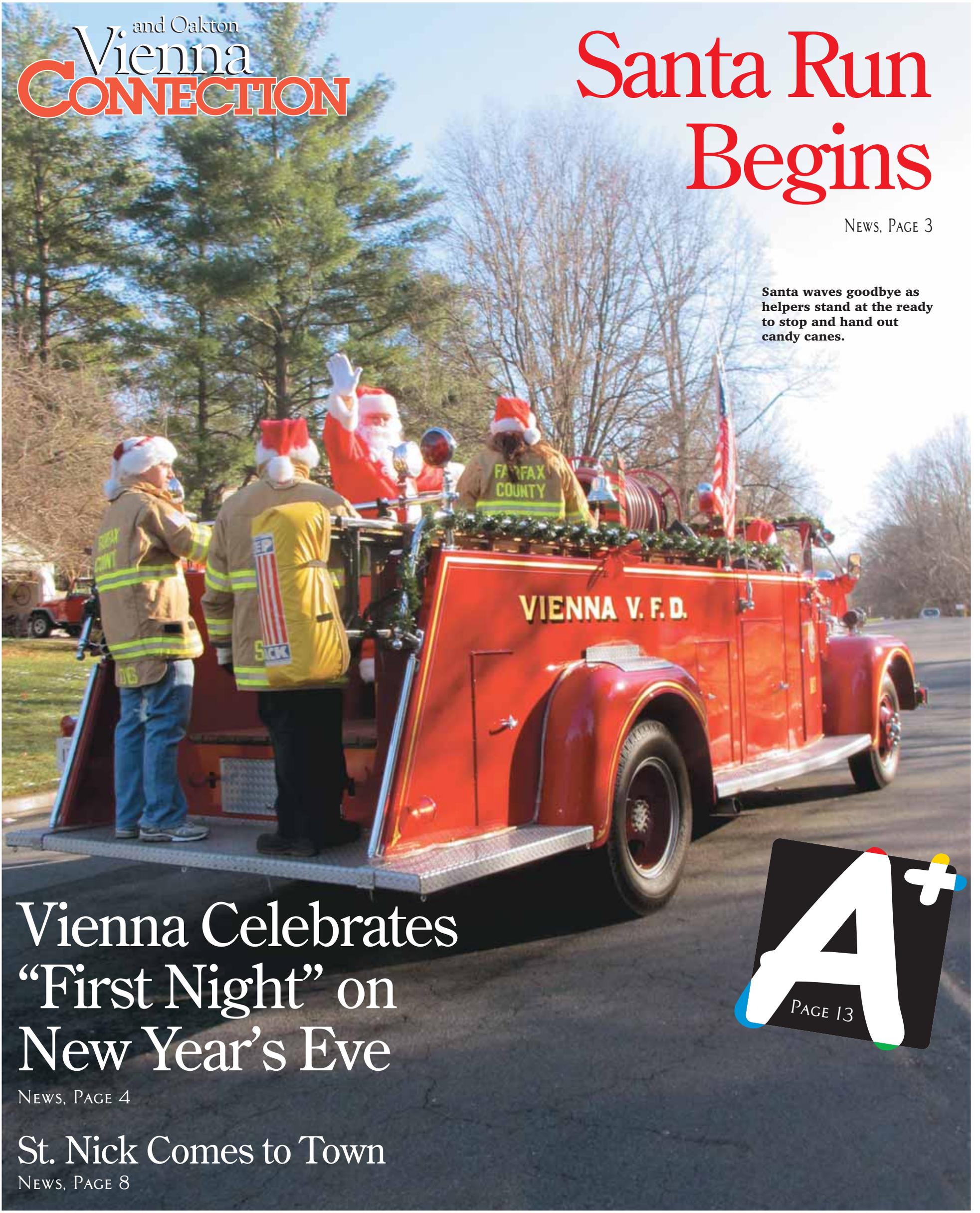


# Santa Run Begins

NEWS, PAGE 3

**Santa waves goodbye as helpers stand at the ready to stop and hand out candy canes.**



## Vienna Celebrates “First Night” on New Year’s Eve

NEWS, PAGE 4

## St. Nick Comes to Town

NEWS, PAGE 8



OPINION, PAGE 6 ♦ ENTERTAINMENT, PAGE 10 ♦ SPORTS, PAGE 12 ♦ CLASSIFIEDS, PAGE 14

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**Bill Sonntag, with Santa, is the biggest fan of the Vienna Volunteer Fire Department. Santa and his elves made a special trip to pick up Bill for the launch of the 2013 "Santa Run." Bill's parents say the VVFD volunteers all go well out of their way to look out for the people of the community.**



PHOTO COURTESY OF SONNTAG FAMILY

## Santa Run Begins

**Vienna Volunteer Fire Department volunteers cruise Vienna neighborhoods in antique fire engine.**

BY DONNA MANZ  
THE CONNECTION

In most places, people go to events. In Vienna, occasionally, events go to the people. And the annual Santa Runs, operated by the Vienna Volunteer Fire Department and volunteers, is an event that goes out to the people, the whole Vienna community, for a full week leading up to Christmas. The 2013 Santa Run kicked off on Dec. 15 with drives through side streets off Beulah Road near Meadowlark Gardens.

Every day, an antique 1946 Maxim fire engine, owned by Vienna's fire department, cruises through Vienna-area neighborhoods, siren and holiday music blaring as it travels. Onboard is a jolly Santa, Mrs. Claus and elves that dress up to look like emergency responders. Where children stand, elves jump off the fire truck to hand out candy canes to children and dog biscuits to dogs.

On Sunday's early afternoon run, passing cars honked continuously. Drivers and passengers, from kids to senior citizens, smiled and waved. Between the siren and the holiday music blaring, Santa and his elves announced their impending arrival even before they were visible. VVFD buys 3,000 candy canes and one box of dog biscuits for distribution. The activity is funded through the fire department's fundraisers.

There's something sentimental when older folks – 70s and 80s – come out of their homes to greet Santa. Perhaps, they are recalling their grown children's childhoods or their own. A great number of dogs raised their paws in acknowledgement (the paws were operated by humans but it's the thought that is meaningful). Sometimes, a young child peered out from behind a glass door or window.

"Vienna is definitely unique," said Chief Elf Willie Lorenc, onboard Sunday's run. Lorenc said that it's not uncommon for parents to bring out kids not fully dressed just to see Santa on the fire engine. "It gets behind the fire department. We realize we're part of something special to the town."

New this year is the "Santa tracker," something akin



PHOTOS BY DONNA MANZ/THE CONNECTION

**From babies to grandparents, everyone wants to see the Santa firetruck.**

to NORAD's Santa tracker, only Vienna's is specific to VVFD's routings. Click on the map on VVFD's website and you'll know exactly where Santa is during the run.

"The people at VVFD have the biggest hearts in town all year-long and are the ultimate heroes to us, and especially to our son, Bill," said Sara Sonntag.

On weekdays, the Santa Run begins about 5:30 p.m. and runs until 8:30 or 9 p.m. Most kids are probably in-bed by then, Lorenc said.

Santa runs continue until about Dec. 22. Schedule and make-up days for bad weather can be located at [www.vvfd.org](http://www.vvfd.org). Click on the "Santa tracker" when you are on the site. Kids can write to Santa at [santa@vvfd.org](mailto:santa@vvfd.org), and follow him on Twitter at @VVFDSanta.

## New Approach to Mental Health

**Reforms in wake of tragedy involving state senator's son.**

BY MICHAEL LEE POPE  
THE CONNECTION

Advocates for mental health services have been calling for improved services and increased funding for years, although the issue has been pushed aside year after year. But now that the son of state Sen. Creigh Deeds (D-25) committed suicide after stabbing his father, a new sense of urgency is emerging in advance of the upcoming General Assembly session. This week, Republican Gov. Bob McDonnell proposed adding \$38 million over two years to the existing \$250 million budget for community service boards across the commonwealth.

"It makes you wonder why a crisis was needed to initiate the type of funding that we need," said Pamela Barrett, a member of the Fairfax-Falls Church Community Services Board. "We are so far behind other states in mental health crisis response funding as it is, and it's something that the CSBs have been lobbying for and begging for for years."

McDonnell also issued an executive order 68 to convene a task force on improving mental health services and crisis response. The governor described his task force as a group of leaders in the mental health and law enforcement as well as the judicial system and private hospitals. Within minutes of McDonnell's announcement, Governor-elect Terry McAuliffe issued a statement commending the governor, an indication he intends to follow through when he assumes the reins of power next year. But advocates for mental health remain skeptical.

