

AuroraHighlands.org

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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, March 9, 2011 at 7:00 p.m.

AURORA HILLS COMMUNITY CENTER

Agenda

6:30 Social

7:00 Arlington Public School Strategic Plan Overview and Survey

7:15 AHCA Business Meeting

7:45 Airport, Airplanes and Helicopter Status - Denis O'Sullivan

Proposed Arlington County Budget for Fiscal Year 2012

By Nick Giacobbe

On February 8, Arlington County Manager Barbara Donnellan proposed a \$985.2 million balanced budget for fiscal year 2012, an increase of 3.1 % over fiscal year 2011. As proposed, the budget does not recommend a real estate tax rate increase and does not propose any restoration of previous service cuts. Reflecting on the difficult cuts made over the past two budget years, Donnellan said she has "treated the adopted fiscal year 2011 budget as 'the new baseline.'"

With this budget proposal, we will not have to mount the extensive campaigns that have become annual rites of spring for the past two years as we fought to maintain our library hours and the senior program at the Aurora Hills Community Center. Instead, those services will be maintained at current levels, which become the "new normal." Additional hours or programs will have to compete with every other new initiative proposed in the county budget process.

The stationary Visitor Center will be replaced with a Mobile Visitor Center that can be used at various locations and events.

On the revenue side, the County Manager proposes maintaining the current tax rate of 95.8 cents per \$100 of assessed value (including the sanitary district tax). Thanks to increases in real estate assessments and real property tax base growth of 6.3% over the past year, the overall tax and fee burden for the average Arlington homeowner would increase 1.4%, from \$6,398 to \$6,487. County Manager Donnellan warns that "demand for services for the neediest in our community continues to grow, and revenue streams from property, sales and other non-real estate taxes are projected to be generally flat." She notes that the outlook (Continued on page 6)

In other proposals that impact our neighborhood, the Visitor Center at Pentagon Row has been closed for good, saving the County \$52,000 in annual rent pay-

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President's Corner

by Michael Dowell

Shaking off the winter, March is a month when on any given day, we may be taking in the warm sun in 75 degree heat, soaking from head to toe in cold rain, or even trudging through heavy snow. The coat closet simply isn't big enough for this time of year!

Whatever the weather, there's a lot going on this month. Enjoy Family Fridays at the community center, Fridays from 5:30 to 7:30 pm. Stop by for some pizza, chat with friends, and watch a movie to kick off your weekend.

The Joyce Street Phase I traffic calming construction is close to completion in the 1500 block between River House and the softball fields. So if the day is nice, take a walk down the new broad sidewalk along the park side of

the street. The narrowing has reduced the road's design speed (the speed at which people will instinctively drive) from 45 mph to 25 mph. In the coming months, landscaping and a neighborhood sign will be added to the traffic island at the entrance to our neighborhood.

As you read the newsletter this weekend, the Odyssey of the Mind Team will be finishing their competition weekend, the culmination of four months of work on their mousetrap-powered vehicle.

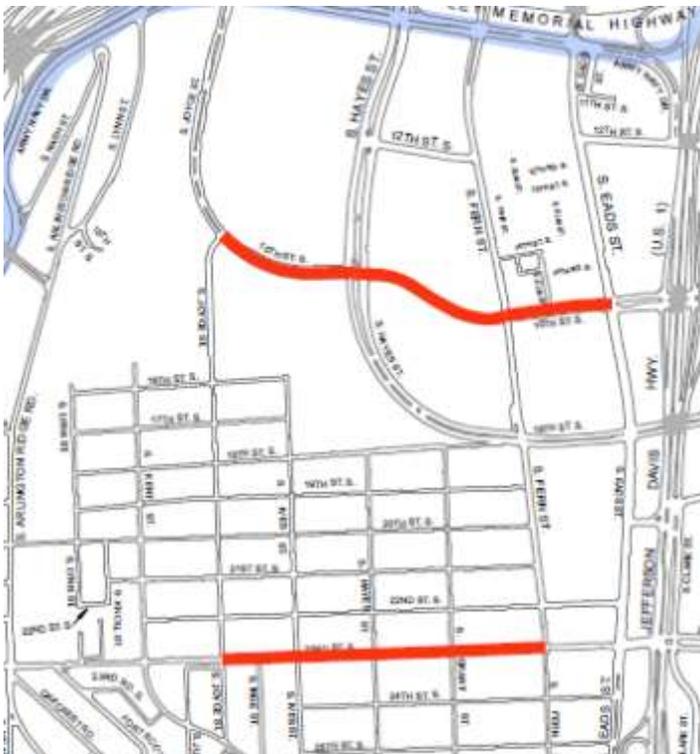
Meanwhile, our combined communities are starting to draw up candidate metrics for monitoring quality of life in our neighborhoods. One can't really measure contentment, but one can measure the distance to the nearest

