

CONNECTION

Reston ♦ Herndon ♦ ^{Oak Hill} Chantilly ♦ CENTRE VIEW



CALENDAR, PAGE 9 ♦ CLASSIFIEDS, PAGE 10

PHOTO BY BONNIE HOBBS/THE CONNECTION

New School Chief
Named Amid Protest

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9-5, You'll Love It

PAGE 5

Making the Case for More

PAGE 6

From left are Tyler Hicks
as Rapunzel's prince
and Nitish Kommoju as
Cinderella's prince.

Into the
Woods

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NEWS

New I-66 West Exit to Route 28 South

As of this Thursday, April 21, the exit from I-66 West to Route 28 South will be temporarily relocated approximately one-half mile prior to (east of) the current exit ramp. This temporary exit to Route 28 South will be in place for about two weeks as construction at the I-66/Route 28 Interchange advances as part of the Transform 66 Outside of the Beltway Project.

If drivers miss the new exit location, they can use the detour route to reach Route 28 South by exiting to Route 29 Centreville, turning left to exit to Route 29 North and then following the signs to Route 28 South. All work is weather-dependent.

Police Work

Detectives have been investigating several crimes since last September that have occurred overnight at different businesses in the Northpoint Village Shopping Center. On Sept. 4 and Oct. 5, the owners of the Matsutake Sushi and Sake Bar reported someone damaged the windows of their business overnight. On March 30, a man entered Gregorio's Trattoria and Bobby's Bagel Café overnight and stole merchandise as well as cash. As detectives continued their investigation, they learned the suspect also entered and stole from the Glory Days Grill nearby. Detectives recovered digital evidence from the businesses. They developed a profile of a suspect believed to be responsible for these crimes.

Friday night, while conducting a surveillance operation related to the burglaries, a detective saw the suspect near the North Point Village Shopping Center trespassing on private property. Detectives attempted to stop the man, but he ran into a nearby wooded area. Officers saturated the area and took him into custody after finding him walking down Reston Parkway. When officers arrested the man, he was in the possession of burglarious tools to include gloves, a multi-tool, an Allen-wrench set, a screwdriver, and a knife. An additional search of a nearby home led to the recovery of property stolen from these crimes.

A 22 year old Reston man was charged with possession of burglarious tools, three counts of burglary, two counts of destruction of property, and one count of trespassing. He was taken to the Adult Detention Center and held without bond. Detectives continue to investigate to determine if he has committed additional burglaries in the County.

"Our detectives recognized a pattern in this case and worked diligently with community members and business partners to identify a suspect. A heads-up detective spotted the suspect who fled on foot. Detectives and officers worked quickly, and after a search of the area, an alert patrol officer took the man into custody. This is a wonderful example of our investigatory team working side by side with our community members and businesses to improve public safety," said Captain Frederick Chambers, Commander, Criminal Investigations Division.

If you have info about this crime please contact detectives at our Reston Police District at 703-478-0904, option 2. Tips can also be submitted anonymously through Crime Solvers by phone - 1-866-411-TIPS (866-411-8477)

CONNECTION

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An independent, locally owned weekly newspaper delivered to homes and businesses.

**Published by
Local Media Connection LLC**

**1606 King Street
Alexandria, Virginia 22314**

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Public Hearings



Funding the Right Transportation Projects

You are invited to share comments on transportation projects that have been recommended for funding in the FY2023-2028 Six-Year Improvement Program (SYIP). Additionally, pursuant to §33.2-202, comments will be accepted for new projects valued in excess of \$25 million. The Commonwealth Transportation Board will take your comments into consideration as it develops the FY2023-2028 SYIP. The program allocates public funds to highway, road, bridge, rail, bicycle, pedestrian and public transportation projects. All federally eligible projects in the SYIP will be included in the Statewide Transportation Improvement Program to document how Virginia will obligate its federal funds.

Meeting materials will be available <https://www.ctb.virginia.gov/planning/springmeetings2022/default.asp> before April 25, 2022.

Public meetings begin at 4 p.m. in each of the locations except as noted below:
A formal comment period will be held at these meetings.

Monday, April 25 Fredericksburg District James Monroe High School 2300 Washington Avenue Fredericksburg, Virginia 22401	Tuesday, April 26 Culpeper District Culpeper District Auditorium 1601 Orange Road Culpeper, Virginia 22701	Thursday, April 28 Richmond District Richmond District Auditorium 2430 Pine Forest Drive Colonial Heights, Virginia 23834
Monday, May 2 Staunton District Blue Ridge Community College Plecker Center 1 College Lane Weyers Cave, Virginia 24486	Tuesday, May 3 Lynchburg District Virginian Hotel, 712 Church Street Lynchburg, Virginia 24504	Wednesday, May 4 *Northern Virginia District Northern Virginia District Office Potomac Conference Room 4975 Alliance Drive Fairfax, Virginia 22030 <i>*meeting begins at 5:30 p.m.</i>
Monday, May 9 Hampton Roads District Hampton Roads District Auditorium 7511 Burbage Drive, Suffolk, Virginia 23435	Wednesday, May 11 Bristol District Southwest Virginia Higher Education Center One Partnership Circle Abingdon, Virginia 24210	Thursday, May 12 Salem District Holiday Inn Valley View 3315 Ordway Drive NW Roanoke, Virginia 24017

*The Northern Virginia District meeting will serve as the required joint public meeting with the Northern Virginia Transportation Authority, the Northern Virginia Transportation Commission, the Virginia Railway Express, and the CTB per § 33.2-214.3 of the Code of Virginia.

You can submit comments by email or mail by May 23, 2022.

For roads and highways: Six-YearProgram@VDOT.Virginia.gov, or Infrastructure Investment Director, Virginia Department of Transportation 1401 East Broad St., Richmond, VA 23219.

For rail and public transportation: DRPTPR@drpt.virginia.gov, Public Information Office, Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation 600 East Main Street, Suite 2102, Richmond VA, 23219.

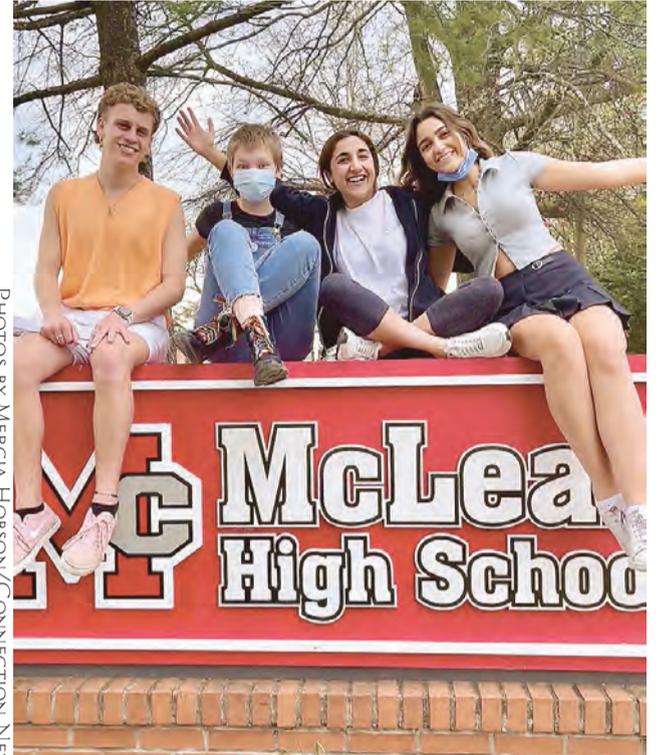
The Commonwealth is committed to ensuring that no person is excluded from participation in, or denied the benefits of its services on the basis of race, color or national origin, as protected by Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. If you need further information on these policies or special assistance for persons with disabilities or limited English proficiency, please contact the Virginia Department of Transportation's Title VI Compliance Officer at 804-786-2730 or the Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation's Title VI Compliance Officer at 804-786-4440 (TTY users call 711).



