

Opening Day

NEWS, PAGE 6

Little League players
Hannah Smith, Nate
Smith and Tyler
Lennon lead the
Pledge of Allegiance
on Opening Day of
the Fairfax County
Little League, Satur-
day, April 6.

Enjoying Frozen
Treats to Help
Fairfax Girl

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City Votes 6-0
To Get Out of
Water Business

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PHOTO BY CRAIG STERBUTZEL/THE CONNECTION

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City Votes 6-0 to Get Out of Water Business

Cost of owning water system outweighs civic pride.

BY VICTORIA ROSS
THE CONNECTION NEWSPAPERS

After a half century of controlling its own water system, the City of Fairfax voted unanimously Tuesday, April 9, to get out of the increasingly costly water business.

The city council's history-making decision closes one contentious chapter of Northern Virginia's "Water Wars," which has embroiled four local governments, powerful politicians, high-priced legal teams, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, and a billion-dollar utility company.

"Change is, indeed, never easy," said Mayor Scott Silverthorne, at the end of a public hearing on the issue Tuesday. "I was firmly in the other camp a year ago. ... I know this has been painful and none of us were thrilled having to make this decision. At the end of the day we all believe it's the right course of action."

Civic pride in owning its water system was not enough to justify the millions of dollars it would take to maintain and litigate Fairfax County and Fairfax Water to keep the City of Fairfax in the water business. According to city officials, it would take \$45 million in upgrades to its current water system to remain in the water business.

Council members were sensitive to the issue of civic pride and the city's long history of independence.

"It's an important part of our history. We're all proud of our independent water system. But, we've been forced to reevaluate," said council member Ellie Schmidt. "I don't like giving up control, but ... our citizens will benefit from lower water rates."

"We have to set pride to one side, and focus on the business decision," said council member Jeff Greenfield. "We have a responsibility to focus on present and look to future. We have opportunity and obligation to save our customers water and high quality."

Council member Dan Drummond contended the city's pride of place is not dependent on its water system.

"Who we procure water from doesn't define us. We're not our water system. This is a vote for our present and our future," Drummond said.

Before Tuesday's vote, city council members heard from about a dozen residents, most of whom spoke in favor of converting to Fairfax Water.

"I'm retired on reasonably fixed income," said longtime city resident Wayne Turk. "When I look at the projected cost to stay in the water business, it makes me awfully nervous. One of the reasons we're thinking about keeping this is city pride? Doesn't



Fairfax City Council member Jeff Greenfield and Mayor R. Scott Silverthorne listen to residents during a public hearing on Tuesday, April 9, debating whether to remain in the water business.



City of Fairfax Utilities Director Rick Thoesen gave council members a report on the benefits of selling its water system and joining with Fairfax Water.

seem like that's a good idea," Turk said.

City resident Rob Flynn agreed: "The City of Fairfax is in a big donut ... let's do the things we do well, and get out of the things we don't."

A few residents said they remained opposed to selling the city's water system, and suggested putting the question to a referendum.

Council member Steve Stombres said the city does not have time for a referendum on the ballot.

"We have pushed this back as far as we can under our mediation agreement ... I have always been proud that we had our own water system, but things have changed. I believed the community was willing to pay a premium to stay in water business, but we are long past the economic viability of that. I am satisfied the benefits outweigh the drawbacks," Stombres said.

Fairfax County Board of Supervisors Chairman Sharon Bulova reacted swiftly to news of the unanimous vote. "I am very pleased. This is a win-win decision for both Fairfax City and

Fairfax County residents," Bulova said.

Silverthorne said the city's decision will resolve pending litigation against Fairfax County, and save the city additional legal costs. The city's lawsuit against Fairfax County halted the county from enacting an ordinance to regulate the city's water fees last July.

The lawsuit stemmed from an ordinance enacted in December, 2011, by the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors that gave the county broad powers to determine how residents got their water and how much they paid for it.

County officials said the new law was an attempt to ensure that all county residents pay a "fair and reasonable" rate for their water. But city leaders said the ordinance was a blatant power grab, and promptly sued the county.

What Happens Next?

In choosing to get out of the water business, the average water residential bill will

be about \$340 by 2018, compared to \$894. Average commercial customers will see significant cost savings as well, with annual bills averaging \$2,481 under the Fairfax Water plan versus \$6,528 if the city retained its utility.

Currently, the average city rate for 1,000 gallons of water is \$4.64 compared to \$2.51 for Fairfax Water customers. Typical annual usage is about 100,000 gallons of water, according to city officials.

Fairfax County resident Kirk Randall, whose home borders the City of Fairfax, said he is thrilled with the decision.

Randall is one of the 21,000 county residents who has paid 71 percent more for water because he gets his water from the City of Fairfax rather than Fairfax Water.

"I'm pleased that our water rates will actually decline instead of doubling or tripling under the status quo. However, while lower water rates are high on my list of priorities, perhaps even more important is reliability."

'Retail' vs. 'Wholesale' Agreement

Silverthorne said the single factor that changed his mind was the advantage of a "retail option," vs. a "wholesale" option.

About a year ago, the city considered—and ultimately rejected—a plan to become a "wholesale" customer of Fairfax Water. Under that option, the city would have purchased water at wholesale rates from Fairfax Water and re-brand it into Fairfax City water. But distribution costs would have been significantly higher because the city's distribution system is much smaller than that of Fairfax Water.

After mediation with Fairfax county and Fairfax Water, a "retail option" was put on the table, and it's this option that changed the mind of Silverthorne and many city residents. By becoming "retail" water customers, the city will essentially sell its water system to Fairfax Water, which will take over all water production, transmission and distribution functions to deliver its water to the city's existing customers.

By converting to Fairfax Water, city officials said city water customers will realize a number of benefits, including:

- ❖ Lower rates: In 2018, average annual cost savings are estimated at \$554 for residential customers and \$4,047 for commercial customers.

- ❖ Water treatment enhancement: Fairfax Water's treatment plants provide drinking water using state-of-the-art treatment processes that would not be possible if the city had to expend \$45 million to refurbish its water treatment facilities.

- ❖ Expanded capacity to address water outages: The city currently has no long-term backup for its Loudoun County treatment and transmission facilities. Each time the city declares a system emergency—which has occurred about every five weeks in recent years—it relies on Fairfax Water to provide water. Jeanne Bailey, a longtime city resident and the spokesperson for Fairfax Water, said that many city residents don't fully understand the vulnerability of the city's system. She said Fairfax Water has 17 billion gallons of upstream storage ready to go in the event of a drought, but specifically prohibits the city from buying emergency water during a drought because it's an event that can be "planned-for," not an emergency.

- ❖ Cost of converting to Fairfax Water offset by sale of city-owned water treatment properties in Loudoun County: The timing of transferring to Fairfax Water now—before costly upgrades to the city's water treatment plant—means money is saved and the can sell the Loudoun properties in the current condition.

Silverthorne, who was elected mayor in May 2012, said he believed this was the right decision for current and future residents. "I can see, years down the road, if we had kept on this path, the future mayor and city council would say 'what in the world were they thinking?'"

"This is a historic decision," Silverthorne continued. "We have vetted this decision and we have kept the community fully informed and involved. We can be proud of that."

Enjoying Frozen Treats to Help Fairfax Girl

Rita's Italian Ice raises money for Tara Sankner.

BY BONNIE HOBBS
THE CONNECTION

Standing on a crate behind the counter of Rita's Italian Ice, 8-year-old Tara Sankner of Fairfax scooped the cool, frosty treat into cups for customers.

Some came there Monday evening because the weather was warm and they enjoy Rita's offerings. Many others came because the Fairfax location was holding a fundraiser for Tara, who was recently diagnosed with brain cancer.

"We just opened last summer and our philanthropy is kids with cancer," explained the store's co-owner, Rico Vicencio. "On opening day, we gave a check to the National Brain Tumor Society and collected hats for children being treated for cancer at Children's National Medical Center."

