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Springfield

CONNECTION

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Shark Tank Racing Squad swimmers, ages 8-18, take a break from doing laps during the Swim Marathon to Fight Breast Cancer on Sunday, April 22, 2018, at the South Run Rec Center pool in Springfield.

A Shark Tank Racing Squad Marathon

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Lucky Half Penny

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Proposed Budget Hit All the Right Notes

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CAMPS & SCHOOLS

PAGE 8

Key Filler-Corn Priorities Signed By the Governor



Del. Eileen Filler-Corn

During a very productive legislative session, many key priorities championed by Del. Eileen Filler-Corn (D-41) passed the Virginia House and Senate this year and made their way to Governor Ralph Northam for his signature, including:

- ❖ Teaching About Boundaries and Personal Privacy in School: Filler-Corn's bill, HB 45 will re-

quire any family life education curriculum offered in any elementary school, middle school, or high school to incorporate age-appropriate elements of effective and evidence-based programs on the importance of the personal privacy and personal boundaries of other individuals. This measure was signed into law on March 19. HB 45 builds upon Filler-Corn's successful legislation from 2016 and

2017, which requires any high school family life education curriculum offered by a local school division to incorporate age-appropriate elements of effective and evidence-based programs on the prevention of dating violence, domestic abuse, sexual harassment, and sexual violence and also allows education about the law and meaning of consent.

- ❖ Making College More Afford-

able: Filler-Corn's bill, HB 454 will require the governing board of each public institution of higher education to implement guidelines that encourage the adoption and use of low-cost and no-cost open educational resources in courses offered at such institution. The measure will help universities and faculties make class materials more affordable to college students. The Governor signed this

bill on April 4.

- ❖ Protecting Health Care Workers and Cutting Government Red Tape: Filler-Corn's bill, HB 456 would have repealed a little known provision allowing a loan provider to petition a circuit court to order the suspension of any state-issued license to engage in a health care profession or occupation when the licensed person is either delinquent or in default in the payment of a federally guaranteed or state-guaranteed educational loan or work-conditional scholarship. Filler-Corn struck her bill and signed on as Chief Co-Patron of a similar bill, HB 456 sponsored by Del. Schuyler Van Valkenburg. The Governor signed the bill on March 5.

- ❖ Taking Government Out of the Doctor's Office: Filler-Corn introduced HB 458 which would provide that a practitioner may issue a written certification for the use of cannabidiol oil or THC-A oil for the treatment, or to alleviate the symptoms of, any diagnosed condition or disease. Under current law, a practitioner may only issue such certification for the treatment or to alleviate the symptoms of intractable epilepsy. Filler-Corn's bill was rolled into HB 1251 sponsored by Del. Ben Cline, on which Filler-Corn serves as a chief copatron. The bill was signed on March 9. This builds upon Filler-Corn's work with Sen. Dave Marsden and her constituents from the 41st District to decriminalize cannabidiol oil since 2015.

- ❖ Improving Virginia's Criminal Justice System: For the past two years, Del. Filler-Corn has carried the Governor's legislation to increase the felony larceny threshold. Her bill, HB 706, would have raised the threshold from \$200 to \$1000. Similar legislation, HB 1550, passed with Filler-Corn as a co-patron. HB 1550 raises the threshold from \$200 to \$500 and was signed into law by Governor Northam on April 4.

- ❖ Making Travel Safer for Infants and Toddlers: Although the enactment is delayed until 2019, Filler-Corn's bill HB 708, will prohibit child restraint devices (car seats) from being forward-facing until, at least, the child reaches two years of age or until the child reaches the minimum weight limit for a forward-facing child restraint device as prescribed by the manufacturer of the device. The bill will also expand the reasons that a

SEE RICHMOND REPORT, PAGE 7

Fight Back Against Fraud!

DISCOVER THE REAL POSSIBILITIES IN Virginia
AARP IN YOUR COMMUNITY

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.





Shark Tank Racing Squad Coach Patty Friedman chats with the swim team before the swimming marathon.



PHOTOS BY STEVE HIBBARD/THE CONNECTION

Senior members of the Shark Tank team who were awarded medals include (from left): Cora Lundgren, Ryan McLaughlin, Jamie Quinn, and Emil Robles.

A Shark Tank Racing Squad Marathon

Swim team raises \$31,500 to fight breast cancer at South Run Rec Center.

BY STEVE HIBBARD
THE CONNECTION

About 60 members of the Shark Tank Racing Squad, ages 8-18 plus three adult coaches, took part in a swim marathon on Sunday, April 22, 2018 at the South Run Rec Center in Springfield where they raised \$32,000 to fight breast cancer. In the eight years they've been holding these swimming marathons, they've raised a total of \$200,000 for the cause.

