



# Virginia-Highland VOICE

A publication of the Virginia-Highland Civic Association March 2002

## VHCA CALENDAR

### General Meetings:

March 6, 7:30 pm

April 3, 7:30 pm

May 8, 7:30 pm

Ponce de Leon Branch Library

### Board Meetings:

March 4, 7:00 pm

April 1, 7:00 pm

May 6, 7:00 pm

YWCA

### Planning Committee:

March 27, 7:30 pm

April 24, 7:30 pm

May 29, 7:30 pm

Ponce de Leon Branch Library

### PEDS Walks:

March 11, 5:30 pm

April 8, 5:30 pm

May 13, 5:30 pm

Highland CVS parking lot

Location of meetings is subject to change.

Become a member  
**www.vahi.org**

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## VHCA UNVEILS NEW WEB SITE FOR THE NEW YEAR AND YEARS TO COME

Gina Davis

The Virginia-Highland Civic Association exists to serve our community. The VHCA is able to thrive because of the support of board members, committee and chair members, volunteers, fundraisers, and membership dues.

But non-profits like ours don't live by the good works of members alone – they need broad-based community support and community awareness. Getting the word out is a constant challenge. Creating a sense of who we are, what we do, and how people can get involved is critical to our success. For a non-profit organization on a limited budget, a well-developed Web site can be the most effective cornerstone of good communication. It cost-effectively provides information to anyone who has Internet

access; it saves the organization postal fees associated with mailing information, and the personal time of volunteers providing information verbally over the telephone.

These days, the VHCA is fortunate indeed. Board member Seth Lynn, managing director for Internet development and consulting firm Genex, has donated the company's expertise and energies to redesign the VHCA's Web site at [www.vahi.org](http://www.vahi.org).

The comprehensive Web site was designed to include information for everyone interested in the Virginia-Highland Civic Association and the community at large. One important feature located on the home page allows site visitors to receive regular community email updates from the VHCA. All visitors who submit their email addresses by March 31 will be eligible to win dinner for two at La Tavola Trattoria.

No visit to the site will be complete without stopping by the "join" section, which includes information on how you can support the VHCA, plus a "print and mail" membership form. The association is grateful to Genex for this generous donation of the new, improved VHCA Web site, which will serve our community well for this new year and for many years to come.

Should your company need Internet consulting or Web development services, we encourage you to contact Genex at [www.genex.com](http://www.genex.com) or 404.592.3000.





## FIGHT BACK AGAINST CRIME

Beth Marks

Virginia-Highland is a great place to live. We welcome visitors to our neighborhood, but we want criminals who want to commit robbery, assaults, burglaries, larcenies, and auto theft to think otherwise.

For the last three years, a portion of the Virginia-Highland neighborhood has had additional off-duty police patrolling the area through a Program called Fight Back Against Crime (FBAC). The FBAC area is the northwest quadrant of Virginia-Highland bordered by Virginia and Hudson to the south, Lanier and North Virginia to the east, Amsterdam to the north and Monroe to the west. The program has actually existed for over 11 years (with a two year period in 1997-1998 when it was inactive because we did not have enough members). During the years that FBAC has been active, the FBAC area averaged only 4 crimes per month (in the year 2001 it averaged only 2.4 per month). In the two years that FBAC was inactive, crime increased to as high as 19 incidents per month.

This proactive program is so successful that crime has dropped to a level where people are unfortunately not as concerned as they should be. We are finding it more difficult to maintain our membership to the level we need to keep this extremely worthwhile program going. Whether you were a previous member that dropped out for expense reasons or a new resident in our neighborhood or you just have never been a member, we ask for your participation to keep our neighborhood a place that criminals don't want to visit!

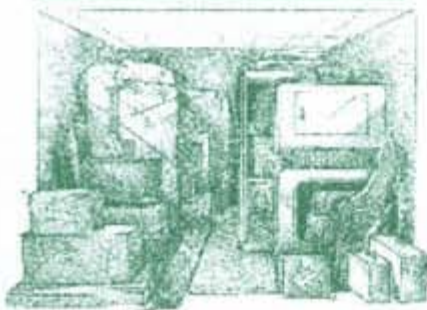
### What is Fight Back Against Crime?

