



# Senior Living

APRIL 2017

The  
**Arlington**  
Connection



# Retirement? Arlingtonians Are Busier than Ever

Doing what one wants.

BY EDEN BROWN  
THE CONNECTION

More than a half-dozen Arlington women recently answered the question: What can you say about retirement? Jamie Usrey, who was

a teacher in the Arlington County Public School system for 20 years, is hardly letting a lot of grass grow under her feet.

She said, "I feel a little embarrassed when I say I am retired when I look at people who are still working hard ... like Hillary Clinton. I am enjoying being able

to be outside more — biking, playing tennis, working in the yard, going for walks with friends and taking more trips to see national parks where we can hike through the beauty of nature. I have more time to exercise ... love those zumba classes ... and read. I love doing Reading Recovery "light" with three kids where I feel I am kind of still 'working' but don't have to go to meetings or write up

long reports. I do want to find a way to be more helpful in making our government work better ... next week. Lots to still do and lots to still see."

Jan Heininger says she is "happier than ever with even more travel, near daily long bike rides, daily mile swims in the summer, and far more time for reading lots and lots of books. I also get to spend far more time at our beach

house where I can more easily avoid politics."

Ruth Neikirk said: "Retire? I never did retire. I stay busy. It's good to stay busy."

Karen Smagala said: "I'm busier than I ever have been since retirement, and I'm enjoying life so much more. My blood pressure went down when I stopped working. People who aren't retired think that retired people have all this time: but I don't have more time. I had to stop saying 'yes' to people who thought I had free time. I do the Master Gardener program and I work at the library in the tool shed two hours a week."

Sheridan Collins said: "Busier than ever! Docenting at the Textile Museum provides continuing education for the brain, tennis and gym keep me fit, and this year more time on politicking helps maintain a healthy attitude. And then there's grandmothering requiring lots of travel. All good!"

Mary Lanaras said: "Retirement is like: everyday is a snow day!"

Joanna Cameron said: "Retirement? There is no such word! If you retire, you stop moving, and if you stop moving, you get old. Retirement is just a word signifying that your priorities have shifted to ones that are all about enjoying what you love, getting outside more and relishing the things that make you happy. Staying in motion above all."

For many women, retirement is a foreign concept: they didn't necessarily work outside the home earning a salary from 9 a.m.-5 p.m. Lanaras worked to home school her children until middle school and helped her husband, Charles, with his real estate business. And then there are people like Flo Broussard, 88, an Arlington resident from 1960 until she moved to Goodwin House a few years ago: she responded by saying: "Retirement?" I'm a lifelong volunteer. I have volunteered for WETA, The White House, Alexandria Hospital, and several other organizations. Then when I 'retired' to Goodwin House, I still volunteer, doing plantings and making crafts for sale to benefit local charities."

And there she was on April 2 at the Rehydration Salts project at Temple Beth El.

## THURSDAY/APR 11

**Origami for Beginners.** 10 a.m.-noon at Arlington Mill Community and Senior Center, 909 S. Dinwiddie St. Join an experienced origami artist to learn about the art of folding paper, including the history and culture of origami. Seniors age 55+. Free. Call 703-228-7369 for more

## Seeking Retirement Options? Consider Goodwin House

GH

GOODWIN HOUSE

[www.goodwinhouse.org](http://www.goodwinhouse.org)



We're a mission-driven, nonprofit organization known for our two communities in Alexandria and Bailey's Crossroads, both of which feature modern amenities and updated apartments. We also offer Goodwin House at Home, an innovative option for active, healthy adults ages 55 and older that provides you with coverage to protect your hard-earned savings. We work with you one-on-one to explore your future options, whether it's staying in your home, moving to a community, or both. To learn more, call us today at 703.824.1238.



