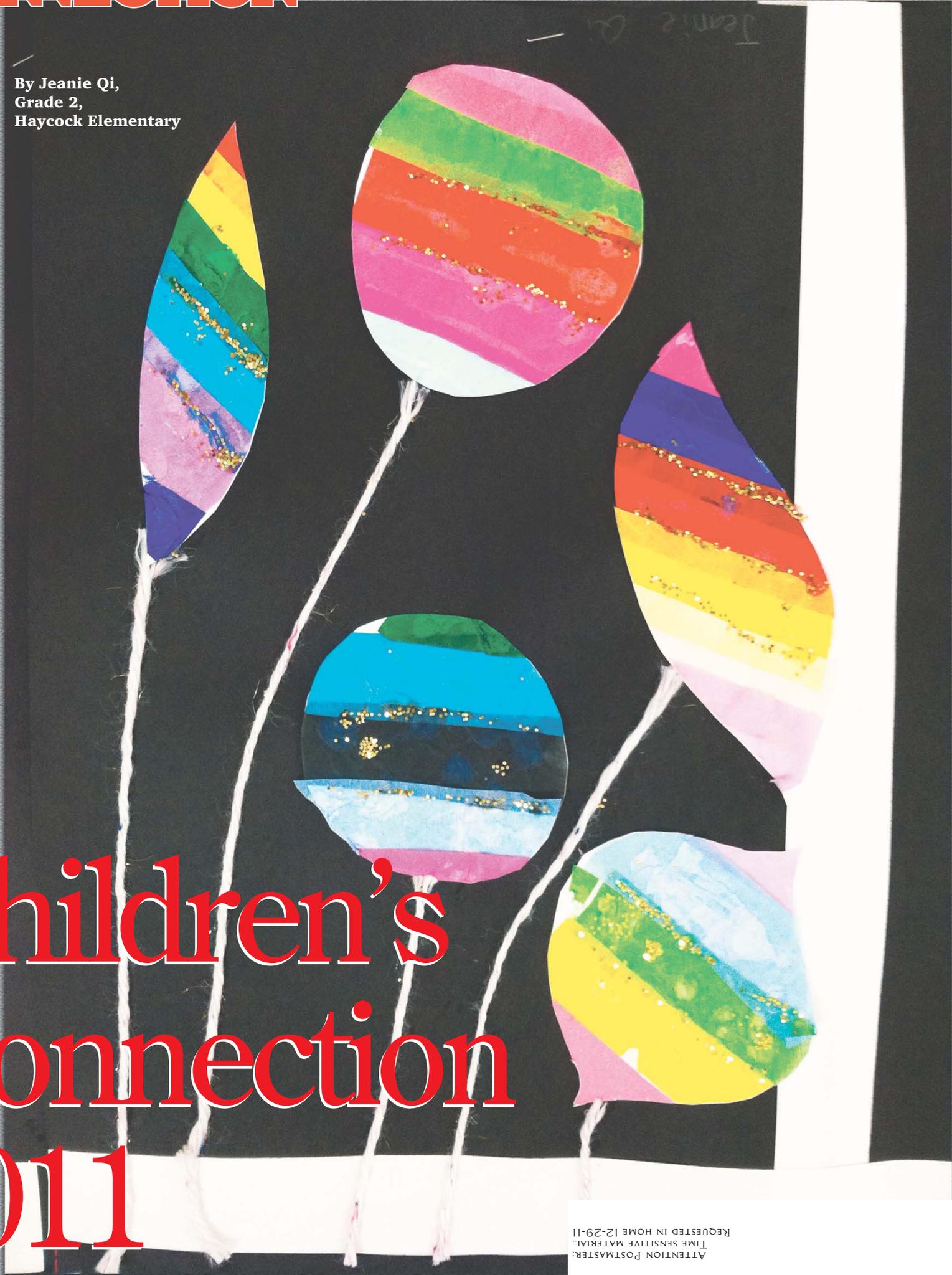


McLean CONNECTION

By Jeanie Qi,
Grade 2,
Haycock Elementary



Children's Connection 2011

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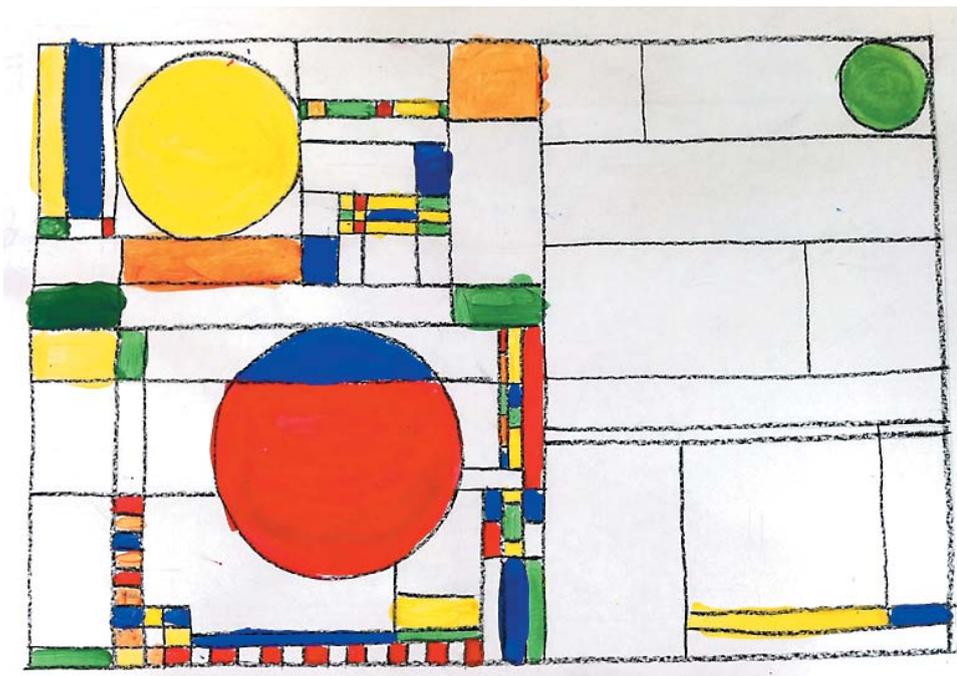
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CHILDREN'S CONNECTION 2011



By Ellie Kreeb, 5th grade, Haycock ES



By Alexander Kirby, KG, Kent Gardens Elementary

Welcome

Dear Readers:

This week, the McLean Connection turns over its pages to the youth and students. We asked principals and teachers from area schools to encourage students to contribute their words, pictures and photos for our annual Children's Issue.

The response as always was enormous. While we were unable to publish every piece we received, we did our best to put together a paper with a fair sampling of the submitted stories, poems, drawings, paintings, photographs and other works of art.

We appreciate the extra effort made by school staff to gather the materials during their busy time leading up to the holidays. We'd also like to encourage both schools and parents to mark their 2012 calendars for early December, the deadline for submissions for next year's Children's Connection. Please keep us in mind as your children

continue to create spectacular works of art and inspiring pieces of writing in the coming year.

The children's issue is only a part of our year-round commitment to cover education and our local schools. As always, the Connection welcomes letters to the editor, story ideas, calendar listings and notices of local events from our readers. Photos and other submissions about special events at schools are especially welcome for our weekly schools pages.

Our preferred method for material is e-mail, which should be sent to mclean@connectionnewspapers.com, but you can reach us by mail at 1606 King Street, Alexandria, VA 22314 or call 703-778-9414 with any questions.

EDITOR KEMAL KURSPAHC



By Sally Teter, 1st Grade, Kent Gardens Elementary



By Trinity Armbruster, 5th Grade, Westgate Elementary



By Cole Davies, 4th Grade, Westgate Elementary

CHILDREN'S CONNECTION 2011



Photos by Kate Fitzgerald, Langley High School, Age 16

Writing to Writers From Spring Hill Elementary

Dear Ms. Munoz Ryan,

In your novel "Esperanza Rising," you showed me the importance of family and how a life could be turned upside down and lead to a struggle to survive. I believe that your story was inspired by your grandmother so it is right that I tell you about mine. My grandma was born in Poland before World War II into a Jewish family. Like Esperanza, she too had a loving family. She lived a good life near Warsaw and like Esperanza suddenly losing her father, my grandma faced horrible things. The Nazis invaded Poland when my grandma was ten. Though she hid with her mother and brother, my grandma was eventually rounded up into a ghetto where her mother died before her eyes of disease and starvation.

Their stories again continue on a similar path. Esperanza's mother loses her house and all the possessions she had. My grandma's family house was taken by the Nazis and she and her father were eventually sent to another ghetto, the Warsaw Ghetto, where most people died or were taken to concentration camps. Esperanza's mother knew that they needed to flee from the evil Tio Luis for their safety. My grandma's father knew that they could not survive the Ghetto so he devised a plan. In the middle of the night he took my grandma and shoved her into a sewer hole under the wall. That is the last time she ever saw anyone from her family. When Esperanza let her father go, she too did not realize she would never see her father again.

My grandma suffered through years of little food, disease and abuse. After the war, she was sent to an orphanage until she was sent for by an uncle in the United States who had money. Though she faced much prejudice, I don't think there is any better quote than "Do not ever be afraid to start over" to describe my grandma and her life of starting over in the United States. Growing up I always felt my grandma's story to be unique to her, but "Esperanza Rising"

changed my perception. I learned you can never say "I love you" until it's too late.

Sincerely,
Sarah Champness, 6th grade
Spring Hill Elementary

Dear Sally Nicholls,

"Look at that sunset and cherish it forever, the most beautiful sight," my Dad exclaimed. Indeed, the sunset was exquisite but soon the memory of that radiant sunset grew hazy and I thought, "What is the point of life's treasures if they're merely temporary and soon forgotten?" One thought persisted: what is life's purpose? Then I read your book "Ways to Live Forever."

