Celebration Collage, Abram Larkin, 2nd grade, Fort Hunt Elementary, Andrew Green, Art Teacher.
During the holiday season, our thoughts turn gratefully to our communities and to our clients. From our family to yours, we hope your holidays are filled with warmth and cheer.

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George Washington’s Mount Vernon Decked Out Holiday Style

Kicking off the holiday season with the annual Christmas Illuminations.

By Mike Salmon
The Gazette

Over 5000 people attended the “Christmas Illuminations,” event at the Mount Vernon Estate Dec. 15 and 16. Food and drink were served at the plantation while attendees shopped at the holiday market, enjoyed the candlelight tours and the fireworks out over the Potomac River that concluded both nights. General and Mrs. Washington were seen among the crowd in period costumes.

Over 5000 people attended the “Christmas Illuminations,” event at the Mount Vernon Estate Dec. 15 and 16. Food and drink were served at the plantation while attendees shopped at the holiday market, enjoyed the candlelight tours and the fireworks out over the Potomac River that concluded both nights. General and Mrs. Washington were seen among the crowd in period costumes.

Frozen Fun

White House ice rink hosts local athletes.

By Jeanne Theismann
Gazette Packet

With the White House as the backdrop, Alexandria resident Douglas Goist demonstrated his goaltending skills at an ice rink installed by President Joe Biden and First Lady Jill Biden as part of an exhibition by the US National Blind Hockey Team Dec. 19.

“This is a great opportunity for athletes of all abilities to come together and enjoy being on the ice,” said Goist, who has been the goalie on the US team since it was formed in 2018.

The rink is the first to be installed on the South Lawn in 43 years. First Lady Jill Biden officially opened the temporary 50-by-70-foot rink Nov. 29. It will operate by invitation only throughout December.

Area schoolchildren and children from families with service members, frontline workers, first responders and teachers are among those who have been invited to skate.

The National Hockey League and the NHL Players Association has provided lessons through their “Learn to Play/Learn to Skate” program, which provides first-time participants with free equipment, weekly sessions and coaching.

Goist and his teammates skated alongside special needs athletes, including deaf players and those in wheelchairs, who used sleds on the ice.

“It was a great experience to be here tonight,” Goist said.
Peter Scoma, 14, Grade 9, Mount Vernon, 5 Frames in Time, (Five Frame Story || A Diorama in MineCraft), Global STEM Thomas A. Edison High School.

Starting with a blank slate in the MineCraft computer application, Peter Scoma built all of the functional diorama and manipulated the people to communicate a story in 5 frames.

1. Construction
In the first frame, construction workers are shown building a Threshold.

2. Ignition
The threshold is seen “igniting”, opening a portal to a different dimension, as a scientist looks on with awe.

3. Exploration
A new dimension is being explored and mapped by researchers in hazmat suits.

4. Colonization
A large base is being constructed to harness the unique materials on the other side of the portal.

5. Destruction
In the final frame, it is clear that the researchers probed too far into the unknown, waking something dark. As scientists flee the scene the technicians on the other side attempt to close the threshold to contain the destruction.
ALVIN SCOMA, 13, GRADE 8, MOUNT VERNON, ELEMENTS OF ART ACCORDION BOOK (MIXED MEDIA) (P1.), LINES (P2.), COLOR (P3.), VALUE (P4.), SHAPE (P5.), SPACE (P6.), FORM (P7.), TEXTURE (P8.), CARL SANDBURG MIDDLE SCHOOL, MOUNT VERNON, VA., MS. SU, ART TEACHER

FOSTER PARENTS NEEDED
Interested in becoming a foster parent? There is always a need for caring foster parents looking to open their homes to foster youth. Get in touch to learn more. Visit fcsvanow@gmail.com or www.FCSVA.org. Or call 703-817-9890.

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED
STEM VOLUNTEERS. The American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS) needs scientists, engineers, mathematicians, and physicians to assist K-12 STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics) teachers in the Northern Virginia Area, during the 2016-17 school year. In the 2015-16 school year, the numbers of STEM volunteers in Northern Virginia were: Fairfax County - 40, Arlington - 20, and Alexandria - one. Details of the collaboration are worked out between the teacher and the volunteer, and may involve giving demonstrations, assisting in lab experiments, lecturing on special topics, assisting with homework, etc. The hours are flexible.

