



Executive director of the Borromeo Housing, Inc. in Arlington, Darlene Bakke greets shoppers at the gift fair. BHI empowers young single mothers to create a self-sustaining future through education, counseling and support, while they reside in a safe home.

Giving Gifts That Give Hope

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PHOTO BY LOUISE KRAFFT/THE CONNECTION



UPCOMING EVENTS

- ▶ **“A BROADWAY CHRISTMAS CAROL”
AT METROSTAGE
NOVEMBER 26 - DECEMBER 28**
- ▶ **THE LITTLE THEATRE OF ALEXANDRIA’S
“A CHRISTMAS CAROL”
DECEMBER 5 - 20**
- ▶ **DEL RAY ARTISANS
19TH ANNUAL HOLIDAY MARKET
DECEMBER 5 - 21**
- ▶ **ALEXANDRIA’S HOLIDAY MARKET
AT CARLYLE
DECEMBER 5 - 24**
- ▶ **CHRISTMAS ILLUMINATIONS
AT MOUNT VERNON
DECEMBER 20**
- ▶ **WATERSKIING SANTA
COMES TO OLD TOWN ALEXANDRIA
DECEMBER 24**
- ▶ **20TH ANNIVERSARY OF
FIRST NIGHT ALEXANDRIA
DECEMBER 31**

EXTRAORDINARY



VisitAlexandriaVA.com/Holidays



PHOTOS CONTRIBUTED

Last month, SoberWoman gave Starbucks gift cards to patrons in Arlington bars who could prove that they left their homes with methods of safe return.

SoberWoman: On a Mission
Anti-DUI superheroine hits Arlington’s nightlife scene.

BY ASHLEY CLAIRE SIMPSON
THE CONNECTION

Are you planning on killing anyone tonight?” While a startling thought, it is also a message of that Washington Regional Alcohol Program (WRAP) wants residents to think about when planning a night out on the town this holiday season. As the weather gets frightful and party invitations are aplenty, WRAP is attacking the ever-present issue of drunk driving with a multitude of approaches.

As part of Checkpoint Strikeforce, a Mid-Atlantic anti-drunk driving effort that increases law enforcement and implements zero tolerance policies, WRAP has facilitated a number of different activities and programs in Arlington during the holidays. Most recently, they paraded an anti-DUI heroine, SoberWoman along the streets of

Clarendon in November, rewarding patrons in Arlington bars who could prove that they left their homes with methods of safe return. Anyone who could show SoberWoman their MetroCard, a taxi-related smartphone application, or introduce her to a designated sober driver received a \$5 Starbucks card courtesy of the Checkpoint Strikeforce campaign.

“This was the second year of having a super hero of this nature in Arlington,” WRAP President Kurt Erickson said. “Last year, it was SoberMan. SoberWoman rewarded people for having exit strategies at the end of the evening. Checkpoint Strikeforce has been around for 13 years, which is enhanced law enforcement to look for and apprehend drunk drivers. We are adding to this with the celebrating of people who are doing the right things — people taking public transit and cabs.”

SoberWoman arrived on Wilson Boulevard in a police motorcade on the Saturday before Thanksgiving, and used a PA system to announce her mission outside of Whitlow’s on Wilson. From there, she made appearances at Arlington hotspots Whitlow’s, Clarendon Grill and Spider Kelly’s.

The heroine was so popular that she was scheduled to make appearances in Maryland and the District.

WRAP is also behind the SoberRide program, the free taxi service for locals that is offered four times a year. SoberRide started for the fourth time this year on Friday, Dec. 12, and last 20 consecutive nights. WRAP contracts nine cab companies, including Arlington’s Red Top Cab, and pays the first \$30 of every ride between 10 p.m. and 6 a.m. until New Year’s Day. Residents have an easy phone number to remember in order to utilize this service: 1-800-200-TAXI. Erickson encourages people to program it



SoberWoman works to stop drunk-driving.

SEE SOBERWOMAN, PAGE 5
WWW.CONNECTIONNEWSPAPERS.COM



PHOTOS BY LOUISE KRAFFT/THE CONNECTION

The Lost Agency Ramblers performed during the afternoon 'Gifts That Give Hope' fair at Calvary United Methodist Church in Arlington.

Giving Gifts That Give Hope

The music of the Lost Agency Ramblers drifted through the auditorium and down the hallway to Grant Street as Calvary United Methodist Church hosted its 4th annual "Gifts that Give Hope" Fair. Fifteen locally based non-profit organizations participated in the gift fair on Saturday, Dec. 13.

Event sponsors were Andors Real Estate Group, The STEM Preschool, Totally Scrappin, JW Tumbles, 32 George Photography and Design, and Whole Foods Market Arlington.

Fair participants included: Animal Welfare League of Arlington, American Partnership for Eosinophilic Disorders (APFED), Arlington Food Assistance Center (AFAC), Arlington Street

People's Assistance Network (A-SPAN), Art for Humanity, Bikes For The World, Borromeo Housing Inc., Calvary Children's School, Co-Partners For Campesinas, First Book – Northern Virginia, Homeless Children's Playtime Project, Mason Leach Superstar Fund, MicheLo Program, Reach Out To Haiti and The Holiday Project. Gifts That Give Hope is an opportunity for people to give back to their community and honor their loved ones at the same time. Instead of buying traditional holiday gifts, shoppers donate to local nonprofits and receive a holiday card describing the donation to give as a gift. Online shopping is available until Dec. 20. For more information visit www.giftsthatgivehope.org/arlington.



First Book-Northern Virginia provides new books to at-risk children in Northern Virginia.



After the death of her 5-year-old son from brain cancer in 2007, Danielle Leach partnered with the American Childhood Cancer Organization. The Mason Leach Superstar Fund provides information, support and services to families fighting cancer.



Sally Cooney Anderson represents The Holiday Project of the National Capital Area. Volunteers visit patients in hospitals, nursing homes and long term care facilities during the holidays.



Wayne Bush works with the 'Reach Out To Haiti' project. The not-for-profit Christian organization continues to provide humanitarian needs in the disaster-struck nation of Haiti.



Calvary Children's School's Beth Posey talks with a former student. The school's mission is to provide the highest quality preschool education in a Christian environment.



Jim and Archer Heinzen of Co-partners of Campesinas works in rural Guatemala and El Salvador to expand education for children and youth and vocational training for youth and adults

Moving Forward

Arlington-Alexandria Coalition for Homelessness undergoes transformation to "Bridges to Independence."

BY VERNON MILES
THE CONNECTION

At the end of 2014, the Arlington-Alexandria Coalition for the Homeless (AACH) will cease to exist. The organization, with its nearly 30 years of work transitioning homeless families into apartments and houses across Northern Virginia, will be going through a transition itself when it becomes "Bridges to Independence." According to leadership at the AACH, the change is a long time coming and better reflects the work the organization does.

"When we became the Arlington-Alexandria Coalition for the Homeless in 1985, it was a great name," said Michael O'Rourke, director of the AACH, "but it doesn't say what we do now and it provides some challenges to us."

