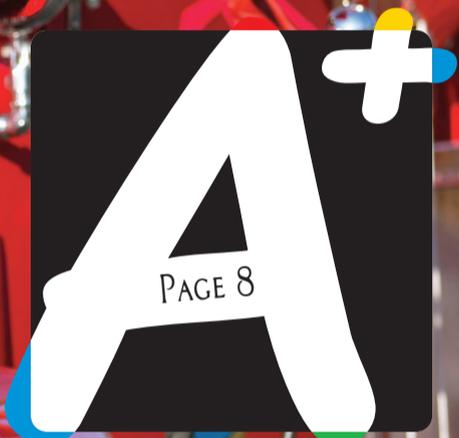


# Vienna and Oakton CONNECTION

PHOTO BY COLIN STOECKER/THE CONNECTION OPINION, PAGE 4 ♦ ENTERTAINMENT, PAGE 5 ♦ CLASSIFIEDS, PAGE 6

## Santa Runs Through Vienna Neighborhoods



VIRGINIA  
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NEWS, PAGE 3

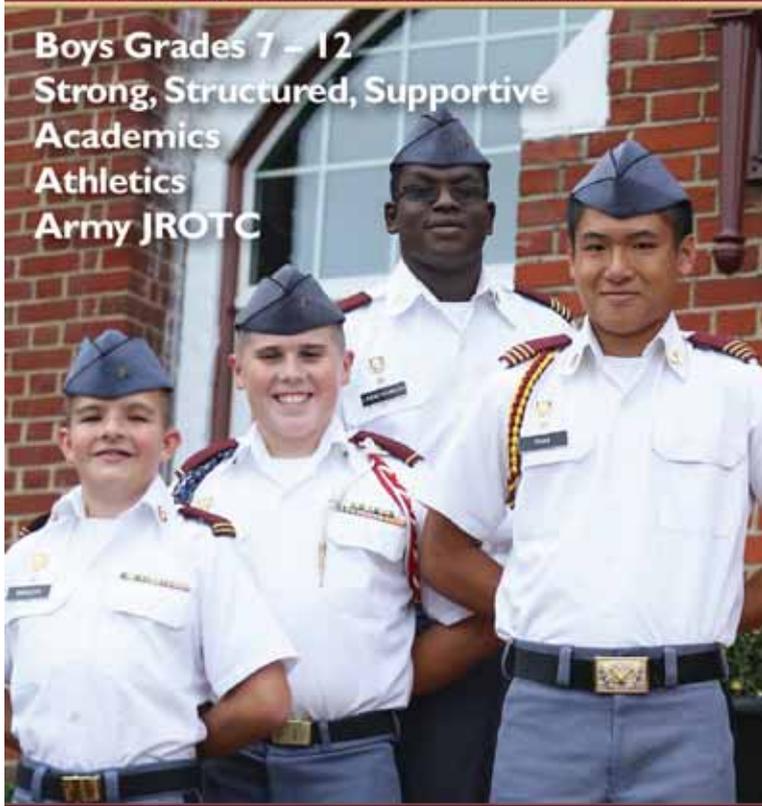
A Year in Review: Change and  
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The 1946 red restored  
Maxim firetruck property  
of the Vienna Volunteer Fire  
Department is used for a  
Santa run Saturday, Dec. 16.

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## A YEAR IN REVIEW

# Change and Collaboration In County, Hunter Mill District

BY SUPERVISOR CATHY HUDGINS  
(D-HUNTER MILL)

**C**hange and collaboration have been the themes for 2017 in Fairfax County and the Hunter Mill District.

This year, two of the most important accomplishments of the Board of Supervisors are the establishment of the Police Civilian Review Panel and the Independent Police Auditor. Like many large jurisdictions, the relationship of the police and our citizens is of great importance. The creation of the panel and the auditor aim to build the trust with citizens and the police necessary to keep our communities and residents safe.

Countywide, we welcome the changeover in leadership in Fairfax County Public Schools (FCPS) with the installation of Superintendent Scott Brabrand, and the appointment of new County Executive Bryan Hill who will take the reins in the County in January. Their predecessors initiated changes in how we do business both at the Board levels and in our programs and services. This collaboration between schools and county continues to evolve with an aim to greater efficiencies and better service delivery to our citizens. Already we have seen the benefits in our work on the FY2019 budget proposal.

One example of the county/schools collaboration is work of the Successful Children and Youth Policy Team (SCYPT). Composed of Board members, agency staff and community advocates, the SCYPT team has a focus on how we can bring together the resources of the County, FCPS, and community organizations to help our children become successful individuals. This year, SCYPT developed their Equitable School Readiness Strategic Plan to expand early children development and learning programs so more children begin their education ready for learning. Investments in pre-K pay off “bigly.”

In the Hunter Mill District, we’re sprouting like long, planned for spring flowers. New development, residential and commercial, debuted in the Tysons area and in Reston.

