

CONNECTION

Reston ♦ Oak Hill Herndon ♦ Chantilly ♦ CENTRE VIEW

Holiday Lights on the Farm

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HOMELIFESTYLE

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The best looking barn for the holidays in Fairfax County: thousands of lights decorate a mile-long route through the Frying Pan Park in Herndon on select weekend evenings in December.

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PHOTO COURTESY OF FAIRFAX COUNTY FIRE DEPARTMENT

Reston Hospital Center Launches Neuro Intervention Program

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Connecting People on Opposite Sides of Route 28

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During the last weeks of each year, this newspaper devotes its pages to the creativity of local students and children. The results are always remarkable. It is a keepsake edition for many families. Even readers without children of that age spend time admiring and chuckling over the issue. The annual Children's Connection (including Children's Gazette and Children's Almanac) is a long-time tradition.

With high visibility, this is a great advertising opportunity for every industry, so give us a call about rates and ad sizes at 703-778-9431 or email advertising@connectionnewspapers.com.

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HOME LIFESTYLE

Christmas Casual or Go All Out?

By MARILYN CAMPBELL
THE CONNECTION

As with many traditions, the pandemic is altering celebrations. Whether extravagant and lavish, minimalist and understated or somewhere in between, inspiration for holiday décor abounds. A group of tastemakers are offering an array of design ideas to make any home merry and bright this season.

Ease and Simplicity

"You can go casual and let yourself off the hook this year," said Amy Rutherford, owner of Red Barn Mercantile in Old Town Alexandria. "Just iron your tablecloth and linen napkins, forage for greenery to put in a vase and call it a day."

Understated décor is one of the themes that Sustainable Designer, Zelda Elisco of Abigail-Elise Design Studio is encouraging this season. "Decorate your mantle with a garland of greenery and wooden beads for the perfect minimalist look," she said. "Arrange the perfect holly bouquet in a large glass vase."

"If there's one thing we've learned from the pandemic, it's to simplify," added Anne Walker of Anne Walker Design and Farm & Feast in Potomac, Maryland. "Focus on what's really important. This principle applies to design as much as it does to life."

A stunning tablescape doesn't have to mean lavish and fussy, says Walker whose designs often incorporate reindeer antler candle holders and laser-cut wood Christmas trees in soft shades of beige. "The lack of embellishment allows each element to have a huge impact. A beautiful dining table is so restful in its simplicity [and] invites you to linger in peaceful, elegant spaces she said.

Find inspiration in nature

While a daylong shopping spree in search of the most festive dining accessories might not be feasible this year, creating a tablescape with natural elements allows for simplicity while maintaining elegance.

"Grab a magnolia leaf and write a name on it for a place card and attach it to your napkins with twine. Simple twine is always a fun way to wrap napkins," said Rutherford. "When you get your Christmas tree they have extra branches lying around. Pick up some of those and line them down the table. Sprinkle in candles, and fresh fruit like pomegranates, apples or oranges with cloves, which smell nice and are really pretty."

"Evergreen is a beautiful smelling green and lasts a long time," added designer Tina Yaraghi of The Enchanted Home. "I love mixing it in with fresh cut boxwood and eucalyptus. Keep a spray bottle with tap water on hand to spray every few days."

Natural elements can also be used to add color. "Try adding a vase filled with cranberries or hurricane candle holders to a tablescape, suggests Yaraghi. "You can place it in the center of a festive wreath. I also add fresh greenery in a little mint julep next to each place setting, which is such a beautiful and elegant touch."

"Votive candles add understated elegance and are a must have for any holiday table," she continued. "There nothing like the glow of candlelight [mixed] with greenery is always a beautiful look and I will often add faux white berries for a little something extra."



PHOTO BY THE ENCHANTED HOME

Etched hurricanes mixed with greenery and pinecones create an elegant tablescape.



PHOTO BY COURTNEY THOMAS, THE PICKET FENCE

Tiny Christmas trees made from bottle brushes add a splash of color to holiday décor.

A Twist on Traditional Accessories

Dining tables aren't the only spots to add Christmas cheer. "Fill your mantle with different styles of bottle brush trees in varying heights and put a wreath above it" said Courtney Thomas of The Picket Fence in Burke, Virginia. "Bottle brush trees, which, as the name suggests, are made of the brushes that you use to clean bottles. They're popular this year. They were big in the 1950s, so they're kind of retro. You can also display them in groups of three or five and make a forest."

