



Ashton Heights News

www.ashtonheights.org

January 2024

Welcome 2024 — Opportunities and Challenges for the New Year By Scott Sklar, President, AHCA

A Happy New Year to all and a hope the holiday season gave us all a time to reflect how lucky we are.

I read The Richmond Times Dispatch, Virginia Mercury, and The Washington Post regularly. And while our area of Arlington has some stresses, we are so lucky to live in an area with tree canopy, relatively low crime, great neighborhood parks, fabulous schools, a trained and capable police force, and great neighborhood cohesion. It is a blessing.

I don't see any serious changes to this scenario this coming year – but we have stressors that AHCA needs to deal with.

Traffic is increasing, so we are seeing more accidents, pedestrian near misses, and speed in local neighborhoods. AHCA Transportation Chair Patrick Lueb, has developed some sophisticated analysis that he has shared with the county (and he will be happy to share with any of you that are interested) on the streets where Arlington police have set-up monitors. We have briefed Arlington County Board members and police staff, and we plan to sustain and increase this dialogue — looking at ways to calm traffic, redirect traffic, enhance visibility, and maintain dialogue with the on-going State of Virginia process regarding turnoffs from Route 50 and within Arlington at the County Board and Police department.

Development challenges on height, land coverage, density, EHO (formerly missing

middle), Clarendon redevelopment are all high on our list. AHCA Development Committee co-chairs Jack Spilsbury and Alexander Tuneski attend meetings, participate in coalitions, and strategize on county input to maximize AHCA's stated positions. Input from Ashton Heights residents is always welcome.

Tree canopy, native plants, and Stormwater Management have also come to the forefront. Our AHCA Tree Canopy – Native Plants Committee Chair Brooke Alexander is an effective advocate, educator, and practitioner – always the vanguard on the benefits to the health and quality of life to our community.

Chris Lewicki who chairs the AHCA Stormwater Management effort represents us at the relevant meetings, also an advocate and educator, and guides input and involvement on Arlington's new stormwater programs newly applied tax in 2024. Both chairs work together to further the mutual benefits of trees and stormwater management.

While the above issues are continually “front and center”, our other AHCA committee chairs and co-chairs are very active. They are listed on page 2 of the newsletter. Feel free to contact them, join the various AHCA committees, and guide strategy and response that so significantly impacts our community.

Continued on page 3

AHCA Monthly Meeting Wed., Jan. 17th, 7 – 9 p.m.

**Clarendon United
Methodist Church
606 N. Irving St.**

- 7:00 p.m.** Mingle and chair setup
- 7:30 p.m.** Scott Sklar, President and Committee reports
- 7:40 p.m.** Is Ashton Heights an out of control criminal Mecca, one of the safest places in America or somewhere in between? How can we make our own homes less attractive to crime?

Come and listen to a speaker from the Arlington Police Department!
- 8:15 p.m.** Sometimes our hopes of peaceful enjoyment of our homes are realized, sometimes not so much from restaurant and bar noise. When is it appropriate to call Code Enforcement? How can we encourage County actions to improve?
- 9:00 p.m.** Adjourn



Editor's Note: View the newsletter in full color at www.ashtonheights.org! Mark your calendar! Articles for the **February 2024** newsletter issue are due by **January 19th**. Send submissions to: amymliller4@gmail.com.

Join or Renew your AHCA Membership!

Ashton Heights Civic Association annual dues are \$15/household or \$10/individual member. Register for two years for \$25/household.

Anyone who resides or owns property in Ashton Heights and is at least 18 years old may join and then vote at AHCA meetings.

Pay your dues online:

<https://ashtonheights.org/about-ahca/join-ahca/>

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The Ashton Heights newsletter is distributed to 1,200+ households 8 months of the year. Our readers enjoy supporting local businesses. If you know of a local business that would benefit from advertising in the Ashton Heights newsletter, please email: newsletterads@ashton-heights.org.

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2023– 2024 AHCA Officers and Executive Committee

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President's Column -- continued from page 1

Our AHCA officers also put in much behind the scenes time but deserve continual acknowledgment on what they do for our association and community.

Dave Schutz, our VP of Programs, is responsible for scheduling speakers for our AHCA monthly meetings. WE ARE ALWAYS looking for input. Please contact Dave (porgschu@verizon.net) with your ideas, contacts, and issues of interest. And "yes", this is a homework assignment.

