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## An Elected Assessor?

– BOS Poised To Give New Powers To The Commissioner of Revenue –

– By Mary M. Bathory Vidaver

Should political appointees have any job protections? The Loudoun County Board of Supervisors (BOS) will vote on two such items at its Dec. 5 business meeting: An amendment to the county's ordinances replacing a non-elected, professionally certified real estate appraiser known as the county assessor with the elected commissioner of revenue and a revision of employment policies for board aides. Based on public comments and off-the-record conversations, the board appears poised to send the public a very contradictory answer to this question.

A story published by The Blue Ridge Leader last month pointed out that a proposal to shift the real property assessment function to the commissioner of revenue's office would transform the assessors from county employees into at-will political appointees. Under a Memorandum of Understanding

between Loudoun County and the commissioner of revenue, they would lose protection from county grievance policies. According to former and current employees of the county, such a change might leave assessors without protection from political pressure to reduce property assessments. This could subject them to similar pressures faced by board aides, the subject of an on-going investigation.

Board Chairman Scott York (R-At-Large) touched on this issue at the public hearing, commenting that a question had "come forward with respect to the employment status of these individuals ... transferring from the current assessor's office [to] the commissioner's office and that they are up for renewal every four years. It is my understanding that we would have about 35 employees affected in that but currently the county has

*Continued on page 19*

## Delgaudio Investigation

### Handed Off To Special Prosecutor

During a hastily called town hall meeting on Nov. 20, Board of Supervisors Chairman Scott York took personal responsibility for withholding the package of documents he had received from former Eugene Delgaudio staff aide Donna Mateer in March. Describing himself as "a rehabilitated carpenter" who had entered politics, York said that he "owed the citizens an apology" for failing to turn over the package to Arlington County Commonwealth's Attorney Theo Stamos, who is now heading an investigation into Mateer's allegations of improper fundraising for Delgaudio's political campaigns. Still, York maintained that Stamos bears responsibility as well.

"My simple mind simply thought that somebody making probably ... over a hundred thousand dollar salary would have gotten the complaint and picked up the phone and called Donna ... But that simply, clearly

didn't happen," York told the crowd of about sixty people who had assembled to ask him questions about the topic of their choice. The majority of speakers expressed concern about York's leadership in his handling of the Delgaudio affair. Allegations about the supervisor came to light in a *Washington Post* article published in late Sept.

In response to sometimes heated questioning, York disclosed that he initially didn't see anything of importance when he reviewed the documents, but upon later review he noticed "something I just didn't see before," an item that led him to turn over the documents to county attorney Jack Roberts. While declining to elaborate further, York said that the document that caught his attention had to do with campaign finance misconduct.

Another account of how the documents

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## Woodgrove High School Shines On It's Academic



Left to right: Hillary Howard, It's Academic host, Woodgrove team members Carolyn Saunders, Christopher Miller, and Julia Heiser.

and junior Julia Heiser.

This was Woodgrove's second consecutive appearance on It's Academic, having won their first round competition during the 51st season.

Woodgrove bested the other teams (Stonewall Jackson High School from Manassas and the School Without Walls from Washington, DC), winning by a 200 point margin. Woodgrove will tape the next round playoff game in spring 2013.

Christopher Miller is a second generation It's Academic team member.

His mother, Gwen Poore Miller, was on Loudoun Valley High School's first It's Academic team in the 1970s. Woodgrove's Academic Team is coached by teachers Louise Spicer, Robert Kane, and John Lanham.



Merry Christmas!  
Happy Holidays!



Wild & Wonderful Wood Ducks

Photo courtesy of Ducks Unlimited

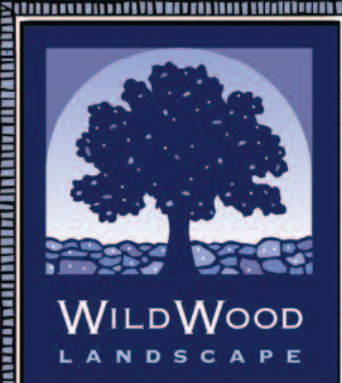
Wild Loudoun, page 8



## Purcellville December First Friday To Bring Special Holiday Offers

Twinkling lights, trolley rides through town, and hardworking merchants promise to make Dec. 7 another busy First Friday in Purcellville. "Merchants want to showcase their business by staying open late one night a month. Busy families need somewhere local and free to enjoy family time," said Above Ground Winery owner, Mary Beth Barbagallo. "We're hoping that these last few months have made residents aware of

the gems this town has to offer. The real shine is in the hard-working Old Town merchants."

Participating businesses will feature hors d'ouerves, wine, art or music, and some will offer more than one treat. The fun begins at 6 p.m. and continues until 9 p.m. Merchant discounts and offers will be posted on the First Friday Facebook page.

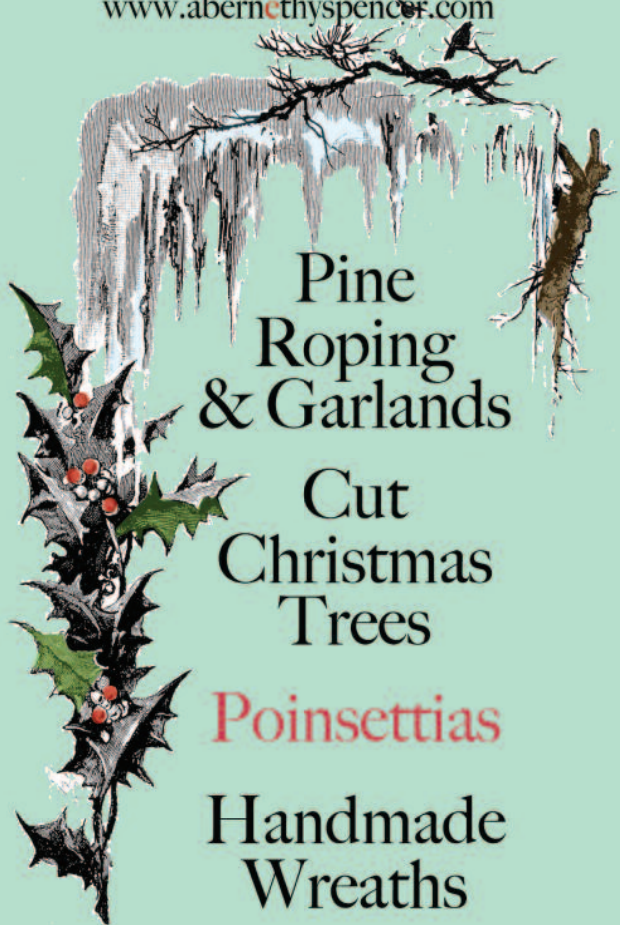


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## Ask Dr. Mike

*Dr. Mike, my husband feels that we should not lie to our 3-year-old child about Santa Claus. He is concerned that our child will resent us for it later and that it will compromise her trust in us as parents. He says he "wants to prepare her for life" as soon as possible. I, however, can't stand the idea of raising our child in a Santa free environment. He and I grew up with childhoods that included Santa at Christmas, so his over the top pragmatism just doesn't make any sense to me. I also have such fond memories of Christmas and want the same for our children. Thoughts?*

— S in Loudoun County

S, I do not think your husband is seeing the forest for the trees, as the old saying goes. I suppose Santa is "a lie," and for that matter, so is the Easter Bunny, fairies, and the Tooth Fairy, if you choose to think in such a literal way. But Santa, and these other characters and what they represent, are fantasies that actually help children develop creativity, language and cognitive skills. Children learn in part through imagination, pretend and fantasies via characters and stories – that's why Aesop's Fables are timeless and Pixar and Disney are so popular with children. There is a message in Santa for our children – the Christmas Spirit, good will, being rewarded for good behavior, etc. Santa's origins as St. Nicholas and Father Christmas harken even more meaningful messages of charity and care to those in need. I would start by talking to your husband about his Christmas experiences as a child. Perhaps this will help you begin to understand why is it so important for your him to exercise logic and reason over emotion "to prepare [his daughter] for life" at age 3? I would also ask your husband to think about the message and tradition of Santa in your families and the goodness in that message and tradition for his own children. I would also validate your husband's position that lying to kids is not good practice but that Santa,

and what he represents, can also be good for young children. By discussing your husband's childhood experience and thoughts on the topic, as well as your own, I am hopeful that the two of you can come to some sort of compromise or resolution that is right for you and your family.



*Dr. Mike, my entire family from out of state will be joining us for Christmas this year, which I am mostly happy about. My sister is super liberal as a parent though. For example, she let's her 19 year old daughter drink a glass of wine at festivities, and she let's her daughter's boyfriend spend the night at their house. I just learned from my sister that her daughter's boyfriend will be staying with us for the holidays as well and let's just say that I am not pleased. I have two pre-teen boys in the house and DO NOT want them exposed to their cousin drinking or to her possibly having sexual relations in our home. I want to say no to the boyfriend altogether but know that it will create drama in my larger family if I do. I also don't want my niece to despise me for years for ruining her holidays in college. Any ideas? — Y in Loudoun County*

Y, I do not see why your situation needs to be dramatic or why it has to have an all-or-nothing outcome. I would reach out to your sister to tell her of your concerns, all of which seem reasonable to me -- you do not want your under age niece drinking alcohol or sharing a room with her boyfriend in your home. Fair enough. Instead of taking the moral high ground though, why not mention your very real concerns regarding your pre-teen boys. To avoid running the risk of upsetting your sister, it might be better to get her to

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## Puka Shell the long-haired Chihuahua here ...

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## Developer Advertising Significant Changes to Historic Downtown



The project would replace current retail space, small businesses, parts of Purcellville's original agricultural and industrial-related structures and other properties. The project would also create a new cut through from 21st Street to a commercial/residential portion of Hatcher Street.

Purcellville's historic downtown has undergone significant changes in recent years. But, the scope of this project appears to be much larger. According to the plan on Renaud's website, as proposed Vineyard Square would include a new (presumably) multi-level parking structure, one 71,000+ square foot 5 story building, one 37,000 square foot 5 story building, one 11,000+ square foot 5 story building (retail), a fourth footprint for a 3,400+ square foot operation and at least 4 other parking areas.

The Vineyard Square property/land is owned by developers John Chapman and

*Continued on page 18*

The Vienna Virginia based Renaud Consulting Company — described as "a full service real estate company" — is promoting on its website a significant, to-be-built commercial rental property known as "Vineyard Square."

Vineyard Square is envisioned as a 100,000 square foot retail/hotel development north of the intersection of Main and 21st Streets within Purcellville's historic downtown.



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## Unreasonable Fiscal Guidance

– By Jim Burton

In October, the Board of Supervisors issued fiscal guidance to the School Board to prepare its FY 14 budget at a level that would be lower than the current FY 13 budget, despite the fact that over 2,500 new students will enter the system, two new elementary schools will open, and contributions to the Virginia Retirement System must increase significantly to repay temporary reductions taken by Governor McDonnell during the economic crisis of 2009. The guidance was issued without any discussions with the School Board or School Administration with regard to consequences. Supervisors claimed that the school system is rife with inefficiencies and a bloated administration that can absorb significant reductions without harming the actual education of the county's children. Yet, not one Supervisor offered a definition of "efficiency" such that an objective evaluation of that claim can be accomplished. In my opinion, the Supervisors are wrong.

**"There is no formula for determining an appropriate annual school budget.**

**Supervisors must consider a wide range of factors – student enrollment, student to teacher ratios, trends in expenditures per pupil, average homeowner's tax bill, Federal and State mandates, etc. In the end, it is a judgment call."**

The previous Board of Supervisors worked very closely with the School Board to usher the county through the worst recession in decades during which the county lost 14 percent of its tax base, home values collapsed, foreclosures reached 240 per month, unemployment grew, and the county's financial situation became tenuous. The School Board willingly tightened its belt, giving up all pay raises for three years, and agreed to budgets that were lowered below the level of FY 09 over that period

**"Supervisors claimed that the school system is rife with inefficiencies and a bloated administration that can absorb significant reductions without harming the actual education of the county's children. Yet, not one Supervisor offered a definition of "efficiency" such that an objective evaluation of that claim can be accomplished. In my opinion, the Supervisors are wrong."**

even though 8,700 new students entered the system causing the average expenditure per student to decrease from \$12,780 in FY 09 to \$10,833 in FY 11 and \$11,014 in FY 12.

The local economy has rebounded with the unemployment rate dropping below 4 percent, which most economists consider full employment; home values are rising again; foreclosures have dramatically decreased; the number of new residential building permits has more than doubled over the past two years; and once again, Loudoun has been identified as the richest county in the nation with an average household income of \$119,600. Under these circumstances, and considering the fiscal constraints imposed upon the school system by the previous board, it is difficult to justify the draconian fiscal guidance issued by the current board.

There is no formula for determining an appropriate annual school budget. Supervisors must consider a wide range of factors – student enrollment, student to teacher ratios, trends in expenditures per pupil, average homeowner's tax bill, Federal and State mandates, etc. In the end, it is a judgment call. In my opinion, taking everything into consideration including the context of the past few years, I believe the Board's guidance, made without consulting either the school administration or the School Board, is excessively harsh and will cause unnecessary harm to the school system.

## View From the Ridge

– By Karen Jimmerson

Since people are free to move, we can assume that they have sorted themselves into areas that meet their preferences. Politicians make determinations about the appetite for growth on the basis of what they hear from their constituents. If we clamor for job and population growth in order to improve economic opportunities and amenities, then go for it. If we ask for this growth without significant increase in population, or if we believe that the quality of life is about as high as it can possibly be, then better to listen.

Purcellville Town Council has been spending on street walk improvements, an expensive water/sewer system upgrade, a new town hall, and now a second roundabout. I believe the quest to bring in more residents is to offset this debt and fulfill a promise made to businesses who have recently moved into town or wish to. Though it is a private developer who wants to build the proposed Catoctin Creek Apartments off Hirst Road, because it will be done with HUD financing, taxpayers foot the bill with our local, state, and federal dollars to provide that financing. But the cost goes much further.

Mayor Lazaro said in the *Loudoun Times Mirror* in April 2011 that the new Purcellville Gateway would allow "for the town's tax rate to be equalized or cut for its residents." Any politician who makes that claim is selling snake oil because taxes won't be lowered because the town gets used to increased spending. He also stated that the council's goal was to keep "folks who live in Purcellville in town to spend their dollars there." The dilemma becomes a question of how much is enough development for them to keep us all shopping here?

Municipalities believe that increasing commercial and retail development will increase revenue, but this is misguided and will only lead to more businesses closing. A national

chain auto parts store opening in the Purcellville Shopping Center may cause the closure of the two small auto parts stores in town. Purcellville has three grocery stores and the closure of the Food Lion in Leesburg is an example of what happens when an over-stored environment is created. We have four pharmacies now; I guess the senior living complex may not be rumor after all. With the addition of the Clarke County Bank we are clearly over-banked, unless we increase our population.

Job growth and increasing population is not required to sustain a local economy. Douglass North, who won a Nobel Prize in economics, wrote, "A society is better off only if it produces more output per person." In other words, increasing people and businesses without increasing income simply puts more stress on public services without increasing actual wealth. Job growth does not cause income growth, especially chain stores with low-wages, and given the costs associated with increasing a population, the town should minimize growth to sustainable levels as they attempt to increase incomes and wealth.

For our local retailers, the increase in population may mean a short-term increase in business, but this increase in population will make us more attractive to big-box retailers, which if allowed to move in will kill small ones. Ninety-percent of our businesses are small, locally run, and this means more money stays local. If we allow a major shift to occur, we will have only national chains with low-wage jobs that create little wealth for our town.

Plans for the future should embrace the residents of today and not disregard them. Opposing the proposed apartment complex is fundamentally about preserving the small town character of Purcellville, which may also save "The Last Hardware Store."

## We Welcome Your Letters to the Editor!

Submissions may be sent to [Editor@BRLeader.com](mailto:Editor@BRLeader.com), or via mail to PO Box 325, Purcellville, VA 20134-0325.

Please include your name,

address and telephone number. We reserve the right to edit submissions as necessary. Deadline for print edition is the third week of each month, or, online any time.

