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PHOTO BY DONNA MANZ/THE CONNECTION

Katharine Mardirosian, the force behind 100 Bowls of Soup, checks on a kettle of simmering minestrone.

Making '100 Bowls of Soup'

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Valentine's Day Décor
HOME & LIFESTYLE, PAGE 13

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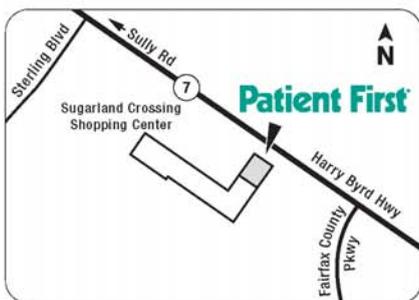
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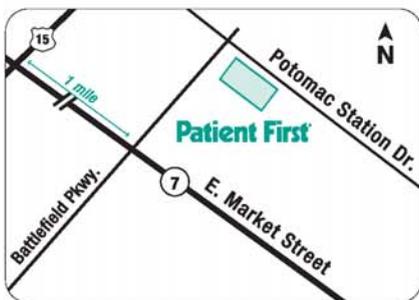


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PHOTO BY VICTORIA ROSS/THE CONNECTION

President Barack Obama spoke at the James Lee Community Center in Falls Church on Wednesday, Feb. 1 about his plans to revitalize the stalled housing market. His speech was short and pointed.

President Announces Homeowners Bill of Rights

Local housing advocates say new rules give homeowners important safeguards.

BY VICTORIA ROSS
THE CONNECTION

Fairfax County housing advocates applauded President Barack Obama's proposed Homeowner's Bill of Rights, saying it will give homeowners critical protection from predatory lenders and important safeguards when they purchase a home.

Calling the continuing depression in the housing market a "make-or-break" moment for the middle class, Obama told a crowd of about 350 people at the James Lee Community Center in Falls Church on Feb. 2, that he wants to see "a set of common-sense rules of the road that every family knows they can count on when they're shopping for a mortgage."

"No more hidden fees or conflicts of interest. No more getting the runaround when you call about your loan. No more fine print," the president said to loud applause. "New safeguards against inappropriate foreclosures. New options to avoid foreclosure if you've fallen on hardship or a run of bad luck. And a new, simple, clear form for new buyers of a home."

He addressed the local housing market: "Here in Falls Church, home values have fallen by about a quarter from their peak. In places like Las Vegas, more than half of all homeowners are underwater. More than half. So it's going to take a while for those prices to rise again," he said.

THE AUDIENCE, which included many local housing advocates, cheered when the President took Congress to task for dragging its feet on plans he announced during the State of the Union Address last

week to kick-start the stalled housing market.

"I am sending Congress a plan that will give every responsible homeowner in America the chance to save about \$3,000 a year on their mortgage by refinancing at historically low rates... What this plan will do is help millions of responsible homeowners who make their payments on time but find themselves trapped under falling home values or wrapped up in red tape."

According to Kerri Wilson, CEO of Reston Interfaith, one of Northern Virginia's largest social services organizations, the nonprofit has received hundreds of calls since the recession from homeowners facing foreclosure or trying to get lenders' attention to reduce their mortgage payments.

"We've heard from those who have lost their jobs and are afraid of losing their homes and everything they've saved for their families. We all know that too many Americans did not fully understand the financial implications of taking out mortgages they could not afford," Wilson said. "Based on our experience then, the Homeowners Bill of Rights will address the issues surrounding foreclosure crisis and offer individuals the help they need to stabilize their budgets and families."

Paula Sampson, executive director of Fairfax County's Department of Housing and Community Development said the president's initiative refocuses attention on the still faltering real estate market and the many homeowners who are still struggling.

"A 'Homeowner's Bill of Rights' and the clarity and transparency it would bring to buying a home could be invaluable," Sampson said. "Just think of the thousands of homebuyers who might have avoided a predatory loan or unexpected rate swings, if the information had been clear and understandable at the closing table."

Sam Mayo, a 21-year-old graduate student from

SEE PRESIDENT, PAGE 5



PHOTOS BY DONNA MANZ/THE CONNECTION

Youngsters pay attention at "Music Together" play station. "Music Together" has strong standing in the Vienna area.

'Find the Fun Fair' Comes to Vienna

Free activities, raffle prizes.

Hundreds of parents and their children turned out for www.playtodaydc.com's public launch at Westwood Country Club on Feb. 4, a "Find the Fun Fair." Favorites activities, from inflatable bouncers to modified "t-ball," and business partners promoting their children's offerings, ran from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Live entertainment, such as karate exhibitions, engaged the children, as well. Participating businesses donated raffle prizes which were awarded every ten minutes throughout the day.

www.playtodaydc.com brings together a myriad of resources for parents in one place, from a calendar of activities that is free to website browsers, to events and classes that are purchased at www.playtodaydc.com, frequently at discounted rates. www.playtodaydc.com founder Elisa Kepner herself recognized that time spent looking for activities could be better-spent enjoying time with her children. What started out as a concept for an indoor play facility that gave children a place to burn off their energy evolved into a model that benefits families and local businesses.

"The goal is to spend less time planning, and more time having fun with our children," said Kepner.

Businesses sharing their product included sports activities, dance, art and theatre classes,



Ava Carter, age 3-1/2, exits the obstacle bounce house in a fun manner. Ava met up with Vienna preschool friends at the www.playtodaydc.com Find the Fun Fair.

wellness, child development support and language classes. Simply fun activities, such as magic shows, had a presence at the fun fair, as well.

"The kids had fun playing while I learned more about classes and activities available to them," said Elizabeth Lucca, a Vienna mother of two young children. "I had the opportunity to ask representatives from the companies represented specific questions about their programs to help me find the best fit."

Read about www.playtodaydc.com and founder Elisa Kepner in the Jan. 18, 2012, edition of the Vienna Connection.

—DONNA MANZ

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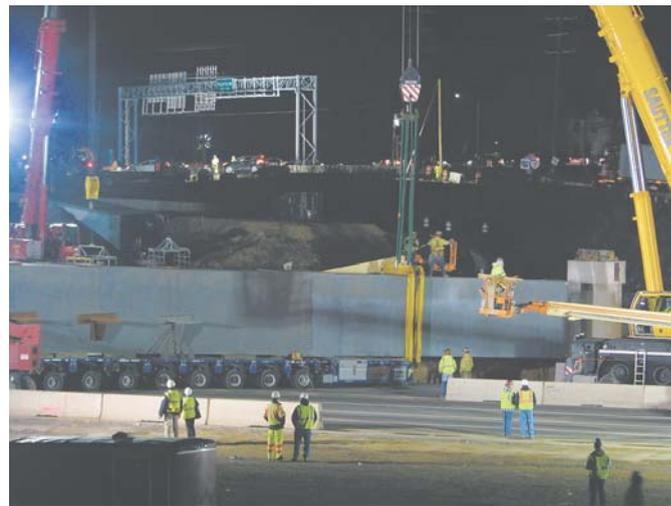
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NEWS



Cranes begin lifting the 250-ton beam that will rest on two supporting structures over the inner loop of the Capital Beltway.

PHOTO BY MIKE SALMON/
VDOT VIRGINIA
MEGAPROJECTS

VDOT Hoists Beam for 495 Express Lanes in Tysons Corner

VDOT and its construction partners Fluor-Lane erected the 495 Express Lanes Project's largest beam over the 495 north (inner loop) lanes on Friday night, Feb. 4. The beam is the main support structure for the express lanes ramp to Route 7, Leesburg Pike, when the new express lanes open by end of this year. A primary crane and support cranes hoisted and placed the 250-ton beam on top of two bridge piers over the Inner Loop lanes after midnight, requiring a full closure of all four northbound lanes, diverting traffic onto the Route 7 exit ramp and down a temporary

ramp back onto 495 north. The beam, known as a "box girder" in the highway engineering world, was built in Lancaster, Pa. and shipped on a special trailer to carry the massive 130-foot, 10-foot high and 6-foot wide beam. Box girders are used in this type of ramp design to span a distance between two piers without a land-based abutment. A similar beam will be used at the 495 Express Lanes ramp connecting to Braddock Road later this year. For more information on the 495 Express Lanes Project and all VDOT Megaprojects go to: www.Vamegaprojects.com.

