



— AT HOME IN —
ALEXANDRIA

NEWSLETTER

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



Watching the donations come in at Del Ray Café were, at rear, Jen Heinz and Cele Garrett. Fore-ground from left: Carmen Raventos-Suarez, Linda Langley, Ernie Lehmann

Once Again, Spring2ACTion Is a Big Boost for AHA

“WOO-HOO,” the shout went up at precisely 8:22 p.m. Wednesday, April 25. AHA had met its ambitious goal in the citywide donation fest called Spring2ACTion.

The manager and stalwart of AHA's effort, Executive Director Cele Garrett, gave a little dance and a big shout for a group of helpers and visitors, startling diners in other rooms of the Del Ray Café. She and her partner-at-computers, Marketing Director Jen Heinz, monitored the leader list morning to late night. Among the visitors were several who had given substantial matching donations as a challenge to donors.

The magic number at 8:22 p.m.? Twenty-seven thousand dollars.

Shortly before midnight, that had risen to \$28,380. Final figures were not immediately available. Some donations were mailed, the online fundraising did not stop until midnight and the donation of a share of the Del Ray Café's receipts for the day had not been calculated.

AHA team members and visitors occupied a downstairs dining room at the restaurant. At one point, 16 people filled the small room. Garrett and Heinz presided in one corner at their laptop computers, calling out developments: “We made this match.” “We are doing well.” “It has slowed; people are probably driving home from work and will donate soon.” And then, of course: “WOO-HOO.”

Visitors included some people from other villages and from Penny Roberts's water aerobics class. Some came from Garrett's neighborhood. Several AHA board members added to the buzz and boosted team morale.

Among the visitors were AHA Chair Jane King, talking about plans for the anniversary (**see story at right**); Treasurer Chriss Nielsen, with her usual gift of champagne; Vice Chair Bob Eiffert, full of praise for Heinz and Garrett; and AHA Co-founder Ernie Lehmann and Montsie Lehmann, reminiscing about AHA history. The café owners, Laurent and Margaret Janowsky, were in and out, doubling as waiters and tripling as busboys. Member Earle Baughman came by to have dinner and regaled the group with the fact he grew up in Elvis Presley's hometown of Tupelo, Miss.

Carmen Raventos-Suarez visited and later persuaded her son and daughter-in-law to join the group for dinner. Linda Langley visited for a while, then left to prepare for a trip to see her new grandchild in California.

Why does AHA take part in Spring2ACTion? AHA depends on a couple of big fundraisers such as Spring2ACTion, because dues cover only about half of AHA's expenses to serve its members. In 2017, AHA met more than 1,300 requests from members, everything from giving rides to physical therapy, to setting up a new computer, to shoveling snow.

Lucky Seven Anniversary Coming May 16

The number seven is lucky for some gamblers. There are seven seas, seven colors in a rainbow, seven brides for seven brothers. So it is a happy thing that AHA celebrates its seventh anniversary May 16.

Join in: 2 p.m. to 4 p.m. Wednesday, May 16, at the Cameron Station Community Center, 200 Station Boulevard.

AHA members have dredged up from their safes and chests some photos of themselves at seven. Attendees will be challenged to identify the photos: “Who is that cute towhead? Does he have hair today?” Etc. Have a picture of yourself at seven? With or without hair? Submit it to AHA before the anniversary. RSVP to AHA **703-231-0824** for instructions about how to send the picture and make it part of a scrolling projection on a large screen.

The other theme of the gathering is Music for Life. Associate Member Lynn Falk and her mandolin ensemble will entertain. Violinist Jennifer Wade and retired music teacher Jane White will outline the benefits of music for all ages.



Brenda Bloch-Young (rear) explains tax law changes to an AHA audience in a program in the Conversation series.

Tax “Geek” Bloch-Young Talks About New Law

Board Member Brenda Bloch-Young has ... uh ... an unusual mind. She can chuckle about tax law.

A tax expert and former tax director at PricewaterhouseCoopers, Bloch-Young verbally navigated the rough waters of the latest tax reform law for an AHA audience of 15 on April 15. The hostess for the session was AHA Advisor Carol Downs.

