



Ashton Heights News

The Newsletter of the Ashton Heights Civic Association

www.AshtonHeights.org

Ashton Heights - 2021 Will Be An Exciting Year For Our Community

Scott Sklar, President, AHCA

As with the rest of the country, dealing with COVID, it has been hard with children out of school, small businesses hurting or out-of-business and constraints on how we see family and friends. Our political leaders in Richmond and Arlington have done an admirable job, conforming with science and health guidance while balancing the economic needs of the State and County. That said, I have been very proud of how our community has behaved throughout these hard times. With the vaccines coming in this year, there will be a light at the end of the tunnel hopefully by the summer to return somewhat close to normal.

As you've read a few times in our AHCA Newsletter, the 100th Anniversary of the Ashton Heights Civic Association is in 2021 and we are looking for your help in digging up old newsletters, pictures and reports in the past so that we can assemble these artifacts, retell the memories, and celebrate ourselves as a community.

Seems a perfect way to reset our Ashton Heights community to energize ourselves for the future. See AHCA Historian Jim Terpstra's January 14th Zoom meeting (7 p.m.) on page three of this newsletter.

As we enter this new year and a significant portion of us are working routinely out of our homes, you might want to consider joining our AHCA Standing Committees - the email addresses of the Committee & Subcommittee Chairs and CoChairs are on the next page - and these issues will be revved up in 2021 after the COVID lull of 2020. Even if it's just tracking the issues in a more detailed way, it's worth your time. Some areas to consider - Development, Housing, Open Spaces (Subc on Park & Playgrounds - Tree Canopy & Native Plants), Safety & Security, Schools, & Transportation. (including Parking & Pedestrian-Street Safety).

I am also looking at some AHCA themes for 2021 to attract the interests of younger residents - so those of you in your 30's and under - please drop me a note (solarsklar@aol.com) on issues and programs that are important to you. It is

JANUARY ZOOM MEETING DETAILS

Topic: AHCA Monthly Member Meeting (online)

Time: January 20, 2021 at 07:30 PM Eastern Time

Ashton Heights is inviting you to a scheduled Zoom meeting. Join the meeting by link or dial-in.

Join the Zoom Meeting (Click the link below)

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/82922873381?pwd=WlVwZFJlOWJkRjR5S0VvQXd1cVkvVUdsUT09>

Or call: +1 301 715 8592 US (Washington DC)

Meeting ID: 829 2287 3381 | Passcode: 729059

AHCA Monthly Meeting

NOW ON ZOOM

Wed., January 20, 2021, 7:30 – 9 PM

7:30 Committee Reports & Community Updates

Speakers:

- **COVID and Other Topics** - Mark Schwartz, Arlington County Manager
- **Sidewalk Inventory** - Jeremy Hassan, P.E.; Chief Operating Engineer, Sewers & Streets; Arlington County Department of Environmental Services; Water, Sewer and Streets Bureau

9:00 Adjournment

critically important that our Association covers the priorities of all groups within our membership -- and am happy to hear ideas and suggestions of any type.

I want to thank everyone within the Association on your camaraderie and respect for each other during these difficult times. And also for your time in being involved in all aspects of our community to make Ashton Heights such a wonderful place to live. I wish everyone a Happy New Year 2021 and may this coming year be full of joy, peace, health, and prosperity.



Ashton Heights Civic Association Volunteers

CIVIC ASSOCIATION MISSION

AHCA's mission is to promote the welfare and interaction of Ashton Heights and Arlington. Meetings, usually held the third Wednesday from September to May, are open to all residents, although only paid members can vote. Active participation is welcome. AHCA keeps you informed through meetings, this newsletter, and the website: www.ashtonheights.org. You can volunteer by contacting the Executive Committee.

Executive Committee

President: Scott Sklar solarsklar@aol.com 703-522-3049	VP Programs: Jim Richardson jabrichardson@verizon.net	VP Membership: Jim O'Brien jimob1@verizon.net 703-528-0376	Treasurer: Doug Williams treasurer@ashtonheights.org	Secretary: Jodie Flakowicz jodie.flakowicz@gmail.com
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Members-at-Large

Cole Deines coledines@gmail.com	Jim Feaster jimfeaster1@gmail.com	Patrick Lueb jiffy64@me.com	Ken Matzkin kenmatz1@gmail.com
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Committees

Safety & Security	Christina Schultz cmschultz@yahoo.com	Transportation	Patrick Lueb jiffy64@me.com
Development/Zoning	David Phillips davidphillips1@msn.com	Playgrounds & Parks Subcommittee	Brent Burris brburris@gmail.com
Housing	Matthew Hall mhall@goldsteinhall.com	Tree Canopy and Native Plants Subcommittee	Brooke Alexander brooke.alexander52@gmail.com
Schools	Gregory Morse gregm748@gmail.com		
Neighborhood Conservation Rep	Brent Burris brburris@gmail.com		

Newsletter

Editor/Layout	Amy Miller amylmiller4@gmail.com	Advertising	Position Open! newsletterads@ashtonheights.org
Distribution	Bea Camp summercamp81@yahoo.com	Listserv Moderator	Betsey Lyon etlyon410@gmail.com

Volunteer with the Ashton Heights Civic Association - Newsletter Advertising Coordinator Wanted!

