

Springfield CONNECTION

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United We Serve

A+, PAGE 8

Area residents spent part of their Monday holiday volunteering during the third annual Family Volunteer Day hosted by Volunteer Fairfax on the George Mason University campus in celebration of Martin Luther King Jr. Day.

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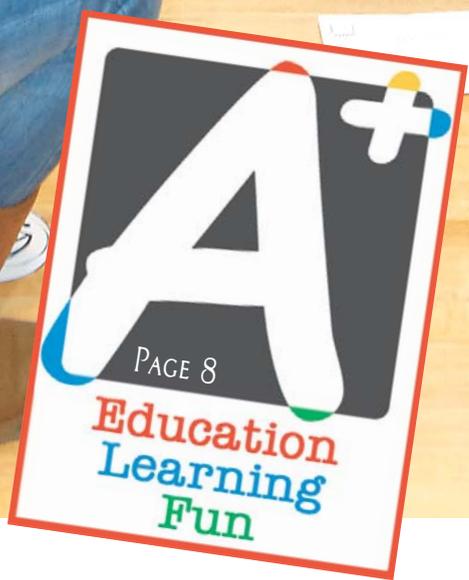


Task Force
Presents 'Common
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Allen Declares
War on Unions

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Allen Declares War on Unions

Seeking his old Senate seat, former governor goes on the offensive against organized labor.

BY MICHAEL LEE POPE
THE CONNECTION

Hoping to capitalize on anti-union sentiment in Virginia this year, Republican George Allen is giving labor issues a starring role in his bid to recapture the Senate seat he lost to Jim Webb in 2006. In a meeting with Connection Newspapers reporters and editors, Allen proposed a series of specific measures to undercut the power of unions. The agenda would undercut the power of the National Labor Relations Board, prohibit mandatory labor agreements on federal projects and ensure secret ballots before a labor union can be created.

“Unions are a big part of the Democrats’ political operation,” said Allen. “There’s no secret about that.”

Allen says the series of proposals were inspired by the National Labor Relations Board’s lawsuit against airline manufacturer Boeing, which sought to punish the company for locating a new plant in South Carolina in retaliation for strikes by unionized workers at its existing facility in Washington state. The lawsuit was dropped last month, but Allen and other Republicans are now hoping to capitalize on the issue on the campaign trail.

“This is an issue that hits a sweet spot for Republican voters,” said Kyle Kondik, political analyst with the University of Virginia Center for Politics. “So it certainly helps him in the primary against Jamie Radtke. It remains to be seen whether it’s something that would appeal to voters in the general election against Tim Kaine.”

ALLEN SAYS the freedom to work is “under assault,” and repeatedly used the lawsuit against Boeing as a reason for the federal government to take decisive action. But Allen’s agenda is broader than simply undercutting the power of the National Labor Relations Board. He would also like to amend the National Labor Relations Act to prevent workers from being compelled to pay union dues or fees to get or keep a job, essentially expanding Virginia’s Right To Work law nationwide. He would also work to guarantee that workers have the opportunity to cast secret ballots before a union can be organized.

“None of George Allen’s proposals would help workers in Virginia like me in any way,” said Karen Conchar, Fairfax County employee and member of Local 5 Service Employees International Union. “Taking away



PHOTOS BY DEB COBB/THE CONNECTION

Former governor George Allen discusses campaign issues as candidate seeking the Republican nomination for U.S. Senate.

“Unions are a big part of the Democrats’ political operation. There’s no secret about that.”

— George Allen

rights at the workplace doesn’t help the middle class put food on the table or pay the mortgage, and it doesn’t help businesses create good jobs.”

As governor in the 1990s, Allen says he saw firsthand how the commonwealth’s Right to Work Law helped encourage investment and expansion of business in Virginia. If elected to the Senate, he says, he wants to advance an agenda to undercut the power of unions in a way that would help businesses create jobs, save taxpayers money and protect the liberty of non-unionized workers. One of his goals would be to repeal the Davis-Bacon wage laws that he says diminish competition and inflate costs to taxpayers for construction when the federal government is involved. Ultimately, Allen said, he’s hoping that voters send a mandate for action.

“The reality is that it matters who the president is,” said Allen. “President Bush didn’t allow project labor agreements. This president is all for them.”

ONE OF ALLEN’S proposals would have particular resonance in Northern Virginia: It would prohibit the federal government from entering into mandatory project labor agreements, a collective bargaining agreement that establishes terms and conditions for a specific construction project. These are frequently large-scale infrastructure projects, such as bridges or Metro expansion to Dulles International Airport. Allen says that taxpayers would get more bang for their buck if the federal government was prohibited from engaging in collective bargaining on these projects.

“The reason you don’t want to have these is that they increase the cost of a project, on average by 22 percent,” said Allen. “You

have less competitive bidding.”

Union groups dispute this notion, questioning if taxpayers would really save money by hiring low-wage workers. Supporters of project labor agreements say unionized workers are paid more money because they produce better work. As a result, supporters say, they also create infrastructure that is less likely to break down or fail — sometimes with catastrophic consequences.

“Sometimes what you see is that without project labor agreements you end up with a more exploitable workforce,” said Julie Hunter, spokeswoman for the Virginia AFL-CIO. “These are workers that tend to not have the same training that the union workforce has.”

ALLEN’S OPPONENTS don’t have much to say about his specific proposals. Campaign officials for Jamie Radke, the Tea Party candidate hoping to challenge him in the Republican primary, declined to respond to multiple requests for an interview. Her campaign website says she would oppose laws that would require a worker’s secret ballot in union elections. The site also says she would support Virginia’s Right To Work Law and oppose collective bargaining between government entities and public employee organizations and unions.

“The fundamental right to associate with those we choose assures workers the right to form labor organizations,” Radke said in a written statement on her campaign website. “However, this fundamental right of association also guarantees the individual the right not to associate.”

If he’s successful against Radke, Allen will face former Democratic Gov. Tim Kaine — pitting two former governors against each

other in a Senate race. Like Allen, Kaine also supports Virginia’s right-to-work law. When contacted about Allen’s labor proposals, the Kaine campaign issued a statement saying that the former Democratic governor upheld the law as governor and will continue to support states’ rights to establish their own rules on this issue as senator. The campaign did not respond to a request to address Allen’s specific proposals.

“The answer to our economic challenges is not tinkering with workplace rules, as George Allen suggests,” said communications director Brandi Hoffine in a written statement. “The real answer is building a high-talent economy by investing in education and workforce development.”

ALLEN’S SUITE OF PROPOSALS will pit traditional political opponents against each other, labor unions and their Democratic allies on one side and business leaders and allies in the Republican party on the other. What’s different about this election is the recession, with the unemployment rate in Virginia currently at 6.2 percent. Another difference with this election cycle is the growing Occupy movement, which seeks to cast a spotlight on the same wealth inequality that gave rise to the original labor movement in the late 19th century. Now, Allen says, it’s time to move away from that model and adopt a more free-market approach.

For voters in Northern Virginia, the stakes are high.

