Santa Joins Vienna Families for Lunch

Taking a Fantasy Flight to the North Pole

Preventing Underage Drinking During the Holidays
Great Falls United Methodist Church will be holding its annual Living Nativity on Dec. 18. Three 20-minute one-act plays of this glorious event will begin at 5 p.m. and end at 6 p.m. Come listen to the story, sing some carols, pet the animals, enjoy refreshments, and rekindle your joy for Christmas.

10100 Georgetown Pike
Great Falls www.greatfallsnm.org
Questions? Call 703-759-3705.

St. Thomas’ Episcopal Church at the intersection of Lewinsville and Brook Roads in McLean, just a mile west of Tyson’s Corner, invites you for a casual Saturday Service at 5 p.m., followed by conversation and fellowship or for Sunday Services at 8 a.m. or 10 a.m. Sunday School for Youth and Children takes place during the 10 a.m. service. Look for our Pumpkin Patch this October, and check www.stthomasmcleanva.org for Special Events and Services through the year. St. Thomas’ Episcopal Church, 8991 Brook Road, McLean, 703-442-0330.

St. Francis Episcopal Church, 9220 Georgetown Pike in Great Falls, offers musical, educational, outreach and fellowship ministries in addition to worship services, including an 8 a.m. worship service without music and a 10 a.m. worship service with nursery care available during the summer. 703-759-2082.

The Jewish Social Services Agency (JSSA) offers a wide variety of support groups for those with emotional, social, and physical challenges. www.jssa.org/growth-learning.
Santa Join Area Families for Lunch

More than 230 people bought tickets for annual Vienna event.

Santa’s helpers and North Pole elves are out in full-force in Vienna, appearing in all the expected places that kids show up at … With support from the Town of Vienna Parks and Recreation Department, Santa and his elves joined more than 230 guests at a lunch in his honor on Dec. 3. The annual lunch with Santa was held at the Vienna volunteer fire station this year as the community center is out of commission while being remodeled.

Santa listened to wish-lists - or just greeted little ones - while Rudolf mingled among the guests. Everyone who was asked responded that they had had fun at the Santa lunch.

The VVFD Auxiliary served a lunch of mac-and-cheese and chicken nuggets, while Kiln and Company donated bisque tiles for kids to paint and bring home. Kiln’s famed custard came after the hot lunch, all donated by the locally-owned business.

On December 10, VVFD Auxiliary is hosting an all-you-can-eat pancake breakfast open to the public.

—Donna Manz

Photos by Donna Manz/The Connection

To a rousing recorded version of “Here Comes Santa Claus,” Santa Claus came.

One-year-old Eric Fedotov expressed his awe upon meeting Rudolf. Big sister Evgeniia, 8, keeps a watchful eye on Eric.

The little kids appeared to get shy sitting on Santa’s lap so Santa used his North Pole skills to engage them.

Big sister Evgeniia Fedotova, 8, held on to little brother Eric, 1, as the two met Rudolf.
Gorgeous costumes, talking pictures, and two thousand air planes — what could this possibly be, you ask? Why, Oakton High School’s production of “Once in a Lifetime” of course!

“Once in a Lifetime” was written in 1929 by Moss Hart, and would turn out to be the first of many successes for the playwright. The comedy opens on three struggling vaudevillian stars: Jerry Hyland, May Daniels, and George Lewis. They are doing just fine trying to “make it” on stage, until Jerry sells their act in a sudden declaration that the real money is in talking pictures. The three head out to Hollywood, where they set up a school on the art of elocution, leading them to meet the gossip columnist Helen Hobart, narcissistic film mogul Herman Globauer, and ditzy aspiring actress and George’s love interest Susan Walker. Through a series of misadventures and near failures, George shoots a movie with no lights, the wrong plot, and inaudible dialogue due to the sound of his cracking Indian nuts; yet he is declared a movie genius ushering in a new period of film.

The cast’s unwavering energy and vitality, along with perfectly timed sarcastic lines, brought this show to life. Each character in the sometimes crazy play was eccentric but still able to maintain his originality. Hunter Carrico did an excellent job of portraying George’s childish side, making a character that, despite his naivety, was somehow charming rather than ridiculous. His relationship with May Daniels, played by Anna Goodin, was almost that of a brother and sister. Goodin’s portrayal of May as the alpha-female and voice of reason radiated within the theatre. Max Torti did a great job as Lawrence Vail, a character who experiences the most extreme change of all, from that of a fed-up, slightly mad playwright to a calm man comforting May on the train.

The elaborate, period-specific costumes were a great success — fitting the characters perfectly. The over-the-top glitz of Helen Hobart’s sequined outfits, the transition from dowdy clothes to nice outfits for the three main cast, and the detailed cigarette girls’ skirts helped the audience better understand the characters and were truly a joy to see. Though at times it was hard to see the actors due to a combination of turned backs and not being in the light, the overall energy of all the characters and expressive faces made up for it. The play had many sets, something that would be daunting for most high schools, but not for Oakton. The various scenes, including a train car, Hollywood hotel, and film studio, were anchored by their detailed sets. The meticulous use of props, such as an old fashion phone and real Indian nuts, did not go unnoticed by the audience. With the craziness of the many sets, costumes, and multiple characters speaking at once, “Once in a Lifetime” is a truly difficult production for a high school, but Oakton pulled it off effectively and with humor that resonated with the audience despite the fact that it was written nearly ninety years ago.
**News**

**Fairfax County Public Schools to Start Before Labor Day in 2017**

School board approves 2017-2018 calendar at Dec. 1 meeting

On Labor Day in 2017, students at Fairfax County Public Schools will have already returned to classes. In their Dec. 1 meeting, members of the school board approved the 2017-2018 calendar which sets the first day of school as Aug. 28, 2017 and the last day as Friday, June 15, 2018.

