

February 11, 2015

Community Relations Committee Activities June 2014 through January 2015

All of 10 resident members returned to the Community Relations Committee this year. The committee welcomed John Bickerman as Council liaison who moved from the Climate and Environment Committee when Council member Kathy Strom assumed liaison responsibilities for the Land Use Committee.

June 2014 through January 2015:

- Breakfast with the Arbor Arborist – Dr. Tolbert Feathers, the Town arborist, offered a June 7 pruning demonstration and an October 18 walk through Town on fall tree care. At both, Dr. Tolbert mentioned the Town programs available help residents keep their trees healthy and properly pruned trimmed. Approximately 25 residents attended each of these informative events.
- Independence Day Parade and Picnic – With the school grounds at Chevy Chase Elementary School not available to the community this summer, the July 4th event shifted to the Leland Neighborhood Park. An estimated 550-600 residents attended this very popular annual event. Recycling and composting were very successful. Residents of all ages appreciated the additional seating with 260 chairs and tables set up in the park area. In general, the Leland Neighborhood Park created a more welcoming, more festive atmosphere for the picnic and parade.
- Facebook and Twitter were launched during the summer after the Town Council adopted the committee’s proposal to provide additional ways to communicate with residents on important notices, dates and events. At a November 8 presentation, TechMoxie demonstrated how individuals, businesses and government use these popular technologies. Between 20-25 residents attended the event and many requested additional IT presentations.
- Good Eats on Town Streets – A new event for the Town, this October 18 fall fete brought approximately 225 residents to the outdoor spaces around the Town Hall and Lawton Center. The event attracted many families who typically do not attend Town events. Residents purchased dinner from three of Montgomery County’s most popular food truck vendors set up on Willow Lane and dined al fresco on the circle or inside the Town Hall. Ben & Jerry’s served up free ice cream for dessert. The B-CC High School Jazz Band provided great music for the evening.
- Discussion and Desserts – On October 23, Town resident Aki Peritz presented to a full house of approximately 60-65 people, “The Islamic State of Iraq and Syria.” Coauthor of *Find, Fix, Finish: Inside the Counterterrorism Campaigns that Killed bin Laden & Devasted al Qaeda*, Mr. Peritz offered insights into the advances of ISIS.
- Bagels & Juice in the Park – On October 24, this popular Saturday morning event attracted approximately 25 families with young children for breakfast play and conversation at the Leland Neighborhood Park.

- Friday Flicks for Grown-Ups and Kids – November launched the return of Friday night movies at the Town Hall. Movies for grown-ups run on the first Friday of the month and offer wine, cheese and a documentary film. November 23 featured *Harvard Beats Yale 29-29* and December 5 featured *Exit Through the Gift Shop*. Attendance ranged from 25-40 people. Movies for families run on the second Friday of the month and offer pizza and popcorn and a PG/G-rated film. November 14 featured *Free Bird*. December 12 featured *Frozen*. January 9 featured *Despicable Me*. Attendance ranged from 50-60 people at these events.
- Winter Outerwear Clothing Drive – This annual community event started a month earlier this season, November 1, and ran through January 31, 2015. Thanks to the generosity of many Town residents, the committee sent more than 375 coats, sweaters, scarves, gloves and other clean gently-used to Bethesda Cares, the Betty Ann Krahnke Center and Family Services, Inc.
- Thanksgiving Food Basket Program – Once again in partnership with the Lawton Community Center and B-CC High School, the committee organized efforts to provide holiday food for 80 Montgomery County Public School families served by the County’s Linkages to Learning program of the Silver Spring YMCA. Each family received approximately \$50 in groceries and a \$25 gift card to purchase a turkey. Through donations from 102 Town residents and B-CC High School families, more than 3,200 pounds of food were purchased and assembled into overflowing boxes and recycling shopping bags. Under the artistic guidance of Town resident Katie Vita, Town children decorated the boxes with festive turkeys.
- Holiday Gift Drive for Victims of Domestic Violence – Once again Town resident Cathy Wolf worked with the committee and spearheaded this annual December effort to help victims of domestic abuse and their children. Residents generously contributed \$1,950 in gifts, gift cards and other donations to help families in need.
- Round House Theatre – A December 7 outing to Round House Theatre attracted seven residents to see an updated musical version of the holiday classic, *The Nutcracker*.
- Dinner Out – *Vino Volo* was the Bethesda restaurant venue for a January 20 Dinner Out. Approximately 10 residents shared conversation and meal out at this lively Woodmont Avenue establishment.
- Tot Lot – Several members of the Land Use Committee and the Community Relations Committee discussed possible options for increased tot lot equipment in the Town. Committee members and Town staff met with representatives from the County parks department (who owns and maintains the Leland Neighborhood Park) and Wonders (who runs an early childhood development center at the Lawton Center complex). It was agreed to pursue additional equipment for the existing Leland Park. The Town Council allotted spending up to \$25,000 for equipment purchases.
- Future activities either planned or in the planning stages include: the annual Chili Dinner with the return of the popular ice cream sundae bar on February 22; three Sunday concerts and a musical workshop on February 8, March 8 and June 12; a healthy gardening presentation on March 15, co-sponsored with the Climate and Environment Committee; a healthy eating presentation on March 22; a spring art show; a spring Discussion and Desserts; an early summer Bagels and Juice in the Park; a spring dog training and behavior workshop; an early summer Arbor Walk; a possible IT presentation on how to organize digital photography.