



Ashton Heights News

The Newsletter of the Ashton Heights Civic Association

www.AshtonHeights.org

Development Marches On - Cold Weather - Good Cheer

By Scott Sklar, President, AHCA

The development process marches on focusing on the Clarendon, Courthouse and Pentagon City areas of Arlington. As AHCA Development Committee Chair Jack Spilsbury relays, we are in a full court press working with our sister civic associations, to maximize open space and native trees, lower building heights with setbacks and tapering, provide underground parking and walkable vibrant communities and neighborhoods.

Noise and traffic are also ramping up. Our AHCA Safety & Security Committee Chair Christina Schultz describes our working with affected neighbors on noise issues from area bars with the Arlington County Police. And we are also following traffic calming measures by the County to make sure our communities are walkable, students walking and biking to school are safe, and noise and speed are reduced.

Due to COVID19, USPS mail service has been seriously delayed and disrupted. I have contacted our regional Post Office regional management about the problem as well as our Congressman, Don Beyer. We are now being tracked by senior USPS management. Staffing is low due to both USPS management changes (not good news) and COVID19 (also not good news). But I do expect the situation will ease and services get better.

This May, we will be electing our AHCA Executive Committee (ExCom) and we will need someone to step-up to fill Jim Feaster's position as Vice President of Programs. This entails lining up speakers for 10 AHCA monthly meetings, half of which are suggested by the AHCA ExCom, AHCA committee chairs, and AHCA members. Please contact me (solarsklar@aol.com) or Jim Feaster (jimfeaster1@gmail.com) on any aspects of the job. This is a great way to help our community.

We will start our February AHCA meeting earlier to host our United States Representative, Congressman Don Beyer. We have been working with his office on moderating airplane and helicopter noise (he has legislatively gotten language for

AHCA Monthly Meeting

Wed., February 16, 2022, 6 – 8:45 P.M.

NOTE TIME CHANGE!

- 6:00 p.m.** Mingle and chair setup
- 6:30 p.m.** Scott Sklar, AHCA President and Committee reports
- 7:00 p.m.** Congressman Beyer speaks on constituency issues related to Ashton Heights and Arlington
- 8:00 p.m.** Arlington Chief of Police, Charles "Andy" Penn, appointed Chief of the Arlington County Police Department on June 4, 2021 following a 9-month period as the Acting Chief of Police
- 8:45 p.m.** Adjourn

a study), and as I mentioned earlier, interceding with the USPS on service reliability. This meeting will be a great time to ask questions to our Congressman, so please join us.

Winter weather is here – which means freezing pipes, ice & snow on sidewalks, stoops, driveways and roadways, higher utility costs for heating. So here are some links to address some of these issues:

- Arlington County – Snow Removal
<https://www.arlingtonva.us/Government/Programs/Emergency/Weather/Snow-and-Ice/Snow-Removal-Phases>
- Snow issue form:
<https://gis.arlingtonva.us/mapapps/snowpublic/index.php>
- Arlington County Snow Activity Map
<https://snowmap.arlingtonva.us/SnowOps/SnowActivityMap/#12/38.8810/-77.1000>
- Arlington Initiative to Rethink Energy (AIRE) which provides guidance on energy savings
<https://www.arlingtonva.us/Government/Programs/Sustainability-and-Environment/Energy>

So be safe, have fun, and hope to see you at our earlier time 6:30 p.m. SHARP for our February Monthly AHCA meeting at CUMC on Wednesday, February 16, 2022!

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

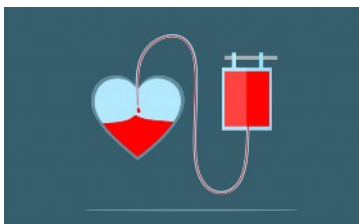
Safety & Security	Christina Schultz cmschultz@yahoo.com	Transportation	Patrick Lueb jiffy64@me.com
Development/Zoning	Jack Spilsbury spilsburyj@gmail.com	Playgrounds & Parks Subcommittee	Brent Burris brburris@gmail.com
Housing	Matthew Hall mhall@goldsteinhall.com	Tree Canopy and Native Plants Subcommittee	Brooke Alexander brooke.alexander52@gmail.com
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Local Blood Drive

The Annual Troop 111 Blood Drive is scheduled for Sunday, February 27th from 8:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. at St. Agnes (2024 N Randolph St., Arlington, VA 22202). The need for blood is critical, as we are in a national blood crisis. The pandemic has decreased the number of drives and donations, and hospitals across the country have reached dangerously low blood supplies, the lowest level in 20 years.



