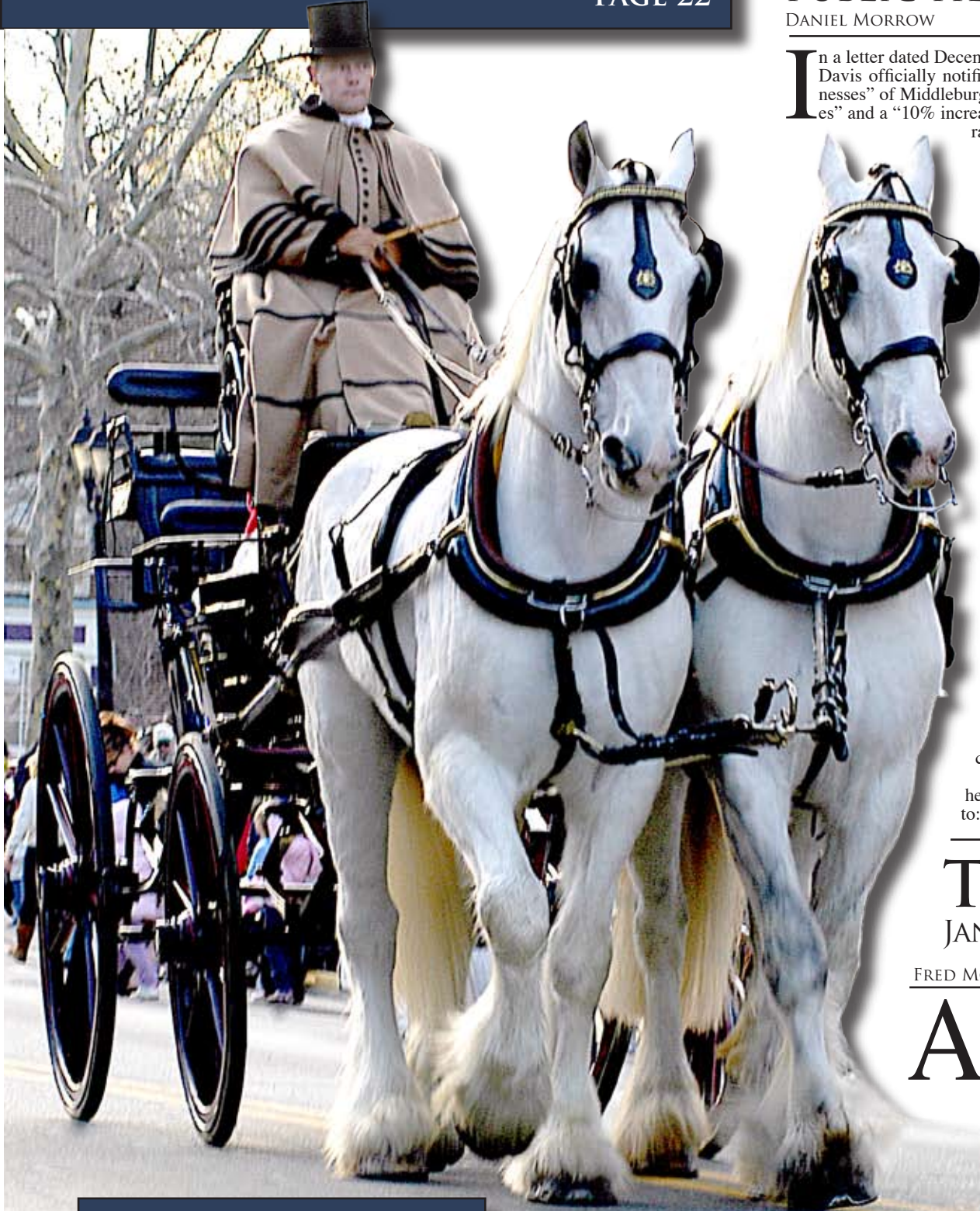




CHRISTMAS IN MIDDLEBURG PHOTOS

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CITIZENS DEMAND INTELLIGENT POWER STRATEGY

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\$5 MILLION GIFT TO UVA

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TAX AND WATER BILLS TO RISE PUBLIC HEARING SCHEDULED

DANIEL MORROW

In a letter dated December 8, 2006, Mayor Betsy Davis officially notified the "citizens and businesses" of Middleburg that "several tax increases" and a "10% increase in our water and sewer rates" would be the subject of a public hearing at the next regular meeting of the Town Council on December 14. (See full text of the Davis letter on page 5)

The Town's Personnel and Finance Committee and, later, the full Council, unanimously supported the proposed changes.

In a preliminary report Town Auditor, CPA Jeff Mitchell of Leesburg, had warned Council to expect a "sobering" report on the state of the Town's finances.

Mitchell delivered a draft of his final audit late on Wednesday, December 6.

"Not Easy Decision"

Mayor Davis said increasing taxes was "not an easy decision" for anyone on the Council, and "one we wish we didn't have to consider."

Following the public hearing, Council is expected to: 1) levy a new tax of 35-

cents-per-pack on cigarettes sold within the Town limits; 2) increase the "meals" tax, a tax not just on restaurant meals but on "customers purchasing prepared foods" by 33%; and increase the "occupancy tax," charged to "overnight guests in hotels and bed and breakfasts" by 66%.

Mayor Davis described the proposed 4% tax on meals and 5% "occupancy" taxes as in line with those of surrounding jurisdictions.

Describing the proposed 10% increase in water and sewer rates as "probably the hardest to understand," Davis termed it "a necessity" due to steadily increasing costs and stagnant revenue.

Audit "Highlights"

Mitchell's full audit report confirmed his earlier warnings of serious cash, cash-flow, spending and financial oversight problems (See cover story in the November edition of the Middleburg Eccentric: <http://www.mbecc.com>)

Total Assets Decline

Technically, the town is still "in the black." According to Mitchell, Middleburg's total net assets (most in the form of real property and equipment owned by the Town rather than cash) still exceed liabilities by more than \$4 million.

The total value of the town's assets, however, decreased by nearly \$77,000 in fiscal year 2006.

Overspending, Cash Crunch, Rising Debt

When the Town's fiscal year ended on June 30, 2006, "the Town of Middleburg's governmental funds reported combined ending fund balances of \$25, 503," according to Mitchell, "a decrease of \$911,388 in comparison with the prior year."

After spending \$219,726 more than had been officially budgeted and/or approved (termed by the auditors, the "available amount for spending at the government's discretion") the town was compelled to borrow money to pay its bills over the summer.

That borrowing, against a \$500,000 line of credit from Middleburg Bank, added to what was already a one-year, \$1,178, 637 increase in the Town's total

Continued Page 4

THE GIVING SPIRIT

JANE LOCKHART AND CHRISTMAS AT FOXCROFT

FRED MCMANE

Amid the tinsel, toys and trimmings of the holidays, it is easy to get lost in the commercialized trappings of the season. Not when

Foxcroft School Director of Activities and Transportation Jane Lockhart is around, though. She simply will not let the

students she works with – nor anyone else in the community -- forget that the season is truly about giving.

Each December, Lockhart oversees myriad activities that teach Foxcroft girls to be generous with their time and talents. They benefit the needy in and around Middleburg, bring the school and town together, and spread joy among children of all ages. Lockhart – who has moved a grand total of four miles in her life (from Middleburg village to Foxcroft campus) – gives back because Middleburg, and especially Foxcroft, gave so much to her as a child.

Generous Legacy

The first Wednesday in December 1950: Little Jane Nuckolls attends her first Foxcroft Christmas Pageant. The daughter of a



Welsh mother and English father, Jane is a six-year-old student at Middleburg Elementary.

"Miss Charlotte [Haxall Noland, founder of Foxcroft] would send a bus to pick up the students

Continued Page 6

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P.O. Box 1768
Middleburg, VA 20118
540-687-3200
fax 540-687-8035
www.mbecc.com
news@mbec.com

Cover Photo By Jay Hubbard
Dog Day in Middleburg
South Madison Street

Editor in Chief
Dee Dee Hubbard ~ editor@mbec.com

Chief Production Editor
Jay Hubbard

Publisher
Dan Morrow

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NEWS OF NOTE

DOMINION VIRGINIA DRAWS CROWDS UNITES OPPOSITION IN LOUDOUN AND FAUQUIER

Conservatives and Liberals, Republicans and Democrats, tree-huggers and asphalt lovers of all ages, sexes, and religious orientations, lined up in Middleburg and Marshall the week of November 26 to oppose Dominion Virginia Power's plan to clear land for a 40-mile-long high-voltage power line along the Fauquier/Loudoun line. In Middleburg, a line of determined, but well-behaved opponents, snaked around the Community Center waiting for admission to the "briefing."

An even larger crowd marched four-to-six abreast in a blocks-long line seeking admission to the Ruritan Hall in Marshall, Virginia.

Many, if not most of those in the well-behaved crowds wore buttons or waved banners opposing the project as they waited in line, anticipating entry to a "presentation" or "town hall" meeting, ostensibly including a "questions and answers" session, for which all seemed well prepared ("primed" is perhaps the more accurate term.)

Instead, they discovered, the lines were much like traffic on Route 50, caused by a bottle-neck at a table at which Dominion Virginia was distrib-

uting and collecting questionnaires.

In Marshall, anti-power line proponents soon informed the crowd there was no reason to stand in line, and, from their point of view, no reason to help Dominion Virginia document "community engagement" by filling out the "questionnaire."

"Why rate 'factors most important to you' in routing the line?" they asked. "Scratch out the questions and write, 'No Power Line Anywhere,'" they urged the crowd.

Within minutes the lines had disappeared and the Hall was packed.

Once inside, attendees were greeted by representatives of Dominion Virginia manning "information stations."

A Dominion Virginia representative manning a display outlining the "Need" for the power line found himself surrounded by a dozen or so opponents seeking answers to well-reasoned questions about alternative approaches to generation and transmission.

As time wore on, smiles became forced, and "discussions" degenerated into sharper, more highly charged exchanges of "talking points."

A representative at the "Environ-



mental Protection" station was similarly besieged. Asked if it would be possible to bury the line rather than string it across the landscape on towers, he answered, "Yes, but it would be VERY expensive."

"How much?," several people asked at once. "A billion and a half," he replied. "Ahh . . . that's one bridge to no-

where, one Bush library, and one bad day in Iraq," replied one wag.

"The Dominion Virginia Power Company - Unifiers, Not Dividers" joked another.

After an hour or two the crowds began to drift away.

"How'd this work out for you?" someone asked the "Right of Way" guy. "Just fine," he said. "Just fine."

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NEWS OF NOTE

CROWNED SALAMANDER COLLECTION DEBUTS IN MIDDLEBURG

Continuing to enlarge her Salamander brand, Sheila Johnson recently introduced the “Crowned Salamander Collection” of fine jewelry to two hundred friends and colleagues at Middleburg’s Mystique jewelry boutique.

Johnson worked with local designer Elizabeth Mandros Miller and Master Goldsmith Ivan Naranjo to design pieces that are beautifully crafted, imminently wearable and reflective of the salamander symbol.

