



Virginia-Highland VOICE

A publication of the Virginia-Highland Civic Association December 2002

VHCA CALENDAR

General Meetings:

December 4, 7:30 pm

February 5, 7:30 pm

Ponce de Leon Branch Library

Board Meetings:

December 2, 7:00 pm

January 6, 7:00 pm

February 3, 7:00 pm

YWCA

Planning Committee:

January 29, 7:30 pm

February 26, 7:30 pm

Ponce de Leon Branch Library

Location of meetings is subject to change.

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- Broken Sidewalk? We Can Help!
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LIGHTING THE HOME FOR THE HOLIDAYS

Darrah Horgan

There's no place like home for the holidays, and no better way to express that welcoming atmosphere than decorating your home with a festive, comfortable feel for family and friends. "Lighting plays a major role in setting the proper ambiance," said Cindy Herrin, an outside sales representative for Georgia Lighting. "In my seven years working with lighting, every holiday season is a new and exciting opportunity to experiment."

Dimmer switches are an easy, do-it-yourself installation project that will give you better control over the mood of any room in your home. With the addition of lamp lighting, a dim overhead fixture allows enough light without the glare or intrusion of too much brightness. Georgia Lighting offers a variety of holiday-themed accent lights, such as angel lamps.

Another easy way to add a festive touch is with inexpensive lamp and light shades. Exchanged for your regular shades, colored shades can add a warm glow to a room and give your fixtures new life! You can also experiment by decorating chandeliers and other existing fixtures with garlands, fruit and ornaments. Georgia Lighting also sells a variety of fabric chain covers to add a festive flavor, while hiding the chain or cord on hanging fixtures.

To accent the overall lighting in a room, Herrin notes nothing adds to the mood quite like a roaring fire. The smell, sound and light emitted from a crackling fireplace adds a cozy feel and a warm glow to its room. A soft spotlight above the mantle or framed picture, and lamplight throughout the room also complements that illumination.

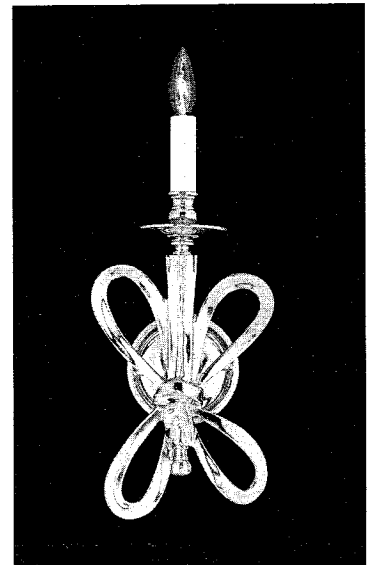
Herrin emphasizes the safety considerations for holiday decorating. Trees should be adequately watered, and garlands should not be dry or brittle when mixed with warm bulbs or candles. Luminaries should always be weighted with sand (which also extinguishes any stray sparks), and candles should be centered, away from bag sides.

Landscape lighting is an essential and fun element to holiday lighting. Focusing a low-voltage spotlight on the front door adds to the overall merriment of a decorated yard, and highlights a wreath or other adornment. Herrin believes that colorful light displays will be in favor this year, especially patriotic themes and "Americana" with red and blue lights complementing traditional white.

She also advises using timers. "The use of timers not only makes your lighting less of a hassle to deal with, it also gives your house that 'lived-in' look when you're out of town or at a neighbor's gathering."

Candles always provide a nice holiday touch. Try using them in untraditional places, like the kitchen. Since the kitchen often becomes a gathering place around this time of year, Herrin likes to use scented candles, like cinnamon or vanilla, to add to the festive feel of the room.

So this holiday season, plan lighting that will make guests feel cozy, passers-by admire and your family, well, feel at home for the holidays.



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

To the Editor,

I have lived in the Virginia Highland area for four years now and love the atmosphere and the people that make up our community. I am, however, very concerned about the high theft problem growing in our area, particularly on Virginia Avenue. I have had two CD players stolen, one three years ago and another as recent as four months ago. I had overheard several people at a recent weekend gathering comment on other cars that were hit that same night. I woke up this morning only to find that my Jeep was gone....stolen. Coupled with that, a roommate of mine noted that his girlfriend's car window had been broken and her CD player stolen three weeks ago...right across from our house on Virginia Avenue.