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President Comes to Area, Announces New Initiative

FROM PAGE 3

Herndon, said he hoped President Obama go another term to complete his plan.

"You just can't replace his energy. I woke up at 4 a.m., because I was really excited to see the president. My mother knows real estate, and I've seen these big empty houses all over Northern Virginia. It's scary to think about buying a home here," he said.

During his speech, Obama also blasted predatory lending practices, and vowed to tighten regulations.

"(The American people) were hurt. By lenders who sold loans to people who they knew couldn't afford the mortgages ... and banks that packaged those mortgages up and traded them to reap phantom profits, knowing that they were building a house of cards."

"It was wrong. It was wrong," the president said to nods and a buzz of agreement in the audience. "It triggered the worst economic crisis of our lifetimes. And it has been the single biggest drag on our recovery from a terrible recession. Crushing debt has kept millions of consumers from spending."

He said his plan will allow responsible homeowners to refinance at a lower rate, saving hundreds of dollars each month. "Or you can choose those savings to rebuild equity in your homes, which will help most underwater homeowners come back up for air more quickly," he said.

THE PRESIDENT made it clear that his "aggressive plan" was not designed for those who have been irresponsible.

"This plan, like the other actions we've taken, will not help the neighbors down the street who bought a house they couldn't afford, and then walked away and left a foreclosed home behind...It's not going to help those who bought multiple homes just to speculate and flip the house and make a quick buck, but it can help those who've acted responsibly," he said.

He veered off script, and entertained the audience, when he recalled how confusing it was when he and First Lady Michelle Obama bought their first home.

"Now, think about it...How many of you have had to deal with overly complicated mortgage forms and hidden clauses and



PHOTOS BY VICTORIA ROSS/THE CONNECTION

Sam Mayo of Herndon said – as a future homebuyer – he was pleased to hear President Obama's plans for making the process simpler for responsible homebuyers.

complex terms? I remember when Michelle and I bought our first condo — and we're both lawyers," he said, triggering laughter from the audience. "And we're looking through the forms and kind of holding it up... reading it again...What does this phrase mean?" And that's for two trained lawyers."

The president then held up a single sheet of paper.

"So this is what a mortgage form should look like. This is it," he said to loud applause and cheers. "Now that our new consumer watchdog agency is finally running at full steam, now that Richard Cordray is in as the Director of the Consumer Finance Protection Bureau, they're moving forward on important protections like this new, shorter mortgage form. Simple, not complicated. Informative, not confusing. Terms are clear. Fees are transparent."

After a pause for effect, the president took another shot at Congress to cheers from the audience: "This, by the way, is what some



Kerri Wilson, CEO of Reston Interfaith

of the folks in Congress are trying to roll back and prevent from happening."

He called the housing crisis "personal," saying it struck at the heart of what it means to be middle class in America. "Our homes, the place where we invest our nest egg, place where we raise our family, the place where we plant roots in a community, the place where we build memories," he said.

He ended his speech with an appeal to Congress. "I urge Congress to act. Pass this plan. Help more families keep their homes. Help more neighborhoods remain vibrant. Help keep more dreams defended and alive. And I promise you that I'll keep doing everything I can to make the future brighter for this community, for this commonwealth, for this country."

Quincy Springs, a Fairfax resident with the County's Department of Neighborhood and Community Services, said the president was presenting Americans with an "opportunity."

"So many people have experienced job loss, foreclosures and other hardships. He has the right plan, and he doesn't get the good credit he deserves," Springs said.

Claudia Lupoletti of Burke said she thought Obama struck the right tone in sending a serious message to lenders.



Quincy Springs, with the Fairfax County Department of Neighborhood and Community Services, said he thought President Obama does not get enough credit for his plans.

"I'm very happy to hear that he is going to hold lenders accountable and not just homeowners," Lupoletti said. "He's right about the paperwork. We bought our first home in New York City and it was an all-day process with hundreds of complex forms. I think this is long overdue," she said.

"It is inspiring to see the president move forward to implement a federal response to the mortgage and foreclosure crisis," said Dean Klein, Director of the County's Office to Prevent and End Homelessness, who attended the event with Pat Harrison, Fairfax County's Deputy Director. "(The crisis) has impacted so many individuals and families in our community and nationally."

Congressman Gerry Connolly (D-11) issued a brief statement after the president's speech: "I welcome President Obama back to Northern Virginia. His strong commitment to the economic recovery is obviously heartfelt and I proudly support him in that effort," Connolly said.

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OPINION

Access for Home Schoolers to School Activities

Families who home-school their children in this area take a burden off crowded schools, and off taxpayers who pay on average between \$12,000 and \$16,000 per year per child in school depending on where in Northern Virginia.

There is no reason to deny students who live within a school's boundaries access to the extracurricular activities of that school. While a proposal making its way through the Virginia General Assembly would address home schoolers' access to sports, home schooled stu-

dents should also be able to take some classes in school without having to be enrolled as a full-time student.

There is good reason to change the "bright white line" of student or non-student in public schools, all or nothing. Students have a variety of educational needs. Students need flexibility and often need several different educational contexts to create success.

Of course these students should be subject to all the same requirements as any other student in trying out for a spot on a team or in

the school play or band.

Some local school officials have said it's not fair, homeschooled students don't have to work as hard at their studies as public school students, so they would have an unfair advantage in extracurriculars. First, many homeschoolers work harder than the average public school students. And second, by this reasoning, perhaps coaches should consider some sort of weighted assessment of course load when deciding who should be on the team.

Public schools should be committed to providing the best solutions for all students.

Suppressing the Vote And Other Action in Richmond

While all Fairfax, Arlington and Alexandria senators voted against a bill that forces voters to provide one of a short list of identification in order to vote, the bill passed 20-to-20. Here's how: 02/06/12 Passed Senate (20-Y 20-N); 02/06/12 Senate: Chair votes Yes

Senators George Barker, Adam Ebbin, Barbara Favola, Mark Herring, Janet Howell, Dave Marsden, Chap Petersen, Toddy Puller and Dick Saslaw voted against the bill, which "eliminates the provision that allows a voter to sign a sworn statement that he is the named registered voter he claims to be in lieu of showing identification." Instead such a voter must cast a provisional ballot if he cannot provide a required

form of identification, and provisional ballots are counted the next day when a committee determines eligibility.

A Commonwealth of Virginia voter registration card will no longer count as one of forms of identification that a voter can present to demonstrate that he is a qualified voter, but a separate bill would add concealed handgun permits to the list of acceptable forms of identification to vote

One Gun a Month Not Enough?

Virginia's long standing law restricting gun

purchases to one a month was overturned this week.

In the Senate, all Alexandria, Arlington and Fairfax senators voted against the repeal. In the House of Delegates, Barbara Comstock and Tim Hugo voted in favor of eliminating the restriction. Three Republicans joined all the Democrats from our area in voting against lifting the one-gun-a-month restriction: Dave Albo, Jim LeMunyon and Tom Rust voted against the repeal along with Bob Brink, David Bulova, David Englin, Eileen Filler-Corn, Mark Herring, Mark Keam, Ken Plum, Mark Sickles, Scott Surovell and Vivian Watts.

— MARY KIMM

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Keeping Dulles Rail On Track

To the Editor:

Henry Ford once said that you should not find fault, but find a remedy, because anyone can complain. I believe this principle describes our efforts over the last year to reduce the cost of Dulles Rail and keep it moving forward.

Opponents to this critical project continue to suggest we halt progress in order to study any possible effects. Doing so would not only delay the project but would end up costing Fairfax County taxpayers and Dulles Toll Road users

more in the long run, the very scenario these opponents use to justify their opposition. In order to protect taxpayers and commuters, I have worked with our County staff and our funding partners over the last year to successfully reduce the cost of Dulles Rail by over \$700 million all while keeping the project on track. We chose to find remedies instead of faults.

