

Great Falls CONNECTION

Spencer Hedges of Great Falls on a trip to Japan. He was recently admitted to study at Oxford University in the United Kingdom.

Heading to Oxford

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JANUARY 10-16, 2018

ONLINE AT WWW.CONNECTIONNEWSPAPERS.COM

COMMUNITY

James G. Lewis to Speak at Great Falls Senior Center Event

Great Falls Senior Center (GFSC) has announced James G. Lewis, a ninth generation Virginian native to Northern Virginia area and a graduate of George Mason University, as their guest speaker. The title of his talk will be "Confederate Cavalry General Jeb Stuart, June 27, 1983." His interest piqued some years ago by some unnatural looking "trenches" in his backyard. The trenches turned out to be Confederate earthworks, as documented by the Fairfax County Archeology Department. He became a core member of the Hunter Mill Defense

League (HMDL) which was researching/creating its own DVD about the Hunter Mill Road corridor during the American Civil War. The outcome was an award-winning documentary, "Danger Between the Lines," shown on PBS TV. He compiled the "Hunter Mill Road Civil War Self-Guided Tour" and co-authored "Forgotten Roads of the Hunter Mill Road Corridor" and "Sunstroke & Ankle-Deep Mud." He took a trip in 2013 to northern France and created several acclaimed slide-oriented presentations, including "What Our Boys Faced on D-DAY,"

"D-Day+1 Thru the Battle of the Bulge," and "Japan's Biggest Secret During World War II." Lewis was awarded the "Lord Fairfax" designation by the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors. He remains active through his association with the Bull Run Civil War Round Table, research projects, lectures and local historical bus tours.

The Jan. 16 event will be held at St. Francis Episcopal Church, 9220 Georgetown Pike, Great Falls from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. and includes lunch; contributions for lunch would be welcomed. Reservations

are required, contact Polly Fitzgerald at 703-759-4345 or pollyf1t@verizon.net. Visit www.gfseniors.org.

Give Back initiative this month is toothbrushes and toothpaste.

The sponsor is Tribute at One Loudon Assisted Living and Memory Care located at 20618 Easthampton Plaza, Ashburn, Virginia 20147. Also, renew 2018 membership (dues of \$15 per person) to receive these monthly letters. Applications will be at the Hospitality Desk, or visit www.gfseniors.org and pay with PayPal.



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- 4th of July Parade**
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- Halloween Spooktacular**
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Photos by Walt Lawrence

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- River Nail and Spa.....703-746-8886
- Robert Mobley, AIA Architect.....703-759-1927
- School of Theatrical Dance.....703-759-5652
- Spectrum Property Management....703-307-2965
- Village Centre Mgmt Office.....703-759-2485
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FAITH NOTES

Faith Notes are for announcements and events in the faith community. Send to north@connectionnewspapers.com. Deadline is Friday at noon.

St. Francis Episcopal Church, 9220 Georgetown Pike, Great Falls, has Sunday services at 8 – Holy Eucharist Rite I and 10 a.m. – Holy Eucharist Rite II with music. 703-759-2082.

The Jewish Social Services Agency (JSSA) offers a wide variety of support groups for those with emotional, social, and physical challenges. www.jssa.org/growth-learning.

McLean Bible Church. Fitness Class at Body and Soul Fitness. Gain balance, energy and strength at 10 a.m. Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays. Free childcare for registered students. Email bodyandsoul@mcleanbible.org.

Haven of Northern Virginia provides support, compassion, information and resources to the bereaved and seriously ill. To become a Haven volunteer, please call 703-941-7000 to request an orientation. Volunteers must complete a 30-hour training and commit to one year of service answering Haven phones (2.5 hours weekly). Next training is scheduled for fall 2017.

Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Fairfax, 2709 Hunter Mill Road, Oakton, offers the Religious Exploration program for all children, from pre-K toddlers through high school seniors, emphasizing exploration of all religious traditions while developing a personal spiritual path. The program offers classes on Saturday afternoons and Sunday mornings. 703-281-4230.

Trinity United Methodist Church, 1205 Dolley Madison Blvd., McLean. Sunday worship services are at 8:30 and 10:30 a.m. Sunday School for young adults follows the 10:30 a.m. worship services and for children at 9:30 a.m. Youth Group for grades 7-12 meets Sundays at 5 p.m. A 20-minute service of Holy Communion is held each Wednesday at noon. 703-356-3312 or umtrinity.org.

Passages DivorceCare. For those experiencing the pain of separation or divorce, the caring community at Vienna Presbyterian Church offers Passages DivorceCare. This 15-week program offers a path toward healing. Vienna Presbyterian Church is located on the corner of Maple Avenue (Rt. 123) and Park Street in Vienna. Cost to cover materials is \$20, scholarships available. For more information or to register call 703-938-9050, go to www.viennapres.org, or send an email to Passages@ViennaPres.org.



Jeanne Lavelle of Fairfax, with the assistance of interpreter Jessica Holt, addresses the Fairfax delegation to the General Assembly. Lavelle advocated for funding to ensure that deaf and hearing impaired children are not left “functionally illiterate” because they are not given the opportunity to learn language skills.



PHOTOS BY ANDREA WORKER/THE CONNECTION

Theresa Sheipe of Fairfax was one of many members of the “More Recess for Virginians” group who either spoke or supported from the audience in favor of protecting and expanding recess in Virginia schools.

Citizens Shape Assembly Agenda

Fairfax delegation to General Assembly hears from public before heading to Richmond.

BY ANDREA WORKER
THE CONNECTION

The 2018 Regular Session of the Virginia General Assembly convenes on Wednesday, Jan. 10. Before the state senators and delegates head off for Richmond, many of the Fairfax County contingent met with constituents in a Saturday, Dec. 6, public hearing at the County Government Center.

More than 100 registered speakers and their supporters braved single-digit temperatures for the opportunity to tell their elected representatives just what they hoped to see included in the upcoming legislative agendas.

Fairfax County Board of Supervisors Chairman Sharon Bulova welcomed the delegation, and then began the hearing as “Speaker # 1,” representing the interests of the entire county.

Funding for the educational needs of the county was first on Bulova’s ask list — a theme that was often repeated during the marathon five hour-plus hearing. She followed that request with an appeal for funding for WMATA, citing that reliable and safe public transportation is critical to the economic health of the region.

