

'Be a Kid Again and Have Fun'

NEWS, PAGE 6

(From left) Zion Jang and
Doug Klain after the famous,
piano number in Fairfax High's
"Big: The Musical."

Fairfax Pitcher Leckert
Throws 3-Hit Shutout
Against McLean
SPORTS, PAGE 15

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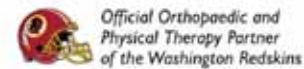


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‘Another Step in a Long Ladder’

Fairfax County pays \$2.95 million to settle John Geer wrongful death case.

BY TIM PETERSON
THE CONNECTION

More than seven months after the Geer family lawyer Michael Lieberman filed a \$12 million wrongful death civil suit in Circuit Court against Fairfax County Police, the two sides reached a \$2.95 million settlement, announced Tuesday, April 21.

The suit sought damages from Fairfax County Chief of Police Edwin Roessler, Jr. and other officers and supervisors related to the killing of John Geer on Aug. 29, 2013. Police had come to Geer’s Springfield home after receiving a domestic dispute call. After a 40-minute conversation with officers, Geer, who was standing in his doorway with arms raised and resting on the frame, was shot and killed by PFC Adam Torres, according to police.

Fairfax County, citing ongoing investigations of the incident, released little information to the public or the family until an order from Fairfax Circuit Court judge Randy Bellows finally prompted action, including divulging the name of the officer who fired the shot, on Jan. 21, 2015.

FILES RELEASED from the Police Department’s own investigation into the incident include an account from Torres that he saw Geer’s hands lower suddenly towards his waist when he shot him.

Investigators learned on the same day Geer died, Aug. 29, 2013, that at least five witnesses including the police officer talking to Geer at the instant he was shot, disputed Torres’s version of events. None of the other witnesses saw Geer’s hands move below his head.

“Now that the family knows who killed John and knows the facts and the unjustifiable decisions that led to this tragedy, the family wants to put this legal battle behind them so they can attempt to move on,” said Geer family attorney Michael Lieberman following the settlement.

Fairfax County Board of Supervisors chairman Sharon Bulova said in Tuesday’s release: “I am pleased that a fair settlement has been reached and I hope this may bring some measure of closure to the family of John Geer.”

Supervisor Pat Herrity (R-Springfield) echoed the sentiment in an interview, saying “Although nothing can replace the loss of John Geer, the big thing is this brings closure to the family that’s been through a very difficult ordeal. Based on what we had in front of us, this is the right decision.”

John’s father Don Geer responded that



John Geer’s father Don spoke at a meeting of the Virginia Citizens Coalition for Police Accountability held in the Martha Washington Library in Alexandria.

Sal Culosi, father of Dr. Salvatore Culosi who was shot by a Fairfax County Police officer, addressed Don Geer at the April 21 meeting of the Virginia Citizens Coalition for Police Accountability.



Jeff Stewart, a friend of John Geer who witnessed him being shot, plans to push the ad hoc commission reviewing Fairfax County Police Department policies to discuss creation of an independent citizen’s oversight board to look at police incidents.

Nick Beltrante, executive director of the Virginia Citizens Coalition for Police Accountability and member of the Fairfax County ad hoc commission to review police policies for disclosure of information and use of force, speaks at a Coalition meeting held April 21 at the Martha Washington Library in Alexandria.



while the settlement will provide some financial stability to Geer’s two daughters, it doesn’t go far enough.

“This is another step in a long ladder of steps to get things accomplished,” Don Geer said in an interview. “It’s just one of many. As far as I’m concerned, until charges are pressed with Torres, it won’t be a closure. ... Fairfax has still done nothing as far as he’s concerned.

He’s still on the doggone payroll. I’m paying his salary. That’s really quite disgusting.”

“I understand Mr. Geer’s frustration,” said Bulova in an email. “A criminal charge would have to come from either the Commonwealth Attorney who is an elected official, independent of the Board of Supervisors, or the Justice Department. I am not happy with how long it is taking for a decision, one way or another.”

One step Bulova and the supervisors have taken is the creation of an ad hoc commission to review police policies for release of information and use of force, comprising lawyers, academics, members of the media, citizens and police representatives.

Its first, largely introductory meeting was held at the Fairfax County Government Center March 23.

Its second meeting is scheduled for the same location on April 27.

“While the family is hopeful that the recently created public commission will result in meaningful changes,” Lieberman said, “it remains important that the residents of Fairfax County continue to demand actual change from county officials as to the police department’s use of force, its lack of transparency and accountability, as well as many other issues that have come to light through this tragedy.”

Jeff Stewart, a close friend of John and Don Geer, who witnessed Geer being shot and now sits on the ad hoc commission, believes the case “is half over” with the settlement.

“We still have an officer that hasn’t been held accountable for his actions,” Stewart said. “I hope that people don’t forget about it.

“Money doesn’t solve the problem,” he continued. “It helps the girls out long term, but money doesn’t hold anyone accountable.

For me it doesn’t bring a lot of closure. John would still be dead, no officer would still be accountable, we’re right back where we were when Culosi was shot and [David] Masters was shot.” Both died in Fairfax County police-related shootings.

THE COMMISSION is scheduled to make recommendations for Fairfax County Police policy changes to the Board of Supervisors in October.

For more information on the commission and its schedule, visit www.fairfaxcounty.gov/policecommission.

PHOTOS BY TIM PETERSON
THE CONNECTION

Our Daily Bread to Host 'Artful Living' Event

Fairfax-based non-profit Our Daily Bread (ODB) invites the public to attend a special evening of art, wine and strengthening community in association with the 30th Annual Fairfax Spotlight on the Arts Festival to benefit the families it serves in the Fairfax County area who are working toward financial self-sufficiency. "Artful Living" will be held on Friday, May 1 from 7 to 10 p.m. at the Stacy C. Sherwood Community Center in Fairfax City (3740 Old Lee Highway).

Attendees will enjoy a juried art show and participate in a popular art contest, enjoy live music by local Latin-jazz band Batida Diferente, wine and appetizers from Dolce Vita Restaurant, and a craft beer tasting featuring the "Final Four" from the Washington Post Food Section's "Beer Madness 2015." Artwork will be offered for sale. Delegate Ken Plum will serve as a celebrity auctioneer, offering up items that include a game-day experience with Jayson Werth and the Washington Nationals, a wine basket featuring six excellent vintages from the West Coast, a luxurious Wintergreen vacation home rental, and a performance and dinner package for the Wolf Trap Opera and National Symphony Orchestra's



PHOTO CONTRIBUTED

Artist David Amoroso of Arlington won Best of Show with his work "Dina" at Our Daily Bread's inaugural event with Fairfax Spotlight on the Arts, "Do You See What I See" on May 1, 2014. Preparations are underway for Artful Living, which will include a juried art show with local artists serving as judges.

Madama Butterfly. During the evening, Our Daily Bread client and volunteer mentor will speak about their experiences.

Admission is \$40 per person in advance and \$50 at the door. Tickets may be purchased at www.ODBFairfax.org or at the event. Proceeds will benefit Our Daily Bread's programs to provide financial education and mentoring, as well as emergency food, financial aid and seasonal assistance to working families throughout the Fairfax County area who are struggling to make ends meet.

ODB Executive Director Lisa Whetzel said, "We are so excited to partner with Fairfax Spotlight on the Arts for a second year to celebrate art and the community that supports our work. ... We hope everyone will join us for this unique evening of art, wine and strengthening our community that offers us an opportunity to look at the world around us through a different lens."

Our Daily Bread is in its 31st year of providing assistance and a way forward for struggling individuals and families throughout the Fairfax County area. More information is available at www.ODBFairfax.org.

Budget Gets Marked Up

Supervisors scheduled to adopt budget next Tuesday, April 28.

BY KEN MOORE
THE CONNECTION

The Board of Supervisors marked up the proposed budget Tuesday, April 21, by increasing school funding, adding key economic growth positions and restoring money to suggested cuts to "critical" human service programs Tuesday morning, April 21, according to its Chairman Sharon Bulova.

The board is scheduled to formally adopt the FY 2016 Budget next Tuesday, April 28.

See the Mark-up Package at <http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/dmb/>

"This is a responsible budget that responds to the needs of our community and takes into account the feedback we received during public hearings, town hall meetings, letters, emails and phone calls from our constituents," Bulova said. More than 200 people testified and the board listened to more than 14 hours of testimony from the public between April 7-9.

"Speakers during our three days of public hearings adopted as their theme a call to invest in Fairfax and that is what this mark-up package seeks to do," said Bulova. The marked-up budget maintains the current tax rate at \$1.09, implements a new compensation plan for county employees with an average increase of approximately 3.6 percent (including a "market rate adjustment of 1.1 percent), comes close to fully funding the School Board's transfer request, and restores a number of Human Services reductions proposed in the original advertised budget, Bulova said.

Because of an increase in property assessments, the average homeowner will pay \$185 more in property taxes, even though the tax rate will not increase.

Kimberly Adams, president of the Fairfax Education Association, responded immediately.

"FEA has rallied both in Fairfax and in Richmond to tell elected officials that the community wants greater investment in our community and our schools," said Adams. "Here in Fairfax, the Board of Supervi-

sors has tied their own hands, apologized for this being an election year, and then said they 'wish they could do more.' Our schools are not funded by wishes; they are funded by a dedication to actually invest in Fairfax before more damage is done to our community."

Three supervisors voted against the marked-up package, including Pat Herrity (R), Michael Frey (R), and Linda Smyth (D).

"I am disappointed that not only did the board raise our citizens' taxes yet again, but the board majority failed to even make the easy decisions to even discuss reducing spending to address the \$100 million shortfall we are facing in FY 2017," said Herrity. "Under this board's watch our homeowners have seen their tax bills go up by 16 percent in three years, our commercial vacancy rate has spiked to over 16 percent, ... but the board thought they deserved a pay raise for themselves," said Herrity.

"This is a responsible budget that responds to the needs of our community."

— Sharon Bulova, Chairman, Board of Supervisors

The revised budget restores the most critical Human Services reductions in the Advertised Budget, including Healthy Families, Parenting Education "Good Touch, Bad Touch" programs, mental health services in jail, and detox diversion positions. It also restores the Enforcement of the Grass Ordinance, Bulova said.

