

A Community of Support, Enrichment & Fun for our Alexandria Neighbors Ages 55+

## More Than an Anniversary: Celebrating 15 Years of Community

By Jamie Ciesla, AHA Executive Director

On June 20, At Home in Alexandria (AHA) celebrated a remarkable milestone—15 years of helping older adults remain connected, engaged, and independent in their homes and community. Thanks to the dedicated members of the Planning Committee, whose creativity, enthusiasm, and countless hours of work made the event a joyful and memorable occasion.

As I looked around the room and reflected on AHA's accomplishments, I was struck by the relationships that have been built and nurtured over the past 15 years. AHA is more than a service organization; it is a community of neighbors helping neighbors. Our members, volunteers, board members, and staff have formed friendships, shared life's joys and challenges, and created a network of support that enriches the lives of everyone involved.

Marsha Haley's photo booth (see photo gallery on page 4) provided lots of joy. Throughout the afternoon, guests gathered with family and friends old and new, laughing, posing for photos, and capturing memories of the occasion. It was a visual reminder of the relationships and community that AHA has fostered over the years and a meaningful reflection of what the organization is all about. Whether providing a ride to a medical appointment, helping with a household task, sharing a meal, attending a social event, or simply checking in, AHA volunteers and members care for one another in meaningful ways. These acts of kindness, repeated thousands of times over the past 15 years, have created a community built on trust, compassion, and mutual support. Everyone who has contributed to AHA's success should take pride in what has been built and sustained.

While the afternoon was a celebration of what has been accomplished, it was also a reminder of the growing need for connection and support as Alexandria's older adult population continues to grow. Our recent expansion into West Alexandria presents an opportunity to welcome new members and strengthen community connections in more neighborhoods across the city. We also need to expand our volunteer base to connect more Alexandrians to meaningful opportunities to support their neighbors and to ensure that AHA's members continue to receive the timely, responsive, and meaningful support they have come to rely on.

The foundation built over the past 15 years is strong. With continued commitment from members, volunteers, partners, and supporters, AHA is well positioned to build an even more connected, inclusive, and caring community for years to come. Together, we can ensure that every older adult in Alexandria has the opportunity to age with dignity, purpose, and connection.

## July 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 looking for a new facilitator, contact the office if you are interested.

<b>Tuesdays, July 7, 14,21, and 28</b>	<b>AHAYoga at The View in Alexandria House. Spaces may be limited. *Mat Yoga 9:30-10:30; Chair Yoga 11am-12 noon. NOTE: BOTH classes are FULL at this time.</b>	<b>9:30am - 12pm*</b>
<b>Tuesdays, July 14,21, and 28</b>	<b>Weekly Scrabble at the home of Jeff and Donna Gathers. Limit of 3.</b>	<b>1:30pm</b>
<b>Wednesday, July 8</b>	<b>Dine Around at Fettoosh Restaurant 5100 Wilson Boulevard, Arlington. Limit of 8.</b>	<b>6-8pm</b>
<b>Wednesday, July 15</b>	<b>Third Wednesday Book Club on Zoom. "Wild Dark Shore" by Charlotte McConaghy</b>	<b>7pm</b>
<b>Thursday, July 16</b>	<b>Men's Night Out at Aldo's Italian Kitchen, 2850 Eisenhower Ave. No limit.</b>	<b>5-6:30pm</b>
<b>Monday, July 20</b>	<b>Lively Arts Discussion at Charlotte Tsoucalas's home. Limit of 10.</b>	<b>10am</b>
<b>Thursday, July 23</b>	<b>Lunch Around at Vaso's Kitchen 1225 Powhatan St. Limit of 10.</b>	<b>12:30pm</b>
<b>Monday, July 27</b>	<b>Morning Brew at Panera 3201 Duke Street Alexandria, VA 22314</b>	<b>10am</b>
<b>Wednesday, July 22</b>	<b>Solo AHAer Group at Aldo's Italian Kitchen, 2850 Eisenhower Ave Suite #1</b>	<b>1pm</b>



## Spotlight on Our Volunteers

### Are You Downsizing?

By Peter Crouch, AHA Volunteer and Seniors Real Estate Specialist at the Crouch Group

Downsizing from a long-time home or condo can be daunting. An organized approach can make it much easier.

**Decide what comes.** It is always hard to decide what to take to your new home. Use a floorplan to determine what bigger items (like furniture) can fit. Then you can fill in the rest. If realistic about how much space you will have, you will be able to prioritize your possessions easily.

**Decide what goes . . . and where.** Sort what is left into categories for gifting to family and friends, selling, donating, and discarding. A good, color-coded tagging system can make it remarkably easy to manage possessions.

