

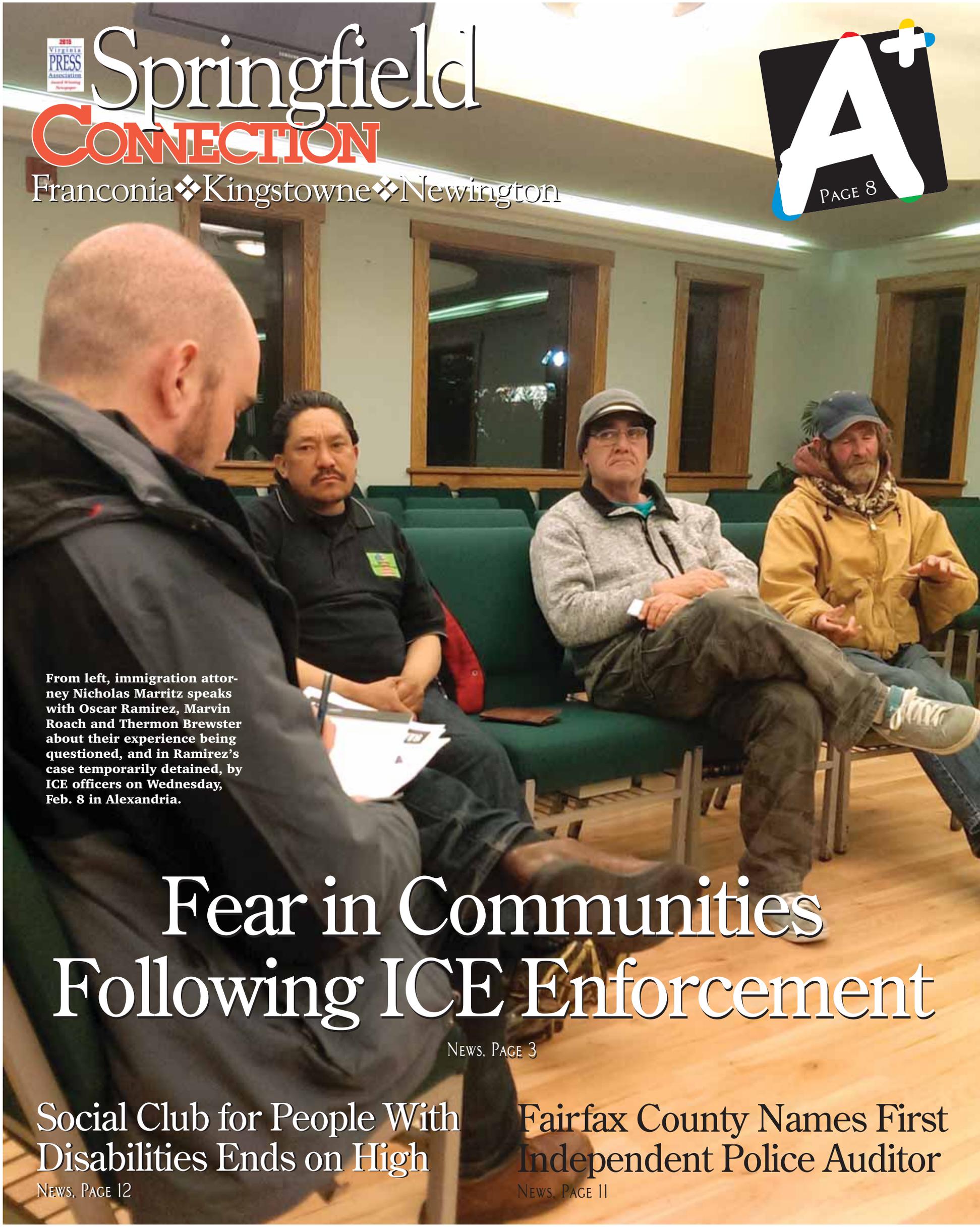


Springfield CONNECTION

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PHOTO BY TIM PETERSON/THE CONNECTION



From left, immigration attorney Nicholas Murriz speaks with Oscar Ramirez, Marvin Roach and Thermon Brewster about their experience being questioned, and in Ramirez's case temporarily detained, by ICE officers on Wednesday, Feb. 8 in Alexandria.

Fear in Communities Following ICE Enforcement

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Social Club for People With Disabilities Ends on High

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Fairfax County Names First Independent Police Auditor

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Dialogue on Islam ‘in Multiple Colors’

Islamophobia and xenophobia in today’s political climate discussed at Mason.

BY RASMIEYH ABDELNABI
INSTITUTE FOR
IMMIGRATION RESEARCH
GEORGE MASON UNIVERSITY



PHOTO BY EZZAT SHEHADEH/ALI VURAL AK CENTER FOR GLOBAL ISLAMIC STUDIES

From left, Besheer Mohamed of the Pew Research Center, Amber Jamil of the American Pakistan Foundation, Monica Gomez Issac of the Institute for Immigration Research, Ahmet Tekelioglu of the Ali Vural Ak Center for Global Islamic Studies and Patricia Maulden of the Dialogue and Difference Project.

More than 130 students, educators, university staff, and community members came together Feb. 1 at George Mason University for a panel discussion on Islamophobia and xenophobia in today’s political climate. Due to an overwhelming response to the event, organizers had to change the room to a bigger one the day before the event. According to Monica Gomez Issac, the executive director of the Institute for Immigrant Research (IIR) at Mason, several faculty members asked to bring their entire classes to the event. The packed room left attendees standing along the walls and sitting on the floor.

The panel discussion was jointly hosted by Mason units, which included the IIR, the Ali Vural Ak Center for Global Islamic Stud-

ies, and the Dialogue and Difference Project with the School for Conflict Analysis and Resolution. The panelists included Amber Jamil, the executive director for the American Pakistan Foundation, Patricia Maulden, the director of the Dialogue and Difference Project, Besheer Mohamed, a senior researcher at Pew Research Center, and Ahmet Tekelioglu of the Ali Vural Ak Center for Global Islamic Studies.

“Life has changed a lot, for a lot of people

and human connection. Each panelist was given time to present their thoughts on Muslims in United States.

Besheer Mohamed, who specializes in surveys and minority religious groups, shared some survey results with the audience. He explained that as a researcher his intent was to show what people know about Muslims, their perceptions of Muslims and the stark disconnect between the two. Mohamed said that survey research sug-

gests that the public does not know much about Islam and are not in contact with Muslims. According to Mohamed, only half of the public knows that the Quran is the Islamic holy book or know a Muslim. Despite not knowing enough about Islam or knowing any Muslims, the public perception of Muslims is negative, Mohamed said. The American public “is divided on whether or not they trust Muslims, they are divided on whether Muslims are anti-American, divided on whether Islam is likely to encourage violence. But also really not sure about the religion at all,” Mohamed explained. However, this is where the role of the researcher to inform the public of the facts becomes important, he said. Ahmet Tekelioglu of the Ali Vural Ak Center for Global Islamic Studies and an expert on Muslims in America, said the challenges in today’s political climate are not new and called for more dialogues on Islam. Since 9/11, there has been an emphasis on educating the general public about Islam through university classes and community presentations, as knowledge of Islam shapes the world, from the United States to Europe. “At the center, one of our main challenges is to make sure that Islam is known with its multiple colors, not understood as a homogeneous religion,” he explained.

THE PANELISTS focused on the need for dialogue that combined facts, emotion,

over the last two weeks. It is an interesting time to be a part of an institute for immigration research. It is an interesting time. It is an interesting time to be at one of the most geographically diverse institutions of higher education in the United States at this moment,” said Shannon Davis, acting director of the IIR.

“Life has changed a lot, for a lot of people

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SEE DIALOGUE, PAGE 11

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Around 6:45 a.m. Wednesday, Feb. 8, Oscar Ramirez, Marvin Roach, Thermon Brewster and other men emerged from the hypothermia shelter at Rising Hope United Methodist Mission Church on Russell Road in the Mount Vernon Area of Alexandria. When they began traversing the parking lot towards the Aldi grocery store, opposite the church, a flurry of at least half a dozen unmarked police cars descended on the group, the men said.



PHOTOS BY TIM PETERSON/THE CONNECTION

From left, immigration attorney Nicholas Marritz speaks with Oscar Ramirez, Marvin Roach and Thermon Brewster about their experience being questioned, and in Ramirez' case temporarily detained, by ICE officers on Wednesday, Feb. 8 in Alexandria.