THE GROUP “More Recess for Virginians” came out in full, green t-shirted force, asking the delegation to support legislation that would include recess as part of the “instructional hours” in elementary schools. Recess supporter Theresa Sheipe from Fairfax asked the legislators to provide the School Board more flexibility to better serve the children, and Shannon Hamilton, Ph.D., a neuroscientist from Alexandria, added “Science is on the side of recess. We hope you are, too.”

Other topics included concerns for the environment and climate change impact, with many arguing for renewable energy

sources, and several opposing what they consider the “influence of Dominion Energy” on Virginia policies. The Faith Alliance for Climate Solutions, 350 Fairfax, and The Climate Reality Project put forth speakers representing their organizations, among the dozen or so individuals who also spoke on the issue.

Social services advocates were also well represented. Speakers from the Fairfax-Falls Church Community Services Board, The ARC of Northern Virginia, Fairfax County Community Action Advisory Board, Northern Virginia Family Services, and Social Action Linking Together, along with numerous individuals, like Jeanne Lavelle with the Virginia Association for the Deaf, urged the delegation to consider the needs of the community’s less fortunate and the more vulnerable.

Several of the social service organizations also supported the expansion of Medicaid in the Commonwealth, as did speakers from the county government employees union, SEIU Virginia 512. State Sen. Dick Saslaw (D-35) responded to the “expansionists” that they wouldn’t find many dissenters on that topic among the legislators on the dais.

Advocates for stronger gun safety laws, bipartisan redistricting and voter protection, the decriminalization of marijuana, banning solitary confinement in prisons, funding of judgeships, immigrant support, and providing more powers to the civilian police force review panel and auditor all had their turn



State Sen. Chap Petersen (D-34) meets with Bill Barfield, second vice president, Legislative Committee co-chair for the Fairfax County Federation of Citizens Associations. Barfield, a mathematician who lives in Fairfax, and Tim Thompson, the Federation’s president, presented their representatives with a list of 11 legislative issues for consideration.

at the microphone.

In past years, citizens had more opportunity to talk with their representatives after the hearing, but the length of this year’s event saw several of the legislators called to other duties before the close, and even the majority of the citizen activists did not make it to the moment when Saslaw called “time.”

A HANDFUL of the delegation did linger, including state Sen. Chap Peterson (D-34), state Sen. Barbara Favola (D-31), and Del. Jennifer Boysko (D-86).

Petersen took a few moments to chat with his constituent Bill Barfield, who had testified and presented the legislative issues put forth by the Fairfax County Federation of Citizens Association.

Boysko will be sponsoring the Dignity Act this session, and supporting in-state tuition legislation, as part of her agenda.

Favola provided information on her 2018



State Sen. Barbara Favola (D-31) admits she has her work cut out for her in the 2018 Regular Session of the Virginia Legislature. She’s tackling Paid Family Leave, Gun Safety, Domestic Violence Prevention, Medicaid Expansion, K-12 education reforms and improvements, and Equal Taxing Authority for Counties, to name a few.

Legislative Agenda.

High on the list is working to get counties the same taxing authority as cities. “Counties are providing the same services as cities, and the discrepancy in taxing authority is really unfair,” she said.

Paid Family Leave, Gun Safety, K-12 Education reforms and enhancements are also in her sights. Favola admits that some of her proposed legislation requires taking some “big steps,” but that on many of the issues, “many small steps have already been taken, so there’s reason to be optimistic.”

To track what state senators and delegates are up to in the General Assembly, to contact them, or to track the progress of proposed legislation, visit www.virginiageneralassembly.gov.

Pulling Legal Status from Local Salvadorans

Bad for communities, bad for the economy, bad for the families, and no upside.

It's going to hurt right here in Northern Virginia.

As this administration continues its persecution against immigrants, it will move to end protected status for more than 200,000 Salvadorans, tens of thousands of whom live among us as neighbors, coworkers, friends, business owners, homeowners.

These neighbors, Salvadorans who came here in the wake of terrible natural disaster and political unrest, have been living and working here legally since 2001 at least. Temporary Protected Status was given to approximately 217,000 Salvadoran immigrants living in the United States at the time of the disasters.

Their families have added almost as many U.S.-born children. They are intertwined with naturalized citizens and other legal residents from their country, with the withdrawal of protected status affecting a community far larger than the TPS recipients. These communities are concentrated, intensifying the overall impact, and more live here in the D.C. suburbs than

anywhere else.

On average, Salvadoran TPS recipients have been in the U.S. for 21 years; one-third have mortgages. These are people who have had legal work permits, who suddenly will not be able to work legally here. Their mortgages, and the mortgages of people who depend on them, will be at risk. Removing the ability of recipients to work legally will increase the risk of foreclosure, with negative economic impact across communities.

Salvadorans with protected status pay sales and property taxes. The communities they live in will be damaged. Their children will be more at risk. Our economy will be damaged.

THE SALVADORAN IMMIGRANT population is most concentrated in the Washington, D.C. metropolitan area, where 165,000 El Salvador-born residents make up 2.9 percent of the population.

Salvadorans in the United States sent \$3.6 billion home to El Salvador in 2012, 16.5 percent of that country's GDP.

Virginia has nearly 45,000 El Salvadoran TPS

residents, almost all in Northern Virginia, and concentrated in particular neighborhoods. Arlington has identified just four census tracts with more than 1,000 Salvadoran residents each (two with more than 1,400). In 2015, the most common birthplace for the foreign-born residents of Virginia was El Salvador, accounting for 96,515 Virginia residents. Fairfax County in 2010 was home to 43,566 Salvadorans.

Analysis shows that when Salvadoran, Honduran, and Haitian workers with TPS are removed from the labor force, the United States will lose \$45.2 billion in gross domestic product (GDP) over the next decade, according to Immigrant Legal Resource Center. When TPS holders lose their work authorization, it will result in a \$6.9 billion reduction to Social Security and Medicare contributions over a decade, as calculated by the ILRC.

All of that shows why this will damage communities and the economy. It says nothing about the harm to families. But the harm is great.

— MARY KIMM

MKIMM@CONNECTIONNEWSPAPERS.COM

Sources: American Progress, Pew Hispanic, Center for Immigration Studies, U.S. Census, Immigrant Legal Resource Center, local government demographic data.