"Christmas villages have been really popular this year," continued Thomas. "Those are fun but for a side table, console or on a shelf."

There's Nothing Wrong with Extravagance

Even using decorations that you already own, simple doesn't mean lackluster. "Even if you normally go full tilt with glitter and glamour during the holidays, try something new this year," said Walker.

"For table settings, I say go big or go home," said Yaraghi. "I love bringing out all my silver, china, crystal. The more the merrier and if not for the holidays, then when?"

"Get a beautiful centerpiece and line the table with pretty candles," said Rutherford. "Embrace the moment, embrace it even though it might be your immediate family and not the 30 people you usually host. Go all out. Just because it's the four or six of you doesn't mean you can go all out."

NEWS

PHOTOS BY BONNIE HOBBS/THE CONNECTION



The brand-new ramp from Chantilly's Walney Road/Cabells Mill Drive intersection over Route 28.



This is the new Route 28 overpass, connecting people from Chantilly directly to Centreville.

Connecting People on Opposite Sides of Route 28

New Braddock/Walney roads overpass links Chantilly and Centreville.

BY BONNIE HOBBS
THE CONNECTION

It's been a long time coming – but once again, drivers traveling from the Walney Road/Cabell's Mill Drive intersection in Chantilly will be able to cross Route 28 to reach Braddock Road in Centreville. They used to be able to do it all the time; but after VDOT cut off their access, more than a decade ago, they've been forced to take a detour north and double back south.

But on Nov. 25, the section of Walney Road west of Cabell's Mill Drive was reopened, leading westbound Walney traffic up a ramp to a brand-new overpass above Route 28. That means motorists there may now cross Route 28 to reach Braddock Road directly.

In November 2005, to reduce accidents and congestion on Route 28 – thereby improving safety and traffic flow – VDOT unveiled its plan for a drastic change there. It recommended a partial median closure at the Walney Road intersection and installation of a median island.

Drivers could no longer cross Route 28 between Braddock and Walney, and the traffic signal would only permit northbound left turns and east- and westbound right turns. Walney's left lane would disappear, and traffic could only turn right from Walney onto Route 28 north, through a channelized island.

BOTH LANES coming from Braddock onto Route 28 were only allowed to turn right (south) only. Motorists couldn't turn left (north) onto Route 28 and were instead directed to the Westfields Interchange. Drivers could still turn left onto Braddock from Route 28 north, but Route 28 south traffic was barred from turning left onto Walney. It could only be reached by a right turn from Route 28 north.

Eventually, VDOT implemented its plan – greatly impacting residents of Cabell's Mill and other neighborhoods off Walney Road. With their direct access to Braddock Road closed off, they've had to take a circuitous route to reach Centreville, just across the

highway from them.

These residents have had to turn right onto Route 28 and travel north so they could make a U-turn near E.C. Lawrence park, then head south on Route 28 and finally make a right turn onto Braddock – or continue to Route 29 to Centreville's shopping centers, restaurants, grocery stores, schools, churches and businesses.

So the newly opened, Route 28 overpass marks a momentous – and much welcome – change in their lives. It enables them to finally take a direct route to reach all these amenities.

Drivers still aren't allowed to turn left onto the ramps to Route 28 south or I-66 west because of ongoing construction on the new overpass. Instead, they'll continue to use the Route 28/Westfields Boulevard Interchange to do so.

At the top of the new ramp, motorists will be able to turn left onto Braddock Road headed west, or they may take a right onto Walney Road headed east. Eastbound travel on the overpass, as well as additional traffic move-

ments, are set to open in the coming months.

On the other end of the new overpass, drivers traveling east on Braddock won't yet be able to use the new flyover to cross Route 28 to reach Walney Road and Cabell's Mill. Recently opened, permanent ramps from eastbound Braddock to Route 28 south and I-66 west remain open.

THE NEW, permanent ramp from Route 28 north to the new Braddock Road/Walney Road overpass over Route 28 is part of the I-66 Outside the Beltway Project's Route 28 Interchange improvements. To access this ramp, motorists on northbound Route 28 will stay to the left over I-66.

In addition, there's more good news for local motorists. According to VDOT, early this Saturday, Dec. 12, the new, permanent ramp from I-66 west to the Braddock/Walney overpass over Route 28 will open. Drivers will reach this new ramp by taking the exit from I-66 west to Route 28 north and then staying to the left for the ramp leading to Braddock/Walney roads.

