

# What to Look Forward to in 2019?

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PHOTOS BY ANDREA WORKER/THE CONNECTION  
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Dranesville District Supervisor John Foust checks out the illustrative boards at the McLean Community Business Center Study Open House. In today's Connection, Foust previews the year 2019 in his district.

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# Richmond Priorities: Education and Transit

## Supervisors host session with Fairfax General Assembly delegation.

BY ANDREA WORKER  
THE CONNECTION

The 2019 session of the Commonwealth of Virginia's General Assembly will begin at noon on Jan. 9. That's still weeks away, but the county has been preparing its "ask list" even before the second special session adjourned on Aug. 30.

That preparation takes into account the achievements and the disappointments that resulted from the 2018 session along with analysis of the current political situation, changes in federal rules, regulations and laws that may affect the state, and a review of the county's financial status and forecast of future needs before the budget is advertised in February 2019.

On Dec. 11, the Board of Supervisors invited the delegation representing Fairfax County to participate in a work session at the Government Center and to be formally presented with the county's legislative program which was adopted on Dec. 4. Most of those delegates were in attendance, and those unable to attend sent representatives. "Securing K-12 funding is a top priority," said Board Chairman Sharon Bulova in her opening remarks. A joint position with the Fairfax County School Board on "Funding Core Services" for those grades was the very first item in the legislative program packet distributed to the delegation.

Bulova said some progress has been made, but the statistics continue to show an inequality when educational funds are apportioned, leaving local jurisdictions to fill in the gaps to maintain a quality system.

Only four other school system divisions in the state serve as many or more students receiving free or assisted school lunches. The county also has one of the largest shares of students with special education needs, or who are learning English as a second language to be properly educated, yet the county contends that the formulas for funding distribution contain structural features that leave "statewide funding far behind the inflation-adjusted FY 2009 level." As of 2013, the Joint Legislative Audit and Review Commission ranked Virginia 23<sup>rd</sup> nationwide in total per-student spending, but 11<sup>th</sup> in the local share of this spending."

**THE COUNTY** says this trend reflects "Virginia's reliance on local effort and a growing imbalance in this partnership."

Together, the Board of Supervisors and the School Board strongly support a number of elements for their K-12 funding request:

- ❖ Restoration of full funding for Cost of Competing Adjustment for support personnel;
- ❖ Increased state funding for school divisions with high numbers of English learners, students living in economically disadvantaged households, students with special needs, and/or requiring mental health services;



State delegates and senators joined the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors, other county staff, and representatives from a number of civic groups for a legislative work session prior to the start of the 2019 General Assembly in January.

- ❖ Elimination of the support positions ratio cap "which has artificially lowered state funding contributions ... by hundreds of millions of dollars;"

- ❖ Appropriately funded Standards of Quality consistent with local staffing costs;

- ❖ Use of "true weighted averages" when calculating average teachers' salaries and other education costs;

- ❖ Recognition of cost of living variations throughout the Commonwealth in the funding formulas;

- ❖ Increased state resources for early childhood education programs to give all students the same opportunities for success when they enter the K-12 system.

The boards jointly oppose:

- ❖ State budgets that target or disproportionately affect Northern Virginia;

- ❖ State policies which direct funds away from local public schools and toward non-public options;

- ❖ Cuts or formula/policy changes which impose unfunded mandates.

Supervisor Jeff McKay (D-Lee District) chairs the board's Budget and Legislative Committees and spoke to the next issues on the county's "top priorities list," starting with "Transit." He urged the delegation and the audience members to review the "Transportation Fact Sheet" included in the Legislative Program, and maybe even "dig deeper" for background information and a clear understanding of the current situation.

Of particular concern, and so noted in the "Priorities" of the Legislative Program, is the fact that legislation enacted in the 2018 General Assembly addresses the needs of the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA) in part by diverting funds from the Northern Virginia Transportation Authority (NVTA).

This diversion reduces funds for other critical transportation needs in Northern Virginia by \$102 million per year. Projects that could be negatively affected or placed on hold for the foreseeable future include widening of several sections of Route 28 and

PHOTOS BY ANDREA WORKER/THE CONNECTION



Lee District Supervisor Jeff McKay chairs the Board of Supervisors' Legislative Committee. McKay gave an overview of the county's legislative priorities to the Fairfax Delegation to the General Assembly, his colleagues, and a roomful of staff and interested parties at the Government Center on Dec. 11.

the Soapstone Drive extension in Reston, among others. Such impacts will continue if the funding diversion continues.