Student protest over the superintendent selection process at McLean High School last week.



Students stages walk out protests at McLean, Westfield and Mount Vernon High Schools, among others.



Protestors at McLean High School (from left): Atticus Gore, Sierra Balleisen, Ava Farivar, and Layla Bizri, climb up on the school sign after demonstrating to raise awareness, advocate for their rights, and for students to have a voice in the selection of the new FCPS superintendent.

PHOTOS BY MERCIA HOBSON/CONNECTION NEWSPAPERS

No Stopping School Board Naming New Division Superintendent

Student protests, petition and NAACP objections fail to derail the endgame.

BY MERCIA HOBSON
THE CONNECTION

On April 14, 250 high school students in Fairfax County staged walkouts and protests at multiple schools, including Westfield, McLean, Oakton, and Mount Vernon high schools

organized by the Pride Liberation Project. It is a student-led coalition of queer and allied FCPS students who advocate for the rights of LGBTQIA students.

The Fairfax County School Board was scheduled to vote that evening naming Michelle Reid, Ed.D., as Fairfax County Public Schools' next superintendent. Reid

is currently the superintendent of the Northshore School District in Washington state.

Sierra Balleisen, a McLean High School student protestor, said, "I'm here as a neurodivergent student trying to advocate for our rights and allow the students to have a voice in the new superintendent ... There should be nothing about us

without us."

According to Pride Liberation Projects' Student Statement Supporting NAACP Letter Regarding Superintendent Search, outreach to the community during the search for new superintendents was limited to fifteen days in January. The only outreach to students was an 11-student panel, chosen

through a process not revealed to the general student body. "Though these 11 students are likely immensely qualified, they nonetheless cannot represent the views of a 180,000+ student body that attends 198 schools and centers, speaks 200+ languages, and belongs to a diverse range of socio-
SEE STUDENT PROTEST, PAGE 4

Fairfax School Board's Frustration Shows

Does the process diminish new superintendent's appointment?

BY MERCIA HOBSON
THE CONNECTION

At its regular meeting on April 14, the Fairfax County School Board voted 9 to 3 to appoint Michelle Reid, Ed.D. as division superintendent of Fairfax County Public Schools, effective July 1, 2022, and ending June 30, 2026, replacing Superintendent Scott Brabrand, who is stepping down. The appointment was accompanied by concern and angst by

school board members. Laura Jane Cohen (Springfield) described the board as "a collective group of 12 very different people."

Rachna Sizemore Heizer (Vice Chair and Member-at-Large) said that Reid performed consistently at the top of the candidates for superintendent of FCPS, impressing them with her "thoughtful, brilliant, and insightful analysis, her work around STEM, and strong academics for all students, and an understanding that our focus must also be on the whole child." Sizemore Heizer said she was

also impressed with Reid's work on racial and educational justice and inclusion, demonstrating support for and deep understanding of LGBTQIA students, students of color, students from various re-



Rachna Sizemore Heizer (Vice Chair and Member-at-Large)

ligious backgrounds, English language learner students, immigrants, students with disabilities, and those with different gender identity. "She was the only one to talk about ableism and demonstrate understanding of the concepts of neurodiversity."

Karen Keys-Gamarra (Member-at-Large) made a motion to delay the vote, seconded by Dr. Ricardy Anderson (Mason District). Keys-Gamarra addressed
SEE FAIRFAX SCHOOL, PAGE 7

Student Protests, Petition and NAACP Objections Fail to Derail the Endgame



Jaya Nachnani, Mount Vernon High School student, was an organizer of the protest.

FROM PAGE 3

economic backgrounds,” said PLP’s statement.

The student statement referenced Reid’s record on closing achievement gaps and protecting students’ free speech, describing it as “lackluster.” “Moreover, Northshore School District’s history on protecting neurodivergent and disabled students is poor. For example, community members raised concerns of the restraint and seclusion of disabled students.”

“The need to hear our voices is more important than ever given the various concerns that have emerged over Dr. Reid’s approach to student journalism, neurodivergent students, and students of color,” protest organizer and Westfield student Aaryan Rawal said.

Reid and Dr. Cheryl Logan, the superintendent of Omaha Public Schools, had been the two finalists for the FCPS superintendent position. A select community panel met with the two candidates on March 28 and 29.

According to the April 9 Fairfax County NAACP release, the panel was made up of “individual members of selected School Board Advisory Committees; a few chosen FCPS elementary, middle, and high school principals; five members from the Fairfax County Council of PTAs (FCCPTA) to represent the five FCPS geographic regions; a representative from Northern Virginia Community College; a representative of the Fairfax County Federation of Citizens Associations (whose mission is to protect Homeowners Association interests); and the Fairfax County Chamber of Commerce.”

The panel did not include representatives from the Fairfax NAACP or the Pride Liberation Project.

The Fairfax NAACP said that it had been “inundated with messages from whistleblowers (serving on the panel) sharing names and data points as well as overall impressions.”

The Fairfax NAACP said that many panelists were “shocked” that a superintendent (Reid) with only a \$400 million budget vs. a \$2.7 billion FCPS budget, 2,100 employees vs. 25,000 FCPS employees, and achievement gaps despite relatively high wealth and low poverty could have ended up as one of FCPS’s final two candidates.

The Fairfax NAACP reached out to school board members. While they received responses from a few, the members’ reactions were not about the data or comparative characteristics of the divisions but rather to express their dismay that whistleblowers reached out to Fairfax NAACP and Fairfax NAACP acted on their behalf.

“With so much at stake, we have determined to share this information with the public,” the Fairfax NAACP said.

The Omaha World-Herald reported on April 15 that Dr. Cheryl Logan informed the Omaha Public School board a week before that she had taken her name out of the FCPS superintendent search. Logan’s announcement and the NAACP’s release occurred on the same day. With Logan’s withdrawal, Reid was now the leading candidate to succeed Dr. Scott Brabrand, the current FCPS Superintendent.

In the 72 hours leading up to the protests and the school board’s pending confirmation vote for Reid, the Pride Liberation Project circulated amongst FCPS high school students its petition addressed to FCPS school board members and



Student protestors at Westfield High School.

GR Consulting. “FCPS cannot select a new Superintendent without thoroughly reaching out to students and addressing concerns,” the student group said.

In their petition, PLP requested that “FCPS conduct a public audit of the Superintendent search process and publicly release clear indications that the Superintendent was chosen for demonstrating success in key areas, including community outreach, closing achievement and opportunity gaps, mental health access for all students, and equitable school experiences for vulnerable student populations, such as neurodivergent, people of color, LGBTQIA+, and English language learner students.”

Westfield student Aaryan Rawal reported that over 500 students signed the petition requesting that GR Consulting and the school board do more to reach out to students during the final stages of the superintendent search. PLP proposed holding student town hall meetings during high school free (advisory) time to allow students to voice concerns and provide board members with “important context.”

Jaya Nachnani was the primary organizer of the Mount Vernon High School protest. On April 14, she tweeted that they had two protest goals: “to get more time to investigate the allegations made against Reid and raise concerns regarding the difference in demographics between the counties (FCPS and Northshore school districts).”