While the AACH started out as a homeless shelter, O'Rourke says their aims over the years have moved more towards educating their clients and working with them towards being able to live on their own. As Bridges to Independence, the organization hopes to expand its programs with clients who are at risk of losing their home to keep them housed and reform their budget before they enter homelessness.

Like many of its clients, the AACH will be finding a new home in the spring. As part of its transition, the AACH is losing one of its sites that currently houses its offices, a children's play room, and

a tech classroom. The classroom is complete with a smart-board and teleconferencing capabilities, part of a \$25,000 tech grant from NBC. The servers and much of the office equipment came from Hillary Clinton's campaign for Presidency six years ago, when her Arlington headquartered campaign sold off the equipment at a cheap price. O'Rourke says he's looking forward to Hillary Clinton running again, if only because it will mean they get upgraded equipment. These facilities will be replaced by a new headquarters that operates out of the first floor of new building going up on their headquarters at the corner of North Highland Street and 10th Street North.

The organization operates on an annual budget of \$1.7 million. Eighty-five percent of its funding goes to program services and 15 percent goes into staff management. The majority of their budget comes from its contract with Arlington County to operate the shelter, a grant from Housing and Urban Development in Alexandria, and government contracts from the state.

"It's not just a donation, they come with things we're supposed to accomplish," said O'Rourke. "For the most part, [our funding is] either a contract or a grant."

O'Rourke treats each case as a professional project, calling residents in AACH programs clients. Currently the AACH offers two main programs for its clients.

SEE COALITION, PAGE 8



Arlington-Alexandria Coalition for Homelessness Director Michael O'Rourke and one of the program's play rooms.

PHOTO BY VERNON MILES/THE CONNECTION

OPINION

Holidays Are for Giving

In the scramble to finish Christmas shopping, remember tens of thousands of local children are short of food as well as presents.

The holidays are for giving. Christmas and Hanukkah are about children and family, about sharing, about joy, about being thankful and about faith and appreciation.

Here in Northern Virginia, many of us see few signs of families in need as we go about our daily lives and holiday shopping. Our neighborhoods are largely segregated economically; we mostly see the people who are most like ourselves economically.

But in Fairfax County, about 65,000 people live below the poverty line, about 6 percent. In Arlington and Alexandria, more than 8 percent of the population lives in poverty, about 18,000 people in Arlington and more than 12,000 people in Alexandria.

To be clear, the poverty line is \$19,780 for a family of three; it's \$11,670 for a single person household. Imagine for a minute how far \$20,000 a year would go in your family. To live in Northern Virginia, a family needs to earn about twice the rate of poverty to get by. The median household income in Fairfax County and Arlington is well over \$100,000.

In Fairfax County Public Schools, more than 52,000 students, or more than 28 percent, are poor enough to receive free or subsidized

meals, a significant measure of poverty.

In Arlington more than 32 percent of the students are poor enough to receive free or subsidized meals; that's 7,452 students at last count.

In Alexandria, more than 8,500 students are poor enough to receive free or subsidized meals. That's 60 percent of the 14,222 students enrolled.

These are children who may not be sure that they will have a meal between the meals they get in school. School holidays can bring un-

EDITORIAL

Where to Give Locally in Arlington

In no particular order:

- ❖ Arlington Thrive provides one-time, same-day emergency financial assistance to Arlington residents facing a financial crisis, and also has programs to help prevent homelessness. 703-558-0035 www.arlingtonthrive.org
- ❖ Doorways for Women and Families provides services to help women out of domestic violence and homelessness toward safe and stable lives, Arlington www.doorwaysva.org, 703-504-9400
- ❖ The Arlington Food Assistance Center provides supplemental food assistance to Arlington County residents, on average serving 3,500 adults and 1,500 children a week, plus weekend backpacks for about 300 homeless children attending the public schools in Arlington. 2708 South Nelson Street, Arlington, VA 22206 <http://www.afac.org/> 703-845-8486
- ❖ Habitat for Humanity of Northern Virginia, <http://habitatnova.org/> Arlington, 703-521-9890

certainty and hunger, a far cry from the celebrations, gifts and plenty that we associate with Christmas, Hanukkah and winter holiday vacations. Many of these are children are living in families who must choose between medical bills, car repair, heat and food. Almost all are families where at least one adult is employed full time, but still many are one unexpected expense away from disaster. Many of these families live on the brink of homelessness.

There are literally hundreds, probably thousands, of ways to give locally this season. Also mark your calendar to help again in a month or two. The needs don't go away after the holidays. Here are a few ideas.

— MARY KIMM

MKIMM@CONNECTIONNEWSPAPERS.COM

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Vaccinations Needed More Than Ever

To the Editor:

An Ebola victim has been at the center of media attention for the past few days. We see breaking news on CNN and local channels such as: "Hospital did not handle the case well." Anxiety and fear that Ebola may turn into an epidemic here in U.S. heightened to its peak after the death of the patient. One case in Dallas has put the entire country into a panic mode. Could we have taken any measures to protect Ebola from coming to U.S.? Can we do something to protect ourselves better from future threats such as Ebola?

We know from this case that any epidemic anywhere in world can become a local threat in the United States. Viruses are not limited to Ebola and Africa. Viruses are of many forms and kinds. They are everywhere, some deadly and some non-deadly, some preventable and some better prevented than cured. They can turn into an epidemic as they travel fast and cover vast distances. They can cause mass human destruction from one border to another and can come to our own door like Ebola has today.

There are 300 million children around the world in low-income countries where outbreaks of pneumonia and diarrhea are a high risk. If not addressed in time, with appropriate measures, each one of those children can

become a victim of death or potentially can spread the disease. Both of these scenarios are unacceptable in this time and age when such viruses can be prevented by inexpensive vaccines. As a clinician myself, I believe prevention is better than a cure. Being mother of two kids, I also believe that every child, like mine deserves to live a healthy life. Where you live should not determine if you live.

The good news is that Gavi, the global vaccine alliance, helps empower low-income countries by ensuring vaccines reach the poorest most vulnerable children. Gavi alliance, with the support and leadership of developing coun-

tries has delivered life saving vaccines to half a billion children since year 2000. It is more critical than ever to support the Gavi initiative. The more we take precautionary measures around the world, the more we prevent dreadful viruses reaching our borders. Perhaps if there was a preventive vaccine for Ebola, we would have had a peaceful day today.

Now is the opportunity for the U.S. to take leadership in Gavi's efforts to save 5 million lives by 2020 and protect our own border from future epidemics.

Kay Neseem
Arlington

'UCHOOSE'

The Virginia license plate is unusual ("UCHOOSE"). So are the colors of the vehicle at the intersection of Wilson and Clarendon boulevards. But there

is nothing unusual about the message: "If you drink, don't drive." The December holidays and New Year's Day are scenes of celebration commonly including alcoholic beverages. For those people who become careless and over-indulge, a "Sober Ride Free Cab Service" is available: 1-800-200-TAXI throughout the Washington, D.C. metro area.



PHOTO BY MICHAEL MCMORROW

The
Arlington
Connection

www.ConnectionNewspapers.com

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An independent, locally owned weekly newspaper delivered to homes and businesses.

