Springfield Schools Prepare for an ‘Exciting Year’

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Heads Up Football Flourishing in Fairfax County

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Playing to Win

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From left: Assistant Principal Janice Dalton and Principal Maureen Boland go over plans for the upcoming school year in Boland’s office at Rolling Valley Elementary School.
Send notes to the Connection at south@connectionnewspapers.com or call 703-778-9416. The deadline for submissions is the Friday prior to publication. Dated announcements should be submitted at least two weeks prior to the event.

FRIDAY/AUG. 15-SUNDAY/AUG. 31

eBooks. Richard Byrd Library, 7250 Commerce Street, Springfield. Learn how to browse the collection, check out books and download to PC, Mac and eBook readers. Call the library at 703-451-6065 to schedule an appointment.

One-on-One English Conversation Practice. City of Fairfax Regional Library, 10360 North Street, Fairfax. Practice speaking English with a volunteer partner. Call 703-293-6227 for an appointment.

Personalized Internet/Microsoft Office Tutoring. City of Fairfax Regional Library, 10360 North Street, Fairfax. Learn how to use the Web or increase your skills. Call 703-293-6227 for an appointment.

FRIDAY/AUG. 15

Red Cross Blood Donation. 9 a.m.-2 p.m. Fairfax County Government Center, 12000 Government Center Parkway, Fairfax. The American Red Cross encourages all eligible blood donors to make an appointment to donate blood soon to help prevent a shortage. To make an appointment, visit redcrossblood.org or call 1-800-RED CROSS.

Genealogy Help Desk. 2-3 p.m. City of Fairfax Regional Library, 10360 North Street, Fairfax. Bring your family history stumpers to the experts. Call 703-293-6227.

Microsoft Powerpoint. 2:30-4 p.m. City of Fairfax Regional Library, 10360 North Street, Fairfax. Learn how to put together an attractive presentation using Microsoft PowerPoint. Register at www.fairfaxcounty.gov/library/branches/bx/ under “Events.” Call 703-293-6227.

Master Gardeners Plant Clinic. 10 a.m. 9000 Burke Lake Road, Burke. Master Gardeners from Fairfax County Cooperative Extension hosts plant clinics each Saturday morning through the summer to answer any gardening questions. For adults.

SATURDAY/AUG. 16

Legal and Financial Planning for Alzheimer’s. 10 a.m. – 12:30 p.m. Alzheimer’s Association National Capital Area Chapter, 3701 Fender Drive, Suite 400, Fairfax. This free workshop is for individuals and families dealing with Alzheimer’s who need to know more about what legal and financial issues to consider and how to put plans in place. To register, call the Alzheimer’s Association 24/7 Helpline at 800-272-3900.

Teen Advisory Board Meeting. 10:30 a.m.-12 p.m. Burke Centre Library, 5935 Freds Oak Road, Burke. TAB is a group of young adult volunteers between the age of 13 to 18 years who meet twice a month to plan and implement projects that will benefit the library and the community. To apply please contact nancy.klein@fairfaxcounty.gov.

Genealogy Help Desk. 2-3 p.m. City of Fairfax Regional Library, 10360 North Street, Fairfax. Bring your family history stumpers to the experts. Call 703-293-6227.

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Springfield Schools Prepare for an ‘Exciting Year’

Full-day Mondays the biggest change in a new school year.

By Marissa Beale
The Connection

With the first day of school, Sept. 2, approaching — elementary schools are hard at work preparing for the new school year.

While many of the schools in Springfield are undergoing changes such as renovation or changes in administration, every school will have to deal with what is, by far, the biggest change, yet, for the 2014-2015 school year.

“This is the first year since 1972 that all [Fairfax County Public Schools] will go to a full day on Monday,” said Maureen Boland, principal of Rolling Valley Elementary School. For years, elementary school students were released early from school on Mondays, reducing the school day to four hours long. The early release allowed extra time for teacher planning. However, the School Board voted to lengthen the day after both parents and teachers spoke up about it. The change is set to take place this upcoming September. While parents are excited for the change, students have differing ideas.

“I will miss the Mondays,” said Graham Harper, a rising sixth grader at Keene Mill Elementary School. But students can delight in having 20 minutes of daily recess because of the added minutes to the school day. The new change also allows for up to 12 school days to be missed due to things such as inclement weather, without extra days having to be added to the school year calendar.

“I think a lot of parents will like the extended school day,” said Amy Harper, preschool teacher at West Springfield Elementary School.