"The Advertised Budget as amended by these actions results in some changes that will make some folks happy, some relieved, and some disappointed," said Bulova.

"It is, however, a responsible package that: maintains our current tax rate at \$1.09." The marked up budget comes close to fully funding the School Board's request with an increase of over \$66 million (including funding for School Debt Service) over last year, Bulova said.

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News

Transurban Begins Grant Program

Transurban, the company that operates the 95 and 495 Express lanes, announced earlier this month the launch of a community grant program for nonprofit organizations working in or benefiting the Express Lanes corridor.

Every quarter, the grant program will provide \$1,500 each to three organizations from the fields of environment, community and safety — totaling 12 grants per year.

The first application deadline already passed on March 31, but the remaining deadlines for organizations to apply for the grants are June 30, September 30 and December 31.

For more information visit www.expresslanes.com/grant-program.

— TIM PETERSON

Robinson Recognized

Fairfax County Public Schools (FCPS) students placed in 45 events at the 2015 Future Business Leaders of America (FBLA) State Conference held recently in Reston. Those students who finished first, second, or third qualify for national competition and will travel to Chicago at the end of June for the FBLA National Leadership Conference. The chapter from Robinson Secondary School was named Virginia's Most Outstanding Chapter.

Four FCPS students were elected or appointed to state office for the 2015-16 school year. They are Ryan Apigian of Robinson Secondary School, Virginia FBLA president; Monica Wuhler of Robinson Secondary School, corresponding secretary; Isaias Noda of Robinson Secondary School, state parliamentarian; and Karenna Oner of Robinson Secondary School, vice president representing the Northern Virginia region.

Two FCPS students were named winners of Virginia FBLA scholarships: Robinson Secondary students Ryan Apigian and Nicholas Phan.

The Robinson Secondary FBLA chapter was recognized for having the largest membership in Virginia.

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NEWS

'Be a Kid Again and Have Fun'

Fairfax High presents "Big: The Musical."

BY BONNIE HOBBS
THE CONNECTION

In today's world, many young people spend so much time on their smartphones that they miss chances to just go out and play. But Fairfax High's production of "Big: The Musical" reminds them and others to sometimes be kids again and have fun doing so.

Featuring a cast and crew of 75, plus a 20-piece pit orchestra, it's the school's Cappies show. They've rehearsed since February, and Director Erich DiCenzo says things are going great.

"We've invited eight, elementary-school kids from five Fairfax schools to participate in the production," he said. "And they've quickly become a working family with everyone else."

It's a musical adaptation of the popular, Tom Hanks film. On the carnival machine Zoltar, Josh Baskin, 13, makes a wish to be big – and, overnight, he becomes adult-sized and his whole world changes. "Choral, band and theater students, and even athletes, are in this show," said DiCenzo. "And we're retaining all the favorite moments from the film – from the baby corn to the big piano."

Scenes take place in Josh's New Jersey neighborhood, the carnival, a toy store, Josh's New York apartment and the offices where he works. The set boasts two, two-story houses, a turntable clock tower, two trampolines, a tire swing and the movie's iconic 17.5-foot-long, fully functional, floor piano.

"The costumes are also exciting because every actor represents a famous toy of the late '80s," said DiCenzo. "So the audience will be able to see their own, favorite, childhood toys come to life. And we've launched a huge campaign to get Tom Hanks to come to the play; we encourage everyone reading this story to re-tweet our message, 'Come see #FHSBIG.'"

He said the best thing about the show is that "it reminds people to be a kid again, don't take life so seriously and get swept away by magic. I'm proud of the students because they're challenging themselves with more difficult choreography and tech projects, and they're striving to make every production better than the last. People can know that, no matter what we're performing, it'll be well-worth seeing."

FRESHMAN Thomas Iodice plays Josh as a child and senior Doug Klain portrays him as a grownup. "Josh is 33 with a 13-year-old's mind," said Klain. "He changes over



PHOTO COURTESY OF DARBY BINFORD

(From left) are Doug Klain, Zion Jang and Thomas Iodice in the carnival scene from "Big: The Musical."

the course of the show but, at his core, he's an alive spirit with a fire inside. Adults tend to lose that as they grow up, so the contrast between Josh and other adults is really obvious."

It's a difficult role for him, explained Klain, because "I've always played the old, angry man and the boss. And I have a deep voice but, to play Josh, I have to talk with a childlike voice with different inflections. I also had to lose my inhibitions to move and act like a child playing with toys."

But, he added, "I like how much fun Josh has in every moment. No matter what he's doing, he always enjoys himself; and even when he's sad, he's hopeful and optimistic. My favorite number is 'Fun,' the F.A.O. Schwartz toy-store scene where Josh and his boss, MacMillan [played by Zion Jang], dance on the piano. It's 'Big's' most iconic scene and it's so enjoyable getting to re-create it."

Klain said audience members won't be able to leave without smiles on their faces. "This show will make people feel good and be happy," he said. "It's nice to see a play and just have a good time."

Junior Molly Berry plays toy-store executive Susan Lawrence. "She's hardworking and not very fun-loving," said Berry. "She's powerful and intelligent and in an unhappy relationship. But Josh teaches her how to laugh, dance and have fun again. I like playing her because she also has a vulnerable side and I get to show those two sides of her personality."

SEE FEEL-GOOD, PAGE 7

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NEWS

'Feel-good Musical' for All to Enjoy

FROM PAGE 6

Berry's favorite song is "My Secretary's in Love." In it, she said, "Susan's talking about how angry she is because her secretary's busy planning her wedding, instead of working. I get to scream and act crazy while singing it." She said people will really like the set because "it's amazing; our tech team is working incredibly hard. And the show's energy and youthfulness will make it entertaining for the audience."

Josh's best friend, Billy, is played by junior Matthew Velasco. "Josh has been sheltered, but Billy's a spastic rule-breaker and almost Josh's exact opposite," said Velasco. "Billy's more streetwise and brings Josh out of his shell, while Josh keeps Billy from going over the edge."

Loving his role, Velasco said, "I'm like a kid in real life, so I feel like I'm playing myself. A lot of the jokes involve Billy doing something silly, and I think, 'That's something I'd do.'" Velasco especially likes the song, "Coffee, Black," because "it's energetic and I like its melodies and harmonies. And Doug and Molly really mesh together in that scene."

All in all, he said, "It's a fun show and will take the audience through so many emotions. They'll be sobbing, one minute, and laughing, the next; even the cast members' smallest gestures are powerful. It's a feel-good musical that people

will really connect with."

SENIOR Caroline Silas portrays Josh's mom. "She's an over-the-top character," said Silas. "Around the neighborhood, she's a 'Stepford' housewife; but she goes into crazy-mom mode through the story. She's emotional and undergoes a complete change after her child leaves, so she's a dynamic character."

Silas enjoys her part because "I've had the most acting freedom with this character to take her on as my own. She's an empathetic and caring mom, and it's eye-opening to explore a situation where you lose your child and make it as realistic as possible."

Silas likes the number, "It's Time," because it's when "the big kids finally stand up for themselves. It's an upbeat, hip-hop routine that looks really polished." As for the audience, she said, "They'll like getting to experience childhood again. This show will take them back in time and will be fun for both adults and children."

THE CURTAIN RISES Friday-Saturday, May 1-2, and Thursday-Saturday, May 7, 8 and 9, at 7:30 p.m.; and Sunday, May 3, at 2:30 p.m. Tickets are \$10 via www.fxplayers.org or \$15 at the door. For the Sunday matinee, tickets are \$5 for children 12 and under. And after the show, they can dance on the big piano, take a photo with the cast and make a wish with Zoltar.

(From left)
Doug Klain and
Zion Jang play
with light
sabers during
Fairfax High's
"Big: The
Musical."



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Thursday, May 28, 2015
Oakton High School Cafeteria (Entrance #1 or #14)
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Tuesday, June 2, 2015
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15000 Graduation Drive, Haymarket, VA 20169

Wednesday, June 3, 2015
Bull Run Elementary School Cafeteria (Entrance #1)
15301 Lee Highway, Centreville, VA 20121

The Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT), in partnership with the Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation (DRPT), will host hearings for the public to review and provide comments on the Tier 2 Environmental Assessment (EA)/Draft Section 4(f) Evaluation for the Transform 66 Outside the Beltway Project. In compliance with the National Historic Preservation Act, Section 106 and 36 CFR Part 800, information on potential effects of the proposed improvements on properties listed in or eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places is included in the environmental document. The EA is being prepared in compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969, as amended, and 23 CFR 771. The project involves the transformation of 25 miles of I-66 between U.S. Route 15 in Haymarket and I-495/the Capital Beltway, and will provide congestion relief and enhanced safety, as well as new travel choices and reliability.

Stop by between 5:30 and 9 p.m. to view displays, learn more about the project, discuss your questions with VDOT staff and provide written or oral comments. The formal presentation will begin at 7 p.m.

Review project information, including preliminary plans, project schedule, and right-of-way, environmental and civil rights information at www.transform66.org, at the public hearings, or at VDOT's Northern Virginia District Office at 4975 Alliance Drive in Fairfax beginning May 12, 2015. Please call 800-367-7623 or TTY/TDD 711 to ensure appropriate personnel are available to answer your questions.

Written comments may be mailed to Ms. Susan Shaw, Megaprojects Director, at the VDOT Office address above, or emailed to Transform66@VDOT.Virginia.gov. Please reference "Transform 66 Outside the Beltway" in the subject line. Comments must be postmarked, emailed or delivered to VDOT by **June 18, 2015** to be included in the public hearing record.

VDOT ensures nondiscrimination and equal employment in all programs and activities in accordance with Title VI and Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. If you need more information or special assistance for persons with disabilities or limited English proficiency, contact VDOT's Civil Rights Division at 800-367-7623 or TTY/TDD 711.

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Connection Papers Win Awards

Variety of coverage honored at annual Virginia Press Association conference.

On Saturday, April 18, a group of journalists from the Connection Newspapers traveled to Roanoke for the annual Virginia Press Association event to collect awards

for business reporting, government writing, writing about health, science and the environment, feature writing, sports writing, column writing, obituaries, cartoons, entertainment pages and writing, public safety writing, editorial pages and writing, page design, informational graphics and more.

