

HILLBROOK HILITES



Hillbrook-Tall Oaks Civic Association (HTOCA) Newsletter

January 2022

CELEBRATING THE HOLIDAYS AND RINGING IN 2022 THROUGHOUT HILLBROOK TALL OAKS

Despite the global pandemic's continuing challenges, we still managed to pull off not one, but TWO outside events to celebrate the holidays these last few months!

First was the annual **Halloween Parade & Party and Oktoberfest**, which we held on actual Halloween Sunday. A record turnout of kids and adults decked out as Beetlejuice, Pennywise, Batman, Pac-Man, dinosaurs, foxes, mushrooms and more for the parade, which started at Dodson and made its way down to the Colburn Drive cul-de-sac. See [page 9](#) for photos. Special thanks to **Joanna Edie** for helping organize and stage the parade route, to **Stacey Merritt-Baker** for donating her trash and recycling bins, and to **The Women's Wellness Group** for donating their time and energy creating the kids' treat bags. Congratulations also to our Halloween contest winners:

- Guess the Pumpkin Weight: **Brian & Christina Kindlon**, 5013 Kingston
- Pumpkin Carving: **Betsy Martin & Gregg Smith**, 6822 Silver
- Home Decorating Co-Winners: **Chelsie Bain & Greg Noble**, 6821 Silver, and **Andrea & Tom Mulhearn**, 4502 Hillbrook

Our final event of 2021 was a new one we hope to make an annual tradition. **Liz Joy Tsegaye** approached the Board to organize a holiday event to celebrate the season, so we held the first-ever **Holiday Hot Cocoa & Bonfire Event** on Sunday, December 19, in **Dann Winter's** driveway on Kingston. See [page 3](#) for a full recap and photos from this festive first-timer, which included a bonfire, hot cocoa, **Women's Wellness Group**-donated kids' treat bags, and a visit from the Annandale Volunteer Fire Department.

And congratulations to the winner of the annual Holiday Decorating Contest:

- **Elizabeth and Daniel Semere**, 4905 Dodson
- Honorable Mention: **Katie & Brian Clary**, 5104 Kingston

We are always looking for great ideas for new events and groups — and great people to help organize them. For more information or to get involved, email hillbrooktalloaks@gmail.com or check out our Facebook Group: Hillbrook Tall Oaks Civic Association.



In This Issue...

- New Garden Club Takes Root
- Holiday Event Recap & Photos
- Know Thy (New) Neighbors
- Women's Wellness Group Update
- Giving Thanks Event Recap
- Neighborhood Safety Ideas
- Family Turkey Trot
- Halloween Photos... *and more!*

NEIGHBORHOOD GARDEN CLUB TAKES ROOT

With the eager support of the HTOCA Board and several gardener neighbors, the Hillbrook-Tall Oaks Garden Club has launched and is growing.

Here is Group Organizer **Betsy Martin's** update:

We held our third monthly meeting in December and have been having a delightful time. Each meeting has been about six folks, with a great mix of new and experienced gardeners. Topics have included:

- Plant identification and care
- Garden bed prep and design
- Overwintering potted plants
- Community tree planting and invasive control projects
- Spring garden tours
- Upcoming guest speaker invites



Some of the long-time neighborhood residents have shared interesting stories about the neighborhood back in the day, which have been very informative and entertaining – legacy gardens that are still thriving as well as some lost beauties.

We decorated the Hillbrook neighborhood entrance sign ([see page 1](#)) for the holiday and will do so for the seasons coming up. Did you know that there used to be a Tall Oaks Neighborhood sign on Dodson Drive? If you have a picture of it, please send it along!

We meet in a member's home on the second Wednesday of each month at 7pm. Upcoming plans include seed and plant swaps, a visit from a local Master Gardener and joint spring clean-ups.

As the weather warms up, we may change the meeting time to daylight hours, maybe Saturday mornings, to visit members' gardens to enjoy and share questions and advice on locale, as it were.

Please join us at our **next meeting on Wednesday, January 12**, to meet some amazing neighbors and share tips and favorite resources for simplifying garden maintenance and to learn more about our beautiful neighborhood and how to be good stewards.

Betsy Martin, Garden Club Organizer

571-242-5873

betsybmartin@gmail.com

FIRST HOLIDAY EVENT WAS ON FIRE

The first-ever Holiday Hot Cocoa & Bonfire Event took place on Sunday, December 19, on Kingston Drive near the intersection of Silver Lane.

Here is Organizer **Liz Joy Tsegaye's** recap and photos:

Thank you to everyone who joined us for this festive holiday event!

