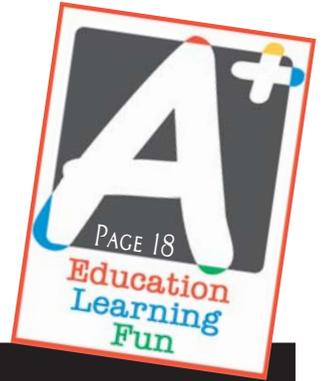


Alexandria Gazette Packet



THE SHOPS AT BELLE VIEW
INSIDE



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DECEMBER 15, 2011



PHOTO BY LOUISE KRAFFT/GAZETTE PACKET

Early Visit By Santa

Fifty-four preschoolers at Child and Family Network Center in Cora Kelly were entertained on Thursday, Dec. 8, by the Blue Sky Puppet Theatre and a special visit from Santa. The Blue Sky Puppet Theatre, based in the Baltimore/Washington metropolitan area, has been performing exclusively for children and their families since 1980. Santa and his elves were sponsored by the Santa We Believe Foundation.

The Child and Family Network Centers, based in Alexandria, provides free bilingual preschool and social services.

Preschooler Kreilys Flores meets Santa.

Arlandria Dilemma

Will improving neighborhood push out Latino residents, businesses?

BY MICHAEL LEE POPE
GAZETTE PACKET

This weekend, members of the Alexandria City Council will be presented with a dilemma that could radically transform Arlandria — a working-class neighborhood of poor and Latino residents straddling Alexandria and Arlington.

At issue is a proposal to redevelop the Mount Vernon Village Center on Mount Vernon Avenue, demolishing an old 1940s-era strip mall to construct a 600,000-square-foot mixed-use development with two six-story towers. Supporters of the proposal say redeveloping the blighted strip mall will transform the neighborhood and create new vitality. Opponents say the proposal would gentrify the neighborhood and displace the existing community.

“There is a great concern about what might be referred to as

gentrification, the change in the character of the neighborhood,” said Planning Commission member Stuart Dunn. “That’s a real issue, and an issue that is troubling.”

Planning Commission members approved the development last week, sending the issue to the City Council for public hearing on Dec. 17 — but not without some heart-

ache. Dunn offered the motion that eventually approved the proposal, but he added that he was “reluctant” to do so. Commissioner Donna Fossum said the project had “tepid approval.” Commissioner Eric Wagner said he “lived in fear” that new development could be stimulus pushing out the existing community.

“It’s a reaction to gentrification, which is real,” said Wagner. “We have to move with due speed to figure out ways to keep that preserved as the market-rate affordable housing that it is.”

“Our market is the Hispanic community that lives around here. I assume it won’t be the Hispanic community that is going to live in the new development.”

— Roberto Perez, small-business owner

NEIGHBORS ARE DIVIDED

on the proposal. Many residents and small-business owners worry about what will happen once the massive six-story towers are erected. Although the project itself won’t displace anyone, opponents say, it could have a ripple effect that could upend the community. They say the rising tide

wouldn’t lift all boats. Rather, it could create a tsunami that would destroy one of the last remaining low-income communities in the Washington metropolitan region.

“This development is going to cause a chain reaction,” said Gabriel Rojo, executive director of Tenants and Workers United. “The

SEE ARLANDRIA, PAGE 26

Waterfront Group: Mission Impossible

Plan to increase density and allow hotels divides a panel created to find consensus.

BY MICHAEL LEE POPE
GAZETTE PACKET

The plan has divided Alexandria for a year. Now members of a work group are divided, even as they are poised to present a final report to City Council members during a Jan. 10 work session. Four members agree with city planners, who have proposed overturning a longstanding ban on hotels and increasing density at three sites slated for redevelopment. Three members oppose rezoning the waterfront, setting up a four-to-three split on a panel created to find consensus on the controversial plan.

“I’d be very careful when using the word ‘consen-

sus,” said David Olinger, a member of the minority who represents the Old Town Civic Association. “A four to three split is not consensus.”

Next week, the work group will circulate a final report that hopes to capture the disagreement over major sticking points — allowing hotels, changing zoning and what happens at the foot of King Street. City Council members have scheduled a Jan. 10 work session to consider the work group’s report, which will be worded in a way that expresses the will of the five-vote majority and the four-vote minority. Two members have been given the task of distilling both sides of the argument

“I agree that it’s a tedious format,” said Nate Macek, one of the two members who will author the final report. “But this has been a tedious process.”

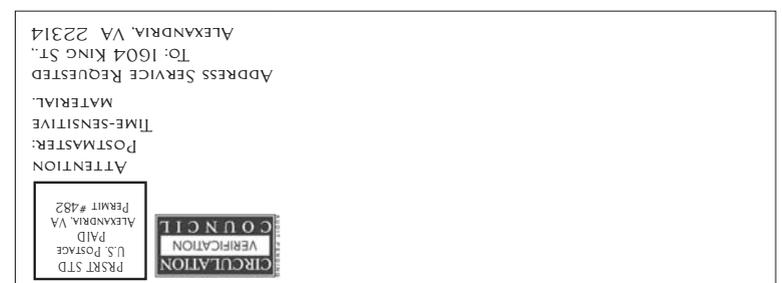
“There was a lot of contention, but there was not consensus.”

— Bob Wood, member of the Waterfront Plan Work Group

THE PANEL was created in the spring, when council members became deadlocked on differences of opinion about allowing hotels and increasing density. Before adjourning for the summer recess, council members appointed a group officially known as the Waterfront Plan Work Group.

SEE WATERFRONT GROUP, PAGE 26

SEE WATERFRONT GROUP, PAGE 26

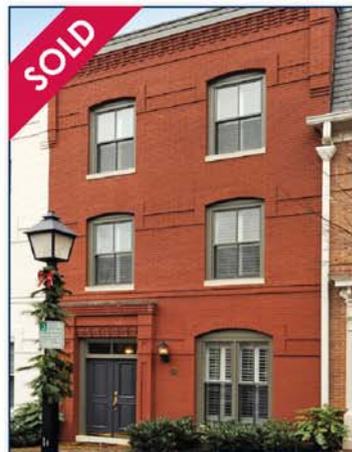
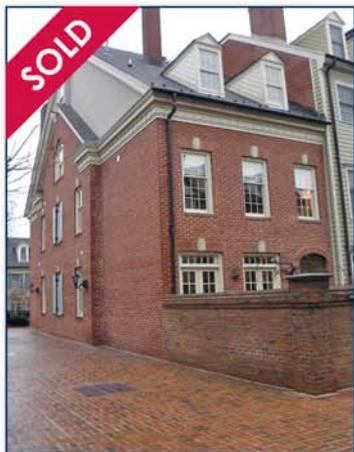
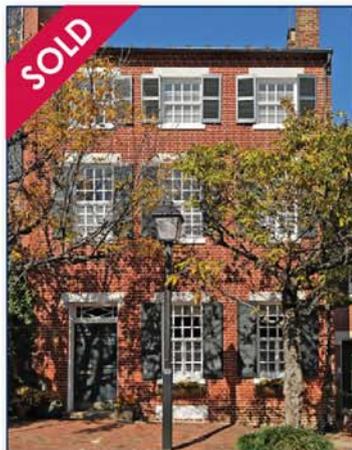
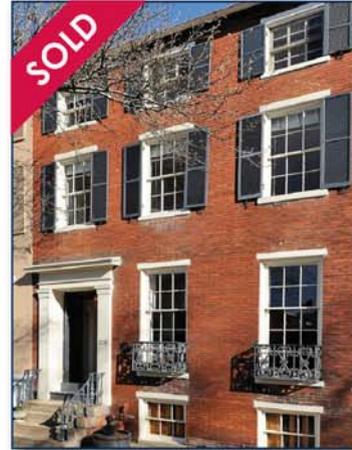
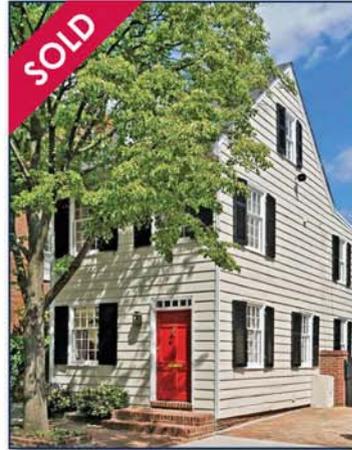
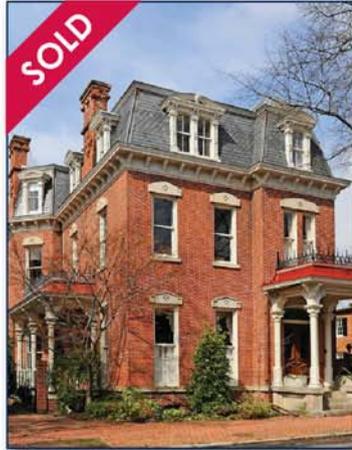
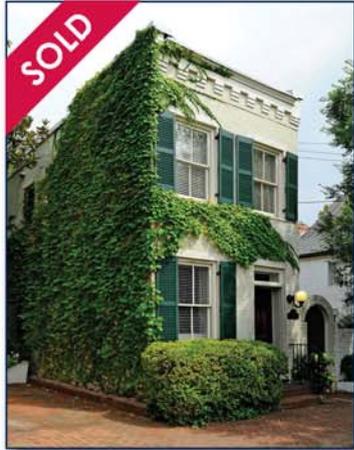




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COUNCIL NOTEBOOK

Going Postal

The city's first post office was George Tavern, which was at the northwest corner of Cameron and Royal Street. Back then, the city was located on an official post road known as King's Highway and the postal service was a growth industry.

These days the United States Postal Service is in decline. It's running a \$10 billion deficit, and Postal Service leaders have put together a list of 3,700 facilities that could be on the chopping block including two in Alexandria.

"The two that have been targeted have historic significance," said Mayor **Bill Euille**. "We shouldn't sit idly by."

One of the post offices is a historic building on the campus of the Virginia Theological Seminary with murky origins. The other is a 1940s-era Art Deco building on Mount Vernon Avenue known as the Potomac Post Office because Del Ray was once a town called Potomac. Both facilities have their supporters, who have been lobbying City Council members to do something — anything — to prevent the two offices from closing.

"There's no doubt that something needs to be done," said Vice Mayor **Kerry Donley**. "You can't have these kinds of deficits and continue to operate."

Ultimately, City Council members don't have much of a say because the federal government will be making the decision. So they decided to do the only thing they can — write a letter to formally opposing the closure of the two post offices. During a discussion of how the letter should be framed Tuesday night, Donley suggested that the Postal Service should consider eliminating Saturday mail delivery and reducing health-care costs.

Councilwoman **Alicia Hughes** said the Postal Service officials should keep in mind that they are not paying for the land or the building at the Seminary post office.

"It doesn't make sense to close a post office that's actually turning a profit," said Hughes.

Imperfect Attendance

Woody Allen once observed that 80 percent of success was showing up. For members of Alexandria boards and commissions, the percentage is closer to 75 percent.

That's the minimum standard of attendance expected of the 58 boards, commissions and task forces that are required to file attendance reports. According to a recently completed review of attendance records, eight members did not make the cut.

"Each of the eight persons has been notified by letter of their attendance record," former acting city manager **Bruce Johnson** wrote in the Dec. 6 memorandum. "These persons may reapply for reappointment with other new applicants when the positions are advertised by the City Clerk."

The Commission on Information Technology suffered the biggest cut, with three members booted for imperfect attendance. One of the members on the chopping block was School Board member **Helen Morris**.

Acting No More

Monday marked the first day on the job for new city manager **Rashad Young**, ending the seven-month tenure of the acting city manager. Mayor Euille and several council members took a few moments to thank Johnson for stepping in and leading through a hurricane, a flood and an earthquake.

"I think he got to enjoy it because wherever I went around the town I saw him at parties and receptions," Euille said. "I never looked at Bruce as being a party animal. I always thought of him as someone who is boring. But I saw a side I didn't know he had."

"Free food," quipped Johnson, who has now returned to his day job as the city's chief financial officer.

— MICHAEL LEE POPE



Burke and Herbert's Walter Clarke and Marilou Octavious thank a donor to the Salvation Army Red Kettle Campaign Dec. 9 on King Street in Old Town.

Battle of the Bells
Red Kettle Campaign continues through Dec. 24.

It's a holiday symbol as traditional as red hats and reindeer: The bell ringers for the Salvation Army Red Kettle Campaign and volunteers from many local civic organizations are behind those smiles greeting Alexandrians throughout the city.

"There's a friendly competition going among several local organizations," said Lt. Trey Jones of the Alexandria Citadel. "Rotary, the American Legion, the Boat Club, Kiwanis — they are all out this year to see who can raise the most money during their bell-ringing hours."

The Alexandria Citadel raises 25 percent of its yearly operating budget during the 35 days of the Red Kettle Campaign, which runs through Christmas Eve.

"So far we have raised just under \$100,000," Jones said. "Our budgeted goal is \$175,000 but because we have Giant grocery stores back involved, we'd like to reach \$200,000. We're running low on re-



Donations to the Red Kettle Campaign can be made electronically via cell phone by scanning the QR code at the Red Kettle sites.

sources right now so I am hoping we can meet that before the end of the campaign."

The local support is what allows the Salvation Army to provide substantial services for the community throughout the year, including a transitional housing program for women, and emergency utility, rent and food assistance.

"This year we added an Army-Navy game day competition in front of Walmart in Kingstowne," Jones said. "Unfortunately for Army, Navy beat them there as well, raising \$860 to Army's \$731 but it was a fun day and we hope to do it again next year."

For more information or to donate to the Red Kettle Campaign, visit www.SalArmyDC.org/alexandria.

— JEANNE THEISMANN

Alive! Distributes Food to Needy

Volunteers work to ensure holiday meals.

BY MONTIE MARTIN
GAZETTE PACKET

Nearly 120 volunteers from over 41 religious congregations volunteered their time on Saturday, Dec. 10, to help distribute food for the holidays to Alexandria's most vulnerable citizens.

The Alive! Last Saturday food program holds 11 distribution events a year, with November and December combined for the holidays. The holiday event is the largest out of the year, with nearly 710 families in attendance.

"We hope to have enough donations to feed everyone," said Deborah Patterson, a senior volunteer with Alive! and site coordinator at Cora Kelly Recreation Center. "Times are tough for a lot of people, but if they can help those at the margins of survival it helps society and the city as a whole."

Once social workers refer clients and their family for services with the program, the site coordinators make requests from the National Capital Area Food Bank, which delivers the food for distribution.

Clients receive a five-day supply of fresh vegetables, venison and eggs. Although turkeys have been a traditional supplement for the holiday meals, due to a rise in the price of food and a strapped budget, chickens were selected this

SEE VOLUNTEERS, PAGE 29



Jeri Greenwell adds a 5-pound bag of potatoes to the food carts.

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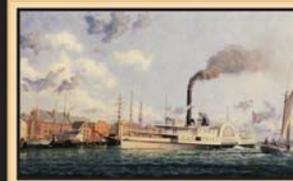


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HOLIDAY GIFT GUIDE

Don't Forget Everyone's Best Friend Pet gifts for pet people.