The swimmers are part of the Potomac Valley Swimming Club and come from seven local high schools: Woodson, West Springfield, Thomas Jefferson, Robinson, South County, Hayfield and Saint John Paul the Great. They are coached by Patty Friedman of Fairfax Station who is the team founder and National and Senior Team Coach.

"There are 60 kids in the water; many are here for their eighth time but there are many that are new. They will swim three to four miles today and their individual efforts allow them to feel the power of what you can do as a person," said Friedman. "But we gather at the beginning and at the end to celebrate the power of numbers and the importance of bonding with other people and realize when you give, it reflects back on you 1,000 times. There are many of these kids here who have been affected one way or another by breast cancer."

FRIEDMAN said for seven of the eight years, the money went to the Avon Foundation, which then granted the money out to local organizations. Avon ended the walk



Kealani Nanz of Fairfax Station, who made the breast cancer banner, with coach Patty Friedman.

this year and so they found another organization to support — the National Breast Cancer Coalition.

She said next week they will go to the summit of the National Breast Cancer Coalition in Washington, D.C. and the kids will present the check. "The kids will learn a little bit more about the project, and on Tuesday, a few of the older kids will go to Capitol Hill to lobby their members to try to get more money towards the NBCC Artemis Project. This is under National Breast Cancer Coalition," she said.

Swimmer Riley Allison, 17, of Fairfax, who attends Woodson High School, raised \$1,000 with his brother Nathan and sister Hope, and swam 120 laps in the pool — in his fifth marathon. "Today we're going to be swimming as a team and we all worked together to raise money to fight breast can-

cer. This money is going to be going toward research for a cure for breast cancer or slow it down and help combat it," he said.

Swimmer Ryan McLaughlin, 17, of Fairfax, who attends Woodson High, raised \$650, and swam 153 laps.

"For a month or two now, we've been raising money. We've been asking family members, friends, neighbors, just anything they'd be willing to donate to help us raise money for the National Breast Cancer Coalition — because it means so much to Coach Patty and she's been such a role model for me," he said.

"I wanted to help her. But also, my aunt, my Godmother and my Godfather's wife, they all had breast cancer.

This is a disease that is found in 1 in 8 women and you never know who's going to be the next one. It could be your sister,

your neighbor, your mother. And so, it's something that really needs to be taken down. ... And it's helped me realize that I have the power to help make a change — to make a difference," he said.

Swimmer Jamie Quinn, 18, of Fairfax, who attends Woodson High, raised more than \$400, and swam 143 laps. "This is actually my first year doing this, my first time being on the team and this is new to me. [Coach Patty] is always giving back and I'm so grateful to be part of this. My intent is to raise money and inform people about breast cancer awareness," she said.

Swimmer Alejandro Rodriguez, 17, of Alexandria, who attends Hayfield Secondary, raised \$500, and swam 153 laps — his eighth marathon. "Each year, every time I take part in the marathon, Coach Patty always instills upon us the

values of not only being the ones to talk about making a difference but being the leaders to truly take a step and make a difference.

And it's amazing to be able to make such a difference, not only with peers, but with younger kids to change the world.

Swimmer Cora Lundgren, 18, of Fairfax, who goes to Woodson High, raised \$500, and swam 143 laps. "I want to raise awareness for breast cancer and for all the people who suffer from the disease. My grandmother was a survivor of breast cancer and I want to swim my laps to help honor her and the other people who suffer from breast cancer," she said.

TO SUPPORT the Shark Tank Racing Squad, their fundraising page is: www.tinyurl.com/2018armyoflove.

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WEEK

Ramadan Pack-Out Session in Springfield

Islamic Relief USA will hold its annual Ramadan Food Box Pack-Out sessions in four states this year. The events will take place in Texas, New Jersey, Illinois, and Virginia.

Virginia session will take place on Saturday, May 5, at 6820 Commercial Dr., Suite F in Springfield. The first shift is from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. and the second shift is from 2 to 6 p.m.

The sessions consist of volunteers packing boxes with nonperishable foods. The packages will be given to people in need in their local communities through food pantries, houses of worship, among other locations. The goal is to create some 5,000 packaged meals at each location. All food will go to residents in the United States.

"During Ramadan, it is essential for Muslims to not only fast from sunrise to sunset," said Said Durrah, national volunteers manager for IRUSA. "It also is a time to reflect, to think about people in your community with little means, especially with regards to healthy food. The food box pack-out sessions enable local communities to make a positive difference."

Among the different tasks volunteers could do are putting together and breaking down cardboard boxes, carrying and arranging boxes of food, and sealing packages.

This year also marks the 25th year of the founding of IRUSA.

For more information on the organization or the pack-outs, visit irusa.org.



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).