Jim O'Brien, has been our longtime VP for Membership, soliciting members and collecting our tiny dues payments. Please log onto to our AHCA website (<https://ashtonheights.org/about-ahca/join-ahca/>) and submit the \$15 annual family dues payment. Or contact Jim to inquire about your membership status (jimob1@verizon.net).

Doug Williams has been our AHCA Treasurer, a thankless task, but a long and capable volunteer for many years.

Chris O'Brien, the AHCA Secretary, who you see taking minutes at our monthly AHCA meetings on the third Wednesday of every month in the Clarendon United Methodist Church social Hall. He also oversees our website in conjunction with our AHCA newsletter editor Amy Miller, who puts in a huge amount of time coordinating and laying out our AHCA monthly newsletter, hand delivered and posted to our website eight months during the year.

On that note, please contact our Editor Amy Miller with ideas and articles for our monthly AHCA newsletter (amymiller4@gmail.com). And lastly ongoing thanks to

Betsey Lyon (betseylyon410@gmail.com) who serves as our AHCA listserv moderator. A thankless job, but so essential for our association.

As always, I apologize to many others I did not mention, but deserve our community praise. I promise to continue the public acknowledgment to everyone who gives their time to help our community.

Thank you all, each and every one of you.

And finally, thanks to everyone in our Ashton Heights community for your time, interest, and commitment in making Ashton Heights a vibrant place — a wonderful community to live, work, and play. Happy 2024!

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PMA Health is a multi-specialty practice with four offices, including two Immediate Care locations, in Arlington and Falls Church. Delivering compassionate care of the highest quality, based on our combination of time-tested experience, the latest medical research and technology is our first priority. Our patients inspire us with the health care goals they want to achieve and the challenges they face. We are committed to each and every patient creating individualized care plans that we can manage together.

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Is Someone Draining Your Gift Card?

Community Safety and Security Corner
By Christina Schultz



Over the holiday season, gift cards are often the perfect present to give or receive. Unfortunately, authorities from across the country are warning shoppers about a scam known as card draining.

It works like this – the offender discreetly removes gift cards from a store rack, neatly opens or slightly adjusts the gift card package to reveal the card numbers and associated pin codes, copies this information, then returns the gift cards to the rack. When an unsuspecting customer selects one of these compromised gift cards and activates it by adding value at check out, the scammer immediately “drains” the available funds, often to an offshore bank account. The buyer is left with a worthless gift card.

There have been numerous incidents of card draining. In a Target store in Sacramento, a man was seen suspiciously placing gift cards inside his jacket, then replacing them with another set of seemingly identical ones. He was caught with over 5,000 gift cards from Target and Apple in his possession. The cards were traced to 54 Target stores in 12 counties across California. In Bucks County, Pennsylvania, police have been investigating reports of gift card tampering involving over 100 Visa Vanilla and Apple gift cards at one Giant location. It could easily happen here.

These operations have become very sophisticated. Modifications are often imperceptible. Shoppers should nevertheless exercise caution by looking for any signs of tampering, such as scratches or scuff marks around the bar code and security sticker on the back of the card.

If you suspect you have been a victim of a card draining scam, you should report it to the Arlington County Policy Department’s non-emergency number (703-558-2222) or file an [online report](#). There may be other cards lurking in the racks only to instead be gifted to a thief.

How to Protect Yourself:

- Ensure the gift card does not appear to be tampered with, that the gift card is sealed and the protective cover and the tape covering the pin is intact.
- Keep the store receipt in case the gift card you are purchasing is found to have been compromised.
- If a purchased gift card is found to be compromised, immediately report it to the gift card company directly and ask that it be canceled. You may also be able to request a refund. You can find contact information for some of the more popular gift card companies [here](#).

Calling for Nominations!

The Meet Your Neighbor column is a popular one and we need your help. Do you know someone who we should feature next month or in coming months? Nominate yourself or a neighbor! Fill out the form at this link: <https://bit.ly/3RBQjsZ> or use the QR code below.