Published by
Local Media Connection LLC

1606 King Street
Alexandria, Virginia 22314

Free digital edition delivered to your email box. Go to connectionnewspapers.com/subscribe

NEWS DEPARTMENT:
arlington@connectionnewspapers.com

Steven Mauren
Editor

703-778-9415
smauren@connectionnewspapers.com

Vernon Miles
Reporter

703-615-0960
vmiles@connectionnewspapers.com

Jon Roetman
Sports Editor

703-752-4013
jroetman@connectionnewspapers.com
[@jonroetman](https://twitter.com/jonroetman)

ADVERTISING:
For advertising information
sales@connectionnewspapers.com
703-778-9431

Debbie Funk
Display Advertising/National Sales
703-778-9444
debfunk@connectionnewspapers.com

Andrea Smith
Classified & Employment Advertising
703-778-9411
asmith@connectionnewspapers.com

David Griffin
Marketing Assistant
703-778-9431
dgriffin@connectionnewspapers.com

Editor & Publisher
Mary Kimm
mkimm@connectionnewspapers.com
[@MaryKimm](https://twitter.com/MaryKimm)

Executive Vice President
Jerry Vernon
jvernon@connectionnewspapers.com

Editor in Chief
Steven Mauren
Photography:
Deb Cobb, Craig Sterbutzel
Art/Design:
Laurence Foong, John Heinly
Production Manager:
Geovani Flores

Special Assistant to the Publisher
Jeanne Theismann
jtheismann@connectionnewspapers.com
[@TheismannMedia](https://twitter.com/TheismannMedia)

CIRCULATION: 703-778-9426
circulation@connectionnewspapers.com



SoberWoman: On a Mission

FROM PAGE 2
into their phones.

"More than 60,000 have utilized this since we started," Erickson said. "The average fare is less than \$22."

As part of SoberRide, calls must originate in Arlington County, Montgomery County, Prince William County, Fairfax County, Prince William County, Eastern Loudoun County, or in the District. From there, SoberRide will take riders ages 21 and older anywhere. All calls for the program are funneled through Arlington's Red Top Cab Company.

"We had almost 1,900 people use it last December and 463 specifically on New Year's Eve," Erickson said. "We contract nine different cab companies in the area, including Red Top Cab Company in Arlington. They handle all calls for the program. They do this because they believe in the program. They are a privately run company that do this out of a valued sense of community service."

Statistics show that the holidays garner not just generosity and good cheer, but also an increased amount of alcohol-induced drivers attempting to navigate the roads of Virginia.

Virginia DMV statistics show that drunk driving fatalities in the Commonwealth increased between 2012 and last year. From 2012 to 2013, alcohol-related crashes in Arlington County decreased and alcohol-related traffic arrests increased in the county.

Lieutenant Kip S. Malcolm of the Arlington County Police Department said from Jan. 1 through Dec. 1 of this year, there have already been 627 DUI arrests

in Arlington County. This, he noted, is almost two arrests every day.

Malcolm also said Arlington County police appreciate the efforts of WRAP, as he has already seen a drunk driving-related serious injury this year.

"Obviously as we enter the holiday season, we do see an increase of instances of driving under the influence," Malcolm said. "We work with WRAP and other groups to discourage driving under the influence. We are in partnership with them as to work against this. WRAP gives us the opportunity to remind people to have a plan to get home. Buzzed driving is drunk driving so we want to make sure people have the resources to get home."

Malcolm said with the increased awareness in Arlington this time of year, residents have no excuse to get behind the wheel of their cars while impaired. He said it is important to have a plan before they engage in adult merriment.

"We are not telling you, 'don't drink,'" Malcolm said. "Enjoy good cheer. Just have a plan: 'this is how I am getting home responsibly.'"

He also said he has no problem being as in-your-face about prevention as possible, even if it takes accompanying a "super hero" to Arlington bars on Saturday nights.

"We did have one gentleman send us an e-mail complaint, asking who is funding and approving this. The e-mail was a concern to which my reply was, 'we will get behind any campaign we can that will reduce DUI fatalities.' We stand behind WRAP and look forward to doing it again next year."

"FLOURISHING AFTER 55"

"Flourishing After 55" from Arlington Office of Senior Adult Programs for Dec. 14-20.

Senior centers: Lee, 5722 Lee Hwy.; Langston-Brown, 2121 N. Culpeper St.; Culpepper Garden, 4435 N. Pershing Dr.; Walter Reed, 2909 S. 16th St.; Arlington Mill, 909 S. Dinwiddie St.; Aurora Hills, 735 S. 18th St.

Pickleball games and instruction, Mondays, 10 a.m., Walter Reed. Free. Register, 703-228-0955.

Strength training, Monday-Wednesday-Friday, 9 a.m., TJ. \$60/15 sessions; \$4 drop-in. Details, 703-228-4745.

Seated exercise, Monday-Wednesday-Friday, 9 a.m., Madison. \$60/15 sessions; \$4 drop-in. Details, 703-228-4878.

Madison Chess Club, Mondays, 9:30 a.m., Madison Comm. Center. Free. Details, 703-228-0555.

Ice skating, Mondays, 8:10 a.m. - 9:20 a.m., Kettler Capitals Iceplex, Ballston Mall, \$1. Register, 703-228-4745.

Seniors only weight room hours, Langston-Brown, \$60/15 sessions. Details, 703-228-6300.

Foreign language conversation groups, free. Details, 703-228-4721.

Bilingual Spanish/English book club, Tuesday, Dec. 16, 10:30 a.m., Culpepper Garden. Free. Register, 703-228-4403.

Drop-in volleyball, Tuesdays, 1:30 p.m., Langston-Brown. Free. Register, 703-228-6300.

Beginners full fitness exercise, Tuesdays, 10 a.m., Lee. \$60/15 sessions

or \$4 per class. Details, 703-228-0555.

Arlington Mill Trekkers, Tuesdays, 9:30 a.m. Free. Register, 703-228-7369.

Table tennis, Tuesdays 10 a.m. - 12 p.m., Walter Reed. Free. Register, 703-228-0955.

Music and movement, Wednesdays, 10:30 a.m., Culpepper Garden. Free. Register, 703-228-4403.

Duplicate bridge, Wednesdays, 10 a.m. -10 p.m., Aurora Hills. Cost \$5. Register, 703-228-5722.

Line dancing class, Wednesdays, 9:30 a.m., Walter Reed. Register, 703-228-0955.

Arlington Walking Club, Wednesdays, 9 a.m., \$4. Register, 703-228-4403.

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ENTERTAINMENT

Email announcements to arlington@connectionnewspapers.com. Include date, time, location, description and contact for event: phone, email and/or website. Photos and artwork welcome. Deadline is Thursday at noon, at least two weeks before event.

ONGOING

Fall SOLOS. Through Saturday, Dec. 20, artists from across the Mid-Atlantic region are selected for solo exhibitions to take place in one of AAC's seven separate gallery spaces, or outside on the grounds. Visit www.arlingtonartscenter.org/solos/ apply for more.