Known for its amazing strength and tenacity, the salamander is said to be the only animal that can walk through fire. Johnson, entrepreneur and CEO of Salamander Hospitality, encountered the name when she purchased her Middleburg farm.

“The farm was originally named Salamander Farm, and, although previous owners had changed the name, I decided to return the property to its original name,” Johnson explained. “Salamander is now the brand for all my enterprises.”



The sterling silver and gold collection integrates equestrian elements, and includes earrings, a charm bracelet, and several variations of necklaces with fresh water pearls and semi-precious stones and diamonds. A collection for men line includes key chains,

money clips and cufflinks.

The Crowned Salamander collection will be available at Mystique Jewelers in Middleburg through the month of January. For more information visit www.mystique.com.

MARVIN SIMMS, JR. RECOGNIZED



Mayor Betsy Davis presented town employee Marvin Simms, Jr. with a certificate and an administrative day of leave in recognition of his innovative ideas and superb service to Middleburg. “Marvin has consistently

been an outstanding town employee,” Davis said.

“He comes up with creative ways to do more work with less, and has drastically cut the overtime in his shop.”

TAX AND WATER BILLS TO RISE FROM PAGE 1

debt.

Revenues Exceeded Expectations

Particularly distressing in light of the Town’s cash balances was the otherwise positive news that Middleburg’s income in 2006 was more than \$161,000 higher than Town Council’s budget projections.

General property tax revenues, for example, were more than \$15,000 higher than the budgeted \$186,500.

Other local taxes, including those on meals and utilities, were more than \$30,000 higher than the \$684,750 budget projection.

Where Did the Money Go?

As early as December 5, Council Member Mark Snyder noted that he expected “... to find out that monies were spent outside of the budget approved by council that were not authorized by council and were not properly reported to council.”

Snyder’s suspicions were at least partially confirmed by Mitchell’s audit.

As of June 30, the auditors reported, “expenditures exceeded appropriations in the following general fund departments:

- General Government Administration: \$ 90,113
- Public Safety: \$ 46,037
- Public Works: \$ 87,611
- Capital outlay, improvements, etc.: \$768,567

Overspending Detailed

In her December 8 letter Mayor Davis promised “a top to bottom review” of the town’s budget “to identify items that can be eliminated or deferred.”

Mitchell’s audit, available from the Town Office, provided a number of suggestions of just where to start.

“Capital Expenses”

By far the largest single problem facing the Council is the reported \$853,567 spent by the Town on “Capital Outlay, Improvements, and Contingencies,” more than \$768,000 over the 2006 budget of \$85,000.

“General Government” Expenses

The Town Administration overspent its budget by more than \$65,000. Nearly \$22,000 of that overspending was on engineering and consulting fees. The second largest problem, however, was spending on what was budgeted as “other” unnamed activities. Against a loosely defined budget of \$4,200, the Town spent \$20,995

The Treasurer’s Office was \$31,475 over budget, most of it in salaries.

Planning and Zoning expenses were nearly \$38,000 over budget, with most of the excess spent on engineering and consulting fees.

Only Middleburg’s Tourism and

Marketing Department, managed in 2006 by Middleburg’s current Acting Town Manager, Claudia Dornin, was within \$20 of its targeted budget.

“Public Safety” Expenses

Middleburg spent \$313,155 on “public safety” in fiscal year 2006, against a budget of \$267,118. Roughly half the \$46,037 overage was due to spending on police overtime, advertising, insurance, and equipment maintenance

“Public Works” Expenses

With the exception of \$1,856 saved on a street assistant’s salary and an unexpected \$152 windfall on “other wages”, every single Public Works budget category was reported to be in the red.

A \$29,823 overage on Maintenance and Repairs accounted for the largest single portion of the \$87,611 Public Works deficit. Other problem areas included overtime, landscape maintenance and insurance.

In his preliminary audit report Jeff Mitchell had also noted that only 55% of the water pumped from the town’s wells was being accounted for in the Town’s water bills.

What Happened in March, April, and May?

An independent review of the Town Council’s monthly budget reports for 2006 indicates a precipitous decline in the Town’s financial well-being beginning at least as early as March, 2006.

Between February and June, 2006, the Treasurer’s Reports approved by Council clearly indicate: a \$300 thousand increase in the Town’s liabilities; a \$321 thousand decrease in cash available in the town’s general fund (marked by an operating fund balance decrease of nearly \$310 thousand); and a drop of more than \$249 thousand in the Town’s water-and-sewer fund

The reports point to expenses associated with building the Liberty Street Parking Lot, unexpected street repairs, unanticipated water and sewer repairs, and the installation of new parking meters as major culprits.

Three members of the 2006 Council named in the audit as responsible for oversight no longer serve. (Mayor C. L. Dimos, Helen A. Hyre, and Margaret A. New). Mayor Betsy Davis, Darlene Kirk, Eura Lewis, and Bundles Murdock remain on the Council. Town Manager J. Michael Casey was dismissed by the current Council during the summer.

Further details are expected when Mayor Davis issues a “State of the Town” message, addressing the issues raised by the recent audit, the processes and procedures which led to it, and, her plan for insuring that they

LETTER TO CITIZENS AND BUSINESS OR MIDDLEBURG FROM THE MAYOR OF MIDDLEBURG

To our citizens and businesses of Middleburg,

At our next council meeting on December 14th, we will be having a public hearing on several tax increases that we are considering. The council asked me to describe these taxes and the reasons increases are required.

We are recommending the meals tax, which is charged to customers purchasing prepared foods, be increased from 3% to 4%. While the County does not collect a meals tax, this puts our rate in line with other towns that have this tax. We are recommending the occupancy tax, which is charged to overnight guests in hotels and bed and breakfasts, be increased from 3% to 5%, the rate currently being charged in Loudoun County. With the increases in meals and occupancy taxes we will bring our rates in line with those being charged by nearby towns and the surrounding county.

The 35 cents cigarette tax is a new tax for our town. Its adoption was suggested several years ago, but put aside because the administrative costs were thought to be too high for the income it would produce. We have re-evaluated this tax and find that the Northern Virginia Cigarette Tax Board will do all of the paperwork and it would be a fairly simple process. Our suggested 35 cents tax is lower than the tax currently being charged in Purcellville (.45) and Leesburg (.50), but we thought we would start off low and then re-evaluate it.

We have recommended a 10% increase in our water and sewer rates. I know this is probably the hardest increase to understand, but it is a necessity. Two years ago, the Personnel and Finance Committee, along with the Public Works Committee, recommended Council increase our utility rates. A lot of time was spent and studies were done by the Public Works Committee to come to this conclusion. Our Utilities fund is just not paying for itself. Salary increases (cost of living), increases in state mandated requirements for our water and sewer facilities (which require additional chemicals and testing, etc), huge increases in health care payments, increases in (electricity, gas, heat, etc.) are just a few of the increased costs we must continue to meet and, yet, we have not been receiving any more on our revenue end. Until two years ago, we had not increased our rates for MANY years. Our expenses were increasing by leaps and bounds and we still had the same amount of utility users paying the same rates they had paid for many, many years. Rather than making a bold increase all at once, it was recommended to increase the rates by 10% a year for the next 3 years. This year was the third year that the 10% increase should have been made, but never was. We continue to offer a discount on our water and sewer bills to our citizens who are on fixed incomes and meet the requirements.

I hope I have been able to explain some of the reasons for these recommended tax increases. This is not an easy decision for any of us and one we wish we didn’t even have to consider, but it is a reality and one we must face. We ask that you try to see these increases from all perspectives. We are trying to do what, in our judgment, is in the best interest for our town. The demands on our town have grown tremendously while our population has not. The taxes that we collect are only to support YOU and the services you require and deserve. We have hardworking and dedicated employees and we want to continue to pay them the fair wages they deserve. Please be assured that the Town Council also is committed to a top-to-bottom review of the budget to identify items that can be eliminated or deferred. We have so much to be thankful for in our town.... we want to continue the path we are on and to stay strong and vibrant.

With kind regards,

Betsy Allen Davis
Mayor



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NEWS OF NOTE

JOHNSON'S \$5 MILLION GIFT TO UNIVERSITY OF VIRGINIA

Businesswoman Sheila C. Johnson, an advocate for the protection of children and co-founder of Black Entertainment Television (BET), has pledged \$5 million to the Curry School of Education to establish a center for human services at the school.

The Sheila C. Johnson Center of Human Services will bring together the most significant outreach efforts of the Curry School, serving more than 7,500 children, adults and families annually.

The gift was announced today at a news conference in the office of Virginia Governor Timothy M. Kaine, also an ardent supporter of early childhood education.

"I want to thank Sheila for her generosity and her commitment to spreading opportunity - especially when it comes to educating our youngest citizens," he said. "Both her vision and her leadership are extraordinary, and the University and the Commonwealth are grateful for her willingness to commit to this exciting partnership."

In thanking Johnson for her gift,

University President John T. Casteen III said, "Sheila Johnson's generous gift reflects her commitment to children in need and will enhance the most critical public services that the Curry School of Education offers. The Curry School's clinics assist thousands of children, students and adults each year.

"The new center will enable the school to reach even more persons in need. This gift will also help us equip our students with what Thomas Jefferson called 'useful knowledge' - knowledge they will use to educate young people in the years ahead."

"The work that is being done at the Curry School of Education is extremely important to the well-being of children and families." Currently a member of the Curry School Foundation Board, Johnson continued, "So many children struggle with learning disabilities in our society and are misdiagnosed. The



Curry School will provide a place for children, parents and families to get the help they need."

David Breneman, dean of the Curry School, believes the new center will be a major addition. "Through the work of these clinics," he said, "thousands of Virginia citizens will be helped to realize their educational potential."

The center will be housed on the main floor of the Curry School's new building, Bavaro Hall, set to break ground in 2007. The locale will make the clinics a more visible part of the University and make them more accessible to the public.

THE GIVING SPIRIT

FROM PAGE 1

from Middleburg and Banneker Elementary schools," recalls Lockhart. "We went to the gym and sat on mats. Elementary schools then were for grades one through seven so there were lots of kids there.

"After the Pageant we would all go to another building that is gone now, Cook House. We would get in line at a window that had the letter of our last names posted above it. And when I got up to the window I would get two presents: something to play with and something to wear. This would happen every year and clothes always fit."

"When Foxcroft started [in 1914] there wasn't much to Middleburg," Lockhart continues. "There was no doctor, no bank. Miss Charlotte was a part of getting all those things. She was a founder of the bank and she helped establish the Middleburg health center. She and Foxcroft really made Middleburg."

"When I started at Middleburg Elementary, 14 Foxcroft girls would come every Monday and they would teach us how to sing. And another 14 girls would come every Wednesday and would teach us how to draw and paint. And then on Friday another 14 girls would come and they would play outdoors with us and teach us kickball and things."

"On Tuesday and Thursday, Miss Charlotte paid two ladies to come to the school and teach us how to cook and sew. So the boys wouldn't be left out. Miss Charlotte paid a man to come and teach them how to use tools and make things."