Rocky Run Collects Presents for ONC

Each year, the nonprofit Our Neighbor's Child (ONC) collects new, unwrapped toys to deliver to hundreds of families in need in Centreville and Chantilly. And instrumental in its efforts is the annual gift drop-off at Rocky Run Middle School. Students in its National Junior Honor Society (NJHS) passed out more than 2,000 flyers in local neighborhoods, advertising the event. Then on Nov. 21,

NJHS sponsors were in the parking lot in front of the school to receive the gifts donated by the community.

— BONNIE HOBBS

(From left) are Rocky Run science teacher Renee Martin, math teacher Laura Hornberger and Assistant Principal Christine Sciabica.



BONNIE HOBBS/THE CONNECTION

Redistricting Underway

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



The Constitution requires that after the federal census every ten years there is to be a reapportionment of legislative districts based on population growth and shifts reflecting "one-man, one-vote." Virginia voters made history this year by approving a constitutional amendment establishing a Redistricting Commission. With Virginia having elections in odd-numbered years including in 2021 elections for governor, lieutenant governor, attorney general and members of the House of Delegates, Virginia is on a fast track to get the Commission underway.

In the special session that ended in October, the General Assembly passed enabling legislation to establish the Commission by Nov. 15. Already the eight legislators who will be on the Commission have been named as well as the retired judges who will participate. In all instances of appointing members, consideration shall be given "to the racial, ethnic, geographic, and gender diversity of the Commonwealth." The

partisan leadership in the House and Senate who made the appointments were prohibited from appointing themselves.

Applications are being accepted through Dec. 28 from citizens who would like to serve on the Commission. Persons who have been involved in partisan political activity or who are relatives of members in office or those involved in partisan political activity are not eligible to serve on the Commission. For details on who is eligible for membership and details on applying, go to redistricting.dls.virginia.gov/.

The enabling language for the Commission includes extensive requirements for public participation in the redistricting process. "All meetings and hearings held by the Commission shall be adequately advertised and planned to ensure the public is able to attend and participate fully. Meetings and hearings shall be advertised in multiple languages as practicable and appropriate." At least three public hearings are to be held. The legislation also requires that "All data used by the Commission in the drawing of districts shall be available to the public on

its website. Such data, including census data, precinct maps, election results, and shapefiles, shall be posted within three days of receipt by the Commission."

The Commission is required to submit to the General Assembly plans for districts for the Senate and the House of Delegates of the General Assembly no later than 45 days following the receipt of census data and for Congressional Districts by 60 days. If the Commission is unable to agree on districts, the responsibility for drawing of district lines goes to the state Supreme Court. The law requires that the Court shall appoint two special masters to assist the Court in the establishment of districts. The two special masters shall work together to develop any plan to be submitted to the Court for its consideration. Special masters have been used by the courts to resolve district conflicts in the past including related to Virginia past redistricting.

The timing of the process is limited between the availability of census data and primary elections that could result in a delay in primary elections and reduced time before the general election. Virginia voters have spoken, and a complex process is underway to ensure that voters pick their representatives rather than legislators picking their voters.

495 NEXT Project: A 'Game Changer in the Region

To the Editor:

Having lived in McLean for more than 36 years and represented McLean and Great Falls in the House of Delegates, I have experienced our traffic congestion as it has grown worse each year. Travel along the northern section of I-495 near my neighborhood along the Georgetown Pike historic byway has become challenging. Once the covid health crisis is behind us, the prospect of more congestion will be ahead of us as normal commuting patterns resume.

The proposed 495 NEXT Project, which will extend the 495 Express Lanes north to the George Washington Memorial Parkway, can solve many of these the Dulles Toll Road and George Washington Memorial Parkway, this project will provide a reliable travel choice that

will reduce travel time significantly. Safety will be improved by reducing the number of accidents on I-495 and by reducing the cut through traffic on local roads – a very important factor for neighborhoods like mine. This project will allow transit and carpoolers to bypass congestion with a faster toll-free trip, a point I made consistently as a state legislator when the original HOT lanes were being constructed. That last point is even more compelling today. As Tysons - and the region – continue to grow, the Express Lanes will move more people in fewer vehicles.

Perhaps more importantly, the 495 NEXT Project will allow Virginia to be prepared for the Capital Beltway Accord Project that will include rebuilding the American Legion Bridge

and extending the 495 Express Lanes across the Potomac River into Maryland. This project will address one of the most congested corridors in the country and certainly will be a "game changer" for our region.