Fear in Communities Following ICE Enforcement

Men said to be detained after leaving Mount Vernon shelter.

BY TIM PETERSON
THE CONNECTION

Around 6:45 a.m. Wednesday, Feb. 8, Oscar Ramirez, Marvin Roach, Thermon Brewster and other men emerged from the hypothermia shelter at Rising Hope United Methodist Mission Church on Russell Road in the Mount Vernon Area of Alexandria. Many walked next door to 7-Eleven for cold beers, they said, to begin planning the day out, as is their routine.

When they began crossing the parking lot towards the Aldi grocery store, opposite Rising Hope, a flurry of at least half a dozen unmarked police cars descended on the group, Ramirez, Roach and Brewster said.

"Like it was a setup or something," said Brewster.

Officers with uniforms reading "POLICE" and "ICE" (U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement) immediately told the men to stop where they were. The officers didn't identify themselves other than that, the three men said, and weren't displaying weapons.

Roach and Brewster, both Caucasian, were shown pictures of men on a computer, they said, and asked by officers if they had seen any of them. Neither were asked for any kind of identification or nationality information.

Ramirez, however, was surrounded by officers, along with several other Latino men and told to stand against a wall while keeping their hands visible. Ramirez is a native of El Salvador but said he moved to the United States in 1986, when he was just a boy.

The Latino men were also asked if they had seen the men on the computer screen, said Ramirez, who attempted to help trans-



PHOTO COURTESY OF ROBERTO TELLERIA

A resident's cell phone photo captured ICE agents engaging with men near the 7-Eleven on Russell Road in Alexandria on Wednesday, Feb. 8.

late for some of the other men. But, after being singled out, they were also questioned about their immigration status.

Ramirez said he wasn't asked for photo identification, just his date of birth, Social Security number and date when he entered the country. He admitted he isn't a U.S. citizen, but holds a green card and was granted a suspension of deportation by U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services because he had been a resident for so long and has three daughters all born in America.

Officers told Ramirez he was OK, and was free to go. Other men, he said, were shackled and shoved into a large white van.

When the van pulled up, all three men said, there were already men inside, some of whom were crying. A number of men from the shelter were put in the van, which drove away.

Ramirez said he knows some of them have minor criminal records, and one was facing charges for a robbery in Washington, D.C. But he also said he had never seen an incident with law enforcement like this in his life.

Roach and Brewster, longtime residents of the area, echoed Ramirez. "I've been here all my life," Roach said, "I've never seen anything like this. It happened really fast, it was like a kidnapping."

SINCE THAT WEDNESDAY morning, the three said they've seen similar unmarked police cars in the area of the church off and on.

According to an ICE official, just two individuals were arrested Wednesday in that area, as part of routine activity.

"Every day, as part of routine targeted enforcement operations, U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) arrests criminal aliens and other individuals who are in violation of our nation's immigration laws," the official said in a statement.

The official could not confirm other aspects of the men's story, and insisted ICE does not detain people in vans, as the men described.

"ICE conducts targeted immigration enforcement in compliance with federal law and agency policy," the statement continues, "ICE does not conduct sweeps or raids that target aliens indiscriminately."

Though the statement is at odds with the men's account, Ramirez said there is genuine fear in the Latino community. Businesses including the laundromat usually frequented by Latinos in that shopping center have been barren in the last week.

"People are staying in, they're scared," he said.

Across the country last week, ICE launched a number of "targeted enforcement actions," Department of Homeland Security Secretary John F. Kelly said in a statement on Feb. 13. That was following an executive order signed by President Donald Trump promoting stricter enforcement of immigration laws.

Officers in Los Angeles, Chicago, Atlanta, San Antonio and New York City areas arrested more than 680 people "who pose a threat to public safety, border security or the integrity of our nation's immigration system," Kelly said.

Kelly went on to explain this is nothing out of the ordinary for ICE. As well, he said, "President Trump has been clear in affirming the critical mission of DHS in protecting the nation and directed our department to focus on removing illegal aliens who have violated our immigration laws, with a specific focus on those who pose a threat to public safety, have been charged with criminal offenses, have committed immigration violations or have been deported and re-entered the country illegally."

Routine or not, the latest activities of ICE have clearly raised public sensitivity and fear of deportation.

At a Lee District town meeting on Feb. 11, state Sen. Scott Surovell (D-36) said there was like a whole segment of the audience missing due to perception of events like what allegedly took place on Russell Road as raids.

"We have to do more to make people feel welcome," Surovell said. "I'm going to do everything I can to support them."

A woman in the audience said students in her English for Speakers of Other Languages class are coming to school scared, some that parents may not be there to pick them up at the end of the day.

"There is genuine fear," said state Sen. George Barker (D-39), "that little kids should not have. A political decision may sound great until you see the faces of the individuals affected."

Supervisor Dan Storck (D-Mount Vernon) said since word of ICE activity in Mount Vernon started circulating last week, he's received numerous concerned calls and emails about people being unreasonably disturbed.

"At the core of this, it's about a diverse community wanting to make sure we honor and respect that by not going after people that may be different, look different from us."

At the same time, Storck said, "we recognize, we don't want people that are criminals to be out in our community. There's a

SEE MORNING RAID. PAGE 5

County Executive Proposes \$4.10 Billion Budget

Calls for no increase in real estate taxes; falls \$61 million short of schools' request.

BY ANDREA WORKER
THE CONNECTION

An exercise in “triage and trade-offs” was how Mount Vernon District Supervisor Daniel Storck described the FY 2018 budget as proposed by County Executive Ed Long to the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors on Tuesday, Feb. 14.

“There are really no surprises here, but it is still sobering” to see the results in black and white, added Supervisor Jeff McKay (Lee).

Long is proposing a General Fund budget of \$4.10 billion.

The highlights of the 60-plus slide presentation include:

- ❖ \$1.97 billion for Fairfax County Public School operations, as well as School capital construction projects with \$13.1 million, and School debt service transfer of \$189.13 million.

- ❖ Additionally, \$83.4 million for school programs and services such as Head Start, Health and Behavioral Science Services and after-school programs.

- ❖ Funding for performance, merit and longevity increases for county employees.

- ❖ 18 relief Police Sergeant positions and \$2.7 million for pay scale levelling for uniformed Police and Sheriffs.

- ❖ \$3.10 million additional for Health and Human Services priorities, including for Community Services Board support for individuals with developmental disabilities to comply with current state and federal requirements and the addition of a human trafficking position.

- ❖ Funding for two new positions to support the start of the comprehensive review of the Zoning Ordinance.

- ❖ The county is able to manage the increases to Metro funding for FY 2018 – but the warning alarm has sounded. Starting in FY 2019 and beyond, the increases to the county’s required contribution to Metro “are not sustainable within existing revenue resources.”

- ❖ Reductions and savings included in the Advertised FY2018 Budget total over \$13.0 million, generated through agency-identified opportunities, other post-employment benefits, fuel savings, and cost realignments.

The proposed budget is balanced at the current real estate tax level of \$1.13 per \$100 of assessed property value and the county retains its Triple-A Bond rating.

By creating a budget without increasing the current tax rate, a number of county priorities cannot be funded, according to Long.

The items that have been set aside in the multi-year budget include a Market Rate Adjustment of 1.65 percent for county employees, funding for the second year of the Diversion First program, police span of con-



PHOTO BY ANDREA WORKER/THE CONNECTION

County Executive Ed Long said the proposed budget maintains commitment to the county’s financial policies addressing needs for both county and schools, but in the end “the county’s needs are much greater than our resources.”

rol positions that were recommended by the Ad-Hoc Commission and a consultant study, public safety staffing plan, additional funding for employment and day support for individuals with developmental disabilities, information technology investments, and funding to replace fire and rescue apparatus. These items together carry costs upwards of \$125 million.

The budget falls \$61 million short of the amount requested by the School Board. To bridge that gap would mean a real estate tax increase of 2.5 cents, according to Long.

About 40 citizens rallied in the lobby of Government Center — until they were asked to vacate the premises and continue their demonstration and press conference outside the building. Led by Dave Broder, “Invest In Fairfax” made its appearance to “reject the FY 2018 budget proposal.” The group is a coalition of families, teachers, small business owners, county employees and firefighters, mental health workers and others. “It’s unacceptable that in the wealthiest county in the nation, the county executive would balance the budget by cutting mental health funding, cutting programs for people with disabilities and breaking promises to our frontline professionals.” Broder and his group are calling on the public to engage in the budget process and make their voices heard. “We need to remember that these services and our schools are largely what made Fairfax County great and they need to be protected.”