For Lockhart and the other children, the highlight of the year was always the Christmas Pageant. This past December 3, Lockhart attended her 50th pageant. Her sons, Michael and Christopher, were there, too, with their children. Michael is no the athletic director and head baseball coach at Notre Dame Academy. Jane's husband of 40+ years, Lee Lockhart, is the assistant baseball coach. Watching the Pageant, presented by Foxcroft's New Students each year as a gift to the community, is a Lockhart family tradition. It's a spectacle that includes live donkeys, birds and rabbits as well as splendid costumes and lovely music - and has undergone only cosmetic changes since it first was presented soon after the School was founded in 1914.

Santa's Workshop

The first Friday in December 2006: Santa's Workshop isn't any busier than the Foxhound Auditorium at Foxcroft. Under Lockhart's leadership, the student body and faculty are busy creating care packages for the needy (10 boxes each containing a turkey and enough food to feed a family of four for a month) and supplies for orphan animals at Middleburg Humane Foundation; and decorating

125 miniature Christmas trees, which the girls will deliver to the residents of the Loudoun Long Term Care/Rehab facility in Leesburg and to the Goodwin House in Alexandria.

In addition, the girls are purchasing and wrapping presents for the campus support staff and Residential Life faculty; making personal, homemade cards to accompany all of the above and preparing goody bags for each child who will attend the Pageant on Sunday.

Students and faculty, working in small groups, are also making wreaths and decorating the gym (the Pageant's performance hall); adorning Christmas trees in the dining hall, library and dormitories; stuffing and mailing

Christmas cards and fixing a simple supper of sandwiches, vegetable trays and Christmas cookies for the campus community.

The dining room has been closed this night and the money saved, along with donations from the Student Council, Dean of Students and various other donors has been used to purchase the supplies necessary to fund the



LIVE ANIMALS ADD UNCERTAINTY TO THE PAGEANT PERFORMANCE. THIS YEAR, (FROM LEFT) NELLIE FOOSANER AND LILLIBET MOTION OF MIDDLEBURG, RACHEL GIAMPA OF WARRENTON AND CAMPBELL MOFFAT OF BOCA RATON, FLA., WERE AMONG THE DONKEY WRANGLERS.

projects.

In the ensuing week, a bus load of students and Jane will personally deliver 75 trees and sing Christmas carols to the patients at Loudoun County Long Term Care, better known to the Foxcroft community as "Special Friends." Other groups deliver the 10 boxes of food will go to families in Middleburg, St. Louis and The Plains ("Some of these families do not even have a stove," Lockhart tells the girls. "They cook on a hot plate.") and will visit Middleburg Humane.

According to Lockhart, Foxcroft's intimate involvement with the Middleburg schools ended in 1958 when Loudoun County told Foxcroft it had to stop because it was giving the Middleburg students preferential treatment over the rest of the County's schools.

"But the Foxcroft community has continued its community service," says Lockhart, proudly. "and we have found other ways to give back. All year long we visit and support Middleburg Humane, Special Friends and Foxcroft Tutoring. We have the Junior Class Walk-A-Thon, which raises thousands of dollars for different charities and Foxcroft Reaching Out. We clean Foxcroft Road for Adopt A Highway, send educational supplies for Malawi, have clothing drives for disasters and Fairy Tale Closet, Pennies for Patients. . . and I don't think I've remembered everything."

"You tell Foxcroft girls there is a cause and they jump on it." And more often than not, the first one in will be Jane Nuckolls Lockhart.

Experience the Magic



Bursting with newly arrived German Christmas Treasures, we invite you to step back in time and experience the magic of an old world Christmas at The Christmas Sleigh in Middleburg.

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It gives us great pleasure to announce the Grand Opening of Purcellville Wine & Gourmet. PWG will offer a wide variety of wines, beers, cigars, coffees, assorted gourmet foods, candies and specialty cheeses. Doors will open December 5th, 2006 at 10:00 am. Ribbon cutting ceremony will be held December 11, 2006 2:00pm-4:00pm.

PWG will offer wine tastings every Friday night and throughout the day on Saturdays. Please stop in to meet Duane "The Wine Guy" and enjoy some wine at our wine bar, sample some coffee from the coffee bar, or smoke a cigar in the shopping center breezeway. PWG hopes to have its gift baskets on your holiday shopping list and be a regular stop in your travels.

Duane M. Harris (Hamilton, VA), shopkeeper and owner, brings over 10

years of wine business experience to PWG. Duane's goal is to eliminate the intimidation of wine and share his passion with the community. Most recently he received his Certified Wine Specialist accreditation from the Society of Wine Educators and passed the Introductory Sommelier Course held in New York by the Court of Master Sommeliers. Duane is backed by the support of his wife, Stephanie R. Harris (Hamilton, VA) and partners Charles W. Slocum (Arlington, VA) and Christopher S. and Teresa R. Erickson (Round Hill, VA).

Purcellville Wine & Gourmet is located in the Loudoun Valley Shopping Center at 741 East Main Street in Purcellville, VA - 540-751-2080, hours of operation Monday through Saturday 10-8pm, Sunday 12-5pm.

JAN NEUHARTH JOINS MIDDLEBURG FINANCIAL CORPORATION'S BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Middleburg Financial Corporation has elected Jan Neuharth to its Board of Directors. Ms. Neuharth is President of Paper Chase Farms, Inc., Chairman of the National Law Council at Vanderbilt University School of Law, a noted Hunt Country suspense author and well known local community leader. She will take her seat on the Middleburg Financial Corporation Board of Directors immediately.

Joe Boling, Chief Executive Officer and Chairman of the Board of Middleburg Financial Corporation commented, "We're thrilled Jan is joining the board. Like our other board members, she's achieved amazing personal success while still giving a lot back to the community. Her intelligence, energy and community focus are going to be great assets."

Ms. Neuharth is the Founder and President of Paper Chase Farms. She

established its equestrian center in 1985 and later expanded the company to include equestrian consulting, the development and sales of horse products such as custom horse jumps and the Paper Chase Cup Jump Cup, and book publishing. She has published two successful novels, The Hunt and The Chase. The Hunt was a finalist for the Benjamin Franklin Award in the Mystery/Suspense category. The Chase is now in its second printing.

Heavily involved in the local community, Ms. Neuharth serves on the boards of various not-for-profit organizations throughout the area. She is on the Board of Trustees for The Freedom Forum, the Loudoun Healthcare Foundation, The Newseum, the United States Equestrian Team Foundation, Marion duPont Scott Equine Medical Center and the Westmoreland Davis Memorial Foundation.

Ms. Neuharth received her Bachelor of Arts degree from the University



of Florida and her law degree from Vanderbilt University School of Law. She resides in Loudoun County with her husband and two children.

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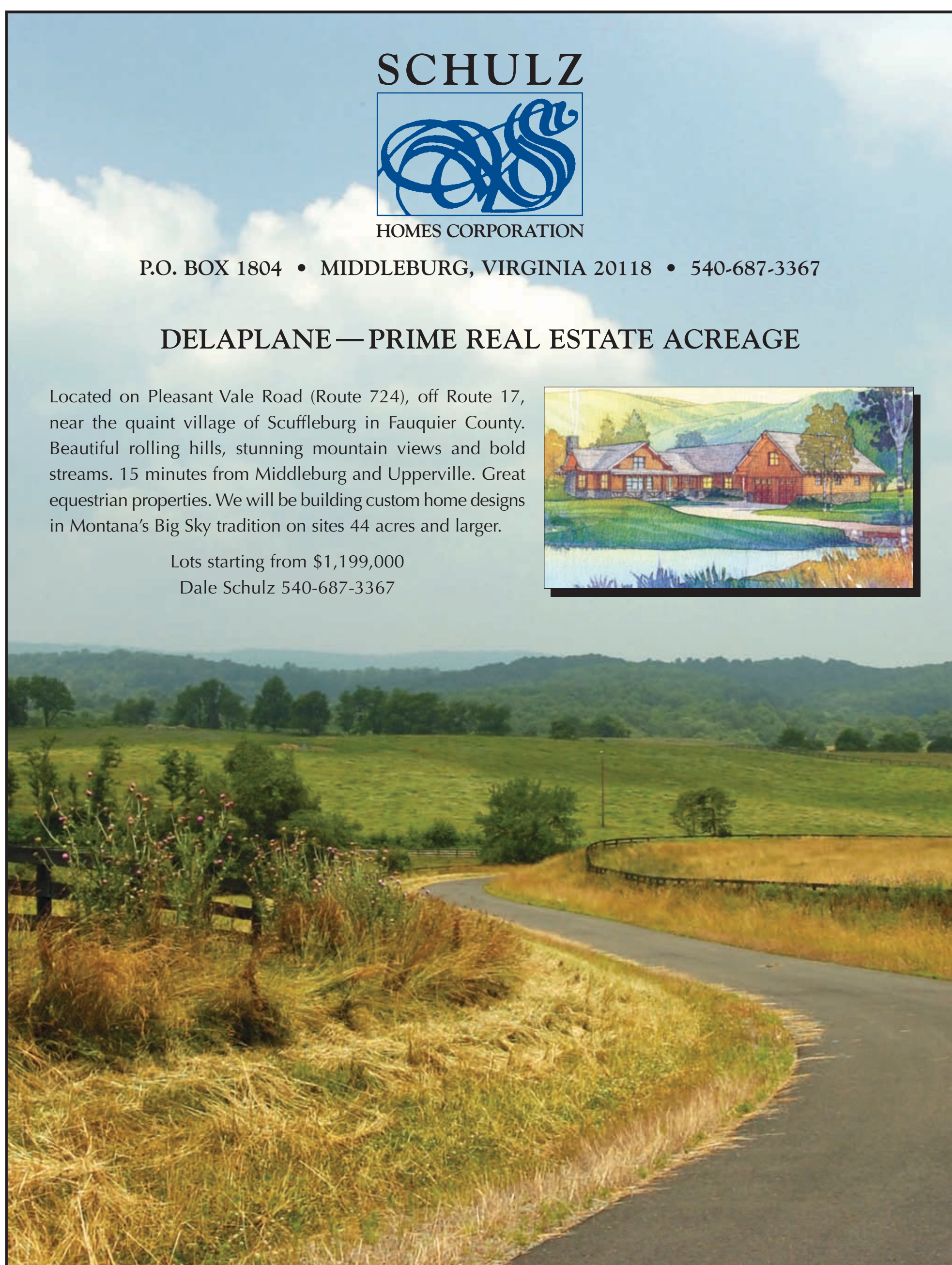
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THE EDITOR'S DESK

KEEP THE HOME FIRES BURNING

There can be no other village that offers such a beautiful, distinguished, exquisite array of presents for everyone on your list than Middleburg, Virginia. And, there can be no other example of true Christmas spirit more appreciated by our shop owners, restaurants and retailers than your shopping first at home.

Before you drive for hours to Tyson's Corner to fight to find a parking space, fight to find a salesperson who will help you and fight your way home to find you are too exhausted to enjoy even one minute of a winter evening, stroll around town and take note of what is available here.

You will find finery to challenge the finest in Manhattan, Paris or Milan, and a wealth of jewels, decorative objects, antiques and art. Middleburg's shops are charming, welcoming and diverse.

