Is Our Water Safe?

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Rescued Owl Released

News, Page 4

Name Own Adoption Fee for Shelter Animals

News, Page 5

The Potomac River at Blockhouse Point, about three miles upstream from the Potomac Water Filtration plant on River Road in Potomac which provides water for millions of residents in the Washington D.C. metropolitan area.
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Don’t Take Safe Drinking Water for Granted

In the wake of the chemical spill in West Virginia, weighing the threats to local drinking water.

By Ken Moore
THE ALMANAC

Most of the 5 million residents in the Washington D.C. metropolitan area have no idea that their drinking water comes from the Potomac River, said Hedrick Belin, president of the Potomac Conservancy.

"Until last week, the same could have probably been said for 300,000 residents in Charleston, W.Va.,” Belin added.

On Jan. 9, West Virginia Gov. Earl Ray Tomblin informed the residents of nine counties, an estimated 300,000 people, that their tap water was contaminated. “West Virginians in the affected service areas are urged not to use tap water for drinking, cooking, washing or bathing,” Tomblin said.

A chemical leak just upriver from the water intake on the Elk River made the water suitable only for flushing toilets. For two weeks later, pregnant women were still warned not to drink the water.

THE POTOMAC RIVER Water Filtration Plant on River Road in Potomac, operated by Washington Suburban Sanitary Commission, extracts 100 million gallons of water a day from the Potomac River and delivers it to millions of people in the region.

Most of those people take for granted that when they turn on the tap the water that comes out is safe and pure.

“Absolutely. Out of sight, out of mind. That’s how we describe it,” said Jim Neustadt, director of communications and community relations with WSSC. “Could an incident like what happened in West Virginia jeopardize the water supply for millions of people?”

“The answer is anything can happen anywhere, but we take many precautions,” said Neustadt. “You have to understand that this is a regional issue, you have Fairfax Water, you have Loudoun water, you have DC water. It is an issue that gets worked on regionally.”

That regional effort includes constant monitoring of the river.

“We can reassure the public that this is not something we haven’t thought about,” Neustadt said. “We take this very seriously.”

People should not take their drinking water for granted, said Curtis Dalpra, with the Interstate Commission on the Potomac River Basin,

“Maybe the utilities make it too easy for us with how they do their work successfully and quietly,” said Dalpra. Perhaps an incident like this will help in getting people to understand how important the river is in their daily lives, he said.

“If there’s any silver lining to the incident in West Virginia, it’s that it keeps people focused on their drinking water,” Dalpra said. “People are accustomed to turning on their tap and expecting a clean safe product coming out, and they don’t think about it very much.”

THE ELK RIVER in West Virginia flows through a far more industrial area than the Potomac River does here.

But chemical spills are far from the only threat to the region’s drinking water.

“The greatest threat to the region’s water quality is polluted runoff,” said Belin. “This growing source of pollution is water that washes off the land after a rain storm, carrying sediment, excess nutrients and other toxins and contaminants directly into streams and rivers.”

Local activists have been pressing for action on water quality for decades, calling for restoration and preservation of the environment in the stream valleys.

Watts Branch is a stream which flows into the Potomac River just above the water filtration plant intake, bringing with it sediment and runoff. West Montgomery County Citizens Association would like to see investment in improving the water quality upstream in the Watts Branch as a way of improving water quality at the intake.

Maintaining a buffer of forest along the river is in their daily lives, he said.

“The ICPRB’s mission is to enhance, protect and conserve the water and associated land resources of the Potomac River and its tributaries through regional and interstate cooperation. Through regional cooperation and partnerships, ICPRB is protecting the river and improving the quality of life in the watershed, as it has since 1990.”

Get Involved

Potomac Conservancy
www.potomac.org

“Established in 1918, today WSSC is among the largest water and wastewater utilities in the nation, with a network of nearly 5,600 miles of fresh water pipeline and more than 5,400 miles of sewer pipeline.”

Our service area spans nearly 1,000 square miles in Prince George’s and Montgomery counties serving 1.8 million residents through approximately 460,000 customer accounts.

WSSC drinking water has always met or exceeded federal standards.

“Our Mission: We are entrusted by our community to provide safe and reliable water, life’s most precious resource, and return clean water to our environment, all in an ethical, sustainable, and financially responsible manner.”

Potomac Almanac Editor Steven Mauren
703-277-8915 or almanac@connectionnewspapers.com

See www.potomacalmanac.com
A group of curious well-wishers looked on as a Great Horned Owl spread her formidable wings and lifted off from the arms of her rescuer back into the Potomac forest. It was a happy ending to a brief saga that could have ended much differently.

