Fairfax Connection

Retired Navy Commander Bob Persell and wife Beverley at OLLI in Fairfax annual Veterans Day celebration.

Photo by Bonnie Hobbs/The Connection

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Fairfax Connection Editor Kemal Kurspahic
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'It Just Makes Me Feel Good'

OLLI honors veterans with annual celebration.

By Bonnie Hobbs
The Connection

For the third year in a row, the Osher Lifelong Learning Institute (OLLI) in Fairfax honored America's veterans with a special and moving program befitting all those in the military who have served their country.

Held Friday, Nov. 10, it began with the presentation of the colors and the singing of the national anthem. Then, after OLLI board member Martha Powers read an original poem composed for the occasion; then songs representing each branch of the service were played, with veterans standing for their particular anthem.

Photos by Bonnie Hobbs/The Connection

The military veterans attending OLLI's annual ceremony honoring them pose for a group photo.

Two of those attending were WWII veterans. Chester Myslicki, 97, served with the Army in the Pacific, and Adrian Pelzner was on a Navy supply ship in the Pacific. Both men said they cheered when they heard the war was over.

The OLLI members also donated money to Wreaths Across America to purchase wreaths to be placed on graves in the cemetery at the Quantico Marine Corps Base, over the holidays. Then on Dec. 16, OLLI volunteers will lay these wreaths there.

But the focus of this year's Veterans Day program was women in the military, so attendees watched the PBS documentary, "Fly Girls," about the women who test-piloted aircraft, ferried planes and logged 60 million miles in the air – all at their own expense, and without recognition, or even funeral benefits for the 38 who died. In fact, they didn't receive veteran status or benefits until 40 years after their service.

Between 1942-44, more than 1,000 women left homes and jobs to fly for the U.S. military during WWII. Known as WASP (Women Airforce Service Pilots), they faced danger and discrimination. Nonetheless, they ferried airplanes between military bases throughout the country, freeing men for combat overseas. They also tested aircraft to go faster and higher to better support the war effort.

One woman even piloted the first jet fighter and showed the male pilots how to fly the B-29. They flew every type of aircraft, and their safety and performance records were comparable to those of male pilots. Overall, the WASP program was deemed a huge success.

Army veteran Chester Myslicki, recalls his joy at the end of WWII.

THE ORGANIZATION'S FOUNDER, Jackie Cochran, later received the Distinguished Flying Medal. In 1948, she was commissioned a lieutenant colonel in the Air Force; and in 1953, she became the first woman to break the sound barrier. In 2010, under President Obama, the WASP members were officially recognized and received gold medals.

> "A lot of us were Vietnam veterans who weren't appreciated when we came home. Now, people thank us for our service."
>
> **— Retired Career Navy Officer Bob Persell**

Prior to OLLI's Veterans Day program, retired career Navy officer Bob Persell and his wife Beverley – who taught French at OLLI for more than a decade – spoke with The Connection about their life in the military. Bob served 24 years; he was commissioned an ensign in 1961 and married Beverley in 1962.

Adrian Pelzner served on a Navy supply ship during WWII.

They were stationed in Norfolk, where Beverly taught high-school French. But in October 1962, said Bob, "I was on one of the first destroyers assigned to the quarantine line, or blockade, in Cuba, during the Cuban Missile Crisis."

"He didn't come home that night, and I called the captain's wife to ask what happened," said Beverley. "She said, 'Turn on the TV, and President Kennedy will tell you where he is.'"

"I wasn't scared; we were doing what we normally did on the ship," said Bob. "But if I'd known that the Russian submarines had nuclear torpedoes, I would have been petrified."

"I was worried about him; we'd just been married a couple months," said Beverly. "But at the end, he surprised me and came home." Bob was then transferred to Destroyer School in Newport, R.I. During his Naval career, he served on three destroyers and one nuclear-powered cruiser.

And because he loved his job so much, he said, "I didn't think I worked a day in my life." In 1964, he was selected for the Nuclear Power School to supervise the operation and maintenance of a nuclear propulsion plant.

"He had to be scanned before he went home, each night, to make sure he wasn't radioactive," said Beverley. The first of their two sons, Robert III, was born then. He later attended The Citadel and became a Marine, but died of cancer two years ago. Their second son, Jeffrey, is a vice president with American Systems.

Recalling some of his favorite assignments in the Navy, Bob said, "I had so much fun being on the staff of the Naval Post-Graduate School, from 1978-80, in Monterey, Calif." Meanwhile, Beverly taught French at Monterey High.

He also enjoyed being the nuclear-weapons officer on the USS Longbeach from 1968-70. And, he added, "I particularly liked being the executive officer on the destroyer Epperson from 1971-73. I had a wonderful commanding officer. He told me, 'You run the ship; if I don't like what you're doing, I'll tell you.' You can't beat that."

DURING BOB'S LAST tour of duty, he was both the executive officer and commanding officer of the Organization Effectiveness Center in Washington, D.C. There, he did management consulting to the Navy and Marine Corps major commands. "I enjoyed working with strategically impactful organizations," he said. "I told the people in charge how to improve their organizations."

He retired as a commander in 1985, after serving his country for more than two decades. At his farewell ceremony, said Bob, "The admiral gave a speech about the sacrifices military families make and the lower salaries we receive by not working in the civilian sector. And I told him, 'You could have had me for half the price.'"

But he didn't stay idle for long. Retiring on a Friday, Bob began working, the next Monday, for NASA in Washington, D.C., and stayed for 11 years. He finished as the head of NASA agency-wide training programs.

He also served three years on OLLI's board of directors. "I think OLLI is a wonderful opportunity for retirees, military or not," he explained. "They've had occupation-focused, undergrad and graduate careers. But here, they can now take courses they couldn't then. For example, engineers can take courses in English literature."

Noting that OLLI is all about lifelong learning, Bob said, "The best way to learn is by teaching something, and we have such appreciative audiences here. At the end of a class, the teachers get a round of applause." In fact, Beverley taught French at OLLI for 10 years, herself. As for OLLI's annual, Veterans Day celebration, she called it "wonderful and inspiring."

"It just makes me feel good – and appreciated," added Bob. "A lot of us were Vietnam veterans who weren't appreciated when we came home. Now, people thank us for our service."

Before the feast and football games,
Bring your family and friends to a

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Thursday, November 23 at 11 a.m.
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VDOT Virginia Department of Transportation

Fairfax County Parkway Widening
Fairfax County

Public Information Meeting

Thursday, December 7, 2017
6:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m.
Presentation starts at 7 p.m.

VDOT Northern Virginia District Building
Potomac Conference Room
4975 Alliance Drive
Fairfax, VA 22030

If the event is cancelled due to inclement weather, the alternate date will be **Wednesday, December 13, 2017**.

Find out about plans to widen Fairfax County Parkway (Route 286) from four to six lanes between Route 29 (Lee Highway) and Route 123 (Ox Road). The project will also include an interchange that will consolidate Popes Head Road and/or the future Shirley Gate Road extension, improvements to the existing Fairfax County Parkway Trail, and a new shared-use path to fill in gaps along the existing trail.

Stop by between 6:30 p.m. and 8:30 p.m. to view displays and learn more about the project and its preliminary design, including interchange options. VDOT will hold a presentation beginning at 7 p.m. Project staff will be available to answer your questions.

Review project information at the VDOT project website **(www.virginiadot.org/projects)**, at the information meeting, or during business hours at VDOT's Northern Virginia District Office at 4975 Alliance Drive in Fairfax. Please call ahead at 703-259-2377 or TTY/TDD 711 to ensure appropriate personnel are available to answer your questions.

Give your written comments at the meeting, or submit them by **December 17, 2017** to Ms. Angel Tao, P.E., Virginia Department of Transportation, 4975 Alliance Drive, Fairfax, VA 22030, or email meetingcomments@VDOT.virginia.gov. Please reference "Fairfax County Parkway Widening" in the subject line.

VDOT ensures nondiscrimination and equal employment in all programs and activities in accordance with Title VI and Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. If you need more information or special assistance for persons with disabilities or limited English proficiency, contact VDOT's Civil Rights Division at 703-259-1775 or TTY/TDD 711.

State Project: 0286-029-259, P101
UPC: 107937

Photo by Bonnie Hobbs/The Connection

From left: Leadership Fairfax Board Chairman Tim Sargeant, Dominion Energy; Stephen Fuller accepting for Bob Buchanan, president, the 2030 Group, Regional Leadership Award; Rikki Epstein, The Arc of Northern Virginia, Nonprofit Leader Award; Patti Stevens, Executive Director, Fairfax County Office of Public-Private Partnerships, Trustee Leadership Award; Phyllis Pajardo, Superintendent, City of Fairfax Schools, Educational Leadership Award: Mike Coogan, for Leidos, Corporate Leadership Award; and Karen Cleveland, president and CEO, Leadership Fairfax.

'Vision, Passion and Selfless Dedication'

Pajardo honored as 2017 Education Leader of the Year.

By Bonnie Hobbs
The Connection

City of Fairfax Schools Superintendent Phyllis Pajardo was just honored by Leadership Fairfax as the 2017 Education Leader of the Year. She found out about it in October and received her award last Thursday, Nov. 9. It was presented during the Northern Virginia Leadership Awards luncheon at The Waterford in Fair Oaks celebrating all the winners.

