



# Ashton Heights News

The Newsletter of the Ashton Heights Civic Association

[www.AshtonHeights.org](http://www.AshtonHeights.org)

## COVID, Economy and Safety

Scott Sklar, President, AHCA

The core issue on everyone's mind is how long we are all going to endure this pandemic and when we will all be vaccinated. And I understand this being over 65 myself.

Leaving politics aside, we have four issues. Coordination with states proactively by the federal government, coordination by the state with Virginia cities and counties and Arlington County coordinating with all of us. I had issued a brief from Arlington County Manager Mark Schwartz at our January 2021 AHCA meeting. And to put it bluntly, the feds were unclear with the state, and Virginia bypassed Arlington on providing first doses via CVS/Walgreens for nursing/old age homes, and Virginia Hospital Center (VHS) for healthcare workers, first responders and a third of our teachers.

Now that is changing, in part, with vaccines going to counties, not hospitals, and the counties working with their hospitals and other healthcare providers. While this resulted in cancellations for those that signed up for vaccines with VHC, I expect that as vaccines come in, those appointments will be re-set ASAP.

The fourth issue, is that vaccine supplies have been limited, putting strains all over the country. The vaccine companies are having problems scaling up supply. Hopefully soon, a third "one dose" vaccine will be available.

With all these questions, we have a volunteer Martha Casey ([mlcasey@oacpc.com](mailto:mlcasey@oacpc.com)), who will coordinate timely information both through our monthly newsletter and our listserv. Any questions and suggestions, please contact her directly. Thank you, Martha. I am also in contact with the county on these issues, so if you have suggestions that you believe I should be inputting to the county, please email me directly: [solarsklar@aol.com](mailto:solarsklar@aol.com).

On a related issue, our local businesses are hurting. I personally am making an extra effort to buy food, goods and services right here in Arlington. Most are surviving on razor-thin margins. So if possible, please buy locally. I understand not everything can come from local businesses, and there are other considerations that come into play. Do what's best for you and your family.

And I would be remiss not to re-emphasize that wearing masks, washing hands and sanitizing is very essential. Even those

## AHCA Monthly Meeting

### ON ZOOM

**Wed., February 17, 2021, 7:30 – 9 PM**

Join the Zoom Meeting (Click the link below)

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/89111087609?pwd=WU53dWMxZVF0WmtWWmRGMTJ6em50dz09>

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

Meeting ID: 891 1108 7609 | Passcode: 916274

**7:30** Committee Reports & Community Updates

#### Speakers:

- **Preventing Fraud and Identity Theft** - Officer Harley Guenther, Arlington County Police Department
- **Virginia Hospital Center Rebuilding and Reorganization** - Adrian Stanton, VP/Business Development, Virginia Hospital Center

**9:00** Adjournment

vaccinated can still convey the virus with unwashed/sanitized hands or even spreading droplets from others -- so as tiring as this all is, please keep your resolve.

I feel very safe here in Ashton Heights - we have a caring community. And I want to thank all AHCA members for not only stepping up to the challenge but helping others in our community. Makes me very proud. Have a safe and joyous February.

## Volunteer Newsletter Advertising Coordinator Wanted!

**Help out your community!** The Ashton Heights newsletter needs a new newsletter advertising coordinator. Carmen Kosik has held this position since 2016 and 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. If interested or if you have questions about the position, please contact Scott Sklar ([solarsklar@aol.com](mailto:solarsklar@aol.com)), Amy Miller ([amylmiller4@gmail.com](mailto:amylmiller4@gmail.com)) or Carmen Kosik ([newsletterads@ashtonheights.org](mailto:newsletterads@ashtonheights.org)).

# 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](http://www.ashtonheights.org). You can volunteer by contacting the Executive Committee.

