



Courier

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Police Department Lends Helping Hands to Officer in Iraq

Several members of the Police Department and their families created their own version of "Extreme Home Makeover" on Nov. 10 when they spent the day helping the family of Detective **Jim Sparks**, Criminal Investigation Unit. Sparks, an 18-year veteran of the Police Department, is spending this holiday season in Iraq on his third tour with the National Guard in the Middle East.

According to his wife, Carla, the group of about 50 people, some of whom had never met her husband, spent nearly eight hours fixing the backyard fence, landscaping, painting a bathroom, organizing closets and making several minor repairs around their house in Warrenton. Neighbors and a Cub Scout troop also helped with the projects.

"We don't expect anything and these people from the Police Department, including officers and civilians, gave up their whole day to help us," she said. "You can't imagine what kind of feeling the kids and I received from that wonderful act of kindness."

The event was planned by Pfc. **Darrin Decoster** and his family who live in the same neighborhood as the Sparks family. Decoster and Police Department colleagues arranged for donations of food,



Several of the Police Department employees and their families, as well as neighbors who spent Saturday, Nov. 10, at the Sparks home working on several projects. Detective Jim Sparks left in June to serve his third tour in the Middle East as a staff sergeant in the National Guard. This is his second tour in Iraq; he has also served a tour in Afghanistan.

Photo provided by Carla Sparks.

as well as materials that were donated by Rankins Hardware in Warrenton.

In an e-mail he sent to the department, Sparks wrote, "It truly is a comfort to know that my police family is there to help and support my family at home. Words alone cannot express the heartfelt gratitude I feel. Knowing that I can count on you all to support my family is a enormous relief. Your support makes it possible for me to concentrate on the 20 men that I must lead and take care of."

The Sparks have three children, Valerie, James and Eve. Although Sparks is expected to return to the U.S. in July, they are "keeping their fingers crossed," according to his wife, that he might be home sooner for Valerie's graduation from high school.

In the meantime, his Police Department colleagues continue to support the family. The Mason District Station recently dropped off a large care package. ■

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Courier is available online at <http://infoweb/courier>

Government Center Joins County Ornament Collection

A tradition that began in 1994 has grown into a collection of 15 holiday ornaments representing county buildings, historical sites and the county seal.

The collection includes sites across the county, including this year's ornament featuring the Government Center. The ornaments are made of solid pewter, except the gold plate 2004 seal ornament. County government employees receive a 10 percent discount on the prices listed at right. (Note: the 2002 Laurel Grove ornament is out of stock.)

The new Government Center ornament and other ornaments are for sale in the Maps and Publications Center, located in Suite 156 in the Government Center. The center is open Monday through Friday from 8:15 a.m. – 4:15 p.m. ■

Year	Features	Cost
1994	Court House	(See 2002)
1995	Colvin Run Mill	\$7.50
1996	Historic Sully	\$8
1997	Green Spring Manor House	\$8.50
1998	Hunter House	\$7.50
1999	Wakefield Chapel	\$7.50
2000	Historic Huntley	\$7.50
2001	Woodlawn	\$8.20
2002	Court House	\$8.25 (reprint)
2002	Laurel Grove	\$8.25
2003	Historic Ash Grove	\$8.25
2004	Fairfax County Virginia Seal (gold plate)	\$13.50
2005	County Seal	\$10
2006	Frying Pan Farm Park	\$10.50
2007	Government Center	\$10.50



Take the Government Center home for the holidays. The front of the ornament features "Seasons Greetings" and the year is engraved on the back.