Goodwin House at Home is an exciting program for healthy, active, older adults who want to remain in their home as they age with access to just the right amount of support throughout all stages of life. Once you join the program, your personal Member Services Facilitator can assist you with scheduling home maintenance and repairs, such as lawn care and housekeeping. They'll also be there when the unexpected happens, such as a fall or more serious medical condition, to orchestrate your care and in-home needs based upon a plan you'll create together. Our flexible financial plans help remove the fear of the unknown as it relates to both long-term care needs and protecting your financial future. Peace of mind and high-quality care has never been more accessible, or affordable.

GH

GOODWIN HOUSE  
AT HOME

To learn more, call us today at  
703.575.5202 or visit our website at  
[www.goodwinhouse.org/athome](http://www.goodwinhouse.org/athome)



# Senior Living Fit for the Golden Years

Exercises for strength, endurance, balance and aerobics are key.

BY MARILYN CAMPBELL  
THE CONNECTION

**A**t 7 a.m. each weekday, a group of Del Ray seniors meet at Starbucks to embark on a brisk, 45-minute walk. The women return to their starting point for coffee and conversation. Their goal is to stay active and socially engaged.

"Even those of us who've never exercised and aren't necessarily fit enjoy our walks," said Joyce Herrington, one of the group members. "It's mostly social and we enjoy it. The fact that we're getting some exercise is a bonus."

Late last month, representatives from Go4Life, a program created by the National Institute on Aging (NIA), held a pilot workshop in Potomac, Md., that was designed to test methods for motivating older adults to increase their physical activity. Workshop participants were from Potomac Community Village, one of several Go4Life partner organizations of seniors who are helping to design strategies to engage seniors in exercise programs.

Sheila Moldover, Potomac Community Village Communications Chair believes that local seniors can benefit from Go4Life.

"We're going to include some easy and simple flexibility, balance and strength exercises at each of our Potomac Community Village meetings, and distribute Go4Life materials to our members, including to those who are already exercising," she said. "We want to encourage everyone to pay attention to their balance, flexibility and strength as well as to endurance. We see that as enabling us to age in place, to thrive in place, and be healthy and active."

Go4Life, an exercise and physical activity campaign from the National Institute on Aging (NIA) at the National Institutes of Health (NIH), is designed to help those who are over 50 incorporate exercise and physical activity into their daily lives.

"We want people to know that it's never too late to start an exercise program, and we focus on four types of exercise: strength, endurance balance and flexibility," said



**Members of the Potomac Community Village attend a workshop on the Go4Life program, which was designed to help those who are over 50 incorporate exercise and physical activity into their daily lives.**

PHOTO BY SHEILA MOLDOVER

**"The most important thing is to find an exercise or activity that you enjoy. If you enjoy what you are doing, you will be more likely to continue."**

— Susan P Thompson, Ph.D., Northern Virginia Community College.

Stephanie Dailey of the Go4Life program at the NIA. "It's important that they're doing all four components. Older adults can gain a lot from exercising. In fact, people have a lot more to lose by not exercising than by starting exercising."

**WHEN BEGINNING** an exercise program, Dailey recommends guidelines established by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

"About 150 minutes per week of moderate activity is recommended for adults," she said. "If you are going to start a fitness program, see your doctor first."

For older adults exercise is important for maintaining function, physical strength and fitness, managing and preventing diseases, improving your mood and giving you more energy.

In spite of a popular misconception, older adults can gain strength and improve their

muscles with these exercises, says personal trainer Christian Elliot, CEO, Founder TRUE Health and Wholeness in Arlington, Va. "I work with people who are in their 60s, 70s, 80s and 90s and I've never met a person who couldn't improve their fitness," he said. "We're not going to stop aging, but you can certainly slow it."

Elliot recalls a client who was in her late 50s who didn't have a history of physical fitness, but wanted to get in shape. "She has hit some of the most phenomenal milestones, like being able to hold a 12-minute plank, do 50 push-ups and five push-ups on one arm," he said.

