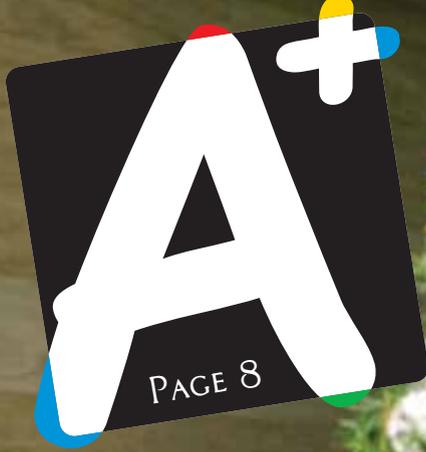


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PHOTO BY TIM PETERSON/THE CONNECTION



Burke CONNECTION

Gerry Staudte and his wife Barbara Nowak of Burke are Burke United Methodist members and have coordinated their congregation's hypothermia shelter week for the last seven years.

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THE CONNECTION
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NEWS



PHOTO CONTRIBUTED

Burke & Herbert Bank Regional Winner Dylan J. Fox with his Lake Braddock Secondary School Teacher Lesa Thompson and Principal Dave Thomas.

Burke Teen Wins Lights, Camera, Save Contest

Dylan J. Fox, a freshman at Lake Braddock Secondary School in Burke, will advance to the American Bankers Association (ABA) national competition, Lights, Camera, Save! His video, "Save Your Future!" was selected by a panel of local experts as the Burke & Herbert Bank preliminary round winner. The winning video combined sound financial advice with compelling imagery to capture the top prize.

The ABA Lights, Camera, Save! video contest challenged students, aged 13-18, across the nation to submit a 90-second video that would inspire other teens to use money wisely and promote the value of saving. As a Virginia participating bank, Burke & Herbert Bank was responsible for accepting and judging entries across the region.

"At Burke & Herbert Bank, we believe that building financial literacy is extremely important, especially among young people. This program is a great vehicle to get teens to see the benefits of using money wisely and saving for the future with messaging created by teens for teens," commented Burke & Herbert Bank Executive Vice President Terry Cole. "We're delighted with the variety and quality of the videos we received this year. All the students and schools that participated are to be congratulated for their great work."

The Bank will recognize Dylan's first place video with a \$350 gift card. His teacher, Lesa Thompson, also will be awarded a \$50 gift card for her support and inspiration.

Burke & Herbert Bank's judging team consisted of Patti North, Chair, Alexandria Film Festival; Mary Kimm, Editor and Publisher, The Connection Newspapers; Amy Granahan, Program Manager, Marketing, Economics and Personal Finance, Fairfax County Public Schools; Benjamin Lyon, TV Production & Photography Teacher, T.C. Williams High School, Alexandria City Public Schools; and the Bank's Executive Vice President and Marketing Director, Terry Cole.

As the Burke & Herbert Bank preliminary round winner, Dylan and his video will advance to the national competition. Students in the national competition can win \$1,000, \$2,500 or the grand prize of \$5,000, plus a scholarship for an educator from their school to attend the Jump\$tart National Educator Conference. Winners will be announced during America Saves Week in February 2017.

Ryan Henry Potts, a student at West Potomac Academy was selected as the runner-up for his video, "More Sense Means More Cents." He will receive a \$100 gift card from Burke & Herbert Bank. His teacher, Birgit Buhleier, will receive a \$50 gift card for her support. Fahar Minhaj from Hayfield Secondary School will receive a \$50 gift card for the third place finish of his video, "Savings for the Future," and his teacher, Geoffrey Pietrovito, also will receive a \$50 gift card.

For more information, visit burkeandherbertbank.com.

SCHOOL NOTES

Send notes to the Connection at south@connectionnewspapers.com or call 703-778-9416. Deadline is Friday. Dated announcements should be submitted at least two weeks prior to the event.

Katherine Hough, Fairfax Station, has been awarded the Boeing Scholarship for outstanding academic achievement in the Volgenau School of Engineering at George Mason University.

Vocal musicians from 12 Fairfax County public schools have been named to the Virginia Honors Choir for 2016. This select choir is open only to the top 125 singers from around the Commonwealth of Virginia, and is the highest honor a choir student can attain during his or her high school career. Thirty-one Fairfax County Public Schools (FCPS) students were selected for the

SEE SCHOOL NOTES, PAGE 9

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NEWS

Sheriff's Deputy Cleared in Fatal Shooting

Commonwealth's Attorney: homicide was justified self-defense.

BY TIM PETERSON
THE CONNECTION

In a decision released Dec. 16, Commonwealth's Attorney Ray Morrogh cleared Fairfax County Master Deputy Sheriff Patrick McPartlin of any criminal wrongdoing in the fatal shooting of Yovani Amaya Gomez that took place Aug. 15 outside Inova Fairfax Hospital.

Morrogh's decision comes after receiving the results of the Fairfax County Police Department criminal investigation on Nov. 15.

McPartlin was one of the sheriff deputies involved in the death of inmate Natasha McKenna at the the Fairfax County Adult Detention Center. McKenna, a woman with a history of mental illness, died in February 2015, a few days after she was restrained, shackled, hooded and shocked with a taser four times in an attempt to move her to the Alexandria jail. Morrogh decided against any charges against the deputies, including McPartlin, in that case as well.

Police had previously released some details of the chain of events leading up to McPartlin shooting Gomez in August. Morrogh's report added further information to the timeline, which included Gomez be-

ing taken in for medical attention for possible dehydration and/or mental health episode, and his discharge with no diagnosis for either. After being escorted to the bus stop outside Inova by a security guard, another pair of guards responded to a report of Gomez wielding a weapon.

Gomez hurt one of the guards, Morrogh says, who also requested backup from law enforcement. MDS McPartlin was one of two deputies guarding a prisoner at the hospital and responded to the call for help.

Gomez charged at McPartlin, who Morrogh says attempted to back up and then began firing.

MORROGH'S REPORT quotes McPartlin as saying, "... before I shot I think I was trying to get back but he was too close so I had to shoot."

McPartlin did not remember giving Gomez any commands prior to shooting, Morrogh says, though other guards who were at the scene said the deputy did ask Gomez to calm down and stop charging and put the apparent weapon down.

