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# Fairfax Station

## CONNECTION Clifton & Lorton

WELLBEING  
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Sara Van Aalst is the new principal of Fairview Elementary, one of the oldest schools in Fairfax County – dating back to 1899.

# Meet New Principal Of Fairview Elementary

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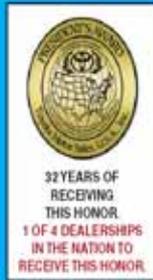
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# Sheltering Homeless Neighbors

**Extreme cold sees increased need.**

BY ANDREA WORKER  
THE CONNECTION

**T**he polar vortex swept down upon the region all last week, with near-record cold temperatures and accumulations of snow and ice to make life less-than-pleasant.

For most, the effects of that arctic blast were at worst uncomfortable and annoying, causing chaotic schedule changes with school closures and hazardous road conditions, but at least most were able to turn up the thermostats in their homes, huddle around fireplaces, or turn on the electric blankets and space heaters to keep themselves cozy despite the elements at play outside.

For some of area neighbors, however — like the homeless and the more vulnerable — the effects of winter weather are more dire, even life-threatening.

Even before the worst of the weather hit the region, Fairfax County Police were investigating three apparent weather-related deaths. An 86-year-old resident of a Reston senior living facility was found outside the housing center by local police officers, called in to assist in a search when the elderly woman was determined to be missing.

A 47-year-old man, with no fixed address, was found asleep in the laundry room of an apartment complex. He was pronounced dead by Fairfax County Fire and Rescue when they arrived on the scene.

On Jan. 14, officers arrived at the assisted living center in Great Falls, responding to a CPR call for an 88-year-old resident who was found outside the facility and succumbed to the effects of the cold.

"It doesn't take long for a person to become endangered by exposure to cold weather," said Brenda Dushko.

Dushko is the director of development for FACETS, a nonprofit that has been serving our neighbors in need since 2003 and a founding and active partner in the Fairfax-Falls Church Community Partnership to Prevent and End Homelessness.

FACETS works year-round to help break the cycle of poverty and homelessness, but a major portion of their mission is dedicated to running the Hypothermia Prevention and Response Program for the county's Human Services Region 4 - Western County/Fairfax and Centreville areas.

**HYPOTHERMIA** is a life-threatening condition, brought on when the body temperature drops below 95 degrees — not far below the average normal temperature. With a warm coat, gloves and a hat, a warm car to travel in and a warm home to avoid prolonged exposure to the cold, hypothermia



PHOTO BY ANDREA WORKER/THE CONNECTION

**Some of the St. Christopher's Episcopal Church hypothermia shelter volunteers (from left): Rev. Peter Ackerman, Zach Manning, Christina Manning, Kathy Barnard, Sarah Wilsey, David Wilsey, Debbie Brant, and Pam Branstetter.**

## Where To Find Help

Several other partners join FACETS in the mission to prevent and end homelessness and to keep the homeless from being another Fairfax County Police Department statistic during the cold.

**In Human Services Region 1** — the South County — **New Hope Housing** operates the Eleanor U. Kennedy Shelter in Ft. Belvoir as well as managing the temporary shelters in the area. Call 703-799-0200 or visit the website [www.newhopehousing.org/programs/shelter](http://www.newhopehousing.org/programs/shelter) for more information on Region 1 assistance.

**Human Services Region 2** — Eastern County/Falls Church/Annandale — is also served by **New Hope Housing** with a year-round shelter at Bailey's Crossroads Community Shelter and the rotating faith community facilities. Call 703-820-7621 or the New Hope Housing website.

doesn't present a problem for most.

"But if you spend much of your time outdoors, looking for a warm place to stay, that's another story," said Dushko. "Now imagine being outside for hours overnight and you can quickly see why our homeless are in extreme danger, even more than usual, during these winter months."

Dushko spoke on Friday, Feb. 1, during a tour of the temporary hypothermia shelter at St. Christopher's Episcopal Church on Hanover Lane in Springfield.

"The good people of St. Christopher's have been running their week-long shelter as part of the program for 15 years, right from the very beginning," she said.

From November through March each year, between 30-45 faith communities gather a small army of volunteer congregants and open their doors for a seven-day stretch to offer hot meals, a warm place to sleep, other items of need, and companionship.

Christina Manning is one of the St. Christopher volunteers and she has been giving her time to this cause for all 15 years that

**Human Services Region 3** — North County/Reston and Herndon is served by **Cornerstones** operating the Hypothermia Program and the year-round Embry Rucker Community Shelter. See the website at [www.cornerstonesva.org](http://www.cornerstonesva.org) or call 703-437-1975.

**The City of Falls Church** is also under the assistance umbrella of **New Hope Housing** with contact available through the website or by calling 703-799-0200.

Visiting the Fairfax County website for the Office to Prevent and End Homelessness will also yield related information and resources.

Citizens are urged to check on vulnerable relatives and neighbors. When seeing someone who is unsheltered and may be in distress, call the non-emergency police phone number at 703-691-2131 (TTY 711) and a police officer will respond and so a wellness check on the individual in question, transporting them for medical assistance or to shelter as required.

the church has been involved.

"It's really just helping out a friend," she said in between stirring a steaming pot on the church's kitchen stove, unwrapping other food items, and mixing up some macaroni and cheese. "So many of us are just one step away from being in the same situation. I talk with a lot of our visitors who have full-time jobs, but circumstances and the lack of affordable housing in our area have brought them to this place."

Volunteering runs in the family, as Manning was joined in her kitchen duties by her 15-year-old son, Zach. "He's been coming here since before he was actually born," laughed Manning, "then he came in his stroller, and eventually he became a full-blown helper."

On this night at St. Christopher's, Zach wasn't the only young person doing their part to help others: 16-year-old Sarah Wilsey was also doing food preparation at the steel kitchen work table, while her father, David Wilsey, worked the roux on the stove.

"The people who come here, they are just

like us, just in a bad situation," said Sarah. Dad David has been volunteering at the St. Christopher's shelter event for the last 10 years. "This is something I can do to give back, to help others — and I can cook."

Katy Dunlap, who organizes St. Christopher's turn as a shelter, says it takes about 15 people per day to keep things running. In addition to those who cook, serve and clean, there are people who help with intake, the overnight volunteers who stay with the guests, and those "who just come for a while to talk to our visitors."

**NOT EVERYONE** wants to talk, but some do and seem to just be happy to have a conversation, to be seen and listened to."

"J" — a young woman who is hampered by a brain injury that affects her memory and other cognitive abilities — was shyly willing to talk a bit about herself. "J" who was once employed as a teacher and also worked in retail, has been moving from shelter to shelter since the cold weather descended.

"I am really trying to make it, to find a stable living situation and get back to work," she said. She is being aided in her endeavours by a FACETS caseworker, but the fact that she was turned down initially for any disability assistance is making her transition to "normal life" (as she puts it) difficult to say the least. "But I won't give up. And I really appreciate all these people who care and help."

"A" was also employed before, working for a grocery store. "It was pretty good. I liked it." He even had housing accommodation, but was suddenly left homeless again when a change at the place where he lived left no room for him. Now on dialysis, "A" is back on the streets, but working with a case manager and hopeful that his situation will improve. He, too, says he is grateful for the people who open their doors to help.

