

Six To Be Honored

County hosts annual Harambee Ceremony.

BY ORRIN KONHEIM
THE CONNECTION

Six African-American men and women will be honorees this Saturday, Sept. 24, by the Arlington County Department of Parks and Recreation's 9th Annual Harambee Ceremony at the National Rural Electric Association Building. The ceremony is meant to recognize the work of elders for their contributions to their community.

"The word elder — the connotation is they're being honored not by their age but by their wisdom and by what they've given to their community," said departmental spokesman Jason Harrison.

Honorees for the ceremony, which takes its name from a Kenyan tradition, are chosen through nominations.

"The thing about this award is they do things without looking for a reward and I feel like it's one way to let them know they're appreciated," said county employee Wanda Richardson who submitted two nominations this past year.

"Oftentimes, they're the people you count on but most people don't talk about," added departmental communications coordinator Susan Kalish. "We want to deliver praise to the unsung heroes."

SEE HARAMBEE, PAGE 8

Help Adults Improve Literacy

Nonprofit has long waiting list needing tutors.

BY DENISE LEW
THE CONNECTION

In light of National Adult Education and Family Literacy Week, Sept. 12 – 16, the Literacy Council of Northern Virginia is seeking at least 75 more volunteer tutors to promote its mission in teaching adults the basic skills of reading, writing, speaking and understanding English.

The organization already has a long waiting list of adult students who are eager to improve their literacy skills by working one-to-one with a trained volunteer.

SEE VOLUNTEERS, PAGE 19



The Northern Virginia Senior Olympics opened at Thomas Jefferson Community Center on Sept. 17.



George Stan Brown and his wife Annie watch fellow participants in the 60-meter dash.

Senior Olympics Begin

PHOTOS BY LASHAWN AVERY-SIMONS/THE CONNECTION



Maureen Ruel received first place gold for the 3-mile (800 meter) walk during the Senior Olympics.



Stephen Banks won first place gold in the 1600-meter run during the Senior Olympics opening day events.

Bluemont's Uncertain Future

Neighbors debate density and height as potential redevelopment looms.

BY MICHAEL LEE POPE
THE CONNECTION

The Arlington neighborhood known as Bluemont is facing an identity crisis as deep as the one it confronted a decade ago, when residents decided to ditch its old Confederate name Stonewall Jackson Citizens Association. These days, the battle lines have less to do with Union and Confederate and more to do with the price of increased density and the cost of change. The Bluemont Civic Association is torn between those supporting high-density development and those concerned that neighborhood leaders are willing to allow developers to diminish their quality of life.

"It's time to improve our little section of main street."

— Judah Dal Cais, president, Bluemont Civic Association

"What we are being asked to consider is something that's against the will of the people who live here," said longtime resident Suzanne Sunderberg. "When you get up to four or five stories, that's beyond what people want."

At issue is a vision for a redeveloped commercial corridor, which is located along four blocks of Wilson Boulevard from North Greenbrier Street to George Mason Drive. Businesses in the area include a 1950s-era Safeway, two gas stations, a handful of retailers and several run-down buildings. Some neighborhood residents are calling for a village center concept that would include a redeveloped Safeway with four stories above the new grocery store.

"Some people feel disenfranchised because redevelopment tends to kick out unsuccessful businesses," said Judah Dal Cais, president of the Bluemont Civic Association. "It's time

SEE BLUEMONT, PAGE 9

"Canceronymous"



By KENNETH B. LOURIE

Hello. My name is Ken. I have cancer. I have never been to a meeting before. I've seen a psychologist twice, but never before have I participated in any kind of public forum where my fellow cancer patients were in attendance. I'm not exactly sure what there is to gain from confessing – and admitting – my cancer-related sins, but I imagine denial is not a prudent long-range solution. Nor do I imagine there's a twelve step program for cancer sobriety; it's likely a two-step program: one foot in front of the other.

And for two and half years, that's how I've rolled: steadily forward. Trying to smell some roses as I went while attempting to stress less and live more. Aware of my rather ominous circumstances and terminal prognosis (which I have now exceeded, big time), but ever mindful of the infamous fat lady whose songs have often been heard but in whose name many predictions have failed to materialize. Not that my oncologist was predicting, back in Feb., 2009 when he told Team Lourie that my diagnosis was stage IV lung cancer, very serious; and that I had "13 months to two years" to live. It was more his very-educated opinion about an extremely unfortunate set of health circumstances that had begun to reveal themselves during the last week of Dec., 2008. That is when I first went to the Emergency Room complaining about a pain in my left rib cage that had migrated to the right (even I had to admit that seemed odd). Combined with the difficulty I was also having inhaling/breathing and bending at the waist, I consented to my wife, Dina's urging me to see a doctor so together we drove to the E.R. The rest is history I've rather not have made nor been a party to (some party!). But life goes on (don't I know it). Thank God!

So here I am, 30 months, post diagnosis, alive and not trying to count backwards. Trying as well to ignore certain facts – in evidence, and not consider other facts/eventualities/inevitable and presume somehow, that grim is sometimes just a collection of fairy tales and not relevant at all to my long-range (heck, make that short-term and/or medium-term) prognosis. Ignorance is not exactly bliss – for me, but it is a means to a hopefully not premature end. Although I don't see any of this as a beginning, either. It's more of a continuation. Still, as long as it's not an end, I can live with it. Duh!

