



Ashton Heights News

The Newsletter of the Ashton Heights Civic Association

www.AshtonHeights.org

2022 Opportunities and Challenges

By Scott Sklar, President, AHCA

Virtually every community issue we cover is about to be in overdrive in 2022.

Open spaces and parks are at the center of AHCA's input to the Clarendon area Arlington County planning – where on our border several large buildings will be going up, and we want to make sure we have ample park and open space (and native trees). AHCA is at the lead and “in the center” of that dialogue, with Committee Chairs Brook Alexander, Brent Burris, and Jack Spillsbury leading the charge.

Development has always been our most time-consuming focus, and the AHCA Development Committee has been in the forefront. Our Development Committee Chair, Jack Spillsbury, has garnered support of the four other civic associations that surround Clarendon to coordinate our priorities and presentations. And the Committee members are all active and engaged in the effort of Clarendon redevelopment on building set-backs, building tapering, open spaces, and underground parking as essential components – a great group of active community members – thank you.

Our Safety & Security Committee, chaired by Christina Schultz, has an ongoing liaison with the Arlington County Police Department whose representatives report at AHCA's monthly meetings. Car thefts and car incursions are becoming more common – we need to lock our vehicle doors and not idle our cars and leave – as the fastest cure for this problem. Violent crime has not increased, but has so in areas around Arlington County – so we need to remain vigilant.

Transportation has the same issues of pedestrian safety, bicycle lanes, traffic guiding and calming. We have roadway and walkway projects along North Glebe Road in play, and issues being followed by AHCA Transportation chair Patrick Lueb.

Schools issues are followed by Committee Co Chairs Gregory Morse and Caroline Rogus – and major issues seem to be steady, but they will report as needed and are open to any input from Ashton Heights residents.

AHCA Monthly Meeting

Wed., January 19, 2022, 7:30 – 9 P.M.

- 7:00 p.m.** Mingle and chair setup
- 7:30 p.m.** Scott Sklar, AHCA President and Committee reports
- 7:45 p.m.** Macy's - Representatives of Insight Properties will provide an update on its planned redevelopment of the Ballston Macy's into a residential building with 44,000 square feet of ground floor grocery store use.
- 8:15 p.m.** Christine Baker, Vision Zero
Christine is the county lead planner for [Vision Zero](#). She will give an overview, status and open for Q&A
- 9:00 p.m.** Adjourn

Housing issues are a hot topic by the Arlington County Board as its Middle Housing report has been issued, and AHCA Housing Committee Chairs Matt Hall and Christina Schultz are participating and tracking.

Aside from the formal committee work, I have been dialoguing with members of the Arlington County Board, and the new police chief Andy Penn, as well as with our sister civic associations.

I am pleased we can have our AHCA monthly meetings back in-person at the Clarendon United Methodist Church social hall on the third Wednesday of every month, or this January 19th. If you have ideas on speakers and program issues, please contact our VP for Programs Jim Feaster.

And now that we have celebrated Ashton Heights's 100th anniversary, I need to re-emphasize that it is up to us to preserve and enhance our community, so it evolves as the great place it is to live, work, play. The work we do as a community is essential. Thank you for being an AHCA member, and all that you do.

Ashton Heights Civic Association Volunteers

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 Feaster jimfeaster1@gmail.com	VP Membership: Jim O'Brien jimob1@verizon.net 703-528-0376	Treasurer: Doug Williams treasurer@ashtonheights.org	Secretary: Chris Armstrong carmstrong07@gmail.com
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Members-at-Large

Cole Deines coledines@gmail.com	Jim Richardson jabrichardson@verizon.net	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	Jack Spilsbury spilsburyj@gmail.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
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Development Committee Update

By Jack Spilsbury

The AHCA Development Committee continues to participate in the Arlington Planning Commission's year-long review of the Clarendon Sector Plan. The review is addressing land use, building height and massing, architecture, open space, transportation, and other topics related to retaining Clarendon's uniquely "urban village" character. County staff are working to finalize their proposed updates to the 2006 Sector Plan.

