Participating in Jeans Day 2012 (from left) Supervisor John Cook with staff members Ann Sharp, Rosemary Ryan, Kiel Stone, Kalia Sokos and Lindsey Smith with Ryan’s dog Finn, an Irish wolfhound.

Going Casual for A Cause

News, Page 3

Holiday Favorites At GMU

Holiday Happenings, Page 4

How the Powerless Access Power
Focus on Immigration, Page 8
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NEWS

Enhanced Security Around Schools

FCPS releases message about Connecticut tragedy.

On Sunday, Dec. 16, Superintendent Jack Dale sent an email message to all FCPS families and employees. He said the Fairfax County Police Department will be increasing patrols and visibility this week around all FCPS schools, including elementary schools, in response to Friday’s tragedy in Connecticut.

“This is not in response to any specific threat but rather a police initiative to enhance safety and security around the schools and to help alleviate the understandably high levels of anxiety,” Dale said. Police patrols will be increased throughout the school day from the opening of schools to dismissal. FCPS security personnel will also be patrolling our schools, focusing on elementary schools during the school day.

Counselors and mental health support for staff and students will be available at all schools beginning tomorrow. Students and staff are advised to let a teacher, counselor, or principal know if they need assistance. In addition, resources for support are available at www.fcps.edu.

“There is nothing more important to us than providing a safe and secure learning environment for our students and employees. I want to assure you that we will continue to be vigilant in our efforts to protect them,” Dale said. “Thanks to the Fairfax County Police Department and FCPS security personnel for their efforts. Our thoughts remain with the children and families in Newtown.”

—Victoria Ross

Don’t Drink and Drive

During the holiday season, the City of Fairfax Police Department reminds drivers to consider all options available before drinking and making the decision to drive. Making arrangements in advance to rely on a designated driver, calling a cab or spending the night are all alternatives police recommend to help prevent tragedies resulting from impaired driving.

Police strongly encourage people to utilize the SoberRide program offered by the Washington Regional Alcohol Program (WRAP). This program allows for free taxi rides (up to a $30 fare) from 10 p.m. until 6 a.m.; it started Dec. 14 and continues through Tuesday morning, Jan. 1, 2013.

To take advantage of it, call 1-800-200-8294 (TAXI), or #WRAP (#9727) for customers of AT&T wireless telephones, to request a cab ride as an alternative to driving after drinking. Persons must be 21 or older to use the SoberRide service.

Animal Shelter Open House

The Fairfax County Animal Shelter is holding a holiday open house Saturday, Dec. 22, from noon-5 p.m., at 4500 West Ox Road in Fairfax. Attendees may meet new director Tawny Hammond, tour the newly constructed, spacious, animal-adoption wing, enjoy holiday refreshments, and learn about the many opportunities to volunteer.

The shelter is also offering a free spay or neuter for the first 100 cats, kittens, dogs or puppies adopted from the shelter through Dec. 31. The special offer is part of the shelter’s annual Home for the Holidays adoption celebration to help homeless animals leave the shelter for stable, new homes in time for the holidays. The shelter also has rabbits, small mammals, reptiles and birds. To view animals available for adoption, visit http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/police/animalservices/ and click on adoption. Regular adoption hours are Tuesday-Friday, noon-6:30 p.m.; and Saturday, 10 a.m.-4:30 p.m. For more information, call 703-830-1100.

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SPECIAL MOVE-IN PROGRAMS
Move in by December 31st and save up to $35,000!
Nearly 10,000 people and 130-plus organizations participate in Jeans Day 2012 to help end homelessness.

By Victoria Ross
The Connection

On Jan. 25, 2012, there were 1,534 people who were literally homeless in the Fairfax-Falls Church Community. Six hundred and ninety-seven of them were individuals and 837 were people in families.

During the past year, the number of people who were homeless in the Fairfax-Falls Church Community declined by one percent (15 people) from the number counted in January 2011. Persons in families decreased by 5.2 percent (46 people) compared to 2011. The number of single adults increased by 4.5 percent (30 adults) compared to 2011.

The majority of the homeless are families and many work full time:

❖ Close to 60 percent of homeless persons are in families.
❖ More than 75 percent of children in homeless families are under the age of 11.
❖ Nearly 60 percent of adults in homeless families work.
❖ Lack of affordable housing is the main cause of homelessness.
❖ Monthly rent for a one-bedroom apartment is $1,134.
❖ A family must earn $22.25 an hour to afford a one-bedroom apartment.
❖ 82 percent of homeless families earn less than $14.24 an hour.

More information about homelessness in Fairfax County, and the partnership to end it, is available at http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/homeless/

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Capturing 50 Years of Christmas History

Springfield resident Al Nielsen has photographed the National Christmas Tree every year since 1963.

In December 1963, Al Nielsen drove his wife and four children to Washington, D.C. to see the National Christmas Tree, a red spruce from West Virginia. That year, the lighting of the tree was delayed due to the mourning period following the assassination of President Kennedy. Being without a tripod, Nielsen placed his camera atop his car and captured the first photo of what would become a long-standing annual tradition. Now 90 years old, Nielsen recently photographed the 2012 National Christmas Tree, making this the 50th consecutive year that he has captured history in the nation’s capital.

While all 50 years have been memorable for Nielsen, a few years particularly stick in his mind. In 1979 and 1980, the National Christmas Tree remained mostly unlit out of respect for the American hostages being held in Iran. However, upon their release on Inauguration Day in 1981, the National Christmas Tree was relit in celebration of their impending return to the United States. That day, Nielsen recalls that he was helping his wife Vivian who was working with her church to provide hot beverages to those attending the inauguration ceremony. “When I heard about the lighting of the tree, I took my camera and got over there,” said Nielsen.

