

Getting Haitians Connected

NEWS, PAGE 12

Len Forkas, right, founder of the Reston-based non-profit Hopecam, and his brother-in-law Bernardo Camino prepare to attempt a flight from the Dominican Republic into Haiti to deliver hand-cranked radios.

Music, Poetry Celebrate Love

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Charges Not Sticking to Gold Burglary Suspects

Fairfax, Loudoun counties dismiss all charges so far; grand jury indictment possible.

BY MIKE DICICCO
THE CONNECTION

Raman Kumar said the Indian-Americans he had spoken with in the Northern Virginia region were becoming nervous as they wondered whether the three suspects arrested in November in connection with a long string of burglaries targeting the South Asian community were going to be released. "They are scared now. They are very, very scared these guys will be set free," Kumar said.

The burglary of his Centreville home about a year ago fit the pattern for a string of at least 26 incidents in Fairfax and Loudoun



Dagoberto Soto-Ramirez

counties between January and November of last year, and Kumar has become the unofficial spokesman for the victims of the spree.

AT A PRELIMINARY HEARING on Tuesday, Feb. 9, Loudoun County Judge Julia Cannon dismissed all six charges against Francisco Gray, also known as Cristhian Oliva-Penaranda. Gray, 39, as well as Dagoberto Soto-Ramirez, 27, and his wife Melinda Soto, also known as Marie Soto-



Francisco Gray, also known as Cristhian Oliva-Penaranda

Melinda, 33, all of whom were arrested on Nov. 10, also each had 11 charges placed against them in Fairfax County. Judge Ian O'Flaherty dismissed 10 of those charges for each defendant at a preliminary hearing on Jan. 20.

Each of the suspects still has one charge pending in Fairfax County, with the collective preliminary hearing set for Feb. 24, and Soto-Ramirez and his wife are scheduled to appear before a Loudoun County judge on March 4, each



Melinda Soto, also known as Marie Soto-Melinda

facing the same six charges that Gray had dismissed.

"It was quite obvious that the commonwealth didn't show they had probable cause for the arrest and the prosecution at that point, and the court dismissed it," defense attorney Bobby Stafford said of the hearing in Fairfax County. Stafford is defending Soto Ramirez in both counties.

Fairfax County Assistant Commonwealth's Attorney Ian Rodway said the county was con-

sidering seeking an indictment, in which case a grand jury would hear the dismissed charges and decide whether there was enough evidence to prosecute, but he said no decision had been made.

Loudoun County prosecutor Steve Sincavage said he wasn't sure whether the county would pursue an indictment.

Attorneys would not discuss details of the case, as it is ongoing.

Rodway confirmed that four more New York residents had been extradited to Virginia in connection with the burglaries.

Initially, all three of the suspects arrested in November were listed as New York residents, but Gray has since been listed as a resident of Hurst, Texas by the Loudoun courts, and Fairfax now considers him an Arlington resident.

The string of burglaries involved the theft of high-karat gold jewelry that South Asians traditionally keep in their homes, as well as electronics, passports and other valuables and documents. More than half of the incidents took place in the Fair Oaks Police Dis-

SEE COUNTY, PAGE 7



“Life is my college. May I graduate well, and earn some honors!”

• Louisa May Alcott

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Offering Residents a Voice

RA, RCA push their way into Reston master planning process, encouraging citizen participation.

BY MIKE DICICCO
THE CONNECTION

The Reston Association and other groups have pushed since last fall to have citizen advisory groups included in the Reston Master Plan Special Study process, which is being guided by a task force appointed around the beginning of December. “Well, the plan didn’t fly. The task force didn’t agree. But that didn’t stop us,” Dick Stillson, co-chair of the Reston Citizens Association’s Reston 2020 Committee, said at an RA Board work session Saturday morning, Feb. 13.

While the RCA had decided to create its own Reston Master Plan citizen advisory committees, the purpose of Saturday’s session was to discuss how the Reston Association’s existing advisory committees could inform the task force’s work. With or without its authorization, the task force will be hearing from groups of residents, as it updates county plans for the Reston Center for Industry and Government (RCIG), where Metrorail is expected within five years, and, later, for the town centers throughout the community.

The updated plan is expected to allow greatly increased development density in the Dulles Corridor, particularly around future Metro stations, and to add residential density to the town centers.

At Saturday’s meeting, RA Board member Paul Thomas, the association’s appointee to the Master Plan Special Study Task Force, charged each of the RA’s seven citizen advisory committees with creating reports for him to bring to the task force.

The committees include a Transportation Advisory Committee, a Parks and Planning Advisory Committee, an Environmental Advisory Committee and others, and each would provide a report addressing its area of expertise before each of the community workshops scheduled to discuss portions of the RCIG over the next few months. Because the first community workshop, where the area around the planned Herndon-Monroe station will be discussed, is scheduled for next Thursday, Feb. 25, Thomas said he would understand if committees didn’t have their reports in quite on time, but he said they would need to be completed before the task force discussion of the Herndon-Monroe area on March 2.

He said reports were to present both challenges and solutions. “There are not just problems out there, but there are opportunities to do things that are good,” he said, adding that one example would be working to complete a network of paths in the RCIG and connect it to the rest of Reston. One of the committees’ most challenging jobs, he said, would be to reach out to members of the community and gather their input regarding each topic as it would apply to the areas around each of the four Metro stations planned for the RCIG. And, he said, committees should seek out any residents who were interested in helping to write the recommendations, particularly the 100 or so people who had attended the “land-use college” sessions that Supervisor Cathy Hudgins (D-Hunter Mill) had staged in the summer to prepare residents for the master plan process. “I just feel like there aren’t enough people paying at-



PHOTO BY MIKE DICICCO/THE CONNECTION

Reston Association Board members and advisory committee chairs discuss their role in the Reston Master Plan Special Study process Saturday morning.

tention to the fact that [the study] is happening,” Thomas said.

This was Stillson’s concern as well, and he had already sent out e-mails to everyone who had attended at least one session of the land-use college, inviting them to join the four advisory committees — transportation, public facilities, urban design, and environment, parks and recreation — that the RCA was forming. He said he was concerned about the Reston Association and the Reston Citizens Association soliciting participation from the same people. “This is not supposed to be a competition,” he said.

RA Board member Richard Chew said the association would solicit input from its members in order to make its recommendations, but Stillson pointed out that most residents were members of both groups.

“I view it as a positive-sum game. I don’t view it as being cannibalistic,” Thomas said.

“If we start fighting and saying, ‘We’re RA and we’re not going to listen to you,’ we’re dead meat,” said Dave Edwards, co-chair of the Reston Association’s Transportation Advisory Committee.

Stillson said he expected the chairs of the RCA’s advisory groups to be in close contact with the chairs of RA advisory committees. “We’d like to work completely together,” he said.

In a later interview, Stillson said the idea of the RCA committees was simply to allow more people to participate by having unlimited membership, as opposed to the RA’s 15-member advisory groups. He

SEE CITIZENS, PAGE 5



PHOTOS BY STEPHANIE KNAPP/THE CONNECTION

Mary Kate Bristow and Jeffrey Ritte combine song with poetry in their performance at Café Montmartre last Saturday.

Music, Poetry Celebrate Love

Valentine’s Day performance at Café Montmartre.

Singer Mary Kate Bristow and poet Jeffrey Ritte entertained a room filled with red hearts, pink flowers and candlelit dinners on Saturday, Feb. 13 at Café Montmartre at Lake Anne. This was their debut performance together and the first time Ritte has read his poetry aloud publicly.

This event was a celebration of not only Valentine’s Day, but also the launching of Ritte’s second book of poetry, “The Tapestry in Question,” which can be bought online.

The show was a combination

of songs and poetry about love. The venue chosen for the event also had significance, as it was the place Ritte took his wife on their first date as well as the location for their wedding reception. She sat in the audience as Ritte and Bristow dedicated some songs and poems to her.

When asked how she liked the performance, Fran Janniro said it was “a wonderful integration of the music and the poetry. It was a beautiful rendition.”

— STEPHANIE KNAPP



Poet Jeffrey Ritte reading his poetry from his second book, ‘The Tapestry in Question.’



Mary Kate Bristow sings songs of love for Valentine’s Day.



Gail and Bill Toth, making the jump in 2009, organized the Virginia Polar Plunge three years ago to give back to Camp Sunshine. Daughter Jennifer, now 17, was a camper there when she was 4.

Polar Dip at Lake Anne

The third annual Virginia Polar Dip at Lake Anne has been rescheduled for Saturday, Feb. 20 at 2 p.m. The event was postponed from its original planned date of Saturday Feb. 6, a day of extreme weather and power failures in Reston. "Normally, a bit of wintry weather makes the event all the more spectacular," said organizer Gail Toth. "In this case, we rescheduled for reasons of safety and practicality."