❖ The Aperture apartments, BLVD Reston Station and other new buildings opened their doors, bringing new residents and businesses.

❖ Senior residents who want to stay in their community will have new options with the coming of the Hunters Woods at Trails Edge Senior Living Community in Reston.

❖ The Reston Transportation Service District was established this year to provide needed revenue for new roads, improvements to existing roads, intersection improvements and grid of streets to around the transit stations.

❖ In Reston, the community continues to tussle with the proposed zoning amendment to the Reston PRC to raise the density. While a decision is not forthcoming in 2017, it has been exciting to see so many residents becoming engaged in this issue by attending meetings, writing letters, and offering their input.

On the fun side in Hunter Mill:

❖ James Madison High school sports had a banner year as teams won state championships in Girls Swim and Dive, Cross Country, and Softball.

❖ McNair Elementary School Chess Team outmaneuvered their opponents at Virginia Scholastic Chess Championships in both team and individual competitions, coming home with multiple champi-



**Superintendent Scott Brabrand and Huntermill District Supervisor Catherine Hudgins.**

PHOTOS CONTRIBUTED



**“Convergence” at Aperture.**

onship trophies.

❖ Vienna Chorale celebrated their 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of sharing their beautiful music with the community.

❖ New public art sculptures were unveiled at the Aperture, and at the newly renovated Vienna Community Center, both welcome additions to our artscape. And, Reston Public Art celebrated their 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary.

❖ The NoVi Trail Network neared completion, providing walkable connections to local amenities such as parks, schools, Tysons and the Town of Vienna.

As you can see, 2017 was very busy! I look forward to being as equally engaged in 2018. A Happy Hunter Mill Holiday to you!

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- Potomac Almanac
- Reston Connection
- Springfield Connection
- Vienna/Oakton Connection



PHOTOS BY COLIN STOECKER/THE CONNECTION

**From left: Santa, Lori Stevens of Centreville, elf, Bill Sontag, an honorary Vienna Volunteer Fire Department member and Monserrat Perez of Fairfax ride the Santa mobile for a Santa run Saturday, Dec. 16 in Vienna.**



**Santa, Elliot Zaret of Great Falls, pictured with Vienna neighborhood residents, (from left) Jacob Lucca, 7, Thomas Lucca, 5, and Logan Lucca, 9, on the classic fire truck for a Santa run Saturday, Dec. 16 in Vienna.**

## Santa Runs Through Vienna Neighborhoods

### Vienna Volunteer Fire Department holds annual Santa Run.

BY COLIN STOECKER  
THE CONNECTION

**T**his year in Vienna, Santa's sleigh was a 1946 restored red Maxim firetruck. Courtesy of the Vienna Volunteer Fire Department, Santa rode the streets of Vienna in style Saturday, Dec. 16, blaring a screaming siren and throwing waves, smiles, and candy canes to all the neighborhood children who came running from their houses.

Matt Jones, a member of the board for the Vienna Volunteer Fire Department, and a firefighter is the driver of the classic red fire-engine this holiday season. Although he doesn't take all of the credit for being the only person certified to drive the double shifter.

"We have a simple driving test, and a few people at the station know how to do it properly," said Jones.

The Vienna Volunteer Fire Department purchased the classic engine in 1996. It had been rusting away in a farm field in Virginia when they restored it. It has been in use for the past 20 years in parades, community events, birthdays, and this holiday season as Santa's sleigh.

"Everybody loves it," said Jones. "A lot of fire departments do fire truck Christmas runs, but our antique vehicle makes it more accessible."

The truck, which boasts a classic wooden bed and a newly installed speaker, offers a

bumpy ride with loud Christmas music, lights, and decorations. EMTs from the department rode in the back dressed in customary fire-jackets and Christmas hats, ready to jump out and deliver candy canes to children and dog biscuits to neighborhood pets.

"The firetruck is made for kids, and to give Vienna that small town feel," said Jones.

And that is exactly what the Santa mobile accomplished Saturday morning as children swarmed from their houses, some still in pajamas, or without shoes as they ran to see a jolly Santa Claus and for some candy canes from Santa's elves.

"Even if the truck breaks down, Santa stays for some community outreach," said Jones.

This year Santa has a Twitter account courtesy of the Vienna Volunteer Fire Department, a location system that helps interested neighbors find when Santa's sleigh will be visiting their street.

"I love driving this, it's a joy to drive. And I love bringing the Christmas spirit that is so clearly appreciated by the residents of Vienna," said Jones.

Elizabeth Lucca was waiting outside of her house with her husband and three sons as well as other curious and excited neighbors when Santa arrived on the fire truck.

"I like how happy it makes my kids to see Santa and get candy canes," said Lucca with a smile.