SEVERAL SCHOOLS IN SPRINGFIELD are preparing to undergo renovations in the fall. Keene Mill Elementary School, Garfield Elementary School, and North Springfield Elementary are just three schools with construction plans either already underway or in the works. Garfield Elementary, which opened in 1952, is undergoing construction that is expected to be completed in 2015. The renovation will add an entirely new wing to the school, according to the school’s website. Keene Mill is preparing for an 18-month renovation project that will start in November, according to Ellen Colter, assistant principal at Keene Mill Elementary School. “Parents are nervous, but the kids are excited,” said Keene Mill Principal, Renee Miller.

Academically-wise, several schools have exciting changes underway. Keene Mill plans to add a “Language through Content Program,” which incorporates Science, Technology, Engineering, Art, and Math (STEAM) programs with foreign language. Every class will have a Language through Content Program. Come September, every student will receive one hour a week of Spanish instruction. Keene Mill is one of 16 pilot schools in the county that are trying this out. “We are starting with foreign language and then adding S.T.E.A.M.,” said Principal Miller. S.T.E.A.M. stands for science, technology, engineering, art, and math, and is a movement that has been widely adopted across the country to encourage the integration of Art + Design in K-20 education. “We are starting with foreign language and then adding S.T.E.A.M.,” said Principal Miller. S.T.E.A.M. stands for science, technology, engineering, art, and math, and is a movement that has been widely adopted across the country to encourage the integration of Art + Design in K-20 education.

Cardinal Forest Elementary School kindergarten teacher Sue Trinka greets parents who bring their rising kindergarten students to the school for reading level evaluations.

Cardinal Forest Elementary School kindergarten teacher Diane Flanagan goes over reading materials with a rising kindergarten student.

From left: Assistant Principal Ellen Colter, Technology Specialist Brian Lachance, and Principal Renee Miller all share the same goal of turning today’s learners into tomorrow’s leaders at Keene Mill Elementary School.

From left: Cardinal Forest Elementary School (CFES) kindergarten teacher Sue Trinka and CFES Principal, Karena Kenna, sit in Kenna’s office discussing the upcoming school year.

OVER THE COURSE of the days leading up to the first day of school, kindergarten teachers at Cardinal Forest will sit down, one to one, with students, to test and record their reading abilities.

“This reading assessment is fairly new,” said kindergarten teacher Sue Trinka. “This year marks the second one where we have done it,” she said. This test is to better gauge abilities of students going to school for the first time. Over at Rolling Valley Elementary School, Principal Maureen Boland and Assistant Principal Janice Dalton are preparing for the school year by maintaining a fun and positive atmosphere. One thing they have focused on is forming business partnerships, and partnering with the PTA to create events to grow and strengthen the school’s community. The school has sponsored a health fair, See Schools, Page 7
Heads Up Football Flourishing in Fairfax County

Program reduces concussion risk by teaching players to take the “head” out of tackling.

By Victoria Ross
The Connection

It wasn’t that long ago when youth football coaches believed a player’s toughness was measured by his ability to play through the pain. Concussions and other serious injuries were just “part of the game.”

“When I was playing football for W.T. Woodson in the late 1960s, you had two practices a day in the heat and humidity of August. There were no water breaks except before and after practice,” said state Sen. Dave Marsden (D-37). “Coaches thought drinking water would make you sick.”

Marsden, a wide receiver for Woodson, said injuries were minimized.

“When someone had disorienting head trauma, we’d say you got your bell rung, or ‘he was shaken up by the play.’ Coaches clearly expected you to go right back in the game.”

During football’s heyday, players and coaches alike looked up to legends like Paul “Bear” Bryant who left a legacy of 37 winning seasons and five Associated Press national championships at Alabama.

Bryant was also known as a strict disciplinarian: His first training camp as Texas A&M coach did much to write his legacy as a “tough” coach when Bryant took his “Junction Boys” to a small Texas town and ran a boot camp in which more than two-thirds of his players quit. As a player at Alabama, Bryant demonstrated his own toughness by playing against Tennessee with a broken leg.

“There was this thing that coaches had all been taught, that it took that kind of toughness to win . . . ,” Marsden said. “It was ridiculous, and we know better now.”

TWO YEARS AGO, as concussions were getting more attention in the NFL, USA Football — the national governing body for the sport and its youth outreach arm — created a program to teach safe tackling to youngsters called “Heads Up.” Heads Up Football is based on a style of tackling that simplifies many safety techniques into six key components: concussion education and response; equipment fitting; heat and hydration; the establishment of a player safety coach; and tackling with the head up — and out of contact.

“ ‘Heads Up Football’ is the standard of instruction moving forward during a session that allowed in high school football programs in Virginia. The NFL discovered the program a year of meetings — significant reductions in full contact were written into regulations governing high school football in Virginia. VHSL Executive Director Ken Tilley presented the task force’s action to the Senate at the 2014 session. Their actions also made ‘Heads Up Football’ the standard of instruction.

