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Sisters Jean, 13, and Krista, 11, are adoptable through Kidsave, visiting the area from Colombia hoping to connect with their future family. www.kidsave.org/kids-galleries/

These Children Need You

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AUGUST 3-9, 2022

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Tax Policy To Help Those Most in Need

BY DEL. KENNETH R. "KEN" PLUM

One of the positive outcomes of the budget proposed by former Governor Ralph Northam as he left office was the adoption in Virginia of a refundable earned income tax credit (EITC). His proposal was included in the Conference Report between the House and Senate and was agreed to by both houses and signed by the Governor. Persons of low or moderate income who qualify will be winners in being able to keep more of their earnings to meet their personal and household expenses.

Virginia has had an earned income tax credit patterned after the federal system for many years thanks to the efforts of the late Senator Toddy Puller. The Virginia EITC was not refundable as it is in the federal system and in many other states. A refundable Virginia EITC has been advocated for by many groups who work with persons of low or moderate income including Social Action Linking Together (SALT) and its leader John Horejsi, the Commonwealth Institute for Fiscal Analysis (TCI) that did the important work of researching the issue, and others. I introduced legislation several times over a decade during Democratic and Republican administrations, but it failed to gain executive support and competed with other budget priorities. Governor Northam seized on the opportunity to make the EITC refundable during



a time when the state was flush for cash that could fund it.

According to research done by TCI, about 600,000 working families in Virginia receive the federal EITC, and under the new law they will also be able to receive a state EITC that matches up to 20% of their federal credit. Because Virginia's state EITC has not been refundable in the past, most families who qualify for the credit do not receive the full amount of the state EITC. A refundable state EITC will provide them a larger tax refund and help to offset sales, excise, and property taxes paid which contribute to Virginia's tax code being upside down. One advocacy group calculated that for every \$10,000 in income, lower-income Virginians pay \$980 in state and local taxes while the wealthiest 1% pay only \$700. Lower-income Virginians do not qualify for the many credits and advantages that those who make more money can use to lower their tax burden. This EITC change can help bring some fairness to tax policy while helping those of lower income keep more of their earnings to buy their groceries, pay their rent, and fill their prescriptions.

The tax policy that the new policy replaces limited the effectiveness of the state EITC, with particularly negative consequences for racial equity. The state's Commission to Examine Racial and Economic Inequity in Virginia Law had recommended that the state enact a partially refundable EITC, noting that the policy "would

help to increase incomes for working families in Virginia, particularly for Black and Latinx families who, and despite working, are more likely to be excluded from the current nonrefundable credit due to having low incomes."

I am pleased to have been part of this important change in tax policy, but I fear that under the new administration it might be vulnerable. We have made progress, but we will need to work together to keep it.

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NEWS

Are Supervisors Out of Touch with Residents?

Residents furious board OKed funding of Braddock/Old Lee jughandle.

BY BONNIE HOBBS
THE CONNECTION

With no public notice until the last minute, local land-use groups mobilized at the 11th hour to update their 2020 resolution decrying a proposed jughandle at Braddock and Old Lee roads in Centreville. A state delegate even wrote a letter to the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors, asking them to delay action on it.

But as has happened with this issue in the past, their pleas fell on deaf ears and – at the urging of Supervisor Kathy Smith (D-Sully) – the Board unanimously approved the county funding needed to make this project a reality. It had already received \$16 million in Smart Scale money from the Commonwealth Transportation Board (CTB); and on July 19, the Supervisors contributed \$2 million from the county.

“Environmentally, ecologically, financially, the jughandle is untenable,” said Jay Johnston with the Sully District Council of Citizens Associations. “Only Loudoun County residents benefit.”

Fairfax County’s current Comprehensive Plan calls for realigning Braddock and Old Lee roads in Centreville to cut through Rock Hill District Park, with Braddock ending in a T at Old Lee. But VDOT says it’s too expensive and prefers instead to make “interim, low-cost improvements.”