Nielsen also fondly recalls the 1995 National Christmas Tree. “President Clinton himself financed the lighting of the tree,” said Nielsen. During that time, there was a partial government shutdown; to avoid the possibility of the National Christmas Tree going dim that year, Clinton requested to receive the electricity bill for the tree.

OVER THE YEARS, Nielsen has kept up with modern technology. He switched from Minolta to Nikon when digital photography began to flourish, and now he even has a remote-controlled tripod, a major improvement from 1963. In addition to capturing still images, Nielsen began to videotape the trees when enhanced technology allowed the lights and decorations to change colors and designs, so as to capture all of its displays. In April 2003, Nielsen and his wife moved to Greenspring retirement community in Springfield. He has since become the “unofficial-official” resident photographer for the community, often taking photos for the resident-produced monthly newsletter and volunteering to operate the cameras in the community’s television studio. He has also produced several special video features for the studio.

After moving, Nielsen continued to make his way into Washington, D.C. each year on the morning following the tree lighting ceremony, just as he had done for the forty years prior. In early 2011, Nielsen even managed to capture a photo of the tree after it toppled from high winds. That tree, a blue spruce, had served as the National Christmas Tree since 1978. This year, two of Nielsen’s sons and a grandson accompanied him on his trip to see the brand new Colorado blue spruce on the Ellipse donned with 450 LED light strings. “It was a family outing, just like my first photo in 1963,” said Nielsen. Nielsen has asked his youngest son Brian to carry on the tradition.

So what is Nielsen’s explanation for continuing the tradition for 50 years? He said plainly, “I got hooked on it.” The National Park Service got wind of his collection, and have displayed his National Christmas Tree photos from 1965-1995 on their website. Nielsen is very pleased that his annual tradition has helped to make the National Park Service’s records more comprehensive.

LAST YEAR, Nielsen produced a 31-minute video featuring each National Christmas Tree since 1963. Nielsen, who taught himself how to use Photoshop and Final Cut Express on his Mac computer, included snippets of National Christmas Tree history from each year and set the images to various holiday tunes. “I’m still working on it,” said Nielsen, who is planning to add the 50th tree to the video before the end of the year.

Additional information about Greenspring can be found at www.ericksonliving.com.
THURSDAY/DEC. 20
Great Russian Nutcracker, 7:30 p.m., at the GMU Concert Hall, 4400 University Drive, Fairfax. The Moscow Ballet 20th anniversary production brings new “Dove of Peace” choreography inspired by the work of Stanislav Visnev, former Bolshoi Ballet dancer, to Fairfax for the holidays. $48-127. www.nutcracker.com.

SATURDAY/DEC. 22
Animal Lovers Holiday Open House, Noon-5 p.m., at the Fairfax County Animal Shelter, 4500 West Ox Road, Fairfax. Meet Director Tawny Hammond learn about many opportunities to volunteer, see the newly constructed spacious animal adoption wing and enjoy holiday refreshments at the open house. 703-830-1100 or www.fairfaxcounty.gov/animalservices.

Holiday Pops: Songs of the Season. 8 p.m., at George Mason University’s Center for the Arts, 4400 University Drive, Fairfax. As part of the Great Performances at Mason series, the American Festival Pops Orchestra Holiday Brass Quinteret performs holiday classics with guest narration from Rock Davis. $24, $40, $48; youth through 12th half price when accompanied by adult. 888-945-2468 or cfa.gmu.edu.

TUESDAY/DEC. 25
JCCNV’s Annual J Fest, 11 a.m.-2 p.m., at the JCCNV, 8900 Little River Turnpike, Fairfax. Kosher food for purchase, arts and crafts, music, “wild and crazy” games and activities, a moon bounce, a community service project, face painting and a balloon artist are among the attractions of the festival. $15 for JCCNV members per family; $20 per family, general entry. 703-323-0880 or www.jccnv.org.

Fiddler on the Roof Sing-Along, 3 p.m., at the JCCNV, 8900 Little River Turnpike, Fairfax. A free film

See Calendar, Page 7

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Reminder: Shop Locally, Give Locally

Supporting the community.

With less than a week before Christmas, many people have not completed their shopping, and so we remind you of the importance of spending a significant portion of your shopping budget locally. At this point in the season, the high cost of expedited shipping might also serve as an incentive to shop in locally owned stores.

One way to be sure holiday shopping comes with some holiday spirit is to do a portion of your shopping in some of the area’s locally owned stores. There is special holiday ambiance available in the heart of a town that is decked out for the season.

Small retail shops are part of defining any community. Their livelihood depends on the livability and quality of the neighborhoods where they are located. A small business owner pays attention to every detail in her or his business in a way that no chain can. Frequently, it is the small retail person who is active in fundraising for local charities, for fire and rescue service, for schools and in organizing holiday events.

Local retail stores, mom-and-pop stores, continue to face tough challenges. Competition from big box stores and online sellers makes the holiday shopping season all the more important to locally-owned retailers.

With less than two weeks to go before the end of the charitable giving year, we also reiterate the importance of spending a portion of your holiday giving to a variety of local nonprofit organizations.

Where to Give Locally

The Fairfax County Office of Public Private Partnerships has put together a list of 12 ways to support nonprofit partners that are in need of contributions to carry out their mission. Visit www.fairfaxforpartnerships.org.

Support services for aging in place through Life Circle Alliance (www.lifecirclealliance.org). Donate here.

Shop online “Gifts that Give Hope” Alternative Gift Fair for Fairfax County at www.giftsthatsavehope.org/fairfax. Providing links to buy gifts that support more than 20 Fairfax County nonprofits including Alternative House, Herndon-Reston FISH, FACETS, Stroke Alternative House, Herndon-Reston FISH.


❖ Give the gift of love to benefit the Arts Council of Fairfax County, at arsinthefairfax.com/ donate.