Last year, Fairfax County became the first high school district in the country to adopt Heads Up Football.

Craig Richardson, the vice chair of Communications for the Fairfax County Youth Football League and former president and commissioner of McLean Youth Football, is shown coaching his McLean team last season.

Supervisors Honor Those Promoting Heads Up Football

Last January, the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors honored a group of local coaches and residents for their role in promoting Heads Up Football, a program to reduce the number of concussions among players, in Fairfax County Public Schools.

The board recognized Bill Curran, Fairfax County Public Schools; Mark Meanna, USA Football board member; Dick Adams, former Annandale High School coach; Mike Laflin, Chantilly High School coach; Chris Haddock, Centreville High School coach; and State Sen. Dave Marsden.

Local coaches were also previously among just three districts in the country to adopt a pilot program. The program aims to improve tackling techniques, and by extension, reduce the number of concussions — a topic of increasing concern among parents and on the professional level, in the NFL. “All the polls show that NFL football is the most popular sport in our country today, but there’s a bit of a contradiction, as the pro game is so popular there is a growing number of parents who are concerned and won’t let their children participate in youth sports or youth football. The concern is long-term impact of head injuries and concussion impacts. So this is just a huge step forward to give parents that one extra level of security,” said Supervisor Michael Frey (R-Sully District). Added Supervisor Pat Herrity (R-Springfield): “Every little thing that we do, if we can prevent serious injuries, it’s important to our students and our communities.”

A task force was established and — after a year of meetings — significant reductions in full contact were written into regulations governing high school football in Virginia. VHSL Executive Director Ken Tilley presented the task force’s action to the Senate at the 2014 session. Their actions also made “Heads Up Football” the standard of instruction.

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Craig Richardson, the vice chair of Communications for the Fairfax County Youth Football League (FCYFL) and former president and commissioner of McLean Youth Football, said Heads Up football has become a key component of all Fairfax County clubs.

FCYFL is the umbrella organization comprising the 22 clubs that serve Arlington, Fairfax, Loudoun, Prince William and the City of Alexandria. Last season, FCYFL fielded more than 300 teams, with 1,200 coaches and more than 6,000 players.

When USA Football created Heads Up in 2012, it hoped to reach a few hundred of the nearly 11,000 leagues in the U.S. IN ONE YEAR. Heads Up Football was adopted by nearly 2,800 groups.

The NFL noticed.

This year, the NFL provided USA Football with a five-year, $45 million grant. And USA Football is in the process of hiring more master trainers, expecting to add between 50 and 70 to the first-year roster of about 30.

Heads Up football simplifies many safety techniques into six key components:

❖ education and certification
❖ equipment fitting
❖ concussion education and response
❖ heat and hydration
❖ the establishment of a player safety coach
❖ and tackling with the head up — and out of contact.

“The FCYFL has been on the forefront of making football the safest it can be for years,” Richardson said.

“For example, our age/weight matrix is the model that football programs across the county now follow. Every year, we weigh in every single one of the 6,000 or so players in our league, and they are placed within a particularly weight-class depending on their age and weight. The younger a player is in the weight-class, the more they can weigh, Richardson said.

Richardson also noted that — because there are three skill levels within each weight class — players are matched up appropriately.

“Finally, we require all coaches to be USA Football certified, which requires completion of an extensive online training course including a module on concussions and other safety issues, and they must complete a background check by a professional screening company,” he said.

Richardson said there was some initial hesitation from coaches, particularly those making national headlines as the target of an FBI probe — were slim to none.

So he introduced his bill, then asked that it be tabled in favor of a letter to the Virginia High School League (VHSL) by the Education and Health Committee chairman asking that the matter be studied.

A letter signed by the members of the Virginia Senate worked just as well,” Marsden said, smiling.

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U.S. Rep Wolf (R-10) Announces Service Academy Appointments

Rep. Frank Wolf (R-10) announced the 10th District’s Class of 2018 appointments to the nation’s service academies, as well as those selected for Academy prep schools. The students appointed from the area include:
- UNITED STATES AIR FORCE ACADEMY
  James Lynch - Fairfax Station, Robinson HS
  Dominic Adase - Springfield, West Springfield HS

- UNITED STATES MERCHANT MARINE ACADEMY
  David Symmes - Fairfax Station, South County HS

- UNITED STATES MILITARY ACADEMY
  - Preparatory School
    David Jaquish - Fairfax Station, Trinity Christian School

- UNITED STATES NAVAL ACADEMY
  Lourania Oliver - Clifton, Flint Hill HS
  Taylor Yohe - Springfield, Thomas Jefferson HS
  Margaret Rund - Fairfax Station, Lake Braddock HS

**Note:** These appointees were nominated by Wolf’s 10th District Service Academy Advisory Board, which interviews candidates and recommends nominees. The selection process is strictly a competitive one.