SEE BULLETIN, PAGE 7

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Toy Drive

Making Spirits Bright

Firefighters mark 25 years of toy donations.

By JEANNE THEISMANN
The Gazette

Firefighters and Friends to the Rescue marked its 25th year of serving families in need with a toy distribution day Dec. 11 at Station 11 in Penn Daw.

“This is one of my favorite events of the year,” said Bruce Witucki of Union Street Public House. “It’s hard to believe this was our 25th year of providing for the community.”

Firefighters and Friends to the Rescue was founded by Willie Bailey, recently retired as Deputy Chief of the Office of the Fire Marshall with the Fairfax County Fire and Rescue Department. Bailey credits Witucki with generating significant early support for the organization.

“Bruce has been a sponsor since the organization was founded,” Bailey said. “He was instrumental in building support for us, through his own donations and with introductions to his wide circle of friends and businesses in the community.”

The annual event has grown from serving the Route 1 corridor to helping families, schools and nonprofits throughout Northern Virginia.

“This year we gave away over 3,000 toys, 50 bikes, and $3,000 in gift cards to over 50 schools and nonprofits,” Bailey said. “For 25 years individuals like Bruce and our many business sponsors have helped us provide for those less fortunate in the community.”

Children from the Gum Springs Head Start program selected a toy of their choice while having the opportunity to visit with Santa and interact with Caring Angels Therapy dogs. Mount Vernon District Supervisor Dan Storck and State Senator George Barker (D-39) were among the volunteers helping distribute toys.

“It’s important to be involved in helping people, particularly children,” Barker said. Sponsors for the event include: Ken and Kelly Savittiere Foundation; Apple Federal Credit Union; Progressive Firefighters of Fairfax; Local 2058; Fire and Rescue Retirement Association; Nationwide Credit Corporation; John and Jack Taylor; Chadwick’s Restaurant; Union Street Public House Restaurant (Bruce Witucki); Alexandria Toyota; Andrew Mitchell; Daniel Rowe; Bernie Cabral; Energesco Solutions LLC (William Bennett); Modern Technology Solution, Inc.; Medocracy, Inc.; DWCNV; PROMAX Realtors; The Movement Studios; Accenture Federal Services; Five Guys (Sam Chamberlain); FRANSMART; FCAC Delta Sigma Theta Sorority; Mount Vernon Gazette; Rotary Club of Tysons Corner; Caring Angels Therapy Dogs; Kelly’s Irish Times Restaurant; Fairfax County Police Department; Walmart (Store #2258 - Richmond Hwy.); and Primo Family Restaurant.

“It’s hard to believe but we have been providing gifts during the holidays for a quarter-century now,” Bailey said. “I am so thankful to our sponsors and supporters for making this a special time of year for so many families.”

Photos by Janet Barnett/The Gazette
What’s ‘Germinating’ In the General Assembly

By Del. Paul Krizek

As I hinted last week, this week’s column will delve into the environmental legislation that I have “germinating” in drafting. I am actively working with relevant stakeholders and constituents during this ongoing drafting process to ensure that these bills are ready for introduction in January.

I plan to introduce legislation urged by many of my constituents that aims to combat the invasive plant species Hedera helix, which is commonly known as English Ivy. English Ivy is designated as an invasive plant by the Commonwealth and all local jurisdictions in Virginia. As an invasive species, English Ivy can cover the forest floor, excluding tree seedlings and understory plants from nutrients. It can climb trees up to 90 feet, where it blocks photosynthesis and weights the tree down. Ivy is also a host for bacterial leaf scorch. Ivy spreads from root suckers and can form dense stands of plants into natural areas through bird dropings and is expensive to control and remove, costing localities millions. As you may know, in 2017, the General Assembly gave localities the ability to control for runnings and is expensive to control.

This bill would give localities the ability to prohibit homeowners from installing managed conservation landscaping, such as using landscape practices that incorporate environmentally sensitive design to address stormwater runoff, reduce pollution, protect clean air and water and support wildlife through the use of native plants. After incorporating some of these landscaping changes on their properties, several of my constituents have faced pushback from their HOAs, which tend to favor turf grass. Over 2 million Virginia residents live in a homeowner association, and as we face the current climate crisis, Virginia residents should have the flexibility to more sustainably manage their private land.

