim, Ben Southern and Ed Lee. Highlander Ian Clark finished first in diving.

McLean Youth Soccer (MYS) Spring 2010 registration has begun on MYS' web site at www.mcleansoccer.org. Returning players as well as new players are welcome to register. MYS offers various programs for children ages 4 through 18. MYS programs include recreation, travel, McLean Premier Soccer Travel, U5 for Pre-K players and TOP Soccer for children with special needs. The season will begin the week of April 5 and extend through mid-June. Be sure to register no later than Jan. 30 to take advantage of the early discounted registration fees. Contact the MYS Administrator at admin@mcleansoccer.org. For more information, call the MYS office at 703-506-8068.

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Cancer Can, Or It Can't (Me, Too)



By **KENNETH B. LOURIE**

I can mostly handle this cancer stuff. However, there is one area I can't totally manage – emotions. Specifically when certain things – physical, mental, spiritual – happen. I never know if what I'm feeling is attributable to the cancer, and thus worthy of a phone call/email to my study nurse and/or oncologist, or more a function of simply being who I am, independent of the cancer business; meaning a middle-aged, slightly overweight ("Slightly?" Be quiet, Dina.), out-of-shape, -collar worker bee. I don't want to overreact to symptoms, nor do I want to be stubborn and stupid and underreact either. For all I know (and it's not really very much), whatever I'm feeling might actually matter, or it might not. Ergo the problem.

It's hard, make that impossible (for me anyway) to separate fact from fiction, cancer-related from normal wear and tear, the beginning of the end from the end of the beginning. I am encouraged by the medical staff to call with any concerns (real or imagined) that I may have. Still, when I called last week to report a non-stop runny nose that required constant blowing and tissue use (which ultimately lead to a very chapped and sore nose, inside and out) I felt funny. Here I have stage IV lung cancer and I'm worried about a runny nose. Even the description "runny nose" sounds insignificant and not nearly as serious many of the other symptoms familiar to cancer patients: nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, loss of sleep, loss of appetite, weight loss, nose bleeds, tingling and loss of use/control of your extremities and so forth that might warrant a cancer-call. Runny nose! What am I going to call about next? A skinned knee? A boo-boo on my buttock? A pimple on my poopik? Finding that line between compulsively obsessing over my symptoms to accepting what's happening to me as normal, given my age (and thus not particularly worthy of cancer-induced worry/anxiety/fear/depression) has been most difficult for me.

This difficulty has manifested itself because my coping mechanism diagnosis-to-date, has been not to consume myself (or try not to) with everything that is happening to me medically (or could be in the future). That's not to say that I'm ignoring what's occasionally been happening, but more so attempting to keep it in perspective/context: try not to overreact to the things (side effects, symptoms, deficiencies), that typically happen to cancer/chemo patients and conversely, try to react positively to the things that don't happen. My concern is that I'm taking too much in stride, attributing too much of what cancer stuff I think I feel to the inevitability of the underlying health situation in which I find myself immersed (and thus not unique or worth mentioning) and instead go with the proverbial flow and not fight this rising tide.

I don't want to be swept away and drowned by these waves of emotion and end up in a sea of non-tranquility. Somehow I need to, as Katie Winter of Secret Deodorant marketing fame once made famous, "Keep myself cool, calm and collected." I don't imagine that being in denial would help, but neither do I think proactively pursuing pathology reports (as but one example of the endless amount of information available from your health care provider) would provide the solace and balance I seek. I am open to suggestion.

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

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Brittany Tholan

My Grandpa's 'Caliphate'

BY BRITTANY THOLAN

Just the other day, I was walking through the bookstore, looking for the calendars, when I found myself face to face with a book that had my grandfather's name written across the top in large, capital letters, "André Le Gallo" and under it, "The Caliphate".

When I was little, my grandfather would tell me stories, true stories, of his adventures as a spy in the CIA. The stories my mother didn't hear until

she was 16. Like how they received a death threat under the door of their house, how he had to get through checkpoints without being recognized as an American and how when he finally left the country, he disassembled a gun and hid the pieces in different furniture in his house, just in case he had to come back. And now my grandfather has gathered up all his knowledge and laid it out magnificently in a book, fictional, but attention grabbing, even for me, a teenage girl who was just in the bookstore to finally buy her 2010 calendar.

Of course I bought "The Caliphate." I went home and turned to a random page and read it, I was so drawn into it that I flipped to next page and read on. I got a good four pages into it when my mom snatched it and told me to read it from the beginning. I flipped to Chapter 1 and read,

"In the darkness of Neuilly-sur-Seine on the outskirts of Paris, Farid stood on the ladder leaning against the wall separating the Saudi ambassador's and the American's back gardens. Wearing designer glasses and dark silk slacks, he looked more like an aging poster boy for the business-casual look than like the typical second-story man . . ."

The book's main character, Steve Church, is based on André's son, Christopher, to whom the book is dedicated to, and who lived in McLean as an adult, but died in 2002 at age 33. Steve's personality and mannerisms are modeled on Christopher's family say that through this book he has been brought back to life.

Andre Le Gallo's "The Caliphate" can be found in bookstores under "New in Paperback". Go to www.andreleгалlo.com to read more.

The writer is a 14-year-old Vienna resident who recently moved from California and now attends Langley High School.



PHOTO BY VERONICA GARABELLI/ CAPITAL NEWS SERVICE

Del. Mark Keam (D-35), center, at the General Assembly session.