urgent care facility (not good), fire department (great!), 24-hour pharmacy (not good either) and library (great!). We can monitor the percent of capacity at our schools (at or beyond capacity), the amount of open space (quite a bit), the percentage of tree canopy (not as good as it was before the tornado in 2001), and the quality of the air (worst in the area). We can even assess quality of the power and telecommunications infrastructure (harrumph!), even the number of visible stars (60 the other night). So we can characterize quite a few aspects of our community. Deciding what is important to us and how to measure will be a major project for us over the next two years.

Join us at the AHCA monthly meeting next Wednesday March 9 at 7:00 pm. Representatives from Arlington Public Schools will provide an overview of the APS strategic planning process and will have a survey for neighbors to complete, providing input to the strategic plan. This agenda item will be done jointly with ARCA.

Street Paving Season—2011 Edition

The 2011 street repaving season is upon us, and this year the hot asphalt will be rolled onto sections of 15th Street and 23rd Street, marked in bold on the map below. The work typically takes a week or so and will be performed between April and November. The Arlington County Department of Environmental Services will schedule the work. Contact Francis Soulemany at 703-228-7822 or by email, fsoulemany@arlingtonva.us, with comments or concerns.



Crystal City Potomac Yard Transitway Public Meeting

Arlington County is planning transit improvements in the Crystal City Potomac Yard (CCPY) Corridor, including a bus-only transitway, station stops, frequent bus service, and passenger amenities. The goal of the project is to provide high-capacity and high-quality transit service to residents, businesses, and visitors in this fast developing corridor.

A public meeting will be held **Wednesday, March 16**, to provide an update on the Crystal City Potomac Yard bus transitway project. The planners are particularly seeking community input on the prototypical design of transitway stations in Crystal City.

Feel free to stop by the session at any time. The meeting will follow this general timetable:

4:30 – 5:00	Open House
5:00 – 5:30	Presentation
5:30 – 6:00	Questions & Answers
6:00 – 7:00	Open House
7:00 – 7:30	Repeat of Presentation
7:30 – 8:00	Questions & Answers

The meeting will be at the **Aurora Hills Community Center, 735 18th Street South.**

Schools' News

News about our neighborhood schools

Oakridge Tutors - Volunteers Needed
Tutoring is a great opportunity for members of the community to support our fantastic neighborhood elementary school! Anyone who would like to join the Oakridge Tutors, please e-mail Casey Dolan, the school-based tutor coordinator (Casey_Dolan@apsva.us), or ARCA resident, Tom Martin, at 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 - The spring play is just around the corner: *Midsummer Night's Dream*
Gunston Middle School, Theater 1
March 11 & 12 at 7:00pm

Bring the whole family!

Celebrate Gunston at the annual community-wide open house. Come learn about the school and all the wonderful learning going on: March 18 from 6:00 to 8:00 p.m.

Wakefield High School

The Wakefield Booster and Alumni Association's (Wakefield Foundation) annual Golf Tournament fund-raiser will be Saturday,

May 7, at the beautiful Virginia Oaks Golf Club in Gainesville, VA (<http://www.virginiaoaksgc.com>). Paul Ferguson, class of 1983 and Wakefield High School Hall of Fame, will be the Honorary Chair this year. Come out and support this fund-raiser that provides scholarships to some Wakefield graduates from our neighborhood. For further information, contact Paul B. Greenfield at greenfieldpb@yahoo.com.



Update on Sprayground at Virginia Highlands Park

Design continues on the sprayground at Virginia Highlands Park funded largely by Neighborhood Conservation and approved by the board in September 2009. A more developed concept plan was reviewed with the community design group in February and County staff is currently working on design development and construction documents. They are moving forward with the current concept

developed with the community, but if they have to stray from the concept, they will ask the community design group for input. The sprayground is scheduled to open for the Summer 2012 season. If you want to be on the email list for information about the project, please contact Christine Simpson at csimpson@arlingtonva.us.

Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) Registration

Registration is now open for returning and new CSA members! Sign-up now to guarantee your box for 2011. Enjoy 20 weeks of Thursday deliveries of fresh, farm produce straight from the local farm. Additional benefits include free U-pick quantities at the farm and free admission for your family to farm events. Cost for the season:



Returning CSA Members - \$498.23

New CSA Members - \$513.23

Sign up at http://www.greatcountryfarms.com/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=132.



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Senate Amendment to FAA Bill Would Increase Flights at National Airport

By Brent Spence, AHCA Treasurer

The Senate is considering Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) legislation purportedly designed to boost safety and increase consumer rights. However, an amendment has been made that would add 24 long-haul daily flights. Kay Bailey Hutchison (R-TX), has threatened to vote against the FAA bill until it includes a provision to increase National's flights to Western states. Jay Rockefeller, (D-WV) is also pushing for the increased slots.

It is commonly thought that the increased western flights will serve mostly as easier ways for senators to get to and from their home districts. Also, Congressmen and Senators have a private parking area near the terminal at National Airport.

Our local lawmakers are arguing that increasing flights will hurt the area economically by taking flights away from Dulles and BWI. Rep. Gerry Connolly, (D-VA), has stated that allowing more flights at National, could harm Dulles economically and threaten the airport's bond rating. For us in the neighborhood, safety is the big issue along with increased noise. With one short runway, National is not safe to handle more flights. There are already a large number of wave-offs sending planes directly over our homes. In addition, emergency situations such as the plane recently diverted to Dulles, could easily turn deadly in such a crowded space. Longer flights require the planes to have more fuel, making it harder for planes to take off and creating greater problems if there is an accident. They also would be more likely to be scheduled during nighttime hours when there is less traffic, between 11:00 p.m. and 6:00 a.m.

One action you can take is to have friends and relatives in the states of the Senators supporting increased flights contact their Senators to let them know they don't appreciate the Senate interfering with National Airport. We'll discuss this further at our next meeting.

Helicopter Issues

By Brent Spence

Another Arlington Helicopter Forum was held on February 23, hosted (again) by county board member, Mary Hines. We do not have a report, but Denis O'Sullivan at this writing is planning to attend a Citizens for the Abatement of Aircraft Noise (CAAN) meeting to be held before our March AHCA meeting, so we can look forward to getting his update. He will also be asking AHCA to make a donation to CAAN, and we should support his, and CAAN's, efforts to help protect us from encroachment from the sky.

WANTED: Volunteer AHCA Webmaster
Contact Cory at AHCA.news@yahoo.com

South Arlington Moms Club (SAMC)

The Arlington-South chapter of the International MOMS club (Mothers Offering Mothers Support) is always looking for new members. We meet during the day when at-home mothers most need support. We believe being a mother shouldn't isolate you, so mothers can bring their children with them to all our activities. Any age children are welcome. You don't need to leave the group when your children enter school. We know you still need support as your children grow.

The next open-to-the-public SAMC event, the Super Playgroup General Meeting, will be held on Friday, March 11 at Our Lady Queen of Peace, 2700 19th St. S., Arlington. Come one; come ALL! The SAMC Super Playgroup General Meetings are open to everyone, so get your stay-at-home mommy friends OUT of their homes to join the fun!

Our Super Playgroups offer volunteer-led children's activities for all ages and they are great opportunities to let the kids play and do crafts while we enjoy the company of other great moms. If it's nice weather, we can head over to the park located right beside the church after the meeting.

We hope to see lots of old friends and new faces!
Please note our new room at Our Lady Queen of Peace. We now meet in Father Ray Hall, the one-story orange brick building behind the church. Park in the back parking lot. With the Ministry Center (our old location) behind you, walk between the two buildings ahead. Father Ray Hall is on the right.

For membership information please email samcmember@yahoo.com or visit our website, <http://www.meetup.com/MOMS-Club-of-Arlington-South/>

Neighbor Wins Arlington Vehicle Decal Contest

After a month of voting by Arlington County residents, Wakefield High School junior Maya Giacobbe is the winner of the seventh annual Arlington vehicle decal design competition.

