

The Virginia Hills Echo



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2015 Real Estate Assessments: No Change

Property owners in Virginia Hills should have received the new assessments of their properties about a month ago. Property owners may have been surprised to see that their assessments have not changed from 2014. Since the Board of Supervisors has advertised a 2015 tax rate of \$1.09, the same as the current year's rate, Virginia Hills residents will, at worst, not see a real estate tax increase this year. The Board may ultimately decide to implement a rate lower (but not higher) than \$1.09, in which case real estate taxes will actually be lower.

For the 14th year in a row, VHCA has reviewed the assessments done by the County Department of Tax Administration (DTA) for correctness. Unlike in 2014, VHCA has found no problems with the assessments. One of the reasons that there were no changes this year was that last year the Department of Tax Administration (DTA) increased assessments by about 3% more than their sale data justified, so the small change in 2014 sales is just catching up to that.

VHCA checked a sample of 40 homes in the neighborhood to insure that the new assessments are uniform (that is, unchanged) across the neighborhood. If your assessment has gone up, one reason may be that you were issued a building permit to improve your home. Another reason may be that your house had a previous addition and DTA had incorrect data for the square footage. DTA has in the last few years been using satellite data to verify house/addition dimensions.

You can check the data that DTA holds on your property at <http://icare.fairfaxcounty.gov/ffxcare/main/home.aspx>

For the purposes of determining the change in assessments, there were 36 sales of land with improvements (homes). Of these, eight were not used for the assessment process. These included two foreclosures (the same as last year), two sales under duress, a sale by the lender, a handyman special, and two sales deemed to be at prices that were not representative.

The sales data shows that the median time of ownership was seven years. However, four of the homes sold appear to be investor fixer-uppers that were owned less than two years. If those home are eliminated from the data, the median ownership period rises to ten years.

Fairfax County assesses properties by mass appraisal, not by individual appraisal as would a mortgage lender or real estate agent. For more information on mass appraisal, see the article at <http://www.dougboelter.com/policy/assessments1.html>

Pothole Damage Claims

If you hit a pothole and your vehicle is damaged, you can submit a damage claim to VDOT. Claims are investigated on a case-by-case basis. Investigators review the circumstances, the type and location of the pothole, if VDOT had been previously notified of the issue, and if crews had been given a reasonable amount of time to repair the pothole.

If you have questions about damage claims, contact VDOT's Customer Service Center at 1-800-FOR-ROAD (1-800-367-7623).

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Virginia Hills Citizens Association Meeting

***Tuesday, April 14th – 7:30 PM
Old Virginia Hills School, Diana Lane***

Speaker: TBA

The President's Corner

Comment from VHCA President Warren Suyderhoud

Hello again! Well, it's springtime again and it's a good time for some spring maintenance on the lawn! I know that as much snow and water we received over the last several months can really alter the soil pH and compact your soil, as well as bring out those wonderful weeds. Best thing to do is clean, fertilize, and mow your yard early in the season. Here is a great website to get some tips: <http://home.howstuffworks.com/5-spring-lawn-care-tips.htm>

Spring is also a good time to talk about community and some good and fun announcements. Rose Hill Elementary School will hold again the Rocket Run for Autism on April 18th. The charity event will include a 5K run/walk for kids that starts at 8:00 AM. There will also be the 8:30 AM walk for everyone. Registration is \$25.00 and the forms can be found on the Rose Hill website. Please come out and join this event to bring awareness to autism.

Another great community organization is the Torpedo Factory Art Center, in Old Town. The center is a 501© non-profit whose mission is to foster connections among the public and to ignite the creative spirit. It's a great place for families and especially those with teenagers to develop a new skill by volunteering! Positions are always available in hands-on art activities or even to greet visitors at the information desk. The best way to learn about the center is to call them at (703) 838-4365 x301.

If you have community announcements, please send them to me. On the other hand, if you would like to set up a community event, just contact me as well. Oh, and one more thing, don't forget about our next monthly association meeting at the Old Virginia Hills School on Tuesday April 14th, at 7:30 pm. Hope to see you there!

