



Ashton Heights News

www.ashtonheights.org

May 2025

Mid-Year Callouts – Thanks to all of you! By Scott Sklar, President, AHCA

For those of you on our AHCA listserv, I hope you saw my announcement of the new AHCA Officers and the Executive Committee that were unanimously voted in at the April AHCA monthly membership meeting.

But before that, I want to thank Jim O'Brien for his great work for over a decade as our Vice President of Membership. He was a great VP and deserves our special thanks. I also want to thank Jaya Chavern who stepped up at the last minute to become our new AHCA VP of Membership. Thank you, Jaya!

We also have two new ExCom members, long time AHCA resident Betsey Lyon, and Jennifer Sosin who brings a wealth of experience that will be valuable for our association. Thank you both for stepping up for your community. Thanks to Celia Slater who served as the AHCA Nominations Chair which made sure the AHCA elections process was open.

The names of the incoming AHCA Executive Committee beginning May 1, 2025 are on page two of this newsletter.

We have so many AHCA members providing services to the community. I hope I have included everyone.

Amy Miller has been our newsletter editor – and she has improved the newsletter and is wonderful to work with. Glynis Lough who has served as an interim listserv moderator takes over as the main AHCA listserv moderator. These two positions are the information conduit to our association, and bind us together. So, my sincere thanks to you both.

Our AHCA officers put in ongoing time every month. Dave Schutz serves as VP of Programs and pulls together our monthly meeting programs and speakers, which takes time and thought, plus rushing to fill in when speakers abruptly change plans. Doug Williams is our Treasurer, and Chris Armstrong is our Secretary. He takes care of our monthly meeting minutes and works with our website manager Rob Liford. Please thank these volunteers if you see them around the neighborhood.

Our four At-Large ExCom members round out the AHCA management team. David Phillips and Jim Richardson have previously chaired committees and our new ExCom members, Betsey Lyon and Jennifer Sosin will add some new blood and skills which is essential for our civic association.

Aside from Amy Miller, Bea Camp and Julie Mangis coordinate a whole cotillion of AHCA members to deliver our monthly newsletter door-to-door eight months a year. These coordinators and each and every one of you who personally deliver newsletters – serve as an essential communication outreach arm that makes sure we reach everyone in Ashton Heights. This is special in that we do not rely on just electronic media, so that our residents who are not computer literate, elderly, recent residents and immigrants – know and hear about what we do – and advise them about our community issues. My deepest thanks for the extra work you do for our community.

When I became your president thirteen years ago, I established a formal committee system, that assigns leads or co-leads (Committee Chairs) and Committees to address our issues. I also assign some individuals who carry out focused tracking and representation.

Continued on page 4

AHCA Monthly Meeting Wed., May 21, 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
- 7:45 p.m.** Michael Schaffner will talk about Camp Casey in the context of Arlington during the War Between the States.
- When you go by the corner of Columbia Pike and Courthouse Road, do you think about Camp Casey? Michael thinks you should! Learn more about the campaign for a historic marker in this talk.
- 8:15 p.m.** Natalie Roy, a local Realtor, neighbor, and community advocate, will share stories of sellers who've tried to keep their homes from becoming tear-downs and protect trees—what's worked, what hasn't, and what we can learn from their efforts.
- The buyer owns it, and can do with it what s/he wants, BUT that hasn't stopped some sellers from trying. How frequently do sellers try to steer their houses away from tear down and how do they do it? Come learn more from Natalie!
- 9:00 p.m.** Adjourn

Editor's Note: View the newsletter in **full color** at www.ashtonheights.org! If you have an idea for an article, reach out, we'd love to have you. The next issue will be the **September 2025** newsletter issue – submissions are due by **August 22nd**. Send submissions to: amylmiller4@gmail.com. Thanks in advance for your contributions.

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.

Business card: \$60
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One page insert: \$325

2025– 2026 AHCA Officers and Executive Committee

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Volunteer Needed: Help Distribute the Newsletter

By Bea Camp

Julie Mangis and I have been partnering on the Ashton Heights newsletter distribution every month for over a decade now. What had been a one-person job before we took it over became a happy combo — Julie keeps the lists and makes sure all the blocks are covered, while I enjoy the neighborhood exercise involved in carting bags around to the six mid-level distributors.



Thanks to all our volunteers, this three-tiered system (actually four, with editor Amy kicking off the process every issue) works well.