Maya's photo of the historic Hume School, entitled "Hume, Sweet Hume," will be featured on the 2011-2012 decals which will be displayed on 155,000 registered vehicles in Arlington County. Thanks for voting!



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Proposed FY2012 County Budget

—Continued from Page 1—

for the state and national economy “is somewhat better, but still not on the sure footing we would all prefer.” The budget includes a transfer to the Arlington Public Schools of \$378.2 million, an increase of \$17.8 million in new local tax revenue, or 4.9% more than fiscal year 2011. The

added amount for schools includes \$8.6 million to cover the costs of 1,008 new students and \$9.2 million in additional tax revenue for other school needs.

The County Board will hold two public hearings: the first on the budget on March 22 and the second on the tax

rate and fees on March 24. The County Board will adopt the final budget for fiscal year 2012 at the April 16 meeting.

For more on the budget visit the Arlington County website at <http://www.arlingtonva.us>.

Green Living Expo



Arlingtonians for A Clean Environment (ACE) will hold its second [Green Living Expo](#) on Saturday, March 19, 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. at Washington-Lee High School, 1301 N. Stafford Street. The Expo will feature green vendors, seminars, a raffle, food sales, cooking demonstrations, and children's activities.

Aurora Hills Senior Program Hosts ALRI Geopolitics Class

The Aurora Hills Community Center is the venue for a class being offered by the Arlington Learning in Retirement Institute (ALRI) beginning in April. ALRI offers its members non-credit, college-level courses during weekdays in the spring and fall. Aurora Hills Community Center will host “Geopolitics of the Ancient Middle East” on Wednesdays from 1:30 to 3:00 p.m. It runs for six weeks starting

April 6; the course fee is \$45.00; the instructor is Dave Rudgers, a former CIA editor and analyst.

ALRI is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization for people 50 years or older, regardless of residence location. ALRI is governed, supported and financed by its members; the annual membership is \$55.00 per person. In addition to the course offerings, it hosts special

events and has several clubs such as Ethnic Lunch, Travel, Bridge, Cinema, Current Events Discussion, etc. For more information about ALRI, please visit the website: www.ArlingtonLRI.org or call 703-228-2144. A copy of the Spring 2011 Course Catalogue is available online or at the Aurora Hills Community Center.

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Long-Time Neighbor and Author Offers Problem-Solving Skills

Al Burt, a 36-year resident of our neighborhood, would like to volunteer some of his time helping his neighbors solve their specific, nagging problems, using the creativity that has served him so well over the years. Author of “Cut the Strings” (available in our local library),

stuff to make life easier and provide more usable space, repairing those old comfortable shoes, using materials from a discarded item to create a useful item, or inventing a new something or procedure to solve that pesky problem or just make life a little better. Some of Al's solutions may seem a bit “out of the box” but what the heck, why not give it a try.

Al has been employing his creative mind to solve his personal problems and improve his quality of life while adhering to his bare bones budget for some 40 years. His supply of problems is now running low so he wants to divert some of this creative energy toward helping his neighbors cope with their problems or ambitions in an informal way. Some examples might be: reorganizing

Al will neither charge, nor accept, any payment for his time and offers no guarantee of the results. You can reach him at 703-521-9629 or email dcami-adca@yahoo.com. Please title your email message “Cut the Strings” to avoid it being deleted.

MT Vernon Baptist Church

You are invited to visit us at:

MT VERNON BAPTIST CHURCH

935 South 23rd Street,

Phone: 703.979.1558

WWW.MVBCCC.ORG

EMAIL MVBCCC@MVBCCC.ORG

Weekly services:

11 a.m. Sunday, 7 p.m. Wednesday

Activities and Events

Pancake Breakfast

Saturday, March 5, 8:00 – 10:00 a.m. at Calvary UMC, corner of 23rd & Grant Streets (2315 S Grant St.). The men at [Calvary UMC](#) invite you to join us for the best breakfast deal in town: pancakes, sausage, coffee, and orange juice - all for only \$5-adults, \$4-seniors, and \$2 for kids. For more information, contact Todd at the Church office, admin@calmeth.org.

Friday Night Movies Continue each Friday through March 25 from 5:30—7:30 p.m. at the Aurora Hills Community Center. The Civic Association will be offering snacks, bring your sleeping bags or comfy pillows to enjoy a family feature presentation. Movies start at 6:00 p.m.

