Best Friends of Great Falls

No Property Tax Rate Increase And Fully Funded Public Schools

Great Falls Safeway Renovated

Photo by Maggie Giordano/The Connection

Michelle Zadeh, Great Falls resident, Real Estate Agent with Gigi, Shih Tzu: “She just brings a lot of joy and happiness into our life.”

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Senior Living

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Great Falls Safeway Renovated

Company execs and local dignitaries celebrate Safeway remodel with ribbon-cutting, food and fun.

By Andrea Worker
The Connection

Store Director Mike Stuckwisch was pleased to welcome customers to the official reopening of the Great Falls Safeway at 9881 Georgetown Pike on Feb. 16 with a ribbon-cutting ceremony, live music by the New Line Brass Band, plenty of snacks and even some free gifts to thank the community for their patience during the significant remodel.

A number of senior members of the Safeway company were on hand to mark the occasion and highlight the numerous enhancements to the grocery store that has been a staple in the Great Falls village for years. Dranesville District Supervisor John Pount and Great Falls Citizens Association President Bill Canis also stopped by, each offering remarks welcoming the improved offerings to area shoppers.

“We are pleased to share renovations that enhance our customers’ shopping experience,” said Tom Lofland, President of Safeway’s Easter Division, in a statement. “Our Great Falls customers are sure to enjoy the newly renovated store.”

More space and more selection have been added to a number of departments. The meat and seafood department now offers a “service meat case” where shoppers can purchase custom-cut meats from the Safeway butchers and find an increased selection of natural and organic meats. The same goes for the seafood offerings, with an expanded selection of wild, natural and organic seafood choices.

The deli has added Italian specialty meats and expanded their cheese selection and now offers more prepared foods, including hot items, salads and sandwiches. Also on offer are Dietz and Watson Original antibiotic-free meats and cheeses.

The enhancements continue into the produce, bakery, and floral departments with new fixtures, refrigerated units and displays and more in-store made items. Produce increases fresh-cut, in-store fruits and vegetables, refrigerated juices and kombucha. The bakery adds a new display case featuring gourmet single cupcakes and there is a grab-and-go dessert case with signature cakes. There’s even a new cream island case with a large assortment of single serve desserts, gourmet cream goods and fresh fruit desserts. The bakers also now offer a wide assortment of artisan dinner breads in another new case.

More home decor and home goods enhance the floral department.

In the renovation, more space has been dedicated to the beer and wine department where shoppers will find more premium wines and a larger selection of local craft beers.

Stuckwisch and team are excited to welcome their neighbors to the enhanced Safeway from 5 a.m. until 11 p.m. seven days a week with additional self-checkouts and services for time-saving and convenience.
No Property Tax Rate Increase and Fully Funded Public Schools

County executive presents proposed FY 2020 budget.

Andrea Worker
The Connection

After several years of contentious budget wrangling, an increase in the tax rate, and negotiations forced to “kick-the-can” on many funding requests due to fiscal obstacles in a sluggish local economy, the proposed Fairfax County FY 2020 Budget still presents its challenges, but the county supervisors see progress and reason for optimism.

“There’s more good news than bad,” was Supervisor Jeff McKay’s (Lee District) reaction to County Executive Bryan Hill’s presentation to the Board on Tuesday, Feb. 19. McKay is the chair of the Board of Supervisors’ budget committee, and while he and other supervisors still expressed some concerns, particularly over the additional monies required of the county to fund Metro, and the lack of funds to support much needed transportation and infrastructure improvements, the initial draft was generally met with a sense of “having something we can work with.”

McKay, board chair Sharon Bulova and others thanked Hill and county CFO Joe Mondoro for a proposed budget of $4.4 billion that fully funds Fairfax County Public Schools, allows for raises that help align teachers’ salaries with neighboring jurisdictions and modest Market Rate Adjustments and longevity increases for county employees. The proposal also supports board priorities such as the Diversion First Program, Gang and Opioid Prevention efforts, Early Childhood and Environmental initiatives, and staffing and training for the South County Police Center and Animal Shelter that the county hopes to see operational by 2022.

Thanks to an increase in property values last year, more commercial properties added to the tax rolls, and economies and efficiencies instituted by Hill and the county, the proposed budget achieves these funding objectives without suggesting an increase to the residential real estate rate — the main source of the county’s revenue.