PHOTOS CONTRIBUTED

Students of the Nguabu School in Sierra Leone supported by West Springfield Rotary Club project.

West Springfield Rotary to Help Promote Education in Sierra Leone

Rotary International has awarded a \$101,000 grant to the Rotary Clubs of West Springfield (with members from Burke, Fairfax Station and Springfield), Gainesville-Haymarket and Caroline County, Va. and Bo, Sierra Leone to support three primary schools in remote villages in that West African nation. The assistance to the schools will result in significant, sustained improvements in their ability to provide the necessary primary education and in turn drive long term positive impacts for their local communities.

The grant will enable the Rotary Clubs to install latrines and solar electricity systems in each school and send three teachers from each school

to Njala University for training and certification. Another major element is health and sanitation training.

During this three-year project, the Rotary clubs will be working with the three villages to ensure they develop local funding sources and implement practices to sustain schools into the future. In addition to requiring that the project be sustainable, RI grants require extensive project monitoring to measure success against well-defined metrics. The service project progress will be regularly updated on the Rotary Club of West Springfield Facebook site devoted to this project: <https://www.facebook.com/WSRCSierraLeoneProject>



Largoh School - one of the schools supported by Rotary project.



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Budget Hits All the Right Notes

By SHARON BULOVA
CHAIRMAN, FAIRFAX COUNTY
BOARD OF SUPERVISORS



During Tuesday, April 24's 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 [on Tuesday] 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 BOARD

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

STEM Professionals Needed. Help assist K-12 STEM teachers as part of the American Association for the Advancement of Science's STEM Volunteer Program, stemvolunteers.org, during the 2018-19 school year. In the 2017-18 school year, there are 85 volunteers in six Northern Virginia school districts. Contact Don Rea at 571-551-2488, or donaldrea@aol.com.

Volunteer Adult Mentors Needed. Help assist the Department of Family Services' BeFriendA-Child mentoring program. The mentors provide opportunities for companionship,

guidance and support to children who have been abused and neglected, or who are at risk of abuse and neglect. Contact Ibrahim Khalil at Ibrahim.khalil@fairfaxcounty.gov or 703-324-4547.

KINDERGARTEN REGISTRATION

Child turning 5 years old by Sept. 30? If so, contact your child's school to make arrangements for kindergarten enrollment. Most schools begin getting information together now for parents of incoming kindergartners, and many host an orientation or open house. All kindergarten programs are full-day and located in FCPS elementary

schools. Check your school's webpage or contact the school directly for specific enrollment information and dates of orientation or visit www.fcps.edu/registration/kindergarten-registration.

DOCENTS WANTED

Docents Needed. Sundays 1-4 p.m. at the Fairfax Station Railroad Museum, 11200 Fairfax Station Road in Fairfax Station. Greet museum visitors and tell them about the exhibits, the museum and the its railroad and Civil War history. Ideal for people who live in the Fairfax, Burke, Clifton or Fairfax Station area and want to

contribute to the local community through volunteerism. This is a perfect opportunity for those interested in railroads, the Civil War and Northern Virginia history. Training and orientation provided. Other volunteer opportunities are gardening, publicity and exhibit planning. Call Michael at 703-945-7483.

FRIDAY/APRIL 27

Celebrate Arbor Day. 1 p.m. at Fairfax High School, 3501 Rebel Run, Fairfax. The City of Fairfax will plant

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NEWS DEPARTMENT:
south@connectionnewspapers.com

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

Andrea Worker
Contributing Writer
aworker@connectionnewspapers.com

Jean Card
Production Editor
jcard@connectionnewspapers.com

ADVERTISING:
For advertising information
e-mail:
sales@connectionnewspapers.com
703-778-9431

Steve Hogan
Display Advertising, 703-778-9418
shogan@connectionnewspapers.com

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

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

Classified & Employment Advertising
703-778-9431

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

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

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

CIRCULATION
Circulation Manager:
Ann Oliver
circulation@connectionnewspapers.com



RICHMOND REPORT

FROM PAGE 2

physician may determine when it is impractical for a child to use a rear-facing child restraint system due to the child's height. The Governor signed this bill on March 23.

❖ Bringing Much-Needed Transportation Funds to Northern Virginia and Hampton Roads: Working closely with the Northern Virginia Chamber of Commerce and the Northern Virginia Transportation Commission, Del. Filler-Corn introduced HB 1083, which would have provided that the 2.1 percent tax that is imposed on the sales price of motor fuel in Northern Virginia and Hampton Roads shall be imposed on the regional price of gas, defined and computed as the six-month average price of fuel, for each region. Her bill was rolled into HB 768, on which she serves as a chief co-patron. Governor Northam signed this bill on April 6. This will not only provide millions of dollars in transportation funds to Virginia's largest metropolitan regions but also fix a long-standing oversight from the 2013 Transportation Bill (SMART Scale). It is important to note that this is a key component of the bill that will provide a dedicated funding source to Metro.