Help out your community! The Ashton Heights newsletter needs a new newsletter advertising coordinator.

Carmen Kosik has held this position for two years and for 2021 needs to step down. Thank you for your service Carmen.

The position consists of contacting our existing advertisers to renew (all by web and phone) and solicit some new ones from time to time.

The newsletter advertising coordinator works with Amy Miller, the newsletter editor and Doug Williams, the AHCA Treasurer.

If interested or if you have questions about the position, please contact Scott Sklar (solarsklar@aol.com), Amy Miller (amylmiller4@gmail.com) or Carmen Kosik (newsletterads@ashtonheights.org).

Advertise with us!

The Ashton Heights newsletter is distributed to 1,200 households September - May. Our readers enjoy supporting local businesses.

Do you know of a local business that would benefit from advertising in the AH newsletter?

Email: newsletterads@ashtonheights.org

2021 Ad Rates:

Business Card	\$60	Full Page	\$245
1/4 Page	\$85	Full Back Page	\$295
1/2 Page	\$145	One Page Insert	\$325

Planning Meeting for Ashton Heights 100th Anniversary

Ashton Heights is inviting you to a scheduled Zoom meeting. Please feel free to invite neighbors who might also be interested in planning programs and celebrations around the neighborhood's 100th anniversary.

Jim Terpstra, terpstrajames2@gmail.com, is chairing the anniversary committee. Any ideas, suggestions, comments should be directed to him.

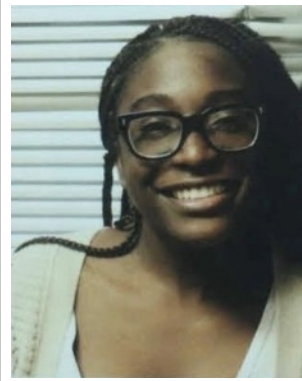
Topic: AH 100th Anniversary meeting (online)

Time: January 14, 2021 at 07:00 PM Eastern Time

Join the Zoom Meeting (Click the link below)

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/81937526385?pwd=RmdkeVVNWDFxWHR6ZFg2RU9mSmE2UT09>

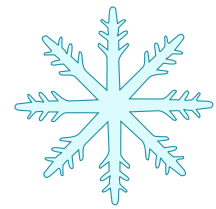
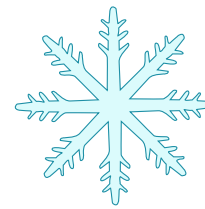
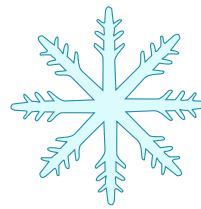
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Community Safety & Security Corner

Smile, You're on Body-Worn Camera!

By Christina Schultz

On December 16, 2020, Arlington County police officers switched on their body cameras. Body cameras are now worn on the uniforms of the police force, sheriff's deputies, and fire marshals. The cameras record all dispatch calls and enforcement and investigative contacts. Previously, camera systems were only located on patrol vehicles and in interview rooms.



The use of body cameras in Arlington is not a recent idea. The police department conducted a study in 2015 and recommended purchasing the equipment. However, it was never previously included in the budget request to the County Board with high costs cited as the reason for its omission. Protests over the killing of George Floyd by a Minneapolis police officer in May and the Arlington police department's participation in the aggressive crackdown on peaceful gatherings in Lafayette Square in Washington D.C. a few days later brought the issue back to the forefront.

Shortly afterward, the Arlington chapter of the NAACP launched a petition to prioritize body-worn cameras for law enforcement officials. As a result, County manager Mark Schwartz allocated \$1.8 million in the capital improvement plan for camera hardware, data storage, software, maintenance, upgrades to squad-car camera systems, and courtroom video. All three law enforcement agencies held online public forums to gather input from Arlingtonians on policies for the body cameras. Rules on the use of equipment

and footage were based on similar policies nationwide and reviewed by expert organizations.

While many experts tout the benefits of body-worn cameras (see box), the effectiveness of this measure is still being examined. According to a recent study, published by George Mason University's Center for Evidence-Based Crime Policy, which examined 70 body-worn camera studies through June 2018, cameras have not had a statistically significant impact on officer and citizen behavior or how citizens view police. The same study showed mixed results on the reduction of the use of force by police. One clear benefit has been the value of footage as evidence. A closer examination of how body-worn cameras support public safety in Arlington will require further examination. This will have to include how these cameras are being used, whether the footage is reviewed before preparing incident reports, and whether videos are released to those involved and the public. Behavior change goes beyond simply buying equipment. It must also include setting appropriate policies and holding those responsible accountable for policy implementation.