BY MONTIE MARTIN
GAZETTE PACKET

Consider picking up a gift this holiday season that delights both animals and their people. From venison antlers for dogs to delectable cat treats for the feline affiliated, there is a range of goodies and services that fit every budget.

This year's trending dog toys include venison and elk antlers, an all-natural product that lasts longer than conventional bones. Unlike bones or rawhide that splinter and are not wholly digestible, antlers stay fresh and are reasonably priced at most pet stores.

"I never even heard of antlers nine months ago, now we can't seem to keep them on the shelf."

— **Brand Vitz, sales associate at Chateau Animaux**

"I never even heard of antlers nine months ago, now we can't seem to keep them on the shelf," said Brand Vitz, a sales associate at Chateau Animaux in Old Town. "They're porous and can be soaked in chicken stock to hold flavor."

Squeaky toys are also popular. "Dogs of all ages like toys, and all toys are destructible," said Fabina Neves, a sales associate with Profeed Pet Supplies at the

Bradlee Shopping Center. "It's so obnoxious when the toy squeaks, but dogs love it."

Gifts for people include breed specific magnets that show off animal pride, and can be professionally wrapped at most pet stores which makes life a little easier for the holidays.

Friends and family with animals might also enjoy a professional dog walk or home visit. The gift of a home sitter offers an opportunity to go out late without concern for furry loved ones.

"Home sitters are very popular around the



PHOTO COURTESY OF KITSTRING MARKETING

Dean DeGood, owner of doggywalker.com, provides professional dog walking services and pet sitters for the holidays.

holidays," said Sue Lambert, operations manager with doggywalker.com. "Between late night shopping and parties it's good to know someone is there to take care your animal so you can have fun."

Books about pets are another possibility. Allie Phillips, an animal rights lawyer who tackles the legality of classifying pets as property, will be promoting her new book "Defending the Defenseless" on Saturday, Dec. 18 at the new Pro Feed Pet Nutrition Center at the Belle View Shopping Center.

Donating to a shelter in the name of an animal-conscious friend or family member would make for a different kind of present, and engender a memorable feeling of kindness to the holiday season.

Animal Sitters for Carefree Evenings

Professional animal sitters are available over the holidays and make for a perfect gift for someone who can enjoy an evening out without worrying about a furry loved one. Sitters service Alexandria, Mount Vernon, Arlington and parts of Fairfax. For more information, visit doggywalker.com



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BUSINESS

Restaurant Plans To Move

Bombay Curry Company awaits city approval.

BY MONTIE MARTIN
GAZETTE PACKET

The Bombay Curry Company, a fixture of the Del Ray community since 1995, will be closing on Dec. 20. Owner Balraj Bhasin, however, sees the closing of his Clavert Building location as an opportunity to move closer to his clientele along Mt. Vernon Avenue.

“Running a restaurant can be stressful, but the neighborhood has been very supportive,” said Bhasin. “A lot of people have given us encouragement, we have received over 200 emails of support from regulars.”

Such an overwhelming community response is no surprise considering the many organizations Bombay Curry Company has supported over the years. Bhasin has given proceeds and gift certificates to Food and Friends, Head Start, and Alexandria’s Volunteer Bureau.

In recognition of Children’s Day in India, on Nov. 14 Bombay Curry Company donated all sales to Alexandria’s Child, which supports foster care through the city’s Department of Community & Human Services.

“In India I grew up to believe Children’s Day was very important,” said Bhasin. “Nov. 14 is the birthday of India’s first Prime Minister, and while some of his views were controversial he believed the future of the country was with children.”

As those who have eaten at Bhasin’s restaurant will say, his food is recognized as among the best in Alexandria.

“The curry is awesome, the chicken kabobs are awesome, and the Sunday brunch is awesome,” said Estela Herrera, a barista at St. Elmos Coffee Pub. “They take pride in what they do. They’re coming



LOUISE KRAFT/GAZETTE PACKET

Balraj Bhasin, owner of the Bombay Curry Company, has been a fixture of the Del Ray community since 1995.



PHOTO BY MONTIE MARTIN/GAZETTE PACKET

The Bombay Curry Company plans to relocate to 2607 Mt. Vernon Avenue pending city approval.

back to a better area, and it will be good for the community when Bombay opens again.”

Bhasin first moved to Del Ray in 1991, and established his curry restaurant when the Del Ray Citizens Association identified the need for Indian food.

Indian Cuisine

The Bombay Curry Company, currently located at The Clavert Building, will close Dec. 20 with plans to open at 2607 Mt. Vernon Avenue pending city approval. For a complete menu visit: bombaycurrycompany.com

His recipes come from a lengthy experience working in the hospitality sector in northern India, where people move with their herds and cook over fires.

The chooza kabob, a dish that includes a young chicken, onions, bell peppers, served on bed of rice and topped with curry sauce, was a must for Bhasin.

“I really wanted the dish, but could not get it exactly as I remembered,” said Bhasin. “Then one day at a mall I noticed an old cook book from the 1960s and started flipping through it. It had the recipe; it was exactly the same. The name of the book was ‘Great American Cooking.’”

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BUSINESS



Mellenie Runion of truly-life with the DRBA board Star Award.



Pat Miller, left, is presented with the Lifetime Achievement Star Award by Gayle Reuter at the Del Ray Business Association holiday luncheon Dec. 12 at the newly opened Pork Barrel BBQ.



U.S. Rep. Jim Moran (D-8) and Mike Anderson of Pork Barrel BBQ.



New City Manager Rashad Young, center, with Mayor Bill Euille and Sheriff Dana Lawhorne at the DRBA Star Awards luncheon Dec. 12

PHOTOS BY JEANNE THEISMANN/GAZETTE PACKET



Marvin Paz, left with Parks and Recreation Director James Spengler, was named DRBA city employee Star Award winner for 2011.

Del Ray Business Association Presents Star Awards

Community, business leaders honored.

The Del Ray Business Association held its annual Star Awards holiday luncheon Dec. 12, honoring community leaders and volunteers at a meeting that served as an unofficial introduction for new City Man-

ager Rashad Young.

"I've only been on the job for four hours and here I am," joked Young after an introduction by Mayor Bill Euille. "My family and I visited Del Ray when I was interviewing for the job. We love this community and it represents well the kind of city Alexandria is."

The 2011 Star Award winners are: Marvin Paz, city employee Star Award; Mellenie

Runion, board Star Award; and Ellyn Ferguson, citizen Star Award.

Pat Miller, a longtime DRBA officer and founder of Art on the Avenue and the Del Ray Farmers Market, was presented with the Lifetime Achievement Star Award.

"This is a real honor for me," Miller said. "It is an honor to be living here."

— JEANNE THEISMANN

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LIVING LEGENDS

2011 Living Legend of Alexandria – Timothy S. Elliott

Motivated by public service.

BY DIANE BECHTOL

Timothy S. Elliott, the man who championed the Scholarship Fund of Alexandria to give high-school students a chance at college, and who worked for a City boating facility to benefit student athletes and local adult rowers, is a 2011 Living Legend of Alexandria.

Former member and chairman of the Alexandria School Board, and a soccer coach, member and chair of the Alexandria Parks and Recreation Commission, co-chair of the Alexandria Cultural Assessment Commission, Elliott said, "I keep my fingers in the pie and that keeps life sweet." Make that multiple pies. He has also served on the City Manager's Small Business Task Force, and vice chair and board member of Old Town Civic Association. He's a member of the Jones Point neighborhood community group and represented the OTCA on the Woodrow Wilson Bridge Task Force. In the 1970s, he was one of the plaintiffs in a suit against Alexandria to prevent constructing apartment buildings on the Alexandria waterfront, where Founders Park stands.

Elliott includes volleyball, tennis, sailing, bicycling, and volunteering at rowing competitions among his recreational interests. He has also built a log cabin.

"I like doing things to make life better for people, and my wife Page is the same way. She may be working more quietly in the background, but she is there." Elliott says he's been inspired by a family tradition that appreciated and participated in public service. "I was motivated as a kid. My father was a lawyer for the government for 36 years and also served in the Army. In 1928, my grandmother campaigned for Al Smith and this was only nine years after women got the right to vote." He is gratified that the life lesson has been passed down through the generations, pointing to a young granddaughter who allots a portion of her allowance to the homeless.

"Time is a vacuum and you fill it up." While on the school board, he was unable to accrue vacation time from his job at the

Living Legends: The Project

Now in its fifth year, Living Legends of Alexandria is an ongoing 501(c)(3) photo-documentary project to identify, honor and chronicle Alexandria's Living Legends. The project was conceived by Nina Tisara to create an enduring artistic record of the people whose vision and dedication make a positive, tangible difference to the quality of life in Alexandria. Platinum and Gold Sponsors this year are Club Managers Association of America, Erkiletian Real Estate Development, Inova Alexandria Hospital, Renner & Co., Rotary Club of Alexandria, the Alexandria Commission for the Arts and the late Douglas Thurman.

This is one of a series of 12 profiles that will appear this year. For more information or to nominate a Legend for 2012, visit www.AlexandriaLegends.com.

Interior Department, because it was used instead for school board meetings and related activities.

ONE OF THE MOST life-changing acts and generosity came from the Elliott family in the 1980s. They took in Italian exchange student and rower Espedito Gasparo, who lived with them for one year. Page Elliott saw Espedito's college potential, despite his destiny to be a secretary upon his return to Italy. "What would have happened to that kid? There was 27 percent unemployment and the Mafia was everywhere." The Elliotts supported Espedito's nearly impossible dream to attend college. He graduated from T.C. Williams, as did the Elliott's two children Farar and Schuyler. Espedito graduated from the University of Naples, came back to the United States for an internship with an economist and met his future wife. Remaining here, Espedito is now a U.S. citizen and has a master's degree from George Mason University. The Elliotts consider Espedito their son and his two children as among their total of six grandchildren.

Elliott himself graduated from Fairfax High School, then from Brandeis University and Harvard Law School. Elliott performed military service with the New York National Guard, as a telephone crewman and in the Virginia National Guard as a radio repairman.

Elliott began his professional career with the IBM Corporation. At IBM, Elliott's work included federal, state and local government contract law, anti-trust, plant and laboratory management and labor and civil rights law. After 10 years, he left IBM to become an assistant solicitor with the U.S. Department of the Interior where he gave for legal advice regarding freedom of information requests, advisory committees, administrative procedures, ethics, and personnel litigation.

From 1978 until his retirement in 2003, Elliott managed the general law division and legal advice for the department and was assigned to special projects, including cases that went before the U.S. Supreme Court. He personally provided legal advice to nine Secretaries of the Interior. Elliott was surprised to learn that unbeknown to him, his colleagues were referring to him as "The Mayor" of the Department. "I asked them, 'what's that supposed to mean?' and I was told everyone considered me the go-to person whenever a question arose.

RECOGNITION of Elliott came from the highest levels. He is the recipient of six federal service awards, including the Department of the Interior Meritorious and Dis-



Timothy S. Elliott has served the community in multiple roles from School Board chairman to Parks and Recreation Commission chair to co-chair of the Alexandria Cultural Assessment Commission.

PHOTO BY NINA TISARA/LIVING LEGENDS OF ALEXANDRIA

tinguished Service Awards, the Secretary of the Interior's Silver Award, and the Presidential Meritorious and Distinguished Senior Executive Awards. Elliott was a charter member of the Senior Executive Service and is a member of the New York Bar and U.S. Supreme Court Bars.

Two Alexandria school-related involvements are especially close to his heart, including the boathouse constructed on the Potomac River for the T.C. Williams rowing teams. "The boathouse for public high school students is an unusual facility and we were able to convince the federal government it was essential to our community." Elliott was instrumental in planning a lean-to on the crew facility building to house an adult rowing program. The resulting rent money supports the youth program.

He described the day hundreds of locals "worked like a land-based machine" to pass bricks to construct the lean-to. "It was like in an old movie, passing the bricks one by

one. That's the beauty of Alexandria. Here we are sitting minutes from Washington and there's a group of citizens caught up by community spirit." Elliott's proudest achievement has been leading the Scholarship Fund of Alexandria, which has benefitted T.C. Williams High School students for 24 years. Most of the 3,000-plus scholarships given to date are both need and merit-based. "We established the fund with some trepidation. It was something new and it was relatively rare in the United States to have financial aid in the form of a community scholarship fund. Kids either weren't going to be able to attend college or were not going to as high a reach school as they were capable of attending."

He attributes success to a T.C. Williams teacher's belief that there were people in the Alexandria community who would donate to a fund, and to school administrators who have done the groundwork to educate worthy scholarship candidates. To date, more than \$7 million has been awarded; \$700,000 in the last year. An annual telethon and a spring silent auction highlight the solicitation cycle. "It never ceases to amaze me to see the generosity of our city."

"Kids come back every day and say 'I wouldn't have been able to go to school if not for that \$1200. I remember the time a student needed \$500 for books and fees. We of course did the right thing and found a way to see that he got it.'"

"Some of the past scholarship recipients have become donors or served on the Scholarship Fund Board or both. We really wanted the fund to live off itself through its own new generations."

"This is why I love it and why I continue to be motivated in public service — it is community-based and you see the difference it makes in the world and the people around you."

NEIGHBORHOOD

Taylor Run

GALLAND MOTTO

"Able, gracious and conscientious" was the election motto of Marion Galland, who gave a sherry party to thank the volunteers who had worked on her campaign in 1969, starting an annual tradition that still continues. Marion was the brave woman who forced City Council to stop flying Confederate flags on George Washington's birthday, feeling they were inappropriate. The sherry party was originally all Democratic women, but has enlarged itself to include Republicans since the 1980s. Hostesses this year were Sherry Brown, Harlene Clayton, Vola Lawson, Lucy Thomson, Marian Van Landingham and Lois Walker. The party was held at Lucy Thomson's on North Quaker Lane. Patsy Ticer, Nancy Macklin, Del. Charnielle Herring, Rose Berler, Councilwoman Del Pepper, Lou Cook, Judges Connie Frogale and

Becky Moore, and Resa O'Flaherty with her daughter Lucelle were all there.

Karen Leibach missed the party because she didn't get the invitation till the day she got back from her latest cruise, which was to the Panama Canal. She read a book about the construction of the canal to prepare herself for the trip. Karen, who must be one of the most well-traveled people in Alexandria, takes about four cruises a year. This year she went to Buenos Aires, the Antarctic, the Mediterranean, and the Baltic Sea.

The sherry party has been held at many locations in Alexandria; Doris Mela had it one year, Lois Hunt and Judy Simonson did it one year, Lois Walker and Anna Dees both opened their homes, and for many years it was at the home of Beverly Beidler and Bev Steele. The hostesses may vary, but the guest list remains about the same, or as the invitation says, those women who make a difference in Alexandria.

— LOIS KELSO HUNT

BUSINESS



PHOTO BY LOUISE KRAFFT/GAZETTE PACKET

60 Thanksgiving Dinners

The meeting room at Keller Williams Realty was filled on Nov. 22 with staff members and volunteers and the makings for 60 complete Thanksgiving dinners. On the tables 60 10-14 pound turkeys, bags of potatoes, stuffing, chicken broth, cans of green beans, corn and yams, cranberry sauce, dinner rolls and pumpkin pies were stacked and ready to bag. Keller Williams plans on making the Thanksgiving Dinner fundraiser an annual event and hopes to provide 100 dinners next year. Above, Keller Williams staff and volunteers include: Arnold Zedd, Rick Wanzer, Bryan Taylor, Sandy Pickett, Houston Monticone, Doris Monticone, Mel Hanson, Tammie Hawkins, Brenda Stone, Christina Wood, Mike Anastasia, Lana Africano, Linda Min, Linn Payne, Kris Bernard, Suzanne Snyder, Shane McCullar, Jim Lyons and Renee Burnett.