❖ Making Child Care Safer:

Filler-Corn's bill, HB 1480 would have amended child care licensure codes and would add to minimum basic health and safety standards for license exempt child care programs. While Filler-Corn's bill was re-referred from the House floor to the House Appropriations Committee and was therefore not voted on. Its Senate companion, sponsored by Senator Emmett Hanger, SB 539 was signed by the Governor on April 9. This legislation will help to ensure that no matter where Virginia's parents place their children for child care, they can feel more secure that their children are being cared for in a safer program with oversight.

❖ Reforming School Absenteeism Policy: Filler-Corn's Bill, HB 1485 will reform truancy and absenteeism policies in public schools. This bill aims to find better options to keep children in school before they are referred to the courts for truancy. The Governor signed this bill on April 4.

"My priorities center around protecting our families, strengthening our education system, improving our transportation and quality of life in Virginia and ensuring that our workforce is ready and able to compete," said Filler-Corn.

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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

CAMP INVENTION

<http://campinvention.org/>

GOVERNMENT ASSISTANCE

<https://www.fsafeds.com/>

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."

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Hogwarts!
Act Out the Song
Mythological Madness

CAMPS & SCHOOLS

Helping Games at Keene Mill Elementary

Keene Mill Elementary is running the Helping Games program instituted by PE teacher Nikki Zenker. Through this program, KMES students have collected 2,104 canned goods for ECHO, 2,436 winter clothing items for ECHO and 4,918 books for those who need them, including Lynbrook Elementary. They are still accepting donations for Pennies for Patients. The school was divided into four color teams with t-shirts for all students. Elhady Orthodontics provided the t-shirts to support the initiative. They have also encouraged service and track points for participation. The final assembly is coming up where the school will celebrate results.





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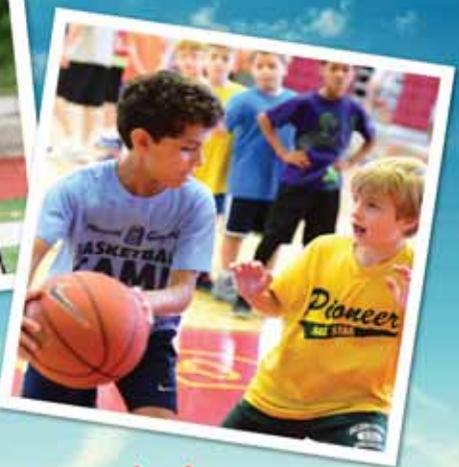
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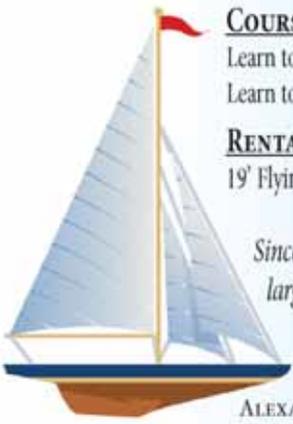
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CAMPS & SCHOOLS

New Student Representative on School Board Elected

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



Benjamin (Bennie) Tignor

1. Tignor will participate in School Board meetings as a nonvoting member, filling the position currently held by Niharika Vattikonda, a senior at TJHSST. 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.

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Lucky Half Penny

Supervisors drop a half-cent from the proposed 2.5 cent increase in real estate tax rate.

BY KEN MOORE
THE CONNECTION

The Board of Supervisors dropped one half cent for the FY 2019 advertised budget in a 8-2 vote Tuesday, April 24. "This is the fewest number of changes we've made to the budget in recent years. And I think a lot of that is a reflection on our desire to fund a lot of needs that exist in the county," said Lee District Supervisor Jeff McKay, at the board's budget committee meeting on Friday, April 19.

The Board of Supervisors will officially adopt its FY 2019 Budget on May 1.

"The recommendation is to go from a two and a half cent increase to a two cent increase, so going to \$1.15 as the new rate for FY 2019," said Joe Mondoro, the county's chief financial officer/director.

That translates to a drop from \$268 to \$241 for the average taxpayer on this year's real estate bill.

"We need to identify \$12.3 million," said Mondoro. "We are doing that in proportions, schools and county, just as we did with the building of the budget, so the impact is felt by both and as a result of the actions will maintain the 52.8 percent allocation to schools and will maintain the same growth rate for county and schools. That growth

April West, a Fairfax County employee and union member, spoke about the importance of retirement security for working families at public hearings before the Board of Supervisors earlier in April.