This is happening way too much for an area that should be safer. I don't know if the police patrol our streets frequently in the early morning hours, but I, for one, do not feel so safe anymore. In fact, I am considering moving out of this area that I love so much. Is there anything we as a community can do to stop or slow down this problem? More street lights? More patrolling of some of our streets?

I would appreciate your thoughts. Thank you for listening.

Regards,

Kevin Vaughter

Dear Kevin,

Thank you for voicing your concerns. It is unfortunate that you have been a victim of crime in our neighborhood. As you can see from this issue of the VOICE, safety is a major concern of many of our residents. Steve Luben, a member of the VAHI Public Safety Committee addresses some of the very same issues you raise and offers a few simple ways to avoid being a victim (such as not having checks delivered to your home). Officer Nicole Rabel provides us with some things we can do to protect ourselves, particularly around the upcoming holiday season.

I think we can adopt these safety precautions but your call for the community to bond together around this issue is timely. We appreciate you bringing these issues to our attention and encourage you to become involved in the VAHI Civic Association. The Association has an active Public Safety committee, which you are welcome to join and has close relations with the Atlanta police officers responsible for patrolling and monitoring our neighborhood. I encourage you to attend meetings and make your concerns known to our Atlanta PD representatives and to the rest of the association. Only by engaging our community to actively work together in the fight against crime can we begin to reduce the levels of crime that appear to be on the rise in ours and other neighborhoods.

Sincerely,

The Editor

The Voice is seeking a new Editor and new Business Manager!!!
If you're interested in either one or both of these exciting volunteer positions, please email editor@vahi.org or call Jenn Ballentine at 404-875-7558.
The Voice comes out 4 times per year and requires about 5-10 hours worth of work per issue.
Don't miss out on this great opportunity to get involved in your neighborhood association!!!

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PRESIDENT'S ADDRESS

Steve Kushner

Last year, the Board set out to accomplish several goals for the 2001-2002 term. These goals included an increase in dues-paying members of the Civic Association, an increase in e-mail addresses on the Civic Association's e-mail distribution list, improvement in the Voice and a successful Summerfest. These goals were all largely accomplished.

While not all residents of Virginia-Highland (in the approximately 7,500 homes) are dues-paying members or on the e-mail distribution list, we did see dramatic increases. Since you are reading this now, you can judge the improvement in the Voice. While I won't comment on any improvement in the editorial content, we are at least ensuring that the Voice is delivered in a timely fashion and to all of the homes in the neighborhood, which was not true in the past.

As for Summerfest, as a direct result of the dedication of our neighborhood volunteers, Summerfest 2002 was the most successful we have ever had. We measure Summerfest success in a variety of ways - was it safe, was it enjoyable for kids and adults alike, was the art interesting and diverse, was the music a complement to the festival, and did the neighborhood make any money? The answer is a resounding yes. It was safe and enjoyable. The art was better than ever, and without exception the artists had a better experience than ever. The musical acts positively added to the festival, especially the Saturday night concert by Roger McGuinn. As for financial success, the neighborhood made over \$68,000, which allowed us to donate over \$20,000 to our neighborhood schools, parks and other worthy causes that contribute to the neighborhood.

Lest you think we are all vacationing in the Caribbean with the balance of the funds, the Board has earmarked another almost \$30,000 to be spent in 2002-2003 on the continuation and expansion of the off-duty police security patrol along North Highland, the repair of sidewalks and maintenance of John Howell Park.

As always, this coming year brings new (and old) challenges to our neighborhood. Renovations continue at The Hilan Theater (800 North Highland), once the proposed new location for the Cotton Club, that appear to create (or recreate) a theater or similar type of venue. No news yet on any potential tenant.

The Atkins Park Neighborhood Association, the 3-block neighborhood within our neighborhood, has applied for 24 hour Residential Parking Permits. This would prevent, and make illegal, any parking on St. Louis, St. Augustine and St. Charles Avenues (between North Highland and Briarcliff) by anyone who does not live on these 3 blocks - including everyone else who lives in Virginia-Highland. Residential parking permits have the effect of privatizing public space, in this case by homeowners who can park all their cars in their driveways but would rather not.

What is even worse, however, is that residential parking permits are not a solution to living near a commercial district. It merely moves the problem and increases the burden on all of those blocks that surround Atkins Park's 3 blocks. Moreover, the parking issues that confront Atkins Park are not unique to Atkins Park. Rather, parking is a fact of life for all of us who have chosen to live in Virginia-Highland - especially those who chose to live on North Highland, or a block or two in either direction.