It plans to add a traffic signal, plus a 200-foot southbound right-turn lane and a 1,100-foot jughandle lane to accommodate the existing eastbound left turns. The work would include realigning the S curve on Braddock by cutting 20 feet deep into the ground and removing a large section of rock.

At both in-person and virtual public hearings in 2020, local residents told VDOT not to do it because it would just add more traffic to Braddock from Loudoun County, making it harder for Centreville residents to access that road. But VDOT chose the jughandle plan anyway.

in July 2020 – prior to the second public hearing – the Supervisors recommended it receive nearly \$16 million in Smart Scale funding from the Commonwealth Transportation Board (CTB). At that time, no Fairfax County projects – including this one – were approved.

But when an Alexandria Smart Scale project was canceled, in fall 2021, unbeknownst to Centreville residents, the CTB shifted \$16 million of those newly freed-up funds to the Braddock-Old Lee project. Then, before the Supervisors’ July 19 vote, Fairfax County Department of Transportation Director Tom

Biesiadny discussed what happens next.

“VDOT has done some conceptual design work that’ll be moved into more formal design,” he said. “The environmental work still has to be completed, and there’ll have to be a design public hearing before the project comes back to the [CTB] for formal approval of [it] to go to land acquisition and construction. So there’ll be opportunities for additional public comment and the project will have to address all environmental concerns [before it can be built].”

Smith then read VDOT’s responses to some of the residents’ questions during its September 2020 virtual meeting. When asked why the Comprehensive Plan alignment wasn’t recommended, VDOT said it was because it would cost more than \$80 million.

A resident asked, “Why not consider a single, southbound, right-turn lane on Braddock?” VDOT replied that it wouldn’t address all current operational and safety issues at that intersection, and that’s why this project is being done. Regarding potential impacts to public and private property, VDOT said the public will be able to have input.

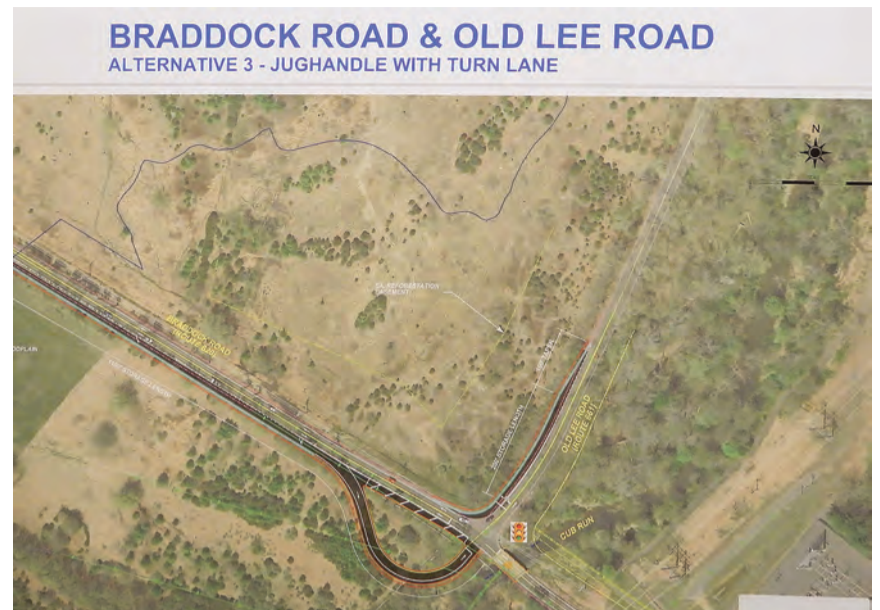
Nearly laughing while she read a resident’s concern about this project increasing traffic from Loudoun County into Centreville, Smith said, “This would address safety and congestion concerns already present. Braddock Road is a public road with no restrictions on access for regional traffic. Lots of people travel the road, so VDOT suggested a jughandle.”