McKay also made note of funding formulas which seem to "be a way to take money out of Northern Virginia and put it somewhere else." The Department of Rail and Public Transportation's policy change to allocate state funds based on project cost versus non-federal share could also impair the county's heavily-subsidized Connector bus system — which receives no federal funds and is a key element in the overall transportation network. In FY 2019 the localities within Northern Virginia will be footing over 19 percent of the bill for transit capital purchases, while outside Northern Virginia, jurisdictions will only be called upon to fund less than 5 percent of these goods and services.

The county also asks the Fairfax Delegation to protect Northern Virginia's fair share of statewide revenues for general maintenance. In FY 2019 the area is expected to only receive 6.9 percent of the state's Good Repair funds, even though the county's secondary roads, with only 39 percent rated as being in Fair or Better Condition, fall far below the Commonwealth's 60 percent av-

erage, or its 65 percent target.

**THE ECONOMIC SUCCESS** of the county and Northern Virginia are crucial to the economic health of the Commonwealth as a whole, the supervisors and staff argue, and that health and continued growth are dependent on a modern, efficient, multimodal transportation system that is safe and in good repair.

McKay shared the podium with County Executive Bryan Hill, Deputy Director, Department of Management and Budget, Christina Jackson, and James Regimbal of Fiscal Analytics to discuss the county's third — but equally important — Legislative Program priority; the State Budget.

Several pages of examples, statistics and concerns boil down to the county's position that the State "should rebalance its resources and responsibilities."

According to the report, State aid to localities has decreased by almost \$1 billion between FY 2009 and FY 2016. The inclusion of a 5-year period during that time when localities were required to return funds in order to help balance the state's budget basically created a "reverse concept of local aid to the Commonwealth" and equated to more than \$20 million in state funding cuts to Fairfax County which was further affected by cuts to the K-12 funds and the implementation of the cap on funding education support positions.

Since 2016, the General Assembly has made progress in increasing the state's commitment to education in the county, but the formulas and the allocation of resources for education and other services and activities in Northern Virginia continue to fall way short of the needs and out of balance with the rest of the Commonwealth's shares and responsibilities.

Governance and Local Authority rounded out the county's Top Priority list. There was no one in the room not aware that Fairfax County relies primarily on residential and property tax for its revenues. The county continues to call for diversification of tax revenue streams and the ability for local authorities to have more control over those methods of revenue generation.

McKay also expressed the board's strong opposition to the "Proffer Bill" as enacted by the General Assembly in 2016 which "severely limits proffer authority" and has the effect of "distancing communities and neighborhoods from decisions about development in their area."

"This needs to be fixed," said McKay.

The Legislative Program Priorities were accompanied by numerous position statements on issues regarding the environment, health, public safety, general laws, human services and more that the board asks the Fairfax Delegation to consider and address in the upcoming session.

The entirety of the 2019 Fairfax County Legislative Program is available on the county's website at [www.fairfaxcounty.gov](http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov) along with archived information from many of the board's Legislative Committee meetings.



PHOTOS CONTRIBUTED

**Over the last year, hundreds of residents and stakeholders have met at workshops and meetings organized by the county and its consultant to create a vision plan for downtown McLean.**

**Work to renovate and expand the McLean Community Center wrapped up in late 2018 and a ribbon cutting was held on Dec. 5. The MCC is hosting Community Open House on Saturday, Jan. 5, 2019, 11 a.m.-2 p.m.**

## The Year Ahead in the Dranesville District

BY SUPERVISOR JOHN W. FOUST (D)  
DRANESVILLE DISTRICT



Each year, there are many projects, studies, and developments in the works in the Dranesville District. It is exciting to look back each year at what has been accomplished and to look forward to what is ahead. It is my honor to serve as your representative to the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors and share updates and information about what's going on in the area. I wish you all the best in 2019.

and a diverse mix of housing.

In early 2019, a task force comprising residents and representatives of local citizen groups will begin working with County staff to translate the community's vision into recommendations for a revised Comprehensive Plan for the CBC. The plan they recommend will then go through another community vetting process that will include public hearings

at the Planning Commission and before the Board of Supervisors. The community has been very engaged in this process, and I look forward to continuing these discussions.

### Re-imagining 'Downtown McLean'

The area designated as the McLean Community Business Center (CBC), more commonly known as downtown McLean, has long been planned to serve as a focal point and gathering place for McLean area residents, with a mix of residential and community-serving commercial uses. Over the last year, hundreds of residents and stakeholders have met at workshops and meetings organized by the County and its consultant to create a vision plan for downtown McLean.

