

Fairfax CONNECTION

Serving Areas of Burke

Joe Pines attacks his plate of wings at the start of the Wing Bowl. 'I like to see who's the best [at eating wings],' he said.

Home From Haiti

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City Honors Fairfax Duo

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Wing Thing

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PHOTO BY CRAIG STERBUTZEL/THE CONNECTION CALENDAR, PAGE 10 ♦ SPORTS, PAGE 13 ♦ CLASSIFIED, PAGE 17

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PHOTO BY JUSTIN FANIZZI/THE CONNECTION

Mayor Robert Lederer reads the proclamation recognizing Bialek and Rummel.

Above and Beyond

Fairfax City Council recognizes charitable efforts of two Fairfax High School students.

BY JUSTIN FANIZZI
THE CONNECTION

Most 16-year-olds can be found spending their free time playing video games, browsing Facebook or frittering away hours at the local mall. Marissa Bialek and Jordan Rummel are not average 16-year-olds, though. They like to spend their free time trying to make their community a better place for all, young and old, wealthy or not.

The two Fairfax High School juniors created Project BOND, otherwise known as Beginning to Open New Doors, last year in an effort to provide assistance to those who need it most in the area. Their tireless efforts, along with the help of a recruited army of fellow classmates, were rewarded with a proclamation from the Fairfax City Council Tuesday, Jan. 26 praising them for their work.

"Most students just beg their teachers to fill out community service forms or things like that," Rummel said. "We wanted our community service project to be something that people would want to do, but I never thought that this little thing we started during the summer would get to this level. To be blunt, it's been pretty cool."

According to Bialek and Rummel, who have been friends since seventh grade, the idea to create Project BOND was conceived by Bialek last summer. Bialek said that she was thinking about her fellow students and how many of them were still seeking community service hours to fulfill a school requirement. Then, she said, the idea came to her to organize an ongoing project that

would allow her classmates to meet their own requirements, but to do it in a way that they would be excited to be a part of. She quickly grabbed the phone and called Rummel to tell him about her idea, and instantly, he saw the potential and the two began planning.

"I was just sitting in my room thinking about how many people were trying to find a community service project, so it started that way," Bialek said. "But I wanted to

make it a good, fun thing to do, and it just went from there."

The first step in creating Project BOND, Bialek and Rummel decided, was to start spreading the word in their own communities and among their own friends and

family to stimulate interest. So, the two organized a "Field Day" in Bialek's Hampton Chase neighborhood in which all residents were invited to a nearby park for an afternoon of family-friendly activities. No admission was charged and no donations were asked for; the two simply wanted to let people know that they were starting Project BOND and help strangers to become friends.

"We just wanted people to get out and playing games with each other and not feel like they were attending a charity event," Bialek said. "I saw people I'd never seen before getting engaged with each other. I was shocked at how well it went."

After seeing the success of their initial efforts, the two then started thinking about expansion. They said that they started advertising their project around the school and on Facebook, encouraging their friends to join the team and even received promo

SEE SCHOOL, PAGE 6

WWW.CONNECTIONNEWSPAPERS.COM



PHOTO BY JUSTIN FANIZZI/THE CONNECTION

Virginia Task Force 1 team members line up in front of their plane.

Still Under Consideration

Governor still weighs school funding freeze.

BY VERONICA GARABELLI
CAPITAL NEWS SERVICE

Under pressure from politicians in Northern Virginia, Gov. Bob McDonnell (R) appears to be backing away from a staff comment that he would continue using a school funding formula that takes money from more affluent localities and gives it to less affluent ones.

Last week, McDonnell's press secretary, Stacey Johnson, told Capital News Service that the governor planned to uphold the funding-formula freeze proposed in December by then-Gov. Tim Kaine (D).

"The governor plans to keep the current freeze," Johnson said in an e-mail on Friday (Jan. 22). "We will put out more specific direction to agency heads next week."

However, on Tuesday, Johnson backed away from that statement. In a statement sent to Capital News Service she said, "We are evaluating all of the components of the current budget and will be working with House and Senate budget conferees to gather their input on existing spending reductions as well as potential new cost savings strategies."

"No final decisions have been made regarding the composite index freeze by the legislators or the governor's finance team."

At issue is the Local Composite Index, a formula that determines how much school funding a county or city would get from the state government.

The LCI assigns each school division a score, such as ".75" or ".51," based on the locality's adjusted gross income, taxable retail sales and property tax base. The lower its score, the more money the locality gets from the state government for basic education and vice versa.

THE LCI scores for Fairfax, Loudoun and Prince William counties were about to drop, meaning those school divisions would get more state funding. However, Kaine decided to freeze the LCI scores at last year's levels.

The result: Fairfax County stands to lose \$61 million; Prince William County, \$22 million; and Loudoun County, \$34 million.

Supervisor Jeff McKay (D-Lee) said the sooner school districts know the fate of the school funding formula, the better because they will be able to plan their budgets.

McKay said he wants to educate Fairfax County citizens about the LCI freeze. He said that the issue originally was seen as "inside baseball" and that the anger coming out of Northern Virginia was underestimated.

"Clearly, what we're doing is starting to work," McKay said. "Every taxpayer in this

Rescuers Return from Haiti

Virginia Task Force 1 returns from 15-day deployment to earthquake-ravaged country.

BY JUSTIN FANIZZI
THE CONNECTION

For most people, the devastation of the Jan. 12 earthquake in Haiti was realized only through television news reports or horrifying images in the newspaper and their only means of assistance lied in Red Cross donations. The members of Virginia Task Force 1, however, got a more hands-on experience.

The task force, comprised of members of the Fairfax County Urban Search and Rescue Team, returned home Thursday, Jan. 28

after spending two weeks in Haiti digging through rubble and saving lives. The multi-hour rescue missions, combined with 20-hour work days, left most of the 114 team members thrilled to be home and a bit more thankful for the things they used to take for granted.

"I've been in many earthquakes and was

"I've been in many earthquakes and I'd never seen destruction like that."

— Rescue Specialist Wayne Reedy

at the Pentagon on 9/11 and I'd never seen destruction like that," Rescue Specialist Wayne Reedy said. "Nothing prepares you for what you see at first, but you have to adapt and overcome."

The task force, one of only three teams in the country approved by the federal government to perform overseas search-and-rescue missions,

was activated by the United States Agency

SEE TASK FORCE, PAGE 15

Rams Present 'Hard-Knock' Musical

Robinson Middle brings 'Annie' to stage.

BY BONNIE HOBBS
THE CONNECTION

Featuring a cast and crew of more than 100, Robinson Middle School is presenting "Annie." And it won't be an abridged version.

"We set the bar really high," said Amy Hard, co-directing with Diane Burokow. "No junior shows We do only full-length, Broadway productions."

Show times are Thursday, Feb. 12, at 7 p.m.; Saturday, Feb. 13, at 2 p.m. and 7

p.m.; and Sunday, Feb. 14, at 2 p.m. Tickets are \$10 online and at the door, but they go quickly, so purchases at www.robinsondrama.org are recommended.

Accompanying the cast on piano will be Robinson Secondary students Madison Auch and Michael Lamar. Choreographers were Hard and sophomore Josh Israel. Musical director is Lee High Choir Director Kristin Sheppard.

"We've set it strongly in the Great Depression, so the environment becomes a char-

acter," said Hard. "It's the first time we've done 'Annie' here, and we picked the show before we knew we had a perfect Annie."

Playing that title role is seventh-grader Chloe Gilfoil, with a powerful voice that belies her petite stature. Describing 11-year-old Annie as "energetic and spunky," Chloe said her character looks on the bright side. "She's friendly and not afraid to say anything," said Chloe. "She's an orphan, befriended by the rich Mr. Warbucks, but she hopes her parents will find her."

Chloe enjoys acting and making new

SEE ROBINSON, PAGE 14

SEE FUNDING, PAGE 7



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Dan Browne, Stephanie Davis and Sean Pugerude were the winners in PVI's school-wide Poetry Out Loud competition. Davis will advance to the regional round after winning the school contest.