Although Julie is prepared to continue, I have decided it's time to step back. This means we are looking for someone to take over my paper route, which occupies an hour or two per issue, eight months of the year (September-November and January-May). Please let me know if you are interested; I will be available to guide you through the first month and serve as back-up as needed. Please email me at: campbeatrice@gmail.com

Group Offering Scholarships for Women

By Claudia Vandermade

Virginia
State Chapter, P.E.O.

Virginia's Philanthropic Educational Organization (P.E.O.) is celebrating its 75th State Convention in Richmond in late May. P.E.O. has been motivating, educating and celebrating women for more than 156 years. Since its inception in 1869, the nonprofit organization has helped more than 125,000 women pursue educational goals by providing over \$432 million in grants, scholarships, awards and loans. The Sisterhood also owns and supports Cottey College, a women's college in Missouri.

Through membership, the P.E.O. Sisterhood has brought together more than half a million women in the United States and Canada who are passionate about helping women advance through education while supporting and motivating them. In addition to the educational philanthropies, the P.E.O. Sisterhood provides a framework of support and community for all of its members.

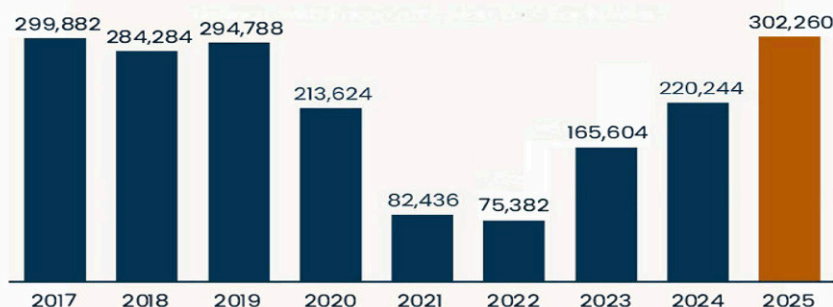
Please contact Ashton Heights residents Susan Weinbeck (susan.weinbeck@gmail.com) or Claudia Vandermade (claudiev@gmail.com) and visit peointernational.org and vapeo.org for more information.

The best piece of advice for sellers today? Remember this phrase: If the asking price isn't compelling, it's not selling. Unfortunately, the number of sellers who are having to reduce their price is on the rise. Many aren't factoring in current market conditions. In today's market, buyers have more options, and they're skipping overpriced homes without a second thought.

So, let's work together. With my help, we can collaborate and set a price on your home to pull people in, not push them away.

The Number of Price Cuts Is Back at More Normal Levels

Listings with Price Cuts, March of Each Year



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President's Column continued from page 1

On the latter, Christine Lewicki has been our AHCA Water Management lead and Stormwater liaison. Ken Matzkin has been the AHCA designated rep to the large group of civic associations focused on lot coverage and EHO/MMH issues.

And finally, much of the real work we do and effectiveness rests with our committee chairs & co-chairs. Our committee with the greatest time and scope is the AHCA Development Committee ably lead by Jack Spilsbury & Alexander Tuneski. They follow zoning, projects and processes which can take a huge amount of time, networking and strategizing.

Our second busiest committee is the Tree Canopy & Native Plants Committee chaired by Brooke Alexander. The committee has developed a petition with sign-ons from Ashton Heights and expanded to Lyon Park on protecting tree canopy and accelerating tree planting. Brooke speaks before many other civic association and Arlington County entities on this issue.

Our five other committees tend to be more issue focused, such as AHCA Transportation chaired by Patrick Lueb, Parks & Open Spaces chaired by Chris Horvath, Safety & Security chaired by Christina Schultz, Housing chaired by Matt Hall, and schools co-chaired by Lori Fischler & Caroline Rogus.

These are amazing community leaders representing important issues to our community. For those of you with concerns or interested in participating, please contact these folks – they will welcome your ideas and interests.

Most importantly, thanks to every AHCA resident and member for your service to the Ashton Heights community and its civic association. Our final monthly meeting before our summer recess will be on May 21 from 7:30 to 9 p.m. I hope you will join us for committee updates and featured speakers. Happy Spring!



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Kiwanis Blueberries On Sale Again This Year!

By Julie Mangis

"They're so good you'll think you picked them yourself!"