“This Advertised Budget assumes no change in the tax rate of $1.15 per $100 of assessed property value,” said Hill.

Helping things along financially was Virginia’s economic recovery from the recession and from sequestration.

“Our growth has finally picked up,” said Hill, noting a decline in office space vacancy rates, an increase in government contract spending, and employment gains in the Washington Metro region that rose above historical averages in 2018. The county is also expecting a positive impact from the selection of Northern Virginia as a second headquarters for Amazon.

On the other side of the scale, Hill reminded that “no one yet really knows the true effect of the recent partial government shutdown.” In addition, the failure of the current General Assembly session to restore transportation funds to the region has pushed a number of projects further from their anticipated start or completion dates.

Without those funds, work to improve safety and traffic flow on roads like the Fairfax County and Franconia-Springfield Parkways will no doubt be negatively affected, according to Braddock District Supervisor John Cook, who added that “citizens need to know the facts, that even with 3 percent growth in the county, it’s still a struggle to meet our needs. We need their help.”

Several of the supervisors posed budget questions for Hill and Mondoro.

“The answers to their questions will be forthcoming at one of the Budget Committee meetings, and Hill also noted that the responses would be made available to the public on the county’s Management and Budget website.”

While there is no assumption of a tax rate increase, other “non-general fund tax rate” service fees will see slight increases. Sewer Base Charges will rise from $30.38 per quarter, to $32.91, the Sewer Availability Charge (residential) will increase from $8,100 to $8,340 and the Sewer Service Charge will rise from $7.00 to $7.28 per 1,000 gallons.

After the Budget presentation, Hill, CFO Mondoro, and Superintendent of Fairfax County Public Schools Scott Brabrand held a joint Q&A with media representatives.

“This is a superintendent’s dream,” said Brabrand in his remarks, “to be able to work with a county executive and to have the kind of relationship we are creating between the School Board and the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors.” This is the right way to do business.”

To Brabrand, this budget “puts the needs of students first, the needs of the school system first.” He expressed “delight” that the budget is “finishing the work to make our teachers market competitive — we want the best and brightest teachers and support staff” so that the system can continue to provide an outstanding educational experience for the benefit of the entire community.

Brabrand vowed to continue the FCPS’s focus on One Fairfax to strive for equity in all aspects of its operation, and to continue collaborating with the Fairfax County government.

Hill ended on a positive note, saying that while he was disappointed that not all funding requests could be met as “we manage within our means to meet our 5 percent needs on 3 percent growth,” many unfunded priorities from past years were finally being addressed. He also urged citizens to “get involved. All of the information is readily available — your voice matters.”

Each district will host at least one budget town hall — with either Hill or Mondoro or both in attendance — before the Board of Supervisors holds public hearings and before the budget goes to “mark-up” on April 30, with adoption slated for the board meeting on May 7.

Public hearings before the board will be held on April 9 at 4 p.m. and on April 10 and 11 at 1 p.m. All meetings will take place at the Fairfax County Government Center in the Board Auditorium. Persons who wish to speak at a public hearing need to sign up with the Clerk by calling 703-324-3151, or by form at www.fairfaxcounty.gov/bosclerk/speakers-form. Written testimony for the record can also be emailed to the Clerk’s Office at clerktohebos@fairfaxcounty.gov.

A 37-page Summary of the Budget, a reader-friendly two-page highlights document, as well as complete information on the budget process, timeline, meetings and more are all available on the county’s website, search “budget.” Information on the town hall meetings can be found at https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/budget/ fy-2020-budget-town-hall-meetings.
Great Falls Connection

February 27 - March 5, 2019 www.ConnectionNewspapers.com

Pet Connection

Best Friends of Great Falls

It's no secret that the Great Falls community is full of animal lovers. Pets of all kinds can be found in the homes. However, dogs seem to be a popular choice for many. There is not just one favored type of dog breed found here. In fact, many different breeds of all shapes and sizes can be spotted, and each has its own special qualities that make it into the hearts of its owners. Here are some things that a few people had to say about their beloved dogs and what makes them so special.