A look at the themes of some winning entries gives some insight into the mission at the Connection: to tell stories of significance, using reporting, data and analysis while getting to the heart of why the issues matter in local lives. In a time that we, like all newspapers, are functioning with reduced resources, it helps affirm that the effort can make a difference.

Bonnie Hobbs won for ongoing coverage of

EDITORIAL

a family's efforts to provide the best life for a son they call "not special needs, but a special person," and a second award for coverage of issues related to affordable housing and homelessness.

Judges call Michael Pope's business reporting "first-rate, data-driven reporting and analysis on important issues." Stories on driving habits, cesarean deliveries and the Affordable Care Act are called "well-researched, clearly written and engaging. The use of real-live people high up in stories to illustrate makes for very compelling material."

Vernon Miles won for breaking news coverage of Arlington's first same sex marriage, being "on the scene of a local event that has local, statewide and national significance. ... The story is multi-sourced; has a strong lead that gives readers a sense of the scene; places the

event in historic context; and captures the celebratory feel of the event."

On Pope government reporting: "Rather than regurgitating official statements, the reporter tells people's stories to illuminate the consequences of government decisions. This represents a model for all government reporting."

On Marilyn Campbell's reporting for Wellbeing: "These articles amount to personal guidance in the best sense of the term."

Even in recreation and entertainment, our mission is to provide our readers with the information they need to have fun, and our annual update to the "Insiders Guide to the Parks," brainchild of Jean Card, is designed to do that.

What are we missing? We rely on our readers to let us know. We invite your story ideas, your tips, your letters to the editor, calendar listings, photos of mothers for Mother's Day and fathers for Fathers Day, and more. Visit www.connectionnewspapers.com and click on "contact us," or email editors@connectionnewspapers.com

— MARY KIMM

MKIMM@CONNECTIONNEWSPAPERS.COM

Winners

Truncated list, for a complete list, see www.connectionnewspapers.com

Jon Roetman, The Vienna/Oakton Connection — Sports Writing Portfolio, First Place. *Madison's Koshuta Scores 39 Against 'Idol' Floyd; Oakton Girls' XC Repeats as State Champs; Madison Volleyball Drops Heartbreaker in State Final.* Judge's comments: Strong and clear writing and excellent storytelling helps game stories feel more like features. Excellent work.



Jon Roetman



Victoria Ross



Joan Brady

Victoria Ross, Oak Hill/Herndon Connection — Government Writing, First Place. *Let Sun Shine on Virginia's Financial Disclosure Laws, Mr. Horejsi Goes to Richmond; Bulova: 'This Will Be a Challenging Budget.'* Judge's comments: An engaging look at a lobbyist who fights for the little guy; an entertaining story on a political candidate, helping readers put the upcoming election into context; one of the better budgeting stories I've seen lately that helps readers understand how the county's budgeting process is going to cost them more money. The supporting sidebars help bring the message home.



Mary Kimm



Marilyn Campbell



Bonnie Hobbs

sight. Her writing combines depth and subtlety with eloquence of expression. In some senses, her subject matter is narrow. But viewed through a different filter, it is universal. She writes engagingly on a consistent basis.

Marilyn Campbell, Chantilly Connection — Health, Science and Environmental Writing, Third Place. *Spiritual Wellness in the New Year; Consistent Bedtimes Aid Children; How To Age in Place Safely;* Judge's comments: These articles amount to personal guidance in the best sense of the term. They should serve as very helpful resources for readers of a variety of ages. In concise manner, they effectively made the

concepts clear and applicable to the reader. The aging in place article was particularly relevant and insightful, the childhood sleep story was unlike anything I'd ever read (and I have two kids) and really summed up how a specific approach to children's health makes sense. The spiritual health article was unusual, refreshing to see, and I love the variety of sources and comments.

Bonnie Hobbs, The Fairfax Connection — Personal Service Writing, Third Place. *Affordable Housing Lack Can Lead to Hunger; 'Help Us, Will You Please?' City of Fairfax to Tackle Affordable Housing; Council 'Honored to Support this Project;' 'Dream Come True' for Lamb Center.* Judge's comments: Solid writing and good follow-through on the housing issues. The writer did a good job of including income and free lunch data without breaking the flow of the story.

Mary Kimm, The McLean Connection — Editorial Writing, Third Place. *Trending in the Right Direction; Virginia Proves Elections Matter; More Affordable Housing Needed; Tragic Consequences; Deadly Medicaid Debacle.* Judge's comments: This submission consists of five well-articulated and well-grounded pieces tackling access to affordable housing and health care, a pair of closely related state and national issues with important local ramifications. The work combines passion with a persuasive factual underpinning.

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NEWS

Woodson High Premieres an Original Musical Play

In "Waiting," the entire stage becomes a restaurant.

BY BONNIE HOBBS
THE CONNECTION

Seated right onstage, the audience becomes part of the action when Woodson High presents an original musical, "Waiting." It presents a slice of teenage life, as seen through the eyes of servers at a diner.

The cast and crew of nearly 70 have been rehearsing since February, and the show is the world premiere of a play by Sarah Motes Ashley. She and Woodson Director Terri Hobson attended Woodson together as teens.

Motes is now a successful songwriter and playwright based in East Tennessee. And she wrote this play in college about a restaurant and the people who work there.

"It was fun to think that waiting on tables is a kind of being onstage, and the kitchen is the backstage," she explained. "Terri was in the original production at JMU and she asked if she could produce the show at Woodson. So I rewrote it, and now I get to go back to the auditorium where I first discovered musical theater to see it performed."

"The script was written in the 1980s, so she's now made it modern-day," said senior Isabel Jabaley, the stage manager. "I helped her with the language – things high-school students would say. We did it in our Tech Theater class and it gave the script fresh, new perspectives."

The story's about waiters and waitresses in a Virginia diner called The Red Kettle. It focuses on the three, main servers who are 17. "Megan is in foster care and has had a difficult past," said Jabaley. "But she can relate to her co-workers, makes friends with them and can talk with them about their [mutual] concerns about the future and their families."

Kayla's story comprises the main conflict; she's bullied because of a photo taken of her, and the other servers support her. Brandon, gay and in the closet, is also bullied. But together, the three servers bond and sympathize with each other. And despite the serious subjects, it's a positive and happy show.

"It's an upbeat musical – a mix of pop music with some hip-hop,



BONNIE HOBBS/THE CONNECTION
Portraying servers are (from left) Lexie McEntire, Jacob Lamb and Hannah Thomas.

jazz and Broadway influences," said Jabaley. "I love being a stage manager, working with the cast and seeing their progress. And the music, choreography and script are all really fun."

Portraying Megan is senior Lexie McEntire. "She's a foster kid who was taken away from her alcoholic mother, so she has lots of emotional problems," said McEntire. "She just started working at the diner and isn't very trusting. She's kind of sarcastic and sometimes short-tempered, but also likeable and a loyal friend. I usually play the friendly, clean-cut girl, so I'm having fun being gritty, which is more challenging."

McEntire also choreographed most of the numbers. "I started out as a dancer and I teach at a studio, so it's a big part of my identity as a performer," she said. "My favorite number is 'Famous,' a dream sequence of cheerleaders making fun of Kayla [Hannah Thomas]. It was exciting putting cheerleaders moves and stunts into the routine."

She said many high-schoolers will relate to the characters' struggles. "And this show's really new and innovative because the audience will be seated at tables onstage for an up-close experience," said McEntire. "They'll be in the diner with the customers; and, since the actors will perform all around them, their characters will seem like real people. Four walls will create the diner and, through a window, the audience will be able to see a live, four-

SEE WOODSON, PAGE 10



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Artist's rendition of the completed Old Town Square in Fairfax.



PHOTO COURTESY OF SCOTT SILVERTHORNE

Workmen are busy preparing Fairfax's Old Town Square for its debut.

Old Town Square Debuting in Style

Ribbon-cutting and Derby-Q event set for May 2.

BY BONNIE HOBBS
THE CONNECTION

The City of Fairfax's brand-new Old Town Square will make its debut Saturday, May 2, with two special events. First, at 9 a.m., will be the official ribbon-cutting on the City's new gathering place that features decorative fountains.

Then, from 2-7 p.m., the Derby-Q barbecue, bourbon and brews festival will be held there in celebration of the annual Kentucky Derby. This community event will feature food, music and fun in the City's downtown.

Designed to bring more people to that area, Fairfax's \$4 million Old Town Square project includes an interactive water feature as well as a cascade water feature; two parking lots with permeable, brick-paver parking; and a two-tiered plaza.

It also boasts a memorial garden area; ADA-compliant, brick, pedestrian walkways; storage sheds with a connecting pergola; preservation and enhancement of the

existing Kitty Pozer Garden; plus landscaping and lighting. And City Mayor Scott Silverthorne has high hopes for it.

"You can feel the positive momentum we are experiencing in our historic downtown," he said. "New and cool niche business are locating here, our restaurants are crowded and our community's long history and love of the arts will help with local tourism." "Our new park, Old Town Square, will be the crown jewel in our downtown," continued Silverthorne. "It has been over a decade in the making and completes the City's open-space initiative goals that were voter approved in November 2000 by a 2-1 margin. It will quickly become a destination for weddings, concerts, special events and for children of all ages to enjoy the outdoors."

At its inaugural event, Derby-Q, there'll be a variety of barbecued-food vendors on hand,

as well as a Beer Garden and tastings of bourbon and Scotch whiskey for people age 21 and over. The running of the Kentucky Derby will be shown on a big screen at 6 p.m.

Providing the music will be live blues bands. Kicking things off from 2-4:30 p.m. will be Moonshine Society. Noted saxophonist Ron Holloway helps give the group its signature sound of modern blues with hints of rock and Southern soul. For the last three years in a row, it was voted one of "D.C.'s Top Four Favorite Bands" by the Washington Area Music Assn. (WAMA).

Then, playing onstage from 4:30-7 p.m. will be Clarence "Bluesman" Turner. A genuine blues performer from Washington, D.C., he has a "down-home," guitar-driven blues style. He, too, is an award-winner, having captured the D.C. Blues Challenge and the Blue Ridge Blues Challenge.

