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## State Champion

SPORTS, PAGE 12

Fairfax senior Rachel Barborek placed first on floor (9.675) at the VHSL individual state meet on March 8. Barborek's stellar performance included two other event titles — bars (9.825) and beam (9.65) — culminating in state all-around title.



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Home LifeStyle

MARCH 12-18, 2015

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# Day of Celebration: Homeless No More

The first residents move into Kate's Place.

BY BONNIE HOBBS  
THE CONNECTION

**K**ate's Place consists of six apartments for extremely low-income and formerly homeless families. And to the mothers and children who just moved in, the homes are more than a roof over their heads — they're a lifeline.

"From the bottom of my heart, I thank you," said Silvia Galindo. "I wish I had a camera in my heart because I don't want to forget every, single face who helped give me such a sweet home."

She was speaking Monday afternoon, Feb. 23, during a Welcome Home ceremony at the Katherine K. Hanley Shelter, across the courtyard from the new homes. They're off of Lee Highway in Fairfax, at the intersection of Meadow Estates Drive and Route 29, across from the Hampton Forest community.

**A MOTHER** of two daughters, 15 and 6, Galindo particularly praised Shelter House, the nonprofit which runs the day-to-day operations at the Hanley Shelter and provides case management. "Because we have support from Shelter House, my children will have a future," she said. "This is very special — God bless every one of you."

Several Fairfax County supervisors attended the ceremony, as did other stakeholders in Kate's Place. Deputy County Executive Patricia Harrington said that, on March 31, 2008, the supervisors adopted a plan to end homelessness in the county within 10 years. "Kate's Place is one step toward that progress," she said. "But it requires a collective effort."

Board of Supervisors Chairman Sharon Bulova said she was proud to celebrate a homecoming for these families. "This is a wonderful demonstration of the county's commitment to ensuring safe homes for its residents," she said. "And it's an attractive addition to the community."

Bulova said the apartments provide "comfortable, affordable and supportive housing to families who've experienced prolonged homelessness. And since they're living next to the Hanley Shelter, they can obtain the services they need to be successful in their independence."

"Partnerships have been incredibly important in getting these homes open, she continued. "The Redevelopment and Housing Authority and other county agencies, plus the nonprofit organizations including Shelter House have all played a part. And without HUD's funding, we wouldn't have this facility."



Ready to cut the ceremonial ribbon are (from left) Robert Schwaninger, Patricia Harrison, Pat Herrity, Tyrea Edmonds, Kate Hanley, Sharon Bulova, Kariah Edmonds, and Supervisors Cathy Hudgins and John Cook.



**Resident Silvia Galindo: "From the bottom of my heart, I thank you."**



**Tyrea Edmonds and daughter Kariah, 7, just moved into Kate's Place.**



**Kate Hanley speaks during the ceremony for her namesake, "Kate's Place."**

Supervisor Pat Herrity (R-Springfield) said the apartments "will give once-homeless families a place to call their own. And these families will be able to get services such as job-search and after-school tutoring, without leaving their neighborhood."

Marvin Turner, director of HUD's D.C. and National Capitol Area field office, said President Obama stressed that tackling the problem of homelessness and homeless individuals would be a cornerstone of his administration. And, he added, "The county's plan is in coordination with his."

"Fairfax County, under the leadership of Sharon Bulova and others, has been at the forefront, identifying the most vulnerable to prioritize them," continued Turner. "And I'm pleased that part of the funding came from [HUD's] Home Investment Partnership

block grants providing homes for low-income families."

The Kate's Place families began moving into their new homes on Feb. 20. Altogether, there are six mothers and 13 children.

Rodney Lusk, on the governing board of the Fairfax-Falls Church Partnership to Prevent and End Homelessness, called the new apartments amazing and a "positive step" toward eradicating homelessness.

"Today is a day of celebration," he said. "I congratulate all the partners who've come forward to make this new housing possible. To the new residents, welcome home, and I wish you continued success in your future endeavors."

"This collaboration of compassion is a remarkable thing," said Robert Schwaninger, chairman of the Fairfax County Redevelop-

ment and Housing Authority. "Without people committed to helping, we couldn't have gotten it done."

Speaking next was former Board of Supervisors Chairman Kate Hanley, in whose honor both the shelter and the homes are named. "This is incredibly exciting," she said. She also praised former Springfield District Supervisor Elaine McConnell for doing "a yeoman's job" on the shelter. Hanley thanked the advocates for bringing the long-awaited, new residences to fruition and noted that Cornerstones is the shelter's nonprofit property manager.

"This time of year, when it's dangerously cold, people focus on the homeless," she said. "But that focus blurs when the weather's warmer. We're keeping the focus on it all year 'round."

Hanley said people often stop and tell her how wonderful the Hanley Shelter is and how they volunteer there. "And that's amazing," she said. "All I did was find the money. This is a wonderful example of a community that cares."

But, said Shelter House Executive Director Joe Meyer, "Without Kate, we wouldn't be in this room today — and neither would the six families who've already moved in. It's permanent, supportive housing for people who wouldn't be able to pay regular, market rent or sustain their homes on their own."

After the shelter opened in August 2007, he said, curious and wary neighbors asked questions about it. "So we invited them in," said Meyer. "And that October, their homeowners association asked the [shelter] children to come trick-or-treat in their neighborhood. And now, we've allowed six families to integrate back into the community so they can have the integrity we all deserve."

With her 7-year-old daughter, Kariah, by her side, Kate's Place resident Tyrea Edmonds thanked God, Fairfax County, Cornerstones and Shelter House for all their help. "This has been a long journey for me and my daughter," she said. "On more nights than I can remember, she's wiped my tears and kept me strong."

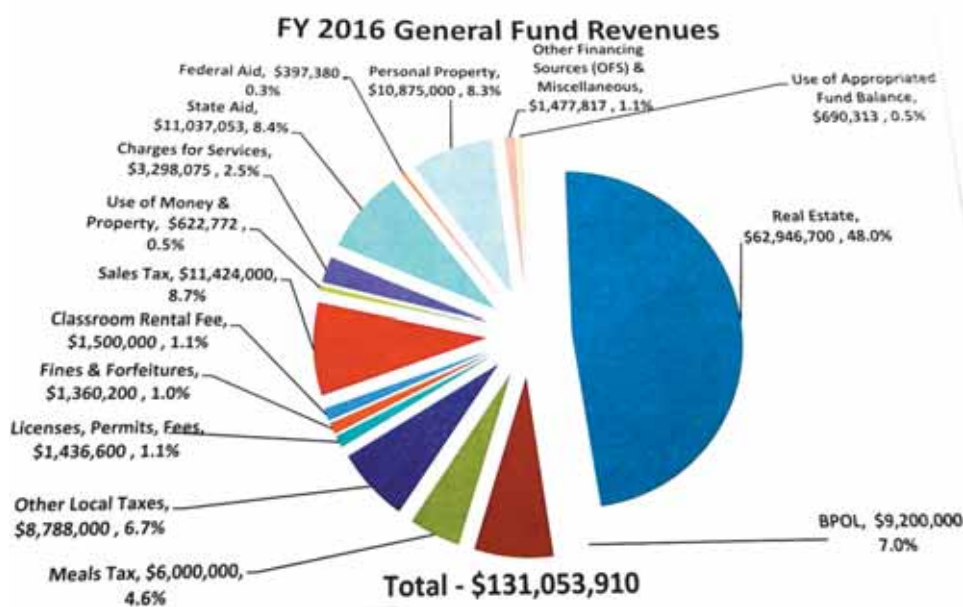
**TURNING TOWARD KARIAH**, she said, "Thank you. This is for you and for all the children who need a home." For quite a while, said Edmonds, "My pride kept me from asking for help. But when your child is homeless, you keep up the fight. Finally, on Oct. 6, 2014, I moved into the shelter; I knew a new door had opened. We now have a new beginning and a place to call home."

"When you're homeless, you feel like no one can hear you," she continued. "So to others in this situation, I say, 'Make your crackly voice a roar so you can be heard.' Tonight, when I tuck my princess into her bed in her new home, I'll know my voice was heard."

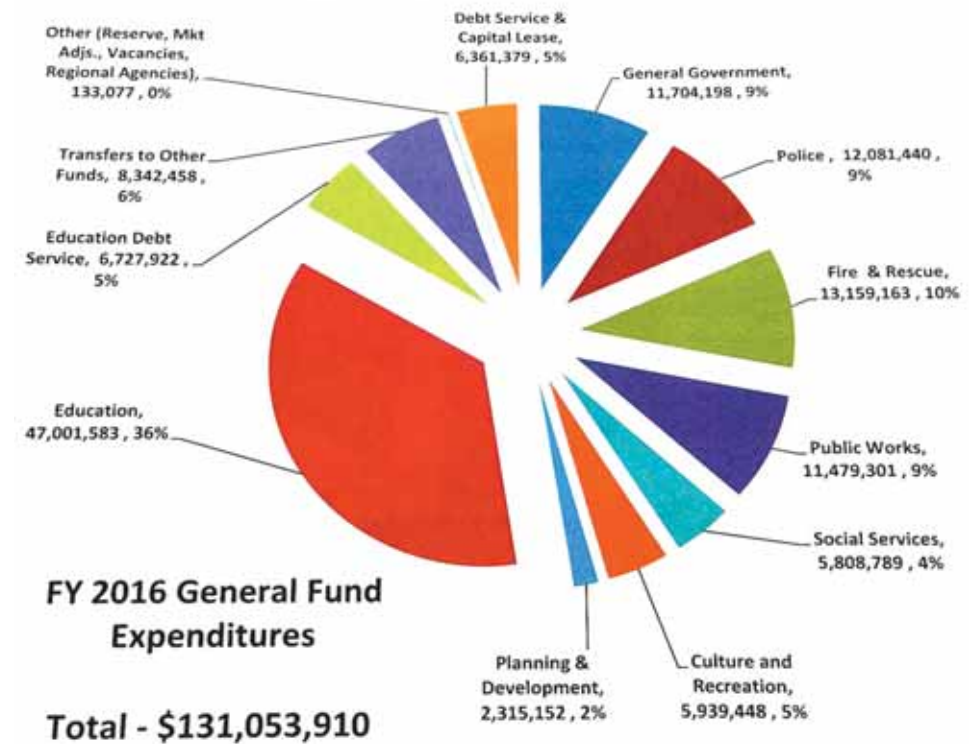
**"This is a wonderful example of a community that cares."**

**— Kate Hanley, former chairman, Fairfax County Board of Supervisors**





FY '16 General Fund revenues.



FY '16 General Fund expenditures.

