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CENTRE VIEW

NORTHERN EDITION

JUNE 10-16, 2010 "ALL THEY CAN DO" 25 CENTS NEWSSTAND PRICE VOLUME XXIV, NO. 23

PHOTO BY DEB COBB/CENTRE VIEW

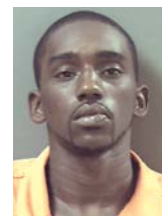
In Remembrance **During the June 5 Remembrance Cabaret for Reema Samaha, members of Virginia Tech's Contemporary Dance Ensemble perform "Andaloosia" a dance choreographed by Samaha. On the stage are Adrienne Ginter, Jamie Garubba, Lee Gibaldi, Kait Gibson, Rachel Jude, Jessica Magarelli, Heather Swanson, and Leah Zacherl.**

MORE PHOTOS, PAGE 3

Five Years Prison for Killing Teen

BY BONNIE HOBBS
CENTRE VIEW

During the course of Rasheed Nurse's sen-tencing for killing Bryan Vidarte, 19, of Centreville, a Spanish-language interpreter read the victim-impact statement written by Vidarte's mother.



Nurse

"The death of my son was the worst calamity in my life," wrote Beatriz Aldomara. "Parents never think they'll bury a son before them. I ask God why someone who didn't know him would want to kill him."

That very question was central to the case against Nurse, now 27, of Herndon, and Guillermo Alvarado, 20, of Sterling (for

SEE INVOLUNTARY, PAGE 6

Mountain View Student Wins Hispanic Scholarship

Plucky alternative school achieving success.

BY BONNIE HOBBS
CENTRE VIEW

Hispanic students are the largest minority group at Mountain View School and, last year and this year, they've chalked up a 100-percent pass rate on the SOLs and a 100-percent graduation rate.

And now, Mountain View senior Idania Marquina is one of four students from 28 high schools to receive a scholarship from the Hispanic Leadership Alliance — a group of Fairfax County Public Schools educators dedicated to improving the quality of education for Hispanic students.

"I was so proud and excited because I was the only one from an alternative school to win," she said. "Mountain View is a place where everybody can get good grades if you stay focused on school."

BONNIE HOBBS/CENTRE VIEW

Scholar Idania Marquina

Originally from El Salvador, Marquina, 23, came to the U.S. six years ago to live with her mother and has attended Mountain View four years. "When I came here, I had zero English," she said. "But after I got married in 2005 to the man who was once my neighbor in El Salvador, he encouraged me to continue in school."

She also worked at Five Guys in Centreville and, said Marquina, "I think one of the reasons they chose me to win this scholarship is that, while I was a student and a wife, I was also working." She also did well academically, posting an overall 3.7 GPA.

Marquina spent many lunchtimes studying with her mentor, math teacher Anne Hoffman, plus teachers Catherine Collins and Susan Culik. "And while I was studying English, my ESOL teacher, Michelle Ohanian, helped me," said Marquina. Principal Jim Oliver noted that, even though she's completed all her graduation requirements, she still comes to school every day to study chemistry.

"I'm in the nursing program at Falls Church High because I want to be a nurse and I plan to continue my second year there, next year," she said. It's an FCPS program, like an academy course." Afterward, she hopes to get her RN at NOVA and eventually become a pediatric nurse.

AT MOUNTAIN VIEW, said Marquina, "The teachers helped me a lot and this was a nice place to continue my education. I liked how the teachers cared for all of the students, not just me, and Mr. Oliver is like the father of this family." She's received As and Bs, noting, "I didn't know a lot about math before, but now it's my favorite subject."

Marquina said all the students with high grades received letters about the scholarship from the Hispanic Leadership Alliance and she applied. "I had to write about my experience being an immigrant in the U.S. and how I learned and improved," she said. "I told them I was a student, wife and someone working, at the same time. And I said I'd use the $1,000 scholarship to pursue my education."

SEE FINDING, PAGE 4

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People

Art Scholarship

Georgia Cerisano of Centreville, age 12, a home-schooled student, received a scholarship to the Alexander Talbot Rice Academy of Art. The announcement was made at Wakefield School in The Plains. The May 2010 competition in Virginia is Talbot Rice's pilot program in the U.S., and was open to all area students ages 11-18. Talbot Rice singled out Miss Cerisano in making his announcement of the winners, saying that her entry was among the best pieces of student work he had ever encountered.

Barstow

Air Force Pilot Candidate

Andrew David Barstow graduated from Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University College of Engineering with a bachelor of science in aerospace engineering with a minor in leadership. He will also be commissioned into the United States Air Force as a second lieutenant.

Barstow completed the five-year engineering program and was a member of the Corps of Cadets and ROTC. He was recognized three times for the Commandant's List for academic excellence in recognition of scholastic achievement.

A graduate of Centreville High School in 2005, he played varsity basketball and then continued the sport as a player and player-coach for the Corps of Cadets team competing against many colleges in the Atlantic coast area. Barstow is an Air Force pilot candidate and he will begin his training in June with Initial Flight Screening (IFS) in Pueblo, Colo.

He is the son of David and Lynnette Barstow and brother of Stephanie and Adam.

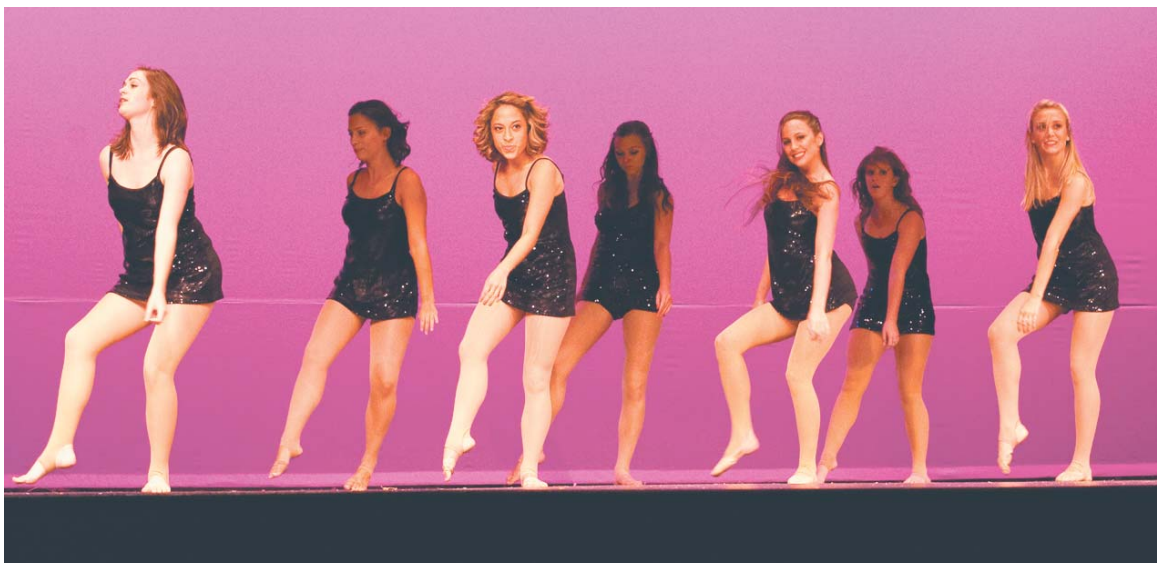
Centre View Editor Steven Mauren
703-778-9415 or centreview@connectionnewspapers.com

One of Reema's many talents was as a comedienne. Dallas Sweezy, Randa Samaha, Omar Samaha and Allison Wruk (in no particular order) perform a classic Saturday Night Live skit, "The Vogelchecks."

Photos by Deb Cobb/Centre View

Phoebe Dillard, Sarah Cowdery, Christopher George and Ashley Dillard perform "The Chain."

Remembrance Cabaret for Reema Samaha



Members of Virginia Tech's Contemporary Dance Ensemble perform "I Gotcha." On the stage are Jamie Garubba, Lee Gibaldi, Adrienne Ginter, Rachel Jude, Jessica Magarelli, Heather Swanson, and Leah Zacherl. Reema Samaha danced with the Ensemble while attending Virginia Tech.

The Remembrance Cabaret at Westfield High School on June 5 opened with a performance by Reema's former belly dance instructor, Amustela.

Branson Reese and Dallas Sweezy perform "Fix You."

Dan Hrebenak and Jade Jones perform "Ode to the generation."

Roundups

Online Soliciting Is Charged

Conversations between a man and an undercover officer, posing as a juvenile, led to the June 2 arrest of a Maryland man. Fairfax County police say the man communicated with the undercover officer via e-mail and texts and reportedly made arrangements to meet at a local business in Centreville, June 2, for sex.

Around 9 p.m. the man arrived at the business, in the 6200 block of Multiplex Drive in Centre Ridge and was subsequently arrested by detectives. Joseph Leng, 38, of 6 Tadcaster Circle in Waldorf, was charged with the use of a communication device to solicit a minor and attempted sexual intercourse with a person under age 18.

FBI Employee Convicted of Child Pornography Possession

Samuel I. Kaplan, 64, of Gainesville, pleaded guilty last Tuesday, June 2, in federal court, to possessing child pornography. He now faces a possible maximum penalty of 10 years in prison when he's sentenced Aug. 27 by U.S. District Court Judge T.S. Ellis III.

According to court records, Kaplan — who's employed as an information technology program manager at an FBI facility in Chantilly — was discovered using the FBI's network to facilitate sexually explicit communications. During the course of the investigation, investigators from the Justice Department's Office of the Inspector General discovered that Kaplan possessed on his home computer, 10-20 images depicting minor victims engaged in sexually explicit conduct.

This case is being investigated by the U.S. Department of Justice Office of the Inspector General. Special Assistant United States Attorney Jeffrey Zeeman is the prosecutor. It was brought as part of Project Safe Childhood — a nationwide initiative launched in May 2006 by the Department of Justice — to combat the growing epidemic of child sexual exploitation and abuse.

Led by U.S. Attorneys Offices and the Criminal Division's Child Exploitation and Obscenity Section (CEOS), Project Safe Childhood marshals federal, state and local resources to better locate, apprehend and prosecute individuals who exploit children via the Internet, as well as to identify and rescue victims. For more information, see www.projectsafechildhood.gov.

Church Proposal at WFCCA

If Harvest Chinese Christian Church can get VDOT's approval for its turn lanes on Route 29, it'll be a big step closer to being able to build a place of worship in Centreville. The church also needs to obtain a special permit from Fairfax County.

The site is four acres at the southwest corner of Route 29 at Cedar Spring Road. And church representatives will present updates at the next meeting of the West Fairfax County Citizens Association (WFCCA) Land-Use Committee. It will be held Tuesday, June 15, at 7 p.m., in the Sully District Governmental Center, 4900 Stonecroft Blvd. in Chantilly.

Prom/Grad Revelers: Party with Caution

Impaired drivers will be targeted across the Fair Oaks police district with a comprehensive, DWI enforcement initiative that began June 5 and runs until July 2.

In the midst of the current prom and graduation season, officers want to help ensure safety for teens and their families as they celebrate these milestones. The latest teen crash map, depicting 2008-09 crashes in Fairfax County, shows the month of June has the highest average number of teen injury crashes — and Fridays are the worst days.

Officers will be visible on busy roadways such as the Fairfax County Parkway, West Ox Road and Routes 50 and 28. Additionally, Fair Oaks Crime Prevention Officer (MPO Sophia Grinnan) has penned an original poem, "The June Tune," and encourages residents to read and remember its important, safe-driving message.

Finding Success at Mountain View

From Page 1

The scholarship was awarded May 24 at a ceremony at Carlos O'Kelly's restaurant in Fairfax. And when Marquina graduates from Mountain View, June 22, her husband Elmer, an electrician, will be there, along with her mother, Maria Argueta, who's coming from Indiana for the event.