Lake Anne Village Center is hosting the third annual Virginia Polar Dip to benefit Camp Sunshine, where registered participants will take a chilly dip into Lake Anne to raise funds for the charity. Spectators are welcome to come and cheer for the plungers who jump in one to three at a time, many in costume, but all in swimming apparel. Safety personnel in dry suits will break up the lake ice and will be standing by, in the water, to assist the plungers back to dry land. Through pledges or self-sponsorship, each participant will pay a minimum of \$100 for the opportunity to plunge into the bracing water, or just wet their feet with a Chicken Dip. Participants will check in, get ready and warm up afterwards in the fitness center, just steps away from the Polar Dip location at the Lake Anne dock. Lake Anne Village Center is located at 1609 Washington Plaza, Reston, VA 20190. Registration, pledge forms and regulations are available at www.freezinforareason.com.

The third annual Virginia Polar Dip is sponsored by Lake Anne Village Center, Jasmine Café, Sheraton Reston, David Madison Photography, and hosted by Reston Association and Lake Anne Merchants & Professionals Committee (LARCA). For sponsor opportunities and information, contact Gail Toth, gatoth@cox.net.

A Guided Walk in Restored Glade Stream Valley

Join Reston Museum for a walk along the first fully restored sections of the Glade Stream Valley in South Reston on Saturday, Feb. 20 at 1:30 p.m. Explore paved and natural trails, new bridges, raised wooden walkways, and plantings in the area between Hunters Woods Pool and Steeplechase Drive. See restored stream banks and the raised stream bed of the Glade. Meet at Reston Museum, Lake Anne Village Center at 1:30 p.m. to join a carpool to Hunters Woods in South Reston where the walk begins. South Reston dwellers may prefer to meet walk leader Squire Muse at The Reston Community Center in Hunters Woods at 1:45 p.m. The walk will take about one hour.

SCHOOL NOTES

Students in the **Sunrise Valley Elementary Peer Pals** program have won a poster contest celebrating Virginia Disability History and Awareness Month, sponsored by the Arc of Northern Virginia. Based on the theme We Belong, the winning entry included drawings showing that students with disabilities want to learn, work, and socialize just like

other students. It featured the shared activities that all students enjoy, including books, physical education, computers, music, and playground activities. The Sunrise Valley poster will be displayed in the Virginia General Assembly building in Richmond. Contact principal Elizabeth English at 703-715-3800 or ewenglish@fcps.edu.

NEWS

Fairfax Schools See Ups And Downs in Funding Fight

School board lays out budget and Gov. agrees to give Fairfax schools more money.

BY JULIA O'DONOGHUE
THE CONNECTION

While Maryclaire Ramsey appreciates the Fairfax County Public Schools is in a difficult budget position, she also wishes she saw more outside-the-box thinking from the school administration and school board members.

"I don't feel like they are taking a good, hard, long look at operations on a higher level," said Ramsey, who lives in the Fox Mill area of Oak Hill.

Instead of being creative, the school board and schools Superintendent Jack Dale are trotting out the same list of potential cuts – popular programs like elementary school foreign language instruction – that they do whenever they face a budget downturn, according to Ramsey.

A skeptic might think the school board does this because it scares parents and motivates them to go to the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors to advocate for more money to be transferred to the school system.

Ramsey, for her part, resents the fact that releasing a list of vulnerable programs tends to pit one parent community against another at a time when the school advocates should be working together.

"Everybody is going to have their favorite program. How do you tell parents that freshman sports is more important than band?" she said.

Instead, Ramsey wishes the school board offered more creative solutions to solving the current budget crisis. She would like the school board to explore "revenue generation" or offer more cuts to the central administration for example.

For her and many others, the current school budget proposal offers the same, old-way of thinking.

STARTING NEXT YEAR, it seems almost certain that Fairfax County students have to pay a fee to play high school sports and advanced placement tests.

The Fairfax County School Board voted on its initial budget request to the Board of Supervisors at a Feb. 4 meeting, laying out those programs it intends to ask the county to fund and those it will

The Fairfax Schools Budget So Far ...

The Fairfax County School Board took its first pass at its operating budget for the 2010-2011 school year during a Feb. 4 meeting, tacking on approximately \$23 million in additional spending to the plan originally proposed last month.

Schools Superintendent Jack Dale had presented a \$2.3 billion budget for Fairfax County Public Schools in January. Dale's plan included \$100 million in spending reductions and a request for the Fairfax County government to provide \$57.8 million more to the school system than it did last year.

Fairfax County already devoted more than 50 percent of county revenue, approximately \$1.7 billion, to the school system last year.

The school board amended Dale's proposal slightly, deciding it could not live with some of the cuts that the superintendent had proposed, and asking for more from the county. The school board increased the public schools' funding request to the county by \$81 million over what was provided last year.

During its own budget deliberations, the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors will decide how much of the county's total revenue to give to the school system. If the amount of funding is less than the school system requested, the school board will have to make additional cuts to the budget currently proposed in the late spring.

The following are some of programs and services the school board would use the additional \$23 million from the county to fund and those programs they have agreed to eliminate.

The school board voted to put the following programs and cuts into the budget:

- ❖ \$17.1 million added to avoid increasing class size by an additional student per teacher
- ❖ \$1.4 million added to keep assistant principals positions
- ❖ \$800,000 added for instructional assistant positions
- ❖ \$1.6 million added for instructional coaches positions
- ❖ (\$900,000) reduction via additional cuts for central administration
- ❖ \$2.2 million added for the Foreign Language in Elementary Schools program
- ❖ (\$110,000) reduction, cutting a fifth grade field trip to the International Children's Festival
- ❖ \$250,000 added to help students from Pimmit Hills Alternative High School transition to another campus or program

The school board has agreed to eliminate the following programs:

- ❖ \$1.2 million for "Focus," a special academic program in place in schools with high-risk student populations
- ❖ \$1.3 million for the Extended Learning Program known as Excel, also in place in schools with high-risk student populations
- ❖ \$6.3 million for summer school
- ❖ \$200,000 for two internal auditor positions
- ❖ \$150,000 for a student suspension program

reluctantly agree to cut at this early stage.

There will be new student fees to participate in high school athletics and to take Advanced Placement and International Baccalaureate tests. The school board is moving forward with a plan to eliminate Pimmit Hills Alternative High School and two academic programs in elementary schools with large populations of poor students.

Though the school board can restore such programs after the supervisors approve the public school money transfer in the late spring, it is unlikely board members will have the luxury of restoring funding to programs cut this early on in the budget process.

"We are going to be fighting for any money we can get," said School Board member Stu Gibson (Hunter Mill).

CURRENT CLASS SIZE, foreign language in elementary schools and freshman sports are among the programs threatened by cuts that so far are still funded.

The school board budget includes a request for \$81 million more from the county than the approximately \$1.7 billion the supervisors gave the school system to operate last year.

Schools Superintendent Jack Dale had originally suggested the school board only ask the county for an additional \$57.8 million and include several more cuts in the budget.

But school board members found several of Dale's cuts — including freshman sports, foreign language in elementary schools and larger class size — to be too drastic. The school board also restored \$3.8 million in funding for instruction assistants, instructional coaches and assistant principals that Dale had proposed to eliminate.

Without full funding, including the extra \$81 million, the school board will argue that many of the undesirable cuts they have avoided will have to be made, said school board members.

SEE FORMULA, PAGE 12

NEWS

Volunteers Face Challenges in Clearing Snow

Getting students to Fairfax County Public Schools this week was no easy task, just ask the parents at Clearview Elementary School in Herndon.

According to School Board member Jane Strauss (Dranesville), the Clearview community spent much of Feb. 13 and 14 shoveling walking paths so students could get to and from the Herndon school building for classes this week.

Unfortunately, the Virginia Department of Transportation [VDOT] came along and undid much of Clearview's hard work. In an effort to widen the driving paths for cars in the neighborhood, the transportation department's snowplows ended up piling mountains of new snow onto the freshly-cleared sidewalks around Clearview less than 24 hours later.

TALES LIKE THE one at Clearview were cropping up all over Fairfax County as the locality's schools prepared to open on Feb. 16 for the first time after two back-to-back, record-breaking snow storms.

But many of the neighborhood roads — including school bus stops — were still questionable nearly seven days after the second major snow storm started.

"You have some parents who blame us for not clearing the snow. We are not responsible when VDOT piles snow up on the local sidewalks," said School board member Stu Gibson (Hunter Mill).

LIKE CLEARVIEW, Reston residents had organized over the weekend to help dig their local schools out from under the snow. Gibson said about 50 to 60 people showed up with everything from shovels to industrial snow blowers to assist with clearing sidewalks and bus stop areas.

"This was all done through social networking. They called it the Reston 'big dig,'" said Gibson.

Reston volunteers were dispatched to several local elementary schools where snow had piled up. South Lakes High School principal Bruce Butler also provided residents with maps of local bus stops, so they could ensure safety in those areas.

"We had motorists stopping as they were driving so they could get out their cars and help us," said Gibson.

— JULIA O'DONOGHUE
WWW.CONNECTIONNEWSPAPERS.COM

Citizens Encouraged To Guide Planning Process

FROM PAGE 3

said he expected the groups to agree on most issues.

