

ALCOVA HEIGHTS

The Newsletter of the Alcova Heights Neighborhood, Arlington, Virginia

April 2013



IN THIS ISSUE

Sara's Column

Spotlight on a Neighbor:
Mary Ann Orecchio

Announcements & Milestones

Gardening: Mulch Volcanoes

"Eye on Alcova Heights" photo

NEXT MEETING

Alcova Heights Citizens Association Meeting

Date: Thursday, April 18, 2013

Time: 7:00 p.m.

Location: Baptist Church,
8th and Monroe

Program:

- 1) Spring gardening presentation by Janet Draper, Alcova Heights resident and Smithsonian horticulturist
- 2) Conservation Plan update

A Chance to Serve

by Sara Uzel, AHCA President

Dear neighbors,

In the 20 years that my family has lived in Alcova Heights, I've learned that the people who call this neighborhood home are bright, driven, talented folks who have great ideas and genuinely want to help out. But sometimes the demands of work and family make adding a civic responsibility a daunting prospect.

When I took over as AHCA president at the beginning of this year, I said my number-one priority would be to do whatever it took to involve more of our neighbors in the work of the association. Over the years, I've seen civic engagement here surge and subside, and I know that the times when participation has been high are the most dynamic, exciting, and fun. My goal is to bring enough people into the mix to have strong engagement that lasts.

With that in mind, I've begun looking at the various opportunities within the association to see how they can be divided or parceled out to allow people to participate at a level that fits their busy lives. At the end of this article is a list of available tasks. Please look it over and consider taking on one of the association duties.

I don't want to stress anyone out. I don't want to pressure anyone who simply doesn't have time to spare. But if you're someone who feels they have a contribution to make, but you've been holding back because of anxiety about whether you can make the time commitment, now is your chance to get involved without fear of biting off more than you can chew. Please check out the list and see if there is a fit for your schedule and skills. Talk to a neighbor about splitting a responsibility. Or propose a new event or duty that doesn't yet exist! No matter how much time you have to spare, there is a place for you in the AHCA.

Call me or email me if you have questions. Or talk to any of the officers or other volunteers who've worked with the AHCA. We'll give you honest answers about how our involvement has impacted our lives. By getting involved, you'll do good work that helps the community and the county as a whole; you'll get

cont'd. on page 2

Alcova Heights Spring Community Yard Sale Coming Up!

Saturday, May 11
8 a.m. to Noon
Throughout Alcova Heights
For more info. see page 5



cont'd. from page 1

to know neighbors you may not have even known you had; you'll talk to county officials and county-wide civic association leaders; but most importantly you'll be involved in the decisions that shape our neighborhood and make it the special place that it is.

There are names, emails, and phone numbers at the back of this newsletter for anyone who would like to reach out with questions. We're all more than willing to share our experiences.

And finally, whether you're able to spare the time to volunteer or not, please pay your neighborhood dues. It's only \$10, but these funds go to financing all the great events and programs the association sponsors. There is a form in this newsletter with details about how to make your payment.

Call me or email me if you have questions. (703-628-2369; suzel@techtrendsgroup.com)

Sara

ALCOVA HEIGHTS VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

Duty	Frequency	Description	Responsibilities
Neighborhood Conservation Advisory Committee	Monthly	County-wide committee meets monthly to discuss citizen-initiated public improvements.	Attend meetings in the evenings and report back to neighborhood via listserv
Park Clean-Up	One day in April or May	Annual event where volunteers pick up trash and clear invasive plant species from Alcovia Park.	Coordinate with county parks and rec and promote the event within the community.
Block Party	July/August	Community Block Party with food, live music, kids games, face painting, etc.	Assist chairperson with logistics, preparations, and execution.
Halloween Parade	Last Saturday in October	Alcovia Heights has had a Halloween parade since at least 1995. It starts at Monroe and ends at the park with lots of goodies and fun.	Permits and coordinating with police and fire department. Arranging snacks, candy, prizes.
Newsletter/AHCA Blog Site	Year-round	Our bi-monthly neighborhood newsletter and website.	Contribute writing, photography, web updates, and more. We need an announcements and milestones editor, columnists, restaurant reviewers, etc.
PA System Pick-up/Drop-off	Bi-monthly	CPRO allows us to use their PA system for our meetings, but we need to pick it up between 4 and 6 the night of meetings and drop it off the following morning.	Go to CPRO office on Columbia Pike near CVS on meeting nights and afterwards.
Proofreader	As needed	AHCA creates many documents and communications that need to be looked over and cleaned up.	Help edit and clean up various documents and communications from the AHCA.
Translator	As needed	Some AHCA documents need to be translated into Spanish and other languages.	Help translate various documents and communications from the AHCA into Spanish (and possibly other languages.)
Sign Installer/Collector	Year-round	Street signs to announce neighborhood events.	Event signs for AHCA meetings, the Halloween Parade and the Block Party put up two weeks before event and removed afterward.
Sign Refurbishment	As needed	Street signs to announce neighborhood events are in need of repair or replacement.	Repaint or remanufacture neighborhood events signs.
Neighborhood Yard Sale	Once per year	An AHCA-coordinated neighborhood yard sale, usually in late-spring.	Coordinate with neighbors on date of the sale, and announce event via advertising, listserv, street signage.
Caroling in the Park	Mid-December	An annual holiday caroling party for neighbors.	Coordinate date for caroling, announce date to community, coordinate bonfire permit for Alcovia Park, refreshments.
Newsletter Distribution: Special Assignment	As needed	Offering the newsletter in electronic-only format has created challenges for keeping track of subscriber preferences and communicating those preferences to hardcopy distributors.	Devise system to keep track of residents who have opted for electronic delivery of the newsletter and communicate to newsletter distributors.

