Madison Alumna Publishes Award-winning Book

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A Lawsuit Challenges TJ Admission Changes

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Madison Beats Westfield, Improves to 3-0

Sports, Page 9

Barry Connor #5 passes the ball to Madison receiver Jackson DeSimone #10. Warhawks won, 21-14, the school’s first win against Westfield in school history.
She Keeps On Giving

By Char McCargo Bah

This wife, mother, grandmother, entrepreneur and First Lady of the Improved Benevolent Protective Order of Elks of the World, Inc. (IBPOEW) is always on the move in fundraising and helping her communities in Sterling and Vienna.

Cynthia C. Polk is a multi-talented person who keeps giving and helping the communities. Her professional careers are paralegal for a general practice law firm in Sterling, Va. and an entrepreneur licensed nail technician, sole proprietor. She was also appointed as the third serving Grand Organizer (First Lady) of the organization for the Grand Temple Daughters of Elks in 2018. As an organizer, she developed the Grand Organizer’s Department, “Wings of Hope,” whose primary purpose is to assist families in crisis, regardless of their social-economic background. Because of COVID-19, many families in her communities needed help because they lost their jobs. By donating her own money, and with the help of the Elks members, they raised the needed funds for the Wings of Hope.

THE WINGS OF HOPE under the leadership of Mrs. Polk has assisted families in getting their children school supplies, medical expenses, rents, groceries and household supplies. In addition, she has sponsored many community service projects in Virginia, District of Columbia, Delaware, Maryland, North Carolina, New Jersey, Kentucky and Indiana since 2019. Some of the community service projects included free dinners for furloughed workers, free food for families in need, annual diaper-bag-drive and meals-on-wheels. Her community services were expanded to include an Easter-Egg-Scavenger-Hunt for the children, food pantry, women and children clothes (closet).

Cynthia and Mr. Prentice Booker are the Directors of the Beauty & Talent Pageant Program for the State of Virginia Elks. Cynthia brings her organizational and managerial skills in her role as First Lady.

Mr. Lawrence Robinson of the IBPOEW says this about Mrs. Polk, “A strong attribute to Cynthia’s success is her ability to get along with people, young or old regardless of race, color or religion.”

Cynthia was born in Athens, Ala. and moved with her family at the age of six to Louisville, Ky. She attended Doss High School in Kentucky. She married Leonard J. Polk, Jr of Vienna. Leonard is the son of Leonard J. Polk, Sr and Thelma Polk. Cynthia and her husband have four children: Leonard III, Gregory, Leniesha, and Tanja. Cynthia and Leonard have three grandchildren. Her husband, Leonard attended James Madison High School in Vienna and he graduated from George Mason University. He then graduated from David A. Clarke School of Law in Washington, DC and he earned his Juris Doctor Degree. Mr. Polk is a practicing lawyer and a counsellor for the Supreme Court of the United States of America since 2008. He is also the 14th Grand Exalted Ruler/Grand Patriarch and Chief Executive Officer of the IBPOEW of Jacksonville, Fla.

WHEN CYNTHIA WAS EIGHT years old, her mother told her that she could do anything she sets her mind on. Well, Cynthia took her mom’s advice and pursued her passion in helping others. She firmly believes that, if you help one person, then, that is one less person struggling in the world.

Mrs. Cynthia C. Polk keeps giving and giving. She is truly a woman on the move.


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A Lawsuit Challenges
TJ Admission Changes

Parents sue to stop TJ’s admission policy changes alleging anti-Asian race discrimination.

BY MERCIA HOBSON
THE CONNECTION

Fairfax County School Board and Fairfax County Public Schools Superintendent Dr. Scott Brabrand face a new lawsuit filed against them last week in United States District Court in Alexandria. The lawsuit alleges race discrimination against Asian-American students by the School Board and the superintendent in changing the admissions process to Thomas Jefferson High School for Science and Technology, known as “TJ.” The Pacific Legal Foundation filed the civil suit on Wednesday, March 10, on behalf of their client, Coalition for TJ, a group of mostly concerned parents at the high school.

“This type of racial balancing is unconstitutional,” said Pacific Legal Foundation attorney Erin Wilcox at a press conference held that morning outside the courthouse.

The Plaintiffs allege FCPS’ recently-implemented overhaul of the TJ admissions process changes, which eliminated the long-standing race-neutral standardized admissions test, was specifically aimed to reduce the number of incoming Asian-American students to racially balance the school according to the racial demographics of the school. “Up until this year, admissions to TJ have been race-blind,” said Wilcox. “Unfortunately, Fairfax County Schools officials apparently believed that this is too many Asian students,” she said.