**FOR NOW**, the issue seems to have newfound momentum — the result of a series of events that unfolded last month, when an emergency custody order was issued for the senator's son but a psychiatric bed could not be located before the order expired. That's why one of the reforms proposed by the governor is allowing magistrates to extend the orders by two hours.

Another proposal would extend temporary detention orders to 72 hours, a proposal that would cost about \$1.6 million a year. Funding is also proposed for the Western State Hospital, where Northern Virginia jurisdictions send patients, which would be about \$680,000 a year.

"These proposals will make a dent, but this is certainly not going to solve the problem," said Judith Deane of the Arlington Community Services Board. "Northern Virginia jurisdictions put a lot of their own money into this, so in that sense we are better off than many other counties in Virginia. But we still have a lot of need."

Alexandria Community Services Board director Michael Gilmore said when he was director of the community services board that serves rural Bath County and Rockbridge County, the local funding for community services was about \$5 per capita when he left a decade ago. In Alexandria, by contrast, the local funding for community services is \$125 per capita. That's why a psychiatric bed might be much more difficult to find in the rural stretches of Virginia, where services are few and far between.

"Much of the state is dependent on billing Medicaid to cover the cost of the services they provide," said Gilmore. "But all five of the community services boards up here have much more local funding."

**THE PROPOSALS INCLUDE** expanding programs for child psychiatry and children's crisis response services as well as crisis intervention team programs, crisis stabilization services and discharge assistance programs. Other proposals include expanding mental health first aid programs, secure assessment centers and suicide prevention efforts. One initiative would spend \$1.8 million to create six secure crisis intervention team assessment centers where people can be held safely for evaluation and finding a bed without tying up law enforcement personnel.

"That's only \$300,000 a center," said Gilmore. "I think it's going to cost a lot more than that."



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## NEWS

# Vienna Celebrates "First Night" on New Year's Eve

**Vienna Business Association and Town of Vienna debut family-focused New Year's Eve celebration on Historic Church Street.**

BY DONNA MANZ  
THE CONNECTION

**F**irst Night Vienna is planned to be the best family-friendly New Year's Eve celebration the community has ever seen.

The Vienna Business Association [VBA] is partnering with the Town of Vienna to kick off the first-ever "First Night" celebration in Vienna. First Night Vienna, covering Historic Church Street, features four entertainment venues, food, musicians, vocalists, and activities for kids. Church Street closes down between Mill and Center streets for the evening's festivities from 7 p.m. to midnight.

The ball drops, figuratively-speaking, for kids at 9 p.m. Grown-ups can toast the New Year alcohol-free at midnight.

"Vienna should be doing something like this," said First Night Vienna chair, Michael Amouri of Caffe Amouri. "It's a thing that fits a town like Vienna. We're inventing something new here." Amouri said it's an event of community, businesses and the Town of Vienna coming together. "It's a family-friendly, alcohol-free New Year's celebration. You'll see your neighbors, make new friends."

Entertainers include local musicians, Vienna Idol winners and participants, and children's favorite magician, The Great Zucchini.

First Night Vienna is free to the public. There will be a main stage under an outside tent where the kids' entertainment will run from 7 to 9 p.m. Comic-magician The Great Zucchini was the first of kids' favorite performers to commit. Kids' entertainment offers music and puppets, too, and children will toast the New Year at 9 p.m.

After the kids' party closes, pop bands and vocalists perform until midnight. Throughout the First Night Vienna celebration, there will be four venues along Church Street with musical performers at each one. In addition to music, there will be food trucks for people to buy food from. The Freeman Store will be open, as well.

The Town of Vienna has thrown its full support and resources toward this project, Amouri said. And it is happening now because of the "incredible" and "dedicated" people who have been working on First Night Vienna since 2012. When Amouri first approached the former chamber of commerce representing Vienna a few years ago, the chamber wasn't interested, Amouri said. When he brought up the idea to the Vienna Business Association, they were enthusiastic. "We want to do it," VBA told Amouri.

The four entertainment venues are divided into genres. The main stage, tented, is devoted to children from 7 to 9 p.m., and after the kids toast the New Year, the stage

The Vienna Business Association and the Town of Vienna present  
**FIRST NIGHT VIENNA 2013**  
NEW YEAR'S EVE CELEBRATION  
**December 31st 7PM - 12AM**  
**Historic Church Street**  
Free Admission • Food Trucks • Alcohol-Free

Entertainment Schedule:  
 - 7:00-9:00 PM: The Great Zucchini, After Hours Party Band  
 - 8:00-9:00 PM: Justin Trapani, Scott Butler, TBB Band, Suburban Hearts, Jessica Williams  
 - 9:00-11:00 PM: Vienna Idol winners, Caffe Amouri  
 - 11:00-12:00 AM: TBB Band, Justin Trapani, Scott Butler, Puffy Baker, Lincoln Taylor

Sponsors: Navy Federal Credit Union, Vienna Idol, Whole Foods, Artful Gift Shop, Weichert Realtors-Mary Foerster, Madison High School Boosters, Sanctuary on Church, Vienna Paint - Benjamin Moore, Caffe Amouri, Plaka Grill, Kettle.

**The Vienna Business Association, in partnership with the Town of Vienna, presents the first annual New Year's Eve "First Night" Celebration.**

### Entertainment Schedule

Family-friendly New Year's Eve celebration, free. Historic Church Street, Dec. 31, 7 p.m. to midnight. Four music venues, main stage: children's entertainment from 7 to 9 p.m. Special children's New Year's Eve toast at 9 p.m. The Great Zucchini, comedic magician for kids, performs from 8 to 8:50 p.m. Music venues: main tent - caboose parking lot; Concorde Lodge - opposite Vienna Presbyterian Church; Caffe Amouri; Vienna Presbyterian Church chapel.

Go to [www.firstnightvienna.org](http://www.firstnightvienna.org) and [www.facebook.com/FirstNightVienna](http://www.facebook.com/FirstNightVienna) for details and schedule of events and entertainment.

features pop music. The chapel at Vienna Presbyterian Church highlights what Amouri calls the "eclectic mix." At Caffe Amouri, most of the performers are Vienna Idol winners or participants. At Concorde Lodge, the music turns to Blues Jam. Along Church Street, food trucks will be selling a diversity of foods, and Caffe Amouri will have coffee, teas and snacks for sale.

Plaka Grill and Vienna Smiles are title sponsors, and Navy Federal Credit Union, Vienna Idol, Whole Foods, Artful Gift Shop, Weichert Realtors-Mary Foerster, Madison High School Boosters, Sanctuary on Church, Vienna Paint - Benjamin Moore and Caffe Amouri are contributing sponsors.

"This is a vision," said Amouri. "It's so good for our town. We hope this will be a Vienna tradition, that it will grow and be a big event like Alexandria's First Night."

Learn more about First Night Vienna at [www.firstnightvienna.org](http://www.firstnightvienna.org) and at [facebook.com/FirstNightVienna](http://facebook.com/FirstNightVienna).

## NEWS



PHOTO CONTRIBUTED

**Tidal Force 6 members, from left: Max Golub; Shaurya Saran; Christopher Gardner; Vani Subramanian; Christina Luckett; and Coach Shalini Saran.**

## 'Tidal Force 6' Earns State Robotics Award

At the 2013-14 VA/DC First LEGO League (FLL) VA-DC Championship Tournament on Dec. 7-8, "Tidal Force 6," a team of 5th graders from Louise Archer Elementary, won the Division 1 - Gracious Professionalism Award for 9 through 11 year olds. Team members are Christopher Gardner, Max Golub, Christina Luckett, Shaurya Saran, and Vani Subramanian.

More than 100 teams competed in the Nature's Fury Challenge over two days at the FLL State Tournament held in Harrisonburg, Va. Categories judged include: Core Values; Research Project; Robot Design; and Robot Game/Programming. The Gracious Professionalism Award is the highest honor achievable within the area of FLL Core Values and is granted to the team that shows consistent respect for their own and other teams' members, recognizing that

both friendly competition and mutual gain are possible, both on and off the playing field. One judge commented, "The [Tidal Force 6] team's positivity and enthusiasm was clear in [its] healthy communication."

First LEGO League is an international organization comprising more than 20,000 teams from over 70 countries. Its mission is to inspire young people to be science and technology leaders, by engaging them in exciting mentor-based programs that build science, engineering and technology skills, that inspire innovation, and that foster well-rounded life capabilities including self-confidence, communication, and leadership.

