

Fairfax Serving Areas of Burke CONNECTION

Supervisor John Cook (R-Braddock) greets residents of Kings Park West in Fairfax during the Wednesday, Jan. 30, groundbreaking ceremony for the swim club that will be transformed into parkland and a storm water retention basin.

'Stuff the Bus' Campaign Helps Feed the Hungry

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Public Still Hot For Ice Skating Rink in Fairfax

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PHOTO BY LINDSEY SMITH

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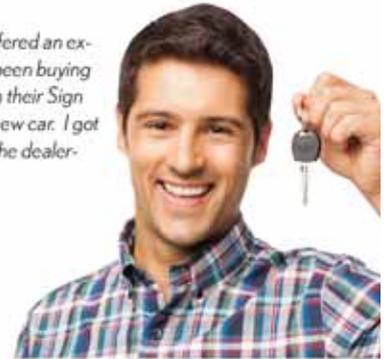
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From left, Craig Carinci, director of storm water planning, DPWES; John Dargle Jr., director, Park Authority; Brice Kutch, Bowman Consulting Group; Braddock District Supervisor John Cook, Fairfax County; Paul Thaler, project inspector, Utilities Design and Construction Division, DPWES; Tony Vellucci, Braddock District representative to the Park Authority Board; Roy Waugh, Bowman Consulting Group; Dave Bowden, director, Planning & Development, Park Authority; Jose Soto, Sagres Construction Corporation; Yudhie Brownson, project engineer, Utilities Design and Construction Division, DPWES; Elfatih Salim, Water-quality Benefits, DPWES; and Joseph Adzovie, senior engineering inspector, DPWES-UDCD.

From Community Eyesore To Community Asset

Transformation of Kings West Swim Club adds green space.

BY VICTORIA ROSS
THE CONNECTION

For several years, neighbors in the Kings Park West subdivision grappled with the problem of what to do with the big hole in the ground that was once the Kings West Swim Club.

Built in 1976, the Kings West Swim Club—owned and maintained by a voluntary membership organization, not a homeowner’s association—was similar to many suburban neighborhood pools built during the 1960s and 1970s. It was a community hot spot that featured basketball and tennis courts and a clubhouse.

Proximity to the pool was a plus. When Mary Haley bought her house in 1980, her deck overlooked the swim club, and she said it was great living within walking distance to the pool. “It was a gathering place when we moved in,” Haley said during a community meeting about the defunct pool.

But after years of declining membership and skyrocketing maintenance bills, Kings West closed down in 2005. Abandoned, the pool quickly became an eyesore, a health hazard and a magnet for troublemakers.

“There are probably hundreds of pools throughout Fairfax County that closed because of similar circumstances,” said Supervisor John Cook (R-Braddock).

ON WEDNESDAY, JAN. 30, Cook hosted a groundbreaking ceremony at the site to announce that the long-awaited plan to transform the dilapidated swim club into parkland and a storm water retention basin was officially underway.

“We turned what was a negative for the community into a big environmental positive,” Cook said.

Cook is credited with spearheading the effort to transform the nine-acre swim club property, which sits in a resource protection area near a stream, into

a neighborhood park. He worked closely with the county’s Department of Public Works and Environmental Services (DPWES) and the Fairfax County Park Authority (FCPA), as well as Braddock District Park Board member Tony Vellucci.

For nearly two years, Cook and Vellucci hosted dozens of community meetings and worked closely with neighbors to come up with a solution to the abandoned and neglected pool.

“I am proud to have been able to play a role in taking an abandoned pool that created serious health and safety concerns for the community and transform it into an environmental resource that will provide much needed water quality enhancements in the Rabbit Branch of the Pohick Stream Valley and protect a sensitive Resource Protection Area,” Cook said during the ceremony.

UPON COMPLETION, the new green space will replace the club house and parking lot, but will reuse the existing swimming pool in order to remove several hundred pounds of nitrogen, phosphorous and sediment that would otherwise pollute Rabbit Branch annually.

The newly created pervious surface will also reduce storm water runoff by 44,000 cubic feet per year, or roughly 10 percent of the annual rainfall that would flow through the site, further improving sediment control and reducing the effects of erosion.

Cook said that \$430,000 of storm water funds were provided because of these significant environmental benefits.

“When community and government come together and work cooperatively, successes like this happen,” Cook said. “The community has been very proactive throughout this whole process, maintaining its commitment to the swim club while also searching tirelessly for a way to reuse the property in a beneficial manner.”

He said the transformation project is a significant achievement for the Braddock District.

“The community gains additional green space. The removal of the pool and its amenities removes a potential health hazard, eyesore and crime magnet,” Cook said. “It’s a win for everyone here in the community; it’s a win for our storm water program, and it’s a win for parks.”



PHOTO BY GRETCHEN BULOVA

From left, State Sen. Chap Petersen (D-34) and Del. David Bulova (D-37) provided an overview of issues that are currently before the General Assembly and took questions from constituents during their winter Town Hall meeting at the City of Fairfax City Hall Saturday, Feb. 2.

Lawmakers Provide Assembly Overview

Petersen, Bulova host Town Hall meeting in Fairfax.

Transportation, redistricting and the proposed closure of the Northern Virginia Training Center were the top issues among constituents who showed up at the Town Hall meeting hosted by Del. David Bulova (D-37) and Sen. Chap Petersen (D-34) on Saturday, Feb. 2.

“We counted a little over 100 people ... I love the fact that so many people care enough to come out on a cold Saturday

morning,” said Bulova, who, along with Petersen, gave constituents an overview of major issues as well as information on bills the lawmakers introduced and the preliminary results of Bulova’s constituent survey.

“Many folks don’t realize exactly how many issues we deal with that directly affect our community,” Bulova said. “I love the questions and I love the dialogue with my constituents. This is truly what community is all about.”

Session Highlights:

- ❖ Session convened on Jan. 9; ends on Feb. 23.
- ❖ 1,042 bills introduced in the House; 684 in the Senate.
- Bulova’s Bills include:
 - ❖ HB 1584—Addresses what happens to digital assets (such as a Facebook page) if a minor dies.
 - ❖ HB 1674—Allows a local school board to apply innovations at a charter school to other schools in the district.
 - ❖ HB 2296—Creates a cost-share program to assist local governments with projects to clean up the Chesapeake Bay.
 - ❖ HB 1883—Makes texting and driving a reckless offense if it is the cause of an accident.
- Petersen’s bills include:
 - ❖ SB 733—Bill to raise gas tax by 10 cents, then index it based on increase in average miles per gallon.
 - ❖ SB 732—Bill to reallocate Commonwealth Transportation Board seats to represent Northern Virginia more fairly.
 - ❖ SB 734—Would allow homeowners who have been foreclosed on using false documents to receive compensation from banks.
 - ❖ SB739—Would increase the number of voting machines required by precinct and pay for them by the state.
 - ❖ To contact Del. Bulova in Richmond, call 804-698-1037 or email DelDBulova@house.virginia.gov.
 - ❖ To contact Sen. Petersen in Richmond, call 804-698-7534 or email Kathy@fairfaxsenator.com.

