Penguin, by Jaxon LeBlanc, 1st grade, Cherry Run Elementary School, Burke, Mrs Rodas
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. He tried it again. Still nothing happened.

“I don't know,” my dad said.

“Why isn't it working?” I asked.

“I Don't know,” my dad said.

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 persevere. Even if you don't succeed the first time, try again.

The Big Match
By Caroline Rakip
Caroline Rakip (memoir/The Big Match) 12 years old
Sixth grade Orange Hunt
Teacher: Brenda Patrick

FWEEEEEEE!! The ref’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, 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.

“But 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. I opened my eyes and saw the ball. It was about to go over the net. I raised my racket and hit it. The ball fell to the ground, giving us a point.

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 losses, your peers care about you just as much as anyone else.

Wave
By Josephine Gibbs
Josephine Gibbs (Memoir/Wave) 11 years old
Sixth grade Orange Hunt ES
Teacher: Brenda Patrick

We walked down to the water with my brother Beau. I heard the waves crashing on the other side yelled.

“Oh no. I thought, Out of bounds, now 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. 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 losses, your peers care about you just as much as anyone else.

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Let Your Bright Life SHINE
Welcome the the Children’s and Teens’ Connection 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.

Emma Yuan, 10 years old, 5th grade, City of Fairfax, Mosaic Elementary School, Vienna, Mr. Guzman, Art Teacher

Now the Connection 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.

Blue and Pink Poem

by Kowkab S Mahboobi, G. Grade 2, Clifton, Willow Spring Elementary School, Clifton VA, Alison Willison, English teacher

BLUE

The horizon is blue
When the sun is new
I was eating stew at the zoo
As the animals flew
Until they came and ate the stew

PINK

My pen’s out of pink ink
I’m about to blink
I’m thinking how will I blink
As a pink pig is snorting
Children's and Teens' Connection

Cherry Run Elementary School

Hummingbird by Esther Nobles, 5th grade

Snowman by Isla Wong, 1st grade

Snowman, Penelope Fattahi, 1st grade

Snake, by Cody Kerr, 5th grade

Instrument, by Grant Rooney, 5th grade

Cardinal hand prints by Beatrice Roraff, 2nd grade
Children’s and Teens’ Connection

Cherry Run Elementary School
Burke

Cat face portrait by Kaia Bentley, 4th grade

Music machine by Matthew Soltren, 5th grade

Penguin, by Jaxon LeBlanc, 1st grade

Abstract art, by Izzy Ruocco, 3rd grade

Bird on a branch by Claire Giacomazzi, 5th grade

Male portrait, Jameson Horner, 4th grade
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 Savitriere Foundation; Apple Federal Credit Union; Progressive Firefighters of Fairfax; Local 2068; Fire and Rescue Retirement Association; Nationwide Credit Corporation; John and Jack Taylor; Chadbuck’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.

“This is one of my favorite events of the year.”

— Longtime toy drive supporter Bruce Witucki

Photos by Janet Barnett/The Connection
Transported in Paint

At The Smithsonian American Art Museum
By: Ella Esposito (Field trip article/ Journalism/The Smithsonian American Art Museum D.C.)
12 years old
Sixth grade Orange Hunt Teacher: Brenda Patrick

The hum of the bus welcomed you for a ride. You made your way to the back of the bus and found your selected seat. For forty-five minutes you bounced and balanced yourself on a cold vinyl cushion. You bobbled around chatting with your friends, your back rubbing on the used, remembered surface, while watching the highway pass and come again. Driving into Washington D.C. was exciting, colorful, and active. Each monument, restaurant and person you saw made you more excited for the upcoming event.

We arrived early so we walked around D.C. Christmas lights and decorations set the mood for a good experience. The smell of french fries, tipped to everyone’s nose as we walked by Five Guys. You took a quick snapshot to savor the moment and continue our adventure. Next we sauntered in the joyful ambiance of China Town.