Finally, I am working on a bill to create a stakeholder workgroup to study the current Litter Tax and other litter prevention and mitigation approaches in the Commonwealth and recommend reforms to modernize them.

It’s so wonderful to represent this district where so many tirelessly dedicate themselves to advocating for the protection and preservation of our environment. Our efforts together will play an instrumental role in ensuring a healthier and more sustainable future for the generations to come.
Children's and Teens' Gazette

Fort Hunt Elementary

Andrew Green
Art Teacher

Family Gram, Lillian Anderson, 1st grade
Family Gram, Colleen Curran, 1st grade
Dante Smith, Shapes Collage, Kindergarten

Celebration Collage, Abram Larkin, 2nd grade
Celebration Collage, Audrey Larkin, 2nd grade
Celebration Collage, Calvin Kenneally, 2nd grade

Celebration Collage, Caroline McAsey, 2nd grade
Celebration Collage, Frances Bruns, 2nd grade
Celebration Collage, Lillian Bowers, 2nd grade

Family Helper Robot, Elijah Tilghman, 1st grade
Family Helper Robot, Vera Hall, 1st grade

Duck Architecture Drawing, Heidi Buchman, 2nd grade

More Fort Hunt Elementary, Page 9
Children's and Teens' Gazette

Fort Hunt Elementary

Andrew Green
Art Teacher

African Mask, Blaise Wing, 3rd grade
African Mask, Britta Pederson, 3rd grade
African Mask, Charlotte Hills, 3rd grade
African Mask, Jameson Riley, 3rd grade
African Mask, Liv Lipovsky, 3rd grade
African Mask, Samuel Kennealy, 3rd grade
Time Catchphrase Drawing, Time Flies, A.J. Keane, 4th grade
Cultural Identity Drawing, Keia Pedregon, 3rd grade
Cultural Identity Drawing, Madi Dattaro, 3rd Grade
Cultural Identity Drawing, Olivia Ong, 3rd grade
Cultural Identity Drawing, Xander Mullings, 3rd grade

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Fort Hunt Elementary

Superplant Collage, Hanna Burroughs, 4th grade

Superplant Collage, Maria Pfarr, 4th grade

Superplant Collage, Lily Chambers, 4th grade

Superplant Collage, Amelia May, 4th grade

Superplant Collage, Cecilia Parila, 4th grade

Landmark Collage, Dayanna Portillo Mercado, El Salvador, Monumento al Salvador del Mundo, 5th grade

Landmark Collage, Mount Fuji, Noah Moller, 5th grade

Landmark Collage, Washington Monument, Lilia Wing, 5th grade
Sixth Grade, Orange Hunt Teacher: Brenda Patrick

The Fireball
By: Colin Clark
Colin Clark (memoir Fireball)
12 years old
Sixth Grade Orange Hunt Teacher: Brenda Patrick

One time we were on vacation in a rental house in West Virginia. On one of the nights we had planned to have steak, corn and potatoes for dinner. We were all excited since we had been having fun and we all liked steak. I was also really excited because I liked grilling and was looking forward to making the steak with my dad.

While my dad and I were going to make the steak, my mom was going to cook the corn and potatoes. We liked grilling things and we had a charcoal grill at home. There was a gas grill on the back porch. My dad got the steak ready to cook by putting some spices on it. My two sisters were doing something in the house that didn’t involve dinner.

Once we were ready, my dad and I went out to the back porch and went over to turn on the grill so that we could cook the steaks. He turned the knob and pressed the igniter. Nothing happened. He tried it again. Still nothing happened.

“I don’t know.” my dad said.

“I hope this works, I say”.

“Me too.” says my dad.

“Why isn’t it working?” I asked.

“We were both confused as to why the grill wasn’t turning on. My dad made sure the gas valve was open. It was at that point we didn’t know what to do, so we went back inside to try to figure out what was wrong and why it wouldn’t light.

After a little while, we decided that we were going to get a lighter from the kitchen and use it to light the grill that way like we did at home, except that the grill at home was a charcoal grill and not a gas grill. My dad went to the kitchen and after a minute he found the lighter and went outside to light the grill.

“I hope this works, I say”.

“Me too.” says my dad.

“If it didn’t work we wouldn’t know what to do. We went back outside and moved over to the grill and we turned on the gas. My dad moved the lighter in position to light it. Then he lit the lighter and suddenly a fireball erupted from the grill…. Later that evening we were eating dinner.

