

Vienna's Church Street At Its Christmas Best

NEWS, PAGE 3



Scouts Evict Invaders in Oakton

NEWS, PAGE 2

Holiday Entertainment

CALENDAR, PAGE 8

Santa waved to the crowd as he rode in on a 1940s VVFD firetruck during the Vienna's annual Church Street Stroll Monday evening, Dec. 2, 2019.

PRSRRT STD
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
EASTON, MD
PERMIT # 322
POSTAL CUSTOMER
EGR WSS
ATTENTION POSTMASTER:
TIME SENSITIVE MATERIAL
REQUESTED IN HOME 12-5-19

PHOTO BY LISA FAY/THE CONNECTION OPINION, PAGE 4 ♦ ENTERTAINMENT, PAGE 8 ♦ CLASSIFIEDS, PAGE 10

NEWS

These volunteers planted more than 100 native plants where pachysandra had been removed.



PHOTOS CONTRIBUTED



Picture before: Approximately 5000 square feet of invasive plant on the Gerry Connolly Cross County Trail.

Scouts Evict Invaders in Oakton

Every Saturday and Sunday in October, Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, college students, and neighborhood homeowners pulled invasive plants, primarily pachysandra, from a section of the Gerry Connolly Cross County Trail off Miller Heights Road in Oakton. I am a Scout in BSA Troop 987 and led the project with support from Hornaday advisor Sara Holtz and sponsor Fairfax County Park Authority's Invasive Management Area (IMA) program. Invasive plants are non-native, aggressive plants that cause ecological or economic harm and degrade our natural ecosystem.

Ninety-nine volunteers worked 210 hours to remove 85 bags of invasive plants from the park land. The goal was to replace the pachysandra with native plants and trees. Volunteers planted white wood aster, hairy bush clover, American alumroot, trailing

bush clover, dwarf cinquefoil, pussytoes, arrowleaf violet, common wood rush, Pennsylvania sedge, bluestem, goldenrod, arrowwood viburnum, witch hazel, hazelnut trees, ironwood trees, and redbud trees. I created this plan for this project in order to earn the BSA Hornaday Badge. This award was created by Dr. William T. Hornaday who was a conservationist and is a prestigious award that requires a Scout to lead a conservation project, complete several merit badges, and meet rank requirements. By successfully completing this project I am one step closer to earning the Boy Scout Hornaday Badge.

Homeowners, I encourage you to remove any invasive plants in your yard and replace with native plants (see list above).

—ELI EDWARDS



Picture after: Invasive plants are replaced with 110 native plants and trees.

Scheduled Maintenance On Your Schedule.

Life shouldn't come to a halt when your car's in the shop. Keep moving with our loaner cars and free shuttle service.

\$19.99



OIL CHANGE OPENING SPECIAL

Includes a 25-point inspection.

Limit one coupon per service type. Valid at Virginia Tire & Auto of Tysons & Virginia Tire & Auto of Vienna. Applies to 5 quart synthetic blend oil change, or \$20 off any premium oil change. EXP: 12/31/19 COUPCN_TY_LOF

Drop by our NEW stores in Tysons and Vienna today!

Tysons: 2055 Chain Bridge Road, Vienna, VA

Vienna: 141 Maple Ave West, Vienna, VA

VAtire.com

1.855.425.3677





Children's choruses sang Christmas carols throughout the night on the main stage.



Santa waved to the crowd as he rode in on a 1940s VVFD firetruck. PHOTOS BY LISA FAY/THE CONNECTION

Vienna's Church Street at Its Christmas Best

Holiday Stroll celebrates community spirit.

BY LISA FAY
THE CONNECTION

Vienna's Church Street Holiday Stroll is so full of charm, it is an event that would make any Christmas Hallmark movie jealous. The on and off cold drizzle did not keep residents from enjoying the 23rd annual holiday event.

Church Street merchants put on their Christmas best as Mayor Laurie DiRocco started the Stroll by giving out the awards for best decorated storefront. This year's theme was "Home for the Holidays." Merle Norman Cosmetic Studio took home the gold, Vienna Rexall Drug Center and JV Tile Ltd. both came in second, and Social Burger came in third.

Afterwards, a loud siren came streaming down Church Street as Santa rode in on the Vienna Volunteer Fire Department's 1940s restored fire engine. Screams of "Santa!" filled the air as kids cheered when Santa took his place on the front porch of the Freeman Store and Museum after lighting the holiday tree with the Mayor.

The Old Chapel of Vienna Presbyterian Church was filled with classic Christmas



Mayor Laurie DiRocco welcomed Santa to the Stroll.

tunes as residents were allowed to ring the church bells, providing the town with a "Silver Bells" vibe. Children happily roasted marshmallows on the open fire pits lining Church Street and Caffe Amouri cups were aplenty.

A petting zoo, sponsored by My Gym Vienna!, outside of the Caboose entertained

people as they walked by to check out historic structures such as the Little Library, Caboose, and Train Station that were decorated and open to visitors.

The Church Street Holiday Stroll would not be possible without the Town of Vienna team, Historic Vienna Inc, and the entirety of Church Street and its merchants coming

together to celebrate this traditional event and one another. Another successful Vienna event is marked in the books as the year comes to a close and a new decade is on the horizon. Here's to 2020, Vienna!

—MORE PHOTOS FROM HOLIDAY STROLL, PAGE 9



Parents eagerly awaited their turn to snap photos of their children with Santa.



Bards Alley's window decorations followed the theme of this year's storefront decorating contest: Home for the Holidays.



Children roasted marshmallows at the fire pit stations along Church Street.

Getting Bills Ready for the 2020 State Legislature

BY SEN. SCOTT SUROVELL
(D-36)

The 2020 Virginia General Assembly will convene in about a month and legislators are now preparing bills to propose. Many constituents and advocacy groups are proposing legislation.

Two weeks ago, I reported on some of the bigger issues we are likely to tackle. In this column, I am covering a few of the bills that I will introduce. I will discuss more in future columns.

In the 2018 and 2019 sessions, we came very close to passing legislation prohibiting drivers from having a phone in their hand in a moving vehicle. In the last session, we approved legislation to prohibit this in construction zones, but the Speaker killed it by ruling Governor Ralph Northam's attempt to widen it to all highways not germane. It will pass this session.

I will propose several predatory lending reforms. Using Native American tribes as fronts, online lenders continue to make loans over the internet in Virginia at over 400 percent interest rates and requiring far off tribal arbitration for

disputes. Other states have enacted consumer protections, including steps to rein in interest rates, fees, collection practices and repeat loans.

I will introduce bills to curb firearm violence. The Unite the Right March in Charlottesville coupled with the four-armed men who appeared at the Alexandria Farmer's Market in September underscore the need for local governments to have the ability to prohibit firearms at permitted public events. Second, suicide is the leading cause of firearm death in Virginia. One of my bills will allow people to place themselves on a "do-not-sell" list for firearms so they cannot be sold a gun if they have a moment of weakness. Third, Virginia's Department of Game and Inland Fisheries is still allowing permittees to license duck blinds in counties and areas where duck hunting is illegal under local ordinances. I will introduce legislation to fix this along with Del. Paul Krizek (D-44).

I will introduce a bill to create a new Public Defender's Office for Prince William County and the cities of Manassas and Manassas Park. Virginia currently has 25 public defender offices, but

Virginia's second-largest jurisdiction does not. A public defender's office will professionalize defense representation, improve justice outcomes and cost taxpayers little more than funding private court-appointed counsel.

