



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

# AHA!

## NEWSLETTER

### January 2015

### VOL. 6 NO. 1



*Happy New Year 2015*

## Clan AHA Makes an Impression In Annual Scottish Walk Parade

More than 30 marchers from At Home in Alexandria took part in the annual Scottish Walk through Old Town.

Resplendent in their bright red scarves and white caps with red AHA logo, the AHA group carried a banner and waved white placards with bells attached. Volunteers handed out AHA materials and encouraged people in the crowd to learn more and get involved. Many in the crowd called out “Aha!” in welcome.

The tallest AHA marcher, and one who drew much attention, was L Liddle, adding inches to his height by riding his Segway along the parade route. Leading and bringing up the rear were the two AHA official parade vehicles, provided and driven by Charles Ablard, a newcomer to the Board of Directors, and Chriss Nielsen, AHA treasurer. Just behind the walking contingent was Barry Stauffer with a stroller that held a Santa figure inside that sang a recorded “Jingle Bells.”

That was the musical note of the AHA walk—“Jingle Bells” accompanied by the shaking of the tiny bells the walkers carried. But, as the next group in the parade was a Scottish clan from New Jersey, in their bright yellow tartans and with their massed bagpipes, the bells could not often compete.

Preceding the AHA group was the “Tom Jefferson” mascot of the Washington Nationals baseball team. The Tom figure, a human with a huge Jefferson head, waved to the crowd and attracted attention to the AHA group who followed.

Passengers in the AHA autos were Chair Barbara Rosenfeld and Elisabeth Malcolm, Mary Nefedov, Helen Desfosses and Tom Fitzgerald. Rosenfeld waved from her perch atop the back seat of Chriss’ convertible.

Maggie Stauffer planned and organized—and was song leader for—the parade.

Ann and L Liddle welcomed the marchers into their home, just steps away from the staging area, for pre-march refreshments and visiting. (See parade photos on p. 2.)

## Board Newcomers Sit in on a Session; Officially on Board Jan. 1

AHA welcomed new Board of Directors members as guests at its Dec. 16 meeting, preparing them for the Jan. 1 effective date of their appointment. The five expanded the Board to 14, just one shy of its full complement under the bylaws.

The new members are Charles Ablard, an attorney; Brenda Bloch-Young, an accountant; Linda Langley, an events planner; Penny Roberts, AHA volunteer director; and Mary Jayne Swanson, retail management veteran.

They bring a variety of interests and talent to the board. Their visit to the Dec. 16 session showed they are not reluctant to join in the discussions.

The Governance Committee will hold a board orientation session Monday, Jan. 12, from 2:30 p.m. to 4:30 p.m. in Chriss Nielsen’s office, suite 200 at 1501 Duke St. Committee Co-Chair Helen Desfosses said new and continuing members of the Board are encouraged to attend. The session will cover a brief history of AHA, the Board member’s role, the bylaws, the Board handbook and a look at Robert’s Rules.

Ablard clarified an item in the AHA description of his résumé: he retired long ago from his job as a Defense Department administrative law judge. His volunteer work includes tutoring and the Historic Alexandria Foundation.

## Scenes from the Parade

Photos by Heather Reitze, Cele Garrett, Barry Stauffer



**L Liddle on Segway,  
AHA car behind him**



**AHA convertible leads the contingent**



**AHA Chair Barbara  
Rosenfeld in the "command  
car," greeting the crowd**



**Volunteer Hal Howard.  
Note the bright yellow  
tartans of the New  
Jersey clan behind him.**



**Ann and L Liddle hosted a reception in their  
home before the parade, which formed just  
outside their door. Above, left to right:  
Birgitte Guttstadt, Elisabeth Malcolm and  
Helen Desfosses, and Office Co-Managers  
Monica Estabrooke and Diane Atchinson.**



**Tom Fitzgerald, front seat, and  
Mary Nefedov in AHA auto.**



**Washington Nationals'  
"Tom" Jefferson greets  
the AHA group, left, and  
then turns to walk ahead  
of the AHA contingent,  
greatly increasing  
crowds' notice of the  
AHA marchers.**



**At right, AHA  
group poses at  
assembly point  
very close to the  
Liddles' home.  
AHA parade  
organizer  
Maggie Stauffer  
is at far right.**



**The AHA "clan" wore the  
village's signature white caps  
with AHA logo, but also  
sporting red mufflers and  
waved AHA placards that  
had little "jingle bells"  
attached for when the group  
sang the Christmas song of  
the same name.**



## Notes From the December Board Meeting

The past year was “a good year for AHA,” Chair Barbara Rosenfeld reported to the Board in mid-December. “We have increased our members, provided services to lots of folks, raised our profile in the community and achieved a solid financial footing.”

