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Great Falls CONNECTION

PHOTO BY MERCIA HOBSON/THE CONNECTION
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Equinox Through the Telescope

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Jason Fan, 7, looks at the sun through the telescope. 'It's all a red ball,' he says.

Food for the Hungry

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COMMUNITY

Helping to Feed Hungry Families

Stuff the Bus event brings in much needed food donations.

BY MERCIA HOBSON
THE CONNECTION

More than 86,000 people in Fairfax County are experiencing food insecurity according to the most recent Feeding America Impact of Coronavirus on Food Insecurity projections published March 29, 2021. The food insecurity rate in Fairfax County was at 7.4 percent in 2021.

On Saturday, March 19, 2022, residents in the county dropped off donations at the 18 Stuff the Bus locations, adding up to 14,273 pounds of food donated on that one day. This was less than the last two collection day, 15,415.68 pounds collected on Sept 11, 2021; and 14,526.36 pounds collected on Oct. 9, 2021. If you were unable to give in person, you can Stuff the Bus virtually by visiting Volunteer Fairfax's Stuff the Bus Donation Page, <https://www.volunteerfairfax.org/home/stuff-the-bus-virtual-food-drive/>

Items such as canned goods, pasta, beans and diapers supported various local nonprofit organizations including, LINK and SHARE of McLean at the Great Falls Library and McLean Government Center sites, and Cornerstones and Committee for Helping Others (CHO) at the Hunter Mill District Supervisor's Office.

Fairfax County Stuff the Bus is a collaboration between Fairfax County Government and local nonprofits. The event started in 2011 in response to a desperate need to assist local food pantries



MERCIA HOBSON/THE CONNECTION
Carter Leach of Oakton, Fairfax County MV Transit Driver for Neighborhood & Community Services, at the Great Falls Library in the Dranesville District.

refilling their shelves after the holidays. Now in its 11th year, Stuff the Bus continues to support food assistance efforts for families and households.

"Stuff the Bus started well before the pandemic to combat hunger in our community. That need has only grown these past few years," said Chairman Jeffrey McKay (D-At-Large) Fairfax County Board of Supervisors. "I am so thankful for our nonprofit partners working tirelessly to distribute food to our residents, as well as the extraordinary generosity of our residents who always make this event successful."

According to Supervisor Walter Alcorn (D- Hunter Mill), the Stuff

SEE STUFF THE BUS, PAGE 4

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CALENDAR

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about an
upcoming event**

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Sebastian Palmieri, 8, and his sister, Luna, of Great Falls look at the light pollution display. Light pollution is everywhere, wasting energy and money, harming health, and causing harm to wildlife.



Christina Tyler Weeks is a NASA solar system volunteer. She helps the children make sundials.



Signage for the Observatory at Turner Farm located in Great Falls.

Observatory Park Celebrates the Equinox

An astronomical turning point of the seasons.

BY MERCIA HOBSON
THE CONNECTION

On March 20, from noon to 2 p.m., Turner Farm Observatory in Great Falls held a spring equinox celebration. Participants who had registered with Fairfax County Parks for the activity learned about the equinox, which happened this year on March 20 at 11:33 a.m. Eastern Standard Time.

There are two equinoxes yearly. One occurs in March, about March 21, and the other in September, around Sept. 23. These are the days when the sun is directly above the equator, resulting in days and nights of equal duration.

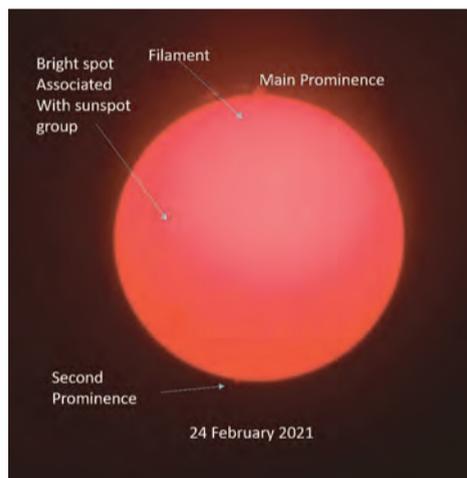


PHOTO COURTESY OF DR. JEFFERY L. KRETSCH

This is a photograph of the Sun taken by Dr. Jeffery L. Kretsch in February. It shows what would have been seen through one of the Analemma Society's special telescopes used by children and adults on March 20 to see the Equinox.



Jason Fan, 7, looks at the sun through the telescope. "It's all a red ball," he says.

The vernal equinox is another name for the March equinox. It denotes the start of the spring season in the Northern Hemisphere and the start of the fall season in the Southern Hemisphere.

Observatory Park at Turner Farm is managed by the Analemma Society in collaboration with the Fairfax County Park Authority. According to Dr. Jeffery L. Kretsch of the Analemma Society, during their equinox celebration, they demonstrated safe practices for viewing the sun in their telescopes, assisted with hands-on sundial creations, and offered other solar system-related activities to registered attendees.