In the late 1990s, Virginia required the use of alternative sentencing analyses to inform judges when convicted defendants should be considered for non-prison sentences. Over time, judges have ignored these recommendations more than followed them. I will carry legislation requiring the state to assemble data on judicial use of this data and require probation officers to provide findings about the costs of various sentencing alternatives to the courts before a judge renders a final sentence in a case. This would hopefully encourage more informed decision-making and better outcomes.

Virginia's civil justice system should also be modernized. Virginia and Mississippi are the only states in America that do not allow class action lawsuits. Virginia also still adheres to ancient doctrines that punish largely innocent collision victims, and we have not adjusted Virginia's auto insurance minimum policy limits since the

1970s when medical care cost a fraction of today's cost and the average car cost 25 percent of today's vehicles. This allows wrongdoers to escape responsibility and leaves innocent collision victims holding the bag for their own injuries.

Virginia's three boards governing mental health professionals issued regulations prohibiting therapies that attempt to change one's sexual orientation, known as "conversion therapy." We need to put that prohibition into law to ensure that it will not be reversed. I will introduce that bill.

For the last four sessions, I have introduced legislation to address the lack of available driving permits for many of my immigrant constituents.

Since 2014, Maryland and the District of Columbia have allowed driving permits to anyone who can show that they pay taxes, pass a driving test and pay fees. My bill has died in committee by one vote each year. I am hopeful the new majority will mean a better outcome.

Please email me at scott@scotturovell.org if you have any questions or feedback

Will Democrats Deliver Real Change?

BY JOHN LOVAAS
RESTON IMPACT PRODUCER/HOST

On Nov. 5, the Democrats captured majorities in both houses of Virginia's General Assembly after a long period of Republicans' having their way with public policy in the Commonwealth. Now, let's see what the Dems do. Because Gov. Ralph Northam is also a Democrat and because the composition of the Party now is very different—both more diverse and more progressive—from the Democrats of old it seems reasonable to expect a major shift in a more progressive direction. In fact, there is a lot of talk among the new legislators about many overdue actions including addressing gaping income inequality, gun violence, basic health care, expansion of pre-school education, gerrymandering and voting rights—in addition to actually ratifying the E.R.A!

Some specific measures are being discussed, but we are starting to hear voices of some long-time incumbents counselling us not to expect too much too soon. Be realistic! We might expect bills introduced to raise the hopelessly outdated \$7.25 minimum wage with gradual increases actually

passing. But, there have also been reports that repeal of Virginia's so-called "right to work" law is unlikely even to be submitted and certainly will not pass if it were to surface. Corporations and their chambers of commerce still hold sway with too many legislators including a junior local state senator and other longer serving members. Many of us believe that the "right to work" law which stifles creation of unions is a major factor in income inequality, severely tilting the playing field against working men and women. Sadly, it appears that the new majorities may lack the spine to remember who got them elected and to confront "right to work." hence unlikely to take a real bite out of income inequality in Virginia.

I am assured that ERA ratification is a real priority on the agenda. Also, there may be more willingness to address gun violence, which in Virginia is remarkable. For example, universal background checks and a ban on large capacity magazines and bump stocks are already being discussed and deemed likely to pass. In Vir-



INDEPENDENT PROGRESSIVE

ginia, this one falls under the category of I'll believe it when I see the Governor's signature on the actual pieces of legislation. Banning assault weapons much less buying back those already in circulation, while crucial to reducing the killings, are definitely a bridge too far for the new majority,

Increased funding for pre-school education and expanded health insurance coverage have strong backing and may make it through the legislative minefields as long as no noticeable increases in taxes are required to implement them! One prominent local legislator suggests tax increases are unlikely in the first General Assembly session. This would suggest that it may be feasible in the subsequent GA. Really?!? A tax increase in the second year of the delegates' term as they face election? No way! Will not happen. For me, the biggest shock, and a tie for biggest disappointment along with the bleak outlook for "right to work" repeal, is what I've seen in the Post and gotten talking to a state senator that the constitutional amendment reforming redistricting (a dagger

to the heart of gerrymandering) is in jeopardy. The amendment passed the outgoing legislature and was presumed a slam dunk in the 2020 session, thus meeting the Virginia requirement of a second passage to effect an amendment to the constitution, is in jeopardy. Sen. Dick Saslaw, long time Senate Minority Leader and now returned to his old Majority Leader status, is a big fan of gerrymandering and anxious to avenge what Republicans did to Democrats for many years. Saslaw, who unfortunately barely beat rising star Yasmine Taeb in a primary, and others may scuttle the excellent compromise amendment that would create a commission to draw maps consisting of 8 citizens and 8 legislators, evenly divided by party and requiring a supermajority of both sides to approve a new map. This requires a genuine consensus and is regarded as one of the strongest redistricting reforms undertaken to date in the U.S. If Saslaw and friends succeed in killing the amendment, maps reflecting the new 2020 census will be gerrymandered as before except that the Democrats, not Republicans, will dictate the outcomes. Reform would be delayed until at least the 2030 census.



PEOPLE

Medal of Merit for Life-saving Action

Calvin Mihalak, a member of Scouts BSA Troop 1983 at Vale United Methodist Church in Oakton, was awarded the Medal of Merit by the Boy Scouts of America for extraordinary skill in saving the life of a drowning individual on Aug. 8, 2019. When Calvin saw his father remove an unresponsive young boy from the pool, he quickly jumped to action. Using skills that he had recently learned as part of the Lifesaving merit badge at summer camp, Calvin began administering CPR, and after a number of CPR cycles, the young boy began taking limited breaths. When the ambulance arrived, the EMTs took over, and by the time the young boy was in the ambulance for



PHOTO CONTRIBUTED

Calvin Mihalak

transport to the hospital he was breathing regularly. As a result of Calvin's quick action, extraordinary skill, and calm demeanor he saved the life of an individual who has since fully recovered.

THE SYLVESTERY

VINSON HALL RETIREMENT COMMUNITY

The Sylvestery at Vinson Hall Retirement Community offers secure, assisted living for individuals with memory impairment.

Call today to schedule a tour.
703-538-2975

No military or government affiliation required.

VINSON HALL
RETIREMENT COMMUNITY

THE SYLVESTERY • 1728 KIRBY RD., MCLEAN, VA • WWW.VINSONHALL.ORG

Same Company, Same Employees,
Same Great Value - Now Celebrating 20 Years!

TWO POOR TEACHERS

Kitchen and Bathroom Remodeling

10% down
nothing until the job
is complete for the
past 17 years

Free Estimates

703-999-2928

- Master Plumber
- Master Electrician
- Master HVAC

Fully Insured & Class A Licensed
Since 1999

Visit our website: www.twopoorteachers.com

SUGARLOAF CRAFTS FESTIVAL.
Est. 1975

DEC 6, 7 & 8
DULLES EXPO CENTER
CHANTILLY, VA - RT. 28 AT WILLARD RD
FRI & SAT 10-6, SUN 10-5 • 3 DAYS ONLY!

