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BAR Recommendations Rejected By Town Council

Historic Preservation Threatened

- By Valerie Cury

The Purcellville Town Council held a special meeting Dec. 17 to hear an appeal by developers John Chapman and Mark Nelis on their Vineyard Square project.

The Board of Architectural Review (BAR) had earlier voted to stop demolition of two historic structures on 21st Street, noting that the existing facades in the town's Historic Corridor Overlay District had to be maintained and incorporated into the design for the 6-story mixed-use project. In the BAR's motion to deny the demolition, it noted that the buildings "possess integrity of design, craftsmanship and materials from their early twentieth-century period of significance that cannot be replicated." "These buildings embody the early twentieth-century development of Purcellville's business district and incorporate original period features such as brick facades, storefront windows, period appropriate entry doors, sign bands, and steeped parapet walls which are distinctive architectural elements of Purcellville's downtown and link the design of these buildings with other buildings of the same period on the street which contribute to the historic context of the street."

In their appeal, developers Chapman and Nelis argued that the buildings "are beyond their economic life, having been built in an amateur fashion, and cannot feasibly be preserved as part of the redevelopment." Their appeal also noted that although the "building has a similar scale



Purcellville Town Council voted to let developers raze facades in the Historic Corridor Overlay District.



This building in Washington D.C. is currently undergoing a complete renovation to include underground parking.

and character to other buildings along North 21st Street ... a newly constructed building [six story] could easily serve the same purposes." They also noted that the existing buildings failed to comply with current building codes, are not structurally sound for any development, and "do not meet any criteria for the contemporary use of the property." The planned widening of the sidewalks on 21st Street, slated to be paid for with grant monies secured by the town, would not be possible if they could not demolish the facades.

Nelis spoke to the town council and said that their goal is to have a modern downtown. He said that he has told the public that he has to tear down all the buildings and build a compact town center. There is no alternative to

Continued on page 11



Facades are routinely preserved when a community is serious about maintaining the historic feel.

Chairman York: "It's Time To Move On"

Autumn Hill/Mayfair Gets Go Ahead

- By Mary M. Bathory Vidaver

Saying that it was time to move on, Chairman Scott York (R-At-Large) led the Board of Supervisors in an approval of a boundary line adjustment with the Town of Purcellville. The Jan. 2 vote in conjunction with the town council's vote on Dec. 10 seemingly ensures the development of at least 257 homes on the Autumn Hill /

Mayfair property.

Citizens opposed to the decision were extremely disappointed. Richard Corns, a resident of the Chestnut Hills development adjacent to the Autumn Hill property, highlighted that the board voted on the motion prior to the meeting's public comment period. "After I spoke, someone informed me that the board had already voted to approve the annex and "It was

time to move on. How can I move on when my home has no chance in recovering the lost value? Maybe Scott York can absorb a \$700k loss on his home - I cannot."

William Baker, another neighboring landowner, stated "I think the entire board failed to do a good job researching the project. They ignored the health department documents; they did not listen to a word the

Continued on page 6



Killdeer - Protective & Assertive Winter Beauty, page 20

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A New Year, A New You

– By Michael
Oberschneider,
Psy.D.



Dr. Mike

But first a few facts worth considering. According to a study on New Year's resolutions published in the University of Scranton Journal of Clinical Psychology, nearly 50 percent of us make New Year's Resolutions but only about 8 percent of us succeed. Losing weight (1), getting organized (2), spending less and saving more (3), enjoying life to the fullest (4), and staying fit and healthy (5) were the top resolutions for 2014. Findings from the study also support the old adage, "You can't teach an old dog new tricks," with younger people in their 20's fairing much better than those 50 and older in sticking to resolutions.

This year, I offer the following suggestions in helping you to discover the new you:

First, be mindful of what matters most to you and your loved ones in creating change. Sometimes the most important changes worth making in life are not the first ones that come to mind. Sitting down for dinner more frequently as a family, for example, may not rank as high

as spending less or getting organized, but the impact may be more meaningful to your children and spouse. Thus, spend some time to reflect on what matters most to you. Only you know what is missing from your life and/or what part of you is most in need of repair or attention.

Second, do not be overly ambitious. It is hard enough to focus on making one positive change at a time, yet many people overload themselves with several resolutions. I suggest committing to improving one important area in your life only. You can always work on other aspects of yourself later.

Third, think of the change you wish to make for yourself as a process and not a goal in and of itself. So rather than focusing on losing 20 pounds, instead work to create the mindset of having a healthier relationship with food and then set some reasonable expectations for yourself (e.g., drinking more water, snacking less or differently, eating smaller portions, etc.).

Fourth, make your resolutions known to others. Having the support of family and friends will help to keep you on track and accountable for the change you desire. You may also wish to embark on a shared resolution with a loved one or

Continued on page 20

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Relief For Dulles Toll Road Users

- By Delegate-Elect Dave LaRock

Why are Dulles Toll Road tolls rising? Like it or not, as Dulles Toll Road users we have been strapped with a huge share of the Dulles Rail construction costs which, although originally estimated to be \$875 million, has increased by 245 percent to \$3 billion today.



LaRock

If you pay the outrageous round-trip toll of \$7 to use the often-congested Dulles Toll Road, which now costs the average daily commuter about \$1,750 annually, you can look to the center lanes and see drivers who pay zero dollars in tolls zipping along in those free center lanes. Elsewhere, drivers who attempt to cope with soaring tolls by moving onto local non-tolled routes add further to already gridlocked conditions. Regional mobility overall is diminished for local residents, businesses and travelers.

The Commonwealth of Virginia has recently committed \$450 million toward "buying down" tolls. Taxpayers across Virginia are being tapped for \$100's of millions to stall the inevitable surge in the Dulles Toll Road tolls. That is a hefty payment expected from Virginia taxpayers, and keep in mind that when that money goes to tolls, it is not used to relieve our congested roads, improve our schools, or

lower our taxes.

As the newly-elected Delegate of the 33rd District, my first proposed remedy for the long list of grievances affecting the District's drivers and taxpayers is to negotiate with the Metropolitan Washington Airport Authority to require drivers using the center lanes of the Dulles Access Road to pay their fair share of the Dulles Rail Construction costs. A current estimate based on Dulles Access Road trips per day indicates that tolling the center lanes at the same rate as the Dulles Toll Road and applying 100 percent of the revenue towards Dulles Toll Road toll relief would allow a reduction in tolls on this road by as much as 33 percent. This is not a magic bullet, but it will be a giant step toward toll relief on the Dulles Toll Road.

As a further remedy, I propose the Dulles Airport Access Road be opened to the general public as high occupancy toll (HOT) lanes with all-electronic tolling. This will guarantee a more congestion-free road accessible to buses, high occupancy vehicles (HOVs) and any driver willing to pay a toll to avoid some of the worst traffic congestion in the nation.

I've spoken with Congressman Frank Wolf's office a number of times about tolling the Dulles Airport Access Road. I'm pleased to say Congressman Wolf's office is open to this change. Congressman Wolf

Continued on page 7

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Hope For Rural Loudoun In The Board Room

– By Malcolm F. Baldwin

Let us begin the New Year by crediting Loudoun's Board of Supervisors with some important 2013 actions benefitting our rural economy.

Earlier this year the board approved the Rural Business Strategy developed by the board-appointed Rural Economic Development Council (REDC, of which I am a member), albeit by narrow 5-4 vote. It later funded the staff assistant position requested by the REDC and the Economic Development Department staff to help implementation. And, it went on to reject a proposed notion of eliminating the REDC as an advisory body.

Further support for rural Loudoun came

in December with the board's consideration of the unanimous planning commission recommendation not to allow new school siting by right in rural zoning districts. Several supervisors reversed previous positions favoring speedier approval of school sites, now seeing benefits of public comments and requirements for board approval of special zoning exceptions for new school sites in rural Loudoun, and possibly elsewhere. The board appears likely to follow its planning commission's recommendation.

What accounts for this regard for rural Loudoun, especially compared with the position of the last Republican Board of Supervisors (2004-2007) that let the rural zoning of the board it succeeded lapse and revert to 3-acre zoning? That action produced a flood of new subdivisions in the west. Political reasons for our current board's position may reflect supervisors' understanding that:

Lower density advances their tax-cutting agenda by avoiding significant costs to Loudoun taxpayers from growth in public service and school requirements;

Rural Loudoun has been a reliable Republican stronghold in recent elections, even as the county as a whole has turned blue; and most of their largest campaign donors have been developers with major project proposals for eastern, not western Loudoun areas.

Let's look at these reasons more closely. **Cost avoidance, revenue and lower taxes:** Three supervisors from eastern Loudoun – Williams (Broad Run), Letourneau (Dulles), and Buono (Ashburn) – as well as Chairman York (At Large) and our two western supervisors Higgins (Catoctin) and Clarke (Blue Ridge) – frequently cite the \$1.62 cost for schools and public services for every \$1.00 received in residential property taxes. Several supervisors have also rejected developer proposals to convert commercial to residential zoning in eastern Loudoun. That's progress. The board's finance committee reflected the board's desire to maximize revenue without raising taxes by recommending continuation of the previous board's moratorium on granting new open space land-use tax deferrals to lots between 5 and 20 acres, despite application of new agricultural or forestry requirements. While noting his support for the rural economy, Committee Chair Buono questioned why small lots should receive tax deferral when rural zoning already prohibited their subdivision or further development. Supervisor Letourneau asked, why offer a land-use tax break to promote rural economic activity if doing that reduces county revenue. As Supervisor Higgins noted, their questions ignored the substantial economic benefits of rural activities on Loudoun's small parcels, which one hopes the full board will understand in

reaching a decision mid-January.

Support from a Republican rural Loudoun:

Our eastern supervisors have reasons to support the rural initiatives and the rural concerns of its two Republican supervisors elected in 2011 to serve the Catoctin and Blue Ridge Districts. These districts went Republican by some 55 to 58 percent in every national, state or local election held in Loudoun since 2008, irrespective of turnouts ranging from 28 percent (in 2011) to 70 percent (in the 2012 Presidential election). Good Republican politics suggests that this board should support the modest rural programs that these districts prefer.

Response to donors' development priorities:

All Republican supervisors received significant 2011 campaign contributions from large construction, real estate and construction donors who by and large care most about development projects in eastern, not western Loudoun. These include projects around Dulles Airport and future metro stations, and new and expanded north-south highways, including the Bi-County Parkway. But rural Loudoun will be substantially affected by these projects. While board members frequently refuse to admit that the parkway could be the first leg of the future outer beltway favored by the Chamber of Commerce and other business groups, they also neglect its adverse impacts on Loudoun's Transition Zone, rural lands in Prince William County, and the opportunity cost of consuming scarce highway funds in lieu of projects able to relieve current east-west traffic congestion.

Campaign Donations Have Consequences

As political economist Francis Fukuyama recently observed in his article "The Decay of American Political Institutions,"

(*The American Interest*, Dec. 8, 2013) a political donation recipient "incurs a moral obligation to the other party, and is then inclined to return the favor at another time or place." That, notes Fukuyama, is the human response around which American lobbying is built.

A case in point: the board approved the controversial baseball and special events stadium at One Loudoun after our supervisors collectively received \$67,569 in 2010-11 campaign donations – more than a third of it to Chairman York – by the stadium's investors and their Virginia Investment Partnership entities. (See www.vpap.org.) The facts suggest that the board will continue to focus on eastern developments that its donors seek, leaving rural Loudoun less directly vulnerable, at least for now, unless and until developer priorities pivot back toward the west.

But the substantial economic benefits of Loudoun's rural economy, as well as its inherent vulnerability, remain much misunderstood, as indicated by the pending board action respecting the 5 to 20 acre open space moratorium. In 2010 a privately funded survey conducted for the county found that the 436 parcels (4,414 acres) in the open space category consisted of 19 percent in pastures, which supported an estimated 213 horses. These parcels alone generated an estimated \$1.3 million annually in tax revenue to Loudoun. (Report to the Finance, Government Services and Operations Committee on the Open Space Survey, March 3, 2010.)

Substantial *additional* economic returns to the rural economy clearly come from Loudoun's vibrant vineyard, forestry, livestock, farmstay accommodations, Christmas tree, vegetable and flower enterprises that small parcels support and feed into the substantial greater Washington, D.C. market. While we lack

Continued on page 7



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Bumper Cars On Main Street

– By Karen Jimmerson

America’s main streets are on a path to all look the same – the same McDonald’s, Taco Bell, Starbucks and Jiffy Lube. They fill the landscape of our everyday paths. Our lives have been franchised or chained. It is so commonplace that is now seems inevitable, unavoidable, and just a fact of our modern lives. Small towns that used to belong in a Norman Rockwell painting are losing that very real esthetic.

As you drive into western Loudoun, large tracts of open space still embrace you. A drive into neighboring counties and parts of eastern Loudoun, you see tangible evidence of development gone awry. Every few miles, fast food restaurants repeat themselves. Strip malls flank bumper to bumper traffic. Western Loudoun is slowing falling prey to this, and remember eastern Loudoun looked like western Loudoun not too long ago.

Three Separate Applications ... Three Separate Problems

Developers in Purcellville are proposing to build an indoor/outdoor commercial recreation and entertainment facility, as well a 176-unit tax-credit multi-family apartment complex off Hirst Rd and Maple Avenue – and, the 176 number could go up to 482. The Tilley Entertainment facility will have an outdoor space for concerts and events, bumper boats, miniature golf, batting cages, and a go-kart track. Additional facilities will include an ice-cream parlor, a food court, and a 35,000-square foot main building with a full service restaurant, sports bar, bowling alley, a laser tag course, and a game arcade.

There are three separate applications, for three separate properties, under consideration. The applications include various combinations of comprehensive plan amendments, rezoning amendments, and special use permits.

