

Springfield CONNECTION

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PHOTO BY MARTI MOORE/THE CONNECTION

OCTOBER 12-18, 2017

ONLINE AT WWW.CONNECTIONNEWSPAPERS.COM

WEEK IN SPRINGFIELD

Charity Walk to Benefit Local Nonprofit

The Hemophilia Association of the Capital Area (HACA), a nonprofit organization based in Springfield, will hold its fifth annual Fall Walk on Saturday, Oct. 14, at Lake Accotink Park in Springfield.

HACA has served people in the metro D.C. area who are affected by bleeding disorders such as hemophilia and von Willebrand disease since 1964.

The event will take place at the McLaren-Sargent Pavilion, accessible from the Heming Avenue entrance of the park. Check-in begins at 8:30 a.m. at the pavilion, with the 2-mile walk along the shores of the lake taking place at 10 a.m. Registration is \$25 and includes a t-shirt (while supplies last).

Funds raised through the walk will support the programs and services of HACA, which include summer camp for kids with a bleeding disorder; patient assistance to help with the cost of healthcare bills and emergency expenses; chapter scholarship programs; and more.

For more information on HACA, go to

www.hacacares.org. To register for the walk, go to <https://tinyurl.com/FallFestivalWalk>.

Lorton Man Dies in Crash on Alban Road in Springfield

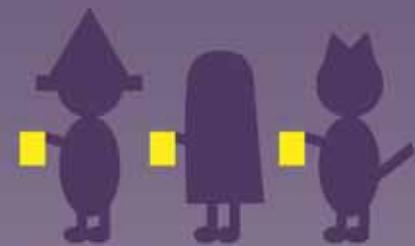
Crash Reconstruction Unit detectives from West Springfield Police District are investigating a fatal crash in Springfield Tuesday morning, Oct. 10, involving a 1998 Ford Mustang and a 2008 Dodge Caliber. It hap-

pened in the 8400 block of Alban Road at about 8:15 a.m. The Ford Mustang was north on Alban Road and the 2008 Dodge Caliber was south on Alban Road when the cars crashed almost head on into one another. The driver of the Ford Mustang, 82-year-old William Henry Corum of Lorton, was pronounced dead at the scene. The other driver was treated for minor injuries at the scene and was released. Speed is yet to be determined, but after a preliminary investigation it does not appear alcohol was a factor in the crash, according to police. All lanes of traffic on Alban Road were closed for several hours. The crash remains under investigation.

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Area Authors Tour Fall Literary Conferences

Scary plots are ripe for Halloween reading.

BY MARTI MOORE
THE CONNECTION

Springfield writer Eric Gardner, 41, served on three panels in August at the Killer Nashville International Literary Conference in Franklin, Tenn. — where he received the 2017 Readers' Choice Award for Best Fiction Adult Horror for his 2016 book "Awakening." It's the second volume the "XIII Legion Series."

The retired U.S. Army captain writes contemporary fiction about good versus evil. Under Gardner's command, his gritty characters persevere through the constant beat down of life as they explore mankind's role in heaven and hell.

He draws fire from his previous life as a military infantry officer and is shooting for a Halloween release date next year for his fifth book "Descent." The timing couldn't be better because Gardner describes his books as "scary" and "macabre."

LAST MONTH, his children let their stay-at-home dad attend the Creatures, Crimes & Creativity (C3) Con in Columbia, Md., with Fairfax author John B. Wren — who was a panelist Sept. 9 in two symposiums about "Writing emotion: Opening a vein" and "the nitty gritty of prose." The semi-

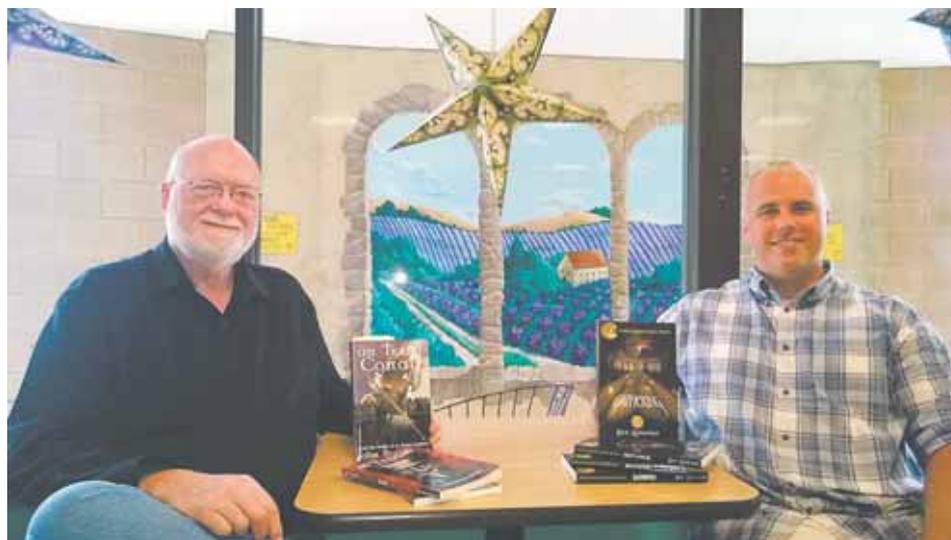


PHOTO BY MARTI MOORE/THE CONNECTION

Fairfax author John B. Wren, left, and Springfield writer Eric Gardner, right, discuss the upcoming fall book season Aug. 23 at the Grounded Coffee Shop, where they meet weekly as a mutual sounding board and keep each other motivated to write.

retired mechanical engineer returned Sept. 10 for a talk on "the politics of villains."

Gardner also was a panelist that day in a discussion most law-abiding citizens rarely consider: "Bullet, garrote or blade? Inventive ways to kill off characters."

Their art takes these Fairfax County wordsmiths all the way to Canada this week for Bouchercon 2017: Passport to Murder, a mystery convention in Toronto Oct. 12-15. Gardner and Wren say they attend these

genre-specific events because "we talk craft," meet fans, other authors and build networks.

"Writing a book can be an isolating endeavor," admits Gardner. "It's easy to become discouraged." That's why he and Wren meet each week for coffee — so they can suffer together.

Wren, 73, has written two psychological thrillers and a mystery novel called "Darryl's Reunion" that was adapted as a screenplay.

Last year, he shifted gears from the 21st century into reverse and backed himself into the first millennium with historic tales set in Ireland between 893 and 1042.

His interest in the Emerald Isle stems from his mother, who was born in a lighthouse in Ireland's County Cork. The year 2014 marked the millennial anniversary of the Battle of Clontarf — which inspired Wren's trilogy about a family of medieval Irish warriors beginning with "an Trodai Scolai" and followed by "an Trodai Laoghaire."

The series required a "wee bit of research," Gardner said last year at a book signing in Burke. Wren takes pride in presenting an accurate account of historical fact while weaving his fictional characters in and out. His third book "an Trodai Conall" is due out next month.

Both Gardner and Wren get their books published through an online independent print-on-demand service called CreateSpace — a division of Amazon.com.

Although they don't enjoy the benefit of a publicity dream team, CreateSpace offers marketing advice for a fee and pays their authors as their books sell on Amazon and other retail outlets. Gardner and Wren watch the profits trickle into their account.

The payoff hasn't justified the hard work yet.

"We're not gettin' rich," Wren admits. It's the process of writing he truly enjoys.

Visit their websites johnbwren.com and www.Thirteenthlegionseries.com.