Davis Wins Poetry Contest

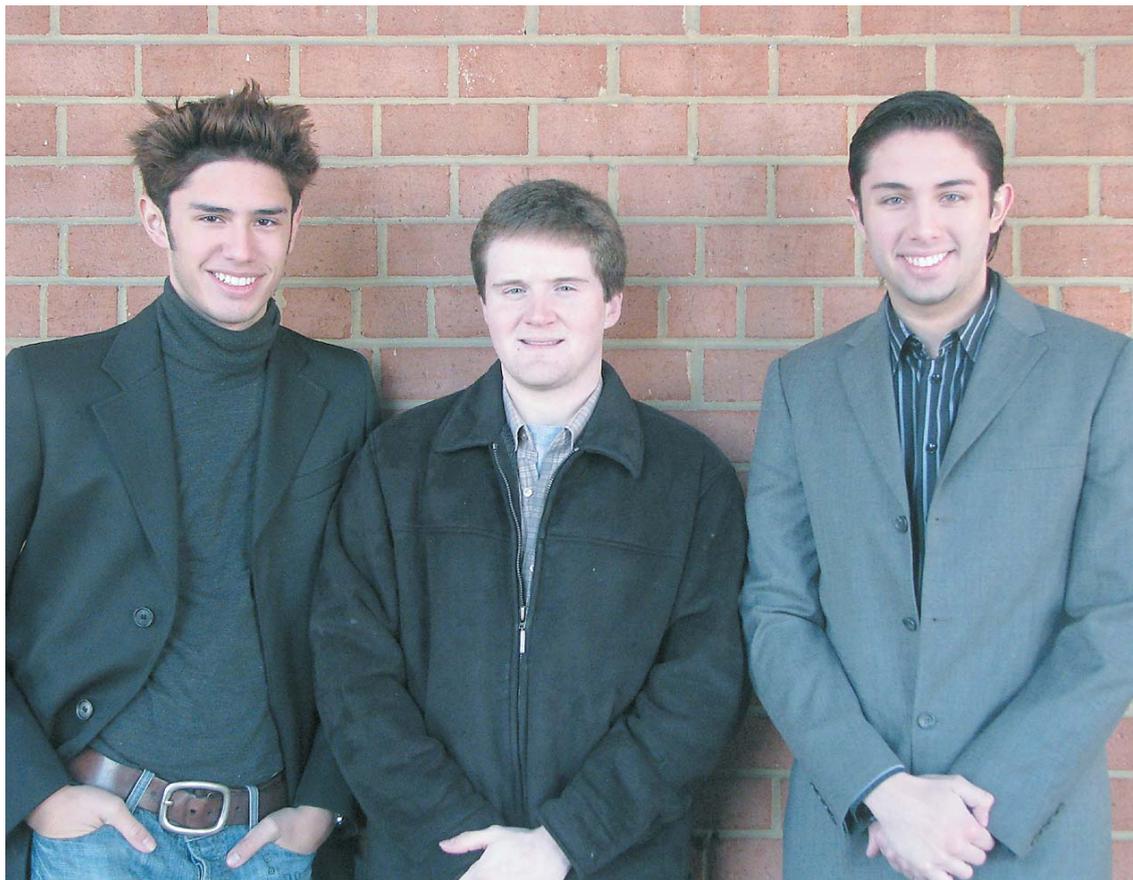
Paul VI recently hosted a school-wide Poetry Out Loud competition, as part of the national recitation contest. The 2010 Virginia Poetry Out Loud Recitation Contest is a partnership of The National Endowment for the Arts and the Poetry Foundation, the Virginia Commission for the Arts, Theatre IV and Barksdale Theatre. Each student recited two poems from memory chosen from an anthology of 600 poems. Contestants were judged on accuracy, voice and articulation, appropriateness of dramatization, level of difficulty, physical presence and evidence of understanding. Junior Stephanie Davis won first place for her recitation of "Richard Corey" by Edwin Arlington Robinson and "Falling: The Code" by Li-Young Lee. Sophomore Sean Pugerude won second place and senior Dan Browne was awarded third place. After winning the school competition, Davis will advance to the regional competition on Feb. 19 at the Signature Theatre in Arlington. To learn more, visit <http://www.poetryoutloud.org/>.



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Bulova Named Legislator of Year

On Tuesday, Jan. 19, Del. David Bulova (D-37) accepted the 2009 Legislator of the Year Award from the Virginia Professional Fire Fighters for support to Virginia's fire fighters, EMTs and first responders. Bulova received the award at the Virginia Professional Fire Fighters Legislative Conference in Richmond. During the 2009 General Assembly session, Bulova sponsored legislation to strengthen the Line of Duty Act, which provides for the families of Virginia's public safety officers who are killed or disabled in the line of duty. Bulova, center, receives the Legislator of the Year Award.



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Julian Curi, James Wright and Dex Curi

To Change the World

Brothers, friend create New Thought Pictures film company.

BY JUSTIN FANIZZI
THE CONNECTION

Burke resident and George Mason University senior Dex Curi believes that art should do more than produce chip laughs of third-rate thrills, and he is willing to back up his words with action.

With the help of his brother Julian and friend James Wright, Curi created New Thought Pictures, a film company whose mission may seem lofty but to its creators, is wholly attainable. Simply put, they want their movies to change the world.

"I want people to watch the films we make and be stirred in the soul and walk away with their consciousness raised," Dex Curi said. "We want stories that change the world."

Their first attempt at reaching that goal has come in the form of their debut movie, the 6-minute long "WILL," the story of a young man who is confused with his sexuality. In the film, which is available on video-sharing Web site YouTube, the man has a relationship with another man he meets on campus, and ultimately finds himself in a life-altering situation that leaves him with remorse and regret. While the subject matter may be controversial, the filmmakers are simply using it as a vehicle to convey their message of awareness and thinking before acting on an impulse or desire.

"A lot of people are careless when it comes to sex and are think that they cannot get [HIV/AIDS]," said

Wright, who wrote the screenplay for "WILL" based on a short story he drafted. "Many of my friends are gay, and a couple of them have HIV because they were careless. Whatever your lifestyle, it should be lived safer."

According to Dex Curi, the film was posted to YouTube in early January after spending about 40 hours shooting film for the 6-minute film. He said that Wright provided the story, which Dex Curi then turned into a script. Curi then recruited Julian to be the director and cinematographer, because Julian had prior experience. Then they began scouting locations. After they received permission to shoot in certain locations, they started filming. Curi said that they shot so much film because the script was a work in progress and they needed to make sure they filmed anything they could possibly use so a story could be constructed in the editing phase.

"I've done work on a lot of projects, but I saw a lot of potential in this project," Julian Curi said. "They came to me asking for help [in shooting the film] and one thing led to another and I ended

up becoming part of the company."

The film, which also contains original music performed by Wright, already has nearly 1,000 hits on YouTube and many positive comments have been posted by viewers. In addition, Dex Curi said that the film has received good reviews from the gay community and from several other sources. Dex Curi said that he mailed copies of the film to area groups that he felt would be interested, which included several gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender groups and that these groups, surprisingly, enjoyed the film.

"I thought there'd be much more controversy than there was," Dex Curi said. "The people in the gay and lesbian community that have seen it actually feel

"We want stories that change the world."

— Dex Curi

New Thought Pictures

FROM PAGE 4

pity for the main character because he is truly confused. His sense of home, they felt, was accepting that he had HIV and accepted that he would die from it."

In addition to busily working to expand the budding New Thoughts Pictures, the three also have their studies to worry about, as well. Dex Curi is in his final semester at Mason and will earn a bachelor's degree in

psychology and plans on going for his doctorate in the field. Julian Curi is studying communications in radio and television at Franciscan University in Ohio and will graduate in 2012. Wright, 22, is studying music at Northern Virginia Community College and is transferring to Mason this summer, where he will study philosophy. Though their academic pursuits may seem to inhibit their filmmaking careers, they each believe that their field of study will

help them perfect their craft.

"I truly believe that you have to understand, as an actor, the human psyche," Dex Curi said. "You can't understand that unless you're academically trained to do that, so that's why I am pursuing my doctorate in psychology."

In the meantime, however, Dex and Julian Curi and James Wright will continue to ply their trade and improve their abilities and the only way to do that is to keep making movies. Dex Curi said that they have already begun preparing to shoot their next film this summer, a full-length film entitled "White-Washed Sepulchre," which he said tells the

story of a homosexual priest who struggles with his choices. Wright did not write the script for this movie but contributed to the editing process, and once again, Julian Curi will direct. Though it will only be movie number two, the trio believes that it will be just the beginning in a long line of films that will have a greater impact.

"I believe that the purpose of any art should be to change the world, and that's why I am so inspired but what we are doing," Wright said. "It's not about making money of getting hits on You Tube. It's about trying to inspire a 'New Thought' within people."



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PEOPLE

Lords of the Wings

Hard Times restaurant hosts buffalo wing eating contest.

BY REED S. ALBERS
THE CONNECTION

Buffalo wings and football. It's a culinary marriage made in pigskin heaven. What better way to pass the annoying pre-Super Bowl week than to host a buffalo wing eating competition?

That's what local restaurateur Doug Welsh, owner of the Hard Times Cafe in Fairfax, decided to do to help promote his business and his wings.

On Feb. 2, the final qualifying leg of the 2010 Wing Bowl took place at his sports bar.

"I had the idea a couple of years ago, but I'm not a big eating competition person," he said. "But our wing business is so big and people are fanatical about them, we wanted to promote [the wings]."

With a few phone calls to local sports radio station 106.7 WJFK to help promote the event, the Wing Bowl was born.

"We kicked around the idea with the guys from WJFK," he said. "They said that other markets run a Wing Bowl so we jumped all over it."

The premise is simple: 20 contestants have 10 minutes to eat as many chicken wings as possible. The bone of each wing must be clear of any meat; partial wings do not count toward a competitor's grand total.

Oh, and don't vomit, that's an automatic disqualification.

The top four finishers from each of the restaurant's seven participating locations move on to a finals competition on Feb. 5

at the Hard Times Cafe in Springfield, where 30 of the area's best wing eaters will chow down for a \$2,500 cash prize.