THE COUNTY LINE

Making the Difference Between Struggle and Success

BY CARMEN JORDAN

All youth need stability and loving parents to give them the best chance for success in life. This is why finding adoptive homes and permanent traditional foster homes for our youth is so critical. Over the last six years, as a Fairfax Families4Kids mentor, I have seen foster youth struggle, especially when circumstance has caused them to be moved frequently from foster care placement to foster care placement (including traditional foster homes and foster group homes).

There is one 14-year-old youth in particular that I recall that was originally removed from his biological home, then lived with another biological family member for a time, then was moved into a traditional foster home, then to a group foster facility—all of this taking place over a few short years. This youth has been participating at group FF4Kids mentoring events for several years. I remember the poor behavior demonstrated at times by this youth at the group events, including not following the rules, speaking out of turn in an effort to gain attention, occasional physical outbursts due to not being able to control his anger, actually teasing other foster youth in an effort to get them to chase him around the room.

This behavior was his way of crying out for the love and attention he was not receiving at “home.” He wanted so desperately to be seen and heard by anyone in his life. This foster youth was just recently placed in a loving, adoptive home. The youth’s behavior at the group mentoring events has made a complete turnaround. He no longer needs to be the center of attention, always has a smile on his face, and demonstrates positive interaction with both mentors/volunteers and the other foster youth. This is due to him finally feeling safe and knowing that there are loving adults that he can trust to protect and take care of him. There is no amount of support from the county, school system, programs, and organizations that can replicate the day in and day out support that a child receives from a loving family.

MY HOPE is that as a community, we do more to seek out Fairfax County families that are willing to provide loving adoptive and long-term foster homes for foster youth. There is a reason that the name of our program is “Fairfax Families4Kids.” It is our mission to find Fairfax County families for these foster kids. Mentoring through the program helps prepare these youth for placement. The county’s ability to more effectively find long-term, loving homes for foster youth is the key to a foster youth’s ability to grow to become mature, responsible, independent adults.

I have mentored many foster youth both through their years in foster care and their transition out of foster care. Though many foster youth have positive transitions out of foster care into independent, adult lives, there are many foster youth whose outcomes are less successful.

I can tell you stories about Fairfax County foster youth that transition out and become homeless within weeks or months. They share with me the “life skills” they have learned to survive.

“The metro trains/buses run all night except 3 to 6 a.m., so if you have metro money, you can ride all day and night to stay warm. Then you just need to walk the streets during those hours.

* Another youth said he sleeps on the floor of a



Carmen Jordan, mentor for Fairfax Families4Kids: “My hope is that, as a community, we do more to seek out Fairfax County families that are willing to provide loving adoptive and long-term foster homes for foster youth.”

About the Author

Carmen Jordan of Reston has been a mentor for Fairfax Families4Kids for six years. She is considered one of the most experienced mentors in the program. In addition to working full-time as a marquee account manager at Deltek in Herndon, Jordan makes herself available to “troubleshoot” for the children and families she mentors. In the following column, she details her experiences with the program, and at-risk foster youth.

friend’s motel room or catches a few hours of sleep at the 24-hour McDonald’s until the police ask him to leave.

❖ They can tell you about their stays at the various community homeless shelters. “The crack heads and heroin addicts will steal from you so you need to keep your stuff with you at all times.”

❖ They will tell you where they can find public computers where they can apply online for jobs. They can make enough money to feed themselves but not enough to find permanent housing. They live with health ailments because they no longer have health insurance.

AT TIMES it is painful to witness, but as mentors, our mentoring does not cease just because they transition out of foster care. Through FF4Kids mentoring, a trusting relationship is formed, allowing foster youth to be receptive to the advice and counseling that we have to offer. This is key: if there is no trust, it is difficult for foster youth to accept advice and counseling.

For many of these foster youth, the relationships they have with their mentor is the longest term relationship they have with a responsible adult. I can’t tell you how many times a social worker, case worker, life skills coach or foster parent has said “Carmen, you have known him longer. Talk to him and explain how important it is for him to stay in school, obtain his high school diploma.”

It has been an honor and privilege to mentor many of the foster youth within our Fairfax County community. They have taught me more about perseverance through adversity than I could ever teach them. Mentoring can be difficult at times, they will make missteps along the way but they will also surprise you with their ability to accomplish goals they have set for themselves in an effort to become mature, independent young adults. Mentoring is about being there for them through the ups and downs!

Building Blocks for Success

Fairfax Families4Kids: a community of hope.

BY SUPERVISOR MICHAEL FREY

When it comes to building buildings or fixing things, Fairfax County does a great job. Schools, fire stations, parks—the county has a proven track record of exemplary projects.

Building or fixing families and people—that’s tougher to evaluate.

Fairfax is probably no better or worse than most local governments. Fixing people is hard. There is no plan that, if followed to the letter, results in a split family being made whole, or a person with mental illness or substance abuse issues being cured. People are different than buildings.

Maybe that’s why I was so excited about the Fairfax Families4Kids program when I was introduced to it, and became such a huge supporter of it immediately.

Kids in foster care really have the deck stacked against them. For whatever reason their family situation didn’t work and someone—typically the courts—stepped in and forced change. They are left looking to total strangers to do what their family should have done but couldn’t. That’s a lot to ask. They are dependent on government programs to find them temporary housing, maybe a permanent foster home, and for some of the luckier kids, a family.

FF4Kids is a partnership between the county and a whole lot of people who really believe these kids in foster care deserve more help. The program offers the kind of opportunities and experiences that the county can’t possibly provide by itself. Without the volunteers, who serve as mentors, friends, teachers and occasionally substitute parents, most of these kids would bounce from one temporary situation to the next, usually aging out of foster care with little skills, no love, and little chance for future success.

I have been so impressed with everyone I have met who is involved with the program. It has increased my sense of optimism about the chances that more of



Supervisor Michael Frey (R-Sully)

these kids will find forever homes with adoptive families. Clearly, there is a positive effect on the kids when they see the mentors devoting so much time and effort to them. Many of these kids have never had the love and attention they get within this program. Certainly they have never had the life education they get, and for the first time many of them begin to believe in themselves. Self-confidence and optimism are not qualities you find in many foster children. A program that gives them those two things, in my mind, can’t help but benefit them.

There have been success stories for kids in this program, including adoption of some of the children by some of the mentors. Of course, not every child has been so lucky. Some still age out of the system with no family back-up to catch them if they fall. But they do have the FF4Kids family, and that in itself is a confidence-builder. They also have life skills and social skills that they likely would not without the FF4Kids programs. There are no guarantees in life, but there is no doubt in my mind whether or not they find the adoptive family we all hope that they will, they will be much better prepared young adults.

As long as there are incredibly caring and dedicated people like the FF4Kids mentors and volunteers, I will be doing all I can to help support them.

BONNIE HOBBS/THE CONNECTION

NEWS

A Ticket to Hollywood

Fairfax Academy student Maddie Assel is on American Idol.