FCPS has an enrollment nearly



Student protestors at McLean High School



Student protest at Mount Vernon High School.

PHOTO CONTRIBUTED BY PLP

PHOTO CONTRIBUTED BY PLP

PHOTO BY MERCIA HOBSON/CONNECTION NEWSPAPERS

HIGH SCHOOL MUSICAL

Really Funny with Important Message

Westfield High's musical, '9 to 5,' takes the stage.

BY BONNIE HOBBS
THE CONNECTION

Full of laughter and heart, "9 to 5" is Westfield High's upcoming Cappies show. And as it did with audiences who saw the movie, this story struck a chord with Westfield High's theater director, Enza Giannone-Hosig.

"I'm a working mother, working more than 9 a.m.-5 p.m., and I related to it – and especially to Violet's character," she said. "Especially after the last year-and-a-half, we're right back to that grind. I remember how funny this movie was, and I wanted us to perform something that would make us laugh and raise our spirits. I wanted something for the little guy who wins at the end."

Show times are Friday-Saturday, April 29-30 and May 6-7, at 7 p.m.; and Sunday, May 1, at 2 p.m. Tickets are \$15, adults; \$10, students (with I.D.s) at the door (cash or checks only) or via www.westfieldtheatre.com. All seats are reserved. (Recommended for ages 14 and up).

"It's interesting how this story was based on a real, 9-5 movement, organized by women being mistreated in the workplace," said Giannone-Hosig. "Jane Fonda found out about it and produced this movie, and Dolly Parton wrote the songs. And even though it takes place in 1979, it's still relevant today. We're still hearing about women being mistreated at work and making less money than men. So we've come far, but not far enough."

"Audiences will laugh at the slapstick humor and enjoy the over-the-top choreography. But ultimately, it's a heartwarming story with relevance to what women are still experiencing. People will also enjoy being back in the theater with a live orchestra and seeing actors onstage with full costumes and sets. The actors wear 1979 business casual, with a little pop of color every time one of



BONNIE HOBBS/THE CONNECTION

Among the main characters in Westfield's "9 to 5" are (from left) Julia Manser, Elli Vlattas, Elias Collier and Isabel Nemati (as Roz, the boss's assistant).

the secretaries fantasizes about killing her boss."

Junior Elias Collier plays Franklin Hart, boss of Consolidated – the company where almost all the story takes place. "He's misogynistic and is all about the women," said Collier. "He's one-dimensional and immature; he never learns anything and is more like a man-child."

Collier likes his role because "He's very eccentric and completely opposite of me. It's really fun to explore his bad side because, as an actor, that's how you grow. My favorite song is 'Here for You,' which he sings in his head to Doralee. He wants to get with her, and it's such a funny song."

Audiences will love the show, he said, because of its terrific choreography, dancing, singing and acting. "The singers and the three main actresses [playing employees Doralee, Judy and Violet] are amazing," said Collier. "And when you put it all together, it makes for an incredible experience. Also, the set design is really immersive; it's two stories, and we can actually walk up the

SEE WESTFIELD, PAGE 8

IAD Master Plan Public Open House Workshop

Wednesday, April 27, 2022

Time: 6:00 p.m. to 8:30 p.m.

Location: Washington Dulles Airport Marriott
45020 Aviation Drive
Dulles, VA 20166

The Metropolitan Washington Airports Authority is preparing a Master Plan for the Washington Dulles International Airport. The Airport Master Plan is a comprehensive study that describes short-, medium- and long-term improvements proposed for the airport. It is designed to establish a roadmap for incremental development to meet future aviation demand and other airport needs for the next 25 years.

The Master Planning process is designed as an inclusive process that encourages citizen participation. A public open house workshop will be held to provide information on the study process, forecasts of activity, and future facility needs. Representatives from the Airports Authority and the Consultant team will be available to answer questions and receive comments on the ongoing Master Planning analyses and tasks completed to date.



For additional information, please scan the QR code or visit us at the website below: <https://www.flydulles.com/about-airport/master-plan/dulles-international-airport-master-plan>

The Metropolitan Washington Airports Authority Master Plan team can also be contacted at: IADMaster.Plan@mwa.com

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April 30th - May 1st at
The Shops at Wisconsin Place



Sara O'Connor

Needing More at County Budget Hearings

Comments favor funding for low-income and affordable housing, police and first responders pay increases, parks, and more.

BY MERCIA HOBSON
THE CONNECTION

Key concerns at the Board of Supervisors last week included competitive compensation for county employees, particularly police and first responders; support for vital nonprofit community programs and county parks; and affordable and low-income housing on an ongoing basis.

Fairfax County Board of Supervisors held their Public Hearing on the County Executive's Proposed FY 2023 Advertised Budget Plan, the Advertised Capital Improvement Program for Fiscal Years 2023-2027 (CIP) (With Future Fiscal Years to 2032) and the Current Appropriation in the FY 2022 Revised Budget Plan from April 12-14. Residents, employees, and nonprofit and organization leaders testified.

Stella Pekarsky, chair of the Fairfax County School Board, said she appreciated the collaboration with the Board of Supervisors and thanked County Executive Bryan Hill. He had presented the Board with an advertised budget that "fully funds the superintendent's fiscal year 2023 proposed budget. "Our schools are the cornerstone of a strong community, educating the leaders of tomorrow," she said.

Fairfax County employees, including SEIU Virginia 512 members, testified. Last October, a collective bargaining ordinance passed in Fairfax County, allowing employees more voice for improved pay, benefits, and working conditions. Members requested fully-funded pay plans and lowered health care expenditures.

SEIU member Karen Johnson is a child educator who testified on housing challenges. "I can't afford to live in Fairfax, so I live in Fredericksburg," she said, leading to a four-hour daily round-trip commute.

SEIU member Sunny Carito is a county librarian. Carito says fully-funded raises would help offset rising healthcare costs that have been "gobbling up" her earnings. "[Due to rising healthcare costs,] my take-home pay, with the same benefit choices, has fallen \$75 per paycheck," she said.

Scott Spitzer, president of the McLean Citizens Association, testified that there were "reasonable and prudent budgetary approaches and specific proposed funding that the MCA urges the Board of Supervisors to revise from the advertised budget." MCA advocated for funding the Park Authority's proposal for an additional \$751,954 for natural resource management and sustainability. He expressed concern about the county police department's 200 open positions.

An MCA resolution encouraged the county to reduce the transfer to the Fairfax County Public Schools to pay for additional spending on maintenance, including natural resource management for the Park Authority, and larger raises for new, less senior police officers. "FCPS student enrollment has de-



Penny Gross



Elizabeth Villatoro



Kerrie Wilson



James Waller



PHOTO CONTRIBUTED BY SEIU VIRGINIA 512

Karen Johnson, SEIU Virginia 512 member.

clined and is projected to continue declining through FY 2027," Spitzer said.

"There is no human service response without the nonprofits," said Allison DeCoursey, president and CEO of United Community. The organization provides human services along Richmond Highway in Mount Vernon and Lee districts. DeCoursey described the poverty and unequal opportunity there, particularly in two of the county's three poorest census tracts, calling it an island.

"The life expectancy of folks on this island is ten years less than the mean of the county; 31 percent are uninsured. The median household income for Fairfax is \$112,000. On this island, it's \$55,000."

The nonprofit is working to change islands of disadvantage and create communities of opportunity. The organization's first Lived Experience Consultant is Elizabeth Villatoro. She said, "Sixteen years ago, I am a person who lived in the shadows as a woman, a mother, and an immigrant for 14 years. Nobody saw me." Villatoro started as a school volunteer, then became a Neighborhood Ambassador.