❖ Give the gift of time to benefit a variety of local nonprofit organizations. www.awayforward.org

❖ Give the gift of art to benefit the Fairfax County Office of Public Private Partnerships, at www.fairfaxforpartnerships.org.

❖ Support services for aging in place through Life Circle Alliance (www.lifecirclealliance.org). Donate here.

❖ Donate the gift of trees through RestorFairs of the Fairfax County Restoration Project http://www.repfcp.org/reforestfairfax.

❖ Give the gift of Art to benefit the Arts Council of Fairfax County, at arsinthefairfax.com/donate.

❖ Protect a child’s smile and health by donating to Prevent Fairy Whites from the MCCP Foundation, mccpfoundation.org/news/mfp/fairfax/fairywhites.php.


❖ Provide for a family for the holidays through A Way Forward and donate care packages to those who need it most, http://www.awayforward.org

❖ Other Fairfax County organizations that need your help to keep helping others:

❖ Literacy Council of Northern Virginia, www.lcn.org. Teaches the adult basic skills of reading, writing, speaking and understanding English. Offers one-to-one tutoring programs for adults as well as beginning-level ESL and Family Learning adult programs.


❖ Our Daily Bread has been serving needy families in Fairfax County for 25 years. The Holiday Program helps those in need for food for the holidays and gifts for their children, making last year’s holiday season brighter for approximately 3,000 families. Visit www.odbfairfax.com/holiday.

❖ Food for Others distributed more than 2.4 million pounds of free food to families in need in Northern Virginia in the year ending June 30, 2012. The non-profit provides a safety net for people who face emergencies such as a family illness or the loss of a job or a spouse. 2938 Prosperity Ave., Fairfax, VA 22031, 703-207-9173.

❖ Foodforothers.com

❖ Ecumenical Community Helping Others (ECHO), 703-569-9160. Open to receive donations at 7:00 a.m. Old Keene Mill Road, Springfield. Provides food and financial assistance to those in short-term emergencies, and provides clothing and household goods to low income families, helping more than 5,000 people last year. www.echo-inc.org.

❖ Lorton Community Action Center operates the Act II Thrift Shop at 9506 Chain Bridge Road, Lorton. Sales from the shop generate funds for LCAG and clients also shop there. Non-perishable gift cards and food baskets for Christmas, and warm coats. 703-339-8611.

❖ Comfort for America’s Uniformed Services (CAUSE) — www.awayforward.org

❖ Enabling Families and Communities to Care for their Own Children (CAUSE) — www.awayforward.org

❖ National Capital Food Bank, 6833 Hill Park Drive, Lorton, serving all of Northern Virginia. 703-541-3061. www.capitalfoodbank.org

❖ Western Fairfax Christian Ministries — food pantry at 13981 Merothee Drive in Chantilly (near Backyard Grill and Bar). For more information or to sponsor a family, call 703-988-9566, ext. 106. To mail gift cards or send donations by check, add a note saying “food basket program” and send them to: WFCM, P.O. Box 220802, Chantilly, VA 20125. 703-988-8556.

❖ The Jeanie Schmidt Clinic Free Clinic, 13325 Dulles Technology Drive, Herndon, VA 20171. 751-325-3577. Last year, 139 community volunteers including nurses, nurse practitioners and physicians, gave more than 1,300 hours of their time to see patients. jscfreeclinic.org.


❖ Reston Interfaith, 11150 Sunset Hills Road, Suite 210, Reston, serving Reston and Herndon. 571-323-2577. By last year’s holiday season, more than 5,000 adults and children gave more than 1,300 hours of their time to see patients. jscfreeclinic.org.

❖ Fairfax City Area FISH (For Immediate Sympathetic Help), working with the Office of Coordinated Services Planning, Fairfax County Department of Human Services, FISH helps local citizens who are in temporary need of food, clothing and financial assistance for rent, mortgage payments, utilities, and medical treatments. FISH also provides limited transportation for doctor appointments and food delivery. 703-222-0880 http://fairfxfish.org/

❖ Herndon-Reston FISH (For Immediate Sympathetic Help), 336 Victory Drive, Herndon, VA 20131-0105 http://herndonrestonfish.org

❖ Reston Interfaith, 11150 Sunset Hills Road, Suite 210, Reston, serving Reston and Herndon. 571-323-2577. www.AWCFish.org.

❖ LINK, serving Herndon, Chantilly, Loudoun and more, needs contributions of food for children and holiday toys for children, plus volunteers. More than 3,000 adults and children are helped for help with holiday meals. 703-437-1776 www.linkagainsthunger.org

❖ FACETS helps parents, their children and individuals who suffer the effects of poverty in the Fairfax area. FACETS is always in need of volunteers, and offers a variety of one-time and ongoing opportunities. 703-885-4251 or www.fcestc.org. FACETS offers a monthly Youth Volunteer Night. Volunteer at www.fcestc.org. 10640 Page Avenue, Suite 300, Fairfax VA 22030.

❖ Committee for Helping Others (CHO), Vienna, organized in 1969 by a group of concerned churches and individuals in the Dunn Loring, Merrifield, Oakton, Vienna community to provide simple, loving charity to those in need. 703-281-7614 http://www.cho va.com

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❖ Herndon-Reston FISH (For Immediate Sympathetic Help), 336 Victory Drive, Herndon, VA 391-0105 http://herndonrestonfish.org

❖ Lamb Center, www.thelambcenter.org, Day center for homeless, Fairfax 703-691-3178

❖ Northern Virginia Family Services, 10455 White Granite Drive Suite 100, Oakton, VA 22124. 703-385-2367 http://www.nvfs.org

❖ United Community Ministries, Mount Vernon, 703-768-7106, 7511 Fordson Road, Alexandria that distributes gift cards and holiday toys for children, plus volunteers. More than 3,000 adults and children are helped for help with holiday meals. 703-437-1776 www.linkagainsthunger.org

❖ FACETS helps parents, their children and individuals who suffer the effects of poverty in the Fairfax area.