Others listed above received their appointments through presidential, Senate or other nomination sources. Coast Guard Academy candidates do not need a nomination.

Shift Hearts Ministry to Hold Youth Summit

Shift Hearts Ministry in partnership with Oben and Company is presenting the first Youth Empowerment Summit: Jesus or Nah? on August 15-16, 2014 for youth ages 10-25. This free two-day summit will give attendees the opportunity to participate in discussions and interactive presentations on key issues that directly impact youth, including current issues in their communities, understanding the historical and cultural aspects of Christianity, and keys to effective communication.

On day one of this inaugural Summit, the focus will be on key issues that impact youth today. On day two, participants will engage in interactive discussions and presentations designed to empower youth to make a difference in their own communities and to inspire others to do the same.

**Breakfast with the Bishop**

Shift Hearts Ministry invites Bishop Ronald A. Butler to be the keynote speaker on day two of the Summit. Butler is the current bishop of the Christian Church of America and is known for his advocacy for youth and education. He will address the audience on the importance of leadership, mentorship, and using faith to inspire action.

**Network and Connect**

The Summit will also provide opportunities for youth to network and connect with leaders from various organizations and communities. Youth will have the chance to engage in small group discussions and learn from experienced mentors and professionals.

Shift Hearts Ministry is committed to empowering youth and giving them the tools they need to make a difference in their communities. The Summit is an opportunity for youth to come together, learn from one another, and be inspired to take action.

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Homelessness: Source of Trauma for Children

Nearly 700 children live in emergency homeless shelters in Fairfax County at some point during the year.

By Dean Klein

S ummer vacation is wrapping up; kids everywhere are gearing up for the return to school. Stores are filled with school supplies; back-to-school advertising fills our TVs, radio and mailboxes. Many families are hustling from store to store getting supplies, backpacks, clothes and haircuts. As children, while we hated to see summer end, we fondly remember the yearly ritual and the excitement and anticipation of getting all those new things.

Unfortunately, not all families and children in Fairfax County experience this new school year this way. It may be hard to imagine that in a county as wealthy as Fairfax there are hundreds of children that do not have a home to call their own. In 2013, almost 700 children reside in emergency homeless shelters at some point during the year. This uncertain existence is a constant source of trauma for children.

Dean Klein

The ribbon cutting for the new Community Residences, Inc. High Support Needs.

Using the accepted formula of spending one third of gross income on housing, a rent of $1,200/month requires an approximate annual income of $44,000. That equates to about $21 an hour. People who work in the service industry and the stores and businesses we rely on each and every day earn much less than that.

As stated in the Ten Year Plan to Prevent and End Homelessness adopted by our community in 2008, we need to have affordable housing that is accessible to all its hardworking members. While it is also imperative that we as a community continue to ensure that children have school supplies, access to good nutrition at school, clothing etc., without a home to call their own, they will continue to live in a perpetual state of fear and stress. If we genuinely want them to succeed, that is too heavy a load for the youngest and most vulnerable in our community.

If you would like to be a part of helping these families, please contact one of our non-profit partners so hard to find and provide housing for them or the Fairfax County Public Schools Homeless Liaison Office working diligently to make sure these children receive the services they are entitled to and need. Visit http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/homeless/partnerupdate/community-partners.htm and http://www.fcps.edu/dss/ips/homelessinfo/HomelessBrochure.pdf for more.

Dean Klein is director of the Fairfax County Office to Prevent and End Homelessness.
Schools Prepare for New Year

From Page 3

an international night, a movie night, and a school dance. “All of these events are designed to celebrate the community,” said Dalton. The school also had their first camping trip at Hemlock Overlook, a regional park in Clifton. The trip was for the entire sixth grade class, and was a huge success. “We hope to make this a tradition,” said Boland.

For a complete school year calendar, visit the Fairfax County Public School website at www.fcps.edu.

Celebrating Virtues

Saint Bernadette Catholic School, one of about nine private schools in Springfield, will start the school with a new vision statement that strives for students to be “well-formed” in conscience, “well-trained” in mind, and to “witness the love of Christ through practical application of the faith.” Michael Kelleher, who is entering his second year as principal of Saint Bernadette, says that the school’s focus is not only for students to get good jobs once they have completed their education, but to be well rounded individuals. This well-roundedness has a lot to do with virtues. In the upcoming school year, Saint Bernadette will celebrate a different virtue each month. The theme for the first month is the virtue of hope, and students at the school will have an opportunity to recognize each other for exhibiting the virtue being focused on for the given month.

