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Great Falls Remembers 9/11

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Women Helping NOVA Women Succeed

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'Shooting for the Stars' in Great Falls

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Andy Wilson, the President of the Friends of the Great Falls Freedom Memorial, speaks at the 9/11 ceremony.

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Frank Sesno, former CNN's Washington Bureau chief, has been a Great Falls resident for sixteen years. He was responsible for reporting at CNN on the day of the attacks.



The Boy Scouts of America Troop 55 presents the colors in honor of those killed on 9/11.

PHOTOS BY NADEZHDA SHULGA/THE CONNECTION

Great Falls Remembers 9/11 Great Falls residents light candles to honor those killed in the terrorist attacks on Sept. 11, 2001.

BY NADEZHDA SHULGA
THE CONNECTION

“We are here to remember,” Frank Sesno, former CNN Washington bureau chief and now director of the George Washington University’s School of Media and Public Affairs, addressed the guests with a keynote speech, “First, we remember our friends and neighbors, Americans, and people from around the world who lost their lives that terrible day 18 years ago... We remember the unfinished lives. What they did – and what more they could have done. We remember how we grieved, coped, bore down, responded and rebuilt. But remembering is getting harder. So many things pull at our time and attention. The years pass. Many of today’s first-year college students were not born when 9/11 happened. We have to work harder to teach what happened – and what it meant. To remember.”

Sesno has been a Great Falls resident for 16 years. As bureau chief, he was respon-



Pastor Dave Zuchelli from Smith Chapel United Methodist Church prays for those who died on Sept. 11, 2001.

sible for reporting on 9/11 at CNN. When one of the hijacked planes was still in the air, Sesno’s team was deploying a camera to the office’s rooftop trained on the Capitol dome. Nobody knew what to expect.

At this year’s ceremony, Andy Wilson, President of the Friends of the Great Falls Freedom Memorial, shared how one of the

most significant days in American history unfolded.

Wilson remembered the chaos of that day: “It seemed the world was coming to an end. When I came home, I called my wife. She was on her way home. Our kids were out of school already. We got together as a family. Nobody knew what was going to happen.” Wilson shared that there were a lot of rumors floating around at that time. Local radio stations reported a bomb exploded outside the State Department which was later found to be false.

Six residents of Great Falls died on 9/11 at the Pentagon. All of them lost their lives as passengers on Flight 77. The names of the victims were read out loud and six candles were lit to honor their memory. The reading of the Great Falls 9/11 Honor Roll was preceded by a rendition of “How Great Thou Art” by Dick Kunz.

Great Falls residents and county officials have been working together to find ways

to commemorate a tragedy that lives on for them from days long past. Since 2004, the Great Falls Freedom Memorial became a place for healing and to honor the lives lost on 9/11.

“We appreciate the tremendous support from our local politicians,” said Wilson. “State Senator Barbara Favola, Chairman of the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors Sharon Bulova, State Delegate Kathleen Murphy, and Dranesville District Supervisor John Foust. We appreciated them very much!”

The ceremony featured participation from the local Boy Scout Troop 55. The troop presented the colors in honor of 9/11, raised the flag, and led the audience in the Pledge of Allegiance.

The event concluded with a charge and benediction from Pastor of Smith Chapel United Methodist Church Dave Zuchelli as well as moving and patriotic “America the Beautiful” led by Dick Kunz.



From left: State Sen. Barbara Favola; Chairman of the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors Sharon Bulova; Del. Kathleen Murphy; Dranesville District Supervisor John Foust; and former Great Falls resident and CNN Washington Bureau Chief Frank Sesno lit the candles to honor the lives that were lost on 9/11.



Great Falls residents lit the candles to honor those who were killed in the terrorist attacks on Sept. 11, 2001.



Crews continue work to reconstruct the bridge deck, make extensive repairs to substructure and the approaching roadway at Swinks Mill Road at Scotts Run (VA-685).

Repairs to Kirby and Swinks Mill Roads Continue

Swinks Mill Road expected to reopen end of September; Kirby Road in mid-December.

The Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) continues repairs and reconstruction on Swinks Mill Road and Kirby Road in McLean, both severely damaged by flooding this summer. The road closures remain in place during repairs but do not prevent resident access. As many as 20 roads in Fairfax

County were closed due to storm damage from July 8, and extensive repairs were made to twelve McLean-area roads in the days following.

An update on the final two locations needing long-term road and bridge construction:

Swinks Mill Road at Scotts Run (VA-685):

- ❖ Crews continue work to reconstruct the bridge deck, make extensive repairs to substructure and the approaching roadway.

- ❖ In the last month, crews excavated and poured concrete working surfaces on the downstream side on which the footers will be built, installed rebar and poured two footers on the downstream side, installed rebar and support for the stem wall, that joins the foundation to the vertical walls of the bridge, on the downstream right-side abutment (leg of bridge), and partially installed rebar for stem wall on the downstream left-side abutment.

- ❖ Work is on schedule to be complete by the end of September.

Kirby Road at Pimmit Run (VA-695):

- ❖ In total, hundreds of feet of the road and bridge saw extensive damage.

- ❖ Martins Construction Corporation has been awarded a \$2.1 million emergency contract for repairs, and work is anticipated to begin the week of Sept. 23. The work includes:

- ❖ Relocation of Little Pimmit Run to its previous stream alignment in compliance with federal/state permitting agencies;

- ❖ Rebuilding the washed-out section of Kirby Road with concrete and rip rap;

- ❖ Replacement of a more than 50-year-old 24-inch sanitary sewer line;

- ❖ Reconstruction of the bridge over Pimmit Run with work on the abutments, wing walls, parapets, bridge deck, and approaches;

- ❖ Access to all homes will be maintained during the work. The road is expected to safely reopen to through traffic in mid-December, and final asphalt and lane striping will continue through May 2020.

For ongoing updates, follow VDOT Northern Virginia on Twitter: @vadotnova



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- 4th of July Parade
- Concerts on the Green
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Photos by Walt Lawrence

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PHOTOS BY TOM MANNING/THE CONNECTION

The Fairfax County Police Unified Team 2 pulls an 82-ton FedEx Airbus A320.

Dulles Day Festival, Plane Pull Attract Crowds

The 27th annual Dulles Day Festival and Plane Pull was held at Washington Dulles International Airport on Sept. 14. The event, presented by the Metropolitan Washington Airports Authority and United Airlines, has raised more than \$2 million for the Special Olympics of Virginia since it began in 1992. This year, 59 teams competed to see how fast they could pull a FedEx Airbus A320 or a United Boeing 757 airplane 12 feet. The Chesapeake Sheriff's Office won for the twelfth consecutive year. The Chesapeake team completed their pull in 4.95 seconds, beating the team from the Fairfax County Sheriff's Office by just .01 seconds.



Elizabeth Jenkins, 6, along with her brother and dad, pull for team Freddie Mac of McLean at the Dulles Day Festival and Plane Pull on Sept. 14.



Visitors check out a FedEx race car and go inside a FedEx airplane.