BY BONNIE HOBBS
THE CONNECTION

Fairfax Academy student Maddie Assel is a bubbly, outgoing, 17-year-old. She's busy with school, friends, college visits and—oh, yes, she's also a contestant on American Idol.

Viewers nationwide saw her on the popular TV singing competition, Thursday, Jan. 24, as she belted out her own rendition of the Beatles song, "Oh, Darling." She was auditioning for the show in Baton Rouge, La., and made such an impression on the judges that she got a ticket to Hollywood to compete further.

"I've watched American Idol for so many seasons and have seen people holding a golden ticket," said Assel. "But it's one of those dreams you never think will happen to you."

Her name's pronounced "as-SELL," with the accent on the second syllable, and she lives in Clifton's Little Rocky Run community. She's also been singing since age 3, both at home and as a child doing errands with her parents, Teri and Allan, who both support her music endeavors.

Now, she's almost all grown up and even has her



Fairfax Academy student Maddie Assel, of Clifton, performs on TV on the popular singing-competition show, American Idol.

own You Tube account, youtube.com/therealmaddiesaith, where she did covers of The Weekend's "Wicked Games" and "Like Me" by 2 Chainz. "I haven't updated it lately," said Assel. "But I plan on adding songs weekly."

She's also gaining even more exposure for her talents via American Idol. Her friend Kara Perdue, plus her grandmother, Sylvia Assel of New Orleans, nominated her for the show together.

"They know each other and had videos of me singing, so they sent one to 'American Idol' last summer," explained Assel. "And I was one out of seven chosen

SEE MADDIE, PAGE 11

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Homeless, Not Hopeless

BY PAM MICHELL
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, NEW HOPE
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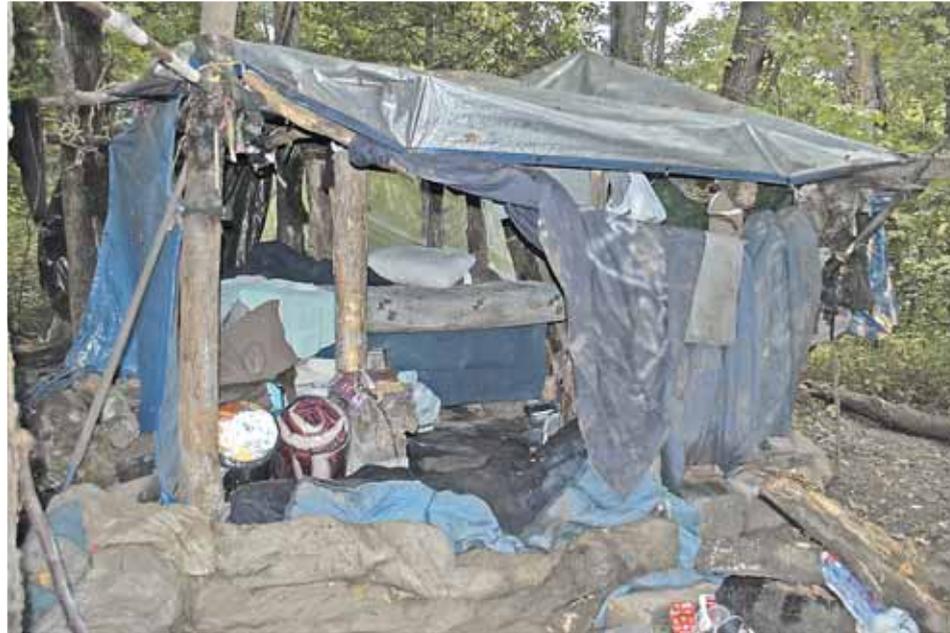
George and Mary spent many years homeless and unsheltered in Fairfax County. Yes, Fairfax County, one of the wealthiest counties in the country. But in Fairfax County, homeless persons such as George and Mary are generally hidden. They live in the woods, behind dumpsters, and in shopping centers. Out of sight, out of mind.

For many years, local non-profit partners have been working with county staff day in and day out to offer persons who find themselves homeless a chance to start anew. When given the stability of housing and the support of professionals and volunteers, homeless adults—including those who have lived many years on the streets and in the woods—can and do change and become stable, contributing members of our community. We non-profit homeless services providers can tell story upon story of what a difference stable housing and supports can make in a life of someone whom others have given up on, whom others have discarded as “hopeless.”

In January 2012, 697 single adults were counted as homeless in Fairfax County and 51 percent of them (353) were chronically homeless—12 consecutive months or four separate incidences of homelessness in the past three years; 24 percent of homeless adults were unsheltered. These numbers are going up.

This month you can help us find out who is “out there.” You can hear their stories and you can help provide them the housing they need.

As part of a nationwide effort to put a name and a face to each



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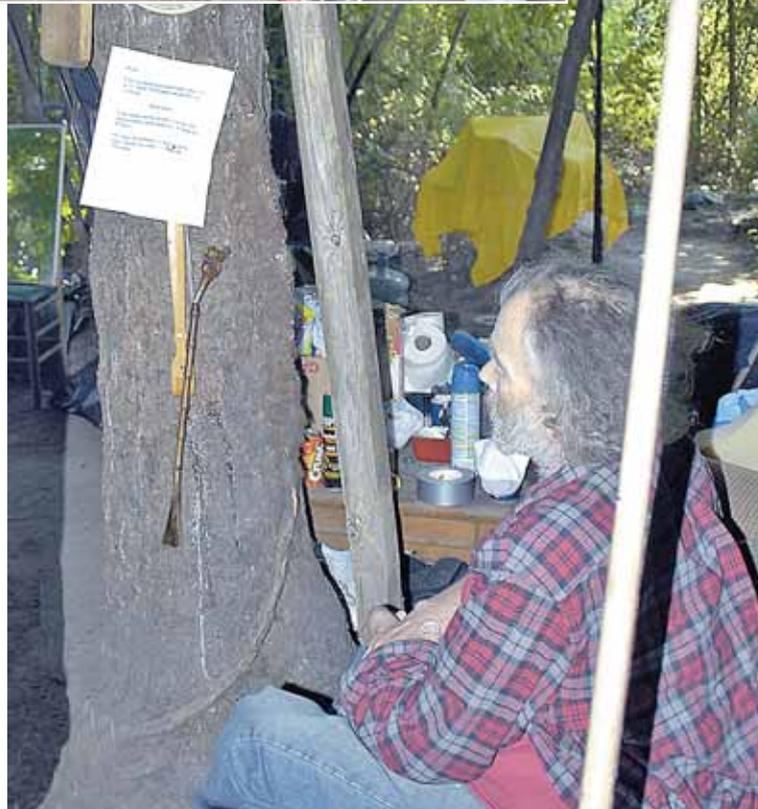
Homeless camp: In January 2012, 697 single adults were counted as homeless in Fairfax County and 51 percent of them (353) were chronically homeless.

number, the Fairfax-Falls Church community is participating in a national campaign—100K Homes—that will help us understand who is homeless, why they are homeless and how we can get them housed.