While downtown McLean has seen some revitalization, such as undergrounding of utilities, landscape and streetscape improvements, and construction of several development projects, it has been 20 years since the last comprehensive review of the downtown's land use plan. A revised Comprehensive Plan, based on community input and priorities, will help stimulate the revitalization that has long been desired for downtown McLean.

On Dec. 17, a final vision plan was presented to the community. The proposed vision plan includes three zones; center, general, and edge, with the highest density in the center and lower densities in the edge, closer to surrounding neighborhoods. The plan aims to revitalize McLean's commercial core by prioritizing open space, a walkable shopping and dining district,

### McLean Community Center Reopens

Work to renovate and expand the McLean Community Center wrapped up in late 2018 and a ribbon cutting was held on Dec. 5. The project included renovation of approximately 33,000 existing square feet and the addition of 7,700 square feet to the facility. Two additional multi-purpose rooms, an enclosed outdoor courtyard with seating and landscaping, and refurbished meeting rooms were included in the project. In addition, the renovation upgraded the technology throughout the building and improved and enhanced the storm water management system while bringing the MCC into compliance with current ADA and building code regulations. The parking lot was regraded and resurfaced, additional parking spaces were added, and walkway lighting was improved. Beginning in early 2019, residents will be able to take full advantage of this new and improved community resource.

### Lewinsville Senior Center Nears Completion

In fall 2018, The Fallstead opened. It is the first of two buildings included as part of the

Lewinsville Redevelopment Project in McLean. This building consists of 80 independent affordable living apartments for low-income seniors. The second building, which is still under construction, will house an expanded senior center, an adult day care center and two children's day care centers, and is expected to open in spring 2019. The Lewinsville Project is the result of a private-public partnership between the County and Wesley-Hamel Lewinsville LLC.

### Jones Branch Connector Improves Local Traffic

On Dec. 15, one travel lane in each direction opened on the Jones Branch Connector. This project, which is being completed by the Virginia Department of Transportation in cooperation with Fairfax County, provides an important new link to Route 123 over the Capital Beltway (I-495) for commuters and visitors to Tysons. The link will improve local traffic and access for drivers, in addition to offering a vital option for area bicyclists and pedestrians. By providing an alternate route across the Beltway and linking the Tysons East and Central areas, the Connector is expected to relieve traffic along Route 123, at the I-495 interchange, and at other congested intersections. When completed in fall 2019, the Jones Branch Connector will have two travel lanes and on-street bike lanes in each direction; 8- to 12-foot-wide lighted sidewalks, landscaping and other streetscape amenities; and a wide, raised median to accommodate future transit options, such as a circulator-bus route.

### New Facilities at Riverbend Park

Riverbend Park located along the Potomac River in Great Falls, is known for its natural, educational, and cultural features. Many

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# ENTERTAINMENT

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

## WEDNESDAY/JAN. 2

**First Hike Fairfax 2019.** Visit any Fairfax County Park Authority trail on Jan. 1, 2019. Take lots of photos. Pick a favorite photo to enter into the Fairfax County Park Authority's First Hike Photo Contest by Jan. 2. The contest is open to amateur and professional photographers. Limit one photo entry per person. Visit the First Hike Fairfax at [www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/first-hike](http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/first-hike).

**Coffee with The McLean Newcomers and Neighbors.** 11 a.m.-12:30 p.m. in the Tysons-Pimmit Regional Library, 7584 Leesburg Pike, Falls Church. The McLean Newcomers and Neighbors will host a coffee for members and prospective members. Visit [www.McLeanNewcomers.org](http://www.McLeanNewcomers.org) or email [McLeanNewcomers@yahoo.com](mailto:McLeanNewcomers@yahoo.com).

## SATURDAY/JAN. 5

**RECenter Swim Classes Start.** The Fairfax County Park Authority offers youth swim instruction for babies to teens at nine RECenters throughout the county. Call 703-222-4664 or visit [www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/recenter/swimming](http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/recenter/swimming).

## SUNDAY/JAN. 6

**Amadeus Orchestra Performance.** 4 p.m. Saint Luke Catholic Church, 7001 Georgetown Pike, McLean. Israeli guest conductor Amos Talmon takes the podium in a concert of favorites by two Viennese masters. Mozart's sparkling "Marriage of Figaro" overture sets the stage for Beethoven's "Symphony No. 1." Gil Garburg returns from Berlin to play Beethoven's "Piano Concerto No. 2." A pre-concert lecture by Music Director A. Scott Wood will begin at 3:15 p.m. A reception will follow the concert. Tickets are \$40 and may be purchased at the door or online at [www.amadeusconcerts.com](http://www.amadeusconcerts.com). Students 17 and under and active military are admitted free of charge.