BUSINESS MATTERS

A New Lifestyle

This weekend, City Council members will consider a special-use permit for a new “lifestyle” Safeway at Bradlee Shopping Center near the intersection of Quaker Lane, Braddock Road and King Street. The proposal would expand the footprint of the existing grocery store and place a majority of the parking for the customers in an at-grade structure with the retail grocery store on the second floor. The new store would double the square footage and add 29 extra parking spaces.

“The store is older, crowded and run down,” wrote Alexandria resident **April O’Reilly** in an email supporting the proposal. “Updating the store will not only improve its appearance but also provide a store that’s on par with other neighborhood grocery stores such as the Harris Teeter in Shrlington.”

A Safeway has been at the location for many decades, and the current building dates to 1982. It’s configured so that the loading docks face King Street, a design city planners say “is not in keeping with good urban design principles.” The proposal reorients the front of the store to King Street and adds bioretention ponds along the perimeter of the site to treat stormwater runoff.

“I’m concerned that the increase in the number of trips to Safeway that would have otherwise gone to the Whole Foods has not been considered,” wrote Fairlington resident **Rosaline Jordan** in a critical email about the proposal. “I think that this issue needs to be investigated to ensure that there is an adequate number of spaces in the new Safeway parking lot during peak hours and that traffic flow is unimpeded given the additional number of trips.”

Dismal Indicators

President **Harry Truman** had a famously strained relationship with economists. They’re always saying one thing one hand and another thing on the other hand.

“Give me a one-handed economist,” Truman famously quipped.

Not much has changed in the dismal science. The

city’s monthly financial report was full of counterbalancing data points. The unemployment rate in Alexandria is at 4.8 percent, although new construction grew significantly in October. Office vacancy rates in Alexandria increased by 0.6 percent from the second to the third quarter, although consumer confidence is on the rise.

It’s a dichotomy that even extends to the holiday season.

After a series of charts detailing everything from the number of new business license applications to retail sales tax collection, the final chart presented by Finance Director **Laura Triggs** featured a Christmas tree and a note indicating that Christmas tree sales are at the highest point since the global financial crisis began in 2008.

“While it may mean that more trees are being purchased,” said Triggs with a grin, “it may also mean that more people are staying at home.”

Carts and Trucks

When city officials were planning to open food carts earlier this year, the pilot program was designed to allow eight vendors. Five vendors applied, and four ended up participating in the program. One left because it was difficult to staff the cart. Another left because of insufficient foot traffic. A third stayed until the end but declined to commit to participating again. In the end only one vendor committed to being part of the program again next year.

“If we only get one applicant,” said Councilman **Paul Smedberg**, “we may have to consider killing the program.”

City officials are hoping that allowing vendors beyond Old Town to participate will help save the program. In the meantime, Smedberg and Councilman **Rob Krupicka** suggested the city allow the burgeoning food truck movement to ride into town — specifically in the Eisenhower Valley and the Carlyle neighborhood.

“I feel like we’re missing out on something by not participating,” said Krupicka.

— MICHAEL LEE POPE



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Cause To Celebrate

By MARY ANNE WEBER
CHAIR, COMMUNITY SERVICES
BOARD

Everyone knows who the one percent are and who the 99 percent are. But one Alexandria program is part of the three percent, the three percent of the health and human service programs world wide that are accredited by CARF with no recommendations. In plain English that means the surveyors who spent a day and a half in the city poring over records and talking to people did not identify any area which did not conform to standards.

Not only that, but when the federal Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration decided to make a training film for both practitioners and clients on the proper use of methadone and the role of methadone clinics, they chose Alexandria's clinic as one of a handful they filmed.

The program is Alexandria's Opioid Treatment Program which was being accredited for the third time, for three years, the maximum accreditation CARF will give. Alexandria's program is one of 20 in Virginia and 1,200 nationwide that are certified by SAMHSA and registered with the Drug Enforcement Administration, The federal government requires that such clinics be accredited and CARF, an international independent, not for profit accreditor for health and human services was chosen.

In a letter to Connie Juntunen, assistant director of Clinical and Emergency Services, CARF pointed out that for the surveyors to make no recommendations "is an extraordinary accomplishment, as only three percent of CARF surveys result in no recommendations."

The letter went on to say "Everyone involved in your organization should take pride in achieving this high level of accreditation. CARF will recognize this accomplishment in its listing of organizations with accreditation and we encourage you to make this accomplishment known throughout your community."

When the two surveyors, Denise M. Howard and Tanya Laughinghouse, visited the city, they interviewed Executive Director of the Community Services Board Dr. Michael Gilmore, staff members, board members and clients.

"They met with clients by appointment, but they also went into



the waiting room to talk with whoever was there," said Juntunen. "They looked at record keeping, risk management, safety and training, they have very extensive standards."

According to their own report CARF's standards included leadership, strategic integrated planning, input from the persons served, legal requirements, financial planning and management, risk management, health and safety, human resources, accessibility and the rights of persons served.

Described as the gold standard in treating opiate addiction, methadone treatment is not a quick fix and involves much more than taking a medication every day for a year or two or three, or however long it takes. It involves monitoring the person's physical and mental health, extensive education and counseling along with treatment.

"Coming down from an opiate addiction, the person is very, very ill," Juntunen said. "There is nausea, sweating, cramping, cravings for drugs."

Not everyone who comes into the clinic can be treated. The person must be in withdrawal from an opiate whether it be heroin or prescription drugs. They are checked by Dr. Kurt Brandt, the clinic's physician. Those who come out of jail and are addicted are also eligible. "We start slowly with a low dosage and raise the level of the drug and adjust the dose," Juntunen said. The client comes into the clinic every day, seven days a week for his or her dose. They must do this for a minimum of three months, sometime longer before they will be allowed to take home a week's supply of the drug, carefully measured in individual doses. Although Methadone comes in powder, pill and liquid form, Alexandria uses only the liquid form.

"The length of time a person is on methadone is very individual. We don't push people. We really are not supposed to do that," Juntunen said. She noted that there is a 90 percent relapse rate for those who go with short-term fixes.

A few years ago there was growing concern nationwide over an increase in methadone-associated deaths. Up until the late 1990s, methadone had been used mainly

SEE METHADONE, PAGE 15



PHOTO BY LOUISE KRAFFT/GAZETTE PACKET

Snapshot

Liese and Bella Ponzi and Sophia and Lillian Price offer poinsettias for sale Sunday afternoon, Dec. 11 outside Pizzaiola on the Fern. The girls are raising funds for their U-11 Alexandria Fire White soccer team.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Safeguard Against Mercury

To the Editor:

On Dec. 16, the Environmental Protection Agency is expected to pass one of the most important safeguards in the last decade when it finalizes a rule to limit the amount of toxic mercury coming from power plants. I emphasize the word "expected" because action could be delayed due to opposition from some states and power companies. As the outgoing chairperson for the Washington Metropolitan Air Quality Committee and a long-time opponent of the Potomac River Generating Station, I have come to know the danger mercury poses to the health of our families and the importance of this proposed rule.

Mercury emissions are transported through the air and deposited on water and land, where they enter the food supply exposing humans and wildlife. Mercury has been linked to reproductive health problems, heart attacks, and developmental disabilities. It can adversely affect neurological development in fetuses, infants and children. Mercury exposure in the

womb can occur through a mother's consumption of contaminated fish and shellfish that contain mercury. This can affect a baby's brain and nervous system impacting his/her cognitive thinking, memory, attention, language and fine motor skills.

Much smaller sources of mercury emissions such as Waste-to-Energy plants were required to install state of the art mercury controls more than a decade ago. It is about time that larger sources such as power plants be required to install these controls. Five cheers for the new rule.

Del Pepper
Member, Alexandria City Council

Vision for River Museum

To the Editor:

I heartily agree with Ellen Stanton's wise comments, in her letter to the Gazette Packet of Dec. 8, about the difficulties of funding a new museum on the waterfront, but these difficulties are not insuperable. The right kind of museum will support and publi

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LETTERS

FROM PAGE 10

cize, not undermine, existing museums.

To succeed a Museum of the Potomac River must be based on a compelling, long-term vision, be decentralized along the waterfront, and start small until a major fund-raising effort can be organized and implemented.

A riverine museum would be something almost unique. As Ms. Stanton points out, there are dozens of maritime museums in this country, but there are very few riverine ones. The freshness of a riverine vision will be a big advantage when it comes to the long, hard process of fund raising.

Moreover "riverine" describes what Alexandria is. We are on a tidal estuary, not a seacoast. We happen to be located near the midpoint of the Potomac river system, which extends from its inland origins to the Chesapeake Bay.

The theme of the museum would be: The Potomac River runs through us — through our history, our heroes, our reason for being a city. It played a significant role in the very creation of our country. The museum should celebrate this remarkable river in its entirety. It would encompass the natural and human history of the Potomac from its sources to the Chesapeake Bay, albeit with emphasis on Alexandria.

Subject matter. History, natural and human, from George Washington and Robert E. Lee to bass and sturgeon, bald eagles and loons; Native and Black Americans; industry, transportation and recreation; pollution, past and present — and a great deal more.

Staged, decentralized implementation. The first stage would be a revived and expanded trail of graphic displays along the waterfront. Eventually there should be a "mother ship" museum center, ideally located at one of the Robinson Terminal sites that have pier facilities for visiting ships.

Essential preconditions: (a) Not allowing the upzoning which is currently proposed to destroy this opportunity by radically commercializing both Robinson Terminal sites; (b) organizing a robust, long-term fundraising effort, building on the Waterfront's status as a National Historic Landscape; (c) addressing parking and congestion issues, as for any other major development; (d) obtaining the support of city, state and federal authorities.

That is a daunting list but really good things never come easily. The basic question is whether we and our leaders are willing to make a long term effort. An Irish politician — why do we always blame this kind of thing on the Irish? — is

supposed to have said, "Why should I care about Posterity? What has Posterity ever done for me?" In this case we should shun cynicism and try to do better.

Robert Pringle
Ambassador (ret)
Member of CAAWP

Vote No To Rezoning

To the Editor:

I've grown weary of the fight over the waterfront too, though for very different reasons than those expressed by the Chamber's Co-Chair Elect Andrew Palmieri and Dennis Auld, a lead spokesperson for Waterfront for All, a group composed of business people that supports the City's waterfront plan.

I'm tired of a political process that cuts off all real debate and the opportunity for thoughtful planning, whether it is along the waterfront or in the West End. And I'm tired of hearing the Mayor say that hotels, town-homes and offices will make the waterfront more accessible to everyone in Alexandria.

A process that involves senior City planners meeting regularly, out of public view, with property owners (and developers) to decide how the waterfront should be rezoned, is neither fair nor democratic. Yet it was in those former meetings that the real business of deciding how to rezone the waterfront for revenue, as opposed to creating a waterfront plan that truly benefits everyone, took place. As Katy Cannady, president of the Alexandria League of Women Voters, has pointed out many times, citizens had little if any opportunity to make fundamental changes to the plan. She has attended every public meeting since 2009.

In truth, the City's "Waterfront Plan" is not really a plan at all, but hundreds of pages of weak guidelines attached to a zoning text amendment (for several properties) that effectively turns over planning of the waterfront to what seem to be the City Council's real constituents: The Washington Post, developers, and the folks they work for and invest with.

The plan's advocates claim that more high-density development will make the waterfront a more public place, at no cost to taxpayers. In fact, the development will further cut the community off from the river, will increase traffic problems, pollute the Potomac and Chesapeake Bay, denigrate the historic character of Old Town, and attract fewer tourists. The City's plan has no compelling

SEE LETTERS, PAGE 13



On his 3rd tour in Iraq in 2008, Spc. Josh Schictl was driving a Humvee which was hit by two IED's. He suffered life-threatening injuries to his face and head. Despite the quick work of medics, Spc. Schictl lost his right eye and nine teeth. Nearly all of the bones in his face were broken but were stabilized before transport to Walter Reed Medical Center. He also suffered a TBI.

Wounded warriors and their families struggle for years to recover physically, emotionally and financially from the sacrifices they make in wartime. Operation Homefront seeks to walk with them on their journey and ease the hardships they face. The DC Metro Chapter assisted Josh and Emily with transitional housing, household furnishings, holiday gifts and grocery gift cards during these difficult times.

There are many ways you can work with the DC Metro Chapter to assist local military families like Josh and Emily.

People ask us everyday how they can show their appreciation and gratitude for the sacrifices made by military families. One way you can do this is to let the DC Metro Chapter fill the gap for military families as they adjust to the 'new normal' after being deployed or wounded in combat. Send your tax deductible donation before Dec. 31st to help us meet next year's needs.

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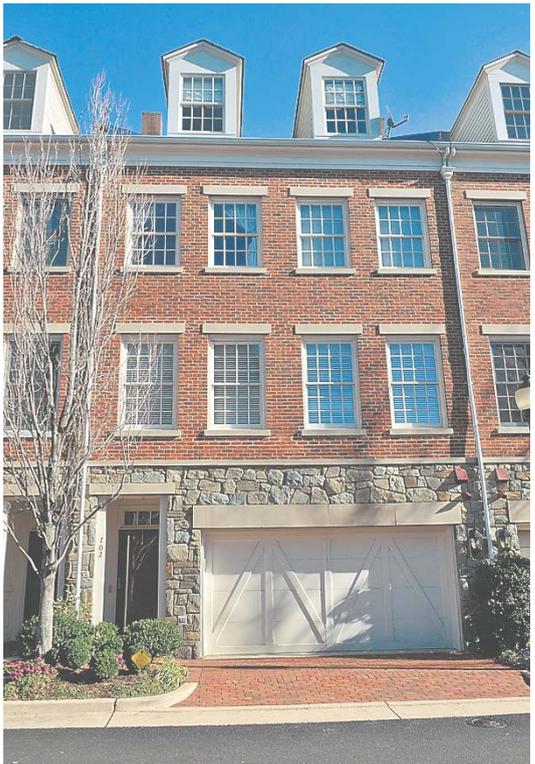
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Alexandria REAL ESTATE

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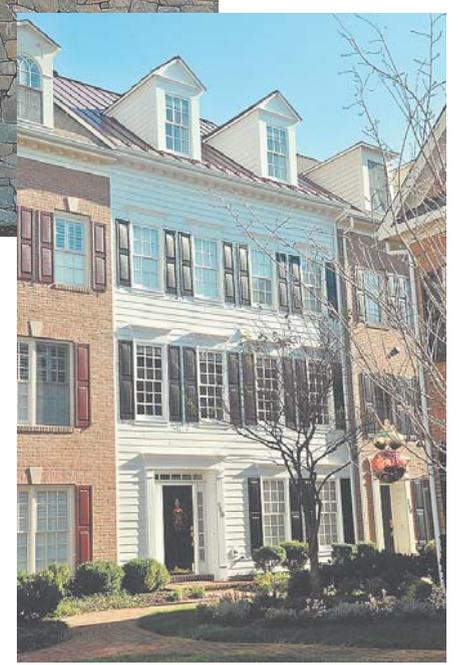
3 106 Princess Street, Alexandria — \$995,000



4 407 Nelson Avenue East, Alexandria — \$958,714

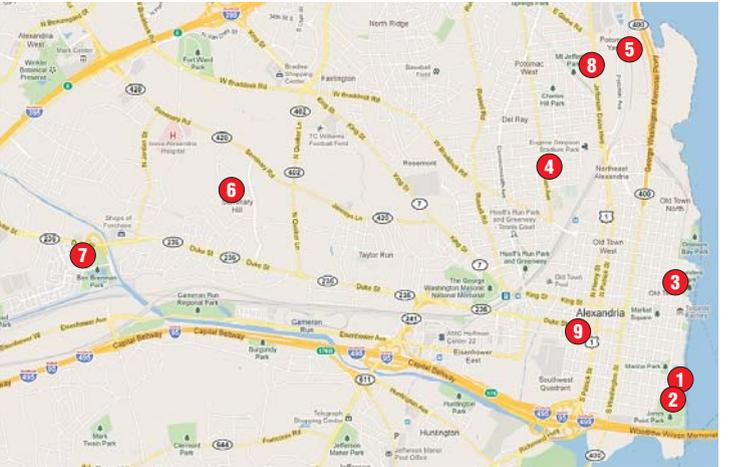


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3 106 PRINCESS ST	3	2	2	ALEXANDRIA	\$995,000	Townhouse	0.03	22314	BRANDT TOWNHOUSE	10/07/11
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8 711 MCKENZIE ST	4	3	1	ALEXANDRIA	\$910,000	Townhouse	0.07	22301	POTOMAC YARD	10/31/11
9 316 FAYETTE ST S	3	3	1	ALEXANDRIA	\$900,000	Townhouse	0.03	22314	OLD TOWN VILLAGE	10/07/11



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LETTERS

FROM PAGE 11

vision. We might as well all be living in Ballston or Crystal City and that indeed is what a majority of the City Council seem to think will improve our quality of life in Alexandria.