Join us on Feb. 25, 26, and/or 27, as a part of a volunteer team visiting campsites to interview homeless individuals. On March 1 we will give a detailed report to the community about who we found and where we go from here. See <http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/homeless/100khomes/> for details.

Help us help everyone in Fairfax County find a way home.

For more information on New Hope Housing in Alexandria, go to www.newhopehousing.org.



The Fairfax-Falls Church community is participating in a national campaign—100K Homes—that will help in understanding who is homeless, why they are homeless and how we can get them housed.

We Are a Family

To the Editor:

Thank you for the wonderful articles highlighting the positive impact of Fairfax Families4Kids and the relationships and families that have come about because of the program.

As a mentor, I know firsthand how important mentoring programs such as Fairfax Families4Kids can be in a child's life.

Initially I got involved with

FF4Kids because I wanted to give back. In other words, I wanted to be there for children because I have had adults in my life that have mentored me and helped to mold me into the person I am today.

Also, my grandparents and my mother have been foster parents and I have seen the impact on foster kids of hav-



Shavonne Hayes

ing loving/caring adults in their lives.

What I have realized is that spending time with the kids has had a tremendous impact on me. I think of the various experiences of the kids—multiple foster homes, aging out without a place to live or no job. It always reminds me to remember how

truly blessed I am no matter what happens. If they can survive the

hand life has dealt to them then there is nothing I cannot overcome. I continue to be amazed and humbled by their resiliency.

To see the challenges they have aging out of the system makes me want to do all I can to ensure they have the support they need. We are more than mentors and mentees. We are a family.

Shavonne Hayes
Sterling

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NEWS



Jonathan and Roxanne Daley of Fairfax purchase a gift card from Wal-Mart to help restock Our Daily Bread's pantry shelves during a "Stuff the Bus" stop on Saturday, Feb. 3, at the Fairfax Wal-Mart.



(From left) Angie Carrera of Op3; Chris Garris, Our Daily Bread's food program manager and volunteer coordinator; Sharon Bulova, chairman of the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors and Wendy Lemieux of OP3 encourage shoppers to purchase gift cards.

'Stuff the Bus' Campaign Helps Feed the Hungry

Donations continue to increase as campaign enters third year.

BY VICTORIA ROSS
THE CONNECTION NEWSPAPERS

Local grocery stores were packed this weekend with shoppers stocking up on Super Bowl snacks for the annual football fan party. At the Wal-Mart in Fairfax, shoppers were greeted with colorful displays of chips, dips and other party favorites.

They were also greeted by volunteers from Our Daily Bread (ODB), who were handing out flyers and encouraging shoppers to donate gift cards or specific items to restock ODB's pantry shelves. A Fairfax nonprofit for nearly 30 years, ODB provides food and other critical services to the working poor, the elderly and the disabled. More than half of ODB's clients are local children.

Dianne Hon, a Vienna resident, said "Stuff the Bus" makes it easy to donate. "I am already here for groceries and other items, especially since it's the day before the Super Bowl, so it's very convenient to pick up a few extra items for a worthy cause," Hon said.

"Thank you for doing this," Hon said to the volunteers. "You made this so easy."

Jonathan and Roxanne Daley of Fairfax donated a gift card to the campaign. "It's too easy to forget that there are people in Fairfax County who go hungry," Roxanne Daley said. "I love the gift card idea. It's easy and you know you're helping someone get what they want."

FAIRFAX BOARD OF SUPERVISORS CHAIRMAN Sharon Bulova, who greeted shoppers and encouraged them to donate on Saturday, Feb. 2, said gift cards are especially helpful for a number of reasons.

"There's a dignity about it," Bulova said. "You don't stand out from other shoppers with a gift card, and you can purchase what you want for a special recipe, or if you have specific dietary needs."

Chris Garris, ODB's food program manager and volunteer coordinator, said they are encouraging more people to donate gift cards, particularly because they help clients purchase fresh food. "A \$20 gift card

helps families supplement our pantry's non-perishable food with milk and meat."

Garris said the timing of the Stuff the Bus campaign—which is intentionally scheduled between Martin Luther King Day in January and Presidents Day in February—is important for local pantries because it occurs after the seasonal dose of good will.

"During the fall and holiday season, Our Daily Bread's food pantry is overwhelmed with donations from the community," she said. "But by February, our supplies are often running low even though the need for food is greater than ever."

"Stuff the Bus is an important component in restocking pantries after the holidays," Bulova said. "The need for healthy food is ever growing and the interest for Fairfax County residents to help is there, so we are happily providing the bridge to bring them together."

THE CAMPAIGN, now in its third year, is a partnership between Fairfax County Office of Public Private Partnerships (OP3); MV Transportation Inc., which operates the FASTRAN buses and provides volunteers; local nonprofits; and grocery store chains. All donations go directly to local nonprofit organizations that help feed needy families and individuals in the Fairfax-Falls Church Community.

"The residents of Fairfax and our partners, like MV Transportation and Frank & Co., have really come out in support of Stuff the Bus this year. Each year, we get more donations," said Michael Artson, chief planner with the county's Neighborhood and Community Services (NCS) Department, one of the food drive's organizers.

"Food pantries address a critical need which is especially acute after the holidays, the Stuff the Bus campaign helps us help our community. Its importance to helping stock the shelves can't be overstated," said Roxanne Rice, executive director, Food for Others.

Last year, more than 25,000 lbs. of food was collected for local pantries, all benefiting local nonprofits that help feed needy families in the Fairfax community.

At the end of Saturday's Stuff the Bus campaign, Juliet Reyes of Herndon, a Wal-Mart employee, who was in the middle of her shift as a cashier, asked ODB volunteers if she could donate cash. "I've been listening to people talk about this, and I want to help too. People here shouldn't go hungry."

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Men, women and children work up Super Bowl appetites skating around the rink at Fairfax Ice Arena.



PHOTO BY TIM PETERSON/ THE CONNECTION

Public Still Hot for Ice Skating Rink in Fairfax

Michael Weiss' former training site hosts the next generation of Olympians.

BY TIM PETERSON
THE CONNECTION

It's one of life's ironies: we love to complain about how cold it is, yet the arctic activity of ice skating continues to be a major recreation destination. Though he's been a hockey guy all his life, Fairfax Ice Arena Manager Andy Heckmann doesn't get it either. "I never understand the psychology," he said, "why people come here when it's cold."

WHATEVER THEIR REASONING, skaters of all shapes and sizes are coming in from the freezing outdoors en masse to greet the chilly rink inside at Fairfax. In addition to public skating hours offered seven days a week, all year long (except Christmas Day), the nearly 40-year-old arena hosts all levels of skating lessons and camps, birthday parties, five divisions of Fairfax Hockey League for adult

players and a slew of competitive figure skaters with the Skating Club of Northern Virginia.

Serving as inspiration for the young skaters training on-site is the fact that two-time Olympic figure skater and WT Woodson High School graduate Michael Weiss once trained in the very same rink. Weiss, a national champion and World bronze medalist, worked with coach Audrey Weisiger who had married into the Weisiger family that still owns the facility.