**Hire someone to help you declutter, pack, move and unpack.** A “move manager” can help fine-tune your floorplan, sort and distribute your possessions, pack your possessions, and then unpack everything in your new home. With this help, you can walk away from your former home in the morning and sleep in your organized new home that night.

**If you are selling a home, use a “Senior Real Estate Specialist” (SRES)** to prepare your house for sale. A SRES can manage repairs, cleaning, painting, and anything else you agree will help market the house. And, they conduct the full sale process. A SRES will help from the start, making your move and sale as stress-free as possible.

Downsizing can be daunting, but there is help available. If you decide to hire a Move Manager or SRES, AHA can make a referral.



### A Bonny Hillwalk

By Jim Larocco, AHA Board Member

My hiking buddy Bruce Burton and I hillwalked (the Scottish term for hiking) the West Highland Way in Scotland. This 90-mile walk passes along the length of Loch Lomond. For sheer natural beauty, June in Scotland is a treasure. And the weather is deliciously cool. More than the climate and scenery, we were struck by the kindness, warmth, and helpfulness of the local people we met along our journey.



Editor’s note: Jim is starting an AHA walking group. If interested, please email him directly at [rocca-rocco@usa.net](mailto:rocca-rocco@usa.net).

### Diovanne Barlow: Why I Volunteer at AHA



Diovanne Barlow, a two-year volunteer at AHA, believes that the simple presence of volunteers can bring physical and mental ease to members.

In her own words . . . “AHA!’s admirable advocacy for older Alexandrians led me to invest my time volunteering to the organization. With my background in Human Services and Recreation, I find value in helping those in need. I enjoy my time getting to know our members. Chatting about their lives and their day always fill me with delight. I always look forward to it. The satisfaction and gratitude from them are enough to make volunteering memorable.”

Thank you, Richmond Bowen and HITT Contracting! 16 AHA households took part in the 3<sup>rd</sup> annual Clear the Clutter event.

# FUN WAS HAD BY ALL AT THE AHA 15<sup>th</sup> ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION



## Introducing Nona Phinn, AHA's new Marketing and Membership Manager: In Her Own Words

Throughout my career, I have helped nonprofits and mission-driven organizations strengthen their impact by telling compelling stories, expanding their reach, and building meaningful connections. For more than fifteen years, my work in marketing and communications has centered on a simple belief: when an organization clearly communicates its purpose and connects authentically with people, its mission can move from an aspiration to a lived reality.

That belief is what draws me to AHA. Community is essential to human flourishing, especially as we age. AHA embodies the timeless idea of a village: neighbors supporting neighbors through friendship, practical care, and genuine belonging. In an increasingly disconnected world, AHA creates the relationships that help people thrive.

As a member of this village, I hope to help expand awareness of AHA's remarkable work. Because when people come together with intentionality, compassion, and a shared commitment to one another, remarkable things happen. Communities flourish. Lives are enriched. And a mission comes to life.

### CONTACT US

#### At Home in Alexandria

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

AHA@AtHomeInAlexandria.org  
www.AtHomeInAlexandria.org

### Board of Directors

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

\*Emerita Non-Voting Member \*\*Emerita Voting Member

#### Executive Director

Jamie Ciesla

#### Marketing and Membership Manager

Nona Phinn

#### Operations and Member Services Manager

Tegan Cohen

#### Newsletter Editor

M. Laurie Cammisa

### SURVEY OF OUR MEMBERS

Thank you to the 87 AHA members who participated in the Virginia Village Member Survey. The Virginia Villages Collective (VVC) will use the survey results from AHA and other Villages across Virginia to better understand how Villages can meet the needs of their members, reduce the risk of social isolation, and strengthen communities throughout Virginia.

This data will also be used to support advocacy efforts at the State House to continue funding of the Village model. That advocacy is already making a difference. In 2025, Virginia awarded \$400,000 through the Virginia Village Expansion Pilot Program, managed by the Washington Area Villages Exchange. As part of that initiative, At Home in Alexandria received a \$7,500 grant to support its mission. Building on that momentum, Virginia's newly enacted two-year state budget (HB30) includes an additional \$400,000 to expand the program for another year, demonstrating the Commonwealth's continued commitment to supporting Villages across Virginia.



3139 Mt. Vernon Avenue  
Alexandria, VA 22305



**Happy 4<sup>th</sup> of July!**  
**AHA Offices will be closed**

### ***Special Days in July***

July 4                    *Independence Day*  
July 11                  *Alexandria Day*

### ***In This Issue***

P. 1                    *Message from Jamie Ciesla*  
P. 2                    *July Calendar*  
P. 3                    *Spotlight on Three AHA Volunteers*  
P. 4                    *AHA's 15<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration*  
P. 5                    *Introducing Nona Phinn*