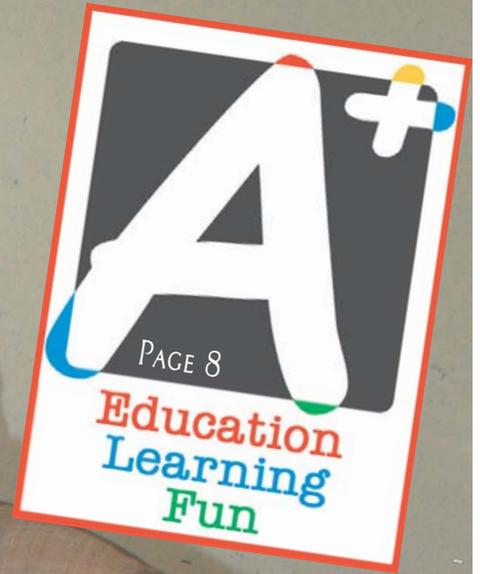


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First place Patriot's Pen winner Paarth Jain and U.S. Rep. Gerry Connolly (D-11) chat after the Veterans of Foreign Wars Post 7327 Awards Ceremony on Sunday, Feb. 12 at JW & Friends in Springfield.

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Fairfax County Considers Meals Tax Referendum

Revenue would be earmarked for transportation projects.

BY VICTORIA ROSS

THE CONNECTION

Last week, it looked as if the Virginia General Assembly might give Fairfax County a new funding tool: the right to generate new revenue through user fees, such as tax on restaurant meals, which would drive down the County's reliance on property taxes.

"We had heard rumblings that the state might give us the authority to do that," said Supervisor Jeff McKay (D-Lee), chairman of the board's transportation committee. "That's how we started talking about a meals tax that would generate revenue for transportation upgrades."

But when McKay and several other supervisors went to Richmond last Thursday to review the bills coming out of the Virginia General Assembly, they spotted the stick that came with that carrot.

"Yes, they were saying, 'we'll give you this authority, but you also have to take responsibility for maintaining your roads,'" McKay said. "The other shoe dropping was basically the sound of devolution... Essentially, the state would be handing us a badly broken road system without the funds to even bring it up to a barely acceptable level... That's what really infuriated me."

Virginia is one of three states in the country where the state, rather than local counties and municipalities, have the responsibility to maintain substantially all public roads. McKay said the pending legislation would transfer that maintenance responsibility to the County (a process known as devolution), but not return to the County any of the state tax revenues that currently pay for that maintenance. Officials in Fairfax County, as well as other Northern Virginia counties, are adamantly against devolution.

"It's time for Fairfax County to stop being the state's ATM machine," McKay added. "The state continues every year to suck more money from Northern Virginia... We're not going to let the state off the hook for its responsibility to maintain our roads."

Rather than relying upon the Commonwealth to grant the County additional taxing authority to address anticipated budget shortfalls, supervisors are now considering asking voters to approve a meals tax through a referendum. Such a referendum would not require additional authority from the General Assembly.

A VOTER REFERENDUM on a meals tax is an idea that gained bipartisan support during a two-day retreat for the board held last Monday and Tuesday, Feb 6-7, at the Lorton Workhouse Arts Center.

Although similar referendums have failed in the



Chairman Sharon Bulova (D-at-large) reviews goals during the Board of Supervisors retreat, held Feb. 6-7 at the Lorton Workhouse Arts Center.

past, supervisors say voters might approve the tax if they were assured the revenue would go directly to a specific list of transportation improvements, such as widening roads and building interchanges to reduce gridlock.

Supervisor John Cook (R-Braddock) said a 4 percent tax on restaurant meals - something that Vienna, the City of Fairfax and Alexandria already do - could generate up to \$80 million a year over the next decade. He said there is also a potential \$150 million on the table from a list of transportation-related fees the board discussed in 2007.

"We had a pretty robust discussion during the retreat of what it would take to meet our transportation needs," Cook said. Cook said the sobering financial picture presented by County Executive Tony Griffin revealed a \$300 - \$400 million annual gap "between what we need in Fairfax and what we would get under current law and budgets."

"If voters approved a meals tax referendum, we could start to close that gap. It's worth having a serious discussion about this," Cook said. But Cook stressed he has not come down one way or the other on the meals tax referendum.

"We have to wait and see what ends up passing in Richmond. We need to step back and let the state have its session," Cook said. "There are all sorts of things flying around - an index tax on gas, whether or not there's devolution - and we need to have a hand on the spoon stirring the pot. I have not endorsed (a meals tax referendum) or rejected it."

CHAIRMAN SHARON BULOVA (D-at-large) said a meals tax could be a source of funding for road maintenance, education or tax diversification.

But Bulova also noted the precarious success rate of similar referendums in the past, when voters rejected tax increases in 1992 and 2002.

"A lot has changed since those referendums failed," Bulova said. "In my heart of hearts, I think we should have a meals tax because everyone around us has it. It levels the playing field."

Senator Chap Petersen (D-34) said even though Vienna and the City of Fairfax have 4 percent meal

SEE MEALS TAX, PAGE 11



Samantha Bryant (middle) posed with the prom dress she'd created, along with Brian Beitler and Lis Rocky of David's Bridal.

Fairfax Student Wins Prom Dress Contest

Dream come true for Samantha Bryant.

BY JENNIFER FEDOR
THE CONNECTION

For 17-year-old Samantha Bryant, Feb. 3 should have been like any other school day. It was noon, when she normally left W.T. Woodson High School and drove to Fairfax Academy where she studies fashion design.

However, her day took an unexpected turn. Last fall, Samantha had submitted an illustration of her dream prom dress in the "Sketch Your Prom Dress Contest," co-sponsored by David's Bridal and Seventeen Magazine. As she entered the school cafeteria, told she was needed there for a meeting related to the senior party, she was floored to see a crowd waiting for her, including her parents, Principal Jeff Yost, classmates, and local camera crews.

David's Bridal Executive Vice President Brian Beitler and Production Development Associate Lis Rockey also eagerly anticipated her arrival, as they stood next to a dress form and an easel, both veiled in white fabric. They announced that Samantha was not only one of three finalists but had won the grand prize. Her sketch, realized in an actual dress, was revealed beneath the white cloth, as well as a blow-up of her creation in a Seventeen Magazine fashion spread.

Samantha was shaking. "I couldn't really think of anything else except 'Oh, my gosh, this is really happening.' It really did feel like a dream come true."

As her mother and father looked on, Samantha examined the dress she had sketched several months ago, inspired by

Vincent Van Gogh's painting "Starry Night."