Spotlight on a Neighbor: Neighborhood Special Events Owe Much to the Work of Mary Ann Orecchio

by Karen Osterloh



If you've attended an Alcova Heights Summer Block Party, a civic association meeting, or pretty much any other AHCA event over the past few years, there's a good chance that long-time resident Mary Ann Orecchio had something to do with planning the occasion or helping to make it a success.

"Mary Ann will always take on projects and is very conscientious," notes Alcova Heights resident and former AHCA President Marie Van Ness. "I always knew she would get a job done."

Mary Ann has a long history of service to AHCA, serving as board secretary from 2008 through 2010 and coordinator of several special events over the years. She led the organization of the 2010 summer block party on South 9th Street, which gave her the experience she'd need while planning the 2012 event on South Lincoln, particularly when Mother Nature threw a wrench in the works. She'd gotten everything in order in the days leading up to that event, but on the night before the party, a destructive derecho storm hammered the region, leaving Alcova Heights without power during one of the summer's hottest stretches. The block party could easily have been a dud or even cancelled, but Mary Ann and her crew of volunteers saved the day. They notified neighbors that the party was on; broke out the burgers and beverages; made sure that the band and face painters were available; and hooked up several water hoses to cool down the impressive (and impressed) crowd. The only casualty was the moon bounce, which was sidelined because the electric pump had no power.

A Welcome Bouquet

Mary Ann moved to Alcova Heights in 1992 from nearby Rosslyn, where she'd lived for more than 24 years. After scouring Northern Virginia for an affordable single-family home, the house on the corner of 9th and Monroe captured her heart. On move-in day, she and her significant

other, Dan Rice, knew that they'd found the right place when neighbor Anna Lee Funkhouser greeted them with "Welcome to Alcova Heights" flowers and other neighbors stopped by to help out with moving day tasks.

"Alcova Heights is a great neighborhood," she says. "People are so friendly, and there is always someone around to lend a helping hand."

West Virginia Native

Mary Ann grew up in Weirton, West Virginia, a small town in the state's northern panhandle near Wheeling. After high school, she left Weirton to attend Weaver Airline School in Kansas City, Missouri. Following graduation, she was recruited by the FBI and moved to Washington, D.C. She later worked for the World Bank, the Marriott Hotel chain, a law firm, the National Foreign Affairs Training Academy, and various temp agencies.

She earned an associate's degree in hotel restaurant management from Northern Virginia Community College in 1984, which helped her get the job at Marriott Hotels, where she booked parties and events. She credits her time at Marriott with making her a more gregarious person. "People who know me now would be surprised to learn that I used to be extremely shy," she notes.

Mary Ann says she generally likes the changes that have occurred in and around Alcova Heights since she moved here 21 years ago. She particularly enjoys all the new restaurants that have opened along Columbia Pike, but worries a bit that new development on the already busy corridor may bring unwanted congestion to our neighborhood.

"This neighborhood is such a wonderful place," she says. "I'd hate for anything to happen that would hurt our quality of life here."

Retired since 2008, Mary Ann still keeps a full schedule. In addition to her AHCA activities, she volunteers at her church, Our Lady Queen of Peace, and at the Dominican Retreat House in McLean. She also gardens, cooks, walks daily, does yoga, and is active with the Arlington County 55+ Program.

