

Oak Hill ♦ Herndon
CONNECTION

Herndon Hosts Holiday Sing-Along

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Santa hands out candy to a crowd of children at the Town of Herndon holiday sing-along and tree lighting ceremony Saturday, Dec. 3.

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NEWS

Hunter Mill District Supervisor Cathy Hudgins points out the winner of a free turkey to Fairfax County Park Authority Board Chairman Bill Bouie at the Frying Pan Park old-fashioned Holiday on the Farm event and 50th anniversary capstone celebration. To their right, a sign indicates the Friends of Frying Pan Park advocacy group has raised \$47,000 of the \$50,000 goal that will be used to create a legacy fund to maintain the farm for another 50 years. The group is part of the Combined Federal Campaign (CFC#67488) and The Commonwealth of Virginia Campaign (CVC#711).



Ciara Sitko of Springfield and her Norwegian Fjord Toril are dressed in their holiday finest as part of the Norwegian Fjord Horse Association demonstration that was part of the Frying Pan Park Holiday on the Farm event on Dec. 3.

Frying Pan Park Turns 50

On Saturday, Dec. 3, Frying Pan Park held an old-fashioned Holiday on the Farm event capping off a year of special events marking the park's 50th anniversary as part of the Fairfax County Park Authority.

PHOTOS BY DEB COBB/THE CONNECTION



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HERNDON CONNECTION EDITOR
KEMAL KURSPAHIC
703-778-9414 OR
MCLEAN@CONNECTIONNEWSPAPERS.COM

Members of the Herndon High School Band lead the crowd in downtown Herndon in Christmas carols Saturday, Dec. 3.



Santa Claus is mobbed by children at the Herndon tree lighting and holiday sing-along Saturday Dec. 3.

Herndon Hosts Holiday Sing-Along

PHOTOS BY ALEX MCVEIGH/THE CONNECTION

Santa, Herndon High School band participate in annual event.

BY ALEX MCVEIGH
THE CONNECTION

Dozens of Herndon residents gathered at the corner of Lynn and Elden streets Saturday, Dec. 3 for the town's annual holiday sing-along and tree lighting ceremony. Members of the Herndon High School Band provided musical accompaniment to the carolers, most of whom were waiting for the arrival of a special guest.

"It's the one town event we do not miss, because it's the best way to enjoy the holiday season before the stress of travel and shopping come to the forefront," said Beth Kriebehl of Herndon, who came with her family. "I think the kids enjoy holding candles and seeing Santa, but even when they're older I think they'll be able to appreciate the sense of community you get at an event like this."

The band led the crowd in a number of Christmas carols as the sun went down. For their efforts, the Council for the Arts of Herndon donated \$250 to the Band Parents Organization.

"This money will go to the parents organization to help with scholarship and student dues, and it's always appreciated every year," said Herndon High Director of Bands Kathleen Schoelwer.

The band barely had time to put away their instruments before the sound of a fire engine could be heard coming south on Lynn Street. The fire engine slowed as it reached the crowd, and when it stopped, a figure in red climbed off the back of the truck.

"I didn't know who it was at first, I thought it was a firefighter in a bright suit that was coming down to talk to us," said Kayleigh Wilkie, 4. "Then I saw it was Santa with a huge stocking, and I just ran to him."

Wilkie was one of dozens of children who mobbed Santa Claus when he got off the truck and began handing out candy from a stocking that was almost as tall as he was.

Other families took turns taking photos around the Christmas tree that was lit as soon as Santa appeared. Tina Gonzalez of Herndon said the lighting is the perfect spot for an annual photo.

"It's always the photo we use for our Christmas cards," said Gonzalez, who came with her husband and three children. "Not only is it a cute photo, but we have a collection from every year, and it's neat to see how they grow every year compared to the tree, and it's nice to know we'll have a photo that tells the year after year story of where our family was and what it was like."



From left, Jameson, 7, Jeff, Shannon, 4, and Shelli Glynn in front of the Herndon Christmas tree Saturday, Dec. 3.



Members of the Herndon High School Band, Herndon Town Council and Council for the Arts of Herndon after the Arts Council presented a check to the Herndon High School Band Parents Organization.

THE COUNTY LINE

Whose Road is it Anyway? County vs. State: A heated debate on who should fix area roads.

BY VICTORIA ROSS
THE CONNECTION

State and local government officials agree that Fairfax County's roads are in deplorable shape, but who should fix the problem has sparked a heated political debate.

On Dec. 1, Fairfax County, along with Prince William and Loudoun Counties, issued a joint statement firmly opposing any hint of legislation from the Virginia General Assembly that would shift road maintenance responsibilities from the Commonwealth to counties, a process known as road devolution.

"Road devolution is going to be a huge issue in Richmond this year," said Supervisor Jeff McKay (D-Lee). "The idea of local control is universally embraced, but the problem comes down to the cash, and the state is not going to give us the money we need to take over our roads."

County officials argue that devolution would lock in the state's chronic underfunding of secondary roads, and county taxpayers would be on the hook for the cumulative effects of deficient maintenance measures when the big bills come due.

The Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) has reported that more than a third of secondary roads throughout the state are in poor condition, and estimates that \$75 to \$100 million is required to bring just one percent of the states 27,166 mile lanes up to performance standards.

McKay, who chairs the Board's Legislative Committee, said the cost to Fairfax County taxpayers could be close to \$200 million.

"The start-up costs of taking this over would be significant, and my greatest fear is that we'd be pitting roads against schools and public safety," he said. He added that any additional costs associated with road devolution would necessitate a tax hike and likely take money away from projects such as new school construction and renovation of existing schools.

He compared road devolution to the state driving a new car into the ground, and then sticking the county with the repair bills.

"The biggest advocate of devolution is the state. They would like nothing more than to hand it over to us, because they've wrecked it."

IN A DEC. 2 PUBLIC LETTER, Fairfax County Board of Supervisors Chairman Sharon Bulova (D-At-large) joined her Republican counterparts in Prince William and Loudoun County contending that road devolution is really an unfunded mandate that would likely come under the guise of transportation funding reform.

"Although we are of different political parties, we are firmly united in opposition to devolution because of the massive property tax increase it will produce for the residents and businesses of Fairfax, Prince William and Loudoun counties... The cost could



This section of Hunter Mill Road in Reston was the first of six roads and bridges to re-open after being extensively damaged by Tropical Storm Lee on Sept. 8.

"The biggest advocate of road devolution is the state. They would like nothing more than to hand it over to us, because they've wrecked it."

— Supervisor Jeff McKay (D-Lee)

exceed \$500 per household," according to the statement.

Bulova said that General Assembly created the problem by neglecting the roads, and they should be the ones to fix it.

"Once the state abandons this responsibility, it will never take it back," Bulova said. "Local governments and taxpayers should not be expected to shoulder what is now a responsibility of the commonwealth."

Although Gov. Robert McDonnell has not yet proposed specific road devolution legislation, House Republicans have been looking at ways to shift spiraling road-maintenance responsibilities back to localities for several years.

In 2005, the General Assembly directed VDOT to develop legislative recommendations, in conjunction with representatives of counties, on the process for any county that wants to assume responsibility for their secondary construction program. So far, no county has taken the state up on its offer.

Bulova noted that over the past few years the General Assembly has pushed the financial burden for more than \$1 billion in services down to local municipalities without sharing state revenues to pay for them. "Then, they claim they have not raised taxes," she said, adding that it's a "shell game" that does nothing to address the state's nearly depleted construction funding.