We are known for the grace and beauty of our area. After you finish your Christmas shopping in Middleburg, you will also remember us for our gracious welcome and beautiful bounty you'll find here that includes something that will delight every individual on your list.

Happy Holidays! Be safe, be cheerful and be kind to all.

Middleburg Eccentric welcomes and encourages Letters to the Editor. Letters must be signed and include writer's name, address and daytime phone number. Please submit letter via email: editor@mbecc.com or P.O. Box 1768, Middleburg VA 20118

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

To the Editor:

Dear Members of the United States Senate and House of Representatives:

As key members of the US Congress closely associated with the growing controversy over the Northern Virginia Power Line we would like to propose to you a strategic solution not just for the power line issue, but for the region as a whole.

What we propose is to build a dual purpose tunnel from Front Royal, Virginia, underneath existing Interstate 66 to Haymarket and Gainesville, Virginia, at which point the tunnel will divide into two separate tunnels. One tunnel will proceed to Dulles airport, and the second tunnel will continue underneath Interstate 66 and joint the Vienna Metro in Vienna, Virginia.

Our technical solution is as follows. We propose that the underground power cable be run in a parallel section in the same tunnel structure as a Metro line that will run from a Front Royal Metro Station, all underground, with the line dividing at Haymarket-Gainesville, as described above. The power cable will benefit from

the global knowledge and engineering experience in running large, extremely high voltage, cables through underground tunnels. The cable can be shrouded in the necessary concrete jacket that is normally required, and all maintenance will be done underground. There will be no visible above ground evidence of the cable other than the existence of new Metro stations at places like Linden, Markham, Delaplane, Marshall, The Plains-Great Meadow, Haymarket-Gainesville, and then stations to Dulles and Vienna respectively.

The above provides a strategic solution and vision for both the power cable controversy and for the long term transportation crisis that is growing in the key Northern Virginia I-66, Route 50, and Route 7 corridors. The transportation crisis will, in due course, be as big a problem and controversy as the power line issue. We solve two problems in one, and conserve the environment for posterity.

The above project is a National issue, and we propose that the Departments of Energy and Transportation fund the project - a joint dual purpose tunnel. We name this the Front Royal -Dulles-Vienna Power

and Transport Connector.

We have the technology, the will, management and determination to make this happen, and create a paradigm for the United States that will set a way ahead for solutions to power distribution and mass transportation.

Please contact us at the above address for further information.

Dr. Anthony R. Wells
Partner and CEO
TKC International

To the Editor:

Dominion Resources is the 20th largest polluter in the S&P 500. With over 33,000,000 metric tons of CO2 emissions created annually, Dominion would rank 34th in the world if it was considered a country.

Mount Storm is the plant that will provide the power for the transmission lines if Dominion is successful in its misinformation campaign. This plant was the object of a law suit by then New York Attorney General Spitzer for being one of the nation's dirtiest plants. And considering that Northern Virginia is barely in attainment as far as the Clean Air Act is concerned, why

would Richmond continue to promote the use of a plant that is a major part of that problem - unless they didn't care or were ill-informed.

Consider our current transmission lines infrastructure. Virginia currently has 197,100,000 MWH of electric power generation and supply capacity, yet only consumes 100,000,000 MWH of energy each year. A utilization rate of 50.7% hardly qualifies as electron gridlock(100,000,000 of consumption/197,100,000 = 50.7%).

The gridlock is not on our transmission lines but in Richmond's lack of leadership in anything but the status quo. And that seems to be along the lines of using brute force rather than taking the initiative to ask "Is this the only way or is there a better path?"

Virginia legislature has not enacted a Renewable Portfolio Standard (RPS) like 22 states, created a Renewable Energy Credit market like 10 States, joined the 8 Northeast states on Climate Change mandatory regulation, or offered a green power pricing program like the 350 offered by virtually every other US utility. In short, Virginia continues to be lagging in innovation and thus remains in the dark, pun intended, about key issues regarding our future.

Here are two of many potential solutions. On the supply side, we could enact Renewable Portfolio Standards, requiring 10% of all of Virginia's power be renewable and enabling utilities like Dominion to participate in a Renewable Energy Credit market as a compliance mechanism.

On the demand side, we could pass tax credit incentives for utilities that put compact fluorescent light bulbs in their customer homes. As any businessman will tell you, there are two sides to a balance sheet, and both need to be constantly scrutinized to achieve material success.

Chandler Van Voorhis
The Plains, Virginia

To the Editor:

It may be easy for Dominion executives to sit at their desks in Richmond, look at a map and think the proposed Dominion transmission lines makes sense. However, for those of us who live, work and visit the beautiful Piedmont region of Virginia, it makes no sense at all.

This land was surveyed by a young George Washington and

revered by Thomas Jefferson. Now, Dominion is proposing a forty-mile scar of 15-story industrial towers across this special ground.

The fact is that there is no proof that we need this transmission line. There are many alternative means that would provide the electricity needed in this region without causing damage to the environment, hurting property owners and defiling our historic countryside. Around the world, companies are finding efficient, environmentally friendly technologies to create and transmit electricity. Dominion has failed to consider these innovative approaches.

Dominion has come up with a scheme to transmit electricity from dirty coal-fired plants in the Ohio River Valley, which are already polluting the air through Virginia, to the Northeast. This idea is driven by corporate greed. Virginia ratepayers will pay the cost and Dominion will receive the profits. In the process, they will seize private property and devalue property with no compensation.

Imagine the visitors to our area as they drive out Interstate 66 from Washington to attend the spring or fall Gold Cup, the numerous wine festivals, the turning of the leaves in the Blue Ridge, to visit a battlefield or other historic site and the many other reasons that people go to the Piedmont. The first thing that they will see is a line of 15-story high industrial towers.

We are an organization of ratepayers, workers, farmers, teachers, physicians and average men and women who care about preserving our land just the way our forefathers did and many generations of families have. We urge you to tell Dominion No Power Towers.

Matt Sheedy
President
Virginians for Sensible Energy Policies

To the Editor:

I commend you for opening a discussion of the proposed high voltage line through northern Virginia. As you correctly note, reliable and low cost energy is an important element of a sound growth economy for Virginia. However, I wonder why this state should be willing to accept a tired and destructive 1930s approach of building 15 story towers above a pristine landscape when modern technology can do much more to address this 21st century need.

First of all, let's understand

the real issue for Virginia. In Northern Virginia Dominion has forecasted a total rise over the next 5 years of just 8% in peak electricity demand during a few days a year. Further, by 2011, they have forecasted an overload of only 6% beyond a fail safe back up requirement for a few days a year on one line. So we are talking about a very manageable issue, not a crisis.

As you point out, there are modern ways to address this need. The small local generation you mention is a good approach and can provide clean, reliable and secure electric energy. But you are too pessimistic about their application. These small plants are readily available and quick to construct - unlike large coal or nuclear plants. But, beyond that approach, there are a variety of new technologies which can significantly boost the capacity of the existing transmission system, and significantly improve its safety as well. These techniques which boost line voltages, increase utilization and allow better intra-system integration are recommended by mainstream utility industry sources like the Electric Power Research Institute and the Edison Electric Institute - both utility sponsored organizations. Further, energy and load management techniques can allow large and small users alike to lower their own costs by shifting consumption away from peak times when power is most costly. Finally, under certain circumstances high voltage lines can be placed underground to avoid local damage. These modern approaches can eliminate the need for this tired old technology and avoid its destruction of our heritage and our landscape.

This emerging need in Northern Virginia is not a crisis, but it is an opportunity. Virginia and Dominion can embrace 21st century technology. They have the wonderful opportunity take a leadership role in meeting the needs of the State and regional economies while preserving our environment and protecting our history. Or, they can cling to old thinking and needlessly destroy what we all value. We all hope they see the future and make the right choice.

Mitch Diamond
Unison, Virginia
Lead Vice President
Booz Allen & Hamilton
World-Wide Energy Practice (Retired))

--Why don't Airlines and Airports have the same security check-in procedures?

-- Why would someone at

RANT & RAVES

FIRST AIRFARE, THEN GAS, NOW DRUGS

LAWRENCE A. HUNTER, PH.D.

Emboldened by their landslide victory, the Democrats have vowed to put prescription drugs back on the congressional agenda. But this time, they're back with an old and unwelcome twist: price controls.

For those of us who are old enough to remember the gas crisis of the 1970s, "price controls" are a four-letter word. They were meant to control 1970s era-inflation, but they actually resulted in higher pump prices and shortages, which weren't alleviated until President Reagan removed the controls in the 1980s.

The same thing happened with airfares. When price controls were finally removed in 1981, prices fell dramatically. In fact, even the prospect of price controls creates havoc. Research and development on new drugs plummeted in 1993 after President Clinton announced a proposal to let the government set prices for "breakthrough" drugs. It wasn't until Congress rejected Clinton's healthcare proposal in 1996 that R&D on new drugs

returned to its normal level.

With all this evidence, you'd think that even folks in Washington would learn the lessons of history. But they haven't. Instead, they've simply learned to disguise their true intentions.

That's why the leading voices in this effort aren't calling them "price controls" any more. They're now using the term "price negotiations" - insisting that government should simply be allowed to "negotiate" drug prices.

But the federal government is far too powerful to negotiate on a level playing field. Indeed, it even has the power to impose legal regulations on its contractors. One such regulation almost certain to result from "negotiated prices" would be the creation of a single national list of drugs, the so-called "formulary." Seniors would then be forced to choose their drugs from the list rather than from the wide variety of formularies that vary from insurance plan to insurance plan under current law. Thus, "negotiated prices" will lead directly to the rationing of drugs

Continued Page 15

MYSTERIES

FROM BEYOND THE BELTWAY

KEN RIETZ

There are some mysteries of life that are never solved. Like sitting in a huge traffic backup that suddenly clears for no apparent reason. Who was at the front of the line slowing it down? And, why? Or why is it always the Van, loaded with kids, that recklessly speeds by as if you were parked?

As we near the end of the year, here are some 2006 mysteries to mull over.

-- Why would Dominion propose a 40 mile line of 15 story power towers right through one of the most beautiful and historic places in Virginia just to transport energy to New Jersey and other north-eastern states?

--Why would Nancy Pelosi, after becoming the first female speaker of the House of Representatives, put her reputation at risk by supporting for majority leader, an unindicted, co-conspirator in the ABSCAM scandal?

--Why don't Airlines and Airports have the same security check-in procedures?

-- Why would someone at

RED VS BLUE

POWER OF WRATH THE WRATH OF POWER

MARK TATE - (R)

Last month we began to see the plan by Dominion Power to condemn a 40-mile swath of land through Fauquier County, Loudoun County, Clarke County, Prince William County and Frederick County. Dominion has held a series of meetings to try to convince the public these lines are a good idea. The public has responded with a great amount of outrage.

Thousands of citizens showed up to these meetings to say NO to the power towers and lines.