### Executive Committee

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

Cole Deines <a href="mailto:coledines@gmail.com">coledines@gmail.com</a>	Jim Feaster <a href="mailto:jimfeaster1@gmail.com">jimfeaster1@gmail.com</a>	Patrick Lueb <a href="mailto:jiffy64@me.com">jiffy64@me.com</a>	Ken Matzkin <a href="mailto:kenmatz1@gmail.com">kenmatz1@gmail.com</a>
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### Committees

<b>Safety &amp; Security</b>	Christina Schultz <a href="mailto:cmschultz@yahoo.com">cmschultz@yahoo.com</a>	<b>Transportation</b>	Patrick Lueb <a href="mailto:jiffy64@me.com">jiffy64@me.com</a>
<b>Development/Zoning</b>	David Phillips <a href="mailto:davidphillips1@msn.com">davidphillips1@msn.com</a>	<b>Playgrounds &amp; Parks Subcommittee</b>	Brent Burris <a href="mailto:brburris@gmail.com">brburris@gmail.com</a>
<b>Housing</b>	Matthew Hall <a href="mailto:mhall@goldsteinhall.com">mhall@goldsteinhall.com</a>	<b>Tree Canopy and Native Plants Subcommittee</b>	Brooke Alexander <a href="mailto:brooke.alexander52@gmail.com">brooke.alexander52@gmail.com</a>
<b>Schools</b>	Gregory Morse <a href="mailto:gregm748@gmail.com">gregm748@gmail.com</a>		
<b>Schools</b>	Caroline Rogus <a href="mailto:crogus@gmail.com">crogus@gmail.com</a>		
<b>Neighborhood Conservation Rep</b>	Brent Burris <a href="mailto:brburris@gmail.com">brburris@gmail.com</a>	Lutz Prager alternate <a href="mailto:pragerlutz@gmail.com">pragerlutz@gmail.com</a>	

### Newsletter

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## Drive Through Food & Toiletry Collection for Arlington Homeless Shelters - February and March 13<sup>th</sup> - 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](mailto:clarendonmission@gmail.com) or (703) 527-9513.



### 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](mailto: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

## Ashton Heights 100 Year Anniversary Celebrations

This year we plan to celebrate the wonderful 100 years of our neighborhood. Listed below are the topics we plan to cover in presentations at AHCA meetings. In addition we will be collecting materials to share; if anyone is interested in these topics, has questions, ideas and or materials, please reach out to the people listed below based on the topic. All general questions can be sent to AHCA Historian Jim Terpstra at [terpstrajames2@gmail.com](mailto:terpstrajames2@gmail.com). If you have not seen the extensive materials covering our history, please review them on our website: <https://ashtonheights.org/about-ashton-heights/history/>

In addition, there are more materials at the Center for Local History at our main library. We will be planning additional presentations in the fall after we review loads of wonderful materials we've received.

March Meeting Ashton Heights Historical Materials – Jim Terpstra: [terpstrajames2@gmail.com](mailto:terpstrajames2@gmail.com)

April Meeting Social History – Ann Felker: [gr8est9@gmail.com](mailto:gr8est9@gmail.com)

May Meeting Clarendon History -- Tom Petty: [barley.petty@prodigy.net](mailto:barley.petty@prodigy.net)

The topics covered in the September, October and November Meetings will be shared in the newsletter this spring. Some popular topics include: 1) our amazing tree canopy, 2) all the new building styles and renovations, 3) Buckingham and New Deal Housing and 4) Columbia Gardens. Additional questions and topics can be considered.

### Community Safety & Security Corner

#### *Real or Fake News: How Can You Tell?*

By Christina Schultz

Social media and new digital platforms have expanded access to information sources, innovative forms of communication, and greater global reach. However, these advancements have also led to the spread of disinformation. Popularly known as "fake news," the term once meant false stories but has also been used by political pundits to refer to media outlets with which they disagree. The unfortunate results are that information sources have become more contentious and polarizing and there has been a precipitous decline in public trust in traditional journalism.

In 2019, the Pew Research Center reported that 54 percent of Americans either got their news "sometimes" or "often" from social media, with Facebook being the most popular site. In another 2019 Pew survey, 18 percent of American adults responded that they "commonly" get news about politics and elections from social media, with young people most likely to get their news online through mobile devices. Complicating this increasing dependence on social media is that distinguishing between fact and false information is becoming more difficult. A 2020 survey by PBS NewsHour, NPR, and Marist Poll found that 59 percent of Americans recognize that it is hard to identify disinformation on social media.