At first, Welsh said he hesitated to host a competitive eating event, but over time he came to love the idea.

"I've seen those [hot dog eating] competitions and I wondered 'What is this?' I just didn't get it," he said. "But then I went to [one of the Hard Times-hosted events] and I loved it."

While not in the same league as Nathan's International July Fourth Hot Dog Eating Contest at Coney Island, N.Y., the Fairfax Wing Bowl attracted a curious crowd to witness live competitive eating.

It also brought out some local eating veterans and newbies.

"I just won a wing eating championship a month ago," said contestant Joe Pines, 27, a Fairfax resident. "I like to see who's the best [at eating wings]. It's a lot of fun."

Just as football has plays such as the blitz, option and pass, competitive eaters bring their own strategies to the table.

One competitor employed the "wood chipper" method, placing a wing in his mouth and then twirling the meat off the bone with his teeth. Pines said he used a

slow-but-steady approach after nearly choking during the event.

"I was going so fast I had to stop, I kind of choked," he said. "You have to take it slow. You can't go at it full speed."

Competitive-eating newcomer Kim Dryden, 28, of Fairfax said he practiced with two-piece wings before the competition.

"I was hoping to get 50 wings [eaten]," he said. "But they were drumstick wings so it was harder than I thought."

The winner of the Fairfax event, Mike Longo, 22, of Long Island, N.Y., successfully ate 49 wings to claim first place and a spot in the finals.

Longo, a veteran competitive eater, said a friend told him about the contest and he wanted to be part of the area's first Wing

Bowl.

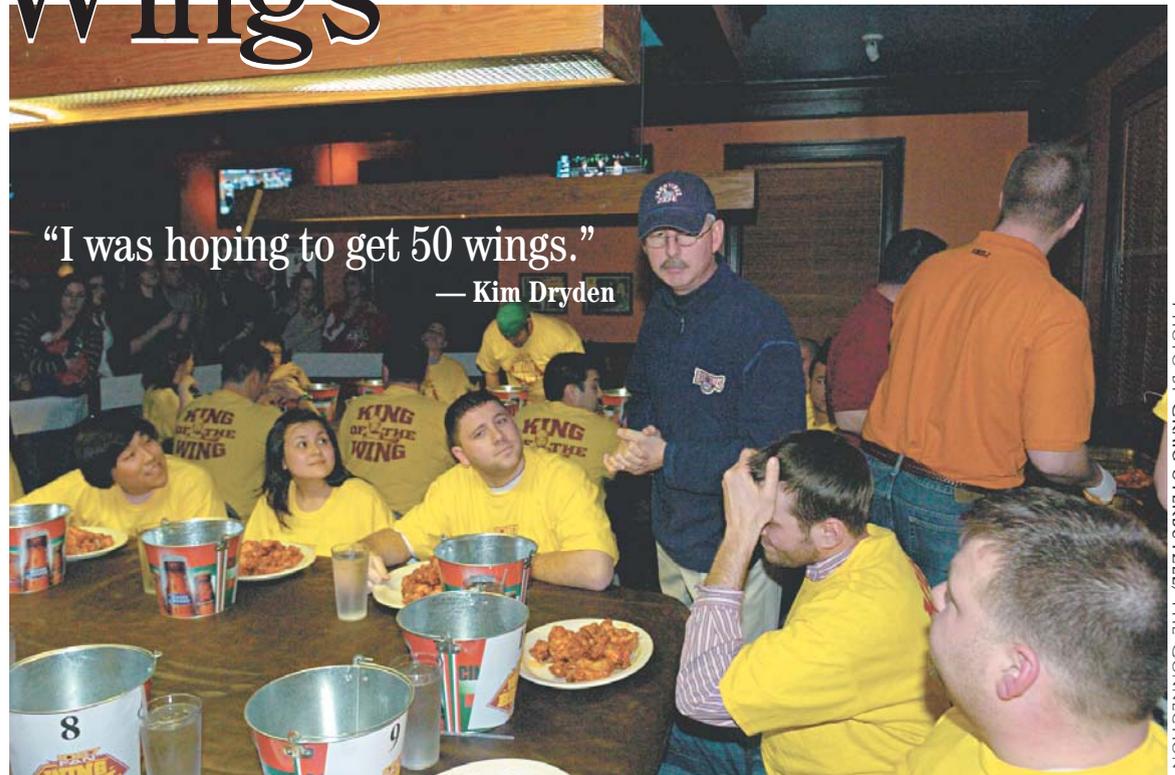
"This was right up my alley," he said. "I've done pizza-eating competitions before. That's pretty much my specialty. I guess wings are up there, too."

With an estimated 1,100 wings cooked for the Fairfax event, Welsh said he expects to see the Wing Bowl grow into an annual event.

"Our first goal was to get the event done this year" he said. "We expect it to grow over the next few years."

Looking ahead to the finals, Welsh suddenly realized that 1,100 wings may not be enough.

"It just dawned on me that at the finals we're going to have 30 of the best wing eaters going at it at once," he said.



Joe Pines attacks his plate of wings at the start of the Wing Bowl. 'I like to see who's the best [at eating wings],' he said.

PHOTO BY CRAIG STERBUTZEL/THE CONNECTION

School Community Service Project Grows

FROM PAGE 2

tional help from many of the school's teachers. Once they felt that word was sufficiently spread, they began asking friends and family members for small donations for their next charity effort. The two took the money they received and went to local supermarkets and department stores and bought food and clothes for a number of charities that they targeted beforehand. Soon enough, their Facebook group had more than 100 followers and received several dozen commitments from people offering their time and support.

"We got really good reviews from the field day, and we even had an article about [Project BOND] written in the school newspaper," Rummel said. "It really just took off."

After garnering considerable support from their friends and family, Bialek and Rummel

started to look for other ways to support the less fortunate in the county. The next charity effort, they decided, would be participation in the 2009 Fannie Mae Help the Homeless Walk-a-Thon, on Nov. 22. The two solicited friends and family for donations for the walk, and they ended up collecting more than \$500, all of which was donated to homeless charities that Fannie Mae had preordained.

As soon as the Walk-a-Thon was completed, Bialek and Rummel started work on their next endeavor, the Salvation Army's Angel Tree program. Again, they asked for financial donations from people that they knew, and eventually, they collected enough money to purchase winter outfits and several toys for three different Fairfax children. In addition, they also organized a holiday food drive in which they collected more than 400 packets of Ramen Noodles for the

Lamb Center homeless day center in Fairfax and personally brought the food to the center.

"The [charity work] for the Lamb Center really struck me," Rummel said. "You know you're directly making an impact when you see the people you are helping. They were so grateful. It was so touching."

While Bialek were humbled and appreciative of the recognition they received from the City Council, they both said that they are more concerned with Project BOND's future. The charity's latest endeavor, they said, is planning a food drive for the Capital Area Food bank. They plan to collect money and nonperishable food items, which they hope to hand over in mid-February. In addition, Rummel said that they recently spoke with representatives from city's social services program about future events that Project BOND can contribute to and

discussed groups in the area that are most in need of Project BOND's support. These new connections, combined with Bialek and Rummel's boundless determination to help people, forecast great things ahead for Project BOND, and as evidenced by the proclamation, people are noticing it, too.

"I love seeing my friends doing things that are so great, and when the community recognizes them, it's even better," said classmate Victoria Tran. "They started it themselves, but now it's turned into something much bigger. This is only the beginning for Project BOND."

Project BOND

Go to [HYPERLINK "http://projectbond.org/"](http://projectbond.org/) for more information on Project BOND.

Funding

FROM PAGE 3

county has to keep the pressure on this.”

SEN. CHAP PETERSEN (D-34), has spoken in the General Assembly about the school funding formula. He said he doesn't think McDonnell's administration is focused on the issue.

“I'm not quite sure if they understand it,” Petersen said. “I don't think they've made a commitment one way or the other.”

Corey A. Stewart, chairman of the Prince William County Board of Supervisors, and Scott K. York, chairman of the Loudoun County Board of Supervisors, said they are also working to spread the word about the LCI freeze.

“I really am not prone to making exaggerations,” Stewart said “But it would seriously damage the educational systems in Northern Virginia.”

Kaine proposed freezing the LCI to protect 97 school divisions that would lose money if the formula were re-calculated.

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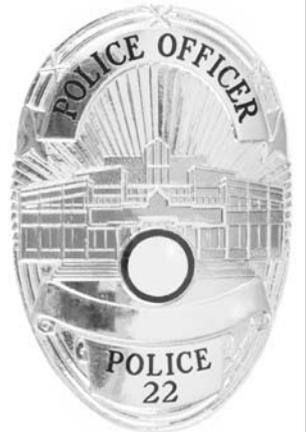
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OPINION

Adding More Painful Cuts

With talk of cutting programs that make it bearable to go to school for students, pay cuts should also be on the table.

Some of the cuts proposed by Fairfax County Public Schools might sound like they would not affect learning very much.

Freshman sports, for instance, involves 2,200 students across the county who are engaged in the delicate transition from middle school to high school. Why would it matter? How about the 5,000 students who participate in indoor track?