THE COMPLAINT alleges that without the court issuing an injunction, the number of Asian-American students in the incoming TJ Class of 2025 is likely to be cut in half due to the “defendants’ stated desire to manipulate TJ’s demographics.” “The discriminatory intent they’ve shown is intertwined and an inseparable part of the policies they put in place,” Wilcox said.

According to the lawsuit, in the fall of 2020, Superintendent Brabrand and the School Board saw a reporting requirement by the Virginia Department of Education to include the racial/ethnic make-up and socioeconomic diversity of its students, faculty, and applicants as an opportunity “to completely overhaul the TJ admissions process in order to racially balance the school’s demographics, going far beyond the minimal reporting requirements.”

Located in Alexandria, TJ is a regional Virginia state-chartered magnet school operated by FCPS with students eligible for admission from Fairfax, Arlington, Loudoun, and Prince William counties, and the City of Falls Church. TJ is ranked the number one public high school in the 2020 National Rankings. The School Board voted to eliminate the TJ merit-based admissions test at its Oct. 6

By Mercia Hobson
The Connection

The lawsuit alleges that coupled with their history of sending large numbers of disadvantaged students, English language learners, or special education students, the lawsuits allege that coupled with the high concentration of Asian-American students in four middle schools – Carson, Kilmer, Rocky Run, and Longfellow – and their history of sending large numbers of students to TJ, racial balancing could be accomplished.

According to the complaint, the plaintiffs sought “to vindicate the rights of Asian-American public school children in and around Fairfax County, Virginia, to compete on an equal footing for admission to the nationally-ranked Thomas Jefferson High School for Science and Technology (TJ) without regard to their race.” Over all, Plaintiffs’ data analysis reported in the complaint that the student body at TJ, at approximately 73 percent Asian-American students under the merit-based race-blind admissions system would drop to 31 percent under the new racial-balancing admissions system for the Class of 2025 with “no other racial group projected to lose seats.”

The lawsuit alleges changes to admissions procedures for entry into TJ in the fall of 2020. “The Coalition for TJ is not going to stand for this kind of discrimination against Asian-American students and they are here to fight for equal protection for their children,” said Wilcox.

Julia McCaskill, an immigrant, and parent of a TJ student and students in grades 8 and 6, said at the March 10 press conference that TJ does not belong to a certain race or certain group of people. Low admission rates at TJ for Black and Hispanics are the failure of the FCPS Board, according to McCaskill. “They failed those under-represented areas over the decades instead of fixing the pipeline issue. The authorities are stirring up hate against Asian-Americans hoping to slash the number of Asian-American students will fix the overdue school problem.”

“The identified process for entry into TJ the admissions procedure for entry into TJ without regard to their race.” Over all, Plaintiffs’ data analysis reported in the complaint that the student body at TJ, at approximately 73 percent Asian-American students under the merit-based race-blind admissions policy that limits the number of students accepted from each county feeder middle school to the top 1.5 percent who meet the minimum evaluation criteria-GPA, student portrait sheet, problem-solving essay, and experience factors: including economically disadvantaged students, English language learners, or special education students.

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On Dec. 17, the School Board voted and adopted, with immediate implementation, further changes to the TJ admissions policy that limits the number of students accepted from each county feeder middle school to the top 1.5 percent who meet the minimum evaluation criteria-GPA, student portrait sheet, problem-solving essay, and experience factors: including economically disadvantaged students, English language learners, or special education students.

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THE PLAINTIFFS requested entry of an order requiring the Defendants to return to
Law and Order and Justice

By Kenneth R. "Ken" Plum
STATE DELEGATE (D-35)

There is no more important function of government than ensuring public safety. The challenge in a constitutional form of government is achieving safety for the public without jeopardizing the rights and freedom of some to protect others. Public safety has been like a political football with some raising fears about crime and perceived threats to the community. Few is the number of politicians who until recently have been willing to suggest that our laws and institutions of justice require a review of the balance of public safety, the application of laws, and justice.

Over the last several decades there have been many political campaigns built around a suggestion of increasing crime rates and simplistic solutions to keep everyone safe. California started the trend with legislation with the slogan “Three Strikes and You’re Out” that increased penalties for repeat offenses. A governor’s race in Virginia was won by an underdog candidate with a slogan of “no more pa-

role.” Legislative sessions during an election year would see more ideas about expanding the list of crimes for which the state could put someone to death, and the list lengthened of crimes for which mandatory minimum sentences were prescribed. At the same time guns became easier to purchase and own, and every mass shooting was followed by more gun purchases.