Pockets of drippy teens were taking up sidewalks and roads could be seen ablaze with red fire engines. Sirens followed us as we explored D.C. We made our path across the street one more time, to arrive back at the tall Ionic marble pillars, and a multitude of steps. We peeked into the portal that took us back in time but only in disguise as a museum.

Finally we were invited into the building buzzing with excitement. When we entered it was fancy like a hotel, twisted stairs, and endless gift shops. Then we floated into a giant room with delicate glass ceilings, greenery, flowers, and an “in progress” stage. We met our tour guide, and began our journey in the building of wonders.

As we entered the first room we arrived at a piece of art. Our group viewed many paintings that were all so detailed. We gazed at a beautiful, heartfelt, touching, painting of sailors during the Revolutionary War. It was an amazing, eye-catching canvas of a landscape with few animals, which caught everyone’s eye. It pulled you in like a storybook. If you looked at it long enough you could be transported into the painting. Its gold frame made it like a fairytale photo. It was skyrocketing over most of the paintings down the hallway.

You felt as if you were on the top of one of the mountains gazing down at the horizon.

Our group had the privilege to view about eight pieces of art and our tour was an hour long. At some points you had the opportunity to make up your own story about the art if the guide didn’t explain it for you.

The floors varied in different galleries, and so did the paint. The staging set the mood extremely well. Overall it was an entertaining experience. The docent told you how to stand and how to observe, so it clearly was not a free for all. Without our tour guide we wouldn’t have discovered as much as we did.

As we departed the portal of wonders we took in one last breeze of D.C. and the painted canvas. We left with amazing Art in our minds that we couldn’t see anywhere else.

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LIVING NATIVITY

Kissed by a Camel, Nibbled on by a Goat

St. Christopher’s Episcopal recreates the nativity, live.

By Susan Laume
The Connection

St. Christopher’s Episcopal Church in Springfield, locally nicknamed “the camel church” held its 5th Annual Living Nativity on Saturday, Dec. 9. Described by Reverend Elvira Beracochea as “both reverent and fun,” the event recreates the birth of Jesus with music, readings and costumed actors. Rev. Beracochea also says it “gives people of all ages, faiths, ethnicities, and whatever other human distinctions there may be, the opportunity to be kissed by a camel, pet a donkey, and be nibbled on by a goat.” That’s likely a suitable celebration for a 2,300 year birthday.

Photos by Susan Laume

St. Christopher’s Mary, Joseph and Jesus, played by Christina, Matthew & Nicholas Leuthy

Delilah in the role of Camel (she’s a natural) with Magi Jennifer Caton, of Bar C Ranch

Delilah is a gentle and patient camel

Only Delilah has a chance of upstaging the very adorable Nicholas as star of the nativity

Soft camel nose.

This goat, and a sheep, cow, and donkey rounded out the animal cast
Children’s and Teens’ Connection

St. Stephens and St. Agnes School

Addy Petrou, Grade 6, St. Stephens and St. Agnes Middle School, Ida Fehrenbach, art teacher.

Sophia Voudouris, Grade 2, St. Stephens and St. Agnes Lower School, Cindy Heid, art teacher.

Yabsra Tewodros, Grade 2, St. Stephens and St. Agnes Lower School, Cindy Heid, art teacher.

Everly Kunz, Grade 8, St. Stephens and St. Agnes Middle School, Ida Fehrenbach, art teacher.

Alex Blaker, Grade 6, St. Stephens and St. Agnes Middle School, Kati Towle, art teacher.

Anabel Delucia, Grade 4, St. Stephens and St. Agnes Lower School, Jade Xia, art teacher.

Brody Hark, Grade 4, St. Stephens and St. Agnes Lower School, Jade Xia, art teacher.

Cecil Gregg, Grade 9, St. Stephens and St. Agnes Upper School, Tom Bunnell, art teacher.

Caeli Boris, Grade 9, St. Stephens and St. Agnes Upper School, Kate Elkins, art teacher.