# City Manager Presents Proposed New Budget

**Would raise tax rates, fund employee merit raises.**

BY BONNIE HOBBS  
THE CONNECTION

The thing to remember about the proposed City of Fairfax budget for FY 2016 is that it's still a work in progress. City Manager Bob Sisson presented it last Tuesday, March 3, to the City Council, but there will be work sessions and public hearings before it's finally adopted on April 29.

He called the document "an opportunity for the Council to hear what [City] staff thinks is going to happen over the next 12 months, beginning July 1." And he encouraged residents, too, to examine the budget, attend a meeting and participate in the discussions.

Sisson described the City's financial outlook as stable, with moderate growth projected. But Fairfax's real-estate tax base –

its single, largest, revenue source – will only experience limited growth.

"In FY '15, the assessed value of real estate grew 3.3 percent, or \$176 million," he said. "This year, it'll be just 1.8 percent, or \$100 million."

Meanwhile, General Fund expenditures are slated to jump by nearly \$3.1 million. Some 56.4 percent of these outlays – including the City's instructional contract with Fairfax County, non-education county contracts, required annual contribution to retirement systems and debt-service payments – are areas that can't be financially reduced. That leaves only 43.6 percent of the General Fund budget for the Council to examine for possible funding cuts.

And although the school expenditure may eventually be adjusted somewhat, the City's education contract is expected to be \$46.1 million, or an increase of \$660,000 over last year's amount. Overall, the budget recommends total City expenditures of \$172,485,000 – a 7-percent hike over the current fiscal year. Recommended General Fund spending is \$131,054,000, or a 2.4-percent rise.

**AS A RESULT**, Sisson proposes raising the residential real-estate tax rate by 2.5 cents per \$100 assessed valuation and the Commercial and Industrial real-estate tax rate by 2 cents per \$100 assessed valuation. He also recommends a waste water utility-rate increase of 10 percent.

At the current real-estate tax rate of \$1.04 per \$100 assessed valuation, a person owning a home valued last year at \$300,000 paid \$3,120 in real-estate taxes. But this year, because of average 2.9-percent assessment increases, that same home is worth \$308,806; and if the tax rate rises 2.5 cents to 1.065 cents per \$100 assessed valuation, his tax bill would be \$3,289 – or \$169 more, for a 5.41-percent hike.

Two cents of the tax rate, or \$1.1 million, will continue being dedicated to the Stormwater Fund, necessary to meet state and federal regulatory requirements, plus maintain aging infrastructure. In order to keep tax bills the same as last year, the City would actually have to reduce the real-estate tax rate by 3 cents to \$1.01 per \$100 assessed valuation.

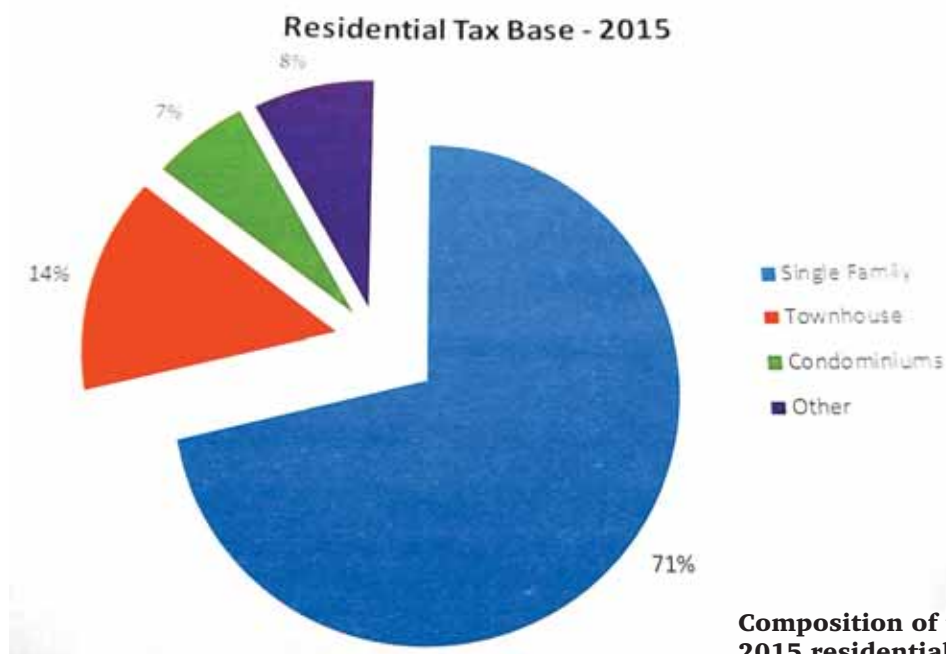
Even with the proposed increase, said Sisson, the City's real-estate tax rate would be the third-lowest in the region, only higher than Alexandria and Arlington. Fairfax County's current tax rate is \$1.131. And, he added, "We're healthier and more diversified in our revenue than many of our sister jurisdictions."

Still, with 1 cent of real-estate property tax equal to \$567,166 in revenue, the City would have to cut more than \$1.4 million from its projected FY '16 spending in order to avert a real-estate tax increase.

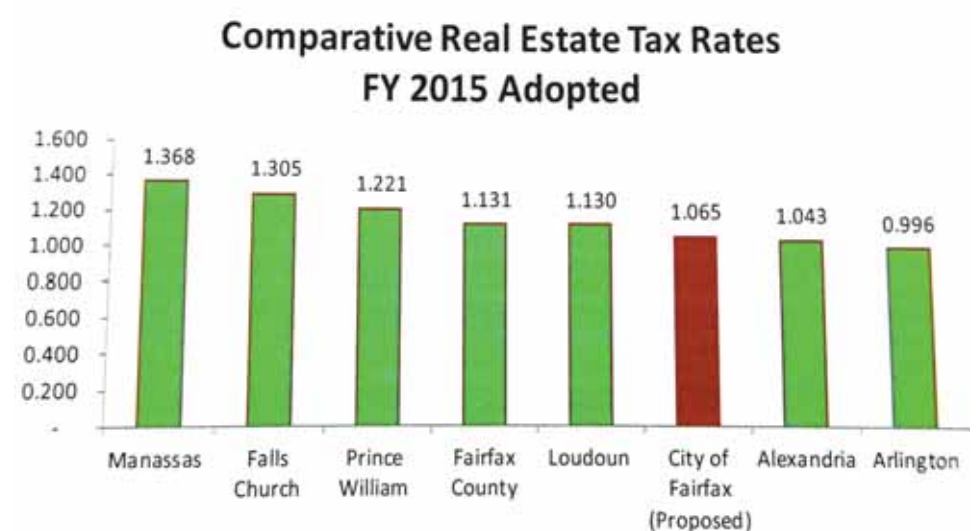
Yet that could prove to be a tall order, considering the fact that "there are never enough resources" to fund all the needed expenditures, as it is, said Sisson. For example, staff requested more than \$12 million for Capital Improvement Projects, but that number was scaled back to \$5.6 million – including \$2.1 million for street repaving – in the proposed budget.

Sisson also noted that the recommended 10-percent rate hike for wastewater services is necessary to generate sufficient funds for debt service relating to the City's share of

SEE DIALOGUE, PAGE 9



Composition of the City's 2015 residential tax base.



Comparative real-estate tax rates of nearby jurisdictions.



## NEWS

### League of Women Voters Presents Firearms Forum

What is Fairfax County doing to cut down on firearms-related suicide and domestic violence? The Fairfax-area League of Women Voters will host an informational public forum to discuss the topic at Pohick Regional Library in Burke on March 22.

Moderator Dr. Kristin A. Goss, Associate Professor of Public Policy and Political Science at Duke University, will lead a panel covering the collaborative efforts being taken by county organizations. Goss is a published author on firearms, including the books "Disarmed: The Missing Movement for Gun Control in America" and "The Gun Debate: What Everyone Needs to Know" (with Philip J. Cook).

The panel is scheduled to include Sandra Bromley, J.D., the county-wide domestic violence coordinator; Jesse Ellis, prevention manager of the Fairfax County Department of Neighborhood and Community Services and MPO James T. Frey, crime prevention officer in the West Springfield precinct of the Fairfax County Police Department.

"Firearms: Reducing the Risk in Fairfax County" will be held Sunday, March 22 from 2-3:30 p.m. at the Pohick Regional Library, located at 6450 Sydenstricker Rd. in Burke. For more information, visit [www.lwv-fairfax.org](http://www.lwv-fairfax.org).

— TIM PETERSON

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Send notes to the Connection at [south@connectionnewspapers.com](mailto: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/MARCH 13

**Tax Relief Workshop.** 10 a.m.-2 p.m. Providence Community Center, 3001 Vaden Drive, Fairfax. Real estate tax relief is available for older adults and people with disabilities who meet certain qualifications; you may also be eligible for car tax relief and tax relief for renters. Hosted by Supervisor Linda Smyth. Free. 703-560-6946.

#### SATURDAY/MARCH 14

**Chairman Bulova's Community Dialogue on the Budget.** Fairfax County Government Center, 12000 Government Center Parkway, Fairfax - Conference Room 9/10, 2:30 p.m.

**Speak Up for a Child.** 11 a.m. - noon. Fairfax CASA office, 4103 Chain Bridge Rd., Suite 200, Fairfax. Fairfax Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA) is hosting an information session. If you would like to learn more about advocating for abused or neglected children, please call 703-273-3526, x22 or email [ekosarin@casafairfax.org](mailto:ekosarin@casafairfax.org) for more information.

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# OPINION

## Balancing Act: Budgeting for Housing

BY DAVID LEVINE  
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR  
GOOD SHEPHERD HOUSING AND FAMILY  
SERVICES, INC.

In our work housing families and individuals experiencing homelessness, many of them have never lived in housing of their own. They have lived doubled up with relatives and friends, camped out in broken-down minivans, or checked into motels for overnight stays. But signing a lease with a commitment to a year's worth of monthly rent payments — that's a new or long-ago experience for them. And it's a scary one, too.

That's when we come into their lives to help them out. Our housing locators and case managers work with them to understand the basics of renting a housing property. Without question, the rental lease gives them rights. It bestows on them the new lawful designation of "tenant." But a rental lease also comes with new responsibilities.

The responsibilities are not easy. Paying rent on the first of the month is their highest priority as a tenant. Keeping in line with rental community rules and regulations is equally important. Making sure that they keep their housing

in a good condition is another one. Excessive damage and wear-and-tear of their rental housing will make their security deposits — the one they had struggled for weeks to pull together — vanish into thin air.