POLICE PHOTOS

Carjacking suspects



Help Identify Suspects in Carjacking

Detectives are asking for assistance identifying two suspects who carjacked a woman at knifepoint on Sept. 29. The incident occurred in the lower parking lot outside of Target at Springfield Town Center, 6500 Springfield Mall. As a woman was getting in her car, the suspects pictured here approached.

According to police, the female suspect brandished a knife, while the male suspect grabbed the victim and pulled her from the vehicle. The two suspects drove away and later used the victim's credit

card at a retail store in Virginia. The vehicle, a tan 2010 Honda CRV with Virginia tag WNX-3508, has not yet been recovered.

Anyone with information on the identity of these subjects is asked to contact Detective Rich Downham at 703-246-7800 or Crime Solvers electronically by visiting www.fairfaxcrimesolvers.org or text-a-tip by texting "TIP187" plus your message to CRIMES(274637)** or by calling 1-866-411-TIPS(8477), or call Fairfax County Police at 703-691-2131.



PHOTO COURTESY OF THE FAIRFAX STATION RAILROAD MUSEUM

Eagle Scout Troop Replaces Railroad Ties at Museum

Alex Allison, Eagle Scout candidate (front, center, with cap) and members of his Troop 1853 as well as friends and family members, replaced decaying railroad ties at the Fairfax Station Railroad Museum on Oct. 8. Troop 1853 is located in Springfield. The Fairfax Station Railroad Museum is located at 11200 Fairfax Station Road. Learn more at www.fairfax-station.org, www.facebook.com/FFXSRR, or call 703-425-9225.

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Mount Vernon Gazette and Connection Newspapers
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NEWS

Andrews Federal Sponsors Back to School Bash in Springfield

Andrews Federal Credit Union recently served as a Community Sponsor for the Tots2Tweens Back2School Bash at the Springfield Town Center in Springfield, Virginia.

The first 500 children were provided drawstring backpacks, pencils and pencil cases. Additionally, Andrews Federal staff volunteers gave away fidget spinners, notepads, pens, and lunch bags to the winners of their spin the wheel game.

"Starting the school year off on the right foot is extremely important," said Andrews Federal's Enola Thaboun, Springfield Town Center Branch Manager. "We are always ready to contribute to the success of our future leaders in any way we can."

To learn more about Andrews Federal Credit Union and its community involvement, or to become a member, call 800-487-5500 or visit www.andrewsfcu.org.



Andrews Federal's Ryan Drigo looks on as two young attendees spin the wheel for a prize at the Back2School Bash at Springfield Town Center.

PHOTOS CONTRIBUTED



Andrew's Federal's Enola Thaboun, Springfield Town Center Branch Manager; Ryan Drigo, Springfield Town Center Assistant Branch Manager; and Stan Koussis, Community Development Manager.



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PEOPLE



Discussing 'Lottery Dream Home'

Andy and Valerie Shreev of Alexandria recently won the million-dollar top prize in a Virginia Lottery game. They will be featured on the HGTV show "My Lottery Dream Home," airing Friday, Oct. 13 at 7:30 p.m. on cable network HGTV. The couple claimed the top prize in the Virginia Lottery's "Golden Spades Scratcher" game in October 2016. Andy bought the winning ticket at Kingstowne Sunoco, 5800 Kingstowne Center Drive in Alexandria. Rather than take the full prize over 30 years, the couple opted for the cash option of \$561,798 before taxes. At the time of their win, the couple was celebrating an even bigger prize: The birth of their daughter.

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BY SCOTT SUROVELL
STATE SENATOR (D-36)



COMMENTARY

Stephen Paddock's Las Vegas assault rifle killing spree has again highlighted the dangers of Virginia's and America's much-too-lax firearms environment. Virginians know the dangers of high-powered weapons having experienced snipers Malvo and Muhammad and the Virginia Tech massacre. Some of us have been steadily, but unsuccessfully, trying to pass reasonable firearms violence prevention laws in Virginia for years.

For example, after Jared Loughner's 2011 attack on U.S. Rep. Gabrielle Giffords, I cosponsored legislation to prohibit the sale of firearm ammunition magazines that hold more than 20 bullets. The legislature has rejected the bill every year since.

In 2015, a Fairfax attorney told me about a

client he defended in a mental commitment proceeding in which his client was found to be a danger to himself or others. Virginia law prohibits these people from obtaining a concealed weapon permit or possessing a firearm, but the law does not prohibit the possession of ammunition. I tried to prohibit mentally-incapacitated people from purchasing or possessing ammunition, but the legislature struck it down.

In 2015, I fought to prohibit Virginia from recognizing concealed weapon permits from other states unless their permits contained the same restrictions required by Virginia law — like those adjudged insane subject to protective order, convicted of two misdemeanors in five years, convicted of assault or sexual battery, addicted to drugs, convicted of driving

while intoxicated in the last three years or dishonorably discharged from the Armed Forces.

Attorney General Mark Herring cancelled numerous reciprocity agreements with other states for these reasons, but months later in 2015, the legislature passed legislation requiring reciprocity. Today, a non-felon, Virginia resident who cannot obtain a concealed carry permit in Virginia can obtain one in Florida and use it here.

Last year, I introduced legislation requiring background checks for all gun purchases. This would close the gun show loophole and ensure that a felon could not evade purchase restrictions by simply buying guns on eBay or other gun-sale websites. My bill was killed 12-3 in the Senate Courts of Justice Committee. While it seems likely that bump stocks will be banned now that 58 innocent people were mowed down, I am not optimistic we will see additional safety improvements in the short term.

I will continue to work for reasonable laws to prohibit firearm violence in Virginia and I welcome any ideas from my constituents. You can reach me at scott@scottsurovell.org.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Claims Up Against Facts

To the Editor:

In response to Kevin R. Rose's *Opinion: Letter to the Editor: Deer Hunting Effect Misrepresented* (*Connection*, Sept. 6-12, 2017).

How convenient for you to not mention that you work with Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries (VDGIF). VDGIF, your employer, profits from the sales of hunting licenses, so it is no surprise that the VDOT data that clearly shows hunting is increasing deer-vehicle collisions in our county bothers you so much.

As a resident in Fairfax County and one who is adjacent to a park where bowhunting is taking place, I also received the postcard you speak of and I requested data from VDOT to see for myself if the content in the postcard is correct and it is. Though it was time consuming to map out all of the deer vehicle collisions (DVCs) in our county over the last three years, which is all VDOT could provide for me, I did see a very obvious trend that did show how approximately 93 percent of all DVCs over the span of these three years is, in fact, within 1 to 1.5 miles of a bow hunted park or in a bow hunted park. Your claims are up against the facts — in this case the VDOT data which fortunately is not biased like you are.

Kudos to whoever mailed out these postcards. There are people in our county who are sick and

tired of "higher officials" making uneducated decisions and putting the public's safety at risk. Whoever sent out these flyers seems to have noticed deer carcasses beside these bow hunted parks and decided to look into this. Everyone has a right to VDOT data and I'm glad the author of this postcard reminded us of this, since we clearly can't rely on people who are running this so-called deer management program or people who work with pro-hunting VDGIF.

You go on to argue that 92 percent of Fairfax County is within 1.5 miles of a bow hunted park. Please show us how 92 percent of Fairfax County is within 1.5 miles of a park. I grew up in Fairfax County and know well enough you are making this up. All we have to do is look at a map and see that.

