



The Kidera family of McLean, Steve, and Katie with their two young children Rory, 4, and Connor, 1, pose beside their car with a Christmas tree on top, re-creating 2020 style, the scene from the Norman Rockwell Christmas painting. The family purchased their tree at Sexton Family Christmas Trees in the Great Falls Village Centre directly beside the Great Falls Christmas tree illuminated for the holiday season.

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PHOTO BY MERCIA HOBSON/THE CONNECTION

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NEWS

Drawing the Line

BY MICHAEL LEE POPE
THE CONNECTION

The history of partisan gerrymandering in Virginia dates back to the 1780s, when Gov. Patrick Henry tried to draw the congressional districts in a way specifically designed to deny his archenemy James Madison a seat in the House of Representatives. The plan failed, and Madison was elected anyway. Ever since then, the history of partisan gerrymandering has been a story of elected officials lusting after power for themselves and seeking revenge on others. The last redistricting in 2011 was so bad that courts threw out two of the three maps.

"There's a House district in the Richmond area that became known as the toilet bowl district because of the way it's strung around, and there's a congressional district that goes from North Carolina to Loudoun County," said Sen. George Barker (D-39), who led redistricting effort for Senate Democrats in 2011. "I think with the new map, you'll be able to see that the districts are better and more compact."

Now that voters have approved a constitutional amendment creating a new redistricting commission, the pieces have already started falling into place for how the commission will work and who will serve on it. Leaders in the General Assembly have already named the judges for the selection committee that will name the citizen members, including retired Arlington Circuit Court Judge Joanne Alper. And party leaders in the General Assembly have selected the "Super Eight" lawmakers who will serve on the panel. All that's left now is for members of the general public to submit their application to the Virginia Division of Legislative Services. "The more people that apply, the more diverse set of people we'll have to consider," said Barker, who is one of the eight lawmakers who will serve on the commission. "You don't have anything to lose by applying. Please apply if you're at all interested."

TO BE SELECTED, citizen applicants must

first grab the attention of one of the four party leaders in the General Assembly. That could mean a letter of recommendation from an elected official who is close to the Speaker of the House. Or it could mean a call to the Senate Republican Leader.

But that's only the first part of the process. The 64 resumes that are selected by the party leaders in the General Assembly will go to a five-judge panel, who will get to make the final selection of the eight citizen members.

"They're basically seating a jury," said Brian Cannon, executive director of Fair Maps VA. "The judges are probably looking for people who are going to make really good commissioners because the partisan sorting has already happened at the first phase."

Applicants don't need to be demographers or lawyers to become part of the commission, although that wouldn't hurt. Elected officials or anyone who has ever tried to be an elected official in a partisan election will be excluded from being a citizen member now that lawmakers have approved implementing legislation.

The deadline for applications is Dec. 28, and the commission will start meeting in February to prepare for the Census data to be available in April.

"If you are a former School Board member or a former city administrator, you're more likely to receive a favorable look from the judges," said Cannon. "You don't have to be an expert to be on the commission, but if you have some sort of expertise like you're a demographer or a mathematician you're likely to receive a favorable look from the judges."

THE EFFORT TO DITCH the old way of redistricting was decades in the making, stretching back to the civil rights movement. Back in 1965, a federal court ruled that Virginia's congressional districts were unconsti-



Sen. George Barker (D-39)

Newly created redistricting commission zooms toward new maps.

Five-Judge Panel

- ❖ Retired Petersburg Circuit Court Judge Pamela Baskerville, chairwoman
- ❖ Retired Arlington Circuit Court Judge Joanne Alper, chosen by House Democrats
- ❖ Retired Bristol Circuit Court Judge Larry Kirksey, chosen by House Republicans
- ❖ Retired Newport News Judge David Pugh, chosen by Senate Democrats
- ❖ Retired Hampton Circuit Court Judge Williams Andrews, chosen by Senate Republicans

Super Eight Lawmakers

- ❖ Sen. George Barker (D-39)
- ❖ Sen. Mamie Locke (D-2)
- ❖ Sen. Steve Newman (R-23)
- ❖ Sen. Ryan McDougle (R-4)
- ❖ Del. Marcus Simon (D-53)
- ❖ Del. Delores McQuinn (D-70)
- ❖ Del. Margaret Ransone (R-99)
- ❖ Del. Les Adams (R-16)

tutional because they violated the principle of "one man, one vote." The map for the House of Delegates districts in the election of 1981 was so bad a judge ordered a new election in 1982, promptly followed by yet another election in 1983. One of the more notorious examples of partisan gerrymandering in Virginia happened after the 2010 Census, when Republicans drew maps that a federal court later determined packed Black voters into a handful of districts to dilute their influence throughout the state.