— SHOP 350+ ARTISTS —

BUY TICKETS!
www.SugarloafCrafts.com
\$8 ONLINE • \$10 AT DOOR • KIDS 12 & UNDER FREE



**TELL US
WHAT
YOU
THINK**

SUBMIT YOUR LETTER TO THE EDITOR HERE
www.ConnectionNewspapers.com/contact/letter

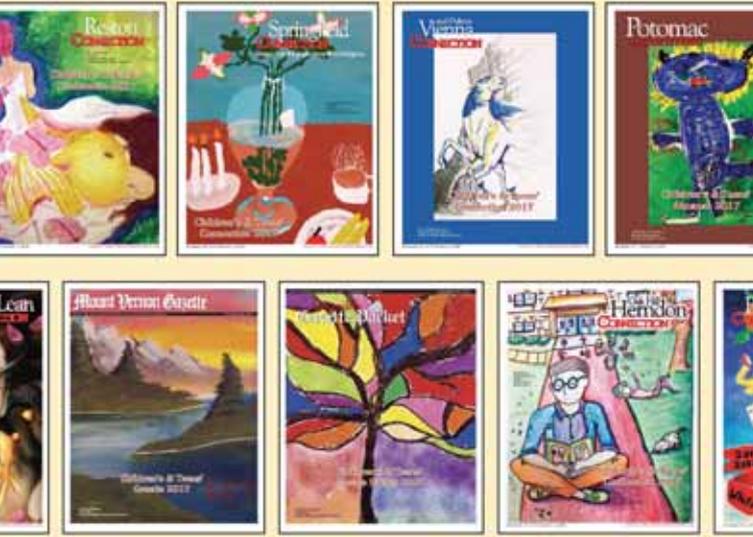
The Children's & Teens' CONNECTION 2019

Don't Miss Out On Reaching Your Audience!

Each of this year's Children's & Teens' editions will be an expanded 2-week issue and are on track to be some of the largest issues ever! Contact our sales team to find out how to effectively advertise your message in this annual, keepsake edition across our 15 different markets.

For Advertising information, call 703.778.9431 or email sales@connectionnewspapers.com

Publishes December 25 | Ads Due By December 13



WELLBEING

Maintaining Peace on Earth (and at Home)

Preserving your family's wellbeing during the holidays.

BY MARILYN CAMPBELL
THE CONNECTION

For many, December will be filled with sugar-laden holiday parties, lengthy-shopping trips and long lines for a chance to sit on Santa's lap. For families that thrive on routine, holiday merriment can lead to schedule disruptions that throw a family's rhythm into disarray. Maintaining the wellbeing of both parents and children during the season takes a bit of advanced planning.

"Children, just like adults, need both energetic time and rest time embedded throughout the day," said psychologist Carolyn Lorente, Ph.D. of Northern Virginia Community College and Belle Point Wellness Center. "During the holidays, this natural rhythm can easily get disrupted."

Keep the holidays in the proper perspective and remember that the season is for a finite period of time and one's normal routine will be restored, says therapist Carol Barnaby, LCSW-C. "The biggest stress that people often have is feeling that they are being judged by others if their children are having a hard time. I tell my patients to focus on the things that they can control and remember, other people have once been in their shoes."

Providing opportunities for an emotional outlet can help with mood stabilization. "Make sure that [children] have enough outdoor play paired with quiet down time throughout their day," said Lorente. "Model for them how to find a quiet space to retreat to when things start to heat up."

When parents are able to exhibit a sense of tranquility during a period of chaos, children often mimic this emotional response. "Remain calm and stay patient," added Joanne Bagshaw, PhD Professor of Psychology Montgomery College. "Emotions are contagious, and your ability to remain calm under pressure is great role modeling for young children and can help prevent strong emotions from escalating."

When in new and unfamiliar social settings, some children need more time than others to adjust to the social demands, says Lorente. "Know your child," she said. "Some will make these transitions quite easily while many will find this challenging. Remember that our first job is to teach. And children learn best by watching how we handle the stressors of the season."

In fact, reflecting on a child's temperament can



PHOTO BY MARILYN CAMPBELL

The merriment of the holidays can disrupt a family's sense of wellbeing.

serve as a guide for parents as they navigate the impact of a disputed schedule. "This is a time to go with what you know about your child," said psychologist Stacie Isenberg Psy. D. "Some kids can push bed-

time and sugar every so often, with little to no negative effects. If this describes your child, stay later than usual and enjoy the special occasion. If this is not your child, you and your child are likely to become miserable by pushing the limits that night and very likely the next day or maybe two."

Returning to normalcy as often as possible can preserve a family's wellbeing during the holiday season, suggests Jerome Short, Ph.D., professor of psychology at George Mason University. "Maintain household routines leading up to holiday events, such as regular meal, play, and bed times for children," he said. "Plenty of sleep, including naps, helps children with their attention spans, mood regulation, and self-control of their

"The biggest stress that people often have is feeling that they are being judged by others if their children are having a hard time. I tell my patients to focus on the things that they can control and remember, other people have once been in their shoes."

— Carol Barnaby, LCSW-C

behaviors,"

"Put limits around bedtime and sugar consumption that match your child's physiological and emotional abilities and you'll all have the best experience," added Isenberg.

Nutrition plays a role in mood and behavior especially during the holidays. "Keep some protein heavy snacks handy, like cheese sticks, or nuts if your child doesn't have allergies," said Bagshaw. "Snacks filled with protein can help stabilize blood sugar, and young children's moods."

Explaining to a child what they can expect at holiday event can mitigate meltdowns. "Make a plan with your partner and set realistic expectations on how long you will stay at events," said Barnaby. "This is often the best thing couples can do to manage stress and frustration that leads to conflict. Take turns in managing the children so that each of you can have some fun."



Natalie Monkou

PHOTO CONTRIBUTED

Helping Boost Vienna Economy

New Town Economic Development Manager has a listening tour on agenda.

BY MIKE SALMON
THE CONNECTION

Local businesses are getting a boost this holiday shopping season with the introduction of Natalie Monkou, the new economic development manager who is kicking off the season with a listening tour. Meeting up face to face will give her a glimpse of what's out there for Vienna businesses. "I plan to get feedback from as many community stakeholder groups as possible," she said.

She knows there is change occurring in and around Vienna, and economically, the introduction of Amazon to Arlington, the downfall of the brick and mortar stores nationwide, and the huge widening project on I-66 impact the commercial scene in Vienna in one way or another. Monkou has experience working in Arlington when March of Dimes and Nestle arrived to boost that economic picture, and before that, she was in Prince George's County as the special assistant to the deputy chief of economic development.

Shopping on the internet has impacted the local retail establishments around Fairfax County, but shopping in Vienna on Church Street and Main Street has a colorful side that the web shopping lacks. "A lot of people are looking for experiences when they shop," she said. "It's one of the things I'm going to talk about," on the listening tour, she said.

Having a supporter of the town's strategic plan will help, said Town Manager Mer-

cury Payton, who noted the impact of strong local businesses and a vibrant downtown area. "Having an economic development manager who is focused on supporting existing businesses and partnering with potential businesses will result in a healthier, even more vibrant Vienna," he said. He also sees Monkou's role as a relationship-builder, helping to connect property owners with perspective businesses and business managers with assistive resources as well as collaborating with Fairfax County's Economic Development Authority.

Monkou has an undergraduate degree in English and a master's degree in public administration, both from the University of Maryland. She's a resident of Annandale, and enjoys traveling, spicy foods, and brunch.

When the position search was launched by the town, Monkou stood out amongst a very competitive pool, says Payton. He wanted a candidate who would not be intimidated by the pressures of the Northern Virginia region and who could be effective almost immediately. He was impressed by Monkou's economic development experience in Prince George's County and Arlington, where she was part of a team that, he says, had "headline-grabbing economic development wins."

Although the situations may have been a little different in Arlington and Prince George's County, the skills she used elsewhere "can be applied here," as well, she said.

Fully Furnished **\$4,895**
Private Studio Apartments per month*!

ONLY TWO LEFT!



While visiting for the holidays, have you noticed that your loved one needs more assistance? Take advantage of the *Tall Oaks Home for the Holidays Program*. It's the best value of the season!

Contact Nicole Zuke at
703-834-9800 or
NZuke@TallOaksAL.com.