"Dr. Pajardo has mentored many leaders in the field of education," said friend and colleague Nardos King. "I am sure I can speak for others in saying that she has inspired, encouraged and supported many of us to get where we are as leaders."

Photo Courtesy of Carrie Dorsey

Phyllis Pajardo was named 2017 Education Leader of the Year.

"Dr. Pajardo is the epitome of what is means to be dynamic, forward thinking and innovative in our field," continued King. "I am so proud and honored to be associated with her, and she is most deserving of this award."

Pajardo joined City of Fairfax Schools in 2015 after working for almost 35 years at Fairfax County Public Schools. She served as a teacher, assistant principal, principal, cluster (region) director and cluster assistant superintendent. From 2011-2015, Pajardo was the FCPS Assistant Superintendent for Human Resources, responsible for recruiting, hiring and developing a diverse workforce for the school system. This is her first year as the City Schools superintendent.

As for the leadership award, she said, "I'm still getting my head around it. It's overwhelming and gratifying because I don't think educators do the work for recognition. We do it because we see a need and because we mentor people and want to impact others."

Pajardo was nominated for the award by some of her former principals in both Fairfax County and Fairfax City schools. And it was particularly fitting because, said Pajardo, "I know that I helped the people who nominated me grow as leaders."

Leadership Fairfax is a nonprofit organization that inspires, develops, engages and connects leaders across sectors and experience to impact issues facing Fairfax County and the region. And on Monday, its president and CEO, Karen Cleveland, said, "We are grateful to live in a county with dedicated and talented educators to nurture future generations. But we honor Dr. Phyllis Pajardo for being more than an educator.

"Dr. Phyl is an exceptional leader at every level. Whether she is running a department, taking on a multimillion-dollar project or volunteering for an initiative, she leads with vision, passion and selfless dedication.

I cannot count the number of educators, students and administrators who reached out when they heard she was receiving this award, saying how deserving she was and how she is the epitome of an education leader."

Besides being the City Schools' superintendent, Pajardo also serves as an adjunct faculty member in leadership preparation/development for GMU, UVA and Virginia Tech and has given presentations at national, state and local conferences.

Blood Donations Sought

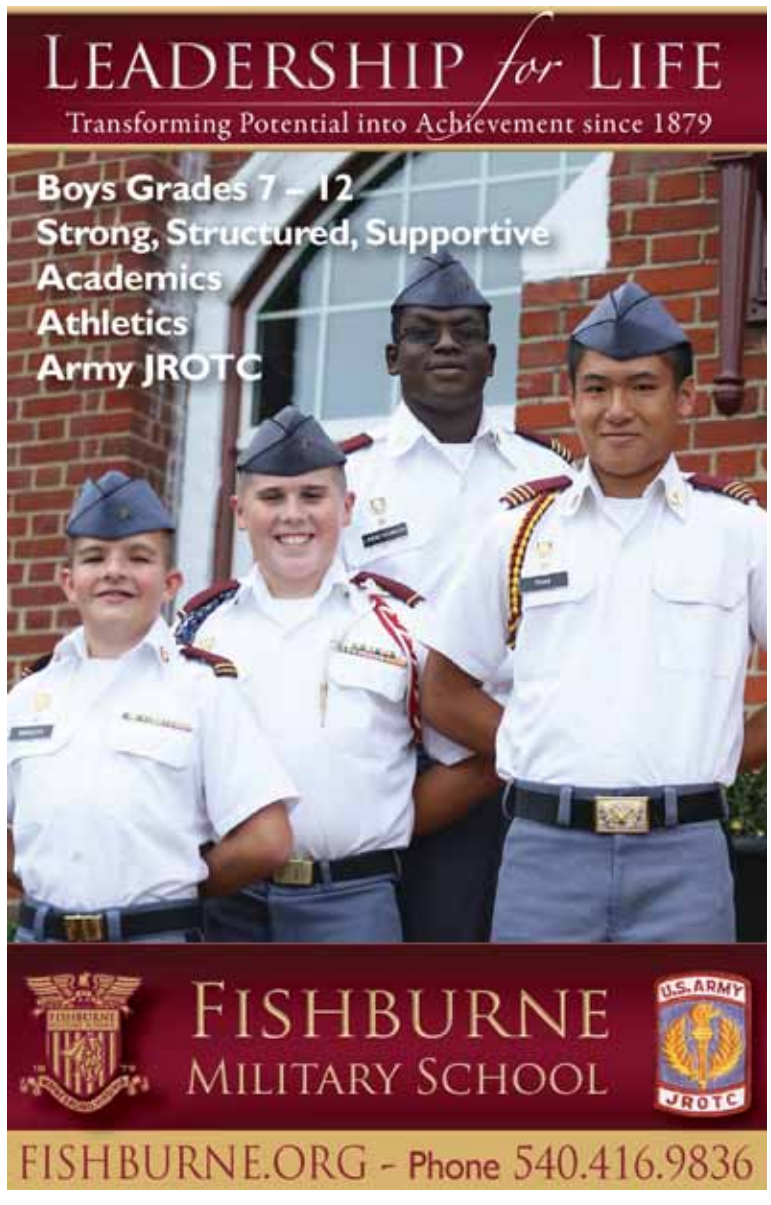
The American Red Cross encourages people to share their good health this holiday season by donating blood for patients in need. Upcoming blood donation opportunities, Nov. 16-30 at the Fairfax Blood Donation Center, 2720 Prosperity Avenue, Suite 200:

- ❖ Thursday, Nov. 16 — 12:45-5:45 p.m.
- ❖ Friday, Nov. 17 — 7:45 a.m.-3 p.m.
- ❖ Saturday, Nov. 18 — 7:45 a.m.-3 p.m.
- ❖ Sunday, Nov. 19 — 7:45 a.m.-2:45 p.m.
- ❖ Monday, Nov. 20 — 1:15-8:30 p.m.
- ❖ Tuesday, Nov. 21 — 10:45 a.m.-5:45 p.m.
- ❖ Wednesday, Nov. 22 — 12:45-5:45 p.m.
- ❖ Thursday, Nov. 23 — 7:45 a.m.-11:45 a.m.
- ❖ Friday, Nov. 24 — 7:45 a.m.-3 p.m.
- ❖ Saturday, Nov. 25 — 7:45 a.m.-3 p.m.
- ❖ Sunday, Nov. 26 — 7:45 a.m.-2:45 p.m.
- ❖ Monday, Nov. 27 — 1:15-8:30 p.m.
- ❖ Tuesday, Nov. 28 — 10:45 a.m.-5:45 p.m.
- ❖ Wednesday, Nov. 29 — 12:45-8 p.m.
- ❖ Thursday, Nov. 30 — 12:45-5:45 p.m.

How to donate blood?

Simply download the American Red Cross Blood Donor App, visit redcrossblood.org or call 1-800-RED CROSS (1-800-733-2767) to make an appointment or for more information. All blood types are needed to ensure a reliable supply for patients. A blood donor card or driver's license or two other forms of identification are required at check-in. Individuals who are 17 years of age in most states (16 with parental consent where allowed by state law), weigh at least 110 pounds and are in generally good health may be eligible to donate blood. High school students and other donors 18 years of age and younger also have to meet certain height and weight requirements.

Blood and platelet donors can save time at their next donation by using RapidPass to complete their pre-donation reading and health history questionnaire online, on the day of their donation, from a computer or mobile device. To get started and learn more, visit redcrossblood.org/RapidPass and follow the instructions on the site.



Opinion

Give Locally in Fairfax County

School holidays can bring uncertainty and hunger for tens of thousands of poor children in our area.

Editorial

The holidays are about giving, and giving thanks. The holidays are about children and family. The holidays are about sharing, about joy. The holidays are about being thankful and about faith and appreciation. The holidays are about alleviating suffering for others.

Northern Virginia is among the wealthiest areas in the country. Many if not most of us go through our daily and seasonal routines without encountering evidence of the needy families among us.

In Fairfax County, more than 52,000 (28 percent) of FCPS students are are poor enough to receive free or subsidized meals.

The median family income in Fairfax County rose to $129,800. But among families with children, 6 percent have income below the poverty level. That's $20,420 for a family of three. That's about $1,700 a month. Median rent in Fairfax County is $1,747, meaning the cost for half the rentals is more than that.

These are children living in families who may be on the brink of homelessness, families who must choose between medical bills, car repair, heat and food. Some of these are children who may not be sure that they will have a meal between the meals they get in school.

School holidays can bring uncertainty and hunger — a far cry from the celebrations, gifts and plenty that we associate with Thanksgiving and Christmas.

Hundreds of homeless students attend the public schools, and their needs are greater.

Many nonprofits in the county need your help to provide a holiday meal for Thanksgiving or Christmas, to provide children with gifts.

There are literally hundreds, probably thousands, of ways to give locally this season. Here are a few ideas. We will rerun this list again after Thanksgiving, so please let us know what we have missed.