Earlier in the day, Gomez first approached Fairfax County Police officer K. Woodward in his cruiser on Little River Turnpike on what was an extremely hot afternoon.

Morrogh said it was clear to Fairfax County Police officer K. Woodward that "Mr. Gomez did not speak English proficiently."

Woodward attempted to ask him if he wanted to hurt himself using the Google Translate cell phone app. Woodward had also summoned paramedics to check Gomez out physically.

Rescue determined Gomez's vital signs were within normal ranges, Morrogh reports.

But when Gomez appeared to answer in the affirmative with "Sí," he did want to harm himself, Woodward asked that he be taken to Inova Fairfax Hospital.

Morrogh says the medics described Gomez as non-combative, mumbling in Spanish and at one time pointing to his head and saying "voices."

Gomez was examined at the hospital by a physician and Spanish-speaking nurse, the report continues.

"They advised Officer Woodward that Mr. Gomez denied any mental health issues and further said that he did not want to hurt himself," Morrogh said. "They also told Officer Woodward that Mr. Gomez told them that he had a stomach ache and didn't feel well."

Gomez's diagnosis after a physical exami-

nation and mental condition assessment was that he was not in distress but suffering from "general weakness," according to Morrogh's report.

Old Dominion Security guard Ezra Carter found Gomez in the lobby after he was discharged some time between 8 p.m. and 9 p.m. Carter used an interpreter to find that Gomez wanted to be taken to a homeless shelter. The guard then walked Gomez to the bus stop, Morrogh's report says.

In the conclusion of his seven-page investigation report, Morrogh reiterates Gomez charged at McPartlin with what appeared to be a sword but later turned out to be a sign post pulled from the ground.

"Reasonably perceiving himself to be in imminent danger of death or great bodily harm, MDS McPartlin, while retreating, discharged his weapon until the threat was abated," Morrogh says in the report. "In my legal opinion, this is a case of justifiable homicide and no individual is criminally responsible for the death of Yovani A. Gomez."

IN A RESPONSE STATEMENT, Sheriff Stacey Kincaid said, "Our condolences go to Mr. Gomez's family. Now that Commonwealth's Attorney Ray Morrogh has released his findings that no criminal

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Power of Citizen Advocacy

On Monday, December 19th, the 2nd year anniversary of the federal passage of the ABLER Act, Delegate Eileen Filler-Corn (D-41) joined ABLEnow for a press conference to commemorate the opening of the first ABLEnow account in Virginia. Fittingly, this account was opened for Natalie Beck, whose parents first came up with the idea for ABLE accounts several years ago.

"The ABLE Act is proof of the power of citizen advocacy," said Filler-Corn. "From the kitchen table of Catherine and Stephen Beck in the 41st District, to President Obama's desk and to Governor McAuliffe's pen, twice, the 2015 bill and the 2016 bill both experienced a long journey. A journey that Stephen unfortunately was not able to see come to a close. But Stephen's legacy will live on through his daughter Natalie, and through these ABLE Accounts and the families that they will help."

Delegate Filler-Corn introduced and helped pass the Virginia Achieving a Better Life Experience (ABLE) Act during the 2015 Virginia General Assembly Session. This law makes it possible for individuals with disabilities and their families to open tax-free savings accounts to cover important expenses such as education and housing.

Other guests that joined Delegate Filler-Corn and the Beck family at the press con-



PHOTOS CONTRIBUTED

The first ABLEnow account in Virginia was opened for Natalie Beck, whose parents first came up with the idea for ABLE accounts several years ago.

ference included U.S. Rep. Don Beyer (D-8), Mary Morris, the CEO of Virginia529 College Savings Plan, ABLEnow, Michael Morris with the ABLE National Resource Center and Sara Hart Weir with the ABLE

Del. Eileen Filler-Corn (D-41) joins ABLEnow in commemorating the opening of the first ABLEnow account in Virginia.



The guests at the press conference commemorating the opening of the first ABLEnow account in Virginia.

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OPINION

Congress Coming Together To Find and Fund Faster Cures

BY BARBARA COMSTOCK
U.S. REPRESENTATIVE (R-IO)



On Dec. 8, I joined with a bipartisan group of House and Senate members, and the Speaker of the House, as the Speaker signed the 21st Century Cures Act. It was a joyful occasion as we concluded this year's session with what I believe is one of the most important and game-changing pieces of legislation passed this year. It was signed into law days later by the President and supported by more than 700 research, doctor and patient advocacy groups and provides \$4.8 billion in new research investments to the National Institutes of Health (NIH).

At the ceremony, Tennessee Senator Lamar Alexander recounted the testimony of Dr. Francis Collins, director of the NIH, who has highlighted the new, exciting cures possible within the next 10 years: an artificial pancreas to help people with diabetes; medicine to limit the effects of Alzheimer's; a vaccine for Zika; a vaccine for HIV; a vaccine for the flu; the use of regenerative medicine using our own cells to restore a damaged heart; and non-addictive pain medicines that will help curb opioid addiction.

Imagine how different our health care system could be with these innovations. It is no wonder that Dr. Collins calls NIH the "National Institute of Hope." In Loudoun County, so many of us have seen that hope in the inspirational advocacy work of families such as Mark and Ellyn Miller, who lost their daughter, Gabriella,

COMMENTARY

to cancer, and Chris and Roya Giordano, who lost their son, Mathias. The 21st Century Cures Act honors their efforts with \$1.8 billion for cancer research, which will support the Cancer Moonshot initiative.

Currently, there are only 500 treatments for 10,000 known diseases. With the mapping of the human genome and advances over the past several decades, we have more genetic clues about cancer and other diseases. But we still need to remove barriers to increase research collaboration, identify diseases earlier through personalized medicine, reform the FDA and modernize clinical trials, and remove unnecessary regulation for developing new medical apps. This legislation does this and streamlines the entire biomedical ecosystem.

With the 21st Century Cures Act now law, many of NIH's initiatives will be enhanced — such as the BRAIN Initiative that will help in fighting diseases like Alzheimer's. The bill will also concentrate funding on NIH's Precision Medicine Initiative that will focus research dollars on genetic, lifestyle and environmental variations of disease.