2008 Holiday Schedule

The Board of Supervisors approved the following 12.5 holidays to be observed by the county government during 2008:

- ◆ New Year's Day – Tuesday, Jan. 1
- ◆ Martin Luther King Jr. Day – Monday, Jan. 21
- ◆ George Washington's Day – Monday, Feb. 18
- ◆ Memorial Day – Monday, May 26
- ◆ Independence Day – Friday, July 4
- ◆ Labor Day – Monday, Sept. 1
- ◆ Columbus Day – Monday, Oct. 13
- ◆ Veterans Day – Tuesday, Nov. 11
- ◆ Thanksgiving – Thursday, Nov. 27
- ◆ Day after Thanksgiving – Friday, Nov. 28
- ◆ Christmas Eve (half day) – Wednesday, Dec. 24
- ◆ Christmas Day – Thursday, Dec. 25
- ◆ Day after Christmas – Friday, Dec. 26

▶ To access the list online, including federal, state and Fairfax County Public Schools holidays, visit <http://infoweb/hr/currentholiday.htm>. ■

20th Annual Toy Drive Santa's Ride for Children Is Dec. 12

The 20th Annual Santa's Ride for Children is fast approaching. The toy drive is conducted by the Police Department's Motor Squad with the cooperation of the Vienna Police Department, Fairfax County Sheriff's Office, Fairfax City Police, Falls Church Police, Herndon Police and Virginia State Police.

Bring unwrapped, new toys, games, books, stuffed animals and gifts to any county police station or the Print Shop

in the Government Center, Suite 143, no later than 9 a.m. Wednesday, Dec. 12. Donations to Santa's Ride will be brought to Fairfax Hospital and to children in the community who might not otherwise have a cheerful holiday season.

Come out to support Santa and his elves in front of the Government Center on Wednesday, Dec. 12, at 11 a.m. For more information, contact **Anita Vines**, 703-324-2838, TTY 711. ■



Board of Supervisors Chairman Gerald E. Connolly with several of Santa's "elves" at last year's event.

People Like Us...

Meet Tina Cunningham, Library

Tina Cunningham is the branch manager of the City of Fairfax Regional Library, which closed its old location Nov. 25 and will reopen Jan. 26 at its new location at Old Lee Highway and North Street.

Cunningham has worked as a librarian for the Fairfax County Public Library since 1989. She began as circulation librarian then moved to management positions at Centreville Regional Library, Herndon Fortnightly Library, Tysons-Pimmit Regional Library, and has been in her current position since 2001.

Favorite part of my job...

... Helping people get answers to their questions and find great books to read!

Favorite spot in Fairfax County...

... Driving along the Fairfax County Parkway in fall when the leaves are at their peak color or in the spring when the dogwoods are in bloom. It's a treat to drive to work each day.

Favorite food...

... I love good food of all kinds, especially anything made with chocolate.

Work colleagues would be surprised to learn...

... How soft-hearted I really am.

If I could be a superhero or cartoon character, I would be...

... Wonder Woman; you need super powers to get everything done!



Tina Cunningham
Photo by Zayna Fayyad, Office of Public Affairs

When I was a child, I thought I would grow up to be...

... An English teacher and a great novelist.

Who has had the biggest influence in your career with the county?

... I was fortunate to have great supervisors and mentors, particularly **Elizabeth Waller** and **Reed Coats**. The leadership training I had during my 29

years in the Army Reserve has also helped me to be a better library manager and leader.

Words of wisdom for those contemplating a career working for the library...

... A love of books and information helps, but a love of helping people is essential for a library career. I enjoy management because I can influence the way a building is operated, find my staff members' strengths and encourage them to grow, and enable all facets of the organization to work together to accomplish our mission.

▶ People Like Us is a recurring feature in Courier about the people who work for Fairfax County. Send your nomination for a future People Like Us profile with contact information to courier@fairfaxcounty.gov. ■

Is Your PRISM Address Correct?

Employees are reminded to verify that their PRISM address is correct to ensure timely receipt of their tax year 2007 Wage and Tax Statement (Form W-2).

Employees can review their current PRISM address using Online TIME transaction 008 or update their personal information using Online TIME transaction 005.

Department payroll contacts also can update an employee's address information on behalf of an employee who does not have access to Online TIME.

▶ If you need PRISM online time assistance, please contact the PRISM Hot Line at 703-324-3400, TTY 711. ■

When the SACC “Kids” Become SACC Employees...

By Dan Dildine, Department of Family Services, School Age Child Care (SACC) Program

Pat Diehl started work as a teacher in the Fairfax County School Age Child Care (SACC) program in 1980 – the same year **Rick Hershey** entered the SACC program as a child.