## Letters to the Editor

### Against Moving Assessor's Function to the Commissioner of Revenue

Dear Editor:

The Loudoun County Board of Supervisors should vote against moving the assessor function to the commissioner of revenue office. Eight points to consider:

1. The prior county assessor was selected via a nationwide executive search. He was highly qualified and effective. During his seven years of service, he brought assessments and related programs into compliance with the state and local mandates. The office was professionally managed and

restructured under strong, independent, leadership. During the Government Reform Commission interview, the COR couldn't recall his office budget. He said, "I knew you were going to ask that question," and deferred to staff. Does the current COR have the qualifications, management expertise, licenses, or certifications to function as the county assessor?

2. The perception problem identified in the GRC recommendation is a red herring. Citizens don't care if the assessment is X and the tax rate is Y. They care about

Continued on page 5

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## Committees at a Glance

**Committees at a Glance** informs our readers about the inner workings of local government and how actions and decisions impact our everyday lives. Here we discuss recent meetings of the Purcellville Board of Architectural Review.

### Purcellville Board of Architectural Review – November 20, 2012

■ *Topic: Discussion on proposed Catoctin Creek Apartments*

The Purcellville Board of Architectural Review (BAR) recommended delaying action on the proposed project known as the Catoctin Creek Apartments until the property is rezoned to a zoning district that allows apartments, and the applicant resubmits to the BAR for approval. (Note: The property is located near the corner of Hatcher and Hirst, near Taco Bell and the medical offices. Up until late October 2012, the property was reported as zoned Transition X. The property is now identified as zoned CM-1. The photo below shows the kind of development that is typically found in this zoning district. At the Old Dominion Valley HOA annual meeting

in November [a residential neighborhood that overlooks this area], attorney and developer Mark Nelis, representing the developer of the proposed Catoctin Creek Apartments, held up an ariel image of an auto body shop, the implication being that if the apartments were not approved Dominion Valley residents might have a more industrial use as their neighbor. In fact, the CM-1 district has many uses, including the below photo of an office building, which is quite compatible with the current neighboring buildings.)

BAR members in attendance: Walter Voskian, Patrick Giglio, Daniel Piper. (Mr. Giglio abstained from any comments until further review.)

Concerns raised by BAR members:

- Visual repetition of buildings and recommendations for a more linear layout;
- View from Route 7 bypass – some buildings will sit up quite high so the complex will be seen easily from Route 7;
- Scale of the complex is quite large for Purcellville;
- The haphazard layout of the buildings; the developer states that the topography of the land dictates the layout – BAR recommends they not fight the sight and not perform major cut/fill;

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## A Ponzi Scheme of Suburban Growth

– by Andrea Gaines

Small towns and cities in America have suffered from a Ponzi scheme of suburban growth. Most small towns are bankrupted or heavily indebted because the growth did not alleviate fiscal gaps. The local government benefits from the increased revenues associated with new growth, but it also assumes the long-term liability for maintaining the new infrastructure. This exchange — a near-term cash advantage for a long-term financial obligation — is one element of the Ponzi scheme.

The cycle demands ever-increasing growth rates to maintain bloated and inefficient infrastructure systems, a pattern that seemingly seems to never stop.

The other part of the scheme is the realization that the revenue collected does not come close to covering the costs of maintaining the infrastructure. In America, we have a ticking time bomb of unfunded liability for infrastructure maintenance. The American Society of Civil Engineers estimates the cost at \$5 trillion, but that's just for major infrastructure, not the minor streets, curbs, walkways, and pipes that serve our homes.

Transportation improvements are primarily made to increase safety and reduce congestion. After generations of trying to build our way out of congestion, we have discovered that constant growth has negated any attempted gains. To add to the problem, federal transportation policies reward states with funds for building additional roads, regardless of their efficiency. Political meddling further distorts transportation spending by prioritizing improvements based on political clout, not return on investment or actual need, hence the reason why we got the Southern Collector Road and not the Route 7 interchange at 690.

Growth and change is always difficult and if it is chaotic and unpredictable then no one wins. Zoning codes and plans need to be rewritten to reflect the community and provide true predictability for residents. The way in which Loudoun County and the Town

***If we continue to grow to the point where development sprawls up to the mountain ridge, beside every stream, and onto every farm, then we loose that which is our greatest asset. There will be no rolling countryside, no eco-tourism, no wineries, no visit to horse country, and certainly, no scenic drive through 'Everybody's Home Town, Purcellville.'***

of Purcellville provide constant exemptions for zoning and ordinances results in residents not trusting our government representatives and developers and councils distrusting the residents who fight their projects. Everyone ends up on the losing end.

Town centered growth can only be effective if the community is clearly defined and the plans for the future transparent. The area surrounding Purcellville is rich in agriculture and natural resources and its integration into the town needs to be done carefully and not treated as transitional reserve for continued growth. If we continue to grow to the point where development sprawls up to the mountain ridge, beside every stream, and onto every farm, then we loose that which is our greatest asset. There will be no rolling countryside, no eco-tourism, no wineries, no visit to horse country, and certainly, no scenic drive through "Everybody's Home Town," Purcellville.

Community values, culture, and identity need to be accounted for in the town's vision and we need to maximize environmental assets and economic assets to emphasize a sense of place. With several vineyards just outside of town and the destination restaurant Magnolias, and soon The Wine Kitchen, we solidify our town as inviting to tourists and residents alike.

The dilemma is that the current pattern of never ending development in Loudoun County does not create real wealth. It has only created the illusion of wealth. How do we best manage our future without stripping away what sets us apart from every town and city along Route 7?

## Letters to the Editor, continued from page 4

total tax. A perception of political cronyism is the problem. The assessor is responsible for valuing over \$60 billion in real estate, the basis of the county's largest local revenue source. The current COR is the finance chair of the GOP 10th Congressional District Committee. The perception that political "friends" will receive favorable assessments and ordinary citizens will bear an unfair share of the tax burden is insurmountable. The assessor MUST be objective, independent, impartial and insulated from political influence.

3. As finance chair of the GOP 10th Congressional District, the COR serves under John Whitbeck, a member of the GRC. Mr. Whitbeck is the political boss in a patronage system that powers the re-election of the COR. In spite of this conflict of interest, Mr. Whitbeck did not recuse himself from GRC assessment reorganization hearings or votes, and the COR tried his

best to downplay the idea that this conflict is a cause of concern.

4. The assessor's office staff will be reorganized under the COR and will lose its ability to file grievances. If an employee is directed to modify an assessment by a superior and refuses, he or she may be fired by the COR with no recourse. Under the recommended reorganization, staff must sign an affidavit and waive their current employment rights or their position with the county will be eliminated under a "reduction in force."
5. The county is in the midst of a criminal investigation involving supervisor aides who allegedly have no grievance or whistleblower protections. The BOS knows that this is an organizational defect. Do they want to repeat it?
6. Loudoun County's real estate roll is the second largest in the state. An asset of this

magnitude should be professionally managed. The largest locality with an assessment process under a COR is Stafford County, which has an assessment roll of approximately \$13 billion. Loudoun's portfolio exceeds \$60 billion. Every major locality in Virginia has the real property assessment function under an independent office and assessor, not a COR. Why is Loudoun suddenly inclined to make a regressive, politically motivated organizational change that undermines the revenue and taxation process, immediately following the controversial termination of the former assessor?

7. The GRC stated that the consolidation of the COR and assessor functions would increase efficiency and provide additional revenue from the state for the services provided by the COR. No support was provided by the GRC for either statement. What is the amount of funding that will be

provided by the state and how will the consolidated operation be more efficient? Will the COR be eliminating positions? What is the COR's plan regarding restructuring and reorganization?

8. The voters didn't vote for a COR serving in the reorganized capacity recommended by the GRC. The fact that the GRC recommendation failed to identify any of the above points discredits their recommendation. The BOS should reject it.

– Jonathan Weintraub, Lovettsville

### Opposes Catoctin Creek Apartments

Dear Editor:

I am writing this letter to express opposition to the proposed Catoctin Creek Apartment complex, which would be located near the corner of Hirst Road and Maple Avenue in Purcellville, VA. To put it simply, an apartment complex at this location is not in the

*Continued on page 20*







## Gov. McDonnell Praises Virginia Farm Bureau For Successful Property Rights Campaign

Gov. Robert McDonnell has praised the Virginia Farm Bureau Federation's successful efforts to pass the Virginia state constitution amendment known as "Question 1."

The Question 1 campaign was launched in opposition to a 2005 U.S. Supreme Court decision in *Kelo v. New London*, which upheld the decision by a Connecticut town to use "economic development" as a justification for transferring land from one private owner to another. In that case, the Supreme Court ruled that the general benefits a community enjoyed from economic growth was a permissible "public use" – the standard applied under the takings clause of the 5th Amendment to the United States Constitution. Dozens of other states have also repudiated the Supreme Court decision by pursuing similar pro-property rights campaigns.

"It's cider month, so it's only appropriate to make a toast to great cider makers in Virginia and to you for putting your heart and soul into enshrining private property rights in the [state] constitution," McDonnell told participants at a November VFBF gathering. "I want to salute you for the significant work you've done on passage of the amendment ..."

Seventy five percent of Virginia voters supported Question 1 on last month's statewide ballot.

The amendment requires all government

and private condemning authorities to ensure that any eminent domain takings are for public purposes rather than private gain. It also requires that property owners be paid fair market value for their land, limits takings to land necessary for public purposes, and requires compensation to landowners for lost business and access.

"We finally got it on the ballot for the voters, and I'd say a 3-to-1 majority is a terrific effort. And I commend you for that," said McDonnell.

McDonnell also praised Farm Bureau for entering a partnership to present the State Fair of Virginia after the previous owners declared bankruptcy. "You did in eight weeks what no one else thought was possible and put on a State Fair. It was really a terrific effort on your part," he said.

McDonnell also commended the organization for helping sponsor the annual Governor's Conference on Agricultural Trade, which attracts trade officials from around the world.

Virginia's agricultural and forestry exports totaled \$2.35 billion last year, and the Governor plans to continue promoting Virginia products globally.

With nearly 150,000 members in 88 county Farm Bureaus, VFBF is Virginia's largest farmers' advocacy group.

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**U.S. Army All-American Bowl Selects Top Ranked Players**

Jonathan Allen and Ryan Burns of Stone Bridge High School, Ashburn, have been selected to play in the 2013 U.S. Army All-American Bowl, joining an elite group of All-Americans, and William Ghrist of Briar Woods High School, Ashburn, has been selected to be a member of the 2013 U.S. Army All-American Marching Band. Ghrist will join an elite group of musicians who will perform during halftime of the U.S. Army All-American Bowl.



*William Ghrist, a mellophone player from Briar Woods High School in Ashburn, poses for a photo with Staff Sergeant Spencer Emert, Staff Sergeant Demario Ingram and Mr. Stephen Wolkoff after being officially named to the 2013 U.S. Army All-American Bowl Marching Band.*

Those selected will play in the game on Saturday, January 5, 2013, at the Alamodome in San Antonio, Texas. The annual East vs. West match-up will be televised live on NBC at 1:00 p.m. EST and will feature the nation's top 90 high school football players.

"Jonathan and Ryan are talented athletes whose leadership and teamwork qualities have made them standouts at Stone Bridge High School," said John Myers, Director of Marketing, Army Marketing and Research Group. "Only the strongest wear the Army colors, and Jonathan and Ryan possess mental, emotional and physical strengths similar to the Army Strong Soldier, that have afforded them that

honor. We are proud to welcome all of the U.S. Army All-American Bowl players and commend each of them on their selection."

The U.S. Army All-American Marching Band recognizes the top 125 high school senior marching musicians and color guard members from across the country, showcasing their talents during the largest celebration of high school football in America, the U.S. Army All-American Bowl.

"The U.S. Army has a distinguished musi-

*Continued on page 23*

**Wild Loudoun Wild & Wonderful Wood Ducks**

– By Andrea Gaines

There's a wide rambling creek and large wetland area near my house, about 3 1/2 miles south of the town of Purcellville. The creek is called Crooked Run, the same small waterway that runs through some of the last remaining farmland in the town, Crooked Run Orchard. It is part of the larger Goose Creek system of Loudoun County waterways and connects to both the Potomac Watershed and the Chesapeake Bay.

One late spring morning I was walking along a dirt road there, and glancing towards the trees edging the wetland, I saw a large bird emerge out of a hole in a dead tree and float in a half-graceful-half-plunge to the shallow water below. The bird hit the water and joined what looked to be a mate, disappearing into some marsh grass.

The bird leaving the tree was mostly a pretty soft brown, but with a subtle flash of blue on its wing. The bird it joined down below had bright spots of color play all over its head, back and sides, punctuated by flashes of white.

I had heard about the colorful species known as the wood duck, but had never seen one.

In doing research for this article I decided it probably was a wood duck pair I'd seen on that spring morning.

Then, a few weeks ago I happened upon a television nature program profiling ducks, with a focus on the wood duck. The opening scene (incredible film photography) showed a baby wood duck emerging from its tree cavity nest about 60 feet from the ground. It looked down at its mother on the forest floor

below, got the signal and just jumped – it's pudgy body and tiny unformed wings providing some kind of lift or direction. It then landed with a hefty bounce ... no much the worse for wear. All of a sudden there was another



*Front cover, male and female wood duck pair; Above: male wood duck. Photos courtesy of Ducks Unlimited.*

baby launching itself, and another and another – eight in all. Like clockwork they got to their feet and formed a line to

their mother, who was waiting just feet away in the underbrush. Seconds from that moment – after a furious, waddling dash to some water – mom and babies where purposefully but slowly gliding along the edge of a wetland towards a safe hiding place. What a transition: Nest in a tree, 60 feet up, to forest floor to safer aquatic habitat in about 30 seconds. Amazing.

I was fascinated by the scene of the babies jumping from the tree and thought of that scene in the spring several years before. Maybe I had happened upon the same

*Continued on page 26*



## The Perfect Place To Study The Future

— By Hannah James

“What do you want to be when you grow up?” is one of the most commonly asked questions of youth. A firefighter, a policeman, a teacher, a doctor are some of the frequent answers. As the children grow up, the once normal question becomes infrequent, that is, until perhaps the sophomore year of high school. Then, once again, the question is a center point of many conversations, causing flexible plans to be drawn.



*“In this economy especially, many students are also concerned about tuition and boarding costs. There are scholarships a plenty, but hundreds of students apply for each one, making it hard to count on outside money.”*

interested in schools located near a city, as opposed to a suburban or country environment. When asked her preference, junior Tessa Haas replied that she was looking at a college in an urban setting, “because of my museum major. It usually requires an internship.” Other students prefer a rural area. “It’s more quaint,” said senior Victoria Lamb. “Cities are big and hectic. They aren’t very peaceful.”

In this economy especially, many students are also concerned about tuition and boarding costs. There are scholarships a plenty, but hundreds of students apply for each one, making it hard to count on outside money. Some students already have scholarship money through various government educational benefits. However, sometimes this money comes with a catch. “If I go out-of-state, I can not get any more help unlike I could if I stay in-state,” said junior Michaela Pierre.

Size of the college is often a pertinent factor in deciding where to apply. “I don’t want it to be so big that I don’t get the classes I want,” said senior Peter Sotos. Similarly, junior Hamna Ahmad said, “A small student [to teacher] ratio would be ideal.” Too big and students feel as though there is no community, too small and teenagers feel boxed in.

As well as location, tuition, and size, stu-

By this time, many years later, most students better know who they are and what they are interested in. Often what they are interested in is what they seek to major in. “I am thinking of majoring in astrophysics,” said sophomore Ellie Grace. “The fact that it involves so many different branches of science makes it seem like something that I would like to do for the rest of my life.” Many students like to make sure their projected majors are practical and will be useful when searching for jobs. Junior Maya Loncar is thinking about double majoring in the music and math fields. “Math has always been my best and favorite subject (other than music) and most likely secures a job in the future.”

When finding colleges to apply to, there are many variables to consider. Some students are

*Continued on page 23*



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# Orange County Hounds Team Chase Results



The Orange County Hounds annual Team Chase event was held on Sunday, Nov. 18 at Old White-wood Farm in The Plains as nearly 100 horses and riders took to the heart of Orange County's territory.