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. The nearby Del Ray market is open year round, offering producer-grown 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.

YogaFit for Seniors

Tuesdays and Thursdays beginning in March, 11:00 a.m. to noon at Mt. Vernon Baptist Church, 935 S. 23rd Street. Sit & Be Fit. This Yoga class is gentle and fun. Small fee. Call 703-797-1558 for more information.

YogaFit

Tuesdays and Thursdays, 6:30 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. at Mt. Vernon Baptist Church, 935 S. 23rd Street. Come experience the health benefits of Hatha Yoga. Small fee. Call 703-797-1558 for more information.

Four Mile Run Watershed Cleanup, Saturday, March 12, 9:00 a.m. to noon.

Join Arlingtonians for a Clean Environment at three locations: Shirlington Park, Barcroft Park, and Arlington Mill Community Center.

Registration is required to volunteer@arlingtonenvironment.org or 703-228-6406. Please specify which location you are registering for when you call or email. (Call the Arlington County Park Rangers to register for other locations: 703-525-0168.)



FLASH, March 17 - April 17, Wednesdays and Thursdays: 5:00 p.m. – 10:00 p.m., Fridays: 5:00 p.m. - 11:00 p.m.; Saturdays: Noon – 11:00 p.m.; Sundays: Noon – 7:00 p.m. on the 12th and 13th floors of 2450 Crystal Drive. The Crystal City BID and Foto DC bring together 250 photos, 55 photographers and a library of 150 photo books in two locally-curated free shows.

Arlington Home Show & Expo, Saturday, April 9, 10:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m. at the Walter Reed Community Center, 2909 South 16th Street. The 5th annual home show will offer one-stop

shopping for a wide variety of home improvements. The expo will feature information on remodeling kitchens and baths, finishing or waterproofing basements, replacing windows and doors, as well as how to make your home more energy efficient.

Community Leadership Institute: Transportation, Thursday evening, March 31 and Saturday morning, April 12, Washington, DC

The Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments' [National Capital Region Transportation Planning Board](#) is seek-

ing citizen leaders and activists to participate in its upcoming [Community Leadership Institute](#).

How are transportation decisions made in this region? How can community leaders make a difference? The Community Lead-

ership Institute (CLI) is designed to help you figure these questions out. The CLI is a series of two half-day workshops for community leaders and activists intended to enhance participants' ability to get involved in transportation decision-making. The next CLI takes place in Washington, D.C. For more information, contact Deborah Kerson Bilek of the Transportation Planning Board at 202-962-3317 or dbilek@mwkog.org

AHCA Needs a Volunteer Webmaster

The Civic Association is searching for a neighbor to serve as the webmaster for the neighborhood site, www.AuroraHighlands.org. The Executive Committee has lots of good ideas for the web site, but are all technically incompetent. If you know how to manage a web site and are interested in volunteering, please contact Cory at AHCA.news@yahoo.com.

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

Improving Your Home's Comfort, Health and Energy Efficiency: Part 4, What You Should Know About Water Heaters

By Scott Donelson

Since November, I have been focusing on several topics to improve the comfort, health, and energy efficiency of your home. You may be feeling the effects of those high gas or electric bills or still having to put on a sweater just to be comfortable due to drafts. You don't have to live with either! All of these articles can be found at <http://aurorahighlands.org/Media>. Here is a synopsis of the articles to date:

Nov 2010 - What causes hot/cold problems in the home resulting in high bills and how to identify the sources through an energy audit that produces a prioritized list of improvements based on "best bang for the buck".

Jan 2011 - Heating and cooling systems—The types out there and considerations to when replacing one.

Feb 2011 - Twelve easy homeowner tips for reducing energy consumption beyond replacing light bulbs!

COMMON WATER HEATER TYPES AND TERMINOLOGY

Gas storage heaters- large tank and combustion gases, either natural drafted or are fan assisted. A natural draft heater has a metal flue that vents to a chimney or vertical flue through the roof. Gases naturally rise up and out and there is a gap at the top of the heater to allow air to come in the flue to create the draft. A fan-assisted unit will have a fan on top of the heater and vents with plastic pipe out a sidewall of the home.

Electric storage heaters- large tank with two electric heating elements in the side.

Tankless heaters- wall-mounted, no tank, generally gas (electric not usually accepted for whole house solutions due to power required and efficiency), sealed combustion (air taken from outside for combustion) and vent out the sidewall.