"I was so happy with it. It was so pretty and exactly the color I was thinking of," she notes. "I've always gravitated towards blues and this was midnight blue. They captured it perfectly, the way it sparkled. It looked so good."

It was a magical moment for a girl described as quiet, humble, and respectful by her principal. Her father, who believed they were announcing that Samantha had made it into the finals, was so awestruck when he realized she'd won he forgot to take pictures with the camera he'd brought.

Beitler was thrilled to witness Samantha's reaction as well as that of her peers. "We had the chance to share Samantha's success in designing a gown that both Seventeen editors as well as David's Bridal designers and merchants thought was not only well-designed but would be successful in the marketplace," he comments. "To be able to do that in front of her classmates was a really unique experience."

OVER two thousand young women and men across the country submitted sketches to the contest in September and October. "It was a very difficult decision," Rockey recalls. "The David's Bridal team spent hours reviewing the thousands of entries."

Samantha's winning design features an A-line silhouette which is flattering for most body types, as well as elements such as sparkle tulle and beading embellishment. The tieback neckline can be worn tied at the neck or

SEE DRESS, PAGE 7



PHOTOS BY AMNA REHMATULLA/THE CONNECTION

From left: Commander Gary Kelch of VFW Post 7327, third place Patriot's Pen winner Nithin Bagal, first place Patriot's Pen winner Paarth Jain, U.S. Rep. Gerry Connolly, second place Voice of Democracy winner Gwendolyn Cardiff, first place Voice of Democracy winner Hanan Awel, teacher of the year Sheila Bruen, Ladies Auxiliary President Linda Bond, and third place Voice of Democracy winner Megan Marriott.



U.S. Rep. Gerry Connolly (D-11) presented Post Commander Gary Kelch and President Linda Bond of the Ladies Auxiliary with a framed Congressional Record certificate at the VFW Post 7327 Awards Ceremony on Sunday, Feb. 12.

Veterans Honor Area Residents

Local students, teacher, public safety officials, businesses recognized.

BY AMNA REHMATULLA
THE CONNECTION

Paarth Jain, a sixth grader at Keene Mill Elementary, woke up early on Sunday to catch his 4 a.m. flight with his family from Miami to arrive at home in Springfield for a very special event he could not miss: the Springfield Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) Post 7327 and the Ladies Auxiliary awards ceremony honoring local students, a teacher, public safety officials and businesses at JW & Friends Restaurant in Springfield on Sunday, Feb. 12.

"The Veterans of Foreign Wars believe strongly in good citizenship and fostering patriotism in the leaders of our future," Post Commander Gary Kelch said. This is done through their annual patriotic programs: the Patriot's Pen Essay Writing Contest and the Voice of Democracy Speech Competition. "We encourage youthful minds, grades 6-8, to examine our nation's history through their own experiences and modern society through our Patriot's Pen Essay Writing Contest," Kelch said. Each year for Patriot's Pen, VFW announces a theme. This year's theme was, "Why am I proud of my country?" Each student participating was required to describe that topic in 350 words or less. Post 7327 received 72 written entries. Three community members, not VFW members, judged the entries.

THIS YEAR'S FIRST PLACE WINNER was Paarth Jain, a sixth grader from Keene

Mill Elementary in Springfield. He received a plaque and a \$150 check each from Post 7327 and Ladies Auxiliary. Jain read his winning essay titled, "America, the Land of All" out loud:

"All of us are USA together. Not just because we live there. We are part of it because of the experience. We are joined by the freedom. We are similar because of our rights. We are connected by the government. And although we may speak different tongues and have different faces, we will always be the soul of America."

The audience cheered and applauded as Jain ended his essay.

U.S. Rep. Gerry Connolly (D-11) who was also present at the event said, "You got it. You got what America is."

Connolly presented each awardee with a copy of a Congressional Record certificate. "Not everything we do in Congress passes unanimously, but I'm very proud of the fact that I put in the Congressional Record a certificate honoring VFW Post 7327 but also all of the honorees today, and there was no objection," he said.

The first place winner in both categories [Patriot's Pen and Voice of Democracy] is forwarded to district-wide competition. District 10 for the Veterans of Foreign Wars in Virginia, runs from Dale City to Leesburg. This year's Patriot Pen winner from Post 7327, Jain, has also placed second in the district and next week will be honored at the VFW district meeting. Winners from the district advance on to state-wide competition between the 13 districts in Virginia. And winners of the state of Virginia advance on to nationals where they compete among winners from the 50 states, the overseas territories, and posts that are in foreign countries.

When asked how he felt about winning first place, Jain responded, "I feel ok. My

teacher made me do the essay." "I feel excited," his mother, Komal Jain, said.

Second and third place winners of the Patriot's Pen contest were Brielle Perry and Nithin Bagal, they both attend Keene Mill Elementary as well.

THE VOICE OF DEMOCRACY competition is open to students in grades 9-12. The theme for this year's program was, "Is there pride in serving in our military?"

Entries for Voice of Democracy must be recorded, verbal speech, and not to exceed five minutes and be submitted on a tape or CD. Post 7327 received seven entries for this year's competition.

This year's first place winner was Hanan Awel, a 12th grader from Lee High School in Springfield. Awel received a plaque and a check of \$150 each from Post 7327 and Ladies Auxiliary. She read her winning speech to the audience.

Second place winner was Gwendolyn Cardiff and third place winner was Megan Marriott, both home schooled students from Alexandria.

Each year the VFW seeks to recognize an elementary, junior high, and high school teacher for their "outstanding commitment for teaching Americanism and patriotism to their students and to promote America's history, traditions, and institutions effectively throughout the year."

This year, the teacher of the year award was presented to Sheila Bruen, a physical education teacher at Angelus Academy in Springfield. She was nominated for the award by a parent, Mary Hansen. Bruen received a specially designed crystal apple award, a certificate, and two checks each in the amount of \$200.

She felt "honored and blessed" to win teacher of the year. Her husband, Tom Bruen, thought the occasion was wonder-

ful and that it was "nice to be recognized."

PUBLIC SAFETY AWARDS included: firefighter, police officer and emergency medical technician of the year. All three awardees received a plaque and a \$200 check each from Post 7327 and Ladies Auxiliary.

Firefighter of the year was Tom Baldwin who is from the Springfield Volunteer Fire Department. He was nominated for this award by Fire Chief Blake Pain.

Baldwin has worked as a firefighter for the past four years. He describes being on the job as "excitement of not knowing what's going to come. It's like a mystery box," Baldwin said.

His parents who were also present at the ceremony felt very proud and honored. "I wish I could have done something like this myself," his father, Vince Baldwin said.

The Emergency Medical Technician (EMT) of the year was Sgt. Brian Witt who is also from the Springfield Volunteer Fire Department and was also nominated for this award by Pain.

