

A Community of Members Age 55+ Helping One Another to Lead Safe, Active, and Connected Lives

LOOKING AHEAD TO A GREAT YEAR

By Jamie Ciesla, Executive Director

I'm delighted to be writing to you as I settle into my new role as Executive Director with At Home in Alexandria (AHA). Over the past few weeks, I've been struck by how welcoming, engaged, and generous this community is, and I want to express how truly appreciative I am of the warm reception I've received from AHA colleagues, members, volunteers, partners, and the Board. It has truly made this transition both exciting and meaningful.

Whether it's attending an event, talking with volunteers, or learning about the many ways members support one another, it's clear that AHA is more than an organization—it's a community built on care, curiosity, and connection. I'm grateful to be joining something so special.

A little about me: I came to AHA from the global health sector, where I developed a deep appreciation for community-based work and a strong belief that staying connected—to neighbors, activities, and shared experiences—makes life richer at every stage. I've spent much of my career working in roles that focus on strengthening communities and supporting people where they are, and I'm thrilled to now be doing that work right here in Alexandria. Outside of work, I enjoy spending time with my family and dogs, traveling, and reading.

As we look ahead to the coming year—AHA's 15th year of operations—I'm especially excited about the wide range of events and activities planned to bring the AHA community together—from celebrations and social gatherings to educational programs, exercise classes, and outings. These moments are at the heart of what makes AHA thrive, and I look forward to meeting many more of you at upcoming events in the months ahead.

Thank you again for the warm welcome and for the important role each of you plays in this community. I'm eager to continue listening, learning, and working together. My email is Director@AtHomeInAlexandria.org—feel free to reach out! I hope to see you soon at an upcoming event!



Bob Eiffert, Doug Land, and Jamie Ciesla
at the January Happy Hour

February 2026 Calendar

Please note that the programs in this calendar may be scheduled via Zoom or in person. The AHA office will send you the Zoom link after you have registered for a program. The link will allow you to join Zoom. Movie Group is on hiatus until we find a new host; reach out to the office if you are interested.

Tuesdays, Feb 3, 10, & 17	AHA Yoga at The View in Alexandria House. Spaces may be limited. *Mat Yoga 9:30-10:30; Chair Yoga 11am-12 noon.	9:30am - 12pm*
Tuesdays, Feb 10, 17 & 24	Weekly Scrabble at the home of Jeff and Donna Gathers. Limit of 3.	1:30pm
Tuesday, February 10	Ladies' Night Out at Royal Restaurant, 730 N St Asaph St. Limit of 10.	5-7pm
Wednesday, February 11	Dine Around at RT's, 3804 Mount Vernon Avenue. Limit of 8.	6-8pm
Monday, February 16	Lively Arts Discussion at Marie Cataffo's home. Limit of 10.	10am
Wednesday, February 18	Exploring Horizons: Senior Education and Travel co-hosted with Senior Services of Alexandria at Beatley Library.	10am
Wednesday, February 18	Third Wednesday Book Club on Zoom. <i>The Briar Club</i> by Kate Quinn	7pm
Thursday, February 19	Men's Night Out at Aldo's Italian Kitchen, 2850 Eisenhower Ave. No limit.	5-6:30pm
Saturday, February 21	Happy Hour at the home of Bob Eiffert and Michael Curry, address provided upon registration.	5-6:30pm
Monday, February 23	Morning Brew at Panera, 3201 Duke St. No limit.	10am
Tuesday, February 24	Tech TUESDAY Customizing your iPhone/Android phone to make it work just as YOU like. AHA office. Limit of 10.	1pm
Thursday, February 26	Lunch Around at Trademark, 2080 Jamieson Avenue. Limit of 10.	12pm

TO REGISTER

Please call or email the office at AHA@AtHomeInAlexandria.org or at (703) 231-0824

AHA'S COVID GUIDELINES

AHA no longer requires, but **highly recommends**, COVID vaccines for members attending in-person events. If you don't feel well, please test prior to attending AHA events.