Condensing tankless models are 15% more efficient and don't cost that much more than conventional tankless models.

They have an additional heat exchanger to boost the efficiency, similar to a condensing furnace.

Hybrid electric storage heaters- Use a heat pump on top of the tank and capture heat from the surrounding air and transfer the heat to the tank in addition to the normal tank electric elements. More than twice as efficient as conventional electric storage heaters.

SIGNS FOR REPLACEMENT

Age— water heaters nominally last 10-15 years but can fail in under 10.

Rust- any visible rust or bubbled paint around the bottom.

Run out of water- the water heater tank is undersized, an electric element is bad, or the heater has a low hot water recovery first hour recovery

Keep having to turn the temp up to get enough hot water- undersized heater, an electric element is bad, or gas burner is failing.

CONSIDERATIONS FOR REPLACEMENT

Replace BEFORE it fails! Avoid a "water heater flood" in your basement or living space. Most people make snap decisions and get stuck with low efficiency or underperforming heaters simply based on what the plumber has in stock and what can be installed the quickest.

Efficiency- Rated as Energy Factor (EF). The higher the number the better but gas EFs CANNOT be compared to electric EFs. Gas EFs range from .55 for a standard storage model

to .96 for a condensing tankless unit. Electric EFs range from .9 for a standard one to 2.3 for a hybrid electric model. Given NoVa utility rates, electric heaters always cost more to operate per year than gas (about twice as much); however, a hybrid electric is on par with a standard gas storage unit for operating costs, but it still costs more to operate than a tankless gas heater.

Size- For storage water heaters, a 50 gal. gas heater is usually sufficient for a family of four. Electric heaters are sometimes a little bigger due to slower recovery times— the 50-80 gal. size for a family of four are better although, bigger is not better because more water must be kept hot all the time.

Cost- Higher efficiency costs more money, but pays for itself. Tankless heaters last twice as long as storage units.

First hour recovery- The amount of water the tank can reheat in one hour. A good gas heater will generally handle 85-95 gal./hour, electric will be less. The best strategy is to have a smaller tank with a higher FHR.

WATER HEATER ENERGY USE

Per the EPA, water heating is the second largest portion of your home energy use at 14%. This is behind home heating and cooling which consumes 46%, and a staggering half of this is being wasted due to air leaks in the home (discussed in the November article). See last month's article for tips on reducing water heating energy consumption or go to the link at the end of this article.

GAS TANKLESS VS TANK

Tankless heater PROs: save space, last two times longer, have an endless supply of hot water, no catastrophic failure (causing a flood), 97% efficient models, no water to keep constantly warm, sealed combustion (no threat of combustion gases entering the home) CONs: more expensive, (Continued on p. 9)

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Water Heaters

- Continued from p. 8 -

may be difficult to install due to side-wall venting requirement, condensate drain requirement (condensing models) (minor), must be sized correctly for the proper number of simultaneous faucets/showers operating (minor)

COMBUSTION SAFETY DANGERS

Although common in many homes, a natural draft gas water heater is the most susceptible appliance for combustion safety problems. It relies on combustion gases to naturally flow up and out the flue, but often the metal flues are not routed properly, the flue is back drafting when a strong ventilation device is turned on like a Viking style range hood, or there are other problems such as a partial chimney blockage or gas leaks. Dangerous natural or combustion gases enter the home as a result. An energy audit will identify these problems. We find combustion safety problems during energy audits in about 1 in 5 homes we work on. A natural draft water heater should be the LAST alternative/option during replacement decisions. Next month's article will go into more depth on the

common problems with combustion equipment and how to further protect you and your family.

CONCLUSION

If a replacement is warranted, a condensing tankless gas water heater is recommended for efficiency, longevity, combustion safety, etc. If your current heater is electric and gas is readily available in the home, consider converting to gas if you go with a tankless model. Otherwise, a hybrid electric is the next best option and dramatically more efficient than a standard electric storage model. For gas users, a natural draft gas storage tank model is the choice of last resort due to their lower efficiency and potential for combustion safety problems.

