

Choosing To Serve

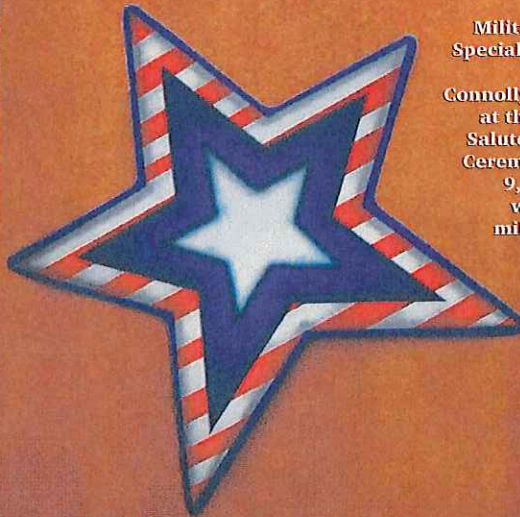
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No Family Strife Here

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Sharing a Cup of Coffee

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Military and Veteran Affairs Specialist 2nd Lt. Joe Weeren, with U.S. Rep. Gerry Connolly's (D-11) office, spoke at the first Our Community Salutes Enlistee Recognition Ceremony on Thursday, June 9, for Robinson students who are enlisting in the military after graduation.



PHOTO BY VICTORIA ROSS/THE CONNECTION SPORTS, PAGE 16 ♦ CALENDAR, PAGE 10 ♦ CLASSIFIED, PAGE 20

These Grads Choose To Serve

Burke mother organizes first recognition ceremony for Robinson Secondary enlistees.

BY VICTORIA ROSS
THE CONNECTION

On Valentine's Day, many moms receive candy hearts or chocolates. But Christine Zinser, a Burke mother of five and local Realtor, got a stunning declaration from her 17-year-old son Philipp.

"My son was asking me to go to the local recruiting station to sign papers that would allow him to enlist in the U.S. Marine Corps right after high school graduation," Zinser said.

Her three older children had all gone to prestigious colleges.

"We are not a 'military family,' so I was expecting Philipp to tell me the colleges he was interested in. Instead, he's asking my permission to join the military. I was really taken aback at first," Zinser said.

Her fear eventually gave way to a sense of pride that her youngest son was willing to serve and protect his country. "He will most likely be in combat before many other students are out of their sophomore year in college. He is volunteering to make a tremendous commitment, and our family is very proud of him," Zinser said.

She assumed that the students who had chosen to enlist would be included in the Senior Awards Ceremony at Robinson Sec-

ondary School. She quickly found out that was not the case.

"I didn't think that was right, especially since the school's namesake is an enlisted man himself," she said.

Robinson Secondary School was named in honor of Sgt. James W. Robinson Jr., the first Virginia resident to receive the Medal of Honor for "gallantry and heroism in the Vietnam conflict." He died in April 1966, after putting himself in the line of fire to save several other soldiers.

Zinser immediately began searching for a way to recognize and honor the choice some students were making to enlist. She first contacted Fairfax County Supervisor John Cook (R-Braddock), who offered space to hold the ceremony.

She found a website called "Our Community Salutes," a non-profit organization created in 2009 to recognize high school seniors and their parents who plan to enlist in the military immediately after graduation.

"I couldn't believe it. I immediately called the organization and shared my story. My goal was to form a Northern Virginia chapter to ensure the 2012 enlistees in Fairfax County and their families would get the recognition my son and his classmates would not get. I was so happy, I was crying," she said.

Encouraged to plan a ceremony for Robinson enlistees, she and Philipp attended an OCS ceremony in New Jersey. "We got an idea of how they were held. We realized we needed a color guard, chaplain, military speaker, emcee, copies of the Congressional Record

"I didn't think that was right, especially since the school's namesake is an enlisted man himself."

— Christine Zinser

and ceremonial flags that were flown over the Capitol, among other things."