The other co-owners are his wife



Tara Sankner and BethAnn Telford scoop flavored Italian ice at Rita's in Fairfax.

Kristen and their friends, Ed and Jacque Whang. The Vicencios have three young sons and the Whangs have three young daughters, so it's not surprising that Tara's plight touched them.

THE EVENT came about via Fair Lakes resident BethAnn Telford, who's battling brain cancer, herself. She and Rico used to work together and have known each other 10 years; after Telford's re-



Rita's Italian Ice co-owners are (from left) Ed and Jacque Whang and Kristen and Rico Vicencio.

cent surgery, he paid her a visit.

"About three weeks ago, he came to see how I was doing and delivered Rita's Ice to make me feel better," said Telford. "That's when we discussed doing this for Tara." The other owners quickly agreed.

"This is close to our hearts because we all have kids," said Jacque, who works out with Telford at Life Time Fitness in Centreville. "BethAnn is such an inspiration to us and we want to

give back however we can. And being able to do this for Tara, in conjunction with BethAnn, makes this all the more special."

So on Monday, April 8, from 6-8 p.m., Rita's donated 20 percent off all sales to Tara and her family, towards their medical bills. Contributions were also collected during the day, after a woman called to say she couldn't come to Rita's during the fundraiser, but wanted to donate.

"She said, 'We need to put an end to [childhood cancer],' " said Jacque. "So we put together a donation bin." And, added Rico Vicencio, "People have been donating since 2 p.m."

Rita's has 60 different flavors of ices rotating and changing daily, with 12 flavors always available. Vicencio said mango and wild black cherry are the most popular flavors. The store also offers old-fashioned frozen custard in various flavors, including a lower-fat vanilla, plus custard cakes and custard cookie sandwiches. There are cones and sundaes with unlimited toppings; but, said Vicencio, "We're most known for our gelati—layers of custard, Italian ice and more custard."

Across Route 29 from Paul VI High, the store's open daily from noon-9 p.m.; but starting May 31, it'll stay open weekends until 10 p.m. and, come summer, it'll be open daily until 10 p.m.

Monday evening, people of all ages flocked to Rita's, and both Tara and Telford were "celebrity scoopers." Meryl Bisaga and Sigrid

SEE SUPPORTING, PAGE 5

PHOTOS BY BONNIE HOBBS/THE CONNECTION

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NEWS

Supporting Tara

FROM PAGE 4

Rodgers came from Centreville just for the fundraiser.

"I'm on the Board of Directors of Bite Me Cancer [started by Chantilly thyroid cancer survivor Nikki Ferraro], so I've met all these wonderful people through it," said Bisaga. "I'm also a thyroid cancer survivor and I want to do whatever I can to help—especially little children."

"I lost family members to cancer, so anything I can do to help, I will," added Rodgers. "We're so advanced in so many other things, but not in curing cancer."

"There needs to be more money for research," said Bisaga. "And events like this bring more public awareness."

Tara's had three weeks of chemo so far and it's taken a toll on her slender body. She's been tired, has had headaches and back pain and had to have her hair cut short after it began falling out. But that didn't stop her from pitching an inning Saturday with her youth sports team, the Vienna Galaxy, or attending a Girl Scout father-daughter dance that evening with her dad.

Still, Telford understands firsthand what Tara's enduring, so she was particularly pleased to see such a good turnout at Rita's. "I think it's wonderful that the community reaches out to help children in need—especially right now when this child is going through the worst part of her chemo," she said.

TARA SAID SHE HAD FUN "playing with the other children, making ices, helping and eating. I liked the lemon flavor the best."

Also there Monday evening was Springfield's "Tattoo Tom" Mitchell, who's become one of Tara's champions. On Sunday, April 7, he ran the Cherry Blossom 10-Miler in Washington, D.C., in her honor and then came to Rita's for the fundraiser and to give her his race medal.

He, too, was touched by cancer when his daughter Shayla, 16, died of the disease in 2009. He then started the Stillbrave Childhood Cancer Foundation, providing non-medical support for families going through cancer.

"I also do volunteer work for Children's National Medical Center, and they referred me to Tara's mom Tammy to fix some leaky faucets for her," said Mitchell. "That's how I met Tara. She gave me one of her pink, 'Pray for Tara' bracelets, and I wore it Sunday and ran that race faster than I'd ever done it before."

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Approved by Fairfax, Prince William and Loudoun County Public Schools.

NEWS

PHOTOS BY CRAIG STERBUTZEL/THE CONNECTION



Challenger league players are ready to play ball as they wave from their float during the kick-off parade on Saturday, April 6, Fairfax County Little League Opening Day.

Opening Day

Fairfax County Little League kicks off a news season.

The Fairfax County Little League held their Opening Day festivities on Saturday, April 6, at Chilcott Baseball Field on Oak Street. Area dignitaries—from state delegates to Fairfax City and County representatives—took part in the parade as well as hundreds of players, family members and volunteers.

Lake Braddock freshman Kayley Anna Manarchuck sang before the Fairfax County Little League Opening Day Game Saturday, April 6.



Challenger players Leslie Spittery and Michael Hudson are ready to play on Opening Day of the Fairfax County Little League, Saturday, April 6.

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WEEK IN FAIRFAX

Apple, Vantria Federal Credit Unions Announce Merger

Apple Federal Credit Union (Apple) and Vantria Federal Credit Union (Vantria) announced that they have received approval by the National Credit Union Administration to merge in early May 2013. Apple is headquartered in Fairfax, with a branch network extending throughout Northern Virginia. Vantria is also headquartered in Fairfax County with one branch (Springfield) serving the county.

Apple will absorb Vantria, including all of its employees and its branch, so there are no expected layoffs or branch closings related to this merger.

"Apple will benefit from a larger member base and a slightly broader branch network, resulting in greater convenience for members of both credit unions," says Larry Kelly, president and chief executive officer of Apple. "In addition, Vantria shares many of our core values including a strong membership focus and sense of community."

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OPINION

Voting Again

Every year is election year in Virginia, and it's a bit much.

The most hotly contested race for statewide office in Virginia, the Republican contest for lieutenant governor, will be decided at a statewide convention on May 18. That's about a month from now.

A statewide Democratic primary will take place June 11.

On Nov. 5, all eyes will turn to Virginia to follow the conclusion of a fascinating race for governor. Democrat Terry McAuliffe will face Republican Ken Cuccinelli in a contest that will appeal to more conservative Republicans and more liberal Democrats.

The race will feature massive efforts to turn out the vote. Mailboxes will fill up with glossy mailers. Airwaves will no doubt reflect the election.

Wait, didn't we just do this?

Yes, but in 2013, Virginia will choose governor, lieutenant governor, attorney general, and all 100 members of the House of Delegates. Arlington voters will also elect one member to the county board and one member to the school board. City of Alexandria voters will also elect a commonwealth's attorney and sheriff.

And it won't be simple.

Right now it appears that there are seven Republican candidates, two Democratic candidates and an Independent Green candidate running for lieutenant governor.

Republicans will choose from their seven can-

didates at a statewide convention on May 18. Here are the names of the seven: Jeannemarie Devolites Davis (R), former state senator and wife of former U.S. Rep. Tom Davis; E.W. Jackson Sr. (R); L. Scott Lingamfelter (R), state delegate; Steve Martin (R), state senator; Pete Snyder (R); Corey Stewart (R), Prince William County Board chair, and Susan Stimpson (R), Stafford County Board chair.

Democrats will choose a candidate for lieutenant governor in the statewide primary on June 11; candidates are Aneesh Chopra (D) and state Sen. Ralph Northam (D).

EDITORIAL

Two Republicans and two Democrats appear to be running for attorney general: Democrats Justin Fairfax and state Sen. Mark Herring would face off in the June 11 primary. Republicans would choose between candidates Del. Rob Bell (R) and state Sen. Mark Obenshain (R) at the state-wide convention May 18.

Town of Vienna voters will elect three members of its town council on May 7.