"This country gave me a lot even when I

was in the shadow. Today I feel like I am a part of this country because I can give you something back." She said when she first came here, she had only cereal to eat. "I remember how terrible that feels. So, my message to you today is, please don't give up. We need you; we need your support. We really need you."

Anita Irvin is the executive director of Insight Memory Care Center. "As of 2020, an estimated 14 percent of Fairfax County residents are 65 or older, and by 2035, this number is projected to be 17.6 percent. Funding from [Consolidated Community Funding Pool] will support our programs, services, and financial assistance fund, allowing more residents in Fairfax County to receive the care and support that they desperately need."

Deborah Hammer, chair of the Fairfax Area Disability Service Board (FA-DSB), said that 87,000 citizens of Fairfax County have a disability. She requested the board's support and proposed a funding increase for the co-responder model, allowing first responders in Fairfax County to better meet

the needs of people having a behavioral health crisis. She also advocated for permanent funding for one nurse in each Fairfax County public school; and funding for five new positions in the county's Department of Housing and Community Development to support the creation, rehabilitation, and preservation of affordable housing throughout Fairfax County.

"FA-DSB specifically requests that the current 5 percent set aside for accessible housing be increased to 10 percent due to the extensive need in the county for housing that can be accessed by those with physical or motor disabilities," Hammer said.

James Waller, president of the Friends of Colvin Run Mill, member of the Alliance of Park Friends, said that at another budget hearing, Supervisor James Walkinshaw, "hit the nail on the head."

"To win the new competition to attract firms with remote workers, and thereby help drive the county's budget and economic growth ... more investment is needed in schools and our premier parks," he said.

Waller said parks had received low priority in the budget, half of what they were 30 years ago. The tax of the park taxpayer budget was the equivalent of 2.6 cents of our real estate taxes and now is the equivalent of one cent, he said. "Give parks a higher priority ... Give them two cents."

Kerrie Wilson spoke on behalf of the Affordable Housing Advisory Council: housing is foundational to the county's prosperity, its communities, and families. The board recently adopted a new minimum goal of 10,000 affordable homes by 2034.

"But I want to put that in the context of the initial need that was documented in 2018, where we have a gap of nearly 31,000 homes already existing, in addition to making room for the new workers and people we want in our county," she said. According to Wilson, reaching the county's minimum goal and the unmet housing needs requires a dedicated recurring source of funds to get to the resource equivalent of the two pennies of the real estate tax that was committed.

According to Wilson, short-term carryover funds, federal ARPA, and other nonrecurring resources are essential. "But they won't meet the needs to sustain the pipeline that is already underway with the good efforts of FCRHA and the housing department."

"Recovery is years in the making," said Wilson. "I want to acknowledge Supervisor Alcorn; we serve in his district. I think he would agree that there has been recent awareness and sort of maybe awakening to the plight, particularly of people who remain unhoused."

According to the Budget Process Timeline, on April 22, the Board of Supervisors Budget Committee meets for pre-markup. On April 26, the Board of Supervisors marks up the FY 2023 Budget, and on May 10, the Board of Supervisors adopts FY 2023 Budget. On May 26, the School Board adopts its FY2023 Approved Budget. The FY 2023 Budget year begins on July 1, 2022.

Fairfax School Board's Frustration Shows

FROM PAGE 3

Reid, who sat in the audience, saying that what she was about to say had little to do with Reid but with the process. "As many people know, our community has expressed some outrage. I can't blame them," Keys-Gamarra said. The people who reached out were community members, according to Keys-Gamarra. "It is our job to hear them. For a public school system, our school system belongs to the public. So, my objection today has to do with the fact that we seem to be rushing this decision ... This is their community, and they care. It's our responsibility to listen and not to jam this vote through. In my opinion, it is sending them a message that they don't matter."



Karen Keys-Gamarra
(Member-at-Large)

Dr. Ricardy Anderson (Mason District) concurred, saying that the community bombarded them with emails and phone calls. "They have asked to be heard. I strongly believe that we should afford ourselves the gift of time to reach out to those who have expressed their concerns and to listen more closely before finalizing our decision."



Dr. Ricardy Anderson
(Mason District)

Laura Jane Cohen (Springfield) said she respected how Keys-Gamarra and Anderson felt and would not pretend to say that she understood their hurt. She said the system was imperfect, run by human beings. "There's not a person up here who does not understand how high the stakes are ... I'm proud of who we chose, and I trust you to get us to where we need to be. I hope that we're all going to do our best to work together and figure out how in the heck we got here."



Laura Jane Cohen
(Springfield)

Elaine Tholen (Dranesville) said she struggled with this as the board worked for months and held public sessions. "We tried to hear from the public. I am really hurt people feel disenfranchised ... All I can say is I worked in good faith. I have read resumes. I have interviewed people over and over and over. What we put these candidates through

was so intense. We got to a point where we had two incredible, incredible people. As we slowly went through the interview process, the decision was tough ... We voted as the board, and Dr. Michelle Reid came out on top, fair and square."



Elaine Tholen
(Dranesville)

Megan McLaughlin (Braddock) expressed empathy for her colleagues and the public, who felt hurt and concerned about the process. She reaffirmed that the board was transparent in publishing the calendar and the process. It would be a confidential search because the board was trying to attract the best candidate, and they didn't necessarily want to leave their districts. She said that the recruiting company had found strong candidates, and she wanted to celebrate the board's incredible finalist. "I don't believe that we are discounting the people who we were elected to represent. I don't feel that we've rushed this process or had a lack of transparency. Our calendar, our timeline, our entire process was all published ... I believe all 12 of us care deeply, and we recognize that, sadly, there are hurt members in our community."



Megan McLaughlin
(Braddock)

Tamara Derenak Kaufax (Lee) welcomed Reid as the board's top candidate. "We knew that when we extended the offer to you on April 2, we were getting a visionary educator who was known both regionally and nationally for your outstanding instructional leadership." Kaufax said that FCPS is not without its challenges, but Reid had described herself as a "visionary, as an incurable optimist."



Tamara Derenak Kaufax
(Lee)

"You will need that here," Kaufax said. "I look forward to working with you to build community trust and to bring our community together."

Melanie K. Meren (Hunter Mill) described Reid as a "thought leader," saying it is an accomplishment few people can obtain because it demands discipline of curiosity, investigation of data, and the calculated

risk of innovation. Meren said Dr. Reid demonstrated intimate knowledge of data about Fairfax, and she heard in her voice the eagerness to see and experience for herself that data as it comes to life through the county's students, staff, and communities. Meren appreciated how Reid understood the value of play. "I believe that Dr. Reid will lead Fairfax County into fulfilling the birthright that is public education in America."



Melanie K. Meren
(Hunter Mill)

Karen Corbett Sanders (Mount Vernon) said that this had been a difficult decision for this whole board. "It impacts everything FCPS does as a system and each student in ways that the school board knows and ways that they do not yet know. ... As stewards of a \$3.3 billion entity, we know that FCPS is both a complex business entity and an academic center of excellence," Sanders said. She knew the application process had been extensive, yet FCPS's needs were vast and differed from those of the district Reid currently serves as superintendent. "My decision to vote no tonight is a difficult one, and it is based on my concerns that center around the ability to scale up from a small school system ... to a system the size of Fairfax County with 180,000 students, (and) the absence of experience in a large, diverse district."