Comstock's Report: Highlights of 2017

BY BARBARA COMSTOCK
U.S. REPRESENTATIVE (R-IO)



Happy New Year! 2017 was a busy year and I wanted to provide highlights on a wide range of issues we addressed. My staff and I have met with thousands of constituents, local elected officials, businesses and advocacy groups and have had hundreds of meetings throughout our District with constituents to find critical solutions to problems that affect us all. Some of our highlights:

Tax Relief for Working Families and Businesses

In December, Congress passed the *Tax Cuts and Jobs Act* a pro-growth, pro-jobs, pro-family tax relief package that featured doubling the child tax credit to \$2,000 that I advocated for, as well as lowering personal and business tax rates so hardworking families and businesses will have a healthier economy. With this historic tax cut and the 14 regulatory reform bills that were signed into law this year, we have helped unleash strong economic growth, and we are now heading into the third consecutive quarter of above 3 percent growth. The regulatory reform bills are estimated to save \$3.7 billion. You can read more about the details of the tax cuts on my website at Comstock.House.Gov.

Strengthening Our Defense and National Security

Congress passed the *National Defense Authorization Act* (NDAA) for FY 2018 in December. The NDAA provides much-needed funding for our troops to carry out their missions, including a 2.4 percent pay increase for our troops; \$28 billion to address readiness concerns; and \$8 billion in funding for cyber operations; and support for PTSD. The NDAA also continues, via my amendment, to provide support for STARBASE, a STEM education program that serves 10th District students.

Leading in the Battle Against Sexual Harassment

The House of Representatives passed my bipartisan resolution to combat sexual harassment in Congress that mandates educating everyone, from Members to the interns, on preventing sexual harassment in Congress and having zero tolerance. I am also working on legislation that will fundamentally reform the outdated 1995 *Congressional Accountability Act* so it protects victims, brings disclosure to the process, and stops taxpayer money from being used for sexual harassment claims. I have also co-sponsored legislation that requires disclosure of any members who made sexual harassment settlements in the past.

Supporting Our Firefighters and First Responders

In December, Congress passed my legislation that ensures our nation's firefighters and paramedics will have the tools and training they need to fight and prevent fires. Loudoun County Fire and Rescue Department Chief Keith Brower praised the legislation, "These programs greatly assist localities in the areas of firefighter safety, fire and life safety education and improved resourcing for tactical fire operations...This bill is tremendous for career and volunteer firefighters alike." The President signed this bill into law last week.

Cracking Down on MS-13

The House of Representatives passed my bipartisan legislation, the *Criminal Alien Gang Member Removal Act*, which will provide additional tools to our law enforcement to combat MS-13. This legislation identifies gang membership and participation in gangs as grounds for inadmissibility and removability from the country. My legislation for additional funding to regional task forces like the Northern Virginia Regional Gang Task Force also advanced through the Judiciary Committee and should soon be voted for on the House floor.

SEE COMSTOCK, PAGE 10

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LETTER

Urging Congress to Protect EPA Funding

To the Editor:

President Trump and some in Congress propose to slash the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) budget and weaken some of the agency's tools that keep our air, water and natural resources clean and healthy.

When Congress disables EPA and cuts funding, Congress is undermining efforts that help clean up our local waterways. For example, thanks to strong clean water standards, the Potomac River's health is improving, submerged aquatic vegetation is returning and some fish population trends are encouraging. Many species of waterfowl winter on the river and bald eagle numbers are climbing. Audubon has recognized a section of the Potomac River southeast of Washington, D.C., as an Important Bird Area because of the many species of waterfowl that winter on the river and the high and increasing numbers of Bald Eagles, and we appreciate EPA's work in cleaning up the river.

EPA has helped improve Northern Virginia water quality with Chesapeake Bay Small Watershed Grants. Some examples:

- ❖ The Northern Virginia Regional Commission received a \$164,637 grant to stabilize and protect approximately 800 feet of eroding shoreline along the Potomac River in Leesylvania State Park with a living shoreline. The project also restored .64 acres of riparian buffer and tidal marsh.

- ❖ Arlington County received an \$80,000 grant to expand incentives for private property owners to install innovative stormwater practices on their property to impede runoff.

- ❖ Longfellow Middle School in Falls Church used a \$20,000 grant to install a rainwater harvest system and rain gardens at the school.

As Congress wrestles with funding bills and struggles to keep the government running, Congress needs to remember that EPA is not a centralized, out-of-touch agency in the nation's capital, but an agency that reaches into local communities and helps clean up local waterways.

The Audubon Society of Northern Virginia calls on the Virginia Congressional delegation to protect EPA funding for cleaning up our local waterways. We've made too much progress to slide backward now.

Carl Kikuchi, President
Audubon Society of Northern Virginia

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REAL ESTATE

McLean, Great Falls Market: Strong in 2017

BY KAREN BRISCOE



The number of real estate transactions in McLean and Great Falls closed out the year in 2017 11 percent greater than in 2016. In comparison to the 2007 market just one decade ago, the number is up almost 30 percent. The last peak year for Northern Virginia real estate was 2007. All price segments performed better or remained steady in 2017 compared to 2016 and the benchmark year of 2007. This is good news as we look towards the 2018 spring season.

The most significant increases in number of sales not surprisingly occurred in the lower price brackets. Homes priced under \$1.25 million for the zip codes 22101, 22102 and 22066 comprised the majority of the gains. The under \$750,000 is predominately condos, townhomes, smaller single-family homes or lot/land where the existing home is torn down and a new home is constructed. The lower brackets, which represent 72 percent of the market, comprises three price ranges: under \$750,000; \$750,000 to \$1 million and \$1 million to \$1.25 million.

The move-up buyer in McLean and Great Falls includes the next three price brackets

which are: \$1.25 million to \$2 million; \$2 million to \$3 million and \$3 million plus. The market improved the most for luxury properties over \$3 million.

Home Sellers in the area experienced in many cases the "best of times" market conditions in 2017. As we move into the new year, there are strong indications

that homes priced well and in good condition will sell for solid prices. Should demand continue to remain strong relative to supply, some market segments may experience price appreciation.

Purchasing in an up-market cycle frequently proves advantageous over time and gives area Home Buyers the confidence to make a move. In many cases there is an opportunity for the great arbitrage of selling well in the lower price points and buying up well in the upper brackets.

Though Northern Virginia is presently in wintertime, the spring market is just around the corner. Start now to beat the rush!

Karen Briscoe with HBC Group at Keller Williams is an active and experienced Realtor in the Northern Virginia marketplace. Briscoe, alongside her partner Lizzy Conroy and team, works with sellers, buyers, investors and builders in all price ranges. www.HBCGroupKW.com, 703-734-0192, Homes@HBCGroupKW.com.