The benefits of police body-worn cameras:

- Improves accountability among all parties.
- Demonstrates transparency and openness in police interactions with the public.
- Encourages better officer performance and civilian conduct.
- Offers an impartial eyewitness.
- Helps with evidence collection and court proceedings.
- Provides a learning tool for officer training and development.
- Allows for identifying and correcting weaknesses in police performance.

Meet Your Neighbor: Daun Thomas Frankland

By Betsey Lyon

Daun Thomas Frankland, President and Superintendent of Columbia Gardens Cemetery, grew up in Ashton Heights on the cemetery grounds, later lived far and wide, and is now back home, enjoying life in Arlington. Frankland and husband Wally raised their daughter Leslie in Paris after living in California, Germany, Kansas, The Netherlands, and DC.

The Alexandria Park Association created Columbia Gardens Cemetery in 1917 during World War I, with Daun's Great Grandfather, Judge Harry Randolph Thomas a co-founder. He served as trustee and caretaker of the 38-acre cemetery, a job that has stayed in the Thomas family, often with the caretaker living in the Superintendent's house. These days, Daun and her husband live in a condominium on Arlington's urban corridor.

Born in Key West, Florida, Daun moved as a baby with her parents to the Columbia Gardens property when her father took over as Superintendent. While attending local schools, she and her two brothers found growing up with the cemetery property as their backyard "fantastic," Daun recalls. With friends or alone, they would run or bicycle around their expansive acreage for exercise and creative play. "Essentially, we lived and played in the middle of a large park right in the middle of Arlington."

She felt well prepared professionally to take over Columbia Gardens management when brother Ned retired from running it in 2015, following their mother's death. Daun says that heading Columbia Gardens calls on her extensive customer service experience and problem-solving skills, with the added challenge of helping customers through their most emotionally delicate times.

Daun is grateful to be continuing her family's 103-year legacy in Arlington. She and Wally were a typical Army family, moving frequently, and then happily spent many years in Paris while he was on staff with the American Military Battle Monuments Commission. An Art History and Studio Arts major in college, Daun founded and operated both Thomas Matthews Antiques and Paris at Your Feet, an interior design business serving customers in Paris and then in Kensington, MD. Daughter Leslie completed high school in Paris and graduated from West Point in 2018.

As the cemetery business evolves, Daun enjoys being a change agent focused on keeping the business thriving and relevant to customers, as well as welcoming to the community. She appreciates helping their increasingly diverse clientele incorporate family and cultural practices and traditions into their loved ones' end-of-life ceremonies and celebrations. Families now often seek space for funeral gatherings outside of churches, so Columbia Gardens plans to reconfigure part of the Superintendent's house for more event space.

The property maintains a memorial rose garden planted by Daun's grandfather in 1967, with local rose expert Pam Powers overseeing its care. Visitors may notice that many trees in the cemetery are tagged, part of the cemetery's arboretum status, official designation Daun and Wally worked to achieve after exploring the arboretum at West Point.

Today, Columbia Gardens continues as a nonprofit organization on private property employing nine people full time and several college and high school students in summer. Daun and her team heartily welcome visitors to explore nature in the cemetery, with deference for any funerals in progress. See you there on your next walk!



Drive Through Food & Toiletry Collection for Arlington Homeless Shelters - January 9th and February 13th - 9am to noon

The Food Drive will support family residents of Bridges to Independence in Clarendon. Top priority needs: Rice, boxed cereal, applesauce, juice, and packaged healthy kids' snacks (no prepared or opened food please) and other dry food items. The Toiletry Drive will support individuals living at Residential Program Center (RPC) on Columbia Pike and a day program providing showers, laundry and meals for drop-in visitors. They need: Razors (men's and women's), toothbrushes, toothpaste, shower curtains, queen size bed sheets, deodorant (regular and travel size), new men's underwear (XL, 2XL, 3XL), new women's underwear, new socks, combs and brushes, flip flops for showers, and bar soaps. Clarendon Presbyterian Church is located at 1305 North Jackson Street, Arlington, VA 22201. No physical interaction. Masks required. Drop-off at curbside location outside church. Please send questions to clarendonmission@gmail.com or (703) 527-9513.

Taking the Vaccine

By Linda Scott, RN



How did we get a successful and safe vaccine so fast? This story shows how new technology, money and an enhanced understanding of the human body made this possible. In the typical medication production routine, funding is difficult. In this instance, the funding for all phases was made available at once, and investment in manufacturing production began nearly simultaneously to vaccine development. Many countries, including the US, pre-paid for vaccines or made other funding available to encourage vaccine development worldwide which stimulated a lot of potential vaccine sources.