I encourage the Commonwealth to move this project forward as soon as possible. In addition to the benefits discussed above the 495 NEXT Project will create thousands of jobs and millions of dollars in economic activity at a time in which our region greatly needs this investment. As a former state legislator, a transportation policy activist, and a longtime resident of McLean, I strongly support this project.

Margaret G. Vanderhaye
McLean

What Does It Cost to Buy a Dog?

Virginia observes Puppy Mill Awareness Month.

BY SUSAN LAUME
THE CONNECTION

Second article in series.

With prices normally not displayed in puppy stores or on-line, it's often difficult for potential buyers to learn the purchase price of a dog and to compare prices across offerings before sale processing. Nor is cost information at breeder or dealer level transparent or readily shared by the pet trade industry.

Puppy stores charge what the market will

bear. You won't find prices on dog cages in the store or the store's web page because prices are quoted. Buyers should beware. There are often "specials" available — at a final price still well above what responsible small breeders are charging; even double the charge at a small breeder. Puppy stores include in their prices: factory farm wholesale price, "middle-man" charges for collecting and transporting the dog from out of state, attorney and lobbying fees, and store overhead. (Virginia's laws discourage commercial breeding operations, so all dogs are shipping in from out of state.) Without this overhead, small breeders are able to spend

more out-of-pocket on health testing and care.

No Higher Quality Behind Higher Puppy Store Pricing

If a pet store dog costs \$5,000 - 10,000, it must be a really good one, right? Wrong!

Quotes for trendy breeds, like French Bulldogs for example, can be as high as \$10,000 in the pet stores with their high mark-ups. The dog will be the same quality — even the same dog— when the French Bulldog

SEE LAUME, PAGE 7



Reston Hospital Center Launches Neuro Intervention Program

Reston Hospital Center announced its launch of the next phase of its established stroke program, through a partnership with the nationally-regarded neurovascular surgery team from MedStar Washington Hospital Center and MedStar Georgetown University Hospital.

Responding to the need for advanced neurological and stroke care in Loudoun and Fairfax Counties, Reston Hospital Center has built a state-of-the-art neuro intervention suite. The new suite features an advanced multi-directional imaging system that enables physicians to visualize extremely detailed, “real-time” images of a patient’s brain and spinal blood vessels for the treatment of stroke as well as other neurovascular procedures that require the highest level of precision.

“Bringing this advanced technology and treatment option to our community expedites diagnosis during an emergency and allows patients to receive the most advanced care close to home,” said John Deardorff, President and Chief Executive Officer of HCA Healthcare’s Northern Virginia market and Reston Hospital Center. “We are excited to collaborate with local Emergency Medicine Services (EMS) and neurovascular intervention experts from MedStar Health to provide this much needed service to our community.”



PHOTO CONTRIBUTED

Reston Hospital Center has built a state-of-the-art neuro intervention suite.

“For patients suffering from a stroke or brain aneurysm, every second counts,” said Dr. Rocco A. Armonda, Stroke Medical Director at Reston Hospital Center. “If someone is having signs of a stroke, call 911 immediately. The faster patients can get access to life-saving interventions, the greater the chances of survival and maximum recovery

with minimal brain damage.”

Reston Hospital Center is a certified advanced Primary Stroke Center, as designated by The Joint Commission, the nation’s leading healthcare accrediting agency, and a level II Trauma Center. Reston’s neurological care service includes a multidisciplinary team that cares for patients who need close

monitoring and advanced medical care with the most up-to-date specialized equipment available and a state-of-the-art, 24-bed intensive care unit (ICU). Reston also provides an inpatient neurological rehabilitation program to help patients, as needed, to regain motor function following a neurological event or surgery, with

“For patients suffering from a stroke or brain aneurysm, every second counts.”

— Dr. Rocco A. Armonda,
Stroke Medical Director at
Reston Hospital Center

a dedicated rehabilitation team that guides patients return to daily living through a combination of physical therapy, occupational therapy, and speech language therapy.

For more information about Reston Hospital Center visit www.restonhospital.com or follow them on Facebook and Instagram.

Poplar Tree Road Bridge Now Open

The Poplar Tree Road extension and bridge over Route 28 in Chantilly has just opened, connecting Walney and Stringfellow roads on the east side of Route 28 with Stonecroft Boulevard and Westfields Boulevard on the west side. Featuring a shared-use path linking to the new E.C. Lawrence Park access road, the bridge also gives bicyclists and pedestrians – especially those living on the west side of Route 28 – improved access to the park.

