

HILLBROOK HILITES



Hillbrook-Tall Oaks Civic Association (HTOCA) Newsletter

January 2021

FALL AND WINTER EVENTS A HOLIDAY HIT; MORE COMMUNITY EVENTS PLANNED

2020 was certainly a year like no other. After we took a breath (and a few weeks) to collect ourselves back in early March, the Hillbrook-Tall Oaks Civic Association (HTOCA) determined it would not let a global pandemic stop us from serving neighbors and injecting a little bit of fun into our year. In fact, we have had one of the more active years in recent history.

Thanks to the wonderful ideas and can-do spirit of many neighborhood volunteers, we kept up the active pace this fall and over the holiday season.

One highlight: Bringing back an annual favorite: the Halloween Parade, Party and Oktoberfest held on - what else? Halloween. With careful consideration given to social distancing, mask-wearing and other CDC protocols, we safely hosted our one and only in-person social event in 2020! Special thanks to **Alisha Martinez and the Women's Wellness Group** for making this day special for neighborhood kids and adults alike.

We also sponsored what we hope becomes a new tradition: Holiday decorating contests. Neighbors brought out their competitive spirit - and a whole lot of lights! - to showcase their creativity. With so many entries spread across Hillbrook and Tall Oaks, it was great to see your community spirit on full display! Neighbors voted for the following winners, who each received a \$25 gift card to a local business:

Best Pumpkin Decoration: **Joanna & Clint Edie**, 5101 Dodson Drive

Best Halloween Decoration: **Joe and Catrina Lillis**, 6900 Cherry Lane

Best Holiday Decoration: **David & Cara Cook**, 6924 Cherry Lane

Special mention goes to: **Greg Noble & Chelsie Bain**, 6821 Silver Lane

Thanks to all residents who participated! For those who didn't enter but had Halloween and holiday decorations, thanks for raising our spirits. It helped make the neighborhood festive!

If you have any ideas for similar contests or events during the winter or spring, please contact us at hillbrooktalloaks@gmail.com.



In This Issue...

- Fall and Holiday Events Recap
- Know Thy (New) Neighbors: Sara Peters and Mark Gannon
- M.A.R.C.H. Charity Drive
- Annandale High School PTSA Updates
- Women's Wellness Group
- County Zoning Initiative Issues
- Recycling & Yard Waste Updates
- January: Radon Testing Month
- Little Pantry Opens Near Library
- Protect Your Trees from Ivy

And more!

KNOW THY (NEW) NEIGHBORS: MEET SARA PETERS AND MARK GANNON



Photo courtesy of Sara Peters

Have you noticed a lot more for-sale signs and moving trucks in recent months? The Welcome Committee visited a record number of new residents in 2020: **25 new neighbors in the last 12 months, to be exact!** Sara Peters and Mark Gannon are just two of the new residents now calling Hillbrook-Tall Oaks home.

How long have you lived in Hillbrook-Tall Oaks?

We just moved here - in July 2020.

Where are you originally from?

Sara is from Tupelo, Mississippi and has been in the DC area since 2003. Mark grew up nearby, in Bethesda, MD.

Where did you meet?

We first met when working at the same law firm in DC. Now Mark is teaching English and coaching lacrosse and football at St. Stephen's and St. Agnes Middle School. Sara is working for the House Appropriations Committee.

Any interesting memories so far?

We have loved seeing the Monarch butterflies, chipmunks, foxes, deer, and other critters. On the flip side, our tomatoes disappeared the day we planted them!

What's your favorite part about living here?

Nature, large trees, friendly neighbors, and the space of our house! We moved from a 1-bedroom apartment in Arlington, where we were both working from home with no outdoor space. It's nice to have more space, especially this year!

What advice do you have for your fellow residents?

We appreciate all the help we have already received from our neighbors. Any other advice is welcome!

We are so happy to have our new home and to be part of such a friendly and welcoming neighborhood. If you see us out, please say hello - we'd love to meet you.

New to the neighborhood? Know someone who is? Need to update your info?

Please email hillbrooktalloaks@gmail.com to send your contact information so we can include you in neighborhood communications.

