

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

Great Events on the Horizon

by Executive Director Cele Garrett

September is the time of year when we welcome back many of our members and volunteers from summer travels. AHA hosted 30 events and fulfilled over 200 member requests since the beginning of June, so we didn't have a sleepy summer by any means.

Now that most of the gang is back in town, please save the date for two important events: AHA's fall fundraiser on Sunday, October 6, 5-7:30 p.m. and AHA's volunteer appreciation party on Saturday, October 26 at 5 p.m.

Last year, we made the decision to forgo our big fall gala in favor of a less formal, more intimate and less costly fundraiser. Joe Reeder kindly opened his historic Old Town home and garden for a casual buffet dinner. Despite the rain (thank goodness for big tents!), it was a wonderful gathering.

This year, longtime AHA supporters and Alexandria residents Vicki and Fabrice Vasques have offered to host our party at Belle Haven Country Club. It's a lovely venue with ample parking that will provide the ideal setting for an evening party. The event will feature heavy hors d'oeuvres and open bar, along with live background music. Lots of comfortable seating will be available. A few special auction items will be offered, too. If you have an "experiential" item

to donate—tickets to an event, a travel destination, a private dining opportunity or the like—we welcome it. Reach out to me at cele@athomeinalexandria.org or call the office.

Later in the month, AHA member Josefa Gibson once again will welcome AHA volunteers and members to her home so we can toast our fantastic volunteers. Josefa's party is always a crowd favorite so you don't want to miss it. We thank her for opening her beautiful home to celebrate and honor AHA volunteers, the true backbone of our organization.

These two events—each hosted by individuals who have been part of AHA for many years—illustrate just what a special community we've created together. Whether you've opened your home for a Sunday afternoon "Conversations" talk, Friday games day, a book club, the AHA holiday party, our "pre-game" Scottish Walk coffee or any other AHA gathering (and you all know who you are), I thank you from the bottom of my heart for the hospitality you've extended to our members and volunteers.

Of course, you won't have to wait 'til October for some great AHA events; just check out September's calendar, which is getting fuller by the day. ***Bring it on, autumn!***



City of Alexandria Offers Free Medication and Firearm Locking Devices

The City of Alexandria is offering free locking medication boxes and firearm trigger or cable locks as part of [Lock and Talk Northern Virginia](#). This safety program is a collaborative initiative of the Suicide Prevention Alliance of Northern Virginia.

Studies show that when firearms are accessible, individuals are three times more likely to die by suicide, and that the majority of people who die by suicide use either firearms, poisons or medications. Suicide and accidents can be prevented by limiting access to lethal means and talking with those who may want to end their lives. The best strategy for protecting a person at risk is to remove lethal means from the home until a mental health crisis is resolved.

The free firearm locks and medication lock boxes offered from this program include information on safe handling, along with tips on how to secure firearms and medications. Alexandria residents and employees may call 703-746-3436 to obtain these free life-saving devices.

Suicide can be prevented. Anyone at risk of suicide, or who knows someone at risk, should get help right away. Treatment works and people recover. Call PRS CrisisLink at 703-527-4077, text "CONNECT" to 85511 or call City of Alexandria Emergency Services at 703-746-3401. **For life-threatening situations, call 911 immediately.**

Meet Up, Cheer Up, Greet a Friend, have a Bite to Eat – AHA Does It All



A recent gathering at The View, Alexandria House, with many members mingling and catching up on news, stories and opinions. The crowd grew to 21 members – try out the next one on September 14, 5-7 p.m. RSVP required.

Dillon Rule vs Home Rule Up for Discussion

by Julie Gentry

The September Single Subject Discussion Group will meet on September 27th to learn how the Dillon Rule and Home Rule states differ in what decisions local municipalities are permitted to make. It promises to be an eye-opening discussion. There **may** even be a guest speaker.

In Dillon Rule states, the state legislature has the capacity to deny or permit decisions made by local jurisdictions. Examples that must be approved by the Virginia State Legislature include:

- Open public schools before Labor Day
- Alter speed limits for vehicles traveling through school zones,
- Expand the definition of "family" so same-sex partners qualify for health insurance
- Permit Arlington County to ban smoking at a county-owned Amphitheater
- Ban firearms from Alexandria City facilities

In Home Rule states, local jurisdictions can make their own decisions without state interference. Come to the discussion on September 27 to learn more.

Meetings are held in the conference room of the Bradlee Safeway on the ground level from 10:30 - 12 noon. Parking is free and entry is through the door that is facing King Street.