"I'm especially proud of Tom and Brian because I'm also an administrative volunteer for the Springfield Fire Department," President of the Ladies Auxiliary, Linda Bond said.

The police officer of the year was Scott MacCaskill from the Franconia District Police Station.

Local businesses and individuals were also honored with certificates for their contributions to VFW Post 7327's programs. These included: Karen Stone of JW & Friends Restaurant and Driver's Lounge; Ron Bullock of Springfield Trophies; John O'Leary of Benjamin's Restaurant; Scott Brown of Cardinal Plaza Shell; Fischer Hardware; and the Northern Virginia Surgery Center and Staff.

OBITUARY



Barbara Parkinson

Barbara Parkinson, 67, Longtime Connection Employee, Dies

Barbara Jean Parkinson, 67, of Sterling, Va., died Feb. 7, 2012 at her residence. Born on Sept. 17, 1944 in New York she was the daughter of the late Charles and Elizabeth Lundy. Ms. Parkinson was a member of Cornerstone Chapel in Leesburg, Va.

Barbara attended Michigan State University where she received her Bachelor's Degree in Music. During her college years she was a member of the singing group known as The Jills. Being a Music major in college she had a talent and love for music. She also played the piano and enjoyed singing.

She worked for Connection Newspapers for many years.

Barbara enjoyed and loved spending time with her grandchildren and doing crafts with them.

Barbara was passionate about her faith and enjoyed sharing it with others.

She is survived by her son Mark Parkinson and his wife Rachel, of Purcellville, Va.; daughter Jennifer Daughtry and her husband Jay of Sterling, Va.; brother Wayne Lundy of Loveland, Ohio; and five grandchildren.

A graveside service was held on Friday, Feb. 10, 2012 at Ebenezer Cemetery, in Round Hill, Va. with Pastor Mike Emerson officiating.

Memorial contributions can be sent to the Cornerstone Chapel at www.cornerstonechapel.net.

Please visit www.hallfh.com to express online condolences to the family.

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OPINION

Saving the Bay: A Good Investment

Cleaning up the water that runs into the Chesapeake Bay will help create jobs and economic activity in Virginia.

A plan to raise \$300 million in bonds to upgrade wastewater treatment plants around the commonwealth stalled in a House of Delegates committee last week, a setback in meeting EPA requirements to clean up the water that leads to the Bay. Money is tight, lawmakers say, although an identical plan cleared the Senate.

Let's be clear that part of what we're talking about by delay is continuing to allow raw sewage to run into Virginia's waterways every time it rains.

This is like deciding to let the toilets in the house overflow rather than spend money on the plumber. Not only is it unhealthy and unpleasant, it also makes Virginia less attractive for tourists and eco-tourists.

Upgrading the sewage treatment plants will

generate jobs, but also upgrade the quality of the water Virginians depend on for drinking, household and business use and recreation.

More than 30 years of "saving" the Chesapeake Bay has accomplished about half of what needs to be done. The bay is primary attraction for tourists in Virginia, and is the basis for many jobs. The investment in the health of the bay is a jobs bill for Virginia.

Aside from upgrading the treatment plants, states in the Chesapeake Bay watershed will need to find ways slow the pace of stormwater runoff, do better with erosion control, change some agricultural practices to keep "fertilizer" from rushing into waterways every time it rains, and more. Efforts made upstream by other states will also benefit Virginia's water-

ways. There are new green and more cost effective ways to go about many of these tasks.

The mission will also need the continued involvement of individuals and organizations who are dedicated to the Chesapeake Bay.

It's an investment that will pay dividends for Virginia.

Pet Connection

Send us photos of your pets this week for inclusion in next week's Pet Connection. Our favorite pictures include both pets and humans. Please identify everyone in the photo, give a brief description of your pet, include address and phone number, and email to: north@connectionnewspapers.com

Community Engagement, Transportation Dominate Agenda

Chairman reflects on Board of Supervisors retreat.

BY SHARON BULOVA
CHAIRMAN, FAIRFAX COUNTY
BOARD OF SUPERVISORS



ing our growing minority and immigrant community, as well as our younger generations, was identified as a challenge and will be the subject for future Board discussion.

On Monday and Tuesday, Feb. 6-7, Board of Supervisors engaged in a two day Strategic Planning Retreat. The retreat, held at the Lorton Arts Workhouse Center, was an opportunity for board members to engage in some informal, in-depth discussion of our respective district issues, as well as countywide opportunities and challenges. Our location, the site of the former Lorton Prison, served as an impressive example of revitalization and historic re-use in the South County area of Fairfax County. The old prison buildings, built at the beginning of the 20th century, are now home to artists' studios and performance arenas. If you haven't visited, I hope you will do so. During a tour of the studios at lunchtime, I chatted with several of the artists and vowed to return to purchase some original artwork.

The importance of Community Engagement was woven throughout all topics during our two days. The board recognized that we make the best decisions when we have the community at the table with us. Some examples of especially successful community engagement have been our Community Dialogues on the Budget, Neighborhood College sessions, the Parks Listening Tours, and our use of new social media using online chats and surveys. Engag-

❖ Day One of our Retreat included a presentation by Fairfax County's Financial Advisor, Public Financial Management, (PFM Group) on how the Rating Agencies view us. We were described as having "Gilt Edged" ratings, which we're very proud of and which saves us millions of dollars when we sell bonds to pay for County and School facilities. Board members were complimented on our disciplined fiscal stewardship and adherence to the 10 Principals of Financial Management that guide budget decisions. The presentation sparked discussion about how large or small the county's liquid reserves need to be. Rating agencies would like them to be larger. Budget watchdogs question whether we have too much "cushion" that should instead be used to reduce the tax rate, or fund more services. More discussion of adequate vs. inadequate reserves will be subject to future discussion.

❖ Transportation played a major role on our agenda during both days. Each Board member spoke to the need to identify creative, multimodal solutions to traffic

congestion within their districts and throughout Fairfax County. With less and less funding coming from the federal government and the state, local governments are pressured to assume more responsibility for transportation - for capital, operation and maintenance. A great deal of discussion took place both days about a new Board of Supervisors Four-Year Transportation Plan that will be developed during upcoming Board Transportation Committee meetings, as well as potential sources of new revenue to support it.

Our Board continues to be concerned about plans at the state level to "devolve" the maintenance of neighborhood and secondary streets to the localities. Without sufficient state investment, our streets have deteriorated to an alarming degree. Assuming this responsibility without sufficient funding will result in a significant cost to local taxpayers.