“This artificially increases the costs and it also ends up with less competition so you end up with a higher cost to the taxpayers,” said Allen. “If you look at the Metro extension to Dulles, the ones who will ultimately have to pay for these unnecessarily higher costs will be the taxpayers.”

NEWS

'Common Sense' Proposals

Allowing schools to open before Labor Day part of task force recommendations.

BY VICTORIA ROSS
THE CONNECTION

Repeal of the "Kings Dominion law," which requires Fairfax County schools to obtain a state waiver to open schools before Labor Day, is high on the list of legislative priorities announced Monday, Jan. 16, by Governor Robert McDonnell.

During a news conference in Richmond, Supervisor Pat Herry (R-Springfield), who chaired the Governor's Task Force for Local Government Mandate Review, joined McDonnell in announcing a number of legislative proposals to eliminate "burdensome state mandates" on localities.

"(This) report contains common sense recommendations which will provide fiscal relief to localities and the Commonwealth, and will enable both to more efficiently serve Virginia's residents," Herry said.

Allowing Northern Virginia schools to open before Labor Day without a waiver - a move championed for years by local school boards and educators - was just one of 60 mandates the task force recommended eliminating or modifying.

A THIRD of the recommendations dealt with education, including removing the requirement that schools must offer online Standards of Learning (SOL) testing in middle schools.

"In Fairfax County alone this program costs over \$4 million to set up, then an additional \$4 million plus per year to run," Herry said. "While online testing is a worthwhile objective, an additional \$4 million a year would enable FCPS to hire nearly 60 new teachers."

The task force also set a goal for the Department of Education to reduce "unnecessary" state and federal reporting requirements for Schools by 15 percent, such as abolishing the mandate for annual reports on remediation programs.

"The removal of these mandates on localities will save time, tax-payer dollars and ultimately result in better, more accountable services for Virginians," said Joan Wodiska, president of the Virginia School Board Association and a member of the Falls Church City School Board, during Monday's news conference.

Other legislation proposed by the task force includes:

- ❖ Removing the mandate for state inspections of erosion and sediment control programs where localities have inspections.

- ❖ Eliminating the mandate that requires VDOT approval of the location of locally-placed red light cameras.

- ❖ Eliminating the mandate for localities to give first priority for vending contracts to the Department of Blind and Visually Impaired.

In September 2011, the Governor announced the creation of the five-member task force, a result of legislation introduced by Sen. Steve Newman (R-



Governor Bob McDonnell (left) listens as Springfield Supervisor Pat Herry comments on legislation to reduce "unnecessary" mandates on localities during a news conference in Richmond Monday, Jan. 16.

Bedford County) to review state mandates imposed on localities, and to recommend temporary suspension or permanent repeal of such mandates.

"Burdensome mandates on localities exacerbate the challenge of balancing a budget in these tight fiscal times," McDonnell said at the news conference. "On the state level, we don't like it when the federal government hampers us with mandates and red tape."

Herry said localities need relief from state mandates, and are not in a position to accept new ones after several tough budget years.

"These recommendations have taken on greater importance as the cumulative budget gaps in local governments likely exceed the budget gap experienced by the Commonwealth," Herry said. "The vast majority of localities are projecting revenue growth less than the Commonwealth's projected growth of 3.1 percent."

IN ADDITION to the legislative proposals, Governor McDonnell is recommending \$10 million in his Fiscal Year 2013 budget and \$15 million in Fiscal Year 2014 to help offset previous reductions in aid to localities.

Herry said Monday's announcement was just the first step of the task force that has been meeting since November 2011.

"It's important to point out that this is only an interim report to meet the deadline Gov. McDonnell gave us for the 2012 General Assembly session, and these recommendations are only the beginning of our work," he said.

Several bills have been introduced in the 2012 General Assembly session at the request of the Governor and other legislators reflecting the vast majority of the Task Force recommendations, according to a statement released by the Governor's office on Monday.

The full report from the Task Force for Local Mandate Review is available at: www.governor.virginia.gov/utility/docs/Interim Report 1 16 12.pdf

PHOTO CONTRIBUTED

\$2.4 Billion School Budget Proposed

Budget includes new positions, salary increases to address growing student population.

Fairfax County Public Schools (FCPS) Superintendent Jack D. Dale presented a \$2.4 billion budget proposal to the school board on Jan. 12, reflecting a nine percent - or \$202.3 million increase - in next year's operating budget.

With a projected enrollment of 181,608 students, the proposed budget includes an additional 721.3 positions to support an additional 3,900 students, as well as cost-of-living increases for all eligible employees. Since 2008, the district's enrollment has grown by more than 15,000 students.

"Over the past five years, we have added the (student population) equivalent of a high school, middle school and 16 elementary schools," Ted Velkoff (At-large) said after the Jan. 12 school board meeting, during which Dale released details of the budget.

Velkoff added there is a "pent-up need" for increased funding. "The funding has been pretty flat over the past five years, while we've been absorbing that many students and we've had no corresponding increase in funding," Velkoff said.

"We are seeing the greatest increases in the numbers of our students with additional needs," Dale said. "Since 2008, the number of students enrolled in English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) has risen 48.3 percent, and the number of students eligible for free or reduced-price meals is up 35.4 percent."

This fall, FCPS will open two new schools: a middle school at the South County site and an elementary school at the Lacey site.

The proposed budget includes the addition of 26 positions to address large class sizes and 12 positions to support the expansion of the World Lan-



Jack Dale

guages program in elementary schools. Eight schools will add the Foreign Languages in the Elementary Schools (FLES) program, and two new schools will implement the Foreign Language Immersion program.

Under Dale's plan, extended learning time for students and extended time for teachers are included in the budget, as well as a 2-percent cost-of-living increase for employees. Teacher salaries have been frozen for two years.

"It is imperative for FCPS to stay competitive in the marketplace in order to continue to attract the best employees to support student success," Dale said. "We continue to dedicate the majority of our budget, 85.9 percent, and the majority of our positions, 94.6 percent, directly to instructional programs."

"I was content to see that teacher compensation was again prioritized in this year's budget. Sustaining compensation increases from last year shows Fairfax's commitment to ensuring that those who teach here can afford to live here," said Ryan McElveen (At-large).

"However, I was disappointed to see that athletic fees were not addressed in the budget. In terms of cost, they are a low-hanging fruit at less than \$2 million," McElveen said athletic fees, as well as booster fees, fundraisers and spirit-pack payments, can be a significant burden on students of low-income families. "I hope that the board will remember these students and their families in the coming months,"

— VICTORIA ROSS

Budget Facts

- ❖ Funds to expand Pathways to the Baccalaureate, part of the College Success program, to four additional schools - Centreville, Chantilly, South County and Westfield High Schools - and to expand the program to 10th and 11th grades at Annandale, Edison, Falls Church, Lee, Mount Vernon, South Lakes, and Stuart High Schools and Hayfield Secondary School.

