

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

AHA: Where We Are...and Where We're Headed

By Executive Director Cele Garrett

Over six years ago, At Home in Alexandria (AHA) opened its doors as an independent nonprofit. We are not tied to a city agency and we receive no local, state or federal funding. Not unlike our AHA members, we prefer being independent.

This autonomy gives us the flexibility to adapt or add services as needed. We have an active, hands-on board of directors (composed of 14 members) that convenes monthly to plan effectively and to discuss ways we can make AHA as strong, as efficient, and as valuable to our members as it can be. (Our monthly meetings remain open to all members.)



Cele Garrett

We've seen steady growth in our membership each year and, at the time of this writing, AHA has reached our highest number: 170 members. Some of our members—especially those with no family close by—come to depend on AHA in a significant way.

Other members may need us more intensely for short spurts of time (say, after a surgery or perhaps prior to and after a move). And, other members do not need our services each and every week but are glad to have AHA there when they do need some help. AHA can be involved as much or as little as a member needs or wants—and we strive to respect each member's level of need.

AHA's associate membership continues to grow in popularity. Now, fully one-third of our AHA members choose to join as associate members because they do not yet need the practical services that AHA provides but they enjoy our growing array of social and educational offerings. And, they want the service to be there for them if or when they should have a need.

At \$250 per household, associate membership has a lower fee than full membership, and all but \$50 of that amount is tax-deductible.

Alexandria's population will continue to age—and most people prefer to *age in community*. For the foreseeable future, our community has a need for the services that AHA provides.

Fortunately, AHA's financial footing is sound. Of course, we have the inevitable highs and lows of cash flows that can come with being part of a membership-based operation. Most villages like ours find that membership dues cover

approximately 45 percent of their operating budget—and currently AHA's membership dues cover less than 40 percent of our expenses. Like any mature nonprofit operation, however, we must look beyond the day-to-day operations and plan for our long-term sustainability.

Toward this effort, early in 2016, we began laying the groundwork for a major gift and planned giving program. On our five-year anniversary celebration, we officially announced this program. (You might call that announcement our “quiet launch.”)

Since then, we have had conversations with a few folks—including some members themselves—here in our community who have identified AHA as a viable solution to an issue they care deeply about: helping our older neighbors have a meaningful life and to remain as independent, confident, engaged and active as possible.

It's gratifying to learn from folks in our community who, like us, are committed to this rewarding work and who are interested in sharing their ideas to make AHA an exceptional resource for our older neighbors in Alexandria. We invite you to come and “grow” with us.

Finances, Members

AHA's finances are adequate but not dramatically up or down, Vice Chair Jane King reported, presiding over a Board meeting while Barbara Rosenfeld was away.

The village has had a recent surge in members, now totaling 170 (see Executive Director report this page). King said AHA is “still experiencing increasing interest in membership,” and “two conversations are occurring with prospective subsidized members.”

She praised Brenda Bloch-Young for creating a new program of discussions about events in the headlines. The interest in that sort of program drives interest in joining AHA, she said. (See **Interest Group News, p. 2**)

Interest Group News

Beastly hot weather took its toll on some activities.

The July bicycle ride by the Blazing Saddles (so close to actual blazing at this time) was canceled because of the heat. Sponsors Maggie and Barry Stauffer had travel plans for August, so watch this space for scheduling of an outing in the fall.

The AHA-Alexandria House bridge group had two tables of bridge in July at the remodeled The View at Alexandria House, coordinator Nancy Kincaid reported.

She also manages the movie group, six members of which went to see "The Big Sick" at Shirlington. "We all loved it," Kincaid said.

The "What's in the News" group, 14 attendees pictured below, is a popular discussion of current affairs. Coordinator Brenda Bloch-Young (at left in white) kept the discussion moving, preventing a one-topic session.



Attendees at "What's in the News"

Vice Chair Jane King said it is activity groups such as the discussion group that help spread the word about AHA and have attracted interest in joining or volunteering.