Area Roundups

From Page 5

The summit was for the entire sixth grade class, and was a huge success. “We hope to make this a tradition,” said Boland.

For a complete school year calendar, visit the Fairfax County Public School website at www.fcps.edu.

St. Bernadette Catholic School Principal Michael Kelleher said he is excited about updates to the school, including a vision statement that focuses not just on strength in academics, but also on well-roundedness.

Citizens Police Academy

People interested in law enforcement and who’d like to learn about the Fairfax County Police Department and meet many of those who serve in it may now do so. They may apply to join the Sept. 11-Nov. 15 session of the Citizens Police Academy. It’s a free, 10-week program put on by the Police Department and is open to people who live or work in this county.

Participants complete some 40 hours of learning to gain a better understanding of and appreciation for police via a combination of lectures, tours and hands-on activities. Topics covered include the 911 Call Center, patrol, traffic stops, Adult Detention Center, gangs, financial crimes and SWAT team.

To apply, go to http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/police/services/citizens-police-academy.htm or email CPA@fairfaxcounty.gov.

Farmers Market

Each Thursday, from 3-7 p.m., the Fairfax County Government Center hosts a farmers market in its parking lot. The Government Center is at 12000 Government Center Pkwy, in Fair Oaks, and the next markets are slated for Aug. 14 and Aug. 21.

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St. Bernadette Catholic School Principal Michael Kelleher said he is excited about updates to the school, including a vision statement that focuses not just on strength in academics, but also on well-roundedness.
### Top Sales in June, 2014

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### Local REAL ESTATE

- **15604 Jillians Forest Way, Centreville** — $2,650,000
- **10609 Donovans Hill Drive, Fairfax Station** — $1,125,000
- **3444 Preservation Drive, Fairfax** — $1,099,000
- **4700 Brentwall Court, Chantilly** — $746,000
- **3554 Early Woodland Place, Fairfax** — $1,240,000
- **6530 Megills Crossing Way, Clifton** — $1,050,000
When summer comes to a grinding halt in a few weeks, a new school year will begin. From alarm clocks and school bells to piles of homework assignments and sports schedules, maintaining a coordinated household can be difficult, however. Local organizers are offering simple suggestions to help make the transition from summer to the start of the school year seamless.

“If you’ve had a lazy summer and your home is an organizational mess, take a day off from work or at least set aside several hours to spend whipping it back into shape before the first day of school,” said Faye English, an organizer from Fairfax. “The school year will be much easier if you get organized from the beginning.”

Designating a place in one’s home for papers and homework supplies is one way to stay organized during the school year.

“Children enjoy seeing their artwork hanging at home,” said Dando. “At the end of the school year you can store some of the artwork in a keepsake box.” Take inventory of each child’s school supplies and determine what needs to be purchased and what can be reused. “Once the school sends the list of supplies your child will need, figure out what you already have so you don’t feel compelled to buy everything on the list,” said English. “If your child [has a] backpack or lunchbox that’s in perfectly good condition, consider reusing it.”

**SET ASIDE A SPACE** where children do homework and make sure each child has a bin with the supplies he or she will need for completing their assignments, said Arlington-based organizer Michelle Stanbury. “The homework space should be quiet, free of distractions and have good lighting,” she said.

Keep a large family calendar that includes each child’s events. “It can even be a dry erase board,” said Stanbury. “But it should include sports schedules, club meetings, field trip dates and other events. Use a different color marker for each child. This way everyone in the family knows everyone else’s schedule.”

Encourage children to begin choosing their outfits for school before going to bed at night. “This will save a lot of time and fights when children are getting ready for school in the morning,” said Dando. “With younger children, it also helps if, when you’re school shopping, you buy clothes that all coordinate together and match. This is especially useful for children who like to pick out their own outfits for school.”

Designate a space in one’s home for papers and homework supplies is one way to stay organized during the school year.
Playing to Win

Serious local tennis competitors share their approach to the game.

As the U.S. Open approaches, several local tennis students are competing in their own United States Tennis Association (USTA) local competitions. There are several levels of tournaments to choose from as well as age groups whether they’re entry-level, intermediate, or advanced.

“Central to tennis is competition. They learn to win and how to lose,” according to Coach Wayne Bryan. If Bryan’s name sounds familiar, not only is he a world-class coach, but also father to the most successful professional men’s doubles teams in tennis history, the Bryan brothers Bob and Mike. “I’m a huge believer in the tennis experience,” said Bryan who advocates as much exposure to tennis as possible. “It’s a way of life. The more you immerse yourself in the way of life, the better.”

The cornerstone of Bryan’s coaching philosophy is “Making it fun.” Bryan emphasizes a positive and enthusiastic approach to the game and has written about the importance of the coach’s and parents’ roles in motivating and inspiring their tennis kids.