"Be careful in how you describe what you're seeking," wrote former Alexandria Republican Chairman Chis Marston in a 2010 email that later became evidence in a United States Supreme Court case. "We need to keep out any hint of unfairness (except the fundamental unfairness of the Voting Rights Act) or partisanship." As the 2020 Census approached last year, lawmakers saw a rare opportunity for compromise. Republicans were justifiably worried they were about to lose control, and they were willing to set up a process to take some of the partisanship out of the process. Democrats were eager to finally score some kind of reform

of a process they had long criticized while they were out of power. When the two sides became deadlocked, the process moved to a closed-door conference committee of three senators and four House members.

"At the time, it seemed like the best opportunity we had at getting rid of gerrymandering," said Del. Paul Krizek (D-44), who was a member of the conference committee.

THE COMMISSION that voters approved last month was nobody's ideal model for what a redistricting commission should look like. Instead of an independent commission of retired judges, the panel is instead a bipartisan commission of elected officials and citizen members who have been selected by elected officials and retired judges. Supporters say the two-step process of having party leaders identify a pool of potential candidates that are then selected by retired judges offers a series of checks and balances that will work out in the end.

"Having the judges and going through the process will put a certain degree of separation," said David Ramadan, a former Republican member of the House of Delegates who now at the Schar School of Policy and Government at George Mason University. "It's less likely to have influence on them by individuals or by certain citizen groups that may want to push for one side or another."

The deadline for the five-judge panel to select citizen members is Jan. 15. The commission is expected to start meeting and select a chairman sometime in February. If all goes well, the Census data will be available in March or April. But because of delays caused by the pandemic, the Census numbers might not be available in time to accommodate an August primary for the House of Delegates. That could mean a series of elections in the future that will keep political consultants fully employed for years to come.

"There's some speculation that the current House members may run in their current districts in 2021 and then have to run in the new redistricted districts in 2022," said Del. Mark Cole (R-88).

McLean Woman's Club: No Holiday Homes Tour This Year; Hopefully in 2021

For the first time in 53 years, the Woman's Club of McLean will be unable to plan and hold its annual Holiday Homes Tour this fall due to the coronavirus pandemic. The club has continued much of its charitable support, donating some of the proceeds of its 2019 Homes Tour, but has held back 50 percent so as to be able to donate them in 2021. The club hopes to mount a Homes Tour or other major fundraiser next year.

The charities supported by the club include the Falls Church—McLean Children's Center, Second Story, Friends

of Pleasant Grove, Share Inc., Vinson Hall Transitional Housing Project and the McLean Volunteer Fire Department.

During 2020, the club has continued to meet on a regular basis, either in available space or via Zoom technology. It will continue regular meetings in 2021.

Historic Home on McLean Ballantrae estate featured on the 2019 Holiday Homes Tour.

PHOTO BY LAURA SHERIDAN



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. Vanderhye
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

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NEWS

Shepherd's Center volunteer, Matthew Humphrey, Executive VP, Head of Wealth & Investment Management, United Bank; Jayne Young, Interim Executive Director, Shepherd's Center; Erin O'Reilly, Operations/Volunteer Manager, Shepherd's Center



PHOTOS COURTESY OF SHEPHERD'S CENTER

Holiday Meals for Area Seniors

During Thanksgiving week, the Shepherd's Center serving Oakton-Vienna-Reston-Herndon (SC) was able to share Thanksgiving meals with local isolated senior clients. SC's Thanksgiving dinner delivery initiative was welcomed by their clients.

"This is a wonderful example of everyone of all ages in the community helping each other. The volunteer delivery drivers all said they got more out of the experience than they gave," said Jayne Young, Interim Executive Director, Shepherd's Center.

In addition to the holiday meal prepared by Bazin's on Church, SC also delivered goodie bags complete with masks, hand sanitizer, greeting cards created by the fifth grade Girl Scout troop at Wolf Trap Elementary and snack bags with fruit compiled by the K-6 graders at Emmaus' Children's Ministry.