SEE PLANE PULL, PAGE 9

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Police Reform in Fairfax—Four Years Later

BY JOHN LOVAAS
RESTON IMPACT PRODUCER/HOST



It's hard to believe it's been four years since the Ad Hoc Commission to Review Police Practices submitted its final report to Fairfax County's Board of Supervisors. The 202 unanimously agreed recommendations contained therein, if fully implemented as intended by the 40-member Commission, would be transformative of our Fairfax County Police Department (FCPD). While transformation would be an exaggeration of what has been accomplished so far, the progress to date is remarkable, thanks in no small measure to the leadership of Police Chief Edwin Roessler.

The Commission created by the Board of Supervisors in early 2015, fifteen months after an officer's fatal shooting of unarmed John Geer, divided its report into five areas: Communications, Recruitment & Diversity, Mental Health, Use of Force, and Independent Oversight & Investigations. In the 75 years since the Police Department was created, the men in blue controlled all that went on behind the steel blue curtain. Transparency and civilian review were foreign concepts. So, there was tension on a Commission made up of one-third police, including heavy hitters. Our unanimous decisions reflect their presence.

What has been accomplished? Nearly all recommendations to improve Communications, i.e., public information on police operations, have been implemented, including installing a civilian chief of communications. At

INDEPENDENT PROGRESSIVE

times getting out information on police shootings still is delayed, but it gets out. Transparency does not come easily in a Department with five would-be police unions, but forward movement to date is impressive.

Diversity, however, is the one area where there has been almost zero progress. The Police Department is not representative of the County it serves — especially in hiring and promoting Latinos and African Americans. The county is nearly 10 percent black and 16 percent Latino, but the Force is just over 7 percent black and 4 percent Latino, and worse higher up. It's hard to believe minorities don't apply for and cannot qualify for entry level positions paying \$55,000. The Chief says bad press for cops these days is a main obstacle. That may be, but institutional resistance also certainly plays a role.

Mental Health - a success! Persons with mental illness frequently conflict with police officers, usually involving minor offenses (e.g., disorderly conduct), sometimes with tragic consequences. Half of all fatal shootings by law enforcement involve people with mental illness. Officers are ill prepared to identify persons in crisis much less manage encounters with them.

Their only option for resolution is arrest and incarceration in the county jail, a lockup filled with people in crisis.

Crisis Intervention Training for all officers and a Diversion First program providing facilities to assess and treat (vs. jail) the mentally ill were adopted and are underway.

Use Of Force. Appropriately, 87 of 202 Commission recommendations involve use of force. They include adopting a new philosophy—the Sanctity of Life as the guiding principle for new police policy and practices.

Policies and practices were reviewed and have been overhauled to include de-escalation in confrontations, prompt reporting stressing transparency, emphasis of less lethal techniques, and employing new technologies (e.g., late model tasers and body cameras for all officers). Implementation is nearly complete.

New tasers are now on the way, and long-delayed body cameras are expected to be approved for funding by County Supervisors this month. FCPD could be a topnotch, more humane force if these Use of Force reforms fully sink in. Perhaps John Geer did not die in vain!

A final area, Independent Oversight and Investigation, has met strong resistance from police. Three activities were proposed. A recommendation to build independent investigative capacity with the Commonwealth Attorney was killed by the Supervisors.

However, the Independent Police Auditor (IPA) is in place and reviewing all officer involved shootings, deaths and serious injury investigations conducted by the Internal Affairs Bureau.

Last, the proposed Civilian Review Panel is in place to accept public complaints about police abuse of authority, hear them and review police investigations of them. CRP's power was diluted in the approval process. Still, the creation of the CRP and the IPA mark truly historical turning points in drawing back the steel blue curtain.

More at <https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/policecivilianreviewpanel/complaint-process>

Legislating by Skulduggery

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



Last week while Democrats in the North Carolina House of Representatives were attending a 9/11 remembrance service, Republicans called a surprise vote to overturn the Democratic governor's veto of the state budget. While Democrats and media were told that there would be no voting during the morning session, Democrats' attendance at the vigil allowed Republicans to get the three-fifths vote needed to override the veto.

Reaction to the maneuver has been harsh. The Charlotte Observer in an editorial said that "the verdict is now plain. North Carolina's Republican legislative leaders

COMMENTARY

— not actually leaders, but connivers — are beyond shame." The paper described what happened as a "stunning display of contempt for democracy ... but this isn't a case simply of hardball politics and sly legislative maneuvering. This is a case of breaking faith with the people..." The Senate must concur on the override before it becomes effective.

Before Virginians get too smug about what happened in North Carolina we must remember what happened in the Virginia General Assembly about a month ago.

With the continuing string of mass murders in the country — beginning about the time of the massacre at Virginia Tech that for a while was the largest ever and continuing through a mass shooting at a Virginia Beach municipal building — Gov. Ralph Northam called a special session of the General Assembly to consider several bills intended to reduce gun violence.

The special session convened on July 9 to take up bills related to gun violence but without notice to Democrats or media the Republican majority adjourned 90 minutes later without taking up any of the bills and with a return date scheduled after the elections.

There were no bills among those introduced to respond to gun violence that would have confiscated guns or altered the Second Amendment.

They were common-sense bills that according to all public opinion polls I have seen are supported by more than 80 percent and some by more than 90 percent of the public.

The experience in Virginia can be described by the same terms of that in North Carolina: contempt for democracy, a travesty of the process, legislative deceit. You may have seen news reports that the Republican floor leader in the Virginia House received a \$200,000 campaign contribution from the NRA several weeks later.

Partisan control of the Virginia House and Senate are on the line this Nov. 5 as all 140 seats are on the ballot.

There are numerous critically important issues on the ballot that it would take several columns to enumerate.

I do want to add one that gets too little discussion and that is legislative reform. Such reform includes independent drawing of legislative district lines, or getting rid of gerrymandering, that allows the abuses of legislative power in North Carolina and Virginia that are discussed here. As the Charlotte Observer said of the situation in North Carolina, "It was an illegitimate majority acting in an unethical way."

What happened in both states demonstrates once again that the speakership be defined not as the head of the majority party but as an impartial and fair leader. In both instances the speakers of their respective houses should have stopped these episodes of legislating by skulduggery.

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Submit civic/community announcements at ConnectionNewspapers.com/Calendar. Photos and artwork welcome. Deadline is Thursday at noon, at least two weeks before event.

THROUGH OCT. 23

How to Build a Better Budget. At the McLean Community Center, 1234 Ingleside Ave., McLean. The McLean Community Center (MCC) Governing Board invites residents of Small District 1A-Dranesville to engage with planning Center's fiscal year 2021 budget. All meetings of the Governing Board are open to the public. The preliminary consolidated budget will be posted on the Center's website and available at the Center's reception desk a week prior to the public hearing on Wednesday, Sept. 25. Visit www.mcleancenter.org/news-items/404-board-holds-meetings-on-fy2021-budget-proposal for more.

- ❖ The Public Hearing on the FY2021 Budget, will be held at 7:30 p.m. on Wednesday, Sept. 25.
- ❖ Residents may submit written comments through Monday, Oct. 21 - by mail to McLean Community Center, 1234 Ingleside Ave., McLean VA 22101; fax 703-653-9435; or email to george.sachs@fairfaxcounty.gov.
- ❖ The Board will approve the FY2021 budget when it meets at 7:30 p.m. on Wednesday, Oct. 23. The final budget will be approved by the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors in spring 2020.

