

Mount Vernon Gazette

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MOUNT VERNON'S HOMETOWN NEWSPAPER • A CONNECTION NEWSPAPER

FEBRUARY 11, 2010



PHOTO BY ROBERT PUSEY

A fallen tree blocks the roadway south on the Stone Bridge before West Boulevard Drive.

Snowed In

Emergency personnel work around the clock to respond to large snowfall.

BY JULIA O'DONOGHUE
THE GAZETTE

plowed on Feb. 8.

The Virginia Department of Transportation expected to remove 500,000 tons of snow from Northern Virginia roads this week, and that was before weather teams started calling for a second storm to hit the region this week.

Parts of Fairfax County received as much as 34 inches of snow during the initial storm that started Friday, Feb. 5. A few days later, local emergency responders were bracing for a second wave of winter weather, expected to bring as much as 10 to 20 inches of additional snow on Tuesday, Feb. 9.

A few Fairfax neighborhoods had not recovered from the first storm, let alone been able to prepare for second wave of harsh conditions. Parts of West Springfield, McLean, Great Falls, Clifton and Kings Park West remained totally unplowed and, in some cases, without power four days after first storm and less than 24 hours before the second storm was scheduled to arrive, according to local elected officials.

"If we get [another] 20 inches of snow, that is going to be a huge problem. I think the next couple of days are going to be harder than the last couple of days," said Supervisor John Foust (D-Dranesville), whose neighborhood street in McLean still had not been

DOMINION POWER, the largest local utility company, expected to restore service to all their Fairfax customers by the 10 p.m. on Tuesday, Feb. 9. As of Monday afternoon, approximately 100 households in the county served by Dominion still had no electricity, said company spokesperson Daisy Pridgen.

A few of the more isolated parts of Great Falls and some older West Springfield developments were still without electricity on the eve of the second storm, according to local elected officials.

"The people without power are my biggest concern. We have seniors without power who are likely at risk," said Supervisor Patrick Herrity (R-Springfield.)

The level of electricity service that had been restored by Feb. 8 was an improvement over the prior two days, when thousands of Fairfax residents were without power, according to Fairfax County spokesperson Merni Fitzgerald.

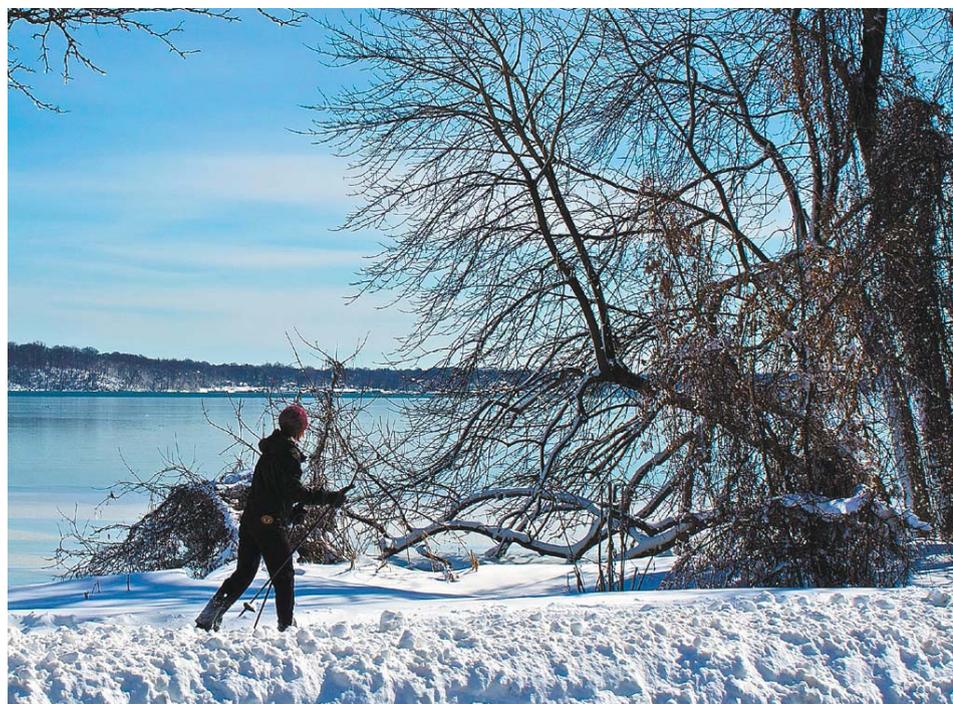
"It went off all across the district. We had huge patches of Great Falls and McLean without power. Dominion has made very significant progress with getting them back online," said Foust.

In the Springfield and Herndon areas, the highest concentrations of residents were without electricity for long periods of time.

The county opened two emer
SEE STORM YIELDS, PAGE 4

"Salt could be a challenge during the next storm."

— Joan Morris,
Virginia Department
of Transportation



A jogger takes advantage of Sunday's sunshine and sprints down the bike path on the George Washington Parkway.

PHOTO BY ROBERT PUSEY



PHOTO BY GALE CURCIO

Waynewood residents Hannah and Emilie enjoy playing in the snow.



PHOTO BY GALE CURCIO

Sadie and Roxie romp in the snow on Sunday, Feb. 7 in Waynewood.

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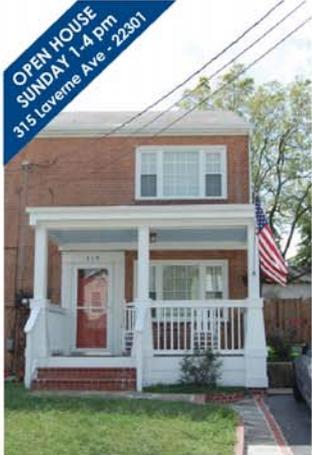
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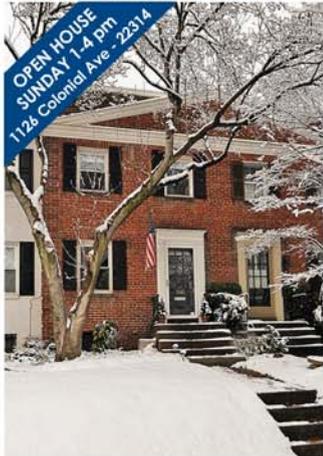
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Gum Springs: A Slave's Legacy, Part II

BY MICHAEL K. BOHN
THE GAZETTE

This is the second in a four-part series on Gum Springs, a historically African-American community in the Mount Vernon area. It will run throughout February in recognition of African-American History Month.

RECONSTRUCTION

Six months after the end of the Civil War, 2,941 African-Americans were living in Fairfax County. A few began to gather in small communities — Lewinsville (Vienna) and Cooktown (Herndon), for example, but the great majority of them lived on the edges of their former owners' land. Some sharecropped, but most worked for wages. A small number began to rent tiny parcels, and even fewer slowly accumulated the resources to buy land.