The Walking Group has had to cancel only in rain; the heat has not affected its Tuesday outings. Photo below shows from right: Mary Nefedov, Shelly Schwab, Penny Roberts and Mary's stepdaughter Suzanne.



Walking Club members along the Potomac

Penny Roberts reports that Metropolitan Opera Live is in a summer pause, but will start up again on Oct. 7, with *Norma* by Bellini and featuring Sondra Radvanovsky as Norma and Joyce DiDonato as Adalgisa. On Oct. 14 the group will see *Die Zauberflöte* (*The Magic Flute*) by Mozart.

AHA to Offer *Matter of Balance* Training

In the spring of 2016, Marymount University, in partnership with Inova and Goodwin House, began the process of applying for a federal grant available from the Administration for Community Living (ACL), an agency that is part of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

The goal of the grant proposal was to establish an integrated network to conduct an ongoing series of fall prevention programs across northern Virginia.

After learning more about this program, AHA agreed that this was an idea worthy of our support and joined 16 other organizations as additional stakeholders on the project. We learned late last summer that the grant was awarded. Since that time, each of our organizations has begun the training and coordination necessary to get our own fall prevention workshops off the ground.

We're pleased to announce that four of our AHA members and volunteers are now trained to offer the small-group class *Matter of Balance*, a popular program that combines movement, video modules and discussion to address specific topics like improving flexibility, balance and strength. This robust, evidence-based program is an eight-week program with participants meeting each week for two hours. Because of the interactive nature of this class, it will be strictly capped at 12 participants. AHA is working with the City of Alexandria to confirm space for the class and, in the coming weeks, we'll share complete details.

Use Upcycle Space to Get Your Creativity On!

Upcycle is offering AHA some "adult studio art hours" this summer. The idea of drop-in hours came from our initial meeting last month.

The "open hours" provide a chance to explore any artistic endeavor in a "judgment free" zone, using Upcycle's space and materials. Open hours for August: Thursday, Aug. 10, 1-4 p.m.; Sunday, Aug. 27, 1-4 p.m.; Thursday, Aug. 31, 1-4 p.m. Upcycle is in the Durant Arts Center, 1605 Cameron St., and must meet a minimum of six participants, so please register if you plan to

attend: <http://www.upcyclecrc.org/adult-studio-hours.html>



How Many Regulations Touch The Teeny Peanut M&M?

Many, an audience learned at AHA's Conversation With program on the subject June 25 at the Porto Vecchio home of Virginia Martin.

In an unusual interactive program, Kristen Norman-Major, Ph.D., professor of public administration at Hamline University, had the audience call out the myriad ways a product could be regulated.

The subject of this informal audience-participation production and marketing research: a small package of peanut M&Ms.

The first question from Norman-Major was: Any allergies to peanuts in the room? Nobody had an allergy.

Then Norman-Major got the session started by asking the audience members to call out what rules and laws the small candy might have to meet, from the production or growing of the ingredients to their making into candy, to the advertising and promotion and shipping.

Sweeteners, somebody suggested. Labeling, another said. Transportation. Union rules. Flavors and colors. And so it went down a list of about three dozen ways government at various levels has its hands on peanut M&Ms.

When the subject was exhausted, Norman-Major handed around samples. The discussion raised questions about the proper role of government and the proper balance of controls on products.



Kristen Norman-Major, in background in blue, gets her audience to guess the myriad rules and regulations a peanut M&M must meet.



“Namaste,” an AHA Lunch Around group said to each other as greeting in the Indian restaurant by the same name. The 10 who attended ordered from the a la carte menu or chose the substantial buffet.



Fireworks Viewing Parties

AHA guests huddle to view the July 8 fireworks celebrating Alexandria's 268th birthday from the Alexandria House balconies of Joyce and Dick Bachman and Nancy Kincaid. A couple of backlights: a full moon, a bit flattened by clouds, and the bright lights of the casino in the distance.