We have seen how dangerous false information can be in affecting public perceptions and shaping emotions. While there is disagreement over whether tech companies

are doing enough to stop the spread of disinformation, there are ways in which we can be more responsible in processing and sharing news. Remember that the producers of disinformation purposely create content to elicit an emotional response. If an article or video triggers an emotional reaction, the best practice is to pause before reposting or retweeting. Stop and ask yourself questions about who wrote the article, where the article came from, who shared it, when it was created, and why it was shared. While separating fact from fiction accurately can be a challenge, there are several ways to get to the truth (see box). Avoiding the spread of rumors and lies can prevent harm. Recent events have shown how false information can foster discriminatory and inflammatory ideas and, in extreme cases, catalyze and justify violence.



#### **Ways to spot disinformation:**

- Think critically if the story sounds real
- Check the source
- Confirm who else is reporting the information
- Examine the evidence in the story
- Scrutinize images for potential alterations

## Meet Your Neighbor: The Phillips Family

By Betsey Lyon

David and Nadezhda Phillips, with children Joshua and Josephine, arrived in Ashton Heights in 2007, eventually building their current home on North Kenmore Street in 2016.

British by birth, David's family lived in Africa but he was schooled mostly in London. He earned a PhD in Economic Development, started his career in the private sector, became bored with large, impersonal organizations, so went to work in Africa, and then taught at an English University. He later moved to DC as a World Bank staff member where he focused on Africa and the former Soviet Union for 14 years. He then started a small international development consulting company in Ballston and authored two books. He's now a semi-retired Economic consultant.



David and Nadezhda met in her hometown of Minsk, Belarus, where David was the World Bank Representative and she also was working in development. Joshua and Josephine were born in Alexandria and schooled K-12 in Arlington. Joshua now attends the University of Virginia, as Josephine completes her senior year at Washington-Liberty and applies to colleges. Mom is also studying again, toward a BA in nutrition, hoping to convert everyone to a diet of raw food. So their home is full of laptops and piles of study notes as everyone toils remotely. David says his family has been most impressed with Arlington because of its urban center close to a quiet neighborhood, our quality public schools, and our gung-ho celebration of "Halloween." Nadezhda is also impressed with our wildlife, especially the foxes.

After a chance meeting at a neighbor's house, Civic Association President Scott Sklar asked David to chair the Ashton Heights Development Committee. Despite his ignorance (often a positive, he claims) he accepted, and on discovering there was work involved, asked Jack Spilsbury to co-chair. They took over from longtime Ashton Heights volunteers Jim Richardson and Joan FitzGerald. David and Jack formed a working group of a half-dozen neighbors to track projects, clarify plans, and collaborate with County staff. The working group met continuously pre-Covid with County Director of Planning Bob Duffy on many projects, and recently on Clarendon redevelopment. When David asked Duffy to assign a (junior) staff person to work with them, Duffy surprisingly and bravely assigned himself. David says he quickly learned that Ashton Heights is one of the more active civic associations in Arlington by reaching out to others and finding most struggle more than we do to organize.

The Phillips family expects to be in Ashton Heights for a long time, enjoying good neighbors and our quiet yet urban neighborhood in dynamic Arlington. They split their vacations between Europe and increasingly the U.S., and are amazed to live both a couple of hours from the sea and one of the world's celebrated mountain ranges.

David encourages residents to follow Ashton Heights Development Committee activity via this newsletter and monthly civic association meetings on third Wednesdays during the school year, via Zoom during Covid. Questions about Development volunteer opportunities? Email him directly: [davidphillips1@msn.com](mailto:davidphillips1@msn.com).

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## How We Care for Lyon Park's Trees

By Bill Anhut, member Lyon Park Board of Governors and Arlington County Tree Steward

Lyon Park has just over 60 trees, including two Co-Champion White Ash trees (the largest two ash trees in Arlington County) and a Notable tree, Arlington's 4th largest Willow Oak. In the last three years we have planted 2 sycamores, a red maple, a pin oak, and a sweet gum. We planted two disease-resistant American Chestnut seedlings during Lyon Park's 2019 Centennial Celebration, a swamp white oak last spring, and through the Tree Canopy Fund, a Sugarberry and a Linden tree last November.

All of the young trees are healthy and thriving.

