



— AT HOME IN —
ALEXANDRIA

NEWSLETTER

Volume 12, Number 2

February 2021

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

Holiday Thanks by Vice Chair Pam Nelson

The AHA staff, board and volunteers put on their elf hats and put together gift bags for members just before the Christmas holiday. The final count was almost 170 gift bags. The photo shows the Nelson living room taken when most of the assembly was completed, just waiting for the next day when the succulents were added prior to the start of delivery. Many thanks to so many who made this possible.



The upfront work coordinator was **Penelope Roberts**, who also procured candy canes and handled weeks of care of the succulents; **Pam and Steve Nelson** procured the masks and managed the bag assembly along with Pam’s sister, **Ruthann Prange**, visiting from New Jersey; **Maggie and Barry Stauffer** procured bags and tissue paper; **Dara Surratt**, along with **Megan McIntyre**, recruited and coordinated delivery, including creating a spreadsheet to keep everyone on task; and **Cele Garrett** arranged the note cards.

The delivery team included **Penelope Roberts**, with help from **Nancy Kincaid**; **Dara Surratt** and her twin daughters, Emily and Caroline; **Tricia Sabatini**; **Megan McIntyre**; **Bob Eiffert**, with help from **Babs Waters** and **Adam Perry**; **Susanne Adams** and her grandson Andrew; **Jane King**; **Sherry de Vries**; **Pam and Steve Nelson**; **Donna Gold** and **Claudia Shaw**.

Welcome Loretta Darst by Executive Director Cele Garrett

AHA is happy to welcome Loretta Darst to our staff as our new membership/marketing manager. You may recall that Jen Heinz retired from that position this past August. For three months, Karen Akers filled her slot, but Karen was recruited for a full-time position elsewhere at the end of 2020.

Loretta (nickname “Retta”) has called the Del Ray neighborhood her home for 17 years. She has a deep background in educational publishing for such companies as Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, Pearson Education, and Scholastic Inc. Prior to that, she was a teacher. She received her master’s degree in education from the University of Houston. AHA is so glad to have her.



Presidents Day Celebrations

Alexandria loves a parade but this year, in the time of COVID, the George Washington Parade has been cancelled. Instead, there are other events in the city you may enjoy. See www.Alexandriava.gov for tours, a scavenger hunt, or programs of historical interest.

February 2021 Zoom Calendar

<p>The programs in the table below are all scheduled to take place using the Zoom app on your computer or device. The AHA office will provide you with the meeting link after you have registered for the program.</p>		
Feb. 4, Thurs.	Ladies' Night In	5-6:30 pm
Feb. 8, Mon.	Monday Book Club: <i>The Water Dancer</i> , by Ta-Nehisi Coates	1-3 pm
Feb. 9, Tues.	What's in the News	10-11:30 am
Feb. 12, Fri.	Dementia Friendly Information Session	10-11:30 am
Feb.12, Fri.	Politics Forum: Robert Eiffert discusses policy issues in long term care	1:30-3 pm
Feb. 15, Mon.	Art Talk: African American Art with Lee Ann Lawch	10-11:30 am
Feb. 16, Tues.	Board Meeting	2-4 pm
Feb. 16, Tues.	Birthday party celebration for all February birthdays	5-6 pm
Feb. 17, Wed.	Armchair Travels: Kelly Espy of Road Scholar tours discusses travel ideas for seniors	1:30-2:30 pm
Feb. 17, Wed.	The Racial Wealth Gap, Pamela Queen, Maryland state delegate	3-4:30 pm
Feb. 18, Thurs.	Men's Night In	5-6 pm
Feb. 19, Fri.	Roundtable: Emily Baker, Deputy City Manager, will speak about her responsibilities	10-11 am
Feb. 21, Sun.	"Journalism in Today's World: How to Make Sense of it All" with guest speaker Bill Plante, veteran CBS News journalist	3-4 pm
Feb. 22, Mon.	Virtual Tour of the George Washington Masonic National Memorial, hosted by Chevy Chase at Home	2-3 pm
Feb. 23, Tues.	What's in the News	10-11:30 am
Feb. 23, Tues.	Readers Theater Group	2-3:30 pm
Feb. 24, Wed.	Coffee and Conversation	10-11:30 am
Feb. 25, Thurs.	Social and Racial Equity: Alexandria City Councilman Canek Aguirre will speak on the Latino experience	10-11:30 am

Happy Valentine's Day

February Program Notes

Monday, Feb. 15 Art Talk: In honor of Black History Month, docent Lee Ann Lawch will turn our attention to the African American artists featured at the Smithsonian American Art Museum.

