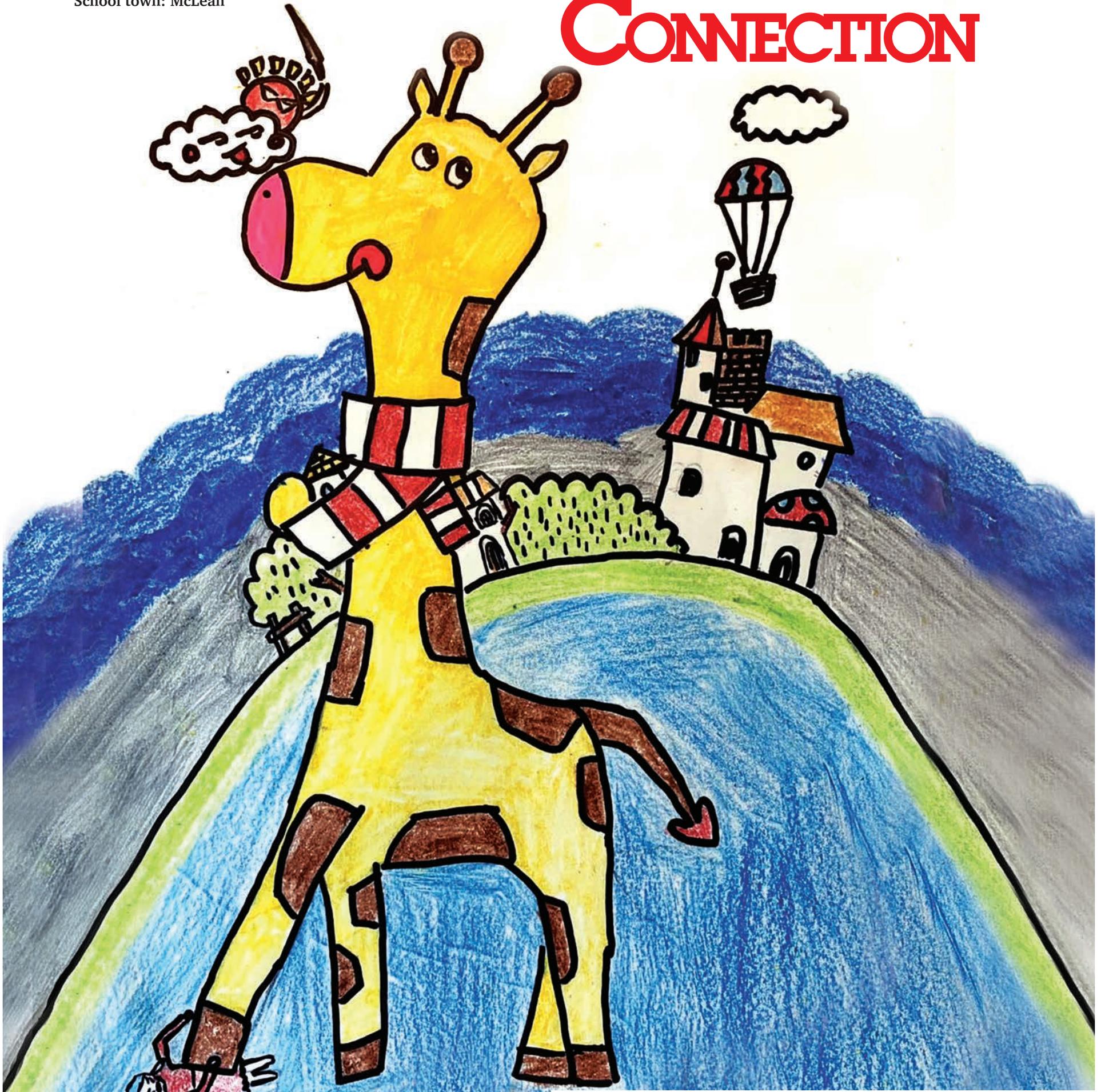


Student name: Bradley Hanning Wang  
Age: 10  
Grade: 5  
School: Spring Hill elementary school  
School town: McLean

# Great Falls CONNECTION



**Children's & Teens'  
Connection 2021**

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<b>SERVICES INCLUDED</b>	<b>SERVICES INCLUDED</b>	<b>SERVICES INCLUDED</b>	<b>SERVICES INCLUDED</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 2 professional cleanings</li> <li>• 2 regular exams</li> <li>• 2 fluoride treatments</li> <li>• 1 bitewing x-rays</li> <li>• 1 emergency exam</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 2 professional cleanings</li> <li>• 2 regular exams &amp; screenings</li> <li>• 2 fluoride treatments</li> <li>• 1 bitewing x-rays</li> <li>• 1 emergency exam</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 3 perio maintenance</li> <li>• 2 regular exams &amp; screenings</li> <li>• 2 fluoride treatments</li> <li>• 1 bitewing x-rays</li> <li>• 1 emergency exam</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 2 professional cleanings</li> <li>• 2 regular exams &amp; screenings</li> <li>• 2 fluoride treatments</li> <li>• 1 bitewing x-rays</li> <li>• 2 emergency exams</li> </ul>

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# 2021 CHILDREN'S AND TEENS' CONNECTION



Niall Coleman, 6, Great Falls, 1st Grade, Colvin Run Elementary, Vienna.  
Teacher: Lauren Grimm



Andres Maza Rion, 11, Great Falls, 6th Grade, Colvin Run Elementary, Vienna.  
Teacher: Lauren Grimm

Welcome to our 2021 Children's Connection sections. While submissions were still short of the pre-pandemic avalanche of children's and teens' art and writing, in 2021 students have delivered a delightful, sometimes unusual, panoply of expression. I've enjoyed the art and writing as we've downloaded it over many many hours in the last two weeks. And I hope you will also.

You can find digital copies of the papers, including the Children's and Teens' Connection at <http://www.connectionnewspapers.com/PDFs/>. The papers should be posted by Thursday, Dec. 16. We deliver tens of thousands of papers to homes, businesses, public libraries and community centers, plus thousands more in email and digital. We will print extra copies, and restock at libraries and community centers. But also feel free to print out pages from the PDFs or

take a digital copy to a photo center to print out larger, high resolution copies of your child's art if you desire many copies.

It feels like a small, or not so small, miracle to have made it to the end of 2021 and be looking forward into the New Year. The pandemic has been a bear, financially and otherwise. Revenue plummeted at the beginning in 2020. More recently we have seen the return of advertising for events and Grand Openings. Some beloved advertisers have stayed the course supporting us throughout, and many more have done what they can. Revenue is still short of our greatly curtailed costs.

At the end of 2020, we didn't have any idea how we would keep going. But our readers responded overwhelmingly to our Go Fund Me, bringing us within reach of our goal of \$50,000. PPP funding, "forgivable loans," made our survival possible. Now we are still hoping for a grant from

Rebuild Virginia to help get us into 2022. We applied almost a year ago, but it seems possible that our application might be reviewed while there is still money in the fund.

I think we can be characterized as pathological optimists. While there are forces out there that could make it impossible for us to keep going, we continue to push forward. While I have said this a few times without yet making it happen, keep your eyes open for our membership drive, which would hope for readers, sources and community members who would be interested in supporting us on a monthly basis.

One of the magical elements that helped us get this far was the presence on our staff of an international journalism legend, Kemal Kurspahic, who served as managing editor and guiding light for decades. Kemal

died tragically and unexpectedly this fall, having a stroke after minor surgery. We miss him daily. Keeping everything going has been harder since. You can read Kemal's obituary here: <http://www.connection-newspapers.com/news/2021/sep/22/courage-journalism/>

We haven't done everything we aspire to do, we always aspire to greater community service. But we do know that the community is better off for Local Media Connection continuing to publish.

Now that we've told you how we're doing (ha!), let us know how you are doing, what you think about the state of our communities.

Thank you.