"It gets lonely sometimes, people don't want to see you. Some are afraid of you, so it's nice to be here, have a good meal and people to talk with."

The lay volunteers at the participating churches are supported by trained FACETS staff and volunteers, also on sight overnight and offering guidance and resources to the clients. During the season, Dushko noted that some 3,800 volunteers donate more than 33,000 hours to running the shelters, providing transportation and other services to their neighbors in need.

The extreme cold has seen the numbers of clients at all of the county's shelters, both the permanent and the temporary, rise sharply, Dushko reported. Last year, the county assisted almost 1,100 people in need of shelter during the winter months.

"We had about 40 people here last night," said St. Christopher's pastor, Peter Ackerman, and a line had already formed outside the doors by 4:30, although the official opening hours don't begin until 5 p.m.

# OPINION

## Week of Absurdities

BY KENNETH R. "KEN" PLUM  
STATE DELEGATE (D-36)

**T**he 2019 session of the General Assembly has reached its mid-point, or crossover, when the two houses start to consider bills that have survived the other house. It also represents the final action on many bills giving an indication of what the ultimate legislation for the session is likely to be. In the back of most legislators' minds is the fact that when the legislature adjourns *sine die* (until another day) the election season will begin. The thought of going home to meet their voters motivates many votes. After all, that is the way it should be in a representative democracy. The results, however, create some absurdities.

Republicans appear to be planning to focus once again on abortion. Although *Roe v Wade* decided in 1973 was supposed to set the rules for abortions, the debate still goes on. This week in a massive media campaign linked to fundraising, the opponents accused Governor

Ralph Northam who is a pediatrician and first term Delegate Kathy Tran, a mother of four the youngest of whom she was nursing during session last year, of favoring infanticide! I witnessed the verbal ambush by some of the most skilled lawyers in the House who with some editing of the tape of their cross-examination of her created a false impression of her bill and what it did. Calling the episode absurd is a mild description; I think Governor Northam came closer to an accurate description when he called it disgusting. (Read more at [https://wapo.st/2GduVpd?tid=ss\\_mail&utm\\_term=.814210c15403](https://wapo.st/2GduVpd?tid=ss_mail&utm_term=.814210c15403))

Thirty-seven states have ratified the Equal Rights Amendment. It is looking doubtful that Virginia will join that group this year. In floor speeches on the amendment one of the women opposing the amendment said that she did not need "words on a piece of paper" to get what she wanted.

Bills that would have created an independent redistricting commission including my perennial bill have been defeated in the House. A bill introduced by the Speaker of the House that would create a commission to redistrict the legislature is far from independent in that it still has legis-

lators picking their voters in order to protect incumbents and hold onto the majority. If the bill makes it through the legislature it will be amended or vetoed by the governor. It remains difficult for the majority to play fair especially when it holds control by such a slim sliver of power. A two-vote shift in both houses would put Democrats in charge of the legislature.

Major divisions continue to exist between the parties on finalizing the budget. Republicans favor a plan that continues the federal approach of giving tax breaks to those with the highest income. My bill to establish a partially refundable Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) was defeated. About half the states have used an EITC to help raise the income of working families. There is a slight possibility that Governor Northam could get the EITC in a compromise budget as he is a strong proponent of it.

Several weeks remain for the legislature to work its will. Some good bills are passing that will be favorable to the people of the Commonwealth, and I will discuss these in future columns. With an election looming in the fall, we may still see more absurdities!

### COMMENTARY

## Be Part of the Pet Connection

The Pet Connection, a twice-yearly special edition, will publish the last week of February, and photos and stories of your pets with you and your family should be submitted by Friday, Feb. 22.

We invite you to send stories about your pets, photos of you and

your family with your cats, dogs, llamas, alpacas, ponies, hamsters, snakes, lizards, frogs, rabbits, or whatever other creatures share your life with you.

Tell us the story of a special bond between a child and a dog, the story of how you came to adopt

your pet, or examples of amazing feats of your creatures.

Just a cute photo is fine too. Our favorite pictures include both pets and humans.

Please tell us a little bit about your creature, identify everyone in the photo, give a brief description what is happening in the photo, and include address and phone

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### LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

## Assistance League Receives Grant

To the Editor:

Assistance League of Northern Virginia recognizes The Allstate Foundation and Allstate volunteers for being positive forces for change in our community. Twenty-two Allstate volunteers came together to host a day of community service that enabled the all-volunteer, non-profit organization to secure a \$22,000 Helping Hands Grant.

Allstate volunteers, including David Akers, Christine Angles, Rudolf Alston, Jose Bernal, David Bowen, Sharon Driscoll, Shelley Driscoll, Kevin Dupree, Matthew Henaghan, Joyia Lytle, Mike Mazri, Sharon Neighoff, Jason Passarell, Ricardo Paz Soldan, Christopher Ruby, Tonya Semones, Jason Sengpiehl, William Simkins, Miguel Villegas, Michael Wallach, William Waughn and Don Wright, gave their time to support the nonprofit's program that reduces hunger in our vulnerable communities.

For more than 60 years, the Allstate Foundation has been bringing out the good in millions of lives, committing financial and human resources where they can make the most impact. Weekend Food for Kids was selected as the featured service activity for the "Feed Your Future Volunteer Relay" that took place in Washington, D.C., in October 2018. Assistance League was honored to be included as a partner providing innovative and lasting solutions to enhance the community's well-being.

The Allstate Foundation supports the causes that its employees care about most. Allstate executives and regional advisory board members, including exclusive agents and exclusive financial specialists from D.C., Delaware, Maryland, Virginia, and West Virginia, participated in a relay race to pack more than 500 bags of nonperishable food for less advantaged children in our region.

Allstate senior communication consultant, Caitlyn Barron, and Allstate exclusive agent, Christine Angles, organized the group activity and orchestrated the

group grant.

"This is all beyond outstanding! We are so proud to hear that our efforts benefited some of the most vulnerable in our society - our children," said Shaundra Turner Jones, Allstate corporate relations manager. "This impactful event has our hearts full and we look forward to being involved in many more," she added.

The Allstate Foundation Helping Hands Grant will help Assistance League advance its mission to transform the lives of children and strengthen our community. The funds will be used to purchase three-months' worth of food for underprivileged children in six partner schools enrolled in the 2019-20 Weekend Food for Kids program.

Allstate Foundation and Allstate volunteers bring out the good in their community, helping organizations like Assistance League bring important programs to those most in need. To learn more, visit [www.alnv.org](http://www.alnv.org).

**Karen Smith Amster**  
VP Resource Development  
Assistance League of Northern Virginia

## Extremely Disappointed

To the Editor:

I graduated from college in 1986. I went to the University of Mississippi my freshman year and half of my sophomore year. My freshman year (1982), the school was still waving Confederate flags at football games and was in the process of transitioning to using a flag that just said, "Ole Miss" in red on a blue background. To protest, the Ku Klux Klan showed up at at least one football game. It was terrifying. The KKK is not funny. Not even a little bit.