THURSDAY/SEPT. 19

Adventures in Learning. 10 a.m.-noon at Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Fairfax, Program Building, 2709 Hunter Mill Road, Oakton. The Shepherd's Center of Oakton-Vienna (SCOV) presents their Adventures in Learning (AIL) Open House/Registration for the fall 2019 semester. During the AIL Open House (11-11:30 a.m.) honor and share memories of long-time AIL Chair, Kathy Tugendhat. Light refreshments provided courtesy of SCOV. Fall classes run Thursdays, Sept. 26-Nov. 14. \$45 tuition covers all AIL classes (students may attend as many as they wish). Students may

sample one class for free. Visit www.scov.org or call 703-281-0538.

Students and Volunteers Wanted. 7-8:30 p.m. at St. Mark Christian Formation Center, 9972 Vale Road, Vienna. Students and Volunteers Needed! St. Mark's Catholic Church English as a Second Language (ESL) Ministry is seeking students and new volunteers to participate in their upcoming fall 2019 term, Sept. 24-Dec. 5. Call Monica at 703-980-9380, email stmarkesl@gmail.com, or visit www.stmarkesl.org.

FRIDAY/SEPT. 20

Fall Equinox Celebration. 6:30-8 p.m. at Unity of Fairfax (Meditation Garden), 2854 Hunter Mill Road, Oakton. Join in prayer to balance and heal oneself and Mother Earth. Participants prepare with smudging, chanting, drumming, singing, and joining with others in celebration of harvest. Bring a drum, flute, rattle, a chair if needed, and an object to represent what you are harvesting. Meet at the Medicine Wheel, in the Meditation Garden. In case of inclement weather, meet inside Unity. Free. Register at uof-2019-fall-equinox.eventbrite.com/.

MONDAY/SEPT. 23

Candidate Forum. 7 p.m. at Fairfax County Government Center, 12000 Government Center Pkwy, Fairfax. Candidates for Countywide offices: At Large School Board and Chair of the Board of Supervisors. These candidate forums are nonpartisan. The League of Women Voters of the Fairfax Area does not support or oppose any party or candidate and invite all certified candidates in their respective districts. After a moderated discussion, meet the candidates. Volunteers, including students, are welcome. Visit www.lwv-fairfax.org/candidateforum for more.

WEDNESDAY/SEPT. 25

Community Conversations. 6:30-8:30 p.m. at Marshall High School in Tysons/Falls Church. Fairfax County is planning for the next 10-20 years in the community and they want to hear

SEE BULLETIN, PAGE 15

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Normal Adolescent Moods Swings or Depression?

Making a distinction between the two can be difficult.

BY MARILYN CAMPBELL
THE CONNECTION

Stephanie Pironne says her daughter Lila was always a child who was well behaved. From preschool through elementary school, she was described by her teachers as having a kind and cheerful nature. When her daughter, now 13 years old and in eighth grade, began middle school, something changed.

"She now goes from goes from happy to grumpy to sad all within 15 minutes and with nothing around her having changed," said Pironne. "I'm always on edge when she comes down for breakfast in the morning because I never know what I'm going to get. She might be yelling at me for something I didn't know I'd done, giving me the silent treatment or happy and chatty or combination of all three.

Such emotional roller coasters are often a part of puberty. Hormonal changes that happen when puberty begins can cause not only bodily physical changes but mood swings that can feel out of control, say mental health professionals. It's often difficult for parents and those close to teens learn to distinguish normal changes in mood from a more serious mental health issue.

"It's really, really hard to do, because they can present in very much the same way, and aren't always two distinct categories," said psychologist Stacie Isenberg, Psy.D. "Also, sometimes [puberty-driven mood swings], do get treated with medication. I've had patients who were prescribed birth control and some who were prescribed antidepressants."

The severity of the symptoms, says Carol Barnaby, MSW, LCSW-C can help make the distinction," said therapist Carol Barnaby, MSW, LCSW-C. "Crying spells or deep sadness for no apparent reason is a sign. Displaying a loss of energy or isolating themselves from others and persistent low self-esteem are also signals."

"If your child's mood seems off with regularity or they are withdrawing or increasingly irritable, I would advise parents to get a professional assessment," added Isenberg. "You can start with you pediatrician, and based on their recommendation, you may want to have your child see a psychologist or psychiatrist."

The amount of time the symptoms last could also be a clue that professional help is needed. "Teen depression is normally indicated by a persistent change in mood that lasts two weeks or more," said Barnaby. "The change in mood seems to cause significant distress and problems that show up at home, school, during extra-curricular activities, and in social areas of life."

A desire to hurt oneself is an indicator of a mental health issue that is more serious than normal teen mood swings, said Barnaby.

"If your child ever talks about self-harm like cutting themselves, refusing to attend school or other activities they previously enjoyed those are sign that you should seek help immediately.

If your child talks ...or has thoughts about suicide or not wanting to be around, seek professional help immediately," added Isenberg.

"She goes from goes from happy to grumpy to sad all within 15 minutes and with nothing around her having changed. I'm always on edge when she comes down for breakfast in the morning because I never know what I'm going to get."

— Stephanie Pironne

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Virginia Schools Rank Third in Nation with B-minus

A leading education journal ranked Virginia's public schools as third in the nation in student achievement based on the performance of students on national assessments in reading and mathematics, graduation rates and achievement on Advanced Placement examinations.

Education Week's Quality Counts 2019 report awarded the commonwealth a letter

grade of B- for K-12 achievement. Only Massachusetts, with a B+, and New Jersey, with a B, earned higher grades. Superintendent of Public Instruction James Lane said: "I look forward to visiting as many schools as I can during the coming weeks and months and personally congratulating teachers, principals, administrators and support professionals for all they do as we strive to make the commonwealth's schools the best

in the nation." K-12 achievement comprises one third of Education Week's three-part Quality Counts rating system. Earlier this year, the publication awarded Virginia a B on its "Chance for Success Index" and a C for school finance. Today's grade for K-12 achievement resulted in Virginia earning an overall grade of B- from Education Week for 2019.

Protecting Environment, One Book at a Time

Local Langley ninth graders in Girl Scout Troop 5420 Grayton Simanson, Amelia Lee, Samantha Brunjes, and Charlotte Carbaugh established Little Library for Environmental Awareness earning their silver award in Girl Scouts.

They chose to create an environmentally themed Little Library and placed it at 9409 Fair Pine Lane. This location was chosen for easy accessibility to the public. Their Little Library was created with recycled plastic milk jugs and contains many environment themed books which include handmade bookmarks that give tips about caring for the environment both locally and globally.