❖ The topic of Transportation was coupled with a presentation on our Financial Outlook as we undergo a sluggish recovery from the Great Recession and as we face additional major Capital and Operational Challenges to support our growing and changing community. Bottom line, we have more needs than anticipated revenue. Both opportunity and challenges will result from future economic development and from the redevelopment of older parts of Fairfax County. The presentation was extremely valuable in setting the stage for this Board's challenges as we begin this four year term.

❖ The second day of our retreat ended with a discussion of planning and development - The Next

Planning Horizon. When Fairfax County experienced its earlier periods of growth we were a community of farms and villages. The early planning process involved Annual Plan Reviews, later changed to Area Plan Reviews. Early planning called for everything (residential, retail, commercial) to be separated from each other. The pattern requires us to get into our car in order to get almost anywhere. Newer development strategies call for more mixed use, "walkable" communities and more connections of pedestrian, bike and transit modes of transportation.

As Fairfax County matures, our growth and development will involve more Redevelopment and Revitalization of our older commercial and industrial area. Retreat discussion on this topic dealt with how we can adopt better tools for this pattern of development, and how best we can engage our community in the process. The development of a Next Planning Horizon process will take place during the next months at the Board's Revitalization Committee.

❖ Education continues to be our number one priority. Throughout the retreat Board members expressed that they are looking forward to meeting with members of the School Board at a full day retreat on Saturday, Feb. 25. A number of areas for collaboration (human services, transportation, sharing capital facilities) were suggested for discussion at that venue. As we continue to struggle with fiscal challenges and changes, it is critical that we forge an effective working relationship with our partners on the School side of the aisle.

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Standing on the 'Side of Love'

People of faith gather to support marriage equality in Fairfax.

BY VICTORIA ROSS
THE CONNECTION

Holding red heart balloons and handing out candles and flowers, nearly 200 guests gathered in the shadow of the historic Fairfax County Courthouse to celebrate the union of a one couple on Valentine's Day.

The Rev. Karen Rasmussen and Barb Brehm - longtime Fairfax residents who are both retired Navy veterans and have been partners for 26 years - were at the courthouse to apply for a marriage license.

"I remembered the ring," Rasmussen said, holding it up to the crowd who laughed and applauded.

At 2 p.m., the couple entered the courthouse, where they were taken to a room by Clerk of Courts John Frey, and denied a marriage license. Under Virginia law, marriage between persons of the same sex is prohibited. "Therefore, I hereby deny your request for a marriage license," wrote John Frey, Clerk of Courts.

The scene played out the way the participants knew it would. But the rejection didn't dampen the mood of the crowd.

"Of course we are disappointed," Rasmussen said, holding Brehm's hand.

"But the clerk was very gracious. He didn't have a form that said 'bride' and 'bride.' Maybe next time it will be yes. We will invite you all back when we get a yes," she said, as the crowd cheered.

MORE CELEBRATION THAN PROTEST, the event was organized by People of Faith for Equality in Virginia (POFEV) - a statewide interfaith organization of clergy and laypersons committed to achieving full equality for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender (LGBT) Virginians - together with the Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Fairfax (UUCF).

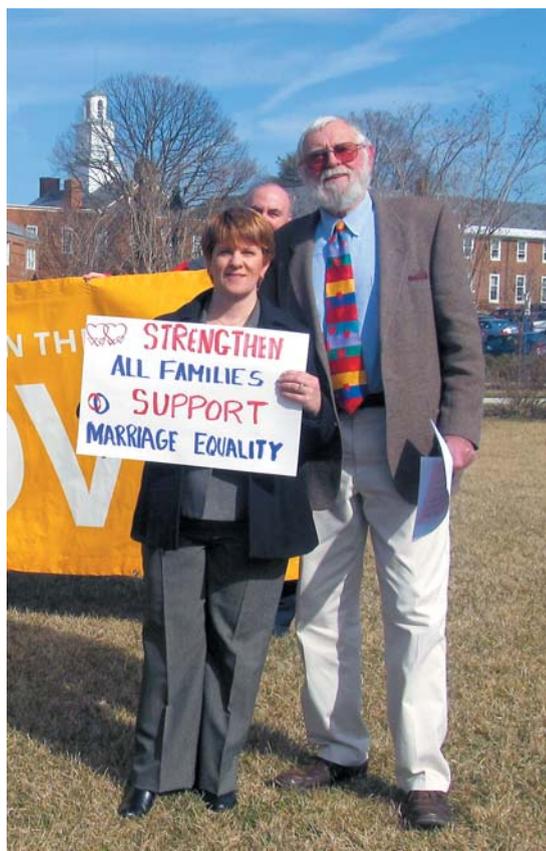
Participants sang civil-rights era songs, listened to several impassioned speeches by local and national clergy, and held a candlelight vigil to protest discrimination of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender families. To the surprise of several participants, there were no counter-demonstrations or confrontations.

"I think this is a matter of visibility and awareness. It's important that people know a lot of ordinary people right here in Fairfax County support marriage equality," said Catherine Read, who sits on the board of Our Daily Bread, a Fairfax nonprofit that provides food and other essential services to those in need.

"We are here to stand in support of loving lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender couples who cannot legally obtain a marriage license in the Commonwealth of Virginia," said the Rev. Peter Morales, president of the Unitarian Universalist Association (UUA).

Attending the event from his home in Massachusetts, Morales said the Bay state - the first U.S. state to issue marriage licenses to same-sex couples beginning in 2004 - is one of six states that allow homosexuals to marry, in addition to the District of Columbia.

"Look around here. The turn-out is fabulous,"



Catherine Read of Fairfax stands with the Rev. Don Prange in support of marriage equality at an event organized by several faith groups, including the Unitarian Universalist Church of Fairfax.

Morales said. "We are reclaiming religious faith from the forces of marginalism and ignorance. I am happy to add my voice to this major interfaith battle," he said, telling the crowd that marriage in his home state is thriving, and has one of the lowest divorce rates. "We will prevail. We need to continue this fight together."

According to Morales, Unitarian Universalists have a long and rich history of social justice work. In 2008, the UUA launched the "Standing on the Side of Love" campaign to elevate compassionate religious voices to influence public attitudes and public policy.

"For Unitarian Universalists, support for marriage equality is an expression of our core religious values," Morales said. "We affirm the inherent worth and dignity of all people. We believe our laws should treat all people equally and with compassion. We are determined to stand on the side of love, and to stand for equal treatment of our LGBT brothers and sisters."

The Rev. Scott Sammler-Michael, senior minister of the Accotink Unitarian Universalist Church in Burke, who led the crowd in singing several spiritual songs, said he has always been an advocate for marriage equality. "This is the civil rights issue of our time. Denying people who love each other the right to get married has never made any sense to me," he said.