We would appreciate your support. If you haven't been eligible in the past, you may be now; eligibility restrictions due to various travel/military experiences have eased. Please sign up through the link: <https://bit.ly/BoyScoutTroop0227> and Login/Create an account. You can also call 1-866-256-6372 and use Sponsor Code 7810. Please contact Mike Podratsky at mtpodratsky@gmail.com with any questions or issues signing up.

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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/>

Native Black Cherry Tree - One of our Keystone Species

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

What is a Keystone species?

Remember food webs in biology class? The base of the food web (generally a plant) supports various animals. The more animals a plant species supports, the higher value it has to the ecosystem. Native cherries support 456 species of butterfly larvae. Cherries, oaks (534 species) and willows (455 species) support the most species, and are therefore our top keystone species. (We're not talking about ornamental Japanese cherries here, which are beautiful, but don't support our native butterfly larvae at all!)

Black Cherry stats (*Prunus serotina*)

- Height: 50-80 feet; Width: 30-60 feet. A medium to large deciduous tree with a dense oval crown. Deep rooted.
- Flowers: drooping racemes of small, slightly fragrant, white flowers in April/May
- Light requirements: sun, partial shade
- Water requirements: dry to moist
- Ecological functions: nest sites; pollen and nectar; food for birds, mammals and caterpillars
- Landscape functions: spring flowers, fall foliage, fragrance, shading and cooling, edible fruits for humans



© Duane A. Miller 8/21/2016

Eastern Tiger Swallowtail caterpillars need Black Cherry leaves!

Eastern Tiger Swallowtail caterpillars are one of the 456 species of butterfly caterpillars which eat native cherry leaves. They also eat tulip tree leaves and sweetbay magnolia leaves. But, if none of these species are available, the Eastern Tiger Swallowtail will not reproduce in the area.

Where do Eastern Tiger Swallowtail butterflies overwinter?

They overwinter as a chrysalis (the pupal stage) and attach themselves under overhangs, in leaf litter, under bark, or other protected areas near the ground. In April they emerge and take flight. We have 3 generations of



Tiger Swallowtail chrysalis – photo by Dean Morley

Eastern Tiger Swallowtail butterflies each year. So keep some leaf litter in your garden - some of next year's Eastern Tiger Swallowtails may be there!

What about those tent caterpillars?

Black cherry trees are susceptible to tent caterpillars. The good news is that tent caterpillars also are part of our food web! Tent caterpillars leave their large group silk nest during the day to eat leaves, and return to the nest at night where they are more protected. In our neighborhood, predators for tent caterpillars include robins, blue jays, cardinals, predatory insects, numerous small mammals, and some reptiles. With predators around, the tent caterpillars stay in check. Black cherry will re-leaf after tent caterpillars have had their fill of leaves.

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Arlington Arts Center Opens January 29th with New Exhibitions

Photo and article by Catherine Anchin

Hello Ashton Heights! We've missed seeing you at the Arlington Arts Center during January. We're now open for the winter season with four new, wonderful exhibitions, and for the first time in a while, we'll be open on Sundays! In our galleries through March 19, you will see what's happening in the vibrant local, national, and international contemporary arts scene.

In Spite of Modernism: Contemporary Art, Abstract Legacies, and Identity features five contemporary artists from Virginia, New York, and California who challenge abstract styles narrowly associated with Modernism. Each artist applies styles like geometric abstraction and flat, colorful compositions – those developed by various communities around the world – into their paintings and fabric-based works. In doing so, the artists confront the Modern movement's exclusions of race, gender, and sexuality, and offer a more inclusive interpretation of the history and artistic styles that gave Western Modern artists global recognition.