Another Chance to See and Hear Atul Gawande

We're excited to announce that once again AHA is joining forces with Mount Vernon At Home for a special watch party on Monday, Sept. 25 from 4:30 to 7 p.m. at the Unitarian Universalist Church at 1909 Windmill Lane (right off Fort Hunt Road) in Alexandria.

We will watch a live simulcast of author and physician Atul Gawande as he addresses villages like ours across the country on the occasion of the 15th anniversary of the village movement, which started in Boston. (This is the event that was originally scheduled in February but had to be postponed because of a snowstorm in Boston, when the chosen venue—as well as the backup venue—had to close.)

The church sanctuary, a spacious and comfortable room, will be the setting. Appetizers, wine and refreshments will be included and there will be an entrance fee of \$10 to help offset the expenses, paid in advance when you RSVP.

You can pay online at www.athomeinalexandria.org, by phone (703-231-0824), or by mail (3139 Mt Vernon Ave., Alexandria VA 22305).

What's Up With AHA Members, Associates and Volunteers



Winnie and Ken Hill, at head of table at June's TGIF, chat with Barry Stauffer (standing) and other guests at one of the best-attended gatherings in the Fin & Hoof bar. Soon afterward, the Hills moved into a new community in Adamstown, MD.

Earle Baughman regaled fellow villagers at an AHA gathering with the tale of his daughter, who long years ago as a child, was given free rein to order anything off a menu. She chose three (count 'em, 3) kinds of potato—fried, baked and mashed, and was happy as a clam.

New member **Mary Jane Ruhl** made a good choice for her first AHA event – the fireworks viewing July 8 from a high balcony of the Alexandria House. (See photo, p. 3)

“Don't make me out to be Wonder Woman or something,” member **Shirley Rettig** said when told she would be mentioned in this column. But why not? She is 90 and she hikes, bikes and skis. Maybe not as much or as intensely as in the past, but anyway....

Rettig was born in Cleveland May 21, 1927 (the day Charles Lindbergh landed in Paris). She has a degree in chemistry and worked in private industry before a career with the U.S. Geological Survey, retiring in 1989. She tried skiing in her 40s and “I was hooked.” She joined the Potomac Appalachian Club for hikes that are, she says, shorter now. And “the biking is getting short” also—only a half-hour the day of this interview. Another hiking buddy told her about AHA and that is how we have “don't call me Wonder Woman” in our midst.

VOLUNTEER CORNER

Pete Crouch, a standout volunteer for AHA, is now a “three-fer.”

When he was in Connecticut in June, he talked with Stephanie Panagos, the executive director of Our Shoreline Community Association (OSCA). This village serves the coastal Connecticut communities of Mystic, Noank and Groton, with around 65 members.

“Stephanie runs it out of her home,” Crouch reported, “and tells me that while they are mostly providing transportation, they are looking to expand their image,” by emulating the efforts of the original village, Beacon Hill in Boston, to shift to a broader, younger base. “Beacon Hill says it ran into the impression that villages were for the very old, and is encouraging younger participants as well as older,” Crouch said.

So what did Crouch do? He signed on as a volunteer with OSCA. He was already a volunteer for AHA and for Mount Vernon At Home. He can only do the Connecticut errands when he goes up there on vacation.

Other guests at the **Joyce and Dick Bachman** balcony for the Alexandria fireworks tried to blame **Bill Gemmill**, a retired meteorologist, for the gusty winds that flipped some of the Bachmans' crackers off their balcony table as well as the top of the wine cooler. Gemmill would have none of it—retired long ago, he said. The wines stood their ground, however, and were not harmed. **Dick Bachman** retrieved the cooler top the next afternoon from where it had flown, outside a garage across the street below.

Josette Desfayes volunteered to help teach French to a new member contemplating a trip to France. *Merci beaucoup*, Josette.