We know the hardest part is making that rent payment on the first of each month. It is a real balancing act. As the sociologist Sudhir Venkatesh once noted about low-income families living in South Chicago who struggled to make rent payments: "This does not mean people fail to plan but ... there are

separate temporal horizons, one in the immediate future and the other a longer way off." In other words, these families focus on the expenses to be paid today, not tomorrow or next month.

In its just released poverty study of women and girls in the Washington D.C. metropolitan region, the Washington Area Women's Foundation included information on the average monthly expenses faced by poor families living in our region. Drawing on 2013 U.S. Census Bureau data and other datasets, the author of the study provided measures of economic security for what a family of three without public assistance would need to pay its expenses.

For example, even at \$1,325/month as the average rent in Fairfax County, this monthly rent is actually not the most costly of the family's household expenses. In fact, at an average of \$1,821/month, the highest monthly expense is for childcare. All told, when all the expenses are added up, a typical family of three would need \$82,572 in annual income in Fairfax County to afford to live comfortably there and cover all its expenses.

The federal poverty line annual income for a family of three is \$19,530. As many families experiencing homelessness are earning just above the poverty line, the amount of income needed to live without worries in Fairfax County is a long way off for them.

Still, even for low-income families and individuals experiencing homelessness, our case managers and housing locators can make a world of difference. They work to find them very affordable housing within a shrinking pool of this kind of housing. Once housed, they support them in getting a budget in place — and then we can only hope that nothing upends their budgets.

No medical emergencies. No transmission repairs on their cars used for work. No one-time spikes in their heating costs. It is a balancing act.

### COMMENTARY

### LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

## An Open Letter to Governor

Dear Governor McAuliffe,

When you visited our Pre-Session Round Table Luncheon in December 2013, we in the League of Women Voters were thrilled to hear you say, "I think we should do everything we can to make voting as easy as possible in Virginia."

You have kept your word, and have been a wonderful friend to voters in Virginia. We were proud to sit near the front when you announced budget money for new voting equipment, at your press conference in Virginia Beach — and to lobby for that budget line.

Now a bill has been passed by both houses, requiring citizens who apply for absentee ballots to include a photocopy of their valid photo ID. There is no real purpose to this bill, beyond making it harder to vote — because registrars have no photo with which to compare the mailed copy.

This measure would have especially harsh effects on the old, the poor, the disabled, and the homebound — depriving them of an easy way to vote if traveling presents a challenge.

A number of organizations — including many in the electoral board and registrar associations — oppose this bill. The League stood with them to lobby against this suppressive measure. And now we ask you, with great respect: Please

veto House Bill 1318!

We are counting on your strong promise to defend voters in Virginia. Thank you again for all you do for citizens.

**Anne Sterling**  
President, League of Women  
Voters of Virginia

## Bully Bikers

To the Editor:

I'd like to share some comments about our wonderful town (Vienna) and the surrounding communities regarding bicycle riders. As a point of reference, I love to ride my bicycle, a Trek Hybrid that is perfect for the trails and the W&OD. I ride at least once a week and get in approximately 20 miles to get my exercise in and just general enjoyment.

My point here is that I recognize and appreciate all bikers and what they are doing as fun and exercise.

However, I witnessed yesterday an incident that is indicative of the increasing "bully" population of many bikers today. Bikers who ride in our streets designed for cars but taking aggression out on vehicles for following the motor vehicle laws when they themselves do not. I'm not talking about just the casual biker but the major bikers who think they are powerful enough to keep up a 50 mile an hour ride on our streets.

I was in the parking lot of Noodles and Company and Starbucks on

Maple Avenue on Sunday afternoon. A young lady driving her car in the right lane adjacent to the parking lot attempted to make a right turn (correctly) into the lot. A biker was attempting to pass her on her right side and he nearly clipped her. He started screaming and yelling at the young woman and then started hitting and kicking her car. She was terrified.

His obscenities and aggression was so horrific that it attracted numerous people.

As the young lady pulled into the parking lot the biker came to chase her and was all set to start yelling and screaming at her for "her fault" of hitting him. I intervened and stopped his aggressive approach and then he started taking it out on me! He saw my license plate as a Marine Corp's vanity plate and told me I was a disgrace to the Corps! He wanted a fight. That is all there is to it.

When is the Vienna Police department going to start ticketing these aggressive bikers who are driving on our roads but are not driving within the laws enacted for our roads? Also, what about "aggressive bicycle driver" behavior of these bully bikers? Can we do something about them as well?

**Sean DuGuay**  
Vienna

## Money Talks

To the Editor:

I must say I agree wholeheart-

edly with the "ugly" segment of your article that summarizes the end of the Virginia General Assembly (Editorial, "Good, Bad and Ugly: A look at recently ended session of the Virginia General Assembly," Connection, March 4-10, 2015). It seems as though lobbying and payoffs are far too common an occurrence in politics these days. This makes me question the legitimacy of our representatives, not to mention the government as a whole. When corporations fund a representative to a far greater degree than the majority of the public could donate during a campaign, wouldn't it be safe to assume that the money comes with multiple strings attached?

It comes with a price, that price presumably being an unwavering loyalty that disregards public opinion entirely. I see it almost as blackmail, "you put through policies that favor our business practices, the money keeps flowing and you get to stay in office."

Nowadays your bank account is your mouth, and if you don't have the money then your mouth is sewn shut. This is classism in a nutshell, and if we want to be true to democratic process, then there is no place for lobbying practices in the people's government. Oh wait I forgot, corporations are people too right?

**Christopher S. Fenwick**  
McLean

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## OPINION

# The World Comes to Fairfax

## World Police & Fire to be held in Fairfax County this summer.

By JOHN C. COOK  
SUPERVISOR (R-BRADDOCK DISTRICT)



COMMENTARY

From June 26 to July 5, Fairfax County will host the 16<sup>th</sup> World Police & Fire Games. This international event—one of the largest of its kind—will attract between 15,000 to 30,000 visitors from all over the world, and will feature over 12,000 police officers, firefighters, customs, and correction officers competing in over 65 different sporting events.

For those competing this summer, the World Police & Fire Games is a tremendous honor, with over 70 countries represented. These brave men and women, who dedicate their lives to serving their communities around the world, will have the opportunity to showcase their athletic abilities in arenas, fields, and stadiums across Northern Virginia.

The World Police & Fire Games will provide members of the county a chance to personally honor these public safety officers by volunteering to help out at the Games. The Games require 4,000 volunteers and a variety of different volunteer positions still need to be filled.

Volunteer opportunities include acting as Games Ambassadors by sharing information with guests regarding event times, being a part of the Registration Team by helping to register each of the participants, or joining the Field of Play and Games Administra-

tion Team to help set up and tear down the sports events. Additionally, Games Village Team members are needed to ensure that all visitors have a wonderful experience, Ceremonies Team members are needed to assist in running the celebrations, and Transportation Team members are needed to provide logistical assistance. In order to ensure the health and safety of the athletes, visitors, and the staff, medical professional volunteers are also vital. I urge you to volunteer to help make these Games a huge success. If you would like to register to volunteer, or if you are looking for more information, please visit <http://fairfax2015.com/volunteer>.

The Games will provide a boost to the county's tourism industry and advance economic development throughout the region, placing Fairfax County among other prestigious host cities such as Melbourne, Stockholm, Barcelona and Belfast. In fact, several of the events will even be held right in Braddock District including locations like George Mason University, Northern Virginia Community College, Robinson Secondary School, and Wakefield Park. For those looking for more information, the World Police & Fire Games will be the focus of the Braddock Neighborhood News this month, which airs on Channel 16 on Sundays at 5 p.m., Wednesdays at 7 p.m., and Fridays at 5 p.m.

The World Police & Fire Games not only provide us an opportunity to recognize and support thousands of brave men and women who serve us on a daily basis, but they also offer us an avenue to show the world what those living here already know: that Fairfax County is a wonderful place to live, work, and visit. I hope you all take advantage of the spectacular events coming our way this June, and consider lending a hand as a Games volunteer.

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### Fair and Humane

To the Editor,

I completely agree that there should be better management of mental illnesses in jail (Editorial, "Managing Mental Illness in Jails," Connection, February 25-March 3, 2015).

This is a common pattern that many people are unaware of or simply don't care about because of the stigma that comes with those imprisoned.

It is common to assume that because someone is imprisoned, they are undoubtedly "evil." Since substance abuse and mental illnesses are common patterns among prisoners, more awareness should be spread on this issue so that treatment can be improved.

If people who are not imprisoned can receive support and treatment for their addictions and illnesses, then prisoners should receive the same opportunities. It is not fair to deny people access to these resources just because of what they've done in the past. In fact, receiving this treatment could improve their quality of life and possibly keep them from future criminal activities.

Despite what they have done in the past, criminals deserve fair and humane treatment just as any other human does. Along with humane treatment comes effective treatment, involving proper support and resources for those suffering from addictions and mental illnesses. Natasha McKenna obviously did not receive humane or effective treatment, as she was suffering from severe mental treatment and was punished to the point of death for it rather than receiving adequate and proper treatment. Her situation could have easily been avoided if there was better management of mental illnesses in her jail facility. Perhaps she would not have been so combative or aggressive if she had received adequate care. Enclosing people in restrictive jail cells is not an effective response to mental illnesses, as we have learned in the past from asylums and other inappropriate "hospitals" for the mentally ill. I hope that our society will soon realize this so that action will be taken.

Victoria Lamb  
Reston

### Helping Mentally Ill

To the Editor:

I would like to discuss the article "Managing Mental Illness in Jails" (Connection, February 25-March 3, 2015). I think that the mention of the mentally ill woman, Natasha McKenna, demonstrated an important issue in our society today. That issue is the prevalence of mental illness and how it is present in individuals but ends up affecting the larger society. This is because some people may see this as just one woman who had a history of mental illness, but fail to understand what may have contributed to her illness and the illness of others. I believe that we should look to the prison system, which is so widespread in our nation and question the effect prison has on people. Also, we should look at how we view mentally ill people. Do we just ignore them or do we actually try to help them so they don't end up in these harsh prison environments?

Steven Koskulitz  
Herndon

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**Parcel 2 (Mohammed N. Shirazi, et al.): 10503 West Drive #D, Fairfax; Fairfax Professional Village Condos.  
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**Parcel 3 (Mohammed N. Shirazi, et al.): 4242 Chain Bridge Road #C, Fairfax; Fairfax Professional Village Condos. Tax Map #: 57-4-20-6C**

**Parcel 4 (Mohammed N. Shirazi, et al.): 4242 Chain Bridge Road #D, Fairfax; Fairfax Professional Village Condos. Tax Map #: 57-4-20-7D**

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**This Bobcat driver clears the snow from a residential road.**



**Sledding in a backyard in Fair Oaks.**

## Having Fun on a Snowy Day

**W**hile workmen did their best to clear the roads, children home from school, last Thursday, March 5, had fun in the snow in this Fair Oaks neighborhood. It was the area's third snowfall in less than three weeks, bringing six inches or more of the cold, white stuff each time.