McLean & Great Falls Annual Market Analysis of Home Sales (Based on Final Closed Price):

2017 compared to 2016 and 2007						
2017 Total Sales: 1,212						
Zip Code	>\$3 Mil	\$2-3 Mil	\$1.25-2 Mil	\$1-\$1.25 Mil	\$750k-\$1 Mil	<\$750k
22101	21	38	141	93	177	75
22102	10	17	44	31	43	275
22066	5	13	54	55	95	25
	Total: 36	Total: 68	Total: 239	Total: 179	Total: 315	Total: 375
	Combined Total Upper Brackets: 343			Combined Total Lower Brackets: 869		
2016 Total Sales: 1,090						
Zip Code	>\$3 Mil	\$2-3 Mil	\$1.25-2 Mil	\$1-\$1.25 Mil	\$750k-\$1 Mil	<\$750k
22101	14	32	120	80	152	73
22102	6	15	43	30	58	223
22066	3	17	63	44	80	37
	Total: 23	Total: 64	Total: 226	Total: 154	Total: 290	Total: 333
	Combined Total Upper Brackets: 313			Combined Total Lower Brackets: 777		
2007 Total Sales: 932						
Zip Code	>\$3 Mil	\$2-3 Mil	\$1.25-2 Mil	\$1-\$1.25 Mil	\$750k-\$1 Mil	<\$750k
22101	6	20	85	54	128	129
22102	13	15	38	16	33	184
22066	9	18	74	30	47	33
	Total: 28	Total: 53	Total: 197	Total: 100	Total: 208	Total: 346
	Combined Total Upper Brackets: 278			Combined Total Lower Brackets: 654		



FILE PHOTO BY STEVE HIBBARD/THE CONNECTION

Fluffy Thoughts of McLean (from left): Jordan Schneier and LaFayette Alston at the 2017 McLean Chocolate Festival.

Chocolate Festival Returns to McLean

The seventh Annual McLean Chocolate Festival will be held on Sunday, Jan. 28, 2018, at McLean High School, 1633 Davidson Road, McLean. The Festival will run between 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. Festival visitors will have the opportunity to taste the specialties of 17 area chocolatiers (more may be added), and enjoy fun for the entire family.

This year the Children's Game Room features the bluegrass music of local artist Mike

Mitchell, popular with all ages at last year's festival. Admission is \$2, children 3 and under are free. Come early for the best selection of chocolates.

The McLean Chocolate Festival is sponsored by and is a fundraiser for the Rotary Club of McLean, with proceeds benefiting many local charitable organizations. For additional information, including an updated list of vendors, visit www.mcleanchocolatefestival.com.

Urgent Call for Blood and Platelet Donations

This January, National Blood Donor Month, the American Red Cross has an urgent need for blood and platelet donors of all blood types to make an appointment to give now and help address a winter blood donation shortage.

Severe winter weather has had a tremendous impact on blood donations already this year, with more than 150 blood drives forced to cancel causing over 5,500 blood and platelet donations to go uncollected. This is in addition to seasonal illnesses, such as the flu, and hectic holiday schedules collectively contributing to more than 28,000 fewer donations than what was needed in November and December.

How to help

Eligible donors can find a blood or platelet donation opportunity and schedule an appointment to donate by using the free Blood Donor App, visiting redcrossblood.org or calling 1-800-RED CROSS (1-800-733-2767). Donation appointments and completion of a RapidPass are encouraged to help speed up the donation process. RapidPass lets donors complete the pre-donation reading and answer the health history ques-

tionnaire online, on the day of their donation, by visiting redcrossblood.org/rapidpass from the convenience of a mobile device or computer, or through the Blood Donor App.

Upcoming blood donation opportunities Jan. 8-31

HERNDON

Jan. 11, 9 a.m.-2 p.m., Brandywine Realty Trust, 13825 Sunrise Valley Drive, Suite 250
Jan. 16, 8 a.m.-2 p.m., St. Timothy's Episcopal Church, 432 Van Buren St.

MCLEAN

Jan. 29, 1 p.m.-5 p.m., Federal Highway Administration, 6300 Georgetown Pike

RESTON

Jan. 12, 8 a.m.-1:30 p.m., U.S. Geological Survey, 12201 Sunrise Valley Drive
Jan. 24, 10 a.m.-3 p.m., Reston Library, 11925 Bowman Towne Drive
Jan. 24, 3 p.m.-8 p.m., St. Thomas a Becket RCC, 1421 Wiehle Ave.

FALLS CHURCH

Jan. 10, 8:30 a.m.-1 p.m., City of Falls Church Community Center, 223 Little Falls St.
Jan. 16, 9:30 a.m.-3 p.m., Keller Williams Realty, 105 W. Broad St.

2018 Color of the Year: Ultra Violet

Mixed reactions from local tastemakers who offer design ideas.

BY MARILYN CAMPBELL

It's a moment that interior designers anticipate all year: the announcement of the Pantone Color of the Year. Ultra Violet is the selection for 2018, and local designers are giving it a mixed reception.

"Interiors have gone so neutral, I look forward to suggesting... Ultra Violet, a color [that] can bridge warm and cool gray neutrals," said Moira Denson, interior designer and assistant professor of Interior Design at Marymount University.

"There's nothing subtle about Ultra Violet. It's one-dimensional and difficult to decorate with, except in very small doses," said interior designer Annie Elliott of Annie Elliott Interiors and Bossy Color. "I find the color loud. 'Look at me!' It screams."

The selection by Pantone, the self-described global authority on color, is intended to be a harbinger of the hue that will be on trend in the coming year. The organization's color gurus spend about nine months observing trends in industries ranging from film and entertainment to art and fashion.

This year's pick can add a burst of vibrancy to a home's interior in impermanent ways, advises interior designer Cathleen Gruver of Gruver Cooley. "Some quick easy ways to use the color are adding throw pillows, which are relatively inexpensive and easy to trade out," she said. "Accent plates on a dining table are an option for those who may not want to commit in their home."

"Use this color in extremely small doses," added Elliott. "If you really love this color, I suggest using it as part of a larger pattern. Don't buy a solid purple pillow; choose a pretty floral that has some Ultra Violet in it."

For those with less trepidation about Ultra Violet, interior designer Sarah Glenn of Braswell Design + Build in Alexandria, said, "The powder room is a great place to incorporate deep colors in interesting ways. Install a graphic violet wallpaper behind a bright white pedestal sink, or paint the ceiling a high gloss violet to reflect the decorative lighting in the room."