## TUESDAY/JAN. 8

**McLean Historical Society Meeting.** 7:30 p.m. at McLean Community Center, 1234 Ingleside Ave., McLean. Historian Todi Carnes who will discuss "Behind the Words of the Gettysburg Address: Their Origins and Meanings." Everyone is welcome. Call 703-356-8223.

## WEDNESDAY/JAN. 9

**Movie Series: New Disney Classics.** 12:30 p.m. at The Alden Community Hall, McLean Community Center, 1234 Ingleside Ave., McLean. The Alden is kicking off a new film series with "new Disney Classics" – those that were loved during the 1990s. The films will be shown at 12:30 p.m. on the 2nd Wednesday of the month through June. Free admission. Visit [mcleancenter.org/performing-arts](http://mcleancenter.org/performing-arts).

## FRIDAY/JAN. 11

**The Old Firehouse 5th and 6th Grader Parties.** 7-9 p.m. at The Old Firehouse, 1440 Chain Bridge Road, McLean. The Snow Ball – these popular parties are themed and the Old



## Community Open House

Having recently completed an 18-month renovation, the McLean Community Center (MCC) is hosting a free Community Open House. In addition to self-guided tours using a map and a "passport," participants can take advantage of a mini health fair in the Center's Community Hall. Saturday, Jan. 5, 11 a.m.-2 p.m. at the McLean Community Center, 1234 Ingleside Ave., McLean. Call 703-790-0123, TTY: 711, or visit [www.mcleancenter.org](http://www.mcleancenter.org).

Firehouse is decorated accordingly. Participants will enjoy free catered food and beverages, an open dance floor with music played by a popular DJ and a variety of party attractions. \$35/\$25 MCC district residents. Preregistration is highly recommended. Call 703-448-8336 or visit [mcleancenter.org/teens](http://mcleancenter.org/teens).

## SATURDAY/JAN. 12

**Astronomy Festival.** 5-8 p.m. at Turner Farm, 925 Springvale Road, Great Falls. After the sun sets, soak up some starshine at an "Astronomy Festival" that will include guided stargazing and telescope viewing. Listen to ancient stories about the constellations around the campfire, and participate in other activities and games throughout the evening. \$8 per person. Hot chocolate and snacks will be available for purchase. Canceled if it rains or snows. Call 703-324-8618 or visit [www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/turner-farm](http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/turner-farm).

## SUNDAY/JAN. 13

**Lox and Lecture: "The Island of Roses – Tragedy in Paradise."** 11:45 a.m. at Temple Rodef Shalom, 2100 Westmoreland St., Falls Church. Through the memories of her mother, family friends and additional archival material, Rebecca Samona reconstructs the little known story of the life of the Jews of Rhodes, an Italian colony. There will be a question and answer session after the movie. Light bagel and lox brunch prior to the movie. WoTRS members \$7, non-WoTRS members \$10. RSVP by Jan. 10 at [wotrslxlecturejan2019.eventbrite.com](http://wotrslxlecturejan2019.eventbrite.com). Email [juleskrac@aol.com](mailto:juleskrac@aol.com) or call 202-321-5824.

**Annual Salzman Lecture.** 6 p.m. in the Sanctuary at Lewinsville Presbyterian Church, 1724 Chain Bridge Road, McLean. This year's speaker will be Susan Wharton Gates, PhD, author of "Days of Slaughter: Inside the Fall of Freddie Mac – and Why It Could Happen Again." She will share experiences and insights as a former vice president of public policy at Freddie Mac in the lead up to the 30-percent collapse of house prices and subsequent government takeover of her company in 2008. Visit [www.lewinsville.org](http://www.lewinsville.org).

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—Chief Seattle (1788-1866)  
Suquamish/Duwamish chief

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**NEWS**

**Thinking Outside the Box**

**Ideas for original and attainable goals for New Year's resolutions.**

BY MARILYN CAMPBELL

**W**ith a new year often come new resolutions, be they six-pack abs by spring or giving up carnivore's diet and going vegan, but setting drastic or unrealistic goals can lead to failure. For New Year's resolutions that can bring change in overall wellbeing, whether physical, emotional or financial, local innovators say think outside the box and they offer unorthodox resolutions and minor actions that can have a major impact.