Or the thousands of students who find their love of learning through music.

Or the students getting a second chance on success at Pimmit Hills Alternative School.

Succeeding in school is all about finding a niche, a reason to go, particularly in high school. For some students, this is band. For others it is the chance to run track. For some, it's an art class. For others it might be a con-

nection to friends made through freshman sports.

Education succeeds for many different reasons. It is a huge mistake to cut off the very things that help students engage.

Nevertheless, schools across the area will have less money per student this year, and they will have to make cuts. Before they cut the life out of the school day for so many children, parents and the rest of local taxpayers deserve to see

administration and staff over a certain level willing to share the pain.

No doubt many administrative cuts are not receiving as much publicity as cuts that impact students. But what administrative departments will face cuts similar to those proposed for music or some sports programs?

EDITORIAL

Sorting Out Conflicting Advice on Mammograms

BY DR. KIRSTEN EDMISTON
MEDICAL DIRECTOR, INOVA CANCER SERVICES

Women can be apprehensive about going for their annual mammogram. The stress of waiting for results, or even the test itself, can be something many would gladly avoid.

In November, the United States Preventive Services Task Force (USPSF) may have added to this stress by announcing revised screening mammography guidelines. The new recommendations left many women uncertain about what to do about their breast health. The USPSF recommended against routine screening mammography in women aged 40 to 49 and recommended that women aged 50 to 74 have a mammogram every two years rather than every year, unless there is a high-risk for breast cancer because of family history or gene mutations.

The new guidelines conflict with those of the American Cancer Society and the American College of Radiology, which both remain committed to advising annual mammograms starting at age 40, as well as the National Cancer Institute, which recommends that women age 40 and older have mammograms every one to two years.

The Inova Breast Care Institute, which has entry points throughout Northern Virginia for patients with any type of breast health issues, continues to support routine annual screening mammograms from qualified breast imaging centers for women over the age of 40 as long as they are in good health.

In the United States, breast cancer is the

most common cancer and the second leading cause of cancer deaths in women according to the American Cancer Society. More than 192,000 new cases and 40,000 deaths from the disease are expected in the U.S. this year.

THE BEST approach to maintaining a women's breast health is to maintain a healthy lifestyle, have appropriate screening based on risk and to encourage women to discuss their specific family history and circumstances with their physician.

COMMENTARY

Women who have found breast cancer after having an annual mammogram agree that it is important to be diligent about having regular breast exams. Early detection leads to the best chance for a successful outcome.

The Inova Breast Care Institute at Inova Alexandria, Inova Fairfax, Inova Fair Oaks, Inova Loudoun and Inova Mount Vernon hospitals are some of the first programs in the Washington, D.C., metro area to receive three-year accreditation from the National Accreditation Program for Breast Centers, which awards accreditation only to programs that embrace a multidisciplinary approach and can meet or exceed 27 strict standards for excellence in breast care.

When there are questions about breast care, experts at the Inova Breast Care Institute are available to answer those questions, alleviate any concerns and offer our commitment to supporting women's breast health. For more information about breast health visit inova.org/ibci.

Pay cuts for staff with salaries more than \$75,000 should also be on the table, holding classroom teachers harmless.

More moderate than many of the cuts in many private companies with revenue short-fall in the past two years, schools could consider a 5 percent or smaller for employees who make \$75,000-\$90,000, ranging up to a 20 percent cut for those who make \$140,000-\$200,000 and possibly more for anyone who makes more than \$200,000.

These are people who have served in the school system for a long time, and they deserve respect for the excellent job they have done. But right now, everything needs to be on the table.

This budget crisis is different than in the past. Right now for the first time, taxpayers are looking at drastically lower home values, and many are underwater. Tens of thousands of taxpayers in Northern Virginia are unemployed. For the public to press for more money for schools, schools will have to demonstrate that they "get it."

— MARY KIMM

Opposing Connolly On Health Care

To the Editor:

U.S. Rep. Gerry Connolly (D-11) should not be re-elected this November.

I am opposed to the current health care legislation and wrote to him last August to express this opposition and I know that many of my friends and neighbors did as well. Mr. Connolly replied to my e-mail by closing with "But we have to get it right and take into account your concerns and the concerns of others." Yet, on Nov. 7, 2009, Mr. Connolly voted in favor of HR3962 - Affordable Health Care for America Act. He voted "Aye," ignoring the opposition of thousands of voters in the 11th District of Virginia. He apparently was more concerned with ingratiating himself to the House Democratic leadership to advance his political career than with listening to his constituents.

Now, Mr. Connolly is quoted in a Jan. 25 Politico article about the fate of health care legislation as saying "We're out of sync. I favor health care reform. I favor comprehensive healthcare reform, but not at the price of forcing something down the public's throat that the public finds distasteful and bitter." Apparently now Mr. Connolly realizes that the American people and just maybe the voters in the 11th District

SEE LETTERS, PAGE 9

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LETTERS

FROM PAGE 8

are really, really serious in their opposition to this legislation.

What has happened to change Mr. Connolly's mind about supporting the current legislation? Of course we all know the answer — Sen. Scott Brown (R-Mass.) Mr. Connolly is now afraid for his political life. If the voters in the bluest of blue states, Massachusetts, can turn against a Democrat, then the voters in the 11th District could easily turn against him in November. Furthermore, he must now think that separating himself as far as possible from the House Democratic leadership will help him

politically. What a difference two months can make.

The 11th District deserves a better congressman than Mr. Connolly who responds so blatantly to the political winds. He ignored his constituents' concerns in November to advance his own political career and now he is reacting differently because he fears for his political life. Can we ever trust him to honestly represent our views? I believe the voters in November will see through this transparent "battlefield conversion" and retire him in November.

Keith G. Damon
Fairfax

Join the Shepherd's Center of Fairfax-Burke for its Adventures In Learning program open to all adults age 50 or better. Registrants bring a bag lunch and stay for a full day of exercise/classes/activities and socializing, or pick and choose the classes that interest them the most. For the spring session, classes will meet each Monday, from March 22-May 3 (except April 5), 9:30 a.m.-2:45 p.m., at Lord of Life Lutheran Church, 5114 Twinbrook Road, Fairfax; registration fee-\$30. Class schedule and registration forms will be available on-line starting Feb. 19 at www.fairfax-burkesc.org or by calling the SCFB office at 703-323-4788.

The Literacy Council of Northern Virginia (LCNV) helps adults learn to read, write, speak and understand English through one-to-

one tutoring programs and English classes. Each year, LCNV conducts tutor-training workshops to prepare volunteer tutors to provide individualized instruction to adult students who want to improve their English literacy skills. Each tutor is trained, matched with a student, and encouraged to meet weekly for an hour and a half to help the student improve his or her English skills. No teaching or foreign language skills are required. A \$40 training fee covers the cost of books, materials and instruction. All tutor-training workshops take place at the James Lee Community Center, 2855 Annandale Road in Falls Church. ESOL Tutor Training Workshop takes place on Saturdays, Feb. 20 and 27 and March 6, from 9:30 a.m.-3:30 p.m. For more information, e-mail volunteers@lcnv.org or call 703-237-0866.

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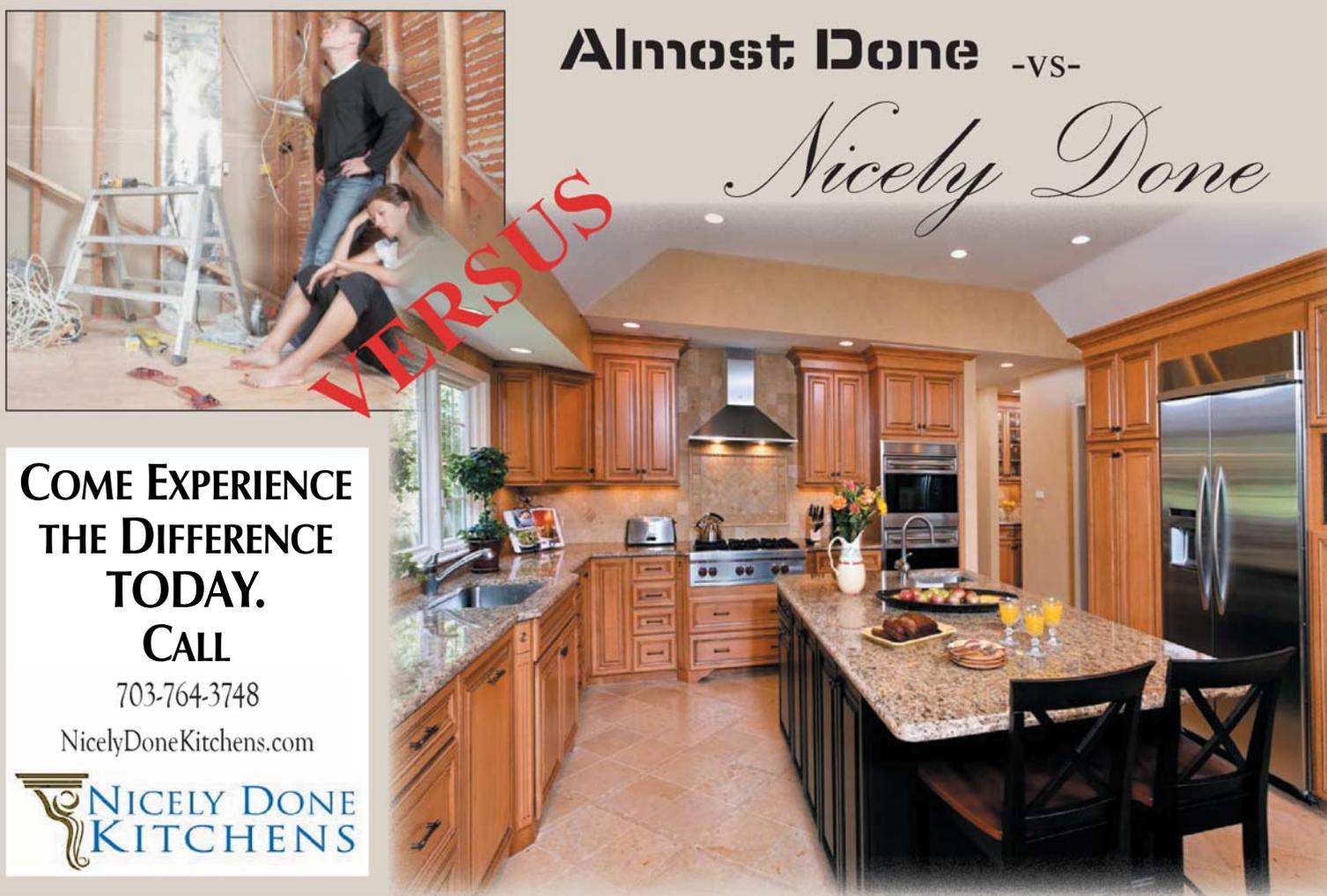
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THURSDAY/FEB. 4