Derby-Q Ticket Information

- ❖ General Admission is \$10 – Enjoy live entertainment and barbeque food vendors. Children 3 and under are free. Anyone under 18 must be accompanied by an adult who's 21 or older.
- ❖ Beer Tasting Package is \$25 – Includes free general admission, souvenir tasting-glass, eight craft beer-tasting tickets and one free Famous Kentucky Derby Mint Julep. Re-buy beer-tasting options will be available after entry.
- ❖ Beer- and Whiskey-Tasting Package is \$65 – Includes everything in the Beer-Tasting Package, as well as admission to The Scotch Man Whiskey Tasting with Dougie Wylie at 2:30 or 5 p.m. (choose one session; seating is limited).
- ❖ Tickets are available now at www.derby-q.com or via <http://www.fairfaxva.gov/government/parks-recreation/special-events/derby-q/tickets> or may be purchased at the gate. For more information, call 703-385-1710 or email parksrec@fairfaxva.gov.

Woodson Presents 'Waiting'

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piece, street band performing."

Sophomore Jacob Lamb plays Brandon, who hopes to go to New York and become a dancer on Broadway. "He's gay, but hasn't told his parents; only his close friends at the diner know," said Lamb. "He's very welcoming and is Megan's first friend at the diner. He's open and a good listener, but can also be showy with a big personality. And he's not afraid to stand up for what he believes in."

Lamb loves his role because he, too, wants to act on Broadway and his personality is similar to Brandon's. "It makes the character more real to me," he said. Lamb especially likes the number, "That's Not a Tip,"

because this show's a realistic portrait of waiters' lives – "working really hard and not receiving as much money as they should. There's no singing; it's a rapping step routine."

He said the audience will like the show's scene structure with "multiple, interweaving storylines. Lots of different things are going on at the same time, which makes it even more realistic."

Portraying Brody, one of the high-school jocks eating at the diner, is sophomore Justin Carter. "He's a jerk, a little childish, and looks up to his brother," said Carter. "He's lazy and laid back and is a former football player. He's an interesting character to play and a new type of role for me. I usually play the sympathetic one, but Brody's

the opposite."

Director Hobson said it's all been a great experience for her students because they've had input into the script, songs and scenes and the play's been personalized to showcase their talents. "The challenge was converting the stage into a restaurant; the audience will enter right into it and sit down," she said. "And because the actors will be so close, we have to use different makeup techniques."

SHOW TIMES are Friday-Saturday, May 1-2 and May 8-9, at 7:30 p.m.; plus Saturday-Sunday, May 2-3, at 2 p.m. Tickets are \$10, adults; \$5, senior citizens, at the door or via www.wtdrama.org. Online sales are encouraged due to limited seating. Not appropriate for children under 14.

Calendar

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

FRIDAY-SATURDAY/APRIL 24-25

Seussical, the Musical Jr. 7:30 p.m. on April 24. 1:30 & 7:30 p.m. on April 25. Family Worship Center, 7719 Fullerton Road, Springfield. Northern Virginia Players is thrilled to present Seussical, the Musical Jr. All of your favorite Dr. Seuss characters spring to life onstage in a fantastic musical extravaganza from TONY winners Lynn Ahrens and Stephen Flaherty. For more information and ticket purchase, please visit our website at: NVPlayers.com. For Group Information or further assistance, please call 703-866-3546.

SATURDAY-SUNDAY/APRIL 25-26

The Emperor's New Clothes. 1 p.m. Workhouse Arts Center, 9518 Workhouse Way, Lorton. Presented by Pandemonium Theatrical Productions. Guess who's got a passion for fashion? In this musical adaptation of the classic tale, Emperor Augustus has been led astray of his once kind-hearted nature by a villainous duo who are eager to take over the throne. In his newest quest to be the best-dressed man in town, Augustus seeks the help of two mysterious tailors who promise a magical Suit of Honor that is sure to amaze! His very wise daughter, Emma, has become suspicious of everyone but will she be able to unravel the puzzling plot before it is too late? Join the adventure in an afternoon of mystery, music and lots of laughter. Running time approximately 75 minutes, with one intermission. Appropriate for all ages.

SATURDAY/APRIL 25

Model Classic 2015. 9 a.m. - 4 p.m. Fairfax High School, 3501 Rebel Run, Fairfax. Annual exhibit of scale models. Event will feature: A display of hundreds of museum quality scale models. A modeling contest consisting of over 80 categories. 1st, 2nd, & 3rd place awards in each category. Admission Fees: Adults \$8 (\$10 entire family). Junior (Under 18) free. Adult Contestant \$10 (includes admission). www.novaipms.org

Mothers, Daughters and Special Friends Tea. 2-4 p.m. Historic Pohick Church, 9301 Richmond Highway, Lorton. Join the Historic Pohick Church Docent Guild for their annual Signature Tea. The theme this year will be "Mothers, Daughters, and Special Friends." New children's tours of the historic church for our young guests will be held before the tea beginning at 1 pm. The special afternoon tea with a Colonial Living History program follows the tours at 2 p.m. Tickets are \$25 for adults and \$15 for children under 12. Seating is limited. For reservations and more information please contact Helen Parker at 703-497-5927 or email at helenandjeff@verizon.net.

Spring Fest Fairfax 2015. 10 a.m. - 4 p.m. Workhouse Arts Center, 9518 Workhouse Way, Lorton. Spend the day at the historic Workhouse Arts Center learning about environmental projects and programs, tasting food from around the world, playing games, and riding ponies! Don't miss Billy B! on the main stage. Other activities include a petting zoo, rock climbing walls, bounce houses, face-painting, plant sales, wagon rides, and dozens of exhibits and vendors. Admission is free; some activities require a \$5 wristband. For more information, please visit: <http://www.springfestfairfax.org/>.

Bill Gaither & Gaither Vocal Band. 6 p.m. Patriot Center, 4400 University Drive, Fairfax. Multi-Grammy Award-winner Bill Gaither will host a spectacular

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CALENDAR

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evening of music, laughter and encouragement featuring the talent of the prestigious Gaither Vocal Band and several talented musical guests. Tickets are also available in person at the Patriot Center Box Office, as well as all Ticketmaster outlets. Group rates are also available by calling 703-993-3000.

Community Wellness Fair. 10 a.m. - 3 p.m. 9316 Old Keene Mill Road, Burke. Body composition measurements - find out how old your body really is. Nutritional consultations; exercise demonstrations.

WEDNESDAY/APRIL 29

Prison Lecture Series: Life After Prison. 7:30 p.m. Workhouse Arts Center, 9518 Workhouse Way, Lorton. Many prisoners gained new vocational and academic skills while incarcerated. The first panel consists of former officials who share their experiences with prison industries. The second panel will include parole officers who describe the reintegration of inmates into the real world community.

SUNDAY/APRIL 26

The Auld Shebeen 10 Year Anniversary. 3-8 p.m. 3971 Chain Bridge Road, Fairfax. Performances by local Irish dance schools and local Irish musicians, complimentary appetizers and bar specials!

FRIDAY-SATURDAY/MAY 1,2,8,9

"Les Miserables." 7 p.m. South County High School, 8501 Silverbrook Road, Lorton. Tickets will cost \$12 for general admission or \$10 for students and seniors.citizens.

You can order tickets online at southcountytheatre.org. "Les Miserables" is famous musical adapted from the novel by Victor Hugo in 1862. The story revolves around former convict Jean Valjean and his pursuit of self-redemption by breaking his parole, thus having to escape the fleet of Inspector Javert. Intertwined are the students' revolution to combat the monarchy and a love triangle between schoolboy Marius, Valjean's daughter Cosette, and the poor Eponine. Taking place in France in the early 19th century, the central themes are compassion and social injustice.

SATURDAY/MAY 2

Derby-Q Festival. 2-7 p.m. City of Fairfax. This outdoor community festival will showcase the area's premier brew master and BBQ vendors. The festival will feature bourbon and scotch whiskey tastings. Live blues bands will perform on stage while the crowds anxiously await the Greatest Two Minutes in Sports - the Kentucky Derby, shown on the big screen. To purchase a ticket for this event please visit www.derby-q.com.

Art of Wellness Fair. 1-5 p.m. Unity of Fairfax Church, 2854 Hunter Mill Road, Oakton. Learn how to maintain and enhance your health by attending demonstrations and presentations and talking with the vendors. Enjoy this day of healing for body, mind, and spirit.

Historic Pohick Church Saturday Tour. 1-3 p.m. Pohick Church, 9301Richmond Highway, Lorton. The Historic Pohick Church Docent Guild willgive free guided tours of the historic colonial church. http://www.pohick.org.



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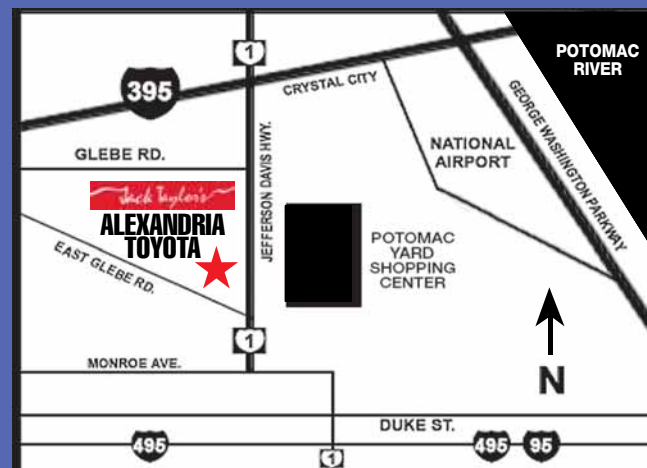
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<p>TOYOTA GENUINE SERVICE 5K, 10K, 20K, 25K, 35K MILE MINOR FACTORY RECOMMENDED MAINTENANCE SERVICE \$59⁹⁵</p> <p><small>SYNTHETIC OIL, ADDITIONAL \$10. NOT VALID WITH ANY OTHER OFFER OR COUPON. TOYOTA VEHICLES ONLY. OFFER EXPIRES 4/30/15. COUPON MUST BE PRESENTED AT TIME OF SERVICE. VALID ONLY AT ALEXANDRIA TOYOTA. TAX AND SHOP SUPPLIES ADDITIONAL.</small></p>	<p>TOYOTA GENUINE SERVICE DETAIL SPECIALS \$39⁹⁵ Wash & Vacuum \$139⁹⁵ Hand wash, wax & interior cleaning \$295⁹⁵ Full premium detail</p> <p><small>NOT VALID WITH ANY OTHER OFFER OR COUPON. TOYOTA VEHICLES ONLY. OFFER EXPIRES 4/30/15. COUPON MUST BE PRESENTED AT TIME OF SERVICE. VALID ONLY AT ALEXANDRIA TOYOTA.</small></p>	



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3. \$1,250 Cash Back from Toyota Motor Sales USA, Inc. available on new 2015 Prius. Customers can receive cash back from Toyota or can apply to down payment. Excludes plug-in models. See dealer for details. ToyotaCare covers normal factory scheduled service. Plan is 2 years or 25K miles, whichever comes first. The new vehicle cannot be part of a rental or commercial fleet, or a livery/taxi vehicle. See participating Toyota dealer for plan details. Valid only in the continental U.S. and Alaska. Roadside assistance does not include parts and fluids. Plus plug-in hybrid comes with an extra year of roadside assistance, for a total of three (3) years from date of purchase. Lease, APR and Cash Back offers may not be combined. See dealer for details. Offers expire 4/30/2015.