Now, almost 28 years later, Diehl is about to retire as SACC director, and Hershey, an alumnae of the SACC program, is entering his 14th year as an employee.

“Rick isn’t our only SACC child to SACC employee story,” said Diehl. “It’s a measure of how long we’ve been around and the profound effect SACC has on children in the program.”

“I loved SACC when I was a kid and I love working for SACC now,” explained Hershey.

The former SACC teacher, now SACC registrar, cites his fond childhood memories of the program as a “big factor” in deciding to work for SACC.

SACC offers before- and after-school child care for children grades K-6 at centers in most Fairfax County elementary schools. Child care for children with

special needs is available at all sites and at two centers that serve children and youth, ages 5-21, with multiple types of disabilities.

While SACC has grown in size over the years, its core mission remains the same: Providing safe, quality care and innovative programming for children.

Community service activities by children in SACC have included creating activity books for sick children at Inova hospitals; sewing fleece hats, mittens and scarves for donation to homeless shelters; collecting school supplies and clothing for an “adopted” elementary school in an impoverished area of the Mississippi Delta; and repairing bicycles for donation to local charities.

This year’s curriculum focus, “Eye on the News,” has children exploring all aspects of different types of media. SACC rooms have been transformed into news hubs where children are actively researching and reporting the news. Children are using computers to create their own center newsletters, newspapers and magazines.

The program’s engaging curriculum, staff development opportunities for teachers, and many partnerships with the

SACC Facts

▶ SACC began in 1979 with 25 centers, 53 teachers and 715 children. Since then, SACC has grown substantially, currently serving 10,000+ children in 134 centers and employing 600 teachers.

▶ The program now offers an in-depth experiential curriculum aligned with the Fairfax County Public Schools Program of Studies. It also emphasizes community involvement.

▶ SACC received the National Association of Counties’ Acts of Caring Award in 2005. The award recognizes the top county volunteer programs in the country.

community have established SACC as a national standard for quality school age child care.

▶ For more information on the SACC program, visit www.fairfaxcounty.gov/ofc/sacc.htm. ■

Julianne Remer, SACC Center supervisor, teaches children at Dogwood Elementary School SACC Center in Reston how to play the guitar. There may be a future SACC employee in the group of students. Photo by Art Cole, SACC



Millennium Forum – “Appreciative Intelligence”

Patricia Bangs, Library,
Millennium Forum Planning Committee

A senior interpreter at Riverbend Park expands the meaning of “nature program” and revenue from classes quadruples in four years. A Fairfax County risk management team tweaks its role by setting up proactive Significant Incidence Outreach Centers to assist residents after flooding and other disasters. A Prince William County fire marshal shortens a 12-week backlog of permit approvals for fire protection systems by convening customer focus groups and organizing code compliance seminars.

These are all examples of how “appreciative intelligence” can foster innovation in local government, according to Tojo Thatchenkery, a professor of organizational development and knowledge management at George Mason University. He was the speaker for the Nov. 28 Millennium Forum. Thatchenkery is the author of “Appreciative Intelligence: Seeing the Mighty Oak in the Acorn.”

As researchers have expanded the concept of intelligence beyond I.Q. to aspects such as emotional intelligence, Thatchenkery believes he has identified yet another variation. In his study of successful executives, he found certain traits they shared in common, which he calls “appreciative intelligence.”

According to Thatchenkery, appreciative intelligence involves three concepts.

The first he calls “reframing” or changing the way we see a situation. In a simple exercise, he showed the audience a slide of a typewriter. While the audience saw an antiquated technology, his daughter, who had never seen one, said “Cool! A keyboard with a printer.” More famous examples of reframing include the founders of Amazon.com, who



Tojo Thatchenkery, the Nov. 28 Millennium Forum speaker and a professor at George Mason University.

reframed the concept of buying books or the inventor of the Segway, who saw a different way for people to get around urban areas.

The second component of appreciative intelligence is appreciating the positive. This is the ability to bring to the surface what is good in a situation.

The final component is seeing how the future unfolds in the present. When the producers of Coca-Cola failed in marketing it as a headache medicine, they turned it into a soft drink.