The inspiration for this project took an environmental turn when this group visited the Difficult Run Nature Reserve. There they saw the impact of humans on our nearby environment realizing that with more awareness, they could have both a positive impact on nearby nature and promote awareness within their own community on the little things that could be done to help our environment such as:

Ditch plastic bags for canvas totes; REFUSE and turn down what you don't need; Buy in bulk and skip the packaging; Wrap food in beeswax paper; BYO reusable bottle; Say no to disposable utensils; borrow books from the library or our little library; REPAIR. If it's broken, fix it;

REUSE. Join swap groups in you area; RECYCLE ANYTHING ON: EARTH911.COM

This troop's Little Library is not complete without



PHOTO CONTRIBUTED

Troop 5420 earns Silver Award by creating Environmental themed lending library: Langley High ninth graders Samantha Brunjes, Amelia Lee, Grayton Simanson and Charlotte Carbaugh.

books. This team of girls has donated/collected books, but the motto of the Little Library is 'Take A Book. Share A Book.' Feel free to share your books as well and take some time to learn about saving our environment.

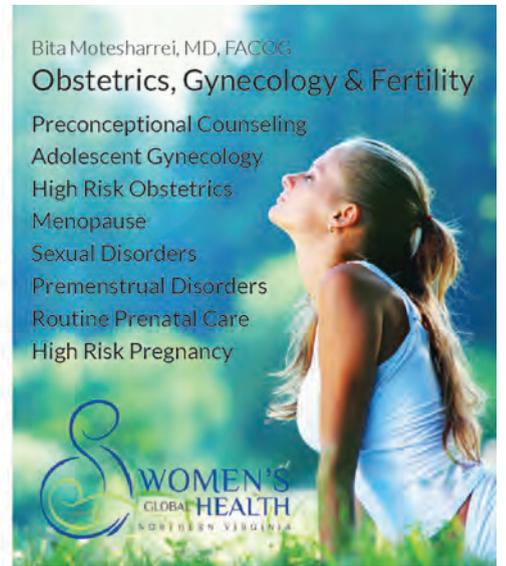


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Children take pleasure in trying to "Dunk a Cop!"

Plane Pull

FROM PAGE 5

It's all smiles for the lead pullers of team Diplomatic Security Special Agents Association.



PHOTOS BY TOM MANNING/THE CONNECTION

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Women Helping NOVA Women Succeed

Great Falls Friends and Neighbors Scholarship Fund presents annual scholarships.

BY MERCIA HOBSON
THE CONNECTION

Northern Virginia Community College student, Ellah Momand of Alexandria came to the United States two and a half years ago from Afghanistan. While currently pursuing a degree in biochemistry with plans to become a heart specialist or cardiac surgeon, she is also taking care of her family. During a celebratory luncheon held Friday, Sept. 13 at River Bend Golf and Country Club, Great Falls, Momand and eleven other women had the opportunity to meet and thank members of Great Falls Friends & Neighbors Scholarship Fund for 2019 scholarships awarded to them totaling \$17,500.

“As a student, taking care of family and also pursuing academic goals, this scholarship is really important. It lessens the financial stress and burden to achieve my educational goals while living in this high-cost area,” said Momand.

According to member Erin Labato, Great Falls Friends & Neighbors Scholarship Fund benefits women 25 years of age and older, attending higher levels of education at any phase in their lives and who meet guidelines.

“For many of these women, they are the first in their families to attend college, or they are working full-time to support a family [while going to school],” she said.

Formed in 1983 under the umbrella of the Great Falls Friends and Neighbors club for women and supported by its membership,



From left, Candace Bovee, Lissa Carter, Ellah Momand, Mary Lou Christy, Kathryn Rutkowski and Christie Lavin at the Great Falls Friends & Neighbors Scholarship Fund’s 2019 celebratory luncheon, The group awarded a scholarship to Momand.

the scholarship fund became a 501 (c)(3) organization with a separate approved board. In 2016, the board established two \$25,000 endowments, one at George Mason University (GMU) and one at Northern Virginia Community College to ensure the perpetuity of donated monies. In memory of former club member Betty Carter, a scholarship is also awarded each year to a George Mason dance student.

Mary Lou Christy, President of the Great Falls Friends and Neighbors Scholarship Fund, explained that recipients had to meet

Lissa Carter and Kathryn Rutkowski join Mary Lou Christy, President of the Great Falls Friends and Neighbors Scholarship Fund, Inc. as she congratulates 2019 scholarship recipient, Ellah Momand during a celebratory luncheon held Friday, Sept. 13.



certain criteria and have 3.0 GPA or better. “Each submitted an essay, and the board determined the recipients based on their essays and (financial) scores provided to us from FAFSA.”

Diana Parkinson of Oakton is Assistant Director of Donor Relations and Stewardship at GMU. She said that her job is to provide reports and scholarship recipient information. “I am the liaison between Office of Student Financial Aid, the University Foundation, and GFFNSF,” Parkinson said. “I’ve heard many stories that regardless of the award amount, it makes a life-changing difference. Students tell what a stress reliever it is and that enables them to focus on their studies.”

To donate or for more information about the Great Falls Friends and Neighbors Scholarship Fund, Inc. visit, www.gffnsf.org.

PHOTOS BY
MERCIA HOBSON
THE CONNECTION

Award Recipients

2019 Great Falls Friends and Neighbors Scholarship Fund, Inc. Awards:

George Mason University - (\$1,500 Scholarship; \$1,000 to Endowment Recipient) – total = \$5,500

Ana Vasquez Veliz, Fairfax County – Pursuing a bachelor’s degree in nursing, she plans to continue onto a master’s degree program. As a Latina, Veliz seeks to focus on the Latin community educating them on health-related topics.

Bindu Bista Dhani, Fairfax County - Immigrated from Nepal 3 years ago, she is working hard to obtain her bachelor’s degree in nursing while supporting her family in Nepal. Dhani’s goal is to become a critical care Nurse Practitioner and provide healthcare to low-income people.

Silvana Perez, Fairfax County - A graduate student pursuing a master’s degree in education, she is a single mother who plans to work as an Elementary School teacher in the Fairfax County School system in diverse and low-income areas.

Endowment Recipient – To be decided by the university.

Northern Virginia Community College – \$1,500 Scholarship, 2 from Endowment, Total-\$12,000

Ligia Decaro, Fairfax County – From Venezuela and a mom of 2 boys, she has a bachelor’s degree in computer science and is currently pursuing an associate’s degree in accounting.

Rebekah Reaves, Fairfax County – Single mother of 3 special needs children; she is pursuing a degree in interior design.

Melissa Carbajal, Fairfax County - A veteran of the United States Marine Corps, she is

currently completing her associate’s degree in business administration with plans to pursue a bachelor’s degree in kinesiology from GMU.

Sothearin Thach, Fairfax County – Working since she was 14, Thach realized education was the key to improving herself and advancing. She is pursuing a degree in information technology.

Dimple Jamine Oliva, Fairfax County – Born and raised in the Philippines, while her mother was hospitalized for cancer, Oliva was struck by how compassionate and professional the nurses were, and decided she wanted to be a nurse so she could bring empathy, support, and unparalleled health care to the sick. Once she obtains her degree, she hopes to work as a hospital nurse full time.

Ellaha Momand, Alexandria - She came to this country two and a half years ago from Afghanistan and is currently pursuing a degree in

biochemistry with plans to become either a heart specialist or cardiac surgeon. Momand realizes the huge responsibility doctors have for their patients and desires to be someone who can help others and also someone in whom her patients can put their trust.