Freshly-picked blueberries trucked directly to Arlington from a family farm in New Jersey! The Kiwanis Club of Arlington is taking orders for 10-pound boxes of blueberries again this year. Healthful, nutritious and delicious, berries are expected to arrive in Arlington June 19 and be available for pick up June 20 and 21 at Cherrydale Methodist Church, 3701 Lorcom Lane.

The cost for a 10-pound box is \$45, and orders may be placed online at <https://arlingtonvakiwanis.com>. Customers also have an option to purchase boxes of blueberries for donation to the Arlington Food Assistance Center (AFAC) for distribution to Arlington's neediest families. Please consider adding a box or two for AFAC to your order and Kiwanis will deliver the berries directly to AFAC. Last year, more than a ton of blueberries were purchased for donation to AFAC.

Proceeds from blueberry sales also benefit the Kiwanis scholarship program for Arlington high school graduates, and non-profits such as Arlington Thrive, Bridges to Independence, Doorways, The Salvation Army, National Capital Treatment & Recovery, VHC Pediatrics, Arlington YMCA, ASPIRE! After-School Learning, and many others. This is the twelfth year for Kiwanis blueberry sales, and every year, more Arlington families discover the plump, high-quality berries offered by Kiwanis are far superior to grocery store varieties. Be sure to get your order in soon.





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The Role of Trees in Stormwater Management

By Brooke Alexander, Native Plant and Tree Canopy Committee Chair



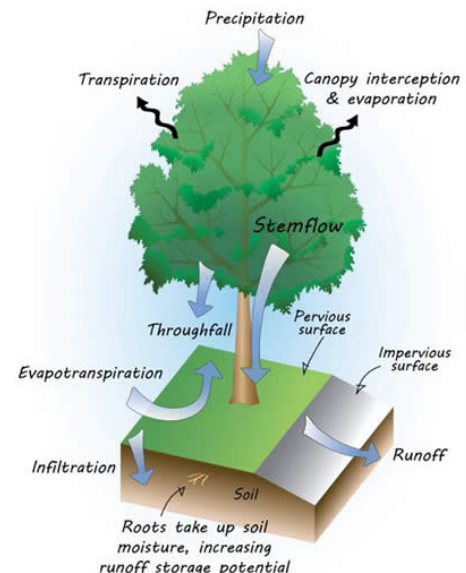
This article is part of a continuing series about the value of trees. This month we're specifically looking at how trees reduce stormwater.

Ashton Heights is applying for a grant for tree planting from the VA Department of Forestry. This grant is focused on planting trees as part of the Chesapeake Bay Watershed Implementation Plan to reduce nitrogen, phosphorus and sediment contributions to the Bay.

See the drawing and descriptions to the right to see how trees reduce stormwater runoff, and in doing so, reduce nitrogen, phosphorus and sediment contributions to the Bay. See the related article about Ashton Heights 2025 Canopy Tree Planting Blitz on page 7.

A healthy urban forest can reduce runoff in the following ways:**

- **Transpiration:** Tree roots draw water from the soil that the leaves use in photosynthesis; leaves then release water vapor into the atmosphere as a byproduct.
- **Interception:** Leaves, branches and trunk surfaces intercept and absorb rainfall, reducing the amount of water that reaches the ground.
- **Reduced Throughfall:** Canopies reduce soil erosion by diminishing the volume and velocity of rainfall
- **Increased Infiltration:** Root growth and decomposition increase soil infiltration capacity and rate.
- **Phytoremediation:** Trees take up trace amounts of harmful chemicals from the soil, along with water. Inside the tree, these chemicals may be transformed into less harmful substances and used or stored.



** EPA's Stormwater to Street Trees: Engineering Urban Forests for Stormwater Management, Sept 2013 (EPA 841-B-13-001).

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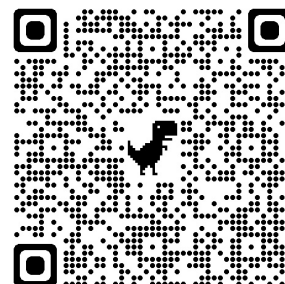
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Calling for Nominations

The Meet Your Neighbor column is a popular one, but we need your help. Do you know someone who we can feature in the fall issues?

Please consider nominating yourself or a neighbor! Fill out the form at this link: <https://bit.ly/3RBQjsZ> or use the QR code to the right.