Early in the summer, I was devouring crême brûlée, and as I finished licking my spoon, the thought popped into my head again: "What was the point of that dessert, delectable indeed, but now gone? I only have the faintest memory of its taste. If this dessert is only temporary, then other of life's treasures are temporary and short lasting, so what is life's point?" After being provoked countless times by this thought, school began. I noticed a book entitled "Ways to Live Forever" and began reading it.

As I was reading your book, I felt tears well in my eyes and anger boil inside me at Sam's countdown to death. Sam's various questions on death and life and what his goals were caught my attention, especially the list including how he wanted to break a world record and fly an airship. Each of his lists and questions made me reflect on not only his questions but also my questions, and gradually guided me to the answer to my question. When I finished "Ways to Live Forever" I realized how Sam fulfilled his dreams and was satisfied with his life, even though it was cut short. Finally, I found the answer to the question that nagged me for months. The answer was simple: fulfillment.

What is the point of life, if its treasures are only temporary? The answer is to find fulfillment. Just like Sam, I now set goals

to do things to create satisfaction, like improving my grades and my violin playing. When I accomplish these things, my life feels a little more fulfilling and during times when I feel discouraged or somber I now reflect and smile with satisfaction on the times I've succeeded. During times of amusement, I no longer am provoked by the question of how my amusements are only temporary, but I remember how this moment can live forever and be relived to make me smile. Thank you for writing this book, for now the radiant sunset is exquisite again.

Sincerely,
Noah Daniel, 6th Grade
Spring Hill Elementary School

Dear Maya Angelou,

There is no reset button in life. If you mess up, it's over and it can't be changed. Whether history is good or bad, once it has happened we should move on. This is what I thought you were trying to tell your readers when you wrote, "On the Pulse of Morning."

After reading your poem I learned that history is important. No matter how boring it is to listen to the teacher talk about the Revolutionary War, or the segregation that went on during the 1930s, it is all very important. Learning about all of these things helps us so we don't make the same mistakes people did in the past. It also teaches us to make our own mark on history and to fight for what we believe in, just like Martin Luther King Jr. and George Washington.

After reading your poem two or three times I noticed that a rock, a river, and a tree were all metaphors for some of the many things that should be changed in this world. A rock represented cynical people, a river represented peace from all violence in the world, and the tree represented racism. All of these things are events that have occurred throughout history but have been changed because of people who have fought

for what they think is right, even if it meant death.

After reading your poem I learned that history is much more important than I used to think. By learning about what people did in the past helps us make better decisions, prevents us from making the same mistakes people did long ago, and helps us move on from the many terrible events that have occurred throughout history. Thank you for teaching me that bad things will occur in my life, but once it has happened if I move on it will eventually get better.

Sincerely,
George Lorenze, 6th grade
Spring Hill Elementary School

Dear Sharon Draper,

Your book, "Out of my Mind," truly blew my mind and shattered all my preconceived notions about children with disabilities. I realized how wrong I was in assuming that these kids can't think, feel or communicate. It got me thinking that many of these children just act differently but are smart in their own way.

I was heartened to know that there are compassionate people like Mrs. Tracy and Mrs. Valencia in this world, yet not surprised that there are others like Mrs. Billups who just stereotype these kids into one size fits all. I was ecstatic when Melody made it into her school's Whiz Kid Championship team and felt her disappointment when her teammates deliberately left her behind. Sadly, I could also relate to her teammates and the thought process that lead to them excluding her. This made me examine my own feelings and behavior towards children like Melody. Whenever I have encountered children like her, making facial gestures, noises, and various movements, I would feel scared and try to divert my attention away from them. It never crossed my mind that this might have been their way of communicat

SEE LETTERS, PAGE 8

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CHILDREN'S CONNECTION 2011

Reading, A Must For All Ages

BY ANNIE LU
HAYCOCK ELEMENTARY SCHOOL/
6TH GRADE

Most of people think that reading is something only necessary for "the younger ones". This is not true, and I'm not talking about cookbooks or newspapers. Many middle aged adults do not read. This is a problem because the mind needs to be active, but there are multiple reasons to be passionate about reading.

1. Reading can not only strengthen your mind, but also your attitude. Most of us usually don't think about fairies or wizards anymore. Our children like to refer to this as "grown-ups". Sometimes though, it's okay to return to the world of our childhood fantasies. Reading fiction can make you think of details and help notice things you never notice before. You'll be able to see from other people's perspectives. It can also give you the positive thought that anything can happen.

2. Reading can also relieve stress. When you read, you are submerged in another world and you let go of everything around you. It's almost like indulging in a hot tub, where all you feel is the warm water seeping in your skin. You see characters from a book dealing with things you find frustrating. Then, reading can really help you by building a connection.

3. Reading can help you create your own story! Everyone has a story, and reading can help bring out your own. (Or someone else's!) Reading links to writing. Writing can also help relieve stress or you can just express yourself. Maybe when you feel really angry, like you can't understand someone or when you feel really sad if someone close died, you can express yourself in writing. Writing can transfer your thoughts and emotions on paper and believe it or not, take some of the weight of your chest.

4. Lots of stories have morals, some just aren't written down. Reading can teach you a lot of things like friendship, kindness and courage. Many people look to books for comfort. Reading can make you a better person outside and inside.

So what are you waiting for? Whether you're a toddler or 60 years old, go pick up a good book and read!



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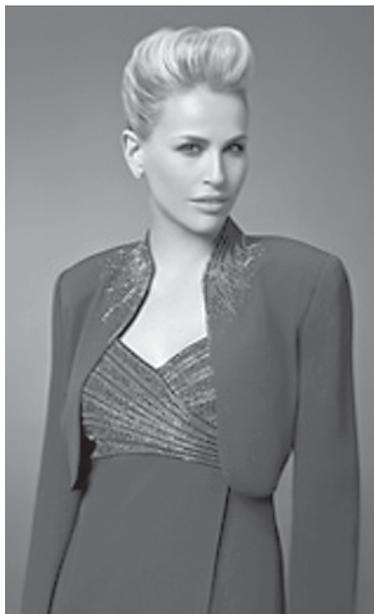
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CHILDREN'S CONNECTION 2011

The True Meaning of Christmas

BY CLARE DABALDO
COOPER MIDDLE SCHOOL/8TH GRADE

What comes to your mind when you think about Christmas? Is it the presents? A huge feast that will leave you feeling stuffed? A rosy cheeked Santa all dressed in red, accompanied by his trusty reindeer? For some people Christmas is the most hectic and stress-filled time of the month. But has everyone forgotten what Christmas is all about? I certainly did until I did some community service.

This December I went over to southeast DC to St Timothy's Church with a few friends. I helped tons of elementary and middle school children decorate stockings, draw pictures, and put stickers onto candles. While cheery kids were making their Christmas presents, just about everyone said that their creations were for mommy, daddy, grandma, or grandpa.

While children were happily making their gifts, parents and grandparents went downstairs to get presents for the kids. Sneaking to the church basement, adults filled up with gifts, dumped them into shiny black trash bags so their kids wouldn't be able to see, and retreated back upstairs to join the craft

making festivities. Men, women, boys, and girls of all ages came together for cookies, decorating crafts, and singing classic Christmas tunes.

To me all I was doing was teaching people how to make crafts, and helping talkative little kids glue pom-poms onto tiny red felt Santa hats. But these people were grateful. Almost everyone I helped said thank you and Merry Christmas.

Many of the people at St. Timothy's were at one point of time homeless. This was the only shopping that they were going to do for Christmas. These people weren't going to have a big tree. They weren't going to have a feast on a long table filled with decadent sweets. But they weren't upset. The community was happy to be with their family, singing carols, and decorating ornaments.

This experience hit me deep inside; Christmas isn't about receiving, and getting what you want. Christmas is about helping those around you to have the best holiday ever. The true meaning of Christmas is really all about love and giving. Also, the best gift is the gift of giving, because no matter how much something costs or how "cool" it is, nothing is better than the feeling you get after you help someone.

Daddy's Girl, Daughter's Man

BY SOPHIE HOLSINGER
COOPER MIDDLE SCHOOL/7TH GRADE

When I was little I drove down to Charlottesville every Saturday in the fall with my dad, to watch the University of Virginia play football. We had so much fun tailgating, watching the game, and eating junk food together. I remember us doing some really crazy cheers, screaming at the top of our lungs, and having a ball together.

When I was about 11 years old I didn't get to spend all of that time with my dad. I started to do after school activities that created so many different conflicts. I had a full schedule every weekend filled with soccer games, birthday parties, and school events. I barely had enough time to do homework and my dad also had lots of work to do with his new job. I never went to a Virginia football game with my dad again.

My dad is a very family oriented guy. If no one else in the family is doing it, he's not either. He stopped getting season tickets to the Virginia games because he didn't want to go to the games without me or the family, and he sure wasn't going to miss any of my soccer games!

Going to Charlottesville, being with old college friends, and watching football, that was what he loved to do. But he gave all of that up to be with my

family and I.

I've learned a lot from my dad because he taught me that family goes first. Even if you have a party, or a hobby that you want to go do, family and parents are what matter. Some day you won't have your parents standing by you all the time and they won't always be there to fix your mistakes.

That is why it's important to spend time with family now rather than later. I'm not trying to tell you that you always have to be with your family and you can't ever go to the mall with your friends, but sometimes it nice to just hang out with family even if it's not your favorite thing in the world. Your parents love you and they want to spend time with you, you just have to be open to it.

My dad and I now watch the University of Virginia play football on TV every Saturday afternoon. While we are watching the game my dad does some of his work, and I text my friends and catch up. It's our new tradition that we will forever continue to do. And every once in a while, when we can rearrange our schedules, we go down to Charlottesville and we watch a game together.

I know that me and my dad will forever be close, and I know that he will always be there for me. I know that my dad loves me and I love him to because he gave up everything for my family and I.