No one got hurt from the Fireball because it was small and had only lasted a second. The rest of the cooking had gone without incident and we had a nice dinner. The lesson I learned was to be patient, and persistent. Even if you don’t succeed the first time, try again.

The End

The Big Match
By Caroline Rakip
Caroline Rakip (memoir The Big Match)
12 years old

Sixth grade Orange Hunt Teacher: Brenda Patrick

FWEEEE!! The red’s whistle rang in my ear like the school bell. My legs were shaking in the thought of losing. I heard whispers around me. “You got this!” “Let’s go!” “Serve it!”

I looked over at my coaches who were signaling me to go. I looked over at the ref who was staring at me, basically telling me I only had ten seconds to serve the ball over the net. I looked straight ahead of me, just to see the other team staring me dead into the eye, their determination filling the room.

My heart sank. My throat burned. I felt my insides swell, and my vision started to blur. I wanted to sob. I wanted to run away and never return. The pressure was on me, me to carry this team to a win.

But I had to stay, so I threw the ball into the air and hit it. It went flying across the gym. I followed the ball with my eyes, it soaring through the wind. I watched as the other team swung their arms, trying to hit the ball, but missed! The ball fell to the ground, giving us a point.

My team clapped, and my coaches cheered.

“Just one more point!” My coach pushed.

“Just one more,” I mumbled under my breath. “Just one.”

The whistle was louder than the last. My heart beat in my chest, making it feel like a drum circle. I shut my eyes hoping it would end, and we won, all because of me. I knew that I would have to serve it in order for that to really happen, so I threw the volleyball up and served, better than ever.

The adrenaline pounded in my head, the ball up and served, better than ever. Someone on the other side yelled.

“Oh no. I thought, Out of bounds, how will we win?”

The ball came swooshing down, as everyone leaned to the side, watching for the ball to be out. I held my breath, as if it would affect the movement of the ball.

I turned around just in time to miss the ball. Just to hear my coach scream and cheer for joy.

“You did it!” She called. She was jumping up and down in excitement. My entire team came up to me and we all exchanged high-fives.

We won! I thought. I could not believe it. My team had never won any game, we were used to losing. My shoulders felt like a giant weight got lifted off. My happiness flooded through me, into my face, stretching a smile across my face. We had just earned our first win, and it was because of me.

I learned that day that no matter what, your team will always be there for you. Wins or loses, your peers care about you just as much as anyone else.

“Just one more!” I mumbled under my breath. I turned around just in time to miss the ball. I held my breath, as if it would affect the movement of the ball.

“I learned that day that no matter what, your team will always be there for you. Wins or loses, your peers care about you just as much as anyone else.”

The adrenaline pounded in my head, making my blood boil. I stared down the ball, praying it would hit the net. The adrenaline was coursing through me, into my face, stretching a smile across my face. We had just earned our first win, and it was because of me.

I learned that day that no matter what, your team will always be there for you. Wins or loses, your peers care about you just as much as anyone else.
Welcome the Children’s and Teens’ Gazette 2023

The art and writing of local students is always a bright spot. We offer many thanks to the art teachers who guided these artists and compiled the art to appear here. You can find the other Children’s and Teens’ editions by going to http://www.connectionnewspapers.com/PDFs/ and then scrolling down to Children’s. Thanks for reading.

Now the Gazette will be on a break until after the New Year, with our next publication appearing the week of Jan. 10. In the meantime contact us, for advertising contact debfunk@connectionnewspapers.com or sales@connectionnewspapers.com. For the newsroom, contact editors@connectionnewspapers.com.
**ENTERTAINMENT**

**WEDNESDAYS THROUGH SATURDAYS**

Tours Around Tall Ship Providence and Sen. John Warner Maritime Heritage Center: 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. At Alexandria's Waterfront Park, 1A Prince Street, Alexandria. Guests of all ages are recruited into the Continental Navy aboard Tall Ship Providence with legendary Captain John Paul Jones. Recruits are assigned jobs on the ship, learn where they will work and live, how to load a cannon, etc... Tours conclude in the Naval History Theatre with a film about the ship. The Heritage Center is a floating museum on the Alexandria waterfront. Visit https://tallshipprovidence.org/

**NOW THRU JAN. 7**

**National Treasures | Leanne Fink** At The Athenaeum, 201 Prince Street, Alexandria. National Treasures is a collection of oil and cold wax paintings by Leanne Fink that pays homage to the grandeur of America's National Parks. Inspired by the beauty of the natural world, Leanne is known for her visually dynamic landscapes. The Athenaeum Gallery is open Thursday to Sunday from 12 p.m. to 4 p.m.

