



Over the Fence

News for Neighbors from the Arlington Heights Civic Association
Summer 2009 Edition

Visit our website: www.ahca.info

Join our yahoo group: ahca-subscribe@yahoo.com

President's Message

Many of us are welcoming the summer heat after a very wet and cool spring. AHCA kicked off summer by sharing a booth with the Penrose Neighborhood Association at the 14th Annual Columbia Pike Blues Festival. This followed our spring events: the BBQ & Potluck, the softball game versus Alcovia Heights and the Garden & Home Tour. Thanks to all our volunteers for wonderful work on these events!

Speaking of events, a number of our traditions in the neighborhood were started or sustained by Jim and Joan Gill. We bid a fond farewell to Jim and Joan, formerly of 121 South Hudson Street. As you may know, Jim and Joan used their boundless energy to get the civic association back on its feet in the early 1990s, doing everything from writing and delivering newsletters, to guiding Neighborhood Conservation projects from petition to funding, to gardening and neighborhood sign design, to social events, to attending charrettes for the Columbia Pike Form Based Code and board membership on CPRO, and mentoring new leaders like Jay Wind, and myself. Arlington Heights has benefited tremendously from their leadership and their community service. We are still reaping the benefits of their work, and they will be truly missed.

In light of the tremendous contribution that the Gills have made to our neighborhood over the

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past 20 years, the Executive Committee has voted to recognize Jim and Joan Gill as Honored Citizens of the Arlington Heights Neighborhood. Please join AHCA in congratulating the Gills!

The summer heat has just begun, but our family is lucky to have an opportunity to take a sabbatical this summer, overseas. Since I will be gone, please contact Stacey Whyte, our fabulous First Vice President (contact information is listed in this newsletter), with any neighborhood business.

Have a great summer!

Juliet Hiznay

SUMMER AHCA MEETING AGENDA

Please join the civic association on Tuesday, July 28, 2009, at 7:00 p.m. at Patrick Henry Elementary School's Library. Expected agenda items are: "Meet the Neighbors" program with a special guest speaker; 2009 Arlington County Fair update, updates on Jefferson Middle School renovation and TJ dust fields; and update on major conservation projects and other construction projects.

Arlington Heights Civic Association – 2009 Officers

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Construction Update

By Juliet Hiznay

Many projects are expected in the neighborhood in 2009 and 2010, with some already under way. Despite the wet weather this spring, these have continued apace. Streetscape work on Columbia Pike has been completed on the north side, and installation of sidewalk, curb, gutter, streetlights, and trees has now moved to the south side. The Gravity 3 water main project (Arlington Boulevard and Washington Boulevard) is moving forward, though slowly. The civic association has requested that affected areas along Arlington Boulevard be restored. More information about Gravity 3 is available at: www.arlingtonva.us/departments/EnvironmentalServices/CapTrack/Details.aspx?q=UHJval9JZD0yOTQ2

The county presented the design for the dust field replacement at a community meeting held on June 16, 2009, with a tentative construction start date in November 2009. The project will

remove the dust material and replace it with a synthetic surface, dark skies lighting, an accessible walkway (level with the field), a small seating area, and an enclosure for the portable toilet. A drawing, is now available at: www.arlingtonva.us/Departments/ParksRecreation/scripts/planning/ParksRecreationScriptsPlanningInDesign.aspx

Also in November, renovation work is expected to begin on Thomas Jefferson Middle School. Approved by the School Board on April 2, 2009, this project will update interior spaces, improve lighting, and reconfigure the parking lot to improve traffic flow. Signage and a new path at Second Street South are also included. Mechanical systems shared with the Community Center will also be replaced.