Pleased with her achievement, Oliver said she's "just one example of what we do here to stress that all students can succeed — and we're getting the job done. FCPS wants to close the minority achievement gap, and we're doing it in a phenomenal way. We just took our math SOLs, June 2, and had a 100-percent pass rate. The same thing happened in January with our math, social studies, science and English SOLs."

From left are Mountain View math teacher Anne Hoffman, scholarship winner Idania Marquina and Principal Jim Oliver.

Actually, he said, when it comes to the SOLs, "Mountain View's ranked sixth out of 319 high schools in the state of Virginia — that's not too shabby. What's so cool about it is that, out of those schools, T.J. [Thomas Jefferson] is ranked number one and we're tied with Langley in sixth because of our 100 percent in math and 99 percent in English."

Oliver said Mountain View doesn't have a championship football team or accolade-garnering band. "But we do have star students, and we work at recognizing them for their academic excellence, and our educators, for the great teaching that takes place here," he said. "And it means so much to the kids for our school to be recognized."

IN JANUARY, Del. Tim Hugo (R-40th) sent a resolution to the Virginia General Assembly honoring Mountain View for its many milestones and achievements — including its SOL accomplishments and "tradition of commitment, compassion and excellence in teaching, guidance and learning." That resolution was from the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors and, two weeks later, the general assembly sent its own resolution commending the school.

At Mountain View, said Oliver, "We look at the whole student. We try to build self-esteem, character and citizenship and educate these kids so they have a positive future when they leave us."

"We're fortunate to be in a smaller setting where we can build close relationships with our students," he continued. "But they come to us, for a variety of reasons, from 17 different high schools, and we have to bring them in and nurture them so they all feel a unified part of the school. And the nice thing is that the students support each other — making a nurturing environment for learning — and I think that's another big part of our success."

At a recent presentation Oliver gave to educators in Kentucky on "Saving Struggling Learners," he discussed the strong relationships created at Mountain View. "Kids have to trust their teachers and administrators," he said. "And every student has a mentor so there's constant communication and no one falls through the cracks."

Many times, a mentor isn't a student's teacher, but just another adult in the school. This person is someone the student can talk to about whatever he or she wants to — school, personal issues, home, job — anything that might affect that student's performance at school.

"Most of my students work full time, so they have a pretty demanding schedule," said Oliver. "But our formula definitely works because, this year, we're graduating 175 students — more than ever in the school's 11-year history.

He said it's tremendously important to find time for individualized education. "We've got the recipe to work with these students," said Oliver. "We work on remediation and truly believe all students can succeed. We raise the bar and don't let anybody lag behind."

At Mountain View, staff members stand outside every morning, greeting the students by name as they arrive for school. "They know they're walking into a building where people care and where students aren't invisible — people know them," said Oliver. "Our motto is 'family, love and respect,' and the students are all part of that family."

Free Carseat Inspections

Certified technicians from the Sully District Police Station will perform free, child safety carseat inspections Thursday, June 17, from 5-8:30 p.m., at the station, 4900 Stonecroft Blvd. in Chantilly. No appointment is necessary. But residents should install the child safety seats themselves so technicians may properly inspect and adjust them, as needed.

However, because of time constraints, only the first 35 vehicles arriving on each date will be inspected. That way, inspectors may have enough time to properly instruct the caregiver on the proper use of the child seat. Call 703-814-7000, ext. 5140, to confirm dates and times.

Truck Safety Stops Find 113 Violations

Fairfax County police conducted comprehensive truck-safety inspections last Tuesday, June 1, in the Sully District, discovering 113 safety and equipment violations. Out of 30 trucks checked, 13 were placed out-of-service and 15 tickets were issued. Commercial motor-carrier officers focused on construction vehicles throughout the morning at a parking lot of E.C. Lawrence Park at Route 28 in Centreville.

News

Student Shines at Animation Festival

By Bonnie Hobbs
Centre View

Kieran Claffey isn't even a student at the Fairfax Academy, but he entered its third annual Free4All Film and Animation Festival independently and ended up having two of his animated films shown.

A junior, Claffey is in Westfield High's animation class, but he's dabbled in the field since he was a boy. "When I was 10, I took a brief summer camp — four days long — on flash animation and Web design," he said. "That got me interested in animation."

The May 20 festival at Fairfax High featured original short films and animations created by high-school students from Fairfax, Arlington, Loudoun and Prince William counties. Thirty videos and 20 animation pieces were submitted.

Industry professionals judged and selected the Best of Show awards. The top 15 film and animation pieces were shown at the festival, and then audience members chose the People's Choice award winners.

Sponsored by the Fairfax Academy Professional Graphics Studio program in partnership with MHz Networks and the National Shortie Awards, the festival let student filmmakers have their work shown and judged by digital media professionals.

Claffey will take computer graphics and animation classes next year at the academy. In the meantime, he got more experience in his craft by creating his festival entries, "Hushed World" and "Briefcasehead Man."

Kieran Claffey, Westfield High School junior and Oakton resident participated in the Free 4 All Animation & Film Fest held May 20 at Fairfax High School.

"Hushed World" is about a man trapped in a gray house that's calm and peaceful. "He looks outside his small window onto a world filled with nature and bright color, and he's sad that he can't get outside because there are no doors," said Claffey. "Then one night, a comet hits the building and color runs into his life."

"Briefcasehead Man" is about a businessman who wakes up to discover his head is a briefcase. "Most of the animation is a conversation between him and his boss," said Claffey. "He's trying to fit in and downplay his head. They tell him to go home early, so he does. He goes to sleep and, when he wakes up the next day, his head's back to normal. But when he goes back to work, everyone else's head is a briefcase."

Previously, Claffey also entered this animated film into the Scholastic Art Awards competition and won an award. Regarding the Free4All Film and Animation Festival, he said, "It's cool to be in it. And it's exciting to see both of my entries get into the top 15."

County Briefs

Leave (Animal) Babies Alone

It is not uncommon for wildlife mothers to be away from their young to avoid attracting predators. This is normal behavior. If a baby animal is hiding quietly, it is usually not an orphan, and young animals raised by their parents have better chances for survival.

Fairfax County's wildlife biologist Vicky Monroe is urging people to leave young animals alone. According to Monroe, with the advent of warm weather, encounters between people and wildlife increase. The number of baby animals that are "found" and taken to the Animal Shelter, away from their natural habitats also increases.

Most common species of animals taken by residents include;

❖ Birds (fledglings have feathers, open eyes and leave the nest before fully able to fly.

❖ Deer (fawn are left unattended by their mothers 90 percent of the time)

❖ Rabbits (young rabbits are left unattended by mothers during daylight)

❖ Turtles (young turtles fully independent upon hatching from egg)

A young animal might be in need of rescue by a certified wildlife rehabilitator or veterinarian if it is found near deceased mother, has an obvious injury, is in distress (crying and wandering) or in poor condition (dirty, attracting flies, skinny).

For more about wildlife in Fairfax County, see www.fairfaxcounty.gov/living/animals/wildlife or for more about injured wildlife, see www.dgif.virginia.gov/wildlife/injured/.

Cleanup Rallies Supporters Against Litter

Thousands of residents volunteered at more than 575 sites as part of the Alice Ferguson Foundation's fight against litter on Saturday, April 10, the 22nd Annual Potomac River Watershed Cleanup. Final results indicate that 14,537 volunteers gathered 251.9 tons of trash throughout the watershed. Fairfax County contributed with 101 Clean-up Sites and 2,115 volunteers removing 29.3 tons.

Trash collected from Fairfax County included 26,200 bottles and cans, 6,016 plastic bags, 2,197 bags of trash and recyclables.

The cleanup is part of the Alice Ferguson Foundation's aggressive litter prevention campaign. The Trash Free Potomac Watershed Initiative seeks to make the Potomac Watershed trash free by 2013. The program sets out to change behavior and mind set to curb the tendency to litter.

For more on volunteer opportunities with the Alice Ferguson Foundation, see www.Potomac

See County Briefs, Page 11

Centreville Field Hockey CAMP

WHO: Rising 4th – 9th Grade girls interested in the sport of field hockey

WHEN: July 19 – 23rd 2010
9 am – 12 pm each day

WHERE: Centreville High School baseball/field hockey complex (behind the school)

- Beginner and experienced players welcome
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Involuntary Manslaughter Yields Five Years in Prison

From Page 1

merly of Centreville) — both of whom were charged in Vidarte's death. Now Nurse has been sentenced to five years in prison and Alvarado is slated for sentencing in September.

The tragedy occurred July 19, 2009, around 2:47 a.m., outside a home on Tappahannock Place near Lowes Island Boulevard in Sterling. Vidarte, a 2008 Westfield High grad, was at a party there, as were Nurse and Alvarado. But it wasn't a joyful affair.

Alvarado was livid that Vidarte's court testimony about a robbery spree helped send a friend to prison for eight years. So when he discovered Vidarte at the party, the two argued and were eventually told to leave the house.

> "Your son deserved to have a chance to live."
> — Rasheed Nurse, convicted felon

Outside on the road, a fight began and Vidarte was shot and killed. But it wasn't Alvarado who pulled the trigger — it was Nurse. Both men were then arrested and charged with second-degree murder and had a preliminary hearing, last September, in Loudoun County General District Court. The grand jury indicted them in October and each later pleaded guilty to the lesser charge of involuntary manslaughter.

During the preliminary hearing, several witnesses testified about what happened at the party. And Dr. Shane Chittenden, with the Virginia Medical Examiner's Office, presented the results of Vidarte's autopsy.

Vidarte sustained a gunshot wound to the neck and chest, where the bullet perforated his left lung. Said Chittenden: "It was a contact wound — meaning the muzzle of the barrel of the gun was in contact with the surface of the skin at the time the bullet was discharged from the gun."

Loudoun Sheriff's Investigator Mark Bush related Alvarado's account of the incident to him. Bush said Alvarado and Vidarte prepared to fight each other and, according to Alvarado, Nurse tried to "act as a peacekeeper and break up the fight."

"They exchanged words and Bryan hit Nurse in the face, two or three times," continued Bush. "Before Alvarado could get between them, Nurse pulled out a gun and fired a shot. Alvarado said he knew Nurse brought a weapon with him to the party."

NURSE RETURNED to court, May 18, for sentencing; but so many witnesses were called that, after seven hours, the case was continued to May 20 for the attorneys' closing arguments. During the testimony portion, Assistant Commonwealth's Attorney Sean Morgan questioned Julian Mason Jr., the forensic scientist who examined the .380-caliber, semi-automatic weapon that killed Vidarte. Mason said it requires nearly 12 pounds of force to fire and nothing would have caused it to fire accidentally.

Loudoun Sheriff's Investigator Kelly Poland interrogated Nurse after his arrest. She said he admitted shooting Vidarte after being struck by him. "[Nurse] was wearing a holster on his right hip, under his shirt," she said. "He said he'd never seen or met Vidarte before that night and knew nothing about him 'til then."

Poland said Nurse told her he'd "made a mistake" by shooting Vidarte and asked several times how he was. When she told him Vidarte had died, she said Nurse's response was, "I'm done, then … for the rest of my life." Said Poland: "He said, 'I've killed somebody' and said Guillermo put him out there and set him up."

She said Alvarado "got more and more agitated as the night wore on, and Nurse tried to calm him down and even tried to get Alvarado to leave the party. Instead, Alvarado confronted Vidarte and things escalated.

Outside, said Poland, Vidarte allegedly said, "I'll take you and your boy." Then, she said, Alvarado asked Nurse for his gun, but Nurse fired it, himself, after Vidarte punched him twice in the face. The first blow knocked out a tooth, and the second grazed Nurse.

Poland said Nurse didn't have a concealed-weapon permit and didn't have the safety on his gun. "He said the bullet was in the chamber and all he had to do was pull the trigger," she said. "He said he was carrying the gun that night for his own safety [because he'd been robbed previously while unarmed]."