PHOTOS BY  
BONNIE HOBBS/  
THE CONNECTION



**Wearing a funny face mask to keep warm, this boy slides down a snow mountain created by the three recent snowstorms.**



**Top of the World: This boy stands atop a snow mountain during the March 5 storm.**

## The New School of Northern Virginia Presents 'The Laramie Project'

BY KAMRYN LEONCAVALLO

**S**tudents at The New School of Northern Virginia (NSNVA) are presenting a challenging, and controversial play this March: "The Laramie Project." In 1998, a young college student named Matthew Shepard was beaten and left to die in a brutal act of anti gay violence.

"The Laramie Project," a compilation of interviews conducted by Moisés Kaufman and members of the Tectonic Theater Company with the citizens of Laramie, Wyo., examines the aftermath of this hate crime and its effects on a small community. New School students are excited by this special opportunity, especially since the story is real and its message is important. As Nathan Grover, a junior, said, "'The Laramie Project' is a story being written by people today... it's still happening today, and we get to help write the ending."

Because of the large number of people represented in this production, each student plays as many as four different characters. This demands great flexibility



**Because of the large number of people represented in this production, each student plays as many as four different characters.**

from the cast. Lowell Weissman, a junior, said, "I have to change between casual, disturbed, spiteful, and relaxed in the blink of an eye."

Steve Elm, the New School theatre director, adds, "Our task is to create a recognizable, yet heightened sense of reality, one that invites and demands attention from its

audience. Our big challenge is to present each character, and each staged moment, with integrity and humanity, regardless of our personal views and beliefs."

Although this play was written in 1999, its impact and message has proved to be relevant and meaningful 16 years later. The play encourages its viewers to look critically at society's attitudes and behaviors.

"The Laramie Project is being performed from March 10-14 at 7:30 p.m., and March 15 at 2:30 p.m. in the John Swayze Theatre of The New School of Northern Virginia, 9431 Silver King Court, Fairfax. Tickets are \$10 for adults and \$7 for students and are available at the door and at the box office 703-691-3040, 9-4 weekdays. Seating is limited and available on a first come, first served basis. The March 14 performance is sold out.

Visit [www.newschoolva.com](http://www.newschoolva.com) for more information.

*Kamryn Leoncavallo is lead critic for the NSNVA's Cappies Team.*

PHOTO CONTRIBUTED



## NEWS

# Dialogue Opens On City Budget

FROM PAGE 4

improvements at the Norman Cole Wastewater Plant. The money will also be used for ongoing capital needs of the City's wastewater-collectors system.

The proposed budget also includes some \$45,000 for a pay and classification study for City employee salaries, plus 3.5-percent merit raises (\$313,000) for eligible employees and a 1-percent market adjustment (\$270,000).

**AFTER THE PRESENTATION,** Mayor Scott Silverthorne and the Council members thanked Sisson, Finance Director David Hodgkins and City staff for all their hard work preparing the budget document.

Silverthorne also reminded everyone that "This is the city manager's budget, and we'll be hearing from every key department head about their department's needs. So there will be lots of opportunities for questions and dialogue. One of the key issues this Council will grapple

with is the setting of the tax rate."

"I'm disappointed with the [proposed] tax increase," said Councilman Michael DeMarco. "So I think we should work on that with a sharpened pencil."

Councilman David Meyer said Fairfax's tax base has grown over time and "without redevelopment of our commercial properties, we won't see appreciable growth in our tax base." To Sisson, he said, "Our most important asset is our employees, so I commend you for recommending the pay and classification study; this is long overdue."

Councilwoman Nancy Loftus called the budget document "bad news" and said she was disappointed in it. "Proposed expenditures are up, as are proposed residential, commercial and wastewater tax increases," she said.

"And with increased home assessments, residential tax bills will already be higher, even if the real estate tax rate remains flat," she told Sisson.

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## ENTERTAINMENT

Send notes to the Connection at [south@connectionnewspapers.com](mailto: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.

### THURSDAY-SUNDAY/MARCH 12-15

**"Doubt: A Parable."** 7:30 p.m. Old Town Village, 3950 University Drive, Fairfax. Tickets are \$17 in advance. Remaining seats, if available, will be \$20 at the door, one hour prior to performance times. Free parking is available. The production runs approximately 90 minutes, and a brief, talk-back session with the actors and directors will follow each performance. Buy tickets at: <http://fairfaxcitytheatre.ticketleap.com/doubt-a-parable/>.

**The Laramie Project.** The New School of Northern Virginia, 9432, Silver King Court, Fairfax. A production that examines the aftermath of a murder and the effects of a hate crime on the community. Tickets: \$7-\$10.

### FRIDAY/MARCH 13

**Military and the Arts Reception.** 7-9 p.m. Workhouse Arts Center, 9518 Workhouse Way, Lorton. The event is the culminating performance of a Music & Writing workshop offered at the USO Warrior and Family Center at Fort Belvoir. In that workshop, local Service Members will collaborate with internationally touring poet Mahogany L. Browne as well as Christylez Bacon and Wytold to compose original songs that speak to the theme of origins and place. The event will also feature remarks by Colonel Gadson (USA, Ret.), and the launch of the Workhouse Military and the Arts Initiative. This event is sponsored by the USO of Metropolitan Washington-Baltimore.

### SATURDAY/MARCH 14

**Burke Racquet & Swim Club's 30th Birthday Celebration with Health Fair & Inova Blood Drive.** Blood drive: 8 a.m. - 12 p.m. Health Fair: 9 a.m. - 12 p.m. 6001 Burke Commons Rd., Burke. Come and visit with your local doctors and health presenters. Free morning exercise classes, seated massages, rock climbing and more. You can even save a life by donating blood.

**Annual Talent Hunt Competition** at Robert E. Lee High School, 6540 Franconia Rd., Springfield, 1-4 p.m. organized by men of Omega Psi Phi Fraternity Inc., Psi Alpha Alpha and Eta Delta Delta Chapters of Fairfax County, in conjunction with P.A.A.M.A.S. Social Organization of Lee High School. Students exhibit their talents and share gifts of musical disciplines, oratorical delivery and visual artistic interpretations with family, friends and community.

**The Male Chorus Annual Fundraiser,** with a free Gospel Concert and Dinner Sale at Greater Little Zion Baptist Church, 10185 Zion Drive, Fairfax: 2-4 p.m. Dinner Sale; 4:30-6:30 p.m. - Gospel Concert, featuring Minister Isaac Howard and the Combined Gospel Chorus, along with the Zion Inspirational Choir of Greater Little Zion. Dinners \$12, Concert - free (Love Offerings will be accepted). Call 703-764-9111 to place advance orders.

**Fairfax City Regional Library Book Sale.** 10 a.m. - 3 p.m. 10360 North Street, Fairfax. Thousands of gently-read books and non-book media organized into categories including picture books, early readers, nonfiction, holiday, chapter books and more. \$.25-\$2.00. Some specials \$3 and \$4.



PHOTO BY BONNIE HOBBS/THE CONNECTION

**Uncertainty about whether a priest committed a crime is at the heart of "Doubt: A Parable," the play being presented by the City of Fairfax Theatre Company. Show times are March 12-15, at 3950 University Drive, Fairfax. Thursday, Friday and Saturday performances begin at 7:30 p.m.; Sunday, 2 p.m. Tickets are \$17 in advance; any remaining seats will be \$20 at the door. Free parking is available, and a brief "talk-back" session with the actors and directors follows each performance. Buy tickets at: <http://fairfaxcitytheatre.ticketleap.com/doubt-a-parable/>. In photo, from left: Anna Fagan, Chris Andersen and Brenda Parker rehearse a scene.**

**2nd Saturday Art Walk.** Workhouse Arts Center, 9518 Workhouse Way, Lorton. The 2nd Saturday Art Walk at the Workhouse showcases the diverse work of more than 100 visual artists in a unique historic venue, creating an atmosphere that encourages visitors to immerse themselves in the richness of this creative community.

### SUNDAY/MARCH 15

**Model Trains Running.** 11200 Fairfax Station Road in Fairfax Station. The Northern Virginia NTRAK group will have running N Gauge Model trains at the Fairfax Station Railroad Museum. Admission: Museum members and children 4 and under, free; children 5-15, \$2; adults 16 and over, \$4. [www.fairfax-station.org](http://www.fairfax-station.org), 703-425-9225.

### THURSDAY/MARCH 19

**Fashion Show Luncheon & Marketplace Fundraiser.** 10 a.m. Church of the Good Shepherd, 9350 Braddock Road, Burke. At 10 a.m. to noon, attendees are invited to shop at the spring marketplace where local vendors will sell their products, with a percentage of proceeds going to SCFB. Starting at noon, there will be a fashion show by Draper's & Damon of Fairfax and special luncheon, along with door prizes, raffles and coupons. For reservations, call Faye Quesenberry, 703-620-0161, by March 12. The cost is \$25; checks payable to SCFB. If transportation is needed, call the SCFB office 703-323-4788. Visit [www.scfbva.org](http://www.scfbva.org) for more information.

### SATURDAY/MARCH 21

**Appraisal Event.** 10 a.m.-12:30 p.m. Stacy C. Sherwood Center, 3740 Old Lee Highway, Fairfax. Find out what your items are worth, come get your items appraised by professionals. \$5 admission, \$5 for each appraisal.

Limit 3 items. Proceeds go to City of Fairfax Senior Center.

**Family Fun Night.** 6-9 p.m. Providence Elementary School, 3616 Jermentown Road, Fairfax. Families with children of all ages are invited to take part in the fun fair.

**Date Night: Chef's Table.** 7-9 p.m. Workhouse Arts Center, 9518 Workhouse Way, Lorton. Anyone can go out for dinner and a movie so why not make your night something special to be remembered? Date Night cooking classes are designed to be fun, relaxing and an escape from the daily grind. They are great way to learn some basic cooking techniques while enjoying your company and making new friends. The menu items will be prepared by participants working together at each of the cooking islands. Participants will be served a tasting portion of all the entrees and a pre-chef-selected drink of choice.

### FRIDAY-SUNDAY/MARCH 20-22

**Fairfax City Library Book Sale.** 10 a.m.-5 p.m. Fairfax City Library, 10360 North Street, Fairfax. Thousands of book in all sorts of categories.

