

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

## AHA Villagers Fete Their Volunteers



Hostess Josefa Gibson (center) visits with guests at her party. (L to R) Mary Margaret McGrail, Gloria Sikora, AHA Executive Director Cele Garrett.



Above, the goodies. Below, waiting for the Belmont Stakes



Dozens of AHA members, volunteers and officers gathered June 9 for a Volunteer Appreciation Party hosted by Josefa Gibson.

The event has become one of the best-attended and most festive gatherings of the At Home in Alexandria social schedule. It took place in the Gibson home at Alexandria House, a space that shows off Gibson's varied collections—art, kitchen gadgets, clocks and more.

AHA's former Chair Barbara Rosenfeld was fond of saying, "We are all volunteers." The Gibson gathering honored the varied roles in AHA's nonprofit village—Board members, officers, office staff, and those who fill the myriad assignments to help AHA members.

Attendance at the appreciation totaled 38 people in all those roles, including several "pure volunteers," those who concentrate on the assignments. They chatted and sipped and crowded around a table of goodies and a kitchen counter of wines. Several watched the Belmont Stakes on TV

A few from AHA showed up early to help Gibson set up the party. Some brought wine. But she is a very independent hostess and turned down most offers of help.

"It was a pleasure" to host the party, she said. "I told the people who wanted to help that I have my own system. I'm so used to doing things myself that it's easier for me."

In what was clearly an understatement, she said, "I enjoy doing a little something for AHA."



Scott Garrett, Josefa Gibson, Pete Crouch.



Dara Surratt, Kathie Fricke at volunteer fest.

## Al Boyer, 1926-2018



**Al Boyer**

John Alton “Al” Boyer, distinguished attorney and longtime member of At Home in Alexandria, died June 2. He was 91.

Born Dec. 12, 1926 in Damascus, Md., Boyer enlisted in the Army just before his 18th birthday.

It was there that he began his college education, first at the University of Maryland and then at the University of Chicago, where he was trained as a translator. He served in the military police and attained the rank of sergeant.

Boyer received a bachelor’s degree from George Washington University and Juris Doctor degree from GWU’s Law School, graduating second in his class.

He was hired by the prestigious international law firm Covington & Burling in its Chicago office. He returned to the District of Columbia and served as clerk for the Chief Judge of the U.S. Court of Federal Claims. Boyer later became junior partner in the law firm of Kominers and Fort, and later a named partner in Kominers, Fort, Schlefer and Boyer, retiring in 1986.

He became a close friend of one of the founders of AHA, Richard Moose, who among others persuaded Boyer and his wife, Cynthia, to join AHA. “Richard and Al were very fond of each other and often had breakfast at the Royal Café,” Moose’s widow, Maggie, said.

Boyer and his wife, a recognized textile artist, amassed an eclectic collection of art and through their philanthropy supported law students, the Textile Museum, Arena Stage and others.

Boyer is survived by his wife, sons John Boyer and Bruce Boyer, and grandchildren Jacob, Elias, David, Andrew and Gregory Boyer.

## “Save or Shred” Hints For Tackling Paper Clutter

Kay Bransford of MemoryBanc guided an AHA audience through the chore of deciding what to do with documents and paper clutter.

MemoryBanc helps clients collect and organize important records and dispose of unwanted ones.

She advised people to discuss specific needs with estate, financial and insurance advisers. For unneeded items, she said, one should thoroughly shred anything that has personal information, such as credit card receipts, travel tickets, bank records or any of a long list of everyday items with information such as a person’s name, Social Security number, bank data or phone number.

Bransford handed out a list of “Save or Shred” hints, including: **save** personal materials such as birth certificates and marriage licenses, **shred** bank statements after a year unless needed to support tax returns or unless needed for a Medicaid application or other purpose.

**Save** home purchase and improvement records as long

## City Adopts Age-Friendly Plan

By Vice Chair Bob Eiffert

On May 22, the Alexandria City Council adopted the Commission on Aging’s (COA) Age Friendly Community Plan. The plan is a replacement for one adopted in 2012 and is the culmination of two years of work by the COA.

The plan features six broad areas of focus to address identified needs and many more specific goals with detailed work plans for each.

The process began when the Mayor, with the agreement of City Council, sent a letter of application to the World Health Organization through its United States representatives at AARP.

AARP approved the application and Alexandria became the first community in Virginia to receive the Age Friendly designation. Led by AHA Board Chair Jane King, the planning process included input from over 1,000 Alexandrians through a variety of means. AARP conducted a survey of over 500 residents in 2016, and the COA hosted several forums and a number of listening sessions with stakeholders and older Alexandrians to gain input.

King was the lead author of the plan, putting in many hours of work supported by the COA, its committees and others. City staff carefully reviewed and altered the plan to assure that it conforms with various departmental plans.