M.A.R.C.H. Charity Event Planned

Did you know that more than 60% of Annandale High School students participate in the federally-funded free and reduced lunch program?

According to Norma Foti, president of the Annandale High School (AHS) PTSA, there are many families and children in need in our own community. Foti also runs the AHS Food Pantry, which provides non-perishable and some perishable food and household items. The pantry also accepts gift cards and money.

In a joint effort for our neighborhood, HTOCA Board member **Laurelie Wallace** and Women's Wellness Group member **Katie Clary** are planning a Spring Cleaning drive to help "Make All Residents Charitable Heroes" (M.A.R.C.H.).

To support the AHS Pantry, we will be collecting items from March 1-17 (through St. Patrick's Day). Our theme will be cleaning supplies and household items, including green items. We will collect any items residents choose to donate.

Suggested items include (but are not limited to): disinfecting wipes, all-purpose cleaners, sponges, paper towels, laundry detergent, dish detergent, liquid soap, hand sanitizer; and personal hygiene products such as shampoo/conditioner, body soap, toothbrushes/toothpaste, toilet paper, diapers and feminine hygiene products. We encourage neighbors to give what they can.

While we will accept any items you choose to donate, please keep in mind that the pantry cannot accept anything that is past its expiration date. Keep an eye out for more details coming from hillbrooktalloaks@gmail.com with more information over the coming weeks, including drop-off locations across the neighborhood.

In the meantime, please visit <https://annandalehsptsa.membershiptoolkit.com/ahspantry> for more information on the critical role the Pantry serves.

For more information about the March drive for our neighborhood, please reach out to laurelie.wallace@gmail.com or claryfamily24@gmail.com.



Questions?

Need to Pay Your Annual \$25 Dues?

Want to Get Involved?

HTOCA

PO Box 1112
Annandale, VA

22003-9112

Email:

hillbrooktalloaks@gmail.com

Visit our website:

www.HTOCA22003.org

Virginia General Assembly Now Open

It's back! The 2021 Session of the General Assembly began Wednesday, January 13, and runs through February 11. You can follow the legislative progress at <http://www.viriniageneralassembly.gov>. We encourage you to use your voice to share your thoughts and concerns on issues of interest to you.

And remember, in Virginia we have elections every year. The House is up for re-election.

ANNANDALE HIGH SCHOOL PTSA UPDATES

Extending the season of giving into the post-holiday months, **Tall Oaks resident and Annandale High School (AHS) PTSA VP of Membership Rai Kent shares updates on what the greater Atoms community has been up to, including several additional ways we can support the Atoms:**



Photo courtesy of Annandale High School PTSA

Greetings from the Annandale High School PTSA. We represent a wonderful and diverse community of more than 2,100 students and over 250 teachers, administrators, and support staff. We work hard to provide programs and activities that benefit these students, their parents, the staff, and our community.

We have hosted a fun trivia night, which we hope to do again and get more of the community to participate. We also organize a large, safe All-Night Graduation Celebration for seniors, provide a Food Pantry to those students and families most in need, and a lot of other events.

As mentioned on the previous page, our **AHS Food Pantry** is an important way for us to give back to students and their families who are most in need in our community. There are many ways that you can support the Food

Pantry: monetary donations via PayPal, fill a bag ready for distribution, shop our Amazon Wish List, or drop off donations at AHS during office hours.

We are currently teaming up with the AHS Athletic Boosters in selling **limited edition, breathable Atoms logo masks** like the one pictured above. Masks are \$12 online and available for pickup at AHS. It is a must-have for current and past Atoms alike! For purchasing details, visit bit.ly/AtomsMask.

We are also partnering with **Papa Johns for a Pizza Night Fundraiser** that runs every Thursday through June. Use code AHS4010 to save 40% on your pizza on these fundraiser evenings.

Looking to donate to a charity? Consider donating to the **Annandale PTSA Nucleus Fund**. The fund is used to sponsor the many programs and activities offered by the PTSA. Donors will receive an email receipt for tax purposes. We also participate with Harris Teeter, Amazon Smiles, Shutterfly and FlipGive.