You may have seen his fun approach to tennis on display if you attended the CitiOpen in Washington, D.C. just a few weeks ago. Bryan was the MC for the tennis matches and worked the crowds attending the event, including prize giveaways and trivia.

The Bryan brothers Bob and Mike. “I’m a huge believer in the tennis experience,” said Bryan who advocates as much exposure to tennis as possible.

Relying on Bryan’s philosophy is “Making it fun,” Bryan believes that the competitive experience develops long-term benefits for tennis youth, regardless of the level they compete at.

“With tennis, you can play until 95. When we say sport for life, it truly is. They become enamored with it when they’re young and it’s still a benefit to them [as they get older].”

Like the four grand slams in tennis, there are several local, state-wide, and national tournaments taking place all over the country on various surfaces. Most are on hard court, but there are several on clay and even a few that utilize a grass surface like Wimbledon. According to Vona, “It depends on where you are in the country. In the North there’s clay. I would say it’s about 70 percent hard court and 30 percent clay.”

Chidimma Okpara, Natasha Subhash, and Reilly Tran are all 12-year-old competitors from the Four Seasons Tennis Club in Fairfax. All three compete in both clay and hard court tournaments throughout the nation.

The Williams sisters inspired me,” said Okpara. She also has a 6-year-old sister who plays and started at age 4, two years younger than her older sister. Talking about her sister, “she says she wants to be like Serena and says ‘I’m going to beat you.’” Her brother also practiced tennis but has now switched to basketball. Her sister wants to go pro and play doubles with Okpara.

On the men’s side, her idols include both Roger Federer and Rafael Nadal. “Federer because he’s really calm and he’s really optimistic and he’s like the king of champions. Nadal because he fights. On the women’s side it would be Sharapova and Azarenka.”

Tran is also a fan of Nadal’s since she plays left-handed as well. “I like Nadal because he’s a lefty. I also play with two hands on each side.” This helps her pack a lot of force into her shots, providing her with more power than her compact frame might otherwise allow. Tran feels that the extra force she gets overcomes the lack of reach that might result with such an approach. Like her peers at the tennis center, she practices about four hours a day during the school week, more in the summer. Okpara, Tran, and Subhash all leave school early so they can get in enough practice after school and miss about 15 school days a year due to tournament schedules.

Parental involvement is usually crucial as a child needs to be supported to achieve the highest levels of their abilities. It takes time to get them to practice, to tournaments. It also takes a substantial financial outlay as well,” says Bob Pass, the 4Star Tennis Academy coach for all three girls.

Natasha Subhash’s dad loves sports and instilled this love for the game in her. Subhash started playing tennis at 4Star at age 4 and entered her first tournament by age 6. The only child in the family, she explained, “my dad, he introduced me to tennis. He loves to play.” Along with her doubles partner, Malkia Menguene, she captured the silver ball in 14s (playing in an older group than her age) at the National Clay Court Championships in Plantation, FL, just this past July.

IT TAKES A LOT to make a competitive tennis player and there are several facilities in the Northern Virginia area that are making the grade for the MidAtlantic section of the USTA. In addition to 4Star, the Jack Schore Tennis program operates out of the Regency Sport and Health in McLean. Both facilities include well-maintained clay courts to ensure that those attending their programs are exposed to different surfaces if they want to compete on the circuit.

Schore emphasized the importance of having the chance to practice on clay as well as hard court. “Due to the slower surface, on clay you generally have to set up points better. Again the points are longer which means more emphasis on conditioning. There is also specialized footwork. There can be a greater emphasis on the serve and first strike tennis on a hard court,” he explained in an email.

There are several competitions that take place throughout the year at various levels. “We had 18 students play in the National Clay Courts and will have 16 in the National Hard Courts. We have over a hundred students who play USTA tournaments at the Sectional level. About 45 play National events but not the National Championship events,” said Bob Pass in an email.

As Tran, Subhash, and Okpara explained, their weekend practices are taken up mostly with competition play. It’s a year-long process with a lot of sweat, sacrifice, family support and travel time.

As Coach Wayne Bryan put it, “It’s all hard work and drudgery. That inspiration leads to passion. Great tennis can be at all levels. But it’s important they have fun each and every day.”
**ENTERTAINMENT**

Send notes to the Connection at south@connectionnewspapers.com or call 703-778-9416. The deadline is the Friday prior to the next paper’s publication. Dated announcements should be submitted at least two weeks prior to the event.

**FRIDAY/AUG. 15 – SUNDAY/AUG. 24**

**Legally Blonde – the Musical.**

Workhouse Arts Center, W-3 Theatre, 9601 Ox Road, Lorton. This Broadway musical follows the story of Elle Woods as she goes on a mission to find love (and herself) at Harvard Law School. Buy tickets and find showtimes at www.workhousearts.org. 703-584-2900.

