

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

AHA Survey Results You Like Us -- You *Really* Like Us by Jane King

The AHA Board members and AHA staff, Cele Garrett and Jen Heinz, met recently to discuss the results of the survey of members completed in late 2019. For board members and staff, review of the survey offers an opportunity to assess the satisfaction of members with its services and programs, as well as any dissatisfaction, and to invite recommendations for new ideas. I'd like to share some of the key take-aways from the 72 responses received.

1. It is helpful to know in analyzing the survey why members joined AHA. The survey showed:

- 25 percent joined for opportunities for social or cultural engagement.
- 27 percent joined to have access to AHA services when they need them.
- 24 percent joined because AHA is important to the community; and
- The remaining percentage of members joined for services or at the recommendation of a friend.

2. Satisfaction is high for all the many programs offered by AHA. New program ideas were shared freely by respondents.

- For new programs, one that many suggested has already been created: monthly coffee and conversation. Also, of interest as indicated on the survey are a non-fiction book club and potluck dinners that would rotate among members' homes. If anyone would like to initiate a non-fiction book club or potluck dinners, please call the office.
- For the many who chose group travel as a new AHA offering, you will be happy to hear that the theme for AHA's Anniversary Celebration on May 13 is travel adventures. The possibility of group travel sponsored by AHA will be discussed.
- Also high on preferences by respondents are regular monthly trips to a museum or gallery. Penelope Roberts, who chairs AHA's Program Committee, has explained that transportation is always a consideration in arranging these trips. Use of Metro, carpooling, or Uber or Lyft will sometimes be encouraged for these outings.

3. Survey respondents who are full members indicated near 100 percent satisfaction with volunteer support. Interestingly, 42 percent of associate members who provided their views are AHA volunteers. This is remarkable evidence that many members want to give back if they are able.

4. Of the services offered, transportation exceeds all others in the most frequently requested and is highly valued. It is followed by tech support, indoor maintenance/handyman services and home organizing.

5. And perhaps most important, members indicated high regard for the work of the AHA staff. Cele Garrett, Jen Heinz, Dara Surratt, and Megan McIntyre should be congratulated for the high marks they received from survey respondents.

We're grateful for the feedback provided by our respondents and are so pleased by the overall high level of satisfaction with AHA programs and services. Of course, your ideas and feedback are always welcome anytime – you don't need to wait for a survey. Please contact staff or board members anytime you have something to share with us.

Save the date: Spring2ACTion 2020 By Cele Garrett

Spring2ACTion is still several weeks away but this fundraising campaign is so important to AHA that it's worth my asking you to save the date: Wednesday, April 29. Alexandria's community foundation, ACT for Alexandria, is making a big splash this year to celebrate a milestone: the 10th annual Spring2ACTion. It's hard to believe this is AHA's ninth year of participating. What a difference this campaign has made for our organization over these years—and we're proud that AHA has made a difference for so many older neighbors in our city. This campaign celebrates the many wonderful nonprofits that serve this community. The Spring2ACTion online fundraising campaign is the chance for Alexandria residents to thank those nonprofit organizations. For now, please mark the date on your calendar. We'll have details to follow in the coming weeks.

AHA to hold Dementia Friends Information Sessions in March By Cele Garrett

Dementia Friendly Alexandria (DFA) is a volunteer initiative whose goal is to prepare the Alexandria community to support those with dementia and their caregivers and ensure their ability to engage in city life more fully. DFA is led by Goodwin House Alexandria and the City of Alexandria's Commission on Aging in close collaboration with the DFA action team of local government officials, nonprofits, home care providers, faith-based organizations and other community members. The core facet of this initiative is a one-hour Dementia Friends information session to citizens across the city. These sessions provide practical tips and guidance on how to recognize someone you encounter who may be dealing with dementia and how to help them. The DFA web site is now live. Please check out www.dementiafriendlyalexva.org. Our thanks go to AARP for providing seed money for the website.

AHA is a partner on the action team. On Wednesday, March 18, we will offer two Dementia Friends information sessions for volunteers, members and AHA staff. These sessions will be led by AHA's Jane King and Old Dominion Home Care's Alexandra Johnson.

Members and volunteers may RSVP through AHA Hub or by calling the AHA office at 703-231-0824. Please indicate which session you prefer.

Pedestrian Street Safety Tips

by Jane King

The Commission on Aging Transportation Committee met recently with Mike Doyle and asked him for recommendations for enhancing pedestrian safety. Mike, who had a longtime recovery from a pedestrian crash himself, offers the following advice from Alexandria Families for Safe Streets (AFSS), <https://www.alxffss.org/>.