Gum Springs didn't become an African-American community until the heirs of West Ford began to break up two of the four original parcels among their families or sell portions to others. There weren't that many non-Ford family residents at Gum Springs early on despite the 1863 opening of Bethlehem Baptist Church and the first dedicated schoolhouse in 1867. That was changing in 1888 when 13 black families owned land in Gum Springs.

In 1890, five Gum Springs men formed the Joint Stock Club. Pooling their funds in a manner used previously by African-Americans in Richmond, the men bought available parcels in Gum Springs. They subdivided the land and resold smaller plots to other African-Americans for \$30 an acre, the same price they paid for the land.

PROSPERITY

The period 1900 to 1945 was the "golden age" of Gum Springs, according to historian John Terry Chase. In his 1990 book, "Gum Springs, The Triumph of a Black Community," he ascribed the good times to a booming farm economy in southeast Fairfax County. The county ranked first in the commonwealth in dairy production and sixth in wheat, and Gum Springs farm laborers were in demand.

The surge in economic activity during World War II partially offset lingering effects of the Great Depression. But African-American servicemen stationed at Fort Belvoir struggled to find local housing in segregated Fairfax County. Several Gum Springs residents built small houses and cabins for the GI families, but the lack of public sewer and water inhibited any real development.

This growth did not mean all was well in Jim Crow Virginia. "Negroes" or "coloreds," as they were called, couldn't buy houses or land just anywhere, nor could they drink from white-only water fountains, or sit in the front of the bus. Given the state of segregated Fairfax County, Gum Springs was a beacon of light in the darkness of discrimination.

DRAINAGE AND HOUSING

In the landmark 1954 case, *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka*, the U.S. Su-



Mr. and Mrs. James Chisley welcomed the construction of their new home in Gabriel Plaza, a community housing initiative undertaken by Gum Springs residents in 1972.

WASHINGTON STAR: REPRINTED BY PERMISSION OF THE D.C. PUBLIC LIBRARY.

preme Court ruled in that separate schools for blacks were "inherently unequal." The following year, Rosa Parks refused to surrender her bus seat to a white man in Montgomery, Ala. The wave of civil rights actions that followed — sit-ins, boycotts, marches, violence, forced school integration, and voting rights legislation — rippled across the country to Gum Springs.

Besides the fundamental denial of civil rights, the lack of storm water drainage appeared to have been the primary impediment to improving life in Gum Springs. Bankers would not extend mortgages for better housing without drainage, a prerequisite also for paved roads and public utilities. Fairfax County would not improve drainage in Gum Springs and other African-American enclaves because blacks lacked political clout.

The 1960 census found that 72 percent of the 281 houses in Gum Springs were either dilapidated or deteriorating. By contrast, only five percent of the 12,086 houses in the overall Mount Vernon district were unsound.

The low point of Gum Springs' history dawned in 1961 when Fairfax County issued a "Housing Hygiene Code" aimed at "cleaning out pockets of slum dwellings."



This 1963 photo captured the state of housing and storm water drainage in Gum Springs. These homes were across Route One from the Mount Vernon Open-Air drive-in theater, shown in the background.

Officials cited Gum Springs, with about 3,200 residents, as Northern Virginia's largest "slum," and the main reason for the creation of the new code.

"We didn't live in a slum," Ron Chase and Judith Garret said in unison during a 2007 interview. Chase, president of the Gum Springs Historical Society, and Garret, then the head of the Gum Springs Civic Association, both grew up in the community. "I don't believe those figures about dilapidated housing," Chase said. "The county was looking for reasons for replacing the housing in

Gum Springs, and it used those statistics as justification." Chase acknowledged that there were about 100 shanties, especially in Joe King's Bottom, an area near Route One, but said there were far fewer substandard houses than the county claimed.

After county inspectors issued condemnation notices and eviction orders, 215 dwellings had been demolished by February 1963. Many of the remaining residents huddled by wood stoves in drafty shacks. One mother of young children said her well was full of "wiggly tails" and she had no indoor plumbing.

Emboldened by a temporary reprieve granted by the board of supervisors in 1966, Gum Springs residents convinced the county to let them initiate their own housing development program. The first effort was the construction of 28 new homes to replace some of the shanties. Five residents pooled adjacent parcels in 1968 and created the Gabriel Plaza Housing Corporation. They sold the aggregated 5.8 acres to the Fairfax Housing Commission, which acquired construction funds through the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. Fairfax County paid for streets and sidewalks.

When reminiscing about these successes, Ron Chase admitted that residents used government statistics about slum conditions in

Gum Springs to their advantage, regardless of the validity of the numbers. "The figures formed a two-edged sword," he said. "The county used them to advance their solutions, but we used them to push our ideas."

In 1979, residents embarked on a second housing development — Brosar Park. Again, property owners pooled 11.6 acres of land and built 37 houses. In 1982, Fairfax County approved another housing project, however it was one that generated controversy in the area.

At issue was a proposed 105-unit townhouse development named in honor of West Ford. The homes were to be low-income rentals, versus houses for sale. Nearby white homeowners opposed the project, citing

the prospect of attracting even more poor people to Gum Springs. That prompted a negative reaction from third-generation Gum Springs resident, Marie Saunders, whose husband was the fourth great-grandson of West Ford. "They think we'd be pulling in a bunch of welfare people," said Saunders, who also claimed that race was the real reason for opposition.

Nevertheless, the county built the federally-funded West Ford housing, which opened in 1985. Fairfax County Redevelopment and Housing Authority owns and operates the complex.

Storm Yields Power Outages

FROM PAGE 1
agency shelters at the Robert E. Lee Center in Franconia and Oak Marr Recreation Center in Oakton after the storm, partly to respond to the needs of those communities without electricity, said Fitzgerald. No one showed up at the Franconia location and only two families went to the Oakton location before the county shut both shelters down Feb. 8.

At the Oakton location, one family took hot showers and left immediately. Another family spent several hours there and went home around midnight once they found out their power had been restored, said Fitzgerald.

"The shelters were very well promoted but people found other ways to deal with the lack of electricity," said Fitzgerald.

Fairfax will consider opening the shelters again if they needed after the second snow storm, she added.

THOUGH THE POWER had come back on in most Fairfax houses, dozens of subdivisions scattered throughout the county had yet to see a snowplow less with than 24 hours to go before the second storm was expected to hit.

The commonwealth of Virginia, not Fairfax County, is responsible for plowing the vast majority of local roads. Transportation officials said they aimed to make "at least one pass" with a snow plow on every street in Fairfax by Tuesday night, Feb. 9, though the flakes were expected to start falling again in the middle of that afternoon.

"We are trying to get the plows to every street — it's a major challenge," said Joan Morris, Virginia transportation spokesperson.