Capital punishment, extending the time prisoners were held, and arming more citizens resulted in Virginia being the number one state in putting people to death (first with an electric chair and more recently with lethal injection), increased prison construction, severe overcrowding of prisons, and protests at the state capitol in Richmond of more than 22,000 armed persons.

The disproportionate impact on people of color and in minority communities has become glaringly clear as the videos of body-cam and other devices show us the unfair way some laws have been administered. The slogan “Black Lives Matter” hit a responsive chord as the inequities in administering laws became obvious.

With the outcome of the elections of 2019 and the election of more progressive members in the House of Delegates, Virginia has become more realistic in its dealing with criminal justice and law and order issues. Abolishing the death penalty was one of the first among many reforms taken. A recognition of the connection between Jim Crow laws of the past and current policing resulted in the repeal of laws that were most strongly felt in the Black community. No-knock warrants were eliminated as were minor offenses that resulted in Black persons being stopped regularly by the police. A bill for the expungement of records of convictions for several misdemeanor crimes passed as did a bill to establish a process for seeking expungement through the courts for other crimes. Major progress was made in the discussion of eliminating mandatory minimum sentences with the likelihood that a bill will be passed in future sessions.

Some will call the actions of the legislature being soft on crime. I believe that a more realistic view is that the state has become less political and more balanced on ways to keep the community safe and to realize justice for more of our citizens. You will hear more of these opposing views in the campaigns coming up this fall.

Celebrate International Women’s Month. And then Keep Going

By Kate Viggiano Janich

If nothing else, the past few years have taught us this: It’s International Women’s Month 2021 — and we still have a lot of work to do to achieve equality for women in our country.

Only last year in 2020 did Virginia become the 38th state to ratify the long-contested Equal Rights Amendment (the ERA). The ERA is an addition to the US Constitution that would prohibit discrimination based on sex.

Only last year did we elect our first woman Vice President — a leadership position higher than any woman ever before her. Yet, while we celebrated this incredible achievement, we wonder — why is this incredible at all? Should it not be the norm?

And, as we watched Vice President Kamala Harris step up on this platform, the women on the ground around us took significant steps down. Women’s progress in the workplace rolled back with alarming speed. Because when the chips fell and families were forced to make tough choices due to COVID, the women were the ones who took a step back. They lost their jobs (that still paid less than men’s roles), cut their time down, or put aside their fledgling businesses to care for their families.

Let us be clear.

We are thankful for the women who helped us get where we are today. Our ancestors fought for our right to speak up with a vote. For protecting our bodies, for using our brains and creativity in new ways, for exploring the world’s possibilities.

We are thankful for the groups of women and advocacy coalitions who remind us every day the importance and power of #womensupportingwomen.

And yet. We have a lot to do so all the work doesn’t go to waste. We must keep moving so that when a woman steps into power, it’s considered part of the norm. So that working mothers aren’t the ones who step down in their careers by default.

For our part at Rowan Tree, we are committing to supporting women business owners. We are fighting on behalf of minority groups to achieve equity. We are fostering collaboration and learning opportunities, because we all know that we are #strongertogether. Let’s keep going.

Kate Viggiano Janich, Co-Founder, Rowan Tree, a coworking + cogrowth community focused on women, open to all. www.workrowan.com

As the author, Piccolo said, she felt due diligence to warn readers that if they were sensitive to the topic and didn’t feel they could handle reading it, then the book was not for them. “You’re not ready for it yet,” she said.

The book also arms the reader with resources for crisis intervention through national centers and online support. In the text, the author notes that self-harmers are not weak people who can’t deal with life. They need guidance, reassurance, and support as they learn how to manage better. “There is no shame in reaching out for help, nor is there shame for being a self-harmer,” writes the author.

“Why is Kristyn A. Kutter?” delves quickly into bullying, shame, and how social media, while a good thing most of the time, is “really a bad thing because it can get ugly.” Piccolo said she is thankful she went to Madison and became a Warhawk because as hard as it was going through high school and being bullied, going through self-hate, self-harm, and negatives, it helps her now to reach out and help others.

Piccolo’s book is real, truthful, and deals with self-harm, depression, and suicide told in a manner where the author does not inject her personal story. The reader can put themselves in a position that is relatable without interference. Piccolo achieves this by writing the content in a Q&A dialogue format and italics telling the actions and thoughts, similar to a theatre script with stage directions.