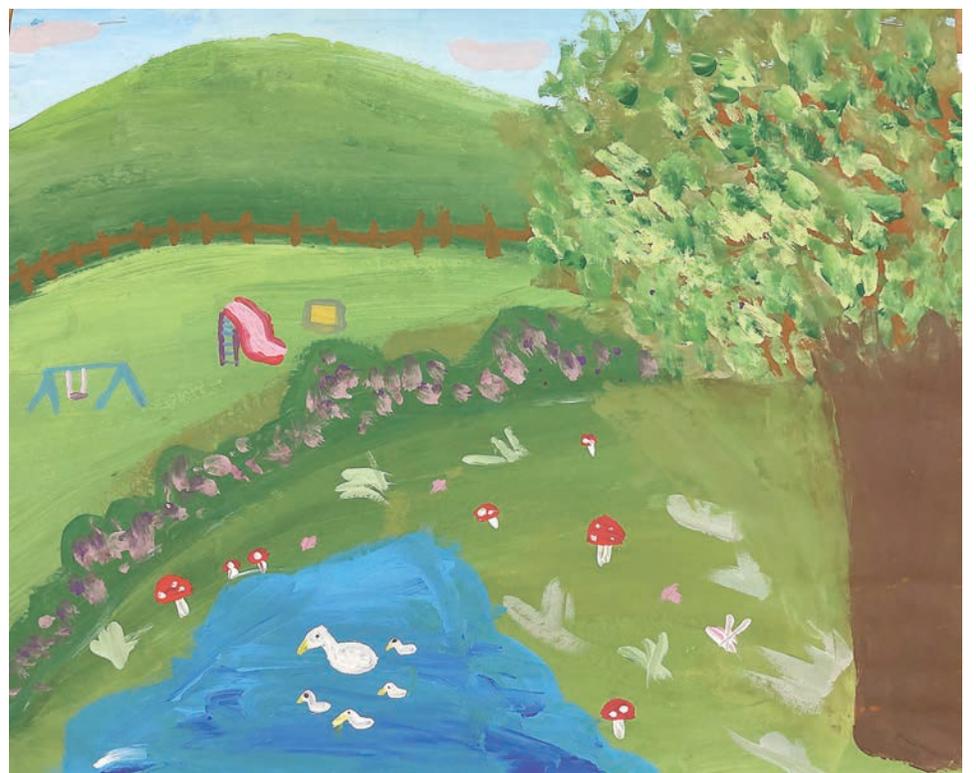
— MARY KIMM,  
KIMM.MARY@GMAIL.COM



Kaitlin Nguyen, 11, Great Falls, 6th Grade, Colvin Run Elementary, Vienna.  
Teacher: Lauren Grimm



Eric Schellhaas, 10, Vienna, 5th Grade, Colvin Run Elementary, Vienna. Teacher: Lauren Grimm



Evelyn Song, 9, Great Falls, 3rd Grade, Colvin Run Elementary, Vienna.  
Teacher: Lauren Grimm

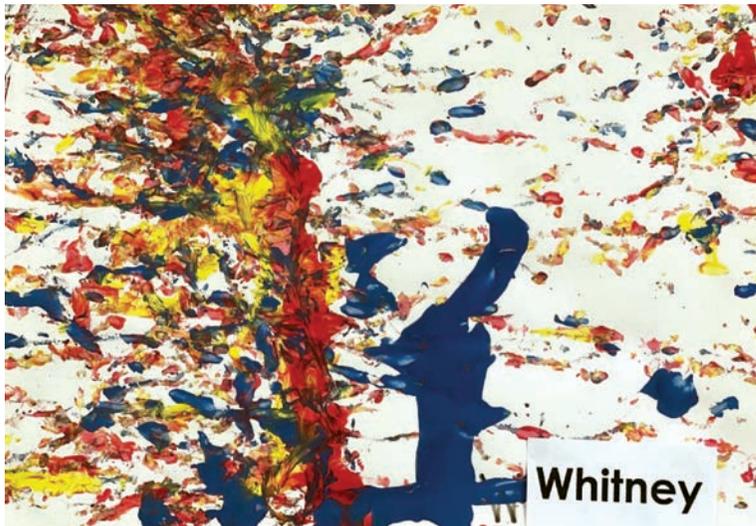
# GREAT FALLS UNITED METHODIST PRESCHOOL (GFUMP)



Name of Work: Mountain Sunset  
 Name: Mary Whitson  
 Age: 4  
 Teacher: Kirsten McCrann and Barbara Redmond



Our little preschool, Great Falls United Methodist Preschool (GFUMP) took a “walking field trip” over to the Great Falls Fire Station to spread holiday cheer to the hardworking fire fighters through group caroling. Each child also spread love to a child in need by bringing over a toy for the Toys for Tots collection. It was adorable.



Name of Work: Painting with Acorns  
 Name: Whitney Brogden  
 Age: 2  
 Teacher: Heidi Dulany and Cheryl West



Name of Work: Leaf Prints  
 Name: Chadwick Calderwood  
 Age: 2  
 Teacher: Heidi Dulany and Cheryl West



Name of Work: Self Portrait  
 Name: Chloe Perez  
 Age: 4  
 Teacher: Paula van Gorder, Rene Ladd and Alison Lopez



Name of Work: A Flower in the Sun  
 Name: Blair Barlow  
 Age: 3  
 Teacher: Paula van Gorder, Rene Ladd and Alison Lopez



Name of Work: “M is for Mitten”  
 Name: Dagan Cohen  
 Age: 4  
 Teacher: Kirsten McCrann and Barbara Redmond



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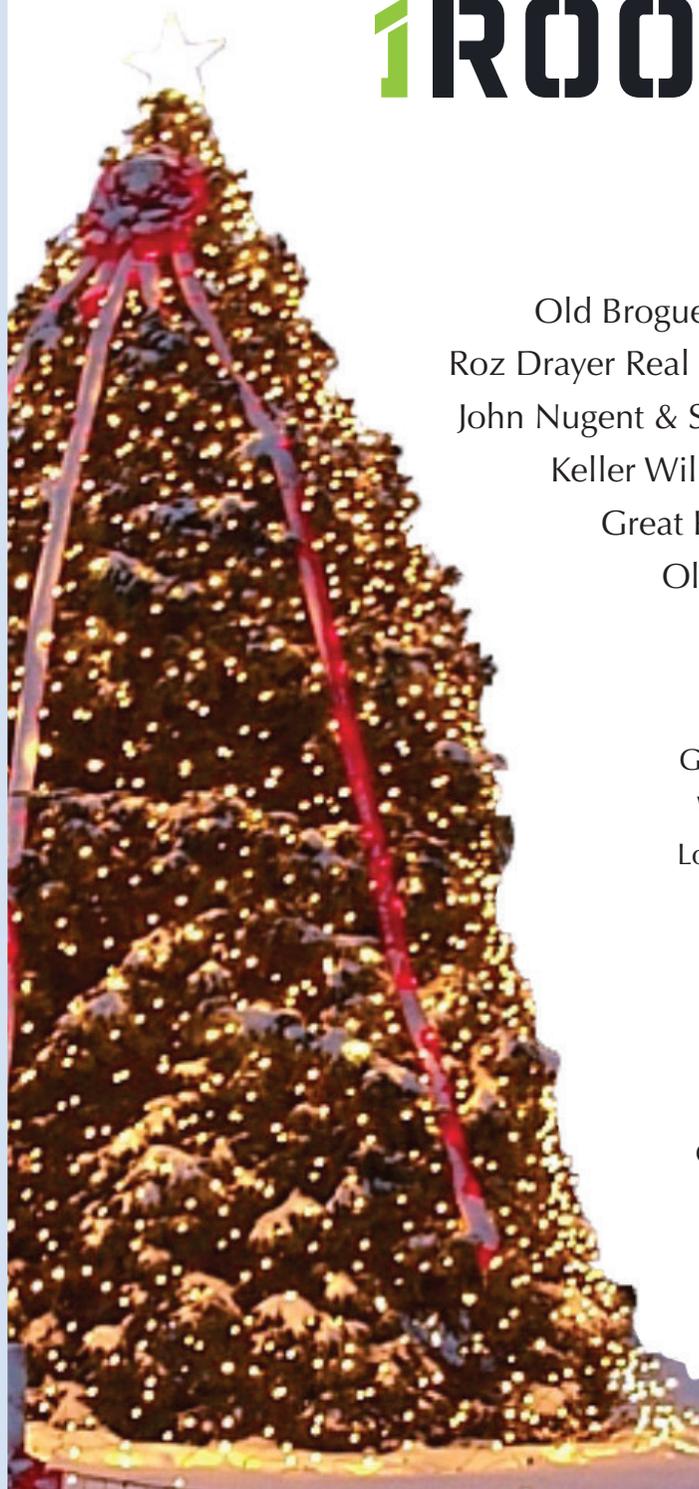
The Celebrate Great Falls Foundation is incredibly appreciative and thankful for our Sponsors, our Volunteers, our Staff Members and our Board.

We are so fortunate to be a part of this special community and could not have gotten through 2020 and 2021 without your support.



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# Langley Choral Department Celebrates Return of Renaissance Feaste

**T**he Langley High School Choral Department celebrated the return of the hopefully-back-to-annual Renaissance Feaste last Friday and Saturday, Dec. 3 and 4 to a sold-out crowd. This Langley tradition is a highlight of the performance calendar, so bringing it back (with some Covid adjustments) has brought joy to many, perhaps the performers most of all, whose enthusiasm showed in every word and note.