Virginia has a General Election every year on the Tuesday following the first Monday in November; that's Nov. 5, this year. Federal offices are elected in even-numbered years. State and local offices are elected in odd-numbered years. If primaries are called by the political parties, they are held on the second Tuesday in June; that's June 11, this year.

This is a formula for election fatigue, alter-

nating record voter turnout with tepid voter turnout. Realigning Virginia's election calendar so that the critical statewide races took place in presidential election years would increase voter participation, although this change is not simple and not likely.

The Virginia General Assembly voted this year to impose much more stringent voter identification requirements starting in July 2014, an unnecessary step that suppresses the votes of poor, elderly and minority voters. Instead, they should fund an annual mailing to all registered voters that summarizes what and who will be on the ballot. This would increase the integrity of elections, giving all voters a chance to arrive at the polls informed and engaged.

Here are some good sources for information on upcoming elections:

Virginia State Board of Elections, www.sbe.virginia.gov/.

Virginia Public Access Project, www.vpap.org/candidates?display=state.

Fairfax County Board of Elections, www.fairfaxcounty.gov/elections/ecalendar.htm.

Alexandria Board of Elections, www.alexandriava.gov/Elections.

Arlington Board of Elections, www.arlingtonva.us/Departments/VoterRegistration/VoterRegistrationMain.aspx.

— MARY KIMM,

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COMMENTARY

Paving the Way

BY KENNETH R. "KEN" PLUM
STATE DELEGATE (D-36)

The Reconvened Session of the General Assembly that met last week concluded work for this year on the most significant funding program for transportation infrastructure approved by the legislature since the historic special session in 1986. The bill that had previously passed the legislature in the 2013 Regular Session was sent to the governor for his approval and signature. He proposed a series of amendments that were voted on last Wednesday, April 3, and approved by the House and the Senate. The governor will now sign the bill into law.

There is no getting around the fact that the new law will cost the motoring public some extra dollars. One advantage of the bill is that it raises most of the money from those who use the roads. The more vehicles you buy, the more gas you use, or the more cars you title the more you will pay for the construction and upkeep of the roads. This very point allowed some legislators who were opposed to raising taxes to vote for the bill, for they considered the new revenues to be coming from "user fees." By whatever name is necessary to develop public understanding, the new law establishes a framework for revenue growth that will help keep up with the cost of inflation and growth. The cents per gallon gasoline tax for example will be replaced with a sales tax on the wholesale price of gasoline. It is doubtful that there will be a noticeable change in gasoline prices at the pump considering the fluctuations in gas prices that already occur based on market factors.

The purchase of new cars has always had a reduced sales tax rate. The current 3.5 percent will become 4 percent on July 1, 2013, and will increase slightly each year until it reaches 4.15 percent on July 1, 2016, still below the sales tax on all other purchases. For the special needs of Northern Virginia there will also be a "congestion relief fee" of \$0.15 per \$100 value of the net sales price of a home. A transit occupancy tax on hotel rooms at the rate of 2 percent is also established for Northern Virginia. While the new law strengthens the statewide maintenance and construction fund, it recognizes the unique needs of the suburbs of Northern Virginia and Hampton Roads and provides that the special funds that are raised in those regions stays there for use in the region. No more sending money to Richmond with a percentage of it not making its way back. Language in the law also requires that priority be given to projects that offer relief from congestion.

There is a strong mass transit component to the law that provides funding for inter-city rail and \$300 million off the top to help with the funding of the Silver Line. The additional funds should help keep tolls to a more reasonable level on the Dulles Toll Road.

The governor offered an amendment at my request and the urging of others that the alternative fuel fee be eliminated or reduced. He chose to reduce it from \$100 to \$64. The House leadership has committed to a study of the fee during this year to consider if it should be re-assessed and if so, the amount, and the special vehicles to which it should apply. I expect major revisions on this issue in the 2014 session. The job is not totally complete in other areas as well. Clearly, though, we have paved the way for Virginians and the future.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Alarmed by School Names

To the Editor:

Am I the only one alarmed by the presence of high schools named after confederate leaders? After our nation's long and divisive war, symbols of bigotry abound; this, however, is only amplified as a problem when the symbol is a high school.

To be clear, the "War of Northern Aggression" (as it is ridiculously called in some areas), and Virginia's part in it, are things to be ashamed of, not to glorify. Forcibly legitimizing treasonous villains, and allowing our children to be the recipient of our preposterous revisionism is wrong.

For example: The following high schools should be changing their names immediately:

Robert E Lee High School

JEB Stuart High School

Fairfax High School (Rebels)

Stonewall Jackson High School

To erroneously fight your country is wrong. To erroneously fight your country for your right to enslave is worse. To glorify those who have erroneously fought their country for their right to enslave is the worst thing we could be doing.

Kiran Hampton
Great Falls

Fairfax
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NEWS

Police Receive Alarming Number of Tax Fraud Reports

As annual tax returns are being calculated and submitted in a last-minute furor across the country, Fairfax County Police have received an alarming report of 75 to 100 cases of tax identification fraud in recent weeks. Detectives are warning residents of the scam and urge them to take precautions to prevent being victimized.

In this recent series of crimes, taxpayers don't discover they've been victimized until after they file their tax returns and are told that the IRS has already received and documented their returns. Confused and perplexed, victims are told to contact the Financial Crimes Investigative unit to report the matter and that their security numbers have been stolen or compromised. Victims must handle the arduous process of clearing up the financial mess created by these swindlers.

Detectives stress that while there is little that can be done locally to track suspects in these cases, education and prevention are key factors that can help prevent identity

theft. They issue the following precautions:

- ❖ Limit the occasions you share your social security number with others.
 - ❖ Do not voluntarily give your social security to others.
 - ❖ Closely monitor your credit reports to catch potential fraud early.
 - ❖ As odd as it sounds, closely monitor your children's credit reports as well; thieves are known to steal children's social security numbers as well.
 - ❖ Virginia residents can have a customer identifier on their driver's license in lieu of their social security number.
 - ❖ Shred all personal information at home prior to trash disposal.
 - ❖ Opt out of pre-approved credit applications by calling 888-567-8688.
- For more information on financial crimes, check <http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/police/financialcrimes/>. To schedule a group presentation with a financial crimes expert, contact the Public Information Office at 703-246-3271.

lost (adj): 1. unable to find the way. 2. not appreciated or understood. 3. no longer owned or known

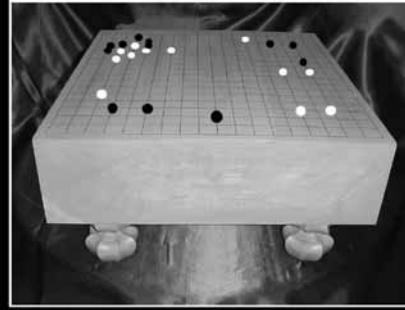
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I-66 and Route 28 Improvements Fairfax County

Public Information Meeting

Monday, April 29, 2013, 6 – 8 p.m.

Stone Middle School Cafeteria

5500 Sully Park Drive, Chantilly, VA 20120

Learn about the results of a preliminary study of alternatives to improve the interchange at I-66 and Route 28 in Fairfax County.

Stop by between 6 p.m. and 8 p.m. to view displays and learn more about the project. VDOT staff will be available to answer your questions.

Review project information at www.virginiadot.org, at the information meeting, or during business hours at VDOT's Northern Virginia District Office at 4975 Alliance Drive in Fairfax. Please call ahead at 703-259-3223, 800-367-7623 or TTY/TDD 711 to ensure appropriate personnel are available to answer your questions.

Give your written comments at the meeting, or submit them by May 9, 2013 to Mr. Leonard Siegel, P.E., Virginia Department of Transportation, 4975 Alliance Drive, Fairfax, VA 22030, or email meeting_comments@VDOT.virginia.gov. Please reference "I-66 and Route 28 Improvements" in the subject line.

VDOT 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, contact the project manager at the above phone numbers.

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Historic Garden Week is scheduled for April 20-27 and will include sites in Alexandria and Fairfax County.

