

CENTRE VIEW

NORTHERN EDITION



PHOTO BY BONNIE HOBBS/CENTRE VIEW

Fire investigators wait for safe access to the site of what was a two-story, Brookfield home before a gas explosion and fire destroyed it, Sunday night.

Fire, Gas Destroy Home

Brookfield family loses everything when house explodes.

BY BONNIE HOBBS
CENTRE VIEW

It was a phone call the Chantilly husband and father of two could never have imagined receiving — and yet, Sunday night, while he and his family were out for dinner, it came.

"My neighbor called and asked, 'Where is your family? Are they with you?'" said the Brookfield resident. "I told him, 'Yes, what happened?' And he said, 'There was a big explosion and your house burned down.'"

Centre View is not identifying him because he's a victim, but 60 firefighters from five stations — including two hazardous-materials units — rushed to his home after receiving neighbors' 911 calls about a gas leak, an explosion and a fire. The two-story house at 4303 Lees Corner Road, near Pennsboro Drive, was completely destroyed; Fairfax County fire officials estimated the damage at \$400,000.

"It took approximately one hour to bring [the two-alarm blaze] under control because of the large volume of fire," said Fire and Rescue Department spokesman Dan Schmidt. "The heat was intense, nearby trees caught on fire and the siding melted on the neighbors' homes on both sides."

Still, before firefighters arrived, two neighbors across the street risked their lives after the explosion to search the home for anyone trapped inside. Twenty-something Kevin McCollum had gone outside, around 8:45 p.m., and was standing next to his car while talking to a friend on the phone.

"I work in the parts department of Pohanka Lexus in Chantilly, and I was about to go to the gas station," he said. "My tank was almost empty, and I wanted to be ready for work in the morning. I was facing the house across the street and, the next thing I knew, it exploded."

"It seriously felt like a sonic boom," said McCollum. "Their front door landed in our yard, all their windows blew out and a shower of glass sprayed all over the street. Their roof just caved in on itself. It was a huge explosion; I saw fire on the roof and smoke coming from inside."

His father, Charles McCollum, came outside, too, and they soon realized that both cars belonging to the homeowners were present. One was in the garage, and the other was in the driveway so, believing their friends were still in the burning house, they sprang into action.

"My dad and I ran inside and yelled their names,"

SEE DESTROY, PAGE 3

'A Place Where Magic Happens'

Mountain View Principal Jim Oliver retires.

BY BONNIE HOBBS
CENTRE VIEW

If anyone was ever the heart and soul of a school, it was Jim Oliver, principal of Mountain View. So his sudden retirement, Dec. 3, caught much of his staff by surprise.

But as far as he was concerned, that day had been coming for awhile. "I could have retired in July," he said. "But because they were closing another alternative high school, I wanted to make sure



Oliver

Mountain View was going to be the school I wanted it to be, and stay for the transition."

With Mountain View gaining some 40 students from Pimmit Hills, plus other schools, Oliver wanted "to get the school year up and running. We had to renovate two classrooms and hire two new teachers, so I didn't want to leave until I felt comfortable that everything would be OK and that things I wanted

SEE OLIVER, PAGE 5



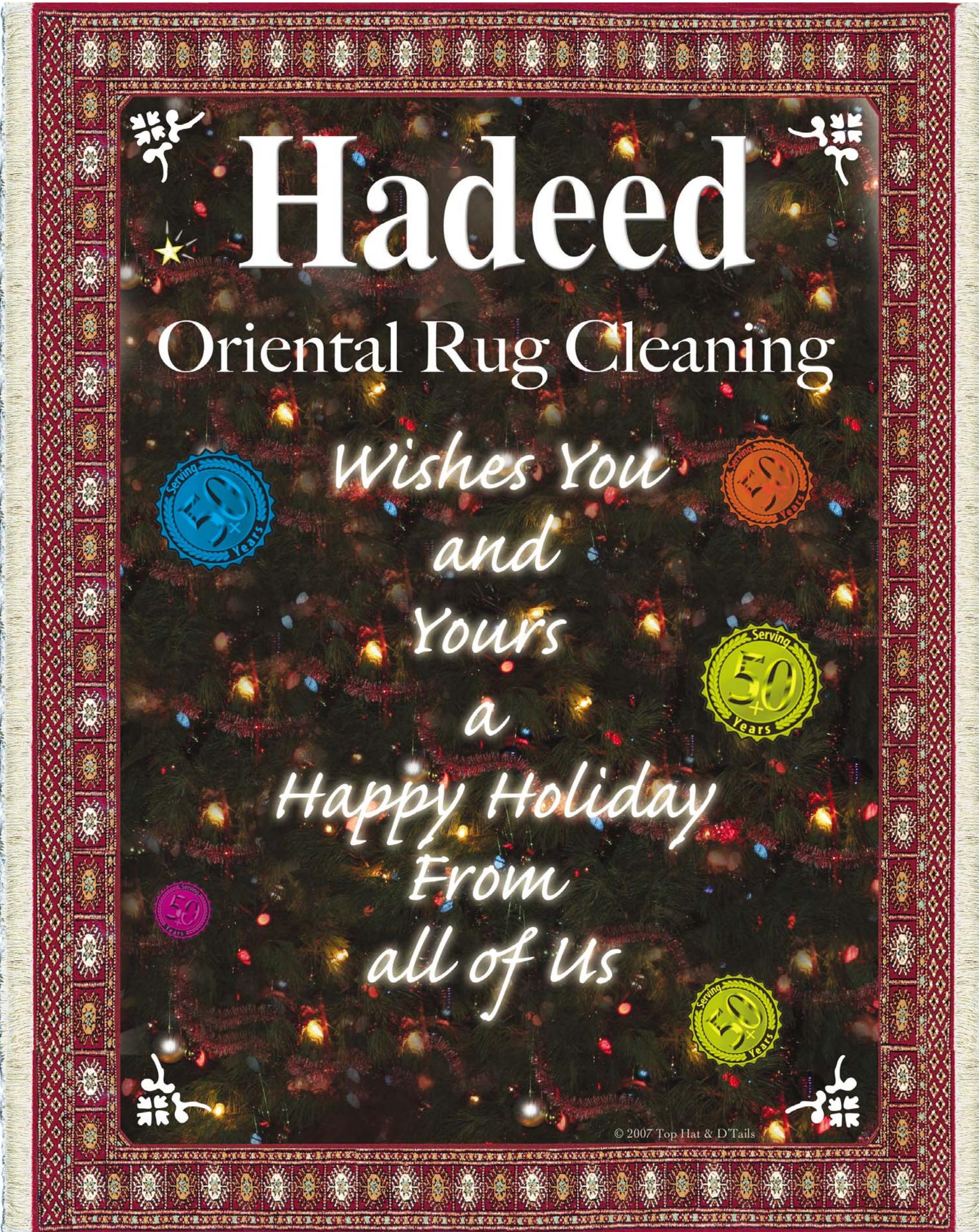
PHOTO BY BONNIE HOBBS/CENTRE VIEW

Delivering a Happy Holiday

From left: Westfield High freshmen Grace Horgan and Katelyn Rennyson, plus Haymarket's Brooke Bowen, distribute gift wrap collected for Our Neighbor's Child (ONC) by Chantilly High. More photos, page 6.

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Fire, Gas Destroy Chantilly Home

FROM PAGE 1

said Kevin McCollum. “It looked like something out of a horror movie. There were holes in the walls everywhere, smoke was coming out of the kitchen and everything was broken and in shambles.”