Opponents of the current plan, including Citizens for an Alternative Alexandria Waterfront Plan (CAAWP) have offered the seeds of a compromise only to be told by Councilman Krupicka and others that there plan is unrealistic and takes resources away from other projects. The facts suggest quite the reverse — that the City has failed to look at any other alternatives seriously, has

failed to conduct a through cost benefit analysis of all the alternatives, has not developed a waterfront plan at all, and has not engaged the community in a serious visioning process.

I strongly oppose the proposed rezoning of the waterfront. It closes the door on a waterfront that should be open to all Alexandrians. Tell the City Council to vote No to rezoning and Yes to alternatives on Janu. 21. Take back your waterfront. We all live along the river.

Andrew Macdonald
SEE LETTERS, PAGE 15

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For 25 years, *Rebuilding Together Alexandria* has provided free home repairs to low-income homeowners, including elderly, disabled, veterans and families with children. Through our volunteers, we have provided \$5.5M worth of in-kind contributions to 1,400 Alexandria homeowners and non-profits serving those in need. With your help, even more families will be able to remain safely in their homes. Donate today!

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Alexandria
Gazette Packet

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OPINION

Check on Senior Citizens

BY MONICA BELL
BOARD MEMBER, SENIOR SERVICES OF
ALEXANDRIA



Monica Bell

Alexandria's seniors face additional challenges during the holiday season and in cold, winter weather. Seniors often feel ignored, lonely, and out of touch, especially if they are confined to their homes by weather or by limited mobility. They appreciate our caring and sharing more than we can ever imagine.

Here is a list of simple ways to help seniors and make the season more enjoyable and safer.

1. Check their holiday decorations to be sure they are set up safely and don't create a tripping or fire hazard.
2. Check on the temperature inside their home to be sure that it is at least 68 - 70 degrees. The National Institute On Aging suggests that temperature will help ensure that the elderly will not develop hypothermia inside their home, especially if they live alone. Even mild hypothermia is an extremely dangerous situation when unnoticed and untreated.
3. Check to make sure they have warm enough clothes to wear both inside and outside their home.
4. If it snows or sleet, shovel and de-ice their walkways and driveway so they are not slippery or snow-covered.
5. Check on them each day, especially

when we're having an extreme or lengthy cold spell.

6. Offer to run errands or do food shopping for them so they don't have to drive to the store in bad weather.

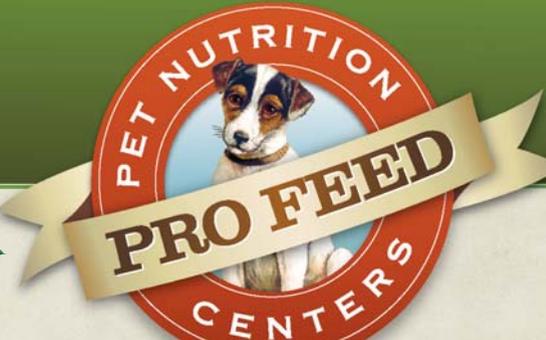
7. Offer them some of the wonderful holiday cookies or other goodies you bake.

8. Check to be sure the stove or oven is not being used to heat the home. These are potentially hazardous.

9. If space heaters are being used, check to be sure they are being used properly.

Senior Services of Alexandria www.seniorservicesalex.org provides several helpful programs for Alexandria's seniors including Meals on Wheels and a low-cost transportation service. A unique and meaningful gift idea for a friend, family member, or client is to make a donation on their behalf to Senior Services. Each gift is fully tax deductible and the recipients will receive a special holiday card notifying them of your donation. You will also enjoy the peace and satisfaction of knowing that your gift will make a difference in the lives of Alexandria residents all year long.

To participate in the Holiday Giving program, contact Lydia Durand, Development Director, at development@seniorservicesalex.org or by calling 703-836-4414 ext. 14.



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LETTERS

FROM PAGE 13

Convenient But Not Helpful

To the Editor:

Now that WMATA has forced federal employees to take electronic so-called "Smart" benefits (meaning no more exchanging paper vouchers for VRE tickets), I have to use Commuter Direct (and stop off at Crystal City, buy my monthly VRE ticket, and get back on to come home). So, the Old Town Transit Shop might be the best place to buy DASH and Metro passes, but it is not the best place to buy VRE passes with Smart Benefits because the Old Town Transit Shop can't tap into VRE's and WMATA's system the way Commuter Direct and seven other VRE vendors have managed to do since Oct. 11. Until the Old Town Transit Shop decides to accept Smart Benefits for VRE passes, you should replace "best" with something more truthful, maybe "most conveniently located." Its hours of operation are better than Commuter Direct's which opens at 10 a.m. instead of 7 a.m., but what good is that if you can't buy what you need there?

Dino Drudi
Alexandria

Beneficial Program

To the Editor:

There is a new ill-conceived proposal by the Superintendent to close adult education and ESL services in Alexandria. What is wrong about this you may ask? This current modest program educates 600 students annually at minimal cost. This is a valuable, efficient and cost-effective program for immigrants and under-served minori-

ties within the City of Alexandria. The program not only helps to promote good citizenship, but it also encourages the involvement of immigrant parents in the Alexandria School system which their children attend.

I was invited to work for APS after school integration in the 1960s to help serve minority students in need. How outrageous that over 50 years later in 2011, there is a move to deny those minority students the services they deserve and that yield educational, social and civic benefits to the community.

Rita Siebenaler
Alexandria

Importance of Learning English

To the Editor:

I'm a student at Alexandria Adult Learning Center and ESL and GED classes for adults. I'm writing about the proposal that Alexandria City Public Schools informed us about. Alexandria must be a new immigrant-friendly place [that helps] future Virginia taxpayers.

For my part (husband), I think that it would be very difficult to continue living in Alexandria, if the only English classes available for my wife are in Arlington and Fairfax. She needs those classes in order to find a job and be a valuable contributor to her new community. I have been a Virginia resident and taxpayer for more than 36 years. Thank you.

Marième Fal

Help Save Adult Classes

To the Editor:

My name is Rowshan Zabi. I'm

contacting you about saving adult ESL classes in Alexandria.

The Adult classes have helped hundreds of adults learn to read and write in English. With these skills, adult students have been able to get their GED and obtain better jobs. The adults of Alexandria have to right to education as much as the children of Alexandria do.

I've grown up in Alexandria and went to school here. As a child, the subject I struggled most with was English so I always wished my parents could help me. With more educated parents, the children of Alexandria will have a better shot of educational support both at school and at home.

My mother is currently a student in the Adult ESL classes at Ramsey Elementary School and with the knowledge she learned from these classes, she's now able to easily hold a conversation in English.

The Adult Education classes provide adults with the skills to achieve their dreams and become active members of the community.

Please help save the Adult Education classes in Alexandria.

Rowshan Zabi

Save Adult Education

To the Editor:

Without a sound reason for closing the Alexandria Adult Learning Center (AALC), priority must be given to continuing this highly successful and valuable educational program which produces productive adult citizens and contributes significantly to both the students and the Alexandria community. There are several categories to be examined in assessing the value of this unique and important program.

SEE LETTERS, PAGE 24

Local Methadone Clinic Found Exemplary

FROM PAGE 10

to treat opioid addiction but since then has been increasingly used to manage pain and the results of a 2009 report by the GAO compiling data from the Food and Drug Administration, the Centers for Disease Control, SAMHSA and DEA, showed that while the use of methadone for treating addiction was tightly controlled with daily doses carefully monitored, pain management was different. Methadone is a controlled substance, regulated by federal and state law but the rules are different. When used for pain management, a dose may relieve pain for three or four hours but the methadone remains in the body much longer. On the other hand, one dose suppresses withdrawal symptoms for 24 hours. So the report stressed that both practitioners and clients needed to understand the dangers of taking more methadone than prescribed or taking other medications with it. The danger is made worse by increasing amounts of the drug being used illegally.

At Alexandria's clinic, clients are asked about ev-

ery medication they take, legal prescription or illegal, over the counter, herbal remedies, everything. There is even a prescription monitoring program available so that a physician can see if more than one doctor is prescribing medication and what kinds. Clients are also taught about what reactions to look for and when they need to call for help.

SAMHSA's training film, which can be accessed through the city's website at <http://alexandriava.gov/DCHS>, stresses both the value of methadone treatment and the need for both practitioners and clients to understand it is a potent drug that must be handled carefully. Gilmore, Brandt and therapist Tony Muccio talk about the treatment's benefits and safety when used correctly while clients acknowledge it is a long road back and requires much more than swallowing a liquid once a day.

Opiate addiction is a serious problem but at least here in Alexandria people can find help, not just any help but the best it can be. That is certainly reason to celebrate.



PHOTO BY JEANNE THEISMANN/GAZETTE PACKET

Toys for Tots

Fire stations in Fairfax County and the City of Alexandria are accepting new, unwrapped toys for children of all ages for the annual Marine Corps Toys for Tots campaign. "All 37 stations in Fairfax County and eight in Alexandria will serve as drop off points through Dec. 19," said Capt. Willie Bailey, coordinator of the firefighters' toy drive efforts. For more information, contact Capt. Bailey at 571-641-0036 or willie.bailey@fairfaxcounty.gov.



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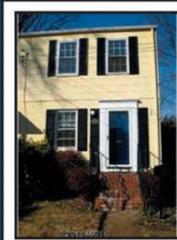
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Getting into the 'Right Fit' Private School

Experts explain how to navigate admissions process for area's most elite schools.

By MARILYN CAMPBELL
THE GAZETTE

Each year, parents who opt out of their neighborhood public school in favor of an independent school must sift through the long list of the Washington area's independent schools to find one that meets the needs of their child.

They must then navigate the lengthy application required by most schools, and hope that their efforts are deft enough to gain acceptance in a competitive environment. Some schools report receiving as many as nine applications for each available slot.

Even for prospective pre-kindergarten students, the independent school admissions process often includes a written application, admissions tests, parent statements, student interviews, parent interviews, playdates, school visits, transcripts and teacher recommendations.

"What we're trying to do is get a whole picture of a child and look at information from a variety of different sources," said

Christina Tait, director of admission and financial aid at The Langley School in McLean.

THE APPLICATION PACKETS provide insight for both the school and the applicants. "We have a fairly detailed process so that we get to know the girls and they get to know us," said Pilar Cabeza de Vaca, head of the Madeira School in McLean. "Our goal is to find girls who are the right fit for our school and for whom our school is the right fit."

The role of each component of the application varies depending on the age of the applicant. "The admission [process] for young children is especially complex and difficult because we have to use both explicit and intuitive measures because we have less data," said Diane Dunning, director of admission and financial aid at St. Stephen's & St. Agnes School in Alexandria. "If you were looking at a ninth grade [admissions] folder, you would have eight years of report cards and maybe four years of standardized testing. You are also able to interview [older applicants] in a different



Admissions officials at St. Stephen's & St. Agnes School in Alexandria say independent school admissions is a thoughtful process. Above are St. Stephen's & St. Agnes School fifth grade students Sebastian Omechevarria, Kennon Moon, Geordie Hendricks, and Trinity Gourdin.

way than when you are interacting with the young children."

Why is so much probing necessary?

"Schools are looking for consistency in grades, attitude, testing and recommenda-

tions," said Lindsay White, educational consultant with the School Counseling Group in Washington, D.C. "[For example] If there

SEE PRIVATE SCHOOL, PAGE 25

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The Howard Gardner School



PHOTO BY JEANNE THEISMANN/GAZETTE PACKET

Marcus Fisk, who plays Scrooge, is congratulated by his wife Pam after the opening night performance of 'A Christmas Carol' at The Little Theatre of Alexandria Dec. 8.

'Tis the Season

Greed, ghosts and redemption in LTA's "A Christmas Carol."

BY JEANNE THEISMANN
GAZETTE PACKET

It's a tale nearly as old as time: The miserly Ebenezer Scrooge is ethically and emotionally transformed after being haunted by visits from the Ghosts of Christmas Past, Present and Yet to Come in the Charles Dickens classic "A Christmas Carol," now playing at The Little Theatre of Alexandria.

First published in December of 1843, Dickens never intended his novel to become a play, yet it was so popular that within a year there were eight theatrical versions playing in London and America. LTA has chosen the Donna Ferragut traditional adaptation of the Victorian play for this holiday season.

"This is a dream cast," said Robin Parker, who directs the cast of 32 that includes 11 children. "They have been phenomenal from the very beginning."

Taking on the central role of Scrooge is longtime Alexandria resident and retired Navy Captain Marcus Fisk. Fisk gives a passionate performance, holding the audience spellbound as he deftly brings a tenderness to the transformation of the despised businessman.

"Marcus wouldn't believe what the rest of us say behind his back," laughed Janette Moman, who plays Mrs. Fezziwig. "We are all in awe of him — he is that good."

Rachel Rose Gray is the Ghost of Christmas Past, Brandon DeGroat the Ghost of Christmas Present and Ben Cherington as the silent Ghost of Christmas Yet to Come.

Jerry Casagrande is Scrooge's terminally cheerful nephew Fred with Aaron Lewis as Bob Cratchit and Larry Grey as Mr. Fezziwig.