**From left: Sarah Thompson, of Oakton, a junior EMT pictured with Tate Romney, 5, and his father Aaron Romney outside their house in Vienna for a Santa run Saturday, Dec. 16.**



**Santa, Elliot Zaret of Great Falls, waves from the classic fire engine for a Santa run Saturday, Dec. 16 in Vienna.**



**Luisa Schwarzott of Fairfax passes out candy canes to neighborhood children in Vienna for a Santa run Saturday, Dec. 16 in Vienna.**

# OPINION

# Merry Christmas

Whether you believe the Christmas story literally or in spirit, you know it is the story of joy, hope and love, with the promise of redemption.

The pages of the Connection Newspapers (including the Alexandria Gazette Packet, the Mount Vernon Gazette, the Potomac Almanac and the Centre View) have been full of holiday spirit beginning before Thanksgiving. Group and individual efforts to help the needy, holiday parades, Santa arriving by boat, Santa arriving by horse-drawn carriage, Santa arriving at the Malls, tree lightings, Menorah lightings, stories of giving, secular celebrations, religious celebrations. Shopping locally. Giving locally. Christmas is about the birth of Jesus Christ. Whether you believe the Christmas story literally or in spirit, you know it is the story of joy, hope and love, with the promise of redemption.

## EDITORIAL

It is also about embracing the teachings of Jesus: to love thy neighbor as thyself; to help the needy; to feed the hungry and clothe the poor; to care for those who are sick; to invite and welcome strangers; to treat others as you would have them treat you.

### Matthew 7:12:

“So in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you, for this sums up the Law and the Prophets.”

### Matthew 25:35-40:

“For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.”

“Then the righteous will answer him, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?’

“Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one

of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.”

**SO LET US SHARE** the verse relating the birth of Jesus from the Bible, Luke 2: 4-19:

“And Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judaea, unto the city of David, which is called Bethlehem; (because he was of the house and lineage of David:) To be taxed with Mary his espoused wife, being great with child. And so it was, that, while they were there, the days were accomplished that she should be delivered. And she brought forth her firstborn son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger; because there was no room for them in the inn.

“And there were in the same country, shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. And, lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the

“Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.”

Lord shone round about them: and they were sore afraid. And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people.

“For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord. And this shall be a sign unto you; Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger.

“And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men.

“And it came to pass, as the angels were gone away from them into heaven, the shepherds said one to another, Let us now go even unto Bethlehem, and see this thing which is

come to pass, which the Lord hath made known unto us. And they came with haste, and found Mary, and Joseph, and the babe lying in a manger. And when they had seen it, they made known abroad the saying which was told them concerning this child. And all they that heard it wondered at those things which were told them by the shepherds.”

— MARY KIMM

MKIMM@CONNECTIONNEWSPAPERS.COM

## Editor's Note About the Rest of 2017

This is our last regular edition of 2017. Next week, after Christmas, we will publish our annual Children's Issue, devoted entirely to the artwork and writing of local students. We have more submissions from local students than ever, and so some children's and teens' artwork and writing will spill over into the first week of the new year.

Our next regular edition will publish Jan. 3-4, 2018, with deadline for content and advertising of Dec. 30 (late ads accepted).

In the meantime you can reach the editors

at editors@connectionnewspapers.com and sales/marketing/advertising at sales@connectionnewspapers.com.

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## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### Taking Exception on Tax Reform

To the Editor:

(Regarding 'Federal Tax Reform. Bad for Fairfax,' Connection, Dec. 13, 2017)

Interesting article! However, I must take exception with the conclusion as presented by our local representatives. Capping the state and local write-offs will help to ensure that the local property taxes will slow their continued in-

creases above a reasonable deduction against your federal income tax.

Maybe, just maybe once the local deductions are capped at 10K our local elected officials will stop or slow their tax and spend policies. Once the tax paying property owners find that their outrageous property taxes are not deductible they just might start questioning the out of control spending by our local Fairfax county representatives and maybe think of electing different representatives.

One can only hope that this tax bill passes and a capped of 10K is

placed on local deductions. It is really time to bite the bullet and focus on spending.

**Dudley Losselyong**  
Great Falls

### The Other Side of Gun Ownership

To the Editor:

Reporting part of the story (Letters, "Armed as for a war zone," Connection, Dec. 13) can be more

misleading than reporting none. Here's what some don't want you to know: If you're not involved with drugs or gangs, the probability that you'll be the victim of violent crime in the U.S. drops to the same levels as those in Western European nations with the most restrictive gun regulations in the world. Attributing differences in homicide rates to gun ownership rates, without a hint of empirical support, is deceptive and irresponsible.