Restaurant Review: Andy's Pizza

By Oliver Fry, age 10

Website: www.eatandyspizza.com
901 N. Pollard St., Arlington, VA 22203

Andy's Pizza, as the name implies, is a pizza place located near Virginia Square. They recently opened in Ballston and I thought I'd review them. They sell exceptionally made, in-store, fresh pizzas including... classic cheese, pepperoni, white, margherita, sausage and pepper, carnivore (pepperoni and sausage) and many more.

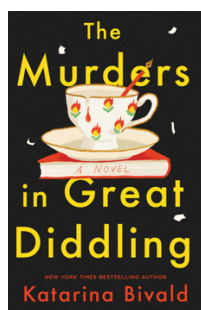
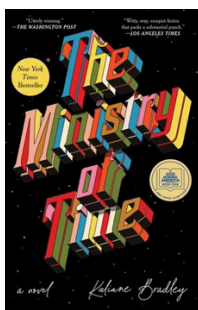
When I went there I got the carnivore pie, (which is currently priced at \$30.50) and I thought it was delicious. You can also order pizza by-the-slice. There was a tiny bit of spiciness in the sausage so if you hate spice you might want to grab a cup of water before chowing down.

I overall rate this pizza a 8.7 stars out of 10 and I would really recommend it. We went there right after it opened, so it was extremely busy but the line moved swiftly nonetheless. If you really don't want to wait in line they have an online ordering system that you can use to order ahead. Although during my visit I was only able to try one pie I'm sure all the other options are great as well. Andy joins other great neighborhood pizza options like Troys and Pizzatos that we enjoy.



Great Reads

By Jennifer Sosin



If you are like me, you're always looking for your next great read. If you are like me in another way, when asked for recommendations, you draw a blank on the last book you loved. And that, dear neighbors, is why I have a book blog. For years, I kept a book

journal as a way of remembering what I read. About a dozen years ago, I was persuaded to share it with friends, and it became Souvenir Scribbles (www.souvenirscribbles.wordpress.com). Feel free to check it out.

And so, in response to a request for book reviews for this newsletter, I have pulled from my Scribbles to offer some recommendations. The books below are not necessarily my very favorites, not necessarily the most recent. Instead, what they have in common is that they made me smile. While they don't ignore the evils of the world, they offer something hopeful, or distracting, or funny —something that offers an escape from the unrelentingly alarming news cycle in which we are all living. Because if you're like me in a third way, escape into fiction is welcome right now.

Brief and charming

[Antoine Laurain, *The President's Hat*](#) (1986). This is a quick and delightful read. The title is literal. It is the story of the president's hat. More precisely, it is the story of President Mitterrand's hat. President Mitterrand loses his hat, someone finds it, the finder's life is transformed. The hat is lost again, found again, and the cycle repeats. The book is charming, witty, and just a little acerbic in its descriptions of 1980s France.

Layered and thought-provoking

[Kaliane Bradley, *The Ministry of Time*](#) (2024). An extraordinarily original novel. A mash-up of science fiction, dystopian thriller, political satire, and romantic comedy. This is a book that asks serious questions about serious issues, but it is also fast-paced, filled with suspense, and often quite hilarious.

Black comedy

[Oyinkan Braithwaite, *My Sister, the Serial Killer*](#) (2018). Here's how the publisher described this debut novel: "A short, darkly funny, hand grenade of a novel about a Nigerian woman whose younger sister has a very inconvenient habit of killing her boyfriends." Yup. That's what it's about. It's unexpected, it's suspenseful, and, yes, it's hard not to laugh.

And a few that are just plain fun

[Delia Ephron, *Siracusa*](#) (2016). This is a soap-opera of a book, a juicy read, clever and voyeuristic, sometimes dark and cutting, sometimes quite the comedy. It is the story of two couples who set off to Italy on a shared vacation. Each chapter is narrated by one of the four adults, describing the same events from four very different perspectives. Quickly, the tensions and the secrets

escalate, culminating in a plot twist that was surprising despite plenty of foreshadowing.

[Katarina Bivald, *The Murders in Great Diddling*](#) (2024). This is the kind of mystery I like: character-driven and intelligent without taking itself too seriously, neither too bloody nor too cozy. Here, the murders are off-stage, the characters are colorful, the story is told with a side-eye and a wink, but Bivald keeps her balance, never tripping into a puddle of treacle. That said, on a scale of one to ten, if 1 is a gritty and gory thriller and 10 is the coziest of cozies, I'd put *Great Diddling* at a 7. Definitely on the cozy side of the hill, so you have to be okay with that.

