

The Castagnero family, Matt, Amanda, and Will, ten months, at the 2022 Vienna Halloween Parade.

75 Year Halloween Tradition

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BEAR BRANCH

BECKTAILS

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PHOTO BY JENNIFER FALCONE

Silver Line Sets Opening Day

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Festival of Lights: Many Hands & Several Months

PAGE 6

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75th Annual Vienna Halloween Parade

Floats, entertainment, and small-town charm fill the night.

BY MERCIA HOBSON
THE CONNECTION

The Town of Vienna has been holding a Halloween parade for local children and their parents since 1946, marking this year's event as the 76th Annual Vienna Halloween Parade. The 2022 parade had the theme "Time machine: Vienna in the past, present, and future."

Leigh Kitcher, a 30-year leader and dedicated volunteer in Vienna, served as Grand Marshall. She is recognized for her leadership roles on Historic Vienna, Inc., Ayr Hill Garden Club, and National Capital Area Garden Club boards. "Her leadership on the Liberty Amendments Advisory Committee and Facilitators groups in 2021 resulted in an astonishingly successful inaugural program including 65 events presented to more than 22,000 people," according to the Town of Vienna.

The Vienna Police Department and the Fairfax County Police Motor Squad were the first two participating groups in the lineup of 82 groups for the 2022 Halloween Parade. Traditionally held on the Wednesday evening one week before Halloween, this year's parade lasted approximately an hour and a half.

The Ghost Balloon by Title Sponsor Virginia Tire & Auto proved a big hit with the spectators, as did the James Madison High School "Pride of Vienna" Marching Band. While the parade participants were



The Vienna Town Council, one for all and all for one.

not permitted to throw candy or hand out any items due to safety concerns, the Town gave out 1,000 Halloween Goody Bags at the end of the parade route near Vienna

Elementary while supplies lasted. The half-mile-long parade route ran down Maple Avenue, from Branch Road to Center Street, providing plenty of curb-side seating for all.



The 2022 parade theme, "Time machine: Vienna in the past, present, and future."



The Castagnero family, Matt, Amanda, and Will, ten months, at the 2022 Vienna Halloween Parade.



James Madison High School "Pride of Vienna" Marching Band.



The Ghost Balloon by Title Sponsor Virginia Tire & Auto floats by the reviewing stand.



The Ghost Balloon by Title Sponsor Virginia Tire & Auto.



Spectators line the half-mile-long parade route.

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NEWS

WMATA Sets Start Date for Silver Line

The six new stations on the Silver Line are due to open Nov. 15, beginning service to Washington Dulles International Airport and Loudoun County. The stations are Reston Town Center, Herndon, Innovation Center, Washington Dulles International Airport, Loudoun Gateway, and Ashburn.

It will be the largest expansion of Metro-rail since the system's inception.

On opening day, Metro teams at the six new Silver Line stations will hand out commemorative pennants, a Metro tradition that started when the first station opened in 1976.

The extension completes the final phase of the full 23-mile expansion that began construction in 2009; the first segment opened five years later. This final segment provides a long-awaited connection to Washington Dulles International Airport, offering visitors a direct connection to destinations around the region.

The Silver Line Extension includes a new rail maintenance and service yard, located on 90 acres of the Washington Dulles Inter-

national Airport property. The Dulles Rail Yard is the largest rail yard in the Metro system and employs nearly 700 people.

The announcement of a planned opening date follows 18 weeks of testing, training and safety certification efforts by Metro. Metro took control of the Silver Line Extension from the Metropolitan Washington Airports Authority (MWAA) more than four months ago, after the project achieved its Operational Readiness Date on June 23, 2022. Since then Metro has been testing the new tracks and equipment, and training staff at the stations, railyard, and maintenance facilities in preparation for opening to the public.

Metro continues to work on a short list of items with the Washington Metrorail Safety Commission, expecting to finalize safety certification before opening for passenger service.

Metro Board Members and employees announced the opening in a video, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=md8tfV_HiR4.

Visit wmata.com/silverline for more information, including virtual station tours, maps, and connecting bus routes.

Notice for Voters in Towns of Herndon, Clifton and Vienna

Fairfax County voters in the towns of Herndon, Clifton, and Vienna may have recently received a notice from the Virginia Department of Elections in Richmond advising them of an incorrect location and address for their polling place.