She said Vidarte didn't know Nurse had a gun because it was covered up. She also noted that Nurse never hit the ground after being hit. Said Poland: "When Alvarado told Nurse, 'Gimme the gun,' that put Vidarte's attention on Nurse, and that's when Vidarte hit Nurse." Poland said Nurse thought Vidarte had something "shiny and metallic in his hand" before hitting him, and police recovered a beer bottle nearby with a bloodstain and Vidarte's DNA on it.

STILL, NO MATTER what transpired at the party, Vidarte was still someone's son, and his mother's victim-impact statement read in court was heart-wrenching. Aldomara called him her best friend and a wonderful brother and son — and she even brought his ashes with her to court.

She said he learned sign language to communicate with his deaf-mute, little brother and was helping her get out of debt. "It seems ironic that, as he was studying criminal justice, he was killed," wrote Aldomara. "Now my youngest son always draws Bryan in a coffin."

Although Vidarte had made mistakes in the past, she wrote, he'd changed for her. "I wait for him on my doorstep, and time passes, but he doesn't come back," she wrote. "I wasn't able to say goodbye to him — not a kiss, not a hug. I have so much pain in my soul and my heart."

Aldomara wondered why they couldn't have fought without weapons. "My children and I are now in therapy, but we will never recover from this," she wrote. "Thanks to these men, I will never be able to hear [Bryan's] voice again."

Defense attorney Matthew Snow showed excerpts from Nurse's interview with Poland. "I was trying to be a mediator, but [Vidarte] kept coming after me," said Nurse. "I stepped between them, like an idiot; I should have just gone home. I wasn't trying to kill anyone; I was just trying to defend myself."

Nurse has three children and, in a videotaped call to his mother from jail, he told her what happened and said, "I didn't mean to do it. Kiss my kids for me and tell them I love them."

In court, his girlfriend, Tina Campos, said they plan to be married. She also noted that, since Nurse's incarceration, "He's matured a lot."

Nurse also testified, admitting he shot Vidarte and telling his relatives, "I regret it and I'm sorry I hurt your son and your family. Your son deserved to have a chance to live, and I'm sorry I took him from you. I take full responsibility for what I did; I never meant to hurt him."

> "I wasn't able to say goodbye to him – not a kiss, not a hug."
> — Beatriz Aldomara, victim's mother

He said he fired the gun to stop Vidarte from hitting him and was looking away from Vidarte when he pulled the trigger. When Snow asked him to explain how Vidarte sustained a contact wound, Nurse replied, "I pulled my arm up and fired, and Bryan was still punching and ran into the gun." He said he pleaded guilty to involuntary manslaughter because he was afraid a jury would convict him of murder.

Earlier, Nurse said he'd been raised to fight back if someone attacked him, and prosecutor Morgan called him on it to show Nurse didn't have to use deadly force against Vidarte. When Morgan asked Nurse, "So you know how to protect yourself with your fists?" Nurse replied simply, "Yes, sir."

After closing arguments May 20, Judge Burke McCahill sentenced him to 10 years in prison, suspending five, and placed him on five years supervised probation. Alvarado was slated for sentencing June 7, but it was continued to Sept. 27.

Parris Named Assistant Superintendent of Cluster III

Dan Parris, principal of Rocky Run Middle School since 2003, has been promoted and will be leaving that position. He was just named Fairfax County Public Schools (FCPS) assistant superintendent for Cluster III, effective July 1.

Cluster III serves the Annandale, Stuart and Woodson pyramids, plus Thomas Jefferson High School for Science and Technology. Parris will replace Cecelia Krill, who is retiring.

"Dan's experience as a principal, director of student services and classroom teacher has provided him with the background necessary to successfully manage a cluster," said FCPS Superintendent Jack Dale. "He has direct experience with students in advanced academic programs, as well as special needs, and is an advocate of professional learning communities. We congratulate him on his new position."

Parris joined FCPS as a classroom teacher in 1982, teaching U.S. history, English and P.E. at Sandburg Middle School and the former Foster Middle School. During his 10 years as a teacher, he participated in many curriculum-development projects, served as advisor for the student government association, coordinated intramurals and was involved in writing and implementing instructional grants.

He later was the assistant principal at Holmes and Stone middle schools; and in 2002, he served six months as acting principal of London Towne Elementary. Parris then became Stone's director of student services, planning and implementing assessment programs relating to SOLs.

As Rocky Run's principal, he spearheaded the movement to create a professional learning community and worked with the entire school community to design and deliver an academically challenging instructional program for all students. He also led efforts to implement comprehensive, schoolwide assessment and, this year, Rocky Run received the Governor's Highest Award for Educational Excellence as part of the Virginia Index of Performance.

Earlier, Parris was named administrator of the year by the Greater Washington Reading Council in 2008 and was a finalist for FCPS Principal of the Year in 2009. That same year, he was also recognized by the FCPS Minority Student Achievement Oversight Committee for helping close the achievement gap.

Parents Learn Internet Safety

By Bonnie Hobbs
Centre View

It can be a scary world — and with more young people than ever online, these days — parents need as much information as possible to keep their children safe. Toward that end, MPO Allie Eggers of the Fairfax County Police Department's Crime Prevention Unit, came to Greenbriar East Elementary recently to share her knowledge.

In a presentation titled, "Monitoring Your Child Online," she said parents don't realize "how much is out there and how much technology — such as iTouch phones with Internet access — is available." Indeed, she told the small number of parents attending her talk that she worries most about those who didn't come because "they don't know."

For example, said Eggers, "With Internet access, you can get Red Tube, which is free porn. " She said a friend of hers found it on her daughter's laptop and asked Eggers what it was. "So parents have to be involved," said the officer. She also warned them about the content of their children's Facebook or other home pages.

"I tell kids that, when they put [sexy or compromising] photos of themselves on their Web site, they think it's Brad Pitt who's looking at them," she said. "It's not; it's predators. And when they post their daily schedules — where they're going and when — people can track them down that way." The same goes for pictures of them on spring break, said Eggers. "Your friends already know what you look like," she tells them. "So why do you have to put your pictures up?"

PARENTS SHOULD also know where all computers and communication devices are in their home. "One family makes their kids put all laptops, phones, etc., in a basket at night so their children can't get text messages at 2:30 in the morning," said Eggers. "They get a good night's sleep, too."

"Do your children have e-mail accounts?" she asked attendees. "Just because they don't have one at your house doesn't mean they don't have one at someone else's home." She also advised parents to invest in some computer, anti-virus protection and make sure they have multiple backups of their files and photos because "your teens may download something to your computer an give it a virus."

Photo by Bonnie Hobbs
Centre View

MPO Allie Eggers advises GBE parents how to keep their children safe while they're online.

Eggers said the Internet allows any user anywhere to post any information, even things false or misleading, so they may bully others online. "Kids can do malicious things on the Internet and think they're anonymous," she said. "But it can come back to haunt them."

Sexting online is also a concern. "When they're sending pictures of genitalia and they're under 18, they're [breaking the law]," said Eggers. "When they take that picture, even though it's of themselves, they're in possession of child porn. When they hit 'send,' they've distributed it."

> "Kids don't think someone will hurt them."
>
> — MPO Allie Eggers, police Crime Prevention Unit

But that's not all. "When their boyfriend puts it on the Internet, it can end up on a billboard in Spain," she said. That's because, in some societies worldwide, children may be "little more than property" and "a 14-year-old may be considered an adult."

So Eggers urged parents to be aware of what's out there. She said e-mail, apps, instant messaging, chatting, surfing the Web and online newsgroups can all pose dangers. "Chat rooms aren't as popular now; it's more Twitter and Facebook," she told them. "Ask your kids where they're going on the Web and how long they'll be there — because it's a whole, other world."

Spam about sexually explicit products or material may come their way. Marketing that deceptively collects personal information from young people for contests and surveys may later be used to sell products to them or their parents.

The Internet provides teens with easy access to games with excessive violence and gender stereotypes, so parents must set the standards for what's appropriate and what's not. "You can't get rid of everything and be everywhere but, under Internet options, you can regulate language, sex and violence," said Eggers. "Talk to your kids and establish lines of communication."

THE INTERNET also enables strangers pretending to be someone else to contact children via e-mail, gain their confidence and influence their actions. So Eggers warned parents to watch for differences in their children's behavior as signs that something's wrong. Changes that can signal problems include isolation; suddenly not doing well in school; minimizing things on the computer screen when parents walk into the room; and hiding computer CDs and discs.

"When you see the glow of the computer in your child's room at 3 a.m., you should be concerned," she said. "And if unknown people are sending them gifts, it could lead to stalking. Teach your child to log off and tell you about any uncomfortable experiences online."

Eggers advised parents to know their children's e-mail and other accounts, such as Facebook and Flickr (for sharing photos), plus their passwords. "There should be nothing secretive," she said. "And they shouldn't give their passwords to new friends because [these friends] could then go into your child's account and change things or write things that are untrue or malicious."

"Kids don't think someone will hurt them," she continued. "So talk with your child about the people he or she is meeting online. Set a rule that your child never arranges an in-person meeting without you present. There's a huge percentage of false identities out there. But when you're their age, you think, 'Why would anybody lie?'"

Eggers said parents can use tools to block spam or limit the e-mails sent to their child's account. "There's software that can route

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Opinion

For Scientists, Start Earlier, Learn Geography

After years of changes designed to increase diversity, Thomas Jefferson this year admitted nine poor students.

Editorials

Each year, 480 students are admitted to the top high school in the United States, Thomas Jefferson High School for Science and Technology.

Back in 2004, a Blue Ribbon commission recommended a variety of changes to the admission's process to enter Fairfax County's top public school, an effort to boost the diversity at the school. The school's students have been about 90 percent Asian and white.

Many changes later, changes designed to consider students "holistically," the incoming freshman class has dramatically smaller percentages of black, Hispanic and poor students than the student body of the county as a whole. Four African American students were admitted, along with 13 Hispanic students, in a class of 480 incoming freshman.

More telling, there were nine students poor enough to qualify for free-or-reduced price meals admitted to begin ninth grade next year at TJ. That's less than two percent. Children in a family of four with income of less than $44,000 annually qualify for subsidized meals, and such children make up about 20 percent of all students in Fairfax County.

More than 70 percent of those admitted to TJ had completed geometry in eighth grade. But in some of the poorest and most diverse middle schools in the county, advanced math programs are not even offered.

In the overall state of the county, does it matter how many poor students, or black students, or Hispanic students, get to go to the best high school in the country?

It does matter that students from schools with more diversity and more poverty are not getting the opportunity to develop a passion for science and technology.

The school system's failure to prepare more poor students well enough to gain admission to TJ means a huge missed opportunity. It means that tens of thousands of students who could be developing a passion for science at an early age that might transform their lives are not getting the foundation they need to go forward in rigorous programs, whether that's at TJ or AP or IB.

FCPS is cutting programs that benefit poor students and schools with a higher percentage of poor students, for example Project Excel and year-round school calendar, even as it is clear poor students have almost no access to the county's top programs.

It's time to add a geographic component to admissions at TJ, reserving some spots for students from every middle school.

This will also require starting earlier with advanced classes so that when those students arrive at TJ, they can succeed there.

Last Call for Father's Day photos

Father's Day is Sunday, June 20, and once again the Centre View will publish a gallery of Father's Day photos.

Send in photos as soon as possible, including names of everyone in the picture, the date the picture was taken, the ages of the children and sentence or two about what is happening and where the photograph was taken. Be sure to include your town name and neighborhood.

Email photos to centreview@connectionnewspapers.com, or mail a disk or prints to Centre View, Father's Day Photo Gallery, 1606 King Street, Alexandria, VA 22314.

Field Day

Students at Lees Corner Elementary enjoyed the spectacular weather and a fun-filled Field Day recently.

Bike and Hike in Brookfield

Brookfield Civic Association in cooperation with Fairfax County Police held a community outreach Bike and Hike on April 18. Pictured, from left, Kevin Snyder, Officer Swartz, Tempest the Dog, Lucas Miller, Raquel Snyder, and Michelle Miller.