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Concrete Maintenance Program

By Juliet Hiznay

The county has informed the civic association that Arlington Heights and Penrose are the first two neighborhoods that will benefit from the High Density Concrete Maintenance Program. The project manager is Mr. Francis Soulamany, who can be reached at 703-228-7822. The purpose of the program is to make spot repairs to sidewalk curb and gutter, as needed. The contractor is expected to mark problem areas in white in high-density areas (mostly along the Pike). If there are areas of the neighborhood that are not marked, but you believe need to be fixed, please call Mr. Soulamany. Please note that the county also repairs sidewalks in residential areas when notified. If you would like to pay for your driveway apron to be replaced, that can be done as well. For additional information call 703-228-7822, or go to: www.arlingtonva.us/departments/environmentalservices/cpe/concrete/EnvironmentalServicesHdcr.aspx

PLEASE SUPPORT YOUR CIVIC ASSOCIATION - JOIN TODAY FOR 2009

SEND TO: AHCA, c/o Lisa Bongardt, 319 S. Irving St., Arlington, VA 22204 *note new address*

Name(s): _____

Address: _____, Arlington, VA 22204 Phone: _____

E-mail: _____

Enclosed is \$20.00 for a Family Membership

Enclosed is \$25.00 for a Business Membership

Optional: I would like to be involved with/help out with:

Becoming an officer or serving on a committee

Distributing the newsletter or other announcements

Contributing articles for the newsletter

Volunteer for Events (social events, kids programs, etc. . .)

There is a vacancy for the Social Committee Chair of the Civic Association. If you are interested in serving please contact Stacey Whyte at 703-271-2681 or kandswhyte@gmail.com.

Real Estate Market Trends

For the local Northern VA & DC area, buyer traffic has increased as affordability improves; with entry level housing seeing the majority of activity. April and May increased with the traffic index improving to 66 from 54 in March (readings greater than 50 suggest traffic above expectations). Extremely low interest rates and lower prices are driving sales. Buyers are making the best of home prices, and many affordable properties are receiving multiple offers, especially Bank Owned and Short Sale listings. **The \$8,000 first time homebuyer tax credit** is also spurring traffic levels, especially at the lower end. Lenders can now monetize the tax credit for use as additional down payment, or for other closing costs, which can help achieve a lower interest rate for the home buyer. Movement in the upper price ranges is still slower. Sellers are becoming increasingly realistic with their pricing, and are seeing price cuts to better match those of most recent sales in the last 90 days.

Inventory levels have stabilized and in some markets there is a shortage of good housing stock.

Appraisals continue to be an issue, with many coming in lower than expected which is derailing some transactions, or causing sellers to drop their prices to appraised value. While mortgage rates are at or below 5% for conforming, FHA and VA loans, new underwriting criteria and appraisal rules are creating huge challenges for all parties involved in residential housing sales.

As of May 1st, all lenders are operating on the new appraisal law passed by Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac. The **Home Valuation Code of Conduct (HVCC)** now requires that Appraisals must be ordered through an approved national appraisal company selected by each lender. The national appraisal companies choose a random appraiser within an area to conduct the appraisal. This applies to ALL conventional transactions.

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Meet the new Columbia Pike Children's Librarian.

Desiree Fairouz

Our Columbia Pike Library has a new Children's Librarian – Ms. Desiree Fairouz. She began late spring, after Ms. Wiggins retired. She brings enthusiasm and new ideas for our teenagers, children, and babies. This native Californian raised her family in Arlington, Texas, and now resides in Washington, D.C.

Ms. Fairouz brings five years of experience as a children's librarian from Fort Worth Public Libraries. However, this was not her first career. She worked fifteen years as a Station Sales Representative and in reservations for Mexicana Airlines at Los Angeles Airport, Dallas/Fort Worth Airport, and San Antonio Airport. Following these experiences, Ms. Fairouz taught six years as a bilingual educator. Now we are lucky enough to have her as our librarian.