This vaccine is technically different from others in its use of mRNA. mRNA is a bit of protein that is coded [genetically sequenced] to do one specific task: create a specific protein. These bits of genetic code are not a complete copy of anything, and they are temporary. They dissipate, disappear, are digested. So, DNA takeover is impossible.

Next, the one task these mRNA bits are designed to do is build the spike protein. Most of us are now familiar with the spike protein feature of the SARS-CoV-2 virus. So, if the coded mRNA tells the body to manufacture a bunch of spike proteins, the spike protein (the virus) is identified as an invader, and it begins to produce and bring soldiers [antibodies and T-cells]

onto the field of battle. These antibodies are the protection against the SARS CoV-2 virus. The only thing in the vaccine are little messages to build spike proteins and normal saline.

Your body then creates the spike protein which triggers the immune response of antibody production. Then, theoretically IF you were to become acutely infected, you would become not ill or minimally ill, because you already have your response system built. Your antibodies and T-cells already know what to do and could begin fighting the infection immediately rather than over 5 – 7 days.

Some other important or fun facts about the COVID-vaccine:

- You should expect an immune response with the vaccine. This means mild fever, aches, mild symptoms as well as soreness at injection site. This is normal and expected. The vaccine has no additives or preservatives. You should stick around after your shot for 15 – 30 minutes as advised. Any serious reaction would occur within that time frame. These common though uncomfortable effects are much less than the effects of the full illness lasting likely 1 day.
- The protein manufacturing process used in this scenario is costly, and time consuming, if it had to be built by people. Having mRNA tell your body to build this spike protein as a natural cellular process is cool! This mRNA capability has been around since the early 60's and now it is being brought into the spotlight-at just the right time, maybe.

Continued on page 6...



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Vaccines, continued from page 5...

- The need for the super cold storage of the Pfizer vaccine is related to the recipe they have used. If just the mRNA, a protein, were injected, it would dissipate fast. In Pfizer's vaccine, the mRNA protein is covered with a lipid nanoparticle—imagine a drop of butter. The lipid substance protects the protein to give it a chance to get to the cells and stimulate the immune response. Gotta keep the “butter” cold! The other manufacturers used a different approach, apparently.

I've been a science believer all along. My doubt was fueled by the speed of vaccine production and the politicizing of a health care matter. Now I understand the unique circumstances here. I also understand the action of this vaccine which is LIKE some we know (tetanus) but different from others (measles). If you are interested, here are two easy to understand science resources:

- Paul Auerwater MD COVID-19: Keeping Up with A Moving Target weekly webcast and podcast
<https://covid19.dkbmed.com/>
- Shane Crotty PhD Director of the La Jolla Institute for Immunology
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eK0C5tFHze8&t=19s>

There is still no treatment and no cure for COVID-19. **Keep wearing your mask** (prevention), **washing hands** (prevention), and **keeping your distance** (prevention). We do not know everything, yet this vaccine (prevention) has been tested on more people than normally test a new medication. Vaccines will get us more safely to herd immunity, and it can work. Remember smallpox?

When my chance comes to take a vaccine, I plan to do so, and hope you will too!

Proposed Arlington Water and Wastewater Rate Structure

By Barbara E. Taylor

A committee of Arlington County community and business representatives, assisted by County staff and a consultant, has been working for more than a year on a proposed new rate structure for residential and commercial water and wastewater services. I attended a virtual meeting on December 7th at which the proposed structure was presented.

The goal of the process has been to develop a rate structure that will cover costs, be legally defensible, administratively feasible, and reflect key community values. Possible values identified at the outset of the process included revenue stability, affordability, equity across customer categories, rate stability, conservation, economic development, and simplicity. It was clear that some values, such as rate stability and conservation could be in tension with one another. A community engagement effort included an online survey garnering 2,300 responses and, prior to the pandemic, in-person meetings, pop-up sessions for hard-to-reach communities, and information tables at existing events. Conservation and affordability emerged as the values most important to most participants, with equity across customer categories a close third.

Arlington is the only jurisdiction in the Greater Washington area that bases its water and sewer charges solely on consumption, without incentivizing conservation or differentiating among single-family homes, multifamily dwellings, and businesses. Also, except for a few large commercial customers, wastewater charges are solely a function of how much water each home or building uses. Even water that never enters the wastewater system (e.g., from lawn watering) is implicitly treated as if it creates wastewater.