One difference, he said, was that his organization planned to study all of the areas, inside and outside the RCIG, simultaneously. The task force is not to take up planning around the village centers until fall, and the Reston Association's advisory committees are to follow suit. "We thought it would be useful to have groups that studied the issues pertaining to all those areas," Stillson said.

"How much weight will Reston citizens hold in any decision?" Susan Idziak, chair of the RA's Communications Advisory Committee, asked at Saturday's work session. "If I'm going to go to a meeting, I want to do something."

"Can they make a difference? Yes, I believe they can," Thomas said. "The idea of these meetings is to gather community input." However, he said, it would be important for residents to attend meetings and understand the issues in some detail in order to

make informed recommendations.

In May, after the task force has carried out its analysis of the Dulles Corridor, meetings will be held with residents living around each of the planned Metro stations, said Cate Fulkerson, the RA's director of administration and member services.

The task force's final recommendations for the RCIG are to be made over the summer, and the group will begin work on the residential area of Reston in October. Meanwhile, the county Planning Commission is to make a decision on the RCIG in November, and the Board of Supervisors will have the final say in December.

Chew pointed out that the RA would ultimately have the option of making its own set of recommendations to the Planning Commission and Board of Supervisors.

Thomas said the RA was also working with the county and its own staff to figure out ways to convince developers that residents of any communities to be built in the RCIG should be members of the association.



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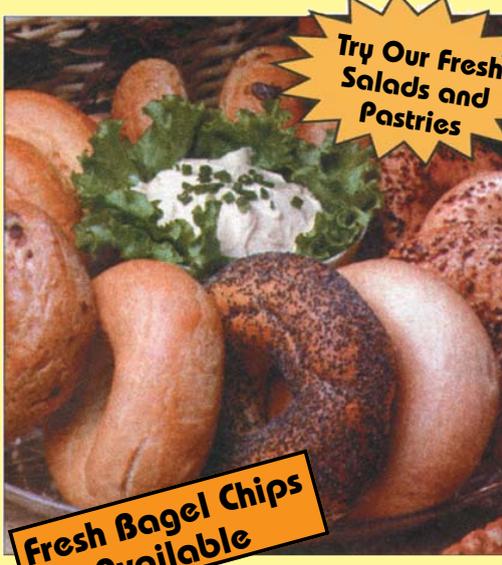
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New Housing Blueprint

Ending homelessness, moving beyond preservation of affordable housing.

BY SHARON BULOVA

Several years ago, on a freezing February morning, I rode the VRE into Washington, D.C. for a Council of Governments meeting. As I was leaving Union Station, I noticed a middle-aged woman, with sacks of belongings and bedding gathered around her. She was clearly a person with mental illness, muttering to herself and batting the air at imaginary objects.

I remember thinking, "I'm so glad I live in Fairfax County. We have social services programs that would help someone like this woman." But later that week, while jogging down an old alignment of a road near my home, I spotted a tent tucked way back in the woods. It was a homeless person's encampment.

Fairfax County has established a "hypothermia program" to shelter homeless individuals during the cold winter months. The program is a partnership among county agencies, area houses of worship and nonprofit organizations. The hypothermia program has served to crystallize how inadequate our human services network is for dealing with homelessness.

In March 2008, our Board of Supervisors endorsed a "Housing First" strategy to end homelessness as we know it. Working with houses of worship and charitable organiza-



Sharon Bulova

tions, Fairfax County has adopted a strategy for making sure people in our community have a roof over their heads and receive the help they need to get back on their feet.

At our Jan. 26 meeting, the Board of Supervisors approved a new Housing Blueprint to address the challenge of ensuring there is accessible, affordable housing for all members of our community. Affordable housing was a key topic when the Board considered our current Fiscal Year 2010 budget and the Board dedicated considerable time to discussing housing issues at our post-budget retreat last June.

At the retreat, we agreed that our housing programs must emphasize serving those with the greatest needs, that affordable housing represents a spectrum of needs, and that we can be most effective in accomplishing these goals by working with Faith Community and non-profit partners in the community.

The Housing Blueprint is a strategy for addressing these priorities and represents a new direction compared to the previous policy of

Blueprint Highlights

Resolved: End homelessness; provide affordable housing options to those with special needs; cut the waiting lists for affordable housing in half; produce workforce housing to accommodate projected job growth.

preservation. The new goals stated in the Blueprint are comprehensive: to end homelessness in 10 years, to provide affordable housing options to those with special needs, to cut the waiting lists for affordable housing in half over 10 years, and to produce workforce housing to accommodate projected job growth.

The Blueprint is the product of impressive collaboration by county agencies, concerned citizens, houses of worship and local non-profits. Because of the metrics it includes, the Blueprint sets short and long term goals and can be used to evaluate our programs.

TO VIEW the Housing Blueprint, please visit <http://www.e-ffordable.org/>.

If you would like more information, or would like to volunteer in efforts to address homelessness, the County's Office to End Homelessness can be reached by going to <http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/homeless>.

Sharon Bulova is chairman of the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors.

COMMENTARY

School Reform

BY KENNETH R. "KEN" PLUM
STATE DELEGATE (D-36)

Gov. Robert McDonnell (R) had a press conference last week to announce his "The Opportunity to Learn" school reform initiative.

As I told the members of the House of Delegates in a floor speech the next day, I think the governor's press conference lacked one thing: a sense of reality. There was no mention of the financial stress under which school divisions now find themselves. With plunging local property values, there is a drop in property taxes collected that are the principal source of revenue for schools. The General Assembly is still looking to cut an additional couple of billion dollars from the state budget that will impact education funding. School divisions throughout the Commonwealth are making major reductions to instructional and extra-curricular programs and adding fees to support some activities. To say that we should not innovate at a time when dollars are scarce would be a mistake; indeed, innovation can sometimes save money. To undertake one without recognition of the other would be folly. Siphoning off scarce dollars from public schools at this time does not make much sense to me.

The governor's announcement also overlooked the reality of the incredible innovation that takes place in the public schools already. Throughout the state there are magnet schools, alternative schools, gifted centers, IB and AP programs, career training centers

and more. Ask school administrators and teachers why more innovation does not take place, and they will tell you that it is because of restrictive state laws and regulations. The Governor's reform initiative is built around charter schools, lab schools, and virtual schools.

"Charter schools," the governor was reported as saying at his press conference, "are public schools with the ability to innovate in the education of our young people." If more innovation is what the governor seeks, he should give public schools the same "ability to innovate" as he proposes for charter schools. That way all students could benefit rather than the 5 percent projected under his plan. Virtual instruction is a good but not new idea. Already students in remote areas and small schools can choose from a greater array of classes that are delivered electronically. Lab schools were popular in the 1950s and 1960s for teacher training but were largely abandoned for their high cost and for the lack of diversity in the student body.

Ironically, at a time when many in leadership roles in Richmond are denouncing federal intervention in all aspects of government, the prospect of federal funding is being used as a carrot to attract support for the governor's proposal. For many, a good dose of reality of how we are going to meet the ongoing cost of schools might lead us to take any discussion of reform more seriously.

To view my speech, go to www.kenplum.com.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

SLHS Students Smooth the Way

To the Editor:

The snow has subsided and the plowed mounds of it are blocking everyone's driveways. People walk the roughly plowed street and a few SUVs careen up and down the gentle slope of our street, always an attraction in snowstorms, as we wonder who will make it up the hill and who will abandon their cars.

Our neighborhood is close knit with a mix of people — seniors, widows and widowers, couples, singles and a few families with young children. We gather once or twice a year and have a party celebrating life. Everyone is invited and most everyone comes. We like each other and care for each other. One couple is special to us all, Kevin and Amy. They always have a smile for everyone, even though each day is a challenge for them both. One year after they married, nearly 20 years ago, Kevin discovered he had Multiple Sclerosis. Braces and canes help him to move a few feet, with great effort, but a

SEE LETTERS, PAGE 15

Snow Day Make Ups Considered

Fairfax County Public Schools Superintendent Jack Dale was scheduled to release his plan for coping with instructional time lost to snow days at the local school board's Feb. 17 meeting. The school board will vote on a final solution March 4.

Virginia requires school system to provide approximately 180 days — or an equivalent number of hours — in instruction. Fairfax County builds 183 days of instruction into its calendar in anticipation of snow cancellations.

But the school board said it exhausted its three "extra" snow days in December, when another large snowstorm hit. Legally, it will have to find a way to make up many, though not necessarily, all of the snow days missed since then.

According to School Board president Kathy Smith (Sully), the fourth and fifth days of school missed because of snow in one year have to be made up.

"I have never seen us miss this many snow days. We had one year where we went through 10 days but I think we are going to have more than that," said School Board member Jane Strauss (Dranesville), who has served since the early 1990s.

Several school board members are concerned that another major storm may hit the region, causing students to miss even more class.

"Virginia says we have to have

180 days. I don't know what we do if this keeps going," said Smith.