But not everyone agrees that devolution is a problem.

"[Local control of local roads] is a great idea," said Del. Dave Albo (R-42), who has been a member of the House since 1994

"We should be chomping at the bit to take this over; instead, we are thumbing our nose at the Governor."

— Supervisor John Cook (R-Braddock)

and a key player in obtaining funding for road projects in his district, which covers Springfield and Lorton. "We would not have to ask Richmond which roads to get repaved. We could ask our county supervisors, who personally know which roads are in need of repair."

Albo said legislation, along with a reallocation of resources to pay for it, is likely this session.

"I think it's highly likely that we pass it because this is the system we currently use for cities, so we are not reinventing the wheel," Albo said.

Currently, counties do not have the same taxing authority as cities and towns. Cities, such as Arlington, have more latitude in raising revenue through other means, such as cigarette, hotel and restaurant taxes, while the majority of Fairfax County's revenue is derived from property taxes.

State Sen. Chap Petersen (D-34) agrees that road devolution should be a local option, but with the stipulation that adequate revenue comes with the responsibility. "There needs to be an agreed formula which holds the county harmless if it decides to maintain its own roads," Petersen said.

Supervisor John Cook (R-Braddock), who made "local control of local roads" his signature campaign issue, said board members should see road devolution as an opportunity instead of an obstacle.

"Virginia is not the norm. We're one of only a few states where the state has maintenance and construction responsibilities for local roads," Cook said.

THE COMMONWEALTH'S SYSTEM goes back to the Great Depression. During the 1930s, many counties struggled with road maintenance, creating uneven levels

of road maintenance and affecting commerce. In 1932, the Virginia General Assembly passed the Byrd Act, which gave VDOT all maintenance, operational, and construction responsibilities for secondary roads, with the exception of Arlington and Henrico counties.

"This is an opportunity, and the board is saying we don't even want to have a dialogue. This could be the best thing for us if it's done right, and they don't know the state is not going to change the funding formula. We should be chomping at the bit to take this over; instead, we are thumbing our nose at the Governor."

Cook said he has talked directly with McDonnell and Virginia Secretary of Transportation Sean Connaughton, and he sees an opportunity for Fairfax County to benefit from road devolution.

Cook said the way to make road devolution viable for Fairfax County includes having the state transfer ownership of the land and redoing the funding formula to be more in line with urban jurisdictions that control local roads.

"Don't fall for the argument that this is going to cost \$200 million," Cook said.

"That is misleading, because it only costs us if we choose to do a better job than the state. That's not an imposed cost. If we're getting at least what the state is already spending, and we have control, that's better than no control at all."

Asked what local control would look like, Cook said residents would see medians and roads mowed more frequently, potholes would be filled within a week of reporting and roads would be repaved every 10-20 years instead of 20-40 years, among other benefits.

But McKay and other board members are not so optimistic.

Pat Herrity (R-Springfield) one of the three Republicans on the board, said he generally thinks the most effective government is local government, but for Fairfax County to take over control of its secondary roads, a few others items must come with the mandate.

"The state needs to make up for years of neglect, there needs to be a guaranteed funding stream, and it needs to be at a level necessary to perform the maintenance – not the current level," Herrity said. "Otherwise the state is just transferring the burden and years of neglect onto Fairfax County taxpayers."

"There's no question Fairfax County could do a better job, but I am very suspect that the state is going to give us the tools to fix the problem. In my mind, this has to be dead on arrival," McKay said.

Fairfax County's position on road devolution is part of its 2012 legislative agenda, which will go before the Board of Supervisors on Tuesday, Dec. 6, for a final vote. On Wednesday, McKay chairs a joint session between board members and Fairfax County legislators during which the County's legislative agenda will be presented.

PHOTO COURTESY OF VDOT

WEEK IN HERNDON

Leaf Collection Extended Until Dec. 23.

The schedule for leaf collection has been extended throughout the Town of Herndon. Residents should rake leaves as close to the curb as possible without blocking storm drains, sidewalks or mailboxes and without impeding vehicular traffic.

Following the extended collection, leaves must be placed in 30 gallon kraft recyclable bags and will be picked up on regular trash/ yard waste collection days.

North of Bike Trail — Week of Dec. 5-9

South of Bike Trail — Week of Dec. 12-16

North of Bike Trail — Week of Dec. 19-23

For more information, call 703-435-6860 or email public.works@herndon-va.gov. Visit www.herndon-va.gov (see "Featured This Month" on the homepage) for more information.

Parks & Recreation Department Honored

The Town of Herndon's Parks & Recreation Department was awarded re-accreditation from the Commission for Accreditation of Parks and Recreation Agencies (CAPRA), an independent body sanctioned by the National Park and Recreation Association (NPRA) and the American Academy for Park and Recreation Administration. This qualifies Herndon as one of 97 nationally-accredited agencies and one of only six in Virginia. There are more than 10,000 recreation agencies in the United States. This honor was announced at the National Park and Recreation Association Annual Congress in Atlanta in November 2011.

The Commission for Accreditation of Parks and Recreation Agencies recognizes park and recreation agencies for excellence in operation and service. Accreditation lasts for five years and Herndon Parks & Recreation first achieved this honor in 2006. The accreditation process is extensive and includes a self assessment, an on-site peer review, and final review by the Commission for Accreditation of Parks and Recreation Agencies. An accredited agency must demonstrate compliance with 144 standards ranging in subject matter from fiscal accountability, security and personnel management to conservation preservation, land use management and program standards.

The Town of Herndon Parks and Recreation Department is a four-time National Gold Medal Award winner for excellence in park and recreation management presented by the American Academy for Park and Recreation Administration.

Public Hearing on Road Improvements

Mayor Steve DeBenedittis has scheduled public hearings on planned improvements to the intersection at Park Avenue and Monroe Street, and to the intersection at Park Avenue and Dranesville Road to include a proposed median on Dranesville Road, north to Bennett Street. The hearings will be held on Tuesday, Jan. 10, 2012, as part of the regularly scheduled meeting of the Herndon Town Council.

Citizens may also voice their opinions via email, to town.clerk@herndon-va.gov, or by calling 703-435-6804.

All public hearings of the Herndon Town Council are held at the Mary Ingram Council Chambers, 765 Lynn Street, Herndon. Meetings begin at 7 p.m.

Herndon Girl Scouts Launch 100 Blanket Drive

In honor of the Girl Scouts' 100th anniversary in 2012, troops from Service Unit 51-7 will be launching the "Spread the Warmth: Girl Scout 100 Blanket Drive" in support of Reston Interfaith's Embry Rucker Shelter.

Girls already have begun collecting blankets and linens from family and friends, and will be bringing the donations to a Dec. 12 event where a representative of Reston Interfaith will present information on other volunteer opportunities that the girls can participate in during the holidays and beyond.

Also at the event, the girls will be creating collection bags donated by Trader Joe's in Reston. The bags will be used for neighborhood door-to-door collections for additional donations.



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More on Giving Locally

Local organizations need your help right now to help needy families.

Organizations that help needy families and individuals in Northern Virginia have seen a dramatic increase in requests for assistance since the recession hit in 2008, and right now those organizations need your help to meet the need.

Connection reporter Victoria Ross cites the examples of Ecumenical Community Helping Others (ECHO) and Food for Others. In 2010, ECHO assisted more than 1,472 households, an increase of nearly 30 percent from before the recession. And Food for Others delivered a record 2.7 million pounds of food to an average of 125 families a day last year.