Also, overall homicide rates in

SEE LETTERS, PAGE 7

## Vienna & Oakton CONNECTION

www.ConnectionNewspapers.com

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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NEWS DEPARTMENT:  
vienna@connectionnewspapers.com

**Kemal Kurspahic**  
Editor ♦ 703-778-9414  
kemal@connectionnewspapers.com

**Donna Manz**  
Contributing Writer  
dmanz@connectionnewspapers.com

**Andrea Worker**  
Reporter  
aworker@connectionnewspapers.com

**Mike Salmon**  
Editorial Assistant  
vienna@connectionnewspapers.com

ADVERTISING:  
For advertising information  
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**Don Park**  
Display Advertising  
703-778-9420  
donpark@connectionnewspapers.com

**Debbie Funk**  
National Sales  
703-778-9444  
debfunk@connectionnewspapers.com

**David Griffin**  
Marketing Assistant  
703-778-9431  
dgriffin@connectionnewspapers.com

**Editor & Publisher**  
Mary Kimm  
mkimm@connectionnewspapers.com  
@MaryKimm

**Executive Vice President**  
Jerry Vernon  
703-549-0004  
jvernon@connectionnewspapers.com

**Editor in Chief**  
Steven Mauren  
**Managing Editor**  
Kemal Kurspahic  
**Art/Design:**  
Laurence Foong, John Heinly,  
Ali Khaligh  
**Production Manager:**  
Geovani Flores

**Special Assistant to the Publisher**  
Jeanne Theismann  
jtheismann@connectionnewspapers.com  
@TheismannMedia

CIRCULATION  
circulation@connectionnewspapers.com



# ENTERTAINMENT

Submit entertainment announcements at [www.connectionnewspapers.com/Calendar/](http://www.connectionnewspapers.com/Calendar/). The deadline is noon on Friday. Photos/artwork encouraged.

## ONGOING

**Vienna-Wide Food Drive.** Through Dec. 31, bring food contributions to Vienna Town Hall - 127 Center St. S; Vienna Arts Society-115 Pleasant St. NW; Bikes@Vienna-128-A Church St. NW; Caffe Amouri-107 Church St., NE; Evolution Fitness- 216 Dominion Road, NE; Rexall Drug Store-150 Maple Ave. W; Drs. Covell, Stack and Henon- 120 Beulah Road, NE; Patrick Henry Library (co-sponsored by Supervisor Cathy Hudgins) and the Vienna Community Center. Girl Scout Troop 2684 will be helping NEVCA by picking up the food. Sponsored by Committee for Helping Others. Call 703-281-7614.

**Winter Walk of Lights.** At Meadowlark Botanical Gardens, 9750 Meadowlark Gardens Court, Vienna. During the Winter Walk of Lights, 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](http://www.novaparks.com/events/winter-walk-of-lights).

**Textures Exhibit.** Through Jan. 7, various times at the Vienna Arts Center, 115 Pleasant St., NW. Call 703-319-3971 or visit [www.ViennaArtsSociety.org](http://www.ViennaArtsSociety.org).

## WEDNESDAY/DEC. 20

**Timeline Arcade and Ice Cream.** 8 a.m.-6 p.m.-noon at The Old Firehouse, 1440 Chain Bridge Road, McLean. Play old-school video games and then eat ice cream. \$55/45 for McLean Community Center district residents. Call 703-790-0123 or visit [www.mcleancenter.org](http://www.mcleancenter.org).

## THURSDAY/DEC. 21

**Bowling and Movie.** 8 a.m.-6 p.m.-noon at The Old Firehouse, 1440 Chain Bridge Road, McLean. \$65/55 for McLean residents. Call 703-790-0123 or visit [www.mcleancenter.org](http://www.mcleancenter.org).

## TUESDAY/DEC. 26

**Beatrix Potter Tea.** noon-1:30 p.m. at Riverbend Park, 8700 Potomac Hills St., Great Falls. Learn about the famous author. Nibble on cupcakes and sip fruit punch or tea while hearing stories about the bunny family of her creation. Meet a live white tale rabbit and learn what wild bunnies do in the winter. Make a bunny of your own to take home. Call 703-759-9018 or visit [www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/riverbend-park/](http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/riverbend-park/).

## WEDNESDAY/DEC. 27

**Dave and Buster's arcade.** 8 a.m.-6 p.m.-noon at The Old Firehouse, 1440 Chain Bridge Road, McLean. Lunch and a \$25 game card with unlimited arcade game play are included. \$70/60 for McLean residents. Call 703-790-0123 or visit [www.mcleancenter.org](http://www.mcleancenter.org).

## THURSDAY/DEC. 28

**Tubing/Ice Skating Trip.** 8 a.m.-6 p.m.-noon at The Old Firehouse, 1440 Chain Bridge Road, McLean. Chill out racing down hills on the tubes or gliding on skates. During the day, there is a pizza party. Admission for tubing or ice skating and lunch are included in the fee. \$55/45 for McLean residents. Call 703-790-0123

## Art Exhibit

**Thompson Farm Barns on Canvas.** Various times through Dec. 31 at the Great Falls Library, 9830 Georgetown Pike. Local artist Parinaz Ziai Bahadori exhibits a selection of acrylic and watercolor paintings and collages, some of which are dedicated to the Thompson Farm barns which were torn down last year in Great Falls. Call 703-757-8560 for more.