We had a great turn out on a cold Sunday evening with lots of treat bags organized by the **Women's Wellness Group**, hot cocoa and holiday cheer.

The Annandale Volunteer Fire Department made an appearance with one of its ambulances. Anyone who wanted could climb through, explore the truck, and some lucky ones even got to honk the horn!

It was a great way to gather one last time in 2021 and spend some outdoor time together to celebrate the season.

Special thank you for **Dann Winters** for allowing us to gather in his driveway in order to safely have a firepit once the sun went down. **Thank you again and we hope to continue to have a year-end gathering in 2022!**



Questions?

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KNOW THY (NEW) NEIGHBORS: MEET KAREN GRUNSTRA, LARRY KIM & EGGROLL

Eight new neighbors decided to make the Hillbrook Tall Oaks neighborhood home in 2021, continuing the wave of record move-ins we experienced throughout 2020.

Karen Grunstra, Larry Kim and their two-year-old American Bulldog, **Eggroll (below right)**, arrived in July 2021. Karen, who is also a new Hillbrook-Tall Oaks Civic Association (HTOCA) Board Member, shared this update:

Where are you originally from?

“I grew up in Northern New Jersey and have lived in the DMV for a decade, most recently in the City of Alexandria. Larry is an Annandale native and excited to be back in his hometown.”

Any interesting memories from living here?

“We love how friendly our neighbors are and how active the community is! In particular, I am loving the Women’s Wellness Group and the newly revived Gardening Club. Both offer a great way to meet new people and feel more at home here in Hillbrook Tall Oaks.

One of my favorite memories so far is when my awesome neighbor, **Katie Clary**, invited me to join a night of wine tasting, a summer Women’s Wellness Group activity, and I got to meet a dozen or more neighbors, including **Betsy Martin**, the leader of the Gardening Club. It was meant to be!”

What's your favorite part about living here?

“When we were hunting for our first home, it was important to us that we have a generous fenced-in yard and be close to family and work downtown (for when the new-normal arrives!).

We are thrilled to have a safe place for Eggroll to run and play and enough space to host get together with friends and family. I am excited to tackle the blank slate that is our backyard and plant my first vegetable garden this upcoming spring. Larry loves how close he is to the local fishing holes throughout the county.”

What advice do you have for your fellow residents?

“Say hello and get involved. We are often out on our driveway playing a round of HORSE at our basketball hoop or out for a walk with Eggroll or one of our foster pups. Please stop by for a chat!”



GET SOCIAL WITH HTOCA !

We have created a group on Facebook: www.facebook.com/groups/htoca.

The group will serve as HTOCA’s official Facebook channel for announcements, so please join us for the latest news, community events and other happenings around the neighborhood. **We welcome posts from neighbors in this new group!**

WOMEN'S WELLNESS GROUP SETS THE PACE FOR FUN, FITNESS AND FRIENDSHIP

The **Hillbrook Tall Oaks Women's Wellness Group**, which exists to build community with a focus on wellness, has had an awesome 2021. Here is Group Leader **Alisha Martinez's** 2021 recap:

The Women's Wellness Group offered a record-breaking 34 workouts, including challenges, yoga and cardio classes, a friendly Olympic competition, and neighborhood walks. Several women joined us for their first workout in 2021. We also want to give a shoutout to neighbor **Katie Clary** for clocking in 60 workouts since our inception in March 2019. Great work, all!

The Wellness group also hosted four social gatherings in 2021. They enjoyed breakfast and mimosas at a Women's Appreciation Brunch this spring at **Alisha's** place, a Summer Pool Party at **Sara Peters'** home, and a Wine Tasting at **Katie's**. The group contributed 48 Halloween Treat Bags to Oktoberfest for the kids in the neighborhood (*pictured below*), and another several dozen for our first Holiday Bonfire Event.

Thank you to **Joanna Edie** for leading dozens of yoga classes, neighbors who have led workouts and challenges, and to all who have supported the wellness group for the last three years. Thanks also to the Hillbrook Tall Oaks Civic Association for supporting us!

We hope everyone had a joyous holiday season with family and friends. We look forward to connecting with everyone in the new year! If you would like to participate, volunteer, or join in any of the fun, please contact **Alisha Martinez** (alishakmartinez@gmail.com). Walks and yoga classes will start back up in the spring when the weather gets a little warmer - stay tuned. Happy New Year!!



