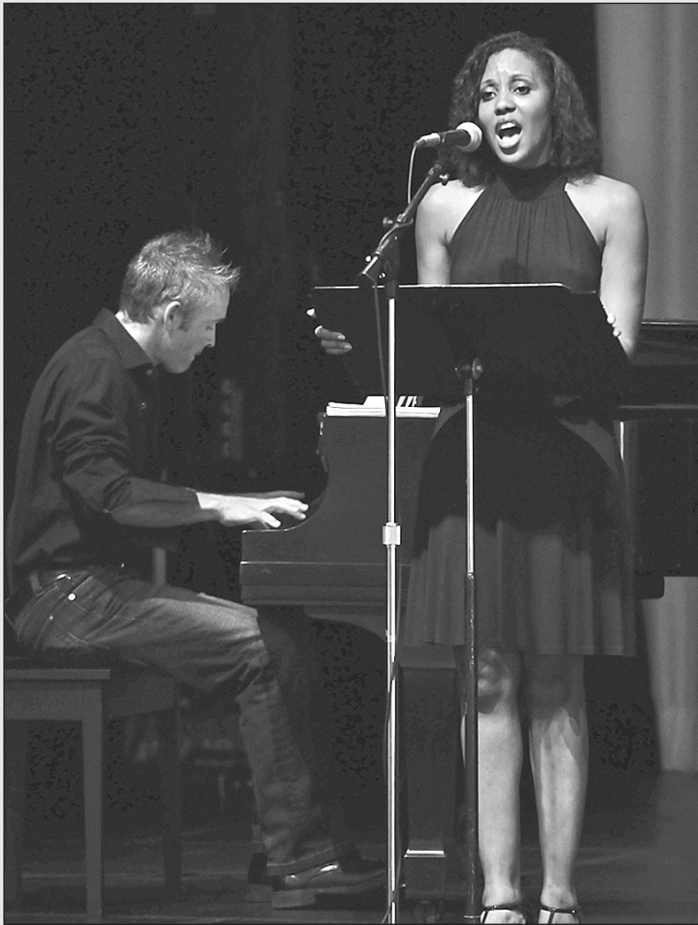


THE NORTHWEST CURRENT

FROM PAGE TO STAGE



Bill Petros/The Current

Kara Tameika-Watkins performs a tune from Matt Conner's musical journey "Where Does East Begin" during Monday's Signature Theatre presentation at the Kennedy Center's Millennium Stage, part of the annual Page to Stage event.

City falls short on crossing guards

■ **Schools:** Council member criticizes first-week shortage

By **CAROL BUCKLEY**
Current Staff Writer

A shortage of school crossing guards during the first week of school has led to finger-pointing among city officials and promises of more guards from the agency that hires the safety personnel.

At-large Council member Phil Mendelson, who chairs the Committee on Public Safety and the Judiciary, wrote letters Thursday to Mayor Adrian Fenty and District Department of Transportation interim director Frank Seales Jr. complaining that many schools were left without crossing guards last week.

Mendelson wrote and publicized the letters because he had tried to communicate his concerns to Seales before school began but received no

response, he said in an interview.

The Department of Transportation took over administration of the school crossing guard program in fall 2007 from the Metropolitan Police Department because officials thought the Transportation Department could administer the program more successfully, Mendelson recalled in his letter to Seales.

"This has yet to become apparent," he said. See **Schools**/Page 17

Nebraska Avenue project draws flak

By **IAN THOMS**
Current Staff Writer

Residents along Nebraska Avenue in Chevy Chase are pushing the D.C. Department of Transportation to address more of their concerns with the roadway's \$3 million planned reconstruction. They say current plans ignore speeding, damaging water runoff and other problems that plague the road, which leads to Rock Creek Park's Bingham Drive.

The Transportation Department will resurface Nebraska Avenue between Utah and Oregon avenues in mid-September. The agency will also reconstruct sidewalks where they exist and add sidewalks where they do not. New catch basins will be installed, and the traffic signal at Nebraska and Utah avenues, as well as all of the road's street lamps, will be upgraded.

And, to address speeding, the street will be narrowed at certain points by jutting the sidewalk out and by See **Nebraska**/Page 35



Bill Petros/The Current

Neighbors are trying to convince D.C. officials to add speed-control measures as part of a \$3 million project to reconstruct part of Nebraska Avenue.

D.C. librarian builds libraries in Africa

■ **Philanthropy:** From home office, Chevy Chase resident organizes global book drive

By **AILEA SNELLER**
Current Correspondent

Jane Kinney Meyers knows a good library collection when she sees one. The Chevy Chase resident has been a professional librarian for 30 years. These days, she spends "every waking moment" thinking about the Lubuto Library Project, an organization she founded to build libraries in Africa. And when she says the project's flagship library in Zambia has a collection that is "as good as you'll find anywhere," she knows what she's talking about.

Meyers graduated with a master's degree in library



Bill Petros/The Current

Chevy Chase resident Jane Kinney Meyers founded the Lubuto Library Project, which helps build libraries in Africa.

sciences from the University of Maryland in 1978. In the mid-1980s, she began her international career by helping to develop a network of research libraries in Malawi. In 1998, she headed to Zambia to accompany See **Books**/Page 34

Stores' struggles offer sign D.C. isn't recession-proof

By **IAN THOMS**
Current Staff Writer

Whatever you call it — a slowdown, a downturn, a recession — local business owners are feeling it.