Always:

- Cross the street at crosswalks and intersections.
- Watch for turning vehicles — look left, right, and left again.
- Look over your shoulder as you are walking in a cross walk to make sure a vehicle isn't about to turn into you.
- Use the pushbuttons and wait for the walk signal.
- Be visible: wear something light (white, yellow) or reflective after dark.
- Wear reflectors and carry a small flashlight or a blinking light.
- Watch out for blind spots around trucks and buses.
- Stay off the road as a pedestrian. If there is no sidewalk available, it is recommended to avoid that road entirely but if you must, walk against traffic on the side of the road so you can see vehicles coming at you.
- Stay alert to your surroundings and listen for cars and cyclists.
- Be proactive — during daylight hours, practice the "Project Wave" method. Before crossing the street, stop, look, and wave. If a car is present or approaching, wave to the driver. When the driver waves back, you know that both you and the driver are engaged so it is safe to cross the street.
- If you are crossing an intersection in a crosswalk at night be sure to carry a blinking light or flashlight and wear reflective clothing.

Don't:

- Don't walk and use mobile devices.
- Don't wear earphones in both ears.

AFSS is an all-volunteer nonprofit 501(c)(3) organization whose mission is to bring the Alexandria community together to create safe streets. AFSS dedicates itself to:

- telling the impact stories of crash survivors and families who had a member killed by traffic violence
- educating students via street safety programs in ACPS schools
- raising public awareness of street safety risks via public outreach forums
- advocating for Traffic Regulation policy changes related to infrastructure, traffic laws and penalties
- enhancing "Near Miss" data analytics to help eliminate crashes in "hot spot" location.

Organizing, Streamlining, Decluttering...

By Cele Garrett

Whatever term you happen to use for “editing down” your possessions, most of us struggle with the process. It came as no surprise that, even on a rainy day, we filled the room at Beatley Library with the recent AHA workshop Decluttering and Downsizing: Ideas from the Experts. The event was sponsored with Right at Home, In-Home Care & Assistance. Our six presenters offered an array of helpful tips and insights. If you missed this session, you can access the presenters’ handouts on the AHA website under Resources: Articles.



Speakers, from left to right: Gretchen Klimoski, Marie Spetalnik, Karen Gardiner, Sharon Bliss, Pete Crouch and Lori James

AHA members often request help with organizing. We’ve always had a group of volunteers who can work one-on-one to help you clean out a closet, organize an office or haul away clothing and household items no longer needed. In recent years, our volunteer and AHA member, Gretchen Klimoski has begun working with a few AHA members who could use a higher level of organizing support. If you’re moving to a new place, Gretchen can help organize and tag your boxes to ensure that they’ll be placed correctly at the next place. She can also measure your furniture and work up a scale model to help with furniture placement. And, she can help you sort through and organize your possessions once you’ve made the move. Even if you have a home organizing project that doesn’t involve a move, consider working with Gretchen. Yes, she does this on a volunteer basis. She and her husband Richard travel several months out of the year but if the timing is right, Gretchen can be a fantastic resource.



Politics Forum – “Will the Center Hold?”

by Bill Clayton

The audience had many questions for Helen Desfosses, prompted by fast-moving developments involving the White House, the Justice Department and the continuing Democratic-Republican gap.

Desfosses described the expanded question: “What are the forces holding the country together and what are the forces pulling it apart? Both are strong currently.”

She and the audience members mentioned several possible factors: fewer civics classes in schools, less family discussion around the dinner table, less impact from groups such as the League of Women Voters, decline of print media and what Desfosses called the “drip, drip, drip of negativity” in public and political discourse.

The 2020 Census is Coming!

by Julie Gentry

The Roundtable discussion group meeting on March 20 will feature Councilman Canek Aguirre, Chairman of the Alexandria Complete Count Committee, to describe how Alexandria is preparing for this decennial event.

The Alexandria Complete Count Committee will encourage all residents to participate in the 2020 Census by working with staff to develop and implement an outreach strategy focused especially on communities that have been historically undercounted. These groups include racial and ethnic minority groups, renters, children under the age of five, and communities in Arlandria and the West End.

The focus of this Roundtable is to brief the attendees about the importance of the census and provide a list of resources they can access online.

RSVP to the AHA office or online at <https://aha.clubexpress.com/>

Memoir Writing Workshop Returns

AHA’s popular workshop series will continue this spring. The introductory session will take place on Tuesday, March 31, at 2-3:30 p.m. at the Abyssinia Market and Coffee House. This first meeting will be a “trial” session where folks can come to see if they’re interested. Kay Cowan, facilitator, will lay out the framework of the workshop at that time. The remaining five sessions will take part every other Tuesday at 2 p.m.