Unfortunately, all ash trees in Virginia are endangered by the infestation of the Emerald Ash Borer, a pest introduced to the U.S. from China years ago. For the past 10 years, Lyon Park has hired arborists to advise and treat our White Ash trees to fend off the borer, and last spring our arborist again treated the trees, pruned all deadwood, and mulched the trees.



Nevertheless, on November 5, a limb of one of the white ash trees broke from the trunk and fell. Though the limb appeared healthy at inspection, its weight and high winds brought it down. Had the limb exhibited any symptoms that it would break from the tree, the arborist would have removed the limb during his spring pruning. While it is rare that large, apparently healthy limbs fall from trees, it can happen. Within the past year, we removed one of our Tulip trees because it posed a threat to fall; and we've pruned deadwood from other trees. By carefully inspecting trees annually, an arborist can minimize the occurrences of falling limbs or trees.

Lyon Park has four white oak trees that are severely stressed due largely to the Community Center renovation construction. For the past four years, our ISA Certified Arborist, Robert Blakely of Northern Woods, has been treating the trees and pruning all dead wood. At Robert's recent November inspection, he commented that the white oaks have been further impacted by recent dramatic changes in our climate, particularly 2019's August/September drought and severe temperature spikes. Even though each tree has dead wood, Robert remains optimistic that three of the four trees have sufficient healthy branching that they can be nurtured for the foreseeable future. The fourth white oak shows signs of an opportunistic fungus, Hypoxlyn Canker, and that tree must be removed this winter when the other white oaks are pruned.

The Lyon Park Board of Governors, charged with caring for our park and community center, is proud of our Co-Champion White Ash trees and our Notable Willow Oak and we care dearly for the preservation and maintenance of our trees. We will selectively continue to plant new trees, prune or remove any trees that pose a danger to our park users, and consult with our arborist following his direction for the care of our trees.

*Thanks to John Ruml for facilitating inclusion of this article in the Ashton Heights newsletter.*

## Pre-Planning Gives You and Your Family Peace of Mind

**P**lanning 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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### Kaldi's Social House

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[www.kaldissocialhouse.net](http://www.kaldissocialhouse.net)

By Ann Felker



From the couple least likely to eat out, not only because we are -ahem-old, but because I like to cook and Timmy likes to eat. Furthermore, Timmy has been, for 57 1/2 years, the most complementary of cuisine audiences. He will earnestly say, "That is the best tuna sandwich you ever made!" the day after I have made a four course meal with all new recipes. Luckily, I get his nuances, but when he compliments a restaurant, I know he speaks from experience and high standards.

Kaldi's Social House is at the corner of 10th and Highland, in the most recently completed apartment building on 10th Street. We heard about the building several years ago at an AHCA meeting and its reality includes a fabulous, innovative restaurant whose name might indicate merely a coffee house/hang out space. It indeed, can be just that, but its extensive menu, well-spaced tables, comfy sofas and clean contemporary lines offer an upscale experience no matter the time of day.

First of all, Kaldi follows all CDC current guidelines for health and safety. The doors open often enough to offer frequent fresh air renewal, and appropriate masks, wipes and table

cleaning are routine. Even the requisite TV's are quiet, at least in the daytime.

The menu covers three meals per day with brunch on weekends. We are not happy hour folks, but they do that too, all with a 21st Century awareness that there are unique food combinations and components that would not have been on the menu at the Biker Bar that Kaldi sort of replaces at least geographically.

Delightful, interesting, tasty, thoughtful. Guests can be vegan, gluten free, continental, or Midwestern and find something to rave about. Breakfast smoothies and gluten-free waffles, full-on carnivore burgers and roasted veggie brioche, grain bowls and main dish salads, crab cake sliders or dinner platters of butternut squash carbonara and three homemade desserts - what more could you ask? Just read the item descriptions to see how the chef provides unique touches...all using fresh, in-season produce.

The cocktail offerings are probably as enticing as the coffee opportunities. We just stuck to the coffee, but Timmy, a serious rhubarb fan, asked about a Rhubarb G&T, and the excellent waiter said they offer that only when they can get fresh rhubarb! Plan your visit to match your seasonal favorites or just stop in for a fabulous feed anytime. Their take out menu is beautifully presented so do not hold back. Keep our local businesses alive.