PHOTO CONTRIBUTED

rate will be 4.2 percent as a result of this action. For the school side, the adjustment is \$3.6 million." Supervisors expressed concern that they are providing more money to schools for teacher salaries, but schools plan to spend more than \$17 million of the funds for administrators, not teachers.

"The bottom line, for me, is that they are still talking very significant increases for administrators in one year," said John Foust, Dranesville District supervisor.

SEVERAL SUPERVISORS complained that they needed detailed information from the schools about raises for administrators, but they hadn't gotten that information as

the vote approaches.

"I don't think we have the information we need to get them that money," said Foust.

"We're hoping we're going to have more definitive numbers before we have to act on this," said McKay.

"The point is, we should have that information and we should be able to view it and we should be able to have it sooner rather than later since we have to take action on this on Tuesday."

"Tuesday is going to come real quick," said Foust at the Friday meeting. "They have to lay it out." Pat Herrity added that School Board members hadn't gotten the answers to these questions either.

IN AN UNUSUAL TWIST, the General Assembly has still not approved the budget, injecting some uncertainty to how much the county and schools can expect to receive.

But overall, the news on state funding appeared to be good, with additional revenue from the state included in all three versions of the state budget, House of Delegates, Senate and Governor.

"As the board is aware, there is not yet a state budget. However, the \$900,000 that we're identifying here is included in all three the Governor, the House and the Senate versions of the budget so staff felt comfortable that recognizing this amount of money add on, which is typically what we would do, made sense," said Mondoro.

"And so the addition of that \$900,000 to the advertised balance that the county executive identified for you in February of \$3.9 million means going into markup there's \$4.8 million available to the board," he said.

Negotiations continue at the state level about expanding Medicaid, with the House of Delegates' and Governor's versions of the budget including the expansion. With expansion of Medicaid comes significant extra funding. "Should Medicaid expansion happen, we should make sure as quickly as possible that we sit down back at this table and take a look at the results of that will be," Chairman Sharon Bulova said.

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CALENDAR

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

ONGOING

Art Exhibit: Pulp Fiction. Through April 29, gallery hours in Arches Gallery, Building W-9 of the Workhouse Arts Center, 9518 Workhouse Way, Lorton. Pulp Fiction showcases work by artist Anne Hollis, exploring mixed media art while focusing on moments in time from mythological stories to real life. Visit www.workhousearts.org/.

Art Exhibit: The Scenic Route. Through May 6, gallery hours at Warrior Way Gallery (W-16), Lorton Workhouse Arts Center, 9518 Workhouse Way, Lorton. Chester Kasnowski, a veteran of the United States Air Force, is a multi-disciplinary artist who believes in the power of tradition and history. Free. Visit www.workhousearts.org/event/chester-kasnowski-scenic-route/

Art Exhibit: To the Ends of the Earth. Through May 13, gallery hours at Vulcan Gallery, 1st Floor, Workhouse Arts Center, 9518 Workhouse Way, Lorton. Exploring the works of three photographers, Pedro Correa, Hal Eastman and Rick Reda. Visit www.workhousearts.org.

Rock of Ages – The Musical. Through May 20, Fridays-Saturdays, 8 p.m.; Sundays, 2 p.m. at Workhouse Arts Center, Building W-3 (Theatre), 9518 Workhouse Way, Lorton. This Tony-Award winning musical takes the audience back to the 1980s era of big: big bands, big egos big guitar solos and big hair. Parental discretion advised. \$20-\$35. Visit www.workhousearts.org.

Second Saturdays. 6-9 p.m. at the Workhouse Arts Center, 9518 Workhouse Road, Lorton. The Second Saturday Art Walk is the perfect time to meet nearly 100 Resident and Associate Artists, creating art in the studios or exhibiting in our galleries. Experience performances of dance, cabaret, comedy, big band, jazz. Visit www.workhousearts.org/.

Fairfax Pets on Wheels New Volunteer Orientation. An orientation for new volunteers interested in visiting residents of nursing homes and assisted living facilities with their approved pets through the Fairfax Pets On Wheels program is held the first Wednesday of every month starting at 7:30 p.m. Visit www.fpow.org for each month's location. Prior to attending, please complete the online application found at www.fpow.org/volunteer. www.fpow.org, 703-324-5424 or dfspetsonwheels@fairfaxcounty.gov.