The projects are seemingly being handled

as one entity. At the December Purcellville Planning Commission work session, Tom Priscilla, also a member of the Town Council, asked Patrick Sullivan, director of community development, whether this was going to be treated as one application. Sullivan said, “Yes.” Several members of the commission expressed confusion about how many applications existed, how many public hearings would be needed, and needed clarification on which developer is requesting what, etc. When first proposed, on its own, the apartment complex faced stiff community opposition. Many in the community now believe they have been lumped together as a PR tactic to push the whole thing through.

9,000 Vehicle Trips Per Day

A traffic report says that the entire project will generate almost 9,000 vehicle trips per day. As Sullivan warned, “Traffic is going to be a great issue.” The project is located next to the Purcellville Public Safety Center, and the county expressed concern about how the project would affect the Purcellville Public Safety Center’s access to Hirst Road in this already heavily travelled area. The county report encourages the town to consider proffer contributions from the applicant to help mitigate the traffic impacts. But, currently only one proffer for one million has been offered by the apartment developer, S.L. Nausbaum, whose complex will contribute over 1,000 residential vehicles trips per day. There currently is no proffer put forth by Tilley Entertainment.

The proposed proffer is being used to make improvements to the Hirst/Berlin Turnpike intersection, covering just a small portion of the total cost. The Hirst/Maple intersection is anticipated to have capacity issues and the town transportation plan identifies this intersection as a location for a future roundabout, multi-way stop,

or traffic signal. The Hirst/Hatcher intersection is currently operating above capacity and according to the town, “is anticipated to operate at a level of service F under 2020 conditions” (failing to mention that the population growth of Purcellville has already exceed the comprehensive plan’s population growth for 2020). With the Autumn Hill/Mayfair development of 257 houses plus commercial, 61 new townhouses currently under construction on 21 Street, and the addition of 176 apartments coupled with new development outside of town limits, residents of Purcellville will bear the cost of adding and maintaining infrastructure.

So ... Why Is This Much New Residential A Positive?

The Statement of Justification from the developer says that the Catoctin Creek Apartments will produce \$49,500 in annual real estate taxes for the town. However, after the initial boost in water/sewer connection fees, this project will require continual cost/improvements to road infrastructure, increases in police and other public services, and with a minimum of 40 students being added to the local schools at a cost of \$468,000 per year, the monetary gain for these apartments will be non-existent.

I Can’t Hear You!

During a work session, Planning Commissioner Chip Paciulli referred to the entertainment project as a “fairground.” The idea of go-karts and batting cages may sound exciting, but nearby residents would have to live with the noise every day, sometimes 10-12 hours a day. The average go-kart has a decibel level of 79-83 dBA at 100 ft., and batting cages exceed 90 dBA. A YouTube video of water bumper boats operated by Tilley Entertainment at Kimball Farms in Massachusetts confirms

Continued on page 17

View From The Ridge

A Citizen-Directed Future For Western Loudoun – What It Will Take –

– By Andrea Gaines

The Blue Ridge Leader’s View From The Ridge feature was introduced in 1984. This feature is intended to present to the public our big picture assessment of what is going on in our western Loudoun community – an independent and spirited assessment, free of the special interests that seek to control the day. As we begin 2014, we recommit ourselves to being that independent voice for you.

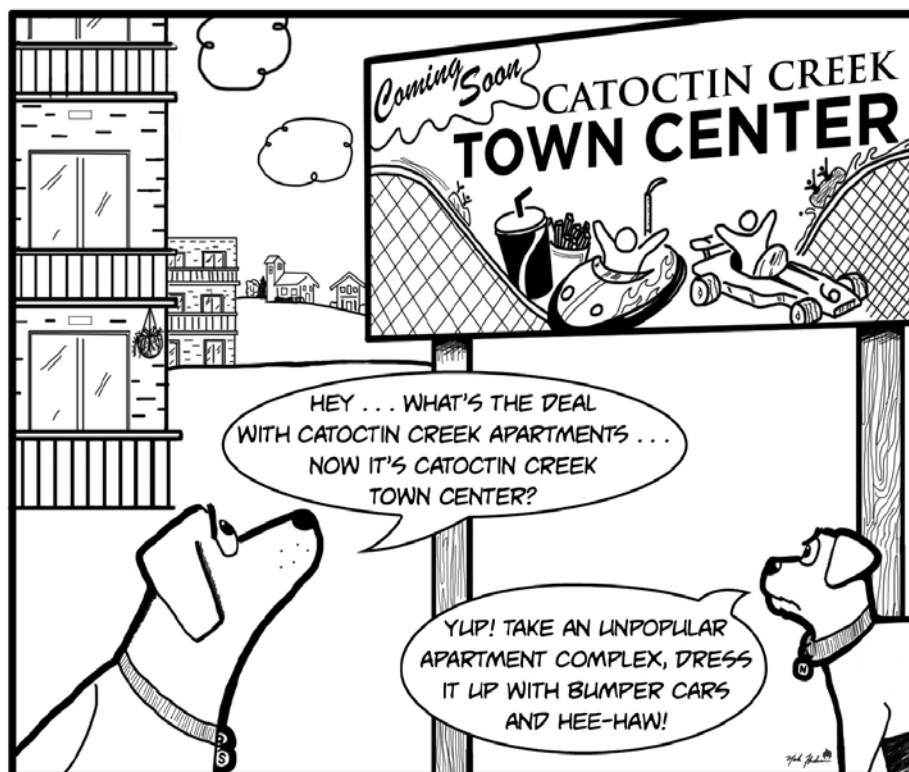
Why Is An Independent Voice So Important To Western Loudoun?

All communities, even small ones, have centers of power. As the people run their businesses and live their lives, it’s up to government, even if it is a small town council or county board of supervisors, to make sure everyone’s getting a fair shake. And, it’s up to the news media to make sure government is doing its job and conducting its business out in the open, while providing citizens a microphone with which to express their views.

This is critical in a fast growing community such as western Loudoun where hundreds of millions of dollars are at stake in land deals, residential and commercial development and political favors. And, it is absolutely urgent in a political atmosphere where town councils and boards of supervisors seem more interested in greasing the skids for developers than in serving the public.

The good news is that western Loudoun has not yet been overrun by development. The challenge is that developers have their sights set on western Loudoun, and, without an engaged and educated public, really bad things can happen.

Continued on page 17



Chairman York, continued from page 1 citizens said. Board members refused to meet with us, take our calls or provide any response. They paid no attention to the public point of view of the district supervisor. The whole thing was a sham."

Comments made by Chestnut Hill resident and retired Air Force officer John Hightower during the board's Dec. 11 public hearing echoed Baker's criticism. "I believe in integrity; I believe in the process. But I have been astonished by what I've seen in this whole mess. It's devastating. I just hope that someone will come to their senses." Corns echoed these criticisms in an email, "If government is to be proper,

this debate should have been about what the people wanted, not what the board wanted."

In emails and public statements members of both the board and the town council blamed their decision on the situation created by a predecessor board – the approval of 492 quadrplexes on the property by an earlier board in 1991. Supervisor Matt LeTourneau (R-Dulles) complained during the public hearing, "This is a lousy position that the Board of Supervisors is in." Similarly, Supervisor Suzanne Volpe (R-Sugarland Run) explained, "We inherited something that's been kicking around this building for 20 years." Purcellville Town Council member Joan Lehr, voting to approve the boundary

line adjustment at the council's meeting on Dec. 10, gave a similar explanation.

However, this rationalization ignored arguments made by neighbors to the property, the proffer agreement governing the development of those quadrplexes, legal filings by the county attorney in the county's court battle with the current property owner, and the 22 years the property remained undeveloped by three different owners. In summary, the proffer agreement approved by the 1991 board only allowed development with the town's extension of water and sewer. As long as the town council refused such extension, such extensive development could not occur.

In emails and public statements members of both bodies suggested that this interpretation might not survive the current landowner's court challenge. In media reports Purcellville Mayor Bob Lazaro, sounding very different than in his fight against Woodgrove High School when he vowed to go to the Supreme Court to halt the school's construction, pointed to the risks associated with relying on the outcome of a court case to protect the town. Demonstrating her complete confidence in the office of the county attorney, Volpe justified her decision to citizens by recounting her accuracy in predicting the number of cases lost by the office's 17 attorneys. Speaking outside a town council meeting in November, York said he didn't want the case to go to court because the judge likes to split the baby and he wouldn't like to see 492 homes built with alternative septic. He did not expand on how such a result – one entirely in the landowner's favor – would be splitting the baby.

However, as reported in this paper, the State Department of Health, in issuing a permit for the use of a communal alternative septic system on the Autumn Hill property, specifically restricted the number of units to a far lower number than 492. The number allowed by the permit was also smaller than the 257 homes proposed under the settlement agreement. Although at least one citizen brought this to the board's attention at the public hearing on Dec. 11, most board members insisted that the choice was between 492 and 257 units.

Yet, even if the county lost the lawsuit, it is not clear that the ruling would have forced the Department of Health to expand its approval to the full 492 units. According to Allen Knapp, director of the office of Environmental Health Services for the Virginia Department of Health, "We do not live in the world of proffers. If there were to be a conflict between the Board [of Health]'s regulations and a local ordinance, I believe it will only be resolved by an appropriate court." Such resolution would require a separate lawsuit by the landowner against the state.

Also unmentioned by members of the board and the town council, was information reported in this paper that the health department permit expired on

Continued on page 7

Hard Night For Supervisor Clarke

Supervisor Janet Clarke (R-Blue Ridge) had a hard night at the board's Dec. 11 public hearing. William Baker, a Blue Ridge District resident, called on Clarke to step down. "You have broken our trust," he explained. Richard Corns, another Blue Ridge District resident, echoed Baker's statement. "She lied... We request Ms. Janet Clarke's resignation."

The subject of the public hearing was a proposal to settle the lawsuit brought by Brookfield Autumn Hill, the owners of the Autumn Hill / Mayfair property, against the county through a boundary line adjustment with the Town of Purcellville. The controversial settlement proposal allows the construction of 257 homes served by town water and sewer. The issue was whether or not Clarke publicly opposed the proposal while quietly working behind the scenes in its support.

Clarke's colleagues on the board quickly came to her defense, including Eugene Delgaudio (R-Sterling), who was the subject of a special grand jury investigation earlier in the year. Chairman Scott York (R-At-Large) interrupted the hearing to say "I find the comments about Ms. Clarke a little absurd... She's not corrupt, she has done her job as a board of supervisors member... she supports your position."

Accusing the speakers of "adult bullying," Clarke tearfully defended her actions. "This particular item is just heart wrenching for me because I feel like I approached this in the proper fashion for the people, vetted this, brought it back to the board with the direction that the community wanted and the board did not respect me as the district representative... I do not understand the direction this took and why in closed session when I made particular statements they were pretty much brushed off."

York presented a similar story. "Ms. Clarke did come to me and ask if there was interest in the Board to settle the lawsuit and we talked with the developer. As time went on... she changed her position and tried to convince the Board of Supervisors not to go forward with this project." However, this contradicts a statement he made to a citizen outside the November town council meeting in which he said Clarke wanted this.

While it may be impossible to determine the actual truth of Clarke's position on this matter at least one member of the Clarke household is on record as supporting the development. Clarke's husband, Tom Clarke, was the lone speaker who spoke in the development's favor at the public hearing.

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Chairman York, continued from page 6

Nov. 15, 2013, just a few days prior to the decision to advertise a boundary line adjustment. Since that report, a source in the Health Department referred The Blue Ridge Leader to the Virginia State Code governing septic system permits. Under current rules, an expired permit cannot be renewed unless the landowner has obtained a building permit or commenced construction. In such cases, the landowner must submit a new application with the appropriate fees for reconsideration by the health department. Autumn Hill had neither received building permits from the county nor commenced construction on the septic system. According to former Blue

Ridge Supervisor Jim Burton, “[Autumn Hill] could not get a building permit unless their building plans conformed to the current zoning, which they did not.”

Board members also failed to mention that the settlement delivers the proffers to the town, while the county will be required to construct and fund much of the necessary infrastructure, such as schools and libraries for the new residents. The town will receive \$1.3 million in proffers (including approximately \$26,000 for the Purcellville Fire and Rescue companies) plus \$12 million in water and sewer fees. The county receives nothing.

Toll Road, continued from page 3

himself has called tolls on the nearby Dulles Greenway, “highway robbery.” We know that unless elected officials step up on behalf of local drivers, the tolls on the Dulles Toll Road will exceed the outrageous fares on the Dulles Greenway by the year 2019.

As a delegate, I intend to introduce legislation that will make tolling the center lanes to buy down tolls a precondition to the release of any Virginia taxpayer dollars to

the Dulles Rail Project.

I will push hard on this issue because it is the right thing to do. In the end, our success depends on whether or not drivers and taxpayers are willing to stand up and say they have lost their patience with being cash cows and are willing to endure no more.

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Hope For Rural Loudoun, continued from page 4

precise data on these additional economic returns, we know they are substantial.

The county’s fiscal impact analysis overstates the potential tax revenue lost from lifting the moratorium at \$4.5 million by unreasonably assuming that all the 2500 eligible parcels would seek and meet required agricultural/forestry standards. If we apply the county’s figures to an estimate that 60 percent did qualify – a high proportion – then the deferred tax revenue might equal approximately \$2.5 million.

The full board needs to weigh not only accurate figures for lost property taxes but also increased business tax revenue and other economic benefits to the county from parcels meeting the stringent land-use tax criteria of the Agricultural District Advisory Committee.