## COVID-19 Vaccine Update

As with all things COVID-related, information changes rapidly. Some good ways to stay updated are:



- to subscribe to the Ashton Heights listserv. Join by providing your full name and street address to: [main+subscribe@ashtonheights.groups.io](mailto:main+subscribe@ashtonheights.groups.io), our new volunteer Martha Casey will be providing streamlined information about COVID news on the listserv.
- Visit the Arlington COVID response page: <https://www.arlingtonva.us/covid-19/>
- Visit the Virginia Department of Health: <https://www.vdh.virginia.gov/>
- **NEW!** VA Department of Health COVID dashboard: [vdh.virginia.gov/coronavirus/covid-19-vaccine-summary](https://vdh.virginia.gov/coronavirus/covid-19-vaccine-summary)
- Also of note: those 75+ residents who had their vaccines cancelled will receive a call from official schedulers soon. It will be coming from a 703-228 number. Remember: vaccinations are free and no one calling from this official county phone number will ask for your social security or Medicare numbers.

**The following is excerpted from a recent Facebook post written by Dr. Kathryn A. Dreger, Virginia Hospital Center (VHC)**

### What happened with the VHC Appointments?

I went for a walk with my daughter this weekend. We were talking about the vaccine distribution, and I asked her two questions. "Imagine you went to buy a car, and they told you it wouldn't be ready for 6 weeks. Then, after only 3 ½ weeks, they called to let you know it was ready. How would you feel? She replied, "Happy!"

"Okay," I said, "Now imagine you went to buy a car, and they told you it would be ready in a week, but it didn't come for 3 ½ weeks. How would you feel?" Frowning, she complained, "I'd feel really mad... and disappointed." "Right!" I replied, "This vaccine roll-out is like telling everyone they will get the car they (desperately) want in a week, and then saying there aren't any cars right now. But they should have some cars coming in soon. They just aren't totally sure when."

Many of you may have received an email recently from VHC that your appointment for the COVID vaccine has been cancelled. I understand you must be frustrated, angry and worried. I thought it might be helpful to share with you what I know, and what you can do moving forward.

Over the last week, the vaccine being delivered to the state of Virginia dropped to only 105,000 injections a week. To make things more difficult, the entire state opened up to Group 1b. 8.5 million people live in Virginia. According to Dr. Danny Avula (the Vaccine Coordinator for the State of Virginia) Group 1b encompasses 50% of the state, which is over 4 million lives. At only 105,000 vaccinations a week, it would take 10 months to vaccinate Group 1b.

Not good news, I know, but this shortage will not last forever. More vaccinations are being made, and President Biden has plans to use the Defense Production Act to improve vaccine supply and distribution.

For now, the issue is a very practical one. The supply being delivered to Arlington County has dropped by 500 doses a week. That has huge implications for the people who are scheduled. For 500 people, that vaccine is simply not there.

On Friday, Jan. 22<sup>nd</sup>, given the dramatic issues with supply, the Virginia Department of Health announced that vaccines will no longer be delivered to both hospitals and health departments. Instead, all vaccinations will go to local health departments. The Virginia Department of Health is in charge, and that means VHC will no longer be receiving large amounts of vaccine, so they had to cancel their appointments.

Moving forward, all vaccines will be delivered through the Arlington County Department of Health. This will allow one central location to maintain a fair and swift distribution of a scarce resource. Dr. Reuben Varghese (the Director of the Arlington County Department of Health) has been working incredibly hard. They have distributed nearly 90% of the vaccine they have been given, and the other 10% has been allocated. They are making sure they have enough for those who have had the vaccination to get the second shot.

I know how many of you want to get this vaccine, want the pandemic to end, and want life to return to normal. But, simply put, there is not enough vaccine right now. I can only say that for the near future, getting a vaccine is going to be hard – for everyone. None of us like this, but rest assured that there is not some magic supply of vaccine that everyone else can find except you. You are not alone. This is just going to take time.

### What should I do now?

If you have had one of the vaccines at Virginia Hospital Center: The second has been set aside for you.

### If you are a resident of Arlington County, over 75 years old and you had an appointment time at VHC:

Your name and information have been sent to the Arlington Department of Health. They have to enter your information into their database. They will be doing their best to call you in the next week to schedule a new vaccination time for the coming weeks to months. These appointments will be worked into their already crowded schedule, so please be patient.