The Inova Schar Cancer Institute in Fairfax is one of the premier cancer centers in our region that can be part of this new era of innovation. Last month, they announced a new research partnership with the University of Virginia to develop the Global Genomics and Bioinformatics Research Institute, located at the Inova Center for Personalized Health in Fairfax.

I joined our private and public advocates at the announcement where they explained the mission: "The institute will recruit researchers, scientists and investigators who will engage in collaborative research focused on genomics, functional biology, bioinformatics, biologically driven engineering, precision medicine, translational research, development of targeted therapeutics and commercialization of new discoveries." This partnership will also work to achieve designation by the National Cancer Institute as a Comprehensive Cancer Center and establish a regional campus of the UVA School of Medicine at Inova. More partnerships are anticipated, as well as support from my former colleagues in the General Assembly, led by Speaker Bill Howell. As Todd Stottlemeyer, CEO of the Inova Center for Personalized Health, said, "This new partnership will further expand Inova's ground-breaking research in precision medicine and help us to realize the promise of personalized health."

While the legislation advances research and medical breakthroughs and provides for reforms and investments for faster cures and treatments, it also incorporates provisions we had passed to reform our mental health system and fight against the heroin and the opioid epidemic, which was recently declared a Public Health Emergency in Virginia.

This is just the beginning of what will be a new chapter in medical innovation. Virginia can play a critical and lifesaving role in bringing faster cures and treatments to patients plagued with these cruel diseases. We in Congress must continue to be partners by seeking the best policies and investments that allow this innovation to soar.

Fairfax Police Reform Is Well Underway

BY PHILLIP NIEDZIELSKI-EICHNER

I endorse the Connection Newspaper's recent editorial on the progress Fairfax County has made implementing the recommendations of the Ad Hoc Police Practices Review Commission, on which I had the honor of serving as chairman of the Use of Force Subcommittee. I have had the opportunity to interact with many members of the Fairfax Police Department, ranging from commanders to precinct-level supervisors and officers, all of whom I hold in high regard. We have a fine police department that we are fortunate to have protecting us day-in and day-out.

While the August 2013 shooting death of John Geer was the catalyst for the commission's formation, our charge was to assess the Department's performance against national best practices. As we executed against this charge, we identified both areas for improvement and mechanisms we believed would strengthen the public's trust and confidence in the department.

Forming a commission is a time-honored tool by public officials to delay action — or avoid it altogether — since there are always significant barriers to achieving change to deep-rooted organizational practices, traditions and culture. I commend both the Fairfax Board of Supervisors and the Police Department, particularly its chief and command leadership, with ensuring that the Police Commission's work is not sitting on the shelf gathering dust.

With my seven-month commission experience and a year's worth of persistent focus on implementation alongside a dedicated subset of fellow commissioners, I can state without reservation that both the letter and spirit of the commission's recommendations have been embraced by Fairfax County.

Fairfax County is well on the way toward approving and implementing the preponderance of the commission's recommendations. Of note in this regard are the following:

❖ The two-pronged approach to independent Police Department oversight advocated by the commission and recently approved by the

Board of Supervisors is significant in light of historical resistance to civilian review of police actions.

❖ The changes directed by the supervisors and Chief Roessler with regard to the Police Department's openness and transparency are substantial and have already helped regain the public trust lost, in part, because of the dismal handling of the Geer case.

❖ The county's investment in Diversion First, which provides treatment rather than jail for nonviolent people with mental illness, and broad-based police officer training in crisis intervention techniques, are already paying dividends. Those with mental illness are being treated with greater sensitivity to their affliction, easing the potential for unnecessary suffering, while also reducing the potential for officer injuries and the need for the use of force. Ultimately, this will also help insure a more effective use of tax dollars.

As important and forward leaning as these

SEE POLICE REFORM, PAGE 5

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Filling Oversight Positions

Supervisors outline procedures for bringing on police auditor and Civilian Review Panel.

One week after voting to establish Fairfax County's first Civilian Review Panel for police, Public Safety Committee chair supervisor John Cook (R-Braddock) and Board of Supervisors Chairman Sharon Bulova outlined steps to be taken to fill the nine-member panel, as well as hire an independent police auditor.

Near the conclusion of the Dec. 13 Public Safety Committee meeting, Cook said a letter will be sent to organizations around the county by the end of December inviting them to submit nominees for the review panel. Those groups include minority organizations, disability services, interfaith groups and others that were part of the Election Process Improvement Commission.

Each supervisor will also be able to nominate individuals for the panel.

Cook said all nominations should be received by Jan. 31, 2017. For the next two weeks those applications will be available to the supervisors, who will then review them in closed session on Feb. 14.

On Sept. 20, the board created another

oversight entity, the office of the independent police auditor. Both bodies were recommendations from the Ad Hoc Police Practices Review Commission.

The members of the Civilian Review Panel will be volunteers, while the Independent Auditor and staff will be paid Fairfax County employees.

The job posting for auditor has closed, and received many applications, Bulova said. Six candidates have been determined by Fairfax County human resources to fulfill the requirements of the advertisement, supervisor Penny Gross (D-Mason) said.

Bulova said she's appointed a screening committee for the auditor applicants, including Auditor of the Board Jim Shelton, Connection Newspapers publisher and Ad Hoc Commission member Mary Kimm, Ad Hoc Commission member Adrian Steel, chair of the commission's Independent Oversight and Investigations subcommittee Jack Johnson, and supervisors Gross and Cook.

— TIM PETERSON

Police Reform Underway

FROM PAGE 4

steps are, I believe the recrafting and re-writing of the Police Department's Use of Force policy, also known as General Order 540, warrants particular note. The new Use of Force policy encompasses the commission recommendations, which also incorporated use-of-force recommendations made by the independent Police Executive Research Forum. It gives emphasis to the sanctity of human life, dignity and liberty of all persons as its overarching value or driving theme; and it calls for de-escalation as the strategy of first resort when confronted with a threat rather than the use of deadly force.

Every member of the Fairfax Police Department, from command leadership to police officer will receive training under General Order 540 by the end of January, 2017. Police officer performance will be assessed against the standards set in this policy, while recruitment and vetting of police officer candidates will focus on the abilities and temperament that comport with the values captured therein.