Gothic Adaption of Beauty and the Beast. Through Jan. 4, 2015; Wednesday-Saturday 8 p.m., Sunday 2 p.m., excluding Christmas Eve, Christmas Day, New Year's Eve and New Year's Day. Synetic Theater, 1800 South Bell Street, Arlington. Based on the classic fairytale. Tickets: \$35 and up. Student tickets start at \$20. Senior citizens and military receive \$5 off. Group discounts are available. Visit www.synetictheater.org for more.

Art Exhibit. Runs through Jan. 5, at Cherrydale Branch Library, 2190 Military Road. "We Are Arlington," an exhibit of vintage photographs and memorabilia. Monday-Thursdays, 10 a.m.-9 p.m. Tuesday-Wednesday, 1-9 p.m. Friday-Saturday, 10 a.m.-5 p.m. Call 703-228-6330 for more.

"Floating, Flying and Racing." 1-4 p.m. Saturdays and Sundays only, at the Arlington Historical Museum, 1805 South Arlington Ridge Road. The Arlington Historical Society celebrates the holidays with a new temporary exhibit every year. For the 2014 holiday a collection of more than two dozen toys and models antique toys is on display until Jan. 18. Visit www.arlingtonhistoricalsociety.org.

Family and Teen Skate Nights. Through March 28 at The Thomas Jefferson Community Center, 300 N. Park Drive. The evenings start with Family Skating from 6:30-9 p.m. and close with Teen Nights from 9-10:45 p.m., for middle and high school students. \$2 per person/\$3 skate rental. Visit parks.arlingtonva.us/kids-events/roller-skating-nights-skate-parties-thomas-jefferson for more.

LGBT & Straight Friends Social. Tuesdays. Happy Hour, 3 p.m.-7 p.m.; Mikey's "Bar A" Video Wall, 7 p.m.; start time at 8 p.m. IOTA Club & Cafe, 2832 Wilson Blvd. IOTA Club & Cafe has designated every Tuesday LGBT & Straight Friends Social Night for those 21 years and older. Free. Visit www.iotaclubandcafe.com/ for more information.

Open Mic Comedy. Wednesdays 8-10 p.m. at Ri Ra Irish Pub, 2915 Wilson Blvd. Doors open at 7 p.m. 21 and up only. Free show, \$25 cash prize for best joke. Call 703-248-9888 or visit www.RiRa.com/Arlington for more.

Invasive Plants Removal. Work parties are held every month to keep the parks free of destructive invasive plants. Teens, adults and families welcome. Every second Sunday of the month 2-4:30 p.m. at Gulf Branch Nature Center, 3608 Military Road; call 703-228-3403. Every third Sunday of the month 2-5 p.m. at Long Branch Nature Center, 625 S. Carlin Springs Road; call 703-228-6535 or visit registration.arlingtonva.us. Free, no registration required.

Comedy. Every Saturday at 3 p.m. at Comedy Spot, in Ballston Common Mall, 4238 Wilson Blvd., children can enjoy ComedySportz for Kidz. \$10. Visit www.comedyindc.com or 703-294-LAFF.

Comedy. Every Friday at 8 p.m. and



CONNECTION FILE PHOTO

Fire Chief James H. Schwartz joins Rabbi Mordechai Newman and members of Chabad Lubavitch of Alexandria-Arlington gather for a Chanukah ceremony at Pentagon City skating rink on Sunday, Dec. 9, 2012.

Lighting up the Holiday

On Thursday, Dec. 18, from 6-8:30 p.m., many children and adults from the Alexandria-Arlington area will converge on the area's ultimate celebration of Chanukah — "Chanukah On Ice." The program will begin with open skating where children and adults can ice skate to contemporary Jewish music and classic Chanukah songs. It will continue with a lighting ceremony, greetings from local dignitaries, Kosher food, Chanukah songs and a free raffle. Lighting Ceremony at 7 p.m. Tickets are \$13 at the door, \$10 in advance. Ticket includes skate rental; food sold separately. Visit www.ChabadAA.org or call 703-370-2774 for more. The Pentagon Row ice skating rink is located at 1201 S Joyce Street, Arlington.

Saturday at 7:30 p.m. is ComedySportz ("clean") and at 10 p.m. on Friday and Saturday is the Blue Show ("adult"), both at Comedy Spot, in Ballston Common Mall, 4238 Wilson Blvd. \$15 each. Visit www.comedyindc.com or 703-294-LAFF.

Poetry Series. 6-8 p.m. second Sunday of the month at IOTA Club & Cafe, 2832 Wilson Blvd. Hosted by poet Miles David Moore. Featured artists share their poetry followed by open readings. Free. Visit www.iotaclubandcafe.com or call 703-522-8340.

Open Mic Nite. 8 p.m.-12:30 a.m. every Wednesday at IOTA Club & Cafe, 2832 Wilson Blvd. Sign-up times are 7:30 p.m. and 10 p.m. Bring instruments, fans and friends. Featured musicians perform from 9:30-10 p.m. Visit www.iotaclubandcafe.com or call 703-522-8340.

Karaoke. 8 p.m. on the first Sunday every month at Galaxy Hut, 2711 Wilson Blvd. Visit www.galaxyhut.com or call 703-525-8646.

Pub Quiz. 8 p.m. every Sunday at Whitlow's on Wilson, 2854 Wilson Blvd. Prizes for first place. Free. Visit www.whitlows.com or call 703-276-9693.

Storytime. Mondays and Fridays, 10:30-11:00 a.m. at Kinder Haus Toys, 1220 N. Fillmore St. Storytime with Ms. Laura. Call 703-527-5929.

Legu Club. Monthly on the first Wednesday, 4-5 p.m. Glencarlyn Branch Library, 300 South Kensington St. The library provides

tubs of legos and a special challenge and after the program the creations are displayed for everyone to see. No registration required. Call 703-228-6548 for more.

Family Nights. 7-9 p.m. on the first Friday of the month at Arlington Mill Community Center. E-mail DPR-YouthandFamily@arlingtonva.us. or call Emily Thrasher at 703-228-4773 for more.

CAMPS, CLASSES & WORKSHOPS

Theatre Classes. Encore Stage & Studio is holding classes and mini camps for children in grades K-8 at on Saturdays at Thomas Jefferson Community Theatre, 125 S. Old Glebe Road and Tuesdays and Wednesdays after-school at Theatre on the Run, 3700 S. Four Mile Run Drive. Visit www.encorestageva.org for a list of classes.

Synetic Theater. Synetic Studio, 2155 Crystal City Plaza Arcade T-19, Arlington. Synetic offers an introduction to the world of physical theater, acting and dance through energetic and athletic feats that inspire students to creativity. Classes include programs for elementary, middle and high school students, as well as adults. Discounted packages and payment plans are available. Visit www.synetictheater.org/studio or call 703-824-8060.