LONG ATTRIBUTES the majority of the county’s fiscal woes to sluggish economic growth. In the 10 years between FY1998 and FY2008 the county’s economy grew annually by about 6.5 percent. Since then, growth has slowed to 2.1 percent — less than a third of the growth posted in the prior decade.

“We have to also add in the effects of se-



Members of “Invest in Fairfax” rally at the Government Center during the presentation of the proposed FY 2018 budget.

questration and the decrease in government contracts,” said Long.

The largest portion of the 1.1 percent increase in total employment over the prior year has been in the the leisure, hospitality and retail sectors, lower paying categories. Job growth in the generally higher-paying sectors of information services and cybersecurity have lost ground. According to the county’s data, this slower economic growth and fewer higher-paying jobs have begun depleting the county’s coffers, while demand for services, as exemplified by the 2016 Fairfax County Human Services Needs Assessment, is on the rise.

Fairfax County’s high office vacancy rate is also having a negative impact on the budget. According to Long, of 116.4 million square feet of office space in the county, more than 20 million still sits empty. Even more worrying on this front, studies show that 73 percent of the the region’s office space is obsolete and just can’t meet the technology and work space demands of today’s business marketplace.

Long also produced statistics that show the local housing market still underperforming against the nation’s figures during 2016. With so much of the county’s revenues relying on real estate taxes, it doesn’t help matters when more than half of the 342,000 residences in the area saw no change or a decrease in their property’s assessed value.

Still unknown in the final budget evaluation is what effect the state’s yet-to-be-approved budget will have, as well as uncertainties surrounding the new federal administration.

The board’s next budget committee meeting is on Feb. 21.

SUPERVISOR Pat Herrity (Springfield) said in a statement: “It is again obvious by today’s proposed budget that we desperately need to do something about our unsustainable pension costs. ... I believe it’s time we refocus on our priorities like pub-

lic safety, congestion relieving ... teachers’ salaries, and helping those most in need, and not balance the budget on the backs of either our taxpayers or our employees. ... The only way to fund our requirements is to set and fund priorities and reduce elsewhere.”

McKay and Supervisor John Cook (Braddock District) both expressed concern about figures showing that those least able to afford it seem to be facing the largest property assessment increases. McKay noted that in his district Habitat for Humanity housing ranked number three for the largest assessment increases in the area and questioned Long on “the math.” Long had no ready answer for this particular example, but promised that staff would look into the matter.

Cook questioned if the county executive had looked at inequalities and potential savings in programs like those that provide after-school care for all children at no cost, “even the children of millionaires who could afford to pay.” As for the lack of economic growth in the area, Cook said, “It’s been 12 years since we had more than 3 percent growth in the county. It’s time for the people across the river to stop this silly stuff and see to growth.”

Public hearings will be held at the Government Center on on April 4, 5 and 6. Those wishing to speak must sign up in advance.

The supervisors will be holding town hall meetings in their districts, and Long has committed to be in attendance to present the budget proposal directly to the public, and hear the public’s response and suggestions.

The Board of Supervisors’ meetings are recorded and available on the Fairfax County government website at www.fairfaxcounty.gov. Information about the meetings in each district is also available there, or call the local supervisor’s of

SEE BUDGET, PAGE 11

Morning Raid Spread Fear

FROM PAGE 3

balance we always want. I don't think our President has that balance in what he does."

Storck said he's been in touch with the Mount Vernon District police station about citizens' concerns over ICE activity. He said he was told they "usually don't know what's going on," with ICE or other federal law enforcement operations.

FCPD spokesperson Master Police Officer Don Gotthardt said in an email county police had no role in any "federal raids," and, "in fact, have not been made aware of any in Fairfax County."

TRAFFIC WAS SLOWED significantly Saturday afternoon Feb. 11 on I-66 around Centreville where a number of both FCPD and ICE vehicles had lights flashing and a large van with about a dozen Latino male passengers were pulled over.

In this case, Gotthardt said an FCPD officer made a routine stop for a traffic violation and then, after seeking advice from a patrol supervisor, contacted ICE to assist with interviews.

Gotthardt said he did not know the nature of the conversations, though both he and an ICE official confirmed that none of the men were arrested and were allowed to re-load the van and resume driving.

When asked to give further detail on the FCPD protocol for collaborating with ICE, Gotthardt did not respond in time for print.

Board of Supervisors Chairman Sharon Bulova said she hasn't been made aware of any more activity by ICE than what other citizens are seeing themselves or on the news.

But, as she said she has asserted numerous times, Fairfax County is a "Very diverse community — people have come from all over the globe. It's important that we main-

tain a harmonious community."

Bulova also said she's watching carefully "to make sure all members of our communities are being treated fairly."

After having listened to the story from Ramirez, Roach and Brewster, immigration lawyer Nicholas Marritz of the Legal Aid Justice Center in Falls Church doesn't believe that was the case across from Rising Hope.

"Stopping a group of people without reasonable suspicion, seems to be on extremely questionable legal footing to me," Marritz said. "You have the right not to be seized, based on the color of skin. It's a violation of Constitutional rights."

Marritz said the men's narrative underscores the need for more people to understand and assert their rights.

"Everyone is protected by the Constitution," he said. "You have the right to remain silent, to say 'I'm not going to tell you about immigration status,' to ask to talk to an attorney. No one should have to suffer an indignity like this."

Storck said the stress and fear he's heard from community members, especially among children, is "not what we want in Mount Vernon, in Fairfax County."

"This is not the United States of America that I voted for, nor the kind of country in think the vast majority of people really want," Storck continued. "We need solutions, not more fear. Solutions, by recognizing the millions of undocumented residents, and providing a path to be here legally, protecting their children in the meantime. Protecting our children, frankly."

Storck said he planned to speak with senior FCPD leadership and find out more about their protocol for interacting with ICE.

The hypothermia shelter at Rising Hope is coordinated by New Hope Housing.



PHOTO BY TIM PETERSON/THE CONNECTION

According to an ICE official, two individuals were arrested Wednesday, Feb. 8 near the shopping center on Russell Road in Alexandria, as part of routine enforcement activity.

"The Fairfax is like a cruise ship."



—Colonel Philip (Phil) J. Saulnier, USA, Retired and Judith (Judy) Saulnier, Residents at The Fairfax for 3.5 Years

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Check All Belts
Level Deck
Check Operations
Clean Tractor



Expires 2/28/17

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\$199 + Parts
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Replace Air Filter
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Ending Gerrymandering Important to Region

Efforts appear dead for this session, but elections later this year provide new opportunities.

While three bills that could have reined in the runaway gerrymandering in Virginia made it through the Virginia Senate to crossover, they died on Tuesday morning in a House subcommittee, despite some vocal Republican support.

In Virginia, Democrats have won every statewide election since 2010, and notably Barack Obama won the state in 2008 by more than 52 percent of the vote. Many of these victories have been narrow. In 2009, Republicans won Governor, Lt. Governor and Attorney General by strong margins.

EDITORIAL

It is reasonable, given these results, to expect that representation at the state level would be approximately even, with either Republicans or Democrats holding a small advantage. Instead, Republicans control the House of Delegates 66 to 34, and the Virginia Senate 21 to 19.

There is little competition for these seats as a result.

According to OneVirginia2021, an advocacy group for ending gerrymandering, 56 candi-

dates in the House of Delegates faced no real competition in the last general election in 2013, with 22 Democrats and 34 Republicans facing no major-party challenger. In the end, only two seats changed parties.

These same lawmakers are set to redraw the the boundaries for state legislative and congressional districts after the 2020 census, and the just-killed proposed constitutional amendments would have required that these not be motivated by partisan politics. By far the best approach would be to turn the process over to a non-partisan commission to draw boundaries in the best interests of Virginia citizens.

One of the proposals, cosponsored by Sen. Jill Vogel (R) and Sen. Janet Howell (D), passed the Senate 31-9, but died in the House subcommittee on a 5-2 vote.