The proposed new rate structure, after further community input and County Board approval, would go into effect in January 2022. It would include for the first time, a base charge for all customers, even if they theoretically used no water at all, thus providing some revenue stability for the system. For single-family homes, the quarterly base charge would be \$13.47 for water and \$11.09 for sewage, a total of \$24.56. On top of that, single-family homes would pay a quarterly unit cost of \$3.84 per 1,000 gallons, up to 9,000 gallons, and \$6.14 per 1,000 gallons above 9,000, a rate structure intended to encourage conservation, since 9,000 gallons is estimated to be the average a house would need for basic indoor use. (Actual median single-family usage is 12,000 gallons per quarter.)

A further change, only for single-family homes, would respond to the problem of charges to treat water that never enters the wastewater system. It would base sewer charges year-round on winter usage, so even if residents water their lawns or fill a swimming pool in the summer, their sewer charges won't reflect their increased water usage. The bottom line for the average single-family customer wouldn't change much under the proposed system. Today, the median home uses 48,000 gallons of water per year and pays \$706. Under the proposed plan, that user would pay \$721.

There is much more information about the rate study on the committee's website <https://water.arlingtonva.us/water-and-wastewater-utility-rate-study>, including proposed charges for commercial and multifamily residential buildings and for various levels of water use by single-family homes.



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Winter *planning* leads to early spring *planting*!

Forestry and Natural Resources Plan (FNRP)

By Brooke Alexander, Ashton Heights Tree Canopy and Native Plant Coordinator

Arlington is updating both our 2010 Natural Resources Management Plan and our 2004 Urban Forest Master Plan. The new document will combine these and be called the Forestry and Natural Resources Plan (FNRP) and will guide development and county decisions, likely for the next decade or two.

Those interested in trees, recreation, and natural lands, please sign up for the County email list to stay informed on project updates and ways to engage at:
<https://projects.arlingtonva.us/fnrp>. It is important that the County know that we are interested in this topic. Signing up will indicate interest to the County. This does not obligate you to do anything further. I'm hoping that 50 to 100 of us will sign up.

If you'd like to delve into these topics in more detail, join me in evaluating these documents, and giving more specific feedback into this process. Email me at brooke.alexander52@gmail.com. I am taking the lead in this for Ashton Heights.

Here are more details on the breadth of the document from the County's website:

"The scope of this project includes an analysis of Arlington's existing conditions and planning for a greater future. Research methods in the forms of benchmarking, focus groups and community engagement will help inform many components of this plan. This plan will cover topics regarding impacts and opportunities related to Arlington's tree canopy, natural lands, urban development, wildlife, recreation, public education and stewardship among others."



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AHCA MEMBERSHIP SIGN-UP AND DUES PAYMENT FORM

Ashton Heights Civic Association annual dues are \$15 per household or \$10 per individual member or \$25 per household for two years. Anyone residing or owning property in Ashton Heights who is at least 18 may join and then vote at AHCA meetings.

Send this form and a check payable to AHCA to Jim O'Brien, 643 N. Kenmore St. 22201.

Name(s): _____

Children (and ages) (optional): _____

Street address: _____

Phone: _____ Resident since: _____

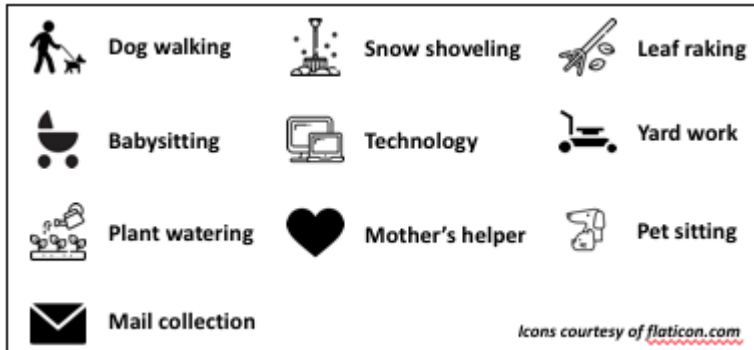
E-mail: _____

Neighborhood interests: _____

PAY DUES ONLINE:

www.ashtonheights.org/join-ahca

Kids, Inc. Entrepreneurs



We have a new and improved guide to services that our local youth offer. Kids, Inc. is a robust roster of willing, able local youth to help when the household hands are not enough.

Send updates to: Ann Felker -
gr8est9@gmail.com

For privacy reasons, Kids Inc is not available on our website version of the newsletter. Please see the Ashton Heights listserv OR your printed copy that is delivered to your door. Thanks!

Tree Canopy and Native Plants Subcommittee Updates

By Brooke Alexander, Ashton Heights Tree Canopy and Native Plant Coordinator, Arlington Regional Master Naturalist

Oak Decline**

Why are our oaks dying?

Two major reasons: water stress and construction damage. These can take decades to eventually kill a tree. According to Jim McGlone**, "trees do not 'suddenly' die (unless there is a chain saw involved); trees are very good at hiding illness".