Virginia Historic Garden Week Celebrates 80th Anniversary

Celebration raises money to restore and preserve Virginia's historic landmarks.

By MARILYN CAMPBELL
THE CONNECTION

Virginia will be in bloom later this month when more than 250 of the state's picturesque gardens, homes and historic landmarks open to the public for Historic Garden Week. The statewide event, which is in its 80th year and runs April 20-27, includes sites in the City of Alexandria and Fairfax County.

"Virginia is especially beautiful during Historic Garden Week," said Lynn McCashin, executive director of the Garden Club of Virginia, which sponsors the statewide house and garden tour. "Every year is different, and this one is extra special because of the anniversary."

Karen Cauthen Miller, Historic Garden Week state director, says the event will feature approximately 32 separate tours throughout the Commonwealth of Virginia. The event raises money to restore and preserve Virginia's historic landmarks.

"Historic Garden Week has transformed the landscape of Virginia over its 80-year history. It's really an incredible accomplishment," said Miller. "One-hundred percent of proceeds go to the restoration and preservation of the state's most im-

portant public properties. The list is a who's who of any place your kids would visit on a school fieldtrip. We restored the Bowling Green at Mount Vernon with funding from the Historic Garden Week, for example."

Miller added that Historic Garden Week is the largest ongoing volunteer effort in Virginia and is put on by 3,400 volunteers who work year-round.

"The restorations are of such a scale that they require the combined efforts of all 47 clubs that make up the Garden Club of Virginia. In Northern Virginia alone, the projects that have benefited from Historic Garden Week include Mount Vernon and Green Springs, the state's only Beatrix Farrand garden," said Anne Geddy Cross, chairwoman of Historic Garden Week.

There are 78 special events throughout the commonwealth of Virginia planned during the weeklong celebration. In Alexandria, for example, those who purchase tickets to the Old Town Alexandria tour will also have admission fees to George Washington's Mount Vernon Estate and Gardens waived on April 20.

Ticket prices for Historic Garden Week vary. For a tour schedule and ticket information, visit www.vagardenweek.org.



Historic Garden Week is scheduled for April 20-27 and will include sites in Alexandria and Fairfax County.



The front facade to the house Scot Minesinger purchased in the late 1980s was undistinguished, even bland. The engineer found the cross-gabled roof line particularly misconceived, but hoped to eventually introduce a more cohesive architecture.



PHOTOS COURTESY OF HADLEY PHOTOGRAPHY

The Colonial-style elaboration developed by Sun Design Remodeling explores resonant 18th century detailing, starting with the cultured stone cladding on the lower level and chimneys. Decorative entablature above windows, crown molding and period railing spindles build a style-appropriate profile, yet the existing windows and shutters were re-used.

A Family Home Evolves

Sun Design Remodeling helps a local engineer find the indoor/outdoor solution he dreamed of for 25 years.

By JOHN BYRD

Sometimes a good opportunity isn't obvious at first. To see what's possible, one must look past surfaces. The facade of a 3,400 square foot frame house at the end of a Fairfax Station cul-de-sac, for instance. The year is 1987. Engineer Scot Minesinger, then in his late 20s, is thinking about the future.

At a glance, there are many things about the frame house Minesinger doesn't like, starting with a faux cross-gabled roof line that seems to have no reference in any architectural style.

The "spindly" front porch and the white vinyl siding are also detractors, as is the facade that's not so much understated as "bland."

Around back, Minesinger finds nearly 60 linear feet of rear elevation varied only by smallish, builder-grade windows — a peculiar glazing design, given the lovely woodland setting all around.

Still, the house had been on the market for two years, and Minesinger is looking for something to build his dreams on — a place where a future family might thrive in the fullness of time.

Considered from this perspective: a house on two rolling acres has a lot to offer, the only real problem being to figure out how that emergent "family home" — re-designed to taste — will actually look.

"I wasn't in a hurry," Minesinger said, explaining the 25-year gap between the dream and its fulfillment. "I wanted a more sustainable home energy system first. And while I saw the potentials in the rear of the house, I was looking for the combination of suitable influences that would move the project forward."

So the big picture unfolds incrementally. In 1996, after occupying the house for six years, Minesinger designed a geothermal-based energy system, which he installed in the front yard. "My winter utility bills dropped to about half," he said. "It was a step towards independence that makes other changes possible."

That said, it may be unsurprising to learn that one so ardently methodical

eventually discovered how he wanted his house to look by hiring a design build firm to help him think it through.

"My wife, Carolyn, had been clipping stories from magazines for years," Minesinger said. "We wanted the house to be appropriate to this terrific setting, but we needed people with real experi-

More

Sun Design Remodeling sponsors tours of recently remodeled homes as well as workshops on home remodeling topics. Headquartered in Burke, the firm recently opened a second office in McLean. Call 703-425-5588 or visit www.SunDesignInc.com.

ence to help us shape our ideas."

ENTER SUN DESIGN REMODELING of Burke, a residential design/build firm recognized for innovative whole-house makeovers.

"It was critically important to me to find a process through which Carolyn and I could explore our thoughts together. In this regard, the 3-D space modeling approach offered by Sun Design made everything much easier," Minesinger said.

The first breakthrough: recognizing that the existing, vaguely "eclectic" front facade needed to firmly define itself — as classic colonial with distinctive early American accents.

"The architectural identity became fairly obvious once we sat down with Sun Design," Minesinger said. "Carolyn's interest in using stone nudged us in a style direction that really fits the setting. In fact, you can still see this kind of stone work in historical homes nearby — especially as you head west into hill country."

Thus, the spindly porch supports have been replaced by sturdier columns with a more stately profile. Porch railings are now period-specific. Decorative entablature crown each window.

At ground level, cultured stone cladding graces the exposed lower level, the new porch support piers and the chimneys. A second chimney has been added to the front facade, an architectural salute to Virginia's classic Georgians. Like-

wise, new siding — in tan and khaki with bright white trim — accentuates the new facade's textured warmth.

Meanwhile, on the rear elevation, Sun Design developed a distinctive indoor/outdoor plan purposed to multi-generational requirements.

And that works. The three children are now teens. Clever "zoning" solutions confer both the privacy and easy interaction needed to satisfy the family's varied, and foreseeable, needs.

"The patio room evolved logically," Minesinger said. "It's directly linked to the dining room; a great spot to take in the view ... without getting your feet wet."

Still, the room is, by definition, "transitional" to the outdoor experience. Though it's over 400 square feet, there was no corresponding modification to the home's HVAC system. Instead, the design calls for two-ply insulated glass on three-sides, and features a floor-to-ceiling stone fireplace.

"The enclosure stays really comfortable without any additional heating or cooling support," Minesinger said, referring to the spaciously open addition as "a second family room."

Overhead, a private balcony linked to the master bedroom suite gives the adult Minesingers a quiet treetop perch from which to take it all in.

Exiting the patio room through French doors, the open-air plan unfolds as a series of terraced activity zones: a 12-by-16-foot deck; a cozy covered porch cooled by a pair of overhead rotating fans.

Both structures, in turn, segue along their respective low-rise staircases to a flagstone patio where the family generally gathers to enjoy grilling and warm weather dining.

Rounding out the picture: a 1196-square-foot two-level outbuilding created to shelter Minesinger's collection of vintage 1970s Cadillacs.

As with every other aspect of the project, the design called for carefully scaling-back the new structure's mass, concentrating on architecturally sympathetic rooflines and elevations.

It all marries beautifully. Opportunity realized.