Dale had not released his proposal at the time The Connection Newspapers went to press but several school board members said he was probably considering lengthening the school day for the rest of the year as well as adding on school days in June.

According to Strauss, any solution is likely to irritate parents.

In the past, parents and teachers have not been willing to give up parts of spring break to make up snow days. They have also been unhappy about an extension to the school day when it was used in prior years. Simply adding extra days onto the end of the school year also doesn't seem viable.

"I am pretty sure we are not going to extend the school year into July," said School Board member Stu Gibson (Hunter Mill).

Just adding school days onto the end of the year would also do very little to assist high school student who have to prepare for Advanced Placement and International Baccalaureate exams in the late spring. The tests take place on a national schedule and cannot be moved back as a result of the snowstorm.

"I think you are going to see some high school students coming into school on Saturdays so they can be ready for those AP and IB tests," said Strauss.

— JULIA O'DONOGHUE

County Ponders Next Move

FROM PAGE 2

trict, but they spread through Oak Hill, Reston, South Riding, Lorton and McLean.

POLICE said the November arrest was based on "burglarious materials" in the vehicle the suspects were driving.

Kumar, who attended the preliminary hearing in Fairfax County, said prosecutors had presented as evidence gold-detecting equipment, cell phones that had called the homes of victims before they were burglarized and a list of names and phone numbers, many of them labeled "indio," among other items found in the suspects' possession. "But the prosecutors, they were unable to tie up the evidence," he said. He noted that the burglaries, which peaked in October, had ceased after the arrest.

He said he hoped for a grand

jury indictment. "If that's not going to happen, we have to be a lot more proactive and take care of each other and look out for each other's houses." Dismissing the cases, he said, could embolden others to commit similar crimes in the area.

In response to the burglaries, Del. Tim Hugo (R-40) proposed legislation increasing the penalty for dealers repeatedly convicted of purchasing gold without complying with the Precious Metals Dealer Law. The law requires that sellers present identification and dealers keep records of each sale, and noncompliance is punishable by revoking a dealer's license for a year.

Hugo proposed that precious metal dealers should face a mandatory two-year revocation of their licenses if convicted a second time. The bill became law on Thursday, Feb. 11.

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COMMUNITY

War at Home

'Dear Sara Jane' follows the tale of military wife.

BY ALLISON AUSTIN
THE CONNECTION

The Hub Theatre brings together story, art and community. It is a Reston-based non-profit theater company built on the idea of creating a conversation with its audience, according to Helen Pafumi, the Hub's artistic director.

"Everything from their laughter, their silence, during the show, to the talk backs afterward, to stuff we hear, it's a continual conversation," said Pafumi. "We talk about things that our community would want to discuss. Sometimes the stories are about love, the economy."

Pafumi co-founded the theater with Maggie Ulmer and Marey Oakes. Pafumi and Ulmer were acquaintances, who by chance, discovered they were both interested in starting theater companies in Reston. They decided to pair up on the venture. Oakes was doing grant writing for Ulmer at the time and decided to join them.

"It's been a lovely partnership. All three of us bring our different strengths to the company," Pafumi said.

THE COMPANY spent much of 2008 raising money and trying to spread the word. The theater was incorporated in August 2008. They began with staged readings at Lake Anne Plaza and the Reston Town Center. From there, the com-

pany progressed to producing plays. Their inaugural stage production was "The Pavilion" at 1st Stage in Tysons Corner. They continued with a production of "We won't pay! We won't pay!" last fall at ArtSpace in Falls Church.

"It's a powerful thing when you're standing on stage and you know you have that audience with you completely," said Pafumi.

Finding a stable venue in Fairfax County has proved to be difficult. Many places are out of the price range for a non-profit group. Pafumi is still excited to see where the county goes in terms of venues.

"Fairfax County is a cultural community. They are an artistic community. They care about it," said Pafumi.

Fund-raising is essential to the continued operation of the Hub Theatre. The company does everything from grant writing to in-house salons and "e-mail asks," according to Pafumi. They are continually on the hunt for corporate sponsors and others interested in investing in the company. Pafumi thinks local restaurants would profit from an audience interested in dining before seeing a theater production. She thinks arts foster economic growth and also strengthen the community.

"We really would like to become, not just stable in a venue, but part of this community. Something that business owners of this community want to reinforce," said Pafumi.

THE UPCOMING PRODUCTION is a one woman show entitled "Dear Sara Jane." Jessica Lefkow is directing.

"Dear Sara Jane" follows the tale

CALENDAR

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

THURSDAY/FEB. 18

Mary Gilliatt: Fabulous Food and Friends. 10 a.m. at St John Neumann's Church, 11900 Lawyers Road, Reston. Free, register at 703-433-2754 or hatlady@gmail.com.

Dan Dietz's 'tempODYSSEY.' 8 p.m. at George Mason University Black Box Theater, 4400 University Drive, Fairfax. Tickets \$6, students and seniors \$3. Tickets to performances canceled due to snow will be honored. 703-993-8888 or 703-993-1120.

FRIDAY/FEB. 19

'Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf' by Edward Albee. 8 p.m. at Taking Flight Theatre Company, Waddell Theater, 1000 Harry Byrd Highway, Sterling. Students and seniors \$10, general admission \$15.

www.cct2ft.com.

Dan Dietz's 'tempODYSSEY.' 8 p.m. at George Mason University Black Box Theater, 4400 University Drive, Fairfax. Tickets \$6, students and seniors \$3. Tickets to performances canceled due to snow will be honored. 703-993-8888 or 703-993-1120.

'This House is Not Kosher.' 5 p.m. and 7:30 p.m. at Herndon High School, 700 Bennett St., Herndon. A comedy written and performed by HHS students. \$5. 703-401-0428 or www.herndonadrama.org.

SATURDAY/FEB. 20

Third Annual Lake Anne Polar Bear Dip. 2 p.m. at the Lake Anne, 1639 Washington Plaza, Reston. This fundraiser for Camp Sunshine is rescheduled from Feb. 6. 703-709-7700 or www.freezinforareason.com.

'Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf' by Edward Albee. 8 p.m. at Taking Flight Theatre Company, Waddell Theater, 1000 Harry Byrd Highway, Sterling. Students and seniors \$10,

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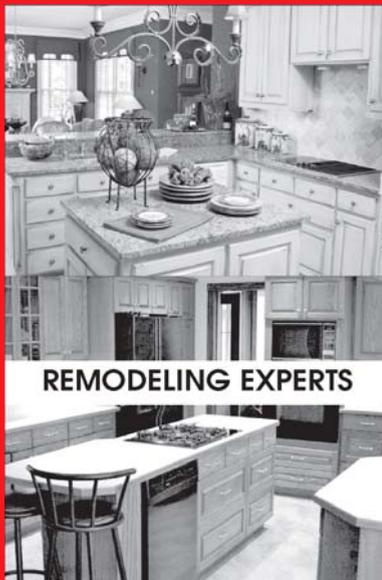
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Helen Pafumi co-founded the theater that talks 'about things that our community would want to discuss.'

of a military wife waiting for her husband to return from war. The play is built like a thriller, according to Lefkow.

"Little by little we learn what we're doing in the room with Sara Jane, what she's going through, why she's struggling with her secrets. ... Even in the end, we are left with a few mysteries, but in a way that leaves us fulfilled," Lefkow said. "People will be talking about this character days after they've seen the show."

Actress Casie Platt plays the part of Sara Jane, as well as the part of Linnie, Sara Jane's twin sister. Platt has the task of playing contrasting characters, in both appearance and personality.

"One-actor shows provide an opportunity for extended, intense examination of a singular truth with a performer," Lefkow said.

While not explicitly stated, it is implied that Sara Jane is waiting for her husband to return from the Iraq War.

Pafumi has some fears of alienating the audience with such a controversial topic. However, she is eased by the reassuring words from both her husband and

brother-in law, who have both served in the military.

"I think they are more excited that the conversation is being had at all," said Pafumi.

Pafumi thinks it is important to put a spotlight, not only on those who are fighting in wars, but also, on the struggles of the people who are left behind waiting for their loved ones to return from battle.

"I know many military wives who have this struggle," said Pafumi. "What is it to wait for someone to come home? To wonder if they're coming home."

Pafumi is unafraid of the possible backlash, preferring to produce a conversation, no matter how heated.

Lefkow feels similarly. She hopes the audience leaves feeling invigorated.

Pafumi's mission is to have a theatre that is accessible to the community. She tries to maintain a ticket price of under \$25.