Karen Corbett Sanders
(Mount Vernon)

Karl Frisch (Providence) said he was thrilled when the school system received dozens of "amazing, qualified, and impressive applicants." "Through round after round of interviews, with tough, probing questions, I was always impressed with Dr. Reid's answers, not only for the clarity and detail with which she described her work as superintendent, but with her insights about Fairfax County Public Schools," Frisch said. According to Frisch, Dr. Reid "routinely spoke unprompted about the ways she addressed the equity needs of her student body: LGBTQ students, Muslim students, students of color, English language learners, students with special needs, and more." Her commitment to eq-



Karl Frisch
(Providence)

uity was woven through her answers and accomplishments, he said.

Abrar Omeish (Member-at-Large) said, "Today, I am asking for a rare commodity in our public arena, and all I can offer you is good faith, hard work, thoughtful consideration, and a track record of sincerity, dedication, and advocacy for equity and inclusion. I'm not here to dismiss anyone's feelings nor discredit the multitude of perspectives, and insights community members have around how we experienced today." Omeish added that she agreed that there were concerns. She had her own reservations. But the reality was that "the work of democracy is always messy to bring 12 people behind one decision. I'm supporting Dr. Reid today for several exciting reasons, one of which is because she had the most holistic equity responses we've encountered."



Abrar Omeish
(Member-at-Large)

Stella Pekarsky (Chair, Sully) spoke directly to Reid. "Nothing is easy in Fairfax. But I am sorry, I am sorry because you deserve a much warmer, better welcome than we were able to give you tonight. And it is my opinion that none of this has to do with you. You are an exceptional educator- exceptional; and those who strive for excellence, never settle for anything else."



Stella Pekarsky
(Chair, Sully)

Pekarsky said she was honored to have Reid present, selected by the school board, as it begins writing the next chapter for Fairfax County Public Schools in partnership with the community.

"**Dr. Michelle Reed** exemplifies the critical characteristics of servant leadership in every way and is driven by a vision for public schools that is resolutely student-centered, a vision not for what education is today, but what it could be, what it must be for kids who will be the leaders of tomorrow."



Michelle Reid, incoming superintendent

Reid received her doctorate in Educational Leadership from the University of Washington, master's degree in educational administration from University of Washington, and her bachelor's degree in natural science and chemistry from the University of Puget Sound.

HIGH SCHOOL MUSICAL

Westfield High's Musical, '9 to 5,' Takes the Stage

FROM PAGE 5

stairs. My character is either at the top level, watching everyone and seeing himself as better than them, or at the bottom, yelling at them."

Portraying Doralee is senior Kaitlyn Long. "She's flirty without trying, full of energy, colorful and a fun person to be around," said Long. "She's also very strong and doesn't take any nonsense from anyone."

"It's fun playing her because she gets me out of my comfort zone," she continued. "It's my first lead, and she's openly sexual, so it's harder for me. The music I get to sing is amazing, and I have entertaining scenes with a lot of unique characters."

Long especially likes the "Cowgirl's Revenge" number that she sings. "It's fast-paced, and the message behind it is that Doralee is taking back her life," she said. "She's also getting back at Mr. Hart for all the times he's put her down." As for the show, she said what will resonate with the audience is its amount of humor, the girl power and the camaraderie among the three women and the cast as a whole.

Senior Elli Vlattas plays Judy. "She's an innocent, new girl with no office experience," said Vlattas. "Then she meets Violet and Doralee and finds her tribe and where she needs to be in life. She's recently divorced but, by the end of the show, she realizes she doesn't need a man



BONNIE HOBBS/THE CONNECTION

Portraying office secretaries are (from left) Anna Kaplan, Zoe Brennan, Natalie Kattas, Julia Manser, Elli Vlattas and Isabel Nemati.

to be happy."

"I love this role because Judy's similar to me and it's fun to put myself into her shoes, thinking how I'll be the new girl, next year, at college," explained Vlattas. "And she has the biggest progression on the show – she learns to stand up for herself."

Her favorite song is her solo, "Get Out and Stay Out," which she sings to her ex-husband who wants to return to her. "But she

sends him away," said Vlattas. "It's very empowering, and others in tough situations can relate to it."

The show will appeal to audiences, she said, because "It's a really funny comedy with an important message – that everyone should be equal everywhere, whether in the workplace or at home. I think everyone will love it. So many people have seen the movie; and now, high-schoolers will see the

play – and they can all come together and enjoy it."

Portraying Violet is senior Julia Manser. "She's been working at the company the longest and aspires to be the female CEO," said Manser. "She's a strong, hard-working, single mother and a widow. She's a no-nonsense person, but also has a kind side."

"I'm really enjoying playing her because I'm a bossy person, so I like getting to act that out," she continued. "And it's been fun working with the other two girls to play up the comedy. Unlike some of the other characters, Violet is three-dimensional, so I appreciate her nuances."

Manser especially likes the song, "I Just Might," which the three women sing individually and then together. "They're each talking about their own dreams," she said. "Violet's wishing to be treated equally at work and thinking, 'I just might get to a higher position and be treated fairly.'"

She said audiences will enjoy "the comedy and the friendship between the main characters and the ensemble members, as well. They'll also love getting to see Dolly Parton's music performed onstage and the high-energy choreography." Regarding the show's message, said Manser, it's that "Women throughout history have worked hard and wished for things they deserve, and their stories need to be highlighted more."

Student Protests, Petition and NAACP Objections Fail to Derail the Endgame

FROM PAGE 4

ten times larger than Northshore (20K v.180K students). According to a demographic and program comparison released by the Fairfax County NAACP on April 9, 2022, FCPS has five times the percentage of Black students, slightly more than twice the percentage of Hispanic students, more than twice the percentage of students eligible for free and reduced priced meals, and nearly three times the number of English Language Learners. The differences in actual numbers of students in each category are vast.

In one of its final attempts to be heard, Pride Liberation Project issued an April 14 release, stating: "Don't confirm Dr. Reid or any other candidate on Thursday, April 14 ... until students and community members are allowed to participate in the process through student town-halls in each of FCPS' regions during advisory periods, along with community panels open to any organization."

On the evening of April 14, stu-

"Dr. Michelle Reid, incoming superintendent exemplifies the critical characteristics of servant leadership in every way and is driven by a vision for public schools that is resolutely student-centered, a vision not for what education is today, but what it could be, what it must be for kids who will be the leaders of tomorrow."

– Stella Pekarsky (Chair, Sully)

dent Aaryan Rawal said, as the Fairfax County School Board was preparing to vote on Reid's confirmation. that PLP sent its petition to school board members and GR Consulting that evening.

When asked what response they received, Rawal said that the only response from FCPS was a call from someone in the division's communications office who "pressured us not to criticize Dr. Reid until after tonight's meeting."

Following nearly two hours of discussion, the FCSB voted 9 to 3

naming Michelle Reid, Ed.D., as the next division superintendent of Fairfax County Public Schools, effective July 1, 2022, and ending June 30, 2026.

School Board members Melanie K. Meren, Elaine V. Tholen, Megan McLaughlin, Tamara D. Kafax, Rachna S. Heizer - vice chair, Stella Pekarsky - chair, Laura Jane H. Cohen, Karl V. Frisch, and Abrar Omeish all voted in favor. Ricardy J. Anderson, Karen A. Keys-Gamarra, and Karen Corbett Sanders voted no.

Westfield student Aaryan Raw-

al followed up in a second email, "We are incredibly disappointed that the school board ignored the voices of student protestors, petitioners, and the countless others who were simply never given the needed information by our schools to participate in this process ... We will continue to organize and advocate for our community ... It's up to the county to acknowledge our voice. We sincerely hope Dr. Reid proves us wrong."