“These changes are being made to provide more instructional time before winter break,” a statement from the school system said, “enhanced flexibility to help students and school staff members meet college application deadlines, and to end the school year earlier in June.”

Students will again see a solid two-week winter break that lasts from Dec. 18, 2017 to Jan. 1, 2018, and a one-week spring break from March 26-30, 2018.

The change comes after the school board learned FCPS was qualified for a Virginia Department of Education waiver to start classes before Labor Day due to weather conditions.

Over the last decade, the FCPS statement said, the school system has had five years when there were more than eight days canceled due to snow.

FCPS said it received more than 36,000 responses from a survey sent to all parents and staff on March 30, 2016 asking for feedback on starting before Labor Day.

The new calendar is available online at [https://www.fcps.edu/news-and-calendars/calendars/calendars-and-events/](https://www.fcps.edu/news-and-calendars/calendars/calendars-and-events/)
Virginia is represented by Democrats in all five statewide offices, has voted for a Democratic president three times, yet the Virginia House of Delegates has 66 Republicans and 34 Democrats. This week, the U.S. Supreme Court heard arguments on the legality and constitutional-ity of the last redistricting of Virginia House of Delegates' districts. The court's decision could be monumental for all Virginia voters. If I could fix one thing to make our govern-ment work better at every level, I would re-form redistricting. Partisan redistricting abuse has been around since the beginning of Ameri-can democracy. The term “gerrymander” origi-nates from an 1812 attempt to draw districts favoring Massachusetts Gov. Eldridge Gerry. To be clear, both parties do it, but in the last two decades, gerrymandering has become espe-cially powerful for a few reasons.

First, America is more partisan. Due to mul-tiple and growing sources of information avail-able in today's world, voters are able to self-select their news sources and are exposed to fewer alternative perspectives. This has driven up partisan identification and led to fewer vot-ers who are willing to split their votes between political parties.

Second, and more importantly, computer-enabled mapping software has made it pos-sible to draw districts that are finely crafted. When redistricting was done with index cards shifting precincts days because of ancillary ef-fects and the need to recalculate and balance district populations. Today, computing technology analyzes data by census block and in a few seconds can draw a com-prehensive set of districts to elect a predicted number from a specific political party while maximizing majority-minority districts.

Over the last 30 years, these political con-siderations have caused district lines to con-stantly shift. Many areas constantly move be-tween congressmen, senators and delegates every redistricting cycle. Changed lines leave people confused about their representatives. Census level analysis leaves precincts split re-quiring local governments to redraw precinct lines to avoid polling places with multiple bal-lots. This costs taxpayers money and leaves valves confused about their polling place.

Resulting districts are not communities of interest. The 36th Senate district that I repre-sent stretches 60 miles across three counties and two area codes. The 1st Congressional Dis-trict crosses the 36th and stretches from Manassas to near Norfolk. Districts should minimize jurisdictional splits, use natural geo-graphical boundaries like rivers and be truly compact and contiguous.

Together, this creates a series of hyper-partis-an districts, both Republican and Demo-cratic, which are so safe in general elections that they incentivize incumbents to focus on galvanizing primary voters’ support and not the broader electorate. This distorts public policy and increases partisanship when it is time to legislate.

There are two solutions to this problem. First, the legislature could give up redistricting power and transfer it to a bipartisan or non-partisan commission. Incumbent legislators should not pick their voters. I have always sup-ported nonpartisan redistricting and the Vir-ginia State Senate has passed it several times, but it always dies in the hyper-gerrymandered House of Delegates. A legislative solution is highly unlikely.

The real opportunity to remedy this situa-tion lies in the courts. Some courts have thrown out hyper gerrymandered seats using Voting Rights Act provisions. While valuable, this law is not a comprehensive tool because it is lim-ited to preventing racial discrimination and does not address other problems with parti-san redistricting. A Wisconsin federal court recently used an analysis based on the 1st and 14th Amendments to invalidate partisan redis-tricting by focusing on “wasted votes,” but did not recommend a remedy.

Courts can often resolve issues that legislatives cannot. For example, in 1962, num-erous legislatures, including Virginia’s, re-fused to redraw districts recognizing the boom-ing suburban populations. The U.S. Supreme Court required Virginia and other states to draw districts based on actual population by adopting the “one man, one vote” rule of the Baker v. Carr case.

Today, it is similarly time for the courts to restore democracy to our country and our com-momwealth. Hopefully, they will use the Vir-ginia House of Delegates case argued this week to restore democracy to America.

It is an honor to serve as your state senator. If you have any feedback, you can always contact me at scott@scottsurovell.org.

To Be a Delegate

By Kenneth R. “Ken” Plim
State Delegate (D-36)

T he National Conference of State Legislatures sponsors a “Legislators Back to School Day” each year as a way to promote the idea that more legislators should visit their local schools to see the good work they are doing as well as to understand the challenges that school admin-istrators and teachers face. I take advantage of that opportunity and other times I am in-vited to visit schools in my district and some-times to visit schools in other areas to learn about special programs. For me the visits are very positive experiences. I continue to be im-pressed with the outstanding work that our schools are doing especially considering the thousands of children—more than 180,000 in Fairfax County—they have to educate. Ensur-ing that every child reaches his or her full po-tential is a continual challenge, but I find ad-ministrators and teachers at every level work-ing earnestly and diligently to make sure it happens. The children in our community are amazing! They are for the most part eager learners who are full of questions and curios-ity. And they are good citizens.