Once she shared her idea to host a ceremony for the 2011 Robinson enlistees, everything started to click into place. U.S. Rep. Gerry Connolly's (D-11) office agreed to help and send representatives. Capt. Julian C. Kilcullen, the executive recruiting officer for the U.S. Marine Corps, stepped up to be the keynote military speaker at the ceremony.

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PHOTO BY VICTORIA ROSS/THE CONNECTION

Christine Zinser hugs her son, Philipp, who is enlisting in the U.S. Marines.

Dems' House Not Divided

BY VICTORIA ROSS
THE CONNECTION

If the sound and fury swirling around the primary for the Fairfax County Braddock District Board of Supervisors seat signifies anything, local Democratic Party leaders are not acknowledging it.

The latest chess moves in the primary, which determines who gets the chance to unseat Supervisor John Cook (R-Braddock) in the general election, has ignited a blaze of blog hysteria, with connect-the-dot conspiracy theories, and questions about whether newcomer Chris Wade is a Republican wolf in Democrat's clothing.

In the past 10 days, Marc Greidinger, a civil rights attorney who called himself "the real Democrat" in the race dropped out. A day later, Janet Oleszek, a former Fairfax County School Board member with Sen. Chap Petersen's (D-34) backing, dropped in.

Wade, a local businessman who was the fresh-faced Democratic front-runner in April, endorsed by Board of Supervisors Chairman Sharon Bulova (D-At-large) is

Democrats say no sign of party infighting in Braddock District primary, Cook disagrees.

getting slammed for his Republican votes in two primaries and pressured, some claim, to drop out.

Taking a page from President Barack Obama's (D) playbook, high-profile Demo-

crats would remain neutral in this primary. So will U.S. Rep. Gerry Connolly (D-11), who said he has not made an endorsement in the Braddock supervisor's race and has nothing to say, at the moment, about the primary or Wade's Republican votes.

Del. Scott Surovell (D-44), who preceded Simmons as FCDC chair and practices law with Petersen in the City of Fairfax, agreed that a two-way primary race is not indicative of party squabbling.

"I'm not someone who believes party leaders should decide who the nominees should be. If someone wants to run for office, they should run for office. As elected officials, I don't think it's our job to push people out of the race. Our party is strongest when our candidates are selected by the people who vote in the primaries, and the primaries tend to weed out the weakest candidate," Surovell said in an interview on Tuesday.

Bulova, who served as the Braddock Dis-

"My campaign is in sharp contrast to the circus side-show presented by the Democratic Party in the last two weeks."

— Supervisor John Cook (R-Braddock)

crats are playing it cool, brushing it off.

"I think it's better to let the voters of the Braddock District decide who the Democratic nominee is rather than a few bloggers who don't live in Fairfax County," said Rex Simmons, chairman of the Fairfax County Democratic Committee. Simmons said the



PHOTO BY VICTORIA ROSS/THE CONNECTION

Chris Wade, Democratic Party candidate for Braddock District seat on the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors

trict supervisor for 20 years before winning the chairmanship, said the fact that two candidates are running in the primary is not surprising.

"Of course there is interest in this race.

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BURKE CONNECTION ♦ JUNE 16-22, 2011 ♦ 3

Robinson Grads Opt for Military Service

FROM PAGE 3

"When Christine contacted me, she had so many ideas about this. And there were so many e-mails that went back and forth between us in such a short period of time that you would have thought we were married," Kilcullen joked at the ceremony.

"She is pretty amazing. She had this idea, and put this ceremony together in just three weeks" Kilcullen said.

She reached out to another Robinson mom, Carolyn Kellam, whose son was also enlisting.

"When she first called me, I thought 'uh oh, she's mad' because my son recruited her son," Kellam said at the ceremony, when she presented Zinser with a bouquet of flowers. "I agreed they needed to be recognized. I can't get through the 'Star-Spangled Banner' without crying, so I was behind this 100 percent."

Kellam arranged for the soloist from Fairfax County Police Department and organized the baked goods and decorations, Zinser said.