For the second consecutive year, Caroline Fout won the Junior Hunter Championship on her late grandmother Eve Fout's elegant thoroughbred hunter, Morning Pleasure. The Junior Hunter Reserve Champion was Allegra Solari on her lovely bay Doncaster. Helen Brettell earned the Genuine Hunter Championship on her picture perfect chestnut mare Brooke. The Eduardo Coria Team with Kathleen Lyons on Luke and Eduardo Coria won the Best Hilltopper Pair. Final results:

**Hilltopper Pairs:** *Best Hunt Team:* Eduardo Coria Team 1 – Kathleen Lyons on Luke and Eduardo Coria- Casanova Hunt; *Best*

*Turned Out:* Coria Team 2 of Christie Fitzsimmons and Eduardo Coria – Casanova Hunt.

**Limit Hunters:** *Best Hunt Team:* "Fox Jumpers" Graham Alcock on Matchstick, Hayley Alcock on Foxy, Nancy Alcock on Millpoint Farbetter, Beverly Alcock on Martigraw – Piedmont Fox Hounds; *Ideal Time:* "Robin and Allegra" Allegra Solari on Doncaster, Robin Ross on Maverick, Enrique Solari on Ruby – Warrenton Hunt; *Best Turned Out:* "Making Ends Meet" Ashley Boardman on Greystone, Jane Braswell on Turf and Caroline Fout on Morning Pleasure- Middleburg Orange County Beagles; *Junior Champion:* Caroline Fout on Morning Pleasure – Middleburg Orange County Beagles and OCH; *Junior Reserve Champion:* Allegra Solari on Doncaster – Warrenton Hunt.

**Genuine Hunters:** *Best Hunt*

*Team:* "Joint Ventures" Andrea Gilman on Jamieson, Kathleen O'Keefe on Dudley, Eduardo Coria on Arcadia's Gold-Casanova and old Dominion Hunt; *Best Turned Out:* "The Champagne Chasers" M'lesa Boike on Bennet, Jim Drunagel on Skip Along Slew, Pann Drunagel on Jimmy Slide, Mike Olding on The Cane Prince; *Ideal Time winners:* "Tally Ho Trio" Mark Thompson on Eli, Joy Crompton on Seamus, and Tracey Cover.

**The Genuine Hunter Championship:** *Champion:* Helen Brettell on Brooke – Middleburg Hunt; *Reserve Champion:* Leslie Hazel on Bob – Orange County Hounds.

*Photos, left to right: Best Hunt Team (left to right) Hayley, Nancy and Beverly Alcock (minus father Graham); Junior Hunter Champion Caroline Fout; Genuine Hunter Champion, Helen Brettell. Photos by Richard Clay – www.richardclayphotography.com.*



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## Giving Books This Holiday? ... Some BRL Staff and Reader Favorites

- *Sally Hemings: A Novel* by Barbara Chase-Riboud
- *Still Alice* by Lisa Genova (very profound about Alzheimers, Alice is a professor at Harvard and this is her journey);
- *Manhunt: The 12-Day Chase to Catch Lincoln's*
- *Killer* by James L. Swanson (with the new Lincoln movie just being released, this very timely);
- *Gods in Alabama* by Joshilyn Jackson; and
- *Half Broke Horses* by Jeanette Walls (fantastic book!!)

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## An Interview With Robert “Bobby” Zoldos II, Mayor of Lovettsville – By Tim Jon

Robert J. “Bobby” Zoldos II began his first term as mayor of Lovettsville this past spring; he served four terms on town council prior to his current position. His day job – firefighter for Fairfax County Fire and Rescue – has placed him on international missions of mercy to earthquake and other disaster areas – as Task Force Leader on Virginia Task Force One (commonly known as the Urban Search and Rescue Squad). Robert Zoldos has had a couple of very good mentors in public service: his father – Robert Zoldos Sr. – has served as Leesburg Town Councilman (and firefighter), and previous Lovettsville Mayor Elaine Walker – who served 20 years as Mayor and 10 years on Council.



**Q: Your day job must put outstanding demands on your time and energy; how do you manage to squeeze in time for mayoral service – given your family obligations at home, as well?**

A: As a firefighter, I work a strange 24-hour rotating shift that places me at home almost 20 days

a month. Being around town during the day is so important because it allows me to work at the town office during the day (when most of the regular town business is done) as well as see how the whole town functions during this important time. The Town Council, staff and I have worked hard to plan events and meetings around our schedules as well as trying to make our town business more accessible to others as well. To this end, we are having quarterly Saturday morning council meetings so that those residents with long commutes and evening activities have a chance to participate in our meetings.

**Q: Do you think that residents in Lovettsville need to worry (any time soon, that is) about dealing with the growing pains being experienced in – say – Purcellville? I guess I'm asking: what are the limiting factors for growth in your Town**

**(for example: water supply, annexation issues, other utility considerations)?**

A: Our biggest limiting factor for growth is that we are mostly built out (or in the planning stages for most of the open areas). Through wise decisions concerning our utilities in the past few years, we are in an excellent position to support any growth left in town as well as a school adjacent to the town.

**Q: We've heard a lot of talk in recent years about the need for a high school in or around Lovettsville; when should that happen – in your opinion?**

A: Right Now! The sooner the better because we have kids on those buses for far too long. The bigger worry here is that we have sixth graders riding with twelfth graders and that is just not the situation that we parents want for our kids. While there is not enough land in the town to have it inside, a perfect place for the school is just south of town (near the center of the school's service area). If the school board can locate these new schools adjacent to the town, we are ready to serve the school sites with utilities immediately and truly look forward to bringing the next high school and middle school here. We even have a team name for the school – the Lovettsville “Lions” has a nice ring to it.

**Q: What's the future – and timeline – for the Town Square – and the rest of that mixed-use development on the west side?**

A: During my first month as mayor, the Town Manager and I met with the owner of the Town Square retail area to discuss how we can move this critical development for our town forward. The holdup on their construction of the commercial buildings is that they would like to reduce the scope and lessen the materials that they have agreed to provide when the development was approved. They also asked us to find second-floor tenants for them, a space that is hard for them to lease. We have found a few tenants for them and hope that will move this project forward. As much as we all want the Town Square retail to be open tomorrow, we know that the residents of the town want us to hold to the agreement so that the center of our town will be something that we all be proud of for years to come.

**Q: Open space and recreation needs are important considerations – even in a 'small' Town like Lovettsville; what are the plans for these items – and what else might you like to see for the community's residents?**

A: We have several new areas of town for recreation and enjoyment that we will be very proud of soon.

– First of all, in conjunction with the County of Loudoun, we are moving forward with the Lovettsville Community Park. The land for this park was purchased jointly by the Town and the County – a first! We have met with Department of Parks, Recreation & Community Services throughout the planning process and believe that this 92-acre park on our eastern boundary will be one of the high-lights of our town.

– We are very happy with our Town Green and Square. They are both, now, well used. “Movies on the Green” and Mayfest occur on the green and the square is home to the Tree-Lighting, Veterans Day, and our newest event “Beserkle in the Squirkle” to be held on New Year's Day!

– Our newest park, the Quarter-Branch Park, is scheduled to open by next summer. It will include a one-sixth mile soft track with six fitness stations. Plans are almost completed for this park and we have engaged with George Mason University to assist with the fitness station design.

**Q: Loudoun County has had (and has!) its share of colorful personalities in its elected leaders; whom do you look for role models in public service?**

A: I have been blessed to have gone on rescue missions around the world with some truly incredible leaders. I have tried to learn as much as I can from their “In Extremis” leadership, while that has made me who I am today – it doesn't always translate into the elected world! My elected role models include Mayor Elaine Walker (my predecessor who did so much to make our town great!), Congressman Frank Wolf (whom I interned for and who is a good guy), Frank Raflo (great bow-ties and he was “Mr. Loudoun”), Dave Kennedy (a true southern gentleman who was brilliant), and my father (I am the new and improved version ...).

**Q: Your predecessor – Elaine Walker – led the town for many years and certainly left her stamp on local government; what's your vision for Lovettsville's future – and how much of a shift in direction do you see?**

A: Our vision for Lovettsville is a small-town environment while providing for more of the needs of the town. We feel those needs take place in four categories: Transportation, economic development, education, and participation in government. We don't believe that you will see a shift in direction as much as an increase in speed and engagement in new methods.



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## Piper Dan's Celtic Shop On The Move

When Mary Shea Knight, proprietor of Piper Dan's Keltic Shoppe Irish & Scottish Imports, found out she was losing her store space on N. 21st Street, she started looking for another space in Old Town Purcellville.

In the end “everything works out,” she said. Her new space is right around the corner at 109 E. Main St. In just three and a half weeks they transformed the space into Piper Dan's Keltic Shoppe's new home, moving in just hours before Hurricane Sandy hit the area.

The space is more than double the size of the previous location. They offer a large selection of Irish and Scottish knitwear, capes, traditional Irish vintage caps, kilts and highland wear. Kilt rentals are also available, and custom tartan items can be ordered. There are handcrafted leather goods and jewelry, Irish linens and foods including soda bread, scones, teas, coffee, truffles, jams, lemon curd, sauces, Christmas Pudding, brandy butter and more. There is a large book and children's section, Irish and Scottish music, and bagpiping supplies. The shop offers

a bridal registry for Irish Belleek, Galway Crystal, Mullingar Pewter and other gifts.

The family moved to Virginia in 2005 from Massachusetts where Knight started the business in 1971. She had three locations at one time in Massachusetts. She reopened in Frederick, Md., but later she and her husband Dan purchased a home and found a business location in Purcellville. All of her children are involved in the business, and all of their names, are tagged on various merchandise throughout the shop. Most notably, Danny, (Piper Dan) who started bagpiping lessons at the age of 10, is a professional bagpiper and instructor. His services are available for hire through Piper Dan's Keltic Shoppe for weddings, birthdays, funerals, graduations, etc.

Piper Dan's Keltic Shoppe Irish & Scottish Imports is open Tuesday through Saturday from 11 a.m. to 6 p.m., Sunday 12-4, and closed on Mondays. The shop will be open seven days a week until Christmas, and will offer some extended evening hours.



## Amy V. Smith's Money Talks

– The Post Election Agenda –

– By Amy Smith

Today's post-election political landscape looks a lot like the pre-election political landscape. President Obama will be working with a democratically controlled Senate, and a Republican-controlled House of Representatives for a minimum of two more years. The issues haven't really changed, either. What has changed, though, is the amount of time left to deal with these issues. With little time to act, the stakes are high. Here's a quick rundown of some of the big issues that need to be addressed.



### Expiring tax provisions

With the "Bush tax cuts" (extended for an additional two years by legislation passed in 2010) set to sunset at the end of 2012, federal income tax rates are scheduled to jump up in 2013. We'll go from six federal tax brackets (10, 15, 25, 28, 33 and 35 percent) to five (15, 28, 31, 36, and 39.6 percent). The maximum rate that applies to long-term capital gain tax rates now apply to qualifying dividends, starting in 2013, dividends will once again be taxed as ordinary income.

Other breaks go away in 2013 as well:

- The temporary 2% reduction in the Social Security portion of the Federal Insurance Contribution Act (FICA) payroll tax, in place for the last two years, is scheduled to

- expire at the end of 2012;
- Estate and gift tax provisions will change significantly (reverting to 2001 rules). For example, the amount that can generally be excluded from estate and gift tax drops from \$5.12 million in 2012 to \$1 million in 2013, and the top tax rate increases from 35% to 55%;
- Itemized deductions and dependency exemption will once again be phased out for individuals with high adjusted gross income (AGIs);
- The earned income tax credit, the child tax credit, and the American Opportunity (Hope) tax credit all revert to old lower limits and less generous rules; and
- Individuals will no longer be able to deduct student loan interest after the first 60 months of repayment;

Additionally, lower alternative minimum tax (AMT) exemption amounts (the AMT-related provisions actually expired at the end of 2011) mean that there will be a dramatic increase in the number of individuals subject to AMT when they file their 2012 federal income tax returns in 2013.

There seems to be a general willingness to extend many expiring provisions. The sticking point, however, has centered on whether lower tax rate and other tax breaks get extended for all or only for individuals earning \$200,000 or less (households earning \$250,000 or less). Recent posturing has indicated that compro-

*Continued on page 29*

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## Just Like Nothing (Else) on Earth – by Tim Jon

Mist, shadow, woods and water. And deer. Lots of deer: that's my list of first impressions of what was – to me – one of the hidden gems in the eastern part of Loudoun County.



You see, I'd never actually been inside Algonkian Regional Park before; I'd driven right past lots of times, and I'd made mental notes to 'go back and really spend some time there, 'but, like lots of our best intentions, it'd long gone by the wayside. "I didn't have time," would've been my excuse.

You believe me, right?

Well, let's get back to the mist, shadow, woods, water and deer – because they made up for all the lost time and opportunity. Since I almost religiously make my 'Just Like' visits at about the break of dawn, it's no

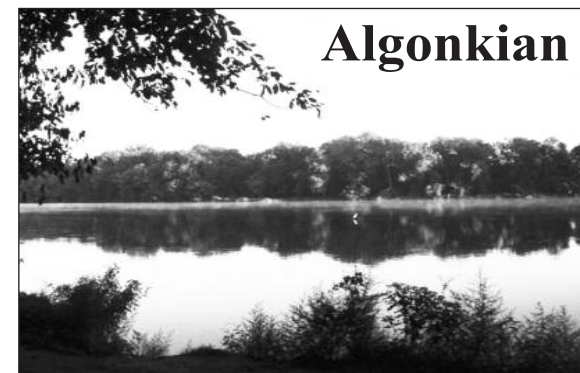
surprise that I encountered mist in abundance at Algonkian: heck, half the county's covered in a white veil at that time in the morning. OK, that covers that portion, I'll move on to the shadows: Same deal, I'll admit. And woods – we've still got – thank God – any number of places filled with stands of mature trees in Loudoun (if those are ever gone – I'd be soon to follow).

But water – if you want to be directly exposed to large portions of water in this county – you've got to be pretty choosy: there's Sleet Lake out by Round Hill, Beaverdam Reservoir south of Leesburg, Goose Creek, and lots of other smaller little 'runs' all over the place. I think it's that direct connection to the Potomac that really made the morning for me at Algonkian (I'm from Minnesota, remember – Land of 10,000 lakes?). And, I'd never seen deer in abundance like this east of Leesburg – it was practically like one of those petting zoos we'd

stop at on family vacations. So – you put all that together into a package and this place really outstrips any would-be competition – in that half of the county, that is.

See, I'm one of those who, for better or worse, often thinks of Eastern Loudoun as a place filled with lots of concrete, industrial parks, roads (sometimes to nowhere in particular), a confusing number of neighborhoods, and a general crowding tendency that – given a choice – makes me head the other way. Not that I dislike all those traits – I'd just rather be out in the open – with some space to relax, move around and breathe.

But that's just exactly what I found at Algonkian Regional Park – right in Sterling- or Sugarland Run – or whatever they call that 'area.' Just a short walk from my vehicle along a river flat covered by mature trees and



## Algonkian

other vegetation, I found myself at the shoreline of the Potomac.

And, you know what? I was almost alone, and it was almost absolutely quiet. I mean for Eastern Loudoun. You're going to have other park visitors, and you can always hear the planes heading into Dulles, but it's about as close to peace and solitude as you're going

Continued on page 23

Send us your sports photos and updates to editor@BRLeader.com

## ULYFL Undefeated



Pictured: Head Coach – Paul McCloskey, Assistant Coaches – Jeremy Jenkins, Uwe Halveland, Tony King, Joseph Mazzara and John Santmyer. Team Roster: 1 Dawson Calvin, 9 Riley Smith, 10 JJ Santmyer IV, 15 Christopher Carroll, 20 Cort Junker, 31 Nicholas Schiavone, 35 Bryce Lucas, 36 Evan King, 46 Rainer Halveland, 69 Ian McCloskey, 76 Matthew Mazzara, 85 Ryan Munro, 87 Carter Jenkins, 91 Tyler Rabatin, 94 Jonathan Bacigalupi, 98 Jacob Frye.

The Upper Loudoun Youth Football League (ULYFL) is proud to have their C-League Huskies finish the season undefeated 12-0 as Regional Champions (against the

Lower Loudoun Boys Football League, LLBFL) and ranked #1 in the state of Virginia (boys 7-9 year olds).