EXPLORING HORIZONS: SENIOR EDUCATION AND TRAVEL

Senior Services of Alexandria and At Home in Alexandria are hosting a Speaker Series event “Exploring Horizons: Senior Education and Travel” on Wednesday, February 18 at Beatley Central Library, 5005 Duke Street from 10-11:30am. This event will feature expert speakers talking about continuing education opportunities for older adults in the Washington, DC region, as well traveling – both locally and beyond. AHA member Jim Larocco will discuss senior travel in state/national parks. We hope you will join us for this informative and fun event! Please RSVP at (703) 836-4414, ext. 110 or email Events@SeniorServicesAlex.org

NEW MEMBER DIRECTORY AND REQUEST FOR UPDATED CONTACT INFO

We are updating our Member Director to include the many new members who joined us in 2025. If you would like to get a new copy or need to update your own personal information, for the directory **and for AHA’s records** please call the office at 703-231-0824.

MEMBERSHIP RATE INCREASE

In fall, Board Chair Alan Dinsmore wrote to each AHA member to inform them of the new membership rates. As a reminder, those new rates will be in effect at the time of your next renewal. The rates are: \$990 for a full household membership; \$695 for a full single membership; \$405 for an associate household membership; and \$355 for an associate single membership.

As Alan shared in fall: “It has been seven years since we last increased our dues. AHA continually faces the same increase in expenses that households and businesses face—and we have worked hard to absorb these increases without it impacting our dues. We do not make any financial decisions without great care and thought—and we thank you in advance for understanding our need to make this adjustment.”

FREE TAX PREP FOR ALEXANDRIA RESIDENTS

As tax season approaches, the City of Alexandria is offering free tax preparation services to help eligible residents file their federal and state income tax returns. Trained volunteer tax preparers are available to assist individuals and families in ensuring all eligible credits and deductions are applied. This helps residents maximize refunds while avoiding costly filing errors. The program is open to residents with household incomes up to \$69,000. Services are provided at no cost.

Tax preparation services will be offered February 4 through April 18 on Wednesdays from 6 – 8 pm and Saturdays from 9 – noon at the Del Pepper Community Resource Center, 4850 Mark Center Drive, 5th floor. Limited walk-ins will be available. Appointments are strongly encouraged. To schedule, call 202.830.1480 (English) or 202.869.2999 (Spanish).

Click [here](#) or go to www.alexandriava.gov/dchs for more information including a complete list of needed documents that residents should bring.



CALL FOR HAPPY HOUR HOSTS

We are looking for folks to host our popular monthly Happy Hours. If you have a home that is large enough to accommodate 25 or more people, is easily accessible, and has convenient parking, please consider hosting. You just provide the venue and AHA staff and volunteers do the rest. Please call the office at 703-231-0824 if you are interested in hosting.



Welcome New Member

John Gosling

CALLING ALL MEMBERS AND VOLUNTEERS

By Gretchen Klimoski, Chair, Governance Committee of AHA Board

We know you all love AHA. You can really show that love by becoming more engaged in what makes us work. What skills can you share with AHA? What interests you? The Board is looking for people to serve on several committees.

- **Finance Committee** is looking for people with a finance background.
- **Governance Committee** is looking for people with experience in nonprofit management.
- **Development Committee** is looking for people with fundraising experience to help coordinate our spring and year end campaigns, seek grants, and expand corporate funding.
- **Program Committee** oversees and coordinates AHA's social, educational and cultural programs, and is seeking individuals to work with current program coordinators and create new programs.
- **Volunteer Committee**, which assists staff with the recruitment and training of volunteers, is seeking individuals to review the range of services offered by volunteers and make recommendations regarding new services.
- **Membership Committee**, which seeks ways to spread the word about AHA's Associate and Full memberships, is seeking individuals to recruit new members and suggest retention strategies.

If you are interested in one or more of these endeavors please contact Gretchen at gklimoski@verizon.net.

WEBINAR HOSTED BY RAFT

Join RAFT on February 24 from 11am-1pm for a webinar titled *Positive Approach to Care - Normal vs. Not Normal Aging*. This is an interactive webinar, designed by Teepa Snow for care professionals and family caregivers. Discuss the differences in sensory input between normal aging and not normal aging and learn techniques to support people with dementia.

To register, go to

<https://events.teams.microsoft.com/event/c7962978-f0be-4218-947e-033498de5f88@80354804-1fdf-428e-9f5f-5091e994cf54/registration>

SOLO AHAer GROUP UPDATE

In October, AHA launched the Solo AHAer group for those who are solo aging and are interested in spending time with other "solo" folks. The group now meets almost every month to socialize and to discuss the needs of solo agers. This month's meeting will be at 1pm on February 25th.