Wanting to donate time instead of money? **Volunteers are always welcome.** We need volunteers to help with All Night Graduation Celebration preparations, including a Decorations Chair and Mulch Sales Coordinator.

Interested in learning more? Check out our website at www.annandalehsptsa.org. You can also find us on Twitter @AtomsPTSA and "like" us on Facebook and Instagram. Upcoming PTSA meetings are scheduled for January 19th at 7:00 pm, and February 16th at 7:00 pm. Meetings are virtual; connection instructions are on our website.

Questions? Contact Rai Kent, VP of Membership, at membership.atoms.ptsa@gmail.com.

WOMEN'S WELLNESS GROUP IS HITTING ITS STRIDE

The Women's Wellness Group made the most out of 2020!

The group grew from a handful of people in 2019 to 40 members this past year, conducted two food drives to support the community, and held more than 120 workouts for the neighborhood.

Neighbors **Andrea Stanley** won the September Sweatfest Challenge and **Rai Kent** won the Holiday Fitness Challenge. The group also hosted two virtual activities for kids - cake decorating for July 4th and a holiday crafts class - and its first-ever gift exchange, where group members exchanged YETI travel mugs, a wine and cheese basket, and other wonderful gifts. It was a tough year for everyone, but this community really rallied to make the best out of a difficult year.

So what's next in 2021? The group will be running a "Love Yourself" challenge in February and invites any female neighbor who'd like to join in the fun to participate.

The wellness group hosts weekly 45-minute classes that specialize in yoga and meditation as well as cardio, strength, and core. Classes are on Saturdays from 8:30 to 9:15 a.m., and take place virtually on Zoom between November and March, and outdoors at Poe Middle School between April and October.

It is free to participate and while equipment like a yoga mat and dumbbells are recommended, they are not required. The wellness group will have its first-ever barre class on January 30th and a challenge on February 27th, both led by neighbors.

Neighborhood women of all ages and skill levels are welcome to participate. We encourage everyone to come for what they can and have fun. **Please reach out to Alisha Martinez (alishakmartinez@gmail.com or 617-290-0728) for additional information, or check out the group's site: <https://sites.google.com/view/hillbrooktalloaks/home>.**

Questions?

Need to Pay Your
Annual \$25 Dues?

Want to Get Involved?

HTOCA

PO Box 1112
Annandale, VA

22003-9112

Email:

hillbrooktalloaks@gmail.com

Visit our website:

www.HTOCA22003.org



Photo courtesy of Alisha Martinez

COUNTY ZONING INITIATIVE RAISING CONCERNS

Fairfax has undertaken a major initiative known as zMod to modernize and organize the county's zoning ordinances, which have not been collectively addressed for almost 40 years. While the intent is to simplify language and presentation - not revise the substance - of these ordinances, at least one proposed amendment is proving to be controversial to single-family homeowners who believe revisions will undermine the one home-one family precept.

Questions surround what the Mason District Council (MDC), an organization of district homeowners and civic associations including HTOCA, terms as "proposed sweeping and controversial amendments to regulations" pertaining to Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs). The provision states that homeowners may create an ADU, which essentially is a separate unit with a kitchen within an existing home or property. These units, commonly referred to as "grandparent" units, are currently limited to relatives aged 55+ living with the homeowner, or a non-related person with a disability. Detached units are currently limited to properties of two acres or more; for properties with fewer than two acres, an ADU must be inside the home.

Under Fairfax County's current requirements, proposals for these additions require neighborhood notification and a public hearing. Under the proposed changes, Fairfax County would drop notification and hearing requirements as well as the requirement that ADUs house a relative or person with special disability. Some residents fear that this proposed change will create "boarding house" environments within single family home-zoned neighborhoods such as Hillbrook-Tall Oaks. An interior ADU effectively turns the single-family home into a duplex, while a standalone ADU adds a second home to the property, according to the MDC.

Given these concerns, the MDC opposes this provision. **You can find MDC's letter explaining its position in more detail on the HTOCA website here: <http://htoca22003.org/uploads/3/2/7/4/3274862/MDC-ZMOD-ADU%20Issue.docx>.** The letter contains links to more information as well as a survey to express your opinions on the matter.