On Monday, Jan. 13, John Phillips noticed two hawks on his Brickyard Road property looking intently at something on the ground. When he looked to see what they were looking at, he discovered a huge Great Horned Owl with its leg trapped in netting.

His wife Jill Phillips had recently read about an owl rescue and placed a call to Suzanne Shoemaker at Owl Moon Raptor Center in Boyds. Shoemaker made her way to Potomac to see if the owl could be saved. The Phillips own Squeals on Wheels mobile petting zoo.

“The owl was admitted exhausted and dehydrated, with a swollen and abraded left foot, with the [plastic] netting still attached, and a strained, sore left leg,” Shoemaker said. “She required fluid therapy, soaking and wound cleaning and dressing of the left foot, and ... anti-inflammatory medication.”

Shoemaker bandaged the owl’s foot, but the owl pulled the bandages off her first night. Once the owl was re-hydrated, Shoemaker fed her frozen rats and mice, thawing them first.

The female Great Horned Owl was the biggest owl Shoemaker had ever seen.

By Saturday, the owl was ready to go back to her own habitat, where she likely has a nest and a mate waiting. The owl showed no signs of appreciating how lucky she was to be rescued as she spread her wings and took flight as Shoemaker let her go.

“If John and Jill had not found the Great Horned Owl in time, clearly she would have suffered a slow death from dehydration and starvation, or eventually another predator might have gotten up the nerve to attack her,” Shoemaker said.

The Great Horned Owl is one of the most common species of owls and is a year-round resident of most of the U.S. They are often more than two feet tall with a wingspan of up to five feet across. The females are larger than the males.

**Rescued Owl Released**

![Jill and John Phillips gathered with friends and neighbors to witness the release of a Great Horned Owl who was rescued on their Potomac property less than a week earlier.](image1)

Jill and John Phillips gathered with friends and neighbors to witness the release of a Great Horned Owl who was rescued on their Potomac property less than a week earlier.

**Great Horned Owl takes flight back into her territory after rescue.**

![The owl, who was found tangled in netting on Monday, Jan. 13, rescued and treated by Suzanne Shoemaker of Owl Moon Raptor Center, was released back in her territory on Saturday, Jan. 18.](image2)

The owl, who was found tangled in netting on Monday, Jan. 13, rescued and treated by Suzanne Shoemaker of Owl Moon Raptor Center, was released back in her territory on Saturday, Jan. 18.
Great Horned Owl Returns Home

Through Jan. 31, the Montgomery County Humane Society, located at the Montgomery County Animal Shelter, 14645 Rothgeb Drive, is allowing adopters to name their own adoption fee for the shelter's cats, dogs and other animals.

An additional cost is the county's pet licensing fee which is required for all Montgomery County residents' pets.

Prospective adopters should come prepared. Here's what to bring:

- Please bring a government-issued ID and proof of address if current address is not on the ID.
- If renting a home, bring proof of the landlord's approval to have a pet.
- Collars, leashes, and cat carriers will be available for purchase, or bring your own.
- Adopters may name their own adoption fee through Jan. 31.

Visit www.mchumane.org to learn more, or call 240-773-5960 and select option 4.

Hours to visit with the animals are weekdays, noon-7 p.m., and weekends, noon-5 p.m.; closed Wednesdays.

Name Own Adoption Fee This Month

Great Horned Owl Returns Home

Netting used in landscaping to keep deer out, or as fencing to keep poultry in, even the netting for trampolines and soccer, all pose a threat to raptors (birds of prey like owls and hawks) and other birds, Shoemaker said. Other potential entanglement hazards include fishing line and hooks, barb-wire and electric fencing.

Other dangers include second-hand poisoning when hawks or owls eat dead poisoned rats and mice and lead from hunters’ ammunition and fishing tackle poisoning.

I have seen the effects of all of these things in Montgomery County birds of prey,” Shoemaker said. Owl Moon Raptor Center is a licensed wildlife rehabilitation center specializing in birds of prey which cooperates with the Maryland Department of Natural Resources, Wildlife & Heritage Service, and local animal control offices and humane societies to answer calls concerning injured, orphaned, or otherwise jeopardized birds of prey.

Visit http://owlmoon.org/

School Notes

Email announcements to almanc@connectionnewspapers.com. Deadline is Thursday at noon. Photos are welcome.

The following students have been named Intel Science Talent Search semi-finalists: Daniel D. Liu and Jessica G. Yao from Winton Churchill High School and Lisa Deng from Walt Whitman High School.