Water stress includes drought, and extreme storms. For us, 2013 and 2014 had hot dry Aug/Sept, and 2019 had dry July/Aug/Sept; and in between, in 2017-2018, we had 18 months of very high rainfall. Our oaks like consistency of patterns. The alteration of extremes is even more damaging than either extreme. Our dying oaks likely started to decline with the drought of 2013.

Construction and other physical damage. Trees can be damaged by disturbing roots and/or damaging bark or branches. Roots radiate out from the trunk to beyond the branches. Roots supply water and minerals to the leaves to make food. The larger area of roots disturbed, the greater stress to the tree. Remember that xylem and phloem are just under the bark. These are the tiny conduits which bring water from the roots to the leaves, and bring food to the roots from the leaves. A small cut on the bark disturbs this flow vertically all the way up and down from that spot.



How bad is it? Tree canopy coverage has been declining in Ashton Heights. Our 320 acres had 56% coverage in 2008; declined to 41% in 2011; and further declined to 40% in 2016. No measurements have been made since 2016 (or prior to 2008); my observations indicate a significant decline since 2016.

What can be done? Our best hope is to keep our trees healthy, so they can have the reserves to deal with stress! Remember, older trees are more productive, but less adaptable to stresses. Here are some things that will help:

- Minimize physical damage: if doing construction, consult with an arborist to minimize damage to trees.
- Physical damage includes damage by lawn mowers and string trimmers, and soil disturbance.
- Replace lawn with mulch, or mulched native plants! There is 5 times more tree root mass under mulch than under turf. The mycorrhizae (which require organics) in the soil assist oaks in taking up moisture and nutrients; turf tends to be barren of organics.
- Water during droughts! Get a soil moisture meter and measure weekly at min 2 inch soil depth.
- If you hang a swing: use a hook, NOT a rope around the branch. This minimizes disturbance of xylem/phloem.
- Get good advice: Use Arlington extension office or find a consulting arborist through www.goodtreecare.com
- Plant new trees NOW: for our grandchildren!

Secondary factors. Trees with fungal pathogens, insect damage and bacterial disease are exhibiting secondary factors. These generally come in AFTER a tree is already weakened. (Don't treat these diseases or insects without knowing the cause of decline, and only when it will help your tree survive. Treatment of diseases that are not present, or treating them when it will not help the tree's likelihood of survival will waste your money and can cause negative impacts to our local ecosystems.**)

** info from Jim McGlone, Urban Forest Conservationist, VA Dept of Forestry; and <https://environment.arlingtonva.us/oak-decline/>

Reminder: Old Trees Wanted

Part of Ashton Heights' 100-year anniversary in 2021 will be celebrating our old trees. Please let the Old Tree Committee know of any old trees in the neighborhood that you are aware of!

We will document them, and potentially include them on our tour. Email brooke.alexander52@gmail.com to get involved.

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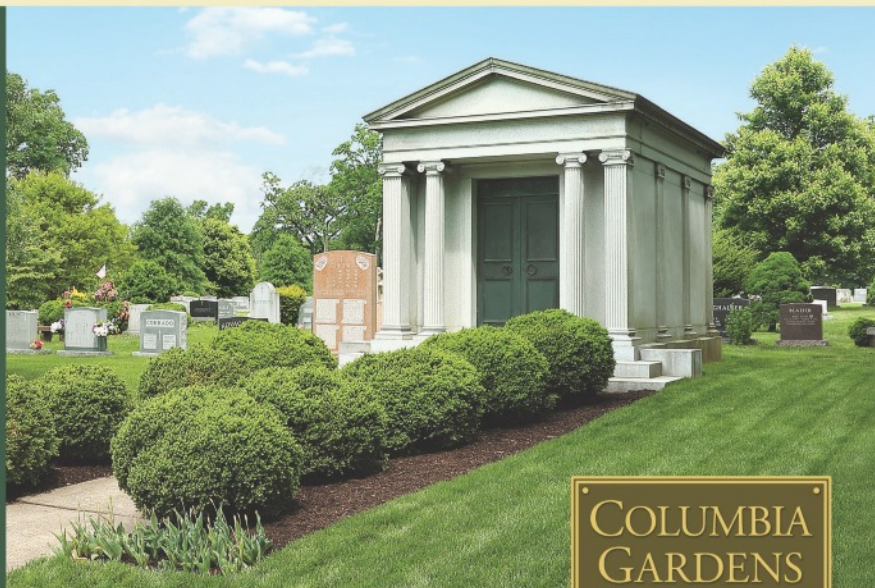
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Pre-Planning Gives You and Your Family Peace of Mind



Planning ahead for funeral and burial arrangements relieves your family of the burden of having to make decisions at a stressful time. Pre-planning is a true gift of love for your family—both emotionally and financially. Columbia Gardens Cemetery is approved by the State of Virginia to accept pre-payment for funeral and burial services. If you have not yet decided what arrangements you would like, we are here to guide and support you. We will explain burial, cremation, memorialization, options for funeral services and more.