— Mary Kimm

mkimm@connectionnewspapers.com

Where to Give Locally

❖ **Cornerstones**, 11150 Sunset Hills Road, Suite 210, Reston, serving Reston and Herndon. 571-323-9555, www.cornerstonesva.org. Nonprofit providing support and advocacy for those in need of food, shelter, affordable housing, quality childcare, and other human services. Programs and services include the Embry Rucker Community Shelter, Emergency Food Pantry, Hypothermia Prevention Program, Thanksgiving Food Drive, Gifts for Kids and annual Coat Drive. Gifts will be collected at Cornerstones main office, 11150 Sunset Hills Road, Suite 210, Reston, VA 20190 on Thursday, Dec. 7 and Friday, Dec. 8, 9 a.m. to 6 p.m.; Saturday, Dec. 9, 9 a.m. – noon. Contact Nate King, Donations and Drives Coordinator, at 571-323-9569.

❖ **Share of McLean** operates a food pantry; provides assistance to families to avoid eviction, keep utilities on and meet other needs in a crisis. Share of McLean will provide holiday assistance to more than 250 needy families (630-plus people) this year. Help neighbors in need by donating money, fulfilling a wish or donating Walmart, Target, Giant, or Safeway gift cards. Share's Furniture Program is in major need of drivers and helpers. Visit the Furniture Program page. The Food Pantry is in major need of supplies; visit the Food Pantry page and check Facebook to see how to help the Food Pantry. Visit www.shareofmclean.org for more info about Share.

❖ **Herndon-Reston FISH** (Friendly Instant Sympathetic Help), 336 Victory Drive, Herndon, 703-391-0105, herndonrestonfish.org. Herndon-Reston FISH has assisted local residents in short-term crises by since 1969. FISH provides Friendly Instant Sympathetic Help by responding to emergency requests for rent, transportation, utilities, medical prescriptions and other needs. FISH operates The Bargain Loft, a thrift store, which needs donations of good quality saleable items, accepting and selling art, furniture, jewelry, household linens, dishes, pots and pans, books, women's designer clothing (clean and on hangers), puzzles, games, collectibles, small electronics and more. If you have store questions, call 703-437-0600. Herndon-Reston FISH also provides Holiday Food & Gift Baskets during the November and December season.

❖ **LINK**, serving Herndon, Chantilly, Loudoun and more. Every year the goal is to provide each family with a week's worth of non-perishable food in November and again in December. When funds allow, grocery gift cards are also included. In November, clients also receive a voucher for coats and warm clothing. In December, children 16 and under receive gifts. holiday@linkagainsthunger.org. 703-437-1776 www.linkagainsthunger.org.

❖ **Committee for Helping Others** (CHO), Vienna, organized in 1969 by a group of churches and individuals in the Dunn Loring, Merrifield, Oakton, Vienna community to provide simple, loving charity to those in need. Last year 450 children had a special Christmas through the annual Christmas Store. 703-281-7614, www.cho-va.com

❖ **Northern Virginia Family Service**. Just $50 provides a complete holiday meal to a family of four. Donate at give.nvfs.org/holidaydonation or via check payable to "NVFS" with "Operation Turkey" on the memo line, or send grocery store gift cards. Northern Virginia Family Service, attn: Holiday Initiatives, 10455 White Granite, Drive, Suite 100, Oakton, VA 22124.

❖ **Second Story** — Abused and Homeless Children's Refuge, 2100 Gallows Road, Vienna, VA 22182. 703-506-9191, second-story.org. Second Story (formerly Alternative House) provides shelter and services for homeless, runaway or abused teenagers, unaccompanied youth, and young mothers and their children. Requests for food and clothing are up more than 50 percent.

❖ **Shepherd's Center of Oakton Vienna** providing services, personal enrichment, volunteer opportunities for adults 50 and over. Currently serving 3,000+ mature adults in the region. 703-281-0538, www.scov.org.

❖ **Touching Heart** in Herndon is a nonprofit organization whose mission is to educate children to have giving hearts. www.touchingheart.com, 703-901-7355.

❖ **Western Fairfax Christian Ministries** — food pantry at 13981 Metrotech Drive in Chantilly. For more information or to sponsor a family, call 703-988-9656, ext. 105. To mail gift cards or send donations by check, add a note saying "food basket program" and send them to: WFCM, P.O. Box 220802, Chantilly, VA 20153.

❖ **HomeAid** builds and renovates facilities that house the homeless, and partners with many local organizations to do so. 3684 Centerview Drive, Suite 110B, Chantilly, VA 20151. www.homeaidnova.org.

❖ **FACETS** helps parents, their children and individuals who suffer the effects of poverty in the Fairfax area, a partner in efforts to end homelessness in Fairfax County. FACETS is always in need of volunteers, and offers a variety of one-time and ongoing opportunities. 703-865-4251, volunteer@facetscares.org or www.facetscares.org. 10640 Page Ave., Suite 300, Fairfax, VA 22030.

❖ **Britepaths** will have 3,000 individuals and families in need of holiday assistance list this fall. Sponsor a family or donate to provide a family with a Thanksgiving meal, December holiday meal and/or gifts for their children. britepaths.org.

❖ **Fairfax City Area FISH** (For Immediate Sympathetic Help) helps local people who are in temporary need of life's basic necessities such as food, clothing, and financial assistance for rent, mortgage payments, utilities, and medical treatments. FISH also provides limited transportation for doctor appointments and food delivery. 703-222-0880, fairfaxfish.org.

❖ **Lamb Center**, day center for homeless, Fairfax. 703-691-3178, www.thelambcenter.org.

❖ **Food for Others** provides a safety net for people who suddenly face unforeseen emergencies such as a family illness or the loss of a job or a spouse. Located at 2938 Prosperity Ave., Fairfax, VA 22031, 703-207-9173, info@foodforothers.org or www.foodforothers.org. Hours: Monday-Friday, 9:30 a.m.-5 p.m.

❖ **Ecumenical Community Helping Others** (ECHO). 703-569-9160, www.foodforothers.org. Open to receive donations at 7205 Old Keene Mill Road, Springfield. Provides food and financial assistance to those in short-term emergencies, and provides clothing and household goods to low income families, helping more than 5,000 people last year.

❖ **Lorton Community Action Center** (LCAC) will provide Thanksgiving and Holiday assistance to more than 450 families this year. Thanksgiving and Christmas food baskets along with fulfilling gift wishes for more than 1,000 children and teens will help low-income families More information at lortonaction.org/seasonal-assistance/. Volunteers are needed for these events as well. Register online at lortonaction.org or call 703-339-5161, ext. 140 or email Linda@LortonAction.org. Mailing address: LCAC, P.O. Box 154, Lorton, VA 22199-0154.

❖ **Assistance League of Northern Virginia** is an all-volunteer nonprofit organization that feeds, clothes and educates children in need. Assistance League's philanthropic programs touch the lives of thousands of children at 11 Title I schools in Northern Virginia, serving children most in need at selected schools in Fairfax and Prince William counties and the City of Alexandria. To learn more about volunteer and sponsorship opportunities, email alnorthernva@gmail.com or visit www.northernvirginia.assistanceleague.org.

❖ **Comfort for America's Uniformed Services** (CAUSE) ensures that recuperating service members have opportunities for recreation and social interaction and receive concrete signs of appreciation for all that they have done. 1100 N Glebe Road, Suite 373, Arlington, VA 22201.703-591-4968, cause-usa.org.

❖ **Shelter House** provides crisis intervention, safe housing and supportive services to promote self-sufficiency for homeless families and victims of domestic violence in Fairfax County. www.shelterhouse.org/

❖ **United Community Ministries**, Mount Vernon, 703-768-7106, 7511 Fordson Road, Alexandria, VA 22306 assists low-income families and individuals living along the Route 1 Corridor, UCM provides four different housing programs as well as a Workforce Development Center to help prepare people for moving forward with their jobs. For the holidays, donations of nearly 10,000 toys, books, games, clothing, and other gifts ensured a joy-filled holiday for more than 1,200 children in 600 families. 7511 Fordson Road, Alexandria VA 22306. www.ucmagency.org

Donations of cash/checks and gift cards are also welcome.

❖ **National Capital Food Bank**, 6833 Hill Park Drive, Lorton, serving all of Northern Virginia. 703-541-3063, www.capitalareafoodbank.org.

❖ **Homestretch** is the largest provider of transitional housing in Fairfax County and offers a services to help the homeless better their lives through education. Email jhenderson@homestretchva.org; 703-237-2035 x125; homestretchva.org/.

❖ **Pathway Homes** focuses on providing housing and support services to individuals with serious mental illnesses, with the mission to help these individuals reach their full potential and lead stable lives. They offer both in-home programs, semi-independent houses and assisted living facilities. 10201 Fairfax Boulevard, Suite 200, Fairfax, VA 22030. 703-876-

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Fairfax Connection

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Holiday Celebrations

A winter wonderland of sparkling snowflakes in Fairfax Ballet's Nutcracker.