Though Weiss' one-time presence and history enhance the rink's popularity and charm, Heckmann doesn't think there's that much more draw for skaters than the simple paradoxical truth: "If it's winter, and it's Saturday, it's usually pretty insane," he said. At least until the Zamboni makes an appearance.

For full public skating hours and rates, visit www.fairfaxicearena.com.



Kate Main, freshman, Robinson Secondary School

"I love to go here to spend time with my friends in the winter-time. I'd consider myself a good skater, my friends are OK. It's basically the one thing we do together in the winter."



Grayson Kilgo, senior, Robinson Secondary School

"Ever since I was in elementary school, my sister and I took lessons at Fairfax Ice Arena, so we've known it for a long time. I still go with my whole family."



Victoria Lewan, sophomore, Robinson Secondary School

"My mom used to be a figure skater, so we would come here a lot. We would bond over that. She didn't push me into it—it's too expensive. Instead I became a swimmer."

VIEWPOINTS

Why do you like coming to the Fairfax Ice Arena?

—TIM PETERSON



Tiffany Lee (left), junior, Robinson Secondary School

"We're here because it's my sister's birthday party today. I like skating in general, and I never fall. She falls [points to friend, Bonnie]."

Bonnie Chung (right), junior, Robinson Secondary School

"I like this rink because you can come and skate in any season, any time. I like Reston too, but Fairfax is better because sometimes Reston is way too cold."



Leathy Leggett (top right), housewife/photographer, McLean

"We come once or twice a year with our three children. Today, they were bored, and it's cold out, so here we are! And we wanted to wear them out so we can watch the Super Bowl."

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SATURDAY/FEB. 9

Valentine's Wine Tasting. Noon-6 p.m., at Total Wine, 6801 Bland St., Tower Shopping Center, Springfield. Taste and see what tempts the palate and take home a bottle for the big day. 703-912-9387 or www.totalwine.com.

Contra Dance. 7:15-8 p.m. and 8-10:45 p.m., at RCC Hunters Woods, 2310 Colts Neck Rd., Reston. Susan Taylor calls contra dances and squares to the music of the June Apple Band; an hour-long workshop precedes the dance, which begins at 8 p.m. and requires no partner. 703-476-4500.

Mark Morris Dance Group. 8 p.m., at George Mason University Center for the Arts, 4400 University Dr., Fairfax. The troop whose founding choreography was called one of the greatest of our time by Mikhail Baryshnikov and which is highly reviewed by The New York Times comes to Fairfax performing three pieces, "The Office," "Socrates" and "Festival Dance." \$23-46. 888-945-2468 or cfa.gmu.edu.

MONDAY/FEB. 11

Rhyme Time Valentine. 10:30 a.m., at Kings Park Library, 9000

Burke Lake Road, Burke. Stories, rhymes and Valentine's Day fun for children ages 3-5 accompanied by an adult. www.fairfaxcounty.gov/library/branches/kp/.

SUNDAY/FEB. 10

Roses and the Lost Art of Natural Perfumery. 2-4 p.m., at Merrifield Garden Center, 12101 Lee Highway, Fairfax. Arlington Rose Foundation hosts Tara Krause of the Organic Perfumery and the fourth generation artist-alchemist talks botanicals, roses and herbs; light refreshments and bouquets as door prizes included. 703-371-9351.

THURSDAY/FEB. 14

Preschool Storytime. 10:30 a.m., at the City of Fairfax Library, 10360 North St., Fairfax. Stories, songs and activities with a Valentine's Day theme for children ages 3-5 accompanied by adult. 703-293-6227 or www.fairfaxcounty.gov/library/branches/fx/.

Romance Package. Overnight, at the Springfield Hilton, 6550 Loisdale Road, Springfield. Champagne in your room and breakfast in bed to celebrate your love. Reservations. www.hilton.com/Springfield.

CALENDAR

To have community events listed, send to south@connectionnewspapers.com or call 703-778-9416 with questions. Deadline for calendar listings is two weeks prior to event.

THURSDAY/FEB. 7

Toddler Time. 10:30 a.m., at the City of Fairfax Library, 10360 North St., Fairfax. Stories, songs and activities to build children's early literacy skills; ages 2-3 with adult. www.fairfaxcounty.gov/library/branches/fx/.

FRIDAY/FEB. 8

You're a Good Man, Charlie Brown. 7:30 p.m., at Fairfax High School, 3601 Rebel Run, Fairfax. The FX Players present the junior/senior musical based on the Peanuts characters and benefiting the senior scholarship; join Snoopy, Charlie Brown and the gang. for adults, \$10 purchased online and \$15 at the door; for children ages 6-12, \$8 online and \$10 at the door; ages 5 and under, free. 703-219-2200 or www.fxplayers.org.

Mark Morris Dance Group. 8 p.m., at George Mason University Center for the Arts, 4400 University Dr., Fairfax. The troop highly reviewed by The New York Times comes to Fairfax performing three pieces, "The Office," "Socrates" and "Festival Dance." \$23-46. 888-945-2468 or cfa.gmu.edu.

Jenelle Lynn Randall, You're Gonna Hear From Me. 8 p.m., at George Mason University in the Harris Theatre, 4400 University Dr., Fairfax. Mason alumna, Broadway veteran and jazz singer Jenelle Lynn Randall sings a tribute performance to jazz legend Nancy Wilson. \$15,



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Gay Men's Chorus of Washington, D.C., in Concert

A concert by Gay Men's Chorus of Washington, D.C., a select vocal ensemble, to perform on Saturday, Feb. 9, at 8 p.m. at the Jewish Community Center of Northern Virginia, 8900 Little River Turnpike, Fairfax. 703-537-3036 or www.jccnv.org.

general admission; \$10 for students, staff, seniors, faculty and groups. 888-945-2468 or cfa.gmu.edu.

\$8 online and \$10 at the door; ages 5 and under, free. 703-219-2200 or www.fxplayers.org.

SATURDAY/FEB. 9

You're a Good Man, Charlie Brown. 11 a.m., 7:30 p.m., at Fairfax High School, 3601 Rebel Run, Fairfax. The FX Players present the junior/senior musical based on the Peanuts characters and benefiting the senior scholarship; join Snoopy, Charlie Brown and the gang. for adults, \$10 purchased online and \$15 at the door; for children ages 6-12,

SUNDAY/FEB. 10

You're a Good Man, Charlie Brown. 2 p.m., at Fairfax High School, 3601 Rebel Run, Fairfax. The FX Players are Snoopy, Charlie Brown and the gang. for adults, \$10 purchased online and \$15 at the door; for children ages 6-12, \$8 online and \$10 at the door; ages 5 and under, free. 703-219-2200 or www.fxplayers.org.

THURSDAY/FEB. 14

Bob's Discount Furniture Donation and Opening Reception. 9:45 a.m., at Bob's Discount Furniture, Greenbriar Shopping, 13055A Lee Jackson Memorial Highway, Fairfax. Entertainment and refreshments offered at the ribbon cutting as the organization presents \$25,000 to 16 local schools (between Fairfax and Waldorf, Md., at a concurrent opening) for arts and education programs. www.facebook.com/mybobs.