The Fairfax County Office of Elections is mailing the voters affected a letter confirming their correct voting location on Election Day.

Additionally, you may find your correct voting location and other correct informa-

tion here:

- ❖ Your voter registration record on the Department of Elections Citizen Portal: vote.elections.virginia.gov

- ❖ On the green sample ballot and voter information flyer received in the mail the first week of October from the Fairfax County Office of Elections.

Contact the Fairfax County Office of Elections with questions. 703-222-0776 TTY 711.1

Scouting for Food on Nov. 12, 2022

On Saturday, Nov. 12, Scouts and their adult leaders from Troops and Packs all over Northern Virginia will be gathering food donated by their neighbors and bringing it to local charities in the annual Scouting for Food collection.

All food is donated to local charities that distribute the food to those in need in our community. Last year, over 680 scouts and 500 adult leaders collected 44,350 pounds of food in the Powhatan District covering Great Falls, Herndon, Reston, Oakton, and Chantilly.

Four charities will receive food from the scouts on Nov. 12 and the public is also welcome to drop off nonperishable food between 10 a.m. and 1 p.m. The charities are: LINK receiving food at Trinity Presbyterian Church at 651 Dranesville Road, Herndon; Community of Faith UMC Food Pantry at 13224 Franklin Farm Road, Herndon; Cornerstones, receiving food at St. John Neumann Church, 11900 Lawyers Rd, Reston; and the South Lakes High School PTSA Food Pantry receiving food at Good Shepherd Lutheran Church at 1133 Reston Ave, Hern-



A fifth-grade scout from Pack 1601 with food he collected for Scouting for Food in 2021.

don.

Betty Eidemiller, of the LINK charity on Scouting for Food: "Food insufficiency in

SEE SCOUTING FOR FOOD, PAGE 5
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Herndon Moose Lodge, 779 Center St, Herndon, VA

Scouting for Food on Nov. 12, 2022

FROM PAGE 4

Herndon, Sterling, and Ashburn is great and LINK volunteers are working hard to provide, thanks to all the generosity that we see from the community." LINK's 2021 holiday program served over 1,008 families and 5,284 individuals.

Rev. Robert Vaughn, of the Community of Faith UMC Food Pantry on Scouting for Food: "Scouting for Food is an important link in providing food for families in our neighborhoods. Eighty-five percent of all the non-perishable items come from the annual collection – every can, box and bag make a difference in the lives of our clients. Some of our families receive their entire week's groceries from the food ministry." Recently, 196 families were served in a single week.

Roberta Gosling of the South Lakes High School Food Pantry on Scouting for Food: "We pack 20-25 pound bags of food and distribute that along with many other items to approximately 140 families each week at South Lakes High School. These groceries serve students and families in the SLHS Pyramid. Prior to the pandemic, we knew that approximately 30% of the students

SEE SCOUTING, PAGE 8



Scouts from Pack 1601 who are in first, third, and fifth grade with a delivery of food to a food pantry in 2021. Many volunteers are helping to sort and box the food for storage.



Scouts from Troop 159 with food they collected in 2021 for Scouting for Food.

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Holiday Shows ‘Light’ Up the Season

NOVA Parks Offers Three Popular Light Festivals.

By SUSAN LAUME
THE CONNECTION

If you are one of those charged with setting up the family’s holiday house or tree lights, and recall the struggles of taming tangles, locating bulb outages, reaching power outlets, and the challenge of packing it all away again after the season, then you might begin to empathize with the job of Evan Inkley. He and his crew of special event employees create the “Festival of Lights” at Bull Run Park, arguably the largest such display in Northern Virginia.

Imagine, if you can, the effort needed to manage a festival of more than a million bulbs and thousands of strings of lights and power cords; enough to extend over the 64-mile distance of the Capital Beltway. The largest individual display is 40 feet tall and almost seven feet wide; just one of 600 light displays. Forty some of those displays with animation require individual set-up and programming using laptop computers.

Employees communicate in an elf-like code, using names for displays like: “Jack & the Beanstalk,” “Flight School,” “Elf Cottage,” and snow tubes. They have a dedicated workshop where one can imagine the magic created rivals that at Santa’s famous workshop at the North Pole. Questions asked by crew reveal the intricacy of their work and set-ups, “Does the snowflake arch cord running across the road need a male end on the left side or right side?”