Cheering on Walkers

Girls from Senior Girl Scout Troop 4262 decorated their pink shirts and made signs to cheer for the walkers in the Avon Breast Cancer Walk in the District on May 1. They are (from left to right): Justice Morgan, Megan Mellinger (holding sign), Heather Berry, Annie Halterman, Jasmine Cha, Jessica Ayer, and Jenny Kim. Not pictured: Valerie Heintz.

CentreView
NORTHERN EDITION

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Appreciate Support

To the Editor:

On behalf of the Westfield High School's PTSA, we would like to say "Thank You" to all of the corporate sponsors of our After Prom Celebration (APC) and the All Night Grad Party (ANGP). The generosity of the parents, local businesses, and citizens in the community made it possible for us to plan a special evening for our 2010 graduates. We'd like to thank the following companies:

ACE Hardware Store, Centreville; Alexandre de Paris Beauty Spa; American Restaurants; Annalee's Formals; Angelic Spa and Nails; Applebee's (Fair Lakes and Westfields location); Baja Fresh Restaurant; Bob O's @ Holiday Inn, Chantilly; Bowl America, Chantilly; Carrabbas Restaurant, Centreville; Cheesecake Factory Restaurant, Fair Lakes; CiCi's Pizza, Chantilly; Chick-Fil-A Restaurant, Chantilly; Centreville Multiplex Cinemas; Copper Canyon Restaurant, Centreville; Costco Wholesale Corporation, Chantilly; Cub Run Recreation Center, Chantilly; Domino's Pizza, South Riding; Eggspectations, Chantilly; Famous Dave's Restaurant, Chantilly; Felder Music Studios, Centreville; Foster's Grille, Chantilly; Giant Grocery Store, Centreville (St. Germaine Road); Glory Days Restaurant, Centreville; Hallmark Gold Crown Card, Centreville;

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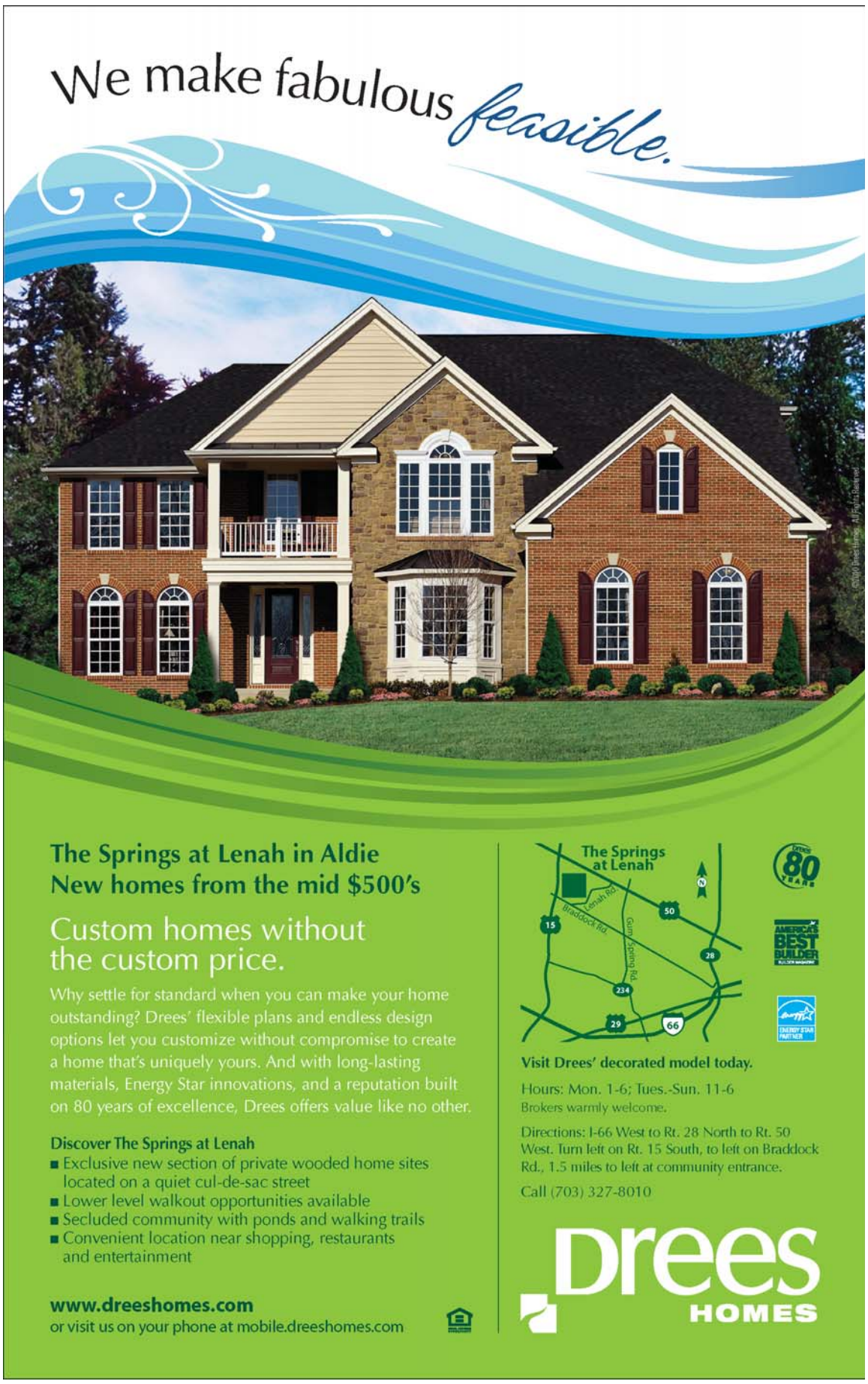

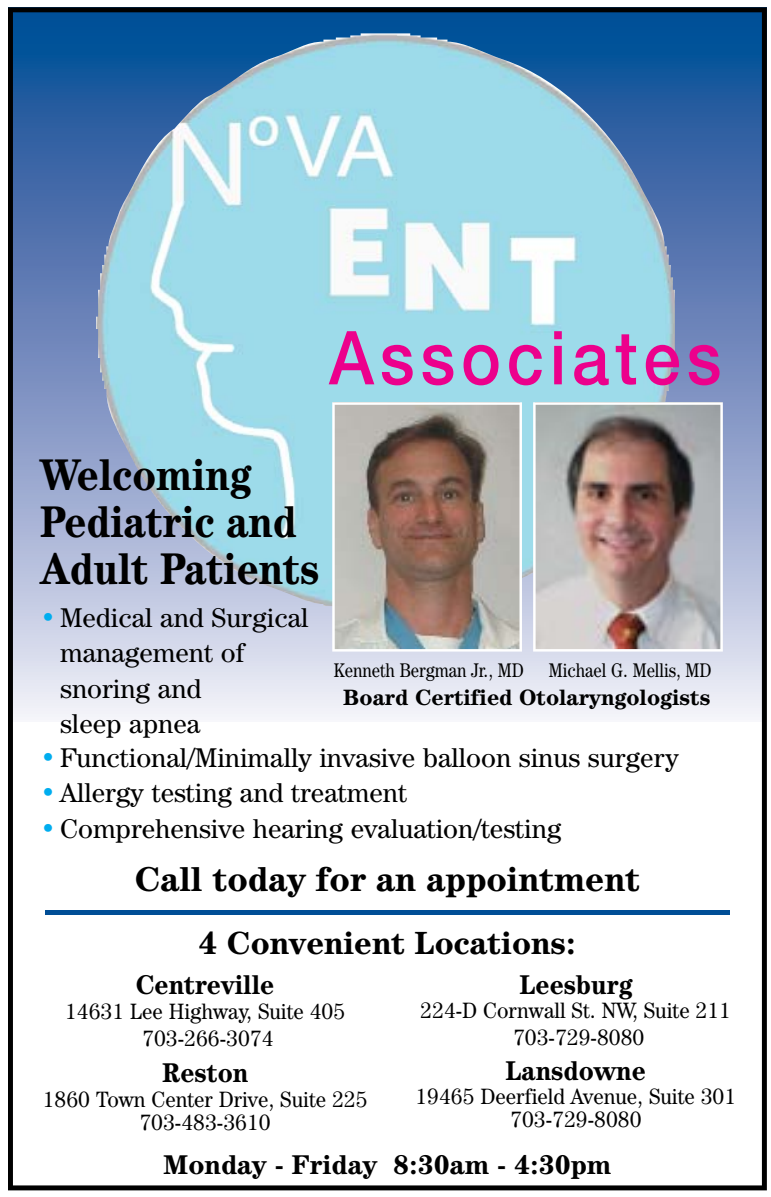

Centreville REAL ESTATE

also featuring surrounding areas of Fairfax

For information about appearing on this page, contact Karen Washburn at 703-778-9422 or kwashburn@connectionnewspapers.com

On the Market

Chantilly- Unique Home

Welcome to a fantastic and unique home, one of South Riding's finest! This "Highgrove" was built by Ryan Homes in 2005 with 5/6 bedrooms, 4.5 bathrooms, and a 3 car side load garage on a half-acre lot. Inside you'll find nearly 5,800 finished square feet of luxurious entertainment and enjoyment! Every upgrade and option you could imagine has been provided for you. From the hardwood and ceramic tile flooring, to the custom painting, decorative columns, upgraded lighting fixtures, and superlative faux finishes throughout, this home will please the most discriminating buyer. The huge gourmet kitchen offers extensive granite countertops, stainless steel appliances, and includes a relaxing morning room. The spacious master bedroom suite includes a sitting room, columns, tray ceiling, and two large walk-in closets. Technophiles will instantly appreciate the audio system with built-in speakers, intercom system, advanced wiring package, security system, exterior landscape lighting, and underground irritation system. Enjoy the summer afternoons from the breezy shade of its screened porch and Trex decks, which overlook a perfectly flat, square fenced yard backing to trees. The awesome basement has top quality Brazilian cherry laminate flooring throughout the recreation room. There's also a home theatre room, and an exercise room, which could be used as a guest bedroom. This home was appraised for $975,000 in December 2009, and is currently offered for sale at $875,000.

For more information contact: Robert Walters,
The Ron Rush Team, Associate Broker VA, MD, DC,
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Profiles in Real Estate- Steve Capistrant

Steve Capistrant was born and raised in St. Paul Minnesota, and moved to Northern Virginia after meeting his future wife Susan. He first moved to Alexandria, working for Western Airlines at the time which later became Delta Air Lines. After several years Susan and Steve were married and moved west to the "sleepy little town Centreville," Steve said. "It seemed like the wild west in the early 1980's and Dulles Airport was this big far away place that few people used."

Steve and Susan have two great children Marc, 23, who graduated from Radford University, and Jill, 21, who will be a senior at George Mason University. Susan continued her High School teaching career with Fairfax County Public Schools and Steve continued at Delta.

"After 33 years and Sept. 11, I was eager to begin a new career," said Steve. "I had always been interested in Real Estate as my mother was a Realtor for many years." In 2004 Steve Capistrant became a Real Estate Appraiser, and after apprenticing for a year, he started NVA Appraisal LLC which he still operates. Still eager to expand, he also became a sales agent and joined Long and Foster.

Steve's strong background in customer service made the transition to Real Estate an easy one. He offers a great combination to his clients because he combine the analytical skills of an appraiser and excellent customer service as a Realtor. Centreville has been a great place for the Capistrant family. Steve Capistrant invites you to visit him at nvaappraisal.com and nvahouse.com.

Steve Capistrant
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steve@nvaappraisal.com

Parents Learn Internet Safety

From Page 7

their e-mail to your account first," she said. "You should also keep the computer in the family area to better monitor your child's life online, and the child should be on the computer in moderation. An hour is OK; five or six hours on a Saturday? Not so hot."

Parents may check their child's Internet history to see the sites he or she has visited. If nothing's listed, said Eggers, "He's already one step ahead of you." She also urged them to make a list of the screen names and real names of people with whom your child is communicating online, plus their parents' names and phone numbers.

