



Helping Alexandria's seniors who prefer to remain
—independently—in their own homes

AHA! NEWSLETTER MARCH 2014 VOL. 5 NO. 3



Penny Roberts

Volunteers Fill Myriad Tasks For At Home in Alexandria

Penny Roberts, Chair of Volunteers

“Can someone help me put my patio furniture together?”

“I have a dental appointment on Thursday, but I don't think I can get there by myself in the snow. Can someone take me?”

“Help, my closet is overflowing!”

These are just a few of the requests received at the AHA office in any given week that are filled by our volunteers.

Volunteers are the backbone of the Village movement nationwide. And AHA is no exception. Following in the footsteps of our founders, all volunteers themselves, our current volunteers provide services to members, raise money, recruit members and volunteers, develop programs and policies,

and generally keep AHA going. One member said she was delighted with the quick response by the volunteer who set up her VCR, a dying art. Another member expressed surprise and grateful appreciation to a volunteer who came out in a driving rainstorm to pick her up from an appointment. Another was grateful for a volunteer's help “with the snow and ice at my house.”

On any given day, drivers like Ken Hill and Nancy Berg may be taking members to appointments. Other volunteers like Elias Moose and Pete Crouch are responding to requests for minor repairs. Or perhaps Julie Gentry or Monica Estabrooke is helping with that overflowing closet or basement. Volunteers like Joyce Bachman are working in the office, or like Carol Flint are helping with mailings. And how about those young high school students: Nick Ambrose, Jason Filios, Holly Garrett and Sarah Moras who helped with our recent snow removal effort?

Thanks to the efforts of member-volunteer Nancy Kincaid and the program committee, we have wonderfully diverse social activities, from museum visits to our very successful Saturday evening potluck gatherings.

In 2013, AHA's special and ongoing events had a total participation of 899. Meghan Evans and Margaret French have developed a theater group, while Don Ford conceived of the monthly arts discussion group. And who doesn't love Ruth Arnold's birthday calls?

Volunteering has its own rewards. As Phyllis Sims put it, “Honestly, I love doing this. I know this helps members who used to be able to do for themselves – shopping, etc., and need assistance now. It is not an imposition but fun to be with these members. And I believe that AHA is so good for those who belong.”

Mark your calendars now for April 24, AHA's anniversary party and Volunteer Appreciation Day.

**Let's show our support for our volunteers. If you would like
to volunteer or know someone who would, let the office know, at 703-231-0824.**

Panel of Experts Discuss Home Care Needs and Services

Three veterans of the home care business outlined the benefits, costs and availability of home care in Northern Virginia, at the latest in AHA's Discussion Series.

Home care fills a niche between what the volunteers of At Home in Alexandria can do and the varied field of residential care, such as nursing homes and retirement homes.

Panelists were (in photo at right, starting from the left) Mitchell Opalski of Synergy Home Care, Alexandra Woodman Johnson of Old Dominion Home Care and Jim Lindsay of ACC Family Adult Companion Care. At far right is AHA Board Member Alan Dinsmore.

A thorough assessment is needed to determine what home care is appropriate for a person, Opalski said, "to determine whether skilled or non-medical care is needed." For those who do not need help all day, services can be in hourly increments. "We work it out with the client," Lindsay said. "Every 120 days, we reassess" to see if adjustments are needed in the schedule and nature of the care, he added.

There are trade schools to teach home caregiving, the panel said. The three entities represented on the panel require that their employees be licensed, and they put them through a strict screening.

Lindsay said there are more than 800 home care firms in Northern Virginia, varying greatly in size and quality. The "greatest challenge" for his firm is in hiring people in a high-turnover field and trying to stand out in a crowded business, he said.

Woodman Johnson said clients range in age from 55 to 95 and have conditions ranging from dementia, to heart problem, to diabetes and others. Caregivers help with bathing and grooming, meal preparation, errands, housecleaning or just companionship.

The cost for urban home care workers varies substantially, Lindsay said, from \$20 to \$25 an hour, for shifts less than a day, to \$200 a day and up for live-in care.

Because of the close and personal nature of home care, the agencies are careful to have a good match between client and caregiver, the panel said. "If it is not working, we change the caregivers," Lindsay said.

The discussion was held Jan. 29 at the Beatley Central Library. Twenty-one people attended. Prior to the panel discussion, MaryAnn Griffin, who serves on the AHA Advisory Council and directs the Alexandria Office of Aging and Adult Services, described a city program to help jobseekers over 50 years in age. The "JobLink" program helps "experienced jobseekers," through individual counseling and group workshops, know how to search for work, learn computer skills, draft a résumé, and more.



