

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

A New Year Brings Changes to AHA's Board of Directors

by Cele Garrett

The beginning of the year is a time of new beginnings and AHA's board of directors has a few transitions of its own. At the end of 2019, three great board members completed their term, as required by AHA's bylaws: Bill Clayton, Alan Dinsmore and Barbara Rosenfeld. Bill Clayton has served AHA in so many ways we cannot count them all. He edited 100 newsletters, for which he remains a contributing writer, and for years he coordinated the silent auction of AHA's annual gala. Bill has been our biggest cheerleader and has probably logged more volunteer hours than anyone. At critical points, he has come to the need of so many AHA members and he is a real favorite among our members.

Alan Dinsmore has developed educational programs that AHA has offered to our members and to the public, including presentations we have co-led with Goodwin House at Home. He has served on AHA's Member Services committee. Alan will continue to lead the Transportation committee of the Commission on Aging. Most recently, that committee guided the Commission's advocacy, on behalf of seniors, to disallow the use of e-scooters on sidewalks.

Barbara Rosenfeld has been involved with AHA from its earliest days and has offered many years of strong leadership, to include four years as chair of AHA's board. She has coordinated our very popular "Conversations With..." program. As a result of her many acquaintances in the region, she ably attracted many outstanding speakers. Barbara has been a tremendous contributor to AHA's success.

Two new members join the AHA board of directors: Victoria Almquist and Peter Crouch. Victoria Almquist retired in 2015 from the Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids. She served as director of outreach, managing a coalition of public health and medical groups that advocate for changes in tobacco policy at the national, state and local levels. Victoria currently serves on the Alexandria Commission on Aging and is an executive volunteer with Compassion and Choices.

Peter Crouch, with Crouch Realty Group of McEneaney Associates, has been an AHA corporate sponsor for the past several years. Pete has served on the AHA Advisory Council as well. Most AHA members know him as the handyman who comes to the rescue for countless maintenance tasks or who oversees contractors to keep them honest. Pete worked for a large real estate developer building senior housing before opening his own real estate brokerage business in the '90s.

As Jane King's term comes to an end, AHA's board chair changes as well. It would be difficult to find a single person with more depth of experience in advocating for senior issues as Jane. She has served on the Alexandria Commission on Aging for several years, including four years as its chair. She was the chief architect of the city's Age-Friendly Plan for a Livable Community approved by the city council and AARP. Additionally, Jane is a leader of the Dementia Friendly Alexandria initiative. Jane spearheaded the development and implementation of the Alexandria Strategic Plan on Aging. Jane worked for AARP until her retirement.

Fortunately for AHA, Jane leaves the AHA board in the capable hands of Bob Eiffert. Bob Eiffert has had thirty years' experience in leadership positions in local government, both in Alexandria and Fairfax County. His responsibilities have included, at different times, housing, aging and long-term care. He has served as chair of the Alexandria Commission on Aging and on the board of the Goodwin House Foundation. He has also been AHA's vice chair for the last two years.

Pam Nelson has been elected to serve as vice-chair of AHA for a two-year term. Pam has been the chair of AHA's Governance committee and will also continue in that role. Kathie Fricke continues as treasurer as does Sandy Heisted as secretary.



Improving Care Transitions

By Susanne Adams, Lee Coughlin, and Laura Noble

..... Note from Cele Garrett, AHA executive director: Recently, AHA had a chance to take part in a webinar titled “Improving Care Transition,” offered by Right At Home, one of our providers. The three volunteers listed above rose to the challenge of participating in the webinar, discussing it afterwards, and combining their notes to create the following article. On AHA’s Member Services committee, along with a larger group of talented and caring volunteers. Susanne and Lee are both retired nurses and Laura is a recently retired occupational therapist.

These days, patients are discharged and sent home sooner—and sicker—than in the past. To lessen the chances of a return trip to the hospital, please keep the following points in mind. Though AHA is not qualified to assist with true medical needs like administering medications or providing help with activities of daily living (ADLs), our volunteers can drive you to appointments, serve as your “second ear” at medical appointments, pick up medications, or check in by phone or in person with the frequency that you desire. Our office can recommend trusted resources if you need a higher level of care during your rehabilitation.....

Here is a sobering fact: One in six Medicare patients is readmitted to the hospital within 30 days of discharge. Whether you are transitioning from the hospital to home, to a rehab facility or even to outpatient therapy or other services after a hospital stay, here are a few keys to success:

- **Good discharge planning:** Patients must have written discharge instructions. The notes should be patient-centered and should include all disciplines involved in the patient's care during hospitalization. The patient’s goals and personal circumstances must be considered. One plan does not fit all!
- **Timely and accurate communication:** Communications with the patient AND caregiver should include written instructions, a medication list, and demonstration and “teach-back” of any new procedures. It is important patients have someone with them at discharge while instructions are being reviewed to be a "second ear." In addition, accurate and timely communication with the rehab facility, home care company, or outpatient providers is critical. Know exactly what number to call if you find that discharge instructions aren’t clear or if you experience adverse symptoms that aren’t

expected. It’s important to know which warning signs need to be reported.