He said pieces of the roof had crashed inside the home, onto the staircase, and were on fire. “So my dad kicked some of it aside and went upstairs,” said McCollum. “He said the whole, second level had fallen on itself. All the doors were blocked and the fire alarm was going off.”

McCollum said friends of the family who lived there

had come by, earlier that evening, and taken the husband, wife and their two sons, ages 13 and 5, out to dinner. But, he added, “We didn’t know that, at the time, so we kept listening for them.”

Eventually, though, the smell of gas was so strong and overwhelming that they had to leave and go outside. They hopped a fence to get to the backyard and discovered the whole, right side of the house was gone. Still, they refused to give up.

“I jumped on top of some debris and climbed into their master bedroom, but there was nobody there,” said McCollum. “The back part of the house was on fire now, and my dad told me, ‘Get out of there – it’s going; it’s too late now.’ And when I turned around, the whole house was on fire.”

Two minutes later, he said, “It seemed like a whole armada of fire trucks – about 20 – showed up, along with Washington Gas and Dominion Virginia Power. You name it, they were here. Everybody in the neighborhood had heard the explosion, and they were outside, too.”

While searching the burning home, said McCollum, he didn’t think about his own safety. “Adrenaline kicked in,” he explained. “And if I didn’t do anything and somebody had been inside, I couldn’t have lived with myself.”

He described the house as “one, whole ball of fire. We could feel the heat and had to back up into the carport to get away from it. You see things like this on TV and in movies and think, ‘It won’t happen here,’ and then it does. You just hope and pray for everyone’s safety.”

After awhile, said McCollum, “One of the firefighters asked us to get everybody out because of the strong odor of gas, so I went to two neighbors’ homes and made sure they were out. During the night, the gas company shut off the gas. There was a huge hole, about 5x5, in the middle of the road, and the gas company found the leak and fixed it. They worked on it throughout the night.”

McCollum said houses on his street have gas heat, water heaters and stoves. So all Sunday night and early Monday morning,

firefighters and Washington Gas employees went inside residents’ homes with scanners, every 45 minutes or so, to measure gas levels and make sure no one else was in danger.

At press time, fire officials still hadn’t determined what caused the blast. Monday afternoon,

Schmidt said fire and gas-company investigators would be “sifting through things there for the next, few days. We don’t

know the fire’s point of origin in the home, and we won’t know what was first – the gas leak or the fire – until we sort through it all. And even then, we may not know. It was fortunate no one got hurt – that’s the main thing.”

Anthony Barrero Jr., battalion chief with the Fire and Hazardous Materials investigative section, said the home was “fully involved” in flames when firefighters arrived. “Defensive tactics were taken to surround, isolate and extinguish the fire while protecting the houses on both sides,” he said.

Monday afternoon, fire investigators were waiting for access to the property to begin searching for the cause of the blaze and its exact starting point. First, though, Washington Gas needed to make sure it was safe and Dominion had to find and cut the electrical line to the home.

Anjana Amin, who also lives across the street, said the destroyed house had just been renovated and enlarged last year, and the brick exterior added. “It was one of the nicest homes on the block and one of the few, brick homes,” she said. “The neighbors to the left of them had just finished renovating their home’s exterior, two months ago, and the people to the right [of the victims’ house] had just put in new windows.”

She and her daughter Sima both heard the explosion and ran outside. “She ran toward the house, and I ran inside to call 911,” said Sima, a nursing student employed at Inova Fair Oaks Hospital. “The explosion was scary because our whole house shook.”

“We were also worried because we knew they had two, little kids,” said her mother. “The family’s cars were there and we didn’t know if they were in the house.”

Afraid, as well, that the flames could spread to their house, too, they grabbed their coats, cell phones and a laptop in case they had to flee quickly. “We also worried about the people in the homes beside the one that exploded, but they got evacuated and came outside,” said Sima. Then, said Anjana, there was “a



A view of the side and back of the house, looking into the “interior.” The top of the family’s gazebo is on the ground.

PHOTOS BY BONNIE HOBBS/CENTRE VIEW

strong smell of gas” and they, too, had to evacuate, along with other neighbors.

They came back at 2 a.m. to see if the gas company would allow them back inside their house. “But it was still pending, so we stayed with my brother in Fair Lakes and returned home [Monday] at 7:30 a.m.,” said Sima. “But we were still scared to come home because it could have been anybody’s house [that exploded]. We

were almost afraid to turn on the gas burners this morning at breakfast. It makes you feel small because you don’t have control over something like this.”

Before the blast, said Anjana, the victims’ outside Christmas lights were aglow and each window was decorated with an electric candle and a wreath. “It was one of the nicest displays on the street,” she said.

“It’s very sad and tragic that this happened during the holidays,” added her daughter. “But they were just lucky they weren’t home; we thank God about that.”

Sima also noted it “was a relief to see the gas crew and fire marshal still here [Monday] checking, so we know they’ll be here in case anything else happens and to find out the cause. Our prayers are with the family; I’m sure the stress is very traumatizing for them.”

Indeed, after receiving the phone call about their house, said the homeowner, the family rushed back to Brookfield, but his wife and children “didn’t want to see the house on fire, so they stayed at my sister’s



Just six days before Christmas, a gas explosion and fire decimated the home of a Chantilly family of four.

house while I went to the scene. It totally shocked me – I couldn’t believe it. If I was in there, I would be burned to death.”

He said he and his wife and two sons – an eighth-grader at Rocky Run Middle School and a kindergartner at Brookfield Elementary – had left their home Sunday, at 6 p.m., to have dinner in Manassas “and that saved us.”

Still, he added, “Everything is totally gone. We just have what was on our bodies; everything was burned.” And although the family is temporarily staying with his sister, he said, “We are homeless.”

He said the fire marshal told him of the McCollums’ heroic actions, trying to rescue his family. “It was fantastic and wonderful what they did for us,” he said. “I need to go and thank them.”

Naturally, he said, his family is devastated to lose its home and belongings – and just six days before Christmas. But he said the most important thing is that they’re all safe and well. And, he added, “We’re thankful we weren’t there.”

CENTREVILLE

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'A Place Where Magic Happens'

FROM PAGE 1

would be in place.”
He spent 31 years with Fairfax County Public Schools, the last 7 and a half at Mountain View. He began in 1978 as a Spanish teacher, head track coach and assistant football coach at Herndon High. “Bill Trussell was the principal there and, when he opened Centreville High, I was one of the fortunate teachers who helped him,” said Oliver. It was 1988 and, again, Oliver coached and taught Spanish. He stayed 15 years and eventually became an assistant principal.

It was exciting being in on the ground floor. “We only had ninth and 10th grades, to start, and only about 40 teachers,” he said. “So we were a close-knit group and I had a lot of great times there; it was a fun experience.”

In 1995, Oliver even made All-Met Coach of the Year when the Wildcats won the state track title. He also learned a great deal about administration. “When I left Centreville in 2004, we had 3,000 students and 45 trailers,” he said. “We had to think outside the box, dealing with quick growth, and it helped me learn how to manage a building and its space.”

Eventually, though, Oliver



PHOTO COURTESY OF KEN BURTON

At his retirement party, Dec. 15, Mountain View Principal Jim Oliver poses with (from left) Pam Rutkowski, finance technician; Lynne Chrisinger, main-office secretary; Yolanda Villanueva, Oliver’s administrative assistant; Ghada Aqel, Guidance student information assistant; and Tina Perez, Guidance administrative assistant.

wanted a different experience, for his own growth, so he became Mountain View’s principal. “Being able to speak with students and parents in Spanish helped make them feel comfortable,” he said. But the school, itself, surprised him.