*Pricing includes Level I care. New, long-term leases only (excludes respite). Through November 30, 2019.



703.834.9800
12052 N. Shore Dr.
Reston, VA 20190
www.TallOaksAL.com
A Family Company

Tall Oaks
ASSISTED LIVING
RISING TO NEW HEIGHTS

Coordinated Services Management, Inc. Professional Management of Retirement Communities Since 1981

LORD + TAYLOR THIS LOCATION ONLY!

STORE CLOSING

7850 TYSON'S CORNER CENTER
MCLEAN, VA 22102

EVERYTHING MUST GO!

50-70% OFF

LOWEST TICKETED PRICE STOREWIDE!
INCLUDING CLEARANCE

Some exclusions apply.

**DRESSES | WOMEN'S | SHOES | HANDBAGS
JEWELRY + ACCESSORIES | BEAUTY | MEN'S
KIDS' | HOME**

ALL SALES FINAL. RETURNS OF MERCHANDISE PURCHASED AT STORE LISTED PRIOR TO NOVEMBER 2ND WILL BE ACCEPTED AT THIS STORE THROUGH SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 17TH. RETURNS OF ITEMS PURCHASED PRIOR TO NOVEMBER 2ND AT STORE LISTED WILL CONTINUE TO BE ACCEPTED AT CONTINUING LORD & TAYLOR LOCATIONS.
ADVERTISED DISCOUNTS VALID ONLY AT CLOSING LOCATION LISTED ABOVE. • WE ACCEPT CASH, VISA, MASTERCARD, AMERICAN EXPRESS, DISCOVER
NO RETURNS • NO ADJUSTMENTS TO PRIOR PURCHASES • NO SPECIAL ORDERS • NO OTHER DISCOUNT OFFERS ACCEPTED
QUANTITIES LIMITED TO STOCK ON HAND

CALENDAR

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

ONGOING

2019 White House Ornaments. The 2019 White House Ornaments are available from the Assistance League of Northern Virginia. White House Ornaments are wonderful for gift giving. This year's White House Ornament is a "whirlybird" honoring Dwight D. Eisenhower, 34th president of the United States. To purchase, contact Cindy Burgess at burgessgl@verizon.net. Cost per ornament is \$22. Proceeds support ALNV's local children's programs. Visit the website: www.alnv.org.

Great Falls Farmers Market. Year-round, Saturdays, 9 a.m.-1 p.m., 778 Walker Road, Great Falls. Music, vendors, fresh produce, fresh prepared food, delightful bakery, spices from around the world, wild-caught fish, grass-fed, free-range meats, organic-fed poultry and eggs. 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. Local produce, meats/eggs, dairy, baked goods, and more. Admission is free. Visit community-foodworks.org.

Christmas and Holidays

NOW THRU DEC. 22

Holiday Art Market. Noon to 6 p.m. At 101 Church Street, NW, Vienna. The Vienna Arts Society presents hundreds of original artworks as well as hand-crafted gift items; to include jewelry, silk scarves, pottery, fused glass and more. Free. Market hours are Thursdays - Sundays from noon - 6 p.m. In addition, doors will open during the annual Vienna Church Street Stroll, 5- 9 p.m., Monday, Dec. 2, when the street fills with hundreds celebrating Santa's arrival in town. Visit the website: www.ViennaArtsSociety.org.

NOW THRU DEC. 24

HGTV's Santa HQ. At Tysons Corner Center, 1961 Chain Bridge Road, McLean. Kids can explore the wonder of Santa in the digital age with HGTV's Santa HQ at Tysons Corner Center! This holiday, check out the interactive Elf Academy at Santa HQ. You can try on the latest elf looks with Santa's Magic Mirror, create your very own Elf-ID Card and scan yourself on the Naughty or Nice O'Meter. Plus, new this year, spend less time in line and more time on holiday fun with a Fast Pass. Prices and times vary. Visit the website: www.tysonscornercenter.com/SantaHQ

NOW THRU DEC. 24

ACS Gift Wrapping. 11 a.m. to 8 p.m. At Tysons Corner Center, 1961 Chain Bridge Road, McLean. The American Cancer Society volunteers will be offering holiday gift wrapping, located next to Santa Claus Headquarters in the mall, Fashion Court, Level 1. Donations to help fight cancer are welcome. Free. All donations for the gift wrapping go to fight cancer from all angles with the American Cancer Society. Email: shiri.rozenberg@cancer.org or visit the website: www.cancer.org.

THURSDAY/DEC. 5

53rd Annual McLean Holiday Homes Tour. Hours of tour: 9:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. Tour four large, festively decorated homes in McLean's Ballantrae Farm and Langley Forest. Lunch, jewelry and holiday boutique, baked goods at Trinity United Methodist Church, McLean. Cost: \$30 before Dec. 5th and \$35 after at Mesmeralda's, in McLean; Karin's Florist, in Vienna, and Great Dogs of Great Falls; also on website, www.mcleanwomansclub.org and at church. Call 703-556-0197.

DEC. 5-23

MBC Christmas Drive-Through Light Show. 7:15-9:30 p.m. At McLean Bible Church, 8925 Leesburg Pike, Vienna. The public is invited to drive through the spectacular Drive-Through Light Show set up around the McLean Bible Church Tysons building. Experience the story of



"Frosty" will be performed on Saturday, Dec. 14 at 1 and 4 p.m. at The Alden Theater in McLean.

"Frosty" at The Alden Theater

SATURDAY/DEC. 14

"Frosty." 1 p.m. and 4 p.m. At The Alden Theater, 1234 Ingleside Ave., McLean. The Alden, a division of the McLean Community Center (MCC), presents the family friendly holiday musical "Frosty" for two performances. A young orphan named Billy discovers magic in a stolen hat. When he places the hat on a snowman's head, that snowman comes to life! The audience will join Billy and Frosty on a New York City adventure filled with thrills and chills as the two discover that the real magic of Christmas is love. Tickets are \$15 for the general public and \$10 for MCC district residents. Visit: www.aldentheatre.org or call 703-790-0123, TTY: 711.

Christmas with your family from the comfort of your vehicle. Free Visit the website: mcleanbible.org/christmas

DEC. 5 AND 6

Tiny Tots Concerts. Dec. 5 at 10 a.m. and 7 p.m. ("Jammy Friendly"); and Dec. 6 at 10 a.m. At James Madison High School, 2500 James Madison Drive, Vienna. The James Madison High School Band Program presents an exciting concert celebration featuring a wide spectrum of seasonal music. Costumed performers include old friends and some very special surprise guests. Sing, clap and dance along with the band as you are introduced to the wonderful world of music and symphonic instruments. Advance purchase is recommended to ensure admission. Tickets are \$9 per person and may be purchased online at <https://www.jmhsband.org>. Admission is free for babies in arms (under age 1). Walk-in tickets may be purchased in the lobby by check, cash or credit card 30 minutes prior to the show for \$10 per person if the concert has not sold out. Visit the website: www.jmhsband.org.

SATURDAY/DEC. 7

Breakfast with Santa. 8-11 a.m. At Tysons Corner Center, Food Court on 3, McLean. Take part in holiday festivities provided by Tysons Corner Center, entertainment by Those Funny Little People (featured on America's Got Talent), a balloon artist, holiday crafts, retailer activations from b8ta, LL Bean, Roots, and more, free breakfast and time with the Man in Red. The breakfast will be emceed by Tommy McFly and Kelly Collis from The Tommy Show. Event details and RSVP. **Breakfast With Santa.** 8:30-10:30 a.m. At St. Francis Episcopal Church, 9220 Georgetown Pike, Great Falls. Make memories with a picture with Santa and avoid the malls. Free community event open to all to benefit Housing Up and Samaritan Ministry. Suggested donation is a new, unwrapped toy. Free. Email: Annabeebacon@gmail.com or call 571-235-6349.

