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McLean CONNECTION

A team from Virginia Oral, Facial & Implant Surgery of McLean flew to Punta Cana, Dominican Republic to treat both children and adults of Dominican and Haitian background. Pictured: Michella Saad (surgical assistant) and Michael Gocke (Dr. Gocke's son) with the locals at the Batey (village).



McLean Team on A Mission to Help

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PHOTOS BY ANDREA WORKER/THE CONNECTION

Everyone had words of praise for Homer Johns on his retirement, including, from left: Frank Smith, president of the Great Falls VFD, Fairfax County Fire and Rescue chief John Butler, and Great Falls VFD chief, Doug Wessell.



PHOTO CONTRIBUTED

Homer Johns and the Great Falls Fire and Rescue volunteers he calls his 'Three Musketeers' at his retirement party on February 13. L-R: Keri Hamel, Johns, Leslie Smith, and Sarah McMichael.

Honoring a Half-Century of Service

Great Falls and McLean Volunteer Firefighter Homer Johns retires after 52 years of service.

BY ANDREA WORKER
THE CONNECTION

There's no shortage of volunteers ready and willing to step up and add their words of acclamation about their friend, their colleague, their mentor, their leader, Homer Johns – not a surprise when considering that volunteerism has been the cornerstone of Johns' life and many of those around him.

Johns played all those roles – usually concurrently – over the course of his 52 years as a volunteer firefighter and emergency medical technician (EMT) for both the Great Falls and the McLean Volunteer Fire and Rescue services.

Now, at 87-years of age, Johns, who has still been heading six days a week into Great Falls Station 12 - the state-of-the-art building he helped bring into existence back in 2012 - to handle a variety of administrative, training, and fundraising duties, is finally ready to hang up that helmet.

"Well, sort of ready," he acknowledges. "There's a lot of my history here, and a lot of good people that I will miss."

Johns is retiring, selling up his Great Falls home and moving to Staunton to be closer to his son and grandchildren, and many of his fellow volunteers, as well as "career" personnel are wondering just how they will get along without him.

"He's part of the building. I have never known this place without him," said Amanda Liston, who's been a Station 12 volunteer since 2001 and "inherited" the position of station "historian," collecting articles and photos about the history of the fire and rescue service in Great Falls. Many of those articles and photos feature Johns, who first began serving the community in 1971 when he moved there from the Pimmit Hills area of McLean, while continuing his



The "career" personnel, present and past, gather to wish a fond farewell to their retiring volunteer partner Homer Johns at the party in his honor.

service in McLean and while working his "day job" as a career employee with the CIA.

"He's one of the bricks in this building," agreed Justin Green. Green is a Great Falls resident who also works as a Loudoun County firefighter and has been volunteering at Station 12 for 23 years. "Homer has just always been here and always been an important part of what goes on here and getting things done."

Johns has firefighting in the family background, with an uncle who worked the job in Baltimore.

"I used to visit him at the station with my cousin," said Johns, but as interesting as his uncle's activities were to the young Homer, it wasn't until he was already working for the CIA that Johns really got hooked on the "hook and ladder" life.

A fellow carpooler from the CIA was a volunteer firefighter for the McLean service and kept his radio scanner live as they travelled to and from work. Listening to the action, and being cajoled by the workmate to consider joining the volunteer ranks, Johns finally did just that in 1967.

TEN YEARS LATER he became the Chief

of the McLean Volunteer gang, while – you guessed it! - still working full time for the government and having already moved from McLean to Great Falls and started his volunteer work in his new community.

Over the course of those 52 years serving both "houses," Johns has held every position imaginable, including chief (once simultaneously as chief for both communities), president, assistant chief, treasurer, secretary, trainer, and more – and he's seen a lot of changes to the service and helped usher in more than a few.

The first full Chief to become an EMT when the program was initiated, Johns says he has always been focused on the life-saving "rescue" aspect of the work. He drove the very first ambulance vehicle in Fairfax County with the McLean squad.

"I probably shouldn't tell that story," he said, since he recalls being so "mesmerized" by the mobile first responder conveyance that it wasn't until he arrived at that inaugural call-out that he was told by those already on scene that he had rolled up without his headlights on.

"The emergency lights were so bright, I never even noticed!"



The man of the hour, Homer Johns, volunteer firefighter and emergency medical technician retiring after 52 years of service in McLean and Great Falls, is flanked by Fairfax County Supervisor John Foust (D-Dranesville) and Fairfax County Fire and Rescue Dept. chief John Butler at his retirement bash.

Johns also had a hand in the acquisition of the Fire Safety Trailer and Hazard House for the McLean VFD, now used throughout the community to teach children about household fires and how to plan a fire escape route.

"A little different than the on-the-job training that we got as the actual fire and rescue team," Johns notes.

"I don't think I was ever so scared as on those first few learn-it-as-you-go experiences."

Back in his early days on the volunteer job, trainees were mostly taught by setting

SEE HOMER JOHNS, PAGE 10

Langley High Orchestra to Present Pyramis

Pyramid Concert features orchestral sounds of Hungary

BY ANANYA AMIRTHALINGAM
SENIOR AT LANGLEY HIGH

Set for Tuesday, Feb. 26, Langley High School Orchestra's annual pyramid concert is an event showcasing Langley's and Cooper Middle School's orchestras. This year the concert will also be the venue for the Langley Orchestra Society's Silent Auction.