One question that I get from children that may be a curiosity of some adults as well is just what is a delegate. I dis-cuss with the students the meaning of “to be delegate” and explain that I am given a delegation of responsibil-ity by the voters of my district to go to the state capitol each year to rep-resent their interests. In most states and at the federal level, members of one house of the leg-islate are called representatives; they repre-sent their constituents in the legislature just as I am delegated to do by the people who live in my legislative district.

Their follow-up question is a key one that must be answered appropriately if our repre-sentative form of government or republic is to be successful: How do I know the interests of my constituents? I give several explanations. My term of office is for two years. When I stand for re-election every two years I tell the voters in my district what I stand for and believe in. Their vote for me is an affirmation that I stand for the kind of things that they want in their government. If I do not represent the interests of my voters, they have an opportunity every two years to take back the delegation of re-sponsibility they have given to me and give it to someone else.

Secondly, I know many of the interests of my constituents because I am out and about in the community all the time. I listen to a lot of people. I encourage people to call or write to me. I try to stay very active in the community to understand my constituents and their needs. I encourage people to respond to my annual constituent survey which you can do at www.kenplum.com. Along with Senator Janet Howell I hold public meetings; the next one is Monday, Dec. 19, 7:30 to 9:00 p.m., at the Reston Community Center at Lake Anne. Please come and participate.

Being a delegate is supposed to be a part-time job in Virginia; for me it is a full-time job and a half, but I am very honored to have been entrusted with this delegation of responsibility.

Write

The Connection welcomes views on any public issue. The deadline for all material is noon Friday. Send to:
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Call: 703-917-6444.
By e-mail: north@connectionnewspapers.com

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The Container Store Launches Annual Holiday Hugs Program

The Container Store continues its annual, nationwide signature giving program, Holiday Hugs. Collections are going on now through Dec. 18 and gifts will be delivered to the hospital the week of Dec. 19. The Container Store’s Washington, DC-area locations include Washington, DC, Rockville, Arlington, Reston and Tysons Corner.

The Container Store continues its annual, nationwide signature giving program, Holiday Hugs. Collections are going on now through Dec. 18 and gifts will be delivered to the hospital the week of Dec. 19. The Container Store’s Washington, DC-area locations include Washington, DC, Rockville, Arlington, Reston and Tysons Corner.

said Melissa Reiff, Chief Executive Officer of The Container Store. “Our Holiday Hugs program is an easy way to bring joy to young patients and their families through this gesture of love from everyone associated with The Container Store.”

For more information about the Holiday Hugs program, visit standfor.containerstore.com/holidayhugs.

The Container Store Launches Annual Holiday Hugs Program

The Container Store continues its annual, nationwide signature giving program, Holiday Hugs. In each of their Washington, DC-area stores, they are partnering with Children’s National Health System to collect and deliver new, unwrapped gifts to their young patients who are spending the holidays away from home.

Customers can participate in the Holiday Hugs program by dropping off new, unwrapped books, small toys and games, toiletries, gift cards and kid-friendly stocking stuffers in collection bins at the Washington, DC, Arlington, Reston, Tysons Corner and Rockville locations between now and Dec. 18. Employees from the Washington, DC-area stores will then volunteer their time to package the donated gifts into custom Holiday Hugs Sacks and deliver them to Children’s National Health System the week of Dec. 19.

“Every holiday season, The Container Store embraces the spirit of giving by helping those in need in our local communities,”

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**Drop-off boxes**

Volunteer By Helping Pack Shoeboxes for

Inaugural Christmas Village at McLean

The Freeman Store & Museum

Wednesday

"Ten Best Friends"  NOV. 1-

CHO Food, New Toy, and Bike Drive

ONGOING

We are collecting donation for the Britepaths Holiday Program to help needy families.

https://britepaths.org/our-programs/holiday-program

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**Calendar**

The Church of the Good Shepherd in Vienna will host a Puppy Nativity on Saturday, Dec. 17 from 10 - 2 p.m. in the parking lot of the church at 2351 Hunter Mill Road, Vienna. Bring your puppies and dogs to take part in the Live Puppy Nativity. This will be fun for the community and may make great holiday pictures. Costumes and treats will be provided for pets. Hot chocolate will be served, and the church’s youth group will be on hand to accept community donations for the Britepaths Holiday Program to help needy families.

Send announcements to connectionnewspapers.com/Calendar/. Deadline is Friday at noon for the following week’s paper. Photos/artwork encouraged.

**ONGOING**

**CHO Food, New Toy, and Bike Drive**

Nov. 1-

CHO requests that no food be expired.

“Ten Best Friends” a solo show featuring Joan Fegan’s oil portraits of the ten most popular breeds of dog in the US, has been extended through the holidays. Cost: Free. The location is The Frame Factory Gallery, 212 Dominion Rd., NE, Vienna, VA 22180. 703-281-2350

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**Thursday/Dec. 8**

**Volunteer By Helping Pack Shoeboxes for Operation Christmas Child**

Volunteer at McLean Bible Church Tysontown Campus 8925 Leesburg Pike Vienna. Email us at chrismasvillage@mcleanbible.org or visit: https://www.mcleanbible.org/events/christmas-village-2016

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**Friday/Dec. 9**

**Carrie Newcomer at Jammin Java**

Open: 6 p.m. Show 7 p.m. 227 Maple Ave East, Vienna. She recently released her 16th CD, The Beautiful Not Yet, and will be performing at Jammin Java. www.jamminjava.com/
“FREE REPORT Reveals How You Can Eliminate Knee Pain…” (Without Having To Take Any Type Of Drugs, Go On Any Medication, Or Even Consider Getting Surgery!”)