Piccolo said the way she writes is that she sees a movie screen in front of her, actions happening with the characters, and hears what they say. “For her character Kristyn, it downloaded instantly for Piccolo, a girl sitting in a red chair going on a self-discovery journey, having a conversation with herself.” At some point we all find ourselves having conversations with ourselves, whether people will admit it or not, and whether you have it in your head, or have it out loud, sooner or later, as issues start to mount in
In our new series, *County Highlights*, the *Connection* spotlights actions and comments by Fairfax County officials, public servants, and local citizens who call the County’s 406 square miles home. Interesting fact: If Fairfax County were a city, its population of 1.46 million residents would rank it as the 10th largest city in the United States. The County has more residents than six states—Montana, Alaska, South Dakota, North Dakota, Delaware, Wyoming, and Vermont.

**Fairfax County Board of Supervisors Meeting of March 9, 2021**

Zoning Ordinance Modification (zMOD)-Approved to Postpone Decision-10-0

Following five hours of public testimony on March 9 and action by the Fairfax County Planning Commission the week before, the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors approved to defer its decision on the Zoning, Ordinance Modification (zMOD) draft until March 23. Chairman Jeffrey C. McKay (D-At-Large) said the Board postponed the decision “to make sure we get it right.”

Among those testifying, Jeffrey Landon representing the Fairfax National Estates Homeowners Association in Centreville, said, “Do it honestly with full citizen participation. The scope of zMOD, from the scope of the project statement, does not appear to align with what has been tucked inside the several hundred-page document.” Debbie Smith, Chair of the Mason District Council Board, expressed concern about the more substantive proposals in zMOD that could potentially impact single-family neighborhoods by removing public notice, engagement, and land use matters for Accessory Living Units (ALUs) as well as home-based businesses. She said, “Sensitive ordinance changes like ALUs and home-based businesses should not be casually slipped into the massive zMOD project.” Holly DePaul of Vienna, said, “I’m against any regulation on the size, quantity, or content of flags flown.”

Supervisor Pat Herrity (R-Springfield) said that he did not think in his 13 years on the Board, he had ever heard such opposition to proposed changes from as broad a group, “I certainly couldn’t support what’s on the table right now, either the Planning Commission or the staff recommendation,” he said. The zMOD advertised options for consideration can be found on the County website.

**Solar Panels-Approved 10-0**

The Board approved the motion to lease County-owned property to Sigora Solar, LLC to install, operate, and maintain solar photovoltaic panels for on-site electric generation on 22 County locations. It did not represent a complete list of the sites at which Sigora Solar will install solar facilities. Electricity costs for facilities at which PPA solar projects are installed are expected to decrease as soon as the panels are activated. Under its contract with Fairfax County, Sigora Solar offered a fixed rate of $0.069 per kWh delivered for a 25-year contract term. “This will help in our environmental sustainability and also save County funds on utility bills,” said McKay.

**Advertised Tax Rate and Tax Assessments - Approved 9-1, Herrity opposed**

The Board approved to authorize advertisement of a brief synopsis of the FY 2022 Budget and a real estate tax rate for FY 2022 of $1.15 per $100 of assessed value. “This represents no change from the current real estate tax rate,” said McKay. It was one cent higher though, than County Executive Bryan Hill’s proposed budget plan for FY 2022. “I think we should be doing what our struggling residents are doing, finding ways to work within our means,” said Herrity. The Board may lower any advertised tax rate, but higher tax rates cannot be imposed without advertising such rates. The approval set the cap at $1.15.

Tax assessments in the County are rising, leading to a $224 increase in the average home. The Department of Taxation assesses tax bills based on the real estate market by analyzing sales of homes of comparable value in comparable neighborhoods.

**2021 Forest Pest Management System and Disease Carrying Insect Program—Approved 10-0**

The Board approved the County Executive’s recommendation that the Board of Supervisors direct staff take action concerning Fairfax County’s Calendar Year 2021 Forest Pest Management Program. Supervisor Dan Storck (D-Mount Vernon) said, “It’s essential that we manage, not only pests that can impact and severely denude out forests, but also that we look overall at forestry management.”

The Board also approved the annual submission of the Disease Carrying Insect Program, including the continuation of the county-wide mosquito surveillance program, testing mosquitoes for West Nile virus (WNV), Zika virus, and other pathogens, larviciding of mosquito breeding areas, and aggressive community outreach and education program to increase County residents’ awareness of mosquitoes, West Nile virus, Zika virus, and other mosquito-borne diseases, as well as personal protection and prevention methods.