While the preponderance of our recommendations have been approved and are being implemented, there are exceptions. For example, we called for all officers being outfitted with body worn cameras, to complement the dashboard cameras now mounted in each patrol vehicle. We believe such cameras will benefit both the public

and the police officer. The supervisors delayed consideration of this recommendation for important matters of budget and privacy concerns, which I believe will ultimately be overcome.

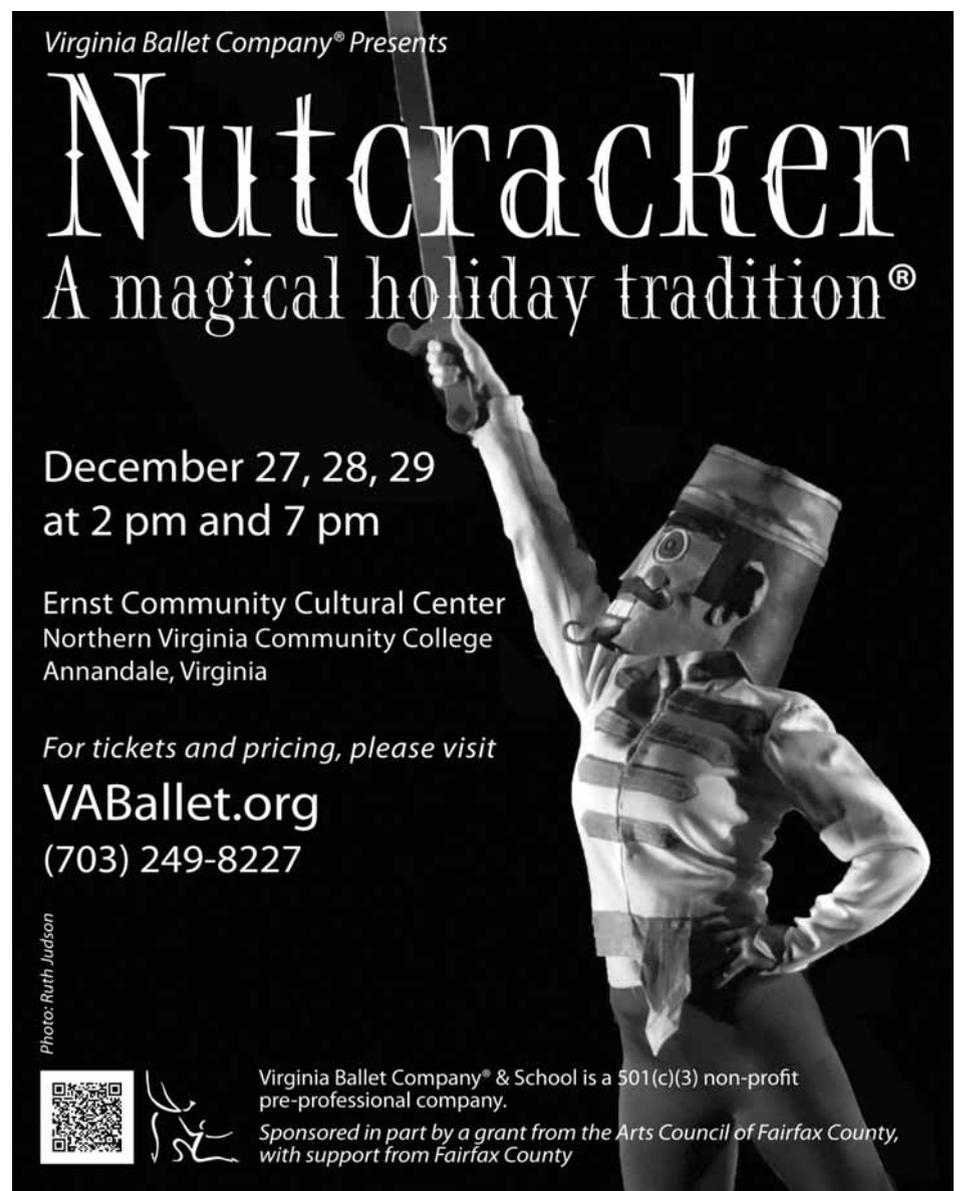
I encourage everyone who is interested to review the Police Commission recommendations progress report at <http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/policecommission/progressreport.htm>. In summary, you will find that 178 of the 202 recommendations (88 percent) have been approved and are either in process of being implemented or have already been implemented; 15 (7.4 percent) are still under review; and 9 (4.5 percent) have been rejected.

The evidence so far is that the deep-rooted change of the nature and spirit advocated by the commission is more achievable now than even the most optimistic expected. This noted, I caution that the transformative progress I have observed can only be sustained over time with the continued county and Police Department leadership commitment, the active involvement of the police rank and file officers and most critically continued community participation, monitoring and oversight.

Phillip Niedzielski-Eichner served as chairman of the Use of Force Subcommittee of the Ad Hoc Police Practices Review Commission, and continues service on the Implementation Committee.



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HOLIDAY EVENTS

PHOTOS BY TIM PETERSON/THE CONNECTION



Gerry Staudte and his wife Barbara Nowak of Burke are Burke United Methodist members and have coordinated their congregation's hypothermia shelter week for the last seven years.



Just before 5 p.m. on Dec. 14, the Burke United Methodist Church kitchen is bustling with volunteers. They're preparing soup, snacks and dinner meals for between 25 and 30 homeless guests who will spend the night at the church.

Cold No More

BY TIM PETERSON
THE CONNECTION

Just before five p.m. on Dec. 14, the Burke United Methodist Church kitchen is bustling with volunteers. They're preparing soup, snacks and dinner meals for between 25 and 30 homeless guests who will spend the night at the church.

The church hosted homeless guests all week as part of Fairfax County's hypothermia prevention shelter program that runs from the end of November through March.

During that time, emergency homeless shelters managed by nonprofit organizations and the faith-based community will have a no turn-away policy. Around 40 churches participate in one form or another.

Gerry Staudte and his wife Barbara Nowak of Burke are Burke United Methodist members and have coordinated their congregation's hypothermia shelter week for the last seven years.

Staudte said it takes 175 volunteers to either man shifts or make donations to make the operation run each year.

"Our hearts go out to these people," he said. "The generosity of the people in this church is unbelievable."

Staudte said the heavy emphasis on missions was the reason he joined the church in the first place.