In response to Dominion's plans to deface the countryside and condemn our land we have founded Virginians for Sensible Energy Policies. Virginians for Sensible Energy Policies is a coalition of local groups, Dominion Virginia ratepayers, families, farmers, workers and citizens of all ages. It is organized to stop Dominion from constructing the proposed high-voltage

transmission lines, seizing private property and creating a forty-mile scar across the Piedmont. According to the American Council of Energy Efficiency, Virginia ranks in the bottom ten states in regard to efficient use of energy. Virginians for Sensible Energy Policies encourages Dominion power to seek energy alternatives and the state of Virginia to adopt energy policies that encourage efficiency.

As VSEP has looked closely at the proposed power line project. There are some glaring issues the power company does not want you to know.

Dominion has yet to prove the need for these lines. The North American Electric Reliability Council found in its 2005 Long-Term Reliability Assessment that power capacity in Virginia was "not a reliability concern at this time." Instead, the lines Dominion is planning to build will transport electricity through Virginia to other Northeastern states. Even if by 2011, Dominion

did need these lines, they are overkill. They are building a giant facility for all time that may only be needed locally a few hours a year at most. The rest of the time, they will be used to allow power sales from highly-polluting plants in the northeast.

Further, new generating capacity east of here, planned to come on line in 2016 will likely eliminate the need for these towers of power.

Dominion is using a 1930's approach when modern approaches are much more efficient. Today's technology allows energy companies to increase the capacity of existing lines and reduce the need for more rights of way that create more damage.

Using new approaches Dominion could add capacity to existing lines along existing rights of way without doing more unnecessary damage. New small plants to meet peak needs are cheap and quick to build, quiet and clean to operate and need only operate a few hours a year. The

did need these lines, they are overkill. They are building a giant facility for all time that may only be needed locally a few hours a year at most. The rest of the time, they will be used to allow power sales from highly-polluting plants in the northeast.

We must demand alternate solutions to the State's power needs. The land targeted by Dominion was surveyed by a young George Washington and revered by Thomas Jefferson.

Generations of families have worked hard to preserve this land which includes: 7 Civil War Battlefields, 17 National Historic Register sites, including a National Historic Landmark, 13 Miles of Appalachian Trail and 83 Miles of Scenic Byway, 16 Miles of Scenic Rivers, and thousands of homes, farms and small businesses. A prized historic destination for families and students across Northern Virginia as well as for travelers and tourists from around the world will be forever defaced.

OVERSIGHT FAILURE: WHO'S TO BLAME?

DAN MORROW - (D)

The two-month cascade of "sobering" reports from the Town's Auditor threatens to divide friend from friend, "insider" from "outsider", Council from constituency, and ourselves from all rational perspective.

People have lost their jobs, left them, or felt compelled to take on more than one. There are mutterings about competence and oversight, what's legal and what's ethical, personal integrity and fiduciary responsibility.

Mayor Davis finds herself in the unenviable position of having served on the Council that got us into this mess, and as leader of the Council that must get us out of it.

Who's to blame?

In part, The Middleburg Eccentric, and to be specific,

me, the Publisher, council reporter, left-wing columnist and general factotum.

I assumed direct and personal responsibility for covering the Council well before anything had gone awry.

I had access to every single Treasurer's report, and to every member of the Town Council and Professional Staff, even to those who are reluctant to speak "on the record." All I had to do was ask. I was, after all, "the press" . . . or should have been.

I should have seen (and should have reported) anomalies that now jump off the pages of what then seemed dreary financial reports.

I should have done a better job. I should have read the footnotes. I should have asked the now obvious questions.

No one, with the possible exception of Mayor Davis and

some members the Council, feels worse about all this than I.

I owe the town, and our readers, an apology . . . and hereby offer it . . . with the promise that I will henceforth do everything in my power to make sure that I never miss something like this ever again.

I also ask for your help.

Except for the Salamander project, or for one of the truly great presentations by a school group, it was (and is) rare to see anyone other than invited guests at Council Meetings.

Fewer still attended vitally important open sessions of key committees.

The Mayor and members of the Council take on great personal and fiduciary responsibilities . . . and work as volunteers. They give the Town incredible amounts time and

energy. But they cannot do their job well without the active and interested support of their community.

Happily, the greater Middleburg community, and the readership of the Eccentric, comprises some of the brightest and most talented people in the world.

Please. Come to the meetings. Offer your opinions and insights. Tell us what we're missing. Help us all do a better job.

You think we'll all hate you for it and mutter smug sentiments under our breath. Not so. We all know we need the help. . . . and we will all be eternally grateful.

Next monthly meeting, Town Hall, December 14.

Agenda's on the town web site.

See you there . . . and here.

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PASTIMES

LIVE, FROM FEDEX....

SEVENTH INNING STRETCH

ALEX CUDABACK

An interesting thing happened a couple weeks ago when I went to FedEx Field to watch the Redskins get clobbered by Atlanta; I spent the entire game watching football.

If you haven't been to a live football game recently, allow me to let you in on a little secret: if you're just going to watch some football, you're better off saving your \$70 and watching the game from the comfort of your own BarcaLounge.

Heresy!, some will shout. Un-American!, others will cry. Phooey, I retort.

Most people take in their NFL football via the boob-tube in their living rooms, content to watch the game in their jammies, one hand within striking distance of the chips and dip, the other warmly embracing the remote, their own personal bathroom (look, ma, no lines!) a few quick steps away. The replays and the commercials play out as part of the game, as necessary as the actual contest, seamlessly interwoven with the game by the magic-makers in New York and L.A.

Plop yourself down at an actual

game, however, and time seems to slow to an agonizing crawl. All those commercials and replays and "game-breaks" and other interruptions which seemed so appropriately placed are now gone.

In their place?

Nada. Zero. Zilch. Bupkis, even. Every once in a seemingly great while, someone will call an actual play and, if everyone can remember when the play is supposed to start, it actually gets run. For the most part, though, it's just a bunch of Broddingnagians in pads and helmets, milling around, drinking some water, writhing in agony, shoot-in' the breeze. Sure, there are cheerleaders and weird dance numbers with folks in incomprehensible outfits, but for the most part, you sit there wishing you could change the channel and see what's happening in the other games around the country.

Well, now you can. For the rest of the season, the NFL, DirecTV and Kangaroo Media are running a trial of DirecTV's "NFL Sunday Ticket In-Stadium" system, a nifty little trick that allows folks at the game to flip between all the games in progress at that given moment, including, a little

oddly, the game that they're actually attending.

The key component, as far as fans are concerned, is the actual Kangaroo TV device, sort of a cross between the old, bright yellow Sony Sports Walkman, a surprisingly sharp LCD screen, and enough rubberized gaskets and padding to protect the thing in case of monsoon or butter fingers.

A Kangaroo TV Broadcast Center sets up in the parking lot of the stadium and pulls in the DirecTV NFL Sunday Ticket' feed, the regional feed, and a bunch of real-time fantasy stats. All that information then gets streamed out to all the Kangaroo TV's in the stadium and at people's tailgates. The ensuing 7-second delay actually serves to synch your device up pretty perfectly for an instant replay of every play on the field at your home game.

But does it work?

My day at the game was only made better by the little gizmo, let me put it that way. Being able to check in on other games was oddly satisfying, and the RedZone' feature constantly alerts you when any other games get into, you guessed it, the red zone. Fan-

tasy geeks will like the real-time fantasy stats, if only so they can bust on their friends, real-time, when one of their players blows up. The screen really is surprisingly sharp, and I didn't experience any difficulty with reception. Yes, it even works there.

I only had three gripes about the Kangaroo TV, and two of them are pretty minor. First, there's a fair amount of menu-navigating, primarily of the pop-up variety, which I found relatively irksome. It's still early in the test, though, and I have to imagine the technology will just get more intuitive and easy to use, although how they managed to leave a "last channel" button off the device eludes me. Second, is the look. The yellow screams "Hell-lo!" at every passer-by, and while the included lanyard does a fine job keeping the device resting comfortably on your belly, the only person who looks dorkier than you is the guy with the Bluetooth cell-phone earpiece attached to his head. Purely an aesthetic complaint, I'll admit.

My third concern is more likely to pose something of a problem: price-point. You rent the Kangaroo TV at every game, and have to turn it in after. To do so will cost you \$40, a not-incon-



sequential price after you've shelled out for tickets, parking, snacks, etc. Add it up over a season, and you're looking at an additional \$320 to your season ticket outlay. Fans seemed intrigued, however, at least judging by the number of devices scattered throughout the stands.

Judging by the success Kangaroo has enjoyed in NASCAR, the Champ Car Series, and Formula One, I imagine there's a market for the device in the NFL. It does help pass the boredom between plays and during TV-timeouts, and it really is pretty cool to watch all those other games from the comfort of your hometown stadium.

Most importantly, the little yellow Kangaroo guarantees you'll be able to watch some really good football, regardless of what game you're actually attending. That, in and of itself, and particularly for a 'Skins fan, out to make the device worth the price of admission.

cuda24@yahoo.com

THE NEW YEAR COMES WITH A NAV-SYSTEM

THE ART OF ART

TOM NEEL

Ho, ho, ho! It has always been my attempt through these monthly words I share with you, to serve up a snack of artful endeavors and creative thought. Something to munch on, if you will. As we begin waving goodbye to 2006, one can't help thinking about receiving a shiny new 2007. All new memories and options to enjoy. That new year smell, what could be better? Perhaps a navigation system? The best thing is, while there is some paper work to do (there's always paper work), you don't have to haggle over the price because it's

FREE! Can you imagine, what a deal. Every year you get a nice new year for free, to do whatever you want with. There's one catch, you have to survive the one you just traded in.

I'm sure some of you are now thinking, well Tom, that was a let down, but it's not intended to be, that's life. As they say "This is not rehearsal, this is the play and the show is on." So, live it to your fullest and to do this, it helps to be creative. Creativity is a way of thinking, not something you can buy it in a store. Some of us will waste the year a way, wondering

Continued Page 6



St. John Pucci
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BOOK SENSE PICKS FOR 2006

EXPLORING BOOKS

PAT DALY

Just in time for the last 9 shopping days before Christmas is the independent booksellers' list of the best books published in 2006! Historical fiction leads the way with *Abundance* by Sena Jeter Naslund, a remarkable story of the life of Marie Antoinette, and *On Agate Hill*, by Lee Smith, a novel set in the post-Civil War era. And, although we suspect Carl Hiaasen's new book, *Nature Girl*, came out too late in the year to make the list, it is sure to be on the Christmas list of the author's many avid fans.

Among the best non-fiction are Erick Larson's *Thunderstruck*, which juxtaposes the invention of Marconi's



wireless with the murderous actions of the legendary Hawley Crippen, and *The Weather Maker*, by Tim Flannery, a timely and thorough review of all previous research regarding climate change that may very well move you to take political action.

Three first novels are particularly noteworthy – *Special Topics in Calamity Physics: A Novel*, by Marisha Pessl, in which the lonely daughter of an arrogant professor is forced to examine secrets in her past when one of her teacher's is murdered, *The Meaning of Night*, by Michael Cox, a literary thriller set in Victorian England with plot twists reminiscent of Dickens' best, and *The Thirteenth Tale*, by Diane Setterfield, the story of a biographer and an ailing writer who meet and discover unique parallels in their lives.