### SUNDAY/MARCH 22

**Hands On Modeling Day at The Fairfax Station Railroad Museum,** 1-4 p.m. Visitors will be able to participate in hands on modeling activities and in the basics of artifact restoration. In addition, they will see demonstrations of common office items used at the Station in the early 1900s. 11200 Fairfax Station Road in Fairfax Station. Admission is free to Museum Members and children 4 and under; \$2 children 5-15 and \$4 adults 16 and over. [www.fairfax-station.org](http://www.fairfax-station.org), 703-425-9225.

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# ENTERTAINMENT



PHOTO COURTESY OF VIRGINIA OPERA

Cecilia Violetta Lopez as Violetta and Rolando Sanz as Alfredo in Virginia Opera's "La Traviata."

## A Heartbeat Through the Universe Virginia Opera present "La Traviata."

BY DAVID SIEGEL  
THE CONNECTION

**B**e smitten with Violetta, the brave woman who learns that "love can be inspired by a passing glance," but happiness is not such an easy journey. This is the grand sweep of Verdi's "La Traviata," the world's most performed opera, coming to the Center for the Arts, courtesy of Virginia Opera with music by the Richmond Symphony Orchestra.

"La Traviata" is about "life on the edge with a woman who took a wrong way" said Lillian Groag, director. Set in decadent 19<sup>th</sup> century Paris, Verdi's masterful story tells of a lovely courtesan who unexpectedly falls in love with a man that ultimately is not meant to be.

"With an extraordinary cast, 'La Traviata' is a timeless story with an emphasis on tumultuous relationships and spurned love and compassion." It also may be recognizable from movies such as "Pretty Woman" or "Moulin Rouge."

"Even if you think you don't know 'La Traviata' you will instantly recognize a number of its songs," added Groag. One of those songs might be the aptly named "The Drinking Song" or the grand show-stopping aria, "Siempre Libre" about making choices between independence and the constraints of love.

The production, created in partnership with Des Moines Metro Opera, takes place within a "gossamer, delicate setting: like a dragonfly's nest of beautiful abstraction," added Groag.

In her Virginia Opera debut, Cecilia Violetta López is the ill-fated character Violetta. Lopez described her role as an "elegant, confident woman who is swept away by love, but is also scarred by love. She is real; trying to deal with her complicated life. We can relate to her as she learns that love is so overpowering."

"La Traviata' is full of emotion, all with Verdi's music and lyrics to dig into," added Lopez. As Verdi wrote, love can be "madness and euphoria".

Rolando Sanz, portrays Alfredo, the man who loves Violetta. He also shows her the destructive power of love and commitment.

Beyond his opera performances, Sanz is the artistic director for the D.C.

area's Young Artists of America, created to provide talented young musicians the opportunity to be mentored by professional artists. Andrew Bisantz, in his Virginia Opera debut, will lead the Richmond Symphony.

Virginia Opera President and CEO Russell P. Allen commented that the production of "La Traviata" will astonish with an "amazing cast in an exciting operatic experience." An evening to hook audiences into the opera experience.

### Where and When

Virginia Opera performs "La Traviata" at the George Mason University Center for the Arts, 4400 University Drive, Fairfax. Performances: Saturday, March 21 at 8 p.m. and Sunday, March 22 at 2 p.m. Tickets \$44-\$98. Call 888-945-2468 or visit: [www.cfa.gmu.edu](http://www.cfa.gmu.edu). Note: Will be performed in Italian with English supertitles. Each performance will feature a free pre performance opera discussion by Virginia Opera's Dr. Glenn "Dr. Opera" Winters.

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**GAYLORD NATIONAL RESORT**



# Fairfax Gymnast Barborek Wins State All-Around Title

Senior takes advantage of second chance, wins as alternate.

BY JON ROETMAN  
THE CONNECTION

Fairfax gymnast Rachel Barborek thought her year-long dream of winning a state all-around championship was dead following the 6A North region meet on Feb. 11.

Barborek finished outside of the top four in the all-around standings and failed to earn a state berth. Nearly a month later, however, a text message from head coach Marissa Gaines informed Barborek she had received a second chance.

Barborek learned on Friday, March 6 that she would compete as an alternate in the state all-around competition. Two days later, the senior made the most of her opportunity.

Barborek won the all-around championship at the VHSL individual state meet on Sunday, March 8 at Patriot High School. She produced a score of 38.7, finishing ahead of Hickory's Haley Cole (38.3), Marshall's Morgan Stahl (37.625), Cox's Mary Munitz (37.35) and Washington-Lee's Sophie Hatcher (37.325).

Barborek became just the second Fairfax County gymnast to win the state all-around title since 2002, and the first since Herndon's Maria Hayden accomplished the feat in 2010.

Barborek's stellar performance included three event titles — bars (9.825), floor (9.675) and beam (9.65).

"I was just so excited," Barborek said after the meet, "that I got a second chance."

Barborek's year-long journey to a state championship began at the 2014 state meet. After watching Great Bridge gymnast Courtney Adams step onto the medal stand and accept the all-around title, Barborek, then a junior, vowed to be No. 1 the following year.

"I remember last year watching the girl who won all-around at states," Barborek said, "just watching her go on the podium and I was saying, 'I want that to be me next year.'"

The thought of an all-around title kept Barborek motivated during training. When her senior season arrived, the former Level 10 club gymnast was impressive. She crushed the competition during the final home meet of her high school career, when she produced an all-around score of 38.325. She also finished first in the all-around at Washington-Lee's Barbara Reinwald Invitational.

At the Conference 6 meet on Feb. 2, Barborek won the beam championship and earned a regional all-around berth. But nine days later, with Barborek needing to qualify just once more to earn a trip to states, she stumbled during the 6A North region meet



PHOTO BY CRAIG STERBUTZEL/THE CONNECTION

**Fairfax gymnast Rachel Barborek won the bars state championship (9.825) on March 8 at Patriot High School. Barborek's stellar performance included two other event titles — floor (9.675) and beam (9.65).**

at Lake Braddock Secondary School.

Barborek fell during her beam routine and earned a less-than-stellar score of 8.475. Her bars routine went well until the end, when a "mental block" led to Barborek hanging on too long before her dismount. She finished with a score of 8.775.

At the end of the competition, Barborek had won a regional floor title and qualified for states in three events. However, she placed fifth in the all-around, and only the top four advanced to states.

Her year-long goal of winning an all-around state title had seemingly come to an end.

"She worked really hard and she was really, really disappointed after regionals," said Barborek's mother, Susan Barborek, a Fairfax assistant coach and former gymnast at the University of Michigan. "It was the

worst meet of her life."

The individual state meet, originally scheduled for Feb. 21, was postponed three times due to inclement weather concerns. During the delay, Yorktown freshman Bella Kane, who placed second in the all-around at regionals and earned a state berth, suffered a knee injury during a club meet. The injury kept Kane from competing at states and opened the door for Barborek to compete in the all-around as an alternate.

After Gaines was notified, she sent a text message to Barborek and her mother on Friday night, roughly 40 hours before

the competition, to inform them of the senior's all-around opportunity. While Barborek was excited, she now faced the challenge of going through her beam routine, which she hadn't practice for three

weeks after failing to qualify at regionals. Barborek practiced on a balance beam for one hour on Saturday before competing at states the following day.

During warmups on Sunday, Barborek could sense the possibility of something special happening.

"I had a pretty good vault warmup — it was OK — and then I went to bars and I had a really good bar warmup and I was like, it's going to be a good day," Barborek said. "I could just tell from the beginning."

Gymnasts from the 6A North region started on vault, and Barborek produced a score of 9.55, which would place her in a tie for 10th.

After vault, it was on to bars, the event during which Barborek ran into a mental block at regionals and failed to let go when she was supposed to dismount. On this day, however, the Fairfax senior nailed her routine and produced the top score of the day in any event — 9.825.

Susan Barborek celebrated by jumping in the air and hugging her daughter after Barborek landed her dismount.

"Were you at regionals?" Susan Barborek asked a reporter when talking about her celebration. "She didn't let go of the bar. So, yes, I was happy that she let go of the bar. ... I was just happy that she did what she is capable of doing."

From there, it was on to beam, the event Barborek had practiced once in three weeks. Lack of practice did not hinder her performance, however, as Barborek earned a 9.65, which held on as the event's top score.

At that point, with three strong performances in the bag and Barborek's best event — floor — remaining, a championship seemed like a possibility to Barborek and her mother.

"... I realized, you've hit three events and floor is your best," Susan Barborek said. "I was like, I know what you can do on floor, so I was feeling somewhat confident."

Barborek finished strong, scoring 9.675 on floor, which gave her three event championships and secured the all-around title.

"It's amazing, but it doesn't surprise me, just knowing how much of a hard worker she is and how dedicated [she is] and how much she wanted it," Gaines said. "I knew she would fight for it."

With the competition having ended, Barborek would make four trips to the top of the medal stand.

"I was very happy for Rachel," Hayfield gymnast Molly Overstreet wrote in an email. "I knew from the beginning that she deserved it and that she could win the all-around."

After receiving first-place medals for bars, beam and floor, Barborek's final trip to the top of the medal stand completed her year-long goal of winning the state all-around title.

It required a second chance, but Barborek made the most of her opportunity.

"I couldn't ask for a better state meet or a way to end the season," Barborek said. "... The whole year I was just training, thinking I want to win states [in the] all-around. When I won, it's just unreal. I was so happy."