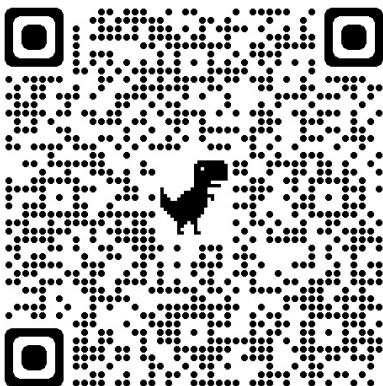


Photo by Jill Wellington



Restaurant Review – Tasty Chicken Box By Tony Trombly

Website: tastychickenbox.com

2716 Washington Boulevard

Arlington, VA 22201

571-497-2133

My wife and I were pulling into town after traveling for the Thanksgiving holiday and stopped in for lunch at the Tasty Chicken Box. It opened earlier this year and we have been meaning to try it. We walked in and were greeted by a lovely young woman. We asked her what we should order as a first time guest and she seemed really excited at this question! She immediately prepared a small sample for each of us and said, "This is our most popular dish, it's the Chicken and Lamb Combo over Rice".

The food looked familiar and yet different from what we were used to. It resembled many of the items we order at Lebanese Taverna, like Shawarma, and Tabouleh, but it also resembled the kabob menu of Ravi Kabob. Well, these two neighborhood fixtures need to make room for a new favorite because the Tasty Chicken Box is the food of Yemen and it is fantastic!!

We both ordered the dish she gave us in samples, the Chicken and Lamb Combo over Rice. The portions are very generous! After she put a bed of rice and a healthy serving of both marinated, grilled chicken and lamb, there are two different sauces and a choice of toppings. There is so much on the menu that we didn't have, but what we had was amazing! Deep delicious flavors, velvety textures, and so much of it!

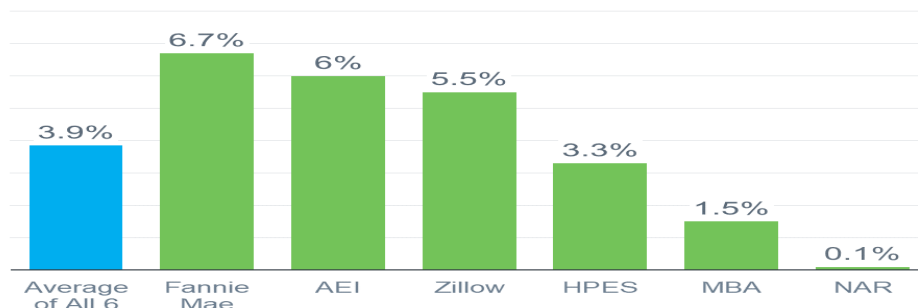
All of this was enhanced by our server's enthusiasm for us to try it. Her obvious pride and love for the food they serve came through in the experience. We will be back, we will use them for catering, and we should all consider this a new neighborhood gem!



Chicken kabob wrap and chicken over rice platter - Photos courtesy of Amy Miller

Just a few short weeks ago, the *Fannie Mae* forecast was for 3.9% appreciation in 2023. In the forecast that just came out, that projection was updated from 3.9% to 6.7% for the year. This increase goes to show just how confident experts are that home prices will net positive this year. So, if you believe home prices are falling, it may be time to get your insights from the experts instead – and they're saying prices aren't falling, they're climbing. Questions on your home? Let's talk!

2023 Year-End Home Price Forecasts



Before planning a move, let's connect. Get a professional's advice. Put my 38 years of local market expertise to work for you!

Casey O'Neal, Compass Real Estate
703-217-9090 (cell)



Scan the QR code for the 2023 Ashton Heights sales report.



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Plant This — Not That

By Brooke Alexander, Native Plant and Tree Canopy Coordinator



When I had my landscape design business in the 1990s, I planted burning bush. It was recommended by USDA. It had a nice vase-like form in the garden, the leaves turned brilliant red in the fall, and it had berries for the birds. What we now know is that burning bush is invasive, a threat to the health of our native woodlands, and not good for the birds.

Birds eat these non-native fruits to their detriment. Our migratory birds depend on our native fleshy fruits that have high fat/protein content, which sustains them over great distances. The non-native fleshy fruits like burning bush are high in carbohydrates, which do not support the long flights of our migratory birds. These non-natives evolved in a locale that does not have migratory birds.