What does it take to put all these



Night work reveals any missing bulbs or unplugged cords before show opening.



A fleet of van trailers is needed to store all the materials that make up the seasonal display.



NOVA Parks huge “Festival of Lights” welcomes seasonal celebrants with hundreds of displays.

PHOTOS BY SUSAN LAUME/THE CONNECTION

elements together to create such a huge show with new features every year? Inkley says that “many hands and several months” is the short answer. Although the events crew works year-round creating new displays and making repairs, intense activity occurs between mid-August and the show opening in early November each year. The eight to ten member regular staff is increased during crunch time by pulling crew members from other park maintenance teams and the park system’s headquarters, to reach 25 helpers. They may pull 12 hour shifts to be ready for opening night. This year on November

11th.

Old style bulbs have been replaced with more efficient LEDs in all displays and the old bulbs recycled. Generators line the storage area ready for duty remote from permanent power sources. The closed park is active now at night with large crane equipment stretched out in the darkness, like metal brontosauruses reach-

ing high into the trees, to place lights in the canopies and on tree trunks. Pick-up trucks and carts move materials like a roving army of ants. Many of the displays are lit up, viewed only by wildlife and the crew members, who know that perfection can only be achieved in the dark. Displays set up in the day do not look the same at night, and night reveals missing bulbs and

unplugged cords.

The show displays coexist, for the most part peacefully, with the park’s abundant wildlife. Inkley says animals typically avoid the lights at night. On occasion, daylight reveals a hoof print where a deer has stepped on a wire without injury ... to the deer. One curious fox, of the several that make the

SEE NOVA PARKS, PAGE 8



Inside the workshop, rivaling Santa’s famous operation, employees Kelly Gilfillen and Evan Inkley hold elements which will become part of the magical glow.



Shelves full of display materials, power cords, and generators await service along the event route.



Special events manager Evan Inkley demonstrates the heights and lengths he and his crew go to inside the 3,000-square-foot storage building to make the festival a memorable holiday excursion.

NEWS

VOTE, it's Election Day Tuesday/Nov. 8

Polls open from 6 a.m. to 7 p.m. If you are in line by 7 p.m., you will be able to vote.

Note that Fairfax County voters in the towns of Herndon, Clifton, and Vienna may have recently received a notice from the Virginia Department of Elections in Richmond with the wrong location and address for their polling place. Please disregard that notice. Find your correct voting location and other correct information with your voter registration record on the Department of Elections Citizen Portal: vote.elections.virginia.gov Call 703-222-0776 TTY 711 with questions.

Sample ballots and more at <https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/elections/home-page>

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/NOV. 6

"The Oldest Hatred; Fighting Back." 11 a.m.-12:15 p.m. Via Zoom. The Generations After, an organization primarily comprised of children of Holocaust survivors, as well as survivors, and grandchildren of survivors, will present a program on antisemitism. "The Oldest Hatred; Fighting Back" will feature guest speakers Mark Weitzman and Jonah Cohen. Mark Weitzman is Chief Operation Officer of the World Jewish Restitution Organization. He previously served as Director of Government Affairs for the Simon Wiesenthal Center. Weitzman spearheaded the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance's (IHRA) 2016 adoption of the Working Definition of Antisemitism. Cohen is the director of communications for the Committee for Accuracy in Middle East Reporting and Analysis (CAMERA). His articles on Jews, Israel, and human rights have appeared in numerous publications. Following the program, The Generations after will hold their annual meeting and elections, at approximately 12:15 PM. To register for the program and/or the annual meeting, copy this link:

The Oldest Hatred; Fighting Back, Nov 6, 11 AM ET + Annual Meeting/Elections, 12:15 PM | Cognito Forms

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So many of our Military families today find themselves in financial crisis, now more than ever. This will be especially true during this Holiday Season. To give back, Able Forces Foundation (AFF) is once again sponsoring the Adopt-A-Warrior

SEE BULLETIN, PAGE 9

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NEWS

Scouting for Food on Nov. 12, 2022

FROM PAGE 5

at SLHS were food insecure — that’s approximately 730 students. Many have told us that these groceries and other products have been a life-saver for them.”