## Live Music

Local musician "Rorie," is in concert, Sunday, Jan. 14, 7 p.m. at Jammin' Java, 227 Maple Ave E., Vienna. She plays her new EP called "Dawn." Call 703-255-1566 or visit [www.roriemusic.com](http://www.roriemusic.com).

or visit [www.mcleancenter.org](http://www.mcleancenter.org). **The Nutcracker.** 2 and 7 p.m. at the Ernst Community Cultural Center, 8333 Little River Turnpike, Annandale. The Virginia Ballet Company is presenting its 68th annual production of "The Nutcracker." This is a full-length, professionally-staged ballet. \$30 for adults and \$20 for children, seniors and students at VABallet.org. Email [vbcoffice@vaballet.org](mailto:vbcoffice@vaballet.org) or call 703-249-8227.

## FRIDAY/DEC. 29

**Movie Double Feature.** 8 a.m.-6 p.m.-noon at The Old Firehouse, 1440 Chain Bridge Road, McLean. Road trip to AMC for two movies. Movie tickets and lunch are included in the fee. \$55/45 for McLean residents. Call 703-790-0123 or visit [www.mcleancenter.org](http://www.mcleancenter.org).

**The Nutcracker.** 2 and 7 p.m. at the Ernst Community Cultural Center, 8333 Little River Turnpike, Annandale. The Virginia Ballet Company is presenting its 68th annual production of "The Nutcracker." This is a full-length, professionally-staged ballet. \$30 for adults and \$20 for children, seniors and students at VABallet.org. Email [vbcoffice@vaballet.org](mailto:vbcoffice@vaballet.org) or call 703-249-8227.

## SATURDAY/JAN. 13

**Women at the Helm.** 10 a.m. at the Patrick Henry Library, 101 Maple Ave. E. Vienna Mayor Laurie DiRocco and Town Council Members Carey Sienicki and Linda Colbert will share

their experiences of leading the Town of Vienna. Visit [vienna-va.aauw.net/](http://vienna-va.aauw.net/).

## SUNDAY/JAN. 14

**MLK Speaker.** 2 p.m. at The Old Firehouse, 1440 Chain Bridge Road. Award-winning sports columnist William Rhoden, who will speak on the timely subject of "Activist Athletes." \$20, \$10 for McLean Community Center tax district residents. Visit [www.aldentheatre.org](http://www.aldentheatre.org) or call 703-790-0123.

**Rorie in Concert.** 7 p.m. at Jammin' Java, 227 Maple Ave E, Vienna. Local musician plays her new EP called "Dawn." Call 703-255-1566 or visit [www.roriemusic.com](http://www.roriemusic.com).

## WEDNESDAY/JAN. 17

**Art Workshop.** 10 a.m.-4 p.m. at the Vienna Arts Center, 115 Pleasant St. Artist Jacqueline Saunders is hosting a one day workshop. Call 703-319-3971 or visit [ViennaArtsSociety.org](http://ViennaArtsSociety.org).

## SATURDAY/JAN. 27

**Artists Reception.** 4-6 p.m. at Vienna Art Center, 115 Pleasant St., NW. Jazz It Up! Exhibit open until March 3. Free and open to the public. Call 703-319-3971 or visit [www.ViennaArtsSociety.org](http://www.ViennaArtsSociety.org).

## FRIDAY/FEB. 3

**Lera Lynn in Concert.** 7 p.m. at Jammin' Java, 227 Maple Ave E, Vienna. Call 703-255-1566 or visit [www.leralynn.com](http://www.leralynn.com).

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VDOT Northern Virginia District Office  
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Fairfax, VA 22030

If cancelled for inclement weather, the alternate date will be Friday, Jan. 5, 2018.

The Commonwealth Transportation Board invites you to comment on projects to be funded by a concession fee to the Commonwealth as part of the financial agreement with Express Mobility Partners for the I-66 Express Lanes Outside the Beltway project. At a future meeting, the CTB will vote to amend these projects in the Commonwealth's Six-Year Improvement Program.

Information related to the following projects will be available:

- Rt. 234/Balls Ford Road interchange and relocation in Prince William
- Virginia Railway Express Manassas Line upgrade - Phase I
- Balls Ford Road widening from Groveton Road to Route 234 Business (Sudley Road) in Prince William
- I-66 median widening at Route 29 for WMATA in Fairfax
- Commuter parking garage at Fairfax Corner
- George Synder Trail in Fairfax City
- Widen Jermantown Road bridge to four lanes over I-66 in Fairfax
- Western bus maintenance facility in Prince William
- East Falls Church Metro Bus bay expansion in Arlington
- Monument Drive bridge pedestrian improvements in Fairfax
- Rt. 50/Waples Mill Road intersection improvements in Fairfax
- Construct Poplar Tree Road bridge to four lanes over Route 28 in Fairfax
- Lee Highway pedestrian improvements in Fairfax
- Nutley Street SW multi-use trail to Metro in Vienna

If you cannot attend the hearing, email comments to [meetingcomments@vdot.virginia.gov](mailto:meetingcomments@vdot.virginia.gov) and reference "I-66 Concession Projects" in the subject line, or mail them to Maria Sinner at VDOT's District Office, 4975 Alliance Drive, Fairfax, VA 22030 through Jan. 8, 2018.