"We have been doing Equinox sessions at the park for several years with great success. Kids enjoy marking the shadow of different objects as the day progresses seeing them make a straight east west lines and knowing that is one way ancients knew it was the equinox and spring (or fall) was starting," said Kretsch.

Your Car Worth More Than Last Year?

Probably, and the car tax owed is probably also going up.

BY KEN MOORE
THE CONNECTION

Ninety percent of Fairfax County car owners will experience "a substantial increase in the assessed value" of their cars, according to the county's Chief Financial Officer Christina Jackson.

This could cause an increase of \$186 per vehicle owner during property tax bills this year. Usually the value of a car, and the tax owed, go down every year.

"No one has talked about this," said Chairman Jeff McKay, at the Budget Committee meeting last Tuesday, March 15.

An average car, for example, assessed at \$11,778 in FY2022 will be valued at \$15,663 for property tax purposes in FY2023; that comes with a total tax bill of \$716 this year that was \$538 last year, according to county documents.

"In Richmond, they are talking about a lot of tax breaks for people but no one's talking about this," said McKay.

McKay moved that the Board send a let-

ter to Gov. Glenn Youngkin "asking for real car tax relief for people in Fairfax County who are struggling with, again, something beyond their capacity to be able to control."

The pandemic has impacted the supply chain, causing greater demand than supply. Automakers built fewer cars because of critical shortages of supplies like microchips; low supply and high demand has caused values to rise. And used car prices have gone up, too.

The Board of Supervisors discussed how

to mitigate the impact of rising assessments during the committee meeting. Staff has recommended an 85 percent ratio to cut the tax owed.

"I support action we can take at the County level to provide additional car tax relief as well," McKay said two days later in an email to residents.

The Board would act on this along with budget adoption on May 10, 2022.

"My 12-year-old car that has 154,000 miles on it is looking better and better all the time," said Mason Supervisor Penny Gross, at the committee hearing last week.

CONSERVATION

County Art Contest Focuses on Water Conservation

High school artists called on to explore “One Water” theme.

BY MIKE SALMON
THE CONNECTION

The drinking water in Fairfax County is a valuable resource and this year, Fairfax Water is having an art contest for high school students to spread the word on water conservation to the next generation.

Fairfax Water and Fairfax County Wastewater Management is working with the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments to sponsor this art contest with the theme of protecting the source water. “We feel like art is a unique and exciting way to be able to understand this source’s protection,” said Melissa Atwood with Fairfax Water.

The thought in the county’s water world is to treat this resource as “One Water,” similar to a county social effort of “One Fairfax.”

“Our drinking water, wastewater, and stormwater are all One Water, connected through our local waterways. To preserve water quality for future generations, it is important to understand where water comes from, how we use it, where it goes when it leaves our homes and businesses, and how it eventually becomes source water again,” they said.



Artists need to think “One Water.”

On the One Water video the county produced, it said that “waste water, storm water and drinking water are all one water.” It then goes through the journey of the water through its various phases in streams, lakes, stormwater drains and the water pumping plant back to the house.

To preserve water quality for future generations, it is important to understand where water comes from, how we use it, where it goes when it leaves our homes and businesses, and how it eventually becomes source water again. “Art is a great way for students to learn about source water protection and



PHOTO BY MIKE SALMON/THE CONNECTION

Eventually, the lakes, creeks and rivers are all connected.

creatively express what they’ve learned on the topic. The artwork that students create can be used to help spread the word about this important issue to the entire community,” said Fairfax Water.

The contest is open to high school students from 9-12 grade and can be entered in two categories: “Painting and Drawing” or “Photography and Digital Art.” The submitted piece should tell a clear and creative message about source water protection highlighting the connection between human actions on land impacting water quality, and the judges are looking for themes in the art.

It should connect to local waterways, water recreation and the role of water utilities to protect our sources of water through environmental stewardship and responsible wastewater treatment.

Local winners will move on to the Regional Art Contest where they can win up \$300 for the grand prize. The art teachers also get a prize when the grand prize winner is announced. There is a \$150 honorable mention winner in each category.

To apply go to <https://bit.ly/3e8kd3h> and for contest questions, email pr@fairfax-water.org.

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Stuff the Bus Event Brings in Much Needed Food Donations

FROM PAGE 2

the Bus is a proven and successful countywide food collection effort to assist the many nonprofits that are on the front lines in addressing food insecurity. “This includes two Hunter Mill District nonprofits – Cornerstones and CHO (Committee for Helping Others). Through the years our residents have generously donated literally tons of food,” Alcorn said.

Financial contributions, according to the Fairfax County website, are good for a variety of reasons. Among other things, monetary gifts enable food banks to buy culturally appropriate items, allowing them to better fulfill the requirements of the different populations they serve.

Canned and dried food are essential components of food pantries, but a healthy diet also includes fresh fruits and vegetables, low-fat dairy products, and lean proteins, which cannot be obtained via food drives. Having cash on hand also allows food pantries to keep their shelves stocked at times of year when contributions are low.