Rebecca Wichmann, Fairfax County – Pursuing a degree in computer science, Wichmann works full time and attends school full time.

Cariza Anna Opana, Fairfax County – Pursuing a degree in liberal arts with the dream to finish her bachelor’s degree in the United States, Opana seeks to return to the Philippines to obtain her master’s degree. After struggling with anxiety and depression herself, Opana hopes to raise awareness of mental health in her home country and fight the stigma it has there.



Ainsley W. displayed her moon and played 'Rockets.'



Lauren L. played 'To the Evening Star.'

'Shooting for the Stars' in Great Falls

Students of Artstars Studio in Great Falls recently held piano recitals, where music and space travel were combined. The theme was "Shoot for the Stars," honoring the accomplishments of the Apollo 11 astronauts.

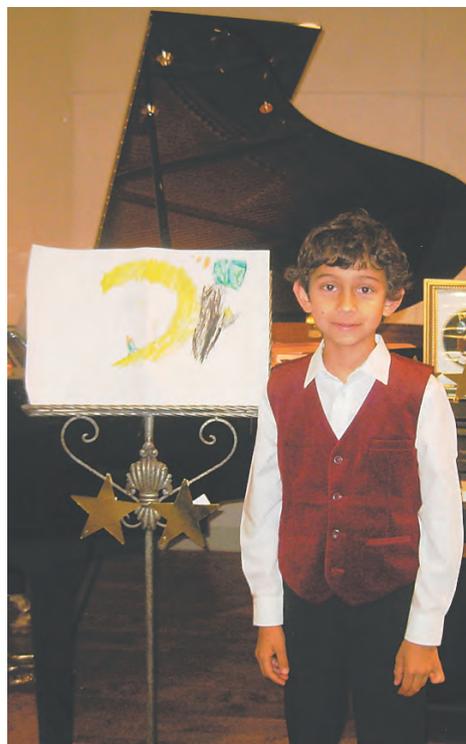
The young pianists played pieces with celestial titles, such as "Lunar Eclipse," "Hopscotch on Mars," and "Milky Way."

Classical selections included Beethoven's "Moonlight Sonata" and "To the Evening Star" by Wagner.

The musicians also created artwork to coordinate with the theme. Their art was displayed during their performances.

Throughout the program, students shared interesting facts about the Apollo project. For example, Neil Armstrong took fragments of the Wright brothers' plane on the journey to the moon.

Artstars Studio is located in Great Falls. The instructor is Mary Jane Cogan, who worked at Buzz Aldrin Elementary School, where she was fortunate to meet the astronaut. She is the author of "There Once Was a Cat." For information about piano classes, contact her at artstarsmjic@gmail.com.



Thiago G. played 'Stars On a Summer Night.'



Jenna W. performed 'Lunar Eclipse.'



Leila H. presented 'Moonlight Waltz.'

PHOTOS CONTRIBUTED



Syrus W. performed 'Moonlight Sonata.'



Steven W. played 'Hopscotch On Mars.'



Anastasia M. shared the theme from 'Stars Wars.'

CALENDAR

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

ONGOING

Senior Olympics. The Northern Virginia Senior Olympics features more than 60 events that challenge the mind as well as the body. New games this year: jigsaw puzzle and line-dancing. The public is invited, free of charge, to all NVSO events. The games run through Sept. 28. Visit www.nvso.us.

Countless Shades of Black. Through Oct. 12, Monday-Saturday, 10 a.m.-5 p.m. at The Frame Factory Gallery, 212 Dominion Road N.E., Vienna. Countless Shades of Black features local artist Alfredo Milian and Discovery Graphics. Free. Visit www.theframefactory1.com for a slideshow.

Pop-Up Scream Selfie Museum. Through Nov. 3, on select dates and times at Tysons Corner Center, Lower Level near Lord & Taylor. The American Scream Selfie Museum will feature interactive exhibits that will make visitors laugh and scream and the star of eye-popping selfies. The museum will feature an array of custom-built Halloween themed sets individuals can interact with: sit on the Iron Throne and rule the Seven Kingdoms, stand in an ancient Egyptian tomb and face the Mummy; visit a gruesome morgue; and more. \$15-\$18. Visit www.american-scream.com for timed tickets.

Oak Marr Farmers' Market. 8 a.m.-noon at Oak Marr RECenter, 3200 Jermantown Road, Oakton. Every Wednesday through Nov. 13, rain or shine. www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/farmersmarkets/oak-marr for more.

McLean Farmers Market. Fridays, through Nov. 15, 8 a.m.-noon at Lewinsville Park, 1659 Chain Bridge Road, McLean. www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/farmersmarkets/mclean.

Great Falls Farmers Market. Year-round, Saturdays, 9 a.m.-1 p.m., 778 Walker Road, Great Falls. Email kathleen@greatfallsfarmersmarket.org

Oakton Farmers Market. Saturdays, 9 a.m.-1 p.m. at Unity of Fairfax Church, 2854 Hunter Mill Road, Oakton. Year-round weekly farmers market in Oakton. community-foodworks.org.

Mah Jongg Cards. Order cards through Jan. 15, 2020, from Temple Rodef Shalom, 2100 Westmoreland St. 2020 Mah Jongg cards are \$8 for small cards and \$9 for large cards. Official cards and will be sent directly from the National Mah Jongg League in late March/early April 2020. Go to bit.ly/mahjonggcards2020 or email iva.gresko@gmail.com to order.

FRIDAY/SEPT. 20

Application Deadline: Vienna Halloween Parade. The 2019 Vienna Halloween Parade theme is "Famous Children's Books and Fairy Tales Brought to Life." To apply as a parade entrant, submit a completed registration form, narrative, waiver, and float policy form with a detailed sketch and description. Forms at viennava.gov/halloween.

Batty Myth-Busting. 7-8:30 p.m. at Lake Fairfax Park, 1400 Lake Fairfax Drive, Reston. Separate fact from fiction with the "Let's Get Batty" program at Lake Fairfax Park. Park staff will debunk some common myths about our friendly bat neighbors and provide information about a deadly fungus that is threatening their population. The program also includes a short naturalist-led hike. Designed for participants age 7-adult. \$7 per person. Call 703-471-5414 or visit www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/lake-fairfax.

Young Adult Game Night. 7:30-9:30 p.m. at Lewinsville Presbyterian Church, 1724 Chain Bridge Road, McLean. The Young Adult Ministry will be hosting its first Game Night of the program year. All young adults are invited to gather in the chapel for some games, snacks, and fellowship. Bring friends and games you are interested in playing. Newcomers welcome. Free. Visit www.lewinsville.org/events/young-adult-game-night/ or call 703-356-7200.

SATURDAY/SEPT. 21

Annual Walk for Mental Health. 9 a.m. check in; walk starts at 10 a.m. Tysons Corner Center on the Plaza 1961 Chain Bridge Road, Tysons. In addition to live music, face painting, interactive music and art stations and information booths, participants will be celebrating hope and raising mental health awareness. Visit www.nami-northernvirginia.org/ to register.