"You look around and see people get warm – there may have been events in their lives that caused them to become homeless, that wasn't their fault," said Staudte. "In the past four years, there's not been a single death due to hypothermia. The system is working."

Last year across Fairfax County, around 1,000 different or unique individuals took advantage of Fairfax County hypothermia prevention services, according to Abby Dunner, singles program manager for the county's Office to Prevent and End Homelessness.

Burke United Methodists hosts hypothermia prevention shelter.



Between 25 and 30 homeless people spend the night at Burke United Methodist Church during their week hosting part of the Fairfax County hypothermia prevention program.



After or during their meal, homeless guests at Burke United Methodist Church can watch television or movies during their overnight stay.



In addition to the case management, guests at BUMC are able to choose from donated clothing, hats and gloves, all of which comes from the congregation.

Dunner said the homeless population has come down over the last eight years, "but there's still a long way to go."

That's why case management has been a central part of the hypothermia prevention program for the last decade.

The county provides health services, basic medication, rapid rehousing and permanent supported housing programs through representatives who visit one site each week during the hypothermia shelter program.

Each shelter site also has a case manager from one of four non-profits on hand as a facilitator and counselor.

At Burke United Methodist, the Fairfax-based non-profit FACETS provides a counselor-case manager to meet with clients, many of whom come to Burke on a bus or van from the Lamb Center, a day-time drop-in shelter in Fairfax. At 7 a.m. the next morning, most head back.

Other non-profits helping manage hypothermia shelters around Fairfax County are Cornerstones, New Hope Housing and Northern Virginia Family Services.

In addition to the case management, guests at BUMC are able to choose from donated clothing, hats and gloves, all of which comes from the congregation.

"This prepares our hearts to celebrate Christmas," said Nowak. "Christ asked us to donate, to reach out to those in need. It's so cold and this is a need. We're glad to be able to contribute."

Those seeking shelter can call Fairfax County coordinated services planning at 703-222-0880. Anyone who sees or knows of an individual in need of shelter can call the Fairfax County Police non-emergency number at 703-691-2131 and an officer will be sent to pick them up and transport to a shelter.

For more information on the Fairfax County Hypothermia prevention program, visit www.fairfaxcounty.gov/homeless/hypothermia-prevention.

CALENDAR

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

ONGOING

Springfield Town Center Toy Drive through Dec. 24 located at 6500 Springfield Mall, Springfield. Springfield Town Center is partnering with America's Adopt A Soldier Foundation to sponsor a Toy Drive to gather new toys to be donated to children undergoing treatment at Walter Reed Medical Center. Please bring new toys to the bin located next to Guest Services, on the Lower Level near Starbucks to donate and bring joy to a child struggling with illness during this Holiday Season.
6500 Springfield Mall, Springfield.

Bob Brown Puppets Holiday Show 10:30 a.m. Old Town Hall, 3999 University Dr, Fairfax. Join the City of Fairfax every Monday morning at 10:30am for Funday Monday. Funday Monday will offer a variety of children's activities and entertainment in Old Town Hall. Admission: Free. Sponsored by the City of Fairfax Commission on the Arts. 703-385-7858
www.fairfaxva.gov/culturalarts

'Storytime & Craft' at Lucy Activewear Every Friday in December at 10:30 a.m. Lucy Activewear 11899 Grand Commons Avenue, Fairfax. An opportunity to get holiday shopping done in peace. Lucy Activewear will be hosting 'Storytime & Craft.' This event is appropriate for ages 3-8. Please sign up.

Bull Run Festival of Lights and Holiday Village Nov. 23 - Jan. 8 7700 Bull Run Dr. Centreville. Every year from Thanksgiving until just after New Year's Day the Bull Run Festival of Lights will be in session. A 2.5 mile stretch will be illuminated by holiday light displays. The festival happens annually at Bull Run Regional Park in Centreville, Virginia. Drive the festival route from the comfort of your car; turn out



The Fairfax Choral Society will hold auditions on Tuesday Jan. 3 and Monday Jan. 9 both at 7 p.m. and both taking place at Fairfax Presbyterian Church 10723 Main Street, Fairfax. Celebrating its 55th anniversary, the Symphonic Chorus, directed by Dr. Douglas Mears, will perform Hollywood Goes Choral IV with the Washington Symphonic Brass and "Ode to Joy" Beethoven's Symphony No. 9 with the Fairfax Symphony Orchestra this spring. Weekly rehearsal will be held Mondays from 7:30 - 9:50 p.m. FCS also has an award-winning youth program featuring ten ensembles at three campuses located in Annandale, Centreville, and Vienna for singers ages 5 - 19. Contact the office to schedule an audition for one of our youth choruses or our adult Symphonic Chorus 703-642-3277 or office@fairfaxchoralsociety.org

your headlights and just follow the magical glow. After viewing the lights, bring your family and friends to the holiday village to enjoy rides, refreshments, and of course, photos with Santa Claus. The cost of driving through the light show is Mon-Thurs, \$15 per car ; Fri - Sun & Holidays, \$20 per car (vans w/ 15-34 people and motorcoaches cost extra - visit website for details) Want to avoid the crowds? Fridays, Saturdays, and Sundays are our busiest nights. Please take advantage of the Monday through Thursday discounted price and avoid a long wait.

"Ispirazione Italiana" Inspired by Italy Dec. 17 - Jan. 16, Bodzin Art Gallery 8900 Little River Turnpike, Fairfax. Watercolors by acclaimed artist and J member Judy Wengrovitz and special guest artist Eliana Strauss. sarah.berry@jccnv.org, 703-537-3075
Children's Theatre: "A Magical Christmas" Saturdays through Dec. 22, 1 p.m. Workhouse Arts Center, 9601 Ox Road, Lorton. A children's theatre performance for the holidays. There's something not right in the town of Believe. Santa hasn't stopped there for many years; in fact he doesn't even know the place exists! Joy's

grandfather decides to do something about it and make sure that this year's Christmas will be the most magical ever. Appropriate for all ages. Concessions available in lobby before the performance and at intermission. Cost: \$8 children, \$12 adults. workhousearts.org Cost: \$8 children, \$12 adults.