Upcoming AHA/GHAH Workshop: For Your Eyes and Ears

AHA continues its tradition of teaming up with Goodwin House at Home to co-present a workshop to our members, volunteers and other community friends. Our next collaboration, Sensory Loss: How Modern Technology Helps, will take place on **Wednesday, September 25 from 1:30-3:30 p.m. at Goodwin House Alexandria**. Our featured panelists and guests will include representatives from the Northern Virginia Resource Center for Deaf and Hard of Hearing, the Prevention of Blindness Society, Metropolitan Washington Ear, Authored Clothing, and Alexandria Library's Talking Books. We'll also have an array of "show and tell" items at tables for attendees to peruse.

Goodwin House at Home is managing reservations. Call 703-952-9511 or email athome@goodwinhouse.org. This is a free workshop but space is limited. Snacks and refreshments will be provided, as will valet parking. Feel free to bring a friend.

Jane King Wins Local Honors

by Bill Clayton

August must have been AHA Chair Jane King Month in local newspapers. The "good news" paper Zebra devoted more than a half-page in its August edition to King, emphasizing her being honored as a Living Legend of Alexandria. Elsewhere in the Zebra is a long article about making Alexandria a dementia-friendly city, an initiative on whose "action team" King served prominently. The Alexandria Gazette Packet of Aug. 8-14 had a photo and article about the Dementia-Friendly Alexandria initiative, including details of King's role in its formation. See photos of the launch on Page 5.



Mayor Justin Wilson read a proclamation at the launch of the initiative in a July 30 program in City Hall at which honored guests and speakers included King, Jacqueline Barbarito of Goodwin House, Mary Lee Anderson of Senior Services of Alexandria and Melissa Andrews, president of Leading Age Virginia.

The aim of Dementia-Friendly Alexandria is to educate the community about dementia – its effects and how caregivers can help people living with dementia. The Gazette article quoted the Alzheimer's Association as saying 5.8 million people are living with Alzheimer's, the most common type of dementia.

As head of AHA, King emphasizes that, in addition to services such as transportation, caregiving organizations such as AHA must offer a range of activities designed to reduce senior citizens' feelings of isolation and loneliness.

King has long been an honored volunteer with AARP. She won the Annie B. Rose Lifetime Achievement Award from the Commission on Aging, recognizing her outstanding and long-running contributions to the wellbeing of Alexandria.

AHA has a rich history with the Alexandria Commission on Aging, providing a succession of chairs of the important agency. Current Chair **Babs Waters** succeeded **Bob Eiffert**, who succeeded **Jane King**, who succeeded **Carol Downs**. In addition, over the years, AHA people have served on the commission and chaired some of its committees.

The SECURE Act

by Brenda Block-Young
Retired CPA, Tax Director

How long has it been since the House has passed new legislation with a vote of 417-3? This new proposal stands for Setting Every Community Up for Retirement Enhancement (SECURE) Act of 2019. The bill was expected to be approved by unanimous consent by the Senate before the August recess, but the debt agreement shelved this act for now.

While the bill has a number of excellent provisions to improve retirement savings for current working Americans, there is a revenue grab that impacts us. The "pay for" in the bill requires our IRA / 401(k) beneficiaries to withdraw the funds over a 10-year period rather than resetting the withdrawal period based on the life expectancy of the eldest beneficiary (estimated at 30-40 years.) Beneficiaries will be receiving significant required distributions during their peak earning years and likely taxed at top marginal rates. The intent is to kill the stretch IRA benefit and is almost a stealth estate tax.

There is another version of this bill in the Senate Finance Committee called Retirement Enhancement and Savings Act (RESA) that recommended the "Death of the Stretch IRA" with modifications, permitting \$400,000 from the 10-year withdrawal period and another version with an exclusion of \$450,000 per beneficiary. Either would be an improvement to the impact of the SECURE Act for current retirees who intended to leave these funds to their beneficiaries.

For now, the bill is "on the shelf" with some expectation that it may be included in year-end spending bills. My sincere thanks to Carol Downs for connecting me with the AARP National Advocate assigned to Congress. Questions? Feel free to contact me.

AHA Testimonial

by Mary Margaret McGrail

Nine years ago, I thought I might retire to Massachusetts where I grew up and still have many family members whom I love. I looked at 55+ active housing communities on the road to Boston but they were not very active. So, I decided to stay in my Alexandria home. I have some good friends in the metropolitan area, but they live in D.C., Mt Airy, MD, and other outlying towns. Because of distance we don't see each other very much.

Then, almost two years ago, I discovered AHA and joined with full membership. I have had wonderful volunteer gentlemen from AHA help me in my home, garden and on the computer. I now have new friends with whom I "dine around", talk over the news, and go to the movies. Happy Hours, informative lectures - all events are so good. The AHA office is extremely helpful - they couldn't be nicer. So, in the 50 years I've lived here, it's the first time I really feel

AT HOME IN ALEXANDRIA.