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.fhshorus.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.

Owl Tales. 10:30 a.m. Burke Centre Library, 5935 Freds Oak Road, Burke. Stories about owls. Age 13-23 Months with adult. 703-249-1520.

TrackHustle & BeTaRaZ presents the Board Games Beat Battle. 10 p.m. Jammin' Java, 227 Maple Ave. East, Vienna. \$10 advance, \$12 day of show. 703-255-1566 or www.jamminjava.com.

The 2010 W.E.B. DuBois Lecture and Film 'Black and Queer in America.' Lecture at 1:30 p.m., film screening and discussion begins 4 p.m. at Research I, Room 163, George Mason University, Fairfax campus. This program is part of George Mason University's programs in African and African American Studies, and Women and Gender Studies. Speakers include Patrik-Ian Polk, creator, director, and producer of Logo Channel's Noah's Arc, and Marlon Ross, University of Virginia professor of African American Literature and Gender & Queer Theory. Free admission. 703-993-4080 or <http://aaas.gmu.edu>.

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 Petillo 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,



Happy New Year

Celebrate the Lunar New Year on Feb. 13 and 14, from 1-5 p.m., at Fair Oaks Mall. Enjoy a weekend of music, dance, kung fu demonstrations, a lantern festival, and children's drawing contests. Fair Oaks Mall is located at 11750 Fair Oaks Mall, Fairfax. Free. For more information visit www.ShopFairOaksMall.com or call 703-359-8302.

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www.fairfaxsymphony.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.

Brian Gaffney. 7-9:30 p.m., at The Auld Shebeen, 3971 Chain Bridge Road, Fairfax. 703-293-9600.

Stroke Comeback Center Fund-raiser: 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.

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.

'The Vagina Monologues.' 8 p.m. at George Mason University Harris Theatre, 4400 University Drive, Fairfax. Tickets \$25. Part of the Vday

campaign to end violence against women and girls. sas.gmu.edu.

SATURDAY/FEB. 6

Jeri Sager. 7:30 p.m. at Wolf Trap Foundation for the Performing Arts, 1624 Trap Road, Vienna. West Springfield High School alumnus 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.

Spagetti Dinner. 5-7 p.m. at the City of Fairfax Senior Center, Green Acres Center Cafeteria, 4401 Sideburn Road, Fairfax. Pasta, salad, garlic bread, dessert and beverage. Adults \$8, students and seniors \$7, \$6 under age 10. Children under age 2 free. Proceeds benefit the Senior Center. Open to the public, walk-ins welcome. 703-359-2487 or jormesher@fairfaxva.gov.

Mark Morris Dance Group. 8 p.m. at George Mason University Center

SEE CALENDAR. PAGE 11



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CALENDAR

FROM PAGE 10

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: Virginia's 1st 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., Fairfax. 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.

Brian Gaffney. 7-9:30 p.m., at The Auld Shebeen, 3971 Chain Bridge Road, Fairfax. 703-293-9600.

Read to the Dog. 1 p.m. Pohick Regional Library, 6450 Sydenstricker Road, Burke. Read aloud to a trained therapy dog. Call or sign up online for a 15-minute session. Age 6-12. 703-644-7333.

Vienna-Falls Church Chorus. 10 a.m. City of Fairfax Regional Library, 10360 North St., Fairfax. A quartet will perform in the lobby. 703-293-6227.

Scouts and Crafts. 10 a.m. City of Fairfax Regional Library, 10360 North St., Fairfax. Girl Scout Troop

SEE CALENDAR, PAGE 12

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THINGS TO DO

A Star Comes Home

West Springfield grad Jeri Sager returns to area for a 'homecoming' show at Wolf Trap.

BY AMBER HEALY
THE CONNECTION

Jeri Sager's family didn't know she could sing until she was in high school. "We were sitting around the dinner table one night and Jeri said she was going to be doing a solo during church the next Sunday," said her sister, Jo Gilley, who now lives in Chicago.

The puzzled faces turned to slack-jawed astonishment when Sager, then in her early teens, belted out a song Barbara Streisand sang in the movie "Funny Girl."

"We were just stunned," Gilley said. "My dad forgot he was in church for a second and said 'Damn. She can really sing,' she laughed.

Now Sager is preparing for a one-night only show at The Barns at Wolf Trap Saturday night, where she'll perform songs from her career on Broadway. Currently, Sager is performing both on land — a concert in Dallas this week before her return to Fairfax County — and at sea — on cruise ships, including a recent stint in the Panama Canal. When she's not on the road, she makes her home in Nashville with her husband, Randy Rickel, who is currently on tour as a coach driver for comedians.

Growing up, Sager's performances were, for the most part, "alone in my room, singing into my hairbrush" in the early days, she said. She would come home from West Springfield High School and emulate the singers she loved to listen to, learning from and imitating them.

Sager was in the band, playing percussion in seventh and eighth grade, but joined chorus in 10th grade. She tried out for the all-state choir that year and was one of two girls to make the performing group from her school that year.

"Nobody knew who I was," Sager said. "I came out of nowhere."

She never did shows for her family, like most aspiring singers do, Sager admitted. But her stage presence is equally credited to her mother "a wonderful actress" and her father, "who had a great voice. I got my

voice from my father but the soul of an actress comes from my mom."

When Sager performs at Wolf Trap on Saturday evening, in the audience will be her sister, Gilley, her husband and their two sons, along with some friends from her days at the now-defunct Harlequin Theater in Maryland.

"I didn't go to my homecoming dance, so I'm kind of giving myself a homecoming," Sager said, laughing.

Earlier in the week, Sager did a show in Dallas, where her brother Jim lives with his family. "This is like Old Home Week," Sager said, sounding thrilled to be performing in front of people she loves.

While onstage, she's performing songs she loves as well, from the laundry list of shows she's starred in over nearly 20 years.

Among her favorites is a rendition of "Memory" from the musical "Cats."