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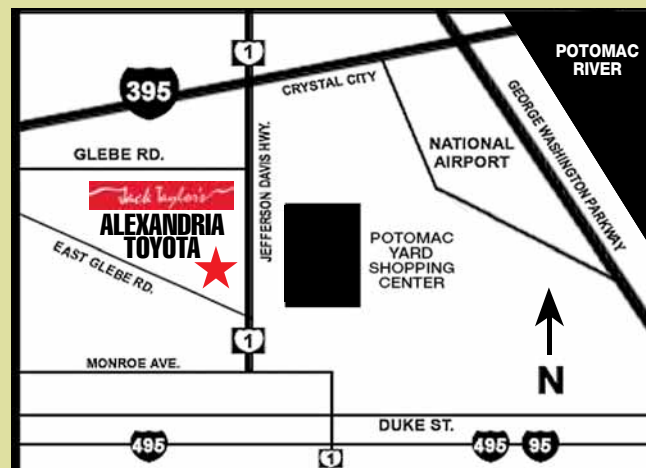


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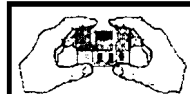
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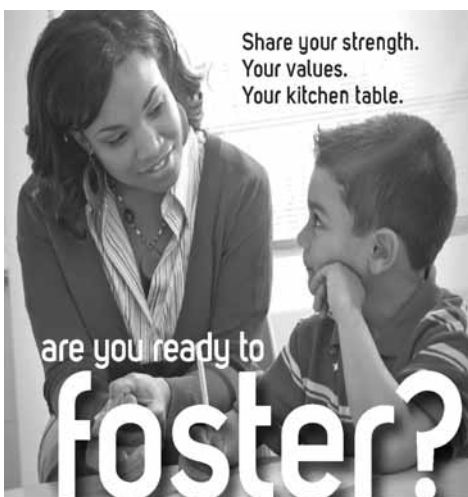
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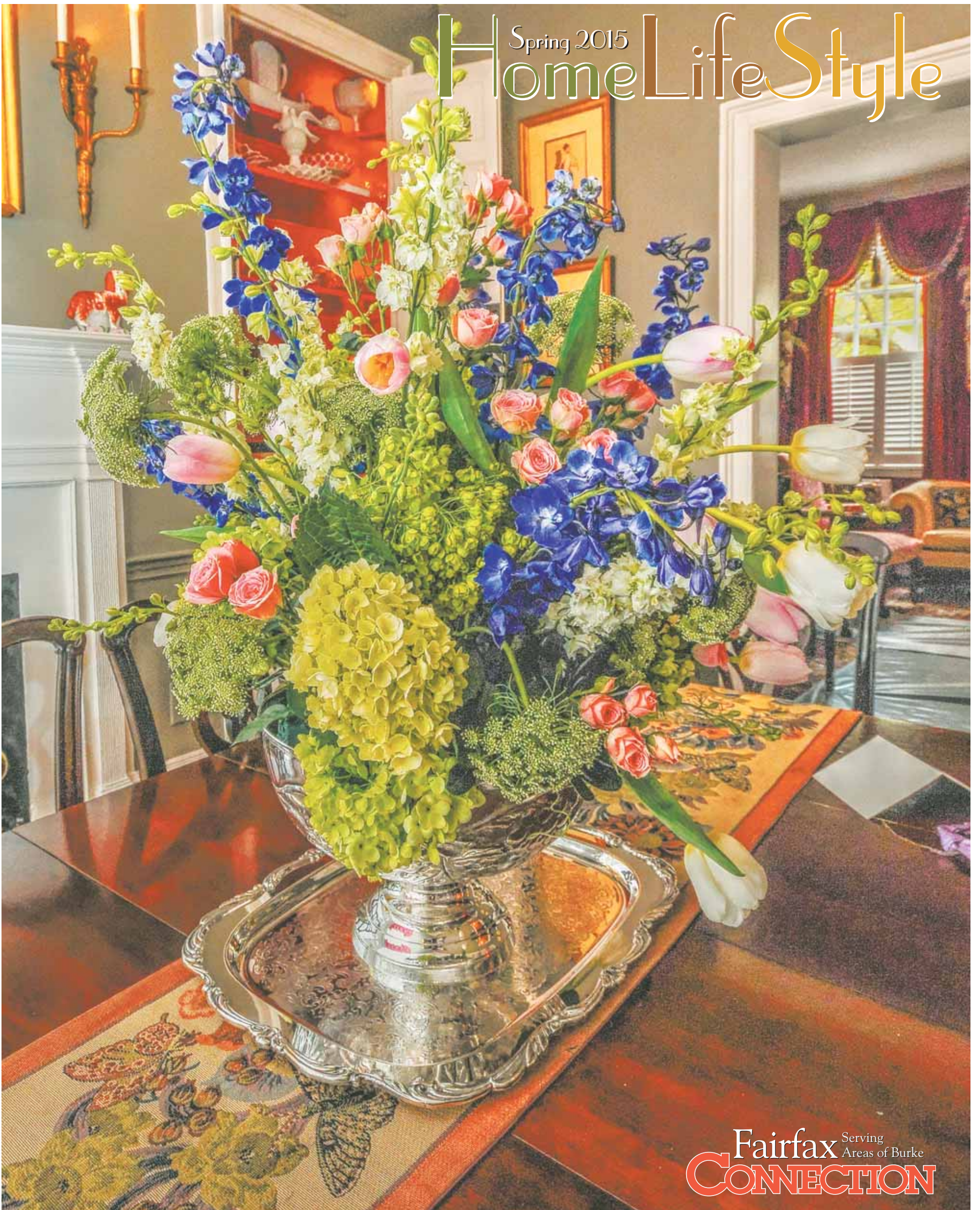


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## Historic Virginia in Gardens

Tour includes a rare private look at special properties in Fairfax County, Old Town Alexandria and Leesburg.

The Virginia Historic Garden Tour is an 8-day event that stretches across the Commonwealth. Each spring visitors are welcomed to over 250 of Virginia's most beautiful gardens, homes and historic landmarks. This event provides the opportunity to see unforgettable gardens at the peak of Virginia's springtime color, as well as beautiful houses sparkling with more than 2,000 flower arrangements created by Garden Club of Virginia members.

The Clifton Historic District, registered as a Virginia Historic Landmark, was a Civil War railroad stop and is filled with shops, memorable restaurants and restored homes. Clara Barton, founder of the American Red Cross, tended to soldiers after the Battle of



PHOTO COURTESY OF GARDEN CLUB OF FAIRFAX

**Nestled in an equestrian neighborhood, a 10,000 square-foot contemporary home was built in 2013 for an active family with young children, and includes a stable.**

Second Manassas at St. Mary's Church and the historic Fairfax Station, now a Railroad Museum.

A self-drive tour on April 21 features stables, vineyards, a world-class garden,

Georgian-revival architecture, and a 10,000 square-foot contemporary home with a vanishing edge swimming pool – four private

SEE HISTORIC GARDENS, PAGE 4

### Old Town Alexandria, Saturday, April 18

Old Town Alexandria was in 1946 the third city in the country to create a historic district to preserve its downtown. Today it has 4,000 buildings with a historic designation. The April 18 walking tour in Old Town includes five row houses with courtyard gardens in this preserved area, and refreshments at St. Paul's Episcopal Church. In addition to the private properties featured, the tour ticket allows access to The Carlyle House Historic Park, Lee-Fendall House Museum and Garden, George Mason's Gunston Hall and George Washington's Mount Vernon Estate and Gardens. The tour is hosted by The Garden Club of Alexandria and Hunting Creek Garden Club. [www.vagardenweek.org](http://www.vagardenweek.org)

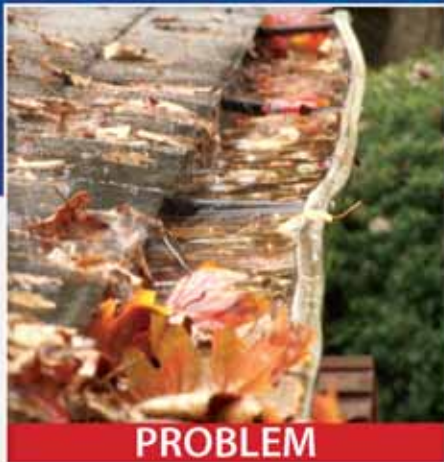
### Clifton and Fairfax Station, Tuesday, April 21

This self-drive tour features stables, vineyards, a world-class garden, Georgian-revival architecture, and a 10,000 square-foot contemporary home with a vanishing edge swimming pool – four private homes with gardens and two stables in all. Tour ticket includes a tea at the Clifton Presbyterian Church. Advance Ticket Sales: \$30 at [www.vagardenweek.org](http://www.vagardenweek.org) or email [fairfaxtickets@vagardenweek.org](mailto:fairfaxtickets@vagardenweek.org). Visit [www.gardencluboffairfax.blogspot.com](http://www.gardencluboffairfax.blogspot.com) for a list of local retailers selling tickets.

### Leesburg, Sunday and Monday, April 19-20

Leesburg was mapped and recognized by the Council of the Colony in 1758. Most of the 11 featured tour properties are located on two historic roads, Edwards Ferry Road and Cornwall Street. The neighborhoods offer a variety of architectural styles and well established gardens. This two-day Towne and Country tour features 11 properties and coincides with the Leesburg Flower and Garden Festival, which takes place on April 18 and 19.

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## Spring Pop for the Real Estate Market?

Agents again optimistic for a strong spring

BY TIM PETERSON  
THE CONNECTION

Just like last year, real estate agent Ron Kowalski is optimistic coming out of the winter doldrums. He runs Ron Kowalski Real Estate Group with Keller Williams Capital Properties, covering Lorton, Fairfax Station and Springfield.

"Expectations are again high for the spring market," he said. That's due in part to mortgage interest rates being attractively low, just like last year. "The rates haven't gone up, as we all thought."

Interest rates for a 30-year fixed mortgage, both nationally and in Virginia, weren't quite as low in April 2014 (4.1-4.2 percent) as the year before (3.3 percent), according to the online real estate database Zillow. But with the economy gradually recovering, agents were feeling a surge coming on.

In 2014, "the year started off strong until we got up to about July and August," said Rex Reiley, with RE/MAX Allegiance in the Mount Vernon area, "when things started to taper off a bit."

Agents were also anticipating a raise in rates, but that didn't happen. And now, the national and state interest rates are currently hovering around 3.8 percent for a 30-year fixed mortgage with a credit rating of 740 to 850 according to Zillow.

Though rates have dipped somewhat from a year ago, prices and available inventory have grown.

In the past year, Fairfax County has seen the average selling price of homes rise from \$491,144 to \$526,786 (a 7.3 percent increase) versus the Mid Atlantic Region average increase of 3.2 percent. Over the same period the number of active listings in the county increased from 1,634 to 2,198 (a 34.5 percent increase over last January). (Source: RealEstate Business Intelligence)

With the spring 2015 market preparing to bloom, agents are hopeful the low rates and available inventory will motivate more buyers and sellers to get off the fence and into the arena. Particularly because it's unclear when rates might rise again.

"People don't want to wait," said Pattie Mancini, whose coverage area with Avery-Hess Realtors includes Springfield. She said her office has been hitting sales goals for the first time in over a year. "With prices going up, and interest rates might be going up, this is the perfect storm."

Mancini said she's seeing more "millennials" coming into the market in Springfield, and finding more houses available from older individuals who had been holding out while the market was worse over the last five years.