- FBAC is an off-duty police patrol program administered by volunteers who live in the neighborhood.
- The off-duty police are either Atlanta Police Department (APD) officers who work in Zone 6 or are detectives in the APD.
- The off-duty police work 4 nights per week in 5-hour shifts per night. The times and days of the shift vary depending on recent crime patterns.
- FBAC members receive a schedule of patrol times each month so they know when they can call an FBAC officer and members receive a monthly newsletter with details of any crimes in the neighborhood, special lookouts, and reminders of potential problems.
- The officers drive around our portion of the neighborhood investigating anything or anyone suspicious.
- The off-duty officers carry a cell phone so an FBAC member can contact them during their shift.
- If any problems escalate between newsletters, we notify members via e-mail.

### Become a FBAC member

You can join FBAC for \$25 per month, payable semiannually. Membership includes access to the off-duty police cell phone number, monthly schedules, monthly updates on neighborhood crime, lookout notices as needed and an FBAC yard sign. Call the Fight Back Against Crime voice mail at 404-483-2677 if you have any questions. Leave your name and number and we will get back to you. Or e-mail Beth Marks at [beth.marks@ix.netcom.com](mailto:beth.marks@ix.netcom.com).

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## PRESIDENT'S ADDRESS

We've got a big year ahead of us all with lots of goings on in the Neighborhood.

First, thank you to all of you who joined or renewed their memberships in the Association and invested in the Neighborhood. We hope that we can use your yearly investment to better our Neighborhood for all of us. Thank you too to all of you who came out on January 12 to help the Fire Station and the Neighborhood dedicate our new fire engine, with a special thanks to Warren Bruno and the Business Association for providing the food and beverages for the dedication.

We are of course in the midst of preparations for Summerfest 2002, which will be held on June 1st and 2nd. The artist applications are flowing in at a prodigious rate and sponsorships are lining up. Our Summerfest Chairperson, P.K. Trettel, is again doing a great job of keeping it all organized, and building on Aaron Gross, the past Chairperson's, excellent foundation. The new Chairperson of the Artist's Market, Cynthia Gentry, brings a new focus and a fresh look at the process and has taken no time in getting up to speed. She will no doubt carry on the tradition of a fantastic artist market nurtured by Kathy Barkley. We should also welcome back to Summerfest Jill Gossett and Jean Jordan, the Volunteer Committee Co-Chairs, and Pierce Pape, our 5K Road Race Chairperson. Their efforts should ensure another successful Summerfest, which will enable the Association to keep giving back to the Neighborhood and supporting the parks, schools and other worthy causes.

There are always zoning issues to occupy our time, but thankfully, we haven't had any battles to fight (not yet anyway). Hopefully, those neighbors who have had variance and special exception requests come before the Planning Committee and Association have had a relatively painless experience. As usual, there are a couple of matters on the horizon, both good and bad, depending on your perspective. A new mixed-use building is planned for the Southeast corner of North Highland and Amsterdam. The owner of the property and his architects are working with the Association on a design that everyone can agree on (or at least accept) and it should be an asset to the Neighborhood.

The old Hilan Theater (the building behind Starbucks and Ben & Jerry's) may get a new tenant (and it won't be the Cotton Club). The interior of the property at 798 and 800 North Highland Avenue has been deconstructed and the space will be built out shortly. No word on what kind of tenant will occupy the space, but the owner does want to obtain an alcohol license for the space. Based on past court rulings, it appears that the owner can put a business in the space with a waiver of up to 128 parking spaces - meaning a 12,800 square foot restaurant or other use for the space. We are discussing the project with the owner, and we have been assured that Starbucks and Ben & Jerry's will be staying. The owner may also redesign the front of the building to resurrect the storefront of the old theater.

Some residents of the Atkins Park portion of our Neighborhood have been contemplating applying for resident-only parking permits on St. Charles (between North Highland and Briarcliff), St. Augustine and St. Louis Avenues. Parking is of course an issue for all Neighborhood residents that live within a block or two of North Highland Avenue. It is, however, not a new issue, and one that has confronted the neighborhood for many years, as the shops and residents that help make our Neighborhood a vibrant community have been around for decades, and long before many of us bought our homes. The Neighborhood should look long and hard at the issue of resident parking permits and consider whether the adoption of such an ordinance is in the best interests of the Neighborhood as a whole. If certain streets are restricted, the impact will only be greater on those that are not. If all streets are restricted, our commercial districts will surely die. As we all know, there are simply not enough parking lots (and no parking decks) for the parking requirements of all of the businesses in the Neighborhood. On-street parking is a fact of life for us and is vital to the businesses, which add to the character of the Neighborhood and help to make us the envy of Metropolitan Atlanta.