Global Hunger Banquet. 6 p.m. at Church of the Holy Comforter, 543 Beulah Road NE,



Opening day of ValeArts Fall Show

ValeArts "Colorful Journeys"

The 27th ValeArts Fall Show will feature more than 150 original works by nine local artists in various media, styles, and sizes. Three days fine art exhibition, a family friendly neighborhood event. Friday, Sept. 27, 10 a.m.-9 p.m. (reception, 7-9 p.m.); Saturday-Sunday, Sept. 28-29, 10 a.m.-6 p.m. at Historic Vale Schoolhouse, 3124 Fox Mill Road, Oakton. Free admission. Visit www.valearts.com or call 703-860-1888.

Northern Virginia Senior Olympics

The Northern Virginia Senior Olympics features more than 60 events that challenge the mind as well as the body. New games this year: jigsaw puzzle and line-dancing. The games run through Sept. 28. The games will be hosted at more than 25 venues, many of which are located in and around Fairfax and Arlington counties and the City of Alexandria. There will be no on-site registration for competitors. Spectators are welcome at all events and admission is free. For event details, go to www.nvso.us, call 703-228-4721 or email nvso1982@gmail.com.

Vienna. An intergenerational education event and meal, illustrating the global division of food portions and supplementing the Vienna CROP Walk. Free tickets at www.eventbrite.com - enter "hunger banquet" in the events button. Free, but there will be an opportunity to donate to the CROP Walk at the event.

SUNDAY/SEPT. 22

Nature Nook-Turtles. 10-11 a.m. at Clemyjontri Park, 6317 Georgetown Pike, McLean. Join a naturalist to learn about the region's native turtles. In this program for children ages 3-5, participants will take a short park hike, meet a live turtle and make a turtle craft. \$9 per child. Call 703-388-2807 or visit www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/clemyjontri.

Gyotaku at Lake Fairfax. 11 a.m.-1 p.m. at Lake Fairfax Park, 1400 Lake Fairfax Drive, Reston. Get in the swim about "Gyotaku," the ancient Japanese custom of fish printing, with a program at Lake Fairfax Park. Learn about the fish living in Lake Fairfax and give Gyotaku a try by on a T-shirt or fabric bag that you can take home. Designed for participants age 5-adult. \$9 per person. Call 703-471-5414 or visit www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/lake-fairfax.

Cider Fresh from the Press. Noon-3 p.m. at

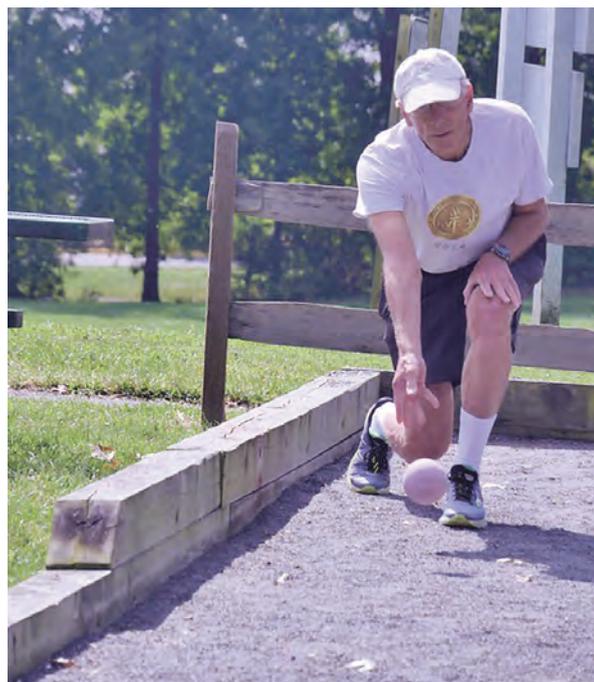


PHOTO BY DANA EICHLER

FILE PHOTOS BY SHIRLEY RUHE

rarely-heard Overture in C ("Trumpet"), op. 101, raises the curtain on a new season. Four Amadeus veterans (oboist Wesley Nichols, clarinetist Anne Ament, bassoonist Eric Dirksen, and hornist Karin Berkley) step to the front with Mozart's Sinfonia Concertante. And hear a foreshadowing of Beethoven's 250th anniversary year with his Eroica Symphony. A pre-concert lecture by Music Director A. Scott Wood will begin at 3:15 p.m. and a reception will follow the concert. \$40 at the door or www.amadeusconcerts.com. Students 17 and under and active military are admitted free charge.

Deeper than Skin. 7-9 p.m. at Unity of Fairfax, 2854 Hunter Mill Road, Oakton. A musical exploration of race: "Deeper Than the Skin" is an experience of singing and listening, of experiencing a connection so deep that it makes you laugh, smile, cry, and reconsider what you know about our history. \$25. Email music@unityoffairfax.org or visit deeperthantheskin.eventbrite.com/.

MONDAY/SEPT. 23

The Ayr Hill Garden Club Monthly Gathering. 12:45 p.m. at the Emmanuel Lutheran Church, 2589 Chain Bridge Road, Vienna.

The meeting features Erica Carter, Fairfax County Recycling Coordinator. There is a lot of talk about recycling these days - what can be recycled? Where does it go? Is China still buying? What can one do to minimize the amount of waste created? Free and open to the public. Email emilielarson@rcn.com.

WEDNESDAY/SEPT. 25

Foreign-Language Film. 1 p.m. at The Alden, 1234 Ingleside Ave., McLean. Free admission. Come enjoy foreign films selected by The Alden staff. 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. Free admission. Visit www.mcleancenter.org.

NOVA ScratchEd Meetup. 4:45-7:45 p.m. at Thinkabit Lab, 7054 Haycock Road, Falls Church. In the first NOVA ScratchEd Meetup ever, educators will have the opportunity to make, learn, share, and connect with others around the topic of creative computing. Free. Refreshments will be served. Email james.h.koontz@gmail.com or visit www.meetup.com/ScratchEd-NorthernVA/events/263667456/.

Holy Happy Hour. 6:15-7:15 p.m. at Lewinsville Presbyterian Church, 1724 Chain Bridge Road, McLean. An "Autumn Leaves" Jazz themed program will feature Christopher Ziemba and Lena Seikaly, performing a piano and voice duet. The short concert begins at 6:15, followed by wine and cheese in Fellowship Hall. Free and open to the public. Visit www.lewinsville.org/events/holy-happy-hour/

FRIDAY/SEPT. 27

20th Anniversary Celebration. 4-8 p.m. at Club Phoenix Teen Center, 120 Cherry St. SE, Vienna. Vienna's rallying point for afterschool games, food, and good company will celebrate its 20th year with music, games, inflatables, food trucks, and special guest appearances. Free and open to the public. Club Phoenix is open Monday-Thursday, 2:30-6:30 p.m. and Fridays, 2:30-10 p.m. Visit www.viennava.gov/index.aspx?NID=80 or call 703-255-5736.

All That Jazz Dinner. 4:30-6:30 p.m. at Sunrise of McLean, 8315 Turning Leaf Lane, McLean. Food, fun, raffle ticket and All That Jazz. Proceeds of the dinner will be donated to the Alzheimer's Association. Dinner: \$25, adults; \$15, children 12 and under. RSVP by Wednesday, Sept. 24 to McLean.Conc3@SunriseSeniorLiving.com or 703-734-1600.