The Fairfax County School Board will hold public hearings on the FY 2013 budget on Jan. 30 and 31 at Jackson Middle School, 3020 Gallows Road. A speakers' list for those public hearings opened on Jan. 13 at: www.fcps.edu/schlbld/meetings/requestspeak.shtml. For complete information on the FCPS FY 2013 budget, including the budget calendar, visit www.fcps.edu/fs/budget/index.shtml

Free Resources Ease Isolation, Fear

Inova's Life with Cancer brings information, support to local survivors.

BY JENNIFER FEDOR
THE CONNECTION

A diagnosis of cancer can be overwhelming, isolating, and frightening. "I always use the analogy with people that have landed on a foreign planet and use a whole different language in the cancer world," social worker Michelle Touissant, from Life with Cancer, said.

Touissant is an oncology counselor who manages a support group for women with gynecological cancers. For more than 20 years, Life with Cancer, part of the Inova Health System, has served cancer survivors (as individuals are considered from the day of diagnosis through lifetime) and their loved ones.

Founded in 1987 at Inova Fairfax Hospital, Life with Cancer was conceived after Nando DeFilippo lost his wife to leukemia. Frustrated by the lack of support services for families affected by cancer, he made a generous donation to Inova Health System to help others dealing with the same dearth of information.

"We started with one support group," said program manager Sabina Gnesdiloff, also a licensed social worker, with Life with Cancer since 1989. "The whole idea was to support families living with cancer so they didn't just hear information in hallways."

THE PROGRAM has since expanded to boast a team of 26 staff members from a variety of disciplines and more than 90 volunteers. Its mission is to "enhance the quality of life of those affected by cancer," including family members and other caregivers, by providing diverse resources free of charge. Services are available in each of Inova's five hospitals, as well as the newly erected, 16,000 square-foot Family Center in Fairfax, on land donated by Sid Dewberry of Dewberry, Inc.

Life with Cancer offers classes, diagnosis-specific support groups, and informational sessions to cancer survivors. The range of offerings includes Laughter Yoga, Writing for Wellness, and Mah Jongg Club. From leveled fitness to mind-body classes to art and play therapy sessions, survivors can find experiences suited to their present level of health and interests. "Sometimes I think people surprise themselves by what appeals to them here," Touissant observes.

In addition, there are support groups for couples and families affected by cancer, as well as bereavement groups for children, teens, and adults with timely sessions such as dealing with loss at the holidays. Information sessions incorporate pertinent topics to particular age groups, such as fertility issues for young adult cancer survivors.



The Dewberry Life with Cancer Family Center in Fairfax combines the comforts of home with cancer education.

As a result of donations from individuals, foundations, and corporate donors, all services through Life with Cancer are free, with the exception of oncology massage.

The programs are facilitated by certified oncology nurses and licensed clinical social workers. According to Gnesdiloff, "the nurse is to help explain the side effects, the treatments, how to help people understand what they were going through from the medical perspective. Then we have social workers whom we call oncology counselors who help people deal with the fallout for the children, how to live as a couple when cancer is a part of it, how to adjust to illness, how to develop some coping skills."

One of the nurses on staff, Marsha Komandt, says, "I love what I do. I feel like I learn so much from [the cancer survivors]. They enrich my life immeasurably and I'm always learning something new from them." With Life with Cancer for 22 years (including a brief retirement), she coordinates the exercise programs, which include four levels of fitness starting at chair-based classes, as well as a spiritual quest group. In addition to running the leukemia support group, Komandt oversees the resource library of brochures, pamphlets and books with information on symptom management, side effects, and treatments.

Carolyn Sam, a breast cancer survivor and a volunteer for six years, is appreciative of her experience at Life with Cancer because "it's not just what I get from the staff or from classes but what I get from fellow survivors. It's a feeling of safety and comfort. Here, people may not have the same cancer but we've all been there, done that. I call it the club nobody wants to belong to."

With its lobby fireplace, bright rooms decorated by quilts and paintings from local artists, and serene, woodsy backdrop, the Dewberry Family Center was designed as an escape from the cold, sterile environment of a hospital. From an expansive ex-

ercise studio to a cheerful playroom to a game room for teens, the center houses rooms for diverse activities.

Similarly, Sam says the offerings allow survivors to take some of the focus off of cancer. Everybody pours their heart out in a support group, she notes, but in a knitting circle, "if they want to talk about it, they can, but they don't have to." She has benefited from the wellness classes, which promote physical activity and nutrition. Life with Cancer offers information about options for cancer treatment in the form of presentations by physicians with knowledge on the latest medical research as well as classes for complementary approaches such as yoga, reiki, and tai chi.

LIFE WITH CANCER understands that different people experience cancer differently. Culture can play a role in how some survivors navigate through treatment and beyond. Veronica Martinez, Hispanic Outreach Program Coordinator and registered nurse, works with many individuals who "are so overwhelmed with the stressors of the diagnosis on top of what they've already been dealing with: social demographical issues, poverty, language barriers." Often these survivors question how they will continue to work to support their families, how they will afford treatment without insurance, how they will travel to treatment sessions, and how they will take care of their families.

Martinez helps patrons overcome the specific issues impacting each individual's experience with cancer. She runs three monthly support groups, along with her co-chair David McGinness, and disseminates information about available community resources. She is currently working on developing a survivorship plan in Spanish with instructions on what questions to ask the doctor following treatment, including symptoms that indicate a recurrence. In Novem-



Carolyn Sam, a volunteer with Life with Cancer for six years, leads the knitting circle.

ber, Life with Cancer co-hosted "Viviendo con Esperanza (Living with Hope)" for Hispanic cancer survivors and their caregivers.

Terry Meade passed away this past December, having been diagnosed with kidney and renal cell carcinoma in 2007. For about eight months he used the resources at Life with Cancer and was impressed by the multitude of offerings that were completely free. His wife had passed away the previous December of leukemia and at the time he was unaware of the organization. He explained, "I needed a little bit more support, as having a grown-up household with no one around, it's pretty quiet. I felt really empty as you can imagine." Hospice recommended Life with Cancer and he began to take advantage of the exercise classes because "you've got to keep going, no matter how limited" and enjoyed new experiences in a gentle yoga class and a seat-based class about learning to kayak.

Life with Cancer offered him what "you need to know to function, like a bereavement class for those who have lost somebody significant in their family" taught by knowledgeable and caring instructors. He felt supported by fellow survivors and connected by the fact that they understood each other's experience. He was comforted by the warm and inviting environment of the Dewberry Family Center and awed by the list of classes they offered, reminding him of a junior college. His only regret was that he didn't know about it when his wife was ill.

Gnesdiloff notes that Life with Cancer has been described as "the jewel in the crown of Inova" and that people are often not aware it exists as a resource to those affected by cancer. Thanks to Nando DeFilippo, there will be fewer individuals and families who will face a cancer diagnosis without the needed information and support. For more information and to view a current calendar of events, visit www.lifewithcancer.org.