[Julie Schumacher, *Dear Committee Members*](#) (2014). This is the first of a trilogy. It is a laugh-out-loud epistolary novel in the voice of an English professor at a middling university who has a knack for offending people, and who is determined not to become chair of the English department. If you have ever taught at a university, ever been asked by a student for a letter of recommendation, ever battled academic bureaucracy, this is a novel for you.

Ashton Heights May BLITZ!

By Brooke Alexander and
Caroline Rogus, Co-Chairs
of the AH 2025 Canopy Tree
Planting Blitz



What is the BLITZ?

It is the Ashton Heights' tree planting initiative. Join together with your neighbors. Together we can reverse our declining tree canopy and become the oasis in central Arlington, again. We are aiming for 1,200 new canopy trees, an average of one per household.

What's happening next?

- Heather Schildge and Joslin Gallatin are applying for grant funds for Ashton Heights.
- Completing our list of Block Captains! (Please sign up by May 25)
- Our petition to the County Board will be finalized at the May 21 AHCA meeting.

What's happening this summer?

Block Captains will be briefed, and will meet with neighbors to solicit interest in a consultation. Arlington Regional Master Naturalists (ARMN) members will do consultations with individual homeowners regarding the right tree in the right place.

When will the trees be planted?

December 2025

Want more info?

Contact us by email! Brooke (brooke.alexander52@gmail.com) and Caroline (crogus@gmail.com) OR look at the weekly updates on the listserv.

If you're not on the listserv, please [sign up](#) as it's a long time until the next newsletter – September 2025.



Spring FLING

Saturday, May 10 | 12:00 – 3:00 pm
Columbia Gardens Cemetery Grounds

Fun activities for children and adults:

- Paint a rock for a Mother's Day gift
- Meet our rosarian for rose growing tips
- See how honey is made and put on a beekeeper suit
- Get planting advice from the Tree Stewards of Arlington
- Play a game of cornhole
- Refreshments served



columbiagardenscemetery.org | 3411 Arlington Blvd., Arlington, VA 22201 | 703.527.1235

Lyon Park 2025 Egg Hunt Recap

By Paul Showalter

Mix lots of candy... more than 3,500 plastic eggs and what do you get? Another fabulous egg hunt in Lyon Park. Numerous volunteers spent hours stuffing candy into those little plastic eggs for our annual Egg Hunt in the Park.

And what a day in the park it was. The weather was gorgeous. Lyon Park was full of kids (and parents and grandparents) having fun and collecting thousands of eggs in a hurry. We hope you were able to join us. If you watch the videos of the event posted online, you will laugh. The kids are hilarious.

When the Giant Yellow Peep made its appearance, everyone went wild. It was a great addition to our event, and a fabulous photo op.

Thank you to my amazing team of volunteers (young and "slightly" older) ... without you, the event would not have been possible. Thanks to my volunteers, Linda Henderson and her grandkids; David Grahn; Gray Handley; Bill Anhut; Sharon Showalter; Alex, Helen and Claire Peters. Claire also returned on Saturday to help with the main event, and as always, did a great job wrangling the kids.

These types of events make Lyon Park special and a true asset for our community. Please step up and get involved in our next big event, the Lyon Park Spring Fair.



Featured Tree: 80-Year Old Willow Oak Tree

By Brooke Alexander, Native Plant and Tree Canopy Committee Chair



Trees are fun to swing from! Just ask Eleanor Gould, age 12. She's been enjoying this swing since its installation when she was four years old. Eleanor lights up when talking about her tree and her swing. See her smile and her tree in the photo.

Eleanor's parents, Caroline and John, moved to Ashton Heights with their older child Henry in 2011. The large, beautiful willow oak in the backyard of their Irving Street house was a selling point. They were careful to protect the tree and its roots when they designed and built their screened porch a few years ago.

This tree casts shade into several yards. The Gould backyard is filled with shade throughout our region's hot summers, and there is almost always a breeze on their back porch. And yet, when the leaves are off this deciduous tree from late fall to early spring, plenty of light reaches the porch and the back of the house. The family has celebrated many birthdays beneath the tree: a favorite party game was whacking at a pinata hung from one of the willow oak's lower branches.

