

Potomac ALMANAC

LOBBY
SALE

The yellow lion is Kalina Sloat and Henry Huang; the red lion is Jaime Yen and Justin Kuan. The Potomac Library hosted a variety of activities to celebrate Chinese New Year.

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FEBRUARY 8-14, 2017

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Doctor of Audiology

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HomeLifeStyle



PHOTO CONTRIBUTED

The McLean, Va. makeover features an 11-foot cathedral ceiling dominated by a window wall, and a post-modern hearth as the central interior focal point.

Fireplace as Focal Point

A hearth is in demand for cold weather.

BY JOHN BYRD ible the rest of the décor.”

“Fireplaces have never fallen out of favor,” said David Foster, president of Foster Remodeling Solutions. “We may be seeing a preference for gas over a traditional wood-burner, but the hearth itself is hugely popular — with homeowners continually seeking distinctions in style, building materials and, even, where it will be located.”

Foster says he’s currently working on several home remodeling projects that feature a fireplace as an interior focal point.

“A fireplace offers aesthetic and functional benefits at one price,” he said, “so it’s an attractive option.”

Fireplace-desire can also be a spur to creative thinking that stimulates a more engaging and original remodeling project.

Case in point, the new formal dining room created for Burke, Va. homeowners Dennis Perzanowski and Jack Ellison. The goal: convert a three season-room into a year-around dining room complete with a gas-fueled hearth on one elevation.

“We were looking for a mix of old and new styles,” said Perzanowski. “We wanted to feature a traditional dining room set with sideboards, but there are modern touches such an industrial-style chandelier.”

In this context, a gas fireplace with an brushed steel frame was a perfect offset. Mounted on the east wall elevation and with an oil painting just above, the stacked geometrical shapes lend balance and symmetry to an otherwise blank wall between two floor-to-ceiling windows.

Chris Arnold, a Foster partner who managed the project, knew there would be challenges in adding a hearth in a somewhat restricted available space, but with a little research found a 42” x 38” gas insert that perfectly suits the spot allocated for an eye-catching focal point.

“This is something of a formal dining room,” Arnold notes, “yet the fireplace design is so understated it’s visually compat-

RAISE THE ROOF

Meanwhile, not far away, the interior design solution to a Vienna, Va. great room also depended on profiling a new hearth.

Ted and Wanda Rogers had asked had Foster to renovate the circa-1960’s ranch they had occupied for 30 years.

The remodeler added more than 1,000 square feet of additional living space. But the question that generated really serious discussion was how best to introduce a new hearth.

Wanda Rogers wanted to eliminate the original builder-grade brick-facing fireplace, which was situated in the middle of the house and too drafty and cold.

Ted Rogers agreed in principal, but was attracted to a gas-fueled fireplace alternative, which offers considerable heating efficiencies.

As all soon learned, the existing 8-ft ceiling to the Rogers home was too low to yield much design benefit. That’s when Foster proposed re-working the entire mid-house interior by opening sightlines out and up.

To implement changes that now called for connecting the new kitchen to a front-facing family room, the remodeler replaced an obstructive bearing wall with concealed structural supports.

Giving sightlines free-reign, likewise, meant removing the living room ceiling and shelling-in previously concealed roofing rafters.

An ascending vertical accent was now introduced: a floor-to-ceiling hearth constructed of dry stacked Ledgesstones.

The new hearth is designed for a gas-fueled insert equipped with blowers and remote control. Vents draw air in from the outside. The couple can adjust a thermostat for the desired temperature. This is a useful since, at full speed, the unit can generate 55,000 BTUs of heat — enough to

SEE FOCAL POINT, PAGE 7

WWW.CONNECTIONNEWSPAPERS.COM



Chinese Culture

The Lion Dance at the Potomac Library was one of several performances on Saturday, Feb. 4. The afternoon's activities included a shadow puppet show, Chinese martial arts, origami crafts and Chinese calligraphy.

PHOTOS BY DEBORAH STEVENS/THE ALMANAC



Daphne Yeh and Derek Hu



Lydia Wang



The audience gathered for the Lion Dance performance at the Potomac Library.

Journey to 'Wheel' Yields First Book

Potomac man publishes book following his quest to compete on "Wheel of Fortune."