Fairfax County NAACP tweeted, "We are appalled that despite

community outcry, the @fcpsnews SB has chosen to plow through a superintendent vote tonight. Revelations regarding Special Education practices make the Northshore candidate (Reid) even less suitable than we knew." The following day, Jaya Nachnani, a student protestor at Mount Vernon High School, tweeted, "Today we met with Dr. Reid and members of the school board. Here's what I have to say: this entire protest is not against Dr. Reid (but) rather FCPS. FCPS chose not to listen to the students and the teachers, and I'm highly disappointed."

According to NSD.org, Reid was unanimously chosen as superintendent by the Northshore School District Board of Directors in June 2016. Before Northshore, Reid was the superintendent of South Kitsap School District, her first position as superintendent. The South Kitsap school board unanimously approved Reid as superintendent in February 2013, reported the Kitsap Sun.

CALENDAR

NOW THRU APRIL 28

A collection of paintings by Layla Gray and Coty Dickson entitled "The Four Seasons" is on display at the Great Falls Library, 9830 Georgetown Pike, Great Falls, VA 22066. The public can view this collection of favorite seasonal paintings in the library's large meeting room from now through Thursday, April 28, 2022 during regular library hours. Contact Coty Dickson at coty dickson@gmail.com for additional information.

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. Go to the Friends of Frying Pan Farm Park website for 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.

NOW THRU MAY 8

"The Mamalogues." Thursdays at 7:30 p.m., Fridays at 8 p.m., Saturdays at 2 and 8 p.m., Sundays at 2 p.m. At 1st Stage, 1524 Spring Hill



Doodle POP will perform on Saturday, April 23 at the McLean Community Center in McLean.

Road, Tysons. In this satirical comedy, three friends share the joys, challenges, and anxieties of being middle class single Black mothers in predominantly white suburbs. The story celebrates motherhood and community while exploring racial profiling on the playground and supporting your kid who is perpetually the Only Black Child (OBC). Follow their journey as they lean in and steer their children from pampers to college while navigating their own road toward retirement. Visit www.1ststage.org.

APRIL 22 TO MAY 7

"Death of a Salesman." Presented by Vienna Theatre Company. At 120

Cherry Street, SE, Vienna. Show times are: 8 p.m.: Fridays and Saturdays: April 22, 23, 29, 30; May 6, 7, 2022; 2 p.m.: Sundays: May 1, May 8, 2022. Arthur Miller's 1949 Pulitzer Prize-winning drama about the tragic shortcomings of an American dreamer, is widely considered to be one of the greatest plays of the 20th century. Purchase tickets at vienna.gov/webtrac, in person at the Vienna Community Center, 120 Cherry St. SE during open hours, or before each performance if available. Visit www.viennatheatrecompany.org.

APRIL 22-24

ValeArts Show. 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. At

Old Vale Schoolhouse, 3124 Fox Mill Road, Oakton. The exhibit, Colorful Journeys, will be bursting in springtime colors at this historic venue. Admirers of all ages are welcome to view paintings in oil, watercolor, mixed media, encaustic, and acrylic to delight the eye and stir the senses. All paintings are for sale. Visit <https://www.valearts.com> for more information.

SATURDAY/APRIL 23

Clifton Lions Club Family Pancake Breakfast. 7:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. At Clifton Presbyterian Church, 12748 Richards Lane, Clifton. Cost is \$10 per adult; \$5 per child. Proceeds go to charity.

SATURDAY/APRIL 23

Earth Day McLean—Act Locally. 9 a.m.–noon. At McLean Community Center, McLean. Free admission for MCC district residents; registration is required. This drive-through, outdoor, environmental action event provides a convenient way for McLean residents to better the planet. Several local community businesses and organizations will provide four key facets of environmental health in the spirit of shredding, reusing, recycling and planting.

SATURDAY/APRIL 23

Parks and Sugarland Run Cleanup Day. 9 a.m. to noon. At Runnymede Park, 195 Herndon Parkway, Herndon. Join your fellow community members and help cleanup parks, Sugarland Run watershed, and stream locations. Meet at Runnymede Park for supplies and assignments, then work on your own to help care for one of the eleven parks or three trails in Herndon. They'll be picking up litter, removing non-native invasive plants, and otherwise refreshing our parks as we head into spring. Visit herndon-va.gov/recreation, or call 703-787-7300.

SATURDAY/APRIL 23

Roomful of Blues. 8 p.m. At Jammin' Java, 227 Maple Ave. E, Vienna. A Roomful of Blues is filled with soaring blues, zydeco twists, late-night ballads, Latin-tinged funk and a touch of vintage, fifth-gear rock 'n' roll. Tickets are \$25-\$35. Website: www.jamminjava.com.

SEE CALENDAR, PAGE 10

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SATURDAY/APRIL 23
Doodle POP 4 p.m. At McLean Community Center, McLean. A mischievous duo starts to doodle... and ends up creating a whole imaginative world! They invite the audience along on their sea adventure with a tiny little turtle. What will happen as we follow their vivid drawings into this beautiful watery world, and will they return the turtle to the sea safely? Doodle POP is a touching and playful non-verbal show that uses live musicians to perform the accompanying score and sound effects. Created by BRUSH Theatre of South Korea. Visit: www.aldentheatre.org

APRIL 23-24
Yard Sale and Giveaway Day. Gate Post Estates is will be coupling a Giveaway Day with their annual yard sale. The yard sale will take place on Saturday, April 23, beginning at 8 a.m., and the Giveaway Day will be the following day, on Sunday, April 24, beginning at 10 a.m. For the Giveaway Day, residents will place any items they wish to donate to the community in front of their homes and mark them with a "Giveaway" or "Free" sign. Gate Post Estates is located off of Route 29, across from the Centreville Baptist Church.

APRIL 23-24
Spring Book Sale. At Centreville Regional Library, 14200 St. Germain Dr., Centreville. Saturday, April 23 and Sunday, April 24, 10 a.m. - 5 p.m. Children's books, teen and adult fiction, classics, poetry & literature, nonfiction, DVDs, audio books and CDs. No scanners or other electronic price-checking allowed. Cash, check and credit cards accepted.

SUNDAY/APRIL 24
Vocal Quartet Concert. 4-5:30 p.m. At Church of the Holy Comforter, 543 Beulah Road, NE, Vienna. Concert by the vocal quartet Third Practice, featuring the Hermit Songs of Samuel Barber and other works from the Renaissance to the present day that express longing for both solitude and connection. Visit the website: https://holyccomforter.com/music/

SUNDAY/APRIL 24
10th Annual McLean Chocolate Festival. 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. At the McLean Community Center, McLean. Taste the specialties of area chocolatiers and enjoy fun for the whole family. The youngest attendees can enjoy a children's game room. The McLean Chocolate Festival is a fundraiser for the McLean Rotary, with proceeds benefiting many local organizations. Cost: \$2 admission. Visit: www.mcleanchocolatefestival.com.

SUNDAY/APRIL 24
Reduced Shakespeare Company's Hamlet Big Adventure. 3 and 7 p.m. At Reston Community Theater's CenterStage. The Reduced Shakespeare Company returns to Reston with the Washington, DC premiere of this hilarious (and completely fictional) prequel to Hamlet. Visit www.restoncommunitycenter.com.