**Comments on WMATA’s FY 2022 Operating Budget and FY 2022-2027 Capital Improvement Program to WMATA**

McKay said there were “a lot of troubling things in the budget proposal.” “You don’t get people back into the system by cutting service and closing stations.”

Supervisor Walter Alcorn (D-Hunter Mill) said the proposal in Metro’s budget to shut down stations in January generated much attention and concern. “The impacts…would be just horrible for our residents and our businesses…Specific to the Silver Line…It would be doubling down on the pain again given that residents and folks that use the Dulles Toll Road are paying for and have been paying for several years the construction of that line.” Alcorn said he was optimistic that with federal help, that “terrible outcome” can be avoided.

**News From School Board Member, Rachna Sizemore Heizer Member-at-Large**

Prom and Graduation for FCPS Seniors: In her newsletter to County students, families, and staff, School Board Member Rachna Sizemore Heizer (Member-at-Large) said she promised plans were being made for some form of in-person prom and graduation. “Exactly what it will look like depends on your performance at the Governor’s restrictions, but everyone is committed to at least giving you those two seminal events despite all you have lost,” Sizemore Heizer said.

www.ConnectionNewspapers.com
s a middle school student, Sofie Jacobs was at times mocked by other girls for her fastidi-ous study habits and the good grades she re-
ceived as a result. She joined an after-school cheerleading and dance class, but was taunted because of her lack of talent. At the time she didn’t want to dis-
cuss the pain she felt from the rejection by peers, who she now labels as “mean girls.” Ini-
tially, Sofie rebuffed her mother Meredith’s efforts to console her. “There was one place, however, where she felt comfortable expressing her feel-
ings without the shame or humili-
a: her journals.

“I remember so clearly the night she came home, ran to her room, and slammed the door,” said her mother, Meredith. “I could hear her crying, but she didn’t want to open the door or talk to me. Finally, she opened the door and handed me the journal where she had poured every-
things onto the page. After I read it, we were able to talk about it.”

Writing in my journal took away any worries about my mom’s imme-
diate reactions,” said Sofie, now 24. “It also let me work out my thoughts and have space for myself. I’ve al-
ways thought the most important thing in writing is the eraser. You rarely risk saying something you wish you hadn’t said when you’re writing.”

Journaling became part of the foundation of Mer-
edith’s relationship with Sofie. “When we talk, we created an interactive journal called, ‘Just Between Us: Mother & Daughter Journal’ that is designed to inspire conversations and healthy communication. It will be released next month and is an updated version of their first book, which they published ten years ago.

MOTHER-DAUGHTER relationships can be among the most difficult to navigate and maintain, say mental health professionals. Patterns range from an unhealthy closeness to a distant connection that is devoid of emotional intimacy, affecting mental and emotional health.

Emmeshed is the way that Springfield psychother-
apist Joyce Marter describes relationships that lack boundaries. “This is when the mother and daugh-
ter have a symbiotic relationship that doesn’t allow for healthy separation and independence,” she said. “They simply are too close. This can make it difficult for the daughter to develop a healthy sense of self as her own individual person or to separate and individ-
uate into an independent adult.”

At the opposite end of the relationship spectrum is a relationship that is characterized by control and dis-
connection. “The mother and daughter are not emo-
tionally close,” said Marter. “This can happen when they haven’t had a proper bonding experience, haven’t spent enough time together, or don’t relate or connect

Meredith and Sofie Jacobs of North Potomac use journaling as a way to maintain a healthy relationship.

Her journals were just one of her efforts to console her. There

on a deeper emotional level. It can also happen when a mother is too authoritarian and controlling and there isn’t a sense of respect or trust for the daughter as a capable per-
son.”

An ideal relationship has a healthy balance of attachment and healthy separation, advises Marter. “The daughter feels loved, understood, respected, valued and supported by the mother and also feels free to be her own person with her own life and interests,” she said.

It is possible to repair what is broken, cultivate what doesn’t exist and maintain what is working, says Tori Stone, PhD, Assistant Professor, Counseling at George Mason University. Stone said there are many ways to develop healthy mother-daughter relationships, particularly at an ear-
ly age.

“Just try to be emotionally present when you are with your daughter and listen when she is ready to talk,” she said. “Resist the impulse to provide advice or solutions. You can ask, ‘Is there anything I can do to help?’”