MERCIA HOBSON/THE CONNECTION

Stuff the Bus donations at McLean Government Center in the Dranesville District. Thomas Tunley, Fairfax County MV Transit Driver for Neighborhood & Community Services, stands with volunteers from SHARE of McLean.

Stuff the Bus has gathered over 220 tons of food to serve Fairfax County residents facing food insecurity since its start.

CALENDAR

NOW THRU MARCH 30

Fiber Optics. 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. At McLean Textile Gallery, 6819 Elm Street, McLean. Philadelphia print-maker Fay Stanford will show her fabulist banners. Stanford creates wry fairy tales about suburban family life – especially death, disease and aging. Visit the website: mcleantextilegallery.org.

NOW THRU APRIL 30

The Friends of Frying Pan Farm Park invite the public to participate in its 2022 photo contest. Help celebrate all that is special about the farm with the second “Focus on the Farm” fundraiser. Open to photographers of all ages and abilities, capture the beauty and farm life at Frying Pan Farm Park. The categories include nature, landscape and scenery, and farm animals. Photos must be taken, and entries submitted between March 1 and April 30, 2022. You can enter up to 10 photos. The fee is \$7 per entry for adults, and \$5 per entry for children up to age 16. The fees will directly support the park and care and feeding of the animals at the farm. Go to the Friends of Frying Pan Farm Park website for detailed instructions and submission information; or email the Friends of Frying Pan Farm Park at friends@fryingpanpark.org. Frying Pan Park is located at 2709 West Ox Road, Herndon. Call 703-437-9101.

FRIDAY/MARCH 25

Elizabeth Vismans, an artist and Life Purpose Coach, will be the featured presenter at the meeting of the McLean Art Society, 10 a.m.-noon. The meeting will take place on Zoom with the demonstration at 11 a.m. following a general meeting. Guests are invited. To participate in this meeting, contact M.A.S. President Anna Katakina at annakatakina@aol.com.

MARCH 25-27

Capital Art & Craft Festival. At Dulles Expo Center in Chantilly. The Spring Capital Art & Craft Festival will feature art in more than a dozen mediums including glass, jewelry, leather, paintings, prints, photography, pottery, wearable art

and wood. Friday, March 25: 10 a.m. – 6 p.m.; Saturday, March 26: 10 a.m. – 6 p.m.; Sunday, March 27: 10 a.m. – 4 p.m. Tickets: \$10 in advance; \$12 at the door. Senior discount available; children under 12 free. Ticket information: www.CapitalArtAndCraftFestivals.com.

SATURDAY/MARCH 26

Diva Central Formal Dress Event. 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. At RCC Lake Anne, 1609-A Washington Plaza, Reston. This one-day event is the perfect shopping experience for any current high school or middle school student who needs a dress, shoes, jewelry and other accessories. Everything is absolutely free, and shoppers may choose up to two outfits. The event will also feature exciting door prizes and raffle giveaways. Register online through myRCC. The registration number is 8C1008-2A. Patrons who need assistance creating a household account may call 703-476-4500 and press “8” for assistance. For additional information, please contact LaTanja Snelling, RCC Collaboration and Outreach Director, at 703-390-6158.

SATURDAY/MARCH 26

Washington Sinfonietta. 7:30 p.m. At Falls Church Episcopal Church, 166 E. Broad Street, Falls Church. The Sinfonietta will perform “Three S’s”: Andante Festivo by Sibelius, Cello Concerto No. 1 by Saint-Saens featuring cello soloist Eric Kutz, and Schubert’s Symphony No. 2. A link to purchase tickets to the concert in advance can be found here: <https://www.brownpapertickets.com/event/5388499>. Visit www.washingtonsinfonietta.org.

SATURDAY/MARCH 26

Spectacular Falls, A Slippery Solo Musical. 8 p.m. Featuring Anita Hollander. At Reston Community Theater’s CenterStage. Come share a humorous, edgy, moving and somewhat slippery exploration of how we all fall, how the world can fall apart and how we rise again. Cost is \$15 Reston/\$20 Non-Reston. Visit www.restoncommunity-center.com.

SEE CALENDAR, PAGE 10

BULLETIN BOARD

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

SATURDAY/APRIL 23

Sen. Mark Warner will host his annual Academy Day on Saturday, April 23, from 10 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. This is a virtual event that will be hosted on Accelevents. The event will offer students, their parents or guardians, and school counselors a comprehensive overview of the United States service academies and their admission processes. Attendees will have the opportunity to join breakout sessions with representatives from the United States service academies for presentations and an interactive question and answer period. On the main stage, you will hear from representatives from the Virginia congressional delegation about the application procedures for

congressional nominations to the academies as well as speakers from the Department of Defense Medical Examination Review Board, the University of Virginia ROTC programs, the Virginia Tech Corps of Cadets, the Virginia Military Institute, and the Virginia Women’s Institute for Leadership at Mary Baldwin University. There will also be time to speak in more detail with many of these representatives at their virtual resource tables.