Feb. 17 The Racial Wealth Gap: Pamela Queen, Delegate to the Maryland General Assembly from northern Montgomery County, will review the causes and policies underlying the racial wealth gap, including discrimination in the labor market, the disparity in education and skills, high incarceration rates, and low net worth and assets. Register with the AHA office.

Wednesday, Feb. 17 Armchair Travels: Are you eager to get out of the house and "visit" a breathtaking new place? While we may not be able to leave just yet, it certainly would be fun and inspiring to start making plans. Please join us to hear about Road Scholar trips with Kelly Espy. She will share some exciting and popular virtual trips we can take right now. Road Scholar is a "not for profit" travel organization that visits over 150 countries and all 50 states.

Friday, Feb. 19 Roundtable: Hear from Emily Baker, Deputy City Manager, about her responsibilities that affect us. She oversees and facilitates transportation, affordable housing, land use planning, zoning, historic preservation, environmental protection, code administration, capital project implementation and museum functions.

Sunday, Feb. 21 "Journalism in Today's World: How to Make Sense of it All." AHA, Mt Vernon at Home and Arlington Neighborhood Village collaborate to feature veteran journalist Bill Plante. At CBS, he covered the civil rights movement and the Vietnam War--and served as CBS Senior White House Correspondent. He will talk about how to understand journalism, reporting, and the cascade of information washing over us daily. Register on AHA Hub or call the office.

Monday, Feb. 22 Tour of the George Washington Masonic National Memorial: The docent leading this tour is a volunteer with the village Chevy Chase at Home and will host this event. Go to <https://www.chevychaseathome.org/>, select Events and search for this program to register.

Age Friendly Plan - Housing

by Jane King

Previous issues of this newsletter covered the overarching, priority goal of Alexandria's Age Friendly Plan, "Social Participation, Respect and Social Inclusion." This goal is important because our population is remarkably diverse and older resident needs are so varied.

This issue and the next will focus on housing goals. Any longer-term resident of the city knows that affordable housing is a persistent, seemingly intractable deficiency in the city. Accommodating older residents complicates housing opportunities. Many older adults require "accessible" housing, which incorporates design elements that enhance usefulness of a home for those who may have special physical or cognitive requirements.

Ideally, homes would be universally designed. The Universal Design Project describes this approach as the "outcome of a design process indicating that something is as functional as possible for as many people as possible." A universally designed home would be manageable for a person in a wheelchair. It would have a no-step entrance, wide hallways, a bathroom with pathways for a wheelchair and a bedroom on the first floor.

Though Alexandria is revered for its historic relevance, so many of our homes would fail a universal design test. And even if universally designed, so much of Alexandria's housing would not be classified as readily affordable. However, many adjustments can be made to homes to make them more useful for their residents. The city is promoting greater availability of affordable, accessible housing.

To address the need for housing appropriate for older residents, the Commission on Aging's Age Friendly Plan proposes four goals, to be described in more detail in subsequent issues.

- Determine prospective benefits and challenges regarding, for example, Accessory Dwelling Units (ADU), recently approved in the city. For more information, go to the city's Office of Housing at <https://www.alexandriava.gov/Housing>.
- Develop public and private mechanisms to enhance availability of affordable assisted living in Alexandria.
- Work with key organizations and individuals to incorporate "housing for a lifetime" features in both new and redeveloped housing.
- Prevent the unnecessary or unwanted institutionalization of those who could and would prefer to remain in their homes if possible.

February Birthday Celebrations

by Maggie Stauffer

Are you one of the 15 lucky AHA members celebrating a birthday this month? Then plan to join with other February birthday babies who are invited to gather for a special, virtual birthday party on Tuesday, Feb. 16 from 5 p.m. – 6 p.m.



Wear something festive, pour a glass of bubbly and have some cake and candles handy and get ready to have some fun as we celebrate together.

Please RSVP to the office and watch your mail for a special February birthday party invitation coming your way from the Birthday Fairies, Maggie Stauffer and Susanne O'Neill.

Be a Star with Readers Theater Group

Besides reading the scripts, members of the Readers Theater enjoy commentary on the selected pieces read. Most members read a solo piece but there are also dual dialogue presentations. Below is a photo of the wily group of AHA members having fun with some entertaining scripts that Steve Nelson found for the group.