After making his theatrical debut in LTA's "Oliver!" earlier this year, 8-year-old Joseph Machosky is endearing as the innocent Tiny Tim.

The entire cast is remarkably talented and costumes by Annie Vroom bring the Victorian streets of London to life.

"I can't imagine anything more fun than Christmas in Alexandria," said Moman, a fifth-grade teacher at Springfield Estates Elementary School. "This is a show I can invite all my students to see."

The power of the story still strikes a chord with audiences around the world and remains undimmed by time. While there may be bigger and flashier shows this holiday season, none will warm the heart more than The Little Theatre of Alexandria's "A Christmas Carol."

NOTE: Due to overwhelming turnout, an additional show has been added Dec. 18 at 5 p.m. for 'A Christmas Carol,' playing now through Dec. 18 at The Little Theatre of Alexandria. 600 Wolfe St. Call 703-683-0496 or visit www.thelittletheatre.com.



Tracy Turnblad (Carolyn Cole, center) and the cast of "Hairspray."

Welcome to the '60s!

Signature's "Hairspray" pumps up the volume.

BY JEANNE THEISMANN
GAZETTE PACKET

With big dreams and even bigger hair, plump and plucky Baltimore teen Tracy Turnblad longs to dance on the local American Bandstand-style show in the energetic, toe-tapping musical "Hairspray," now playing at Signature Theatre.

Based on the 2002 Tony Award-winning musical, itself based on the original 1988 John Waters film, "Hairspray" follows plussed protagonist Tracy Turnblad in her 1962 crusade to integrate the Corny Collins show. Allies in her fight against both racism and girls of girth grow to include Tracy's best friend Penny Pingleton, teen heartthrob Link Larkin and Motormouth Maybelle, hostess of the once-a-month "Negro Day" on Corny's show.

Playing the unlikely heroine Tracy, Carolyn Cole opens the show in overdrive belting out one of the show's signature songs, "Good Morning, Baltimore." In the role that made film stars of Ricki Lake and Nikki Blonsky, Cole is a diminutive dynamo with a siren-like voice that carries a charging score of 20 infectious melodies by Academy-Award nominee Marc Shaiman and Scott Whittman.

Directed by Signature's Artistic Director Eric Schaeffer, the show marks the musical theater stage debut of WETA and Sirius/XM radio host Robert Aubry Davis as Edna Turnblad. The deftly hilarious Davis adds a tenderness and

vulnerability to the role originated by Harvey Fierstein on Broadway and John Travolta in the subsequent movie.

Davis' duet, "Timeless to Me," with Harry A. Winter as Tracy's father Wilbur, is an unqualified show stopper and one of the highlights of the production.

Patrick Thomas Cragin plays the dreamy Elvis-inspired Link Larkin while Stephen Gregory Smith nails the role of the suave Corny Collins, a savvy TV host who is decidedly Team Tracy.

As Tracy's duck-to-swan best friend Penny, Lauren Williams channels her inner Mary J. Blige with mega talented James Hayden Rodriguez as her forbidden crush Seaweed.

Determined in their opposition to all this rhythmic righteousness are the bratty Amber Von Tussle and her maniacal mama Velma. Bringing mega-star wattage to the roles are Helen Hayes award winners Erin Driscoll as Amber and the always dazzling Sherri L. Edelen as Velma. Both are hilarious in their over-the-top wickedness with Edelen especially entertaining in "Miss Baltimore Crabs" and "Velma's Revenge."

In a company of standouts, Nova Y. Payton's Motormouth Maybelle brings the audience to its feet with vocals that soar to stratospheric heights in the gospel-infused "I Know Where I've Been."

The versatile Lynn Audrey Neal



Tracy Turnblad (Carolyn Cole) stops to "hear the bells."

tackles the roles of Prudy Pingleton, Gym Teacher and Matron with aplomb as does Signature favorite Matt Conner in the dual roles of Mr. Pinky and Harriman F. Spritzer.

Behind Schaeffer's creative direction, Karma Camp and Brianna Camp provide non-stop energetic choreography. With colorful and inventive sets by Daniel Conway, vivid costumes by Kathleen Geldard and an eight-piece orchestra conducted by Jon Kalbfleisch, the exuberant Signature production brings the audience to its feet as it closes the show with the driving rhythm of "You Can't Stop the Beat."

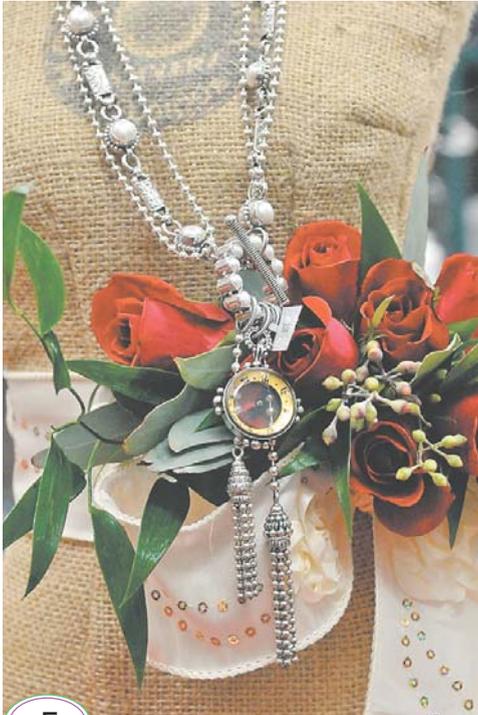
With a flawless 26-member cast, dazzling performances and a contagious score that is as impossible to shake off as Tracy's lacquered beehive, Signature Theatre's "Hairspray" is a blockbuster musical with staying power.

"Hairspray" runs through Jan. 29 at Signature Theatre, 4200 Campbell Ave., Arlington. For tickets, call 703-820-9771 or visit www.signature-theatre.org.



D KING'S JEWELRY
 609 King Street
 703.549.0011
 kingsjewelry.net
 Tahitian grey graduated pearls.
 13.7 mm-11mm with 14k gold clasp.
 18" long, \$4,680.

Photos by Louise Krafft



F VIRGINIA FLORIST
 1632 Belle View Boulevard
 703.765.3355
 "Echo of the Dreamer" collection
 by Margaret Thurman (Uma's aunt).
 Pearls with vintage medallion, \$1,330.



Contributed photo

A SILVERMAN'S
 110 N. St Asaph Street
 703.836.5363
 silvermangalleries.com
 Mogul jewel of emerald,
 rubies and rose-cut
 diamonds. 18k gold,
 20th c. 2" diameter,
 \$3,500.



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B B&C JEWELRY
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 703.379.6010
 bcjewelry.net
 Sterling silver and
 pearl open link
 necklace by Majorica.
 36" long. \$495.



C BISHOP BOUTIQUE
 815-B King Street
 571.312.0042
 bishopboutique.com
 "Tangerine Twist" by Margaret Elizabeth.
 Carnelian stones tied with a vintage brooch.
 One-of-a-kind, \$395.



E TODAY'S CARGO
 1102 King Street
 703.836.6866
 todayscargo.com
 Colored quartz crystal beaded
 necklaces with fabric tie.
 18" strand, \$35.

Talk of the Town

Treasure Hunt

The Wanderer has run off to find dazzling bounty to adorn the fabulous female friends on his shopping list this holiday. From antique pieces to contemporary designs he has really hit the jackpot. So many fabulous gems ... so little time!

ENTERTAINMENT



Walker Home Wins Window Wonderland Contest

The Old Town Boutique District (OTBD) held an Old Town Window Wonderland contest for Old Town retailers, restaurants, offices and commercial buildings to identify the best holiday window décor. After receiving 2,500 votes on Facebook from Nov. 24 to Dec. 5, the winner was announced as Walker Home at 1125 King Street, Alexandria. The second runnerup was Fiberspace. Pictured with Mayor Bill Euille are Rose Woodford (Walker Home), and the co-founders of the Old Town Boutique District, Elizabeth Todd (owner of The Shoe Hive) and Kim Putens (owner of Bloomers).

'Tis the Season

Little Theatre of Alexandria producer Mary Beth Smith-Toomey sits on Santa's lap Dec. 3 as part of a LTA's free pictures with Santa open house during the Scottish Walk Parade. Behind the beard is Smith-Toomey's husband Michael Toomey. The Charles Dickens classic tale "A Christmas Carol" is playing now through Dec. 18.



PHOTO BY JEANNE THEISMANN
GAZETTE PACKET

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Delight in our *HomeLifeStyle* sections, the second week of every month.

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Alexandria
Gazette Packet

First Night ALEXANDRIA



An Old Town New Year's Eve Party

12•31•11

Four Spotlight Areas of Entertainment between the Masonic Memorial and the Waterfront featuring 107 performances beginning at 7:00 pm



Third Annual
Fun Hunt
starts at 1:00 pm

Admission badges are available online now through December 18 for just \$15. Children 12 and under, and active military are FREE, sponsored by Spectre Group International (Dec. 31 pick-up only)

Don't miss the area's largest, safest, family-friendly, budget-friendly New Year's Eve celebration!

More information and retail badge sites at FirstNightAlexandria.org

ENTERTAINMENT

DECEMBER

Trees, wreaths at Sandburg Middle School.

Buy your holiday greens and trees while supplies last. Choose from a great selection of fresh Fraser Firs and Scotch Pines, decorated or undecorated wreaths, three types of garland and "Kissing Balls". Your purchase will help fund West Potomac High School athletes. At Carl Sandburg Middle School, 8428 Fort Hunt Rd., until sold out — weekdays, 5-8 p.m.; Saturday, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.; Sunday, noon to 5 p.m.

NOW THROUGH DEC. 18

Mount Vernon by Candlelight. 5 to 8:30 p.m. recurring weekly on Sunday, Saturday. "Mrs. Washington" hosts an enchanting evening of candlelit tours, fireside Christmas caroling, and hot cider and ginger cookies. The Mount Vernon by Candlelight tour includes the first and second floors, featuring characters from the Washingtons' world guiding visitors through the home and adding ambiance and authenticity to a traditional Christmas evening at Mount Vernon. At George Washington's Mount Vernon Estate, 3200 Mount Vernon Memorial Highway, Mount Vernon. Admission: Adults: \$20; Children 11 and under: \$14. Visit www.MountVernon.org or call 703-780-2000.

NOW THROUGH DEC. 19

Tavern Toddlers. Mondays between 10:30 a.m. and noon. Cost is \$7/group of three. A five-visit pass is \$30. A weekly open playtime and a new craft activity each week. At Gadsby's Tavern Museum, 134 North Royal St., Old Town Alexandria. Call 703-746-4242 or visit www.gadsbystavern.org.

NOW THROUGH JAN. 6

Christmas at Mount Vernon. 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. recurring daily. Holiday visitors will enjoy themed decorations (including 12 Christmas trees), a gingerbread replica of the Mansion created by former White House pastry chef Roland Mesnier, chocolate making demonstrations, and a rare opportunity to tour the third floor of the Mansion. In 1787, George Washington paid 18 shillings to bring a camel to Mount Vernon for his guests'

enjoyment. During Christmas at Mount Vernon, visitors can meet Aladdin the camel. At George Washington's Mount Vernon Estate, 3200 Mount Vernon Memorial Highway, Mount Vernon. Christmas at Mount Vernon admission is included in general admission: \$15/adults; \$7/youth. Call 703-780-2000.

THROUGH DEC. 17

"School House Rock - Live!" Presented by Mount Vernon High School. Friday, Dec. 16 at 7:30 p.m.; Saturday, Dec. 17 at 2 p.m. and 7 p.m. Tickets are \$5/children; \$7/students; \$10/adults. At Mount Vernon Little Theater, located at Entrance 4. The ensemble cast includes Bryan Azucena, Kodie Badolato, Logan Beveridge, Vanessa Blake, Desha Brown, Lizzy Craine, Jerry Halstead, Courtney Kramer, Jonathan Leonard, Christopher Lisle, Jessica Merkmán, David Parces, Aylana Randall, Chris Rohe, and Emily Whitworth. Call Trena Weiss-Null at Mount Vernon High School at 703-619-3100.

THROUGH DEC. 18

ETAP Holiday Musical Extravaganza. Santa's Special Delivery is a family-friendly show suitable for all ages, written by Scott Dees and directed by Raynor van der Merwe, featuring the ETAP company members and special guest performers Tina and Dan Delafield. At the Richard J. Ernst Theatre, 8333 Little River Turnpike, Annandale. Performances are Friday, Dec. 16 at 8 p.m.; Saturday, Dec. 17 at 1 p.m., 4 p.m., and 8 p.m.; and Sunday, Dec. 18 at 1 p.m. and 4 p.m. Tickets are \$15 to \$25; visit www.encore-tap.org or 703-222-5511.

THURSDAY/DEC. 15

Fitness Together Holiday Open House. Featuring goodies and great deals on Personal Training, PACK and Gift Cards. At 300 North Washington Street, Alexandria; Call 703-683-0777.

Holiday Spectacular. 7:30 p.m. West Potomac high school choirs along with guests from Carl Sandburg Middle School and Hybla Valley Elementary School, are singing and dancing during their "Holiday Spectacular!" Directed by Ernest Johnson and choreographed by Gennifer



Cast and crew: (from left) Walid Chaya (Artistic Director & Founder), Morghan Gray, Kathryn Baker, Emiley Trowbridge, Emily Hidle, Mary Harrell, Katie Lincoln (Tour Manager), Micaela Erin McMahon and Alysa Wolf.

SATURDAY/DEC. 17

Snowy Day Cabaret. 1 p.m. Snowy Day Cabaret is a review of holiday hits and musical theater classics with a cast of children ages 7-14. At Wright to Read at Capital Farms, 4109 Mt. Vernon Ave., Alexandria.

Lisenby, this evening of music has something for all ages, including a visit from Santa Claus! At West Potomac High School, Springbank Auditorium. Tickets, \$6, may be purchased at the door.

FRIDAY/DEC. 16

Wee Ones Storytime. 10:30 to 11 a.m. Free.

Explore the exciting world with some of favorite stories and songs.

Ages 2 and under. At Hooray for Books, 1555 King St., Alexandria. Call 703-548-4092 or visit www.hooray4books.com.

Pajama Storytime. 7 to 8 p.m. Climb into your jammies and join in a warm storytime. We'll have quiet and loud stories for all ages. RSVP requested

by email at info@hooray4books.com, or call us at 703-548-4092. At Hooray for Books, 1555 King St., Alexandria. Call 703-548-4092 or visit www.hooray4books.com.

SATURDAY/DEC. 17

Library Open House. 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. Enjoy music and other activities. At the Martha Washington Library, 6614 Fort Hunt Road, Alexandria. Call 703-768-6700.

"Nutcracker in a Nutshell." 3 p.m. and 7:30 p.m. Northern Virginia Community College Alexandria Campus, 3001 North Beauregard St., Alexandria. Presented by the Center for Ballet Arts. 703-273-

SEE ENTERTAINMENT, PAGE 23

We have at Santa. If you want to see him again, Leave cold beer & wine THE NIGHT BEFORE christmas. NO CARROTS! go to unwined gourmet wine • cigars, or else! From The Reindeer.