Great Horned Owl Returns Home

Poisoning

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Name Own Adoption Fee This Month

Montgomery County Public Libraries (MCPL) has kicked off the New Year by launching three new online services — Zinio for Libraries, 3M Cloud Library e-book lending system and Learn4Life.

Zinio, a digital newsstand, is designed especially for public library users. The service digitally recreates, page-by-page, full-color magazines with interactive features such as audio and video; intuitive navigation; and keyboard article search. Registered customers may view 100 magazine titles and check-out as many as they want. Customers can keep the magazines in their personal reading list for as long as they choose, with no due dates or the need to wait for a magazine to be returned by another reader.


The Learn4Life program makes it easy to take high-quality, free courses and career training programs entirely over the Internet. Learn4Life offers:

- Courses that offer special credits or certificates, e.g., Healthcare Certificates
- Academic courses, such as college readiness math and science
- Career training courses, e.g., business fundamentals

Poisoning

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In November 2013, 34 Potomac homes sold between $2,800,000-$490,000.

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2. **10005 Ormond Road** — $875,000
3. **8818 Tuckerman Lane** — $835,000
4. **904 Twin Oaks Drive** — $722,000
5. **11013 Old Coach Road** — $785,000
6. **12131 Trailridge Drive** — $785,000

In November 2013, 34 Potomac homes sold between $2,800,000-$490,000.
Sports

Whitman Girls’ Basketball Extends Winning Streak to 10
The Whitman girls’ basketball team edged Paint Branch 44-43 on Jan. 17, improving the Vikings’ record to 11-2 and extending their winning streak to 10 games.

Whitman's Jan. 21 contest against Quince Orchard was rescheduled for Thursday, Jan. 23 due to inclement weather. The Vikings will host the Cougars at 7 p.m.

Whitman Boys’ Basketball Bounces Back
After having its nine-game winning streak snapped by Blair, the Whitman boys’ basketball team responded with a 59-38 victory over Paint Branch on Jan. 17. The victory improved the Vikings’ record to 10-3.

Whitman's Jan. 21 contest against Quince Orchard was rescheduled for Jan. 23 due to inclement weather. The Vikings will travel to face the Cougars at 7 p.m.

Churchill Boys’ Basketball Beats Magruder
The Churchill boys’ basketball team defeated three-time defending region champion Magruder 63-52 on Jan. 17.

The Bulldogs will host Damascus at 7 p.m. on Jan. 28.

Churchill Girls’ Basketball Extends Winning Streak To Four
The Churchill girls’ basketball team edged Magruder 56-55 on Jan. 17, giving the Bulldogs four consecutive victories.

Churchill will travel to face Damascus at 7 p.m. on Jan. 28.

Gaithersburg Snaps Wootton Girls’ Five-Game Win Streak
The Wootton girls’ basketball team lost to Gaithersburg 57-52 on Jan. 17, snapping the Patriots’ five-game winning streak.

Wootton (7-5) will travel to face Magruder at 7 p.m. on Friday, Jan. 24.

Wootton Boys’ Basketball Drops Sixth Straight
The Wootton boys’ basketball team lost to Gaithersburg 86-76 on Jan. 17, dropping its record to 4-8.

The Patriots will travel to face Magruder at 5:15 p.m. on Friday, Jan. 24.

Nicole Fleck, seen against Walter Johnson on Jan. 4, and the Whitman girls’ basketball team extended their winning streak to 10 games with a victory against Paint Branch on Jan. 17.
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- William Van Horne

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Friends Forever
By KENNETH B. LOURIE