Announcements and Milestones

Barcroft Principal To Retire



Miriam Hughey-Guy, the beloved principal of Barcroft Elementary School, has announced that she will retire at the end of the 2012-2013 school year after a 20-year career in Arlington education.

"It has been a privilege, honor, and pleasure to have served your children, the families, and the community over the past 20 years," she wrote in a letter to parents. "My years of working at Barcroft have been the best part of my working life."

Mrs. Hughey-Guy's last day will be September 1, 2013.

8th Street Sidewalk Nearly Completed

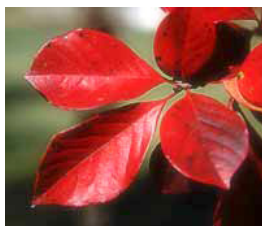
by Suzanne Manlove

The 8th Street sidewalks project is nearing completion, with the utility company finishing up work on pole relocations and power line transfers.

Jill Yutan, landscape architect for the Neighborhood Conservation Program, has ordered the installation of 24 redbud trees under the power lines on the north side of 8th Street S. and seven blackgum trees on the south side of the street. She has mailed out plans to all property owners and has received comments from a few folks.

Work on the bioretention basin/sidewalk on the easterly corner of the project (corner of S. 8th and Monroe) will also be completed in the spring. This will be followed by street paving work and reconstruction of the two existing speed humps (one will be relocated closer to S. Oakland St.), signage installation and striping work later in the spring/early summer.

If you have any questions, feel free to contact Sena Wijesinha, the county's Capital Projects Coordinator, at 703-228-7933.



The red leaves of a blackgum tree in fall.



Pink flowers appear on Redbud trees in the spring.

Barcroft Elementary School News

On April 2, U.S. Congressman Jim Moran toured Barcroft Elementary to mark the school's observance of Autism Acceptance Month. See photo (APS).

On April 3, parents met with the Arlington schools superintendent to discuss the selection process for a new Barcroft principal following the announcement by Principal Miriam Hughey-Guy that she will retire at the end of the school year. Community members may provide feedback at the school's website: www.apsva.us/site/default.aspx?domainid=388.

"Like" the Barcroft Facebook page (<https://www.facebook.com/BarcroftElementary>) or visit the school's calendar page (<http://www.apsva.us/Page/13363>) to keep up with Barcroft happenings.

Births

Miriam Green Kihara was born on March 2 to Molly Ball and David Kihara of South Quincy Street.

Joe and Anissa Brennan of South 6th Street welcomed their son, *Jack Harris Brennan*, on January 9.

Peter Clay "Pete" Barker, son of Jon and Jessica Barker (South 7th Street), was born November 25, 2012.

Deaths

Matt Hilburn of 1st Road South passed away on July 1 after a long battle with cancer. He is survived by his wife, Michelle Weiss Hilburn.

ROOFING • SIDING • GUTTERS

Repairs or Replacement
Gutter Cleaning, Roof Certifications for
Buyers and Sellers

Reasonable Rates • Quick Response

Call Birk Meadows

703-876-4808

Meadows Roof Inspection Services

PIANO ON THE RUN



*For people on the run . . .
living near Four Mile Run.*

Yes! We teach piano in your home.

If you've ever dreamed of playing piano - now is the time - in the comfort of your own home.

Accepting children and adults.

Keyboard or piano needed for practice.

Register quarterly and
receive one free lesson.

(703) 400-1814

PianoOnTheRun.com

pianoontherun@gmail.com

Alcova Heights Spring Community Yard Sale

What: Community Yard Sale

When: Saturday, May 11

Time: 8 a.m. to Noon

Where: Throughout Alcova Heights

Contact: Kristina, kvd9802@yahoo.com

As any avid yard-saler knows, community-organized sales always attract more shoppers. The more houses that participate, the better. So get your stash together and let your spring cleaning help pay for a great Mother's Day treat. Kids lemonade and cookie stands throughout the neighborhood are also welcome.

The neighborhood association will provide funding to advertise and promote the sale to the public. If you plan to participate or have any questions/suggestions, please contact Kristina (3617 S. 6th St.) at kvd9802@yahoo.com.