Although, not in the Book Sense Picks, no shopping list would be complete without Amy Sedaris' irreverent, yet hilarious cookbook, entitled *I Like You*, or Bill Bryson's memoir, *The Life and Times of The Thunderbolt Kid*. And holiday books abound from David Baldacci's *The Christmas Train* and Jeff Guinn's *The Great Santa Search*, for adults, to Tasha Tudor's beautifully illustrated *The Night Before Christmas*, Tomi de Paola's *Christmas Remembered*. Among the magical tales for true believers, you'll find Susanna Ronchi's delightful *One Snowy Night* and Carter Goodrich's *A Creature Was Stirring*.

If you are looking for something uniquely informative and entertaining for children and adults of all ages, we recommend *Egyptology*, *Dragonology*, *Wizardology*, *Pirateology*, *Fairyopolis*, *Fairyalty* and *A Princess Primer*, as well as *The Architectural Pop-Up Book*, *Great Maps of the Civil War*, and Robert Sabuda and Matthew Reinhart's fantastically engineered pop-up books from *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* and *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* to *Santa Claus*, *The Twelve Days of Christmas* and *Winter's Tale*.

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PASTIMES

DISHING IT OUT

FROM BEHIND THE STOVE

BRIAN LICHOROWIC

This time of year people pull out all the stops. It's the holiday party season. Middleburg locals, Caroline and Jack Helmy, hosted yet another wonderful holiday event. Caroline, a true gourmet and gourmand, was kind enough to share her secret recipe for her Beef Bourgeoisie. "Four bottles of wine in the dish, One in the cook!" Atta girl! A true Julia Child inspired methodology. It was delicious. I'm still at a loss to understand why we only do this the last two month of the calendar year, but we do.

No one ever lays out a turkey feast with mincemeat pies and cookies at tax time.

My wife and I are blessed to be invited to break bread with our good

friends and family. Every year there are always a few dishes that floor me. Some, amazingly good and some, lets say, of "questionable cuisine". Every year I find one that I say, to myself, "gotta write that one down".

The winner of the "questionable cuisine" category this year goes to my Mother-in-Law's neighbor, Tammy, in Melbourne, FL. She found a side dish recipe in Family Circle™ Magazine and was nice enough to construct and transport it to a large dinner party of 18 of us for Thanksgiving dinner. (Even now, I am breaking out in hives.) It consisted of canned fruit cocktail mixed with a few cups of trail mix (nut, raisins, dried apricots, etc), marshmallows and a large amount of crumbled Reese's peanut butter cups sprinkled on top. She then baked the concoction for 20 minutes.

I t had no name. I c a n ' t seem to stomach Reese's peanut butter cups on the same plate as my turkey, stuffing, potatoes and gravy. But we ate it, smiled and thanked Tammy. After she departed, resounding in the kitchen was the sink disposal and even that had a hard time with it.

At the other end of the spectrum, these dishes below were offered to us by our beloved friends and family. It is my sincere wish for you to enjoy them with yours.

Peace.



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Ricotta & Herb Stuffed Pan Roasted Chicken with Pomegranates & Young Spinach

This dish just looks like Christmas. My big brother usually finds a way to tie in all the elements of cuisine; taste, appearance and plating. Getting the recipe from him is always another matter. He doesn't write anything down and he usually can't make the exact thing twice. But he's got this one down pat. I had to watch him make it then try it myself. Any type of Poultry can be used. Guinea Fowl, Cornish Game Hens or plain old Chicken (I used one of the Ayrshire farms roasters)

- 2.5 lbs Poultry (quartered, preferred deboned. Ask your butcher to do it)
- 4 oz Ricotta Cheese
- 1 handful Fresh Thyme leaves, chopped fine
- 1/2 handful Fresh Sage leaves, chopped fine
- 4 glugs Olive oil
- 1 whole Pomegranate (just the seeds- skin and yellow pith removed)
- 1/2 tsp Butter
- 1 clove Garlic,
- 1/4 cup White Wine
- 3 cups Spinach, fresh & young & thoroughly washed
- To taste Sea salt & cracked pepper

Serve with these . . .

"Blow Out My Aorta" Baked Onions

This is a treat to have something like this on your plate at the holiday because you surely you can't have these on a regular basis. Anything that starts with Cream and adds cheese; God love ya. It's a great, delicious, "bad" example. Pick a good size onion and be aware the tops & bottoms you trim off and the onion you scoop out, are to be saved and chopped for the filling!

- 1 med Onions, (tennis ball size) White preferred, peeled
- 4 slices Pancetta or Bacon
- 2 whole Garlic cloves, chopped fine
- 4 twigs Fresh Rosemary, chopped
- 8 tbs Heavy Cream
- 1/4 cup Parmesan Cheese, grated
- 2 glugs Olive oil

Serve with the above Chicken

Cider-Mashed Sweet Potatoes

I just had these a couple days ago. Different, magnificent and simple to make. Brown sugar and sweet potatoes are the perfect combination. Top them with marshmallows for a traditional holiday side dish. 2/3-cup Apple

- 2/3-cup Apple cider
- 5 large Sweet potatoes or yams, scrubbed but unpeeled
- 4 Tbsp. Butter
- 2 Tbsp. Light brown sugar
- 1/2 tsp. Salt
- 1/4 cup Pecans, lightly toasted, chopped
- 4 Pineapple thinly sliced rings for garnish

Comments or Catastrophes?
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DECEMBER ADVICE

THE PLANT LADY

KAREN REXRODE



The cut boughs of evergreens can be a wonderful insulator for perennials that are evergreen or semi-evergreen. Nature usually insulates with fallen leaves but most of us clean up our gardens and tidiness is not always



healthy for all plants. It would be difficult to list all of the plants that might benefit from an extra blanket of evergreen branches but a stroll through your garden would reveal perennials that are still holding on to a bit of foliage. Some of these perennials are probably evergreen in our zone but will suffer from dramatic temperature drops that are often accompanied by strong winds. Situate cut boughs around these plants and turn a few limbs upside down, over top. Anchor with a heavy stone or a few bricks and leave the branches there until late February or early March. Sometimes one Christmas tree is not enough, friends and family members are always great sources for more. The covering will also protect the earliest flowering plants like primula and pulmonaria. I have often been greeted by primroses in full bloom when I peek in late February, a real winter treat. A few plants that benefit from a collar of boughs are half hardy euphorbias, rosemary, trailing verbenas, and kniphofias or red hot pokers. The idea is simply to keep the wind off and buffer temperatures so that the plants don't desiccate while the ground is frozen. Check underneath once in awhile to make sure that chewing vermin aren't making a meal of your plants. Voles are the main culprits and they feel secure as they hide out of site. Hawks, owls and

Set in amongst pansies, trailing ivy or ornamental cabbage, the tips of the branches are simply shoved into the soil during a thaw, much like putting filler in a flower arrangement. Berried holly branches or sprigs of blue spruce and boxwood provide color and cold tolerance. As you may have noticed pansies and violas look a little frozen on cold mornings. They will thaw out as the temperatures rise and its important not to squeeze the foliage or flatten plants while they're frozen.

By now most of our gardens look empty and dormant. The chill has settled in and days are short. It's also the time that gardening catalogs begin to arrive. Seed, bulb and plant catalogs fill up the mailbox, enticing pictures take the gardener out of the drab winter months. It's all so tempting. Purchasing plants this way can be very disappointing. Often shipped too early to actually put outside and so small in size that it's a challenge to keep then alive. Use reputable sources and remember your local nurseries. Call around to local businesses if you read about something tempting, it may be available and it may even be less expensive. Chances are it's not shipped in from Washington State, not uprooted in shipping and not waiting on your doorstep on a freezing cold day.

THE NEW YEAR COMES WITH A NAV-SYSTEM

FROM PAGE 11

what to do, pondering over decisions, dilemmas and even death. Others will live life creatively, with the curiosity of youth, with all the adventure of a great book and knowing that life is not about the shiny new year you'll get, but making the very best of the one you have.

We live in a world so often only measured by income. Don't get me wrong, there's nothing wrong with income, it's part of life too, but it shouldn't be the ultimate yardstick of life. Possibly the better measurement is to ask, did you challenge yourself? What did you learn from it? How will you use it tomorrow, not just next year? What did you give to your community? What have you discovered? Did you meet someone new? How might that person affect your life?

I was at a social event last night. There was a fairly large crowd. Conversation filled the air. (that's code for, it was noisy) As I rounded a corner, there was an older women sitting by herself in a chair, but smiling, just looking about. I sat down for a second and said "How are you?" She look at me and said "Very, very well". I said, "Wow, not just one very, but two, that really says something". She responded with a bigger smile and a

bit of laughter and vigor, "Yes, exceptional". "Everyone looks so nice and everything is so pretty". Her many trade ins of old years for new, was no surprise to me. She had a great attitude. I suspect she got more out of one year, than many of us will get out of five. She is a young thinker.

Yes, this year is largely in your rear view mirror, but it still has places it can take you. Let it.

FOR THE NEW YEAR

Next year, I would like to not only continue to explore the topics of art as I have, but go a step further by sharing some of my personal experiences as an artist and spotlighting others who immerse themselves in creative thinking or businesses. As well, I would love to hear from any of you that may have topics or questions I might be able to help with and certainly this also includes the wider reading audience of this paper.

All the best to you, your families and friends. Have a safe, healthy and happy holiday season and yes, NEW YEAR. I understand for those of you with a busy year ahead, that the new 2007 comes with reclining bucket seats! Enjoy!

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Happy Holidays!

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PASTIMES

THE GINGERBREAD LADY

Lisa Weber spent the holiday season making gingerbread boys and girls for patients who have December dental appointments with Dr. Gallegos and Dr. Jackson. According to colleague Michele Murray, Lisa, who assists Dr. Gallageos, has a knack for putting smiles on patients' faces all year, but when they arrive and see her gingerbread treats, their delight is obvious.



FIRST AIRFARE, THEN GAS, NOW DRUGS FROM PAGE 13

that are not included on the national formulary.

In other words, negotiating with the government is like playing baseball against a team whose pitcher is also the umpire calling the strikes. The game is fixed.

By forcing the nation's pharmaceutical companies to sell drugs below their market value, Washington's efforts would come with a host of other unintended consequences.

There can be little doubt that price controls would raise prices and ration drugs. But they would also discourage research spending on new life-saving and life-extending medications. Worse still, price controls for Medicare prescription drugs would force companies to divert research funds into less risky -- but also less promising -- product lines that are not under price controls but are of less value to seniors.

Take Alzheimer's disease, which affects 10 percent of those over 65 and half of those over 85. If the government decreed that a drug designed to alleviate Alzheimer's be sold at a below-market price, drug companies wouldn't be able to recoup their investments. With caps on prices, they would focus on markets unaffected by price controls and shift resources

to develop drugs usable by younger people covered by private insurance. Seniors with diseases like Alzheimer's would be out of luck. The end result would be out-and-out drug rationing to old people.