I am extremely disappointed to discover that Mr. Northam participated in photo wearing Blackface with someone in a KKK outfit. He knew better. I voted for Mr. Northam, so this makes the discovery even more painful.

Everyone does stupid things in college. This was not stupid. It was mean and it wasn't funny. Mr. Northam should resign in order to show respect for his Black constituents and, really, all Virginia voters.

**Amy Dickson**  
Springfield

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# NEWS

## New Principal at Fairview Elementary

Sara Van Aalst will lead the Falcons with 700 students and a staff of about 100.

BY STEVE HIBBARD  
THE CONNECTION

Sara Van Aalst, 40, of Manassas became the new principal of Fairview Elementary School in Fairfax Station on Monday, Jan. 28, 2019. With 18 years in education, she replaces Lynn Mayer who retired after 31 years.

Aalst is thrilled to be working at the Fairview School site off Ox Road, which is one of the oldest in Fairfax County — dating back to 1899. “I knew I wanted to be an educator as a child and I frequently talked about wanting to teach in a one-room schoolhouse, even as an undergraduate. But returning to Fairfax County to teach, that opportunity was not going to present itself. So, when I found out the history of Fairview, I felt a great calling to serve its community,” she said.

She continued: “From what I know of the school, Fairview continues to serve its community just as it did as a one room schoolhouse. There are very strong connections between the teachers, students and their families. At the end of my first year of teaching at Franklin Sherman, I was given a photo of a one-room schoolhouse and I put that in my office. I just hope to continue that legacy that was started at that school



PHOTO BY STEVE HIBBARD/THE CONNECTION

**Sara Van Aalst is the new principal of Fairview Elementary, one of the oldest schools in Fairfax County – dating back to 1899.**

house in 1899.”

**THIS YEAR,** Aalst will lead the Falcons (mascot) with 700 students and a staff of about 100. The demographic breakdown of Fairview is: 8.9 percent

SEE NEW PRINCIPAL, PAGE 10

... NYT CRITICS PICK ...  
**"UNEQUIVOCALLY THRILLING."**  
 -THE NEW YORK TIMES

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## WELLBEING

# American Heart Month

Making healthy diet and exercise choices are two keys to preventing heart disease.

BY MARILYN CAMPBELL

Each time the door bell rang, a guest arrived, wearing red and bringing with her a new flavorful dish with an aroma that filled the already pungent air in Cassandra Pope's Arlington home. One by one friends strolled through the living room and into the kitchen bearing dishes like balsamic-grilled chicken breast, curried cauliflower steak and freshly made hummus. They had arrived for a potluck dinner and the theme that evening was heart health.

"My father died of a heart attack when he was 62, and when he was 57 he had a stroke," said Pope. "All nine of his siblings had massive heart attacks and all of them died of a heart-related illness. So I know that I need to focus eating better and exercising and losing weight. My friends always get together for dinner about once or twice a month and usually we have a theme. For February, we decided to combine Valentine's Day and heart health. We exchanged recipes so that we all have a stash of new recipes to try."

Cardiovascular disease remains one of the leading cause of death in the United States, and after decades of a steady decline in this country, it is once again on the rise, according to a study by the American Heart Association. The research also shows that approximately 80 percent of all cardiovascular disease can be prevented by adopting a healthy lifestyle and controlling high blood pressure, diabetes and high cholesterol. During February, American Heart Month, health care professionals are working to raise awareness of the importance of making healthy lifestyle choices and managing their health conditions.

"February is also Black History Month and these two recognitions go hand-in-hand," said Nikkia Wilkens, Fairfax County Health Department community outreach professional. "African Americans have some of the highest rates of hypertension and heart disease, [but] with the right steps, we can improve our heart health."

Some of the heart-smart lifestyle adjustments that Wilkens and other health care professionals advise include staying active and exercising regularly and monitoring one's salt intake. "Incorporate movement into your everyday activities, such as taking the stairs instead of an elevator," said Wilkens. "Maintain a healthy diet and skip the fried foods, and eat lots of

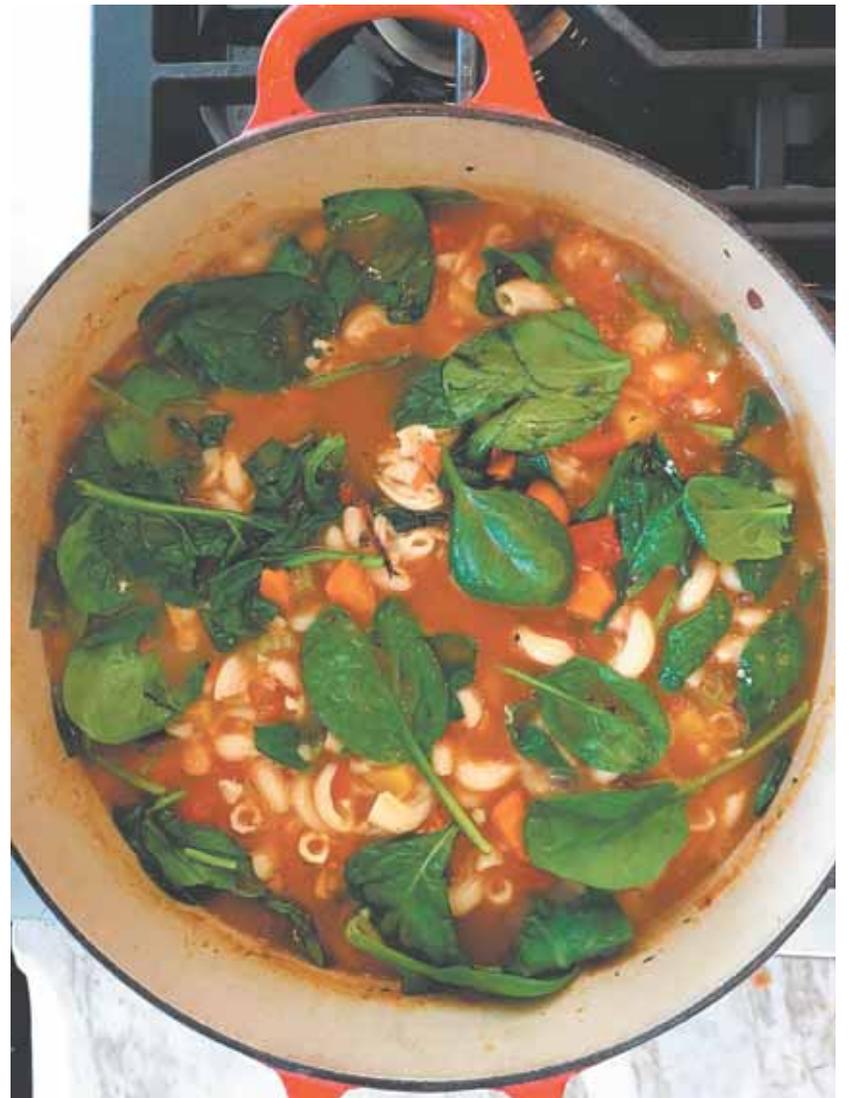


PHOTO CONTRIBUTED

**Finding creative but tasteful ways to add vibrantly colored fruit and vegetables to one's diet can help prevent heart disease.**

fruits and vegetables. Commit to eight hours [of sleep] a night and drink eight glasses of water each day."