*Continued on page 8...*

Continued from page 7...

**If you are a resident of Arlington County, over 75 years old and you never had an appointment at VHC:**

Please register at the Arlington County Department of Health  
<https://www.arlingtonva.us/covid-19/vaccines/registration/>

**If you are between 65-74 years old and you had an appointment time at Virginia Hospital Center:**

Unfortunately, given the current vaccination shortage, I think it will take some time to get through the people over age 75. Your scheduled time and registration information will not be sent over to the Department of Health. Please re-register at the Department of Health directly and they will place you on their waitlist. <https://www.arlingtonva.us/covid-19/vaccines/registration/>

I really hope this helps all of you. If I had the vaccinations, I would be more than happy to distribute them. According to the Virginia Department of Health, there are no plans to distribute vaccines to physician primary care practices. The shortage is so great, that a centralized distribution is the best way to maximize orderly vaccine delivery and minimize waste.

In the meantime, we are still no worse off than we have been for the last ten months. Please continue wearing your masks, staying six feet apart and let's hope warm weather arrives soon so that we can see each other outside (without getting frostbite!).

**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.

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Street address: \_\_\_\_\_

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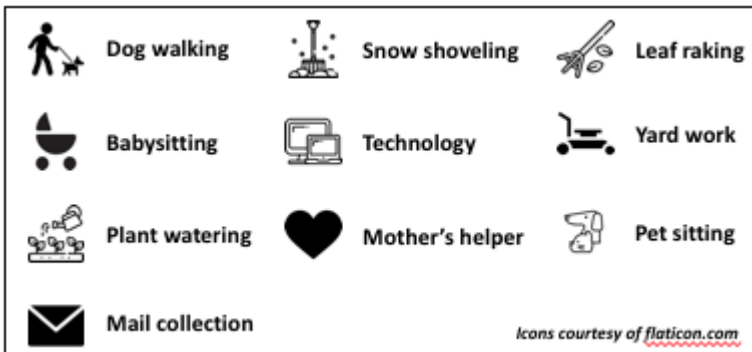
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We have a new and improved guide to services that our local youth offer. Kids, Inc. is a robust roster of willing, able local youth to help when the household hands are not enough.

Send updates to: Ann Felker - [gr8est9@gmail.com](mailto:gr8est9@gmail.com)

**Kids, Inc. Is not included in the website version of the newsletter for privacy reasons. Please view your printed newsletter hand-delivered by generous volunteers OR the issue that is distributed through the Ashton Heights listserv. Thanks!**

## Hackberry: Why Would Anyone Plant a Hackberry Tree?

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

The name is unappealing, and the tree sometimes appears unkempt. Why would anyone plant one? For the birds and the butterflies!

**Birds:** The name 'hackberry' is named after the hard little drupe that the tree produces. Although dry and gaggy and unappealing to humans, these small drupes are loved by the birds! Drupes stay on the trees well into winter. So, they are available to fall migrant birds, and wintering birds. These include: robins, cardinals, mockingbirds, titmice, Baltimore orioles, cedar waxwing and pileated woodpeckers.



*Mourning Cloak (Nymphalis antiopa)*

**Birds and butterflies:** Hackberry leaves are the favored food for many butterfly caterpillars. These include the larvae of Question Mark, Comma, Hackberry, Tawny Emperor, Snout, and Mourning Cloak butterflies; some of these only feed on hackberry trees. These caterpillars, in turn, are food for spring migrant birds, and the young of resident breeding birds.

**Growing conditions:** The hackberry is a rugged and adaptable tree. It can be planted in clay, loam, or sandy soil. It can tolerate wet, moist or dry sites; it can stand seasonally parched soils (once established). Hackberries can tolerate sun, partial sun, and shade. And has a pH tolerance of 6-7.8; that covers normal pH here in Ashton Heights, as well as those soils that have been treated with lime to accommodate your grass.