For example, in April I made the case for an aerial station at Dulles International Airport by "walking the walk" — showing people the

short distance between the proposed underground station and the aerial station. Moving the station above ground led to a cost savings of \$330 million. Our County staff worked with their counterparts in Loudoun County and officials from the state and federal government over the summer to identify over \$300 million in additional savings. Our work is consistent with Ford's principle.

Stopping the progress we have fought so hard to achieve also goes against our Board's stated commitment to "vigorously pursue economic development and revitaliza-

tion opportunities." Even the most vocal opponents of Dulles Rail cannot ignore its economic development potential.

Complete preliminary engineering estimates on Phase 2 are due out soon. When they are released, our Board will have 90 days to approve our continued commitment to this ambitious project. Rail to Dulles remains my number one transportation goal.

Sharon Bulova
Chairman
Fairfax County Board of Supervisors

Support Funding Alzheimer's Project

To the Editor:

Today, 5.4 million Americans are living with Alzheimer's disease, including 130,000 Virginia residents. By 2050 as many as 16 million Americans will have this disease that slowly steals memories, independence, autonomy and so much more. Now the nation's sixth leading cause of death, Alzheimer's is unmatched in the scale of its devastating human and economic impact. There is no other chronic disease that affects so many without a way to cure, prevent or even slow its progression.

One in three Americans know someone with Alzheimer's. There are nearly 15 million family mem-

bers and friends providing care for a loved one with Alzheimer's and dementia, including more than 422,000 Virginians.

Beyond the sheer numbers of lives touched by the disease, the financial impact on our nation is staggering. Alzheimer's cost the nation \$183 billion today. That amount will soar to \$1 trillion by midcentury. Medicare costs will increase nearly 600 percent and Medicaid nearly 400 percent — if we do nothing.

The National Alzheimer's Project Act (NAPA), signed into law in January 2011, requires the creation of a national strategic plan to address the rapidly escalating Alzheimer's disease crisis and will

coordinate Alzheimer's disease efforts across the federal government. The Advisory Council on Alzheimer's Research, Care, and Services, created by NAPA to coordinate federal agencies conducting Alzheimer's-related care, services and research, met in mid-January to review the first draft framework of a National Alzheimer's Plan.

This is an historic moment. We need a meaningful allocation of resources in the President's upcoming budget if we are committed to finding a cure. Our nation's leaders must follow through and fulfill their commitment with a strong plan supported by the necessary resources to alter the course of Alzheimer's.

Alzheimer's won't wait. I invite you to take action today by sign-

ing our petition to President Obama at www.alz.org. Urge the President to take the next bold step forward in the fight against Alzheimer's and fulfill the promise of the National Alzheimer's Project Act passed unanimously by Congress more than a year ago. Tell him millions of families are counting on him to fulfill the potential of NAPA when he releases his upcoming Budget Request.

Now is the time to create a world without Alzheimer's. Families won't forget.

Susan Kudla Finn, PMP
President and CEO
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They're Making '100 Bowls of Soup'

Local entrepreneur wants to change processed food industry one bowl at a time.

BY DONNA MANZ
THE CONNECTION

Early in Katharine Mardirosian's post-college life, she considered a career in international relations. A Harvard graduate, Mardirosian traveled and worked in eastern Europe and New York. She met her future husband while working in Romania. After the couple came back to the area that Mardirosian grew up in, McLean, in 1994. Two years later, Mardirosian got her M.B.A. at the University of Maryland, and her entrepreneurial spirit kept bobbing up. Nowadays, Mardirosian owns her own business, an innovative one, at that, preparing and selling from-scratch soups made with locally-sourced ingredients. 100 Bowls of Soup is Mardirosian's line of seasonal soups.

"My mission is to make the healthiest, most nourishing, and most flavorful soup I can out of local and organic ingredients," said Mardirosian, who lives in McLean but makes her soups out of the licensed kitchen at Maple Avenue Market. Fresh, healthy soups are something she thought was really needed.

Living in Romania inspired Mardirosian's perspective. Local cooks, out of necessity, used fresh ingredients and cooked everything the family ate. "They knew how to cook and to cook really well," said Mardirosian. "There was very little processed food."

BEFORE RELOCATING her work station to Vienna, Mardirosian used a church's licensed kitchen in McLean. But cooking at Maple Avenue Market offers opportunities to Mardirosian and her assistant cook, Meredith Haines of Vienna, that a church kitchen doesn't offer. The women, at Maple Avenue Market cooking every Tuesday and Wednesday, get to meet the shop's customers, as well as suppliers. That kind of community environment elevates the cooking process to something more meaningful.

Because the ingredients are "local," they are, by definition, "seasonal," as well. You can't make gazpacho here in the winter if you buy local, Mardirosian said. The beef that goes into Mardirosian's chili and goulash is pasture-raised



100 Bowls of Soup owner Katharine Mardirosian and her assistant Meredith Haines display winter varieties of the business's soups.

from Polyface Farms in Staunton, Va.

Mardirosian and Haines make two soups a day, two days a week, in small batches of 40 – 60 pints. "When you're cooking for a small number of people, not mass-producing it, it's more meaningful," said Mardirosian.

"My bigger mission is to change the processed food industry one bowl at a time."

She doesn't rely on salt for flavoring; she uses herbs and spices. And for her from-scratch stocks, she roasts the bones first for the meat stocks, and then boils them to extract the essence.

"Pay attention to every ingredient that goes into what you eat," Mardirosian said. "Every ingredient should matter, and whenever possible, cook from scratch."

Chris Guerre, owner of Maple Avenue Markets, farms a lot of the produce he sells, and it's from him that Mardirosian buys a big share of her ingredients. From Deepa Patke, Mardirosian buys the vindaloo spice packages that go

into sweet potato vindaloo soup.

MARDIROSIAN went through McLean schools as her two children, one a high school senior, the other a sixth-grader, are doing now. Haines, Mardirosian said, is connecting her to Vienna. So is Chris Guerre who actively supports the community and works to improve school lunches locally.

Mardirosian sells 100 Bowls of Soup at the Maple Avenue Market, the Organic Butcher in McLean, the Reston Farm Market in summers, Potomac Vegetable Farm in Vienna and at the newly-opened Mom's Organic Market in Herndon. Stores set their own prices but Mardirosian believes the vegan soups typically sell for about \$7 a pint and the meat soups and stocks for about \$8 a pint. Quart special orders are accepted.

"I do this for the satisfaction of producing a product I really believe in," said Mardirosian. "And to provide someone with a wonderful, healthy and nourishing meal."

PHOTO BY DONNA MANZ/THE CONNECTION

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To have community events listed in the Connection, send to vienna@connectionnewspapers.com. Deadline is Friday.

THURSDAY/FEB. 9

The Great Falls Optimist Club monthly meeting, 6:30 p.m. at the Great Falls Library with the presentation from the DECCA students of the Dominion High School. At the regular meeting for March 8, presenters are the Langley High School robotics students. Visitors welcome.

What's Love Got To Do With It? Healthy Relationships and Dating. 7 p.m. McLean High School, 1633 Davidson Drive, McLean. In recognition of Teen Dating Violence Awareness & Prevention Month, Safe Community Coalition presents an educational program for parents and high school students. A live presentation of "Remote Control" from Deana's Educational Theater will explore issues, attitudes and beliefs about relationships; Lynne Russell of Dating Abuse Stops Here will speak about her daughter's murder by her ex-boyfriend, and a clinical social worker and a trauma physician will explore healthy relationships. 703-795-6943 or www.safecommunitycoalition.net.

SATURDAY/FEB. 11

"An Indian Meal" Cooking Class. 10 a.m. Vienna Community Center, 120 Cherry St., S.E., Vienna. Learn to make a simple and quick Indian meal including a Mixed Vegetable Pilaf, a Chicken Curry, a Bean Vegetable and a Raita. \$45-\$56.25. Register at 703-255-6360 or www.viennava.gov.

McLean Branch of the American Association of University Women. 9:30 a.m. McLean Community Center, 1234 Ingleside Ave., McLean. Art Taylor, professor at GMU and book critic for the Washington Post, will talk about the process of reviewing books and discuss Laura Lippman's "I'd Know You Anywhere." 703-847-3195 or www.mcleanaauw.org.