On December 8, the Commission's Long Range Planning Committee (LRPC) held its sixth, and most likely final session focused on Clarendon's west-end, where developers propose substantial new construction. This session reviewed options to upgrade the fire station at 10th and Hudson Street.

At the LRPC, we teamed with four other participating Civic Associations to oppose the County's proposals to change the zoning designation for the County-owned 10th Street block (site of Fire Department and the former Clarendon House) from park/public open space to residential development and to lift height restrictions there. We are encouraged by support from several Planning Commission members, as well as a letter to the Board from Arlington's Forestry and Natural Resources

Commission asking the County to deliver on the approximately 50,000 feet of park space delineated for that location in the 2006 plan.



On December 11, a representative from the Clarendon-Court House Civic Association joined with several AHCA speakers at the County's monthly Board meeting to press for retaining the planned 10th Street park space. We are now working with the other civic associations to send a joint letter to the Board to oppose eliminating the planned park space. Given the prospect of upgrading the fire station at that site, we have called for creative thinking to co-locate it with substantial new recreation space.

The proposed sector plan updates will be reviewed in January by the County's Zoning Board. The full package would then go to the Planning Commission and County Board for a first review in February, and formal approval as soon as March 2022. Please monitor the County's LRPC website for further updates.

Meet Your Neighbors: The Moustafa Family

By Erika Cohen Derr

If Ashton Heights ever appoints an ambassadorial delegation, Hoda Moustafa should lead it! She speaks with joy and personal experience of the strong sense of community to be found here, for adults, children and canines alike. The Moustafa family - Hoda and Ahmed, and children Yasmeen, Amir, Alex and Layla - chose this neighborhood out of happenstance, but have returned to it with intention. Their experiences living in other places offer plenty to compare it to, which makes Ashton Heights all the more special in their eyes.

Though both are Egyptian by heritage, Hoda grew up in Montgomery County, Maryland, and Ahmed hails from Chicago. The Moustafas came to Ashton Heights in search of a larger home for their growing family in 2011 after living in another part of Arlington with their three eldest children. When the fourth and youngest was on the way, they found a comfortable, spacious house on Pershing Drive, and Hoda instantly fell in love with the neighborhood. The children grew up playing in local parks, scootering to see nearby friends, attending neighborhood schools, and enjoying community gatherings. Hoda started a book club with other Ashton Heights residents, which continues to this day (new members welcome!). AH residents may also recognize Hoda as a gym instructor at Gold's Gym, where she taught spinning and Body Pump for many years.

The Moustafa's children are part of the community fabric as well, each in their own ways. Yasmeen, now a student at William and Mary, enjoys acting and singing, and for years was a regular babysitter for local families. Amir, currently attending Virginia Tech, prefers boxing and experimenting in the kitchen. He was a regular at the annual Lyon Park Chili Cook Off and took the prize one year for best chili! Younger children Alex and Layla enjoy school at Thomas Jefferson and Long Branch respectively, and stay busy with various activities like swimming, boxing, gymnastics, piano and Girl Scouts (note to self: it's cookie season!). The family makes time for all the seasonal festivities in Ashton Heights, from Halloween excitement on Jackson Street, to cheering on runners at the Thanksgiving Turkey Trot which runs right by their house.



Hoda's job with The World Bank brought the Moustafas to Senegal for four years, affording them the chance to travel extensively around Africa. From The Gambia to Zambia, and Morocco to Botswana, Hoda and family took advantage of the time abroad to explore the continent broadly, learn French, and adopt lovable dog Lomo, who joined them in Arlington shortly after their return. This time away reinforced how special the Ashton Heights community is.