School Funding Formula Angers Fairfax Delegates

'Legal action' under consideration.

BY VERONICA GARABELLI
CAPITAL NEWS SERVICE

Gov. Bob McDonnell's (R) plan to continue using an education funding formula that takes money from more affluent school districts and gives it to less affluent ones has so upset Fairfax County supervisors that they are considering legal action.

"This is really a cut-and-dried issue," said Supervisor Jeffrey C. McKay (D-Lee). "It's outright discrimination against Northern Virginia."

McDonnell's decision will cut \$61 million from the Fairfax County Public Schools' budget, said Paul Regnier, a spokesman for the school district.

According to the school system's Web site, Fairfax County's school budget for the 2010 fiscal year is \$2.2 billion, so the funding cut amounts to 3 percent of the budget. Regnier said that could mean larger class sizes, the elimination of full-day kindergartens or the curtailment of foreign language emergence services.

McDonnell's office confirmed Friday, Jan. 22, that he would uphold the use of the school funding formula proposed in December by then-Gov. Tim Kaine (D).

Details will be given to agency heads next week, McDonnell's press secretary, Stacey Johnson, said in an e-mail to Capital News Service.

Sen. Chap Petersen (D-34) said he was furious when he heard the formula would be frozen at the level set by Kaine.

Petersen noted that because the real estate market had fallen in Northern Virginia, Fairfax, Prince William and Loudoun counties received lower scores on the scale than they had in the past.

Ordinarily, the lower scores would have resulted in more money from the state for basic education.

"Now, thanks to the plan that was put forward by Gov. Kaine, the rules are being changed on us," Petersen said.

On Jan. 12, the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors voted 10-0 to look into legal action if the McDonnell administration upheld the freeze in the school funding formula.

The formula is called the Local Composite Index, or LCI. It determines which localities can pay the most for basic kindergarten-through-12th-grade education and which ones cannot. It is calculated using adjusted gross income, taxable retail sales and true value of real property.

This year, Fairfax's score went from .76 to .71; Loudoun fell from .67 to .58 and Prince William dipped from .44 to .40.

That should have meant more money for those school districts. However, Kaine — and now McDonnell — decided to freeze the formula at the previous scores.

That decision will please some localities, such as Russell County, in the southwest corner of Virginia.

Dr. Lorraine C. Turner, superintendent for the Russell County Public Schools, said her school district would benefit from the LCI freeze.

"If it's frozen at last year's rate, the state will give us more money, as opposed to asking the locality to pay for it," Turner said.

In December, Kaine proposed freezing the LCI until the 2012 fiscal year. He said this would help protect 97 school divisions that would lose money if the formula were re-calculated.



PHOTOS BY LAURA FRIBERG

Seventh graders Nikki Lockwood, Courtney Gistaro, Kate Garrow, Marry Geren and Kathryn Karnaze from The Langley School conducted a bake sale outside of the Giant in McLean to raise money for Haiti Relief. The group of about dozen 12- and 13-year olds raised about \$1,600 for Doctors Without Borders.

Honk for Haiti

Group of Langley School seventh graders raise \$1,600 for Doctors Without Borders.

BY JENNA PUGRANT
THE CONNECTION

Staked outside the Giant in McLean, The Langley School seventh graders waved their handmade signs displaying the words "Honk for Haiti" and listened as cars of shoppers showed their support for Haiti by honoring their requests.

"I was shocked at how much damage the earthquake had caused and how many people had been killed from it," said Laura Perskinski, The Langley School seventh grader.

Her classmate, Kate Garrow, said, "I found it extremely ironic that an earthquake had hit one of the poorest countries in the world. If a crisis like this one had happened to a country like the United States, we could have dealt with it, but with Haiti, it is a lot harder to handle."

The crisis hit even closer to home for the students of Langley's seventh grade class when they found out their language arts teacher's neighbor was trapped in Haiti. "We all wanted to take some form of action," said Kathryn Karnaze, 13. "We thought a bake sale would be a great way to raise money."

About a dozen Langley seventh graders organized at Kathryn Karnaze's home in McLean on Sunday, Jan. 17 to bake for their anticipated bake sale the following day. On Monday, the group of seventh graders set up their bake sale tables outside of Giant in order to put all the money

they sold from their baked goods towards Haiti relief. "The boys and girls started out a little shy when they were asking for donations," said Christal Karnaze, the Langley School mom who helped organize the bake sale. "But their confidence grew when they found out how supportive everyone was of their cause."

The seventh graders stayed outside of Giant to accept donations from 10 a.m.-2 p.m. "A lot of people did not even buy food," said Laura. "They just donated money. I was surprised by their generosity and it seemed like everyone just wanted to help anyway they could."

"I also think we were able to get a lot of donations because we chose to do a bake sale as opposed to simply asking for money," Kate said. "It showed everyone that we had worked hard and really made an effort to help."

Christal Karnaze helped organize the entire operation with the intent to empower the students to take actions. "They all did not know how they could make impact and help the people of Haiti. The bake sale was an opportunity that let them turn their helplessness into hopefulness."

The boys and girls from The Langley School raised over \$1,600 for Haiti and donated all of the money to Doctors Without Borders, an international medical humanitarian organization.

Langley seventh grader Courtney Gistaro holds up one of the signs her fellow classmates made to try to get people to buy their baked goods for Haiti.



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