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Vienna/Oakton Connection ❖ December 7-13, 2016 ❖ 9

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“Fancy Nancy” at Alden Theatre

‘Fancy Nancy’s Splendiferous Christmas’ cast. McLean Community Center presents “Fancy Nancy’s Splendiferous Christmas” performed by Vital Theatre at the Alden Theatre, McLean Community Center, 1234 Ingleside Ave, McLean. Performance: Sunday, Dec. 11, 2016 at 1 p.m. Tickets: $15-$30 for MCC tax district residents. Call: 703-790-0123 or visit www.mcleancommunitycenter.com

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Calendar

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Musiciologist, humorist and jazz pianist John Eaton will share the history and harmonies of some favorite seasonal songs from the American Songbook at a special “Holiday Spectacular” on Saturday, Dec. 17 at The Alden 1234 Ingleside Ave. McLean.
Preventing Underage Drinking During the Holidays

Experts suggest holding honest conversations.

By Marilyn Campbell

The holidays are as much a part of some holiday parties as decadent desserts. As a result, yuletide festivities increase access to alcoholic beverages for underage drinkers. According to experts, underage drinkers are responsible for between 10 and 20 percent of all alcohol consumed during the holiday season, they also make up the highest percentage of impaired drivers. The temptation among tweens and teens to experiment and give into peer pressure, combined with the availability of alcoholic beverages can be a deadly combination, says safety experts. They encourage parents to have conversations with their children. “A lot of parents would be surprised that their child would drink, but there are a lot of ways for children to get alcohol,” said Allen Lomax, executive director of the Substance Abuse Prevention Coalition of Alexandria. “It’s easy for them to get alcohol from their parents’ home if it’s not locked up. You have to constantly monitor parties in your home when teens are there because there’s a good chance that someone, even if it’s not your own child, could have alcohol.”

A child’s inquisitiveness about alcohol is a sign that it’s time for a parent to begin a dialogue about the dangers and consequences of underage consumption, says Linda R. Cote-Reilly, a developmental psychologist, certified family life educator and professor at Marymount University in Arlington. It is best to start the conversation ... long before the child might be in a situation where they partake in underage drinking. ... It’s not that different from conversations about sexual activity. One big difference, though, is that the child will have observed his or her own parents’ alcohol use, so parents should be prepared to ... answer pointed questions.”

In fact, personal experiences, even those that are unpleasant, can be teachable moments and should not be avoided or sugar-coated, says Cote-Reilly. “Some children will have an alcoholic in the family, and parents should always address that situation honestly and in child appropriate language. For example, a child might say, ‘Why did Uncle Jim fall asleep during Thanksgiving dinner?’ and the parent could respond, ‘Because he drank too much alcohol.’”

Because alcohol is a legal substance that children often observe parents and other adults consuming, and that they might legally consume themselves later in life, the issue can be confusing. While parents want to curb underage drinking to keep their schoolchildren safe and avoid legal penalties, said Amy L. Best, professor and chair, Department of Sociology and Anthropology, George Mason University. “On the other hand, parents also need to lay the groundwork for their children to consume alcohol responsibly in early adulthood.”

Unfortunately, straight alcohol bans do little to protect young people as they move out from under the yoke of parental supervision. For students transitioning to college, it is very important they have the tools and resources to manage situations where binge drinking is more common.

Engaging in a straightforward discussion that is void of mandates and hard-lined rules is the most effective approach in getting children to be receptive, advised Best. “I think parents do well when they engage in honest and reasoned discussions with their children about alcohol and that these conversations be ongoing, informal and structured so their children can feel comfortable talking about what they are observing around them,” she said.

“Research suggests that when parents focus on rules and discipline, adolescents tend to be more likely to engage in surreptitious drinking and succumb to peer pressure,” agreed Shannon N. Davis, associate professor of sociology at George Mason University, adds that adolescents thinking about drinking as something that is forbidden might actually be enhancing its desirability, says Davis. “Instead, [discuss it] as something that in moderation is part of adult life; [these discussions] are more likely to have their children express ideas about moderation in their own subsequent alcohol consumption,” she said. “This is not to say that parents should encourage their adolescents to break the law. Instead, rather than focusing on the illegality of the behavior and the rules around drinking, parents should have honest conversations about drinking, the consequences on bodies of drinking, and explain why the rules exist in general.”

Honest conversations also help clear up misconceptions. “Children often harbor ideas about alcohol that are downright wrong,” said Best. “Sometimes this means parents just listen and then can share their own observations, as well as the strategies they used to navigate the complex world of adolescent and adult drinking.”

It is important that parents set clear boundaries. “I also think parents do well when they set clear guidelines and follow them,” said Best. “It is important that teens have the means to forge a sense of self that is separate from their parents. That is the fundamental developmental project of adolescence. When teens have productive means to forge a sense of self independence of parent(s), alcohol holds less appeal.”

It also holds less appeal to confident teens. “Most importantly, parents want to ensure that their adolescents have high levels of self-esteem that allow them to feel comfortable saying no to any circumstance where they are uncomfortable or pressured by their friends,” said Davis. “Reminding adolescents that it is OK to be different is a hard thing, and it is a hard thing for the adolescents to hear.”

Free Holiday Cab Rides Offered to Prevent Drunk Driving

HOLIDAY SOBER RIDE PROGRAM

Combating the holiday period which the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration says is a “dangerous time to be on the road due to a high number of drunk drivers behind the wheel,” a local nonprofit organization announced that free cab rides will be offered to would-be drunk drivers throughout the Washington metropolitan area during the winter holidays.