During teen and preteen years, mother-daugh-
ter relationships can be difficult to navigate. “Give choices whenever possible Set expectations [and] rea-
sonable limits that have reasonable end dates,” said Stone. “Let your daughter know the consequence in advance. For example, cell phones are a privilege, if you do not follow through on responsibilities, you will lose your phone privilege.”

Securing and harmonious relationships requires parental guidance, but also space to flourish, says Stone. “Detaching with love does not mean we don’t care about our loved ones,” she said. “Rather, it means having a healthy separation in relationships where you do not try and control. We must separate enough to allow them to make their own mistakes so they can learn. They need to be free to be their authentic selves instead of living as we hope or expect them to be.”

Infusing an element of light-heartedness into a mother-daughter relationship is an important element that the Jacobs express in their books.

“We thought we could help other mothers and daughters have the kind of conversations we had through our journal, but insert the humor that Sofie and I share to make it fun,” said Meredith. “There is a lot of trust that is built through those silly moments that help form the foundation for when it’s time to have harder conversations.”
People

Virginia Journalist of the Year

Marina Qu of McLean High School wins top state honor.

McLean High School senior Marina Qu has been named the 2021 Virginia Journalist of the Year by the Virginia Association of Journalism Teachers and Advisers. Qu serves as editor-in-chief of The Highlander newspaper and The Tartan literary magazine; she has been on both publications’ staff for three years.

In her Journalist of the Year portfolio, Qu wrote, “Our role as student-journalists did not diminish in spite of the global emergency that was unfolding—our responsibilities were heightened. We overcame challenges that we didn’t know we would ever face. And we did it against all odds.”

Qu will compete for the Journalism Education Association’s national Journalist of the Year award, to be announced in April.

According to her profile in The Highlander online, “Marina Qu enjoys writing about local news relevant to the community and collaborating with other reporters. Outside of journalism, she loves to spend time with her little sister Regina and taste food from around the world!”

Pratika Katiyar, the editor-in-chief of tjToday at Thomas Jefferson High School for Science and Technology, came in second in the Virginia competition.

Piccolo

FROM PAGE 5
your life, there’s just no getting around it.” Piccolo’s character Kristyn records the conversations with herself.

“Kristyn takes a sip of soda. A. “Cutting was something Maddison, and I did in private. We never really talk- ed ‘bout it.”

Q. “What happened that pushed you to self-harm for the first time?”

Kristyn remains silent.

Q. “Was it your break-up with Jamey?”

Kristyn’s palms begin to sweat. She wipes them on her jeans to hide her ner- vousness.

A. “It’s complicated.”

According to Piccolo, she wanted Kristyn to be real in a way that a teenager or an adult who was a cutter still dealing with hurt could put themselves in that red chair and relate to Kristyn but at the same time relate to their person- al issues, things going on with them and their hurts.

Piccolo acknowledged she has no method to her writing; she never does outlines. She sits down and bangs it out, rarely going back, maybe an edit or two tweaking a word here and there. Some- times she uses an old typewriter. Other times, she sits outside up against a tree and writes the words in a notebook.

PICCOLO said a lot of people had given her controversy because of the negative topic. People will not interview her about self-harm or talk about it because it is a negative topic.

As a freshman at James Madison High School, Piccolo said she spent a lot of time huddled in a library’s back cor- ner. She would stare up at all the books around her and say to herself, “One day, I’m going to write something that’s going to help somebody not feel the way I feel right now. It took me a long time to get to that point...through my early twenties. It was really rough, very rough...If I had read something like Kristyn, maybe know things, I wouldn’t have looked at those years so negatively.”

A. “Sometimes I get a rush from cut- ting, and it’s the best feeling in the world when it happens. But...”

Q. “But?”

A. “Coming down can feel even worse.”

“My hope is that people, no matter what age, will be able to look in the mir- ror and see themselves the way God sees them. Beautiful. Unique. Strong. Stop seeing themselves the way the bullies may have convinced them to believe they are. In today’s world of cancel culture, I believe it is time to cancel ‘negativity’ and bring back a ‘positive outlook’ in one’s onward movement through life,” Piccolo says.

“It’s complicated.”

Week in McLean

McLean Community Center Holds a Virtual Public Hearing

The McLean Community Center (MCC) is asking residents of Small District 1A-Dranesville, who pay a real estate tax surcharge to support the center, to “Fill Us In” on what kinds of new programs and services they would like to see offered and/or improved upon in the planning for the center’s FY2023 fiscal year. Residents can access an online survey to submit their ideas, here: https://conta.cc/3ckvdsU.

