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April 2011

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Area's Top Cop Police Captain Shawn Bennett Aims to Serve

By Susan Francis

Captain Shawn Bennett knew at age 18 that he wanted to be a police officer. "I played baseball with the son of a crash reconstruction officer who knew I was interested in law enforcement," said Bennett. "He invited me on a ride along with the Mt. Vernon District, and as I went call to call and witnessed the interactions between the police and the citizens, I knew this was

what I wanted," he said. Just a little more than a month later, in April 1990, Bennett entered the Fairfax County Criminal Justice Academy as a cadet.

By January 2010, Bennett had risen in the ranks to become commander of the Franconia District Station, one of Fairfax County's eight district stations. His focus is to continue developing excellent relationships within the community. "The station

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County Board Declines Incinerator Purchase Plan

The Fairfax County Board of Supervisors last week opted not to purchase the Lorton-based waste-to-energy plant owned by Covanta Energy, deciding instead to extend a service contract that will allow Covanta to continue to own and operate the facility until 2041.

The final decision to extend the contract came after extended debate of a

proposal to purchase the 21-year-old incinerator for \$417.5 million. The county already owns the land on which the incinerator was built, and the terms of the original contract, written in 1987, gave the county the option to purchase the incinerator when the contract expired.

The county began exploring the purchase option after Covanta and

Homecoming



"Homecoming," by Virginia artist Nancy Hannans is part of an exhibit of work by Hannans and fellow Virginian Denise Shamoun Phalan that will be displayed at the Workhouse Arts Center's Studio 5 through May 8. More information is available at www.workhousearts.org.

county officials were unable to come to agreement on the terms of a new contract. Some members of the Board felt that terms for a contract extension,

originally negotiated in 2008, were too favorable to Covanta.

The plan to buy was controversial, with several members of the Board

voicing strong opposition to the county taking over the plant, which would likely have continued to operate under Covanta's

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NEWSBRIEFS

Virginia Historical Society Creates Searchable Database of Slave Names

The road from emancipation and reconstruction to the civil rights movement and the election of Virginia's first black governor is well documented in Virginia history.

But early black history, from the arrival of the first Africans through the Civil War, is often represented only through the words of white observers, freed persons who looked back on slavery many years later, or the records generated by others about African Americans who achieved recognition for their actions.

For most enslaved Americans, the only physical record of their existence may be a name in a register kept by a slave owner.

The Virginia Historical Society (VHS) is creating a free, online database called Unknown No Longer: A Database of Virginia Slave Names. The searchable database will contain personal information about enslaved Virginians gleaned from some of the more than 8 million processed manuscripts in VHS collections.

Unknown No Longer is unlike any research tool currently available and will be valuable for academic researchers, family historians and genealogists alike.

The VHS received a grant from Dominion Resources and the Dominion Foundation to fund the creation of this database. Right now they are in the research phase, combing through material such as diaries, letters, insurance papers, wills, freedom papers, receipts and deeds to extract raw information.

Once the VHS launches Unknown No Longer in September with 1,000 names, the database will be searchable through the use of a variety of keywords, such as name, gender, location, occupation and plantation. A website visitor could enter as much or as little information known about a particular African American to conduct a search.

To learn more about black history records at the VHS, use the Guide to African American Manuscripts.

Visit the VHS website in September to utilize the free Unknown No Longer database. It was designed to remove a barrier that has stood too long and will allow people today seeking to connect with their past the opportunity to do so.

Portrait Presented to Soldier's Surviving Family

Survivor Outreach Services at Fort Belvoir on March 18 hosted a portrait presentation in honor of Cpt. Andrew Pearson. The portrait was presented to Pearson's surviving family.

The American Fallen Soldiers Project is a 501(c)3 non-profit organization that makes available to the families a no-cost original portrait of their fallen loved one that fully captures their appearance and personality. This organization presented an acrylic portrait of Cpt. Andrew Pearson to his surviving family.

Cpt. Andrew R. Pearson was supporting Operation Iraqi Freedom. He died April 30, 2008, in Baghdad, Iraq, from wounds suffered when his vehicle encountered an improvised explosive device. He was assigned to the 1st Battalion, 22nd Infantry Regiment, 1st Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division, Fort Hood, TX.

Spring Schedule for Youth Theater Program Announced

Acting For Young People Stages has announced its slate of Spring performances, including a musical version of "Snow White" and another show that asks the question: what would happen if Dr. Seuss had a whack at "Romeo and Juliet?"

AFYP Stages creates both touring productions, performed for young audiences by professional actors and Showcase Productions, in which new plays and adaptations feature young actors. All shows take place at theSPACE in Fairfax, are free (donations accepted) and suitable for all ages.

"We are delighted to bring these new shows to family audiences in and around Fairfax," said Mary Lechter, AFYP Stages' artistic and executive director. "With these new productions we continue to grow our repertoire and expand the goal of bringing high-quality programs with important and

timely messages to families and children."

First up, on April 8, is a screening of "Who Was Sadie?" a comedic short film about a group of kids who find themselves abandoning the dance floor at their high school's Sadie Hawkins dance. Written and directed by Dannie Snyder, this is part of AFYP's Film Acting 101.

On April 9 and 10, the Young Actors' Showcase feature is "Snow White," by Marjorie Sokoloff, directed by Candice Carter with musical direction by Patrick Magill. "This musical tale features characters from the beloved classic," commented Lechter. "Including all seven quirky dwarves, a tongue-tied prince, a sassy mirror, a dancing chicken and, of course, Snow White."

Other productions include "The Seussification of Romeo & Juliet" and a new adaptation of "The Fisherman and His Wife."

theSPACE is a raw space located in the retail center of Old Town Plaza at 3955 Chain Bridge Road in Fairfax. More information is available at www.afyp.org.

Parks Service Award Nominations are Open

The Fairfax County Park Authority is now accepting nominations for the 2011 Elly Doyle Park Service Award.

The Elly Doyle Park Service Award was established by the Fairfax County Park Authority on December 20, 1988, in recognition of Ellamae Doyle's years of outstanding service toward the preservation of parkland, natural and recreational areas for the benefit of Fairfax County residents. The purpose of the award is to publicly recognize a volunteer or group of volunteers for outstanding contributions to Fairfax County parks.

Eligibility is open to individuals and groups that have made outstanding service contributions to Fairfax County parks, including Fairfax County Park Authority volunteers.

The contribution on which the nomination is based must have occurred within the prior year (March 2010 through March 2011), but the nomination may also include accomplishments accumulated over time.

Award recipients will be honored at a reception and recipients' names will be placed on a bronze plaque at the Fairfax County Government Center.

Anyone may submit a nomination for the Elly Doyle Park Service Award.

Nominations are open until June 24, 2011. Visit information is available at www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/2011doylenom.htm.

[fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/2011doylenom.htm](http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/2011doylenom.htm).

Changes to School Disciplinary Process Proposed

In the wake of a pair of stories in the Washington Post pointing out deficiencies in the disciplinary system used by Fairfax County Public Schools, Superintendent Jack D. Dale last week proposed a number of changes to the system.

(See this month's editorial, page 19.)

"We have been listening carefully to the conversations and suggestions being shared by parents and members of the community," said Dale. "These recommendations incorporate many of the suggestions and changes we have heard. We look forward to continuing discussion around these revisions with the school board in April and May."

The recommended changes, outlined in a press release issued last week, are:

- Refine the guidelines on parental notification for potential suspensions and expulsions and help parents prepare for the hearing process.
- Enhance communication related to the Student Responsibilities and Rights (SR&R) handbook with a goal of improving understanding by parents and students.
- Audio record all hearings.
- Shorten the timeline between disciplinary incidents and the disposition of the decision.
- Provide instructional support during the suspension and provide an intervention education program, if appropriate to the offense.
- Authorize school principals to act as the superintendent's designee for the purpose of conducting a preliminary review in individual cases at their schools where a student is found to be in possession of his or her own prescription medication.
- Develop a data-collection process analysis to include academic success, recidivism, and on-time graduation.
- Create an exit survey for parents to complete at the end of disciplinary hearings.
- Review and reinforce the training program for school board members and staff members to achieve consistent implementation of the disciplinary process.
- Continue the Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports program in all schools.

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HOME AND GARDEN

Prepare for Plant Sales with a Garden Plan

Spring at last. Despite the threat of late snow, warmth and sunshine are coaxing leaf buds, tulips and people out of dormancy. As plant sales beckon, the delayed effects of color starvation can drive a normally reasonable person to rush at any pretty plant in a pot and set them out willy-nilly in the yard. Count me in! Some preparation on the way to the garden center can help us with our choices. A plan can do this.

There is plenty of evidence to suggest that it is not necessary to have a plan before having a garden. That said, it can save you time and money, and guide your decisions. The result of line-of-sight plant purchasing is that the garden this year develops the same hodgepodge quality that last year's garden did. And the problems that were present last year—the blank wall, the too-steep slope, the ugly view—are still there this year. A little planning may help us make selections that fulfill our desires for the garden.

A plan is only paper, but it is a powerful tool. The simple process of putting your yard on paper forces you to take a good look at it and know it better. A copy of the plat of your house and lot is a great way to begin, but you can start with one part of the yard or one planting area. Graph paper is handy. Measure and record the length, width and

height (if appropriate) of a space, such as the one under the windows in the front, and shop for plants with confidence. If the window ledge is at three feet from the ground, you can avoid future maintenance by choosing plants that only grow that tall. In front of the same window, a shrub that grows to six feet will require routine pruning or may be better suited somewhere else, unless your objective is to create a window screen. Measuring the space at the front door and steps will help you choose the right size and shape of containers.

Noting the existing conditions of the yard on paper makes it harder to ignore the issues you may have with it. A beautiful shade tree or a handsome view is an asset that can be emphasized in a design, but a steep slope is a liability for walking or erosion and may need to be the first priority this year. Other important things to note are the location and height of overhead wires; the limits of a drain field; where power, telephone and cable lines run and irrigation or lighting. Select trees that will not grow up into power lines or far enough away so as not to interfere with them. Make cultural observations. Note sunny and shady areas, keeping in mind that the sun angle and tree foliage will affect the duration of

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Gardeners' Tips



Irene Mills

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School Gardens Start Planting for Spring

As the lyrics of a tradition American and English folk song go: "Oats peas beans and barley grow. Can you or I or anyone know how oats peas beans and barley grow?" Well, not only can you and I know about growing vegetables, but school children in 36 Fairfax County schools can know a lot about growing vegetables, fruit and herbs. Some schools in our vast county are just planning their first

vegetable gardens this year, but one school, Churchill Road Elementary School, is in its eighth year of planting and harvesting. What follows is a random sampling of the varied school gardening programs in Fairfax County. It does not attempt to be comprehensive. Churchill Road's active gardening program is called Outdoor Odyssey and now

includes a greenhouse where seeds are first planted while raised beds await the seedlings. Plantings begin in early March and continue through May. In early spring students plant peas, radishes and lettuce. Later, tomatoes, carrots, green peppers, corn, squash, pumpkins, beans, green beans, eggplant, sunflowers, onions, cabbage and cucumbers are planted. Their herbs include lemon balm, oregano and mint.

Lane Elementary's garden has been in existence for several years. Students maintain the garden where lettuces and herbs are planned for this year. Nicole Goeneweg, who teaches a multi-age class of first- and second-graders, runs an after-school program called Roots & Shoots, where students learn about the environment, ecology and plant life. Liberty Middle School has an after-school VIP club that helps plant in the spring. This VIP club (Value in Prevention) runs in the summer with 50 children.