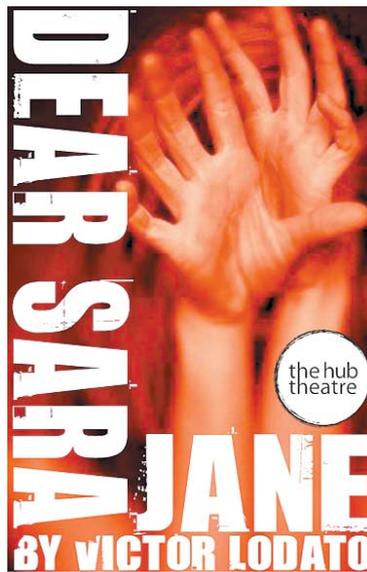
"Dear Sara Jane" will run from Feb. 26-March 21 at the Sundry in Vienna, 316 Dominion Road. Tickets range from \$15 to \$20, and are available by calling: 703-698-0088 or visiting www.thehubtheatre.org



Actress Casie Platt plays the part of Sara Jane, as well as the part of Linnie, Sara Jane's twin sister.

Tickets

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'Dear Sara Jane' runs from Feb. 26-March 21 at the Sundry in Vienna.

general admission \$15. www.cct2ft.com.

Dan Dietz's 'tempODYSSEY.' 2 p.m. and 8 p.m. at George Mason University Black Box Theater, 4400 University Drive, Fairfax. Tickets \$6, students and seniors \$3. Tickets to performances canceled due to snow will be honored. 703-993-8888 or 703-993-1120.

A Guided Walk in the Restored Glade Stream Valley. 1:30 p.m. at Reston Museum, 1639 Washington Plaza, Reston. 703-709-7700 or www.restonmuseum.org

SUNDAY/FEB. 21

'Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf' by Edward Albee. 7 p.m. at Taking Flight Theatre Company, Waddell Theater, 1000 Harry Byrd Highway, Sterling. Students and seniors \$10, general admission \$15. www.cct2ft.com.

Holy Cross Performing Artist Series: The Glen Echos. 3 p.m. at Holy Cross Lutheran Church, 1090 Sterling Road, Herndon. Barbershop

quartet. Free.

www.holycrosslutheranchurch.net.

Dan Dietz's 'tempODYSSEY.' 2 p.m. at George Mason University Black Box Theater, 4400 University Drive, Fairfax. Tickets \$6, students and seniors \$3. Tickets to performances canceled due to snow will be honored. 703-993-8888 or 703-993-1120.

MONDAY/FEB. 22

ESL Beginners. 11 a.m. Reston Regional Library, 11925 Bowman Towne Drive, Reston. Practice English in a conversation group. 703-689-2700.

Kids' Science. 3 p.m. Reston Regional Library, 11925 Bowman Towne Drive, Reston. Explore scientific topics through activities. Age 5-7. 703-689-2700.

TUESDAY/FEB. 23

ESL Advanced. 11 a.m. Reston Regional Library, 11925 Bowman Towne Drive, Reston. Practice English in a conversation group. 703-689-2700.

INOVA Blood Drive. 12-7:30 p.m.

beside the Pavilion, Reston Town Center, 11900 Market St., Reston. Schedule appointments at 1-866-256-6372 or inova.org/donateblood.

Folk Club of Reston-Herndon: Spook Handy. 7:15 p.m. at The Tortilla Factory, 648 Elden St., Herndon. Tickets \$11 non-members, \$10 members. www.RestonHerndonFolkClub.com.

WEDNESDAY/FEB. 24

Toothy Grins. 11 a.m. Oakton Library, 10304 Lynnhaven Place, Oakton. Celebrate Children's Dental Health Month with a storytime program presented by a pediatric dentist. Age 3-5 with adult. 703-242-4020.

Reston Writers. 12 p.m. Reston Regional Library, 11925 Bowman Towne Drive, Reston. Networking and professional discussion (not critiquing) for writers in the Reston area. Adults. 703-689-2700.

Pajama Storytime. 6:45 p.m. Reston Regional Library, 11925 Bowman Towne Drive, Reston. Wear pajamas for bedtime favorites. All ages. 703-689-2700.

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Ready Or Not, High School Sports Teams Enter Playoffs

Following a week-plus of inactivity due to snowfall, Northern Region squads must immediately turn it on

BY RICH SANDERS
THE CONNECTION

For Fairfax County high school sports teams, last week's snow storm brought seasons to an abrupt halt just as they were preparing to wind down regular season schedules and head into district postseason competition.

The momentum and continuity of the winter athletic seasons evaporated as snow continued to rise in accumulation and intensity. Most student-athletes remained at home over the week-and-a-half period as schools closed and extracurricular activities, including sports practices and contests, were postponed or canceled.

"We played last Thursday [Feb. 4]. Then there was no contact with the kids until Saturday [Feb. 13] when we practiced," said Jim Smith, the Chantilly High boys' basketball coach. "I would send out e-mails [to the team] and things like that."

Since late November, local high school teams throughout Northern Virginia have practiced almost daily and competed in games or meets once or twice a week. Then, all of a sudden, it all came to the weather-related halt. Coaches or players could do little except to stay at home and wait for things to clear up outdoors. Fairfax County schools were closed throughout last week. Monday, Feb. 15 was President's Day so students were not expected to get back into school until the following day.

At Centreville High, members of the indoor track and field team had actually considered the possibility of weather problems later in the season.

"We have discussed all season how unpredictable the weather can be and how flexible we must be with our training [and] how we must be diligent about keeping our fitness levels up," wrote Kelley Devlin, a Centreville track and field assistant coach, in an e-mail. "We can't afford to take multiple day breaks. Our team is very good with using cross training machines — ellipticals, treadmills, bikes — if not in their own home, at a neighbor or friend's close by. Or when the roads are safe, they get to a gym or find some safe streets

that are close to clear to run on." Devlin was pleased with how the Wildcat athletes responded to the school and activities' shutdown.

"They have done a wonderful job sticking together and using indoor track facilities in the area to get track workouts in when possible and the parents have been extremely supportive with transporting them," she said.

Centreville, along with the other track programs in the area, concluded their respective postseason district championship meets on Thursday, Feb. 11, just before the latest snow fall hit the area in what has been a record-breaking winter of accumulation in this part of the state. The Northern Region track and field championships are scheduled to take place this Saturday, Feb. 20 at the George Mason University field house.

"We are incredibly thankful to have gotten our district meet in," said Devlin, who saw the Wildcat boys' team garner a first place tie with Robinson at districts. "The runners are highly motivated after much success at the district level. They know they have unfinished business at the regional meet, and are prepared to race hard to get to the Virginia State meet."

BASKETBALL DISTRICT tournaments are slated to begin this week. In the Concorde District, teams' district records over the first round of the regular season schedule are being used to determine tournament seeding. Any games played over the second half of the regular season district schedule do not count toward postseason seeding. In the case of the Chantilly boys' team (13-6 overall record), that meant recent district wins over Oakton on Feb. 4 and Robinson on Jan. 28 got wiped off the board in regards to tournament seeding.

The top-seed Herndon boys and the No. 2-seed Centreville team both were scheduled to receive first round byes in this week's six-team Concorde tournament. Chantilly, the No. 3 seed, was scheduled to host No. 6 Robinson in a district quarterfinals round game on Wednesday, Feb. 17, while No. 4 Oakton was set to host No. 5 Westfield in the other quarterfinals. Wednesday's win-



The South Lakes girls' basketball team, coached by Christy Winters Scott (pictured), finished second in the regular season Liberty District standings and will host Marshall in a first round district tournament game this Thursday night, Feb. 18 at 7.

ners will advance to Friday's semifinals round and a seeding at next week's 16-team Northern Region tournament. Meanwhile, Wednesday's district quarterfinals round losing teams will see their seasons end.

It might not seem fair that teams that have not played in 11 days all of a sudden have to compete in a do-or-die district playoff game. But that's the way it is for teams in the Concorde and elsewhere. Teams are in the same quandary as a result of the final week-and-a-half of the regular seasons being wiped out.

Smith, the Chantilly coach and the former head coach at McLean High, said it was good to get back onto the practice floor on Saturday. Like other coaches across the region, he hopes his team will be ready to jump into playoff action following the long layoff.

"It's kind of hard to gage the emotional tempo of the team," said Smith. "But I thought we had a great practice [although] the kids got tired quickly and the conditioning was a little bit of a factor."

Smith told his players, weather

problems or not, just one district champion will be crowned in each of the region's four districts — the Concorde, Liberty, Patriot and National.

"The thing I said to my kids on Saturday [at practice] is that there will be four district champions, and the following week there will be one region champion," said Smith. "The teams that win [championships] will be the teams that navigated best and did not allow [the schedule disruptions due to the snow] to be a distraction. There is nothing we can do about [the past two weeks] or change. Our next step is to get ready for Robinson."

Tim Anderson, the Langley High girls' basketball coach, said the biggest factor going into district tournament play following the less than ideal conclusion to the regular season is to excel in basics.

"The bottom line is to execute on the floor," said Anderson, whose Saxons were set to host cross-town rival McLean in a Liberty District tournament contest Thursday, Feb. 18, at 5:30 p.m. "And, if you don't win, your

season's over."

Anderson said his squad, which had its first practice in over a week this past Saturday, was not overly distracted by the unusual end to the regular season.