Imagine how our neighborhood would change if our commercial areas were not viable - if the majority of people who came here to shop and dine could not find any place to park because all of the surrounding streets were resident parking only. The few parking lots in the neighborhood cannot fit all the cars. Visitors and those of our neighbors who can't or don't walk to the commercial districts will surely shop and dine elsewhere. Retail stores and restaurants obviously can't succeed without patrons.

Continued on page 4



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PRESIDENT'S ADDRESS

Continued from page 3

Don't think this can't happen. Prior to filing its own application for Residential Parking Permits, Atkins Park attempted to rally other blocks around the commercial areas to also file applications. Thankfully, at least so far, no other applications have been filed. Remember, we all chose to live here (and have watched the dramatic increase in our property values), in part because of the viable commercial districts. Virginia-Highland is a model neighborhood for the rest of the metropolitan Atlanta area (as well as for other cities nationwide) because of the mixture of residential and commercial areas. We should strive to keep it that way.

So much for the soapbox. Good things as always are also happening in the neighborhood as well. Try out Sala, the new Mexican restaurant by the Fifth Group (La Tavola), in Camille's old space. No driving after that second margarita. Although we lost Caribou, Richard Chey (Highland Bagel and Doc Chey's) has some exciting ideas for the space, which we should see after the first of the year. Progress should be forthcoming soon at 830 Ponce de Leon Avenue. Even though we lost some trees and the density is greater than some would prefer, the development should be an overall positive addition to the neighborhood, and it will surely beat the urban campground that exists there now.

Our Summerfest Chair for 2003 is Rob Frazier and Premier Events. Rob is a professional events planner, with extensive experience with events around the State. He, like those before him, will rely on neighborhood volunteers, like Cynthia Gentry, who has graciously agreed to reprise her role as Artist Market Chair for 2003. We are confident that Rob and his groups will build on the wonderful foundation and success established by Aaron

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Gross and P.K.Trettel. Check the website (www.vahi.org) and listen to Z93, our radio partner, for updates and details. Remember, it's never too early to start thinking about volunteering.

So get out, enjoy the neighborhood - walk there if you can, please pay your dues (and maybe get a tax deduction since we're a 501(c)(3) non-profit corporation), check the website, get on the e-mail distribution list and come to a meeting once in a while (first Wednesday of every month, 7:30 p.m. at the Library) to see what is going on. I look forward to seeing you around the neighborhood.

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SAFETY DURING THE HOLIDAYS

Officer Nicole Rabel

Many holidays are celebrated during the winter season. Most of these holidays have some type of gift giving. Therefore, we are likely to carry more money on our person and fill up our vehicles with merchandise.

We all know this...even the criminals. So, while you are running around with fifty things on your mind the criminal only has one thing on his/her mind. That one thing is you. The criminal sees that you are preoccupied, not paying attention to your surroundings and placing bag after bag into your car. The criminal sees that he has the upper hand. He sees the opportunity and most likely he will act on it.

But, does he have to have the upper hand? The answer is NO! You can have the upper hand if you are aware and pay attention. Unfortunate events can and do happen. However, by being aware and acting confident you can significantly reduce a dangerous situation from occurring.

The following are tips to prepare you and remind you to put safety on the top of your list.

- ~ Carry a cell phone
- ~ Travel with a friend
- ~ Make sure your vehicle is tuned-up, gassed-up and ready for the weather
- ~ Do not leave anything visible in your vehicle! This includes change, dry-cleaning, CD's, cell phone chargers, letters, etc.
- ~ Put packages in the trunk of your vehicle (or under the seat or under a tarp of some kind)
- ~ Park as close to the door as possible and in a well lit area
- ~ Remember where you parked, you can become an obvious target if you stand in the middle of a parking lot scratching your head and looking around confused
- ~ Have your keys out and ready to use
- ~ Don't carry so much that you have no mobility in your arms
- ~ When you get to the parking lot, look at the area between you and your vehicle. Are strange activities occurring between you and your vehicle? If so, don't go alone. Ask a security officer or an employee to walk with you.
- ~ Check out your vehicle as you approach it and get in
- ~ When using public transportation walk with people who are traveling the same direction you are and use well lit paths
- ~ FOLLOW YOUR INTUITION! If a situation does not "feel" right it probably isn't! Forget politeness and formalities and get to a safe place or attract attention.