Next year's FLL challenge has been announced as FLL World Class: Learning Unleashed! For more information, visit [www.firstlegoleague.org](http://www.firstlegoleague.org).



**Vienna Elementary fourth graders presenting a check of \$2,156.09 to Jill's House.**

## Fundraising for a Good Cause

The fourth graders at Vienna Elementary School raised \$2,156.09 to donate to Jill's House, a respite facility for children with special needs, by selling wrist-bands the students made. They also collected loose change at school and from friends. The students' aimed to raise \$500, but they ended up raising much more.

Jill's House provides respite for children with intellectual disabilities and their families in the Greater Washington, DC area. They serve boys and girls, ages 6 through 17, with intellectual dis-

abilities without regard to race, religion, or ethnicity. Their mission is to be a safe haven to which parents can entrust their children, allowing the parents a time of rest. To ensure that parents and caregivers get a real break, typical siblings are welcome to stay at Jill's House. They believe that parents of children with intellectual disabilities need more support. Their hope is that their model will help change the way communities address the needs of families with children with special needs. For more information visit <http://jillshouse.org/>

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# OPINION

## Preserve 3-2-1 for Housing

**Housing for all income levels near transit supports vibrant communities and job growth, reduces traffic.**

BY MICHELLE KROCKER  
AND JIM EDMONDSON

In the latest edition of The Herry Report, Springfield Supervisor Pat Herry proposed “redirecting developers’ \$3 per square foot contribution for buying rent-controlled housing units into a trust fund to pay for public school renovation and construction.”

The report proceeds to make several unsubstantiated claims regarding the number of people living in subsidized housing and the growth in both the number of subsidized units and number of households in Fairfax County. However as in the past, The Herry Report does not provide the full picture of the housing policy under discussion, and misrepresents the facts.

The Board of Supervisors adopted its housing policy in 2010 as a part of the larger plan

for the redevelopment of Tysons. It is now under consideration, at the request of the board, for application in other designated high density, transit and business centers in the rest of the county. Called the ‘3-2-1’ policy, the proposal by county staff would apply a contribution from commercial development to support the construction of workforce housing in the transit or business area, as it does in the Tysons plan. The contribution would be applied on a sliding scale based on a proposed development’s proximity to a transit station. This proposal will go before the Planning Commission and then the Board of Supervisors in the first quarter of 2014.

Why is this policy important?

❖ To accommodate projected job growth and remain competitive within the region, it is important to ensure housing opportunities for the workforce of the future at all income levels;

❖ Developing housing at transit stations and adjacent to employment centers encourages use of mass transit, walking and biking which can lead to fewer cars, and less congestion; it also enhances Metro revenue and reduces the pressure on local government to provide subsidies for the system;

❖ Linking commercial development (jobs) and housing via a linkage program is an acknowledged “best practice” in hundreds of communities across the country to ensure an

adequate supply of housing to support job growth.

❖ It recognizes the changing preferences of workers/taxpayers/voters, particularly young people, to live near where they work.

The proposed policy anticipates that the contributions will be made to a housing trust fund used by the county to leverage private sector financing to develop the needed housing.

The housing that is constructed will not be owned or purchased by the county. In fact, very little of the affordable housing in the county is owned by the government.

Securing decent housing that is affordable remains a challenge for Fairfax County households earning less than \$60,000.

Meeting the growing needs of our school system is also an important issue. Both education and safe, decent housing are fundamental to the well-being of our community, and residents want leadership that seeks to find workable solutions. Failing to recognize the importance of both and pitting one issue against the other are not the answers, and the citizens of Fairfax County deserve better from elected officials.

*Michelle Krocker is executive director, Northern Virginia Affordable Housing Alliance. Jim Edmondson is president of AHOME, which promotes affordable housing opportunities for families at all income levels.*

GUEST  
EDITORIAL

### LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

## Parents Advocate for Class Size Caps

To the Editor:

On Saturday, Dec. 7, Fairfax County Public Schools (FCPS) Superintendent’s (Dr. Karen Garza) conducted a “Listening Tour” meeting at Cooper Middle School in McLean.

Many parents who spoke at the meeting were concerned about large class sizes in their children’s schools. This is not a problem in most FCPS schools - the average elementary school class in FCPS has only 21-22 students, and plenty of FCPS elementary schools average 20 or fewer students per class.

However, large class sizes have become the norm in Vienna, Oakton, McLean and Great Falls schools. Teachers unlucky enough to be assigned to the 30+ classes are often pushed to the limit in terms of what they can do to control classroom behavior and alleviate student stress. At Wolftrap Elementary, teachers have even created a “coping couch” for stressed kids to help them escape from the crowded, noisy and chaotic atmosphere that is so often inevitable with such excessively large classes.

The school system is looking at county-wide increases in average class sizes. Without some type of class size cap, this would create a situation where most of the county’s students had reasonable class sizes (e.g., 16 to 26 students), but even more students in the Vienna, Oakton, McLean and Great Falls would have more than 30 students in their rooms - which are no larger than the rooms being used to hold 17 or 22 students elsewhere in FCPS.



**Karen Garza discusses class size at the Dec. 7 listening tour in McLean.**

After seeing their children crammed into oversized classes for years, parents formed Class Size Counts last year. The group is working with State Delegate Barbara Comstock to address the class size issue at the state level, Supervisor Foust, several School Board members and Superintendent Garza at the county level. The Class Size Counts online petition, with over 1,000 signatures, asks that the Fairfax County school system not increase average class sizes without simultaneously implementing class size caps:

[http://www.ipetitions.com/petition/stop-oversize-classes-in-fairfax-countyschool/?utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_source=system&utm\\_campaign=Send%2Bto%2BFriend](http://www.ipetitions.com/petition/stop-oversize-classes-in-fairfax-countyschool/?utm_medium=email&utm_source=system&utm_campaign=Send%2Bto%2BFriend)

At Cooper Middle School, Dr. Garza reassured parents and teachers in the room that she is working to fix this problem, by drafting an FCPS regulation that would impose class size caps.

Class Size Counts applauds Dr. Garza for taking a stand on implementing caps so that all children in FCPS can receive a decent and fair education.

Interestingly, the School Board member whose district includes many schools with the largest class sizes - Jane Strauss - also told parents at a Longfellow PTA meeting that she opposed a class size cap, and preferred to continue using the FCPS “staffing reserve.” Several years ago, parents submitted a Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) request for emails and other documents regarding the staffing reserve. The documents painted a picture of a slush fund with no apparent criteria or controls.

**Kim Farrell**

Mother of two FCPS students  
Vienna

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Letters to the Editor  
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## Bobbie Kilberg Honored as Business Hall of Fame Laureate

2013 Washington Business Hall of Fame Laureate and Northern Virginia Technology Council President and CEO Bobbie Green Kilberg with Virginia Governor Bob O'Donnell and Junior Achievement student and student at George C. Marshall High School Matt Colwell. The annual Washington Business Hall of Fame, now in its 26th year, is considered the "Academy Awards of Business" for the D.C. region

## Family Science Night at Colvin Run Elementary

Colvin Run Elementary School (CRES) hosted its second annual Family Science Night on Dec. 6, with hands-on experiments from the Children's Science Center's Museum Without Walls Mobile Labs. Museum Without Walls Mobile Labs provided experiments, which included Animal Adaptations, Getting to the Heart of Your Heart, Investigating Density, and Forensic Science, to name a few. The two-hour evening program combined science learning and family bonding. Hands-on activities demonstrate a variety of scientific principles and make S.T.E.A.M. learning fun and accessible to today's students.

Students had the opportunity to watch science-themed movies projected above on a dome theater screen. The dome theater is a mobile planetarium that featured innovative shows such as The Dinosaur Prophecy, Earth's Wild Ride, Future Moon, Force Five, and Into the Deep.

Colvin Run Elementary School students presented their science projects to Family Science Night attendees. Student science projects included a simple water purifier, a vehicle propulsion system, and DNA theory and genetics. Students presented their methodology and their experimental results from 6:30 to 7:30 p.m.

The CRES PTO funded a new Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Math (S.T.E.A.M.) Lab. Located in a dedicated space and administered by CRES teacher,

Susan Blackwell, the lab features state-of-the-art technology that allows CRES students the opportunity to take part in fun, engaging activities that build upon aspects of their current curriculum. Blackwell stated, "The students are very excited about Family Science Night. I have heard them talking enthusiastically about the evening. The event is a great extension to the work we are doing in the S.T.E.A.M. Lab and across the school. It ties together a fun family event to what we are doing in the classroom."