- **Follow-up at home:** This can be done by a visiting nurse or therapist, home aide, friend, or AHA volunteer to make sure that all recommended tasks are completed. This includes getting the recommended assistance for ADLs, such as dressing and bathing, meals that follow diet and nutrition recommendations, shopping, transportation to appointments, and picking up medication and supplies. Often a hospital representative will call to see how things are going. It is important to accept help after discharge; this is not the time to try to go it alone!
- **Take the correct medications, the right dosage, at the right time:** You will want to know if your prior medications are to be continued or if there is a change to the dosage. There are many opportunities for mistakes in this area so do not hesitate to call the doctor or nurse with any questions. Reconciling medications after a hospital stay is a critical step in a successful discharge.
- **Maintain good nutrition:** Thirty to forty percent of all patients entering the hospital are malnourished and an additional 38 percent become malnourished in the hospital—an astonishing statistic. Malnourished patients are more at risk for infections, ulcers, falls, poor recovery including wound healing, readmissions and even death. Some signs of malnutrition are weight loss, weakness, decreased functional status, diminished appetite, edema, or loss of subcutaneous fat. To enhance your nutrition, find foods that are appealing, ensure that chewing and swallowing are intact, serve small frequent portions, and use nutritional supplements, for example, Ensure, if needed. If you suspect you or someone you know may be malnourished, follow up with the doctor.
- **Keep follow-up appointments:** It is important to have someone coordinating your care after discharge if multiple disciplines or specialists are involved. Notify your primary care doctor about your hospitalization. Often a follow-up appointment is recommended with your primary care doctor soon after you get home.

Agenda: Alexandria Discusses Aging in Alexandria

Recent AHA Chair Jane King joined three prominent figures in the world of services and programs for older residents, in a November 25 panel discussion of aging in Alexandria. The program was one of a series by Agenda: Alexandria, an issues forum that prides itself for “taking a look at issues without taking sides.”

In addition to King, panelists were Mary Lee Anderson, executive director of Senior Services of Alexandria; Tracey Johnson, director of sales at Sunrise Senior Living of Alexandria; and Dr. Vivek Sinha, medical director of Silverado Memory Care Community.

Michael Pope, the journalist who moderates the programs for Agenda Alexandria, directed the discussion by taking questions from the audience. The result was a wide-ranging exploration of many issues, to include dementia and Alexandria as a Dementia Friendly Community, Medicare, the availability of many services and programs for older adults, the importance of documents such as wills and advance directives, and home modifications that accommodate aging residents.

Perhaps the subject of greatest interest to the audience was dementia. Dr. Sinha explained some of the concerns about dementia he addresses as a physician. Both King and Anderson had advice for caring for people with dementia. “Be positive,” Anderson advised. Dementia patients often have conflicting strong emotions. When a person with dementia imagines things that are clearly not true, “Do not correct them,” King advised, but “go with the flow” and then steer the discussion to another topic.

King and Anderson worked with members of the Alexandria Commission on Aging, Goodwin House staff and others to assure that Alexandria is designated a “dementia friendly community.” To that end, King, Anderson, AHA board member Babs Waters and a former AHA chair, Carol Downs, have completed the training to be “dementia friendly champions.” They will conduct information sessions to support the ability of participants to engage more knowledgeably with people with dementia.

Addressing the need for changes to a home to accommodate aging, the panel described several modifications that are helpful to aging occupants – such as removing rugs that threaten slipping or tripping, installing handles or locks that are easy to operate, and grab bars in bathrooms, though installation requires blocking to secure the bars and is best done by a professional.

King described the services and programs offered by AHA. She noted that AHA offers programs of such variety that they can satisfy the many interests of members. They include everything from Blazing Saddles to a Mystery Book Group and “What’s in the News,” a current events forum.

The Politics Forum Discusses Impeachment by Bill Clayton

Political scientist and AHA Board member Helen Desfosses (background, in red) led a discussion Dec. 13 of current political issues.



“It could not be more timely,” she said, pointing out that the House Judiciary Committee was just then voting on two articles of impeachment against President Trump. She had hoped to focus the discussion on the presidential campaigns. But the calendar and political climate dictated a long discussion of the impeachment process, followed by campaign issues and questions from the audience of 22, in The View, a meeting room in Alexandria House.

Noting the intense partisanship and division in the United States since Trump’s election, Desfosses had an encouraging note: “We will survive this crisis,” she said. “I have traveled the world, talking about democracy. We are still a beacon.” The United States is far from the only country in turmoil, she said, mentioning challenges to regimes in several countries. “All over the world, countries are breaking apart,” she said.

Because of the polarization of the two major political parties in the United States, “Independents are going to be more and more important” in elections, she said.

Holding up a book by Howard Fields entitled “High Crimes and Misdemeanors,” Desfosses outlined the process of impeachment, on the very afternoon the House committee was approving two articles of impeachment, alleging Trump had obstructed Congress and misused the powers of the presidency.