As many of you know, a study of the North Highland Corridor was completed recently and the bond referendum from November was supposed to include money for implementation of the study. The first node for improvement was to be the corner of North Highland and Virginia Avenues. It is so far unclear whether the City will spend the money on implementation. Please keep contacting our Councilmember, Anne Fauver, our at large Councilmembers, Caesar Mitchell, Mary Norwood and Lamar Wills, and of course, Council President Cathy Woolard. Let them know how we want to see our money spent.

Please visit our new and improved website at [www.vahi.org](http://www.vahi.org). All the information about the Association is included there, plus e-mail links to members of the Board, the officers and the committees. In the Summerfest section, there is also an on-line form for volunteers and a downloadable Artist Market Application. Thanks to Seth Lynn and the good folks at Genex, we have a new look and updated content. We also have a new logo. Look for it at Summerfest on shirts, hats, license plates and coffee mugs.

I can't forget our Voice Editors - thank you to Krista Miller and our newest Editor, Jenn Ballentine, for all their hard work in putting this edition together (and giving me extra time beyond the deadline to submit this piece). We appreciate their hard work and dedication.

Best wishes to all of you in this New Year. Please join us at our meetings and get involved in your committees. Every helping hand (and point of view) is always welcomed and appreciated.



## ASK OFFICER DAVE

**Q:** Dear Officer Dave,

I hear that crime is down in Atlanta, but what does that mean?

Crime Curious

**A:** Dear Crime Curious,

When a city states that its crime rate is down, it is using a nation-wide standard of comparing crime called Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR). The Official UCR Report is published by all cities in the United States. All reports of crime are defined the same, no matter what city the crime occurs in. Only the seven worst classes of crime get counted for the "Crime Rate". They are Homicide, Rape, Robbery, Aggravated Assault, Burglary, Theft, and Auto Theft. They are called Part One Crime, and each of these Part One Crimes gets counted as one crime per offense. Other crimes like vandalism, drugs, and weapon possessions, although they are felonies, are counted as Part Two Crimes. The Part Two Crimes are not counted as "Crime Rate" offenses.

After the Part One Crimes are counted and totaled, they are compared with the rate of Part One Crimes during the same month of the previous year. The year-to-date totals are also compared.

While the official 2001 UCR Crime Report has not yet been released, it appears that the Crime Rate for Atlanta has decreased by +/-7% since 2000. Beat 610, the Virginia Highland area, is not included in the UCR but it is estimated that crime in our neighborhood is down by +/-11%.

However, we must remain alert for trouble. Always call 911 at the first sign of anything suspicious. Your call may assist in continuing to lower the crime rate in our neighborhood.

Officer Dave

## INTOWN WOMEN'S GROUP TO HOST CHARITY FUNDRAISER

Laurie Dugoniths

On April 11, 2002, the Intown Women's Group will be hosting its annual charity fundraiser. This year's event will be an Art and Silent Auction for the benefit of MY HOUSE, a long-term transitional home for children who cannot be released from the hospital to their mother's care.

The event will be held at the Trolley Barn in Inman Park from 6:30 – 10:30 p.m. with a preview of art and a silent auction of selected items from 6:30 – 8:00 p.m. Payment received before April 3rd is \$20; admission at the door is \$30. Checks can be made payable and mailed to Intown Women's Group at:

P.O. Box 11542  
Atlanta, GA 30355

Please note: only checks and cash will be accepted for silent auction items, but art auction items can be paid for with a credit card. Please call 404-228-2434 if you would like additional information.



## TAKING CARE OF THE TREES IN OUR NEIGHBORHOOD

Kenyetta Lindsey

Atlanta has many majestic trees that provide a great value to the City. Trees need our attention and respect in order to remain healthy and safe for public enjoyment. The trees that line our streets and thrive in our parks are public trees belonging to the City. The City provides pruning and removal of dead, dying, or diseased trees and has developed laws to protect these assets.