This event was funded by Northrop Grumman and Susan Lorand. Meal deliveries were made by Board members Rich Deusterhaus, Bill Farrell, Patti Vaughn, Leigh Banducci, Scott Schroth and Jayne Young. Also delivering were volunteers Matthew Humphrey, Executive VP, Head of Wealth & Investment Management, United Bank, Joe Young, Matthew Banducci, Susan Garvey, Director of Community Outreach, The Kensington Reston and Thom Garvey.

To volunteer, donate or learn more about how you can help, or how we can help you, visit www.scov.org or, contact the office at 703-281-0538, office@scov.org.



From left -- Julie and Patrick Bazin, Owners Bazin's on Church, and Jayne Young, Interim Executive Director, Shepherd's Center

WEEK IN MCLEAN

Student Publications, Journalists Win Peacemakers Awards

The National Scholastic Press Association (NSPA) has awarded Peacemaker Awards to two Fairfax County Public Schools (FCPS) publications.

Winners of the 2020 Newsmagazine Peacemaker are:

❖ tjTODAY, Thomas Jefferson High School for Science and Technology; editors: Justin Chang, Irina Lee, and Grace Mak; adviser: Erinn Harris.

❖ The Highlander, McLean High School; editors: Nicholas Lohman, Dasha Makarishcheva, and Ava Rotondo; adviser: Lindsay Benedict.

Additionally, staff members from The Highlander were awarded several individual awards in a variety of contests:

Social Justice Reporting, second place, Coming Clean, Heran Essayas, Kyle Hawley, Nicholas Lohman, and Ava Rotondo.

Story of the Year: News Story, fourth place, Supporting Future Changemakers, Marina Qu.

Newsmagazine Cover, fifth place, Coronavirus edition, Dasha Makarishcheva.

Portfolio: Artist of the Year, fifth place, Darya Makarishcheva.

Local Climate Change Reporting, honorable mention, A Scorched Earth,

Ben Brooks, Dua Mobin, Marina Qu, and Rebeka Rafi.

POLICE REPORT

Alert: Mail Stolen from Collection Boxes

The Vienna Police Department would like to warn citizens that mail has been stolen from the US Post Office collection boxes at the corner of Church St NW and Lawyers Rd NW after being broken into several times this year. The most recent incident occurred overnight from Nov. 22 to Nov. 23. If you used these mailboxes during that time, please ensure that any checks, banknotes, or other important mail reached its intended destination. Mail theft or tampering is investigated by the US Postal Inspection Service and may be reported via their website at <https://www.uspis.gov/report/>. The Vienna Police department cooperates fully with their investigations and forwards all mail theft reports to the Postal Inspection Service. If you see suspicious activity at the mail collection boxes, contact the Vienna Police Department for an immediate response.

To avoid theft, citizens are advised to use the collection mailboxes at 200 Block Lovers Lane, NW inside the post office

The following summary contains various incidents of general interest handled by the Town of Vienna Police Department from Nov. 25, 2020 – Dec. 3, 2020.

Between Jan. 1, 2018 at 12 a.m. and Nov. 25, 2020 at 2:09 p.m. A resident reported that in 2018, he was notified by a bank that a fraudulent account was opened by an unknown person using his personal information. He resolved the issue with the bank's security department at that time. He is now receiving notices from a collection agency regarding the fraudulent activity on the account.

Fraud -- 200 Block Cherry Street, SW, Between Sept. 1 at 12 p.m. and Nov. 23 at 12 p.m. A resident reported that a check she mailed was stolen, forged, and cashed.

Suspicious Event -- 400 Block Orchard Street, NW, Between Nov. 3 at 12 p.m. and Nov. 10 at 12 p.m. A resident reported that a check she was supposed to receive in the mail never arrived. The resident was advised to contact the US Postal Service to file a report.

Fraud -- 500 Block Gibson Drive, SW, Between Nov. 6 at 12 pm. and Nov. 23 at 12 p.m. A resident contracted a company to paint a home that he owns in North Carolina. The resident received an email requesting payment for the work from someone stating that he worked for the painting company. The resident wired the payment, believing it was going to the com-

pany performing the work, but the company never received the payment. The contractor, the resident was working with, did not know the person who sent the email.

Fraud -- 600 Block Alma Street, SE, Between Nov. 22 at 3 a.m. and Nov. 23 at 5 p.m. A resident reported that she mailed a check from the mailbox at Church Street and Lawyers Road that was stolen, forged, and cashed.