4. 0.9% APR financing up to 60 months available to qualified buyers thru Toyota Financial Services. Total financed cannot exceed MSRP plus options, tax and license fees. 60 monthly payments of \$17.05 for each \$1,000 borrowed. Not all buyers will qualify. ToyotaCare covers normal factory scheduled service. Plan is 2 years or 25K miles, whichever comes first. The new vehicle cannot be part of a rental or commercial fleet, or a livery/taxi vehicle. See participating Toyota dealer for plan details. Valid only in the continental U.S. and Alaska. Roadside assistance does not include parts and fluids. Plus plug-in hybrid comes with an extra year of roadside assistance, for a total of three (3) years from date of purchase. Lease, APR and Cash Back offers may not be combined. See dealer for details. Offers expire 4/30/2015.



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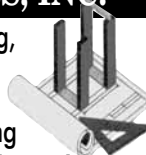
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Notice is hereby given that the following watercraft has been abandoned for more than 60 Days on the property of: Hillcrest Marine Inc. 10117 Richmond Hwy, Lorton VA 22079 703-339-6200. Description of watercraft: 1972 Glastron 16' Yellow #1422045. Application for Watercraft Registration/Title will be made in accordance with Section 29.1-733.25 of the Code of Virginia if this watercraft is not claimed and removed within 30 days of first publication of this notice. Please contact the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries with questions.

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21 Announcements

**PUBLIC HEARING FOR TOWN OF CLIFTON, VIRGINIA
PROPOSED AMENDMENT TO SPECIAL USE PERMIT
PUBLIC HEARING OF TOWN COUNCIL
May 5, 2015**
Notice is hereby given that the Town Council of the Town of Clifton, Virginia will hold a Public Hearing on Tuesday, May 5, 2015 at 7:30 p.m. at the Clifton Town Meeting Hall, 12641 Chapel Road, Clifton, VA 20124 to consider the amendment of the special use permit of Clifton General Store / Main Street Pub, located at 7140 Main Street, to include and authorize an increase in number of seats and increase in parking onsite and off-site for the public and employees. The application for the proposed amendment to Clifton General Store / Main Street Pub special use permit is available for review and downloading on the Town's website at www.clifton-va.com and a hard copy may be examined at the Clifton Post Office, 12644 Chapel Road, Clifton VA, 20124. All interested parties are invited to attend and express their views with respect to the requested amendment to the Clifton General Store / Main Street Pub special use permit.

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-Archimedes

21 Announcements

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**Fairfax
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against
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April 17.**

PHOTO
BY CRAIG
STERBUTZEL/
THE CONNECTION

Fairfax Pitcher Leckert Throws 3-Hit Shutout Against McLean

Rebels improve to 8-4 with 1-0 win over Highlanders.

BY JON ROETMAN
THE CONNECTION

Fairfax pitcher Christian Leckert stepped off the mound, took a deep breath and regrouped.

The senior right-hander had a 1-0 lead against McLean in the bottom of the fourth inning, but outfielder Matt Collins had nearly put the Highlanders in front with a two-run homer. Collins' blast down the left-field line landed in the parking lot at McLean High School, but had curved foul. "... [I] thought about location [and] how I can get him out," Leckert said. "So I just kept pitching [with a] short memory."

Leckert responded by striking out Collins and getting Billy Gerhardt to fly out, ending the threat.

As it turned out, Collins' long foul ball was the closest McLean would get to scoring against the Fairfax hurler.

Leckert, who will play for James Madison University, tossed a three-hit shutout and led the Fairfax baseball team to a 1-0 victory over McLean on April 17.

Leckert walked two and struck out six. The Highlanders did not have runner reach third base.

"[Leckert] is a heck of a pitcher, obviously," Fairfax head coach Rick Freeman said. "Everybody knows that. When he throws his curveball for strikes consistently, that's the kind of game he gets. He's able to pitch backward to a lot of hitters and get them off balance early in the count and then his fastball looks a lot better than it is. He's a heck of a pitcher."

"When he throws his curveball for a strike, he's really lights out."

Freeman praised Leckert's ability to bounce back after Collins' long foul ball.

"That's who he's become," the head coach said. "He's a senior now and he pitches with a lot of confidence and a lot of leadership. I don't think he was rattled by it. I think he looked at it and said I can still get this guy, I've just got to make a good pitch."

A two-out single by McLean's CJ Downey and a wild pitch by Leckert gave the Highlanders a runner in scoring position in the bottom of the seventh inning, but Leckert got Frank Minamino to ground out to end

the game.

"He's an absolute workhorse," Fairfax shortstop Jason Waldman said about Leckert. "He's been doing this since sophomore year for us. He pretty much goes the distance every single time. It's fun to play behind him. He just gets groundballs, weak fly balls all the time. It's fun to watch."

McLean head coach John Dowling praised Leckert's effort, but said the Highlanders' inability to adjust contributed to their lack of production.

"All the credit in the world to Leckert," Dowling said. "He threw strikes and we did not come into the game with a strong approach and we did not adjust to what he was doing. If I'm him, I'm going to do the same thing: a lot of breaking balls that were effective."

What would Dowling have liked McLean batters to do differently?

"Adjust to a lot of breaking balls," Dowling said. "We were taking fastball swings in fastball counts and he was not throwing fastballs. And for seven innings, we continued to do the same thing. That is not acceptable."

While Leckert shut down the McLean lineup, the Highlanders found success by using four different pitchers against the Rebels.

Jon Clines, Charles Groppe, Downey and Gerhardt limited Fairfax to four hits, including none in the final three innings, but the Rebels managed to score the one run they needed.

Waldman, who will play for William & Mary, led off the top of the fourth with a double and advanced to third on a wild pitch. Senior third baseman Victor Danieletto then singled, driving in the winning run.

Waldman finished 2-for-3 with a pair of doubles. Sophomore Tommy Bradley had a single for the Rebels.

The win improved Fairfax's record to 8-4. The Rebels started the season with six consecutive victories, but lost four of their next five.

The Rebels will travel to face Yorktown at 6 p.m. on Thursday, April 23.

"This group is probably one of the more talented groups that have come through Fairfax in a while," Waldman said. "I think if we can play like we did tonight every single night, [there is] no reason why we shouldn't be taking a regional championship home."



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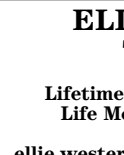
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2015 Spring Real Estate & New Homes



PHOTO BY BRYAN BURRIS

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Staged to Sell

Real estate agents give the lowdown on getting your home ready for the market.

BY MARILYN CAMPBELL
THE CONNECTION

When a Burke family hired E. Diane Neustrand to sell their home, she did her standard walk-through of the house to assess it, but when she reached the dining room, she stopped cold.

"It was painted with three different shades of orange and accessorized with black, white and gold furniture," said Neustrand, a real estate agent with Long and Foster Real Estate, Inc. in Burke, Fairfax Station and Clifton.

First on Neustrand's chopping block: a pair of zebra print chairs. The boisterous wall colors were next.

"It wasn't harmonious at all," said Neustrand, who also works as a professional home stager. "We had to calm that down because orange is not a color that sells well. You want neutrals in paint and furniture, so potential buyers can visualize their own items in your home."

Residential real estate staging, the practice of preparing a home to go on the market for sale by making it aesthetically appealing, is credited with giving homes an advantage over the competition.

Staging can range from rearranging furniture, decluttering and painting the walls to furnishing a home in which the seller no



PHOTO BY ROBERT WHETZEL

Realtors say professionally staged homes spend less time on the market.

longer resides.

The National Association of Realtors' 2015 Investment & Home Buyers Survey showed that staging can have a positive impact on the number of days a home sits on the market and the amount of money potential buyers a willing offer for the home.

"STAGED HOMES traditionally present themselves better than the competition by being clean, clutter-free and ready to show to prospective buyers," said Mona Bekheet, a real estate agent with McEneaney Associates, Inc. in McLean. "Home staging is decluttering, depersonalizing and preparing a seller's home to look like a model

home so the potential buyers can see themselves living in the home."

The survey showed that 49 percent of agents say most buyers are affected by home staging, while a 2013 study by the Real Estate Staging Association showed staged homes sold 83 percent sooner than houses that weren't staged.

Realtors also believe buyers usually offer a 1-5 percent increase on the value of a staged home.

"Staged homes take less time on the market and they sell at the best price," said Bekheet. "Buyers view them as well cared for properties and appraisers are more likely to appraise staged homes at a full or higher value."

That increase can offset the expense of having a home professionally staged. Services, including consultations and furniture rental, can cost \$250 to \$2,000. Neustrand uses as many of the homeowners' possessions as she can to minimize out-of-pocket expenses.

However, real estate agents say initiating conversations with homeowners about their homes and suggesting changes must be handled delicately.

"You don't want to hurt someone's feelings by telling them that they need to move items or get rid of items like the wrong artwork or too much furniture," said Maria

SEE STAGED, PAGE 5

Optimism for 2015 Real Estate Market

BY ANDREA WORKER
THE CONNECTION

After what seemed to be an endless winter, spring has finally come calling, signaling the start of the year's first real estate high season. Homes trade hands all year long, but spring is often for buyers, seller, agents, brokers and lenders like those weeks between Thanksgiving and Christmas; buyers at full speed searching out the best bargains and sellers looking to move their wares without having to resort to price-slashing sales tactics.