Ms. Fairouz has many interests such as traveling to other countries, hiking and biking. She is an advocate for peace and human rights. She also enjoys reading near a body of water! When asked what her favorite books are she responded with:

*"My favorite juvenile genre is picture books especially ones about the natural world like Lynne Cherry's *The Kapok Tree* or Denise Fleming's *Where Once There Was a Wood*. My favorite adult fiction authors are Isabel Allende, Paulo Coelho, Robert Crais and Anne Lamott. I have recently begun enjoying memoirs and biographies like those written about the Obamas and Saira Shah's and others' memoirs about Afghanistan."*

Ms. Desiree has several goals for our library. *"I would love to see more teens taking advantage of the library. Our team here at Columbia Pike Branch Library works hard to make every patron feel at home. We would love to see this space become a hub of community activity, a place where adults and kids feel safe, comfortable and engaged in literature and library programs and resources."*

When asked about upcoming programs, Ms. Fairouz focused on the "Get Caught Reading Program" for the children. Children entering Kindergarten through 5th grade may sign up at the reference desk at the library. There are also programs available for the children that require a free ticket. One event left is on Aug. 5 - Bob Brown and his Second-Hand Stars Puppet Show

at 7:00. The tickets may be picked up at the reference desk starting the day before the scheduled program.

The Preschool Storytelling Program will continue starting the week of July 6. All of the Arlington Public Youth Services Librarians will take their storytimes on the road. Ms. Fairouz will be doing programs at Aurora Hills and one at Central Library. Check the schedule at the library for more details.

How does Ms. Desiree suggest we share books with our children?

"I like to ask children what they most recently enjoyed or got excited about. I often lead them to non-fiction if they are reluctant readers. As a former teacher, I also promote cross-curricular connections from non to fiction, pet care books with dog stories for example or books about the planets with Star Wars chapter books."

The library staff has been doing major Spring cleaning and decluttering the library. They have created special spaces for Seniors, Teens, and babies by adding a reading lounge next to the periodicals, opening up the teen area to be more inviting and adding a rocking chair so moms can rock and read to their babies. Ms. Fairouz hopes to enlist the help of a local artist to "jazz" up the teen area and also a muralist to paint the storytime room.

Ms. Fairouz has created a wish list of items for the Youth area of the library. If you want to donate any of them, please contact the library at 703-228-5710.

Items:

bean bags or other cool seating ie; a surfboard bench
hummingbird feeders
butterfly plants
area rug appropriate for teen space
latino decor (to highlight the Spanish collection) like pinatas, papel picado, etc.
someone to decorate our rocking chair by painting whimsical designs on it

Please stop by and welcome our new neighbor and say hi to our Columbia Pike veteran librarians.

Interviewed by Dora Sue Black

How to Put Together a Block Party

By Santya Lanman

With summer upon us, it's time to venture out and reconnect with neighbors after along winter "hibernation". There's no better way to do this than with a block party. With a little planning and group effort, it can be a wonderful way to catch up with old neighbors as well as greet new neighbors. Here are some tips on how to get started:

1. Socialize the idea
 - Choose a date convenient for most neighbors that doesn't conflict with other local events.
 - The homes that are "blocked" off during the party will need to consent to the street closure. This should be done in advance of obtaining the County permit. It's best to choose a stretch of the street that will allow easy detour. Neighbors who need to use their cars during the party should park outside of the barricade area before the party begins.
 - Once the party is a go, distribute a flyer or send an Evite to the neighbors two weeks before the party. Make sure all neighbors affected by the street closure are reminded of the event.
2. Get a permit.
 - A permit is required to close your street to traffic. You can find a block party permit guide on the Parks and Recreation Department website at <http://www.arlingtonva.us/departments/EnvironmentalServices/dot/traffic/parking/EnvironmentalServicesHb2.aspx> or call them at 703-228-3629. There is a \$34.00 fee for the permit plus an additional fee for barricades.
3. About those barricades...
 - Depending upon the width of your street, the barricades that the County provides may or may not be enough to deter cars from passing through. One year, while we had three barricades at each end of the street and signs closing off the street, a driver squeezed through the barricades and proceeded to drive through our party! We now use garbage cans to supplement the barricades.
4. Decide how to handle food.
 - Food is always a central part of any party. On my street, we set up two grills and ask three families to be the hosts for the year. Each of the host families contributes money to purchase hamburgers and hot dogs with fixings, and non-alcoholic drinks. Non-host families are asked to bring a side dish or dessert to share. Alcohol is bring-your-own but is supposed to be kept out of the street. However you decide to handle food, it's a good idea to put an RSVP request on the flyer to get an idea of the turn-out.
5. What about the kids?
 - Consider creating a specific zone for riding wheeled toys and also make rules about the speed. Preteens on bikes can become big hazards for toddlers on tricycles.
 - The T.E.A.M office of Parks and Rec. rents out moon bounces and other equipment that can be fun additions to the party. Visit them at <http://www.arlingtonva.us/Departments/ParksRecreation/teens/ParksRecreationTEAM.asp> or call 703-228-1805 to see what is available.