"We were just another victim of the economy," said Rochelle Love, co-owner of Shepherd Park's Pure Bliss Day Spa, which closed last month.

In recent interviews, small business owners throughout the city said they have experienced a significant slump in the economy over the last year, and they are suffering because of it. They pointed to a

number of factors for the change — including the price of gas, the value of the dollar and the housing market crisis — all of which translate into consumers spending less.

Gary Cha, owner of Yes! Organic Market, a local chain of grocery stores, said he keeps track of his customers and how much they spend. While the number of total customers has remained more or less steady year to year, he said, the average customer is spending noticeably less this year.

"I think we're lucky to have stayed even from last year," Cha See **Economy**/Page 21

NEWS

■ **New bookstore in Georgetown specializes in translations.** Page 7.
■ **D.C. to offer cash rewards at Hardy, 13 other schools.** Page 9.



SPORTS

■ **Visitation aims to defend ISL AA banner.** Page 13.
■ **Wilson boys soccer team opens year with new coach.** Page 13.



PASSAGES

■ **Boundary-breaking diplomat pens memoir.** Page 19.
■ **Georgetown store calls attention to ills of packaging.** Page 19.



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NORTHWEST REAL ESTATE

BOOKS

From Page 1

her husband, who was serving as a representative for the International Monetary Fund. She took about 1,000 children's books with her and quickly realized she needed every one of them.

UNICEF estimates that one in five children in Zambia has been orphaned due to the HIV/AIDS pandemic, and that number is rising. In Zambia's capital, Lusaka, thousands

of kids roamed the streets parentless because of the HIV/AIDS crisis.

Meyers began reading to the kids at a shelter called Fountain of Hope. She would read for hours at a time, and the kids would always beg for more. So Meyers decided to put her talents to use. Armed with a bunch of donated books, she transformed a 20-foot shipping crate into a makeshift library.

When Meyers left Zambia in 2001, she heard people say that the library was changing kids' lives — it was even helping students pass

their secondary-school entrance examinations.

"Once we started hearing that we thought, 'Well, we've got to do this right,'" she said.

In 2005, Meyers founded the Lubuto Library Project, a nonprofit organization that specializes in designing and building first-rate children's libraries for street kids in Africa. On Sept. 21, 2007, to the sounds of traditional African hand drumming and children singing, the Lubuto Library Project opened its first official library near that same shelter in Lusaka.

"Lubuto" means knowledge, enlightenment and light in Bemba, a language spoken in Zambia, and the Lubuto project has come a long way from the old shipping crate that marked the project's humble beginnings.

The Lusaka library, a carefully designed set of traditional Zambian buildings, boasts 4,000 books and a collection of children's literature that Meyers says is top-notch. The majority of the collection was donated, organized, classified, packed and shipped by local volunteers here in D.C.

As part of the project, Meyers hosts Sunday afternoon volunteer sessions at St. Paul's Lutheran Church at 4900 Connecticut Ave. NW. She has also recruited help with book drives from her local Starbucks and Politics and Prose bookstore. Meanwhile, when Meyers' daughter Penelope was in high school at the Edmund Burke School, she started a club to benefit Lubuto that continues even now that she's away at Barnard College in New York. Burke students hold

book drives and help with the Sunday sorting sessions. The idea is that when the shipment arrives, the Lubuto staff in Zambia will have a pre-organized and catalogued children's library collection ready for the shelves.

Meyers also tries to generate awareness of the scale of the HIV/AIDS problem in Africa, and of the vast human toll it's taking on societies there. She treats the volunteer sessions as opportunities to educate Washingtonians about the impacts of HIV/AIDS on the lives of street kids an ocean away, and Meyers hopes to involve more high schools and local organizations in partnering with Lubuto to volunteer and generate donations.

"It's an awareness thing. It's not just about donating money — the volunteers are really thinking about the children they're serving," Meyers' daughter said.

"We want people to think about the kids," her mother added.

"What we do is so different than anything anyone's ever done. We're a new idea," Meyers said. "We're not a book donation program. We're building incredibly beautiful libraries run by Zambians. They're sustainable institutions."

The project is founded on the philosophy that a library is "much more than a building filled with shelves of books," she said. Project staff in the field has recruited Zambian professionals to come teach the kids art, health, storytelling, writing and photography, among other programs, including motivational mentoring.

Lubuto's Web site features a blog that highlights stories of children

who are using the library. They are reading work by Martin Luther King Jr., debating the impacts of colonialism on their country and painting pictures that capture the lives they hope to live. It's a far cry from the desolation and danger of life on the streets.

The first Lubuto Library's opening drew a congratulatory letter from first lady Laura Bush. Actor Danny Glover has offered his sponsorship of Lubuto as a UNICEF spokesperson. The project received a \$10,000 donation from Oprah's Angel Network, and singer Faith Hill worked with Lubuto to get extra books to her hometown in Mississippi after Hurricane Katrina.

Meyers has big plans for her project. Lubuto intends to build at least 100 libraries in Zambia, as outlined in a memorandum of understanding signed with the country's Ministry of Education, and the Zambian government wants to train people to work in and run the libraries. Lubuto has also received official requests for their programming from the governments of Malawi and Rwanda. Meyers is currently developing a book-based literacy program to train library staff how to teach kids to read.

And all this comes from a woman with a love of books and children who works from a small home office with a band of volunteers who share her passion. "Out of a spare room in your house you can do the most incredible things," she said.

More information on the Lubuto Library Project, including how to donate and volunteer, is available at lubuto.org.

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