“It wasn’t my idea, but I was comfortable with it,” she continued. “I think it’s vitally important. We have accidents and issues there, so I ask for my colleagues’ support.”

Then, without any questions or discussion by any of the other supervisors, the Board unanimously approved the county funding.

However, area residents remain alarmed at the harm this plan would do to the environment. And Sully Estates’ Kathleen Leggette, who lives along Braddock Road, would see it firsthand.

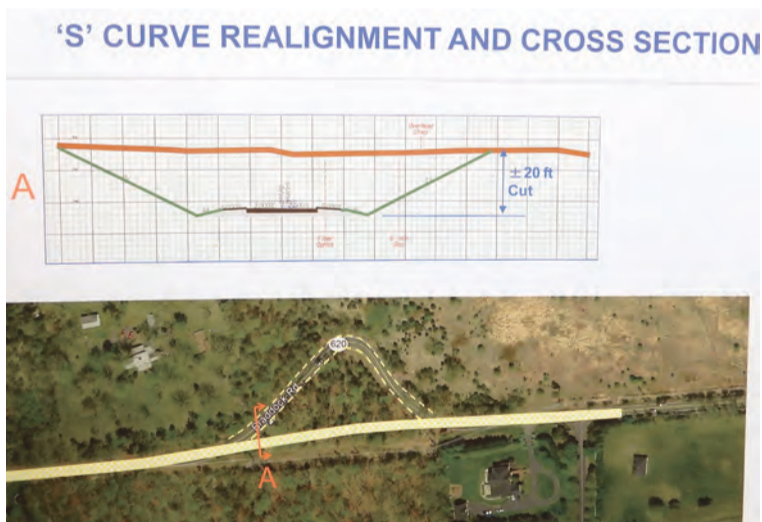
The jughandle would cut a swath directly through her backyard – in a 100-year floodplain, the Chesapeake Watershed and a Resource Protection Area – endangering both the wildlife and the environment there. VDOT’s so-called “interim” road would cause permanent damage to her land, she said.



Local residents say the jughandle will open the floodgates to Loudoun County commuters.



A view of the notorious Braddock Road S curve on the east side looking west.



A diagram of VDOT’s plan to realign the S curve on Braddock Road.

Leggette even used a rope to trace the path of the new road through her land. “It’s just 20-24 inches from the stream and 5-feet below the current road,” she said. “It makes no engineering sense. A transportation engineer I consulted said VDOT really underestimated the S curve. It’ll have to take Braddock Road land after the Pleasant Valley roundabout, to the S curve, downhill and from several other properties because it’s too steep and won’t work.”

Agreeing, resident Daniel Mays said the original Comprehensive Plan path through Rock Hill Park “doesn’t have the engineering challenges the jughandle does, so it shouldn’t

be more expensive. Ban trucks at the S curve and put a stop sign at Braddock and Old Lee instead.” Furthermore, he added, “This road, so close to the Cub Run Stream – protected by law from construction – would endanger the water.”

Also worried about the project’s environmental impact was Virginia Run’s Jim Hart. “This site is just downhill from the largest stand of a globally rare oak and hickory forest in Virginia,” he said. “Environmental-impact studies should be done

first. The Cub Run Stream contains the threatened wood turtle, and there’d be massive disturbance in the floodplain uphill from the Occoquan.”

He, too, said VDOT’s plan would result in more traffic – and large trucks – from Loudoun on Braddock. “The two-lane segment of Braddock was never intended to be the main way between Loudoun and Route 28 in Centreville,” said Hart. “These neighborhoods weren’t meant to be commuter neighborhoods.”

On July 15, Leggette – who’d thought lack of funding had killed this project – notified the joint land-use

committee comprised of the Sully District Council (SDC) and West Fairfax County Citizens Association (WFCCA) that VDOT sent her a letter requesting entry to her property to conduct studies. That’s when she and the land-use members learned Smith would ask the Supervisors to OK the jughandle at their July 19 meeting just four days later.