Have a safe and happy holiday season!

MONEY MAGNET MISSES MOSQUITOES

Chip Gallagher

In the last issue of the Voice I wrote about a Mosquito Magnet I installed in hopes of ridding my property of the swarms of mosquitoes which had taken over my backyard. The machine did not come cheap. At \$795 dollars, the need to purchase an \$18 propane tank every 21 days, as well as the "octenol" attractant cartridges at \$6 a pop meant a protracted war would be costly. Still the idea of gardening, barbecuing or playing with my two girls in the shade of the backyard without having a daily bloodletting seemed a reasonable price to pay to free up the yard. The West Nile virus was also partial justification for taking the plunge although I new statistically that I was more likely to be hurt on 75/85 then be bitten by a diseased mosquito.

The machine did work. Within the first four weeks I caught well over a 1000 mosquitoes. I changed out the net (yet another cost) and desiccated another 200 mosquitoes. However, the third tank of propane filled the trap with fewer and fewer mosquitoes. I don't know if there was Lamarckian pressure at work or the mosquitoes had erected buoy markers warning off their comrades from the machine, but the death toll went down markedly. After three months of operation the problem was there were still swarms of mosquitoes everywhere. My wife made the observation that swarms still did descend on anything warm-blooded that ventured into the backyard but the swarms were not as large as they once were.

By my calculations each mosquito cost about 75 cents to kill. This seems absurdly expensive. I imagine I could hire my eight-year-old neighbor Luke and pay him a nickel for each mosquito he kills. The saving would be considerable and the work would keep him off the streets. The machine almost worked. But, as the saying goes, almost only counts in horseshoes and hand grenades.

BROKEN SIDEWALK? WE CAN HELP!

Chip Gallagher

Imagine taking a nice stroll from Amsterdam to Ponce or on any side street in Virginia Highland. Now imagine that the sidewalk you're on is perfectly smooth and pedestrian friendly: no cracks, no missing pavers, no sink holes. One of our main projects this fiscal year is to repair all or at least a sizable portion of the sidewalks in our neighborhood. We will pay 25% of the cost of the sidewalk repair, up to \$500. Getting your sidewalk repaired is cheaper and easier than you can imagine because if you use the city to make the repairs you pay only for the sidewalk materials. I got a portion of my front sidewalk repaved by the city for a cost of \$280 and the Virginia Highland Civic Association reimbursed me \$70. The board has allocated \$10,000 of this year's budget to fix our sidewalks.

What you need to do if you are interested in fixing your sidewalk:

1. Call the city's streets number at 404-330-6245 and set up an appointment to have someone inspect your property and write up an estimate and work order. Get a name and a direct number of your contact so you can follow up on your work order.
2. Make sure you have a receipt from the city for the work that was done to your sidewalk. We cannot reimburse you if you do not have a receipt. Make an additional copy for your records.
3. Send the receipt to Wiley Sommerville at 858 Adair Ave. or call him at 404-881-1003.

If you have any questions feel free to contact me at 404-651-1853.

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PUBLIC SAFETY, TRAFFIC, AND CLEANLINESS

Steve Luben

One of the reasons we here in Virginia-Highland have chosen to reside here is that we enjoy the ability to walk to many of our favorite places: restaurants, pubs, shops, the library, the post office, and those of us with dogs love to get them out of the house for a walk too.

Of course, our neighborhood has become very popular over the last several years with people from all over metro Atlanta and beyond. This makes it challenging at times to walk, since most drivers totally ignore crosswalks and are unaware that it is Georgia law to stop for someone crossing. Our lives are put at risk just getting to the other side of the street.

There are also those that pay no attention to the posted speed in Virginia-Highland (nor most places in Atlanta). I'm amazed on a daily basis at the velocity some people will go. Some of these speeding drivers are from out of our neighborhood, but many, I hate to admit, are some of Virginia-Highland's own.

I appeal to those who don't stop at the crosswalks and happen to sometimes or always be in a hurry to SLOW DOWN. Let's all make a concerted effort to perhaps leave a few minutes before we normally would....it is much less stressful. As I say this, I know that I have been known to have done all of the above, but vow to do better.

In a truly collaborative effort within our neighborhood, the Virginia-Highland Civic Association and Business Association, Atkins Park Neighborhood Association, the Neighborhood Planning Unit F (NPU-F), and the Atlanta Police Department Zone 6 precinct have met and will implement an awareness campaign about these very issues over the next several months. Our concerns about certain areas of the neighborhood with regard to traffic design have also been made known to the City of Atlanta Traffic and Transportation engineers who are reviewing several key intersections on our behalf.