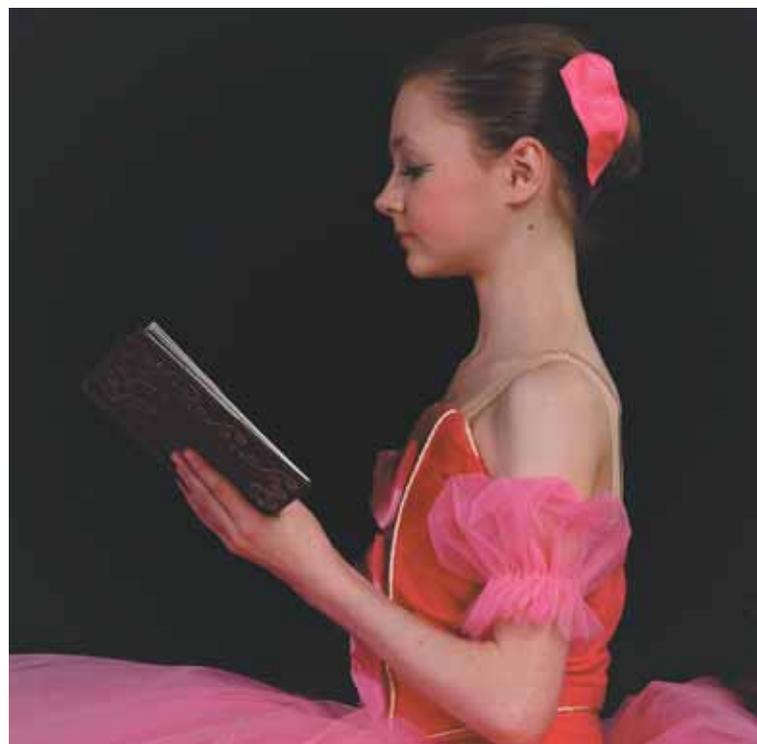
English Conversation Groups weekly at George Mason, Burke Centre, and Lorton Libraries Practice and improve your English. Day and start times vary. Visit: va.evanced.info/fairfaxcounty/lib/eventcalendar.asp

THURSDAY/APRIL 26

Fall for the Book Pop Up Lit Night. 5:30 p.m. at Pacers Pop-Up Theatre Space, 10427 North St., Fairfax. Fall for the Book's New Pop Up Lit Nights invite the community to Happy Hour appreciations of literature and storytelling. Bring friends and enjoy food and fun. Readings take place on the last Thursday of each month, January through April. Free parking is available. For more information visit www.fallforthebook.org/pop-up-lit-nights/ or call 703-352-ARTS.

FRIDAY/APRIL 27

Assistance League Fundraiser. 11 a.m.-2 p.m. at Country Club of Fairfax, 5110 Ox Road, Fairfax. The Assistance League of Northern Virginia annual spring fundraiser will include a luncheon and silent and



Virginia Ballet dancer

PHOTO BY DALE HUBBARD

Coppelia

Virginia Ballet Company And School will present the classic ballet Coppelia, professionally staged and fully costumed. Saturday, April 28, 2 and 7 p.m. in the Ernst Community Cultural Center Theater, Northern Virginia Community College Annandale Campus, 8333 Little River Turnpike, Annandale. \$30 for adults and \$20 for children, students and seniors, plus a \$3 fee per each ticket at www.vaballet.org. A limited number of general admission tickets (\$12) is available for the Working Stage Rehearsal on Friday, April 27 at 6:30 p.m. Must be purchased in advance online.

live auctions. The funds raised will support programs which touch the lives of 6,000 children in Northern Virginia each year. \$65. Visit www.northernvirginiaassistanceleague.org.

Mason Players "Originals." 8 p.m. at TheatreSpace, George Mason University. New scripts, artistic performances and creative offerings inspired by GMU students will drive this final theatrical celebration of the season. Programming varies throughout the weekend. Pay what you can (\$5 increments only). Visit www.cfa.gmu.edu for more.

FRIDAY-SUNDAY/APRIL 27-29

"The Little Mermaid." Friday-Saturday, 7 p.m.; Sunday, 1 p.m. at Fairfax High School, 3501 Rebel Run, Fairfax. Based on one of Hans Christian Andersen's most beloved stories and the classic animated film, Disney's "The Little Mermaid" is a story for the ages. Irresistible songs, including "Under the Sea," "Kiss the Girl" and "Part of Your World." Tickets available at fxplayers.org.

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. After race celebration, including superhero meet and greets, a DJ, free food, face painting, kids' crafts, photo booth, and more. Visit www.fairfaxrunforthechildren.com/.

Springfield Farmers Market Opens. 10 a.m.-2 p.m. at Springfield Town Center, 6699 Spring Mall Drive, Springfield.

Fairfax History Day. 10 a.m.-5 p.m. at Historic Blenheim, 3610 Old Lee Highway, Fairfax. Explore the nineteenth century in Fairfax with living history presentations, exhibits, and historic tours. Meet a scientist and a tradesman and learn about African-American life. Enjoy period music, family activities, tours of the

Historic Blenheim House and its Civil War Union soldier graffiti, wagon rides and more. Adults, \$5; youth (3-12), \$3; 2 and younger, free. Call 703-591-0560.