With suggestions from readers, we have updated our lists. We welcome suggestions as we continuously update our local lists of community organizations. You can find a complete list on our website, www.connectionnewspapers.com.

Last News Issue of 2012

This is the last regular edition of the Connection for 2012, and it includes the last of our 2012 series on immigration. Next week, delivered shortly after Christmas, is the Children’s Connection, devoted to the artwork and writing of area students.

— Mary Kimm

www.connectionnewspapers.com
**MONDAY/DEC. 31**
Fairfax Four Miler, 6 p.m., at Old Town Hall, 3999 University Drive, Fairfax. The most fun way to kick off New Year’s Eve, sweatpants and soda included. Register at http://paceevents.com/race/fairfax-four-miler.

**TUESDAY/JAN. 8**
Encore Chorale Rehearsal, 11 a.m.-12:30 p.m., at The Woodlands Retirement Community, 4320 Forest Hill Drive, Fairfax. Former high school and college choisters, church, synagogue and community choral singers are invited to sing in a dynamic rehearsal with the Encore Chorale for their Spring 2013 season. 301-261-5747 info@encorecreativity.org or http://encorecreativity.org.

**FRIDAY/JAN. 18**
Aquila Theatre with Edmond Rostand’s “Cyrano De Bergerac,” 8 p.m., at George Mason University’s Center for the Arts, Intersection of Braddock Road and Route 123, Fairfax. Edmond Rostand’s classic tale of unrequited love, presented by acclaimed British American touring troupe Aquila Theatre. $20, $32, $40. 888-894-2468 or cfa.gmu.edu.

**SATURDAY/JAN. 19**
Fairfax Symphony Orchestra: Masterworks IV, 8 p.m., George Mason University Center for the Arts, 4400 University Drive, Fairfax. Conductor Christopher Zimmerman and flautist Christina Jennings perform Mozart’s Overture to The Magic Flute, Leshnoff’s Flute Concerto, Ives’ The Unanswered Question and Brahms’ Symphony No. 1 in C minor, Op. 68. $25-$55. 703-563-1990 or www.fairfaxsymphony.org.

**SUNDAY/JAN. 20**
Garden Gauge Model Train Display at the Fairfax Station Railroad Museum, 1-4 p.m., at the Fairfax Station Railroad Museum, 11200 Fairfax Station Road, Fairfax. The Washington, Virginia & Maryland Garden Railway Society will have a display and running G Gauge (Garden Gauge) model trains. $3 for adults; $1 for children. 703-425-9225 or www.fairfaxstation.org.

**ONGOING**
Join Jewish War Veterans of the USA. The Burke Post E 100 at 5712 Walnut Wood, Burke, invites Jewish veterans and service members to join. Call David B. Meyers at 703-209-5925 for information.

Collecting Fairfax, 9 a.m.-5 p.m., at Fairfax Museum and Visitor Center, 10209 Main Street, Fairfax. With six major themes, this exhibition highlights objects added to the collection since 1992; the exhibit is open through Jan. 29, 2013. 703-385-6144.

**From Page 5**
Showing serves as the musical ending to the day’s 2 Fest activities (see above listing); sing “If I Were a Rich Man,” “Matchmaker” and other fun, traditional favorite from the 1971 musical. Ages 8-and-up. www.jccnv.org.

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**VENERDAY/JAN. 18**
Fairfax. Celebrated choreographer and tap dancer Savion Glover honors his art form with a Hoofer’s Meditation on the art of tap. $23; $38, $44. 888-894-2468 or cfa.gmu.edu.

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Focus On Immigration

How the Powerless Access

Immigrants make significant gains in influencing political system.

By Victoria Ross
The Connection

Final part of the series.

On Election Night Nov. 6, Keisy Chavez’s nerves were frayed.

The Fairfax single mom had been campaigning hard for Democrats since the official launch of Latinos for Obama last April.

She filmed a commercial for Senate candidate Tim Kaine in September, worked phone banks, door-knocked during 104-degree heat, stuffed envelopes, delivered yard signs, and seized every opportunity to talk to friends, neighbors and strangers about the importance of the 2012 election.

Her daughter, Cinthya Qureshi, 24, likes to tease her mom about her willingness to talk to anyone when it comes to politics.

“If my mom is pumping gas, and sees someone next to her, she will start a conversation about politics,” she said.

“I’ve been organizing for President Obama and Governor Kaine since the launch of their campaigns, and everyone I talk to in the Latino community gets fired up to help spread the message of everything they have done for us,” said Chavez.

Chavez was ecstatic over Kaine’s and Obama’s victories in Virginia. “It was such a powerful feeling. I can’t really describe how happy and relieved I felt,” she said.

“It shows that you can make a difference. It’s a big motivation to realize that you can have an impact on something bigger than you, something that touches so many people.”

Like many Latinos this election cycle, Chavez made certain her voice was heard. According to exit polls, recent immigrants, not just Latinos, voted overwhelmingly, 73 percent, for Obama in Northern Virginia.

Data from the Pew Research Center also shows that Asian Americans have shifted more to Democrats since 2008 than any other minority group. Representing just 3 percent of the national voting population, they are the fastest growing demographic in the United States, and their influence is being felt beyond traditionally blue states, like California, Hawaii, New York and New Jersey, into swing states like Virginia and North Carolina.

“This area, particularly Fairfax County, is teeming with immigrants, from South America, India, Vietnam, South Korea and elsewhere,” said Frederic Bemak, director of the Diversity Research and Action Center at George Mason University. “I can’t imagine many of them swooned at Romney’s incessant China bashing, or talk of self-deportation for the undocumented.”