Friends of the Burke Centre Library Used Book Sale. 1-6 p.m., at Freds Oak Road, Burke. Discover thousands of books for adults and children. 703-249-1520.

FRIDAY/FEB. 15

Friends of the Burke Centre Library Used Book Sale. 1-6 p.m., at Freds Oak Road, Burke. Discover thousands of books for adults and children. 703-249-1520.

SATURDAY/FEB. 16

Friends of the Burke Centre Library Used Book Sale. 1-6 p.m., at Freds Oak Road, Burke. Discover thousands of books for adults and children. 703-249-1520.

TUESDAY/FEB. 19

22nd Annual Board of Supervisors Breakfast. 7-9:30 a.m., at the Waterford in Fair Oaks, 12025 Lee Jackson Memorial Highway, Fairfax. A morning of information and great networking that gives businesses and residents of Fairfax County an opportunity to hear straight from the Board of Supervisors about what is happening in Fairfax County. \$30-\$50. www.leadershipfairfax.org.

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Maddie Goes to Hollywood

FROM PAGE 5

from hundreds of thousands of nominations like this, in the whole country.”

SHE CAME HOME from school one day, toward the end of October, and her parents told her she had to fly immediately to New Orleans to audition for LSU’s music program. Since she’d been applying to that and other prestigious music schools, she was excited.

“My mom and I flew together and were met by my grandma,” said Assel. “Then we went out to dinner together at Café Du Monde and a band started playing my favorite song, ‘Sitting on the Dock of the Bay,’ by Otis Redding. My grandma told me to get up and go sing with them, and I decided, ‘Why not? I’m in the French Quarter and will never get this opportunity again,’ so I did.”

While she sang, people started recording her on cameras and cell phones. “I thought they were confused, but I kept on singing,” said Assel. “Then all of a sudden, I heard a deep voice behind me saying, ‘Yo, Maddie,’ and I turned around and it was Randy Jackson.

“I was completely shocked; I had no idea what was going on,” she continued. “So I started crying because I was so overwhelmed. Then Randy told me to sing for him, and I did. I sang, ‘Oh, Darling,’ and he said, ‘I can’t wait to hear you tomorrow at auditions.’ He said it would be before him, Mariah Carey, Nicki Minaj and Keith Urban in Baton Rouge. It was just surreal.”

Then Jackson told Assel who’d nominated her. “It was amazing,” she said. “It opened my eyes to the fact that other people believed in me, too.”

Still, she was nervous before her big performance. “I wasn’t pre-



American Idol host Ryan Seacrest poses with Fairfax Academy student Maddie Assel after she receives her golden ticket to Hollywood.

pared because everything was happening so fast that I didn’t have time to practice,” she said. “But I got four ‘yesses’ from the judges.”

Walking into the room, said Assel, “I was just so excited to meet the judges. Everyone knows Mariah Carey, and she and the others all have such talent and have made names for themselves in the industry. So getting to sing before them was just incredible.”

She made it to Hollywood Week but, beyond that, she can’t talk about how she did because those shows haven’t aired yet. So people will have to tune in to find out. But she enjoyed being a tourist, visiting Hollywood for the first time. “It was the experience of a lifetime, getting to see all the things you see in movies,” said Assel. “I saw the Hollywood sign, the Kodak Theater and the Walk of Fame, and all the other contestants were nice to me and took care of me.”

SHE’S CONTINUING to go on college auditions “at the best music programs in the entire coun-

try, and it’s an honor to do that,” she said. Assel will also be in the spring showcase for singers at the Fairfax Academy, where she’s in the Musical Theater and Actors Studio program taught by Mike Replogle, who directs the academy.

“The academy program at Fairfax High lets you focus on and practice what you want to be in performing arts when you grow up,” she said. She’s in her second year there, and classmate Isabelle Baucum says Assel has a wonderful voice.

“I haven’t heard anyone else who sounds like her,” said Baucum. “She’s folksy, jazzy and poppy, with a versatile range, and totally her own artist.” As for Maddie the person, Baucum calls her fun and sassy in a sweet way. “I like her a lot and I’m happy for her,” she said. “I’m excited that she had this opportunity and is being noticed for it because she’s talented and deserves the recognition.”

Although Assel can sing rock, jazz and blues, she’s leaning more toward performing pop music in college, en route to becoming a professional recording artist. Her favorite singers are Beyoncé and Haley Reinhart, who finished third on “Idol,” a couple years ago.

“I was especially influenced by Haley, who opened the door for girls with those big, rock voices,” said Assel. And she was helped on “Idol” by voice coach, Sarah Pramstaller, a Chantilly High grad and FCPS teacher.

“I’ve always wanted to be on American Idol, but I thought, ‘No way I’d ever make it and sing on that stage,’” said Assel. “But I learned that everything you dream is a possibility and, if you work hard enough for something you really want, it can actually happen.”



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OPEN HOUSES SATURDAY/SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 9 & 10

When you visit one of these Open Houses, tell the Realtor you saw it in this Connection Newspaper. For more real estate listings and open houses, visit www.ConnectionNewspapers.com and click on the “This Week in Real Estate” link. Call Specific Agents to Confirm Dates & Times

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6010 Wilmington Dr.....\$579,900.....Sun 1-4.....David Unterman.....RE/MAX..703-869-1876
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Fairfax

6050 Colchester Rd.....\$649,900.....Sun 1-4..Carol Hermandorfer.....Long & Foster..703-503-1812
13403 Foxhole Dr.....\$365,000.....Sun 1-4.....Jo Ann L. Procvic.....Long & Foster..703-966-3351

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11107 Hampton Rd.....\$1,295,000...Sat 10-1Franklin Mendoza.....Weichert..703-282-2163
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WELLBEING

Geriatric experts say healthy lifestyle habits like regular exercise, eating a nutritious diet and brain challenges can help preserve mental health as we age.



PHOTOS CONTRIBUTED

Preserving Mental Health as We Age

Experts say diet, exercise and mental stimulation are key.

BY MARILYN CAMPBELL
THE CONNECTION

Randy Weadon walks six miles each day around the perimeters of his retirement community, Greenspring in Springfield. He also does crossword puzzles daily.

"During tax season, I walk around the halls and mentally do my income taxes in my head," said Weadon, a retired Coast Guard officer. "If I had not started walking, I don't know if I'd be alive. I am 86-and-a-half years old, but I don't feel that age at all."

Geriatric experts say healthy lifestyle habits like regular exercise, eating a nutritious diet and brain challenges can help preserve mental health as we age.

"The one thing that I always tell my patients is that if you don't use it, you lose it. I recommend crossword puzzles, mentally challenging games and reading, especially about current events," said Dr. Lisa Calusic, a psychiatrist at Inova Behavioral Health Services in Alexandria, and an Arlington, resident.