“As a subschool principal at Centreville, I’d sent some students there for disciplinary action,” said

Oliver. “But I had no idea what the students were really like until I walked those halls. After the first couple days, it was incredible — the sense you felt and received from the students. It hooks you as soon as you walk in the door; it’s just a special place.”

Describing the students as “real” and “street-smart,” he said, “They

SEE OLIVER, PAGE 12

Praise, Admiration from School’s Teachers, Staff

Besides making a positive influence on Mountain View’s students, Principal Jim Oliver also left his mark on its teachers and staff.

Sometime in January, at Sully District Supervisor Michael Frey’s request, Fairfax County’s Board of Supervisors will formally honor Oliver for his service to the school. Meanwhile, school personnel gave their thoughts about him following his retirement.

Jeffrey Reaman, Employment/Transition representative, has spent 33 years in FCPS and worked for many leaders. But, he

said, “What set Jim apart was his passion. He believed strongly in the mission of alternative education in this county and embraced the challenge. You couldn’t be around him without [doing the same].”

“His devotion was unique, because he personalized it,” explained Reaman. “To him, every young person that came through the doors of Mountain View was a new family member entitled to love and respect, and expected to love and respect, in return. The academic success these students achieved in this family atmosphere is unparalleled. I’ve been lucky to work for such a terrific school system, but truly blessed to work at Mountain View with

Jim Oliver.”

Special education teacher Tim McElroy said Oliver placed people into positions best matching their abilities and then “let them do their jobs, without micromanaging,” while supporting them when needed. “He set the goal, provided the tools to meet it and communicated his faith in his staff that his high expectations would be met,” said McElroy. “He’s the kind of person who made you want to work hard for him.”

Oliver’s administrative assistant, Yolanda Villanueva, said he had “a

SEE PRAISE, PAGE 12

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COMMUNITY



These Girl Scouts helped A Child's Joy stuff 800 handmade stockings with small toys and games for ONC.



Some 135 Westfield High SGA members baked 4,860 cookies and boxed them up for ONC.

Delivering a Happy Holiday

Our Neighbor's Child (ONC) delivered Christmas presents and cookies, Sunday, Dec. 19, to 800 local families in need. Community members donated gifts, made stockings and baked cookies to help make it all possible.



From left: RCD Inc.'s Connor Damico, Matthew Kline and Curt Damico with Westfield High lacrosse players Mike Ritter, Kevin Hughes and Will Beal are ready to deliver these presents.



Helping ONC volunteer Pat Shelton (second from left) with gift delivery are Westfield students Duncan Somers, Peter Donovan and Adrian Ott.

PHOTOS BY BONNIE HOBBS/
CENTRE VIEW



ONC's Brooke Caskey (on left) confers with volunteer Leslie Dominy about directions to a recipient's home.



From left: Ryan Lavin (WHS '05), Patrick Morrisette (WHS '08) and Trey Messiah (WHS'08) carry bicycles to cars for delivery.



From left: Paul VI sophomores Will Biagi and Owen Costello load Anna Jackson's car with ONC gifts to deliver.



From left: Westfield High seniors Yasmin Sheikhabadi and Jackie Barrera prepare to bring the gifts in their car to the recipients.

COMMUNITY



PHOTO BY BONNIE HOBBS/CENTRE VIEW

Centreville High SGA students pack up boxes of home-made cookies for ONC.

Centreville High SGA Lends Helping Hand

Not only are the members of Centreville High's SGA training to be good leaders, but they're also learning firsthand about citizenship. Not only did these students bake and box up nearly 4,000 cookies for the Our Neighbor's Child recipient families, they also worked three days helping sort and package toys at ONC's warehouse.

But that's not all, said SGA Advisor Demby Banbury. "They collected 2 and a half tons of food for the Capital Area Food Bank," she said. "And the SGA sponsored 40 families through Centreville High's Winter Wish program."

The school counselors and social worker gave Banbury a list of local families who need help providing presents for their children at the holidays. Each family was only identified by a number, but information was given about their

children's ages, sizes and needs. "Then the SGA kids and some teachers bought toys, clothes and gift cards for them," said Banbury. "Most families will get two bags full of goodies, and the SGA will shop for any items not received."

She said 39 of the families live in the Centreville High community and the other is a Fairfax County family with three children "that our SGA kids personally took on so they can have a happy holiday." Delighted with their actions, Banbury described her students as "amazing, unselfish, caring, passionate, young people. Sometimes kids this age get a bad rap about always thinking, 'Me, me,'" she said. "But these kids went above and beyond my expectations. They really put themselves out, and I'm very proud to be their teacher. These are our future leaders."

— BONNIE HOBBS



Some 160 Centreville High SGA students each baked two dozen cookies to contribute.

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ENTERTAINMENT

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

MONDAYS AND WEDNESDAYS

ZUMBA Classes. 7 to 8 p.m. Latin based dance fitness class. The first class is free; afterward it's \$7-\$9 per class. At Cornerstone Montessori School, 4455 Brookfield Corporate Drive, Suite 201, Chantilly. Visit www.gozumbafun.com.

THURSDAY/DEC. 23

Centreville Stitches. 1:30 to 3:30 p.m. Do you enjoy knitting, crocheting or other needlework crafts and conversation? Join the fun at the Centreville Regional Library, 14200 St. Germain Dr., Centreville. All levels (adults) welcome. Call Jo at 703-803-0595 or email joknitter@verizon.net.

FRIDAY/DEC. 24

Christmas Eve Service. 8 p.m. Jubilee Christian Center will have a Christmas Eve Service on Dec. 24, 8 p.m., with refreshments, at 4650 Shirley Gate Rd., Fairfax. Call 703-383-1170, or see www.jccag.org

DEC. 30 TO JAN. 2

2nd Annual FROSTIVAL! 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. daily, except Dec. 31, 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. only. Will include 15 winter-themed crafts, interactive science activities and games, professional and local celebrity storytelling, 15 bounces, slides and rides, two stages featuring nationally recognized children's performers, as well as numerous exhibits and vendors. At the Dulles Expo and Conference Center, 4368 Chantilly Shopping Center, Chantilly. A presentation of Celebrate Fairfax, Inc. Visit www.FROSTIVAL.com.

FRIDAY/DEC. 31

Bull Run 5K Run. Held at the Bull Run's Festival of Lights in Centreville. To benefit the CMG Heart Foundation and Bull Run Regional Park with proceeds going to the Adam P. Seymour Foundation. Early registration is open until Dec. 13, (\$22), and regular registration (after Dec. 13, 2010) is \$27. Online registration can be made at www.bullrunrunners.com and will close on Dec. 30. Pick up race numbers at VA Runner, 5734 Union Mill Road, Clifton, VA 20124. Visit www.bullrunrunners.com

SUNDAY/JAN. 2

Southern Gospel Concert. 6 p.m. With The Proclaimers Quartet from Columbus, GA. A freewill offering will be received. At Oakton Baptist Church, 14001 Sullyfield Circle, Chantilly. The church is located on Route 50, 1/5

BULLETIN BOARD

ONGOING

Fair Oaks Parkinson Support Group for people living with Parkinson's disease, caregivers and family, meets on the 4th Saturday, from 10 am-noon at Sunrise at Fair Oaks, 3750 Joseph Siewick Drive, Fairfax. Free. 703-378-7221. www.ParkinsonFoundation.org

Parkinson Aquatic Exercise Classes for people living with Parkinson's disease and caregivers meets 10:30-11:30 a.m. Tuesdays and Thursdays, The Woodlands, 4320 Forest Hill Drive, Fairfax. People living with Parkinson's \$10, caregivers \$5. Registration required. Sonia Gow 703-378-7221

The Fairfax County Animal Shelter is offering a free spay or neuter for the first 100 cats, kittens, dogs or puppies adopted from the shelter during the month of December. The special offer is part of the shelter's annual Home 4 the Holidays adoption celebration to help homeless animals make their way out of the shelter and into a new home in time for the holidays.