Since it had been more than a few months, today I summoned up the courage to Google my long-time friend and fellow stage IV lung cancer survivor, Suzanne. Suzanne and I had been years out of touch for no real reason other than initiative and the geographic consideration that she lived in Barnstable, Ma. and I live in Burtonsville, Md. and recently back in touch – due to our identical cancer diagnoses. I learned that she had succumbed to her disease back in October. 2013. We last had contact electronically back in the summer. She was extremely weak then, she said, too weak to talk, so e-mailing was best. In that e-mail, ultimately her last, she wrote that the most recent chemotherapy drug with which she was infused was no longer effective and that her oncologist had no in a timely manner. I tried not to blame not that she said it in so many words, but at that point her prognosis was grim. She offered that her two boys were with her and from them she would gain comfort. The news was very unsettling to me and I was afraid that this e-mail might be our last – and so it was.  
Suzanne and I had never boyfriend/girlfriend, but from Elementary School through High School we were extremely close and confidants of the highest order (”thick as thieves,” to invoke a quote from the warden in the movie, “Shawshank Redemption”) describing the close relationship between Tim Robbins – “Andy Dufresne” and Red – (Morgan Freeman). Our friendship was forged during those formative, pre-adolescent years and maintained on – and then off – until back on again a year or so ago, for nearly 50 years. The reason I hadn’t inquired sooner than today was because I was fearful of what I would find out. Typically her e-mails were fairly random and on the occasion when I would e-mail her, she would rarely respond in a timely manner. I tried not to worry about this last silent interval. Today my worst fears were realized. Just as cancer survivors draw great strength from those still living with this terrible disease, so too are we weakened when one of us dies. Rather than feeling fortunate that I am still alive, I feel sadness that Suzanne is not. When one of us dies, we all die – a little bit, or at least, our resolve to persevere dies a little bit. I’ve always said that there is strength in our numbers, that we cannot afford to lose. Lung Cancer causes approximately 160,000 deaths a year, a leading cause of cancer deaths in the United States.  
Certainly Suzanne’s death affects her family way more than it affects me. However, learning that she has died has given me pause to consider/reconsider how serious my health situation is. It’s ironic that Suzanne and I were friends for so many years and that ultimately we should be diagnosed with the same disease and given a similar prognosis. It seems only ironic that Suzanne and I were friends for so many years and that ultimately we recognize and show appreciation to in – and then off – until back on again a year or so ago, for nearly 50 years. The reason I hadn’t inquired sooner than today was because I was fearful of what I would find out. Typically her e-mails were fairly random and on the occasion when I would e-mail her, she would rarely respond in a timely manner. I tried not to worry about this last silent interval. Today my worst fears were realized. Just as cancer survivors draw great strength from those still living with this terrible disease, so too are we weakened when one of us dies. Rather than feeling fortunate that I am still alive, I feel sadness that Suzanne is not. When one of us dies, we all die – a little bit, or at least, our resolve to persevere dies a little bit. I’ve always said that there is strength in our numbers, that we cannot afford to lose. Lung Cancer causes approximately 160,000 deaths a year, the leading cause of cancer deaths in the United States.)  
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News

Safe Water Requires Constant Vigilance

By Ken Moore

The Potomac River at Blockhouse Point, about three miles upstream from the Potomac Water Filtration plant on River Road in Potomac which provides water for millions of residents in the Washington D.C. metropolitan area.

“…we leave for our children and grandchildren.”

The future of water is so very important, agreed Neustadt.

Board Seeks Nominees for Service Awards

F R O M Page 3

The Montgomery County Board of Education is seeking nominations from the public for its 17th Annual Awards for Distinguished Service to Public Education.

The awards are sponsored by the board to recognize and show appreciation to individuals who may not be active currently, but have made extraordinary contributions in the past. The nominee’s contributions must have had a profound effect on the school system over a sustained period of time. Nominations in other categories must be of individuals (including MCPS students), groups, or organizations that have, within the past three years, provided service, support, and commitment to public education as demonstrated by:

❖ An outstanding contribution of time and expertise to school system programs
❖ Development and/or implementation of an exemplary program or project, or
❖ A contribution that results in system-wide benefit.

Nomination forms are available in six languages on the Board of Education website or may be obtained from the board office at the address below. To receive a nomination form by mail, call 301-279-3617. Completed nomination forms must be received in the Board of Education office by 5 p.m. on Feb. 11.

Mail completed forms to:
Montgomery County Board of Education
850 Hungerford Drive, Room 123
Rockville, Maryland 20850
Fax: 301-279-3860
Email: Becky_Gibson@mcpsmd.org

Pets for Adoption

RINGO (dog) – M, 1 and a half years old, 35 lbs., neutered, Lab mix. Ringo was saved from a rough situation where he was unloved and uncared for by a former owner. PAW has taken care of his medical needs and is working on this good boy’s socialization and need for love. Ringo likes children, other dogs and learns quickly. He will do best with a dog experienced owner who will help this great boy be all he can be.

GIRL FRIDAY (dog) – F, 6 years old, 50 lbs., spayed, Sheph- herd mix. Friday didn’t receive the best care before she was rescued but is still a sweet, affectionate girl ready to e m b r a c e people. She obeys commands quickly, likes play with other dogs and is a calm, loving girl. Friday would be a great, easy care dog for an adopter looking for a tranquil companion ready for a lot of love.

Page 11

Safe Water Requires Constant Vigilance

By Ken Moore

The Potomac River at Blockhouse Point, about three miles upstream from the Potomac Water Filtration plant on River Road in Potomac which provides water for millions of residents in the Washington D.C. metropolitan area.

“…we leave for our children and grandchildren.”

The future of water is so very important, agreed Neustadt.

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