Researchers Pamela Greenwood and Raja Parasuraman, professors at the Department of Psychology at George Mason University in Fairfax, have spent more than 20 years studying the way the human brain ages with a focus on Alzheimer's disease. The two wrote a book, "Nurturing the Older Brain and Mind," in which they explore ways middle-aged people can stave off mental deterioration.

"We know that if we can put off dementing illnesses, even by a year or two through lifestyle changes, that will reduce the number of people with Alzheimer's disease, which is reaching epidemic proportions," Parasuraman says.



Randy Weadon, 86, does crossword puzzles and walks six miles each day.

The duo says that preventing and staving off mental deterioration is more important than ever now that workers are staying employed longer for economic reasons. Physical activity is an important tool as well.

"Exercise [is] the 'lifestyle' factor with the strongest effect," said Greenwood. "A number of different research groups have found benefits of aerobic exercise on both brain structure and function, and on cognitive performance."

Joel Martin, a professor of kinesiology at George Mason, agrees: "Regular exercise has been proven to slow the aging process," he said. "People have their actual age, which they can't do anything about, and their biological age. Someone could be 40 years old, live a very inactive lifestyle and not eat very well, which may cause them to be closer to 60 in terms of their biological age. Vice

versa: Someone who is 60 could be very active and eat a healthy diet and feel like they are much younger, perhaps a biological age closer to mid-40s."

As an octogenarian, Weadon credits his sharpness to regular mental challenges. Martin agrees. "Regularly engaging in activities requiring cognitive function is important," said Martin. "Most tissues in the body respond to stress placed on it by becoming stronger or adapting to handle the stimulus you place on it. If you lift weights, your muscles get bigger and stronger. If you don't do any sort of physical activity to stimulate your muscles, then they get smaller and become weaker. The brain is the same way, it needs regular stimulation to maintain its function."

Experts also say not to rule out the importance of good nutrition. "The antioxidants in foods, especially fruits and vegetables, can help to preserve and protect tissues from damage that occurs as part of the natural aging process," said Martin.



PHOTO BY MARILYN CAMPBELL

A study published last month in *Journal of the American Heart Association* showed that eating three or more servings of blueberries and strawberries per week may help women cut their risk of a heart attack by as much as one-third.

February is Heart Month

Diet and fitness experts offer suggestions for maintaining a healthy heart.

BY MARILYN CAMPBELL
THE CONNECTION

When Mary Elizabeth O'Conner enters a supermarket, she is careful to stay within the outer perimeters of the store. "Most grocery stores are designed so that the healthiest and non-processed food, like fresh vegetables and meat are kept on the outer edges," she said. She looks for heart-healthy foods like whole grains and fresh fruit.

O'Conner has two good reasons for being tuned in to nutrition: "Both of my parents died unexpectedly from heart attacks," she said. "My father died 15 years ago in February."

February is American Heart Month and health experts are encouraging diet and exercise changes that will lead to better heart health.

Joel Martin, Ph.D. an assistant professor of kinesiology at George Mason University in Fairfax, says the Dietary Approaches to Stop Hypertension (DASH) eating plan is often recommended for people who are at risk for heart disease.

"The diet has been proven by numerous research studies to lower blood pressure. High blood pressure is a major risk factor for serious heart problems, [like] heart attacks for example," he said. "The diet emphasizes fruits, vegetables, whole grains and lower amounts of sweets, red meat, and sodium. It especially emphasizes lower amounts of sodium to decrease blood pressure."

Two good options are strawberries and blueberries. In fact, a study published last month in the *Journal of the American Heart Association* showed that eating three or more servings of the berries per week may help women cut their risk of a heart attack by as much as one-third.

Consuming more Omega-3 fatty acids—found in fish, flaxseeds and nuts—has also been shown to lower the risk of heart disease.

There are some foods that should be avoided, say some experts. "[Foods that are] bad for hearts include cholesterol rich foods, like foods from animals. The current recommendation is beef once per week with a serving size the size of a deck of cards," said Laura Evans, assistant professor, George Mason University School of Nursing. "Avoid trans fats. These are modified fats found in processed foods, cheese, all processed foods and salt."

Andrew Meade of the Reston-based National Association for Sports and Physical Education, says that the average person can reduce his or her risk of heart disease by exercising for at least 30 minutes each day.

"That is the only way to realize any heart-health benefit," he said. "Exercising for 30 minutes most days of the week builds your cardiovascular endurance."

Martin, who agrees, said, "In terms of exercise habits for a healthy heart, just getting regular aerobic exercise is a good idea ... to ensure a healthy cardiovascular system."

SPORTS

Butler Too Much for TC

LB Senior totals 29 points, 22 rebounds in OT victory.

BY JON ROETMAN
THE CONNECTION

The T.C. Williams girls' basketball team this season snapped a nine-game losing streak against West Springfield, twice beating the three-time defending Patriot District champion during the month of January.

Defeating West Springfield for the first time since 2009 gave TC an opportunity to earn the No. 1 seed in this year's district tournament. But the Titans' journey to the top of the district standings was derailed on Tuesday night by Lake Braddock's 6-foot-4 matchup nightmare.

NATALIE BUTLER

scored 29 points, grabbed 22 rebounds and blocked seven shots as the Bruins defeated the Titans 56-54 in overtime on Tuesday, Feb. 5, at T.C. Williams High School.

Along with being a force in the paint, Butler, a 6-foot-4 senior who will play at Georgetown University next season, made four clutch free throws to help Lake Braddock move into a second-place tie with T.C. Williams. West Springfield sits atop the district standings with an 11-2 record, followed by the Bruins and Titans at 10-3. Lake Braddock would win a head-to-head tiebreaker with TC, having won both regular season meetings with the Titans.

Lake Braddock led 53-52 when junior Caitlyn Mandela went to the free-throw line with 13.6 seconds remaining in overtime. Mandela made her first attempt and missed the second. Butler grabbed the rebound, drew a foul and put the game out of reach by knocking down both foul shots. The Titans added a meaningless bucket in the closing seconds.

"I knew that the crowd was going to be loud and that there was going to be lots of distractions and a lot of pressure," Butler said about her game-clinching free throws. "I just really wanted to win and the team did a great job and I didn't want to let the team down. I sort of blocked everything out and just told myself, they're just two free throws—make them and move on."

Butler also made a pair of free throws to tie the score at 45-all with 41.4 seconds remaining in regulation. She finished the evening seven-for-nine at the foul line.

While Butler came up clutch at the charity stripe, it was her production in the paint during the second half that gave the Bruins a chance to win. After Butler totaled just five points in the first half, including a scoreless second quarter, Lake Braddock coach John Giannelli said the Bruins made an effort to get the ball inside.

"In the first half, we didn't look inside at all and we didn't swing the ball at all," Giannelli said. "We



Lake Braddock senior Natalie Butler scored 29 points and grabbed 22 rebounds against T.C. Williams on Tuesday, Feb. 5.

came in at halftime, we talked to Nat and we decided we need to swing the ball quicker and then Nat switches from post to post and then we get the ball inside or we swing it back. Our main goal was to get the ball inside to Nat. The more we swung the ball, the better chance we had to get it into her."

Butler responded with nine points in the third quarter, nine in the fourth and six in overtime.