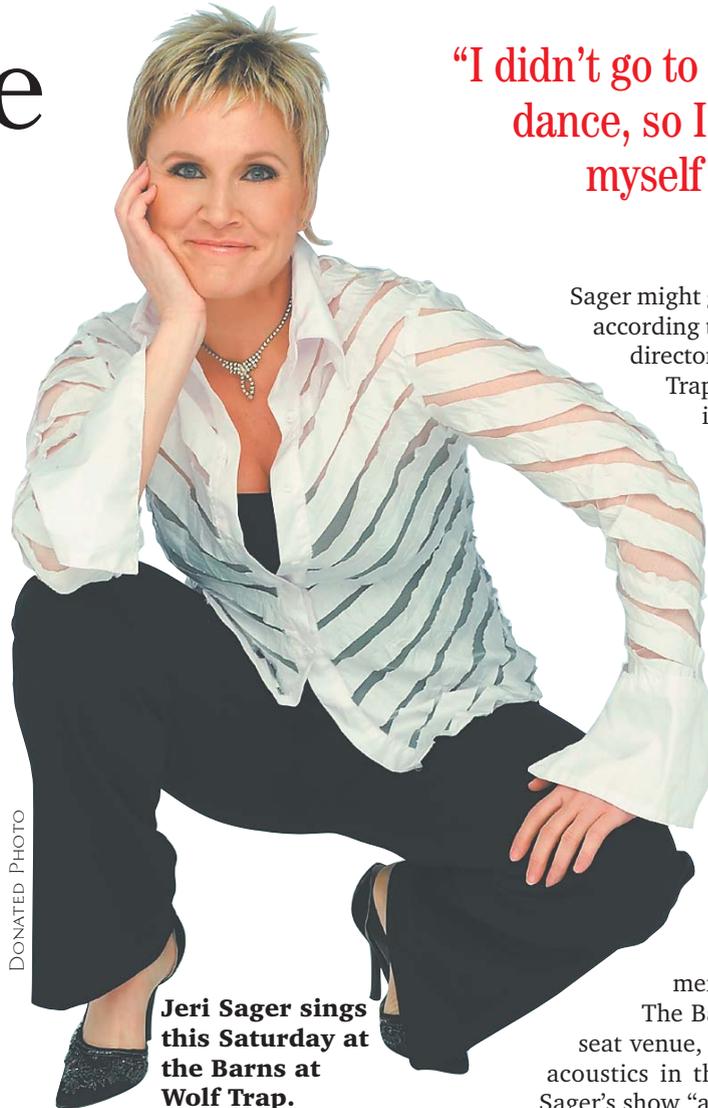
Each performer selected for the legendary musical is told the story of the dancing felines by their musical director at the beginning of rehearsals, Sager said. On her first day, Patrick Vaccariello, her musical director, and production director David Taylor gave her their version of the story and gave her a little insight behind the song.

At first, she admitted she wasn't thrilled to sing a song known and loved by so many.

"I'll be honest, I hated that song," she said. But when she heard the story and got a little bit of a backstory on what her character, Grizabella, was going through before singing that well-known song, everything changed.

"Now I love it," she said. "I now tell audiences the story they told me before I sing it and it's a different take on the song, I think it has a new dimension."

ALSO INCLUDED in the two-hour-long show will be songs from other Andrew Lloyd Weber hits like "Evita" and "Phantom of the Opera" and some other well-known Broadway staples like "A Chorus Line" and "Fid-



DONATED PHOTO

Jeri Sager sings this Saturday at the Barns at Wolf Trap.

"I didn't go to my homecoming dance, so I'm kind of giving myself a homecoming."

— Jeri Sager

Sager might get her wish of a full house, according to Graham Binder, assistant director for public relations at Wolf Trap, who says the performance is "heading toward a sell-out."

The team at Wolf Trap is excited for this performance, Binder said, because Sager is a "name" among people who love Broadway tunes.

Trying to secure a performance at Wolf Trap was "a no-brainer," he said. "She's a NOVA native and has a brand new cabaret show that our patrons have yet to see, plus she's obviously a name given her accomplishments on Broadway."

The Barns of Wolf Trap is a 382-seat venue, Binder said, with "the best acoustics in the NOVA region," making Sager's show "an extremely hot ticket."

bler on the Roof." Sager said she changes the roster all the time, so she wasn't fully certain of what her set list would look like for the concert at Wolf Trap.

Sager will be backed by a three-piece ensemble, including pianist Scot Woolley, who is also her musical director, along with bass player Doug Largent, percussionist Mitch Perrins and Bryan Crook, on alto and tenor sax, clarinet and flute.

Her performance is a family-friendly show, and she's hoping many families will come out, so children realize that real live singing isn't what can be seen on shows like "American Idol."

"There's so much out there that's lip-synched and fixed. Kids need to be exposed to live performances so they know the difference," Sager said. "The difference with Broadway is that if I can't sing a song on pitch eight times a week, I don't get that job."

WITH SOME of her family in the audience, the show may take on a very emotional atmosphere.

"I think it makes for a very special time when family and friends are present at any endeavor, especially a live show," he said. "The energy is just that much more palpable for the performer and the crowd."

Sager has to keep in mind that "when I'm telling stories about my past, there will be people in the audience who will remember what I'm talking about," she said. "For the first time in my life, I'll be telling a story to an audience of people who were there with me."

The audience is always an integral part of the show, Sager said, because it is because of the people in the seats that she has a job.

"I'm so lucky to do what I love, but I know that if they didn't want to hear me sing, I couldn't do that," she said.

CALENDAR

FROM PAGE 11

#1194 provides simple craft activities for children age 4-8 years. 703-293-6227.

Chocolate Covered Fairy Tales.

11 a.m. City of Fairfax Regional Library, 10360 North St., Fairfax. Storyteller Gary Lloyd with his version of selected fairy tales. 703-293-6227.

Glass Harp Music. 2 p.m. City of Fairfax Regional Library, 10360 North St., Fairfax. Presented by harpist Jamey Turner. 703-293-6227.

One-on-One Computer Tutoring. 10-11 a.m. Burke

Centre Library, 5935 Freds Oak Road, Burke. Learn to use a computer, navigate the Internet, and work with common software applications. Call for an appointment. Adults. 703-249-1520.

New World Bilingual Institute

Chinese New Year Celebration: the Year of the Tiger. 1:30 p.m. at George Mason University Dewberry Hall, Johnson Center, 4400 University Drive, Fairfax. Chinese painting and calligraphy demonstrations, riddle guessing, raffle, dumpling cooking lesson and more. Performances include the WuShi, Lion Dance, TaiJi Fan Dance, Presidential Dragon Dance, Dance

ETC Broadway Dance, Er Hu (Chinese Violin), HuLuShi Music and TingPin Dumb Dance. Silent auction to benefit the NWBI Hope Fund for underprivileged children in GuiZhou, YunNan, China. \$6 adults, \$3 students, seniors and children, \$2 under age two. www.nwbi.us or 703-978-7905.

Big Football Game Sampling Day.

10 a.m.-1 p.m. at Unity Church of Fairfax, 2854 Hunter Mill Road, Oakton. A market-wide sampling of local foods that you can buy at the market or make at home. Smartmarkets.org.

'The Vagina Monologues.' 2 p.m. and 8 p.m. at George Mason University Harris Theatre, 4400

University Drive, Fairfax. Tickets \$25. Part of the Vday campaign to end violence against women and girls. sas.gmu.edu.

SUNDAY/FEB. 7

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.

Magical Moments with Jonathan

Austin. 1 p.m. and 3 p.m. City of Fairfax Regional Library, 10360 North St., Fairfax. 703-293-6227.

MONDAY/FEB. 8

Lightning Strikes! Percy Jackson Movie Release Party.

3:30 p.m. Kings Park Library, 9000 Burke Lake Road, Burke. Celebrate the release of the new film based on the book series with trivia and activities. Age 8-14. 703-978-5600.

Friends of the Library Monthly Meeting.

7 p.m. Kings Park Library, 9000 Burke Lake Road, Burke. For more information, call 703-978-5600.

Ram Grapplers Prep for District Finals

Wrestlers look to improve upon successful season.

BY REED S. ALBERS
THE CONNECTION

The Robinson wrestling team is accustomed to being one of the best on the Northern Virginia wrestling scene, but according to head coach Bryan Hazard, his team's performance at the Battlefield Duals on Jan. 8 and 9 at Colonial Forge in Stafford, Va., really showcased his team's potential.

"At the Battlefield Duals, we got to wrestle some of the nation's best teams, including Connellsville, [from Pennsylvania,]" he said. "We won eight matches against [Connellsville] out of 14. We lost to them, but it showed us we were ready [for the post-season]."

Robinson won six of its seven meets at the Battlefield Duals, including a key victory over Concorde District opponent Westfield.

Despite finishing the season undefeated in the Concorde District, the Rams are putting their season behind them and focusing on what Hazard considers the "real season."

"Everything up to this point was just practice," he said. "All that work is to get here."

On Feb. 6, the Rams will compete for the Concorde District championship and a chance to advance their wrestlers to regional and state competitions.

Hazard rattled off a list of his top performers who he said are looking to build on their success.

One of those wrestlers is Tim Fitzpatrick, whose return to the Robinson wrestling team has been a welcome one.

"The sky is the limit for him," Hazard said. "He took two years off and he's finally beginning to buy back in. He came back ex-

"Everything up to this point was just practice."

— Bryan Hazard

cited to wrestle."

Jacob Crawford is another wrestler Hazard singled out as a top performer. He noted his regular season losses came against exceptional opponents.

"He's just a great kid," Hazard said.

"He lost a handful of matches to nationally ranked opponents. Otherwise, he's been very good."

Hazard is particularly optimistic about his lightweights, Dallas Smith and Jake Smith.

"Our lightweights are very tough," Hazard said. "They've wrestled very well this

year and they could go far."

Although Hazard singled out some of his best wrestlers, he was quick to add that his entire team has been strong this season and attributes their success to a hard-work mentality.

"The kids here are experienced and hard working," he said. "They're kind of stubborn in training and they're just tough. It's been a great group."

DESPITE HIS optimism about the Rams' chances at the Concorde District finals, Hazard knows the formidable competition could upset his team's title bid.

"Everything changes come tournament time," he said. "You have to be prepared

for anything."