**SATURDAYS/AUG. 16-AUG. 23**

**Burke Arts in the Parks.**


**SATURDAY/AUG. 16**

**“Legally Blonde – the Musical.”**

Workhouse Arts Center, 9601 Ox Road, Lorton. The Workhouse Arts Center is proud to present our 4th Annual Workhouse Clay Exhibition for the month of August. Artworks being created throughout the country. 703-584-2900.

**SUNDAY/AUG. 17**

**Mount Vernon Nights: IONA**

Come and enjoy traditional music of Scotland, Ireland, Wales, England, France, and Spain, featuring fiddle, vocals, flute, guitar and percussion. Picnic baskets, lawn chairs and blankets are welcome, but outside alcohol is not permitted. www.workhousearts.org. 703-584-2900.

**July/August**

**“Time, Nature and Technology.”**

W-16 McGuire Woods Gallery, 9518 Workhouse Way, Lorton. Three artists from Virginia and Maryland use glass as a means to dig into the conceptual nature of discovery, time, fiction and experiment. 703-584-2900.

**Saturdays/Aug. 16-Aug. 23**

**Burke Arts in the Parks.**

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**Saturdays/Aug. 16-Sunday/Sept. 7**

**4th Annual Workhouse Clay National.**

Workhouse Arts Center W-16 McGuire Woods Gallery, 9518 Workhouse Way, Lorton. This exhibition represents the depth and breadth of contemporary ceramic artworks being created throughout the country. 703-584-2900.

**Saturday/Aug. 16**

**Mount Vernon Nights: IONA**

Come and enjoy traditional music of Scotland, Ireland, Wales, England, France, and Spain, featuring fiddle, vocals, flute, guitar and percussion. Picnic baskets, lawn chairs and blankets are welcome, but outside alcohol is not permitted. www.workhousearts.org. 703-584-2900.

**Trivia Night Fundraiser for Kids**

6:30-8:30 p.m. Good Shepherd Parish Hall, 9350 Braddock Road, Burke. Come join our Fairfix Optimist Club event. Tickets $10; all proceeds benefit kids’ programs. Doors open at 6; food & beverages available; prize traffic. 703-341-8203.

**Community Library, 9520 Richmond Highway, Burke.**

**Walk-in eBook clinic.**

10 a.m.-12 p.m. 6450 Sydenstricker Road, Burke. Help download library eBooks by bringing your device and its account ID and password. For adults.

**Friday/Aug. 22**

**Fun Flicks.**

10:30 a.m. 6450 Sydenstricker Road, Burke. Watch movies based on children’s books, including: Olivia Acts Out, Olivia and Grandma’s Visit, and Olivia Plays the Piano. Cosponsored by the Friends of the Pohick Regional Library.

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The 29-year-old is Rams’ fourth head coach in five years.

By Jon Roetman

The Robinson football program, a proud, two-time Virginia state champion, has been reduced to a head-coaching turnstile in recent seasons.

Mark Bendorff, who coached the Rams for 14 seasons, guiding them to three state final appearances and a pair of titles (1997, 2001), retired following the 2010 season. After Bendorff’s retirement, Trey Taylor lasted two seasons as head coach, guiding Robinson to a 9-13 record and a pair of first-round playoff exits. Former principal Dan Meier served as interim head coach during the 2013 campaign, leading the Rams to an 8-4 mark, including a playoff win over Patriot High School.

Following Meier’s one-year stint, Scott Vossler became Robinson’s third head coach in as many seasons, and fourth in the last five years. While those numbers might seem mind-boggling for one of the area’s top programs, the hiring of Vossler, a 29-year-old Ohio native, might actually bring a level of continuity. Vossler spent the previous three seasons as a Robinson assistant, and was the team’s defensive coordinator in 2013. “The fact that I’ve been here for three years really helps,” Vossler said. “All these guys that are seniors were freshmen my first year here. That helps me [know] where they’ve been and what they’ve dealt with, and it also, I think, helps them have some familiar faces that are around.”

Vossler said he wants to return the Rams to prominence. “I think we’ve got to get better at what we want to do,” he said, “but I also think all of us coaches, administration and all the players feel an obligation to the people that played here and coached here before to get things back to where they had it.”

ONE PLAYER who is very familiar with Vossler is linebacker Nick Roth, who enters his third season as a varsity starter. Roth, a 6-foot-1, 200-pound senior, has put on 30 pounds since his sophomore year and is expected to be one of the Rams’ top players in their 4-3 defensive scheme. “[Vossler] knows all the players really well,” Roth said. “He’s a young head coach. He connects with the players a little better than the other coaches have.”