Photo courtesy of Fairfax Ballet

NOV. 16-18

Christmas Craft Show. Thursday and Friday, 10 a.m.-7 p.m.; Saturday 10 a.m.-4 p.m. at the Oakton Church of the Brethren, 10025 Courthouse Road, Vienna. Oakton Church of the Brethren's 24th Annual Christmas Craft Show is a three-day event featuring a wide variety of handmade creations and craft supplies for purchase, plus a soup and sandwich lunch and bake sale. Visit www.oaktonbrethren.org.

SATURDAY-SUNDAY/NOV. 18-19

Burke Civic Ballet's Nutcracker. Saturday, 2 p.m. and 6 p.m.; Sunday, 1 p.m. and 5 p.m. at Ernst Theater on Northern Virginia Community College's campus, 8333 Little River Turnpike, Annandale. Featuring 3-year-old miniature dolls to professional dancers courtesy of Colorado Ballet, this production of the Nutcracker will enchant all ages. Be mesmerized by a growing tree, magic tricks, leaping mice, toy soldiers, falling snow, authentic costumes made in Ukraine, 75 dancing flowers and delectable confections from the Kingdom of Sweets. $20-$28, buy tickets at buffas.com/burke-civic-ballet/nutcracker-tickets-buy-now/.

SATURDAY/NOV. 18

Santa Fest. 10 a.m.-1 p.m. at Springfield Town Center, 6500 Springfield Mall. Welcome Santa to Springfield Town Center enjoy snacks straight from the North Pole, craft activities, face painting and entertainment and photos with Santa, all in Grand Court, located on the first level of Spring Town Center. Visit springfieldtowncenter.com.

5th Annual Snowflake Stampede. 5:30 p.m. at Bull Run Regional Park, 7700 Bull Run Drive, Centreville. At the Bull Run Festival of Lights, a 2.5 mile fun run or walk for holiday enthusiasts of all ages. Enjoy a special preview of the Festival of Lights on foot, and take a picture with your favorite display. Parking and check in are at the corporate barn pavilion; follow the signs for the Snowflake Stampede. $22 per adult (13 and older); $17 per child (3-12); 2 and younger, free. Visit ticketfly.com to sign up (search Snowflake Stampede). Prepayment required. More at www.novaparks.com/events/bull-run-festival-of-lights/snowflake-stampede.

SUNDAY/NOV. 19

Turkey Trot. 8 a.m. Start and finish at the Vienna Volunteer Fire Dept., 400 Center St. S., Vienna. Visit www.viennaturkeytrot.org/.

NOV. 22-JAN. 7

Bull Run Festival of Lights. Monday-Thursday, 5:30-9:30 p.m., $15 per car; Fridays-Sundays and holidays, 5:30-10 p.m., $20 per car. Bull Run Regional Park, 7700 Bull Run Drive, Centreville. The Bull Run Festival of Lights is more than just a light show. After enjoying two and a half miles of light displays, stop at the Holiday Village, complete with bonfires, s'mores, holiday merchandise and free activities, the Holiday Village is fun for the whole family. Have a photo taken with Santa. Call 703-631-0550 or visit www.novaparks.com/events/bull-run-festival-of-lights.

SATURDAY/NOV. 25

The Nutcracker. 2 and 7 p.m. in the Centreville High School Auditorium, 6001 Union Mill Road, Clifton. The entirely student and volunteer production features Little Rocky Run residents, MSB alumnae dancers and current students from Mia Saunders School of Ballet. Email msb.nutcracker.tickets@gmail.com.

NOV. 24-26

Thanksgiving Weekend Show. Friday-Saturday, 10 a.m.-5 p.m.; Sunday 11 a.m.-4 p.m. at Spring Hill ReCenter, 1239 Spring Hill Road, McLean. Approximately 80 juried artisans offering original, handmade arts and crafts, including decorative painting, fused, etched, painted and stained glass, ceramics and pottery, hand-painted silk, woodworking handweaving, photography, paintings and drawings,clothing and functional textiles, jewelry and much more. All of the artists and artisans will be on hand to answer questions and talk about their work. $5, Free for children 12 and under. Email anneclark01@comcast.net or call 703-391-5611.

NOV. 25-26

Fairfax Ballet Company's Nutcracker. Nov. 25, 2 p.m. and 7 p.m., and Nov. 26, 2 p.m. at W.T. Woodson High School, 9525 Main St., Fairfax. Fairfax Ballet Senior company member Ana Victoria Smith of Clifton, dances the role of Clara. Company members, along with students from the Russell School of Ballet and professional guest artists. Email events@fairfaxballet.com or call 703-665-9427.

FRIDAY/DEC. 1

Guitarist Peter Griggs Holiday Concert. 7 p.m. at Grace Presbyterian Church, 7434 Bath St., Springfield. Show is called "Music For An Old English Christmas." Visit www.gracepresby.org or call 703-451-2900.

Tree Lighting in Clifton. 7 p.m. at Chapel Road and Main Street in Clifton. Set the holiday season in motion with the official lighting of the town Christmas Tree. Carol, drink hot chocolate, roast s'mores over the fire, and join in the holiday spirit. Visit clifton-va.com.

SATURDAY/DEC. 2

Annual Holiday Train Show. 10 a.m.-5 p.m. at the Fairfax Station Railroad Museum, 11200 Fairfax Station Road, Fairfax Station. Bring broken locomotives to the "Train Doctor" to fix or advise on other options. Stop and admire the antique cars visiting for this event, weather permitting. Visit the gift shop for holiday gift items and Santa may stop by to visit. Museum members and ages 4 and under, free; 5-15, $2; 16 and older, $5. Visit www.fairfax-station.org.

Holiday Sing-A-Long Luncheon. 11:30 a.m.-1 p.m. at Springfield Golf and Country Club, 8301 Old Keene Mill Road, Springfield. $20. Call 703-922-6438 or email Springwmconn@yahoo.com.

Festival of Lights and Carols. 2-7 p.m. at 3999 University Drive, Fairfax. Children ages 12 and under can enjoy lunch with Santa at Sherwood Community Center. Lunch seatings will be offered at 11:30 a.m., and 12:30 p.m., must pre-register. Listen to live holiday music and enjoy s'mores and hot cider at Old Town Square from 2-7 p.m. Enjoy caroling and lighting of the Christmas Tree at Old Town Square at 6 p.m. Visit fairfaxva.gov/about-us/special-events/festival-of-lights-and-carols.

Christmas in Brass. 3 p.m. at Kirkwood Presbyterian Church, 8336 Carrleigh Parkway, Springfield. Featuring the Barclay Brass Quintet. This stellar ensemble will present a program of secular and sacred seasonal music that will appeal to a broad audience of all ages. Email concerts@kirkwoodpres.com, visit www.kirkwoodpres.com, or call the church office at 703-451-5320.

Town of Clifton Holiday Homes Tour. 4-7 p.m. at 12644 Chapel Road, Clifton. Five homes in Town and a bonus home outside of Town, in addition to the caboose and two historic churches that will be open to the public. Free admission.Call 703-517-7703.

SUNDAY/DEC. 3

Home for the Holidays Concert. 4-6 p.m. at Lanier Middle School, 3801 Jermantown Road, Fairfax. Main Street Community Band plays a mix of seasonal favorites. Visit www.fairfaxband.org.

FRIDAY/DEC. 8

Flutist in Concert. 8 p.m. at Old Town Hall, 3999 University Drive, Fairfax. Celebrate the Sounds of the Season with the Columbia Flute Choir in the Christmas Concert. Free. Call 703-385-7858 or visit www.fairfaxva.gov/culturalarts.

DEC. 8-9

Christmas Store Help Needed. Friday night for set up and Saturday to escort shoppers at Vienna Presbyterian Church, 124 Park St. NE. Call 703-938-7213.

SATURDAY/DEC. 9

Lunch with Santa. 11:30 a.m. and 12:30 p.m. at Old Town Hall, 3999 University Drive, Fairfax. Children ages 10 and under can enjoy lunch with Santa. $6. Call 703-385-7858 or visit www.fairfaxva.gov/culturalarts.

Horse-drawn Carriage Rides. 4-9 p.m. at Reston Town Center, 11900 Market St. $5 per person; children 5 and under ride free with adult. Proceeds go to local charities. Call 703-709-6720 or visit restontowncenter.com.

SUNDAY/DEC. 10

Holiday Ornament Craft Day. 1-4 p.m. at the Fairfax Station Railroad Museum, 11200 Fairfax Station Road, Fairfax Station. Museum members and ages 4 and under, free; 5-15, $2; 16 and older, $4. Visit www.fairfax-station.org.

SATURDAY/DEC. 16

Horse-drawn Carriage Rides. 4-9 p.m. at Reston Town Center, 11900 Market St. $5 per person; children 5 and under ride free with adult. Proceeds go to local charities. Call 703-709-6720 or visit restontowncenter.com.

SUNDAY/DEC. 17

Handel's "Messiah." 9 a.m. and 11 a.m. at Unity of Fairfax, 2854 Hunter Mill Road, Oakton. Enjoy a free performance of Handel's "Messiah" by the choirs of Unity of Fairfax and the Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Fairfax Visit www.unityoffairfax.org/events.

Mini-Train Rides. noon-4 p.m. at Reston Town Center, 11900 Market St. Proceeds go to local charities. Call 703-709-6720 or visit restontowncenter.com.