Information on the nomination process for the service academies is available on the Senator’s website at www.warner.senate.gov. You may email academy_noms@warner.senate.gov with any questions.

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Four members of the Fairfax County School Board appear in the group photos. From left, Karen Corbett Sanders, Mount Vernon District Representative; Rachna Sizemore Heizer, Vice-Chair, Member-at-Large; Laura Jane Cohen, Springfield District Representative; and Abrar Omeish Member-at-Large.

Peacemakers Student Peace Awards of Fairfax County.

The Student Peace Awards of Fairfax County was begun in 2006 to encourage everyone to think more about peace as both a means and an end, and to recognize young people who work as peacemakers.

The program started with one school (Herndon High School) and one sponsor

(Herndon Friends Meeting) and gradually expanded from there. In 2013, for the first time, it was offered to every public high school in Fairfax County. Two private schools are also included. There are currently nineteen sponsoring organizations, listed at the end.

Peacemaking is vital in our world, and

students active in the pursuit of peace should be encouraged in every way possible.

The sponsors, family, and friends celebrate the accomplishments of the recipients at a public reception in early March. The award consists of a monetary gift for each recipient and for a peace-focused

charity of his or her choice, and a framed certificate, generally presented at each participating school's annual awards ceremony.

A reception to recognize the student winners was on Sunday, March 13, 2022 at Sherwood Community Center, 3740 Old Lee Highway, Fairfax.

Sponsoring Organizations:

- Accotink Unitarian Universalist Church, Burke
- Alexandria Friends Meeting
- Alexandria South Rotary Club
- All Dulles Area Muslim Society, Sterling
- Cornerstone, Reston
- Daniles Run Peace Church, Fairfax
- First Church of Christ, Scientist, Fairfax
- George Mason University, Jimmy and Rosalynn Carter School for Conflict Analysis and Resolution
- Herndon Friends Meeting
- Holy Cross Lutheran Church, Herndon
- Langley Hill Friends Meeting, McLean
- Northern Virginia Hebrew Congregation, Reston
- Rotary Club of Annandale
- Rotary Club of Reston
- St. John Neumann Catholic Church, Reston
- St. Mark Catholic Church, Vienna
- Stewart R. Mott Foundation, Washington, D.C.
- United Christian Parish of Reston



2022 Recipients of the Student Peace Awards of Fairfax County



**Jewel Coulter, Senior
Annandale High School**

Jewel Coulter has volunteered for the National Korean American Service & Education Consortium (NAKASEC) which organizes Korean and Asian Americans to achieve social, economic, and racial justice. She also partnered with 2021 Peace Awards recipient Jimmy Lee to create the Annandale High School Equity Team. She has served as a Student Equity Ambassador Leader for the school division, working with students across Fairfax County to increase equity in schools. The equity team that they had established at Annandale was replicated across the division.



happy and successful lives in their newly adopted communities." The students have been raising money to purchase welcome packages for refugees coming to the greater metropolitan area. Other activities include a winter coat drive, a talent show fundraiser, and "Letters of Hope" postcards written to overseas refugees. As part of their effort to raise awareness of what it means to be a refugee, they plan to invite refugees to come and speak with students, share their experiences, and answer student questions.



**Zilala Mamat, Senior
Chantilly High School**

Zilala Mamat's extended family has suffered under China's policy of human rights abuses directed at Uyghur people. As a freshman, Zilala organized and led an optional assembly to educate students, who were shocked to learn that in this day and age, people were being sent to concentration camps in other parts of the world. As a sophomore, Zilala founded a human rights club at Chantilly High School that promotes activism and education on human rights issues. Outside of school, Zilala founded a non-profit, United Uyghur Youth (UUY), to spread awareness about the Uyghur human rights crisis, preserving Uyghur culture and empowering Uyghur youth. She has organized several demonstrations and protests about human rights abuses and has also organized and raised more than \$1,500 for UUY through a T-shirt campaign to fund future demonstrations and protests.



Rania Ali

**Rania Ali, Senior
Edison High School**

Rania Ali has raised money for and worked at the Khartoum Cheshire Home, a rehabilitation center for disabled children in Sudan. She updated and translated the Home's website and translated the Home's website. SEE STUDENT PEACE AWARDS, PAGE 7

STAR - Students Together Assisting Refugees

Centreville HS

The Centreville HS chapter of STAR (Students Together Assisting Refugees) is dedicated to "helping refugees realize

Four members of the Fairfax County School Board appear in the group photos. From left, Karen Corbett Sanders, Mount Vernon District Representative; Rachna Sizemore Heizer, Vice-Chair, Member-at-Large; Laura Jane Cohen, Springfield District Representative; and Abrar Omeish Member-at-Large.

Student Peace Awards of Fairfax County

FROM PAGE 6

into Arabic to help members of the Sudanese community access the information. Rania is an active member of Edison's Black Student Union and the Student Muslim Association. Last December she joined other Fairfax County Public School students at Edison High School in One Fairfax, a peaceful protest to call attention to an incident of Islamophobia at another area high school.