As of that meeting, membership totaled 129, just ahead of expectations and up 25 percent for the year, Executive Director Cele Garrett reported. The continuing need for the organization, she said, is to encourage members to call for service “when they are reluctant to do so.” Retention of members is almost total and volunteers are also retained successfully “thanks in large part to Penny Roberts’ efforts to know our new volunteers, bring them together in social ways regularly and stay in touch with them.”

Garrett cited several publicity efforts that increase AHA visibility—advertisements in the *Alexandria Gazette* and *Alexandria Times* and mentions in *Virginia Living* magazine, a *Gazette* story about Spring2Action, another *Gazette* item about home modification and a photo in the *Alexandria Times*. AHA is enhancing its alliances with other organizations and building its social media and Website presence.

Rosenfeld exulted at the addition to the Board of Directors of five able and involved people who are prospects to fill roles in AHA’s major committees, and she welcomed the Board vote to add Louise Kenny to the Advisory Council. Kenny, a graduate of Seton Hall University, is a fund-raising consultant with long experience with nonprofits and also experience in advertising and communications. **(See Kenny biographical sketch and photo, p. 4.)**

Treasurer Chriss Nielsen reported the AHA finances “in fabulous shape,” but said members should be aware that dues cover less than half AHA’s expenses, meaning fundraising will continue to be part of the village’s efforts.

AHA is building a fund and spreading the word for subsidized memberships. Two Board members, Brenda Bloch-Young and Steve Nelson, have met and talked with prospects. AHA will contact churches and social service groups to describe the subsidized membership program, which is a way to broaden and diversify AHA’s appeal.

Governance Committee Co-Chairs Helen Desfosses and L Liddle will host an orientation for new Board members (and current ones are invited) Monday, Jan. 12, from 2:30 p.m. to 4:30 p.m., in Chriss Nielsen’s office at 1501 Duke St., suite 200.

The Board voted modest increases in paid hours for Garrett and Office Co-Manager Monica Estabrooke and will do so next year for Co-Manager Diane Atchinson, who took her job last summer. The Board will have a “mini-retreat” on Tuesday, Jan. 20, from 1 p.m. to 5 p.m. in Portner’s Landing, to review the past year and plan the coming one.

### Falls a Sharply Increasing Menace to the Elderly

Falls “remain the leading cause of both fatal and nonfatal injuries among older adults,” Erickson Living’s *Journal* reports, citing the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention statistics that 24,000 people died in 2012 after falling and 2.4 million were hurt. The numbers were a 50 percent increase in 10 years.

Factors in balance, all affected by the aging process, include vision, hearing, muscle tone, awareness of surroundings, and the sensory signals of body position, motion and equilibrium. Disorders such as arthritis and neuropathies are often the cause of balance difficulty because of their effect on flexibility and muscle strength.

Around the house, removing clutter, improving lighting, securing loose rugs and installing handrails in bathrooms can do much to protect people from falls. Fall-prevention classes or such exercises as tai chi can help, the Erickson report says.



### Festive Gatherings by AHA

Two of the best-attended events for AHA were the holiday party at the home of Chriss Nielsen (left) and Tom Crowley and the holiday evening meal at A La Lucia. (right). The photo shows one of several tables at the restaurant. Clockwise from foreground: Teddye Clayton, Steve Nelson, Pam Nelson (partly hidden), Eleanor Kask, L and Ann Liddle, Julie Gentry, (standing), Tom Fitzgerald, Mary Nefedov and Betty Wanamaker.



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

Volunteer *extraordinaire* **Pete Crouch** (remember his death-defying stunt steering traffic into the Benefit parking lot?) was Santa's elf during the holidays. His fame spread, so to speak, because he had an assignment—hanging garland over the doorway of a member of Mount Vernon At Home. For next year, he suggests AHA put more effort into generating jobs for the elf closer to home.

**Mary Page "Frisky" Hickey**, a well-known botanical artist, placed two paintings in the "Preserving Our Heritage" show at the Athenaeum, a juried exhibition featuring images of heirloom and heritage plants.

**Ken Hill and Bill Clayton** put on their other hats, as chair and board member, respectively, of their neighborhood organization, and helped trim, saw, display and sell hundreds of Christmas trees in the annual North Ridge Citizens' Association sale.

**Alice Cohan** says she feels fine, a remarkable report considering she is living with a donated heart. She has had a steady recovery from the operation. She reported "a bit of a stumbling block"—a problem with kidney function that was being treated. "Other than that I am doing quite well," she said.

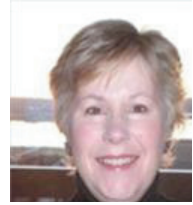


Heart transplant patient Alice Cohan and caregivers

**Nancy Berg** reports: "The Berg family of 10 booked the Savage River Lodge for two days before New Year's Eve." The lodge in Maryland features winter sports and houses guests in cabins and yurts. Yes, yurts. But Nancy said they did not expect Mongolians to ride into camp.