SATURDAY/DEC. 23

Horse-drawn Carriage Rides. 4-9 p.m. at Reston Town Center, 11900 Market St. $5 per person; children 5 and under ride free with adult. Proceeds go to local charities. Call 703-709-6720 or visit restontowncenter.com.

SUNDAY/DEC. 24

Christmas Eve Celebrations. Celebrate Christmas in a positive, welcoming and inclusive spiritual community. Meditation service at 9 a.m., family-oriented service at 11 a.m.; candlelight service at 7:30 p.m. at Unity of Fairfax, Oakton. Free. Visit www.unityoffairfax.org/events.

THROUGH DEC. 24

Santa's Flight Academy. Various times at at Fair Oaks Mall, 11750 Fair Oaks Mall, Fairfax. Santa surrounded by a space motif. Visit www.santaexpresslane.com.

SUNDAY/DEC. 31

Burning Bowl Ceremony. 9 and 11 a.m. at Unity of Fairfax, 2854 Hunter Mill Road, Oakton. Experience this ritual of releasing what no longer serves you and envisioning the year ahead. Free. Visit unityoffairfax.org.

New Year's Eve Scramble. 10 a.m. at Herndon Centennial Golf Course, 909 Ferndale Ave., Herndon. Shotgun start. Entry fee includes green fee, cart fee, range balls and prizes. $60 per player. Call 703-471-5769 or visit www.herndongolf.com.

MONDAY/JAN. 1

New Year's Labyrinth. noon-4 p.m. at Unity of Fairfax, 2854 Hunter Mill Road, Oakton. Set your intentions for 2018 while walking Unity's indoor labyrinth. Free. Visit www.unityoffairfax.org/events.

New Year's Day 5K. 10 a.m. at Reston Town Center, 11900 Market St., Reston. Music, food, awards, and fun celebration following the race. Presented by Potomac River Running. Call 703-709-6720 or visit restontowncenter.com.

THROUGH EARLY JANUARY

Winter Walk of Lights. At Meadowlark Botanical Gardens, 9750 Meadowlark Gardens Court, Vienna. The garden is transformed into a half-mile, walk of lights. Revisit perennial favorites such as the animated Lakeside Lights, the Fountain of Lights, and the Holiday Nature Walk – and look for new displays each year. Round out a visit roasting marshmallows and sipping on hot beverages, available for purchase. Visit www.novaparks.com/events/winter-walk-of-lights.

Education • Learning • Fun

Manners in the Tech Age

Etiquette classes aim to teach the lost art of manners.

By Marilyn Campbell

On a sunny, fall day a group of 10-year-old children sit around an antique cherry wood table in Arlington. The boys are wearing navy blazers, pressed khakis and shiny loafers. The girls have donned their most festive dresses, nude stockings and have grosgrain ribbons in their neatly combed hair. They've arrived at the home for a lesson in etiquette. Most of them would rather be some place else.

"I have to leave early for a soccer game," said Jimmy, who has a hard time disguising his glee.

In an era when it's commonplace to order pizza on a smartphone and coordinate play dates by text, old-fashioned etiquette can appear obsolete. A recent survey of teachers shows that 73 percent of instructors believe that students are less polite than when the teachers themselves were students. In the age high-tech conveniences, children can become over scheduled and under socialized, which has led to an uptick in the number of parents who are enrolling their children in etiquette classes, say protocol instructors.

"Parents have a tremendous interest in etiquette classes because so many parents realize that they don't have that knowledge themselves," said Dorothea Johnson, who founded the Protocol School of Washington and is the author of the book "Modern Manners: Tools to Take You to the Top," which she co-authored with her granddaughter actress Liv Tyler.

"I think most parents know that good manners and etiquette will be important to their [children's] future," added Henryette Neal who teaches etiquette classes for children through the Fairfax County Park Authority. "Young people will be educated, but without proper social skills they will not be able to present themselves properly." Neal is also the owner of owner of Steppin Out Charm and Imaging Studio.

Fairfax County Etiquette Classes

parktakes.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/parktakes/

The result of fast-paced lifestyles combined with overloaded schedules is a generation of children who place more value on social media savvy than on knowledge of social graces. Family dinners are replaced by fast food, says one parent. "Who needs good manners to gobble down a slice of pizza," said Carole Mincey of Alexandria whose 14-year-old daughter and 11-year-old son have taken etiquette and ballroom dance from Simpson's Classes, one of the area's invitation-only

See Manners, Page 14

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

ONGOING

Santa's Flight Academy. Through Dec. 24, at various times at at Fair Oaks Mall, 11750 Fair Oaks Mall, Fairfax. Santa surrounded by a space motif. Visit www.santaexpresslane.com.

THURSDAY/NOV. 16

Spy Lecture. 7 p.m. at the Braddock District Supervisor's Office, 9002 Burke Lake Road, Burke. Retired FBI Agent Lydia Jechorek discusses her presentation "From Teaching Art to Chasing Spies." Free. Call 703-764-8061.

NOV. 17-18

International Holiday Bazaar. 8:30 a.m. at Immanuel Baptist Church, 6911 Braddock Road, Springfield. Hosted by Bethany House of Northern Virginia. Friday from 4-8 p.m.; Saturday 10 a.m.-3 p.m. Proceeds go to Bethany House of Northern Virginia which provides emergency shelter and supportive services to victims of domestic violence throughout Northern Virginia and the surrounding DC metro communities.$5. Visit www.bhnv.org.

St. Matthews Annual Craft Fair & Children's Show. Friday 10 a.m.-6 p.m. and Saturday 10 a.m.-4 p.m. at St. Matthews United Methodist Church, 8617 Little River Turnpike, Annandale. More than 40 vendors and children's author and entertainer Edward Allan Faine (a.k.a. "How-to Cowboy) will teach attendees how to whistle through their tongues, play hand trumpet, talk like Donald Duck and Darth Vader, and perform other tricks. Free. Visit stmatthewsumc.org.

SATURDAY/NOV. 18

Santa Fest. 10 a.m.-1 p.m. at Springfield Town Center, 6500 Springfield Mall. Welcome Santa to Springfield Town Center, enjoy snacks straight from the North Pole, craft activities, face painting and entertainment and photos with Santa, all in Grand Court located on the first level of Spring Town Center. Visit springfieldtowncenter.com.

SUNDAY/NOV. 19

Model Train Show. 1-4 p.m. at The Fairfax Station Railroad Museum, 11200 Fairfax Station Road, Fairfax Station. The NTRAK group with a display of running N Gauge model trains. Museum members and ages 4 and under, free; 5-15, $2; 16 and older, $4. Visit www.fairfaxstation.org or call 703-425-9225.

Crop Hunger Walk. 2 p.m. at Fairfax Presbyterian Church, 10723 Main St., Fairfax. 25th annual Burke/Fairfax CROP Hunger Walk to raise funds and awareness to combat hunger and provide disaster relief. Visit www.burkecropwalk.org.

Community Thanksgiving Dinner. 5-7 p.m. at the Franconia United Methodist Church, 6037 Franconia Road, Alexandria. The 5th annual "pre-Thanksgiving" dinner with all the trimmings. The event is free and open to all. Visit franconiaumc.org.

MONDAY/NOV. 20

Mason Jazz Vocals. 8-10 p.m. at the Center for the Arts, 4400 University Drive, Fairfax. George Mason University presents an evening of jazz vocals, soloists, the Mason Jazz Vocal Ensemble and special guests, Herndon High School Jazz Choir. $12 adults $8 seniors $5 youth through grade 12. Visit http://cfa.gmu.edu.

From left: Mark Walters, Jill Gardner and Roger Honeywell in "The Girl of the Golden West."

Photo by Ben Schill Photography/ Courtesy Virginia Opera

Opera in the Gold Rush Days

Virginia Opera's "The Girl of the Golden West" at the Center for the Arts.

By David Siegel
The Connection

If you believe opera is only about faraway places with strange sounding names, the very American, "The Girl of the Golden West" is coming to town courtesy of Virginia Opera, the official opera company of Virginia. The Virginia Opera was also a recent recipient of several "Arts Inspiration Awards" from the Virginia Commission for the Arts.

"Puccini's 'The Girl of the Golden West' is a colorful opera about just regular people during the California Gold Rush of 1849," said Jake Gardner who sings the role of the good hearted Sheriff Jack Rance in the production. "With sumptuous music composed by Puccini ["La Boehme" later adapted to become the urban musical "Rent"] the opera even sounds at times like music from Western movies many will recall."

"The Girl of the Golden West" has a sweeping score that is Puccini's interpretation of the rough and tough rural American Wild West. Including cigars, whiskey, mud, and even a dog. The opera's themes include unrequited love, jealousy, betrayal, and redemption.

There are miners trying to make their fortunes, a mysterious bandit and a sheriff out to get his man.

The story line follows the travails of Minnie, the saloon owner. She is the object of desire for many of the home-sick, card-playing patrons of her establishment. But, Minnie has her own thoughts about that, especially after a mysterious stranger arrives.

Jill Gardner sings the role of Minnie. She describes Minnie as a "woman of dignity who happens to run a high class saloon. It is a beautiful love story with its theme of redemption."