“I’m just stunned by the lack of transparency on this issue,” said WFCCA’s Ted Trosciancki, who said the project would greenlight “volumes of traffic to get from Loudoun to Braddock to the HOT lanes on I-66.”

SEE NEWS, PAGE 6



St. Tim's Block Party rocks the church grounds with games, food trucks, friendships, and joy.

From left, Rev. Charles R. Cowherd, Priest-in-Charge and Pastor Franklin Morales, Latino Pastor

Pastor Franklin Morales, Latino Pastor at St. Tim's enjoys his dinner with members of the Spanish congregation.

Block Party Blast at St. Tim's

Parishioners and community members rock in the sunshine.

BY MERCIA HOBSON
THE CONNECTION

St. Timothy's Episcopal Church in the Town of Herndon rocked the church grounds with a block party full of music, games, food trucks, friendships, and joy. St. Tim's Block Party ran from late afternoon to early evening on July 28, highlighted by a performance by Big Al's



Enjoying ice cream and friends in the shade of the old trees



Herndon's own, Big Al's Garage, (from left) Walt Lazear, Al Hobson, Patricia Quezada, John Druitt, and Paulie Britt, perform at St. Tim's Block Party.

Garage. According to the Rev. Charles Cowherd, Pastor-in-Charge at St. Tim's, despite the oppressive heat, over a hundred people attended the event, including parishioners

from the English- and Spanish-speaking congregations as well as community members. Free and open to the public, the crowd of young and old enjoyed the moon bounce,



Food trucks are always a treat.

games, dinner and icy treats from local food trucks, and picnicking beneath the shade trees as the oldies band played. With temperatures exceeding 90 degrees, the numerous kiddie splash pools were extremely well-liked among children.

The Great Falls Volunteer Fire Department's Fairfax County Fire & Rescue Station #12

deserves special recognition. As a community service, Robert Ferretti, Rudy Corado, and Sarah McMichael arrived at the block party in emergency vehicle 412. They opened the doors and invited the children and adults to explore and ask questions. A second recognition goes to Block Party organizer Melissa Druitt and the volunteers.



Kevin Ortube hands Maria La Walt her order.

The next event at St. Tim's is Family/Community Day, which takes place on Aug. 20 and is hosted annually by the Spanish-speaking congregation. The picnic and games begin at 4:30, and end before the 7 p.m. Bilingual Eucharist. Bring backpacks and laptops



EMTs Robert Ferretti, Rudy Corado and Sarah McMichael of the Great Falls Volunteer Fire Department Station #12 welcome the public for a look inside their emergency vehicle.

to the three weekend services to be blessed. St. Timothy's, established in 1868, is located at 432 Van Buren Street, Herndon.

FROM PAGE 3

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On July 17, the land-use committee painstakingly updated its 2020 resolution opposing the project and emailed it to the Supervisors. Del. Dan Helmer (D-40th) emailed them a letter, too, urging “deep study of environmental impacts” before moving forward with this road. He also said he “shared constituents’ concerns that traffic in areas with residential driveways on Braddock Road will dramatically increase and expand the danger to families who live here.”

“After they’ve destroyed that intersection, desecrated the woodlands and cut into that hillside, someone will then want to add more lanes to that road, said SDC’s Lewis Grimm. “This is clearly another example of how out of touch the current Supervisors are with the citizens they supposedly represent.”

Following the Supervisors’ approval, a disgusted Carol Hawn, of the WFCCA, said, “No one listened.”

“Not a single objection, discussion or question,” said SDC’s Johnston. “Their eyes and ears are closed to us all. Our only recourse is to vote them all out and start over with people willing to serve the constituency.”

Agreeing, resident Jeff Flading said, “The Board of Supervisors counts on the majority of voters not paying attention to what they do in the details of day-to-day governance.”

Leggette said Smith’s record “has been one of ignoring her constituents’ voices, consistently supporting developers and paving over the green spaces we have left in Sully District.”