BY PEGGY MCEWAN
THE ALMANAC

It started years ago when Mark Anthony Linton was a young boy sitting with his grandmother watching her favorite game show, "Wheel of Fortune."

The two would solve the puzzles together with Linton helping her understand American expressions and spelling. His grandmother emigrated from Jamaica and lived with Linton's family.

"I was 12 years old and she was 81," Linton said. "It was a way to connect with her."

Before she died, Linton promised her he would someday be on the show.

Thus began his obsession with the show, how it worked and how to get on it to compete for money and prizes and keep his promise.

In January Linton published his first book, "F_LL in the BL_NK," about his journey to keep that promise.

The book is not just Linton's story, it follows 10 others, men and women from across the country, who shared his dream.

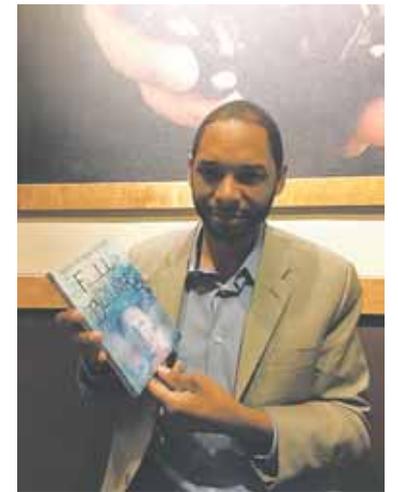
Linton and the others met online, playing a mid-day version of "Wheel of Fortune" on Twitter called "Wheel of Fortune Toss Up." New games are available Monday through Friday at 1 and 7:30 p.m. weekdays, Linton said.

He plays each day at 1 p.m., during his lunch time, a break from his career as a Realtor. After a while he said, he noticed he was playing with the same people every day so started conversing with them on Twitter. They recognized him by his Twitter handle: @SkinnyRealty.

Skinny is appropriate because, Linton, 43, said, "I'm 6 ft. 5 inches and weigh 165."

Though known only to each other by their Twitter handles, Linton writes as if the group members are sitting around the lunch table together. He has never met any of them in person, he said, but added he would like to travel the country meeting each of them.

"It was 10 people you would



PEGGY MCEWAN/THE ALMANAC

Potomac resident Mark Anthony Linton shows a copy of his first book "F_LL in the BL_NK," about his quest to become a "Wheel of Fortune" contestant.

never assume would be sitting together," he said.

As he writes at the beginning of the book: "Get inspired by a group of strangers who met on social media, created a lighthearted gathering without a set agenda, and 50 percent (5 of 10) became contestants on America's favorite game-show, winning over \$200,000."

In the book he describes those strangers, women from Ohio, Colorado and Kansas City, a married couple from Spokane, two men from California, and men from Michigan, Illinois and Texas along with Linton.

Five of the 10 were eventually selected to appear on the show, including Linton who has been selected but not yet received what he refers to as the "golden letter" with an appearance date.

"Each person sent me a letter about themselves [for the book]," Linton said. "They were overjoyed when I finished it."

As it turns out Linton had another goal for his life: to write a book. He is excited that he accomplished that goal while moving to reach another.

The book is available on Amazon (amzn.to/2icpCH1), Barnes and Nobles (<http://bit.ly/2kKgRc9>), and other online retailers.

OPINION

Maryland Figures in Black History

For each day of Black History Month, the office of U.S. Rep. John K. Delaney (D-6) is posting to his Facebook page a profile of a different African-American leader from Maryland. Delaney's district includes parts of Potomac, upper Montgomery County and other parts of the state. www.facebook.com/congressmanjohndelaney

The Black History Month entry for Feb. 1, 2017: Thurgood Marshall, the first African-American to serve on the Supreme Court. Born in Baltimore in 1908, Marshall earned his undergraduate degree from Lincoln University in Pennsylvania and later obtained a law degree from Howard University Law School in Washington. Marshall became chief counsel for the NAACP in 1938 and throughout his distinguished career Marshall helped advance many decisions that led to the expansion of civil rights. In 1954, Marshall successfully argued before the Supreme Court in the historic *Brown vs. Board of Education* case. Overall, Marshall won 29 of the 32 cases he argued before the Supreme Court. In 1967, President Lyndon B. Johnson nominated Marshall for the Supreme Court, where he served until 1991.