Sincerely,
Warren Suyderhoud

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www.VirginiaHills.org**



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For yearly discount rate, see www.VirginiaHills.org/Echo.html

Virginia Hills Citizens Association Officers 2014-2016

President	Warren Suyderhoud	240-381-8610	president@virginiahills.org
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Parks Count Survey Released to 15,000 Households

An important park needs survey is being mailed to 15,000 randomly selected Fairfax County households. This survey is a key element of the Parks Count study being conducted by the Fairfax County Park Authority. If you receive a survey in your mailbox, please take 10 to 15 minutes to complete and return it in the return envelope provided.

Parks Count, the Park Needs Assessment Study, considers park and recreation needs, trends, and preferences in Fairfax County. The Park Authority has partnered with ETC Institute, a leading national consultant, to administer the statistically valid survey, a linchpin of the Needs Assessment Study. Households selected to receive the survey represent a random sampling that will be used to project countywide park and recreation needs. The higher the number of responses from selected households, the more accurate the projections. The survey results will help inform priorities and decisions about future park and recreation service delivery and facility improvements.

Households receiving the survey are asked to return the survey within a week. Those selected may also respond by phone or online as directed in the survey. Individuals requiring language assistance can utilize the phone number provided for translation assistance. Whether you use parks all the time or only occasionally, the Park Authority seeks your opinions and needs your completed survey.

If you are not one of the 15,000 randomly selected households, you may still find out more about the study and share ideas with us on our Parks Count website, by email, or by phone.

For more information, please visit Parks Count online, contact Needs Assessment Project Manager Anna Bentley at 703-324-8726, or send a note to Parkmail@fairfaxcounty.gov

2015 Native Seedling Sale

This annual seedling sale makes low-cost native shrub and tree seedlings available to Northern Virginia residents. Seedling packages can be ordered up through Wednesday, April 22 and are available for pickup in early May. Trees and shrubs help cleanse water, prevent soil erosion, provide habitat, cool our climate and clean our air. Consider adding native trees and shrubs to your property. For additional information, go to www.fairfaxcounty.gov/nvswcd/seedlingsale.htm.

Join the Virginia Hills Citizens Association for the 2014-2015 year that began on September 1st.

2014-2015 Membership

**Mail to: VHCA, P.O. Box 10837,
Alexandria, VA 22310**

I'd (We'd) like to join / renew my (our) membership in the Virginia Hills Citizens Association. Enclosed are the annual membership dues of \$7.00 per household. I am also including a contribution in the amount of

\$ _____.

Name (s) _____

Address _____

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Phone _____

E-mail _____

Comments: _____

Checks for dues may be made payable to VHCA or the Virginia Hills Citizens Association.