"Everyone's willing to lend a hand," says Hoda. "Ask for help, from tax advisors, chiropractors, someone to watch our dog. ... I send something out on the listserv, and right away, people are there with offers to help." One particularly generous neighbor, Ruth Judson, took care of finding new homes for their 2 cats when they left for Senegal, and then housed Amir while he was home from boarding school for 2 weeks.

For their part, the Moustafas embody this community ethic. They are active members of the listserv, posting suggestions or invitations on a frequent basis. During the recent era of tumultuous politics, they distributed lawn signs that read "Hate has No Home Here" to dozens in the neighborhood. Hoda volunteers weekly at the nearby Arlington vaccine clinics, to help ensure the safety and health of all Arlingtonians. Even the youngest, Layla has written a dispatch from her quarantine pod for this esteemed publication!

Ashton Heights is a friendly, welcoming and connected neighborhood, which drew the Moustafas here in the first place. For the better part of ten years, they have committed themselves to drawing on this sense of place to create an even stronger sense of community.



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A new report from *CoreLogic* reveals home prices are up 18% since this time last year.

The **demand** for homes is significantly greater than the current **supply** that's available to buy, which is driving the increase. From Q2 2020 to Q2 2021, the average home appreciation was 17.4% nationwide. The supply of homes for sale will greatly affect where prices go in the coming months.

Experts forecast prices will continue to increase to only 5% in 2022. Buyers hoping to purchase in the future may see this as great news.

Now a slight moderation of home prices does not mean values will depreciate or fall. Price increases may occur at a slower pace, but experts still expect them to rise.

This lack of homes for sale is creating a challenge for many buyers who are growing frustrated in their search. On the other hand, this is a huge opportunity for sellers, as low supply is driving up home values.

According to *CoreLogic*, the average home in the U.S. has appreciated by more than \$50,000 over the past year. And for many homeowners, that's opening new doors as they re-think their needs and use their equity to move up, right size or downsize.

Are you living in your ideal home now?

If you are thinking of a new lifestyle, I'm glad to help you research and discuss options. Put my 36 years of local Arlington market expertise to work for you and your largest financial investment! Contact me for a confidential consulting session.



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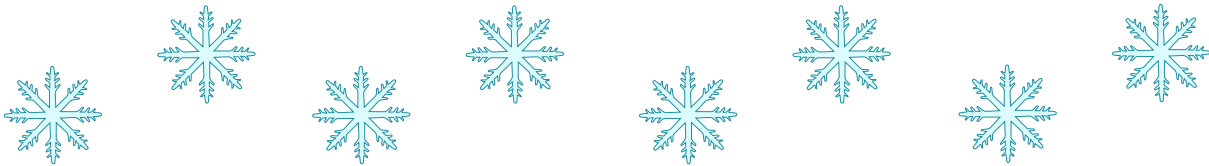
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Who Feeds Our Baby Birds?

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

Virtually all the birds in Ashton Heights feed caterpillars to their babies. Caterpillars are soft, and easily stuffed down the gullet, and contain just the right nutrients for baby birds.



How many caterpillars are needed?

According to Doug Tallamy, 6,000-9,000 caterpillars are needed to bring one clutch of chickadees to fledging, which takes 16 days. Then, the parents continue to supplement food for their fledglings for an additional 21 days.

Where do birds get the caterpillars to feed their babies?

From our trees! Caterpillars eat leaves. Our native trees grow the most caterpillars. Our native oaks have 557 different species of caterpillars that they support; maples, 300 species; pines, 210; sycamore, 45. Non-native trees (like crepe myrtle) feed very, very few caterpillars, if any.



Photo courtesy of Arlington Tree Stewards

So, feed the birds - Plant a native tree!

COVID-19 Vaccine Update

By Martha Casey

I'd certainly hoped not to be writing a Covid vaccine update nearly a year after the first one, but here we are, so here it is.



Omicron

The omicron surge is underway and will likely continue for the next 4 to 6 weeks. Preliminary studies from South Africa and the United Kingdom indicate that the newest variant is highly transmissible, though cases may be mostly mild. As anyone who has experienced Covid can attest, "mild" is a relative term, and those over 65 continue to suffer the most severe complications.

