



MESSAGE FROM PAULA LETTICE, *President*

I, along with my family and friends, am adjusting to new ways to celebrate

Thanksgiving,

sharing our traditions and stories across the miles - most of it now virtually. I personally am so thankful for our health care and public safety personnel who, day in and day out, are the front line in our handling of the pandemic ... we are indebted to them for their dedica-

tion, skill, and perseverance, as the pandemic continues to be front and center in our lives.

It's now the merry month of December, filled with lots of social, historical, and religious meaning for many. Again, the ways we celebrated in the past may no longer work in the current environment but I am amazed and gratified to see how many are taking these traditions and adjusting them to suit the times. We can still decorate. We can still do holiday baking. We can still enjoy holiday music. We

can still donate to charities who do such great work in their communities, in education, and in medicine and health. And we can still reach across the miles with greetings on paper, through email, and posting on social media.

My best wishes to you as we close out 2020 ... it's been my extreme pleasure to be your MVAH president and Board chair for the past nine months. I wish each of you a Merry Christmas and Happy Hanukkah. ~ *Paula*



DIRECTOR'S CORNER

Jan Buchanan, *Executive Director*

I may sound like a broken record on this, but I think that generosity is one of the greatest gifts we humans have to offer one another. *To give is to live*, my dad says. He built a charitable organization back in the late 1960s focused on empowering people to give and making it so easy to do so. His organization sponsored charitable projects to help people with a vision to be able to actually do the charitable work. Hundreds of projects with impact around the country and the globe took shape. Thousands of lives were touched. I grasped

Dad's mantle and took the helm of this organization in 2009, expanding his vision of generosity. My life has forever changed, seeing the goodness in humanity to help one another.

The impact of a single gift, whether it's a financial one or one of your time or talent, can have a tremendous impact not only on the receiver of the gift, but on you! I'm not writing this to prime you to give to this organization, although I do feel that supporting this Village ensures our work, but to expand what you can do, even during this pandemic! A couple of articles in this issue will verify the benefits of giving and show you some ways you can give, safely and securely this season. It could be to give someone a smile or a compliment. This can go a long way!

Hand in hand with generosity goes gratitude. I wrote about this last month, and we did a meditation exercise on it in November. Generosity and gratitude are powerful medicine! Healing, supporting, connecting, loving. Think about ways you are giving and about ways you can expand your generosity as we round out a very bizarre year. Make a mental note each day of what you are grateful for. Gifting of yourself in myriad ways elevates us all and connects us all.

Wishing you a joyous holiday season. ~ *Jan*

TO REACH US

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OFFICE ADDRESS

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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

Jan Buchanan, *Executive Director*,
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BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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Mount Vernon At Home Holiday Luncheon is December 17!

Join fellow members and friends for a lovely home-delivered Cedar Knoll meal and Zoom event to celebrate the holidays! You'll have a choice of three delicious entrees from Cedar Knoll: Jumbo Lump Crab Cake Sandwich, Arugula Salad with Chicken, or Wild Mushroom Tart. Orange Almond Cake for dessert! Luncheon tickets are just \$35 which covers meal, tax and delivery. Meals will be delivered between 11:30 and 12:00. Our program on Zoom will begin at 12:00 pm. We will be having a 50/50 raffle. Raffle tickets are available for purchase at \$15 each. Please call the office to make your luncheon reservations and purchase raffle tickets by December 10th.

Mount Vernon At Home End of Year Giving Campaign

Our Fall Giving Campaign is underway and we thank all of you who have donated so far! Your support is necessary to maintain the programming and services that Mount Vernon At Home provides. Donations undergird our membership fees so we can keep them stable. Your financial donations can come in many forms! We can accept IRA distributions and gifts of stock too.

Giving is Powerful!

When you give to others, research shows you are more likely to reduce your stress levels, improve your mood and boost your social connections. Studies also show that people are happier when they spend money on a gift for others instead of one for themselves. When you give to others, your brain responds as though you were the one who received the gift! The endorphins you feel can be compared to a runner's high or chowing down on your favorite food. Positive feelings associated with giving stick around for about two hours. Not only will you want to give more, but the person who receives your gift is also inspired to give.