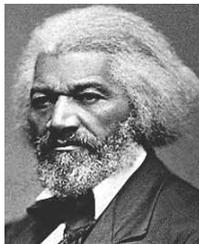


Thurgood Marshall

The Black History Month entry for Feb. 2, 2017: Henry Blair an inventor and one of the first African-Americans to receive a patent in the United States. Blair was born in Glen Ross, Md. in 1807. In 1834, Blair received his first patent for a corn planter, a wheel-driven device that allowed farmers to plant more corn using less labor in a shorter period of time. The planter looked much like a wheelbarrow, with a compartment included to hold seeds and rakes which dragged behind to cover the soil. Newspaper accounts at the time claimed that the device would combine the labor of eight people into one device. Two years

later, Blair received his second patent, this time for a cotton planter. Blair died in 1860.

The Black History Month entry for Feb. 3, 2017: Frederick Douglass, who has made his way into the news recently, was born a slave in 1818 in Talbot County. Douglass learned to read and write at a young age, teaching other slaves to do the same. Douglass often said, "Knowledge is the pathway from slavery to freedom." Douglass met Anne Murray, a free woman, in 1837. She motivated him to escape slavery in 1838, eventually taking a train north to freedom. After gaining his freedom, Douglass began to read *The Liberator*, a weekly journal written by William Lloyd Garrison. The *Liberator* inspired Douglass to get more involved in the abolitionist movement. In 1845, Douglass published one of his most widely read and influential works, "Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave." His autobiography immediately became a bestseller, capturing the brutality of slavery in America. Douglass began publishing his first abolitionist newspaper, *The North Star*, with the motto "Right is of no Sex – Truth is of no Color – God is the Father of us all, and we are all brethren." Douglass not only fought for emancipation, but for women's suffrage. He attended the 1848 Seneca Falls Convention, where he was a major influence passing a resolution asking for women's suffrage. Douglass continued to fight for civil rights and suffrage throughout the Civil War and Reconstruction periods. By the time of his death in 1895, Douglass was known around the world as a champion for justice, freedom, and equality.



Frederick Douglass

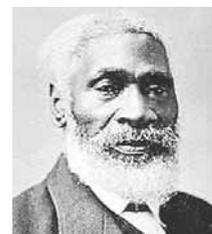
The Black History Month entry for Feb. 4, 2017: James Pennington, a minister, writer and abolitionist. Born a slave on the Eastern Shore in 1807, Pennington was eventually moved to a farm near Hagerstown. At the age of 19, Pennington escaped, eventually landing in Pennsylvania and then later moving to New York. As a young man he made his way to New York, where he worked diligently to receive an education, paying for tutors out of his earnings. Pennington began attending classes at Yale Divinity School in the 1830s, becoming the first black student to study at Yale, although he was not allowed to speak in class or borrow books from the library. Pennington later became a prominent minister, public speaker and abolitionist, speaking across the United States and United Kingdom. In 1841, he wrote one of the first histories of African-Americans and published a memoir, "The Fugitive Blacksmith." Pennington wrote about the difficult life endured by slaves and disputed pro-slavery rhetoric. Pennington's story was popular and went through three edi-



James Pennington

tions in two years. In the late 1840s he became deeply involved in the anti-slavery movement and was a delegate to the 1843 Anti-Slavery Convention in London. During the Civil War, Pennington helped recruit black troops to serve in the Union Army. He died in 1870.

The Black History Month entry for Feb. 5, 2017: Josiah Henson, an author, abolitionist, and minister, who was born in 1789 in Charles County. Born into slavery, as an adult Josiah worked in the fields for a man named Isaac Riley, on his farm in Montgomery County in what is now in North Bethesda. He quickly gained the favor of Riley and became the supervisor of his master's farm. After saving up \$350, Josiah Henson attempted to buy his freedom from Riley with a promise of an extra \$100. Riley added an extra zero to the paper, changing the fee to \$1000 and cheated Josiah out of his freedom and money. Josiah then escaped with his family to Canada, where he founded a settlement for escaped slaves. The Dawn settlement grew to 500 people at its peak, and they exported black walnut lumber to the United States and Britain. Henson's autobiography, "The Life of Josiah Henson, Formerly a Slave, Now an Inhabitant of Canada, as Narrated by Himself" is believed to have inspired the title character of Harriet Beecher Stowe's "Uncle Tom's Cabin." Henson was the first black man to be featured on a Canadian stamp. He died in Canada on May 5, 1883 at the age of 93.