In *Le Caftan, Le Turban*, a solo presentation of new paintings by Arlington Arts Center resident artist Negar Ahkami, the artist depicts European film and fashion icons clad in caftans and



turbans. By combining Middle Eastern signifiers used in Western pop culture and art, Ahkami exposes the broader complex phenomenon of cultural appropriation.

Also on view, is the first in a new series dedicated to the work of international artists, *Global Spotlight: Annabel Daou*, which features two recent video works by the Lebanese-born, New York-based artist. The two works – *A Year Like Any Other* (2020), and *chou hayda / if you only knew* (2017-2018) – offer meditations on

the human relationship to time and its passage, particularly in periods of crisis.

Body and Place: Marymount University Student and Alumni Exhibition brings together the work of three current Marymount art students and two recent Marymount alumni, bridging the gap between art student and artist. The drawings, paintings, prints, and digital work explore trauma, transformation, and growth, notions of place, space, and isolation, and an acute awareness of the everyday. This exhibition creates community amongst the solitary nature of our current time and enables a continuity and connection between the delicate transition and potency of being an advanced art student and a recent art graduate.

We're also hosting many in-person and virtual artist talks and public programs. Visit our [website](http://www.ashtonheights.org) for the most up to date information and registration. And as always, many thanks for all your support of the Arlington Arts Center! See you soon!

Meet Your Neighbors: The Roman Family

By Erika Cohen Derr

For more than twenty years, the Romans have enjoyed many aspects of living in the Ashton Heights community, from the local schools, to the bikeable neighborhood, to the proximity to Washington, DC. But this year, as the pandemic continued to disrupt life as we know it, the Romans discovered new reasons to love the community: the joy that a new puppy can bring! Mini-Aussiedoodle Tux joined Shaara, Rafael, Talia and Zachary Roman and brought new connections to the neighborhood in his wake. "We had never had a pet before - not even a goldfish!" but according to Shaara, Zachary had been lobbying for a dog, and she and Talia finally relented. Family life has taken on a new rhythm.

With roots in Bombay, India, and New York City, Shaara and Rafael met while living in Lagos, Nigeria. For a period they lived in Greece, where they were married. Rafael's work with the United States Marine Corps brought them to the Washington, DC area where they lived for a stint in Stafford before relocating to Arlington. Shaara earned an MBA from Georgetown, and spent years in the corporate sector before starting her own consulting firm six years ago. Early on, a co-worker of Shaara's introduced them to the Ashton Heights neighborhood, and they fell in love with the classic and varied home styles, the tree canopy, the walkable streets and accessible location. Friendly neighbors made the decision even clearer.

For years, the Romans were regulars at former neighbors' annual ice cream social. Part of their regular routine is greeting neighbors from the vantage point of their corner home. Additionally, they have found multiple ways to give back to the community that they call home. Shaara serves on the boards of Arlington Soccer Association and the Arlington Arts Center, and Rafael served on the Arlington County Fiscal Affairs Advisory Committee, and both spent years assisting



with childrens' organized activities including soccer and Girl Scouts.

Both Talia and Zachary have attended neighborhood schools from Faith Lutheran Preschool to Washington-Liberty High School, though Talia now spends time in Poughkeepsie as a student at Vassar. She studies neuroscience and devotes time to art, dance, and exploring her new environs. Younger brother Zachary spends his time playing soccer with Arlington's travel program and gaming; his artistic interests lean towards guitar and film study. Growing up in Ashton Heights helped nurture a sense of freedom in the younger Romans. Talia observes "My friends and I have been friends our whole lives, since preschool. Living here really helps with

your independence when you're in middle school and you can walk to your friend's house, just down the street." She and her friends have made the community better, too. Through several projects with her local Girls Scouts troop, they have installed Little Free Libraries around Arlington and the Northern Virginia region.