**FOR THOSE WHO** are new to fitness, there is good news. "There's a lot of evidence that middle age is a great time to get fit," said Julie Ries, Ph.D, professor of physical therapy at Marymount University. "You want to be active and healthy in your middle

age so that will keep dementia at bay in your old age. Exercise is not only for your physical health, but also your cognitive health."

A well-rounded exercise program should include exercises that focus on aerobic exercise, flexibility, muscular strength and muscular endurance, and balance, says Susan P Thompson, Ph.D., assistant dean, Health Physical Education at Northern Virginia Community College.

"Cardiovascular exercises should be done most days of the week for a minimum of 20-30 minutes," she said. "Walking, swimming, cycling, dancing, hiking and any activity that uses your large muscles in a continuous movement will increase your heart rate and improve circulation."

Stretching and moving your joints through their range of motion will keep the joints lubricated and less stiff. "Stretching will also help decrease pain and stiffness in the back, neck, hip and feet," said Thompson. "For the sportsman it will increase your power and ability to improve your follow through motion. For the hiker, it will let you lift your arms and legs higher. You can stretch daily. Yoga and dance are activities

SEE FIT, PAGE 7

## Bridge Sharpens Mental Skills

BY SHIRLEY RUHE  
THE CONNECTION

**D**ark clouds and heavy rain didn't deter the 9 1/2 tables of duplicate bridge players from showing up at Madison Senior Center in Arlington on Friday, March 31. Complete silence envelops the room as furrowed brows concentrate on the cards in their hands. An occasional "both of the kings are off" or "I knew I should have stayed home" penetrates the silence.

Mike Zane, coordinator of the group and an American Contract Bridge League (ACBL) certified director said, "we've been going ... well, it's got to be at least 10 years." Zane said that bridge was big in the 1930s-60s. "If you watch any old film, even a war

### Madison Senior Center

3829 N. Stafford Street  
Arlington, VA 22207  
Senior Programming Contact: Anne Peret, 703-228-4878  
TTY: 711

film, you'd see a bridge game. Even Ian Fleming played the Earl of Sandwich in a James Bond film. But," he continued, "it's lost its flavor."

Zane said it used to be that in the military academies the two required extracurricular classes were ballroom dancing and bridge, two important social skills.

Zane looks around the room and pulls out a long



**Duplicate bridge players concentrate on their next move at the regular ACBL-sanctioned games held Friday mornings from 10 a.m.-2 p.m. at Madison Senior Center.**

PHOTO BY SHIRLEY RUHE/  
THE CONNECTION

SEE BRIDGE, PAGE 7





## The Kensington Falls Church Presents Energized Fitness for Parkinson's

Announcing an Introductory Orientation  
with Laxman Bahroo, MD and  
Angela Onyekanne, DPT, GCS, CEEAA  
Sunday, April 9, 2017 • 2:00pm-4:00pm

at The Kensington Falls Church  
700 West Broad Street, Falls Church, VA

Refreshments served • RSVP to Karen Akers at 703-992-9868  
or to [kakers@kensingtonsl.com](mailto:kakers@kensingtonsl.com)

**T**he Kensington Falls Church is pleased to announce its collaboration with the Parkinson Foundation of The National Capital Area (PFNCA) and Genesis Rehab Services to offer Energized Fitness for Parkinson's. The program provides a high-energy fitness experience geared toward improving mobility and strength while participants share time with others facing Parkinson's.

Energized Fitness will be introduced by Dr. Laxman Bahroo, a neurologist who focuses on movement disorders, and Angela Onyekanne, a therapist who is trained in LSVT BIG (a therapy that involves large amplitude, exaggerated movements that lead to smoother, larger, safer movements). Dr. Bahroo and Angela are our allies in striving to maximize health and optimize independence for people with Parkinson's. **Please RSVP to join us.**



**Dr. Laxman Bahroo** is an assistant professor and co-director of the Neurology Residency Program at MedStar Georgetown University Hospital. He is a board certified neurologist and member of the Movement Disorders program. Primary areas of focus in movement disorders include the medical and surgical management of Parkinson's disease and essential tremor.