It matters more here in Northern Virginia. Virginia is a Dillon Rule state, which means that localities have only the power specifically given to them by the General Assembly. It means that the economic engines of the state in Northern Virginia provide most of the financial wherewithal but citizens in Alexandria, Arlington and Fairfax County are often unable

to govern themselves as they wish because of control by a far more conservative General Assembly.

Real change starts locally. Anyone seeking change should tune in for this year's elections in Virginia, including all the seats in the General Assembly, plus Governor, Lieutenant Governor and Attorney General. Every voter will choose one Virginia Senator and one member of the Virginia House of Delegates.

Nonpartisan redistricting could support the best interests of the population, not the politicians.

In 2016:

Hillary Clinton (D) 1,981,473 (49.75%); Donald Trump (R) 1,769,443 (44.43%)

In 2013:

McAuliffe (D) 1,069,789; Cuccinelli (R) 1,013,389 Northam (D) 1,213,155; Jackson (R) 980,257 Herring (D) 1,103,777; Obenshain (R) 1,103,612

In 2012:

Obama (D) 1,971,820; Romney (R) 1,822,522 Kaine (D) 2,010,067; Allen (R) 1,785,542

— MARY KIMM

MKIMM@CONNECTIONNEWSPAPERS.COM

From ICE Sweep to State Budget

BY SCOTT SUROVELL
STATE SENATOR (D-36)



Crossover week of the 2017 Session came to a close as we finished initial action on over 3,000 bills. Twenty-two of my bills were passed by the Senate and moved on to the House of Delegates.

My two Saturday Town Hall meetings had the largest crowds I have seen in eight years. There

was significant concern regarding federal immigration raids on U.S. 1. On Friday, I received alarming reports that Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) had arrested numerous Latinos in a raid on U.S. 1. While the deportation of convicted felons has been consistent policy, random street sweeps and arrest or deportations of law-abiding residents is unprecedented in our community. I will work to get better information and seek to stop these actions.

Other questions focused on affordable housing, education funding, water quality, addressing the opioid crisis, respecting LGBTQ rights, proliferation of out-of-state license plates, and concerns about fracking. You can watch videos of both town halls on my YouTube channel.

we considered legislation last year, I heard concerns from numerous residents about residences being effectively used as hotel or movie studios. The bill we passed reaffirms local government's authority to regulate temporary rentals and fine owners who fail to pay occupancy taxes for renting property to multiple tenants over 30-days per year. On Thursday, we passed the Senate Amendments to the State Budget. I am pleased that the Senate Budget Amendments provided unconditional matching funds for a 2-percent raise for our teachers. These funds, coupled with other amendments would result in an additional \$18.5 million for Fairfax County Public Schools, \$26.6 million for Prince William County Public Schools and \$7.1 million for Stafford County Public Schools.

Unfortunately, the Senate has proposed to cut about \$6 million from the Governor's proposed budget to improve operation of our election system. Last year, Virginia's voter registration system

failed on the last day of voter registration due to Virginians attempting to register to vote. The Governor's proposed funding would have solved this problem. I will work to ensure it is restored.

On Thursday, my two pedestrian and cycling safety bills acquired a bit of a "fever" on the House side of the Chamber. Biking and pedestrian safety is a major problem in the United States, Virginia and the 36th District. Nationwide bike and pedestrian fatalities are rising faster than average. In Virginia, pedestrian fatalities were up 51 percent in 2016. That kind of increase is not an aberration.

My legislation to clarify the use of bike lanes and specifically prohibit the use of bike lanes to pass cars was killed in a House Transportation Subcommittee by one vote. Members were concerned

that it would be "confusing" to drivers. I argued that driver education and signage would solve the problem, but was not persuasive.

My legislation to create a new standard and new penalties for seriously injuring a "vulnerable user" was sent to the House Courts Committee which previously killed a similar bill. Hopefully, I will have better luck.

This week, my legislation to generate better information regarding coal ash regulation will be up for vote along with most of my other bills in the House of Delegates.

As always, if you have any feedback, drop me a note at scott@scottsuovell.org. Also, please complete my constituent survey at www.scottsuovell.org/survey if you have not done so yet. It is an honor to serve as your state senator.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Voting Rights Under Attack

To the Editor:

Unsatisfied with the existing identification requirements to vote in Virginia, on Feb. 1 Republicans in Virginia's House of Delegates voted to make it even harder to vote in state elections. If this were to pass, in order to register to vote in Virginia's state elections, Virgin-

ians would need to prove citizenship by providing a birth certificate, a passport, or naturalization documents. This is part of the continued Trump-led Republican effort to attack the very soul of our democracy by raising concerns about non-existent voter fraud and then pretending to fight it.

These restrictions will not stop voter fraud because that fraud does not exist. What the restric-

SEE LETTER, PAGE 7



NEWS

Remains Discovered Near Industrial Park, Ruled a Homicide

Fairfax County Police Major Crimes detectives were assisting another jurisdiction in looking for a missing teenage girl when they discovered human remains on Feb. 11 in the 7100 block of Wimsatt Road in Springfield.

The search began, police said, at Lake Accotink Park, 7500 Lake Accotink Park Road in Springfield, and expanded to the nearby area.

On Feb. 13, FCPD released the results of an autopsy of the body, believed to be that of Damaris A. Reyes Rivas, 15, of Gaithersburg, Md. The Medical Examiner's office ruled the death a homicide; the

victim had suffered upper body trauma, a statement said.

Reyes Rivas was reported missing from Montgomery County in Maryland on Dec. 10, 2016. Though police said there are many leads and that investigation is still ongoing.

Anyone with information is asked to contact the Fairfax County police at 703-691-2131, or reach out to can Crime Solvers electronically by visiting www.fairfaxcrimesolvers.org, or text-a-tip by texting "TIP187" plus your message to CRIMES(274637).

— TIM PETERSON

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

FROM PAGE 6

tions will do is send Virginians rooting through boxes of decades-old files containing birth certificates and passports. Passports are expensive, and birth certificates are hard to obtain, especially if you were born somewhere outside the U.S. These restrictions will keep ordinary, every day Virginians from voting to choose their representatives.

Republicans are doing their best to keep Virginians from the polls, but they cannot keep us from the phones. Unless you are currently holding your birth certificate or passport in your hands, I recommend picking up your phone and calling your state senator before they try to take that away too.

Kenneth Bledsoe
Reston

An Open Letter to Sen Mitch McConnell

Dear Senator McConnell,

While we may disagree on many issues, I respect the office you hold. I was taught that the office of Senator was one to be executed with respect and dignity. Because of this, I am appalled at your conduct toward Senator Warren on the Floor during the Sessions debate. The office you hold is bigger than your party. There are young children (my children, to be specific) looking to you as an example of someone to be held in the highest esteem. Rather, I had to explain to them why you would dismiss a reading of the words of Coretta Scott King; a national hero, whose story they are learning about in school. I explained to my children that Mrs. King was the true definition of a patriot. She and Dr. King changed the world with both their unapologetic love and their refusal to cower to the oppressors trying to silence them.

Now I will say thank you. Because of your shameful behavior, I've had the opportunity to teach my children the difference between standing up for what's right and trying to silence the truth for personal gain. Because you're a father yourself, I'm sure you know that tangible examples are always more effective than fables, so I

predict this one will linger in their memory banks. Subsequent to watching the Senate confirmations unfold, my 7-year-old daughter has announced that she wants to be President when she grows up. Who knows, maybe seeing you bully Senator Warren on the Floor was what pushed her to this resolution! She is being raised to value truth, honor and respect for her fellow citizens above greed and bigotry and, in part thanks to you, she will be an extraordinary civil servant.

Andrea Petersen
Vienna

Write

The Connection welcomes views on any public issue.

The deadline for all material is noon Friday. Letters must be signed. Include home address and home and business numbers. Letters are routinely edited for libel, grammar, good taste and factual errors. Send to:

Letters to the Editor
The Connection
1606 King St.
Alexandria VA 22314
Call: 703-917-6444.

By e-mail:
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Celebrating Black History Month

Educators say these lessons are urgently needed in current racial climate.

BY MARILYN CAMPBELL
THE CONNECTION

Even though Elavie Ndura knows that it is a daunting challenge to help children grasp the entirety of the African American experience in the shortest month of the year, each February she and other educators give it their best effort. This year, they feel it's more important than ever.