The major role of Ramerrez (alias Dick Johnson), the bandit who steals Minnie's heart is portrayed by acclaimed veteran tenor, Roger Honeywell. Virginia Opera's production of "The Girl of the Golden West" is directed by Lillian Groag who created and first directed the opera for the world famous Glimmerglass Opera. The Virginia Opera's production will be under the baton of musical director Andrew Bisantz.

In a recent interview, Jill Gardner and Jake Gardner, married in real life, spoke of "the great joy of working together. We are even able to assist one another in performing such a great work of art as 'The Girl of the Golden West.'"

Inviting audiences to the opera, Jill Gardner said, "If you enjoy the music from a composer like Andrew Lloyd Weber, please take in 'The Girl of the Golden West.' The music is sumptuous."

Where & When

Virginia Opera presents "The Girl of the Golden West" at Center for the Arts, George Mason University, 444 University Drive, Fairfax. Performances: Dec. 2, 2017 at 8 p.m. and Sunday, Dec. 3, 2017 at 2 p.m. Tickets: $54, $90 and $110. Call 888-945-2468 or visit www.cfa.gmu.edu. **Note:** Sung in Italian with projected English supertitles. Pre-performance discussion 45 minutes before the curtain with "Dr. Opera" Glenn Winters.

NOV. 20-DEC. 10

Toy Collection. Sheehy Auto Stores throughout the Washington, D.C.-metro area will collect new and unwrapped toys as part of the company's annual Sheehy Cares Toy Collection to benefit the U.S. Marine Corps Reserve Toys for Tots Program, which will distribute those toys as Christmas gifts to less fortunate children in the community in which the campaign is conducted. Sheehy's Toys for Tots drop-off locations include:

- Sheehy Volkswagen of Springfield, 6601 Backlick Road, Springfield
- Sheehy Ford of Springfield, 6727 Loisdale Road, Springfield
- Sheehy Subaru of Springfield, 6571 Backlick Road, Springfield
- Patriot Harley-Davidson, 9739 Fairfax Boulevard, Fairfax

NOV. 25-26

Fairfax Ballet Company's Nutcracker. Nov. 25, 2 p.m. and 7 p.m., and Nov. 26, 2 p.m. at W.T. Woodson High School, 9525 Main St., Fairfax. Fairfax Ballet Senior company member Ana Victoria Smith of Clifton, dances the role of Clara. Company members, along with students from the Russell School of Ballet and professional guest artists. Email events@fairfaxballet.com or call 703-665-9427.

FRIDAY/DEC. 1

Guitarist Peter Griggs Holiday Concert. 7 p.m. at Grace Presbyterian Church, 7434 Bath St., Springfield. Show is called "Music For An Old English Christmas." Visit www.gracepresby.org or call 703-451-2900.

SATURDAY/DEC. 2

Christmas Traditions Concert. 9:30-11 a.m. at St. Stephens United Methodist Church, 9203 Braddock Road, Burke. The St. Stephen's United Methodist Women Maranatha Singers will present a morning of holiday music. Free. Call 703-250-5013.

Holiday Sing-A-Long Luncheon. 11:30 a.m.-1 p.m. at Springfield Golf and Country Club, 8301 Old Keene Mill Road, Springfield. $20. Call 703-922- 6438 or email Springwmconn@yahoo.com.

Festival of Lights and Carols. 2-7 p.m. at 3999 University Drive, Fairfax. Children ages 12 and under can enjoy lunch with Santa at Sherwood Community Center. Lunch seatings will be offered at 11:30 a.m., and 12:30 p.m., must pre-register. Listen to live holiday music and enjoy s'mores and hot cider at Old Town Square from 2-7 p.m. Enjoy caroling and lighting of the Christmas Tree at Old Town Square at 6 p.m. Visit fairfaxva.gov/about-us/special-events/festival-of-lights-and-carols.

Christmas in Brass. 3 p.m. at Kirkwood Presbyterian Church, 8336 Carrleigh Parkway, Springfield. Featuring the Barclay Brass Quintet. This ensemble will present a program of secular and sacred seasonal music that will appeal to a broad audience of all ages. Visit kirkwoodpres.com, or call 703-451-5320.

Historic Clifton Holiday Homes Tour . 4-7 p.m. at Clifton Baptist Church, 7152 Main St., Clifton. $25 adult; $5 child; credit cards are more. Visit clifton-va.com.

DEC. 2-3

Arts and Crafts Show. 9 a.m.-4 p.m. Saturday; 10 a.m.-3:30 p.m. Sunday at the Audrey Moore RECenter, 8100 Braddock Road, Annandale. Call 703-321-7081.

SUNDAY/DEC. 3

"Hansel and Gretel" Opera. 2 and 5 p.m. at Old Town Hall, 3999 University Drive, Fairfax. Mason Opera will present Engelbert Humperdinck's take on the Brothers Grimm fairytale "Hansel and Gretel." Tickets: $12, $8, $5. Call 703-385-7858 or visit www.fairfaxva.gov/culturalarts.

Home for the Holidays Concert. 4-6 p.m. at Lanier Middle School, 3801 Jermantown Road, Fairfax. Main Street Community Band plays a mix of seasonal favorites. Visit www.fairfaxband.org.

MONDAY/DEC. 4

Funday Monday. 10:30 a.m. at Old Town Hall, 3999 University Drive, Fairfax. Fun with Mr. Skip. Free. Call 703-385-7858 or visit www.fairfaxva.gov/culturalarts.

FRIDAY/DEC. 8

B-I-N-G-O. 7 p.m. at Fire Station 3, 4081 University Drive, Fairfax. Smoke free, all proceeds go to purchasing fire and rescue equipment. Visit www.fairfaxvfd.com or call 703-273-3638.

Flutist in Concert. 8 p.m. at Old Town Hall, 3999 University Drive, Fairfax. Celebrate the Sounds of the Season with the Columbia Flute Choir in the Christmas Concert. Free. Call 703-385-7858 or visit www.fairfaxva.gov/culturalarts.

Gift Guide

Trends in Gift Giving

From charitable to sustainable, shopping ideas to please even the pickiest.

By Marilyn Campbell
The Connection

Consider eco-friendly gifts that are constructed from recycled materials.

"Items made from reclaimed materials are a great way to give a unique gift," said Courtney Thomas of the Picket Fence in Burke. "Reclaimed wood is especially popular."

Solemate Socks are another colorful option. They are made by repurposing recycled cotton yarn that is then spun into vibrant, patterned socks. Thomas also recommends decorative items made from reclaimed wood. "We have some beautiful churches made from wood salvaged from barns in Alabama," she said.

Ornaments made from reclaimed paper are another environmentally conscious option. "Not only are these beautiful decorations, but they help provide jobs for people in third-world countries," said Thomas.

Kevin Sweitzer of Thos. Moser, Handmade American Furniture recommends items made from sustainable North American hardwoods, "Namely cherry from the Allegheny Plateau in Pennsylvania and walnut from the riverbanks of Missouri."

Examples include stacks of food-safe wooden bowls, which are "are sustainable and reusable, [make] a perfect hostess gift … and a great conversation piece."

GIFTS THAT MAKE A DIFFERENCE in the lives of others are also on trend this year.

One example is Starling Project candles. Proceeds from the sales of these scented candles are donated to UNICEF to help provide solar energy to under-resourced countries.

"Products that support a cause are also a great way to both give a meaningful gift and help those in need," said Thomas. "We have pottery ornaments that are made in Alabama by women escaping domestic violence."

Vintage-inspired gifts are trendy this season, says Susan Nelson from Home on Cameron in Alexandria. "Wooden toys, [for example] appeal to all ages, as do vintage items such as magnifying glasses," she said. "Gifts that are unique and offer a unique experience are popular right now."

Handmade gifts are another consideration, adds Todd Martz, also from Home on Cameron. "Visitors … love the handmade items for gifts, such as felt flowers from Nepal, hand painted vases, and the custom pillows [which come] in a variety of colors and patterns.

Photo courtesy of The Picket Fence

Eco-friendly gift ideas include decorative items such as these churches which are wood salvaged from, says Courtney Thomas of the Picket Fence in Burke.

Photo courtesy of Home on Cameron

Ornaments made from recycled paper, such as these from The Picket Fence in Burke, make eco-friendly holiday gifts.

GIVING PRACTICAL GIFTS that the recipient will actually use can minimize the need for gift returns. Merchants who are on the receiving end of after-season holiday gift returns suggest customers think about what it will be like for the recipient to actually own the gift, rather than the moment of receiving the gift.

One example, says Madeline Fairbanks of Country Casual Teak, "are accessories for those who entertain regularly such as … wine stopper or wine caddy," she said. "Purchasers like the thoughtfulness of the items and the durability of the products because they last for many years."

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SALT Holds Annual Advocacy Conference

Social justice advocates told: "Go and do good."