SUNDAY/FEB. 12

Is Anything Wrong with the Scientific Method? 12:45 p.m. Fairfax Unitarian Church, 2709 Hunter Mill Road, Oakton. Scientists don't really follow a rigid procedure-list called "The Scientific Method" in their daily work. The procedure-list is a myth spread by the education system and even some scientists have been taken in by it.

TUESDAY/FEB. 14

Tyson's Corner Kiwanis Club Meeting. 7:30 p.m. at George C. Marshall High School, Room 124, 7731 Leesburg Pike, Falls Church. Meeting is public and individuals looking to volunteer in their community welcome. Meetings the second and fourth Tuesday of the month. www.tysonscornerkiwanis.org.

NARFE Meeting. 1:30 p.m. Vienna Community Center, 120 Cherry St., Vienna. With Jamie Grasso, who specializes in liquidating estate jewelry, gold, silver and coins. Open to all members and their guests. Free. 703-938-6580.

THURSDAY/FEB. 16

Vienna Theatre Company Auditions: "The Fantasticks." 7:30-9:30 p.m. Vienna Community Center, 120 Cherry St. S.E., Vienna. Auditions consist of vocals and movements for all characters except the Mute, Mortimer, and Henry and cold readings from the script. The show is scheduled to open April 20. 703-255-6360 or www.viennatheatrecompany.org.

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House on a Hill

Contemporary in Oakton transformed into welcoming southern colonial.

BY JOHN BYRD
SPECIAL TO THE CONNECTION

Huntsville, Ala. is a pretty small town— yet it has three historic districts and more homes in the national register than most places twice its size. Growing up in such a community, Gina Jones is understandably attracted to welcoming porches and grand foyers—hallmarks of the antebellum style.

Alas, when Jones, an Internet publisher, relocated to Northern Virginia ten years ago, the place that came closest to suiting her family's needs was an Oakton contemporary— one of four on a private drive at the top of a hill.

Jones adapted to her new setting just fine. But after occupying the house for a few years, certain shortcomings became apparent.

"I was looking for a larger master bedroom, a guest room... and I really wanted a front porch and a foyer," Jones recalls. "The foyer was important in my childhood home. It's where the house begins"

The practical problem with the last part of the vision, however, was the steeply sloping grade immediately outside the existing front door. The more Jones learned about her home's inherent site problems, in fact, the more the search for new square footage became concentrated on the rear elevation.

"We wanted to stick to our budget," Jones recalls "so the remodeling proposals we received were all focused on the back of the house."

It was at this juncture that Jones met Sonny Nazemian, president of Michael Nash Kitchens and Homes.

"Sonny plan's not only made our new façade feasible— but actually created more square footage than we'd thought we could afford," Jones explains. "Naturally, we were thrilled with that."

The existing front patio served as a 14-foot by 26-foot template for a two-level enclosure.

The lower level now accommodates a spacious foyer with ten foot ceilings, a first

SEE HOUSE, PAGE 13



PHOTOS CONTRIBUTED



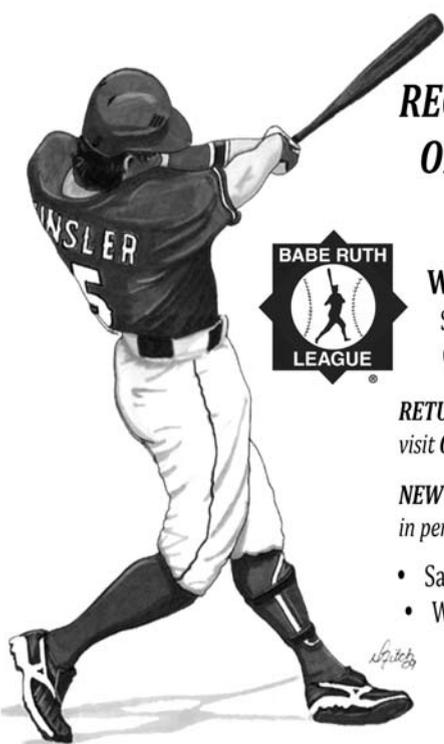
The new interior faithfully explores late 18th century design elements— presenting a period-appropriate setting for several collectibles and antiques



PHOTO BY CRAIG STERBUTZEL

Dennis Parker and his wife Gina Jones in their remodeled Oakton home.

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Home Life Style

Remodeling: An Opportunity To Follow One's Passion

By JOSHUA BAKER
SPECIAL TO THE CONNECTION

Having remodeled thousands of projects over the past 25 years, our clients' reactions tell us that some of the most successful projects often address a specific passion or interest. Folks seem to be spending more and more time at home not only working, but also enriching their lives through personal interests. To that end, today's remodeling design often includes developing new areas for pursuing a variety of passions. Here are some local examples:

A breakfast room addition was carefully planned to also function as a bird watching area. The foundation was specially designed to allow the existing trees to remain in close proximity, and great care was taken to preserve the surroundings during construction. A professional arborist was engaged to manage the health of the trees in the six months prior to construction to ensure the addition had an almost treehouse feel.

There are a wide range of car enthusiasts each with his (or her) own specifications. Some garage additions, whether attached or



PHOTO CONTRIBUTED

detached, are effectively museums. One such addition was designed as an antique car barn, including four-inch thick, rough wood floors, and individual bays for each piece of art. Other garage projects are focused on automobile maintenance and repair. These often have automatic lifts, similar to your local repair shop, which allow for easy access and even provide additional storage. One Great Falls garage was designed and built so that a father could share his knowledge and interest in cars with his sons.

Sports fanaticism often drives remodeling design. Sometimes, modestly designed trophy areas for displaying family victories are included. Other times, whole rooms pay homage to (most often out of town) favorite college or professional sports teams. Real stadium seats, painted murals of favorite scenes, and custom flooring made to look like ball fields are all a part of the fun.

Are salt-water aquariums your thing? While they aren't for everyone due to the significant maintenance, technology and



The 7,000-gallon salt water aquarium in this BOWA renovation in McLean required extensive structural reinforcement and a crane to set it in place.

investment required, some homeowners find the colors and peaceful setting captivating. For one local enthusiast we installed a 7,000-gallon live coral reef. The weight of the aquarium required the floor be reinforced with steel beams, and a separate control/filter room was added.

Many designs incorporate a trend towards enjoying and collecting wine. A very efficient and relatively inexpensive approach is to purchase specialized wine refrigerators. These vary in size from small under-counter units, appropriate for a kitchen or bar area, to large full-size units most often installed in unfinished areas of the basement. For the wine aficionados, fully conditioned wine rooms with custom-made wood racking for storage have become common in luxury homes. And for a really nice touch, these rooms are designed to include a tasting area or even full-size dining areas, similar to many stylish restaurants.

Art collections, whether pop or classical, often drive remodeling design decisions. For example, hallways are widened to create galleries and sophisticated specialty lighting is installed, based upon the type of art work, natural light etc. One



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In this BOWA project in Great Falls, a gallery was designed to display the owner's extensive motion picture poster collection.

such project in Great Falls involved creating a generous gallery to feature original antique movie posters.

So the questions remains, what's your passion? By working closely with an experienced design build remodeler who has access to a whole host of spe-

cialty designers and experts, your dreams of an at-home museum, sanctuary, tasting room, etc. may well be within reach.

Joshua Baker is founder of Bowa Builders.

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Delight in our HomeLifeStyle sections, the second week of every month. Peek at the top real estate sales, glimpse over-the-top remodeling projects, get practical suggestions for your home.