Tickets were limited to 124 fortunate guests per night, masked when not eating, and the event sold out quickly. The performance was lauded by one attendee, a former professional musician, as “professional quality with the enthusiasm that only teens could provide.” Several of the solo turns were so beautiful that they brought tears to eyes – and not just those of the singer’s parents.

The journey back to Merrie Olde England featured the 18-member Langley Madrigals Choir, singing over 25 festive, seasonal songs in a variety of languages in addition to several traditional Madrigals

songs, all of which involve intricate inter-linked parts, sung without accompaniment. It also included performers from other choirs, including over 30 students in Treble, Select Treble, Concert Choir, and the Cooper Middle School Choir, serenading the audience with their beautiful renditions of a range of carols.

In addition, 8 Minstrels from other choirs, 6 talented Pages, and 2 jesters entertained the crowd. Songs performed ranged from popular holiday carols like “Deck the Halls,” “Good King Wenceslas” and “We Wish You a Merry Christmas,” to the festive “Masters in This Hall.”

All of the performers were dressed in bright and beautiful traditional Renaissance costumes, with the very 2021 addition of masks when not on stage. “Langley Halle” was decorated as a Medieval Castle for the holiday season, and the whole event was designed to be period-appropriate, from the jesters to the joking performers, dialogue both suggesting and explaining songs, and plenty of food. The “Book on Curtasye” was read via scroll, admonishing guests not to “wype their greazy fingers on theyre beardes” or to otherwise “disgust theyre table companions.” After the “traditional” parade of the Wassail bowl, the Boar’s Head (luckily not a real boar’s head), and then the



Shouts of “Wassail” were heard throughout the Halle as the Madrigals toasted to all and sundry.



PHOTOS BY BLAKE TIPPENS PHOTOGRAPHY OF GREAT FALLS



Dr. Lambert with the graduating seniors of the Madrigals.



The Minstrels provided beautiful carols as the audience entered the Halle as well as between courses.



The Pages kept the event moving with their smiles and antics.

Flaming Figgie Pudding (luckily not actually flaming), the feast was served. Guests enjoyed individually covered plates of Boston Market sliced turkey, mashed potatoes, broccoli, and apple pie (affectionately referred to by the performers as “Figgie Pudding.”)

This was a particularly special time to bring back The Feaste, as it is the 20th year that the Langley Choirs have been led by Dr. Mac L. Lambert, Jr. Dr. Lambert commented, “When I think about this year’s Renaissance Feaste, I am overwhelmed at the leadership skills and dedication shown by all the students in the choir department, as well as the support shown by the parents to put on such a huge event. After a year with no live performances, I was very worried that it might

not happen, but everyone pulled together and worked really hard to make it a highlight of the school year!”

Langley Choral Guild President Kim Buckingham, in her eighth consecutive year as a choir parent, has this to say about “Doc” Lambert. “I have seen Doc’s dedication to the kids and the program first hand over the years. My twin girls, Sarah and Emily, who graduated in 2018, and my son Mike who will graduate in the spring took choir with Doc all through high school. Between them all, they have experienced and enjoyed all six choirs offered at Langley. His choirs consistently receive superior ratings in competitions and continue to wow at performances. On the Spring trip to France in 2016, the mayor of a small town (Honfleur) that host-

ed a performance even gave him a key to the town. The Renaissance Feaste that Doc brought to Langley is evidence of his commitment and hard work and how he inspires his students to do the same. As a parent of a senior, it was wonderful to bring back Feaste, and it was extra special that it was Doc’s 20th.”

Langley Senior Alexander Rubin sings Dr. Lambert’s praises (pun intended.) “During virtual school, Doc took time out of class to individually ask each of us how we were doing and try to help everyone have as little stress as possible. He cares about every member, which is part of why Doc somehow produces a product that is far greater than the sum of its parts. While there is certainly no lack of talent in Langley Choir, a choir cannot be great without every member. Doc creates such a feeling of camaraderie and unity among the choirs, and it brings everyone closer together both inside and outside of class. There is a reason the Langley Choir trophy case is running out of room, and that reason is Doc Lambert. He has kept the program alive, welcoming, rewarding, exciting, and unbelievably successful for 20 years.”

The excellent teaching, talent and camaraderie showed during the Renaissance Feaste. What a wonderful event.

CALENDAR

**NOW THRU DEC. 19.**

**Holiday Lights on the Farm.** Fridays thru Sundays 5:30 to 8 p.m. At Frying Pan Farm Park, 2739 West Ox Road, Herndon. What is "Holiday Lights on the Farm"? It's where you tour Frying Pan Farm Park in the safety and warmth of your car and see an amazing display of holiday decorations lighting up the 135-acre park. The cost is \$20 per private vehicle. Or you can take the tour on a tractor-drawn wagon ride with up to 20 of your family or friends for \$150 per group. Last year this event sold out, so get your tickets early at <https://bit.ly/FPLights>.

**NOW THRU FEB. 19**

**New Art Exhibits.** At McLean Project for the Arts, 1234 Ingleside Ave., McLean. MPA will open its two newest exhibitions on Dec. 2, 2021. Give and Take: Building Form (Emerson Gallery) will feature abstract wood sculpture by Emilie Benes Brzezinski, Rachel Rotenberg, Foon Sham, and Norma Schwartz, while the Atrium Gallery will feature Intersectional Painting: Works by Sheila Crider. Both exhibitions run through Feb. 19, 2022. Visit [www.mpaart.org/](http://www.mpaart.org/) or call 703-790-1953 for gallery hours.

**NOW THRU DEC. 18**

**"A Child's Christmas in Wales."** Presented by Vienna Theater Company, Vienna. This holiday season, experience a musical celebration of Welsh poet Dylan Thomas' iconic story, A Child's Christmas in Wales, the "never to be forgotten day at the end of the unremembered year," when songs are sung, cakes and sweets are abundant, and the

frozen city parks are laden with mysteries and adventures for wild boys and girls to explore. Performance Dates and Times: 7 p.m.: Fridays and Saturdays: Dec 17, 18; 2 p.m. matinees: Sunday Dec 5, 19; and 10 a.m. matinee: Saturday, Dec 18. Tickets: \$15/\$10. Visit <http://www.viennatheatrecompany.org>.

**NOW THRU DEC. 19**

**"Every Christmas Story Ever Told (And Then Some)."** At NextStop Theatre, 269 Sunset Park Drive, Herndon. Santa Claus, Rudolph, the Grinch, and just about every other seasonal character you can think of make an appearance in this racy comedy that will have you laughing all the way to the New Year. <https://www.nextstoptheatre.org/>

**NOW THRU JAN. 2, 2022**

**LuminoCity Festival.** 6-9 p.m. At Roer's Zoofari, 1228 Hunter Mill Road, Vienna. The LuminoCity Festival, immersive light display experience, unforgettably spectacular night of lights. The festival includes African, Asian, Arid, and Ancient-themed exhibits of spectacularly lit art displays set up in the zoo's walk-through area. [www.roerszoofari.com](http://www.roerszoofari.com).

**NOW THRU DEC. 31**

**Holiday Sparkle.** 12-5 p.m. At Reston Art Gallery and Studios, 11400 Washington Plaza W at Lake Anne, Reston. Enjoy the gallery experience at a show of giftable art – authentic, local works of paintings, mixed media, jewelry, mobiles, fine craft