**BREAKFAST WITH SANTA**

“Breakfast with Santa” will take place every weekend in December, from 8:00 a.m. to 10:00 a.m. in three locations in Alexandria: Joe Theismann's Restaurant Mai's Italian Kitchen Ada’s on the River Tickets range from $5-$65 and include a hearty and festive breakfast feast that will delight your taste buds. Children will receive take-home treats to continue the holiday spirit at home. While adults can indulge in some celebratory Prosecco.

Tickets can be purchased here: https://www.eventbrite.com/ec/breakfast-with-santa-in-old-town-alexandria-by-arp-1039279

**SUNDAY/DEC. 31**

**First Night Alexandria** In locations around Old Town Alexandria. First Night Alexandria, known as the largest family-friendly and affordable New Year’s Eve festival of music and more event in the region, returns with its day into the night of celebration showcasing performing arts throughout Old Town. The annual event (in its 29th year) will feature a variety of activities, activations, dance parties, live music and more. The festivities kick off at 2:00 p.m. and conclude at midnight as thousands welcome in the New Year.

A tradition that started in 1994, First Night Alexandria has become a staple in the region to bring in the New Year as an affordable event filled with a lineup of entertainment and activities. Proceeds from the event supports Alexandria's middle and high school students’ activities with a musical backdrop in choir, orchestra, and band.

New this Year: Twilight Fireworks - This year's celebration will feature a twilight fireworks display at 6 p.m. on Alexandria's waterfront geared to families who want to enjoy the show.

First Night Alexandria takes place on Sunday, Dec. 31, 2023 in Old Town Alexandria.

with their kids and loved ones. First Night Alexandria will also still host an abbreviated encore display of the New Year’s fireworks at midnight on the waterfront.

Fun Hunt - Add adventure, exploration, and education to the last day of the year! After 5 years, the Fun Hunt returns with new ways to enjoy an afternoon in Old Town Alexandria. Ticketed guests have the opportunity to turn to day of Fun and entertainment into potential prize winnings. The adventure concludes at the Block Party at Market Square just prior to the Twilight Fireworks.

Daytime Block Party – Join us at Market Square from 4 – 6 p.m. for a time of music, a “Cool Happy New Year” demonstration and special fun just prior to the new Twilight Fireworks display.

For more information visit www.firstnightalexandria.org.

**JAN. 5-27, 2024**

**“Visions of Resilience: Art for Climate Justice” exhibit** at Del Ray Artisans, 2704 Mount Vernon Avenue, Alexandria, in partnership with the Changing Planet Justice Foundation, raises awareness about climate change and its impact on marginalized communities. By conveying issues through the universal language of image, we encourage action towards a just, climate-friendly future. Reception: Friday, January 5, 7-9 p.m. Open Thursdays 12-6 p.m., Fridays 12-9 p.m., Saturdays and Sundays 12-6 p.m. (closed January 28). DelRayArtisans.org/exhibits

**SATURDAY/FEB. 3, 2024**

Sherlock Holmes and the Case of the Missing Maestro. 3 p.m. At George Washington Masonic Memorial, 101 Callahan Drive, Alexandria. When the orchestra is ready to begin their concert and suddenly discover the Maestro is nowhere to be found they begin to panic. Thankfully the world’s greatest detective is available and agrees to take the case. All the musicians are suspects and thus Sherlock Holmes must investigate each of the instrument families to deduce who is behind the mystery. With Hispanic Lopez-Vanex, Guest Conductor.

**THE BIRCHMERE**

At 3701 Mount Vernon Ave., Alexandria. All shows are at 7:30 p.m., unless otherwise noted. Tickets available at Ticketmaster.com. Contact The Birchmere at 703-549-7500 or www.Birchmere.com.