Home care panelists with Alan Dinsmore



Keith D. Lind

Speaker Explains Substantial Difference Between Hospital "Observation" and Being Admitted

The frequency and duration of Medicare beneficiaries' use of hospital observation status (OS) has serious implications for care and costs, a speaker told an AHA Discussion Series audience Feb. 19.

Keith D. Lind, senior policy advisor for the AARP Public Policy Institute, explained the findings of an institute survey of hospital emergency unit visits and inpatient admittance. The study "found far greater increases in both the frequency and duration of Observation Status use than previous studies," Lind said.

"The magnitude of these changes raises concerns that observation is becoming a substitute for inpatient admission and ... may be of questionable clinical benefit," Lind said. "Use of observation status may also impose an unnecessary financial burden on Medicare beneficiaries. ... Unlike inpatient coverage, there is no cap on beneficiary cost-sharing for Observation Status visits."

On the other hand, OS stays may increase hospital efficiency and quality of care, by sorting out what care may be needed.



Members of the audience at AHA event

Things We Do



Scenes from the Potluck gathering on Feb. 8: At left, David Butler talks across the groaning board with Carol and Oliver Flint.

At right, Pam and Steve Nelson and “L” Liddle pour wine while Barbara Rosenfeld and Chriss Nielsen confer.



Lunch at Fontaine on Feb. 4: Trying a variety of crêpes and galettes: clockwise from front left: Betty Kirchner, Tom Fitzgerald, Barbara Rosenfeld, Dick and Joyce Bachman and Penny Roberts.

The Feb. 20 social gathering was a visit to the Spy Museum, shown in a museum file photo.



AHA/SSA Workshop on Senior Living Options

By Executive Director Cele Garrett

Our Feb. 12 workshop with Senior Services of Alexandria, “Senior Living: New and Innovative Options,” was successful on many fronts.

As one of five panelists, I was given 10 minutes to talk about AHA’s services. AHA Vice Chair Jane King, representing AARP, also was on the panel. The event put AHA in front of an audience of more than 100 and we also received a great deal of local promotion, both before and after.

The program brought in a new member and she has offered to promote AHA on the Rosemont listserv.

Membership Cards Are Coming

Soon AHA members will be receiving membership cards. Each card will have your name, address and phone number on one side, and emergency contact information on the other. These cards will identify you to volunteers when you have a transportation need and will provide information in case of an emergency.

Down the road, we hope that you might be able to use the cards for special deals with local merchants. Look for more information about the cards in the mail soon.

Financial Planning Workshop —Mark the Date

AHA and the Speck-Caudron Investment Group will collaborate on a workshop Thursday, March 27: “Is My Financial Plan Still the Right One?” The event opens at 9 a.m. with coffee/registration and the program starts at 9:30—at the Beth El Hebrew Congregation, 3830 Seminary Rd.

The session looks at strategies for reducing taxes, tax-advantaged and taxable income investments, long-term growth with tax deferral, and criteria for selecting investments that are right for you.

What's Up With AHA Members, Friends And Volunteers?

By Nancy Berg

Nancy Kincaid and Doug Fleming went on a seven-day cruise in the Caribbean on Holland America's Westerdam. Great life, yes? Well, there was a hitch: They didn't get off the ship in St Martin, where they once had a home, because there were five other ships docked next to them, discharging 20,000 tourists.

The AHA group interested in the brisk game of pickleball has grown by at least one: **Sharon Ksander** has taken up the sport, reports **Steve Nelson**, who with **Ann Kaupp** makes up the hard core of pickleball enthusiasts in the village. Ksander, a Friend of AHA, started at the Charles Houston Center and got "good starter tips and exercises," Nelson said.

Margaret and Donald Ford, once awash in packing material and boxes, report they are nearing completion of moving into the Carlyle Towers, the three-high-rise complex on the West Side. The Fords promise to write something for this newsletter, when the dust clears from their move, to compare AHA with the Beacon Hill Village, the nation's first.

Spotlight On Our IT Guru: Linus "L" Liddle

Linus "L" Liddle became involved in the village movement in 2008 as a volunteer for Mount Vernon at Home (MVAH), where he offered to develop a database to help the emerging organization manage its mailing lists.

In 2009, L was named to AHA's Board of Directors and played a role in establishing AHA.

