

[AuroraHighlands.org](http://AuroraHighlands.org)

**Inside This Issue:**

- ◆ PenPlace Proposal
- ◆ President's Corner
- ◆ School News
- ◆ "Why Do We Call It...?"
- ◆ Activities and Events
- ◆ Edgar Allan Poe night
- ◆ Energy Efficient Home
- ◆ How to Join AHCA
- ◆ Tree Talk Column

If you live in the Aurora Highlands area, you are invited and encouraged to come to our monthly meetings where we meet neighbors, discuss topics of interest and share information. All are welcome to attend. Come and meet your neighbors at the Aurora Hills Community Center at 735 18th Street South. Childcare will be provided.

OUR UPCOMING MONTHLY MEETING:  
**Wednesday, January 12, 2011 at 7:00 p.m.**  
AURORA HILLS COMMUNITY CENTER

Agenda

- 6:30** Social
- 7:00** AHCA Business Meeting
- 7:30** Four Mile Run Presentation by Neal Sigmon
- 8:00** Landscaping at Water Pollution Control Plant Update

**Proposed New Development for Pentagon City Tract: PenPlace**

by Nancy Swain of Arlington Ridge Civic Association and Brent Spence of Aurora Highlands Civic Association

Recently a proposal was submitted by Vornado Corporation to Arlington County to develop a parcel in Pentagon City. The proposal is a Phased Development Site Plan Amendment (PDSP) to the long existing Pentagon City PDSP. The area is generally bounded by Army-Navy Drive, Eads and Fern, and 12th Street extended but does not include the Marriott Residences.

The proposal includes two commercial office buildings, two DoD office buildings and a hotel. The developer is also considering some retail/

commercial along 12th Street. The site area is 12.21 acres; the office buildings would take up about 10.56 acres and hotel 1.64 acres. For those familiar with FAR's (floor area ratios), they would be 3.93. Heights would range from 139' to 291' excluding penthouses. To consider the height in stories, two office buildings would range from 18-22 stories, 1 would be 18, and the remaining office building and the hotel would be 12 stories. The complex would include 2,285 parking places.

The Pentagon City tract has an important history that relates to the site. The entire 116 acre tract includes the area between Army-Navy Drive,

Joyce, part of Virginia Highlands Park, the 18th Street curvature, and Eads St. The area includes Southampton Town Houses, the senior citizen apartment building and nursing home. The area does not include Pentagon Center and the Costco site. In 1976 the site was re-zoned to a coordinated mixed-use development, C-0 2.5 with a PDSP. The community objected to the increase in density and took the matter to court. The judge did not rule on the merits of the citizens' claims regarding environmental impacts, but rather on the legislative function. This law suit put the community deeply in debt and resulted in the bingo games that were run for years to raise money.

The original PDSP included a carefully calculated mix of commercial and residential and this mix has been

—Continued on Page 5—

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## President's Corner

by Michael Dowell

Happy New Year Neighbors! We look forward to a good year in our community. Here are some news items and several events of interest coming up this month.

**Aurora Hills Facility Master Plan:** Following up on a discussion during Candidate's Night in October, County Board Chairman Chris Zimmerman has engaged the county staff with considering a master plan for the Aurora Hills Facility, a multi-use building which has served our community for decades and but is getting a little long in tooth. An initial meeting with the county will be held on January 10, to exchange ideas.

Alice's list-serv reported an attempted mugging last month, during which one of our neighbors ran into the 7-11 at the corner of Eads and 23<sup>rd</sup> Street and asked to use their phone to call the police. The 7-11 employees refused to allow him to use their telephone and the mugging suspects escaped. We have communicated our concerns about this to the 7-11 manager and the 7-11 corporate offices in Dallas, Texas,

who are investigating the matter. I will update you on their response next month.

The Community Center Winter Activities will continue this month as the Odyssey of the Mind team gets into high gear with their mouse mobile design. Join us for the Edgar Allan Poe birthday celebration on January 22, and in February we'll start up the Family Fridays series, to take us into the spring.

The Crystal City Citizens Review Council (C3RC) Charter has been approved by the county board. The nineteen person council will have seven seats for community representatives: two each from ARCA and AHCA and three from Crystal City. AHCA will submit several nominations to the county board by January 15 for their review and selection at the next board meeting. In the coming year, the C3RC will be establishing and benchmarking "measures of progress" for the area that includes Crystal City and our communities. These metrics, such as traffic congestion, will be assessed every two years for the next several decades

to ensure that our unique community remains a friendly front-porch neighborhood with extraordinary access to the surrounding city. If you are interested in being a representative or providing some focused support on a particular issue, please contact me ([ahcapresident@gmail.com](mailto:ahcapresident@gmail.com)).