City Council was very interested and engaged in the plan, and complimented Jane and the COA on the excellent work.

The 77-page plan is available on the City’s website at [www.alexandriava.gov](http://www.alexandriava.gov). Type “Age Friendly Community Plan” into the site search box, and the plan will be one of the COA documents listed in the right column.



**Kay Bransford speaks on conquering clutter**

as you own the property.

**Save “forever”** the record of a final mortgage payment. **Save** purchase receipts until you reconcile them with credit card or bank statements, unless needed for a warranty or insurance claim, then shred. **Save** your Social Security card. For tax records, get advice from your accountant.

For insurance policies, **save** until policy is renewed or coverage ends, and you have no claim outstanding; then, **shred**.

## AHA Gala “Revisited”

By Cele Garrett, Executive Director

Typically around this time each year, this newsletter includes a "save the date" announcement about our upcoming fundraising gala. This year, after months of thought and discussion among our staff, board of directors and several key volunteers, we've made the decision to forgo our traditional fall gala.

This decision comes, in part, as a result of many discussions of AHA's financial and fundraising model. Our membership has grown steadily; naturally, a higher number of member requests accompany that growth. We've added social and educational events—an important part of what AHA offers—and we'll continue doing that as new interests emerge. In just the past year or two, AHA has added the new mystery book club, Tech Tuesdays, the current-events discussion group, the opera simulcast outings and the cycling club. And, we offer an additional level of support for our frailest members.

This is the essence of our work. Increasingly, however, the advance planning for our annual gala had begun to take on a life of its own. Likewise, large-venue expenses were increasing at an untenable rate. Our fantastic AHA volunteers took much of the workload off the staff—and I cannot overemphasize what a tremendous help and cost savings that has been. Still, we found that, for about three months out of each year, the staff spent significant time on this one event. Simply put, we are in the business of serving our members—not planning large-scale events.

This decision presents a challenge: How else will we raise the monies that the gala brought in? We think, however, this presents new opportunities for AHA. We're already exploring ideas for smaller, more intimate events throughout the year. Maybe not every event will appeal to all members and supporters—but there will be something interesting for everyone.

AHA is not a "one size fits all" group, and we think some new opportunities will keep things fresh and interesting. An intimate dinner for 20 . . . a special wine-tasting . . . a behind-the-scenes tour . . . a lecture featuring a special guest. (An AHA group travel experience could be in our future too.)

Our first special event will take place Sunday evening, July 29. Details to follow.

We will look for other less-costly opportunities—such as with our anniversary event—where we can bring a large number of members and volunteers together to socialize in one place. Fundraising, though, is a necessary part of any nonprofit organization, and AHA is no exception. I'm eager to hear thoughts and ideas from our members, supporters and friends on new ways we can keep our organization strong AND create fun, meaningful possibilities.



Host Barbara Rosenfeld, Marty Tolchin, Bill Clayton

### The Evolution of Journalism From Two Who Have Put in a Century

Two “ink-stained wretches” with a combined century of work in journalism described to an AHA audience on June 24 journalism’s evolution “from Speed Graphic cameras to ‘enemies of the people.’”

The speakers were Marty Tolchin, onetime New York Times reporter and founder of two Capitol Hill publications, and Bill Clayton, who spent decades with United Press International and the Houston Chronicle. Their reminiscences attracted an AHA audience of 25 to the Alexandria House home of Barbara Rosenfeld.

Tolchin and Clayton started off with brief biographical summaries: Clayton of his 23 years with United Press International, 18 years with the Houston Chronicle in Washington, then blogging and finally, the past seven years as editor of the AHA newsletter. Tolchin recounted his landing a job as copy boy for the New York Times, moving up to reporter and staying 40 years, the last 20 reporting on Congress. He founded two well-regarded publications, *The Hill* and *Politico*.

Tolchin discussed the “democratization” of journalism, from cave drawings to papyrus to the printing press (“which broke the church's monopoly on communication”) to the telegraph, telephone, radio, television, cable news and the internet.

“It used to be that you had to be a zillionaire to engage in mass communication, but now you only need a cellphone,” Tolchin said. With the technological advances came growing literacy “from only the church and aristocrats to nearly all Americans and a good part of the world.”

Each advance had plusses and minuses: “Printing presses published the Bible and *Mein Kampf*. Radio brought us FDR and Father Coughlin.

“The internet has taken a toll on newspapers. Fifty percent have vanished in last decade. But there's been an explosion of bloggers, some good, some bad.”

## What's Up With AHA Members, Associates and Volunteers



**Julie Gentry**

**Julie Gentry (at left)** was in Dublin on Bloomsday and observed it properly. She said, "Tradition has it that on June 16th, Bloomsday, one dresses up with a bowler and fancy clothes and eats gorgonzola cheese with or without brown bread and a glass of burgundy.