SATURDAY-SUNDAY/DEC. 7-8

Holiday Fest Art Show and Sale. 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. At The Arts of Great Falls, 756 Walker Road, Great Falls. At Two Locations: 1) The Grange and Old Schoolhouse, 9818 Georgetown Pike, Great Falls; and 2) The Artists' Atelier in Great Falls Village Center, 756 Walker Rd., Great Falls. The First Friday Art Walk will be

held Dec 6, from 6-8 p.m. at The Artists' Loft, Atelier & Arts of Great Falls Gallery, 756 & 766 Walker Rd in Great Falls. Visit the website: www.greatfallsart.org.

SUNDAY/DEC. 8

Sensory Santa. 8-10 a.m. At Tysons Corner Center, Level 1, Fashion Court, McLean. Tysons Corner Center is pleased to partner with Cherry

Hill photography and Autism Speaks to welcome children with special needs for a low impact, time with Santa. The mall will open its doors early, exclusively for families and give them private time with the Big Man in Red.

Santa Visits. 12 - 2 p.m. At Freeman Store and Museum, 131 Church Street, NE, Vienna. Presented by the Historic Vienna, Inc., The jolly ol' elf will listen to children's holiday wishes in the decorated parlor next to the Christmas tree. Free admission; no reservations necessary. Questions? Call 703-938-5187, email historiciennava@gmail.com, or visit historiciennainc.org.

Christmas Concert. 6 p.m. At Lewinsville Presbyterian Church, 1724 Chain Bridge Road, McLean. "Waiting for the Messiah" - a blend of the Christmas Section of Handel's Messiah with Advent and Christmastime favorites. Also features Artists: Lewinsville's vocal and bell choirs, featuring orchestra. Visit <https://www.lewinsville.org/concerts/> or call the church office during business hours 703-356-7200.

THURSDAY/DEC. 12

Holiday Storytime PJ Party. 6-8 p.m. At Tysons Corner Center, Level 1, Fashion Court, McLean. Wear your PJs for a fun, holiday-themed event where they read through some holiday classics and enjoy hot chocolate, other sweet treats, and fun-filled activations with special entertainment provided by Dee Vinchey Entertainment and retailer activations. Visit www.tysonscornercenter.com/SantaHQ.

Events in Alexandria

FRIDAY-SATURDAY/DEC. 6-7

The Scottish Christmas Walk Weekend. At various Old Town Alexandria locations. The Campaigna Center presents the 49th Annual Scottish Christmas Walk Weekend and Parade. The parade is Dec. 7 at 11 a.m. and begins at St. Asaph and Wolfe Streets and concludes at Market Square with a massed band concert. Admission: Free for parade and Heather and Greens Sales; \$180-\$290 for Taste of Scotland; \$40 for Holiday Home Tours. In 1749, the City of Alexandria was officially established by three Scottish merchants and named after its original founder, John Alexander, also of Scottish descent. Through your support of the events of The Scottish Christmas Walk Weekend, you provide vital support to Campaigna Center programs that serve more than 2,000 children, teens, and adults throughout the year. Visit the website: <https://www.campaignacenter.org/scottishwalkweekend>

SATURDAY/DEC. 7

Boat Parade of Lights. Parade begins at 5:30 p.m.; Dockside festivities 2 to 8 p.m. At Waterfront Park, 1 King Street, Alexandria. Parade viewing areas: Founders Park (351 N. Union St.), Alexandria City Marina (O Cameron St.), Waterfront Park (1 King St. and 1A Prince St.), Point Lumley Park (1 Duke St.), Shipyard/Harborside Park (1 Wilkes St.), Windmill Hill Park (501 S. Union St.) and Ford's Landing Park (99 Franklin St.). Admission: Free; \$ for food/drink and some activities. Visit AlexandriaVA.com/boatparade Schedule in Old Town (2 to 8 p.m.)

- ❖ Holiday music and giveaways from 97.1 WASH-FM
- ❖ Letters to Santa postcard station from Penny Post
- ❖ Holiday ornament activity from AR Workshop Alexandria (2 to 4 p.m.)
- ❖ Bookmark making station from Old Town Books (4:30 to 8 p.m.)
- ❖ Torpedo Factory Art Center Holiday Festival
- ❖ Santa arrives by fireboat at the Alexandria City Marina (3:30 p.m.)
- ❖ Alexandria Holiday Boat Parade of Lights begins (5:30 p.m.)

Calendar

THURSDAY/DEC. 5

Plant Seed Swap. 7:30 p.m. At Vienna Community Center, 120 Cherry Street, SE, Vienna. The Town of Vienna's Conservation and Sustainability Commission will host a native plant seed swap. The seed swap will be preceded by an educational talk from local amateur botanist Jay Lechtman. Lechtman has experience propagating rare and often endangered carnivorous plants and has written a number of articles on botanical topics in both local and international publications, including Grandiflora MidAtlantic Gardening Magazine. If you have native plant seeds to swap, please bring them. Regardless of whether you can bring seeds or not, there will be plenty to share.

Holiday Stroll on Church Street

Santa waved to the crowd as he rode in on a 1940s VVFD firetruck.



PHOTOS BY LISA FAY/
THE CONNECTION



Lollipop the sheep was wearing a festive headband.

Santa welcomed all ages on the front porch of the Freeman Store and Museum.



Families made funny faces to get their children's attention as they sat on Santa's lap.

Here's What's Happening at MCC!

It's Back & Better Than Ever!



The McLean Holiday Crafts Show
Friday, Dec. 6, 11 a.m.-7 p.m.
Saturday, Dec. 7, 10 a.m.-6 p.m.
Sunday, Dec. 8, 11 a.m.-4 p.m.
Admission: \$7; good for all three days of the show

MCC Governing Board



MCC Governing Board Meeting
Wednesday, Dec. 11, 7:30 p.m.
Open to the public

McLean Traveler



Holiday House Tour, Richmond, Va.
Thursday, Dec. 12
7:30 a.m.-7 p.m.
\$148/\$143 MCC district residents

Holiday Family Fun



Holiday Gingerbread Workshop
Thursday, Dec. 12, 6:30-8 p.m.
\$45/\$35 MCC district residents.
Fee includes payment for one house.



Presented by The Alden

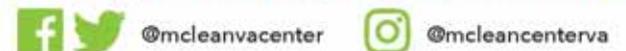


The Barter Players Encore Company
"Frosty"
Saturday, Dec. 14
1 p.m. and 4 p.m.
\$15/\$10 MCC district residents



The McLean Community Center
www.mcleancenter.org
Home of the Alden Theatre
www.aldentheatre.org
703-790-0123, TTY: 711

1234 Ingleside Ave., McLean, VA 22101



CALENDAR

			1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30	31		

Let us know about an upcoming event

connectionnewspapers.com/Calendar

Employment

Forget Daily Commuting

Print and digital media sales consultant for area's most popular and trusted local news source

Manage your own hours from home
Enjoy flexible schedule plus no daily commute
Help local businesses grow
Unique opportunity to be a voice in your community
Competitive compensation

Call Jerry Vernon
703-549-0004
Connection Newspapers & Digital Media
Trusted Connection to Local Communities

Announcements

Announcements

The BIGGEST Craft Show at Expo Center EVER

OVER 300 CRAFTERS!