More than 45,000 students in Fairfax County Public Schools are from families poor enough to qualify for free or reduced priced meals. That's more than 25 percent of students in the schools. In Arlington, 34 percent of students are poor enough to qualify for free or reduced meals. In the City of Alexandria, more than 54 percent of students are poor.

In Fairfax County, 46,000 live below the poverty line; more than 80,000 have no health insurance.

In Northern Virginia, thousands are unemployed and many more are underemployed. Among the homeless in Northern Virginia, many are working poor, families with at least one wage-earner who doesn't make enough to pay for

EDITORIALS

Where To Give

In no particular order:

- ❖ **Our Daily Bread** — ODB has been serving needy families in Fairfax County for 25 years. For more information on their holiday programs, including how to sponsor a family, go to www.odbfairfax.com.
- ❖ **Food for Others** — Food for Others is the largest distributor of free food directly to people in need in Northern Virginia, provides the assistance needed by unemployed and low-income neighbors. The non-profit provides a safety net for people who suddenly face unforeseen emergencies such as a family illness or the loss of a job or a spouse. Located at 2938 Prosperity Ave., Fairfax, VA 22031, 703-207-9173. www.foodforothers.com
- ❖ **Ecumenical Community Helping Others (ECHO)**, 703-569-9160. Open to receive donations at 7205 Old Keene Mill Road, Springfield. www.echo-inc.org.
- ❖ **Lorton Community Action Center** operates the Act II Thrift Shop at 9506 Richmond Highway, Lorton. Sales from the shop generate funds for LCAC and clients also shop there. While donations are welcome during store hours, visitors are asked to call first at 703-339-8611 before dropping off. www.lortonaction.org.
- ❖ **Comfort for America's Uniformed Services (CAUSE)** — CAUSE ensures that recuperating service members have opportunities for recreation and social interaction and receive concrete signs of appreciation for all that they have done. 4114 Legato Road Suite B, Fairfax, VA 22033, 703-591-4968, cause-usa.org
- ❖ **Western Fairfax Christian Ministries** — food pantry at 13981 Metrotech Drive in Chantilly (near Backyard Grill and Bar). For more information or to sponsor a family, call 703-988-9656, ext. 105. To mail gift cards or send donations by check, add a note saying "food basket program" and send them to: WFCM, P.O. Box 220802, Chantilly, VA 20153. 703-988-9656.
- ❖ **The Jeanie Schmidt Free Clinic**, 13525 Dulles Technology Drive, Herndon, VA 20171, 571-235-

housing for the family. About half of the homeless in Northern Virginia are children.

Here are some suggestions about how to help, but there are dozens of other opportunities.

3577. Last year, 139 community volunteers — nurses, nurse practitioners, and physicians — gave more than 1,300 hours of their time to see patients. jsfreeclinic.org.

- ❖ **Alternative House** — Abused and Homeless Children's Refuge, 2100 Gallows Road, Vienna, VA 22182, 703-506-9191. www.thealternativehouse.org.
- ❖ **Reston Interfaith**, 11150 Sunset Hills Road, Suite 210, Reston, serving Reston and Herndon. 571-323-9555, www.restoninterfaith.org. Programs and services include the Embry Rucker Community Shelter, Emergency Food Pantry, Hypothermia Prevention Program and the Thanksgiving Food Drive.
- ❖ **SHARE** of McLean seeks donations of grocery gift cards. Gift cards can be dropped off at SHARE, c/o McLean Baptist Church, 1367 Chain Bridge Road on Wednesdays and Saturdays (except Thanksgiving week) 9:30 a.m. - noon. Checks and gift cards can be sent to: Holiday Celebration, Share, Inc. PO Box 210, McLean, VA 22101. 703-284-2179. www.SHAREofMcLean.org
- ❖ **LINK**, serving Herndon, Chantilly, Loudoun and more, needs contributions of food, coats and holiday toys for children, plus volunteers. Email Lisa Lombardozzi at LisaLombo@signaturecos.com. 703-437-1776 www.linkagainsthunger.org
- ❖ **FACETS** — Information about supply donations and FACETS holiday gifts drive is available on the website at www.facetscares.org. Additionally, FACETS is always in need of volunteers, and offers a variety of one-time and ongoing opportunities. People who are interested in volunteering can contact 703-865-4251 or volunteer@facetscares.org.
- ❖ **Committee for Helping Others (CHO)**, Vienna 703-281-7614
- ❖ **Fairfax City Area FISH** (For Immediate Sympathetic Help), 703-222-0880
- ❖ **Lamb Center**, www.thelambcenter.org, Fairfax 703-691-3178
- ❖ **Herndon-Reston FISH** (For Immediate Sympathetic Help), 703-391-0105
- ❖ **Northern Virginia Family Service**, Oakton, 703-385-3267
- ❖ **United Community Ministries**, Mount Vernon, 703-768-7106, 7511 Fordson Road, Alexandria, 22306
- ❖ **National Capital Food Bank**, 6833 Hill Park Drive, Lorton, serving all of Northern Virginia, 703-541-3063, www.capitalareafoodbank.org

Free, Safe Ride Home from Holiday Celebrations

Once again, the Washington Regional Alcohol Program will provide a safety net for those who might celebrate the holiday season with alcohol and unexpectedly need a safe ride home.

WRAP's 2011 Holiday SoberRide program will be offered nightly from 10 p.m. to 6 a.m. beginning Friday, Dec. 16, and running until

Jan. 1, 2012.

To receive a free cab ride home (up to a \$30 fare), call 800-200-8294 (TAXI). You must be 21 or older to use the SoberRide service. All requests for SoberRide service must be called to and dispatched from 1-800-200-8294. Callers will be responsible for any amount over \$30.

WRAP's SoberRide has helped to ensure lo-

cal residents have a safe way home on high-risk holidays, keeping likely impaired drivers off the roads. Since 1993, WRAP has provided nearly 53,000 safe rides home. SoberRide operates during the December/January holiday season, St. Patrick's Day, Independence Day and Halloween.

For details, see <http://wrap.org/soberride>

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

A Common Sense Measure

To the Editor:

[Re: Del. Plum's Commentary, Personhood Bill Introduced, Reston Connection, Nov. 30-Dec. 6, 2011]

Del. Marshall's recently filed House Bill 1 is a common sense measure that recognizes the scientific fact that life begins at conception, and on that basis creates a civil cause of action for the wrongful death of an unborn child. This cause of action already exists in the majority of states and is a natural complement to Virginia's fetal homicide law.

In fact, the language of Marshall's bill is taken verbatim from a statute that has been on the books in Missouri for over 25 years. The bill is legally airtight, as it was specifically left standing by the United States Supreme Court in a 1989 decision.

Nonetheless, pro-abortion advocates have already taken aim at the measure, employing a tried-and-true fear-mongering tactic. They suggest that the bill's passage will result in a parade of horrors, raising a host of allegedly unanswerable "questions." Would the law mean that abortionists are prosecuted for murder? Will miscarriages be treated as involuntary

manslaughter? Will oral contraception become illegal? Of course not.

Exhibit A: the law has been on the books in Missouri for over 25 years, and none of these "sky-is-falling" predictions have come true.

Exhibit B: this isn't a criminal law. It will have no effect on the practice of abortion, which is governed by specific statutes describing how and when abortion is legal in the Commonwealth. If a pregnant woman chooses to end the life of her child, these statutes will continue to govern that choice.

What the law would do is to provide a legal remedy for parents

whose beloved unborn baby is killed by the negligent or criminal act of a third party. Does anyone out there really think that is a bad idea?