In the meantime, if you have concerns about quality of life in our neighborhood, think about how you would characterize your concern as something measureable. Send in your thoughts and ideas and we'll put them in next month's newsletter – in addition to traffic, folks have expressed interest in tree canopy coverage, air quality, and ambient noise levels, so be creative! Myself, I've contacted the International Dark Sky Association to understand how modern lighting controls can help preserve or even restore some of our night sky. On a clear night, Arlingtonians are lucky to see only about 35 of the 6000 stars that are visible out in the countryside – let's not lose any more!

## December 2010 AHCA Meeting Highlights

The meeting took place on December 8, 2010 in the Aurora Hills Community Center. Complete minutes of the meeting are available on the AHCA website, [AuroraHighlands.org](http://AuroraHighlands.org)

**Library Reference Material** Documents related to the community will be stored in "reference materials" near ESL materials.

**Membership** Currently there are 58 paid memberships (down from 190 last year).

**Newsletter Editor** Cory asked for a volunteer to manage the distribution of the newsletter. Mike Shumway volunteered to take on the job. Thanks Mikel!

**1<sup>st</sup> VP Report** Nick Giacobbe reported that it is county budget season. Nick reported from the county budget meeting and that although the situation is

not as dire as last year, the County is still looking for ways to save money, cutting about 30 million dollars across the board. The libraries are probably not going to be on the chopping block although they are not in line to have hours restored. There was discussion about ways to be more efficient.

**Water Pollution Control Plant** – Nick reports that the landscape plan did not get approved in time for the fall planting season. The county has to put 99 more trees on the property to be in line with the Chesapeake Bay requirements. It looks like this will happen in the Spring. We will likely get a brief on the new plan at our January AHCA meeting.

Member Miriam Gennari proposed writing a letter to the county to propose adding solar panels to the new community center roof. The idea is to sell it

as an investment in generating our own energy or getting an electric car power center at the library. Group discussion on the topic continued: given the county's commitment for sustainability, energy sustainability, we should take advantage of some of the programs and alternative energies such as solar and geothermal.

A motion was made and seconded to write a letter of inquiry to the County Board and Manager about the Energy Savings Performance Contracts being explored and confirming our support for such an effort at AHCA. Letter will ask County to consider energy options in the refurbishing of the community center.

Committee reports:

**Sidewalks (Bruce Cameron):** Ives St. final design is done but there needs to be one more round with the neighbor-

—Continued on Page 4—

## Schools' News

News about our neighborhood schools  
Compiled by Kathie Laird

**5 Feb., Saturday** - The **Saturday String Fling** (formerly known as the Pyramid Orchestra Concert) will take place at 12:00 p.m. in the Wakefield High School auditorium. All schools--elementary through high school in South Arlington will participate. The concert is free and open to the public.

### Oakridge Tutors - Volunteers Needed

Tutoring is a great opportunity for members of the community to support our fantastic neighborhood elementary school! Anyone would like to join the Oakridge Tutors, please e-mail Casey Dolan, the school-based tutor coordinator ([Casey\\_Dolan@apsva.us](mailto:Casey_Dolan@apsva.us)), or ARCA resident, Tom Martin, at [tom\\_martin542@hotmail.com](mailto:tom_martin542@hotmail.com). For more information, see the article in the Arlington Connection (with photos of 2 ARCA tutors): <http://connectionarchives.com/PDF/2010/121510/Arlington.pdf>

### Gunston Middle School

**18 Jan., 6 p.m.** - Judge Glenda Hatchett, a children's advocate, will launch her Parent Power Now movement at Gunston. Judge Hatchett will speak on children and positive social media. See [parentpowernow.com](http://parentpowernow.com)

Kudos to Gunston Middle School students who have garnered the following awards: 10 students selected for honors band and honors orchestra; 18 eighth graders won a competition to write a novel in a month; and Scholastic Art Competition awards (8 gold keys, a silver key, and 3 honorable mentions). The gold key and silver key winners' work will be displayed at the Arlington Central Library. Gold key projects will go on to the national competition in New York.

Gunston TV has been chosen as a finalist in the Signature Theater Silent Film Contest. The student film, "True Love at Last," was selected as one of 5 finalists competing against adult film makers! Check out the film on the Network 21 blog:

<http://gunstontv.blogspot.com/?1563Nav=|&NodeID=4121>

Congratulations and best wishes to Mr. Costner & Gunston's 8th grade participants!

### Wakefield High School

Wakefield is proud to announce that Jose Flores Valverde and Celena Madlansacay have been awarded full-tuition, four-year Posse Scholarships. Jose will attend Bucknell University and Celena will attend Pepperdine University.

## Why do we call it...?

The Arlington Historical Society has just published the fourth edition of the popular book, "Why Do We Call It . . . ?