Big canopy trees are a neighborhood treasure; we all benefit from them. Thank you to the Gould family for their continued stewardship of their willow oak!



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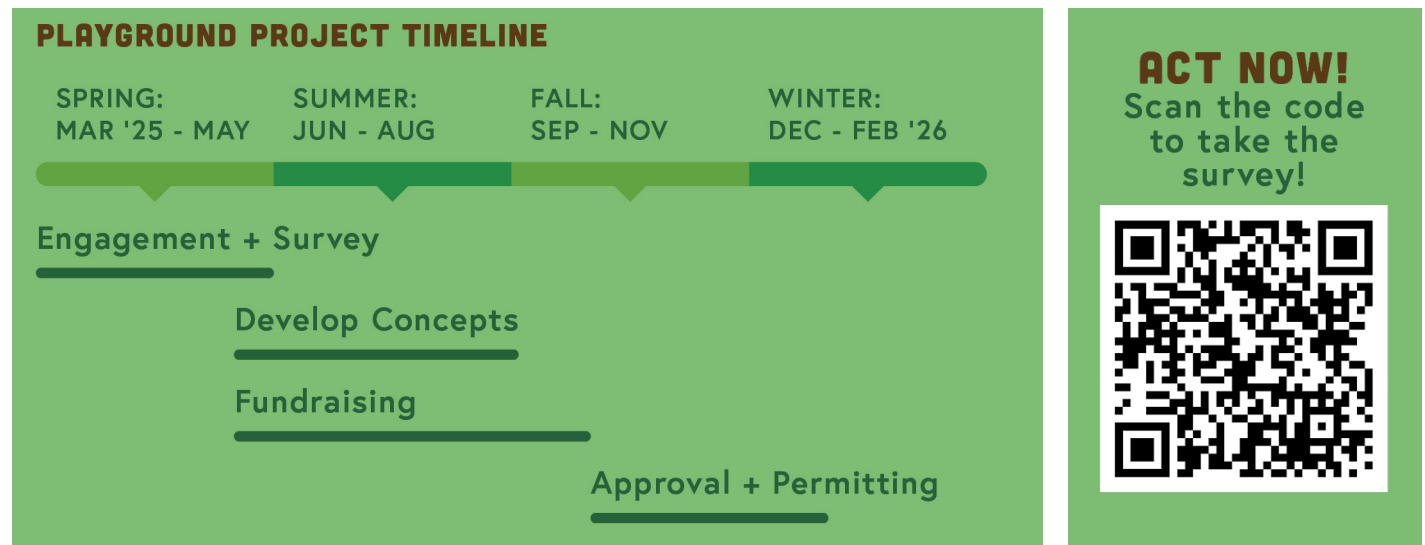
LET'S RENOVATE OUR PLAYGROUND TOGETHER!

Hello Neighbors! The Lyon Park Playground Committee is excited to be working with the community to develop a plan for renovating the playground at Lyon Park. We are a group of volunteers spearheaded by Lyon Park resident Mark Ilich and began meeting in February to discuss the project and how we can "Play It Forward!"

The basic intent is to: replace the equipment, address the current drainage problems, respect the park's natural tree canopy, and install new surfacing. However, other details and what it will look like exactly is still an open question. Throughout the spring we will be at several community events to help raise awareness of the project and hear from the community, including residents of Ashton Heights who use the playground. Last month we launched a survey to better understand the community's preferences and priorities and would love to hear from you—please follow the link below or use the QR code to provide your input and make sure your voice is heard! We value our neighbor's input to help guide the renovation and design process. We also invite you to come to our tent at the Lyon Park Spring Fair on May 17th where we will have an activity table for kids to build their dream playground and volunteers will be available to speak with you more about the project.

In June, based on all the input collected in our Survey, we will launch the next phase of conceptual design and begin fundraising in earnest. A generous donation has allowed us to engage a local design firm to help us shepherd the project through these initial engagement and conceptual design phases; however ongoing volunteer efforts and fundraising will be critical to turning this vital need into a reality. If you would like to support us, please be on the lookout for ways that you can participate in and donate to the efforts and help us PLAY IT FORWARD!

Take the survey: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/LP-Playground-Renovation>



Save the Date – Upcoming Events

Here are just a few events coming up in our area. Underlined events are links in the online version.