“The tectonic plates are shifting on immigration,” said Frank Sharry, a McLean resident and executive director of America’s Voice, an advocacy group for immigrants. “The fact that leading conservative voices are joining Republican leaders in calling for immigration reform that includes relief for the 11 million undocumented immigrants in America is a major development that will open up space for the GOP to do the right thing and help pass sensible reform legislation.”

Sharry said political leaders should consider the response from 2012 voters to this question asked in the network exit polls: “Should most illegal immigrants working in the United States be offered a chance to apply for legal status or deported to country they came from?”

“By a whopping 65-percent-to-28-percent margin, Americans support the ‘apply for legal status’ option,” Sharry said.

Chavez said the 2012 election was a “reality wake-up call.”

“I think it has finally hit some Republican politicians and policy-makers that if you don’t embrace immigration you will go nowhere. If you really want your party or your candidate or issues to be addressed, you need to embrace the mix of people in this country. Everyone has something to bring, regardless of whether you’re Latino, Asian, or Irish.”

Voting: How the powerless begin to access power?

Political affiliation aside, research shows that immigrants, especially when they organize and vote, are influencing the political discussion overall, not just electing Democrats.

According to immigration experts, the right to vote is a key motivating factor when immigrants choose to become citizens, instead of just holding on to their green card.

Andrew Eade, who grew up in England, has been working in the U.S. for 16 years. In May, Eade was one of 75 new citizens who took the Oath of Allegiance during a special naturalization ceremony at the Fairfax County Government Center.

A resident of Herndon for 16 years, Eade said he wanted to become a citizen so he could “fully participate in the system and vote.”

“I wanted to vote because it gives you power. It’s the American way. . . . I wanted my daughter to know that we’re Americans too, and she can do anything. If I can’t do it, maybe she can. Who knows, she could be a doctor someday,” Eade said.

Community-based organizations, according to a 2009 Urban Institute study, play a key role in encouraging immigrants to enroll in citizenship programs so they can participate in the electoral process.

“A significant aspect of immigrant integration is civic participation,” said Richard Eldridge, the Citizenship volunteer manager at Hogar Immigrant Services, a Fairfax County program of Catholic Charities of the Diocese of Arlington. “We have a strong component of helping people become new citizens, of empowering immigrants through the benefits of 
Immigrants Gaining Political Influence

In Virginia and at the national level, immigrant voters are changing the political landscape in unprecedented ways, and holding increasing influence across the political spectrum.

"From a political perspective, the way the demographics are shifting, those who would demonize and attack new immigrants and Latinos do so at their peril," said Del. Alfonso Lopez (D-49), the first Latino Democrat elected to the Virginia General Assembly. Latinos have a long history of political involvement through organizations which give them access to elected officials, according to the Urban Institute.

In contrast, the Urban Institute study says, Asian and African immigrant communities are newer and lack long-serving, established leaders to spearhead and encourage participation and advocacy. While Asians comprise 17.4 percent of Fairfax County’s population, compared to 15.6 percent citizenship. “Our goal is for immigrants to achieve self-sufficiency and participate fully in the greater community," said Brooke Hammond Perez, education services and group manager. Hogar, which was founded in 1981, offers a combination of legal consultation, English-language instruction and citizenship classes.

While the majority of Hogar’s immigrant clients live below the poverty level, their determination to become engaged, active citizens is inspiring, Hammond Perez said. But few have touched Hammond Perez personally as much as client Alhaji Alpha Bah, an 82-year-old immigrant from Sierra Leone. In 1992, Bah was a shop-keeper in the West African nation when civil war broke out. During a decade of brutal civil war, when tens of thousands of people died, Bah was forced from his home, living as a refugee in Guinea for seven years before coming to the United States in 2003.

“He was accompanied to the U.S. by four of his nine children,” Hammond Perez said, adding that his other children had to stay behind in Guinea and Sierra Leone. “Even now, he doesn’t know the whereabouts of three of those five children.”

Bah came to Catholic Charities in 2010. He did not have any formal education, did not speak English and was not able to find consistent work. Despite these obstacles, Bah, accompanied by Hammond Perez, was officially sworn in as a U.S. citizen on Oct. 14, 2011. When asked what he wanted to do as a new American, he said he wanted to register to vote as soon as possible. “I feel proud. I feel big. You are a citizen. Welcome to America,” Bah said in video interview discussing his experiences. (To see the video, visit hogarimmigrantservices.org.)

For new Americans, life is hard, but once they overcome those barriers, they are stronger, and they contribute so much because they fought so hard to get here. I’m proud of my background. The policies I advocate for are from the perspective of an immigrant, something which is sorely missing in Richmond. As an immigrant who came here with nothing, I’m able to have everything I ever wanted, to give my children incredible opportunities.

Let me put it this way: unlike most people whose immigration stories are fairly simple, (for example, they move from one country to another country), I lived in different countries and cultures. I guess you could say I was the result of global circumstances beyond my control. My parents met in the late 1950s. They had lost their parents during the war, so I didn’t know any of my grandparents. My mother had an older sister, who was a devout Christian. She didn’t like my father.

My parents were like street kids after the Korean War. My mother didn’t finish school and my father was sort of a rogue. The only way my aunt would let him approach my mother was to prove he was upstanding citizen, so he became a minister.

In 1961, there was mandatory conscription in the military, so Kim’s father was sent to Vietnam as a chaplain.

My father would come back at least once every two years. My brother was born in 1962, my sister was born in 1964 and I was born in 1966. In 1969, he came back to Seoul, and he wanted to set up a church. But Korea was still very run-down post-war. Imagine Afghanistan, imagine that scenario. Korea was like Afghanistan times two. No running water, all the buildings were bombed, everything was devastated, being run by dictators. It’s only 50 miles from DMZ. That was the world I was born into.