—Maggie Giordano

Meet Mr. Giant

Mr. Giant is a fourteen year old orange tabby adopted from the county animal shelter when he was 18 months old. He had almost identical two brothers with him at the shelter and thankfully they found homes also. Although he does not have the spring in his step as he once did - like to jump on the kitchen counter - he still manages to climb and jump up to the high places to overlook and supervise the household. Mr. Giant loves to be on my lap, is in constant need to head rubs, sleeps by the warm radiator in winter, counts cars out of the window and will find and curl up in any available sun patch as the picture shows. He loves to meow, coo and purr and to be in the room with his humans. He is a precious, gentle and soft companion and I am lucky to have him here — writes Jack O. Nutter of Great Falls.

Photos by Maggie Giordano/The Connection

Michelle Zadeh, Great Falls resident, Real Estate Agent with Gigi, Shih Tzu: “Gigi brought so much positive energy into our household. We never owned any pets before, and this was our first pet ever and I regretted not having more pets a long time ago. She just brings a lot of joy and happiness into our life. They give you unconditional love. Any mood that you are in, they can feel it and just them being there changes your mood.”

Phil Fairclaugh, Great Falls resident, Television Producer, with Bella, Goldendoodle: “I like her speed. She’s pretty quiet. She’s pretty fast; she’s deceptively quick. And you know, she’s amusing. She’s quite nice to look at. She’s not obnoxious. She’s a very good guard dog because she’s loud.”

Sonya Bingham, Leesburg resident, Junior Groomer at Great Dogs of Great Falls, with Nut, Miniature Poodle: “He is kind of a pain, but he is a little bit of a clown at the same time. He’s a very sweet little dog; he makes me laugh. He gets on my nerves and it’s hard to get mad at him because he’s so cute. He’s still a puppy so it’s easy to forgive him.”

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Katie Fultz, Great Falls resident, with Mick, Black lab and Pit Bull mix: “He’s my best friend. He’s been my best friend for 8 years. He’s like my shadow; he’s always close by. When I’m happy he’s happy, when I’m sad he won’t leave my side. He’s crazy smart. He also knows how to use a zipper, so you can’t have any food inside a purse or backpack because he will find it.”

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Photos by Maggie Giordano/The Connection
Finding Sprite, the Rat

I recently visited the Fairfax County Animal Shelter to drop off some pet food donations. In addition to seeing bunnies and the most adorable bonded pair of kittens, I also met a little white rat named Sprite. I had no idea that rats could be so affectionate, curious and sweet. Turns out rats make great pets and you can even teach them tricks. If you are looking for a new pet but don't have a lot of room, consider stopping by the Fairfax County Animal Shelter to see if Sprite still needs a home.

— Sharon Bulova, Chairman of the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors

Jessie Brings Fun and Love

This is our beautiful Jessie playing with her toys. She was my first foster for Operation Paws for Homes three years ago and we knew within days that we were adopting her. We will never know how she ended up at a South Carolina shelter. She was house trained and knew some commands. She brings so much fun and love to our home. And she loves playing with other foster dogs. OPHrescue.org always needs fosters and volunteers to help shelter dogs find new homes — writes Karen Alden, Volunteer - Operation Paws for Homes in Great Falls.
OPINION

Consider a Greyhound

By Jenny Harrop

What would you say to having a greyhound as a pet? It needs too much space. I could never give it enough exercise. That’s not the dog for me. That is what I thought too. Please reconsider. This past November, Florida voters voted to close all of the state’s greyhound racing tracks by the year 2020. There are 11 tracks in Florida, each with hundreds of dogs, many of whom will need homes. So, if you are thinking of adding a dog to your family in the next year, please consider a greyhound.

Many of the commonly held assumptions about the breed are just not true, in fact, quite the opposite. The greyhounds have a nickname of the “40 MPH couch potato.” While they can go 40 MPH on the track, once they retire they are very content to lounge around the house. My greyhound gets a short walk in the morning, a 30-minute mid-day walk, and a short walk in the evening.

People think greyhounds need a lot of space and fenced in yards. Would you believe they are on the American Kennel Club’s list of best apartment dogs? We live in a townhouse and our greyhound does just fine. They do need to be kept on a lead when they are outside. They are sighthounds and can bolt after squirrels or birds.

There are two other aspects of the breed I’d like to highlight. First, they are incredibly sweet and docile. People think otherwise because they are often pictured in their muzzles at the track. They wear these because they have very fragile skin and the muzzles protect them from injuries. Second, in terms of grooming they are very low maintenance. A bath a couple times a year and some brushing does the trick. They do have fast growing nails that need regular trimming, and as mouth breathers, they require regular dental care. Because they are bred and raised at the tracks they are used to being handled by humans so vet visits are not an issue.