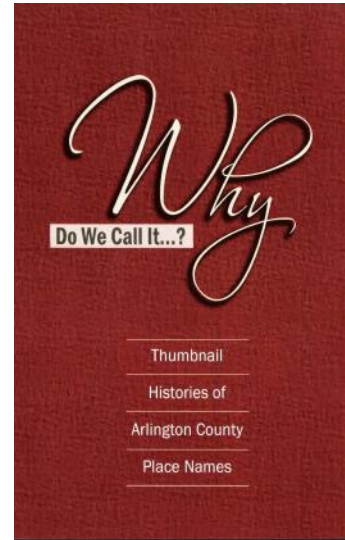
Thumbnail Histories of Arlington County Place Names" which was begun by Norman Novack back in 1960. The latest edition was edited and expanded by our neighbor Alice Andors, with assistance from Julie Katz, and

printed at the SOC Enterprises. Available for sale for \$9.95 at the Arlington His-

torical Society at Hume School, the book is a great way to learn more about the history of our county. Ever

wonder why part of our community was named Aurora Hills or who is remembered with the name of Roach's Run Bird Sanctuary (and his connection to our neighborhood)? Stop by the Museum Shop at Hume School any

Saturday or Sunday from 1:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m. and pick up a copy.



You can order your own Keep Kids Alive yard sign for \$15 plus shipping and handling from <http://www.keepkidsalivedrive25.org/index.html>

## Forming a Local Moms Group

Calling all moms in the ARCA (Arlington Ridge) and AHCA (Aurora Hills) neighborhoods of south Arlington. After moving into the area, I've been unable to find a local moms group. I heard there were once some small ones based on the grade or age of kids or specific neighborhood streets and there were some babysitting co-ops as well. But I'm looking for a group to get to know more moms in the area beyond my school PTA meetings.

In searching for one, I was encouraged to start one. I finally decided..... why not? So, please join me. This will be a group for all moms in the area no matter the grade or age of your child(ren) or if you are a working or stay-at-home mom. The success of the group will depend on the activity level and expectations of each person.

If you are also interested in joining a group in the area, please join me at my home on Friday, February 11, at 6:30 PM. Bring a snack or beverage to share if you wish and we'll sit down and discuss how we'd like the group to work. Please email me for my address if you plan to come. Email if you have any questions or want to give input but just can't make this first meeting. My email is [regi-nameeks@gmail.com](mailto:regi-nameeks@gmail.com). I look forward to meeting you! - Regina :)

## December Meeting Highlights

—Continued from Page 2—

hood and it will be 8-18 months until the physical build-out happens.

Neighborhood Conservation (Chris Mann): Fall funding just released. Our Eads St project is low on the list. There will be 3-4 semi-annual funding rounds until we are top of the list.

CCBID (Cheryl) - The art walls are continuing. Rob Mandle announced that Art Jams (ticketed event) on Southern end of CC – Kids Jams did artwork and Café Pizzaiolo will do an art show in January. Crystal Couture will be in early Feb – boutiques, runway fashion. Also combining running with wine will be a 1K wine walk with Washington Wine Academy – there will be a course in the concourse, bib, heats, water hydration stations. Feb 26<sup>th</sup> (Sat). In March 17-April 17 the CCBID will have “FLASH” – a photo exhibit – details to come.

Community Center (Mike Dowell) – Watch the list serve and newsletter calendar for events: Winter Program Odyssey of the Mind, Science Program for 6-7 year olds starting in January run by a neighborhood NIH researcher; Poe birthday celebration on Jan 22, Family Fridays late Jan to March set up by Bill Gillen. Movies, pizza in the community center. Cory Giaccobe will be teaching a trees and sustainable living class for middle-schoolers.

Spray Park update – Christine Simpson. The Virginia Highlands Park Sprayground was funded last June. Funding is from 400K in neighborhood conservation and 150K that the county manager has promised coming from Kimco (Costco). Christine showed an image board of examples of active water, a dumping bucket and pools and dams. Design to be completed this summer with bidding process to follow. Goal is to have construction completed in time for Memorial Day 2012. Current design will have usability and attractions during other times of the year (off season). Age range “school age” versatile for tots to older kids. AHCA members asked about ways to save trees when creating pathways and other features of the design. We will get an update in February and March. Mike asked for a motion supporting this plan with the comments. Motion passed and AHCA leadership will review her meeting summary.

### Unfinished business

Pen Place LRPC meetings scheduled for 16 Dec, mid Jan and mid Feb.

## Richardson Remodeling

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## Pentagon City Tract: PenPlace

—Continued from Page 1—

maintained although changes have been made within these parameters.

Developers kept rearranging the parcels to build commercial rather than residential. The new apartments are now being built across from Costco because all of the commercial allotment has been used. The importance of the PenPlace development is that this is the first time a developer has proposed to transfer density from elsewhere to the Pentagon City tract. It is also interesting that this development has been kept quiet until the Crystal City redevelopment was approved.

During the review process, considering certain items makes sense:

1. As mentioned above, this plan does not use the existing density and convert it to office, but takes density from the North Tract and applies it to the Pentagon City tract. This has never been done with the Pentagon City tract and PDSP. Significant density has already been taken from the North Tract and applied to the South Tract of Potomac

Yard. What impact might this have on the GLUP or existing C-0 2.5 zoning? What might be the implications of this action for other parts of the Pentagon City tract? What is the point of having plans if they are violated when developers do not want to follow them?