Community Calendar

Sundays - 9:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. - Columbia Pike Farmer's Market at Pike Park (Walter Reed & Columbia Pike)

Sunday, July 26 @ 11:00 a.m.-1:00 p.m. AHCA "Fightin' Pineapples" vs. Penrose Softball Game - Patrick Henry Elementary School's field

Tuesday, July 28, 2009 @ 7:00 p.m. - AHCA Summer Meeting - Patrick Henry Elementary School's library

Wed., August 5 @ 7:00 p.m. Public Library Program for Rising Kindergarten through 5th graders - Bob Brown and his Second-Hand Puppet Show (Free Tickets available starting Aug. 4)

Wed.-Sun., August 19-23 - Arlington County Fair - Thomas Jefferson Community Center

Tuesday, October 20, 2009 @ 7:00 p.m. - AHCA Fall Meeting at Patrick Henry Elementary School's library

Saturday, October 31 Annual Halloween Parade - Details TBA.

Neighborhood Conservation Update

By Juliet Hiznay

Since our Neighborhood Conservation Plan was updated and adopted by the County Board in February of 2008, Arlington Heights has had two projects funded and a third project is likely to be funded this fall. The **Garfield Street** project (0-100 block) is under way. A water main replacement has been completed. The project was slowed when it was discovered that Washington Gas service lines to homes on the street were installed too close to the surface. A preconstruction meeting was held on June 25, and construction is expected in July. The **Fenwick Street** project (1-100 block) is at 90% design. The construction phase for Fenwick will begin after all design work is complete, likely within the next year.

Both Garfield and Fenwick require full street reconstruction (resurfacing and paving) with catch basin installation. The same level of work is also expected for the **Irving Street /Arlington Boulevard** project. (Phase 1, 0-100 blocks). This project is expected to pass petition this summer, and qualify for funding in December 2009 with a design that will widen the street to 28.5 feet. A prior design for this project failed petition this past attempt spring, mostly due to the county's insistence on imposing street width of 31 feet.

Despite policies in place to prevent the widening of neighborhood streets, which generally increases speeds, traffic-engineering staff with the county sought to widen Irving to such an extent that parking spaces would have been eliminated. There was opposition to this design, resulting in the project receiving just 55% approval (falling just short of the 60% required). It should be noted that lack of a response counts as a "no" vote. Given the importance of the street and its sad condition today, it was gratifying that county staff were able to redesign the street plan in a way that will preserve parking on the street. Due to the need to widen the street to accommodate the large volume of cars (1500+ per day), the sidewalk on the west side will be removed so utility poles can be relocated out of the roadway. A new design has been presented to the homeowners, and it is expected that the project will pass final petition and will be recommended for funding by the Neighborhood Conservation Committee in December 2009. Due to the need to move utility poles, the Irving Street/Arlington Boulevard (Phase 1) improvement is likely to be completed sometime in 2011 or 2012.



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