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www.VirginiaHills.org

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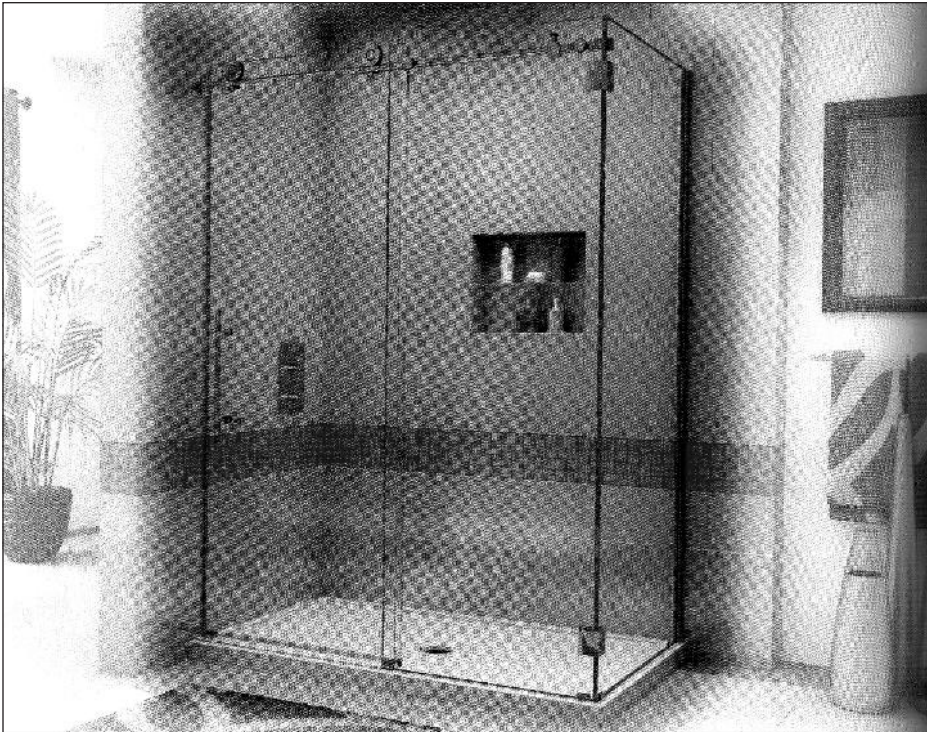
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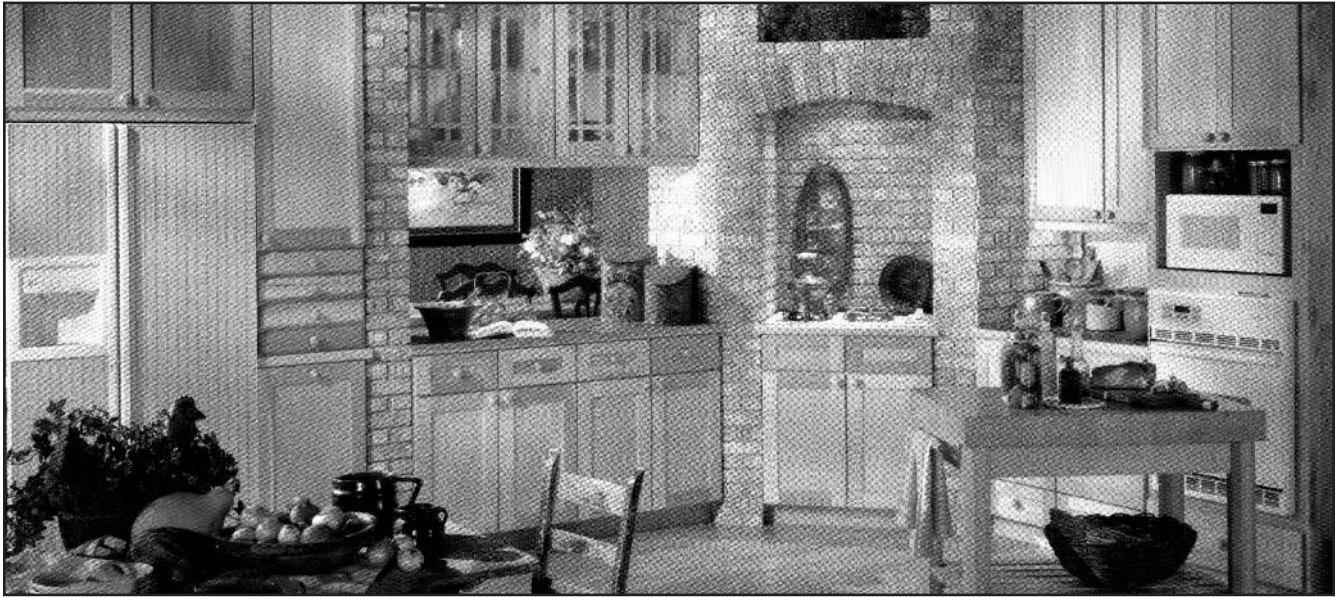
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Beware of IRS Phone Scam from the Internal Revenue Service

The Internal Revenue Service is warning consumers about a sophisticated phone scam targeting taxpayers, including recent immigrants, throughout the country.