Providence Elementary School is in year two of their garden. Last year they planted tomatoes, carrots, corn, sunflowers, squash, zucchini, okra, cantaloupe, turnips, beets,

peas, cabbage, beans, jalapeno and green peppers and pumpkin. Last September the school cafeteria served the beans during lunch and made an okra medley one day and then the parsley was used with potatoes. Students at Mountain View Alternative High eat salads and salsa and fresh squash from their garden

all spring. Fourth- and sixth-graders at Lorton Station Elementary School are starting a Colonial Garden this year. They won't be planting vegetables; they plan to grow thyme, sage, rosemary and chamomile.

Pumpkins are a favorite crop at several schools. They are used during the students' pumpkin study. Seeds can be planted when

the students are in school in the spring and the pumpkins harvested when the students return in the fall.

Floris Elementary was awarded grant money in 2007 that helped to start an outdoor vegetable garden from the Youth Garden Grants Program, which was sponsored by the National Gardening Association and Home Depot. With the money they bought the supplies for raised-bed gardens and a stor-

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Going Green at Woodlawn . . . Literally

By Irma A. Clifton

In late March, a plow broke ground on a new partnership between Woodlawn Plantation and Arcadia Food, Inc., a nonprofit organization that will operate the Arcadia Center for Sustainable Food and Agriculture on the grounds of the historic plantation. Woodlawn staff will collaborate with Ar-

cadia to offer innovative programming and events related to the agricultural heritage and historic foodways of the site, Fairfax County and the region, drawing on food and cultivation practices from throughout Woodlawn's history as a working farm of more than 100 years.

Woodlawn is a property of the National Trust for Historic Preservation who has

leased five acres to Arcadia and cultivation began last month. The first crops planted were radishes and greens to be followed later in the season by herbs, squash, tomatoes and other vegetables. The plot under cultivation is in the area of the formal garden that for many years has been in grass because of shortages of funding and staff to tend it. Arcadia's plan has been approved by the Restoration Committee of the Garden Club of Virginia and closely follows the landscape plan that the late Alden Hopkins, resident landscape

architect for Colonial Williamsburg, created for Woodlawn in the 1950s. Arcadia also planted approximately one-third of the meadow that runs along Rte. 1 with rye grass in order to restore the soil.

Arcadia was established as a nonprofit, in conjunction with Woodlawn, by Neighborhood Restaurant Group co-owner Michael Babin to help bridge the farm-to-consumer gap. Quoted in a Washington Business Journal article in Oct., 2010, Babin said, "As people who work in the restaurant industry, we are participants in the food system, and we are constantly made aware of how distorted and broken it has become. With Arcadia, we hope to provide a rallying point and a resource for the many passionate and committed people trying to change this system." Neighborhood Restaurant Group began more than a decade ago with the opening of the Evening Star Café in Alexandria. It has grown to include nine restaurants and bars, a bakery and dessert lounge and a catering business.

Starting small this spring, with just one acre under cultivation, Arcadia and Woodlawn plan to expand the project in coming years and expect to be able to distribute locally produced foods to the Washington, DC, area well as provide experiential learning opportunities for schools and the community. In addition, according to Susan Hellman, deputy director of Woodlawn and the Pope-

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Fairfax County's Sports Scene

Robert E. Lee High Wins the First One with New Soccer Coach John Millward

By Joseph Hight

On March 14 against Hayfield, the Lee Lancers boys' varsity soccer gave up two quick goals. Would this be the same as last year when they won no games—that's no games as in zero, nada, zilch, a goose egg?

New coach John Millward says "I've got a ton of talent on this team. The hardest thing is getting that talent to play as a team." He compares his job as coach to an artist putting the paint on the canvas.

In the 33rd minute of the Hayfield game, Lancer senior midfielder Henry Rivera put some of that paint on the canvas, scoring on a penalty kick.

Still down by a goal at 1-2 in the second half in the 55th-minute mark of the game, Lancer senior Mo Shalal got the ball to his junior teammate Jamie Ahmed. Goal for Ahmed, assist for Shalal, the Lancers had tied the game.

Millward, 25, was born on a naval base in Newport, RI.

He's a redhead, a Rhode Island red he says, referring to the rooster that is the official state bird of Rhode Island.

Rhode Island reds are proud birds. They never rest. And like the bird, Millward has his players working hard. In the week before the game against Hayfield, he had the team in two-hour practices on Monday, Wednesday and Thursday. On Tuesday and Friday, they played full-game scrimmages.

But Monday, the day before the Ides of March, the Lancers were playing in their first official game under the new coach.

Despite his young age, Millward has coaching experience. He was an assistant coach for a girl's club soccer team in 2004. And from 2005 through 2008, he was head swimming coach for the Canterbury Woods C-Serpents in the Northern Virginia Swimming League.

He was a stand-out soccer player and team co-captain at W.T. Woodson High. In 2003, he was a Virginia High School League All Star. Under Woodson coach Richard Broad's

tutelage, Millward made First-Team All Liberty District, First-Team All Region and was a Washington Post All-Met Honorable Mention.

Millward wants to infuse his Lancers with some of that success. In the 60th minute of the game against Hayfield, Robert E. Lee soccer took a first step. Just five minutes after they had tied the game, Ahmed passed the ball to fellow junior Luis Aguilar, who scored the go-ahead goal to make it 3-2 Lancers.

Now with the lead, defense is what the Lancers needed. Their new coach knows a thing or two about defense. When playing for Shippensburg University of Pennsylvania, Millward was a defensive specialist, playing in 51 games at the center back position. He had drilled the Lancers on the importance of defense, and for eight minutes they held the score at 3-2. Then in the 68th minute of the game Lancer senior Kelechi Uchella got the ball to Aguilar, who scored his second goal of the night.

Millward started playing soccer when he was five. "I never stopped," he says. His dad was an officer in the U.S. Navy. At one point John Millward attended seven schools in seven years, but soccer was a constant.

The young coach says he relates well to the high school athletes. It wasn't so long ago that he was dealing with the same stresses and strains of adolescence, the complex high school social scene and the balancing of academics with other activities.

While he can relate to his young athletes in a different way than an older, more seasoned coach, Millward may have to work harder to maintain a healthy respect for his authority. You need to impose discipline he says, hold them accountable so they learn to be responsible for their actions. "It's a fine line that you have to balance."

Millward says the team has a goal to go deep into the Patriot District Tournament this year.

After Shippensburg, Millward returned



photo by Joseph Hight
New Lee High School soccer coach John Millward

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Northern Virginia Musicians Receive Awards in String Competition

By Eleanor Gomolinski-Lally

The outreach programs of the Fairfax Symphony Orchestra (FSO) offer many opportunities for young people to further their musical skills. There are in-school programs for students in grades kindergarten to 12. FSO musicians perform and work with students directly in their schools with assemblies, workshops and side-by-side concerts.

Master classes are held each season with guest artists who perform at FSO concerts. A small number of students perform for the master teacher in a public lesson in which the audience benefits from the expert advice given by the teacher to the performers.

Students from age six to 18 are eligible to

join the new Student Passport Club. Members of the club get their passports stamped at each concert attended, receive free gifts from local merchants, meet FSO musicians and attend a special reception at the end of each season. Student tickets are \$5 with accompanying adult tickets that start at \$25.

Each year the Dorothy Farnham Feuer Memorial String Competition is held in honor of the founder of FSO. In 1957, violinist Dorothy Farnham Feuer recruited 18 musicians to form what eventually became the Fairfax Symphony Orchestra. As the orchestra grew to more than 80 members by 1960, a board of directors was formed. In 1964, the board recognized the need to sup-

continued on page 13



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FY2012-2017 Six-Year Improvement Program
Working Draft Public Hearings*

The Commonwealth Transportation Board (CTB) invites your comments about essential rail, transit, transportation demand management, bicycle, pedestrian and highway projects in the Working Draft Fiscal Year 2012-2017 Six-Year Improvement Program (SYIP) to be approved by the CTB in June 2011.
*(Public hearings for local/secondary/municipality-maintained roads are held in other forums.)

All projects in the SYIP that are eligible for federal funding will be included in the Statewide Transportation Improvement Program, which documents how Virginia will obligate its share of federal funds.

Districts	Location	Date
Richmond, Culpeper, Fredericksburg	VDOT Central Office Auditorium 1221 East Broad St. Richmond, VA 23219	Wednesday, May 18, 2011 Public hearing, 6 p.m.
Northern Virginia	VDOT Northern Virginia District Office Potomac Conference Center 4975 Alliance Drive, Suite 1N2301 Fairfax, VA 22030	Wednesday, May 4, 2011 Public hearing, 7 p.m.
Hampton Roads	Hampton Roads Planning District Commission 723 Woodlake Drive Chesapeake, VA 23320	Wednesday, April 27, 2011 Public hearing, 6 p.m.
Salem, Bristol, Lynchburg, Staunton	VDOT Salem District Office Auditorium, 731 Harrison Avenue, Salem, VA 24153	Thursday, May 12, 2011 Public hearing, 6 p.m.

*If you can not attend a hearing, you may send your comments to: Public Information Office, Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation, 600 East Main Street, Suite 2102, Richmond, VA 23219, drptpr@drpt.virginia.gov or to Programming Director, Virginia Department of Transportation, 1401 East Broad St., Richmond, VA 23219, Six-YearProgram@VDOT.Virginia.gov. Comments must be received by May 27, 2011.

The Secretary of Transportation's Office ensures nondiscrimination and equal employment in all programs and activities in accordance with Title VI and Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. If you need more information or special assistance for persons with disabilities or limited English proficiency, call 1-888-508-3737 (TTY users, call 711).

Fairfax Spotlight on the Arts Festival

By Jill Graziano Laiacona

If you live in Fairfax, you know the signs when spring has finally sprung—flowers are in full bloom next to Old Town Hall, Mason students are clad in shorts and tees, the soccer fields and baseball diamonds are full—and the Spotlight on the Arts Festival returns to the City of Fairfax, showcasing the best of the visual and performing arts right in our own backyard.

Ellen Brouwer, Spotlight co-chair, said this year's festival features exciting new events and participating organizations, as well as favorites that have been part of the festival for the past 26 years.

"The Spotlight on the Arts Festival will include more than 50 different events over 19 days, making it the premier spring arts festival in Northern Virginia," Brouwer said. "We have chosen to present a selection of diverse performances and exhibitions that will appeal to audiences of every age and artistic interest."

Founded in 1985 as a partnership between the City of Fairfax and George Mason University, the 26th annual Spotlight on the Arts Festival kicks off on Friday, April 15, with the inaugural Mayors' Ball, hosted by Fairfax Mayor Robert Lederer and former Mayor John Mason in collaboration with Spotlight at the Stacy C. Sherwood Community Center, a state-of-the-art facility that opened to the

public in February 2011.

The Sherwood Center will host numerous events throughout the three-week festival, including Polka 'Til Ya Drop by the Alte Kameradan German Band; A Little Night Music, presented by Washington International Piano Arts Council; Jump for Joy, a big-band swing concert featuring the Woodson High School Band and Music for a Lazy Sunday Afternoon by the Main Street Community Band. The Sherwood Center will also be host to A Royal Affair, a breakfast celebrating Prince William and Kate Middleton's nuptials, presented by the Woman's Club of Fairfax and Fairfax Ladies Lunch Group.

"The Sherwood Center gives a new dimension to the size of the audiences and the events that we can now accommodate," said Jo Ormesher, executive director of Spotlight on the Arts. "It complements all of our other venues, giving us a wide range of spaces that

are unique, historic, traditional and now state-of-the-art. We have the ability to run numerous events concurrently throughout the city."

In addition to the Sherwood Center, the

This year's festival will also spill outdoors with a new event called Paint the City, which gives both professional and amateur artists the opportunity to capture the landscapes, architecture and landmarks within the City of Fairfax while residents observe their works in progress.