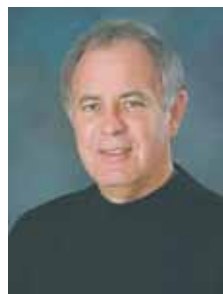
"The millennials are getting older," she said, "seeing it's not such a bad idea, and



PHOTO COURTESY OF PATTIE MANCINI  
**5409 Yorkshire St., in the Kings Park area of Springfield, listed at \$535,000.**



PHOTO COURTESY OF RON KOWALSKI  
**"The builder, McShay Communities from Springfield, is building four homes on spec since he's optimistic about the spring market in this price range (\$949,900-\$1.3M)," said Ron Kowalski, of the new McDonald Estates development in Lorton. "We even painted, decorated and staged the model home (pictured, available for \$1.25M), which is rare for a seven-home development." One active listing is 9324 Dachshund Drive, listed at \$949,900.**



**Rex Reiley with RE/MAX Allegiance.**



**Ron Kowalski of Keller Williams Capital.**



**Pat Richter of Residential Preferred.**



**Pattie Mancini of Avery-Hess Realtors.**

seeing more value in a mortgage than rent."

Pat Richter with Residential Preferred Properties in Burke could use more sellers putting up their property. With more people gaining confidence in their economic stability, she said there are more buyers looking to "move up" in her area.

"For years, we haven't had much of a move up market," Richter said. "Now, people are starting to say this townhouse is

too small, this single family home is too small, and want a bigger one."

With the move up market and more buyers looking to move into Burke, "It's a good time to be a buyer," she said. "But that doesn't mean prices have escalated tremendously. It's interesting because assessments all went up. Now starting April 1, we'll see prices go up a little, pricing for the spring and summer market."



PHOTO COURTESY OF REX REILEY  
**8717 Falkstone Lane in Mt. Vernon Manor, Mount Vernon. "This house went on the market Feb. 25 and a contract was ratified Feb. 28th," said Rex Reiley. "There were multiple offers because this was listed at \$370,000. The interior needed to be remodeled totally and with its low price, it attracted many investors and builders who will renovate it."**



PHOTO COURTESY OF REX REILEY  
**4505 Dolphin Lane, located in Yacht Haven, Mount Vernon, is listed at \$875,000. Its renovations include a two-floor addition on a half-acre lot.**

Fairfax County mailed its 2015 real estate assessment notices Feb. 17: 74 percent of residential properties saw an increase.

SEE LOW INTEREST RATES, PAGE 7

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# Historic Virginia in Gardens

FROM PAGE 2

homes with gardens and two stables in all. Tour ticket includes a tea at the Clifton Presbyterian Church.

Tour proceeds fund the restoration and preservation of Virginia's historic gardens, and provide graduate level research fellowships for building comprehensive and ongoing records of historic gardens and landscapes in the Commonwealth, and support the mission of the Garden Club of Virginia.

For a complete list of tours, see [www.vagardenweek.org](http://www.vagardenweek.org)

## Virginia Historic Garden Tour in Clifton and Fairfax Station

❖ Redlac Drive, Clifton: Located in a pastoral setting with grazing horses nearby, this graceful 1987 Georgian Revival house draws its elegant inspiration from historic Williamsburg. Large rooms with arching Palladian windows overlook a formal boxwood knot garden and serene five-acre landscape. The hardwood tree canopy shades a hillside azalea and rhododendron garden with a bridge over a swale. Details inside include formal dining and living rooms with deep crown and base molding and regal blue and gold wallpaper. Antiques and the owners' serendipitous flea market finds abound. The foyer, with Currier and Ives prints, leads to the living room with its 1876 grand piano.

The bedrooms upstairs are filled with vintage linens and family heirlooms including the family's first-communion dress, and are connected by a central library furnished with an antique parlor set. Balconies overlook a shaded flagstone patio and swimming pool. Dennis and Cyndy Patrick, owners.

❖ Willowbrook Road, Fairfax Station: Nestled in an equestrian neighborhood, this 10,000-square-foot contemporary home was built in 2013 for an active family with young children on the site of their previous house. A handsome entrance of stone, leaded glass and ironwork leads to a spectacular open-plan living, dining and kitchen area designed by the fun-loving owners with year-round entertaining in mind. The living area contains a double fireplace and a backlit onyx bar. Large doors open to a long covered veranda fitted with retractable screens where family and friends enjoy dining outside during warm months overlooking the infinity-edge swimming pool. Other thoughtful details include an elevator, a home gymnasium and a separate garage for the children's bikes and toys. The immaculate two-stall stable on the property has attached horse trailer storage and is home to a beloved horse and a pony. The wife is an accomplished equestrian as evidenced by a tack room filled with trophies and ribbons. Local equestrians will be in the stable to answer horse-related questions. Garth and Heather Viar, owners.

❖ Also Willowbrook Road, Fairfax Sta-



COURTESY OF GARDEN CLUB OF FAIRFAX

**Located in a pastoral setting, this graceful 1987 Georgian Revival house in Clifton draws its inspiration from historic Williamsburg.**

tion: Serenity awaits visitors at this single-story California-style property. The experience begins on the long drive that winds past a riding ring and pastures. Slate steps lead to the entrance courtyard, where a koi pond and bamboo fountain set the warm spa-like mood of this wonderful home. The house, purchased in 2003, has been completely renovated by the current owners, and has been personalized with twin studies, an open-plan kitchen. Clean, contemporary and connected to nature, the rooms along the back of the house each open to a series of graceful garden rooms with an entertaining deck, a yoga/meditation deck, an outdoor shower and a seating area surrounding a fire pit. Inside, visitors find delights like a glass conservatory and studio, a relaxing slate tiled guest bath with heated towel bar, solid cherry doors throughout, a master suite with his and hers dressing rooms and a sleek bath with heated marble floors. The eco-friendly, award-winning stable complex contains a four-stall barn, equipment storage, dry lots, round pen, composting system and pastures. Randall and Joan Onders, owners.

❖ Poplar Grove, Lakewood Lane, Fairfax

Station: Time stands still at Poplar Grove. A curving driveway leads visitors through towering oaks and flowering cherry and plum trees to a slower, more gentle way of living. The cream-colored Federal-style home was built in 1964 and renovated quite literally from the ground up in 2001.

The owners, one a landscape architect of world-class talent and the other a graduate of DuPage School of Horticulture and a seventh-generation Virginian, carved a paradise of 18th-century grandeur out of what had been seven overgrown acres. The owners' passion and expertise brought to life a two-level Colonial parterre kitchen garden with boxwood topiary, oyster-shell walkways and a climbing-rose-covered chicken coop. Nearby is a vineyard with over 400 Petit Verdot grape vines. Visit the swimming pool garden and follow a shady path that leads to the secret white garden with a pond and splashing fountain. In fact, fountains can be heard bubbling and splashing in every direction. Another fountain brings wandering guests to an alfresco dining area reminiscent of Charleston. Inside, visitors find grand moldings, sparkling chandeliers and museum-quality artwork and antiques. Master Gardeners will be available to answer questions in the gardens. Charles Prillaman and Parker Jennings, owners.

Nearby places of interest include the Clifton Historic District, St. Mary of Sorrows Catholic Church, Fairfax Station Railroad Museum, and Mason Neck State Park.

More at [www.viriniagardenweek.org](http://www.viriniagardenweek.org).



PHOTO COURTESY OF GARDEN CLUB OF FAIRFAX

**The self-drive garden tour in Fairfax Station and Clifton in Fairfax County features stables, vineyards, a world-class garden, Georgian-revival architecture, and a stunning 10,000 square-foot contemporary home with a vanishing edge swimming pool – four private homes with gardens and two stables in all.**



lost (adj): 1. unable to find the way. 2. not appreciated or understood. 3. no longer owned or known

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# Home Improvements Earn Awards

Four Sun Design remodeling projects named Washington-area “Contractor of the Year” winners.

BY JOHN BYRD

It’s been a good year for Sun Design Remodeling.

In January, the full-service design/build remodeler won four “Contractor of the Year” awards from the Washington, D.C. chapter of the National Association of the Remodeling Industry (NARI). Then, in February, an already locally-honored gourmet kitchen was named category best (“kitchen above \$150k”) in the 10-state southeastern region.

Winning projects include: a rear elevation poolside recreation solution; a French Country gourmet kitchen (the southeastern regional winner); an open kitchen plan in a traditional interior style; and a lower-level build-out to designed for use by three generations.

## French Country Kitchen Is Local and Regional COTY winner: Residential Kitchen Over \$120,000

For Dr. Rick Layfield and his wife Kelly Layfield, the search for their dream kitchen started shortly after they purchased their 3,700-square-foot, four-bedroom home in Clifton eight years ago.

“The kitchen suite was a primary selling point,” Kelly Layfield said of the 400-square-foot room.

But she found the rear of the house dark and dated. Sightlines to the children’s backyard play areas were not well-aligned. And there was a visually obstructive bulkhead over the primary food preparation zone.

Also, the pentagon-shaped food preparation island and dining counter wasn’t well suited for in-kitchen dining. And the corner breakfast area was cramped — making it hard to access a door to the back porch which used to be a pathway to the family’s outdoor grill.

Fortunately, Kelly Layfield’s first meeting with designer John Benson was productive from the start. He proposed a rectangular food preparation island with a granite surface, parallel with the two corners of the cook’s work zones.

Benson also helped Layfield explore the lighter, more textured hues she had been seeking: marble subway tile wall covering; surfaces in Granite Bianco Antico; white cabinets with glass facings; and an oven backsplash in a white quatrefoil tiling. The coffers, likewise, are delineated in a white and grey duotone.

“This is just the balance I was looking for,” Layfield said. “It feels like home.”



PHOTO BY BRYAN BURRIS

**With its private entrance, fully operative kitchenette and dining table for four, the new lower level allows Tina’s mother, Kay, to host bridge parties for friends independent of any other household activities.**



PHOTO BY MITRO HOOD

**BEST RESIDENTIAL KITCHEN: Sun Design’s winning kitchen solution takes full advantage of a 13’ cathedral ceiling with a two-level window wall. Owner Melynda Britt says the space is much better organized, yet more accessible — perfect for entertaining.**

## Open Floorplan Defines Casual But Elegant Kitchen Residential Kitchen; \$80k to \$120k; COTY Honorable Mention

Steve and Melynda Britt’s four-bedroom colonial in Vienna offered considerable charms when the couple purchased it 10 years ago.

There was a nicely finished library and living room, a formal dining room and a sizable family room in the back half of the house with a 13-foot cathedral ceiling framing a lovely view of mature landscaping.

For Melynda Britt, the larger goal was a kitchen footprint that offered an efficient work space — integrated with the surrounding great room.

“Since the emphasis was on a more intelligent use of limited square footage,” Sun Design’s Duroske said, “we thought custom-built-ins would help create better coordi-

nated work zones.”

Critiquing the kitchen now, Britt is amazed at how much more effectively the solution works on several fronts: The food preparation island protects the cook’s work triangle, and is positioned for easy service to the family room; the beverage station, an effective space divider, is accessible from both the breakfast area and family room; the coffee bar is situated between doors leading to the dining room and the breakfast room, out of the chef’s way; the kitchen’s mosaic tile flooring has been replaced by a refinished hardwood flooring.