The Silent Auction is just one of many pre-concert festivities. During the reception, concertgoers can also enjoy Hungarian sweets from a free dessert bar and musical performances. Seniors Lauren Cain and Alex Tran will perform a piano duet. Junior Cao Linh Pham will perform Franz Liszt's Hungarian Rhapsody No. 2, rumored to be one



PHOTO BY HELEN BECKNER

A former Langley Orchestra assistant conductor, Ms. Leung will return to Langley's stage as conductor of Cooper Orchestras on Tuesday, February 26.

of the most difficult piano pieces. Even Langley's and Cooper's respective conductors (Dr. McCormick and Ms. Leung), and Langley's Mr. Willett and Dr. Lee will be showcasing their musical talent.

At 7 p.m., the bidding will cease and the

Hungarian showcase will start. Inspired by Langley Orchestra's spring trip to Budapest, Pyramis (the Hungarian word for Pyramid) is sure to wow its audience with spirited and familiar tunes.

Langley's Concert Orchestra will begin the event with their rendition of Johannes Brahms' Hungarian Dance No. 5, and will be followed by Cooper's Concert Orchestra.

After a brief intermission and the last call for bids, Langley's Symphonic Orchestra will ascend the stage to perform Hector Berlioz's lively Rakoczi March. Cooper's Symphonic Orchestra will follow with their version of Liszt's Hungarian Rhapsody No. 2. Finally, Langley's Philharmonic Orchestra will bring the night to a close aptly serenading the audience with Erno Dohnanyi's melodic Serenade Op. 10.

Music aside, orchestra students and families look forward to this pyramid concert. Several high school musicians have remarked that playing in the pyramid concert made the transition from Cooper to Langley much easier. The concert also pro-

Silent Auction

Starting at 6 p.m., concertgoers will have an hour to place bids on a variety of items, all donated by local businesses. These items range from gift cards to restaurants like Teas'n You Fusion Tea House and Listrani's, to an SAT course from Georgetown Learning Center, and even four tickets to a National Philharmonic Orchestra Concert. Thank you to all the donors: Amoo's Restaurant, Chipotle, Honeygrow, Lebanese Taverna, Listrani's, Lost Dog Café, Lei'd Poke, McLean Family Restaurant, Moby Dick's Kebabs, Roll Play Vietnamese Grill, Teas'n You Fusion Tea House, J. Gilberts, Urban Plates, Rocco's Italian Restaurant, Corner Bakery, Pulcinella, The Old Brogue, Class-y cookies, Rainbow Con"egg"tion, Parcel Plus, Georgetown Learning Center, Eclips Salon, Yon Chung Photography, The Artisans, Best Buy, National Philharmonic Orchestra, Washington Bach Consort, and the Boston Red Sox. All proceeds raised from the auction will be used by the Langley Orchestra Society for instrument repairs and purchases, orchestral coaches, and concert programs.

vides incoming parents and students with the opportunity to see all that a future in high school orchestra holds: including but not limited to delicious food, lifelong friends, inspiring music, and of course, fun.

This concert is free and community members are encouraged to attend.

Valentine's Gifts to Hospitalized Service Members

On Jan. 27, nearly 150 individuals, from kindergartners to octogenarians, took part in The Potomac School's third annual Intergenerational Valentine's Day Service Event, hosted by Vinson Hall Retirement Community. The participants included Potomac families and older adults affiliated with Vinson Hall and the McLean Community Village Association. Working together, they assembled 60 care packages for military personnel convalescing at Fort Belvoir Community Hospital. Among the items included in the packages were knot-edged fleece blankets and cheerful Valentine's Day cards – both made by hand at the event.

The school's Parent Association Service Learning Committee organized the event, and Potomac parents donated their time and talents, as well as the necessary supplies, to make it successful.



PHOTO COURTESY OF THE POTOMAC SCHOOL

Vinson Hall resident Valerie Vesser and Potomac School ninth grader Ethan Norton enjoy chatting as they work together to create a knot-edged blanket.

First grader Henry Feder was an enthusiastic participant, as were his mom, Sara Feder, and grandmother, Judy Feder. Reflecting on why their family decided to take part, Sara said, "It's important to let members of the

military know that we appreciate them, and this event is one way to do that. Plus, it's fun for people of all ages to get together to do service!" Judy agreed, noting, "It's a pleasure to do service with my daughter-in-law and my grandson."

Potomac parent Gia Cillizza spoke of a personal motivation that resonated with many of the event participants: "My dad and grandfathers served in the US Army and the US Navy. We want to show current members of the military how much we appreciate their service." Vinson Hall resident Bitsy Kotite concurred, noting, "My husband served in the US Army for 33 years, and my son was a student at The Potomac School for four years. So I came today to support both groups."

The military connection was underscored in remarks by Major Alan R.M. Boyes of the Defense Intelligence Agency. He spoke about the rehabilitation work being done

at Fort Belvoir Community Hospital and noted how much the care packages would be appreciated.

The event was also a reminder of how rewarding service can be. Robyn Lighthammer, a McLean Community Village Association board member, reflected, "There is a natural curiosity in the heart of a child and infinite wisdom in the heart of a senior, and intergenerational programs bring these kindred spirits together! Seniors benefit greatly from opportunities for engagement and service, which ultimately reaffirm a greater purpose in life."

Potomac second grader Sofia Elrefai shared, "At our table, we made three blankets for the soldiers! That was the best part." Fifth grader Claire McEwen reflected, "For me, the best part was making the Valentine's Day cards. When you decorate a card, you think about the person who will get it and you feel thankful."