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By Vinh & Susan Nguyen



Ruthie's All-Day opened in October, a brave feat in these times. It is a modern Southern restaurant that one would expect to find in Charleston, SC, with familiar items tweaked and subtly elevated, and every single item proudly made in-house (except for Duke's mayo and Heinz ketchup). Judging by its reception, this collaboration between fine dining vets from the Liberty Tavern and Robert Widmaier groups has been a home run! The restaurant makes great pandemic-aware use of its attractive space. There is a large patio (heaters were added recently), there are huge windows to let fresh air flow through the dining room, and tables are set apart comfortably more than the mandated 6 feet.

Skillet cornbread is a must-have starter; you can taste the fresh corn as well as the slightly sweet sesame honey. Other classics we enjoyed include deviled eggs (spiced up with paprika and garlic croutons) and hushpuppies (with roasted jalapenos adding complexity). The Cobb salad 's fried chicken added a distinctive touch.

The standard dinner is a "meat and three" order. An obvious place to start is the smoked offerings: brisket, pulled pork, and rib racks. Even while new to the local scene, Ruthie's found itself on WaPo's November 2020 top 10 list of BBQ restaurants!

Wood-fired items are also a must-try: hanger steak, striploin, chicken, trout, or salmon; you may even want to stand and watch (and smell) the chef flip your steak on the grill in the open kitchen. The diver scallops were cooked perfectly, the chicken tenders were actually tasty (i.e., not just for kids), and the smoky wood fire really enhanced both salmon and trout. As for the sides, we enjoyed the broccolini, brussels sprouts, mac n' cheese, carrots and fries the best. And whatever you eat, make sure to leave room for the outrageously good butterscotch pudding. The apple donuts are also delicious and fun.

Ruthie's is open for breakfast, lunch and brunch on weekends. Of the brunch offerings, the brisket hash is the bomb! Chunks of smoked brisket are mixed with a medley of roasted vegetables and potatoes and topped with a poached egg. Biscuits and gravy are hearty and flavorful but could use more gravy. Pancakes were predictably over-proportioned even as they were delicious.

Hospitality was warm and heartfelt. Each time we visited, Todd (the front-of-the-house partner) was there to greet every patron. We can't wait to go back!

Virtual Learning

By Layla Moustafa - 3rd grader at Long Branch Elementary School

I'd like to share with you my experience with virtual learning. I will discuss my first day of virtual learning, and my experiences overall since the beginning of the school year.

The first day of virtual learning was in early September; my brother and I went to our neighbor's house for our first day of "POD". A "pod" is a group of students that can work on school together with an adult present that keeps the kids focused. Our pod has six students - three 3rd graders and three 5th graders, all at Long Branch Elementary. Two 3rd graders are in the same class, and two 5th graders are in the same class, and there are two sets of siblings. On the first day, when we all sat down and tried to get into our Microsoft Teams meetings, some of us couldn't get in because the server was overloaded. We had to restart our iPads, but eventually we got in. At 11:15, we all had lunch and recess. Our host, Markus, has a basketball court and a soccer field, so we played until 12:15. Jake, our pod teacher, played with us, too. At 12:15, we had to go back to school



until we got out at 2:30. My classmate Leo and I had a very glitchy afternoon, but after the next few days, we all got the hang of it, and now it feels like a daily routine.

There are some positives about online learning, like still being able to learn new things, and having someone in my class in my pod right next to me. But there are also some negatives, like not being able to be in the class with all my classmates!

There are also some funny things that happened; like once, our teacher was talking about something but we didn't understand because she wasn't sharing her screen and she didn't find out until she finished talking. I would rather be with my class in person, but I've gotten used to it.

Specials (meaning Art, Music, and P.E) are sometimes really different in online learning; for example, in P.E I

kept knocking into furniture and people because I didn't have enough space. In Music, when we would try to sing together as a class, it always sounded quite strange because anytime I sang something, in about 2 or 3 seconds they would hear it, and everytime I moved, for them, they would see it a few seconds later. And it does this with everyone else too. So when we sing together, it sounds like chaos. Let's just say, virtual learning is not easy, but it is still fun!

The housing market has seen record-breaking growth since June after briefly being put on hold during the outbreak of the pandemic this spring. Despite looming economic uncertainty, highly controversial elections and the aggravated spread of the pandemic, home buyers continue to quickly snatch up the relatively few homes listed for sale. This time, the housing market is largely being driven by two factors: a shortage of available housing inventory and extremely low-interest rates.