Admittedly, many will think it is a bad idea to codify, for purposes of Virginia law, the fact that unborn children are human beings. But the only genuine objections to this must be argued on the basis of moral and philosophical principles. Don't fall for fear-mongering hyperbole. The "unintended consequences" questions do have answers.

Rita M. Dunaway
Rockingham County

NEWS

Herndon Homes Show Holiday Best

Annual homes tour shows off residences historic, modern and in between.

BY ALEX McVEIGH
THE CONNECTION

When Kim Lohman purchased her house on Dranesville Road in 2006, she had very specific ideas about how she wanted to decorate it. She chose a Victorian style, making extensive changes to the interior and finding furniture and other accessories to make her vision come to life.

"I worked in England and Scotland for a while, and I've always liked Victorian designs," Lohman said. "I guess I was born in the wrong century."

Lohman makes a hobby of scouring auctions, antique stores and websites to find the items to furnish her house, and she restores many of them to how they would have appeared in another century.

"I don't like buying new things, I love finding the potential in old things, and I take advantage of that potential," she said. "Finding things is a great adventure."

Lohman's house was just one of seven stops on the annual Herndon Holiday Homes Tour, which included five homes, ArtSpace Herndon and the Herndon Depot. The event, held by the town's Cultivating Communities initiative, featured many types of home, from the historical to the modern.

THE HOME OF BILL AND DEBY SASHER was built in 1870, and was previously owned by Gen. William Urick, a member of Herndon's first town council. It also has a special significance for the Herndon Woman's Club, whose members served as docents



Guests browse the expanded master suites, one of two, in the house of Al and Mercia Hobson during the Holiday Homes Tour Saturday, Dec. 3.

for the house.

"Elizabeth Sasher is a former president of the Woman's Club in the '40s, and this is the first year this house has been on the tour, so it's only appropriate," said Patsy Rust of the Woman's Club.

Elizabeth Sasher and her husband Burt purchased the house in 1942, and it has been in their family since.

"In the attic they even found a book from 1861 of rules and regulations for soldiers in the Union Army," said Kelli Radcliffe of the Woman's Club.

The home of Brad and Jacey Skillman is another historic home, which sat on one of the original dairy farms of Herndon. The Skillmans lived in 15 houses over 24 years while in the Navy, so they were drawn to a house that had some roots.

"I've read that old-fashioned houses like ours don't fit with modern life," Jacey Skillman said. "But after living here, I wonder if

there's something about this house that draws a family together around the fireplace to pop corn and laugh over old movies and soak in a lot of good times."

The house was owned by the same family for almost 100 years starting in 1908, and the owners raised about 20 dairy cows in the barn behind the house.

The home of Al and Mercia Hobson is a study in a more modern style. They've spend the last year renovating their house on Vine Street, which was originally on the land of the original 300-acre Bready dairy farm.

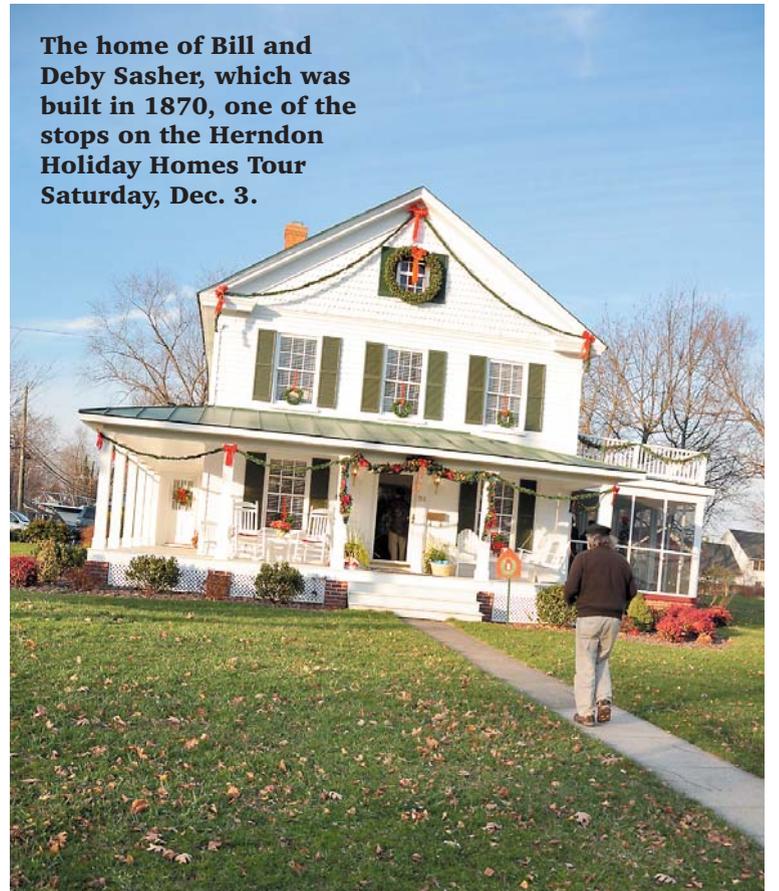
THE HOUSE was designed by its original owner with two master suites, the second of which was added to by a later owner. There is a room dedicated to Al Hobson's Secret Service career, and the couple turned their basement into a gym, woodworking studio for Al and art studio for Mercia.



Guests browse the expanded kitchen and living room of the house of Dave and Lori Culp, a stop on the Herndon Holiday Homes Tour Saturday, Dec. 3.

PHOTOS BY ALEX McVEIGH/THE CONNECTION

The home of Bill and Deby Sasher, which was built in 1870, one of the stops on the Herndon Holiday Homes Tour Saturday, Dec. 3.



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ENTERTAINMENT

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

THURSDAY/DEC. 8

The Nutcracker. 7 p.m. Reston Community Center, 2310 Colts Neck Road, Reston. Performed by the Reston Conservatory Ballet. \$17-\$22. 703-715-8366 or www.conservatoryballet.com.

Preschool Storytime. 10:30 a.m. Reston Regional Library, 11925 Bowman Towne Drive, Reston. Storytime and activities. Age 4-5 with adult. 703-689-2700.

One-on-One Computer Tutoring. 2 p.m. Oakton Library, 10304 Lynnhaven Place, Oakton. Learn the basics of the Internet, Word and Excel. Call for an appointment. Adults. 703-242-4020.

Bedtime Storytime. 7:30 p.m. Oakton Library, 10304 Lynnhaven Place, Oakton. Stories and songs. All ages. 703-242-4020.

E-book /E-Reader Instruction. 7:30 p.m. Oakton Library, 10304 Lynnhaven Place, Oakton. Learn about library eBooks and how to access them with your compatible device. Call for an appointment. Adults. 703-242-4020.

FRIDAY/DEC. 9

Disney's "Beauty and the Beast." 7:30 p.m. Herndon High School Auditorium, 700 Bennett St., Herndon. Tickets \$10. www.herndon.drama.org.

Voice Chamber Singers of Northern Virginia. 7:30 p.m. John Neumann Church, 11900 Lawyers Road, Reston.

A concert of holiday favorites. Toys for Tots collected at the door. Adults \$23, seniors \$18, age 24 and under \$8. 703-277-7772 or www.voce.org

Sugarloaf Crafts Festival. 10 a.m.-6 p.m. Dulles Expo Center, 4320 Chantilly Shopping Center, Chantilly. Pottery, sculpture, glass, jewelry, fashion, wood, metal, furniture, home accessories, photography, and fine art. Gourmet candy, bread, syrup, olive oil and more. Live demonstrations of iron forging, papermaking, copper spinning, stone sculpture and other media. Live music and an interactive puppet theater. Adults \$7 online, \$9 at the door. Under age 12 free. sugarloafcrafs.com or 800-210-9900.