By Andrea Worker
The Gazette

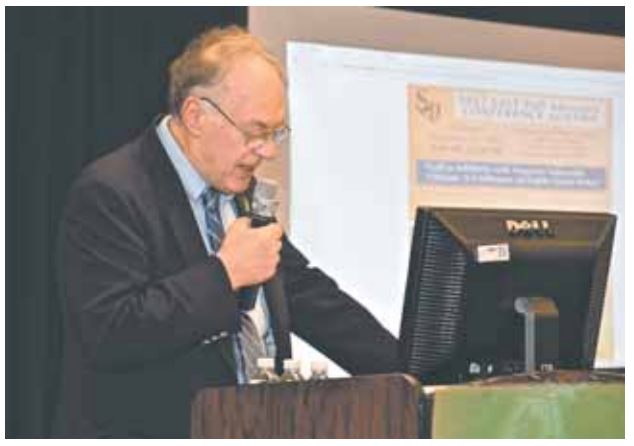
Photos by Andrea Worker/The Gazette

Sister Simone Campbell — often referred to as "the nun on the bus" for the bus tours she and other nuns undertake on their mission to bring about social justice — was the keynote speaker at the SALT conference.

The agenda was full at the 2017 Social Action Linking Together (SALT) Fall Advocacy Conference. The annual forum was held at the Virginia International University in Fairfax on Saturday, Nov. 11 with a packed house in attendance.

SALT is a non-partisan faith-based network of individuals and organizations with the goal of bringing "the social and economic justice teachings of their faith to bear on public policy and legislation." What started as eight socially conscious people about 20 years ago, has grown to a base of about 1,300, who educate themselves and the public on the facts surrounding social issues, and the actions that can be taken to address them.

"It's education, it's advocacy, building relationships with legislators, and bringing people together to strengthen the voices of all," said SALT Founder and Coordinator John Horejsi, who is no stranger to the halls of the Commonwealth's governmental chambers and offices in Richmond.



Social Action Linking Together (SALT) founder and coordinator John Horejsi welcomes attendees to the organization's 2017 Fall Advocacy Conference.

Each year, SALT selects new priority issues, or continues to address issues in progress, and rallies its troops to raise awareness and recommend actions. Horejsi was particularly pleased to announce that largely through the efforts of SALT members, many more Virginians in need will now benefit from the TANF (Temporary Assistance for Needy Families) program, simply by having consolidated the TANF categories.

Additional improvements to TANF, including an associated scholarship program is one of SALT's priorities for the 2018 Virginia legislative session.

THE GROUP has identified several other priorities upon which they will focus their attention in the coming year, including:

❖ Ending school lunch shaming: SALT supports legislation that would prohibit identifying – and stigmatizing – children who are unable to pay for school meals.

❖ Legislation to provide video visitation services to inmates, and not to ban in-person visits where video visits are provided.

❖ Limiting, and ultimately eliminating solitary confinement in prisons.

❖ Opposing block grants for all human service programs opposing block grants for Medicaid.

❖ Supporting greater equity in Kinship Guardian situations, granting more funds to family members caring for children — where foster carers now receive, in some cases, almost five times the funds allotted to family carers.

To illustrate the scope of the needs of the citizens of Virginia, Horejsi recruited Sister Simone Campbell and state Del. Ken Plum (D-36) as speakers for the forum.

Sister Campbell, a member of the international Roman Catholic religious congregation Sisters of Social Service is often referred to as one of the "Nuns on a Bus." As the director of NETWORK, a Catholic advocacy group for social justice, Sister Campbell leads a group of nuns who, since 2012, conduct bus tours around the country as part of their advocacy work, educating and leading discussions on a variety of issues, from healthcare to immigration, voter suppression to advocating for a "living wage" for all.

The need to provide a "living wage" was a central element in Sister Campbell's keynote address on "21st Century Poverty."

Sister Campbell advised the audience to throw away the old stereotypes of the "typically impoverished." Today's poor are increasingly "the working poor," she said, recounting the story of a young woman she encountered at a special White House luncheon. The woman was filled with excitement for having been chosen to attend the event, yet before the end of the meal, she confessed that despite having a "good, full-time job" at a well-known retailer, she lived at a homeless shelter because she couldn't afford the high cost of rents in the D.C. area. Her dream was to work and save her way out of this dilemma.

Sister Campbell doesn't believe that anyone working a full-time job – and some working more than one job – should not be earning enough to pay for a place to live and the means to exist.

"There's something wrong here. We say we are a nation based on family, yet we do so little to support families and hardworking individuals."

The "nun on a bus" expressed her scepticism regarding the tax reform proposals currently being put forth on the Hill. "Trickle down does not work. We have already proven this, time and again. And you know the definition of insanity, right? Doing the same thing over and over, expecting a different result."

Before concluding her remarks, Sister Campbell challenged the attendees to embrace certain "virtues," including remembering to keep a "modicum of joy" in your efforts.

Secondly, she added to "use your 'holy curiosity,' by asking people about themselves and their situations as the way to truly know the face of 21st century poverty. Practice "sacred gossip" by sharing the stories that you hear and encouraging others to take action, and finally, just figuring out what your part is and doing it."

Sister Campbell cautioned against trying to "do it all" or needing to take charge. "Learn whether you're the head, the feet, the hands, whatever you do best to contribute."

She says it took awhile, but now she knows what she does best and where she fits in. "I am the stomach acid … there to churn everybody and everything up."

Plum followed Sister Campbell's address, giving a mini-history of the Commonwealth, particularly in relation to slavery, the birth of a culture of racism, and the reasons why he feels the issue of monuments to Confederate war participants is far from over.

"Virginia has more such monuments than any other state," said Plum, "with 223, almost all of them built in either the early 1900s or during the Civil Rights movement of the 1960s. What's the message there?"

Like Sister Campbell, Plum also addressed the issue of poverty and the widening gap between the wealthy and the less fortunate, using a series of charts and graphs that illustrated how statistics may not tell the whole story, unless you look a little deeper.

Despite always being categorized as one of the richest states in the union, Plum showed how the "real" numbers show one geographically small portion of Virginia, the "Golden Crescent" of Northern Virginia to Hampton Roads, having a median income of $150,000. "For the rest of Virginia, that number is closer to $40,000. What do we do with that information? We have to find ways to share economic opportunities and all that comes with it to rural Virginia, as well."

LOOKING AHEAD to the 2018 legislative session, Plum thinks redistricting could be a hot topic — and that it should be. Fighting for more school funding and the expansion of Medicaid is also on his agenda. "$10.4 billion by not expanding it. Who leaves that kind of money on the table, especially in 'fiscally conservative' Virginia?"

Plum warns that it "might not be pretty" when the session begins, as both parties readjust after the Democratic wins in the Nov. 7 election, but the delegate is hopeful that all the new faces bring fresh new perspectives and new solutions.

The final speaker at the forum was Gay Gardner, from Interfaith Action for Human Rights, (IAHR) speaking about her organization's efforts to "make solitary confinement truly a last resort."

Gardner cited numerous studies that attest to the physical and mental harm done by long-term solitary confinement.

Kimberly Jenkins-Snodgrass, a board member with IAHR spoke briefly about her own son, an inmate who has been kept in solitary for four years. Other prisoners they have contact with have been held in isolation for even longer, one for 14 years.

"Getting a straight answer as to why these men have been so confined is not easy," Gardner said. Sometimes, solitary is employed as a response to an inmate who exhibits signs of mental illness or distress, "but solitary confinement only makes the condition worse."

A question-and-answer session followed the speakers' presentations. Horejsi noted that the energy in the room remained high, despite the almost overwhelming number of issues that had been brought to the table. "Must be that joy that Sister Simone told us to keep handy," he said, before adjourning the forum and exhorting attendees to "Go and do good."

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Education • Learning • Fun

Manners in the Tech Age

From Page 9

etiquette schools. "Because everyone is so busy and technology is so advanced, reality television shows are setting standards of behavior and handwritten thank you notes have been replaced by emails and even texts."

GOOD MANNERS are as important to a child's future success as academics, says another parent. "I feel like if people know what do to do in social situations it empowers them," said Sarah Henry of Chevy Chase, mother of a 10-year-old daughter and a 12-year-old son. "If you're unsure of what to do, it can make you feel intimidated. So it's all about empowering children with knowledge. And it's good for them to be exposed to proper etiquette in case they're not getting it at home. And if they are getting it at home, etiquette classes can reinforce it."

Interactive class sessions help keep their children engaged in the etiquette lessons. "The key is to keep the children occupied," said Johnson. "For example, when teaching proper introductions, I would call two children up to the front of the room and have them introduce themselves to each other."

In addition to learning such common courtesies such as saying "Please," "Thank you" and "You're welcome," children learn to write thank-you notes and introduce themselves to others by making direct eye contact and offering a firm handshake.

Henry says that in a class that she coordinated for her daughter's Girl Scout troop, part of the curriculum included having the children form a receiving line with parents where they practiced handshakes and eye contact.

"We also printed proper table setting samples online and give the girls plastic forks spoons, knives, napkins and a copy of the place setting," said Henry. "We talked about the placement of the utensils, how to hold a knife and fork properly. One of my pet peeves is watching people hold a knife like it's a stick."

These are good life lessons, says Neal. "Etiquette classes are important because people still need to be respectful of others, and it starts with our children," she said. "A simple please and thank you is important."