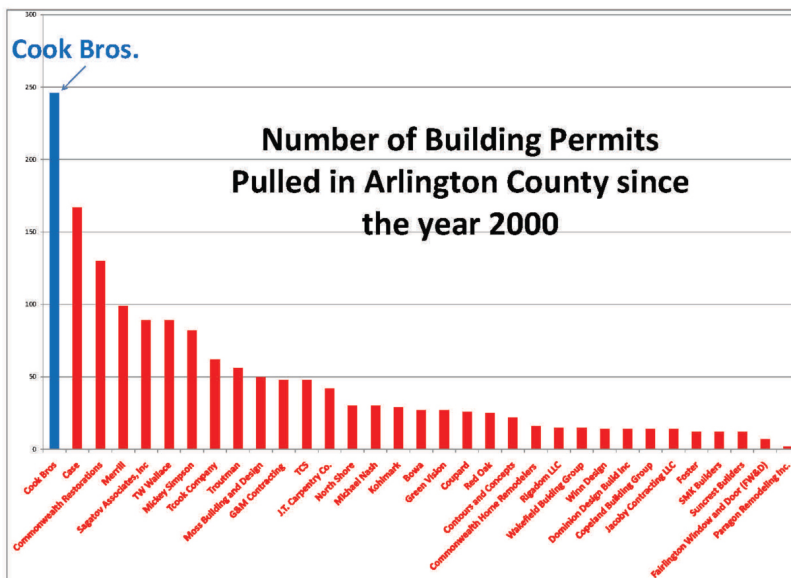
In addition, if you have kids who would like to help by making posters to promote the sale, please let me know! We will collect them the week of April 29.

You Don't Have to Interview the #1 Remodeler in Arlington... But...

Why Wouldn't You?

For a larger Graph image
and more information
about the Graph, visit our
website at

www.CookBros.org/AlcovaGraph



Under the Volcanoes: How Much Mulch is Too Much?

by Janet Draper, Master Gardener

Every year about this time, I am distressed to see what I call “mulch volcanoes” erupting all around our region.

What is a mulch volcano? It happens when a well-meaning homeowner piles mulch onto the trunk of a tree in excess of 2 to 3 inches. Any more than 3 inches is detrimental to the plant, and mulch should never be applied so that it is touching the bark of a tree or shrub.

The trend for putting a ring of mulch around the base of a tree started out innocently enough: It was done to avoid damage to the trunk by lawnmowers or weed-whackers by providing a buffer zone. Somehow that light mulch ring has reached monumental heights, with new layers being applied annually. We are killing our trees by doing this!

Why is this bad for trees? There are many reasons, but the biggies include:

1. Mulch piled against the bark holds moisture in, which rots away the bark (the tree’s natural defense layer), allowing easy access to various pathogens and insects.
2. When piled too deeply, the mulch forms an impermeable surface, allowing water to run off, depriving the tree of moisture.
3. Tree roots need oxygen, and when mulch is piled too deeply, the roots suffocate. They may also grow upwards into the mulch instead of going down into the soil.

So please, go easy on the mulch. And if you see someone piling it on, stop and educate them about how much mulch is too much mulch.

Hope to see everyone at the AHCA meeting on April 18 (7 p.m., Baptist Church), where I’ll give a short presentation on spring gardening and take questions from the audience.

Mulch Better

- Never allow mulch to be up against the trunk.
- Don’t go more than 2 to 3 inches deep.
- Rake off the old mulch before you apply new.
- Mulch that is any color other than brown has probably been dyed and is not good for plants.

Mulch Volcano - BAD

Proper Mulching



Image from mtcandl.com

Other Options

Mulching around a newly planted tree is helpful to hold in a little moisture, but it is not absolutely necessary.

The only reason to mulch around a mature tree is to alleviate mechanical damage to the trunk or surface roots, but another solution would be to create a perennial planting area under the tree to remove the mower from the equation. A light layer of leaf mold (again, not too deep) and careful “plugging in” of young plants is the best way to avoid damaging the tree roots.

A couple potential groundcovers for under the shade of a mature tree include:

Euphorbia Robbiae (Robb’s Spurge) - This vigorous evergreen groundcover, which spreads both by runner and self-sowing, will rapidly fill any space that it is given.

Asarum splendens - This Japanese evergreen and ginger relative with mottled, heart-shaped leaves can be slow to get going, but once established, makes a tight, 5- to 6-inch-thick groundcover.

Sarcococca hookeriana humilis (Sweet Box) - This is a short (1 to 2 inches) suckering evergreen shrub with deliciously fragrant tiny flowers.

Or do a mixed planting that includes winter-blooming hellebores, hostas, and carex.

The possibilities could fill a volcano!

Eye on Alcova Heights



"Tommy" crocuses planted in honor of long-time Alcova House residents Alice and Dan Nicolson give early spring color to the 7th and Oakland traffic circle.