HOLIDAY HOURS
 Belle View Shopping Center 1600 A Belle View Blvd. Alexandria, VA 22307 571.384.6880
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 9am-6pm: Christmas Eve
 Closed Christmas Day
 Bradlee Shopping Center 3690 J King Street Alexandria, VA 22302 703.820.8600

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 Dec 23rd, 8:30-10:30am
 Union St. Public House
 121 South Union St.
 \$10 children
 \$20 adults

Come meet Santa every Saturday & Sunday until Christmas Eve at 210 S. Union St. in Old Town, Alexandria
 Dec. 10th-11th and 17th-18th
 Saturdays, 10am-5pm; Sundays, 12 noon-5pm.
 \$15 — includes photo with Santa

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www.oldtownboutiquedistrict.com
 THIS PROGRAM WAS MADE POSSIBLE THROUGH THE SUPPORT OF THE ALEXANDRIA MARKETING FUND.

ENTERTAINMENT

FROM PAGE 22

5344 or

www.thecenterforballetarts.com.

Canoeing With Santa. 10 a.m. to noon. Canoeing with Santa at YMCA Alexandria, 420 East Monroe Ave., Alexandria. Cost of \$5 supports fundraising campaign for local disadvantaged families. Call YMCA Alexandria at 703-838-8085.

Book Talk. 2 to 4 p.m. Alexandria author Brooke C. Stoddard will discuss and sign copies of his new book *World in the Balance: The Perilous Months of June-October 1940* at The Hangar: Aviation Specialties, 1325 King Street, Alexandria.

Oldies But Goodies. Cocker Spaniel Dog Adoption Show and Pictures with Santa. 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. At Hybla Valley Petsmart, 7690 Richmond Highway, Alexandria.

Holiday Bike Ride. 5:30 to 7 p.m. Meet at St. Elmo's Coffee Pub, 2300 Mt. Vernon Ave. (gather outside). Bike 4 or 5 miles to admire the light displays on the houses of friends and neighbors. Part of the Alexandria BPAC ride.

RSVP to: jonathan@jonathankrall.net.

A Victorian Christmas. 4 p.m. A dramatic one-man recitation of Charles Dickens' A Christmas Carol. Special Performance by Stephen Mead. Tickets are \$10 and available at www.nvfaa.org. At The Athenaeum, 201 Prince St., Alexandria. Call 703-548-0035.

Christmas Carol Sing-Along and Brunch. 10:30 a.m. St. Andrew and St. Margaret of Scotland Anglican Catholic Church on Monroe Avenue in Alexandria will be holding a free Christmas carol sing-along and brunch. Visitors are welcome to join members in singing traditional Christmas carols, along with musical accompaniment. Lyrics will be provided. A fellowship brunch will follow the carol singing. At 402 E. Monroe Avenue in the Del Ray area of Alexandria. Visit www.standrewandstmargaret.org, or call 703-683-3343.

DEC. 17 AND 18

Auditions for "Romeo & Juliet." 2 to 5 p.m. on Saturday, Dec. 17; and 7 to 10 p.m. on Sunday, Dec. 18. A number of roles for adults and youth (ages 13-18) are available. Rehearsals start Jan. 6. Performance dates March 2, 3, 9, 10, 16 & 17 at 8 p.m., and March 4, 11, 18 at 2 p.m. At Aldersgate Church Community Theatre, 1301 Collingwood Road, Alexandria. Visit www.acctonline.org or email bardsplay@gmail.com.

Candlelight Tours. Join "Mrs. Washington" as she hosts an evening of candlelight tours, fireside caroling, and hot cider and ginger cookies. Tours include merry music, and characters from Washingtons' world guiding visitors through the first and second floors of Mount Vernon, adding ambiance and authenticity to a traditional Christmas evening. The event takes place Dec. 17 and 18 (Saturday - Sunday only) from 5 p.m. - 8 p.m. Starting Nov. 1, tickets may be purchased in advance at the Ford Orientation Center (9 a.m. to 4 p.m. daily), or through www.MountVernon.org. Admission is \$20 for adults and \$14 for children under 12.

SUNDAY/DEC. 18

Alexandria Children's Christmas Celebration. 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. The Black Fire Service Professionals of Alexandria light up the holiday for children. At the Alexandria Hilton at Mark Center, 5000 Seminary Road, Alexandria.

Christmas Tea. Noon to 3 p.m. Mrs. B (of Tea with Mrs. B) will guide families and children through a winter wonderland of tea, goodies and holiday arts and crafts. Cost is \$50/children; \$150/adults. At the Morrison House Hotel and the Grille at Morrison House Restaurant. Contact Anna Berke, 703-836-0214 or aberke@cfnc-online.org.

"Nutcracker in a Nutshell." 3 p.m. Northern Virginia Community College Alexandria Campus, 3001 North Beauregard St., Alexandria. Presented by the Center for Ballet Arts. 703-273-5344 or www.thecenterforballetarts.com.

Lessons and Carols. 10 a.m. Afterwards, the Pohick Church Docent Guild will give special guided tours of the historic church. At Pohick Church, 9301 Richmond Highway in Lorton. Call 703-339-6572 or visit <http://www.pohick.org>.

Christmas Candlelight Service. 6 p.m. Entitled "Light and Life to All He Brings," this Lessons and Carols service will feature the APC Adult and Youth choirs, brass quintet and



FIRST NIGHT - Tickets are now on sale for First Night Alexandria, the largest, safest way to spend New Year's Eve in the region! More than 100 performances at 18 indoor venues with entertainment for all ages. Purchase your ticket by Dec. 18 for only \$15 at www.FirstNightAlexandria.org or at retail sites throughout Alexandria (all are listed on the web site). On Dec. 19 through Dec. 31, the price increases to \$20. Children 12 and under are free; active military can get one free ticket on Dec. 31 by showing their active ID, sponsored by Spectre Group.

746-4242.

BPAC Monthly Meeting. 7 p.m. The Alexandria Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Committee promotes bicycling and walking in Alexandria. Agenda includes: A visit with City Council Candidate Scott Gordon, Bicycle and Pedestrian Demonstration project, Community bicycle rides, Bicycle-Friendly Community project, Capital Bikeshare, Recruiting new members for BPAC, and more. At Durant Center, 1605 Cameron St., Alexandria.

Holiday Recital. 11 a.m. Free. Sponsored by the Thomas A. Edison High School Tri-M Music Honor Society. At the Hollin Hall Senior Center, 1500 Shenandoah Road, Alexandria. Call 703-765-4573.

Musician Chris Isaak. 7:30 p.m. Beyond the Sun Tour. At The Birchmere in Alexandria. Call 800-745-3000.

TUESDAY/DEC. 20

Living Nativity Show. 2 to 4 p.m. Free. Outside the front law of the Hermitage of Northern Virginia, 5000 Fairbanks Ave., Alexandria. Call 703-797-3815.

WEDNESDAY/DEC. 21

Swing Dancing. 9 to 11 p.m. Admission is \$10. With Scott Ramminger and the Crawstickers. At Nick's Nightclub, 642 South Pickett St., Alexandria.

Noonday Noels. 12:05 p.m. Eya, Women's Trio. A 30-minute musical service. At the Old Presbyterian Meeting House, 323 S. Fairfax St., Alexandria.

Jewmongous. 7:30 p.m. Tickets are \$25. At The Birchmere, 3701 Mt. Vernon Ave., Alexandria. Visit www.birchmere.com.

DEC. 22

Light Painting Community Art Event. 5 to 7 p.m. Bring a flashlight. Bring a new unwrapped toy or book donation. At Art at the Center, 2804 Sherwood Hall Lane, Alexandria.

FRIDAY/DEC. 23

Holiday Dreams on Ice. 7 p.m. Local ice skaters will skate alongside Olympic champions. Rheana Gray, Carlin Trevisan, Tam Hoang and Mina Boyd, all from Alexandria, will skate alongside champion Johnny Weir and Ashley Wagner, also from Alexandria. At the University of Pennsylvania, Class of 1923 Arena, Philadelphia, PA. Visit www.holidaydreamsonice.com.

Breakfast with Santa. 8:30 to 10:30 a.m. Cost is \$10/child; \$20/adult, and includes a breakfast buffet, craft stations, cookie decorating. Guests can take their own photos with Santa. Sponsored by the Old Town Boutique District. Visit www.oldtownboutiquedistrict.com.

Parent's Night Out. 6:30 to 9 p.m. The YMCA Alexandria's Parents Night Out program will babysit as parents take the night out on the town. The YMCA Alexandria is located at 420 East Monroe Ave., Alexandria. Call 703-838-8085.

congregational carol singing by candlelight. The doors will open at 5:40 p.m. with a brass quintet prelude at 5:45 p.m. At Alexandria Presbyterian Church, 2405 Russell Road in the Del Ray neighborhood of Alexandria. Call 703-683-3348, www.alexandriapres.org.

Colonial English Handbell Ringers. 2 and 4 p.m. Free. Get into the holiday spirit as you listen - and sing along - with their performance of holiday classics using Whitechapel bells. At the Lyceum, 201 S. Washington St., Alexandria. Call 703-746-4994.

Washington Metropolitan Philharmonic. 3 p.m. Presents Tchaikovsky's Swan Lake Suite, Wagner's Siegfried Idyll, Zwillich's Bassoon Concerto with bassoonist Arnold Irchai, Christopher Weiss' Voice of the Unknown Soldier, and a Christmas carol sing-along. At Bishop Ireton H.S., 201 Cambridge Rd., Alexandria. Call 703-799-8229 www.wmpamusic.org. \$20 18 and under free.

2:15 PM pre-concert lecture at both concerts

MONDAY/DEC. 19

Free Water Testing. 7:30 p.m. Your water will be tested for levels of Chlorine, pH value & ORP. Bring your water of choice, whether it is bottled water or filtered water. Free to the public. At Duncan Branch Library, 2501 Commonwealth Ave., Alexandria. Sponsored by Natures Nibbles & Educate Del Ray.

Tavern Toddlers. 10:30 a.m. to noon. Cost is \$7 for a group of three, which must include one adult, or \$30 for a purchase of a five-week pass. At Gadsby's Tavern Museum, 134 North Royal St., Alexandria. Visit www.gadsbystavern.org or call 703-

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DINNER DANCING AND LIVE AUCTION 7:30PM TO MIDNIGHT

DESIGNED BY YELLOW DOT DESIGNS

LETTERS

FROM PAGE 15

The Student Population

Students attending the AALC are primarily local high school dropouts, adults who are seeking a second chance to improve their livelihood, and immigrants who are capable learners but lack skills in English and the cultural literacy necessary to become citizens and an informed electorate. These students attend school voluntarily five days per week and are required to learn academic discipline and study habits. At the successful completion of their advanced AALC study, they are prepared to continue their educations at local community colleges and then on to complete their baccalaureate and advanced degrees. Some students of the AALC go on to skilled jobs in the Alexandria community as valuable workers, taxpayers, and family homebuilders.

All have gained an understanding of what it means to be an American and how to use this opportunity to improve their lives and to participate in improving their community. There is no lengthy summer vacation since classes are taught in academic quarters and the intensive study provides fast-paced learning and appreciation and pride in their accomplishments. Students pay \$65 per quarter and also pay for their books, dictionaries, and equipment. Most of the students hold down one or two jobs while attending these classes. They are models of how the immigrants to America have always achieved success for themselves and especially for their families. These students come from nearly every nation in the world ... certainly those seeking refuge from nations recently engulfed in totalitarian governments, revolutions, and war. They come to Alexandria and bring with them hopes and dreams of the benefits of liberty as did the generations of all of us before them.

The Teachers

When discussing schools, the subject of good teachers always comes up. Without question, the AALC has the best and most dedicated teachers one can find. Teaching adults is different from teaching teenagers or elementary school children. The teachers at AALC receive no public recognition but are quietly dedicated to advancing the lives of their individual students. Whether helping them get jobs, teaching them (on their own personal time) job interview skills, academic and vocational counseling, table manners, cultural benefits from the arts and music, or appropriate fashion and dress, these teachers go out of their way

to prepare their students.

With the wide variety of cultures brought by the students, teachers are expected pay particular attention to the basics of American history and civics and provide focus on equality and tolerance. They ask not just what students expect to gain from America but also what they are expected to contribute. These teachers share ideas and concepts daily, enjoy developing and testing new ideas in the classroom, and take special pride in the progress of each of their students.

The Program

Alexandria has had an AALC since 1969. It is probably the most cost-effective program in the entire Alexandria City Public School system, using only 1 percent of the current school budget and educating almost 600 students per school year at a cost of \$1,113 per student compared to the \$16,983 annual cost per k-12 student.

The AALC has fed students into numerous local colleges without fanfare or recognition. Students continuously return to the school to thank the teachers and describe their advances in colleges and in the work at businesses within the Alexandria community. They realize that learning English is not enough and that the AALC program includes the many activities to help them in their life's work ... not just the learning of verbs, punctuation and syntax.

Students who have failed or dropped out of T.C. Williams become successful GED graduates at the AALC. The program has a different design and atmosphere; one geared toward personal responsibility and success; and one that teaches students to appreciate their learning.

The program also contains a high degree of citizenship and even patriotism. The U.S. Declaration of Independence and the U.S. Constitution are explained and emphasized but within the context of U.S. and world history and geography so these precious documents have real meaning. Opportunity is stressed since, ultimately, opportunity is what the students are seeking; and preparation to accept the challenges of opportunity are the centerpiece of the program. The program uses classroom computers as a classroom tool, just as it uses film and books to expand student understanding but the heart of the educational program is good teachers being at-the-ready to explain, encourage, enlighten and expand their students' education.

The Graduates

The following are just a few of the countless success stories over the years. To protect student con-

fidentiality, first initials are used.

D. came to the AALC after graduating from T.C. Williams reading at a fourth grade level. With personal attention, he learned to read and is currently driving a city bus for DASH.

D. came from the Dominican Republic and is currently a third-year math major at George Mason University

F. a member of Chad's ruling family, learned English, passed her GED and is attending NOVA .

H. with little education and even less self-confidence, passed her GED and is studying to be a Licensed Practical Nurse.

J. having served as Guinea's ambassador to Brazil and the first woman president of the United Nations Security Council, passed her GED at age 79, wrote a book, and is a leader of women's equality movements in Africa, and was awarded GED Graduate of the Year by the GED Examiner's Association at its annual meeting in Portland, Maine.

This is only a small cross section of students who are getting a second chance to succeed at the AALC. These success stories abound. Where these might have been tax users, they have become taxpayers. Where they could have gone on drugs or have been incarcerated (at \$25,000 per year or more), they have become useful citizens and participants in the American Dream and are contributing significantly to American society. Where their families could have been broken and ostracized, they are becoming pillars of the community and their children are becoming the honor students at T.C. Williams and in many colleges. What is that worth? Surely more than \$1,113 per year.

The Conclusion

I could go on about the achievements of the AALC such as the Family Learning Program (mothers and children). All of the children in that class are either enrolled in or have graduated from college. I could describe the joy the students gain in standing up for the USA. And I could tell the story of a U.S. Marine Staff Sergeant who has served two tours in Iraq and whose parents, Brazilian and Italian immigrants now naturalized citizens and true American entrepreneurs, also attended the AALC. If you need more stories to convince you of the incredible value of this remarkable learning center ... just ask.