T.C. Williams head coach Kesha Walton said the Titans tried to keep Butler from catching the ball down low. Six-foot sophomore Grace Patterson and 5-foot-10 senior Baylee Simpson battled in the paint, but it wasn't enough. In the teams' first meeting, Butler scored 40 points and grabbed 31 rebounds during a 76-65 victory against TC on Jan. 11, according to stats from the Washington Post's website.

"Baylee fought as hard as she could. ... Grace got out there and did the best that she could as far as banging [Butler]," Walton said. "That was our game plan: we knew we had to contain her if we wanted to come out successful tonight. ... She's a legit 6-4. Even if she catches the ball, there's nothing we can do but foul, so our goal is to try to keep it away from her as much as we can."

Junior guard Betsy Gallier scored 11 points for Lake Braddock. Junior guard Aryn Burrage scored six points and sophomore guard Christine McGrath finished with five.

LAKE BRADDOCK improved to 14-5 and extended its winning streak to five games. Tuesday was Giannelli's fourth game filling in for head coach Leigh Janis, who recently had a child.

Butler said the Bruins have handled the coaching transition well and she's pleased with the team's success. Lake Braddock finished 7-15 her sophomore season and 9-15 last year.

Giannelli, who came to Lake Braddock from Centreville this season, started the year as a varsity assistant and the head JV coach.

"Being on varsity since [I was] a sophomore, we weren't a threat," Butler said. "It's unbelievable to be a threat now in my senior year. It's great experience. There's a lot of pressure that comes with it, but I love it and I can't wait to play in the next game. Coach G has done a great job with Coach Janis. I think he blended perfectly with the team. There were no issues whatsoever. The girls respected him as a head coach and we all came to practice every day ready to work."

TC will close the regular season with a road game against Annandale at 5:30 p.m. on Thursday, Feb. 7. Lake Braddock will host West Potomac at 7:30 p.m. on Friday, Feb. 8.

Former West Springfield standout point guard April Robinson has started every game of her freshman season for the Duquesne women's basketball team.



PHOTO BY CRAIG STERLITZEL/THE CONNECTION

Robinson Excelling At Duquesne

West Springfield 2012 grad is Dukes' second-leading scorer.

BY JON ROETMAN
THE CONNECTION

April Robinson was a scared freshman when she arrived at Duquesne University in Pittsburgh. The former West Springfield standout was entering the world of Division I college basketball and wasn't sure of her place among her elder teammates.

"When she came on a visit, she was really quiet," said Duquesne junior forward Orsi Szecsi, who was Robinson's host during her visit. "I was the only person that she was talking to. When she came for school, she opened up, but she was a weak freshman, so we always made fun of her. She would just give you the look, the 'What's going on,' just staring at you, blank behind the eyes."

While Robinson's teammates gave her a hard time, and the freshman is still working on the whole "quiet" thing, the 2012 West Springfield graduate has shown the Dukes—and the rest of the Atlantic 10 Conference—there's nothing weak about her game.

Robinson, a 5-foot-8 point guard, earned a starting role and never let it go. Not only did Robinson secure a position of leadership as a true freshman—and the only freshman on the Duquesne roster—she has thrived in it. In 21 games, she's second on the team in scoring (9.0), minutes per game (27.8), assists (2.5) and total steals (31). She has twice been named A-10 Rookie of the Week (Dec. 3, 31) and has played a major role in Duquesne posting a 17-

4 record. As of Wednesday morning, the Dukes were third in the A-10 with a 6-1 record, behind Dayton (7-0) and Saint Joseph's (6-0).

Robinson hasn't been overwhelmed by playing such a prominent role.

"You just play. Starting as a freshman and playing a lot of minutes, it doesn't really mean anything because you go into each practice, each game like it's your last," Robinson said at George Washington University's Smith Center on Wednesday, Jan. 30, after the Dukes beat the Colonials 63-59 in double overtime. "You've just got to do whatever it takes to help your team get the W."

"She's come in, in my mind, and exceeded expectations," said McConnell-Serio, who received the 2004 WNBA Coach of the Year award with the Minnesota Lynx. "She has been tremendous from the beginning and competed. She has always been poised. ... We're better with her as a point guard. She makes plays, she scores, she creates ... she really understands what we're trying to do offensively and defensively and she's amazed me from the beginning of the season until now."

Robinson said the size, quickness and physicality of opponents on the college level are some notable differences from playing high school ball, but the biggest change has been dealing with full-court pressure: "You can't really breathe," she said.

"We basically build on her," Szecsi said. "I'm real proud of her because not many freshmen can do that at her position."

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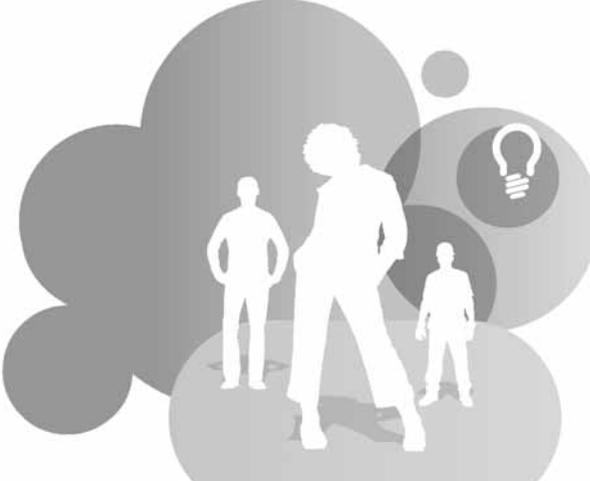
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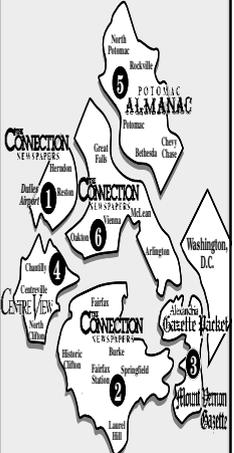
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21 Announcements

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DONALD YOUNG, PLEASE TAKE NOTICE that on September 14, 2012, a PETITION FOR ADOPTION was filed in the office of the Cabell County, West Virginia Circuit Court. PLEASE TAKE FURTHER NOTICE that a HEARING on this Petition is scheduled for March 8, 2013, at 9:15am, at the Cabell County Courthouse, located at 750 Fifth Avenue, Huntington, West Virginia 25701. Said hearing will be before Honorable David M. Pancake, Cabell County Circuit Court Judge.

Please be advised that your parental rights may be terminated in the proceeding. Also, you may appear and may any objections known or to otherwise protect your interest. You shall have thirty(30) days upon being served with this notice to respond to this notice and if you fail to respond within the required time you may not appear in or receive further notice of the adoption proceedings. A copy of the Petition, Case No.: 12-A-34, can be obtained at the Cabell County Circuit Clerk's office at the Cabell County Courthouse, located at 750 Fifth Avenue, Huntington, West Virginia, 25701, phone number 304-526-8622.

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21 Announcements **21 Announcements**

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