"With all of the racial experiences we're having these days, it's critical that children know their history and are not basing their knowledge on only what they see on television or what they hear from their friends," said Elavie Ndura, Ed.D., professor of education at George Mason University in Fairfax. "Research shows that children who understand their histories do better in school and in society, so it's critical that families teach their children about their history."

Ndura believes that the current racial climate in the U.S. gives this year's Black History Month additional significance. A study released last month by the Pew Research Center shows that among Americans, 61 percent of blacks, 58 percent of Hispanics and 45 percent of whites say that race relations in the United States are generally bad. Local educators say Black History Month offers opportunities to address issues of race by allowing the past to inform the present.

"We have seen for more than a year how people from different political viewpoints, but also races, sexes, cultures, religions, sexual orientations, and socioeconomic statuses related to each other in the present political climate, and it was troublesome," said Mika'il A. Petin, Ph.D., associate director of African and African American Studies at George Mason University. "Teaching the history of Black or African-heritage peoples in this month ... is necessary to starting difficult conversations about ... current race relations ... and social inequalities."

Race relations in our society have been deeply strained during the election and as America adjusts to a new presidential ad-

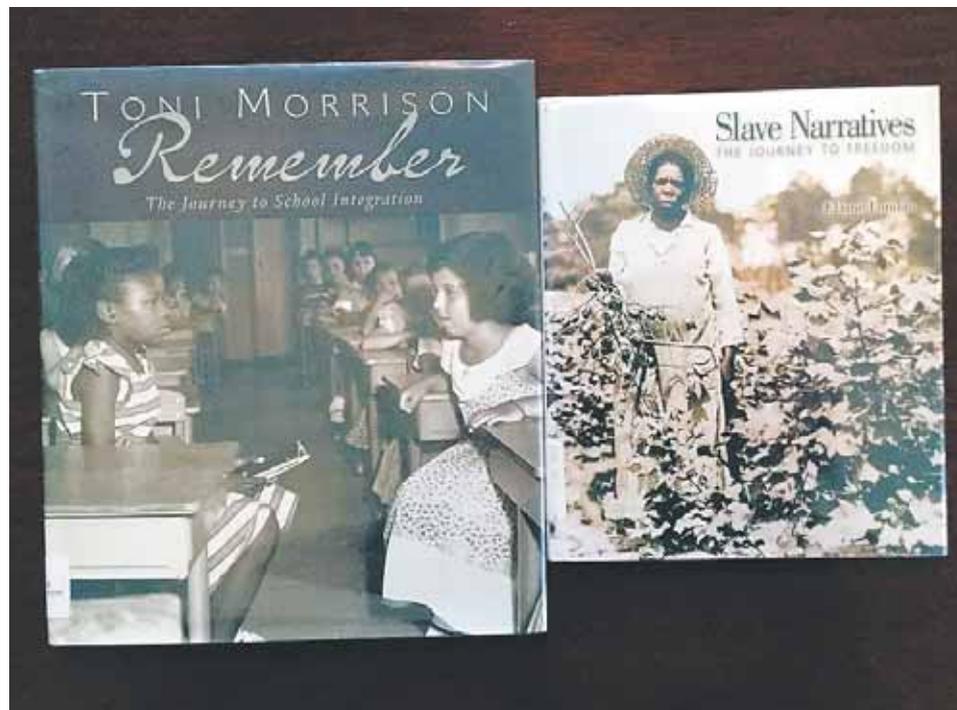


PHOTO BY MARILYN CAMPBELL/THE CONNECTION

Books that explore African American experiences are on display at libraries and bookstores during Black History Month.

ministration. These divisions make African American history lessons critical for all children, but particularly for black children, says Ndura. "As African American parents we have a serious duty to educate our own youth," she said. "Knowing your history grounds and anchors you firmly so that you are not wavered in the wrong direction because of whatever feelings might be caused by what you're seeing on the news."

— **Mika'il A. Petin, Ph.D.,
George Mason University**

Black history lessons work best when they're intentional and creative, advises Jessica Lewis, Ed.D., assistant professor of education and human services at Marymount University in Arlington. "Children benefit when they are exposed to a variety of perspectives, ideas and stories because it helps expand their view of the world and people living in it," she said. "The ability to understand and identify with others and their experiences is a powerful, life-long lesson."

Lewis advises making a trip to a local bookstore or library to find books that offer a glimpse of African American history and suggests that parents begin with books on subjects that interest their children. "[Parents] may start with readings on sports, or science, or biographies of the accomplishments and hardships of individuals who persisted throughout history to make a difference," she said. "Parents can ... select books by black authors

and illustrators and then take the time to read the story together, discuss the pictures, and ask questions about what the characters are feeling and experiencing."

Other ideas include exploring music with roots in African American history such as ragtime, jazz, gospel and blues, making a timeline of major events that occurred during the Civil Rights Movement, and reading speeches from civil rights leaders and then helping children write their own speech about what they are inspired to change in the world. Such activities can open a natural discussion and need not be complicated to be effective, says Lewis.

"Parents are their children's first educators," said Lewis. "It is important for parents to help their children understand the experiences of other children who are not like them because it builds empathy and a deeper sense of community."

One roadblock to such honest conversations, cautions Petin, is a discomfort with discussions of racial differences.

"Let's be frank, some white Americans who are politically and socially conservative become noticeably uncomfortable with the topic of race, and therefore find difficulty with Black History Month," he said. "Yet, Black History Month — similar to the Black Lives Matter movement — does not express superiority over others. Both the month of celebration and sociopolitical movement are forms of resistance to deliberate attempts to conceal the worthiness of Black or African-heritage people in this country."

Some people "may attack Black History Month and Black Lives Matter as political correctness and identity politics, but I would argue that they are not seeing the humanity in both efforts," continued Petin. He emphasized the importance of taking a purposeful approach to teaching children about black history. "I think that all parents must intentionally search for, study, and celebrate those who are on the margins, living in the shadows, perceived as voiceless, and regarded as invisible. Too often, black Americans were those marginal, shadowed, voiceless, and invisible people. All parents should be honest about that, and should have confidence in the U.S. only being great when they and their children educate themselves on this country's history in more inclusive terms."

Schools often play a significant role in the month's activities. Students at the Bullis School in Potomac, Md., for example, attend a Black History Month assembly each February. This year's event was led by several students who shared their thoughts, essays and other projects on a variety of topics. "Diverse literature is always a great idea," added Allison Ewing, chair of the social studies department at Bullis.

"Twenty-eight days of teachable moments" is one way that Petin characterizes Black History Month. "It is never too early to start preparing your kids for a world that is increasingly more connected and shrinking," he said. "When all parents teach their children how to develop skill sets to understand, value, empathize, and celebrate those who may be different than them, the children are better prepared to function in the world."



Bullis School fifth graders Elizabeth Martin and Will Simpson look on as their documentaries about the civil rights movement were presented to the school.

PHOTO COURTESY OF BULLIS SCHOOL

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.

Area Fairfax County Public Schools (FCPS) student publications were named Pacemaker finalists by the National Scholastic Press Association (NSPA) for 2017. The NSPA Pacemaker competition is one of student journalism's highest honors.

The following publications were named Pacemaker finalists:

"Sentry," Robinson Secondary School (middle school yearbooks); **Owen Schwartz and Michaela Rudolph**, editors; Adrienne Forte, adviser.

"Lair," Lake Braddock Secondary School (high school yearbooks); **Jake Gold, Samantha Hernandez, and Christopher Margraf**, editors; Kathryn Helmke, adviser.

Tara Ackerman, graduate of Lake Braddock Secondary School and resident of Burke earned semester honors from Kansas State University in the fall semester of 2016. Students earning a grade point average of 3.75 or above on at least 12 credit hours receive semester honors along with commendations from their deans.

Meredith Elaine Shock, Burke, VA resident, has been named to the dean's list at James Madison University for the fall 2016 semester. Students who earn dean's list honors must carry at least 12 graded credit hours and earn a GPA of between 3.5 and 3.899. Shock is scheduled to graduate in 2017 and is majoring in writing, rhetoric & technical communication.

Nabila A. Guled is a senior majoring in organizational leadership. Nabila has been named to the Fort Hays State University Dean's Honor Roll for the fall 2016 semester.

Ms Meghan Chandler Presing of Fairfax earned a MSW - Master of Social Work at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee. UWM is the second largest university in the State of Wisconsin, with approximately 26,000 undergraduate and graduate students.