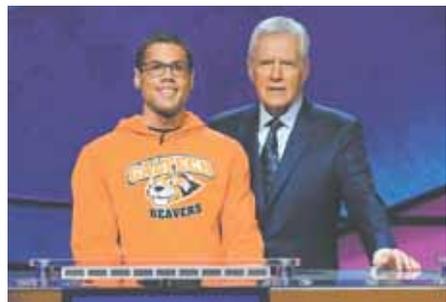
Josiah Henson

The Black History Month entry for Feb. 6, 2017: Explorer Matthew Henson, who made history planting the American flag at the North Pole in 1909. Henson's journey began in Maryland in 1866, when he was born in Charles County. Both of Henson's parents died by the time he was nine and by age 12, Henson was working in Baltimore. In 1887, he met the explorer Robert Peary and joined Peary's crew on his 1890 expedition to Greenland. In 1906, Peary's expedition reached the furthest point north of any expedition to date. Three years later, in 1909, Henson was part of a six-man expedition to the North Pole, the only American to join Peary on the trip. Traveling ahead of Peary on April 6 1909, Henson approached the Pole. After walking back to join Peary, Henson told him, "I think I'm the first man to sit on top of the world." Henson is credited as co-discoverer of the North Pole. In 1912, Henson published his memoirs. Henson was admitted to the prestigious Explorers Club in New York and honored by Presidents Truman and Eisenhower before he died in 1955.



Matthew Henson

The Matthew Henson Trail and Matthew Henson State Park in Montgomery County are named for him.



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On Jeopardy! College Championship

Alex Bourzutschky of Potomac, a junior at the California Institute of Technology, will compete in the Jeopardy! College Championship, a two-week event which begins Monday, Feb. 13. The winner will claim the \$100,000 grand prize and a berth in the next edition of the Tournament of Champions. At right is Jeopardy! host Alex Trebek.

POTOMAC ALMANAC

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ENTERTAINMENT

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

ONGOING

Goldilocks Puppet Show. Through Feb. 19 at Glen Echo Park, 7300 MacArthur Blvd. Story is told with rod puppets and giant hand puppets, this production keeps the audience guessing while including all the favorite elements of the classic children's fairytale. Call 301-634-2222.

Faculty and Students Exhibit. Through Feb. 26 at Glen Echo Park, 7300 MacArthur Blvd. Exhibition focuses on the relationship between teacher and student, showcasing work from the faculty and students. Reception is Saturday, Feb. 11, 4-6 p.m. Photoworks is located on the first floor of the North Arcade building across from the Dentzel Carousel. Call 301-634-2222.

Caroline or Change. Through Feb. 26, various times at the Round House Theatre, 4545 East-West Highway, Bethesda. Play follows a black maid working for a middle-class Jewish family in Louisiana. When a small amount of money goes missing, buried tensions threaten to rip two families apart. Call 240-644-1100 or visit RoundHouseTheatre.org.

DEADLINE FEB. 10

Canal Pride Artwork Contest. The C&O Canal Trust is holding a t-shirt artwork contest to commemorate the 10th anniversary of the Canal Pride program. Amateur artists are invited to create and submit artwork that celebrates this volunteer-driven event. Visit www.canaltrust.org.

FRIDAY/FEB. 10

Opening Reception. 6-8 p.m. at Gallery B, at 7700 Wisconsin Avenue, Suite E. Exhibit runs through Feb. 25, featuring sculptures by Caroline Champetier de Ribes, photographs by Mari Matsuri and paintings by Brigitte Zelenko. Call 301-215-7990 for more.

Parents Night Out for Valentines. 6:15-9:15 p.m. at My Gym Potomac, 11325 Seven Locks Road. Three hours of fitness games, active play, pizza and fun. \$40 for members; \$45 for non-members; sibling discounts. Call 301-983-5300 or email potomac@mygym.com for more.