SEE CALENDAR, PAGE 11

CALENDAR

FROM PAGE 10

SUNDAY/APRIL 24

Fairfax Veg Fest. 10 a.m.-5 p.m. In the parking lot of the Northwest Federal Credit Union, 200 Spring St., Herndon. The fourth annual Fairfax Veg Fest will take place in Herndon with more than 80 exhibitors focused on healthy food, wellness programs, green products, and animal welfare. Attendees at this free event will hear a lineup of world-famous speakers including:

- T. Colin Campbell, PhD – best-selling author of *The China Study*, *Whole*, and *The Low Carb Fraud*; and star of the documentary *Forks Over Knives*
- Neal Barnard, MD -- President of the Physician's Committee for Responsible Medicine (PCRM), author of 18 books detailing the benefits of the plant-based diet
- Gene Baur -- expert on the abuses of industrialized factory farming, called "the conscience of the food movement" by *Time* magazine
- Jim Loomis, MD -- Director of the Barnard Medical Center and former team internist for the St. Louis Rams football team and the St. Louis Cardinals baseball team
- Gwyn Whittaker – CEO of the educational GreenFare Organic Café, and GreenFare Health and Wellness
- Baxter Montgomery, MD – Houston Cardiologist, Montgomery Heart and Wellness Director
- James Wilks – Director of the most widely viewed documentary in the world *The Game Changers*, and Mixed Marshall artist
- Courtland Milloy – Columnist at the *Washington Post* since 1975
- Brian Clement, PhD – Co-Director Hippocrates Institute and author

For more information about the event, and to apply to be a vendor or sponsor, go to <http://fairfaxvegfest.org/> or contact Gwyn Whittaker at gwyn@greenfare.org.

WEDNESDAY/APRIL 27

Sensory Awareness Day. 2:30-6 p.m. At the Old Firehouse in McLean. Challenge your senses at the Old Firehouse! This unique and fun

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.

SUNDAY/APRIL 24

Hunger Conversation Project. 5-6:30 p.m. At Andrew Chapel United Methodist Church, 1301 Trap Road, Vienna. Conversation with Ramona Carroll from the Fairfax County Department of Neighborhood/Community Services about hunger in Vienna and the surrounding community. Stay to pack care bags for those in need. Free. Visit the website: andrewchapelumc.org

SHEPHERD'S CENTER SPRING CLASSES

The Shepherd's Center of Northern Virginia will hold Spring classes from April 21 to June 9, 2022. All Classes will be held virtually on Zoom and in person at the Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Fairfax, 2709 Hunter Mill Road, Oakton. Registration: April 4-19, 2022. The Spring 2022 semester schedule includes 40-plus classes with a wide range of subjects -- from a Health and Wellness series to National and World Affairs.

The following classes are but a few of the classes to choose from:

- ❖ April 28 – "Sorting Fact from Fiction" – Larry Lipman, AARP
- ❖ May 5 – "Monarch Butterflies – Life Cycle and Migration" – Scott Schroth
- ❖ May 19 – "Whale Watching in Baja" – Paul Wormeli
- ❖ May 26 – "Vienna African American Trailblazers and Liberty Amendments" – Gloria Runyon/Sylvia/DeeDee

Students may attend one or all of the all spring classes for a \$55 fee and are encouraged to create their own schedule – attend classes all day or attend only one class. For a complete listing of classes or to register, visit the ALL page on the SCNOVA website at SCNOVA.org

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event, supporting Autism Awareness Month, will provide ALL who attend a sensory exploration (taste, smell, sound, sight and touch). This event is free and open to all.

THURSDAY/APRIL 28

Green Expo. 7 to 9 p.m. At Vienna Community Center, 120 Cherry Street, SE, Vienna. Green Expo Showcases Sustainable Ways of Living The Town of Vienna and the Conservation and Sustainability Commission are teaming up once again for this year's Green Expo at the Vienna Community Center. The annual event features nearly two dozen exhibitors offering information about topics including: composting, recycling, beekeeping, pollinators and native gardens, green landscaping, home energy efficiency, Solarize Vienna, ways to reduce plastic usage, citizen science, volunteer opportunities, sustainable businesses in Vienna, and much more. Attendees can enjoy a live raptor exhibit and ask questions of the Town's arborist. Email CSC@viennava.gov or call 703- 255-6300.

SATURDAY/MAY 7

Celebrate Pilates Day. At RTR Pilates, 9849 Georgetown Pike, Great Falls. Register for one of three free trial reformer classes at RTRPilates.com/PilatesDay. Check out the studio, shop great retail, sip champagne and meet our community.

MAY 21-22

Girls on the Run Spring Registration. GOTR NOVA will be offering an in-person, 10-week curriculum for the Spring 2022 season. Two in-person 5Ks presented by Cigna will be held on May 21st and 22nd in Sterling and Ballston, respectively. Teams will continue to be school and community-based to further our outreach efforts in being accessible to every girl across Northern Virginia. Currently, 105 teams throughout Alexandria, Arlington, Fairfax, Falls Church, Loudoun, Manassas, Manassas Park, and Prince William are open for Spring 2022 registration through March 1, 2022. For more information about spring registration and sites for Girls on the Run of NOVA, visit www.gotrnova.org.

ventures in Learning Spring 2022 or call the office at 703-281-0538. Visit www.scnova.org or contact the Office at 703-281-0538.

FRIDAY/APRIL 22

5th Annual Scam Jam. 9-11:30 a.m. Virtual. AARP Virginia and Fairfax County's Silver Shield Task Force are working together to empower consumers to spot and avoid scams, and to provide support and guidance to victims and their families when fraud happens. For more information and to RSVP, visit aarp.org/FairfaxScamJam

TUESDAY/APRIL 26

Julie Lythcott-Haims. 7-9 p.m. At Temple Rodef Shalom, 2100 Westmoreland Street, Falls Church. NYT best-selling author Julie Lythcott-Haims presents "Throw Out the Checklist Childhood: Tips and Strategies for Raising Successful Kids." Brought to the community by co-hosts The Potomac School and the Safe Community Coalition. For more information and to register, visit the Safe Community Coalition website <https://mcleanscc.org>.

STARTING APRIL 19

Caregiver Support Group Meets. 10 to 11:30 a.m. Online. A Zoom support group for caregivers of family members with dementia is held the first and third Tuesday of each month using Zoom. Times are 10 to 11:30 a.m. A link will be sent to you. The group is sponsored by the Shepherd's Center of Northern Virginia and is free. For info: Jack Tarr: jtarr5@verizon.net. Visit the website: <https://scnova.org/services/services-caregivers-support-group/>

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The Cancer Effect



By KENNETH B. LOURIE

From February 28th until April 9th, approximately 40 days – and nights, I had 19 medical commitments; among them being pre- and post-surgery/procedure, actual procedure and separate surgery, lab tests, infusions, covid tests, diagnostic scans, nuclear medicine; and telephone and video appointments. This was hardly a normal month. It was abnormal and not necessarily cancer related but most likely cancer affected.

As you might imagine, being infused for nearly 10 years with extremely toxic substances will wear and tear the recipient's body, inside and out. Consider further that said recipient (yours truly) began this cancer business at age 54 and a half and over this 10-year period, I have not been getting any younger. And what you end up with is a perfect storm of an age and an immune-compromised patient succumbing to the cumulative side effects of cancer treatment, direct and indirect.

Nevertheless, having some kind of medical appointment every other day – on average, over 40 days is likely to make a Kenny a very dull boy. Not that I wasn't in control of my time or had to adhere to a schedule not of my own choosing; on the contrary, I was very much in control as I set my own appointments and times and places convenient to me. Still, the commitment of time and energy – and the anxiety associated with all these appointments, especially given my underlying medical diagnosis, was unpleasant and unsettling but thankfully very uncharacteristic of my previous cancer life, which was overall, unremarkable medically speaking, other than I didn't die within the "13 month to two years" prognosis I was initially given by my oncologist.