Cooper Spies, Grade 8, St. Stephens and St. Agnes Middle School, Brandon Royal, art teacher.

Augusta Jay, Grade 9, St. Stephens and St. Agnes Upper School, Sean Riley, art teacher.

Michael Hu, Grade 9
Five Frame Story, A Diorama in MineCraft

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.
Burke CAP Cadet Commander Change

By Cadet Airman First Class Bezya Kal
Special to the Connection

In a change of command ceremony on Dec. 7, the Burke Composite Squadron of the Civil Air Patrol celebrated the end of a term under the leadership of Cadet 2dLt Lorenzo Felline. The squadron recognized not only the seamless transition in command but also the remarkable growth in the number of new enthusiastic cadets joining their ranks.

The Cadet Commander holds a crucial leadership role, responsible for guiding and inspiring cadets within the squadron. As the highest-ranking cadet in the squadron, the cadet commander is responsible for directing the unit and leading by example. Morrison has demonstrated exceptional performance as the Cadet Commander and the squad has grown under his leadership. Similarly, Felline has shown remarkable leadership in his previous positions and has consistently exhibited dedication for the Cadet values and therefore has earned his role as the new Cadet Commander.

“I am honored to have been selected for this position,” remarked Felline, “and I hope you all will help me make Burke Composite Squadron the best it can be.” There is no doubt that the new term in Burke Composite Squadron will be as successful as the last one.

Excitingly, there has been a recent surge of new cadets within the squadron. Burke Squadron has grown to be over 120 members, adding fresh perspectives and energy to the squadron.

With the growing number of cadets, Burke Composite Squadron recognizes the need for expanded leadership opportunities and encourages all cadets to embrace leadership opportunities in areas such as the Cadet Staff, Emergency Services, Aerospace and Cybersecurity.

As Burke Composite Squadron moves forward, the squadron anticipates another successful term under the leadership of Felline and the dedication of its members.

Detectives Investigate Fatal Shooting in Franconia

By Mike Salmon
The Gazette

Detectives from the Fairfax County Police Department’s Major Crimes Bureau are investigating a shooting in Franconia that left a Woodbridge man dead.

On Tuesday, Dec. 12 at 1:47 p.m., officers responded to reports of a shooting in the 5300 block of Harbor Court Drive in Franconia. After an extensive search of the area, no victims or suspects were located at the scene. Prior to police arrival, witnesses described hearing a gunshot, and observed a suspect fleeing the area in a black Dodge Charger, with a gun in hand, FCPD said.

Around 2:30 p.m. officers were notified by Prince William County Police that a black Dodge Charger had arrived at a local hospital with a victim suffering from a gunshot wound. Bryant Anthony Gillis, 23, of Woodbridge was pronounced deceased at the hospital.

Detectives determined a friend who was with Gillis at the time of shooting drove him to the hospital. They continue to investigate the circumstances surrounding the shooting. Preliminarily, the shooting does not appear to be a random act, FCPD said.

Detectives continue to investigate the circumstances leading up to and surrounding the shooting and are asking anyone with information regarding this incident to call the Fairfax County Police Department’s Major Crimes Bureau at 703-246-7800, option 2. Tips can also be submitted anonymously through Crime Solvers by phone – 1-866-411-TIPS.
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 hold for now. Seemingly, the future of Lake Accotink is still at large.

Today, the lake is still there, even though it’s only about two feet deep, and the creek still carries snow, more sediment will flow downstream. “As much as it pains me, Save Lake Accotink is calling for an informed decision,” Robertson wrote in a release. He knows.”

The winter seems a good time to put it all on a shelf but with the heavy rains and possible melting snow, more sediment will flow downstream. “As much as it pains me, Save Lake Accotink is calling for an informed decision,” Robertson said. “No one knows.”

The winter seems a good time to digest, I don’t expect any decision before April,” Robertson said. “No one knows.”