To make appreciative intelligence work, “you must change your stories, change your reflections, change your questions and seek diverse ideas,” Thatchenkery said.

Above all, he adds, “just do it” – borrowing the famous tag line from Nike.

▶ To borrow a videotape or DVD of Thatchenkery’s presentation, call ELLVIS at 703-324-8318, TTY 703-324-8365, or e-mail John.Kiefman@fairfaxcounty.gov.

▶ Thatchenkery’s Powerpoint slides of the presentation are at <http://infoweb/mfs>. ■

Upcoming Millennium Forums

▶ **Jan. 30** – Frank Benest, city manager of Palo Alto, Calif., will discuss “Transforming Government From the Inside Out: Three Challenges of 21st Century Leadership.”

▶ **March 26** – Russell L. Fuhrman, executive project manager of the ambitious 7.5-mile Woodrow Wilson Bridge replacement, will discuss “Lessons From the Bridge: Mega Project Management in an Urban Environment.”

▶ **May 28** – Neal Petersen, author and business executive born with disadvantages who became the first black man to race a yacht solo around the world, will discuss “No Barriers, Only Solutions.”

Millennium Forums take place 10:30 a.m. to noon in the Government Center Auditorium. For more information, visit <http://infoweb/mfs>.

Flex Spending Account – Important Debit Card Information

Many Flex Spending Account (FSA) participants have asked for guidance on how to use the EZ REIMBURSE debit card. The EZ REIMBURSE card is a prepaid card that can be used at any drugstore, medical, dental or vision provider displaying the MasterCard logo. However, it is important to note that additional paperwork may be necessary to substantiate the claim.

There will be no additional paperwork, if the card is used to purchase eligible prescription drugs and over-the-counter (OTC) items at any grocery or discount retailer that has implemented the Inventory Information Approval System (IIAS). The IIAS is designed to identify eligible FSA expenses at the time of purchase. Using the card at IIAS merchants will result in a completely paperless process. No paperwork will be required by FBMC because the system will automatically identify all eligible expenses. To date, Wal-Mart, Sam's Club and Walgreens have implemented the IIAS. More retailers are expected to implement the system in early 2008.

What if I use my card at a pharmacy that has not implemented the IIAS?

Participants can use the EZ REIMBURSE card to purchase prescription drugs and OTC items at pharmacies such as CVS and Rite-Aid. However, since these pharmacies do not yet have the IIAS in place, you will need to substantiate the claim by faxing or mailing a copy of the itemized receipt along with a reimbursement claim form. Make sure that the receipt includes the name of the medication.

Beginning in January, the EZ REIMBURSE card cannot be used at grocery or discount retail stores that have not implemented the IIAS. As of late November, local grocery stores, such

as Giant and Safeway do not yet have the system in place. If you purchase prescriptions or OTC items at a retailer that has not implemented the IIAS, you will have to use another form of payment (cash, check or credit card) and then fax or mail the reimbursement claim to Fringe Benefits Management Company (FBMC).

▶ Check the drugstore listing found at www.myFBMC.com for a list of grocery stores and other discount retailers accepting the EZ REIMBURSE card in 2008. Look for updates to the list in future issues of Courier.

When will I have to substantiate claims?

The following services will almost always require substantiation:

- ▶ Dental and orthodontia services.
- ▶ Prescription or medical service co-payments not equal to Fairfax County's standard co-payments. For example, if your medication costs \$19.53 and you do not use a pharmacy that has implemented the IIAS, you will need to substantiate the claim.
 - ▶ Eyeglasses, contact lenses.
 - ▶ OTC medications not purchased at a pharmacy/retailer on the IIAS.
 - ▶ Co-payments charged by non-Fairfax County health plans. For example, if you are enrolled for health coverage under your spouse's plan but use the flex spending account under Fairfax County's plan, all medical expenses/co-payments will require substantiation. The same is true if you and your spouse both work for Fairfax County but one spouse carries the health coverage and the other enrolls for FSA.

What if I don't substantiate these expenses?