Virginia's Transportation department does not have adequate snow removal equipment for a storm of this size. Hundreds of smaller four-wheel drive trucks that the transportation department typically relies on for plowing have been all but useless in response to this storm.

The smaller plows are built to handle a four-to-six inch snowfall but are not effective at removing the two feet of snow that piled onto Fairfax streets after last week's storm. In some cases the snowdrifts on local streets were higher than the smaller plows themselves.

Approximately 1,900 larger trucks from other parts of the commonwealth have been transferred to Virginia to respond to the shortage of appropriate plows. But simply putting larger, industrial plows on local community roads is not always practical.

The plows are sometimes unable to physically fit down side streets. In those cases, more specialized snow removal equipment has to be brought to a



neighborhood, which clears the roads in a slower and more cumbersome fashion, according to officials.

In general, the supervisors were pleased with the Virginia transportation department's snow removal efforts, saying they thought the agency was doing the best that it could.

"[The Virginia Department of Transportation] is not designed to handle a storm this big because we don't get them this big. You don't plan for the storm of the century," said Supervisor John Cook (R-Braddock.)

GOV. BOB McDONNELL (R) has deployed 62 members of the National Guard to Fairfax County to help with both snowstorms. The guardsmen arrived Feb. 7, sleeping on cots set up in the Fairfax County Government Center and a few fire stations around the county.

The Virginia National Guard is able to provide back up to emergency responders overwhelmed with hundreds of requests for assistance. For example, on Monday, Feb. 8, the guard transported an 88 year-old dialysis patient who was snowed in to a medical appointment.

"Our mission here is medical transports, employee transports, helping out police and fire squads, and medical assistance," said Specialist Jeremy Anderson, who was stationed at the National Guard's emergency operations center, set up in the McConnell Public Safety and Transportation Operations Center in Fairfax.

Fairfax officials also said regular citizens have been of great assistance in the storm. Some county residents have been volunteering their four-wheel drive vehicles to transport other people to medical centers and doctor appointments.

In a few cases, regular citizens have also picked up and driven county employees — such a fire and rescue workers — to a job site, said Fitzgerald.

"A lot of the people staffing the shelters were picked up by volunteers and brought here," she said.

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In Preparation Shoppers flood the aisles of Safeway at Belle View Shopping Center before the storm on Friday morning, Feb. 5.

PHOTOS BY LASHAWN AVERY/THE GAZETTE



Jackie Lewis stops at Safeway stops to shop before the storm's arrival.



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OPINION

Surviving the Blizzard as a Community

Connected neighbors save the day; time to check contingency plans, emergency supplies.

More than 48 hours after more than two feet of snow stopped accumulating, after two nights of single digit temperatures in many areas, there are still tens of thousands of households without power.

During this blizzard, random and not-so-random acts of kindness have made all the difference for stranded families in the cold and dark. A little preparation to “shelter in place” also helped.

In neighborhoods around the region, families with power offered help to those without. Consider a few examples of list-serve messages, all sent with addresses and phone contact information, and instructions to spread the word:

“If any neighborhood residents still need a place to stay, you are welcome to come over. You can hang out for just a while to watch the game or stay overnight. We have lots of room and can accommodate a family with kids and pets — we have a large dog who would love to have a playmate for a while.”

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Not Tidal Litter

To the Editor:

In “Out-of-State Litterers,” Jay Spiegel claims that the bottles and cans we pick up in Little Hunting

Creek are brought in by the tide, from the Maryland waters of the Potomac. The picture (and the one accompanying my letter) were taken upstream of a beaver dam, beyond the reach of the tide, and there’s plenty more coming down the storm drains and from Route

1. Mr. Spiegel mischaracterized the Michigan law as not benefiting the environment. The article he cites from MSNBC.com concludes, “Despite the problems, Michigan’s recycling rate for cans and bottles is 97 percent. Other states that have

“We have hot coffee, food and beds to sleep in. We also have a 4-wheel drive and if my husband can help with driving please let us know. Happy to help!”

“We have a warm house and food and beds. Anyone in need is most welcome. We are unplowed, so we can’t drive out ourselves.”

EDITORIAL

Consider one family’s experience: an elderly mother who lives alone in the suburbs while her children live in other states. Stranded by two-feet of snow, and out of power for the second day, her children lost phone contact with her. While friends tried to get to her by 4-wheel drive, an appeal via list-serve brought multiple offers from “strangers” to hike through the snow to check on her, and offers to provide a place to stay. The friend of the family was able to reach her, and found indoor temperatures of 31 degrees before getting her to a warm, safe place. But another 24 hours in that house could have been disastrous.

It’s hard to fathom the combination of no

power, bitter temperatures and no way to get out of the house or the neighborhood.

By the time you read this, written on Monday in the respite between the blizzard and Tuesday’s predicted storm, we may already be dealing with the next round of snow in this record-breaking winter.

It’s a great time to think about emergency contingencies. Do you know who on your block might need some extra thread in the safety net? Elderly, or lives alone, or any other special circumstance? Do you have a way to reach your family members during a power outage? Do you have food and water for a few days without power?

Here are two links to Ready.gov, explaining the basics of an emergency kit and the required elements of an emergency plan.

<http://www.ready.gov/america/getakit/index.html>

<http://www.ready.gov/america/makeaplan/index.html>

We welcome your snow stories, snow tips and snow pictures. Do you know of a random act of kindness to share? Please let us know at gazette@connectionnewspapers.com.

— MARY KIMM,

MKIMM@CONNECTIONNEWSPAPERS.COM

bottle-return laws also like the results. ‘It’s not a perfect system. But as far as the intended environmental impact, it seems to be doing pretty well,’ said Bill Blum, program planner with the Iowa Department of Natural Resources. ‘Containers get picked up. We recycle more than three times any of our neighboring states.’”

I invite Mr. Spiegel to participate in our Little Hunting Creek cleanup this year. It will be on April 10 as part of the Alice Ferguson Foundation’s Potomac-wide cleanup. If he spent the morning picking up trash at the site in the picture, he might become convinced it isn’t floating in with the tide from Maryland.

Elizabeth Martin
Alexandria

Consider Cost Factors

To the Editor:

I am writing to respond to Steve Parker’s Feb. 4 letter, which followed up on Jay McConville’s Jan. 21 letter in which Mr. McConville proposed cutting teacher salaries and benefits. Mr. Parker and Mr. McConville compare Fairfax County’s 1999-2008 population growth to its revenue growth as a means of criticizing the county

SEE LETTERS, PAGE 7



PHOTO BY ROBERT PUSEY

Anna Pusey plays with Sam in the snowfall on Saturday, Feb. 6.

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OPINION

Legislature's Pace Quickens

BY SCOTT SUROVELL
STATE DELEGATE



The work of the General Assembly is intensifying, as we approach this session's mid-point. Several of my bills will be considered soon.