April 15 is usually Tax Day, but because it fell on a Sunday this year, taxpayers were given until April 17.

“I have to giggle,” Bloch-Young said, spreading notes out on a coffee table. “The new tax law is like a new Harry Potter novel for me.”

The new law is officially called “An Act to provide for reconciliation pursuant to titles II and V of the concurrent resolution on the budget for fiscal year 2018.” But it’s been called the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act since it was introduced in November. The Senate parliamentarian ruled the bill’s name and two other provisions had to change, or else the bill would violate the budget rules.

Bloch-Young said the law may have thousands of technical corrections and “there are armies of attorneys working on stuff like this.”

“You have no idea how much fun this is,” she said. “For a geek like me, it is exciting.”

For many taxpayers, considering offsets and changes in deductions, “There isn’t a major change,” she said. “I think it is going to be a wash for most of us in Virginia because of lowering the rates and changes in deductions.”

Some states with substantial state and local taxes will be hurt by limitations in deductibility. In a bill written by a Republican-controlled Congress, those states included Maryland, New York, New Jersey and California, all Democratic areas.

Making Your Life Easier

What AHA Can Do for You

The staff and volunteers of At Home in Alexandria are committed to providing our members friendly and competent help in maintaining their home and lifestyle in the community they love.

The list below is not exhaustive. Ask us if you have a need—we are here to help.

- **Transportation**—Rides to and from an errand, appointment, outing.
- **Home Maintenance**—Changing light bulbs or smoke detector batteries. Organizing closets. Snow removal. Potting plants. Light housekeeping. Decluttering.
- **Information and Referral to Service Providers**—Clearing house for recommended service providers.
- **Tech Help**—Setup and use of TV, cell phone, computer, printer, thermostat, small appliance.
- **Personal Connections**—Check-in calls, reading, friendly visitor.
- **Errands**—Shopping, library, prescriptions.
- **And a full schedule of social events and programs.**
- **Group Outings**—movies, museums, galleries.
- **Dining Out**—lunch and dinner at favorite spots.
- **Classes**—Fitness, technology, cooking, etc.
- **Lectures**
- **Community Events**

If you did not know about some of these, check with AHA at 703-231-0824.



Each year, AHA performs hundreds of errands and sponsors numerous events for its members. A full calendar of events is on the website, www.athomeinalexandria.org, and accompanies each issue of the newsletter. Above, guests at the annual Christmas party, held for the past several years at A La Lucia in Old Town.

Get a Tax Break From Charitable Donations

By Brenda Bloch-Young

As many of us know, we must take a Required Minimum Distribution (RMD) at age 70½ from our IRA and other specific types of retirement accounts. The annual RMD is approximately 4 percent of the account balance based on Internal Revenue Service tables of life expectancy.

If your living expenses are covered from other sources of retirement income, you are able to reduce or eliminate the taxation of a portion of the RMD via a direct contribution to a qualified charitable organization.



A donation of your RMD (or any portion of it) may be donated directly to AHA by your plan administrator. The donation is not tax-deductible BUT it is NOT included in taxable income.

Note that additional taxable income from an RMD may move you into a higher income tax bracket and increase your Medicare Part B premiums. The Medicare Part B premiums increase significantly for a single filer with over \$85,000 in annual income, with another increase over \$107,000, and then \$133,000 in annual income. For those filing jointly, these income thresholds are doubled before the premium increase is applied.

This option may be an efficient way to reduce your annual income tax liability by avoiding additional taxes and higher Medicare Part B premiums as well as gaining the satisfaction of knowing AHA's mission continues far into the future. It's win/win (and easy to do) for many of us.

If you think this option works for you, consult with your plan administrator or tax accountant.

Tech Tuesdays: Worth Checking Out

The photo below shows Marketing Manager Jen Heinz with her Tech Tuesday class, explaining how to handle photography in the smartphone era.