OPEN HOUSES

SATURDAY/SUNDAY, APRIL 13 & 14

When you visit one of these Open Houses, tell the Realtor you saw it in this Connection Newspaper. For more real estate listings and open houses, visit www.ConnectionNewspapers.com and click on the "This Week in Real Estate" link. Call Specific Agents to Confirm Dates & Times

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6012 Deep Lake Way \$753,995 Sat 12-6 Clark Massie Tetra 703-931-6245
6356 Torrence St \$689,900 Sat 1-4 Laura Grzejka RE/MAX 703-754-4341
7303 Mizzen Pl \$575,000 Sun 1-4 Rich Langguth Century 21 703-609-3079
5828 Canvasback Rd \$409,000 Sat 12-4 Andres Piedra Jobin 703-913-3017
6427 Fenestra Ct \$285,000 Sun 2-4 Heidi Ellenberger-Jones Keller Williams 703-915-6038

Centreville

14177 Royal Oak Ln \$299,000 Sun 1-4 Janice Farr Samson Props 703-618-8358

Chantilly

42344 Astors Beachwood \$800,000 Sun 1-4 Chris Pezzana Weichert 703-447-1662
13425 Melville Ln \$574,900 Sun 1-4 Barbara Blumer Coldwell Banker 703-405-5993

Clifton

12130 Sangsters Ct \$1,425,000 Sun 12-3 Leslie Thurman Long & Foster 703-895-6000
13100 Twin Lakes Dr \$1,272,500 Sun 1-4 Marsha & Catie Long & Foster 703-618-4397
6817 Compton Heights Cir \$619,900 Sun 2-4 Pat Fales RE/MAX 703-503-4365
6417 Springhouse Cir \$599,500 Sun 1-4 Robin Jenks Vanderlip Keller Williams 703-969-4966

Fairfax

3783 Penderwood Dr \$959,000 Sun 1-4 Bill Hoffman Keller Williams 703-309-2205

Fairfax Station

8309 Crestridge Rd \$1,495,000 Sun 2-4 Pat Fales RE/MAX 703-503-4365
6314 Youngs Branch Dr \$729,900 Sun 1-4 Diana Khoury Long & Foster 703-401-7549
6205 Simpson Patent Ct \$710,000 Sun 1-4 Christine Shevock RE/MAX 703-475-3986

Falls Church

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3324 Stoneybrae Dr \$699,500 Sat/Sun 1-4 Dana LaFever Weichert 703-609-3479

Franconia/Kingstowne

5577 La Vista Dr \$845,000 Sun 1-4 Tracy Comstock Comstock 703-966-7268
6104 Mulberry Ct \$495,000 Sat 11-2 Mary Ruelh Coldwell Banker 703-451-2500
6304 Walkers Croft Way \$439,900 Sun 1-4 Jim Souvagas Long & Foster 703-919-9191
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9280 Cardinal Forest Ln #201 \$248,900 Sun 1-4 Michael Richter Residential Preferred 703-239-1234

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7954 Hidden Bridge Dr \$408,500 Sun 1-4 Dane Work RE/MAX 703-869-4567
7704 Durer Ct \$305,000 Sun 1-4 Jeremy Stewart Weichert 703-549-8700
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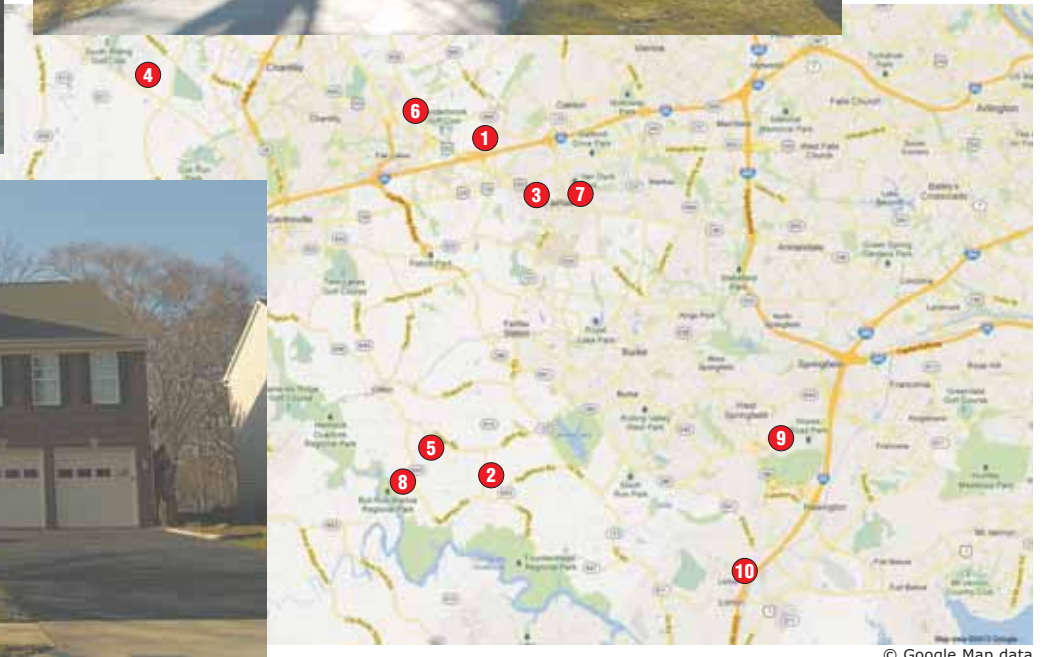
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9 7107 Ayers
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\$775,000



10 8901 Rhododendron Circle,
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1 11393 AMBER HILLS CT	4	3	1	FAIRFAX	FAIRFAX	\$1,138,096	Detached	0.90	22033	ESTATES AT FAIR OAKS	02/20/13
2 11117 DEVEREUX STATION LN	5	4	2	FAIRFAX STATION	FAIRFAX STATION	\$1,050,000	Detached	5.00	22039	DEVEREUX STATION	02/28/13
3 10667 MAIN ST	3	3	1	FAIRFAX	FAIRFAX	\$950,000	Townhouse	0.07	22030	MAIN STREET RESIDENCES	02/01/13
4 4206 KENNA CT	5	5	1	CHANTILLY	CHANTILLY	\$875,931	Detached	0.32	20151	UNKNOWN	02/15/13
5 12129 BEAVER CREEK RD	6	4	2	CLIFTON	CLIFTON	\$850,000	Detached	5.00	20124	MAPLE BRANCH	02/25/13
6 12319 OX RIDGE RD	5	4	1	FAIRFAX	FAIRFAX	\$840,000	Detached	0.22	22033	WEST GROVE ESTATES	02/28/13
7 3838 FARRCROFT GRN	4	3	1	FAIRFAX	FAIRFAX	\$785,000	Townhouse	0.07	22030	FARRCROFT	02/15/13
8 8104 FLOSSIE LN	5	3	1	CLIFTON	CLIFTON	\$775,000	Detached	5.00	20124	FLOSSIE E COMPTON	02/21/13
9 7107 AYERS MEADOW LN	4	4	1	SPRINGFIELD	SPRINGFIELD	\$775,000	Detached	0.22	22150	ACCOTINK BLUFF ESTATES	02/12/13
10 8901 RHODODENDRON CIR	4	4	1	LORTON	LORTON	\$750,000	Detached	0.24	22079	LAUREL HILL LANDBAY	02/22/13

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NOTE: Objections to the issuance of this license must be submitted to ABC no later than 30 days from the publishing date of the first of two required newspaper legal notices. Objections should be registered at www.abc.virginia.gov or 800-552-3200.

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CALENDAR

SATURDAY/APRIL 13

JLNV Strides For Success 5K/1K.

8:30 a.m., at the Fairfax Corner Shopping Center, 11950 Grand Commons Ave., Fairfax. Novice to advanced-level runners welcome; benefits the Junior League of Northern Virginia "Kids in the Kitchen" anti-obesity program and other fitness initiatives along with Michelle Obama's Let's Move initiative. \$35 for 5K; \$20 for 1K fun run/walk; \$10 for children under 10 for either event. 703-442-4163, stridesforsuccess@jlnv.org or www.jlnv.org.

American Festival Pops Orchestra:

Cinema Magic. 8 p.m., at GMU Center for the Arts, 4400 University Drive, Fairfax. Beloved movie masterpieces performed by the iconic Northern Virginia-based orchestra; tickets are half price for youth through grade 12 accompanied by an adult. \$24, \$40, \$48. 888-945-2468 or cfa.gmu.edu.