It is surprisingly easy to meet and adopt a greyhound. The local adoptions groups – listed below – frequently have “meet and greets” where you can ask questions and see some greyhounds. Once you adopt your greyhound, the groups are very supportive. My early owner questions were answered within 24 hours, sometimes by multiple volunteers.

So please, if you might be getting a dog soon – be sure to meet a greyhound and research the breed a bit. They make wonderful pets and there are many who will need homes in the not too distant future.

Local Greyhound Adoption Groups:
- Blue Ridge Greyhound Adoption – www.brga.org
- Virginia greyhound Adoption – www.virginiagreyhounds.org
- James River Greyhounds – www.jamesrivergreyhounds.org
- Greyhound Pets of America – Northern Virginia www.gpa-nova.org

Finding Home for Luka

Karen Alden, Volunteer with Operation Paws for Homes in Great Falls, trying to find a home for Luka who has been with the rescue for awhile. “Luka is one of the special dogs. Luka has been described as Handsome, 2 years young, 42 pounds; Shepherd mix with an awesome curling tail; Smart, knows lots of commands; Loves people and a good treat; Fit, athletic, energetic; Protective of his handler; Big fenced yard ideal. Needs a confident experienced handler. Text or call Drew 410-707-4966. Opsbrescue.org

Dutch Julie: Retired racing greyhound.

Jenny and Ken Harrop with Julie on her “gotcha day.”

Luka needs a home.
Senior Living

By Marilyn Campbell

T racy Palmer didn’t see the accident, but she received a frantic call that every parent dreads: her 11-year-old son had been hit by a car.

“We were on vacation visiting my brother and I’d gone to get coffee and my phone rang,” she said. “My brother told that an 82-year old woman hit my son while he and a few of his cousins were sitting just off the driveway drawing with chalk. She never saw the kids and when she hit my son she thought she’d hit a ball, so she kept going. Thank God one of the neighbors saw it and stopped her.”

After eight days in the intensive care unit, Palmer’s son is on the mend, but Palmer who works as an attorney in Arlington, however, is furious that the elderly driver was allowed behind the wheel of a car in the first place.

Monitoring one’s driving abilities is an essential part of our overall healthcare, especially as one ages. “There’s no cutoff age for when a person should stop driving. But as we age, our joints can become stiff, our reflexes slow down and our ability to make split-second judgement calls or stop on a dime can become impaired,” said Dana Kilgore, MSPT. “Our bodies also become more frail as we age, so the impact of a car accident would probably do more harm to a 25-year old than a 85-year old.”

It is important for seniors and their families to pay close to attention to the warning signs that it’s time to reduce one’s driving or stop it all together, says psychologist Donna Goldstein, Psy.D. “If you notice an increased number of scratches or dents on that mom or dad’s car, especially if they’ve always been a good driver, that could be an indicator,” she said. “Getting traffic tickets, getting lost frequently, running stop signs or traffic lights, those are all signs that it might be time to leave the driving to someone else.”

Accepting the fact that it’s time to stop driving can be difficult. “A driver’s license isn’t just a plastic card with a bad picture that you keep in your wallet,” said Lisa Dombo, LPC, Ed.D, a marriage and family therapist in McLean. “It means freedom and independence. It’s hard for anyone to want to give that up. That’s one of the reasons why it can be so hard for people to convince someone that they need to stop driving.”

That is a lesson that Naomi O’Conner learned one weekend this winter when she made plans with friends to take in a designer sample sale that was happening about two-miles from her house. Her 86-year old mother had agreed to babysit her 7 and 9-year old children. But the weather took a frosty turn and threw her plans into a tailspin.

“My mom lives a mile away from me and has always been my most dependable backup babysitter for weeknights, but when the snow started falling, I knew that I could not let her get on the road in that weather,” said O’Conner who lives in Bethesda. “It was for her safety and everybody else who’d be on road. Unfortunately, she kept insisting that she would be fine and even became a little peeved that I was suggesting that she was too old. Too keep her off the road, I had to concoct a story about one of my friends getting sick and canceling the plans.”

