



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

AHA!

NEWSLETTER

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Left to Right: Debbie Ludington, accepting the Public Service Award for Terah Chamberlin; AHA Vice Chair Jane King; Senior Services of Alexandria President David Baker; AHA Advisory Council Member Mitch Opalski.

Excellence in Aging Awards Honor King and Opalski of AHA

AHA Vice Chair Jane King and Advisory Council Member Mitch Opalski were among outstanding Alexandrians honored May 12 with Excellence in Aging Awards from the Commission on Aging and the Division of Aging and Adult Services.

King was awarded the Annie B. Rose Lifetime Achievement Award, given to a person “whose exemplary achievements span a lifetime of public service.” In congratulating King, Mayor Bill Euille said, “Quite simply, she gets things done.”

Bob Eiffert, chair of the Commission on Aging, called King “the mother of the city’s Strategic Plan on Aging” and said she never has hesitated to take a leadership role in her varied volunteer work.

King’s career has seen her chair the Commission on Aging, co-chair the Northern Virginia Aging Network Legislative Committee, work with AARP teams, advocate for seniors’ programs and speak at events of Senior Services of Alexandria and AARP. Co-workers know her as a soft-spoken, intent and effective activist.

Opalski, president of Synergy HomeCare, was honored with the Lois Van Valkenburgh Award recognizing his “outstanding contributions to elevating the quality of life for older adults.” His company provides caregiver support for older Alexandrians. Apart from that, Opalski has worked with the Alliance for the Physically Disabled, Senior Services of Alexandria (SSA) and, as a liaison, the Commission on Aging.

Opalski “supports many local nonprofits financially, as well as through volunteering on numerous local boards and agencies,” the citation said.

Other recipients honored with Excellence in Aging Awards were SSA Chair David Baker and Terah Chamberlin of the Division of Aging and Adult Services. SSA won the award for an organization and Chamberlin for public service. She could not be present; her award was accepted in her behalf by Debbie Ludington.

SSA was recognized as “a caring and productive organization . . . whose staff is dedicated to enriching the lives of Alexandria seniors.” SSA has more than 300 volunteers in support services that benefit seniors. Chamberlin, the award said, “has worked for the Division of Aging and Adult Services since 2006, first as an adult services social worker, then transitioning to Aging and Disability Coordinator.”

The Annie B. Rose award commemorates a woman who devoted her life to improving housing opportunities and home nursing services for Alexandria’s elderly.

The award Opalski won is named for Lois VanValkenburgh, who was an activist in political and civic affairs and worked 30 years with groups helping people with mental disabilities or substance abuse challenges.

In left photo, Mitch Opalski’s mother, Mary Anne, beams at the honor for her son. It was a beautiful coincidence: her birthday on the day her son won an award. On the right, Mayor Bill Euille, who presented all the awards, holds the plaque for honoree Jane King.





Retired General, an Iraq Dissenter, Discusses “Ethics of War”

Robert Latiff (shown at left), a retired major general who nearly resigned in protest of the Iraq War, fascinated an AHA crowd May 17 with a lecture on “The Ethics of War.” The program, part of the AHA series of “Conversations With,” attracted a capacity audience to the Drake Room of Alexandria House.

Including Latiff, 31 people attended.

Around 2007, Latiff said, he became concerned about the nation’s military actions and high-tech weapons in the wake of the 9/11 attacks.

“I told a four-star mentor (of his thoughts about resigning) and he said, ‘If you were a four-star, it might matter. But you’re not and it won’t.’”

So Latiff did not resign. “I did not act on my deeply held disgust,” he told the New York Times, “and that still claws at me.”

Before switching from the Army to the Air Force, Latiff commanded an Army tactical nuclear weapons unit. After his retirement from the Air Force, he has lectured and written extensively on advanced technology before corporate, government and university audiences.

“After 9/11, all our weapons became high technology: drones, smart bombs, giving military men drugs (for example, to pilots to stay awake),” he told the AHA audience. “It is far too easy to kill somebody when you cannot look at them.” He told of a farmer digging an irrigation trench in Afghanistan and being killed by

a drone whose operator, far distant, thought the man was planting an Improvised Explosive Device (IED).

The technology of today raises many ethical questions about warfare and weapons, Latiff said. He lectures at Notre Dame and George Mason University on the topic, mostly raising questions and challenging students to consider possible answers. Latiff received a Bachelor’s Degree in 1971, a Master’s Degree in 1973 and a Ph.D. in materials science in 1974, all of them from Notre Dame.

The American public is “sort-of ho-hum” about war, Latiff said. “Since Vietnam, war has had no impact on the American public . . . It is easy for Americans to say, ‘We support the troops.’ We have a hubris in our nation” that worries him, he said. The public “really does not have a clue about what the military does—about the military ethos . . . the military ethics.” That is the point of his wanting to lecture and write on the subject, he said.