“This ill-conceived transportation project will cause increased speeding on Braddock,” continued Leggette. “With the S-curve eliminated, there’ll be more accidents as eastbound cars fly down Braddock while trying to enter the jughandle within 100 feet of vehicles entering and exiting Sully Estates.”

Furthermore, she said, “The environmental destruction of the federally protected Chesapeake Watershed will be devastating and irreparable. Based on their design, there are no mitigating actions VDOT can implement. The jughandle lane will be in a floodplain which, after every rainstorm, floods. It’ll literally sit on the bank of Cub Run Stream – allowing debris, chemicals and oils to run into the stream.”

“Once again, citizens tried to get the Supervisors to do the right thing,” said Hart. “At least the effort demonstrates there are people who want the community to be better and our county government to be transparent and accountable.”



The empty Lake Anne Fellowship House with antenna visible on top.



FILE PHOTO BY MERCIA HOBSON/THE CONNECTION

Vendors at Lake Anne in Reston whose point-of-sale systems rely on a common commercial carrier signal have experienced difficulties recently.

Cellular Service Disruption at Lake Anne Impacts 9-1-1

Vendors' point-of-sale systems also experiencing difficulties.

BY MERCIA HOBSON
THE CONNECTION

Supervisor Walter Alcorn (D-Hunter Mill) visited the Reston Farmers Market on Saturday, July 30, and spoke with vendors whose point-of-sale systems that rely on a common commercial carrier signal have experienced difficulties recently. Alcorn reported that AT&T is attempting to restore service. They hope to use their old panels on the empty Lake Anne Fellowship House to restore full service until the building is demolished later this fall. Alcorn said that AT&T informed his office that it could take up to two weeks to acquire the necessary equipment to restore the functionality of the old panels.

"AT&T and Verizon both have panels on the old Lake Anne Fellowship House, and both companies are again talking with the owner of the new Lake Anne House for possible longer-term solutions. Those discussions continue," said Alcorn.

In the interim, Alcorn reports that AT&T has installed a temporary truck-based antenna in the area to facilitate emergency communications and that Fairfax County staff are examining this week the possibility of extending public Wi-Fi coverage beyond the Reston Community Center at Lake Anne.

On Friday, July 29, Fairfax County Emergency Information released an online statement, AT&T Coverage Problem Impacts 9-1-1



Walter Alcorn

1 in the Reston-Lake Anne Area. "An issue with AT&T cellular service has been identified in the Reston-Lake Anne area that may result in service outages, including the ability to contact the county's 9-1-1 service."

The temporarily deployed cellular support truck in the affected area is anticipated to improve service until the coverage issue is resolved.

AT&T recommends the following temporary solutions for service disruption: If the option is available, use a landline to call 9-1-1. If the option is available on your device, use Wi-Fi to place calls. If you are located within the affected area and experience an emergency, relocate or send someone outside the area to obtain service, if possible.

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Dispensing Wisdom, Or Not



By KENNETH B. LOURIE

Having spent way too much time visiting in a hospital recently, I only have one question: Were there always this many Purell "healthy soap" and hand sanitizers dispensing their healthful cleanliness before the pandemic? If you hadn't noticed, let me be the one to assure you; whatever supply chain issues exist in the world, there appears to be no shortage of Purell soap and hand sanitizer. They are everywhere. On nearly every wall 'round every corner. Of course, there mounted in every bathroom as well. It seems whatever turn, in whatever direction, you'll find a Purell dispenser; on either side, in front of you and/or behind you. In fact, they're everywhere you can imagine and a few places you can't. So far, the only place I haven't seen a Purell dispenser is on the elevator. Though there's always one on the wall immediately outside the elevator's floor stop, barely a step or two to the side.