Ballet: Coppelia. 2 and 7 p.m. in the Ernst Community Cultural Center Theater, Northern Virginia Community College Annandale Campus, 8333 Little River Turnpike, Annandale. Virginia Ballet Company And School will present the classic ballet Coppelia, professionally staged and fully costumed. \$30 for adults and \$20 for children, students and seniors, plus a \$3 fee per each ticket at www.vaballet.org. A limited number of general admission tickets (\$12) is available for the Working Stage Rehearsal on Friday, April 27 at 6:30 p.m. Must be purchased in advance online.

SATURDAY-SUNDAY/APRIL 28-29

"The Best Doctor in Town." Saturday, 2 and 7 p.m.; Sunday, 2 p.m. at Pacers Pop-Up Theatre Space, 10427 North St., Fairfax. Set in Southwest Virginia, inspired by actual events, the play follows small town's most revered doctor, who may just be an identity thief and serial killer. Patients are dying and no one in authority believes the great doctor could be responsible. Visit www.shoestringtheatrecompany.com.

SUNDAY/APRIL 29

British Car Show. 9:30 a.m.-3 p.m. at Gunston Hall, 10709 Gunston Road, Lorton. The 21st Britain on the Green show will feature two hundred British cars and motorcycles, music, food trucks, youth activities, and admission to Gunston Hall. \$10 adults, \$5 children 6-18. Call 703-522-6571 or www.capitaltriumphregister.com/bog/

Railroad Communications Event.

1-4 p.m. at the Fairfax Station Railroad Museum, 11200 Fairfax Station Road, Fairfax Station. Demonstrations of means by which railroads communicated vital information through their networks. Ages 16 and older, \$4; 5-15, \$2; 4 and under, free. Visit www.fairfaxstation.org, www.facebook.com/FFXSRR, or call 703-425-9225.

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Planting a Pine Tree in Burke

Boy Scout Jacob Boyett, Phil Sternberg (standing), T-1131 Committee Chair and member Rotary Club of Springfield, and Daniel 'Kaz' Kasmierski, current President of the Rotary Club of Springfield, plant a pine tree on the edge of St. Stephen's United Methodist Church in Burke, as part of an Earth Day event.

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

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35

Follow posted speed limits.

Come to a complete stop at red lights and stop signs, including when turning right. Always yield to people crossing the street.

Avoid distractions. Never text while operating a vehicle.

Join us for the National Bike Challenge - May
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SEX: FEMALE
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NAME/NUMBER: JOHN L SMITH
Medicare Number/Number to Medicare: 1EG4-TE5-MK72
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Coverage starts/Co-insurance expires: 03-01-2016 03-01-2016
Medicare.gov

NEWS



PHOTO CONTRIBUTED

Pictured, from left: Del. Kathy Tran, Michael Thompson, Fairfax County Park Authority Board, Braddock District Representative; Jack Nolan, Honoree; Supervisor Pat Herrity, and Kirk Kincannon, Executive Director, Fairfax County Park Authority.

**Springfield Athletic Field Renamed
In Honor of Longtime Soccer Coach**

On Saturday, April 14, the Fairfax County Park Authority renamed South Run District Park Athletic Field #5 in honor of Jack Nolan, a longtime coach, leader and advocate of youth soccer in the Springfield District.
In the late 1970s and early 1980s, Nolan served as

a coach for several soccer teams in the Springfield Youth Club (SYC). His success on the field led to leadership roles with SYC, the Fairfax County Soccer Council and the Athletic Council. He was instrumental in the development of a rectangular field allocation policy.

WEEK IN SPRINGFIELD

**PM Pediatrics Opens
at Springfield Plaza**

PM Pediatrics, the nation's largest provider of specialized pediatric urgent care, opened its first Virginia location Monday, April 23 in Springfield at 6358 Springfield Plaza. The company's newest location marks its 28th overall, and the fourth location in the DC Metro Area, joining Greenbelt, Rockville and Annapolis, Md.

PM Pediatrics of Springfield is open 365 days a year, Monday through Sunday from noon to mid-

night, and on select holidays from 10 a.m. to midnight. The 4,500 square foot, state-of-the-art location is staffed by Pediatric Emergency Specialists, including board-certified pediatric emergency physicians and pediatricians, and features onsite digital x-ray and lab. Unlike traditional urgent care practices, PM Pediatrics treats children and young adults exclusively, with physicians, nurses, equipment and an office environment all tailored to provide the best possible care for pediatric patients.

For more information about PM Pediatrics and a list of locations, visit pmpediatrics.com.