It must recognize also that Loudoun’s farming population is aging and that long-term health of our rural economy requires encouragement of young farmers. Many are eager to farm but can afford only small parcels. Consider the high-quality produce supplied by one young farmer from his less than 5-acre Quarter Branch Farm to many of Northern Virginia’s most noted restaurants – Lovettsville’s Market Table Bistro, among others.

We can be critical of this board’s budgets and priorities, as I have been, but we also have reason to hope that it will pursue rational economic policies for rural Loudoun. Its understanding of the cost of housing development is a

helpful start. So let’s begin the New Year by working to increase the board’s understanding of the rural economy’s sustainable economic benefits and the importance of the county’s sustained investment in its future.

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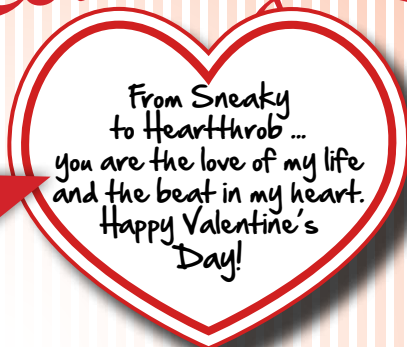


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Demystifying Purcellville's Debt Burden And AAA Bond Rating

– By Kwasi Fraser

Recently, Purcellville received stellar bond ratings from all three Wall Street rating agencies. Standard & Poor's awarded Purcellville with an AAA rating, while Moody's and Fitch Ratings issued double-A ratings.

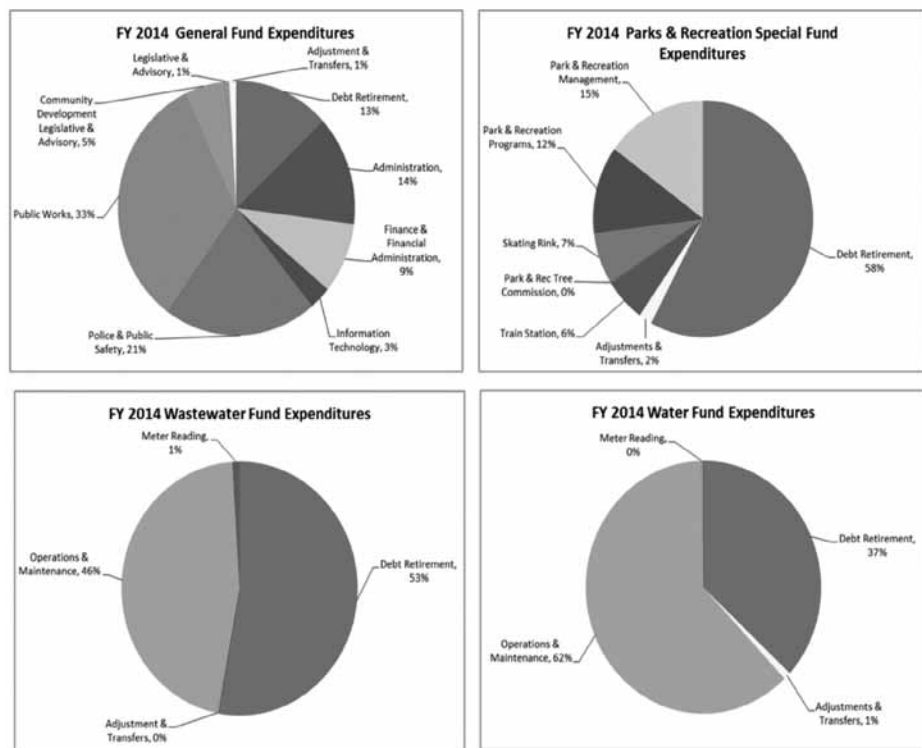
At first glance, these ratings seem great, but this is without analysis of the rationale and assumptions behind them. This article will attempt to further analyze and present a clear view of what drove these ratings and what they mean to Purcellville's current \$64 million debt burden.

Current Debt Burden and Debt Service

With an estimated population of 7,829, the current debt burden is about \$8,175 per Purcellville resident. According to the *Adopted Fiscal Year 2014 Fiscal Plan & Capital Improvement Program Fiscal Year 2014-2018*, Purcellville has an outstanding debt of \$64,184,129 of which 48.59 percent, equating to \$31,190,323, is attributed to the Waste Water Fund. The amount of interest and principal that is due on Purcellville's Fiscal Year 2014 debt service is \$5,085,366. With estimated fiscal year 2014 total budgeted expenditures of \$17,355,533, the debt service accounts for 29.3 percent of total expenditures.

Figure 1 further illustrates the percent allocations of Purcellville's fiscal year 2014 expenditures.

Figure 1



Purcellville has a policy that debt service as a percentage of expenditures should not exceed 15 percent. However, as shown in Figure 1, this policy seems only to apply to General Fund Expenditures and not the expenditures of the other funds in which the debt service as a percentage of expenditures range from 37 percent to 58 percent.

Assumptions and Rationale for Ratings

The below statement from Standard & Poor's more than anything else provides the main reason for their AAA rating of Purcellville's series 2013A and 2013B GO refunding bonds.

"The town's full-faith-credit pledge and agreement to levy ad valorem property taxes without limitation as to rate or amount secure the bonds. Officials intend to use series 2013A and 2013B bond proceeds to refund the town's previously issued GO bonds."

Moody echoed a similar statement in its Aa2 rating of the Town of Purcellville's \$28.3 million General Obligation Bonds Series 2013A and \$6.5 million Taxable General Obligation Bond Series 2013B. Moody's states the following: "The bonds are secured by the town's general obligation unlimited tax pledge."

Likewise, Fitch Ratings states that the bonds are backed by Purcellville's full faith and credit and "unlimited taxing power."

The key words are "levy ad valorem property taxes without limitation, unlimited tax pledge, and unlimited taxing power." Given that Purcellville is in the wealthiest county in America with very strong economic indicators and direct access to the greater Washington

MSA's employment base, Purcellville's median household incomes are among the highest in the nation. Purcellville's per capita personal income is 20 to 35 percent higher than Virginia's and the U.S. averages, and individual poverty rates are much lower at 2.5 percent compared to 10.7 percent across Virginia.

That said, the assumption is that the residents of Purcellville can easily afford tax and

"[Per the bond rating agencies] ... the assumption is that the residents of Purcellville can easily afford tax and fee increases and as such the town council can tax its residents without limitation."

fee increases and as such the Town Council can tax its residents without limitations. But as we know, all things come with limitations, and at some point high taxes will result in residents curtailing their spending on products and services in Purcellville, delinquent tax bills, and ultimately with people moving to more affordable areas in the country.

One wonders if any price elasticity study was conducted by

the credit agencies to determine at what property tax rate or fee increases it would be cost prohibitive for residents to live in Purcellville.

The below chart provides a summary of the assumptions and rationale for the credit agencies stellar ratings and the associated risks.

STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> General obligation of the town backed by Purcellville's full faith and credit and unlimited taxing power Sizable reserves Stable tax base with strong socio-economic indices 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Utility operations have not been self-supporting <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Since net revenues of the system have covered debt service on the utility portion of the town's debt by only 70 percent from fiscal 2010 – 2013, with cash flow deficits averaging about \$1 million per year. Declining cash and reserves in utility systems Some exposure to economically sensitive revenues Elevated debt burden
OPPORTUNITIES	THREATS
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Substantial tax base growth and diversification Increase in rating profile Ability to Refinance and/or obtain new debt facility 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Declines in liquidity and/or fund balances to levels that exceed current expectations Reliance on general fund reserves to supplement utility funds. Economic stagnation that impedes tax base growth

Impact of Rating on Purcellville's Debt Burden

Credit ratings are the equivalent of credit scores. The higher a credit score, the greater are one's chances of obtaining favorable low cost loans and other financing. So, with the ratings from the three rating agencies, Purcellville, under the advisement of Davenport and Company will refinance its existing debt to accomplish the following:

Reduce the current cost of borrowing – lowering the interest rates on approximately \$23.7 million of existing utility enterprise (Water and Sewer) debt.

Free up approximately \$7.7 million cash flow from fiscal year 2014 to fiscal year 2019, assuming an average 5.5 percent borrowing rate.

Eliminate the water and sewer balloon debt service of \$5,391,469 in 2021 and \$7,211,025 in 2029 by locking in interest rates and extending the payoff period of the existing debt.

Figure 2 on page 11 illustrates the projected impact on future debt service should the proposed strategy of Davenport and Company be supported by the bond market and implemented. The line shows the current state debt service, and the bars show the future state debt service under the proposed Davenport & Company strategy. It is worth noting that although the proposed future state will eliminate the ballooning maturities in 2021 and 2029, the total debt payoff is extended out, and as a result, Purcellville will be paying approximately \$15 million more (difference between the red line and green bar) over the new payoff period. Under the proposed strategy the town will avoid a total cost of approximately \$7.7 million from fiscal year 2014 to fiscal year 2019, but as shown in Figure 2, we will incur approximately \$10.9 million more in debt service from fiscal year 2022 to fiscal year 2028. These figures may be revised following confirmation of the results of the Oct. 9, 2013 bond sale and any subsequent updated analysis from Davenport & Company LLC.

Continued on page 11

Debt Burden and AAA Bond Rating, continued from page 10

Source: Discussion Material Prepared for the Town of Purcellville Virginia General Fund and Utility Enterprise Fund Plan of Finance Update September 10, 2013 - Davenport & Company LLC

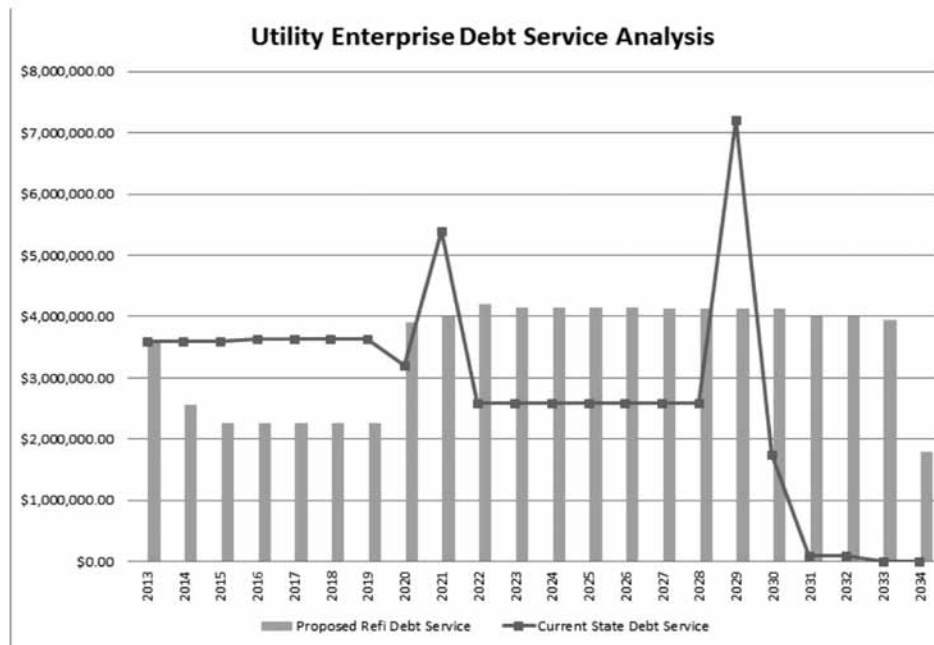


Figure 2

Water and Sewer Bills Outlook

With the above proposed refinance strategy, Davenport and Company has projected the following increases in consumption charges from 2013 to 2018:

	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Water	7 percent	0 percent	8 percent	7 percent	7 percent	4.5 percent
Sewer	20 percent	0 percent	8 percent	7 percent	7 percent	4.5 percent

According to the Sept. 10, 2013 proposal from Davenport & Company to the town, the 7 percent increase in water and 20 percent increase in sewer for 2013 were adopted in January 2013. The Town Manager’s Fiscal Year 2014 budget includes another rate increase of 8 percent for water and 15 percent for waste water, but the budget document does not state the effective date of this additional rate increase.

Residents will welcome the zero percent increase in fiscal 2014, an election year, and the single digit percent increases from 2015 to 2018; however, as shown in Figure 2, for the years 2020 and beyond, debt service is projected to be significantly higher and may result in double digit increases in fees.

Impact of \$12.5 Million in Utility Connection Fees

The town projects it will receive \$12.5 million in utility connection fees with the newly-approved boundary line adjustment request for Autumn Hill/Mayfair. This \$12.5 million can be used to further reduce spikes in fees to our residents. While the proposed refinance option from Davenport and Company calls for a 0 percent increase in 2014, with the \$12.5 million that increase can be extended out over a few years. Considering our current debt burden and infrastructure such action may not be prudent.

The \$12.5 million accounts for approximately 19.5 percent of our current debt but is a result of a reactive short-term solution that in the long run may have adverse consequence on infrastructure, schools and future financial health of the town. Annexation and taxation is not sustainable since new lands are not being created and household incomes do have limits. Purcellville must pursue well assessed, coordinated, and accepted sustainable strategies for its current and future challenges and opportunities. Such strategies with input and collaboration from residents, businesses, and our neighbors will ensure optimal value creation and preservation.

Kwasi Fraser is a resident of Purcellville.

BAR, continued from page 1

demolition – “the masonry will crumble,” he continued. As Nelis noted, the Purcellville Town Council revised their zoning ordinance to allow for the size and scale of his development. The town council also adopted an ordinance allowing for a 65-foot building height. A tourism district was put in place for the Vineyard Square development as well, which could allow them certain tax credits for up to nine years. Councilman Tom Priscilla, who also serves as vice-president of the Purcellville Preservation Association, said that the council has to go with the zoning ordinance and due to the fact that the windows had been changed there was nothing historically relevant. Councilwoman Joan Lehr said, “Buildings don’t make a town. The guts of this small town are the people.” Lehr also said that shop owners have not been begging council to save the buildings.