Victims are told they owe money to the IRS and it must be paid promptly through a pre-loaded debit card or wire transfer. If the victim refuses to cooperate, they are then threatened with arrest, deportation or suspension of a business or driver's license. In many cases, the caller becomes hostile and insulting.

"This scam has hit taxpayers in nearly every state in the country. We want to educate taxpayers so they can help protect themselves. Rest assured, we do not and will not ask for credit card numbers over the phone, nor request a pre-paid debit card or wire transfer," says IRS Acting Commissioner Danny Werfel. "If someone unexpectedly calls claiming to be from the IRS and threatens police arrest, deportation or license revocation if you don't pay immediately, that is a sign that it really isn't the IRS calling." Werfel noted that **the first IRS contact with taxpayers on a tax issue is likely to occur via mail.**

Other characteristics of this scam include:

- Scammers use fake names and IRS badge numbers. They generally use common names and surnames to identify themselves.

- Scammers may be able to recite the last four digits of a victim's Social Security Number.
- Scammers spoof the IRS toll-free number on caller ID to make it appear that it's the IRS calling.
- Scammers sometimes send bogus IRS emails to some victims to support their bogus calls.
- Victims hear background noise of other calls being conducted to mimic a call site.
- After threatening victims with jail time or driver's license revocation, scammers hang up and others soon call back pretending to be from the local police or DMV, and the caller ID supports their claim.

If you get a phone call from someone claiming to be from the IRS, report the incident at 1.800.366.4484.

The IRS encourages taxpayers to be vigilant against phone and email scams that use the IRS as a lure. The IRS does not initiate contact with taxpayers by email to request personal or financial information. This includes any type of electronic communication, such as text messages and social media channels. Recipients should not open any attachments or click on any links contained in the message. Instead, forward the e-mail to phishing@irs.gov.