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10 11510 Hemingway Drive, Reston — \$925,000



2 9695 Mill Ridge Lane, Great Falls — \$3,106,367

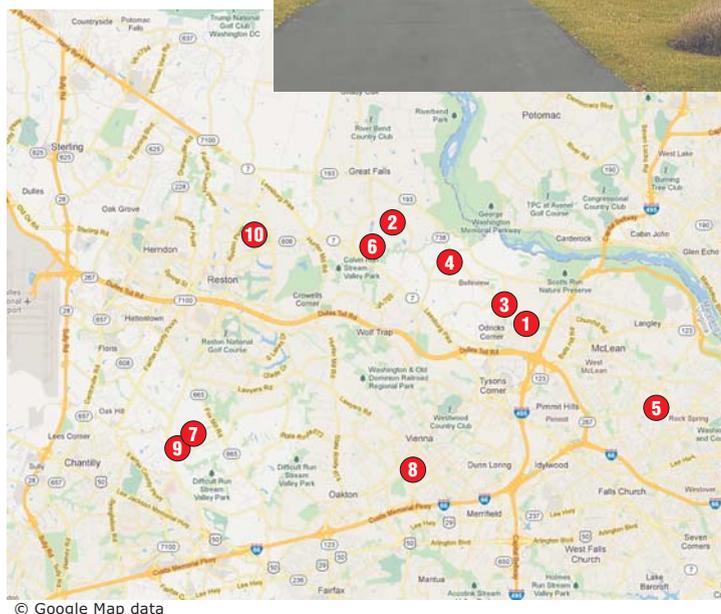


3 8100 Spring Hill Farm Drive, McLean — \$3,000,000

4 8891 Olson Court, McLean — \$2,025,000



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2 9695 MILL RIDGE LN	5	..	5	. 1	GREAT FALLS	\$3,106,367	Detached	2.02	..	22066	THE LANE AT FOUR STAIRS	..	12/21/11
3 8100 SPRING HILL FARM DR	..	5	..	3	.....	MCLEAN	.....	\$3,000,000	....	Detached	.....	0.84	..	22102	.....	SPRING HILL FARM	.....	12/30/11
4 8891 OLSON CT	.....	5	..	5	. 2	.....	MCLEAN	.....	....	Detached	.....	1.72	..	22102	.....	BRYAN POND	.....	12/27/11
5 1949 MASSACHUSETTS AVE	..	6	..	5	. 1	.....	MC LEAN	.....	....	Detached	.....	0.50	..	22101	.....	FRANKLIN PARK	.....	12/14/11
6 1093 MILL FIELD CT	.....	5	..	4	. 2	.....	GREAT FALLS	.....	....	Detached	.....	0.83	..	22066	.....	COLVIN MILL RUN	.....	12/16/11
7 12312 WESTWOOD HILLS DR	4	..	4	. 1	.....	OAK HILL	.....	\$1,240,410	....	Detached	.....	1.00	..	20171	.....	RESERVE AT OAKTON	.....	12/09/11
8 504 STEPHEN CIR	.....	5	..	4	. 1	.....	VIENNA	.....	....	Detached	.....	0.30	..	22180	.....	VIENNA WOODS	.....	12/30/11
9 12315 WESTWOOD HILLS DR	4	..	3	. 1	HERNDON	\$1,172,249	Detached	1.35	..	20171	RESERVE AT OAKTON	12/28/11
10 11510 HEMINGWAY DR	3	..	3	. 1	RESTON	Townhouse	..	0.05	..	20194	RESTON	12/08/11

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Valentine's Day Décor

Share ideas for sweetening a home or dining table.

BY MARILYN CAMPBELL
THE CONNECTION

Whether planning a dinner party for friends, a romantic meal for two or a breakfast surprise for children, local designers say simple accents can create a festive atmosphere on Valentine's Day. First on the list of suggestions: originality.

"I feel that things like oversized balloons and little bears with stuffed hearts have been overdone so much that I would maybe stay away from those," said Angela Phelps of Le Village Marche in Arlington. "Look for things that are more creative."

One way to make guests or family feel special is with lightly scented conversation heart candles and soaps. "They're cute and quirky," said McLean resident Penelope Bell of the Dandelion Patch in Reston, Vienna, Leesburg and Washington, D.C. "I would put them in a powder room for guests if you're having a Valentine's Day gathering. You could display them in a small soap or cylindrical glass vase."

Designers say subtle home accents can be used to express affection. "You can display Valentine's-themed glass plates that can be used to hold candy or a little glass heart," said Judy Philactos of Periwinkle in Washington, D.C. Small glass hearts can be grouped or scattered on an accent table as an expression of love.

Phelps recommends Valentine-themed vintage postcards, which can be used for more than correspondence. "[These] glittering greetings are fun for decorating as well."

Philactos strings lace-trimmed, heart-shaped Valentine's Day cards to make a garland that can be hung on a mantle to add burst of color. She also loops a ribbon through the cards and hangs them on a metal photo tree to create a Cupid-worthy accent piece.

Decorative candles can create an air of romance or festivity. "I've used pink, lightly scented bubbled glass candles," said Phelps. "If you put three or four



PHOTO BY MARILYN CAMPBELL

Accents for creating a festive atmosphere for children on Valentine's Day are plentiful.

of those together, I think they look really, really nice."

When it comes to the table, Phelps suggests moving beyond red.

"I think if you are decorating a table for a romantic dinner, you can never go wrong with candles or fresh flowers," said Phelps. "You can do a white theme with little bits of red. [Valentine's Day table settings] don't always have to be all red, and it doesn't always have to be roses."

Floral designer Gerry Rogers of Petal's Edge Floral Design in Alexandria says floral options are plentiful. "February is a great time of year for flowers. We're starting to get a lot of spring flowers back in," said Rogers "Things like anemone and tulips and sometimes even peonies and sweet pea. Gerbera daisies can be a playful or colorful choice, and orchids are great for someone who likes something a little more exotic."

Potomac-based floral designer Evelyn Kinville suggests looking to nature for inspiration. "You can create an arrangement that looks like you went out for a walk in a woodsy area and found some nice vines and grasses," said Kinville of Behnke's Florist in Potomac. "You can mix those with roses or hydrangeas. These arrangements make nice accents for end tables or coffee tables."

countertops and cherry cabinetry.

Upstairs, the new front-facing master bedroom is more than double the size of its predecessor.

The master suite opens out onto the upstairs porch with a stunning view of wooded acreage abutting the property.

In a corner of the master suite, Nazemian installed a gas fireplace, elevating it for visibility from the bed. "It's a Bed and Breakfast fireplace," Jones said, "and it's also an effective heat source."

The master bath features a double vanity and soaking tub, a walk-in shower and heated floors and towel racks. Structured porcelain covers the floors, shower and tub surrounds; the cherry cabinets have granite countertops.

Standard oak floors and wall-to-wall carpeting were replaced with a richly stained Brazilian woods. "It's the details that make the whole house so cohesive," Jones said.

To give the eclectic architecture a unifying cast, the exterior elevations are clad in cedar shake and painted a vivid Wedgwood blue.

"It just works beautifully," Jones said. "And it feels like home."

House on a Hill

FROM PAGE 9

level guest room and a full bath. On the second level, the project co-opted one of three existing bedrooms to form a substantially larger master bedroom suite.

Best yet, the new site plan permits a top item on the wish list: a 25-foot-long, two level front porch that, Jones says, evokes the graciously welcoming facade of her childhood home.

Inside, the new interior faithfully explores late 18th century decorum in detailing appropriate to several period collectibles and antiques.

Beginning with an Adam-style front door bordered by sidelights and a Palladium window, the foyer is embellished in hardwood flooring, crown molding and embossed knee high panels. Two Doric columns on either side of a stair accessing the main living area are both decorative and structural.

Adjacent to the foyer, the new first level addition provides for a home office that doubles as a guest suite with a private entrance. The suite includes a full bath finished in Brazilian slate-tile, granite

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Photo by Kenneth M. Wyner

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

THURSDAY/FEB. 9

"Three Bears." 12 p.m. 1st Stage, 1524 Spring Hill Road, Tysons Corner. A brand-new play with a comedic twist on the classic fairy tale sends the Three Bears and a golden-haired friend on an a cappella musical adventure. For age 5 and up. Tickets \$15 at www.1ststageTysons.org or 703-854-1856.

Mountain Heart. 8 p.m. The Barns at Wolftrap, 1551 Trap Road, Vienna. Bluegrass with rock, gospel, jazz, R&B and blues. \$22. www.wolftrap.org.