Her Melody

BY RONNA TAHAN
COOPER MIDDLE SCHOOL/7TH GRADE

Music has more power than many people give it credit for. It has the ability to move us to tears, or bring out peals of laughter. It can change our perspective about something in a split second. The notes we hear can change a happy moment into one of sadness, and the best part about it is that no two songs or pieces are the same, nor are two people.

If someone sees my sister and I, they would not think we are related, and once they get to know us, they would have no doubt that we aren't related, when in fact we are. My sister has inspired me to be a perfectionist, never settle for second best, but to continue to work hard at what I want. Even though I love her deeply, I used to get a little jealous of her. No matter how hard I worked to be like her, I never was.

My whole family has dark brown hair, then you see me; yeah, I'm the one with the burst of rustic red hair between all of them. The first thing most people ask me is, "Did you dye your hair?" and my answer never changes, it has always been "No". At home I'm the loud one that always fills the silence but at school I'm shy and get nervous to speak up. My sister is quite but full of emotion inside, continuing to always get the best scores possible. The perfect student every teachers wishes they had, and once I get into their class they always say, "Oh, how is your sister? Is she enjoying high school? Tell her I said hi!" Then there I am, getting mostly perfect- but not all

perfect- grades, and I feel like I'm a failure.

She is amazing at the piano and every time people come to our house they always ask her to play a song, while my guitar and I go unnoticed. At first it really hurt my feelings so it motivated me to work harder at it. Not to mention, she is great at science and math, so if you haven't guessed it, I paid extra attention in those classes too. But it wasn't until fifth grade that I realized that yes all my hard work paid off, but my real passion isn't in numbers or equations, but in the simplicity and elegance of writing.

Once I felt sure that writing is what I want to do for the rest of my life, I told them about how I have been in a constant fight with myself to be better than my sister, and to my surprise, they laughed! I couldn't believe my ears when my sister said that she always admired my hair color and wished she didn't have a boring color, or how she also admires my determination. That day I realized that I never will be like her, nor do I want to. I learned that no two people are the same and that I don't have to be like her to be perfect, no one is perfect, but everyone is themselves, and you should never try to change that.

I think of my sister and me as a kind of Yin-Yang. While we're two totally different people with two totally different personalities, it's nice to know we share at least one thing in common, our love for each other. While we continue to get older and change, one thing will stay the same, the support that we give each other. I know one thing for sure... her melody will always be with me.

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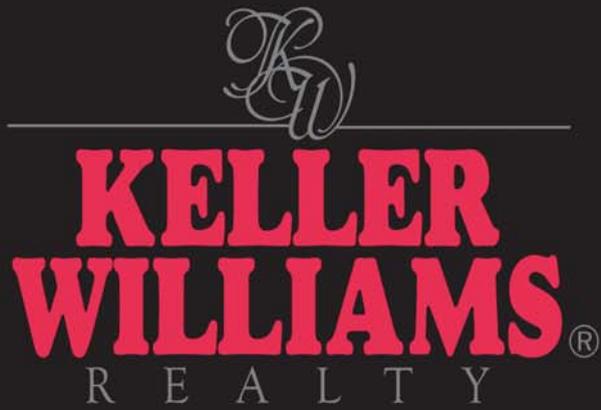
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CHILDREN'S CONNECTION 2011

Letters to Writers From Spring Hill

FROM PAGE 4

ing, just like Melody's. Your book opened my eyes to the fact that these kids may be even smarter than many of us that have no developmental problems. Next time I see a disabled child, I'll try hard to understand what they might be saying. I know this won't be easy, but I will put my best foot forward.

I was so glad that Melody got a Medi-Talker which opens a new world for her. I hope that scientists can invent different devices which will enable other disabled kids to reach their full potential. Your book has inspired my interest in this field and I hope to pursue this when I am older.

Your book, "Out of my Mind," made me want to help children with special needs. I'm sure this book has raised awareness among many other young readers, like me. Thank you for writing this unique and special story.

Sincerely,

Irma Saluja, 6th grade
Spring Hill Elementary School

Dear Maya Angelou,

I've read all kinds of poems, but your poem was special. It opened a door I'd never dreamed about. Growing up, I had it made. A roof over my head, food on my table, everything I needed was at the tips of my fingers. I always thought that everybody was happy and it was a perfect world, until I read your poem.

To me, your poem reflected our past, like colonial times. When we came, England wanted us to be under their command, and we fought back, but there were loyalists. We treated the loyalists as outcasts for having an opinion we disagreed with. Why didn't we respect what they had to say? What if they felt the same way about our opinion? And slavery? Patrick Henry's famous words, "Give me liberty or give me death". What did he mean

by liberty if we lived in a country that relied on slavery?

Why did we treat them different for their skin? Why would we take them from their home, defenseless, just to do work we were capable of doing? We never put it into perspective; never saw it from their point of view. And even when slavery was abolished, people were STILL discriminating against them. Your poem showed me all these things and I thought to myself "Why? Why would they do this?"

Today we are different. We have come a long way. We have industries, companies, and so much more. But, we are so busy admiring our work; we don't realize that it's destroying the planet. But the Rock does. He has been watching us for years, waiting for us to come out and see what we've done. He wants us to face the world. We have been trying to blame someone else but deep down, we know it's all our faults. But, it depends on how you see it. Some see a world so hopelessly destroyed, where some may see the hope of a second chance.

"On the Pulse of Morning" showed me that no matter what happens, tomorrow is a new day, a spark of hope. It showed me to be a river and go with the flow, but also a rock and stand my ground. There will always be problems in this world, and thanks to your poem, I think I have found a way to fix them.

Sincerely,

Jenn Saxenian, 6th grade
Spring Hill Elementary School

Dear Clement Moore,

Thank you for writing your book "Twas the Night Before Christmas" and helping me to understand the true meaning of Christmas. My Grandfather reads it to me every Christmas Eve as he did for my mother when she was a little girl. It's a wonderful story that has lasted forever.

When I was a little boy I believed every word of it. I memorized all of the reindeer names and pictured myself being the little boy in the book. I waited for Santa to come down the chimney. It helped me to visualize what Santa was doing on Christmas Eve, which was flying around with his reindeer giving presents to little boys and girls.

As I have grown older the book has meant more to me. First of all, it gives me a very special time with my grandfather that I look forward to all year. We cuddle up on the bed and he reads that same story to me that I've heard ten times already. I keep thinking that maybe the story will change but thankfully it doesn't. He always reads it with the same enthusiasm and excitement as if it's the first time that he's heard it but I know that it isn't. I realize that it's not about the words but about the traditions that it has brought about.

I still do believe in Santa Claus because you wrote this book about him. But maybe it's your book that has kept his spirit alive for so many children and has allowed all of us to go on believing. It's your book that has brought the reindeer to life and the sleigh, the sack of presents and even the milk and cookies. It's amazing to me how long all of these traditions have lasted. It makes me think that you are the one who invented Christmas or at least the Santa Claus part of it.

I love the fact that you wrote it as a poem. It is definitely the only book that I have memorized. I find myself saying it in my head at other times of the year besides Christmas.

This year on Christmas Eve I will be reading your book again with my Grandfather and thinking what Christmas really means to me. Thank you so much for inventing such a great day for so many reasons.

Sincerely,

Michael Arcari, 6th grade
Spring Hill Elementary School



Grand Canyon by Celia Barabanov, 2nd Grade, Churchill Road Elementary

Love

KATIE BELLASCHI
COOPER MIDDLE SCHOOL/7TH GRADE

Love is a strong word
that is beyond anyone's description.
Not one person,
or even a group of people, has the ability
to describe it in words.
Love can be shown
in many different ways,
at many different times,
by many different people.
From the warm, silky fur
of a new puppy
to the first peek at a newborn sibling,
love is defined by you.
Love is what you imagine it to be,
so live life imagining.

Christmas Eve

BY KATHERINE ALEXIS ROHLOFF
LANGLEY HIGH SCHOOL/9TH GRADE

Snow floats gently down from the vast, open sky
A small town's sparkling lights twinkle nearby
Houses are decorated with annual Christmas cheer
That lasts for the rest of the year
Within the last house in the happy small town
There is quite a lot of sound
The twins, Martha and Kelly sing merry Christmas songs
While little Danny puts the plate of cookies where it belongs
Father puts the finishing touches on the log fire
While Mother sets her antique Santa statue out for all to admire
Soon it will be time for Santa Clause to come by
And all the kids listen to the clock hours slowly chime
The whole family gathers next to the fire
And reads Christmas stories with tales that inspire
All too soon, it is time to go to sleep
But it is very hard for the young children not to make a peep
Soon they find themselves traveling down the sweet road of Christmas dreams
Past candy canes, chocolate, and whipped cream.

SCHOOL NOTES

Send School Notes to
mdean@connectionnewspapers.com.
Deadline is Friday.

Ten Langley High School students have been named as 2011 National Merit Scholarship Semifinalists: **Allison S. Brady, Saba Eskandarian, Jimmy J. Fang, Jamison G. Fox-Canning, Nathaniel C. Howe, Dylan J. Kriz, Debbie R. Pan, Spencer C. Shabshab, Holliday L.**

Shuler and **Andrew J. Stewart.**

Six McLean High School students have been named as 2011 National Merit Scholarship Semifinalists: **Nana-Kwabena A. Abrefah, Daniel J. Lee, Eric R. Leimkuhler, Elizabeth McGrady, Justin Nam and Brian Tong.**

Michael P. DeSantis of the Potomac School has been named as a 2011 National Merit Scholar-

ship Semifinalist.