While African-American have one of the highest rates of heart disease, the American Heart Association reports that anyone at any age can be affected by cardiovascular diseases and 80 percent of cardiac events can be prevented.

"Even making small changes like getting 30 minutes of exercise a day can improve not just your heart health, but your overall health as well," said fitness trainer Brendan Moore. "Find a type of exercise that you enjoy enough to do for 30 minutes that also gets you to break a sweat and do it everyday. The important thing is that you get your heart rate up. If you start to break a sweat, you know that you're exerting enough energy to have an impact."

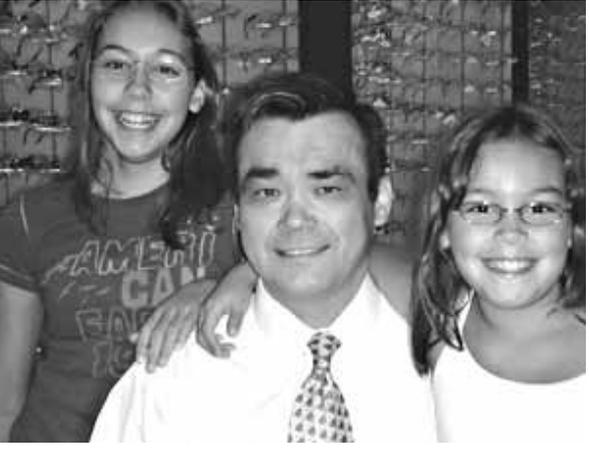
Small dietary changes can be made gradually. "Watching your salt intake is really important," said dietician Caroline Knowles. "There are so many ways to prepare meals by using spices instead of salt so that you don't compromise the taste. With slow cookers and instant cookers there are so many options that you no longer have to fry food to enjoy that satisfying taste."



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# Focus on Safer Driving

## Bans on holding cellphones while driving.

BY ANDREW GIONFRIDDO  
CAPITAL NEWS SERVICE

The Virginia Senate and House of Delegates on Tuesday, Feb. 5, each passed bills prohibiting motorists from touching their cellphones while driving.

The Senate approved SB 1341 on a vote of 34-6, and the House passed HB 1811, 69-27. The bills would explicitly ban using a hand-held communication device, unless it is in hands-free mode, while operating a vehicle.

State law currently prohibits only reading email or text messages or manually entering letters or text in a hand-held personal communications device while driving. The legislation would extend that ban to using the device for making phone calls, checking social media and other purposes.

"It is unlawful for any person, while driving a moving motor vehicle on the highways in the Commonwealth, to hold a handheld personal communications device," the bills state.

Drivers would still be able to operate their phones if they are lawfully parked or stopped or are reporting an emergency.

The chief sponsors of the House bill were Republican Dels. Christopher Collins of

Frederick County and Michael Weibert of Fauquier County and Democratic Del. Michael Mullin of Newport News.

Speaking as a former police officer, Collins said the existing law needed improvements.

"Our current texting while driving statute has just not been enforced," he said. "The enforcement numbers went way down during the last several years."

The penalty for a first offense is a \$125 fine that rises to \$250 for a second or subsequent violation.

"This is going to be straight up — if you have your phone in your hand, you are in violation of a law," Collins said.

The Senate bill was sponsored by Republican Sens. Richard Stuart of King George County and Frank Wagner of Virginia Beach and Democratic Sen. Scott Surovell of Fairfax. Under the legislation, the ban on using hand-held devices would not apply to citizens band radios. The bills also would exempt hand-held communication devices that are physically connected to the vehicle and used for navigation or audio transmissions. Although the House and Senate bills are identical, the legislation still hasn't cleared the final hurdles. Now, the House must pass the Senate bill, or the Senate must pass the House bill, and then the governor must sign the legislation.



## New Year. New Plan. Fresh Start. Fairfax Divorce Workshop.

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**Date:** Saturday, February 9, 2019  
Saturday, March 9, 2019  
Saturday, APRIL 13, 2019

**Time:** 9:00-9:30a.m.—Registration  
9:30-1:00 p.m.—Workshop

**Place:** Duff & Kronfeld, P.C.  
Fair Oaks Commerce Center  
11320 Random Hills Road/Suite 630  
Fairfax, VA 22030

**No Fee**  
Pre-registration recommended as space is limited.

**Online Registration**  
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1. To qualify for this offer, you must have a new or existing Platinum Savings account and enroll the account in this offer between 01/21/2019 and 03/22/2019. This offer is subject to change at any time, without notice. This offer is available only to Platinum Savings customers in the following states: CT, DC, DE, FL, GA, MD, NJ, NY, SC and VA. In order to earn the Special Interest Rate of 2.08% (Special Rate), you must deposit \$25,000 in new money (from sources outside of Wells Fargo Bank, N.A., or its affiliates) to the enrolled savings account and maintain a minimum daily account balance of \$25,000 throughout the term of this offer. The corresponding Annual Percentage Yield (APY) for this offer is 2.10%. The Special Rate will be applied to the enrolled savings account for a period of 12 months, starting on the date the account is enrolled in the offer. However, for any day during that 12 month period that the daily account balance is less than the \$25,000 minimum, the Special Rate will not apply and the interest rate will revert to the standard interest rate applicable to your Platinum Savings account. As of 12/10/2018, the standard interest rate and APY for a Platinum Savings account in CT, DC, DE, FL, GA, MD, NJ, NY, SC and VA with an account balance of \$0.01 to \$99,999.99 is 0.03% (0.03% APY) and with an account balance of \$100,000 and above is 0.05% (0.05% APY). Each tier shown reflects the current minimum daily collected balance required to obtain the applicable APY. Interest is compounded daily and paid monthly. The amount of interest earned is based on the daily collected balances in the account. Upon the expiration of the 12 month promotional period, standard interest rates apply. Minimum to open a Platinum Savings account is \$25. A monthly service fee of \$12 applies in any month the account falls below a \$3,500 minimum daily balance. Fees may reduce earnings. Interest rates are variable and subject to change without notice. Wells Fargo may limit the amount you deposit to a Platinum Savings account to an aggregate of \$1 million. Offer not available to Private Banking, Wealth, Business Banking or Wholesale customers. 2. Annual Percentage Yield (APY) is effective for accounts opened between 01/21/2019 and 03/22/2019. The 11-month New Dollar CD special requires a minimum of \$25,000 brought to Wells Fargo from sources outside of Wells Fargo Bank, N.A., or its affiliates to earn the advertised APY. Public Funds and Wholesale accounts are not eligible for this offer. APY assumes interest remains on deposit until maturity. Interest is compounded daily. Payment of interest on CDs is based on term: For terms less than 12 months (365 days), interest may be paid monthly, quarterly, semi-annually, or at maturity (the end of the term). For terms of 12 months or more, interest may be paid monthly, quarterly, semi-annually, or annually. A fee for early withdrawal will be imposed and could reduce earnings on this account. Special Rates are applicable to the initial term of the CD only. At maturity, the Special Rate CD will automatically renew for a term of 6 months, at the interest rate and APY in effect for CDs on renewal date not subject to a Special Rate, unless the Bank has notified you otherwise. Due to the new money requirement, accounts may only be opened at your local branch. Wells Fargo reserves the right to modify or discontinue the offer at any time without notice. Offer cannot be combined with any other consumer deposit offer. Minimum new money deposit requirement of at least \$25,000 is for this offer only and cannot be transferred to another account to qualify for any other consumer deposit offer. If you wish to take advantage of another consumer deposit offer requiring a minimum new money deposit, you will be required to do so with another new money deposit as stated in the offer requirements and qualifications. Offer cannot be reproduced, purchased, sold, transferred, or traded. 3. The Portfolio by Wells Fargo program has a \$30 monthly service fee, which can be avoided when you have one of the following qualifying balances: \$25,000 or more in qualifying linked bank deposit accounts (checking, savings, CDs, FDIC-insured IRAs) or \$50,000 or more in any combination of qualifying linked banking, brokerage (available through Wells Fargo Advisors, LLC) and credit balances (including 10% of mortgage balances, certain mortgages not eligible). If the Portfolio by Wells Fargo relationship is terminated, the bonus interest rate on all eligible savings accounts, and discounts or fee waivers on other products and services, will discontinue and revert to the Bank's then-current applicable rate or fee. For bonus interest rates on time accounts, this change will occur upon renewal. If the Portfolio by Wells Fargo relationship is terminated, the remaining unlinked Wells Fargo Portfolio Checking or Wells Fargo Prime Checking account will be converted to another checking product or closed.