SEE CALENDAR, PAGE 14

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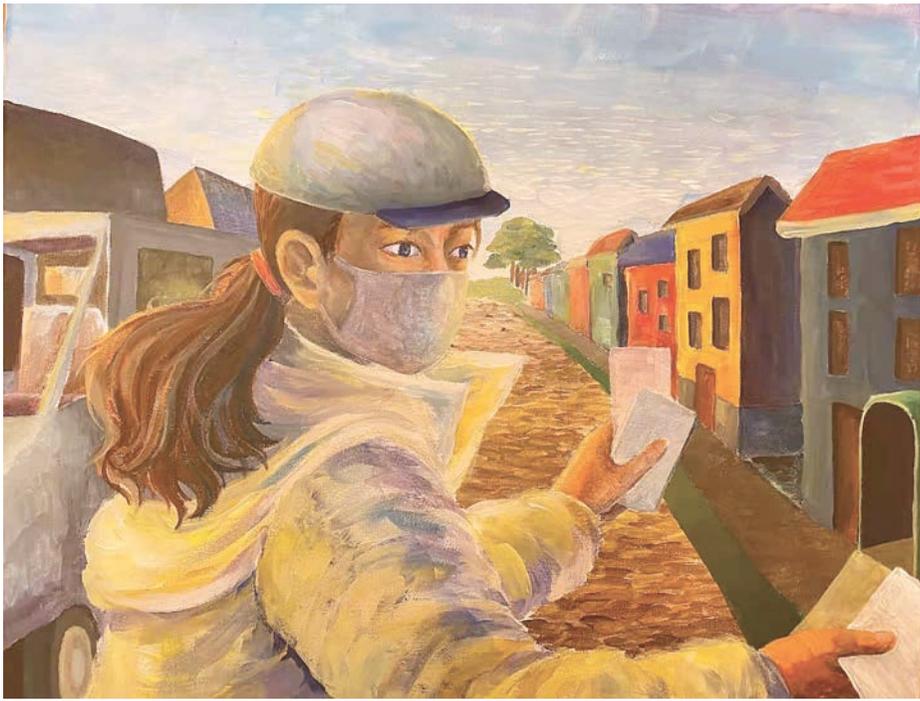
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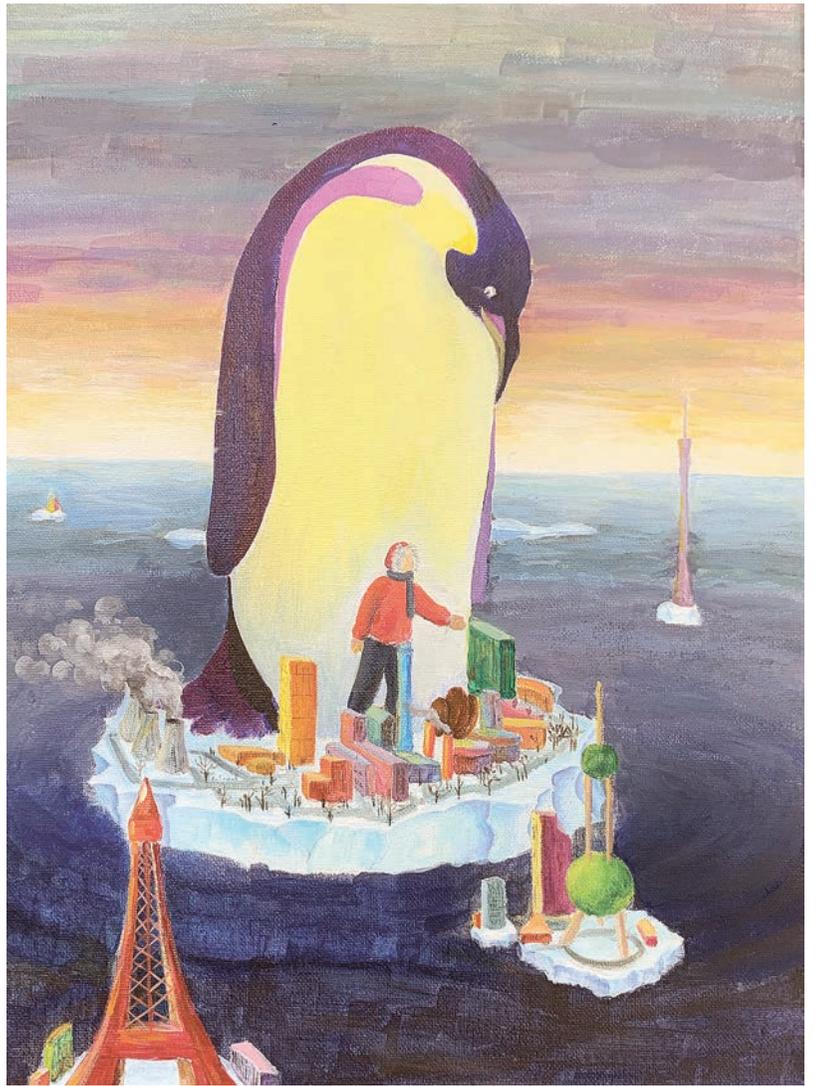
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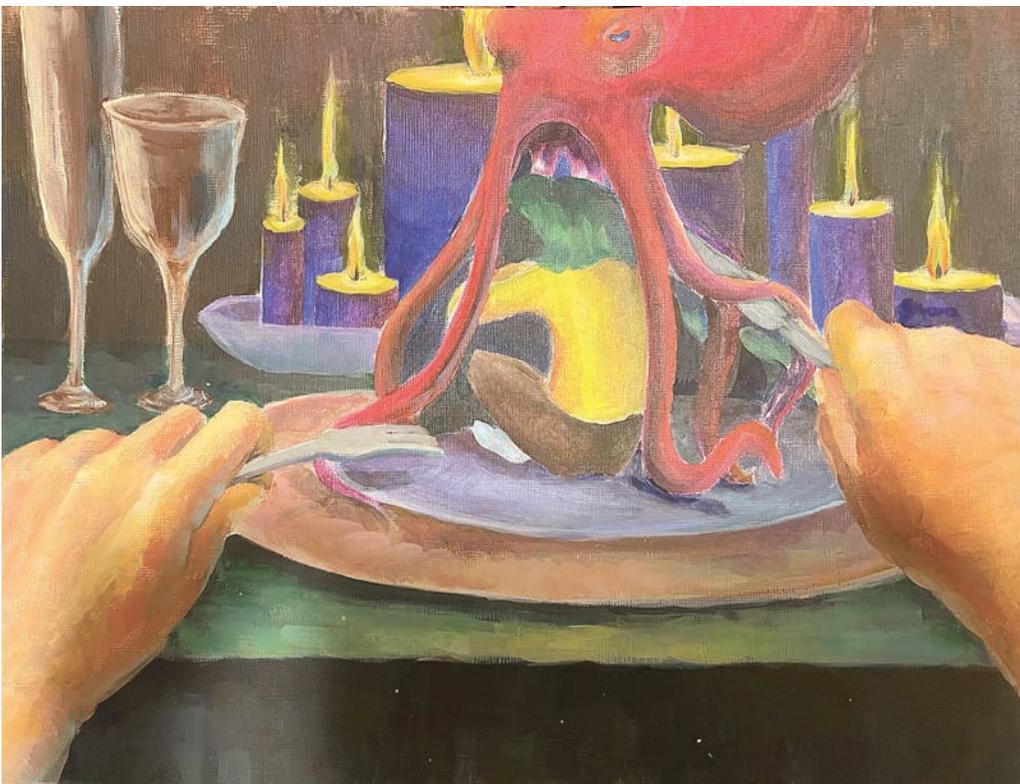


The Postman

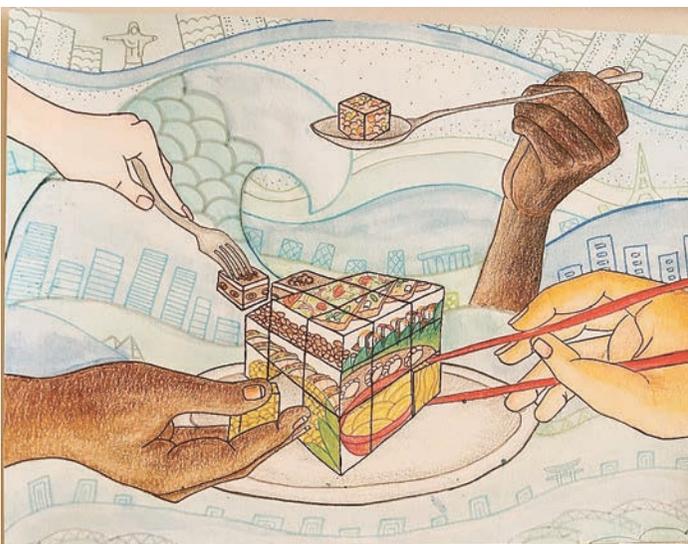


Polluted Age

Name: Anxin Ye  
 Age: 17  
 Grade: 12  
 Town of Residence: Vienna  
 Name of the School: James Madison High School  
 Name of Teacher: Brandy Carter  
 Town of School Location: Vienna



Mind Anatomy



"A Shared Meal with Friends" - By Cathy Huang of Langley High School

Grade 9

Name: Cathy Huang  
 Age: 15  
 Grade: 9  
 Town of residence: McLean  
 School: Langley High School  
 Art teacher: Yanshun Sui  
 Town of school: McLean