IT'S ALMOST GIRL SCOUT COOKIE TIME!

The Girl Scout Cookie program is a fun way for girls to earn money to support their dreams.

When you make a Girl Scout Cookie purchase, you're helping the next generation of entrepreneurs get an important taste (no pun intended!) of what it takes to be successful: teamwork, planning, and a positive outlook. And because proceeds from your purchase stay local, you also help create positive change in your community by powering life-changing experiences for Girl Scouts all year long.

You can find cookies for sale at www.girlscouts.org or purchase from a local troop by contacting neighbor Wendy Reinoehl at wendyreinoehl@yahoo.com or 202-641-0933.

RECYCLING & YARD WASTE UPDATES

Recycling - Recycling used materials is one way we can reduce unnecessary waste of natural resources and reduce energy consumption (and thus emission of carbon dioxide and other “greenhouse gases”). Fairfax County makes this easy by providing weekly curbside pickup of recycled materials, using the blue 96-gallon carts provided to each household in our neighborhood.

There have been several recent changes in the County’s policies for what materials can - and cannot - be placed in these recycling bins. Placing unacceptable materials in recycling bins can cause contamination or other problems during processing, which may result in large volumes of recyclable items being treated as regular trash instead and diverted to landfills. If you have any question about whether a particular item can or cannot be recycled, you can find additional information at <http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/publicworks/recycling-trash/residential-materials>.

So what’s changed?

- **Glass** can no longer be placed in the blue bins for curbside recycling. Glass is infinitely recyclable, but broken glass can make an entire truckload of recycled materials unusable. Instead, Hillbrook Tall Oaks residents can recycle their glass in the purple glass-only recycling bin in the parking lot of the Mason District Government Center at 6507 Columbia Pike. Fairfax is the only county in our region that recycles glass, which it turns into construction materials and other innovative uses. There are also youthful neighborhood entrepreneurs who are willing to pick up your glass on a regular basis for a fee.
- **Plastic grocery bags** cannot be placed in the blue bins, but they can be recycled by taking them back to Giant, Lidl, Target, and other local retail stores. COVID-19 precautions have disallowed reusable shopping bags temporarily, resulting in a huge increase in our use of single-use plastic bags. Through a partnership with Winchester-based **Trex**, these bags can now be recycled and turned into durable park benches and plastic decking.



Yard waste - Our neighborhood’s “tall oaks” and lawns add beauty and value to our community. They also generate a lot of yard waste that Fairfax County does not allow in the curbside-pickup trash or recycling bins. From March to December, the county will pick up yard waste in *compostable paper bags* designated for yard waste - **but not plastic bags** - or in durable containers that can be dumped curbside. Please ensure your contractors know about this change, too. Some additional county guidelines:

- Small quantities of yard waste can be tied in bundles, no longer than 4 feet in length, and no more than 50 pounds in weight
- Branches must not exceed 6 inches in diameter
- Yard waste must not include soil, mulch, sod, stumps, whole trees, large branches or limbs
- For more than 10 bags or 4 tied bundles, contact the County for a special pick-up. Each household is eligible for 5 free special collections per calendar year

The Fairfax Recycles Newsletter is designed for anyone who wants to reduce waste and live more sustainably. You can read the latest newsletter and sign up for updates and notifications at <https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/publicworks/recycling-trash/subscribe-fairfax-recycler>.

Questions?

Need to Pay Your Annual \$25 Dues?

Want to Get Involved?

HTOCA
PO Box 1112
Annandale, VA

22003-9112

Email:
hillbrooktal-loaks@gmail.com

Visit our website:
www.HTOCA22003.org



Did you know that radon gas is the second-leading cause of lung cancer in the U.S. after smoking? Caused by the breakdown of naturally occurring radioactive elements in the soil & rocks, radon gas is colorless and odorless, making it impossible to detect without purchasing a specialized test kit.

The EPA recommends testing for radon once every two years, as levels can fluctuate year to year. Fairfax County is classified by the EPA as Zone 1 (high) radon risk, which means higher risk of unsafe radon levels (over 4pCi/l.) Radon levels can vary from block to block and even house to house, so even if your neighbor's level is low, yours may not be.