Announcements

Announcements

Employment

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of the worst mistakes that can be
made in his subject and how to avoid them.
-Werner Heisenberg

BULLETIN

FROM PAGE 6

a tree at Fairfax High School. Open to the public.
Call 703-385-7995.

FRIDAY-SATURDAY/APRIL 27-28

City of Fairfax Spring Cleanup. Join the city in the annual spring cleaning ritual by taking advantage of the many special services offered this time of year. Call 703-385-7995.

❖ **Arbor Day tree planting** — Celebrate Arbor Day at 1 p.m. Friday, April 27 as the City of Fairfax plants a tree at Fairfax High School, 3501 Rebel Run.

❖ **Cleanup Day** — Residents and businesses can help the city spruce up for spring by cleaning up their neighborhoods or any public areas in the city. Choose Spring Cleanup Day April 28, or any day in April during Spring Cleanup Month. To participate, call 703-385-7995 or e-mail Heather.Turley@fairfaxva.gov.

❖ **Curbside leaf collection** — Curbside leaf collection in the city every Tuesday in April.

SATURDAY/APRIL 28

Caregiver Bootcamp. 8:30 a.m.-3 p.m. at Insight Memory Care Center, 3953 Pender Drive, Suite 100, Fairfax. Join IMCC for a day-long training event covering essential caregiving topics. Day includes: breakfast, dementia overview, legal needs, lunch, communication and behavior changes and information on community resources. Rescheduled from April 7. Contact lindsey.vajpeyi@insightmcc.org, Lindsey Vajpeyi, 703-204-4664 or visit InsightMCC.org.

Scam Jam and Shred Event. 9 a.m.-1 p.m. at Fairfax County Gov. Center, 12000 Government Center Parkway, Fairfax. Free fraud fighting event with AARP Virginia and Fairfax County Government's Silver Shield task force. Shred truck will be on-site from 8 a.m.-noon. Documents will be shredded on-site free of charge. Registration required at aarp.cvent.com/OSSFairfax or call 1-877-926-8300.

Flea Market. 9 a.m.-3 p.m. at Rolling Valley Park and Ride, 9220 Old Keene Mill Road, Burke. Sellers: Rent two parking spaces (minimum). Spaces are reserved and pre-assigned. The prepaid cost is \$20 (plus the donation of a saleable item to Cub Pack 678's booth). To reserve spaces call 703-354-7045. Buyers: More than 50 sellers, bargains and refreshments.

Living with Alzheimer's: For Middle-Stage Caregivers. 10 a.m.-noon at Ravensworth Baptist Church, 5100 Ravensworth Road, Annandale. Part three of three-part series. Join the Alzheimer's Association for this free three-part series and hear caregivers and professionals discuss helpful strategies to provide safe and comfortable care in the middle stage of Alzheimer's. To register, call 800-272-3900.

Medicine Cabinet Cleanout. 10 a.m.-2 p.m. at Fair Oaks District Station, 12300 Lee Jackson Memorial Highway, Fairfax; Franconia District Station, 6121 Franconia Road, Alexandria; West Springfield District Station, 6140 Rolling Road, Springfield. Free safe disposal of unused or expired medications. Drop off at any Fairfax County District Police Stations (pills or liquids only, no pressurized canisters or needles). Visit www.fairfaxcounty.gov/community-services-board/news/2018/medicine-cabinet-cleanout.

Drug Take Back Day. 10 a.m.-2 p.m. in City of Fairfax Police Station lobby, 3730 Old Lee Highway. Unwanted prescription and over-the-counter drugs, including pills, ointments and liquids in sealed containers (no needles or syringes) will be accepted. Drop-off is anonymous. Call 703-385-7829.

Teen Job Fair. noon-2 p.m. at West Springfield High School, 6100 Rolling Road. Employers will gather, take applications and resumes for part time jobs. Contact Greater Springfield Chamber of Commerce, Nancy-jo Manney at manney@springfieldchamber.org for more.

SUNDAY/APRIL 29

2018 Annual Women's Day Service. 9:45 a.m. at Greater Little Zion Baptist Church, 10185 Zion Drive, Fairfax. The guest speaker will be the Rev. Kimberly Ridley, pastor of My Light Christian Church in Richmond. Music will be furnished by the Greater Little Zion Women's Day Choir. Call 703-239-9111.

MONDAY/APRIL 30

Community Meeting: Lake Accotink. 7-8:30 p.m. at Lake Braddock Secondary School, 9200 Burke Lake Road, Burke. The Park Authority will join Braddock Supervisor John Cook and Lee Supervisor Jeff McKay to gather public input in developing a vision for Lake Accotink Park. Visit www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/planning-development/lakeaccotink. Call 703-324-8662

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An expert is someone who knows some of the worst mis- takes that can be made in his subject and how to avoid them. -Werner Heisenberg	

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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