Offered by the nonprofit Washington Regional Alcohol Program (WRAP), the annual 10 p.m. and 6 a.m. each evening between Friday, Dec. 16, 2016 and Sunday, Jan. 1, 2017 as a way to keep local roads safe from impaired drivers during this traditionally high-risk holiday period.

During the evening hours, between Dec. 16 and Jan. 1, Washington metropolitan area residents celebrating with alcohol may call the toll-free SoberRide phone number 1-800-200-TAXI (1-800-200-8294) and be afforded a no-cost (up to $ 30 fare), safe way home. (AT&T wireless users can dial #WRAP for the same service.)

More information about WRAP’s SoberRide initiative can be found at www.soberride.com.
SUNDAY/DEC. 11
Colonial Wassail - 1 - 4 p.m. The Claude Moore Colonial Farm’s orchard to wassail the trees with singing, dancing and chants to ensure “a howling crop.” Enjoy hot spiced cider, sugar cakes, a roaring fire and 18th century games. Fun and educational activity for all. Cost: Adults: $7; Children 3-12 and Seniors: $2. Children under 3 complimentary admission. AAA and military discounts. Free parking. Vicki Baker: 703-231-3545, vshaker703@gmail.com

"Fancy Nancy Splendiferous Christmas" at 1 & 4 p.m. 1234 Inglewood Ave, McLean. For ages 4+. What could be fancier than Christmas? This year, Nancy is especially excited. She has enough money to buy a brand-new sparkly Christmas-tree topper. But when things don’t turn out the way Nancy planned, will Christmas still be splendiferous? Admission: $15/$10 MHC tax district residents. http://mcleancenter.org/alden-theatre

WEDNESDAY/DEC. 14
Giant’s In-Store Nutritionists Promote Community Wellness 6 p.m. Vienna Giant at Vienna Shopping Center, 359 Maple Avenue East, Vienna. Giant nutritionist Amanda Barnes invites residents to community wellness classes, store events and in-store consultations. In a world full of food options and different diet trends, a nutritionist has the training and expertise needed to sort through individual information to provide their clients with a plan that suits their needs. A nutritionist’s primary job is to help advise customers when it comes to their health and what they consume Through setting up consultations and creating specialized diets, nutritionists can help with various concerns, like weight loss, diabetes and other health issues where diet is particularly important.

SATURDAY/DEC. 17
Puppy Nativity Vienna Church 10 - 2 p.m. in the parking lot of the church at 2351 Hunter Mill Road, Vienna. Bring your puppies and dogs to take part in the Live Puppy Nativity. This will be fun for the community and may make great holiday pictures. Costumes and treats will be provided for pets. Hot chocolate will be served, and the church’s youth group will be on hand to accept community donations for the Britepaths Holiday Program to help needy families. https://britepaths.org/our-programs/holiday-program

Holiday Express and Visit with Santa at Clemyjontri Park 2 p.m. 1234 Ingleside Ave, McLean. Visit with Santa, go for a ride on the Holiday Express train, and take a spin on the unique carousel that’s wheelchair accessible. There will also be holiday pictures for children to color. Stay for a while and let the kids play on the specially-designed playground that allows children of all abilities to have fun side-by-side. Train rides: $5 Carousel rides: $3. Photo with Santa: $5 http://www.winterwalkoflights.com. To get a per person $1 discount, good Monday through Thursday, use mailer16 when purchasing tickets.

**Winter Walk of Lights Brings Holiday Magic to Life**

Meadowlark Gardens’ Winter Walk of Lights opened on Nov. 18. A half-a-million colored and crystal LED lights glow and shimmer in night, creating storybook vignettes and woodland surrealism. The Winter Walk of Lights at Meadowlark Botanical Gardens off Beulah Road in Vienna runs through Jan. 8. First timed entry is at 5:30 p.m.; the last is 9:30 p.m. Buy your tickets online at www.winterwalkoflights.com. To get a per person $1 discount, go for a ride on the Holiday Express train, and take a spin on the unique carousel that’s wheelchair accessible. There will also be holiday pictures for children to color. Stay for a while and let the kids play on the specially-designed playground that allows children of all abilities to have fun side-by-side. Train rides: $5 Carousel rides: $3. Photo with Santa: $5 http://www.winterwalkoflights.com. To get a per person $1 discount, good Monday through Thursday, use mailer16 when purchasing tickets.
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**NEWS**

Oak Hill Herndon Fantasy Flight 2016: Children with life-challenging illnesses and their families board Sleigh Ride One, nonstop service to the North Pole, for a day of holiday cheer and a private visit with Santa Clause. United Airlines hosted the day with the support of hundreds of volunteers and regional businesses.

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Taking a Fantasy Flight to the North Pole

In spirit of season, community organizations and businesses donate hundreds of service hours and supplies.

By Mercia Hobson
The Connection

One hundred twenty-five children with life-challenging illnesses, their families and a support team of doctors, nurses and volunteers, for a total of 216 people, arrived at Gate 7, Terminal D at Dulles International Airport, Dec. 3, and headed for the hottest destination of the season.

Children’s Hospice International, located in Alexandria, in partnership with United Airlines had invited children and their families to experience a special trip. Earlier that morning each person had checked in at the United Airlines counter and received a complimentary ticket aboard Flight 2135, IAD-NTP non-stop service from Washington to the North Pole, aboard Fantasy Flight 2016, call sign Sleigh Ride One.

They lined up at the boarding gate shortly before 8:30 a.m., awaiting an adventure so many families had anticipated for months. Going down the jet bridge, parents lifted their children out of wheelchairs leaving the chairs behind for the support crew. Others held the hands of their ill child and the hands of their other children as the line moved forward to enter the plane.

The flight crew greeted the passengers as they boarded the plane for their all-expense paid trip to the North Pole and personal visits with Santa Claus.