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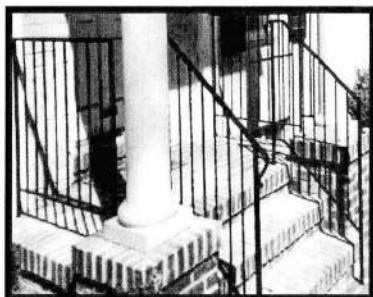
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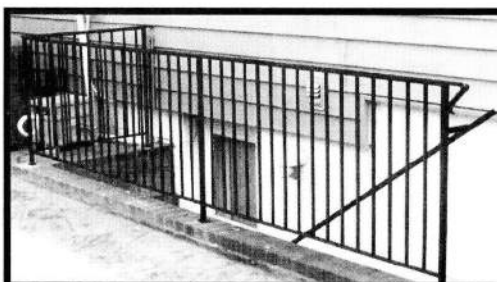
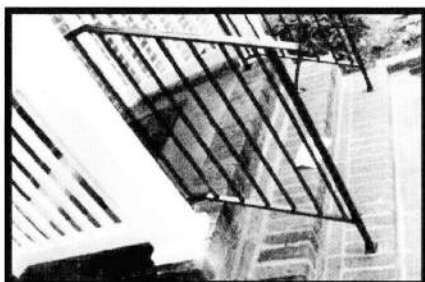
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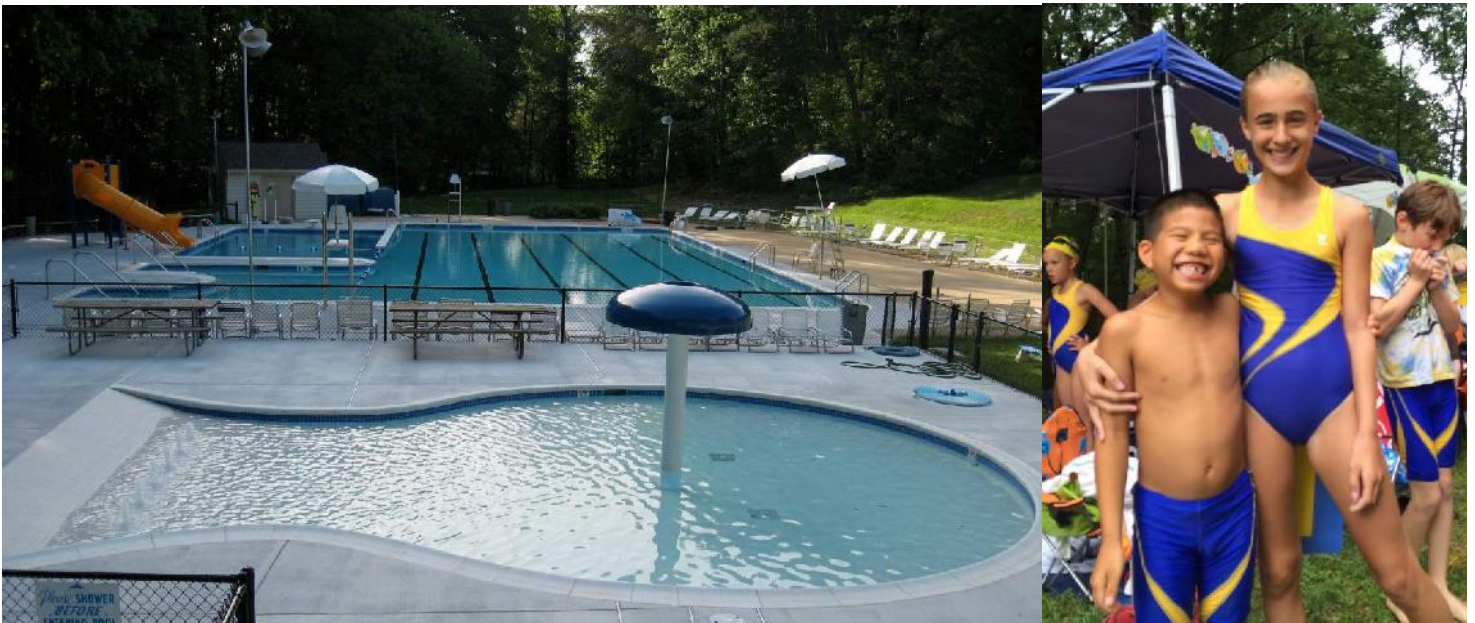
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The Rose Hill Players Present: ALICE @ WONDERLAND

The Rose Hill Players of Rose Hill Elementary School are putting on their annual play. This year's production is Alice @ Wonderland.

What would happen if a 21st-century Alice collided with Lewis Carroll's legendary Wonderland? This modern retelling of the classic children's story has all of the characters you know and love, including the Mad Hatter, the Cheshire Cat, and the Queen of Hearts. With cell phone in hand, a present-day Alice encounters the Wonderland so many of us treasure in a musical that appeals to both children and adults.

Join us for performances at Thomas A. Edison High School (5801 Franconia Rd., Alexandria) on Friday, May 15th at 7pm and Saturday, May 16th at 1pm and 7pm. Tickets will be available at the door (\$5 for adults, \$3 for children, \$1 for children at matinee). Concessions will be available.

Visit the Virginia Hills web site at www.VirginiaHills.org

Fall Cankerworm In Fairfax County

Fall cankerworm is a northern Virginia-native insect also known as the inchworm. They lay eggs in the fall and in the spring the young caterpillars hatch and feed, causing defoliation of deciduous trees. Fairfax County is about to embark upon a spraying campaign to kill them across 66 wooded acres, including Virginia Hills. The insecticide used is indiscriminate and kills an unknown number of other insects, including other butterfly and moth caterpillars. The treatment is controversial; county officials argue the insecticide is justified to prevent further defoliation while many environmentalists say the cankerworm is an important part of the local ecosystem, providing food for birds, bats, amphibians, and other animals. Eleven local and national non-governmental organizations oppose the spraying, including the Audobon Society and the American Horticultural Association.