2. Looking at possible legal impacts a PDSP amendment would have on the zoning potential for the Pentagon Center and Costco site is important. When property is "similarly situated" sometimes "rights" can occur with future development and/or redevelopment due to a precedent having been set.

3. As always, potential environmental impacts are crucial. Traffic impacts need to be considered. There are 2,285 parking places and that many cars could theoretically enter our neighborhood entering or leaving the site. Since I-395 and Route 1 are saturated, drivers may attempt to avoid congestion by going on Eads and Fern, and then up 23rd and turn on Arlington Ridge road. Air quality in another issue to consider. Higher levels of

carbon monoxide occur with slowed and stopped cars. Recent studies have shown that air pollution and diabetes are linked, among other adverse health effects.

Certainly other issues will emerge during the review process. We will be directing these questions to the Long Range Planning Committee meetings scheduled to review the PDSP amendment application. These meetings are scheduled for January 18<sup>th</sup> and February 17<sup>th</sup> with a third meeting to be scheduled (the December 16 meeting was canceled due to snow). Please contact Mike Dowell, Nick Giacobbe or Bruce Cameron with any additional questions or concerns.

### Vornado Conducts Neighborhood Focus Group on PenPlace

At a recent meeting of AHCA, members learned that several neighbors had participated in a focus group to discuss the Vornado proposal. The participants were invited to participate by Martin Focus Group Services of Alexandria, a firm hired by Vornado. The diverse focus group members unanimously did not favor the proposal, even with modifications. Issues that were raised included the inability to deal with the increased density both for traffic and public transportation, especially the overextended Pentagon City metro station. Also, that a model was being used that didn't fit this location. Another major point was that no part of the proposal contributes anything to the neighborhood or the county - for instance, while the proposal boasts commercial space that would serve the community, in discussion it became clear that there really was no local demand for what was being offered.

We've communicated our concerns to Vornado. We have confirmed that their objective is to get community input, and have asked them to consider publishing the focus group findings to promote continuing open discussions.

### Calling all writers!

Do you have knowledge or expertise in a field that would interest or help your neighbors? Do you have an interesting story about our neighborhood's history? Write an article for the AHCA Newsletter!

Share your knowledge about health, finance, pets, home repair, gardening, car maintenance or any other tips that would interest or benefit your neighbors. Pitch your idea to the newsletter editor at [ahca.news@yahoo.com](mailto:ahca.news@yahoo.com).

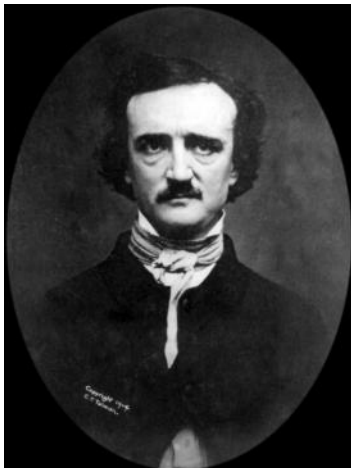
***Do you have a neighbor  
who's doing something cool?  
Write it up and send it in.***

# Special Event!



## Edgar Allan Poe Birthday Celebration! January 22, 2011 Aurora Hills Community Center

Once upon a midnight dreary, while I pondered, weak and weary,  
Over many a quaint and curious volume of forgotten lore,  
While I nodded, nearly napping, suddenly there came a tapping,  
As of some one gently rapping, rapping at my chamber door.  
"Tis some visitor," I muttered, "tapping at my chamber door —  
Only this, and nothing more."



— The Raven, Edgar Allan Poe

**Edgar Allan Poe's** gothic, macabre short stories have kept folks awake long into the night for over 150 years, and have left an indelible trail across American literature. Poe invented the detective novel, and penned stories that marked the emerging

genre of science fiction. Embraced as Baltimore's own, Poe's grave was honored for years on his birthday with a bottle of cognac and three roses. Today, the title of his classic poem bestrides the Baltimore Ravens NFL football team.

Join us on Saturday, January 22, 2011 at the Aurora Hills Community Center to celebrate Edgar Allan Poe's birthday. Christopher Davis, who performed this past fall at the Maryland Renaissance Festival, will provide an eve-

ning of interactive comedic entertainment with readings and audience participation. Mr. Davis will provide dramatic readings of "The Tell-tale Heart", "The Black Cat" and "The Cask of Amontillado", finishing with Poe's classic, "The Raven". Scary? Yeah, a little! But there's safety in numbers, so come for a chilling, fun evening.

Doors open at 7 p.m. with Restaurant Row refreshments. Performance starts at 8 p.m. Suggested donation \$5.

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## Activities and Events

### **Pancake Breakfast**

**Saturday, January 15, 8:00 – 10:00 a.m.** at Calvary UMC, corner of 23rd & Grant Streets (2315 S Grant St.). Still the best buy in town.