Ken Junge, Principal of Colvin Run Elementary School noted, "Family Science Night has a wide range of activities designed to engage the whole family in hands-on and minds-on learning. I am delighted to see our students presenting their own projects and families being able to tour our new S.T.E.A.M. Lab. With our focus on Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Math (S.T.E.A.M.), this evening continues to celebrate the excitement of discovery within all of us."

Colvin Run Elementary School (CRES) opened in 2003 and is located at 1400 Trap Road in Vienna. Ken Junge is the Principal and the Assistant Principal is Mary Lou Carmack.

CRES PTO comprises of parents and teachers who actively support a variety of enrichment programs for CRES students. The current CRES PTO president is Carolyn Rumpel.

## Ron Glass Named Top Producer at Long & Foster

Ron Glass, a commercial broker with Long & Foster Real Estate's Commercial sales office, located in Vienna, has been named top producer for September 2013. Long & Foster is the largest independent residential real estate company in the United States.

A real estate professional for more than 20 years, Glass is an active member of the Virginia Association of Realtors, Greater Washington Commercial Association of Realtors and Southeast Fairfax Development Corporation. He is also the former chairman on the Economic Development Committee for the Greater Springfield Chamber of Commerce of Realtors. Additionally, Glass has been recognized on the Long & Foster Gold Team Hall of Fame.

Glass has consistently proven to be a high achiever since he entered real estate, and he has frequently been cited as a top real estate producer. Glass is also a member of Long & Foster's coveted Gold Team.

For more information, visit <http://commercialdivision.lnfre.com>.



Glass

CONTRIBUTED

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Members of the Virginia 49th Infantry, a family-oriented Civil War living history and re-enactment organization, returned to Colvin Run Mill to sing Christmas carols.

PHOTOS BY RYAN DUNN / THE CONNECTION

## Christmas Celebrated At Colvin Run Mill

Santa and carolers visits historic park.

BY RYAN DUNN  
THE CONNECTION

A historic Colvin Run Mill Park Santa Claus made a visit to the miller's office from 3 to 6 p.m. Despite damp, overcast weather on Saturday, spirits stayed bright as visitors came by to see Santa and hear carolers from the Virginia 49th Infantry, participate in crafts, or join in a marshmallow roasting.

Bill Vigna and his wife Debbi drove down to Colvin Run Mill Park with his three daughters from the city of Fairfax. "Coming over here to see Santa has become something of a tradition," said Vigna. Also on display at the mill was a Christmas tree trimmed with Victorian decorations.

"We have a great bunch of volunteers to help us with the crafts," said Pam Gennari, an employee of the Fairfax County Park Authority and resident of Ashburn. More than 40 volunteers and staff were on site to help with the day events, including Colvin Run Mill park's manager. Park volunteer Jim Hogan, a resident of Centerville was also attending the event. "Myself and another volunteer of ten display simple mechanics of the park to visiting third graders on Fridays," said Hogan.



Tony Meadows helped led the Virginia 49th Infantry's caroling event at Colvin Run Mill on Saturday.



Volunteer Jim Hogan, Manager of Colvin Run Mill Park Frank Henry, and park volunteer Frank Boucher at Colvin Run Mill Park.



Santa Claus arrived to cheer at the Vienna Volunteer Fire Department's breakfast with Santa. He listened to children share their Christmas lists and sat for photos with them.

PHOTOS BY DONNA MANZ / THE CONNECTION

## A Visit from St. Nick

Santa stops by the pancake breakfast hosted by the Vienna Volunteer Fire Department.

Vienna's traditions shine during holidays and, in December, it shines an awful lot. Traditional activities and events abound, from the Church Street Stroll to Santa visits.

Every year, Santa takes time out of his busy toy-making schedule to stop by the Vienna Volunteer Fire Department's pancake breakfast. He turned up there again on Dec. 14 to the cheers of young children. He listened to wish-lists and sat for photos and seemed to know the names of many of the children and

their parents. Parents rushed to take photographs.

A part of the seasonal breakfast is a game hosted by VVFD member Bob Zillian. Adults do not fare well when playing this game, but, kids always win. They get to pick out a stuffed toy from the hundreds on display.

Proceeds from VVFD's fundraisers go toward the support of the volunteer fire department in Vienna. Even fundraiser pancake breakfast "prices" are in the form of a suggested donation. Breakfast included pancakes (and syrup),

bacon and sausage, and soft drinks. There was even a bake sale sponsored by the Auxiliary to finish off the meal.

As tasty as the food was, it was Santa who took center-stage.

To learn more about the events presented by the Vienna Volunteer Fire Department, go to [www.vvfd.org](http://www.vvfd.org). New this year is a Santa tracker for the department's annual one-week Santa Run throughout Vienna.

— DONNA MANZ



Despite his busy schedule, Santa always makes time to visit Vienna's good children.



Layers and layers of stuffed toys await kids at VVFD's annual holiday pancake breakfast.



Vienna Volunteer Fire Department "Santa Run" coordinator Matt Jones and his family – Chris, 4 years old, Katie, 2 years old, Laura, 16 weeks old, and wife Christine share the fun of the December 14 breakfast with Santa at the fire station.

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# HOLIDAY CALENDAR

## SATURDAY/DEC. 21

### Gingerbread House Decorating

**Class.** 10 a.m. or 1 p.m. at the Ritz Carlton, 1700 Tysons Blvd., McLean. Learn to make your own gingerbread house. \$70 per child, ages 2-12. Reservations required. 703-917-5498.

**The Nutcracker Tea.** 10 a.m. or 1 p.m. at the Ritz Carlton, 1700 Tysons Blvd., McLean. Watch the ballet production of "The Nutcracker" while enjoying afternoon tea and treats. \$75 per person. Reservations required. 703-917-5498.

**The Annual Rocknocoeros Holiday Singalong.** 11 a.m. & 2 p.m. 227 Maple Avenue East, Vienna. Admission: \$10. 703-255-1566

**Winter Solstice Celebration.** 4-5:30 p.m. Unity of Fairfax, 2854 Hunter Mill Road, Oakton. Join us as we use music, meditation, and inspirational readings to individually connect to the energies of Mother Earth for peace and healing. As a group, we will also connect to sacred sites around the planet—where people are joining, every solstice and equinox, in Global Medicine Wheel Ceremonies, to bring love and harmony to our beautiful planet. After the ceremony, we will adjourn with drumming and flute playing for refreshments in our Atrium. www.UnityOfFairfax.org

## SATURDAY/DEC. 21, 22, 28, & 29

### Annual Train Display at Colvin

**Run Mill.** Colvin Run Mill Barn, 10017 Colvin Run Road, Great Falls. Watch G-gauge trains wend their way

through a miniature western town in the Colvin Run Barn.

## SUNDAY/DEC. 22

### A Festival of Lessons & Carols.

9 a.m. & 11:15 a.m. St. John's Episcopal Church, 6715 Georgetown Pike, McLean. Lessons will be read by parishioners, seasonal anthems presented by the choirs, and carols sung by the congregation.

### Gingerbread House Decorating

**Class.** 10 a.m. or 1 p.m. at the Ritz Carlton, 1700 Tysons Blvd., McLean. Learn to make your own gingerbread house. \$70 per child, ages 2-12. Reservations required. 703-917-5498.

**The Princess Tea.** 11 a.m. or 2 p.m. at the Ritz Carlton, 1700 Tysons Blvd., McLean. Watch a theatrical production feature Disney princesses while enjoying afternoon tea and treats. \$75 per person. Children under 2 are free. Reservations required. 703-917-5498.

## TUESDAY/DEC. 24

### St. John's Episcopal Church Christmas Worship Services.

3:30 p.m. 6715 Georgetown Pike, McLean. 703-356-4902. This service is especially designed for families with young children.

## WEDNESDAY/DEC. 25

### Christmas Day Brunch at Entyze

**Bistro.** 10 a.m.-3 p.m. at the Ritz Carlton, 1700 Tysons Blvd., McLean.

Celebrate the holiday with brunch. Enjoy live musical entertainment and special activities, including face painting and a balloon artist for the children. \$120 per adult; \$40 for children under 12. Reservations required. 703-917-5498.

## TUESDAY/DEC. 31

### New Year's Eve at Entyze Bistro.

5:30-10:30 p.m. at the Ritz Carlton, 1700 Tysons Blvd., McLean. Ring in the New Year with a four-course tasting menu, champagne toast and live music. \$135 per person. Reservations required. 703-917-5498.