“We can now comfortably entertain 20-25 guests,” Britt said. “Better yet, the space is really warm and comfortable.”

## Finished Lower Level Offers Multi-Gen Family Solution COTY Honorable Mention

Eric Park and his wife Tina, both physicians, were already quite busy 10 years ago when they purchased a 3,400-square-foot two-level neo-colonial in Falls Church.

“Our plan all along was to create a family home,” Tina Park said. “We saw the lower level eventually playing a part in our daily lives, but were only using it for storage. It wasn’t until my mother began regularly helping us with the girls that we began looking at the house more closely.”

At first Park’s mother, Kay, would stay in the guest room, but gradually everyone started looking at ways to increase available privacy.

It’s at this point that Sun Design Remodeling enters the story.

“A basement conversion is challenging,” said Sun Design’s Liz Lee-Sint, who guided the Park project from concept to completion, “especially when it’s going to be mainstreamed with the rest of the house.”

For Kay, the top priority was a suite with all the features of independent living, including a private entrance, a comfortable master suite and a fully functional kitchenette with dining for four.

On a separate note, the Parks envisioned a 195-square-foot family fitness center and a children’s play zone with custom built-ins.

Describing the finished décor as “modern Asian contemporary,” Tina Park stressed simple lines, soft tones and open visuals.

“It’s really the nicest place in the house now,” Park said. “And it satisfies so many different needs that it’s become our main gathering place.”

## House and grounds reconciliation judged this year’s best Exterior Solution/COTY Grand award winner

As Monte Zaben tells it, the rear elevation to his 8,300-square-foot colonial in Fredericksburg was so sun-exposed it was uncomfortable sitting by the pool he had just installed the year before.

After researching several options, however, he stumbled on Sun Design’s portfolio of indoor-outdoor solutions, and set up a meeting.

Combining an extended radius that steps down to the pool with vaulted entrance way, the structure’s architecture is welcoming.

Tapered craftsman-style piers support a seam metal roof. Inside, three distinct activity zones flow together: an open-air lounge; a cozy poolside vista with a pair of wicker chairs; and an outdoor kitchen equipped with a traditional grill, a power burner and refrigerators. A second level grilling deck is now, likewise, under roof.

Happy with the outcome, Zaben said he enjoys the outdoor kitchen so much he was out grilling one of his specialties this past January. “We make regular use of the outdoor space on just about every seasonable day,” he adds. “It’s very much a part of our lives now.”

*John Byrd has been writing about home improvement for 30 years. He can be reached at byrdmatx@gmail.com.*

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# Low Interest Rates Give Agents Optimism for Spring

FROM PAGE 3

"Assessments matter because the tax burden is increasing on homeowners in many jurisdictions, particularly Fairfax," said David Versel, senior researcher with the George Mason University Center for Regional Analysis.

Another burden on homeowners who may be waiting to enter the market is lingering insecurity over the effects of government Sequestration.

"I gear it to federal government spending," said George Mason professor of finance Gerald Hanweck. "When is that going to bottom out? When it does and they begin to spend again, then we'll see a pickup."

Rex Reiley is looking for that to happen soon, hoping that Congress signs off on a new budget and that it eliminates or reduces Sequester cutbacks. "If that happens, think we'll see a big boom, with everyone confident in their employment again."

Longer term, Hanweck is encouraged by an "up-surge in technology entrepreneurship" in Northern Virginia, as well as the development of the Inova research campus in Merrifield for attracting pharmaceuticals and biotech. But that impact on the real estate market could take years to notice, he said.

In the short term, he expects house prices in Fairfax County to fall slightly, forecasting a 2 percent drop in the median over the next few months in existing and new homes, a great opportunity for first-time

buyers who qualify for low-interest loans.

"Agents have a right to be optimistic," said Hanweck. "At same time, they'll have to work real hard to make the optimism pay off, selling about 97-98 percent of the listing price. That's going to certainly drop, it's just a matter of pricing."

In Lorton, Ron Kowalski has observed steady sales overall in the last month, about one per day for the 22079 zip code as a whole. The "move up" segment of houses priced \$500,000 to \$800,000 has lagged behind the "low end" (under \$500,000) and upper tier (\$1 million and above).

He's confident that increasing inventory coupled with the interest rates and "lenders loosening standards a little" will continue to help with affordability and drive sales into the spring, especially with first-time buyers.

But, he said more of his clients are researching properties on the internet before they meet with him. And that's having a mixed effect on whether they decide to make a move or not.

"They're getting a lot of information," he said, "but so much is filtered through what they want to look at. There are both sides to the story. People focus on the one that sold super high or low. My issue is a lot of the information is self-directed."

Kowalski doesn't mind buyers or sellers coming into the market loaded with their own data; he's just happy they're there.

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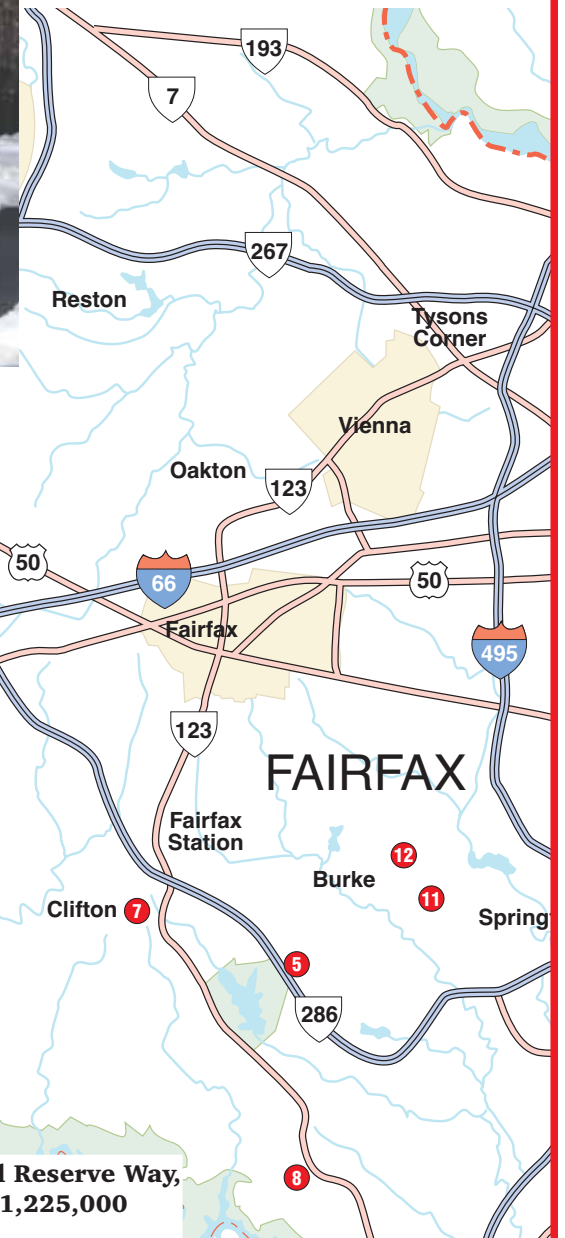


# Local REAL ESTATE

PHOTOS BY CRAIG STERBUTZEL/  
THE CONNECTION

## January, 2015 Top Sales

**2** 7063 Balmoral Forest Road,  
Clifton — \$1,415,700



**4** 9407 Old Reserve Way,  
Fairfax — \$1,225,000



**3** 12510  
Yates Ford  
Road, Clifton  
— \$1,300,000



**8** 8740 Mountain Valley Road,  
Fairfax Station — \$1,047,500



**10** 5105 Bebe Court, Centreville — \$802,000

Address .....	BR	FB	HB	..	Postal	City .....	Sold Price ..	Type .....	Lot	AC	PostalCode .....	Subdivision .....	Date Sold
<b>1</b> 12995 WYCKLAND DR .....	6	..	8	..	2	CLIFTON .....	\$2,100,000 ..	Detached ....	5.00	.....	20124 .....	WYCKLAND .....	01/16/15
<b>2</b> 7063 BALMORAL FOREST RD .	5	..	5	..	3	CLIFTON .....	\$1,415,700 ..	Detached ....	3.00	.....	20124 .....	BALMORAL GREENS .....	01/23/15
<b>3</b> 12510 YATES FORD RD .....	3	..	2	..	0	CLIFTON .....	\$1,300,000 ..	Detached ....	15.62	.....	20124 .....	PEPPER MILL FARM .....	01/08/15
<b>4</b> 9407 OLD RESERVE WAY .....	5	..	4	..	1	FAIRFAX .....	\$1,225,000 ..	Detached ....	0.27	.....	22031 .....	PICKETT'S RESERVE .....	01/09/15
<b>5</b> 6511 BURKE WOODS DR .....	6	..	5	..	2	BURKE .....	\$1,150,000 ..	Detached ....	0.83	.....	22015 .....	BURKE LAKE MEADOW .....	01/26/15
<b>6</b> 13102 BELLE COTE LN .....	5	..	4	..	1	FAIRFAX .....	\$1,100,000 ..	Detached ....	0.83	.....	22033 .....	OAK HILL RESERVE .....	01/15/15
<b>7</b> 11311 CHAPEL RD .....	4	..	4	..	1	FAIRFAX STATION ...	\$1,060,000 ..	Detached ....	5.00	.....	22039 .....	WOLF RUN HUNT .....	01/05/15
<b>8</b> 8740 MOUNTAIN VALLEY RD .	5	..	4	..	1	FAIRFAX STATION ...	\$1,047,500 ..	Detached ....	5.91	.....	22039 .....	HAMPTON HILLS .....	01/13/15
<b>9</b> 10687 YORKTOWN CT .....	3	..	4	..	1	FAIRFAX .....	\$1,005,000 ..	Townhouse .	0.05	.....	22030 .....	JAGUAR/YORKTOWN .....	01/06/15
<b>10</b> 5105 BEBE CT .....	5	..	3	..	1	CENTREVILLE .....	\$802,000 ..	Detached ....	0.17	.....	20120 .....	FAIRLAKES CROSSNG .....	01/26/15
<b>11</b> 6114 GARDEN RD .....	4	..	3	..	1	SPRINGFIELD .....	\$729,000 ..	Detached ....	0.19	.....	22152 .....	LEE-BROOKE .....	01/16/15
<b>12</b> 5413 MOUNT GREENWICH CT .	4	..	2	..	1	BURKE .....	\$715,000 ..	Detached ....	0.23	.....	22015 .....	SIGNAL HILL .....	01/15/15

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