BAR member Dan Piper spoke before the town council and said, “Incorporating the existing façade is indeed feasible with proper planning and a commitment to the community and things that are important to the community.” “The buildings are distinctive,” he continued, further noting that the town council staff report prepared for this meeting was not accurate on this issue.

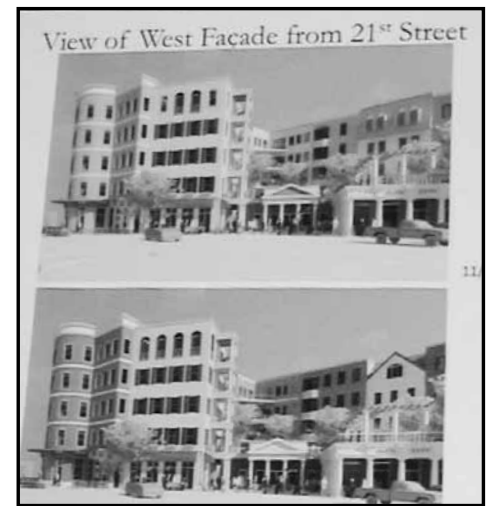
Shortly thereafter, despite BAR objections, the council voted 7-0 to grant the developers’ appeal and allow the buildings to be demolished. This will allow developers Nelis and Chapman to tear down the brick facades at numbers 130 and 138 on 21st Street. After the vote – in referring to the BAR meeting scheduled for the next day – Mayor Robert Lazaro addressed BAR member Dan Piper, warning him against not approving the proposed Vineyard Square design plan, which, among other things, would now address scale and mass. Lazaro did not want the BAR to make the council come back and undue their vote again.

UPDATE: Dec. 18 BAR Meeting

The next day the BAR heard and gave comments before their vote on whether or not to approve the proposed Vineyard Square design.

Mark Nelis spoke before the BAR and said, “The important question really is one of scale. We know this building works economically. We are not in a position to take a floor off this building; if we did we would never be able to build the building.” “Town Council adopted an ordinance for 65 feet based on our advocacy of what we know had to happen in downtown Purcellville to make the project financially responsible.” “Are we asking for approval of a 65- foot tall building; the answer is yes,” Nelis said. He also said that he was not willing to compromise on the height (5-6 story) and mass of the building; “If the mass and scale is unacceptable ... we can’t make this building work at a smaller scale.”

Chairman Pat Giglio said that the BAR would have issues with the height and scale of the building because of the design



Rendering of proposed 5-6 story building on 21st Street with design changes.

guidelines. “That’s where we are going to have some issues with this particularly with our design guidelines and what is being spelled out in our design guidelines in terms of compatibly with our downtown.” He pointed out that the design is not compatible with the current streetscape and the guidelines do require compatibly. “In order to respect the street, 2-3 stories would be reasonable on 21st Street.” Two to three stories is indeed common in areas of historic downtown that have been renovated.

In discussions, BAR member Piper also said that the drawings for Vineyard Square are not detailed enough. “There is so little information.” BAR members were also struggling with the corners of the 6-story building. They wanted to have additional public review and input. However, Nelis pushed for a vote, and the BAR then voted to approve Vineyard Square (CDA 13-11-130) with, among other things, limitations on height.

The building height on 21st Street should be no taller than 2-3 stories, measured from the existing grade. The tallest portions at the rear of the building should be no taller than 4 stories ... “to maintain a gradual transition between the proposed building and existing buildings streetscape in conformance with the Guidelines and the Zoning Ordinance. Decreasing the height of the proposed building will allow the building to better blend with neighboring buildings and complement the existing historic streetscape in conformance with the Design Guidelines.” The motion passed 4-1 with newly appointed BAR member and former councilmember Greg Wagner voting against the motion. After the vote developer Nelis said, “You are giving us an approval for a building we would never build.”

The developer’s appeal will be heard and voted on at the Jan. 14 Purcellville Town Council meeting at 7 p.m.

Note: It is customary for the minutes of the previous BAR meeting to be approved at the next meeting. However, the prior meetings’ minutes could not be approved because town staff had left out detailed comments from individual BAR members, many of which were opposed to Vineyard Square as presented.

Caring For Our Seniors: Driving Safety

– By Andrea Gaines

In December we looked at the emotional issues seniors might face over the holidays. This month we look to the year ahead, one of the most practical issues being how driving and driving safety plays into the lives of seniors.

Driving offers life-sized independence for seniors. And, maintaining the ability to drive safely is of utmost importance. Here are some important things to take into consideration as seniors and their families address the issue, as well as ways to ensure that aging parents and loved ones maintain that ability for as long as possible.

The Numbers

We don't often think of serious automobile accidents as an issue that impacts older drivers. Traffic deaths, for example, are highest in the 16–20 age group.

But, while drivers in their fifties and sixties have some of the lowest accident rates, serious automobile crashes rise sharply for adult drivers 70 years and older. And, approximately 17 percent of traffic fatalities take place in the 65+ age group. Older drivers are also far less likely to survive a serious car accident.

Factors Relating To The Increased Risk That Comes With Age

Factors relating to the increase in automobile accidents for older drivers include every day health issues such as impaired vision and hearing, reduced arm and leg strength, stiffness, and arthritis. Older Americans who take certain medications may also have reduced reflexes, as would any age group.

The AARP cautions seniors and their families to look for the following when considering if an older person might be



affected by specific factors, posing a risk to themselves or others when behind the wheel:

- Decrease in confidence while driving
- Difficulty turning to see when backing up
- Easily distracted while driving
- Hitting curbs
- Scrapes or dents on the car, mailbox or garage
- Increased agitation or irritation when driving
- Failure to notice traffic signs or important activity on the side of the road
- Trouble navigating turns
- Driving at inappropriate speeds
- Bad judgment making left turns
- Delayed response to unexpected situations
- Moving into wrong lane or difficulty maintaining lane position
- Confusion at exits
- Ticketed moving violations or warnings
- Getting lost in familiar places
- Car accident
- Failure to stop at stop sign or red light
- Stopping in traffic for no apparent reason

It's also a good idea for the person looking at the issue of an older person's driving safety to ride along with the senior and see their driving first hand. The reactions of other drivers on the road – whether it be honking or swerving to avoid them – is also something to look for. And, an older driver's performance at intersections is critical; a study of intersection crashes found that 58 percent of drivers 80 and

older failed to yield at intersections. The number for drivers 70–79 was 37 percent.

How To Drive Safely For As Long As Possible

The key to ensuring that older Americans drive as long as they can – within the law and safely – is to 1) inventory any possible problems, and 2) act to address them – whether it be a change in driving times and patterns, or a refresher course in driving itself.

Like any other driver, every time a senior gets behind the wheel they should think about the tasks they will be called upon to perform. Things like coordinating your hands and feet, being able to pick up on traffic signs and signals, reacting to the speed, position and movements of other cars on the road and the performance of your own car. The good news is that experience counts when it comes to driving safety, and, having typically driven for a long time, seniors have that experience.

Here are some actions to consider for seniors and family to keep you on the road and safe for as long as possible:

Medical:

Get the basics checked every year – this includes your eyes and your hearing. And, make sure you put tools such as glasses and hearing aids to work! Don't leave them at home. Also, talk to your doctor about how any medications you might take could effect your driving – just to be sure.

Knowledge is power!

Your car. Make sure your car is in basic good shape, with up to date plates, registration, inspection, etc. Make sure windshield, mirrors, and headlights clean. Also, inside, turn the brightness up on the your dashboard. Experts recommend cars with automatic transmission, power steering, and power brakes. It's a good idea to have the name and number of any doctors within easy reach, too, in the car. And, make sure you have basic things like an emergency assistance kit, etc. in your car in case you need it.

Take care of yourself. Eat right and stay rested. Lack of sleep, for example, can be as dangerous as driving under the influence of alcohol.

Drive with other drivers in mind. Drive at a comfortable but not too slow speed and go with the flow of traffic. Use the right lanes for a slower pace, pay particular attention at intersections and maintain a safe distance behind other cars so you can brake in time if need be.

Be honest about what your limitations might be. Acknowledging limitations does not mean giving up your car ... it just means that all involved are committed to making the senior driver – and the others on the road – safe.

Happy New Year and safe driving!

Woodgrove High School Jan. - Feb. Events

The Woodgrove High School Student Council Association is planning several events for this January. One of the SCA sponsored services is the exam breakfasts. Last year, the SCA offered several breakfast foods -- such as bananas, apples and rice-crispy treats—to students in the morning during exam week. Many students took advantage of these breakfasts, with hardly anything left over each day.

"The exam breakfasts last year were really good," said senior Emily Orr. "I love Rice Krispies."

Research shows that nutrition plays an important role in brain function and performance on academic tests which is why the SCA provides these breakfasts.

"The breakfasts helped me wake up in the morning and just made the thought of going to school easier," said senior Sierra McLaughlin.

Feb. 10 through 14, the SCA will be hosting a special SnowComing week, with spirit days for each school day. Spirit days for this week will be chosen at the SCA General Assembly meeting on Friday, Jan. 31. Anybody with ideas can attend the meeting or just give their input to a SCA senator during exam week.

"I love spirit days," said senior Emily May. "I think dressing up is really fun and I like to see what other people are wearing."

The SCA is also planning to sell Valentine's Day Serenades in early February. A student can buy a serenade for another student, and the chorus will come and sing to that person in class on Friday, Feb. 14.

Senior Cate Renner said, "One person was serenaded to in my class last year. It was so funny to watch. This year, I'm planning to buy one for my friend."

Barbara S. Williams

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Webfabrics Donates Quilts To Wounded Veterans

Little did Donny Daughenbaugh and Cathie Walker know that a simple side-trip to a local quilting shop would result in a nationwide out-pouring of generosity.

That's exactly what happened when the vice president of the Coalition to Salute America's Heroes, and the wife of the organization's CEO, stopped at Webfabrics, on Bailey Lane in Purcellville this past August. They met owner Carly Mul and told her about the important work being done by the Coalition, a Leesburg-based non-profit group dedicated to rebuilding the lives of severely wounded veterans of the War on Terror.

When they asked if Mul could help them collect quilts for the 100-plus combat-wounded veterans attending the Coalition's annual Road to Recovery Conference & Tribute in December, she said she'd try.

"I offered to put out a call to our nationwide quilting network asking them to support the cause, but I had no idea what kind of response I'd get," said Mul, who has a history of supporting charitable causes.

Mul sent out the appeal in her e-newsletter, which reaches thousands of quilters around the world. She soon received more than 100 pledges to handcraft and deliver quilts prior to the early-December deadline. She heard from women, and men, that wanted to support the project as a way of showing their appreciation for the sacrifices made by the soldiers. Most had no personal link to the military, while others had sons and daughters currently serving in Iraq or Afghanistan. A few were veterans themselves.

The initial response was heartening. But with only three weeks to go, Mul had received just 51 blankets. She sent another appeal prior to Thanksgiving, urging her customers "to move their sewing machines from simmer to low heat," Mul said.

Roughly a week before her departure for Orlando, where the 7th annual Road to Recovery was held Dec. 9 -12, 30 quilts arrived in one day. The Annandale Quilt Guild delivered 27 of them.

"That put us over the top, and helped me to stop being a nervous wreck," said Mul. "By the time we left, I was able to take 147 absolutely gorgeous quilts with me to the conference.



Jason and Rebecca Singleton with their quilt.

"I was so proud to do this, but this story isn't about me. It's about nearly 150 generous individuals around the country that dedicated their personal time and talents to creating a work of love that will bring warmth and comfort to an American hero they likely will never meet. I know it's a blessing that both the giver and the recipient will cherish forever."

Daughenbaugh lives with a bullet lodged at the base of his skull near his brain, the result of being shot in the face while on night foot patrol with his squad outside of Baghdad. The retired Marine knows how meaningful the gesture can be.

"When my medevac flight from Germany landed and they rolled me out the back of the C-130 in the freezing cold, a two-star general came up and covered me with a quilt," remembers Daughenbaugh. "He said, 'This is from America.' I'll never forget that moment, and that quilt has been keeping me warm ever since."

Because Mul collected more quilts than were needed for the conference, she gave the extras to Daughenbaugh, who will distribute them to wounded veterans he meets on his frequent visits to VA hospitals around the nation.

"I may not be a two-star general, but I'm looking forward to delivering these quilts to people like me that are going through some of the toughest days of their lives," said Daughenbaugh. "It's yet another way the Coalition to Salute America's Heroes is making a meaningful difference in the lives of combat-wounded men and women."

For more information on the Coalition, visit www.saluteheroes.org.

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View From The Ridge, continued from page 5

Western Loudoun's Growth Patterns – Environmentally Destructive And Fiscally Foolish

Great small towns such as Purcellville can continue to be successful and distinctive towns, but only if the people in charge of running things serve and work for everyone, managing growth in a way that preserves the essence of why people came here to live in the first place. Just because you can make more money putting an apartment complex on a piece of property instead of developing it into larger lots at a lower density, doesn't mean you should have a right to do so. This balance between the money to be made and what residents want is under significant threat today.

The annexation project known as Autumn Hill/Mayfair is the largest in the history of the town. Enormous in scale, this development will carpet bomb a now rural/large lot residential area just north of town with high-density residential development. Purcellville will get the benefit of approximately \$12 million in utility hookups ... but taxpayers and neighbors will pay dearly. Each of the new homes will cost the town and county taxpayer \$1.70 in government services for every \$1 they return in property taxes. And, the property owners next to Autumn Hill/Mayfair will see their rural way of life lost to high-density residential and commercial development as close as 25 ft. from their property line.

