



# VILLAGE VOICE

JULY 2024

CHEERS TO 15 YEARS

## MVAH CELEBRATES OUR 15TH ANNIVERSARY!



### MESSAGE FROM PRESIDENT MICHELE CALHOUN

“Feeling gratitude and not expressing it is like wrapping a present and not giving it.”

— William Arthur Ward

We all face personal challenges, sometimes longer than hoped, sometimes harder than expected. During these times it is understandable to be more self-absorbed and not recognize all the little things family, friends and neighbors do to help us through a challenge. We are halfway through 2024. Reflect on these past 6 months. Was there a MVAH volunteer who did something extraordinary to help you; a volunteer especially caring and sensitive to your situation; one that went above and beyond to help support you or one that is just always there for you?

In a few sentences, tell us who it was and what they did that you want to recognize them. Send your thoughts to [info@mountvernonathome.org](mailto:info@mountvernonathome.org) or call 703-303-4060. Have a happy and safe summer!



### MVAH Walking Group



(L to R) Carol Comlish, Michele Calhoun, Dave Prescott, Pat Wessel, Alica Outerbridge, Mary Sabulsky, and Cher Terry enjoyed the fresh air and exercise on June 21.

### HAIL AND FAREWELL

#### Birthday Greetings to MVAH Members

#### MEMBER BIRTHDAYS

- 7/1 Jane Barnes
- 7/9 Susan Reardon
- 7/10 Janet Kenney
- 7/10 Ken Wessel
- 7/15 Paula Lettice
- 7/19 Richard Crispino
- 7/19 Doug Kleine
- 7/21 Flo Perry
- 7/22 Paul Krizek
- 7/24 Mary Anson
- 7/24 Mel Goodweather
- 7/26 Pris Bornmann

#### Birthday Greetings to MVAH Volunteers

- 7/11 Shanna Shurin
- 7/15 Lydia Spaulding

Please note that ALL requests for volunteer services must go through the MVAH office.

Please be sure to use this contact information when making any requests:

[info@mountvernonathome.org](mailto:info@mountvernonathome.org)  
[volunteercoordinator@mountvernonathome.org](mailto:volunteercoordinator@mountvernonathome.org)  
 Phone: 703-303-4060

## Mount Vernon at Home

### TO REACH US

Phone: 703-303-4060

Office hours: M-F, 10:00 am–4:00 pm  
info@mountvernonathome.org  
https://www.mountvernonathome.org

### MAILING ADDRESS

Mount Vernon at Home  
P.O. Box 7493  
Alexandria, VA 22307

### OFFICE ADDRESS

Sherwood Regional Library  
2501 Sherwood Hall Lane, 2nd Floor  
Alexandria, VA 22306

To become a *member*, go to  
www.mountvernonathome.org and  
click on “Membership”.  
Dues can be paid online via PayPal  
or call our office at 703-303-4060.

To become a *volunteer*, go to  
www.mountvernonathome.org and  
click on “Get Involved” or  
call our office at 703-303-4060.

To *support* our Village, go to  
www.mountvernonathome.org and  
click on “Donate.” Mount Vernon at  
Home is a 501(c)(3) charitable  
organization. Your tax-deductible  
gifts are welcome!

### MOUNT VERNON AT HOME LEADERS

Kathy Dismukes, *Executive Director*  
Dave Prescott, *Volunteer Coordinator*

### BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Michele Calhoun, Board President  
Kathi Hanrahan, Vice President  
Tim Wagner, Treasurer  
Brendan Power, Secretary

Maribeth Bersani  
MaryAnne Beatty  
Jane Earley  
Evan Kaufman  
Robert Kuletz  
Paula Lettice (Past President)  
Greg Lukens  
Barbara Mann  
Deborah Matthews  
Herb Riggs  
Kamla Rodriguez  
Karen Corbett Sanders  
Susan Wuchinich

## Message from Executive Director, Kathy Dismukes



As I settle in to my position, I am still having a lot of “firsts.” I attended my first member lunch, drove a member for the first time, put together my first newsletter ☺, and recruited my first volunteer. I’m connecting with other villages in our region, and I especially appreciate the information and encouragement provided by the executive directors of our closest neighbors, Wendy Zenker (Arlington Neighborhood Village), and Cele Garrett (At Home in Alexandria).