The remarks prompted many questions from the audience, among them:

- Were his qualms about Iraq widely shared in the military? At first, he did not think so and expected to be criticized “roundly,” but that did not happen, he said.
- Is he concerned about the government’s “mining data” from civilians? He is more concerned about corporate use of people’s personal data, he said.
- How do we protect the electricity grid from attack? Latiff drew chuckles by saying that in a way, we are saved by the numerous small grids and relay points that would make mass destruction difficult.

Drink “Across France” To Benefit AHA

Pam and Steve Nelson and Linda Langley have arranged a wine tasting-cum-benefit for AHA at the Au Domaine wine shop June 24. The shop, at 802 N. Fairfax, is offering “A Tour of France” free tastings from 4 to 7:30 p.m. that day and the owners will donate 25 percent of their net profit from all sales during that day’s 4-8 p.m. store hours.

Au Domaine carries wines from all over Europe as well as patés, cheeses, crackers, and other goodies. AHA villagers are encouraged to taste and buy. The thirstier you are to buy good French wines, the more AHA benefits. *Bon Appétit, mes amis.*



A capacity crowd attended the lecture.





Ken Labowitz

Labowitz Guides Audience Through Estate, Executor Complexities

Ken Labowitz, attorney and member of AHA's Advisory Council, lectured on "Managing Your Estate with Your Executor" May 6 in a program co-sponsored by AHA and Goodwin House at Home.

The event, which drew an audience of 40, was held in Goodwin House Bailey's Crossroads..

Having a will drawn is "not like having an appendix out—not 'once and it is done,'" Labowitz said. There are occasions when a will should be changed, updated or in rare cases, drafted anew. The executor of a person's estate should be "a person who is willing and able to spend the time required." It is a complicated system, he said, joking: "Did I mention wills are done by lawyers? This is not a rational system." Lawyers will sometimes make it as complicated as they can, he said.

Labowitz advised, "Have important papers where they can be found easily" when needed. That includes life insurance documents, brokerage papers, account numbers and such. The executor will need access to your bank account when he does his work.

For a small fee, the original of a will can be stored in the courthouse, Labowitz said, and the executor could have a copy in his possession.

One important step is to have a conversation with family about what you intend to leave to which heir.

"There is no magic formula," Labowitz said. Some art and some collections are more valuable to a person than to the person's heirs. Some charities do not accept some items, so it is better to know that before writing a bequest into a will.

Labowitz's presentation prompted numerous questions, some of which he could not answer fully. "I wish I had an answer for every situation," he said.

Meet and Greet To Tell About AHA

Vice Chair Jane King (left in photo) and Mary Jayne Swanson (third from right) chat with guests at a gathering on May 7 to tell the story of AHA to prospects in the neighborhood.

Swanson's home was most appropriate for the gathering because it has several modifications to make "aging in place" easier.

Guests enjoyed wine and cheese and took home brochures to spread the word in the Del Ray area.



Get A Reward For Referrals

Every time you refer a person who becomes a new member, you get \$50 off your membership fee.

It's easy money – just think of AHA when you are in a social group, talk it up and when a prospect you have talked with becomes a member, your own fee will be cut by \$50 for that year.

AHA To Benefit From Alexandria House "Balcony Tour"

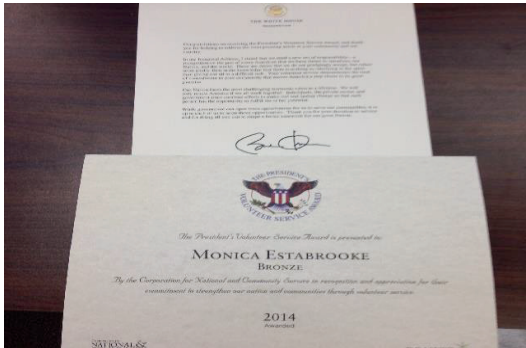
Alexandria House is holding a "balcony tour" Saturday, June 20, 3-5 p.m., to view a variety of decorative balcony gardens and plantings. The tour is open to AHA members, volunteers and their guests, as well as to residents of Alexandria House.

The Alexandria House social committee has generously offered to donate proceeds from the event to AHA. Tickets are \$5 and may be obtained in the Alexandria House lobby, beginning at 2:45 p.m., before the event begins. The entrance ticket enables guests to view all the balconies on the tour and to enjoy refreshments.

AHA members needing transportation should contact AHA at aha@athomeinalexandria.org or phone 703-231-0824.

What's Up With AHA Members, Associates And Volunteers

Monica Estabrooke, AHA office co-manager, is proudly displaying a volunteerism award from the White House and a congratulations letter from President Obama. (See photo below). IBM, for which Monica worked, submitted her name last year for the President's Volunteer Service Award for service in 2014. She was recognized for volunteer work with United Way Worldwide, At Home in Alexandria and the Legacy Foundation, an anti-smoking organization.



