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McLean CONNECTION



The Democratic candidates vying for the chance to challenge incumbent Rep. Barbara Comstock for the District 10 Congressional seat. From left, Dan Helmer, Lindsey Davis Stover, Alison Friedman, moderator Glenn Kessler, Paul Pelletier, State Sen. Jennifer Wexton, and Dr. Julia Biggins.



Comstock Challengers Count on 'Blue Wave'

NEWS, PAGE 3

Celebrating Earth Day in Tysons

NEWS, PAGE 6

Food Drive To Support SHARE

NEWS, PAGE 2

CAMPS & SCHOOLS

PAGE 7

OPINION, PAGE 4 ♦ ENTERTAINMENT, PAGE 8 ♦ CLASSIFIEDS, PAGE 10

PHOTO BY ANDREA WORKER/THE CONNECTION

SHARE and The New Dominion Women's Club Host Food Drive

SHARE of McLean and The New Dominion Women's Club held a very successful food drive at Giant Supermarket on Chain Bridge Road to benefit the food pantry at SHARE. Neighbors showed their support by purchasing 500 bags of groceries pre-sorted by Giant as well as donating \$1,250 in cash and gift cards to go toward additional purchases. An additional "wish list" of items needed was also provided to shoppers. The food drive helps SHARE provide groceries to qualifying residents of McLean, Falls Church, and Great Falls.

"We were very pleased with the outpouring of support from our community for the food drive for SHARE. It is such a wonderful organization. Members of our club and their families volunteered at Giant and also helped sort items/unload the truck at the SHARE pantry. You can always check SHARE's website to volunteer and to find out current needs," said Faisa Stafford, Food Drive Coordinator from New Dominion Women's Club.

SHARE provides many services to those in need. In addition to stocking a grocery

store style food pantry, it also donates used laptops, clothing, linens, and furniture.

SHARE hosts a huge annual Holiday Party which includes gifts for all its clients. It also conducts a Back-to-School supplies program in August for students. Other services include financial guidance and health screenings. Volunteers range in age from teens through seniors. There are opportunities for community service hours. Food donations are accepted on Wednesdays and Saturdays at 9 a.m. - 12 noon.

For more information and to find out how



PHOTO CONTRIBUTED

NDWC members and their families joined with Girl Scouts from Troop 6043 volunteered to stuff SHARE truck at Giant. From left: Richard, Jennifer, and Libby Salopek; Kaylee Marinus; Faisa and Praha Stafford, Jana and Keira Allen; Alex and Jennifer Wood.

Fight Back Against Fraud!

OPERATION: STOP SCAMS

Join us for a free fraud fighting event

Every day, hundreds of local residents lose their hard-earned money to a variety of fraud schemes. In fact, every 2 seconds, a con artist steals someone's identity!

To strike back against scammers, AARP Virginia and Fairfax County Government's Silver Shield Task Force are bringing together top experts and law enforcement officials to present at a free informational Scam Jam.

The presenters will discuss scams targeting Virginians, such as fake solicitor schemes, bogus investment deals, lottery scams, email fraud, a grandparent ruse and the latest identity theft shams.

FREE FRAUD EVENT

Saturday, April 28, 2018 | 9 a.m. - 1 p.m.

*shred truck will be on-site from 8 a.m. - Noon

Fairfax County Government Center | Board Auditorium
12000 Government Center Parkway | Fairfax, VA 22035

Light refreshments and lunch will be served. Registration is required at aarp.cvent.com/OSSFairfax or call **1-877-926-8300**.

Your documents will be shredded on-site free of charge. No quantity limit. Please, no plastics or electronics.

Fairfax County is committed to nondiscrimination on the basis of disability in all county programs, services and activities. Reasonable accommodations will be provided upon request. For information, call Melissa Smarr, 703-324-1929, TTY 711.

AARP
Fraud Watch Network



you can help, visit www.shareofmclean.org.

For more information about the club, visit www.ndwc.org/celebrate-50.

WEEK IN MCLEAN

RSVP Northern Virginia to Host Free Senior Volunteer Orientation

RSVP Northern Virginia will hold a volunteer orientation at Dolley Madison Library, Wednesday, May 2, at 2:30 p.m. The hour-long event is free and open to anyone age 55 years or better.

RSVP (Retired and Senior Volunteer Program) is the region's volunteer network for people 55 and older and provides individualized support to seniors seeking service opportunities in and around Fairfax County, Arlington County and the City of Alexandria.

RSVP volunteers enjoy flexible schedules, free accident and liability insurance while serving, optional mileage and meal reimbursement and are invited to volunteer group projects and social gatherings. RSVP offers its members more than 200 volunteer opportunities, many of which are located in Fairfax County, including providing rides, support and meals to older neighbors, assisting local veterans in need and helping prepare the community for disasters.

The Dolley Madison Library is located at 1244 Oak Ridge Avenue in McLean. To sign up for the May 2, orientation, email RSVP Volunteer Specialist Carly Hubicki at chubicki@volunteerfairfax.org or call the RSVP Hotline at 703-403-5360.

Charleys Philly Steaks Opens in Tysons

Charleys Philly Steaks has opened a new location at Tysons Corner Center on April 20. For more than 30 years, Charleys Philly Steaks has been serving up its Philly Cheesesteaks made with 100 percent USDA Choice Beef or 100 percent All-White Meat Chicken and fresh toppings, grilled-to-order the Charleys way, along with loaded Gourmet Fries and all-natural Lemonades. Charleys Philly Steaks has almost 600 locations across the world, with 16 locations in Virginia.

Comstock Challengers Count on 'Blue Wave'

Six Democrats vying to unseat Barbara Comstock face off at Colvin Run Elementary

BY ANDREA WORKER
THE CONNECTION

The six Democrats, four women and two men, competing for the chance to unseat incumbent U.S. Rep. Barbara Comstock (R-10) come November, took to the stage to face each other and more than 300 interested citizens from around the widespread boundaries of the 10th Congressional District. The district includes Loudoun, Frederick and Clarke counties, and parts of Fairfax and Prince William counties. The forum was hosted by the Dranesville District Democratic Committee at Colvin Run Elementary School in Vienna, and introduced by the organization's Chair, Jennifer Adeli.

There was much agreement among the candidates as they answered questions posed by moderator Glenn Kessler, the Washington Post Fact-Checker columnist. The crowd applauded enthusiastically as the contenders lambasted Comstock, President Trump, and the Republican Congress on issues that included the Trump Administration's attacks on the Affordable Care Act, the future of Social Security, climate change, sanctions against Iran and Russia, DACA and immigration reform, the recently passed Tax Reform bill, tariffs and the U.S.'s departure from the Trans-Pacific Partnership.

ALL OF THE DEBATERS expressed their support for the Affordable Care Act and their anger at how the program is being diluted, while offering differing solutions on the general topic of healthcare.