January is National Radon Action month. For Commonwealth residents, the Virginia Department of Health is offering radon test kits for \$3, which includes shipping and laboratory fees. You can find more information here about the program: <https://www.vdhradon.org/>. Other sellers such as Amazon also offer both short-term (2-7 day) and more accurate long-term (> 90 day) tests. If you find unsafe levels in your home, a certified installer can install a radon mitigation system in your home for \$800-\$1,300. Find a certified installer here: <https://www.vdh.virginia.gov/radiological-health/indoor-radon-program/testing/>.

NEW COMMUNITY DIRECTORY IS HERE

We hope you are enjoying the latest edition of the Community Directory. The December 2020 version is a result of countless hours of effort from volunteers who canvassed the neighborhood - both virtually and in person - to ensure we have the latest, greatest information for the more than 270 households that call Hillbrook-Tall Oaks home.

A whopping 11 neighbors and area businesses purchased ads to promote their services in this edition. Please be sure to check out our generous advertisers as we all think (and purchase) local! Special thanks also to **Earle Whitmore** for funding the printing of this year's directory, as she has so generously in years past, and to **Terry Boyd, Alisha Martinez, Al Sample and Laurelie Wallace** for volunteering their time to find advertisers and coordinate logistics.

If you need a copy (limit one per household) or want to update your contact information, please reach out to hillbrooktalloaks@gmail.com.

The Community Directory is just one more way that HTOCA serves you, our neighbors and residents. We not only throw fun parties and organize special events, but we also serve the neighborhood's interests by advocating for you at monthly HTOCA Board meetings open to all (and now held virtually), Mason District Council meetings, and representation at Fairfax County Federation meetings.

Have you paid your annual \$25 dues yet? Visit www.htoca22003.org to pay via PayPal or send a check to HTOCA, P.O. Box 1112, Annandale, VA, 22003.

LITTLE PANTRY NOW OPEN NEAR LIBRARY

You may have noticed a red box near the entrance of George Mason Regional Library.

Sponsored by the Friends of Mason Library, the Free Little Pantry provides complimentary items for less-fortunate neighbors and residents.

The Little Pantry is currently accepting new and unopened donations of:

- Non-expired, non-perishable food items (please, no glass)
- Toiletries
- School supplies

Its motto: Take what you need, and leave what you can.



PROTECT YOUR TREES FROM IVY

It is common to see English ivy crawling up trees in Hillbrook-Tall Oaks. Allowing ivy to encroach on your tree, however, puts it at risk. Doing nothing could result in the homeowner having an expensive tree removal bill.

Allowing ivy around and on your trees can deprive them of nutrients that would otherwise be available to nourish them. Ivy can also be a vector for disease and pests that can harm trees. Ivy can grow so dense that it weakens tree limbs. The Davey Tree Expert Company recommends removing ivy.

Use pruning shears to cut ivy at the base of the tree. Where there are thick ivy veins on a tree, take a large flat-blade screwdriver to pry the ivy off the tree near the base of the tree. Be sure to cut or break the stem completely; the ivy will then die. Rake ivy stems and leaders out of your lawn and garden beds with a heavy steel rake. Ivy can be killed by spraying it with white vinegar (available in gallon jugs at the grocery store), but take care to avoid hitting other plants.

SHAPE FAIRFAX FUTURE BUS SERVICE

The Fairfax County Department of Transportation (FCDOT) continually evaluates bus service on the Fairfax Connector to ensure it is responding to the needs of the public. As outreach on the 10-year Transit Strategic Plan (TSP) begins, FCDOT wants your input to create a bus system that works for everyone.

Visit <https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/connector/tsp> to share your comments and ideas, which will be **accepted until February 19, 2021**. There will also be three online community input meetings and an online survey available to provide your comments on Fairfax Connector bus service throughout the county.

Questions?

Need to Pay Your
Annual \$25 Dues?

Want to Get Involved?

HTOCA

PO Box 1112
Annandale, VA

22003-9112

Email:

[hillbrooktal-
loaks@gmail.com](mailto:hillbrooktal-loaks@gmail.com)

Visit our website:

www.HTOCA22003.org