Expenses requiring documentation will appear in blue on your monthly statement from FBMC and will be under the heading

HR Central

HR Central has benefit information.

- ▶ Call 703-324-4900
TTY 703-222-7314
- ▶ Visit <http://infoweb/hr/benefits>

"Outstanding Card Transactions Requiring Documentation." These same outstanding transactions appear in red on the FBMC Web site (www.myFBMC.com).

If you fail to send in the requested documentation after two notifications on your monthly statement from FBMC, the following actions will be taken in this order:

1. Your card will be suspended until documentation is provided and payment on an eligible future paper claim will be withheld to offset the non-documented card transaction.
2. If FBMC is unable to offset the card transaction against future paper claims, an after-tax salary deduction will be taken for the amount of any outstanding EZ REIMBURSE card transactions. As a last resort, the amount of any non-documented card transactions will be reported as income on your W-2 at the end of the tax year.
 - ▶ Participants who have questions about the debit card, outstanding card transactions or their flexible spending account balances should contact Fringe Benefits Management Company at 800-342-8017, TTY 711, or www.myfbmc.com. ■

Briefs

Department of Finance Introduces New Support Hot Line – 324-4DOF



The Department of Finance has launched a new financial support hot line. Operated by the Financial Assistance and Compliance Team (FACT), the hot line is available to employees who need answers to questions related to financial policies and procedures, as well as the new Electronic Accounts Payable System (EAPS). Answers to questions on travel, reconciliation, petty cash and more can be answered by calling 703-324-4DOF (4363), TTY 711, 8 a.m. – 4:30 p.m., Monday – Friday.

Support is also available via e-mail at dofact@fairfaxcounty.gov.

No Pet Left Behind this Holiday Season

The Animal Shelter is opening its doors on the next two Sundays as part of the annual “Home for the Holidays” campaign. The shelter will be open during special adoption hours on Dec. 9 and 16, noon – 4 p.m. This is in addition to regular operating hours.

The shelter has cats, dogs, small mammals and reptiles for adoption. To view animals available for adoption, visit www.fairfaxcounty.gov/police/animalservices. The shelter is at 4500 West Ox Road, Fairfax. Regular adoption hours are Tuesday – Friday, 10 a.m. – 5 p.m. and Saturday 10 a.m. – 4 p.m. Call 703-830-1100, TTY 711.

Online Holiday Information

A Web page has been created by the Office of Public Affairs to centralize the county’s holiday-related events, programs and tips. Visit www.fairfaxcounty.gov/opa/holidays.htm.

Holiday Food Drive – Now Is the Time to Donate!

Celebrate the holiday season by participating in the 15th annual collection of non-perishable food and personal hygiene items, coordinated by the Department of Human Resources (DHR).

All donations benefit FACETS, a nonprofit organization that responds to the diverse and multiple needs of homeless and low-income people living in Fairfax County. Collection box locations can be found in the Government Center in the cafeteria and HR Central, Suite 270.

If these collection sites are not convenient, agencies can set up a collection site and deliver all donated food to HR Central, Suite 270 before Thursday, Dec. 13. DHR staff is unable to pick up donations from other locations.

Outstanding Performance Awards on Monday, Dec. 10

Employees are invited to attend the Outstanding Performance Awards (OPAs) on Monday, Dec. 10, at 11 a.m. in the Government Center Forum, 12000 Government Center Parkway, Fairfax. More than 50 employees will be receiving OPAs, three employee groups will receive team awards and a manager will be recognized with a Managerial Excellence Award. Stop by and cheer for your outstanding colleagues.

Fairfax County Inauguration Ceremony Is Dec. 12

Chairman **Gerald E. Connolly** and the Board of Supervisors request the honor of your presence at the Inauguration of Fairfax County’s Eleventh Urban County Board of Supervisors, Fairfax County’s Constitutional Officers and the Northern Virginia Soil and Water Conservation District Directors on Wednesday, Dec. 12, at 6:30 p.m. in the Government Center Forum, 12000 Government Center Parkway, Fairfax. For more information, contact the Office of Public Affairs at 703-324-3187, TTY 711.