Help is on the way: Pfizer says an omicron-specific vaccine could be ready for approval by March, and their anti-viral treatment pill, which is 89% effective against hospitalization or death, could be available in 4 to 6 weeks.

Get a Booster

Until these latest medical miracles arrive, early data show that the best current protection against serious illness and hospitalization is to be **fully vaccinated AND boosted**. Over 90% of Arlingtonians have had at least one jab, but cases are rising rapidly and on December 17th, Arlington reported the second highest number of cases in the entire pandemic. Fortunately, Virginia hospitals are not now at capacity, unlike other states whose governors have had to call in the National Guard and federal strike force staffing teams. That could change quickly, so give our overworked and highly stressed health care workers a break. Instead of clapping for them, get a booster.

Vaccines are available at pharmacies and county clinics. It's best to make an appointment, and they are required for 16 and 17 year-olds to get a Pfizer booster, but many locations provide shots to walk-ins.

Booster Eligibility

Lots of different rules for shots and boosters so here's a quick eligibility review:

- Ages 5 to 15 eligible for the two-dose Pfizer vaccine, 3 weeks apart
- Ages 16 and 17 eligible for Pfizer vaccine plus booster 6 months after second shot
- All adults 18 and over eligible for vaccines and booster 6 months after second shot- 6 months after a Pfizer or Moderna, 2 months after J&J.

NOTE that the CDC has finally announced that Pfizer and Moderna are recommended over J&J, which is largely ineffective and has more serious side effects.

- Immunocompromised individuals 12 and over should get an additional primary shot 28 days after their second shot (or single J&J shot). Those 16 and over are eligible for a booster 6 months after their additional primary shot.

Not Yet Eligible:

- Ages 5 to 15 not yet eligible for booster
- Ages 5 and under still no access to vaccines. Pfizer and Moderna announced that trials of a two-shot regimen had failed. They have begun studies of a 3-shot regimen, which will not be completed for several months.

Just trying to put this list together is head-spinning - and it changes often. Be sure to speak with your doctor about what's best for you and your family.

Get Tested

It seems that frequent testing is about to become part of our lives, if it hasn't already. Some options for getting it done to get on with our lives:

- Walmart has Binax at home tests for \$14.99 for two - home delivery currently backed up about 10 days.
- Arlington Public Libraries have free at home tests. They run out quickly but are replenished on Wednesdays.
- CVS on Lee Highway next to Italian Store always seems to have a good supply.
- Ashton Heights own testing center at the intersection of Tenth and Wilson - walk ins welcome
- Arlington County Curative self-testing kiosks - free - at Arlington Mill, Courthouse, Aurora Hills, and Virginia Highlands.

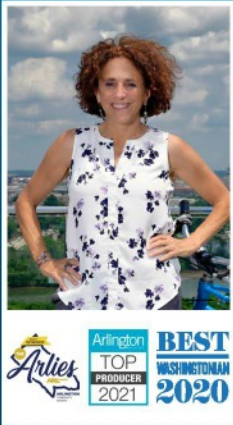
A Word About Confusion

It's been confusing and disconcerting to watch scientific understanding of Covid and vaccine efficacy develop in real time - often via that great adjudicator of reality, Twitter!

When I went to the Abington Massachusetts Town Hall to drink the Sabin polio vaccine out of Dixie cups with all the other kids (yep now you know how old I am) our parents looked to one authority - town pediatrician Dr. Ted Greenfield. These days it feels like a cacophony of heated medical opinions which make it really hard to know what's true - and I'm not sure even Dr. Ted would have all the answers today. Here's to keeping calm and carrying on.

Wishing Ashton Heights safe and happy holidays!

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Ashton Heights Civic Association annual dues are \$15/household or \$10/individual member or \$25/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

Ashton Heights Pet of the Month

Meet Elvis, a Shih Tzu that turned 17 years old this past June 2021.