If you have any questions or are interested in joining this group, please reach out to Veronica directly at veronica@athomeinalexandria.org.

EMERGENCY LESSONS FROM FERN

By Alan Dinsmore, Board Chair

Alexandria, of our experience, does not have severe winter weather. Right? Veteran residents know otherwise but the lessons are sometimes forgotten. Especially when a severe Winter is not a recent experience. Severe weather will come again. Here is a short check list.

1. Is your supply of prescription medications adequate? Plan that the drug store might be closed and the delivery service will not be functioning.
2. Do any of your meds require refrigeration? Small insulated bags are available along with long lasting ice bricks that will get you through a power outage.
3. Buy a power bank for your cell phone. Emergencies can involve multiple calls that can drain your phone very quickly.
4. Are you dependent on electricity for something like chronic obstructive pulmonary disease breathing assistance, an oxygen generator or any other similar condition requiring electricity? Portable power banks are available that provide temporary power for one device.
5. How is your supply of over-the-counter meds like aspirin or digestive aids? You don't want to be down to the last drop and then discover that the weather emergency means replacements might be in short supply.

Be safe and follow this checklist or develop one of your own.

PUT ON YOUR WALKING SHOES

Last month, we introduced Jim Larocco, a new AHA Board member and the hike coordinator for the Capital Area Chapter of American Pilgrims on the Camino. Jim is inviting everyone to join him on February 14 for a 4-mile, 3-hour, mostly paved walk that starts and finishes in Old Town. The walk will celebrate Alexandria's Revolutionary War History and will include stops at a boundary stone, Alexandria National Cemetery, Shuter's Hill, Old Christ Church, Gadsby's Tavern, Farmer's Market, City Hall, the Basilica of St. Mary, and the Old Presbyterian Meeting House.

Please meet at the corner of Wilkes and South Payne streets at 10 am. There is free unlimited parking on South Payne Street beginning at the 500 block.

There will be lots to do in Old Town before and after the walk. The Farmer's Market at City Hall is open from 7 am to noon and the George Washington Birthday Parade starts at 2 pm.



REGISTRATION BEGINS

The Spring Semester for Encore Learning is right around the corner. Registration for courses opens on February 2 with classes beginning on March 2. Go to the website to register.

www.encorelearning.net

Encore Learning is a non-profit adult learning community with about 1,000 members mainly in the D.C. metro area. Membership is open to anyone over the age of 50. You must be a member to enroll in courses.

Prior to classes beginning in March, Encore Learning is holding two special presentations in February: *War Powers Resolution: What You Need to Know* on February 9 and *Celebrating America's 250th – Hamilton: The Man and The Musical* on February 23.

Board of Directors

Alan Dinsmore, Chair	Victoria Almquist, Vice Chair
Jim Woolwine, Treasurer	Ray Biegun, Secretary
Ruth Arnold	Bob Eiffert*
Jenny Elrod	Jane King**
Gretchen Klimoski	James Larocco
Roberta McGregor	Pam Nelson *
Lisa Ramirez-Branum	Karen Streich
John Veldhuis	

*Non-voting emeritus member **Voting Emeritus Member

Executive Director
Jamie Ciesla

Marketing and Membership Manager
Veronica Ferris

Operations and Member Services Manager
Tegan Cohen

Editor: M. Laurie Cammisa

Advisory Council

Laurie Blackburn	Pete Crouch
Louise Kenny	Jessica LeFevre
Ernie Lehmann	Mitch Opalski
Vicki Vasques	

At Home in Alexandria

offices will be closed
Monday, February 16
in observance of President's Day

HAPPY 
Presidents' Day

CONTACT US

At Home in Alexandria

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

AHA@AtHomeInAlexandria.org
www.AtHomeInAlexandria.org



— AT HOME IN —
ALEXANDRIA

3139 Mt. Vernon Avenue
Alexandria, VA 22305

Special Days in February

February 2	<i>Groundhog Day</i>
February 8	<i>Super Bowl LX</i>
February 14	<i>Valentine's Day</i>
February 14	<i>George Washington Birthday Parade</i>
February 16	<i>Presidents' Day</i>



In This Issue.

P. 1	Looking Ahead to a Great Year
P. 2	February Calendar
P. 3-4	Reminders and Events
P. 4	Opportunity to Join a Committee
P. 5	Upcoming Events