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### Announcements

### Legals

**ABC LICENSE**  
2T Restaurant LLC trading as 2T Restaurant, 262 Cedar Lane, Vienna, VA, 20164. The above establishment is applying to the VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF ALCOHOLIC BEVERAGE CONTROL (ABC) for a Mixed beverages on Premises + Wine & Beer on & off + Keg license to sell or manufacture alcoholic beverages. Yasser Meschkinfam President and CEO. NOTE: Objections to the issuance of this license must be submitted to ABC no later than 30 days from the publishing date of the first of two required newspaper legal notices. Objections should be registered at [www.abc.virginia.gov](http://www.abc.virginia.gov) or 800-552-3200.

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**THE CONNECTION NEWSPAPERS**

## NEWS



PHOTOS BY COLIN STOECKER/THE CONNECTION

**Sam Ellis, 16, junior at Marshall High School, from Vienna, a skate host, Alejandro Catacora, 16, sophomore at Albert Einstein High School, and Amir Sefat, manager on duty Saturday, George Mason University senior, pictured at the ice skating rink at Tysons Corner Center Saturday, Dec. 16.**

# Holiday on Ice

## Tysons Corner ice skating attracts people from all over the area.

BY COLIN STOECKER  
THE CONNECTION

Saturday Dec. 16, the ice skating rink at Tysons Corner Center in the outdoor bridge area by Lord and Taylor and Shake Shack was buzzing with ice-skaters of all ages and skill levels. This is the fifth year that the rink has been in operation at Tysons Corner, adding a holiday feel to the shopping mall.

Amir Sefat, manager on duty Saturday, and George Mason University senior enjoys working at the ice skating rink because he plays hockey.

"It beats being inside and working in the mall all holiday season," said Sefat. "This ice skating rink is unique because it's a frozen outdoor pond on a bridge in a plaza. There's a lot more that goes into it than meets the eye," said Sefat.

According to Sefat, the rink took a few months to set up because of cooling pipes under the ice which help to keep the rink frozen even during warmer weather. The rink was finished and opened to skaters on Nov. 27 this year.

"Ice skating is different from the regular ground, you have freedom and it feels like you are flying," said Sefat. "The reception has been outstanding this year. We have had a lot of people, grandparents and kids as well. We even had to get special tiny size shoes for little ones," said Sefat.

The ice skating rink also boasts a Barrel and Bushel restaurant which serves food and a full bar for relaxing before or after ice



**Tiffany Lin and her mother Wanda Lin were enjoying the ice skating rink at Tysons Corner Center on Saturday, Dec. 16.**

skating.

Skate hosts in red jackets also patrol the ice helping those who have slipped and fallen. "I make sure all of their shoes are tied and if they've fallen that they're alright," said Alejandro Catacora, 16, sophomore at Albert Einstein High School.

Rennie Zhang and Michelle Li of Tysons Corner, were enjoying the ice skating rink between shopping at the mall.

"It's my first time and it's interesting so far. It's not as scary as I thought and a lot of fun and I'm really enjoying it!" said Li.

Emerald Mathis, 17, homeschooled from Reston, was also working as a skate host Saturday. Between polishing the glass on the edge of the rink, he commented on what it's like to work at an ice skating rink during the holiday season.

"I wanted to work here last year," said Mathis. "As a skate host, people are going to fall, but it's about making sure that they get up OK!" he said.

# BULLETIN

Submit civic/community announcements at [ConnectionNewspapers.com/Calendar](http://ConnectionNewspapers.com/Calendar). Photos and artwork welcome. Deadline is Thursday at noon, at least two weeks before event.

## HOLIDAY SOBER-RIDE

**Free Sober Rides.** The annual Holiday SoberRide program will operate 8 p.m.-4 a.m. each night from Friday, Dec. 15, 2017-Monday, Jan. 1, 2018. Area residents age 21 and older celebrating with alcohol may download Lyft to their phones, then enter the code in the app's "Promo" section to receive their no cost (up to \$15) safe transportation home. WRAP's weekly Holiday SoberRide promo codes will be posted at 2 p.m. on Dec. 15, Dec. 23 and Dec. 31 on [www.SoberRide.com](http://www.SoberRide.com).

## THURSDAY/DEC. 21

**Caregivers Support Group.** 10-11:30 a.m. at UUCF Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Fairfax - Program Building, 2709 Hunter Mill Road, Oakton. Shepherd's Center of Oakton-Vienna Caregivers Support Group is held the first and third Thursdays of every month, year round. Call 703-821-6838 or email [jtarr5@verizon.net](mailto:jtarr5@verizon.net) for more.