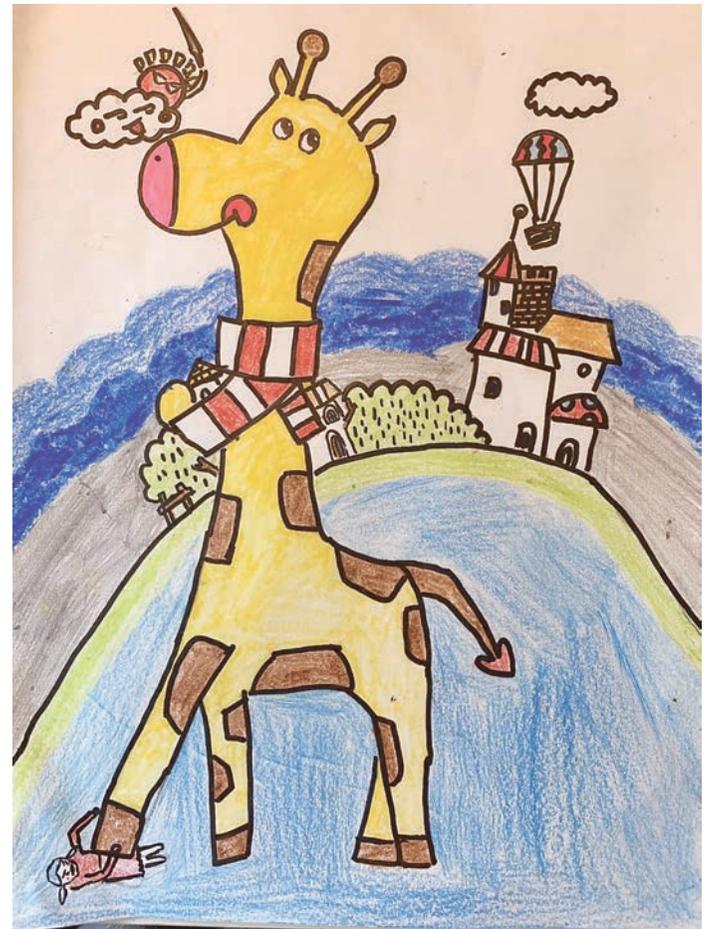


Artwork caption:  
 Wonderful Seasons!  
 Student's name:  
 Samhita Athreya  
 Age: 8 yrs  
 Grade: 3rd  
 Name of School:  
 Colvin Run Elementary School  
 Town of residence:  
 Vienna, VA  
 Art Teacher: Yanshun Sui

# CHILDREN'S AND TEENS' CONNECTION



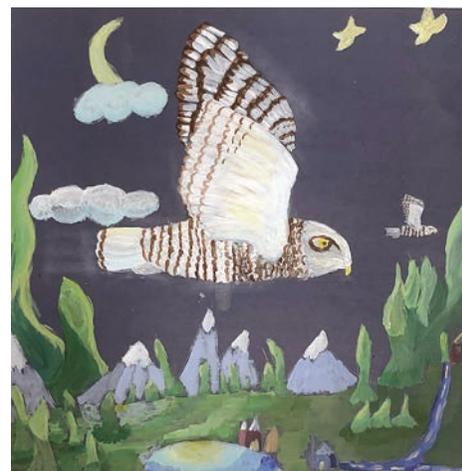
Rylee Liang, 8, Mclean, 3rd Grade, Kent Gardens Elementary School  
Name of Teacher: Ms.Sui  
Artwork Title: Magical Carousel



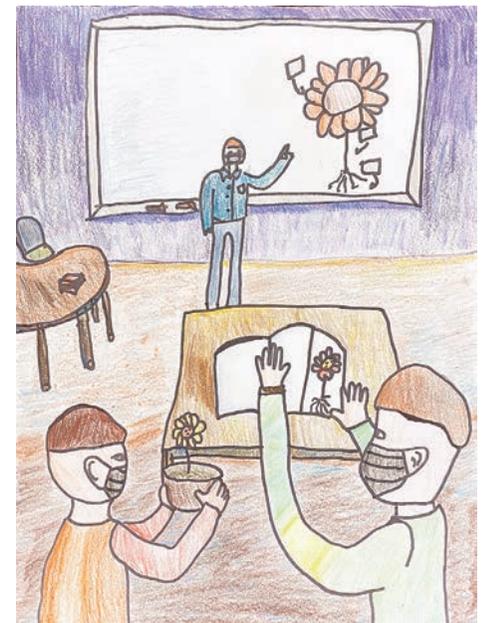
Bradley Hanning Wang, 10, Vienna, Grade 5,  
Spring Hill elementary school, McLean



Ocean Awareness, Marissa Lin, 11, Vienna Grade 6, Vienna



Owls at Night, Marissa Lin, 11, Vienna  
Grade 6, Vienna



The Biology Lesson, Yuenshing Ye,  
Vienna, 12, Grade 6, Flint Hill  
Elementary School, Vienna  
Name of Teacher: Sarah McAlister

"I got an idea of my poem from the quote 'Be the rainbow in someone else's cloud' -  
Maya Angelou"

POEM BY IAN KIM

## Rainbow in a cloud

Be the light to the very dark  
Be the hope to the hopeless  
Be the shelter to the weary  
Be the color to the blind  
Be the love to the scorned  
Be the courage to the fearful  
Be the voice that speaks out to the world  
Be the reason why someone is living today  
Be the rainbow in everyone's cloud

# COOPER MIDDLE SCHOOL

## The Recent Years

SHAE TU

13 YEARS OLD, 8TH GRADE

GREAT FALLS

MRS. BOVENZI, COOPER MIDDLE SCHOOL

It's been almost two years since the first Covid-19 case landed in America. Along with that, some other things appeared too. Social distancing? Get used to it. Wearing masks? Deal with it. Online learning? You'll survive. Slowly but surely, people have gotten used to it. Covid-19 has and will continue to indefinitely impact people around the world.

Children in the future will look back to these years and think it's history. They might complain about wearing masks, but here's what I would tell them, "It's just a mask. When I was your age, I had to wear a mask every day just so I wouldn't die." If they asked me what my life was like, I would tell them about how scary seeing new cases pop up online was like.

Of course, each cloud has a silver lining. Covid is no different. Many people have taken the extra time to learn a new hobby. Personally, I've had time to build some jigsaw puzzles at home. Maybe you've experimented with weird and wondrous flavors while cooking, or dove into that book that has been sitting on your shelf for the past 5 years. The pandemic has given me time to take a break and given me the opportunity to do the things I enjoy.

Hopefully, the pandemic ends soon, wrapping up that chapter in our lives. We could go back to what we were doing 2 years ago, before this nightmare started. Even though Coronavirus will never leave us completely, I look forward to when it's over. When we'll finally be free.

## What Are You?

SHANTI VARADARAJAN

12 YEARS OLD, 7TH GRADE

GREAT FALLS

MRS. BOVENZI, COOPER MIDDLE SCHOOL

What are you? Three simple words forming a simple question, one to which I can't seem to find an answer for. I was born and raised here in the United States, but I know that's not what they're after. What they truly mean is, why does my skin look like that?

I'm neither Indian nor American, I'm neither dark nor light. I'm neither one nor the other; I'm both and I'm proud of it, because my ethnicity has no bearing on my identity. If you just got to know me instead of asking that one simple question, you'd find that there's a lot more to me than what the question implies.

That question, although it may seem innocent, implies that there's something wrong or out of the norm about the subject of the matter. When the reality is that the subject is human just like the rest of us so please if there is any human decency left in this world, just stop.

## Pandemic Problems

JASON WU

7TH GRADE, AGE 12

GREAT FALLS, VA

MRS. BOVENZI, COOPER MIDDLE SCHOOL

During the first month of the pandemic, life was great; no school, video games, so much free time. Everything you could ever ask for. Right? Well, not exactly. Soon things became boring, a life devoid of social and human interaction.

Pre-pandemic, I had never really thought of how much friendship meant to me, but lockdown finally gave me a time to reflect and think. It gave me many new opportunities to discover and get into different, unique hobbies, but most importantly, it provided me with more family time. While the pandemic was a horrible thing, it gave many of us more time outside enjoying the weather and more time with our closest loved ones.

When I finally came back to school after 2 years, I was overjoyed to finally see my friends and classmates again. I hadn't realized how much I had missed them, and everything else in my old routine, and that is something I would never take for granted again.

Overall, if I could give one piece of advice to anyone, it would be to value and cherish everything you have. For during the pandemic, I learned just how much I valued the small things. From the short walk to the bus stop to the exciting ring of the dismissal bell, I missed them all.

## The Last Time

EMMA AMOS

12, 7TH GRADE

MCLEAN

MRS. BOVENZI, COOPER MIDDLE SCHOOL

It was March 12, 2020. At the time I was oblivious to what was going to happen to my 5th grade class and the world. As I started to walk to school, on what I thought was a normal day, I kicked a single rock the whole way while singing a tune I heard on the radio. When I reach my fifth grade homeroom class I walk in as my friends greet me with a smile. As I sit in my seat I see the teachers nervously talking. I couldn't hear the chatter but I knew something was up. As I walk over to my teacher after almost tripping over a computer cord I ask "Is everything okay?"

"Oh, everything is alright," she tells me. I accept the answer and become less concerned as I open my computer to start on my morning work. An article is recommended to read. "Covid is rapidly spreading in Schools in Virginia" as I start to read my brain starts hurting. "Sickness" "Quarantining" "Pandemic" it all started sounding like the Spanish flu. Before I could show my friend it was time to switch classes.