FRIDAY/TUESDAY/THROUGH DEC. 23

Holiday Follies. At Signature Theatre, 4200 Campbell Ave. The fun begins with a new spin on the seasonal

revue Holiday Follies. The series, now in its fifth season, will feature performers Gannon O'Brien, Stephen Gregory Smith, Delores King Williams and Bayla Whitten under the direction of Walter Ware III with musical direction by Howard Breitbart. With a "Choose Your Own Adventure" spin to the festivities, the cabaret set list is built to change from night to night with the help of the audience. Show times vary. Visit www.signature-theatre.org for more.
 ♦ Wednesday/Dec. 17 at 7:30 p.m.
 ♦ Thursday/Dec. 18 at 8 p.m.
 ♦ Friday/Dec. 19 at 8 p.m.
 ♦ Saturday/Dec. 20 at 2 and 8 p.m.
 ♦ Sunday/Dec. 21 at 2 and 7 p.m.
 ♦ Monday/Dec. 22 at 7:30 p.m.
 ♦ Tuesday/Dec. 23 at 7:30 p.m.

WEDNESDAY/DEC. 17

Holiday Show. 8 p.m. at Ballston Common Mall, 4328 Wilson Blvd, Arlington. Take a break holiday shopping and enjoy Potomac Harmony Chorus singing songs of the season under the tree at the Ballston Food Court. Free. Visit www.potomacharmony.org for more.

FRIDAY/DEC. 19

Science and the Christmas Star. 6:30 p.m. The Friends of the Planetarium offers a screening of "An Astronomer Looks for the Christmas Star." All ages. The digital show will be followed by Q&A with Dr. Alice Monet, president of the Friends of the Planetarium, and Planetarium Director Jonathan Harmon. \$2 for

children (up to age 12), \$2 for Seniors (60+), and \$3 for teens and adults. Visit www.friendsoftheplanetarium.org.

Screening of Season of Light. 7:30 p.m. One of the most popular shows at the David M. Brown Planetarium, Season of Light is an annual holiday program about the coldest and darkest of seasons — a time which holds some of the warmest and brightest celebrations of the year. This multicultural presentation traces the history and development of many of the world's most endearing holiday customs, all of which involve lighting up the winter season. \$2 for children (up to age 12), \$2 for Seniors (60+), and \$3 for teens and adults. Visit www.friendsoftheplanetarium.org.

SATURDAY/DEC. 20

Christmas Bird Count. 7:30 a.m. at Potomac Overlook Regional Park, 2845 N Marcey Road. Come walk all the trails of the park to survey what birds are hunkering down for the winter at Potomac Overlook. Visit www.nvrpa.org/park/potomac_overlook for more.

Turtles in Winter. 10-11 a.m. at Long Branch Nature Center, 625 S. Carlin Springs Road, Arlington. Learn about how Arlington's aquatic and box turtle adapt to winter and sketch. Registration is \$5. Call 703-228-6535 for more.

Ready for Winter. 10:30 a.m. at Potomac Overlook Regional Park, 2845 N Marcey Road. Learn the secrets of how many of our local animals prepare for and survive the

ENTERTAINMENT

winter. Visit www.nvrpa.org/park/potomac_overlook for more.

Science and the Christmas Star.

The Friends of the Planetarium offers a screening of "An Astronomer Looks for the Christmas Star." All ages. The digital show will be followed by Q&A with Dr. Alice Monet, president of the Friends of the Planetarium, and Planetarium Director Jonathan Harmon. \$2 for children (up to age 12), \$2 for Seniors (60+), and \$3 for teens and adults. Visit www.friendsoftheplanetarium.org.

Childrens Choir Concert.

7 p.m. at St. Peter's Episcopal Church, 4250 N Glebe Road, Arlington. The 25th Anniversary Holiday Concert will feature international carols, Hanukkah and New Year songs from around (the world). Visit www.worldchildrenschoir.org for more.

Screening of Season of Light.

7:30 p.m. One of the most popular shows at the David M. Brown Planetarium, Season of Light is an annual holiday program about the coldest and darkest of seasons — a time which holds some of the warmest and brightest celebrations of the year. This multicultural presentation traces the history and development of many of the world's most endearing holiday customs, all of which involve lighting up the winter season. \$2 for children (up to age 12), \$2 for Seniors (60+), and \$3 for teens and adults. Visit www.friendsoftheplanetarium.org.

SUNDAY/DEC. 21

Winter Solstice Hike. 3-4:30 p.m. at Long Branch Nature Center, 625 S. Carlin Springs Road, Arlington. Enjoy a hike on the shortest day of the year. Registration is \$5. Call 703-228-6535 for more.

Flying Squirrel Workshop. 5-6 p.m. at Long Branch Nature Center, 625 S. Carlin Springs Road, Arlington. Learn about flying squirrels and their habits. Registration is \$5. Call 703-228-6535 for more.

MONDAY/DEC. 22

Book Club Meeting. 7 p.m. at One More Page Books, 2200 North Westmoreland St. The holistic health and wellness book group will chat about "How Yoga Works" by Gesne Michael Roach. Call 703-300-9746 or visit www.onemorepagebooks.com for more.

TUESDAY/DEC. 23

Book Club Meeting. 7 p.m. at One More Page Books, 2200 North Westmoreland St. The spirituality book club will discuss "Ties that Bind: Stories of Love and Gratitude from the First Ten Years of

FOOD & DRINK

Clarendon Farmers Market. Year-round, has locally produced breads and pastries, organic vegetables, flowers, soap, sorbet and more. Saturdays and Sundays, 8 a.m.-noon at Courthouse Parking Lot, 3195 North Wilson Blvd. Also year-round on Wednesdays from 3-7 p.m. at Clarendon Metro Station. Visit www.Clarendon.org. Call 703-812-8881.

Arlington Farmers Market at Courthouse. Adjacent to the Arlington County Courthouse Parking Lot, at the intersection of N. Courthouse Road and N. 14th Street. This is a 'producer only' market with more than 30 producers. From January through March, the market is open on Saturdays 9 a.m.-noon. Visit www.arlingtonfarmersmarket.com for a list of vendors.

Arlington Mill Community Center Plaza. Wednesday, 3-7 p.m. at 909 S Dinwiddie St., Arlington. A new farmers market will be open weekly. Visit www.columbia-pike.org/events/?event=1049 for more.

Storycorps" by Dave Isay. Call 703-300-9746 or visit www.onemorepagebooks.com for more.

MONDAY/DEC. 29

Teacher Work Day Trip. 10 a.m.-4 p.m. leaving from Thomas Jefferson Community Center, 3501 S 2nd St., Arlington. Four hours of unlimited rides, attractions and video games at Central Park Funland. Ten indoor rides and attractions such as: Laser Tag, Bumper Cars, Rock Wall Climbing, Mini Bowling, the Himalaya and Spinning Teacups. \$5 has been added for each participant to play some of these games. Each participant will receive two slices of pizza and a 16 oz. drink. For full time and session dates or to register visit registration.arlingtonva.us and use activity code 970014-B.