The Battle of Dranesville. 7 p.m. Reston Community Center-Lake Anne, 1609 Washington Plaza, Reston. John Waggoner and Jim Lewis present a program on The Battle of Dranesville, a combat that was fought on Dec. 20, 1861, the strategic significance of Leesburg Turnpike, and what happened to the area of Dranesville and Reston during and after the war. 703-709-7700 or www.restonmuseum.org.

The Nutcracker. 7:30 p.m. Reston Community Center, 2310 Colts Neck Road, Reston. Performed by the Reston Conservatory Ballet. \$17-\$22. 703-715-8366 or www.conservatoryballet.com.

SATURDAY/DEC. 10

WMZO Winter Fest with Rodney Atkins. 5:30 p.m. George Mason University Patriot Center, 4500 Patriot Circle, Fairfax. Also with Kellie Pickler, Thompson Square, David Nail, Josh Thompson and Ashton Shephard. \$30-\$99, available at www.ticketmaster.com and 703-573-

SEAT. Accessible seating available for patrons with disabilities at 703-993-3035. www.patriotcenter.com.

"Disney's Beauty and the Beast." 2 p.m. Herndon High School Auditorium, 700 Bennett St., Herndon. Tickets \$10. www.herndon.drama.org.

Sugarloaf Crafts Festival. 10 a.m.-6 p.m. Dulles Expo Center, 4320 Chantilly Shopping Center, Chantilly. Pottery, sculpture, glass, jewelry, fashion, wood, metal, furniture, home accessories, photography, and fine art. Gourmet candy, bread, syrup, olive oil and more. Live demonstrations of iron forging, papermaking, copper spinning, stone sculpture and other media. Live music and an interactive puppet theater. Adults \$7 online, \$9 at the door. Under age 12 free. sugarloafcrafs.com or 800-210-9900.

Holiday Model Train Show. 10 a.m.-5 p.m. ArtSpace Herndon, 750 Center St., Herndon. W&OD caboose and Herndon Depot Museum open for tours. Free. 703-956-6590.

Voice Chamber Singers of Northern Virginia. 7:30 p.m. St. Timothy's Episcopal Church, 432 Van Buren St., Herndon. A concert of holiday favorites. Toys for Tots collected at the door. Adults \$23, seniors \$18, age 24 and under \$8. 703-277-7772 or www.voce.org.

The Nutcracker. 2:30 p.m. and 7:30 p.m. Reston Community Center, 2310 Colts Neck Road, Reston. Performed by the Reston Conservatory Ballet. Additional shortened performance suitable for young audiences at 11 a.m. \$17-\$22. 703-715-8366 or www.conservatoryballet.com.

Pianist George Winston. 8 p.m. George Mason University Center for the Arts, 4400 University Drive, Fairfax. \$21-\$42. <http://cfa.gmu.edu/>

calendar/178/
Holiday Open House. 11 a.m. Reston Regional Library, 11925 Bowman Towne Drive, Reston. Join the staff and Friends of the Reston Regional Library for a holiday open house. Live music and refreshments. 703-689-2700.

Holidays Around the World. 2 p.m. Reston Regional Library, 11925 Bowman Towne Drive, Reston. Sing a-longs and dancing with Cody&Bj. 703-689-2700.

Holiday Open House. 11 a.m. Oakton Library, 10304 Lynnhaven Place, Oakton. Share the winter holiday season. Music, crafts and refreshments. All ages. 703-242-4020.

SUNDAY/DEC. 11

Master Singers of Virginia: A Festival of Lessons And Carols. 7 p.m. Church Of The Epiphany, 3301 Hidden Meadow Drive, Herndon. Pre-concert lecture by director Erik Jones at 6:15 p.m. Music and stories based on the Festival from King's College in Cambridge, England, Paul Mealor's Ubi Caritas, plus an opportunity for the audience to join in singing carols. Light refreshments. \$18 adults, \$15 students and seniors in advance, plus \$2 at the door. www.msva.org or 703-829-6782.

Sugarloaf Crafts Festival. 10 a.m.-5 p.m. Dulles Expo Center, 4320 Chantilly Shopping Center, Chantilly. Pottery, sculpture, glass, jewelry, fashion, wood, metal, furniture, home accessories, photography, and fine art. Gourmet candy, bread, syrup, olive oil and more. Live demonstrations of iron forging, papermaking, copper spinning, stone sculpture and other media. Live music and an interactive puppet theater. Adults \$7 online, \$9 at the door. Under age 12 free.

Holiday Model Train Show. 11 a.m.-4 p.m. ArtSpace Herndon, 750 Center St., Herndon. Herndon Depot Museum open for tours 12-3 p.m. Free. 703-956-6590.

The Nutcracker. 3:30 p.m. Reston Community Center, 2310 Colts Neck Road, Reston. Performed by the Reston Conservatory Ballet. Additional shortened performance suitable for young audiences at 12 p.m. \$17-\$22. 703-715-8366 or www.conservatoryballet.com.

Symphony Orchestra and Combined Choirs Sing-Along Messiah. 7 p.m. George Mason University Center For The Arts Concert Hall, 4400 University Drive, Fairfax. Adults \$10, students and seniors \$5. 703-993-1380 or <http://music.gmu.edu>.

Holiday Music Service. 9:15 a.m. and 11:15 a.m. Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Fairfax, 2709 Hunter Mill Road, Oakton. "Magnificat" by John Rutter with Choral and Orchestra. www.uucf.org.

Christmas Cantata. 8 a.m., 9:15 a.m. and 11 a.m. Floris United Methodist Church, 13600 Frying Pan Road, Herndon. "The Winter Rose" will be performed during Sunday worship services by the Floris UMC choirs and full orchestra. Traditional carols and newly composed anthems. 703-793-0026 or www.florisumc.org/cantata.

MONDAY/DEC. 12

Judging of the Dress Up Herndon For the Holidays Contest. 6-8 p.m. Neighborhood Decoration Contest throughout Herndon. Home decorations judged in traditional, whimsical, lights categories and more. Free. 703-435-6800 ext. 2084 or www.herndon-va.gov.

Winter Woodpeckers. 10 a.m. Walker Nature Education Center, 11450 Glade Drive, Reston. Learn about woodpeckers and other birds who peck on trees. Look for their homes and make a craft. For age 3-5 with adult. \$5 child RA members, \$8 child non-members. Reserve at 703-476-9689 or naturecenter@reston.org.

English Conversation. 10:30 a.m. Oakton Library, 10304 Lynnhaven Place, Oakton. English practice for non-native speakers. Adults. 703-242-4020.

TUESDAY/DEC. 13

The Reston Choral: Messiah Singalong. 7:30 p.m. Good Shepherd Lutheran Church, 1133 Reston Ave., Herndon. Admission \$10, rental scores \$3. lindacke@verizon.net.

Moscow Ballet's Great Russian Nutcracker. 7:30 p.m. George Mason University Center for the Arts, 4400 University Drive, Fairfax. Tickets \$28-\$122, available at ticketmaster.com or 703-573-SEAT.

Read to the Dog. 7 p.m. Reston Regional Library, 11925 Bowman Towne Drive, Reston. Read aloud to a trained therapy dog. Call or sign up online for a 15-minute session. Age 6-12. 703-689-2700.