Elvis' proud owner Scott Sklar writes that Elvis is a gentle soul, knows many neighbors personally on N. Ivy St. and thinks rabbits and squirrels are just freaky-looking, misshapen Shih Tzus.



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Arlington County Civic Federation Update

By Julia Tanner, AHCA Delegate and board member to the ACCF

Happy winter, neighbors. Here is the latest from the Arlington County Civic Federation ("Civ Fed" or "ACCF"), an organization of more than 90 civic minded Arlington organizations.

Civ Fed has hosted several recent discussions of county projects. In October, Matt Ladd and Kellie Brown from the County's

Community Planning, Housing and Development Department discussed

"Expanding Housing Choice: Missing Middle Housing Study."

Their slides are [here](#), video [here](#), and study page [here](#).



Image courtesy of Arlington County website

The supply of smaller and affordable homes is decreasing in Arlington. The staff study of "missing middle" housing will conclude with policy recommendations that may include zoning amendments.

Community priorities include reducing housing costs, adding more supply, adding housing reflecting the needs of the whole community, preserving tree canopy, and investing in schools and infrastructure to keep pace with growth. Recommendations to the County Board will be made in 2nd Quarter 2022. Staff are recommending more study of types of housing circled on page 10 of the slides.

Also at the October meeting, Dr Aaron Miller, Director of the Department of Public Safety Communications and Emergency Management, presented [slides](#) on the Clarendon Safety and Innovation Zone. This project is using sensors on light fixtures in Clarendon to determine how many people and objects are around, and environmental factors such as humidity, decibels, and carbon monoxide.

Responding to questions about privacy, Dr. Miller noted that a privacy panel and impact assessment report are linked on the project's [website](#). The first meeting of an Oversight Panel will occur Dec. 1 and is open to the public; info [here](#) and members listed [here](#).

ACCF's next monthly meeting is Nov 9. Dr. Samia Byrd, the County's Chief Race and Equity Officer, will present the status of the County's Dialogues on Race & Equity work plan and discuss continuing work to promote diversity and equity in Arlington.

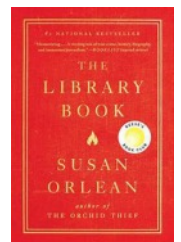
In addition, Chris Wimbush, Chair of the ACCF Task Force in Governance and Election Reform (TiGER), will report on recommendations for better, more responsive government in Arlington. The Task Force is studying matters including county board election districts; more info [here](#).

In other news, the Civil Rights Working Group of the ACCF Legislative Committee has submitted a FOIA records request seeking information on six deaths of inmates in custody at the Arlington Detention Center since 2015.

The Library Book by Susan Orlean

Book Review by Denise Cormaney, follow all her reviews at [@findyourgoldenhour](#) on Instagram

10 stars. I'm swooning over here. If you are a library nerd, this is the book of your dreams. The Washington Post calls it "a dazzling love letter to a beloved institution." Consider me dazzled. The jumping-off point is an in-depth investigation into the 1986 fire at the Los Angeles Central Library. That story is interesting and compelling and worth reading. But Orlean weaves those chapters with chapters on the history of the LA library, filled with fascinating characters and interesting stories, educating us on how a tiny collection of books (available to men only! shocker!) in the late 1800s evolved into the vibrant and valuable community centers we know our libraries to be today.



Despite being an avid library user, I purchased a copy of this book. Go to your local bookstore and check it out. I marked so many passages that I could fill your screen with endless quotes, but I won't steal your joy of coming upon them yourself. But library nerds everywhere, rejoice! This is the book you didn't know you were waiting for. And it will confirm something you already knew: libraries are the heart and soul of a community. It's one of the few remaining places that are free and open to everyone, filled not just with books and information, but people dedicated to preserving knowledge and serving their entire community, from the harried mom of a toddler to the bookish middle-schooler to the lonely senior citizen to the homeless person who is often hidden in plain sight.