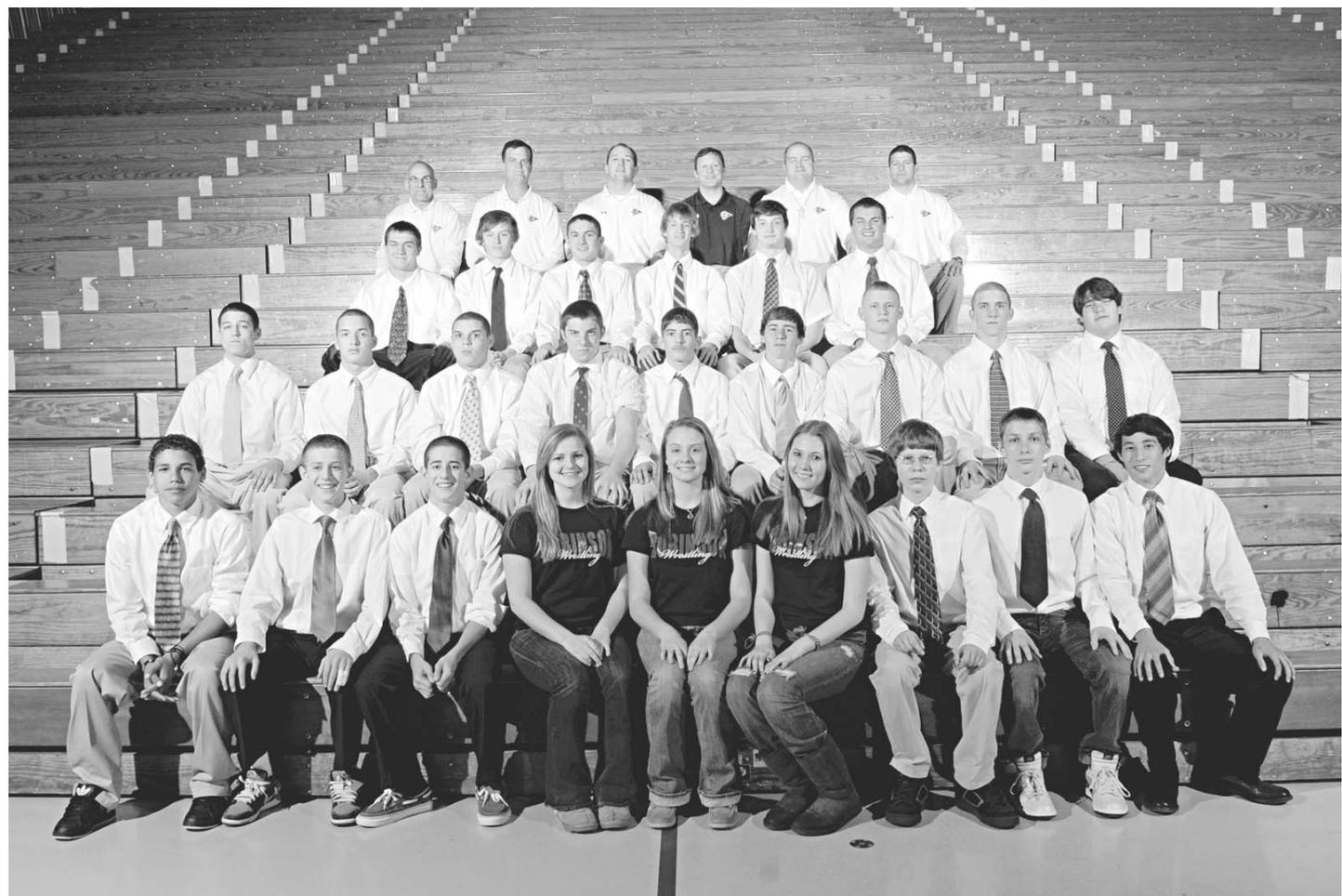
Preparing for the unknown during tournament season doesn't just apply to wrestling.

One unanticipated change for Hazard and his team is that the upcoming district finals will take place all in one day, instead of a normal two-day schedule, because of a potential snowstorm.

"I'm not sure what we're going to do [because of the change]," he said. "But we'll figure it out."

Even with a one-day finals meet, Hazard is confident his team will be ready to defend the school's wrestling legacy.

"[The kids] have high expectations for themselves and we do, too," he said.



COURTESY ROBINSON SECONDARY

The Robinson wrestling team went undefeated in Concorde District meets this season.

Two Individual Titles for Rebels

At the Liberty District track and field finals on Jan. 29, two Fairfax athletes took home individual Liberty District championships.

Richie Lowe won the boys' shot put title while David Ladd and Nabil Mezher placed first and second in the boys' 55-meter dash.

The team also saw personal best performances from two other athletes. Yol Ho Sung ran a 7.35 in the

55-meter dash and Veronica Bustos who ran a 8.55 in the 55-meter dash.

Robinson Girls' Claim District Swim Title

The Robinson girls' swim team won their fourth straight Concorde District swim title on Jan. 30, scoring 515 points, besting Oakton's 443 and Westfield's 316.

The boys' team was unable to add a 13th straight title to their Concorde District winning streak as Oakton upset the

swimming powerhouse with 492 points to Robinson's 404.

Four Bruins Commit On Signing Day

On Feb. 3, four Lake Braddock athletes signed their National Letter of Intent to play sports at the collegiate level.

Football player Khamrone Kolb will be attending Penn State University. Soccer player Rachel Nichols will be attending Cornell University. Baseball player Ryan Lindemuth will

be attending Washington and Lee University. Track and cross-country runner Liana Epstein will be attending Yale University.

Hoops Tryouts

The Braddock Road Youth Club Girls U-14 (ninth grade) AAU Basketball team will be conducting tryouts at Lake Braddock Secondary School on Sunday, Feb. 14 and Sunday, Feb. 21 from 3-5 p.m. For additional information, e-mail jmotey@aol.com.

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PHOTO BY BONNIE HOBBS/THE CONNECTION

As Molly, student Zoe Diamond-Tapper, on the floor, pretends to be the mean Miss Hannigan while the other orphans taunt her during the song, 'It's a Hard-Knock Life.'

Robinson Stages 'Annie'

FROM PAGE 3

friends among the cast. "It's hard memorizing all the lines, but I get to work with a dog, ride on things and get lifted up," she said. "I think the show will be touching and really enjoyable."

Eighth-grader James Lynch portrays Daddy Warbucks. "He's a wealthy, regal and composed businessman and one of few people untouched by the Depression," said James. "He feels he's better than everyone else and that what he does is right. So [initially], he has little respect for most of the other characters. But Annie unlocks the part of him that's soft and caring."

James loves playing such a powerful, important person. "I stand straight and keep my head high," he said. "And it's fun to show how Warbucks changes from coldhearted to loving." He said the audience will like the play's serious and funny moments, plus energetic songs and choreography.

His favorite number is "The New Deal for Christ-mas." "Everything's coming together and it's all good. It's the happy ending in song form," said James. "Annie brings sunshine to poor people who don't have much to look forward to. The play's message is that people should keep a positive attitude."

However, not all the characters share Annie's outlook, and eighth-grader Hannah Sikora portrays Miss Hannigan, who runs the orphanage. "She's mean and an alcoholic," said Hannah. "She can't find a man and no one likes her. She's frustrated that none of these 'rotten orphans' listen to her and she wants to get rich fast."

A longtime fan of "Annie," Hannah is enjoying her role — the complete opposite of her, in real life — so more of a stretch to play. She says the audience will love the show's classic and familiar storyline.

"The directors made it not like a typical, middle-school performance, but more like a professional show," she said.

Playing President Franklin D. Roosevelt is eighth-grader Eli Downs. "Annie gave him the inspiration and optimism to create the New Deal," said Eli. "She really wanted to meet the president of the United States and went with Warbucks for a quick visit. FDR let her stay [so he could] have a child's perspective on the government."

Eli has done many plays, but it's the first time he's played a real person. "FDR was someone everyone knew and cherished, and knowing that is almost a burden, but also fun," said Eli. "I've done research and seen many movies about him so I can play him realistically." His favorite number is "You Won't Be an Orphan for Long" because "it's a happy song and a

showstopper. Everyone's in it, all reassuring Annie."

Seventh-grader Zoe Diamond-Tapper portrays another orphan, Annie's good friend Molly. "She's upset with her life, but tries making the best of it," said Zoe. "It feels free playing someone half my age. My favorite song is 'It's a Hard-Knock Life' because it's high energy and I make fun of Miss Hannigan." As for the show, she said, "The audience will see all the hard work and effort we put into it. And Chloe has an amazing voice the audience will really like."

Stage manager is senior Cody Clarke and, said Hard, "He's helped since seventh grade and made this program work." For this play, he's in charge of the high-school, tech-crew chiefs doing sets, lights, sound, makeup and costumes. He also runs scenes and numbers with the young thespians. "I thrive on chaos," he said. "This is a timeless show and we've got a really talented group of actors."

"The dynamic between the cast members really charges the theater with electricity," said Hard.

"It's hard memorizing all the lines, but I get to work with a dog, ride on things and get lifted up."