Please join our Coalition to Save Our School. The students deserve it and our community needs it.

Vincent R. Tocci

Lt. Col., USAF (Ret)

coalitiontosaveourschool@gmail.com

For 3¢ Plain

BY HARRY COVERT

I began writing letters as a boy, back in the days when a stamp was three cents and mail delivery was twice daily – morning and afternoon. Postcards were one cent. Tempus fugit.

The other day I visited an Alexandria post office and was astonished to count only four customers, one to mail an overseas parcel, two for Christmas stamps and another to pick up a registered letter. Right in the middle of the holiday season when, before the internet age, the lines were packed and jammed with people sending letters, cards and parcels.

It struck me then as to why the Post Office is facing such a devastating time. With electronic mail so prevalent nowadays, people have just stopped sending Christmas cards en masse. No wonder panic abounds for the men and women with the slogan, "neither snow, nor rain, nor gloom of night shall stray these couriers from their appointed rounds."

Average people, though, are not up in arms over the crises days of the U. S. Postal Service. The only subject it seems is why postal employee pensions are so great and service is down. Really?

I'm sure the politicians will see the importance to rescue the mail and postal delivery and they should. We need six-day delivery.

Another American icon is passing from the scene after the New Year. U. S. Savings Bonds will not be sold by banking institutions. The only way to get them will be online from the U. S. Treasury. High-dollar investors don't have much use for the low rate of return bonds but they've always been good for savings if you wait 10 years.

Many will recall their "grammar" school days of the 1940s and 1950s. We bought stamps in class — 10 and 25 cents. The idea was to fill out a little booklet with \$18.75 and buy a \$25 bond. I've misplaced or lost all the little booklets.

I managed to buy the stamps in Miss Reames' fifth grade class. I did it by selling newspapers. The advertisement in a comic book led me to a weekly national paper called Grit. It was the only time I was a paper boy. Fifty papers usually ar-



COVERT MATTERS

rived from Williamsport, Pa., around Thursday or Friday at my house. Before I began to pester my neighbors and family members to buy the latest issue, I naturally had to read Grit from cover to cover. It was in Grit that I first heard of Paul Harvey, just starting his column writing and broadcasting career. And I miss his journalism to this day.

Friday evenings and Saturdays, pay days for many in those days, were usually good selling days. I'd stand in front of the Virginia ABC store and haunt the liquor buyers going in and coming out.

I made 10 cents on the 50-cent paper and sometimes tips would be good enough.

It didn't bother me at all that most of the content involved stories of rural America, recipes and human interest stories. "Read the latest news," I chanted and most of the time the drinkers felt sorry for the tow-headed boy and would buy one. Lots of times the would-be readers would promptly discard them at the gas station across the street where they'd go, buy a Seven-Up and take a slug of Seagram's. I was slick, though. The papers didn't go to waste. I picked up the unread and re-sold them. I had to pay the Grit Publishing Company six-cents (\$3) for my 50. This I would do at the Post Office with a money order. I enjoyed going to the post office for this business transaction.

Now back to the original intent of these words. I have a simple solution to saving the post office. I think if each citizen would mail at least three or more personal first-class letters weekly that could make a dent in the mail deficits. Certainly, we know friends and family who'd enjoy a personal handwritten note, pen pals and letters to the editor. I have about 100 Forever stamps recalling the Liberty Ships of World War II. And we don't have to lick them either.

Can't we put down our iPhones and Droids long enough to mail a letter in an envelope? So, I urge you, gentle readers, to become philatelists and deltiologists.



Getting into the 'Right Fit' Private School

FROM PAGE 18

is a huge difference between a [teacher] recommendation and what they are seeing on the grades, that is going to be a red flag."

Most schools want prospective applicants to spend time on campus. "The [school] visit is important to us. It gives the boy and his family a chance to experience the Heights first hand," said Richard Moss, director of admission at the Heights School in Potomac, Md. "On the flip side, it gives us a chance to really get to know the boy. How is he interacting with his peers? Is he friendly? Is he courteous? Does he have a good, firm handshake? Does he look the teachers in the eye when he greets them in the morning?"

Most applications ask parents to answer questions describing their children. Here are two questions from the Langley School's application: What do you believe is your role as a parent in your child's education? What qualities do you consider to be most important for your child's education?

Consultants say schools look at the way parents answer questions. "There are a lot of parents who regurgitate the school's mission statement and all the language that is used on the school's website. Schools can see right through that," said educational consultant Clare Anderson, of Chevy Chase, Md. "They want to know that the family is in line with how [the school] works with students and [their] approach to education."

Schools also pay attention to a parent's evaluation of their child. "Red flags go up when everything is just perfect and they've never encountered a setback or difficulty," said Anderson. "[Schools] are looking for honest, candid responses. Obviously parents are going to frame it in a positive light, as they should."

Most schools require admissions tests. Depending on the age and grade of the child, these tests include the Wechsler Preschool and Primary Scale of Intelligence (WPPSI-III), Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children (WISC) and the Secondary School Admission Test for (SSAT).

"Testing often creates the most anxiety," said Dunning, of St. Stephen's & St. Agnes.

THE TESTS are used differently depending on the age of the applicant. "Tests for [young children] are used as standardized tools to give an overall picture of a child's

learning profile. These are not predictors for academic success. They give broad overviews of how a child learns," said Anderson. Tests given to middle and high school applicants are more meaningful. "Those tests measure how well your child has done with the information he or she has learned in school. If they see an eighth grader who has only average grades, but remarkable SSATs, they are going to ask, 'Is this an underachiever? Why is this child not excelling in the classroom?'"

Should children prepare for tests? When it comes to young children, most consultants say no. "It is unethical and makes your test scores invalid," said Anderson. "You are going to shoot yourself in the foot [if you prep your young child]. Your child will be the first to announce it either in the tester's office or at the school on the playdate. Then the scores are invalid."

The scenario is different for those applying for slots in middle and upper school. "I've had students who've taken [admissions tests] without prep, and then I

worked with them and their scores [went] up considerably," said Christa Abbott, an Arlington-based independent test prep tutor.

Anderson agrees. "Just like you preheat your oven, you've got to get your child ready for the test. Just knowing the format of the test can really help," said Anderson. "But I caution parents about [taking expensive test prep classes]. There has to be a primary concern that something is going to get in the way of your child being able to show what he or she knows."

Some parents hire educational consultants like White or Anderson, hoping to get a competitive advantage. Consultants say their role is to guide families through the process. "The number one mistake that I think parents make is thinking that hiring an educational consultant is going to give them an advantage at a very competitive school," said Mark Sklarow, executive director of the Independent Educational Consultants Association in Fairfax. "That is just not the way the system works. Consultants don't have a secret handshake that they can use with



St. Stephen's & St. Agnes Upper School students Isabella Norton, Leah Joseph, and Ulises Giacomani with Upper School Science Teacher Julie Krane.

an admissions director to help get a student in. The reason you hire an educational consultant is to find a good fit between a student's needs and a school's strengths. A consultant's role is to [identify] a school where a child is going to thrive."

So what can parents do to make sure their child's application shines in a pool overflowing with many attractive applicants?

"It is always nice to think about what is special about your child,"

said White. "What is the one special strength or talent your child might have, whether it be academics or an extracurricular interest? What is the potential for your child to contribute to the school?"

Anderson says she encourages parents to view admissions procedures as multi-pronged. "My hope is to help parents understand the process and see that there really is a method and [schools] are looking to get the best from your child."

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Will Improving Arlandria Neighborhood Displace Poor?

FROM PAGE 1

rents across the street in this huge apartment complex are going to go up. The rents on all the small businesses are going to go up.”

Up and down the Arlandria section of Mount Vernon Avenue, Christmas shoppers dart in and out of small markets and Latino-owned shops.

Many of the business owners look toward the current version of the Mount Vernon Village Center, a 50,000-square-foot retail center, and wonder what will happen when the high-end rental units open and new neighbors begin moving in.

“Our market is the Hispanic community that lives around here,” said Roberto Perez, owner of FPP Communications, which sells cell phones and accessories. “I assume it won’t be the Hispanic community that is going to live in the new development.”

SUPPORTERS of the proposal cheer the development as a transformation of a blighted area. They say demolishing the old 1940s-era strip mall and replacing it with a

ALEXANDRIA DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING AND ZONING



The new Mount Vernon Village Center will have two mixed-use buildings with 53,000 square feet of retail space and five floors of multi-family residential units.

gleaming new development is exactly what the neighborhood needs. Although the Planning Commission’s public hearing was dominated by those opposing the plan, several spoke in favor of the plan as offering a needed change to a long-suffering neighborhood.

“I hear a lot of comments this evening about diversity,” says Jacob Cuomo, who

lives in nearby Hume Springs. “I challenge anyone to ride down Mount Vernon Avenue and see diversity of races.”

Arlandria is a predominantly Hispanic neighborhood. But it has small businesses owned by immigrants from all over the world. Sopha May is an immigrant from Cambodia who owns a market on the avenue. She says she’s concerned

gentrification could push her out of the neighborhood. “I don’t like it,” said May. “I’m worried about it closing my business down.”

A recent survey of 48 businesses in Arlandria by the Alexandria Economic Development Partnership revealed a number of lingering problems in the neighborhood that borders with Arlington. Dirty streets, unkempt facades and unattractive signage were the major source of concern.

That was followed by concern about poor living conditions and pest-control problems. Other businesses complained about frequent crime, attempted break-ins and insufficient police presence.

Then there’s the drug dealing and gang activity that persists in the neighborhood despite ongoing efforts to curtail the neighborhood’s underworld.

“We absolutely have gangs,” said Police Chief Earl Cook earlier this year. “We do not pretend we don’t have gangs.”

Waterfront Plan Work Group Fails To Reach Consensus

FROM PAGE 1

Its members were charged with narrowing differences and finding points of agreement. Some were hoping for the group to broker some sort of compromise. Now, after 16 weeks of meetings, neither of those goals have been accomplished.

“I challenge the characterization that we are approving the plan,” said Bob Wood, a member of the minority. “There was a lot of contention, but there was not consensus.”

Perhaps the most important action of the work group was a four-to-three vote in favor of increasing the zoning. The split indicates the deep divisions that have lingered over the course of the last year. Many residents, mostly Old Town residents, oppose increasing density because they fear it would lead to increasing traffic and parking problems as well as a diminished quality of life for people who live near the waterfront. The split within the work group reflected that divide, with the three members living closest to the waterfront standing in opposition to rezoning the waterfront. The farther away members lived from the waterfront, the more they tend to support the idea.

“More density would add to the waterfront,” said Mindy Lyle, a member of the majority who lives in Cameron Station. “I think that hotels, retail and things that bring vibrancy and add to the use of green spaces are what is important.”

IN SOME WAYS, the debate about the waterfront plan is reminiscent of a family feud. The participants are emotional and unwilling to back down. And the anxiety grows with each passing argument. The final meeting of the work group, for example,

became heated when Bert Ely suggested he was going to write his own report. He initially suggested that his report be attached as an amendment to the work group’s final report, but other members of the panel vehemently objected.

“This is like a cartel,” observed work group member Christopher Ballard at one point. “It works until it breaks down.”

Clearly, the work group broke down toward the end — arguing over the same battlefield that divided City Council members earlier this year. After hearing several pointed arguments against a dissenting report being included in the final report, Ely said he was going to release it himself and circulate it throughout the city.

“You are a part of a group,” Lyle scolded Ely. “And as such, you should act accordingly.”

“Does this mean we are not all going to get WPWG tattoos?” asked Ballard, easing the tension in the council work room.

“That’s a generational thing,” Wood interjected. “I was thinking of a jacket or a hat.”

“We’ll bring T-shirts,” added Planning Director Faroll Hamer.

WHEN THE FINAL moments of the Waterfront Work Group arrived Wednesday as the clock struck noon, the effort fizzled without much fanfare. No T-shirts were distributed and no music filled the air. Work group members went about their separate ways, and City Council members are now in roughly the same position it was in before the panel was created — facing down the barrel of a controversial vote that could define their public career.

“The atmosphere is tense, the dialogue is intractable and this is rapidly evolving into

a stalemate,” said Kathryn Papp during the final public comment period of the work group. “It will either endure as heritage or it will be a blot on our name.”

A draft of the work group’s final report obtained by the Gazette Packet indicates how tenuous the recommendations will be, straddling the line between the five members in support and the four in opposition. The Planning Department’s recommendation that the city “create a new public park” where the Old Dominion Boat Club is now

located has been replaced by a suggestion in the passive voice that “there should be a significant public space on King Street between Union Street and the river.” Much of the draft report has conflicting ideas with panel members’ names appearing in parentheses.

“This group is essentially punting,” said Boyd Walker, co-chairman of the Citizens for an Alternative Waterfront Plan. “I’m not sure the council will like what you are punting or not.”

OBITUARY

Saleh H. Farah Dirir

Saleh H. Farah Dirir of Alexandria died on Oct. 13, 2011 of a heart attack. He was 74 years old.

He received his master’s degree in physical science from Kansas State Teachers College in 1969. He went on to teach at University of Somalia, Lafoole, Somalia and National Teacher Training Center, Afgoi. Eventually becoming the dean of the college (1974-77).

Six months later he crossed the border to the newly independent Republic of Djibouti, and was appointed as the first Ambassador of Djibouti to the United States of America and Permanent Representative to the UN. He left the United States in 1987 and went on to represent the Republic of Djibouti in Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, Kenya and Uganda. After which period he retired and settled with his beloved family of eight in Alexandria.

While in retirement he was a substi-



Saleh H. Farah Dirir

tute teacher at the local high school his children attended, T.C. Williams, and other various public schools in the surrounding area. In his spare time he was a writer and poet, with four yet to be

published books.

He is survived by his wife of 37 years, Fatoum Assowe, his four daughters, Marian Farah-Beck and husband Ed Beck, Obah Farah Walker and husband Zachary Walker, Ayan Farah and husband Sherif Ismail, and Saada Farah; one son, Ali Farah, and two adoring grandchildren, Laila and Aden Walker. He was preceded in death by his eldest son Farah S. Farah. He will be greatly missed by his family, friends and many students.

TC Freshman Smith an Impact Player with Bright Future

Senior point guard Kerman helping develop freshman Smith.

By JON ROETMAN
GAZETTE PACKET

With his skinny limbs sticking out of his baggy jersey and shorts, T.C. Williams freshman point guard Malik Smith defends a West Potomac ball-handler during Tuesday night's varsity boys basketball game. Despite standing 5-foot-6 and weighing 115 pounds, Smith is unfazed by his surroundings as his eyes focus on his opponent. He exudes a swagger while moving his feet to maintain position.

Smith plays and acts like he belongs at the varsity level. What he lacks in size or experience he makes up with a high basketball IQ and a fearless approach to the game. He played significant minutes against West Potomac on Dec. 13, and while the Titans suffered a 51-50 loss, Smith showed glimpses of why head coach Julian King had a freshman on the court during crunch time.

Smith is a solid defender and showed he wasn't afraid to take a big shot. While Smith didn't score, misfiring on several 3-point attempts, he continued to shoot with confidence.