Minnie Orozco of Cornerstones on Scouting for Food: “Scouting for food as well as other food drives are really important to Cornerstones food pantry — they help us provide food for our community who are in need and who cannot afford to buy food.” Cornerstones’ Assistance Services and Pantry Program (ASAPP) is the largest food pantry in northwest Fairfax County. In FY2021 ASAPP served 1,347 households, benefiting 4,810 people, with an average of 450+ households served per month.



Scouts from Troop 1983G with food they collected for Scouting for Food in 2021.

NOVA Parks Offers Three Popular Light Festivals

FROM PAGE 6

Your festival driving adventure of 30 to 45 minutes might end with a stop at the park’s Holiday Village for a hot cocoa by the bonfire, fun at the carnival, posing for photos, shopping for holiday merchandise, or a camel ride — yes, a real live camel lets you image yourself as a biblical Wiseman ... or Wise-child. After the final drive through of the festival’s close on January 8th, Inkley and crew start the two to four month process to take down all the displays ... perhaps after a celebratory hot cocoa of their own?

When asked if he decorates his own home for the holidays, given his almost year-long immersion in holiday decorating, Inkley says, “I do decorate but it takes extra motivation.” That motivation comes, not just from his young family, but also from a friendly neighborhood lighting contest. With his professional background, does he have an edge? Says Inkley, “They changed the rules recently to have no back-to-back winner.”

Bull Run’s Festival of Lights is located at 7700 Bull Run Dr, Centreville; for reservations, event calendar and discount dates, see <https://www.novaparks.com/events/bull-run-festival-of-lights>

Other area light shows by NOVA Parks include: Meadowlark Park, Winter Walk of Lights, a half-mile walk through lighted features with a nature theme (9750 Meadowlark Gardens Ct, Vienna) <https://www.novaparks.com/events/winter-walk-of-lights/ticket-information>; and Ice & Lights, a lighted winter village with walls through, and with day and night time skating (4001 Eisenhower Ave, Alexandria), <https://www.novaparks.com/events/ice-lights>

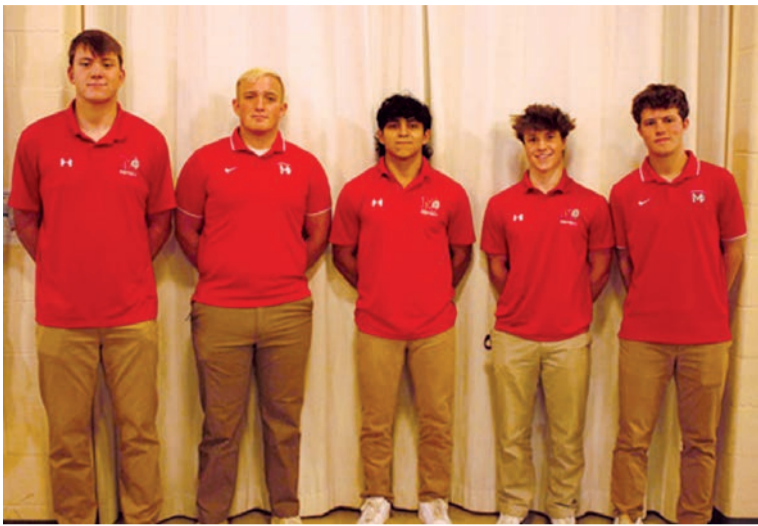
Recall your own attic, garage, or closet storage space available for seasonal items. Then appreciate the vast number of elements under Inkley’s stewardship. The park’s dedicated 3,000-square-foot maintenance and storage building contains shelves with row upon row of large plastic containers, a number that makes one’s home storage pale in comparison. Still, the building and bins are not sufficient to hold it all. Twelve 53-foot van trailers and three shipping containers supplement storage for the seasonal items.

At the culmination of this colossal preparation effort, from the ease and comfort of your car, you and your family can enjoy the festival’s sparkling, colorful lights, which add to the uplifting spirit of the holidays. Drive along the two and a half mile stretch of holiday light displays, and expect to hear ooh’s and aah’s continue as passengers recognize favorite symbols, characters, or representations of outdoor activities. Bull Run’s festival hosted over 62,000 vehicles in 2022. With timed entry tickets sold by vehicle, it’s estimated that about a quarter of a million people saw last year’s show. It’s become a traditional holiday outing for many. Bull Run’s festival is the first show undertaken by NOVA Parks, which now offers three light shows in the area.,

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Members of the McLean HS football team: Andrew Mock, left tackle; Luke Dettleff, Center; Daniel Benitez, running back/linebacker; Easton Johnson, linebacker/running back; and Charley Samburg, quarterback and safety. Not shown is coach Jock Cockerham.