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OPINION

A Historic Session

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



As you read this column the Virginia General Assembly will be nearing its adjournment *sine die* for the 400th year of its existence, having first met in the church on Jamestowne Island in 1619. During this commemorative year there will be many opportu-

COMMENTARY nities to learn more about Virginia and to reflect on how its history influences it to today even in the current legislative session and in what on another occasion was referred to as its "recent unpleasanties."

That first session of what became known a century and a half later as the General Assembly was composed of a representative of the 22 plantations that had sprung up along the major rivers of the state as there were no local government, political boundaries, or transportation networks in existence. The representatives were all white males who were land owners. African Americans had to wait for the out-

come of the Civil War and women the twentieth century before they became part of the electorate. While the right to vote has begrudgingly expanded over time there continues to be a resistance to making it easier to vote. In the current session there were proposals to allow people to vote early or vote absentee without an excuse and to make election day a holiday for the convenience of voters, but it does not appear that any will become law. Establishing a fair way to draw legislative boundaries has been hotly debated, but the decision to establish an independent redistricting commission will await the closing hours of the session.

Slaves were brought to the colony of Virginia in 1619 to work the tobacco fields that were the mainstay of the colony's economy. They had none of the rights that Englishmen claimed and beginning in the 1640s were subjected to "slave codes" that defined them as property to be bought and sold with no access to learning to read and write or to move about freely. After the Civil War these restrictive laws became the Jim Crow laws that con-

tinued to limit the rights of black people who were kept in line by the Ku Klux Klan and by public lynchings. White supremacy reigned with black-face entertainment intended to degrade black people through crude humor. Happenings during this legislative session showed how little we have progressed on issues of human rights and respect, but there is hope. The reminder to the Governor of his racist past will make him an even more enlightened person who if he continues can provide important leadership to dismantling racism in the state. The incredible people of color who were elected to the House of Delegates in the last election bring strong voices to the need for greater equity and justice in the Commonwealth. Some limited reforms that will help establish equity and remove racism in the criminal justice system are on their way to passage.

Women first came to the Virginia colony in 1619. While rights of women have expanded slowly over the centuries, having Virginia ratify the Equal Rights Amendment is still in doubt. May the lessons of this historic legislative session move us forward in future years.

To check on the fate of specific bills, go to <http://lis.virginia.gov>.



Alejandra Duran, Julie Benalja and Michella Saad (surgical assistants) getting ready to assist in Amelioblastoma removal with Dr. Gocke as the surgeon/



Dr. Gocke in surgery

PHOTOS CONTRIBUTED

McLean Team on a Mission to Help

BY MICHAEL TIMOTHY GOCKE
DDS, CEO

On Jan. 26, 2019 a team from team Virginia Oral, Facial & Implant Surgery of McLean flew from Dulles Airport to Punta Cana, Dominican Republic.

The excitement from the team was palpable, yet this being the team's first medical mission trip there was a little fear of the unknown. We were greeted by our contacts from the mission and oriented on how the week would flow. As the next morning arrived, so began the journey. The team drove to La Romana to deliver oral and maxillofacial surgical care to those in need. World Mission Partners (<http://www.worldmissionpartners.org>), a non-profit

501 (C)-3, coordinated the logistics of our mission trip. In La Romana, we treated both children and adults of Dominican and Haitian background. The current state of the infrastructure and quality of life in Haiti is still dire. After the earthquake which devastated Haiti in 2010 followed by a tsunami, many people fled to neighboring Dominican Republic to seek refuge. Many Haitians are living in the Bateyes (small villages) and work in the sugarcane fields. There are several hundred Bateyes in La Romana and these Haitian residents have not had any medical or dental care since they have arrived. A majority of the treatments and patients, during our trip, were performed at The Good Samaritan Hospital. (<http://www.laromana.org>)

In order to provide the medical attention needed for the Haitians in the Bateyes, we traveled to them in a medical RV that was outfitted with 2 treatment rooms. The Bateyes do not have running water so this was mandatory in order to provide care. We also knew the residents there lack the funds and ability to travel. We were able to treat many adults, most of whom have been living in pain for months by performing extractions under local anesthetic.

Approximately 50 children were also provided prophylactic care with a caries preventing varnish by our team. In the dental clinic and the operating room, at the Good Samaritan Hospital, we performed dental and facial

SEE MISSION REPORT, PAGE 11

McLean
CONNECTION

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WINTER SHELTERS

Find homeless and cold weather drop-in centers and shelters that serve Northern Virginia at www.novaregion.org/174/Homeless-Shelter-Lists.

questions or a printed copy of the agenda, call the Planning Commission office at 703-324-2865 (TTY 703-324-7951).

THURSDAY/FEB. 21

Caregivers Support Group. 10-11:30 a.m. at UUCF Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Fairfax - Program Building, 2709 Hunter Mill Road, Oakton. For caregivers to adult family members with dementia. First and third Thursdays of every month. Hosted by Shepherd's Center of Oakton-Vienna, scov.org. Contact facilitator Jack Tarr at 703-821-6838 or jtarr5@verizon.net.

Memory Cafe. 2-4 p.m. at Andrew Chapel United Methodist Church, 1301 Trap Road, Vienna. Connect with others living with loved ones with dementia. Helping those with dementia and their caregivers find fun, resources and "family." Email Carol Blackwell at lovriver@aol.com or call at 571-236-6933.