"Our girls on the varsity team practiced on Saturday and we had a normal practice," he said. "They seem to really roll with things pretty well when they know [the weather is] something they can't control. The thing that is frustrating for them is that they have missed school and classes, and they've missed the practices and games."

The following Liberty District girls' basketball tournament first round games were scheduled for this Thursday night, Feb. 18: No. 8-seed Jefferson at top seed Madison (7 p.m.); No. 5 McLean at No. 4 Langley (5:45 p.m.); No. 6 Fairfax at No. 3 Stone Bridge (5:45 p.m.); and No. 7 Marshall at No. 2 South Lakes (7 p.m.).

The girls' semifinals will take place the following night (Friday) at Madison High School. The first game will start at 5:45 p.m.

The Liberty District boys' first round playoff games will also take place on Thursday and are as follows: No. 8 Madison at top seed Langley (7:30 p.m.); No. 5 South Lakes at No. 4 Fairfax (7 p.m.); No. 6 McLean at No. 3 Stone Bridge (7:30 p.m.); and No. 7 Jefferson at No. 2 Marshall (7 p.m.).

The Liberty boys' semifinals games will be held on Friday night at South Lakes. The first game will start at 5:45 p.m.

The boys' and girls' district finals will take place next Monday evening, Feb. 22 at South Lakes. The girls' title game will be at 5:45 p.m., followed by the boys' championship.

WRESTLING, as a result of the long layoff, was scheduled to forego its district tournaments and, instead, have an expanded Super Regional's tournament on Tuesday, Feb. 16 and Wednesday, Feb. 17 of this week at Fairfax High School. Then, in a quick turnaround, the state AAA tournament is set to take place this Friday and Saturday at Robinson Secondary School.

This week's region meet was to consist of 32 wrestlers competing at each weight class with the top four advancing to states. The field of 32 wrestlers at each weight class is double the usual number of 16 wrestlers who would compete at regionals in a normal year.

PHOTO BY CRAIG STERBUTZEL/THE CONNECTION

NEWS

All of the Think Pink! performers: Mistaya Smith, Lily Roth, Jacqueline Gillman, Alexandra Ambrose, Ella Fertitta, Joyce Lee, Caitlin Giovanis and Nancy Lee.



PHOTOS BY STEPHANIE KNAPP/ THE CONNECTION

Think Pink Skating Show Raises Funds for the Cure

The Children's Charity Ice Theatre presented eight local figure skaters that performed in the Reston Town Center Ice Pavilion on Sunday, Feb. 14. Sponsored by Yogen Frusz, the donations-only event raised money for Susan G. Komen for the Cure.

The Children's Charity Ice Theatre was started in 2002 when a young skater needed an expensive treatment. So a group of fellow skaters put on a charity performance, which raised more than \$1,000 in one night. The group

continued to put on performances for donations, raising more than \$4,000, which it has given to different charities.

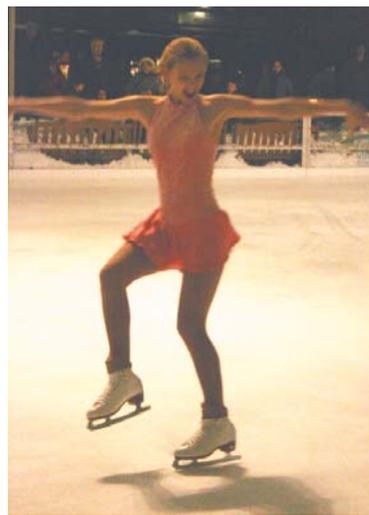
This year's charity is the Susan G. Komen foundation, which is fighting to find a cure for breast cancer.

For more information about the Think Pink! Ice skaters, visit www.info-komen.org/goto/thinkpinkiceshow.

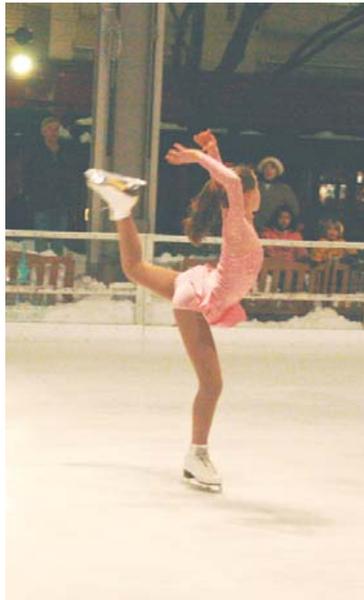
— STEPHANIE KNAPP



Caitlin Giovanis is a USFS Gold medal winner.



Alexandra Ambrose is pictured skating to music from 'The Pink Panther.'



Mistaya Smith, skating to music from Disney's 'The Princess and the Frog,' has been skating for five years.



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NEWS

Getting Haitians Connected

Local nonprofit turns to Haiti.

The Reston-based nonprofit Hopecam, founded by Vienna resident Len Forkas, is all about creating connections. So when Hopecam members began planning their annual retreat to the Dominican Republic, Forkas thought, "Maybe we can help make a connection to these people in Haiti," he said.

The nonprofit's primary mission is to set up audiovisual connections between childhood cancer patients homebound during treatment and their friends and classmates.

Having read that many residents of the quake-ravaged country were still without power and that most traditionally received their information via radios, Forkas decided to deliver a batch of radios often used by campers, which are powered by hand cranks and also function as flashlights and cell phone chargers. Due to cheap, quality cell phone coverage, mobile phones are more common on Hispaniola, the island the two countries share, than anywhere else in the Caribbean, he said. "Even the poorest people in the Dominican Republic and Haiti have cell phones."

He wanted displaced residents to be able to receive information and communicate with each other.

Hopecam sent out an e-mail blast soliciting donations from the 1,000 or so subscribers on its e-mail list and, within a couple of weeks, had raised about \$6,000. Members set out for the island on Jan. 29 with about 100 radios.

"I've been going to the Dominican Republic for 27 years, and so I feel very connected to that island," Forkas said, noting that most of the workers who rebuilt the house he owns on the island were Hai-



PHOTO CONTRIBUTED

From the single-engine plane carrying Hopecam members into Haiti, trucks traveling from the Dominican Republic to Haiti, many of them carrying supplies, can be seen stacking up at a border checkpoint in the port town of Jimani.

tians.

His brother-in-law Bernardo Camino lives in the Dominican capital of Santo Domingo and is training to be a pilot, so Forkas rented a plane and filed a flight plan, and they took off from Balaguer Airport on the morning of Jan. 31, planning to land near a distribution point outside the Haitian capital of Port au Prince. However, the weather prevented them from getting clearance to land.

Camino's uncle, though, sits on the board of the Sur Futuro Foundation, a nonprofit dedicated to communities in the south of the Dominican Republic. The organization has undertaken to deliver the radios on behalf of Hopecam. "Hopefully, in the next couple of weeks, we should see photos of the families that received our radios," Forkas said.

Formula for Partial Relief

FROM PAGE 4

SEVERAL SUPERVISORS said it is unlikely Fairfax will give the school system an extra \$81 million, especially when other county agencies and departments are seeing cuts in their funding.

"I think trying to provide an extra \$81 million in funding would be extremely difficult to do in this economic climate. Our board has to be sensitive to taxpayers who are struggling to pay their mortgages and stay in their homes," said Fairfax County Chairman Sharon Bulova (D-At-large.)

Fairfax County already allocates more than half of its general funding to the public school system annually. Since the residential real estate tax generates most of the county revenue, an increase in schools funding would most likely correspond to an increase in real property tax rate for homeowners.

According to county officials, \$81 million is equal to increasing property taxes approximately four cents per \$100 of assessed property value this year.

Some supervisors questioned

whether the school board had really made all the cuts it could, particularly when it came to central administration staff.

"Until the school system looks at their administrative costs, I think this school board will be hard pressed to spend an additional \$81 million on the school system," said Supervisor Patrick Herrity (R-Springfield).

When compared to Dale's budget proposal, the school board did vote to reduce spending on central administration functions by \$900,000 in order to fund other programs, according to school system documents.

Still, other supervisors appeared to be questioning whether the school board had looked at all of its options.

"I have serious questions about cost and whether there are things not on the table to be cut," said Supervisor John Foust (D-Dranesville).

GOV. BOB McDONNELL (R) did offer a silver lining in the discussion about schools funding late in the day on Feb. 8.

McDonnell supports restoring

the Virginia state education funding formula to its original 2010 proportions, which means Fairfax will get a larger slice of the financial pie of education funding coming out of Richmond.

Last December, former Gov. Tim Kaine (D) proposed "freezing" the education funding formula to proportions used last year, protecting funding for several school districts downstate from losing money but costing Fairfax County Public Schools \$61 million.

It is unclear whether Fairfax will receive the full \$61 million now that McDonnell has "unfrozen" the formula. In light of a massive budget shortfall, the Virginia General Assembly could cut education funding overall, meaning the pool of money for all school districts may shrink.

But Fairfax County will still receive more money than the locality would have, if McDonnell had stuck to Kaine's original proposal.