THE WAR IN VIETNAM was at a standstill, a lot of countries started establishing ties in South Vietnam, so they asked my father, who had studied Vietnamese language and culture, to establish a Korean church and community center. We lived in the church, and I remember the building well.

This goes directly into how I got into politics. From the time I was 4-years-old, I can’t remember one meal we had with just the five of us. Our meals were with whoever was at the church. For the 5,000 Koreans who lived in Vietnam in the 70s, every one of them came to our church because it was also the only community center. It was the hub of all Korean activities. From the time I woke up until I went to bed, there were always people around us.

When I was a small kid, I freaked out because we had caskets. I remember there be a wedding in the morning, a funeral in the middle of the day, and another wedding at night. You’d see the same people dressed up for a wedding and then back for a funeral, because they knew each other. I lived in that world with the idea that community helps each other. It was ingrained in me such a natural way that I think, to this day, that’s the core of my being.

What made me who I am and what made me think the way I do and act the way I do every single day was molded in my childhood. More importantly, because of my father, I saw it was incumbent upon us to be leaders in our community. Family is important, but community is just as important. So that has led me to do what I’m doing today.

When Keam was 9-years-old, in April of 1975, he recalls his family fleeing the church compound during what historians call the Fall of Saigon. The capture of Saigon by the People’s Army of Vietnam and the National Liberation Front marked the end of the Vietnam War and the start of a transition period leading to the formal reunification of Vietnam into a communist state. The fall of the city was preceded by the evacuation of almost all the American civilian and military personnel in Saigon, along with tens of thousands of South Vietnamese civilians associated with the southern regime. The evacuation culminated in Operation Frequent Wind, which was the largest helicopter evacuation in history.

That’s the most traumatic thing that’s ever happened to me. We were playing in the room, and I just remember my mother coming in saying we have to pack up and go.

We had seen a lot of things. Whenever I see war...
Focus on Immigration

Immigrants Gain Influence in Virginia

From Page 9

who are Latino, Asians speak many different languages and come from a wide variety of cultures, making it more difficult to politically mobilize the population as a whole.

Regardless, political leaders are increasingly tuned in to the concerns of immigrants, and the number of immigrant community-based organizations is increasing. In 2000, according to the Urban Institute, there were 90 such organizations in Fairfax County; in 2009, the number was up to 149.

“The number of organizations devoted to the interest of members of the immigrant community has been increasing just as the number of immigrants has been increasing,” said Del. Ken Plumb (D-36). “I try to attend as many meetings of groups with immigrant members to demonstrate to them that they can have a say in government and that there are those in elective office who value the contributions.”

At the 24th annual Candidates’ Night Dinner, hosted by the Arab American Republicans and the Arab American Democratic Caucus of Virginia on Sept. 30, nearly every Fairfax County Democrat running for office was there, courting voters, including Kaine, U.S. Rep. James Moran (D-8) and U.S. Rep. Gerry Connolly (D-11). Former U.S. Rep. Tom Davis, (R), who served eight terms in Congress, was Mitt Romney’s surrogate.

Launched in 1987 by the Arab American Institute (AAI), the event is a forum for campaigning politicians, and a place where the Arab-American community can engage in the political process.

“Candidates’ Night, by admission of most politicians attending the forum, has been praised as one of the best ethnic political forums,” said event co-chair Saba L. Shami. “It’s become an institution, bringing candidates together with the Arab American community as an integral part of the American political process.”

Del. Mark Keam (D-35), the first Korean American and the first Asian-born immigrant to serve in the Virginia General Assembly, said Asian immigrants are beginning to see unprecedented growth in both population and political clout.

“In 2000, I was the convention chair of the National Asian American Bar Association. It was held in D.C., and we broke all records. We had 500 lawyers getting together in the same town, and we had a budget of over $300,000. We thought that was big time,” Keam said.

“In 2012, same town, same convention, but this year the event drew 1,700 lawyers and had a budget of $1.6 million,” Keam said. “What that tells you is something about both the physical growth and the economic clout of Asians, because of the money sponsors were willing to spend targeting our community.”

Lopez pointed out that since 2000 Latino voter participation in the Commonwealth of Virginia has gone up between 1 and 3 percent every election cycle. Currently, there are 683,000 Latinos in Virginia, and approximately 183,000 of those are eligible voters, according to the State Board of Elections.

According to the 2010 decennial census, between 2000 and 2010, Latino voter registration increased by 75 percent in Virginia, one of highest increases in country.

“This is something that really blew me away,” Lopez said. “The average age of the Latino citizen is 15 years old. Think about what that means in two years and four years and eight years. You’re going to see a huge increase in Latino registered voters.”

Lopez said the increasing percentage of Virginia’s Latinos and immigrant voters make him hopeful that the political polarization regarding immigration reform will diminish.

“There’s something huge about what’s happening in the Commonwealth,” Lopez said. “The demographic shifts coming to Virginia will wipe out the effects of the short-sighted anti-immigrant politicking we see now.”

Chavez said it’s just smart—politically and economically—to create a pathway to citizenship for young immigrants. “We’re relying on their talent and skills. It’s not just a Latino concern. . . . It helps the economy and makes America stronger for everyone.”

“Like the program says it’s the new normal.” Get used to it. Embrace it,” Chavez said.
Fsunhroir Fundraiser in Honor of Ryan Lopynski
On April 26, 2009, Ryan Lopynski was a freshman at Virginia Tech with his whole life ahead of him. On April 8, 2009, Ryan Lopynski was killed in a tragic heart attack. Ryan was a bright young man who was beloved by his family, friends, and the entire Virginia Tech community.