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# ENTERTAINMENT

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

## ONGOING

**Workhouse Student-Faculty Exhibition.** Through Feb. 10 at Workhouse Arts Center, 9518 Workhouse Way, Lorton. The Workhouse Arts Center Student and Faculty Exhibition will survey works from course instructors, faculty and their students. Explore paintings, drawings, glass works, clay works and fiber art created in Workhouse's classes and workshops. Call 703-584-2900 or visit [workhousearts.org](http://workhousearts.org).

**Art Exhibit: Amazing Art Jam.** Through Feb. 24, gallery hours at the Vulcan Gallery, Workhouse Arts Center, 9518 Workhouse Way, Lorton. Workhouse Arts Center hosts the third iteration of the Amazing Art Jam. This pop-up exhibition offers fresh perspectives by exploring several young, contemporary themes including street art, anime, Marvel iconography and hip-hop culture. Curated by Ackshun Jackson, the show will feature works in various mediums including interactive, sculpture, murals, paintings and works on paper from over 40 regional artists. Visit [www.workhousearts.org/event/amazing-art-jam](http://www.workhousearts.org/event/amazing-art-jam) for more.

**Winter Golf.** Through Feb. 28, skip the traffic with the Afternoon Drive special at the heated and covered ranges at Burke Lake Golf Center and the newly renovated Oak Marr Golf Complex. All buckets are \$2 off, Monday-Thursday, 4 p.m. until closing. Or try the indoor studio at Pinecrest Golf Course's Valis Family Golf Learning Center. Visit [www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/golf](http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/golf).

**Fine Arts Enrichment Camps.** The Youth Arts Camp & Education Outreach (ages 13-17) programs at the Workhouse provide rich experiences in fine arts year-round. Campers work alongside professional artists and professional educators to excel in different mediums, learning various techniques, and creating quality artwork with every visit. Find upcoming camps at [reservations.workhousearts.org](http://reservations.workhousearts.org).

## FRIDAY/FEB. 8

**Gunston Hall Game Night.** 6-9 p.m. at Gunston Hall, 10709 Gunston Road, Mason Neck. Gunston Hall is opening its doors after-hours to welcome game enthusiasts to immerse themselves in a variety of 18th-century card, board, and dice games. \$35 registration includes beverages and heavy hors d'oeuvres, including some items made from 18th-century recipes. Visit [www.gunstonhall.org](http://www.gunstonhall.org) for more.

## FRIDAY-SATURDAY/FEB. 8-9

**Small Plates Choreography Festival.** 8 p.m. at Building W-3 (Theatre), Workhouse Arts Center, 9518 Workhouse Way, Lorton. Small Plates creates a growth environment by holding guided Q&A feedback sessions with the audience after each performance. The Friday performance will feature pre-professional dance created by student choreographers, or by professional choreographers performed by students. Saturday's performance will mainly feature professional artists with limited space for pre-professional work. \$15-\$20. Call 703-584-2900 or visit [workhousearts.org](http://workhousearts.org).

## SATURDAY/FEB. 9

**Animal Sweetheart's Dance.** 2-4 p.m. at Hidden Pond Nature Center, 8511 Greeley Blvd., Springfield. Dance, laugh, and learn at the social

# Sparkling Wit, Magical Love Potion

## Virginia Opera brings 'The Elixir of Love' to the Center for the Arts.

BY DAVID SIEGEL  
THE CONNECTION

Time for some lightening up courtesy of the Virginia Opera. The comic opera "The Elixir of Love" by Gaetano Donizetti will be bringing a plentitude of remedies for the February cold. "Elixir" is an operatic romantic comedy about the pursuit of love with help from a very special tonic.

Donizetti's charming "The Elixir of Love" is performed in the bel canto opera style in which expressive voices transport the audience into a bubbly, vibrant tale of comedic misunderstandings and endearing characters.

What is "The Elixir of Love" about? It is centered upon a shy peasant named Nemorino who is secretly enthralled with a rather feisty socialite Adina. Alas, Adina has her eyes on a dashing military man, Sergeant Belcore. Nemorino decides a love potion is his best hope to win over Adina. He uses his paltry savings to purchase a special potion from a very skillful traveling salesman named Dulcamara.

Nemorino is convinced the potion is magical and will make Adina fall in love with him. But, will the elixir help love find its way? Will the path to love be simple?

Directed by Kyle Lang, "The Elixir of Love" features sumptuous arias, beautiful musical melodies and scenes with rapid-fire comic pattern. Adam Turner, Virginia Opera's artistic director will conduct the Donizetti score. The opera features one of the more celebrated tenor arias, "Una furtiva lagrima." ("a furtive tear"). In the song Nemorino vividly recalls a tear on his beloved Adina's cheek; he convinces himself that she loves him.

The cast features Cecilia Violetta López named a rising star by "Opera News" as Adina. Recent



PHOTO BY BEN SCHILL PHOTOGRAPHY

### Cecilia Violetta Lopez as Adina and Carlos Enrique Santelli as Nemorino in Virginia Opera's "The Elixir of Love."

winner of the 2018 Metropolitan Opera National Council Auditions, tenor Carlos Enrique Santelli makes his Virginia Opera mainstage debut appearing as lovelorn Nemorino. Bass-baritone Matthew Burns is Dulcamara the animated purveyor of the magical love potions. Corey Crider sings the role of the dashing military man Belcore.

In an interview, Burns, originally from Richmond and a graduate of Virginia Commonwealth University, discussed his character of Dulcamara as not unlike a traveling salesman selling "the virtues of a dark looking drink as a cure to fix anything." When singing rapid fire comic songs his character Dulcamara is like "a modern day rapper, able to rattle off lyrics and names in quick seconds."