**Angela Onyekanne, DPT, GCS, CEEAA** has ten years of experience working exclusively with geriatric clients in a variety of settings. She is APTA Board-Certified in Geriatric PT and LSVT BIG certified for individuals with Parkinson's disease.

**THE KENSINGTON**  
An Assisted Living Community  
FALLS CHURCH

703.992.9868 | 700 West Broad St, Falls Church, VA 22046  
[www.TheKensingtonFallsChurch.com](http://www.TheKensingtonFallsChurch.com)



## Senior Living



PHOTO BY EDEN BROWN/THE CONNECTION

**Rick Glassco (left) and Linda Oliver (right), joined others from St. Clements, Fairlington United Methodist, and Immanuel on the Hill, to participate in an opportunity to save lives.**

## How to Save a Life in One Day

BY EDEN BROWN  
THE CONNECTION

**M**ike Oliver says he retired in 2000; he and his wife, Linda, spend 364 days a year doing good things. They work with ALIVE (ALExandrians Involved Ecumenically) and St. Clement's Church, and in November and December, Mike takes advantage of his naturally twinkly eyes to bring joy to children in the area embodying Santa Claus. But on the 365th day, he says, they do something really amazing: they save lives. They spend six hours filling small sandwich baggies with rehydration salts and sugars at the Temple Beth El Synagogue, along with other volunteers, many of them over 55.

Bobbi Gershman, who oversees the project, says she got less of a turnout this year than last. They will only be able to package about 15,000 sachets of rehydration salts. She likes it better when the room is overflowing and she gets numbers like 20,000 sachets; but every little bit helps, she says. For Gershman, it's almost a full time job to run the event, and every year when

she starts out, she feels it is too much work for her. But within weeks she is energized by the thought of what a difference they are making somewhere in the world, and by the time the day comes, and she puts in a really long day from about 7 a.m. to 6 p.m., she is motivated to do it again another year.

Flo Broussard, 88, who lived in Arlington from 1960 until four years ago when she moved to Goodwin House, said she is a lifelong volunteer. She has volunteered for WETA, The White House, Alexandria Hospital, and several other organizations before she "retired" to Goodwin House, where she volunteers, both doing plantings and making crafts for sale to benefit local charities, but also doing things like this rehydration project.

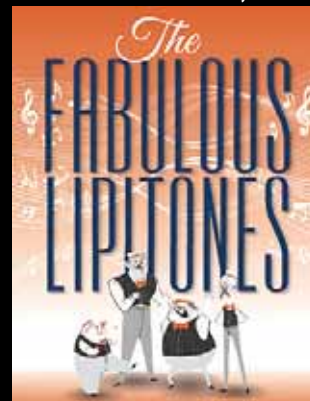
Gershman said she hopes she gets more volunteers next year: she will have to return a lot of salt. Sponsors for the event were Beth El Brotherhoods, Beth El Religious School Children, Immanuel Church on the Hill, Rabbi's Good Deed Fund, and Harris Teeter.

To volunteer next April, check the Temple Beth El Alexandria website, or join ALIVE, [www.ALIVE.org](http://www.ALIVE.org).

**We didn't  
inherit  
the earth  
from our  
parents.  
We're bor-  
rowing it  
from our  
children.**

—Chief Seattle  
(1788-1866)  
Suquamish/  
Duwamish chief

APRIL 22 - MAY 13, 2017



JUNE 3-24, 2017



Little Theatre of Alexandria  
600 Wolfe Street • 703-683-0496  
[www.thelittletheatre.com](http://www.thelittletheatre.com)



## Senior Living



**Fran Field, contra dance instructor at Lee Senior Center, leads a workshop for beginners before the dancing session begins.**



**"Grab hands and circle to the left."**

PHOTOS BY SHIRLEY RUHE/THE CONNECTION



**"Do-si-do your partner. Do-si-do your neighbor."**

# Dance the Rain Away

**T**hirty-six hands join in a circle and step to the left, then to the right. Fran Field, contra dance instructor at Lee Senior Center, leads the group in a contra step workshop, a dance similar to square dancing. Allemande left, then allemande right. "Wait I'm confused. How do I get from this step to the next one?" Field demonstrates with a partner from the group.