Lindsey Davis Stover, who served as a Chief of Staff on Capitol Hill, as well as a Senior Advisor at the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs under President Obama, declared that access to affordable and quality healthcare "shouldn't be something we have to keep marching for. It's a right, not a privilege."

Two-term Virginia senator Jennifer Wexton and Paul Pelletier, a former federal prosecutor, both support adjusting the financial threshold for the Affordable Care Act to allow more citizens to qualify for subsidies, with Pelletier adding that controlling fraud would help drive down costs.

Wexton lauded "Obamacare" as a good first step, saying that "we don't need to reinvent the wheel" and that a sliding scale based on ability to pay should be investigated. "Let's get creative."

Dr. Julia Biggins, an infectious disease scientist, took the healthcare issue a step further, saying she would vote for a thresh-



The Democratic candidates vying for the chance to challenge incumbent Rep. Barbara Comstock's Congressional District 10 seat. From left, Dan Helmer, Lindsey Davis Stover, Alison Friedman, moderator Glenn Kessler, Paul Pelletier, State Sen. Jennifer Wexton, and Dr. Julia Biggins.

PHOTOS BY ANDREA WORKER/THE CONNECTION



The event was hosted by the Dranesville District Democratic Committee. Chair Jennifer Adeli welcomed the attendees and introduced the moderator and the candidates.



Susan Jacobs and candidate Dan Helmer. Jacobs, a McLean resident is supporting Helmer as the "best candidate" but says she will back whoever wins the primary. "They are all good, with great resumes."

old increase while working toward a "single-payer" healthcare system and a focus on preventative care. "Let's shoot for the moon," she urged, saying that to date, Congressional efforts in this area have been "Band-Aids" on the greater problem. "It's complex," she added, "but we've been talking for decades." Biggins also believes that healthcare should be a government responsibility, and not tied to employment.

West Point graduate, Rhodes Scholar, and veteran of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, Dan Helmer envisions a system where Americans can opt into Medicare. Helmer's insistence that the Government's ability to use scale be "unleashed" to negotiate drug prices received a roar of approval from the attendees.

Questions concerning the Tax Reform Act also drew criticism from the candidates and approbation from the audience on their negative commentary.

"It's a horrible product for many reasons," was Alison Friedman's assessment. Friedman is a former senior official with the Obama Administration's State Department, authoring legislation to combat human trafficking and protect voting rights. In her estimation, the Tax Reform Act is anything but, benefiting corporations and the wealthy above working families, singles, and those in most need.

Helmer called the legislation "one of the most unpatriotic" bills ever passed, and thinks a complete re-write is needed, "starting from scratch" to get it right.

The Republicans' immigration bans and reforms and the proposed Border Wall also got a bashing from the candidates, with Davis Stover describing both as "heartless and bad economic decisions" and calling attention to the exemplary safety record of the city of El Paso, Texas "right there on that border. The 'wall' isn't about national security. It's a symbol of hate."

Friedman, who at one point during the two-hour debate called Donald Trump "the greatest threat to our national security," added that among the many reasons to run against Comstock, the comments she made during a debate when first running for Congress, likening the tracking of immigrants entering the country to tracking FedEx packages "are up there on my list."

"All my time in Iraq and Afghanistan, I never thought we were fighting to deport children," added Helmer.

If moderator Kessler was hoping to catch the candidates off guard with a direct question asking if they would support Nancy Pelosi in a Congressional leadership role if elected, first-to-the-mic Friedman wasn't phased. "Lucky me to get this one first!" she quipped, then fired back.

"This is not the conversation that we should be having now," she said, insisting that Democrats needed to avoid "being divided," and needed to pull together and stay on message.

While acknowledging Pelosi's contribu-

SEE CHALLENGERS, PAGE 11

OPINION

Budget Hits All the Right Notes

BY SHARON BULOVA
CHAIRMAN, FAIRFAX COUNTY
BOARD OF SUPERVISORS



During today's [April 24] Board of Supervisors Meeting, the Board marked up the FY2019 Advertised Budget by a vote of 8-2. Formal adoption of the budget will take place on May 1. I would like to share with you my remarks prior to our vote this morning:

The process for adopting the County Budget every year is all about community engagement. Fiscal Year 2019 is no exception, with Budget Forums and Town Hall Meetings hosted in each of our nine Districts, Budget Committee meetings (which included our partners on the School Board), and three days of public hearings on the Advertised Budget earlier this month. Since February, our offices have received hundreds, if not thousands, of letters, e-mail messages,

phone calls and personal visits from our constituents.

The Budget "mood" this year was harmonic, thanks to an Advertised Budget that I believe hit all of the right notes.

The Budget that we are about to "Mark-Up," or amend, is based on a tax rate of \$1.15. The package:

- ❖ Fully funds the School Board's request, bringing teachers' salaries

into competitive alignment with our sister jurisdictions in the region;

- ❖ Overall support for our school system is increased by \$91.49 million or 4.22 percent over Fiscal Year 2018, with 52.8 percent of our General Fund Budget going to schools;

- ❖ Fully funds compensation for our County employees with a 2.25 percent Market Rate Adjustment, Performance, Merit and Longevity increases;

- ❖ Includes funding for Fairfax First, Gang Prevention, the expansion of Diversion First

and Opportunity Neighborhoods, additional slots for Early Childhood programs, and funding to address the Opioid Crisis;

- ❖ Provides an increase in funding for Metro (pending a long-term solution), VRE and our Connector Bus System.

While this Mark-Up package includes a 2 cent increase in the real estate tax rate, an increase of \$241 on the average annual tax bill, I believe the additional revenue is an important investment needed to shore up the foundation on which our quality of life rests.

I want to thank Budget Committee Chairman Jeff McKay for his excellent work bringing this Mark-Up Package to the Board today, along with Budget Guidance that addresses issues discussed during budget deliberations with each of our colleagues. Adoption of a Budget every year requires the good faith collaboration of each member of our Board and I appreciate everyone's willingness to come together on a Budget process that moves Fairfax County forward.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Time to Rediscover Libraries

To the Editor:

As a current high school teacher in Fairfax County, and a future school librarian, I frequently hear the question, "Why do you want to be a librarian? Do kids even read anymore?" April is National School Library Month, and I'd like to take the opportunity to clarify the answers to these questions.

In my school, the library is not only already an essential part of the school, it is filled with untapped potential as well, because so many parents, students, and teachers are not aware of all of the opportunities that are available. Our school library provides our students with technology access, research stations, a place to work and research, but also has lunch programs to help students meet each other and make friends; on some days during lunch there is a

knitting group that meets. Students meet and teach each other to create new stitches and patterns, and you haven't seen a school united until you've seen a freshman girl patiently demonstrating a stitch for the third time to a senior football player. We have a book club that meets during our remediation period once a month. The kids pick the books, and have some of the most lively discussions I've heard.

