

February 9, 2016

**Community Relations Committee Activities
July 2015 through January 2016**

Events/Community Service:

- **July 4 Parade and Picnic** – Key organizer Aki Peritz, Committee members, and many other non-Committee volunteers pulled off a grand celebration despite a morning of rain that cleared in time for the event to be held on the Lawton Center grounds. Complete with a reading of the Declaration of Independence, strolling minstrels, a fire truck, recycling efforts, and, as always, great food, the event was a huge success. About 550 residents and their guests attended.
- **Play Date in the Park** – On the Saturday, July 11, a Play Date for young children and their parents was held at the Leland Park playground. About 40 parents and children enjoyed this fun event, which featured bagels, coffee, and drinks.
- **Summer Concert and Good Eats** – This very well-received event was held on Sunday, July 19, on the Lawton Center grounds. In spite of the heat, about 200 residents enjoyed great music by the 60-member Rockville Concert Band and feasted on food from three popular food trucks. Tables and chairs allowed residents to eat and enjoy the music in the shade.
- **Rising Kindergarten/Primary School Play Date** – A first-time Play Date for rising kindergarteners and their parents and for parents and their children who were about to enter first and second grade met on Saturday, August 22, at the Lawton Center playground. About 15–20 families had the chance to share information about the transition to kindergarten. Bagels, donuts, coffee, and drinks were provided.
- **Discussion and Desserts #1** –Town resident Melanie Choukas-Bradley launched the first of this occasional series on Tuesday, September 29, in the Town Hall focusing on her journey from being a journalist to a naturalist and on Rock Creek Park. Despite a deluge of rain at the start of the event, about 30 residents attended and enjoyed wine with desserts. Melanie offered to lead a hike in Rock Creek Park next April.
- **Discussion and Desserts #2** – The second in this series, on Monday, October 5, featured a presentation by Town resident Joel Rubin on the Iran Nuclear Deal with a follow-up Q&A. An audience of 35 residents attended and enjoyed wine with desserts.
- **Breakfast and Tree Walk** – About 25–30 residents attended the Saturday, October 24, breakfast of bagels and coffee, followed by a tree walk led by Town Arborist Tolbert Feather. Residents not only got to learn about Town trees, but also got answers to their tree-related questions.
- **Movie Night for Families** – The very popular and often packed Movie Nights for Families were launched in November after the time change, featuring *Toy Story 1* on Friday, November 13; *Cloudy with a Chance of Meatballs* on Friday, December 11; and *Up* on Friday, January 8. These events start promptly with pizza, popcorn, and drinks. Adults must RSVP and accompany their children for the entire time.

- **Winter Outwear Clothing Drive** – From November 1 through January 31, the Committee, as it has done for several years, working with the Lawton Community Center, collected clean, gently-used or new warm coats, winter accessories, and heavy sweaters, pants, and socks to donate to Bethesda Cares and Interfaith Works, both serving persons in need. Bins were available in both the Town Hall and the Lawton Center. In all, Town staff made 10 trips, each with 4 filled bins, to the charities.
- **Thanksgiving Dinner Basket Drive** – For this annual tradition, 80 Montgomery County Public School needy families in eastern Montgomery County received overflowing boxes and bags of food and gift food cards for the Thanksgiving holiday weekend. Eighty-eight Town residents generously supported the purchase of more than 3,200 pounds of food and gift cards for these families served by the county’s Linkages to Learning program. The B-CC High School football team sorted, boxed, and bagged the food as part of their annual partnership with the Town. Approximately 40 Town artists of all ages decorated the lids of the boxes in the Lawton Center Art Room. Any funds donated over the cost of the food and the food gift cards were converted into gift cards to help families over the upcoming holidays.
- **Holiday Gift Drive** – Town residents were extremely generous this year, providing an overwhelming \$4,000 in donations to brighten the holidays for domestic violence victims and their children, who are clients of the Montgomery County Abused Persons Program and Chesapeake Counseling. Donations, primarily of gift cards, but also some checks, were made, along with the adoption by Town residents of nine families to receive gifts. This drive could not have occurred without the very generous effort, again this year, by former Committee member Cathy Wolf.
- **Round House Theatre Event** – Twenty-one residents enjoyed the play *Stage Kiss* on Thursday, December 10. Attendees paid a reduced price of \$30 per ticket.
- **Twentieth Annual Holiday Buffet for Seniors and Retirees** – This long-standing Town luncheon tradition was held on Wednesday, December 16, in the Town Hall, attracting 35 appreciative residents.
- **Movie Nights for Grown-Ups** – The first showing featured the captivating movie *Finding Vivian Maier* on Friday, January 15, with about 45 residents attending. Food and wine were served.
- **Re-Gifting Party** – New this year, this event was scheduled for Sunday, January 24, with residents being asked to bring a wrapped gift that they did not like and exchange it for one they did. Unfortunately, thanks to the two-foot snowstorm, the event had to be cancelled. The Committee hopes to run it next year.
- **Magic Show** – The Michael Chamberlain Magic Show on Friday, February 5, was a huge success with roughly 80 adults and children filling the Town Hall. Pizza and beverages were served.

Special Project:

- **Town Centennial** – After much discussion, the Committee decided that a separate committee was needed to organize all the projects and events for the upcoming 2018

Town Centennial. Committee Liaison, Al Lang, agreed to approach the Town Council to request the formation and appointment of such a committee.

Communications:

- **Discussion on Improving Town Communications** – Town resident Aaron Presnall, a political economist specializing in telecommunications and participatory politics, met with the Committee at its January meeting for more than an hour to brainstorm ideas for improving Town communications to and from residents. At the February meeting, five members volunteered to consolidate the list of suggestions for future discussion.
- **New Website Feature** – Thanks to Committee input, Town events are now featured on the front page of the Town website.
- **Additional Event Advertising** – To help residents keep abreast about future events, flyers announcing Town events are now posted at the entry to the Town Hall and in the locked bulletin board outside. In addition, at each event we are handing out flyers announcing upcoming events.
- **Event Survey** – At most events, those attending are now being asked to fill out a very brief survey asking for feedback on the event and ideas for future events. The flyer also includes space for an e-mail address to sign up for the Town Crier.
- **Welcome Package** – At its February meeting, seven Committee members agreed to meet to come up with a draft design of what might be included in a Welcome Package for new residents and others on request.

February Events:

- **Movie Night for Families** –This month's feature will be *Finding Nemo* on Friday, February 12, at its new time of 5:45 PM.
- **Discussion & Desserts #3** –Town resident Aki Peritz will present on ISIS on Thursday, February 18. Desserts and wine will be served.
- **Town Chili Dinner** –The annual Town Chili Dinner at the Chevy Chase Elementary School will be held on Sunday, February 21. The event will feature the popular ice cream sundae bar and a puppet show for children. Residents are encouraged to leave donations (checks or cash) for the Manna Food Center, which works to meet the needs of more than 78,000 county residents who experience hunger and food insecurity.