I’m also connecting with a new coalition called the Virginia Villages Collective. Comprised of the 18 different villages in Virginia, the group has already approached State Senator Scott Surovell (34th District) and Majority Leader of the Senate. Surovell will host a call in July to learn more about the work of Virginia’s villages and how to support it.

I have a lot of things on my list, and an important next step is to start introducing myself to our sponsors and meeting with prospective sponsors. I will have the guidance of our own Maribeth Bersani, chair of last month’s Celebrate! Gala and expert on aging. Check out her profile in the Meet the Board Director feature.

I’m more and more impressed with Mount Vernon at Home! We have almost 15 program events coming in July, so join in the fun!

All the best,  
Kathy

### Card & Game Night is a Winner!



Our first Card/Game night had a small turnout, but the group enjoyed playing Rack-O, an easy card game new to several members who picked it up quickly. Everyone left a winner after a few hours of relaxed playing and good conversation. If you like cards and games, put July 17th, 4:00 - 7:00 pm on your calendar. Look for details in the weekly email “blast.”



(L to R) Keith Bea, Bill Mould (host),  
Brendan Power, Paula Lettice, Vicky Bea  
(not shown: Michele Calhoun)

Brendan Power said: “While playing Racko, the topic of conversation frequently turned to Broadway musicals, and I learned more than I ever knew before!”

### Paul Spring Lunch and a Movie



Members enjoyed lunch and the movie *Dunkirk* at Paul Spring Retirement Community (7116 Fort Hunt Rd, Alexandria) on June 19.

### JOYOUS MOMENTS

#### Happy Birthday (June 12) to Carol Comlish!



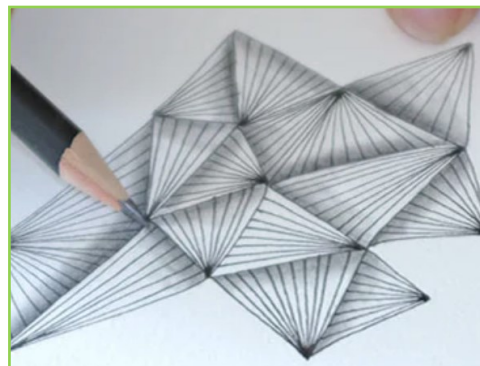
Caption from Carol: This is my daughter and granddaughter from California who came out to join me and my son and his children to celebrate my birthday. I'm now finally old enough to have lots of wisdom!



### Zentangle

Are you interested in attending a Zentangle introduction session? Those of us with no artistic training or skills can learn the basics of zentangling in one afternoon session. It is an easy-to-learn, relaxing, fun way to create beautiful images by drawing structured patterns. These patterns are called tangles. Tangles are created by a combination of dots, lines, simple curves and orbs. It is a tool for stress relief and builds present-moment awareness.

If you like zentangle art, it is a low-cost investment of just paper, pens, and pencils for you to continue on your own. If you are interested in learning about the basics, please send an email to [info@mountvernonathome.org](mailto:info@mountvernonathome.org) or call the MVAH office at 703-303-4060. If there is enough interest, MVAH will schedule a class in the near future.



## MEET BOARD DIRECTOR MARIBETH BERSANI

### Professional Background

I am one of those rare individuals lucky enough to have always known what I wanted to do



professionally. I started volunteering at a nursing home when I was a senior in high school and have worked with seniors for my entire career. My first paying position was as a legislative analyst for the New York State Assembly Committee on Aging. I then moved to the New York State Office for the Aging

where I held many different positions culminating in Executive Deputy Director of the Agency.