As a VDGIF employee you also have access to data from 2005 to 2016. You are comparing 11 years of data that only you seem to have access to to three years of data (2014-2017) explained in the postcards. The postcard clearly states that the author could only obtain three years of data from VDOT. The data in the postcard is based on data collected between May 6, 2014 and April 25, 2017. I had a look at the VDOT data during this time frame and the postcard is accurate in terms of DVCs and locations. If you did your homework and looked at the same dates, you would have the same numbers as the postcard. This also goes for the dates of the deer ster-

ilizations in Fairfax City. The postcard also gave accurate data for those three years.

Not a surprise that you, VDGIF, have several years worth of VDOT data, yet, we the residents of Fairfax County only have access to three years of VDOT data.

As for the research articles you clearly did not read, hunting does increase the overall deer population since hunted herds did have an increased incidence of multiple deliveries. In this case a significant increase of twins and triplets in deer herds that were hunted. Why do you call this insignificant?

Rob Brooks
Fairfax Station

Column as an Inspiration

To the Editor:

As a regular reader of Kenneth Lourie's "Cancer Column," I'd like to request the Editor to please consider giving the column a much-deserved face-lift. The *Connection* needs to shed more light on Lourie's illuminating accounts of dealing with the deadly disease, and overcoming the odds, instead of burying it in the shadow of the Business Directory with an Obituary-like black border! Also, a color profile picture would breathe new life into these weekly gems. I understand, Lourie is an Ad/Sales Representative, but more importantly, he is a Survivor and an inspiration to us all.

Considering the other cancers plaguing our society — fake news, mass shootings, and reality shows that are anything but real to most of us — it is all the more urgent to highlight real-life, first-hand accounts from people like Lourie who are fighting the real fight. If, perhaps, we read such stories of courage and positive determination, it could inspire a sorely-needed dose of consideration, empathy, and kindness in our community, or at the very least, give us a much-needed reality-check.

To Mr. Lourie, thank you for sharing your story every week, and wishing you continued strength...

Shaila Muralidhar
Great Falls

Fairfax County Steps to Limit Unsustainable Pension Liabilities

To the Editor:

Fairfax County can limit its unsustainable pension liabilities if it seeks serious policy options. But it has not.

Unfunded pension liabilities of its five main pension systems in June 2016 were an unsustainable \$5.6 billion, up \$0.8 billion in that year alone. Moreover, that unfunded

SEE LETTERS, PAGE 7

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An independent, locally owned weekly newspaper delivered to homes and businesses.

Published by
Local Media Connection LLC

1606 King Street
Alexandria, Virginia 22314

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LETTERS

FROM PAGE 6

level would be far larger were its liabilities based on realistic 5.5 percent discount rates rather than 7.25 percent discount rates.

One of five systems is the Educational Employees' Supplementary Retirement System (ERFC) for public school employees. Its unfunded liabilities surged 27 percent last year. Worse, this supplemental system entices good employees to retire as early as 52.

In short, four of five systems — not the Virginia Retirement system

— are unduly generous. If the County were prudent with liabilities for which it ultimately is responsible, it would seek — and consider — serious pension options. But it has not. To be prudent, the County should seek impacts on its unfunded liabilities of:

1. Changing full pension ages to the first of the Social Security age or one satisfying the Rule of 90 (age plus service years),

2. Eliminating employee contributions to, and eligibility for, pensions for new and unvested employees,

3. Using realistic pension discount rates of 5.5 percent rate,

4. Capping cost-of-living adjustments at 2 percent,

5. Increasing contribution rates by both employers and participating employees by 0.5 percent over each of the next five years and

6. Enhancing returns by shifting funds to diversified low-cost index funds.

Dr. David V. Pritchett
McLean

FAITH NOTES

Arabic New Life Baptist Church is located at 6428 Ox Road in Fairfax Station. Worship services are on Sundays at 10:45 a.m. and prayer services are on Wednesdays at 6:30 p.m. Bible Study is on Fridays at 7 p.m. Pastor: Wissam Jamil. Call 703-273-5599.

Sydenstricker United Methodist Church has Worship services Saturday in the chapel at 5:30 p.m. and Sunday in the Sanctuary at 8:30 a.m. and 11 a.m. traditional worship. Sunday School for youth and children is in the Sanctuary at 9:30 a.m., and Sunday School for adults is in the sanctuary at 9:45 a.m. Fellowship is in Hottle Hall on Sundays at 10:30 a.m. 8508 Hooes Road in Springfield. www.sumcdisciples.org or 703-451-8223.

St. Anthony of Padua American National Catholic Church, 10383 Democracy Lane, Fairfax, holds mass for Contemporary Catholics every Sunday at 12:30 p.m. St. Anthony's is an independent Catholic parish, inclusive and accepting of all people. Experience true acceptance and true Catholicism. www.MySaintAnthonys.org.

Calvary Hill Baptist Church, 9301 Little River Turnpike in Fairfax, conducts Worship team practice for the Praise Band in the Sanctuary every Thursday at 7 p.m. All are welcome. 703-323-1347.

The Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Fairfax, 2709 Hunter

Mill Road in Oakton, offers services Sundays at 9:15 and 11:15 a.m. www.uucf.org.

The Fairfax Church of Christ, 3901 Rugby Road in Fairfax, has facilitators available to help those who are experiencing a separation or divorce. 703-631-2100 or www.fxcc.org.

Congregation Adat Reyim, an independent Jewish congregation, offers services Friday at 8 p.m., Saturday at 9:30 a.m. and Maariv minyan at 7:30 p.m. Hebrew School is Sundays from 9-11:15 for K-6th graders and Mondays from 5:30-7:30 p.m. for 3rd-6th graders. Adat Reyim is located at 6500 Westbury Oaks Court in Springfield. 703-569-7577 or www.adatreyim.org.

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Home LifeStyle

Inside D.C. Design House

In its 10th year, showcase raises money for charity.

BY MARILYN CAMPBELL

DC Design House

For the 10th anniversary of the D.C. Design House, 23 designers transformed the Potomac, Md. home which includes nine bedrooms, nine full bathrooms, four half bathrooms, a cinema, two-story library, a pool and a pool house. Visitors will have the opportunity to walk through the 27,256 square-foot estate to view the latest in home design trends. Proceeds from the event benefit the Children's National Health System.

It was actress Grace Kelly and the movie "To Catch a Thief" that inspired

Designer Marika Meyer's creation of the lady's retreat. "I thought of her elegance and her scarf blowing in the wind," said Meyer.

A collection of framed Hermes scarves line the of the room's walls.

Much of the room's furniture, including two vintage, velvet chairs and a neutral sofa, surround a Lucite cocktail table, creating a balance between modern and traditional styles.

"When designing the room I thought, 'who would live in that room and what would she be like?'" said Meyer.

Meyer used custom-designed, hand-painted fabric from her own collection for

Location: 9004 Congressional Court, Potomac, Md.

Tickets: \$35 at www.dcdesignhouse.com/copy-of-events

Open through Oct. 29: Saturday-Sunday 12-5 p.m.; Closed Mondays; Tuesday-Friday 10 a.m.-3 p.m., Sunday, Oct. 29: DC Design House, last day, 12-5 p.m.

the room's drapes, pillows, stools and other accessories. One of her biggest obstacles was making the large room feel intimate. "I designed it to make it beautiful and functional, she said. "I created different destinations so it doesn't feel so overwhelming."