Conversation About Suicide. 7-9 p.m. at Our Lady of Good Counsel, 8601 Wolftrap Road, Vienna. "A Conversation about Suicide: Warning Signs and Common Misconceptions" facilitated by Jessica Zappia, Bilingual Clinical Mental Health Counselor with Catholic Charities Diocese of Arlington. RSVP by Wednesday, Feb. 20 to confirm catering and to capture any questions in advance. If plans change, please just show up. Free. Visit www.olgcvva.org/news-post/~post/suicide for more.

FRIDAY/FEB. 22

Selective Mutism. 10 a.m.-noon at Dunn Loring Center for Parent Services, 2334 Gallows Road, Entrance 1 - Room 100, Dunn Loring. Learn about the diagnosis of Selective Mutism and how symptoms are

maintained and persist. Dr. Kristin Swanson is a clinical psychologist, specializing in work with young children (ages 2-12) and their families. Call 703-204-3941 or visit www.fcps.edu/resources/family-engagement/parent-resource-center for more or to register.

Scholarship Application Deadline.

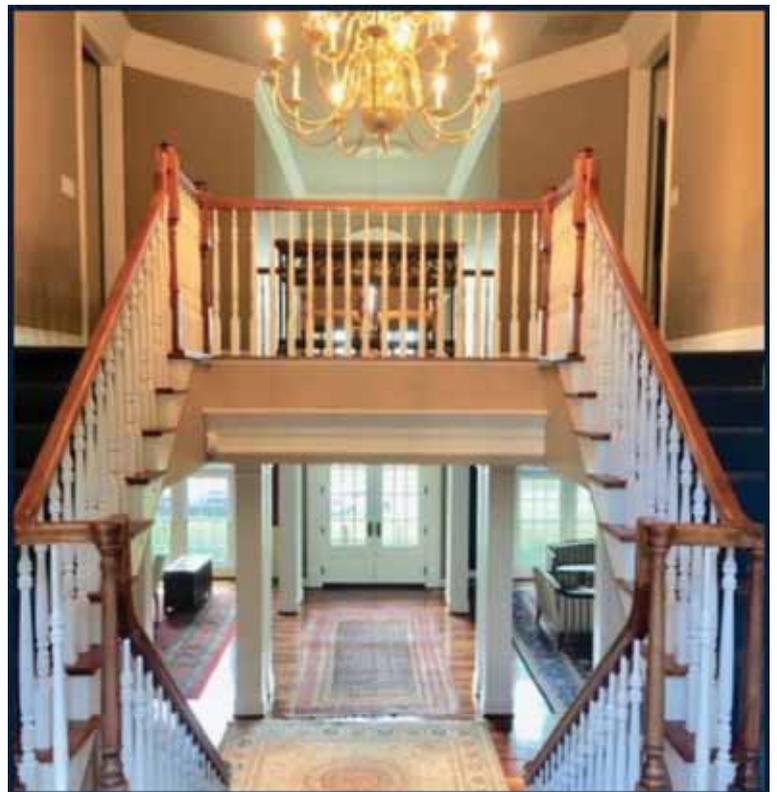
The Fairfax County Alumnae Chapter of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc. will award scholarships to African American female students who demonstrate a high degree of scholarship, leadership, and community service. Applicants must have a 3.0 or higher grade point average on a 4.0 scale and be a resident of Fairfax County. Download an application at www.fcacdst.org/scholarship-application. Email fcacscholarship@fcacdst.org with questions.

Language Immersion Lottery Registration Deadline.

Immersion lottery registration will close on Feb. 22 for grade 1. A SIS parent account is required to register. More information about Immersion programs and information meetings can be found at www.fcps.edu.

SATURDAY/FEB. 23

Super Transition Saturday. 8:30 a.m.-12:15 p.m. at Luther Jackson Middle School, 3020 Gallows Road, Falls Church. This workshop is for parents and educators of students receiving special education services. Learn about Career and Transition Services (CTS) programming and course options for students with disabilities. This event also includes a student/parent panel where members describe their personal experiences. Call 703-204-3941 or visit www.fcps.edu/resources/family-engagement/parent-resource-center for more or to register.



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ENTERTAINMENT

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

ONGOING

The Golden Girls of Northern Virginia, a senior women's softball league, is looking for players. Any woman over the age of 40 is encouraged to join. All skill levels are welcome. Games are on Wednesday evenings and Saturday mornings in Vienna, April-October. Other activities during the year. Visit www.goldengirls.org.

FRIDAY/FEB. 22

Waterfowl Wintering Along the Potomac. 9-11 a.m. at Riverbend Park, 8700 Potomac Hills St., Great Falls. Fairfax County is an attractive spot for waterfowl that don't mind a little cold. Take the "Winter Waterfowl Hike" at Riverbend Park to see what avian creatures are making their residence here over the winter. Hike with a naturalist at the park to search for winter waterfowl along the Upper Potomac River. Bring binoculars and spotting scopes. Designed for participants age 14-adult. \$8 per person. Call 703-759-9018 or visit www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/riverbend.

Unruly Theatre Project. 7 p.m. at The Old Firehouse, 1440 Chain Bridge Road, McLean. (The) Unruly Theatre Project (UTP) is The Alden's professional teen improv company dedicated to bringing comedic productions to the community. Make plans now to attend a hilarious and unpredictable performance. Admission is free. Visit mcleancenter.org/performing-arts/unruly-theatre-project.