Police Service -- 900 Block Westwood Drive, NE, Nov. 25 11:45 a.m. A resident turned in a BB gun for destruction.

Arrest - Emotionally Disturbed Person and Emergency Custody Order -- Moore Avenue, SW, Nov. 25 7:33 p.m. Ofc. McElhattan served an Emergency Custody Order on a resident. The resident was transported to an area hospital for evaluation and treatment. During the transport and medical evaluation the man exhibited violent and erratic behavior toward the officer and medical staff. A Temporary Detention Order was issued and a Fairfax County Officer took custody of the man at the hospital.

Emotionally Disturbed Person -- Owaisa Road, SE, Nov. 26 10:59 a.m.

Officers responded to assist mental health personnel with a resident. The resident refused to exit his home to speak to anyone.

Domestic Assault -- Nutley Street, NW, Nov. 26 11:41 a.m.

A resident reported that her two adult grandsons were fighting in her home. One of the men left the house before officers arrived. The resident reported her concerns about the grandson who resides with her. Officers provided the resident with resources available to assist her grandson.

Grand Larceny -- 400 Block Holmes Drive, NW, Nov. 26 between 1 p.m. and 9:30 p.m. A citizen reported that someone entered her vehicle and stole several items from a purse, including an iPhone, a wallet, US currency, gift cards, and various identification and debit cards. The citizen believes her vehicle was locked, however, there were no signs of forced entry.

Emotionally Disturbed Person -- Nutley Street, NW, Nov. 26 6:17 p.m.

PFC Gucwa transported a resident to an area medical facility for assessment. After the assessment, the man was released by medical staff and the officer transported him back to his home.

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."

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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.

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NEWS



Juno Braley - Impromptu Art

Madison High Students Win 28 Awards at State Convention

Each November, the Virginia Junior Classical League (VJCL) sponsors a state convention at the Richmond Convention Center. This year, the convention was held virtually on Zoom with the aid of G Suite and other remote participation tech tools. Students from 50 schools across the state participated, including nine students from Madison. The state convention features a wide variety of competitions in academics, graphic crafts, and creative arts, all based on classical content and themes. In addition, students participate in Discamus sessions featuring Latin and Greek teachers and professors from around the state, a spirit contest between schools, a talent show, elections for state officers, and other activities.

Each Madison student took three academic tests and participated in

three additional arts and crafts or creative arts contests (this year, everything but the academic tests and impromptu art contest happened prior to convention, with due dates by Nov. 7. Seniors and Co-Presidents of the Latin Club Juno Braley and Melinda Goldfeder served as Madison's voting delegates and representatives at the Nominations Committee Meeting, and the group as a whole earned 27 individual awards and a school spirit award.

The Madison delegation included a student who attended the 2017, 2018, and 2019 VJCL conventions; two students who attended the 2018 and 2019 conventions; three students who attended the 2019 convention; three students for whom this was their first convention; and students from every level of Latin.

Madison Awards (28 total):

Madison Delegation:
6th place, Spirit Contest

❖ Juno Braley: Summa Cum Laude, T-Shirt Design; Magna Cum Laude, Impromptu Art, 12th grade; 6th place, Mottoes, Quotes, and Abbreviations, Level IV; 10th place, Derivatives, Level IV

❖ Corinne Church: Summa Cum Laude, Costume Contest, Patroclus; Summa Cum Laude, Impromptu Art, 11th grade; 1st place, Reading Comprehension, Elementary Level; 1st place, Geography, Level I; 2nd place, Derivatives, Level I; 4th place, Mottoes, Quotes, and Abbreviations, Level I

❖ Sophia Hsu: Summa Cum Laude, Portfolio, 9th grade; 3rd place, Vocabulary, Level I; 6th place, Mottoes, Quotes,

and Abbreviations, Level I; 7th place, Derivatives, Level I; 9th place, Reading Comprehension, Elementary Level

❖ Madison Le: Cum Laude, Upper Level Modern Myth

❖ Sinead McWeeney: Magna Cum Laude, Graphic Arts Portfolio, 11th Grade; Magna Cum Laude, Latin Oratory, Level II; Cum Laude, Impromptu Art, 11th grade; 3rd place, Geography, Level III; 8th place, History, Level III

❖ Hannah Petersen: Summa Cum Laude, Latin Oratory, Level II; Summa Cum Laude, Impromptu Art, 10th grade; Summa Cum Laude, DIY Masks; Magna Cum Laude, Costume Contest, Cloelia; Cum Laude, Modern Myth, Middle Level; 7th place, Reading Comprehension, Intermediate Level

Great Falls' 30th Annual Christmas Tree Lighting

Santa's visit sparks the spirit of the season.