THE CLERGY offered a blessing to all LGBT couples present. "It is my great hope that we are moving toward a kinder and more just society in which all citizens enjoy equality under the law," said Mary Katherine Morn, parish minister at UUCF.

"As a spiritual leader, I am especially concerned about protecting and supporting all those who seek to create loving families, the foundation of our great country," Morn said.

Cathy Downs of Springfield said she has always had friends who were same-sex couples, and it was painful to watch them struggle with simple rights, such as hospital visitation. "I hope they walk in and get that marriage license."

A Winning Dress

FROM PAGE 3

behind, offering versatility to the young woman who wears it.

Rockey, who serves as a liaison between the design team and merchandising team at David's Bridal, notes that Samantha's dress was both trend-conscious and appealing to a variety of wearers. "Part of my role as a judge was to determine which of the sketches submitted could really be executed by our David's Bridal design team," she comments.

Beitler agrees. "All of [Samantha's] elements were trend-right. Then you accompany that by a style we felt would be worn easily by a range of customers, regardless of their size."

In addition to a sketch of her perfect prom dress, Samantha and other contestants were required to submit a 100-word description of their vision and inspiration. Judged by a panel of fashion editors from Seventeen Magazine and design experts from David's Bridal, finalists' sketches were also posted on Facebook for teen fans to critique.

SAMANTHA has been passionate about fashion illustration since she was 11 and was encouraged by her family to enter. Web Bryant, her dad and an artist for USA Today, remembers how exciting it was to see her sketch realized into a finished product in the school cafeteria. "It was amazing because it was so much of a finish from being there the night she did the illustration and helping her send it off and scanning it and filing out the paperwork," he observes, "To actually see it there made you pause."

Bryant recalls that Samantha showed artistic talent early on, particularly with watercolors, pencils, and graphite. She continues to enjoy trips to places like the National Museum with friends to track down beloved pieces of artwork.

"I definitely pull inspiration in almost everything I design. I find it so much easier when you have something visual to pull from than just pulling it out of thin air in your head," describes Samantha. She had always loved Van Gogh's "Starry Night" and felt it epitomizes the romance and fairytale quality of prom night.

Samantha's prom dress went on sale on David's Bridal's website on Feb. 7. It will be sold in stores, including the Springfield location, starting on Feb. 15. "It's just so cool to think that

now real girls all over the world can see it and buy it," she expresses. "Maybe girls that don't even know me or don't even realize it was from a contest will fall in love with it anyway which is just so fascinating." The Seventeen Magazine fashion spread featuring her dress appears this month.

AS IF HAVING her dress developed, manufactured, and sold by David's Bridal weren't exciting enough, Samantha has also won a \$25,000 scholarship, \$5,000 for her school, and a trip to New York City to visit David's Bridal design studio.

Samantha can't wait to visit what many consider one of the fashion capitals of the world. "I really love networking and getting to know people in the industry and seeing how everything works. Any insight into that world is so exciting to me," she adds. She'll be accompanied by two other contestants from the top three.

"It's a very wonderful thing that's happened to a very wonderful young lady," Principal Jeff Yost summarizes. He plans to collaborate with Samantha to decide how to use the money she won for Woodson. He believes that programs like Fairfax Academy, where Samantha studies fashion design, expose young adults to possible career paths and prepare them for higher education.

Samantha is grateful for her Fashion 1 and Fashion 2 teachers, Barbara Galindo and Jin-A Chang, who helped her develop more commercial illustrations and prepared her for a career as a designer. She also hones her skills by taking advanced sewing classes in the evenings. She would love to major in fashion design at her top choice, the Fashion Institute of Technology in Manhattan.

SAMANTHA'S ADVICE to other budding fashion designers or anyone working towards their dream? "Just to simply work at it, every single day," she encourages. "When I first started illustrating I was awful, but if you truly love it and you are truly passionate about it, it will grow and you'll get better."

Samantha looks forward to wearing her design at her prom this year. "I'm excited to try it on. Even if it doesn't look perfect on me, I'll wear it anyway." One of Yost's assistant principals has a daughter who wants to buy the dress as well.

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Sun 1-4	Saul Juarez Weichert .. 703-597-3807
7908 Edinburgh Dr.	\$499,995
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8617 Beech Hollow Ln.	\$378,000
Sun 1-4	Susan Gurry Weichert .. 703-609-6393

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Education • Learning • Fun

Coming to America

Robinson Middle students simulate Ellis Island immigration.

BY BONNIE HOBBS
THE CONNECTION

It's one thing to read about history in a textbook, but another thing entirely to experience it "firsthand." And 550 seventh-graders at Robinson Middle School did that recently, simulating what immigrants went through at Ellis Island at the turn of the 20th century.

Students were given character identities – their names, ages, genders, countries of origin, education, whether they had children or disabilities, and economic status – most were poor. Then they dressed in costume and – in a room transformed into Ellis Island – they went through six stations, answering questions and taking tests before they could enter the U.S.

The two-day event is part of the history SOLs. "It's also a really important topic in an era of modern immigration," explained U.S. History teacher Susan Reade, middle-school Social Studies Department chair. "Our message to the students is that we're all immigrants, with a history and legacy of immigration. Whether it was last week or on the Mayflower, we all came from somewhere else."

The event was based on class discussions and library research. At the outset, with a replica of the Statue of Liberty in the background, some students sang and danced to Neil Diamond's rousing song, "America." Then, to give the students an understanding of citizenship and a framework for the exercise, Reade told them why people left their home countries and discussed their travel conditions.

"They got pushed out of their home countries," said Reade, the middle-school Social Studies Department chair. "Things were bad enough for them to leave everything they knew to start over in a new country. The Jews, in particular, fled religious persecution; others left because of government oppression, to avoid required military service, or because of starvation – the potato famine in Ireland. They also came for opportunities to get an education, a better job and land, and to escape poverty."



From left, three "immigrants" - Colleen Mulligan (Germany), Brennen McCarthy (Greece) and Emily Weidner (Ukraine) - with their "babies" and luggage.

Millions of people left their homes and relatives. "They were the very best workers – highly motivated and energetic people willing to take risks," said Reade. "This is our legacy; these are our relatives, and their strength is what built the United States."

THE FIRST WAVE of immigrants came from Northern and Western Europe. "Most spoke English and were Protestant so they blended in easily," said Reade. "Industrialization begins and the Homestead Act is created. Ten million people immigrated before 1890."

The second wave of 15 million people came between 1880 and 1910. "Only assembly-line jobs were available and there was no more free land," said Reade. "U.S. workers thought the immigrants would take away their jobs, so they met them with discrimination and anger."