BRAWS Hosts Mardi Bras. At Westwood Country Club, 800 Maple Ave. E, Vienna. BRAWS, a volunteer-driven, community-based 501(c)3 nonprofit organization that provides homeless women and children with necessities including new bras and underwear as well as menstrual supplies. Tickets are on sale now at www.braws.org/mardi-bras-2019.html for \$100. Visit braws.org.

SATURDAY/FEB. 23

Wolf Trap Tickets On Sale. Tickets go on sale to the public Feb. 23 at 10 a.m.; Wolf Trap members are buying now. Additional shows to be announced in March. Buy tickets online at wolftrap.org; by phone at 877-WOLFTRAP; or in person at the Filene Center Box Office, 1551 Trap Road, Vienna or after Feb. 24, at The Barns at Wolf Trap Box Office, 1635 Trap Road, Vienna.

The Okee Dokee Brothers. 1 p.m., 4 p.m. and 6:30 p.m. At The Alden, 1234 Ingleside Ave., McLean. Cost is \$20/\$15 MCC district residents. As childhood friends growing up in Denver, CO, Joe Mailander and Justin Lansing were always exploring the outdoors. Now, as the Grammy Award-winning Okee Dokee Brothers, they have put this passion for the outdoors at the heart of their Americana Folk music. Visit www.mcleancenter.org.

Winter Wine and Beer Tasting. 7-10 p.m. at the Great Falls Grange, 9818 Georgetown Pike, Great Falls. Sample a variety of red wines, white wines and selected by Richard Ashton of Classic Wines of Great Falls and four locally crafted beers from Lost Rhino Brewery in Leesburg. \$50. Tickets are available through Feb. 21 (or until sold out). Visit celebrategreatfalls.org.

FRIDAY-SATURDAY/FEB. 23-24

Scrapbooking Weekend. Friday, 6 p.m.-midnight; Saturday, 9 a.m.-7

Perspectives Speaker Series

Author Walter Mosley will give a 60-minute talk followed by a book signing. NAACP Image Award-winning writer of mysteries and crime fiction, in 2016 Mosley was named Grand Master by the Mystery Writers of America (Edgar Award). Presented in partnership with the Fairfax County Public Library. Sunday, Feb. 24, 2 p.m. at The Alden Theatre at McLean Community Center, 1234 Ingleside Ave., McLean. Free. Pre-registration required. Visit mcleancenter.org/alden-theatre for more.

p.m. at Vienna Volunteer Fire Department, 400 Center St., South, Vienna. The Vienna Volunteer Fire Department Auxiliary is sponsoring a scrapbooking weekend. Proceeds purchase lifesaving equipment for the fire department. Email lisaemerson3@verizon.net or call 703-981-4504.

SUNDAY/FEB. 24

Author Event: Dr. Paul Zeitz. 1 p.m. at Unity of Fairfax, 2854 Hunter Mill Road, Oakton. Zeitz, activist and author of "Waging Justice: A Doctor's Journey to Speak Truth and Be Bold," will discuss opportunities to work for social justice. Visit unityoffairfax.org or call 703-281-1767.

Winter Concerts: IONA. 4 and 6 p.m. seatings at The Old Brogue Irish Pub, 760-C Walker Road, Great Falls. The Old Brogue Irish Pub of Great Falls and Barnaby Productions, Inc. present the 30th season of family friendly, Winter Traditional Celtic Concerts performed in a listening room by the fireside. Tickets must be purchased in advance at oldbrogue.com: \$18 general admission; \$12 children.

The Capitol Steps Benefit Performance. 7 p.m. at Fairfax High School, 3501 Rebel Run Road, Fairfax. Join in for a SILLYarious evening as the Capitol Steps political satire comedy troupe performs a show to benefit high school theatre for the Cappies of the National Capitol Area. Free parking. Adults, \$30; students/senior citizens, \$20; children 12 and under, \$10; and groups of 10 or more, \$15. Contact Amy.Young@cappies.com or visit www.cappies.com/nca.

WEDNESDAY/FEB. 27

Foreign-Language Film. 1 p.m. At The Alden, 1234 Ingleside Ave., McLean. Free admission. Come enjoy foreign films selected by The Alden staff, then stay after for a discussion backstage in The Alden's green room. These movies are chosen for adult audiences and may contain mature content, language and themes. Visit www.mcleancenter.org.

Holy Happy Hour Recital Series. 6:15 p.m. at Lewinsville Presbyterian Church, 1724 Chain Bridge Road, McLean. Featuring Nicholas Quardokus, Organ Scholar at St. Paul's Parish in Washington, D.C., the 30-minute musical offering will be followed by wine, hor d'oeuvres and fellowship. Free and open to the public; a good will offering to support the music department will be taken. Visit www.Lewinsville.org or call 703-356-7200.

THURSDAY/FEB. 28

Movie Screening: "Angst." 7-8:30 p.m. at Langley High School Auditorium, 6520 Georgetown Pike, McLean. Join the Safe Community Coalition and Langley High School PTSA for a showing of "Angst: Raising Awareness Around Anxiety."



Free. Recommended for 6th grade and up. Email gina@stationwagon.com.
Burke Historical Society Speaker. 7:30 p.m. at Patrick Henry Library, 101 Maple Ave. East, Vienna. Mary Lipsey will share stories from her latest book, *Aviation: From Curiosity to Reality*. Learn about the early years of flight and some of the less-remembered pioneers. Visit burkehistoricalsociety.org.