PHOTOS BY JENNIFER FEDOR/THE CONNECTION

AREA ROUNDUPS

Post 176 to Honor Heroes

On Sunday, Feb. 5, The American Legion Department of Virginia's 17th District will hold a remembrance service of the sacrifice of "The Four Chaplains" at Springfield Post 176 in Springfield. "The Four Chaplains" were Father John Washington (Catholic), Reverend Clark Poling (Dutch Reformed), Rabbi Alexander Goode (Jewish) and Reverend George Fox (Methodist). These four Chaplains, sometimes referred to as the "Immortal Chaplains," were four United States Army Chaplains who gave their lives to save other civilian and military personnel during the sinking of the troop ship USAT Dorchester during World War II. As the ship was sinking, they helped other soldiers board lifeboats and gave their own life jackets when the supply ran out.

The service will begin at 10:30 a.m. and all are invited to attend to remember these American heroes. A buffet breakfast will be served immediately following the Memorial Service for \$7. Springfield American Legion Post 176's address is: 6520 Amherst Avenue, Springfield, VA 22150.

Help Find County Executive

Fairfax County Executive Anthony Griffin will retire in April and a national search to replace him will begin soon. The county is seeking public input via a survey available now through Jan. 23. Go to www.fairfaxcounty.gov/ce/search/.

Luncheon to Advance Youth Mentoring

Fairfax Partnership for Youth is hosting a Mentoring Partnerships Luncheon that is free and open to the community. Participants will have the opportunity to meet representatives of mentoring programs throughout Northern Virginia, celebrate the achievements of mentoring programs this past year and learn how to bring more effective mentoring programs to the youth in their community.

This free event will be held on Tuesday, Jan. 24 from noon until 2 p.m., in Room 106 of the Herry Building at Fairfax Government Center, 12055 Government Center Parkway Fairfax, VA 22030.

For more information and to register, visit:

http://www.fairfaxyouth.org/event_1023.xml?document_id=1149.

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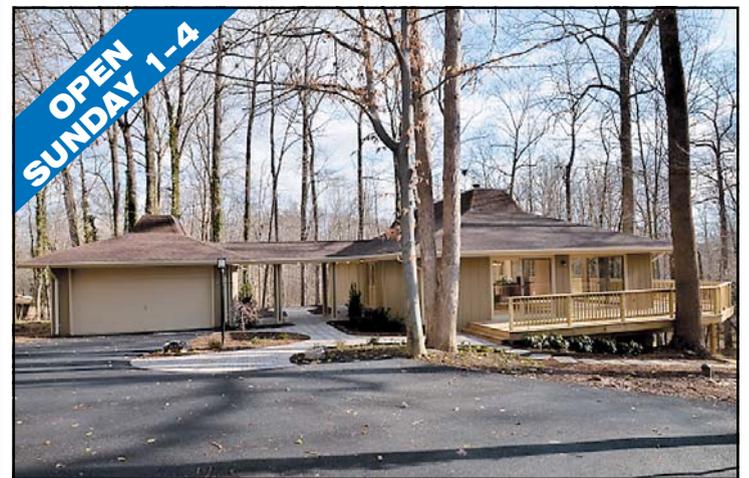
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Building on Pro-business Culture

New industry sectors are critical to Fairfax County's continued economic success.

BY SHARON BULOVA
CHAIRMAN, BOARD OF SUPERVISORS



Sharon Bulova

In the speech I gave Dec. 13 as I was sworn in as chairman of the Board of Supervisors, I quoted Albert Einstein, who said, "In the middle of difficulty lies opportunity." The continuing economic problems that afflict the nation, and the federal budget cuts that could take effect soon, provide Fairfax County an opportunity to continue the significant and diversified economic development successes of the past several years.

Fairfax County is fortunate to be at the doorstep of the nation's capital. Our proximity to Washington has made us a natural base for companies that want to do business with the federal government, and our ability to attract and retain government contractors has been a

critical element in the county becoming the economic engine of the Washington area as well as the Commonwealth of Virginia. And, of course, the commercialization of government technology, including the Internet, has also helped create businesses and jobs in

Fairfax County.

We are proud that 66 of the nation's 100 largest government contractors have a presence in the county, including 22 that are based here. Government contractors employ Fairfax County residents and perform some of the most vital tasks required by the nation.

Of course, no community can sustain itself over time unless it has a diverse economy. Fairfax County will continue to foster the business-friendly climate that has attracted so many corporate relocations in the last several years, and we will continue to welcome government contractors to our community. But, we also will redouble our efforts to attract companies from a wide array of appropriate industry sectors to diversify our economic base.

The county, working through the Economic Development Authority, has in recent years landed the headquarters of high-profile large employers that are helping us diversify our economy. Volkswagen Group of America and Hilton Worldwide give us important inroads in the automotive and hospitality industries, for example. Most recently Bechtel, one of the largest engineering and construction companies in the world, announced it would relocate its global operations headquarters to Fairfax County. That is the kind of progress that the county can build upon for future economic success.

In my inaugural speech, I also referred to a business owner who moved his IT firm to the county. He told me how much he liked the mood here and that he wanted to be in a place where people enjoy what they do and are "charged up" about their work and their community. Our corporate leaders, like our residents, appreciate that, during these challenging times, Fairfax County has developed and improved on our pro-business culture. That will continue to be important in these difficult times as we look for new opportunities to improve the economic stability of the county in 2012 and beyond.

Sharon Bulova chairs the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors.

RICHMOND DIARY

Re-writing the Rules

BY STATE SEN. DAVID MARSDEN
(D-37)

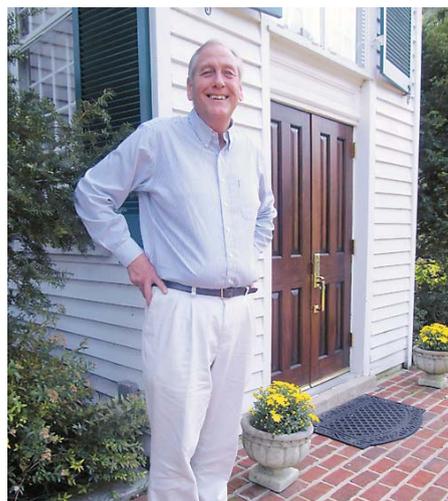
SUNDAY, JAN. 8

I packed up the car and stopped by a constituent's house to pick up information regarding 100 percent disabled veterans whose homes are in trusts, and who are not receiving the intended property tax relief. We spend a lot of time in the legislature trying to fix loopholes like this one in the bills we pass. Later that afternoon we held a Democratic senate caucus meeting, where we discussed our options under the Constitution and the rules of the Senate to deal with who will organize as the majority party, or how to establish power sharing. We will be dealing with this in three days.

MONDAY, JAN. 9

In the days leading up to the first session, legislators meet with individuals and groups having business with the General Assembly. My day started with a meeting with interior designers. They are worried that Gov. McDonnell's budget removes the requirement that they be certified and licensed to perform their duties. They made a compelling case as to how important interior design can be towards creating safe environments. I met also with the Department of Juvenile Justice, and we discussed how to reorganize our Juvenile Justice resources to create a more efficient and effective system.