"Paint the City is a fantastic new venture, and given that we are celebrating the 50th anniversary of Fairfax, what better way to honor the city than capture our beautiful cityscape?" Ormesher said.

Ormesher and the other festival organizers are thrilled with Spotlight's increasing popularity and hope that this year's festival will attract even more people than in years past.

"With our new venues and participants, Spotlight continues to grow and develop along with the City of

Fairfax," Ormesher said. "It is truly reflective of our community and we are proud of the involvement and commitment our residents have shown to make this festival successful year after year."

For more information on the 26th annual Fairfax Spotlight on the Arts Festival, please visit www.fairfaxspotlight.org.

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The Main Street Community Band

Spotlight network includes Old Town Hall, theSPACE at Old Town Plaza, the Civil War Interpretive Center at Historic Blenheim, Truro Church, Fairfax Museum, the Auld Shebeen, Fairfax and Woodson high schools, the Ernst Center at Northern Virginia Community College's Annandale Campus, George Mason University's Center for the Arts and more.

Taking a Spin Around Elite Saint Pete

On a sunny Saturday morning, I had a pelican's-eye view of the contemporary city skyline from St. Petersburg Pier. Pelicans perched on each pylon, shifting from foot to foot as runners passed by on their morning routes. The rhythm was reminiscent of "All the Single Ladies" and I laughed. Despite its reputation as being retirement central, Saint Pete is growing younger and trendier by the year. (VisitStPeteClearwater.com)

On Jan. 11 at 11:11 a.m., The Salvador Dali Museum revealed its new facility right smack dab in the center of things in the town park. The new building is worthy of the artist. A slightly misshapen glass bubble

beckons. A maze invites viewers to get lost in the sunshine. And, rising from the floor is a circular staircase to nowhere. It ends pointing toward the sky, where much of Dali's art left you dangling, between heaven and Earth with the sound of cerebral music in your ears and dirt in your mouth.

Next it was a spin around the Saturday farmers' market, where music, jewelry, art and craft are as plentiful as the produce. Then, onto the Chihuly Exhibit right on Beach Drive, where the rich folks dwell in the condo canyons. The Chihuly collection opened in its own space designed by award-winning architect Albert Alfonso. Those who find

Dale Chihuly an enigma will be fascinated by this exhibit. The colorful, complex and multi-dimensional glass sculptures shine in their own space.

The collection includes large-scale installations including the Ruby Red Icicle Chandelier, baskets, drawings and some of his series works including Macchia, Nijima Floats, Persians and Tumbleweeds. I was particularly enamored by the film that places the artist in Jerusalem working on an exhibit at the 2,000-year-old ruin. Tickets to the Chihuly Collection are dated and timed, allowing an intimate experience with the art.

Straub Park, which buffers Beach Drive from the water, also offers a beach, a great place to study how the sun sparkles on the glass towers. When it's time for a taste of St. Pete, there are dozens of trendy eateries along Beach Drive and Second Avenue North. Most locals dine al fresco and the sidewalks are convivial and crowded. Young folks display short skirts and high heels but flip-flops are also considered formal wear in Florida. Pull up a chair and enjoy lunch or dinner at Bella Brava, Ceviche Tapas Bar, Moon Under Water or Park Shore Grill.

Don't miss the Fine Arts Museum in Straub Park. Small as it is, the permanent collection reflects an appropriate sampler of European Art from the 17th, 18th and 19th centuries, American Art from the 18th and 19th centuries including Robert Henri, George Inness and Georgia O'Keefe.

And, if you are emotionally tough enough, the Florida Holocaust Museum will break your heart and give you hope during the same visit. Just a short walk off Beach Drive on Fifth Street South, the Holocaust Museum hosts an array of artifacts, survivor stories and

frequent art exhibits. Through May 31, 2011, you can explore a show by Richard Notkin titled "Peace/War, Survival/Extinction," an

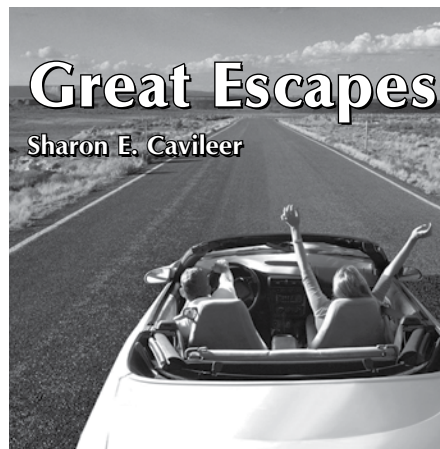
artist's plea for sanity. While the contemporary art is moving and representative, the biggest impact comes from the actual artifacts of the museum from baby shoes to a wooden boxcar used to transport Jews to the death camps.

Celebrate the sunshine and the warm waters of the Gulf at one of a series of beaches. It's amusing to hit the beach in downtown St. Petersburg and walk from the Vinoy but one of the most beautiful can be found at Fort De Soto Park. Named America's Best Beach in 2005 and 2008, and TripAdvisor's No. 1 Beach for 2008 and 2009, this sweet slice of heaven is soft sand, emerald waters and shady pines. Comprising five separate islands, the park features a seven-mile paved trail, paw playground and dog beach, camping, fishing and Fort de Soto, of course.

Despite the oil spill, the gulf looks surprisingly lovely and its seafood is just as tasty as ever. And, visiting the gulf this year is just the nice and neighborly thing to do; it will help this gorgeous gulf coast recover.

Consider it a public service to taste great grouper, crab, oysters and more at 400 Beach Seafood and Tap House. Bella Brava, Cassis American Brasserie and Park Shore Grille. Or try the pier-side seating at Sea Critters Café on historic Pass-A-Grille at St. Pete Beach. Another local favorite is simply old Florida fun at the Chattaway. It's colorful, cash-only and out of range of the rich folks, if you've had enough elite St. Pete. The staff at the Don Caesar will applaud your good taste.

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BUSINESS BRIEF

Supporting Veterans with Survival Bracelets

Jewelry By Design in Woodbridge has launched a new campaign called From Soldier To Soldier, designed to raise money for wounded veterans and their families.

The campaign is based on the sales of a designer version of the survival and friendship bracelets worn by many U.S. and allied soldiers in Iraq and Afghanistan.

For every bracelet sold at Jewelry By Design, \$25 will be donated to Homes For Our Troops and other organizations supporting returning wounded veterans and their families.

The bracelets in the field are braided

by the soldiers with parachute cord. They are known as survival bracelets, because they can be unraveled and the paracord can be used for many purposes in a pinch. They are also exchanged among the soldiers as friendship bracelets. Often a uniform button is sewn on and used as the clasp.

The designer version has a sterling silver clasp shaped like a uniform button and is extremely tightly braided. Sterling silver and gold-plated sterling silver heart clasps with and without a small diamond are also

available.

Jewelry By Design can be reached at 703-580-8880 or www.jbd4u.com.



Win or Die: Playing the Game of Thrones

Without a single episode airing, HBO's upcoming "Game of Thrones" already has high expectations—it's been dubbed the most anticipated television series of 2011. The upcoming series pushed the novel on which it is based—first published in 1996—to the New York Times bestseller list, and the book's sequels have been selling well.

For those who haven't read the novels, the show may look like the second coming of "Lord of the Rings." It's an epic fantasy and features Sean Bean (who played Boromir in the Rings movies).

But the comparisons end there. Both brilliant in their own way, "Game of Thrones" is radically different in tone and setting from J.R.R. Tolkien's work. For starters, "Game of Thrones" features no elves, only one dwarf (of the human variety), and the barest hints of magic and the supernatural. Secondly, in "Lord of the Rings," it was pretty easy to tell the good guys from the bad, and one could rest assured who would triumph. In George R.R. Martin's "Song of Fire and Ice" series, the characters are all gray.

The good guys do nefarious things, while the bad guys occasionally do something noble. Just telling the difference between them is challenging enough. Far more perilous to the reader, however, is that a lot of great characters die, often unexpectedly and sometimes frustratingly.

In short: this show, and the novels on which they are based, are not for the faint of heart. If Martin had written *Lord of the Rings*, Frodo probably would have been slain by Aragorn just before he destroyed Sauron's ring of power.

Still, the novels are gripping and fantasy at its best. Because it is not derivative of Tolkien, "Game of Thrones" feels unique, and sometimes more like a historical novel than a fantasy book. Although Martin plays down the supernatural elements in the world of Westernos, they still exist. The novel begins with rumors that the "white walkers"—creatures of legend that lurk in the cold and use the dead to do their bidding—have been sighted again. There is also talk of dragons, the last of which was slain 100 years ago.

But it is the well-drawn characters that really make the novels such a good read. Eddard Stark, played by Bean in the HBO series, is as close as it gets to a good guy. Noble, moral and intelligent, Stark reluctantly accepts King Robert Baratheon's request to come to the capital of Westernos and become the Hand of the King—running the kingdom while

the king goes hunting, drinking and carousing. When Stark arrives in King's Landing, however, things quickly go awry. The former Hand has mysteriously died, someone has plotted to kill Stark's second youngest son and rumors of a threat against the king himself have started to circulate.

But the novels don't stay exclusively with Stark, instead jumping around to other characters, including his wife and five children, the conniving queen who despises Eddard, and Tyrion Lannister, the dwarf who seeks his father's respect. All of the characters are fascinating to watch, because each one has compelling reasons for his or her actions, even if some ultimately lead to their doom.

Other than Stark, the most interesting is Daenerys Targaryen, the exiled princess of mad King Aerys, who King Robert slew to take the crown. Her story is almost entirely separate from the others as she attempts to build an invasion army to retake the crown. (Indeed, I've nearly finished three of the four published novels and have yet to see how her story connects with the rest.) Although her quest makes her sound like the "bad" guy, Martin does not portray her that way. While she is young and inexperienced, she cares about her allies, helps to free slaves and believes her goal is right.

HBO looks like the network to handle these juggling plotlines and deliver some gripping television. Based on what I've seen to date, the casting seems spot-on and the high production values readily apparent. This may be the first fantasy television series in history that doesn't look cheap or campy. With author Martin serving as an executive producer, the show also looks like it will stay close to the books' plotline.

My one concern is that HBO may quit with the 10 episodes it has filmed. "Game of Thrones" is really just the tip of the iceberg and ends with several plot lines unresolved. If you just watch the show, the finale is liable to leave you wondering what is going on. With three sequels out (and three more expected later), many events started in "Game of Thrones" do not reach their apex until much later.

However, since HBO has bought the rights to the other books in the "Song of Fire and Ice" series, it appears they are ready to move forward. If so, that could make "Game of Thrones" not just the most anticipated series of this year, but of the decade.

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Mamma's Kitchen Serves it Up

Mamma's Kitchen serves hearty, homestyle food in a bright, airy storefront in the Hybla Valley section of Alexandria. Although it is one of many such Greek restaurants serving popular Mediterranean dishes, including pizza, Mamma's Kitchen stands out for its inviting dining space and its delicious versions of the classics.

Inside Mamma's Kitchen, large murals of outdoor and picturesque scenes from Greece—including one of the old city in Athens with a view of the Parthenon—cover several portions of the walls in the dining room. The scenes are painted in bold and bright colors. Some are simply picturesque, while others are whimsical and light-hearted.

Service at Mamma's Kitchen is fast and friendly. Families are welcomed, and highchairs are readily available for young diners. The kids' menu (\$3.99 to \$5.49) includes: spaghetti and meatballs, grilled cheese sandwiches, grilled chicken, hamburgers and pita pizza. In addition, the To Go Menu enables diners to order their meal for take-out.