THURSDAY/FEB. 16

Staying Safe in the Cyber World. 7-9 p.m. at the Bolger Center, 9600



Contest Winner

PHOTO STAN COLLYER

The January C&O Canal Trust monthly photo contest winner was Stan Collyer's "Super Moon Rising," taken at Lock 29, Lander Lockhouse. Feb. 10 is the last day to enter the February contest, visit www.canaltrust.org.

Newbridge Drive. Tracy D. Rezvani, the program administrator at the Montgomery County Office of Consumer Protection, will talk on identity theft and other scams, concerns of internet use. Email info@PotomacCommunityVillage.org for more.

at Glen Echo Park, 7300 MacArthur Blvd. Swing into spring with orchestra music. \$18, \$14 for students with valid ID, and \$10 for children ages 5-13, 4 and under free. Visit www.glenechopark.org or www.tomcunningham.com for more.

THURSDAY/FEB. 16

Historical Home Tours. 11 a.m. at The Mansion at Strathmore, 10701 Rockville Pike. A guided tour for adults illuminating the history, architecture and personal stories of the Mansion at Strathmore. The tour lasts approximately 45-60 minutes. Free. Please note: Tickets will not be mailed. There will be a will call list at the door. Private tours for larger groups are also available by appointment for a \$30 fee by calling 301-581-5102 or emailing historictours@strathmore.org.

SATURDAY/FEB. 18

Dog Obedience Workshops. 1:30-3:30 p.m. at St. Luke's Episcopal Church, 6030 Grosvenor Lane, Bethesda. Learn tips and tricks to help dogs learn how to be calmer when meeting new people, both in the home and out in public. Visit yourdogfriend.org/free-workshops/ or call 301-983-5913.

American Swing Dance. 7 p.m. at Glen Echo Spanish Ballroom, 7300 MacArthur Blvd. Swing dance with Big Joe and the Dynafloes. \$20, less with a discount card. Visit www.gottaswing.com.

One Day Plays. 8 p.m. at Imagination Stage, 4908 Auburn Ave. Six original plays from local theaters that are written, directed, rehearsed and performed in one day. Call 301/215-6660 or visit www.bethesda.org.

Extreme Chopin. 8 p.m. at the Music Center at Strathmore, 5301 Tuckerman Lane, North Bethesda. Pianist Brian Ganz performs world-famous and little-known works of Chopin. \$28-\$88, children 7-17 admitted free. Visit nationalphilharmonic.org or call 301-581-5100 for more.

SATURDAY/FEB. 25

Tom Cunningham Orchestra. 8 p.m.

TUESDAY/FEB. 28

Community Pancake Dinner. 5-7:30 p.m. at the Potomac Presbyterian Church, 10301 River Road. All-you-can eat Pancake Dinner (gluten-free too), scrambled eggs, sausage, toppings and live jazz music. \$10, \$40 for family. Visit www.potomacpresbyterian.org or call 301-299-6007 for more.

FEB. 28-MARCH 1

Dionne Warwick in Concert. 8 p.m. at the Bethesda Blues & Jazz Supper Club, 7719 Wisconsin Ave. 4th Anniversary concert. \$115-\$150. Visit www.bethesdabluesjazz.com or call 240-330-4500.

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December, 2016 Top Sales



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9 9805 Glynshire Way — \$1,310,000