The Romans appreciate the local character of Ashton Heights, from the proximity to independent

businesses like Mario's, to the Rotary sign they remember adorning their former neighbor's yard. In good years and not-so-good years, they loyally fly their New York Giants flag. Their Little Free Library is a stop on many neighbors' regular walks. They have managed multiple renovation projects led by a local builder, whose mother would occasionally stop by to check on his work. Now with puppy Tux, they have more opportunities to enjoy Ashton Heights.

"During the pandemic, we actually saw more of our neighbors because we were outside more. We felt more connected to the community," observes Shaara. "Now, with this little guy, Tux, we're outside all the time." From morning walks, to impromptu puppy playdates with neighbors' dogs, Tux has been a great addition both to the Roman family, and to the neighborhood that values community, service, and connection.

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In the second year of pandemic uncertainty, the real estate market flourished in 2021, and the average sold price of all property types in Northern VA increased 6.5% above 2020. Single family homes posted the largest price gains with an increase of almost 12% above the average cost of similar-sized homes sold in 2020.

Ashton Heights saw 21 sales in 2021 with an average list price of \$1,350,981 and average sold price of \$1,368,478 compared to 19 sales in 2020 with an average list prices of \$1,232,032 and average sold price of \$1,234,055.

So far in 2022 we are experiencing a fast-paced real estate market, with strong momentum from an active December. Homes are moving quickly, and inventory is scarce. Although home prices will continue to rise, experts predict a more moderate pace than last year as prices are already high. Locally, the influx of new jobs offered and

still to come by Amazon has created a ripple effect that benefits the region. There will be a battle for most houses and buyers will have to compete, mainly for single family homes. Nationally, there is a shortage of over 5 million homes according to the National Association of Realtors.

The Federal Reserve is supporting rate increases to curb inflation as early as March. While the Fed doesn't set mortgage rates, mortgage rates have jumped recently in anticipation of Fed policy rate hikes. Interest rates are currently in the 3.25% to 3.5% range.

Are you living in your ideal home now?

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Restaurant Review: Our Mom Eugenia

By Vinh and Susan Nguyen

Mosaic District | 2985 District Avenue | Fairfax, VA 22031

Website: www.ourmomeugenia.com | P: 434-339-4019

For Thanksgiving and with extended families in town, we chose dinner at Our Mom Eugenia. Why? Wonderful homestyle service, amazing Greek food, and readiness to accommodate large groups. And yes, Eugenia is the Mom and head chef and her sons run the front of the house.

The list of appetizers (mezze) is long, with vegetarian/vegan/gluten-free entries well-noted on the menu. Every offering deserves a careful study of the ingredients, often leading to a heady imagining of the color, texture, and smell of the dish. The menu is an invitation to be transported to Zakynthos, the family's island home, and to sit for a meal while looking out at the whitest sand and the bluest sea found anywhere.

Of course the Greek salad is just perfect, but give the roasted beet salad a try too (this is Susan's favorite). Another must is the assortment of spreads – including tzatziki, fava (hummus-like), skordalia (potatoes with garlic) and melitzanosalata (cousin of baba ganoush); the 3-spread sample gives you choice.

Traditional favorites like spanakopita (spinach pie in phyllo) and dolmades (stuffed grape leaves, with or without ground beef) are there – and really good – but you should also try other options. We loved the beer-battered zucchini slices and beans tossed in a light tomato and herb sauce. Our favorite cheese

appetizers are the grilled haloumi and the flaming-at-table saganaki; both cheeses are hearty with a touch of sweetness.

Meat appetizers like keftedakia (meatballs), kotopoulo souvlaki (chicken skewers) and bakaliaros (fried cod bites) are miniature versions of entrees and great choices if you want to stay with small dishes.

Don't miss the grilled octopus, nicely charred and yet incredibly tender. The formula is simple: fresh ingredients, garlic, lemon, olive oil, cherry tomatoes in unfussy preparations. Restraint, an uncommon chef trait, is at the core of what makes this restaurant such a gem.