"He's just fearless," King said. "He put up those two 3s in the second half and they just rimmed out. When he took the second one he didn't hesitate, so I didn't say a word. Had he taken the shot and second-guessed himself and maybe been a little hesitant, I probably would have said something. But if you're going to shoot the ball with confidence and you know that's a shot that you can make — I've seen you make it 1,000 times — hey, go ahead and shoot.

"He actually played as if he were a senior



T.C. Williams head coach Julian King describes freshman point guard Malik Smith as "fearless."

tonight."

Smith played on the junior varsity as an eighth-grader and said he figured he'd end up playing a second season of JV ball as a freshman.

King had other ideas.

"Two years ago, I saw the kid when he was coming in as an eighth-grader," King said, "and if I were eligible to put him on varsity, he would have been on varsity — he's just that good. He's going to develop into such a great player you want to have him with you as much of the way as you can to help mold him. He's a great kid on and off the court. He works hard every day, he soaks in everything like a sponge, so I want that kid around me as much as possible."

Smith said it's nerve-wracking being a



T.C. Williams senior point guard Daquan Kerman, left, is helping develop Titan freshman Malik Smith.

freshman on varsity because others point to his youth if he makes a mistake. No. 23 has shown he's up to the challenge.

"I was excited," Smith said about earning a varsity roster spot, "but then I had to make sure that I do everything right."

Senior point guard Daquan Kerman, one of the Titans' most skilled and experienced players, works with Smith during practice. Kerman said the freshman, along with having physical talent, possesses a cool head. He also likes to pick play fights with bigger kids. Smith said he looks up to Kerman.

"I try to guide him," Kerman said. "I call him my little protégé. I try to teach him what to do and what not to do. ... He feels as if he has to play big because he's small."

Kerman's performance this season will have a major effect on how well the Titans

play. Smith has shown he can contribute as a freshman and figures to have a bright future. On Tuesday, there were times when they were both on the court.

"Daquan does a good job bringing [Smith] along, but for the most part, you don't have to with this kid," King said. "He knows how to fit in with the team but yet still create his own niche. All I can say to everybody is that in two or three years he is going to be a kid that probably will be All-Met."

THE TITANS STRUGGLED with rebounding against West Potomac and were beaten by a Bryant Fultz tip-in during the closing seconds of the fourth quarter. After West Potomac missed the front end of a one-and-one, a strong offensive rebounding effort

SEE FRESHMAN SMITH, PAGE 28

SPORTS BRIEFS

Alexandria To Host MidAtlantic Erg Sprints

Alexandria will play host to the third-largest indoor rowing event in the world on Saturday, Feb. 4, when the MidAtlantic Erg Sprints are held in the Gerry Bertier Gymnasium at T.C. Williams High School.

This is the 27th year Alexandria has hosted the MidAtlantic Erg Sprints, which is essentially a land-based regatta where athletes race and compete against each other on rowing machines (also called ergometers, or "ergs"). About 1,400 athletes from more than 100 clubs and schools competed in the 2011 Erg Sprints. According to Erg Sprint Director Jeff Byron, that number is expected to increase in 2012.

Byron said that the 2012 MidAtlantic Erg Sprints

will feature more than 100 events for junior, college, and masters rowers, as well as events designed for lightweight rowers, coxswains, parent/child teams and kids. The Erg Sprints will also feature events designed for adaptive rowers — a category of event specifically designed for individuals with disabilities and one, Byron noted, that has included Wounded Warriors in the past.

Races on Feb. 4 will begin at 8 a.m. and conclude at approximately 3 p.m. The top finishers in the MidAtlantic Erg Sprints will qualify to compete in the World Indoor Rowing Championship — also known as the Crash-B Sprints — which will be held in Boston on Feb. 19.

The MidAtlantic Erg Sprints were first held in Alexandria in January of 1986. The event is sponsored by the Alexandria Crew Boosters. For the schedule of events and more information, visit www.ergsprints.com.



Madison Weitekamp, a varsity rower on the T.C. Williams Crew team, is shown competing at the 2011 MidAtlantic Erg Sprints, which were held on Jan. 29 of this past year in the Gerry Bertier Gymnasium at T.C. Williams High School.

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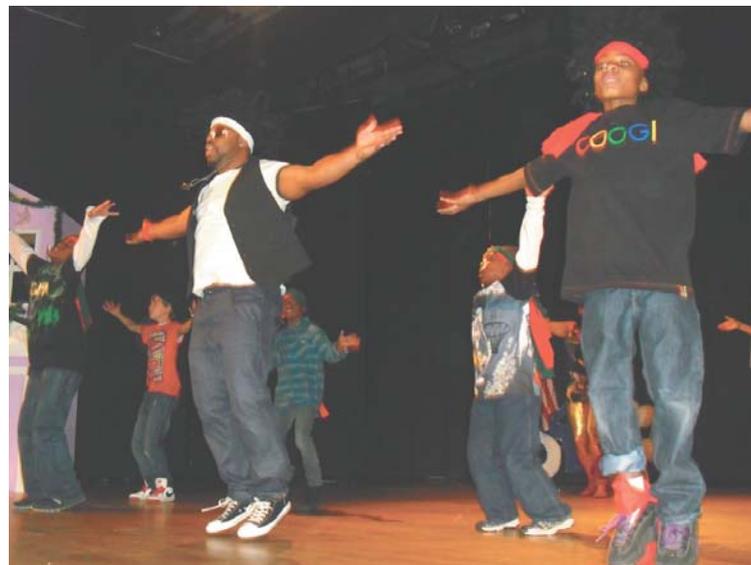
BY MCKENYA DILWORTH-ABDALLA
CENTER DIRECTOR
NANNIE J. LEE MEMORIAL
RECREATION CENTER

The Department of Recreation, Parks and Cultural Activities' ACCT (Alexandria City Community Theatre) presented its annual holiday performance of "Celebrations Around the Globe" at the Kauffman Auditorium at the Lee Center this past Saturday, Dec. 10. The production highlights celebrations from cultures from around the world as a way to show how people are more similar, than different, in the way that they express happiness and joy. This year the cultures that were highlighted were North America, Mexico, Japan and China. Therapeutic Recreation represented China with their impressively constructed dragon and shared with the audience the significance of the dragon to the Chinese New Year.

Nannie J. Lee, under the creative direction of James Franklin, burst onto the stage and energized the audience with a combination of Japanese and North American cultures, having fused dance movements and music of both cultures, which ultimately caused each person in the audience to get out of their seats.

Mt. Vernon Chorale combined with Ramsay's Chorale sang delightful songs that dazzled the audience and inspired holiday cheer. Mt. Vernon also had viola and trumpet solos which were new elements to the Celebrations Around the Globe performances. We also had more community participation with ARHA's Ruby Tucker performing a dance that was choreographed by Jason Ellis, the center director.

In keeping with tradition, I would like to thank each and every person involved with the production of Celebrations Around the Globe. Thank you to: RPCA Senior Managers, Division Chief, Leslie Clark for attending, Margaret Orlando, for just keeping things in order, Ensemble Choreography Michelle Helaire, Music Director: Jacqueline McNair, Sound and Lights: Chris Zamora, Creative Assistants:



Dancers take to the stage at Lee Center on Dec. 10.



Ms. Wigglesworth, Mr. Phillip, Jamie Aylor, James Franklin, Iesha Resurreccion and Shenika Farmer. ACCT ENSEMBLE - Nannie J. Lee ACCT Ensemble participants: Illiana Moses, Jordan Cokley, Justice Cokley, Josiah Golden, Chase Bartlett and Kejuan Ferguson. William Ramsay ACCT Ensemble participants: Selome Metaferia, Immanuel Meteferia, Efferlata Berasu, Isha Kamara, Matilda Koroma, Angela Lalwani, Suzette Brimpong, Brian McGee, Maurice Franklin, Marlow Franklin, Sophie Diene and Moustapha Diene. ARHA Ruby Tucker Center: Tayhana Jackson, Tymyron

Daniels, Dionni Robinson, Jamiya Hooks, Shayona Alford and Makayla Alford. Mt. Vernon ACCT Ensemble participants: McKenzie Carmichael, Eva Reumann, Sebastian Echevarria, Pierina Echevarria, Gabriela Melara, Italia Vanegas, Dereck Reyes, Cierra Brown, Alisa Quiniones, Kacey Kelly, Brianna Cauley, Ryle Edwards, Alexa Boggan, Sabrina ReyesViola, Solo - Gabriela Melara, Trumpet Duet - Jalen, Sabastian Echevarria. Therapeutic Recreation ACCT Ensemble participants: Sesi Atiase, Noah Berman, Danielle Williams and last but not least to the center directors of Charles Barrett (Barbara Farrington), Therapeutic (Jackie Person), William Ramsay (Harold Little), Mt. Vernon (Elsie Akinbobola) and ARHA Ruby Tucker (Jason Ellis); because of you we're working ...

Freshman Smith with Bright Future

FROM PAGE 27

gave the Wolverines multiple opportunities to win the game in the final seconds and Fultz cashed in. Fultz, a 6-foot-5 senior, finished with 24 points and 12 rebounds.

After the game, TC junior Landon Moss took blame for the Fultz tip-in, saying he should have boxed out on the play. Senior TJ Huggins said the Wolverines "outworked" the Titans.

King said his postgame talk "wasn't pleasant." "I basically told the truth and the truth is we got our butts kicked tonight," King said. "Offensively, defensively, we got completely outplayed. Take nothing away from West Potomac, they clearly came in and were the better team tonight. No question about it. They killed us on the boards, got any shot they wanted, got any second shot — as you can see, they

ended the game with second- [and] third-chance shots. ...

"[Fultz's tip-in was] completely West Potomac making a play. I'm not going to take anything away from them. Sure, Landon and TJ, there are things they could have done. There are things they probably tried to do, West Potomac just wouldn't allow us to do it."

Moss finished with a team-high 17 points and six rebounds. Huggins scored 14 points and grabbed five rebounds and Jordan Byrd added 10 points.

The Titans lost at home to a Northern Region opponent for only the second time since 2005. Lake Braddock beat TC at home last season before the Titans went on to win the Patriot District and Northern Region titles.

The loss to West Potomac dropped TC's record to 3-1. The Titans will host Woodson at 7:45 p.m. on Tuesday, Dec. 20.

Touched by an Angel

Salvation Army provides holiday gifts for families

BY JEANNE THEISMANN
GAZETTE PACKET

They were women on a mission. As Heather Eggleston and Christina Tschampel entered Artfully Gifts and Chocolate Dec. 5, they were determined to find just the right gift for a special young teen.

"Do you have any diaries?" Tschampel asked the store's co-owner Eric Nelson. "And it's for a young girl so it needs to have a lock."

Eggleston and Tschampel were shopping for gifts as part of the Salvation Army's Angel Tree gift drive. Their employer, the National School Boards Association, is one of the many businesses participating in this year's drive.

"Most of our donations will come through company adoptions," said Lt. Sheri Jones, who spearheads the Angel Tree program in Alexandria. "We've been very fortunate. The public has been very generous to us."

The Salvation Army Angel Tree program was started in 1985 to help chil-

dren and families in need during the holidays. Families register in October to participate and the information of each recipient is compiled onto a tag that lists first name, gender, age, clothing size, shoe size and a Christmas wish. The tags are then distributed to area corporations and individuals who do the shopping for their 'angels.'

"We have 476 boxes waiting to be filled," Jones said. "Each one represents a family in Alexandria with more than 1,000 children 'adopted' through this year's drive."

The distribution days for this year's drive are scheduled for Dec. 19 and 20 so it's crunch time for Jones and the volunteers who sort, tag and load the gifts into individually labeled boxes at the Salvation Army headquarters on Mount Vernon Avenue in Del Ray.

"Now is the time that we need people to drop off any toys they bought for the Angel Tree drive," Jones said. "We want to make sure the gifts are here when the families arrive to pick up their boxes."



Angel Tree tags provide the first name, age and needs of children hoping to be 'adopted' for the holidays.



Lt. Sheri Jones and Diamond Simpkins bag toys Dec. 12 at the Salvation Army building in Del Ray as part of this year's Angel Tree Drive.

Throughout the region, more than 15,000 kids will be served through the Angel Tree drive thanks to the Salvation Army and the generosity of shoppers like Eggleston and Tschampel.



Christine Tschampel and Heather Eggleston of the National School Boards Association shop for gifts for Angel Tree recipients at Artfully Gifts and Chocolate.

"This is such a wonderful program," said Eggleston, who has participated in the Angel Tree drive for many years. "It just wouldn't be Christmas without a few 'angels' to shop for."

Volunteers with Alive! Distribute Food to Needy

FROM PAGE 3

year instead. The four-pound rooster chickens were contributions from the Capital Area Food Bank at no cost to Alive!

With an operating budget of \$100,000 for food distributions throughout the year, Alive! stretches resources in the form of purchasing food for 20 cents per pound. Staples such as eggs, however, have doubled in price since last year. The rising cost of food puts an additional strain on available funds even as the number of referrals grows; from 2007 to 2010 Alive! has seen a 40 percent increase in the number of clients requesting services.

The Last Saturday food program distributes food at Ladrey Senior High Rise, Church of the Resurrection, and Cora Kelly Rec Center. While each site has its own logistical challenges, the Cora Kelly site receives over half of all Alive! clients. Nearly 70 percent of these clients are Spanish speakers.

"After working for so many years with a focus on my job and family, today I make a point to help the community," said Paul Doherty, an Alive! volunteer and member of the Christ Church congregation. "I also have a selfish motive for volunteering, I speak Spanish and wanted an opportunity to practice."

The message of helping others transcends religious affiliations, as seen by the varied Christian denominations, Jewish groups



Former ALIVE! president Gerry Hebert raffles off a few houseware items to those waiting at Cora Kelly.

and Muslim organizations present.

Deborah Schaffer, an ESL teacher at ACPS and member of the Beth El Hebrew Congregation, has volunteered with Alive! for the past six years. "In Judaism there is a term called 'Tikkun olam,' which means repairing the world. The idea is we need to make a point to help our community."

"Our church is mission oriented, and helping others is part of that," said Phillip

Ferguson, a 30-year volunteer with Alive! and member of the Alfred St. Baptist Church. "Helping others extends the ministry beyond the doors of the church."

The City of Alexandria also coordinates with Alive! in the form offering free flu shots during the distribution events. The Alive! partnership with the Department of Health began three years ago when health officials needed a way to reach the community dur-

Helping

Alive! is staffed primarily by volunteers, which allows up to 90 percent of contributions to go towards program needs. All contributions are tax deductible, checks can be made payable to Alive! and mailed to 2723 King St., Alexandria, VA 22302. For more information on volunteer opportunities or to make a contribution online, visit: alive-inc.org

ing the H1N1 outbreak.

"We found out the December food distribution draws the largest crowds, and thought it was a perfect opportunity to reach vulnerable populations," said Cyndi Lake, emergency planner with the Alexandria Department of Health. "Our collaboration with community partners is key, and making a difference is something all of us in public health believe is important."

Although the December food distribution event tends to draw the largest crowds, site coordinators are alarmed that holiday numbers remain high throughout the year.

"We're seeing a December high crowd every month," said Patterson. "Even when we had massive rain people still showed up."

"Contributions drop off dramatically after the holidays," said Ken Naser, executive director of Alive!. "People forget out clients have to eat year round. In June and July people are still eating."

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