"By unfreezing the formula, the Governor had made sure we will see additional money or, at least, some more money that we would have otherwise expected for our school system," said Bulova.

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A Mutiny on this Bounty



By KENNETH B. LOURIE

Now I don't want to pick on a paper towel any more than I have to, especially when it comes to First Amendment rights, but if they can print it, I can certainly talk about/object to it; Fletcher Christian (Clark Gable) wouldn't have it any other way. I don't know if anybody's noticed, I only have of late, but on some of the paper towel rolls in my last "8-like-getting-12" jumbo pack, there were sayings, expressions, philosophical points of view (albeit with a garden theme for some reason), about how to live that I found somewhat objectionable. Not quite intrusive or offensive, but inappropriate somehow.

Who exactly is a paper towel manufacturer to advise me on how to live my daily life, in or out of the garden? What follows are their exact words: "No two days are the same in one garden." "No two gardens are the same." "You can bury a lot of troubles digging in the dirt." "The flowers of all tomorrows are the seeds of today." "Friends are flowers in a life's garden." As my recently deceased mother might have said, and I quote, "Puke city." Is there a reason why, as a paper towel-buyer, I am being subjected to, proselytized to even, concerning my life (with the garden serving as some kind of metaphor)? I'm not looking for absorption here, I'm looking for absorption, not some observance to some subtle code of conduct. Hubris could not be more clearly evident than when a paper product, a disposable "quicker picker upper," presumes to pontificate in print for its buyers, who are presumably not yet aware. Caveat Emptor has just taken on a whole new meaning, for me. I used to be careful what I wished for; now apparently, I have to be careful about the reasons the manufacturers are selling their products for.

I naively thought that their reasons were product performance, market share, profitability, jobs, retirement, maybe even improving/enhancing their buyers' quality of life vis-à-vis the use of an affordable and effective product. I never thought it was for mind control. Who do they think they are? They're making paper towels (napkins, toilet paper, tissue, etc.); they're not feeding the homeless/changing the world. They're providing goods and services for it, not providing answers to philosophical questions. Have they all of a sudden begun to think of themselves as role models of altruism? Has the pursuit of the almighty buck empowered them to believe they have powers beyond their receipt of dollars and the sense that it accrues? Is there some sort of entitlement which their success has created/spawned? I realize money is paper (linen, actually), but what do they hope to gain (other than more paper/currency) by preaching more than cleanliness?

Oh, I just got it. Since cleanliness is next to Godliness, I suppose the manufacturer figured that they would straddle that blurry line between business and religion (the commercial equivalent of church and state) to win friends and influence lots of people, and hopefully generate profits in the process. "Not a sermon, just a thought."

Whether I'm tilting at windmills here or making much to do about nothing is for readers/buyers to assess. My objection to this paper-towel ploy is really about abuse of power. Just because your product makes it into my home on a regular basis, don't think for a minute that you can influence what we think before or after we actually use it. However, if I have any philosophical questions or concerns in the interim, I'll make sure to call the 800 number listed on your package.

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

NEWS

Bill To Protect Sex Offenders' Employers

BY VERONICA GARABELLI
CAPITAL NEWS SERVICE

A bill making headway in the General Assembly seeks to protect employers of sex offenders by not listing the name of the offender's workplace on the Virginia Sex Offender Registry.

Senate Bill 635, sponsored by Sen. Dave Marsden (D-37), would still list a sex offender's work address. The bill passed the Senate this month unanimously and now will be considered by the House of Delegates.

RICHMOND REPORT

Marsden said SB 635 is meant to help sex offenders integrate back into society.

Currently, the Virginia Sex Offender Registry's Web site [<http://sex-offender.vsp.virginia.gov>] displays a photograph and description of each offender; lists the offender's crime; and shows the offender's home address and the name and location of the offender's employer.

As a result, some sex offenders lose their jobs, because a customer complains or because the employer fears the stigma of being associated with the sex offender registry.

"It's the address and the location that is still important, not the name of the business," Marsden said. "We don't want businesses to be harmed, and we don't want the offender, if they're doing everything they're supposed to do, being harmed."

A group called Reform Sex Offender Laws of Virginia approached the senator about filing the bill.

Mary Devoy, organizer for the group, said employers who are willing to give sex offenders a second chance despite the negative publicity should not be punished. Devoy said that when sex offenders are unemployed, they can't meet their parole requirements.

"We want the folks on the registry to be able to survive," Devoy said. "Let them live their lives, have a job and raise their children. This bill is one step toward that."

Several people have posted comments about the bill on the Richmond Sunlight Web site. One said that by listing the employer's name, the sex offender registry has "effectively applied the 'social pariah' label to responsible businesses."

To track or comment on Senate Bill 635, visit www.richmondsunlight.com/bill/2010/sb635.

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Ready for Incheon Patriots?

George Mason University may open campus in South Korea.

BY VERONICA GARABELLI
CAPITAL NEWS SERVICE

George Mason University hopes to tap into global educational opportunities by opening a campus in South Korea.

Senate Bill 712, sponsored by Sen. Chap Petersen (D-34), would allow Mason to establish a campus in Incheon, South Korea.

Incheon Free Economic Zones approached the university about the possibility of the campus in hopes of turning three parts of the city — Songdo, Cheongna and the island of Yeongjong — into business hubs.

The bill, which is supported by the State Council of Higher Education for Virginia, would allow students to transfer from the Incheon campus to Mason's Fairfax campus and vice versa.

On Thursday, Feb. 4, the legislation won a unanimous endorsement from the Senate Education and Health Committee. It now goes to the full Senate for consideration.

Mason's Incheon branch intends to focus on global affairs, public administration, conflict resolution and economics. Ideally, Mason would attract 2,000 new students with the location in Korea.

Petersen, whose wife is from South Korea, said students from the Incheon campus would add a lot to the community. It

Incheon

Population: 2.6 million. Incheon is South Korea's third-largest metropolitan area, after Seoul and Busan.

Location: On the west coast of the Korean peninsula.

What it's known for: Incheon is South Korea's most important transportation hub. It is the South Korea's largest seaport on the west coast and home to the country's largest airport. South Korea's tallest building, the Northeast Asia Trade Tower, is in Incheon.

Sources: <http://english.incheon.go.kr/>; Wikipedia

could help improve the job market and economy, he said.

"A lot of them (international students) move to the United States or even become U.S. citizens," Petersen said. "That has a major impact in getting talented people into Fairfax."

Mason's international efforts have not always been successful. Last year, George Mason closed its Ras Al Khaimah Campus in the United Arab Emirates because of the global economic crisis and other reasons.

But GMU Provost Peter Stearns believes things would be different with the proposed campus in South Korea. If the plan moves forward, he said, the university would have more experience and a better feel for the potential cost.

No Plan for Quality, Character or Affordability

BY JOHN LOVAAS
CIVIC LEADER AND RESTON IMPACT PRODUCER/HOST

The early conversations of the Reston Master Plan Task Force offer little prospect for either the character or exciting innovation which marked the original Reston as a special "New Town." Discussion to date revolves around one major issue absorbing the Task Force — quantity, i.e., how much new development and re-development should be allowed and under what rules. On one side we have the maximalists (Bob Simon and the developer interests) who chant density, density, density. The other side is more no-growth or no-change absolutists. I exaggerate, but not much.

INDEPENDENT PROGRESSIVE

A side issue is: Who should be allowed to play in the Master Plan game? The Task Force nominally represents the community, but in fact tilts sharply to the developer clan-county bureaucracy establishment which usually guides land-use decisions hereabouts. Others seek to establish more of an equilibrium in the process, giving Reston's special brand of just plain residents a voice at the table equal to that of the established powers.

Sadly, with all the energy focused on the more versus less debate, there has been little conversation about the quality of what will come to our special place. Apart from occasional *de rigueur* references to Reston's

founding goals, there is no serious discussion of how to give them substance in a new Plan. For example, the founding goal of "providing the fullest range of housing styles and prices ... heterogeneity [diversity] that spells a lively and varied community" will need a lot more attention than it has received to date. Currently, Reston's affordable housing continues to disappear at an alarming rate as exemplified by the 340 apartment homes JBG will eliminate with county blessing at Fairways Apartments. When Reston had a population of 15,000 people, it had more affordable units than it has now with 65,000 residents. How will the new plan reverse this loss of Reston identity and character?

A new Master Plan is a generational opportunity to restore and to create special elements in our community. The plan could, for example, provide a roadmap to reinvigorate and beautify the original village centers that developers have turned into ugly strip malls. New features such as a performing arts center and landmark (air rights?) gateways to Reston could be planned in the rail corridor. And, the color of development and, yes, redevelopment must be green. Excellence in design and construction, including LEED Gold as a minimum standard, should be a plan centerpiece.

At this point, Reston will be lucky to achieve mediocrity unless the Master Plan turns its focus to quality and character. Greater equilibrium in Task Force participation could help to change the focus.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

FROM PAGE 6

motorized scooter is his usual means of transportation.