Fairfax land owners who would like to opt out of the program can do so by calling 703-324-5304. Homeowners can look into creating an inviting habitat for wildlife who feed on fall cankerworm on their property as a means of alternative pest control. For more information on Fairfax County's eradication plan, please visit www.fairfaxcounty.gov.

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Richmond Highway Spring Clean on April 25

Come alone or bring a group and help give the highways around Fort Belvoir a good "spring clean."

Mount Vernon Lee Chamber of Commerce joins with Fort Belvoir Installation Command to pick up garbage that has accumulated over the winter months and give this part of our community a fresh look. Jeff Todd Way is a new addition to the roads that will be cleaned.

Volunteers will meet at the Candlewood Suites, 8847 Richmond Highway, Alexandria, VA 22309, on April 25 at 8:30 a.m. to receive garbage bags, safety vests, and work assignments. To volunteer please contact Jacqueline Leeker at Fort Belvoir, (703) 805-2034 or Jacqueline.n.leeker.civ@mail.mil or visit www.mtvernon-leechamber.org.

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Joshua 24:15

Volunteer to "Take Back the Forest"

The third annual Take Back the Forest promotion, sponsored by REI, Inc., through the Park Foundation, began April 1, 2015. Through May 30, anyone who volunteers to help restore habitat through the Invasive Management Area (IMA) program will receive a free Take Back the Forest t-shirt. Help remove invasive plants that threaten the native plants wildlife rely upon. There is an online calendar that lists dates and sites of IMA programs. Contact Erin Stocksclaeder (703-324-8681) to sign up for a volunteer slot. Go to www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/resource-management/ima/ for the calendar and additional information.

Alexandria Wegmans Hiring From Mount Vernon – Lee Chamber of Commerce

Wegmans continues to actively recruit, hire and train for their Alexandria location. The employment office is located at 5695 King Centre Drive, Suite 100, Alexandria VA 22315. Store manager Mike Dempsey says, "Our primary focus at this time is to recruit candidates with an interest in full-time, including supervisory, part time and

culinary positions. We are certainly interested in those with experience in the food business, but no experience is required. We always seek candidates who reflect our core values: high standards, caring, respect, empowerment and making a difference in the community." Candidates can apply online at www.wegmans.com/careers or call the office directly at 703-822-9600.

Fairfax County Farmers Markets Open in May From Fairfax County Park Authority

Spring is here and the 11 Fairfax County Park Authority (FCPA) Farmers Markets are gearing up for the 2015 season! All markets open the first week of May, providing residents with fresh food options until late fall. These markets are unique in that they are "producer-only" locally grown markets. All vendors come from within a 125-mile radius of Fairfax County and must grow or produce all products they sell at the market. Vendors from Virginia, Maryland, West Virginia and Southern Pennsylvania are working hard to bring the freshest produce, meats, cheese, ice cream, breads, honey, sweets, cut flowers, and plants available to Fairfax County residents.

Supporting your local farmers markets is not only delicious, but has a big impact on your health, the local economy and environment! Local produce is picked fresh, and therefore is more nutrient-rich than produce that has traveled an extended period of time. Varieties are chosen on taste and nutrient content, rather than durability. Buying from local farmers markets also helps to keep money circulating through the local economy. If each household in Virginia pledged to spend \$10 a week on locally grown agricultural products it would bring in \$1.65 billion into the Virginia economy each year! Aside from reducing your carbon footprint, buying directly from farmers also gives you the opportunity to choose to support farmers using sustainable growing practices. Sustainable farming practices help prevent soil fertility loss, while reducing pesticide and fertilizer run-off into the Chesapeake Bay watershed. Most importantly the farmers markets offer shoppers the opportunity to ask questions and connect with their local farmers.