HB 831 requires out-of-state companies to establish that they are qualified to transact business in Virginia before they bid on government contracts. Most non-Virginia corporations do not pay the filing fees (\$250 to \$2,500) or annual fees (\$100 per year) required of Virginia-based companies. Non-Virginia companies can take business away from law-abiding Virginia companies because the state and localities do not confirm that our law is being followed before they award a company a contract. If passed, my legislation would net millions for taxpayers and create more Virginia jobs.

We need people in decision-making positions who understand our region. That's why I'm pressing for my bill to reallocate seats on the Commonwealth Transportation Board (CTB), the group that decides which major transportation construction projects to fund (when we actually have money). The Governor makes these appointments based on Virginia's 1930 population patterns. My bill, HB 818, requires representation using current congressional districts. So far, the majority has refused to act on my bill. I am working to change that.

I have talked to Secretary of Transportation Sean Connaughton twice about U.S. 1. Mr. Connaughton lived in the Sequoyah Condominiums in Janna Lee on U.S. 1 and

also represented Woodbridge, so he knows firsthand the importance of revitalizing the Route 1 corridor.

My bill modifying civil penalties for tobacco tax stamps passed the House of Del-

egates. The Department of Taxation requested this bill because they have problems enforcing penalties when machines fail to affix stamps to cigarette packs. The fines were out of proportion to the stamp costs and resulted in appeals in 42 of 50 of actions. For instance, \$30 of missed stamps required a \$25,000 assessment and missing stamps cannot be discovered, if at all, until packs are removed from cartons by inattentive stockers or cashiers. Innocent retailers, such as those who provide many of the jobs on U.S. 1, bear the brunt of the enforcement actions. This bill will result in fewer appeals, more fines paid and better results for taxpayers and for businesses.

Many people have visited me in Richmond. I welcome these meetings. If possible, call or e-mail in advance so we can arrange a tour of your historic Capitol, where the famous statue of Mount Vernonite George Washington is the centerpiece. Amtrak has three trains daily from Alexandria to Richmond's Main Street Station.

Please share your views on my Web site, www.ScottSurovell.org or by calling 571-249-4484 and read about my work at ScottSurovell.Blogspot.com.

county programs across the board. Everyone knows that a hungry child cannot focus on learning and that good nutrition is critical to a youngster's health.

Fairfax County has made an effort to provide full-day kindergarten at all its elementary schools. While full-day kindergarten increases costs a small amount for every household, it provides critical early childhood education for all children, including those whose families cannot afford private pre-school programs. It can also save a few households daycare expenses and allow both parents to work, thus producing income for the family and revenue for all levels of government. Having well-educated children, who get strong basics in the beginning, helps society overall when these children become productive adults.

An important issue, and probably the most significant, is that Virginia's state government has consistently defunded education, mandated new spending and pushed more and more responsibilities onto local governments because the House of Delegates has refused to provide schools the resources they need, including new revenue. This shortfall will most likely be exacerbated multi-fold this year given Governor McDonnell's intransigence on new tax

SEE LETTERS, PAGE 8

RICHMOND REPORT

LETTERS

FROM PAGE 6

schools' budget, a superficial analysis. If they would take the time to study the county and the school system's budgets, they would understand that budgeting for a county of over one million people, a population larger than that of nine states, cannot be reduced to simplistic mathematical models.

From 1999 to 2008, the county's population increased eight percent, while the county's school population grew 12 percent or by nearly 20,000 students. School expenditures never simply grow directly proportional to student population growth, the theory they propose.

During the 1999-2008 time period, Fairfax County also became more diverse. Diversity can bring added expenses such as English as a Second Language classes and tutoring. Many factors affect the school system's costs besides the raw number of people present, factors like aging facilities, new technology, up-to-date teaching materials and the rising cost of energy.

Fairfax County's free and subsidized lunch programs for children from low-income families have also skyrocketed. All of us need to understand that not everyone in this county has benefited from the county's "boomtime" as those at the top. Providing nutritious meals for children adds costs to

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LETTERS

FROM PAGE 7

revenue and refusal to recognize the realities of providing good government services, including strong schools. Mount Vernon Del. Scott Surovell and Sen. Toddy Puller are fighting to correct the unfairness in the state school funding formula and to get adequate state funding for our schools.

As our school board member Dan Storck pointed out last week in this newspaper, Fairfax County Public Schools' spending per student is one of the lowest in the entire Washington, D.C., metropolitan area. While Mr. Parker and Mr. McConville compare two statistics and claim a correlation, reality is not so black and white. There are many factors and variables that affect local government and school budgeting.

We need an informed and responsible discussion about our county and state budgets. Resolving it will take time, analysis, community input and collective sacrifice — not simplistic syllogisms that mislead people. I hope they will join us in finding responsible solutions.

Jeanne M. O'Hara
Alexandria

Shouldn't Serve Two Masters

To the Editor:

Jay Spiegel's letter published in the Feb. 4, Mount Vernon Gazette, is right on about the Mount Vernon Council of Citizens Associations' (MVCCA) apparent conflict of duties by certain members in the Council's leadership roles.

Some year ago, as co-chairman of the Council, I initiated a number of changes to the bylaws to help ensure that the Council truly represented the general membership of member citizens associations. One such change prohibited individual members from serving in policy appointed positions on County boards, commissions, etc. while serving in Council leadership roles.

Only under such arrangements can the Council claim that it truly represents the general membership when it takes positions on issues. When holding oneself out as representing others, the citizens' concerns should be paramount and placed ahead of any personal interest or ambition.

With questions raised in the recent past about the Council's lack of representation of the general membership, it behooves the Council to adhere strictly to the bylaws and not have persons in leadership roles serve two masters.

If those in leadership roles prefer to serve in County policy appointee roles, those persons should resign the Council's leadership positions. Then and only then can the Council claim that it truly represents the interests and concerns of its general membership.

Frank Medico
Mt. Vernon

Don't Add To Tax Burden

To the Editor:

Section 58.1-3833 of the Virginia Code authorizes Virginia counties to enact a Food and Bev-

erage Tax of up to 4 percent if the tax is approved in a referendum duly conducted within the jurisdiction in question. The referendum may be initiated in one of two ways, (1) by resolution of the County Board of Supervisors (BOS) or (2) on filing of a Petition signed by 10 percent of the registered voters in the County.

This State Law has one exception. For Roanoke, Rockbridge, Frederick, Arlington, and Montgomery Counties, such a tax may be enacted provided the county holds a public hearing and its BOS adopts the tax by unanimous vote. Among others, Arlington did so and has this tax.

Last December, Mount Vernon Supervisor Gerry Hyland asked our BOS to approve holding a referendum to seek approval of the populace for a meals tax. The BOS voted down the proposal by a vote of 7-3. Undaunted, Supervisor Hyland has expressed his continuing desire to seek a meals tax in Fairfax County.