FREDERICKSBURG Holiday Craft SHOW

USE THIS COUPON FOR \$1 OFF AT DOOR OR Use Promo code: holiday19 Online and SAVE \$2
Not Valid with Special \$5 Friday Senior Ticket

Fredericksburg Expo Center
Fredericksburg, VA • Exit 130b I-95
FredericksburgExpoCenter.com

HOURS
Fri, Dec 6: 10 am - 6 pm
Sat, Dec 7: 10 am - 6 pm
Sun, Dec 8: 11 am - 4 pm

ADMISSION
Tickets are Good all 3 days
Adult At Door: \$8, Online: \$7*,
Senior at Door (60+): \$7, Online \$6*
FRIDAY ONLY SENIOR AT DOOR: \$5
Kids 12 & Under Free, *processing fee

FREDERICKSBURGHOLIDAYCRAFTSHOW.COM

Past issues of

THE CONNECTION NEWSPAPERS

back to 2008 are available at

<http://connectionarchives.com/PDF>

NEWS

Local Book Launch for One of the World's Best Selling Authors

New thriller hits Herndon first at Herndon Middle School.

BY MERCIA HOBSON
THE CONNECTION

Fans of one of the world's bestselling fiction-writers and storytellers, David Baldacci, attended the book launch for the second novel in his Atlee Pine Thriller, "A Minute to Midnight" by Grand Central Publishing. Held at Herndon Middle School on Nov. 19, an estimated crowd of 200 book enthusiasts from across the region and as far as Woodstock, Va. poured into the auditorium. Each hoped to be one of the lucky winners in the giveaway of 100 free signed copies of the new thriller and to hear Baldacci speak. Bards Alley in Vienna, an Indie bookstore owned by Jen Morrow, partnered with Reston Regional Library to produce the book launch. The Friends of the Reston Regional Library supported the event.

Igor Birman of Herndon sat in the auditorium's tiered theatre seats and waited for the author talk and signing to begin. "I like Baldacci's books," he said. "They are always entertaining. The last one, 'Long Road to Mercy' (Atlee Pine #1), was set in the Grand Canyon, and now I would like to visit there again. I look forward to reading his latest Atlee Pine Book," Birman said.

For Deb Tangren of Woodstock, Va., Baldacci's ability to develop his characters drew her to his novels. "You feel like you know them," she said. It was the opportunity, though, for the author to sign the 21 books she brought to the event that drew Tangren to make the 90-minute drive to Herndon.

Evelyn Valdez of Alexandria also attended the book launch. She described herself as "one of David Baldacci's biggest fans," something she said she shared with her 90-year-old grandfather. "He is only Spanish-speaking, so we have to wait a year for the book to be translated for him," she said.

According to Tracey Key of Reston, she found Baldacci "uniquely relevant in his ability to connect and communicate not only through his books but in personal storytelling during his book signings and interviews," she said.

Jen Morrow, the owner of Bards Alley, introduced Baldacci. "On the book birthday of 'A Minute to Midnight,' you really don't need a long introduction. A lifelong Virginian... (David) practiced law in Washington, D.C., but he was always a lifelong writer. He

published his first novel, 'Absolute Power,' in 1996. A featured film adaptation followed with Clint Eastwood as its director and star. In total, David has published 40 novels. Is it 41 now ... all national and international bestsellers and several have been adapted for film and television. His novels are published in over 45 languages and in more than 80 countries, with over \$130 million worldwide sales. David has also published seven novels for younger readers. Now, in addition to being a prolific writer, David is a devoted philanthropist, and his greatest efforts are dedicated to his family's Wish You Well Foundation... fostering literacy and educational programs."

BALDACCI provided the audience with a snapshot of the first two chapters of "A Minute to Midnight." Baldacci said he brought back the main character,

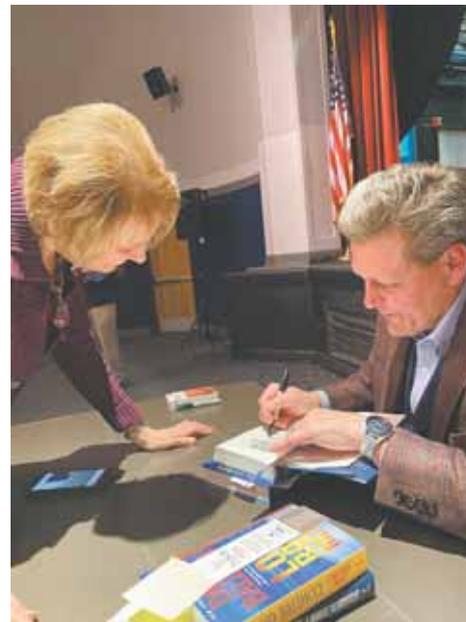


PHOTO BY MERCIA HOBSON/THE CONNECTION
Bestselling novelist and storyteller David Baldacci signs copies of his book, "A Minute to Midnight- an Atlee Pine Thriller" during the book launch hosted by Bards Books in Vienna partnering with Reston Regional Library held at Herndon Middle School on Nov. 19.

FBI Agent Atlee Pine. According to Baldacci, Pine finds herself interviewing a serial killer she thinks might have abducted her twin sister, Mercy, thirty years ago. While driving home following the interview, Pine receives an Amber Alert on her phone, sees the suspect and gives chase. "They have a confrontation, and he comes out on the worse end of it... She saw thirty years of frustration and anger building of not knowing what happened to her sister, and she almost beats this guy to death. And that's really bad for an FBI agent. They frown on stuff like that. So she's given an ultimatum. Get your head straight, figure this out. Find out what happened, and if you don't do that, you have no more future at the Federal Bureau of Investigation," he said.

Transitioning to a different topic during his remarks, Baldacci said he grew up in segregated Richmond, Va., as a self-described library rat. "I

don't think I'd be a writer today except for the fact I was a huge reader as a kid. I know what libraries meant to me... I was able to see the world through books. I read about people who didn't look like me, talk like me... dress like me, pray like me. But we all had one common factor among us all, and that was our humanity. That's what I got out of books growing up as a kid in a world that maybe wasn't as fair-minded or equal as it should have been...Libraries can change you completely," he said.

"I find readers to be more open, more tolerant, curious about life and talkative. They want to know things, and they can change their minds. They don't mind having spirited debates with people because they understand the power of knowledge and information. And I've always felt if every community, every street had a library packed with books, and people went there every day and read books, we'd have a far better world than we do today," said Baldacci.

BULLETIN

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

Fairfax County Board of Supervisors Meetings in 2019

12000 Government Center Parkway
Fairfax, VA 22035
Dec. 10 Committee Meetings
♦ 9:30 a.m. - Health, Housing and Human Services Committee
♦ 11 a.m. - Development Process Committee
♦ 1:30 p.m. - Transportation Committee
♦ 3 p.m. - General Assembly Annual Reception and Work Session

NOW THRU DEC. 18

Active Aging Wellness Exercise Class. 11 a.m. to 12 p.m. At Oakton Church of the Brethren, 10025 Courthouse Road, Vienna. An eight week exercise class to improve strength, balance and mobility for older adults sponsored by Shepherd's Center of Oakton-Vienna. Cost is \$40 for 8 week session - payable to Sun Fitness LLC. To register, contact Casey Tarr, eileentarr1@verizon.net or 703-821-6838.

TUESDAY/DEC. 10

Potluck Holiday Party. 12 noon. At Vienna Community Center, 120 Cherry Street, SE, Vienna. Presented by NARFE (National Active and Retired Federal Employees Association) Chapter 1116. Includes an installation of officers by Dr. Constance Bails, President, Virginia Federation of NARFE (VFN) - Members and guests welcome. RSVP to 703-281-5123.