Even more than this, our library is teaching our students how to be digital citizens and 21st century learners. They foster curiosity — not always an easy feat in high schoolers. They have a coding station where our students can learn to code, even if they aren't taking computer science classes, and a media lab where students produce, film, and present daily announcements for the school. They are trying to get a 3D printer in the library, as well as virtual reality technology to allow our students to explore places and ideas to which they might never other-

wise have access.

So yes, kids do still read. But these also aren't the same school libraries that we had; no longer is the library a silent, intimidating tomb of books. Go check out your local school library after school one day in April — you might just be surprised at what you find!

Meagan Major
Fairfax

Stopping Violence in Any Form

To the Editor:

In response to your last week's opinion piece calling a new state license plate with the words "Stop Gun Violence" a small victory, I offer the following:

I notice that the Virginia General Assembly and the Governor have passed a bill for a new license plate with the words "Stop Gun Violence" on it. There are

those of us who are opposed to violence in any form — knife violence, explosives violence, poison violence, vehicular violence, and the like. Everett Piper recently stated: "Take away guns and we'll use a knife. Take away knives and we'll use a club. Take away clubs, and we'll use a rock." The lead editorial in the 4-10-18 edition of The Washington Times observed that knifings across the British Isles are up 21 percent. Stabbings in London in 2017 are at their highest level in 6 years, up 23 percent over the previous year. Knives and acid are the two most common weapons used in London. Violence starts in the heart — not in the hand.

The Virginia General Assembly's myopic focus on guns is not the solution to stopping violence. I suggest the General Assembly and Governor would better serve Virginians by renaming the license plate "Stop Violence".

Paul McIlvaine
Alexandria

BULLETIN

Fairfax County is offering the following FREE "Caring for You, Caring for Me" programs; a blend of interactive support and education for caregivers of older adults.

Monday, May 7-June 11 (5 weeks every Monday), 1:30-3:30 p.m. at Lincolnia Adult Day Health Care Center, 4710 North Chambliss St., Alexandria. Find out more at www.fairfaxcounty.gov/OlderAdults and click on Caring for You, Caring for Me Program or call 703-324-7577 or 703-324-7210, TTY 711.

Thursday, May 31-June 28 (5 weeks every Thursday), 7-8 p.m. at

Herndon Fortnightly Library, 768 Center St., Herndon. Find out more at www.fairfaxcounty.gov/OlderAdults and click on Caring for You, Caring for Me Program or call 703-324-7577 or 703-324-7210, TTY 711.

Fairfax County's free **Family Caregiver Telephone Support Group** meets by phone on **Tuesday, May 8, 7-8 p.m.** This month's topic is "Using Humor as a Survival Tool". Register beforehand at www.fairfaxcounty.gov/OlderAdults and click on Caregiver Support/Respite. Call 703-324-5484, TTY 711.

Fairfax County is offering a free Medicare 101 program. Learn the facts about health insurance for older adults. **Monday, May 14, 10:30 a.m.- Noon.** Lord of Life Lutheran Church, 5114 Twinbrook Rd., Fairfax. To register, call Mary Walker at 703-278-8375, TTY 711. Find out more at www.fairfaxcounty.gov/OlderAdults and click on Medicare/Insurance Counseling.

The **Fairfax Commission on Aging** meets on **Wednesday, May 16, 1-3 p.m.** at the Sully District Governmental Center, Richard Frank Room, 4900 Stonecroft Blvd.,

Chantilly. The public is welcome to attend and join in the comment period that begins each session. Find out more at www.fairfaxcounty.gov/dfs/olderadultservices/coa.htm. Call 703-324-5403, TTY 711 for meeting access needs.

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- ❖ What Older Adults Should Know About Opioids

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The team at the US Science & Engineering Festival.

CALENDAR

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

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- High Risk Obstetrics
- Menopause
- Sexual Disorders
- Pre-menstrual Disorders
- Routine Prenatal Care
- High Risk Pregnancy

WOMEN'S HEALTH

Team Rising Phoenix to Participate in World Competition

Three Cooper Middle School students — David Han, Sophia Lee, Cynthia Wu — along with four other teammates of Rising Phoenix showcased their robots at the 5th USA Science and Engineering Festival held in Washington D.C. on April 6-8.

Team Rising Phoenix of the Capital Robotics Club is a McLean based robotics team, and it was the only middle-school/elementary-school students group being invited to this largest STEM festival in the US.

The other Rising Phoenix team members are Matthew Li (Nysmith School), Pranav Anumandlahave (Longfellow MS), Samantha Li (Spring Hill ES), and Daniel Wu (Churchill ES). They have been

working together as a team for three years.

“My philosophy is not only to teach the kids how to build a robot, but also to provide a platform for them to learn and discover the essential values of cooperation, communication, and commitment while building robots and competing with others”, said the head coach Yun Li.

The Rising Phoenix recently won VEX IQ Robotics Virginia State Championship in Feb. 2018.

The accomplishments of the Team has earned them a ticket to compete in the upcoming 2018 Vex IQ World Competition (Apr. 29 - May 1) with a few hundred teams from different countries and regions.

2018 Road to Independence Gala

Friday, May 11 • 6 p.m. • Hilton McLean Tysons Corner

Commit to being a transformative agent in our community by joining us at our 2018 Road to Independence Gala. Your support is critical to helping us respond to the ever-changing needs of more than 35,000 neighbors across Northern Virginia.

nvfs.org/gala



PHOTO CONTRIBUTED

Assistant Principal Cherith Pierson donates her money in order to help stick eighth grader Matt Harlow to the wall.

Cooper Middle Students Raise Funds for Blood Cancer Research

An eighth grade QUEST group at Cooper Middle School raised more than \$2,000 for blood cancer research through the Pennies for Patients organization. Penny collections took place in QSTs from March 12 through March 23. Other

QST classes were able to sabotage each other with any silver coins or bills. Students also raised more than \$500 for “Stuck For A Buck.” Stuck For A Buck raised money by selling tape to tape a teacher or student to the wall.

WHOLE HOUSE REMODELED HOME TOUR
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Public Hearings Funding the Right Transportation Projects

You are invited to share comments on transportation projects that have been recommended for funding in the FY2019-2024 Six-Year Improvement Program (SYIP). Additionally, pursuant to §33.2-202, comments will be accepted for new projects valued in excess of \$25 million. The Commonwealth Transportation Board will take your comments into consideration as it develops the FY2019-2024 Six-Year Improvement Program. The program allocates public funds to highway, road, bridge, rail, bicycle, pedestrian and public transportation projects. All federally eligible projects in the SYIP will be included in the Statewide Transportation Improvement Program to document how Virginia will obligate its federal funds.

Meeting materials will be available at <http://www.ctb.virginia.gov/planning/springmeetings/default.asp> beginning April 16, 2018.

Public meetings begin at 4:00 p.m. in each of the locations except as noted below:
A formal comment period will be held at these meetings.