Unfortunately, Atlanta does lose part of its tree canopy due to natural occurrences such as windstorms, drought, ice, as well as mechanical damage. The City works hard to plant trees in order to restore our natural tree coverage. Our tree replacement plan coincides with the City tree ordinance established to enforce a "no net loss of trees" policy within the City. Our Parks Bureau has an Arborist to uphold the City's policy on trees.

Pruning trees properly requires skill, so to prevent abuse please consult with a City Arborist before attempting any work on public trees. For more information or questions concerning the tree ordinance, trimming and removal of public trees please contact one of the Parks Arborists: Kenyetta Lindsey at (404) 817-6853 or Sandra DeWitt at (404) 817-6814.

## Spring is just around the corner. Literally.



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## FIRE STATION #19 DEDICATES NEW STATE-OF-THE-ART ENGINE

Jenn Ballentine

The City of Atlanta Fire Department dedicated Fire Engine #19 on January 12, 2002 at 2:00 p.m. at Fire Station #19 on the corner of N. Highland Avenue and Los Angeles Avenue. Fire officials, city officials, and over 100 members of the Virginia-Highland community braved the rain and cold to attend the dedication ceremony, celebrating safety and applauding the firefighters for their hard work and dedication to the community.

The ceremony began with an address by the Atlanta Fire Captain of Station 19, Raymond Bearden. Following the address, members of local Boys and Girls Scout troops led the audience in the pledge of allegiance and the Atlanta Gay Men's Chorus performed a splendid rendition of our National Anthem. Supporters of the event and of Station #19 including Atlanta City Councilwoman (District 6), Anne Fauver and Steven Kushner, President of the Virginia Highland Civic Association pledged their appreciation and continued support of the station. After a brief invocation, Atlanta Fire Chief Winston L. Minor dedicated the new engine and the neighborhood kids finally got the chance to get behind the wheel of the new fire truck.

This new fire engine is the first of 43 pieces of new apparatus' expected to be distributed throughout Atlanta until December 2002. This new equipment is a state of the art 2001 Spartan Quality 2000 GPM Pumper. This machine is designed to make fire suppression faster and safer, thereby making our community a safer place to live.



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# THE HISTORY AND FUTURE OF JOHN HOWELL PARK

Stephanie Coffin

In the last issue of the *Virginia Highland Voice*, Tinka Green wrote about the origins and highlights of John Howell Park. I would like to update you on the Park's more recent history. In September 2000, the John Howell Park board resigned and the Virginia Highland Civic Association became an active partner of the park with the Parks Department.

As Parks Chair, I agreed to become Maintenance Coordinator for the park and did a number of things to help improve the park over the course of 2000, including mulching the playground area, ensuring that the broken lights in the center of the park were fixed, and pruning all the large trees with branches that overhung pedestrian and activity areas, thereby immediately stopping the problem of falling limbs and adding life to the mature trees.

The Civic Association's contract with Mike Ferreira from Dreamscape Designs continued and was solidified by a new sign that announced the public-private partnership that has so benefited the park. Mike and his crew mows, plants flowers, adds mulch, and handles the regular maintenance of the park along with the City of Atlanta Parks Department. Mike reseeded the top part of the meadow this fall and will do the bottom of the meadow this spring.

In September 2001, Mike and I continued to implement the John Howell Master Plan primarily in areas that had either never been landscaped and also in the areas that were bare and empty. We concentrated in three spots: along Arcadia and the back fence, right in the center of the park along Virginia, and along Barnett as these were areas that had suffered from heavy Summerfest use. The Civic Association contributed \$3,500, the Civic fund gave \$1,000, Dream Scape donated \$750, and we received \$2,000 in tree donations from Trees Atlanta and from a neighborhood developer – a big thank you goes to these organizations and individuals for their help! The park looks great and the new landscaping is almost finished. Although you can only see the winter plant accents right now, the new bushes and flowers will really show this spring!

Currently, we are just waiting for the last three large trees to be installed this spring along Arcadia. The park also needs more garbage cans and about \$1,000 to complete the landscaping plans. Donations are accepted! Please call me, Stephanie Coffin, Maintenance Coordinator for John Howell Park at (404) 874-0523 if you see any problems in the park or if you would like to contribute to making John Howell Park a healthier, prettier park!