I walked into the dimly lit science classroom, taught by Ms. Smith. As I sit down in my wobbly chair I start on my workbooks, but even before I flip the page, the teacher sighs and says with a worrisome voice, "Look, if we have to go home for a while, don't worry about your workbook or any work." As I look around the room I see my confused peers. We have never seen our teacher scared and unsure as now. Then I see my teacher turn her head towards the board

so as not to show her students her pain, I realize that things are really not good.

At lunch I talk to my friend, at the time I didn't know that would be the last time I would talk to them. During music we could see the teacher's face so we could understand how to sing, I didn't know that was the last time I would see someone's face. At the end of the day I gave my friend a hug, I would have never guessed that I would never hug a friend again. I never knew it was the last time. March 12, 2020 was the last time my life was normal.

## Small Act of Kindness

WINNIE EMERICK

(12) 7TH GRADE

VIENNA

MRS. BOVENZI, COOPER MIDDLE SCHOOL

Until the first day of 7th grade I had never said the pledge of allegiance. I had no reason to, seeing as I have lived abroad since I was 2 years old. When the loud speaker said "Please stand for the Pledge of Allegiance" I froze, then followed everyone by standing up. My face was probably red because while everyone else recited a pledge they had known for years, I stood awkwardly with my hand over my heart.

Later in the same class every student filled out a form about themselves. In a section labeled "Is there anything else I should know about you?" I added that I didn't know the Pledge of Allegiance. I expected that our history teacher wouldn't read that until much later and even then wouldn't do anything about it.

I was wrong, and shocked when, twenty minutes later, he stood up and inconspicuously slipped me a note while shuffling past my desk. I unfolded it to find the pledge of allegiance written out with a nice note on the bottom.

I went home that night and read it over and over again. By the next morning I stood up with everyone else and said the pledge of allegiance quietly but clearly with my hand over my heart.

This act of kindness warmed my heart in a way I will never forget. The fact that he spent a little extra time and effort to help me changed my day and gave me a sense that people cared. Remember all it takes is one act of kindness to change the world.

## Eight Years

CLARE RASO

12 YEARS OLD, 7TH GRADE

MCLEAN

MRS. BOVENZI, COOPER MIDDLE SCHOOL

8 years ago....

I was backstage, behind the curtains, listening to Christmas music. Loud jumps shake the stage, and the chatter of the audience sets a joyful and exciting mood for my dance friends and me. I watched the older dancers move across the stage gracefully and in a smooth manner. The older dancers portrayed different dolls of all diverse countries and morals. They danced in an addicting way to upbeat and cheerful music. "I want to be the Chinese doll one day," I

thought to myself.

"Come on girls, get ready to go on stage!"

I packed up my lunch and fixed my make-up. I was nervous and antsy as I got ready to go on the stage for the first time in my life. Cramped, I saved myself a spot in line. All of my friends and I lined up to get ready to dance. Suddenly, our music started playing. As I walked under the bright lights that shone onto my face, I struggled to look upon the audience to find my family. Confused and scared, I danced in a dainty and fluid way. I danced as if it would be the last time I ever experienced something like this. Little did I know, I would experience situations like these for the next several years.

Throughout the next eight years, I trained as hard as I could, so I could eventually be as powerful and skilled as kids who were older than me. I looked up to the older students when I danced at the same show every year. Always wanting to become a doll in the annual Christmas show my teacher put on, I practiced over 400 weeks perfecting my ballet, tap, and jazz skills.

During the COVID-19 pandemic this year, I finally got my chance to become the Chinese doll. I finally got a solo, just like I had dreamt of eight years ago. I always had little faith in myself that I would be able to dance as the doll I dreamed of becoming. Constant rehearsals have led me to one distinct conclusion. As long as I try and put my best foot forward, I can do anything I put my mind to.

## My Family's Tradition

KRISTEN HAN

13 - GRADE 7

MCLEAN, VA

MRS. BOVENZI, COOPER MIDDLE SCHOOL

The warm, savory scent of homemade dumplings fills the air on the day before a new year. My family and I wrap each dumpling with delicacy and control, carefully packing them with pork filling. After wrapping each dumpling we set them aside on a metal tray, and get started wrapping the next. The dumplings are identical in size, shape, and color. They sit in three, straight rows, as if they were little soldiers standing in formation. One-by-one, they enter bubbling hot water, soon to become a delicious meal and a symbol of reunion for me and my family.

Every year, my family and I celebrate a holiday on the first day of the lunar calendar, which is called Chinese New Year. This holiday celebrates the beginning of the new year and the start of spring. On Chinese New Year's Eve, it's traditional for us to make and eat dumplings together before midnight. We also eat other common Chinese foods including fish and spring rolls.

My mom and dad brought Chinese New Year from their family cultures in China to America. Since we can't see our relatives that live in China, we chat with them on the phone, wishing them a great holiday and a fabulous year. Chinese New Year is important to me because it is a time for my family to reunite, connect, reflect on the past year, and think about what we can work on for the upcoming year. I'm always looking forward to this traditional celebration.



Jack Kelly, 17, Great Falls, Langley High School senior.

NEWS

# Improvements Coming to Northern Section of GW Parkway

## Contract awarded through the Great American Outdoors Act.

BY MIKE SALMON  
THE CONNECTION

Improvements are in store for the northern portion of the George Washington Memorial Parkway now that the National Park Service and the Federal Highway Administration announced a \$161 million contract under the Great American Outdoors Act.

This announcement comes on the heels of the passage of the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, a historic investment in the nation's infrastructure that will help rebuild roads and bridges, tackle the climate crisis, and create good-paying jobs, the NPS said.

The Parkway is more than just a road used by roughly 70,000 vehicles per day, but users will see little impact for the first year of this design-build contract because it's initially in the planning phase, said Aaron LaRocca, a spokesperson at the National Park Service. The work is scheduled to begin in 2023 and be completed in 2025.

"This project will improve the driving experience, safety, and water drainage while retaining and reviving the historic beauty and significance of the parkway – including opening scenic views to Washington, D.C.," said Charles Cuvelier, George Washington Memorial Parkway superintendent.

The rehabilitation project is in the section from Spout Run to I-495. It includes replacing the as-

The northern section starts at Spout Run and goes to the beltway.

phalt pavement, redesigning of the Route 123 interchange, repairing stormwater management systems, reconstructing stone walls and roadside barriers, rehabilitating the historic overlooks and lengthening entrance and exit lanes at some interchanges.

The northern section of the parkway is the busiest section of parkway and serves about 26 million drivers annually. This section, which opened in 1962, has never undergone a major rehabilitation. The first phase of the project will be project design, and park visitors and drivers will experience little or no change to their routines for at least a year.

The Bipartisan Infrastructure Law contains over \$30 billion in investments that fund Interior Department initiatives and benefit the communities it directly serves. In addition to historic funding for climate resiliency initiatives and legacy pollution clean-up, the law provides for a five-year reauthorization of the Federal Lands Transportation Program, which will help invest in repairing and upgrading National Park Service roads, bridges, trails and transit systems. The law also invests in projects that will help fund bridge replacements and resiliency, repair ferry boats and terminal facilities, and maintain wildlife crossings that keep people and surrounding wildlife safe, the NPS said.



## Public Notice

### Updated weight limits on Virginia bridges and culverts

In accord with state and federal law, the Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) has imposed new or changed existing weight restrictions and installed new signage indicating the updated weight restrictions on the following bridges and culverts (structures) in Virginia within the last 30 days.

Jurisdiction	Fed Struc Id	Route #	Route Name	Crossing	Posted Date
MONTGOMERY	12355	787	DRY VALLEY RD./ROUTE 787	MEADOW CREEK	10/28/2021
DINWIDDIE	6063	631	CLAIRBORNE RD.	HATCHER RUN	10/23/2021
CARROLL	4640	620	FOREST OAK RD./ROUTE 620	CROOKED CREEK	10/22/2021
SCOTT	16924	796	GILLENWATER LOOP	BIG MOCCASIN CREEK	10/20/2021
LUNENBURG	11609	626	DOUBLE BRIDGES RD.	LEDBETTER CREEK	10/12/2021

The list above is not a comprehensive list of all structures with weight restrictions in the Commonwealth, but shows only structures that have new or changed weight restrictions within the last 30 days. The list contains only basic structure identification and location information and the date the new or changed weight restriction and signage became effective.

For a full listing of all bridge and culvert weight restrictions with detailed information about specific structures, including location data and actual weight limits, visit <https://www.virginiadot.org> and navigate to Info Center/Trucking Resources. This page references a posted structures report and a GIS map tool that contain detailed information about restricted structures in Virginia. To receive email notifications regarding new or updated weight restrictions for structures statewide, complete the sign-up form on the web page.