The thought of suggesting to a loved one that it’s time to give up their car keys can be daunting. Dombo says that there are steps that one can take to make such a conversation less intimidating. “This is a very sensitive issue for many people because it means dramatic change in lifestyle and having less control over ourselves,” she said. “It’s important to be respectful and not talk to them like they are a child. Give specific examples instead of making general statements and try not to have the conversation alone. It’s usually more effective to have the conversation with a group of family members.”

Demonstrating an understand of the what reduced driving means is also important, suggests Goldstein. “You must show empathy,” she said. “This type of transition can lead to depression for some seniors. Offering alternatives like gift certificates for cab rides or Uber or Lyft can be good. Coming up with a plan to remain socially active and to run errands and get to doctor’s appointments. But this type of life transition is not easy, but it is possible to live a rich, full life without a car.”
Submit entertainment announcements at www.connectionnewspapers.com/Calendar. The deadline is noon on Friday. Photos/artwork encouraged.

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. All movies are shown in the original language with English subtitles. Foreign-language films will be shown at 1 p.m. on the 4th Wednesday of the month through May. These movies are chosen for adult audiences and may contain mature content, language and themes. Visit www.mcleancenter.org.

FRIDAY/SUNDAY/MARCH 1-3
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 lesser-remembered pioneers. Visit burkehistoricalsociety.org for more.

THURSDAY/FEB. 28
Movie Screening: “Angst.” 7:30 p.m. at Langley Library, 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 for more.

FRIDAY/SUNDAY/MARCH 1-3
Tysons 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 for more.

SUNDAY/MARCH 3
Maple Syrup Fresh from the Trees. Noon-2 p.m. at Colvin Run Mill, 10017 Colvin Run Road, Great Falls. See sap dripping into collection pails on the trees, and discover the surprising amount of sap it takes to make just a little syrup. Taste the combination of maple syrup over cornbread made from the mill’s cornmeal, while supplies last. $5 per person for visitors age 3-adult. No reservations are required. This is an outdoor program, dress for the weather. Call 703-759-2771 or visit www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/colvin-run-mill for more.

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 fadrene. Tickets must be purchased in advance at oldbrogue.com: $18 general admission; $12 children.

House of Hamill: Brian Buchanan and Rose Baldino

Live Music: Rebecca Loebe
Before signing her first record deal last year, Loebe had made her national tele- vision debut on the first season of The Voice. Catch Loebe in concert with her full band as she celebrates the release of her fifth studio album Give Up Your Ghosts. Sunday, March 3, 7 p.m. at Jammin’ Java, 227 Maple Ave., East, Vienna. $15-$20. Call 703-281-1566 or visit www.jamminjava.com for more.

Live Music: House of Hamill
Maggiano’s Concert Series will present an early St. Patrick’s Day performance with national touring artists, House of Hamill. Area audiences may recognize Buchanan, a front man with the Toronto-based Celtic folk rockers, Enter the Haggis, Buchanan’s musical partner for this duo project is Rose Baldino, a fiddler, vocalist, and former bandleader of the Celtic folk band, Burning Bridget Cleary. Baldino and Buchanan launched House of Hamill in 2015. The couple was married in 2017 and they began touring nationally. Thursday, March 7 at Maggiano’s Little Italy – Tysons Corner, 2001 International Drive, McLean. 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).
Calendar

Thursday-Saturday/March 7-9
Gazebo on the Green, by Robert Gilbert

Robert Gilbert, a local artist, will have a small solo exhibit of his watercolors at the TD Bank in Great Falls (9901 Georgetown Pike). The title of the exhibit is “Near and Far.” The paintings are hanging in the quiet, professional looking lobby out of the traffic flow from the front entry. The paintings are watercolors of two local scenes and two of New York. They are framed and priced at $350 each. The exhibit runs from March 6 to April 5.

WEDNESDAY/MARCH 13
Movie Series: New Disney Classics. 12:30 p.m. at The Alden Community Hall, McLean Community Center, 1234 Ingleside Ave., McLean. The Alden is kicking off a new film series with “new Disney Classics” – those that were loved during the 1990s. The films will be shown at 12:30 p.m. on the 2nd Wednesday of the month through June. Free admission. Visit mcleancenter.org/performing-arts for more.
New Girls on the Block

Scouts BSA opens up new opportunity to girls.