Dark and dramatic cabinetry, which Glenn says is trending this year, offers an-



PHOTO COURTESY OF MOIRA DENSON

"Ultra violet sets a mood that allows all my landscapes to feel grounded," says artist Moira Denson, who is an assistant professor of Interior Design at Marymount University

other use for the Pantone pick. "Go bold and incorporate a deep violet island or base cabinets into a new kitchen," she said. "Incorporate a violet glass mosaic tile on your shower floor or as an accent stripe around tub walls. I especially love violet glass paired with the grey and taupe tones of

wooden white marble tile."

Some designers describe Ultra Violet as commanding, particularly when used inside a home. "This shade of purple is a powerful color and one that I would use as an accent," said interior designer Marika Meyer of Marika Meyer Interiors. "A little bit will go a long way. It is also a great color to pair with other colors, it is a very friendly complementary color."

"Good pairings include green and purple, a classic combination, but I've always liked red with purple," added Elliott. "Ultra Violet is a vivid color, so make sure you use equally strong colors with it so it doesn't dominate a palette."

Pair it with gold and yellow tones, suggests Denson, who is also an artist. "I paint skies all the time," she said. "It's what watercolorists do. To me, shades of the ultra-violet are the most pleasing sky. It works super well with what we traditionally think of skies: blue toned. It sets a mood that allows all my landscapes to feel grounded."

In announcing the selection, Laurie Pressman, vice president of the Pantone Color Institute described Ultra Violet as, "a blue-based purple that takes our awareness and potential to a higher level. Ultra Violet communicates originality, ingenuity and visionary thinking that points us toward the future."

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CALENDAR

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

ONGOING

The 2018 Eclectic Essentials production features four plays that focus on relationships: For Whom the Southern Belle Tolls, Death Be Not Loud, Capsmittment and One Click Away. Eclectic Essentials: Relationships will be performed at 8 p.m. Friday and Saturday, Jan. 19-20, 26-27, Feb. 2-3, as well as at 2 p.m. on Sunday, Jan. 28, and 2 p.m. on Sunday, Feb. 4. Tickets are general admission and available for \$14 at the Vienna Community Center, online at viennava.gov/webtrac, or at the door, if still available. Visit viennatheatrecompany.org or e-mail vtcshows@yahoo.com for more information.

Friday Night Telescopes. The Roll-Top observatory is available to the public for viewing the skies on Friday nights: Jan. 5, 12, 19 and 26, 7:30-9:30 p.m. The Analemma Society holds Friday Night Public Viewing Sessions at Turner Farm on Springvale Road in Great Falls. The public may use the newly mounted telescopes or bring their own telescope or binoculars to use outside. There is a lot to see in the night sky. Events are weather dependent. Please check the Analemma tweet page (or directly at @AnalemmaSociety) for updates on Friday viewing if the weather looks questionable. Visit www.analemma.org.

Great Falls Farmers Market. Saturdays, 9 a.m.-1 p.m., 778 Walker Road, Great Falls. Music, vendors, fresh produce, fresh prepared food, delightful bakery, spices from around the world, wild-caught fish, grass-fed, free-range meats, organic-fed poultry and eggs. Email kathleen@greatfallsfarmersmarket.org for more.

Free Tai Chi. Every Saturday, from 7:55-9 a.m., Introduction and Beginners' Practice, meet on the outdoor basketball court located directly behind the Dolley Madison Public Library, 1244 Oak Ridge Ave. in McLean Central Park, McLean. Call 703-759-9141 or visit www.FreeTaiChi.org for more.

The Freeman Store & Museum Wednesday through Sunday noon-4 p.m. 131 Church St. NE, Vienna. The Freeman Store & Museum is dedicated to Preserving and promoting Vienna's heritage through the identification, preservation, and interpretation of history significant places, events, and persons. Historicviennainc.org

Bingo Night. Sundays. 4 p.m. Flame Room, Vienna Volunteer Fire Department, 400 Center St. S, Vienna. \$10. www.vvfd.org/bingo.html.

Gentle Yoga. Thursdays, 6:30 p.m. Emmaus United Church of Christ, 900 E Maple Ave. E., Vienna. Saturdays, 9:30 a.m. Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Fairfax, 2709 Hunter Mill Road, Oakton. Gentle Kundalini Yoga, one free introductory session, senior discounts. Increase flexibility, improve breathing and health, reduce stress. Ravi Kaur has 15 years experience teaching yoga. \$15 per session. www.edimprovement.org. 571-213-3192.

Fishing Rod Rentals 8700 Potomac Hills St., Great Falls. Rentals available during visitor center hours. Fishing tackle and live bait are available for purchase. Reservations required for group rentals. \$6/rental (2 hour max). Valid driver's license required. Rod/reel combinations are perfect for beginners and children. A Virginia or Maryland freshwater fishing license is required for those 16 years or older. The park does not sell fishing licenses. www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/riverbend-park/

Colvin Run Mill open 11 - 4 p.m. daily, closed Tuesday. 10017 Colvin Run Road, Great Falls. Fairfax County's operational 19th century water powered gristmill, offers recreational and educational activities for all ages through daily tours, school programs and special events. Fees: \$7/adult, \$6 students 16+ with ID, \$5 children & seniors. Admission to park is free except for some special events.

Fundamentals of Watercolors. Mondays 10 a.m.-1 p.m. at The Arts of Great Falls, 756 Walker Road, Great Falls. Artist Lorrie Herman will help students get comfortable working with watercolors and understanding this medium. Visit www.greatfallsart.org for more.

Evening Painting. Tuesdays 6:30 -9:30 p.m. at The Arts of Great Falls, 756 Walker Road, Great Falls. Jill Banks focuses on oil painting fundamentals with two sessions each of still life, landscapes, and portrait/ clothed figure from a live model. Visit www.greatfallsart.org for more.

Honoring Activist Athletes on Dr. King's Birthday

William Rhoden, author, "Forty Million Dollar Slaves, The Rise, Fall and Redemption of the Black Athlete," will be a featured speaker at McLean Community Center's Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Birthday celebration at The Old Firehouse, 1440 Chain Bridge Road, McLean. Event is Sunday, Jan. 14, at 2 p.m. Tickets: \$20/\$10 MCC tax district residents. For ADA seating, contact evelyn.hill@fairfaxcounty.gov or call 571-296-8385



PHOTO COURTESY OF MCLEAN COMMUNITY CENTER

THURSDAY/JAN. 11

McLean Traveler Day Trip. 9:30 a.m.-3:30 p.m. at Churchill Road Elementary School, 7100 Churchill Road, McLean. Trip to National Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C. to see "Johannes Vermeer and the Masters of Genre Painting." Call 703-790-0123 for more.