## Kenny Voted Onto Advisory Council

The AHA Board of Directors voted in December to add Louise Kenny to the Advisory Council. The addition boosts the Council membership to 18, a varied group with experience and expertise along a wide range of skills and experience.



Louise Kennv

Kenny was for seven years director of investor relations for United Way Worldwide. Before that, she was a development officer for Matheny Medical and Educational Center, a school and hospital for the disabled. Her career included stints in advertising, community outreach and revenue building.

She is a Certified Fundraising Professional and a graduate of Seton Hall University with a bachelor's degree in communications.

Kenny has lived in Alexandria with her husband, Mike, for seven years. She has tutored and mentored two young girls, an experience she calls life-changing. She relishes "all things Alexandria, a city rich in history, culture and charm."

## Things We Do, Tallied

Program Chair Nancy Kincaid took an exhaustive look at attendance at the events and gatherings of AHA from 2012 through most of 2014.

Evening Dine Arounds, for instance, had 296 attending in those years. The holiday dinner at A La Lucia has proven a standout with attendance of 40 for the most recent event.

The informal lectures called Conversation With attracted 269. Several had audiences of 10 to 20.

The "other" category's 764 attendees covered events from discussion groups to health lectures to receptions honoring volunteers. Josefa Gibson's volunteer party, for example, attracted 37. The Nielsen-Crowley holiday parties have had crowds nearing 50 people.

Pot luck evenings have proven very popular, from their venue in the Drake Room of Alexandria House.

Thank God It's Friday sippings in the Fin & Hoof bar of Sheraton Suites were not a big crowd but a consiustent "hard core" of several people. The total for the two years was 139. The Ladies Night Out version attracted 88.

AHA's First Anniversary celebration featuring Judith Viorst led the attendance list with 88 in the audience.

## A Friendly Reminder to Members and Associates: Please RSVP

Folded in this newsletter are the calendars of events for January and February.

A lot of people put work into scheduling the events, and all of you can help:

**Please RSVP. And if you have signed up for an event and know in advance you cannot make it, please tell the office.**

Those two simple phone calls—to sign on for an event or to alert AHA to a change in plans—really help us reserve space in restaurants, line up rides for those who need them and have a good idea of the popularity of events.

So remember, **Répondez s'il vous plaît.**



Eileen Spinella hitches a ride with Santa

### Santa Roars Up To AHA

Eileen Spinella of Mount Vernon Nursing and Rehabilitation Center rode shotgun for Santa in a visit to AHA's office.

Santa's sleigh is a tricked-out and souped-up Ford Model T that was a sensation in the parking lot outside the AHA office on Mount Vernon Avenue.

From his store of gifts, Santa produced a present for the AHA workers—some chocolates, maybe from the North Pole. Or maybe not.

### Keeping The Brain Sharp

The Mayo Clinic Health Letter says activities that stimulate the mind may slow or prevent mental decline. Using a computer, playing games, reading books, doing crafts (like knitting, quilting, other handiwork) were associated with a substantial decrease in the chance of developing mild impairment.

### Chuckles

- A sunbather reading? Well red.
- Time flies like an arrow; fruit flies like a banana.
- In a democracy, the vote counts; in a feudal system, the Count votes.
- A chicken crosses the road: poultry in motion.
- You don't pay your exorcist? You may get repossessed.
- You see one shopping center, you've seen a mall.

### Board of Directors

Barbara Rosenfeld, Chair	Helen Desfosses
Jane King, Vice Chair	Alan Dinsmore
Chriss Nielsen, Treasurer	Daniel Kulund
Linus Liddle, Secretary	Linda Langley
Bill Clayton, Editor	Steve Nelson
Charles Ablard	Penny Roberts
Brenda Bloch-Young	Mary Jayne Swanson

#### Executive Director

Cecile (Cele) Garrett

#### Advisory Council

Carolyn Abshire	Laurie Blackburn
Carol Downs	Stewart Dunn
MaryAnn Griffin	Richard Hobson
Judith Jones, MD	Louise Kenny
Ken Labowitz	Ernie Lehmann
Tim Lovain	Temple C. Moore
Richard Moose	Mitch Opalski
George Pera	Patsy Ticer
Vicki Vasques	Marian Van Landingham

#### Office Co-Managers

Monica Estabrooke and Diane Atchinson

### CONTACT US

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

[AHA@athomeinalexandria.org](mailto:AHA@athomeinalexandria.org)  
Web [www.athomeinalexandria.org](http://www.athomeinalexandria.org)



3139 Mt. Vernon Ave., Alexandria VA 22305

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