## TUESDAY/JAN. 9

**English as a Second Language Classes.** 7-8 p.m. at St. Mark Christian Formation Center, 9972 Vale Road, Vienna. Come help 150+ adult learners master the English language, prepare for American citizenship, learn to converse fluently in English, improve their writing skills, and integrate into the local community. Call 703-980-9380, email [stmarksesl@gmail.com](mailto:stmarksesl@gmail.com), or visit [www.stmarksesl.org](http://www.stmarksesl.org).

## THURSDAY/JAN. 11

**English as a Second Language Classes.** 7-8 p.m. at St. Mark Christian Formation Center, 9972 Vale Road, Vienna. Come help 150+ adult learners master the English language, prepare for American citizenship, learn to converse fluently in English, improve their writing skills, and integrate into the local community. Call 703-980-9380, email [stmarksesl@gmail.com](mailto:stmarksesl@gmail.com), or visit [www.stmarksesl.org](http://www.stmarksesl.org).

## SUPPORT GROUPS

**Are You A Caregiver? Shepherd's Center of Oakton Vienna Caregivers' Support Group** takes place first & third Thursday of each month. February 2nd and 16th, 2017 from 10:00 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. Join us at the Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Fairfax (UUCF) - Program Building, 2709 Hunter Mill Rd, Oakton, VA. For more info contact facilitator, Jack Tarr, 703-821-6838 [jtarr5@verizon.net](mailto:jtarr5@verizon.net).

**Haven of Northern Virginia Support Group.** 703-941-7000, [www.havenofnova.org](http://www.havenofnova.org) or [havenofnova@verizon.net](mailto:havenofnova@verizon.net).

**Virginia Chronic Pain Support Group** Meets from 1:30 - 3 p.m. the 2nd Wednesday of each month at Kaplan Center for Integrative Medicine, 6829 Elm St., Suite 300, McLean. Group leader, Jodi Brayton, LCSW. 703-532-4892.

## LETTERS

FROM PAGE 4

the U.S. are 12 times closer than the specific gun homicide rate given in Mr. Nelson's letter. In other words, British criminals substitute knives or clubs for guns to kill their victims — cold comfort there.

Housebreaking is far more common in Britain than in the U.S. Could this be due to the deterrent effect of widespread gun ownership? Surveys of violent felons reveal that they are far more fearful of facing an armed resident than the highly unlikely chance that a cop will appear during the crime.

**Michael Crawford**  
Great Falls

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## "Suit Yourself, Biscuit"



By KENNETH B. LOURIE

Talk about a superfluous statement. I was asleep in bed and awoke to find one of our five cats, Biscuit, the oldest at 11+, lying sphinx-like on the front right of our bed. Though it was dark, I could see in his yellow eyes that he was awake.

Wanting to feel a cat against my body, I said, "Biscuit, come here. Come lie against my chest." No response so I repeated the request. This time with a bit more conviction: "Biscuit, come here. I want to feel you next to me." Again, no response. In fact, no reaction whatsoever. So I muttered, without thinking even: "OKAY, Biscuit, suit yourself."

And then I laughed. Of course he's going to suit himself. That's what cats do. I should be grateful he didn't jump off the bed. After all, he was minding his own business.

And that business is the entire philosophy of the feline species captured in two words. If any of you has ever owned a cat and been sensitive to and appreciative of their differences with the canine population, cats don't really come when you call them. Nor do they respond to a million other things you ask of them. If you understand and embrace that behavior, you'll likely begin to see this non-responsiveness as part of their charm.

However, when they do come when you call them, or when they climb uninvited onto your chest while lying in bed or snuggle with you on the couch; oh, how special you feel. And if you don't feel put upon or tolerated and can instead savor the uniqueness of their knead (and do everything you can to encourage its repetition), then you can indeed find pleasure and purpose in that moment, rare though it may be — or maybe not.

Accepting the parameters of the relationship with your cat, and managing your expectations, will go a long way toward understanding what your cat is able to give you. And what cats can give you is companionship and love — on their terms of course. The mere fact that Biscuit is lying on the bed should be enough to make me happy. Expecting that he would rise due to my beck and call, at night, especially while he's cat-napping is unreasonable on my part. Biscuit is not being difficult in the least. He is simply adhering to a non-responsive-type behavior that generations of cats — and generations of cat owners, should be accustomed to, not questioned or even curious about.

As an extraordinarily experienced cat owner (almost 40 years), I should have known better. Yet I couldn't resist the temptation/control the urge to give Biscuit (a cat) the chance to change the course of presumptive cat history and come to me when I asked. The problem is, once in a blue moon — or was that a red moon (it certainly appeared to be above the fold on the front page of The Washington Post the other day), cats will break with historical convention and respond/react/reply in kind with both word and deed. They'll come, they'll snuggle, they'll talk, they'll nuzzle, they might even lick. In fact, they'll do everything they can to endear themselves to you.