Some easy ways to give include:

- Rounding up at the grocery store, pet store or other locations where this is offered. Some credit cards even offer this when you pay your monthly bills.
- Making your Amazon purchases via AmazonSmile. You can select Mount Vernon At Home or any charity of your choice to receive a percentage gift from Amazon from your shopping.
- Creating your own matching gift! Pick a cause and determine how much you'd like to give. Divide it in half and let your friends know you'll match all donations up to that amount.
- Making it a holiday event for your family to get them into the spirit of giving. Let your grandkids present you with their causes and ideas and part of your holiday gifts to them can be donations to their selected charities.

Give Your Way to Greatness!

What do almost all of the most successful people have in common? They're "givers," but not in a monetary sense. Here are some things you can do freely for others to help "give" your way to greatness!

Time – Prioritize your day around what you value. Be present, and focus on the current conversation instead of thinking into the future.

Smile – Even if your day hasn't been great, giving a genuine smile to those you meet can bring happiness to others.

Compliments – There's nothing like an *authentic* compliment. When you compliment someone, tell them why you like that particular thing and ask a question about it to show your interest.

Patience – This helps you slow down, empathize and show the recipient grace. When you find yourself struggling here, take a few breaths and count to ten to gain some new perspective.

Energy – Adopt a positive mindset and attitude, and communicate that to others. You'll inspire them to do the same!

(These science-based tips and research are from the website Happify.com)

The Power of Volunteering

People who volunteer often experience improvements in their mental health and more satisfaction with their lives. Pick your passion, match it to your skills and make it part of your routine.

How to Volunteer Safely

MVAH has many opportunities to serve. You could become a Board member, serve on our Caring Committee which makes regular check-in calls to members and writes notes and sends birthday cards, or be available to run errands.

If you're looking for other volunteer opportunities, check out Volunteer Fairfax's program called RSVP (Retired Seniors Volunteer Program). They have many volunteer opportunities posted on their website <https://www.volunteerfairfax.org/programs/rsvp-northern-virginia/>. Contact Volunteer Specialist, Shannon White, at swhite@volunteerfairfax.org or call 703-403-5360 for information.

Ventures in Community

Mount Vernon At Home is part of Ventures in Community, a community of over 30 local nonprofits and faith-based organizations that addresses our area's most pressing needs, such as homelessness, hunger, affordable housing and more. These local nonprofits are doing all they can to mitigate the COVID-19 pandemic in our area. To find out more, go to www.venturesincommunity.org and click on Membership for a listing of participating organizations. Some of the groups who could really use support include United Community which operates a local food bank; New Hope Housing, finding hypothermia shelters this winter; and FACETS which focuses on helping the homeless.

Award Winning Volunteer Paula Lettice



Our own Paula Lettice is an example of the power of generosity. Paula has deep roots in helping nonprofits, having spent the last years of her career as an executive director. Upon retirement, Paula now devotes countless hours to area nonprofits.

Paula recently received an award for her outstanding contributions to improve the lives of low-income families and individuals through her work with Good Shepherd Housing and Family Services. She served on their board of directors and helped lead the organization's development and adaptation of a 5-year strategic plan.

Paula was also instrumental as their Board Treasurer in advancing the financial reporting of the agency and created a strong foundation for their long-term financial sustainability.

We are so fortunate that Paula now devotes this same passion toward Mount Vernon At Home and is giving of her time and talent to support and improve our organization.

Thank you Paula!

COVID-19 Risk Assessment Test

A new survey test created by BellAge, an applied research and technology company, provides immediate feedback on your risk of contracting COVID-19. Find out how likely you are to get or spread COVID-19, how severe it might be if you get sick, steps to reduce your risks, and ways to have your needs met during the pandemic. Your report will provide guidance from leading experts and organizations based on research, science, and recommendations published by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the World Health Organization. This free and completely confidential test takes just 5 to 10 minutes and you'll immediately receive your custom report based on your life and habits. Here's the link: <https://NewYork.CV19CheckUp.org>.

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Getting Ready for Winter – Inside and Out – We can help!



As cold weather approaches, it is important to take a few preventative measures to protect your home through the chilly months. Winterizing is generally a task that can be done relatively inexpensively, but will make a big difference in how comfortable your home is, and could end up saving you money on energy bills, and potentially on repair bills, too. We'd like to help with some of the tasks you may need to get your house ready. And for the bigger tasks, call us for vetted service providers.