But that's not all, folks. Price controls also would add more bureaucratic red tape, cause shortages of existing drugs, and interfere with individual decisions on healthcare.

If you think the outlook for the new Medicare prescription drug program is complicated now, wait until price controls are in the mix.

The Medicare drug benefit certainly has its problems. It's the most expensive government entitlement program in history, and will soon surpass Social Security as the nation's largest unfunded liability.

But "price negotiations" are hardly a solution. Indeed, nearly all economists agree that they're incredibly damaging. Those who want to improve the Medicare drug benefit should focus their efforts instead on transforming it into a truly market-based, consumer-driven program.

Dr. Hunter is the former staff director of the congressional Joint Economic Committee. He currently consults in the pharmaceutical industry.

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THINGS TO DO

HOLIDAY EXHIBIT FEATURES WORK BY AREA ARTISTS

December 1 – January 20

Loudoun's leading artists – as well as new talent from the area – will display their original paintings, drawings, sculpture and ceramic art at Gallery 222 during the Holiday Season.

Gallery regulars Trisha Adams, Don Black, Dasher Chagnaa, Sandra Ehrenkranz, Courtney Fair, Joan Gardiner, Carmen Howell, Alfred McAdams, Kurt Schwarz, Antonia Walker and Velda Warner will be represented. In addition, work by well-known artists Brian Kirk and Sherry Sanabria will be included in the exhibit.

The gallery is pleased to introduce four new artists to the Gallery. John Raymond creates steel sculpture from found objects; Elissa Savos forms figures from clay; Richard Taylor creates wood-fired pottery; and Jeffrey Stockberger paints landscapes and still lifes. Stockberger's work was prominently featured in the recent Designer Showhouse at Rust Nature Sanctuary.

The exhibit opens on December 1 and runs through January 20, and the Opening Reception will be hosted on Friday, December 1 from 6 to 9 pm during Leesburg's First Friday. Gallery 222 is located on the edge of the historic district at 222 South King Street in Leesburg. The gallery is open Monday – Saturday, 10 am to 5 pm, and by appointment. 703 777 5498.

Gallery 222 is a component of the Loudoun Academy of the Arts Foundation, a 501c3 educational organization that provides fine art instruction, gallery exhibition space and studio rentals for practicing artists.

Cavaliers, Courage and Coffee by the Wood Stove

Saturday, January 13th, from 7:30 p.m. to 9:30 p.m.

The Gray Ghost Interpretive Group (GGIG) presents Cavaliers, Courage and Coffee in the Rector House in the village of Atoka (4 miles west of Middleburg off Route 50). For the winter months, this popular program will move indoors to the Rector parlor by the wood stove. First person interpretations of citizens of Mosby's Confederacy will tell how stories of Colonel John Singleton Mosby and his Rangers affected their lives. This family program presented by the Mosby Heritage Area Association is free to the public. For further information contact the Mosby Heritage Area Association at 540-687-6681 or www.mosbyheritagearea.org.

Virginia Foxhound Club Annual Meeting

Sunday, January 21 st at 12:30 p.m.

The Virginia Foxhound Club's annual meeting takes place at the Fauquier Springs Country Club in Warrenton. Featured will be Al Geoff-

frin who will recount some of his experiences with horses following the luncheon.

Mr. Geoffrin and his wife own stables near The Plains where he has a horse transportation business. During the past year he has worked together with Robert Duvall to develop the AMC miniseries "Broken Trail." Mr. Geoffrin did the screenwriting for the film and companion book about the adventures of two cowboys driving 500 horses from Oregon to Wyoming.

The Virginia Foxhound Club provides many services, including organization of the prestigious Hound Show at Morven Park which attracts hounds from coast to coast. All participating foxhunters should attend.

Reservations are required for the luncheon and program at \$35 per person. Please call Joan Jones 540-364-3397 or Jennifer Spalding 540-592-9556 for reservations and information.

Marion duPont Scott Equine Medical Center

2006-07 "Tuesday Talk" Schedule

Veterinarians, horse owners and horse professionals gain valuable insight and practical advice related to a wide array of equine healthcare topics during the annual Marion duPont Scott Equine Medical Center's "Tuesday Talk" series. This series of lectures is designed to provide veterinarians, horse owners and horse professionals

with valuable insight and practical advice related to a wide-array of equine healthcare topics.

The 2006-07 "Tuesday Talk" schedule is as follows:

"Equine Neurological Issues Over the Life Course" – Tuesday, Dec. 5, 2006, by Martin O. Furr, DVM, Ph.D., Diplomate ACVIM, Adelaide C. Riggs Chair in Equine Medicine, Marion duPont Scott Equine Medical Center

"Acupuncture and Pain Relief for Horses" – Jan. 16, 2007, by Alison A. Smith, DVM, Diplomate ACVA, Clinical Assistant Professor in Anesthesia, Marion duPont Scott Equine Medical Center

"New Treatments for Equine Tumors" – Feb. 13, 2007, Kenneth E. Sullins, DVM, MS, Diplomate ACVS, Professor of Equine Surgery, Marion duPont Scott Equine Medical Center

"Detecting and Treating Lameness" – March 6, 2007, Nathaniel A. White, II, DVM, MS, Diplomate ACVS, Jean Ellen Shehan Professor and Director, Marion duPont Scott Equine Medical Center

All "Tuesday Talk" lectures take place at 7:00 p.m. in the Marion duPont Scott Equine Medical Center's library. There is no admittance fee, but seating is limited and pre-registration is required. To register, e-mail Amy Troppmann at atroppmann@vt.edu or call (703) 771-6843. Additional information regarding the center and its services is available online at www.equinemedicalcenter.net.

Wakefield School Auction Committee's Annual Gala

"La Luna Bella di Toscana"
March 24th, 2007

The Wakefield School Gala Auction Committee is already making plans for their annual dinner/dance auction to take place this spring on March 24th at Wakefield School in The Plains, VA. This year's theme will be "La Luna Bella di Toscana" (The Beautiful Tuscan Moon) and plans are underway to transform the school gym into an Italian moonlit night.

"We had such success with last year's auction, we hope to repeat that same success. Our acquisitions group is already out and about looking for community corporate sponsors and donations, and we also hope to have a celebrity guest Master of Ceremonies for the evening festivities," said Debi Alexander and Mary Oliverio, co-chairs of the event.

Several exciting items have already been donated. Market Salamander will be cater the dinner with entertainment by Washington's premiere event band Powerhouse, as seen on NBC's The Today Show. Funds raised will support many initiatives including professional development, scholarship, and our technology and science programs. Please R.S.V.P. early as the event was sold out last year.

For more information about corporate sponsorships or tickets, please contact Debi Alexander at debialexander@msn.com or visit the website at www.wakefieldschool.org.

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PARENTS & PROGENY

SPORTS ILLUSTRATED NAMES NOTRE DAME ACADEMY GIRLS' BASKETBALL TEAM TO PRE-SEASON TOP TEN



MEAGHAN EICHER

Basketball season is now in full swing, and the Notre Dame Academy girls' varsity team has been recognized by Sports Illustrated magazine with a top ten ranking in the national pre-season girls' category. Ranked sixth in the nation, the team has turned in stellar performances on the court. "Notre Dame is big," according to the SI issue now on the newsstands. The Dragons will play a very tough schedule, which should help its

ranking."

The girls' basketball team was also ranked number 20 in USA Today's Top 25 girls prep basketball poll, in the November 16th issue.

Their season tipped-off with a double win in the Flint Hill Tip-Off Tournament.

First, the team defeated Lake Braddock with a 77-48 win. Then they played St. Anne Belfield, who lost to the Notre Dame Dragons 76-36.

Mia Nickson earned the MVP award and Morgan Wrightson made the All Conference team.

The girls will play in the Big Apple Classic, which is held in Queens, New York.

Boys Varsity

Notre Dame's Boys Varsity Basketball team also won big in the Flint Hill Tip-Off Tournament.

They won both games, beating Georgetown Prep 76-60 and St. Anne Belfield 74-48. Dominique Ngniman received the MVP award.

To find out more about the teams' schedule and success, visit the Notre Dame Academy website at www.notredameva.org.

NOTRE DAME ACADEMY CONGRATULATES THREE ON SIGNING NATIONAL LETTERS OF INTENT

Notre Dame Academy seniors Merritt "Buddy" Sosnoski, Brian MacMahon, and Ebony Williams have signed national letters of intent to play their respective sports at colleges beginning fall of 2007.

Sosnoski, of Front Royal, will attend Virginia Tech, in Blacksburg, Virginia to play baseball. He helped Notre Dame Academy to two Virginia Independent School League state titles, while seeing action as a pitcher, first baseman and outfielder. He earned All-State honors as a junior when he batted .447 and posted a 5-1 record and 2.42 earned run average on

the mound. Sosnoskie posted 16 doubles, two triples and six home runs last season, driving in 47 runs and stealing 18 bases. He worked 43.1 innings on the mound with 36 strikeouts and just eight walks. He is the son of Anthony and Marcie Sosnoski.

MacMahon, of Upperville, will attend St. Leo University in Tampa, Florida to play lacrosse. MacMahon has played attack for all four seasons at Notre Dame Academy. Last year he had a breakout year, scoring 49 goals and contributing eight assists. MacMahon is the son of Paul and Marion MacMahon.

Ebonie Williams, of Hagerstown,

Maryland, will play basketball at Seton Hall University in South Orange, New Jersey. Ebonie averages 15 points and 5 rebounds per game, and leads this year's team to its preseason number six national ranking by Sports Illustrated. Williams is the daughter of Ms. Stephanie Bowins.

"Notre Dame Academy is very proud of Buddy, Brian, and Ebony for their superior athletic achievement and wish them every success in their continuing academic and athletic careers," said John Borley, Notre Dame Academy headmaster.

FOXCROFT STUDENTS FINISHES ATOP THE BATES RATINGS IS TOP JUNIOR EQUESTRIAN

Foxcroft senior Sloane Coles of The Plains, Va., won the 2006 Bates USA Equestrian year-end rider award presented recently at the Syracuse Invitational Sporthorse Tournament last weekend. Coles' trainers, Frank and Stacia Madden of Colts Neck, N.J., were the year-end trainers, based on the November 3, 2006, Bates USA Equestrian Ranking that determined this year's overall winners. The rankings, which are published weekly are available at www.batesequitationranking.com.

As the gold medalist, Coles received a Bates Caprilli Close Contact Saddle and was chosen to participate in Horsemanship Training Sessions

with George Morris, which will take place in Wellington, Fla., from January 15-20, 2007. The purpose of the training sessions is to help create complete "horsemasters" and develop a pipeline for future U.S. Equestrian Teams. The sessions are hosted by the United States Equestrian Federation (USEF) and Stadium Jumping, Inc. Coles, who transferred from Highland School last year in part because Foxcroft's Exceptional Proficiency Program enables her to train more seriously while remaining a student in good standing, is a dormitory prefect, a varsity lacrosse player and an officer in the School's FoxHound intramural program.

HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITY APPLICATIONS ACCEPTED JANUARY 2ND

Inova Loudoun Hospital will be accepting registrations, beginning January 2, 2007, from high school students interested in participating in the Summer Volunteer Program.