But it doesn't happen often or rather it doesn't happen consistently. Yet it remains the goal of every committed (or rather should be) cat owner to make every attempt to induce their cats to succumb to their cat-seducing charms. Like right now, Twinkle, our white, five-and-half-years-old domestic medium hair, is doing everything she can to get my attention. She's walking back and forth across my note pad (as I'm trying to write; I'm busy), she's rubbing her head against my face and using the top of my pen as some sort of head scratcher, she's lying on her left side with as many as four paws outstretched across my left arm as I use it to block her advance and she's talking non-stop.

She's being such a pain, but you have to love them. If you can't appreciate their untimely intrusions and instead expect some kind of predictable dog-like obedience, you need more than "The Cat Whisperer," you need "The Cat Screamer," because it's NOT HAPPENING.

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

# Finding Peace and Joy

Relieving stress and finding meaning in the holiday season.

BY MARILYN CAMPBELL

**W**hen artist Kathryn Coneway is feeling overwhelmed by the stress of the holiday season, she heads outside to find peace and calm in nature.

"I get easily overwhelmed by the crowded parking lots and busy stores," she said. "When I'm feeling overwhelmed, I'll go to Huntley Meadows Park and walk around. The beauty of nature restores me. You're with other people when you're there, but there's still solitude."

From those who are dashing to finish holiday shopping and those who are financially strapped to those grieving a loss or dreading dealing with strained familial relationships, the stretch of time between Thanksgiving and Christmas is often hectic and emotionally charged. Recharging and infusing the holidays with joy and peace might mean redefining the holiday season.

"Research shows increased happiness after thinking of three good things that happened to you today and what caused them," said Jerome Short, Ph.D., associate professor of psychology at George Mason University. "Also, people report improved mood from doing five kind acts in a day, expressing gratitude, pursuing important goals, and playing sports."

An evening of music and quiet creativity is one method that Elizabeth Rees, associate rector

at Saint Aidan's Episcopal Church in Alexandria uses to recharge during the holiday season. The event called "Healing Arts" is held at the Center for Spiritual Deepening at St. Aidan's. "Sometimes for me, meditative art helps me to get into a different space," she said. "And with instrumental cello and guitar music in the background, it [is] beautiful."

Visual imagery is another technique Rees employs. "I went to a... prayer-yoga-dance gathering this week, and [the instructor] had us physically pretend to pick up things that we want to let go of or that are weighing us down to place on an imaginary fire," she said. "I loved the imagery: my burdens and distractions going up in smoke along with my prayers rising to God to make space in me for something new."

Coneway uses the season's natural surrounding to inspire her art, which is another way in which she finds joy and relaxation. "The gift of this time of day is the display of light and colors of early morning and evening," she said. "I encourage families to gather around the table and [create] art together. Whether its parents addressing Christmas cards while children are drawing or making a collage out of wrapping paper or tissue paper, I encourage families to work on something together."

Serving others and expressing gratitude are research-driven techniques for finding happiness says Dr. Lois T. Stover, Ed.D., dean, School of Education and Human Services at Marymount University.

"Make holiday cards and send them out. It's fun to drop a word of kindness anonymously to someone in the neighborhood and then tell that person to pass along the idea, leaving words of kindness or gratitude themselves for someone else," she said. "Create an 'I am

thankful for ...' wall and cover it with sticky notes that complete the sentence as new thoughts come to mind each time you pass by."

There's plenty of holiday joy that comes without a price tag, suggests Stover. "Drive through various neighborhoods just after dark and exclaim 'Oooh - aah' over homes or other buildings that have particularly fun



**Artist Kathryn Coneway and her family spend time in Huntley Meadows Park when they're feeling overwhelmed by the holiday rush.**

PHOTO COURTESY OF KATHRYN CONEWAY



**Richard Sylvain, Pat Keithly and Eileen Myers attended a "Healing Arts" event at the Center for Spiritual Deepening at St. Aidan's Episcopal Church in Alexandria. Such activities can bring peace and joy during a hectic holiday season.**

**"Moments of quiet and rest and being able to be present in the moment help me to get through the frenzy."**

— Elizabeth Rees, Associate Rector, Saint Aidan's Episcopal Church

or beautiful displays of lights," said Stover. "Listen to holiday music in a variety of genres and make play lists of favorites. Sing along loudly. It's hard to feel down while belting out anything from 'Frosty the Snowman' to 'Joy to the World.'"

For those looking to maintain the religious meaning of the season, Rees suggests daily devotions sent electronically. "I've found

some wonderful daily prayers that arrive each day by email. Just a minute or two of focus on what is deep and joyful and holy help center me for the day," she said. "For me, Ignatian prayer has been speaking to me lately, imagining myself into the stories of scripture. Moments of quiet and rest and being able to be present in the moment help me to get through the frenzy."

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