Senior Line Dancing 1 - 2 p.m. Little River Glen Senior Center 4001 Barker Ct, Fairfax. Line Dancing is a gentle, social form of aerobic activity. Studies have shown it aids in warding off Alzheimer's disease. No previous experience needed. Cost: \$5 per 8 week session. barbriba@hotmail.com 703-524-3739

Fairfax Rotary Club Meeting. 12:15-1:30 p.m. Mondays. American Legion, 3939 Oak St., Fairfax. Meetings with luncheon and program. fairfaxrotary.org.

Carolina Shag. Wednesdays. 6:30-10 p.m. Arlington/Fairfax Elks Lodge, 8421 Arlington Blvd., Fairfax. Free lessons at 7:30 p.m. No partners needed. Dinner menu. \$8. Under 21 free. nvshag.org.

FUN-Exercise. Thursdays, noon - 12:50 p.m. Grace Presbyterian Church Family Room, 7434 Bath St., Springfield. Inova certified exercise instructor leads a moderate level exercise class with music and current events conversation. Muscle, Balance, Strength Training using stretch bands and weights both standing and seated exercises. Instructor donation is \$5. moorefitt@yahoo.com or 703-499-6133.

EXERCISE PROGRAM Mondays and Fridays at 9:30 a.m. year-round at Lord of Life Lutheran Church, 5114 Twinbrook Rd. Fairfax. The exercises are for strength, balance and maintaining limberness. Contact SCFB office at 703-426-2824 for more information.

Cafe Ivrit (Hebrew Cafe). Wednesdays. 8:15-9:15 a.m. Jewish Community Center of Northern Virginia, 8900 Little River Turnpike, Fairfax. Shalom (hello) Did you always want to converse in Hebrew? Join Na'ama each week for conversational Hebrew. You will learn and practice Hebrew in a fun and interactive way while learning more about Israel. Free, however we ask that you try to attend regularly. RSVP Naama.Gold@jccnv.org.

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Holiday Grief

Workshop helps others deal with loss.

BY MARILYN CAMPBELL
THE CONNECTION

The holiday season is bittersweet for Jeanne Rorke. The days leading up to Christmas are filled with memories of her parents. Her mother committed suicide when Rorke was 12, and her father died on Christmas Eve eight years ago.

"No one really helped me through the grieving process," said Rorke, recalling her mother's death. "My family was like, 'Don't talk about it.' ... My Christmases have always been kind of sad ... even though I put on a happy face for my family."

Roarke joined about two dozen others at a workshop on handling grief during the holidays called, "Facing the Empty Chair: Surviving the Holidays after Losing a Loved One" at St. Aidan's Episcopal Church in Alexandria. From those who are preparing to celebrate a first Christmas without a loved one to those who've been grieving for decades, participants shared experiences, supported each other and gained tools for surviving the season while facing the reality of the empty chair in which their loved one once sat.

"The holidays can be time of longing for those who've lost someone," said Carey Gauzens, a licensed clinical social worker at the Center for Pastoral Counseling of Virginia in McLean. "The holidays are a time when you reflect on family, and it's hard for someone who's aware that that person isn't there."

At the workshop, Gauzens clarified some of the misinformation surrounding grief, especially during the holidays. "First and most important, is that normal grieving is really hard for most people. Some people believe the myth that grief lasts only for a few months, but it's hard to measure your healing because it's an up and down process, not a smooth, straight line."

Throughout the process, and particularly during the holidays, being able to tap into a source of strength other than oneself is a factor that Gauzen underscores: "It's important to have a support group, friends, a therapist."

Finding someone who is also grieving can



PHOTO COURTESY OF CAREY GAUZENS

Carey Gauzens of the the Center for Pastoral Counseling of Virginia in McLean, led a workshop on grieving during the holidays at St. Aidan's Episcopal Church in Alexandria.

be particularly helpful. For example, when Beverly Bell's husband died nine years ago following an extended illness, she found strength and comfort in a friendship with another widow.

"[We] had a wonderful relationship ... for several years following my husband's death," said Bell, who attended the workshop. "We had a regular lunch date and also shared a number of holidays. She also died a couple of years ago, and I realized that I am particularly missing her presence."

Earlier this year, Bell's brother died as well. "I found myself re-experiencing many of the feelings I had had when my husband died, [but feeling] particularly helpless to comfort my sister-in-law," she said. "Perhaps [my] presence is the most important thing I can ... offer my sister-in-law."

Some of the workshop attendees wanted to learn how to better support others. "I am a member of the Community of Hope International, a group of lay pastoral caregivers whose ministry is to visit those who are experiencing sickness, trauma, tragedy or loss of a loved one," said Caroline

McCormack, one of the participants. "I wanted to have a better understanding of the grieving process, so I might be a more compassionate listener."

She and Bell learned that process is different for everyone. "My husband's death was preceded by a long illness. My brother's death was sudden," said Bell. "I wondered if something about the timing made a difference in how we experience and cope with grief. I learned that it really does not."

"The holidays are a time when you reflect on family, and it's hard for someone who's aware that that person isn't there."

— Carey Gauzens, LCSW

"... We all experience grief in different ways and it can show up at unexpected times and places and so we need to be gentle with ourselves and find ways that we can express our grief in ways that feel healing and safe for us," added Revered Elizabeth Rees, Associate Rector, St. Aidan's Episcopal Church.

This is a point Gauzens tried to underscore: Grieving is an individual process and there is no one-size-fits-all method for coping. Even people who are grieving for the same person can experience it differently and have different needs. "For example, one person might want to talk about the loss, but others might not," she said. "It's important to be sensitive to family members who grieve differently and compromise so that each person feels emotionally safe."

Cultivating self-awareness and knowing what is normal to expect while one is grieving is important. "Sometimes the symptoms are so intense it makes people feel like they're going crazy and frightens them sometimes," said Gauzens. "They might cry at the drop of a hat, get angry or feel unable to control their emotions. There could become deeply distracted or confused like get lost going someplace they know well.

"Give yourself permission to make careful decisions about how you'll spend your time," she added. "It's helpful to discern within yourself what feels right. Decide whether to maintain holiday traditions or do something completely different."

Avoiding all festive, social activities might do more harm than good, however. "A person who's grieving might end up isolating because they won't go to places they once went to with the person they've lost," said Gauzens.