Among those destinations are a large secretary, a game table and a bar cart.

Dubbed A Study in Blue, the library by designer Kelley Proxmire draws inspiration from the library of New York socialite Brooke Astor. "I knew it was a classic and I had seen a recent picture and I knew it was a classic," said Proxmire. "Her books were probably antique, leather-bound and I knew that I something wanted something neat and tidy like that."

The room's dark wood paneling is brightened with natural lighting and accessorized with blue and white porcelain and painted books in varying shades of blue.

The designer's goal was to create a technology-free zone that allowed for uninhibited conversation. "Families need a place to sit and talk to each other without being on the telephone and watching television," said Proxmire. "I want all my rooms to say, 'Come and sit.' I don't want them to be too standoffish."

Marrying modern and traditional design elements, Alexandria-based design duo Todd Martz and Susan Nelson created a family room that is both energizing and relaxing, and is meant to be an electronics-free zone.

"The scale of the house is formal, but we wanted to created a room that is family friendly," said Martz. "We wanted to incorporate children's art, but display it in a way that's elegant."

The walls are covered with bright yellow wallpaper that provides an energetic backdrop for blue and white porcelain accessories. To accommodate the lives of a modern family, the white sofa is covered in Crypton fabric, which is stain-resistant and

easy to clean. Other furniture in the room, which includes two faux leather chairs are centered around a handmade, wooden coffee table.

Children's artwork hangs inside the bookcases among blue and white ginger jars. "It makes the book cases a little less serious," said Nelson.

The poolside oasis created by Kim Asner of Country Casual Teak allows visitors to be transported to a luxury spa. Lush greenery and teak lounge chairs surround the pool. An abundance of seating, a cabana and a pool house make the space ideal for entertaining a

crowd or enjoying the space's serenity.

"The area is large so we needed substantial furniture," said Asner. "The cabana looks grand and impressive, but it's also comfortable."

Located at 9004 Congressional Court, Potomac, Md., the home is listed at \$10.28 million by Long and Foster Real Estate. Open through Oct. 29, tickets are \$35. Visit www.dcdesignhouse.com.

"When designing the room I thought, 'Who would live in that room and what would she be like?'"

— Marika Meyer

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BEFORE



PHOTO BY ANGIE SECKINGER

Bright yellow wallpaper energizes the family room by Todd Martz and Susan Nelson.



PHOTO BY MARILYN CAMPBELL

Designer Marika Meyer used fabric from her own collection to make accessories, including this dog bed and bone, for the lady's retreat.



PHOTO BY MARILYN CAMPBELL

Todd Martz and Susan Nelson use felt flowers made by women in Nepal to accessorize the family room.

SENIOR LIVING

Be Useful, Fit, And Have Fun

Staying busy and remaining productive in the “Golden Years.”

BY EDEN BROWN
THE CONNECTION

fairfaxcounty.gov or call 703-324-5406.

For active “seniors,” there is nothing worse than when the bank teller and the waitress start calling you “sweetie” or “dear,” and the passengers in priority seating on the bus get up to offer you a seat.

Old? Of course none of them feel old. The hair may be graying, the shoes may be sneakers, and the membership may be AARP, but Northern Virginia is a haven for people who want to stay active and useful after retirement.

Join a Musical Group

Sallie Klunk of Arlington says she plays in a small musical group at a local nursing home. “I play flute with three other instrumentalists and about 10 singers once a week at Powhatan Nursing Home. Residents are provided with song sheets. My husband Dave and I played at Powhatan Nursing Home for 10 years as a piano and flute duo before I joined my present group.”

During her time in the nursing home in Fairfax, she learned about Pets on Wheels, and saw the impact it had on residents. “For the residents, singing and enjoying animals are enriching experiences.”

Volunteer for Pets on Wheels

The Fairfax Pets on Wheels program requires six steps: submit an online application; attend an orientation on the first Wednesday of each month, starting at 7:30 p.m. Get a pet behavior assessment. Pet Handler teams are required to pass a behavior assessment to evaluate the pet’s controllability, aggression, reaction to strangers, and overall behavior and level of stress in unfamiliar surroundings. Step 4: Get a Fairfax County Government Appointee Background Form. Step 5: Certify your pet’s wellness. A FPOW health certificate is completed by your pet’s regular veterinarian certifying that the pet is healthy and vaccinations are current. Step 6: Attend training at the facility of your choice.

To learn more, email [### Wednesday Mid-Week Hikers](mailto:d f s p e t s o n w h e e l s @</p>
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“Another way to stay fit and social is the Wednesday Mid-Week Hikers,” Nora Palmatier said. “We have a large listserv and someone organizes a hike each week, then you go or not.”

Kate Hughes provided details: “Initially organized in the late 1970s, the PATC Mid-Week Hikers are an enthusiastic collection of retirees, semi-retirees and others that love to hike. While the pace varies somewhat within the group, participants need to be very fit as most hikes are a brisk 8-12 miles, with up to 3,200 feet of elevation gain. Including a lunch break, most hikes last 5-6 hours. Hike locations include the Shenandoah National Park, the George Washington National Forest in Virginia, Sugarloaf Mountain and Catocin National Park in Maryland. Hikes are posted on the PATC website calendar (top of the homepage www.patc.net) a few days before each hike.”

The Potomac Appalachian Trail Club (PATC) also has an easy hikers group. There are dozens of other hiking meet-ups in the Northern Virginia area, and finding them is easy: see www.meetup.com/topics/hiking/us/va/arlington/

Master Gardeners

The Virginia Cooperative Extension (VCE) Master Gardener program trains participants in best management practices of gardening and landscaping techniques that preserve and sustain the environment. Offered by the Arlington County Office, in partnership with the City of Alexandria, The Master Gardener Training classes are offered once a week several times a year. The class is 9 a.m.-3:30 p.m. with a break for lunch from 12-12:30 p.m. The cost of the 2017 volunteer training is \$235 for Arlington/Alexandria residents and \$285 for non-residents.

Limited scholarship assistance is available. Contact coordinator Leslie Fillmore, at 703-228-6426 or leslief7@vt.edu or look up activities on www.mgnv.org.

CALENDAR

			1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30	31		

Let us know about an upcoming event

connectionnewspapers.com/Calendar

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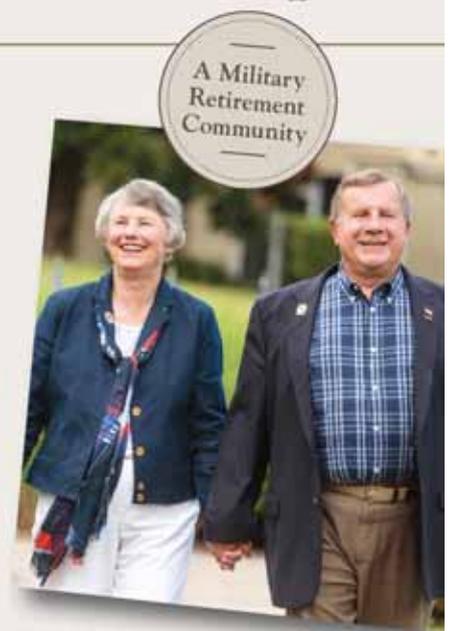
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ENTERTAINMENT

Submit entertainment announcements at www.connectionnewspapers.com/Calendar/. Deadline is noon on Friday. Photos/artwork encouraged.