So far, area real-estate experts and the data from sources like the Northern Virginia Association of Realtors (NVAR), Movoto

Real Estate, and SmartCharts (powered by RealEstate Business Intelligence with data supplied from the MLS listing service) are all aligned in their assessment of the outlook for the 2015 market in Northern Virginia. Compared to a lackluster 2014 after a strong 2013, there's reason for optimism.

Veronica Seva-Gonzalez, NVAR board member and Realtor with Compass Real Estate, noted that the spring weather and positive housing market news had arrived simultaneously. "It's great to see how all of the numbers are up from last year and also from the beginning of this year," she said.

Across the board, the numbers do look positive. Combined data collected for the counties of Fairfax and Arlington, the cities

of Alexandria, Falls Church and Fairfax and the towns of Vienna, Herndon and Clifton, show a first quarter increase of total units sold of just over 9 percent, with 3,657 units sold in 2015 compared to 3,352 the prior year. For the same period and for the same localities, days on the market (DOM) per unit actually rose in 2015 and the average ratio of sales price to list price showed marginal slippage, but Realtors and market analysts see the significant improvements in March 2015 numbers vs. March 2014 figures as an indicator of a healthy selling season ahead.

The March 2015 increases were seen in

SEE OUTLOOK, PAGE 4

Fairfax
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Outlook Optimistic for Local 2015 Real Estate Market

FROM PAGE 3

all sectors of the residential market, with “attached” homes like townhouses leading the way with a 3.6 percent uptick in average sales price. Condominiums came in at second place, with a 1.8 percent increase in the month compared to 2014. Single-family homes came in last for the March 2015 totals, but still better than the prior year by 0.7 percent.

Greatly increased inventory versus last year could be one factor in the more modest single-family home price increases. In 2015, 3,165 new properties came onto the market during the month, while only 2,656 were put on the books during that month last year. A total of 3,381 units were available to buyers in March this year compared to 3,011 last year.

“In some areas and some price ranges, there is definitely more choice,” said Reston Long and Foster Realtor Anita Lasansky. “Sellers are starting to get more confident.”

Realtor Jennifer Boyce, Long and Foster Gold Team, also noted that some buyers were starting to “come out from under,” having held on during the worst of the economic downturn. “Equities are looking stronger, so they can get back in, selling or buying.”

The data does vary around the region. Not all areas experienced an increase in sales prices in the month-to-month comparison. Falls Church City, for example, posted an increase in the numbers of units sold, but a 19.12 percent decrease in median sales price.

Arlington County, on the other hand, saw the largest increase in the March 2015 vs. March 2014 side-by-side; with 24.43 percent more closed sales and a 10.68 percent increase in the median sales price.

Janet Gresh of the Gresh Group in McLean says that her experience so far this year is in line with those numbers. “Arlington is definitely hot right now, close in and enough quality properties that you see serious competition.”

Lasansky gave the numbers she is seeing for Reston a “thumbs up,” as well. “We’re up about 15 percent in the first quarter over last year and about 5 percent up in median sales price.”

In the City of Alexandria, the median sales price rose by more than 10 percent in March on an increase of 14.37 percent in closed sales.

Fairfax County and Fairfax City both saw more moderate improvements in median sales prices at 2.79 percent and 2.00 percent respectively. For Fairfax City, the positive takeaway from the March figures is that the median sales price rose despite a drop in total closed sales of more than 50 percent compared to last year.

While all of the data provided is considered preliminary and still subject to revision, the numbers available to date suggest a good start to the year – and barring the unforeseen negative impact – a positive 2015 real estate market.

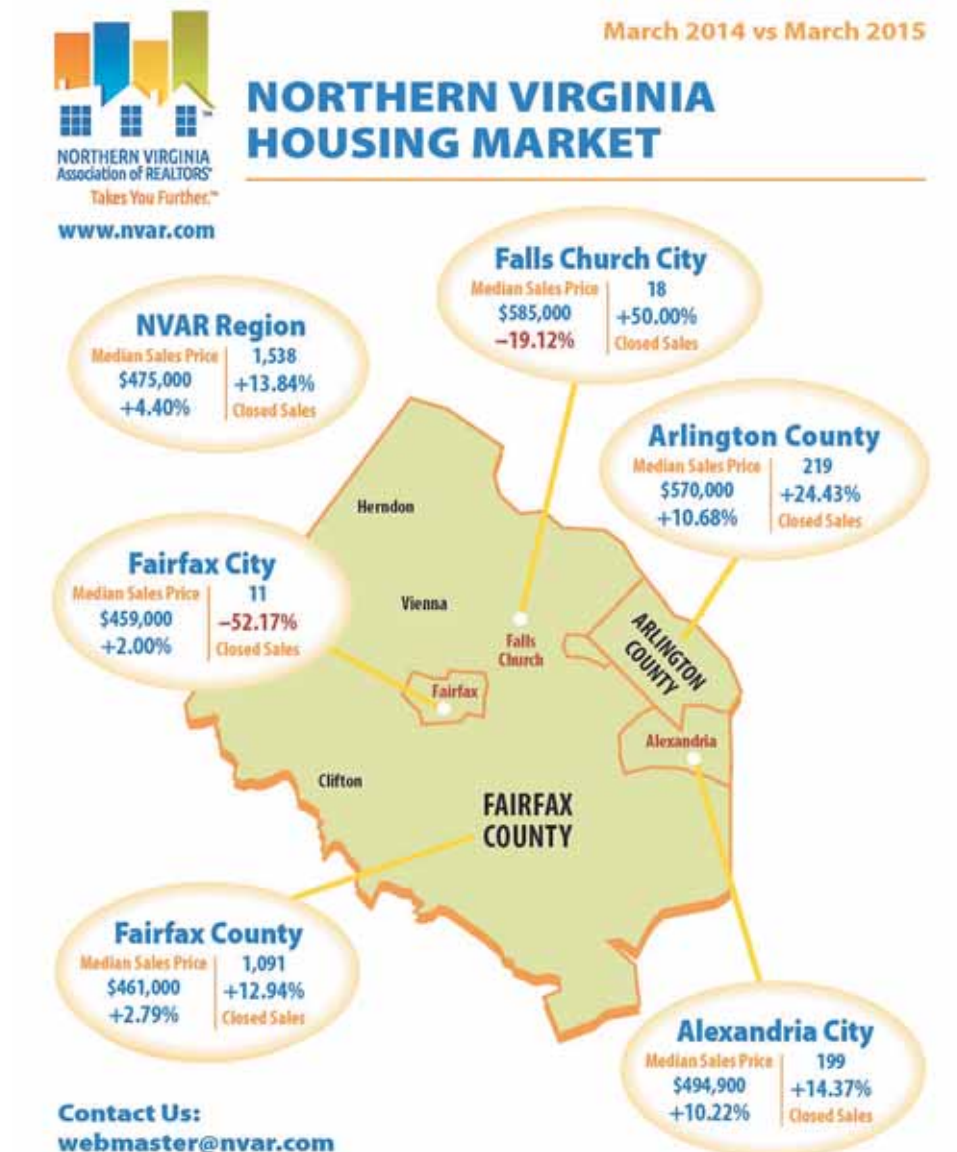


IMAGE COURTESY OF NVAR

Plus-column numbers on the books, the collective optimism of many of the area’s top real estate professionals, and respected organizations like the Northern Virginia Association of Realtors adding that “2015 may be different because of its more sustainable, positive market direction,” all offer signs that the real estate market in the region is looking at a healthy year. Any number of factors, including the ever-present threat of the Federal Reserve raising interest rates sometime this year, could stall or even reverse the positive trends.

Whatever comes along, realtors like Kathleen Quintarelli, Weichert Realtors, Burke, think we will deal with it. “People have kind of stopped believing that the rates will go up again and when they do it will be a shock and have its impact, but we will adjust to that new norm, as well.”

With the latest figures in hand, we asked some of our area’s top real estate professionals for their perspectives, and to offer some expert advice to buyers and sellers alike.

❖ **Virgil Frizzell, Ph.D., MBA**, realtor Long and Foster Reston: “I think the March housing statistics indicate a healthier spring housing market in the footprint of the Northern Virginia Association of Realtors than for the rest of the country. The con-

tinuing improvements ... are good for both homebuyers and home sellers and likely indicate a more balanced market. Buyers should benefit from increasing inventory, still low mortgage [rates] and easing credit standards. The year-over-year increase in housing units sold and modestly rising median prices may embolden sellers.” (Frizzell is the 2015 NVAR Chairman-Elect.)

❖ **Mary Bayat**, owner of Bayat Realty in Alexandria and 2015 NVAR Chair: “Finally, many buyers who had distressed house sales years ago could have enough repaired credit to qualify for a new loan. They will get more house for their money now than if they wait. We expect the Federal Reserve to raise interest rates later this year. Another local indicator is that active listings have risen more than 25 percent.”

❖ **Jennifer Boyce**, Long and Foster Gold Team Burke/Fairfax Station/Clifton: “Don’t price too aggressively in late spring or early summer is my advice. Homes that are well priced and in good condition will sell. The \$500,000-\$800,000 homes are in high demand. Homes that are priced over \$1 million face a smaller and sometimes more exacting buyer base, not willing to compromise much and expecting top quality for their money.”

❖ **Will Farnam**, Long and Foster Falls Church: “I think the data so far for this year would be considered bright - not a boom - but strong. It’s a market that’s good for good properties, not good for just anything. There’s enough choice. One good sign is the traffic at Open Houses. The last two weekends I have had house-fulls, quite different from last year. Smaller down payments on many FHA and VA loans is helping, but despite some lending requirement easing, I find that buyers with credit problems are still struggling to get a loan.”

❖ **Janet Gresh**, The Gresh Group@Keller Williams: “The market is looking good, but it is still a bit more of an art than a science at times. If an under-\$1 million home is priced right, I am starting to see multiple offers, especially in Arlington. ... In some of these areas, if the house doesn’t sell or have offers in the first two weekends, it could be a sign of trouble and time to re-evaluate. ... Don’t overprice and you may end up getting more than you ask for. I have experienced that recently.”