In addition, MCC is holding a Virtual Public Hearing on FY 2023 Programs at 7:30 p.m. on Wednesday, March 24, over Zoom (ZOOM Meeting ID: 817 619 39845; Password: 559547). The hearing is the first step in planning for the FY2023 budget cycle, which begins July 1, 2022 and ends June 30, 2023.

Tax district residents who plan to log in to the hearing and wish to speak are asked to call the Center at 703-744-9348,TTY: TTY 711, to have their names placed on the speakers’ list; however, speakers are not required to sign up in order to speak. Res- idents also may submit comments by mail, email (holly.novak@fairfaxcounty.gov) or in person up to seven days after the hearing.

For more information, call the Center at 703-790-0123, TTY: TTY 711, or visit: www.mcleancenter.org.

McLean Community Foundation Announces Grant Request Deadline

The McLean Community Foundation is accepting grant requests for its current grants cycle until April 1, 2021. Applications can be found on the MCF’s website at mcfonline.org.

The McLean Community Foundation awarded $105,950 in grants that benefited the McLean Community in 2020. SHARE, Inc of McLean received $25,000 to help those with food insecurity. McLean Cares, a new organization designed to not only provide meals to those less fortunate but to also purchase these meals from local McLean restaurants that are struggling to survive was awarded $15,000. Additionally, The Women’s Center that has seen a 25 percent increase in new patients as well as a 40 percent increase in need among patients who were there prior to the pandemic received a $25,600 grant. Additionally grantees include Capital Caring Health, Clemjohntr Park, Our Minds Matter and several area schools.
Madison Beats Westfield, Improves to 3-0

The Westfield Bulldogs traveled to Vienna for a conference football game with the Madison Warhawks on March 12. Early in the first quarter Mikal Legall would run in from 2 yards out to give Westfield a 7-0 advantage. Later in the second quarter, Westfield would take a 14-0 advantage when quarterback Toviel Jung ran in from 7 yards on a quarterback keeper. However 6 minutes later Madison would get on the board when Connor Sevy kicked a field goal. With Madison trailing 14-3 and Westfield driving on the ensuing series, Westfield QB Toviel Jung was intercepted by Justin Williams after Jung’s pass was tipped at the line of scrimmage and Williams would take the ball 65 yards for a Warhawks score with 2:34 to play in the first half. After a scoreless third quarter Connor Sevy would kick his second field goal of the game pulling Madison to within a point, 14-13 with 8:28 to play in the game. Madison QB Barry would score from 1 yard out with 1:35 to play in the game. Madison would opt for a two point conversion which was successful and the Warhawks would hold on for a 21-14 win, the school’s first against Westfield in school history.

Westfield falls to (1-2) (0-1), while Madison improves to (3-0) (2-0). Madison will host Marshall on March 19, and Westfield will host Centreville. Chantilly sits atop the conference at (4-0)(1-0), Centreville (4-1)(2-1), and Oakton is (1-3) (0-2).

— Will Palenscar

Barry Connor and Madison defeated the Westfield Bulldogs for the first time in school history.

Photos by Will Palenscar/The Connection

Madison Beats Westfield, Improves to 3-0

Barry Connor #5 passes the ball to Madison receiver Jackson DeSimone #10.

Westfield QB Toviel Jung #12 avoids the tackle of Madison’s Dylan Wilkinson #7.

Justin Williams #8 intercepts the pass of Westfield’s Toviel Jung and returns it for a touchdown.

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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
March 18, and 9:30 a.m.-4 p.m. Friday, March 19. The entrance fee is $5. Assigned drop-off times will be staged in 10-minute intervals to allow for social distancing and to keep the number of people in the Vienna Community Center at one time to a minimum. Visit viennavsu.gov/photo to register and for additional instructions and details.

WEDNESDAY/MARCH 24
The Unruly Theatre Project’s Virtual Improv Show. 7 p.m. Sponsored by The Alden. Join us for (the) Unruly Theatre Project’s virtual 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 showtime. Register online at www.aldentheatre.org.<cal1>Wednesday/March 24

MARCH 26-28
“Dear Elizabeth.” Presented by The Vienna Theatre Company. The play by Sarah Ruhl is drawn from one of the greatest correspondences in literary history between two of the 20th century’s most brilliant American poets, Elizabeth Bishop and Robert Lowell. Sarah Ruhl adapts more than 400 published letters spanning decades, continents and political eras, telling the tale of an unconventional friendship and intimacy both platonic and romantic, and brings it all to life on the stage. This moving, innovative play started in 1947, ends in 1977 and describes a love that rests easy definition. The performance will be filmed live and aired online as follows: Friday and Saturday – March 26 and 27, April 2 and 3 evenings at 7:30 p.m. Ticket Prices: $15. Purchase online at https://vta.booktix.com.