The question-and-answer period of the program involved nearly all the attendees. One said she was “amazed” that, after a long series of hearings, “No minds were changed” in Congress. Another said that, in view of young people’s engagement in issues such as climate change, “There is hope for the new generation.”

Topics raised by the questions included the role of “big money” in elections, the search for political leaders, the “disrupters” and “influencers” in public life, and that some feel the nation is lucky to have avoided widespread violence in an intense political year.

What's Up With AHA Members, Associates and Volunteers

Brenda Bloch-Young kept a family tradition alive by traveling abroad at Thanksgiving. This time, she and her son, daughter and daughter's boyfriend visited the Cape Town/Western Cape region of South Africa—"an amazing place with a complex history," Brenda reported. They spent a few days in the wine region, then at a house on stilts on a lagoon in a bird sanctuary, then in Kalk Bay before visiting Cape Town. A highlight was Babylonstoren, one of the oldest Cape Dutch farms, with a beautiful fruit and vegetable garden, "unique accommodation, fine food and wine, and a sense of wellbeing," Brenda said. "If Martha Stewart were to create her own theme park, this would be it."



Brenda Bloch-Young and her son visiting a farm in Cape Town

Sandy Heistad and **Mary Ann Bier** traveled to Quebec City, enjoying a "beautiful, friendly and yummy" time, Sandy reports. Christmas markets, quaint shops and lovely decorations were a highlight. The trip was inspired by a book recently read by the AHA Mystery Book Club. The picture shows the gingerbread version of the Chateau Frontenac hotel where they stayed.



Eighteen people attended a boat parade watch party at the Alexandria House home of **Nancy Kincaid**. She reported the parade was comprised of more than 30 boats "lined up in front of my balcony." They floated slowly to the Torpedo Factory area and then back "past my balcony to the wharf." The Potomac River was "smooth as ice on a bright and clear night."

Conversation With . . . The Founding of the Mount Vernon Bike Trail by Virginia Martin

There would be no Mount Vernon Bike Trail if it were not for Barbara Lynch and Paul Hodge, the two speakers for the Jan. 26 Conversation. These Alexandrians will share their intimate knowledge of the trail's history. Avid bikers, Paul, Barbara and her deceased husband Bill, together with hundreds of other volunteers, literally built the trail.

Paul Hodge covered the National Park Service as part of his job as Metropolitan News Editor at *The Washington Post*. It was he who obtained the National Parks Superintendent's permission to build the bike trail. They were awarded an initial grant of \$25,000 to buy gravel, which they hauled in their wheelbarrows from Thanksgiving 1971 to Easter 1972.

Make your reservations early for this very special program, to be held at Virginia Martin's Porto Vecchio apartment.



Bill Clayton put on another hat, from the North Ridge Citizens' Association, to trim trees Dec. 6-8 for NRCA's annual tree sale.

Join Coffee and Conversation

A number of AHA members have shown an interest in a monthly coffee and conversation program. You are invited to come to the Alexandria Pastry Shop, Bradlee Shopping Center, 3690-H King St. Wednesday, Jan. 29, 9:45 -11 a.m.. Bring your ideas for time, day, and coffee shops you would like to try. Please RSVP on the AHA website, or to the AHA Office at 703-231-0824 by January 27. Call Penny Roberts for more information at 703-836-9644.

Stressful to Successful: Decluttering and Downsizing Ideas from the Experts

by Cele Garrett

Who among us hasn't had some challenges with organization or clutter? You may even be considering a move to a smaller space. Whether you're trying to simplify, tackle a major organizing project or embark on a wholesale downsizing, there are experts to help. Join us at this panel presentation where six professionals will offer their tips and share their own approach.

You will also hear about the kinds of organizing help that AHA volunteers can provide. Whether your challenge is paper, books, furniture, clothing or household goods, bring your questions to our panelists. The speakers will include Sharon Bliss (Book Bliss Online), Peter Crouch (Crouch Realty Group), Karen Gardiner (Simplify for Life), Gretchen Klimoski (AHA volunteer), Lori James (Atlas Services, LLC), and Maria Spetalnik (Conquer the Clutter).

Mark this workshop on your calendar: Thursday, February 6, 1-3 p.m., Beatley Library, 5005 Duke Street. The event is free and open to the public but we ask you to RSVP via AHA Hub, by phone (703-231-0824), or by email (aha@athomeinalexandria.org). Questions? Contact Jen Heinz (jenheinz@athomeinalexandria.org).

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IRA Beneficiary Changes in Year-End Funding Bill

by Brenda Bloch-Young

The SECURE Act was included in the year-end funding bill passed by both the House and the Senate. You may remember our item on this in the September newsletter. The bad news is that the bill is effective January 1, 2020 and requires 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.) The intent is to kill the stretch IRA benefit and is a stealth estate tax. We will provide more information in upcoming newsletters.

Farewell 2019



The Ground Troops at the Scottish Walk Parade



Enjoying good food and company at Chris Nielson and Tom Crowley's annual holiday party

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