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SPIRIT OF GIVING DRIVE A WILD SUCCESS FOR ANNANDALE HIGH SCHOOL'S FOOD PANTRY

The generous neighborhood residents of Hillbrook Tall Oaks helped contribute more than 400 items in just two weeks to the Annandale High School (AHS) Food Pantry as part of our second giving event in 2021, The Spirit of Giving Food Drive.

Co-organizers **Laurelie Wallace and Katie Clary** provided this recap:



“Thank you, residents of Hillbrook Tall Oaks, for participating in this great cause and supporting those in our community! Our community hosted four drop-off sites to collect a variety of needs for the more than 65% of AHS students and their family members who experience food insecurity.

The food pantry, which just celebrated its third year of serving members of the AHS community, offers bi-monthly family distributions ([Annandale High School PTSA - Fairfax County, VA - AHS Pantry Distribution Dates \(membershiptoolkit.com\)](#)) as well as twice-weekly student distributions, emergency needs and gift cards for emergency situations.

It also partners with Food for Others and Fairfax Diaper as well as other community businesses, neighborhoods, girl scout troops and churches. The pantry is solely supported through monetary and in-kind, non-perishable food and pantry item donations.

We are planning another “Make All Residents Charitable Heroes (MARCH) giving event in a few months for more information or to volunteer.”

JOIN OUR MONTHLY BOARD MEETINGS!

Did you know that five — count 'em, FIVE — new HTOCA Board Members joined us this year? This includes new Treasurer **Bob Selim** as well as **Chelsie Bain, David Decker, Karen Grunstra** and **Clausen Krzywicki**. They simply raised their hand and volunteered.

Our monthly virtual Board meetings, typically held the second Thursday evening, are open to all neighborhood residents. Interested in starting a group or an event? Want to know the latest neighborhood happenings? Just curious? Join us! Contact hillbrooktalloaks@gmail.com for more information, including confirmed meeting times and dial-in information.

WORKING TOGETHER TO KEEP OUR NEIGHBORHOOD SAFE

New HTOCA Board Member **David Decker** submitted this article:

We are all fortunate to live in a beautiful, peaceful community here in Hillbrook Tall Oaks with its quiet streets and park-like setting.

We are also living in a time of increasing crime around us in the wider Annandale area, and our neighborhood is certainly not immune to this unfortunate element of modern life. While crime prevention is the role of the Fairfax County police, officers cannot be everywhere. They need our eyes and ears, and our awareness is particularly important now given current reports of FCPD staffing shortages at the same time that the county is experiencing rising crime rates.

So as we go for jogs, walk our dogs and stroll with the kids, what should we do if we see suspicious activity or something that just doesn't "feel right"? The Fairfax County Police Department recommends the following:

- **DO** take note of as many details as you safely can, such as the description of the activity, the time of the day, the location, and any descriptive details of the individual(s) involved.
- **DO** note vehicle descriptions and license plate numbers, as well as any other observations that may help officers locate the individuals of concern.
- **DO NOT** attempt to confront or challenge those suspected of engaging in criminal activity. That is the job of the police. Stay safe.
- **CALL** the Fairfax County Police non-emergency number to report what you have seen: (703) 691-2131. If what you are observing constitutes an emergency situation, call 911.

The HTOCA Board is working with Fairfax County to reactivate a Neighborhood Watch program in 2022, which we will share more information on in the new year. In the meantime, let's continue to enjoy our beautiful neighborhood and at the same time, help each other keep it safe and secure.



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THE MONTESSORI SCHOOL OFFERS HOLIDAY WISHES

The Montessori School of Northern Virginia (MSNV) would like to extend warm holiday greetings to the Hillbrook-Tall Oaks community.

We would also like to thank our neighbors for working with us on our mobile vaccination events that required street parking during 2021. We appreciate your patience and cooperation as we work to keep our students, faculty, and staff safe and healthy. Happy new year from MSNV!



FAMILY'S TURKEY TROT GOES COMMUNITY-WIDE



The **Rossignol family's** annual Turkey Trot was extended to many neighborhood friends this past Thanksgiving.

The 0.9 mile fun run, which started on Dodson and circled Silver, Colburn and back up the Dodson hill, was a blast for the kids and burned a bit of energy before the big event. The kids enjoy a special medal ceremony after the run and enjoy some hot cocoa as well as driveway fun and games for all ages.

The neighborhood would like to turn the trot into a larger event in 2022, so Save the Date now for next Thanksgiving. Hopefully we can all celebrate annually!

- **Joanna Rossignol**
4910 Dodson Drive

HALLOWEEN & OKTOBERFEST IN PHOTOS

Here are some photos of our parade and contest winners. Congratulations to all who participated!



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