Tech guru Steve Nelson will lead the next session, May 22 at 10:30 a.m., on enhancing computer security and blocking ads. "Get the lowdown on pop-ups," Nelson says. "They are bad. Don't believe them." Space is limited, so RSVP to the AHA office to hold your seat.



Clockwise from left: Heinz, Susanne Adams, Jessi MacLeod, Maggie Stauffer, Barbara Rosenfeld.

On Pets and Paper Handling: Two Upcoming Programs

Two interesting programs are coming up in May and June, reports Program Co-Chair Penny Roberts:

A Plan for Pets

Wednesday May 23, 1:30 p.m.

Animal Welfare League, 4101 Eisenhower Ave.

Do you own a pet or have a close friend or relative who does? Do you have plans to care for your pet in an emergency, or an extending hospital stay? In emergency situations, police must often remove the pet from your home for safety reasons and take it to the Animal Welfare League. If you register your pet with the League, they will know your wishes and can act in your pet's best interests.



If you would like to learn more about how the League can help or about the variety of programs to help pets, pet owners, and wild animals, please join Rachel Baer, Esq., for this discussion and tour on Wednesday, May 23.



"Are you ready for the rest of your life?"

Thursday, June 7, 1:30 p.m.

Portner's Landing, 621 S. Asaph St.

This is the intriguing title of a talk by Kay Bransford, daily money manager for Memory Banc. She notes that most of us have started to tackle miscellaneous papers and are starting to destroy 10-year-old tax documents. She will advise how to consolidate important information, so that in an emergency our family or trusted friend will have important documents, passwords and files immediately accessible. Join Kay, Thursday, June 7, at 1:30 p.m. in the community room of Portner's Landing, 621 St. Asaph St.

A sign at the March for Science:

"Got polio?

Neither do I.

Thanks, Science."

What's Up With AHA Members, Associates and Volunteers

The **Mather LifeWays Institute on Aging** reports that helping others may help the caregiver as well as the recipient.

“A recent study looked at what impact three types of helping behavior may have on cardiovascular events such as heart attacks and strokes,” the institute reported.

The three activities are formal volunteering with an organization, caregiving and informal helping such as helping friends, neighbors or relatives not living in your home.

For women, even when risk factors were taken into account, formal volunteering “was significantly associated with lower risk of cardiovascular events,” the study said. For men, not so much, researchers said. The reason is unclear.

For men in informal volunteering, the results were reversed: For informal helping, men showed statistically significant reductions in cardiovascular events, even adjusting for risk factors such as smoking or physical activity. The study suggested the gender differences may be related to society’s expectations for women to offer informal volunteering, “while for men such help is less expected.”

Estabrooke Grant

Monica Estabrooke, AHA operations supervisor, formerly with IBM, secured a grant of \$2,000 from IBM for technical upgrades and database work. You go, Monica!

Scams

A new scam involves the new Medicare cards coming out for the coming year. Medicare advises that they will never phone you. They do not charge for cards or ask for your personal information on the phone. **DO NOT** give information over the phone.

Interest Group News

The **Blazing Saddles** will blaze again. **Hosts Maggie and Barry Stauffer** report that, after a winter rest and a spring wind postponement, the bicycling interest group will resume its outings Tuesday, May 22.

The bikers assemble at 1:30 p.m. at the bicycle path near the intersection of Fairfax and Madison streets in Old Town.

The Stauffers welcome riders of all abilities to the outings, which mostly use bike paths and generally last two hours or less, often with a stop for refreshments along the way. The Stauffers urge participants to make sure their bicycles are safe and ready to go before the first ride. **TO JOIN:** Maggie.stauffer@comcast.net 703-629-5476

Our newest Interest Group, the Mystery Book Club, is popular, averaging 15 in attendance monthly. It grew so quickly that some members are discussing establishing a general book club. Check with L Liddle (email below) with ideas for new groups reading other genres of books.