The shelter has a variety of cats and dogs available for adoption, in addition to small mammals, reptiles and birds. To view animals available for adoption, visit <http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/police/animalservices/> and click on adoption. Additionally, a new animal is featured each week on the Fairfax County Police Department website homepage, www.fairfaxcounty.gov/police under "Adopt-A-Pet."

The shelter is located at 4500 West Ox Rd., Fairfax. Regular adoption hours are Tuesday – Friday, 12 p.m. – 6:30 p.m. and Saturday 10 a.m. – 4:30 p.m. Contact the shelter at 703-830-1100.

The Western Fairfax County Woman's Club is selling the 2010 White House Christmas ornaments. This year's ornament honors our 25th President, William McKinley. The two-sided ornament commemorates the long history of music in the White House with the Marine Corps band greeting White House guests and entertaining the President and Mrs. McKinley. The 2010 ornaments cost \$19. All profits benefit charity. Order yours now by calling 703-378-6841 or 703-378-6216.

Ladies, do you have a Revolutionary Patriot in your

mile east of the Route 28 overpass on the corner of Route 50 and Sullyfield Circle. Call 703 631-1799.

FRIDAY/JAN. 7

Swing Dancing. 9 p.m. to midnight. Cost is \$15. With the band, Natty Beaux. Drop-in beginner swing lesson from 8:30 to 9 p.m.; dancing from 9 p.m. to midnight. At the Hilton Washington Dulles Airport Hotel, 13869 Park Center Road (Route 28 near the airport), Herndon.

SATURDAY/JAN. 8

Lane's Mill DAR Meeting. 1 p.m. The Lane's Mill Chapter Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR) will meet. At Centreville Regional Library. Contact lanesmillchapter@hotmail.com

JAN. 28 THROUGH JAN. 30

Sugarloaf Crafts Festival. More than 250 craftspeople will display their handmade works. Hours are Friday from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m.; Saturday from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m.; Sunday from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Admission is \$7/online; \$9/door. At the Dulles Expo Center, 4368 Chantilly Shopping Center, Chantilly. Call 800-210-9900.

SATURDAY/JAN. 29

Winter Dance Clinic. 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. For grades 1-8. Participants will learn two dances, and are invited to perform at halftime at the Chantilly Girls' Varsity Basketball game vs. Oakton on Tuesday, Feb. 1 at 7:30 p.m. The cost for the clinic is \$50 includes pizza lunch and a t-shirt. Registration forms can be found at www.chantillysports.org on the Dance Team page under "Camps and Clinics". Questions? Contact coach Casey Cassara at chargerdancers@gmail.com.

SATURDAY/FEB. 5

Beekeepers Beginners Class. 8:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. An eight-week class. The Beekeepers Association of Northern Virginia is offering beginner classes for those interested in learning about beekeeping. At Centreville Regional Library, 14220 St. Germain Drive, Centreville. Visit BANV's website at beekeepersnova.org.

FEB. 12-13

Wine and Food Showcase. More than 300 different wines produced by Virginia's leading wineries as well as food and wine demos and pairings. The goal is to offer wine lovers the opportunity to sample Virginia's locally grown wines all in one place. Tickets per person run \$45 at the door, \$36 online, and \$20 for non-drinkers. At the Westfields Marriott Hotel in Chantilly. (www.vawineshowcase.org).

family tree? Membership in the Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR) honors and preserves the legacy of your Patriot ancestor. Any woman is eligible for membership who is no less than 18 years of age and can prove lineal, blood line descent from an ancestor who aided in achieving American independence. Admission to membership is by invitation through a Chapter. Interested in learning more? Contact the Lane's Mill Chapter at lanesmillchapter@hotmail.com

New Neighbors League Club (NNLC) 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. Come to one of the monthly coffees or luncheons to meet us. Then join one of the numerous clubs such as bridge, couples bridge, mahjong, gardening, quilting and stitching, Bible study, bowling, bunco, Southern living dining, movie outings, cards or board games, couples mixers, book club, nursing home sing-alongs, and many other activities. Visit the Web site www.newneighborsvirginia.com or Newneighborsleagueclub@yahoo.com

TUESDAY/JAN. 11

Preschool Fair. 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. Free. Come meet representatives from local preschools who will be prepared to answer your questions. Hosted by the MOMS Club of Centreville North. At Sully District Governmental Center, 4900 Stonecroft Blvd., Chantilly. Visit <http://centrevillenorthmoms.webs.com/preschoolfair.htm>.

MONDAY/JAN. 17

Training Tomorrow's Leaders. 7 p.m. Free. GFWC-Western Fairfax County Woman's Club will host a spokesperson for Hugh O'Brian Youth Leadership (HOBY) and an alumni of HOBY's unique leadership training, service-learning, and motivation building experiences. Learn more about this outstanding leadership program and WFCWC's annual sponsorship of a local high school student to attend state seminars. At the Greenbriar Community Center, 4615 Stringfellow Road. Call Jackie at 703-378-8551 or e-mail us at westernfairfaxcountywc@gmail.com.

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SCHOOL NOTES

Local students will perform with the Marching Royal Dukes of James Madison University in the 25th annual London New Year's Day Parade on the band's Dec. 27-Jan. 4 European tour. The following students from Chantilly will be attending: **Michelle Kathleen Beatty and Amanda Elizabeth Stiefvater.**

The Columbia Scholastic Press Association released its Crown Recipient list, Dec. 15, and Chantilly High's yearbook, *Odyssey*, was on it. The award honors excellence in design, photography and copy. Just 50 high school yearbooks in the nation were recognized. Under yearbook advisor Mary Kay Downes, Chantilly's yearbook staff will receive this award, March 18, 2011, at the CSPA Spring Convention at Columbia University.

The FIRST Lego League (FLL) season is in full swing and several GBW teams have participated in regional qualifying tournaments all over Northern Virginia.

Five GBW teams qualified for the VA/DC State Tournament on Dec 4-5 at James Madison University (JMU), Harrisonburg.

FLL, a partnership between FIRST, (For Inspiration and Recognition of Science and Technology) founded by inventor Dean Kamen (Dialysis Machine, Segway etc.) and the LEGO Group, is a S.T.E.M. program that helps young people aged 9-14, discover the fun in science and technology while building self-confidence, knowledge, and life skills. FLL teams work together to solve problems using engineering concepts, practice presentation techniques and build robots using the LEGO MINDSTORM NXT technology.

From its humble beginning in



On the Run

The "Girls on the Run" Team from Lees Corner Elementary recently participated in the annual "Reindeer Romp" at Reston Town Center.

1998, in 2010 FLL has reached more than 171,000 kids in 50-plus countries.