"If your child can't give you that information, he gets blocked," she said. "Sexual predators chat with several kids and groom one by saying things, like, 'Your parents don't understand you.' Then they talk about sex and ask the child to show body parts. Then the kids are in deep, but don't want to tell a parent. I especially worry about young boys because the predator shames them into keeping their secret."

"Tell your kids never to give out their personal information to people online," said Eggers. "This includes name, address, school name or anything else that could identify them. Keep telling them these things until they sink in — be the uncool parent. If you see 'A/S/L?' in a chat or e-mail, someone's asking for your child's age, sex and location — and it's probably a sexual predator."

One way parents may keep tabs on what their children are doing is by installing a monitoring system, such as Spector Pro 6.0, which records all their e-mails, chats, keystrokes and Web sites they visit. Then, said Eggers, "Tell them you've [done that]. You can't protect them from everything, but you can talk to them and be aware."

County Briefs

From Page 5

Cleanup.org or contact Becky Horner at 202-518-7415.

Summer Reading Sign Up

Last year, more than 48,000 children participated in Fairfax County library's Summer Reading Program. This year's program will run June 21 to Sept. 4. In addition to encouraging children to read throughout the summer and rewarding them with a coupon book full of great prizes, the program offers activities for every age group, including: theater stunts, anime drawing and crafts for teens; live animals, magic and a sound effects program for ages 6-12. Participants can also enjoy puppets, music and stories for families and young ones. Families can browse online for event details or pick up a copy of the library's newsletter "This Month" at any Fairfax County Public Library branch. New this year, students can register online to participate in the program. Sign-up, both online and in branches, will begin June 21. For more details, see http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/library/srp/.

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11107 Hampton Rd.	$1,890,000	Sun 1-4	Fran Rudd	ERA	703-980-2572

Lorton

8927 Periwinkle Blue Ct.	$424,900	Sun 1-4	Dan Mleziva	Jobin	703-380-9915

Clifton

13840 Springstone Dr.	$559,000	Sun 1-3	Deborah Linton	Long & Foster	703-967-8852
11908 Henderson Rd.	$866,000	Sun 1-4	Diane Lenahan	Keller Williams	703-283-7328
6801 Tepper La.	$899,000	Sun 1-4	Carol Hermandorfer	Long & Foster	703-503-1812
12208 Clifton Spring Dr.	$949,500	Sun 1-4	Deborah Gorham	Long & Foster	703-581-9005

Annandale

4512 Mullen La.	$605,000	Sun 2-4	Nancy Gordon	Long & Foster	703-573-2600

Burke

10625 Alison Dr.	$369,000	Sun 1-4	Carol Ford	Long & Foster	703-503-4027
5704 Lakeside Oak La.	$400,000	Sun 1-4	Dominique Zarow	Long & Foster	703-313-6500
9755 Oatley La.	$492,500	Sun 1-4	Ed Huebner	RE/MAX	703-250-8500
6553 Koziara Dr.	$565,000	Sun 1-4	Doris Crockett	Weichert	703-615-8411
6506 Legendgate Pl.	$625,000	Sun 2-4	Carol Greco	Long & Foster	703-658-1600
5729 Herbert St.	$679,900	Sun 1-4	Conny Johansen	Keller Williams	703-915-2116

Oak Hill

13432 Elevation Lane	$339,900	Sun 1-4	Bernie Kagan	Samson Properties	703-216-0985

To add your Realtor represented Open House to these weekly listings, please call Karen Washburn at 703-778-9422 or E-Mail the info to kwashburn@connectionnewspapers.com All listings due by Tuesday at 3 pm.

County Notebook

Committees Push for Accelerated Math

Two of the local School Board's advisory committees have urged Fairfax County Public Schools to offer accelerated math classes at all elementary schools in the county.

According to the Advanced Academics Advisory Committee, students who do not take accelerated math as sixth graders are prohibited from taking Algebra I as seventh graders.

And students who take Algebra I in seventh grade often have an advantage when it comes to getting accepted to advanced academic programs in high school.

According to a Fairfax County Public School press release, approximately 80 percent of next year's freshman class at Thomas Jefferson School for Science and Technology had completed Algebra I by the end of seventh grade.

According to the school system's minority student achievement oversight committee, elementary schools without accelerated math are more likely to enroll black and Hispanic students. If accelerated math was expanded to all schools, it could improve the acceptance rate of black and Hispanic students at Jefferson.

Fairfax schools reported last month that only 17 of the 480 students in Jefferson's freshman class next year are black or Hispanic.

Increase Seen in Students with Autism

From 1997 to 2007, the number of students with autism in Fairfax County Public Schools rose 775 percent, according to School Board's advisory committee on students with disabilities.

During the 1996-97 school year, Fairfax County enrolled just 235 students who had been labeled autistic. By the 2006-08 school year, the local school system included 1,712 students with autism.

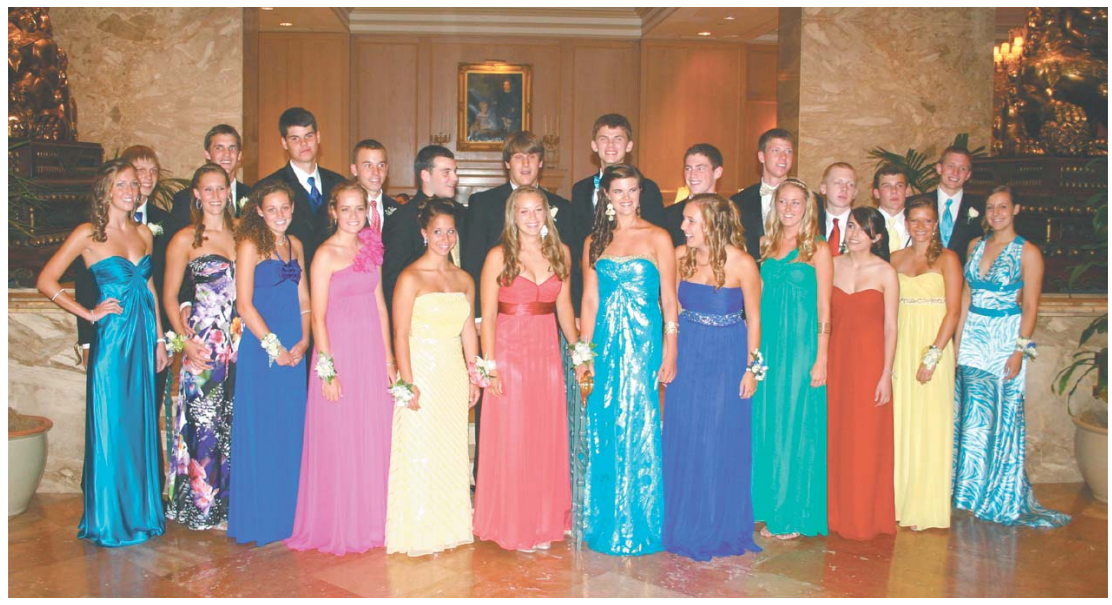
Children in Fairfax schools are far more likely to be autistic than those in other parts of the country. Approximately one in every 91 children enrolled in the Fairfax school system was autistic in 2007, compared to just one in every 150 students nationwide, according to the report.

Congressional Offices Join In Race For The Cure

Staff of all three Northern Virginia congressmen participated in the Susan G. Komen Global Race For The Cure on the National Mall June 5.

Staff members for U.S. Reps. Gerry Connolly (D-11), Jim Moran (D-8) and Frank Wolf (R-10) made up three of the 43 congressional teams that took part in the annual event, which raised more than $4 million for breast cancer outreach and research.

— Julia O'Donoghue



At the Prom

High school seniors from Westfield High School at the Westfield Marriott prior to the Senior Prom.

Crime Report

Activities reported by the Sully District of the Fairfax County Police Department through June 4.

ANIMAL CRUELTY

A bulldog died as a result of being left outside in the heat without water or shelter on Thursday, May 27 around 12:43 p.m. Animal Control officers responded to a home in the 13800 block of Beaujolais Court in Chantilly and transported the dog to a veterinary clinic, where it was pronounced dead a short time later. Charges are pending.

IMPERSONATING A LAW ENFORCEMENT OFFICER/ AGGRESSIVE DRIVING/ ARREST

A man was charged with impersonating a law enforcement officer on Saturday, May 15 for an incident that took place in the area of the Fairfax County Parkway and Roberts Parkway between him and another driver around 1:31 a.m. An investigation determined the arrested activated red and blue lights in his car and implied he was a police officer. A 46-year-old male of the 14800 block of Hancock Court in Centreville, was arrested and taken to jail. He was additionally charged with aggressive driving.

MALICIOUS WOUNDING/ ARREST

Police charged a man with malicious wounding after he allegedly cut a 20-year-old man on Saturday, May 15 around 11:41 p.m. in the 14500 block of Golden Oak Road. A 28-year-old male of the 14400 block of Turin Lane in Centreville, was taken to jail. The victim had non life-threatening injuries.

ATTEMPTED ROBBERY

Two men allegedly attempted to rob a 28-year-old man in the 14400 block of Brookfield Tower Drive around 7:10 p.m. on Sunday, May 16. They assaulted the victim, but fled on foot without taking anything.

The suspects were described as black, between 18 and 24 years old and between 6 feet to 6 feet 4 inches tall, with black hair. The victim declined medical attention.

LARCENIES

15200 block of Bicentennial Court. License plates stolen from vehicle.
6000 block of Berwynd Court. Collector's baseball stolen from residence.
13800 block of Braddock Springs Road. GPS and duffel bag stolen from vehicle.
13600 block of Bridgeland Lane. Purse stolen from business.
4300 block of Chantilly Shopping Center. Trading cards stolen from vehicle.
5600 block of Flagler Drive. License plate stolen from vehicle.
6000 block of Rockton Court. Skateboard stolen from residence.
4900 block of Stonecroft Blvd. Laptop computer stolen from vehicle.
14000 block of Willard Road. Gun stolen from residence.
4100 block of Auto Park Drive. Cash stolen from night deposit box.
5800 block of Deer Lake Lane. Scooter stolen from residence.
4200 block of Lafayette Center Drive. Flags stolen from business.
14100 block of Park Meadow Drive. License plate stolen from vehicle.
4900 block of Stonecroft Blvd. Wallet stolen from business.
4100 block of Auto Park Circle. License plate stolen from vehicle.
4800 block of Autumn Glory Way. License plate stolen from vehicle.
6700 block of Bunkers Court. License plates stolen from vehicle.
4300 block of Chantilly Shopping Center. Cards stolen from business.
4300 block of Chantilly Shopping Center. Laptop stolen from business.
13900 block of Green Trails Court. GPS and two cell phones stolen from vehicle.
14900 block of Lady Madonna Court. License plate stolen from vehicle.
14100 block of Lee Highway. Gasoline stolen from business.

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PhotoCV@connectionnewspapers.com

Or to mail photo prints, send to:

Centre View, "Me and My Dad Photo Gallery,"
1606 King St., Alexandria, VA 22314

Photo prints will be returned to you if you include a stamped, self-addressed envelope, but please don't send us anything irreplaceable.

Communities of Worship

To highlight your faith community, call Karen at 703-917-6468

CENTREVILLE

Centreville Baptist Church

Worship Services
8:00 & 9:30 am Celebration Service
11:00 am Contemporary Service

Bible Study
9:30 am & 11:00 am

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Saint Andrew Lutheran Church

Sunday Worship: 8:30 a.m., 11:00 a.m.
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Adult Bible Study: Wed. 9:30 a.m.