BY MERCIA HOBSON
THE CONNECTION

No way could Santa disappoint the children in Great Falls and miss the Annual Christmas Tree Lighting held this year on the Great Falls Village Centre Field on Sunday, Dec. 6. Surely Santa knew with Covid-19 and related public health issues, the children had already missed so many events in 2020. Santa said he always loved coming to Great Falls from the North Pole and anyway, "all nice the children are there. No naughty kids," he said.

Erin Lobato is Director of the Great Falls Citizens Foundation. The non-profit organization presented the Celebration of Lights and its annual tree lighting with a history that goes back to 1990.

According to Lobato, Jackie Moore, who passed away in 1995, came up with the idea of erecting a tree on the Village Green. Holding tradition and the spirit of the season tucked close to their hearts, organizers at Celebrate Great Falls developed a plan to produce the event and keep everyone safe within the protocols for outdoor gatherings issued by Gov. Northam due to the State of Emergency.

Debbie Nagy, Vice President of the Great Falls Foundation said, "All of us are wearing masks. Volunteers are strategically placed along the planned drive-by route and no guests are allowed outside their vehicles." Organizers trimmed the scope of the event but not the joy of the holiday season.

With only a few minutes to spare as the clock ticked toward 5 p.m., Santa and Mrs. Claus hurried over to the 38-foot tall Norway spruce by SAB Lawn & Landscaping Inc., founded by owner Stephen A. Borcharding of McLean. The ceremonial countdown began. Ten, nine, eight, seven...until the magnificent tree, dressed in its 5000 lights and topped by a star, lit up against the backdrop of the dusk sky.

The children didn't seem to miss the additions from previous years. No pony rides; no petting zoo. They were at the Village Centre to see the man dressed in a red suit and talk with him. Santa took his time and answered the children's questions called out through car windows. "I like chocolate chip cookies," Santa said many times. Seated beside Mrs. Claus in the bed of a pickup truck, Santa posed perfectly for families to take photos



Santa and Mrs. Claus turn around to face their elves after lighting the tree.

PHOTOS BY MERCIA HOBSON/THE CONNECTION



Cars line up for the drive-by Celebration of Lights featuring Santa and Mrs. Claus.

of him and the Missus. Sight-lined directly behind them towered the majestic tree lit for the season. Masked elves accepted the children's hand-delivered letters, which Santa said he would read later.

After the drive-by, Sofia Georgopoulos, 5, of Great Falls, said, "Driving through was a little bit different...but I liked it... I wrote him a letter and it said... 'I love you, Santa. We will leave you cookies and carrots for your reindeer.'" Brother Ari, 2, said simply, "I like Santa." Mom, Rachael wished everyone a Merry Christmas. She added, "We are so thankful for all the volunteers who made this happen. It was so special."

"A part of my mom lives on in this annual tradition that was a dream come true. Seeing the excitement in the children's faces and joy this celebration brings to the community is what it's all about," said Debbie Moore Chason, Jackie Moore's daughter.

Lobato thanked the many sponsors for the event, including AOG Wealth Management, Costa Family & Cosmetic Dentistry, 1ROOF and The Old Brogue. Visit www.celebrategreatfalls.org to see the full list of sponsors.

Here's What's Happening at MCC!

The Old Firehouse

Light Up McLean Holiday Decorating Contest Competition is limited to the first 15 registered households

Sponsored by The Alden



The Unruly Theatre Project's Virtual Improv Show
Wednesday, Dec. 9, 7 p.m.
Free; registration is required.

A Live, Virtual Event!



McLean Uncorked Part 2
Sunday, Dec. 13, 5 p.m.
Free admission; registration is required.

Sponsored by The Alden



The Unruly Theatre Project's Virtual Improv Show
Wednesday, Dec. 16, 7 p.m.
Free; registration is required.

The Old Firehouse



Virtual Family Fun Trivia Night
Friday, Dec. 18, 7-9 p.m.
\$5 per family
Registration is required.