He expanded the scope of the village's database to include member service requests, events and donations. He served as the first AHA executive director, from February through September of 2011 and again from October through December of 2012.

Other D.C.-area villages, including Northwest Neighbors Village, Lake Barcroft and Arlington Village, have used the database software L developed to manage their operations. Recently, L has been appointed to the board of Washington Area Villages Exchange and is an active participant in its information technology committee.

"It's been an interesting experience." He says. "I've worked closely with several villages and each is very different from the others. A lot has to do with the needs and interests of their members, which varies greatly from area to area. In some ways, I think the executive directors are the lynchpins of each village.

"They have an extraordinary influence on their village services and practices, and that has a lot to do with the village's success. One thing is certain, there's no one-size-fits-all process or procedure that works for every village.

"What is constant, though, is that the executive directors, the boards and the volunteers that support villages are committed, enthusiastic and uncompromising in making their efforts count."



"L" Liddle

Role of Healthcare Advocates to Be Examined at March 19 AHA Program

Would you like to know more about how a healthcare advocate can help you or someone you know? Please join At Home in Alexandria (AHA) Wednesday, March 19, from 1 to 3 p.m. at Charles Beatley Library, 5005 Duke St. for "Don't Go There Alone: The Role of the Healthcare Advocate." Casey Tarr, Certified Healthcare Advocate, and Eileen Spinella, Mt. Vernon Nursing & Rehab Center, will tell how to navigate the health care system and to make educated decisions about treatment options and follow-up care in a skilled nursing facility.

Information on what Medicare covers will be included.

The session is free and open to the public. For additional information contact the AHA office at 703-231-0824.

Help Us Celebrate AHA's Third Anniversary

AHA Invites you to its Third Anniversary celebration, Thursday, April 24, 2-4 p.m., at Beth El Hebrew Congregation, 3830 Seminary Rd. Enjoy light refreshments. The guest speakers will be Joan Davitt, Ph.D., and Amanda Lehning, Ph.D., of the University of Maryland School of Social Work, authors of "A National Overview of Villages."



Dick Moose

Moose Host "Conversation With"

Architect William Cromley, shown at right, traced the trends in Alexandria architecture through the years, in the latest of AHA's "Conversation With" events, on Feb. 23 at Porto Vecchio. The host was AHA co-founder Dick Moose, who gave guests a tour of the Maggie and Dick Moose home in Porto Vecchio, on whose renovation Cromley worked.



William Cromley

Ready to Act With ACT? We Will Need YOU

Get ready for Spring2ACTion on Wednesday, April 9. This day-long, citywide donation-fest is one of the biggest budget boosts AHA has.

For 24 hours on that day, AHA will ask our supporters to contribute online a minimum of \$10 (or any larger amount that strikes your fancy). We compete with other nonprofits for special cash prizes through the day.

Details to follow, in the April edition of the AHA newsletter and in emails.

This tickler is just to get you to mark your calendar and be ready to spread the word with all your listservs, associates, friends, schoolmates or churchmates. Last year, AHA came in eighth place for highest dollars raised, out of 96 nonprofit organizations.



Recreation and Culture Featured at March Senior Speaker Series

Senior Services of Alexandria and Alexandria's Department of Recreation, Parks and Cultural Activities are co-sponsoring the March Senior Speaker Series event: "Recreation & Cultural Activities for Alexandria's Seniors."

Attendees will learn about the City's Power Plus 55+ activities programs including "robust walking," aquatics classes and weekly clubs.

The program will be at Chinquapin Recreation Center, 3210 King St., Wednesday, March 12, 9:30 a.m. to noon. Register for this free event: 703-836-4414 ext. 10 or at www.seniorservicesalex.org.

Walking Club Will Resume March 25

The AHA Walking Club, after a winter's rest, resumes Tuesday, March 25, at 9 a.m. at the foot of Madison Street, at the T.C. Williams boathouse.

Dr. Dan Kulund, AHA's drill sergeant for fitness, will show "robust walking" techniques that add strength training and flexibility. You can walk at your own pace. All are invited. Kulund will also demonstrate robust walking March 12 at 11 a.m., in the Senior Services of Alexandria program at Chinquapin recreation center.

In another coming program, Kulund will discuss "Robust Aging Made Easy," to help seniors maintain muscles, bones and joints, and to teach fall avoidance.

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Contact Us

At Home in Alexandria
3139 Mount Vernon Ave.
Alexandria, VA 22305
703-231-0824

AHA@athomeinalexandria.org
Web www.athomeinalexandria.org