## Purcellville's West B Loudoun Lads Win Inaugural Season



Back row, left to right: Assistant Coach Haley Kreuch, Head Coach Matt Kreuch, Thomas "the Flying V" Vegeres, "Captain" Jack Delmonte, Luke "the Wall" Vaillancourt, Alec "Special Ops" Oppenheimer, Hudson "the Hawk" Johns, Cameron "the Cannon" Caylor, John "Fire and Forget" Friberg, Assistant Coach Brian Murphy, Assistant Coach David Livermore, Sean "No Mercy" Murphy, Luca "Speed Deamon" Morelli, Samuel "the Stopper" Lynch. Front row, left to right: Bill "the Intimidator" Zach, "Lightning" Thomas Murphy, Alex "Killer" Kreuch, Cole "Twinkle Toes" Elam, "Mad" Matt Renner, Paul "the Wolf" Woldt and John "Laser" Livermore. Photo credit, Michelle Kreuch.

Purcellville's West B "Loudoun Lads" won Loudoun Soccer's inaugural season of the U13 Classic League, defeating Asburn D in the championship, 2-0. They had an

incredible season with an undefeated regular season record of 8-0 extending into the playoffs where they finished the season with an unbelievable 11-0.

## ODSL Division Championship for Quest Thunder U13



Front row, left to right: McKenna, Lulu, Missy, Cris, Georgia, Catherine, Maddie and back (l-r) Shannon, Amanda, Sydney, Syd, Shannon, Cat, Natalie, Maddy. Coaches (l-r) Jay, Jim and TJ.

In their first season together, the ODFC Quest Thunder U13 Girls Soccer Team won their ODSL Division Championship for the Fall 2012 season, as well as first place in

their division in the Hunt Country Classic Fall Tournament. The team is made up of girls from western Loudoun.

## ULYFL Cougars Win Championship

– Sudden Death Overtime 13 to 6 Over Undefeated Bucs –



(In no particular order) George Bryant, Braden Nesselrodt, Chima Kpaduwa, Christian Dietrich, Derrick Veney, Easton Kittinger, Ethan Moore, Evan Thomas, George Bryant, Henry Hill, Jack Candelaria, John Allerton, Ryan Robotti, Ryan Thomas, Thomas Ellis, Trevor Clifford, Zack Peturso, Larry Jenkins (Head Coach), and Assistant Coaches Brian Burke, Rob Matthews, Chris Bray, Dan Candelaria and Seth Rocca.



## Blue Ridge Middle School Solar Installation Ceremony

The Blue Ridge Middle School in Purcellville celebrated the installation of the six solar light poles that adorn the lower parking lot with a brief ceremony and plaque presentation. The Solar Poles represent substantial work and focus from past principal, Roberta Griffith, past PTOs, Dr. Hatrick and Loudoun County Public Schools, Purcellville's Mayor and town council, as well as the entire Blue Ridge Community. The installation of the poles culminates years of fundraising to bring not only light to the lower parking lot, but further the school system's mission of conservation and smart campus energy use.



teacher, Mr. Joe D'Arcangelis, whose house is solar wired, and students showcased their research talent. Sixteen Blue Ridge Middle students, facilitated by Science 8 teachers Dr. Suzanne Hiller, Mrs. Jackie Robertson, and

*Continued on page 20*

The ceremony that featured a speech from the school's Agnes Myer nominated science

## Upper Loudoun Little League Registration

ULLL began online registration for the Spring 2013 season on Dec. 5. Registration is for children who are age 5 to 12 AS OF April 30, 2013. For more information, please visit [www.ulll.org](http://www.ulll.org).



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## End of Year Thoughts

– By Donna Williamson

- The killing frosts have happened and the growing season is officially over. With leaves down and nestled under shrubs and trees, we can look at the open branches and marvel at interesting bark patterns. I love the sycamores, for their beautiful exfoliating bark and for those upward branches grasping at the winter sky.
- Often I encourage folks to wait until December to prune branches off evergreens so they can be used for holiday decoration. The best I've seen is simply evergreen branches jammed into frost free containers – magnolia, pine, holly, spruce, Virginia red cedar, maybe a piece of red or yellow-twig dogwood for a bright spot. The branches last quite a while in the cool weather and look very festive.
- Last month I brought the deep purple Moses-in-the-boat or Setcreasea inside to save it for next summer. This tropical is so tough it can withstand being planted next to hot pavement in summer and is very drought tolerant. Even those branches that sometimes break off can be stuck in a vase of water and will sprout roots. Adds a bit of color to my office in winter – deep purple contrasts well with snow.



- We are getting ready to hold gardening classes again at the Village Winery in Waterford during February and March. Going to change the format a bit this year, with three weeks on basics for homeowners, three weeks on design elements, one week on easy ways to add pollinator-friendly elements to your existing landscape, and a final week on developing design solutions for home landscape issues. All class members will work on these issues and take home ideas that can be easily implemented. Class size is limited so reserve early. Cost for 8-week class is \$198.

- Loving those Thanksgiving/Christmas cactuses I bought from Abernethy & Spencer last year. After their big show, I ignore them until the warm days of early summer and put the pots outside with a good rain. They stay out all summer and then come inside in late October or early November. With fat flower buds growing each day until the flowers expand in the most delectable colors, they are just the right touch for cooling temperatures and the end of long daylight hours. And they require very little care, a feature that appeals to me in over wintering plants.

*Continued on page 23*

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## Kindergarten Teacher Speaks At National Conference

Loudoun Country Day School kindergarten teacher Angie Cross recently presented at a national conference for early childhood educators.

She spoke at the National Association for the Education of Young Children annual conference in Atlanta, Ga., from Nov. 7-10. She described to the conference how she and her students have not only learned how to integrate iPads into their daily learning in the classroom, but they use it side-by-side with traditional approaches.

Cross started trying to integrate technology into the classroom several years ago as a learning tool, realizing that this generation of young children is comfortable with technology and are growing up in computer-literate households.

Cross partnered with a company called SmartyShortz owned by LCDS parent Jill Etesse, an educational company that combines educational advances with technology. At Cross's request, Etesse's company created a stylus that can be used with a gripper by a kindergarten child with the purpose of learning how to form letters using an iPad while retaining the fine motor skills necessary for that age group.

"Angie asked that we create an app to basically replace multiple handwriting apps, consolidating everything she needed into one with the Zaner-Bloser font upper and lower



case, sight words, Jackson Pollock splatter paint section and an assessment section for her to track where her students may be struggling with a particular letter," Etesse said. "In conjunction with this we started the process of finding someone to basically build us a prototype of a number 2 pencil that could fit her grippers she used on number 2 pencils, leaving no gap from technology to paper when implementing the letter formation strokes. Nine months later, many mishaps, too, we found a perfect fit."

At her presentation, Cross concluded to her audience, "There is a direct evidential link between the quality of instruction and the quality of learning. If the iPad captures students' attention, provides invigoration to the curriculum, and fosters excitement for learning, it will naturally be a strong instructional tool to teachers.

## Kilimanjaro Bound

Taylor Justice had just returned from a training session in the Rockies, building her red blood cell base, in preparation for her historical hike up Mt. Kilimanjaro in Tanzania, Africa. Her 7th grade classmates at Blue Ridge Middle School, friends and teachers came together in the auditorium on Nov. 19, with her family, to hear her describe what she was about to endure. Her power point focused on her community service with the Ski Patrol in Aspen, Colorado and how it led to her being asked to join the "Green Girls" – a group of women brought together by Mariel Hemingway, to raise awareness of global warming and how it is affecting the snow cap and glacier on Mt. Kilimanjaro.

Taylor described what she will experience, from possible altitude-borne illnesses, to the 6 different climates through which she will be traversing. Her classmates are very supportive of her and her attempt to raise awareness of global warming as well as raising money for the Black Rhino sanctuary. At the time of her presentation, Taylor had raised over \$12,000. Upon completion of her presentation to her school community, she was presented with a t-shirt that every student had signed with well wishes for a safe journey.



*Untangle your life and beat holiday stress with the cookie recipes on page 21 ...*

## Sheriff's Office Holds Internet Safety Classes for Parents

The Loudoun County Sheriff's Office (LCSO) has sponsored a series of courses called *Internet Safety: What Parents Need to Know*. The courses introduce parents to basic internet safety as well as some advanced techniques to help keep their children safe while online.

Internet safety is a common topic of discussion for today's parents and in some cases can be a source of anxiety. With technology moving ahead at such a rapid pace, it can be hard for parents to keep up, let alone catch up. Topics discussed have included: social networking; sexting/texting; cell phone technology and features; laptops vs. desk top PC's; current trends; predatory behaviors; PC and console gaming; and monitoring techniques.

Also available at the classes was the "ComputerCOP" program. ComputerCOP is a computer software program that allows parents to view and permanently delete potentially harmful images and information that have been downloaded on any home computer running Windows. The free soft-

ware is easy to install and gives parents an added safeguard to make sure their children are using the Internet safely and responsibly. The software aids in protecting children from harmful material on the Internet, and also initiates a line of communication between parents and children regarding the positive and negative aspects of the Internet and its appropriate use.

The final classes will be held Dec. 10 at John Champe High School and Dec. 12 at Mercer Middle School.

Parents unable to attend the LCSO's internet safety courses can get copies of the ComputerCOP program (available on a first come-first serve basis) at the following locations: Loudoun County Sheriff's Office Administration Building, 880 Harrison Street, SE Leesburg, VA; Dulles South Public Safety Center, 25216 Loudoun Parkway, South Riding, VA; Eastern Loudoun Station, 46620 East Frederick Drive, Sterling, VA (adjacent to Rolling Ridge Elementary School); and University Station, 45299 Research Place, Suite 100, Ashburn, VA.

### *Historic Downtown Purcellville, continued from page 3*

Mark Nelis. Renaud Consulting is owned by Mark Fontaine's family. Fontaine is the president of the Purcellville Volunteer Fire Department.

The group of properties (and their owners) will be the beneficiaries of special nine-year tax breaks and grants through a Town

Purcellville 2011 action which created a special tourism district for the express purpose of developing this area. While the tourism district has been the subject of many town committee and Town Council meetings, Vineyard Square itself has not yet been vetted by the public in that manner.

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*Assessor's Office, continued from page 1*

around 900 employees in that situation.”

York appeared to be referring to the employees of the other constitutional officers. Of these, 746 work in the Sheriff's Office. These employees do operate under a grievance policy according to the Loudoun County Human Resources Department. The Blue Ridge Leader was unable to obtain a copy of that policy prior to deadline.

Former Supervisor Jim Burton (I-Blue Ridge), who served on the board's Finance / Government Services & Operations Committee for 15 of his 16 years as a supervisor, said that he worried York was missing the point. “To claim that it is not germane that assessors can be fired at will with no grievance protections reflects a gross misunderstanding of the issue. Assessors determine the value of property for tax purposes, and as such, are subject to political pressures and legal challenges as individuals, usually to lower the value of their assessments. This is not the case for the bookkeepers and record keepers working for the treasurer or the clerk of the courts.”

**Government Reform Commission**

Two nights after the public hearing the Government Reform Commission (GRC), the board-appointed advisory group that recommended the change in structure, considered whether to revise or reiterate its original recommendation based on the questions raised by *The Leader*. GRC Chairman Tom Julia initiated the discussion, stating, “I just want to be sure that we were thorough and that it didn't appear we left some stone unturned here.” A ten-minute discussion ensued during which commission members agreed that the loss of civil service protections was not germane to their analysis and this new information did not change their recommendation.

Individual rationales differed. Cliff Keirce (Broad Run) ignored the underlying issue altogether. “My only concern is are we going to start now responding to every commentary in a newspaper about our decisions and decide to make motions based on someone's opinion in a newspaper.” Keirce did not respond to an email asking whether he believed the information was irrelevant, given that similar personnel policies have proven insufficient in protecting board aides from political pressure.

Barbara Munsey (Dulles) suggested that

the human resources aspect fell outside their scope. “We were asked to look at the function and the duties of the function and to some degree the political overtones ... what I read in the paper seemed to be the possibility of grievance procedures, etc. and I don't feel like we were tasked to do that.”

Vice Chair Scott Hamberger (Ashburn) suggested, “There's a well-established base of employees across the Commonwealth operating under these parameters. It doesn't make sense to single out this particular group or persons for special treatment.” Like York, he did not mention that the vast majority of these employees do not assess property for taxation purposes.

During two lengthy phone interviews, Julia agreed that the employment status of these employees “is a very relevant issue and is legitimate for study.” However, he believed that any study would require endorsement by the constitutional officers to be successful, because under Virginia law the BOS has no authority to implement changes to the constitutional officers' operations.

**The Board Retains Control**

However, it is the Board's choice whether or not to transfer the real property assessment function to the commissioner of revenue's office. Any reassignment of the responsibility, such as that recommended by the GRC, requires the board to amend the relevant ordinance. Until then, the board retains control over the employment policies covering the assessment staff.

Could the board institute a grievance policy for real property appraisers and assessors as part of the new ordinance? Could they require an amendment to the Memorandum of Understanding between the county and the commissioner of revenue as a condition of transferring the function to the commissioner of revenue? Efforts to reach York and Vice Chair Janet Clarke (R-Blue Ridge) regarding these questions were unsuccessful.

The proposed changes to the board aide policies, also up for a vote on Dec. 5, resulted from allegations first reported by *The Washington Post*, that Supervisor Eugene Delgaudio (R-Sterling) had directed his board aide to use county facilities for political fund-raising while on county time. When the aide sought to address these issues with the county's human resources department and others, Delgaudio fired her. While these

specific allegations are currently under investigation, the board initiated a revision of the aide policies with an eye to preventing future abuses.

Supervisor Ralph Buona (R-Ashburn), chairman of the Finance and Government Services/Operations Committee (FGSO) led staff in the revision effort, presenting the results at the committee's Nov. 20 meeting. With some slight changes the Committee voted to forward the policy amendments to the full board with a recommendation for approval.

**Appropriate Assignments For Aides**

The revised policies, which the full board will consider on Dec. 5, clarify what constitute appropriate assignments for aides. The 2008 policy prohibiting aides from using county time on political activity or campaigning is strengthened to prohibit paid aides from conducting “political activity or campaigning of any type.” They prohibit aides from working on outside business activities for the supervisor and frown on undertaking any outside employment that might conflict with their service as a board aide. They also specifically prohibit a board

member from compelling aides to perform activities of a personal nature during work hours.

Most importantly, the new policies establish a formal process for aides to raise concerns about their board member's actions or work assignments. The process, as proposed, encourages aides to contact the County Administrator. The county administrator will bring the matter to the board chair, vice chair, and/or the Finance and Government Services/Operations Committee chair. Either board leadership or their designee will undertake an investigation of the facts and then recommend a “proper path” forward.

With the board poised to implement a grievance policy for its aides does it make sense to eliminate one for assessment staff? Neither York nor Clarke responded to emails. Buona was hesitant to comment, “given this is all a work in process.” He did note “that the staff aide policy that I brought forward, does not put aides under a formal grievance policy. It simply gives them a potential recourse mechanism.” Whether it might be appropriate that a similar recourse mechanism for the assessors be a requirement of the transfer was not addressed.

**Three Other Assessor's Office Issues**

In addition to the job status of real property assessors, documentation included in the public hearing item regarding the transfer of the assessment function to the Commissioner of Revenue raised three further issues.

The existing county ordinance and state law mandate that the County Assessor meet certain education and skills criteria. The new ordinance removes the county's professional certification requirement, while, according to a 2008 memorandum prepared by Commissioner of Revenue Bob Wertz, the state-mandated education and skill requirements do not apply to a Commissioner of Revenue serving as the County Assessor.

Both Wertz' 2008 memo and the recommendation of the Government Reform Committee, which studied the proposal, suggested potential cost savings associated with the change. In a list of potential

impacts, Wertz wrote, “The need for an assessor would cease to exist.” However, according to the staff report, while the new ordinance does eliminate the County Assessor, it “does not eliminate a full time position currently budgeted for this function.” As a result, there would be no cost savings specifically associated with the cessation of the assessor's existence.