Photo courtesy of Fairfax County

Henryette Neal teaches etiquette classes for children through the Fairfax County Park Authority.

Bulletin Board

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

DEADLINE NOV. 19

Future Lorton Community Center. The project is currently entering the initial design stage and is targeted for completion by early 2022. Fairfax County is seeking public input to ensure that this new facility is designed to meet the needs and interests of the communities they serve. Visit www.fairfaxcounty.gov.

THURSDAY/NOV. 30

Rolling Road Widening Project Public Information Meeting. 6:30-8:30 p.m. at Rolling Valley Elementary School located at 6703 Barnack Drive, Springfield. Visit VirginiaDOT.org for more.

SATURDAY/DEC. 2

Future Quest. 8 a.m.-3 p.m. at GMU's Johnson Center, 4400 University Drive, Fairfax. College and career conference for area middle and high school students with disabilities, as well as their parents, teachers and other professionals. Free. There is free parking in Lot K, or in the Mason Pond Parking Garage for $8. Visit ww.futurequestgmu.org to register or email futurequestnova@gmail.com.

Coffee with Del. David Bulova. 9-11 a.m. at Main Street Bagel, 10268 Main St., City of Fairfax. Del.David Bulova (D-37) will continue a tradition started in 2006 by holding informal office hours, constituents are invited to talk about issues of interest and to ask questions about legislation affecting the community. Visit www.davidbulova.com.

Teaming Up To Benefit Toys For Tots

For the past 13 years Fairfax County Fire and Rescue Department has been a partner with the United States Marines Toys for Tots Program. This year, G&C Express Tire and Auto Service at 14008 Willard Road in Chantilly will serve as a hub for businesses that want to help collect toys. G&C will also serve as a toy drop off site. Representatives of businesses that want to be a collection site may stop by G&C for a box and poster. The fire stations in Fairfax County will start collecting Toys for Tots on Friday, Nov. 24.

U.S. Marines and Battalion Chief Willie Bailey flank G&C owners Gregg and Christina Caldwell.

Give Locally

From Page 6

0390, info@pathwayhomes.org, www.pathwayhomes.org, www.pathwayhomes.org/support-pathway/.

❖ **Good Shepherd Housing and Family Services**, 8305-17B Richmond Highway, PO Box 15096, Alexandria, VA, 22309. 703-768-9419, www.goodhousing.org/. The mission of Good Shepherd Housing (GSH) is to reduce homelessness, increase community support, and promote self-sufficiency. GSH housing manages more than 70 housing units.

❖ **Boys and Girls Clubs of Greater Washington Fairfax Area** operates clubs in two of the neediest areas of the county, Culmore and Mount Vernon/ Route 1 corridor, focusing on character and academic success. www.bgcgw.org/fairfax.

❖ **Christian Relief Services**, 8301 RIchmond Highway, Suite 900, Alexandria, VA 22309, 703-317-9086, 703-317-9690, christianrelief.org/

❖ **Friends of Guest House Northern Virginia** offers structure, supervision, support and assistance to female ex-offenders who want to improve their lives and break the cycle of incarceration. Friends of Guest House offers the only program for women of its kind in Northern Virginia. One East Luray Ave., Alexandria, VA 22301-2025, 703-549-8072, info@friendsofguesthouse.org, friendsofguesthouse.org/

❖ **Wright to Read** 703-299-9854, www.wrighttoread.org. Provides volunteer-based, one-to-one tutoring and mentoring to City of Alexandria public elementary school children in need. Funds are needed to provide field trips and enrichment activities, books and other resources. For more information about Wright to Read and becoming a "Tutor/Mentor" see website.

❖ **Habitat for Humanity of Northern Virginia** transforms the lives of lower-income families in need by providing affordable homeownership opportunities in Alexandria, Arlington, Fairfax and Falls Church. Learn more at www.habitatnova.org.

❖ **Alice's Kids** (@alicewillhelp) aliceskids.org P.O. Box 60, Mount Vernon, VA 22121 When a child is raised in poverty they suffer both publicly and privately. When there is no food in the refrigerator, no electricity nor heat, these are hardships that they can keep hidden from their peers. But, when that same child can't afford to pay for the band field trip, a pair of glasses, a chorus outfit or a new pair of shoes, these are indignities that are evident to their classmates. Alice's Kids pays for these relatively inexpensive items in the hopes of preserving the dignity of the child. Alice's Kids helps children from all over the Mount Vernon area through small acts of kindness.

❖ **The Community Foundation of Northern Virginia** has launched its Permanent Fund campaign, a community endowment which is a forever source to provide critical support for those in need in the Northern Virginia region; Consider leaving a legacy through a current or planned gift to the Permanent Fund at the Community Foundation for Northern Virginia. www.cfnova.org/permanentfund.

Bulletin Board

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THURSDAY/NOV. 16

Police-Public forum. 7-9 p.m. Heritage Human Resources Center, 7611 Little River Turnpike, Annandale. The forums will provide information on the Panel as well as the Independent Police Auditor, the scope of their responsibilities, how complaints can be submitted, and how complaints will be investigated and processed. Visit www.fairfaxcounty.gov/police/ for more.

Community Meeting. 7:30 at Ravensworth Baptist Church, 5100 Ravensworth Road, Annandale. Community meeting focused on the Ravensworth Road intersection of Braddock Road. Visit www.fairfaxcounty.gov/fcdot/braddockroadmmstudy/.

SATURDAY/NOV. 18

Healthy You Summit. 4-6 p.m. at the West Springfield Government Center, Community Room, 6140 Rolling Road, Springfield. Fairfax County Alumnae Chapter of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc. to discuss investing in your health and well-being. Visit www.fcacdst.org/health-care-summit for more.

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Not About Me, Mostly

By KENNETH B. LOURIE

Recently, as in a few weeks ago, Mindy, who none of you regular readers know, died of lung cancer. She was my decade's long best friend's wife. And she was my friend too, going back almost 40 years. Married to my oldest friend (starting in 10th grade), Cary, for over 35 years, Mindy was originally classified as stage I five years ago. Cary didn't tell me for a year or so after because he didn't want to burden me with another piece of bad news, and Mindy being diagnosed with lung cancer would most definitely have been bad news. She had a lobectomy (part of the lung is surgically removed), back then and that's pretty much all I know about the beginning stages. After the surgery however, she was told she was cancer free.

Unfortunately, I wasn't able to attend Mindy's funeral. I had my own post-scan appointment on the Monday morning following the Sunday funeral and night-time shiva and the logistics of traveling back and forth from Washington, D.C., to Boston and back were unworkable. Two weekends later, last weekend in fact, I flew up to Boston and spent four days with Cary, just him and me in the house – without Mindy, of course. We shared an awful lot about Mindy and life, reminiscing backward and contemplating forward. One afternoon, along with Mindy's first cousin, Julie, Cary and I visited Mindy's grave, about 20 minutes from the house, where I was able to pay my respects and say a few words in private. After standing alongside the grave site for a few minutes, Cary took out his smart phone, bent over toward the ground and played "their" song, sniffling and wiping away tears in the process. A very touching moment. Another afternoon, I sat with Cary at their kitchen table and read through all the condolence cards with Cary explaining all the relationships to Mindy. One night, Cary and I went to dinner with his two sons, Jonathan and Jordon (along with Jon's girlfriend, Coleen and Jordy's wife, Lauren). At dinner, I shared two jokes with the boys that Mindy had told years ago, that to this day, I keep in my repertoire; they had not heard them before. One involved an elephant, another had to do with Jesus Christ becoming a bell ringer. Cary's third - and oldest son, Jeffrey, was not present as he had flown back to California on Tuesday where, after spending three weeks at home with his father and brothers watching his mother struggle to survive, he returned a few days after the funeral.

As for me, I teared up throughout the weekend. Over the years, especially after my parents moved to Florida, I didn't see Cary and Mindy as regularly as I had while my parents were still living in Massachusetts (four times a year, generally). From 1989 on, maybe we visited one another a dozen times in person: high school reunions, bar mitzvahs, a couple of Celtic's games and the odd occasion where the timing/opportunity presented itself. All the while, going on 45 years now, we spoke/speak every couple of weeks, picking up in conversation without ever missing a beat.

What was particularly/uniquely difficult for me – and I don't think it is as difficult as losing one's "soul mate," as Cary described Mindy, just as they were beginning to embark on their final journey together: retirement – was that I too have lung cancer. As such, it was a peculiar position in which I found myself. Not only was I grieving the loss of a close friend: Mindy, way too young; she was younger than me by a couple of years, and the effect it had on my best friend, Cary, I was also witnessing first hand, up close and extremely personally, the ravages and devastating impact of a lung cancer diagnosis, a diagnosis with which I am all to familiar. Of course, I felt bad for Cary losing his beautiful wife. Of course, I felt bad for the boys losing a fabulous, devoted mother. But there was a part of me that felt bad for me. As a cancer survivor, it's easy to pretend that this disease isn't killing you until you attend a funeral/spend time with the family of someone who has succumbed to this terrible disease. Then it hits home, with a vengeance. "Cancer sucks," as so many of us know, but life must go on, as difficult as it sometimes is.

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

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