Eleven James Madison High School students have been named as 2011 National Merit Scholarship Semifinalists: **Bria N. Ammer, Lindsay M. Brents, William N. Brown, Harold Hild, Kailyn E. Hornbeck, Bridget L. Jamison, Ye Eun Jeong, Lindsey M. Jost, Andre S. Lindenfelser, Paul P. Psarakis and Jackson T. Simon.**



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2011 Keller Williams McLean/Great Falls Cares Charity Golf Tournament Results

In only the second year of our charity golf tournament, we are pleased to announce that we raised nearly \$60,000 to donate to the two charities we selected this year, Our Military Kids and Lift Me Up! The tournament was held at Trump National Golf Club on October, 24, 2011, and had over 200 golfers participate. A big thank you to everyone that contributed and helped with this year's golf tournament to make it such a huge success and a wonderful event, especially our main sponsors Monarch Title and Potomac Mortgage Group.

Contact Kay Bellhouse to learn why

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CHILDREN'S CONNECTION 2011



By Andrew Zhou, 2nd grade, Churchill Road Elementary

Christmas Cookies

BY ANDREW ZHOU
CHURCHILL ROAD ELEMENTARY/2ND GRADE

Mmmmm! I could smell the good smell of cookies. My mom told me to wash my hands. I was so hungry I ran to the bathroom, opened the door to the bathroom, grabbed the soap, turned on the water, and put the soap on my hands. I counted to 20- 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7...20. I washed off the soap, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6...10. I turned off the water.

I ran to the table. This time it smelled like sugar, chocolate and frosting. My mouth was watering like crazy! I could see the steam rising like a smoke stack.

I could only wait for 1 or 2 seconds. But this time my mouth was watering so much it almost dripped out of my mouth. My tummy was rumbling like an airplane engine.

My mom put the silverware on the table. Finally, she put down the cookies. I grabbed a cookie no matter if it was hot. I took a bite. Mmmmmmmmm.

Diversity Means...People

BY NADIA EUGENE JO
CHURCHILL ROAD ELEMENTARY/5TH GRADE

Do you know who you are?

Have you ever stared at yourself, in the mirror, and realized how unique you are; how interesting every last bit of you are; who you are? When you compare yourself to other people, you may be surprised to know that many of them have a lot of things in common with you. In fact, your close friends might be friends because of that reason. But, have you ever considered them yourself? Probably not, because you are only you in the entire world. Can similarities change something as broad as uniqueness and diversity? If everyone in the world were the same in his or her personality and looks, would you consider that person as you? No, because there's nothing about you that will set you apart from anyone else.

The next time you go outside, take a good look at your friends. You can see that they are all very different. Well, then you might ask yourself, "How come we are not fighting, arguing, and doing other unharmonious things all day if we are so different?" Then you can think of it this way: people are puzzle pieces and the world is an entire picture. We all have

to get in place to make a full, harmonious picture. Some shapes might fit perfectly into each other. But some, unfortunately, don't. Some of the world's crimes happen because of that. But most of us mold ourselves a little bit differently and fit with others to make a beautiful artwork, our world! Diversity, coming together, will not mean chaos but beauty.

Why is diversity so important?

My answer to that is that diversity creates big and small uniqueness, beauty, and harmony which makes the wonderful world we live in. These elements are the key to being us, too. If diversity didn't exist, not only our uniqueness would be destroyed, but also everything else. For example, if we only had one shade of one color, the finished piece wouldn't be as astonishing as a masterpiece of delicate lines, bold splashes of color, and the life it contains.

Stand in front of the mirror one last time. What do you see? Before answering, look over yourself briefly. Perhaps you will get the same answer as me, diversity. That's right. We are diverse in every single part. Of everything that has to do with us, there's a hint of diversity. People are made of diversity, and the world that we live in is diverse, too. The society of puzzle pieces—uniqueness—colors—we all make them up.

Diversity means us, the people.

Snowing

BY MAGGIE BELLASCHI
CHURCHILL ROAD
ELEMENTARY/6TH GRADE

The snow is gently glistening down,
It just keeps piling up on the ground.
There are many animal tracks I can see,
School's canceled, YES we're free.
I build a snowman nice and tall,
I sure hope it doesn't come to its deathly fall.
Snow fights are happening everywhere,
It's so much fun, but almost too cold to bear.
I go sledding on the big hill,
The trees around are silently still.
I don't want to go to school ever again,
But winter has to come to its end.

I am a Pond

BY AMANDA MARY HIRSCH (A.M. HIRSCH)
CHURCHILL ROAD ELEMENTARY/5TH GRADE

I am a pond,
A deep thinker,
I worry,
I laugh,
I cry,
And I love.

Leaves. They grew, and eventually fell. Then I'd catch them and they'd float on top of me as I drifted them to safety. They were very independent. They tried to be bold. They made their design unique and unforgettable. They stroll through life, happily, forever and always.

Fish would swim and play games. They tried to make the most of their lives while they could.

I can still feel the Lily pads floating on top of me.

Turtles were slow and clever,
They would spend all their time hiding inside their shell.
They are scared to face the world alone.

Weeping willows are old and wise,

They were a place of shade,

Of peace,

And of beauty.

Wild flowers grew

They blossom into beautiful flowers.

They stayed strong,

Then they'd start to wilt,

And soon died,

But always will have the heart of that new sprout,

The one I always loved.

Butterflies would float and fly.

Chasing each other,

They are light spirited creatures,

Who would fly whichever way the wind points them.

She was my favorite.

Her hair was golden,

She was skinny,

And has big, dark brown eyes

She was a joy to us all.

She'd admire the leaves bold colors and designs,

Swim with the fish,

She'd help the turtles out of their shells and into the world,

She'd pick flowers and arrange them into bouquets,

She'd chase the butterflies,

Read under the weeping willow,

She'd dance and sing,

She was a ballerina,

She loved ice skating.

Riding horses,

Fashion,

And music,

She wanted to learn every instrument.

She loved to write

She'd read her writing aloud to us.

She also was an artist.

She made sail boats and let them ride on me.

Most of all she'd laugh.

Her laughter was like a bell's ringing.

Every day she'd visit us, every day.

I'll always remember my days with my old friends. I continue on through my life. I have gotten my dream of being part of a river. Now I will see other parts of the world. Sometimes I think I can hear her laughing, it ringing in my ears like a bell, and I turn around. I miss her most of all. I will always remember her. I will never forget. I guess I should be more careful what I wish for.

Be careful what you wish for because you might get it. Be thankful for what you have while you still have it, not after it's gone. Embrace who you are.

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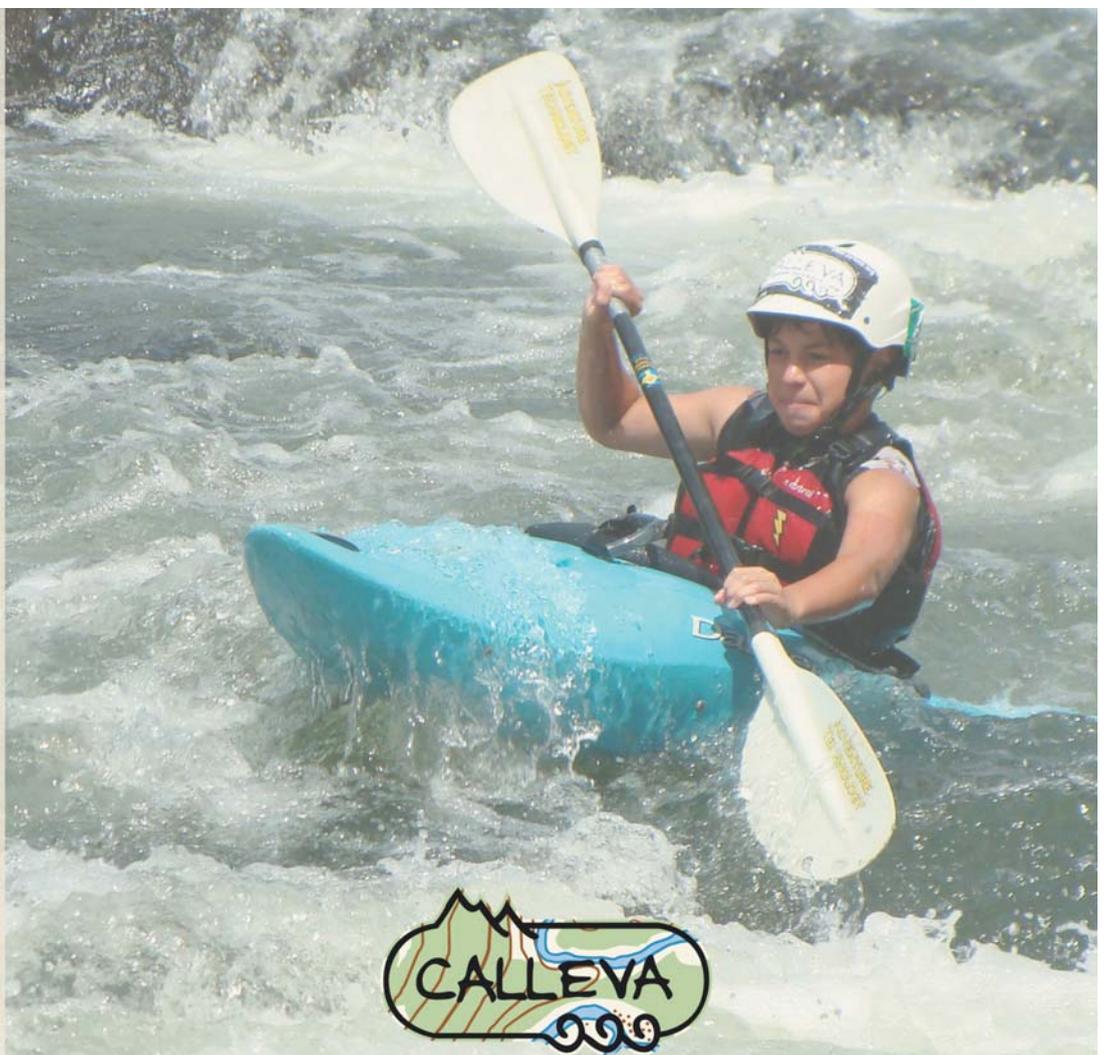
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The True Meaning of Christmas

BY ELLIE CROSS
COOPER MIDDLE SCHOOL/8TH GRADE

Too every little kid, Christmas is all about two things: Santa and presents. That was very much true for me. Except one Christmas, I realized that it was something more. It all started seven years ago, when the newest Barbie dream house came out. That was all that I wanted for Christmas.