Finally, commission members and county officials who advised them claim that the County Assessor stopped reporting to the County Administrator in 2006 and began “reporting directly to the Board of Supervisors.” According to one official speaking off the record, the claim derives from language in former County Assessor Todd Kaufman's employment contract with the board. This underlying assumption drives the GRC's first recommendation that the assessment function should not report directly to the board.

*Continued on page 21*

*Delgaudio, continued from page 1*

became part of a criminal investigation appears in a letter, dated Nov. 9, sent by Roberts to the two investigators hired earlier by the county to conduct an investigation into whether Delgaudio had violated county policy. The contract with the investigators includes a clause that required them to suspend their own investigation and turn the matter over to law enforcement officials in the event that they discovered evidence of criminal misconduct. The letter confirms that this is what happened, and that the investigation authorized by the board has been suspended. According to the county website, the Circuit Court appointed Stamos as a special prosecutor on Nov. 8 at the request of Loudoun Commonwealth's Attorney Jim Plowman.

When asked with whom York had shared the evidence he held back in March, he confirmed that he had shown it to Vice-Chair Janet Clarke and one other person whose

identity he could not recall. York also denied that he had shared the documents with Delgaudio. Clarke had not yet responded to a request by the Blue Ridge Leader for comment.

Meanwhile, the political action committee (PAC) seeking the release of those same documents has been engaged in a dispute with county officials over a tardy response to its Freedom of Information Act request. The request for the documents was sent initially to York, who assured Real Advocate PAC representative Liz Miller that her request would be forwarded to the county attorney for action. After receiving no response by the due date, Miller inquired and was told that, although the county was delinquent, the documents were now part of an active investigation and therefore exempt from disclosure requirements.

In a Nov. 28 appearance before the General District Court seeking an order to

release the documents, Miller's attorney argued unsuccessfully that because there was no investigation at the time that the county failed to respond, it could not be used as a reason to withhold the material. It was also revealed in the course of that hearing that special prosecutor Stamos did not yet have the documents; however, Stamos confirmed the following day that they had been delivered.

Real Advocate has filed an appeal with the Circuit Court, contending that the exception to disclosure requirements for material under active investigation is intended to withhold the content of evidence from the subject of the investigation. “In this case, the person under investigation already knows what's in the documents,” said RAPAC's attorney Stevens Miller. A hearing date had not yet been set at press time for this issue.

Earlier the same evening that York's town hall was held, the board's Finance, Govern-

ment Services & Operations Committee had voted to recommend a new county policy governing staff aides. Delgaudio, who sits on that committee, voiced strong opposition to a new provision that would prohibit supervisors from also employing their staff aides at their private place of business or campaign, objecting that a prohibition on “paying your staff more money to work for you in other venues” would be unconstitutional. Campaign finance reports indicate that Delgaudio has employed some of his aides as campaign workers.

The town hall meeting was held in place of a previously scheduled board meeting at which Supervisor Shawn Williams (R – Broad Run) had announced he would move to have Delgaudio suspended from his committee assignments pending the outcome of the investigation.



## Committees at a Glance, continued from page 5

**Committees at a Glance** informs our readers about the inner workings of local government and how actions and decisions impact our everyday lives.

- The eaves/overhangs look flimsy and they would like to see more detail for visual interest.
- Suggest metal roof as opposed to shingle for character appeal;
- Rotate clubhouse utilities for visual reasons since the utilities side is facing Hirst Road;
- Fencing for clubhouse/pool is not indicated;
- Elevations of building lack depth with little visual relief;
- Proposed siding is least time-honored material – the materials they want to use are on the discouraged material list. (Mr. Piper stated he “would like to see it something that provides more substance.”);
- The amenities proposed by the developer at this meeting, said Mr. Piper, “have low probability considering the site plan does not provide space for it.”;
- Buffer was not sufficient, and they need to create a large buffer to the stream;

- Development is heavily oriented to the automobile and pedestrian access is limited both on site as well as off site, and, they don't meet the guideline standards;
- Mr. Piper inquired as to the elevation change from the clubhouse to the back buildings, but no civil engineer was present and the question could not be answered.

Developer Presentation: The scale of the complex will be “as residential as possible and will be a new generation of rental homes offering a well thought out lifestyle” offering high end living with granite and stainless steel appliances. The pool will have sprayers for kids and outdoor kitchens and fire pits (they showed pictures of an existing Nusbaum property that had a high end pool with pergolas and high end amenities as part of their presentation.) “The apartments will be perfect for empty nesters and families.” The siding would be commercial grade vinyl with some cement siding under the eaves of the building and soffits of the stairs. The brick would be a tumbled red brick with color-matched mortar.

There was no mention by the developer of any affordable/tax-credit status. When asked about using higher end materials for roof and siding, the developer said it would be “significantly higher financially.”

## New Auction Company In Western Loudoun

Auctions on Main, a live auction company in downtown Purcellville, is accepting consignments beginning in 2013. For the home or business with unused items, or those looking to furnish or equip their place, auctions are the perfect solution for buyers and sellers. Buyers can find bargains on previously owned items, all under one roof.

Auctions sells just about anything – one never knows what unique item will be discovered.

Buyers can browse a photo gallery online, which features many of the items being auctioned that week. Sellers eliminate the hassle of selling through the classifieds. Auctions on Main does all the advertising, qualifies the buyer, sells the item and processes the funds. Most importantly, sellers preserve their privacy and save time in finding potential buyers.

Since all items are sold ‘as is,’ buyers can attend scheduled previews to examine seller items prior to bidding. Both buyers and sellers seek fair market value, which is best achieved at auctions.

Auctioneer Mark Albright says, “Auctions represent ‘what the market will bear’ for a particular item today.” He adds: “We live in the most affluent county in the country and people here are always on the move. Folks need a place to turn their quality goods into cash, whether they are relocating for a job or moving into a retirement community.”

Estate liquidation can be especially chal-

lenging for families. “Just about anything can be sold at an auction – real estate, farm equipment, home furnishings, collections – you name it. We’ll come in and take good care of you.”

Auctions on Main also looks forward to holding ‘No-Work’ fundraisers for local non-profit organizations.

Members can bring items to consign and proceeds will go toward their organization. Hoping to contribute to making Purcellville a destination for buyers seeking a historic downtown shopping experience, Auctions on Main joins a collection of unique shop owners that specialize in vintage, antique and recycled items. Auctions naturally have the feel of an event due to the energy of its buyers, competing for an item. Albright adds, “If you’ve ever felt the exhilaration of winning a bid on E-bay, you’ll love a live auction.”

*Auctions on Main Auction Company is locally owned and operated, specializing in live auctions. Located ½ mile west of historic downtown Purcellville, interested parties can sign up for news and event notifications at [www.auctionsonmain.com](http://www.auctionsonmain.com). Mark Albright, Auctioneer, VA License #2907003884. For more information, please visit [www.auctionsonmain.com](http://www.auctionsonmain.com). Contact Claire Escobar, Media Relations PO Box 468 Round Hill, VA 20142 Tel: 540-441-7635; [info@auctionsonmain.com](mailto:info@auctionsonmain.com).*

## Letters to the Editor, continued from page 5

best interest of Purcellville because this area does not have the infrastructure needed to support a high-density population.

Due to its location near one of the town's two exits to State Hwy 7, Hirst Road is one of the primary roads leading into and out of Purcellville. During both the morning and evening rush hours, Hirst Road is inundated with traffic. In the morning, town residents experience significant delays and must wait several traffic light cycles at the corner of Hirst and Berlin Turnpike just to reach Highway 7. In the afternoon, this problem is significantly worse. After 4pm, when Loudoun Valley High School dismisses and employees from the offices and businesses on Hirst and Bailey Lane are leaving work, it is common for the back up on Hirst Road to reach past Maple, and for Maple itself to be backed up towards the high school. There is simply no room for any additional traffic. Having 500 people live at this intersection, in addition to those who already live and work in the area, simply will not work.

What adds to this problem is the fact that there is no reasonable way to expand Hirst Road, either. The road is too close to Highway 7 to add lanes to its north. To add lanes to its south, the road would ironically need to take away space from the proposed apartment complex. Also, because the fire station is build very close to Hirst, any expansion of Hirst would require razing the new fire station and rebuilding it further

back on the property. Additional infrastructure needs, such as water and other utilities will be a significant cost to the town to develop. The additional traffic will also be a safety risk to the town's many residents and visitors who cross Hirst Road daily on the W&OD trail.

Purcellville's population, based on the 2010 Census, was 7,727 people spread over 1,536 acres (2.4 square miles). To build an apartment complex that would house approximately 500 people, the Town would be adding almost 6.5 percent to its population on a property that covers less than 1 percent of the town limits. This would place significant strain on the roads and other infrastructure supporting this area.

The Town of Purcellville did the right thing by zoning this land as CM-1 for light commercial use when the Comprehensive Plan was developed. This would be a much more manageable use of the land, which would involve no increase in population and a small increase in infrastructure use by employees and customers of any businesses. Adding 500 permanent residents to the intersection of Hirst and Maple puts a significant strain on an area that is not built for it. – Kate & Kyle Struckmann

Purcellville

### Joshua's Hands Barn Need Help

Dear Editor:

Many lives were impacted by Hurricane Sandy. We know that many of you, like us

have financially supported efforts to help those in the Northeast who will be recovering for years to come. If you have not given, we strongly encourage you to do so through Samaritan's Purse – they are doing a great work. You can donate time or money and know that you're making a difference.

Here in Virginia, this 200+ year-old barn lost its roof and doors.

This barn has been the center of Joshua's Hands Fall Festival for years in Loudoun County. Although our loss does not compare to those who have lost homes, it is still a loss. We know so many of you have giving hearts. We're placing this need before you - like the Walmart principal. Many small gifts can get this big project done.

We plan to use this wonderful structure as a heritage arts center – for quilting, weaving, spinning and clogging classes. Our major project is quilts for wounded warriors.

Without the roof and doors, the structure is at the mercy of the elements and will not survive. Our long-range restoration plan has to be kicked into action sooner than we anticipated. Will you help us?

We've set up a fundraiser through [www.youcaring.com/other/hurricanesandy-barn/33545](http://www.youcaring.com/other/hurricanesandy-barn/33545) – Hurricane Sandy: Barn Renovation.

You can make a donation of any amount to help us save/restore the barn. Donations are tax deductible as allowed by law.



Thank you for helping in our time of need. If you are a local carpenter willing to help, contact us at [info@joshuahands.org](mailto:info@joshuahands.org).

– Joyce Guthrie, Joshua's Hands  
[www.joshuahands.org](http://www.joshuahands.org)

## Solar, continued from page 15

Mrs. Virginia Stevens conducted research on the science of solar energy. They presented findings at the ceremony. Their work was an outstanding demonstration of “STEM” principles, the study of science, technology, engineering and mathematics.

Blue Ridge Middle School principal Mr. Bell said, “The solar poles are a wonderful addition to our campus. The poles themselves, and what they symbolize to the kids, carry Loudoun's message of always doing what's best for kids.”

The Blue Ridge Middle School is also the first middle school in Loudoun to earn an Energy Star Award, and only one of 5 middle schools in the Commonwealth to receive this award in 2012.



# Nothing Creates Better Memories Than Holiday Cookies

Some of our favorites ...



### Anise Pfeffernusse

1 cup sugar  
1 stick butter & 1 stick margarine (or two sticks of butter)  
1 cup molasses  
1/4 cup strong coffee (dissolve 1 tsp baking soda in coffee)

1 tsp each cinnamon, cloves & anise oil  
1/2 cup flour

Directions: Cream sugar & shortening; add molasses, mix & then add coffee with

soda & mix well. Add some of the flour, spices & anise oil & mix well & then add rest of flour mixing well. Makes a stiff dough. Refrigerate overnight or more (put in 9x9 dish with wax paper on top & bottom). When ready to bake, cut dough into long strip & roll into thin cigar & then slice off small pieces so you have round slices. (Use flour on board & hands when rolling dough.) Place on greased cookie sheet & bake 12 -16 mins @ 325°. Keep in air-tight container – they freeze well. Andrea Thomas, Purcellville, Va

### Buttery Sugar Cookies

2 sticks (1 cup) unsalted butter, softened  
1 cup sugar  
1/2 teaspoon salt

1 large egg  
1 teaspoon pure vanilla extract

2 cups all-purpose flour  
1 cup coarse sanding sugar

Directions: Beat together butter, sugar, and salt in a large bowl with an electric mixer until pale and fluffy. Beat in egg and vanilla. Reduce speed to low, then mix in flour. Halve dough and form each half into a disk, then wrap in wax

paper. Put each disk in a plastic bag and chill until firm enough to roll into balls, about 1 hour. Heat oven to 350°. Line baking sheets with parchment paper. Bake and decorate cookies: While oven heats, work with 1 piece of dough. Roll 1 level tablespoon of dough into a ball, then roll in coarse sugar. (If dough becomes too soft to roll easily into balls, quick-chill in the freezer or chill in the refrigerator.) Place balls 2 inches apart on a lined baking sheet and flatten into 2-inch rounds. Bake cookies until bottoms are golden, 12 to 15 minutes. Barbara Sloan, Middleburg



### Ginger Snaps

3/4 cup butter or shortening  
1 cup sugar  
1 tsp. cinnamon

1 tsp. cloves  
1 tsp. ginger  
1 egg  
Directions: Cream above well with mixer and add:  
4 Tablespoons molasses  
2 cup flour  
2 tsp. baking soda (scant)  
Mix well. Make into small balls & shake in bag of sugar. Lightly grease cookie sheets for 1st batch only. Bake at 350° @ 14-15 mins. Andrea Thomas, Purcellville, Va

## Other Assessor's Office Issues, continued from page 19

However, the county ordinance creating the assessor position specifies that the position report to the County Administrator or his designee. Changes to that reporting structure would require an amendment to the county ordinances; no such amendment appears in the public record. Further, a copy of former County Assessor Todd Kaufman's 2011 Performance Assessment names County Administrator Tim Hemstreet as his supervisor.

According to GRC Chairman Tom Julia, irrespective of whether the assessor reported to the board or to the County Administrator, "he is still a creature of the Board." As the County Administrator prepares the annual budget and proposes the tax rate to fund it, the Commission's con-

cerns regarding "the potential for impropriety in the political manipulation of the tax burden" remain. Splitting those responsible for setting the tax rate from those who calculate the value of the assets taxed makes good business sense.

Former Supervisor and Finance Committee Chairman Jim Burton (I-Blue Ridge) disagreed. Pointing out that the Commissioner of Revenue is also an elected official, he commented, "When you're dealing with establishing the tax base, that's always a very touchy subject. With the County Assessor currently being managed and evaluated by the County Administrator, that's about as far from politics as you can get."

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## Sushi ... "Tails" From the Barnyard – What a Beautifully Bright Year

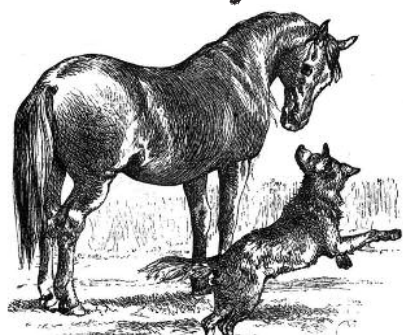
It's me again Sushi, the brave and mighty Cairn Terrier.

Oh, to ride to the cry of the hound on a crisp winter day. Oh, to ride on a grand horse through vast Virginia farmland. Oh, to settle in by a running creek of clear waters and soak in the beauty of the hills.

A year has come and almost gone. Winter, spring, summer, fall. November is over, December is here and a full moon lights up the hills as I lay here on the front porch of the big white farmhouse. Nights are growing colder and right now it is 32 degrees, a slight breeze and getting chillier.

I jumped down off the farm porch and headed towards the ancient pine trees to make my place for the night and to keep

**Nellie ... let's go brighten  
Sushi's year!**



watch for those nasty red fox, the sly ones. (Mrs. B. has her last 100 baby ducklings growing out for the winter season and I can tell you, she is not interested in feeding the fox population.)

I love cold cozy nights like this as the tales begin to weave and spin. For now, Needle Nose Nellie the border collie has trotted towards me, along with Lynden's Sadie Hawkins, that fancy prancing farm pony.

Sadie, as gracefully as a horse or pony can, has plopped her body down and onto the bed of grass under the feathery boughs of the ancient pine trees. Quickly, Nellie and I are curled up against her soft belly – it's good thing to have warm fuzzy friends on a night like this.