FLL tournaments are comprised of four competition areas:

1. **Robot Performance**: Teams compete with a robot on a Championship mat to complete missions.

2. **Robot Design & Programming**: Technical merits of the robot and innovation in execution are judged)

3. **Challenge Topic Research & Presentation**: This year's challenge topic was "Body Forward" – investigating the world of Biomedical Engineering, to discover innovative ways to repair injuries, overcome genetic predispositions, and maximize the body's potential, to leading happier and healthier lives.

4. **Teamwork**: Promotes "Gracious Professionalism", a way of doing things that encourages high-

quality work, emphasizes the value of others, and respects individuals and the community.

More than 100 Westfield theatre students will present five, seasonal, student-directed vignettes during the school's annual Ho-Ho Holiday Show. It's slated for Sunday, Dec. 19, at 2 p.m. and Monday, Dec. 20, at 7 p.m. Tickets are \$5 each and \$12 for groups of up to four.

Performed will be: "Twas the Night Before Christmas," directed by Sarah Bowden and Zoe Tippl; "The Grinch," directed by Taylor Reese and Brittany Simmons; "A Charlie Brown Christmas," directed by Elisabeth Bloxam and Kerowyn Brewer; "The Hanukkah Story," directed by Daniel and Josh Braunstein; and "Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer," directed by Dan Hepler and Andy Roca.

FAITH NOTES

Congregation Yad Shalom, located in Centreville, provides a variety of programs in a traditional format with a modern flair. It openly invites inquiries about participation in these special activities by the local community. There are a number of exciting activities for the family:

❖ The holidays are just around the corner. Check out the Web site for holiday events and special activities throughout the year.

❖ Enjoy dinner with the Congregation at Hunan Chef restaurant, 5085 Westfields Blvd., Centreville, on Saturday, Dec. 25, at 6 p.m.

❖ Start the new year right, join the Congregation for a Friday night Shabbat service with Cantor Zucker on Jan. 7, 2011 at Little Rocky Run Community Center # 3.

For more information and/or directions call 703-579-6079 or visit www.yadshalom.com.

Temple Beth Torah is a Reform Jewish congregation and member of the Union of Reform Judaism (URJ) that meets at St. Johns Episcopal Church in the heart of Centreville. Religious school

is held at the Goddard School in Chantilly, Virginia. The congregation offers the Northern Virginia Jewish community services that provide numerous spiritual, educational, support and social opportunities including religious school for member children age 3 through Bar/Bat Mitzvah and confirmation. Our congregation welcomes all members of the community to attend any of our services or events. For more information, a newsletter, or a membership package, call 703-263-2252 or visit www.BethTorah.net

❖ Wednesday, Jan. 5 at 7:30 p.m. — First Annual TBT College Preview Night. At Temple Beth Torah, 4212C Technology Court, Chantilly.

All high school students and their families are welcome to join in first annual College Preview Night. There will be a panel of TBT members who are currently in college to discuss their experiences with you.

❖ Friday, Jan. 14 — Shabbat Shirah Service - 7:30 p.m. Volunteers are needed to help lead this service.

Lord of Life Lutheran Church's second location, 13421 Twin Lakes

Drive, Clifton, is now open. Everyone is invited to worship services at 10 a.m. on Sunday. Call the church office at 703-323-9500 or go to www.lordoflifelutheran.com.

Shalom Jewish Children is a fun, hands-on Jewish educational program for young children based on experiential learning. Each session is about Jewish holidays, values and celebrations. Meets in Centreville at the Rocky Run Recreation Center. Contact Gloria Pioso at yadshalom@yadshalom.com or call 703-579-6079.

Recovery and Support Care Groups at New Life: Passion for Community in cooperation with New Life Christian Church has an ongoing recovery and support groups for people suffering with various addictions, destructive and dysfunctional behaviors, or who just need some support. These groups are a safe place to receive support and healing. Contact Lucy Martinez at 703-222-8836.

❖ Recovery Connection (12-step group), Sundays at 9:30 a.m. at Westfield High in Chantilly;



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4:00 p.m. Eucharist with Children's Living Crèche
7:00 p.m. Festival Choral Eucharist
10:00 p.m. Festival Choral Eucharist

CHRISTMAS MORNING:
10:30 a.m. Holy Eucharist *(Episcopal)*

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 26:
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CENTRE VIEW

Merry Christmas, Happy New Year

We wish our readers, our clients and everyone who lives, works, studies, plays, shops or pursues their avocations here all the best over this holiday week and beyond into the New Year. Thank you for making the Centre View a part of your week, a part of your year.

This is our last news edition of 2010; next week shortly after Christmas, readers will receive the Children's Centre View, our traditional issue devoted to the writing and artwork of local children and teens.

EDITORIALS

In the meantime, we are looking for input on New Year's resolutions. Share one or more of the resolutions you will make for 2011, or tell us about a past resolution and how you approached it, for better or worse. Do you have some tips to share for achieving your goals? Send us 50-200 words, and please share a photo as well. We'll print selections in our first issue of the New Year, Jan. 5-12, 2011.

Send your submissions to centreview@connectionnewspapers.com.

Another opportunity to be a part of the newspaper: The Pet Centre View will publish on Feb. 2, 2011, send us photos of you and your pet

by Jan. 20.

Alternatives to Drinking and Driving

A recent ride-along with a Northern Virginia police officer gave Connection reporter Alex McVeigh a chance to convey some of the methods and mission to get drunk drivers off the road. (See Getting Drunk Drivers Off the Streets, in Dec. 15's Reston Connection, <http://connectionnewspapers.com/article.asp?article=346976&paper=71&cat=104>)

Among other things on the night of the ride-along, the officer encountered an apparently drunk driver who had fallen asleep behind the wheel waiting to make a right turn, his car running, his turn signal blinking and vomit evident down the outside of the driver's side door.

It's enough to make you want to stay home.

With the season for holiday parties comes the increased incidence of driving under the influence, with drunk driving arrests up more than 70 percent compared to other times of year. In 2010, Fairfax County Police have in-

vestigated more than 660 alcohol related accidents. In 2008 in Fairfax County, there were more than 3,100 arrests for driving under the influence.

In Arlington, 677 arrests. In Alexandria, 515 arrests. In the City of Fairfax, 181 arrests.

DON'T TAKE THE RISK. Plan ahead, leave your car at home, take public transportation, arrange for a designated driver, or choose to abstain if a designated driver isn't available.

But if you find yourself in the unfortunate position of drinking without a safe way home on your own this holiday season, the Washington Regional Alcohol Program has provided you with a safety net called SoberRide. Take their number with you when you head out, and be sure any young adults (must be 21 or over) in your family are similarly armed.

WRAP's 2010 Holiday SoberRide program is available now through 6 a.m., Saturday, Jan. 1, 2011. To receive a free cab ride home (up to a \$30 fare), call 800-200-8294. You must be 21 or older. (Callers are responsible for anything over \$30.)

— MARY KIMM

MKIMM@CONNECTIONNEWSPAPERS.COM



Food Collection

Scouts from Packs 1682 and 1684 in Virginia Run collected approximately 6,870 pounds of food during the annual Scouting For Food program. Collected items were donated to WFCM.



Cooking Up a Celebration

Students in Carol Klotz's Special Education class at Lees Corner Elementary School celebrate Veteran's Day by baking and decorating cookies in a patriotic theme.



Greenbriar West Food Drive a Big Success

The students, PTA members, and teachers and staff at GBW worked together to collect more than 2,500 healthy food items over the last four weeks. Donations will go to Western Fairfax Christian Ministries, a local community outreach center that helps families who need assistance.