After 20 years with the state government, I moved to the private sector working for Sunrise Senior Living. I held many positions during my 10 years with that company but am most proud of opening and managing Sunrise of Alexandria on Duke Street.

The third leg of my career was with the assisted living trade association. This organization allowed me to pursue my love of advocacy and public policy and make meaningful legislative changes at both the federal and state levels. I work part time now for the National Foundation

to End Senior Hunger where I can continue to help seniors.

### What are Your Interests?

Volunteer work and “giving back” are particularly important to me. I have been involved with many of the nonprofits in Alexandria and find them rewarding. My other interests are staying active! I rarely drive and walk everywhere, which supports a healthy lifestyle by giving me my 10,000 steps a day and no stress from traffic! I love to cook and bake and try new recipes. I especially enjoy trying recipes from my grandmother’s old cookbook. I also love to travel and hope to find some new adventures this year.

### Why are you involved in MVAH?

My professional career has provided me with a wealth of knowledge about aging. My personal experience of caring for my parents provided me with the real-life experience of the challenges of growing older. I hope this experience can help MVAH accomplish the noble goal of helping seniors age with dignity and respect in their own homes.

## MVAH Book Group, June 25, 2024

Seven members participated in a lively discussion of comparative medicine, women's roles, banned books and socio-economic conditions, all related to our book selections. Our next book group meets July 23.

**Norma Brodsky** read *Only the Brave*, fiction, by Danielle Steele. Norma's selection covers efforts by non-Jews to help Jews during the Nazi era. It focuses particularly on the resistance of a doctor and his family to euthanizing Jewish patients. Norma liked this book a lot and recommends it.

**Alice Outerbridge** read *The Frozen River*, historical fiction, by Ariel Lawhon, which is set in Maine in the late 18th century, when Maine was still part of Massachusetts. The principal character is Martha, a literate and outstanding midwife, who keeps excellent records. As was common in those days, midwives often acted as coroner in small towns. A body is found in a frozen well following a brutal gang rape of the pastor's wife. Martha is called upon to assist in the investigation. Alice liked this book very much, noting that the best thing about it was the ability to go back in time and feel you were there.

**Cher Terry** read *Huck Finn*, classic fiction, by Mark Twain. Leaving an abusive home, Huck sets off on a raft down the Mississippi River, with Jim, an enslaved man who has escaped. Huck, who is barely literate, develops deep affection for Jim, who is of noble character and who deeply cares for his family. Over the years and for many different reasons, Huck Finn has been banned. Cher enjoyed the book once she figured out the dialect.

**Carol Mattaino** read *Heat and Light*, historical fiction, by Jennifer Haigh, which is set in a declining Pennsylvania coal mining town. When a large corporation says it has found natural gas in the town, it asks residents to lease for payment their properties to the company for drilling. Many residents see this as a great way to recover their dreams of economic success. The company proceeds with fracking on the leased lands, resulting in severe damage to the environment. Ultimately, those who leased their lands lost everything. Carol thought the book was worthwhile but probably not for everyone.

**Louise McLean** read *All for Nothing*, historical fiction, by Walter Kempowski. Set in eastern Germany in the waning days of WWII, the Nazis are retreating westward, while the Soviets push into Germany. Nazi government news was deliberately optimistic to avoid popular panic. Much of the book is set in a crumbling castle in East Prussia inhabited by, among others, a down-on-its-heels noble family. Louise liked the book and recommends it.

**Laurie Tracy** read *Destiny of the Republic*, non-fiction by Candice Millard. This is both a biography of President James Garfield, who had been born into poverty in Ohio and became our 20th President, and a sad tale of his assassination and death. Garfield was shot by a deranged man, but his bullet wounds were not fatal. He died of sepsis because his medical team rejected Dr. Joseph Lister's pioneering discoveries on sanitary medical practices. Laurie liked this book and recommends it.