My last meeting was with the Commissioner of the Division of Motor Vehicles, who updated me on the great strides they have made



State Sen. David Marsden (D-37)

in online services and reducing wait times at DMV customer centers. Northern Virginia customer centers still have the longest waits due to volume.

TUESDAY, JAN. 10

Many of my bills are reflections of the good ideas brought forth by constituents, members of the business community, or the administration. I agreed to sponsor two bills today. The first is on behalf of the Humane Society, which deals with the boom in the creation and operation of fox pens. Foxes are purchased and placed into fenced enclosures ranging from 100 to 900 acres. Competitions are held between dog owners as the dogs track the foxes. Often the end result is the fox being killed by the

State senator reflects on the first week of the 2012 General Assembly session.

Short Bio

A graduate of the private Randolph Macon College, State Sen. Dave Marsden (D-37), 63, recently won his first full term to the Virginia Senate this November. "I grew up in a small farm house that was the original Woodburn Elementary School," he said. "I saw the changes that have taken place in the county, and I have a pretty good awareness that things are always in flux."

Marsden has lived in Burke since 1977 with his wife of 40 years, Julia, where they raised three sons — Nathan, 41; Stuart, 36; and Connor, 34.

In 1970, Marsden began a career as a probation officer in Fairfax County after receiving a social work degree from Randolph Macon in 1970. He went on to establish and operate Fairfax County's shelter home for youth with severe family problems, and in 1982 became the chief administrator for the Fairfax County Juvenile Detention Center, a 121-bed center that served as a model for other centers. He is particularly proud of the fact that during his 17-year tenure as chief of the detention center, there was never an escape or serious injury.

dogs. This is not hunting, this is not sporting, and this is not the Virginia way. Virginia has 41 of these pens.

I was also asked by the Secretary of Education to carry a bill for Gov. McDonnell ending what is called the Kings Dominion rule, which prohibits starting school before Labor Day. The current practice leads up to two weeks of dead time after the Standards of Learning (SOL) tests. If passed, this bill will create more classroom time for students, and make us more competitive nationally. I also met with two groups of University of Virginia students who needed my perspective on mock bills that they were introducing for a class.

SEE RICHMOND DIARY, PAGE 7

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BULLETIN BOARD

Send notes to the Connection at south@connectionnewspapers.com or call 703-778-9416. Deadline is Friday. Dated announcements should be submitted at least two weeks prior to the event.

SATURDAY/JAN. 21

Lee District Open House. 1-3 p.m. Franconia Governmental Center, 6121 Franconia Road, Alexandria. With Supervisor Jeff KcKay, the Lee District staff and exhibits by the Springfield Art Guild. Refreshments served. Contributions of canned goods are accepted, to be donated to local charities. SupervisorMcKay@fairfaxcounty.gov.

THURSDAY/JAN. 26

Registration Open House. 9:30-11:30 a.m. Clifton Children's Academy, 14315 Compton Road, Centreville. Fall 2012 kindergarten and morning, afternoon and fullday Preschool classes. Limited registration available for winter 2012. 703-968-8455 or www.childrensacademy.com.

TUESDAY/FEB. 7

Greater Springfield Chamber of Commerce Brown Bag Seminar. 12 p.m. Community Business Partnership, 7001 Loisdale Road, 2nd Floor, Springfield. Bring your lunch to CBP the first Tuesday of the month and learn best practices for the small and mid-size workplace. Free for

Greater Springfield Chamber members and \$10 for non-members. www.springfieldchamber.org.

South County Federation Meeting. 7:30 p.m. South County Secondary School, 8501 Silverbrook Road, Fairfax. Southcountyfederation. Com.

THURSDAY/FEB. 9

Clifton Lions Club Meeting. 7 p.m. Fairfax Station Railroad Museum, 11200 Fairfax Station Road, Fairfax Station. Meetings are the second and fourth Thursdays of every month. 703-209-7421 or www.clevclubexpress.com.

TUESDAY/MARCH 6

South County Federation Meeting. 7:30 p.m. South County Secondary School, 8501 Silverbrook Road, Fairfax. Southcountyfederation. Com.

TUESDAY/APRIL 3

South County Federation Meeting. 7:30 p.m. South County Secondary School, 8501 Silverbrook Road, Fairfax. Southcountyfederation. Com.

TUESDAY/MAY 1

South County Federation Meeting. 7:30 p.m. South County Secondary School, 8501 Silverbrook Road, Fairfax. Southcountyfederation. Com.

TUESDAY/JUNE 5

South County Federation Meeting. 7:30 p.m. South County Secondary School, 8501 Silverbrook Road, Fairfax. Southcountyfederation. Com.

TUESDAY/JULY 3

South County Federation Meeting. 7:30 p.m. South County Secondary School, 8501 Silverbrook Road, Fairfax. Southcountyfederation. Com.

TUESDAY/SEPT. 11

South County Federation Meeting. 7:30 p.m. South County Secondary School, 8501 Silverbrook Road, Fairfax. Southcountyfederation. Com.

TUESDAY/OCT. 2

South County Federation Meeting. 7:30 p.m. South County Secondary School, 8501 Silverbrook Road, Fairfax. Southcountyfederation. Com.

TUESDAY/NOV. 6

South County Federation Meeting. 7:30 p.m. South County Secondary School, 8501 Silverbrook Road, Fairfax. Southcountyfederation. Com.

TUESDAY/DEC. 4

South County Federation Meeting. 7:30 p.m. South County Secondary School, 8501 Silverbrook Road, Fairfax. Southcountyfederation. Com.

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Richmond Diary

FROM PAGE 6

WEDNESDAY, JAN. 11

Opening session began at noon, and, after the swearing-in ceremony, the Lt. Governor broke a tie and established Republicans as the majority party. They were able to re-write the rules that the Senate operates by, and determine committee chairs and assignments. Later that night we returned to the Capitol to hear the Governor's "State of the Commonwealth" speech. It is always an exciting time, and one that fills you with a sense of pride as to Virginia having the western world's oldest continuously-serving elected body. The Governor agreed to meet with me next week on Juvenile Justice issues.

THURSDAY, JAN. 12

Today was "Banker's Day" at the General Assembly Building, and I was visited by a number of bankers from Fairfax. The Asian Chamber of Commerce reception was held during the day, where I was able to speak for several minutes about tax issues.

My first transportation committee meeting was held this afternoon, and I was asked to serve on a sub-committee that will deal with the more complicated bills. The day was capped off with the biggest event of the session, which is the Agriculture Council dinner, featuring Virginia food products. It is a time for all of us to reconnect with each other and get ready for the session.

FRIDAY, JAN. 13

I learned today that my bill to co-designate The East Sea as the name for the Sea of Japan in Virginia textbooks would be heard on Monday. I arranged to have people come down to Richmond to testify in favor of the bill. William Hong, president of the Virginia Korean American Association, agreed to come with a host of others.

SATURDAY, JAN. 14

We held a press conference with print, television, and radio representing the Korean community in the Washington D.C area, and apparently this issue is resonating in Korea, where it has been on television and radio news shows.