The appetizer menu includes many Greek favorites: Grilled Halloumi Cheese (\$8.50), Tzatziki, yogurt dip with cucumber, garlic and mint served with pita (\$4.99), hummus and pita (\$5.25) and stuffed grape leaves (\$5.95). We enjoyed the Tzatziki, which went down as a very nice, refreshing start to the meal, and also liked the fried calamari (\$7.50), which comes with a marinara sauce and a spicy "boom boom," Aioli-like sauce. This latter sauce was very pungent had a definite kick. Overall, the calamari was cooked just right—nice and chewy but not rubbery.

The gyro platter (\$9.99 lunch, \$12.95 dinner) is presented with a choice of either chicken or a combination of beef and lamb. (Gyro refers to the Greek style of roasting spiced meats on a vertical spit.) The beef-lamb combo is served over a bed of fries and sprinkled generously with feta. Served on the side are wedges of pita, and small containers with chopped tomatoes, chopped onions, and tzatziki. We highly recommend this dish. The meat was spiced just right—neither too overwhelming nor overly pungent—and the various condiments complemented the meat dish well. The portion of both the meat, and especially the fries, was quite generous.

We also sampled the lunch portion of the chicken gyro, served over pita bread as a

sandwich with yogurt sauce, and sliced onions and tomatoes. The sandwich is served with a portion of fresh-cut fries. (We were pleased to learn during a carry-out run that the kitchen will wait until you arrive to pick up your order to make the fries so that you can walk away with a batch that's just been freshly made.) Again, we enjoyed the flavor of the spiced chicken and would happily stop by often for a quick lunch to pick up a version of this popular sandwich if we worked in the area.

A variety of hot and cold sandwiches (\$4.99 to \$8.50) provides plenty of options. For vegetarians, the fresh mozzarella, tomato and basil sandwich (\$6.99 lunch, \$7.99 dinner) is a delicious taste of classic Mediterranean flavors. It comes with fries, too.

Several baked pasta dishes are also available. The Mushroom Ravioli Al Forno (\$14.99) is a mushroom and parmesan-stuffed ravioli baked in Alfredo sauce. It was decadently rich and creamy—a true treat for cheese lovers. The portion is sizeable, so much so that we took some home with us and enjoyed it for lunch the next day.

Mamma's Kitchen offers lots of choices in pizza, which is made on a thin and crispy crust. Though the pizza is perfectly acceptable, we found the Greek specialties to be the area where Mamma's Kitchen truly shined.

For dessert—three versions of baklava (\$3.50), the traditional Eastern Mediterranean dessert made of layered sheets of thin phyllo dough, nuts and a sweet syrup made from either rose water or orange blossoms—offered plenty of temptation. Good, standout baklava is not always easy to find, and we were quite pleased with both the classic version as well as a less traditional chocolate version. This latter is served as two long rolls drizzled with chocolate syrup. Both were served in generous portions. Tiramisu (\$4.25), chocolate cake (\$4.99) and cheesecake (\$4.25) are also available. We also very much enjoyed the chocolate cake, rich and chocolaty, but not overly sweet.

Mamma's Kitchen is located at 7601 Fordson Road in the New Huntley Meadows Plaza. It opens at 11 a.m. on weekdays and at 8:30 a.m. on weekends. Breakfast is served on Saturday and Sunday. They close at 9 p.m. Sunday through Thursday, and at 10 p.m. on Friday and Saturday nights. The phone number is 571-312-6690.



They offer lots of choices in pizza, which is made on a thin and crispy crust.

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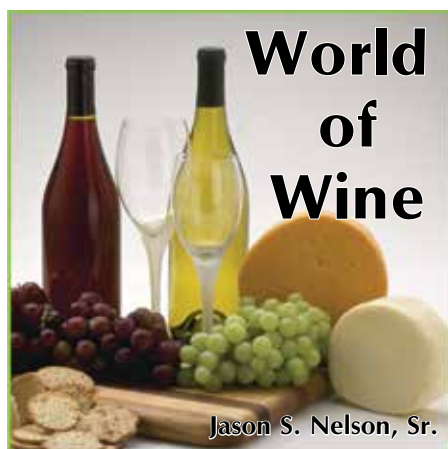
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Uncork New Zealand Pinot Noir

It seems to me that pinot noir is the "it" grape of the moment. New Zealand is perhaps the "it" wine country of the moment. So it stands to reason that the "it" country would produce the "it" wine. Thus, New Zealand pinot noir was born. Originally it was believed that a quality red wine could not be produced in a country with the latitude of New Zealand; it was too dark and too cold. However, due to some



World of Wine

Jason S. Nelson, Sr.

experimental plantings of pinot noir and Gamay vines in the 1970s, pinot noir emerged as New Zealand's second-most important varietal wine. Sauvignon blanc may be New Zealand's No. 1 wine export, but pinot noir is a close second. If New Zealand continues to produce pinot noir as excellent as it has been producing, then pinot

noir may well eclipse that other varietal as

continued on page 13

Meteorite Donated to the Smithsonian

Months after a meteorite crashed through their rented office space, a pair of Lorton doctors were able to finalize the donation of the space rock to the Smithsonian Institution, and the proceeds to Doctors Without Borders. From left, attorney Michael Chamowitz, Dr. Marc Gallini, Dr. Frank Ciampi and attorney Keith Marino.



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Calendar

April 2011

Send calendar listings to Kathy Marinucci
at calendar@chroniclenewspapers.com

SHOWS & EXHIBITS

April 1–25—Exotics Et Cetera. This show, sponsored by the Springfield Art Guild, will feature 25 pieces of watercolorist Ruth Ensley's art. 9 a.m.–4 p.m. (Sun., noon–4 p.m.) in the Historic House at Green Spring Gardens, 4603 Green Spring Rd., Alexandria. (www.springfieldartguild.com)

1–May 5—It's Only Rock 'n' Roll, But I Like It! Del Ray Artisans will pay homage to all things rock 'n' roll. Thurs., noon–4 p.m.; Fri., noon–9 p.m.; Sat., 10 a.m.–9 p.m.; Sun., noon–6 p.m. at the Del Ray Artisans Gallery in the Nicholas A. Colasanto Center, 2704 Mount Vernon Ave., Alexandria. (www.TheDel-RayArtisans.org, 703-838-4827)

17—N-Guage Train Display. The Northern Virginia NTRAK members will have a display and trains running. \$3; \$1 for kids. 1–4 p.m. at the Fairfax Station Railroad Museum, 11200 Fairfax Station Rd., Fairfax Station. (www.fairfax-station.org, 703-425-9225)

DOG ADOPTION

9—Cocker Spaniel Adoption Show. Meet cockers of all ages available for adoption. All dogs are spayed or neutered. Volunteers will be available to help potential adopters find a good match and answer any questions on the dogs. Sponsored by the Oldies But Goodies Cocker Spaniel Rescue. 11 a.m.–2 p.m. at Petsmart, 6535 Frontier Dr., Springfield. (www.cockerspaniel-rescue.com, 703-533-2373)

MARKET & YARD SALE

9—Green Spring Garden Market. Local growers will offer shrubs, native plants and wildflowers, ornamental grasses and unusual perennials and annuals. FROGS will receive 10 percent off in the Garden Gate Plant Shop. Master gardeners will be available. 9 a.m.–1 p.m. at Green Spring Gardens, 4603 Green Spring Rd., Alexandria. (www.greenspring.org, 703-643-5173)

30—Community Yard Sale and Bake Sale will offer crafts, furniture, toys, housewares, knickknacks, hardware, books, baked goods and more. 8 a.m.–noon at St. Peter's in the Woods, 5911 Fairview Woods Dr., Fairfax Station. (703-503-9210)

FILM

9—“Promised Land.” Though apartheid ended in South Africa in 1994, economic injustices between blacks and whites remain unresolved. As revealed in this award-winning film, the most potentially explosive issue is land. The film follows two black communities as they struggle to reclaim land from white owners, some of whom have lived there for generations. One of the Movies with a Mission. Followed by a discussion and a gallery walk. Reservations requested. 4:30 p.m. at the Alexandria Black History Museum, 902 Wythe St., Alexandria. (www.alexblackhistory.org, 703-746-4356)

PERFORMANCES

10—“The Tuba Can Do Everything” will feature Christopher Quade on tuba. He will present a diverse program demonstrating the beauty and surprising versatility of the tuba. 3 p.m. at Burke United Methodist Church, 6200 Burke Centre Parkway, Burke. (www.burkeumc.org, 703-250-6100)

20—May 29—“The Real Inspector Hound” is the story of theatre critics Moon and Birdboot, who watch a ludicrous setup of a country-house murder mystery. By chance, they become involved in the action, causing a series of events that parallel the play they are watching. \$45–\$50. Thurs. & Fri., Sat.: 8 p.m.; Sat., 5 & 8 p.m.; Sun.: 3 & 7 p.m. at Metro Stage, 1201 North Royal St., Alexandria. (www.metrostage.org/index.html, 703-548-9044)

23—May 14—“[title of show].” This quirky musical tells the story of two guys who write a Broadway musical about two guys writing a Broadway musical. Along with two actress friends, they journey from the unemployment line to the bright lights of Broadway. It's a 21st-century update of “putting on a show.” \$19–\$22. 8 p.m. (3 p.m. on Sundays) at the Little Theatre of Alexandria, 600 Wolfe St., Alexandria. (www.thelittletheatre.com/#/703-683-0496)

May 1—Chamber Recital. The chamber ensemble of the American Youth Philharmonic Orchestra will perform in concert. \$5–\$7. 1 p.m. at the Old Town Hall, 3999 University Dr., Fairfax. (www.aypo.org/about-us/about-us.php, 703-642-8051)

May 8—Spring Fling. The American Youth Concert Orchestra and the American Youth String Ensemble will perform in concert. \$5–\$7. 1 p.m. at Bishop Ireton High School, 201 Cambridge Rd., Alexandria. (www.aypo.org/about-us/about-us.php, 703-642-8051)

GATHERINGS

12, 19, 26—The Wakefield Chorale, in its 30th year, will practice, and new members are welcome (no auditions required). 7:30–9:30 p.m. in the cafeteria at North Springfield Elementary School, 7602 Heming Ct., Springfield. (703-451-7917)

13—2011 Seavareid Forum: Race in America. Ray Suarez, author and senior correspondent for the “NewsHour” will discuss race in America and the projection that by 2042, our country will be one with a “minority majority,” dramatically changing the way we view the average American. \$5; \$10 at the door. 7 p.m. at Burgundy Farm Country Day School, 3700 Burgundy Rd., Alexandria. (www.burgundyfarm.org)

16—Grand Ball. Celebrate the arrival of spring with this festive event set in the 1780s in the historic ballroom. Enjoy live music, dance instruction, a special queen's cake and dessert collation, gaming and a cash bar. A king and queen will be chosen to preside over the ball. \$45; \$50 at the door. 8–11 p.m. at Gadsby's Tavern, 134 North Royal St., Alexandria. (www.gadsbystavern.org, 703-746-4242)

16—2011 Center for Alexandria's Children Family Fun Day will feature live entertainment, digital identification kits for children and a variety of interactive exhibits and activities designed to engage children. Parents will learn about keeping children safe and families strong. Sponsored by Capital One Bank. 11 a.m.–3 p.m. at the William Ramsey Recreation Center, 5700 Sanger Ave., Alexandria.

