Be Part of Children’s Connection

Call for student artwork and writing; deadline Dec. 6.

D uring the last week of each year, The Connection devotes its entire issue to the creativity of its students and children. The results are always remarkable, and the editions have won many awards. It is a keepsake edition for many families, and an edition read and praised by readers with and without children.

The annual Children’s Connection is a tradition of well over a decade, and we begin getting inquiries from teachers and parents about submitting artwork and writing almost as soon as each school year begins.

We publish artwork, poetry, essays, creative writing, opinion pieces, short stories, photography, photos of sculpture or gardens or other creative efforts.

We ask that all submissions be digital so they can be sent through email or delivered on CD or flash drive. Writing should be submitted in rich text format (.rtf). Artwork should be photographed or scanned and provided in jpeg format.

Identify each piece of writing or art, including the student’s full name, age, grade and town of residence, plus the name of the school, name of teacher and town of school location. Please provide the submissions by Friday, Dec. 6.

Some suggestions:
❖ Drawings or paintings or photographs of family, friends, pets or some favorite activity. These should be photographed or scanned and submitted in jpeg format.
❖ Short answers (50 to 100 words) to some of the following questions: If you could give your parents any gift that didn’t cost money, what would that gift be? What are you most looking forward to in the upcoming year? What is one thing that you would change about school? What do you want to be when you grow up? What is your favorite animal? What is your favorite toy? What makes a good parent? What makes a good friend? What is one of the best or worst things that ever happened to you? What is the best gift you’ve ever given? Ever received?
❖ Opinion (50 to 100 words) about traffic, sports, restaurants, video games, toys, trends, etc.
❖ Poetry or other creative writing.
❖ Opinion pieces about family, friends, movies, traffic, sports, food, video games, toys, trends, etc.
❖ News stories from school newspapers.

We welcome contributions from families, public and private schools, individuals and homeschoolers.

Email submissions for the Vienna/Oakton, McLean, Great Falls, Reston and Oak Hill/Herndon Children’s Connections to ChildrenSouth@connectionnewspapers.com.

Email submissions for the Potomac Almanac to editor Steven Mauren at smauren@connectionnewspapers.com.

Email submissions for the Arlington Children’s Connection to editor Steven Mauren at smauren@connectionnewspapers.com.

Email submissions for the Children’s Centre View to editor Steven Mauren at smauren@connectionnewspapers.com.

Email submissions for the Children’s Gazette in the Alexandria Gazette Packet or Mount Vernon Gazette to editor Steven Mauren at smauren@connectionnewspapers.com.

To send CDs or flash drives containing artwork and typed, electronic submissions, mark them clearly by school and hometown and mail the CD to Children’s Connection, 1606 King Street, Alexandria, VA 22314.

Please send all submissions by Dec. 6. The Children’s Connection will publish the week of Dec. 26, 2013.

Helping Most Vulnerable Neighbors

Individuals with mental illness represent a disproportionately high percentage of the homeless population.

By Russell Snyder

O nce in a while you read or hear about mental health illness, probably in this very paper. However, more often than not, mental illness is discussed only when a tragedy occurs that brings it to the forefront of the national dialogue. We should strive, as a community, to change that.

More than 260,000 adults in Virginia live with serious mental illness. In the Fairfax-Falls Church community approximately 1,350 people are homeless; more than half of those individuals suffer from serious mental illness.

Individuals with mental illness represent a disproportionately high percentage of the homeless population. With statistics like those above, this is an issue that needs our attention all year round.

For readers who do not know, Volunteers of America operates Bailey’s Crossroads Community Shelter, a 50-bed emergency homeless shelter in Fairfax County for men and women. In our shelter, clients receive case management based on individualized service plans. They attend various life skills groups to empower them to make positive changes. Bailey’s also has an outreach partnership with the Fairfax-Falls Church Community Services Board. A Community Case Manager works directly with our clients who have been identified by staff as having a mental health diagnosis. These individuals receive services and support to build their self-sufficiency, the end goal for all of our clients in every single program we run.

It takes many resources to help homeless individuals with a mental health diagnosis find their way to recovery, but it is possible to accomplish this goal with programs like Bailey’s and collaborations among community partners. If you would like a behind-the-scenes look at the work Volunteers of America Chesapeake is doing to assist those that are homeless and challenged with mental illness, call Tonya Fulwood, Vice-President of Homeless Services, at 240-764-2661. Be an advocate and help us create awareness so we can continue to help our neighbors travel the road to self-sufficiency.

Thank you to the Fairfax community and our partners throughout Northern Virginia for your support as we continue to serve our most vulnerable neighbors in the fight to prevent and end homelessness in our communities.

The writer is President/CEO of Volunteers of America Chesapeake, a faith-based health and human services nonprofit assisting more than 8,000 people each year at 33 programs, serving the homeless and mentally ill. Bailey’s Crossroads Community Shelter has been the community’s primary emergency homeless shelter since 1994.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

A Deceptive Look at Background Checks

To the Editor:

The technology in my DVR inulates me from most advertise- ments. That insulation is especially appreciated during what seems to be the never-ending political sea- son during which ad after ad simply attacks one candidate or another. Sometimes my finger is not fast enough to save me, and that is how I viewed what may be the most deceptive and hypocritical advertisement that I ever recall seeing. Now that I recognize the graphics, I see it often as I speed