“The community has been asking for this access for the last 10 years,” said Park Manager John Shafer. “And it’s now available by using the mixed-use path on the north side of Poplar Tree Road until the crossing at the Poplar Tree and Walney Road traffic light.” This road further provides direct accessibility to E.C. Lawrence’s active-recreation complex and play structures for the neighborhoods to the east of the park.

As for the new bridge, it includes two travel lanes in each direction; its 10-foot-wide path

is on the north side. Built to accommodate the possible, future expansion of Poplar Tree Road, this bridge is just one of several, recent Route 28 improvements that are part of the Transform 66 Outside the Beltway Project.

For example, a new Route 28 north bridge span opened Nov. 4, and new ramps from Braddock Road to Route 28 south and I-66 west opened Nov. 7. Also last month, the final traffic signals between Route 7 in Sterling and Route 29 in Centreville were removed. And a new ramp from Route 28 north to I-66 east opened Nov. 25.

Additional connections between Route 28 north, I-66 west and the new Braddock/Walney roads overpass are slated to open in the upcoming weeks. The Poplar Tree Road Bridge was partially funded by the \$500 million concession fee payment to Virginia by I-66 Express Mobility Partners, FAM Construction LLC. built it.

— BONNIE HOBBS

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Announcements

Announcements

Announcements

Announcements



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-Werner Heisenberg

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www.ConnectionNewspapers.com/contact/letter

NOW THRU DEC. 11
HomeAid Accepting Donations.
HomeAid Northern Virginia is accepting donations of diapers, baby wipes and formula. Getting involved is easy; simply order on the Amazon Wish List (and have shipped directly) or deliver to the address: HomeAid Northern Virginia, 3684 Centerview Drive, Suite 110B, Chantilly, Virginia 20151.

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- ❖ Hunters Woods Fellowship House (Reston)
Weekly on Thursdays, 10:00 - 11:30 AM and Fridays, 8:30 - 10:30 AM.
Thursday, December 17, 2:00 - 4:00 PM.
 - ❖ Lake Anne Fellowship House (Reston)
Wednesday, December 23, 2:00 - 4:00 PM.
- Questions? Contact Diane Beatley at dbeatley@fellowshipsquare.org

SUNDAY/DEC. 13
Female Entrepreneur Community Holiday Party & Virtual Vendor Fair. 4:30-6:30 p.m. Virtual meeting. The DCpreneur 2nd Annual Holiday Party will be virtual, yet festive event with vendor fair, an abundance of laughter, fun, games, prizes, annual accomplishments ceremony, membership 2021 announcements, plus making connections via networking in the social lounge. Using Airmeeet, Vendor Fair attendees will have the ability to move from virtual table to table at the vendor fair to connect with others. Visit the website: <https://dcpreneur.com/>

AREA ROUNDUPS

Car Seat Inspections on Dec. 17

Police officers at the Sully District Station, 4900 Stonecroft Blvd. in Chantilly, will be inspecting children's car seats Thursday, Dec. 17, from 5-8:30 p.m. Inspections are done on a first-come, first-served basis; participants are asked to wear a mask and adhere to social-distancing and safety precautions. The seat must already be installed; then officers will properly re-install it, if necessary, and teach parents how to do it themselves, in the future.

CALENDAR

TYSONS CORNER CENTER HOLIDAY PLANS

Santa Is Back (Now through Dec. 24). Careful consideration has been given to the Santa set to ensure that they are both healthy and magical to meet the moment. Santa will be seated a distance from his guests to maintain a healthful distance, with a physical barrier to prevent young guests from trying to sit on Santa's lap. Santa and his young visitors will wear masks and maintain a healthful distance, in a contactless visit and photo experience fully re-designed to meet the moment.

Grinch's Grotto (Now thru Dec. 31). Located on Level 2 next to A Christmas to Remember. Guests will meet The Grinch and interact with him right in his cave, as well as pose for a photo. Admission includes a free 6x8" printed photo with a playful Grinch catchphrase. With over 20 sayings to choose from, guests can customize their own Grinch holiday memory. Admission also gets you a collectible Grinch ornament. Each ticket allows admission for up to 5 guests to meet the Grinch as a group. This ticket secures your individual time to meet the Grinch and experience his cave. Social distancing and mask usage will be in accordance with local and mall regulations.