Last Courier for 2007

This is the last issue of Courier for 2007. Look for the next issue on Jan. 4, which will have coverage of the Board of Supervisors inauguration and the Outstanding Performance Awards.

Many, many thanks to everyone who shared their stories, successes and photos this year – keep them coming! The more I learn from you, the prouder I am to be a Fairfax County employee and resident.

Also special thanks to my colleagues in the Office of Public Affairs for their proofing, guidance and story ideas; to our intern Zayna Fayyad, whose enthusiasm and talents have saved the day on many occasions; and to the Print Shop staff for their outstanding work and professionalism.

Don’t forget to send in your “Favorite Spot” entry (see page 8) and best wishes for a happy and healthy 2008.

– Lisa Connors, Courier editor

Security & Safety Matters

Electricity is essential for all offices and work locations to run critical equipment, such as computers, lights and other equipment. Many employees work in offices or cubicle-style workstations, which are designed with a limited capacity for electrical appliances. Most offices and cubicles are not designed to accommodate items, such as toaster ovens, refrigerators and space heaters.

Employees need to consider electrical safety when deciding which appliances to plug in. Electrical equipment can cause serious shock and burn injuries if improperly used or maintained.

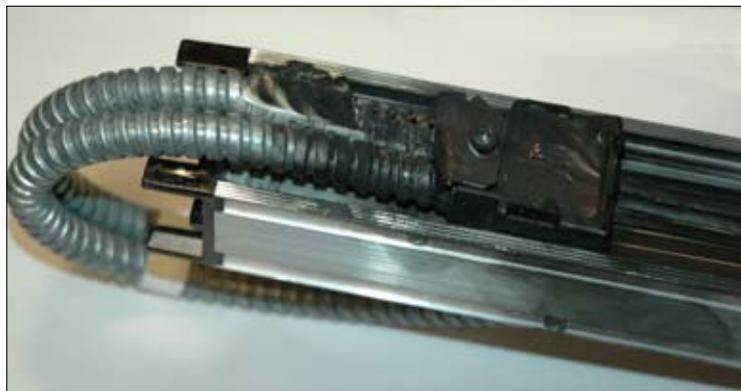
Here are some general rules for offices/cubicle workstations:

Approved appliances: computers, desktop printers, lights, clocks, small fans and similar small appliances.

Unapproved appliances: refrigerators, coffee pots, toasters, microwaves, aquariums, space heaters and similar appliances. These types of appliances should be centrally located in designated kitchen areas.

Any devices that pose a safety hazard will be removed by the Facilities Management Department.

Here are some tips to consider when choosing appliances to bring to work:



A melted electrical outlet from overloaded systems furniture.

▶ **Appliances:** Make sure all electrical items are certified by a nationally recognized independent testing lab.

▶ **Lamps:** Place lamps on level surfaces away from any material that could burn, and use bulbs that match the lamp's recommended wattage.

▶ **Outlets:** Always check outlets for damage and discontinue if the outlet feels hot to the touch. Make sure to fully insert the plug into the outlet and never use loose-fitting plugs.

▶ **Cords:** Periodically check all electrical cords for signs of damage. Remember extension cords should only be used on a temporary basis as they are not intended for permanent use.

▶ Contact **Robert Johnson**, safety analyst, Department of Finance, Risk Management Division, at 703-324-

3043, TTY 711, or robert.johnson@fairfaxcounty.gov, with questions regarding safety in the workplace. ■

Favorite Spot Contest Deadline Is Dec. 17

Send a brief paragraph about your favorite spot in Fairfax County, including where it is and why it is your favorite spot. Your favorite spot can be anywhere within the county that makes it a favorite place to live, work and play.

If you have a digital camera, you can also send a photo of you in your favorite spot with your paragraph.

The contest is open to all Fairfax County government employees.

Send your entry to courier@fairfaxcounty.gov by Dec. 17. Please include your name, agency and contact information.

▶ For more information, including prizes, look for the cover article in the Nov. 23 Courier online at <http://infoweb/courier>.

▶ For questions about the contest, call Courier Editor **Lisa Connors** at 703-324-3197, TTY 711. ■

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