James Hua Lau a senior at Hampden-Sydney College, has been recognized as an outstanding campus leader in the 2016 edition of Who's Who Among Students in American Universities and Colleges. James is the son of Mr. and Mrs. Michael N. Lau of Springfield, VA.

Forty-three students from Hampden-Sydney College were selected for this year's edition. Students are nominated by seniors, administrators, faculty, and coaches based on their academic achievement, service to the community, leadership in extracurricular activities, and potential for continued success. They join a select group of students from more than 2000 institutions of higher learning in all fifty states, the District of Columbia, and several foreign nations.

A private college for men, Hampden-Sydney is ranked nationally by U.S. News & World Report. The College is known for its liberal arts curriculum, the Honor Code which stresses individual and collective responsibility, and a focus on the education of young men.

Three Fairfax County residents have been recognized for academic excel-

lence during the fall 2016 semester at New River Community College.

Justin Luu of Fairfax made the President's List

Elisa Stephano of Burke made the President's List

Cristian Rice of McLean made the Dean's List

To be placed on the President's List, a student must have taken 12 college-level semester hours or more, attained a grade point average of 3.5 for any one semester, and earned a minimum of 20 semester hours at New River Community College. A Dean's List student is one who has taken 12 college-level semester hours of credit or more and attained a grade point average of 3.2 for any one semester. New River Community College is located in Dublin, Virginia and is one of the Commonwealth's 23 community colleges.

Honor Students from Fairfax at Baylor University in Waco, Texas

Ho Yeon Kim, College of Arts and Sciences

Vincent Lorenzo Rimanelli, College of Arts and Sciences

To be named to the Dean's List, a student must be an undergraduate with a minimum grade-point average of 3.7, while enrolled in a minimum of 12 semester hours.

Brescia University, Owensboro, KY 2016 Fall Academic Dean's List:

Yo'Lauder Holt of Springfield majoring in Social Work

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

Gary Kramer, D.D.S.
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ENTERTAINMENT

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.

THURSDAY/FEB. 16

Friday Morning Music Club noon - 1 p.m. Old Town Hall, 3999 University Drive, Fairfax. Friday Morning Music Club, Inc. is a community of music lovers and musicians dedicated to promoting classical music throughout the metropolitan area. On the third Thursday of the month they host their performances at Old Town Hall. Free and open to the public. www.fmmc.org

SATURDAY/FEB. 18

Valentine's Day Banquet. Greater Zion Baptist Church will host Family Ministry 2017 Valentine's Day Banquet, 6:30-11 p.m. at Waterford Receptions at Springfield, 6715 Commerce Street in Springfield. Cost: \$50 per person. Contacts: Anthony and Terri Bazemore @GLZBC (703-764-9111); abazemore6@verizon.net; terrib6@verizon.net. Special features: Dinner Buffet, Music & Dancing. Payment deadline: Feb. 12.

SUNDAY/FEB. 19

NTRAK Model Train Show at the Fairfax Station Railroad Museum 1-4 p.m. The Museum is located at 11200 Fairfax Station Road in Fairfax Station, VA. Museum members and children 4 and under, free; 5-15, \$2; 16 and older \$4. www.fairfax-station.org, 703-425-9225. www.facebook.com/FFXSRR, Twitter@FFXSTNRR.

"Winter Concert" - Northern Virginia Youth Winds 3 p.m. WT Woodson High School, 9525 Main Street, Fairfax. Northern Virginia Youth Winds Conductor: Denny Stokes & Northern Virginia Junior Winds Conductor: Linda Gammon. Free concert, no tickets required. fairfaxband.org or call 571-336-CFBA (2322)

MONDAY/FEB. 20

Student Holiday LEGO Camp. 9 - 5 p.m. Sherwood Community Center, 3740 Old Lee Highway. Instructor Peg Weis teaches building techniques used with thousands of specialty pieces, dozens of mini figures and rotating themes. \$70/day. Ages 6-11 years. Registration forms are available in office or online at www.fairfaxva.gov/parksrec. Email parksrec@fairfaxva.gov or call 703-385-1695.

Winter Game Day. 3-5 p.m. at Burke Presbyterian Church, 5690 Oak Leather Drive. Board games, a flamingo toss, pie face, coloring, snacks, hot drinks, and more. Visit www.BurkePresChurch.org for more.

FRIDAY/FEB. 24

Angry Birds Event and Movie. 6-8:45 p.m. at Sherwood Community Center, 3740 Old Lee Highway. Games, snacks and movie. \$15. Call 703-385-7858.

Cello and Piano Concert. 8 p.m. at Old Town Hall, 3999 University Drive. The Bonita Lestina Old Town Hall Performance Series with cathedral Brass is under the direction of L. Thomas Vining. Call 703-385-7858 or visit www.fairfaxva.gov/culturalarts.

SATURDAY/FEB. 25

Brothers at Arms in the American Revolution. 11 a.m. at City of Fairfax Regional Library, 10360 North St. Book talk by local author, Larrie D. Ferreiro. Visit www.fairfaxcounty.gov/library or call 703-293-6227 x6.

Art and Lunch. Noon-3 p.m. at Village Gallery, 3950 University Drive. Bring



Live Music

On Friday, Feb. 24 at 8 p.m., the Bonita Lestina Old Town Hall Performance Series will feature a clarinet, saxophone, and flute jazz trio at Old Town Hall, 3999 University Drive, Fairfax. Call 703-385-7858 or go to www.fairfaxva.gov/culturalarts

PHOTO
CONTRIBUTED

lunch and enjoy the company of other artists. Free and open to the public. New members welcome. Please visit the Fairfax Art League on Facebook or at www.fairfaxartleague.net or call 703-587-9481.

Civil War Interpretive. 2-4 p.m. at Historic Blenheim, 3610 Old Lee Highway. Retired educator Wes Boutchard will unfold the incredible story of a mulatto slave related to Blenheim's Willcoxon family, his escape from slavery and the choices he made as a free man. Call 703-591-6728 for more.

SUNDAY/FEB. 26

American Youth Philharmonic Orchestras. 3-5 p.m. at Fairfax High School, 3501 Rebel Run. Sibelius, Finlandia and Liszt, Les Preludes concert. Visit www.aypo.org for more information.

Burke Historical Society. 3:30-5 p.m. at Pohick Regional Library, 6450 Sydenstricker Road. Brian Slawski, BHS Vice President and Programs Chair, will conclude his series on jazz in Northern Virginia and the District, past and present, with a look at local jazz festivals, instruction, and radio. Free. Visit www.burkehistoricalsociety.org for more.

Into the Joy of Spring. 4 p.m. at Lanier Middle School, 3801 Jermantown Road. Fairfax Band concert. Free. Visit fairfaxband.org or a call 571-336-CFBA (2322) for more.

MONDAY/FEB. 27

Funday Monday. 10:30 a.m. at Old Town Hall, 3999 University Drive. Music, movement, storytelling, performances, crafts, and more. Call 703-385-7858 or visit www.fairfaxva.gov/culturalarts for more.

THURSDAY/MARCH 2

Hooligan Sparrow Film. 4:30 p.m. at Johnson Center Cinema, George Mason University, 4400 University Drive. The film follows activist Ye Haiyan to China's Hainan Province to protest a principal's

abuse of elementary school girls. Visit fams.gmu.edu/events/6438.

SATURDAY/MARCH 4

Film Screening. 2 p.m. at the Unity of Fairfax, 2854 Hunter Mill Road, Oakton. The screening of the film "Matt Shepard is a Friend of Mine," a documentary exploring the life and death of Matthew Shepard, a gay student murdered in 1998, in Laramie, WY. The story of Matt Shepard's struggles is told through the personal lens of his friends, family and those who were close to him throughout the years. Visit mattshepard.eventbrite.com for more.

Single Dinner and Movie Night. 5 p.m. at Uncle Julio's, 4251 Fairfax Corner Ave. \$32 at door includes dinner, soda, tip and movie ticket. RSVP required. Sponsored by New Beginnings, a support group for separated/divorced men and women. Call 301-924-4101 or visit www.newbeginningsusa.org for more.

WEDNESDAY/MARCH 8

Irish Luncheon. 11:30 a.m.-1:30 p.m. at Burke Presbyterian Church, 5690 Oak Leather Drive. Springfield Christian Women's Connection will host, with musical entertainment from bagpiper Robert Mitchell. \$20. For luncheon reservations call 703-922 6438 or e-mail SpringWmConn@yahoo.com by March 3.