### New Year's Eve Party.

7:30 p.m. Vienna's American Legion Post 180, 330 Center Street, North, Vienna. hris Polk Band: \$35 single, \$50 per couple, benefits Legion National Emergency Fund. Call 703-938-9535 for tickets.

**First Night Vienna.** 7 p.m. - 12 a.m. Church Street in Vienna. A family-friendly New Year's celebration. This celebration will feature local musicians, great food, exciting entertainment and hands-on activities for both children and adults.

### 7th Annual Rocknocoeros New Year's Eve Party.

11 a.m. & 2 p.m. Jammin Java, 227 Maple Ave E, Vienna. Rocknocoeros (pronounced like rhinoceros) is three guys: Coach Cotton, Williebob, and Boogie Woogie Bennie, who make wildly popular, award-winning music for the whole family. Admission: \$10. 703-255-1566



PHOTO: CONTRIBUTED

Madison High School junior Grace Rogers lights up the stage with her Spanish Solo performance.

## Vienna/Oakton Students Perform in The Nutcracker

On Dec. 11 through the 15, 16 students from Vienna/Oakton elementary, middle & high schools took the stage to perform in the Conservatory Ballet's annual production of The Nutcracker. Performances took place at the Reston Community Center's CenterStage.

Madison High School junior, Grace Rogers fired up the stage with her spirited performance of Spanish solo. Since 2001, Rogers has studied at the Conservatory under the careful eye of Artistic Director Julia Redick and her hard work has earned her numerous opportunities to include appearing at the Kennedy Center with the

Marinskii and New York City ballets. Rogers has also attended the Boston Ballet's summer intensive course.

Established in 1972, the Conservatory offers early childhood, pre-professional and adult ballet instruction. Producing the Nutcracker is no small feat and the planning and preparations for the Nutcracker start in the summer with daily rehearsals in full swing by October. With more than 100 students taking on an average of 69 parts appearing 223 times per performance, the Nutcracker provides Conservatory dancers with performance opportunities critical to their artistic growth.

## ENTERTAINMENT

Send announcements to [vienna@connectionnewspapers.com](mailto:vienna@connectionnewspapers.com). Deadline is Friday for the following week's paper. Photos/artwork encouraged. For additional listings, visit <http://www.connectionnewspapers.com/news/2013/sep/26/fairfax-county-calendar/>.

## SATURDAY/DEC. 21

**Ballroom Dance.** 8-9 p.m.; Viennese Waltz lesson, 9-11:30 p.m. dance. Colvin Run Dance Hall, 10201 Colvin Run Road, Great Falls. DJ music from Craig Bukowski playing favorite dance tunes from the 1930s to today. Attire is ballroom casual, no partner or experience is needed. \$15 for the evening. 703-759-2685 or [www.colvinrun.org](http://www.colvinrun.org).

## SATURDAY/ JAN. 4

**Ballroom Dance.** 8-9 p.m. Waltz lesson, 9-11:30 p.m. dance. Colvin Run Dance Hall, 10201 Colvin Run Road, Great Falls. Live music from Mike Surratt & the ECB playing favorite dance tunes from the 1930s to today. Attire is ballroom casual, no partner or experience is needed. \$20 for the evening. 703-759-2685 or [www.colvinrun.org](http://www.colvinrun.org).

## SATURDAY/ JAN. 18

**Ballroom Dance.** 8-9 p.m. Quick-Step lesson, 9-11:30 p.m. dance. Colvin Run Dance Hall, 10201 Colvin Run Road, Great Falls. DJ music from Craig Bukowski playing favorite dance tunes from the 1930s to today. Attire is ballroom casual, no partner or experience is needed. \$15 for the evening. 703-759-2685 or [www.colvinrun.org](http://www.colvinrun.org).

## SUNDAY/JAN. 19

**Breakfast Buffet.** 8 a.m. - 12 p.m. 330 Center Street, N., Vienna. Adults \$8, children \$3. 703-938-1379.

## FRIDAY/JAN. 24 & 25, 2014

**THIS.** 8 p.m. Vienna Community Center, 120 Cherry Street, SE, Vienna. *THIS* is a bright, tart, and

melancholy comedy that captures the uncertain steps of a circle of friends entering the choppy waters of middle age. <http://www.viennatheatrecompany.org/>

## FRIDAY/JAN. 31, 2014

**THIS.** 8 p.m. Vienna Community Center, 120 Cherry Street, SE, Vienna. *THIS* is a bright, tart, and melancholy comedy that captures the uncertain steps of a circle of friends entering the choppy waters of middle age. <http://www.viennatheatrecompany.org/>

## SATURDAY/FEB. 1

**Ballroom Dance.** 8-9 p.m. Samba lesson, 9-11:30 p.m. dance. Colvin Run Dance Hall, 10201 Colvin Run Road, Great Falls. Live music from Mike Surratt & the ECB playing favorite dance tunes from the 1930s to today. Attire is ballroom casual, no partner or experience is needed. \$20 for the evening. 703-759-2685 or [www.colvinrun.org](http://www.colvinrun.org).

### Arts for Autism Gala.

6:30 p.m. Tower Club, 8000 Towers Crescent Drive, #1700, Vienna. An evening that brings together the arts, fashion and autism communities to benefit individuals and families affected by Autism. Festivities include a reception, dinner and silent auction. [www.arts-for-autism.org](http://www.arts-for-autism.org)

## SATURDAY/FEB. 1, 7, 8, 2014

**THIS.** 8 p.m. Vienna Community Center, 120 Cherry Street, SE, Vienna. *THIS* is a bright, tart, and melancholy comedy that captures the uncertain steps of a circle of friends entering the choppy waters of middle age. <http://www.viennatheatrecompany.org/>

## SUNDAY/FEB. 2 & 9, 2014

**THIS.** 2 p.m. Vienna Community Center,

120 Cherry Street, SE, Vienna. *THIS* is a bright, tart, and melancholy comedy that captures the uncertain steps of a circle of friends entering the choppy waters of middle age. <http://www.viennatheatrecompany.org/>

## SATURDAY/FEB. 15

**Valentine's Ballroom Dance.** 8-9 p.m. Tango lesson, 9-11:30 p.m. dance. Colvin Run Dance Hall, 10201 Colvin Run Road, Great Falls. DJ music from Craig Bukowski playing favorite dance tunes from the 1930s to today. Attire is ballroom casual, no partner or experience is needed. \$15 for the evening. 703-759-2685 or [www.colvinrun.org](http://www.colvinrun.org).

## SATURDAY/MARCH 1

**Ballroom Dance.** 8-9 p.m. Merengue lesson, 9-11:30 p.m. dance. Colvin Run Dance Hall, 10201 Colvin Run Road, Great Falls. Live music from Helmut & Andre playing favorite dance tunes from the 1930s to today. Attire is ballroom casual, no partner or experience is needed. \$20 for the evening. 703-759-2685 or [www.colvinrun.org](http://www.colvinrun.org).

## ONGOING

**Straight Ahead Jazz.** 8 p.m., at the Maplewood Grill, 132 Branch Road, Vienna. Every Monday drummer Karl Anthony hosts a night of straight ahead jazz featuring guest musicians and open to sit-in musicians. [www.maplewoodgrill.com](http://www.maplewoodgrill.com).

**Personalized ebook/e-Reader Instruction.** Dolley Madison Library, 1244 Oak Ridge Ave., McLean. Learn about your e-reader and downloading eBooks; event continues through March 31st.



PHOTO BY JOCELYN STEINER

From left — Shannon Benton portraying Jane, and Rikkie Howie portraying Marrell.

## Tickets On Sale for Vienna Theatre's Production of 'This'

Performances for the Vienna Theatre Company's winter production of "This" opens at the Vienna Community Center, 120 Cherry Street SE, on Friday, Jan. 24, 2014, and will run Friday and Saturday nights at 8 p.m. through Feb. 8, with Sunday matinee performances at 2 p.m. on Feb. 2 and 9, 2014.

"This" is a bright, tart and melancholy comedy that captures the uncertain steps of a circle of friends entering the

choppy waters of middle age. "This" is by Melissa James Gibson and directed by Tom Flatt.

Tickets go on sale Dec. 17, and are \$13 general admission. Tickets are available for purchase in advance at the Vienna Community Center or at the door. To reserve tickets, e-mail [vtcshows@yahoo.com](mailto:vtcshows@yahoo.com). For more information, call 703-255-6360 or visit [www.viennatheatrecompany.org](http://www.viennatheatrecompany.org).