<p>Monday, April 16, 2018 Hampton Roads - Hampton Roads Transportation Planning Organization, 723 Woodlake Drive Chesapeake, VA 23320</p>	<p>Thursday, April 19, 2018 Lynchburg - VDOT Lynchburg District Office Ramey Memorial Auditorium 4303 Campbell Avenue Lynchburg, VA 24501</p>	<p>Tuesday, April 24, 2018 Richmond - Hilton Garden Inn 800 Southpark Boulevard Colonial Heights, VA 23834</p>
<p>Monday, April 30, 2018* Northern Virginia - Northern Virginia District Office Potomac Conference Room 4975 Alliance Drive Fairfax, VA 22030</p> <p>*meeting begins at 5:30 p.m.</p>	<p>Thursday, May 3, 2018 Staunton - Holiday Inn and Conference Center 152 Fairway Lane Staunton, VA 24402</p>	<p>Monday, May 7, 2018 Culpeper - Culpeper District Auditorium 1601 Orange Road Culpeper, VA 22701</p>
<p>Tuesday May 8, 2018 Fredericksburg - Germanna Community College Workforce and Technology Center 10000 Germanna Point Drive, Fredericksburg, VA 22408</p>	<p>Thursday, May 10, 2018 Salem - Holiday Inn Valley View 3315 Ordway Drive NW Roanoke, VA 24017</p>	<p>Monday, May 14, 2018 Bristol - Southwest Virginia Higher Education Center One Partnership Circle Abingdon, VA 24210</p>

You can also submit your comments by email or mail by May 30, 2018:

For roads and highways: Six-YearProgram@VDOT.Virginia.gov, or Infrastructure Investment Director, Virginia Department of Transportation 1401 East Broad St., Richmond, VA 23219.

For rail and public transportation: DRPTPR@drpt.virginia.gov, Public Information Office, Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation 600 East Main Street, Suite 2102, Richmond VA, 23219.

The Commonwealth is committed to ensuring that no person is excluded from participation in, or denied the benefits of its services on the basis of race, color or national origin, as protected by Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. If you need further information on these policies or special assistance for persons with disabilities or limited English proficiency, please contact the Virginia Department of Transportation's Title VI Compliance Officer at 804-786-2730 or the Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation's Title VI Compliance Officer at 804-786-4440 (TTY users call 711).

NEWS

PHOTOS BY JENNIFER KAYE/THE CONNECTION



Some of the volunteers pictured before separating into smaller groups to pick up the trash along Jones Branch Road. From left: Pat Montanio, Tom Montanio, Patricia Leslie and Paul D'Onellas.

Celebrating Earth Day in Tysons

To celebrate Earth Day on Sunday, April 22 nine volunteers gathered to clean up Jones Branch Road in Tysons Corner. Hosted by the Sierra Club and Adopt-A-Highway, and organized by Sierra Club member Patricia Leslie, it was the fourth annual clean up day. Wearing safety vests and gloves, the volunteers covered the 1.4 mile stretch of road picking up all sorts of trash, such as hubcaps, plastic bottles, foil wrappers, cigarette butts and even multiple windshield wipers! After filling up numerous bags of trash, the volunteers celebrated Earth Day with cake and mimosas. The Sierra Club hosts a wide variety of events throughout the year across the United States. To find



The beautiful and delicious cake to celebrate Earth Day and a job well done.

events near your location you can visit their website <https://www.sierraclub.org>. To learn more about the Adopt-A-Highway program you can visit <http://www.virginiadot.org/programs/prog-aah-default.asp>

— JENNIFER KAYE

Falls Church residents Paul D'Ornellas and Terry Halter picking up litter along Jones Branch Road in Tysons.



CAMPS & SCHOOLS Affording Summer Camp

For families with a limited budget, paying for camp can be a challenge.

BY MARILYN CAMPBELL

One of the great pleasures of summer is going to camp. From kayaking and rock climbing to horseback riding and sailing, camp is a place where lifelong memories are created. A recent study by the non-profit, global policy think tank RAND Corporation shows that voluntary summer programs like camp have a significant, positive impact on low-income students during a time when they fall behind their wealthier peers both academically and socially.

Katie Crump, a case manager at Interfaith Works, a non-profit organization dedicated to helping the poor and underserved, says that the luxury of summer camp often eludes those who need it most.

"The opportunity of attending a real summer camp is a big thing for them. Unfortunately, this experience can be unattainable due to the high cost and finding transportation among other things," said Crump. "Attending summer camp affords kids a special and important experience that's all their own. It allows kids to be kids, something that is particularly vital for low-income children who are often forced to deal with the burdens of adulthood at a young age."

Despite the cost of summer camp, keeping children engaged during the stretch of time between June and August when school is not in session is a critical part of their

More

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development, says Jerome Short, Ph.D., associate professor of psychology at George Mason University.

"Summer camps give opportunities for children to develop social, emotional, cognitive, and behavioral skills," he said. "Some research shows that higher [socioeconomic status] children increase academic and behavioral skills over the summer and lower [socioeconomic status] children lose skills over the summer. Research shows that lower [socioeconomic status] children benefit from learning social and behavioral skills in different settings with new peers and challenges to apply their skills."

Even with limited resources, summer camps can still be accessible, says Tom Rosenberg, president and CEO of the American Camp Association (ACA). "There is a camp for every budget," he said "[Most] ACA-accredited camps provide some form of scholarship assistance. Reach out to the camp directly to ask about specific financial aid and scholarship options."

The RAND study also showed that even though low-income students can lose up to two months of math and reading skills over

the summer, high-quality summer programs can bridge that gap. Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) camps are an example of programs that can be effective, but possibly unaffordable for some families.

Wolftrap and Colvin Run elementary schools in Fairfax County will be the site of a non-profit STEM camp called Camp Invention. Organized by the National Inventors Hall of Fame (NIHF), the hands-on program is designed for children in kindergarten through sixth grade. Through activities like building robots and designing gadgets, campers get a sense of what it's like to be a physicist or engineer.

"The program has sponsors that provide funding that's used to help underrepresented kids attend the camps," said Ken Torisky, spokesman for National Inventors Hall of Fame. "The money is distributed to students by the school district."

Options for financial assistance for summer camp run the gamut from discounts for dependents of those serving in the military to camp funding offered by churches, synagogues, and civic organizations. "I would suggest to parents that they look into their child being sponsored by a local business to attend a camp or look into payment plan options at a camp that they are interested in attending," advised Stacie Gottlieb, director, Bullis Summer and Extended Day

Programs in Potomac, Md.

While Bullis does not offer financial assistance for summer camp, Gottlieb says that there are discounts for early registration and registering for multiple weeks of camp.