TUESDAY/DEC. 30

Teacher Work Day Trip. 10 a.m.-4 p.m. leaving from Thomas Jefferson Community Center, 3501 S 2nd St., Arlington. Rebounderz and Sudden Combat trip. Bounce the day away at Rebounderz in Sterling, one of the area's largest indoor trampoline arenas, then venture next door for extreme laser tag at Sudden Combat. Price includes one hour of trampoline jump time and one hour of laser tag. There will be time for lunch in between (not included). Bring lunch or extra money for concessions as well as games. For full time and session dates or to register visit registration.arlingtonva.us and use activity code 970014-C.

WEDNESDAY/DEC. 31

Winter Hike. 10-11 a.m. at Long Branch Nature Center, 625 S. Carlin Springs Road, Arlington. Enjoy a winter hike discovering what is outside in nature during the season. Registration is \$5. Call 703-228-6535 for more.

New Years Eve Campfire. 6-7:30 p.m. at Long Branch Nature Center,

625 S. Carlin Springs Road, Arlington. Ring in the new year under the stars at this campfire. Registration is \$5. Call 703-228-6535 for more.

New Years Eve Show. 8 p.m. Ballston Common Mall, 4238 Wilson Blvd. Enjoy an evening of live performances. Tickets are \$15. Visit www.comedyindc.com for more.

THURSDAY-SATURDAY/JAN. 1-3

Live Comedy. 7 p.m. at Arlington Cinema and Drafthouse, 2903 Columbia Pike, Arlington. Carlos Mencia from Mind of Mencia Live will perform. Tickets are \$30. Visit ArlingtonDrafthouse.com for more.

FRIDAY-SUNDAY/JAN. 9-18

"Cinderella." Runs through Friday, Jan. 18. at Thomas Jefferson Community Theatre, 125 S. Old Glebe Road, Arlington. Tickets \$12. Visit www.encorestage.org or Call 703-548-1154 for more.

SUNDAY/JAN. 11

Music for String Quartet. 4 p.m. at Clarendon United Methodist Church, 606 North Irving St. Anchoring this program will be Beethoven's dramatic Op. 18 No. 1 String Quartet, whose slow movement is said to reflect the tomb scene of Shakespeare's Romeo and Juliet. Free. Visit ibischambermusic.org for more.

TUESDAY/JAN. 13

55+ Singers Welcome. 2-3:30 p.m. at Langston Brown Senior Center, 2121 Culpeper Street in Arlington. Encore invites novice and experienced singers who are 55 and older to join the winter/spring season of Encore Chorale. There are no auditions, new singers are welcome, and singers may be seated for rehearsals and performances. Visit www.encorecreativity.org or call 301-261-5747 for registration information and fees.



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PHOTO BY VERNON MILES/THE CONNECTION

Current Arlington-Alexandria Coalition for Homelessness facility on North Highland Street.



PHOTO CONTRIBUTED

Designs for the new Bridges to Independence facility on North Highland Street.

Coalition for Homelessness Undergoes Transformation

FROM PAGE 3

“One is the shelter, transitional for families, expected to live independently,” said O’Rourke. “The second program is much bigger but not as visible, we call it ‘Adopt a Family.’ It’s a rent subsidy program funded by HUD and some by Arlington County.”

The shelter just celebrated its largest “graduating class,” with 26 families moving into independence this year. The second program helps roughly 20 families find their own apartments, sign their own leases and live with subsidized rent in their own apartment. While the AACH initially pays most of the bill, their support is gradually reduced as they help the resident manage their finances. Some people in this second program are graduates of the first.

“We work with them,” said O’Rourke. “We subsidize their rental payment every month with a gradually declining basis and provide intense case management so that when we feel they’re ready to move out on their own independently, they are ready.”

Clients come to the AACH through Arlington and Alexandria Department of Human Services. Every week, there are a couple of shelters in the area, and they divide up those who have been listed as needing shelter.

“It’s one thing to get them in a house, it’s another thing to keep them,” said O’Rourke. “They work on everything from life skills, job readiness, education ... things that support them remaining in their own house We don’t want them to be here too long. This is a transitional facility, we want them to come here, stabilize, and normalize. If they don’t have a job, get a job. If they have

a job, stabilize the job.”

O’Rourke, who worked at AACH for nine years, is still considered the new guy by the other staff. He has a military background, having worked in the Pentagon and contracting before transitioning into charity. O’Rourke emphasized that residents who don’t follow the organization’s rules are kicked out. There’s a curfew, there’s no alcohol, no drugs, and all of the income residents earn is given over to the organization to pay for food or other necessities for the client.

“It’s training, it’s not punitive,” said O’Rourke. “We’re helping them learn how to live within a budget. If they get a check from work or social security, they turn that over and it’s kept in an account for them. It is [difficult], but they agree to abide by our rules when they come in and if they don’t want to abide by that rule, they don’t have to, and they don’t have to live here.”

Much of the focus of the program is on treating the psychological trauma that occurs when a person first becomes homeless.

“We want to be part of a normalization and stabilization process,” said O’Rourke. “What caused them to become homeless? Help them resolve that, help them get the kids on point in school and help them get a job. Get ready to move forward. That’s what the case managers do. They might be here five or six weeks and say they’re ready to move on.”

Homelessness can be particularly traumatic for children in a family. Sam Kelly, deputy director of programs, was a children’s case manager before his promo-

tion and still spends most of his time working with children of homeless families.

“It’s challenging,” said Kelly, “not only dealing with the problems of the kids, but have to have some level of understanding of the parents and their levels of parenting and how all of that comes together to form the child’s values.”

Kelly says working with children is the easy part of the job. Working with parents, some of whom are unable to provide the structure or guidance the children need, is much more challenging.

One of the newest programs AACH provides for children in their care is a Youth Leadership Academy that began last year. It started with six students and emphasized work in education, health nutrition, career exploration and community service. This year, the program has grown to 25 students and has partnered with the Smithsonian Institute to offer internships and job shadowing opportunities for high school students. “We were really fortunate to land that one,” said Kelly. “All six of our kids last year were able to do two-week internships at the museums. Two applied for a specialized internship for a youth engagement through science program, and both were accepted. Out of 250 applicants, they chose 10. Two of those 10 were our kids.”

For youth in the AACH currently in high school, Kelly has been in talks with Arlington County Public Schools to make sure that any of the youths who have a desire to attend Northern Virginia Community College will at least be able to go through the application process. If the child doesn’t want

to attend college, Kelly helps set them up with a vocational or trade school to be able to transition from the AACH into a career.

The Youth Leadership Academy offers several programs to teach residents skills to help them learn financial independence, an education Kelly hopes can help break the cycle of poverty many homeless families face.

“We operate a lemonade stand in the summer as part of our financial literacy initiative and small business initiative for our kids,” said Kelly. “These are the younger, elementary kids, and our youth leadership academy kids supervise the process. We do everything from purchase limits, cut the lemons, look at gain and profit losses, it’s really cool. This year, we’re expanding that a little bit, Wells Fargo is coming in to do a series of financial literacy training for all of our kids. Not everyone can get an internship they want or desire, but everything, as little as watching a lemonade stand, can provide leadership experience.”

The focus on education and fiscal responsibility extends to parents as well as the children. Of AACH graduates, 85 percent do not go back into homelessness. In the last four years, five clients have bought homes in Northern Virginia.