8 10021 Gary Road — \$1,325,000



7 10031 Counselman Road — \$1,500,000



3 8919 Bel Air Place — \$1,965,000



2 9225 Potomac School Drive — \$2,050,000



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2 9225 POTOMAC SCHOOL DR5	5	1	1	POTOMAC	\$2,050,000	Detached	0.39	20854	AVENEL	12/27/16
3 8919 BEL AIR PL	5	4	2	POTOMAC	\$1,965,000	Detached	2.17	20854	GREAT FALLS ESTATES	12/09/16
4 12130 GLEN MILL RD	6	5	1	POTOMAC	\$1,892,500	Detached	5.13	20854	POTOMAC OUTSIDE	12/01/16
5 8503 RAPLEY PRESERVE CIR	5	4	1	POTOMAC	\$1,800,000	Detached	0.56	20854	AVENEL	12/15/16
6 13814 LONGACRES PRESERVE CT	4	5	1	POTOMAC	\$1,673,019	Detached	2.02	20854	DARNESTOWN OUTSIDE	12/20/16
7 10031 COUNSELMAN RD	4	4	1	POTOMAC	\$1,500,000	Detached	1.01	20854	POTOMAC VILLAGE	12/13/16
8 10021 GARY RD	6	4	2	POTOMAC	\$1,325,000	Detached	1.48	20854	POTOMAC HILLS	12/20/16
9 9805 GLYNESHIRE WAY	4	4	1	POTOMAC	\$1,310,000	Detached	0.29	20854	CLAGETT FARM	12/15/16

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Completely Off Topic



By KENNETH B. LOURIE

That topic not being cancer. The topic being candy, or rather the disappearance of candy, from my hiding place at home. The reason I'm even discussing/divulging this publicly is that I've been forced by circumstances beyond my control to already involve my wife, Dina, in the disappearance of said topic: my post-holiday purchase of 75-percent-off-the-regular-price of snack-size type candy, typically available the day after a holiday.

Before I proceed, let me provide a bit of context for some of you irregular readers: I love chocolate. I don't just have a sweet tooth, I have sweet teeth. However, given certain realities/habits in my life, I almost always (unless times/circumstances are desperate) only buy these delicacies when the items are on sale and even more so when the items are both on sale and I have coupons. Now add into that mix an extra \$5 off a \$15 purchase — or a percentage off \$20 or \$30 store-specific coupon, and I'm spending pennies (almost literally) on the dollar. On these occasions — and Rebecca, you should probably stop reading — I load up. ('Load up' for a typical person might mean months. For yours truly, honestly, it means weeks, sometimes even days.)

Now when I bring this much volume into the house, my wife, Dina, need not know anything about it. Generally, I will stash the non-cash in places where I'll doubt she'll look (and I'm not saying the oven; that's an old Henry Youngman joke), and when I do indulge, it won't be in her presence, nor will there be any sign that I've unwrapped anything.

One of my hiding places, which will now be changed, was downstairs in our cellar in a top drawer of an old bureau I use for collecting miscellaneous bank statements, credit card bills, insurance forms, etc., and for years, my candy and previously unmentioned consumables. On the particular day in question — a day now seared into my memory — as I am habitually wont to do, I went to my downstairs drawer to replenish my upstairs drawer (in yet another hiding place) and was shocked and awed to find my two remaining bags of Kisses and Rolos empty, both gutted like a fish, ripped along their sides with nary a wrapper to be seen, 40-50 bite-size pieces gone.

My first reaction was of course to accuse my wife. Doing so however, would have exposed my secret: I buy candy and hide it (although, she probably knows it, and since I'm not exactly losing any weight ...). But what other cause/culprit could be behind such a dastardly deed? A break-in? No. A ghost who loves chocolate? (We do live in a 250-year-old house.) Mice? Squirrels? It's possible. There are some animal-friendly access points under our foundation. And even though the bureau is flush up against a retaining wall/crawl space for critters, I did notice that the bureau drawer was open an inch or two. Barely enough access. Otherwise, there is no entry. But if critters were responsible, where are all the wrappers and/or feces or any other evidence of their transgression? There weren't any. If the candy was indeed pilfered, it was "The Great Escape" of candy heists. Forced with this dilemma and daring-do, I was forced to confront my wife with these facts and ask if she in fact was responsible. She denied everything and blamed either a ghost or an animal. She was surprised, or so she claimed, at where I had hid the candy, not that I hid candy, so we weren't breaking any new ground, but apparently, my secret had been safe.

It's been a few weeks since this non-insurance loss, and there's been no sign or evidence to indicate what happened to my chocolate. My wife seems to have forgotten the incident. As for me, I bought a 3.4-pound container of Kirkland-brand chocolate-covered raisins from Costco so my inventory is back where I want it to be. I just wish my Kisses and Rolos were back as well.

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

Focal Point

FROM PAGE 2

keep the entire great room toasty and warm even during the dead of winter.

Foster's architect proposed a wood-trimmed ledge above the fireplace, a simple motif that draws the eye upwards to the accent-lighted vaulted ceiling.