Members of the Langley HS football team: Remhi Chaudhry, linebacker, Nick Guagliaro, wide receiver, and Brendan Mansinne, quarterback. Not shown is coach Dave Murray.

Meeting of the Minds Before the Game

Members of the McLean and Langley High School football teams spoke to the Rotary Club of McLean on Tuesday, November 1, 2022 about their upcoming game on Friday night Nov. 4, 2022 at McLean High

School beginning at 7:00 pm. This annual rivalry is always an exciting game. Langley High School principal Kimberly Greer and former McLean High School principal Deborah Jackson are both members of McLean Rotary.

BULLETIN BOARD

FROM PAGE 7

Family Christmas program. As in years past, Able Forces Foundation will adopt families from each of the five Military Service branches. All adopted families are identified by military Advocates on military bases or military Recovery programs in the Washington, DC Metro area. These families have been vetted and referred to AFF. Based on need, financial support will ensure each family will have:

- A Christmas Tree
- Complete Christmas Dinner (for up to 8)
- Stocking Stuffers
- the ability to provide up to 5 gifts per child 100% of all donations go directly to support this program. There are no administrative or overhead fees taken

out of donations. All donations contributed between Oct. 25 and Christmas will go directly to support this program. If you can help, go to: www.ableforces.org/adopt to make a contribution.

NEW BICYCLE AND PEDESTRIAN BRIDGE OPENS

The new bicycle and pedestrian bridge over I-495 (Capital Beltway) between Route 7 (Leesburg Pike) and Route 123 (Chain Bridge Road/Dolley Madison Boulevard) opened last week, greatly improving bicyclist and pedestrian accessibility, connectivity, and safety in the Tysons area, according to the Virginia Department of

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CONNECTION

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NEWS DEPARTMENT:
vienna@connectionnewspapers.com

Mary Kimm
Editor and Publisher
mkimm@connectionnewspapers.com

Mercia Hobson
Staff Reporter
mhobson@connectionnewspapers.com

Ken Moore
Contributing Writer
kmoore@connectionnewspapers.com

ADVERTISING:
For advertising information
sales@connectionnewspapers.com
703-778-9431

Debbie Funk
Display Advertising/National Sales
703-778-9444
debfunk@connectionnewspapers.com

David Griffin
Marketing Assistant
703-778-9431
dgriffin@connectionnewspapers.com

Classified & Employment Advertising
703-778-9431

Editor & Publisher
Mary Kimm
mkimm@connectionnewspapers.com
@MaryKimm

Publisher
Jerry Vernon
703-549-0004
jvernon@connectionnewspapers.com

In Memoriam
Managing Editor
Kemal Kurspahic

Art/Design:
Laurence Foong
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Here's What's Happening at MCC!

Presented by The Alden

Six Pack Rodeo
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NOV
6

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It's Back & Better Than Ever!

McLean Antiques Show & Sale
Saturday, Nov. 12, 10 a.m.-5 p.m.
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The Old Firehouse

Snack & Paint
Friday, Nov. 18, 7 p.m.-9 p.m.

Whether you are a beginner or an expert, love snacks or want to get your hands dirty with some paint, come on down to the Old Firehouse for our snack and paint night. Led by a professional art teacher, you will be able to create your own masterpiece with your family while having tons of fun doing so. All materials and snacks are included in the fee. Preregistration is recommended.

NOV
18



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CALENDAR

2022 MCLEAN HIGH SCHOOL BAND FRUIT SALE
Help support the McLean High School Band programs by purchasing fresh fruit from Florida. For over 40 years, the MHS Band Fruit Sale has offered high quality citrus from the Florida groves. This year you can purchase Navel Oranges, Mandarin Oranges, Grapefruit or a Fruit Sampler. Place your order online through November 9th at <http://www.floridafruitstore.com/McLeanHSBand>. Fruit is for pick-up only on Saturday, December 10th at McLean HS, 1633 Davidson Road, McLean. E-mail fruitsale@mcleanband.org