"I think we're ready to do it with music." Field puts on the folk music and the fiddle starts in. "Everyone to the center. Now back." Do-si-do. Two partners pass around each other back to back and return to their original positions. Some dancers turn one direction and others stand in place looking puzzled. "O.K. Let's try it again."

This is the first session of contra dancing and will be offered on fifth Fridays from 1-3 p.m. Participants don't need to come with a partner.

— SHIRLEY RUHE



**"Everyone to the center. Woooooowoooo."**



**"Allemande left your partner. Allemande left your neighbor."**



Award-Winning Senior & Assisted Living Community

Where **Quality** Meets **Affordability**

**Culpepper Garden**

4435 N. Pershing Drive  
Arlington, VA 22203  
703-528-0162  
VA Relay # 800-828-1120  
[www.culpeppergarden.org](http://www.culpeppergarden.org)

Coordinated Services Management, Inc.  
Professional Management of Retirement Communities since 1981










# Senior Living

## Mid-Century Classic for Artful One-level Living

In 1950s, Hollin Hills was a mecca for cutting-edge housing design; 60 years later, mid-century modern is a resurgent style ripe for nuanced improvements.

BY JOHN BYRD

**T**wo years ago, Jeff and Jenny Herre, both retired, were living in a five-level townhouse in Old Town Alexandria with a view of the river. Long-term residents, they were satisfied with all the house had to offer. They collected art and fine furniture and their periodic renovations over several years had extended all the way to the attic.

As they approached their 70s, however, they questioned how much effort they wanted to expend getting from room to room.

"We were wondering aloud whether we'd still want to be climbing five flights of stairs in 10 years," Jeff Herre said. "That's when we began thinking about downsizing, and ways we might concentrate our primary living needs on one level."

As the research got under way, Jeff Herre saw that cost would inevitably play a role in their choices. One-level structures in and around Old Town were appreciably beyond the family budget. Looking further out of town, the options boiled down to: a) purchase a ready-to-occupy home which would come at a higher price; or b) find an older home with renovation potential that could be shaped into a place brimming with personal style.

The latter course would entail finding a creative design/build team with whom one could collaborate closely.

After assessing available northern Virginia properties for several months, a Realtor in-



**At slightly over 900 square feet, the primary living area the Herres' remodeled home in Hollin Hills is comparatively small. But designer Jon Benson's wall elevations employ texture and color that make the space feel expansive.**

PHOTOS BY GREG HADLEY

roduced the Herres to a home in Hollin Hills, a community of some 450 houses in Hybla Valley. Hollin Hills is renowned in architectural circles — even listed in the historic record as one of the first communities in the U.S. to feature modern architecture exclusively, mid-century modern in particular.

"In the 1950s, most progressive modern homes were owner-commissioned," said Roger Lataille, a design consultant at Sun Design Remodeling. "But Hollin Hills was an entire development focused on the advanced architectural concepts that emerged after World War II."

Part of the enduring appeal was that architect Charles Goodman and landscape architect Dan Kiley had sited each Hollin Hills residence to maximize privacy. Even though lots are seldom more than one acre, it's difficult for your neighbor to see you from their house, and vice versa.

"We loved the wooded setting right away," said Jeff Herre. "The problem was, the house itself didn't look like anything we'd want to live in."