Sparkling garland hung on the overhead compartments and cut out snowflakes dangled from the ceiling.

HOLIDAY MAGIC, a mix of community spirit and care, fueled this year’s United Airlines Fantasy Flight 2016, a program in its 27th year of operation. Through the support of United Airlines, its partnership with Children’s Hospice International, the giving of dozens of local and regional corporations and hundreds of volunteers including United employees who donated their time and talent, United’s Flight to the North Pole prepared to depart.

Francis Parker and her husband had eagerly anticipated this day since May when the youngest of their four sons, Case, age 2, was diagnosed with cancer. While waiting to board Fantasy Flight 2016, Parker’s boys had crayoned letters to Santa and mailed them with the help from members of Herndon Rotary Club, Paul Williams, Rotarian, said, “it’s a happy time here today, to celebrate with the families.”

As the boys colored, Parker said, “Case is receiving treatment at Walter Reed. His nurses told us about the flight when Case was diagnosed. We woke them up this morning, put them in the car and didn’t tell them where they were going until we got to the airport. Everybody’s been wonderful.” Looking around, she added: “What a great opportunity this is.”

Although Case’s brothers had flown before, this was to be Case’s first flight, as it was for many children aboard Fantasy Flight 2016. While the flight attendants helped the families settle in, United Airline’s Captain “Bubba” welcomed everyone aboard. He explained that there were some very special rules on the nonstop flight to the North Pole.

“Window blinds have to remain down,” he said, adding that the plane uses a very special fuel, making it travel so fast it’ll be extremely bright outside.

“And everyone knows, where Santa lives,” Captain Bubba said, “it’s a secret, only United has clearance from Santa Claus” to land at the North Pole.

The flight is real and so is the destination. Sandy Steinmeyer, a United Airlines flight attendant and key organizer of the Dulles Fantasy Flights said: “All Fantasy Flights across the United States and Guam, a total of 14 flights, will really take off this year.”

According to Randy Cox, managing director United Airlines, United Airlines donates the fuel for the flights while employees, flight attendants, crews and support teams donate their time.

Julia Wislocka, United Airlines staff representative corporate communication, commented that there is no doubt in her mind Fantasy Flight is the most amazing event of United Airlines. She said, “It’s a great example of employees and the community coming together. The event, takes hundreds of volunteers, and the concourse where the families will arrive, really is transformed to be the North Pole.”

Terry Edwards, a United employee for 27 years, was Mrs. Santa. Before the plane departed, she agreed and said, “In their mindset, the children are at the North Pole. They buy into it 100 percent.”

While Sleigh Ride One traveled at near warp speed, it made quick time to the North Pole but not before flight attendants could treat everyone to apple slices and sweets. As Fantasy Flight 2016 prepared to land, Captain Bubba came on the intercom one last time. To everyone on board, he wished: “Fill your days with laughter; fill them with peace and with joy. Welcome to the North Pole.”

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Destination: North Pole

The children, their families and the support teams deplaned. They headed up the jet bridge to the concourse. There, much to their surprise, with eyes wide open, storybook characters, Minions, Storm Troopers and hundreds of volunteers had formed a gauntlet, and were applauding their arrival. High fives were slapped; children hugged Minions and the Red, White and Blues band played. Even the Racing Presidents of the Washington Nationals stepped up to the children and gave out hugs.

Earlier, Cox described the effort it took to transform the concourse to be the North Pole. “We begin decorating the night before at 6 p.m. It takes 350 volunteers to decorate the North Pole. All the work and the decorations are donated.”

Jim Lynch from Michigan attended the event with his teenage daughter Emily. Lynch said, “Emily completed a weeklong research program at NIH. This is a fun day. And to just walk off that plane, we were blown away.”

Another element of the day is the impact the event has for the siblings of a challenged child. Wislocka said, “Today’s event is so important for the sick kids, but also for their siblings because their parents’ focus has been on the sick child. United Airline employees and our volunteers make sure the siblings get just as much attention and love.”

Xin Huang’s 3-year-old daughter, Heidi, attends the Maryland School for the Deaf and Blind. While Heidi rested in her wheelchair, Huang said that this was the second time they had attended the event. She added, “It’s an important family event. Last year, every other month, Heidi’s brother, Leon, would ask about it. He absolutely believes we are at the North Pole.”

DURING THEIR VISIT to the North Pole, guests experienced an entertainment line up of 13 bands; various support groups such as Summit Therapy Animals and Red Door Salon and entertainers like Aerial Graffiti Jugglers, who all donated their time and talents for the cause.

But the event everyone waited for was his or her personal visit with Santa and Mrs. Claus. Each child had an extended time with Santa and received a bag full of age-appropriate toys or items, purchased specifically for that child.

At 21, Montel Flipping was the oldest invitee. He sat in his wheelchair, eyes alert. His mother, Sonja Flipping said, “Montel was diagnosed with pediatric brain cancer at Children’s Hospital. This has been a 4-year journey, and God is awesome.” She added that Montel, her only child, had been accepted into the Police Cadet Program one month prior to his diagnosis. “Where trust is, is what matters most,” she said as they left to line for Montel’s visit with Santa.

Ashtin Parker from West Springfield High School and Bryson McDaniels from Lake Braddock High School were two of the gift purchasers for the event. Parker said, “This year we got to buy 800 toys.”

Montel Flipping and Mrs. Minnesota, Morgan Bredde, enjoy a moment together during festivities sponsored by United Airlines at their Fantasy Flight celebration. Bredde is an Ambassador for Children’s Hospice International (CHI), a non-profit organization that partnered with United Airlines. CHI completes the circle of care and improves the quality of life for children with life-altering illnesses.