OCT. 21 - NOV. 13
"Frankenstein." At NextStop Theatre Company, 269 Sunset Park Dr., Herndon. By Nick Dear, adapted from the novel by Mary Shelley. Celebrate Halloween season with this thrilling stage adaptation of Mary Shelley's science fiction masterpiece. Enter the dark world of Victor Frankenstein, as he attempts to decipher the secret of life by creating a childlike, but grotesque shadow of a human. Recommended for mature audiences. Visit www.nextstoptheatre.org

OCT. 21-NOV. 5
"Doubt: A Parable." 8 p.m. on Oct. 21, 22, 28, 29; Nov 4, 5; and 2 p.m.: Sundays: Oct 30, Nov 6. At Vienna Community Center: 120 Cherry S. SE, Vienna. "Doubt: A Parable," a play by John Patrick Shanley, analyzes an instance of doubt and suspicion in a Catholic school in the Bronx in the 1960s. The play tells the story of principal Sister Aloysius's suspicions about an inappropriate relationship between a priest and a young male student. Visit the website: www.viennatheatrecompany.org

SATURDAY/NOV. 5
Reston Homes Tour. 10 a.m. – 5 p.m. Tickets are now on sale for the 20th Reston Home Tour of various homes in Reston. Ticket-holders can visit up to eight homes throughout Reston. Self-guided tour stops: Hook Road, Triple Crown Road, Dorrance Court, Auburn Grove Lane, Lake Anne House, Beacon Place, and an EYA model home. Proceeds benefit the Reston Museum. A detailed map with addresses will be emailed closer to the event date. Visit <https://www.restonmuseum.org/hometour>.

SATURDAY/NOV. 5
Appraisal Roadshow. 10:45 a.m. - Noon at Reston Association Headquarters, Reston. The Appraisal Roadshow delivers a treasure hunt experience in a fun, educational and rewarding forum. Bring an item such as jewelry, coins, a timepiece, porcelain, artwork or other heirlooms, and the appraisal experts will educate you and the other participants with interesting facts and information on what it is, what it's worth and what you can do with your treasure. Questions? Contact Ashleigh@reston.org or 703-435-6577.

SUNDAY/NOV. 6
Six Pack Rodeo. 2 p.m. At McLean Community Center, McLean. These McLean locals will rock you with

CALENDAR

FROM PAGE 10

their special brand of “country with a kick”— original music, classic rock and even country favorites.

SUNDAY/NOV. 6

Traditional Celtic Music. 4:30 p.m. and 6:30 p.m. At the Old Brogue Pub in Great Falls. Featuring Robin Bullock, the foremost Celtic bouzouki/guitar and mandolin exponent in the nation! This award-winning Celtic/American string wizard is a prolific composer and multi-instrumentalist, whose virtuosity on guitar, cittern and mandolin blends the ancient melodies of the Celtic lands and their vigorous Appalachian descendants into one powerful musical vision. Visit robinbullock.com

TUESDAY/NOV. 8

VOTE, it's ELECTION DAY. Polls open from 6 a.m. to 7 p.m. If you are in line by 7 p.m., you will be able to vote. Note that Fairfax County voters in the towns of Herndon, Clifton, and Vienna may have recently received a notice from the Virginia Department of Elections in Richmond with the wrong location and address for their polling place. Please disregard that notice. Find your correct voting location and other correct information with your voter registration record on the Department of Elections Citizen Portal: vote.elections.virginia.gov Call 703-222-0776 TTY 711 with questions. Sample ballots and more at <https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/elections/home-page>

WEDNESDAY/NOV. 9

Talk on Lyme and Vector Borne Illnesses. 5:30 p.m. At Greenfare Restaurant, 408 Elden Street, Herndon. What is the incidence and prevalence in our area? How do you prevent bites? How do you remove a tick? What are the signs and symptoms of Lyme? Is labwork accurate? What is the status of a vaccine? Come hear answers to these questions and more from a Lyme survivor, advocate, and health coach. RSVP: mveiga@mylymeguide.com Link to event: <https://greenfare.com/event/the-latest-on-lyme-disease/>

NOW THRU DEC. 31

Crafts for Kids. 10 a.m. to 12 noon. At Reston Art Gallery and Studios, 11400 Washington Plaza W at Lake Anne, Reston. Free, themed art projects for children (with guardian) are offered at Reston Art Gallery and Studios every Saturday from 10 a.m. until 12 p.m. Visit the website: www.restonartgallery.com

SATURDAYS UNTIL DECEMBER

The Reston Farmers Market (sponsored by the Fairfax Co. Park Authority) will take place at

BULLETIN BOARD

FROM PAGE 9

Transportation. The bridge carries a new 10-foot-wide shared-use path that runs nearly half a mile from Tysons One Place and Fashion Boulevard to Old Meadow Road and Provincial Drive, providing a new link between the Tysons Corner Center mall and Tysons residential areas east of the Beltway.