One-on-One Computer Tutoring. 3 p.m. Oakton Library, 10304 Lynnhaven Place, Oakton. Learn the basics of the Internet, Word and Excel. Call for an appointment. Adults. 703-242-4020.

Money Matters. 7:15 p.m. Oakton Library, 10304 Lynnhaven Place, Oakton. Monthly group discussion focuses on personal finance and investing. Adults. 703-242-4020.

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Reston Choral Assoc. Director Lucas Frazier, Artististic Director David Lang and Board President Lloyd Kinzer just prior to the Dec. 3 Holiday Concert.

Chorale Holiday Concert a Success

The Reston Chorale's Saturday night performances of their annual Holiday Concert represented many faiths and languages. Singing in Latin, French, Hebrew and English, they were joined by the Amadeus Orchestra and even the audience, as they joined in for a few carols. The concluding number was "A Musical Journey" that portrayed 12 periods of music, from ancient chant, down through the ages to current times. Both the 6 and 8 p.m. audiences gave the Chorale a standing ovation.

— MICHAEL MCKEE



At the conclusion of the Reston Chorale concert, Reston Founder Robert E. Simon Jr. congratulates Tordis Fahringer, keyboard artist.

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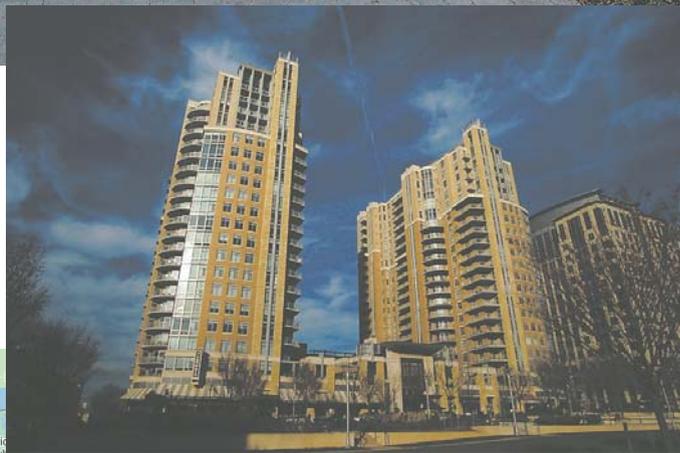
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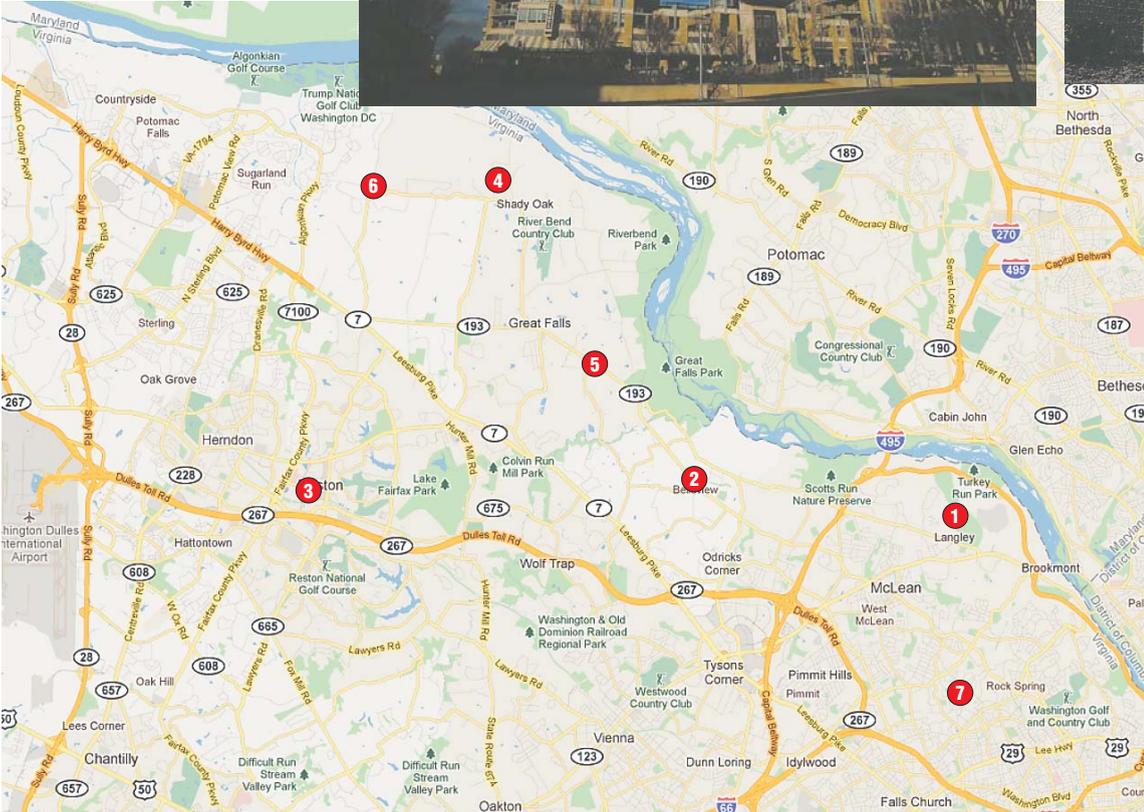
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7 1932 FRANKLIN AVE	6	5	1	MCLEAN	\$2,315,000	Detached	0.32	22101	FRANKLIN FOREST		10/21/11

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Home Life Style

Creating the Holiday Table

Local designers offer suggestions for dressing a festive table and caring for guests.

BY MARILYN CAMPBELL
THE CONNECTION

A festive holiday table requires more than prime rib and plum pudding. From incorporating natural elements to maintaining a consistent theme, local entertaining and design gurus dole out advice for creating a table as enticing as the food it holds.

Candlelight creates a warm ambience, but Ann O'Sheilds, owner of The Nest Egg in Fairfax suggests skipping tall tapers.

"Low candles set a really nice glow on the table and give it a really nice feeling as well," said O'Sheilds. "I always recommend doing unscented candles so they don't interfere with all the fragrances from your holiday meals."

Vienna-based design consultant Denise Willard of Décor by Denise suggests choosing a color scheme, but limiting the palette.

"A simple way to give your holiday decorations a designer look is to stick to two or three colors at most," said Willard. "This year the silver and green color combination is hot."

O'Sheilds agrees that simpler is better. "Whether you want to decorate with blues and browns and silver or go more traditional and use red and gold, keep your palate at a minimum for really high impact."

Let the colors of your room inspire you, especially when choosing flowers.

"Pick a color scheme that goes in your environment," said Evelyn Kinville, lead floral designer for Behnke's Florist Shop in Potomac. "If it is neutral, then you want to add in other colors. Choose colors that go in the room, maybe the colors of the linens. Sometimes people will bring in the china [and try] to pick [the colors in the pattern]."

Bring the outdoors in by using elements from nature, even from your own property, on your table.

"The outdoor, woody, organic feel is really popular right now," said O'Sheilds. "You can incorporate [things] from your own backyard, whether it is pinecones or holly. [You don't have to purchase] brand new decorations every year. You can freshen up what you have by using new elements from outside."

Rustic floral centerpieces are also popular.

"Woody [arrangements] are well-received in Potomac," said Kinville. "There is a [plant] called angel vine. It looks almost like grapevine except that it is very, very fine. Add it to a fresh centerpiece to give it a woody look."

But remember that when you're creating concepts for the table, height matters.