ONGOING

Lake Accotink Park Carousel Closed, Mini-golf and Marina Open. The carousel at Lake Accotink Park has been closed for the remainder of the 2017 operating season for needed repair work. The mini-golf and marina will continue operating as normally scheduled through Oct. 16. Call 703-324-8745.

THROUGH OCTOBER

Fall Festival and Pumpkin Playground. Various times at Burke Nursery & Garden Centre, 9401 Burke Road, Burke. Weekdays is

\$10 per person and the weekend price is \$14 per person. Call 703-323-1188.

Pumpkin Patch. 10 a.m.-7 p.m. at the St. George's United Methodist Church, 4910 Ox Road, Fairfax. Buy fall pumpkins and decorative gourds grown by Native American farmers to support jobs in a high unemployment area in Arizona. Call 703-385-4550.

THURSDAY/OCT. 12

Digital Storytelling Workshop. 10:30 a.m.-noon at George Mason University, Innovation Hall Room 215-G, 4400 University Drive, Fairfax. Award-winning storyteller Laura Packer will help storytellers identify audiences and their needs, hone the voice, and tell a story in a way that will reach out and change the world. Call 703-993-1170 or visit english.gmu.edu/.

Making America Green Lecture. noon at George Mason University HUB Ballroom, 4400 University Drive, Fairfax. Mark Jacobson, a renowned climate scientist, Stanford professor, and science director of Mark Ruffalo's Solutions Project, will detail his vision and plan for 100 percent renewable energy in the U.S. by 2050. Free. Email dkeubric@gmu.edu.

FRIDAY/OCT. 13

Drone Flying Demonstration. 7 p.m. at South Run District Park, 7550 Reservation Drive, Springfield. The DC Area Drone Users Group (DUG) will host a brief discussion and then hands-on flight demos of small, unmanned aircraft systems. Call 703-866-0566 or visit online at fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/rec/southern.

SATURDAY/OCT. 14

Fall Walk Fundraiser. 8:30 a.m. at Lake Accotink Park, 5660 Heming Ave., Springfield. The Hemophilia Association of the Capital Area (HACA), a nonprofit organization based in Springfield, is raising funds to support the programs and services of HACA, which include summer camp for kids with bleeding disorder; patient assistance to help with the cost of healthcare bills and emergency expenses; chapter scholarship programs. Visit www.hacacares.org.

Special Treasures and Used Book Sale. 9 a.m.-2 p.m. at the Church of the Good Shepherd, 9350 Braddock Road, Burke. Houseware, furniture, sports equipment, toys, decor, small electronics, collectibles. Call 703-323-5400.

Fairfax Fall Festival. 10 a.m.-8:30 p.m. at Old Town Fairfax, Route 123 and Route 236, Fairfax. Over 400 arts, crafts, information, food vendors, children's activities and three stages of music and entertainment for all ages. Visit www.fairfaxva.gov.

Fire Prevention Week. 10 a.m.-4 p.m., all Fairfax County Fire and Rescue Stations will be hosting an Open House, stop by the local station that day to meet the firefighters, see the fire trucks, join in the activities and learn about fire safety. Visit fairfaxcounty.gov.

❖ **Station 27 Fire Station Tour** — West Springfield, 6140 Rolling Road.
❖ **Station 22 Fire Station Tour** — Springfield, 7011 Backlick Road.

Bunny Man Lecture. 11 a.m.-1 p.m. at City of Fairfax Regional Library, 10360 North Street. County Archivist and Bunny Man expert, Brian Conley, will talk about the legend of the Bunny Man which has captivated Northern Virginia fear-seekers for over four decades. Visit www.fairfaxcounty.gov/library/events/ or 703-293-6227.

Benefit Musical. 6:30 p.m. at The Historic Sydenstricker Schoolhouse, 8511 Hooes Road, Springfield. Friends of Sydenstricker Schoolhouse will hold a fundraising event at the Schoolhouse featuring a special musical performance by the Rossi Family and a performance of Will Rogers' USA, a one-man show performed by Rob Cork. Visit www.sydenstrickerschoolhouse.org.

OCT. 14-15

Fall Festival. 10 a.m.-4 p.m. at the Whitehall Farm, 6080 Colchester Road, Fairfax. Featuring a large corn maze in the shape of a chicken, pumpkin patch, farm animals, inflatable bounce houses, hay ride, and nature trail. \$12, active duty military and their families receive \$2 off per ticket. Also takes place Oct. 21-22. Visit www.whitehall.farm.

SUNDAY/OCT. 15

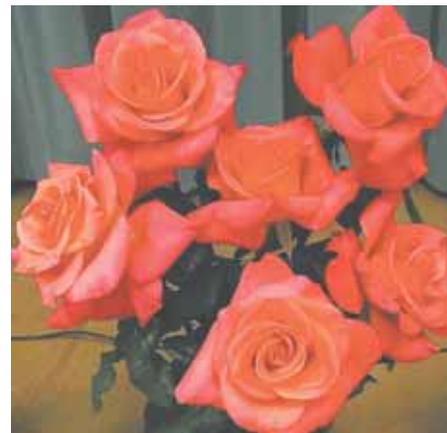
Rose Display. 2-4 p.m. at Merrifield Garden Center- Fair Oaks, 12101 Lee Highway, Fairfax. Arlington Rose Foundation hosts seminar on new and interesting roses for next year's garden. Free. Call 703-371-9351 or email arfinformation@aol.com.

OCT. 16-19

Halloween Costume Exchange. Drop off various times at Sherwood Center, 3740 Old Lee Highway, Fairfax. Pick up new costume on Friday, Oct. 20 from 6-9 p.m. Drop off gently used and clean Halloween costumes Monday through Thursday, and come pick up a great second hand costume for this year on Friday. Visit www.fairfaxva.gov/culturalarts or call 703-385-7858.

FRIDAY/OCT. 20

Pathway to Wellness Conference. 8:30 a.m.-2:30 p.m. at the Fairfax County Government Center, 12000 Government Center Parkway, Fairfax. Keynote Speaker will be Jennifer Marshall, founder of "This is My Brave," and other presenters will talk about how creativity, poetry, music and dance can be part of recovery. \$30. Visit www.fairfaxcounty.gov/csb or email wwwcsb@fairfaxcounty.gov.
Cocktails by Candlelight. 6:30 p.m. at George Mason's Gunston Hall, 10709 Gunston Road, Lorton. Sip on period cocktails as you learn to how to make 18th-century mixed drinks and snacks in the hearth kitchen. \$35, \$25 for Friends of Gunston Hall. Call 703-550-9220 ext. 240 or email mkcraver@gunstonhall.org.



Roses

The Rose Display is Sunday, Oct. 15 from 2-4 p.m. at Merrifield Garden Center- Fair Oaks, 12101 Lee Highway, Fairfax. Arlington Rose Foundation hosts seminar on new and interesting roses for next year's garden. Free. Call 703-371-9351 or email arfinformation@aol.com.

SATURDAY/OCT. 21

2nd Annual Shelane's 5K Run/Walk. 7:30 a.m. at Fairfax County Government Center, 12000 Government Center Parkway, Fairfax. Free kids activities: rock wall, moon bounce, face painting, arts and crafts and more. Come run/walk to help raise awareness and resources for postpartum mood disorders in memory of Shelane Dawn Gaydos. \$30 for 5K, kids fun run, \$10. Visit shelanesrun.org/ or call 571-332-9026.