"The Elixir of Love," is one of the most performed operas worldwide. Visit the Virginia Opera production to enjoy its happy endings.

Virginia Opera presents "The Elixir of Love" at the George Mason University, Center for the Arts, 4400 University Drive, Fairfax. Performances: Saturday, Feb 16, 2019 at 8 p.m. and Sunday, Feb 17, 2019 at 2 p.m. Tickets: \$110, \$90, \$54. Call 888-945-2468, or visit [www.cfa.gmu.edu](http://www.cfa.gmu.edu). Note: Sung in Italian with English subtitles. A pre-performance discussion featuring "Dr. Opera," Glenn Winters begins 45 minutes prior to the performance.

event of the winter season. Space limited, register online ([tinyurl.com/y9nz9q48](http://tinyurl.com/y9nz9q48)) or call 703-451-9588 to save a spot. \$9. Email [casey.riley@fairfaxcounty.gov](mailto:casey.riley@fairfaxcounty.gov) or call 703-451-9588 for more.

### Lorton Community Blood Drive.

3:30-7:30 p.m. at the Workhouse Arts Center, 9518 Workhouse Way, Lorton. Register online to donate. The INOVA Donation Bus which will be located right outside Workhouse Building W-16. After donating, stay for the monthly, free Second Saturday Art Walk, with the chance to meet nearly 100 Workhouse artists. Make an appointment at [tinyurl.com/y7q7sam7](http://tinyurl.com/y7q7sam7).

### Create + Sip: Recreating Escher.

4-6 p.m. at the Workhouse Arts Center, 9518 Workhouse Way, Lorton. Monthly afternoons of wine and fun offer more than just painting. Each Create + Sip is taught by one of Workhouse's studio artists, offering techniques, plus fiber, glass and clay. With Workhouse artist Wendy Anderson, explore the unique world of tessellation via its modern master, M.C. Escher. Tessellations will be created on wooden art palettes with paint. \$35. Visit [insidenovatix.com/events/create-sip](http://insidenovatix.com/events/create-sip)

recreating-escher for tickets.

### Chili Cook Off and Bingo Night.

6-9 p.m. at Historic Pohick Episcopal Church, 9301 Richmond Highway, Lorton. The Ann Mason Guild of Pohick Church will hold their annual Chili Cook Off and Bingo event. Tickets are \$10 per person (without a chili entry) and \$5 per person (with chili entry). Children 10 and under are free. Hot dogs will also be available. Contact: Wendy Remaly at [wendy.remaly@gmail.com](mailto:wendy.remaly@gmail.com) or Angela Edgemon at [Aedg619@aol.com](mailto:Aedg619@aol.com), or call 703-339-6572 or visit [www.pohick.org](http://www.pohick.org).

## SUNDAY/FEB. 10

### T-TRAK Scale Model Train Show.

4 p.m. at the Fairfax Station Railroad Museum, 11200 Fairfax Station Road, Fairfax Station. The Northern Virginia T-TRAK members will hold a N gauge Model Train Display. Ages 16 and older, \$4; 5-15, \$2; 4 and under, free. Visit [www.fairfaxstation.org](http://www.fairfaxstation.org), [www.facebook.com/FFXSRR](http://www.facebook.com/FFXSRR), or call 703-425-9225.

### Handbell Dessert Concert.

3 and 6 p.m. at St. Matthews United Methodist Church, 8617 Little River Turnpike, Annandale. Be serenaded

by handbell choirs at their fundraising event while enjoying dessert at a candle lit table. Adults, \$15; ages 7-17, \$12; age 6 and under, \$8. Tickets at [Shawn.Guth@verizon.net](mailto:Shawn.Guth@verizon.net). Email [mb.brooke@verizon.net](mailto:mb.brooke@verizon.net) for more.

## SATURDAY/FEB. 16

### "One Woman, One Vote."

10 a.m. at Sydenstricker United Methodist Church, 8508 Hooes Road, Springfield. All are welcome to the showing of the PBS video "One Woman, One Vote." The film documents the 70-year battle for women's suffrage in the United States, culminating in the passage of the 19th Amendment to the Constitution. The film, narrated by Susan Sarandon, is part of the general meeting of the Springfield-Annapolis branch of the American Association of University Women. Contact Irene McGhee at 703-628-4048.

### Valentine's Day Banquet.

6:30-11 p.m. at Waterford Receptions at Springfield, 6715 Commerce St., Springfield. The Family Ministry of the Greater Little Zion Baptist Church in Fairfax is sponsoring their Annual

Valentine's Day Banquet. All couples and singles are invited to fellowship and to enjoy an evening of fine dining, music, dancing and featured entertainment. \$60 per person (payment deadline is Feb. 10). Contact Anthony or Terri Bazemore at 703-239-9111.

### Country-Western Dance.

Lessons, 6-7 p.m.; open dancing 7-9:30 p.m. at Accotink Universalist Unitarian Church, 10125 Lakehaven Court, Burke. The Northern Virginia Country-Western Dance Association will hold a dance. A DJ provides music. Couples and singles of all ages welcome. Admission for NVCWDA members \$10; non-members \$12; children under 18 accompanied by a paying adult \$5. Smoke-free, alcohol-free. BYO refreshments. Visit [www.nvcwda.org](http://www.nvcwda.org).

### Art for the Heart.

7-10:30 p.m. in the Parish Hall at Church of the Nativity, 2400 Nativity Lane, Burke. The Knights of Columbus Fr. Sikora Council 7992 is holding their Annual Art Auction. Join in a festive evening of viewing and bidding on a variety of fine art, memorabilia, and collectibles while enjoying complementary wine and specialty hors d'oeuvres prepared by A Bit More Catering. \$15 per person. For tickets contact Tom Savage at 512-983-5641 or [tomkc7992@gmail.com](mailto:tomkc7992@gmail.com).

## SUNDAY/FEB. 17

### NTRAK Scale Model Train Show.

1-4 p.m. at the Fairfax Station Railroad Museum, 11200 Fairfax Station Road, Fairfax Station. The Northern Virginia NTRAK members will hold a N gauge Model Train Display at the Fairfax Station Railroad Museum. Ages 16 and older, \$4; 5-15, \$2; 4 and under, free. Visit [www.fairfaxstation.org](http://www.fairfaxstation.org), [www.facebook.com/FFXSRR](http://www.facebook.com/FFXSRR), or call 703-425-9225.

## TUESDAY/FEB. 19

### Serve Up Dinner for the Animals.

4:30-5:30 p.m. at Hidden Pond Nature Center, 8511 Greeley Boulevard, Springfield. It may not be everyone's idea of dinner, but worms and insects are considered fine dining for the nature center's exhibit animals. Help a naturalist care for and feed the animals. Ages 3-adult. \$6 per person. Call 703-451-9588 or visit [www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/hidden-pond](http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/hidden-pond) for more.