# NEWS

## Teaching Love of Music in Vienna

Hyun-Mi Chung, owner of Elite Piano Academy, is announcing the third anniversary of her studio in Vienna.

Chung has brought her 28 years teaching experience to Vienna to the delight of her many students who share the desire to learn. She expresses her gratitude to the students and their parents for their support during this time.

Chung, a graduate of Juilliard School (B. M. & M. M.), the first woman pianist to have recorded all 35 Beethoven's Sonatas, has a love of music that has been the motivation for her dedication to teaching. Since coming to Vienna, she has maintained a class of 50 students in a six day-a-week schedule. In addition, she has held two recitals

per year (one per semester) for her students at the Vienna Presbyterian Church.

Her only requirement of students is that they want to learn. "If they want to learn, then I can teach them, whether I have to explain something one time or 20 times. When I have 50 students, I have 50 different methods of teaching, because everyone learns differently and at their own pace," she said.

The additional delight for her is that she teaches students of all ages. Since she started taking classical piano lessons when she was 4-years-old, she fully understands this challenge and how to draw out the best in her students. "I've had students as young as 2, as well as many mommies and daddies of younger students. There is really no age limit if you want to learn," she said.

"I love music so much, that I always want to see



**Celebrating three years in Vienna: Hyun-Mi Chung, owner of Elite Piano Academy.**

my students enjoy music, and when my students smile, then I am happy," she stated. "I hope I can contribute to the Vienna Community by helping young aspired musicians to achieve their goals."

Elite Piano Academy is located at 8230 Boone Boulevard, Suite 100A, Vienna. For more information or registration for classes, call 202-674-0499 or visit [www.Hyun-MiChung.net](http://www.Hyun-MiChung.net).

The mystery of Christmas is not how a jolly old elf navigates a narrow chimney.



What we cannot fathom is how God could love us enough to send his One and Only Son.

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## FAITH NOTES

*Faith Notes are for announcements and events in the faith community. Send to [vienna@connectionnewspapers.com](mailto:vienna@connectionnewspapers.com). Deadline is Friday.*

**GriefShare**, a weekly support group for adults grieving the death of a loved one, meets Sundays 6-7:30 p.m. at Vienna Presbyterian Church, 124 Part St., Vienna with a video/discussion format through Dec. 8. \$20 for workbook. [GriefShare@viennapres.org](mailto:GriefShare@viennapres.org).

**The Jewish Social Services Agency (JSSA)** offers a wide variety of support groups for those with emotional, social, and physical challenges. [www.jssa.org/growth-learning](http://www.jssa.org/growth-learning).

**HAVEN of Northern Virginia** offers a variety of free bereavement support groups, meeting on a weekly basis. 703-941-7000 or [www.havenofnova.org](http://www.havenofnova.org).

**McLean Bible Church Fitness Class at Body & Soul Fitness.** Gain balance, energy and strength at 9:45 a.m. Mondays and Fridays. Free childcare for registered students. [bodyandsoul@mcleanbible.org](mailto:bodyandsoul@mcleanbible.org).

**St. Dunstan's Episcopal Church**, 1830 Kirby Road in McLean, holds a third Sunday service every month at 10:15 a.m. which allows children to play active roles in the music and as greeters and ushers. Traditional services are every Sunday at 8:15 and 10:15 a.m.

**Vienna Christian Healing Rooms** are open, every Saturday, 1-5 p.m., at 8200 Bell Lane. A team of Christians is available to anyone requesting prayer. Free and open to the public. 703-698-9779 or [www.viennachristianhealingrooms.com](http://www.viennachristianhealingrooms.com).

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... 703-821-3345

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... 703-560-8462

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... 703-757-8134  
Cartersville Baptist Church  
... 703-255-7075

Fellowship Baptist Church  
... 703-385-8516  
First Baptist Church  
... 703-938-8525

The Light Mission Church ...  
703-757-0877  
Vienna Baptist Church  
... 703-281-4400

New Union Baptist Church...  
703-281-2556  
**Church of the Brethern**  
Oakton Church of the Brethern  
... 703-281-4411

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Our Lady of Good Counsel ...  
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St. Athanasius Catholic Church  
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... 703-281-9100  
**Charismatic**  
New Song Church  
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**Disciples of Christ**  
Antioch Christian Church  
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**Episcopal**  
Church of the Holy Comforter  
... 703-938-6521

Church of the Holy Cross  
... 703-698-6991  
St. Francis Episcopal  
... 703-759-2082

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... 703-759-1579

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... 703-938-2119

Christ The King Lutheran Church  
... 703-759-6068  
St. Athanasius Lutheran Church  
... 703-455-4003

**Methodist**  
Andrew Chapel United Methodist  
... 703-759-3509  
Church of the Good Shepherd  
... 703-281-3987

The Vine Methodist Church  
... 703-573-5336  
Ephiphany United Methodist  
... 703-938-3494

Great Falls United Methodist  
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... 703-938-1233

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... 703-242-9001

Vienna Seventh Day Adventists  
... 703-938-8383  
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... 703-281-4230

**United Church of Christ**  
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Church of Christ  
... 703-938-1555

**Unity**  
Unity of Fairfax  
... 703-281-1767



# SPORTS

## McLean Boys' Basketball Beats Langley in Overtime

Highlanders senior Sullivan leads all scorers with 17 points.

By JON ROETMAN  
THE CONNECTION

McLean senior Joey Sullivan struggled to focus during a math quiz at school on Friday. Later that night, Sullivan, a captain on the school's boys' basketball team, suffered cramps in each of his calves after crashing into a wall behind the baseline.

At the end of the night, however, Sullivan and the Highlanders were able to celebrate a hard-fought victory on their rival's home court.

"It's all worth it," Sullivan said. "Definitely."

**SULLIVAN SCORED** a game-high 17 points, including a bucket that gave McLean a two-possession lead in overtime, and the Highlanders defeated Langley 45-36 at Langley High School.

The teams ended regulation tied at 32. After a Patrick Dolan free throw gave McLean a one-point lead with 2:30 left in overtime, Jack Ferguson extended the lead to three with a jumper before Sullivan's transition bucket increased the lead to five. Langley would get no closer the rest of the way.

"I don't think we should have school when we play Langley games," Sullivan said. "It was hard to focus today. I had to take a math quiz and it was hard to do that. Going into the game, all you do is just shake all day, at least for me."

Sullivan scored 10 of his 17 points in the second half and overtime.

"Joe's our leader from Day One," first-year McLean head coach Mike O'Brien said. "Joe's the heart of the team. He wears his heart on his sleeve, as you can see. He's a very emotional kid. Sometimes he can be a little too emotional, but I'll take that kind of kid 10 out of 10 times and I'll take a team full of them. He just plays with everything he has."

Ferguson finished with 13 points for the Highlanders.

McLean trailed 16-10 at halftime. A Sullivan bucket gave the Highlanders their first lead of the game with 30 seconds left in the third quarter, but Langley regained the lead when freshman guard Aaron Kim knocked down a 3-pointer in the closing seconds of the quarter.

Langley guard Christian Gaibler drilled his third 3-pointer of the game with 2:02 left in the fourth quarter, giving the Saxons a 32-28 lead. After a bucket by Sullivan and two McLean free throws tied the score at 32, Langley had a chance to win, but senior guard Ross Callaghan missed a jumper in the closing seconds of regulation.

"Ten points in the first half, that's hard to do in a varsity game," O'Brien said of McLean's offensive struggles. "Really, [with our performance in] the whole second half, I just thought we really carried that momentum from the second half into that overtime ..."

McLean improved to 2-2 under O'Brien, who coached the school's girls' basketball team last sea-



McLean senior Joey Sullivan scored a game-high 17 points against Langley on Friday night.

son.

"[This win] definitely is a momentum booster," O'Brien said. "This is a big game for the kids. No matter who wins this, whichever team, takes this with them. You can see that student body gets into it. It's a great atmosphere for high school kids to play in. It's kind of what you remember when you go off and you think back to your high school career. This is the kind of game they'll remember."

Langley fell to 0-4 under first-year head coach Scott Newman, who was an assistant with the program the previous four seasons.

"[McLean] made us uncomfortable. They played extremely hard," Newman said. "At the end of the day, we had the ball in our best player's hands, shooting a 15-foot pull-up, which is usually like a lay-up for him, with time expiring, so I'm disappointed with the outcome; but I'm happy with the way our guys played. They really competed, they were tough and now we owe [the Highlanders] one."