Cleanliness has always been a concern for those who walk near the retail and bar corridors of our area. A stroll down N. Highland or Virginia Avenue any Saturday or Sunday morning entails seeing incredible amounts of trash, bottles, cans, remnants of people's ashtrays, etc. Many of you and I most likely bring plastic grocery bags to collect these jewels so we can have some semblance of a clean street. Several residents have made the suggestion to urge the bar owners to help with this growing problem.

I believe this to be a great idea-to have our neighborhood entrepreneurs take the lead (or work in conjunction with the V-H Civic Association and Atkins Park) to create a "Keep Virginia-Highland Clean" Campaign? That truly would give meaning to the term "a great corporate citizen." Perhaps this could be a challenge to help residents with the trash problem created by patrons??

On the issue of crime, according to Atlanta Police, Zone 6, our area is one of the least crime-ridden areas of Atlanta. However, we as residents always prefer that there be none. There have been, however, several incidences of house break-ins over the last few months. These generally occur between 9:30am and 3:30pm and the perpetrators are generally after computers, TV's, stereos, CD players, etc. The method has involved pulling vehicles into the driveways, appearing to be like workmen and then loading up on goodies and driving away. If you work at home and notice anything suspicious, please do not hesitate to call 911 or your neighbor if you're not aware that they have workers due at their home.

Recently there have also been at least 3 houses in our area that have had new checks stolen out of their mailboxes. The perpetrators have gone to the banks and cashed the checks. In one incident, they cashed several thousand dollars. In all cases, the victims had to close their checking accounts. It is advised that if you need to order new checks to have them delivered to your bank. You can work with your bank to pick them up there.

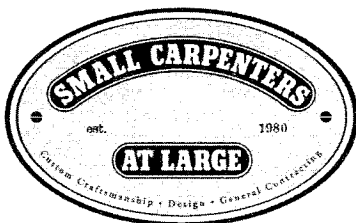
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THE HIGHLAND HOER

John Wolfinger

Congratulations to local garden designer David Ellis for having another great article about his wonderful garden at 704 Cooledge Avenue in the August issue of "Garden Design" magazine. David is the owner of Ellis LanDesign, and his home gardens are a testament to his design skills.

Thanks to a lot of neighborhood volunteers, three important public garden projects were accomplished this fall. The first project involved tons of mulch being placed around trees in John Howell Park under the watchful eyes of Stephanie Coffin and Mike Ferreira. Mike is the owner of Dreamscape Designs, who has done such a terrific job of maintaining the park's plantings. The traffic island at Virginia and North Highland was replanted for fall under the supervision of Rob Glancy. Thanks to Intown Hardware and Habersham Gardens for supplying materials at a discount. Arlington Place and Rosedale Drive now have a lot of new curbside trees, thanks to Trees Atlanta and neighborhood volunteers.

If you are a member of the Atlanta Botanical Garden, and haven't been attending the first Monday of the month garden question and answer sessions, you are missing out on a great chance to learn about plants. The sessions are very informal and very informative.

The Internet also has a wealth of garden information. Some of my favorite garden magazine web sites are as follows:

- www.carolinagardener.com (really geared to our zone 7 gardens)
- www.finegardening.com (well written how-to articles)
- www.hortmag.com (the site for "Horticulture" magazine)
- www.gardengatemagazine.com (no ads in this magazine)
- www.organicgardening.com (lots of good advice)
- www.gardendesignmag.com (beautiful photography and wonderful design ideas), southernliving.com (great articles for southern gardening)
- www.marthastewart.com (maybe she'll be behind bars by the time this is published, but beautiful photography and design ideas and great in-depth articles on plants)
- www.electasy.com/gallery_of_salvias (more information on salvias than you ever dreamed about - they are great plants though)
- www.nativehabitat.com (for those of you, like me, who love brugmansias- you won't believe the number of varieties available-even red!)

If you have favorite garden sites I don't have listed here, let me know and I'll be glad to share them with the rest of the neighborhood.

Speaking of brugmansias, I'll have plenty of rooting stalks available in white, yellow and pink to give away. Contact me @ 404-876-5023 or jjonww2@earthlink.net if you have a sunny spot where you'd like to grow one.

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