

# Great Falls Pride on Display

NEWS, PAGE 3

OPINION, PAGE 8 ♦ ENTERTAINMENT, PAGE 14 ♦ CLASSIFIEDS, PAGE 18 ♦ SPORTS, PAGE 16

PHOTO BY NIKKI CHESHIRE/THE CONNECTION

Unicyclist Lisa Polinari put on a juggling act while simultaneously leading the Bike Brigade during the Great Falls July 4<sup>th</sup> parade.

## NASA Comes to Colvin Run Elementary

NEWS, PAGE 6

## 'Let's Dance!'

NEWS, PAGE 12

## Home LifeStyle

PAGE 9

# Snap, Crackle and Pop at Langley High

Thousands view fireworks at high school.

BY REENA SINGH  
THE CONNECTION

The first crackle in the night sky always has everyone running to their seats to get the best view of the fireworks on Independence Day.

Thousands of people sprawled on the grass and perched in the stadium at Langley High School [LHS] came to watch the fireworks on Friday, July 4.

The 30-minute show began around 9:15 p.m., but the gates opened at 8, giving early visitors the chance to snack on chili dogs and popcorn before the grounds got crowded.

"Between 6,000 to 8,000 people attend every year," said McLean Community Center Director of Special Events Sam Roberts III in a previous interview. "This will be our last year at Langley High School because they are going under construction for five years."

The fireworks show will move to Cooper



PHOTO BY REENA SINGH/ THE CONNECTION

Thousands of people came to Langley High School on July 4 to watch the fireworks.

Middle School next year.

Since Great Falls did not have its own fireworks show that night, many of its residents showed up in the stands at the high school football field. Additionally, several of this year's local visitors had never come to LHS to view the fireworks, but relished an excuse to not celebrate in the nation's capital, which they feared would be overcrowded.

"We live in McLean for two years, and we usually go to the beach," said McLean resident Franck Journoud. "We didn't want to be with a million of [our] closest friends at the [National] Mall."

He said his family spent the holiday listening to Americana, going to a barbecue and spending time at a lake.

McLean residents Lisa and Brett Korade said they went to the National Mall last year to watch the fireworks and did not want to face the crowds again this year. They came to Langley High School early to claim the grassy space with a blanket and folding chairs.

"We're active duty military, and we move a lot, so we don't have a lot of fourth of July traditions," said Brett.

## 'Let's Dance!' Classical Ballet Theatre brings women together

BY EMMA HARRIS  
THE CONNECTION

Four mornings a week, at least a dozen ballet students can be found hard at work perfecting their pirouettes, strengthening their cores with arabesques and practicing their legwork on the bar at the Classical Ballet Theatre in Herndon. Here's the catch: they're adult, working women. Ballet isn't only for little girls in pink tutus.

The ballerinas make up a diverse group. They range in age from mid-40s to mid-60s. Some have decades of dance experience while others began dancing in their late 40s. One student is a minister, while another is a healthcare administrator. The single similarity between the members of the class is their love for and dedication to ballet, said Marisa DiLauro of Reston, adding that it brings them together.

"This is my creative outlet," said Natalie Hall of Fairfax. "I'm desperate to learn and work ... I feel like I'm flying when I dance," she said. Hall, like many of the other students, did not dance as a child, but instead began dancing in her early 30s, she said. "I just fell into it. It makes me incredibly happy."

"We all fell in love with ballet," said Robbin Smith of Great Falls, who danced as a young woman, then picked it back up in her mid-20s.

"Ballet is my passion," said Maureen Berk of Great Falls. Having danced when she was little, it was her young daughter who brought Berk back into the ballet world.

"Through deaths, tough times, anything, ballet helps," she said.

**THE CLASSES** are taught by Alisher Saburov, a graduate of the Bolshoi Ballet Academy in Moscow, former Principal Soloist of the Moscow Festival Ballet and Kremlin Palace Ballet Theatre and Artistic Director at the Classical Ballet Theatre of Northern Virginia. He has been teaching for 12 years, back and forth with dancing, he said.

Saburov's classes are intense, his students said. Beginning with a series of legwork exercises on the ballet bar, they are sweating five minutes in. "To the fourth, and twist, twist, twist, twist, twist," he explained before letting his dancers repeat his movements.

"We dance a different combination of moves every time, and we have to be focused," Smith said. "You can't make a grocery list while in class."

After about 45 minutes and a break to stretch, the ballerinas moved to the center of the room. "Let's dance!" Saburov said, coaching the ballerinas to fly across the floor time and time again.

**SABUROV** is the reason many of the students enjoy dancing so much, Berk said. "Alisher emanates joy when he teaches," she said. "He is the best ballet teacher in the world," Hall added. "He never gives a bad class, and we all absolutely adore him," she said.

SEE DANCING, PAGE 13

PHOTOS BY EMMA HARRIS/THE CONNECTION



Alisher Saburov, artistic director at the Classical Ballet Theatre, shows his class the movements for the next musical set.



Ballerinas Marisa DiLauro, Robbin Smith and Natalie Hall dance at the Classical Ballet Theatre in Herndon.

PHOTO BY EMMA HARRIS/THE CONNECTION

**Carmen Liebeler, Maureen Berk and Natalie Hall begin class at the ballet bar, working to perfect their arm and leg movements.**



# Dancing for Fun, Friendships

FROM PAGE 12

Attending up to four classes a week, the women don their leg warmers diligently. "You hate yourself if you're not consistent in coming to class," Smith said. With hectic lives to balance, some students' schedules revolve around ballet during the week, Berk said. "I get up at 5 a.m. to go to work, come to ballet class, then go back to work," Hall said. "It's that important to me."

And with the work comes the play — through their love for ballet, the women have become a great group of friends, Berk said, mentioning how they plan monthly lunches and occasional trips to Wolf Trap to see ballet performances.

"We're best friends, really social and really fun," Hall said, adding that the group is incredibly supportive and accepting. "It's about finding something you love with people you love, and this is it," Berk said.

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