Still have room for entrees? Lamb can be found as chops, a shank, or a stew; chops are cooked beautifully, and the shank just melts in your mouth. Moussaka is a favorite – eggplant in lasagna-like layers. Chicken, whether as skewers, breast or half-bird is expertly cooked to retain flavor and moisture. The branzino, just like the octopus, stands out for its freshness and minimalist manipulation.

We loved every single dessert we tried, especially the loukoumades (fried dough puffs) with honey, rice pudding, and apple crumb cake.

Hmm, what's the next excuse to visit now?

Photos courtesy of Our Mom Eugenia website



COVID-19

Vaccine Update

By Martha Casey

Quite a month, as I suspect we've all been touched by Covid in one way or another since our last newsletter.



The good news is that as of this writing, new cases nationwide are down 7%. They are down 60% in Virginia as the Omicron surge now moves to the Midwest and the South. Here in Arlington, Virginia Hospital Center ER Chief Mike Silverman reports new case numbers have fallen 65% from four weeks ago. We are thankfully past the peak of this latest surge.

The bad news is that current case numbers are still three to five times higher than they were in the fall, and hospitals continue to face the challenge of full beds and short staffs. It's not over yet.

Avoid Hospitalization

One way to stay out of the hospital (for Covid) is to be vaccinated and boosted. Studies from the UK and the CDC show that vaccines plus boosters are 90 to 94% effective at preventing hospitalization for Covid. Those 50 and older who are unvaccinated are 45 times more likely to be hospitalized than those who are vaxxed and boosted.

Anyone 12 and over can now get a booster five months after completing their initial vaccines. Pharmacies and county clinics are open for your business - get a booster!

Prevent Transmission

Covid is airborne, and N95 masks prevent 95% of particulate transmission. The CDC has at last recommended wearing N95's indoors - seems we're still OK outdoors.

The federal government will be providing free N95 masks (3 per person) starting January 26 at pharmacies and health centers. Hope that program is up and running smoothly by the time you get this.

N95 masks are also available at hardware and medical supply stores, and I've had good luck ordering online from Project N95, the National Critical Equipment Clearinghouse for personal protective equipment. They vet the masks they list for safety. They are at shop.projectn95.org

Test

Looks like testing is a part of our lives for the foreseeable future, and the federal government has promised to ramp up production to alleviate the shortages and lines we've experienced at testing centers.

Free at home Covid tests can now be ordered from [Covidtests.gov](https://covidtests.gov). Shipments are limited to four per residential address and should begin the week of January 24. If you don't have internet access, you can order free tests by calling 1-800-232-0233.

In addition, as of January 15 private insurers are required to cover the cost of eight at-home tests per covered individual per month. A family of four can therefore get up to 32 tests covered per month. Check with your own insurer on their reimbursement rules - seems at this point that most require that you purchase the tests and then seek reimbursement.

Free PCR testing is now available at two new Curative sites in Arlington, one at the Central Library, and one at Marymount University. You can make an appointment at [Curative.com](https://curative.com) by clicking on "Find a Site Near You".

For fast turnaround, both Preston's Pharmacy and Same Day Testing in Ballston have been recommended by neighbors and friends. There are additional fees for fast turnaround.

The Future

Ha! It's pretty clear no one knows as science races to understand this virus. It's not clear, for example, how long booster efficacy will last. Stay tuned as the science and CDC guidelines evolve. And we can all be grateful we aren't hamsters in Hong Kong, where the government is wiping out hamsters in order to curb Covid. Stay safe, stay well.

Drive-thru Food & Toiletries Collection for Area Shelters – February 12th and March 12th

Since the beginning of the pandemic, Clarendon Presbyterian Church has been sponsoring Drive-thru Food and Toiletries collections for Northern Virginia Shelters. They are held monthly, on the second Saturday of each month, from 10 am to 12 noon. There is a continuing need for shelf-stable items and toiletries, and there are announcements on Next Door and on local listserves with "Priority Items" each month. For example: breakfast cereal, packaged healthy kid snacks (no prepared or open food please), canned foods and juice boxes. Toiletries: bar soap, body wash, toothpaste, deodorant, disposable razors (for men and women).