“They’re not living in the poshest neighborhood, but they developed good habits and bought homes,” said O’Rourke. “We have clients that have served on the board of directors, are employees here, or come back and work as volunteers. From homelessness to home owner, what a quantum leap.”

BULLETIN BOARD

Email announcements to arlington@connectionnewspapers.com. Include date, time, location, description and contact for event: phone, email and/or website. Deadline is Thursday at noon, at least two weeks before event.

APPLICANTS NEEDED

Arlington Commission on Long-Term Care Residences needs advocates who work or live in Arlington. The Commission is currently seeking prospective

commission members and volunteers willing to serve as liaisons to long-term care residences. For more information or an application, go to the Commission on Long-Term Care Residence’s website: commissions.arlingtonva.us/ltrc/, or contact the Agency on Aging 703-228-1700, via TTY (703) 228-1788, or via e-mail ArlAAA@arlingtonva.us.

WEDNESDAY/DEC. 17

Swearing-in Ceremony. 5-6 p.m. in County Board Room 307, 2100

Clarendon Blvd., Arlington. The public is invited to the swearing-in ceremony for Arlington County Board Member John Vihstadt, who was elected to the County Board in November. RSVP to the County Board at countyboard@arlingtonva.us. A reception will follow in the Board Room Atrium area. The swearing-in ceremony will be broadcast live on ATV (Arlington TV, Comcast 25 / Verizon 40); you can also watch the live stream online. Visit www.arlingtonva.us for more.

SATURDAY/DEC. 20

Chanukah Party. 5 p.m. at Unitarian Universalist Church of Arlington, 4444 Arlington Blvd. Enjoy this festival of lights and a potluck. Contact Herb Cooper-Levy at admin@kolaminvrc.org for more.

SATURDAY/JAN. 10

Volunteer Orientation. 10 a.m.-11:30 a.m. at James Lee Community Center, 2855 Annandale Road, Falls

Church. The Literacy Council seeks dedicated volunteers with interests in adult education, immigration, ESOL, or related issues to help adults learn English. Teaching or foreign language skills, though beneficial, are not required. Currently registered for our classes or waiting to be matched with tutors, these adult students are eager to improve their English language skills by working with trained volunteers. e-mail volunteers@lcnv.org or call 703-237-0866 x116.

Students at Episcopal High School in Alexandria collaborate on a school project. Essays and interviews help admissions teams determine how an applicant would fit into the school community.



PHOTO COURTESY OF AUDRA WRISLEY



An Essay To Remember

Local educators offer advice on acing school admission essays and interviews.

BY MARILYN CAMPBELL
THE CONNECTION

While many are knee-deep in wrapping paper and eggnog, some students are holed up with computer keyboards and books of quotations. In addition to driving to the mall for holiday shopping, some parents are throwing rapid-fire questions at their children to make sure they are fast on their feet.

For students and parents who hope for slots at the area's top independent schools next year, 'tis admissions season.

"As a school we want to know what the relationship will be between what a student brings to the table and what we will need to bring to the table," said Tim Simpson, assistant head of school and director of admission and financial aid at Bullis School in Potomac, Md.

Interviews are opportunities for admissions teams to get to know applicants and their parents, and share information about their schools.

"We try to encourage students to view the interview as a conversation," said Julie Jameson, director of admissions at St. Andrew's Episcopal School in Potomac. "They should feel comfortable ... be themselves ... and feel free to ask any questions they might have."

In fact, the interview is really a two-way street, says Ann Richardson Miller, director of admission and financial aid at The Madeira School in McLean. "The girl and her parents should be asking as many questions of me as I am asking of her," she said. "After all, this will be her school for the next four years, and fit is critical, both for us, but also for the girl and her parents."

"Learn as much as you can about the school before your visit and be prepared to ask questions," said Scott Conklin, director of admissions, Episcopal High School in Alexandria. "This is also an opportunity to brag about your interests, talents and accomplishments. ... Be humble, but make sure you let us know all about you."

That doesn't mean you should ignore your flaws, however. "We look for genuine conversations that convey the student's real interests and passions," said Simpson. "We also want students and parents to be open to talking about strengths and weaknesses."

THE ADMISSION ESSAY is another opportunity for students to reveal facets of their personalities that might not be obvious through test scores, transcripts and even letters of recommendation, said Patricia Harden, director of admissions and financial aid at Connelly School of the Holy Child in Potomac.

"It should be a well-written snapshot of how an applicant thinks and how she understands some aspect of her world," Harden said.

Some schools even require the admission essay to be completed in person.

"We want to see a student's true, natural writing ability, and we are interested in assessing their ability to develop and present a cohesive, thoughtful essay on the spot," said Michael Cresson, director of admissions, Bishop O'Connell High School in Arlington. "A polished essay prepared at home with lots of edits really doesn't tell us what

we want to know to best evaluate an applicant." No matter where the essay is written however, the same basic writing advice applies.

"We are looking for students to express themselves and give us an insight into what kind of person he or she is," Cresson said. "My suggestions for students ... would be ... to proofread their essay, allow for enough time, do some research on the school and include that in the essay."

"These are simple suggestions, but it is disappointing as a director to read through essays and find simple mistakes and see that it was rushed."

"When interviewing, I think it is also helpful to learn as much as you can about the school before your visit and be prepared to ask questions."

— Scott Conklin,
director of admissions,
Episcopal High School

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Special thanks to Gazette and Connection Newspapers

A Level That's Anything But



By KENNETH B. LOURIE

This is not a home improvement reference, but this is most definitely a do-it-yourself column. And though friends, family and all the medical professionals at The Infusion Center, and of course the Oncology staff, have been wonderfully supportive and encouraging throughout my nearly-six-year ordeal, at the end of the day – heck, at the beginning of the day, every day – the patient has to figure a way to navigate through this characterized-as-terminal minefield. More often than not, this has been my greatest challenge: keeping my spirits up and my attitude positive when there are only three people present and accounted for: me, myself and I.

Dealing with unexpected results – both good and especially bad, from lab work, diagnostic scans and/or in-person appointments/physical examinations/assessments – and the effect all of it has on the patient's presumptive life expectancy, are emotional hurdles I regularly endure. Moreover, interpreting any of these results, better left for the professionals, rarely prevents us amateurs (patients) from wishfully-thinking, denying or freaking out entirely. After all, your life is at stake and since there are no guarantees or 100-percent predictable outcomes in the treatment of stage IV, non-small cell lung cancer – other than it's not curable, according to my oncologist – anticipating the worst while praying for the best becomes your 24/7 reality.

This reality is never more apparent to me, since I'm relatively asymptomatic, than when I complete my every-three-week, pre-chemotherapy lab work. That's when (other than my quarterly CT Scan), the tale of my tape, so to speak, is updated. If certain measurements are too high: creatinine, bilirubin, potassium – then no chemo for me. If certain other measurements are too low: white and red blood cells counts, oxygen, also potassium; then again, no chemo for me. The real anxiety, new anxiety – for me, is what levels show up on the inevitable retest (the first order of business is to confirm the abnormality with additional lab work). Typically, at least historically, my retests, taken a week later (sometimes even a day later), have always returned to normal, and accordingly, chemotherapy has proceeded as usual. This week, however, something different has occurred. This is the first time that my creatinine levels were too high on consecutive three-week intervals. If my next retest does not return to level (as the previous one did), and chemotherapy is put off an additional week again, that too will be a first and cause – in my head anyway, for new concern. This would be a complication/result that in the previous six years has never happened.