Instead, Gauzens suggests planning "something to look forward to after the holiday to reward yourself for getting through the holidays."

She also stressed the need for self-care, including exercising, eating healthy and staying hydrated. "It's important to minimize your use of mood altering substances like alcohol," said Gauzens. "It's tempting to try to numb the pain, but it comes back."

Changing customs can make holidays less painful, says Dr. Linda Guly, Ph.D., professor of psychology, Marymount University in Arlington. "I like to break with traditions that are familiar and that remind us of the loved one we lost," she said. "Sometimes it's good to shake it up and start a new tradition, so you're looking forward instead of behind you."

"The days are darker and colder, which exacerbates any sadness that we might be feeling anyway," said Guly. "Hang in there. It will feel better and you will get through it. The holidays will go by and we'll get back into our routine and productive lives that help with healing."

There is a point however, when assistance from a mental health professional is a necessary, Jerome Short, Ph.D., associate professor of psychology, George Mason University in Fairfax. "People should seek professional help if they have significant distress and difficulty in daily self-care and functioning at home or work that has lasted more than two weeks without improvement," he said. "Common symptoms for depression are low mood, lack of pleasure in previously enjoyable activities, social isolation, and thoughts of hopelessness and helplessness."

Free Holiday Cab Rides Help Prevent Drunk Driving

Combating that 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 will offer free cab rides to would-be drunk drivers throughout the Washington-metropolitan area during the winter holidays.

Washington Regional Alcohol Program (WRAP), operates the annual Holiday SoberRide program between 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 and be afforded a no-cost (up to \$30 fare), safe way home.

"Last December, nearly 1,500 (1,456) Greater Washington residents did the right thing and availed themselves of this lifesaving service rather than possibly driving home impaired," said Kurt Gregory Erickson, WRAP's president. "For SoberRide's hours of operation during just

last New Year's Eve, alone, such ridership (580) translated into the removal of a would-be drunk driver from our shared roadways every 49-seconds."

Since 1993, WRAP's SoberRide program has provided 65,385 free cab rides home to would-be drunk drivers in the Greater Washington area.

More information about WRAP's SoberRide initiative can be found at www.soberride.com.

Burke CARES Receives Toy Donation from Pack 1346

On Dec. 13, members of the Cub Scout Pack 1346 donated toys to the non-profit organization Burke CARES, that will then distribute them to children in need around the Burke Community.

In addition to the annual gift drive, Burke CARES (Community Action Resources for Empowerment and Support) also partners with St. Mary of Sorrows Catholic Church in Fairfax each year to provide donated backpacks and school supplies to between 35 and 45 children in Burke.

Linda Cottrell of Burke has served as Burke CARES director for nearly the last three years. She said the organization was founded in 1996 and incorporated in 1997 to serve residents in the community that were not part of the Burke Centre Conservancy — and who were in need — gain access to some of the community's amenities.

Cottrell is one of half a dozen volunteers who have been reviving Burke CARES after participation in the organization petered off. They've kept the most popular programs, which include the toy and backpack drives, as well as subsidizing community pool memberships for families who spend two



PHOTO CONTRIBUTED

On Dec. 13, members of the Cub Scout Pack 1346 donated toys to the non-profit organization Burke CARES, that will then distribute them to children in need around the Burke Community.

hours volunteering on Earth Day.

"We love to see toys we donate go to kids in need in Burke," Cottrell said, "to take care

of our own and support, help and build a stronger local community."

Burke CARES sole revenue for operating

comes from donations from the Burke Centre Stingers and Penguins summer league swimming teams.

The teams hold a swim-a-thon fundraiser each year that benefits the Leukemia and Lymphoma Society as well as Burke CARES.

Rachel Pak is a sophomore at Robinson Secondary School who sits on the board for Burke CARES. Her father John is also on the board and recruited her.

Pak said she loves helping and being part of something bigger than herself. Pak is a swimmer herself, competing for the Robinson Swim and Dive team.

"Just knowing that I helped some people be on this team, enjoy something I enjoy, makes me happy."

Pak is spearheading updating the Burke CARES website. She said she wants to increase the size of the organization, to do more things for the community.

"There are so many things you could do," Pak said, "this is something in my life I want to make time for."

The Burke CARES website is under construction but does have additional information at www.burkecares.org.

—TIM PETERSON

SCHOOL NOTES

FROM PAGE 2

choir, and five students were named as alternates. The choir will perform at the Virginia Music Educators Association (VMEA) convention to be held at the Omni Homestead Resort in Hot Springs, Nov. 17-19. FCPS students named to the 2016 Virginia Honors Choir include the following students from our area schools: **Woodson High School:** Megan Humes, Caroline Grass, Jacob Lamb, Lucas Valdes, and Marc Manaloto and **Hayfield Secondary School:** Jessica Pressley.

Jonathan Whittington, Kathryn Herring, Emma Zettlemoyer, of Springfield; **Bridget Ray and Kirsten Chase,** of Burke; received \$2,000 scholarships from the Scholarship for Military Children Program in July 2016.

Jane Gibbins-Harding, of Springfield, was named to the dean's list at Bethany College for spring 2016.

U.S. Air Force Airman **Brian A. Zamfino** graduated from basic military training at Joint Base San Antonio-

Lackland, San Antonio, Texas. Zamfino is the son of Joanne and Joseph Zamfino of Springfield. He is a 2015 graduate of West Springfield High School.

Thomas Miskimins, of Fairfax, graduated with a master of arts, in Spring 2016 from the University of New Haven.

Jordan Ecker, of Fairfax, is on the spring 2016 dean's list at the University of Minnesota-Twin Cities.

Caroline Dickson, of Fairfax, is on the spring 2016 dean's list at the University of Maine-Orono.

Allison Righter Moore, and Sarah Ann Hughes Cushing-Spiller, of Springfield, is on the dean's list at Hollins University, for the 2016 spring semester.

James Butler, a Lake Braddock Secondary School graduate, was inducted into the Naval Academy Class of 2020 on June 30, 2016.

Kyle Austin Walsh, of Fairfax, and **Abigail Lynn Lackey,** of Springfield, were named to the honors list for the 2016 spring 2016 semester at Averett University in Danville.

Katherine Marie Hough, of

Fairfax Station, is on the dean's list at George Mason University for spring 2016.