For starters, there were the obstructed sight lines starting from the front entrance. Walking in, one looked left at interior drywall that defined the parameters of a 10-foot-by-10-foot galley kitchen. To the immediate right, a floor-to-

ceiling exposed brick hearth with a masonry niche designed for firewood. To the left, a floor-to-ceiling bookcase and an odd chandelier. Straight ahead, an open stairwell descending to ground level.

Further back, a door leading to the master suite, which included the original 70-square-foot tile-clad bathroom. Two closets less than two feet deep provided the only wardrobe accommodation.

While floor-to-ceiling windows dominating the eastern and western wall elevations boasted a dramatic view of surrounding woodland, the Herres also soon learned that much of the glazing was single pane.

Herre's question for Lataille from the start was right to the point: "Can you make the changes we want within our budget?"

Topping Herre's wish-list: an open plan with places for art display that will work well for entertaining; design that allows the couple to mainly live on one level; a master bath with a walk-in shower and a new powder room; additional storage; a visually compelling interior design; replacement of single pane windows with insulated double-ply thermal glass.

"There have been significant developments in open floor plan design in recent years," Lataille said. "Part of this is driven by demand: more people want spaces that allow for both privacy and easy interaction."

A kitchen-centric floorplan a popular option for a home's primary living space, and offered a practical solution for amateur chef Jenny Herre, who enjoys regaling guests with her original dishes while otherwise fully engaging in the party all around her.

"We thought an open kitchen would really work in this house," Jeff Herre said, "but we needed to see well-developed ideas

before moving forward with the purchase."

Enter Jon Benson, Sun Design's lead designer, master craftsman with several published books on woodworking to his credit.

"When you're removing kitchen walls, the goal is to develop a space plan that meets all functional requirements, yet really supports the room aesthetically," Benson said. "That's why it's important to design elevations that present an appropriate combination of color, texture and tone."

On this score, Benson designed a cook top island and dining counter perfectly positioned between the dining room and the seating area around the fireplace.

Light maple Shaker-style cabinet facings combined with quartz Caesarstone counter surfaces present clean lines and reinforce the light, accessible ambiance of a room surrounded by windows.

Collectibles from India, Lebanon and Brazil are now on view in Benson-designed display spaces.

"This really feels like our home now," said Jeff Herre. "We've made the transition we wanted, and are pleased with it."

*Sun Design Remodeling frequently sponsors design and remodeling seminars as well as tours of recently remodeled homes. Headquartered in Burke, the Sun Design also maintains an office in McLean. Sun Design will be sponsoring an open house in a recently remodeled home on April 29 and 30 from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. daily. For more information: [www.SunDesignInc.com](http://www.SunDesignInc.com)*

*John Byrd ([byrdmatx@gmail.com](mailto:byrdmatx@gmail.com)) has been writing about home improvement for 30 years.*



**Light maple Shaker-style cabinets combined with quartz Caesarstone counter surfaces reinforce the ambiance of a light-filled room.**



## Senior Living

**Mike Zane, coordinator of the Friday morning duplicate bridge group at Madison Senior Center and an ACBL certified director, says he is hoping to copy European schools and get bridge into American high schools. "That's the only way it will survive."**



PHOTO BY SHIRLEY RUHE/  
THE CONNECTION

## Bridge Sharpens Mental Skills

FROM PAGE 3

computer sheet of names. "The players at the tables go up (clockwise) and the board goes down (counter-clockwise)." He explains each player has 13 cards and you play with a partner against the other two players at your table. The highest card wins. Each table will rotate and play the same set of cards. The object is 24 hands or 24 problems to solve. "It's the easiest game in the world."

The duplicate bridge group plays on Fridays from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m., about the time it takes to play one game with a half hour lunch break. Zane says he started playing bridge because his mother, father, and sister played. "Bridge takes four people."

In European high schools every student is required to take bridge according to Zane. "I am interested in getting bridge into schools in America. That's the only way it will survive."

## Fit for Golden Years

FROM PAGE 3

which focus on stretching."