19—Community Passover Second Seder. Bring family and friends and join in celebrating Pesach. Conducted by Rabbi Brett Isserow and Cantor Sharon Steinberg. \$25; \$15, ages 4–13; free, younger than 4. Reservations required. 6 p.m. at the Beth El Hebrew Congregation, 3830 Seminary Rd., Alexandria. (bethelseder@gmail.com, 703-370-4900)

24—The Franconia United Methodist Men Ministry will meet, and invites all men to join them in various service projects such as Heart Havens, the Job Jar, Adopt a Highway and supporting Camp Rainbow. 8 a.m. at the Franconia United Methodist Church, 6037 Franconia Rd., Alexandria. (www.franconiaumc.org, 703-971-5151)

INSTRUCTION

13—Suffragist Amelia (Mrs. Robert) Walker, as portrayed by Lynne Garvey-Hodge, was arrested in front of the White House on July 14, 1917, then incarcerated at the Occoquan Workhouse for participating in the Prison Parades of 1918–1919 that eventually led to successful passage of the 19th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution giving women the right to vote. She will realistically describe the horror of the women's imprisonment at Occoquan. The public is invited to this meeting of the National Active and Retired Federal Employees Association. 1:30 p.m. at American Legion Post 176, 6520 Amherst Ave., Springfield. (jkadelg@yahoo.com, 703 313-9387)

19—“Working for the People.” Dr. Kenneth W. Heger will explain how to find information documenting employment with the federal government by us-

ing records and printed government documents and will describe how these sources differ at the meeting of the Mount Vernon Genealogical Society. The public is invited. 1 p.m. in room 112 of the Hollin Hall Senior Center, 1500 Shenandoah Rd., Alexandria. (www.MVGenealogy.org/, haroldm@erols.com, 703-360-0920)

20 & May 11—Open Life drawing. All skill levels can loosen up and participate in a fun, fast-paced drawing experience at this gesture session, composed primarily of series of dynamic 1- to 5-minute poses by a live model, one or two of which may be revisited for 10–15 minutes at the end of the session. Bring your own supplies. \$8 (\$6 for DRA members). 11 a.m.–1 p.m. at the Del Ray Artisans Gallery in the Nicholas A. Colasanto Center, 2704 Mount Vernon Ave., Alexandria. (www.thedelrayartisans.org, 703-836-1468)



20 & May 11—Open Life drawing. All skill levels can get drawing practice at this short/long-pose session, composed primarily of series of dynamic 5- to 15-minute poses by a live model. Bring your own supplies. \$8 (\$6 for DRA members). 2–5 p.m. at the Del Ray Artisans Gallery in the Nicholas A. Colasanto Center, 2704 Mount Vernon Ave., Alexandria. (www.thedelrayartisans.org, 703-836-1468)

30—Botanical Design. Bruce Nash, horticulture instructor and professional floral designer will explain how to design a spring tabletop garden. Then, you create one to take home. Floral materials and containers provided. \$30 registration and \$20 supply fee. Registration (by April 22) required. 10 a.m.–12:30 p.m. at Green Spring Gardens, 4603 Green Spring Rd., Alexandria. (www.greenspring.org, 703-643-5173)

30—Botanical Design. Bruce Nash, horticulture instructor and professional floral designer will explain how to design a spring tabletop garden. Then, you create one to take home. Floral materials and containers provided. \$30 registration and \$20 supply fee. Registration (by April 22) required. 10 a.m.–12:30 p.m. at Green Spring Gardens, 4603 Green Spring Rd., Alexandria. (www.greenspring.org, 703-643-5173)

May 7 & 8—Mother's Day Tea. Learn about mothers past and present, famous and infamous and uncover the origins of the time-honored celebration. \$27/adults; \$18/ages 12 and younger. Registration required. 1–3 p.m. at Green Spring Gardens, 4603 Green Spring Rd., Alexandria. (www.greenspring.org, 703-941-7987)

May 10—Café Sketching Workshop. Learn techniques for drawing quickly and fearlessly in a sketchbook. Practice first in a mock café setting, then head out as a group to draw. Bring a sketchbook, pencils and eraser. Registration required. \$30 (\$25 for DRA members). 2–5 p.m. at the Del Ray Artisans Gallery in the Nicholas A. Colasanto Center, 2704 Mount Vernon Ave., Alexandria. (www.thedelrayartisans.org/cafe, 703-836-1468)

EASTER

16—Easter Egg Hunt. Meet the Easter Bunny, win a cake in the cake walk, enjoy crafts and play games. Egg hunts are scheduled by age groups and times will be posted. Bring your own basket, but there will be some to borrow. All are welcome. 10 a.m.–noon at Sydenstricker United Methodist Church, 8508 Hooes Rd., Springfield. (www.sumcdisciples.org, 703-451-8223)

17—Palm/Passion Sunday commemorates the entry of Jesus into Jerusalem (Palm Sunday's focus) and begins the series of observances focusing on the events of Holy Week—the beginning of the passion or suffering of Jesus leading to and including the crucifixion.

8:30 and 11 a.m. at Franconia United Methodist Church, 6037 Franconia Rd., Alexandria. (www.franconiaumc.org, 703-971-5151)

21—Holy Thursday Communion and Tenebrae is Christian service in which the extinguishing of candles symbolizes the events of that week from the triumphant Palm Sunday entry through Jesus' burial. Worshipers leave in silence to ponder the impact of Christ's death and await the coming Resurrection. 7:30 p.m. at Franconia United Methodist Church, 6037 Franconia Rd., Alexandria. (www.franconiaumc.org, 703-971-5151)

22—Good Friday Service/the Seven Last Words. These services, based on the seven last words (phrases) of Jesus from the cross, are developed from harmonies of the Gospel passion narratives. Also known as the Devotion of the Three Hours (from noon on Friday to 3 p.m., to remember Christ's hours on the cross). Noon and 7:30 p.m. at Franconia United Methodist Church, 6037 Franconia Rd., Alexandria. (www.franconiaumc.org, 703-971-5151)

23—Easter Egg Hunt is open to preschoolers through 6th-graders. 10 a.m.–noon at Franconia United Methodist Church, 6037 Franconia Rd., Alexandria. (www.franconiaumc.org, 703-971-5151)

24—Easter Celebration. Celebrate the resurrection of Jesus Christ. 8:30 and 11 a.m. at Franconia United Methodist Church, 6037 Franconia Rd., Alexandria. (www.franconiaumc.org, 703-971-5151)

BUS TRIPS

20—Garden Getaway: Springtime at Longwood. Longwood Gardens is a DuPont estate in Pennsylvania. Enjoy formal plantings and fountains on the estate grounds and the grand conservatory, the spectacular Easter display of lilies, orchids and hydrangeas. Lunch is on your own at the café of Longwood. Trip includes transportation, driver tip, entrance and guided tour fees. \$99. Registration required. 7 a.m.–7 p.m. at Green Spring Gardens, 4603 Green Spring Rd., Alexandria. (www.greenspring.org, 703-643-5173)

May 7—“The Grapes of Wrath Tour 2.” Savor Civil War history in the Valley of Virginia and a taste of some of Virginia's best wines as you explore Stonewall Jackson's 1862 Shenandoah Valley Campaign. Visit Pritchard Farm and Rose Hill, make several stops at sites related to the Battle of Front Royal, then see the Philip Carter Winery in Hume for a wine tasting. Advance registration required. \$130; \$140 after April 22. Fee includes transportation, guide and admission fees, box lunch, snacks and wine tasting. Bus will depart at 7:30 a.m. and return at 6 p.m. to Fort Ward Museum, 4301 West Braddock Rd., Alexandria. (alexandriava.gov/FortWard, 703-746-4848)

HELPING

21 & 22—Phoenix Rising Meal Program. Volunteers are needed to help prepare and assemble bag lunches on Thursday at 6:30 p.m., then deliver them on Friday at 5:30 p.m. to homeless people living in the woods, their vehicles and in motels along the Rte. 1 corridor in Alexandria. Franconia United Methodist Church, 6037 Franconia Rd., Alexandria. (www.franconiaumc.org, admin@franconiaumc.org, 703-971-5151)

Musicians Receive Awards

continued from page 7

port young string players and appointed orchestra member Penny Farris to start a youth orchestra. That grew into four orchestras known as the American Youth Philharmonic Association. After Feuer's death in 1963, the string competition was established to recognize and reward outstanding achievement in young Northern Virginia string players from grades seven to 12. The first \$100 award was given to a student in 1964. On Feb. 20, 2011, four winners of this competition were chosen from a group of nine finalists. At the March 19 FSO concert they were recognized on stage and received their awards.

The first prize of \$1,500 was awarded to violinist Brian Hong, a junior at Robinson Secondary School. Among his many accomplishments, Brian is concertmaster of the American Youth Philharmonic. He began playing the violin at the age of four and realized by middle school that he was serious about continuing to excel in the study of his instrument. His mother says she never had to push him to practice. Brian is interested in physics and chemistry and has a full schedule at school but still manages to practice three to four hours a day. This was not the first competition Brian has won. Two other competitions provided him with the opportunity to perform at Strathmore Music Center in recital and with the National Philharmonic. When he attended the Music Academy of the West in Santa Barbara, he was recognized as the youngest Fellow of 2009. During the week of May 30, he will appear on the NPR radio show "From the Top," a program that features very talented young artists. Feuer Competition award money must be used to further the music training of the recipients. Brian plans to use his to commission a new bow.

The second prize of \$1,000 went to Daniel Tavani, a sophomore at Battlefield High School. Daniel is principal cellist of the Youth Symphony Orchestra in Prince William County. He began studying the cello at age six and at 11 performed in a master class for cellist Lynn Harrell. Daniel has taken part in other competitions. He won first prize at 12 in the Senior Division Concerto Competition of the Northern Virginia Music Teachers Association and was a finalist in the National Symphony Orchestra (NSO) Young Artists Competition. He has participated in many concerts in the area, including the Masterworks Festival and performs cello in a piano trio and with members of his family in the Tavani Ensemble. Daniel intends to use his prize money toward the purchase of a new cello.

The third prize of \$700 was awarded to Michael Romans, a sophomore at Lake Braddock Secondary School, where he is concertmaster of the symphony orchestra. He has studied the violin for the past six years, but has also been playing the viola for two years. It was his performance on the viola that led to his award. For the past two years he has played violin in the Virginia All-State Orchestra and in the senior regional orchestra. Michael has had two recitals at the Alexandria Lyceum, where he played both violin and viola. He recently earned first place in a competition held by the Northern Virginia Music Teachers Association. Michael plans to use his award money to purchase a professional violin.

Usually the Feuer Competition awards only three prizes, but this year a \$200 honorable mention award was added, which was given to violinist Jackie Lin, a sophomore at Centreville High School. Jackie has been part of the Youth Fellowship Program and was a

finalist in the NSO Young Soloist Competition. She played for Gil Shaham in a Youth Fellowship Master Class and for Timothy Fain, who was soloist at FSO's Nov. 2010 concert. Jackie also studies piano and is on her school's tennis team. She plans to use her prize money to attend a summer music program.

World of Wine

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New Zealand's greatest wine export.

Brancott was one of the first wineries to plant pinot noir in 1973, despite the skeptics who said that New Zealand wasn't sunny enough to successfully plant red varieties. It is now considered the primary example of New Zealand Marlborough Pinot Noir. It is noted for its cherry and deep plum flavors balanced with spice and tannins. As a good entrance-point wine, this one is perhaps a less complex wine on its own. But I would argue that this is a great backyard barbeque party pinot noir, as it is particularly suited to hamburgers. Brancott Vineyards Pinot

This wine is both barrel- and tank-fermented and matured with a mix of new and older French oak.

Noir Marlborough is approximately \$12 at Total Wine.

Kim Crawford Wines produces a pinot noir that is a dark, brooding wine. It is purple with a touch of crimson. The flavors of Kim Crawford's pinot noir can best be described as layered: black cherries, raspberries, red currants, strawberries, spice, rich mushroom, smoky oak and bright fruit. I recommend a bit of decanting time for the Kim Crawford pinot noir, to release this elegant aromatic which is marked by dark cherry flavor balanced by smoky tannins, yielding a velvety finish. This wine works equally well with salmon or roast beef. Kim Crawford Pinot Noir Marlborough is approximately \$17.50 at Total Wine.