❖ **Anita Lasansky**, Long and Foster Reston: “It’s looking good, strong numbers over last year for Reston especially, what some call the ‘Silicon Valley of the East.’ Some homes are selling now in days, not weeks, if they are well-priced with updated kitchens and bathrooms. Those homes take top dollar and for the first time in years I am seeing multiple offers on those properties. The properties over \$1.2 million are still sitting. Sellers should also be cautioned not to overprice based on the addition of the Metro Silver Line. I see that a lot of people are riding it, but it hasn’t had that much of an impact on house prices in the area, at least not yet, but some sellers are factoring in 5-10 percent in their list price based on the Metro.

❖ **Kathleen Quintarelli**, Weichert Realtors, Burke: “I’m excited. 2015 looks slightly better already. Open Houses are really packed. With interest rates staying so low, more choice, the easing up on credit requirements, and fewer short sales and foreclosures - all those factors are really giving the market energy. There’s just not enough inventory in some categories, especially anything around \$350k - \$450k. Anything in good condition in that price range can go in the first week. My advice to sellers: Price well, prepare your home and stage it. And have your photographs taken by a professional. If the potential buyer comes in and says “Wow! This place looks a lot better than the pictures on the internet!” then your agent - or you - have done something wrong. Sellers should be ready to buy, even the same day you see the house you want. That means pre-approval and preferably by a local lender that we can work with quickly, especially if you’re faced with multiple offers or counters.

Staged to Sell

FROM PAGE 3

Smith of Arlington Realty in Arlington. "But the homeowner's objective should be to sell the home."

Staging helps when a home is too cluttered, or even if a house is already empty. It's also a good idea "for those with dated, mismatched furniture or too many pieces in a room," said Realtor Marsha Schuman of Washington Fine Properties. "For homes that don't have a traditional floor plan, staging helps a buyer see how the rooms can be laid out."

"Even if you have a large home, if your closets are over-stuffed or if you have too much furniture, a prospective buyer can't get a sense of the space and dimension of a room or visualize themselves in the home," said E.J. Stone, a real estate agent with Coldwell Banker Residential Brokerage in Alexandria.

Removing ultra-personal items like family pictures or bills is another part of the staging process.

"You want to get a potential buyer to envision their things in the home," said Stone. "Neutrals can help with that. Those are things that a home stager can suggest."

Less is often more in the home staging game, say Realtors. "I tell my clients to take

stuff off the walls, rent a storage space and take all the stuff you don't need and put it into a storage unit, so it opens up more space," said Michael Richter, real estate agent for residential preferred properties at the Richter Group in Burke.

Realtors rank the living room as the number one room to stage, followed by the kitchen then the master bedroom, dining room and the bathroom.

"Your home should be a model home, like no one lives there," said Neustrand. "The bathroom counters should not have products or clutter. There should not be trash in the garbage can."

"Staged homes traditionally present themselves better than the competition by being clean, clutter-free and ready to show to prospective buyers."

— **Mona Bekheet, McEneaney Associates, Inc., in McLean**

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Trendy Bathroom Transformations

Designers share the hottest ideas in lavatory design.

BY MARILYN CAMPBELL
THE CONNECTION

Imagine stepping into a resort inside the comfort of your own home. Contemporary, spa-like bathrooms with clean lines and features such as floating vanities, open shelving, innovative storage and low-maintenance materials are on trend this year in bathroom remodeling projects.

When the main level master bathroom in a 1970s-era Reston home got a major facelift earlier this year, Dean Turner, of Evolution Design & Build in Reston was tasked with addressing structural issues as well updating the entire space.

"This bathroom had a sunken tub and shower combination that was leaking into the basement below," said Turner. "They wanted me to solve their water problems ... update their bathroom, and they



PHOTO COURTESY OF NICELY DONE KITCHENS AND BATHS

Low maintenance porcelain tile accented with river rock stone are used in this Burke bathroom.

were very interested in a floating vanity."

The floating, walnut piece was made by a local cabinetmaker and hovers 12 inches above the floor, and Turner was able

to give the homeowners an abundance of storage by incorporating cabinetry into the vanity. A simple touch of the fingertip opens and closes its drawers and doors, eliminating the need for visible hardware. Motion detecting, LED lighting under the vanity is another convenience.

Turner's team removed the existing wall and floor tile, replacing it with scratch- and stain-resistant porcelain tile that has the appearance of natural stone, while the wall tiles were made in the image of natural wood.

"When you look at it," said Turner. "It looks just like hardwood flooring on the wall."

AFTER MOVING into a retirement community, an empty-nester couple decided to overhaul the builder-grade bathroom that came with their home. They enlisted the help of Stephanie Brick, of Nicely Done Kitchens and Baths

in Springfield, who designed a contemporary space.

"The homeowners were looking for something that was calming and had a spa-like

energy," said Brick. "They also wanted more storage, especially open storage for linens and displaying items."

Brick and the Nicely team installed cabinetry with open shelving over the toilet. The vanity has a quartz countertop with veins of blue and turquoise that bears a close resemblance to marble. "Those colors were carried through in an accent piece in the shower," said Brick.

The porcelain tile floor has a marble-like appearance.

"You get the beautiful look of marble, but you don't have the maintenance or the cost," said Brick. "The new bathroom has a much more spa-like aesthetic. It was very bland and vanilla and it needed a face lift."

When the owners of a contemporary home in Burke decided to remodel their master bathroom so that it matched the style of the rest of the house, they called on designer Cathy Gross, also of Nicely. She used porcelain tile on the walls accented with river rock stone, a material that she also used on the bathroom floor.

"They wanted to continue the calm, zen, contemporary feel in the remodel of their master bath," said Gross, who also designed the home's kitchen five years prior.

More designs in the unabridged story at www.connectionnewspapers.com

Connecting Outside to In

BY JOHN BYRD

"When we started this company twenty seven years ago, our core specialty was opening up views," said Craig Durosco, chairman and founder of Sun Design Remodeling. "Northern Virginians like their green backyards, so finding ways to connect the house with what's just outside your door is a strong local incentive—especially as spring unfolds into summer."

Homeowner expectation for better integrated outdoor spaces evolves with each season, he said. To accommodate, Sun Design professionals constantly assess emerging building technologies, code issues, design literature. "You are always learning," Durosco says. "Improving on the quality of what you stand for as a company is a constant motivator for everyone here."

By way of example, Durosco cites three recent trend-setting projects.

Poolside Pavilion, Outdoor Kitchen

Entertaining outdoors has become a primary recreational activity for Monte Zaben and family. Though he commutes regularly from his Fredericksburg home to an office in McLean, Zaben's weekends by the pool have become treasured quality time.

"The house was built to my requirements, but I hadn't thought much about the grounds," he says, "We added a saltwater pool a few years ago, only to realize that the back of the house was so sun-

exposed...it was uncomfortable sitting outside."

Zaben set up a meeting with Sun Design. From the start, the homeowner was impressed with plans for a shaded pavilion outside the home's lower level.

Under roof, a lounge area; a smaller closer-in footprint with a cozy poolside vista; an outdoor kitchen equipped with a traditional grill, a smoker and a power burner. When the summer guest list rises to fifty or more the vaulted canopy is a perfect spot for buffet tables.

"We use our outdoor space on just about every seasonable day of the year," Zaben says. "It's very much part of our lives now."

Screen Porch, Rear Decking

As Fairfax homeowner Joanne Alger tells it, Sun Design's solution to a previous problem was key to a new project.

Impressed with the outcome, the Algers now sought Durosco's ideas for a grander rear elevation indoor/outdoor component, one that would better connect the sprawling house with its six acre wooded setting.

The Algers embraced a Sun Design scheme with three main components: a 17-by-16-foot screen porch, a grilling deck, and a ground-level patio. The patio, in turn, segues to a hard-scape platform featuring an eight-foot stone hearth and comfortable seating. Overhead fans and portable heaters keep the outdoor room habitable in all but the coldest days of winter.

"It's our preferred gathering place now,



PHOTO BY MITRO HOOD

The outdoor kitchen is equipped with a grill and a power burner.

"Alger says. "And so comfortable we can use it from early spring to late fall."

Bringing the Outside Indoors

Nick Bonadies, Sun Design's Director of New Business Development, points to the 25-by-16-foot custom window wall in a newly remodeled Fairfax home as a kind of triumph of glazing technologies over the strong wind.

"Homeowners come to us for ideas that will open up space and invite visual continuum," he said.

Sun Design had converted Gini Mulligan's 2,200-square-foot 1960s split foyer home into a 4,238-square-foot French colonial complete with wrap-around porches, a new

master bedroom suite addition, and a spacious gourmet kitchen with a jaw-dropping view of towering backyard trees.

"We bought the house over 20 years ago, mainly because of the lovely wooded setting," Mulligan said. "I then spent so many years gazing out of a small back window, trying to imagine how the house would feel if we had a better view." The scale of Mulligan's vision, a two-story window wall, presented feasibility questions.

A steel "moment" frame, unusual in a residential application, allows for as much as a 40 percent increase in unobstructed glass surface. "It all looks very delicate—but this window can withstand winds of up to 90 miles per hour," Bonadies said.