Sponsored by The Alden



Family Holiday Movie
Saturday, Dec. 19, at 2 p.m.
Free admission
Registration is required.

Closing Notice

Christmas Eve (half-day) and Christmas Day
Thursday, Dec. 24 - Friday, Dec. 25



The McLean Community Center
www.mcleancenter.org

Home of The Alden Theatre
www.aldentheatre.org

1234 Ingleside Ave. McLean, VA 22101



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

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

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

SATURDAY/DEC. 12
'Shop & Stroll' Campaign. The Town of Vienna announced the launch of a new campaign to encourage visitors to explore the town's diverse shopping centers. The initiative titled Vienna Shop & Stroll will take place on Saturday, Dec. 12 from 12-4 p.m. at Glyndon Plaza. Visit ViennaVA.gov/shopandstroll.

NOW THRU DEC. 12
Toys for Tots Collection. The McLean Community Center is now accepting new, unwrapped toys for Toys for Tots. Toys for Tots is a program run by the United States Marine Corps Reserve that distributes toys to children whose parents cannot afford to buy them gifts for Christmas. A donation box is now located in MCC lobby to collect the items. You may drop off toys during our regular business operating hours. This effort will continue through Saturday, Dec. 12, at noon, when a member of the U.S. Marine Corps will come to collect all the donated items at our Santa Claus is Coming to Town event.

DEC. 5-19
XP League Tryouts. 2-4 p.m. At Code Ninjas Falls Church, 479 South Maple Avenue, Suite E, Falls Church. In collaboration with R Controlled E-Sports, Code Ninjas Falls Church will be holding tryouts for its new XP League esports team and invite elementary and middle-school students to participate in try-outs at the Falls Church Code Ninjas with league play starting in early January. Visit the website: <https://www.codeninjas.com/va-falls-church>

DEC. 14 AND 28
Grief Support Group. 6:45 p.m. Virtual Zoom Event. Support group for adults for losses relating to COVID-19 as a result of death, decline or illness, financial impact or spiritual suffering. Support Group takes place 2nd and 4th Mondays monthly through December. Register for the group on the website: <https://www.capitalcaring.org/grief-support-groups-registration/>

TUESDAY/DEC. 15
Caregivers Support Group. 10-11:30 a.m. Virtual via Zoom. Shepherd's Center serving Oakton-Vienna-Reston-Herndon (SC)
SC hosts a support group for caregivers of adult family members with dementia the first and third Tuesdays of each month. Their virtual, facilitated meetings are from 10 to 11:30 a.m. Contact facilitator, Jack Tarr, at jtarr5@verizon.net for details on joining the meeting via zoom or see the SC web site: <https://www.scov.org/announcements>.

VIENNA'S TREASURE ORNAMENT
The Vienna Volunteer Fire Department is offering Vienna's treasure, the 1946 Maxim Fire Engine that will be featured on a beautifully crafted ornament. Limited quantity available, delivery expected early December. Don't miss out, order yours now for \$20 at <http://vvfd.org/store.html>.

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.



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Chesterbrook, Longfellow, McLean schools!



UNDER CONTRACT in 5 days!

Offered for...\$975,000

1437 Cola Drive, McLean

***FABULOUS* and *SPACIOUS* 6 BR and 3 BA home in sought-after POTOMAC HILLS location!** This immaculate and well-maintained home features beautiful hardwood floors throughout main level; sparkling, remodeled gourmet kitchen with granite counters & stainless steel appliances with island and breakfast bar plus additional eat-in space; expansive screened-in porch off kitchen overlooks backyard - perfect for entertaining or relaxing; fully-fenced yard; owner's suite w/ upgraded luxury ba; large LL rec room with custom bar and French door walkout!



UNDER CONTRACT in 6 days!

Offered for...\$649,000

2900 Linden Lane, Falls Church

***WONDERFUL* 3BR/2.5 BA brick rambler on 2 levels in sought-after HILLWOOD location!** This inviting gem features gleaming hardwood floors on the main level; large living room with wood burning fireplace; kitchen features updated gas stove; new washing machine; roof replaced in 2018! Brick driveway installed in 2017. Nice owner's suite with full bath; generously-sized additional bedrooms; lovely deck; spacious lower level rec room with full bath, laundry and storage; situated on landscaped, level lot with **easy access to FALLS CHURCH CITY!**



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