Adventures in Learning Open House. 10-noon at UUCF Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Fairfax - Program Building, 2709 Hunter Mill Road, Oakton. Increase brain power. Visit www.scov.org for more.

Horticultural Therapist. 1-3 p.m. at Great Falls Library, 9830 Georgetown Pike, Great Falls. Jan Lane, a registered Horticultural Therapist presents how gardening activities can be used to help people improve their physical, cognitive and social-emotional health. Visit fggardenclub.org/ for more.

FRIDAY/JAN. 12

Dining with Dorothy. 12:30 p.m. at Skorpio's Maggios Greek Family Restaurant, 421 Maple Ave. E, Vienna. Socializing and dining event. Email dflood1706@gmail.com for more.

5th and 6th Grader Party. 7-9 p.m. at The Old Firehouse, 1440 Chain Bridge Road, McLean. Patrons will enjoy free catered food and beverages, music played by a professional disc jockey, dancing on an open dance floor and other attractions, such as a photo booth, temporary tattoos and board games. \$35/\$25 MCC district residents. Call 703-448-TEEN for more.

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/.

Star Gazing. 10-11 a.m. at Turner Farm Park, 925 Springvale Road, Great Falls. Enjoy guided star gazing, look through a telescope, and listen to constellation stories around the campfire at Observatory Park at Turner Farm. \$10. Call 703-324-8618 for more.

SUNDAY/JAN. 14

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

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 for more.

TUESDAY/JAN. 16

Meet the Civil War Author. 10 a.m.-1 p.m. at St. Francis Episcopal Church, 9220 Georgetown Pike, Great Falls. James G. Lewis talks about his book "Confederate Calvary General Jeb Stuart" and Civil War history around Great Falls. Lunch will be served and reservations are required.



Live Music

Local musician "Rorie," is in concert. 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 for more.

Contact Karen Emami at karen.emami@globalinfotek.com or call 703-938-6471.

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 www.ViennaArtsSociety.org for more.

McLean Newcomers and Neighbors Luncheon. 11:30 a.m. at the Kazan Restaurant, 6813 Redmond Drive, McLean. Deborah Kosciw, CPA, will discuss "Getting Info Ready for Tax Time". \$30. Visit www.McLeanNewcomers.org for more.

FRIDAY/JAN. 19

Improv-Extravaganza. 7 p.m. at Herndon ArtSpace, 750 Center St., Herndon. For one-night-only, The Alden's (the) Unruly Theatre Project and Loudoun County High School's Improvasaurus will bring their signature improv styles to ArtSpace Herndon. Visit www.artspaceherndon.org.

MONDAY-FRIDAY/JAN. 22-26

Wildfire's 10th Anniversary. Wildfire at Tysons Galleria, 3rd floor, McLean. Wildfire is celebrating 10 years and will offer special menus, and prize drawings. All week long, Wildfire will feature 10 Year Birthday Lunch and Dinner specials. Call 703-442-9110 or visit wildfirerestaurant.com/mclean.

THURSDAY/JAN. 25

Genealogy Meeting/Program. 7:30-9 p.m. at Kilmer Middle School, 8100 Wolftrap Road, Vienna. Fairfax Genealogical Society monthly member meeting and program. Librarian Leslie Anderson will discuss the Alexandria Library's resources and help available to family history and other researchers. Open to members and public. Snow date, Feb. 1. Free. Email education@fxgs.org, call 703-644-8185 or visit www.fxgs.org for more.

The Unruly Theatre. 7 p.m. at MPA@ChainBridge, 1446 Chain Bridge Road, McLean. The area's hottest professional teen improv troupe will bring you a hilarious night of comedy. Come help them spread some joy while being wildly entertained. Sponsored by The Alden. Free admission. Visit mcleancenter.org.

FRIDAY/JAN. 26

Splitsville & Paragon Village. 8 a.m.-6 p.m. at The Old Firehouse, 1440 Chain Bridge Road, McLean. The Old Firehouse teacher workday trip. Teens can experience glow-in-the-dark bowling with big screen video walls and a booming surround sound system that plays their favorite songs. It's a non-stop, high-fiving, unforgettable good time. Following bowling, the group will unwind with a movie. \$65/\$55 MCC district residents. Fee includes bowling, shoes, lunch and movie tickets. Bring additional money for movie concessions as desired. Visit mcleancenter.org.

Heading to Oxford

Great Falls resident admitted to study psychology at Oxford University in the UK.

BY COLIN STOECKER
THE CONNECTION



PHOTO CONTRIBUTED

Spencer Hedges on a trip to Japan. He was recently admitted to study at Oxford University in the United Kingdom.

For one Great Falls resident the holidays were much busier than usual. Spencer Hedges, 27, was recently admitted to study at Oxford University in England.

"A lot of people who want to go think it's Harry-Potter. I wanted to be challenged. I told them in my essay that I wanted to be up until 3 a.m. working on my thesis in the library," said Hedges.

Hedges chose to study outside of the United States for college because he felt that he would be doubly challenged by the rigorous education system at Oxford as well as the challenges of living abroad.

"This is my first time living outside of the U.S. for this length of time," said Hedges.

At Oxford he plans on studying psychology and one day plans on becoming a psychologist or psychiatrist.

"I've always been a people person, I enjoy interacting and analyzing," said Hedges. One of his favorite books is Steven Covey's, "The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People."

The European education system is a difference that Hedges is going to have to get used to, and another challenge that he is excited about.

Hedges' mother, Kathleen Hedges is also excited for her son's recent success.

"I admire Spencer for all the effort he has put into his education and for the faith he has in himself and his abilities. It's hard to put into words how proud and happy I am for him and my hopes that this experience will open even more doors into his future. I am so fortunate that he is my son," she said.

Hedges is curious about education in England, and is also interested in European history.

"Adapting to the culture is something I'm excited about because it will be so different," said Hedges.

"Seeing how the education system is different will be another. There is more one-on-one teaching," he said.

Hedges graduated from Langley High School with an excellent GPA, and also attended Cooper Middle School and Great Falls Elementary.

But even with good grades behind him, Hedges found the Oxford application process difficult.

"The admissions process was pretty strenuous. I had to submit a written work on why I wanted to go. They want hard workers who want to push themselves," he said.