Help The Homeless 5K Walk 2017. 8:30 a.m. At Fairfax City Hall, 10455 Armstrong St., Fairfax. A 5K through the neighborhoods of Fairfax City or the 1.5 mile short course. \$32. Visit www.PathwayHomes.org.

2017 Library Jubilee Gala Fundraiser. 5:30-8 p.m. at Pohick Regional Library, 6450 Sydenstricker Road, Burke. "The Library Goes Hollywood" with food, ice cream, auction and photo booth with VIP Hollywood guest, Marilyn Monroe. \$75. Call 703-324-8300 or email Jubilee@FairfaxLibraryFoundation.org.

Trunk or Treat. 6-8 p.m. at Franconia United Methodist Church (FUMC), 6037 Franconia Road. Games, snacks, hot cider in the church parking lot. Visit www.franconiaumc.org/ or call 703-971-5151.

Campfire Stargazing. 8-10 p.m. at Burke Lake Park is located at 7315 Ox Road, Fairfax Station. Astronomical naturalist identifies the stars, constellations and other night-sky features, and make S'mores. \$10. Call 703-323-6600 or visit www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/burkelakepark/.

SUNDAY/OCT. 22

Clifton's Ivakota Farm History. 3:30-5 p.m. at Pohick Regional Library, 6450 Sydenstricker Road, Burke. Lynne Garvey-Hodge, a Fairfax County History Commissioner, lectures on Clifton's Ivakota Farm, which from 1915 to 1925 served as a school and home for unwed mothers and their children. Call 703-324-8300 or email Jubilee@FairfaxLibraryFoundation.org.

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—Chief Seattle (1788-1866)
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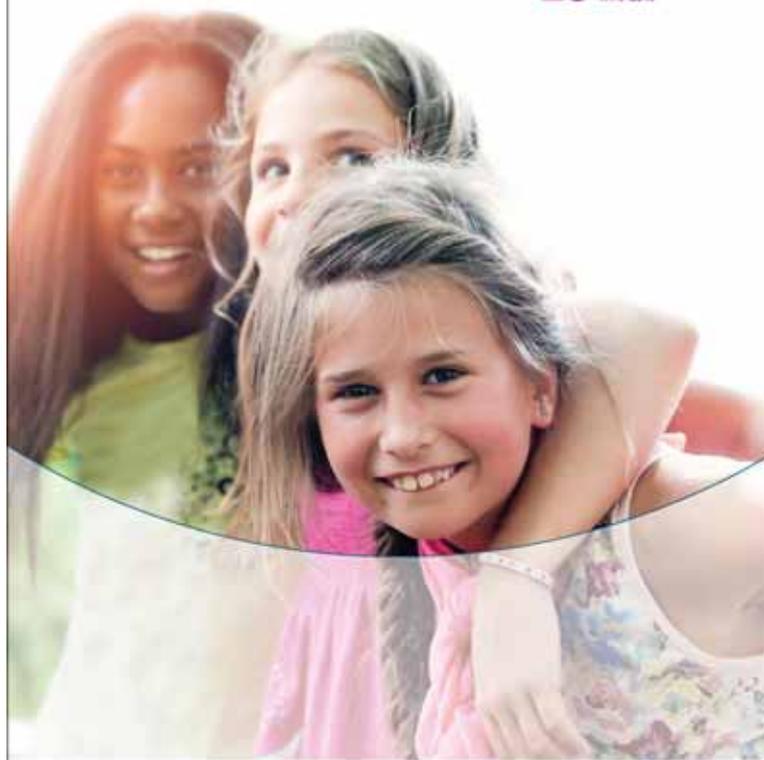
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NEWSPAPERS

Former Addict Shares His Story

Chris Herren, former NBA player and addict, speaks to parents and children in county schools.

BY BASMA HUMADI
THE CONNECTION

“The beauty of living in sobriety is that you find the silver lining in your saddest stories,” said former NBA player Chris Herren. “You make peace with the past. You forgive – and you allow yourself to be forgiven.”

Herren spoke and shared his story Monday, Oct. 2 to parents at Fairfax High School. Students at the high school also gathered earlier that day to listen to Herren’s speech during school hours. The focus of his speech encompassed Herren’s personal journey through recovery and addiction, and the need for communities to focus on wellness.

Herren had it all, lost it all, then struggled to build it all back. He started drinking and smoking pot infrequently as a teen then tried a line of cocaine for the first time in college. It led to a 14-year long addiction on numerous different substances, which would go on to cost Herren \$25,000 a month to support. Landing a stint with the Boston Celtics, getting kicked out of college or seeing his newborn son couldn’t help end it.

“It’s hard in any profession – hiding,” Herren said. “It’s hard no matter what you do in life to balance work and an illness. Often times, they don’t go together. To try to manage that and sustain that, it was exhausting and unmanageable.”

Herren will continue to share his story around high schools in Fairfax County throughout the week as well. By speaking to high schoolers, faculty and parents, Herren hopes to change the attitude of those willing to listen.

“I think when it comes to addiction, as communities, we’ve put so much emphasis on how bad it gets instead of how it begins,” Herren said. “We want to show our kids how ugly and painful addiction becomes instead of understanding at 13, 14, 15, 16 years old why we would even take a chance on letting it begin.”

Challenging educators and children to change the structure of the typical systems they live in is one



PHOTO BY BASMA HUMADI/THE CONNECTION

Addressing a crowd of parents, Herren hopes that more will take initiative in looking out for their children

major factor Herren wants to influence. He is now nine years sober.

“I think wellness should be a core class from the beginning,” Herren said. “I think you should empower kids to be able to communicate their struggle and to build their self-esteem and self worth. Not every kid has a uniform to hide behind and build their confidence. Not every kid is involved in sports or theater or band. There’s a lot of kids out there that need some affirmation.”

One parent in the crowd, Alina Lockridge, admitted that Herren’s speech to high school students earlier that day helped her daughter grow interested in understanding their family’s past with addiction.

“At first, I did not want to come down,” Lockridge said. “[My daughter] started talking about what she experienced and the things I thought I had hid from her about my family’s addiction. You put it in such a way that made her think and frame it as, ‘What did they experience? How can we help them?’”



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Epic Story About Combating Racism

Co-produced by Hub Theatre and Jewish Community Center of Northern Virginia.

BY DAVID SIEGEL
THE CONNECTION

Building robust community partnerships for the Fairfax County performing arts scene, Fairfax's Helen Hayes Award recipient Hub Theatre and the Jewish Community Center of Northern Virginia (JCCNV) are developing a staged reading of a new play. The play is "The Secrets of the Universe (and other songs)" based on little-known actions to combat racism from two towering figures of American society, Marian Anderson and Albert Einstein.

The play, with songs by Helen Hayes Award recipient Marc Acito, is "about the union of hearts, minds, and souls in a quest to unlock the secrets of the universe," said Helen Murray, artistic director, Hub Theatre. "Einstein and Anderson are two incredible

Where & When

Hub Theatre and the Jewish Community Center of Northern Virginia (JCCNV) present "The Secrets of the Universe (and other songs)," at the JCCNV, 8900 Little River Turnpike, Fairfax. Performance, Sunday, Oct. 14, 2017 at 4 p.m. Tickets: \$16 (general admission), \$14 (JCCNV members), \$12 for groups of 15 or more. Call 703-323-0880 or visit www.jccnv.org.

figures, both able to reach beyond themselves to a higher understanding of the world, meeting and forming a friendship."