SUNDAY/MARCH 26

Hands On Activity Day. 1-4 p.m. at The Fairfax Station Railroad Museum, 11200 Fairfax Station Road, Fairfax Station. Railroad and/or historical crafts and activities will be offered for all ages although most are suited for ages 8 and above. Museum members and children 4 and under, free; ages 5-15, \$2; ages 16 and older, \$4. Visit www.fairfax-station.org or call 703-425-9225 for more.

MARCH 31-APRIL 1

Spring Children's Consignment Sale. Friday at 9 a.m.-8 p.m. at Cameron

United Methodist Church, 3130 Franconia Road. Some items are half price on Saturday. Email CUMC.CCS@gmail.com for more.

ONGOING

The U.S. Small Business

Administration is reminding businesses in Virginia that working capital loans are still available to small businesses, small agricultural cooperatives, small businesses engaged in aquaculture and private nonprofit organizations affected by the severe storms and tornadoes on Feb. 24, 2016. Deadline to file is March 7, 2017. <https://disasterloan.sba.gov/ela>. www.sba.gov/disaster. disastercustomerservice@sba.gov.

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 Pets on Wheels New Volunteer Orientation First Wednesday of each month. 7:30 - 9 p.m. 3001 Vaden Drive, Fairfax. An orientation for new volunteers interested in visiting residents of nursing homes and assisted living facilities with their approved pets through the Fairfax Pets On Wheels program is held the first Wednesday of every month starting at 7:30 p.m. Please check our website, www.fpow.org for each month's location. Prior to attending, please complete the online application found at <http://www.fpow.org/volunteer>. Please do NOT bring your pets to this orientation. Also, see weather policy for possible cancellations. www.fpow.org 703-324-5424.

dfspetsonwheels@fairfaxcounty.gov
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. moorefit@yahoo.com or 703-499-6133.

"Out of the Blue..." Art Show

Workhouse Arts Center February 8 to March 8 9518 Workhouse Way, Lorton. Building 9 Hours: Wednesday - Sunday 11 - 6 p.m. Part of the Workhouse Arts Center 2nd Saturday Artwalk "Out of the Blue..." is the featured artist show of Karen Chin. Her collection of pieces are "Out of the Blue" unrelated topics and represent a collection of subject matter that has been accumulating on her art-to-do list. The show includes a nod to the hearts, reds and pinks of February.

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.

Smoke Free Bingo (with breaks for smoking friends). 7 p.m. Every Friday. Fairfax Volunteer Fire Department, 4081 University Drive, Fairfax. Free coffee, entertaining callers, \$1,000 jackpot. www.fairfaxvd.com. 703-273-3638.

NARFE Monthly Meeting Every Second Tuesday 11:30 a.m. American Legion Post 177 located at 3939 Oak Street, Fairfax. NARFE Fairfax 737 monthly luncheon meeting. Enjoy lunch accompanied by a special program. Lunch at noon. Cost: \$11 Speaker/Program-12:45PM. rrharney2@cox.net 703-501-0020

English Conversation Groups weekly at George Mason, Burke Centre, and Lorton Libraries Practice and improve your English. Day and start times vary. Visit: <https://va.evanced.info/fairfaxcounty/lib/eventcalendar.asp>

First Sunday Jazz Brunch 11 - 2 p.m. Recurring monthly on the 1st Sunday at Bazin's on Church 111 Church St N.W., Vienna. Enjoy brunch accompanied by the soft jazz sounds of Virginia Music Adventure. Visit: <http://www.fxva.com/listing/bazins-on-church/1686/>

Stories From Strawberry Park 10 - 11 a.m. Tuesdays in Mosaic - Strawberry Park 2910 District Avenue, Fairfax. Enjoy a live interactive performance each week taught by a group of unique storytellers. For ages 10 and under. Held outside in Strawberry Park. In inclement weather and October through April, storytime will be held in Angelika Film Center. Recurring weekly on Tuesday. Visit: <http://www.fxva.com/listing/mosaic-district/2326/>

Funday Monday 10:30 a.m. - Every Monday - Old Town Hall, 3999 University Dr, Fairfax. There will be music, movement, storytelling, performances, crafts, and more. It is open to children of all ages, however especially for those who haven't yet started school. Programs are free and open to the public, donations are gratefully appreciated. There is ample free parking in the downtown area, and stroller access at the rear of Old Town Hall on Main St. 703-385-7858 www.fairfaxva.gov/culturalarts

Fairfax County Names First Independent Police Auditor

Richard G. Schott, a 27-year veteran of the FBI, was appointed by the Board of Supervisors to be Fairfax County's first-ever independent police auditor.



PHOTO CONTRIBUTED

Richard G. Schott, a 27-year veteran of the FBI, was appointed by the Board of Supervisors to be Fairfax County's first-ever independent police auditor.

The announcement of Schott's hiring came at the board's Feb. 14 meeting. As auditor, Schott will report directly to the board and have numerous oversight responsibilities. Among them, Fairfax County said:

- ❖ Monitoring and reviewing internal investigations of Police Department officer-involved shootings, in-custody deaths and use-of-force cases in which an individual is killed or seriously injured.
- ❖ Requesting further investigations if he determines that an internal investigation was deficient or conclusions were not supported by the evidence.
- ❖ Issuing public reports for each reviewed internal investigation.
- ❖ Reviewing all resident complaint investigations of alleged excessive or unnecessary force by officers.
- ❖ Producing annual reports that

analyze trends and recommend improvements.

Schott will start full-time, paid work April 17 this year — salary is set at \$143,000 — joined by two assistants.

Creation of an independent auditor was a recommendation by the Ad Hoc Police Practices Review Commission for increased oversight of Fairfax County Police.

Another was creation of a civilian review panel. The supervisors

approved that body as well, set to be a nine-member group of volunteers who will review complaints of police misconduct or abuse of power.

During closed session Feb. 14, the board was scheduled to review applications and nominees for those positions. However no announcement was made following the closed-door meeting.

Board of Supervisors chairman Sharon Bulova said she was pleased to welcome Schott as the first auditor.

"In this newly established position, Mr. Schott will provide increased accountability and trans-

parency to the Fairfax County Police Department," Bulova said in a statement.

According to Fairfax County, Schott's FBI career includes working as a special agent with local law enforcement and training state and local officers, "including legal issues associated with police officers' use of force and deadly force."

He also serves as an FBI Academy instructor at Quantico, the county said, teaching new agents about basic constitutional criminal procedure and legal consequences when they employ force.

— TIM PETERSON

County Budget Proposed

FROM PAGE 4

vice directly for more information. The entire Advertised Budget Proposal presentation is also online. Citizens are also encouraged to participate in an online chat with Long on Feb. 24 from 3 - 4p.m. A link leading to a question submission for the chat can be found at the end of the "5 Things to Know About the FY 2018 Budget" on the county website.

Dialogue on Islam 'in Multiple Colors'

FROM PAGE 2

Patricia Maulden of the Dialogue and Difference Project, cautioned against the use of facts without the consideration of emotional responses, particularly when there is a climate of fear or misunderstanding. The first step in addressing Islamophobia and xenophobia, Maulden explained, is to see each other as human because it is in humanizing each other that we can better hear the facts.

She also said that it is essential to honor people's

feelings instead of dismissing them and once people feel heard and understood, the use of facts will be more effective.

Amber Jamil of the American Pakistan Foundation said it is important to reach out to people and tell individual stories, particularly those that impact the community.

A VIDEO of the panel discussion can be found at iir.gmu.edu.

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COMMUNITY



Members and their families gather at the Bowl America in Burke on Sunday, Feb. 12 during an activity with Eddie's Club, a social club for people with disabilities.



PHOTOS BY ABIGAIL CONSTANTINO/THE CONNECTION

Springfield's Eddie Garretson is being honored at the Virginia House of Delegates for his work with people with disabilities through Eddie's Club, a social club he founded in 1997.

Social Club for People With Disabilities Ends on High

Springfield founder honored in Richmond.

BY ABIGAIL CONSTANTINO
THE CONNECTION

Springfield's Eddie Garretson is on his way to Richmond Wednesday to receive an honor in Virginia's House of Delegates.

Del. Dave Albo (R-42) will commend Garretson in a House Resolution for his work with people with disabilities and their families through Eddie's Club.