Hedges enjoys making films, watching movies, and critiquing film in his free time. "I've always been into movies and critiquing them," he said.

He is optimistic about the new year of studying at one of the best universities in the world, which is both excitement and challenge for him.

"It's outside of your comfort zone, taking yourself out of your shoes and doing school twice as much, to adapt to the culture as well. It's an extra challenge that is satisfying and enjoyable," said Hedges.

Hedges thanked his friends, family, and Kathryn Hemmann, assistant professor of Japanese Studies at George Mason University for their role in helping him reach his goals.

Former classmate and 20-year friend, Tyler Hannon, 27, of Great Falls also shared his excitement for his friend to be taking on a new adventure this year.

"I am so excited for him, he has always been interested in English folklore and culture and Spencer has worked very hard to achieve his goals," said Hannon.

Call for Candidates

McLean Community Center 2018 Governing Board Election

Qualification:
Must be a resident of Small Tax District 1A-Dranesville.

Petition to Become A Candidate:

- Candidate must pick up own petition packet at the Center, and return own petition.
- Adult candidate must have ten (10) signatures of adult tax district residents on petition.
- Teen candidate must be 15-17 years old as of McLean Day (May 19) and have ten (10) signatures of teens also 15-17 years old who live in the tax district and in the candidate's high school boundary area.

Positions:

- Three (3) Adult Seats - Three-year terms.
- Two (2) Youth Seats - One-year terms. One (1) each for the Langley and McLean high school boundary areas.

Key Petition Dates:

- **January 22:** Petition Packets are available at the McLean Community Center Administrative Office, 6631 Old Dominion Dr., McLean, VA.
- **March 16:** Completed petitions are due to the Center's Administrative Office by **5 p.m.**

For more information visit the Center at:
6631 Old Dominion Dr., McLean, VA 22101
call: 703-790-0123, TTY: 411
email: elections@mcleancenter.org
or visit: www.mcleancenter.org/about/candidates



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OPINION

Comstock

FROM PAGE 4

**Addressing Our
Transportation Needs**

I serve on the Transportation Committee and we are working on an overall Transportation and Infrastructure package to advance support for our roads, bridges, and infrastructure. This enhances our economic development as well as eases congestion and improves our quality of life.

In early December, I introduced the *METRO Accountability and Reform Act*, the largest legislative reform package introduced since Metro's inception. The legislation has the backing of over 30 business groups including the Northern Virginia Chamber of Commerce, the Greater McLean Chamber of Commerce, and more. The Washington Post Editorial Board said of the legislation. "Barbara Comstock offers a realistic lifeline for Metro".

In early December, Department of the Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke heeded our call for action and announced \$227 million for the full rehabilitation of Arlington Memorial Bridge. The bridge carries 68,000 vehicles daily — many 10th District constituents among them — and this funding prevents the bridge from closing by 2020 and causing major traffic disruptions.

**Leading On
STEM Education**

Congress passed my bipartisan legislation the *INSPIRE Women Act* which was one of the first bills that President Trump signed into law. The legislation provides more resources at NASA to young women who aspire to careers as scientists, engineers, astronauts, mathematicians, and other STEM careers.

The House of Representatives also passed my bipartisan legislation, the *Research and Education Effectiveness and Transparency Act* which provides better information on how to make taxpayer-funded investments in STEM and Research and Development more effective, transparent and fair.

Addressing Hate Crimes

In April, I introduced House Resolution 257, which condemns ethnic, religious, and racial hate crimes. The Senate companion Resolution already passed unanimously. The resolution cites trends in violent incidents targeting Jewish, Muslim, African-American, Hindu, and Sikh communities. The resolution calls on federal law enforcement, working with state and local officials, to investigate all credible reports of these occurrences in the United States, hold perpetrators accountable, and bring them to justice. The

LETTER

**Voting the
Party Line**

To the Editor:

The Republican Party celebrated the New Year with the recent passage of their so-called "tax reform" bill. While some of us may enjoy modest and temporary tax cuts, the bill is a gift to our nation's plutocracy whose tax cuts are substantial and permanent. All this will come at the cost of an exploding federal deficit. The fiscal rectitude preached by the Republi-

cans during the Obama years was pushed aside when it came time to do the bidding of the moneyed interests they are beholden to.

The bill was hurriedly written in a slapdash manner, with no serious analysis of economic impacts, and rushed through the legislative process in part to avoid public scrutiny. It complicates the tax code and will no doubt bring a host of unintended consequences. One foreseeable consequence is new opportunities for tax cheaters, who will be further emboldened by the fruit of long-

term Republican efforts to diminish IRS enforcement powers.

Sadly, District 10's Representative Barbara Comstock voted for this bill. The excuses she offers to justify her vote show once again that she is just reliably voting the party line regardless of the interests of her constituents or our nation. The people of District 10 can only hope that 2018 will bring them better representation in Congress.

Richard Markeloff
Herndon

resolution has strong bipartisan support of cosponsors ranging from Congressman David Brat to Congressman Don Beyer.

**Continuing the Fight
Against the Opioid and
Heroin Epidemic**

This summer, I hosted two opioid roundtables in the District to address our continuing challenges on opioids, heroin and addiction which has now been declared a National Health Emergency by the President. The roundtables brought together local, state, and federal stakeholders to discuss the current state of the opioid epidemic in the region and we are introducing additional legislation to enhance our efforts.

**Working With and
For Our Veterans**

In November, my office, announced that a "Vet Center Community Access Center" will be opening in Leesburg to serve Veterans as well as active duty military personnel and their families in both Loudoun and eastern Fairfax. This spring, I was honored to be named "National Legislator of the Year" by the Virginia Council of the Military Officers Association of America. For a full list of the 66 veterans bills that we have worked on this past year, see Comstock.House.Gov/VetsBills.

**Working To Combat
Human Trafficking**

As a member of the Human Trafficking Caucus, and having passed and worked on major human trafficking initiatives since my time as a Delegate, I continue to work with my colleagues to promote legislation to provide more tools and funding to law enforcement to crack down on the heinous crime of human trafficking. In 2017, the House passed six bills including the *No Human Trafficking on Our Roads Act*, legislation I cosponsored that disqualifies someone from operating a commercial motor vehicle for life for a human trafficking crime. We are also working to stop human trafficking activities online.

Constituent Services

Our staff also addresses casework from assisting with complicated foreign adoptions, to helping with emergency passports for our diverse population, to working with the Veterans Administration, Social Security or Medicare on facilitating resolution of a benefit claim. If you need help with a federal agency go to Comstock.House.Gov or call my District office at 703-404-6903. I wish you and your family very Happy New Year in 2018.