The Catoctin Town Center – originally

Catoctin Creek Apartments – is a huge residential and entertainment complex within town boundaries which will bring another 178 residential units into Purcellville. Citizens spoke out strongly when Catoctin Creek Apartments was proposed. In response, the developer got together with nearby property owners/investors and the whole thing was cleverly “repackaged” into an retail/residential/entertainment project, to include bumper cars, go carts, a water park, a flea market and music venue and more fast food and drive-through restaurants.

Vineyard Square is a gigantic 5-6-story retail/residential project that will dwarf Purcellville's historic downtown area. As proposed by the developer, this project will require the demolition of structures that are on National Register of Historic Places. The Purcellville Town Council is on the side of the developer's project, which will degrade the area's history, possibly threaten the area's historic designation and leave businesses in the area wondering if they will survive the changes proposed for the area.

Greasing The Skids For Development

At a recent hearing on the Autumn Hill/Mayfair annexation, one impassioned citizen who opposed annexation said: “This is not about one person's property,” expressing frustration that the county and the Town of Purcellville seemed unconcerned about how approving a project of this size would affect adjacent homeowners.

The source of this citizen's frustration is the game playing – an increasingly rushed, insider, not-always-fact based way major development projects are moving forward in western Loudoun County.

One such game is “the false dilemma.” With respect to Autumn Hill/Mayfair, in a long and tortured path the Town of Purcellville had twice before rejected the developer's application to have this property annexed into town and developed with high-density residential. When the developer later sued to go forward, reversing course, Purcellville – and the Blue Ridge Supervisor – lobbied the county board of supervisors to settle the lawsuit, saying that going to court would put the area at risk for more intense development. But this was a false dilemma, a game. The developer's septic permit had expired prior to the scheduled court date, and it could not have been renewed because the developer did not have and could not have gotten an active building permit.

With respect to the Catoctin Creek Town Center/Apartment Complex, facing significant opposition to the project as originally proposed, the developer combined its effort with adjacent property owners, renaming the project “The Catoctin Town Center.” This kind of bait and switch or “repackaging” is routine in Purcellville and county zoning politics. But it can't hide the fact that both the apartments and the other parts of the project are inappropriate for the area.

“Sorry ... it's out of our hands.” With

respect to Vineyard Square, the Purcellville Town Council has been working with the individuals who own the properties for years. Town-secured grants (taxpayer-funded) will help pay for some of the infrastructure needed, due to the enormous size of the project. And, while the area is extremely important from an historic perspective (on the National Register of Historic Places) the council has been absolutely silent, sitting on it's hands for years instead of simply limiting density and/or making changes to the zoning regulations that could have protected the area. Sorry ... nothing we can do?”

About a week ago, Thursday evening January 2, the Loudoun County Board of Supervisors gave the go ahead on Autumn Hill/Mayfair. This was the night of the area's terrible snowstorm. A public input session was held that night, but prior to that public input session, impatient, Chairman York called for a vote indicating that the issue needed to be “settled”, and the project was approved. Meanwhile, the citizens who braved the weather were able to express their opinions on Autumn Hill/Mayfair ... but only after the board had “settled the issue”. Wow.

Happy New Year ... Stay Vigilant.

We wish all of western Loudoun a Happy New Year. We promise to keep you informed of the games that are played and what's at stake for the community we love. We thank you for your input – whatever it may be. And, we cherish continuing to serve as your independent voice.

Bumper Cars On Main Street, continued from page 5

the enormous amount of noise this venue would produce. Loudoun County code states that the level of continuous noise emitted from such use, as measured at the property line shared with a residential use, should not exceed 55dBA. Noise would be a major issue for residences of Old Dominion Valley and especially for the proposed apartments that will have little or no buffer (as per the developer's plan).

Nearby residents are also concerned about the possible impact an arcade and sports bar that will remain open until 1 a.m. will have on adjacent properties, including Loudoun Valley High School. The nearby W&OD playground and wooded trails have already produced many a late night police call related to loitering and drug possession/use.

The only complex comparable to this entertainment venue in Loudoun is the Dulles Golf & Sport Center, located in a heavily commercial and industrial location off Route 28 – with the nearest residences 1.4 miles away.

Residents Need A Voice ... And More Details

Residents of Old Dominion Valley started an online petition that now has almost

400 signatures. They believe the interests of current residents should have a louder voice in development decisions to balance corporate developers and their (often out of state) investors. “This is a substantial development that is not of the scale with the surrounding community”, writes one petition signer. Resident Kelli Grim says, “The entire town is our backyard; our issues are all interconnected ... All we're asking for is fairness and for the project details to be out in the open and for residents to have meaningful input into what goes on in our backyards.”

At the planning commission meeting, it was suggested there would be a thirty percent “substantial buffer” to the project and nearby properties. However, a closer inspection of the plans shows that the majority of the surrounding buffer for the apartment complex will be less than town guidelines. The open space requirement for the apartment complex development is 4.80 acres. The plans say it will be less, but no actual number is provided. The tree buffer bordering the Old Dominion Valley community is roughly 1.40 acres, with most of the additional tree buffer along the creek and perimeter of the property totaling a

possible 3 acres, still less than the required. The buffer for Catoctin Creek is mandated to be 100 feet, but the plans show the buffer will be less. There will be minimal buffering from the commercial property to the homes that align the north side of Skyline Drive and practically none between the apartments and the entertainment complex.

A Note On The Affordable Housing Issue

The 176-unit apartment complex proposed is a tax-credit apartment building with priority given to Section 8 Vouchers Housing. The most recent county forecasts project that the supply of affordable housing within the county, existing and planned, will meet the county's visions through 2037. Purcellville has a population of fewer than 8,000 residents with a current supply of 194 tax-credit apartments. Meanwhile, South Riding has 168 tax-credit apartments with a population of over 24,000. Leesburg's ratio of saturation for LIHTC units is 32 percent and Ashburn is 17 percent, however Purcellville's ratio is 100 percent. Arguably, the need for such housing exists elsewhere within the county and closer to the major employment centers, but not here.

In The End ... Do We Really Need This? (And, Can We Really Afford It?)

Loudoun County politicians equate

development with economic growth. But, that is contrary to actual facts. For every \$1 in tax revenue from a residence, we spend \$1.70 in public services – whereas farmland costs just \$0.27 in services for every \$1 it generates in taxes. Previous county boards of supervisors put in motion efforts to retain the open space of western Loudoun through zoning, but subsequent boards have become more developer friendly and agreeable to zoning changes in this part of the county.

As towns across the country spend less on recreation, fast food restaurants and other entertainment chains have now become the gathering space for families. These spaces are not connected to any landscape, natural setting, or even to the community; the interaction is limited and often filled with advertising. If play is the way we learn and adapt within our environment, then public playgrounds, inviting public spaces, and meaningful recreation spaces, are what we really need.

Note: The Catoctin Creek Town Center developers will have a presentation at the Planning Commission meeting on Thursday, Jan. 16 at 7 p.m. at the Purcellville Town Hall.

Amy V. Smith's Money Talks

New Mortgage Rules Scheduled To Take Effect In January

— By Amy Smith

The Consumer Financial Protection Bureau has issued new mortgage rules that are scheduled to take effect on Jan. 10, 2014.

Background

In 2008, the rise in home foreclosures was viewed by many as the result of substandard mortgage lending practices. Subsequently, Congress passed the Dodd-Frank act in 2010, which created the CFPB and set forth a number of financial industry regulations aimed at protecting consumers, including some pertaining to mortgage lending. In January 2013, the CFPB issued mortgage rules that implement the mortgage provisions set forth by Congress under the act.

Highlights of the new mortgage rules

The new rules broaden coverage of existing ability-to-repay rules, which require a lender to make a reasonable, good faith determination that a consumer has the ability to repay a loan. The rules extend coverage of the ability-to-repay rules to the majority of closed-end transactions secured by a dwelling (with certain exceptions).

In addition, the rules set forth specific procedures a lender must follow when determining a borrower's ability to repay the loan, including the consideration and verification of certain consumer information (e.g. income, employment status) and the calculation of the borrower's monthly mortgage payment.

The rules also center on what are referred to as "Qualified Mortgages." According to the Dodd-Frank Act, lenders that issue Qualified Mortgages will receive a presumption of compliance with ability-to-repay rules, thereby reducing their risk of challenge from a borrower for failing to satisfy ability-to-repay requirements.

The rules specify various requirements that a loan must meet in order for it to be considered a Qualified Mortgage, including:

- Limits on risky loan features (e.g. negative amortization or interest-only loans)
- Cap on a lender's points and fees (3 percent of the loan amount)
- Certain underwriting requirements (e.g. 43 percent monthly debt-to-income ratio loan limits)



SMITH

What do new rules mean for consumers?

The new mortgage rules were mainly put into place as a way to end irresponsible mortgage lending and ensure that borrowers will only be able to obtain a mortgage loan that they can afford to pay back.

Proponents view the rules as welcome industry safeguards that simply mirror responsible mortgage lending practices that are already in place.

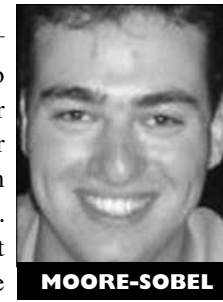
However, some mortgage-industry experts fear that the new rules may end up making obtaining a mortgage loan more difficult than it has been in the past — especially for borrowers who have a high debt-to-income ratio. Borrowers may also find themselves burdened with the task of providing lenders with additional documentation that they may not have had to in the past.

For more information on new mortgage rules, you can visit the CFPB website at www.consumerfinance.gov.

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Frank Wolf Will Be Missed

— By Samuel Moore-Sobel



MOORE-SOBEL

Congressman Frank Wolf, who has represented the 10th district for 33 years, announced in December that he will not seek an 18th term in the House of Representatives. As others scramble in an attempt to take his place, they should be forewarned that they have big shoes to fill.

Wolf was no ordinary congressman. Regardless of whether or not you agreed with him politically, it was hard not to admire him and his work on human rights. He secretly traveled to many countries including Iraq and Afghanistan, observing first-hand the conditions that people were enduring. He has been an advocate for Christians persecuted all over the world and has never been ashamed to tell it like it is. In a day when politicians tend to behave in a partisan manner, Congressman Wolf stood up to lobbyist Grover Norquist, refusing to sign his pledge against raising taxes.

Congressman Wolf's rise to political office is truly an American story. He grew up in a rough Philadelphia neighborhood and by his own admission was not a particularly good student. He ran unsuccessfully for Congress twice, after which most candidates would simply have given up. Yet he persevered, grabbing Ronald Reagan's coattails and sailing into office in 1980.

The news that Congressman Wolf would not run for re-election made me particularly sad. At the age of 8 I began writing the congressman about issues that I cared about such as funding for ending gang violence and the building of the Dulles

Rail, issues close to his heart. We corresponded for months, and ultimately I was invited to meet him in his office in Washington. My mother, brother and I arrived at his office and had our pictures taken with the congressman. He was very kind, asking me questions and encouraging me to follow my dreams. He had me

sit down in his chair and said, "One day this will be your office." It is a moment I will never forget, a moment in which I was inspired to run for public office.

In the last speech I heard Congressman Wolf give, he cast a vision for America. He told the story of how Ben Franklin, after looking at the seat George Washington had been sitting in during the Constitutional Convention in 1787, wondered whether or not the sun painted on the chair was a rising or a setting sun. After the constitution had been signed, Franklin is quoted as saying, "I have the happiness to know, that it is a rising, and not a setting sun." The congressman stated that he was worried for our nation, but was hopeful that we would work together to ensure that our nation's sun would indeed remain a rising one.

I cast my first and what will be my only vote for Congressman Wolf in the 2012 election. It will indeed be strange not having Frank Wolf in Congress as I have been represented by him for my entire lifetime. But here's to hoping that 2014 brings a member of Congress committed to ensuring that our nation's sun will remain a rising one for many generations to come.

Samuel Moore-Sobel is a student at George Mason University.

Bowman Library To Co-Sponsor Fun Workshop Series For Middle Schoolers

Bowman Library will host three fun filled, creative and informative workshops for middle schoolers this winter. The workshop series "Its Classic!" will be presented by Tashi Treadway and is open to the public, free of charge.

The first workshop, "Mingling with Mythology" will be held on Saturday, Jan. 18, from 2 to 3 p.m. Treadway will present the story of Athena and Arachne and workshop participants will have the opportunity to paint their own ancient Greek style pottery.

On Saturday, Feb. 15, from 2 to 3 p.m., the workshop, "Roaming with the Romans" will feature the story of Perseus and Medusa. Workshop participants will have the opportunity to try the art of mosaics.

On Saturday, March 8, from 2 to 3 p.m., the workshop, "Working Out with Words" will feature the story of Argus. Workshop participants will have an opportunity to write in the manner of the ancient Romans.

Treadway, passionate about the classics comments, "I'm looking forward to sharing the classical experience and hopefully inspiring middle schoolers to pursue an appreciation of mythology, art, history and language in our everyday lives."

Each workshop is limited to 20 participants. To pre-register for one or more of the workshops please contact: Donna Hughes at dhughes@handleyregional.org or call 540-869-9000 x215. The Bowman Library is located at 871 Tasker Rd. Stephens City.

Registration For Upper Loudoun Little League - Opened

Upper Loudoun Little League has opened their online registration for spring 2014. They are registering children age 5 by April 30, through age 12 as of April 30. Go to ulll.org to register. There will be one day of walk-in registration scheduled for Saturday, February 1 from 9 a.m. to 12 p.m. at the Purcellville Train Station. Early registration will close at noon on February 1st. The fee is \$110 for one player in addition to the \$12.50 per player Loudoun County fee. More details as well as the family fee structure are available on the ULLL registration page.