Parents should check to see if a camp participates in U.S. government assistance programs, particularly those with income eligibility requirements, like Title XX, advises Rosenberg. While it might be too late for this summer, he encourages parents to explore Dependent Care Flexible Spending Accounts and a Child and Dependent Care tax credit through the FSA Feds website: <https://www.fsafeds.com/>.

"I generally think lower income children benefit when they have access to the same opportunities as upper-income children and also gain cultural skills and knowledge important to upward mobility when they have opportunity to interact with upper-income kids," said Amy L. Best, Ph.D., professor and chair, Department of Sociology and Anthropology at George Mason University. "I also think upper-income kids gain mightily when they have genuine interactions with kids from other class backgrounds. Because empathy, cross cultural understanding, and an ability to work in diverse groups are skills that this new century demands, having opportunities to hone those skills are of value for all involved."

STAYING SAFE TOGETHER

May is National Bike Month! Expect more people biking on roads and trails. Here are some safety tips from BikeFairfax.

- SPEED LIMIT 35**: Follow posted speed limits.
- STOP SIGN**: Come to a complete stop at red lights and stop signs, including when turning right. Always yield to people crossing the street.
- NO TEXTING**: Avoid distractions. Never text while operating a vehicle.

Join us for the National Bike Challenge - May
Bike to School Day - May 9 and
Bike to Work Day - May 18
fairfaxcounty.gov/transportation/bike-walk

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When: Sunday, May 6, 2-4 p.m.

Where: The Old Firehouse Center
1440 Chain Bridge Rd.
McLean, VA 22101

Who: Four adult candidates, two teens from the Langley High School boundary area, and three teens from the McLean High School boundary area.

Format: Informal Reception

Come and meet the four adults and five teens who are vying for votes to fill vacant seats on the MCC Governing Board. Three adult and two teen seats (one for the Langley High School boundary area; one for the McLean High School boundary area) will be filled. Only residents of Small District 1A-Dranesville are eligible to vote.

Refreshments will be served.
For planning purposes, please let us know if you will attend by emailing elections@mcleancenter.org.
See you there!

The McLean Community Center
703-790-0123/TTY: 711
www.mcleancenter.org

CALENDAR

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

ONGOING

“Fly By Night.” Through May 6 at 1st Stage in Tysons, 1524 Spring Hill Road, Tysons Corner. It’s 1965 in New York City and the lights are about to go out. But not before a melancholy sandwich maker becomes enchanted with two sisters in this bittersweet romantic tale about finding hope in a world beset by darkness. Play by Kim Rosenstock, Michael Mitnick, and Will Connolly, directed by Kathryn Chase Bryer. \$38 general admission, \$35 seniors (65+), \$15 students and military. Visit www.1ststage.org or call 703-854-1856.

“Trees, Trees, and Beyond.” Through May 31 at Meadowlark Botanical Gardens, 9750 Meadowlark Gardens Court, Vienna. Vienna Arts Society Exhibition. Free. Open 10-7 p.m. in April; 10-7:30 p.m. in May. Visit www.ViennaArtsSociety.org or call 703-319-3971.

McLean Farmers Market Opens Friday, May 4. Fridays 8 a.m.-noon at Lewinsville Park, 1659 Chain Bridge Rd., McLean. Closed May 19 for McLean Day set up.

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

THURSDAY/APRIL 26

Art Exhibition: Aware. 11:30 a.m.-1:30 p.m. at ServiceSource Headquarters, 10467 White Granite Drive, Oakton. In celebration of Autism Awareness Month, ServiceSource is hosting AWARE., an art exhibition featuring artists on the autism spectrum to raise awareness of disability advocacy efforts in the NoVA community. BBQ will be served. Free. Call 703-970-3653 or visit www.servicesource.org.

“Colors of Change” Film. 7 p.m. at Great Falls Library, 9830 Georgetown Pike, Great Falls. Filmmaker Jenny Nichols, who grew up in Great Falls, explores Greenland through the eyes of an artist, a NASA scientist, and an Inuit elder. Each character represents a different way that humans internalize information: heart, mind and spirit. They demonstrate the intersection of art, culture and science in a region defined by climate change. Presented by Great Falls Studios. Contact James Diedrich at james.jemail@gmail.com.

THURSDAY-SUNDAY/APRIL 26-29

“9 to 5, The Musical.” April 26, 27, and 28 at 7 p.m.; with matinees April 28 and 29, 2 p.m. at McLean High School’s Burke Auditorium, 1633 Davidson Road, McLean. Get up and work as McLean High School’s “TheatreMcLean” presents Dolly Parton’s hit musical comedy, “9 to 5.” Tickets are \$12/online; \$15/door. To order tickets, visit theatremclean.org.

FRIDAY/APRIL 27

Landscape Painting by Gavin Glakas. 10 a.m.-noon at Dolley Madison Library, 1244 Oak Ridge Ave., McLean. At the meeting of the McLean Art Society. Glakas works in oil paints and has demonstrated aspects of portrait painting for us previously. Guests are welcome. Call 703 356-2998.

Night Out at National Harbor. 3:30-11:30 p.m. Meets at The Old Firehouse, 1440 Chain Bridge Road, McLean. Part of the Old Firehouse Friday Night Trips. Cost is \$55/\$45

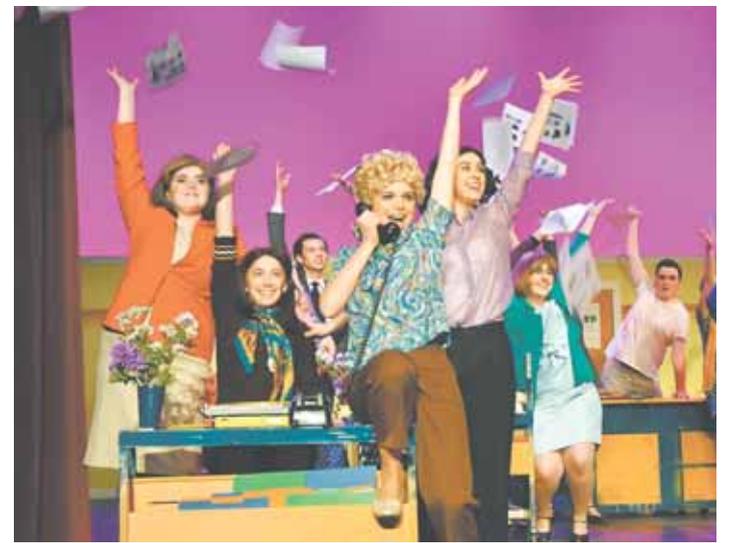


PHOTO BY MARGARET WAAGNER

‘9 to 5’ the Musical at McLean High

The ensemble of ‘9 to 5’ the Musical at McLean High celebrates changes that make workplace life better. From left: Jordan Prather, Ruby Larimer, Adam Stanton, Easton McCollough, Kristen Waagner, Julia Luigs, and Trevor Hazen. Tickets:

www.TheatreMcLean.org. \$12 online or \$15 at the door. Shows: April 26-29 at McLean HS. ‘9 to 5’ the Musical, with music and lyrics by Dolly Parton, is a joyful, outrageous, thought-provoking and a little romantic comedy about friendship and revenge in the Rolodex era. Shows: Thursday, April 26, 7 p.m.; Friday, April 27, 7 p.m.; Saturday, April 28, 2 and 7 p.m. and Sunday, April 29, 2 p.m.