FRIDAY-SUNDAY/MARCH 1-3

Tyson's Library Book Sale. Friday, 11 a.m.-5 p.m.; Saturday, 10 a.m.-4 p.m., and Sunday, 1-4 p.m. at Tysons-Pimmit Regional Library, 7584 Leesburg Pike, Falls Church. Large selection of books and media for all ages and interests. Half price and \$10 per bag sale on Sunday. Volunteers needed. Email tysonslibraryfriends@gmail.com or call 703-790-4031 or 703-338-3307.

SUNDAY/MARCH 3

Winter Concerts: Al Petteway & Amy White. 4 and 6 p.m. seatings at The Old Brogue Irish Pub, 760-C Walker Road, Great Falls. The Old Brogue Irish Pub of Great Falls and Barnaby Productions, Inc. present the 30th season of family friendly, Winter Traditional Celtic Concerts performed in a listening room by the fireside. Tickets must be purchased in advance at oldbrogue.com: \$18 general admission; \$12 children.
Live Music: Rebecca Loebe. 7 p.m. at Jammin' Java, 227 Maple Ave., East, Vienna. Catch Loebe in concert with her full band as she celebrates the release of her fifth studio album *Give Up Your Ghosts*. \$15-\$20. Call 703-255-1566 or visit www.jamminjava.com.

THURSDAY/MARCH 7

Mah Jongg Lessons. 6:30-9:30 p.m. at Temple Rodef Shalom, 2100 Westmoreland St., Falls Church. Three-session Mah Jongg class for beginners taught by Iva Gresko. Plan to attend all three sessions (March 7, 14, 21). Enrollment is limited. \$85, includes nine hours of lessons and includes the 2018 National Mah Jongg League Playing Card. To register, send a check made out to WoTRS to Iva Gresko, 2100 Westmoreland St., Falls Church, VA 22043. Include email address, home address, and home and cell phone numbers. Contact Iva Gresko 703-532-2217.
Live Music: House of Hamill. 7 p.m. at Maggiano's Little Italy - Tysons Corner, 2001 International Drive, McLean. Maggiano's Concert Series will present an early St. Patrick's Day performance with national touring artists, House of Hamill. Showtime is 7 p.m. with the option of a pre-concert early admission experience at 6. 18 and older. \$25-\$45. Call 703-893-5810 or reserve tickets at www.eventbrite.com (search House of Hamill).

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Black History Month: A Look at African American Art

Promoting and preserving a part of history.

BY MARILYN CAMPBELL

Despite his predilection for visual arts, Allen Carter, an African American boy growing up in pre-civil rights era Arlington, might not have been granted entrance into some of the nation's museums due to segregation. Still, he persisted, and years later he became a lauded artist, distinguished teacher and mentor to underprivileged children. And in February — African American History Month — his work is being shown in an exhibit, "Big Al Carter: A Retrospective," at the Fred Schnider Gallery of Art. While his work is part of the permanent collections of both the Smithsonian Institution and the Corcoran Gallery of Art, this is the first exhibit of Carter's work in the Washington, D.C. area since his death in 2008.

"Big Al's family has given us an incredible gift by sharing his art, allowing us to continue to reflect on his life, his art and his message for future generations," said Marty Schnider, president of Fred Schnider Investment Group and founder of Fred Schnider Gallery of Art.

As a painter, printmaker, sculptor and muralist, Carter, also known as "Big Al" drew inspiration from his life experiences,

art history and everyday life. He believed that his life's purpose was to use art to heal. "Art is my emotion. Art is my memories. Art is my life. I create the essence," he once said.

"He paints poor people, he paints people who are fishing or people who are having dinner at the table ... his work is very vast," said Carter's daughter, Cecilia Carter.

Carter's exhibit is particularly noteworthy to some African-American art historians who point to a recent study showing that just 2.4 percent of all acquisitions and gifts and 7.6 percent of all exhibitions at 30 prominent American museums have been of work by African American artists. The recent Andrew W. Mellon Foundation Art Museum Staff Demographic Survey of 181 art museums in North America found that African Americans are greatly underrepresented in mainstream art museums as directors, curators, conservators and educators. Those who study African American art say that solving this dilemma requires a year-round approach.

"We can't just focus on it during Black History Month," said African American art historian Crystal Johnson, Ph.D. "These two statistics go to hand-in-hand and prove what we already know. We need more African American students to explore their ar-



President of Fred Schnider Investment Group, LLC and Founder of the Fred Schnider Gallery of Art, Marty Schnider with Allen "Big Al" Carter's daughters, Cecilia Carter (left) and Flora O. Stone (right)

tistic talents and we need more students to take chance on a non-mainstream career and pursue jobs in museum administration. In order to make any changes, we need to have a seat at the table."

One such aspiring decision maker is recent a George Mason University graduate who landed a position as the co-curator of an exhibit at Howard University. "I'd worked with an exhibition, but I've never had the chance to curate before. I was excited and

nervous," said Kourtney Riles of the exhibit called, "An Examination of Feminist(s) Subjectivity in Modern and Contemporary African American Art."

Art plays a vital, but often overlooked role in African American history, not just during Black History Month, but all year long, advises Angela Black, who has taught art history. "Art is a way of preserving our history," she said. "It tells our story and we need more professionally trained artists who can do that."