Here are the contacts for the various groups:

- Movie Group: Jane Starkey at 703-528-0809
- AHA/AH Bridge: Nancy Kincaid 703-836-4794
- Met Opera Movies: Penny Roberts 703-836-9644, psroberts378@gmail.com
- Theatre buffs: Nancy Kincaid 703-836-4794
- Mystery Book Club: L Liddle, lliddle@gmail.com
- Blazing Saddles: Maggie or Barry Stauffer, maggie.stauffer@comcast.net
- Walking Group: Barbara Rosenfeld or Bill Clayton barbarabrosenfeld@gmail.com tbclayton@comcast.net

Most of the groups are seeking new members. Check with the contacts for the schedule, or to join with a group OR form a new one. Thank you.

Next Conversation: About Civility

From the title, you might think a coming program will be a discussion of current political discourse.

But no. **The May 20 Conversation With** program is about Civil War times. “A Civil Life in An Uncivil Time” is the title of the program, whose speaker will be Paula Whitacre. The event will take place from 3 p.m. to 5 p.m. Sunday, May 20, in the **Porto Vecchio** home of Ruth and Georg Morduch.

Whitacre is a freelance writer and editor whose résumé includes work at the Washington Post and as a foreign service officer.

She discusses the life and times of abolitionist Julia Wilbur, who came to Alexandria and took on the case of escaped slaves.



Scenes

Two scenes the Walking Group encountered along the Potomac: somebody assembled two fortresses of flotsam at the riverside, and a redbud tree in full bloom, at last.

Health Tips From the Mayo Clinic Health Letter

Sometimes, the simplest things

“Keep Calm and Breathe,” the Mayo Clinic Health Letter advises, for relieving stress and anxiety. “When you feel anxious or stressed, something as natural as breathing can serve as a tool to relax your mind and body.

“Deep-breathing exercises, also called diaphragmatic breathing or relaxed breathing, can help slow down your breathing and keep it in a regular flow.”

The technique settles the nervous system and boosts feelings of calm. It may also lower blood pressure.

To practice deep breathing:

- Sit in a comfortable position or lie flat on the floor.
- Close your eyes and place one hand on your belly.
- Take a deep breath in through your nose and let your belly expand.
- Let the abdomen slowly deflate, then repeat the breathing several times, lengthening the time you inhale and exhale.
- Direct your breath into your upper back. Let ribs spread and then relax with each breath. Repeat three or four times.

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Susan Lancaster 1932-2018

AHA member Susan Lancaster died April 13 at the age of 83, after a long and courageous battle with leukemia.

She was a lovely person and many people around here were so fond of her,” AHA Executive Director Cele Garrett told Lancaster’s son, John. AHA stands ready to help the family in any way, Garrett said.

Susan Lancaster was born in Epsom Surrey, England, Feb. 13, 1932, to an American mother and British father.

She moved to the United States after World War II and attended Wells College in New York State.

She married Paul Lancaster, a reporter and later an editor at the *Wall Street Journal*, in 1956.

They settled in Old Greenwich, CT, where they raised two children, John and Jennifer. Both survive her, as does her husband.

Paul and Susan moved to Alexandria in the early 1990s, living first in Old Town and more recently in a condominium overlooking the Potomac just south of Old Town.

Susan is remembered as an enthusiastic tennis player, Francophile, museum-goer and world traveler. She died April 13 at a hospice in Charlottesville, her children and grandchildren at her side.

She will be missed by her AHA family.

TO CONTACT US

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Describing AHA to Professional Groups

AHA always appreciates it when a member or volunteer helps to pave the way for AHA to present information to folks who might have an interest or a need in membership--whether it's a civic group, neighborhood association or professional group.

Such was the case when a local physician practice expressed interest in AHA after hearing about it from three different AHA members who are clients at this practice. The result? These AHA members have been invited to speak to current and prospective clients at the practice on the following dates: May 9 at 6:30 p.m. and May 19 at 10:30 a.m. at 4401 Ford Ave, Suite 250, Alexandria. We appreciate the fact that NVFPA welcomed the chance to learn about AHA--and we hope that other medical practices might follow suit. If you'd like to attend either session, please RSVP:

Lkenney@nvafamilypractice.com; 703-647-4966.