- The [Lubber Run Farmers Market](#) is now open! Support local farmers every Saturday from 8 a.m. to noon until November.
- Check out [Music by the Metro](#), a Clarendon Concert Series. The series runs on Thursday, May 1, 8, 15 and 22 at 6 p.m.
- [Spring Fling](#) at Columbia Gardens Cemetery will take place on Saturday, May 10. Free, fun activities for all ages!
- The [World Migratory Bird Day Festival](#) will be held on Saturday, May 10 at Lacey Woods Park. Registration is required.
- [Arlington Palooza](#) is back on Saturday, May 17 from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. at Lubber Run Community Center. Enjoy a street vendor market, music, food trucks and more.
- The [Armed Forces Cycling Classic](#) returns on May 31 and June 1. The Challenge Ride starts and finishes in front of the Capitol on May 31. The Clarendon Cup is on June 1 in Clarendon. There are kids races both days.

Bingo Night Success!

By Lilly Rizzi and Emma Pike

Bingo night was a success! We raised \$1,600 for PathForward and over 100 people showed up!!

We are Lilly Rizzi and Emma Pike and we go to Thomas Jefferson Middle School. For our required 8th grade community service project, we knew we wanted to host a fundraising event with the community that was fun and engaging.

During school, there was an in-school field trip day to introduce us and our classmates to various nonprofit organizations. PathForward came and we had a fun time helping make sandwiches for the people they support. We learned that they work to not only get homeless people into shelters and homes, but also to help them become successful in everyday life. Since homelessness is a growing problem all around the world, including Arlington, we thought it would be perfect if we included them for our community project.

We then had to decide what type of event to host to raise money for PathForward. After consideration, we landed on hosting our own bingo night. The idea originated from Lilly's annual family beach trip, where she and her family always attend the weekly bingo events. The bingo nights were always so much fun, and we thought our neighbors might also enjoy it! We contacted PathForward - they were excited about this fundraiser and Jon Davis came to our event to promote PathForward and what they are doing.

The process for hosting this event wasn't easy, but with months of planning, an incredible amount of support from the community we made it happen. We started by emailing the Lyon Park Board of Governors, who allowed us to present a pitch at their monthly meeting. This included a presentation about why we wanted to rent out the Lyon Park Community Center at no cost. They agreed - that email was incredible news! It was going to be held at the community center on April 6th. We then started the planning phase. This consisted of planning everything to a tee, including the setup of the room, advertising, and more. After that began the collection of prizes - lots of emails, Facebook posts and in-person visits yielded a lot of generous prize donations worth over \$400.



Now we only had to wait for the big day to arrive. We had no idea what to expect - would we get 10 people? 30 people? Close to 100 people ended up attending our event and supporting PathForward. After an hour and a half of many, many rounds of bingo, the night came to an end. After counting up all the money, we couldn't believe it - we made around \$1,650 to help PathForward's mission to get Arlington homeless off the streets.

We are so incredibly grateful for everything the community and our families and friends did to help. We would like to especially give a huge thank you to Paul Showalter, who mentored us along the way and chose to celebrate his birthday with us at our event.



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Slashing Science: Funding Cuts at the NIH

Community Safety and Security Corner By Christina Schultz

Another government agency being significantly downsized by the Trump Administration's Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE) is the National Institutes for Health (NIH). Chaos and confusion have surrounded funding cuts to both staff and grants. About 1,200 employees, or 6% of the agency's staff, were laid off. Most of these positions consisted of support jobs, communications, IT, human resources, those who order supplies, and specialists who handle contracts and grants. In addition, about 770 active research projects were immediately terminated (wiping out significant chunks of funding to entire scientific fields), and indirect costs to grants were capped. In mid-April, a leaked plan from the Office of Management and Budget proposed 40% budget cuts for the NIH, which would drop the agency's annual budget from \$47 billion to \$27 billion.

What is the NIH?