Terri Kelly, a representative from WFCM, talked to the SCA members about the meaning of homelessness and how important the food drive is to the community. In addition, Student Council Association members decorated and assembled seven Holiday Gift Baskets that were delivered to families right in the Fairfax, Centreville, and Chantilly communities.

A lively competition between the different grades generated enthusiasm for donating the most food items. The fifth-graders edged out the sixth-graders for most donations. In addition seven boxes were prepared for local families by the SCA; gift cards to Giant were added to the food, paper products, and beverages and put into decorated boxes.

Students were involved every step of the way, from planning, promoting, counting, and boxing up food items. They all learned the satisfaction that comes from giving back to their community. The student council advisors, Kristin Crooks and Jeanne McKinley are proud of the hard work done by the SCA members and the incredible generosity of the GBW community.

'A Place Where Magic Happens'

FROM PAGE 5

know when you're sincere and honest and really committed to them. They'll give you their heart and soul, and that's one of the things that make it so rewarding. Every day you can see the difference you've made."

So one of the first things Oliver did was to change the school's image. "It went from 'the place where only bad kids go' to a school to be reckoned with academically in the state," he said. "Mountain View's won several awards, and our staff and school have been recognized with every award possible in Fairfax County."

Oliver, himself, was a finalist last year for Principal of the Year. And in December 2009, the Board of Supervisors commended the school for its academic excellence. It ranked sixth academically out of 318 high schools in Virginia.

"It gave us a tremendous rush because no other Fairfax County school had been recognized by the supervisors with a resolution," he said. "So I think our school's performance has been phenomenal, and we're so proud of all the students and staff."

"Mountain View's a little, alternative high school, but it's got a powerful punch," continued Oliver. "We always say it's a place where magic happens. It's a school of miracles and second chances, where no one says, 'failure,' or 'You can't do this.' Before coming here, a lot of the students had been told, 'You'll never succeed.' At Mountain View, we say, 'Yes, you can.'"

He said the 2 percent of FCPS students who aren't successful come to Mountain View. "They're the most at-risk kids in the 18 schools from which they come," said Oliver. "School hasn't been a positive influence on them. But at Mountain View, they succeed, pass SOLs for the first time, make A-B honor roll, apply to colleges and get scholarships. It's also the first time they've gotten positive recognition for their academic achievements."

Oliver said the teachers there make learning exciting: "We make the environment nurturing and caring so students want to come to Mountain View." They also live the school's motto, "Family, love and respect."

There, teachers, administrators, counselors and students have a sense of family. "We can do this because it's a small school where everybody knows everyone," he said. "So every student feels a part of that family."

Therefore, if a student isn't acting like himself, the other students and teachers know him so well that they pick up on it quickly and intervene. Said Oliver: "Students know they have people in the building they can go to and fill comfortable with about discussing important things in their lives."

He noted that a love for teaching and learning is evident there, and mutual respect is crucial. "It breeds itself," said Oliver. "Students treated with respect will treat each other and the teachers with respect, so everybody gets along."

All in all, he said, "We're proud to have accomplished so much in the past 7 and a half years. It's a testament to the fine students and staff. That's why I'm incredibly emotional about leaving. But my dad, who's 85, lives with my wife and I and is going through some serious, medical issues. So for now, I really need to be home and help out with him, full-time."

At Mountain View, said Oliver, seeing the students in good spirits made him happy. "Knowing they're taking advantage of that second chance just touched my heart," he said. "Being part of 16 graduations and handing out all those diplomas, you know you made a difference. Having that opportunity to serve and influence a young person's life is the greatest reward ever."



COURTESY OF KEN BURTON

Jim Oliver holds a memory book that Mountain View's teachers made for him.

Praise, Admiration from Colleagues

FROM PAGE 5

"vision of success" for the school, right from the start. She said he brought on board faculty members in tune with the "alternative way" of teaching and did his best to make sure each student's individual needs were recognized and addressed.

His Spanish-language skills were a plus, she said, and he often shared with the ESOL students "the struggles his mom went through in coming to the U.S. from Spain. He hoped it would help them understand that, with perseverance, they, too, could excel. More importantly, he connected with all the students and they responded in kind. They respected him and knew he always wanted to see them get ahead."

Villanueva said Oliver also stressed the importance of Mountain View's staff not neglecting their own families. "He will surely be missed by students, faculty and staff," she said. "We appreciate all he's done - not only for us - but for everyone during his years of service with FCPS."

Librarian Jean Fidyk was the first person Oliver hired at Mountain View and he supported all her ideas to make its library not a sterile and forbidding place but, rather, the cheerful, welcoming, social center of the school. There, students meet their friends, chat, eat lunch, read and use the computers. Said Fidyk: "Jim didn't want this to be

a place with a lot of 'no's, but where kids could relax and be themselves."

She said the next principal will have "big shoes to fill because Jim was the glue that kept all of us focused on the mission of this place, 'Family, love and respect.' He's a man with a big heart who made it all work, and we'll miss him."

Counselor Jim Lockwood credited Oliver with "building, orchestrating and leading a one-of-a-kind, educational program that delivers a priceless service to both students and the community. It's tough to see a strong leader move on, but I believe that what he's established here has been done so in such a firm way that Mountain View will continue to be a first-class school."

Career Development Coordinator Sharon DeBragga said Oliver was responsible for bringing up the building, physically, to the standards of a high school. She said he championed the new library, building renovations and the school's logo outside. He also placed reminders of Mountain View's motto throughout the halls.

"That motto is what this school is all about, and Jim taught us to really embrace the students as family, with love and respect," said DeBragga. "I know he'll eventually find something to do that's equally challenging and fulfilling, and we really wish him well."

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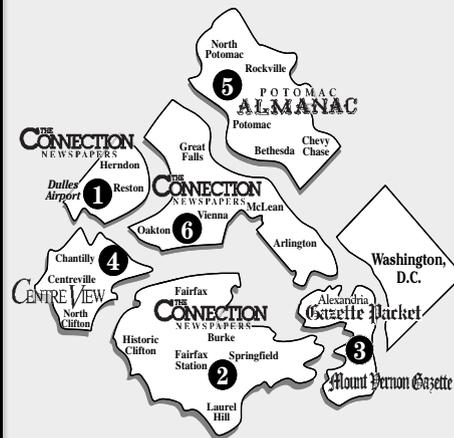
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A Quarter for My Thoughts



By KENNETH B. LOURIE

Wondering whether what I'm feeling physically is symptomatic of my having my stage IV lung cancer – or not, has become the bane of my existence. The presumed inevitability of it wears on me night and day. Though my overall stress level is significantly lower than when I was working full time, commuting two rush-hours a day by car and being "clock-radioed" at 5:30 a.m. Monday through Friday, I'd be lying if I said living with my diagnosis/prognosis is "no problem."

Having said – and admitted that out loud, I am however, reasonably able to get on with the activities of my daily living and pretty much be counted on to finish most of what I start. And what I find myself needing to finish most are my quarterly scans: Bone, CT and Brain MRI, which I have every three months per my participation in a Schering Plough "Randomized Phase 2 Study".