Her hatband bears the name of the pub where she sipped, Davey Byrnes. The day is a celebration of the life of James Joyce. June 16 is the

day his novel *Ulysses* takes place in 1904 and is named Bloomsday for his protagonist Leopold Bloom.

**Program Chair Penny Roberts** says that a number of participants in the very popular "What's in the News" have remarked that it would be useful to be able to focus in depth on important current local and national issues.

To meet this need, Roberts said, "We are initiating a new program temporarily entitled, 'Current Issues Conversation.'" The first meeting will be held July 18, from 10 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. at the home of Virginia Martin, 1250 S. Washington St. #717. The topic for the meeting will be "Gun Control and the Second Amendment."

In addition to the topic at hand, participants will examine how to proceed with further discussions, best dates, times, and future meetings.

"What's in the News" has proven to be standing-room-only popular. Its discussions, often lively, cover several different topics under the guidance of **Brenda Bloch-Young**. Some participants wanted the "news" program to continue, but with the addition of a separate program limited to one topic at a time.

The June 12 session of "the News" covered the G-7 meeting, elections, North Korea, and a book review by **Jane Guyton**, among other topics.



At right, the AHA team at the Old Town Farmer's Market on June 16: Shelly Schwab and Ruth Arnold.

## VOLUNTEER CORNER

**Monica Estabrooke** reports that volunteers were invited recently to participate in an interactive discussion about their volunteer experience and to offer suggestions for improvements in the program.

The sessions were facilitated by Estabrooke and **Jen Heinz**. All volunteers will receive more information about the results periodically.



**Volunteer Chair Mary Jayne Swanson (foreground) discusses the volunteer Program with Andrew Unger and Jane Starkey. Photo by Monica Estabrooke.**

Praise for a volunteer—**Mary Margaret McGrail** had kind words for the work volunteer **Jasper Womach** did for her. She said she wanted a couple of forsythias pruned "and he did a whole clump. . . . He was just wonderful, like a family member," she said.

**MEMBERS, HAS A VOLUNTEER DONE SOMETHING EXTRAORDINARY FOR YOU? LET AHA KNOW. 703-231-0824**



### Tech Tuesday Focuses on the Cloud

Who uses the Cloud? Everyone who uses email, **Jen Heinz** said at the latest Tech Tuesday (above). Heinz showed how to check how much Cloud storage is available on a smartphone and how to delete photos and videos if it's running low. From left: **Teddy McBay**, **Michael Curry**, **Bob Eiffert**, leader **Jen Heinz**, **Denise Cohn**, **Marie Canny** and **Kathie Fricke**. Not shown are **Toni Popkins** and photographer **Teddy Clayton**.

## Change of Venue for TGIF

The TGIF Happy Hour and the Ladies' Night Out, which currently take place at the Fin & Hoof bar in the Sheraton Suites Hotel, will be moved. Beginning in July, both now will be at Sundays in Saigon, 682 N. St. Asaph St.

### Chuckles

Some famous quotes from famous people:

- Mae West – His mother should have thrown him away and kept the stork.
- Oscar Wilde – Some cause happiness wherever they go; others, whenever they go.
- Andrew Lang – He uses statistics the way a drunken man uses lampposts – for support rather than for illumination.
- Groucho Marx – I've had a perfectly wonderful evening – but I'm afraid this wasn't it.
- Samuel Johnson – He is not only dull himself; he is the cause of dullness in others.
- Charles, Lord Talleyrand -- In order to avoid being called a flirt, she always yielded easily.

### Board of Directors

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Monica Estabrooke

#### Operations Co-Managers

Dara Surratt and Kim Carlisle

## Board Chair Jane King Recognizes Staff and Volunteer Standouts

AHA Chair Jane King opened the June 19 Board meeting with praise for several standouts. She said Executive Director Cele Garrett is "remarkable" and "clearly committed to our members, even those who require significant additional attention." Jen Heinz is doing "a great job" in membership recruitment and marketing among several other things including a series of "Tech Tuesday" programs.

Operations Co-Manager Dara Surratt "is always responsive, highly organized and cordial," King said, and had additional duties during a recent staff transition. King said it is difficult to single out volunteers without missing some, but she wanted to note two in particular who have assisted her: "Wendy Driver is one of our younger volunteers" who drives her motorcycle on errands and "has done miracles in my yard" as well as volunteering as a "buddy" for particular help to members. King said Susanne Adams, a Board member, buddy and driver, "seems to take on any assignment that we ask."

Board members were given the new copy of the Board handbook, a project of Pam Nelson that King praised for precise and thorough updating. The new Volunteers' Handbook will go to all volunteers, and when new people sign on, Mary Jayne Swanson will hand out the handbook.

King thanked Lee Coughlin and Laura Noble for their work in member services, training buddies and writing resource materials for members.

Board members reviewed and praised the new AHA brochure, a colorful and concise look at what AHA does.



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