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## MEMBER MUSINGS

### Reading is Rewarding

By Laurie Tracy, Book Group Leader

*Real Simple* magazine gives us many reasons why reading is important to human well-being. Thanks to Cher Terry, we have this link to the article: <https://www.realsimple.com/health/preventative-health/benefits-of-reading-real-books>

According to *Real Simple*, reading: increases intelligence, boosts brainpower, increases empathy, improves understanding of content, reduces the risk of Alzheimer's Disease, improves relaxation and sleep, and encourages life-long learning.

There is a debate about whether these benefits pertain equally to electronic and printed books. But as one of our members put it (thank you, Carol Mattaino): "I think the point is to read whatever turns you on, no matter where you get the words."



MVAH has its own book club that meets on Zoom the fourth Tuesday of the month for approximately one hour. In the MVAH book group, all participants read whatever they want and provide a brief overview of the book. All types of books from non-fiction, biography, romance, mystery and thriller, are welcome.

Participants like this varied format and many of us have gotten great recommendations for what we want to read next.

I hope you will join us!



### July Movie Group

July movies include *Dark Waters* and *Nyad*. The next Movie Group discussion will take place on Wednesday, July 10 at 3:00 pm by Zoom.

***Dark Waters*** (2019, Netflix) - Biographical Comedy/Drama. A tenacious attorney uncovers a dark secret that connects a growing number of unexplained deaths in West Virginia to one of the world's largest corporations. The story dramatizes Robert Bilott's case against the chemical manufacturer DuPont after they dumped several kilotons of toxic sludge in a nearby landfill. He learns the culprit is perfluorooctanoic acid (PFOA), widely used for Teflon nonstick frying pans and carpet flooring. Documents showed that DuPont had been running tests of the effect of PFOA for decades, finding that it causes cancer and congenital disabilities, but kept the findings private. (Rotten Tomatoes, 89%).

***Nyad*** (2023, Netflix) - Biographical Sports Drama. A remarkable true story of tenacity, friendship and the triumph of the human spirit, NYAD recounts a riveting chapter in the life of world-class athlete Diana Nyad. Three decades after giving up marathon swimming in exchange for a prominent career as a sports journalist, at the age of 60, Diana becomes obsessed with completing an epic swim that always eluded her: the 110-mile trek from Cuba to Florida. Extreme currents, sharks and jellyfish round out her challenges. Annette Bening and Jodie Foster received nominations for Best Actress and Best Supporting Actress. (Rotten Tomatoes, 85%)

## JULY UPCOMING PROGRAMS

Note that for all Zoom events, reminders and Zoom links will be sent out before the event. All RSVPs should be directed to our office at 703-303-4060 or [info@mountvernonathome.org](mailto:info@mountvernonathome.org). Please carpool when possible.

*Please note that Cheers and Conversations will take a break in the summer months and resume in September.*



**Thursday, July 4: Happy Independence Day!** Our office will be closed in observance of this holiday.

**Friday, July 5: Walking Group.** Meet at 9:30 am at Fort Hunt Park Picnic/Parking Lot A. Weather permitting.

**Monday, July 8: Program Committee Meeting.** Hosted by Kathi Hanrahan by Zoom at 2:00 pm.

**Tuesday, July 9: Group Lunch.** Meet at The Haven at 11:30 am. RSVP to our office.

**Wednesday, July 10: Movie Group.** Hosted by Kathi Hanrahan by Zoom at 3:00 pm. Assigned movies are *Dark Waters* (2019, Netflix) and *Nyad* (2023, Netflix). Note the date change.

**Friday, July 12: Walking Group.** Meet at Fort Hunt Park at 9:30 am, Picnic/Parking Area A. Weather permitting.

**Saturday, July 13: Timely Topics.** 11:00 am by Zoom. Virginia Hodgkinson is the current events discussion facilitator and Paula Lettice is the Zoom host.