After 15 months in, my results have been, to quote myself (and referring to a previously published column): "Scantastic!" Nevertheless, future results/my health could change in a week – or so I've been reminded, professionally. As such, I've learned to take the so-far good news with the as-yet-not-received bad news. Still, if there's good news to be heard, given the terminal nature of my original prognosis, I want to hear it. More importantly – for me, I need to know how to process it, and where to place it in my compartmentalized/"defense-mechanismed" brain – for self-preservation of course, so that I don't upset this delicate Libra balance that I strive to maintain. And it's about this time (eight to 10 weeks out) in my recurring quarterly scan cycle when my subconscious takes over.

I believe this happens because of something my oncologist said about eight months ago. That was when I first received unexpected and amazing news from him – following the previous week's scans. The tumors were not moving or growing. In fact, there seemed to be more scar tissue than tumors, the doctor said. Perplexed at what it all meant, since I came in experiencing what I thought were cancer-related symptoms, my oncologist attempted to put me at ease – and clarify as well when he said: "You've been scanned stem to stern in the last week, anything you feel over the next eight weeks, don't even worry about it. It's not the cancer," (the cancer that we know about, ergo the continuing mental problem). And as reassuring and wonderful as that answer/explanation was, it has however, had an unintended effect: anxiety.

Per my doctor's advice, for the first eight weeks after my scans and every-three-week appointment with my oncologist have been completed, I really don't worry too much (as much, to be honest) about whatever I might be feeling physically/the cancer. It's all good. However, once I'm into the ninth week or so, the worm turns and all presumptions, rationalizations and nothing-to-worry-about concerning my cancer/any miscellaneous symptoms I may be experiencing, are off. At that point on my mental calendar, the cancer window is officially open for business, or so my subconscious thinks. It's the next four weeks until I'm scanned again that my brain is in total control. It reacts, overreacts, wonders, worries, stresses about every little thing I feel, or think I feel. I can't stop it. I can only endure it.

Consequently, those/these next four weeks can't pass quickly enough. And as peculiar as it may sound, I'm not nearly as nervous for those scan results as much as I am eager for them. At least then, I'll know exactly where my cancer is or – more importantly, where it's not. Then I'll be back in control, for another eight weeks, anyway. It may not be an ideal way to live, but it is living and it is feeling, and it sure beats the alternative.

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

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SPORTS

Chantilly High Impressive in Boys Hoops

Chargers meet two premier teams at the Gonzaga Classic.

By RICH SANDERS
CENTRE VIEW

Last year's Northern Region boys' basketball champions, the Chantilly Chargers, are off to a good 5-2 start this season. The team, under veteran head coach Jim Smith, defeated West Springfield, 90-55, in a non-district road contest last Friday night, Dec. 17 for its fifth victory.

Chantilly was scheduled to host Wakefield High of Arlington earlier this week on Tuesday, Dec. 21. The game versus the Warriors was to be the Chargers' final game before the Christmas holidays break. Over the holidays, Chantilly will once again host its own tournament — The Pohanka Classic — from Dec. 28-30.

In Friday's decisive win over West Springfield, Chantilly received an impressive, balanced scoring attack in which four players finished in double figures, led by 6-foot-8 inch senior forward Jake Weigand's 18 points. The other big scoring nights came from junior guard Brady Caslavka (14 points), 6-11 senior center John Manning (12), and senior guard Jamie Danehower (12). Senior guards Devin Ballam and Trey Huelskamp both contributed eight points and Brian Sydnor, a sophomore, had seven.

Chantilly, which defeated Langley in last year's region finals, opened the current season with road wins over both Madison, 51-43, on Dec. 3, and Yorktown, 49-44 in overtime on Dec. 7.

Chantilly then went 1-2 at the Gonzaga D.C. Classic, held Dec. 10-12 at American University's Bender Arena in downtown, Washington, D.C. The Chargers lost their first game at the Classic to Holy Cross (N.Y.), 69-62, before coming back with a win the following day over St. John's (Ma.), 51-34. In its final game at the tournament, Chantilly fell to Mount St. Joseph's of Maryland, 53-43.

Holy Cross is regarded as one of the top high school teams in New York, while St. Joe's is looked upon as one of the top teams in Maryland. So Chantilly, despite losing to both of those teams at the Classic, played both powerhouse pro-



Chantilly's Devin Ballam, shown here going to the basket at last year's state playoffs, scored eight points in the Chargers' recent win over West Springfield.

PHOTO BY CRAIG STERBUTZEL/CENTRE VIEW

grams quite well.

Last week, competing in its own Northern Region schedule again, Chantilly defeated Hayfield, 69-32, at home on Tuesday, Dec. 14, before winning big over the Spartans of West Springfield three days later on Friday.

"We are playing extremely well defensively," said Smith, the Chantilly coach. "Our two big men — Manning and Wiegand — are a handful for teams to match up with. We need to get more consistent perimeter shooting. If we do we will be very good."

CHANTILLY, over the holidays, will once again host the Pohanka Chantilly Classic Holiday Basketball Tournament. The dates of the event, in its 18th year, will be Tuesday, Dec. 28, Wednesday, Dec. 29 and Thursday, Dec. 30. All games will take place at Chantilly High School, located at 4201 Stringfellow Rd., in Chantilly.

The Pohanka Classic, which in-

cluded some of the best and most exciting basketball in its history.

Guest opponents will include out of the area teams such as Deep Run (Central Region) and Mills Godwin (Richmond), as well as local Northern Region teams such as South County Secondary and Hayfield High.

"This is traditionally one of the top holiday tournaments in the D.C. metro area and we are looking forward to seeing some talented basketball, coaches and players just as we have for 17 years," said Pohanka Chantilly Classic Tournament Director Kurt Sporkmann. "The Chantilly boys are one of the top teams in the area. The tournament is shaping up to be very exciting. We expect the girls tournament to be one of the best ever with this field of teams."

On the boys' side, the defending Pohanka champion Chantilly Chargers return All-Northern Region center John Manning, along with senior teammate Jake Weigand. Rounding out the Charger starters are Devin Ballam, Jamie Danehower and Trey Huelskamp. The Chargers again have high expectations following last year's 20-8 season in which they captured the region title.

One of the Chargers' top obstacles to successfully defending last year's holiday tournament title will be Hayfield, a traditional Northern Virginia powerhouse. Led by longtime California high school coach Ron Palmer, the Hawks bring a relatively new-look team this season, having to replace all five starters from last year's team, which didn't lose until February.

In addition to Chantilly and Hayfield, the boys' bracket features improving programs South County and Thomas Jefferson (Alexandria), as well as Deep Run and Mills Godwin, traditionally two of

the Richmond area's finest programs. Wilson High School from Washington, D.C., also makes its Pohanka Chantilly Classic debut. Rounding out the boy's field is Mountain View High School from Stafford.

The girls' tournament also features an exciting array of teams, such as Northern Region teams Langley and Annandale, as well as non-region opponents such as Hylton High of Woodbridge and the Loudoun County Raiders (Dulles District), the 2009 State AA champions. Other teams in the tournament field will be Paul VI of Fairfax, Georgetown Visitation, and Mills Godwin. Georgetown Visitation is traditionally one of the top teams in the D.C. metro area. All of the girls' teams play an exciting brand of basketball that could make this season's tournament the best in Pohanka Chantilly Classic history.

Admission is \$7 for an all-day pass, and refreshments will be sold. Chantilly students with identification or any Chantilly Youth Association (CYA) basketball players wearing their team shirt with a paying adult will get a \$3 discount.