Invasive burning bush.
Photo ©Elaine Mills

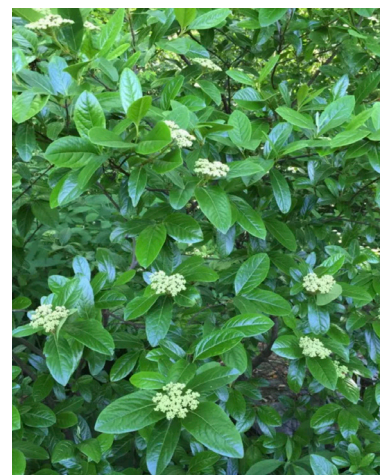
Burning bush and other non-natives that produce fleshy fruits, are spread by birds. Birds eat here, and poop out the seeds on their migration, spreading burning bush. Burning bush survive in shaded areas and out compete natives (since they don't have local predators). Riding my bike along Holmes Run in November (when the burning bush leaves are red) illustrated this problem. Burning bush were a dominant understory plant, reaching 20 feet tall, displacing the native understory plants.

What to do? It took me a while, but I eventually removed the mature burning bushes that were in my yard when I moved into Ashton Heights in 1991; replacing them with native shrubs, which feed our native birds. There are many options. I will describe three. See growing requirements which are accessible here: [Burning Bush \(*Euonymus alatus*\) \(mgnv.org\)](https://mgnv.org/Burning-Bush-Euonymus-alatus/)

***Lindera benzoin* (spicebush).** Grows 6-16 feet tall, 6-12 feet wide. Fragrant yellow flowers before the leaves. Red drupes on female plants in the summer. Yellow fall foliage. [MGNV fact sheet.](#)

***Caccinium corymbosum* (highbush blueberry).** Grows 6-12 feet tall, 4-10 feet wide. Nodding, bell shaped flowers. Edible (by humans and birds) blue black berries. Gold-orange-red-purple autumn color.

***Viburnum nudum* (possum-haw).** Grows 5-12 feet tall and wide. Fragrant creamy white cymes 5-inches wide. Drupes ripen to pink, purple, dark blue from July to Oct. Maroon and burgundy fall foliage. [MGNV fact sheet.](#)



Viburnum nudum
(Possum-haw)
Photo ©Elaine Mills



SAVE THE DATE — LYON PARK PANCAKE BREAKFAST

**Saturday January 20, 2024
8:00 to 10:30 a.m.**

**Coffee and coffee cake will be served from
10:00 to 11:00 a.m.**

Adults: \$15
Kids ages 4 – 10: \$5
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If you would like to volunteer, please contact
Trish Montgomery at
lyon.park.pancake.breakfast@gmail.com



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The Museum of Contemporary Art Arlington Turns 50!

By Catherine Anchin, Executive Director

Happy New Year Ashton Heights Neighbors! 2024 marks the 50th anniversary of the Museum of Contemporary Art Arlington and we're looking forward to a variety of special programs and celebrations throughout the year.

Later this month on Saturday January 20, we'll host an Art After Hours event from 5-8pm where we'll open four new exhibitions, including a solo exhibition by regional artist Lillian Bayley Hoover and an immersive exhibition by the upstate New York artist duo *Ghost of a Dream*. In our Jenkins Community Gallery, we'll feature work from our collaboration with APAH, a community art workshop series with young residents from Columbia Hills.

Additionally, we're offering a lot of new programming to enhance your wellness + art experiences, including a sound bath (January 20), yoga in the galleries (Saturdays and Mondays), weekend art workshops, and as always, our multi-week art classes for kids or adults. Registration

is now open for all these programs, so please visit our website at mocaarlington.org for more information about Public Programs or Education.

Also, at the end of this month, we will open our second location, an Innovation Studio + Store, at Amazon's HQ2 in National Landing. This retail space will enable us to connect more of the Arlington community with contemporary art and artists. Our museum store will be primarily located at this location, along with a small studio for an artist to work in the space and interact with audiences, as well as space for art-making and programs.

The Innovation Studio + Store is a complement to what we do at the museum. We hope that it will serve as a continuation of the warm, friendly, and accessible contemporary art experience we strive for at MoCA Arlington.