Our mission is to welcome all people, to grow in our relationship with Christ, and to serve the Lord

Braddock Road and Cranoke Street
Centreville, VA 20120
www.saintandrewlc.org
703-830-2768

Centreville Community Bible Church

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Warm People ~ Hot Coffee
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Centreville United Methodist Church

Sunday Worship Services
8:15 AM
9:30 AM
11:00 AM
Contemporary Service in the ROC
11:02 AM

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703.830.2684
www.centreville-umc.org
6400 Old Centreville Road, Centreville VA 20121
Corner of New Braddock Road & Route 28

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13924 Braddock Road
Centreville, VA 20120
(703) 830-4563

Pastor James & First Lady Ada Vanison, Founders

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www.thechurchoftheascension.org

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15450 Lee Highway
Centreville, VA 20120
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CENTREVILLE

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CONNECTIONS

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SUNDAY SERVICE SCHEDULE AT CENTREVILLE HIGH SCHOOL

Sunday School	9:00-9:45 AM
Worship Service	9:45 AM
Children's & Youth Church	10:00 AM
Youth Minister: Rev. Bobby Joe Ford, Jr.	
Wednesday Bible Study (Includes Youth Classes)	7:00 9:00 PM

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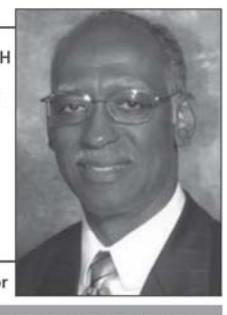
Centreville, VA 20120
Phone: 703-830-8769
Fax: 703-830-6718
Website:
www.mountolive-church.org
Email:
mtolive@mountolive-church.org



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Worth Noting

To have community events listed in Centre View, e-mail to centreview@connectionnewspapers.com. Call Steve Hibbard at 703-778-9412.

ONGOING

Craft Vendors are needed for the Holiday Bazaar and Craft Fair on Saturday, Nov. 13 from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. at Centreville United Methodist Church, 6400 Old Centreville Road. Leased spaces for vendors are going quickly. Book your vendor space now! Contact novemberbazaar@hotmail.com or 703-830-2684.

Trinity Centre Farmer's Market — The Trinity Centre Farmer's Market is located at 5875 Trinity Centre Parkway, Centreville. It will run May 7 - Oct. 29 from 3:30 to 6:30 p.m. Come enjoy local produce from the finest farmers and specialty vendors in Virginia. Check out the website at www.smartmarkets.org.

New Neighbors League Club of Northern Virginia is looking for women who are new to the area, looking to reconnect, or just interested in meeting new people for fun and friendship. Attend one of its monthly coffees or luncheons, then join one of a number of clubs such as bridge, couples bridge, mah jong, gardening, quilting and stitching, bible study, bowling, bunco, Southern living, dining, movie outings, cards or board games, couples mixers, book club, nursing home sing-a-longs and many other activities. For more information visit www.newneighborsvirginia.com

NOW THROUGH JUNE 23

Credit Smart Course. 6:30 to 9 p.m. Free. A six-week course offered by the non-profit Our Daily Bread. Dinner and child care will be provided at each meeting. Spaces are limited. Call Our Daily Bread at 703-273-8829 or visit the web site, www.our-daily-bread.org. At Chantilly High School, Room 253, 4201 Stringfellow Road, Chantilly.

THURSDAY/JUNE 10

Interfaith Pride Celebration. 7 p.m. Worship service is sponsored by People of Faith for Equality in Virginia. At Metropolitan Community Church, 10383 Democracy Lane, Fairfax.

FRIDAY/JUNE 11

ReStore Chantilly Art Show. 6-8 p.m. Habitat ReStore Chantilly is partnering with the Torpedo Factory of Alexandria for an Art Show. Artists will be creating works of art using ReStore materials, and the art will be on display. Reception and Silent Auction on Friday, June 11 from 6-8 p.m. At ReStore Chantilly, 4262 Entre Court, Chantilly. Call 703-953-3747 or visit www.restorenova.org.

JUNE 11-13

Celebrate Fairfax! festival. 90 concerts and performances on six stages, family programs, science and technology, history, carnival rides and fireworks. Festival Hours: Friday 6 p.m. to midnight, Saturday 10 a.m. to midnight, and Sunday 11 a.m. to 7 p.m. On the grounds of the Fairfax County Government Center, 12000 Government Center Parkway, Fairfax. Visit www.celebratefairfax.com; 703-324-FAIR (3247).

SATURDAY/JUNE 12

Clifton Caboose 5K. 6 p.m. Sponsored by the Clifton Betterment Association. Features two races; the 5K and the one-mile fun run. Registration is $24 for the 5K and $18 for the one-mile. Participants can pick up their race packets and register prior to race day on Friday, June 11, from 5 to 7 p.m., and on Race Day, Saturday, June 12, from 4 to 5:30 p.m. at the Barn at 7139 Main St. Visit www.cliftonva.org or email Michelle Stein at michellestein@cox.net.

OTO String Quartet. 10 to 11 a.m. Free. The Fairfax Symphony Orchestra's OTO String Quartet showcases the performing techniques and unique qualities of string instruments. At E.C. Lawrence Park Amphitheater, 5040 Walney Road, Chantilly. Call 703-324-SHOW (7469) www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/performances.

All About Owls at Bull Run. 7:30 p.m. to 9:30 p.m. Free

Owls play an important role in the ecosystem of northern Virginia; learn about this role and the local species of owls that inhabit our area. Search for these night predators on the trails of Bull Run Regional Park. Meet at the camp store. Contact Bull Run for reservations. Contact: 703-631-0550

SUNDAY/JUNE 13

Rock the House 8K Race. 8 a.m. Race is being held as part of the Celebrate Fairfax! festival. Benefits Alternative House, the Abused and Homeless Children's Refuge in Vienna. Registration fee for runners is $30; $35 after May 31. At the Fairfax Government Center, 12000 Government Center Parkway, Fairfax. Call Gina Cocomello at 703-506-9191 or email gina_cocmello@thealternativehouse.org.

CHS Judged Pleasure Ride. 7 a.m. to 5 p.m. Admission is $30/advance, $45/gate. At Bull Run Regional Park in Centreville. Call 703-631-0550.

Cub Run Creek Walk at Bull Run, 11 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.

Free. Join our naturalist for a look at the life that inhabits the Cub Run stream. Use dip nets as we walk into the creek in search of fish, crayfish, and anything else we can find! Bring shoes that can get wet. Meet at the Bull Run camp store. Reservations required. This is a free program. Call 703-631-0550.

MONDAY/JUNE 14

"Train Travel in the U.S. and Canada." 12:30 to 2 p.m. Cost is $7. Bill Forster, a regional representative of the National Association of Railroad Passengers and a director of the Virginia Association of Railway Patrons, will share the best places to travel, special fares, booking accommodations and more. At Clifton Presbyterian Church. RSVP to Bette Petersen: 571-248-8392 or Marilyn Hedges: 703-830-8198.

FRIDAY/JUNE 18

Swing Dancing. 8:30 to 9 p.m. Admission is $15. Swing lesson; 9 p.m. to midnight dancing. Live band, Rockin' Bones with instructors Sue and Gary Caley. At the Hilton Washington Dulles Airport, 13869 Park Center Road, Herndon.

SATURDAY/JUNE 19

Housing Fair and Expo. 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. Sponsored by the Asian Real Estate Association. There will be educational workshops and an opportunity to meet with housing and financial counselors on-site. At the Fairfax County Government Center, 12000 Government Center Parkway.

Bob Brown Puppets. 10 to 11 a.m. Free. Bob Brown and over a dozen of his delightful dragons present an enchanting new production, "Dragon Feathers." Every dragon in the show has a silly skill they can't wait to share with the youngsters in the audience. At E.C. Lawrence Park Amphitheater, 5040 Walney Road, Chantilly. Call 703-324-SHOW (7469) or visit www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/performances.

Bull Run Summer Shoot. 10:15 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. Registered Star FITA. Olympic style archery. All are welcome to come out and watch. If you are interested in registering to participate in this event, contact The Archery Program at thearcheryprogram@gmail.com or call 571-215-4403. Contact: www.thearcheryprogram.net. At Bull Run Regional Park in Centreville.

Colin Thompson Band. 8 to 10 p.m. Free admission and coffee. Canned good donations for a local food pantry will gladly be accepted at the door. Call 703-830-3175 or visit www.CliftonPC.org. At Gathering Grounds Coffee House at Clifton Presbyterian Church, 12748 Richards Lane, Clifton.

SUNDAY/JUNE 20

Antique Car Show. 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Co-sponsored by the FCPA and The Model A Ford Club of America. More than 400 antique and classic cars will fill the grounds. The Mid-Atlantic Great Dane Rescue League will be there with many Great Danes. At Sully Plantation, 3601 Sully Road, Chantilly. Call the Mid-Atlantic Great Dane Rescue League 703-644-8009 or www.nova-magdrl.org

Dixieland Band. 2 to 3 p.m. Free. The Fairfax Symphony Orchestras Dixieland Band performs. At Sully Historic Site, 3601 Sully Road, Chantilly. Call 703-324-SHOW (7469) or visit www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/performances.

Bull Run Summer Shoot. 10:15 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. Registered Star FITA. Olympic style archery. All are welcome to come out and watch. If you are interested in registering to participate in this event, contact The Archery Program at thearcheryprogram@gmail.com or call 571-215-4403. Contact: www.thearcheryprogram.net. At Bull Run Regional Park in Centreville.

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Photo by Craig Dykstra

At the Mitchell's

These Westfield High theater students gathered at the home of student Eric Mitchell, son of Charlie and Cheryl Mitchell of Herndon, prior to the prom, Friday night, June 4, at the Westfields Marriott: Bottom row, (from left) Shivani Dee, Serene Peterson, Taylor Reese, Melanie Aponte, Sarah Bowden, Meredith Freeman and Amanda D'Urso; second row, Max McGough, Marion Lonstein, Emily Howell, Michelle Kearns, Liesl Stach, Stephanie Street and Annie Dykstra; third row, Madz Reeve, DeAnna Hughes, Tyler Foki, John Walsh and Sara Calkins; fourth row, Matt Fries, Bradyn Heck, Lani Fu, Phoebe Dillard, Kevin Clay, Daniel Braunstein and Nick Burroughs; top row, Musa Ghaznavi, Jeremy Rommel, Alvin Kim, Taylor Aucott and Eric Mitchell.

Letters

From Page 9

Heather Hartung, Independent Consultant for Touch Tone Crystal of Fairfax; Jefferson Monticello Resort; Jewelry Design by Bead Geeks; KFC Restaurant, Clifton; Liberty Mountain Resort; LifeTime Fitness, Centreville; Little Italy Deli and Restaurant, Centreville; Luray Caverns; McDonalds, Fairfax (Greenbriar location); Merrifield Garden Center, Fairfax; Milwaukee Custard, Chantilly; Moe's, Chantilly; Mon Ami Gabi Restaurant, Reston; Multiplex Cinema Centreville; Otani's Japanese Restaurant, Chantilly; Panera Bread Headquarters; Passion Nail Spa, Centreville; Pei Wei Restaurant, Fairfax; Quest Diagnostics Nichols Institute; Roxanne Cole, SPHR; Red Rocks Restaurant, Centreville; Reflections of You Salon; Rita's Water Ice, Chantilly; Romano's Macaroni Grill Restaurant, Fair Lakes; Rosemary Thyme Restaurant, Clifton; Ruby Tuesday's Restaurant, Centreville; Safeway Grocery Store, Fairfax; SaladWorks, Herndon; San Vito Restaurant, Herndon; Shoppers Food Warehouse, Centreville; Silver Diner Restaurant, Fairfax; Starbucks Coffee, Centreville (St. Germaine and Stone Road locations); Sully Nails, Centreville; Target, Chantilly; Texas Roadhouse Café, Chantilly; Trader Joe's Grocery Store, Centreville; TGI Friday's Restaurant, Fairfax; Thai Basil Restaurant, Chantilly; Virginia Bagel, Centreville; Westfield High School PTSA; Timberland Four Seasons Resort, and Wegman's Grocery Store, Fairfax.

Both events served as community statements to our youth to have a wonderful time without drugs and/or alcohol. That was the main objective of the Westfield High School PTSA.

Both were huge successes and would not have been possible without the huge contributions and support of our community.