"When setting your table for a dinner, keep in mind the



Place cards can put guests at ease during a dinner party. These ceramic place cards come with a dry erase marker so they can be reused.

height of things that you're putting together and how many people will be at the table," said O'Sheilds. "You don't want it to be so high that you can't see the person across from you."

For the most polished look, choose a theme and keep it consistent.

"I always think that if you pick a theme and do it well throughout and don't falter, you'll be satisfied whether you spend a lot of money or not," said Michael Corrado, owner and head designer at Devers Design Group in Arlington. "If your theme is candy cane, for example, and everything you do [is] red, white and candy cane

oriented, it is going to be very successful looking. If you start faltering, that is when your event looks mish-mashed and not well organized."

Don't be afraid to break tradition. Holly and mistletoe are holiday mainstays, but O'Sheilds says sometimes it is wise to mix old and new. "If you have plates that you like that were passed down to you, you can use them and add in some new, modern elements, like mercury glass pieces," she said. "A good way to keep your decorations current is by adding in modern elements."

SEE CREATING, PAGE 12

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HomeLifeStyle

Top 10 Things To Know Before You Remodel

BY JOSHUA E. BAKER

There are very few decisions that can impact your family life, and the value of one of your biggest assets than selecting the right remodeler. Why not approach this as you would when hiring a lawyer, investment advisor, or even a physician?



Baker

1 Seek an Advocate: Unless you're an expert, and have an enormous amount of time, you will need someone who is able to assemble and manage team of professionals to work together on your behalf. Complex projects require input from numerous players, and may include an architect or designer, various engineers, landscape designer, lighting expert and others. Having one party who takes accountability and manages the entire process while looking after your interests is key to a successful remodeling experience.

2 Plan Early Government regulations and the permitting process for home remodeling are becoming increasingly restrictive and challenging. An experienced professional who understands the ever-changing requirements can help you to navigate through this process will be invaluable during the early stages of your project.

3 Find a Good Match Ensure that your contractor has a track record of success with projects similar to your own. Ask specifically about projects of comparable complexity, magnitude and level of finish, or requiring special areas of expertise, such as green remodeling, or historical restoration.

4 Get First-Hand Info Check the remodeling company's current references and visit recently completed projects to see firsthand if you are satisfied with the caliber of work. The best remodeling firms will be able to provide you with a list of raving fans who will welcome you into their homes.



PHOTO BY GWIN HUNT PHOTOGRAPHY

An outdoor living room by BOWA overlooks a pool and guest house in Vienna. Major renovation projects require extra communication.

5 Explore Options "Paper is cheap." Take as much time as you need to make sure that the design addresses all of your priorities. It is better to invest in design which is relatively inexpensive, vs. having missed opportunities or costly changes during the construction process. Look for cost-effective ways to increase your home's value, such as using durable materials and investing in green technologies that will pay off over time.

6 Be Wise Beware of offers and deals that appear too good to be true. Remodeling remains one of the most reported industries at the Better Business Bureau. Understanding exactly what you are getting for your investment and taking steps to ensure the remodeler will be able to provide service in the long-term is essential. Asking for bank references, researching employee tenure, and confirming that subcontractors have been paid on time can help you evaluate a company's financial stability.

7 Prevent Stress Especially for larger or more complex projects, insist on a full-time onsite project supervisor to orchestrate the entire process and all

the players involved. This will help to keep your project on schedule and surprises to a minimum.

8 Be Firm Insist that a detailed production schedule be tied to your contract, and hold the builder accountable for these deadlines. While it's not commonly provided, ask for a written schedule guarantee with a penalty clause to ensure your satisfaction.

9 Double Check Warranties can vary greatly from one remodeler to another, so make sure you understand exactly what your builder will cover and for what duration after the completion of the project. Also ask about what resources are available to provide service if problems arise in the future.

10 Take Advantage Now is a great time to remodel. Compared to a few years ago, subcontractors are more readily available and their costs are significantly lower, enabling contractors to produce projects more efficiently and deliver greater value.

Joshua E. Baker is founder of BOWA Builders.

Creating the Holiday Table

FROM PAGE 11

FOR YOUR GUESTS

Use care in choosing a menu, keeping in mind possible dietary restrictions of your guests.

"Make sure you understand all of your guests' needs and are doing your best to make sure that you have food for everyone so that no one feels overlooked or left out," said Scott Hoffner, corporate chef for Main Event Caterers in Arlington. "Keep in mind that the dietary

restrictions of the average person are much different than [they were] even just a few years ago. There is a huge turn to vegetarianism and veganism, and you have gluten issues and religious factors in terms of pork or shellfish."

Hoffner believes a menu with farm-to-table fare will make a memorable meal.

"Find food that is local, fresh and in season," said Hoffner. "At the end of that day, that is what is going to give you the best result."

A little planning can make your guests more comfortable.

Place cards can ease anxiety especially when guests don't know each other.

"They put guests at ease," she said. "If you see the table and you see that there is already a place for you, there are not awkward [moments] of looking for a seat [and trying to determine] who you should sit by. They take the anxiety out, especially if guests don't know each other."



Manny Smith and the Centreville Wildcats will be playing Oscar Smith High of Chesapeake for the Div. 6 Virginia state football crown this Saturday at the University of Virginia.



South County running back Peter Basnight rushed for 64 yards in the Stallions' state playoff win over Hanover last Saturday in Lorton.

PHOTOS BY CRAIG STERBUTZEL/THE CONNECTION

Two Northern Region Football Teams in State Finals

Centreville, South County set to play in respective title games this Saturday in Charlottesville.

BY RICH SANDERS
THE CONNECTION

Behind an outstanding game from lefty-throwing quarterback Shane Foley and an offensive line which dominated play in the trenches, the South County Secondary football team soundly defeated Hanover High (Mechanicsville), 38-22, in a Div. 5 Virginia State AAA semifinals football playoff game last Saturday evening. The postseason contest, which began at 4 p.m., took place at South County's home field in Lorton.

With the win, South County continued what has been as dramatic a turnaround season as has perhaps ever been seen from a Northern Region football team. The Stallions began the season with three straight losses — to Hayfield, Oakton, and West Potomac — but have since won 11 straight and now find themselves preparing for this Saturday afternoon's state championship game against annual Div. 5 power Phoebus High (Hampton). The title game is scheduled to be played at the University of Virginia's Scott Stadium in Charlottesville beginning at noon.

Following that state finals clash, the Div. 6 (larger schools) title game will take place between local Northern Region team Centreville versus Oscar Smith High (Chesapeake). That game, set for 4:30 p.m., will also be played at Scott Stadium.

SOUTH COUNTY'S 11-GAME WIN STREAK following its tough start has been fascinating to watch. The Stallions, under new head coach Gerry Pannoni this fall season, had never before, in the school's relatively short seven-year history, won any type of postseason football title before this season. Following the 0-3 start, South County won all seven of its remaining regular season games to make its record 7-3, earning the Stallions a part of the Patriot District title along with West Potomac and Lake

Braddock.

Then, in the eight-team Div. 5 region playoffs, the Stallions continued their red-hot play with victories over three quality opponents — Madison, 31-0; defending Div. 5 region champion Stone Bridge, 25-3; and previously unbeaten Yorktown, 37-13, the latter victory over the Patriots (National District) coming in the region finals.

That earned South County its' first-ever trip to the state playoffs.