TUESDAY/APRIL 16

John Cage 101. 2 p.m., at Johnson Center Library Instruction Room 228, GMU, 4400 University Drive, Fairfax. Assistant Professor of Music Dr. Guessford discusses his research on the source of John Cage's compositional procedures and techniques between 1933 and 1951 on the anniversary of John Cage's 101st birthday. www.gmu.edu.

WEDNESDAY/APRIL 17

Witness: The George Mason Show. 6-8 p.m., at The Mason Hall Alumni Gallery in Mason Hall, GMU, 4400 University Drive, Fairfax. An opening reception featuring the work of Patrick Sargent and Erwin Thamm, who have collaborated the past three years on a "multilayered narrative of our heroes," among them being silk screen layered over woodwork portraits of Andy Warhol, J Edgar Hoover and Paul McCartney. Facebook.com/gmu.soa.

FRIDAY/APRIL 19

The Marriage of Figaro. 8 p.m., at the GMU Center for the Arts, 4400 University Drive, Fairfax. The final installment of the Virginia Opera 2013 season: Rossini's characters of "The Barber of Seville" find themselves in a day of lunacy, as Figaro fights and outwits enemies to be with his betrothed, Susanna. \$44, \$72, \$86. 888-945-2468 or cfa.gmu.edu.

SATURDAY/APRIL 20

Fitness Workshop. 1 p.m., at City of Fairfax Regional Library, 10360 N. St., Fairfax. Cohen, a personal trainer since 2005, with clients ranging in age from teens to senior citizens and who holds certifications for advanced health and fitness specialist and personal training through American Council on Exercise will discuss the aspects of a healthy lifestyle. https://www.facebook.com/GetInShapeWithDavid.

Fairfax Symphony Orchestra. 4 p.m., at Stacy C. Sherwood Community Center, 3740 Old Lee Highway, Fairfax. A preview concert for the 2013-2014 season with performances by the winners of the 2013 Feuer Competition and FSO musicians. \$10. www.fairfaxsymphony.org.

SUNDAY/APRIL 21

The Robinson Crew Team Annual Plant Sale. 10 a.m.-8 p.m. at Burke Nursery and Garden Center at 9401 Burke Road, Burke. The sale includes annuals, perennials, stones, hanging



PHOTO COURTESY OF GEORGE MASON UNIVERSITY

Vincent Oppido plays in the Northern Virginia American Festival Pops Orchestra Saturday, April 13, at 8 p.m. at GMU.

baskets, shrubs, trees and master gardener/landscaping design; flyer required. www.robinsoncrew.org or contact Kay Billings at plantsale4crew@gmail.com.

NOVA Simcha Party-planning

Expo. Noon-4 p.m., at Geshet Jewish Day School, 4800 Mattie Moore Court, Fairfax. A one-stop expo for those planning a milestone celebration—DJs, caterers, invitations, party favors, photographers, venues, decorations and the like abound. 703-323-0880 or www.jccnv.org.

Ringling Bros and Barnum and Baileys' Dragons.

1 p.m., at the Patriot Center, 4400 University Drive, Fairfax. Circus performers from the farthest reaches of the earth have assembled for DRAGONS to showcase their astounding talents. \$15. 800-745-3000 or www.ticketmaster.com.

The Marriage of Figaro.

2 p.m., at

the GMU Center for the Arts, 4400 University Drive, Fairfax. The final installment of the Virginia Opera 2013 season: Rossini's characters of "The Barber of Seville" find themselves in a day of lunacy, as Figaro fights and outwits enemies to be with his betrothed, Susanna. \$48, \$80, \$98. 888-945-2468 or cfa.gmu.edu.

Woven Green In Concert.

4 p.m. at Accotink Unitarian Universalist Church, 10215 Lakehaven Court Burke. In advance: \$10; at the door: \$12; family: \$25. 703-503-4579 or www.wovengreenmusic.com, www.accotinkuuc.org, or administrator@accotinkuuc.org.

Victims' Services Hosts 5k Walk.

4:30 p.m., at Fairfax Corner, 4100 Monument Drive, Fairfax. Join the caring professionals that support local victims of homicide, trauma, sexual and domestic violence, child

To have community events listed, send to south@connectionnewspapers.com or call 703-778-9416 with questions. Deadline for calendar listings is two weeks prior to event.

physical and sexual abuse, stalking human trafficking and suicide as they walk together. Registration required. www.fairfaxcounty.gov/survey/crimevictimsrights.htm.

TUESDAY/APRIL 23

Preservation Awareness Week

Papermaking Workshop. 5-7 p.m., at the Johnson Center Library in the Instruction Room, 4400 University Drive, Fairfax. "Why Beat Pulp? Hand Papermaking as an Intersection of Cultural Values," by Helen Frederick, professor in the School of Art and Design, is a talk and workshop on understanding the natural material and its transformation into paper; participants make their own small book. RSVP. 703-993-2491 or dhogan1@gmu.edu.

THURSDAY/APRIL 25

AFTA Women's Book Club.

6:30-8:30 p.m., at the American Turkish Friendship Association, 3949 University Drive, Fairfax. Come to discuss a series of imaginary letters written to Lady Mary Montague, wife of an English ambassador to Turkey in 1716-1718, entitled "Yes, I Would Love Another Glass of Tea," by Katharine Branning; light refreshments served. http://bit.ly/Xamija.

Free History Program. 7:30 p.m., at Burke Centre Library, 5935 Freds Oak Road, Burke. Historic re-enactor, Lynne Garvey-Hodge, portrays Mrs. Robert Walker, a suffragist from Baltimore. She will talk about the effort to secure voting rights for American women. Then, Bob Beach, architect, describes the plans for a permanent memorial to their struggles: the Turning Point Suffragist Memorial. 703-249-1520.

FRIDAY/APRIL 26

Artist Talk/Walk. 4-6 p.m., at The Mason Hall Alumni Gallery in Mason Hall, GMU, 4400 University Drive, Fairfax. An artists' talk from Patrick Sargent and Erwin Thamm, who have collaborated the past three years on a "multilayered narrative of our heroes"; among the work produced are silk screen layered over woodwork portraits of Andy Warhol, J Edgar Hoover and Paul McCartney. www.facebook.com/gmu.soa.

"The Magic Flute" By Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart. 8 p.m. at Harris Theatre, 4500 Patriot Circle, Fairfax. Follow the young Prince Tamino in his quest for truth and romantic love, as he encounters a cast of unique characters. General admission: \$20; students, seniors, groups: \$15. 888-945-2468 or visitcfa.gmu.edu.

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Owner Jaturon Srirote with daughter Janita at Sisters Thai, a new Asian restaurant in the heart of Old Town Fairfax.

PHOTO CONTRIBUTED



Tammy Disayawathana, owner of Sisters Thai, enjoys a rare moment of peace and quiet in her popular new restaurant located in the heart of Old Town Fairfax.

PHOTO BY VICTORIA ROSS/THE CONNECTION

Sisters Thai Comes to Town

New restaurant adds spice to Old Town Fairfax.

BY VICTORIA ROSS
THE CONNECTION

With its bookcase-lined walls, artfully-arranged floral pillows, bone china tea cups and fresh flowers, the newest restaurant in Old Town Fairfax seems more European bistro than Asian contemporary.

And that's the point.

"I did not want the décor to feel commercial. We want people to feel like they're in their living room. Very cozy and comfortable," said owner Tammy Disayawathana.

Disayawathana, who worked in food service and hospitality management at the Hyatt Regency, said she and her husband Jaturon Srirote always wanted to open a restaurant that reflected their aesthetic and love of Asian cuisine. Her husband came up with the name "sisters," because it symbolizes the positive familial relationship Tammy has with her sister, but also the sisterly bonds between her 7-year-old niece Madolyn Disayawathana and her 13-month-old daughter Janita Srirote.

"This was the right time and the right space. We love the 'old town' style of the space," she said.

Disayawathana worked with designer Sucha Khamsuwan, president of Studio Ideya in Fairfax, to create the bright and inviting space.