— Chloe Gilfoil

COMMUNITY



PHOTO BY CRAIG STERBUTZEL/THE CONNECTION

Katherine Craddock reads 'Stellaluna' to the children at the Jan. 27 Pajamas Program.

Teach the Children

Preschoolers learn lesson of giving during Jan. 27 Pajama Program.

In November 2009, children in the The King's Chapel in Clifton started new program called "King's Kids With a Purpose." Once a month, these children, ages 3 to 10, learn to reach out to others in their community. The children mostly come from Fairfax, Chantilly, Centreville, Alexandria

and Herndon.

For Thanksgiving, they prepared and delivered Thanksgiving baskets throughout Reston, Fairfax, Chantilly and Centreville through F.A.C.E.T.S. For Christmas, they helped pick out and purchase gifts for Prison Fellowship's Angel Tree program, providing Christmas presents to the children of prisoners in Fairfax County and Washington, D.C. in the name of their incarcerated parents.

On Wednesday, Jan. 27, the children took part in "The Pajama Program" by donating new pajamas and bedtime storybooks to children in foster care, shelters and orphanages.

Task Force 1 Back in Fairfax

FROM PAGE 3

for International Development the day after the earthquake but was deployed in two separate units. A team of 72 personnel, six search and rescue canines, search and technical rescue personnel, physicians, paramedics, structural engineers and other support personnel was deployed Jan. 13, but after seeing the extent of the destruction, quickly realized that more task force members were needed. So, 42 more personnel were sent Jan. 15.

ACCORDING TO Task Force Leader Capt. Joe Kaleda, the mission faced difficulty right from the outset. Kaleda said that the Port-Au-Prince Airport, which had only partially reopened at the time of their arrival, had no staff working, so the team had to take its own equipment and baggage of the plane themselves, which he said took a couple of hours. After collecting its gear, the team broke into groups and loaded into trucks and headed for the U.S. Embassy and built a temporary base at that location.

The first mission then, Kaleda said, was to send reconnaissance crews out into the capital city to prioritize search locations based on devastation and the potential for survivors.

"We hit the ground running," Kaleda said. "From

there, it was 24/7 rescue operations for three days straight. It was heart-wrenching, but we were there to do the best we could for as long as we could."

Throughout the two weeks, the team managed to find and rescue 16 survivors that were all buried under the rubble of destroyed buildings across the city. Because much of the country's communication infrastructure was destroyed, Reedy said that the team relied heavily on locals who had a family member or friend missing to let them know where to search. One such tip, Reedy said, led to one of the deployment's most harrowing and challenging rescues at the upscale Hotel Montana, where the team tunneled under the building and up into the rubble to retrieve a buried survivor. That particular rescue took 30 hours, he said.

"When you're out there working, you think of the people just like they are your own family," Reedy said. "Some rescues were difficult because some of the people were so entombed. Some only had an inch of space for 10 days."

With the deployment completed, the 114 task force members will return to their day jobs at the Fairfax County Fire and Rescue Department and other places of employment. Two more task force members left Jan. 28 to join California Task Force 2 members for four to seven days as part of a rapid response force.

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Many Schools Outdated, Overcrowded

Increasing enrollment puts pressure on limited school facilities funding.

BY JULIA O'DONOGHUE
THE CONNECTION

The Fairfax County School Board has set a goal of renovating school buildings every 25 to 30 years, but in reality, most schools are waiting approximately 40 years before their physical plants receive an upgrade.

School Board members unanimously approved a capital improvement plan Jan. 21 that included many school renovation projects several years overdue.

When Franklin-Sherman Elementary's renovation project gets underway this year, it will be the McLean school's first total facilities overhaul since it was built in 1952. Freedom Hill Elementary, which opened in Vienna in 1949, is scheduled to undergo its first "full renovation" in 2010 as well.

It is not clear yet when a building like West Springfield High School, originally built in the 1960s and approximately 100 students over capacity, would see an upgrade to its physical plant, though a renovation is unlikely to get underway any time during the next decade.

WITH LITTLE HELP from the Commonwealth of Virginia, the school system relies almost entirely on the Fairfax County government for money to complete new school construction, building additions and renovations.

Both school staff and county government officials agree that the county has been generous when it comes to school building funding. But what the county can afford to do is simply not enough to keep up with the demand for renovations.

Currently, the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors issues bonds annually for \$155 million worth of school capital projects. The system's staff said it would need approximately \$225 million per year to ensure an

overhaul of each facility every three decades.

By contrast, School Board member Dan Storck (Mount Vernon) has said that Montgomery County, Md. spends approximately \$100 million more per year on school construction than Fairfax, even though the suburban Maryland school system has 30,000 fewer students.

An increase in student enrollment has also put extra pressure on Fairfax's limited school construction funding pool.

The school system has seen enrollment grow by 8,500 students since the beginning of the 2006-07 school year, gaining 3,300 students from September 2008 to September 2009 alone. The boom in the student population is expected to continue, with an estimated 11,500 more students in the school system in the fall of 2014 than were enrolled in this past fall.

An increase in students means that Fairfax schools must use more of its construction funding to build new schools and to add extra wings onto older school buildings.

In the construction plan passed last month, the school system included a new South County Middle School for the Lorton area and 11 "capacity enhancement" projects for older elementary and middle schools around the county.

SOME ELECTED officials are looking at ways to address the school system's capital needs.

The school system's capital funding is supposed to fall from \$155 million to \$130 million annually in 2012, but Supervisor Patrick Herrity (R-Springfield) has proposed keeping the school construction and renovation dollars at their current level.

"Right now, there is a big school construction and renovation need," said Herrity, who said other supervisors would also likely support the additional funding.



PHOTO BY JULIA O'DONOGHUE/THE CONNECTION

Fairfax County Public Schools plans to start the renovation of Longfellow Middle School this year.

But keeping the school facilities' funding elevated means that other county facilities would have to go without renovations and some other government buildings are also in dire need of repairs, according to Fairfax County executive Tony Griffin.

HERRITY has also suggested the school system try to "fast track" some of its construction and renovation projects during the current down swing in the economy, when the price of building material is lower and construction companies are hungry for work.

"We can use techniques like design-build to get these schools renovated quickly. I think we have to take advantage of this 25-to-30 percent reduction in operating costs. We have a limited opportunity to get a bunch of renovations done," said Herrity.

The schools' chief operating officer Dean Tistadt said it could be difficult for Fairfax schools to take advantage of a strategy like design-build contracts. Few companies exist that would be able to do a "phased renovation," in which construction takes place while students remain in a building, along with a design-build contract and the project bidding process would ultimately be less competitive, he said.

But the school system may be able to get

through more renovations in this competitive construction market if the county sped up its permitting process, said Tistadt.

According to Tistadt, acquiring permits from Fairfax County that allows the school system to open a construction project up for bidding can take between 12 and 18 months.

"I am much more comfortable with a project going to bid three to four months from now than I am seeing the project bid 12 months from now," said Tistadt.

PROPOSED budget cuts to school programs could also end up saving the school system money on some facility projects, particularly capacity enhancements.

If elementary schools lose their music programs and full-day kindergarten, many school facilities would suddenly have more open classrooms than the school system originally thought it would.

An increase in class size of one student per teacher would make space for 146 more students at Oakton High School and 139 more students at Robinson Secondary School for example.

This means that the school system may possibly be able to spend fewer dollars on projects like building additions and more money on existing school renovations.

Nam Kyung Kim of Fairfax graduated from the 2009 Governor's School of Agriculture at Virginia Tech on June 28 to July 25. Kim, a senior from Robinson Secondary School, was one of 96 rising junior and senior high school students from across the commonwealth selected to participate in the month-long summer residential program for gifted students interested in agriculture and natural resources.

Leah Pfeiffer of Fairfax gradu-

ated from the 2009 Governor's School of Agriculture at Virginia Tech on June 28 to July 25. Pfeiffer, a senior from Fairfax High School, was one of 96 rising junior and senior high school students from across the commonwealth selected to participate in the month-long summer residential program for gifted students interested in agriculture and natural resources.

Mark Burka of Fairfax graduated

from the 2009 Governor's School of Agriculture at Virginia Tech on June 28 to July 25. Burka, a senior from Robinson Secondary School, was one of 96 rising junior and senior high school students from across the commonwealth selected to participate in the month-long summer residential program for gifted students interested in agriculture and natural resources.

Kevin Poon of Fairfax graduated

from the 2009 Governor's School of Agriculture at Virginia Tech on June 28 to July 25. Poon, a senior from Fairfax High School, was one of 96 rising junior and senior high school students from across the commonwealth selected to participate in the month-long summer residential program for gifted students interested in agriculture and natural resources.

Joshua White, son of Darren and Robin White of Fairfax, was named the Most Improved Player for the Randolph-

Macon Academy football team. White is a senior at the college-preparatory boarding school.

Gov. Tim Kaine (D) recognized **Fairhill Elementary, Frost Middle, Mantua Elementary and Willow Springs Elementary** with the 2010 Governor's Award for Educational Excellence. This award is bestowed by the Virginia Board of Education under the Virginia Index of Performance incentive program.

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