Sigh. I think I'm going to hug every librarian I see the next time I'm there.

A New Place TO CELEBRATE AND REMEMBER

The new event center at Columbia Gardens Cemetery is a lovely setting for welcoming friends and family to celebrate the life of your loved one. Our light-filled, elegant reception room opens onto two large bluestone terraces, surrounded on all sides by gardens, stone paths and charming brick walls for seating. From small, intimate gatherings to large sit-down receptions, our staff can assist you in planning catering, flowers, linens, music and everything you need for a memorable event.



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Book Review - *The Unteachables* by Gordon Korman

Review by Kira Komlodi, age 11

The Unteachables are a class of students that are.... dreadful. They have been removed from normal classes because the teachers (and the other kids) can't handle them. Parker, is an academic catastrophe, Elaine's talent is head-butting kids down the stairs and crushing laminators with doors, Kiana who does not even belong to this school and Aldo, with anger management issues are just a few of the SCS-8 students.



Mr. Kermit is the worst teacher that ever lived. All he does is hand out worksheets and do crossword puzzles. It doesn't help that the superintendent wants Mr. Kermit gone for good. Instead of a peaceful retirement, Mr. Kermit is on his way to a pink piece of paper from the main office.

I really enjoyed this book. It has action, plot-twists and lots of vuvuzela horns. I recommend it for people who like books about students and schools, but with more drama. I hope you will enjoy this book.

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Don't forget – the Lyon Park Citizens Association also publishes a monthly newsletter.

View all of the issues here:
<https://lyonpark.org/library/>

Stay tuned for news about the annual January pancake breakfast.

Make a Difference - Small Steps You Can Take to Help Mother Earth

Are you looking for some practical actions that you can take in your home landscape to help fight climate change? Look no further than these tips from Elaine Mills and the Master Gardeners of Northern Virginia. Please visit www.mgnv.org for more information!

Choose low-emission garden practices to minimize your carbon footprint:

- Use electric or human powered tools, such as push mowers, hand clippers, or rakes
- Install high-efficiency LED bulbs, automatic light timers, and solar-powered products
- Avoid fossil fuel-based fertilizers, pesticides, and peat-based potting mixes

Manage water wisely to deal with drought and flood conditions:

- Use drought-resistant plants in dry areas & create rain gardens where water collects
- Monitor rain gauges and adjust watering schedule accordingly
- Use soaker hoses and drip irrigation to reduce water consumption
- Install rain barrels and cisterns to capture rainwater
- Install permeable pavers to reduce storm water runoff and increase absorption
- Investigate dry wells, terracing, and infiltration trenches, if necessary, to handle flooding



Image courtesy of MGNV

Build your soil to reduce erosion and grow healthier plants:

- Retain fall leaves on site to protect soil and overwintering beneficial insects
- Compost kitchen and garden waste and add to soil
- Disturb soil as little as possible to avoid release of CO₂ and prevent new weed growth
- Use leaf mulch or use plants as green mulch to cover bare soil

Think differently about your lawn:

- Reduce lawn area that needs maintenance
- Discontinue use of polluting fertilizers and pesticides
- Retain grass clippings as natural mulch
- Recognize natural growth cycles of grass and discontinue excessive watering
- Use alternative ground covers, including no-mow grasses and sedges



Make informed choices of plants:

- Remove and do not buy invasive plants, such as English ivy, Periwinkle, and Nandina
- Avoid or consider replacing high-maintenance, disease-prone plants
- Plant trees to increase cooling and shade buildings
- Incorporate native plants to support diminishing pollinator and bird populations

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Community Safety & Security Corner

Is there such a thing as a free stuff? – The Brushing Scam

By Christina Schultz



Free merchandise arriving at your doorstep without you even ordering it! What could be better? Or could it be a scam? The Ashton Heights listserv lit up over the holiday season with reports of deliveries of unsolicited packages. These were likely instances of brushing – a deceitful tactic popping up across the United States in which vendors use e-commerce websites to send free items in the mail, or even empty packages, and then submit positive reviews to bolster product ratings in an attempt to drive up sales. Most of these fake orders in our neighborhood were inexpensive items sent from Amazon.