Saturday/Dec. 12 -- Virtual Holiday Performance at Tysons Corner Center. 10 a.m. Those Funny Little People is a one-of-a-kind entertainment company with life-sized puppets who dance, sing, and make people laugh. Making their television debut in 2011, Those Funny Little People appeared on the TV show America's Got Talent as four elves, an agent, and a showgirl. The group resonated with audiences everywhere and placed within the top 36 acts. Enjoy their holiday entertainment from the comfort of your home.

NOW THRU THE HOLIDAYS

Santa at Springfield Town Center. Santa and his reindeer have arrived at Springfield Town Center to kick-off the holiday season. In an effort to create touchless experiences and accommodate varying levels of visitor comfort, Santa will be available at Springfield Town Center via numerous experiences and offerings: Picture with Santa; Virtual Experience; Family Pet Photos on Mondays; Family Photos and Visits with Santa. Reservations are required for all Santa and photo offerings.

NOW THRU DEC. 15

BUMC Holiday Marketplace. Burke United Methodist Church is hosting an online Holiday Marketplace. Proceeds will benefit our Cambodia ministry and the preschool. Includes links to many local crafters. Visit www.burkeumc.org

MONDAYS BEGINNING DEC. 7

Junior Lakeside Explorers. 10:30 a.m. At Burke Lake Park, 7315 Ox Road, Fairfax Station. Don't miss the chance for your child to join the Park Authority's newest nature club. Join "Junior Lakeside Explorers" at Burke Lake Park. This new nature club is designed for children age 5 to 7. Kids will learn about the wildlife that call the region's lakefront parks home, and the nature topics will be geared to meet some homeschool science requirements. The program meets on Mondays, beginning

Dec. 7, 2020. Sessions run from 10:30 to 11:30 a.m. for four weeks. The cost is \$32 per child. Call 703-323-6600.

WEDNESDAY/DEC. 9

Movie in Community Hall. 7 p.m. At McLean Community Center, 1234 Ingleside Ave., McLean. Sponsored by The Alden. Attendees must wear masks and adhere to social-distancing requirements while in the facility. Seating is limited and preregistration is mandatory. Subscribe to The Alden's monthly newsletter (<https://bit.ly/2HSTLhs>) to get the full movie lineup and movie titles. Visit www.mcleancenter.org

WEDNESDAY/DEC. 9

The Unruly Theatre Project's Virtual Improv Show. 7 p.m. At McLean Community Center, 1234 Ingleside Ave., McLean. Join in (the) Unruly Theatre Project's virtual fall improv shows from the comfort of your couch! Register online and a Zoom link and password for the show will be emailed to you. Participants must register two hours in advance of show-time. Visit www.mcleancenter.org

FRIDAY/DEC. 11

Centrestage Spotlight. 6-8 p.m. Virtual Event. Centrestage Spotlight is a virtual show that will feature songs, monologues and scenes performed by Theatre Centreville students. Audience members will receive a link so the show can be enjoyed virtually. The first show can be viewed between Dec 4th and Dec 7th. The second show can be enjoyed Dec 11th through Dec 14th. To purchase tickets, go to <https://www.theatrecentreville.com/wpa/>

DEC. 11-13

Herndon WinterMarkt WinterPlatz. 10 a.m. to 10 p.m. In Historic Downtown Herndon. WinterPlatz is a community celebration in the heart of Herndon. Participating businesses will join in the festive spirit, decorating and offering WinterPlatz specials. Visit the website: www.herndonwintermarkt.com

SATURDAY/DEC. 12

Winterfest Holiday Market. Noon to 6 p.m. At Workhouse Arts Center, Lorton. This year's event will feature a holiday art market, local vendors, a snowflake decorating content, festive lights, and a special visit from Santa. They are also offering a 20% discount on ALL artwork campus-wide! This is an excellent opportunity to get the perfect gift for the art lover in your life. Visit our website for tickets and information: <https://www.workhousearts.org/event/winterfest-community-market/>

SUNDAY/DEC. 13

Winter Wreath Workshop. 1 p.m. At Colvin Run Mill, 10017 Colvin Run Road, Great Falls. With help from staff at Green Spring Gardens, the "Winter Wreath Workshop" will teach you some dazzling possibilities with greens, ribbons and pinecones. This workshop is designed for participants age 16 to adult. The cost is \$39 per person, plus a \$25 supply fee. Please register for both the program and supply fee. Call 703-759-2771.