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PHOTOS BY VICTORIA ROSS/THE CONNECTION

Angela Williamson of Fairfax brought her two 10-year-old sons, Cameron (left) and Christian (right) to the Family Volunteer Day hosted by Volunteer Fairfax on Monday, Jan. 16, a federal holiday celebrating the life and legacy of Martin Luther King Jr.



Karen Schofield of Fairfax helps daughter Dana, 8, create Valentine's Day cards during the Family Volunteer Day hosted by Volunteer Fairfax on Monday, Jan. 16. Dana is a member of the Caring Kids Club at Greenbrier East Elementary School.



Nine-year-old Mackenzie Chase of Springfield reads a story to her mother, Kerri. "We made a New Year's Resolution that we would volunteer somewhere once a month," said Chase.

PHOTOS BY ROBBIE HAMMER/THE CONNECTION

United We Serve

Volunteer Fairfax mobilizes more than 1,100 residents to celebrate Martin Luther King Jr.'s legacy.

BY VICTORIA ROSS
THE CONNECTION

Sitting together at large round tables, children and their parents cut out pink and red paper hearts, pasting them on cards for nursing home patients, or stuffed socks and blankets into kits for the homeless. Emily Davis of Volunteer Fairfax circulated among the tables, chatting with the children and their parents about their volunteer projects.

"So what was your favorite activity?" Davis asked Dana Schofield, a second-grader at Greenbrier East Elementary School in Fairfax.

"I liked making the Valentine's Day cards," Schofield said, "Probably because they don't get many in their own mailbox."

Davis said her favorite part of Family Volunteer Day was "Reflection Time." "We want people to have these conversations, and reflect on what they accomplished by volunteering, how they are helping others," Davis said. "This was our best year so far."

MORE THAN 1100 PEOPLE participated in Volunteer Fairfax's third annual Family Volunteer Day on Monday, Jan. 16, a federal holiday celebrating the life and legacy

of Martin Luther King Jr. Taking place each year on the third Monday in January, the MLK Day of Service is the only federal holiday observed as a national day of service – a "day on, not a day off."

Volunteer Fairfax, an organization that matches the interests of volunteers with the needs of local nonprofits, expanded its event this

"I think more people would be fighting all the time if Dr. King hadn't taught people how to be friends and help each other."

—Cameron Williamson, 10, Fairfax

year to include Herndon and Alexandria, as well as George Mason University's Dewberry Hall, where about 500 parents and their children completed service projects for area nonprofits.

"We wanted to create an event that allows children to experience first-hand how fun and easy volunteering can be, while providing quality family time," said Jeanne Sanders, executive director of Volunteer Fairfax. Sanders said the Martin Luther King Day event is specifically designed to give parents with young children an opportunity to volunteer together.

"The first year we were overwhelmed with responses, and this

room was really crowded," said Sanders. "Last year, we received grants from Youth Services America and UnitedHealthcare that allowed us to purchase more supplies and expand to three locations."

At GMU, children and parents decorated and packed hypothermia prevention kits for Fairfax County's homeless, made Valentine's Day cards for nursing home patients, wrote notes to accompany books for child care centers and made compost bins using clean, hospital wash basins. All of

the projects will go to area nonprofits, such as FACETS, the Fairfax Library Foundation, The Holiday Project and Inova Health System.

"We might be the only people who come in and give nursing home patients Valentine's Day cards, so these children are doing something very special and they should feel good about it," said Bobby Anderson, a board member of The Holiday Project. "They've already made about 100 cards, and these will go to patients throughout the county."

"My favorite part was helping people stay warm," said five-year-old James Prevet of Vienna, after

putting together one of the hypothermia prevention kits. He attended the event with his three-year-old sister, Josie, and his father, Tyler.

"We want to make giving a way of life, not just a one-time event," said Tyler Prevet.

"You do have to start that message when they are young," said Angela Williamson of Fairfax, who brought her twin boys, Christian and Cameron, 10, to the event. "You feel good at the end of the day after doing this."

Cameron and Christian, who attend Willow Springs Elementary School, said they thought Dr. King would like seeing people of all races working together to help those less fortunate. "I think more people would be fighting all the time if Dr. King hadn't taught people how to be friends and help each other," Cameron Williamson said.

Robert Saul of Clifton said he and his family attended the event "to foster the spirit of giving back when they are young, so it becomes a way of life." His wife, Kristen, said their family has made it a priority to volunteer more. "Martin Luther King said to judge people on the content of their character, not the color of their skin. Volunteering gives us a way to build character, to show that a person's character does count."

FOR MORE INFORMATION on Volunteer Fairfax, go to www.volunteerfairfax.org.



Area residents spent part of their Monday volunteering with Volunteer of Fairfax for their annual MLK Day of Service event, Give Together: A Family Volunteer Day on the campus of George Mason University.



Talía Schmitt, 16, of Fairfax, helps Tyler Prevet, of Vienna, and his children James, 5, and Jessie, 3, make compost boxes on the campus of George Mason University on Monday morning.



Four-year-old Zachary Barr of Springfield listens as his mother, Nancy Barr, reads him a story. Barr said that she wanted to teach her children the importance of giving back to the community.



Lily O'Donnell of Fairfax Station volunteered part of her Monday morning on the campus of GMU at the Family Volunteer Day event sponsored by Volunteer Fairfax.

VIEWPOINTS

PHOTOS BY VICTORIA ROSS/THE CONNECTION

Volunteering on MLK Day

"I like to try to help people who need it. I like all the things that Martin Luther King, Jr. did to help people."

—GAVIN SAUL, 10
CLIFTON



"I think it's important to find the good in each person and try to make a difference in each other's lives. We're a military family, so diversity is a fact of life. We don't always realize how blessed we are, and how important it is to give back to others, to live the Golden Rule."

—NANCY BARR
SPRINGFIELD



"It was our family's resolution this year to volunteer more. We want everyone to have the same opportunities that we have. I think that's what Martin Luther King is about."

—MADISON CHASE, 10,
WITH MOM KERRI CHASE
SPRINGFIELD



"Martin Luther King, Jr. said some profound things. He believed that an individual can change the world with peace, compassion and caring. When you give young children the opportunity to volunteer, they learn an important message, one that will stay with them as adults."

—JEANNE SANDERS
VOLUNTEER FAIRFAX EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

"We want to be here because if Dr. King was never alive, black and white people couldn't be together, or eat at restaurants together or play sports together. We want to celebrate his birthday by helping others."

—CHRISTIAN
WILLIAMSON, 10
FAIRFAX



"It's a day to do something for other people. I liked making the Valentine's Card for people at nursing homes, because I don't think they usually get cards. I also liked putting the bags together with socks and blankets to keep people warm. I wrote a note inside that said 'Hope to you and all others.'"

—DANA SCHOFIELD, 8
FAIRFAX



"Whoever you are, or wherever you come from, you can share your time and do small things that make a big difference to other people. I think that's the message of this day."