In addition to taking one step at a time, one day at a time, etc., and thinking that no news is good news and it's nothing until it's something, I will continue to believe in statistical anomalies and exceptions that disprove the rule. Moreover, I can still pretend with the best of them/us (terminal patients) that somehow I'm different (and not terminal) and believe as well in the power of a positive attitude. The fact that I have cancer is not the first thing out of my mouth (though it is – more often than not – as you regular readers know, the first thing out of my pen), it is generally the last thing, and only if someone asks. As much as it is what I have, it can't be who I am (somehow).

Thank you for letting me share. I feel better already.

Kenny Lourie is an Advertising Representative for The Potomac Almanac & The Connection Newspapers.

Volunteers Needed as Literacy Tutors

FROM PAGE 3

"LCNV is the only organization in Virginia that offers one-to-one tutoring for adults at the lowest literacy level. There are over 129,000 adults living in Northern Virginia who are functionally illiterate," said Patricia Donnelly, executive director at LCNV.

Illiteracy often leads to unemployment, homelessness, criminal behavior, low self-esteem, poor health and poor performance in school. "I relied on my husband for everything because I don't speak English," said an LCNV student from Korea.

"Literacy education strengthens the community through workplace skill development, better jobs, better economy, improved life styles, better health, stronger tax base, more people active in their schools and neighborhoods," said Donnelly.

The LCNV currently educates 1,600 adults in the basic skills of understanding, reading, writing, speaking and English to empower them to integrate more fully and confidently in their communities. The Basic Literacy program works with native and fluent English speakers to improve their ability to read and write, and the English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) Tutoring program works with non-English speakers who are usually illiterate in their native language and want to improve understanding, speaking, reading, and writing English. Both one-on-one tutoring and classroom programs are offered along with self-paced computer classes.

"I like the Literacy Council because it requires commitment both on the part of the tutor and the student. I am working with my third student and he recently became a citizen of the United States. His hard work and constant study enabled him to pass the test on his first attempt. He was thrilled at his success and I was proud of him and his hard work," said Alexandria resident Lynn Gallagher, who recently retired and was looking to volunteer.

Often the tutors and students form long-lasting professional relationships that are beneficial to both sides. "I joined LCNV to help adults who need instruction in the English language so they can become active participants in American society," said Anne Spear, a McLean resident who tutors



A Literacy Council of Northern Virginia class poses for a picture together.

Join

The next Basic Literacy tutor training workshop will be held on Sept. 24 at the James Lee Community Center, 2855 Annandale Road, Falls Church.

For more information, e-mail volunteers@lcnv.org or call 703-237-0866 x111.

at the LCNV. "This experience has been very satisfying for me because I have watched my student become more confident in expressing herself in English and she is a role model for the rest of her family. LCNV's tutoring approach is unique and perfect for those who do not have the time or money to take English classes. It's a huge opportunity LCNV provides for adults who do not have the benefit of the K-12 system's wonderful ESOL program."

Tutors have also seen the program enrich their own lives in terms of serving the community. "I volunteered to be a tutor for two reasons. I wanted to maintain a pro-bono dimension to my life and believe that helping people to learn English is very important for our society. I've gained the satisfaction that my student has improved his English and will soon take the examination to become a naturalized citizen. This is an inspiring accomplishment for a 40-year-old man who never went to school anywhere. He could not read nor write in any language," said Robert Stump, an Arlington resident.

Each year, LCNV hosts eight tutor training workshops to coach volunteer tutors to

Special Event

The Literacy Council of Northern Virginia is one of the 10 selected participants in 3rd Annual Acumen Solutions Race for a Cause held on Sunday, Oct. 16, in Arlington. There's an 8K run and a 1 Mile Fun Run. All proceeds benefit the selected 10 local nonprofits.

provide individualized instruction to adult students. Each tutor is trained, matched with a student, and suggested to meet weekly for an hour and a half to help improve the student's reading and writing skills. Tutoring usually occurs at a library or community center, and tutors and students are matched based on geographic proximity to make the weekly sessions as convenient as possible.

Most students have had positive life-changing experiences as a result of the LCNV programs. "I started to study last November with my tutor, Elison. Since then, I've been learning to speak English and about America. Elison encourages me to try doing everything and so, I'm changing. I can order what I want to eat, return something and explain simple things now," said the LCNV student from Korea who used to rely on her husband on everything.

"The Literacy Council of Northern Virginia has the best mission. We give people the tools they need to change and improve their lives forever: the gift of reading. Once you learn to read, then you can read to learn," said Donnelly.

PHOTOS BY ROSS SYLVESTRI/THE CONNECTION



Rossella Rago, left, host of the online cooking show Cooking With Nonna, gives a cooking demonstration with her mother, Nonna.

Taste of Italy

People gathered at the Crystal Gateway Marriot last month to sample Italian food, wine, entertainment, and art at a Taste of Italy. The event coincided with the national UNICO convention in Washington, D.C., the largest Italian American service organization in the United States. UNICO is Italian for "unique" or "one" or "only" or "only one of its kind." The letters also stand for Unity, Neighborliness, Integrity, Charity, and Opportunity.



Andre' DiMino, left, past national president of UNICO, introduces Mary Ann Esposito, the host of PBS's Ciao Italia.