Meanwhile, our new delegate, Scott Surovell, proposed House Bill No. 830 which would have amended Virginia Code Section 58.1-3833 to add Fairfax County to the list of counties set forth above where the meals tax can be enacted by holding a public hearing and through unanimous vote of our BOS. The Bill was killed in committee but one still wonders — why did Delegate Surovell propose this bill?

With 7 of our BOS members voting against in December, and any one BOS member providing veto power, it seems unlikely House Bill

SEE LETTERS, PAGE 17

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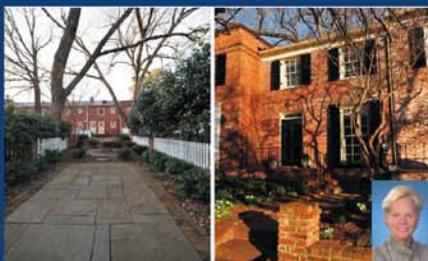
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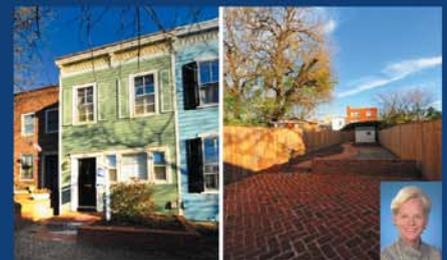
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Doll's trunk. England. Leather, wood, paper, copper alloy, fire gilding, iron, ca. 1797-1799. An inscription inside this toy trunk states that George Washington gave it to Eliza Law's daughter who was born in 1797.

Bringing Them Home

Beginning Feb. 13, Historic Mount Vernon hosts a special new exhibition, Bringing Them Home: 150 Years of Restoring the Washington Collection. Organized in honor of the sesquicentennial of the opening of Mount Vernon to the public in 1860, Bringing Them Home celebrates the Mount Vernon Ladies' Association's 150-year pursuit of original Washington artifacts. Widely dispersed after George and Martha Washington's deaths, these items — which include examples of fine and decorative arts, books, and manuscripts — enrich our understanding of the Washingtons and their daily life at Mount Vernon. Nearly 150 objects will be on view, most are being publicly exhibited for the first time and many have not been at Mount Vernon since the Washingtons lived here. Bringing Them Home tells the tale of how objects have returned to Mount Vernon. The exhibit is in the F.M. Kirby Gallery in the Donald W. Reynolds Museum.

SEE HOME, PAGE 13

A Storm of Laughs Resumes

Molière's "The Miser" lifts snowed in spirits at Clark Street.

BY BRAD HATHAWAY
THE GAZETTE

Only a snow storm of historic proportions could keep the holders of tickets to last weekend's performances at the Clark Street Playhouse from having a great time. That is where the Washington Shakespeare Company is presenting David Ball's marvelous reduction of Molière's five-act "The Miser" into a manic single act. It offers more laughs per minute than any other show now playing on local stages.

Of course, as we all know, that historic storm did arrive and the performances didn't happen. But the show runs for the rest of the month, so there's plenty of time to enjoy this delight. If you need motivation to dig out from the frozen stuff, this should be sufficient reward for some serious shoveling.

Molière's play dates to 1668, late in the brief but eventful life of that playwright/producer/performer who scandalized Paris but who got away with it because he had the protection of the King. Of course, it helped that the king happened to be "The Sun King" Louis XIV. The play involves a miserly widower so attached to his money that he has his fortune buried in his back yard. None of his wealth is frittered away in such frivolous pursuits as supporting his children, or even repairing the broken windows in his dilapidated "estate."

Three hundred years ago, that miser was played by none other than Molière himself, taking full advantage of his chronic cough, shortness of breath and stooped posture. Today it is Ian Armstrong as the titular miser and he substitutes furtive glances, grimaces and cringes as infirmities of character for Molière's infirmities of body. His miser is a very funny caricature of self-inflicted misery.

Armstrong's miser is father to two children of marriageable age — but how to avoid the dreaded "dowry" issue? His son happens to be in love with a young woman who, it turns out, he is to wed himself. Rex Daugherty boosts the production's energy level as the sun while Katie Atkinson is the miser's daughter who is in love with a household servant who has a secret of his own. Mix everything up under the influence of a matchmaker with a hidden agenda of her own, and you have enough plot twists and turns to keep things jumping for just under two hours.

As if any additional spice were needed, two very funny performances as household ser-



C. STANLEY/THE GAZETTE

Ian Armstrong as "The Miser" in Molière's comedy.

vants are provided. (This is, after all, Parisian society where even misers have staff.) One is the household cook in the person of Frank Britton. The other is the coachman, also played by Britton because the miser only hires one person for both jobs. In an inspired piece of tomfoolery, Britton calls the manic events to a screeching halt when the miser finishes issuing instructions to the cook and begins instructing the coachman. "Hold everything! The coachman will be right in," he says and heads off stage to change costumes while everyone onstage waits.

Adaptor David Ball's script is full of crudities. Apparently, in the supposedly sophisticated upper reaches of Parisian society everything tends toward the scatological. Tobias Harding has provided a junk-littered set for the piece with a giant skylight with un-repaired broken glass and Jessi Cole Jackson's costumes place the piece in a modern world where worn sneakers seem perfectly appropriate.

Where and When

The Washington Shakespeare Company's production of "The Miser" plays through Feb. 28 at the Clark Street Playhouse just north of Crystal City. Performances are Thursday - Saturday at 8 p.m. with Saturday and Sunday matinees at 2 p.m. Tickets are \$25 - \$35 except on Saturday afternoons when admission is on a pay-what-you-can basis. Call 1-800-494-8497 or log on to www.BoxOfficeTickets.com/WSC.

♦♦♦

Brad Hathaway reviews theater in Virginia, Washington and Maryland as well as Broadway and writes about theater for a number of national magazines. He can be reached at Brad@PotomacStages.com.

George Washington Birthday Celebration Events Are Cancelled

Due to the snow storms, the City of Alexandria's George Washington Birthday Celebration Committee has announced the cancellation of all major outdoor events scheduled for Feb. 13-15. This cancellation includes:

- ♦ George Washington Birthday Parade;
- ♦ George Washington Classic 10-K Race;
- ♦ Revolutionary War Battle Re-Enactment

and Encampment at Fort Ward Park;

- ♦ Friendship Breakfast at the Holiday Inn & Suites Hotel;

- ♦ Tomb Ceremony for the Unknown Soldier at the Old Presbyterian Meeting House;
- ♦ Walking With Washington Tour.

♦♦♦

The Birthnight Banquet and Ball is still scheduled for Saturday, Feb. 13, at Gadsby's

Tavern Museum. The Committee will also announce the winners of the "Cherry Challenge" on Monday, Feb. 15. For more information, visit www.WashingtonBirthday.org.