Presenting this original drama will "enrich our collective audiences," said Jeff Dannick, executive director, JCCNV. "Here is a unique opportunity to observe and enjoy a unique relationship between two historic giants. Eighty years after their extraordinary meeting, the themes and issues



PHOTO COURTESY OF HUB THEATRE

Helen Murray,
Artistic Director,
Hub Theatre



Jeff Dannick,
Executive Director,
Jewish Community
Center of North-
ern Virginia

PHOTO COURTESY OF JEWISH COMMUNITY CENTER OF NORTHERN VIRGINIA

formed feedback.

Playwright Acito is expected at the performance to take in what he sees and hears from the actors and audience alike, to further develop the script on its next step to full production.

Murray went on to say, "it is exciting to have a partner in bringing this show to our community. With the help of JCCNV we will be able to reach a broader audience with the messages found in this play – ones of tolerance, friendship and diversity."

"Our institutions are very different in purpose and structure, but whenever our missions align, this partnership delivers amazing experiences for our audiences. It demonstrates the best in what makes Northern Virginia such a special place to live," said Dannick.

"The Secrets of the Universe (and other songs)" is a message of tolerance, friendship and diversity. It aims to depict personal and public struggles to overcome racial prejudice where and when it can occur. For this show, it started with being denied a hotel room.

Fiery Tango Music and Dance

'Tango Buenos Aires: The Spirit of Argentina' at the Center for the Arts.

BY DAVID SIEGEL
THE CONNECTION

Journey to Argentina right here in your own Northern Virginia backyard. Take in the passion-filled dance and music called the tango. Considered one of Argentina's great cultural arts, "Tango Buenos Aires: The Spirit of Argentina" will be displaying authentic, alluring dance movements fired-up with classic tango music performed live.

"Tango Buenos Aires: The Spirit of Argentina" will focus on the power of the tango to engage performers and audiences alike with its addictive nature. The tango program will trace the evolution of the tango as a dance and cultural style. Patrons will find themselves gazing at "very beautiful dances and a story being told. There are high energy dances, sensual dances, and dances with high kicks and lifts," said Rosario Bauza, artistic director, "Tango Buenos Aires."

On stage will be 10 dancers and a singer, plus musicians performing live music. The music compositions will include works by Carlos Gardel, a central figure in tango history and Astor Piazzolla as well as original music by Fernando Marzan and other composers. Enjoying a live performance, rather



PHOTO COURTESY OF COLUMBIA ARTISTS MANAGEMENT INC.

"Tango Buenos Aires: The Spirit of Argentina" comes to George Mason University, Center for the Arts, on Saturday, Oct. 14.

than seeing on a screen either big or small, Bauza hopes the audience will become "happy and joyful as they see our performance."

"We would like the audience to depart our Center for the Arts performance with a desire to visit Argentina and experience tango

there also. They will have also learned a little about the life of Carlos Gardel, who is known as the voice of the Tango," said Bauza. "Above all else we hope everyone enjoys 'The Spirit of Argentina.'"

There will be a specially developed feature for the tango dance event at the Cen-

Where & When

"Tango Buenos Aires: the Spirit of Argentina" performing at the George Mason University, Center for the Arts, 4400 University Ave., Fairfax. Performance: Saturday, Oct. 14 at 8 p.m. Tickets are \$50, \$43 and \$30. Call 703-993-2787 or visit www.cfa.gmu.edu Note: Pre-performance discussion with member of the company. Also free beginners' Tango Class led by instructors from Tango Mercurio starting at 6:30 p.m. on Saturday, Oct. 14. Space is limited and advance registration required. Open to ticket holders for the "Tango Buenos Aires" performance. Registration at cfa.gmu.edu/calendar/2496/.

ter for the Arts that will add audience participation. There will be a free beginners' tango class to those with tickets to "Tango Buenos Aires." The free dance lesson is to start before the Saturday evening performance. There will be instructors from Tango Mercurio, a Northern Virginia dance company and studio. The basics of tango will be taught to those who pre-register. In addition, there will be a pre-performance discussion with members of the performance troupe.

So, come to "Tango Buenos Aires: The Spirit of Argentina" to celebrate Argentina's enduring tango; its ardent music and dramatic moments. Even take the opportunity to learn new dance skills or brush-up on old skills with the free tango lessons being made available.

11

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County Marks Constitution Week

At the Sept. 12 meeting of the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors, Anna Maria Fitzhugh Chapter, National Society Daughters of the American Revolution, was honored with a Proclamation which officially designated Sept. 17 to Sept. 23 as Constitution Week in Fairfax County. Pictured are Anna Maria Fitzhugh Chapter members with Braddock District Supervisor John C. Cook and Chairman Sharon Bulova.

Library Goes Hollywood for 2017 Gala Fundraiser

Fairfax Library Foundation is rolling out the red carpet for library supporters on Oct. 21, 5:30-8 p.m. at Pohick Regional Library for the 2017 Library Jubilee: The Library Goes Hollywood!

The Library Jubilee is the Foundation's largest fundraising event each year, with 100 percent of proceeds invested into Fairfax County Public Library. It is a chance to raise funds for the library, acknowledge donors, and celebrate the achievements of library programs.

Have you ever noticed that many of the best movies are adapted from books? This year's Jubilee celebrates the stories we find in our libraries and on the big screen with our theme, The Library Goes Hollywood. This premier event brings together the best in Fairfax County: in attendance will be Foundation and Library leadership and staff, elected officials, published authors, business leaders, and library supporters.

The Foundation is raising money for Fairfax County Public Library programs like Changing Lives Through Literature, giving first time juvenile offenders an alternative to formal court action, and Ready to Read

Early Literacy Outreach, bringing interactive reading experiences to preschool students. The newest funding area is the New American Initiative, raising funds for English Language Learning materials. Last year the Library Jubilee raised \$120,000, with greater proceeds than ever before going to library programs and services.

Each year at the Jubilee, attendees celebrate this work of the Library and Foundation while enjoying hors d'oeuvres, cocktails, musical entertainment and a silent auction. Shirley's Catering and Peterson's Ice Cream will be back this year with their delicious treats, savory and sweet.

A jazz trio from Mason Music Productions will provide live music in the new Pohick Regional Library, while guests bid on auction items including winery visits, hotel packages, and passes to Disney World. There are some new things in store for this Jubilee, like a photo booth and VIP Hollywood guest, "Marilyn Monroe."

For more information on sponsorships and how to be involved, call 703-324-8300 or contact Jubilee@FairfaxLibraryFoundation.org.

Judy Ryan of Fairfax Announces Retirement Sale

Shifting economic trends and demographics have taken their toll on this local family run business. Judy Ryan of Fairfax was an outgrowth of the Image and Color Consulting business Ryan owned beginning with Color Me Beautiful in a studio in Fairfax City. Developing into a retail location for apparel and accessories, the operation moved to Twinbrooke Centre on Braddock Road in 1988. Home décor and gifts were added to respond to customer requests.

"The world was a very different place in 1988. No online shopping, free shipping, free returns, no Amazon and my customers and I were a lot younger," said Ryan. "Our customers are retiring, down-sizing, leaving the area and generally shopping less. Our wonderful, loyal customers have supported us with great attendance at our monthly events, but day to

day traffic has diminished."

The decision to retire was a very difficult one. Judy Ryan said, "If the store could stay in business while I worked 30 hours instead of 50 or more [a] week, I'd probably work until I'm one hundred."