"We were thinking about the theme, almost like a little girl's house, with special touches everywhere. We like to think of this as the living room of Fairfax," she said. "The Thai theme does not have to show up in the décor for customers to know it's a Thai restaurant. We hope they will know once they taste our food."

And customers know, based on the rave reviews on foodie websites such as Yelp, Grubstreet and Epicurious. Open for just eight weeks, Sisters Thai already has a loyal customer base.

"I could sit here all afternoon, because the space is so cozy and inviting," said Catherine Read, a city resident and frequent customer. "I've brought several people here for lunch and dinner, and everyone is impressed with the genuine hospitality and fantastic Thai food."



Madolyn Disayawathana, 7, in Sisters Thai, a popular new restaurant located in the heart of Old Town Fairfax. Her heirloom silhouette graces the unique menus in the restaurant.

PHOTO CONTRIBUTED

The menu offers a variety of traditional Thai soups, entrees and curry dishes, such as roasted duck curry, spicy eggplant and Pad See Ew. Sisters Thai also has a colorful dessert display case, in the style of a French patisserie, with colorful cupcakes, tarts, fruit-flavored mousse and cheesecakes.

Read said one of her favorite items is not on the menu. It is the menu. The cover of every handmade menu has an heirloom silhouette of Madolyn created when she was 3 years old. "When you see their one-of-a-kind-menu, it shows the care and thought behind the entire restaurant. It's the perfect start to a great food experience," Read said.

"We want everything here to be creative and inviting. If I'm happy, I have energy and I can send that energy to everyone who comes here. I'm having a good time," Disayawathana said.



Melissa Dunlap as Karen, Michael Donahue as Tom and David Whitehead as Gabe in rehearsal for the Providence Players production of "Dinner With Friends."

PHOTO BY CHIP CERTZO

Grown-up Play About Grown-up Things

Providence Players of Fairfax present "Dinner with Friends."

BY DAVID SIEGEL
THE CONNECTION

Sitting around a table at a recent rehearsal, Providence Players of Fairfax Director Tina Thronson and some of her cast discussed the troupe's funny yet bittersweet Pulitzer Award-winning next play, "Dinner with Friends," by Donald Margulies.

"Our next show rings so true to life. It is a grown-up play about grown-up things; focusing on couples and their marriages but in some very unlikely, unexpected ways," said Thronson.

"Dinner with Friends" focuses on two couples over a period of time, looking at their early courtships and their on-going marriages, their love and their mistakes. All peppered with flashbacks of time and place, along with a generous helping of food and food references to keep the production full of energy and the audience leaning forward trying to anticipate what might happen next.

The production has four characters; two couples who have been dear friends for years. The story focuses on what happens after one couple lets it be known that a breakup of their marriage is imminent. But this is no straight-forward melodrama with clear sympathies toward one particular character; it is more complex than that, suggested Thronson.

Why is food a focus? Accord-

ing to cast member David Whitehead, "food is used to help the characters take a break from confronting their relationships and themselves." Foodie references also spice-up the tart dialogue, noted Whitehead.

The two couples are Gabe (Whitehead) and Karen (Dunlop), a seemingly happily married middle-aged pair. They are the long-time friends of Tom (Michael Donahue) and Beth (Jayne L. Victor). But, the unexpected news of the looming divorce of Beth and Tom sets the production on its way.

The use of scene flashbacks will provide the audience with the opportunity to see both couples over time. According to Dunlop, "the audience will see how things and viewpoints change. Who is likeable, who to be trusted all change as the play progresses. It is like a mystery. Don't be so sure of your first impressions of anyone or even the ending you initially expect."

Whitehead indicated that the show's humor includes some "biting sarcasm that will ring true." Even lines about wine "take on unexpected meanings. Who would expect that 'astringent,' used in describing a wine's taste, would lead to a much deeper conversation about marriage."

The Providence Players expects that "Dinner with Friends" will spark many conversations as the audience heads home. You are invited to join the discussion.

Where and When

"Dinner with Friends," performed by Providence Players of Fairfax, James Lee Community Center Theater, 2855 Annandale Road, Falls Church. Performances through April 20, Thursday, Friday and Saturday at 7:30 p.m., Sunday Matinee at 2 p.m. April 14. Tickets: \$15-\$18. Call 703-425-6782 or visit www.providenceplayers.org. Note: "Dinner with Friends" is not for young audiences. It contains mature themes and language.

Robinson Students Commit to 26 Acts of Kindness

The number 26 is in honor of the 20 students and six staffers killed during the Sandy Hook Elementary School shooting.

BY ANDREA WORKER
THE CONNECTION

Even if only 10 percent of Robinson Secondary School's almost four thousand students accept the Student Government Association (SGA)'s 26 Acts of Kindness Challenge during the month of April, that would still mean 10,400 random acts of kindness and courtesy added to the world. Not a bad achievement.

"Oh, no, we're going for them all!" declared the eight students who form the 26 Acts of Kindness SGA Committee. They have already run out of the custom-made t-shirts that read "26 Acts of Kindness" on the front and contain 26 lines on the back for each wearer to fill in daily between the 1st and the 26th of April with their participatory kindness (not to worry, more on the way!)

The number 26 is in honor of the 20 students and six staffers who were killed during the tragic Sandy Hook Elementary School shooting on Dec. 14 last year in Newtown, Conn. One of those lost lives belonged to Lauren Rousseau, cousin of Robinson Student Services Counselor Kirsten Wiley. Sophomore committee member RJ Holtzman said, "That connection just made us even more determined to do this right. Ms. Wiley means a lot to all of us. She's really a beloved counselor to so many of the kids here. Maybe this can make her feel just a little better, and we've already done one act of kindness then."

THE IDEA of performing 26 Acts of Kindness to honor the Sandy Hook victims was proposed in an article and via Twitter by NBC news correspondent Ann Curry and quickly went viral. The kids at Robinson are taking it to a new level and making sure that neither the victims, nor the notion of remembering them by spreading kindness, gets lost in the noise of the next news cycle.

To get things started, the SGA crew produced a video that was made available to the entire student body and later uploaded to YouTube. Twenty-six students and members of the school's staff, captured in poignant black and white, were filmed throughout the campus, each holding the picture of one of the Sandy Hook victims. In the video, each picture is slowly turned to reveal an Act of Kindness that had been performed by the participant in memory of the lost person whose image they carry.

"We worked on that video for months," said Jessie Bond, a senior from Fairfax Station. "Not just because it was technically difficult, but because we wanted to respect the victims and we wanted to make something that would show people how important kindness is."

"You don't know what even the smallest act of kindness might mean to someone," added Shannon Lopynski, a senior and resi-

dent of Clifton.

Next on the agenda was a Pledge Banner that accompanied talks about the project. The banner now takes up the back of the SGA's classroom, filled with signatures and even a painted handprint or two.

The T-shirts serve several purposes. "One of the goals of the SGA," said Autumn Guckert, "is to promote unity among the students at Robinson. On the last day of our 26 Acts of Kindness challenge, we plan to get everybody together for a giant panoramic photo, all wearing their filled-in kindness t-shirts. What a way to show how all of us at Robinson pulled together to make a difference. Every time someone wears one of those shirts, the message gets broadcast again, maybe inspiring someone else to do something on their own."

The students plan to send the photo along with a story about their efforts and with words of encouragement to Sandy Hook Elementary. "And, of course," said Will Rowson, a sophomore from Fairfax sounding very much like the next generation's business leader, "you know that things that get written and recorded are the things that get done."

Guckert also knows how to work the press and the social media avenues to get the message out. The junior from Clifton contacted several media sources, including the Connection Newspapers and the local NBC affiliate. "It's not about recognition for us," said Guckert. "It's a way to take this effort to a larger audience, even beyond the walls of Robinson." The group was amazed that their 26 Acts of Kindness Twitter account "exploded on April 1st," as Shannon Lopynski described it. "We started the day with 20 followers. Before the end of the day we were over 200." At last check, there were 600-plus following the postings that good deed-doers were reporting. A browse through that Twitter log shows students and staff and friends and relatives excitedly adding their efforts to the quickly expanding list. "I made dinner for my family last night," read one tweet. "I am writing Thank You notes to teachers." "I made a donation to Autism Speaks." "I just helped our janitor clean up a mess—and thanked her for what she does!" "I bought a Starbucks for the stranger in line behind me!" Scrolling down, good deeds, big and small, keep adding up.