Carter's exhibit, which features rarely seen artwork from his daughters' private collection, runs through March 3 at the Fred Schnider Gallery of Art, 888 N. Quincy Street, Arlington. Several pieces will be available for sale.

"The exhibit and his work reflect everything that he's been through, what he's seen, and what other people have been through and seen," said Big Al's daughter Flora O. Stone, Carter's daughter.

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NEWS

Homer Johns Retires

FROM PAGE 3

fire to old homes donated for the purpose, or just “suing up and going out with a partner to teach you the ropes at an actual fire. Things have changed a lot since then.” Nowadays, career and operational volunteer firefighters and emergency medical personnel are both trained to the same high standards at the Fire and Rescue Academy on West Ox Road, dedicated in 1995.

For the last several years, Johns has abandoned the truck-driving and rescue action for equally important work at the station houses of number 12 in Great Falls and Tower 401 in McLean.

Capt. Mike Allen who commands Station 12 praises Johns as a “linchpin” in the operation of the service, the liaison between the volunteers and the career personnel, “willing to do whatever it takes for both to operate efficiently and in collaboration.”

Allen, who laughs that “I was born the year that Johns started volunteering,” joined a virtual battalion of colleagues, firefighting hierarchy and public officials who gathered at the River Bend Country Club on Feb. 13 to honor Johns and “give him the best, much-deserved send-off toward his next adventure.”

THE RECEPTION AND DINNER was organized by Leslie Smith, another volunteer at Station 12, and one of the trio of volunteers that Johns calls his “three musketeers.”

Smith and fellow volunteers Kerin Hamel and Sarah McMichael have grown close to Johns, even though they are among some of the newest recruits.

“He took us under his wing from day one,” said Hamel. “He always takes the time to talk, help you through anything,” added McMichael. “He really cares and it shows.”

From his perspective, John says the “three musketeers” are worth every minute he has spent working with them, since they are so obviously serious and committed to the work. “They are really just my family now.”

“I just don’t know what we will do without him,” said Smith, who worked tirelessly to pull off his retirement bash. “I don’t know what I will do without him, quite frankly.”

At the party, in addition to accolades from Fairfax County Fire and Rescue Department chief John Butler, Supervisor John Foust (D-Dranesville), Capt. Allen, Great Falls VFD Capt. Doug Wessell, and Great Falls VFD president Frank Smith, letters from Senators Time Kaine and Mark Warner were read, thanking the retiree for his service and presenting him with an American flag that had been flown over the U.S. Capitol Building in his honor.

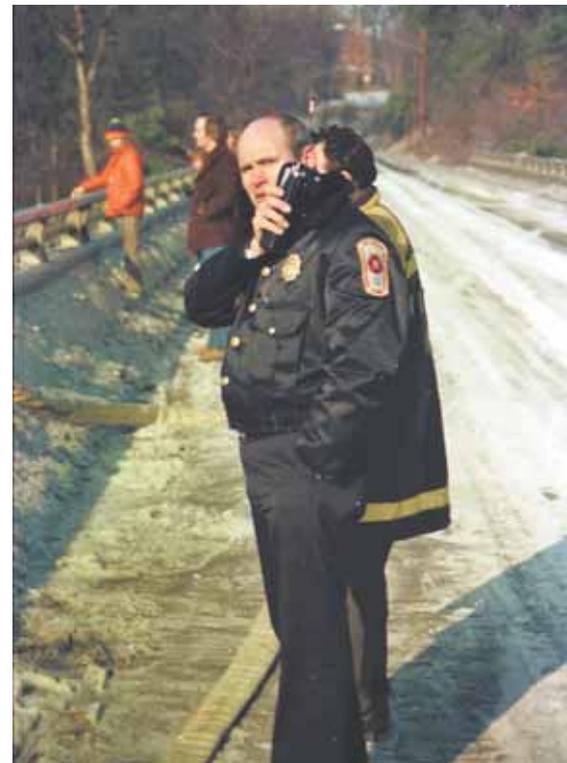
U.S. Senator Jennifer Wexton sent a representative to the event and State Sen. Barbara Favola and Del. Kathleen Murphy also sent letters of congratulations and thanks, and a flag flown for him over the Virginia Legislature.

Supervisor Foust also used the occasion to announce the selection of Johns as the Dranesville Community Volunteer of the Year, and to present a certificate of proclamation from the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors declaring Feb. 13, 2019 officially as “Homer Johns Day.”



PHOTOS BY ANDREA WORKER/THE CONNECTION

The tables at Homer Johns’ retirement event at the River Bend Country Club in Great Falls were decorated with photos of the 52-year volunteer veteran and some festive fun items, courtesy of fellow volunteer and party organizer Lesli Smith.



On the job in 1976, volunteer fire and rescue worker Homer Johns works the scene of a tanker and car collision from a bridge overlooking 1-495 near Tysons Corner.

Over his long volunteer career with the county, Johns has received numerous awards and recognitions for his service, but these many tokens of appreciation on the occasion of his retirement seemed to leave the usually talkative gentleman almost speechless at times during the event.

In the end, Homer Johns, the man who gave so much to so many in two communities of the county over more than half a century, could only thank those thanking him for the opportunity to serve and make a difference, and for the chance to have made so many friendships and memories throughout the years.

Those friends insist that Johns return to visit as often as possible and if he “doesn’t volunteer to do so” according to Capt. Allen, the Shenandoah Valley area might soon see a Great Falls Fire and Rescue vehicle arriving in their neighborhood to escort Homer Johns “back home.”