## TASTE GREAT, LESS FILLING: POPULATION DENSITY AND VIRGINIA HIGHLAND IN CONTEXT

Chip Gallagher

As a board member I have heard many people lament that Virginia Highland has become too dense; too many people in too little space or if you like, same space too many people. I shared this information with a longtime resident of our neighborhood who replied that the opposite was true; the neighborhood is less dense today than it was thirty years ago. While this may seem counterintuitive, a number of factors seem to support his claim that Virginia Highland in 2002 might be less dense than Virginia Highland in 1972. Decades ago many houses in the community were illegal multi-family dwellings with four, five and even six units. A number of houses were demolished when the Department of Transportation planned a freeway off-ramp that would have bisected the neighborhood. Imagine standing in Inman Middle School's soccer field and looking south. The soccer field, John Howell Park, the new town house development on St. Charles and the empty lot (soon to be developed?) that fronts Ponce at the entrance to Freedom Parkway were filled with typical Virginia Highland bungalows. Another reason why the less-dense (versus more filling) argument might be true is that the population of Fulton County, according to the Brookings Institution, declined by 2.5% from 1970 to 1980, from 605,210 to 589,904. In this same time period the city of Atlanta lost over 14% of its population. More than likely this loss reflected white flight out of in-town neighborhoods.

What might appear like greater density (persons per square mile) is really an increase in visitity (visitors to VH per square mile); our neighborhood has become a magnet for shoppers, eaters, strollers and revelers. It is possible then, for our neighborhood to actually be less dense, but appear more dense because of a greater amount of visitors and the resulting increase in pedestrian activity and increased traffic, each of which create the impression that more people live here. Virginia Highland - Tastes great, less filling.



## THE HIGHLAND HOE-ER

John Wolfinger

We're just about to enter the most exciting season of the gardening year - SPRING! You've ogled at the nursery and seed catalogues, been awed at the Southeastern Flower Show, and cruised the neighborhood garden centers - now you're ready to spend a fortune on plants. Whoa - slow down! If you are new to gardening, Mother Nature doesn't offer instant gratification. Gardening takes and teaches patience, and lots of it. You've got lots to do before you see the first bloom in your dirt. You need graph paper, your camera, and then, a shovel and lots of nasty manure. First, photograph your prospective bed from a variety of angles, making sure you get the backgrounds you either want to enhance or hide. Remember where you stood to take these initial shots so you can take identical photos in future months and years to chart your garden's progress. Keep these photos in a garden album and use it to make decisions on future fill-in plantings, movement of plants, or dig-outs on your mistakes. This album can also be a source of pride as you watch your "family" of plants grow and mature, rewarding you with their beauty of foliage and blooms.

Next, measure your future bed, and using your photos, sketch out the footprint on the graph paper. Then site your plants on paper, taking into consideration their mature spreads and heights. It's much easier to move them on paper than it is to actually dig them up in a year or two to accommodate their growth.

Now - you're ready to dig. Get out that shovel and spade, and re-spade as deeply as you can get; roots on larger plants don't necessarily sit on the top 6 inches of soil, so help them get down as deeply as they want to go. Work out all the rocks, weed roots, urban debris and get the soil broken down to a tilth that will make it easy to plant in and make it easy for the plants to spread out their roots. Now go to a local garden center and consult with a nursery person as to what amendments you'll need for your type of soil and the types of plants you want to use. Then buy lots of soil enhancers (and I mean LOTS). Don't skimp dollars on this most important part of the planting process; you don't want to put a \$10.00 plant into a 10-cent hole. I wish I could have back all the money I wasted in my early gardening years planting in 10-cent holes. My plants and soil love the mushroom compost from Intown Hardware, which unlike many lower priced products, is weed seed free.

Finally, after spading in your bags and bags of soil enhancers, being sure to get them mixed in the soil as deeply as you initially dug down, you are ready to begin carefully planting.

I realize that these initial pre-planting steps take a lot of time, patience and money and are a real pain, but as a person who has wasted a lot of hard-earned dollars on plant purchases, they are very necessary to reach a satisfying and rewarding end product. So trust me, the time and money spent is well worth it.