There are limited spaces available currently so please RSVP at your earliest opportunity. The hope is to offer a second class in the fall so that more members can participate.

What's Up With AHA Members, Associates and Volunteers

A volunteer reports that doing an errand with member **Bob Faden** turns into an informative lesson about the passing plants and trees: “Look at that Handkerchief Tree over there. You don’t see many of those.” “Look at the whack job pruners did on those trees to protect the power lines.” “Look at that (row of evergreens) planted close together.” Faden and his wife, Audrey, are recognized gardeners and naturalists. He is Research Botanist Emeritus at the Museum of Natural History. The Fadens tend a garden between their Alexandria home and the YMCA and periodically lead tours of the garden.



Scene, above, from the 2019 competition that won Mike Martin (son of AHA member **Virginia Martin**) Yachtsman of the Year award for 2019 with his crew, Adam Lowry. For several years, Mike Martin has won the 505-world championship – the designation of a type of dinghy used in racing. In 2019, Martin and Lowry won every 505 regatta they sailed in, including the North American and Canadian championships.

Valued AHA volunteer **Annie Stat** has been named Volunteer of the Year at Huntley Meadows Park, a rich nature sanctuary and wetlands. Starting in 2012, Annie has logged 1,500 hours helping at the park.



The photo, left, from the Alexandria Gazette Packet was published for Valentine’s Day. **Shelly and Dick Schwab** have been together for 58 years, having met and married in college. “Never go to bed mad,” is Dick’s advice.

Techie Testimonial

by Nancy Berg

A few weeks ago, my son took me to the Apple Store to buy a watch. The purpose was to replace the medical alert system that I had had for about two years and wasn’t using. If you fall, the watch detects this, and asks if you are o.k. If you are, you can push an “I’m o.k.” button and nothing further happens. If you aren’t o.k., the watch calls 911 and an emergency phone contact - in my case, my son. I should add that my son threw himself down on the floor of the Apple Store twice to test that the device worked. And of course, it did.

The watch also does other wonderful things: I can use it to pay at Safeway without taking out my Visa card; I can text my nearest and dearest and receive texts from them on the watch; and the display includes the time, very clearly, and also weather, health data, and on and on. The cost isn’t minimal, but after a year of not paying for my medical alert system, it will balance out. I clearly love this watch and recommend it to AHAers.



Nancy Berg and her new smart watch.

A Great Start for Coffee & Conversation Group

AHA members, numbering 15, took over the back corner of the Alexandria Pastry Shop at the new program, Coffee & Conversation. The food offerings, breakfast as well as pastries, were delicious and the conversation was general in nature. Stay tuned and watch the AHA calendar for other venues.



Penelope Roberts, Louise Meng, Sandra Stern, Joan Sprigle-Adair, and Sandy Heistad

Blazing Saddles Welcomes Spring

by Maggie Stauffer

After a long winter rest, AHA's Blazing Saddles cycling group is ready to take to the road. Our first spring ride will take place on Thursday, April 23 at 1:00 p.m., doing an easy ride to Shirlington with a coffee stop before returning. Meet at the bike path close to Madison and Fairfax streets, near the Old Town Sport and Health Club.

Dust off your bike and consider joining us even if it has been awhile since you have been on a bike. We ride for fun, at an easy pace, with a little exercise mixed in. If you need help, we are available to make sure your bike is safe and ready for the road.

Please let us know if you will be joining the ride. Rsvp *required* by Wednesday, April 22. For more information and to sign up contact Maggie or Barry Stauffer at Maggie.stauffer@comcast.net or call 703-629-5476.



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Upcoming Programs

by Penelope Roberts

We are celebrating Women's History Month with Gayle E. Converse who will join us in Conversation With... on March 29. She works in media relations for a budding nonprofit, Alexandria Celebrates Women. Gayle will talk about 100 Years of Women's Vote, especially as it applies to Alexandria women.

March also means the return of AHA's walking group. Please join us on Tuesday mornings beginning March 24. The walking group is also looking for a new lead walker who will be responsible for checking the weather and keeping a record of the walkers for the AHA office. If interested contact Penelope Roberts, 703-836-9644 or Shelly Schwab, 703- 836-8964.

Coming soon: In April we will be making a visit to River Farm, details to follow. For more information about all these events, see the AHA calendar.

Bob Levey Recounts Life at the Washington Post



At a recent Conversation With... Bob Levey, above, entertained a full house of AHA members with stories of his time at the Washington Post. He recounted working with publisher Katharine Graham and editor Ben Bradlee. Levey's desk was literally between that of reporters Bob Woodward and Carl Bernstein. He said that every day during Watergate, when the room was constantly chaotic, he would yell something like "Hold it down, I'm trying to work!"

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