Students who have completed the eighth grade by June 2007 are welcome to make application. Students will serve in one or more depart-

mental positions at the Lansdowne or Leesburg Campus locations.

To register, students may stop by the Volunteer Office at the Lansdowne Campus of Inova Loudoun Hospital or call 703-858-6469. If calling to register, please provide the student's name, address and telephone number. All registrants will receive packets of information by the spring of '07.

FIVE REASONS NOT TO EAT LUNCH ALONE W.G. COLEMAN CONTINUES LUNCH BUDDY PROGRAM

TIFFANY SNIDER

W.G. Coleman Elementary School in Marshall, Virginia continues its Lunch Buddy Program in the hopes of yet another successful year. Organizers are actively recruiting volunteers for the 2006-2007 school year as the time draws near for

the Lunch Buddy program to enter into full swing for both the students and the volunteers involved. Working in coordination with the school's guidance counselor, Barbara Overby, Lunch Buddies visit the school once a week to eat lunch with a child involved in the program. Serving as a role model, mentor, and friend, a Lunch Buddy can make a huge difference in the life of a child just by sitting down with them for a twenty-five minute lunch shift once a week.

Many of the students just need someone to pay attention to them, make them feel special, listen to them talk. The children aren't the only ones who leave the lunch table smiling, either. More often than not the adult volunteers gain just as much from the experience as the students. Taking the time to eat lunch with a child can be a refreshing break in the work day for those of us who don't get recess. The experience can be incredibly rewarding and who knows, you might even pick up a knock-knock joke or two in the process.

For those who might be interested in volunteering to be a Lunch Buddy at W.G. Coleman Elementary, please call (540) 364-9023, your interest is greatly appreciated.

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3. Be an elementary-school celebrity!
4. Break up the monotony of the work day by spending time with a child.
5. Enjoy great company and a hot lunch. Where else can you get a piece of pizza with so many added extras?

COIL NAMED TO ALL-ISL TEAM FOXCROFT PLAYERS HAVE GREAT SEASONS



Foxcroft School's Chelsy Coil, a junior co-captain from Middleburg, VA., was named to the All-Independent School League recently by the prestigious Greater Washington, D.C.-area league's coaches.

Coil, who played center forward, center mid center back for 2005 Coach of the Year Katie Kantz this fall, scored nine of Foxcroft's 22 goals. She also had four assists and helped lead Foxcroft to a 9-5-2 record. The squad was ranked 10th among independent schools in Virginia and reached the second round of the ISL Tournament before falling, 1-0, in double overtime, to Stone Ridge.

Coil, a Division I college recruit prospect, and teammate Laura Block, a standout goalie in both field hockey and lacrosse, both competed at National Field Hockey Festival in Indio, CA, Nov. 23-26, playing for a regional all-star high school team. Block had a sensational season for Foxcroft, notching 161 saves and eight shutouts while allowing only 16 goals.

Also competing at the National

Festival, in the Open division, was Coil's older sister, Jessi, who was the All-Loudoun Player of the Year as a Foxcroft senior in 2005. Jessi, a back at Kent State University this fall, was named to the 2006 Mid-American Conference All-Tournament Team in November after anchoring a defense that didn't allow any goal in its first three halves of the tournament. She played in all 22 games of her rookie season and started 21.

Julie Hoppman, another 2006 graduate of Foxcroft and a resident of The Plains, VA, helped the Springfield (MA) College field hockey squad to a 17-6 record and its third straight New England Women's and Men's Athletic Conference title. Hoppman started 16 games and played in 17 for Springfield, one of the top Division III programs in the nation.

At Sewanee: The University of the South, 2005 Foxcroft graduates Mo Baptiste of Berryville, VA, scored two goals and Lynn Hancock of Paris, KY, had a goal and an assist for the Tigers.

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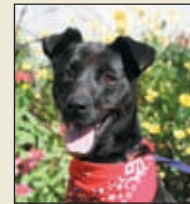
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KITTENS— Another year filled with tons and tons of unwanted litters of kittens. It's so sad, each kitten is so special and deserving of a good life but we can't save them all. But, we do have some gorgeous, fun,



healthy baby kittens and young adults that would be great family friends. We also have good mousers for your barn or garage!

ERICA— Erica came to us in horrible condition. Her collar was grown into her neck and she was very very skinny. Erica would do best as an only animal. She is good with most other dogs but not kitties. She adores cuddling on your lap!



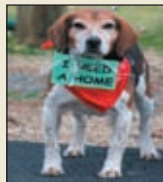
CHEYENNE— A beauty! Cheyenne was at a county shelter where her time was up so we took her to give her a second chance! Cheyenne is a doll, she is very affectionate and very sweet and would love a family of her own soon!



PUPPIES— A beautiful group of Lab mix pups. Color, health and personality galore, this group has it all! Please call for more info and to arrange a time to visit.



DUNCAN - A very affectionate and loving little Beagle mix, he would be your best friend in life! Duncan was rescued from a county shelter where his time was up.



SAMMIE - Sammy is a purebred neutered male Beagle with a big heart. He loves to play with everyone!

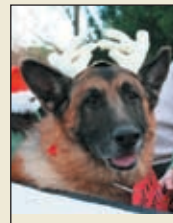
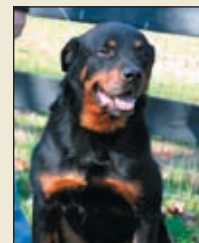
PUPPIES— This is a beautiful group of little Beagle/ lab mix pups. Mom is a 35-40 pound small lab cross, we think a Beagle was dad! 7 girls and one boy, these little kidlets will grow to be small to medium sized dogs. Their mom, Emily is also available. Fun family friends!

540-364-3272



DUDETTE— Poor Dudette-her mom didn't like her personality so she took her to the vet to be put down! Thankfully the vet refused and called us. Dudette is a big gorgeous cat who likes to keep to herself. She enjoys being petted and is very clean.

DUKE— A big handsome purebred Rotweiler who is very affectionate and quite well mannered and gentle. We are still getting to know Duke, we will introduce him to other dog friends soon.



KING-A spectacular purebred German Shepherd. King suffers from a neurologic disorder that causes him to be weak in the hind end but he is not in discomfort. He is a lovely dog who deserves a lovely home.



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A MONTHLY COLUMN FOR PEOPLE WHO SHARE THEIR HOMES WITH FOUR-LEGGED FRIENDS.



This is a plea for help. I have a problem WAY too hard for me to fix. I'm usually the one giving advice, not asking for it. Because of that, it's very difficult to admit that I'm in desperate need of guidance. The problem is that my people have lost their minds. I'm afraid they're going to be committed and I'm going to be orphaned. Abandoned. Sent away to live somewhere with no treats, no bed, and no toys. I shudder at the very thought.

Here's the deal: about a week ago the strange behavior started. My people brought a tree INTO our house. I told them trees belong outside — duh — that's why they grow there and not in the middle of our living room. They laughed and said, "Listen to that cute bark, Albert likes the tree!" I do NOT like the tree. More than that, I do not like the thought of my people becoming unfit pet parents.

The tree was hard enough to handle, but then they started bringing all kinds of stuff home. That in itself was okay, but I knew I was doomed when they started putting the perfectly good things in boxes, covering the boxes with paper, and piling them under the tree. If that's not odd behavior, I don't know what is. They think it's just SO weird that I bury bones. Well, it's a heck of a lot stranger to pretend to bury boxes under a stupid tree that shouldn't even be in the house in the first place.

Anyway, after the whole box burying thing, I was pretty concerned. I wasn't in a panic yet, though. But then I overheard my person on the phone with her friend's daughter talking about a big fat guy in a red suit who would be coming soon. He would be arriving via a reindeer-guided sleigh, sliding down the chimney with a sack on his back, and eating cookies and milk. Oh boy. My person is definitely a goner.

So here I sit, surrounded by nut-

crackers in what is, apparently, a nut-house. I'm wearing a ridiculous red collar with white fuzz all over it. The tree looms over me threateningly. This is it. I know it. My people are going away for a long time and I'm going to be on the street.

If anyone can give me any insight into what on earth I should do, please let me know. If I could just keep my people inside until this is over, I would. Alas, I can't do that. I cringe to imagine them out in the world ev-

ery day, probably thinking and doing crazy things. I hope they're not telling anyone about the tree ... or the guy in the red suit ... or the box obsession. Sooner or later, someone's going to file a report. All I can do is hope upon hope that this is temporary insanity that will pass very soon.

I'll say one thing: if this does pass, I never want to hear that dogs do the craziest things. I never want to hear that my people "just can't understand" why we sniff THERE to say hello, or

why we like to drink out of the big white water bowl in the powder room, or why we chase our tails. Newsflash: we're not the weird ones, folks. You are.

Albert P. Clark

Albert, a Jack Russell Terrier, is Chairman of the Board of Wylie Wagg, a shop for dogs, cats, and their people, in Middleburg and Fairfax.



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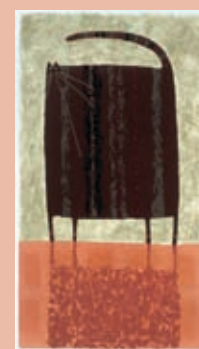
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Longfield
Middleburg, Virginia

Built in 1986, stone house with slate and metal roof, 4 bedrooms, 4 1/2 baths, 3 fireplaces, hardwood floors, and rear flagstone terraces, new heated pool and cabana, and 5-car garage. 96.73 gently rolling, mostly open acres with mountain views. \$3,900,000.



Brickland Yard
Delaplane, Virginia

Beautiful views from every window. This completely updated home has 2 separate master suites with 3 additional bedrooms. Renovation includes the new kitchen with upgraded appliances, new baths, hardwood floors, extensive custom trim and new windows throughout. Hardiplank siding and the new all weather deck minimizes maintenance of this immaculate property of 20+ acres fenced for horses with two run-in sheds. \$1,350,000.



Watermill
Purcellville, Virginia

Gardener's paradise around bright home, 3 bedrooms, 2 1/2 baths, views from every room, large pantry, media room with projection wall, energy efficiency with geothermal heating/cooling and water heating, Anderson doors, insulated attic, 60 year architectural roof, master bath jacuzzi and shower, orchard, gardening shed, secluded glade on stream, BBQ pit. \$599,999.



Stone Ridge
Culpeper, Virginia

Fantastic views from "Stone Ridge" of Longley. 6 bedrooms, 5 1/2 baths, 3 fireplaces, all brick custom colonial on 17 acres with tennis court, pond, and great potential, mature landscaping, and large rooms. Gallery room added several years ago. 4 car garage. \$1,595,000.



Meadow View
Middleburg, Virginia

Minutes to Middleburg, protected location, 4 bedrooms, 3 baths, 5 fireplaces, screened rear porch. 3-stall barn with tack room, 10 usable acres, 4 paddocks, new fencing, 200 x 150 riding ring. Lovely gardens, private setting. \$1,200,000.



Putnams Mill
Orlean, Virginia

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Oakmeade
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Rectortown, Virginia

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The Plains, Virginia

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