What's Up With AHA Members, Associates and Volunteers

Cele Garrett recently met with several members at Fontaine Bistro. From left to right in the photo are Louise Gooden, Pat Roland, Susanne Adams, and Rita Mattia.



AHA Secretary **Sandy Heistad** writes about the unusual service her son, Dean, operates with his airplane and some volunteers: "Amelia Air," which rescues dogs from areas where shelter dogs are put to death after a short period. Amelia Air (ameliaair.org) picks up as many as 20 dogs at a time and takes them to adoption and rescue groups where the animals can "live out a full life in loving households," Dean said.

Amelia Air, a foundation named after a Great Dane that Dean and his wife rescued in 2017, also helps rescue animals from natural disasters. Amelia the dog was severely underweight in 2017, but "she has had a fantastic life with our family since then," Dean reports.

A satisfied customer: **John Veldhuis**. He was with the Blazing Saddles bicycling group on its Aug. 15 outing to Shirlington and a bit of the W&OD Trail.

John wrote this to the "Chief Blazers," **Maggie and Barry Stauffer**: "Thank you so much for a wonderful ride and my first re-entry into the world of biking. Great experience. Looking forward to the next one."



John Veldhuis, Barry & Maggie Stauffer

Global warming? Maybe so. But Tuesday Aug. 20 was too hot for the Walking Group to walk, so it canceled.

Ladies' Night Out - with one honorary lady - enjoyed a gathering at Charlies on the Avenue in Del Ray.



Jolie Rubin, Mary Jayne Swanson, Bill Clayton, Pam Nelson, Shelly Schwab, Nancy Kincaid, Kit Leider, Penny Roberts, Sandra Sterne, and Virginia Kress. (photo by Teddy Clayton)

Monica Estabrooke, former AHA Operations Manager, was involved in a serious accident. Let her tell it: "I am fine. The car is not. It looks like a sausage...caught between a tractor-trailer on the right and a county truck on the left. My son had the car towed to one of his body shops; so, I have a rental for a while. The next night a 100-foot tree fell into my yard from the neighbor's. I'm responsible to pay for the cleanup---get that." She added, "Doing fine...miss my buddies at AHA."

Monica is now executive assistant to the senior pastor at Christ Church in Fairfax Station. She calls the job in the thousand-person congregation "a challenge in a wonderful environment," in which she will be able to use her "fundraising and asset giving" skills.

Monica is an AHA Associate member so, fortunately, we'll see her at some AHA events.

Blazing Saddles Rides Again

September is one of the best months for bike riding, so pump your bike tires and join us on Thursday, September 12th. We will bike 8.5 miles to the Georgetown waterfront, following the Potomac, mainly on bike paths. Riders should be able to maintain a speed of 11-12 mph on a flat road. There will be a coffee or gelato break in Georgetown before returning. Meet at the bike path at Madison and Fairfax Streets at 9:30 a.m.

For bike help or questions please contact Maggie or Barry Stauffer at 703-549-8680 or maggie.stauffer@comcast.net.

Dementia Friendly Alexandria Launches

At Home in Alexandria was well represented at the launch of Dementia Friendly Alexandria at City Hall on July 30, as several members attended to hear about the plans for this important new program. The audience at the launch paid rapt attention to the speakers, as all seemed glad to hear about a city-wide effort to engage those with dementia and their caregivers in the life of the community. Local newspapers covered the event and Channel 4 featured the city's plans for the project.

At Home in Alexandria will play an important role. Cele Garrett, Babs Waters, Carol Downs, Maggie Stauffer as well as Jane King serve on the Action Team, which does the planning for the program and assures that all segments of the community, from businesses, to government, non-profit organizations, the faith community, medical professionals, residents and others, are informed about the best ways to support those with dementia and their caregivers. Alexandria joins 200 communities in 40 states in the Dementia Friendly America network, which advises communities about the best ways to enhance the lives of people living with dementia and their caregivers.



Alexandria Mayor
Justin Wilson



Police Chief Michael Brown;
Assistant Police Chief Don
Hayes; Supervisor,
Community Policing,
Sergeant Misti Battle



Attentive crowd at City Hall on July 30 for the launch of Dementia Friendly Alexandria

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Dear Readers

Thank you for all the kind comments I've received since taking over the editorship of this newsletter. It's given me the opportunity to meet more of you in many different settings – programs, happy hours, book groups and other social settings.

Your input is important to me so please consider sending in any "newsy" items, share your travel, health or financial topics, your good AHA volunteer experiences or whatever it might be. Photos are welcome, too. Send to me at marybier@comcast.net by the 16th of the month.

Thanks for your support,
Mary Ann Bier, Editor

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ALEXANDRIA

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