SUPPORT GROUPS

Parent Support Partners, a service of the Healthy Minds Fairfax initiative, are all parents who have received training and are qualified to

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The McLean Antiques Show and Sale will take place Nov. 12-13 at the McLean Community Center.

McLean Antiques Show and Sale.

10 a.m. to 5 p.m. on Saturday; 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. on Sunday. At McLean Community Center, 1234 Ingleside Ave., McLean. The McLean Antiques Show and Sale will feature an exciting selection of designer vintage clothing and American Folk Art as well as well-known traditional show offerings. The show brings together a fine selection of antiques dealers from eight states from New England to North Carolina. Admission is \$10 per person for both days of the show. Children and teens under age 18 will be admitted free of charge. For a list of dealers, visit www.dfshows.com.

Lake Anne Village in Reston from 8 a.m.-noon. SNAP beneficiaries receive up to \$20 match. Visit <http://restonfarmersmarket.com/>

MCLEAN FARMERS MARKET

The McLean Farmers Market opened for the 2022 season on May 6th, at Lewinsville Park, 1659 Chain Bridge Road, McLean. The market will run every Friday from 8 a.m. to noon through Nov. 11. Local farmers and producers will sell fresh produce and fruits; breads and pastries; prepared foods; meats; herbs; flowers, and more. All products are grown or produced by the vendors and come from within 125 miles of Fairfax County. For more information, see: <https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/farmersmarkets/>

GREAT FALLS FARMERS MARKET

The Great Falls Farmers Market Outdoor Market is open Saturdays, 9 a.m. - 1 p.m., 778 Walker Road, Great Falls. For vendors and weekly highlights see <https://www.greatfallsfarmersmarket.org/>

offer education, support and assistance at no cost to families or caregivers. They provide reliable information that families can use in decision-making and are familiar with services and resources that can help families in distress. Visit www.fairfaxcounty.gov/healthymindsfairfax or www.nami-northernvirginia.org/parent-peer-support.html.

Virginia Chronic Pain Support Group Meets from 1:30-3 p.m. the 2nd Wednesday of each month at Kaplan Center for Integrative Medicine, 6829 Elm St., Suite 300, McLean. Group leader, Jodi Brayton, LCSW. 703-532-4892.

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Thank you to the hundreds of supporters who helped to keep all your Connection Newspapers alive throughout Alexandria, Fairfax County Arlington County and Potomac, Md. along with affiliated websites and digital media. Now we need help again in 2022.

Each local newspaper's mission aspires to provide greater community service, and we do know that our communities are better off if we continue to publish. Last year's financial support from readers and supporters like you bridged the shortfall before Federal PPP funding arrived, and both made our survival possible. We now await a decision for a grant from Rebuild Virginia in early February that we hope will help us in 2022 and beyond. But we need help to survive the first quarter, always a brutal time for cash flow in weekly newspapers. Thank you.

Please, help save these historical papers. All gifts will be used to fund our printed newspapers and websites and to meet obligations to our loyal and patient employees, writers, contractors and suppliers.

The ongoing pandemic continues to crush many newspapers across the country, and our newspapers continue to be at risk. The Northern Virginia area's best read and most trusted source for community news includes the Alexandria Gazette Packet, Mount Vernon Gazette and all Connection Newspapers in the metropolitan region.

The pandemic has hit small businesses hard, which in turn has reduced advertising revenue that keeps these local newspapers alive to provide hyper-local news to residents. It feels like no small miracle to be looking forward into 2022.

Please, help save these historical papers. Connection Newspapers has been offering these local newspapers to residents for over 200 years. Countless residents have grown up with these papers covering significant moments in the lives of family and children, news, community events, school activities, and even pictures of your dogs and cats. Internet news and large national newspapers cannot provide the local connection or historical connection that local papers like Connection Newspapers and the Alexandria Gazette Packet provide. If your child, dog, mother, father, neighborhood, school has been featured, you understand the value of local community newspapers.