Local REAL ESTATE

February, 2015 Top Sales



17 4608 Fillingame Drive, Chantilly — \$512,000



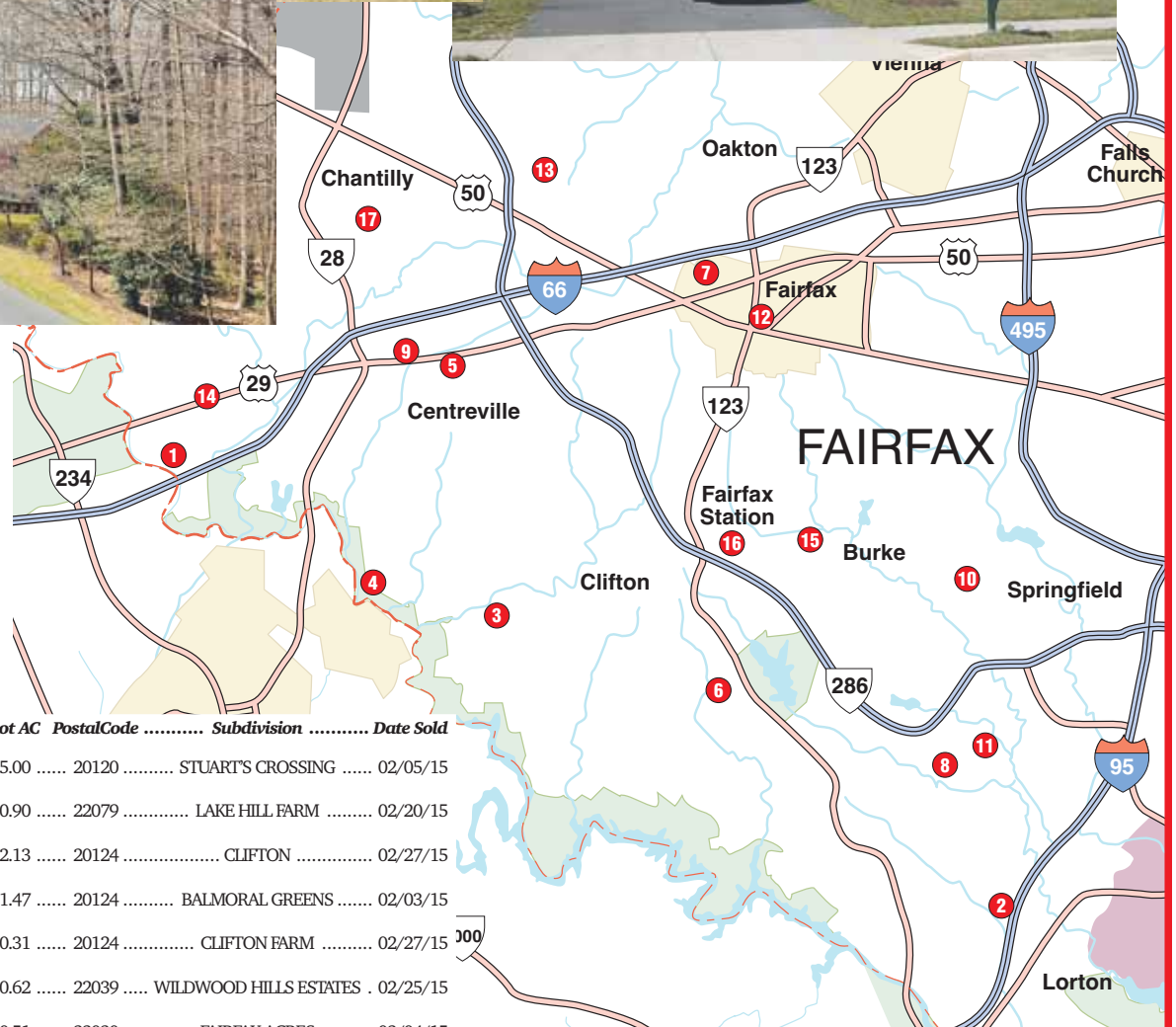
9 13529 Lamium Lane, Centreville — \$775,000

1 7300 Bull Run Post Office Road, Centreville — \$1,154,990

6 10744 Beechnut Court, Fairfax Station — \$815,000



4 13745 Balmoral Greens Avenue, Clifton — \$1,415,700



Address	BR	FB	HB	Postal City	Sold Price	Type	Lot AC	PostalCode	Subdivision	Date Sold			
1 7300 BULL RUN POST OFFICE ROAD	5	..	5	..	1	CENTREVILLE	\$1,154,990	..	Detached	5.00	20120	STUART'S CROSSING	02/05/15
2 9400 BETTGE LAKE CT	4	..	3	..	1	LORTON	\$1,100,000	..	Detached	0.90	22079	LAKE HILL FARM	02/20/15
3 12801 CHESTNUT ST	4	..	2	..	1	CLIFTON	\$1,095,000	..	Detached	2.13	20124	CLIFTON	02/27/15
4 13745 BALMORAL GREENS AVE	4	..	4	..	1	CLIFTON	\$880,000	..	Detached	1.47	20124	BALMORAL GREENS	02/03/15
5 5414 WILLOW VALLEY RD	5	..	5	..	1	CLIFTON	\$860,000	..	Detached	0.31	20124	CLIFTON FARM	02/27/15
6 10744 BEECHNUT CT	5	..	4	..	1	FAIRFAX STATION	\$815,000	..	Detached	0.62	22039	WILDWOOD HILLS ESTATES	02/25/15
7 3614 HILL ST	4	..	4	..	2	FAIRFAX	\$790,000	..	Detached	0.51	22030	FAIRFAX ACRES	02/04/15
8 8017 FLINT ST	5	..	4	..	1	SPRINGFIELD	\$789,000	..	Detached	0.61	22153	CHAPEL ACRES	02/26/15
9 13529 LAMIUM LN	4	..	4	..	1	CENTREVILLE	\$775,000	..	Detached	0.19	20120	FAIRCREST SOUTH	02/23/15
10 8552 CENTER RD	4	..	3	..	1	SPRINGFIELD	\$740,000	..	Detached	0.22	22152	JAMES CREEK	02/03/15
11 8309 KINGS RIDGE CT	5	..	4	..	1	SPRINGFIELD	\$735,000	..	Detached	0.35	22153	GAMBRILL OAKS	02/05/15
12 10411 WHITEHEAD ST	4	..	3	..	1	FAIRFAX	\$720,000	..	Townhouse	0.04	22030	MADISON MEWS	02/19/15
13 3419 TILTON VALLEY DR	5	..	3	..	1	FAIRFAX	\$710,000	..	Detached	1.48	22033	MARY RIDGE	02/12/15
14 15371 WETHERBURN CT	4	..	3	..	1	CENTREVILLE	\$660,000	..	Detached	0.47	20120	VIRGINIA RUN	02/20/15
15 9931 WOOD GROUSE CT	4	..	3	..	1	BURKE	\$640,000	..	Detached	0.18	22015	BURKE CENTRE	02/19/15
16 5802 OAK MOSS TER	5	..	2	..	2	BURKE	\$638,000	..	Detached	0.27	22015	BURKE CENTRE	02/27/15
17 4608 FILLINGAME DR	5	..	3	..	1	CHANTILLY	\$512,000	..	Detached	0.21	20151	LEIGH PROP	02/26/15

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15 9931 Wood Grouse Court, Burke — \$640,000

Award-Winning Connection Newspapers

More Reasons the Connection Newspapers are the Best-Read Community Papers

Winners of Awards in the 2014 Virginia Press Association and Maryland-Delaware-D.C. Press Association Editorial Contests

First Place Winners

Steven G. Artley, *Alexandria Gazette Packet* – Editorial Cartoon. Judge's comments: Smart and insightful.

Bonnie Hobbs, *Centre View* – Feature Series or Continuing Story. Judge's comments: Clear and concise writing with a good flow. Journalist captured the emotion of the event and engaged the reader well.

Michael Lee Pope, *Mount Vernon Gazette* – Business and Financial Writing. Judge's comments: First-rate, data-driven reporting and analysis on important issues. Fine work.

Michael Lee Pope, *McLean Connection* – Health, Science and Environmental Writing. Judge's comments: Michael Lee Pope's stories on driving habits, cesarean deliveries and the Affordable Care Act are well-researched, clearly written and engaging. His use of real-live people high up in his stories to illustrate his findings makes for very compelling material. He seems quite capable of turning some of these topics into a book. If he does, I'll read it.

Jon Roetman, *Vienna/Oakton Connection* – Sports Writing Portfolio. Judge's comments: Strong and clear writing and excellent storytelling helps game stories feel more like features. Excellent work.

Victoria Ross, *Oak Hill/Herndon Connection* – Government Writing. Judge's comments: An engaging look at a lobbyist who fights for the little guy; an entertaining story on a political candidate, helping readers put the upcoming election into context; one of the better budgeting stories I've seen lately that helps readers understand how the county's budgeting process is going to cost them more money. The supporting sidebars help bring the message home.

Jeanne Theismann, *Alexandria Gazette Packet* – Personal Service Writing, Obituaries. Judge's comments: These stories provide a glimpse inside the lives of people who have played significant roles in their communities. The writing is engaging and well-researched. And the stories serve as an example to others of how to live a life of purpose.

Jeanne Theismann, *Alexandria Gazette Packet* – Column Writing, Entertainment. Judge's comments: Ms. Theismann's entertainment columns demonstrate a breadth of knowledge that gives her opinions a ring of authority and authenticity.



Steve Artley



Bonnie Hobbs



Michael Lee Pope



Jon Roetman



Victoria Ross



Jeanne Theismann



Jean Card



Steve Hibbard



Louise Krafft



Joan Brady



Veronica Bruno



Vernon Miles



Marilyn Campbell



Mary Kimm



Steven Mauren



Geovani Flores



Laurence Foong



Renee Ruggles



Ken Moore

LOCAL MEDIA
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Though I live nowhere near her area, I found it easy to be influenced by her writing and to wish that I had the opportunity to attend some of the events she talked about. All three examples are nicely written.

Jean Card, Jeanne Theismann, Steve Hibbard, Louise Krafft and Kara Coleman, *Alexandria Gazette Packet* – Lifestyle or Entertainment Pages. Judge's comments: Good balance. Front page article has good detail and info.

Second Place Winners

Joan Brady, *Great Falls Connection* – Column Writing.

Veronica Bruno, *Mount Vernon Gazette* – Feature Story Writing.

Jean Card, *Alexandria Gazette Packet* – Page Design.

Vernon Miles, *Arlington Connection* – Breaking News Writing.

Jeanne Theismann, *Alexandria Gazette Packet* – Headline Writing.

Third Place Winners

Steven G. Artley, *Alexandria Gazette Packet* – Editorial Cartoon.

Marilyn Campbell, *Chantilly Connection* – Health, Science and Environmental Writing.

Bonnie Hobbs, *Fairfax Connection* – Personal Service Writing.

Mary Kimm, *McLean Connection* – Editorial Writing.

Michael Lee Pope, *Alexandria Gazette Packet* – Public Safety Writing.

Steven Mauren, Mary Kimm, Steve Artley, Geovani Flores and Laurence Foong, *Alexandria Gazette Packet* – Editorial Pages.

Jean Card, Renee Ruggles and Laurence Foong, *Mount Vernon Gazette* – Informational Graphics.

The *Potomac Almanac* participates in the Maryland-Delaware-DC Press Association, and while 2014 award-winners there will not be fully announced until May 1, 2015, we do know that Ken Moore and Marilyn Campbell are winners.