Vossler said he expects the defense’s back seven to be strong. The secondary has three standouts in senior cornerbacks Demarcus Byrdsong (5-10, 160) and Navarus Grant (6-1, 180), and safety Marcus Denham (5-10, 160).

Offensively, senior quarterback Jack Rowllett (6-1, 185) returns for his third varsity season under center, and second running the wing-T. “He’s going to carry us, hopefully,” Vossler said. “The thing that I love about Jack, and I think you notice when he plays, is how competitive he is. If we put Jack in and told him he had to kick off right before the game, he’d tell me he could put it in the end zone. He’s very confident, he’s very competitive, he just wants to go out there and win.”

Robinson’s first home game is Sept. 19 against Mount Vernon.

ROBINSON will travel to face Robert E. Lee at 7:30 p.m. on Thursday, Aug. 28. It’s the first of three consecutive road games to open the season for the Rams, including meetings with Woodson and Lake Braddock. Robinson’s first home game is Sept. 19 against Mount Vernon.

“We’re going to work real hard to try to keep the tradition strong and build off what those people left us,” Vossler said. “We owe it to the school and we owe it to guys like Mark Bendorff and all those great players that were here to right the ship, so that’s going to be our mindset all season.”

Focus on Concussion Prevention

From Page 4

who had been around for a while.

“They had their own way of doing things, and they were a bit resistant to making changes to their approach to teaching. Once they saw the Heads-up football program, how it works, its safety benefits, and the ease in understanding it from the players’ perspective, all were converted and are now outspoken advocates for the program,” Richardson said.

“Parents are obviously concerned given the extensive negative publicity primarily at the NFL level, and are excited that at the youth level we were proactively addressing the issue,” he added. “The Heads-up program also requires significant parent involvement, so they are included in the training process and are an integral component of its success.”

As more than 6,000 local youth began football camps in every area of the county last week, Richardson said the FCYFL reminded players, coaches and parents that Fairfax County is a Heads-up program.

“We take player safety seriously. Our number one rule stipulates that there’s no physical contact for any player during the first three days of practice, and that each player must have at least three practice periods of conditioning and training before engaging in any contact drills or scrimmages.”

Vienna Youth football commissioner Todd Casey ran a “Football Moms” camp last week at Oakton High School specifically to give parents the opportunity to experience and understand what their sons encounter during football practice. The camp was organized by VYI Football Moms, and nearly 50 Oakton and Vienna moms attended the Friday evening camp.

Tami Chadwick, whose son plays VYI football and whose daughter is an OHS cheerleader, said she is more concerned about the possibility of injuries in other sports. “We have a great organization with involved coaches and parents,” Chadwick said. “It’s clear from day one that coaches are concerned with safety. For example, there is no way they let your son play with a helmet that does not fit properly.”

“We coach with safety in mind,” Casey said. “Fairfax County youth football is an incredible community that has a ridiculously large impact on the lives of those who play.”

Casey said Heads Up has not detracted from staying competitive and continuing to compete in playoffs.

Greg Dunlap, a 15-year-old player from Lake Braddock, said the changes have made playing football “smarter and safer.”

“You understand what you’re doing more. It’s not just blindly running and hitting the guy with the football,” Dunlap said.

According to the National Federation of State High School Associations, participation in high school football was down 2.3 percent in the 2012-13 season compared to the 2008-09 season.

Some of that drop-off is attributed to parents’ concerns about safety in football. Former NFL running back Merril Hoge, now a member of USA Football’s board of directors, said Heads Up Football is having a positive impact on the game and addressing parents’ concerns.

The ultimate objective is to educate everyone who needs to know more about the trauma in sport, and when it happens, that the right action takes place,” Hoge says.

TO FAIRFAX COUNTY COACHES like Richardson and Casey, Heads Up Football benefits all coaches, whether they are working with pee wee starting out in football, or high schoolers with college scholarships in sight.

Marsden said that Heads Up shifts the emphasis from treatment to prevention.

“In the past so much of the focus has been on treating a player after a big hit. This is the first time we saw there was something we could do on the front end that makes the game safer,” Marsden said. “At the end of the day, prevention is always the best place to end up, whether it’s medicine, crime or sports. Prevention is always better than the cure,” Marsden said. Marsden sees the connection to high school football as essential. “The high school coach is critical to this program, not only continuing to succeed, but grow,” Marsden said. “The high school coach in the area is the guy who supports the youth programs, the guy who is looked up to on every level, the guy the kids want to play for some day.”

The more high schools applied to the program, it will legitimize the program even more. They prepare their kids for high school. If this is part of the high school curriculum, we will see more youth coaches embrace it.”
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