WEDNESDAY/DEC. 11

Fairfax County Park Authority Board Meeting. 7:30 p.m. in the Herrity Building, 12055 Government Center Parkway, Suite 941, Fairfax. The Park Authority Board's 12 appointed members establish strategic policy and direction for the Park Authority. Open to the public. For agenda and more information, visit www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/boardagn2.htm or call 703-324-8662.

SUNDAY/JAN. 5

Road to Richmond Legislative Brunch. 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. At Westwood Country Club, 800 Maple Ave., East, Vienna. You're invited to join the annual Road to Richmond Legislative Brunch where the General Assembly leadership will discuss the upcoming legislative session. This time will be especially significant because Democrats will be in the majority.

JAN. 7 AND 9

Students and Volunteers Wanted. 7 to 8:30 p.m. At St. Mark's Catholic Church, 9972 Vale Road, Vienna. Students and volunteers are needed for the St. Mark's Catholic Church English as a Second Language (ESL) Ministry. Seeking Students and Volunteers to participate in the upcoming Winter 2020 Term, Jan. 14-Mar. 12. The goal is to "Welcome Everyone" and provide a program where adults from all ethnic and religious backgrounds can come and learn English and acclimate better to life in the U.S. No experience is necessary to Volunteer. All classes take place on Tuesday and Thursday evenings at St. Mark Christian Formation Center. Call Monica at 703-980-9380, Bob at 703-242-7449, email stmarksesl@gmail.com, or see the Web site at www.stmarkesl.org.

PLAYGROUND CLOSING TEMPORARILY

The playground at Tysons Pimmit Park will be closing temporarily to allow for the replacement of the existing picnic shelter at the park. Work on the installation of a picnic shelter with new metal roofing is scheduled now through Feb. 28, 2020. The \$120,000 project is being funded by the 2016 Park Bond. The address is 7584 Leesburg Pike, Falls Church. For details, call 703-324-8662 or at parkmail@fairfaxcounty.gov.

BUSINESS DIRECTORY

WWW.CONNECTIONNEWSPAPERS.COM

CALL 703-549-0004 FOR ADVERTISING INFORMATION

LANDSCAPING A&S CONSTRUCTION SOD, Mulch, Clean-Up Leaf Removal Hauling. 703-863-7465		Good is not good, where better is expected. -Thomas Fuller	
ELECTRICAL K & D ELECTRIC COMMERCIAL / RESIDENTIAL SERVICE Family Owned & Operated Recessed Lighting Ceiling Fans Phone/CATV Computer Network Cabling Service Upgrades Hot Tubs, etc...		ELECTRICAL Licensed/Bonded/Insured Office 703-335-0654 Mobile 703-499-0522 lektrkman28@gmail.com	
GUTTER GUTTER CLEANING Gutters and Downspouts Cleaned Small Repairs • Gutter Guards PINNACLE SERVICES Lic/Ins 703-802-0483 free est. email jamie@lawnsgutters.com web: lawnsgutters.com Friendly Service with a Friendly Price!		LANDSCAPING Quality Tree Service & Landscaping Reasonable prices. Licensed & insured. Winter Cleanup... Tree removal, topping & pruning, shrubbery trimming, mulching, leaf removal, planting, hauling, gutter cleaning, retaining walls, drainage problems, etc. 25 years of experience - Free estimates 703-868-5358 24 Hour Emergency Tree Service	
GUTTER A&S Landscaping • All Concrete work • Retaining Walls • Patios • Decks • Porches (incl. screened) • Erosion & Grading Solutions • French Drains • Sump Pumps • Driveway Asphalt Sealing 703-863-7465 LICENSED Serving All of N. Virginia		IMPROVEMENTS TILE / MARBLE BATHROOM REMODELING by Brennan Bath and Tile Partial or Full. Kit. Floors, Backsplashes. Specializing in Ceramic, Porcelain, Glass Tiles and Natural Stones. Also repair work. 35 yrs exp. www.brennan-tile.com 703-250-2872 Licensed • Bonded • Insured	
IMPROVEMENTS Power Washing Free Estimates Holiday Special Go from green to clean houses. We clean houses, decks, sidewalks, patios and other surfaces. We also welcome small drywall jobs. LICENSED & INSURED 703-987-5096 email: jnave@comcast.net		IMPROVEMENTS HOUSES FROM \$140 TOWNHOUSES FROM \$99	
LANDSCAPING Patios & Drainage Your neighborhood company since 1987 703-772-0500		Find us on Facebook and become a fan! www.Facebook.com/connectionnewspapers THE CONNECTION Newspapers & Online The Connection to Your Community www.connectionnewspapers.com	
LANDSCAPING J.E.S. Services Free Estimates - Fully Licensed & Insured • Planting & Landscaping Design • Drainage & Water Problems • Concrete Driveways, Replacement or New • Patios and Walks • Masonry Work or Dry Laid • Paver, Flagstone, Brick, any style you choose • Retaining walls of all types All work Guaranteed		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	

False Sense of Security



By KENNETH B. LOURIE

I never want to look a gift-oncologist in the mouth or take a "stable"-type CT scan with a grain of salt, however; self-preservation is a funny instinct. It can change from day to day (heck, even hour to hour) and dominate your pre-occupation or intrude your thinking not at all. You can rationalize away the good, bad or indifferent (results) or irrationalize away the less-than-expected or the more-than-anticipated. Results from lab work and/or diagnostic scans are the axis on which your entire life revolves. You either roll with the punches or you get knocked down by them. For a cancer patient, the punches often keep coming.

The punches thrown in my direction occur bi-weekly when I have my pre-immunotherapy lab work for my every-other Friday 30-minute opdivo infusion. (Although the actual lab work and even the infusion is more of a jab.) The left hook/right cross combination occurs quarterly. That's when I slide through the computerized tomography scan and wait for results (as I had been for most of the last week). Since I have generally been asymptomatic - other than for miscellaneous side effects from the various medicines with which I've been infused, the tale of the tape, to continue the boxing references, happens when my oncologist emails the radiologist's report to me with a brief sentence summary: "a little worse" (this time), "stable," or something less discouraging that needs to be discussed at our next face-to-face appointment which generally is scheduled a week or so after the previous week's scan.

Regardless of what these mostly cryptic emails have said, until I hear exactly what my oncologist says, I am neither too high or too low. Granted, hearing "stable" is extremely encouraging whereas "a little worse, not so much. Nevertheless, the fight goes on. Cancer treatment is a series of actions and reactions (punches and counter punches, you might even say) so depending on how one's body reacts, determines what action is recommended. I am living proof, literally. Over my nearly 11 years of treatment, I have been infused with upwards of a dozen different medicines. Once one treatment loses its luster, we change to another hoping it will be more effective, and so on. It's science, not arithmetic. As such, any guarantees left the building with Elvis.

Being a cancer patient is not for everybody. One has to make the most of the least. It's easy to let the hard facts make you soft. Unless you find a way to be up, the cancer will take you down. Somehow, even when it's doing the worst to you, you have to be at your best. Being positive generates positivity in return. When I look at people, I try to smile so that they'll smile back (I'm being selfish, really). Do you remember George Costanza describing the look of disappointment on his mother's face when he told her he wanted to play the accordion? Like that, only the complete opposite.

When I interact with people, I don't want them to feel "poor, poor, pitiful me" to quote Warren Zevon from his song first sung in 1976. And I don't want them to see cancer either. I want them to see everything about me. I may be diagnosed with a terminal form of cancer: stage IV, non-small cell lung cancer, but I don't want to be defined by it. Just because I'm living with cancer doesn't mean it's who I am. It's what I have, that's all.