MCC District Residents. Take in extraordinary views of Washington, D.C., on the Capital Wheel, dinner and discover much more. Admission and dinner are included in the fee. Visit www.mcleancenter.org.

FRIDAY-SUNDAY/APRIL 27-29

ValeArts Show. At Vale Schoolhouse, 3124 Fox Mill Road, Oakton. “Spring into Color” features 150 original works in various media. Free. Artists include Jenna Klimchak, Lorrie Herman, Laura Barringer, Meredith Hannon, Linda Lovell, Traci Oberle, and Mary Beth Gaiarin who will be joined by guest artists Kathleen Best Gillmann and Kim Richards. Hours are 10-9 p.m. Friday; 10-6 p.m. Saturday and Sunday. Visit www.valearts.com. Call 703-860-1888.

SATURDAY/APRIL 28

Fairfax Run for the Children. 8 a.m. at Fairfax County Courthouse Complex, 4110 Chain Bridge Road, Fairfax. Join Fairfax Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA) for the 8th Annual 8K and 3K races. The superhero-themed race attracts nearly 1,000 runners and walkers, 250 volunteers, and raises almost \$85,000 each year to support Fairfax CASA’s advocacy work with abused and neglected children in the community. Participants can enjoy the after race celebration, including superhero meet and greets, a DJ, free food, face painting, kids’ crafts, photo booth, and more. Visit www.fairfaxrunforthechildren.com/.

Visitors from Outer Space. 11 a.m.-noon at Turner Farm’s Observatory Park, 925 Springvale Road, Great Falls. Learn about meteorites and where they come from. Touch and examine visitors from space, including meteorite specimens from the moon and Mars. The cost is \$8 per person. Call 703-324-8618 or visit www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/turner-farm.

Phillips Programs Gala. 6 p.m. at the Hilton McLean, 7920 Jones Branch Drive, McLean. Phillips Programs for Children and Families, a nonprofit helping youth with a variety of challenges and qualities

succeed, is hosting its annual spring gala with auctions, raffles, dinner, and dancing. Cost is \$200. Contact Debi Alexander at debi.alexander@phillipsprograms.org.

April in Paris Patrons’ Gala. 6-11 p.m. at the Embassy of France, 4101 Reservoir Road, NW, Washington, D.C. Tysons McLean Orchestra’s annual gala features extraordinary live auction packages and world-class live entertainment. Cost is \$275 per person. Visit tysonsmcleanorchestra.org.

SATURDAY-SUNDAY/APRIL 28-29

Used Book Sale. 10 a.m.-4 p.m., Saturday; 10 a.m.-2 p.m., Sunday at Patrick Henry Library, 101 Maple Ave., East, Vienna. Featuring thousands of top quality used books. Fill a big shopping bag with books, movies, CDs, DVDs, etc, for \$5. Credit cards accepted. Visit www.fairfaxcounty.gov/library/branches/ph or call 703-568-0104.

National Community Band Festival. Saturday, 4 p.m.; Sunday, 1 p.m. at GMU’s Center for the Arts, 4373 Mason Pond Drive, Fairfax. Sponsored by Fairfax Wind Symphony and GMU’s School of Music. The Fairfax Wind Symphony was formed in the fall of 1999 for the benefit of local music directors and teachers. Visit www.facebook.com/ffxws/.

SUNDAY/APRIL 29

Sustainable Style Expo. 1-3 p.m. at McLean Old Firehouse Center, 1440 Chain Bridge Road, McLean. Free. Join the Sustainable Style Initiative in commemorating Fashion Revolution Week 2018. Enjoy a screening of documentary “The True Cost,” DIY station, vendors and more. RSVP at sustainablestyleinitiative.org.

Walk on the Hill & Green Expo. 2-5 p.m. at Windover Heights Historic District, Vienna. Approximately 50 homes in the town’s northwest historic district will be open to visitors, which also will feature the second annual green expo. Vienna Art Society members will be in the

SEE CALENDAR, PAGE 9

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CALENDAR

FROM PAGE 8

gardens doing plein air paintings. Free and open to public. Visit www.viennava.gov/index.aspx?NID=1244.

Silver Jubilee Concert. 4-6 p.m. Free. At Saint Luke Catholic Church, 7001 Georgetown Pike, McLean. Honoring Artistic Director Paul Skevington and his 25 years at St. Luke's. Features Skevington playing the Franck Chorale No. 2 and the Bach Passacaglia and Fugue on the Steiner-Reck Organ. Collaborator and trumpeter Phil Snedecor will play the Albinoni Adagio and his arrangement of the Bernstein Simple Song. A gala reception follows. Contact www.musicinmclean.org.

TUESDAY/MAY 1

Golf Clinic Registration Opens. At Oak Marr Golf Complex, 3136 Jermantown Road, Oakton. Introduce your 8-17-year-old to the fundamentals of golf with one-hour junior clinics. Clinics are offered for \$15 each and run April through August. Spring registration is now open; summer registration opens May 1, 2018. Space is limited. To register, visit www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/golf/junior.

WEDNESDAY/MAY 2

Coffee for Newcomers. 11 a.m.-12:30 p.m. at McLean Project for the Arts, 1446 Chain Bridge Road, McLean. McLean Newcomers and Neighbors will host a coffee for its members and for others who might be interested in joining. Visit www.McLeanNewcomers.org.

MAY 3-12

"Titanic the Musical." 7 p.m. at Oakton High School, 2900 Sutton Road, Vienna. This is the factual story of that ship — of her officers, crew and passengers. Titanic is a musical with music and lyrics by Maury Yeston and a book by Peter Stone that opened on Broadway in 1997. Tickets are \$15. Show times are May 3-5, and 11-12. Information about the performance is at titanic.oaktondrama.org or visit the website at www.oaktondrama.org.

FRIDAY/MAY 4

Farmers Market Re-Opens. 8 a.m.-noon at 1659 Chain Bridge Road, McLean. Runs Fridays, May 4-Nov. 16. To kick off spring, farmers expect to have an abundance of fresh cut greens, asparagus, strawberries, rhubarb, apples, beets, carrots and more. Everything is harvested hours before sale to ensure optimum taste and nutrition. Visit www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/farmersmarkets or contact the Community Horticulture Office at 703-342-9773.

FRIDAY-SATURDAY/MAY 4-5

"Blithe Spirit" Play Production. 8 p.m. at Vienna Community Center, 120 Cherry St., SE, Vienna. Noel Coward's famous 1941 comedy. Presented by Vienna Theatre Company and Vienna Department of Recreation. Tickets \$14. Visit www.viennatheatrecompany.org.