FRIDAY/MARCH 26
Old Firehouse Family Event. 7-9 p.m. Gather the whole family around the computer or tablet and watch the Old Firehouse with our virtual dance party. This moving, innovative play starts in 1947, and brings it all to life on the stage. Ruhl adapts more than 400 published letters in literary history between two of the 20th century’s most brilliant American poets, Elizabeth Bishop and Robert Lowell. Sarah Ruhl enters the special comorbidity group; a 66-year-old with cancer/weakened immune system. I presented a very appealing target for the virus. I mean, my immune system is already compromised and with occasional breathing problems side-effected by my thyroid cancer medication, I was potentially easy pickins. As such, Diana refused to give me passage out of our house. That, plus, Dr. Fauci had a better chance of leaving Casablanca than I did of leaving Burgundy.

But soon it appears I will have my own “Letters of Taxis.” However, Diana has already informed me that I won’t be returning to my former errand-running ways. She intends to continue ordering food online from the grocery stores – and then drive to pick it up contact-less in their parking lot. Actually, I might be allowed to go that far since I’ll be still remaining in the car and wearing a mask. There is just no way I could possibly keep my distance as the groceries are loaded into the boot. We’ll see; we’re still negotiating. But definitely not until I receive my second shot. In the interim, I imagine our lives will change very little. Thanks to the vaccine though, there is hope that once again, I’ll be able to interact with people, places and things. But return I shall and relieved I will be. How- ever, having lung cancer, and/or thyroid cancer which has metastasized to the lungs, in the midst of a worldwide virus that often locates in the lungs and creates breathing/judgmental problems – even with the two shots, is still as scary and risky as it gets, especially if you’re of a certain age as I am. In two weeks, I’ll have received my booster shot, and I’ll have a lot less to worry about, thank fully. And for a cancer patient still undergoing treatment with a less than a “normal” life expectancy anticipated, being fully vaccinated is as good as it gets. And I suppose I can live with that, living the operative word. Having cancer, irrespective of the type, your diagnosis/ prognosis, is pretty damn difficult. It impacts every facet of your life. The thought (your reality) is never far from your consciousness. And once you become a member of this less than ex clusive club (more every day, unfortunately), a club that nobody wants to join, there are more risks to your life than you ever imagined, and many more for which you have absolutely no awareness. Having an external complication, like a virus, with variants that seem to spread rapidly; when you now have infected over 10,000,000 Americans, and an infection for which there’s no specific cure, and seems to have its greatest negative impact on people exactly like me (age and disease) is almost as foreboding as it could possibly be. And with no place to hide, other than in your own home - with no visitors invesit, a precaution most of us are mandated to invoke the syntax of Hercule Poirot, "the greatest detective in the world!" I have managed much of us impatient and perhaps a bit tense. I can see a healthcare professional, but would almost see the light. Hopefully, it will be July 4th of this year as the President has suggested and not July 4th of next year.

Kenny Louie is an Advertising Representative for The Potomac Almanac & The Connection Newspapers.
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*BEAUTIFUL* and *EXPANSIVE* 4BR/2.5 BA colonial home on 3 fin levels in convenient McLean location! Dramatic 2-story foyer, hdwd floors on main level; gourmet island kitchen w/ breakfast bar and nook; inviting family room off-kitchen w/ vaulted ceiling, stone hearth fireplace and French door walkout to covered patio; elegant living and formal dining rooms; main level library/office; huge owner’s suite with vaulted ceiling and luxury bath; large add’l bedrooms; finished LL includes huge rec room plus office/den, built-ins, wet bar & full bath. Langley HS pyramid!

1566 Great Falls Street, McLean
*FABULOUS* 4BR/4.5 BA colonial home on 3 levels with a loft in sought-after Hunting Ridge location! This beautiful home includes wonderful gourmet kitchen with brand new stainless steel appliances; freshly painted; refinished hardwood floors; lovely deck off the kitchen - perfect for entertaining; large LL rec room with new carpeting, plus guest room, full bath and storage; gorgeous owner’s suite with luxury bath featuring quartz counters, separate shower and soaking tub; upper level laundry; 2-car garage; super location - McLean HS pyramid!

809 Balls Hill Road, McLean
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