Just Like Nothing (Else) On Earth: Lakeview Cemetery



– By Tim Jon

I guess it's 'cause I honestly feel safer here than at most of our more populated locations – like a crowded mall or supermarket or other high-density shopping attraction. I don't have to ponder on any unexpected activities here – I'm pretty sure, anyway. But it's far beyond these concerns; I also have to admit that there's always been kind of an odd – inexorable – attraction between yours truly and the local churchyard. And this one sunk its teeth into me the first time I came across it – which must've been on one of my first ramblings around the new neighborhood during that one year I lived in the charming little Town of Hamilton.

Lakeview Cemetery was practically in the backyard of the historic, imposing – almost foreboding house (fit for an Edward Hopper painting, if there ever was one) in which we rented space – just north of Colonial Highway; the burial ground lay within about a tenth of a mile from the place, so it naturally became one of my habitual destinations on my frequent, solitary walks. In those days – this was about 15 years ago, back long enough to predate much of the recent development on the outskirts of Hamilton – the churchyard was truly (most of the time, anyway) a lonely, isolated place – a perfect spot for a 21st Century 'shaman' to re-connect with his soul. Lord knows there were (and still are, and always will be) plenty of 'em around me in spots like this – at least according to my beliefs.

And, here's the rub, Horatio; the tactile experience of communion – no, not with the dead – but with the eternal – that's the pull. And, if my chemistry fails and I miss out on the connection, it's still a nice, quiet spot in which to sit and listen to the birds and study the surrounding landscape. But more often than not, I'd leave the place, wrapped up in a stronger sense of my role in the universe – even if only for a few brief moments.

I know, I know – in Northern Virginia it's now practically against the law to feel anything – we don't have time for those undesirable sensations; I'd register little surprise if the general assembly one of these years – in their great wisdom – would place a ban on specific emotional reactions to given situations. Heaven forbid.

But, see – bear with me here – just as we



JON

feel the importance – the dire obligation – to carefully, ritualistically enshrine the remains of our loved ones in what we deem a sanctified place (even if it's scattering ashes off the Golden Gate Bridge, etc.) – just as we place the highest priority on such practices – we (I trust some are with me on this) on this side also feel a need to believe in the sanctity of our corporeal being – in our very lives – or at

least in our better acts (Lincoln's Better Angels, maybe). So – you see – there's much more to my fascination with little old churchyards than some sort of half-spooky thrill of possessing enough bravery to walk in a place of the dead. And, I admit to just a smidgen of that – but there's a deeper mystery here – related to the ubiquity of our souls along the River of Time. Or, maybe it's the River in Time. (There are times when you write, and then there are times when you write down.)

And, did I formulate all these thoughts upon my first visit to humble Lakeview Cemetery?

No – nor on my hundredth. I would go so far as to admit that there was very little thought of any kind during my actual visits; cerebral activity (if I could ever be accused of such) nearly always follows visceral experience – often in the total absence of the physical. And, yes, it occurs to me that I've never really known anything about the lives of those men, women and children whose remains lie here; I'm unaware of their specific spiritual beliefs, nationalities, races, professions, politics or daily practices. It's – perhaps oddly – never been of my prime concern; I guess it may be to some. But, then again, how much of our Countries' or States' flags, families' names, skin coloration, religious convictions, political agendas, careers and the like – how much of all these traits do we take away from our span on Earth? Very little, if any. I've been increasingly tempted to believe, in the progression of my personal allotment of time.

Just morbid contemplation?

A bit, perhaps, but I occasionally prefer the solitude of the graveyard to the mania of glitter – and I've always been duly hosted by the ones – or the One – with whom I've communed there.

Packages Of Thanks From Potomac Falls

– By Mary Rose Lunde



LUNDE

“There are so many ways to be brave in this world. Sometimes bravery involves laying down your life for something bigger than you or for someone else.”

This quote, from the novel “Allegiant” by Veronica Roth, depicts the assumption of bravery. But bravery is much more. Consider the bravery of a student being bullied by another student. Aren't they considered brave? Isn't bravery just another form of deception in pretty packaging?

True bravery resides in everyone, it is only those that allow it to show that deserve the honor of being called brave. These brave heroes are soldiers. They lay their lives down to protect the innocent and leave the familiarity of home for the sake of others. And how do we honor these brave soldiers, who risk their lives for us on a daily basis? Easy, we send them addressed care packages from home that show our appreciation.

At Potomac Falls high school, students and teachers came together to send packages to troops overseas. The school's DECA team partnering with the Doug Green Memorial Foundation hosted a “stuffing” party at the school. Students, parents and staff members alike contributed in the packing of thousands of items to be sent out to the troops. Volunteers taped boxes together, packed supplies into the boxes, taped them shut and stuck self-addressed stickers on each box all in thanks to the troops.

The stuffing party was met with much support. “I think it's really good that we are giving back to the troops. It makes you feel good because you know that they will really appreciate everything in the package,” said senior Brandi Waggenhoffer, the DECA vice president of community service. What she feels is true, the “good natured feeling” of thanking someone who has had such

an impact on your life, whether directly or indirectly, makes people feel happy.

The Potomac Falls' National English Honor Society also collected goods and letters to soldiers to be packaged and sent to Afghanistan. The package was sent to the father of a Potomac

Falls student who will then disperse it to the rest of his unit. “This is such a special opportunity for us to show our appreciation for the dedication and sacrifice of a member of our own community. We understand that it is a small gesture, but we hope it will remind him and his unit that they continue to be in our thoughts and prayers,” said Jameson Zoller, co-sponsor for the honor society.

Since this honor society is based off English, the officers and the sponsors believed that a change should be made to where their energies should be spent. Though writing letters to soldiers has always been a part of the society's options, this is the first year that the society has put an emphasis to supporting the truth. The president of the society, Gillian Clarke, was happy that “the package would make someone's day and was happy to support the troops because they deserve all of our love and support.”

This thought of giving back to the troops brought out an emphasis of community service to the school, which already participates in a Panther Project (a yearlong community service project that each grade completes). Both of these groups changed the lives of those soldiers. One package made the difference to those soldiers. It's the appreciation for the soldiers that counted.

Mary Rose Lunde is a senior at Potomac Falls High School and was just recently accepted early decision into Virginia Tech. She is planning on majoring in biology and creative writing.

Gardening Tips For January: Think Seeds

– By Andrea Gaines

Ahhhh. The holidays are over. It's a new year. And, things have slowed down a bit. Now's the time to have some indoor gardening fun – fun with seeds!

Use the month of January to do some planning for your spring garden, including getting seeds ordered and started indoors.

Research ahead the date of our area's last spring frosts. A good reference is www.plantmaps.com. We're in the Piedmont Area, and the average last killing frost – the time after which it is safe to plant things outside – will be between April 20 and April 30. But again, check the website.

Vegetables and herbs to start inside include broccoli, cauliflower, cabbage, parsley, onions, chives, thyme, sage, marjoram



and cilantro. Beans are fun, too, and so easy. It's a great wintertime naturalist's lesson for kids to watch an ordinary bean blossom into a cute little vine. The Virginia Native Plant Society (www.vnps.org) is a great source for spring wildflower seed mixes. Many will reseed themselves naturally year after year, giving you lots to look forward to.

When you tend to seedlings indoors they don't need much fertilizing, but as they develop into small young plants they can benefit from a weak solution of fish emulsion or other organic compound.

The important thing is to get started early so you're not playing catch up as late February and early March roll around. Seeds and spring garden dreams can make a cold winter day so enjoyable.

Sushi – “Tails” From The Barnyard

- By Sushi

A winter's rose stood all alone in the solitude of the forbidden woods just beyond the opposite edge of our creek bed. Her perfect head glistened, silver drops of water like diamonds hung from her delicate petals. The clear waters of beaver dam creek sang along, while the crisp winter cold rustled through the leafless trees and their bows danced in the wind.

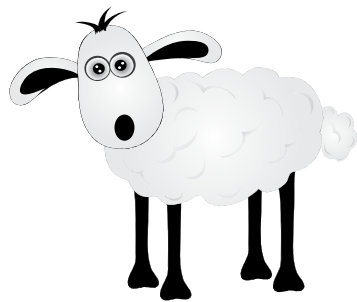
The sunlight played upon the diamonds of the rose beckoning one to take a closer look. With the intrigue of a great gem, like a pirate to treasure, I quickly found my way down toward the creek to inspect more closely. How could a rose be growing this time of year and in a more unlikely place for any rose to grow?

I was so lost in the rose I didn't hear the tip toeing hoofs of a certain bad little lamb following me. As I got closer to the creek bed this bad little lamb slipped on a sheet of ice causing him to slide into me, knocking my stunned self into the bitter icy cold creek's water. I couldn't breathe, I couldn't swim and the rushing water took me in. The last thing I heard was the little lambs gasps and bahhhs.

I could hear the bad little lamb talking to himself, "If I go and get help I am in big trouble for leaving my flock. If I don't get help, Sushi will die. Uggg - what was one to do? If anything happened to Sushi I could never forgive myself."

The little lamb ran, ran, and ran, as fast as he could straight up the long steep path until he arrived at the front door of the old white farm house. Huffing, puffing, nostrils flaring, he tried to catch his breathe. He bahhed and bahhed and bahhed as loud as he could until finally Murphy, the Great Saint Bernard and Mrs. B. came rushing to the door wondering what all the commotion was about.

Mrs. B. saw the frantic little lamb look at



her, the lamb turned its head and pranced toward the front porch steps, turned back and pranced toward the steps again, as if to say follow me. Murphy nudged the lamb and in his great Murphy wisdom followed as Mrs. B yelled; "Murphy go." The little lamb and Murphy raced through the barn yard, passed the flock of sheep, leaving them all looking in wonder, – the little lambs mother called out to him; "Son where are you going?" The bad little lamb knew he was in big trouble Murphy nudged the lamb on straight down the steep path to the cold creek below. They could hear Mrs. B in the four wheel drive not far behind.

The lamb and Murphy came to the creeks bank. Murphy's eye caught my limp cold body caught on a tree trunk just down the opposite side of the creek where the perfect winters rose had grown. Murphy plunged his great body into the creeks rushing water and deftly swam to me. I don't really remember but I am told by one little lamb, that Murphy my wing man not only saved one life that day but two. And, that there was one bad little lamb that came out smelling like a winter's rose.



My master, Elaine Boland lives with her husband and five daughters in Purcellville at Fields of Athenry Farm. She cherishes farm life and the joy of providing her customers with fine fresh meats and products. She can be reached at www.fieldsofathenryfarm.com or 703 926-8444.

Dr. Mike, continued from page 2

friend. For example, you and your spouse could sign up together for a one-month dietary cleanse or sign up and train together for a 5K.

Fifth, set aside some quiet time each day to assess your progress and make mental adjustments as needed. This time does not need to be overly formal or time consuming. A few minutes in the shower or while driving in the car can help to refocus you at the start of each day.

Sixth, visualizing your success can also be helpful in your thought process toward change, and many people benefit from visual aids. Perhaps creating a vision board with resolution focused pictures or ideas posted in your personal space at home or work could serve as a healthy reminder.

Research studies on change have shown that learning new habits can take over three

weeks or more before those habits become a part of you and your behavioral repertoire. So keep in mind that you will have ups and you will have downs in any worthwhile effort you put toward personal change and self-improvement. The important thing to remember is that your efforts do make a difference even if the change you are striving for seems slow in the making. As the statistics from the University of Scranton Journal of Clinical Psychology show, "people who explicitly make resolutions are 10 times more likely to attain their goals than people who don't explicitly make resolutions." All the best to you in 2014.

Michael Oberschneider, "Dr. Mike," is the founder and Director of Ashburn Psychological Services, a private mental health clinic comprised of 12 MD and PhD level mental health clinicians. To learn more go to www.ashburnpsych.com or call 703 723-2900.

Wild Loudoun

Killdeer: Protective and Assertive Winter Beauty

- By Andrea Gaines

Nature is beautiful, inspiring and accessible no matter the season. Still, it was a bit of a challenge to decide what part of wild Loudoun to feature in this January 2014 edition of the Blue Ridge Leader.

My question was answered at Franklin Park a few weeks ago. The park is one of my dog's favorite haunts, with lots of varied natural areas and habitats, lots of places to sniff and lots of trails to follow. As we were enjoying a sunny but cold afternoon there just before Christmas, both she and I stopped and looked up at the sky, reacting to the sharp sound of a small, fast-moving bird, swooping, calling and circling as it finally landed in a wet, snowy area on the edge of a parking lot near a large pond.

The park has quite a bit of what would formerly have been wetland and spring-type areas, and I've always been on alert as to what kind of wildlife that might attract, including birds you would find around water.

This bird was small. But, it also had tall legs for its size and moved across the ground with an exceptionally quick motion. It had a high pitch peep /screech that seemed to say this-is-mine-and-that-is-yours-so-please-keep-your-distance-I-am-busy!

My first thought was that the bird would have been just as at home zipping along the water line at the beach and marsh areas I grew up around on Long Island's north shore, snapping up sand crabs and bits of food along the shore and in the tidal muds.

I took a snapshot of the bird, noticing several very handsome black and white rings and markings around its neck and down its back. I also noticed that when it lifted its wings a distinctive rust-colored upper tail was revealed. And, when it flew it displayed a sharply pointed wing tip, which seemed to help it navigate and direct its darting swoop and dive pattern.

My mind said "killdeer?" And, when I checked my bird books later that day the answer was yes, a killdeer, a relatively small plover – a type of shore bird.

In Loudoun County killdeer use our fields, our lawns, and, yes, as in Franklin Park, our parking lots. They lay their eggs right on the ground atop mixed grasses and/or rocks, and they are found all over Loudoun and North America at various times of the year.