When Ellis Island opened in 1892 to welcome and process immigrants, immigration increased. But it declined sharply in 1914, at the start of WWI, as the U.S. wanted to keep out the immigrants and their problems.

To make the immigration experience more realistic for Robinson students, they were loaded down with luggage and clothing as they entered "Ellis Island." As they boarded ships to America, people carried all their clothes and possessions with them, Reade said.

"The richest people traveled in style; poor people traveled in steerage to save their money to live in



Bjorn Gustafsson as Russian immigrant Dimitri Kowalski, filling out paperwork at Ellis Island.



Eusebus Hershey (far left) and other "immigrants" swear the loyalty oath to the United States.

the new country," she explained. "They had no windows or fresh air and little food. People got seasick, and there was one toilet for 500 people for the two-week journey."

Rich people went straight to New York; the rest went through Ellis Island. Still, said Reade, as they approached the U.S., "they were greeted by Lady Liberty, representing a welcome to the immigrants who wanted freedom and were willing to work hard for a better life. They came for their dreams."

DURING ROBINSON'S SIMULATION, students went through a legal inspection, giving their personal information. During the medical exam, they disclosed any disabilities they had, read an eye chart and were checked for lice. At the mental-health station, their hand/eye coordination was tested. At the vocations area, their docu-



Auria Pritchard portrays a 52-year-old woman from Greece as Robinson Middle students simulate Ellis Island immigration.

Carla Abril portrayed a 37-year-old Polish Jew, Marta Levitsky, who left Poland so she could have religious freedom. She brought her 4-month-old baby girl, Melissa, with her.

Carla said it was a bit confusing, walking around the processing area at Ellis Island. It was also tough being an immigrant, she said, because "People would discriminate against you. They'd yell at you and try to destroy your things." She said the Ellis Island simulation was a good idea to learn about immigration because "Instead of just reading about it, you can see what the immigrants were doing and how they felt about it."

Teacher Catherine Rodriguez called it "An amazing, educational opportunity for the students to experience Ellis Island and immigration. Being able to learn this in a more firsthand format brings the process to life for them – and they also get to dress up and do activities. We gave them guidelines about their characters and they created their own costumes."

Playing a 33-year-old candymaker from Germany was Eusebus Hershey. "It's very cool because you get to see how immigrants got here back then," he said. "I was surprised that they asked me questions about where my 'children' and 'wife' were." Eusebus said his character was jailed three times in Germany for domestic problems, but hoped to start a Catholic church in America.

Natasha Duarte portrayed Greek immigrant Athena Stavropoulos,

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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.

FRIDAY/FEB. 17

Every Avenue. 5 p.m. Jaxx Nightclub, 6355 Rolling Road, Springfield. \$15-\$17. www.jaxxroxx.com.

Mitten Weather. 11 a.m. Burke Centre Library, 5935 Freds Oak Road, Burke. Stories and activities about mittens. Age 3-5 with adult. 703-249-1520.

Tween Book Discussion. 4 p.m. Burke Centre Library, 5935 Freds Oak Road, Burke. Book Discussion. Title pending. Age 8-14. 703-249-1520.

SATURDAY/FEB. 18

Pressed-Leaf Butterfly Workshop. 9:30 a.m. Green Spring Gardens, 4603 Green Spring Road, Alexandria. Code 290 182 3301. \$25. Nancy Olney, staff horticulturalist shows you how to create works of art using recently pressed leaves. Take your 'butterfly' home in a matted frame. Register at www.greenspring.org or 703-642-5173.

Consider Conifers. 10:30 a.m. Green Spring Gardens, 4603 Green Spring Road, Alexandria. Code 290 182 4101. \$12. Identify and describe some of Green Spring's evergreen trees. Be inspired to consider conifers to brighten and define your winter landscape. Then step into the warmth of the Historic House for refreshments. Register at www.greenspring.org or 703-642-5173.

VITA Tax Assistance. 10 a.m. Kingstowne Library, 6500 Landsdowne Centre, Alexandria. IRS-certified volunteers help taxpayers who earned up to \$50K. Adults. 703-339-4610.

VITA Tax Assistance. 10 a.m. Richard Byrd Library, 7250 Commerce St., Springfield. Tax help. IRS-certified

volunteers help taxpayers who earned up to \$50K. Adults. 703-451-8055.

Concert by the Virginia Grand Military Band. 8 p.m. Hayfield Secondary School, 7630 Telegraph Road, Alexandria. VGMB will perform works by Wagner, Beethoven, Karl King and Leonard B. Smith. Adults \$20, under age 18 free. 703-426-4777 or www.vgmb.com.

SUNDAY/FEB. 19

Virginia Chamber Orchestra: Baroque to Jazz. 4 p.m. Ernst Community Cultural Center, Northern Virginia Community College Annandale Campus, 8333 Little River Turnpike, Annandale. Music Director Emil de Cou presents Handel's Two concerti grossi from the Twelve Grand Concertos, Opus 6; Tchaikovsky's Andante Cantabile from String Quartet Opus 11, No. 1; Edvard Grieg's Holberg Suite; Duke Ellington's Solitude and Leroy Anderson's Jazz Pizzicato and Jazz Legato. Reception to follow. Adults \$20, seniors \$18, students free. 703-758-0179 or www.virginiachamberorchestra.org.

Northern Virginia NTRACK Display and N Gauge Trains. 1-4 p.m. Fairfax Station Railroad Museum, 11200 Fairfax Station Road, Fairfax Station. \$3 adults, \$1 children. www.fairfax-station.org or 703-425-9225.

Grow the Best Tasting Tomatoes Ever. 1:30 p.m. Green Spring Gardens, 4603 Green Spring Road, Alexandria. Code 290 182 4601. \$10. The importance of correct planting, feeding, watering and support, with a special emphasis on common mistakes to avoid when growing tasty tomatoes in containers. Book signing.

Register at www.greenspring.org or 703-642-5173.

TUESDAY/FEB. 21

Tuesday Night at the Movies. 7 p.m. Burke Centre Library, 5935 Freds Oak Road, Burke. The romantic comedy His Girl Friday, starring Cary Grant and Rosalind Russell. Light refreshments available. Adults. 703-249-1520.

Family Storytime. 7 p.m. Kingstowne Library, 6500 Landsdowne Centre, Alexandria. Stories, songs and fingerplays. All ages. 703-339-4610.

Classics Book Club. 7 p.m. Richard Byrd Library, 7250 Commerce St., Springfield. The Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam. Adults. 703-451-8055.

English Conversation Group. 7 p.m. Richard Byrd Library, 7250 Commerce St., Springfield. Practice and improve your English. Adults. 703-451-8055.