Again, thank you for your generous donations and for helping Westfield High School's PTSA provide safe, fun, and memorable events for our 2010 seniors. We hope we can count on your continued generosity in years to come.

After Prom Celebration and All Night Graduation Party Committees
Westfield High School PTSA

This event is supported by the Fairfax County Public Schools Student Safety and Wellness Section and the Safe and Drug-Free School and Community Coalition.

Centre View Sports Editor Rich Sanders
703-224-3031 or richsand8@aol.com

State Champion At Last

Chantilly's Chris Foley concludes stellar high school career with first place finish in 3200 race.

By Rich Sanders
Centre View

One of the first things Chantilly High boys' middle/long distance runner Chris Foley has seen every day when he wakes up for the past year is a place card next to his bed which reads, "Do You Want to be a Champion?"

The answer, of course, is yes. "I've looked at that every morning," he said.

Throughout his high school running career going into this past spring season, Foley had not attained that achievement. He had come close — a fifth place finish at last fall's cross country championships, a third place finish in the 3200 (two-mile) event at indoor states — but had never hit pay dirt.

But that all changed last weekend in Richmond where Foley, a senior who will be running collegiately at the University of Virginia next school year, became a state champion by taking first place in the 3200 event with a winning time of 9 minutes, 8.43 seconds, besting second place Blake Theroux (9:13.82) of Western Branch (Chesapeake) and third place finisher Natnael Meseret (9:23.25) of Lee High in Springfield.

"I knew the ability was there," said Chantilly head coach Matt Gilchrist, of Foley. "But after several seasons … He's had his disappointments at the state level."

IN SATURDAY'S 3200 finals race, held at Sports Backers Stadium, Foley, on a hot summer day, ran conservatively over the first three laps (of eight) before making his move and taking the lead on lap four. He never lost the lead. He was pushed by both Theroux and Meseret most of the remainder of the way, but increased his lead on the final lap.

"Going into that final lap I hadn't been feeling great," said Foley. "But I figured, 'This is states and I have one more lap. There's nothing I can't do.'"

During the final down stretch, after he had held off Theroux, Foley knew the race was his.

"It was an amazing feeling," said Foley. "The last 50 meters I just ran with a big grin on my face. Winning a state title had been a goal of mine since my freshmen year."

Foley was a confident runner entering the spring outdoor season. He had finished a disappointing second place in the 3200 at the indoor state championships — finishing behind Centreville High's Yazid Zouaimia — but he had bounced back strongly with an All-American showing at the Nike Indoor National Championships in Boston a few weeks later. There, at the Reggie Lewis Center, Foley finished fourth in the country with a time of 9:09.75.

Photo/Courtesy of Foley Family

State champion Chris Foley, shown here competing at the state meet in Richmond last weekend, will be taking his running game to the University of Virginia next school year.

"That was a huge confidence booster for me," said Foley. "I didn't feel I had a great [indoor] postseason. So to come back was big for me."

"It solidified in his mind that his training was working," said Gilchrist, of Foley's showing in Boston. "He had these lofty goals, and now he knew he could reach them."

At the recent Concorde District outdoor season championships, Foley won the 3200 race. He did not compete in the event at regionals but was at the top of his game in the race at states last week.

Gilchrist said Foley, who scored a school-record time, ran an outstanding race in Richmond.

"Running a perfect race, if you will, involves a lot of skill and mental fortitude," said the coach. "Tactically he ran real well. In the second mile I sort of expected [Theroux or Meseret] to come up and take the lead. But he didn't shy away from the competition and was able to hold them off and extend the lead."

Foley ran his final lap in just over 60 seconds. "That is fast," said Gilchrist. "Most of his laps are 67-68."

Gilchrist was thrilled to see Foley finally experience a first place finish at states.

"His goal has been to win a state title," said Gilchrist. "When you come close a few times and then it comes down to your last race as a senior, it's satisfying to see it pay off."

Givon Holmes, the Centreville High track and field coach, has enjoyed watching Foley compete in recent years.

"He's a very good runner and a tough kid," said Holmes. "It's been interesting to watch he and Yazid [Zouaimia] battle this season. We have nothing but admiration for Chris."

LAST YEAR as a junior, Foley finished third at indoor states in the 3200. That was a good race for Foley at the time and Gilchrist thought that success would carry over into the 2009 spring season. But Foley wore down physically late in that outdoor season.

"It just didn't happen," said Gilchrist.

But Foley came back and put together a solid senior year, capped by the state title.

In his high school career, Foley has captured district and region titles, and earned All-State recognition six times (track and cross country combined). He said two of the most memorable moments of his running career were being part of successful relay teams — the Chargers' region winning 4x800 this past winter, and this spring's 4x800 team that finished third at regionals and broke a school record. That foursome included Mohamed Labor-Koroma, Matt Cumpian, Sean McGorty and Foley.

School Notes

Rocky Run Middle School in Chantilly will be commemorating the 65th anniversary of the end of World War II by welcoming more than 100 World War II era guests to share their eyewitness accounts of the war via more than 350 group interviews with 7th grade students on Thursday, June 10. Some of the small group interviews will be recorded at Rocky Run's recently dedicated Colonel Melvin H. Rosen Oral History Center and be forwarded on to the Library of Congress as part of their Veteran's History Project (http://www.loc.gov/vets/).

Rocky Run will also be hosting seven large group presentations to more than 1,200 students and community members in our theatre. Included amongst the guests are:

❖ Five participants in the invasion of Normandy (also known as "D-Day")

❖ Thomas Miller, who is a true eyewitness to United States history in that he was present at three of most influential moments in American history. He was at Pearl Harbor on Dec. 7, 1941, the flag-raising at Iwo Jima in February of 1945, and the attacks on the Pentagon on 9/11.

❖ Elmer Smith who was the co-pilot on what later became Air Force One. He flew Presidents Roosevelt and Truman to the "Big Three" conferences during World War II

❖ Veterans who served in all of the major theatres of operation.

❖ Civilians who were living in 10 different countries around the world including three Holocaust survivors.

❖ An opening ceremony featuring tributes to the guests.

Included in this will be a special video presentation by Rocky Run's Oral History Club.

Local students were among the 232 men who graduated on Sunday, May 9, at commencement exercises marking the end of the 235th academic year at Hampden-Sydney College.

Montia V. Mercer, Jr. graduated with a B.S. in biology. He is the son of Sheri Jackson-Mercer of Chantilly and is a graduate of Stonewall Jackson High School.

Open registration began June 8 for Northern Virginia Community College's fall semester. Students may enroll online at www.nvcc.edu, by telephone at 703-323-3770, or in person at NOVA's campuses in Alexandria, Annandale, Loudoun, Manassas, Springfield and Woodbridge.

The 16-week fall semester begins Aug. 23. NOVA also offers two eight-week sessions, starting Aug. 23 and Oct. 20.

Hundreds of distance learning courses are available for students who prefer independent study. Most distance learning courses are completed online and are best suited for students with self-discipline and good Internet skills. To learn about distance learning courses, go to http://eli.nvcc.edu.

NOVA's in-state tuition is the best educational value in the area. Students may register early to secure their first-choice classes and defer payment until July 30. For more information, call 703-323-3000 or visit the College's Web site at www.nvcc.edu.

Board Closes Pimmit Hills

Alternative high school served young adults too old to attend traditional programs.

By Julia O'Donoghue
Centre View

Yannick Simo tried to enroll in South Lakes High School when he first moved to Reston from Cameroon two years ago. But Fairfax County Public Schools told Simo, then 20 years-old, that he was already too old to take classes at a traditional high school.

A good student, Simo had been close to graduating high school before he and his younger brother moved across the world to live with their mother.

Now that he is the United States, Simo plans not only to graduate from high school but also college and medical school. He eventually wants to practice cardiology.

Because of his age, Fairfax school system suggested he enroll in an alternative high school to earn his high school diploma. So, Simo started taking classes at Pimmit Hills Alternative High School in Falls Church.

"When I came to Pimmit, I basically didn't have a chance to enroll in a regular high school so I had to come here. Now I love this school. I am so attached to it," said Simo.

After just 18 months of classes at Pimmit, Simo is on track to graduate from high school in two weeks. The student has also earned scholarships from three local Rotary Clubs to help him pay for school at Northern Virginia Community College next year.

Now, Simo is grateful he was not allowed to enroll at South Lakes, where he might have had to take an additional year of high school classes. He also would have had a harder time finding friends at South Lakes, where many students would have been at least four years younger than he is.

"If I had gone to South Lakes, I would have been very shy. I would keep to myself," said Simo.

PIMMIT HILLS' ability to attract students like Simo has been the school's strength but probably also lead to its downfall.

Last month, the Fairfax County School Board voted to close Pimmit Hills as part of a broader package of cuts to the school system's overall budget for the 2010-2011 school year.

Of the county's three alternative high schools, Pimmit made the most sense to close because the change would affect the fewest people overall. Retaining larger schools is also most cost effective, said school officials and school board members.

With only 244 students, Pimmit has fewer students enrolled than Fairfax's two other alternative high schools, said Paul Regnier, the school system's spokesperson.

According to information provided on Fairfax County's website, 265 students attend Mountain View Alternative High School in Centreville and 267 students attend Bryant Alternative High School in the Mount Vernon area.

Pimmit also enrolls the fewest number of school-aged high school students out of the three campuses.

"The majority of our students are adults and the majority of their students are underage I think," said Mike Salaita, a Pimmit math teacher of the differences between his school and the two other alternative high schools.

According to Pimmit's special education coordinator Cynthia Johnson, most of the students at Pimmit fall between the ages of 18 and 22. Many are already too old to attend one of Fairfax's mainstream high schools.

"We are a school that takes older students. Almost all of our students come to class during the day and work in the evening," said Pimmit's principal Beverly Wilson.

Adults who actively sought out a high school education program at Pimmit would be more likely to make the effort to attend classes in another part of the county. School-aged students, like those who attend Bryant and Mountain View, may not be as motivated to seek out other programs if their alternative high school was closed, said Regnier.

Even though she does not support the closing of Pimmit, Wilson agreed with Regnier's rationale.

The adult students who are enrolled in classes at Pimmit are very motivated. According to information on Fairfax County's Web site, approximately 77 percent of Pimmit students are immigrants. Several have lived through war, famine and other far more serious experiences than the closing of their high school, said Wilson.

"I think [the school closing] will be a little bit of a hurdle but our students have the tenacity and fortitude to keep working at it until they get their diploma," said Wilson.

STILL, many adult students picked Pimmit over the other alternative high schools and the school system's adult education classes because the campus was convenient to public transit.

"We are on a bus route and many of our students don't drive," said Salaita.

Several of the older people also chose to attend classes there because of its proximity to jobs in Tysons Corner.

"A lot of our students work the night shift in Tysons Corner," said Johnson.

Both Mountain View and Bryant are difficult to access for many residents.

Simo has ride on two different buses for a total of 90 minutes each way to travel to and from his home in Reston to Pimmit Hills. But if he were forced to attend Mountain View next year, Simo would have to ride three buses in each direction to get from Reston to Centreville every morning.

"Many other students work in this area and they will not be able to go to elsewhere for school," he said.

Still, the closing of Pimmit has saved some money in the system's building construction and renovation program.

FAIRFAX SCHOOLS had planned to add a new gym and cafeteria to the Pimmit facility for approximately $7.5 million. Virginia high schools can no longer receive accreditation if they do not have a cafeteria and a gym included in their facilities.

Both Mountain View and Bryant have cafeterias and gyms but Pimmit's campus has neither. The schools' chief operating officer Dean Tistadt said he hopes to use the extra money to accelerate existing list of capital projects.

The school system does plan to move an alternative learning center – for students with serious behavioral programs who need to be observed at all times – to current Pimmit site.