After 7 Dance Party. 7-10 p.m. at The Old Firehouse, 1440 Chain Bridge Road, McLean. For 7th-10th Graders. The Old Firehouse presents After 7, a can't-miss party that includes raffles, tournaments, catered food and drinks. With hip-hop, Top 40 and dance hall tracks plus requests. \$5 admission. Preregistration is recommended. Visit www.mcleancenter.org or call 703-448-8336.

FRIDAY-SUNDAY/SEPT. 27-29

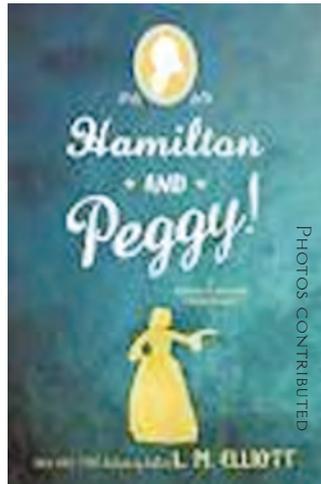
ValeArts "Colorful Journeys." Friday, 10 a.m.-9 p.m. (reception, 7-9 p.m.); Saturday-Sunday, 10 a.m.-6 p.m. at Historic Vale Schoolhouse, 3124 Fox Mill Road, Oakton. 27th ValeArts Fall Show will feature more than 150 original works by nine local artists in various media, styles, and sizes. Free admission. Visit www.valearts.com or call 703-860-1888.

Best-selling Author L.M. Elliott To Visit Sunrise Senior Living

On Tuesday, Oct. 1, at 6:30 p.m., best-selling author and long-time Great Falls resident L.M. Elliott will visit Sunrise Senior Living in Reston to discuss her work and celebrate her newest book, "Hamilton and Peggy: A Revolutionary Friendship," a biographical novel on the youngest of the famed Schuyler Sister trio that's already receiving national awards and favorable reviews from readers and fans of the smash Broadway musical sensation "Hamilton."



L.M. Elliott



L.M. Elliott will celebrate her newest book, "Hamilton and Peggy: A Revolutionary Friendship."

Part of an ongoing community forum called "Creative Conversations" hosted by Sunrise Living in Reston featuring authors, journalists and highly visible members of the artistic community, Elliott's appearance will be one of many to occur through the remainder of the year and into 2020 at the Reston facility.

"We want to open our embrace and invite people from all age groups in," says Kristin Clark Taylor, who designed and facilitates the program. "By creating and sustaining this kind of healthy, creative dialogue, everyone wins," she says.

Elliott will discuss, read from, and autograph her books, which will be available for sale. A dessert reception with the author will follow.

A maximum capacity crowd is expected, so early arrival (6:15 p.m.) is recommended. The event is free and open to the public. For more information, contact 703-956-8930.

"By creating and sustaining this kind of healthy, creative dialogue, everyone wins."

— Kristin Clark Taylor

Elliott, a Washington-based journalist for almost 20 years before becoming a New York Times best-selling novelist of historical fiction, has written nine novels, five picture books, and an adult nonfiction book, all published by HarperCollins or Hyperion, including her recent novels "Suspect Red," a McCarthy-era story of two teenage boys swept up in the Red Scare's national paranoia, and "DaVinci's Tiger," a bio-pic style novel about Ginevra de'Benci, the muse of Leonardo da Vinci whose portrait hangs in the National Gallery of Art.

"This forum is perfect for me because it allows me to not just talk about my work but to engage in ac-

WEEK IN GREAT FALLS

Great Falls Citizens Association to Host School Board Candidates Debate

Great Falls Citizens Association (GFCA) is hosting a Town Hall Debate with Fairfax County Public Schools Board candidates on Wednesday, Sept. 25 to provide an open forum for residents and candidates. It will be held at Forestville Elementary School, 1085 Utterback Store Road in Great Falls, from 7:30 until 10 p.m. Participants will be the three candidates for Dranesville District representative on the FCSP Board and candidates for the three At-Large seats. Candidates will deliver short opening and closing statements and will then take questions collected from the audience by the moderator. The public is invited, but seating is limited so residents should come early to ensure they get a seat. For more information, visit <http://www.gfca.org>.

Special Great Falls Community Concert on Sept. 28

On Saturday, Sept. 28 at 7 p.m. a community concert will be held with local musicians as a fundraising event for the Shepherd's Center of Great Falls, a nonprofit, all-volunteer organization addressing the transportation needs of our senior citizens aging in their own homes. The concert is free, but donations to the Shepherd's Center will be welcomed.

It will be held at the Smith Chapel Green and outdoor Gazebo (yes, Great Falls has two beautiful gazebos) at 11321 Beach Mill Road in Great Falls.

Families and children welcome; bring a lawn chair or blanket to sit outdoors and enjoy the music and beauty of an ancient oak grove. For more information, visit <http://www.smithchapelumc.com> and <http://www.theSCGF.org>.

PUBLIC NOTICE

Public Hearing on the McLean Community Center's FY 2021 Budget
(July 1, 2020–June 30, 2021)

McLean Community Center Governing Board
Wednesday, Sept. 25, 7:30 p.m.

Residents who wish to speak at the Public Hearing are asked to call 703-790-0123, TTY: 711, to be placed on the speakers list. The draft budget proposal is available on the Center's website. Copies will be available at the Public Hearing.

Written comments may be delivered to the McLean Community Center (see address below) marked "Attention: Executive Director," or sent by email to george.sachs@fairfaxcounty.gov. Written comments may be provided after the Public Hearing up through Monday, Oct. 21.



McLean Community Center
1234 Ingleside Ave., McLean VA 22101
703-790-0123, TTY: 711
www.mcleancenter.org

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An expert is someone who knows some of the worst mistakes that can be made in his subject and how to avoid them.

-Werner Heisenberg

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Announcements

Announcements

Convention Coin, Currency and Stamp Show

September 27, 28 & 29

Fredericksburg Expo & Conference Center

2371 Carl D. Silver Parkway, Fredericksburg, VA 22401 (I-95 Exit 130B)



Show Times:

Friday and Saturday, 10am-6pm
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For information contact **Richard Schornak**

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NEWS



PHOTOS BY TOM MANNING/THE CONNECTION

Runners pass a United 787 Dreamliner parked on the runway.

Running On Runway

The 7th annual Dulles Day 5k/10k on the Runway took place on Sept. 14. The races were held on a closed runway at Dulles Airport, giving runners a flat course which made for fast races. All proceeds raised from the races benefit Special Olympics Virginia, the Committee for Dulles Community Outreach, and the Washington Airports Task Force.

Jack Potter, CEO of the Metropolitan Washington Airports Authority, and 10k finisher, Rajesh Reddy from Chantilly.



Solomon Haile from McLean finished seventh among male 10k runners with a time of 36:03.



From left, Mahshid Alizadeh #3384 from Oakton, Jessica Paul #3740 from Vienna, and Beverly Marsters #3839 from Fairfax run the Dulles 10k together on Sept. 14.