WEDNESDAY/FEB. 22

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., Springfield. Books, songs and rhymes. Age 1 with adult. 703-451-8055.

Travel Club. 1 p.m. Richard Byrd Library, 7250 Commerce St., Springfield. Bring lunch and enjoy discussion. Adults. 703-451-8055

THURSDAY/FEB. 23

English Conversation Group. 7 p.m. Burke Centre Library, 5935 Freds Oak Road, Burke. Practice English and improve your skills. Adults. 703-249-1520.



The Sixth Generation, a 1960s rock band, will be performing at Empire in Springfield on Feb. 25. From left: Dave Walenga, Paul Davies, Ron Hamrick (of Burke), Fred Bachman, Fred Hulce and Don Simmons.

'The Sixth Generation' Performs in Springfield

The Sixth Generation, a 1960s rock band, will be performing at Empire in Springfield on Feb. 25. The show is produced by Afton Presents and will begin at 7 p.m. The Sixth Generation was originally formed in Michigan in 1966 and was inducted into the Michigan Rock and Roll Legends hall of fame in 2011. The band regularly performs at venues and festivals across the Midwest and Mid Atlantic regions,

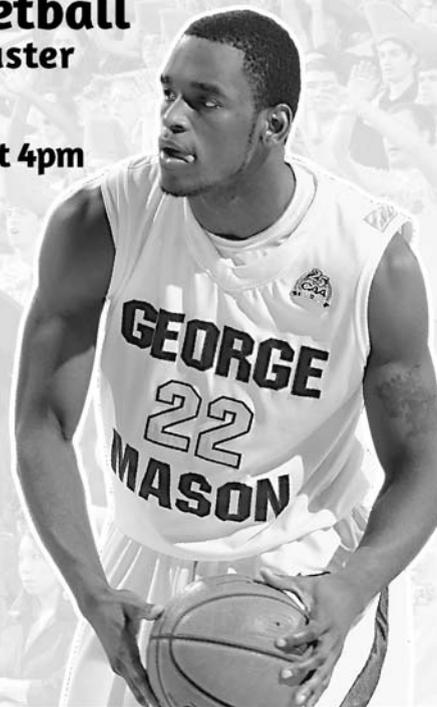
although this will be their first appearance in Northern Virginia. The band performs popular rock songs from the 1960s as well as original songs that baby boomers readily relate to. Their song, "That Was The Time" is a particular favorite among the baby boomer generation but they also have a following among younger fans. Tickets can be purchased online at <http://tickets.aftonshows.com/thesixthgeneration>.



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Meal Tax Discussed

FROM PAGE 3

tax, “the board needs to really lobby the issue in order to get passage.”

Bulova agreed, saying that community engagement is key to the success of any referendum.

“There’s no way I would support putting a meals tax to a referendum without it being clearly defined. And we would have to have, if not support, then at least neutrality from restaurant associations.”

Nancy-Jo Manney, executive director of the Greater Springfield Chamber of Commerce, which represents hundreds of businesses and restaurants in greater Springfield, including Kingstowne as well as the fast-growing Lorton area, said a meals tax is worth a “healthy discussion.”

“To get it approved by voters we will need to be confident the revenue is used for its intended purpose. I don’t think using it for general budget needs will work. It needs to be for something specific - I’d vote for transportation - and not have loop holes,” Manney said. “The other primary factor would be to keep the percentage at or below our neighboring localities.

A competitive meals tax would keep dining in Fairfax County more attractive.”

Supervisor Pat Herrity (R-Springfield) said there was a step he thinks the board needed to take first.

“Before we reach into our tax payers’ pockets and impose a tax on our restaurants and tourism industry we need to make transportation a county priority—in getting real transportation proffers from developers, in our bonding authority and in our budget,” Herrity said. “We also need to work with the other urban jurisdictions in the state to get more of our money back from Richmond now that urban jurisdictions have greater voting power due to redistricting. There has been no organized effort to get that done.”

Bulova said the discussion on a meals tax referendum is far from finished.

“There was agreement on the board that this was the beginning of the discussion not the end,” Bulova said. “Transportation funding is parked in future transportation meeting and budget committee meetings. We don’t have an action plan yet.”

SCHOOL NOTES

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.

Gustavo G. Ramallo of Springfield has received a master of science in electrical engineering from Boston University of Boston, Mass.

Lauren Gertscher of Springfield graduated from Radford University in May 2011 with a Bachelor of Science Degree in Criminal Justice. She is a 2007 graduate of Lake Braddock Secondary School in Burke.

Lucy Webb of Springfield has re-

ceived a president’s scholarship for the 2011-2012 academic year at Biola University of La Mirada, Calif.

Navy Seaman **Lesley A. Garcia**, daughter of Percy R. Garcia of Springfield, recently completed U.S. Navy basic training at Recruit Training Command, Great Lakes, Ill. with honors. During the eight-week program, Garcia completed a variety of training which included classroom study and practical instruction on naval customs, first aid, firefighting, water safety and survival, and shipboard and aircraft safety.

Springfield residents **Kaytlyn Schmitt, Ariel Miller, Kenneth Lee** and **Greg Gates** have been named as members of the Marching Virginians at Virginia Tech.

Luo Qian of Springfield, a senior at Thomas Jefferson High School for Science and Technology, has been named a Regional Finalist in the Siemens Competition in Math, Science & Technology, and will compete for a chance to win a \$100,000 scholarship.

Cole Mitchell has been named to the fall 2011 dean’s list at Randolph-Macon Academy. He is the son of Taylor and Sue Mitchell of Springfield.

Kayla Magaha, a student from Hayfield Secondary School, won a third place award at the Health Occupations Students of America State Leadership conference. Magaha won in the career health day category.

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Lee Gymnasts Michetti, Stewart Qualify for States

BY JON ROETMAN
THE CONNECTION

Lee teammates Leah Michetti and Katie Stewart each earned a regional all-around berth by placing in the top four at districts. While neither member of the Lancer duo was overjoyed with how things turned out at regionals, both managed to punch their ticket to states.

Michetti qualified for states on floor and Stewart earned a berth on vault during the Northern Region gymnastics championships on Feb. 9 at Lake Braddock Secondary School. Michetti said she will also compete on bars due to a gymnast dropping out of the lineup.

Michetti made it to states as an all-around last season, finishing seventh en route to first-team All-Met honors. This year, she failed to crack the top four at regionals, finishing eighth. Her fifth-place score of 9.375 on floor, however, earned her a trip to states (top eight in each event advance). After battling a left knee injury throughout the season, leaving her at 85 percent for regionals, Michetti said she's pleased to have a chance to compete at states.