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

One-on-One English Practice. 2 p.m. Oakton Library, 10304 Lynnhaven Place, Oakton. Call for appointment with an ESL volunteer. Adults. 703-242-4020.

Bedtime Storytime. 7:30 p.m. Oakton Library, 10304 Lynnhaven Place, Oakton. Stories and songs. Age 2-5 with adult. 703-242-4020.

eBook/eReader Instruction. 7:30 p.m. and 8:15 p.m. Oakton Library, 10304 Lynnhaven Place, Oakton. Learn about library eBooks and how to access them with your compatible device. Call for appointment. Adults. 703-242-4020.

FRIDAY/FEB. 10

Virginia Opera: Orphée. 8 p.m. George Mason University's Center for the Arts Concert Hall, 4400 University Drive, Fairfax. The Virginia Premiere of Philip Glass's Orphée, based on Jean Cocteau's reimagining of the myth of Orpheus and Euridice. Sung in French with English supertitles. \$44-\$86. 888-945-2468 or www.gmu.edu.

"Man of La Mancha." 8 p.m. McLean Community Center Alden Theatre, 1234 Ingleside Ave., McLean. Inspired by Don Quixote, suitable for age 16 and older. Tickets \$18-\$20. 703-790-9223 or www.mcleanplayers.org.

Family Skate Night. 6:30-8 p.m. Vienna Community Center, 120 Cherry St., Vienna. Admission \$1. Bring your own roller skates or inline skates (no scooters) and safety equipment. Parents required to stay with their children. 703-255-6360 or www.viennava.com.

"Almost, Maine." 8 p.m. 1st Stage, 1524 Spring Hill Road, Tysons Corner. A series of whimsical love stories. Tickets \$25. www.1ststageTysons.org or 703-854-1856.

Rocknuceros Happy Family Hour at 7 p.m.; **Big O and Dukes Live** at 9:30 p.m. Jammin' Java, 227 Maple Ave E Vienna. www.jamminjava.com.

Chicago City Limits. 8 p.m. The Barns at Wolftrap, 1551 Trap Road, Vienna. Improvisational comedy. \$24. www.wolftrap.org.

English Conversation Group. 10 a.m. Patrick Henry Library, 101 Maple Ave. East, Vienna. English conversation group. Adults. 703-938-0405.

Pokemon League. 3 p.m. Patrick Henry Library, 101 Maple Ave. East, Vienna. Learn and play. Age 5-18. 703-938-0405.

SATURDAY/FEB. 11

"Man of La Mancha." 8 p.m. McLean Community Center Alden Theatre, 1234 Ingleside Ave., McLean. Inspired by Don Quixote, suitable for age 16 and older. Tickets \$18-\$20. 703-790-9223 or www.mcleanplayers.org.

Jimmy Lange Boxing. 7 p.m. George Mason University Patriot Center, 4500 Patriot Circle, Fairfax. Tickets \$35-\$500, available at www.ticketmaster.com and 703-573-SEAT. Accessible seating is available at 703-993-3035. www.jimmylangeboxing.com or www.patriotcenter.com.

Arlo Guthrie: Boys' Night Out. 8 p.m. George Mason Center for the Arts, 4400 University Drive, Fairfax. With his son Abe Guthrie, his grandson Krishna Guthrie, and longtime collaborator Terry a la Berry. Tickets \$24-\$48 at 888-945-2468 or cfa.gmu.edu.

"Almost, Maine." 2 p.m. and 8 p.m. 1st Stage, 1524 Spring Hill Road, Tysons Corner. A series of whimsical love stories. Tickets \$25. www.1ststageTysons.org or 703-854-1856.

An Evening with Willie Nile at 7 p.m.; **Passafire and Dub City Renegades** at 10 p.m. Jammin' Java, 227 Maple Ave E Vienna. www.jamminjava.com.

Lions Club 49th Annual Bland Music Competition. 12:30 p.m. Assembly of God Church, 100 Ayr Hill Ave., Vienna. Local students through 12th grade can compete in the competition, with winners moving on to district, region and state competition in vocal and instrumental categories. Deadline for applications is Feb. 4. 703-938-7716 or n.volpe8@verizon.net.

Chicago City Limits. 7:30 p.m. The Barns at Wolftrap, 1551 Trap Road, Vienna. Improvisational comedy. \$24. www.wolftrap.org.

"Three Bears." 12 p.m. 1st Stage, 1524 Spring Hill Road, Tysons Corner. A brand-new play with a comedic twist on the classic fairy tale sends the Three Bears and a golden-haired friend on an a cappella musical adventure. Fast-paced fun for age 5 and up. Tickets \$15 at www.1ststageTysons.org or 703-854-1856.

Using Library eBooks and eAudioBooks. 10 a.m. Patrick Henry Library, 101 Maple Ave. East, Vienna. One-on-one instruction on using Fairfax County Public Library eBooks and eAudioBooks available through OverDrive. Call for appointment. Adults. 703-938-0405.

Cool Science. 2 p.m. Patrick Henry Library, 101 Maple Ave. East, Vienna. Learn about carbon dioxide and see live demonstrations from Eric Energy. Age 6-12. 703-938-0405.

SUNDAY/FEB. 12

Virginia Opera: Orphée. 8 p.m. George Mason University's Center for the Arts Concert Hall, 4400 University Drive, Fairfax. The Virginia Premiere of Philip Glass's Orphée, based on Jean Cocteau's reimagining of the myth of Orpheus and Euridice. Sung in French with English supertitles. \$44-\$86. 888-945-2468 or www.gmu.edu.

Old Dominion Chrysanthemum Society. 2:30 p.m. Falls Church Community Center, 223 Little Falls St., Falls Church. "The Botany, Horticultural History and Future of Chrysanthemums," with Todd Brethauer. Open to the public, free admission and refreshments. 703-560-8776.

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ENTERTAINMENT

A Place of Love and Beauty

1st Stage presents
'Almost, Maine.'

BY DAVID SIEGEL
THE CONNECTION

Smitten you can become with the delightful, upside-down quirkiness at the heart of "Almost, Maine" the current 1st Stage production. In overlapping vignettes that flow gently into each other, the complexities of love pile up as physical manifestations; sometimes whimsical, sometimes heart-breaking tales of love found and sometimes misplaced.

Under director Michael Chamberlin's creative guidance, this is an evening full of charm and appealing eccentricities. Chamberlin gives three dimensions to what "Almost, Maine" playwright John Cariani called "a play about people who are normally very grounded, but who have become very excited by love...and other extraordinary occurrences." There are also plenty of knotty and thorny relationships



PHOTO COURTESY OF 1ST STAGE

Jessica Shearer and Elliott Kashner in the 1st Stage production of 'Almost, Maine.'

to give some savoring taste to the show.

Chamberlin envelops the audience into the proceedings. With a charming set design by Steven Royal and lighting by Brian S. Allard, the audience enters the set, yes enters the set, as participants living as the towns-folk of "Almost,

Where and When

1st Stage Theater, 1524 Spring Hill Road, Tysons Corner. Performances through Feb. 26. Fridays 8 p.m., Saturdays 2&8 p.m., Sunday's 2&7 p.m. Tickets: \$15-\$25. Call 703-854-1856 or log on: www.boxoffice@1stStageTysons.org.

Maine." It is an intimate, upside-down, snow-globe world of hushed blue-white-grey winter tones, falling snow, northern lights and rich imagination. Derek Knoderer's piano-laden sound design; the costume design by LeVonne Lindsay all of plaids, cords, flannels, and down jackets, and appropriate boots exude the cold in a very small space. Props by Debra Cerie and Kay Rzasa are an unpredictable lark.

Four actors - Megan Dominy, Elliott Kashner, Jessica Shearer and Jonathan Lee Taylor - play 19 of "Almost, Maine" residents in nine vignettes over two acts. Dominy has a fine range for comic physicality, Shearer a lovely sense of how to use her beauty in scenes. Kashner gets quickly to the essence of his characters while Taylor possesses a gutsy flair for the unexpected.

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Opening Doors to Part-time Careers

Flexforce Professionals pairs experienced professional women with local companies.