Double-digit growth in both list and sale prices show an extreme lack of inventory and incredible demand - A sign of a hot seller's real estate market. Home sales have risen to a 14-year high. Speedy home sales continue in all regions of the country and the median sales price continues to have double-digit growth. November, which marks the traditional slowdown of the housing market, remained a hyperactive month.

The flow of buyers and sellers remained abnormally high in the fall season. Not only the housing demand, but the supply of new listings has also reached the highest point since the onset of the pandemic.

In the Northern VA region, this November's average price was at \$685,445 (up 9.52%) and sales were up 33.43% from last November. Arlington's average price was \$862,232 (up 18.61%) and sales were up 28.9%.

Current 30-year fixed rates are in the 2.5% to 2.75% range. Last year at this time, 30-year rates were at 3.85%.

Are you living in your ideal home now? If you're thinking of a new lifestyle, I'm glad to help with some strategic planning.

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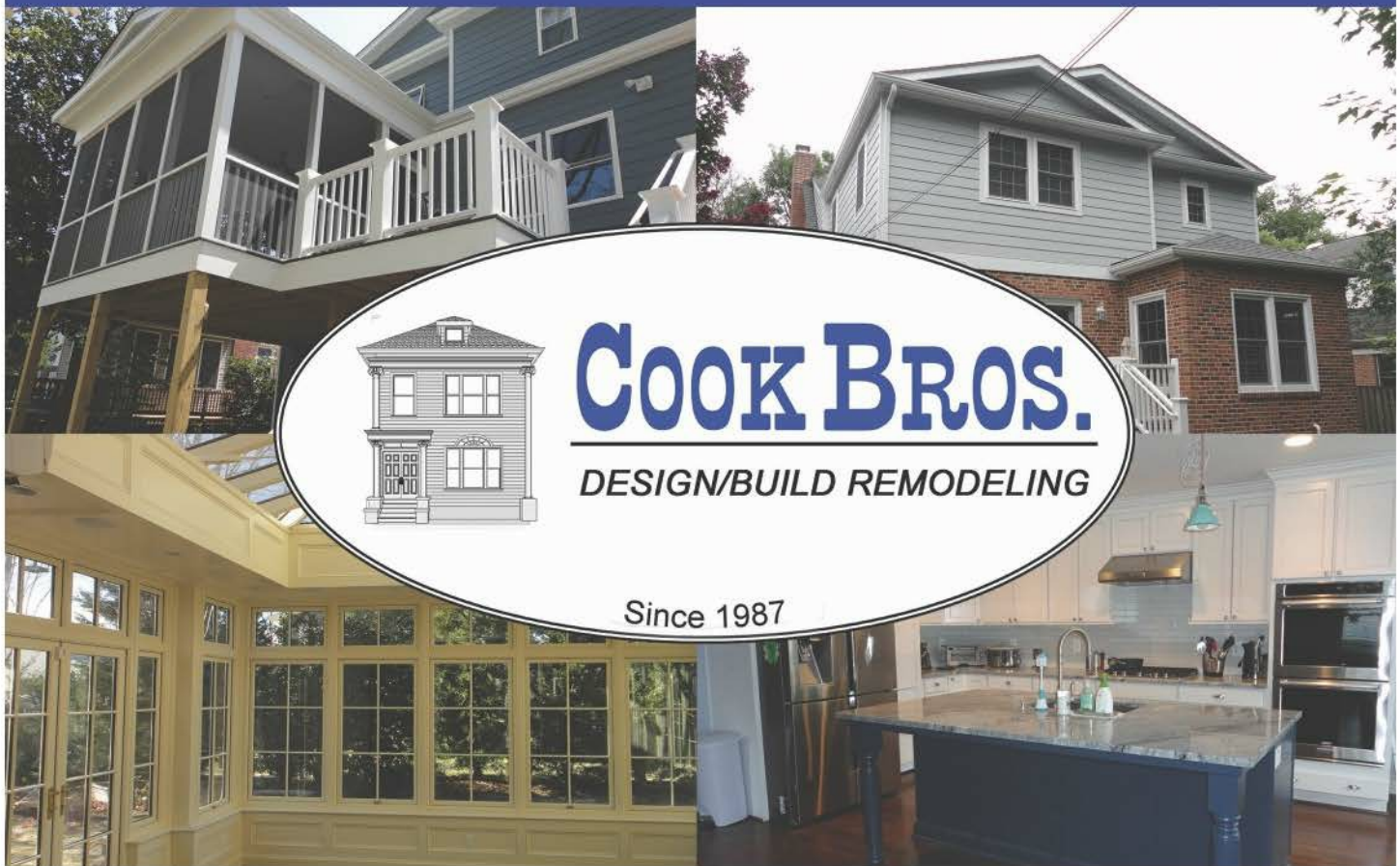
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