The open ground sounds like not such a smart place to lay a clutch of eggs. But there is always a bit of genius to nature. Killdeer have adapted a behavior common to many species whose eggs and/or young need a different kind of protection or advantage. Killdeer employ something called the broken wing act, feigning injury when danger approaches in order to draw a predator's attention away from their nest.



Killdeer eggs



Protective momma killdeer with babies hiding underneath.



Killdeer feigning injury

Other nesting waders, plovers and doves – such as the mourning dove – also use this behavior. They fake injury, the predator takes notice/is distracted by an easy opportunity for a meal, and pretty soon the eggs are safe, or, at least, safer than they had been.

People who study birds report that killdeer are not very nervous around people. But, my Franklin Park killdeer wanted nothing to do with me, flying up and away whenever I got close and continuing its very sharp call. By the way, the sound, per "National Geographic's Field Guide to Birds of North America" matched, too. It is described as "kill-dee or dee-dee-dee," which gives the bird its name.

Biologists say that killdeer are fairly common sights here in the early winter, northern Virginia being right on the line between their summer and winter ranges. So, everything in my identification of the bird made sense.

What a delight to experience this creature, or at least capture a fleeting glimpse of it as it zipped across one of our most increasingly common "habitats" – a parking lot.

McAuliffe Nominates Anne Holton as Secretary of Education

Governor-elect Terry McAuliffe announced the nomination of Former First Lady Anne Holton to be his Secretary of Education.

“Anne Holton’s lifetime of experience with Virginia public schools, her public service on behalf of Virginia students and her passion for creating opportunity for all of our kids make her the best choice to join my administration as Secretary of Education,” said Governor-elect McAuliffe. “A public education in Virginia should be a gateway to success for every student, regardless of where they are born or what their economic circumstances are. I am thrilled to have Anne as a member of my team as we work together to strengthen Virginia’s education system from early childhood all the way through college and workforce training.”

Holton brings a wealth of experience with Virginia students and its public education system to the McAuliffe team. As a child she attended Roanoke, Richmond and Fairfax public schools. As the daughter of Governor Linwood Holton, she and her family helped integrate Richmond public schools. Her three children also attended Virginia public schools. As a Juvenile and Domestic Relations Court Judge in Richmond, Holton developed a deep familiarity with Virginia’s

foster care and juvenile justice systems, and became involved in many initiatives aimed at improving the Commonwealth’s support for at-risk youth. When her husband, Tim Kaine, was Governor of Virginia, Holton devoted her efforts as First Lady to reforming Virginia’s foster care program and supporting her husband’s efforts to expand access to early childhood education.

In her current position as Program Director for the Great Expectations Program for Foster Youth, Holton works with Virginia’s Community Colleges to improve access to and success in higher education for Virginia’s foster youth and alumni.

“I am honored to have this opportunity to work with Governor-elect McAuliffe to strengthen Virginia’s schools from pre-Kindergarten all the way through college and workforce training, and to make sure our system works for all of our students, including those who are too often left on the margins of our society,” said Anne Holton. “I am eager to bring my experience with Virginia public schools as a student, mother, judge, First Lady, and children’s advocate to this exciting role on the great bipartisan team the Governor-elect has built to serve Virginians over these next four years.”

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Video online at: www.loudoun.gov/adultday

Administered by Loudoun County Area Agency on Aging, Loudoun County Department of Parks, Recreation & Community Services.



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– ARTIST'S PROFILE –

Kathy Ratcliffe, Quilting As Family, Fabric And Thread Memories

– By Andrea Gaines

Growing up I'd hear the whir of my mom's sewing machine and watch as precious pieces of Irish linen and chintz, French silk tassels, soft spring cottons and colorful yarns were transformed into pillows, slipcovers, dresses, yardstick covers, curtains and tablecloths.

This was the beautiful, everyday fabric art and craft sewn by my mother. Art, craft and handmade delight was as common in our household as my grandmother's homemade peach marmalade, the greens and flowers we harvested from our garden and yard for the holidays, the shells and rocks we collected as children to edge the driveway and the old barn beams that my dad hand-cut, carved and repurposed into handsome and decorative tables and cabinets.

Interviewing Kathy Ratcliffe just before Christmas in preparation for this January issue of the Blue Ridge Leader all of my family's wonderful fabric and thread memories came pouring out of me.

Like my mother, Ratcliffe's craft, and the language of quilting, has been joyfully passed down by generations of American women. Her focus is on the creation of miniature quilts – 8" x 8" or 10" x 10" – that are sold framed and unframed and are also reproduced as archive-quality giclée prints and as notecards. There is also a book showcasing Ratcliffe's work. And, her work serves as a history lesson – stories attached to each often show an historical quilt upon which her work is based, telling fascinating stories about the origin of the pattern, who made the quilt and where the original lives now ... whether it be in a museum or in a private collection.

"I grew up with antique quilts," said Ratcliffe. "With the right fabric and technique, I could make new things that looked old. Old things, handwork and the arts were highly valued in my family, and most of us did and still participate actively in it in some way." Ratcliffe's grandmother, she notes with an entrepreneur's pride was a quilter and helped women in Virginia market their creations to earn extra income during the Great Depression. Another grandmother was a needle worker as well as a gifted quilter.

As you can imagine, Ratcliffe's work is meticulous, time-consuming and, when you see the finished product – even from the back – absolutely glorious. Some of the relatively small finished quilts contain as many as 1,000 individual pieces, assembled by both hand and machine sewing. "Look at them long enough," Ratcliffe said to me, "and you can pick up pattern after pattern, all following an historical design but each a completely new work of art."

Ratcliffe first started with simple block patterns comprised of large pieces, sometimes using fabrics that looked "old." Her interest was in "simple, graphic quilts of a traditional style." And, as quilting



So dedicated!



Ratcliffe at work on her porch

began to enjoy renewed popularity in the 1970s, she started Nine Patch Studio to share her designs with a wider audience and also engage the home decorating and fine crafts market.

Quilting speaks to specific periods of time. Quilt patterns were inspired by the personal experiences of the women who invented them, all reflecting the social, economic and family lives that they lived – the things they saw and the things that spoke to them. This is why, in Ratcliffe's work – and any quilter's work – you'll become attuned to common pattern terms such as "crown of thorns" and "Joseph's coat" – both religious references, "bear's claw" – a tribute to nature, "log cabin" and "barn raising" – things which speak for themselves, and "furrows" – an agriculture reference.

The 19th century marked one of the most significant times in the history of quilts, and Ratcliffe was keen to emphasize this, for this was a period when quilters migrated from hand-woven fabrics to factory-made fabrics and enjoyed a fresh multitude of fabric choices and colors.

"As I work," Ratcliffe says, "I sense a connection with the women who made those early quilts, with their creative choices as well as their lives and their historical context. In a way, each miniature is a joint project between two quilters – old and new." For her part, she says, "I hope to preserve and validate these singular, deeply personal works of artistic expression."

In June of 2013, Ratcliffe won the highest award possible as a traditional artisan in the year's "Directory of Traditional American Crafts." Her work is showcased in the August 2014 issue of *Early American Life* magazine. She ranks top in her field. While the tiny bits of fabric that comprise her art are often smaller than your fingernail, her contributions to the continuation and preservation of quilting are huge. Bigger than one simple, sweet and generous lady laboring at her craft – simply huge. Thank you, Kathie, for pulling me and our readers



Bear's Claw quilt pattern



Basket quilt pattern

into your wonderful world of quilting,

Ratcliffe's Nine Patch Studio is located in the National Historic Landmark village of Waterford, Virginia, where she lives and works. Her miniature quilts have appeared

in the finest Americana shows – including the village's annual Waterford Fair – and are in private collections nationally and beyond. Ratcliffe's quilts will be on display Jan 14-April 26 at the Virginia Quilt Museum in Harrisonburg, VA. 540.882.3348; www.ninepatchstudio.com.

Franklin Park Visual & Performing Arts Center, Jan. 2014 Events

For reservations/tickets call 540-338-7973 or visit www.franklinparkartscenter.org.

See website for displays and exhibits in the Franklin Park Gallery and for performance schedule details.

Saturday, Jan. 11, 8 p.m. – Mink! And Dry Mill Road. MINK! is a country/indie music duo. Melissa Wright plays guitar and sings. Daniel Zezeski plays drums and sings. They come from completely different musical backgrounds: Melissa from the old-time and country scene of Virginia and Danny from punk and indie of Scranton, Pa. Drymill Road is a bluegrass band playing high energy and heartfelt original material along with their own tasty versions of classics from Led Zeppelin, Dylan, The Beatles and more. Tickets \$15, available at the door.

Friday, Jan. 24, 8 p.m., Saturday, Jan. 25, 8 p.m., Sunday, Jan. 26, 3 p.m. – Main Street Theater: Take 2 ... Say I Do. Main Street's second annual original musical revue features a hand picked cast singing you through the fun and foibles that come along with planning and surviving a wedding. Meet all those familiar characters, the bride, the groom, the long-suffering bridesmaid, mother of the bride, the crazy aunt, the wedding planner and the uninvited guests. Tickets, \$20 adult, \$15 seniors/children; tickets available from karlahlouis@aol.com, or reserve will call by calling 540-338-7973.

Friday, Jan. 31, 8 p.m. – Last Ham Standing. A group of performers take suggestions from the audience to create wacky scenes and funny improv games. Reserved seating. Tickets: \$12 adult, \$10 student, \$8 child.



January & February happenings at Franklin Park Arts Center

MINK & Dry Mill Road

Saturday, January 11 8PM

MINK! is a country/indie duo. Melissa Wright plays guitar and sings. Daniel Zezeski plays drums and sings. Drymill Road is a bluegrass band playing high energy and heartfelt original material along with their own tasty versions of classics from Led Zeppelin, Dylan, The Beatles, and more!

Tickets: \$15 All Ages. Available at the Door



Main Street Theater: Take 2 . . . Say I Do

Friday, January 24 8PM

Saturday, January 25 8PM

Sunday, January 26 3PM

Main Street's second annual original musical revue features a hand-picked cast singing you through the fun and foibles that come along with planning and surviving a wedding. Meet all those familiar characters... the Bride, the Groom, the long-suffering Bridesmaid, Mother of the Bride, the crazy Aunt, the Wedding Planner, and the Uninvited Guests. You might see a familiar storyline from your own wedding day! Mark your calendar now for this dazzling winter wedding-themed event.

Tickets: \$20 Adult., \$15 Seniors/Children karlahlouis@aol.com or reserve will call by calling 540-338-7973.

Last Ham Standing

Friday, January 31 8PM and Friday, February 14 8PM

Don't miss this hilarious show full of laughs for the entire family. A group of talented performers take suggestions from the audience to create wacky scenes and funny improv games. If you like Whose Line Is It Anyway?, you'll love Last Ham Standing, the other comedy meat! Reserved Seating

Tickets: \$12 Adult, \$10 Student, \$8 Child. Visit www.lastham.com or www.franklinparkartscenter.org

Danny Knicely's Big Winter Concert

Saturday, February 1 8PM

Danny Knicely, performing his 8th annual Big Winter Concert, continues to dazzle audiences with a variety of world-class musical performances. This year's event features some of his most adventurous and explosively creative musical partners including Danny on mandolin, Rex McGee on banjo, Nate Leath on fiddle, John Garris on guitar and Bobby Martin on percussion. The evening will also be a CD release for Rex McGee's "Kipple Krunk."

Tickets: \$18 Advance., \$22 at the door or reserve by calling 540-338-7973.



Dan Cray Trio: An Evening of Jazz

Saturday, February 15 8PM



A perfect evening of Jazz for you and your Valentine. Be part of the Washington DC debut of the Dan Cray Trio, direct from New York City. Dan Cray's jazz piano and the Trio's music has been featured on the hit TV show "Gossip Girl,". Legendary Jazz drummer Billy Drummond joins the trio for this unique performance. Drummond can be heard on 300 albums, some as a band leader including "Dubai" named #1 Jazz CD by the New York Times. Adam Cote will be featured on bass guitar.

Tickets: \$15-\$20 www.franklinparkartscenter.org

**FRANKLIN PARK
ARTS CENTER**

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Carver Center January 2014 Events

Wednesday, Jan. 15, Healthy Tips Presentation, 12:45-1:30 p.m. for ages 55 and older. Chander Gambhir from the Fairfax County Health Department will give an educational presentation on measures that we all can take to protect against illness during the cold and flu season.

Monday, Jan. 20, Martin Luther King Jr. Day Event from 9 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. - for ages 18 and older. This year we will travel to Leesburg to join others and participate in the 22nd annual Martin Luther King March and Celebration. The march begins at the Leesburg Town Court House and continues to the former Douglas High School.

Friday, Jan. 24, Ballroom Dance Social from 7-10 p.m. for ages 16 and older. Couples and singles are invited to an evening of dancing which begins with one hour of professional instruction. For the discounted entry fee of \$10, you must call 571-258-3400 by 8 p.m. on Thursday, Jan. 23 to pre-register.

Saturday, Jan. 25, Appraisal Day from 2-5 p.m. for all ages. Todd Peenstra, a nationally known antiques and art appraiser, will visit Carver Center to offer appraisals for objects whose value you may be wondering about. Appropriate items would include, but are not limited to furniture, glass, porcelain, silver, bronze, coins, toys, and documents. Bring anything



Bob McCann

Todd Peenstra

you would like Todd to examine. If an item is too large to transport, feel free to bring a clear photograph in its place. This event will be presented in an Antique Road Show-like format, with each item evaluated and discussed before an audience. Bob McCann of Iron Gate Antiques in Bluemont will be assisting with appraisals and will be on hand to answer any questions regarding repairs and restoration. Cost is \$5 per person with a 3 item maximum.