Capt. Ken Spiro, U.S. Navy (ret.), whose children graduated from Robinson and had worked with Zinser to establish the Robinson Ice Hockey Club, agreed to emcee the event.

Zinser was on a roll. She printed and mailed invitations to the Burke Veterans of Foreign Wars Post 5412.

"Cmdr. David Meyers spread the word, and I contacted the American Legion Post 176, and veterans groups showed up to support the event. Members of the Burke Historical Society learned about the event and spread the word to its members as well, who came out in full force. Friends and neighbors and, literally, the community came out to support these young enlistees and their families."

ON THURSDAY, June 9, more than 75 people crowded into the Braddock District Hall for the first "Our Community Salutes" ceremony. The ceremony lasted about an hour, and recognized the following Robinson students: Junsuk Choi, Daniel Kellam, Sam Lausier, Ji Johng Lee, Won Gyu Lee, Philipp Zinser, Adam Dein (U.S. Marine Corps); David Maeng (U.S. Navy); Kevin Haas and Jade Vitale (U.S. Air Force).

"The challenge put before you today is to display nothing but consummate loyalty and professionalism," Kilcullen said to the enlistees.

"It's not an easy decision to make. Family members naturally have some concerns, but we certainly applaud them," said Cook at

the ceremony.

"When Danny asked us to sign, it was difficult," said Kellam, "The mom in me is scared to death but the citizen in me is very proud." Two days after he graduates, Daniel Kellam will be going to Parris Island for basic training.

Luc Lausier's son, Sam, told his family he wanted to join the U.S. Marine Corps to challenge himself and become the "best of the best."

"We're very proud of him," Luc Lausier said. "For someone so young to feel the call of duty is pretty amazing. This is a child who, like a many children in the area, has the opportunity to do anything he wants to do with his future. It's impressed me that he has this type of commitment. I think all these young men and women feel that they are serving their country for all the right reasons."

Zinser, a Realtor with Long & Foster in Burke, said her goal now is to continue the OCS program annually. "We need the help of the community to continue what has been started and ensure the 2012 Fairfax County graduates who are enlisting and their families receive the recognition they deserve," she said. To learn more about Our Community Salutes, visit www.OurCommunitySalutes.org



PHOTO BY VICTORIA ROSS/THE CONNECTION

Supervisor John Cook (R-Braddock) told the enlistees he was proud of their decision to volunteer and serve in the military. For more photos of the June 9 ceremony, go to www.connectionnewspapers.com.

FAITH NOTES

Send notes to the Connection at south@connectionnewspapers.com or call 703-778-9416. Deadline is Friday. Dated announcements should be submitted at least two weeks prior to the event.

Jubilee Christian Center, 4650 Shirley Gate Road in Fairfax. The Children's Ministry Department will hold Vacation Bible School, with a theme of "Pandamania," at the church on Friday, June 24 at 7 p.m., Saturday, June 25 at 12 p.m. (includes lunch), and Sunday, June 26 at 10 a.m. and 6 p.m. VBS is for ages 3 years-6th grade, and costs \$5. Register by June 19. 703-383-1170 or www.jccag.org.

St Mary of Sorrows Church, 5222 Sideburn Road in Fairfax, is hosting a White Elephant Sale on Friday, June 3 from 5-8 p.m., Saturday, June 4 from 8 a.m.-8 p.m. and Sunday, June 5 from 8 a.m.-1:30 p.m. 703-323-0345.

A new Women's Bible study, "Discovering Who We Are in Christ - Part III," will be at Jubilee Christian Center, 4650 Shirley Gate Road in Fairfax, 9:45 a.m. Tuesdays through May 31. \$15. Child care available. Register at 703-383-1170 or www.jccag.org.

Lord of Life Lutheran Church, 13421 Twin Lakes Drive in Clifton, offers three levels of ESL Classes every Tuesday and Thursday at 7 p.m. Cost for semester is \$35, including student book. To register, come to the next class. www.lordoflifelutheran.com or 703-323-9500.

Interested in the Catholic Faith? Classes will be held at St. Leo

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