The following schedule is for the opening round games on Tuesday, Dec. 28: Georgetown Visitation vs. Loudoun County (girls, 9 a.m.); Hylton vs. Annandale (girls, 10:45 a.m.); Mills Godwin vs. Paul VI (girls, 12:30 p.m.); Mills Godwin vs. Mountain View (boys, 2:15 p.m.); Deep Run vs. Wilson of Washington, D.C. (boys, 4 p.m.); Hayfield vs. South County (boys, 5:45); Langley vs. Chantilly (girls, 7:30); and Thomas Jefferson vs. Chantilly (boys, 9:15).

For information on games played on Wednesday and Thursday, call the Charger Hotline at 703-448-4909 or check the website.

Local Wrestlers Shine at Classic

Westfield captures team title.

The Northern Virginia Wrestling Classic, the local high school early season showcase event, was held this past Friday and Saturday at Fairfax High School.

Thirty-one teams, most from within the Northern Virginia area, participated in the early season tournament. The team champion, for the second straight year, was Westfield High School, which accumulated 271.50 points and had 12 individual place finishers (top eight). Fauquier (Warrenton) and South County Secondary finished second and third, respectively, with 253 and 168. North Stafford (139.50) finished fourth, Annandale (117) was fifth and Chantilly (115.50) garnered sixth place. Rounding out the top 10 teams were seventh place Lake Braddock (112), eighth place Edison (105), ninth place Bishop Ireton of Alexandria (100) and 10th place South

Lakes (95).

Westfield, the team champion, had two individual champions - Beau Donahue, who went a perfect 5-0 to capture the 140-division weight class, and Brett Campbell, who went 4-0 to win the 112 class. Donahue defeated North Stafford's Stephen Gwaltney by major decision (15-3) in the 140 finals. Campbell, meanwhile, won his 112 finals match over Fauquier's Bennett Payne, 4-2.

The Bulldogs also had four wrestlers who earned second place finishes in Tyler DeLeon (4-1 at heavyweight); Stephen Aiello (4-1 at 130); Derek Arnold (4-1 at 125); and Dennon Caranza-Kee (4-1 at 119). Also for Westfield, Harry Van Trees finished third place (5-1 at 152); Frank Aiello (135 division) and David Aiello (103) both took fourth place finishes; Jacob DeLeon (215) and Nick Lehman (145) both finished fifth; and Gabe Ryan (103) was seventh.

Making the Season Bright

FACETS, community play Santa to local children.

BY BONNIE HOBBS
CENTRE VIEW

When money's tight and people are just happy to have a roof over their heads, Christmas presents are often a luxury they just can't afford. But thanks to FACETS (Fairfax Area Christian Emergency & Transitional Services), nearly 200 children last week got some help with their gifts.

For its 10th year, FACETS organized and hosted Holiday Sibling Shops so that children in need would be able to provide presents for their brothers and sisters. All year long, the nonprofit group helps families living in transitional or permanent supported housing, and the sibling shops are eagerly anticipated and fun for all.

Last week's events were at the Ragan Oaks Community Center near Fair Oaks, at Robinson Square near GMU and at Barrios Circle in Centreville. They were also holiday parties where the children ate snacks, made Christmas crafts, selected presents for their siblings and helped wrap them.

"Throughout November, FACETS collected donations from individuals, corporations and faith communities," said Amy Marlow, FACETS assistant director of development. "They gave gifts for babies through kids age 18."

The items collected included things such as footballs, dolls, games, toys, books, cologne, makeup and \$25 gift cards to stores such as Game Stop. Then about 80 children came to the sibling shop at Fair Oaks, another 80 went to the one at Robinson Square and some 15-20 were at the Centreville party.

"We thank all the community members and organizations who donated these hundreds of toys," said Marlow. "What's really special about these parties is that the kids get to come and pick out the gifts for their siblings — which is empowering for them to do and lets them experience the joy of giving to their family."

The Ragan Oaks party was last Monday, Dec. 13, and the atmosphere was festive. Children munched on cookies, gumdrops and popcorn, as well as special, sesame-seed-coated doughnuts made by a community resident from Sudan. And while they snacked, adult volunteers helped them create crepe-paper



FACETS volunteer Katie Torgersen helps Ruba Badawi with her craft project.

Christmas wreaths and beaded snowflake ornaments. "This is also about the community coming together and having fun," said Marlow. "Most of the children's parents are here, and everyone lives in this apartment complex, so it's really neighborhood-based. We want to take this spirit of the holidays and express it all year 'round, because the need continues."

Because of the tough economy, she said, FACETS is serving about 20 percent more children this year than last year. "FACETS serves 5,000 individuals a year throughout Fairfax County," said Marlow. "It provides emergency services for families and adults in danger of becoming homeless. Ragan Oaks is an affordable-housing community, and families here are living on about \$18,000 a year for a family of four."

Fairfax residents Kati and J.P. Hesford organized last Monday's party and brought the craft materials, most of the snacks and the wrapping paper. The party for preschool and elementary-school children was from 5-6 p.m., with middle- and high-school students having their own, holiday celebration from 6-7 p.m.

A mother of four, Shannon Tatem was there helping her two youngest boys choose presents for their older siblings. "It's a good concept," she said. "I like the idea of the kids exchanging gifts for each other; otherwise, they wouldn't be able to. And they had fun, too."

Each child received a number and was then called to pick out presents, so their siblings didn't see what they were getting. "There's also a serious purpose to these events," added Marlow, gesturing toward the tables full of new toys. "Having these types of gifts donated to these families allows the families to stretch their money for basic needs like food, rent, utilities and transportation. It's also a relief for the parents because it helps them to maintain financial stability when they're struggling to make ends meet."

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Western Fairfax Christian Ministries (WFCM) urgently needs donations of sugar (2-5-pounds), coffee, tea, cocoa, mayonnaise, ketchup, syrup, toothpaste and deodorant. Bring them to WFCM'S food pantry at 13981 Metrotech Drive (near the Backyard Grill and Bar) in Chantilly. The thrift store also needs coats and sweaters.

❖ WFCM recently opened a second

office in Centreville at 14631 Lee Highway, No. 313, and needs administrative volunteers to help out there. Especially needed is a receptionist to check in clients, make new appointments and answer phones, Mondays-Fridays, from 9:50 a.m.-2:10 p.m.

❖ The Chantilly location also needs volunteers. A driver or drivers are needed to pick up store donations for the food pantry on Monday mornings. In the thrift store, general help is needed Mondays-Fridays, 9 a.m.-1 p.m. and 3-6 p.m.; and Saturdays, 9 a.m.-1 p.m.; 10 a.m.-2 p.m.;

or 1-5 p.m. An administrative volunteer is also needed; hours and days are flexible. Call 703-988-9656.

Felony Hit-Run Are Charged

City of Fairfax police have charged a 38-year-old Penderbrook man with felony hit and run. He is Christopher J. Patterson of 12162 Penderview Lane. On Sunday, Dec. 19, at 4:26 p.m., officers responded to Main and Poplar streets after learning of

a traffic crash that injured a child. According to police, the child was in one of the two vehicles involved in the crash and was taken by a family member to a medical facility for treatment.

The driver of the other vehicle allegedly fled the scene, say police, but was subsequently identified following investigation and found at a home in the area. Besides the felony offense, Patterson was also charged with violating his restricted license. He was held in the Adult Detention Center on \$10,000 bond.

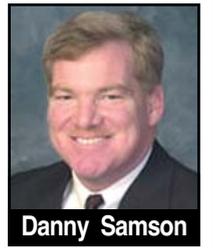
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