### **Synetic Theater presents**

#### ***The Nutcracker***

#### **Continues through January 16**

Crystal City Theater, 1800 S. Bell Street, Arlington. Free Open Rehearsal on Saturday, December 4 at 11:00 a.m. For more information, visit <https://robot.boxofficetickets.com/800-494-TIXS/WebObjects/BOTx2005.woa/wa/inspectProgram?id=122625&passKey=d6318e6d19>

### **L'Arche Presentation, Wednesday, January 19, 6:00 - 7:00 p.m.**

at the Aurora Hills Community Center. Learn more about L'Arche and potential service opportunities in our community. L'Arche builds communities of individuals with developmental disabilities and those without, to learn and grow from one another. For more information, please contact Maria Gillen, <[nanay2kg@yahoo.com](mailto:nanay2kg@yahoo.com)>.

### **Edgar Allen Poe Birthday Program**

**Saturday, January 22, 8:00 p.m.** at the Aurora Hills Community Center. Christopher Davis will provide an evening of interactive comedic entertainment with readings and audience participation. Come at 7:00 for refreshments. Suggested donation: \$5. See page 6 for more details.

### **A Midsummer Night's Dream at Synetic Theater, January 25 - 30**

Synetic Theater presents a limited return of their award-winning *A Midsummer Night's Dream* this January for their 10th Anniversary Season. Synetic brings this smash hit to the Crystal City Theater after its tour to Williams College. If you missed it the first time or just want to see it again, don't miss your chance to experience the joy of this fantastical, playful game of love, mistaken identity and the supernatural. Details at <http://www.synetictheater.org>.

### **Improving Your Home's Comfort, Health, and Energy Efficiency, February AHCA Meeting, February 9, 2011, 7:00 p.m. — 9:00 p.m.**

at the Aurora Hills Community Center. Presentation by Scott Donelson, local resident, BPI certified energy auditor, president of Home Energy Medics, [www.MyEnergyMedics.com](http://www.MyEnergyMedics.com), a NoVA home performance with energy star program participating company.

### **Courthouse Farmers' Market Saturdays from 8:00 a.m. – noon**

Located adjacent to the Arlington County Courthouse Parking Lot, at the intersection of North Courthouse Road and North 14th Street. Arlington's largest market, it continues year round and averages about 30 vendors, all of whom are required to produce their items within 125 miles of Arlington. Winter Market hours (8:00 a.m. to noon) begin on January 1. During Winter Market, the location of the market will shift onto 14th Street, leaving the two parking lots available for parking. Free parking is available in the parking garage under the County Administrative Offices. No dogs are allowed at the market.

### **Del Ray Farmers' Market, Saturdays from 8:00 a.m. – noon, corner of East Oxford & Mount Vernon Avenues.**

Our closest neighborhood farmers' markets have closed for the season, but the nearby Del Ray market is open year round. It is producer grown, with fresh vegetables and fruits in season. All year round, this market offers

meats, eggs, fresh pasta and sauces, Amish cheese, yogurt, bakery goods, eggs, jams and jellies, fancy nuts, and bakery goods.

**Stay involved.  
Keep  
Informed on  
what's going on  
in our  
community.**

### **Crystal Couture Kicks it Up a Notch in the Former Food Court at 1750 Crystal Drive, February 1 - 5, nightly from 6:00 p.m. to 10:00 p.m.**

This year's theme is "Exotic and Elegant to Everything Everyday" and it will once again be a good way to escape the winter doldrums. Couture promises a rocking runway with great lighting and shows, a lounge and more than 20 fabulous fashion boutiques and designers each night from around the DC area. In support of National Wear Red Day to fight heart disease in women, Friday, February 4 will see the runway filled with red, so join the fun.

### **1 K Wine Walk, February 26, 2011 2:00-6:00 p.m.**

a tasting tour through the interior walkways of Crystal City featuring 30-40 different wines, light fare and photographs from finalists and youth category winners of FotoWeek DC. Presented by the [Crystal City Business Improvement District](http://www.crystalcitybusinessimprovementdistrict.org) in partnership with the Washington Wine Academy. For more details, and to order tickets, visit <http://crystalcity.org/item/on-your-mark-get-set-sip>

#### **How to Join the Neighborhood Listserv:**

For bulletins of neighborhood interest, ask to join the Yahoo group 4D-A. The group is administered by Alice Andors of AHCA. Copy the address below into your browser. Once at the page, click on the blue rectangle marked "Join This Group!"

<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/4D-A/>

#### **How to Join Arlington Alert:**

Arlington Alert is an alert system that allows the County to contact you during an emergency by sending text messages to your e-mail or cell phone. Copy the address below into your browser. Once at the page, click on the blue rectangle marked "Click here to register!"