**KIM LED THE SAXONS** with 12 points, including seven in the first half.

"I thought he played great," Newman said. "He really didn't back away from the moment. It's hard to make shots and make plays in that environment. There are so many eyes on you, there's so much pressure, and especially for a freshman, to step up and take and make the shots that he made for us tonight was huge."

Callaghan and Gaibler each scored nine points for Langley.

McLean will compete in the Glory Days Tournament at Lake Braddock Dec. 26-28.

Langley will compete in the Mount Vernon holiday tournament Dec. 26-28.

"You've got to give them all the credit," Newman said. "Their kids competed extremely hard. Down the stretch when they needed a rebound or a loose ball, they had it and I think that was the difference in the game."

PHOTO BY CRAIG STERBUTZEL/THE CONNECTION



Marshall senior Mackenzie Haight (right), seen at the Monroe Parker Invitational, placed 34th at the Foot Locker national cross country meet on Dec. 14 in San Diego.

PHOTO BY ED LULL

## NoVa Harriers Compete At National XC Meet

Marshall senior Haight finished 34th at San Diego meet.

By JON ROETMAN  
THE CONNECTION

Thursday and returned home Sunday.

Mackenzie Haight started competing in cross country during his freshman year at George C. Marshall High School as a way to condition for lacrosse.

Three years later, Haight found himself running with the nation's elite.

Now a senior, Haight competed in the Foot Locker Cross Country Championships national meet on Dec. 14 in San Diego, finishing 34th with a time of 16:06.1. Haight was one of five Northern Virginia harriers to compete in the event. Edison senior Louis Colson finished 32nd with a time of 15:58.7.

Haight said the course, located at Morley Field in Balboa Park, was the most difficult he encountered this season.

"I'm disappointed with how I finished," Haight said. "My goal was (to finish in the) top 15 for All-American. I don't think I executed my race how I planned it. I wanted to run an aggressive race and I found myself at the back of the pack."

While Haight hoped for a better finish, he said he enjoyed the experience. The Northern Virginia runners, including West Springfield's Caroline Alcorta and Lake Braddock's Katy Kunc and Hannah Christen, arrived in San Diego on

"It's incredible," said Haight, who will compete for William and Mary next year. "The entire experience was surreal — one of the best weekends I've ever had in my life. I would never trade the experience for anything."

Haight qualified for the meet by placing in the top 10 at the south regional meet in Charlotte on Nov. 30.

In the girls' race, Alcorta placed third with a time of 17:31. Tessa Barrett, a senior from Waverly, Pa., won the event with a time of 17:15.4, and sophomore Hannah DeBalsi of Westport, Conn., finished second (17:25.3).

Alcorta finished 16th at last year's national meet, missing All-American status by one place. She said a top-15 finish this year would be "really nifty."

She made it with room to spare.

"I'm happy with the effort I put into and how it turned out," said Alcorta, who is committed to the University of North Carolina. "I couldn't ask for anything more than a top-five finish."

Kunc, who started running cross country last year as a junior, finished 19th with a time of 18:07.2. Christen, a senior, was 21st with time of 18:07.3.

"It was a really great experience," Kunc said. "I never would imagine myself racing at such a high level since I just started last year."

# Teaching Children to be Charitable

**Experts say modeling, nurturing are keys to raising generous children.**

BY MARILYN CAMPBELL  
THE CONNECTION

**E**lena Santiviago walked her 6-year-old son down the aisle of a grocery store near her Arlington home. They picked up five boxes of toothpaste and two bottles of mouthwash, several bars of soap and a few sticks of deodorant. The shopping trip was part of a school project in which students fill holiday stockings with personal hygiene items for the homeless.

"I gave him \$20 to spend," she said. "I figure he can learn how expensive things are and that there are some people who can't afford to buy the things he takes for granted."

Teaching children about charity, particularly during a season when many are focused on making sure Santa Claus gets copies of their Christmas lists, is an important lesson, according to experts. Redirecting a child's focus from getting to giving this season may not be as difficult as one might think, however. The key, say experts, is for parents to model and foster a sense of generosity.

"Most children are born with a sense of caring for others, which is related to empathy, or being able to put oneself in another person's shoes," said Amy Van Arsdale, Ph.D., assistant professor of psychology at Marymount University in Arlington. "Empathy and caring are found among humans and other social mammals, and a strong sense of empathy can help people to feel loved and included. As children develop, empathy can be diminished if they are not exposed to it often enough or learn that other characteristics, such as aggression, are more rewarding."

Fred Bemak, Ed.D., who is with the Counseling and Development Program in the College of Education and Human Development at George Mason University in Fairfax, said that some children are more likely to be interested in giving than others. "Children have predispositions for charity, but they are not born with it," said Bemak. "You have children who naturally share more than others. There are some toddlers who share their toys with other children and some toddlers who don't."

Bemak believes that a sense of compassion must be nurtured.

"A child could have a predisposition for charity, but have parents who don't foster it," he said. "You can cultivate it by bringing those values into your home environment."

There are a number of ways to cultivate it. "In young children, parents can foster a child's sense of empathy by modeling this response," said Van Arsdale. "For example, if they see a person who has been injured, the parent could comment on how that injury must hurt. ... Ask the child, for example, 'How might that person be feeling right now?' These interactions can help foster the child's empathy for others."

Bemak suggests directly connecting older children with opportunities to help people who are in need. "Take children to serve people who are homeless or refugee populations or people who don't have resources," he said. "Modeling the behavior is extremely important."

He recalled a personal example from his own life.



**Experts say exposing children to those in need can help them develop a sense of charity.**

"I was in Burma working with children who were vulnerable and poor [who were] at high levels of risk," he said. "Outside the gates [of our facility] were homeless children who were in more desperate situations than those children I was working with."

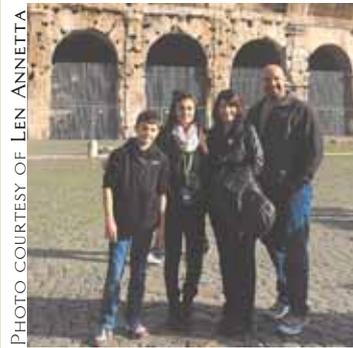
The children were homeless, hungry and dressed in rags. "They had no parents and were markedly different than the at-risk children I was working with," he said. "Typical response of the children I was working with was 'Go away. Leave us alone and don't sit outside our facility.'"

Bemak suggested the homeless children be invited inside for dinner. "We talked with them, welcomed them and ate with them," he said. "After they left, we talked about what the experience was like for the at-risk kids and what they learned by talking to the homeless children."

His students learned about charity through processing the experience of having a human encounter. "We talked about what it meant to give," he said. "It was very powerful for all involved. This exercise can be replicated anywhere."

Van Arsdale said that older children learn best about charity when their parents involve them in altruistic activities. "For example, the family could volunteer together by serving meals at a homeless shelter," she said. "This direct, interpersonal experience is more likely to affect the child's sense of empathy than an indirect experience [such as] telling the child they should be charitable."

Cultivating altruistic values is key to raising children who have a sense of charity. "Share food, possessions, support and assistance in ways that people might need it," said Bemak. "Even a young child can share their toys with other children who might not have toys. In psychology we talk about altruism as a healing variable. Altruism leads to compassion and charity."



**Len Annetta, Ph.D., of George Mason University traveled to Italy recently with his wife, Jennifer, and his children Samantha and Joey. Annetta kept his children occupied during the long flight with cloud games and by helping them practice Italian.**

## Home for the Holidays: Surviving a Long Trip

**Keeping children entertained on lengthy airplane rides.**

BY MARILYN CAMPBELL  
THE CONNECTION

**L**iz Henry is nervous about her upcoming flight to San Francisco. It's not TSA regulations or long lines that are causing her anxiety, however. It is traveling alone with her three children — all of whom are under the age of 6.

"My kids are 5, 3 and 1," said Henry, who lives in Vienna. "I'm taking them to visit my family for Christmas, but they've never flown before. I have a lot of DVDs packed, but I don't know how far those will get me. I don't like pacifying my kids with videos, but I don't think I have a choice."

Going home for the holidays often means boarding an airplane with high-energy children and settling in for a long ride. Parents such as Henry scramble to find ways to fill the time in a way that keeps their child entertained without disturbing other passengers. Local education experts say there are options that don't involve the last resort of videos and electronic games, however.