The National Institutes of Health is the primary U.S. government agency responsible for biomedical and public health research. It was founded in 1887 as part of the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). Headquartered in Bethesda, Maryland, NIH is made up of 27 institutes and centers of different biomedical disciplines, such as particular diseases or body systems. It is also the world's largest public funder of medical research – providing more than 60,000 research grants annually which support 300,000 scientists at more than 2,500 universities, medical schools, and other institutions across the U.S. and internationally. The NIH funds and conducts research aimed at understanding, preventing, and treating diseases. It pays for large clinical trials in fields like cancer, heart disease, and diabetes that have changed medical practice and saved lives. It is the place where seminal discoveries have been made – the deciphering of the human genetic code, discovery of fluoride to prevent tooth decay, isolation of the AIDS virus, use of lithium to manage bipolar disorder, and creation of vaccines against hepatitis and human papillomavirus (HPV). Its research is instrumental for the biotech and pharmaceutical industries.

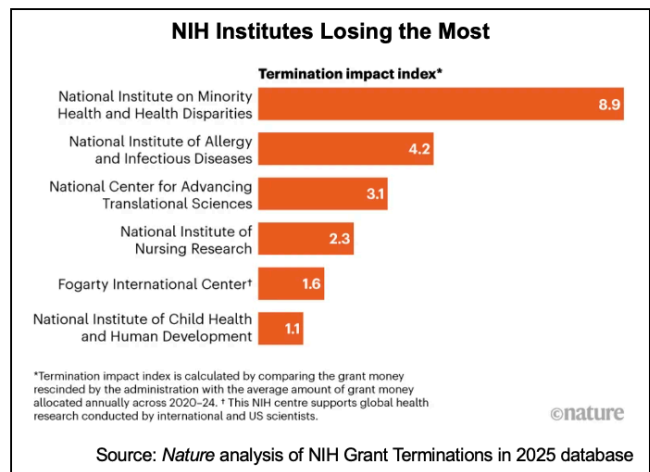
Were fired staff really needed?

Medical research clearly requires scientists, but the eliminated jobs are crucial for enabling these scientists to do their work. Having lost much of their procurement and administrative staff, for example, lab workers are scrambling to buy food for the animals kept in their facilities. Some scientists have been hoarding and rationing the reagents that they have stockpiled. Several investigators reported not being able to get anything that comes on dry ice because there is simply no one to purchase the dry ice. While more limited, other staffing cuts have gone beyond operational personnel. Key scientists who were overseeing projects on sickle cell disease, neurodevelopmental disorders, and pandemic preparedness, among other areas of research, were let go. In addition, leaders of five of the NIH's institutes and at least two other members of senior leadership were placed on administrative leave, making decisions about what diseases to study and what medicines to develop more uncertain. While there may have been room to reorganize and streamline the NIH's work, the decision about layoffs appears to be random and

hurried without any careful analysis or input from stakeholders. More layoffs are expected.

What kind of grants are being cut?

The Trump Administration has rescinded about \$2.3 billion allocated to U.S. researchers on an expanding list of research topics that “no longer effectuates agency priorities,” despite scientists scoring them highly during review. As of early April, the top roughly 770 canceled research grants included: 28.7% for studies that mentioned HIV/AIDS; 24.3% looking at the health of transgender people; 17.1% related to COVID-19; and 3.5% examining the effects of climate change on health. Grant cuts are also being targeted more at certain NIH Institutes, based on their discipline. For example those that focus more on the health of minority groups and infectious diseases are losing the most (see box). Several universities are also under fire from the NIH, which has been forced to halt new grants and contract payments to Harvard, Brown, Northwestern, and Cornell, among others.



What else is going on?

The list is very long, but several items are worth noting. There have been communications restrictions on researchers giving scientific talks and submitting papers to journals for publication. A temporary 30-day travel ban was put into place in late February. HHS told NIH not to communicate with universities about “whether or why the funds are frozen.” The procurement rules are constantly changing. The draw down process for grants and contracts has been inconsistent with DOGE requiring organizations to include a justification for each transaction, even routine ones, and federal officials to then review the justification before deciding whether to approve the payment – creating backlogs in processing payments. Staff are worried that DOGE's requirement to cut 35% of current contracts, where money has already been spent, will be devastating and that decisions will end up being arbitrary.

As one NIH staff member lamented, “I am heartbroken, more than anything, for the future of science in this country as we gut this institution that has for so long been intentionally shielded as much as possible from politics.”

KIDS, INC.

Our local youth are ready to help when the household hands are not enough. If you would like to be added to this list, please send updates to Ann Felker: gr8est9@gmail.com. Include your child's name, birth year, contact information and list the jobs that they are interested in being contacted for hire.



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Babysitting



Leaf raking



Plant watering



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