Easy Winterizing Chores

Mount Vernon At Home Volunteers can Help With

- Turning off and draining the water to hoses outside (disconnect hoses from outside faucets and install faucet covers)
- Replacing indoor air filters
- Changing smoke alarm batteries
- Making sure you have a snow shovel
- Looking for drafty doors and windows – even putting a towel or blanket by a drafty door can help!
- Checking your extra supplies of water, paper products, and canned food. (Try to use glass or stainless steel or large, reusable plastic for water to cut down on individual plastic bottles.)
- Making sure you have a flashlight, extra batteries and candles on hand should the power go out.
- Checking your phones and back up phones – do you have a landline and cell phone?

More Detailed Tasks

that may Require a Professional

- Cleaning gutters and downspouts
- Fixing broken windows and leaky doors, by caulking or applying weatherstripping
- Insulating around electrical outlets and switch plates
- Inspecting your chimney and roof
- Winterizing your HVAC systems
- Ensuring you have adequate attic insulation
- Installing a programmable thermostat
- Blow out and winterize your lawn sprinkler systems
- Clear outside drains of leaves, dirt and debris (especially around basement doors)
- Cover window wells
- Make sure you have proper grading that slopes away from the house
- Check that your sump pump is operating properly
- Winterize pools and ponds

Get a Home Energy Audit

Mount Vernon At Home Executive Director, Jan Buchanan, had a home energy audit conducted many years ago. It was a very low-cost and incredibly eye-opening review of where her house's vulnerability points were as far as energy leaks. There are many commercial companies that perform this audit, but Jan used a Virginia non-profit, Local Energy Alliance Program, that conducts them at a lower cost. Check out their website at www.leap-va.org.

Members: We want to hear from you! Our new year is approaching! What are your resolutions? Do you have an interesting New Year's story to share? A tried-and true, amazing can't-do-without recipe for us to try? Please reach out to Jan, our Executive Director and Editor-in-Chief, at director@mountvernonathome.org or call her at 703-473-2892. Deadline for submission of your stories and recipes is the 15th of the month for publication in the next month's newsletter.

In Memoriam

Bruce Bade, Lieutenant Commander US Navy (retired), died on August 20, 2020. We extend our condolences to his wife, Ginger, and daughter, Catherine.

Anne Griffin, a Charter member of Mount Vernon At Home, died on September 27, 2020.

Our sympathies to Anne's seven children and 12 grandchildren.



Happy December Birthdays!

Happy, happy birthday to each of our members celebrating December birthdays! Our Caring Committee sends a personalized birthday card to all of our members to honor them on their special day!

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|--------------------------|------------------------|
| 12/2 Francis Killpatrick | 12/22 Robert Ellsworth |
| 12/5 Morrie Hoven | 12/27 Judith Crooker |
| 12/15 Mary Sabulsky | 12/28 Earl Flanagan |
| 12/19 Claudia Carpenter | 12/31 Michael Jacobs |
| 12/20 Guin Jones | |



A Holiday Story from Cher Terry

After graduating from college in 1966, I joined the American Red Cross as a recreation director in service to the Armed Forces of the United States. I spent the first four years living a year each in Korea, Okinawa, San Antonio, TX and Wichita Falls, TX. This was a time of fighting in Viet Nam and racial and political unrest in our country.

As the Christmas season approached the year that I was stationed in Wichita Falls (a small Southern town very different from where I grew up in the Twin Cities of Minnesota), I was on the lookout for just the right Santa Claus for the patients in the military hospital there. I chose a sergeant in the hospital cafeteria because of his cheerful and outgoing personality and he was delighted to accept. The surprise for me was that our Santa Claus made the local TV news and newspaper. It was only then that I realized that for that community in 1970, it was a radical choice to have an African American Santa. The end of my story is that everything went exceptionally well; the sergeant was a very jolly and successful Santa and he told me later that being chosen meant a lot to him.

Soup Season!

A cold weather buster from Jan Buchanan

Some of you know that Jan Buchanan earned a master of science degree in nutrition and practiced whole foods nutrition counseling for several years. Jan attended an amazing integrative medicine university in Seattle called Bastyr University after one of the founding practitioners of natural medicine and homeopathy, John Bastyr. Winter soup season is upon us, and this recipe is from one of Jan's cookbook 'bibles', "Feeding the Whole Family" by Cynthia Lair, a teacher and mentor to Jan.