**Plant form:** There are two hackberries that grow in our area: northern hackberry (*Celtis occidentalis*), and southern hackberry (*Celtis laevigata*). They are very similar. They both have yellow fall color before dropping their leaves in the fall. The northern hackberry grows to 60 feet, and has gray bark with warty ridges; the southern grows 60-80 feet, and has gray smooth bark like a beech tree when young, with warty knobs as it gets larger. The overall form of the tree is like a sugar maple. It will be taller and thinner in the shade; wider and shorter in the sun. Small branches are often disfigured by witches broom, which can make it look unkempt.

**Gotta love it!** As we face the changing weather patterns of climate change, there are lot of reasons to recommend a hackberry tree.

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Historically low interest rates helped to fuel the 2020 seller's market, driving prices up throughout the region as buyers competed for available homes. The 2020 average home price in Northern VA was \$670,408, up 9% above the 2019 average.

December is usually a month marked by lower new contract activity, as consumers pause making decisions about buying or selling properties during the holidays. But this year we saw an extension of the busy fall market right up through the years end.

During the last week of December 2020, showing activity was up 252% in NOVA compared to showing levels during the same week in 2019. A total of 1,955 homes sold in December 2020, a 28.2% increase above 1,525 sales in December 2019.

In Ashton Heights there were 19 homes that sold in 2020, with an average sales

price of \$1,232,032, 2019's average was \$1,086,443.

With rates at historic lows, a strong stock market, and buyer demand unabated, experts don't foresee any conditions that would dampen the market in early 2021. The hi-balance conforming rates for Fannie Mae & Freddie Mac will increase in 2021 to \$822,375, up from \$765,600. Current 30-year fixed rates are in the 2.5% to 2.75% range. Last year at this time 30-year rates were at 3.75%.

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**Free Notary Service for Ashton Heights Residents.** With me as your advisor, I can help you sell your home faster and at a higher price. Compass fronts the cost of the services to enhance your home's value. Visit our website for details on the Concierge Program.

## Clarendon Sector Plan Changes

By Joan Fitzgerald

County staff is proposing significant changes to the Clarendon Sector Plan, which was last updated in 2006 based on a lengthy community process. The 2006 updates granted developers significant increases in building height and density in return for community benefits, such as wide sidewalks, lighting, affordable housing, and building design elements that are intended to create an urban village. Sector Plans are a critical tool in guiding development. The 2006 Clarendon Sector Plan for example, was essential in helping Ashton Heights prevent a massive development at the Dominion substation that would have towered over our neighborhood.

The proposed changes to the Clarendon Sector Plan were initiated by developers who are requesting even more height and density, as well as reduced set-backs and step-backs, for no additional community benefits. Many AHCA and LPCA members believe these changes will have the impact of creating an urban canyon instead of the urban village that was envisioned by the stakeholders in the 2006 Clarendon Sector Plan working group.

We all realize that market conditions change, but the 2006 Clarendon Sector Plan already contains dramatic height and density increases for developers, compared to the original zoning for the area. The Clarendon Sector Plan working group tried to carefully weigh the inevitable re-development of the area with the desire to create a vital, activated, accessible urban village. The increase in height and density that is being proposed, as well as the reduction in building 'set backs' and

'step backs' will create an urban canyon, not the urban village that the committee envisioned.

- The increase in height and density are significant. In the area bordering Ashton Heights (N 10<sup>th</sup> Street), the proposal is to increase the lowest heights from 55' to 85' (3 stories) and the highest heights from 110' to 128'. These height increases don't include air conditioning rooms on the top floors or amenities like resident recreation areas, so the actual heights are even higher.
- The proposal includes reduced step-backs and set-backs, which are the building design features that reduce the visual impact of very large buildings, so that pedestrians and drivers don't feel like they are in a gray, unlit canyon. As proposed, the step backs are really only decorative and not deep enough to reduce the visual impact of the massive buildings on pedestrians and drivers.
- The proposal moves an important roadway that was designed to be a vital pedestrian, vehicular and commercial link between Wilson Blvd (and a new public space there) and N Hudson Street, where a large, new public open space was to be located. The roadway now functions as an alleyway for building access, not a vital access way for the community.

Ashton Heights Civic Association representatives sent a letter to County staff and the County Board outlining many concerns. We should all be aware of them, because these changes to the Sector Plan will have a dramatic impact on Ashton Heights.

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