Oyster Bay is another Marlborough vineyard that produces a very good pinot noir. Theirs is noted for cherry and plum flavors rounded by vanilla and perhaps mint. This wine is both barrel- and tank-fermented and matured with a mix of new and older French oak. This yields a complex and spicy pinot noir that is a great stand-alone wine, in my opinion. Oyster Bay Wines Pinot Noir Marlborough is \$14 at Total Wine.

So if you are looking for a new and exciting wine to try that is wallet friendly, look to the up-and-coming New Zealand as a New-World country that produces wines that compete with the Old World. If you have a hard time finding them in the store, they tend to be shelved with the Australian wines, which are usually easy to find.

Sports Scene

continued from page 7

to Northern Virginia, where he works for ADDX Corporation. He lives with his wife Sarah and dog Rommel, not more than 10 minutes away from his mom and dad.

As high points in his soccer career Millward lists starting in the VHSL all-star game in Newport News and his freshman year at Shippensburg when his team made the top 10 in the NCAA Division II national poll.

Winning his first game as the Lee Lancers' head coach of boys' varsity soccer has to rank right up there with those two.

Lemons: A Bowl of Sunshine

Just sitting in a bowl on the counter, lemons are so bright, cheery and fragrant that it's easy to appreciate them for decorative reasons rather than for their culinary uses. But their sharp acidity makes them an all-purpose player in the kitchen, and unlike most fruits they're useful in both desserts and savory dishes.

Lemons are one of the most useful fruits you can have in the kitchen. Use lemons wherever or whenever you need to sharpen the flavors of a dish without added salt—a bonus for anyone on a low-sodium diet. Lemons add a welcome freshness to rich dishes and a refreshing zing to everything from pasta to salad to jams. A squeeze of lemon is a classic flavoring for fish and they're the essential ingredient in lemon meringue pie. Use lemons instead of vinegar for a quick dressing—whisk together olive oil, lemon juice and herbs to drizzle over a salad. Lemon juice prevents unwelcome browning of cut fruit such as apples. Don't overlook the peel or zest of the lemon. The essential oils in the peel make it a powerful flavoring agent. Lemons are prized throughout the Mediterranean, but the most creative uses are in North African cooking, where pickled or preserved lemons are a major flavoring agent and condiment.

Choose lemons that are heavy for their size with thin, unwrinkled skin. There are several tricks to extract the most juice from a lemon. Bring it to room temperature before squeezing. Alternatively, microwave for a few seconds or roll on the counter before squeezing to get the most juice. The juice can then be frozen for longer storage. Generally, a medium lemon yields three tablespoons of juice. The most intense lemon flavor lies in

the skin and there are lots of gadgets out there for removing the peel or zest without getting any of the bitter white pith underneath. If you're using the zest and juice, zest the lemon first. Lemons will keep for several days on the counter, but the refrigerator is best for longer storage.

Familiar conventional lemons, also known as Eureka or Lisbon varieties, are widely available at grocery stores year-round. Meyer lemons are sweeter than ordinary lemons and more fragrant with a floral quality. This lemon/orange hybrid is not grown on a commercial basis, but if you're in California or Florida, they're worth seeking out at farmers' markets.

My current favorite use of lemons is with chicken and seasonal vegetables wrapped in foil, then baked in the oven for a complete meal. While the packets bake, sliced lemons perfume the chicken and vegetables. Picky eaters will enjoy being able to pick and choose their favorite vegetables to include in their individual packets. These packets are especially good with garlic, mushrooms, fingerling potatoes and zucchini or squash, but you could also use onions, carrots, rosemary and tomatoes or anything that looked good at the market that week.

Chicken Packets, Italian-Style

Think of this recipe as a blueprint; adjust ingredients and amounts to your taste and according to what is in season. Avoid delicate vegetables such as asparagus that won't hold up to 40 minutes in the oven. Adapted from Grace Weissman's recipe in the Washington Post, Oct. 20, 2010. (4 servings.)

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Hooked On Cooking

Janet Thompson Conley

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Captain Bennett

continued from page 1

was already providing a high level of police service when I arrived,” he said. “My goal is to keep what we have and move forward from there.”

There are about 120,000 residents in the Franconia District Station’s 51 square-mile jurisdiction east of I-95. “Many of the folks never come in contact with a police officer unless they have a reason to call 911,” said Bennett. “There are only about 20 officers at a time patrolling the Franconia District,” he said. “We need the citizens to be vigilant with their eyes to help us.”

“Since their job is to protect the community, police officers tend to see the world as safety issues, and they focus on writing tickets and making arrests,” said Bennett. “I try to get them to be open minded to see that there is a wealth of citizens who need our services,” he said. “It’s a challenge because we’re very reactive.”

His strategy is to get his officers off the main roads and out of their cars to engage the citizens “I want my officers to ask questions like how are you? What are your concerns? What are the trends in the community?” he said. “With police, 80 percent of our effort is focused on 20 percent of the issues.” Getting out and talking with citizens fosters two-way communication. What I really focus on is equity of service throughout the district.”

Bennett practices what he preaches. “It is powerful to get out of the cruiser and speak with someone out raking their leaves,” he said. In recent months he has scheduled police department meetings at community locations such as Lorton and Kingstowne

libraries and the Springfield Community Center to take himself out of the station and into the community. “The interactions I’ve had have been remarkable,” he said.

According to Bennett, there has always been a Citizens Advisory Committee at the Franconia District Station, but since his arrival as captain, attendance is increasing. He and Lt. David Smith, assistant commander of the Franconia Station, participate in these monthly meetings, answering questions from those attending. “I have a great time at those meetings,” said Bennett. “Folks receive more information that they would typically hear in the news. And attending gives me a chance to hear what’s going on in the neighborhoods.”

Bennett said his goal is to work with citizens to resolve any issues of concern. “I’m not a finger-pointing type of person,” said Bennett. “I want people to bring us their issues and then work together with us to find the best resources for resolving them.”

At January’s Citizen’s Advisory Committee meeting, the Franconia District Station’s Criminal Investigation Section discussed the high incidence of global positioning system (GPS) dev ices theft in the area. Citizens were asking if immigration checks were being conducted on those arrested. Officer Eduardo (Eddie) Azcarate, the station’s communications officer, said, “We as local police do not enforce immigration law because it is a federal issue.” He went on to explain that Fairfax County Police work with Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) on issues of immigration. In response to the concerns and questions, the Franconia District Station is inviting members of ICE to a future Citizen’s Advisory Committee meeting.

Getting out the word is important to Bennett. Franconia is the only district station in Fairfax County that has a station communications officer. “We have permission from the Department Public Information officer M.A. Jennings to work in partnership disseminating information,” said Bennett. “Officer Azcarate is in charge of responding to what our citizens need to know or want to know.” From the station’s website there is an e-mail link to communicate directly with Captain Bennett and Asst. Cmdr. Dave Smith.

Bennett has been with the Fairfax County Police Department for more than 20 years. He’s worked in many capacities, but says the motor squad was his favorite. “Working the motor squad is most everyone’s favorite,” he said. “You work around the entire county riding a Harley Davidson.” Bennett held three ranks in the motor squad: officer, sergeant and second lieutenant. He doesn’t currently ride a motorcycle. “When I was riding for my job, it was fun, but not leisurely,” he said. “I’m playing it a little safe now that I have kids.”

With 130 sworn full-time officers, 14 auxiliary officers who are unpaid volunteers, and 20 civilians working in the Franconia District Station, it is larger than most police departments across the country. “Lt. Dave Smith and I have 24/7/365 responsibilities,” said Bennett. “We are never done.”

For all that, Bennett is happy with his career. “I am ecstatic at where I am in my career right now. I supervise more than most police chiefs across the country,” he said. He is not finished, though. “I’m going to keep trying to move up the ranks and compete for major.”

Gardener’s Tips

continued from page 3

sun or shade. Squiggle in wet and dry areas. A downspout is both a source of undesirable erosion (and watershed pollution), and an opportunity for a rain barrel or a nearby rain garden.

Don’t know how a three-foot shrub will look in a spot? Try placing a three-foot box there to get a feel for the volume it will have. Use a garden hose to experiment with the location and outline of a new planting area. The shape and size will suggest the number and type of plants to put there.

Bring your plan to the plant sales and garden centers. In the most hectic time of year for nurseries, a plan can communicate a great deal of information in a short time. Landscape designers can develop plans for you, from vegetable gardens to rain gardens and wildlife gardens. But if you can, take a measuring tape out into the yard and reconnect with your yard before shopping. Bring a friend to hold the other end of the tape, and sketch bravely on paper. It is an eye-opening lesson every year.

Lastly, try new plants that you did not plan on meeting at the plant sale. It’s fun. Remember that we can expect frost as late as the end of April. Some plants shiver bravely into the growing season. Others do not recover gracefully from the shock. Like icy rain on open-toed shoes or the first sunburn of the year, container plants need to avoid early exposure to the weather just like we do. See you out there!

Irene Mills is a landscape designer at Silverbrook Nursery and Landscaping.

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Woodlawn Goes Green

continued from page 6

Leighey House, Woodlawn has entered into a partnership with Star Catering, part of Arcadia's operation, to provide catering for events held at Woodlawn in which they will

"We anticipate a successful return to Woodlawn's agricultural heritage."

use as much produce raised on the property as possible.

Hellman said she is especially excited that several beehives have been placed at Woodlawn and the bees are expected to arrive any day.

Volunteers will plant and tend the garden plot under the direction of a farm manager. Employees from the Neighborhood Restaurant Groups restaurants will help out, as well. Arcadia's vision is to have 20 acres devoted to a local and sustainable food initiative. "We anticipate a successful return to Woodlawn's agricultural heritage, and look forward to providing our guests a more realistic portrayal of life on a 19th-century working farm," said Hellman.

Education Matters

continued from page 4

age shed for the gardening tools. First-grade teacher Jane Ann Cole explained how teachers and their husbands came on a Saturday, built the raised beds and filled them with soil. "Kindergarten students plant pumpkin seeds in the late spring that they harvest as first-graders in the fall. First-grade students plant corn in the late spring and when the stalks are up, our fourth graders add pole beans and

squash for a three sisters garden."

Cole explained how Native Americans taught early white settlers the technique of planting squash, whose broad leaves protect the roots of the young corn and how the corn stalks later supported the climbing beans. Squash, corn and beans—these are the three sisters. "We plow it all under in the fall after pumpkin harvest and cover it for the winter. We also have a compost bin, and in the spring we add in the compost and get the area ready for the late spring crops to be planted," says

Students learn water conservation through the use of rain barrels, which have become part of gardening activities.

Cole. When school is not in session during the summer break, the plants are on a timer system for drip irrigation. Floris Elementary School is lucky to have such an avid outdoor gardener as Cole, who lives near the school and through the summer comes by every few weeks to weed.

Students learn water conservation through the use of rain barrels, which have become part of gardening activities at Washington Mill, Island Creek and Haycock elementary schools. Kings Glen Elementary uses compost from the school cafeteria. Floris has its own compost bin.

Island Creek Elementary in Kingstowne and Newington Forest Elementary are two schools that plan to plant a garden that attracts butterflies. Schools coordinate their planting of milkweed and other plants friendly to butterflies with second grade's science studies of butterflies and moths.



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Declined Incinerator

continued from page 1

management.

Last month, the Board voted to allow county staff members to make one last attempt to reach a satisfactory contract allowing for Covanta's continued ownership, while simultaneously preparing for a bond-funded purchase if the deal fell through.