BULLETIN

FROM PAGE 7

from everyone. Share thoughts, insights, opinions and experiences that will be used to help further shape a countywide strategic plan. Register via www.fairfaxcounty.gov/strategic-plan-community-conversations. Arrangements for child care, transportation assistance, interpretation services and reasonable ADA accommodations can be made by calling 703-324-5302, TTY 711, or by emailing Angela.Jones@fairfaxcounty.gov.

SATURDAY/SEPT. 28

Community Shredding Day. 9 a.m.-noon in the Parking lot between Patrick Henry Library and Whole Foods, 133 Maple Ave East, Vienna. Gain peace of mind by bringing outdated documents to an on-site shredding service provided by TrueShred. Enjoy snacks and visit with Ameriprise advisors and staff who will also be collecting non-perishable items for donation to Food for Others. Free and open to the public. Email mary.bowen@ampf.com or visit www.ameripriseadvisors.com/matthew.t.felber/events for more.

SUNDAY/SEPT. 29

Parish Picnic, Blessing of the Backpacks, and Ministry Fair. After the 10 a.m. service at Church of the Holy Comforter, 543 Beulah Road, NE, Vienna. Enjoy grilled hot dogs and hamburgers, old-fashioned games, music, a bounce house, and fun activities for all ages. Bring backpacks, bags, briefcases, or whatever is used to carry school or work items (or no bag needed). All are welcome. More at www.holycomforter.com.

MONDAY & WEDNESDAY/SEPT. 30-OCT. 23

Community Emergency Response Team Training. 7-11 p.m. at the Fire and Rescue Academy, 4600 West Ox Road, Fairfax. The Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) Program trains county residents in basic disaster response skills, such as fire safety, light search and rescue, team organization, and disaster medical operations. Using the training learned in the classroom and during exercises, CERT members can assist others in their neighborhood or workplace following an event when professional responders are not immediately available to help. Emphasis on hands-on skill development and Fairfax County protocols and procedures. Instructor will provide syllabus with class schedule at first session. This training does not require any special physical strength or agility. Visit volunteer.fairfaxcounty.gov/custom/1380/#/opp_details/184991 to register.

TUESDAY/OCT. 1

Entrepreneurship 101. 8-10:30 a.m. in the First Floor Conference Center at 8300 Boone Boulevard, Tysons. Starting a Business in Fairfax County – the workshop provides an overview of start-up basics (licenses and permits), workforce services and training programs, and SBA resources including financing and certification programs. Free. Registration required at www.vahcc.com/events.

SATURDAY/OCT. 5

Mental Health and Wellness Conference. 8 a.m.-4 p.m. at Fairfax High School. The morning will focus on social and emotional learning, with a keynote address given by Dr. Marc Brackett, founding director of the Yale Center for Emotional Intelligence. A special session for high school students, the Our Minds Matter Teen Summit, will take place in the morning as well. Attendees are encouraged to stay for Inova's Act on Addiction Summit, which will be held from 12:30-4 p.m. Breakout sessions, exhibit tables, and resources will be available to all attendees throughout the day. Lunch will be provided. Visit www.fcps.edu/resources/student-safety-and-wellness/mental-health-and-resiliency/mental-health-and-wellness to register.

Fall Festival. 10 a.m.-4 p.m. at The Church of the Good Shepherd (United Methodist), 2351 Hunter Mill Road, Vienna. The second "Fall Festival: Where Fun and Kindness Connect!" includes a food packing event, as well as a blood drive, children's program, moon bounce, first-ever animal blessing (noon) and food and refreshments. Free, though canned food donations accepted. A Pet Blessing, a first-time event for the church, will take place at noon to celebrate the feast day of St. Francis. Visit www.GoodShepherdVA.com or call 703-281-3987.

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Medicare Is In The House



By KENNETH B. LOURIE

More like in my wallet. After worrying for the past 18 months about possibly losing my health insurance, I finally hit pay dirt – and it didn't hit back.

I have received my Medicare card and after I "disenroll" from my interim "Obama Care" within the next week or so, I will officially join the ranks of the millions who have insured their health – so to speak, with the Federal Government.

No more will I if-and-or-but about hospitals, doctors ("medical" actually) and prescription drugs (parts "A", "B" and "D" for those of you unfamiliar with the alphabet soup). Dental and vision coverage I'm not so sure about, but at present, I can live with the coverage that I know I have now because the worst case scenarios have been addressed.

And, as a former insurance broker, solving and/or protecting against worst case scenarios was always my main concern.

To invoke "Speedy" from those long-ago Alka Seltzer commercials: "Plop, plop, Fizz, Fizz. Oh, what a relief it is." And even though I'm not plopping or fizzing, I am effervescent nonetheless at my arrival.

Reaching milestones (even destinations, sort of) is a way I've measured and evaluated my cancer experience. Not that I keep a chart or even a calendar with Xs marking the days but "I've looked at life from both sides now" (heck, I've looked at life from all sides now – and in between, too) and my glass is still half full. I remain positive about my negative and despite having never having seen Joni Mitchell in concert (although I did have tickets to see her at Cole Field House in the '70s – once on stage however, she realized she was too sick to perform and stage right she went) occasionally her songs have spoken to me.

Right now, The United States Government is speaking to me in the form of a red, white and blue card. They are telling me that I have made it to the promised land, a land whose existence was proposed in 1965 and which became law in 1966 fulfilling promises made to all Americans who reach age 65 that health insurance is their right and not because they were privileged.

Nevertheless, I feel privileged to be "Medichere." For 10 years, 10 months and 20 days, dating back to late December 2008 when I first experienced the pain in my rib cage which precipitated my visit to the Emergency Room, I have been under the proverbial gun.

Sometimes, it's been holstered. Other times, it's been locked and loaded. So far, no shots have been fired, even though occasionally I've been in very close range.

I can't say for sure whether I thought I'd actually get here, but let's be realistic, we all had our doubts. But now it's time to gear up.

A tremendous weight has been lifted from my shoulders. All I have to do now is live with the fact that I have stage IV, non-small cell lung cancer, an incurable disease if there ever was one. But here I am, alive and reasonably well.

No more will I have to worry about who, what and where I'm going to be treated. From now on, I'm in charge. (Like Charles.) As a result, I feel as if I've regained a little control of my life.

And for a cancer patient originally diagnosed as "terminal," this control is an extraordinarily wonderful feeling.

I wish I could bottle it like "Brighto." "Brighto, Brighto, makes old bodies new. We'll sell a million bottles, woo, woo, woo, woo, woo, woo." (The Three Stooges in "Dizzy Doctors," 1937.) And that's just the kind of silly enthusiasm I'll need living forward.

Hardly is the lung cancer I have on the run. I wouldn't even say I have it on the walk. A stagger, maybe. (Or maybe that's me who's staggering when I lose my balance because of the neuropathy in my feet.)

Cancer is an adversary unlike any other. It's going to do what it does. I doubt Medicare is going to scare it into remission.

Moreover, my not worrying about having health insurance anymore probably isn't going to have much effect on "the cancer" ("Forrest, Forrest Gump") either. The biggest effect will be on me, emotionally.

I just hope that's enough. Because I'm going to need all the ammunition I can muster.

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

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