SATURDAY/MAY 5

Taste of Korea. 9 a.m.-2 p.m. at Korean United Methodist Church of Greater Washington, 1219 Swinks Mill Road, McLean. Sample homemade Korean food and experience Korean culture. Cultural programs such as Korean traditional dance performances (11:30 a.m. and 12:30 p.m.), Tiger Den's Tae Kwon Do demo performance (noon), trying on traditional Korean costumes and games for children. Also there will be a rummage sale and sale of Korean knick-knacks. Visit www.kumcgw.org

Parenting Expert to Speak in McLean

The Safe Community Coalition will present Dr. Wendy Mogel, clinical psychologist, parenting expert, and New York Times best-selling author, on Wednesday, May 2, at 7 p.m. at Temple Rodef Shalom in McLean. In her new book, "Voice Lessons for Parents: What to Say, How to Say it, and When to Listen," Dr. Mogel offers an essential guide to the art of talking with children of all ages, showing us how a change in voice can transform communication and ease the relationship between parents and children.

Tickets are available from voicelessons.brownpapertickets.com for \$25 per person, \$30 at the door. A book signing will immediately follow the presentation. A limited number of copies of



PHOTO CONTRIBUTED

Dr. Wendy Mogel

Dr. Mogel's newest book, "Voice Lessons for Parents: What to Say, How to Say it, and When to Listen," will be for sale as well as copies of her first two books.

SATURDAY-SUNDAY/MAY 5-MAY 6

Annual GFS ArtFest. 10 a.m.-5 p.m. at Great Falls Grange and Great Falls Village Center Studios, 9818 Georgetown Pike and 756 and 766 Walker Road, Great Falls. Paintings, photography, pottery, jewelry, fiber arts and more will be available for purchase. Many artists will have smaller items available for purchase. Free. Visit www.greatfallsstudios.com.

SUNDAY/MAY 6

Vienna Jammers Big Jam Concert. 4 p.m. at Madison High School, 2500 James Madison Drive, Vienna. The Vienna Jammers are an auditioned percussion ensemble made up of children ages 7-18, led by Vienna Elementary School music teacher David Lee Reynolds, Jr. Performing a mix of cover songs, original pieces, and traditional music. Get your tickets at www.viennajammers.org.

TUESDAY/MAY 8

Meet Monica Bhide. 7:30-9 p.m. at Patrick Henry Library, 101 Maple Ave., E, Vienna. Bhide is the author of Karma and the Art of Butter Chicken, which is "set in contemporary India and seasoned with gentle love, dramatic loss, enchanting poetic verse, and exotic food". She has also authored multiple books on Indian cooking. Books available for sale and signing. Call 703-938-0405 or visit <https://librarycalendar.fairfaxcounty.gov/event/3806630>

WEDNESDAY/MAY 9

Speaker Carole Herrick. 7 p.m. at Great Falls Library, 9830 Georgetown Pike, Great Falls. Presented by the Great Falls Historical Society, her talk titled "Washington in Flames, the 1812 Sacking of Washington, and the Escape of the President and Mrs. Madison Through Our Area," is based on her published book on this subject. Carole Herrick is currently the Chair of the Fairfax County History Commission and President of the McLean Historical Society.

THURSDAY/MAY 10

VAS Workshop. 7:30 p.m. at Vienna Arts Center, 115 Pleasant St., NW, Vienna. Golden paints mixed media lecture, demo and meeting with artist

and teacher Amy Shawley Paquette. Visit www.amyshawley.com or www.ViennaArtsSociety.org or call 703-319-3971.

MPA to Host Art+Music Series. 7:30 p.m. at Bullock Hitt Gallery in MPA@ChainBridge, 1446 Chain Bridge Road, McLean. Free. The Dave Kline Band takes the stage. RSVP at mpaart.org.

FRIDAY/MAY 11

NVFS's Independence Gala. 6-9 p.m. at Hilton McLean Tysons Corner, 7920 Jones Branch Drive, McLean. NVFS's Road to Independence Gala provides an elegant setting for leaders and supporters to celebrate the foundations of well-being that NVFS helps create for families and individuals. Visit www.nvfs.org/events/road-to-independence-gala/.

SATURDAY/MAY 12

MPA to Host Art+Music Series. 7:30 p.m. at Bullock Hitt Gallery in MPA@ChainBridge, 1446 Chain Bridge Road, McLean. Free. Featuring the musical collective Sound Impact. RSVP at mpaart.org.

MONDAY/MAY 14

Golf Tournament. 1:30 p.m. Shotgun Start at Hidden Creek Country Club, 1711 Clubhouse Road, Reston. The 2018 Celebrate Great Falls Foundation Golf Tournament. Proceeds benefit Great Falls, Forestville and Colvin Run Elementary schools. Afternoon registration 12:15-1:15 p.m. Foursome - \$600; Single Golfer - \$175. Online Silent Auction opens on May 1. Visit www.greatfallsgolf.org.

WEDNESDAY/MAY 16

Washington Nationals Game. 7:05 p.m. The McLean Racquet and Health Club, 1472 Chain Bridge Road, McLean, has procured a block of tickets for the Nationals/Yankees game. Tickets are limited and will go fast so reserve yours today. This game will sell out and will be difficult to get a ticket on your own. Tickets are \$40. Seats are located in the lower level outfield reserved section. Everyone will be seated together. You will need your own transportation. Contact Steve Davis or Dave Kline or call the club at 703-356-3300.

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NEWS

South Lakes Junior Elected to Student Member, School Board

Benjamin (Bennie) Tignor, a junior at South Lakes High School, has been elected by the countywide Student Advisory Council (SAC) to serve a one-year term as student representative to the Fairfax County School Board, beginning July 1.

Tignor will participate in School Board meetings as a nonvoting member, filling the position currently held by Niharika Vattikonda, a senior at TJHSST. He will be the 48th student representative to the School Board.

According to Fairfax County Public Schools newsletter — Tignor says he hopes to use his position to facilitate “a two-way flow of information, not only from student to Board, but from Board to student. This ensures that students understand that there are representatives who hear their voices, and although they may be limited by budget or policy restrictions, are working to improve the average student’s life.

“Maintaining the student voice and ensuring it is heard is crucial to fostering the high academic standards, healthy and ethical lives, and responsibility the School Board aims to inspire within the student body,” he adds. “I feel it is my duty, as a member of the Fairfax County student body, to project the voices of my peers to those who can interpret and take initiative on their behalf. At times, students feel that individually their voice does not have an impact ... I would be able to ensure these voices are heard.”

HE LISTS four main issues as priorities for the School Board, including: school safety in response to school shootings, school workload and pressure toward International Baccalaureate (IB) and Advanced Placement (AP) diplomas, the ability of students to present feedback on issues that directly impact the student body, and methods of teaching and personal learning within advanced courses.