The Ryan Lopynski Fund was established to honor Ryan’s memory and to support the Virginia Tech community in the wake of his devastating loss. The Fund’s mission is to promote understanding and awareness of sudden cardiac arrest (SCA) and to support research into the prevention of SCA.

The Ryan Lopynski Fund is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization that raises funds through events, donations, and partnerships with businesses and organizations.

The Fund’s goal is to prevent SCA by raising awareness, providing education, and supporting research. The Fund has already raised over $1 million and has supported important research initiatives.

The Fund’s annual fundraising event is the “SCA Awareness and Prevention Journey,” which includes a 5K road race, a children’s fun run, and a day of activities to educate the community about SCA.

The Fund also partners with businesses and organizations to raise funds through events and promotions. The Fund’s partnerships have included partnerships with local businesses, sports teams, and community organizations.

The Fund is led by a dedicated group of volunteers who work tirelessly to raise funds and support the Fund’s mission.

The Fund is making a positive impact on the Virginia Tech community and beyond. The Fund is changing lives and saving lives.

To learn more about the Ryan Lopynski Fund and to get involved, please visit www.ryanolopynski.org.

—Bonnie Hobbs
Teaching Health and Holiday Culinary Traditions

Nutrition experts say moderation, not deprivation, is key.

BY MARYLyn Campbell
The Connection

Te he holidays start with a saucepan of mushrooms—usually portabella, crimini or oyster—sauteed in olive oil. Next, sliced onions sizzle in a bath of bubbling butter and wine until they’re caramelized. This is how Bonita Lillie starts her yuletide feast. Under the guidance of her deft hands, such rank and file produce become mushroom soup. Fresh minced pork and cheddar cheese become a recreation of her mother’s sausage rolls. She doesn’t measure ingredients, count calories or add flavor-depleting substitutes. Only real food makes the cut in her Alexandria kitchen.

“I go with my gut and what feels right. I don’t use recipes,” said Lillie, a registered dietician and nutrition instructor at Marymount University in Arlington. “If you’re cooking a family dish that you look forward to every holiday and you substitute a fat-free version of something, it won’t taste right and you won’t satisfy your memory of that dish.”

During a time of year when it is not uncommon to wash down Bûche de Noël with eggnog or to pile one’s plate with slices of crown roast beef drizzled with merlot cream sauce, Lillie and other local nutritionists, food enthusiasts and health gurus say don’t engage in self-deprivation. They emphasize that moderation, minor modifications and keeping it real are the keys to maintaining family traditions in ways that are healthy.

“Fat, per se, is not evil,” said Nichole Ferrigno, culinary director for Tiny Chefs in Great Falls, Alexandria, McLean, Oakton, Springfield, Arlington and Potomac. “It really becomes about the type of fat one is consuming. When we think of . . . eggnoN, pepper-mint cake and gingerbread, I would tell folks to have the real dish that you look forward to every holiday and many, many, many more calories to reach the same level of satiety.”

Replacing one natural ingredient with another is a flavor-preserving option. “You could substitute . . . an alternative sweetener like honey or agave nectar” for sugar, said Lenora Lawson, a chef instructor at The Art Institute of Washington’s International Culinary Schools in Arlington.

In fact, minor ingredient tweaks can pack powerful taste bud punches. “When you’re baking a cake, sometimes you can replace oil with applesauce in some cakes, and often it tastes better,” said Lillie. She cautions, however, that “when you take out the fat in any dish, you have to replace it with herbs or other seasonings so that you don’t lose the taste.”

ESCHEWING LARGE cookie cutters for their bite-sized counterparts and baking pies with graham cracker crusts instead of traditional fat-laden shells are tactics that Vienna-based culinary instructor Christine Wizniewski employs during the holiday season. “There are lots of ways to go about healthy- ing up the holidays,” she said. “If the filling is the star of the dessert, fill and bake individual ramekins for a crust-free dessert and significant calorie and fat savings.”

Most importantly, when faced with a dizzying ar ray of yuletide treats on a tray or table, think before making a choice. “Be mindful, be appreciative and aware of what you are eating,” said Jennifer Kay Nelson, director of clinical dietetics and an associate professor of nutrition at the Mayo Clinic College of Medicine. “Mindlessly grabbing cookies, candy, nuts here-there-everywhere often end up in unexpected pounds.”

Photos by Marilyn Campbell

The Connection

Welcome, Scouts

Willow Springs Elementary holds Girl Scouts Investiture/Rededication Ceremony.

T he Willow Springs Elementary School Girl Scouts held an investiture/rededication ceremony on Friday, Dec. 7, 2012 at 7 p.m. in the school’s cafeteria. Investiture welcomes new members into the Girl Scout family for the first time.

Rededication is a renewal of their commitment to the Girl Scout Promise and Law for those girls who have already been invested. Girl scouts get a sense of traditions and sisterhood, providing something for the younger scouts to look forward to.

Girl Scout Troop Coordinator Kim Klein moderated the ceremony. After all the Girl Scouts lined the stage steps, the Junior Girl Scout Troop 4405 began with the flag ceremony. Family and friends who attended the event listened as the girls recited the Girl Scout Promise, the Girl Scout Law and sang “Make New Friends.” Daisy Girl Scouts received their pin and were awarded with earned petals. Rededication patches were awarded to those girls already invested in Girl Scouts.

Girl Scout Council of the Nation’s Capital serves the Greater Washington Region, which includes the District of Columbia, eight counties in Maryland, ten counties in Virginia and seven counties in West Virginia. Girl Scouts was founded in 1912. For more information on how to join, volunteer, or donate to Girl Scouts, visit wWw.gscnc.org.