Alin Freitag, Senior
Fairfax High School

Alin Freitag

Alin Freitag was nominated last year to represent his school in a new county program called Student Equity Ambassador Leaders (SEALs). He believes that one of the best ways to promote peace and show respect for the gender and relationship choices of fellow students is by the day-to-day use of their self-selected inclusive pronouns – such as he, him, she, her, they and their. He designed a simple, short form for use in school that included prompts to indicate a student's pronoun preferences. He shared the newly designed form with a handful of teachers, who adapted it to their needs and began using it in their classes. By the start of this school year, the form was successfully included in teachers' beginning of the year forms for his school. Students report feeling encouraged to see it widely used in many of their classes.



Maya Yona, Senior
Ryan Kiefer, Senior
Hayfield Secondary School

Maya Yona, and Ryan Kiefer

Maya Yonas and Ryan Kiefer responded to pandemic-related stress among students by creating a Guided Meditation Group for Hayfield. The group has continued to meet online and as of February of this year had thirty-two participants, including four faculty members. Maya and Ryan both believe that meditation helps achieve peace by promoting mindfulness and clearing the mind to allow for self-reflection and thoughts to be processed in a more positive and healthy manner. They believe those benefits don't stop when the meditation session is over, and that by adopting a more peaceful lifestyle, people will spread that inner peace throughout their community.

Justin Tetelman, Senior
Justice High School

Justice High School is one of six schools in Fairfax County Public Schools to implement the Restorative Justice Community Schools program. Because of Justin's advocacy, Jus-



Justin Tetelman

ice is the only school in the county to launch a student-led youth pilot program. Justin serves as the lead student restorative ambassador. In this role, he facilitates student-led restorative circles within classrooms. Justin also has advocated for gender equity, economic accessibility and increased diversity within the athletics department, mentors other students, and is an active member of the Fairfax County Human Rights Commission.



Deema Osman, Junior
King Abdullah Academy

Deema Osman

Deema Osman is the current CEO of LeadPeace, a NOVA student-led organization with the mission to cultivate youth leaders and peacebuilders. LeadPeace sponsors online lectures and workshops through which students can learn from leaders in the fields of peacemaking, peacekeeping, and conflict resolution. In June of 2020, LeadPeace held a virtual community dialog to examine systemic racism, institutionalized racism, and the Black Lives Matter Movement. Since joining LeadPeace, Deema has mentored six KAA students to become members of the LeadPeace team and encouraged fellow students to learn leadership and peace building skills as well as conflict resolution to support peace within their own communities. A video about their work can be seen on YouTube.



Bethel Tessera, Senior
Lake Braddock Secondary School

Bethel Tessera

high school students to seek help for mental health prob-

lems and to decrease stigma around this issue. They started with the idea that students are more likely to access resources if access is easy. Her team's work was developed into an on-line flyer that was downloaded 4,846 times by students across the nation. Bethel also co-wrote a paper detailing the challenges facing prisoners with mental illness, advocating for increased mental health awareness and intervention for those incarcerated, and sent it to her state Senator.



Caroline Martell, Junior
Langley High School

Caroline Martell

During her freshman year, Caroline Martell took training on advocacy through Team ENOUGH, a national youth organization dedicated to ending gun violence. She has lobbied members of Congress and the state legislature as well as a presidential candidate. She started a chapter at Langley High School of March For Our Lives, the student-led group initiated after Parkland in support of gun violence prevention legislation. She collaborated with her former Civics teacher at Cooper Middle School to develop advocacy training webinars, and she is currently working on organizing a Langley High School club to educate students about activism.

UNICEF Club

John R. Lewis High School

The Lewis High School UNICEF Club supports education, advocacy, and events centered on a broad range of issues including climate change, mental health awareness, women's empowerment, people with disabilities, and much more. Club meetings include planned activities, video presentations, discussions, or Q&As with a different biweekly focus. In response to the stresses of online learning, they initiated a "sticky note" project, writing positive messages to teachers and to other students. They worked with the Key Club to

SEE STUDENT PEACE AWARDS, PAGE 8

Four members of the Fairfax County School Board appear in the group photos. From left, Karen Corbett Sanders, Mount Vernon District Representative; Rachna Sizemore Heizer, Vice-Chair, Member-at-Large; Laura Jane Cohen, Springfield District Representative; and Abrar Omeish Member-at-Large.

Student Peace Awards of Fairfax County

FROM PAGE 7



hold a mug decorating contest and fundraiser for UNICEF's Water, Sanitation and Hygiene Project. The club also set up a conference with the Lewis Muslim Student Association on the oppression of Muslims in the United States and abroad.



**Junior Civitan Club
Madison High School**

Madison's Junior Civitan Club is associated with the national Junior Civitan International, which supports people with disabilities. In past years this has primarily entailed sending cards and gift baskets to VA hospitals and nursing homes.