Come join the fun at the monthly AHA Readers Theater Group. You can suggest your own reading or sign up to take one of Steve's selections. Don't want to read a selection? Then be a member of the audience. All are welcome.

Editor's note: I signed up on Monday morning and was assigned a script to read for the meeting on the same day. There is not a lot of preparation necessary – it really is easy and fun.



What's Up With AHA Members, Associates and Volunteers

Rita Mattia says her podcast has an international reach. A listener in Sao Paulo “popped up” recently, she reported. The hosting company gave her advice about “peppering” her home page with words that would interest listeners to sign in. One description of a topic included a reference to a boa constrictor, “and ... Bam! I had a listener in Turkey.” The most listeners aside from the United States are in western Australia. She has had listeners in Asia and “I seem to be pretty popular in Moscow.”

Longtime pickleball player **Steve Nelson** reports: "All recreation center play ended last March, but in June the outdoor courts were reopened and a hearty few of us have been playing in the heat of summer and now the cold of winter. The photo shows players at the Colasanto Park court in Del Ray the day after Christmas. "The temperature was in the high 20s."



Recently visiting the AHA office, intrepid AHA cheerleader **Bill Clayton** is shown wearing his AHA mask. Have you worn yours lately?



Death Café by Brenda Bloch-Young

On Saturday, Jan. 16, I attended my first Death Café via Zoom hosted by the Alexandria Library. It was an interesting and pleasant experience. The attendees were of all ages and from across the country. The event is offered monthly. You must register on the library website at <https://alexlibraryva.org/events?r=thismonth>.

A Death Café is a group-directed discussion of death with no agenda, objectives, or themes. It is a discussion group rather than a grief support or counselling session. Death Cafés are offered on a nonprofit basis, in a respectful space with no intention of leading people to any conclusion, product or course of action.

The concept began with "café mortels," created in 2004 by Swiss sociologist and anthropologist Bernard Crettaz. The events were adapted and popularized as "death cafés" by Jon Underwood, who held the first one in the basement of his London home. Pre-COVID, the events were in person, always including a beverage and cake. In the age of Zoom, it is possible to attend a Death Café across the country and the world by merely registering online.

Many of us have gone through the process of completing health directives and end of life plans, but how often do we revisit them or consider the options available today? Or do you remember what you actually signed? COVID has forced us all to consider our mortality. A Death Café is a safe space to discuss our options.

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Facts to Remember as We Grow Older

- Life is sexually transmitted.
- Good health is merely the slowest possible rate at which one can die.
- All of us could take a lesson from the weather. It pays no attention to criticism.
- In the 60s, people took LSD to make the world weird. Now the world is weird and people take Prozac to make it normal.
- Life is like a jar of jalapeño peppers. What you do today may be a burning issue tomorrow.
- Death is the number one killer in the world.

COVID-19 Vaccine Stories

by Bill Clayton

Getting those Vaccines

by Cele Garrett

The process for getting the COVID-19 vaccine set off a flurry of messages, advice, complaint and hope on various neighborhood listservs. Here are a few snippets:

- The most plaintive words were from a neighbor who said, “Mother is 94” and had followed the instructions but got no reply. The mayor took up that cause, as did some neighbors, and in short order the elderly woman was registered for a vaccination.
- A couple got immediate confirmation of their applications but their first appointment hit a glitch and they rescheduled.
- One man said he thought the young, not the old, should get first crack at the vaccine.
- A woman thought too much time had gone by since her application, so she phoned a hotline and got a volunteer who relayed her complaint. Soon she had confirmation of her appointment.
- One neighbor advised people on his listserv: When contemplating seeking the vaccine, work directly with the city’s health department, “rather than relying on anecdotes or second-hand chat groups” for information on the vaccine process.

AHA will continue to provide members the latest information on Alexandria’s vaccination process. Over the past two weeks, AHA helped 30 members ages 75 and over by registering them and securing their appointments quickly.

Additionally, we would like to thank Mary Lee Anderson and her staff at Senior Services of Alexandria for alerting us to an opportunity when some slots became available for their Meals on Wheels recipients. When it became clear that there would be some leftover appointment slots, AHA was given an opportunity to quickly reach out to our members to fill those appointments. (Members, if you did not receive a call from our office on a chilly Saturday evening, it is only because you were not in the targeted age range.)



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A Note about Non-AHA Sponsored Events

As you all may know, there are a few events hosted by other villages that are added to our calendar each month. They often require members to register through a different process. If you have questions about how to register for an outside event, contact the office by phone or email (see below). Information in the program notes will direct you how to register.

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