Split Pea Soup with Fresh Peas and Potatoes

Makes 4 servings

2 teaspoons extra-virgin olive oil
1 onion, chopped
1 stalk celery, chopped
1 or 2 medium carrots, chopped
2 small red potatoes, cubed
1 teaspoon cumin
Black pepper, 1-2 turns of the grinder
1 cup green split peas
4 cups water or vegetable stock
1 large bay leaf
½ cup fresh peas (or frozen)
1 teaspoon salt
1-2 teaspoons fresh dill or ½ teaspoon dried

Heat oil in a large soup pot. Add onions and sauté until they begin to soften. Add celery, carrot, potatoes, cumin and pepper. Sauté 5-7 more minutes. If using dried dill, add now with the cumin. Add split peas, water and bay leaf. Bring to a boil, lower heat and simmer for about an hour to 1 ½ hours. Add fresh peas, salt and fresh dill and stir. Continue cooking a few minutes until peas are tender. Ready to serve!

This soup can also be frozen for up to 3 months.



VIRTUAL BOOKCLUB

Our BookClub is unique in that we don't focus on one book, but allow members to share a current read or favorite book they recommend.

To join this discussion, please contact BookClub moderator Barbara Brennan by email at barbarabbrennan@gmail.com or by phone at 703-209-9651.

We've had so many requests for the book summary, it's now included on Mount Vernon At Home's website! Go to www.mountvernonathome.org and select the Calendar/Newsletter tab. There you'll find the BookClub Reviews section for a full review of each month's book picks.

Last Month's Book Picks!

~ Carol Mattaino: *Testament of Youth* by Vera Brittain, published 1933.

~ Sarah Tatum: *Blue Mind* by Wallace J. Nichols, published 2014, 320 pages, and *The Madonnas of Leningrad* by Debra Dean, published 2006, 231 pages. Historical fiction, Notable Book of the Year, Americana Library Association.

~ Cher Terry: *The Splendid and The Vile: A Saga of Churchill, Family, and Defiance During the Blitz* by Erik Larsen, published 2020, 609 pages.

~ Betsy Stephens: *The Beekeeper of Aleppo* by Christy Lefteri, published 2019, 354 pages.

~ Karen Justesen: *The Sellout* by Paul Beatty, published 2015, 305 pages. A scorchingly funny satire on post-racial America" – per NPR's Michael Schaub.

~ Louise McLean: *The Amazing Adventures of Kavalier and Clay* by Michael Chabon, published 2000, 544 pages.

~ Hugh Schwartz: *The Room Where It Happened* by John Bolton, published 2020, 444 pages.

~ Barbara Brennan: *The New Tsar: The Rise and Reign of Vladimir Putin* by Steven Lee Myers, published 2014, 592 pages, and *Caste* by Isabel Wilkerson, published 2020, 496 pages.

December Event Highlights

3-Part Webinar Series, “Surviving to Thriving”: Mount Vernon At Home, Arlington Neighborhood Village, and At Home In Alexandria have partnered with Capital Caring Health to bring education and resources to the community during the pandemic and beyond. This 3-part series will look at aspects and impacts of COVID-19 on the world, our mental and physical health, and what lies ahead. Our first webinar topic will be a comprehensive COVID-19 Update presented by one of the leading geriatric physicians in the area. Dr. Eric De Jonge is Capital Caring Health’s Chief of Geriatrics and is the immediate past-President of the American Academy of Home Care Medicine (AAHCM), Chair of the AAHCM Public Policy Committee, and one of the nation’s most renowned geriatricians to learn the latest science about the COVID-19 virus.

This important discussion will include up-to-date information about incubation periods, when to get tested if you suspect exposure to the virus, and whether antibodies to the virus protect us and for how long. Get tips from an expert on staying safe, protecting ourselves and those we care for as we prepare for the upcoming holiday season and winter months. Dr. DeJonge will provide insight on what to expect with several vaccines currently on the horizon.

The event date is Tuesday, December 8. The meeting will open at 12:30 pm and begin promptly at 12:45 pm and end at 1:45 pm. Register here: www.capitalcaring.org/SurvivingToThriving (Please note that capitalized letters are important in this link.) You can also call us at the office and we can register for you.

MovieClub: This new activity debuted in November. The inaugural zoom event was well attended and members enjoyed discussing the first film selections, *Judy* and *The Trial of the Chicago 7*. December’s movies are *The Death of Stalin* and *Rebecca* (both on Netflix).