The winter is still there, even though it’s only about two feet deep, and the creek still carries a certain amount of sediment downstream but it’s on hold for now. Seemingly, the future of Lake Accotink is still at large.

The Future of Lake Accotink is Still In the Crosshairs
Everything is on hold this winter though.

By Mike Salmon
The Connection

As the colder weather envelopes the area, going out to the parks in Fairfax County is a little tougher but the folks involved with saving Lake Accotink seem to be accepting the fact that life at the old lake will ever be the same. Sure, the county can dish out taxpayers money to try to save the lake, and keep this Springfield amenity alive, but will it be the same fishing spot that many remember from years ago? A place to rent paddle boats and watch the waterfowl on a warm summer evening? A spot for the cardboard boat race that many enjoyed and watch the waterfowl on a warm summer evening? It’s been a while since the lake hosted fun times like this.

It’s been a while since the lake hosted fun times like this.
ENGLISH

HOT WHEELS CHAMPION EXPERIENCE
Hot Wheels Champion Experience, a new interactive experience with immersive digital and physical play, has opened at Tysons Corner Center. At Tysons Corner Center, 10 a.m.-10 p.m. Mon.-Thurs., 10 a.m.-11 p.m. Fri., 10 a.m.-10 p.m. Sat., 11 a.m.-8 p.m. Sun. ($10). In the fee. No outside alcohol is permitted.

THE McLEAN PROJECT FOR THE ARTS’ Winter Exhibitions will run now through Feb. 17, 2024 at the McLean Community Center.

HOLIDAY HAPPENINGS AT THE WORKHOUSE ARTS CENTER
The Workhouse Arts Center will present several holiday events and activities in November and December for visitors to give back to the community, shop for friends and family and enjoy the arts. For more information, visit workhousearts.org.

SUNDAY/DEC. 24
Christmas Eve Service. 11 a.m. At Tysons Corner Presbyterian Church, 1724 Chain Bridge Road, McLean. The youth and young voices will present “The Light before Christmas,“ featuring the music from the Joseph Martin musical. Enjoy cocoa and cookies before and following the service and the warmth of Christmas. This event is free and open to the public, and all are welcome! The traditional Candlelight Communion Christmas Eve service will begin at 6:30 p.m. and will feature a baroque orchestra and the Chancel Choir performing Johann Sebastian Bach’s “Wachet Auf” Cantata. The service and worship featuring beautiful music of the season will begin at 7:00 p.m.

THURSDAY/DEC. 29
Sully Historic Site, $15. Meet Santa Claus! Silver Bells Holiday Sing-Along for family and kids to ring in the “noon” year as we say goodbye to 2023 and celebrate the new year. Enjoy dancing, cookie decorating, cookies and cocoa before and after the performance. Enjoy the festive music and activities in the village. Wear your most festive attire and be ready to dance the night away! For more information, visit sullyhistory.org.

SATURDAY/DEC. 30
Papoose Show at Frying Pan Farm Park, Fairfax, 2:30 p.m.-4:30 p.m., free. Join Master Puppeteer Bob Brown in a jolly, fun-filled romp through a winter wonderland as his de-lightful, trick marionettes perform incredible feats of skill and daring that will leave your young audi-ence shouting with laughter! Fun and fantasy, mirth and merriment, giggles and amazement all mixed together to the sound of your fa-vorite holiday music! He will be re-turning after a 5-year break this year, so come and enjoy his performance. To find out more, or to register for programs, visit the National Events in the Parks website.

SUNDAY/DEC. 31
‘Noon Year’s Eve’ Event. 11 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. At Town of Vienna in partnership with Frying Pan Park Shopping Center, 260 Cedar Lane, Vienna. Town of Vienna in partnership with Cedar Park Shop-ping Center will host a daytime celebration for family and kids to ring in the “noon” year as we say goodbye to 2023 and celebrate the arrival of 2024. This family-friendly event features traditional holiday market, live music, games, a horse and carriage ride and a noon countdown celebration. Some activities will take place under a heated tent. Free. Rain or Shine.