There are so many dispensers on walls throughout the hospital, I'm wondering if there's an employee specifically assigned to monitor their level and to refill their cartridges the moment their level falls below the Mendoza-type line (extremely low). Given how big this hospital is, and how long the corridors are, if the dispenser isn't replenished the moment its levels are low-ish, it might be days before the dedicated Purell-refill employee returns to that wall. It reminds me of the story I heard years ago while tour-boating in San Francisco Bay. As we floated under The Golden Gate Bridge, the guide said the bridge is constantly being painted. That's because the painting process take so long that by the time the painting is finished at one end, it's time to start painting beginning at the other end. Talk about job security. It's a never-ending brush with destiny, especially when you consider the risk, being so high above water and exposed to the elements. Tending to the Purell dispensers feels like that. As long as the hospital remains open, there will be a need for Purell "healthy soap" and hand sanitizer dispensers and the refills that are necessary.

For all the proper hygiene reasons, the nurses are constantly touching the dispensers; before they enter the patient's room and again when they leave the patient's room and everywhere in between. There's a seemingly non-stop whirl of the motorized apparatus that dispenses the Purell products. In the bathrooms, the "healthy soap" dispensed requires water to finish the task. Outside the bathrooms, the dispenser produces a foamy substance that one is directed to rub their hands until dry. No water required. It has been my observation that of all the things that happen in a hospital, nothing comes close, in its frequency of use or in its sheer numbers than the activity surrounding these Purell dispensers. In second place, a distant second in my opinion, would be the use of the nitrile (not latex) "clean" gloves. They are also mounted on the walls, rarely in the halls, mostly in patient rooms, three boxes: one for small, medium, and large hands. Other than maintenance and food delivery (they were their own gloves), whoever enters a patient's room must glove up. Of course, that only happens after they've waived their hand under the automated Purell dispenser. I certainly haven't been counting, but those boxes, 250 count, are regularly emptied as well, and replaced with new boxes. However, their numbers pale in comparison to the numbers of Purell dispensers and refills.

You'd be surprised what your mind conjures while sitting by yourself in a patient's room, and one who's unable to talk or even squeeze your hand. Comic relief is almost mandatory. And considering the circumstances, wondering is not far from hoping.

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



PHOTO BY MERCIA HOBSON/THE CONNECTION
Kristina Campbell with her daughter she adopted in 2019.

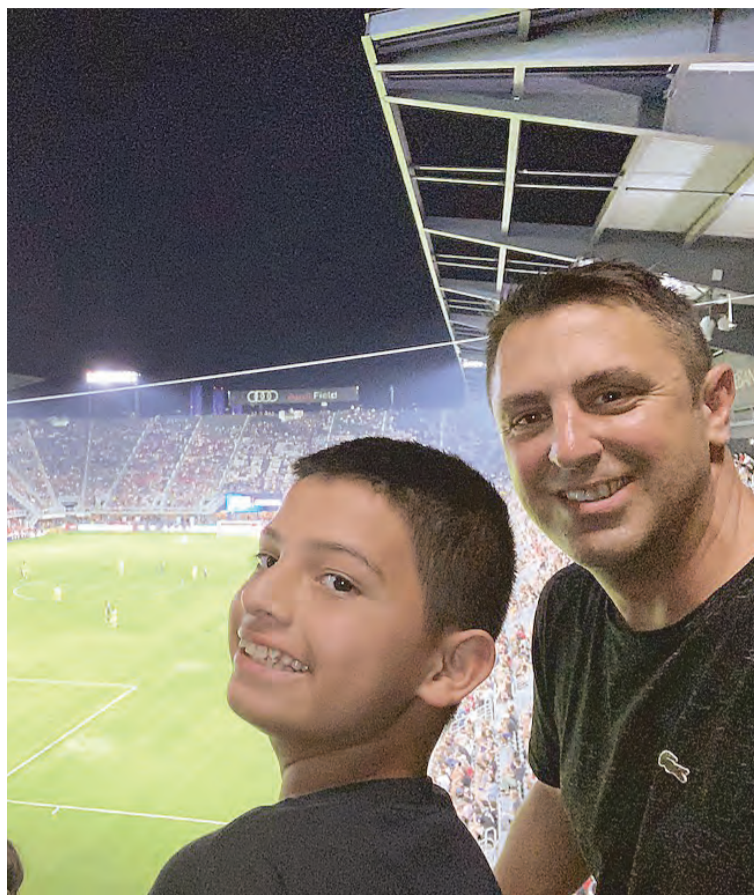


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Justin and Russell Barczyk at a game.