Photo by Jonathan Kozowyk

If you haven't been inside MoCA Arlington recently, I hope you've at least driven by to see *Reclining Liberty*. This monumental sculpture will be with us through the end of July, so please stop in and say hello if you haven't yet. Our museum hours are Wednesday through Sunday 12-5pm and admission is always free.

Thanks for your support of the museum!

An Orphan of the Stock Market Crash of 1929

By Peter W. Dickson, written in 2019

Few homes in Ashton Heights have a more intriguing history and unforgettable visibility than the unusual home at 3520 N. Pershing Dr. which came onto the market in 2009 after six generations from one family -- the English-Brew family -- had lived there for nearly 80 years.

Most residents in the neighborhood are well aware of this home given its unusual architecture which the current realtor has called "California bungalow" although one might also describe this home with its stucco exterior as being a Spanish colonial reminiscent of the old Southwest or Mexico.

This architectural style stands out, especially west of Lincoln St. where the vast majority of homes are either red brick cape cods or center/side-hall colonials which were built between 1933 and 1941.

The other intriguing fact, which is the key to the story or mystery behind this home, is that county records state that it was built in 1929 -- a famous year for sure because after the stock market crashed in October of that year, the construction of homes in Ashton Heights stopped for about 4 years.

A title search and the 1930 Federal Census -- coupled with an interview with Katherine Barbee -- a granddaughter of the man who purchased the home in 1930 -- provide a fairly clear picture of the special history of this home.

Everything strongly suggests that the man who originally undertook to build the home for his growing family lost money in the stock market and had to sell it before having a chance to live there.

The original owner was Daniel R. Davis, a building contractor who in 1929 was living in a community known as Marcytown off Military Road. The birth of his third child that summer evidently persuaded him to build a new home on the large lot along Pershing Dr. which he had purchased in 1926 from Ashton Jones who established Ashton Heights in 1921.

Fancying himself as architect, Davis concocted the architectural plan on his own after studying various magazines. He borrowed \$6,000 at six percent from Jones to build the home. However, he may have been nervous about the project because on August 28 -- eight weeks before the stock market crashed -- he instructed a lawyer via another deed to sell the home if he defaulted on the loan with Jones.

We do not know if Davis defaulted on the loan, but he must have run into a problem quite possibly related to the financial crisis in late 1929 because the Federal Census shows the Davis family still living in Marcytown in mid-April 1930. Six weeks later in June 1930, the California bungalow was sold to Earl W. English -- a part-owner of the Ford automobile dealership in Rosslyn on N. Moore St. where a gas station sits underneath a Church.

It was English's family, including his father-in law and another four subsequent generations, which lived in the home for nearly 80 years. Given the requirements of this extended family, English decided in 1934 to build a second adjacent home -- the brick Cape Cod directly behind at 3521 North Third Street.

This home was the first of the two English-Brew homes that was sold in mid-2009 following the death of Mr. Brew. The



Photo from Redfin.com

purchaser was the Blackburn family (local contractors) which paid \$595,500. This home languished for many years, with the renovation-restoration long delayed in part because of the Great Recession. It finally sold in September 2017.

The fate of the unique, historic English-Brew home on Pershing Dr. was also unclear. The new owner -- Louis Guillot, an architect with the Griffin

Head firm -- quickly offered it for sale more or less "as is" for \$775,000 compared to the \$549,000 he had paid for it not long before in August 2009.

There was legitimate concern that this unique home at 3520 N. Pershing Dr., which has a greater architectural profile and historical appeal, might be demolished for the construction of a new McMansion.

Guillot was not successful in finding any buyer in during the Great Recession in 2009-2010 and decided to invest substantially more money in a restoration which was impressive. The home was sold quickly in April 2011 to William Moore, an Exxon-Mobil professional, for one million dollars, slightly above the asking price. Moore was reassigned to a post in Singapore, and decided to sell the home, which he did to the Burner family in May 2013 for \$1,085,000.

The intense demand for homes in Ashton Heights, even before the decision in late 2018 to locate an Amazon headquarters in Arlington, has resulted in soaring sales prices for Ashton Heights homes, even just for the lots to build new huge mansions. This historic home fully and nicely restored on Pershing Dr. hopefully will always be as it is today.

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Mail collection

Icons courtesy of flaticon.com

Kids Inc. listings can be found in the newsletter copy posted to the Ashton Heights listserv and in the issue hand-delivered to your home.

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