**Wednesday, July 17: Lunch & Movie.** At Paul Spring Retirement Community. Lunch begins at 12:00 noon, followed the movie *The Boys in the Boat*. RSVP to the MVAH office.

**Wednesday, July 17: Card Playing Group.** 4:00 pm - 7:00 pm at Michele Calhoun's home. RSVP to the MVAH office.

**Friday, July 19: Walking Group.** Meet at 9:30 am at Fort Hunt Park Picnic/Parking Lot A. Weather permitting.

**Tuesday, July 23: Book Group.** Hosted by Laurie Tracy by Zoom at 3:00 pm. RSVP to [tracylauri@aol.com](mailto:tracylauri@aol.com).

**Tuesday, July 24: Timely Topics.** 4:00 pm by Zoom. Virginia Hodgkinson is the current events discussion facilitator and Paula Lettice is the Zoom host.

**Friday, July 26: Member Coffee.** 10:00 am at Mt. Vernon Country Club. Bring a friend, neighbor or family member. RSVP to the MVAH office.

**Friday, July 26: Walking Group.** New location for the last Friday of the month: Huntley Meadows Park, Cedar Trail. Meet in the parking lot at the Lockheed Blvd. entrance. Weather permitting.



## Community Events

Don't forget to check out July events at Sherwood Regional Library. Popular library events include Line Dancing, Chair Yoga, and Tai Chi classes, 1-on-1 Tech Tutor, and First Saturday Used Book Sale by the Friends of Sherwood Library. Also there is a Craft & Chat session on July 17. For a complete listing, view their monthly offerings at:

<https://librarycalendar.fairfaxcounty.gov/calendar?cid=6524&t=d&d=0000-00-00&cal=6524&audience=2039,2188&cm=3455&inc=0>

Positive Aging Community in Reston, VA offers a variety of on-demand recordings/podcasts and live and interactive discussions on topics especially for older adults. They are an excellent resource. Check out their website to sample some of their free offerings at:

<https://www.retirementlivingsourcebook.com/videos?q=proaging>



## CHANGE COMING TO FORT HUNT PARK

Since last year MVAH walkers have enjoyed walking the 1.3-mile “loop” and observing nature at Fort Hunt Park. Located at 8999 Fort Hunt Rd., Alexandria, the 136-acre park is home to mixed hardwood forests and open fields, providing a variety of habitats for birds and other wildlife.

Fort Hunt Park is also popular for picnics, concerts, sports, and more. The National Park Service is in the process of installing a new playground, which will be connected via a path from Pavilion A. The playground will open in September.

### Did you know?

Fort Hunt Park preserves the remains of the eponymous Fort Hunt, portions of which date to the time of the Spanish-American War. The park was named after Brigadier General Henry Hunt, who served as chief of artillery of the Army of the Potomac during the Civil War. Remains of several of the fort's original batteries may still be visited today.

The site began its existence as a portion of George Washington's River Farm (which hosted May’s MVAH Celebrate! Gala). A fort was constructed on the site as part of a plan developed in the 1880s to expand and strengthen fortifications around the city of Washington.



This 10-inch “disappearing gun” at Fort Monroe, Virginia, was similar to those on Battery Mount Vernon at what is now Fort Hunt Park.  
(picture from BikeWalkDrive.org)

In 1932 General Douglas MacArthur established a field hospital at Fort Hunt to serve military veterans. During World War II it was the setting for top secret World War II military intelligence operations (known as "P.O. Box 1142") as well as an interrogation center for high-value prisoners of war. Lieutenant Commander Werner Henke, the highest-ranking German officer to be shot while in American captivity during World War II, was killed while attempting an escape from Fort Hunt in June 1944. In 1980, the remaining structures at the site were added to the National Register of Historic Places as the Fort Hunt Historic District. Currently the United States Park Police operate a substation at the park.

(Excerpted from Wikipedia)



Fort Hunt Park’s ramparts



Fort Hunt Park’s new playground under construction