PHOTO BY MERCIA HOBSON/THE CONNECTION
Justin and Russell Barczyk arrive for a Kidsave cookie decorating event on Sunday, July 31. www.kidsave.org/kids-galleries/

These Children Need You

Colombian orphans vacation locally, dream of connections to their future families.

BY MERCIA HOBSON
 THE CONNECTION

Kidsave changed the names of the children eligible for adoption for security reasons.

Orphans from Colombia eight years old and over are frequently ignored and have little chance of growing up in a family. They need champions to change their lives or face aging out of care alone. This summer, eight families from Northern Virginia, Maryland, and the District of Columbia, including Russell Barczyk and his wife Brigitte Miller of Alexandria, are hosting older orphans eligible for adoption from Colombia for five weeks, through Aug. 8.

They are part of the Kidsave Summer Miracles program. The youth and teens are experiencing life in a U.S. family. For some, it will be the connection to their lasting, caring family.

“My wife and I started looking into consultations with different adoption agencies and available options. We heard about Kidsave (and) the program they have with kids in Colombia,” Barczyk said. He explained that 43 Colombian children are spending the summer in the United States, primarily in the Washington, D.C., Los Angeles, and Chicago areas. Eight families in the greater Washington, D.C. area care for nine children, including two sisters. The profiles of all 43 children are available on the Kidsave website.

Host families provide children eligible for adoption the opportunity to spend summer vacations in the United States. While some families will adopt the children they are hosting, other families will become lifelong advocates and others will help the children find their permanent, loving families. According to the nonprofit’s website, approximately 80 percent of the children who have participated in the Summer Miracles program since its inception were matched for adoption.

The Kidsave DC Summer Miracles Cookie Decorating event was held at the Jane E. Lawton Community Rec Center in Chevy Chase, Md. on Sunday, July 31. Approximately 40 people, including families interested in adoption, future hosts, current hosts, and orphans from Colombia, were present. Most children engaged in the activity, with Spanish words and much laughter filling the room. For others, especially the hosts and families who adopted years ago, and others, it was an opportunity to talk and compare experiences.

Kristina Campbell was there with her teenage daughter from Colombia, who participated in the LA Kidsave program three years ago. When asked what she liked most about her mother, Kristina’s daughter said, “It is the fact that she is my mom.” According to Campbell, her daughter learned she would be adopted a few days after returning to Colombia from a Kidsave Los Angeles program. Campbell said the adoption process



PHOTO BY MERCIA HOBSON/THE CONNECTION

Summer gallery of the Summer Miracles’ Kidsave photolistings of children currently available for adoption visiting the D.C. Metro area. www.kidsave.org/kids-galleries/

takes between nine and twelve months.

Beth Dresing is a 10-year Kidsave volunteer, co-chair of the D.C. Metro Summer Miracles board of trustees, a host, and, most importantly, the mother of a son she adopted in 2011. Dresing said he was short and unable to jump hurdles during high school track and field successfully, so he tried out for dance instead. Her son is now a senior in college, majoring in dance and excelling at it.

Barczyk said Justin, age 12, who he and his wife are hosting, enjoys drawing, read-

ing, cooking, watching movies, and listening to Colombian music. According to his online profile, “Justin loves soccer and dreams of traveling to Brazil, specifically to visit their soccer stadiums.... Until then, he’s happy to play soccer with his friends—and potentially with his dream family.”

Learn more about becoming a Kidsave Visiting Family this summer or view the Summer Miracles Adoption Gallery with profiles and videos of youth currently available for adoption or hosting at - <https://www.kidsave.org/kids-galleries/>.