This year the club collected needed items for Afghan refugees. They found local businesses willing to house their donation bins and created posters to encourage all Madison students to participate. The effort was a success, and they were able to donate many necessities to Afghan refugees in the area. The club is currently working with other Madison High School clubs to participate in Project Linus, a national organization that makes blankets for ill, traumatized, and displaced children.



**Maya Kanaan, Senior
George C. Marshall High School**

Maya started the Peace in the Middle East club at Marshall



Maya Kanaan

High School her sophomore year. Now with about 30 members of many ethnicities, the Peace in the Middle East club meets regularly to learn about a variety of Middle Eastern countries. Maya prepares informational slide-shows on each country, focusing on how conflict there is affecting children's lives. Recently, the club obtained the sponsorship of a local restaurant to help raise money for children in Lebanon. They were able to provide five teachers with remote-learning supplies, increasing access to quality education. This past fall, they raised money for Afghani children's school supplies, distributing the money through the Save the Children Fund. The club is planning additional fundraising activities for this spring.



**Olivia Zhang, Junior
McLean High School**



Olivia Zhang

Olivia Zhang is the founder and CEO of the non-profit organization, Cancer Kids First which has thousands of volunteers in chapters around the world sending toys, books and care packages to over 50 pediatric hospitals. Olivia heads the management team with oversight over matters such as planning, policy, and finance. She manages their website which includes milestones of achievement, awards and a variety of events including virtual movies, speakers, volunteer team building, and fund raisers. Olivia is also the president of McLean's Student Government Association, where she launched the Be a Good Neighbor Initiative -- monthly service events such as a toy drive, a blood drive, and writing letters to the elderly.



**Ava Belmont, Senior
Mount Vernon High School**

As president of the Our Minds Matter Teen Advisory and of Mount Vernon High School's Our Minds Matter Club, Ava



Ava Belmont

Belmont helps raise awareness of mental health issues. She leads meetings to discuss mental wellness, organizes awareness months, creates videos to decrease stigma around mental illness, and works to create an open dialogue regarding mental health at the school. She recently received a grant to fund a wellness room at Mount Vernon HS to create a safe space for students to relax and take a break during the day. Ava also serves as a representative with the Fairfax County Public Schools Student-Led Mental Health Working Group and has advocated for greater virtual support in schools for children and adolescents seeking mental health support.



**Tariq Aldalou, Senior
Mountain View
Alternative High School**



Tariq Aldalou

The war in Syria led Tariq Aldalou to move to Lebanon, where he worked as a volunteer teacher and administrator for LOYAC, a nonprofit organization that designs and develops programs which help support underprivileged and vulnerable communities. When Tariq started working for LOYAC, he packed and delivered food boxes to people living in refugee camps. After 2 months, he started teaching math to young students.

This led to additional classes teaching Arabic and English, not just to children but also to their parents, developing curricula for varying age groups. He also worked with adults to help develop their business skills. At Mountain View, Tariq voices his concerns for human rights by publishing in the school newspaper, The Mirror. Topics he has written about include water scarcity, education for all, and terrorism around the world.

**Sara Boddie, Senior
Oakton High School**

Sara Boddie founded a social justice club called "Be the Change" to create an environment for Oakton students to talk about topical issues of interest and inspire them to become community leaders and activists. The club began hosting regular meetings to discuss a variety of issues including the prison industry complex, LGBTQ rights, climate change, and racism within existing institutions such as school systems and the health care field.

They also organized a food drive and collected clothing for the needy. Sara attended a local protest in Vienna and delivered a spe

ech to 200 people that day. She spoke about the stereotyping of young Black children and what she and her brothers experienced as African Americans, knowing that she doesn't

SEE STUDENT PEACE AWARDS, PAGE 9

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Four members of the Fairfax County School Board appear in the group photos. From left, Karen Corbett Sanders, Mount Vernon District Representative; Rachna Sizemore Heizer, Vice-Chair, Member-at-Large; Laura Jane Cohen, Springfield District Representative; and Abrar Omeish Member-at-Large.

Student Peace Awards of Fairfax County

FROM PAGE 8

want these things to happen to her own children in the future.

high school with an ongoing blog, *Our Lives, A Different Kind of Crochet*. The blog discusses culture, biographical stories and the African Diaspora, and includes her award-winning poem, "Prolific."

Through podcasts and interviews, Christopher also advocates for Hispanic equity across Virginia.

As president of TJ's Black Student Union, Damilola guided its members to join the Minority Mentors Program alongside Hispanic Community Club members. This fostered cooperation between the two groups because they had similar goals: for upperclassmen to provide support to younger students. Damilola also represents TJ as one of Fairfax County's Student Equity Ambassador Leaders.



Owen (Vivian) Fuchs-Dubuque, Senior
Quander Road School

Owen Fuchs-Dubuque is a member of Quander Road's service club, Blossoming Beauties. She assisted with clothing and food drives, toy collections, hurricane relief, and their annual Thanksgiving outreaches.