♦♦♦

At George Washington's Mount Vernon Estate, events may be scaled back and performance times may vary. For more information, go to www.Visit.MountVernon.org

FINE ARTS

FEB. 12 THRU MARCH 1

Red Thread Group Art Exhibition. Reception is Friday, Feb. 12 at 7:30 p.m. followed by open mic poetry and readings at 10 p.m. At Blueberry Art Gallery, 116 E. Del Ray Ave., Alexandria. Call 703-894-8854 or info@blueberryartgallery.com



"Paynes Island," by Jill Garity.

THURSDAY/FEB. 18

Heart Art. 6-9 p.m. Rescheduled. Free. Flowers and Candy, Printmaking Demonstration, Target Gallery Reception from 6-8 p.m. At the Torpedo Factory Art Center, 105 N. Union St., Alexandria. Visit www.torpedofactory.org; 703-838-4565.

NOW THROUGH FEB. 20

"White Ice." At the Potomac Fiber Arts Gallery. Artists interpret in fiber the cool, clear, sparkly, sheer, and smooth nature of Ice. Jewelry, sculpture, clothing, and wall pieces are some of the items that will be exhibited. Located in Studio 18 of the Torpedo Factory Art Center at 105 North Union Street in Old Town Alexandria. Open daily from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m., except on Thursdays when it is open from 1 p.m. to 9 p.m. Free admission.

NOW THROUGH FEB. 21

Artioms. Artists are being challenged to express their favorite (or not so favorite) idioms, clichés, word phrases or play on words in their artwork. A prose reading by the Tuesdays at Two Writers Group is on Friday, Feb. 12, at 7 p.m. At Del Ray Artisans at the

Bringing Them Home

FROM PAGE 12

"I can't think of a better way to observe this anniversary than to celebrate Mount Vernon's incredible collections," said Mount Vernon's assistant curator, Laura Simo.

Highlights of the show include several recently discovered objects long thought to have been lost or whose very existence was not known. A silver bottle roller possibly designed by Washington himself while president was previously known only from a 19th-century engraving. Descendants of Robert E. Lee found it in 2007 while cleaning out old trunks filled with family possessions. It is believed to be the only one of its kind in existence today. A French porcelain sugar bowl grabbed curators' attention after its last private owners, who are related by marriage to the General's step-granddaughter, Nelly Custis Lewis, emailed them an image of the object. Mount Vernon staff immediately recognized its decoration and marks as being from a service made expressly for the Washingtons and presented to Martha Washington at Mount Vernon in 1782. The matching cream pitcher, which Mrs. Washington had given to Dolley Madison, was purchased by the Association in 1941.

Nicholas A. Colasanto Center, 2704 Mount Vernon Avenue, Alexandria. Visit www.TheDelRayArtisans.org or 703-838-4827.

NOW THROUGH FEB. 21

"Imprint" — A contemporary printmaking exhibition. Thirty-seven artists from across the country are a part of this exhibition united by one common theme and that is the printmaking process. Eight of the artists in the exhibition are from the DC Metro area. Opening reception is Thursday, Feb. 18 from 6-8 p.m. (rescheduled) Jane Haslem will speak at 7 p.m. followed by a printmaking demonstration by the Printmakers' Inc. At The Torpedo Factory Art Center's Target Gallery, 105 N. Union St., Alexandria. Open daily from 10-6 p.m. and until 9 p.m. on Thursdays.

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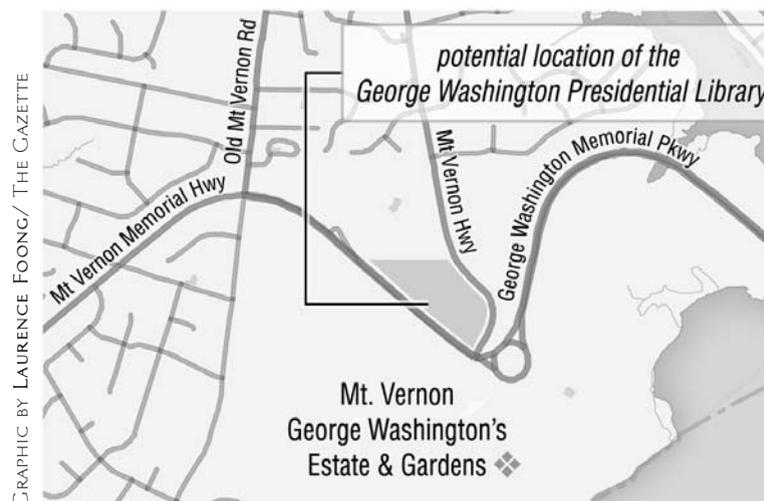
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HISTORY



**Proposed
location for
the National
Library for
the Study
of George
Washington**

Estate To Announce Gift

BY MICHAEL LEE POPE
THE GAZETTE

George Washington is about to celebrate his most lucrative birthday ever, raking in more than \$24 million on the 278th anniversary of this birth.

Officials at the Mount Vernon Estate are on the verge of announcing what they are calling a "significant gift" by a "patriotic foundation." The money will kick off fundraising efforts for a new building that will be known as the National Library for the Study of George Washington, a project that's destined to become the intellectual capital for all things related to America's first president. The Mount Vernon Ladies Association has announced a Feb. 19 press conference at the estate, where the chairman of the foundation offering the contribution will officially announce the gift.

So what's the identity of the big-money foundation?

"You'll just have to wait until the press conference," said Melissa Wood, media relations manager for the estate.

Folks at Mount Vernon are remaining tight-lipped about the name of the foundation and the amount of the gift — for now, at least. The only information they're willing to share until next week is that the gift is "by far the largest in the estate's history." That means the amount will be more than \$24 million, the amount given by the Donald W. Reynolds Foundation to launch the fund-raising effort for Mount Vernon's museum and education center. Back in December, Mount Vernon executive director Jim Rees said he was hoping to coordinate the fund-raising announcement with George Washington's birthday.

"That's when everyone is thinking about Washington," said Rees. "So it would be nice if the announcement could coincide with Washington's birthday."

THE TIMING worked just as Rees hoped it would, with the press conference scheduled for the Friday before Washington's birthday. The Feb. 19 press conference will publicly launch an effort that Rees has been quietly organizing behind the scenes for years — the creation of a national library that will bring together a massive collec-

tion of scattered archival materials in a facility that can handle academic conferences and leadership seminars. Unlike presidential libraries, which are owned and operated by the federal government, this facility will be owned and operated by the Mount Vernon Ladies Association.

"They've got a very good plan," said Richard Norton Smith, a history professor at George Mason University. "Creating a library that's a scholarly facility for researchers is in many ways a great complement to creating an education center where kids of all ages can come and be immersed in the Washington story."