"The past 11 weeks, it's really been unexplainable," said South County senior running back Jake Josephs, who both caught a touchdown and threw for one as well — on a halfback option play. "Everything has worked. "If something goes wrong [in a game], the next play works. ...When we were 0-3 we all got together and said, 'That's it, no more losses or we're done.'"

Hanover, the Div. 5 Central Region champion, had no answers for slowing down South County's rolling offense on Saturday as Foley, the Stallions' southpaw quarterback, behind ample protection from his offensive line, smoked the Hawks by connecting on 13-of-16 passes for 200 yards and three touchdowns. The signal caller threw no interceptions and was not sacked.

His biggest target was senior wide receiver Mike Ferguson, who caught three touchdowns on pass plays of 27, 11, and 13 yards. Ferguson, the team's kicker, also converted a 29-yard field goal.

The Stallions (11-3), who led 24-0 at half-time, utilized an impressive running attack in the win to bring balance to the offense. South County, in all, rushed for 162 yards, the top ball carrier being senior running back Peter Basnight (15 carries, 64 yards).

"We've been playing football [together] since we were in the seventh grade, so to get to the state championship game is awesome."

—Centreville receiver Chase Walter

"The past 11 weeks, it's really been unexplainable."

— South County running back Jake Josephs

CENTREVILLE HIGH, meanwhile, edged home team Hermitage High (Richmond), 10-9, in a Saturday afternoon Div. 6 state semifinals game. The Wildcats (13-1), champions of the Concorde District, will play in the state title game this Saturday afternoon at 4 p.m. versus Oscar Smith (Eastern Region) in Charlottesville.

Centreville, under second year head coach Chris Haddock, went 9-1 over the regular season, its lone loss coming against district opponent Westfield in overtime. In the playoffs, the Wildcats defeated Fairfax, 42-19, defending Div. 6 champion Lake Braddock, 21-18, and Westfield, 27-24. The region title game win over Westfield avenged the regular season loss and gave the Wildcats their first region crown since 2000.

Last week against Hermitage, Centreville — with the score tied at 3-3 — took the lead for good in the third quarter when quarterback Mitch Ferrick, on the final play of a 50-yard scoring march, connected with receiver Chase Walter on an eight-yard fade route pattern in the back of the left side of the end zone. Jared Rondeau, who had tied the game with a 20-yard field goal in the

second quarter, converted the extra point kick to give the Wildcats a 10-3 lead.

"I had a one-on-one on the outside," said Walter, a senior, of the TD play. "Mitch told me he would throw it up and I said, 'fine.' We work on that play every day. I beat my guy — he was behind me — and Mitch threw it up. It was a well thrown ball and I just caught it."

Hermitage scored a touchdown in the fourth quarter to get within 10-9 but the extra point kick failed. Ferrick said a Wildcat player might have tipped the ball on the conversion try.

"We knew [from watching game films] that we'd have a great chance to block field goals or extra points," said Ferrick. "It was a high snap and our guys went in hard at it. I would think it likely their kicker was nervous [with the game on the line]."

Later in the fourth quarter, with Hermitage threatening, Centreville's fierce pass rush forced a poor pass from QB D'Vonta Derricott, resulting in an interception by Connor Coward at the Hawks' 30-yard line.

Shortly after that, with time running out and Hermitage with the ball at its own 25, the Wildcats, on third and fourth down plays, got sacks from Ken Ekanem and Ryan Sepulveda to put the game away. In all, Centreville's defense accounted for 10 sacks, with Ekanem, a senior linebacker, accounting for four-and-a-half.

"I think we did real good on defense," said Ekanem. "We wanted to prove we were a better defense than Hermitage. We threw some blitzes at them and their linemen couldn't pick them up."

Centreville star running back Manny Smith led the Wildcats' ground game with 50 hard fought yards on 20 carries.

The Wildcats, this week, will be looking for their first state crown since winning it all in 2000.

"It's very exciting," said Walter. "We've been playing football [together] since we were in the seventh grade, so to get to the state championship game is awesome."

Show and Tell



By KENNETH B. LOURIE

Regularly, my wife or I receive an invite/query for something or other from friends, family and/or miscellaneous past, present and future business acquaintances, so that they can "see Kenny." Concerned and courteous – and caring though it may be, it makes me feel peculiar, sort of, like I'm something of a "bearded lady." "Come see the lung cancer patient as he continues to live against all medical odds." And apparently, thought I don't really feel it – and certainly don't acknowledge it, I am a bit of an oddity, as I have been all my life. But now, near death – in terms of statistical presumption, I need to be seen; not to be believed, but to be congratulated, encouraged, embraced: "The Amazing Kenny," as the barker might shout it to grab your attention.

Now I'm not about to charge admission or set up a 900 number to answer questions about my life-with-cancer experiences, but people do want to "see me" like I'm the adult version of the baby on the Seinfeld episode when the new mother whined over the phone to Jerry: "Jerry, you gotta see the baby!" (Do you remember the mother described the baby as "breathtaking?") Well, I don't think I'm breathtaking – or worth whining about, but I am still taking breaths, which apparently, is worth noting. Moreover, my living and still breathing is interesting to some, as if my continuing to do so provides some sort of wisdom.

I don't see my continuing to live as any kind of wisdom, however, although I do have a bit of a story to tell. I think it's more plain dumb luck – without characterizing myself too disparagingly. Sure, I've been "compliant," the term most often used to describe one's adherence to doctor's orders. I've showed up for all my appointments and scans. I've taken all my medications as instructed and prescribed. In addition, I've tolerated my treatment with minimal complications. Whatever blips (abnormal labs) which have appeared in my weekly, every-three-week/now every-four-week lab work have always returned to acceptable levels within a reasonable time, which has enabled my treatment to proceed. In summary, I've been an excellent patient. As Curly Howard of The Three Stooges said: "I seen my duty and I done it."

Does this behavior make me some sort of freak? How does one not adhere to medically-instructed protocols (if you believe in that sort of thing) when you're given a death sentence? "I can treat you," my oncologist said after a biopsy confirmed a malignancy in my lungs, "but I can't cure you. Radiation is not an option. You have too many tumors. They're like weeds." (My wife, Dina, still hasn't gotten over that last description.) To me however, it was all sort of amusing, considering that I was basically symptom-free and a lifelong non-smoker. As serious as all of it was – and is, and likely will continue to be, somehow, I'm able to not take it too seriously. Is that wisdom? I think it's probably more like self-preservation.

As a result, I guess I am fairly well-preserved, given my circumstances. I wouldn't say I've aged like fine wine or a bottle of single malt scotch, but I'm still able to walk (slowly though, the neuropathy and edema in my legs and feet – side effects, are a problem) and talk. And in so doing, I seem to be a sort of curiosity, maybe even a source of bemusement to people. Which bothers me not at all. I'm happy to still be in the game. Seeing is believing and showing can be telling. I don't think I have too many answers, but maybe the fact that I'm available for questions matters more.

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

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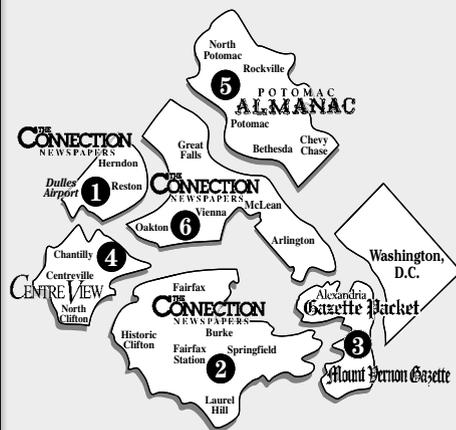
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