McDaniels added: “We got toys every child would like, from ages newborn to 21. If we can make a difference, we will do this any day.” Both Parker and McDaniels had formed gift and fund drives, Ashtin’s drive was named Ashtin’s Angels and McDaniels was Bryson’s Blessings. McDaniels added: “We really put a lot of thought into what to buy, headphones, books, puzzles, then he added: “The headphones are for the 21-year old.” For more information about Fantasy Flight, contact United Airlines. For more information about Children’s Hospice International that ensures medical, psychological, social, and spiritual support to all children with life-threatening conditions and their families, contact www.CHInline.org.
Rocking the Chair

By KENNETH B. LOURIE

On this 21st of October, I wrote a CB person (Citizens Band radio), good buddy, but right now, I am in the middle of both my four-to-five week infirmary leave and the time I have to spend away from those I love. But I am not alone. I have a terminal disease, a condition that is incurable, but not fatal. My disease is not going to take over my mind. And the stronger and healthier that mind is, the more it will help us to mind our business. So I have to reinforce it. Anything to make sure it matters that can be.

At noon, nearly eight years post initial symptoms (New Year’s Day 2009), mostly I can handle what happens to me, so far anyway. I get a kick out of knowing this: I will not have, emotionally by my circumstances, although I am somewhat compromised, physically. Nothing I have felt, at least, so far.

I am living life in a way that is not only joyous, but also meaningful. I am thrilled to live with any of it, ‘live’ being the operative word.

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I've written before, and heard many times already, that the operative word. “Nothing I can't live with, however. Actually, for me, more than bad since I was diagnosed in late February of 2009. I was not only not happy about that, emotionally, by my circumstances, although I am somewhat compromised, physically. Nothing I have felt, at least, so far.

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House Doctors of McLean Celebrates One Year Anniversary

When Richard Marzan opened House Doctors in the fall of 2015, it was because he saw an opportunity to meet two needs: he wanted to begin a new career after retiring from the Army and the community needed a trustworthy, professional handyman service. Now Marzan and his team celebrate the one-year anniversary of House Doctors of McLean.

“The first year of a new business is always a building year and we’ve done that. Now that we’ve laid a solid foundation, we’re moving forward with plenty of lessons learned and a bright future. We exceeded all expectations and we’re receiving strong community support — I’m very excited about year two,” Marzan said.

House Doctors of McLean offers professional handyman services in Dunn Loring, Falls Church, Great Falls, McLean, Arlington, Oakton, Tysons and Vienna as well as the surrounding areas.

Marzan, a retired Lieutenant Colonel, served in the United States Army for more than 27 years. He is a ROTC Distinguished Graduate and in 1995 graduate of the Armor Officer Basic Course at Fort Knox, Ky. Marzan earned his Bachelor’s degree in Industrial Management from the Polytechnic University of Puerto Rico and his Master’s degree in Administration from Central Michigan University. He is also a graduate from the Captains Career Course and the United States Army Command and General Staff College. Marzan’s decorations include the Defense Meritorious Service Medal, Meritorious Service Medal, Iraq and Afghanistan Campaign Medals, Humanitarian Service Medal, NATO Medal, and the Parachutist and Rigger Badge.

“It retired from the military in 2015 and I didn’t want to transition into an office job or government work. The vision I had was with the help of the Army Retirement Services, I met with a business coach who opened my eyes to franchising. When I talked to the folks at House Doctors, I knew this business would be a good fit for me and for the region I call home,” Marzan said. “House Doctors is a professional handyman service and that means any repair we do will be done right.”

House Doctors’ technicians specialize in projects that take two hours to two days to complete, such as light remodeling and repairs of decks, doors, bathrooms and kitchens; repairing drywall; painting; exterior painting; making home modifications and much more.

For more information about House Doctors of McLean or for an estimate on your project, call 703-639-0391, email HD535@HouseDoctors.com or visit http://houedoctors.com/handyman-mclean/.

BULLETIN BOARD

To have community events listed in the Connection, send to connectionnewspapers.com/Calendar/. The deadline for submissions is noon on Friday.

THROUGH DEC. 18
The Container Store Annual Holiday Hugs Program in Partnership with Children’s National Health System Collections are going on now through December 18th and gifts will be delivered to the hospital the week of December 19th. The Container Store is thrilled to continue its annual, nationwide signature giving program, Holiday Hugs. In each of our Washington, DC-area stores, we are partnering with Children’s National Health System to collect and deliver new, unwrapped gifts to their young patients who are spending the holidays in the hospital. Customers can participate in the Holiday Hugs program by dropping off new, unwrapped books, small toys and stuffed animals, toiletries, gift cards and kid-friendly stocking stuffers in collection bins at our Washington, DC, Arlington, VA, Reston, Tysons Corner and Rockville locations.

WEDNESDAY/DEC. 7
Decluttering Seminar. The Retiree Real Estate Education Association announces free public service seminar for December, 2016, on Decluttering (McLean High School, 7 p.m.). The seminar is a part of a series of 8 free seminars on real estate issues unique to retirees. Seminars are free, in the evenings at County public schools, and are for an estimated one hour. All registrations go to Retiree-RealEstate.org.

ONGOING
17th Annual Wish List Angels Project Wish List Angels directly help families in local elementary schools, area shelters, alternative housing and children in foster care. Your generosity and support will perpetuate the essence of the holiday season. This year - the Wish List Project has partnered with Buzz Aldrin, Herndon and Hutchison elementary schools when we learned that there were so many students struggling to make ends meet including basic needs. In conjunction with the school guidance counselors and social workers, we happily added individuals to our Wish List Project to help spread some holiday cheer. Some of their stories were difficult to hear – the father in need of a heart transplant, the child battling leukemia, the mother fighting cancer, the teenage girl who survived mental and physical abuse working on her college degree in psychology to help others. The list grew and once again, we reach out to our Wish List Angels to work their magic this holiday season.