Typically, my cancer life has been very similar to my non-cancer life. There are things I must do, things I can't do, things I wish I could do and finally things that others require me to do. The only difference: the original stage IV non-small cell lung cancer "terminal" diagnosis I received in late February 2009. That kind of news puts a damper on any scenario, real or imagined. Moreover, a scenario which offered no guarantees other than the presumptive normal life expectancy I anticipated was no longer normal. In summary, your future is in doubt, your present is in crisis and your past hopes and dreams are fading fast unless you find a safety valve to help manage the emotional, physical, and spiritual upheaval dominating your life. Or the more likely you are to suffer at the hands of your disease and become another casualty of the cancer wars.

So, I had a lousy month. So what? I'm alive, aren't I? Thirteen-plus years later. Granted, fulfilling all these medical obligations of the last 40 days wouldn't have been my first choice of how I wanted to spend part of my retirement. However, given that I had no choice – after my diagnosis, to live my life as a cancer patient/survivor, as my friend Frank would say: "I'm in pretty good shape for the shape I'm in."

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

‘When the Whole Cast Is Onstage, It’s Just Magical’

Chantilly High presents the musical, ‘Into the Woods.’

BY BONNIE HOBBS
THE CONNECTION

Featuring a cast and crew of about 50, Chantilly High presents its Cappies show, “Into the Woods.” In this popular musical, several fairytales start to intertwine and, by the end of act one, the characters get their happy endings. But act two brings an unexpected twist and the story takes a dark turn.

The curtain rises, Wednesday-Saturday, April 27, 28, 29 and 30, at 7 p.m. Tickets are \$15, adults; \$10, students; at the door or via www.chantillyhsdrama.com – where people may choose their seats.

“The music is absolutely beautiful, and the songs just spring organically out of the scenes,” said Director Andy Shaw. “And people will really love all these characters. Musically, it’s the most challenging score I’ve done since I’ve been here, and the mature script has incredibly complex characters.

“But the cast is amazing and works so well as an ensemble in building the relationships so crucial to this play. And they’re tackling this difficult text with such maturity and professionalism.”

Each act starts in the main characters’ homes, and then the audience is transported to the woods. And since all different social statuses are represented, the costumes range from rags to beautiful dresses and cloaks.

The show’s message, explained Shaw, is the importance of understanding different points of view. “We all think we’re the hero of our own stories,” he said. “But what does it mean to think about other people’s stories and their perspectives?”

Senior Alyssa Dausch portrays Cinderella. “Even though her stepfamily is mean to her, she’s very kind and is always willing to help them,” said Dausch. “She dreams about running away, going to the ball and living a grander life. But when she’s actually faced with her dream life, she’s indecisive and doesn’t know if she wants it.”

Loving her role, Dausch relates to Cinderella’s “general attitude of making good out of what you have, plus her indecision. I’ve always liked playing the fairytale princess, but I like that there’s



Fairytale characters react to seeing the giant from “Jack and the Beanstalk.” Pictured are Jack Wolff (The Steward), Anna Anderson (the Baker’s wife), Julien DaSilva (the Baker), Ren Lagasse (Little Red), Jack Schuchard (Cinderella’s father), Ella Ostlund (Cinderella’s stepmother), Owen Chambers (Mysterious Man), Maddy Latham (Cinderella’s stepsister, Lucinda), Anna Dimaiuta (Cinderella’s stepsister, Florinda) and Sydney Schneider (the Witch).

more depth to her and she has a new challenge to face. My favorite song is ‘Steps of the Palace.’ I sing it when Cinderella’s faced with the choice of staying with the prince or going back to her old life. It’s really pretty and so fun to sing, and it’s a big moment of development in her story.”

Dausch said the audience will like seeing stories they’re familiar with, but with a twist and a more complex message. “The characters must figure out how to deal with loss,” she said. “And how do we decide if someone’s good or bad and determine right from wrong – and what to do with that information?”

Playing the Witch from “Rapunzel” is senior Sydney Schneider. “She’s very protective of Rapunzel and really cares about things,” said Schneider. “She’s a blunt person and knows what’s right and what’s wrong. She’s also a good leader, but no one listens to her. And throughout the show, she represents an over-sheltering mother to Rapunzel.”

Schneider, too, enjoys her part because “There are so many different aspects to her character. I get to change from being an ugly witch to a really glamorous one. I even change her voice and posture. So it’s like playing two different char-

acters, but with the same power. She’s a strong character and is just her unapologetic self – all-knowing in the way she sees the world – and that’s amazing and fantastic.”

Schneider especially likes the song, “Goodbye, Old Friend,” sung by Christian Schopp as Jack (of Jack and the Beanstalk). “It’s the perfect blending of hilarity and sadness,” she said. “It’s a quick and funny song and encapsulates what the show is about.”

She said attendees will like this play’s spectacle because there’s so much to see. “When the whole cast is onstage, it’s just magical,” said Schneider. “People will love the show’s heart – every single character is so genuine in everything they say and do. And the costumes and music are wonderful.”

“There are so many different parts and motifs of the story that come together perfectly,” she continued. “It’s like a huge puzzle of an ensemble cast that just fits flawlessly. People will be thinking about this show after they leave, and they’ll realize the meaning and brilliance of what they just saw. It’s about the consequences of your actions and wondering what’s the right thing to do – and is there even a right thing?”

Junior Ren Lagasse portrays Lit-

tle Red (Riding Hood). “She’s an ambitious little girl who’s brave and has to go through some frightening experiences on her own,” said Lagasse. “At the beginning, she’s just trying to live her life and bring some sweets to Granny. But when she meets the wolf, it changes her and makes her lose trust in people.”

“I love playing pushy, sarcastic characters,” continued Lagasse. “Her story is interesting, and I like making it my own and putting it onto the stage. And I get to sing music ranging from lively uptempo to darker and slower. I really like ‘Your Fault.’ I’m one of five people singing it, and it’s one of the fastest and hardest songs in the show. Everyone’s angry and blaming each other for what’s going on; all their lives have been thrown into disarray.”

She said audiences seeing this show for the first time will be shocked at the change between the first and second acts. “They’ll like the chemistry between all the actors,” said Lagasse. “It’ll seem seamless when it’s performed, because everyone works so well together. And the music is so catchy, it’ll get stuck in people’s heads.”

Playing the Baker is senior Julien DaSilva. “He’s a peasant who’s

spent most of his life just trying to get by,” explained DaSilva. “He and his wife have been trying unsuccessfully to have a baby. Then a witch tells him he must first break the curse that’s been placed on his family by finding certain items. He’s spontaneous and awkward and trying to be the man of the house and a good father, but things aren’t working out as he’d wished.”

DaSilva is enjoying his role because “It’s the deepest character I’ve had.

At the beginning, he’s happy and excited; but as things go wrong, he becomes broken. There’s so much behind his character that I really love getting into it. It tests my abilities as an actor.”

His favorite song is “No One is Alone,” which he sings to Jack while Cinderella sings it to Little Red, at the same time. “It’s such a sweet moment,” said DaSilva. “It shows a lot of character development and that they’ll get through everything together.”

“People know these fairytales, but not the depth of the characters,” he added. “And they’ll love Stephen Sondheim’s fluid music so beautifully intertwined in the story. So much happens in this show that it’s way more than just a fairytale.”