Should I be worried? And whether or not I should be, can I even control my feelings and somehow patiently (no pun intended) wait for new results from the retest without coming apart at the seams? If I could, I would; but given this column's subject, apparently I can't. Wish me luck; hopefully, I won't need it.

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

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SPORTS



Washington-Lee senior Sophie Hatcher won the all-around competition during a Dec. 11 meet at Yorktown High School.



Washington-Lee senior Annie Hatcher competes on beam during a Dec. 11 meet at Yorktown High School.



Yorktown sophomore Juliette Mitrovich competes on bars during a Dec. 11 meet at Yorktown High School.

PHOTOS BY CRAIG STERBUZZEL

W-L, Yorktown Compete in Gymnastics

Generals win Dec. 11 meet at Yorktown High School.

By JON ROETMAN
THE CONNECTION

The 2014-15 Washington-Lee gymnastics team is led by a pair of seniors who have experienced success during the Generals' recent run of championships.

Yorktown returns much of the team that won last year's National District title.

Together, the Arlington foes are friendly rivals and each figures to be in the hunt for the Conference 13 and 6A North region championships.

On Dec. 11, it was W-L that came out victorious during a four-team meet at Yorktown High School. The Generals won the team competition with a score of 136.95, edging Yorktown (134.475).

"We had five out of six of our girls fall on beam, but we still managed to win, so I know that we have room for improvement," W-L senior Sophie Hatcher said. "But the fact that we still won shows that we have a really deep line of girls."

Hatcher and her twin sister, Annie Hatcher, are the W-L leaders. Each was a key contributor last season as the Generals captured their third consecutive region title. Sophie Hatcher competed for the 2013 region championship team, as well.

On Dec. 11, Sophie Hatcher won the all-around competition with a score of 36.35, including first-place finishes on vault (9.6) and floor (9.2). Annie Hatcher took third in the all-around (34.475), including third-place finishes on vault (9.2) and floor (8.95).

"To see Sophie and her leaps and Annie and her jumps on beam, you don't see that level of gymnastics in high school," W-L head coach Joe D'Emidio said. "Once they're gone, it's going to be a long time before you see kids do [a similar] caliber of gymnastics."

Allie Webster and Jennifer Laredo are also key contributors for W-L. D'Emidio said freshmen Maddie McCarthy and Rachel Bradley also stepped up.

The Generals have won two of their three meets this season, and placed third behind McLean and Yorktown during a Dec. 6 meet at Fairfax High School.

Yorktown has an experienced and talented team led by sophomore Juliette Mitrovich. The Patriots return seven of 10 gymnasts from a team that won the 2014 National District competition, but finished behind McLean and W-L at the Conference 13 meet.

"The girls are very cohesive this year," Yorktown coach Joanne Price wrote in an email. "They support one another and cheer each other on. A positive change that I have seen is that the girls seem more willing to take risks this year. They are competing some of their bigger skills and are enjoying some higher scores."

Mitrovich, sophomore Olivia Zavrel, senior Sophie Zidlicky and senior Mariah Bowman are among the Patriots' top gymnasts this season, along with freshmen Marisa Daugherty and Bella Kane.

Mitrovich usually contends for the all-around title at each meet. On Dec. 11, she didn't have the mat she needed to attempt her usual vault, leading to a lower score. She placed second in the all-around (35.925), including a first-place finish on beam (9.25), and second-place finishes on bars (8.825) and floor (9.0).

"She is a confident and well-rounded gymnast," Price wrote. "She has added some higher level skills in her routines this year as well and her scores are climbing."

While W-L and Yorktown are rival high schools, both coaches say the rivalry between gymnastics teams is a friendly one. Many of the opposing gymnasts are friends and some know one another from club gymnastics.

"A lot of these girls know each other in the gymnastics world — not only in high school, but in their clubs," D'Emidio said. "... They're friends and they've been friends not only in high school, but before [in] middle school and elementary school."

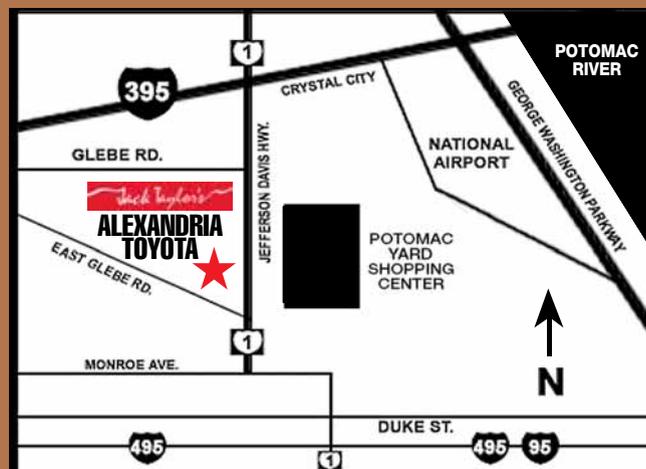
"It's going to be close this year," D'Emidio said. "It's going to be between McLean, Yorktown and us. It's going to be a battle all year long. It's going to be who shows up at the conference [meet] at McLean on [Feb. 2] and whoever is the healthiest team is going to take it."

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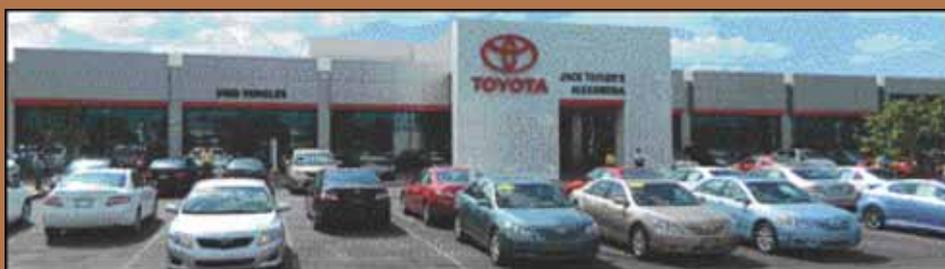
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<p style="text-align: center;"><small>TOYOTA GENUINE SERVICE</small></p> <p style="text-align: center;">WE WILL MEET OR BEAT ANY LOCAL TOYOTA DEALERSHIP'S CURRENT ADVERTISED SERVICE SPECIALS</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><small>NOT VALID WITH ANY OTHER OFFER OR COUPON. TOYOTA VEHICLES ONLY. OFFER EXPIRES 12/31/14. COUPON MUST BE PRESENTED AT TIME OF WRITE-UP. VALID ONLY AT ALEXANDRIA TOYOTA.</small></p>		

Jack Taylor's
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