THE CENTERPIECE of the library's collection will be the complete collection of George Washington's papers, an archive currently housed at the University of Virginia. The facility will also have a series of seminar rooms for academic conferences or leadership seminars. In a recent meeting with neighborhood groups at Mount Vernon, officials from the Baltimore-based architecture firm that is working on the project has announced that the building will seek a silver LEED certification that the building meets strict environmental standards.

"George Washington was into sustainability during his day," said Katherine Ward, who pushed Rees to seek LEED certification for the library. "I think this will help them with the fundraising because donors will probably be more willing to put their name on a green building."

Architectural plans call for modern structure that's that includes elements hinting at the 18th century features. The facility will have access from a road near the post office on Mount Vernon Memorial Highway with about 50 new parking spaces. Landscaping plans call for a heavy dose of native plants to accompany the library, and a number of new trees planted along the north side that will create a buffer between the new facility and the Wessington neighborhood. "They are trying to make sure this is a secluded building as possible," said Mount Vernon Council of Citizens Associations co-chairman David Plummer, who has seen preliminary architectural drawings. "It's not a lot of modern concrete and steel, and it's not overwhelmingly large."

CALENDAR

FRIDAY/FEB. 12

Music for Tuba and Euphonium. 8 p.m. Free. At the George Washington Masonic National Memorial, 101 Callahan Drive, Alexandria. Call 202-767-5658 or visit www.usafband.af.mil.

Ballroom Dancing for Couples. 8:30 p.m. to 11:30 p.m. 2nd Friday of each month. Enjoy waltz, fox trot, cha cha, swing and more to live music on large wooden dance floor in Mount Vernon area; Cost is \$15/person. Private club; reservations required www.fridaynightersdancingclub.com

SATURDAY/FEB. 13

Water Wise Landscaping. 11 a.m.-12:30 p.m. Green Spring horticulturalist Brenda Skarphol. Instruction takes place inside and outdoors. Dress accordingly. \$16. At Green Springs Gardens. Call 703-642-5173 to register.

Birthnight Banquet and Ball. 5:30 p.m. to 11 p.m. (Ball starts at 9 p.m.) Celebrate George Washington's Birthday with a banquet and ball. The evening includes a four-course 18th-century banquet by Gadsby's Tavern Restaurant, English country dancing, toasts, a special 18th-century style dessert collation, and character re-enactors. Tickets are \$100 to \$200 per person, or \$50 for the ball only. At Gadsby's Tavern Museum. Call 703-838-4242. At 134 North Royal Street in Old Town Alexandria.

Tamburitzans Perform. 7 p.m. Duquesne University Tamburitzans perform. Tickets are \$22, \$25 and \$30. At Bishop Ireton High School, 201 Cambridge Road, Alexandria. Call 1-877-826-6437.

Stroll Through Park. 1-3 p.m. Stroll with a naturalist through forest and meadow. Cost is \$10 and refreshments are included. Huntley Meadows Park is located at 3701 Lockheed Boulevard in Alexandria. Meet at the Harrison Lane entrance. Call 703-768-2525.

FEB. 13, 14, 19, 20, 21

"The Canterville Ghost." Showtimes are Feb. 13, 19, and 20 at 7:30 p.m. and Feb. 14 and 21 at 3 p.m. Presented by the Mount Vernon Community Children's Theater. At Heritage Presbyterian Church. Tickets are \$8/students and seniors, \$10/adults. Call 703-360-0686 or www.MVCCT.org.

FEB. 13-14

All-Beethoven Concert. Saturday at 8 p.m.; Sunday at 3 p.m. Alexandria Symphony Orchestra and Maestro Kim Allen Kluge and pianist Yuliya Gorenman. Symphony No. 6, Piano Concerto No. 4. At Rachel M. Schlesinger Concert Hall, NVCC, 3001 N. Beauregard St., Alexandria. Tickets are \$20-\$80, youth is \$5. Call 703-548-0885 or visit www.alexsym.org.

SUNDAY/FEB. 14

Revolutionary War Reenactment. 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. Free. (Skirmish at 2 p.m.) At Fort Ward Park, 4301 W. Braddock Road, Alexandria.

Culinary Connections and Historic Foodways. 1:30-3 p.m. Michael Twitty, culinary historian and interpretive educator. \$10. At Green Springs Gardens. Call 703-642-5173 to register.

Valentine's Day Tea: Love Stories. 1-3 p.m. Love a good story? Bring your sweetheart to explore some of the many roads to "happily ever after" with storyteller Margaret Chatham. Then raise your teacups in honor of the lovers' holiday! \$27. At Green Springs Gardens. Call 703-941-7987..

Marty Nau Jazz Quartet. 11 a.m. At Heritage Presbyterian Church, 8503 Fort Hunt Road, Alexandria. Visit www.heritagechurchva.org for directions. Phone: 703-360-9546.

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LETTERS

FROM PAGE 8

No. 830, if it had passed, would have resulted in a meals tax being enacted in Fairfax County in the foreseeable future. Instead of proposing this bill, why didn't Delegate Surovell organize a petition drive and seek to obtain the signatures of 10 percent of registered voters to place the meals tax on the ballot as a referendum? The reason why may be that the last time Fairfax County considered a meals tax (in 1992), when the County was in a similar budget situation, it was defeated.

What is disturbing to me about House Bill No. 830 is that our newly minted delegate, less than one month into his first term of office, has already concluded that the only way to enact a meals tax is to eliminate the referendum from the law, thereby bypassing the very voters who elected him. Quite disturbing, indeed.

In the meantime, the Virginia Senate passed Senate Bill 280 on Jan. 27, 2010 by a 25-15 vote.

This Bill concerns the same Virginia Code section — if passed by the House of Delegates and signed into law by the Governor, it would eliminate the 4 percent ceiling on the meals tax leaving it up to the locality to determine the rate with no state-imposed ceiling. Also, the BOS could enact the tax merely by holding a public hearing and by a simple majority vote of the BOS. Senator Linda "Toddy" Puller voted in favor of passage. Like our new delegate, our senator favors taking this important decision out of the hands of the taxpayers who can best let our BOS know, through referendum, whether or not we want our taxes raised.

One option that needs to be considered by Supervisor Hyland and encouraged by Senator Puller and Delegate Surovell is refraining from adding to our already steep tax burden during a recession, tightening our belts and balancing the county budget with appropriate and/or necessary cuts. This is not pleasant for any of us but, unfortunately, the time to pay the piper has arrived.

Fairfax County's relatively low BPOL taxes and absence of a meals tax are partially responsible for driving the economic engine in the County that makes it attractive for businesses to locate here. Politicians should only tamper with our formula for relative success at their peril.

Those taxpayers who want the meals tax issue decided by the taxpayers in a referendum, not by our BOS by a simple majority vote should ask Delegate Surovell to oppose any House Bill corresponding to Senate Bill 280. They should also ask Governor McDonnell to veto the Bill if it arrives at his desk — the Senate vote fell two votes short of veto-proof. Those who want our BOS to decide for us by simple majority whether to impose a meals tax and to decide for us what the tax rate shall be, without limitation as to the rate, should let our legislators and Governor know. This looks like an easy decision.