Notices regarding bridges and culverts with new or updated weight restrictions are published monthly by VDOT. For additional information or questions, please contact, [haulingpermits@vdot.virginia.gov](mailto:haulingpermits@vdot.virginia.gov).

*The Virginia Department of Transportation is committed to ensuring that no person is excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any of its programs or activities on the basis of race, color, or national origin, as protected by Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. If you need further information on VDOT's Title VI Program or special assistance for persons with disabilities or limited English proficiency, please contact the Virginia Department of Transportation's Title VI Program Specialist at 804-786-2730.*

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Cellists Amiliya Smith, Michael Dzwonczyk, and Nicolas Kristensen of the Langley Philharmonic Orchestra perform Tchaikovsky's Serenade for Strings.



The Langley Concert Orchestra performs *Once Upon a December*, from *Anastasia*, with clips of the animated film projected in the background.

# An Evening in Moscow

Langley High School Orchestra presents *Russian Winter Dreams*

By ERIKA LI  
SENIOR, LANGLEY HS

On Tuesday, Dec. 7, the Langley High School Orchestra took the stage for an evening of Russian Winter Dreams, showcasing the vibrant music of Russia. Audience members were transported to places in Russia far and wide, from the idyllic countryside to the ballrooms of the historic Winter Palace. The Symphonic Orchestra, comprised of junior and senior musicians, opened the night with *March Slav* by Peter Ilyich Tchaikovsky, a nationalistic and poetic piece written about the Serbian-Ottoman War. Next came *Waltz No. 2*, written by Dmitri Shostakovich, a Soviet-era piece with a haunting main melody, and the *Dance of the Tumblers*, an excerpt from Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov's opera, *The Snow Maiden*.

The freshman and sophomore players of the Concert Orchestra continued the lively tunes with *Postcards from Russia*, a compilation of Russian folk songs, arranged by Carrie Lane Gruselle. The next piece was Tchaikovsky's *Romeo and Juliet*, an overture based on Shakespeare's iconic play, rich in storytelling and imagery.

A standout from the night was the rendition of *Once Upon a December*, arranged by Bob Cerulli, the well-loved main theme of the Disney film *Anastasia*. During the piece, clips of the animation were projected on the stage, creating an immersive experience for audience members. Michael Dzwonczyk, a junior cellist in the Philharmonic Orchestra commented, "It was interesting to see the



The Langley Philharmonic Orchestra plays *A Mad Russian Christmas*, in a festive and energetic end to the concert.

wide variety of Russian music played by the different groups."

Finally, the Philharmonic Orchestra began their performance, starting with the *Waltz and Tema Russo* movements of Tchaikovsky's *Serenade for Strings*. They then closed off the night on a high note, performing *Mad Russian's Christmas*, an arrangement of melodies by the Trans-Siberian Orchestra of Tchaikovsky's classic ballet, the *Nutcracker*. The piece had an added bit of modern flair, with electric bass, guitar, and drums all accompanying the orchestra.

The Langley Orchestra showcased many facets of the lively music of Russia, from nationalistic marches to dances to well-known melodies with a modern twist. Yet it wasn't just music that infused Russian culture into the evening. Orchestra members ate Russian *piroshkis* during the pre-concert banquet

and student pianists performed pieces by the likes of Prokofiev and Rachmaninoff at the reception. Student speakers seamlessly wove between performances, providing background and commentary on each piece. Many orchestra members and students in Langley's flagship Russian language program introduced themselves and recited poetry in Russian, some even dressed in traditional attire.

"I think it was really cool that Russian culture was incorporated into our concert," said Megan Faust, a senior violinist in the Symphonic Orchestra. "I learned about the music and also their language and history."

The sense of warmth and community was strong at the concert, especially with a tribute to former Spring Hill Elementary School orchestra teacher Ruth Donahue. Donahue taught at the Langley feeder school for over



Senior violinist Daewa Zaheer of the Langley Symphonic Orchestra wears traditional Russian clothing as she provides historical background on Russian composers and their music.

three decades, inspiring thousands of students to continue in the strings program, before recently retiring. Spring Hill graduates in Langley's orchestra performed under Donahue's conducting one last time with *Irish Washerwoman*, one of Donahue's orchestra traditions, where students warm up with a catchy tune at progressively faster speeds.

Langley Orchestra's concerts aim to inspire, entertain, and unite. Students and audience members alike were whisked away into the magical world of *Russian Winter Dreams*, making for both a festive and captivating evening of music



Wish List Project Coordinator Christie Shumadine (center) checks in gift cards and coordinates operations at Buzz Aldrin Elementary with the help of Leslie Hutchinson (left) and Eleanor DeMoors (right).



Volunteer elves take gifts from Wish List Angels' cars as they drive through during Drop Off as Coordinator Lissa Perez checks them off the list.

## The Spirit of Holiday Giving

The spirit of giving starts every year on the second Saturday of December, when the Wish List Project holds its annual gift drop off event. Coordinators Christie Shumadine and Lissa Perez, joined by two dozen volunteer elves, brace themselves for over a thousand wrapped gifts and gift cards to be delivered over a 3 hour time period. The generosity is visible as it perpetuates the essence of the holiday season.

The Wish List Project was created in 2000 and run by Ginger Mahon until 2015, when Shumadine, Perez and their families took the reins and put the Wish List Project online. The process has remained the same after all these years; the list of "wishes" from those in need is posted online in mid-November for sign ups. Donors, called Wish List Angels, choose a person, two, or a whole family to buy, wrap, and drop off the gifts specifically wished for. These generous "Angels" go beyond the request, often buying 7-10 gifts for each individual. Gifts are picked up by staff of the recipient organizations and delivered to them for the holidays.

In addition to wrapped gifts, thousands of dollars in gift cards are collected and given to partner shelters and programs for general and emergency use during the holidays and beyond.

Wish List Angels directly help individuals in foster care, child protective services, local area homeless and domestic abuse shelters, teen alternative housing, and local elementary school families identified by counselors.

This year's partners are Fairfax County Family Services, Second Story, Artemis Domestic Abuse Shelter, Katherine Hanley Homeless Shelter, The Women's Center Domestic Violence Program and Buzz Aldrin Elementary School.

Long-time Wish List Angel Leslie Fredrick said, "I have been lucky in my life to always think of Christmas as a joyous time, but not all kids' lives are as easy, some wonder if there will be anything under that tree Christmas morning. I don't want that to happen to any child if I can help. I know I can't help everyone, but I try to help as many as I can." Fredrick noted that it takes a village, she continued, "Thankfully we have generous people in this area. If everyone can keep pitching in, maybe no children will wake up without a present under the tree."

In addition to those giving gifts, nearly two dozen elves give their time on drop-off day. Many elves have helped with this event annually for years, like Caitlyn Shumadine, Lexie Perez, Alexa Gianoplus, Lynley Birchard and Avery Perez, all seniors in high school who have volunteered since they were in 6th grade.



Craig Buffie and Caitlyn Shumadine organize gifts for Shelter and Program Coordinators to pick up later that day.



Wrapping gifts is a big job for volunteers Sandy Buffie (left) and Katie Maguire (right) during Wish List Drop Off day.

Avery Perez said, "I love it more each year and value having the opportunity to give back and help people in need." She reflects, "I'm fortunate enough to know the joy of opening presents on Christmas each year and am grateful to help give others that experience." Perez plans to continue community service in college and bring her Wish List Project experience with her. To keep the two dozen volunteers going through the day, Deli Italiano and others generously donated food.

In addition to the Holiday Wish List Project, other drives have been added in recent years, including Thanksgiving Meal Baskets, Winter Coat & Gear Drive as well as occasional drives for what is needed like a Spring Break Food Drive, Toiletry Collection, and Snack Food Drive.

See a summary of this year's giving and sign up to be a Wish List Angel to help throughout the year at [wishlistangels.org](http://wishlistangels.org).

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HOLIDAYS IN THE  
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At 2910 District Ave., Fairfax. Santa at Mosaic -- Now Thru Dec. 23; Santa's Motorcade -- Dec. 17 at 5 p.m.

NOW THRU DEC. 19.

**Holiday Lights on the Farm.** Fridays thru Sundays 5:30 to 8 p.m. At Frying Pan Farm Park, 2739 West Ox Road, Herndon. What is "Holiday Lights on the Farm"? It's where you tour Frying Pan Farm Park in the safety and warmth of your car and see an amazing display of holiday decorations lighting up the 135-acre park. The cost is \$20 per private vehicle. Or you can take the tour on a tractor-drawn wagon ride with up to 20 of your family or friends for \$150 per group. Last year this event sold out, so get your tickets early at <https://bit.ly/FPLights>.