—NURHAENI
A NORTHERN VIRGINIA COMMUNITY
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Chantilly

25623 America Sq.....\$415,284..Sat/Sun 11-6.....Carla Brown.....Toll Brothers..703-323-0272
25918 Sarazen Dr.....\$598,000....Sun 1-4.....Stacy Rodgers.....Long & Foster..703-905-7226

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4210A Mozart Brigade Ln.....\$235,000.....Sat 1-3.....Nathan Johnson.....Keller Williams..703-725-2929
4337 Amnesty Pl.....\$829,000....Sun 12-3.....Katie Nelson.....New Star..703-641-4989
2849 Hideaway Rd.....\$750,000....Sun 1-4.....Gil Stockton.....Coldwell Banker..703-969-5089
8610 Chandler St.....\$852,900....Sun 1-4.....Dane Work.....RE/MAX..703-869-4567
8880 Olive Mae Cir.....\$849,900....Sun 1-4.....Debbie Tritle.....Weichert..703-821-8300
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10210 Leather Leaf Dr.....\$639,990....Sun 1-4.....Marguerite Roland.....RE/MAX..703-577-4538

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CALENDAR

Send notes to the Connection at south@connectionnewspapers.com or call 703-778-9416. Deadline is Friday. Dated announcements should be submitted at least two weeks prior to the event.

THURSDAY/JAN. 19

Lorton Library Book Club. 7 p.m. Lorton Library, 9520 Richmond Highway, Lorton. Hotel on the Corner of Bitter and Sweet by Jamie Ford. Adults. 703-339-7385.

Springfield Writers' Group. 7 p.m. Richard Byrd Library, 7250 Commerce St., Springfield. Share your work, give and receive feedback in a supportive setting. Adults. 703-451-8055.

A Bee's Eye View of Native Plants. 7:30 p.m. Green Spring Gardens. 4603 Green Spring Road, Alexandria. Explore the plant-pollinator relationship from the bee point of view and learn why what we plant has consequences for these creatures. With Sam Droege, a biologist with the USGS Patuxent Wildlife Research Center. Free and open to the public. 703-732-5291.

Riot. 6 p.m. Jaxx Nightclub, 6355 Rolling Road, Springfield. \$22-\$25. www.jaxxroxx.com.

FRIDAY/JAN. 20

Country Rocker Rick Caballo. 9:30 p.m. Main Street Pub, 7140 Main St., Clifton. www.themainstreetpub.net.

SATURDAY/JAN. 21

Workhouse Art Center Saturday. Workhouse Art Center, 9601 Ox Road, Lorton. www.WorkhouseArts.org.
Ballroom Social Dance. 7:30 p.m. Workhouse Gallery. Rumba dancing,

refreshments and a cash bar. Mini-lesson available. Casual dress code, all skill levels welcome. \$8-\$15.

❖**Date Night: Chef's Table.** 8 p.m. Vulcan Gallery. Cooking lessons. Reservations required at least two days prior to event start date. No walk-ups. \$30-\$70.

❖**Workhouse Film Institute: !Women Art Revolution.** 7:30 p.m. Building W-3. A "secret history" of Feminist Art, exploring the movement through conversations, observations, archival footage and works of artists, historians, curators and critics. \$7-\$10.

Animals in Winter. 10:30 a.m. John Marshall Library, 6209 Rose Hill Drive, Alexandria. Find out how animals deal with freezing temperatures and snow from a naturalist from the Hidden Pond Nature Center. All ages. 703-971-0010.

King Giant CD Release. 6:30 p.m. Jaxx Nightclub, 6355 Rolling Road, Springfield. \$10-\$12. www.jaxxroxx.com.

SUNDAY/JAN. 22

"The Human Spirit" Concert. 3 p.m. Center for the Arts, George Mason University, 4400 University Drive, Fairfax. American Youth Philharmonic with Music Director Daniel Spalding and harpist Dotian Levalier. Instrument Petting Zoo after the concert. \$14 adult, \$10 seniors and students, free age 18 and under. 703-642-8054 or www.aypo.org.

Burns Night Celebration Tea. 1-3 p.m. Green Spring Gardens, 4603 Green Spring Road, Alexandria. \$27. Burns Night is an annual tradition for those who celebrate their Scottish heritage by commemorating the bard Robert Burns. Reserve at 703-941-7987.

Discover the Secret of Trees. 1:30 p.m. Green Spring Gardens, 4603 Green Spring Road, Alexandria. Code 290 182 1901. \$10. Author Nancy Hugo teaches a new way of observing a tree and invites us to deepen our relationships with them. Book signing. Register at www.greenspring.org or 703-642-5173.

Silent Civilian. 6 p.m. Jaxx Nightclub, 6355 Rolling Road, Springfield. \$10-\$12. www.jaxxroxx.com.

MONDAY/JAN. 23

Frosty Mittens. 10:30 a.m. Kingstowne Library, 6500 Landsdowne Centre, Alexandria. Winter stories. Age 12-23 months with adult. 703-339-4610.

Hidden Pond Monday: Hibernators. 2:30 p.m. Richard Byrd Library, 7250 Commerce St., Springfield. Learn how some animals get ready to sleep through the winter and awaken just in time for spring. Presented by the staff of Hidden Pond Nature Center. 703-451-8055.

TUESDAY/JAN. 24

Eclectic Readers. 1 p.m. Burke Centre Library, 5935 Freds Oak Road, Burke. The Double Helix: A Personal Account of the Discovery of the Structure of DNA by James D. Watson. Adults. 703-249-1520.

Writers Peer Review Group. 7 p.m. Kingstowne Library, 6500 Landsdowne Centre, Alexandria. Review peers' works and receive in-depth feedback on your work. Submit up to 25 double-spaced pages to kingstownelibrarywriters@yahoo.com. Adults. 703-339-4610.

English Conversation Group. 7 p.m. Richard Byrd Library, 7250

Key Middle Presents 'King and I'



Come celebrate the 50th Anniversary of "The King and I" Thursday-Saturday, Jan. 26-28 at 7 p.m. at Key Middle School located at 6402 Franconia Rd. in Springfield. Tickets can be purchased at the door. Fun for all ages as the lead actors bring the characters to life as they sing and dance their way through such favorites as "Whistle a Happy Tune," "Getting to Know You," and "Shall We Dance." Join the King, his eleven wives and thirty children in a remarkable true story.

Commerce St., Springfield. Practice and improve your English. Adults. 703-451-8055.

Springfield. Enjoy books, songs and rhymes in a special story time just for ones. Age 1 with adult. 703-451-8055.

Book Discussion Group. 12:30 p.m. Green Spring Gardens, 4603 Green Spring Road, Alexandria. Code 290 187 4301. \$5. Book discussion. Bring a bag lunch. Light refreshments served. Call Green Spring Gardens for this month's selection. Books available for sale at Green Spring Gardens. Register at www.greenspring.org or 703-642-5173.

WEDNESDAY/JAN. 25

Learning English. 10:15 a.m. Kingstowne Library, 6500 Landsdowne Centre, Alexandria. Conversation group for adults learning English. 703-339-4610.

Fun with Ones. 10:30 a.m. Richard Byrd Library, 7250 Commerce St.,

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Lake Braddock Boys Stumble Against West Potomac

Bruins suffer first Patriot District loss of season.