HOLIDAY HAPPIENINGS AT THE WORKHOUSE ARTS CENTER
The Workhouse Arts Center will present several holiday events and activities in November and December for visitors to give back to the community, shop for friends and family and enjoy the arts. For more information, visit workhousearts.org.

THURSDAY/DEC. 28
The Old Firehouse Center Winter Break Trip: Ice @ Gaylord National Resort. 8 a.m.-6 p.m. Join us for some holiday fun, games and activities! We will have some gingerbread deco-rated, ice skating, tubing, ice bumper cars and more. A signed waiver is required to participate. Admission to all activi-ties and a BBQ lunch is included in the fee. Bring additional money for snacks and souvenirs as desired.

DISCOVER THE JOY OF THE HOLIDAYS IN A PARK!
Embrace the magic of the season with the Fairfax County Parks Authority. Enjoy the company of family and community at any of our festive activities and events throughout the holiday season.

IONA Holiday Concert
Friday, Dec. 29, 2023; available 1-1:45 p.m., 2:15 p.m. or 3:15 p.m., $15, at Bluemont Park, Bluemont. One of the top-rated pan-Celtic groups in the world will bring its audience to high-energy entertainment featuring Scottish fiddling, percussion and vocals. Refreshments served in the 18th century kitchen. For more information, visit connectionnewspapers.com.

THURSDAY/DEC. 28
The Old Firehouse Center Winter Break Trip: Ice @ Gaylord National Resort. 8 a.m.-6 p.m. Join us for some holiday fun, games and activities! We will have some gingerbread deco-rated, ice skating, tubing, ice bumper cars and more. A signed waiver is required to participate. Admission to all activi-ties and a BBQ lunch is included in the fee. Bring additional money for snacks and souvenirs as desired.

SEE ENTERTAINMENT. Page 15

BONITA LESTINA
FAIRFAX OLD TOWN HALL PERFORMANCE SERIES
Enjoy an evening of music show-casing a variety of genres or the elegant interior of historic Old Town Hall (3999 University Drive), 7-9 p.m. Thursdays in Fairfax City. Doors open at 7:30 p.m. and performances start at 8 p.m. Reservations are required to run through February 17, 2024, with an Open Mic Night on Thursday, December 7, 2023 from 7:9 p.m. Bringing together five artists—Adjoa Jackson Burrows, Jacqui Crocetta, Maggie Gour, Jean Linowitz, and Elsheta Sikiorka—Metopic Ridge features work that is at once aesthetically pleasing and philosophi-cally compelling.

WEDNESDAY/DEC. 20
Old Firehouse Center, Winter Break Trip to Dave & Buster’s. 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. Join us on the Alexandria waterfront. Dave and Buster’s offers one of the best dining and entertainment experiences around. Buffet lunch and a $25 game card with unlimited arcade games are included. Bring additional money for ticketed arcade games as desired.

WEDNESDAY/DEC. 20
Longest Night Service of Worship. 7:30 p.m. At Lewisville Presbyterian Church, 1724 Chain Bridge Road, McLean. If you have experienced loss in the last holiday festivities can make your grief even more poignant. Grieving the loss of a loved one or coming to terms with so much loss happen-ing in our world will be center of this worship service. This service will interweave music with scripture and poetry and prayer. This event is free and open to the public, and all are welcome! The traditional Candlelight Commu-nion Christmas Eve service will begin at 6:30 p.m. and will feature a baroque orchestra and the Chancel Choir performing Johann Sebastian Bach’s “Wachet Auf” Cantata. The service and worship featuring beautiful music of the season will begin at 7:00 p.m.