All was quiet, only the trickling sound of the Beaver Dam Creek and the creaking sway of hardwood branches as the moon filtered through their canopy gently playing on the hills yonder. Sadie has stretched her thick neck around towards her belly gently snorting her warm breath upon Nellie and me, and she has asked the million-dollar question that started a grand conversation between us farm friends.

Sushi, Nellie, asked Sadie, what do you love most about the Virginia countryside? To start, wasn't it brilliant today when the hounds and riders galloped through the

farm? Such excitement!

Yes, I said, when the hounds and horses come through I am transported back, and I feel ... timeless. Memories blend and steep into a very sweet cup of tea representing the past year.

How so?, said Nellie. Well, I said (puffing myself up a bit as I am quite the expert on all farm things) ... *Just about a year ago* I helped welcome a tiny little white thing (a just ounces big Chihuahua puppy) to the farm family, and announced I had found my new "sun spot" on the freshly constructed farm patio ... *In the spring* I talked about chasing fireflies just for the fun of it, digging worms and getting my paws as muddy as mud could be, and listening to Freddy Frog and Tommy Toad singing amphibious songs by the light of the moon ... *as we approached the deepest temperatures of the summer* I must have been suffering from a self-important form of heat exhaustion, because I told the bittersweet story of myself as a "the mer-dog." My foolish (and some might say reckless) seaside self who swam in the ocean waves and got a little too close to danger, only to be rescued by a real and genuine good hearted "mer" - a real mermaid – named Angel of Light ... *and, this past fall* I recounted how all of the farm animals banded together to ward off an eagle - our nation-

al bird and deserving of respect, but still a wild animal intent on eating one of our farm animals!

Puppies, family, fireflies, mermaids, soaring eagles ... oh, yes, what a beautifully bright year it was here in the Virginia countryside. What a beautiful and nourishing cup of tea. What a beautifully bright year, despite the difficulties which I see, now, as tests of both character and togetherness. Farm togetherness.

I have to tell you. I think the Lord brought us Thanksgiving and Christmas so that we could first count our blessings and give thanks and then give back to all who have meant so much to us. Timeless thanks and giving back.

Nellie ... Sadie (with your warm belly that now helps me drift off to sleep) ... Mrs. B ... Mr. B ... all of the girls and all of the farm animals I am Sushi the Mighty Carin Terrier, but more than that, I am so grateful to be a part of this wild and wonderful farm unit - my family forever, my sweet, timeless cup of tea.

*Come visit my Master, Elaine Boland and the farm crew at Fields of Athenry Farm, directions at [www.fieldsofathenryfarm.com](http://www.fieldsofathenryfarm.com).*



### Ask Dr. Mike, continued from page 2

understand your own needs as a parent rather than being too direct with what you think she is doing wrong. You may think she is an overly liberal parent, but she may think she is a great parent. When speaking to your sister, you could also suggest some outings for your niece and her boyfriend when they are with you. If there is time, perhaps they could have a date day in DC where the two of them could explore the city as a couple. This way they can have their alone and away time together without any lines being crossed in your home. You could even be that super cool Aunt that organizes a folder of possible activities and things to see for them in DC or more locally.

**Dr. Mike, My son's principal, Ms. Kathleen Hwang, of Sanders Corner Elementary School was killed this past week when she was hit by a car while crossing the street. We told our son about the news, and he is very upset. He is so upset that he doesn't want to return to school on Monday. Do you have an advice on how to get us through this difficult time? – L in Loudoun County**

L, First of all, Ms. Hwang's tragic death is a tremendous loss to the community. She was an excellent principal, and was very well liked by her colleagues and students. We all process traumatic news differently, and while there are some well proven predictable stages for loss and grief, expect your son to experience a varied set of emotions over the coming days and weeks as he processes and makes sense what has happened.

As an elementary school child, I imagine that the tragedy has initially brought on very real fear and anxiety for him, as well as sadness, worry and perhaps shock. Prior to sit-

ting down with him to discuss what has happened, be aware of your own emotions. You do not want to burden your son with your own upset, so be prepared in advance for the heavy conversations on the topic that may still come. Also, engage openly in communication and be curious about what he is feeling and thinking. Your son is relying on you to be a pillar of support for him to lean on right now, and he will also need your full interest and investment in him. Do not be concerned if and when your son's emotions fluctuate inasmuch as this is not uncommon after a traumatic event. You also want to validate your son's emotions, and you might even consider talking about your own upsetting feelings in support of his. It is okay if you do not have all of the answers for your son; it is more important that he sees you feelings badly alongside him. Also, you might want to model some coping skills for him. For example, you can encourage your son to practice visualization and relaxation strategies to calm himself. The two of you may practice some of those strategies together. Progressive Muscle Relaxation (PMR) is an easy to do and excellent calming and centering strategy that you could research on-line. Remember, there is an old saying that "Time heals all wounds," so try to keep things in perspective. The upset your son is experiencing now is temporary and should pass over time. If, however, he continues to struggle with his feelings several weeks out, I recommend you contact a child psychologist to determine if your son requires therapy.

I would encourage you to send your son to school on Monday, since avoiding school may only complicate his feelings further. It is my understanding that Loudoun County Pub-

lic Schools Superintendent Edgar B. Hatrick has already notified parents of Ms. Hwang's passing via email. So your son is not alone in the news. I am sure that many of his classmates and friends are experiencing very similar feelings to those of your son's. Hatrick also intends to have a Crisis Resource Team on duty Monday morning for students in need of additional support.

**Dr. Mike, I am afraid my husband and I have raised three very spoiled and entitled children. This year our 12-year-old daughter has requested an iPhone 5, and her older sister would like two (not one) Tory Burch handbags. Our eldest is in college and would like a pair of \$250 tennis shoes. My husband and I don't even buy dress shoes that cost that much for ourselves! My husband and I feel that it seems to be getting harder and harder to teach our kids the value of a dollar, especially when so many of their friends have the latest of everything. Thoughts on helping us with a reality check for our kids without coming off like Scrooge or the Grinch? – M in Loudoun County**

M, Whether you want to blame it on the Internet and the globalization of the world (and products), the superficiality of Hollywood and the media, or something else, it is true that our children have become increasingly expensive to gift for. Rather than focusing on teaching the value of the dollar, however, why not proactively focus more on the value of time and charity in your home this holiday season. In my opinion, time is the most valuable commodity that we can give our children as parents. You could come up with some new holiday traditions where you can all enjoy meaningful time together. For exam-

ple, you could go skiing or snowboarding at one of the nearby resorts. You could cut down your own tree together. You could visit DC and the museums for the day or take a long day trip someplace more rural. Charity, or the active of giving, might also be something for you and your family to consider this year in addition to gifts. Volunteer Loudoun and Volunteer Fairfax are two great organizations with volunteer opportunities for children, teens and families. Their information is available on-line. And remember, modeling is one of the best parenting tools for eliciting change. By modeling balanced spending and saving for yourselves as adults (not just over the holiday season but over the year), you can hopefully begin to challenge your children's view of material possessions. Instituting an allowance can also be a good way of teaching children how to be productive, responsible and resourceful. Instead of simply purchasing things for your kids, they can instead work and save for the items. The sense of accomplishment and pride that comes from earning your own money and making your own purchases can be wonderful for a child's self-esteem and independence. With a few tactful adjustments this year as parents, there is no need to come off as Scrooge or the Grinch!

*Michael Oberschneider "Dr. Mike" is the Founder and Director of Ashburn Psychological Services (APS), a private mental health clinic comprised of 12 MD and PhD level mental health clinician. He and his team are here to serve our Loudoun children, teens and adults. To learn more about Dr. Mike and the APS team, please visit: [www.ashburnpsych.com](http://www.ashburnpsych.com) or call (703) 723-2999.*



*Hannah James, continued from page 9*

dents have their own unique interests that make or break colleges for them. Community and tradition are two very important factors junior Kate Scott takes into consideration. "I want to be a part of an institution with tradition. I have a soft spot for history and rich traditions that are passed down."

Searching for the perfect place to start the future is a very stressful thing. Some students look at dozens of universities, before narrowing down a select few. Others know

that they are going to follow in their parents' footsteps, but have no idea what they want to do with their lives. But despite all of the fears, there is always something for everyone, a hidden niche where students find the field that captures their interest and passion.

*Hannah James is a junior at Potomac Falls High School, and a member of the GSA Student Board.*

*Algonkian, continued from page 14*

to get without traveling a good many miles westward – at least to my knowledge.

Standing on a little point, I even had the sensations I'd experienced decades before in what was then called the Boundary Waters Canoe Area- split between Northern Minnesota and Canada (they added the word 'Wilderness' to the title at some point, which I found kind of superfluous). And that's saying something – because up there, the quiet is truly deafening – and is sometimes split by the howling of wolves. And, I don't know – there's probably a few (wily, I hope) coyotes hanging out in Algonkian.

So – if there's a place in Loudoun County, Virginia that can offer me that kind of

experience, I say that's a very good thing. It'll certainly contribute to the list of factors that brought me here in the first place. I think I'll stay awhile.

Oh yeah – I almost forgot: for those of you who need more than a chance to just chill next to the river's edge, there's other stuff you can do at Algonkian: golf, boating of all kinds, waterpark activities, hiking, fishing, cottage rentals, meetings, banquets – heck – you can even get married here.

Think I'll put the tone on the back burner, darling. Give me the River's edge.

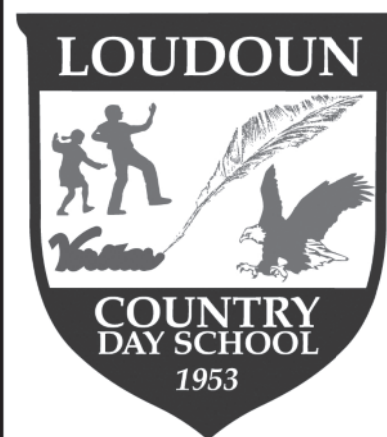
There. Can almost hear those wolves.

*Year End, continued from page 16*

Hoping for a little snow cover to provide a warm blanket for perennials and bulbs, and some time by the fire to catch up on great garden books for all of us. Happy holidays.

*Donna Williamson is a master gardener, garden designer, and garden coach. She has*

*taught gardening and design classes at the State Arboretum of Virginia, Oatlands in Leesburg, and Shenandoah University. Author of The Virginia Gardener's Companion: An Insider's Guide to Low-Maintenance Gardening in Virginia, contact Donna at [dwwinegardening.com](http://dwwinegardening.com), 540-877-2002.*



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*All-American Bowl, continued from page 8*

cal history," said John Myers, Director of Marketing, Army Marketing and Research Group. "The skills and strengths necessary to be a successful band member are mirrored in Army Strong Soldiers. Only the strongest wear the Army colors, which is why we are proud to honor all of our 2013 U.S. Army All-American Band members and congratulate each of them on their selection."

For more than a decade, the U.S. Army All-American Bowl has been the Nation's premier high school football game, serving as the preeminent launching pad for America's future college and NFL stars. Percy Harvin, Jamaal Charles, Patrick Peterson, and Andrew Luck all made their national debuts as U.S. Army All-Americans.



*Quarterback Ryan Burns and Defensive Lineman Jonathan Allen from Stone Bridge High School in Ashburn, pose for a photo after being officially named to the East squad for the 2013 U.S. Army All-American Bowl.*

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By letting you win big now, I will win at the end of the year. I'm betting that if I make you an offer that is "irresistible" (at least it should be if your furnace or air conditioner is over 10 years old) I will accomplish three things:

1. I can pay my professional staff to work instead of not paying them to sit at home on slow days.
2. I will cover my rent, utilities, insurance and taxes.
3. I will reward customers like you that make this possible.

If I can accomplish these three objectives, and provide extra work during the next month, I will be a winner.

### **Keep Reading To Learn How To Get A Premier or Optimum Home Comfort System for Much Less**

By putting this air conditioner and furnace package together, I was able to buy both the air conditioner and the furnace for less and pass it on exclusively to customers like you! So, if you buy one of these 33 new premium high efficiency air conditioning packages (but only if one of the four sizes I have will fit your house, of course), I am offering you the matching furnace and all I ask for is the \$2,515\* in labor and material costs for installation.

### **Perfect Fit For Your Home**

Just call me at 540-349-8030 anytime. I will come out and measure your home (and determine the availability of the proper size). Don't forget, I only have 33 matched systems in four sizes. When they are gone, this remarkable offer ends also. I will show you the retail price on the system that fits your home. Then, I will show you the substantial savings available now. And it will include all labor and installation materials. Nothing is left out!

### **You Can Buy With NO Cash**

Consider this...if you decide to make monthly investments instead of paying cash, the entire amount of your payments might be offset by the savings on your utility bills over the life of the system. It's like "having your cake and eating it too".

### **Why This Offer Can't Last**

You must act before November 15th. Here are two reasons why:

1. I only have four sizes available. When all of the matched air conditioners and furnaces are installed in a particular size, that's it. There are no more available at this price.
2. If I have any of the 33 systems left on November 15th (although I doubt I will), this offer still ends.

Here's why...

The only reason I am making this great offer is to boost our sales during this slow period. My business always starts to improve when the fall cold air hits, and I can sell them at regular price during peak season and still come out ahead. Give us a call now at 540-349-8030 and we will set an appointment for your no-obligation survey.

Thank you for reading this rather long letter. I hope you will take advantage of this incredible offer.

*Jim Dean*

Jim Dean

General Manager

License# VA2705062314A



**540-349-8030**



Always On Time...or You Don't Pay A Dime!® Applies to scheduled repair and maintenance service appointments only. \*Receive a 95% high efficiency gas furnace for \$2,515 when you purchase a premier air conditioner. Limited quantity. Taxes extra. \*\*Manufacturer or third party warranty coverage. Warranties require equipment to be maintained in accordance with the manufacturers recommendations. Some limitations may apply. See store for details. Cannot be combined with any other offers. ©2012 Clockwork IP, LLC.-



Expires 11/15/12

**\$75 OFF Any Completed Repair**



Expires 11/15/12

**\$75 OFF Any Completed Repair**



Expires 11/15/12

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## Preventing Holiday Fires

The approaching holiday season brings traditions, parties, shopping, entertaining – and potential danger. The latest statistics available from the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) show the holidays are a high-risk time for home fires.

- Christmas trees are responsible for 240 home fires each year, and other holiday decorations are the cause of another 1,170 fires.
- Thanksgiving Day sees almost a threefold increase in cooking-related fires.
- Cooking fires are almost twice as likely to happen on Christmas Day as on non-holidays.

Prevention and common sense can help keep homes and families safe during the holidays and throughout the year. Here are some sobering facts about holiday fires and tips to help keep your home, friends and family safe throughout the holiday season.

- Christmas Tree Fire Facts:
  - 33 percent of tree fires are caused by electrical problems; 13 percent involve decorative lights; 42 percent

occur on the 12 days from Dec. 23 through Jan. 3. Check wiring on lights for breaks and wear. Replace worn strings and don't exceed manufacturer guidelines for connecting multiple strands. Don't leave tree lights plugged in when you are away from home or when you go to bed. Keep live trees well watered to reduce the chance of a fire.

- Holiday Decoration Fire Facts:
  - 45 percent of all holiday fires involve candles; that number rises to 56 percent in Dec. Use flameless candles. If you do use traditional candles, burn them in sturdy candleholders, well away from drapes and other flammable materials, and never leave them unattended or allow them to burn down to less than one inch in length.
  - 48 percent of all decoration fires start because the decoration is too close to a heat source. Keep all decorations away from heat sources like radiators, portable heaters, fireplaces, etc.
- Cooking Fire Facts:
  - Cooking fires on Thanksgiving Day exceed the daily

average by 272 percent. Supervise items on the stovetop. 58 percent of kitchen fires involve ranges; homes with electric cooktops have a higher risk of fire than homes with gas cooktops.

– Cooking fires on Christmas Day and Christmas Eve exceed the daily average by 96 percent and 89 percent respectively. Keep flammable items – potholders, packaging, wrapping, wooden utensils, loose clothing – away from the stovetop. And, don't let lack of sleep or alcohol consumption affect your ability to concentrate on preparing the meal.