We were going to my Grandma's house in Newport News for Christmas this year, and I was so excited to finally get the Barbie house that Santa would place under the Christmas tree. All the way to my Grandma's I sang along to Christmas music, as jolly as every five year old is two days before Christmas. Throughout the whole trip all I could think about was my favorite Barbie and Ken hanging out in their new home.

As Christmas Eve approached, I ran up to bed, hardly tired, to make Santa come faster. I slept all through the night, dreaming of candy canes and sleigh bells. The next morning I woke up, sprinted downstairs, and checked to see if Santa had eaten his cookies and milk. When I saw that he had, my heart bounced around inside of me, until I realized that I was the only one awake. It was one in the morning. I thought to myself, Merry Christmas Ellie! So I headed back upstairs to sleep, for the last time that night.

When I woke up for real, I sped down the stairs to the sound of Christmas. When I got downstairs, I saw all my family and relatives cozy and up against the glowing tree. It was time to start opening the presents! We all chose out of a hat to see who would choose their presents first, and I was fifth. After trains and clothes had been distributed, it was my turn.

I rustled around the presents around the tree trying to find a gift wrapped big enough to be a dream house. Then I see something big, pink, purple, and

chewed up. It was my Barbie dream house. As I pulled it up from behind the tree, hitting a thousand little needles causing them to drift to the floor. My eyes filled up quickly with tears. It was really all that I wanted, so I knew that no other presents would seem satisfactory to me.

As my mom saw the house she looked confused and angry. "What happened to the Barbie house?" A couple seconds later, my grandma answered. "When I came downstairs Becky was furiously chewing on it, so I put it behind the tree so she couldn't chew on it anymore." She looked as if she let me down, which made me feel even worse. So I just ran upstairs.

I ran up to the room I was staying in and cried up a river. It felt like hours that I was up there. I could hear footsteps coming towards my room. There was a knock on my door, and my mom came in. I cried even more, thinking that she would say that she is annoyed with my behavior. I turned out to be wrong. She started off saying that she was sorry about my doll house, but I should be lucky that I got it at all.

"There are kids out there that would kill to have a doll house like this, even if it's chewed up," she explained, "you are so lucky to have what you do. You are lucky enough to have more toys at home and a roof over your head that Barbie is welcome to stay in until she finds her own place. And anyway Christmas isn't all about what's under the tree. It's about being thankful for what you have, and not taking granted for it, and spending time with family. Now why don't we go downstairs okay?"

That Christmas I realized something that changed my life. Not only did I learn the true meaning of Christmas, I learned that I should be thankful for everything that I have, including my family. Now every Christmas I go through my clothes and wallet to find enough money for another little kid that is underprivileged to get their own Barbie dream house.

The Comeback

BY JACK BONHAM
COOPER MIDDLE SCHOOL/7TH GRADE

The whistle blew as the jump ball of the game was tossed. My team was the Great Falls Sharks and we were facing a very good team in the playoffs. This game determined who played in the championship. The opponents were bigger, more athletic, and were considerably better than us and it was showing. We were down by probably around 10 points at halftime, but it felt more like 20. The opponents had gotten more rebounds, had gotten better possessions, and every point we scored was either lucky or very hard-earned. Not to mention they had missed some easy opportunities. I felt fairly powerless, sitting there sweating with a water bottle, and a short-handed team. But, I knew that this thing wasn't over yet, we still had a shot.

Coming out of the first half was even worse, because we were playing extremely hard, yet every time we scored they answered right back. I was exhausted but continued to play hard and kept the deficit within reach... sort of. The team's momentum drew them closer to victory each minute. The other team's proud parents were hollering obnoxiously every time their team scored which made it worse.

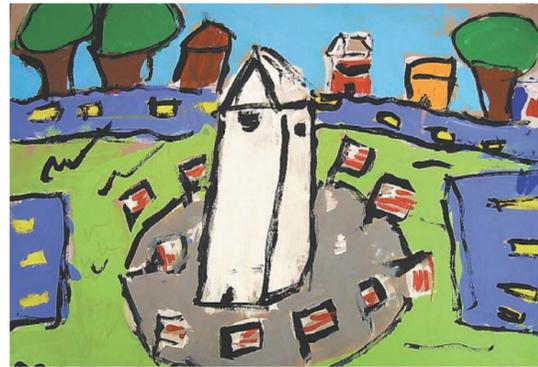
I had a decision to make. Was I going to give-up and let the other team walk all over mine, or was I going to pick up my enthusiasm and hustle, and play like this was my last game. I decided to choose the latter of the two. Even though my shots weren't falling I played my heart-out, playing great defense, making good passes, and being a good teammate. It paid-off. With about five minutes remaining, I found hope. My team found hope. We were chip-

ping away at this 15 point game. Too little, too late? Not at all. With tenacity and confidence, my team was soaring behind the roar of the crowd. Meanwhile, the team that once looked like pros were looking worse than we did in the first half, arguing amongst each other, panicking, and obviously losing their poise. Four minutes ago it had felt like our team was on the verge of being routed, but now we were only down by two. My teammate unexpectedly made a ridiculous hook shot. Crunch time arrived and we were all tied up. I wasn't going to let my team lose.

A good defensive possession and a foul later, my friend was shooting two from the line. One goes in and then the other. The opposition had 15 seconds to tie or take the lead. They raced up the court. The ball was received by their big man. Not a clumsy big man, this guy was a beast. Not to mention he was an absolute freight train. The only thing that separated him from the basket was me. He caught turned and drove right into me. I was knocked to the floor, stunned from the collision. The whistle blew. Offensive foul!

My teammates ran and helped me up as we pulled off the remarkable feat. It was like a miracle. I didn't have a great game, but I played my hardest. My teammates were smiling and jumping around. Our proud parents gave us high fives and the usual compliments. We then prepared for the championship game. Although we went on to lose the championship, it didn't really matter. The previous game was the game that defined our season anyway. The game still reminds me of the late coach Jim Valvano in his speech saying "Don't give up. Don't ever give up."

CHILDREN'S CONNECTION 2011



By Eleanor Lavin, 2nd grade, Spring Hill Elementary

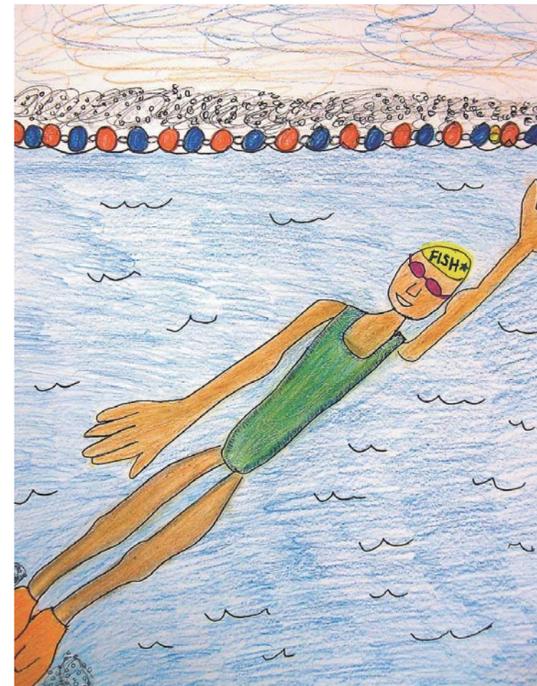


By Diana Farah El Maaluf, 1st Grade, Spring Hill Elementary

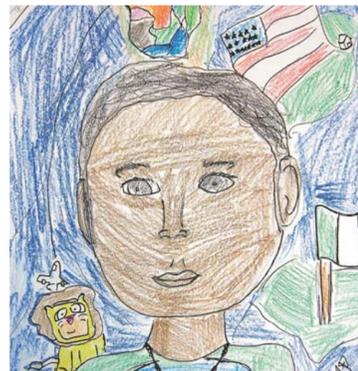
Spring Hill Elementary Art Gallery



By Eunsu Song, 6th Grade, Spring Hill Elementary



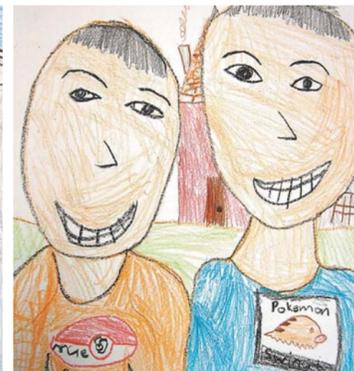
By Irma Saluja, 6th Grade, Spring Hill Elementary



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

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Transportation News and Inclement Weather Guidelines from Fairfax County Public Schools

Coming in January: The Superintendent's Proposed FY2013 Budget

FCPS Buses by the Numbers

FCPS operates one of the largest publicly owned fleets in the country. More than 1,500 school buses, using 6,500 separate routes, transport more than 110,000 students to school each day.

The average FCPS bus is 8.1 years old. Depending on the school district budget, FCPS purchases an average of 95 buses a year. When it comes time to replace a bus, the FCPS transportation department purchases buses that meet or exceed federal and Virginia state safety standards, have a record of reliability, have low projected average total cost of ownership with durable parts to minimize downtime, and is sold by a dealership that provides an acceptable level of service and

responsiveness. The average purchase price for a new bus is \$114,000.

Did You Know?

Only New York City Department of Education transports more students by bus than Fairfax County Public Schools every day.



When the Weather Outside is Frightful

The holidays may be almost behind us but there is still plenty of winter ahead of us. Are you prepared?

