

# COMMUNITY NEWS

## IN BRIEF

### Wakefield student's photo wins car-decal contest

The votes are in, and Arlington County residents have chosen Jeppe Callander's photo of the Pentagon Memorial as the winning design in the 2012-13 Decal Design Competition.

The entry, "Silent Memories," by Callander, a junior at Wakefield High School, will appear on the windshields of more than 155,000 vehicles in Arlington.

To view the decal, go to [www.arlingtonva.us](http://www.arlingtonva.us).

### Deadline nears for Alexandria citizens academy program

Alexandria residents wanting to learn more about the city government process can apply for Alexandria Citizens Academy.

The eight-week program, which runs Feb. 9 through March 29, lets residents experience a wide range of government functions, services, activities and issues. Participants will meet the mayor and city manager, among other city officials, and learn how the city government handles a variety of issues each day, including land use, budget process, transportation, social issues and public safety.

Class sizes are limited to 20 students. Participants must be at least 18 years old. The program is also open to business owners within the city limits.

The deadline to apply is Monday. Applications are available online at [alexandriava.gov/citizensacademy](http://alexandriava.gov/citizensacademy).

Applications can be faxed to 703-838-6426, mailed to 301 King St., Room 1900, Alexandria, Va. 22314, or dropped off at Office of Communications and Public Information, Room 1900, City Hall.

For information, call 703-746-4800.

### Arlington seeks feedback on school calendar

Arlington County public schools are seeking comments from parents, staff members, students and residents about the draft of the 2012-13 school year calendar.

Drafts of the proposed calendar, guidelines and a timeline for calendar development are at [www.apsva.us](http://www.apsva.us).

The superintendent is scheduled to present his recommendation to the School Board on March 8, and the board is expected to adopt the calendar at its March 22 meeting.

The deadline to submit feedback online is Feb. 10.

Some schools have minor deviations from the main school calendar. These include Stratford, H-B Woodlawn, Arlington Mill, Langston, Campbell and Barcroft. If parents want to indicate any preferences for their calendar, they should contact their school's principal directly.

For information, call 703-228-6004.



COURTESY OF BROOKE CURRAN

So far, Brooke Curran has run 43 marathons and raised more than \$90,000 for literacy and women's health groups in Alexandria.

# Going the distance for good

## Stay-at-home mom turns her passion for marathons into a global campaign for charities

BY MEGAN BUERGER

For local marathoner Brooke Curran, the secret to distance running is simple: Have a purpose.

"Running is a mind game," she said. "There has to be a reason that you hit the road every day and punish yourself."

Curran, 43, runs for her home town of Alexandria. Two years ago, she partnered with ACT for Alexandria and created the RunningBrooke Fund. She embarked on a global marathon campaign, pledging to run at least one marathon a month in all 50 states, on every continent and the five world marathon majors. Each race raises money for five Alexandria charities, with a focus on children's literacy and women's health: Girls on the Run, Community Lodgings, the Reading Connection, ACTion Alexandria and Child and Family Network Centers of Alexandria.

Curran admits that she wasn't always so altruistic. Like many marathoners, she started running to improve her health. She was a stay-at-home mother of three and wanted an excuse to get out of the house and stay fit. She ran her first marathon in 2004, and before long, was placing — and then winning — her age

groups.

After a few years, however, winning lost its luster.

"Until that point, running was all about me — me getting faster, me getting stronger," she said. "Ironically, the better I got, the less fulfilling it became."

One afternoon in 2008, while driving through one of Alexandria's poorer neighborhoods, Curran decided to elevate her cause and give back. She fell in love with the city's cobblestone streets when she moved there in 1994. They reminded her of Richmond, her childhood home.

So far, Curran has run 43 marathons in 32 states and five continents and raised more than \$90,000. Her cause has brought her to the coastal monoliths of Easter Island, finish lines on China's Great Wall and the quiet roads of Pocatello, Idaho. By summer, she'll have run in Austin; St. Louis; Fargo, N.D.; Antarctica; and Kona, Hawaii. If she runs on schedule, she will finish in Des Moines in October 2013.

But Curran has no plans on stopping once she's met her goal. After Des Moines, her first plan is to complete a full Ironman triathlon in Florida the following month. And after that? She wants to start 100-mile marathons and jump out of an airplane.

"I'm looking for that thing that will totally break me down," she said, "a challenge that brings me into a black hole, and I've got to claw my way back out."

Curran plans to expand her fund with

her endeavors; RunningBrooke Fund will most likely become a regional and national organization with models for other communities that want to follow suit.

To train, she runs about 70 miles a week through Old Town and jogs the stairs of the Masonic Temple in the early morning. When it comes to races, she prefers the small-town marathons to the ones that draw thousands.

"The small ones remind me why I love to run," she said. "I wake up in my hotel, cross the street and go. That's when my mind and body really sync up."

She pays her own way to every race and occasionally brings along one of her daughters: Clare, 19; Katherine, 17; and Caroline, 14. Her husband, Christopher, a lawyer in the District, mans the house when she's away.

Curran insists that although her journey sounds glamorous, it isn't always fun.

"There are days when it's hard to even look at my sneakers," she said, "but that's why the cause is so important. It pushes me to take a deep breath and lace up."

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On Sunday, Brooke Curran is taking a day off from running to host a Zumba Explosion at the Carlyle Club in Alexandria. Proceeds from the event, which includes two dance classes, a silent auction and fitness tips, will be divided among the charities she supports. For information, go to [www.runningbrooke.com](http://www.runningbrooke.com).