## SATURDAY/FEB. 23

### Orienteering Workshop.

10 a.m.-noon at Burke Lake Park, 7315 Ox Road, Fairfax Station. Put down the GPS and get around the old-fashioned way. Orienteering is the sport of navigation with map and compass. It's easy to learn but always presents challenges. Participants in this program will learn how to use a compass, read a topographic map and navigate orienteering courses. A compass is required. Designed for participants age 8-adult. \$31 per person. Call 703-323-6600 or visit [fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/burke-lake](http://fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/burke-lake).

### Reception: Amazing Art Jam.

7-11 p.m. at the Vulcan Gallery, Workhouse Arts Center, 9518 Workhouse Way, Lorton. Workhouse Arts Center hosts the third iteration of the Amazing Art Jam. This pop-up exhibition offers fresh perspectives by exploring several young, contemporary themes including street art, anime, Marvel iconography and hip-hop culture. Curated by Ackshun Jackson, the show will feature works in various mediums including interactive, sculpture, murals, paintings and works on paper from over 40 regional artists. Visit [www.workhousearts.org/event/amazing-art-jam](http://www.workhousearts.org/event/amazing-art-jam) for more.



# Workhouse

## ARTS CENTER

Join us for our **Second Saturday Art Walk** from 6p-9p on the second Saturday of each month. It's the perfect time to meet nearly 100 Studio and Arches Gallery Artists who create art in their studios and exhibit in our galleries. Enjoy thrilling performances of dance, cabaret, comedy, big band, jazz, and theater. Indulge in unique classes in the art of mixology or cuisines from around the world. And explore art exhibitions featuring the region's finest sculpture, painting, glass, ceramics, and fiber art.

All this excitement and more is tucked away at the Workhouse Arts Center, a 55-acre visual and performing arts center in Lorton, VA, located on the historic grounds of the former DC Correctional Facility at Lorton.

### February Featured Artists

- W-5 Kathy Stoner
- W-6 Group Show
- W-7 Julie Bahun & Mint Thompson
- W-9 Group Show
- W-10 Group Show

9518 Workhouse Way Lorton, VA 22079  
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**NEWS**

**New Principal at Fairview Elementary**

FROM PAGE 5



STEVE HIBBARD/THE CONNECTION

**Sara Van Aalst is the new principal of Fairview Elementary, one of the oldest schools in Fairfax County – dating back to 1899.**

According to Jessica Boger, Special Ed. teacher at Willow Springs Elementary: “Sara Van Aalst will be a great principal because of her willingness to be in the trenches with teachers, students, and parents. On many occasions Sara has come into my special education resource classroom to get to know students, not because I asked her to, not because of a behavior issue, but to build strong relationships with children.”

**VAN AALST** grew up in Falls Church and attended Fairfax County Public Schools for her entire K-12 education. She graduated from Randolph-Macon Woman’s College in 2000 with a bachelor of arts; and a master’s from George Mason University in 2008; as well as an administration and supervision certificate from UVA in 2009.

While at Randolph-Macon, she worked at a preschool on campus all four years. “That was a great experience in early childhood education and offered an experience to be a part of children’s early development in language, their social skills and early academics. I think it gave me a good grounding for the work that I’ve done as an educator and I have wonderful memories of the great passion that the preschool teachers had, and I’m thankful for them allowing me to be part of their classrooms.”

She began her Fairfax County career in 2000, teaching second-, fifth-, and sixth-grades, as well as serving as an afterschool remediation and Jump Start Coordinator. In 2010, she was appointed assistant principal, serving at Laurel Ridge Elementary School, Bull Run Elementary School, and Willow Springs Elementary School. At Laurel Ridge, she initiated a mentor program between staff and identified students; at Bull Run, she developed and opened a Family Resource Center in collaboration with the Office of Communication and Community Relations and collaborated with Special Services, Procedural Support, and Special Education teachers to implement specialized reading programs aligned with student needs.

Sara is married to husband Neil, 45, who works for the Department of Homeland Security. They have a daughter named Cecilia, age 2.

Asian; 5.74 percent Black; 12.21 percent Hispanic; 65 percent White; and 8.6 percent Other. There are 86 percent of students in General Education; 14.26 percent in Special Education; and 6.62 percent in Advanced Academics, Level IV. Some 9.26 percent of students are on Free or Reduced Fees on Meal plan.

“From what I know of the demographics, our goal at Fairview is to provide vigorous and relevant instruction and an inclusive environment, and at the same time we want to be ensuring that all of our students are developing high self-esteem and learning how to be resilient,” she said.

She said that Fairview, which is in the Robinson Pyramid, offers a local Level IV program for students who have qualified for advanced academic instruction in all content areas based on a screening process established by Fairfax County.

As far as new challenges, besides being on the job for a week, she’s looking forward to “having consistency in the school day so I have the opportunity to be in the classroom to see all the wonderful learning that’s occurring. I’m just eager for the opportunity to get to know students as individuals,” she said.

She added: “I am a lifelong learner and want to provide the opportunity for my staff to continue to feed their passions for learning about teaching. So, I think targeted professional development is something I want to continue to provide. I am very passionate about being an advocate for every student and I think it’s important that we consider each child’s individual needs and help that child obtain high levels of success.”

What she loves most about the job is “I get to see the K-6 grade spectrum on any given day and to see a student’s progress through all those academic years – it’s really an incredible experience,” she said.

She is also looking forward to partnering with the school’s PTA. “They provide a wealth of enrichment opportunities for our students as well as a cadre of volunteers that support our teacher’s work, and I look forward to being able to nurture that relationship that has been established and continue to look for ways to partner with our families,” she said.

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**VOLUNTEERS WANTED**

**Interested in local Civil War or Railroad History?** Consider volunteering at the Fairfax Station Railroad Museum. The Museum offers a variety of volunteer opportunities in Museum events, programs and administration. The Museum is also seeking an

individual to coordinate the scheduling of the volunteer staff. Training will be provided for all positions. Email [volunteers@fairfax-station.org](mailto:volunteers@fairfax-station.org) or call 703-945-7483 for opportunities. The Museum is located at 11200 Fairfax Station Road in Fairfax Station. It is open every Sunday, except holidays, from 1-4 p.m. Visit [www.fairfax-station.org](http://www.fairfax-station.org), [www.facebook.com/FFXSRR](http://www.facebook.com/FFXSRR), or call 703-425-9225.

**The Shepherd’s Center of Fairfax-Burke** needs volunteer drivers for trips to medical appointments (Monday - Friday) and companion shopping (Tuesday, Friday) within the Fairfax-Burke area and in the South County area (west of Route 1, Alexandria). Office volunteers are also needed to work in the SCFB (Olley Glen) office to schedule rides. Bilingual volunteers (English and Spanish) are needed as drivers and office volunteers. Email Shavaun Wall at [recruiter@scfbva.org](mailto:recruiter@scfbva.org) or call 703-323-4788.

SEE BULLETIN, PAGE 11

# BULLETIN

FROM PAGE 10

## INPUT SOUGHT

**Shaping the Future Together.** Fairfax County Government is beginning a strategic planning process with the community to shape the future together. The goal is to hear all voices and reach all segments of the community. This effort will span most of 2019, but in this first phase, the community is being asked to visit [fairfaxcounty.gov/strategicplan](http://fairfaxcounty.gov/strategicplan) and:

- ❖ Take a short five-question online survey
- ❖ Join a community conversation in person: Feb. 13 – Reston; Feb. 25 – Alexandria; Feb. 26 – Fairfax; March 6 – Falls Church.
- ❖ Share the survey and conversation invitation with neighbors, co-workers and county family and friends.