H. Jay Spiegel
Mount Vernon

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OBITUARY

Mary Hancock Marquardt, age 88, died on a Tuesday evening, February 2nd, at 5:30pm at her home at Envoy of Alexandria. Mary worked for 19 years as an executive secretary for the US Navy, including assignments at the Bureau of Ordnance and the Alexandria Torpedo Factory. She graduated from the Mississippi Delta Community College with an Associate's Degree in History. She was an accomplished gardener and musician. She is survived by her husband of 48 years, Frank Marquardt and her daughter Marilyn Marquardt. Services will be held at the Envoy of Alexandria, at 900 Virginia Ave, Alexandria, VA 22302 on Monday, February 8th at 1pm. In lieu of flowers, please send your kind donations to the American Heart Association. Arrangements by Everly-Wheatley www.everlyfuneralhomes.com

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Frosh Marinello Leads West Potomac Gymnasts

Four Wolverine individuals qualify for regionals at Patriot District meet.

BY JON ROETMAN
THE GAZETTE

As the West Potomac gymnastics team competed on the floor — its final event of the Patriot District meet — Marien Voorhees wanted to send the Wolverines off with a bang.

For the first time, Voorhees was to end her routine with an Arabian — a half-turn move completed with a front flip. Usually Voorhees incorporates an Arabian near the start of her routine. This time, she tried something new, starting with a full twist.

One big question: would the freshman have enough gas left in her tank to pull off the concluding Arabian?

“It’s a lot tougher because a floor routine takes a lot of endurance, so you’re running out at the end,” Voorhees said. “I was like, ‘Oh God, what if I miss this?’”

Voorhees, who also cheers for West Potomac, performed well but stumbled during her Arabian landing. She received an 8.45, good for 10th place.

From a team standpoint, West Potomac finished its Feb. 4 performance at Lake Braddock Secondary School in a similar fashion. The Wolverines excelled in certain areas, but made just enough mistakes to cost themselves a top-two finish and a regional berth. West Potomac placed third out of six teams with a score of 126.075. Woodson (139.425) won the event and Lake Braddock (134.65) finished second.

West Potomac head coach Pete Novgrod said he was pleased with the team’s effort.

“We made a few mistakes that we don’t normally make but overall they did a real good job,” he said. “We haven’t hit [126 points] all year — and we had falls. We might have been able to go 130, but 126 was fantastic.”

THE WOLVERINES’ top all-around performer was freshman Nicole Marinello, who placed fifth with a score of 33.6. The top four all-around finishers qualify for regionals, a mark Marinello missed by 1.1 points. She did, however, qualify for regionals in the vault (eighth, 8.7), beam (third, 8.535) and floor (sixth, 8.7). The top eight finishers in individual events qualify



West Potomac freshman Marien Voorhees qualified for regionals with a fifth-place finish on the bars during the Patriot District gymnastics meet Dec. 4 at Lake Braddock.

for regionals. Marinello finished ninth on the bars (7.675), falling .05 points behind eighth-place finisher Lizzie White of Lake Braddock.

“Nicole, she came through this meet, big time,” Novgrod said. “She hasn’t come through like that all year in a meet — it’s been hit or miss.” Marinello, who also cheers for the Wolverines, said she was pleased with the team’s finish.

“I kind of assumed that was going to happen, but I’m happy,” she said of the Wolverines coming in third. “I’m really happy for

our captain, Cara [Yaworske], because she gets to compete one more meet.”

Yaworske is the team’s lone senior competitor. She qualified for regionals on the floor, finishing eighth (8.525).

Voorhees qualified on the bars (fifth, 8.5) and sophomore Monica Bell, who competes in club gymnastics with the Arlington Angels, qualified on the vault (sixth, 8.8.25). As a team, West Potomac finished third in each event.

“All of us kind of got a little nervous on the beam and had our wobbles and falls,” Bell said. “Our vault and floor were amaz-

ing.”

Juniors Amanda Smith, Jade Toft, Lauren Pak and Tayler Aitken, sophomores Ali Muir and Jill Tupitza, and freshman Amanda Trenchard also competed for West Potomac. With everyone but Yaworske slated to return next season, led by the talented freshman duo of Voorhees and Marinello, the Wolverines appear to have a bright future ahead.

“Marien is young, so is Nicole,” Novgrod said. “They’re both young freshmen and they’re still learning about high school and doing high school gymnastics.”



Wolverine freshman Nicole Marinello qualifies in three events for regionals.

PHOTOS BY CRAIG STERBUTZEL/THE GAZETTE

SPORTS BRIEFS

Mount Vernon High School recently hired a new head football coach, head girls lacrosse coach and head softball coach, according to the school’s athletic Web site. Barry Wells is the new football coach. A native of Woodbridge, Wells, who began his coaching career at Edison, has been coaching in New Jersey and Pennsyl-

vania. Wells takes over a program which finished 0-10 in 2009.

The girls lacrosse coach is Woodbridge native Caroline Pickell, who played at Limestone College in South Carolina through 2008. The softball coach is former Mount Vernon head softball coach Daniel Coast.

Registration for **Spring Softball** is available. Prior to registering a child for a Fort Hunt Spring sport, review the Spring 2010 Season information for the sport. See the “Softball” link at the top of the fhyaa.org Web site for information on the softball program. Register online at fhyaa.org.

SCHOOLS



PHOTOS BY LASHAWN AVERY/THE GAZETTE

Sydney Nixon, Lola Beste and Amanda St. Clair talk with director Celeste Baucom during a dress rehearsal of "High School Musical Jr." at Carl Sandburg Middle School on Feb. 4.



Rachel Michael is Gabrielle and Cam Danielson is Troy as they take center stage during the rehearsal.

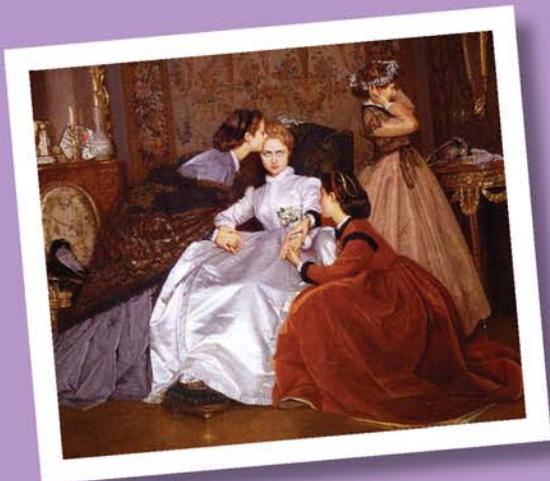
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