Laume

FROM PAGE 4

is found in a rescue or shelter for \$125-\$500 after the original owner surrenders the dog, for any number of reasons.

Typical cost of dogs by source:

public shelters \$125 - \$175

rescues \$300 - \$500

small hobby breeders \$800 - \$1,500 (depending on breed)

pet stores. \$2,500 - \$7,000; even \$10,000 for more popular breeds

To keep your purchase price reasonable and avoid adopting from a puppy

mill: avoid pet stores, newspaper ads, and online "deals." Responsible breeders won't use these sales outlets.

Visit the breeder, ask to see the entire facility where the dogs are kept and bred, ask questions about the dog's genetics and parent health testing. Doing so will help to ensure you receive a healthy puppy whose cost will not be increased by expensive veterinary bills.

Read more information on Puppy Mill Awareness Month in Connection during December.

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"Medican't" Take It Anymore



By KENNETH B. LOURIE

The non-stop - or so it seems, television advertising letting all of us viewers know that the 2020 Medicare Open Enrollment window is about to slam shut is nearly over. For those of us age 65 or older, this is not an opportunity to ignore. And given the frequency and repetition (the commercials are repeated, rarely ever different), at least on the channels that I watch (maybe that's the problem?), I feel like Bill Murray reliving his previous 24 hours endlessly in the movie, "Groundhog Day." However, unlike the movie, I can't do anything to undo what is constantly bombarding me on television. Switching channels during the commercials wouldn't really help because usually I'm watching a specific program - in between the commercials, and switching back and forth seems like too much effort. Besides, I might lose the continuity of the program I'm watching if I were to mis-time my switch. I suppose I could mute the commercial but I've heard Joe Namath - and others talk about the "give back benefit," the "zero dollar premiums in your area," and the possible additional benefits: "vision including contacts, hearing aids and batteries, home-delivered meals, dental and rides to your doctor's appointment" so often that even if I couldn't hear Joe actually promoting, I would still hear what he's saying in my head since I've probably heard it already a hundred times since the enrollment period began.

As I sit and write this on Tuesday, Dec. 1, the end is near however: Dec. 7, 2020. On that day the senior-centric advertising party (solicitation) will be over. Then the commercials will cease and desist - for now, only to return next year in November when the 2021 Open Enrollment period begins anew. Perhaps I'll be more inclined to act then. After all, I am their target audience. However, my being a senior with a pre-existing condition: cancer, limits and complicates my options. In addition, changing plans means changing doctors and though change can often be a good thing, for me, considering my life occasionally hangs in the balance, change might not be a good thing. In fact, it could be a downright bad thing. I mean, my oncologist has kept me alive for almost 12 years since my Feb. 27, 2009 non small cell lung cancer stage IV diagnosis. Granted, there may have been a slight revision of my diagnosis since three surgical biopsies performed earlier this year confirmed that what I actually have is papillary thyroid cancer. Nevertheless, changing now seems counterproductive, sort of. The damage is already done. I'm not sure there's much to gain now that a second opinion has similarly confirmed my updated diagnosis and has agreed with my current oncologist's treatment plan: Lenvima for me. But I do feel there's much to lose: nearly 12 years of treatment/experience with my present provider. And even though I understand that medical records can get transferred, I still feel I'd be putting myself at risk by forfeiting the knowledge that has been accumulated by the doctors who have been treating me/managing my care.

I imagine it's typical that a patient's survival depends in part on their emotional and psychological make-up. And of course on the doctors and staff that have been responsible for their care. And though I am not unaware of the possible mistake/blip on my medical radar with respect to my actual diagnosis, I still feel that I should stay on the horse on which I rode in on, if you know what I mean? Switching plans would mean switching doctors, staffs, procedures, et cetera. And I'm just not sure if I'm emotionally (there's that word again) equipped to deal with such upheaval in my life/care.

All of this being said - and sort of anticipated, listening to all those Medicare Open Enrollment commercials has made Kenny a very dull boy, and an aggravated one at that. I'm not sure I can take much more of it. Thankfully, mercifully, the commercials will stop after Monday, Dec. 7. Although I think Joe did an excellent job promoting his cause, I'm afraid it's fallen on deaf ears. Now that I mention that, I wonder if my current provider offers hearing benefits.