You may wonder why a vendor would go through the trouble and expense. This is how it works. When you purchase an item, you become a “verified buyer.” This allows you to post reviews online about the product. If a vendor sends you a product, they scam you by putting a glowing 5-start review about their own product, in your name. This helps boost the online visibility of the product because the algorithm favors items with high sales volumes and good reviews, pushing them further up the search ranks. Because consumers often rely on the quantity and quality of reviews, particularly for online sales, this scam encourages genuine purchases. The payoff can be highly profitable for these vendors.

The first cases of brushing were reported in 2018. However, it wasn't until mid-2020 when international attention to the issue became more widespread when thousands of packages of seeds, marked as other items, from China began to mysteriously appear in mailboxes across the globe. This incident raised serious bio security concerns, but the origins of the hoax were never uncovered. The vendors conducting these scams are usually foreign, third-party sellers, sending a variety of items. Most unsolicited packages contain cheap, lightweight, and inexpensive to ship items such as iPhone cases, magnetic eyelashes, medical gloves, and ping pong balls. But in some cases, unsuspecting recipients have encountered humidifiers, Bluetooth speakers, and vacuum cleaners.

Brushing might seem more harmless or annoying, than illegal. However, it raises questions on how a vendor acquired your name and address even if this information already appears on publicly available sites. Brushing may indicate a more serious data breach of your personal information. In addition, if the item is a contraband product, the recipient could be held liable. Victims of brushing scams are advised to immediately notify the retailer (as many of our neighbors have done with Amazon), change their passwords, and even utilize credit-monitoring services. Amazon, for one, claims they are looking into the issue, but some consumers feel that

they are not doing enough to figure out how to combat the scam and prevent misleading sales. In any case, while you may enjoy your free items, it's also best to take a few precautions (see box).

How to Protect Yourself from Brushing Scams

- **Don't pay for the merchandise:** Do not be swindled or talking into paying for it.
- **Return to sender:** If marked with a return address, and it is unopened, you may mark it “RETURN TO SENDER” and USPS will return it at no charge to you.
- **Throw it away:** If you opened it, and do not wish to keep it, you may simply dispose of it in the garbage, as long as it is safe to do so.
- **Keep it:** If you opened it and like it, you may keep it. By law, you may keep unsolicited merchandise and are under no obligation to pay for it.
- **Change your account passwords:** Your personal information may have been compromised.
- **Closely monitor:** Closely monitor your credit reports and credit card bills.
- **Notify authorities:** If the merchandise is organic (i.e., seeds, food, plants) or an unknown liquid substance, notify the proper authorities and follow their instructions.
- **Suspicious contents:** If you are wary of the contents inside an unsolicited package, please follow the instructions on the suspicious mail page.
- **Notify the retailer:** If unsolicited merchandise arrives from Amazon, eBay or another third-party seller, go to that company's website and file a fraud report. Ask the company to remove any fake reviews under your name.

- From the United States Postal Inspection Service

Plastic Bag Fee Begins Jan. 1!

Starting January 1, grocery stores, drugstores and convenience stores in Arlington will charge a 5-cent fee for single-use plastic bags.



Be sure to bring your own reusable tote bags. This will help you avoid the 5-cent fee AND will keep single-use disposable plastic out of local waterways, as well as in trash. The county will be distributing reusable bags to SNAP and WIC communities through early 2022.

You can recycle your plastic bags at local supermarkets. Learn more about the initiative here: <https://www.arlingtonva.us/Government/Programs/Recycling-and-Trash/Plastic-Shopping-Bags>

Kids, Inc. Entrepreneurs



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

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!

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