**DECEMBER**

Wed. 20: A John Waters Christmas $59.50
Fri. 22: Tarsha Fitzgerald Presents “The Voices” Christmas Show $35.00
Sat. 23: A Very MAYSia Christmas $69.50
Fri. 29: Hank Williams Tribute featuring Cathy Fink & Marcy Marxer, Daril Davis, Jake Boulter, Robin & Linda Williams, Patrick McAuliffe, Alex Taylor $35
Sat. 30: Bela Donna Band $39.50
Sun. 31: New Year’s Eve with The Solden Scout $70
Porch Delights 7:30pm $49.50

**JANUARY**

Fri. 5: Ricky Skaggs & Kentucky Thunder $49.50
Sat. 6: Ricky Skaggs & Kentucky Thunder $49.50 SOLD OUT!
Fri. 12: Preacher Lawson $39.50
Sat. 13: Last Train Home $35.00
Sun. 14: Patrice Rushen $55.00
Wed. 17: ALL YOU NEED IS LOVE: An All-Star Band Celebrates THE BEATLES 60th Anniversary in America, featuring Kasim Sulton, Steve Kimock, Prairie Prince, Gil Assayas, Bobby Lee Rodgers, Mark Rashotte, Andy Forgie, with narrators by Michael Des Barres $64.00
Fri. 19: Newmyer Flyer Presents LAU- BEL CANYON: Golden Songs of Los Angeles 1966-72 $35.00
Sat. 20: Lyfe Jennings $75.00
Wed. 24: Herman’s Hermits starring Peter Noone $55.00
Fri. 26: Who’s Bad – The Ultimate Michael Jackson Experience $39.50
Sat. 27: Dar Williams with The Nields $45.00 SOLD OUT!
Sun. 28: Forever Tina – A Tribute to the Queen of Rock N Roll $39.50
**News**

**Tommy Can You Hear Me?**

The Who’s rock opera hits the Workhouse this winter.

**By Mike Salmon**

The Gazette

When English rock legends “The Who,” took on the story of “Tommy,” to create the first rock opera, it blossomed into a play, a movie with Elton John wearing a huge pair of boots, and a story of a deaf, dumb and blind kid playing unbelievable pinball. It was the 1970s, but “Tommy” saved The Who’s career as part of the British Rock phenomena and now has landed at the Workhouse Art Center’s stage in Lorton.

“Based on the iconic 1969 rock album, the story of the pinball-playing boy who triumphs over adversities has inspired and amazed audiences for more than 40 years,” the Workhouse description reads.

Fairfax resident Jackie Madejski has the role of Tommy’s mother and at the age of 29, she wasn’t around in the mid 1970s but remembers a car trip with the family to Disneyland. “My brother sang ‘The Who’ the whole time,” she said. Her father didn’t threaten to stop the car on the roadside either. “My dad was a really big Who fan.”

In the movie, Ann Bancroft plays Tommy’s mother who has an extra marital affair, leading to murder and there’s a song for the peaks and valleys of the theatrical presentation. At the Workhouse, there’s more music than anything, and it carries the story through the ups and downs of Tommy’s life. Juliana Cooper plays Tommy, and “she’s really grounded in her part,” Madejski said.

Madejski has been in a couple of Workhouse productions and jumped into the role without seeing Ann Bancroft playing her evil mother part, or Elton John’s oversized boots as he hammered out his version of the “Pinball Wizard,” song in 1975. The movie and album have history, but that was years ago and Madejski is now. “I want to come at it from my own place,” she said. Since it’s all singing, it has its own stress for the cast. “I am trying to match the intensity of Roger Daltry singing,” Madejski said. Daltry played Tommy in the movie and is lead singer of the Who.

Pinball Wizard was a hit by The Who in 1969 and again by Elton John in 1975, reaching the top 40 with Casey Kasem back in the day. In 1975, the film won the award for Rock Movie of the Year in the First Annual Rock Music Awards. Jack Nicholson and Tina Turner tried out in the film also, and Mick Jagger tried out for one of the parts.

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**A Complete Whiff**

**By KENNETH E. LOURIE**

As a longtime married man, I can speak to the various responsibilities that one another has to help nurture/maintain the framework that “Keeps Hope Alive,” to invoke Jesse Jackson – out of context, that any relationship needs to thrive. For my wife Dina and I, it is pertinent to subject matter at hand/homework of our marriage, one very clear delineation exists: Dina handles the social, I handle the business/money. Sometimes however, the bean can be on different tracks as my later work would always take, even with the best of intentions. Getting the trails to coalesce into one takes patience, courage, conviction, and most importantly, accommodation.