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



PHOTO BY MERCIA HOBSON/THE CONNECTION

Frying Pan Farm Park Manager Yvonne Johnson shows that everything is oversized and most items hand-built that are being used at the new Holiday Lights on the Farm driving tour light display.



PHOTO BY FAIRFAX COUNTY PARK AUTHORITY

Fairfax County Park Authority staff leads the effort to get the decorations and lights installed.

Holiday Lights on the Farm

BY MERCIA HOBSON
THE CONNECTION

Fairfax County Park Authority recently looked to find ways for people to have a good time during the holiday season with their family. Leadership decided what better way than having a driving tour at Frying Pan Park in Herndon since it had a good circular route for this operation. “When a creative idea comes up, you make the most of it, said Park Manager Yvonne Johnson.

The decision was made that thousands of lights would decorate a mile-long route through the park on select weekend evenings in December. “We will have some animals out under lights, hopefully, near where you can see them. That’s not something you normally get to see on a holiday light trip. We’re trying to make it very unique to Frying Pan,” she said.

According to Johnson, Frying Pan got the lights and decorations from two other Fairfax County parks, Lake Fairfax and Burke Lake. Through a “wonderful teamwork effort,” everybody pitched in to sort and organize all the holiday decorations. First, they tested hundreds of strands of lights. That’s where the large stall barns came in handy with their many outlets down the multiple long aisles.

Johnson said the park received very generous support for the project. “We had a nursery company, Baumgardners Tree Care, LLC. They hired a scissor lift for us to help put lights up on the taller barns. They did that as an in-kind donation. Then the Fairfax County Fire Department decorated our barn. It’s a good way for them to get practice on their ladder truck. It helps the community,” she said.

On Friday, Dec. 4, Chris Goldbecker, Managed Parks Section Manager at Fairfax Coun-



MERCIA HOBSON/THE CONNECTION

(From left) Chris Goldbecker, Managed Parks Section Manager at Fairfax County Park Authority, and Keith O’Connor Park Manager at Burke Lake, Fairfax County Park Authority install a starburst along a path at Frying Pan Farm Park.

ty Park Authority, and Keith O’Connor, Park Manager at Burke Lake were out in the park, beginning to add more lights. Johnson said that Goldbecker had a lot to do with operations. He said that they had four people working eight hour-days the first week, but the workload dramatically increased for the next week. With volunteers, Goldbecker estimated 800 hours total to set up for the first Friday night, Dec. 12.

THE BIGGEST CHALLENGE, Goldbecker said, was coordinating to the different sites. “Burke Lake Park and Lake Fairfax Park both had winter celebrations...The biggest challenge of the whole thing is just trying to figure out how to take the two different sites, combine them into one, and then figure out how it’s going to work with a trail that was designated by this park.” O’Connor

Lake Fairfax and Burke Lake bring their displays to Frying Pan Farm Park.



PHOTO BY FAIRFAX COUNTY FIRE DEPARTMENT

Staff at Fairfax County Fire Station 36 - Frying Pan Park get ladder truck training as they decorate the Park Authority’s barn at Frying Pan Farm Park.

agreed. “Burke Lake had their event for five years. It’s pretty much plug and play. So, we took everything from Burke Lake, moved it over here and figured out where it would go best.”

Johnson said guests would arrive at a designated time. The route would go past the Country Store and the lower riding ring, around the equestrian barns, and open field displays with three-dimensional works set up there. In the wooded area, they hoped to create a tunnel of lights. Guests would come out of the woods near the pasture areas, pass the Visitor Center, and then make the final right hand turn into the farm area. “You will have a view from a distance... beautiful outlines of all the different farm structures. Then you’ll come into the farm area... a little Christmas Village,” Johnson said.

HOLIDAY LIGHTS ON THE FARM is sponsored by the Fairfax County Park Foundation, The Friends of Frying Pan Farm Park, and Home Depot.

Frying Pan Farm Park is located at 2709 West Ox Road in Herndon.

Register for Holiday Lights on the Farm or Register for a VIP Wagon Ride

The first driving tour weekend is Fri. Dec.11-Sat. Dec. 12, followed by the next weekend, Fri. Dec. 18- Sat. Dec. 19. According to Johnson, tickets are selling fast. Holiday Lights on the Farm is \$20 per car; the maximum vehicle size is 15 passengers. Several dates and times are available. Book an exclusive ride for up to 20 people in a tractor-drawn wagon. For additional information, call 703-222-4664 during business hours.