BY DONNA MANZ
THE CONNECTION

If it weren't for three highly-educated, resourceful local moms who wanted to be home when the school bus arrived, there would, probably, be no "Flexforce Professionals" today. And that would be too bad, because Flexforce serves the kind of purpose that like-minded mothers and small businesses profit from. And it's like no other staffing resource in the area.

Flexforce Professionals, LLC, partners experienced professionals seeking fulfilling part-time employment with local businesses who have part-time, flexible, or project-based needs. The "candidates," as the staffers are called, are primarily well-educated "moms" re-entering the job force. Flexforce serves the Washington, D.C. area.

"Our candidates have professional backgrounds, with 10 or more years of experience and expertise in their fields," said Flexforce co-owner Ellen Grealish. "At the same time, we get to help small businesses find talented, experienced resources that they might not be able to afford otherwise."

Flexforce Professionals principals Ellen Grealish, Gwenn Rosener and Sheila Murphy are walking billboards for their rapidly-growing company. Each has sterling professional credentials and a desire to work around family needs. Rosener, of McLean, holds a Bachelor of Science in industrial engineering and operations research and a Master's of Science in Systems Engineering from Virginia Tech, as well as an MBA from Harvard Business School. Grealish, Herndon, and Murphy, of Vienna, both graduated from Boston College. Grealish graduated with a Bachelor of Arts degree in economics, and Murphy with a Bachelor's in political science.

Grealish worked for more than 12 years in strategic sales, marketing, consulting, and project management, in the U.S. and abroad. She studied economics and history at Oxford University in the U.K.

For more than 12 years, as well, Murphy worked as a domestic and international management consultant, mostly with government or nonprofit agencies. She spent two years in Peru as a social worker for the Center for the Working Child.



Gwenn Rosener, Sheila Murphy and Ellen Grealish are the force behind Flexforce Professionals, LLC.

Rosener focused on strategy development, merger integration and business process reengineering for more than 15 years. She has worked for Ernst & Young's management consulting practice, General Electric, and Sara Lee, and was on the board of the YWCA of San Pedro, Calif., for five years, serving in a myriad of positions.

IN THE UNIVERSE they created out of Flexforce Professionals, Grealish, Murphy and Rosener continue to work in a mentally-challenging environment, growing an innovative business, yet still manage to be home when the children come from school. All three remain active in school and community activities. They were inspired to establish Flexforce because the need for professional part time staffing was not satisfied. The Flexforce Professionals moms observed that many moms voiced the same concerns: I'd like to go back to work part-time and use my skills. They also observed that many smaller businesses would benefit from the expertise of skilled part-time employees.

"There are tools and resources out there to tap into entry-level talent, full-time talent, even independent consultants, but not our target talent pool," said Rosener.

Inspiration for the business model that became Flexforce Professionals arose for Grealish, Murphy and Rosener in similar fashion, the search for a quality part-time job.

Rosener and her family moved back to the D.C. area several years ago after seven years in California. During that time out west, Rosener

took a break from her career to focus on her family. "When we moved back, the kids were both in school full-time and I was ready and excited to jump back into the workforce, but only part-time," said Rosener. "I thought it would be a breeze. I had 15 years of professional experience. But focusing on 'part-time' was the big kink. The infrastructure for searching for professional part-time jobs was virtually non-existent and most of the jobs fielded through on-line and agency searches were entry-level, low paying and low skill. And I wasn't alone. I knew dozens of other women trying to do the same thing - find a job that allowed balance - and running into the same demoralizing barriers.

"At that point, I decided there had to be a better way for professionals who wanted to work part-time to find high-quality part-time work and a way for companies to access this valuable untapped talent pool."

About three years ago, Grealish's third and youngest child was getting ready to go to full-day kindergarten. "In many ways it was a depressing thought," said Grealish. "All of a sudden, after about seven years of raising kids, they were all going to be in school most of the day. What would I do? I can honestly say that during the years of staying home with my kids, I never really missed working outside the house. I felt really blessed to be able to stay home with them, so it kind of hit me hard when I realized that my weekdays would soon be changing." It was at that point that Grealish got the "itch" to find work that was challenging yet allowing her to be

home by a certain time. "I remember thinking, 'Wow, if businesses only knew what a great deal I could add if they let me work part-time. I would be completely dedicated, wouldn't need benefits, and would be willing to reduce my salary if they gave me the flexibility to be home by the time the school bus arrived.'"

Murphy was vacationing in Mexico with her husband four years ago when he "dropped dead" on the beach there. He was only 42 years old and Sheila Murphy was left to raise their three young children on her own.

"In all honesty, there is nothing about me or my nature that is anything close to entrepreneurial," said Murphy. "The idea behind Flexforce came to life about three years ago over a cold beer on the beach with one of my closest friends and, now, business partner Ellen. I think Ellen knew I needed something other than my children to worry about. So now I have a purpose and a mission that I can call my own, the flexibility I need to be able to work, and the support of two amazing partners.

"Flexforce is living proof of the power of your network too. Ellen and I are old Boston College buddies, and Gwenn was in a beach house with my husband back in their single days."

Beth Bednarek, Herndon, first learned of Flexforce last spring when she read an article about the company in the Washington Post. "I was thinking to myself when I read it, 'this is exactly what I need.'" She said she was looking for a part-time accounting job that was a little more challenging than just doing bookkeeping. "I felt like they [Flexforce] really did want to find me a job," said Bednarek, who had been to two other recruiting agencies before she found Flexforce. "I never felt those other places were my advocate," said Bednarek. "Flexforce really did take my skills into account."

In October, Bednarek was placed as an accountant for a local financial business, who, in turn, contracted Bednarek to a client site, an insurance agency. She works approximately 25 hours a week, about six hours a day, in tune with her teenagers' school schedules. Bednarek, who once owned her own business, said she makes the most of her hours there. "It frees the client up to handle the more research-focused elements and I handle the more day-to-day things."

Flexforce's business model concentrates on pairing qualified candidates with businesses such as finance and accounting, sales and marketing, public relations, human resources, legal practices, strategic and business development, project management, web development, research and analysis, technical and proposal writing, employee training, event planning and administration.

THE CANDIDATES of Flexforce Professionals work at affordable rates and require no benefits, said Grealish. They accept this in exchange for the opportunity to work in flexible positions. "Flexibility is part of the compensation package," Rosener said.

Companies don't know how to find these people, said Rosener. "We're the conduit."

David A. Eisele, Sr., President/CEO of Davelle Clothiers of Reston, said that Grealish provided him with exceptional potential employees. "I have used Ellen to fill three different professional positions and the experience has been remarkable. Ellen provided an amazing pool of talent to choose from. I had a tough time making a decision.

"She would screen the employees, send an executive summary of her impressions along with potential employees' resume. She simplified a job that was taking up too much of my business time." Thanks to Grealish and Flexforce, Eisele said he now has three "remarkable" new employees.

"I have always been inspired by the strength and grounding of women," said Rosener. "In so many cases, they are the glue and the safety net in our society putting kids and community first.

"And I love our candidate pool. These are moms who have amazing talent and skills and they've worked hard to prove themselves in the workforce. But they have given up a lot to support their families and communities, and some have struggled with a loss of identity and sometimes, purpose. I'm inspired by the prospect of creating opportunities for them to re-engage, to build their individual identities and transition into roles where they can continue feeling valued and productive as their kids need them less. Where they can have a turn again."

To learn more about Flexforce Professionals, LLC, go to www.flexforceprofessionals.com/ or call 703-854-1820.



Oakton Sweeps at Swim Championships

BY RICH SANDERS
THE CONNECTION

The Northern Region swim and dive championships concluded this past Saturday night at the Oak Marr Recreation Center. Oakton High captured both the boys' and girls' team titles.

On the girls' side, the Cougars, in the 24-team field, finished first with 245 points.

West Potomac (190) and Langley High Schools (181) finished second and third overall. Rounding out the top five teams were Madison High (162) and Lake Braddock Secondary (155.5).

Other local schools competing on the girls' side included South Lakes (11th place), McLean High (15th), and Herndon (19th).