WEDNESDAY/DEC. 21
The Old Firehouse Center Winter Break Trip: Hershey’s Chocolate World. 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. Enter a chocolate utopia at Hershey’s Chocolate World as we create our own Hershey Bar, become an official Hershey Tastemaker to test and rate the chocolate bars in the lab, try to solve the 4D Chocolate Mystery and hop on the trolley as we stroll down Hershey’s Can-dyland Lane to see more than five million holiday lights. Admission to all activities and lunch is included in the fee. Participants are required to bring at least $20 for dinner. Bring additional money for snacks and souvenirs as desired.

FRIDAY/DEC. 22
Virginia National Ballet’s The Nut-cacker. 2 p.m. and 7 p.m. At Capital One Hall, Tysons Corner Center. Don’t miss VNB’s Nutcracker! You’ll love the new characters including The Rat King, The Nutcracker, the Chinese Lion, and many new costumes for Flowers, Mice, and more. You’ll also see gorgeous new backdrops that are 30 x 50 feet with legs (matching side curtains) and borders across the stage, and many new props and scenery. Much of the choreography has also been upgraded to match all of the new scenery, sets, and costumes.

TUESDAY/DEC. 26
The Old Firehouse Center Winter Break Trip: “Aquaman” Day. 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. Arthur Curry is back patrolling the land and seas. Join us as we watch “Aquaman 2.” Prior to the movie, we’ll play some laser tag and get some lunch. A signed waiver is required to participate. Lunch, laser tag games and a mov-ie ticket are included in the fee.

WEDNESDAY/DEC. 27
The Old Firehouse Center Winter Break Trip: Indoor Trampoline. 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. They’ll be heading to one of the most unique trampoline parks in the area. With the oppor-tunity for casual jumping, testing your bouncing dodgeball skills or your ninja abilities, this trip has something for everyone. A signed waiver is required to participate. Session and admission are included in the fee. Appropriate exercise clothing required.

THURSDAY/DEC. 28
The Old Firehouse Center Winter Break Trip: Ice @ Gaylord National Resort. 8 a.m.-6 p.m. Join us for some holiday fun, games and activities! We will have some gingerbread deco-rated, ice skating, tubing, ice bumper cars and more. A signed waiver is required to participate. Admission to all activi-ties and a BBQ lunch is included in the fee. Bring additional money for snacks and souvenirs as desired.

THURSDAY/DEC. 28
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PUBLIC NOTICE
NOTICE OF VOLUNTARY REMEDIATION

Pursuant to the Virginia Voluntary Remediation Regulations, Virginia Administrative Code section 9VAC20-160-120, Ahold USA (Participant) with an address of 1385 Hancock Street in Quincy, Massachusetts 02169, hereby provides notice of voluntary remediation at the following site (Site):

Annandale Shopping Center (aka Annandale Center)
7140 Little River Turnpike
Annandale, VA 22003
VRP Number VRP00619

The Site is approximately 5.7 acres and is used as a shopping center. Sampling on the Site detected the presence of volatile-organic compounds from a past dry-cleaning solvent release in soil, ground water and soil gas on the Site, and in ground water and soil gas offsite. The Participant applied to and was deemed eligible to participate in the Voluntary Remediation Program (VRP) in order to assess and address any environmental risks associated with the detected dry-cleaning solvent constituents. A site characterization report, risk assessment and remedial action plan have been reviewed and accepted as complete by DEQ. The risk assessment includes an assessment of the risks to human health and the environment that were evaluated in accordance with DEQ guidelines. The risk evaluation found that the following deed restrictions placed on the future use of the Site pursuant to the VRP will be protective of human health and the environment: (1) groundwater beneath the Site will not be used for any purpose other than environmental monitoring and testing, dewatering in compliance with law or geothermal energy production; and (2) the existing sub-slab depressurization at the Site will be operated and maintained in accordance with an operation and maintenance plan. Risks to offsite properties are adequately addressed by local ordinances prohibiting potable groundwater use and by vapor barriers and a sub-slab depressurization system installed below the offsite buildings. A Certification of Satisfactory Completion of Remediation will be requested from the VDEQ VRP for VRP Site 00615 after the close of the public notice period.