"Eddie's a good guy," Ron Fields, of Fairfax, said. "He's put together a good club. Everyone has enjoyed everything he provides for them." Fields has two sons with high-functioning autism who are members of the club.

But after 20 years, Eddie's Club will end its run this spring, and the some 200 members and their families will no longer have the activities they have enjoyed through it. Fields is hopeful that someone will step up and take over running the club.

"It will be a big loss to all of the kids," Joel Ticatch, of Chantilly, said. His son Avi, 21, has been a member for six years.

Anita Liberatore, of Burke, said her son Dane, 14, loves the club and will miss it. Dane has made friends at the club, and it is a place for him to put the social skills he learns in school into practice.

Liberatore said the club contributed to the development of her son's social skills. She said Dane, who has intellectual disabilities, developmental issues, autism and cerebral palsy, has become comfortable introducing himself to and making friends with neurotypical children.

But it's not just people with special needs who have enjoyed the benefits of membership. Liberatore said that getting together with other parents and "talking to people you don't have to explain things to has been great."

The club's registration director Patti Alf,



Dane Liberatore, 14, of Burke, loves Eddie's Club and has made good friends in the years he has participated. His mother, Anita, said the club has been great in connecting with similar families.



From left, twins Joey and Scott Eichmann, of Arlington, enjoy a game of bowling with Eddie's Club. Joey's favorite activity at Eddie's Club is bowling, while Scott enjoys going to the movies.



From left, Joel, Avi, and Elaine Ticatch, of Chantilly, participate at an Eddie's Club bowling event at Bowl America in Burke on Sunday, Feb. 12. Avi, 21, who has autism, has been a member of Eddie's Club for six years.

who has a 30-year-old son in the club, said the opportunity to network with other families has been invaluable. She has people she

can talk to about questions that range from what to do when a child turns 18 to recommendations for a good dentist.

More information

Read House Resolution No. 386 on Eddie Garretson, lis.virginia.gov/cgi-bin/legp604.exe?171+ful+HR386+pdf
Learn more about Eddie's Club, www.eddiesclub.org/

Garretson started his work with children with disabilities in 1993. He was directing a West Springfield little league baseball team when he saw a different kind of team on the field — a challenger division comprising children with physical and intellectual disabilities.

"We're all here for a reason. I found my reason," Garretson said. He started the Springfield Challenger Baseball with nine children. Within five years, the team burgeoned to 188 players.

Garretson noticed that during the off-season, the players did not have any social activities. That is how Eddie's Club was formed in 1997.

Once a month the club meets at Washington Irving Middle School in Springfield. With a group of volunteers, it provides activities, such as arts and crafts, woodcrafting, indoor baseball, basketball, games and other programs. The club also schedules outings, such as going to movies, basketball games or bowling; has a teen and young adult club that meets for pizza in Annandale; and throws themed parties.

Alf said the activities try to meet members on the level in which they can participate. One activity the club had was wheelchair art, where big pieces of paper were laid out on the floor with paint, and parents and volunteers helped push members who used wheelchairs.

Garretson will still be involved with Springfield Challenger Baseball after Eddie's Club ends. He is proud of the work that volunteers have poured into the club. "There's no way we would be where we are, do the things we've done without the community and the volunteers," he said.

Garretson received the Herbert C. Hunter Citizen of the Year Award from the Greater Springfield Chamber of Commerce in 2012.

SPORTS



PHOTOS BY STEVE HIBBARD/THE CONNECTION

Large photos of the senior girls lined the Lake Braddock gym.



Bailey Edwards (#10) was escorted by her parents Billy and Elizabeth Edwards, brothers Billy Jr. and Kyle, as well as Grandma Sue Edwards.

Senior Night for Lake Braddock Girls Basketball

Four girls honored at ceremony after playing together since freshman year.

Four senior girls from Lake Braddock Secondary School were honored during Senior Night at the girls varsity basketball game against West Springfield — their last regular season game — on Friday, Feb. 10, 2017 at the school. The girls have been playing together since they were freshmen.

Senior Night consisted of special treats throughout the day from the younger players. Some got treated to Starbucks drinks; they also displayed posters of their basketball accomplishments in the gym and decorated their lockers. A flyer commemorating the event was printed as well as T-shirts,

spirit buttons and stickers. After the basketball game, there was a pizza party with cake and goodies.

“Tonight we’re here to celebrate the Lake Braddock varsity senior girls. We’re here to celebrate the time that they’ve spent on the team and here at the school, and all that they’ve given, as well as their leadership on the court,” said organizer Monica Park of Fairfax Station.

The highlight of the evening was when the announcer introduced each senior girl along with her family members as they walked under an arch of swords created by the Lake Braddock Color Guard before the

basketball game began.

First to walk through the arch was Bailey Edwards (#10), who was escorted by her parents Billy and Elizabeth Edwards, brothers Billy Jr. and Kyle, as well as Grandma Sue Edwards. She said her favorite memory of basketball is getting to play with some of her best friends: Elisa, Kate, and Ari, over these past four years.

Next up was Kate Esper (#30), escorted by her parents Mark and Leah Esper and her grandmother Polly Esper. Her favorite memory is when friend Sydney hit the buzzer beater for a win against Annandale.

Next to walk through the arch was Ariana Zimmerman (#32), who was escorted by her parents Margie and Erik Zimmerman, sister Chelsea and brother-in-law Clayton Ferrer, and best friends Delaney Crowe and Elise Lausier. Her favorite memory is play-

ing for Coach Art and running his trick plays.

Next up was Elisa Taylor (#43), escorted by her parents Kevin and Kathy Taylor, her grandparents Ken and Bev Willey, and best friend Nazaneen Saleh and a surprise guest, her sister Elaina who came from college. Her favorite memory is beating West Springfield after so many years.

According to parent Kevin Taylor of Springfield, “I could not be more proud of my daughter Elisa. She’s made quite a huge advance this year in her play and her competitiveness. It’s a great way for her to finish off her senior year; I could not be more proud.”

Coach Tim Lucas added: “They’ve been a great group; they’ve done everything I could ever ask for, and they’ve made this year a lot of fun.”

— STEVE HIBBARD



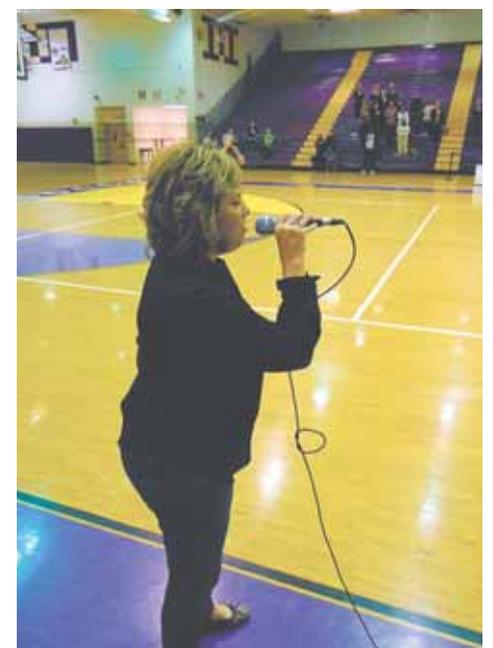
Kate Esper (#30) is escorted by her parents Mark and Leah Esper and her grandmother Polly Esper under an arch of swords during Senior Night at the girls varsity basketball game against West Springfield on Friday, Feb. 10, 2017 at the school.



Ariana Zimmerman (#32) was escorted by her parents Margie and Erik Zimmerman, sister Chelsea and brother-in-law Clayton Ferrer, and best friends Delaney Crowe and Elise Lausier.



Elisa Taylor (#43) was escorted by her parents Kevin and Kathy Taylor, her grandparents Ken and Bev Willey, and best friend Nazaneen Saleh and a surprise guest, her sister Elaina who came from college.



Gail Patton, who teaches Health, P.E. and Driver’s Ed at Lake Braddock, sings “The National Anthem.”

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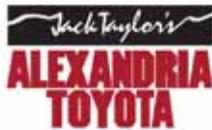
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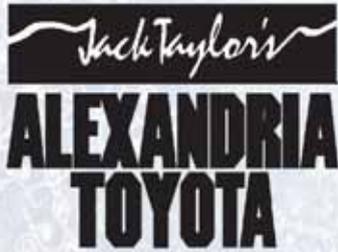
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