"It's a little bit of a disappointment," said Michetti, a junior. "But under the circumstances, it's pretty good and I'm pleased with how everything turned out."

Stewart, a senior, said she was pleased with her effort, but felt the scores she received didn't reflect her performance. She finished 10th in the all-around, highlighted by a fourth-place score of 9.317 on vault.

"I think I came out here and did the best



Lee junior Leah Michetti qualified for states with a fifth-place finish on floor at the Northern Region gymnastics championships on Feb. 9 at Lake Braddock Secondary School.

Lee senior Katie Stewart qualified for states with a fourth-place finish on vault during gymnastics regionals on Feb. 9 at Lake Braddock Secondary School.

I could do at everything," Stewart said. "Some of my scores I wasn't as happy [as I could have been]. I thought I did better. I'm happy with my performance. I can't really complain."

Stewart and Michetti said they're excited to compete at states, which will be held Friday and Saturday, Feb. 17-18 at Salem

High School in Virginia Beach.

Lake Braddock's Caitlin Liberatore, the Patriot District all-around champion, finished seventh in all-around at regionals, including third-place performances on floor (9.45) and bars (9.325).

Madison's Evelyn Nee won the all-around

with a score of 38.683, followed by Washington-Lee's Mary Lynn Clark (38.208), Marshall's Morgan Stahl (37.683) and Westfield's Katie Freix (37.525).

Washington-Lee won the team championship with a score of 145.191. McLean finished runner-up with a 144.851.



PHOTOS BY LOUISE KRAFT/THE CONNECTION

Local Wrestlers Show Strong at Regionals

BY RICH SANDERS
THE CONNECTION

The following is a look at how the high school wrestling teams and individuals from southern Fairfax County fared at last Friday and Saturday's Northern Region Championships held at Hayfield High School. Westfield High, from the other side of the county, reclaimed its position as Northern Region champions as the Bulldogs dethroned Robinson and earned its fourth crown in five years.

"I am extremely pleased with how our guys have stepped up under pressure and performed," said Westfield head coach Chuck Hoskins, whose team, nearly two weeks ago, opened the postseason by winning the Concorde District Championships. "I am so proud of our team. We had some adversity to begin the season which I believe prepared us well for the end of the year. Our [challenging] schedule helped us a great deal."

Westfield had captured the region championship three straight years (2008, '09, '10) before fellow Concorde District rival Robinson soared to the top of the region

last year and ultimately captured the state title as well.

But following a year hiatus from the top, Westfield re-emerged this season as the dominant team of the region. At Saturday's regionals, the Bulldogs finished atop a field of 30 teams, scoring 193 points to runner-up Robinson's 174.50. Annandale (129.50), Mount Vernon (126.50), and Lake Braddock (105) finished third, fourth, and fifth, respectively.

Marshall High, which finished second place at the recent Liberty District Championships two weeks ago, finished sixth place at regionals with 81 points, ahead of seventh place South County (79.50), eighth place Oakton (73.50), ninth place Langley (69.50), and 10th place Madison (68).

At regionals, the top four individuals of each weight class earned an automatic seeding at the upcoming state AAA championships. Fifth and sixth place finishers did not qualify for states but did earn top six medals.

Robinson: The Rams finished a strong second place at regionals and two individual Robinson wrestlers won titles in heavy-weight Jake Pinkston and Brooks Martino

(145). Pinkston won three of his four matches by pin, including his finals victory over Marshall's Matt Crawford. Martino, meanwhile, won his first three region matches by pin before besting Lake Braddock's Rory Renzi in the finals by major decision (16-3).

Two Robinson wrestlers earned second place finishes - Daniel Mika (182) and Santiago Valdez (138). Mika lost a tough 3-2 finals decision to Madison's Nick Hoy and Valdez lost a low-scoring 3-0 title match decision to Westfield's Derek Arnold.

Robinson third place finishers were Jonathan Simmons (160) and Austin Riggs (120). Simmons won his consolation finals match over Washington-Lee's Jared Deiner, and Riggs won his third place match over Lee High's Max Benitos.

Earning a fourth place finish for Robinson was Greyson Olimpo (106). Cole Depasquale (170) finished in fifth place and Andre Kendall (220) was sixth.

Lake Braddock: The fifth place Bruins had two second place finishers and two third place finishers. Jake Sage (152) and Rory Renzi (145) were second place finishers. Both won three straight matches to make it

to the finals. There, Sage lost to Westfield's Beau Donahue, 3-1, and Renzi fell to Robinson's Martino.

Sean Haskett (132) and Ryan Haskett (106) earned third place finishes for the Bruins. Sean Haskett won his 132 third place match over Chantilly's Walter Carlson and Ryan Haskett won his third place match over Robinson's Greyson Olimpo.

Also qualifying for states for Lake Braddock was Gil Enav, who was fourth place at 170. Earning a sixth place medal was Ian Reilly (182).

South County: The seventh place Stallions had two champions crowned - Brett Stein (160) and Hunter Manley (106). Manley defeated Westfield's Gabe Ryan, by major decision (9-1), in the finals, and Stein, at the 160 finals, defeated four-time Liberty District champion Ryan Forrest of South Lakes, 5-3. Also for South County, Keegan Sullivan finished third in 182 weight class. He defeated Mount Vernon's Xavier Craig in the consolation finals.

Lee High: The Lancers, 16th place overall, had one state qualifier in Max Benitos, who finished in fourth place at 120.

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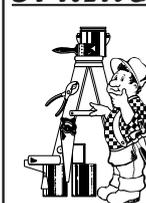
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21 Announcements

Barbara Jean Parkinson, age 67
of Sterling, VA, died February 7, 2012 at her residence. Born on September 17, 1944 in New York she was the daughter of the late Charles and Elizabeth Lundy. Ms. Parkinson was a member of Cornerstone Chapel in Leesburg, VA. Barbara attended Michigan State University where she received her Bachelor's Degree in Music. During her high school years she was a member of the singing group known as The Jill's. She worked for Connection Newspapers for many years. Barbara enjoyed and loved spending time with her grandchildren and doing crafts with them.

She is survived by her son Mark(Rachel) Parkinson of Purcellville, VA; daughter Jennifer(Jay) Daughtry of Sterling, VA; brother Wayne Lundy of Loveland, OH; and five grandchildren.

A graveside service was held on Friday, February 10, 2012 at 11:00 a.m. Ebenezer Cemetery, Round Hill, VA with Pastor Mike Emerson officiating.

Memorial contributions can be sent to the Cornerstone Chapel at www.cornerstone-chapel.net.

Please visit www.hallfh.com to express online condolences to the family.

21 Announcements

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