A letter mailed and an email went out announcing that a Retirement Sale will begin on Oct. 12 at 10 a.m. "The store will most likely remain open until December as the inventory is sold down and new merchandise will arrive. And, we haven't even begun to put out our wonderful Christmas collection," she said.

Judy Ryan and her team look forward to thanking their customers in person and to helping them find some good presents and some nice things for themselves to remember the store.

BULLETIN

Submit civic/community announcements at ConnectionNewspapers.com/Calendar. Deadline is Thursday at noon, at least two weeks before event.

DEMENTIA CAREGIVER SUPPORT GROUPS

Shepherd's Center of Fairfax-Burke sponsors a monthly meeting on the 2nd Tuesday of each month, noon-1:30 p.m., for caregivers to learn and to share with others experiencing similar challenges. Before attending, contact the facilitator, Eileen Thompson at 703-451-8626 or eileen.thompson1@gmail.com.

THURSDAY/OCT. 12

Short-Term Rental Community Meeting. 7 p.m. in Conference Rooms 9 and 10 the Fairfax County Government Center, 12000 Government Center Drive, Fairfax. The county scheduled another meeting to discuss proposed zoning rules for short-term rentals with the community. The public will be able to provide feedback, ask questions and learn about the results from the community survey. Go to www.fairfaxcounty.gov for more.

IN-PERSON, TV DEBATES

The League of Women Voters of the Fairfax Area (LWVFA) will hold forums about the candidates who are running for election to the Virginia House of Delegates. The League invited all certified candidates campaigning for office in their respective districts. At the in-person forums, question-and-answer sessions will be followed by an opportunity for informal conversations with individual candidates. The public and press are encouraged to attend. For more information about the candidates' priorities and positions, visit www.vote411.org. In-person forums:

* **Thursday, Oct. 12** at 7 p.m. at Hayfield Secondary School, Lecture Hall: 7630 Telegraph Road, Alexandria.

* **Wednesday, Oct. 25** at 7:30 p.m. at Sully Government Center: 4900 Stonecroft Blvd., Chantilly.

SATURDAY/OCT. 14

Town Hall Meeting. 9 a.m. at Junior Achievement Finance Park, 4099 Pickett Road, Fairfax. Supervisor John Cook presents a town hall on Raising Teens in the 21st Century. Call 703-425-9300 or visit www.fairfaxcounty.gov/news2/event/parent-resources-town-hall-meeting-raising-teens-in-the-21st-century/.

Office Hours. Mount Vernon District Supervisor Dan Storck will host Saturday office hours. Email mtvernon@fairfaxcounty.gov.
 ♦ 9-11:30 a.m. at Lorton Library, 9520 Richmond Highway, Lorton.
 ♦ 12:30-3 p.m. at the Mount Vernon District office, 2511 Parkers Lane, Mount Vernon.

SUNDY/OCT. 15

Women's Health and Wellness. 3-5 p.m. at the Clifton Town Hall, 12641 Chapel Road, Clifton. The Democratic Women of Clifton and No. VA invite members and the general public to an important meeting on women's health and wellness. A local ob/gyn and a cardiologist will speak and take questions. Email cliftonwomens@aol.com or visit www.democraticwomenofclifton.org.

BRADDOCK ROAD STUDY

Community Meetings. Braddock District Supervisor John Cook and the Fairfax County Department of Transportation (FCDOT) will host a series of community meetings focused on specific sections of Braddock Road this fall.
 ♦ **Wednesday, Oct. 18:** Beltway area – Braddock Hall, 9002 Burke Lake Road, Burke
 ♦ **Wednesday, Oct. 25:** Burke Lake intersection – Kings Park Library, 9000 Burke Lake Road, Burke
 ♦ **Thursday, Nov. 16:** Ravensworth Road intersection – Ravensworth Baptist Church, 5100 Ravensworth Road, Annandale
 ♦ **Monday, Dec. 11:** Burke Lake intersection, second meeting – Kings Park Library, 9000 Burke Lake Road, Burke
 The goal of the Braddock Road Multimodal Study is to develop commuting improvements for the corridor from Guinea Road to I-495 to Ravensworth Road. Visit fairfaxcounty.gov/fcdot/braddockroadmmstudy/.

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What To "Ware?"



By KENNETH B. LOURIE

Recently I received a very generous offer in the mail: a \$10 gift certificate from my local hardware store acknowledging my upcoming/now passed birthday. From what I could read, there was no minimum purchase, no exclusions and no small-type print, just a reasonable expiration date: Oct. 31, approximately six weeks out from the day I received this unexpected gift. More than enough time, one would imagine.

The only problem: what am I going to get at the hardware store, other than the employees' pity about how little I know about so much? Most of the time when I'm in a hardware store (typically I'm not browsing, unlike the cookie aisle at the supermarket), I'm attempting to solve a problem I have at home for which I have very little experience and extremely poor instincts at rectifying. Not only do I rarely know what I'm talking about, I don't even know the proper questions to ask to enable/assist the employee in figuring what the heck my problem actually is – other than me, that is.

I'm very much out of my element in a hardware store. A fish out of water doesn't begin to describe my situation. Tevye, from "Fiddler on the Roof" in speaking to his daughter, Chava, about marrying outside the faith came close: "a bird may love a fish, but where would they build a home together?" Build a home? I have enough difficulty maintaining one that's already built.

When I'm asked, or when I offer it, usually I say: "I know two things: sports and chocolate." I guess I could also add being a cancer patient/survivor, but I don't want to redirect a perfectly innocent conversation into a totally different direction: me and my druthers. Although, my situation has been publicly consumed in the Connection Newspapers going on eight and half years; in person, I try to not let it be the first or even second thing that comes out of my mouth. And I never initiate, though I'm happy to respond if asked. Generally speaking, I'd rather it not be about me and my cancer. As my mother used to say "It's enough already."

But none of this comes up in a hardware store. In fact, the only thing that comes up is my Adam's Apple as I sheepishly swallow and admit how incapable I am as a homeowner/do-it-yourselfer and how much help I need to do almost anything. At least the parking is free so it's not a total loss.

As you might imagine, this situation doesn't exactly lead to an easy conversation or a satisfying outcome. Quite the contrary. I know one thing for sure however, if left to my own devices, either I will cause additional and costly damage in my crude attempt to self-repair, or I will hurt myself in the process. And waste money as well, as the end of the day will likely find me and the problem no closer to a resolution than we were at the beginning of the day.

As William Shakespeare might have written: it will be much ado about nothing as nothing much will have been done. In these recurring circumstances, all I can hope for is a safe landing, so to speak, one in which, as pilots often joke: I can walk away uninjured.

Given that I'm a tool twit and have failed miserably at homeowner 101, what then could I possibly buy at the hardware store with my gift certificate? I just got an idea: lightbulbs. I couldn't possibly screw that up, could I? I mean, they're supposed to be screwed up – into the socket, right? What could be more natural for me?

One last question though: when I place the bulb into the socket, do I screw them to the right or to the left?

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



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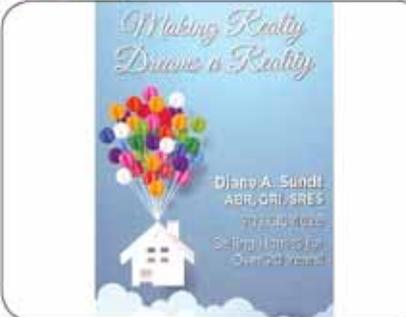
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