Clarendon Presbyterian Church is located at 1305 North Jackson Street, Arlington, VA 22201. If you have questions about upcoming events or donations or if you'd like to volunteer to help staff upcoming events, please contact the church at clarendonmission@gmail.com or (703) 527-9513. And please check the church website for any inclement weather announcements at www.clarendonpresbyterian.org.

Community Safety & Security Corner

Where is all that racket coming from?

By Christina Schultz



Have you ever found yourself unable to concentrate in your home office or are awakened at night by a thumping beat? You aren't alone. Densely populated areas and living near commercial areas can be especially troublesome when it comes to keeping the volume down. Most of the noise around us is part of everyday life – children playing, an evening backyard barbeque, a truck rumbling down the street, even that annoying leaf blower. However, there are other noise situations that go beyond what is legally acceptable.

Not too long ago, there was little attempt to protect people from excessive noise. This began to change in the United States with the passage of the National Environmental Policy Act in 1969, the Noise Control Act in 1972, and the Quiet Communities Act of 1978. These policies succeeded in creating greater awareness of the need for noise control. Now, though noise pollution and regulation are under the purview of the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), noise control ordinances and their implementation are up to state and local governments.

In Arlington County, there are two main regulations on noise control. [Arlington County Code Chapter 15 – Noise Control](#) explains the base standards for the control of environmental noise, including acceptable decibel levels, and the civil and criminal penalties for violations. The [2021 Zoning Ordinance](#) includes language for special uses such as live entertainment, dance halls, and major development projects, often referred to as site plans. There have been concerns in Ashton Heights about potential noise violations coming from the Clarendon area.

The Country reports this may be due to the rise in nightlife activity during the COVID-19 pandemic. Club, bar, and restaurant closures along with vaccine and mask mandates in the District have caused patrons to cross the border into Virginia. Before the pandemic, up to 6,000 people a weekend enjoyed the Clarendon nightlife; today that figure can reach 9,000 even now during the cold weather. Arlington's Business Outreach Unit, County Manager's Office, Code Enforcement Office, and Policy Department have all reiterated their commitment to working with both residents and businesses to measure decibel levels and ensure adherence to the noise regulations. This requires residents to work together or reach out individually to report issues (see box) for a good night's sleep.

If you hear something loud, say something

Arlington County Government encourages its residents to report significant noise violations. It might not seem like it's worth the hassle or that county employees have more pressing issues, but it is a good way for them to track reoccurring violations.

If you suspect a noise violation, first determine the approximate location of the source and try to address it directly with the offender. If direct communication is not possible, you may report the issue [online](#) (choose "Investigation Request") or by phone. Here are a few examples depending on the source and time:

Type of Noise Disturbance	Time of Day	Who to Call
Loud patrons or music (restaurant, bar, club)	Anytime	Police 703-558-2222
Construction noise (not otherwise exempted during nighttime hours)	4:30 p.m. – 8:00 a.m.	Police 703-558-2222
Loud parties or groups	8:00 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.	Code Enforcement 703-228-3232
Loud parties or groups	4:30 p.m. – 8:00 a.m.	Police 703-558-2222

AHCA MEMBERSHIP SIGN-UP AND DUES PAYMENT FORM

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.

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Children (and ages) (optional): _____

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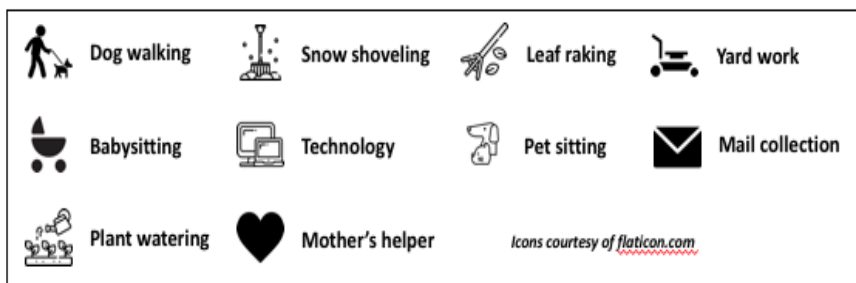
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