Tuesday, Jan. 14 and 28, Jerry's Jukebox from 7:15-8:30 p.m. This bi-monthly event gives you an opportunity to practice your dancing each second and fourth Tuesday.

JANUARY

☉ **Leesburg Toastmaster Club**, meets every first and third Saturday at 10:15 a.m. at the Town Hall in Leesburg. Develop communication and leadership skills in a friendly and fun Toastmaster club. Go to <http://1889.toastmastersclubs.org/> for more information or email vppr-1889@toastmastersclubs.org.

☉ **Thursday, Jan. 9, free gardening lecture, "Champion Trees: What Makes a Champion?"** 7 p.m. at Rust Library in Leesburg. The Loudoun County Master Gardeners' 2014 Lecture series kicks off with guest lecturer Joe Howard speaking about his long time role in the search, identification and preservation of "Champion Trees" in Maryland.

☉ **Saturday, Jan. 11, Ebenezer United Methodist Church Country Breakfast** from 8 to 10 a.m. or until they run out of food. Biscuits and sausage gravy, scrambled eggs, sausage patties, home fried potatoes, pancakes, fruit, coffee cake and more. At the firehouse located at 11762 Harpers Ferry Rd., (Rt.671) Purcellville. Free will offering.

☉ **Saturday, Jan. 11, bluegrass concert**, 7 p.m. at the Lucketts Community Center, 42361 Lucketts Road in Leesburg. The Lucketts Bluegrass Concert Series continues its 40th season of weekly concerts with a special anniversary show. The show features Springfield Exit. Tickets are \$15 at the door. Go to www.luckettsbluegrass.org.

☉ **Tuesday, Jan. 14, Wild Ones**, Blue Ridge Chapter meeting at 10 a.m. in the library

at Blandy Experimental Farm in Boyce. Janet Davis of Hill House Native Plants will be talking about native plants as ground covers – tough as nails American plants – and what works well in different home landscape situations. The winter-sowing/seed swap events postponed from snowy December will also take place. For questions, call Donna Williamson at 540-877-2002.

☉ **Saturday, Jan. 18 and Sunday, Jan. 19, open auditions for roles in "NORTON: A Civil War Opera"** at Franklin Park Arts Center. The new opera features a concept and libretto by Meredith Bean McMath and music by David E. Chávez. Ten-minute auditions by appointment only. Email admin@loudounlyricopera.com or call (703) 771-0996 during business hours for more information.

☉ **Friday, Jan. 24 through Sunday, Jan. 26, "Take 2: Say I Do, A Musical Revue"** at the Franklin Park Arts Center in Purcellville. Friday and Saturday at 8 p.m. and Sunday 3 p.m. Main Street Theater Productions presents this story of the perfect wedding...unless the bride runs away, the mother-in-law gets in the way or a certain wedding planner doesn't get her way. Go to www.franklinparkartscenter.org.

SPORTS REGISTRATIONS

Registration Open for Greater Loudoun Babe Ruth

Spring Registration is now open for the Greater Loudoun Babe Ruth baseball league. Complete the online registration process and make payment on or before Feb. 28. The league has two divisions, 13-15 years old and 16-18 years old. Go to www.gibr.org for information.

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New Gardening Class for 2014 - Feb. 5 to March 26

Expand your gardening toolbox by covering gardening, pruning, and landscape basics with four weeks of, no nonsense garden information and activities, then go on to design a real garden, developing new skills. In this series of classes, participants will move through the basics and then develop sustainable, lower maintenance landscape designs for their homes.

These classes will help you sort through mountains of bewildering and conflicting gardening and plant information to understand the approaches and tasks that really work in Virginia. You can make a big difference in your landscape and environment, saving bees, butterflies, and birds in the process. Gardening with deer and the latest in vegetable gardening will be included. Ornamental and native plants can coexist beautifully in your landscape

for more interest. Develop your design concept, and figure out which plants will work best where.

Classes will be held from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. on Wednesdays, from Feb. 5 to March 26 in the Tasting Room at the Village Winery & Vineyard on Brown's Lane in Waterford. The first class on basics runs from Feb. 5 to Feb. 26. Fee is \$96. Registration is required. The fee for all 8 classes is \$180.

Donna Williamson has taught classes in Waterford, Warrenton, Shenandoah University, Oatlands, and Blandy State Arboretum for more than 20 years. She was founder and editor of GRANDIFLORA Mid Atlantic Gardening magazine and is currently revising her book, The Virginia Gardener's Companion: An Insider's Guide to Low-Maintenance Gardening in Virginia. Call 540 877-2002.

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Time To Order Seeds

- By Donna Williamson

The holidays are over and we can relax into visions of spring. It's the perfect time to start your winter seed sowing activities. If you bring up my article about this last February, all the directions are there. And if you need more detailed information, check out www.agardenforthehouse.com – great blog – and click on winter-sowing. It's lots of fun and the plants did very well for me last season.

The tomatoes I started outside were robust and strong, not the wimpy, indoor grown plants I was used to. Of course I planted too much lettuce seed so I had to cut up the plant mass like a pan of brownies and plant each clump...will do better this year.

Several surprises delighted me. I had collected five Florentine iris seeds and all five germinated in one of my containers. They were transplanted in the spring and grew very well. Butterfly weed and white baptisia grew nicely too. I have struggled with perennial seeds in the past and this method made it easy and successful.

So now, in January, we can order seeds and start them with very little fuss. What a great way to add to your landscape with perennials, annuals, veggies, and even woody plants at low cost. I grew a species hydrangea last winter from seeds left on the stems. It was wonderful to see the little babes sprout in the outdoors. You might start some redbuds or dogwoods from seed...they will surprise you with their fast growth.

So get the winter sowing going. If you need



GenoveseBasil

another list for best planting times for different seeds, email me and I can send you my latest one.

Those of you ready for some fun can sign up for my winter classes beginning February 5 – Wednesdays this year – at the Village Vineyard. We will be looking at newest planting schemes from Europe and how to incorporate good-looking natives into our home landscapes. Email me for the registration form at donnawilliamson2002@earthlink.net.

We have a whole new year to play in the garden – what could be more fun.

Donna Williamson is a garden designer and coach. She has taught gardening and design classes at the State Arboretum of Virginia, Oatlands, and Shenandoah University; she continues to hold classes in Waterford each winter. She is working on a revision of her book The Virginia Gardener's Companion. Email donnawilliamson2002@earthlink.net or call her at 540-877-2002. The Waterford class fills quickly and begins on February 5, 2014. Call or email to reserve a space.

Kitchen Science Kids: The Mystery of Miscibility

- By Leah Enright

Miscibility and immiscibility are two fancy words that scientists like to use in their work with liquids. Some liquids are miscible, some are not, (and are therefore immiscible). Well, not surprisingly we're going to learn the definitions of these words with a simple, (and fun), activity, called a "Wave-In-A-Bottle".

You'll need:

A grown-up to approve this activity and supervise

1 small empty water bottle, labels removed (I love Aqua Pods for this purpose!)

Vegetable Oil

Water

Food Coloring

Glitter, small beads, or metallic confetti, (if available)

Glue and electrical tape to seal the bottle

Fill the empty water bottle 1/3 full of oil, and drop in any glitter, beads or confetti you may have. Fill the rest of the way with water and no more than 1-2 drops of food coloring. Glue the cap onto the bottle, screwing it tightly and securing with a strip of electrical tape. Now, swirl and marvel, watching the liquids slide and wave past each other. Once the

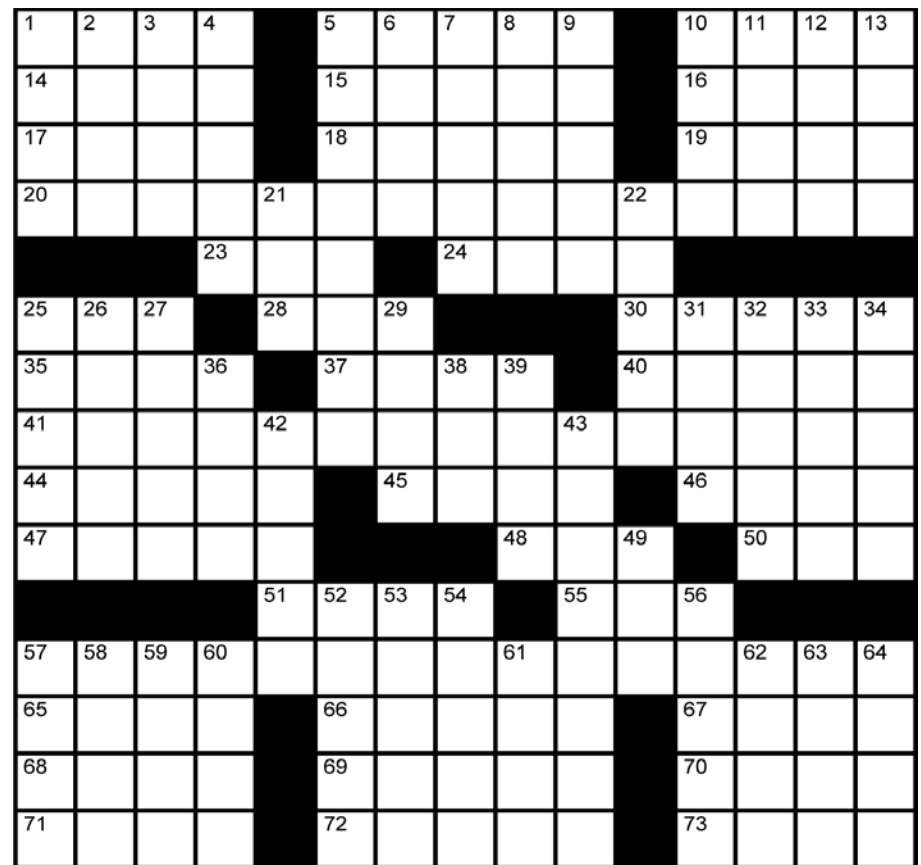


novelty has worn off, give it a good shake, and observe the results. Leave and check it again ten minutes later. What happened?

What you should have noticed is this oil and water may blend, (given a good shake), but they don't mix. That is to say, they are immiscible, (not mixable). So, there you have it-miscible and immiscible are not big mysteries after all, they mean mixable and not mixable, (and it is a nice coincidence that those words rhyme.) So, if you confront these terms on a science test at any point in the future, I hope you'll fondly remember Kitchen Science Kids, and your glittery, immiscible, Wave-In-A-Bottle.

Leah Enright is a hairdresser at Purcellville Gateway's Hair Cuttery. She loves kids, science, and big, messy art projects. She welcomes thoughts and comments at mizbeytac@yahoo.com.

The Good and the Bad – By Myles Mellor and Sally York



ACROSS

1. Invites
5. Biblical hill
10. Nanking nanny
14. Advanced
15. Twelfth Night role
16. Vermin
17. House of Lords member
18. "Otherwise..."
19. Nuncupative
20. "Here he is now!"
23. Carry the day
24. Chop finely
25. Queen, maybe
28. Goose egg
30. Drink garnish
35. Lower the ____
37. Word with bar or color
40. Removes with a dipper
41. Brown thriller
44. Neotropical mammal
45. Tribe of ancient Media
46. Bummed out
47. State in NE India
48. Double curve
50. ____ kitten
51. Savor enjoyment
55. It has moles: Abbr.
57. "On the ____" (Rimes single)
65. Throb
66. Princes in waiting?
67. Bushels
68. Guffaw
69. Bud Grace comic strip
70. Man, for one
71. With understanding
72. Breaks
73. Bar request

DOWN

1. View from Lake Como
2. Escape, in a way
3. Cap site
4. Hat material
5. Electronics science
6. Annoy
7. Time division
8. ____ Bowl
9. Execrates
10. African flower
11. Ballistic missile sys.
12. Berry
13. Hot spot
21. Connections
22. Wild Asian dog
25. Bananalike plant
26. Taboos
27. One-piece garments
29. Good earth
31. Gyro meat
32. Murtis
33. Locus
34. Antique auto
36. Intro to physics?
38. Chain letters?
39. "The ____ of Night" (old soap)
42. Belafonte dance
43. Strips
49. Kind of tax
52. Behind
53. Mall component
54. Mongol rulers
56. Another time
57. Draped dress
58. Graphical user interface feature
59. Spicy stew
60. Mysterious: Var.
61. Tinker with, in a way
62. Different
63. "Come Back, Little Sheba" wife
64. Galley mark

answers on page 23

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Answers to crossword puzzle from page 21

1	A	S	K	S	5	A	M	M	A	H	10	A	M	A	H							
14	L	E	N	T	15	V	I	O	L	A	16	L	I	C	E							
17	P	E	E	R	18	I	F	N	O	T	19	O	R	A	L							
20	S	P	E	A	21	K	O	F	T	H	E	22	D	E	V	I	L					
23	W	I	N	24	H	A	S	H	25	A	N	T	26	N	I	L	27	O	L	I	V	E
35	B	O	O	M	37	C	O	D	E	40	L	A	D	E	S							
41	A	N	G	E	42	L	S	A	N	D	43	E	M	O	N	S						
44	C	O	A	T	45	M	A	G	I	46	B	L	U	E								
47	A	S	S	A	M	48	E	S	49	S	50	S	E	X								
51	B	A	S	K	52	C	I	A	53	O	F	T	H	E	A	N	G	E	54	S		
55	A	C	H	E	56	T	O	A	D	S	57	A	L	O	T							
58	R	O	A	R	59	E	R	N	I	E	60	I	S	L	E							
61	I	N	L	Y	62	R	E	S	T	S	63	N	E	A	T							

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