Hat and mittens? Check. Shovel? Check. Ice scraper? Check.

But if you have children in Fairfax County Public Schools (FCPS), do you know where to get information about school closings and delays due to the weather conditions?

Whether snowflakes are fluttering or raindrops are pouring, Fairfax County Public Schools monitors weather conditions all year round. Weather conditions may necessitate schools open two hours late, close two hours early, or that school will be canceled for an entire day.

Students use various methods to get to school – they walk, take a bus, get dropped off by a parent, ride with another student, or drive themselves. The safety of students, staff, and parents is the primary consideration when FCPS is making a weather-related decision about schools.

If an impending weather event is forecast, FCPS staff gathers information about

weather, road conditions, mobilization plans from transportation sources, and other information to determine the impact on the school system. Weather conditions can vary significantly in different parts of the county. Often major roadways are in good driving condition, but neighborhood roads may be treacherous. The Superintendent is given the most up-to-date information from various sources in an effort to make

a decision by 4:30 a.m. on whether to delay opening schools or cancel school for the day. If weather conditions worsen during the school day, the Superintendent may make a decision to close schools two hours early. Once the decision is made, the information can be found in the following locations:

- www.fcps.edu
- Red Apple Channel 21
- Keep in Touch email and text notifications
- FCPS Facebook page
- FCPS Twitter page
- Local tv news and radio stations

If school is canceled, the School Aged Child Care (SACC) program run by the Fairfax County Government, is also canceled for the day. Parents should have a plan for any last-minute child-care arrangements if schools and SACC programs are closed.

This Just In

The Fairfax County School Board approved the 2012-13 school calendar. The first day of school will be Tuesday, September 4, 2012, and the last day of school will be Tuesday, June 18, 2013. View the complete calendar by visiting www.fcps.edu and click on Calendars.



Getting To Know Us

FCPS Bus Driver Art Hurlock

Art Hurlock spends his days transporting more than 100 students to and from Fairfax County Public Schools (FCPS).

Hurlock became a FCPS driver 11 years ago after managing the automobile maintenance shop for a large company. Although his wife would like him to join her in retirement, he says he has no intention of retiring any time soon.

"I really enjoy it. I like driving and I like the kids," he said. "That's why I'm still here."

FCPS has one of the largest school bus fleets in the nation traveling on more than 2,700 miles of roadway in Fairfax County.

"It's pretty amazing how the school district creates bus routes to make sure all the kids get to school," he said.

Knowing parents are relying on him to transport their children safely to and from school is not something Hurlock takes lightly. He admits the traffic in Northern Virginia is particularly challenging on snowy days.

"When I get home after driving in snowy weather, I just say, that was some day. I'm not just thinking about the 30 kids on my bus, but there are 60 parents who are counting on me too," Hurlock said.

He's been driving the same bus for the more than four years and logged more than 100,000 thousand miles on it.

"I really like what I do. I like the kids. I would say 99 percent of the kids are good and the parents are good to me too," he said.

Safe Routes to Schools

Fairfax County Public Schools is proud to participate in Safe Routes to Schools, an international effort to encourage more families to get out of their cars and onto their feet to enjoy the many benefits of safely walking and bicycling to school. Parents are encouraged to accompany their children to school and to work with their PTA or PTO to organize walking events.

"Walking is a simple way to incorporate exercise into your day," said FCPS Superintendent Jack D. Dale. "We encourage all FCPS students and families to participate in this program and walk or bike to school whenever possible."

The program promotes physical activity, pedestrian safety, and concern for the

environment. Several Fairfax County public schools have established a Safe Routes to School program and participate in bike and walk to school challenges.

For more information visit www.saferoutesinfo.org/.



Be a School Bus Driver for Fairfax County Public Schools

Fairfax County Public Schools has more than 1,200 bus drivers on its transportation team. Their primary goal is to ensure that students are transported safely to and from school. If you have a good driving record, enjoy working with children of all ages, can pass a physical exam and drug and alcohol screening, and have the ability to complete training, you are eligible to apply for a position. Starting pay begins at \$17.07 per hour, with five weeks of paid training. Learn more about how to become an FCPS bus driver at www.fcps.edu and click on Work for FCPS.

Stay informed about all the latest news from FCPS at www.fcps.edu. Check us out on Facebook and follow us on Twitter.

Watch the most recent School Scene and Insight broadcasts on Red Apple Channel 21.



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CHILDREN'S CONNECTION 2011

I Know a Hero...

BY THE KG STUDENTS AT
HAYCOCK ES

I think my dog is a hero because he barks to protect me.

-MADELEINE STIGALL, AGE 5

My mom is a hero because she keeps me safe.

-CHARLOTTE THOMAS, AGE 5

Mrs. Yoo is my hero because she helps me work at school.

-JAMIE ROOKE, AGE 5

My favorite hero is a firefighter.

-OLYN RALEIGH, AGE 5

My dad is a hero because he is keeping America safe in Afghanistan.

-VICTOR VAN VRANKEN, AGE 5

My doctor is a hero because he helps me feel better.

-VIVIAN HILLMAN, AGE 5

My dad is a hero because he picks me up from the bus every day.

-ZALIRA AYERS, AGE 6

My dad is a hero because he protects the country.

-MEERA SHAH, AGE 5

Fire fighters help people stay safe because they keep the fire away.

-CATHERINE HUGHES, AGE 6

My hero is a police officer because they take bad guys to jail.

-JAY WHITLOCK, AGE 6

My mom and dad are my heroes.

-DREW LINEWEAVER, AGE 5

Fire Fighters are heroes because they put out fires.

-ARIEL LEISER, AGE 6



Statue of Liberty by Celia Barabanov, Churchill Road Elementary, 2nd Grade.

My babysitter is a hero. She helps me when mom and dad are out.

-NOAH KALES, AGE 5

All of the police are heroes.

-SAMUEL PARKER, AGE 5

Fire fighters are heroes.

-STELLA MOURIES, AGE 5

My dad is my hero because he protects me.

-LUKE RUSSELL, AGE 6

My mom and dad are heroes because they always love me.

-ARPINEH ANDERSON, AGE 5

My dad is a hero because he helps stop wars in other countries.

-CARMEN HENICK, AGE 5

**Kevin Soraci,
10 grade,
Landon School**

CHILDREN'S CONNECTION 2011

HAYCOCK ELEMENTARY POETRY CORNER

Poetry submissions from Mrs. Spinelli's 6th grade class at Haycock Elementary School.

The Christmas Tree

BY FIONA RICKELS

A green cone of pine needles
shines bright with white light.
A snowman here, a horse there
with mistletoe all around.
Presents wrapped in blue and
gold
give comfort to the Christmas
tree
for when the children wake
they shall all disappear.

BY JONATHAN POPOVA-
JONES

Green, yellow, white, red, or-
ange, and blue
These colors twist and turn as
you move the cube
Patterns flying across the cube
as I spin the cube
First step, now second
It's all a blur
The final moves come to place
I examine it and in my head
I'm thinking SPEED SPEED
I finished, the cube, solved
With a new record of 30 seconds

Book

BY ANNA ZHANG

The spine is creased,
the pages
yellowed
with age.
A musky, rich, earthy
scent
fills the air.
A dog-eared cover is
begging
to be opened.
I begin
to
read.

Snowman

BY SAMANTHA SIMON

It's snowing outside
as clear snow crystals
fall to the ground

Children start to roll me up
and I come to life
my cold, white life

With coal for my eyes
an orange carrot for a nose
and brown sticks as my arms
I begin to form my round body
one, two, three
snowballs stacked on top
I begin my life
in a white wonderland of snow

Icy Bliss

BY MOLLY RUTTENBERG

The slick sheet of
Ice
Its swirly patterns
Its glossy clear feel
I glide my foot across
The surface
The coldness awakens me
As I feel the small crevices
In the strictly beautiful ice
Slowly I look
Up
Into the bright lights
Thinking
Thinking about all the beauty
That is taken for granted

The Snowman

BY QUYEN TRAN

Kids play
as I watch with my coal eyes
listening to the wind
whistle
my bright orange nose
sticking out of my head
kids wrap a warm scarf
around my neck
I watch the ice cold snow
melt around me
then slowly begin to melt my-
self
and all that's left are
my eyes
nose
and scarf

The Last Leaf

BY SOPHIA SPARRGROVE

Hanging by a thread
on a branch, on the tree
outside my window
gold and yellow, orange and red
it sits, waiting to fall.
A cold blast of wind
spins toward the last leaf of au-
tumn
winter is here as the last leaf
twists and turns
toward the ground
It lands
the last leaf of fall is gone.

The One Last Leaf

BY EMMA ZAHNISER

That one last little leaf:
Hanging orange from the branch
of the old oak.
It's color sweet
and thick as honey.
I can taste

Rubik's Cube

SEE HAYCOCK, PAGE 20

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CHILDREN'S CONNECTION 2011



By Elena Man, Westgate Elementary, Grade 6



By Dhanushya Gunji, Westgate Elementary, Grade 5



By Colin Nininger, Westgate Elementary, Grade 5

Westgate Elementary Art Gallery



By Melis Kaya, Westgate Elementary, Grade 4



By Anjali Pillai, Westgate Elementary, Grade 1



By Tanner Chapman, Westgate Elementary, Grade 1

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CHILDREN'S CONNECTION 2011

Book and Dreams

BY KRISTEN HORNBUCKLE
3RD GRADE/WESTGATE ES

My mind races and dances. My eyes fly across the page. This book contains magic and starts pulling my mind into imagination.

I feel like I am fighting dragons and making friends with rouses.

Book.

I feel like brave knights are saving me and fairies are granting me wishes.

I feel like pixies are pinching me.

I am mad into dreams. I want to read more.

Book.

But it is just sad because my mom comes into my room.

And I know what that mean. I am done.

My mom tells me I should stop reading and go to sleep.