<http://www.arlingtonalert.com/index.php?CCheck=1>

# Improving your Home's Comfort Health, and Energy Efficiency: Part 2, Heating/Cooling Systems and Duct Leakage

By Scott Donelson

So the weather in our neighborhood has turned cold, and you may be feeling the effects in some cold spots in your home or much higher utility bills. You don't have to live with either! In a November 2010 AHCA newsletter article, I spoke of the various sources of these problems and the benefits of fixing them in terms of home comfort improvements and energy efficiency without making a huge investment. I also stated the means to find the problems and prioritize the fixes was through a home energy audit. This November article can be viewed at [http://aurorahighlands.org/Media/news2010\\_11.pdf](http://aurorahighlands.org/Media/news2010_11.pdf).

## GENERAL

Heating and cooling systems come in several forms with the most common being furnaces with a separate air conditioner (split systems), heat pumps, and boilers. Most of the information in this article is applicable to all of these.

## HOUSE AS A SYSTEM

A house must be treated as an entire system when addressing home energy saving and comfort improvements to include Heating, Ventilating, and Air Conditioning (HVAC) system upgrades. Home comfort, air quality, moisture control, HVAC system operation, and energy consumption are all inter-related. Remember that the first step is to air seal followed by insulation. Once done, the furnace/boiler and air conditioner can most often be downsized which saves money on the replacement cost as well as operating costs long term. Why? The actual

heating and cooling load on the home is reduced with air sealing and insulation improvements.

## CONSIDERATIONS FOR A NEW SYSTEM

The old adage of "if it ain't broke, don't fix it" may actually be affecting your comfort and costing you money in the long run. The Department of Energy (DOE) and the EPA say that a furnace/boiler should be considered for replacement if it is over 15 years old, and an air conditioner should be considered for replacement if it is more than 10 years old. This is because of the dramatic efficiency improvement of equipment. These upgrades, in addition to air sealing and insulation, can save substantially on energy costs.

Waiting until a system breaks down to replace it offers little opportunity to figure out the best system to install for your home, especially in the heat of the Summer or cold of the Winter! Better quality new systems are also literally whisper quiet. It is always recommended to replace forced air heating and cooling systems together since a matched system is most efficient and effective when paired with the matching new intelligent thermostatic controls. Some features to look for when replacing a system are as follow:

**High Efficiency Furnace or Boiler (95% ±)**- Although slightly more expensive than the standard 80% efficient unit, the cost is more than made up in long term energy savings. These are sometimes called condensing furnaces because they produce condensate like

to take place which makes the most difference in home comfort.

**Intelligent/Communicating Thermostat Control**- Technology has really improved here, and the thermostat can automatically control the HVAC system to optimize comfort and energy savings.

**Two stage or modulating gas valve for heating**- Modulating is best, but the concept is that the furnace only burns enough fuel needed to increase the temperature in a certain amount of time. If the temperature is not increasing fast enough, the gas valve opens further to produce more heat. This saves energy.

**SEER**-A measure of cooling system efficiency. Look for an air conditioner with a SEER of 16 or higher and with compressor sound dampening features. Better units will run quietly.

**Two stage Air conditioner**- These systems are generally more efficient and operate for longer periods at a lower power setting.

It is good to stick with name brands such as Carrier, Trane, and Lennox since generally more design and engineering have gone into them, not just marketing. Regardless of brand, it is truly the installation that makes all the difference. The EPA says improper installation can reduce system efficiency by up to 30%. Here is what to look for in a good contractor/installation:

**Load calculations**- As part of the normal process, the contractor should perform heating and cooling load calculations to determine the proper size of the equipment. Bigger is definitely not better and can shorten the life of equipment and not properly cool the house in the Summer! Most equipment can be downsized from what it currently is.

**Duct Sizing**-A good contractor will evaluate both the return air duct and supply duct sizing and overall system balancing to determine if all are adequate. Many returns are undersized and starve the unit for air, increase noise, and decrease efficiency.

**NATE certified Technicians**- A good

an air conditioner and are vented out a side wall. Also, their sealed combustion chamber virtually eliminates potential combustion safety problems.

**Variable Speed Blower Motor**- This will operate at a lower speed initially, and in Summer, allow more de-humidification

—Continued on Page 9—

Is Your Home Cold?  
Energy Bills High?  
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## Crystal City Citizen Review Council Representatives Sought for AHCA, ARCA and Crystal City

Kit Whitely from ARCA prepared the note below, with some great ideas so we've borrowed it, replacing the "R" with an "H". Thanks Kit. Please consider how you might support our neighborhood in this endeavor. Whether you are a parent, a lawyer, an architect, a teacher, a student, each of you will have a unique perspective and skill set that can provide a lasting benefit to our neighborhood by supporting our representation on the council. Kit's provided a great overview of the council and how important it is to our community.

**Purpose:** Per Board Guidance for Implementation of Crystal City Sector Plan (<http://www.arlingtonva.us/departments/CountyBoard/page78402.aspx>) the County has requested we nominate two candidates each to represent AHCA on the Crystal City Citizen Review Council (CCCRC). To ensure our representatives will be able to reflect the myriad of our citizens' views, AHCA is also constituting a CCCRC support team to help coordinate the input that these reps will need for CCCRC. This support team's product will include recommendations

for tracking metrics; review of design proposals; implementation assessments; and will also include developing additional design guidelines for the areas abutting our single family neighborhood. The two AHCA representatives will then have the responsibility to present the AHCA input to the CCCRC and then participate as the CCCRC develops its assessment/recommendations for the board.