BY JON ROETMAN
THE CONNECTION

When the West Potomac boys basketball team missed the front end of a one-and-one with 17.5 seconds remaining, Lake Braddock had an opportunity to escape with a victory despite playing its “worst game possible.”

But on a night when Lake Braddock squandered a fourth-quarter lead and committed 31 turnovers, the Bruins weren't going to catch a break.

After the missed foul shot, 5-foot-9 Tamaric Wilson grabbed an offensive rebound for the Wolverines, drew a foul and knocked down a pair of free throws. Lake Braddock came up empty on its ensuing possession and suffered its first Patriot District defeat, 55-50, at West Potomac.

Lake Braddock led 48-47 when Brendan McHale scored in transition with 3:03 remaining in the fourth quarter. But West Potomac scored eight of the game's final 10 points to pull within one game of the Bruins in the Patriot District standings. Lake Braddock and Woodson are tied for first at 6-1 (the Bruins defeated the Cavaliers 68-52 on Jan. 3) and West Potomac is 5-2.

“We had 31 turnovers. We shouldn't win the game [playing] that way,” Lake Braddock senior guard Dylan O'Connor said. “It was the worst game possible that we could have played. We didn't pass the ball well, we didn't make good decisions, but we'll get them next time.”

Neither team led by more than six points throughout the contest. Lake Braddock led by as many as four in the fourth quarter, but West Potomac responded with a 7-0 run.

Christian McKenrick led the Bruins with 15 points. O'Connor and McHale each scored 10 points for Lake Braddock and Tyler Snow scored nine points and grabbed nine rebounds.

“They were the first-place team, we were third-place team, it was a Patriot District game [and] when we play Lake Braddock it always comes down to something like that,” West Potomac head coach David Houston said. “They don't let you pull away. They're good. They're a good team. They have some solid shooters, solid players, they're big inside. I've got a lot of respect for their squad, but we persevered. I'm really proud of my guys. They didn't give up, they stuck to the plan and got through this game.”

Bryant Fultz led West Potomac with 13 points.



Lake Braddock senior Tyler Snow (20) jumps for the ball against West Potomac's Bryant Fultz during the teams' Jan. 17 matchup at WPHS.

“It was the worst game possible that we could have played. We didn't pass the ball well, we didn't make good decisions, but we'll get [West Potomac] next time.”

**Lake Braddock senior
Dylan O'Connor**

DeMornay Pierson-El finished with 12 points for the Wolverines and Randal Brobbey and Wilson each had 11.

“We needed to defend our home court,” Houston said. “In the district, that's what it comes down to: you're going to have to defend. We had aspirations of being [No.] 1 in the district at the end of the year and we knew we couldn't go down three games to Lake Braddock, so this was an important win for us.”

The Bruins had won eight of their previous nine and entered the contest on a five-game winning streak. They dropped to 10-4 overall with seven regular season games remaining.

Lake Braddock will travel to play West Springfield at 5:45 p.m. on Friday, Jan. 20. The Bruins will host the Wolverines in the regular season finale on Feb. 10.

“That was the worst game possible, so if we only lost by a basket or two, we're still pretty happy,” O'Connor said. “We're just trying to work forward and correct our mistakes and hopefully go undefeated the rest of the season.”

SPORTS NOTES

Fairfax Adult Softball (FAS) is currently accepting applications for the upcoming spring and summer seasons. Leagues are available in the following divisions: Men's, Women's, Coed, Corporate Coed, Senior's (age 50-plus), and Master's (age 35-plus). Applications are accessible via the FAS home page at www.playsoftballnow.com. Contact FAS to register your team before March 1. For those looking for a team to play on, FAS will place you on a team. Visit the FAS website and register as an individual free agent. For further information, please call 703-815-9007 or email office@fairfaxadultsoftball.com.

Fairfax Adult Softball (FAS) is a non-profit corporation registered in the state of Virginia which administers the largest adult softball program in the state with nearly 10,000 participants.

The Northern Virginia Girls Softball Association (NVGSA) is holding on-line registration for the 2012 spring season (www.nvgsa.org). Registration can also be completed at the NVGSA table during the West Springfield Little League registration from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. on Saturday, Jan. 14 and Saturday, Jan. 21 at Keene Mill Elementary School (6310 Bardu Ave.).

NVGSA offers both house and select levels of play for girls ages five to 18. The league offers spring, summer, and fall softball and free winter clinics to help its players improve individual and team skills. NVGSA has house league teams at 8-under, 10-under, 12-under, and 18-under age levels, and players have the opportunity to try out for select and travel teams. Registration fees are \$80 (8-under), \$95 (10-under), and \$110 (12-under and 18-under).

Practices will begin in mid-March and games will start in mid-April. The season will run through early June. All-Stars will be selected and compete in a Fairfax County All-Star Tournament in mid-June.

Most of the girls in NVGSA live in the Burke, Annandale, Springfield, Alexandria, Fairfax City, and Fairfax Station areas.

NVGSA's sole purpose is to promote girls fastpitch softball. Registration fees cover house league obligations. For questions regarding registration or NVGSA in general, visit www.nvgsa.org or contact NVGSAsoftball@yahoo.com.

Virginia Special Olympics' first-ever FANQUEST is set to take place on Saturday, Jan. 28 at Oakton High School. Special Olympics basketball teams from Oakton and McLean High Schools will play an all-star game beginning at 7:10 p.m. The festive night will include prizes, relays, and other fun crowd participation activities - all in support of the Virginia Special Olympics. Members of the community are invited to ‘volunteer to cheer’ at the event. Sign up at www.volunteer2cheer.com. Check-in will be at the ‘Volunteer to Cheer’ tables at the gym entrances. Whether cheering for the Cougars or the Highlanders, fans will be given materials to make posters and signs, and everyone who comes out to cheer will get free ‘cheer sticks.’ FANQUEST, presented by Booz Allen Hamilton, is one of many events offered year round by Special Olympics Virginia. For more information on the 2012 FANQUEST, please contact Holly Claytor at hclaytor@specialolympicsva.org, or call 804-726-3025.

Virginia High School League (VHSL), the governing body of high school sports in the state, voted on Dec. 7 to develop a new classification model for high school sports teams and leagues to be presented to the VHSL Executive Committee on Feb. 22.

“This latest decision to establish six classifications promises to be the most significant step the [VHSL] has taken in more than 40 years,” said VHSL Executive Director Ken Tilley.

For the 1970-71 school year more than 40 years ago, the VHSL switched from four classifications to the current three classes. The current classifications are single-A (smaller enrollment schools), double-A (middle enrollment), and triple-A (larger enrollment).

“The six classification format recommended greatly reduces size disparities among the classes and eliminates regions altogether,” said Tilley. “Under the new format, there is potential for greater consistency in playoff opportunities. A Football Ratings Committee is already in place to deal with that sport.”

The new format would allow for schools to remain in their current districts.

The VHSL, headquartered in Charlottesville, will celebrate its 100th year of operation next school year.

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