Tignor says he wants to advocate for new methods of learning that will accommodate all of the ways students learn while allowing for “a broader expression of learning styles” in the classroom.

As an advocate for project-based learning, he has spoken in favor of a broader use of project-based learning both to FCPS instructional personnel and at a regional project-based learning conference, saying that it “allows the individual to express his or her method of learning in the best way that suits them, incentivizing innovation and the freedom to enjoy what you produce as a student.”

Tignor believes his work in leadership positions at South Lakes and the initiative he has taken in these positions have prepared him to serve as the Student Representative to the School Board. He currently serves as president of the German Honor Society and, in his leadership class, helped increase participation in the school’s character education program (Scholarship, Ownership, Awareness, and Respect) by 220 percent in less than half a semester. He also helped design and execute the Terraset Workshop, which was recently recognized by the Virginia Student Councils Association.



Benjamin (Bennie) Tignor

PHOTO COURTESY OF FCPS

AT SOUTH LAKES, Tignor has taken honors courses in algebra, biology, English, world history and geography, U.S. and Virginia government; IB courses in chemistry, math, history of the Americas, English literature, biology, physics, and German; and classes in German, orchestra, leadership, and stem engineering. He has been on the All A Honor Roll from 2015-17, and is a varsity lacrosse player.

Tignor is also a member of the National Honor Society and the Interact (Rotary) Club. He took first place in the Biomedical Engineering category of the Regional Science Fair this year for his entry, The Effects of Concentrations of Immobilized Enzymes on the Rate of Enzymatic Activity, which also won a first place award from the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office Society. He has earned Gold Awards on the National German Examination for the past three years, and served internships at the BMW M division design studio and Brainlab Headquarters, both in Munich. Tignor mentors third and sixth grade students at Terraset Elementary every week, and formerly volunteered at Frying Pan Park.

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Challengers

FROM PAGE 3

tions and service, Helmer suggested that it was time for a new generation to take the helm in Congress. "There is something wrong with our politics," he said, "that made so many willing to vote for Donald Trump."

Helmer was also the candidate to turn up the heat on one of his opponents when the issue of gun violence was raised. Helmer called out "someone on this stage" who he said accepted money from the National Rifle Association and other corporations during her political career, and who had voted for legislation approving reciprocity for permitted carriers of concealed weapons from other states.

SEVERAL OTHER QUESTIONS were asked of the candidates and answered, but Helmer smoothly looped back to the gun control issue and acceptance of corporate political contributions.

Sen. Wexton was ultimately identified as the target of Helmer's attack and Kessler gave her the opportunity to respond.

Pointing out that among the candidates she was the only one to ever hold elected office, Wexton said "this is what you do when you govern. You compromise." She further defended her vote saying that the bill was the result of a deal between the NRA, Republicans, and then-Gov. Terry McAuliffe and that its passage aided victims of domestic violence and allowed background checks at gun shows.

Wexton later acknowledged taking contributions from Dominion Energy in previous campaigns, but has already pledged not to take PAC money during this election.

Despite those few more heated exchanges, the candidates and their supporters seemed focused on the goal of continuing the "Blue Wave" that saw a dozen Democrats sweep into office in Richmond, and their mission to "replace and repeal Barbara Comstock" as Alison Friedman put it. Attendees like Susan Jacobs of McLean who backs Dan Helmer and thinks he's the best chance to beat Comstock, and Andrew Fierro of Great Falls who supports Dr. Biggins, both say they are rooting for their candidate, but will support whoever wins the June 12 primary.



PHOTO BY ANDREA WORKER/THE CONNECTION
The inflatable "greeter" at the entrance to the debate. The candidates spent much of their time attacking the Republican Congress, incumbent Rep. Barbara Comstock, and President Trump.

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You Mean Tomorrow Tuesday?



By KENNETH B. LOURIE

Not that deadlines don't happen in the newspaper business; of course they do, every Tuesday for us weeklies. But when combined with my usual post-chemotherapy malaise, it is a bit more challenging. More so when the deadline is tightened up due to the nature of hitting and occasionally missing in-house communications, which is also not unreasonable given the multiple demands multi tasking imposes.

Compounding this task even more is that until I'm back to semi post-chemo normal, in the interim, I am not eating too much, not sleeping well, have low energy (related to the previous two deficiencies), my hands are shaky, my balance is off and I'm having some difficulty focusing. It's a good thing I'm sitting at a desk while attempting to write this column because operating any heavy machinery would definitely be out of the question. What I need to do is mind my own business.

Business which at the moment involves fending off my buff-colored male cat, Chino, as he angles to sit on my writing pad as I move him from left to right - and then right to left since he won't take "Chino, move!" for a directive. But if I know anything, other than what to expect post chemo, I also know what to expect from Chino - or any of the other cats we manage: independence, as any fellow cat owner knows. Unlike a "true and loyal dog," a cat, generally speaking, is not inclined to respond to your commands, well, too many of them, anyway. Nor are they likely to respond to any physical discipline and/or pushing/pulling/redirection. Invariably, if you push, they pull. If you pull, they push.

How Chino knows I'm not feeling well and on an unanticipated and abbreviated deadline, I'll never know. But rather than leave me to it, he'll interfere every way possible: nuzzling, nudging, leaning, rubbing, meowing, moving about and plopping down when all else fails. If you love cats as we do, this is their charm. If you don't love them and their antics, I can see how this kind of behavior can be very frustrating.

I mean, with all this activity, it's difficult to think about what I'm supposed to be doing when I'm so busy preventing things from getting done. I imagine Chino thinks he's doing me a favor, being so affectionate and so in the way. Maybe he thinks he's contributing to the creative process by sitting in the middle of my writing pad? In a way, maybe he is. He's forcing me to concentrate. Moreover, he's forcing me to focus on this most immediate task which, at the moment, has me fending him off with my left wrist while I'm scribbling prose with my right hand. Oddly enough, it might be working as I'm three-quarters finished with this column which 30 minutes ago was a weekend task until it became a today/Tuesday task.

Now if I didn't have a CT scan and lower abdomen MRI scheduled for Wednesday, I'd have a bit more time to sort out the details of writing this column. Unfortunately, post-chemo, mid-newspaper deadline and pre-scan is a triple threat which sometimes can impose its will. A 'will' which I take personally so I will persevere and complete this column with one final paragraph now that Chino has left my desk and likely ended up on some unoccupied couch to sleep; he's had a big day.

All kidding aside, if there's one behavior I need more than any other during these deadline triple threats, it's companionship. Because of Chino and our other four cats: Andrew, Sloane, Biscuit and Twinkle, I am never alone and always have someone to talk to who, occasionally talks back. Not that we understand one another, but it's giving and getting, and it's loving and affecting - me and my cancer; and everything in between.

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



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