And what reminds most me that I have cancer and what challenges my reactions to it more than anything, is when I have these quarterly CT scans (and the annual MRI, too). As much as I try to fend off the possible effect on my mortality (my true sense of insecurity), I'd be lying if I said I was always successful. In truth, I'm always worried about it. How could I not be? I guess I'm not quite ready to throw in the towel. I suppose that means, regardless of what my oncologist says at our next meeting, I'm still ready to live and fight another day.

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

'The Greatest Humanitarian Crisis in the World'

Kicking off Blanket & Coat Drive for Syrian Refugees 2019

BY MERCIA HOBSON
THE CONNECTION

I am pleased that Fairfax County has once again hosted this important humanitarian effort by partnering with local organizations and jurisdictions to help provide winter coats and warm blankets to Syrian refugees abroad... The Syrian Blanket Drive is special to me," said Sharon Bulova, Chairman of the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors, Nov. 21, at the Fairfax County Government Center, to announce the start of the Blanket & Coat Drive for Syrian Refugees 2019.

According to Mark Gibb, President and Executive Director of NOVA Relief Center, the drive originated seven years ago when he and a small delegation of local leaders from Northern Virginia, among them Chairman Bulova, traveled to Turkey in part to encourage friendship and understanding with local governments. The American Turkish Friendship Association headquartered in Fairfax, formed to address the social and cultural needs of Turkish and American people living in the Washington, D.C. Metropolitan Area arranged the trip. "(It) forever altered the lives of all those who went there that day," said Gibb. NOVA Relief Center is coordinating the Blanket & Coat Drive. This year's donations will be distributed to three camps in Jordan: Mafraq, Jerash and Irbid. According to the organization's website, since 2011, Syrians have been trying to escape the civil war at home, with a reported 6 million people displaced within Syria and another 5 million seeking haven as refugees, especially in the neighboring countries of Turkey, Iraq, Lebanon and Jordan.

"I am always impressed with how generous, caring and compassionate our community is. Since we began this drive, Northern Virginia has sent more than 300,000 blankets and coats to Syrian refugees overseas. It is a great example of what happens when people of all faiths and backgrounds come together," said Bulova.

The Northern Virginia delegation went to a city in the southern part of Turkey called Adana, Gibb said. As part of the tour, the mayor and governor of the region asked if they would like to visit a Syrian refugee camp. "I'm not sure if any of us knew exactly what we were being invited to see," said Gibb. "The war in Syria was not a large news item here in the United States, and Syrian refugees were barely a blip on our radar screen. ... We discovered a fenced, tent city of more than 50,000 people, the majority of which, 60 percent, were children under the age of 12. To say they had nothing would be an understatement. We discovered that these were normal, average,



Kicking off the Blanket & Coat Drive for Syrian Refugees 2019: Brody Buhler, Oakton Stake President, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints; Abdun Nafey Matin, Assistant Regional Coordinator, Mid-Atlantic Region, Helping Hand for Relief and Development; Nausheen Baig, All Dulles Area Muslim Society; Rabia Baig, All Dulles Area Muslim Society; Martin Nohe, member of the Prince William County Board of Supervisors and member of the NOVA Relief Center Board of Directors; Asif Khan, Director of Public Affairs, Helping Hand for Relief and Development; Jeff McKay, Chairman-elect of the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors and current Lee District Supervisor; Mark Gibb, President and Executive Director of the Northern Virginia Relief Center; Sharon Bulova, Chairman of the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors and Mary Kathleen Paxton, Manager, Paxton Van Lines.

every day, people- policemen, firemen, teachers (who) through no fault of their own, had become refugees of this tragic war — no place to call home, no country to pay allegiance. They were all in need of the basic necessities - food, water, clothing. We were invited to go to one man's tent who had a family of four children. There was nothing in the tent except for some old ground covering rugs...As we talked to this man through a translator, we asked (him)... how we could help... He told us it was getting cold. Could we send him some blankets?" "That broke our hearts," said Bulova.

According to Gibb, given the gentleman's request, when the delegation returned home to the United States, they launched the first Northern Virginia Blanket Drive in coordination with other Northern Virginia jurisdictions, faith-based organizations and businesses. That first year they filled an entire 55-foot Paxton Companies moving van with blankets which they shipped overseas at no cost to the same refugee camp. "A few of us were fortunate enough to return to that camp and met the same man again who had requested the blankets. We told him we didn't bring just a few blankets we brought 50,000. This man wept, said we were from God as we delivered this precious cargo," said Gibb.

"So here we are today to continue our efforts to assist these somewhat forgotten people. It has been described as the greatest humanitarian crisis in the world. A few

PHOTOS BY MERCIA HOBSON/THE CONNECTION



Mark Gibb, Executive Director of NOVA Relief Center, presents Mary Kathleen Paxton, Manager, Paxton Van Lines with a gift in recognition of the ongoing free shipping services the company provides to support the Blanket & Coat Drive for Syrian Refugees. Lee District Supervisor and Chairman-elect Jeff McKay and Sharon Bulova, Chairman of the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors, look on.

years ago, we added coats as well as blankets, and over the six-year period, we have collected enough blankets and coats to fill over 12 full moving vans. The numbers of coats and blankets are staggering, but the needs are still more than our collective efforts...We cannot do this alone. We partner with a worldwide nonprofit group by the name of the 'Helping Hand for Relief and Development.' Without their assistance, we could not accomplish this task."

Gibb said he learned another significant need is education. "The children are not receiving any education as they are not allowed to attend the local school system as the number of children would completely

overwhelm the schools... We are asking this year, in addition to our Coat and Blanket Drive, that a small monetary donation be made to help with teachers, building structures and school supplies for these refugee children. We have added a donation button on our website, www.novareliefcenter.org, for this purpose. All donations will be used to help educate these refugee children."

"In this country, the holiday season is a time for giving. And there is nothing more meaningful than helping our brothers and sisters around the world find warmth and comfort during difficult times," said Bulova. She thanked the many individuals and organizations that are making this year's drive possible: "Mark Gibb and the NOVA Relief Center for organizing this drive every year; the faith communities and organizations in the private and public sectors for helping children and families as they seek safety from violence; elected officials across Northern Virginia who are using their offices as donation sites and finally, a special thank you to Bill Paxton and Paxton Van Lines of Springfield, Virginia for donating their time, manpower and equipment."

LEE DISTRICT SUPERVISOR and Chairman-elect Jeff McKay said he was happy to support and participate in the effort. "I've always held the belief that we, as a community, must help those most vulnerable whenever we have an opportunity. We must not forget all of those who face hardship, especially those who flee from persecution in other countries. In this time of divisiveness, it's important that we remember our humanity and come together to help our fellow man. Through the NOVA Relief Center's Blanket and Coat Drive for Syrian refugees, we can ensure that Syrian refugee camps will have supplies to stay warm this winter. It's a small, but necessary and important role we can all play," said Supervisor McKay.

Bulova's office and other sites such as those of elected officials, including several members of the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors, serve as drop-off locations for gently used coats and blankets. Participants can stop by her office, Suite 530 of the Fairfax Government Center (5th floor), any time between 9 a.m. and 5 p.m., Monday through Friday with donations. "There is nothing more meaningful than helping our brothers and sisters around the world find warmth and comfort during difficult times," said Bulova.

The Blanket & Coat Drive for Syrian Refugees 2019 is currently underway and extended to Dec. 15, according to Mark Gibb. Visit, www.NOVAReliefCenter.org, for a complete list of drop-off locations and to donate to the education fund.