"Sixty-two students will be cutting their hair to donate to Pantene's Beautiful Lengths program that collects human hair to produce wigs for cancer patients," said Alison Neun. Neun is a special education teacher at Robinson and the teacher co-sponsor of the SGA along with Daniel Clements, who teaches science. Neun and Clements both commented on how proud they were to be associated with the SGA. "All of them," said Clements. "They all participate," commented Neun. "They all support each other and the individual projects



Robinson students signing the Pledge Banner while participating in the 26 Acts of Kindness campaign.

and campaigns they are working on. And they support the entire school by leadership and showing up for events, games, performances, everything across all stereotypical boundaries."

ROBINSON'S 26 ACTS OF KINDNESS campaign will come to its official close on April 26th, but if the members of the Stu-

dent Government Association and the troops they have rallied throughout the school have anything to say about it, that date will not mark the end of the story—just the first chapter of a long series. Check out their YouTube video (search for 26 Acts of Kindness Robinson) and watch the good deeds multiply on their Twitter space at twitter.com/26Acts_Kindness.

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SPORTS



PHOTOS BY CRAIG STERBUTZEL/THE CONNECTION

Lake Braddock shortstop Jack Owens had a pair of doubles against West Springfield on April 5.

Lake Braddock senior Thomas Rogers has been cleared to pitch on a limited basis.

Lake Braddock Baseball Getting Healthy

Bruins blast West Springfield as team bounces back from injuries.

BY JON ROETMAN
THE CONNECTION

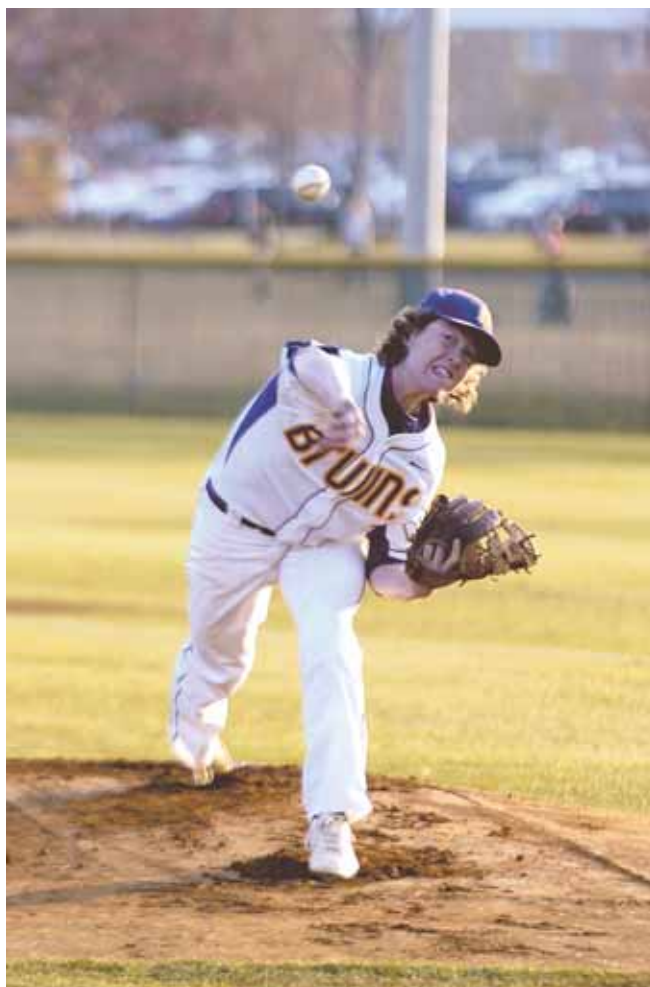
The Lake Braddock baseball team has labored through a slew of injuries early in the season, with several key athletes either missing time or limited in their contributions.

The Bruins lost two of their first five games after entering the season ranked No. 12 nationally by MaxPreps.com. Last season, when Lake Braddock won the program's first state championship, the Bruins started 9-0 and did not suffer their second loss until game No. 19.

Now, nearly one month into the season, Lake Braddock is starting to get some players healthy. Left-handed pitcher Thomas Rogers, who threw a four-hit shutout in last year's state championship game, is cleared to pitch on a limited basis after having Tommy John surgery on Aug. 27. Sophomore pitcher Matt Supko returned from a back injury with hopes of becoming a key contributor on the mound.

As others progress, Lake Braddock figures to improve. But even though the Bruins aren't at full strength, they were plenty good enough on April 5 to avenge last season's loss to rival West Springfield in the Northern Region championship game.

LAKE BRADDOCK, ranked No. 2 in the latest Northern Region coaches poll, defeated West Springfield 11-1 in five innings at Lake Braddock Secondary School. After beating the Spartans twice during the 2012 regular season and again in the Patriot District championship game, the Bru-



Lake Braddock junior Joe Darcy earned the win against West Springfield on April 5, allowing one unearned run in four innings.

ins lost to West Springfield in the region final before running the table at states. On Friday, junior pitcher Joe Darcy limited the Spartans to one unearned run in four in-

nings while earning the victory. The right-hander allowed two hits while walking one and striking out three.

"He did good," Lake Braddock head coach Jody Rutherford said. "He's one of the guys that's getting healthy. I really wasn't expecting him to go four. He kept his pitch count down which ... got him deeper into the game."

"I wouldn't say [we're] hitting our stride. We've still got our best ball in front of us."

— Lake Braddock baseball coach Jody Rutherford

At the plate, junior shortstop Jack Owens had a pair of doubles and an RBI. Senior third baseman Alex Lewis had a hit and three RBIs. Rogers finished with a double and an RBI, Supko had a two-run single and Darcy had an RBI single.

"It's been tough, but I think it's made us a better team," Owens said about the Bruins dealing with injuries. "The chemistry in the dugout, we've all gotten strong. Kids who normally wouldn't play [when others are] healthy ... have played and they got a taste for what it's like ..."

While things are looking up for Lake Braddock, Rutherford said the team has room for improvement, including finding

someone other than senior Nick McIntyre to step up from a pitching standpoint.

"I wouldn't say [we're] hitting our stride," Rutherford said. "We've still got our best ball in front of us. I thought we played a pretty good game against South County [on April 3]. I was pleased that we came out and performed good today."

West Springfield, on the other hand, is struggling. The Spartans got the leadoff man on base in the first inning when shortstop Taylor Boyd led off with a single, but they came up empty. In the bottom half of the inning, a two-out Spartan error opened the door for three Lake Braddock runs.

Starting pitcher Blake Bird allowed eight runs — three earned — and six hits over four innings. The left-hander hit four batters and struck out two.

"We've got a lot of growing up to do," West Springfield head coach Jason Olms said. "We're inexperienced, we're young, but those are just excuses. We've got to get better. We're nowhere near we need to be right now. ..."

"I think Blake did a pretty good job. We're going to need him to go longer, but I think he did a pretty good job — we didn't help him out at all. He kept guys off balance and threw strikes for the most part, just ended up getting a little tired in the fourth."

WEST SPRINGFIELD lost to South County 5-1 on Tuesday, dropping its record to 3-7 overall and 0-4 in the Patriot District. The Spartans have dropped five straight and were outscored 29-3 by T.C. Williams, Lake Braddock and South County.

West Springfield will host Lee at 6:30 p.m. on Friday, April 12.

Lake Braddock defeated West Potomac 8-2 on Tuesday to improve to 8-2 overall and 4-0 in the district. The Bruins have won five in a row and will host Woodson at 6:30 p.m. on Friday, April 12.

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