Visit www.connectionnewspapers.com or <https://www.gofundme.com/f/help-keep-your-newspaper-printing>

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A Distinction Without a Difference



By KENNETH B. LOURIE

I've had health insurance with the same provider for 20+ years. For the past seven years I had been accepted into a special, more fortunate subgroup. Initial qualifications were simple: Serious illness (like my cancer) qualified. The application was a two-page pamphlet asking half-a-dozen, token-type questions. Nothing beyond name, rank, and serial number – and disease, of course. Naturally, I was accepted. The plan paid all co-pays for office visits, scans and such, and every dollar of any prescription medication I was prescribed. It was a freebee, so to speak; and to invoke Dennis Eckersley, formerly of the NESN/Boston Red Sox television broadcasting crew (while describing a particularly fortuitous event on the field): "It was a beautiful thing." And when you consider the cost of cancer drugs, receiving a pass such as this, was instrumental in my survival – financially (you'll learn why: keep reading). Not incurring these costs has been a Godsend for my family.

A year or so ago however, my provider changed the rules. No more would seriousness of disease be the trigger. It would now be means-tested requirement where you had to make less than minimum wage, if you know what I mean? But the application was still modest in its initial approach. I answered a few questions and amazingly made the cut somehow and the benefits were renewed for another year, until Oct. 4th of this year. Apparently, the provider felt the pinch of its generosity. In response to my renewal application submitted 30 days before this year's expiration, the provider responded by mail a few days before my coverage was scheduled to terminate; that they needed additional financial documentation: tax returns, (all schedules), W-2s, 1099s, et cetera. They further advised that I could expect a response 45 days after receipt. This meant that I would be out of time/coverage when my cancer medication was due to be refilled. The timing could not have been worse.

I tried to reorder the medication as near as possible to the end of my current coverage so it would last through the 45 days until I was possibly renewed (hardly guaranteed), but I was advised by the pharmacy that the order was placed too soon, and I'd have to wait until, you guessed it, as it happened, after this special coverage had ended. Frantic, I called the provider's home office, spoke with a pharmacy coverage specialist, and explained my dilemma. She was understanding and said the provider offered a once-per lifetime accommodation for these exact transitional-type circumstances (when the patient now has to pay), to pay for the medication as they previously had: zero dollars. I was ecstatic. I thanked her profusely and hung up. When it was timely to reorder, I called the pharmacy and submitted the order. A day or so later, I received a text advising me that my medication was ready, and the co-pay would be \$985 – for one month. Disappointed (to say the least, panicked to say the most), I called the local pharmacy which was processing the order and asked if they were familiar with this special one-time dispensation. They said they were. Then I said, "What was this order about. I was then put on hold as the pharmacy tech. went "to get the pharmacy manager," she said. (I feared this day of reckoning would occur one day. Not to be a fatalist, more so a realist, but I figured this amazing benefit had to end at some point. I couldn't be this lucky forever. Now however, I might say the eagle has landed. Moreover, given the co-pay I received today, let me amend that statement to say the eagle has crashed and burned.)

Within 30 seconds or so the pharmacy manager comes on the line and asks if she can help. I briefly review with her the basic components of my expectation and ask why the co-pay is \$985 (I'm rounding up, to be fair). She says: "You are covered." "This is not the price that the home office told me I would be paying. I sure doesn't sound like I'm covered." I pleaded, calm. Then she said those words that led to this column: "I'm afraid that one-time offer doesn't apply for this medication." I snickered. You can probably imagine what I said to myself. Then I said: "I don't consider \$985 'coverage.'" Again, she assured me: "You are covered." I snicker, louder and more aggressively this time. You call \$985 for one month, "covered?" She responds that my regular policy still covers medication, just not like the special coverage I had previously did: free; and this \$985 is my current co-pay due. Otherwise, the medication would cost upwards of \$20,000." I hem and haw and eventually hang up the phone after asking how long the prescription will remain available for pick up. I still have a few weeks before I have to decide to pay the piper or not take my cancer medication. Either way, I'm worse off than I am now. Hardly a prescription for future good health.

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



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