Board Member Alan Dinsmore was honored May 23 with the Celebration of Life Award from Mary's House for Older Adults, a facility under development in the District of Columbia to provide affordable housing for older members of the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transsexual (LGBT) community. The award recognizes individuals instrumental in decreasing social isolation of LGBT elders.



Dr. Imani Woody, president of Mary's House for Older Adults, reads the award presented to Alan Dinsmore on May 23.

"Do you know how wonderful it is to celebrate your 38th birthday (O.K., maybe a stretch) with a friend?" **Carol Downs** and **Barbara Rosenfeld** did just that the evening of May 14th at Taverna Cretekou. Downs pronounced the patio "sparkling," the wine "lovely," food "delicious."

Pam and Steve Nelson had a close and skilled tour guide, Pam's sister, Ruthann Prage, for three days in New York: The Whitney, the High Line, Broadway, dining at Sardi's. Steve says they have been "a little over-dramatic ever since, dahlings."

Volunteer Corner

Josefa Gibson hosted her yearly gathering to honor AHA volunteers May 16. Dozens of villagers attended, including the newest volunteer, **Andrew Unger**. AHA Chair **Barbara Rosenfeld** welcomed the group and praised volunteers. Some supporters of AHA are chiefly volunteers, some are also board or committee members and some are also donors. Gesturing to the crowd, Rosenfeld said, "We are all volunteers and that is what makes AHA great."

Unger had stepped right into heavy-duty volunteer work with AHA.

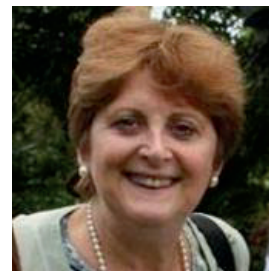
He took on an errand involving helping a member with a wheelchair negotiate several health-care stops in a multiple-story building. Welcome aboard, Andy.



Chair Barbara Rosenfeld (center background) greets guests at Josefa Gibson's annual party for volunteers. Gibson is at left in blue. "We are all volunteers," Rosenfeld said.

Mercedes Kremenetzky is a standout sort of volunteer. She has taken on the task of planning AHA's museum visits, with their particular challenges. But she also is constantly thinking about AHA – how to expand or redesign its programs to suit its membership better, how to make more affordable the events that involve fees, and other ways to make what AHA does smoother and more appealing.

Mercedes was born in Santa Fe, Argentina, in 1947 and received a law degree from the Universidad Nacional del Litoral, Argentina. In her career, she has worked as a prosecutor and professor of law. She moved to Alexandria in the late 1980s and her husband died two years ago.



Mercedes Kremenetzky

Mercedes was not sure how **Volunteer Chair Penny Roberts** got her name, but Penny phoned her and signed her up and AHA acquired a thoughtful, dedicated worker. She hopes to widen her work into an area in which she is expert: women's rights and the prevention of violence against women. She has spoken widely on those topics as well as labor issues.



AHA at Work

Scott Garrett mows the thick grass of a member's yard. Other AHA volunteers cleared fallen tree limbs, cut up a stump and bundled the yard refuse for a city pickup.

Chuckles and Chortles

- Money isn't everything, but it surely keeps the kids in touch.
- If at first you don't succeed, skydiving is not for you.
- We are born naked, wet and hungry – and then things get worse.
- We have enough youth; how about a Fountain of Smart?
- It's not whether you win or lose, but how you place the blame.

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AHA Ready for the National Survey

AHA members have two ways they can help complete the survey of villages commissioned by University of California-Berkeley. They will get an email soon with instructions for doing the survey online – the primary and most efficient way to respond. Brenda Bloch-Young and L Liddle will be available by phone or email to answer questions

Or, members can pick one of the three “survey sessions” for those who have difficulty online. AHA will need a response from every member.

Three “survey sessions” are being offered for AHA members to come in and complete their survey manually with help from a survey administrator:

Tuesday, June 16, 10 a.m.-Noon, Drake Room, Alexandria House.

Thursday, June 18, 10 a.m.-Noon, Drake Room.

Wednesday, June 24, 1-3 p.m., the AHA office.

Members' survey answers will help demonstrate the value of villages to government policymakers and grant-making organizations.

CALLING ALL VILLAGERS

It may be the weather or your crowded calendar, but some recent Dine Arounds, Walking Club outings and museum visits attracted only one or two participants.

Please check the calendars (folded each month into the newsletter) and come to the events that interest you. If you have thoughts about our doing more or fewer or different events, please let us know.

Save the Date

**The annual AHA Gala will be
Sunday, Nov. 8, from 5 to 8 p.m.**

Mark it on your calendar.

Details will emerge as plans are settled.

CONTACT US

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AHA ALEXANDRIANS HELPING ALEXANDRIANS

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