*Information provided by the Purcellville-Area SERVPRO® Restoration Specialists.*

### Propane, continued from page 6

*my home I was told that my tank was owned by the propane company. I wasn't happy. How did that happen?*

Answer: When the builder built your home rather than purchasing a 500 or 1,000 gallon tank he had your propane company provide it without charge with the requirement that you, the homeowner, must purchase propane from only that propane company indefinitely. It is similar to purchasing a new car, for example, a Ford, and being told that for the life of the auto you can only purchase gasoline from one company, for example, Shell. Typically, year after year homeowners who do not own their propane tank pay significantly more for propane than homeowners who own their tank. Company owned tanks were a good deal for your builder and the propane supplier, but a rotten deal for you, the consumer. In over 25-years of building custom homes in the area we never installed a company owned tank. All the custom homes we built in the area the homeowner owned their tank when the home was completed.

*Question: Can any propane company fill up my tank if I do not own it? What alternative do I have?*

Answer: No, only the company who owns your tank can fill it. Your best course of action is to negotiate the purchase of the tank with the company that owns your tank. Typically, your savings will pay for the tank purchase in a 2-3 year period. The sooner you own your own tank, the sooner you can start saving on your fuel bill.

*Question: Is propane clean energy?*

Answer: Propane, along with natural gas, are two of the cleanest burning fossil-fuels. Electrical generation plants throughout the Country are slowing being converted from burning coal to natural gas and propane due to their abundance and price. Propane produces 50% harmful emissions as home heating oil. If propane didn't exist, we would have to invent it. No other substance comes close when it comes to energy density, ease of handling or flexibility.

*About the Author: Dale Schulz is the President of Hunt Country Propane, www.huntcountrypropane.com, located in Middleburg.*

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## December Fun At The Carver Center

*The Carver Center, located at 200 Willie Palmer Way in Purcellville, has the following special events planned for December ...*

### Looking for Beginning Writers

This six-week long class starts on Dec. 5. It meets the first and third Wednesdays in the Carver Library from 10:30 am – 12 pm. The class will teach you how to present your ideas, how to structure your story and how to produce a manuscript that you will be proud to have your children and grandchildren read. Novelists Jean Kipfer and Dixie Hallaj will lead the group. You don't need any writing experience to join, just an interest in trying out the process and in meeting others with similar interests. To register, call 571-258-3400.

### Miracle on 21st Street: A Local Shopping Extravaganza Just for Seniors

Enjoy holiday shopping with friends. Meet at 9:45 a.m. on Friday, Dec. 7 at the Carver Center for your itinerary. It is a list of all of the participating establishments and any needed coupons. Travel by Carver bus or drive yourself to 21st Street in downtown Purcellville. Spend the morning shopping quaint specialty shops where you will enjoy special one-day-only discounts and delicious treats. Anyone interested in participating should pre-register by Wednesday, Dec. 5 by calling 571-258-3400.



### Presentation: Is Your Jewelry Box a Treasure Chest?

On Wednesday, Dec. 12 from 12:30-2 p.m. a certified gemologist from NovaGold will discuss the market for antique and estate jewelry, precious metals, diamonds, watches and coins. Learn how these items are valued and about options to sell, redesign or keep family heirlooms. Everyone is welcome to bring one item for a free evaluation.

### Carver Center's Annual Holiday Party

Come enjoy a delicious mid-day dinner followed by Carver's very own play production from 12-2 p.m. on Friday, Dec. 21. It is a Christmas comedy, starring a combination of Carver members and Carver staff. The play is being directed by Mary Long of the Big Bad Drama Company, with the help of her trusty assistant Lisa Moen. To register or for directions to Carver Center, please call 571-258-3400.

### Round Hill Volunteer Fire Department Hosts Santa

The Round Hill Volunteer Fire Department will escort Santa to the tree lighting ceremony at the town park on Saturday, Dec. 8. Following this, the RHVFD will host a Spaghetti Dinner With Santa at the firehouse from 5:30pm-7 pm. Cost is \$5 for adults and \$3 for children under 12. Spaghetti, meatballs, salad, garlic bread, corn muffins, dessert and a drink. The fire department will also be collecting Toys For Tots and non-perishable food items for the local food banks.

### Toys for Tots Campaign

Above Ground Winery is collecting new, unwrapped toys for the Marine Corps Toys for Tots Campaign. Most needed are pre-teen girls items. You may drop off gifts at 105 E. Main Street, Thursday through Monday from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. Last day of collection is December 10. For more information, please call the tasting room at (540) 579-4467.



### Wild Loudoun, continued from page 8

moment. Female wood duck joining male wood duck in the marsh below while the babies, one by one, launch themselves from their nursery nest into the world beyond.

Wood ducks are here in western Loudoun County a good part of the time. The Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy reports that wood ducks have turned up in their Christmas Bird Count. The birds' species that do migrate do so in search of food, but not because our human calendars tell them it is time. When food begins to get scarce wood ducks will take wing and relocate to, among other places, the swamplands of Louisiana, Florida and Arkansas to provide the food, shelter and protections they need. Winter populations also exist in Texas, New Mexico and elsewhere.

In the bird world, with its wide variety of delicate or showy feathers, sweet calls and soaring flight patterns, every species is magnificent. But, the male wood duck takes bragging rights as one of the most brilliant. (Wood ducks are so colorful that they have been introduced as "ornamental waterfowl" in parks, zoos, gardens and similar habitats.)

The male's bill is a slender combination of red, white, black and yellow. He is up to just less than 2 feet long and he has a 30-inch wingspan and long head crest. His feathers are white, black, blue, brown, chestnut, green, gray, yellow and red. And, he has "painted" plumage with a dark iridescent head and crest bordered by white and a chestnut breast with white spots. The back, wings and tail are dark and iridescent. His sides are yellow bordered by black and white, and his eyes are red.

Females are a soft, taupe-brown overall with white-streaked under parts and a white

teardrop eye patch. The head is gray, and you see blue/purple patches in her wings. As with many birds, he is built for display and she is built for stealth and seclusion/protection.

Wood ducks eat insects, seeds, nuts and small amphibians such as frogs and tadpoles. They like wooded areas with lots of water – including swamps, ponds, lakes and rivers. Depending on temperature and food sources, they can live year-round in the southeastern United States and are widespread on the west coast and in the Caribbean. During the summer they can be found throughout the northern United States and southern Canada, and in winter these ducks migrate to southwest Texas and Mexico.

And, how do wood ducks sound and behave? Wood ducks have a thin, squeaky whistle and a raspy "quack" ... like many birds they also use threatening hisses. (Males are territorial and will charge competitors.) The wood duck is also known as a "perching duck" – it can be found in trees in the right habitat. It locates its food while swimming, but also moves well on land, searching out food in forests and below trees.

Like some other birds, wood ducks are monogamous. They build their nests in tree cavities and will also use manmade nesting boxes of the appropriate size. Wood ducks lay up to 15 eggs and incubate them for 27-37 days. The female then takes care of the young for 55-70 days until they launch themselves from that tree.

*Our thanks to Ducks Unlimited and the Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy for advice and for providing photos for this article.*

Wood ducks are considered a common summer resident in Loudoun County and are uncommon to rare in the winter.

Most move out of area from the 6th of Nov. through the 9th of March (Source: Virginia's Birdlife @ 2007 by the Virginia Society of Ornithology).

The Field List of the Birds of Maryland @ 1996 by the Maryland Ornithological Society shows them as breeding in every county in Maryland and shows them around at about the same time as the Virginian source. In the winter they are more common in the coastal plain than they are in the Piedmont but we have found them on 8 of our 15 Christmas Bird Counts but never in very large numbers.

For the Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy Bird Atlas we have documented them nest-

ing in almost a 1/3 of the atlas blocks in Loudoun County. Maryland shows them as a nester in every county. While they probably nest throughout Loudoun County, they are pretty shy ... especially when nesting ... and somewhat skittish.

They are cavity nesters and don't always nest near water. I've have had the pleasure, on more than one occasion, of watching families right after they have left their nests walk long distances to the nearest body of water. I've also enjoyed watching them search for appropriate nests on several occasions. The male scouts out sites and then shows them to the female who frequently rejects the first sites he shows her.

– Joe Coleman, Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy

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**540 338-7445 [www.CrookedRunOrchard.com](http://www.CrookedRunOrchard.com)**

Crooked Run Orchard, 37883 Main Street, Purcellville, VA 20132, at the intersection of Business 7 & Route 287. Support your local farm!



# December

☉ **Friday, Dec. 7, Rockin' with Rudolph and Friends**, 7 p.m. at Ida Lee Park Recreation Center. Santa will be on hand for the first 45 minutes. For children up to 8 years old, accompanied by a parent. Pre-registration required. Registration \$16 per child (ages 3 to 8) and \$10 per child (ages 2 and under). Visit [www.idalee.org](http://www.idalee.org).

☉ **Friday, Dec. 7, Lantern Making Workshop and Parade**. Lovettsville Community Center. Workshop is \$8, parade is free. Workshop is 6:30-7:15 p.m. Parade is from 7:30-9 p.m. Go to [www.loudoun.gov/prcs](http://www.loudoun.gov/prcs).

☉ **Friday, Dec. 7 and Saturday, Dec. 8, Lovettsville Museum Christmas Open House**, 4 East Pennsylvania Ave., Lovettsville. On Friday evening, the museum will be open from 5 p.m. until the beginning of the Christmas Tree lighting ceremony. The museum will open on Saturday from 1 to 5 p.m. For more information, visit [www.lovettsvillehistoricalsociety.org](http://www.lovettsvillehistoricalsociety.org).

☉ **Friday, December 7, Emerick Elementary Winter Wonderland**, 4:30-8:30 p.m., 440 South Nursery Avenue, Purcellville. Public is welcome.

☉ **Saturday, Dec. 8, 9th annual Christmas in Purcellville**. Parade starts at noon from the Purcellville Train Station and ends at Loudoun Valley High School. Other activities include breakfast with Santa, a Lego train display, face painting and ornament making. Go to [www.purcellvilleva.gov](http://www.purcellvilleva.gov) for more information.

☉ **Saturday, Dec. 8, Hillsboro Historic Homes Tour and the Annual Holiday Craft Fair at Hillsboro's Old Stone School**, 37098 Charles Town Pike in Hillsboro. Home tour from noon to 6 p.m. Tickets are \$20 at the door (sold at the Old Stone School) or \$15 in advance. Craft fair from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Visit [www.HillsboroVa.org](http://www.HillsboroVa.org) for details.

☉ **Saturday, Dec. 8, Hillsboro Country Christmas Dinner**, 11:30 a.m. to 3 p.m. at Hillsboro United Methodist Church, 37216 Charlestown Pike. Free will offering.

☉ **Saturday, Dec. 8 Round Hill Arts Center block-printed holiday card workshop and tree lighting ceremony**. Workshop runs 1pm - 4 pm. Call 540-338-5022 or go to [www.roundhillartscenter.org](http://www.roundhillartscenter.org) to register. Tree lighting ceremony, sponsored by the Round Hill Junior Women's Group begins at dusk in the town's new park pavilion. Hot chocolate from Savoir Fare, baked goods and crafts from 4pm to 5:30pm. Members of the Woodgrove High School Chorus will also perform holiday songs and Santa will arrive by fire truck. Bring donations of new, unwrapped toys for Toys for Tots, and non-perishable food items to be donated to Loudoun Interfaith Relief.

☉ **Sunday, Dec. 9 Civil War Christmas** - Mt. Zion Historic Park on Rt. 50 east of Gilbert's Corner. The Northern Virginia Regional Park Authority will host members of the 28th Virginia Regiment as they hold a celebration of the holiday just as it would have happened during the Civil War. Research from letters home show some light-hearted glee by one writer in 1861 that "Tomorrow is Christmas and we are not going to drill. We are goin' to keep Christmas and we are goin' to have a little fun ..."

☉ **Saturday, Dec. 15, Breakfast with Santa at the Bluemont Community Center**, 33846 Snickersville Turnpike in Bluemont, 9-11 a.m. Registration required by Dec. 7. Price is \$8. Children 2 and under are admitted free. Visit [www.loudoun.gov/prcs](http://www.loudoun.gov/prcs).

☉ **Saturday, Dec. 15, 10am to 3 pm, Holiday Gift Sale to Benefit Black History and Those Who Have Served**. The historic train station in Purcellville (next to Magnolia's at the Mill restaurant). Antiques, collectibles, jewelry, African art and more. 10% off select items with your purchase of up to \$100 ... 20% off select items with your purchase of \$100 or more. Sponsored by the Lincoln Preservation Foundation and Friends of the Grace Multicultural Center. Call 540.338.4185 for more information.

☉ **Tuesday, Dec. 18, Santa Rock concert featuring Rockroses with a special appearance by Santa**. Lovettsville Community Center, 57 E. Broad Way, 11:15 a.m. to 1 p.m. Admission and refreshments, \$6. Visit [www.loudoun.gov/prcs](http://www.loudoun.gov/prcs) for information.

## Make a Wish With Gabriella

Gabriella Miller was recently diagnosed with a rare and inoperable form of brain cancer. When she learned she qualified for the "Make A Wish" Foundation, she was delighted to submit her wish for a trip to Paris, France. But, Gabriella is the kind of child who doesn't like to get something without giving something back. So, she is asking all of her friends near and far to join her in writing letters to Santa Claus, because, if Macy's receives a total of 1,000,000 Make A Wish letters to Santa before Christmas, the company will donate \$1,000,000 to the Make-A-Wish Foundation.



Gabriella would like you to help her make that happen. Her personal goal is to have her friends write 10,000 letters to Santa that she can personally deliver to Macy's on December 23rd. What makes this endeavor even more remarkable is that Gabriella's family does not even celebrate Christmas - they are Jewish. This little girl is inspiring people of all faiths to stop for a moment, count their blessings and write a quick "Dear Santa" note in support of the Make-A-Wish Foundation, an organization that, "enriches the human experience with hope, strength and joy."

**PLEASE JOIN US FOR COOKIES AT ONE OF THESE MAKE-A-WISH WITH GABRIELLA**

**"DEAR SANTA..." LETTER-WRITING PARTIES!**

**We supply the paper - you supply the good wishes!**

**Saturday, Dec. 8 from 10am - 12pm** (come for 5 minutes or two hours!) at Loudoun Country Day School, 20600 Red Cedar Drive, Leesburg, VA.

**Saturday, Dec. 15 from 10am - 12pm** (come for 5 minutes or two hours!) at Loudoun School for the Gifted, 44675 Cape Court, Unit 105, Ashburn, VA.

If your schedule does not allow you to join us for one of these events, there are two other ways to get your letters to Santa in support of Gabriella's 10,000 letter goal.  
1) Drop the letter off in the big mailbox in the lobby of Loudoun Country Day School (between Dec. 4 - Dec. 18), 20600 Red Cedar Drive, Leesburg, VA ~ [www.lcds.org](http://www.lcds.org)  
2) Mail your letter to: Dear Santa "Make-A-Wish with Gabriella," 20899 McIntosh Place, Leesburg, VA 20175. Pass this on to other groups of children who might want to write letters. For more information, please email [ChrisCroll@aol.com](mailto:ChrisCroll@aol.com). Happy Holidays!

## Holiday Gifts

# Sale

### To Benefit Historic Preservation & Honor Those Who Have Served

- Antiques & Rugs
- Fine African Arts & Crafts
- Rare Collectibles
- Jewelry
- Fine Stationary

**Saturday, Dec. 15, 10am to 3pm**  
**Purcellville's Historic Train Station in Old Downtown**

**10%** off select items, with purchase of up to \$100

**20%** off select items, with purchase of \$100 or more



Sponsored by the Lincoln Preservation Foundation and Friends of the Grace Multicultural Center. Call 540.338.4185 for more information.

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► REAL ESTATE TICKER ►

— By Carl Fischer



**Holiday season softening in the residential market ...**

As is often customary this time of year, most market metrics fell in the month of October. Total sales volume was down 8.5 percent compared to last month, but still, year over year we were up a whopping 38 percent. Days on Market (DOM) continues to decline, which is a great litmus test for pent-up demand.

The ratio of SOLD prices to list, or “asking” prices continues to improve. Inventory of homes available for sale is still shrinking, down nearly 16 percent compared to this month last year.