**Request:** We need your help. Please consider becoming a member of our AHCA CCCRC support team. If you are worried about traffic impacts, noise, crime or what a revitalized Eads street will look like, this is your chance to participate. Do you want a say so in what new business replaces the P.O. on Eads? Join the group. Optimally the AHCA team will represent cross sections of both expertise and neighborhood demographics. If you are interested in an even bigger role, can make a two-year commitment and would like to represent AHCA on the CCCRC, let us know. The charter members of the CCCRC will be setting the tone for this innovative team. Organizational, teambuilding and negotiating skills will be as impor-

tant for these charter members as knowledge of the CC Sector Plan.

Finally, we fought hard to get this chance to ensure the neighborhood views are heard throughout the lifetime of the CC development. This independent citizen assessment team for a major development is a new organizational concept for Arlington and could set the precedent for future development efforts. Please help ensure AHCA has a role in this evolution of citizen involvement.

If you are interested in participating, please provide your name to [ahca.news@yahoo.com](mailto:ahca.news@yahoo.com) by **1/12/11**. If, in addition, if you would like to be considered as one of the two AHCA CCCRC reps, please submit vitae that may be forwarded to the board. We will be providing AHCA nominations to the county board NLT 1/15/11. Appointments to CCCRC will be made at the 1/25/11 board meeting. We envision the kickoff meeting for the AHCA CCCRC support team in February 2011.

Appreciate your consideration of an expanded role in the AHCA team.

## Energy-Efficient Home

-Continued from Page 8-

contractor will have NATE certified technicians that have the right training to ensure things like the refrigerant charge meets the manufacturer's specs. Incorrect refrigerant charge can lower efficiency 5-20% and cause premature component failure.

### DUCT LEAKAGE

Duct leakage is a strong contributor to comfort and efficiency problems in the home. Per the EPA, typical homes leak 20% or more of the air out of the ducts before it gets to where it is supposed to go! This occurs in both metal and flex ducts due to small holes and poor connections. Even the best designed system cannot overcome high leakage levels. This is correctable by

using mastic sealant where the ducts are accessible, or if the majority are concealed, an internal duct sealing process can be used that is very good. The following web sites contain more information on the topics discussed: <http://www.MyEnergyMedics.com> (links to many sites and answers to frequently asked questions) [http://www.energystar.gov/index.cfm?c=heat\\_cool.pr\\_hvac](http://www.energystar.gov/index.cfm?c=heat_cool.pr_hvac) (Energy Star-heating and cooling efficiently) [http://www.energystar.gov/index.cfm?c=home\\_improvement.hm\\_improvemnt\\_ducts](http://www.energystar.gov/index.cfm?c=home_improvement.hm_improvemnt_ducts) (EPA Energy star- Benefits of duct sealing)

About the author: Scott Donelson is a local resident, a BPI certified energy auditor, and president of Home Energy Medics, [www.MyEnergyMedics.com](http://www.MyEnergyMedics.com), a NoVA home performance with energy star program participating company.

He will continue the series next month. Stay tuned for "Beyond Lightbulbs: Do It Yourself Tips to Save Energy". Mr. Donelson will present at our February AHCA meeting. His presentation is titled "*Improving Your Home's Comfort, Health, and Energy Efficiency*". The February meeting will take place on February 9, 2011 at 7 p.m. in the Aurora Hills Community Center.

# Saturday Breakfast Buffet \$9.99

Mrs. Trumbull ...  
I know it's Saturday but ..  
could you watch little Ricky this morning?  
Big Ricky and Fred went Golfing and...  
Ethel and I just have to go to  
Freddie's Beach Bar for that  
Neighborhood Breakfast Buffet!



**Every Saturday  
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WASHINGTON, DC 202.944.5000  
GEORGETOWN 202.333.3320  
BETHESDA/CHEVY CHASE 301.222.0050  
POTOMAC 301.983.6400  
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# Yes! I want to join the Aurora Highlands Civic Association!

Please complete the following information and enclose the form with your check payable to **Aurora Highlands Civic Association**. Annual dues are **\$20.00** per household. Bring it to the next Civic Association meeting or mail to:

Membership Chair  
Aurora Highlands Civic Association  
P.O. Box 25201  
Arlington, VA 22202

## Member information:

Name(s): \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

E-Mail: \_\_\_\_\_

Check here to receive Civic Association announcements by email.

## I'm ready to get involved!

### I am interested in:

Library    Schools    Parks and Rec.    Streets & Lights

Zoning/Planning    Other \_\_\_\_\_

Serving on an AHCA committee

**Note:** Your address, phone number and e-mail address will not be released outside the civic association. The dues year runs November 1 to October 31.