OPINION

Mission Report

FROM PAGE 6

surgeries of varying kinds and our assistants also provided dental cleanings for most of these patients as well.

In the variety of surgical patients Dr. Gocke met and treated, there are two that we would like to share as an example of what was encountered. Dr. Gocke met, examined and diagnosed an 18 year old Haitian female with an ankylosed TMJ (jaw bone fused to the skull). She has not been able to open her mouth since birth and is deformed because of it. The basic function of eating is not possible for her except for a small space between her teeth in which she consumes only liquids and pureed food. She is underweight and has been teased by the other kids her age because of this condition all her life. The main hospital in Santo Domingo declined care to her because of the complexity of her condition. Dr Gocke will be flying back as soon as possible with the proper treatment planning and equipment (which will be significant) to replace her joint with a prosthesis, perform jaw surgery to restore function to the jaw and to make her face more symmetric and harmonious. He may have to remove a rib in order to create a jaw for her as well. She also has an infected tooth which cannot be accessed because she cannot open her mouth which can be a life threatening condition for her. This patient's condition deeply affected the entire team. Dr. Gocke has decided to do what he can with his expertise to help her in any way he can to improve the quality of life for this young lady.

In another case, a young Dominican man, with pain for 6 months, presented with a tumor of his jaw. In the hospital operating room, under general anesthesia, Dr. Gocke resected the tumor.

The patient had to lose 8 teeth and a large amount of bone, as part of the resection. This tumor was approximately the size of a ping pong ball. Once he has healed and the cancer has remained clear, Dr. Gocke will return to reconstruct his jaw with bone grafting from his hip.

Eventually, he will be replacing his teeth with dental implants and hoping to give him a second chance at a normal healthy life.

This trip was a great success and we would like to thank all of our supporters. As you can imagine, this trip was a true journey. We feel humbled and grateful to have the opportunity to serve our fellow mankind. Ours souls feel nourished and full of gratitude. We are particularly grateful to our family members who supported us on this venture. This would not have been possible without them. We would also like to thank our our surgical supply vendors who donated many disposable supplies. We thank our Virginia patients who donated clothes, toys, hats and sandals. Lastly, we are especially grateful to our friends and family members who made cash donations. Everyone involved was a part of changing a person's life for the better!

May we all continue to strive to make our communities and world a better place.

Thank you all for being a part of this and making an impact on this life changing care.

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Enough About Cancer



By KENNETH B. LOURIE

At least that was my intention when I sat down to write this column. I was planning on highlighting a couple of my pet peeves: One was about people who back into parking spaces, an all-too common practice (which does not make perfect) that irks me no end and often inconveniences me while idling in my car waiting for the driver to crane his neck and coordinate his mirrors while backing into a head-first space, all while blocking my passage.

The second peeve also involves cars, but this action has potentially far more dangerous consequences: Drivers who, while motoring along, completely ignore my car's blinkers/indicator lights – WHEN THEY'RE FLASHING.

I was taught that when driving a vehicle and needing to turn/switch lanes, I was to indicate that to other drivers by using my blinkers, look into my mirrors and then move right or left accordingly. Moreover, when I observed those same lights flashing in other vehicles, I was to respect their intentions and give them a wide berth. I was not to speed up and interfere with their indications. Unfortunately, the exact opposite often happens.

Though I am still respectful when drivers flash their blinkers, it often happens that when many of my driving brethren see those lights, they react much the same way as a bull does when he sees red: they SPEED UP, and in their vehicle's acceleration, they put me and my passengers at risk. If it has happened once – which it has – it has happened a thousand times.

Unfortunately, neither of these car-related "misbehaviors" has been able to block out one of my key cancer anniversaries: Feb. 20, 2009, and as such, I will now be returning to the scene of the semi crime. And though I am not Billy Shears 20 years after the band taught me how to play, I am a lung cancer survivor who 10 years ago on Feb. 20 learned that I had cancer. That was the day when my primary care physician called me at work, about noon-ish on a Thursday to discuss the results of my previous week's surgical biopsy.

After declining the offer to come to his office, I encouraged him to just tell me – which he did: the growth was malignant. Dumbfounded, I asked for further details, which he politely deferred to an oncologist (a specialty with which I was totally unfamiliar), with whom, while we spoke on the phone, my primary care physician scheduled a Team Lourie appointment for the following Thursday.

This officially ended the diagnostic process which had been going on since I showed up at the Emergency Room on Jan. 1, 2009 complaining of pain in my right side, an inability to take a deep breath and difficulty bending over.

With an inconclusive X-Ray to not corroborate, an otherwise healthy patient with no family history of anything relevant – especially cancer, the doctor was perplexed. Fifty days later I learned I had cancer. And so I remember that day/date, a day which will go down in infamy, so to speak – in my family anyway.

The intervening days, as I have written about recently, were spent investigating the cause of my original symptoms. Eventually all test results led to one conclusion: non-small cell lung cancer, stage IV.

Meaning metastatic and inoperable, meaning "terminal." It was Feb. 20 when I learned my fate. (The following Thursday, Feb. 27, is another anniversary; that's when we met my oncologist for the first time and learned that my life would never be the same, or last nearly as long.)

But yet here I am, alive and reasonably well, writing about nonsense, mostly, instead of cancer, for this week, anyway. Good therapy for sure, and a nice change of pace.

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