Book.

My mind is captured. I can't stop.

But I have to. It's time to sleep.

Book.

The book is into my mind. I can't stop reading.

The fiction is still there. I can't stop thinking about it.

Book.

I have an idea. Maybe I can sleep. Maybe I can read at the same time.

It can just be a dream.

Books and dreams.

I can't stop dreaming. It's still in my mind.

The thought will remain. I flutter to sleep. Dream.

bellowed really loud this time. "Mommy! Daddy! Sister!" But still no one heard me. I had a frightening feeling.

So I sat inside the slide for about 15 minutes, weeping. After a few minutes I got up and I was ready to try again. But then I saw a five year old girl approaching me.

She said, "What's wrong?"

"I can't find the way out," I replied.

"I can help you," she said.

"Thanks," I said and the five year old got me out.

As soon as I found my parents, I ran and hugged them like I hadn't seen them in a million years. I told them what happened and we all had cheese pizza. By that time it was 2:30pm. It was the scariest day of my life.

Big Daddy Falls

BY SHRUTHI MANIMARAN
3RD GRADE/WESTGATE ES

It was sunny. There were no clouds in the sky. I heard tiny screams. It was a beautiful day in late August. My stomach had butterflies in it and my legs ached. We were standing in a long, long line to go on a ride called Big Daddy Falls. I was a little nervous because I was looking at some pictures of it and it looked a little scary to me. I have been on similar rides but not the same as Big Daddy Falls! But I still wanted to go because my dad, brother and my sister were going so I decided to come. It was the longest line I had seen in my life! But we still waited because we really wanted to go on the ride. It almost took more than an hour. My mom did not come for two reasons. One she was too scared and two, she didn't want to get wet.

Now we were second to go on the ride. I was scared and excited at the same time. When it was our turn, we got in the float and then, SWOOSH! We went! First we went into this tube and there was mist in it! Then we came out of the tube and then for another second, we were flying in the air and then SPLAT We landed in a pool! The ride was over. It wasn't as bad as I thought it would be! After that I got off the ride with excitement on my face! I couldn't wait to go again!

Wild Mouse

BY SUDESHNA VANKINA
3RD GRADE/WESTGATE ES

"When is it going to be our turn," I asked my mom. "Soon," she said. My mom, my friend, and I were all going on a mini-rollercoaster. It's name was Wild Mouse. Wild Mouse was going to be my first rollercoaster I have ever been on. A few more people got in the little cart.

Soon it was my turn. My friend was too short and young to go on the ride. I got in the little cart with my mother. "Never mind," I said. "I don't want to go on the ride." But it was too late. I was on my way to the top.

Suddenly I turned. Then I closed my eyes because I went...WOOOOOSH! When I opened my eyes I turned again. I closed my eyes. Then I went down again. After a while I peeked. It seemed a little less scary. But then I went down and I nearly cried. I turned again and closed my eyes. After a few minutes I opened them.

I had fun on the rest of the ride. Even if Wild Mouse was the scariest ride, it was the best ride ever. When the ride was over, I told my mom, "I'm the happiest girl in the world!"

Swimming

BY SAARAH ABURUB
3RD GRADE/WESTGATE ES

When I was two I really wanted to learn how to swim! But I was scared and I was also terrified to go in that sparkly, shiny, cold water.

I dipped one tip of my foot. It did not feel bad! My dad put on my yellow plastic floaties. My dad took me to the water and said, "Kick your feet up in the air." I tried and tried but I could not do it. So my dad held me. I got better and better.

But then he let go of me. I stopped. "No," I said. "Do not let me go!"

He said, "Do not worry. The floaties do not make you drown." I tried and it did not make me drown. But I could not put my butt up in the water.

After weeks, I got to practice. And after that I knew how to swim! But I wore my floaties until I was six, just to be safe and secure!

Chuck E Cheese

BY SWAROOPA PARTHASARATHI
3RD GRADE/WESTGATE ES

It was a bright sunny Saturday as the car pulled up to my favorite place in the whole world, Chuck E Cheese! As soon as we entered I asked to get some Chuck E Cheese coins. And I was ready to have a fantastic adventure.

The first thing I saw was a huge slide. It looked like fabulous fun. So I took off my flip-flops and climbed inside the slide.

I had such a good time that I met this girl from the Philippines. And we both pretended that we were living in a dark, lonely cave with bats and other animals. After that I was starving like a bear prowling for food so I needed to find a way out. I searched high and low but I couldn't find a way out. So I started bawling. "Help! Help!" But no one heard me. So I

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CHILDREN'S CONNECTION 2011

HAYCOCK ELEMENTARY POETRY CORNER

FROM PAGE 17

strong flavor
in my
mouth
as I stare
at its beauty.

Orange Cats

BY KATYA JONKERS

I lay so much love, care and hope
on my
orange and peach cats with pink noses
while they purr at my feet

The Nutcracker

BY NICHOLAS BEGOTKA

The red wooden nutcracker stiff-jawed
brandishing his lustrous sword
straight as an arrow
silent
yet speaking
proudly wearing his feathered hat
no longer used
frozen in his last battle

Lost

BY LEEA ABRISHAMI

The feeling
of it slipping through
my fingers
and falling
in the air.
I snatched at it,
and missed.
Groping around for it,
my finger brushed it.
Too late.
It smashes the surface
of the pond
Splintering the glassy water.
It sinks,
and hits the bottom
with a squelch.
It's lost.

The Rose

BY SAMANTHA EASTMAN

It sits in the garden brown soil
around it
Sunlight streams on it
It is perked up, absorbing the sun
It is happy
Dark clouds come
The sun is covered
The white rose wilts in sadness
Then it rains

Lessons Learned, Uncomfortably

BY LILY BROCK
COOPER MIDDLE SCHOOL/GRADE 8

Among my John Hughes-style crushes, Jerry McAdams* will forever stick with me. A gentleman hated by teachers and loved by all wide-eyed girls. I tried to resist for a while, but I was no match for the allure of his bad attitude and flawlessly styled hair. There I was, everyday-hoping he would ask if he could borrow a pencil or if he could ask the pretty girl in block three if she'd go out with him. I was and partially still am sure his school picture will be in People magazine's "Celebrities at Fourteen" section one day.

Unfortunately, I have never been the cat's pajamas. To be honest, I've always been kind of like the armadillo's formal attire. If you don't get that analogy- I apologize. I won't even try to deny that I'm on the global scale of cool, I'm like a seven and a quarter while Jerry is probably a nine plus. So it may not come as much of a surprise to you that my master plan to make Jerry McAdams my husband failed wretchedly.

One Tuesday afternoon, I found myself nearing Jerry in the halls. Deciding I would have to be closer if he would be able to turn around and propose to me, I moved faster to catch up. I see now that objectively, I was a closer proximity to him than I should ever be to a person I admire that much. Bam! It happened. He turned around, making complete eye contact with me. Flabbergasted, I began wondering if we should invite my crazy Aunt Lynn to the wedding or not. Just as I was

bordering yes, he spoke.

"Okay, could you maybe stop following me around? I don't like anything about you! So just leave me alone." He ended all this with one, very unnecessary, derogatory term which I will not repeat to preserve the dignity of this publication. Also, it was at that point that I noticed a smile beginning to rim the corners of his mouth. Not his attractive, Brad Pitt smile that I was used to gaze at- from a distance, of course. It was a defined smirk.

"Yeah, I wasn't even...you know what? I...ummm.... Right back at you," my response was understandably awkward. It was then that I noticed several of his friends and female companions had formed a semi-circle several steps behind him. I thought this a good time to turn on my heels and start to gain as much distance from the location of my humiliation as was humanly possible.

It took some time for me to realize it really doesn't matter. I don't mean to sound like an obnoxious facebook status, but it's true. The world is full of people who aren't going to like your Kola bear sweatshirt and combat boots. The important thing is that you don't spend the majority of your time trying to make them turn your way. There is a choice: obsess over their acceptance or walk away and spend some of our new free time doing something you actually like. One last thing- for any young ladies who find themselves following around their "soul mate," give it a rest. I'm sure you can find some friends that don't require surveillance equipment to see.

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Arlington Church of Christ...703-528-0535

Church of God- Anderson, Indiana
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Churches-Episcopal
St Andrew Episcopal Church...703-522-1600
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Advent Lutheran Church...703-521-7010
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Lutheran Church of The Redeemer...703-356-3346

Resurrection Lutheran Church...703-532-5991

Churches Lutheran(Missouri, Synod)
Our Savior Lutheran Church...703-892-4846

Churches-Nazarene
Arlington First Church of the Nazarene...703-525-2516

Church- Brethren
Church of The Brethren...703-524-4100

Churches-Baptist
Arlington Baptist Church...703-979-7344
Cherrydale Baptist Church...703-525-8210
First Baptist of Ballston...703-525-7824
Mt. Zion Baptist Church...703-979-7411

Churches -Baptist-Free Will
Bloss Memorial Free Will Baptist Church...703-527-7040

Churches-Christian Science
McLean-First Church of Christ, Scientist...703-356-1391

First Church of Christ, Scientist, Arlington...703-534-0020

Churches- Presbyterian
Arlington Presbyterian Church...703-920-5660
Church of Covenant...703-524-4115

Clarendon Presbyterian Church...703-527-9513

Little Falls Presbyterian Church...703-538-5230

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Cherrydale United Methodist...703-527-3921
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Clarendon United Methodist...703-527-8574
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Celebration Center for Spiritual Living...703-560-2030

Metaphysical
Arlington Metaphysical Chapel...703-276-8738

Presbyterian Church in America Churches
Christ Church of Arlington...703-527-0420

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Congregation Ets Hayim...703-979-4466

Synagogues - Orthodox
Fort Myer Minyan...703-863-4520
Chabad Luvavitch of Alexandria-Arlington...703-370-2774