The state of Georgia provides us gardeners with a wonderful source for seeds and plants - it's the "Farmers Market Bulletin". Mailed to you free of charge, it's a weekly paper that is full of ads that are a hoot to read and respond to. Contact them at 404-656-3608 or at [www.agr.state.ga.us/mbsite/index.html](http://www.agr.state.ga.us/mbsite/index.html) for a copy.

My offer that I made in the last issue of the VOICE to be the contact person for a neighborhood plant exchange still stands. Rather than just adding your overly prolific plants to the compost pile, wouldn't it be great to give them a new garden home and get a new garden buddy as well. Please contact me, John Wolfinger, at 404-876-5023, at [jjonww2@earthlink.net](mailto:jjonww2@earthlink.net), or at 1054 Vance Avenue to be on the giving and receiving lists. I still have lots of rooting stalks of brugmansia (trumpet tree) in white, yellow, pink and apricot to give away. I'd love to see some on every block in the neighborhood. I hope to hear from you soon. Have a wonderful gardening season, and don't forget to support our local garden centers. We need them and they need us.



Visit our website at [www.vahi.org](http://www.vahi.org)



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## VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES WITH TIP, INC.

Nathan Cagle, Atlanta TIP Crisis Team Manager

The Atlanta Fire Department and Trauma Intervention Programs, Inc. (TIP) are looking for caring people willing to be part of a team of citizen volunteers who provide emotional and practical support to the survivors of crisis events. These modern-day Good Samaritans will be called into the community to support those who are emotionally shaken as a result of tragic events.

- Families after the sudden illness or death of a loved one
- Children left alone after the injury or death of their parents
- Victims of domestic violence and other crimes
- Parents of children who have died
- Victims of house fires
- Anyone who is emotionally traumatized

We need citizens willing to be trained as crisis responders in Atlanta. No experience is necessary. To register for an upcoming training, please call 866-666-6722 (Toll Free) or visit the website at [www.tipnational.org](http://www.tipnational.org). For more information about your local TIP, call the Atlanta area contact at 404-853-4314.



## FIGHT BACK AGAINST CRIME

Beth Marks

Virginia-Highland is a great place to live. We welcome visitors to our neighborhood, but we want criminals who want to commit robbery, assaults, burglaries, larcenies, and auto theft to think otherwise.

For the last three years, a portion of the Virginia-Highland neighborhood has had additional off-duty police patrolling the area through a Program called Fight Back Against Crime (FBAC). The FBAC area is the northwest quadrant of Virginia-Highland bordered by Virginia and Hudson to the south, Lanier and North Virginia to the east, Amsterdam to the north and Monroe to the west. The program has actually existed for over 11 years (with a two year period in 1997-1998 when it was inactive because we did not have enough members). During the years that FBAC has been active, the FBAC area averaged only 4 crimes per month (in the year 2001 it averaged only 2.4 per month). In the two years that FBAC was inactive, crime increased to as high as 19 incidents per month.

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### What is Fight Back Against Crime?

- FBAC is an off-duty police patrol program administered by volunteers who live in the neighborhood.
- The off-duty police are either Atlanta Police Department (APD) officers who work in Zone 6 or are detectives in the APD.
- The off-duty police work 4 nights per week in 5-hour shifts per night. The times and days of the shift vary depending on recent crime patterns.
- FBAC members receive a schedule of patrol times each month so they know when they can call an FBAC officer and members receive a monthly newsletter with details of any crimes in the neighborhood, special lookouts, and reminders of potential problems.
- The officers drive around our portion of the neighborhood investigating anything or anyone suspicious.
- The off-duty officers carry a cell phone so an FBAC member can contact them during their shift.
- If any problems escalate between newsletters, we notify members via e-mail.

### Become a FBAC member

You can join FBAC for \$25 per month, payable semiannually. Membership includes access to the off-duty police cell phone number, monthly schedules, monthly updates on neighborhood crime, lookout notices as needed and an FBAC yard sign. Call the Fight Back Against Crime voice mail at 404-483-2677 if you have any questions. Leave your name and number and we will get back to you. Or e-mail Beth Marks at [beth.marks@ix.netcom.com](mailto:beth.marks@ix.netcom.com).

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Rob Glancy, Chair, Parks Committee	404-569-7660
<i>In addition to those listed above:</i>	
Krista Miller, Business Manager, VHCA VOICE	404-892-9024
Jenn Ballentine, Editor, VHCA VOICE	404-875-7558