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=products.pr_where_money (the details on the home energy consumption

breakdown)

http://www.energysavers.gov/your_home/water_heating/index.cfm/mytopic=12770 (selecting a water heater)

http://www.energysavers.gov/your_home/water_heating/index.cfm/mytopic=13030 (low flow faucet aerators and shower heads, water heating blankets, pipe insulation, and water temperature)

http://www.energystar.gov/index.cfm?c=water_heat.pr_crit_water_heaters

(Energy Star water heater criteria)

<http://www.rinnai.us/tankless-water-heater> (tankless water heaters)

<http://www.geappliances.com/heat-pump-hot-water-heater> (hybrid electric water heaters)

About the author: Scott Donelson is a local resident, a BPI certified energy auditor, home energy consultant, and president of Home Energy Medics, www.MyEnergyMedics.com, an elite NoVA home Performance with Energy Star program participating company .

New Post Office Scheduled to Open in April



Parking around back

Construction continues at the new post office in the 1300 block of Fern Street (just across from the Costco tire center). The new post office will be located on the ground floor of the Millennium building and if all goes according to schedule, look for a grand opening in the middle of April. More details in the next newsletter.



For photos of the old post office and the new one, visit our Facebook group, [Aurora Highlands Civic Association](#).



Site of new post office—corner of 14th and Fern Streets

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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

Luna Moths Need Black Walnut, Hickory Trees and Dark Skies

Two decades ago when I moved to our house in Aurora Hills, a luna moth took up residence for a couple of days among the moon flowers and morning glories climbing up the bean trellis. Since I was new to Virginia as well as the neighborhood, I assumed luna moths were a common occurrence that I would be able to enjoy in my new home. That turned out not to be true, and I've only seen two, both more than a decade ago.



The luna moth, *Actias luna*, is a lime-green swallowtail with a wingspan of four and a half inches, making it one of the largest North American moths. Its preferred larval host trees in our area are the walnuts and hickories, but it will also use sweet gum and persimmon trees. Up north, they go for birch, alder and sumac. The trees are not damaged by the caterpillars. After eating their fill of leaves and transforming through five instars (life cycle phases or molts), the caterpillars drop to the ground at the base of the tree, wrap themselves in silk and leaf litter, and pupate.

Luna moths face many challenges to survival in the urban sprawl. They require dark skies to reproduce. They fly up to the tops of the host trees well after midnight to mate and lay eggs. There is evidence that the bright lights from streetlights and buildings interfere with the moth's ability to reproduce. They are also becoming endangered by the measures to control gypsy moths. While I haven't read anything about the effect of leaf collection on Lepidoptera, it seems logical to me that our obsession with raking, mowing

and blowing our yards clean has had the effect of sweeping away the pupated moths and butterflies as they undergo the miracle of metamorphosis at our feet. Finally, as our neighborhood's original native tree cover is aging and disappearing, we are not replacing them with the species that the local fauna require for food, shelter and reproduction. Maybe we can help keep these beauties around by planting native hosts, leaving some leaf litter each fall, especially at the base of walnuts, hickories and sweet gums, and turning off unnecessary lights at night.

For more information on native landscaping for wildlife, download a pdf of the brochure "Native Plants for Conservation, Restoration and Landscaping: Eastern Virginia Coastal Plain," a joint project of the Virginia Native Plant Society and the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation.

http://www.dcr.virginia.gov/natural_heritage/documents/cp_nat_plants.pdf



Arlington's Annual Tree Distribution

The annual spring tree distribution will become the fall tree distribution starting this year. The much anticipated event has coincided with Arbor Day and

Neighborhood Days for the past several years, but County staff and Tree Stewards decided that the young trees have a better survival rate if planted in the fall, when they can quickly go into dormancy after being planted, instead of having to face the hot, dry Virginia summers before their root systems have had a chance to develop. Check here for details in a few months.

Aurora Highlands Civic Association

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President – Michael Dowell
703-521-7739

Vice President – Nick Giacobbe
703-842-5441

2nd Vice President – Cory Giacobbe
703-842-5441

Treasurer / Membership – Brent Spence

Secretary – Jenny Lawhorn

Web Master – Jason Roberts

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

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Plant Liaison -Brad & Louise Garris -

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Urban Planning – Ted Saks

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Items for the Newsletter: Send items in e-mail messages (not attachments) to the newsletter editor, Cory Giacobbe:

AHCA.news@yahoo.com

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

AuroraHighlands.org

P.O. Box 25201 - Arlington, VA 22202

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.