While spending a week or even a day without one's smartphone or tablet might be unrealistic given the constantly connected world in which we live, a digital dial-down might be more attainable. "How about spending five minutes each morning meditating or reading or doing stretches?" said Jen Pape, yoga iRest Level II teacher and studio manager at Circle Yoga.

"One simple and realistic thing to try in the New Year is right when you wake up, instead of ... reaching for your phone to scroll for the news of the day or checking how many likes to your Instagram, take a moment to identify something you are grateful for and a one word intention for the day," said Carolyn Lorente, Ph.D., professor of psychology at Northern Virginia Community College. "A word such as peace, centered, integrity or abundance can be returned to throughout the day. The research on gratitude and intention is strong and doing it just as you start your day can set the tone for the rest of the day."

Whether beginning or completing an undergraduate or graduate degree for professional advancement or simply taking a class that piques one's interest, consider education-centered goals. "I'm sure others can relate to this one," said Jacqueline W. Lee, director of the Inventive Awards Program at the University of Maryland. "Make a timeline and then set weekly or monthly goals." Examples of those goals might be resolving to complete and submit applications or scheduling informational interviews with three people in an area of one's interest.

From rough, dry hands to unsightly acne, skincare is important to one's overall wellbeing says Jaclyn Madden of Rodan + Fields who suggests resolving to take care of one's outer layer. "For a resolution that might be manageable ... I would suggest trying to commit to exfoliating your skin two to three times a week with a facial scrub to rid it of the old, dead skin and bring up the new skin and see a healthy glow," she said. "It also allows your skincare products to work deeper and more effectively."

A scroll through the pictures on most smartphones might reveal that many people have more snapshots than they'll ever be able to use. Resolve to organize those photos by taking small actions, suggests professional photo organizer Jody Al-Saigh of Picture Perfect Organizing. "Five minutes in a doctor's waiting room or in line at the grocery store is enough time to delete a few unwanted photos and dupli-



PHOTO CONTRIBUTED

**Resolving to put an empty bag near your closet and filling it with unwanted clothing items as you come across them is a simple alternative to a complete overhaul all at once, says professional organizer Jodie Jacobs.**

cates from your phone," she said. "Try to remember to do this during your idle moments instead of scrolling social media or news sites."

"Resolve to plan a weekly or monthly time on your calendar to organize photos and backup your collection," added Al-Saigh. "Set reminder alarms to jog your memory. Always set a time after a big vacation or important event to offload photos as well."

While bringing order to chaos is a goal that many hope to achieve, getting to the bottom of the mound of paper on one's desk or cleaning out an overstuffed closet can feel insurmountable. "Resolve to put an empty bag in the bottom of every closet in your home and fill it with unwanted clothing as you come across them instead of waiting until you find time to go through your entire closet," said professional organizer Jodie Jacobs, of SOUPerior Organizing. "Set a date and actually go to a charity to drop off the bags of clothing you already decided to donate."

"Resolve to start shredding your unwanted or sensitive papers once a week instead of waiting and creating an overwhelming amount that you then have to take somewhere and pay to shred," continued Jacobs. "Recycle your junk mail every evening so that it doesn't pile up."

Finding ways to add joy to one's life is a suggestion from therapist Carol Barnaby, MSW, LCSW-C. "I tell people to think not about giving things up, but about what would bring happiness to them in the New Year," she said. "For example, dating, taking up a new hobby, cultivating more friendships or creating less stress. Then set up actionable ideas to achieve those goals. Be kind to yourself and remind yourself that you are human and expected to make mistakes."

**"I tell people to think not about giving things up, but about what would bring happiness to them in the New Year."**

— **Carol Barnaby, MSW, LCSW-C**

# 2019 in Dranesville

FROM PAGE 4

County school children visit the park annually to learn from naturalists who make science and history fun and engaging.

In accordance with the Riverbend Park Master Plan, the Park Authority is constructing an Outdoor Education Classroom/Picnic Shelter to support the park's educational mission. The new facility will enhance the programs Riverbend currently offers. Construction is nearly completed. The facility will be available to the public in spring 2019.