"Reading is always a good choice, but for many children, it cannot hold their attention for long plane rides," said Len Annetta, Ph.D., a professor in the College of Education and Human Development at George Mason University. "Games like Scrabble challenge players' literacy skills in a fun way. Crossword puzzles are also fun and engaging."

Annetta, who recently returned from a family trip to Italy, has first-hand experience with surviving lengthy plane rides with children in tow. "I took the whole family, including my 13- and 11-year-old children," he said. "My children are

older, but we played a name the cloud game. Of course, we were above the clouds, so it made it a bit more difficult."

When traveling abroad, a long flight is an ideal time to learn more about the culture or language of your final destination. "My children tried a crash course on Italian," said Annetta. "They learned a few words they used during the week we were there. This was a free app on the iPod that we downloaded before we left."

Bethesda-based psychotherapist Katie Cogan, Ph.D., recommends activities that engage a child's imagination, particularly for younger children. "You always have your imagination with you no matter what," she said. "You can say to a child, 'Tell me a story,' or you can take turns telling stories with your child. When you're on the plane, you can help your child imagine what it will look like when we get there."

For young children, Cogan said, "Using what's inside you to create a world that already exists. It is called active imagination. Use your creativity to do anything. If you're with a young child, you can ask 'How many things can you think of that are red?'"

Cogan also advises helping children make up a story, particularly about their final destination. "If it is a small kid, give them the first part of the story or the first word and let them take it from there," she said. "Have paper with you, and you can have your child tell you the story and either write it down or have your child write the story down and color it."

Annetta said, "Journaling your experience is a fun way to practice writing while telling the story of where you are going or where you've been."

# Backwards Thinking



By KENNETH B. LOURIE

Considering that I've been cancer-centric now for nearly five years, one would have thought I might have learned and totally embraced an alternative concept: forward living – and less thinking about past causes and their possible current effects. Certainly cancer causes physical manifestations and symptoms that are diagnosable and indicative of trouble. But it's the unseen effects that in some cases cause as many difficulties. What I am referring to is the mental and emotional toll a terminal diagnosis and short term prognosis can have on the patient's perspective on life and living, and what's presumptively thought to be left of it.

And in my experience now as a comparatively long-term survivor – five years come February 27, of stage IV, non-small cell lung cancer (NSCLC), backwards thinking, as in why me, as in woe is me, has generally not been characteristic of my daily grind. Sure, I've made changes to my pre-cancer Kenny regimen of poor diet and above-average stress, and have regularly compared and contrasted my past with my present/future. However, much of this has been ongoing. I've never felt as if I've dwelled on any of it. Focused maybe, but not so much as a negative, more as a positive, as in changes which needed to be made – or else. Moreover, to learn the error of my ways and try to parlay any new found knowledge into a future that initially, according to my oncologist's original prognosis: "13 months to two years", was hardly guaranteed.

In spite of it all, I have lived – and learned and accepted that my new reality is somewhat different than it once was: somewhere between tenuous and temporary. Still, thinking about the past can only do so much good when contemplating a future that has been snatched away somewhat (somewhat? quite, actually) unexpectedly at 54 and one half. If I want to have a future, thinking and living as if I have one is more agreeable and more rewarding – and much less stressful than thinking I don't. And constantly reviewing, assessing, and connecting with the horse on which I rode in, as informative as it may be in helping to understand and appreciate the medical predicament in which I find myself so immersed, might actually be causing more harm – emotionally, than I'm willing to admit. I can't change the past, so living with it on a daily basis when I have a present and a future to consider might be shackling me in some emotional way that is preventing me from maintaining the positive and optimistic attitude so crucial in defending myself against the insidious disease inside my lungs.

Not that I'm suggesting that I can talk/think these malignant tumors ("metastatic to the lung") to cease and desist, but spending mental time on what has already occurred, instead of what possibly could be, seems counterproductive, maybe even harmful. Trouble has already found me; I don't need to encourage it. And after all these years, I should know better. I do know better. Nevertheless, as the content of this column clearly indicates, I am still under siege. I am still trying to balance the challenges of living with a future while being mindful of a past and understanding that some emotions I can't control. Cancer is funny like that, but it's no laughing matter. Even so, I did think the subject was fodder for a column – or maybe I'm just indulging myself at your expense. If it's the latter more so than the former, I appreciate your patience. I probably need it.

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

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PHOTO CONTRIBUTED

Left to right: Sanjana Meduri, Siona Prasad, Zach Wang, Aaraj Vij, Vishnu Murthy, and Alex Tisseront

## Local Lego Team Wins Grand Champions Award

A local, Great Falls-based, FIRST LEGO League Team Positive Aftermath won the 1st Place Grand Champions Award at the VADC Championship Tournament held at James Madison University, Harrisonburg on Dec. 7-8, 2013. The team members Aaraj Vij, Alex Tisseront, Sanjana Meduri, Siona Prasad, Vishnu Murthy, and Zach Wang received the Grand Champions trophy and medallions to commemorate their achievement. They also earned the opportunity to participate in the FLL World Festival, to be held in conjunction with the FIRST Championship, April 23-26, 2014 at the America's Center and Edward Jones Dome in St. Louis, Mo.

In early fall every year, FLL releases a Challenge, which is based on a real-world scientific topic. This year's challenge, Nature's Fury focuses on devising innovative solutions to keep people and property safe before, during, and after a natural disaster. Each Challenge has three parts: the Robot Game, the Project and the FLL Core Values. Teams participate in the Challenge by programming an autonomous robot to score points on a themed playing field (Robot Game), developing a solution to a problem they have identified (Project), all guided by the FLL Core Values. Children work alongside adult mentors to design, build, and program autonomous robots using LEGO MINDSTORMS technologies and create an innovative solution to a problem as part of their research project. After eight intense weeks, the competition season cul-

minates at high-energy, sports-like tournaments. Like any other organized "sport," teams also fund raise, create a team identity, and go on field trips.

This season, Team Positive Aftermath studied hurricanes and focused on the problem of access to clean drinking water for families in the days following a hurricane. They were inspired by stories from family and friends who lived through hurricanes and set their goal on finding a feasible solution. For their innovative solution, they devised a portable and energy efficient water purifier to filter out contaminants commonly found in hurricane water. To accomplish their goal they interacted with many professionals in the related fields and incorporated feedback of scientists from USA and India. The team also organized a Typhoon Haiyan Emergency Fund fundraiser in which all FLL teams and the community members could participate in order to help victims of Typhoon Haiyan. Among other needs, families in the Philippines desperately need access to clean water. Team Positive Aftermath has raised over \$1000 so far, and anyone can still donate at the following website: [www.gofundme.com/Positive-Aftermath](http://www.gofundme.com/Positive-Aftermath)

FIRST LEGO League (FLL) is an international program for 9 to 16 year-old children created in 1998 to get children excited about science and technology – and teach them valuable employment and life skills.

Official FIRST website: <http://www.usfirst.org>

## Volunteer Opportunities

The Northern Virginia Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program needs volunteer advocates for residents in assisted living and nursing facilities throughout the area. Volunteers can work in facilities close to where they live. Training is provided in March 2014.

Call 703-324-5861, TTY 711 or email [Lisa.Callahan@fairfaxcounty.gov](mailto:Lisa.Callahan@fairfaxcounty.gov). Find more information on becoming a long-term care ombudsman volunteer at [http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/dfs/olderadultservices/ltcombudsman/vol\\_ombud\\_program.htm](http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/dfs/olderadultservices/ltcombudsman/vol_ombud_program.htm).

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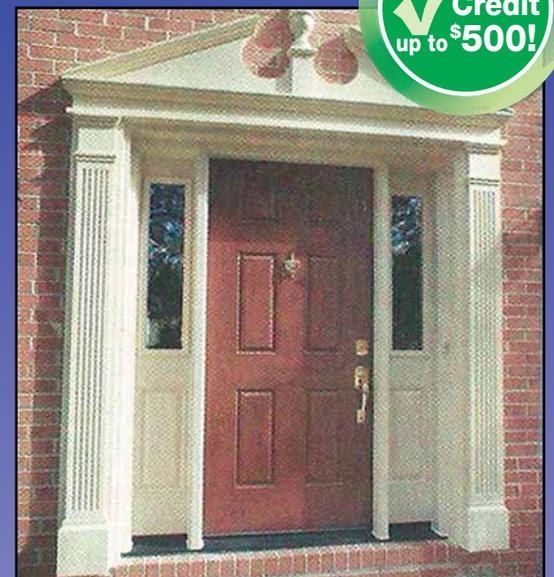
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