PLEASE SUPPORT YOUR CIVIC ASSOCIATION

AHCA dues are \$10 per household. Please send your dues to: AHCA, c/o Mark Cole, Treasurer, 815 S. Oakland St., Arlington, Va. 22204

Name _____

Address _____

Phone _____

E-mail _____

How is the Market? Price growth continues throughout the Washington DC Metro Region, driven by the low inventory of homes for sale. The housing supply is also pushing up the average sale-to-list price ratio, which is now at its highest level since the summer of 2006. While active listings remain at historic lows, new listings are beginning to come on the market to meet some of the demand. February's new listings were up over 13% compared to January although down 5.3% from February 2012. The inventory shortage continues to impact all property segments, with active listings down 40% relative to last year. Townhomes have the lowest supply, and account for only 16.5% of all listings in the metro area.

The jump in new listings could be an early indication of a changing inventory pattern, and seller response to the ripe market. Overall inventory remains very low, and continues to drive down the median days on market relative to last year, which at 24 days is 29 days lower than February 2012..

February 2013 was the 5th consecutive month of double-digit price growth for the

the DC Metro region. Median prices are 11.7 % higher than this time last year. Single-family detached homes led all property segments in median price growth, up 19.5 % from February 2012 and the median sale price for condos rose 12.8 %.

Sprucing up your home prior to putting it on the market is a wise investment although what does "sprucing up" entail for the current real estate environment? Unless you understand buyer's requirements today, your home could possibly for less than its potential. There are distinct differences between how you live in a home and how it must be prepared for sale. *Before you place your home on the market* I can help you be as ready as possible. **Contact me for a Room By Room Review** and I can share lots of quick and easy tips to make your house show like a model home. Additionally, I'll be glad to show you what to do (and more importantly what NOT to do) to increase the chance for obtaining a maximum price and a quicker sale. Getting the best return on your investment is something I can help you with!



Casey O'Neal
Associate Broker
703-217-9090

casey@caseyoneal.com
RE/MAX Allegiance
www.caseyoneal.com

**FREE Notary
Service for Alcova
Heights Residents!**

**Do You want a quick
automated estimate of
your home's value?**

Visit
www.NovaHomeValue.com
or **contact me** for a **Free
no obligation analysis!**

Alcova Heights Citizens Association

President: Sara Uzel
suzel@techtrendsgroup.com
703-628-2369

Vice President: Kelly Holly
kellyholly@yahoo.com

Treasurer: Mark Cole
mcole@usatoday.com

Secretary:
At-Large Seats

Bill Rapp (2-yr. term):
billrapp@mac.com
David Saltiel (2-yr. term):
dhsaltiel@gmail.com
Amber Baum (1-yr. term):
amber.baum@gmail.com
T.J. Ball (1-yr. term):
vtball007@hotmail.com

ACCP Representatives

Marie Van Ness: mjevness@aol.com
Karl Veit: karlveit@verizon.net
Mitzi Williams: mwilliams@sysplan.com

NCAC Representative:
Cliff Anckaitis
anckaitisc@comcast.net

Newsletter Editor: Scot Hoffman
scotrhoff@verizon.net
703-979-1756

Newsletter Layout: Susi Lill
susilill@gmail.com

Circulation: Rhea Dola
sdola@msn.com

Webmaster: Koset Surakomol
koset@surakomol.com

Listserv Manager: Mike Rhode
mrhode@gmail.com

Traffic: Mike Kigin
mikekigin@gmail.com
703-920-4899

Go Digital!

You can opt to get this newsletter in digital-only format by contacting Scot Hoffman at scotrhoff@verizon.net. Include your name and address.

Newsletter PDFs will be posted to the Alcova Heights blog site, <http://alcovaheights.com>. You can also visit the site to see archives of previous newsletters, and if you fill out the short registration form, which is linked to on the About page, you can leave comments, post photos, share videos, etc.



(703) 525- 7973
www.allplumbing.com

- ☒ Serving All Northern VA 24/7
- ☒ 100% Satisfaction Guaranteed
- ☒ Residential & Commercial Work
- ☒ Master Licensed, Bonded & Insured
- ☒ Guaranteed Service Within 24 Hours
- ☒ Free Phone Estimates & Advice
- ☒ Calls Always Answered By A Live

Representative

See our reviews on
Angie's list.



\$50 OFF
WATER HEATER INSTALLATION

\$100 OFF
SEWER OR WATER MAIN DRAIN
INSTALLATION OR
REPLACEMENT

20% OFF
ANY SERVICE FOR NEW
CLIENTS

(Offers cannot be combined. Exp. 12/ 2013)



921 N. JACKSON ST. ARLINGTON, VA 22201

Celebrating Our 43rd Anniversary