Synagogue - Reconstructionist
Kol Ami, the North Virginia Reconstructionist Community...571-271-8387

Saint Ann Catholic Church

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Sunday: 8:00, 9:30, 11:00 AM
1:30 PM Spanish Liturgy
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21 Announcements

ABC LICENSE
Aladdin's Eatery of VA Inc., trading as Aladdin's Eatery 4044 Campbell Avenue, Arlington, VA 22206-3424. The above establishment is applying to the VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF ALCOHOLIC BEVERAGE CONTROL for a Mixed Beverages on premises license to sell or manufacture alcoholic beverages. Raja Atalla, Vice President
NOTE: Objections to the issuance of this license must be submitted to ABC no later than 30 days from the publishing date of the first two required newspaper legal notices. Objections should be registered at www.abc.virginia.gov or 800-552-3200

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21 Announcements



NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING

CONNECTION RULE FOR NEW CONSTRUCTION/REDEVELOPMENT

On December 6, 2011, the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors (BOS) held a public hearing regarding an ordinance to establish exclusive water service areas and maximum allowable rates, fees, and charges within Fairfax County for water service. At the same meeting, the BOS enacted the ordinance as Section 65-6-13 of the Code of Fairfax County. Section (a) of the ordinance provides that effective 12:01 a.m. December 7, 2011, Fairfax Water will be the provider of retail public water service within Fairfax County, Virginia, for any new construction or redevelopment of any dwelling unit and any residential or non-residential structure, unless Fairfax Water determines it cannot make water service available due to a utility-related reason.

The ordinance requires that any determination by Fairfax Water that it cannot make service available be made in accordance with policies, rules, or regulations established by Fairfax Water for the purpose of establishing when a utility-related reason exists that prevents it from supplying water. The ordinance further requires that the policies, rules, or regulations be adopted by Fairfax Water after notice and a public hearing.

At 6:30 p.m. on Thursday, January 12, 2012, Fairfax Water will conduct a public hearing on its proposed CONNECTION RULE FOR NEW CONSTRUCTION/ REDEVELOPMENT. The hearing will be held in Fairfax Water's offices at 8570 Executive Park Avenue, Fairfax, VA.

A copy of the proposed rule can be viewed on our Web site at <http://www.fairfaxwater.org>. Those wishing to speak at this hearing or desiring a copy of the proposed rule should call Ms. Eva Catlin at 703-289-6017. Interested parties may submit written comments to PublicHearingComments@fairfaxwater.org or mail written comments to:

Fairfax Water
Public Hearing Comments
8570 Executive Park Avenue
Fairfax, VA 22031

All written comments must be received by close of business on Wednesday, January 11, 2012 to be included in the record of the public hearing.

21 Announcements

NOTICE

Edward E. Gahres, MD is closing his medical practice at 5021 Seminary Rd, Ste 109, Alexandria, VA, on December 31, 2011. Patients interested in requesting copies of their medical records should call (703) 931-7515 between 10 am and 4 pm, Mon., Tues. and Thurs.

21 Announcements

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21 Announcements

NOTICE

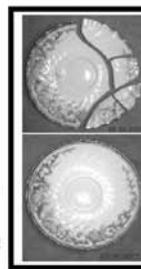
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21 Announcements



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21 Announcements



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21 Announcements

JUNE 30th - 2PM

Norfolk Waterside Marriott - Norfolk, VA

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State of Flux



By KENNETH B. LOURIE

As much as I delude myself – and others – into thinking that Kenny's-life-living-with-cancer is just another bump in the road, I suppose it's only fair, after two and one half years of weekly writing about it, to admit the truth: I wish it were a bump in the road, but it's more like a sinkhole. Emotionally, physically and every which way including loose.

Most days I manage all that I'm expected to, reasonably well. There are other days however, not so much. Sometimes those days relate to something cancer-related: medication, scan, appointment, chemotherapy – or cancellation or change of any of the preceding; or it can be unrelated, specifically, but related generally, as everything becomes when you're categorized as "terminal."

Having employed various mechanisms – and rationalizations since my initial symptoms appeared in late December, 2009 – which ultimately led to my subsequent stage IV lung cancer diagnosis two and one half months later, compartmentalizing has been my greatest ally. A real-life version of "the vault" from a Seinfeld episode, a place where information is stashed for safekeeping and secrecy. However, "the vault" is all mental. It's not protected by doors and locks. Fort Knox it's not. In fact, gaining entrance is fairly easy. And once inside, it's akin to opening a Pandora's Box of your greatest fears; ruling your roost; beyond your control.

And on those days when control is lost and emotions/energy run down – and negative, and depression sets in: wallowing is easy and giving in to it provides a peculiar sort of calm/a why-fight-it sort of attitude. After experiencing this sort of mental meandering multiple times, I can actually tell/feel when it's happening; not before, definitely during and almost always after. It's never easy. However, it is unfortunately a condition with which I am all too familiar.

Assessing its particular cause, other than the obvious cancer connection, is also part of the problem. Knowing and understanding its origin provides me with another peculiar sort of calm. What I have determined is that, as an adjunct to the compartmentalization I regularly employ, my subconscious is weakening under the continual stress of the diagnosis/prognosis. It works so hard to maintain my calm exterior that occasionally it loses its ability to do so, sort of like a rubber band that eventually loses its elasticity. The pulling and tugging and stretching on me emotionally has the identical physical effect that a rubber band would experience under similar demands. And so I snap, sort of (although I don't shoot across the room): I get sullen and lethargic.

Sometimes, I feel like the character Odo (Rene Auberjonois), the Changeling/shapeshifter from Star Trek, Deep Space Nine. In order for Odo to maintain his "humanoid form" 16 hours a day, rather than exist in his normal, restful, "gelatinous state," it required constant vigilance on Odo's part (emotionally, physically; who knows really, it was Science Fiction). As such, there were moments (episodes) when he just couldn't function normally in his humanoid form; the stress internally to maintain his shape was simply too great. It was only when he returned to his quarters and his bucket that he could relax and regain his composure.

Unlike Odo, I don't have a normal state to return to: I only have my "new normal" (Kenny-with-cancer at age 57). And some days I wonder if pretending I don't have cancer might be causing me more problems than admitting to it would. As Dr. Sidney Freedman from the classic television show M*A*S*H said in his farewell episode, "Ladies and gentlemen, take my advice, pull down your pants and slide on the ice." Or not.

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

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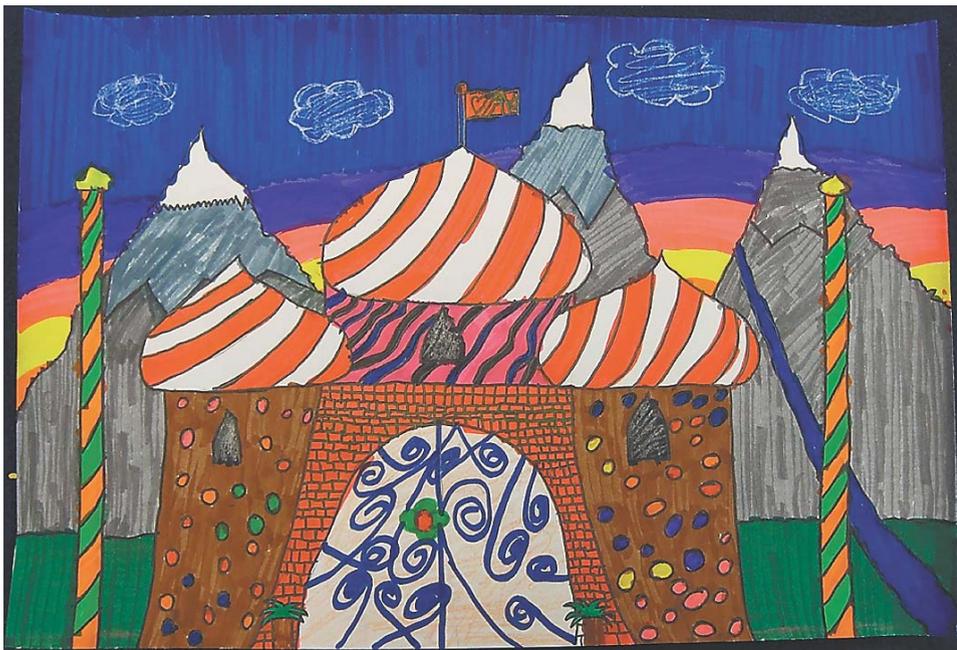


By Lily Cooper, 5th Grade, Kent Gardens Elementary



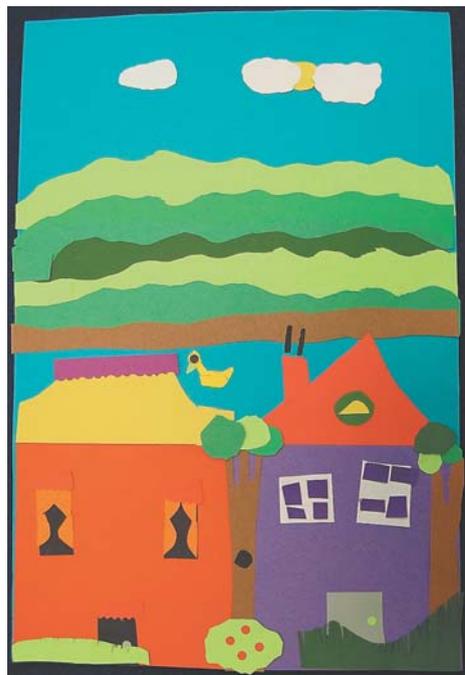
By Chloe Smyth, 4th Grade, Kent Gardens Elementary

Kent Gardens Elementary Art Gallery



By Annabelle DeJong,
5th Grade,
Kent Gardens Elementary

By Sally Teter,
1st Grade,
Kent Gardens Elementary



By Jennifer Yang, 3rd Grade, Kent Gardens Elementary