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21 Announcements

LEGAL NOTICE
CitySwitch proposes to construct wireless communications towers at the following locations: 154ft tower near intersection of Colchester Road and the Norfolk Southern Railroad tracks, Fairfax Station; 199 ft tower next to the Norfolk Southern Railroad tracks near Bren Mar Dr. and Merle Pl., Alexandria. If you have concerns of any historic properties that might be adversely affected by either tower, please write to: Amy, Trileaf Corp., 10845 Olive Blvd., Ste. 310, St. Louis, MO 63141, 314-997-6111. Please include the tower location and the location of the historic resource that you believe might be affected.

21 Announcements

NOTICE

PUBLIC HEARING

Notice is hereby given that the Clifton Town Council will hold a Public Hearing on Thursday, June 17, 2010 at 7:30 P.M. at the Clifton Town Meeting Hall, 12641 Chapel Road, Clifton, Va. 20124 to consider a proposed FY2011 Town Budget. The FY2011 proposed Town Budget will be posted the Town's website (www.cliftonva.us). All interested parties are invited to attend to express their views with respect to the proposed FY2011 Town Budget. Town residents are strongly urged to attend. A Special Town Council meeting will follow later in June.

By order of the Town Council, Clifton, VA
K. Barton, Town Clerk

21 Announcements

Town of Clifton, Virginia

Public Hearing Notice – Final
Old Town Hall Property Sale

On Thursday, June 23, 2010 at 7:00 pm at the Clifton Town Meeting Hall, 12641 Chapel Road, the Clifton Town Council will hold a public hearing to consider the sale of the Old Town Hall and terms of sale.

Members of the public may appear at the Public Hearing at said time and place to present their views on the sale of the Old Town Hall property and terms thereof.

The Old Town Hall located at 12634 Chapel Road, Fairfax County Map number 0754 02 0021A, Clifton, VA, 20124 will be offered for sale, subject to confirmation by the Town Council following the above public hearing, at public auction at 2:00pm on Thursday, June 23,2010 at the premises. Please see www.tranzon.com for complete terms and conditions or call 888-621-2110.

Additional Old Town Hall information can be examined at the Town of Clifton web site, www.cliftonva.us home page under Old Town Hall Auction / Sale.

21 Announcements

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A Question of Answers

By KENNETH B. LOURIE

As much – and as hard – as I try, it's difficult to forget that I have cancer. There are reminders everywhere. But the reminders that arrive/appear unexpectedly – thwack, are the worst. Let me give you two examples: my application for Social Security Disability benefits (which is merely a reduced percentage of your retirement benefit paid early, before you're eligible for that retirement, if you are determined to be "disabled," that is, a determination which is not easily or quickly made).

These days, even applying for Social Security disability is an online exercise (hopefully not in futility, but there's certainly no guarantee) and one that is somewhat daunting at that. My joke has been that if an applicant is able to successfully complete their online application for disability benefits, it immediately disqualifies them from receiving those benefits since the applicant has proven he is not so disabled that he can't sit and type at a computer; (the definition of disability according to Social Security is extremely general, so much so that if you can do anything for which you have background, training, education or experience, Social Security can deny your claim). The process is supposed to take 45 minutes, the site advises; it took me two hours, but I did finish and was able to submit my application online.

The questions begin simply enough; the non-medical ones, all the relevant facts; name, address, phone numbers, date of birth, social security number, employer, income, etc. Soon enough, the medical questions follow. About halfway through these questions, (treating physician, facility, medications, symptoms, date disability began), all of which were very reasonable and expected, humdrum even (sort of, given the seriousness of the matter at hand), came the following question which, had I not already been sitting, would have likely knocked me off my feet: "Is this disability likely to result in death in less than two years?" I hesitated then, as I'm hesitating now, writing the next sentence. Try asking yourself that question and then realizing you have to answer "Yes." Heavy doesn't begin to describe the weight I felt. Within a few minutes, I got my bearings and eventually re-engaged and ultimate completed the application. (By the way, when you answer "yes" to that "do you expect ... " question, you are fast-tracked to a special page within the application for extra-special attention.)

The second example of an unforeseen reminder that I didn't need, and one that came totally out of the blue, unlike the application for Social Security which certainly had the potential for such reminders but one that nevertheless I did not anticipate, came in the mail from my HMO. It was an innocent-sounding, customer service-type survey, asking me questions about my most recent visit with my oncologist: courtesy, efficiency, punctuality; did the doctor explain my treatment, discuss options, clarify procedures and so forth. There were maybe a dozen questions with each answer requiring a check mark beside "no experience" to "excellent," with multiple other characterizations in between. It took five minutes to complete.

At the bottom were a few additional questions, more general, summary-type questions about the responder/patient: " Would you recommend this doctor/HMO to another person?" "Overall, are you pleased with your level of care?" Then, the unexpected two by four: "How would you describe your health? "Poor, Fair, Good, Very Good, Excellent?" Again, I hesitated; gulped and said out loud: "I'm a cancer patient, I guess I'd have to say 'poor.' As much as I'd like to think otherwise, and as "above average" as my oncologist has described my diagnosis-to-date reaction/condition, I'd have to say/think that checking a box other than poor would be naive on my part so I checked 'poor', stuffed and sealed the envelope and then wrote this column.

In general, I feel fine. My oncologist is "pleased." However, I have stage IV lung cancer. Sometimes, the less said – and the less asked about it, the better.

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

In Diversity, TJ Is Low-Performer

New admissions process has failed to increase minority and poor student enrollment.

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Photo by Julia O'Donoghue/Centre View

Sophomore Sarah Sam and freshmen Kleo Greenwood, Alan Barte and Mary Kim Weidman enjoy Thomas Jefferson High School for Science and Technology but said they wish the school had a more diverse student body.

It may seem obvious why students choose to attend Thomas Jefferson High School for Science and Technology. U.S. News and World Report has rated it the best high school in the country for the past three years.

"I came here because of the academic opportunities," said Thomas Woodruff, a junior from Centreville who spends 90 minutes each weekday commuting to and from Jefferson's Alexandria campus.

The Northern Virginia magnet school, commonly referred to as TJ, also has less tangible qualities that make it more desirable. All TJ students have genuine interest in school and academics, which creates a more congenial atmosphere, according to some current students.

"The people here are so much friendlier here. They are nice to each other. You can leave your stuff in the hallway and no one will take it," said Alan Barte, a freshman from Herndon.

But one problem a few current students voiced about TJ is the homogenous student body. Less than five percent of TJ's students are black or Hispanic. Over 80 percent of the pupils are white or Asian.

"The only thing I don't like is how half the students at the school are Asian. I wish there was more diversity," said Mary Kim Weidman, a freshman who is part Korean and from Reston.

GETTING ACCEPTED to TJ, in general, is not an easy task for anyone.

The school admitted only 15.3 percent of the 3,119 student who applied to be part of the Class of 2014. That means TJ had a lower acceptance rate for its incoming freshman class than either Cornell University or Swarthmore College this year, according to information on U.S. News and World Report's website about those colleges' admissions.

Fairfax students also compete with children from around the region for slots at the Northern Virginia magnet school. About 80 percent of TJ's student body comes from Fairfax but residents from Arlington, Loudoun, Prince William and Fauquier counties and the City of Falls Church can also attend the school.

But While It may be difficult for all children, students who are black, Hispanic or poor have a particularly hard time getting admitted to TJ.

Out of 480 students in admitted to next year's freshman class, just four are black and 13 are Hispanic. Only nine are considered poor enough to qualify for free-or-reduced-priced lunch.

And across all four grades at TJ last year, approximately 1.78 percent of students were black, 2.84 percent of students were Hispanic and 1.74 percent were poor.

None of Fairfax's other 24 high schools posted such low percentages of black or Hispanic students as TJ. Only one high school, Langley in McLean, has a lower percentage of poor students enrolled.

TJ does enroll a higher-than-average percentage of Asian students, who will make up almost 58 percent of incoming freshman class next year. Still, some students would like to see more students who are black and Hispanic attend the school.

"There are a lot of people from a lot of different ethnic backgrounds here. But I would like to see more African Americans," said Sarah Sam, a sophomore who is part African American and a member of the school's Black Student Union.

FAIRFAX COUNTY Public Schools has struggled to boost enrollment among black and Hispanic students at TJ since 1998, when the school board ended an affirmative action program at the school.

In 1998, the last year of the affirmative action program, TJ admitted 49 black and Hispanic students. By 2003, this number has dropped to just 16, prompting the school board to form at blue ribbon commission on the TJ admissions process that year.

The commission, which included admissions officers from Yale University and the University of Virginia, concluded TJ was behind other elite high schools and colleges, when it came to certain groups of minorities and poor students.

At the Bronx High School for Science in New York City for example, a school ranked fourth on U.S. News and World Report's "best high schools" list in 2008, approximately 12 percent of the student body was black or Hispanic and one in three students was considered poor.

At the recommendation of the commission, the Fairfax County School Board significantly changed TJ's admissions process in 2004, in part with the hopes of boosting enrollment among black, Hispanic and poor students.

UNDER THE OLD admissions process, students who scored well on the TJ admissions test had a tremendous advantage. TJ admissions gave a rank all the children in the applicant pool based on a formula in which a student's admissions test results accounted for 80 percent of their overall "score" and their grade point average [GPA] accounted for the 20 percent.

Those students who placed among the top 800 applicants according to the formula were considered semifinalists for acceptance to TJ whose teacher recommendations, personal essay and other co-curricular activities are considered.

The current admissions process gives significantly more weight to grades as opposed to the entrance exam. Students with very high GPAs are given more leeway to get a lower score on the entrance exam than before.

The pool of semifinalists is also approximately twice as large.

The school board had concluded that one of the barriers to increasing black and Hispanic enrollment was the low number of students from these groups that made it into semifinalist round in the first place.

One year, as few as seven of the 800 students who made it past the first round of admissions for TJ were black, according to school board documents. By making the pool of semifinalists larger, the school board hoped more students who are black and Hispanic will make it to the final round of the application process and eventually admitted.

But the changes in TJ's admissions process appear to have had little lasting effect five years after they were implemented.

This year, TJ admitted just 17 black and Hispanic students. Last year, 14 students from these minority groups were accepted.

If any "boost" in enrollment occurred as a result of the new admission process, it was among Asian students at TJ. The percentage of TJ's student body that is Asian has jumped from 32 percent to 57.5 percent since the application process was overhauled, even though the number of Asian students in Fairfax County overall has remained the same.

MINORITY STUDENT advocates said there are several reasons why black and Hispanic students struggle to gain admission to TJ.

"There is not a lot of enthusiasm for going at this point. People look at the numbers and say there is not a lot of support for me going to that school," said John Johnson, chair of the School Board's Minority Student Achievement Oversight Committee.

Approximately 50 private companies and tutors offer test preparation specifically for the TJ admission exam. Since black and Hispanic families are more likely to be low-income, they are less likely to have the money to spend for a private tutor for entrance exam, said Johnson.

Even minority and poor students who make it past the initial screening and into the semifinalist round may not have as strong applications as those from affluent backgrounds.

In the final round of the TJ application process, staff look for an indication that students are interested in math or science. And students at-risk are less likely to have gone to math camp or away on a science expedition to another country.

"Those families who are financially gifted have the means to provide more enrichment activities," said Johnson.

MORE IMPORTANTLY, not enough students who are black, Hispanic or poor are being prepared earlier on in their educational careers for gifted and talented programs like TJ, said minority student advocates.

The majority of Fairfax public school students who attend TJ have come through elementary and middle school gifted and talented centers. And of the 10,514 students enrolled in those elementary and middle school gifted and talented centers, only 400 are black and 438 are Hispanic, according to Fairfax County Public Schools.

According to Johnson, there are also 22 elementary schools in Fairfax that do not offer accelerated math. These schools tend to have larger populations of black, Hispanic and low-income students.

Without accelerated math at the elementary school level, students are unable to take Algebra I as seventh graders. And although students are not required to take Algebra I by the end of seventh grade to get into TJ, 80 percent of those accepted this year had done so. There are also some Algebra-related questions included on the entrance exam, according to the school's website.