## Tree Talk: Restoring Our Community's Native Tree Canopy

by Cory Giacobbe

### Suburban Composting

Make your own compost for your garden by saving kitchen scraps and yard waste. The compost will improve your soil and reduce the amount of garbage that gets burned at the dump. If you're like me, you'll want to read a book or website about composting before you begin. I started composting 20 years ago after reading Backyard Composting: Your Complete Guide to Recycling Yard Clippings by Harmonious Technologies. (Currently there are 117 copies available used on Amazon for one cent plus 3.99 shipping.)

Composting can be as simple and technology-free as digging a hole in the back of your yard, to as complex as building a 3-bin stage transfer systems. I go for something right in between: a commercially available plastic bin with locking lid to keep out suburban critters. My first system, 20 years ago, was a box made by lashing 4 shipping pallets together. We bought a pitch fork to turn the steamy, sweet, living mound. It was very satisfying to watch nature turn 10 gallons of yard and kitchen waste into one gallon of dark, rich, garden additive, virtually for free. Some of my neighbors were concerned that I was attracting undesirable visitors, so eventually I graduated to the plastic enclosed structure I have now. It has an open bottom, though, and I'm sure some digging pests could dig their way in to get my delicious banana peels and apple cores. When I buy my next bin, it will be the completely enclosed ball system. You roll it around the garden to mix it. No pitch fork needed! What do you put in a compost bin? Try



to achieve a balance of green and brown material to avoid odors and get the optimum decomposition rate:

#### Brown or Carbon-containing material

Dry leaves, straw, sticks, wood shavings, fireplace ashes, paper towels  
Green or Nitrogen-containing material  
Grass clippings, flowers, herbs, fruit and vegetable scraps, egg shells

#### What NOT to compost

Meat, bones, dairy, pet waste, oil, fat, pernicious weeds, ivy, poisonous plants, diseased plants  
Your compost is finished when it has a crumbly soil texture. It will take about 3 months, but the speed is greatly influenced by amount of stirring, moisture

level and brown/green mix. Actually, if you keep adding kitchen scraps to your compost pile, it will never really be done, right? So my husband made me a sifting screen like the one in the book. Another method would be to have two bins. One that you add fresh stuff to, and one that rests and finishes before use. Mix the compost into your garden soil and watch your garden grow.

P.S. Your tree roots will also benefit from the added nutrients from the compost, and the improved soil structure and moisture retention!

### Tree Steward Class

Apply now for the next Tree Steward class. Tree Stewards are volunteers dedicated to improving the health of our urban trees through educational programs, tree planting and care, demonstrations and tree maintenance throughout the community. Tuesday evenings, February 8 to April 9, 2011. For details and application, visit <http://treestewards.org/>.

## Aurora Highlands Civic Association

### Association Officers

#### & Committee Chairs

President – Michael Dowell

703-521-7739

Vice President – Nick Giacobbe

703-842-5441

2nd Vice President – Cory Giacobbe

703-864-6826

Treasurer / Membership – Brent Spence

Secretary – Jenny Lawhorn

Web Master – Jason Roberts

[AHCAWebmaster@gmail.com](mailto:AHCAWebmaster@gmail.com)

AHCA Rep. to Neighborhood

Conservation Advisory

Committee – Chris Mann

AHCA Rep. to Crystal City Business

Improvement District (CCBID) –

Cheryl Mendonsa

Long Range Planning Commission's

Crystal City Long-Term Plan –

Bruce Cameron & Mike Dowell

Aircraft Noise – Denis O'Sullivan

703-521-6425

Meeting Hospitality - Rosamunda

Neuharth-Ozgo

Newsletter Distribution -

Michael Shumway 703-774-5045

Newsletter Advertising - Marty King

703-979-3410 [martinch@erols.com](mailto:martinch@erols.com)

Newsletter Editor – Cory Giacobbe

703-842-5441

Police and Waste Water Treatment

Plant Liaison -Brad & Louise Garris -

703-548-1944

Urban Planning – Ted Saks

703-683-1312

Items for the Newsletter: Send items in e-mail messages (not attachments) to the newsletter editor, Cory Giacobbe: [AHCA.news@yahoo.com](mailto:AHCA.news@yahoo.com)

For past issues of the newsletter, bylaws, and neighborhood boundaries and more, visit

[AuroraHighlands.org](http://AuroraHighlands.org)

P.O. Box 25201 - Arlington, VA 22202

[AuroraHighlands.org](http://AuroraHighlands.org)

"The Association is a non-partisan organization of community residents formed to work in the overall community interest in promoting civic pride, enhancing the quality of life in the community, preserving the character of the community and planning for the orderly, safe, and humane development of the community" (AHCA Bylaws, Article II). The AHCA meets on the 2nd Wednesday of each month (unless specifically noted) in the Aurora Hills Community Center (735 S. 18th St.) at 7:00 p.m.