By John Foong,
Troop 159, Powhatan District, BSA

This was anything but your typical Scout meeting. A group gathered around a table, and an unmistakable excitement in the air. Chatter filled the room about uniforms, supplies, upcoming outings and more, with an optimism and energy that seemed hard to find today. This is Troop 7, a Scouts BSA all-girls troop and one of the first in the Powhatan district. The official program with Scouts BSA girls’ troops started on Feb. 1, although the troop’s members were moving long before that. The BSA has been a boys-only Troops and Packs option for the longest time—although Venture Crews and Explorer Posts have allowed girls for decades. That begs the question; what’s the difference between a Scouts BSA boys’ troop and Scouts BSA girls’ troop? And what does this accomplish?

Troop 7 Scoutmaster Steve Conner has served in BSA Scouting for 14 years. He believes that the move to allow girls to participate in Scouts BSA Troops was nothing but positive. “I wanted to be a part of forging this path forward and give… the same opportunities that were afforded to my son and the millions of boys who have had the privilege of being part of BSA.” Conner said. He initially thought a Scouts BSA girls’ troop would struggle to gain acceptance in the community, but Troop 7 has had a positive response from other Scouts and the community at large.

These newfound opportunities for girls are making waves in the area, and Troop 7 is already 16 Scouts strong. According to Sarah E., a student from Navy Elementary School and one of these new recruits—observing what her brother had learned in Scouts “intrigued her… it was an opportunity to learn wilderness and life skills.” Another Scout, Melissa, was already a Venturer but was attracted to what the previously boys-only program could offer her, and the chance to interact with Scouts of different ages as peers. Despite being a South Lakes HS senior, she is aiming for the challenge of Eagle Scout. The requirements are the same for boys and girls, but there is a temporary transition rule available to newly joined youth over 16 years old that gives them a time extension to earn their Eagle.

Even with the overwhelming response, Scouts BSA Troop 7 is still open for new Scouts to join. For those interested, there is an opportunity to find out for themselves. The troop has a 30-minute welcoming event on Thursday, March 7 at 7 p.m. in Floris United Methodist Church, where you can meet the girls who make up Troop 7 and practice basic Scouting skills.

In the time it took you to read this article, the troop’s girls had unpacked several crates’ worth of cooking supplies. Gaby, a student at Franklin Middle School and the troop’s Quartermaster, took the lead directing the others in sorting the piles of pots and utensils—a sign of what was in store for the Scouts, and the excitement fueling them. The journey they would undergo on the trail to Eagle would be long and arduous, but it was clear that they were going to make the most of their chance.

More information about Scouts BSA Troop 7 can be found at www.Troop7va.org. To join or find a troop in your neighborhood, please visit https://BeAScout.org.
Submit civic/community announcements at ConnectionNewspapers.com/Calendar. Photos and artwork welcome. Deadline is Thursday at noon, at least two weeks before event.

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

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 and:

❖ Take a short five-question online survey
❖ Join a community conversation in person. March 6 – Falls Church.
❖ Share the survey and conversation invitation with neighbors, co-workers and county family and friends.

FRIDAY/MARCH 1
Technology Fridays in March. 10 a.m.-noon at the Dunn Loring Center for Parent Services, 2334 Gallows Road, Dunn Loring, Entrance 1, Room 100. Join the Parent Resource Center for this series of technology workshops presented by FCPS Assistive Technology Services. Register for one or all of the workshops. Explore a variety of technology tools to support student success and independence with reading and writing in the digital classroom and at home. Register at www.fcps.edu/index.php/resources/family-engagement/parent-resource-center. Call 703-204-3941 or email prefps@fcps.edu for more.

❖ March 1 - Technology to Support Reading and Writing: Encouraging Independence and Student Success
❖ March 8 - Exploring Early Childhood AT Home: Assistive Technology for Preschool
❖ March 15 - Technology Tools to Support Executive Functioning
❖ March 22 - Assistive Technology to Support Communication

SATURDAY/MARCH 2
Sibshops. 9 a.m.-noon at Providence Community Center, 3001 Vaden Drive, Fairfax. The Sibshop workshops are for children in grades 2-5 who have siblings with special needs enrolled in Fairfax County Public Schools. Meet other siblings in a fun, recreational setting; celebrate siblings; share sibling experiences and receive peer support; play games and more. A snack will be provided. Registration is free, donations will be accepted to support the cost of materials and food. Visit www.fcps.edu/resources/family-engagement/parent-resource-center or call the FCPS Parent Resource Center at 703-204-3941 to register.