**A look at Loudoun numbers for September from MRIS:**

October 2012 Real Estate Market Statistics for Loudoun County, VA

Statistic	Values	YoY	MoM
Total Sold Dollar Volume	\$167,898,378	+ 38.35%	- 8.45%
Closed Sales	407	+ 31.29%	- 3.78%
Median Sold Price	\$370,000	+ 4.96%	- 4.88%
Avg Sold Price	\$412,527	+ 5.37%	- 4.85%
Avg Days on Market	60 days	- 25.93%	- 1.64%
Avg Sold to Orig List Ratio	96.79%	+ 1.31%	+ 0.34%

**FHA on the move**

One area of interest that jumped at me this month was a series of articles I ran across focused on imminent changes in process that will have a real impact on buyers of affordable homes in this area.

**Inman news article looks at \$16.3 billion dollar deficit**

In a November 16, 2012 article in this publication, speculation is raised as to whether or not a taxpayer bailout (for the first time in FHA's 78 year history) may be in the offing.

The article went on to say:

*In order to avoid a bailout, FHA will raise annual insurance premiums, sign off on more short sales, streamline sales of foreclosed properties, offer "deeper levels" of payment relief through its loss mitigation program, expand sales of delinquent loans, and, for new loans, reverse a policy instituted in 2011 that canceled required premium payments after loans reached 78 percent of their original value (emphasis mine).*

Next year, FHA plans to raise the annual insurance premium paid by borrowers on an FHA loan by 10 basis points, or 0.1 percent, which is expected to add \$13 a month to the average borrower's monthly payments.

Many buyers look forward to being able to see the Mortgage Insurance Premium as the loan matures, but apparently, that savings may soon be gone.

**And there's more ...**

The article went on to say:

The agency has also vowed to expand its sales of delinquent loans under its Distressed Asset Stabilization Program, committing to sell at least 10,000 such loans per quarter over the next year. Because such sales require investor purchasers to delay foreclosures for a minimum of six months, they represent an opportunity for borrowers to possibly avoid foreclosure while reducing FHA's costs, according to the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), of which FHA is a part.

An upswing in the rate of foreclosed properties may have a temporary “dampening effect” on the upward momentum of home prices, but I suspect that in this area, that impact will be negligible.

Bottom line: it does not look like you'll find a more affordable time than right now to buy your first home, or move up to the home of your dreams.

**Who represents you when you walk into a new-home model?**

It has been some time since I've worked with a significant num-

Continued on page 29

**Kid Scoop** THE AWARD-WINNING PRINT & ONLINE FAMILY FEATURE

“Like” Kid Scoop on Facebook!

**REINDEER GAMES**

Don't let your brain hibernate on winter break! Join in the Reindeer Games and see if you can solve these puzzles designed to boggle your mind!

**Change HOT Into TEA**

Change the word **HOT** into the word **TEA** in just four steps. Change only one letter at a time. Need help? Look at how Randolph changed a **DOG** into a **CAT**.

1	H	O	T
2			
3			
4			
5	T	E	A

Hint: Golfers use the word on line 4.

**Peppermint Puzzler**

This reindeer has a head, antlers, a tail, legs and a body. Can you move just two peppermint sticks to make the reindeer look in the opposite direction?

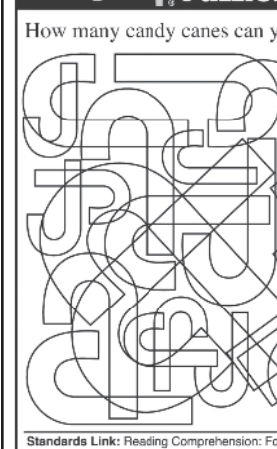


**Food Flight**

Rhoda is doing a little flight practice. Elmer Elf left her favorite treats: apples, carrots and sugar cubes. To help her get the treats, look at each math problem and the numbers next to each treat. Place a number in each empty box so that the problem equals the answer. Use each of these numbers only once. (There is more than one possible solution for each problem.)

$\square - \square + \square - \square = 4$		8 9 3 6
$\square - \square + \square - \square = 7$		5 2 8 4
$\square - \square + \square - \square = 5$		8 7 10 6

**Kid Scoop Puzzler**



**Double Double Word Search**

Find the words in the puzzle, then in this week's Kid Scoop stories and activities.

C	E	T	A	N	R	E	B	I	H
I	H	S	R	E	L	T	N	A	R
R	O	M	O	N	E	Y	M	E	Y
T	S	H	A	R	D	L	I	L	D
E	O	T	I	N	E	N	N	D	O
M	L	A	G	D	Y	D	G	B	
O	V	C	S	E	L	Z	Z	U	P
E	E	A	E	B	R	A	I	N	M
G	E	R	S	R	E	T	N	I	W

**BEYOND Kid Scoop**

**Get In Shape**

Find examples of each of these geometric shapes in your newspaper.

- pentagon
- circle
- square
- trapezoid
- triangle
- rectangle
- octagon

**Which reindeer have trunks?**

ANSWER: The one going on vacation.

**Fill in The Blanks!**

Ask a friend to come up with three nouns (person, place or thing) and three verbs (action words like swim and walk). Use them to fill in the blanks in this story. Read it aloud to share some holiday humor!

NOUN 1: \_\_\_\_\_

NOUN 2: \_\_\_\_\_

NOUN 3: \_\_\_\_\_

VERB 1: \_\_\_\_\_

VERB 2: \_\_\_\_\_

VERB 3: \_\_\_\_\_

Ricky Reindeer wanted to get a special gift for his friend Sadie Squirrel. He walked deep into the forest, and was surprised to find a shiny, new \_\_\_\_\_ in the snow. He picked it up and started to \_\_\_\_\_ back home. He wrapped the gift in \_\_\_\_\_ and put a nice big \_\_\_\_\_ on top. Sadie was thrilled with the gift. She was so happy, she began to \_\_\_\_\_ around in the snow. Ricky was happy, too. So he began to \_\_\_\_\_ merrily while jumping for joy.

Standards Link: Reading Comprehension: Understand text from context clues.

**Chilly Challenge**

Edith Elf wanted to measure the snowfall at the North Pole for one week. She started on Sunday, and stopped the next Saturday. It snowed every day that week. Each day the amount of snow in her bucket doubled. On Saturday, the bucket was full.

On what day of the week was Edith's bucket half full?

ANSWER: It snowed twice as much each day as the day before, so that means that on Friday, Edith's bucket was half full. It doubled that night and was full on Saturday.

**Kid Scoop-doku™**

Complete the grid by using all the letters in the word SLEIGH in each vertical and horizontal row. Each letter should only be used once in each row. Some spaces have been filled in for you.

S	L	E	I	G	H
	I	S			
G		S			
S					
			H	L	
I	E	H	S		

**Write On!**

**Make a Brain Builder**

Make up a holiday math problem that is a story problem. Include the answer. Be sure the holiday is a wintertime holiday.

Example: There was 5 feet of snow on the ground. When the next snowstorm hit, the new storm dropped 3 feet of snow. How much snow is on the ground now? (Answer: 8 feet.)



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Amy Smith, continued from page 13

mise might be achieved by extending the lower tax rates for all, but increasing tax revenue by limiting the deductions to high-income households.

#### Automatic spending cuts or “sequestration”

The failure of the deficit reduction super committee to reach agreement back in November 2011 automatically triggered \$1.2 trillion in broad-based spending cuts over a multiyear period beginning in 2013 (the formal term for this is “automatic sequestration”). The cuts are to be split evenly between defense spending and nondefense spending and are projected to equal about \$109 billion in 2013 (Source: Office of Management and Budget, “OMB Report Pursuant to the Sequestration Transparency Act of 2012 (P.L. 112-155),” September 14, 2012). Although Social Security, Medicaid, and Medicare benefits are exempt, and cuts to Medicare provider payments cannot be more than 2%, most discretionary programs including education, transportation, and energy programs will be subject to the automatic cuts.

As with the expiring tax breaks, new legislation is required to avoid the automatic cuts. But while it’s difficult to find anyone who believes that the across-the-board cuts are a good idea, there’s been no consensus on what to do. The challenge for political leaders will be to come up with a more palatable set of cost saving measure, or an alternate deficit reduction plan.

#### The debt ceiling

While it hasn’t received the same level of attention given to the expiring tax provision and the automatic spending cuts, there’s another problem looming—the government is running out of money again. The federal government will likely hit its borrowing limit (currently set at approximately \$16.4 trillion) sometime before the end of the year, although certain “extraordinary measures” can be implemented to allow the government to meet its obligations into early 2013. (Source: U.S. Department of the Treasury, Treasury Assistant Secretary for Financial Markets Matthew Rutherford November 2012, Quarterly Refunding Statement, October 31, 2012.)

It was a little over a year ago that the last debt ceiling impasse led to the creation of the deficit reduction supercommittee and, ultimately, the imposition of the automatic cuts described above. It remains to be seen whether a new debt ceiling increase is included as part of a larger agreement encompassing the expiring tax provisions and impending spending cuts, or whether it is debated on its own.

*Amy V. Smith Wealth Management, LLC, CFP, CIMA, is an independent firm. Amy offers securities through Raymond James Financial Services, Inc., member FINRA/SIPC. Her office is located at 161 Fort Evans Road, NE, Ste 345, Leesburg, VA 20176. (703-669-5022). www.amysmithwealthmanagement.com. The opinions and recommendations are those of the columnist. Contents prepared by Broadridge Investor Communication Solutions, Inc.. Copyright 2006-2012. All rights reserved. The information contained in this report does not purport to be a complete description of the securities, markets, or developments referred to in this material. The information has been obtained from sources considered to be reliable but we do not guarantee that the foregoing material is accurate or complete. Any information is not a complete summary or statement of all available data necessary for making an investment decision and does not constitute a recommendation.*

### ► REAL ESTATE TICKER, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 28

ber of new home buyers, but that is beginning to change once again.

If you were here in the 1989-1991 downturn, you will recall that it took about five years for new home construction to re-gain credible market share. By 1996, new home prices were rising sharply, and re-sale homes were once again appreciating at a rapid pace.

That’s what’s going on again here in Loudoun County.

#### Ask up front

While many homebuilders offer to cooperate with licensed real estate professionals who represent their buyers, not all do.

If you have been happy working with a licensee who has been helping you find that “perfect home”, but on this particular (beauti-

ful) day you decide to “pop-by” one of the many new model homes showing up throughout the area, I recommend that you announce your loyalty to your agent when you are first met with a smiling face at the front door. They will jump to their feet to greet you in an instant.

But remember, it is that salesperson’s JOB to make the process of buying THEIR new home seem as simple and effortless as possible.

Often, those folks often not licensed. They are merely employees of the builder.

And while they may be truthful, their primary objective is to promote the interests of their employer, the builder.

They will seldom be able to guide you through the value analyses that take into account the broader range of choices available

to you.

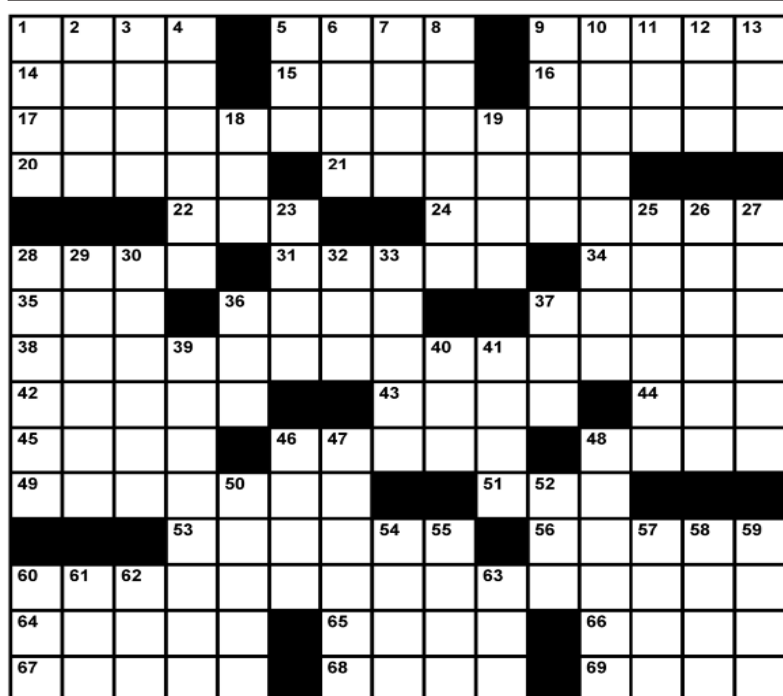
They only showcase the highlights of their particular subdivision, only those that their builder wants you to see.

Not all bad, but we live in a world of choices... Give yourself permission to have the very best representation available.

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*Carl Fischer is the Broker/Owner of United Country Real Estate, specializing in commercial, investment, and selected residential properties, as well as Northern Neck of Virginia waterfront homes. He is licensed in Virginia and West Virginia, and is a member of the Dulles Area Association of Realtor (DAAR) as well as the Northern Neck Association of Realtors (NNAR)*

### Second Careers – By Myles Mellor and Sally York



#### Across

1. Rage violently
5. Sword handle
9. Counters
14. Infant's desire to be loved (Japanese word)
15. Asian nurse
16. Cricket position
17. Outlaw turns soul singer?
20. Cockeyed
21. Spread a fertilizer
22. Oolong, for one
24. Enlist
28. Maori war dance
31. Spite
34. Exude
35. "Act your \_\_\_!"
36. Had on
37. Personae non gratae
38. Director turns businessman?
42. Sentence type
43. Fruitless
44. Trick taker, often
45. Any thing
46. Mozart contemporary
48. Finnish river
49. Cognac cocktail

#### 51. Bit

53. Adorn
56. City in Belgium
60. Pop artist turns actor?
64. Bill of \_\_\_
65. Poker diva
66. Not theirs
67. Daisy variety
68. Yemen gulf
69. White ice

#### Down

1. Big Indian
2. Home of ISU
3. Cher flick
4. 100 centimos
5. "The \_\_\_" (Uris novel)
6. Prayer leader
7. Guru
8. Prefix with magnetic
9. Color of honey
10. Faulks novel
11. \_\_\_ Annie
12. Bully
13. Hampton \_\_\_
18. "Concentration" pronoun
19. Brickbat
23. Acknowledge

#### 25. Uproars

26. Nahuatl speakers
27. Rent payer
28. Kentucky forward
29. Rabbit-like rodent
30. Got it
32. Baseball stat
33. On edge
36. South Korean currency
37. Juliet, to Romeo
39. Agoraphobic?
40. Palindromic begetter?
41. Touch
46. Muslim pilgrimage
47. Anatomical ring
48. Text changer
50. Perfume
52. "Aladdin" prince
54. Scolded
55. Pad or cap starter
57. Needle holder
58. Undeveloped idea
59. European language
60. This may be fragile
61. Nova, e.g.
62. Piggy digit?
63. Hosiery defect

Answers on page 31



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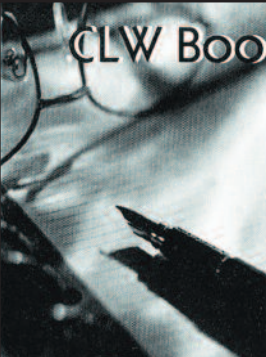
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Answers to crossword puzzle from page 29

R	A	M	P		H	I	L	T		A	B	A	C	I		
A	M	A	E		A	M	A	H		M	I	D	O	N		
J	E	S	S	E	J	A	M	E	S	B	R	O	W	N		
A	S	K	E	W		M	A	R	L	E	D					
				T	E	A				M	A	R	S	H	A	L
H	A	K	A		V	E	N	O	M		O	O	Z	E		
A	G	E		W	O	R	E			S	N	O	T	S		
R	O	N	H	O	W	A	R	D	H	U	G	H	E	S		
R	U	N	O	N			V	A	I	N		A	C	E		
I	T	E	M		H	A	Y	D	N		E	S	S	E		
S	I	D	E	C	A	R				T	A	D				
					B	E	D	E	C	K		L	I	E	G	E
E	L	T	O	N	J	O	H	N	R	I	T	T	E	R		
G	O	O	D	S		L	I	E	U		O	U	R	S		
O	X	E	Y	E		A	D	E	N		R	I	M	E		



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