Board Chairman Sharon Bulova said that the terms ultimately reached by the county and Covanta were a significant improvement over the original contract, and said they would not have been attainable without the credible threat that the county would exercise its option to purchase the facility.

"Exercising our option to purchase allowed us to negotiate a service contract renewal based on the new economic reality and with a stronger negotiating position," she said in a statement presented to the Board. "The extension will result in \$300 million in savings over the life of the new contract compared to the terms negotiated in 2008."

Additionally, she said, "With a service contract based on these new terms, Fairfax County residents will continue to have affordable and reliable trash service for the next 30 years. Our county staff worked very hard to secure these terms and I commend them for their efforts."

Springfield District Representative Pat Herry, the most vocal opponent of the purchase, called the Board's decision a victory for small government principles.

"I vocally opposed this purchase from the start for many reasons," said Herry. "Taking over the trash incinerator from a private company would have been a massive expansion of government at a time when governments at all levels are returning their focus to core functions."

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Hooked on Cooking

continued from page 13

Ingredients

2 medium zucchini or summer squash, sliced
4 new potatoes, sliced or 4 handfuls of fingerling potatoes, cut in half
1 small onion, sliced very thin (optional)
2 cloves garlic, sliced
1 cup jarred artichoke hearts, drained and


quartered
½ cup cherry tomatoes, cut in half
1 lemon, sliced
1 pound boneless, skinless chicken breasts, cut into strips or use chicken tenders
Thyme and/or rosemary sprigs
Salt and pepper
4 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil

The most intense lemon flavor lies in the skin.

Directions

Preheat oven to 400°. Cut 8 large pieces (2 pieces per packet) of aluminum foil, each about 10 inches long. Divide the zucchini, potatoes, onion and garlic evenly among four pieces of foil. Add a quarter of the artichokes, tomatoes, lemon, chicken and herbs to each. Season with salt and pepper.

Drizzle each with a tablespoon of olive oil. Place the second piece of foil on top and fold the edges together tightly to seal. Place the packets on a baking sheet. Bake for about 40 minutes or until the chicken and potatoes are cooked through. Open carefully as the steam will be hot. Discard foil before serving. Make ahead: The packets can be assembled and refrigerated several hours before baking.



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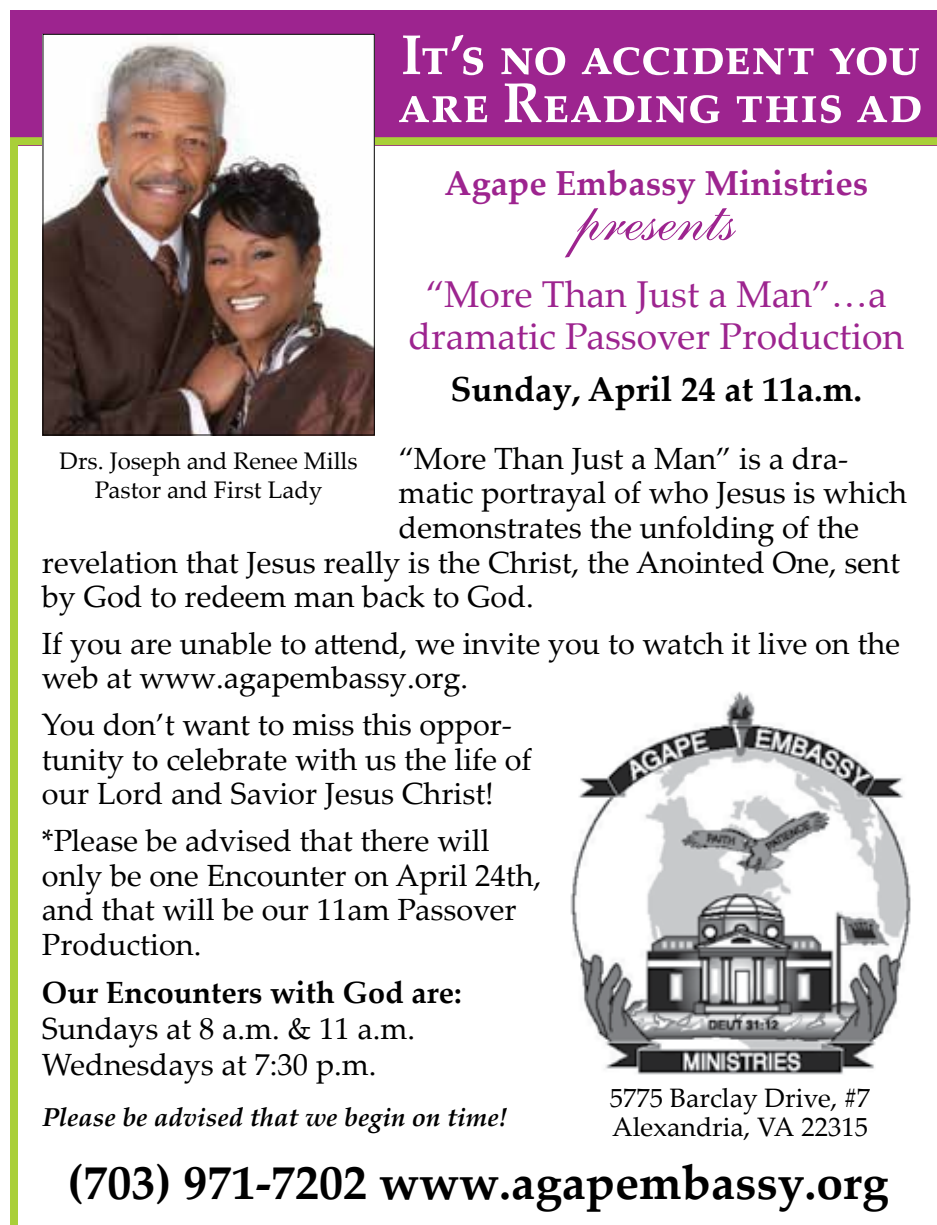
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Commentary



Sharon Bulova (D)
Chairman, Board of Supervisors

New Buses and HOT Lanes

When I gave my State of the County address in January, I listed several items on our plate for 2011 that were “happening to us.” One of the major events looming on the horizon is the September deadline for the movement of 20,000 Defense Department employees to the Ft. Belvoir area under the Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) process.

To prepare for these workers, my col-

leagues on the Board of Supervisors and I have been working with our county staff to identify transportation improvements and choices in the corridor. We have also worked with the Virginia Department of Transportation on a revised plan for HOV and HOT Lanes on I-95.

Beginning in May, Fairfax Connector staff will launch a broad service change campaign and public outreach effort to inform South

County residents of bus service changes that will accompany the BRAC movements this fall.

Information on the proposed bus service changes will be provided on the Fairfax Connector website (www.fairfaxconnector.com) and through various social media outlets, including Twitter (@ffxconnector) and Facebook (www.facebook.com/fairfaxconnector).

In June, staff will hold a series of public meetings in southern Fairfax County to share information with the public about the proposed new service and receive comments on the routes and schedules. When the public meetings have concluded, the comments received regarding the proposed bus service changes will be reviewed and considered for incorporation into the final service plan.

By August, staff will finalize the schedules and begin training drivers. The final schedules will be available to the public by the end of August. Look for the new service to hit the streets in late September or early October.

The proposed BRAC service plan incorporates nine new buses and significantly increases Fairfax Connector bus service in South County. Funding for these new buses and the increase in service will come from our Commercial and Industrial Real Estate Taxes, earmarked for transportation improvements.

Regarding the I-95 HOV and HOT Lanes, transportation secretary Sean Connaughton released a revised proposal in February that is a truncated version of the previous plan. While our Board had hoped for the original

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Commentary



Pat Herrity (R)
Supervisor, Springfield District

County Board Erred in Subsidizing Luxury Affordable Housing

On Tuesday, March 8, the Board of Supervisors approved the 270-unit Residences at the Government Center over the objections of Supervisor Cook, Frey and me. I opposed this plan because I do not believe that the county should be in the business of subsidizing luxury affordable housing, especially when it directly competes with the private sector.

There are right ways to encourage development of affordable housing and wrong ways. This project was wrong on a number of fronts:

- **Luxury Does Not Belong in County-Subsidized Affordable Housing.** As was clearly stated on the applicant's web site, "Although the development is a luxury product, the units will be leased out to households earning between 50 and 100 percent of the Area Median Income." The luxury units also include significant onsite amenities—a pool, spa, exercise and weight room, tot lot and party rooms.

- **Federal Tax Credit Subsidy in Addition to the County Subsidy of \$10 to \$15 Million.** By providing the land, the county will be subsidizing the units to the tune of \$10 to \$15 million. By approving this project for a developer who can make this project work only by taking advantage of the county subsidy and the Low Income Housing Tax Credits Program (LIHTC), we are also contributing to our national deficit. In 2010, the President's Economic Recovery Advisory Board estimated that the LIHTC program would cost the federal government \$61 billion in lost tax revenue from participating corporations from 2008 to 2017.

- **Subsidizing a Product that Competes**

with the Private Sector. Because this is in my district, I know there are ample (several hundred) units currently available at or below the subsidized rents that will be offered by this project. In essence, the county is subsidizing a luxury product to compete with the existing private-sector apartments that actually have equal or lower more-affordable rents already. This subsidized luxury project will reduce the values of surrounding private-sector buildings and have a negative impact on our commercial tax base.

- **No Park Contribution.** The applicant did not provide the per-unit funds typically contributed as a part of the requirement for the Park Authority, typically used for things such as the construction and maintenance of community fields (for example, Patriot Park). They did not provide these funds because of the extensive money they will be spending for onsite amenities including a pool, spa, exercise and weight room, tot lot and party rooms. However, most of these facilities are not accessible to the public.

- **No Preference for Fairfax County Government Employees.** This project was initially proposed by my predecessor for Fairfax County Government employees. Despite a \$10 to \$15 million subsidy, there is no guarantee that any of the 270 units will be occupied by Fairfax County employees.

Despite the fact that this property is in the Springfield District and my familiarity with the impact on the surrounding properties, Chairman Bulova provided a substitute motion to my motion to deny this project and asked the Board to approve it. It was approved 7 to 3 with supervisors Cook and Frey joining me in opposing the project.



Gerald E. Connolly (D)
Congressman, 11th Congressional District

A Government Shutdown Would Affect Everyone

As I write this column, the prospect of a federal government shutdown is once again surfacing as the Congress and the administration seek to reach agreement on a budget for the fiscal year ending on September 30.

Throughout fiscal year 2011, the House and Senate have been unable to pass a year-long budget and have, instead, passed six short-term funding bills, known as continuing resolutions, to keep the government running on a week-to-week basis. But patience is wearing thin for these short-term budget bills and it is unclear whether Congress will agree to any more of them.

The impact of a government shutdown is far-reaching in Northern Virginia.

Confusion and uncertainty reign in many federal agencies as they struggle to plan for the remainder of the year. Services

food inspectors, and delays of war-damaged equipment repairs are but a few of the problems that could arise.

Ironically, the funding of government by short-term resolutions results in gross inefficiencies that end up costing more federal money than if the programs were funded for the entire year. Secretary of Defense Robert Gates called the use of continuing resolutions "a crisis at our doorstep."

I support the passage of a responsible funding plan for the remainder of this fiscal year that takes into account the need to cut unnecessary spending to reduce the federal budget deficit, but also provides the funds necessary to keep the government running efficiently for the benefit of all citizens. It won't be easy. There are too many of my new colleagues in Congress who seem to know the

cost of everything, but the value of nothing when it comes to government programs.