After the storm subsided, two young men from South Lakes High School came to their door and asked if they wanted their driveway shoveled. The answer was yes, of course. While the boys labored on the drive, some of the neighbors gathered on the street in front of the house, sharing news of an impending birth of a grandchild, the bets on one couple getting out of the street to head to sunnier climes, the tree that fell half way across the street and who called VDOT, and who wanted to sled down the hill on the 70-year-old Flexible Flyer wooden sled with metal, but freshly waxed, runners?

Amy, who is expecting their first child, said Kevin would love to, and ran into the house to tell him. Kevin appeared on his canes within a few minutes. The Flyer had had a few test runs down the hill and was ready for him. The shovelers were not losing any time absorbing the whole scene of adults and children pursuing this marginally dangerous pursuit. I knew the cars were still coming around the bend at the bottom of the hill, and I was concerned about our next rider's safety since he could not get up off the sled, but had to be pulled back up the hill on the sled. The shovelers had made unsolicited moves to help Kevin when he appeared with his canes at his

front door. I knew they wanted to be a part of this. I asked them if they would be so kind as to stand at the bottom of the hill and ward off any cars that might be headed there. Mo, a junior at SLHS and Dolla, a sophomore, ran to the bottom as fast as they could. Kevin confessed he hadn't been on a sled for 20 years, but, with the spirit of a teenager, enthusiastically got himself seated on the sled and with a gentle push from us all went soaring down the hill into the arms of Mo and Dolla. The boys turned the sled around and pulled Kevin back up the hill for another run. I offered them a turn on the sled, but they quietly declined. It was getting late in the day but we were all still gathered there by the driveway. The boys worked hard to get the four feet of heavy plowed snow from the driveway entrance. I hope they didn't think we were watching them. One by one we disbanded and Mo and Dolla were finished too. As they left, they shook everyone's hand and thanked us for such a good afternoon. I hope they come back after the next storm. We don't know their last names, and I may have misspelled their first names, but I do know they were a fine example of two young men being educated in South Lakes High School and we are proud of that.

Sally Guilfoyle
Reston



Pictured with Paddy Moynahan are Fred Rubin, his Eagle advisor; Frank Smith, representative from the Powhatan District of the NCAC; Ron Crowe, Scoutmaster of Troop 160; and Mike Wolf, Tom Fay and Charlie Mitchell, members of Moynahan's Review Board.

Bishop O'Connell Senior Earns Rank of Eagle Scout

Paddy Moynahan of Herndon, a senior at Bishop Denis J. O'Connell, completed his Board of Review and earned the rank of Eagle Scout in the Boy Scouts of American on Jan. 11. Moynahan joins more than 100 other scouts in Troop 160 who have earned the rank of Eagle. His Eagle project was a blood drive, which took place on Dec. 5, 2009. Despite cold temperatures and a small accumulation of

snow, more than 76 pints of blood were collected. Many members of the Troop, DJO community and neighborhood offered their time and expertise to assist in running the drive.

Moynahan will be attending college next year hoping to begin his study of film directing and cinematic arts. He also intends to continue his work with scouting as an Assistant Scoutmaster.

COMMUNITY

RA Candidates Announced

Ten candidates competing for three open seats.

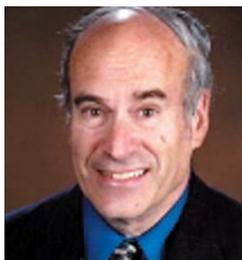
At a meeting of the Reston Association Elections Committee on Thursday, Feb. 4, 10 candidates officially announced their intention to run for the association's board of directors.

The following are brief statements the candidates.

Ballots will be sent to all Reston Association members on Friday, March 5, and must be returned by Friday, April 2. A candidates' forum is scheduled for Thursday, March 18 at 7 p.m. in the Nature House.

For more information on the candidates, visit the Reston Association Web site at www.reston.org.

AT LARGE CANDIDATES



Joe Leighton

As an RA Board member I was instrumental in the successful Nature Center referendum by ensuring that the funds for construction were paid for by voluntary contributions instead of member dues. I hope to use this experience to have a successful referendum on indoor tennis.



Rod Koozmin

I want to encourage two-way lines of communication, both citizen-to-RA and citizen-to-citizen communications. I feel this is important for Reston community-building. I became convinced of this during the recent Brown's Chapel Recreation center meetings in which I saw the board proceeding in a certain direction with very few citizens in agreement. We need to communicate in order to be a strong community. The Virginia legislature requires homeowners associations to provide a means for its members to communicate with each other. RA spends \$1.5 million providing institutional information while providing little or nothing for its members to communicate.



David Robinson

My candidacy offers a fresh perspective to RA's board. I would also bring passion and persistence in serving the interests of our community. My time as co-chair of Reston's Parks and Planning Advisory Committee has energized me into wanting to serve a greater role in the Reston community. I support more transparency in RA Board activities and representing the voice of the public on key issues. The Metrorail implementation is only one area of significant change within Reston. Transparency and ensuring your voice will be heard has never been so important.

LAKE ANNE/TALL OAKS DISTRICT DIRECTOR



Patrick Shipp

My wife and I moved to Reston in November 2008. I am a two-tour veteran of Operation Iraqi Freedom and a presidential management fellow at the Department of Energy's Office of Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy. The arrival of Metro to Reston and the process of revising the master plan are critical to the continued, sustainable growth of our community. I believe that as an at-large director, I can engage and represent the 18-35 year-old demographic of residents that have lived in Reston all of their lives, and also the residents that see Reston as a place to start and raise their families.



Kevin Danaher

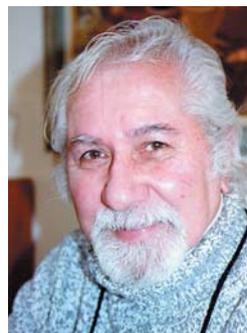
The one constant I have witnessed in Reston since 1990 has been change. Reston Town Center, Sallie Mae, Plaza America, North Point Village Center, Fairfax County Parkway and a Target opened. Metro is coming and there are plans for the redevelopment of Lake Anne and Fairway Apartments. The changes these projects will bring to Reston promise to be more profound than anything Reston has witnessed to date. My straightforward goals for the Reston Association are to continue maintaining the excellent services and facilities already in place while anticipating and planning for changes that will surely occur in the coming years.



Ken Knueven

Reston is one of the largest community associations in the country. Yet it is vitally important to remember that we, the residents, remain the stakeholders. We are the stewards of Reston's future. The Lake Anne/Tall Oaks District faces significant challenges. Among them are open spaces, revitalization efforts, pool closures and the aging Lake Anne RELAC system.

For over 30 years I have been instrumental in the development, growth and leadership of global organizations, gaining a thorough understanding of how citizens, industry and governments can co-exist. I will focus on our community's real needs, offering creative, viable and sustainable solutions.



Guy Rando

We are faced with a unique situation in Reston's history. Over the next year and a half, Fairfax County will rewrite Reston's Master Plan. I worked on the original Reston Master Plan. I would like to see our planned community preserved. My background as an urban designer and landscape architect gives me specific skills and experience to guide Reston Association through this process. I am running for the RA Board to see that our quality of life is not diminished, to see that Reston's open spaces are protected, and to guarantee that RA and the DRB retain control over the RCIG (Dulles Corridor).

NORTH POINT DISTRICT DIRECTOR



Peter Greenberg

We face significant challenges in the coming years. Financial management, the threat of development of common-area lands and staggering increased density in and around Reston Association are the most pressing.

My approach to dealing with these issues is simple, focus on the Association's mission statement: "To preserve and enhance the Reston community through outstanding leadership, service and stewardship of our resources." I'll emphasize the following: Financial management, and in particular, keeping dues in check. Customer service within the organization and outward toward the members. Preserving our common-area lands in perpetuity. Smart participation in the Fairfax County Master Planning process. It is not open season on Reston development.



Michael Collins

Like most Reston residents, my family and I cherish the beauty, diversity and ingenuity of this special place. Therefore, I stand committed to safeguarding its unique character while recognizing that Reston will inevitably change. Experiences that have prepared me to help our community look forward and manage change include studying city planning, practicing law for eight years, launching a small business, volunteering in local politics and creating homeowners associations at Habitat for Humanity. I pledge to solicit residents' input and ensure Reston Association advocates for its members. Share your thoughts at mike4ra@gmail.com or 571-969-4903 or on Facebook at "Mike Collins for Reston Association Board."



Rengin Morro

I want to mobilize the changing face of Reston: young parents with families from diverse backgrounds. My priorities will be: Manage association resources with maximum fiscal responsibility. Try to freeze or decrease membership dues through alternative revenue within the governing documents' limits. Make sure the Reston Master Plan reflects the best interest of Reston residents. As the mother of a 5-year old and an educator, I would advocate for a "Reston Shares" program to engage next-generation leaders by matching them with experienced seniors to gain real-life experience. Work with the Communications Committee to create online "involvement forums" for busy moms and dads with limited time who can contribute virtually.