She is also the lead in the EFE (Education for Employment) Road Café. She keeps their books, ensures that appropriate inventory is maintained, and keeps the Café clean and sanitized. The goal of the Road Café is to teach students good work ethics and to provide them with job skills to enable them to earn internships at local businesses. As an active member of the LGBTQ+ community, she makes it a point to accept others. She is currently completing an internship at an animal hospital and has rescued many animals.



Niyat Asefaw, Senior
South County High School

Niyat Asefaw volunteered at Amen Charitable Organization in Ethiopia, teaching math, physics, and English to grade school children at an orphanage in Ethiopia. She believes strongly in civic action to address economic, social and gender inequalities and discrimination, particularly concerning women, the elderly and refugees. She broadcasts her own sit-down talk show, "The Candid Hour," where she addresses and tackles uncomfortable topics within the Ethiopian community and the world. She also has been actively involved in the Model UN program at South County and became Secretary-General of the club in her junior year.

Loza Markos, Junior
West Potomac High School

Loza Markos raised money for gift packages for Ethiopian students with disabilities and volunteered last year at a hospital in Addis Ababa to assist and teach children with chronic disabilities and illnesses. She also served at a school for children with Autism Spectrum Disorders, teaching math and English and assuring their access to clean water by purchasing and delivering bottled water to the students and their families. Her homeroom teacher, Allyn Howe, noted that "Loza's work in teaching and charity in both Ethiopia and in the Alexandria area reflect her generosity and eagerness to improve the lives of those around her."



Andrea Agola, Senior
Robinson Secondary School

Andre Agola founded a club at Robinson called R.E.A.D. (Representation in English Allows for Dialogue), whose mission is "to collaborate with English teachers to increase POC (person of color) representation in the English curriculum." The club's intention is to cultivate awareness of the importance of diversity and inclusion in education, and to inspire new perspectives on social issues and the experiences faced by the POC community.

Andrea also helped organize a Fairfax County chapter of Diversify Our Narrative, a national non-profit organization that seeks to address the imbalances of materials taught in schools, especially in the areas of racial justice and history. Andrea started sharing her creative ideas before entering
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Damilola Awofisayo and Christopher Arraya, Seniors
Thomas Jefferson High School for Science and Technology

Damilola Awofisayo and Christopher Arraya are active members of the Student Equity Coalition, a student organization whose mission is to affirm, empower and elevate the diversity of TJ's school community. The Student Equity Coalition provides a forum for students to discuss issues, see other perspectives, and provide a voice for under-represented groups while creating a closer-knit community among students whose families come from different countries, cultures and religious backgrounds.

Damilola Awofisayo

Christopher is also the co-president of the Hispanic Community Club through which he created "Minority Mentors."



Vy Nguyen, Junior
W.T. Woodson High School

As a former Miss Northern Virginia Teen USA, Vy Nguyen volunteered for One Love Foundation, an organization that empowers young people from all backgrounds with the knowledge to identify and avoid abusive relationships. Vy has served as a Teen Ambassador, Workshop Facilitator, and Regional Social Media Team Leader. She has spoken on many panels and served on One Love's Film Fellowship Youth Council, which selects recipients of grants to create feature films on relationship abuse for classroom use. Vy is determined to help others avoid or, if necessary, surmount relationship abuse.

FROM PAGE 5

SUNDAY/MARCH 27

Chatham Rabbits Concert. 7 p.m. At Jammin' Java, 227 Maple Ave. E, Vienna. NC Bluegrass + Americana husband/wife duo Chatham Rabbits will perform a concert of their original material and share stories from the stage. Cost is \$10. Visit the website: <https://www.jammin-java.com/shows/chatham-rabbits/>

SUNDAY/MARCH 27

The Judy Carmichael Trio. 2 p.m. At The Alden at McLean Community Center, 1234 Ingleside Ave., McLean. Maybe you know her from 20 years on National Public Radio's "Jazz Inspired" or as one of the world's best stride pianists. But until you experience her brilliant combo of musicianship on the Great American Songbook, sultry vocals, comedic stories and interplay with her saxophonist/guitarist, you don't really know Judy Carmichael. Visit www.mcleancenter.org.

TUESDAY/MARCH 29

Celebrate Chaitra Navratri (Spring Navratri) Workshop. 6 p.m. Virtual. With the arrival of the Indian heat, comes the festival of Chaitra Navratri, a nine-day Hindu festival that marks the transition from spring to summer. The festivals of Navratri in general occur at times of seasonal change, with both Chaitra Navratri and Sharad Navratri (the one that occurs in the fall) happening when the length of the day and night are similar. Both are times of eating particular foods, fasting, and/or eating smaller quantities of food to support our bodies through seasonal changes. For more information, call the Center at 703-790-0123, TTY: 711, or visit the website, www.mcleancenter.org. For Old Firehouse activities, call 703-448-8336. For The Alden Box Office, call 571-296-8385.