NOW THRU JAN. 2

**Ice & Lights: The Winter Village at Cameron Run,** 4001 Eisenhower Ave., Alexandria. Open nightly 5 to 10 p.m.; January 8 to February 27, 2022 (ice skating only), open Saturdays, Sundays and holidays, 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. Featuring an ice rink, multiple new holiday light displays perfect for Instagramming, a retail area, food, music and more. Admission: \$9 for general admission to Village; \$22 for village admission and skating; beginning January 8, \$14 for ice skating; free ages 2 and under. Visit [novaparks.com/events/ice-lights](http://novaparks.com/events/ice-lights)

NOW THRU DEC. 19

"A Child's Christmas in Wales."

Presented by the Vienna Department of Parks and Recreation and Vienna Theatre Company. From a story by Dylan Thomas and adapted to the stage by Jeremy Brooks and Adrian Mitchell. Dates: Friday and Saturday, Dec. 17 and 18 at 7 p.m.; Sunday, Dec. 19 at 2 p.m.; and Saturday, Dec. 18 at 10 a.m. Visit the website: [www.viennatheatrecompany.org](http://www.viennatheatrecompany.org).

CALENDAR

FROM PAGE 7

objects, cards, and more created by the 8 artists of RAGS. Open weekends and by appointment. Visit the website: [www.restonartgallery.com](http://www.restonartgallery.com)

THURSDAY/DEC. 16

**Jennifer Nettles: Broadway Under the Mistletoe.** 7:30 p.m. At Capital One Hall, 7740 Capital One Tower Road, Tysons. Jennifer Nettles stops by for a night of holiday favorites and Broadway hits. Leading with her powerhouse vocals and vivacious energy, this dynamic entertainer recently released Always Like New, a collection of Broadway tunes reimagined as only she can do. Visit [CapitalOneHall.com](http://CapitalOneHall.com).

DEC. 18-19

**Tchaikovsky's The Nutcracker.** 4 p.m. At GMU Center for the Arts, Fairfax. The Fairfax Symphony Orchestra joins The Fairfax Ballet in their sixth collaboration to present the timeless class holiday favorite, The Nutcracker. This production is unique in the Washington metropolitan region as one of few presented with live musical accompaniment. The Fairfax Ballet Company dances to Tchaikovsky's score performed live by the Fairfax Symphony. Enjoy a winter wonderland of dancing snowflakes, sugar plum fairies and epic battles between heroic toy soldiers and mischievous mice.

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# COMMUNITY

## GFCA's Happy Holiday Wish to the Community

### Invasive plant removal protects the western Georgetown Pike Historic Byway sign.

BY MERCIA HOBSON  
THE CONNECTION

Volunteer members of the Great Falls Citizens Association Environment and Parks Committee wish the community a happy holiday season as the association continues to “Protect the Pike.” According to GFCA member Chris Rich, he and a few others volunteered to spruce up the grounds surrounding the western Georgetown Pike Historic Byway sign, which marks the entrance to the Great Falls community off U.S. Route 7.

The sign marks the western gateway to the historic Georgetown Pike Scenic Byway and the entrance to the Great Falls community. “The Great Falls Citizens Association is working to preserve the beauty of the Pike, especially the magnificent trees along its route. This includes managing the invasive plants and weeds that had obscured the sign,” said Rich.

Winnie Frost, a co-chair of the Environment and Parks Committee, added that Georgetown Pike is also in the National Register of Historic Places [Aug. 22, 2012].

Fairfax County Planning and Development states on its website, “[Georgetown Pike] is the last surviving of the four major nineteenth-century Arlington and Fairfax County turnpike roads to retain the integrity of design together with historic and scenic character.” According to an August 2010 news release by the Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT), the four gateway signs installed in summer of 2010 commemorate the pike’s 1973 designation as Virginia’s first Historic and Scenic Byway. VDOT completed the installation of the signs, which sit atop stone walls.

Non-native invasive plants and trees have spread into the minimally managed area over time. The vines and trees threatened to obscure the flagstone wall and sign, and they jeopardized the wall’s structural integrity. Rich led the effort, cutting down the invasive tree saplings and removing invasive plants mechanically with no chemicals.

According to Bill Canis, president of the Great Falls Citizens Association, the non-profit has for 53 years looked to resident volunteers for good ideas and actions that make this a better community. “It is part inspiration and part perspiration,” Canis said. “When those two elements are combined, residents can make marvelous contributions as four residents proved recently in their clean up and decoration of the Georgetown Pike historical marker near Seneca Road. We hope other residents will see similar opportunities all around us and let us know about

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MERCIA HOBSON/THE CONNECTION

From left, GFC members Winne Frost, Lori van Gemert and Chris Rich reveal the recent work that cleared invasive plants and tree saplings from the western Georgetown Pike Historic Byway sign installed on the stone wall that marks the entrance to the Great Falls community off U.S. Route 7, Leesburg Pike.

them. The GFCA board has established a special award certificate to recognize outstanding volunteerism.”

#### The History of Georgetown Pike as a Scenic Byway-

#### Interview with Karen Washburn of GFCA

Unlike other roads of the 1800s that evolved from trails, skirting obstacles and crossing shallow waters, Georgetown Pike is a purposefully engineered road constructed from 1813 through 1827 by two privately organized turnpike companies. It was built to directly link Fairfax, Leesburg, and beyond to the Georgetown ports. According to Washburn, the original roadbed is still in place, with the paved byway running directly over it.

The Georgetown Pike Traffic Calming Working Group recommended the signs, Washburn said in an interview on Dec. 12. The group included Eleanor Anderson, and John Ulfelder of the Great Falls Citizen Association, Del. Vince Callahan, Sen. Janet D. Howell, Fairfax County Supervisor Stuart Mendelsohn, and Georgetown Pike Association members Dorothy McCormick, Knowles Harper, and John Adams, plus Washburn.

In 1973, at the request of the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors, the Commonwealth Transportation Board, in cooperation with the Department of Conservation and Recreation, designated Georgetown Pike as the first Virginia Scenic and Historic Byway.

According to VDOT, the four signs are located on Georgetown Pike near Route 7, the Beltway, and off Route 123 at Colonial Farm Road. State and federal byway funds paid for the \$96,000 design and installation with Arthur Construction of Herndon, the contractor.

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## Indulge Me And/or Indulge Me



By KENNETH B. LOURIE

Give me whatever I want and/or let me be however I want. I have cancer and if you don't like it? Raspberries. I remember what a friend told me soon after I was diagnosed with cancer: “It's all about you now, Kenny.” And it's friendly advice I've shared/passed on to other newly cancer “diagnosees.” And it's always been received with such appreciation as if newly diagnosed cancer patients need a sort of permission to be more concerned about themselves than about others.

For many, it's a bit of an unnatural position: to concern yourself with yourself. But I must tell you, when that hammer is dropped that you've been diagnosed with cancer, your world shrinks. It's almost impossible to think of anything else. You just don't know if something you do or don't do will affect your cancer/life expectancy. And so, cancer becomes the center of your universe. Moreover, you wonder if what you normally do: eat, drink, be happy, be sad, really matters to the outcome of your treatment.

I mean, it's not as if there's a dos and don'ts handbook for newly diagnosed cancer patients with easy-to-follow instructions for who to call/where to go for who knows what. And since you've been diagnosed with an extremely serious disease, you just as soon not get your homework assignments wrong. When your life is snatched away and/or your world is turned inside out/upside down, you really don't want to be the cause of your own demise. For cancer, there's hardly any guarantees. Survival is a long way from six-hour chemotherapy sessions every three weeks and scans every three months. Being a cancer patient is very hands-on – by you and/or the medical staff, so you must pay attention. To say your life might depend on it might be a bit much but it's not totally wrong. Once you get diagnosed into the cancer world, everything about your health seems to lead to the oncology department.

Having to deal with this unexpected/new centrality in your life, a life which, depending on the type and staging of your cancer, you may be in danger, is scary as hell. And if that's the case, the disease may very well be in control and this ongoing fear/angst is the axis upon which your world now turns. Every action, reaction, “proaction,” is taken in the context of your having cancer. What it all means, what it all does, if and when you have to do it again or not, are all definite maybes. Your oncologist becomes your new best friend. You hang on his/her every word. To think that a person you had never previously met is now in charge of your life requires an acceptance of reality, possibly a grim reality, for which there may be no escape and worse, requires total compliance.

You bet I require kid gloves. You bet I require a wide berth. You bet I require anything my heart desires because learning from oncologist that you have a “terminal” diagnosis, is about as unsettling as it gets. Any port in a storm you might say? Heck, how about any port no matter the weather? If Bette Davis were alive today and had been a cancer patient, she might update her famous lament: “Being diagnosed with cancer ain't no place for sissies.”

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



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Dianne Van Volkenburg donates a portion of each sale to the Embry Rucker Community Shelter