Anna Kormis, of Springfield, graduated from Emory and Henry College in spring 2016.

Kyle Austin Walsh, of Fairfax, graduated from Averett University in June 2016. was among the 261 students to receive diplomas during Averett University's May 7 Commencement,

Megan R. Seymour, Megan F. Cummins, Thomas S. Cohen, of Fairfax, **Joshua D. Harlowe, Samantha E. Kinde, Melissa A. Schwartz,** of Springfield; **Sean C. Baird,** of Fairfax Station; graduated from Boston University in spring 2016.

Helene J. Decosse, Alexis J. Fahrney, Jessica M. Ochoa, of Fairfax, are on the dean's list at Boston University for spring 2016.

Seth Lehman, Thet San, of Fairfax, graduated from Furman University in spring 2016.

Luke Hartman, Natalie Heinitz, of Springfield, graduated from Manhattan College in spring 2016.

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Deputy Cleared in Fatal Shooting

FROM PAGE 3

charges are warranted, the Sheriff's Office will conduct an administrative investigation."

Supervisor John Cook (R-Braddock) chairs the Board of Supervisors Public Safety Committee, which has recently voted to establish an office of independent police auditor to review all use of force cases, as well as a civilian review panel to look at complaints of police misconduct.

Cook's office declined to comment on Morrogh's decision.

Cook previously commented that while the Sheriff's office doesn't fall under the administrative purview of the supervisors, they have been invited to present and field questions related to recommendations for policy changes from the Ad Hoc Police Practices Review Commission at the Public Safety Committee Meeting in March 2017.

Board of Supervisors chairman Sharon Bulova did not respond to a request for comment before print time.

Fairfax County Chief of Police Col. Edwin Roessler Jr. said FCPD had been made aware of Morrogh's decision. "The Sheriff's Office was fully cooperative with our detectives throughout the process," Roessler said in a statement.

Author and blogger Pete Earley of Fairfax was a member of the Ad Hoc Police Practices Review Commission and that group's mental health subcommittee.

In response to Morrogh's report, Earley said in a statement he was concerned that it failed to answer basic questions about the encounter "that would reassure Fairfax residents with mental illnesses that they are safe when seeking help."

Earley raised a number of issues, including whether Gomez's doctor and Spanish-speaking nurse were qualified to diagnose psychiatric issues; why there is no mention of Gomez being observed by a psychiatrist despite Inova having a psychiatric unit; the

way in which the nurse questioned Gomez about his psychiatric condition; and what about Gomez's behavior after being discharged prompted the security guard to approach him.

"Just as we were told in the Natasha McKenna case, the reason why Mr. Gomez was fatally shot was entirely his own fault [according to the report]," Earley says. "Blaming an individual with a mental illness is an easy out. Asking tough questions about why a man who sought help from the police and ended up dead hours later is much more difficult and, sadly, this report appears to have failed to ask and answer those questions."

Natasha McKenna, 37, of Alexandria died in February 2015 after being tased multiple times by Sheriff's deputies who were trying to restrain her and transport her to the Alexandria jail. McPartlin was among that group of deputies.

McKenna, police said, had a history of diagnosed mental illness including schizophrenia, bipolar disorder and depression. In McKenna's case as well, Morrogh made the decision none of the deputies were criminally liable.

Cayce Utley is a lead organizer for the organization Showing Up for Racial Justice (SURJ) Northern Virginia that has demonstrated over the Gomez shooting and McKenna's death.

"Commonwealth Attorney Ray Morrogh and Police Chief Ed Roessler have made it clear they have no interest in holding Stacey Kincaid's sheriff's deputies responsible when they kill people," Utley said in a statement. Natasha McKenna and [Yovani Gomez] deserve justice and we will keep pressing Fairfax County until this racist policing is stopped. We are tired of watching this county celebrate so-called 'reforms' that leave all the power in police hands. It's time for Fairfax to be accountable to the people who live and work here."

BULLETIN BOARD

Send notes to the Connection at connectionnewspapers.com/Calendar/ or call 703-778-9416. The deadline for submissions is the Friday prior to publication. Dated announcements should be submitted at least two weeks prior to the event.

SUNDAY/DEC. 25

5th Annual Christmas Day Giving Back Event 1 - 5 p.m. Kilroys Ravensworth Shopping Center 5236 Port Royal Road, Springfield. Volunteers needed join us in saying thank you to our veterans and deployed service members for their service and sacrifices. We will be packing care packages and letters to our veterans. www.americasadoptsoldier.org

TUESDAY JAN. 24

ESL Classes Begin on January 24 in Fairfax and Clifton Lord of Life Lutheran Church will offer beginning, intermediate and advanced ESL classes at their Fairfax and Clifton locations. The course will take place between January 24 and April 6, 2017 on Tuesdays and Thursdays, from 7:00

p.m. to 9:00 p.m. at Lord of Life Lutheran Church located in Fairfax at 5114 Twinbrook Road and in Clifton at 13421 Twin Lakes Drive. The registration deadline is Thursday, January 19, 2017. There is a registration fee of \$15 and the text book costs \$25. For more information, please visit: www.lordoflifefa.org or call (703) 323-9500.

ONGOING

Reminder Crime Prevention - Please contact the Fairfax County Police Department at 703-691-2131 (non-emergency) to report ANY suspicious activity, no matter how small or insignificant it may seem at the time. It is better if police reports can be called in while the suspicious activity is in progress to the extent possible.

Fairfax County needs volunteers to **drive older adults** to medical appointments and wellness programs. For these and other volunteer opportunities, call 703-324-5406, TTY 711 or visit www.fairfaxcounty.gov/olderadults and click on Volunteer Solutions.

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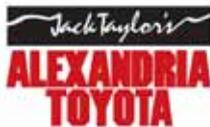
An expert is someone who knows some of the worst mistakes that can be made in his subject and how to avoid them.
-Werner Heisenberg

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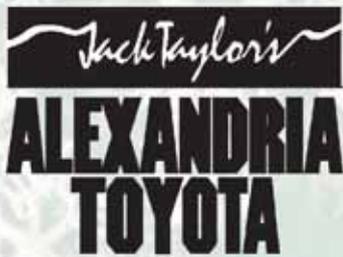
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