First place individual girls' finishers included: Langley's Abi Speers (50-freestyle);

Jefferson's Emily Saitta (dive); Oakton's Laura Branton (100-butterfly); Oakton's Janet Hu (100-free and 100-back); and Herndon's Jenna Van Camp (100-breast-stroke).

OAKTON WON the boys' team title with 281.5 points, besting runner-up Woodson (250) and third place Madison High (217). Jefferson and West Springfield finished fourth and fifth. In all 24 teams competed

in the region boys' championships.

Other competing schools included 10th place Marshall High (91 points), 11th place Langley (88), 14th place Herndon (69), and 15th place McLean (47).

Individual first place finishers included: Marshall's Cyrus Hashemi (200-free and 100-free); Jefferson's Andrew Seliskar (200-IM and 100-fly); Madison's Evan Owens (50-free); Jefferson's Stephen Seliskar (100-back).

District Indoor Track and Field Championships Completed

South Lakes boys win Liberty ahead of second place Langley; Oakton girls capture Concorde crown.

BY RICH SANDERS
THE CONNECTION

The South Lakes High indoor track and field teams were victorious on both the boys' and girls' sides at the recent Liberty District championships, held over two days at the Prince George's County Sportsplex in Maryland. The first day of postseason competition took place on Friday, Jan. 27. The second and final day of action was held last Thursday, Feb. 2.

Next up are the Northern Region boys' and girls' championships, set to take place next week on Saturday, Feb. 18 at Wakefield High School in Arlington. The Virginia State AAA championships are scheduled for Feb. 24-25 at Bethel High School in Hampton.

At districts, the South Lakes boys, the dominant Northern Region program over the years in both indoor and outdoor (spring season) track, won the meet with 144 points, well ahead of second place Langley (66 points) and third place McLean (65). Rounding out the district field were

Jefferson (63), Marshall (53), Madison (45), and Fairfax (29).

South Lakes individual champions were: Armando Drain (both the 300 and 500 dash events), Jacob Grundahl (1000), Rashaan Jones (both the high jump and long jump events), and Corey Gilmore (triple jump).

The Seahawks' 4x200-meter relay team of Zac Parker, Brian Brinson, Aeron Thai, and Connor Metcalf finished in first place.

Other first place winners at the meet were: Kenneth Bowden of Madison (55 dash); Haight Mackenzie of Marshall, who won both the 1600 and 3200 running events; Ed Cai of Jefferson (55-hurdles); Logan Besougloff of Langley (pole vault); and Scott Lafoon of McLean (shot put).

The Madison 4x400 relay team of William Doran, Austin Kolko, Bowden, and Joaquin Alzola finished in first place.

The Jefferson 4x800 relay of Michael Wattendorf, Kyler Blodgett, Andrew O'Shea, and Jacob Zucker finished first as well.

ON THE GIRLS' SIDE, South Lakes won the Liberty team title with 142 points, fin-

ishing ahead of second place Madison (82.33) and third place Langley (70). The fourth through seventh place team finishers were Jefferson (63.50), McLean (59.83), Marshall (25.33), and Fairfax (22).

South Lakes' Danielle Hale had a spectacular meet, winning four events - the 55 dash, high jump, triple jump, and long jump events. Other first place Seahawks were: Naimah Coleman (300); Aya Abdelhalim (55-hurdles); and Sumiya Yates (shot put).

The South Lakes' 4x200 relay team of Coleman, Kristin Tran, Abdelhalim, and Danielle Hale finished in first place. Also, the Seahawks' 4x400 relay of Coleman, Haley Vaughn, Claire Nieuwsma, and Grace Gillen took first place.

Other individual district girls' champions were: McLean High's Hannah Dimmick (500); Jefferson's Katherine Sheridan (both the 1000 and 3200 events); McLean's Madalyn Harper (1600); and Langley's Meigan McNanus (pole vault).

McLean's 4x800 relay team of Madalyn Harper, Alexa Tabackman, Megan McCormack, and Hannah Dimmick took first place.

THE CONCORDE DISTRICT indoor championships took place over two days (Thursday, Jan. 26 and Thursday, Feb. 2) at Prince George's County Sportsplex.

On the girls' side, the Oakton High team captured the district crown with 149 points, finishing ahead of second place Robinson (119) and third place Herndon (64). Rounding out the six-team field were Chantilly (57), Westfield (42), and Centreville (31).

Individual first place finishers for the champion Oakton team were Allie Klimkiewicz (1600 and 3200 races) and Meghan Jean-baptiste (55-hurdles and high jump).

The Oakton girls' 4x200 relay team of Annachristina Clements, Christianne Butters, Danielle Fitzgerald, and Meghan Jean-baptiste finished in first place.

Herndon High's Carina Peter won three events - the 55 dash, long jump, and triple jump.

ON THE BOYS' SIDE at the Concorde championships, Westfield, which began second day action in third place, came through to capture the team title with 117 points, edging second place Chantilly (113). Oakton (92) garnered third place, while the fourth through sixth finishers were Robinson (55), Herndon (46), and Centreville (42).

Oakton's Michael McNamee won the 1000 race and was second in the 1600. Herndon's Austin Miller was first in pole vault.

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Back On The Juice...



By KENNETH B. LOURIE

The chemotherapy juice, that is. Going forward now, every three weeks until I've completed six infusions, finishing sometime around mid May barring any foreseen – and previously experienced blips (meaning delays): levels, counts, readings, etc., that would compel my oncologist to stop the treatment and await results of a retest. If past is at all prologue, inevitably, one of the required pre-chemotherapy blood and urine labs will indicate that my body needs a little "R and R:" recuperation and regeneration of something or other that the chemotherapy destroyed on its way to attacking and hopefully shrinking the tumors. As a result, I will be off schedule to allow my body to settle back to reasonably abnormal (given the severity of the treatment, "normal" is hardly in play anymore). However, it's a process – of fits and starts – one with which I'm familiar so I'm not too concerned about it. Otherwise, I'll be reclining in a Barcalounger at The Infusion Center watching the I.V. drip its cancer-fighting poison into my arm.

However, since this six-time infusion is a repeat performance, I wonder if "reasonably normal" is somehow more problematic the second time around. My oncologist agreed with our decision to re-start because he said/recommended it by saying: "Since it worked so well the first time, we'll probably just do the same thing." "Worked so well" means the tumors shrank and my body tolerated the treatment (not a guarantee, however; one time, I witnessed another chemotherapy patient have a seizure because his body couldn't handle the drug with which he was being infused so they had to stop his treatment). So I'm not taking anything for granted. Nor am I particularly eager or excited. I am however, cautiously optimistic that once again I can survive the ordeal, and make no mistake about it, chemotherapy can be an ordeal.

Certainly knowing what to expect is a big help. Originally, the anxiety of all the treatments, all the appointments, all the pills and all the potential side effects; not to mention the emotional disruptions an out-of-the-blue terminal diagnosis can cause, created a sense of foreboding and negativity that took a little (make that a lot) of time and effort to navigate. But we did, and as we prepare to climb this emotional and physical (not literal) mountain once again, the experience we gained from the initial treatment three years ago has led to significantly less stress for this round (round two).

As with round one, there are no guarantees. I will be "CT-Scanned" in mid February – after two infusions, to assess the effect of the first two chemotherapy treatments. No doubt, waiting for those results will be stressful. However, I'm not sure if indications after only two infusions are significant – good or bad, it's simply prudent at that juncture. Still, we will be hanging on the oncologist's every word, every inflection on every syllable, when he tells us the results – trying to interpret and discern the true meaning of his doctor-speak. Having endured this process many times over the past three years certainly will help us now. However, given the seriousness and life-changing (you'll note I didn't say "life-ending") nature of the conversation, there's only so much one can do to prepare. It's really more about bracing yourself. It's a difficult and emotional moment, almost akin to an out-of-body experience, if there is such a thing.

And after three years of being treated for, and living with, a terminal diagnosis (stage IV lung cancer; there is no stage V), I sort of recognize the various crossroads when I approach them. All you can do is whatever you need to do to get through it. At that moment, there are no rules; it's just instinct and self-preservation. Be true to yourself. It's your life (or death, to be honest); go live it, in health and especially in sickness.

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

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