As a housewarming gesture, Foster fashioned a rustic mantle from the rough-sawn oak previously deployed in the rafters of the original structure. It's a little keepsake of the old place.

Though higher interior ceilings, theoretically, make a room harder to heat, the remodeler re-insulated the ceiling and installed an eco-slate roofing, dramatically improving the thermal efficiency of the entire residence.

The new fireplace is flanked by arches: a recess for shelving and cabinetry on the left; a sympathetically curvilinear entry to the new master suite on the right.

"The effect in all directions is exciting," Wanda Rogers said. "Looking in from the kitchen, the room opens out and up; it feels really warm."

The new vaulted wall expanse also doubles as display space for her private art collection, which is now illuminated by track lights.

FAMILY-GATHERING PLACE

In nearby McLean, Va., a Foster client was looking for a floorplan re-configuration that would include a front-facing family-gathering niche — with a window wall and a fireplace.

"We all saw the aesthetic opportunity," Foster said. "There would be larger windows on all sides. But also a new front-facing family room — with an 11' cathedral ceiling dominated by an extensive window wall, and an appropriately post-modern hearth as the central interior focal point."

The window wall would help to contextualize a more symmetrical front elevation — one defined by a processional entrance way with double French glass doors and sidelights.

Taken as a whole, however, the floor plan is functionally a "great room" formed by clever variances in room width and ceiling height differentiated as clearly identified "use" spaces.

"The slightly narrower width confers a degree of intimacy on the family room that suits its purpose," Foster observes. "The hearth, in particular, really defines this."

The stainless steel hearth features gas burner elements embedded in river rock and functions as both a heat source and an ornamental focal point.

Flanked by open "cubbies" with glass display shelves, cherry wood cabinetry, and a wine rack abutting a wine refrigerator, the "built-ins" define a functionally separate family entertainment zone that includes a wide-screen plasma TV mounted above the fireplace. A more congenial spot for holiday entertaining is hard to imagine.

❖ Foster Remodeling Solutions offers workshops on home remodeling. www.fosterremodeling.com.

❖ John Byrd (byrdmatx@gmail.com) has been writing about home improvement for 30 years.

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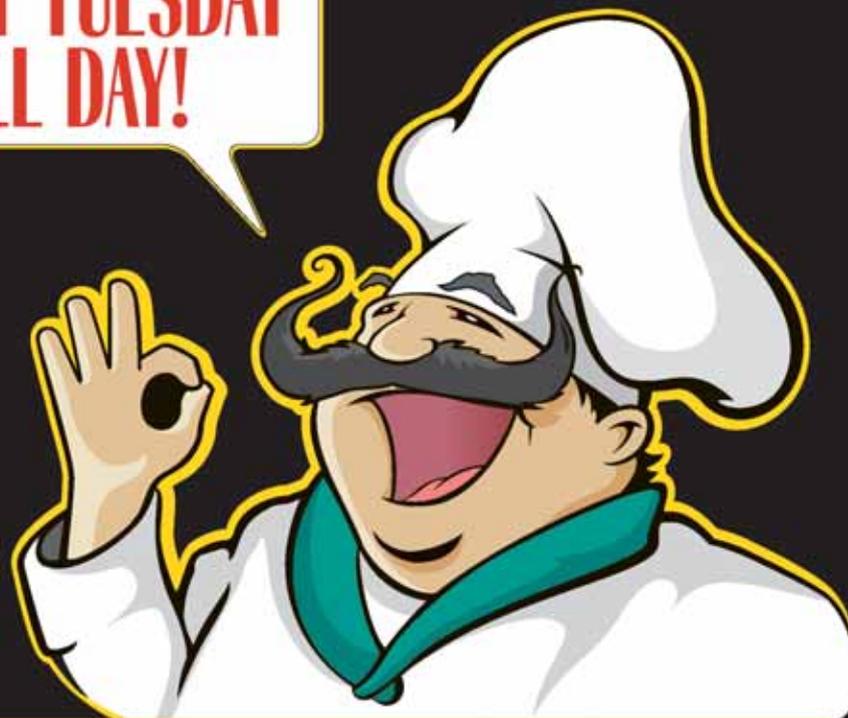
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