## TUESDAYS THROUGH FEB. 19

**Workshop Series: Mind in the Making.** 6:30-8:30 p.m. at Dunn Loring Center for Parent Services, 2334 Gallows Road, Entrance 1 – Room 100, Dunn Loring. Mind in the Making: The Seven Essential Life Skills Every Child Needs by Ellen Galinsky, encompasses an evidence-based list of life skills that are essential for children to succeed socially, emotionally and intellectually in the short and long term. Participants may register for one or all of the workshops and do not need to attend the previous class. Registration is limited. Call 703-204-3941 or visit [www.fcps.edu/resources/family-engagement/parent-resource-center](http://www.fcps.edu/resources/family-engagement/parent-resource-center) for more or to register.

- ❖ Tuesday, Feb. 12 – Taking on Challenges (part 6)
- ❖ Tuesday, Feb. 19 – Self-Directed, Engaged Learning (part 7)

## THURSDAY/FEB. 7

**Public Hearing on E-Bikes on Park Trails.** 7 p.m. at The Jean R. Packard Center at Occoquan Regional Park, 9751 Ox Road, Lorton. A public hearing will be held on proposed changes to regulations on the use of Electrically Assisted Bicycles, or e-bikes, in Fairfax County and NOVA Parks. Under the proposal, the regulation would define an e-bike and clarify distinctions between e-bikes and mopeds. Draft guidelines for the use of e-bikes within Fairfax and NOVA Parks will be presented. Visit [www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/e-bikes](http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/e-bikes) for more.

## FRIDAY/FEB. 8

**“Why Won’t My Child Go to School?”** 10 a.m.-noon at Dunn Loring Center for Parent Services, 2334 Gallows Road, Entrance 1 – Room 100, Dunn Loring. Dr. Lisa Batemen, of Neuroscience, Inc., presents this workshop sharing information on school refusal. Highlights include symptoms of school refusal, including behavioral symptoms, and patterns of behavior. Batemen will also share information on the differences between school refusal and truancy, causes of school refusal, strategies for parents and resources to help support students. Call 703-204-3941 or visit [www.fcps.edu/resources/family-engagement/parent-resource-center](http://www.fcps.edu/resources/family-engagement/parent-resource-center) for more or to register.

## SATURDAY/FEB. 9

**Fairfax County NAACP Meeting.** 10 a.m.-noon at West Springfield Government Center, 6140 Rolling Road, West Springfield. Join Fairfax County NAACP for their monthly meeting to review and discuss their 2019 Advocacy Agenda. The Youth Council will also host a food drive for the Capital Area Food Bank. Light refreshments will be served. RSVP at [www.eventbrite.com/e/2019-agenda-presentation-and-meeting-tickets-55144018243](http://www.eventbrite.com/e/2019-agenda-presentation-and-meeting-tickets-55144018243). Visit [www.fairfaxnaacp.org/](http://www.fairfaxnaacp.org/) for more.

**Hannah P. Clark Open House.** Noon-3 p.m. at the historic Hannah P. Clark (Enyedi) property located at 10605 Furnace Road, Lorton. The Resident Curator Program provides the opportunity for individuals, non-profit and for-profit organizations to secure long-term lease agreements in beautiful public park settings such as Hannah P. Clark (Enyedi) in Fairfax County. The curator leases are without charge in exchange for a financial commitment towards approved rehabilitation of the Park Authority’s underutilized historic properties. Visit online [www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/resident-curator-program](http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/resident-curator-program) or contact Stephanie Langton at 703-324-8791.

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## My Own Sort of Groundhog Day



By KENNETH B. LOURIE

As it happens every year around this time, the monthly calendar turns to February, and I am reminded of the goings on in my life Jan. 1 through Feb. 27, 2009.

I was not, as yet, in the throws of having been diagnosed with non-small cell lung cancer, stage IV, but I was in pursuit of finding the cause of the shortness of breath and stinging pain in my side that first manifested on Jan. 1, 2009.

Cancer was the last word I expected to hear in late February after a biopsy confirmed the finding. Until I received that call from my primary care physician on Thursday, Feb. 20, advising me that the tissue biopsy was indeed malignant, I had been, since that New Year’s Day visit to the Emergency Room, in a diagnostic dalliance to determine what had caused an otherwise, healthy 54-and-half-year-old man, to present with such symptoms.

The Emergency Room doctor was perplexed as the chest X-Ray I had taken that day was inconclusive. In addition, I offered no pertinent medical history to account for the symptoms I was experiencing.

Eventually I was released and it was suggested that I return in a week, have another chest X-Ray then and see a pulmonary doctor. And so I did. After reviewing both X-Rays, and examining me, the pulmonologist was equally perplexed. I was healthy by all appearances and I had no family history of anything.

Out of curiosity – or bewilderment – the doctor told me to get a CT scan, which I did, approximately two weeks later, at the earliest available time. Within a day of having been CT-scanned, I was called by the pulmonologist and advised to schedule an appointment with a thoracic surgeon, a specialty with which I was totally unfamiliar.

Two weeks or so later, at the first available time, I saw the surgeon. Equally befuddled, by his own admission, after reviewing my two X-Rays and recent CT scan, he equivocated on the next step: ordering a P.E.T. scan, which he did not – until a few days later when he changed his mind and told me to make the arrangements; which of course I did, and again, it was approximately two weeks later that an appointment was available.

After receiving the results, the thoracic surgeon called me. He said, among other things: “Your scan lit up like a Christmas tree.”

Not good as I later learned. And so, a surgical biopsy was scheduled, upon availability, about two weeks later, which presumably would determine the cause of my original discomfort and confirm what all this diagnostic back and forth had been about.

Within a few days of my procedure, I received a phone call at work from my internal medicine doctor. He asked if I wanted to come to his office to discuss the results. I said “No, just tell me,” figuring that a request to see him in his office meant bad news.

Sure enough, it was. He told me that the sample was malignant. Stunned by the news, I remember asking: “What does that mean?” He might have mentioned cancer, I can’t recall. He instead deferred and referred me to an oncologist, actually making the appointment for me for the following Thursday, only a week later.

Nearly two months had passed since the original Jan. 1 visit to the E.R. Finally on Feb. 27, I was going to find out what’s been going on – from an oncologist. And sure enough, on that following Thursday, my new-best-friend-to-be, lowered the boom: “Lung cancer.”

My prognosis he said: “13 months to two years.” Moreover, he advised: He “could treat me,” but he “couldn’t cure me.” In simple terms, he told me I was “terminal.”

Not that I don’t already think about having cancer every minute of every day but especially so at this time of the year. This is when my world, as I knew it, came crashing down. Over and over, I review the days and weeks leading up to that first appointment with my oncologist and the impact the diagnosis has had on my life.

Granted, it’s nothing to laugh about, but given that I’ve survived so long, it’s certainly something to be grateful about.

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



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