The Death of Stalin (2018) is a sharp political satire of the Soviet government that takes place in 1953, immediately following the death of dictator Josef Stalin. Written and directed by Armando Iannucci, the creator of HBO's Emmy-winning series *Veep*, the film is a dark and absurd dramatization of the power struggle among Stalin's cronies after the Soviet leader's death. It's based on a French graphic novel of the same name, and it stars Steve Buscemi as Nikita Khrushchev (Stalin's successor), alongside Jason Isaacs, Michael Palin, and Jeffery Tambor.

Rebecca (2020 version). After a whirlwind romance in Monte Carlo with handsome widower Maxim de Winter (Armie Hammer), a newly married young woman (Lily James) arrives at Manderley, her new husband's imposing family estate on a windswept English coast. Naive and inexperienced, she begins to settle into the trappings of her new life, but finds herself battling the shadow of Maxim's first wife, the elegant and urbane Rebecca, whose haunting legacy is kept alive by Manderley's sinister housekeeper Mrs. Danvers (Kristin Scott Thomas).

Watch one or both of the movies and then let’s talk about them at MovieClub’s Zoom meeting on Tuesday, December 15 at 2:00 pm. Need help connecting to Netflix? Barbara Brennan can help! Email Barbara at barbarabbrennan@gmail.com or call her, 703-209-9651.

Conversations: Environmental Responsibility: How We Can All Contribute to Better Waste Management for 2021 and Beyond. Join us on Sunday, December 20 at 3:00 pm as we hear from Christine McCoy, an official with the Fairfax County Solid Waste Management Program. Discover the facts about recycling in our area, learn about a new program for disposing of food scraps, and acquire the tools to personally contribute to a cleaner environment in the New Year. Christine McCoy is a solid waste and recycling professional who has worked in the nonprofit, public, and private sectors for more than 20 years. Christine is currently a Management Analyst II for Fairfax County where she is responsible for program development, outreach and education.

December Events

2nd Cup: Saturday, 12/5, 11:00 am – 12:00 pm. *Finding Joy in our lives these days. What inspires and motivates you?* Dial in: 301 715 8592, Meeting ID: 847 9463 8504

Meditation: Monday, 12/7, 9:30 – 10:00 am. Dial in: 301 715 8592, Meeting ID: 823 1086 9101

COVID-19 Update with Dr. De Jonge of Capital Car-ing Health: Tuesday, 12/8, 12:30 – 2:00 pm.

Click here to register:

www.capitalcaring.org/SurvivingToThriving. You can also call us at the office and we can register for you.

Board of Directors Meeting: Tuesday 12/8, 4:00 – 5:30 pm. Dial-in: 301 715 8592, Meeting ID: 874 1914 7248

BookClub: Thursday, 12/10, 3:00 – 4:00 pm. Dial in -- 301 715 8592, Meeting ID: 854 6488 3020

Timely Topics: Saturday, 12/12, 11:00 am – 12:00 pm. *Dealing with the virus now.* Dial in: 301 715 8592 Meeting ID: 850 7380 0592, Passcode: 179959

Meditation: Monday, 12/14, 9:30 – 10:00 am. Dial in: 301 715 8592, Meeting ID: 823 1086 9101

Program Committee: Monday, 12/14, 2:00 – 3:00 pm. Dial in: 301 715 8592, Meeting ID: 857 0250 4272

MovieClub: Tuesday, 12/15, 2:00 – 3:00 pm. We're talking about *Death of Stalin* and *Rebecca*. Dial-in: 301 715 8592, Meeting ID: 891 1587 7478

MVAH Holiday Luncheon: Thursday, 12/17, 12:00 – 1:30 pm. Requires ticket purchase for Zoom link.

2nd Cup: Saturday, 12/19, 11:00 am – 12:00 pm. *Let's reflect on our favorite or funny holiday memories and traditions.* Dial-in: 301 715 8592, Meeting ID: 870 0843 8705

Conversations: Sunday, 12/20, 3:00 – 4:00 pm. *Environmental Responsibility and Recycling.*

Dial-in: 301 715 8592, Meeting ID: 830 2488 3249, Passcode: 164735

Meditation: Monday, 12/21, 9:30 – 10:00 am. Dial in: 301 715 8592, Meeting ID: 823 1086 9101

Merry Christmas! Friday, 12/25 (Offices closed)

Meditation: Monday, 12/28, 9:30 – 10:00 am. Dial in: 301 715 8592, Meeting ID: 823 1086 9101

Special New Year's Eve Cheers! Thursday, 12/31, 5:00 – 6:00 pm. Dial-in: 301 715 8592 Meeting ID: 860 7324 8072, Passcode: 995055