Last year our community generously granted wishes to over 400 individuals in our community during the holiday season. Please look at the wish lists and take this opportunity to spread some cheer this December. For wish list and payment information visit www.sregnsgenius.com/go/ "WishListAngels2017_" .
Washington Redskins starting quarterback Kirk Cousins answers questions from the media during a press conference for the campaign’s kickoff on Nov. 29. Drivers who share the “Phones Down. Touchdown...” graphic on social media with the hashtag #PhoneDownTouchdown will be entered to win a month of free travel on the 495 and 95 Express Lanes.

Quarterback Promotes ‘Phones Down. Touchdown.’ Initiative

Redskins’ quarterback urges region to put phones down while behind the wheel.

By Fallon Forbush
The Connection

Washington Redskins starting quarterback Kirk Cousins kicked off the “Phones Down. Touchdown,” safe driving campaign in McLean to spread awareness of the dangers and consequences of using cellphones while driving.

“I’ve made a career out of playing offense playing quarterback,” Cousins said during the press conference. “When I’m behind the wheel, I drive defensively. I don’t text or look at my phone while driving because it’s dangerous. No text or phone is worth risking your life or the lives of others.”

Texting for just five seconds behind the wheel is like driving blindfolded across an entire football field, he said. “If I get sacked in a game, I can get back up and move onto the next play—for the most part,” he said. “But when you text and drive, you might not get back up.”

He encouraged people to apply positive peer pressure when they see the foul being committed. “Speak up and tell them to put the Phones Down,” he said. “Tell them to wait. If you’re in the car, don’t let a distracted driver make an excuse. No matter the call or the text, it’s not worth it.”

FRIENDS WHO HAVE DIED in car accidents is part of the reason Cousins was willing to be the face of the campaign. His college teammate and former Michigan State punter Mike Sadler, 24, died in a car accident in Wisconsin in July.

“In 2016 year-to-date, [Fairfax County is] at 35,000 crashes approximately and 29 percent of those have been attributed to distracted driving,” Cpt. Bob Blakley, commander of the Fairfax County Police Department Traffic Division, said during the press conference.

That’s more than 10,000 car accidents so far this year due to distracted driving, and even more citations. POLICE OFFICERS have issued more than 13,000 citations to drivers in the county for distracted driving, Blakley said. But Blakley said enforcement alone is not the answer to the problem.

“It’s a combination of aggressive enforcement but more importantly a huge education and awareness campaign. This is what will truly make the difference.”

Do you think the campaign will make us safer?

Cpt. Jim De Ford, commander of the Fairfax Division of the Virginia State Police

“Distracted driving has become an epidemic and one too many people are too willing to accept as the norm, and too many people are willing to be a part of the problem rather than be the solution,” he said. “By the solution I mean ignore the phone, and that’s even hard for me to do I’ll admit, but I try to do it.”

If drivers fail to ignore their phones while driving, De Ford said that he and his officers will not be ignoring them. “I can assure you that if a Virginia state police trooper observes you texting while driving or determines that your texting caused a crash, then you will be cited,” he said.

Fairfax County has not been immune to the epidemic.

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“It’s a combination of aggressive enforcement but more importantly a huge education and awareness campaign,” he said. “This is what will truly make the difference.”

He encouraged the public to take the time to take the campaign’s pledge at www.phonedowntouchdown.com and to talk about their experiences with texting while driving.

The “Phones Down. Touchdown.” Campaign is sponsored by Transurban, which manages and develops toll road networks in the U.S. and Australia. The company, which hosted the press conference at its McLean office, operates the 495 and 95 Express Lanes in Northern Virginia.

According to Mike McGurk, a spokesperson for Transurban, drivers who share the “Phones Down. Touchdown.” graphic on social media with the hashtag #PhoneDownTouchdown will be entered to win a month of free travel on the Express Lanes. A new winner will be selected every week throughout December and January.

Washington Redskins starting quarterback Kirk Cousins answers questions from the media during a press conference for the campaign’s kickoff on Nov. 29.

Supervisor John Cook (R-Braddock District), right, who is also the chair of the board’s Public Safety Committee, took the pledge to commit to keeping his Phones Down while behind the wheel. Cook, who attended the press conference with Kirk Cousins (left) is the author of the “Slow Down” campaign, which helps alert motorists to the dangers of speeding.

Viewpoints

Del. Marcus Simon (D-53)

“I think that having a nice and easy-to-remember catch phrase will keep it front of mind. Having a celebrity will get the kids involved. My son will catch me looking at my phone (while driving) and it’s not safe.”

That’s more than 10,000 car accidents so far this year due to distracted driving, and even more citations.

Cpt. Bob Blakley, commander of the Fairfax County Police Department Traffic Division

“The problem is growing and so we definitely need help from everybody to get it under control. Year to date, we have issued more than 13,000 citations for failing to pay full time and attention which includes texting while driving in Fairfax County. But enforcement’s not the answer to the problem. It’s a combination of aggressive enforcement but more importantly a huge education and awareness campaign. This is what will truly make the difference.”

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“You don’t have to wear a uniform to see the dangers and too often deadly consequence of distracted driving on the highway, but we see it every day. This is caused by people who fail to do their jobs when they’re on the highway and that’s just simply driving a car while they’re behind the wheel... the Virginia State Police proudly supports this traffic safety initiative... This is a pledge to do the right thing.”

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