WEDNESDAY/MARCH 30

Michael Oppenheimer Speaks. 7:30 p.m. Via Zoom. Topic is: Climate Change: What You Need to Know. Sponsored by the Northern Virginia Hebrew Congregation. Visit the website: <https://nvhc.shulcloud.com/form/speaker-series-3/30/2022.html>

MARCH 30-APRIL 3

Used Book Sale. At Reston Regional Library, 11925 Bowman Towne Drive, Reston. Sale of gently used books for children, young adults, and educators. Shop over 10,000 items. Hours are: Thursday, March 30 - 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.; Friday, April 1 - 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.; Saturday, April 2 - 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.; Sunday, April 3 - 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. Contact the Friends of the Reston Regional Library at 703-829-5467.

APRIL 1-17

"Nat Turner in Jerusalem." Friday and Saturday at 8 p.m., Sunday at 2 p.m. At NextStop Theatre Company, 269 Sunset Park Drive, Herndon. This powerful play delves into an important moment in American history, which has continued to shake the conscience of the nation for almost two centuries. Through powerful performances, audiences are invited to take part in a deep exploration of human morality and the grim reality of the past. Visit the website: <https://www.nextstoptheatre.org/nat-turner-in-jerusalem>

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Here's What's Happening at MCC!

The Old Firehouse



**Friday Night Trip
Dinner & A Movie**
Friday, March 25, 3:30-10 p.m.
\$50/\$40 OFC members.
Food is included.

Presented by The Alden



The Judy Carmichael Trio
Sunday, March 27, 2 p.m.
\$25/\$15 MCC district residents

The Old Firehouse



**Teacher Workday Trips
Ultimate Archery & Movie**
Friday, April 1, 8 a.m.-6 p.m.
\$60/\$50 MCC district residents

The Old Firehouse



Spring Break Trips
Monday, April 4 - Friday, April 8
Fees & Destinations Vary

Presented by The Alden



IN Series: Two World-Premiere Operas
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\$25/\$15 MCC district residents.

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Spring Community Parking Lot Sale
Sunday, April 10, 9 a.m.-1 p.m.
Free admission. Limited selling spaces still available.

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Cause for Concern?



By KENNETH B. LOURIE

If you've read any of my columns, you might be able to guess the answer. In my mind, it's not so much cause for concern as it is a topic for conversation. The topic being the side effects of cancer medicine/treatment. I remember hearing/reading that as it relates to cancer patients, sometimes the side effects of the medicine so severe/so debilitating that the patient must stop the treatment (which I never have). And in stopping what's managing - so to speak, the tumors, the tumors start growing and the cancer starts spreading and then shortening your life. In the past when I've asked my oncologist what would happen to my stable tumors if I were to stop treatment, he unequivocally stated: "I know what will happen. The tumors will grow." And as you might imagine, tumors growing has been my greatest fear.

Per my last series of diagnostic scans in late Dec. and early March, tumors are stable, and life goes on. I had been anxious about these scans because previously we had reduced the dosage of my thyroid cancer medicine down to 10 mg from the initial 24 mg. We had to do this because the side effects from the medicine was adversely affecting my ability to perform my activities of daily living. Walking upstairs or even a modest incline would take my breath away; as would bending over or even standing over the commode. However, this original maximum dose was keeping the tumors stable. Why risk that just so I can breathe easier?

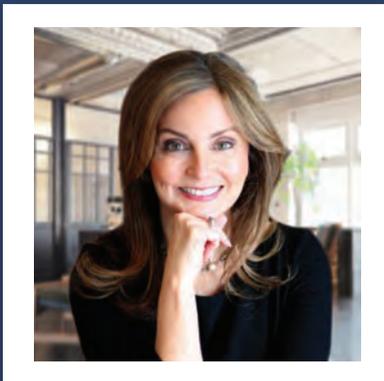
In talking with my oncologist over the years, I've learned - and experienced, that cancer medicine is constantly adjusted and changed your body reacts negatively. The goal, according to my oncologist is to try and find that "sweet spot" as I call it. That's the spot where the minimum amount of medicine tolerated by the patient is doing the maximum good, and of course, when the side effects are the least impactful. Which is where I've been for the past six months or so: reduced dose, less side effects, while still having "stable" results on my quarterly scans.

Recently however, my breathing has become more labored, even while performing less arduous tasks. My wife, Dina, asked me today, after she saw me pull over in the house and sit down to catch my breath, if I thought I should contact my oncologist and tell him of my recent difficulties because it's new-ish and any new symptoms need to be reported to the doctor.

But lowering my dose yet again really scares me. At some point/dosage, the medicine stops being effective. And I'm not sure if one can experiment with a lower dose and if there are complications/disappointments, simply revert to the higher dose and return to the previous abnormal? My oncologist has also said that he can try to keep me from going down, but once down, he can't likely bring me back up. Ergo, my dilemma.

Obviously, it's prudent to keep the oncologist in my loop; he does kind of have my life in the speaker of his stethoscope and should be apprised of all changes in my health. Nevertheless, a reduction in my medicine could be a turning point in the wrong direction, and one quite frankly from which I might never recover.

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



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