MONDAY/MARCH 4
Paving and Restriping Meeting. 6:30 p.m. At Woodbridge Elem/Middle School, 7500 Magarity Road, Falls Church. The Fairfax County Department of Transportation is planning to host community meetings in every district of the county this spring with the Virginia Department of Transportation to discuss proposed 2019 paving and restriping projects. Overall, the program improves hundreds of roads in Fairfax County each year through maintenance and repaving. At the same time, the state and county agencies coordinate restriping efforts to address safety issues for motorists, bicyclists and pedestrians through the creation of bike lanes, parking lanes, crosswalks and more. Visit the website: https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/transportation/2019-paving-and-restriping.

WEDNESDAY/MARCH 6
Lent Services. 12 p.m. and 7:30 p.m. At Lewinsville Presbyterian Church, 1724 Chain Bridge Road, McLean. Worshipers will have the opportunity to receive the imposition of ashes. At the evening service, the sacrament of the Lord’s Supper will be celebrated. This event is free and open to the public.

The Following is a Test
By KENNETH R. LOUIE

Although you can adjust your television set, it’s probably wise to have juiced the battery in your cellular phone. Better still, use your landline – it has one – then having a dropped call right in the middle of your interminable hold. Because the call you’re about to make to a government office – is likely not going to be made to the correct number or the correct person or at the correct time or even to the correct department. And should you be lucky enough to reach an actual person with your call, the explanation for your call’s being transferred to resolve, will no doubt result in a transfer which most likely will not be to the correct number, the correct person, the correct time or even to the correct department.

Unfortunately, after pursuing the government’s helpfulness, you will not be able to figure out exactly what number you’re supposed to call. Is anyone that smart? And therefore you are likely going to experience this loop-de-loop – without the upset stomach.

And what makes your attempt even worse? Hanging up, since your call might be “answered in the order in which it was received.”

Now presuming/assuming that a less-than-immediate resolution is not obtained, there are a few steps one should take in preparation to not make a sad situation worse:

❖ Allow for plenty of time. Do not make this call when you’re in a hurry, on break at lunch or have a limited window of opportunity to complete your task. You will need to be in for the long haul, so to speak.
❖ Try to make this call when you’re able to sit/stand comfortably – for long periods of time. Moreover, make sure you have the privacy you need so that anything you say will be heard (or held against you in a court of law) and any movements your body makes will likewise not be seen.
❖ Although you can adjust your television set, your call is going to be made to the correct number or the correct person, at the correct time or even to the correct department. And should you be lucky enough to reach an actual person with your call, the explanation for your call’s being transferred to resolve, will no doubt result in a transfer which most likely will not be to the correct number, the correct person, the correct time or even to the correct department.

There’s something about being stuck on the phone for long periods of time waiting, waiting, waiting; talking, talking, talking; hoping (you’ll note I didn’t say expecting) to reach the right person and/or resolve the problem/issue, the answer which prompted the call in the first place, which rarely brings out the best in the person on hold. Quite frankly, it’s been my personal experience that the longer the hold, the worse.

In addition to having the time and the place, one must also have the patience. That patience comes from proper preparation. And by “proper preparation” I mean the creature comforts: food, water and access to a bathroom.

The order really should be reversed with bathroom access first and foremost. Being uncomfortable, shall we say, after finding the time and place, and then making the effort to navigate the government’s website looking for the proper person, phone number, department and the correct number you might have accomplishing this Herculean feat, to have that very personal need interrupt the proceedings is the definition of poor planning.

Common sense has to prevail or the consequences may be dire; you might have to start your calling process all over again. I wouldn’t wish that on any one.

There is no greater satisfaction than surviving making one of these calls, and having done so because you put all of your adult Boy Scout skills to work, should be the award of honor one can earn after completing this dreaded and arduous task.

In fact, there should be some kind of reward. Although I imagine reaching nirvana (not listening to Nirvana) is its own reward.

Nevertheless, having survived the ordeal and endured the suffering for as many minutes as I care not to remember, I can say with absolute certainty, it’s sort of a feeling. I wish you all well in your next pursuit of truth and justice despite the American Way.

Ken Louie is an Advertising Representative for The Potomac Almanac & The Connection Newspapers.
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