Private Schools

Private School Admissions: Experts Offer Tips for Writing the Essay

Parents should be completely forth-coming with the information that they would like the school to know about the child. They should feel free to share information that they view as important around school issues. For example, we would rather hear about the areas in which the girl both struggles and is suc- cessful rather than only the areas in which she is successful. We enjoy hear- ing about the parents’ hopes for their daughter at the institution. That is a lovely way to start a relationship be- tween school, the parent and the student,” said Ann Richardson Miller, director of admission and financial aid, The Madeira School, McLean.

“The Admissions Committee looks at the whole application; no one part is most important. The committee consid- ers: Will this child do well here? Will he or she be able to meet the academic expec- tations? Do the family’s hopes and expectations meet with the mission of the school? It’s about making sure the school, the student, and the family are a good fit,” said Diane Dunning, director of ad- mission and financial aid at St. Stephen’s & St. Agnes School in Alexandria.

“We wanted to ask parents to share stories about their child that would al- low us to get to know them better and provide insight into their complex and delightful personalities. That there are no right or wrong answers,” said Mimi Mulligan, director of admission and en- rollment management, Norwood School, Potomac, MD.
Robinson Wrestling Beats Chantilly, Oakton

The Robinson wrestling team won a dual meet against Chantilly and Oakton on Dec. 13 at Oakton High School. Robinson defeated Chantilly, 67-12, and Oakton, 62-9.

Against Chantilly, Robinson won 12 of 14 weight classes, including nine by pin. Ralph Mpanu (120), Dane Roberts (132), Avery Henry (138), Jack Bass (152), Zak Despasquale (160), Ronald White (170), Dan Mika (182), Maxym Sears (195) and Jake Pinkston (285) each had a pin for Rams.

Robinson also won 12 of 14 weight classes against Oakton, with four victories coming via pin. Mason Rockman (120), Robbins (132), Jack Bass (152) and Zak Despasquale (160) had pins for the Rams.

Robinson 138-pounder Dallas Smith is a state champion and three-time state finalist. Bass (152) and Pinkston (285) are two-time state finalists. Mika (182) has a region runner-up finish under his belt and Robbins (132) is a two-time European Department of Defense Dependents Schools champion.

Greyson Olimpo (106) has qualified for states and Despasquale (160) was injured last year but placed at the 2011 state meet. Head coach Bryan Hazard wrote in an email that Joe White (170) is also a top wrestler for the Rams.

Robinson will host Herndon and Kettle Run in a dual meet at Herndon High School at 6 p.m. on Wednesday, Dec. 19, and will compete in the Beast of the East tournament at the University of Delaware on Dec. 22.

Lake Braddock Boys’ Basketball Beats West Springfield

After suffering back-to-back losses against Robinson and Herndon, the Lake Braddock boys’ basketball team responded with a 43-40 victory against West Springfield on Dec. 14.

The win improved the Bruins’ record to 3-2, including 1-0 in the Patriot District, and dropped West Springfield to 0-6.

According to stats from the Washington Post’s Web site, junior forward Will Gregorits led Lake Braddock with 21 points. Sophomore forward John Cronin had 14 for West Springfield.

Lake Braddock hosted Lee on Tuesday after The Connection’s deadline. The Bruins will travel to face Woodson at 7:30 p.m. on Friday, Dec. 21.

The Spartans faced Annandale on Tuesday, after the Connection’s deadline. West Springfield will travel to face South County at 7:30 p.m. on Friday, Dec. 21.

West Springfield Girls’ Basketball Improves to 60

The West Springfield girls’ basketball team remained undefeated with a 48-36 victory against Lake Braddock on Dec. 14, improving the Spartans’ record to 6-0.

According to stats from the Washington Post’s Web site, West Springfield’s Amy Berglund led all scorers with 24 points. Lake Braddock’s Natalie Butler scored 13 points and Marcia Altman added 11.

West Springfield hosted Annandale on Tuesday after the Connection’s deadline. The Spartans will host South County at 7:30 p.m. on Friday, Dec. 21.

Lake Braddock, which fell to 2-3, faced Lee on Tuesday after the Connection’s deadline. The Bruins will host Woodson at 7:30 p.m. on Friday.

Robinson boys limit rival Lake Braddock to season-low 41 points.

Afer a loss to Woodson on Nov. 30, Robinson boys’ basketball Coach Brian Nelson said the Rams played the kind of defense of which they’re capable for just one quarter. The result: a 17-point loss.

Facing rival Lake Braddock on Dec. 7, Robinson put forth its most complete defensive effort to date. The result: Rams fans rushing the court in response to the Rams’ victory.

Robinson limited Lake Braddock to a season-low point total and the Rams won, 55-41, on Friday at Robinson Secondary School. A pair of free throws by Will Grooms gave the Rams their largest lead of the night at 47-29 with 5:38 remaining in the fourth quarter. The Bruins responded with a 10-0 run to pull within eight, but Robinson scored eight of the game’s final 10 points to secure the win.

“Our defense won us that game. There’s no question about it,” Nelson said. “We didn’t shoot the ball particularly well, we didn’t rebound well at all, but we never quite on the defensive end. We did what we have to do—to be successful, and that’s being consistent at the defensive end.

... We got as close as we’ve been so far to 32 minutes of defensive intensity. We had a few lapses here and there, but that was our best defensive effort of the season across an entire game.”

After a 17-point loss to Woodson and a 16-point loss to Wakefield, Robinson responded with victories against South County and Lake Braddock.

By Jon Roetman
The Connection

Robinson senior Keegan Ruddy, left, scored a team-high 16 points against Lake Braddock on Dec. 7.

Lake Braddock junior forward Will Gregorits scored 17 points and 18 rebounds for the Bruins.

“Robinson looked ready to play,” Gregorits said. “In the first half, we looked nervous out there.”
Employment

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