And it is in this context that I prepare you readers for something specifically to do with yours truly. Whatever I am about to disclose is 100% my fault. Being responsible for the business/money side of the marriage means that I am expected to be organized concerning how much money is coming in, and most importantly, how much is going out, and moreover, when pay or play options are feasible/prudent. Meaning, I know how much money is due when certain relatively important bills arrive. In addition to the monthly recurring obligations, this also means I’m to be aware of the ones due less frequently, semiannually, and of course, annually. And then there’s other category of bills which require not so much payment they do require a renewal. The renewal that I try to hold to now for our health insurance, a special health insurance that because of means and/or seriousness of condition (cancer qualifies) enables me to not incur any costs for drugs, co-pays, co-insurance or co-pay. As you might imagine for a cancer patient nearing his 15th year under the presessional gym so to speak, there are regularities, costs associated with my care and now is no time to decline care options based on money/ability to pay, instead of what the doctor recommends. Simply stated, my life might very well be at stake, certainly it might be at risk. And yet, this is exactly what I did. I completely forgot to submit our annual renewal due Sept. 1-st for an Oct. 1-st restart date. It didn’t hit me until I went to check in with the receptionist for the PET scan, that I had scheduled for Nov. 27 that I was told I had to pay. (The other part of this story being the anxiety about the results and all I wrote about in the column entitled “Uncertainty,” “Go-pay due! Just signed up for this in September,” I said. That’s when I was told that my plan had expired in Sept. because I hadn’t renewed it for the ‘21-24 year. I was off by three months or so. I totally missed the deadline. I don’t begrudge the health insurance for not reminding me. Nor do I think Dina should have said something. This was on me, totally. There’s no more important business in a really than its health insurance, particularly when one of its policyholders has been diagnosed originally with “terminal” cancer. I mean cancer is not exactly the kind of thing that goes away on its own. Often, when it goes away, it takes the patient with it.

Moreover, as a former insurance broker, I am aware of the costs and consequences of neglecting one’s insurance responsibilities. And if one is not an experienced agent as I was, there’s plenty of news stories and articles available online about devastating decisions that some families have had to make between rent, food, and having drugs needed to keep them alive. And when the receptionist advised me of my plan’s expiration (or my participation in it, I should say), it was the furthest thing from my mind. I was not thinking at all about having to renew/re-apply at all. Not that I thought for second that it was an automatic self-renewing kind of coverage (knew it wasn’t). It was just as we used to say in the back yard, while hit in hand after missing the whiffle ball: “a complete whiff.”

It’s not exactly a total disaster. Even still have health insurance. And I can re-apply for this special plan at any time; I will just have incurred unecessary expenses in the interim. Hopefully, there won’t be too many cancer-related decisions that cost us money until I am able to re-quality (it’s hardly guaranteed). I just hope that Dina stays in her lane and doesn’t veer from the social lane into my business lane. I never really planned it this way.

I tried in the early days of our marriage to never make the decisions without consulting the other half of me. However, over time and over woe, it became clear to me that since she was minding her business, I should be minding mine, except her business was social; mine was business – with some potential real world consequences, unfortunately.

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

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**Dates:**

Sun Dec 31, 2023
Sun Feb 11, 2024

**W-3 Theater**

9518 Workhouse Way

Lorton, VA, 22079

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[Movie poster.](#)
As 2023 comes to a close, the Chris White Team thanks our Mt. Vernon/Fort Hunt area neighbors for another overwhelming vote of confidence resulting in 78 homes sold for a total value of $70,839,900.

Do you have questions like:
* “What is my home’s value in today’s market?”
* “Can you assist with the contents of my home?”
* “When is the best time to sell a home?”
* “What should I do/not do to prepare my home for the market?”
* “How can I have my home’s preparation managed and paid for with no money out of pocket?”

If you’re considering selling your home in 2024, now is the time to contact us for a consultation!

Hear it directly from a recent client!

“Chris and his sons were outstanding in marketing and selling our home. They made the process easy and timely for my wife and I to be able to find a truly magnificent family who appreciated what made our home so special. Chris and his firm are truly the gold standard for Realtors in the Northern Virginia area. We would recommend them to anyone without hesitation. Not only are they skilled professionals, but they are honest and decent people.” - Dority Family at 4325 Tarpon Ln

78 homes sold in 2023 so far! 703.283.9028
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