Persons wishing to comment on the voluntary remedial action or request additional information should contact the following person who is familiar with the Site:

Noel Simmons
ECS Mid-Atlantic, LLC
14026 Thunderbolt Place, Suite 100
Chantilly, VA 20151-3232
703-471-8400 (for inquiries only)
simmons@ecslimited.com

Written comments will be accepted until 30 days from the date of publication of this notice.

ALL COMMENTS MUST BE SUBMITTED IN WRITING.
The Workhouse Arts Center presents, in First Night Alexandria.

SUNDAY/DEC. 31
New Year’s Eve Comedy Show with Antoine Scott – Sunday, Dec. 31, 8 pm

To celebrate New Year’s Eve, The Workhouse Arts Center presents one of the funniest comics for a one-show-only comedy event. Tickets are $25 at the door.

For more information visit www.workhouseartscenter.org

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

By KENNETH H. LOURIE

A Complete Whiff

As a long-time married man, I can speak to the various responsibilities that one another has to help nurture/maintain theframework that “keeps Hope Alive,” to invoke Jesse Jackson—out of control, that no relationship needs to thrive. For my wife Dina and I, as it pertains to the subject matter at hand (inner workings of our marriage, one very clear delineation exists: Dina handles the social, I handle the business/money. Sometimes however, the team can be on different tracks (as my wife later would always joke, even with the best of intentions). Getting the team to coalesce into one takes patience, courage, conviction, and most importantly, accommodation. And it was in this context that I prepared to render for something specifically to do with years truly. What I am about to divulge 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 unes due less frequently (quarterly, semianually, and of course, annually). And then there’s other category of bills which require not too much payment as they do require a renewal. The renewal that I refer to as for our health insurance, a special health insurance that because of means and/or seriousness of condition (cancer qualifies me to not incur any costs for drugs, co-pays, co-insurance etc.). As you might imagine for a cancer patient nearing his 15th year under the pastel blue so to speak, there are regular recurring costs associated with my care and now it’s time to decide 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 as an Oct. 1-15 renewal date. It didn’t hit me until I went to check in with the receptionist for the PET scan I had scheduled for Nov. 27 that told I had to go back to the last year as this story being the anxiety about the results and all I wrote about in the column entitled, “Uncertainty.” I “go-” pay due (I just signed up for this in September “I” said. That’s when I told my plan had expired in Sept, because I didn’t renew it for the “21-24 year. I was off by three months or so. I totally missed the deadline. I don’t exaggerate the health insurance for not reminding me. Nor do I think Dina should have said something. This was me, totally, there’s no more important business in a family than its health insurance, particularly when one of its payers/covered individual has been diagnosed originally with “terminally” cancer. I mean this is not only an effect 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 a terminally ill insured 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 buying 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 farthest thing from my mind. I was not thinking at all about having to renew/pay up on time. All that I thought for second that it was an automatic self-canceling kind of coverage (I know it wasn’t). It was just as we used to say in the back yard, whiffle bat in one hand and throwing the whiffle ball: “a complete whiff.”

It’s not exactly a total disaster, I still have health insurance. And I can re-apply for this special plan at any time. I will just have incurred unnecessary expenses in the interim. Hopefully, there won’t be too many cancer-related decisions that cost me money until I’m able to no-quality it’s hardly guaranteed. I just hope that Dina stays in her lane and doesn’t venture into the social law into my business lane. I really never planned it this way. I tried in the early days of our marriage to never make the decisions without consulting the other side. However, over time and over wifely 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 Lourie is an Advertising Representative for The Potomac Almanac & The Connection Newspapers
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A heartfelt thank you for your incredible generosity and support of our Toys for Tots campaign. Your donations have brought joy to countless local children this holiday season. Together, we’ve made a meaningful difference in our community.

Wishing you all a joyful and festive holiday season!

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