I also wanted to take a moment to recognize the brave men and women of Fairfax County's Task Force 1, the federal urban search and rescue team composed of

Services are being scaled back, contracts delayed, hiring frozen, and programs have been canceled as federal managers wait to find outabout funding levels.

Fairfax County fire fighters, paramedics and other first responders who recently spent a week on Northern Japan following the earthquake and tsunami that struck that nation.

I had the honor of greeting this team when they returned from Haiti last year and I can tell you that they are a dedicated and elite band of first responders who put the lives of others ahead of their own.

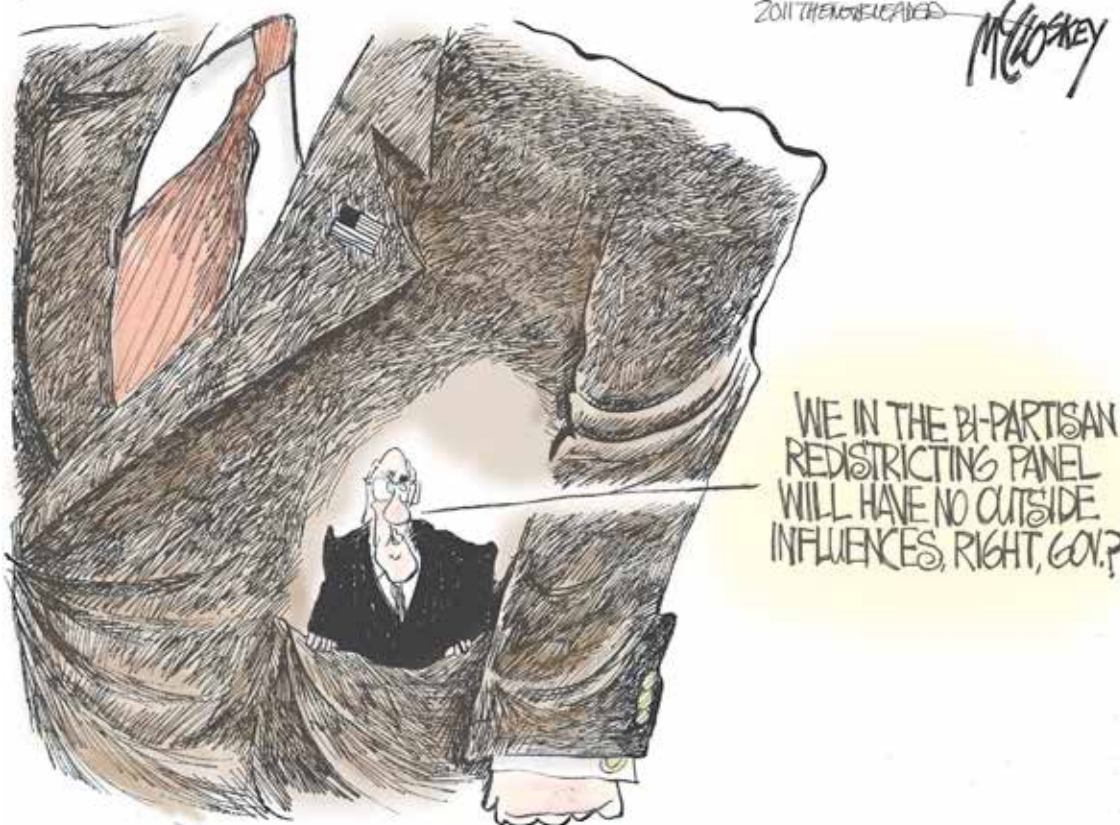
I welcome them home and join with their families in feeling pride in their accomplishments and relief that they made it home from Japan safely.

Finally, if you have an opportunity to visit the Lorton Workhouse Arts Center (at 9601 Ox Road in Lorton) before April 18, take a few moments to enjoy the many works of art created by students from the 11th Congressional District of Virginia. Students from more than 20 schools in Fairfax County, Prince William County and the City of Fairfax participated in this year's Congressional Arts Competition.

Their artwork is wonderful. They use a variety of media from watercolors and oil paints to photography and graphic design to provide us with their views of the world around us.

The winner of this year's contest will have his or her artwork displayed for one year in the U.S. Capitol. Winners in the competition also receive scholarships.

The Lorton Workhouse Arts Center is well worth a trip any time, but it isn't every day you get to see some top-quality art work created by Northern Virginia students.



Our Viewpoint

School Discipline

The challenge of creating an effective and constructive disciplinary system that contributes to a positive learning environment is a challenge that, sadly, many schools around the country fail. Solving this problem is significantly easier for a small school district with a single high school than it is for a system like Fairfax County, with 195 schools and 177,000 students.

As the 11-largest school system in the country, with a hugely diverse student body, operating a transparent, fair and equitable disciplinary system is very difficult. Fairfax County Public Schools are doing it successfully. However, that doesn't mean the system is perfect. There are few issues more serious or emotionally explosive for a parent than how their child is being treated in school.

On March 14, the school board started a review of the student discipline policies and it is clear that there is an enormous diversity and range of opinions among all the affected constituencies—the school board itself, faculty and school administrators and parents—as to whether the system is fair and effective or rigid and unfair. It appears to us that overall the system is, in fact, fair and effective, but that minor changes could make it better. We are pleased that a careful review is under way.

Two recent cases reported in the Washington Post have attracted a lot of attention and have inflamed some parents. One was the suicide of Nick Stuban, a Woodson student suspended for buying one capsule of a (legal at the time) marijuana-like synthetic compound. Was his suspension and transfer to a new school appropriate and unavoidable? And was it a contributing factor in his death?

The second recent case was that of Hayley Russell, a middle school student who was out of school for seven weeks because she had prescription acne medicine in her locker. Given the information available to the public, it is hard to accept that punishment as appropriate, necessary and constructive for her growth or necessary to maintain school discipline.

The problem with both of these cases, and particularly the death of Stuban, which is as emotionally disturbing as it can get for the community, is that none of the (most likely complex) details or circumstances of either of these cases has been made, or can be made, public by the school system. The result is that the public is making negative judgments about the school system's actions based on only partial information.

The procedure for these serious cases of violations of the rules laid out in the Students Responsibilities and Rights Handbook is that when a principal recommends expulsion, the case is transferred to the Hearings Office. That office conducts a hearing attended by a hearings officer, the principal and the assistant principal, the school resource officer or a county police officer, the student and the parents. In the 2009–2010 school year 636 cases were sent to the Hearings Office.

The word “expulsion” is almost a misnomer, as only a small number of students are actually expelled from the Fairfax County School System each year. What actually happens when a student is “expelled” is that they are transferred from their home-base school to either another base school or to one of a number of special Fairfax County programs.

At-large board of education member Martina A. Hone, an attorney, is more uncomfortable with the existing procedures than many of her associates. She is concerned that the hearing officers become prosecutors and that there is not a neutral party in the hearing. She also believes that the hearings should be recorded. We certainly agree with her on that second point, as it would not increase the cost significantly and it would enable an easy review if the hearing results were later challenged. We are not persuaded that having a third “neutral party” in the hearings would be either cost-effective or beneficial.

There is nothing nice about such a hearing, and unfortunately many parents are unwilling to fully acknowledge the meaning of what their child did. Suddenly the excuses, justifications and accusations start pouring out: It was an innocent mistake. He didn't mean it. It was someone

else's fault. The penalty is way too harsh. The hearing officer wasn't fair or nice. It will wreck his chances of getting into a “good” college. The list goes on.

However, when you look at the actual statistics from the 2009–2010 school year—the most recent figures available—we are hard pressed to conclude that anything is amiss. That is not to say that an error does not occur in an individual hearing.

To us, the most significant statistic that leads us to believe that overall the procedure is thoughtful and fair and working properly is that of the 636 students recommended for expulsion and sent to the Hearing Office only 134 were forwarded to the school board for action. In other words, 79 percent received lesser punishments. That doesn't sound inappropriate or unreasonable to us. Finally, out of 177,000 students only 119 were actually transferred and only 11 were truly expelled from the system. Those are very small numbers.

Hone raises an extremely good issue with regard to the record-keeping in these discipline cases. She points out that the Fairfax County Public Schools system has an extremely sophisticated computer system, but it is not tracking what happens to the specific students in the disciplinary system and the effect of transfers on them. Better information could confirm that the procedures are successful or that they are not successful and alternate policies need to be developed. Tracking these students today would require a tedious manual review of the records.

Hone would also like some analysis that explores whether there is a relationship between attendance problems and future discipline problems. That information might produce some data that could lead to effective treatment programs.

The one serious problem that does need to be addressed is that once a student has been suspended, it sometimes takes way too long before a hearing is scheduled. Is there sufficient staffing available for the workload? Given the seriousness of these cases and the serious negative impact on a student who is out of school and in limbo for an extended period of time, these hearings need to happen promptly almost regardless of what it costs to achieve that service.

So, with some reservations, we believe the students of Fairfax County are well served by the school system's disciplinary procedures. Fairfax provides good information about its procedures for students and parents, laying out its policies in a clear handbook.

However, the school system faces a difficult challenge as the vast majority of parents want strict discipline until their child violates the rules.

How does a large system ensure that students in different schools, charged with the same offense under similar circumstances, end up with the same punishment? Solving that problem often results in rigid rules and penalties that are not sensitive to the circumstances and can sometimes result in inappropriate punishments. The minute a system makes subjective judgments, the door is opened to the charge of unequal treatment. Did the child of an “important community leader” get different treatment than the child of a low-income immigrant who doesn't speak English?

While we don't believe Fairfax has a serious problem, we do believe a careful review of the policies is justified. Clearly in response to the March hearing and the ongoing discussions, Superintendent Jack Dale proposed a number of changes to the disciplinary system that directly respond to many of the concerns that have been expressed. His proposals include: audio recording of all hearings, shortening the timeline between disciplinary incidents and the resolution, refining the guidelines on parental notification for potential suspensions and expulsions and authorizing school principals to conduct a review where a student is in possession of their own prescription medication. These proposals were scheduled to be presented to the Board on April 4.

Perhaps these and other changes will insert some flexibility into the system without damaging the confidence in the procedures or weakening the equal penalties for similar offenses. Finally, careful analysis may determine that procedures that are assumed to be effective actually aren't, and that alternatives should be tried.

Parents who have direct experience with the schools absolutely should take the time to communicate with their school board representative how they feel about the system. If there are unrecognized problems, the board needs to hear about them now and look for solutions. On the other hand, if you are happy about how the system is run, it would be good to convey that opinion to your representative.

We have a great school system. We have an opportunity to make it better and it requires everyone's participation.

Bulova

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design that called for new HOT Lanes that stretch all the way from Massaponix to the Pentagon, we have expressed support for the revised proposal.

The new proposal adds a third lane to existing HOV lanes on I-95 beginning in Stafford County, but ends the HOT Lanes just inside the Capital Beltway instead of bringing the new third lane all the way to Washington, DC, as was the plan originally. The rescoped HOT lanes project will link directly to the I-495 HOT lanes currently under construction on the Capital Beltway within Fairfax

County and provide a direct HOT to HOT lanes connection between I-95 in Springfield and Tysons Corner.

The new proposal includes a companion project to build a ramp from the existing HOV lanes on I-395 at Seminary Road. This ramp is a critical component of the new plan as it will allow direct HOV access to the new Mark Center site that by September will be home to 6,400 Defense Department employees relocating as part of BRAC.

As the BRAC relocations continue (employees began moving to the National Geospatial Intelligence Agency in January), Fairfax County will continue to identify strategies and make adjustments to make the transition as smooth as possible both for the employees and for county residents.





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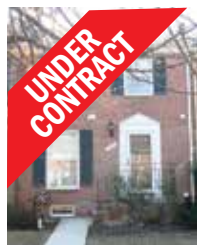
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