BULLETIN

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

FY 2019 SCHOOLS BUDGET

FCPS Superintendent Scott S. Brabrand will present the **2018-19 school year (FY 2019) Proposed Budget** at the School Board meeting on Thursday, Jan. 11, at Jackson Middle School at 7 p.m. The School Board plans to hold a budget work session on Jan. 22, and a public hearing on the Proposed Budget on Jan. 29, with additional hearings on Jan. 30 and Jan. 31, if needed. Get more information on the FCPS budget at www.fcps.edu/about-fcps/budget/fy2019.

GOVERNING BOARD CANDIDATES

The McLean Community Center (MCC) is seeking candidates to run for seats on its 2018-2019 Governing Board. A candidate must reside in the Center's tax district (Small District 1A-Dranesville). To have their names placed on election ballots, candidates are required to obtain the signatures of 10 McLean tax district residents in their respective categories (either adult or youth). Three adult positions and two youth positions are open this year. Key Election Dates:

- Monday, Jan. 22: Petition Packets are available.
 - Friday, March 16: Completed Petition Packets are due at MCC by 5 p.m.
 - Monday, March 19: Candidates' Orientation, 7 p.m., The Old Firehouse Center, 1440 Chain Bridge Rd.
 - Monday, April 9: Absentee Voting begins at the MCC Administrative Office, 6631 Old Dominion Dr., and The Old Firehouse Center, 1440 Chain Bridge Road.
 - Sunday, May 6: Candidates Meet and Greet, 2-4 p.m. Sponsored by the Friends of MCC, at the Old Firehouse Center, 1440 Chain Bridge Road.
 - Wednesday, May 16: Absentee Voting ends at the MCC Administrative Office and the Old Firehouse Center at 5 p.m.
 - Saturday, May 19: Elections at McLean Day from 10:30 a.m.-5 p.m.
- For more information on the MCC Governing Board Elections, call the Center at 703-790-0123, TTY: 711, or visit the Center's website: <http://bit.ly/2ix7qc1>.

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, or visit www.stmarkesl.org.

MONDAY/JAN. 15

Schools Closed. All Fairfax County Public Schools will be closed on **for Martin Luther King Jr.'s Birthday**. Classes will resume on Tuesday, Jan. 16. See the 2017-18 school year calendar at www.fcps.edu.

Center Closings. The McLean Community Center and the Old Firehouse will be closed on Monday, Jan. 15, for the Martin Luther King Jr. Day holiday. The centers will reopen at 9 a.m. on Tuesday, Jan. 16.

WEDNESDAY/JAN. 17

Public Meeting. 7 p.m. in Room 106 of the Herrity Building located at 12055 Government Center Parkway, Fairfax. The Fairfax County Park Authority will hold its annual public comment meeting on the agency's proposed fee adjustments. The public meeting agenda includes a brief presentation on the fee process followed by an opportunity for public comment. Visit www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/feemeeting for more.

THURSDAY/JAN. 18

Caregivers Support Group. 10-11:30 a.m. at UUCF Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Fairfax - Program Building, 2709 Hunter Mill Road, Oakton. For caregivers to adult family members with dementia, meets first and third Thursdays of every month. Call 703-821-6838 or email jtarr5@verizon.net for more.

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Litter Box Humor



By KENNETH B. LOURIE

We have five indoor cats: Biscuit, Chino, Twinkle, Sloan and Andrew, ranging in ages from 11+ years to 5+ years. We live in a two-story converted log cabin with approximately 1,750 square feet, closets not included. Closets in which you're bound to find cats, especially in the winter.

A few moths back, we contracted to have our two full bathrooms, one on each floor, renovated. Given that our house is over 250 years old, not likely a normal renovation. So far the renovation has taken months, as we were told, and as such, we wanted to employ some kind of strategy where we weren't constantly worrying about cats coming and going, sneaking outside, disappearing, and getting in the way of the workman and/or possibly suffering some kind of injury in the process. (Particularly true of Andrew and Biscuit who, uncharacteristic of many cats, are not the least bit put off by unknown people wandering about the house.)

And sure enough, after dinner on the first night FOLLOWING DEMOLITION, Andrew and his sister, Sloane, managed to break through some protective plastic surrounding the door blocking entrance to the upstairs bathroom where they managed to get into the house through an internal wall which had been torn down to the studs. It was their faint meowing which led to their discovery - in the downstairs attic above the kitchen. Their subsequent rescue confirmed that we would need to be extra vigilant to prevent further ado.

To secure the perimeter, we decided to segregate the cats on one side of the house on the first floor: including the kitchen, dining room and my office, with two sets of doors connecting to the living room and to the hall leading past the downstairs bathroom. This disconnect works perfectly because it prevents any escape and it enables the workman to walk in and out of the front door to ply their trade without needing any access to either of the three rooms where the cats are confined.

The cats food and water remains in its usual place in the kitchen. However there is one item (two actually) which has required a major move. You recall I said our cats are 'indoor,' right? And we're confining them to three rooms, right? Have I mentioned their litter boxes yet? Well, I am now.

Not a Herculean task by any means because once cats are shown their litter box's new location, they figure it out. But now their litter boxes which had previously been out of sight and sort of out of mind - one on each floor, have now been placed in two of the three rooms where they've been living most days and they are now most definitely in sight and on my mind.

One box was placed in the dining room where we rarely go at present since it's somewhat cluttered due to the renovation, and the other box was placed in my home office - which box seems to get the most use. (We sort of figured that the kitchen was out of the question.)

My office is approximately eight feet wide by 20 feet long, a space which separates the dining room from the outside wall. The litter box is on the floor at the far end of the room, not at all under foot, but neither out of sight nor out of smell. Where I sit, I am a well-positioned observer of the cats visits to their litter box.

As a consequence of this segregation - designed to secure their safety, and for the subsequent relocation of their litter boxes, in effect, I am now sharing a bathroom with five indoor cats.

All day long I am witness to their litter box proclivities; their arrival and departure, the sights, sounds and smells; their individual tendencies and habits, and of course, their comparative interest in visiting me on my desk before and/or after the paperwork is finished.

Soon we'll have to decide whether to return the boxes to their original location, and risk disrupting yet another new routine. Perhaps we'll leave well enough alone. After all, as any devoted cat owner knows: it's not about us, it's about them.

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



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