## Turner Farmhouse Resident Curator Program

In 2011, the Virginia General Assembly gave local jurisdictions the authority to develop resident curator programs. After evaluating the costs and benefits of such a program, the Board of Supervisors adopted its Resident Curator Program Ordinance in 2014. The ordinance allows people to live in unused, publicly owned historic properties in exchange for rehabbing them. The Turner Farmhouse has occupied a prominent place along the historic Georgetown Pike since 1905, and its builder, Mark Turner, was one of Great Falls' most prominent citizens. The Turner Farmhouse and associated buildings were a great candidate for a resident curator.

In early 2017, the Park Authority was ready to accept applications for the Turner Farmhouse. Of the three applications, Sarah Kirk's quickly stood out. The review of Ms. Kirk's application was thorough and included public meetings, and her proposal received overwhelming support. In July, the Park Authority Board approved the staff recommendation of moving Sarah Kirk's application forward to the leasing process, and in October, the Board of Supervisors authorized the execution of a lease between the County and Ms. Kirk.

Under the care of the lease, Ms. Kirk, as principal of the Turner Farm Foundation will rehabilitate the property. It will serve as a residence for the Kirk family, with its pony farm on the leased property. It will also repair the property's milk house, restore and preserve its historic corn crib, and pending approval of a special exception, renovate an existing garage to serve as a bereavement retreat center for youth who have lost a parent or sibling.

**Write** The Connection welcomes views on any public issue. The deadline for all material is noon Friday. Letters must be signed. Include home address and home and business numbers. Letters are routinely edited for libel, grammar, good taste and factual errors. Send to:

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## You're In My Thoughts



By KENNETH B. LOURIE

Though this column will have been written before Christmas, its content will be about Christmas (as you'll soon read), and because of early deadlines as well for our Jan. 2 edition, it needs to be submitted sooner rather than later anyway.

As you regular readers may remember the timing conflict – and concern – I had involving my pre-Thanksgiving infusion in addition to the impact of this last quarter's every-three-week-in-fusion schedule would have on the holiday season, fortunately, Christmas was not to be affected.

As scheduled, my last chemotherapy infused on Dec. 7 so by the time Dec. 24/25 arrives, there will be no side or straight-on effects. No problem sleeping. No problem getting up. No problem eating. And no problem driving the two-plus hours up and back to our holiday destination.

However, this column wouldn't be written if there weren't a situation of some substance I felt worthy of 600 words or so.

Because my last infusion occurred when it did, the next infusion is scheduled for Dec. 28. That Friday date means I'll have to contribute blood (lab work) and a collection of the previous 24 hours of urine on Wednesday, Dec. 26 (I'll be back home so that's not the problem). The problem is that I will have had to collect and keep cold urine beginning first thing-ish on Tuesday, Christmas day, a day when for the next 8+ hours I will be in someone else's house eating, drinking and making merry – and more importantly, be away from the privacy of my own bathroom and the at-home convenience of collecting urine in a bottle and keeping it cold.

Not that I intend on making a big production of it on Christmas Day, but I will be bringing a cooler with me and likely needing to place it in a very public bathroom in the house or another less obvious place that I'll be visiting half a dozen times throughout the day.

Moreover, to make sure I can provide a sufficient volume, I'll need to bring along a gallon of Turkey Hill Diet Green Tea because it goes through me – unlike water and enables me to fill the specimen bottle to the top.

Which if my last few creatinine levels are any indication, and I want those levels to measure within an acceptable-for-infusion range, I need to drink as much of the tea as possible and visit that hopefully inconspicuous place as much as possible as well.

However, as I think about the transportation/storage of the urine and tea situation, I'm thinking I'm going to need two coolers; one for the urine bottle and one for my tea. Because I certainly don't want the two bottles in the same cooler or God forbid, touching one another. I may not be a germaphobe, but I really don't think I'll be able to drink my tea if it's stored in the same cooler.

And I certainly don't want to impose on my host's hospitality by asking her to store either of these bottles in her refrigerator likely already packed-to-the-gills with dinner prep.

As much as I can, somehow, I want to keep a low profile and not be interjected into any of the proceedings/conversation. (Not that I'd be embarrassed since everyone in the house is family and familiar with my diagnosis/general circumstances.)

When the dinner/visit is over, we'll be driving home, coolers in trunk. If I need a rest stop, I'll have to pull over to use my bottle since I'm contributing until Wednesday morning, Dec. 26, after I'll have spent the night back at home. So Christmas won't be a total loss, as Thanksgiving nearly was, but it will be impacted nonetheless.

Still, if my creatinine level is low enough to once again enable me to be infused on Friday, Dec. 28, the awkwardness of the occasion/task will have been worth the trouble. (Besides, it was fodder for a column.)

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

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