FCPA Farmers Markets are also proud to announce that select markets are now accepting SNAP benefits (formerly food stamps) at McCutcheon/Mount Vernon, Reston, Lorton, and Herndon (NEW in 2015). The SNAP at market program is making huge strides to increase access to fresh foods for low income citizens throughout the county, while offering additional support to local farmers. As an extra incentive to buy additional produce, FCPA farmers markets have implemented a "double bucks program" which matches up to \$10 a day to be used on additional produce.

For more information, including locations, directions and a list of vendors at each market go to <http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/wp-farm-mkt.htm>.

Message from Supervisor McKay

Pull out your summer calendars and mark June 26 through July 5. Fairfax County is hosting the second largest international sporting event—the 2015 World Police and Fire Games. These biennial games were established in 1985. Montreal, Canada will host the 2017 games and Chengdu, China is the 2019 venue. You can find out more at <http://fairfax2015.com/>.

The Police and Fire games showcase the athletic talent of first responders from around the world. We're expecting 12,000 public safety athletes from 70 countries to compete in 61 sports and 1,600 sporting events. The games will take place in 53 locations throughout Fairfax County and the National Capital Region and I'm really excited that our own Springfield Town Center will be the venue for the Ultimate Firefighter Competition, a multi-day competition testing participants' capabilities in four areas: hose task, weight and strength, obstacle course, and high rise.

Not only can you watch these games—most of which are free—but you can even be part of this historic event. The

2015 World Police and Fire Games Committee is recruiting 4,000 volunteers to serve as games ambassadors, work special events, venues and competition, public relations and marketing, and more. Orientation and training will be provided and you must be 18 years of age by July 6 in order to apply. Check out <http://fairfax2015.com/> for information about volunteering including frequently asked questions, volunteer position descriptions, scheduling, and more. You can also complete an online volunteer application.

And by the way, the World Police and Fire Games are more than just games. With more than 30,000 games participants and visitors expected to come to Fairfax County, stay in our hotels, dine, and shop, there's some good economic news for the County. Hosting these games is a real win for our bottom line. The positive economic impact is estimated to be in the range of \$60-\$80 million in revenue while the cost is estimated at \$20 million. Many corporate sponsors such as INOVA Health Systems, SAIC, and Northrop Grumman will help to offset some of that cost.



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Active	Rambler	4005 Ronson Dr	3	2	0	\$399,000		Yes	0
Active	Rambler	3718 Logan Ct	3	2	0	\$439,900		No	2
Cnko	Rambler	6558 Virginia Hills Ave	3	2	0	\$310,000		No	0
Cnko	Rambler	4010 Ronson Dr	3	2	0	\$425,000		Yes	0
Cnko	Rambler	6307 Hillview Ave	3	2	0	\$334,950		Yes	0
Cnko	Bilevel	6141 Telegraph Rd	4	2	0	\$389,000		Yes	0
Cnko	Rambler	6411 Wilcox Ct	3	2	0	\$420,000		Yes	0
Cnko	Bilevel	6213 Sandlin Ct	4	2	0	\$439,900		No	0
Sold	Bilevel	6229 Virginia Hills Ave	4	2	0	\$399,950	\$389,900	Yes	0
Sold	Rambler	6409 Virginia Hills Ave	4	2	0	\$390,000	\$390,000	Yes	0
Sold	Rambler	3613 Heather Ct	3	1	0	\$329,900	\$330,000	No	0
Sold	Rambler	6119 Algona Ct	3	1	0	\$320,000	\$290,000	Yes	0
Sold	Rambler	6423 Dorset Dr	3	2	0	\$350,000	\$350,000	Yes	0
Sold	Rambler	6601 Berkshire Dr	3	1	1	\$329,900	\$325,000	Yes	0
Sold	Rambler	6403 Ronson Ct	3	2	0	\$459,900	\$430,000	Yes	0
Sold	Rambler	6520 Berkshire Dr	4	2	0	\$380,000	\$375,000	Yes	0

All information deemed reliable. Not guaranteed. Derived from Metropolitan Regional Information System for the period 2/1/15-3/31/15.

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