An **AHA team** fell into place quickly to help a member get over some major hurdles. A volunteer helped the member fill out the forms required by the city. But on short notice, a team formed for quite another task: helping the member through a brief court appearance in Fairfax. **Vice Chair Jane King** contacted an **AARP volunteer, Tahera Shairzay**, who speaks the language of the member, and who on very short notice accompanied the member to court to settle a landlord-tenant case. As it turned out, the case was dismissed. But the presence of a translator and AHA driver gave the member comfort and support at a difficult time.

Dial 2-1-1 for Human Services in D.C., Maryland and Virginia

Dial 2-1-1 for assistance in Washington, D.C., Maryland, and Virginia. Find assistance when you or someone you know needs help.

There are thousands of health and human services programs available to assist you—from child care, jobs, health care, and insurance—to emergency services to help you in times of disaster or emergency. When you dial 2-1-1, a trained professional listens to your situation and suggests sources of help using one of the largest databases of health and human services.



Jen Heinz

Social Media

Jen Heinz, AHA’s marketing manager, explained social media to an AHA group July 18 at the village office.

She talked about 15 social media, of which Facebook is “the Big Kahuna,” she said, attracting 83 percent of Internet users ages 18 to 29 and nearly half those over 65.

The list of media is so varied that Heinz counseled: “Do not use them all.” They have differing benefits and niches, she said. They have increasingly taken the place of the Rolodex, the telephone, the letter and other means of communication. Some of the new media are better

for photos, some for brief messages, some for business contacts.

“There is a definite business benefit in being on social media,” Heinz said. “And many people don’t get out of bed before checking their Twitter feeds.”

The best-known Twitter user is President Trump, who sends out several tweets per day.

YouTube, Instagram, Snapchat and Pinterest are good for images and photos, Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn are good the sharing text and articles, but also are for images and photos.

Tips for Better Sleep

The Mayo Clinic Health Letter lists several steps to better sleep.

—Forgo naps. For some people, naps make it harder to fall asleep at night.

—Ask your doctor or pharmacist if any medicines you take affect your sleep.

—Activity such as moderate exercise helps promote good sleep. But stop exercising a few hours before bedtime.

—Avoid or limit caffeine and alcohol; they can make it harder to get sound sleep.

—Keep bedtime snacks small. Eating too much late in the evening could cause stomach upset and digestive problems.

—Relax before bed. Try to put worries and concerns aside.

—Check electronics. The lights from television, computer or cellphone can disturb sleep. Don’t bring them to the bedroom.

—Keep a schedule. Keep bedtime and wake time consistent from day to day, including weekends.

—Hide clocks. Set an alarm when needed, but avoid checking the time, so that you won’t worry about what time it is until you get up.

—If you can’t sleep, read a bit or listen to soothing music until you feel sleepy.

Board of Directors

Barbara Rosenfeld, Chair	Helen Desfosses
Jane King, Vice Chair	Alan Dinsmore
Chriss Nielsen, Treasurer	Bob Eiffert
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

Marketing Manager

Jen Heinz

Advisory Council

Charles Ablard, Liaison

Laurie Blackburn	Peter Crouch
Carol Downs	MaryAnn Griffin
Richard Hobson	Judith Jones, MD
Louise Kenny	Jessica LeFevre
Ernie Lehmann	Tim Lovain
Temple C. Moore	Mitch Opalski
Jan Pomerantz	Patsy Ticer
Vicki Vasques	

Operations Co-Managers

Monica Estabrooke, Bernice Courtenay
and Dara Surratt

Chuckles and Chortles

Things to ponder:

- Why doesn’t Tarzan have a beard?
- If people evolved from apes, why are there still apes?
- You believe it when told there are a billion stars, but when a sign says, “Wet Paint,” you HAVE to touch it to make sure.
- Is there ever a day when mattresses are not on sale?
- How do dead bugs get into the sealed light fixture?
- It was a cruel joke to put an “s” in “lisp.”
- Why does the bank charge a fee for insufficient funds when it already knows you have insufficient funds?

CONTACT US

At Home in Alexandria
3139 Mt. Vernon Avenue
Alexandria, VA 22305
703-231-0824

aha@athomeinalexandria.org
www.athomeinalexandria.org