Improved muscular strength and endurance will allow you to do everyday tasks with less energy with less chance of injury, advises Thompson. "Leg strength will enable you to walk faster, get up and down from chairs with more ease," she said. "For resistance, [you can use] hand weights, resistance bands, weight machines, water walking and exercise or your own body weight. Resistance training should be done two-three times a week working the major muscles. Pilates and other floor work focus on the core muscles."

Balance training is important to prevent falls, one of the leading causes of death and disability in the senior population. "Although muscular strength, muscular endurance, flexibility and cardiovascular exercises contribute to better balance, specific balance training is focused on body awareness, controlling your center of gravity, being able to navigate your envi-

ronment and react quickly," said Thompson. "The most important thing is to find an exercise or activity that you enjoy. If you enjoy what you are doing, you will be more likely to continue."

### For More

Learn more about Go4Life at [go4life.nia.nih.gov](http://go4life.nia.nih.gov).

## The Arlington Connection Senior Living

IS PRODUCED BY  
CONNECTION NEWSPAPERS  
[WWW.CONNECTIONNEWSPAPERS.COM](http://WWW.CONNECTIONNEWSPAPERS.COM)  
LOCAL MEDIA CONNECTION LLC

FOR MORE INFORMATION,  
CALL 703-778-9431 OR EMAIL  
[SALES@CONNECTIONNEWSPAPERS.COM](mailto:SALES@CONNECTIONNEWSPAPERS.COM)

[WWW.CONNECTIONNEWSPAPERS.COM](http://WWW.CONNECTIONNEWSPAPERS.COM)

**WELCOME TO MORE**

*Resident since 2010* *Resident since 2013* *Resident since 2015*

A COMMUNITY IS **MORE** THAN JUST A PLACE YOU LIVE. The heartbeat of any community is created by the people who call it home. At Westminster at Lake Ridge, that heartbeat remains strong and vital through the diversity of our members and staff, and their collective commitment to wellness for the whole person, lifelong learning and community connection. With open spaces throughout, spacious residences and inviting common areas, you'll discover a fulfilling and engaged life—plus the peace of mind that comes with maintenance-free living and a full continuum of extraordinary health services.

**Now accepting wait list deposits. Call 703-791-1100 or visit us today!**

**WESTMINSTER**  
AT LAKE RIDGE  
ENGAGED LIVING  
An Ingleside Community

*Westminster at Lake Ridge is a CARF accredited, not-for-profit, continuing care retirement community.*

703-791-1100 | [www.wlrva.org](http://www.wlrva.org)  
12191 Clipper Drive | Lake Ridge, VA

*where  
seniors ages  
62 and better  
enjoy  
rewarding  
lifestyles in  
the heart  
of Alexandria*

## Celebrating Life Not Years

Hermitage is a welcoming community where senior citizens can enjoy an enriching lifestyle with many choices. Residents live in spacious apartments, with a generous service package that frees them from the demands of home maintenance and supports continued personal independence.

As a CCRC, Hermitage also offers health services on site, including assisted living and skilled nursing care. Residents gain peace of mind, knowing their future needs will be met without having to relocate.

Living at Hermitage, you'll have the freedom to plan each day as you see fit. Make your life as busy or as relaxed as you prefer.

**Call 703-797-3844 for more information.**



5000 Fairbanks Ave. Alexandria 22311  
703-797-3844  
[www.Hermitage-Nova.com](http://www.Hermitage-Nova.com)





# Senior Living

## Elaborating a Log Cabin

Retirees find special satisfactions in pair of art studios, and front porch with view.

BY JOHN BYRD

**B**lissful retirement often validates of the old homily: “Busy hands mean happy hearts.”

On this point, it is hard to imagine a more fruitful environment than the home of Kirby and Helen Thornton, two 70-something retirees who recently completed focused renovations to a log cabin style home in Lorton they have occupied for more than 20 years.

The changes were all about tweaking to even higher relevance aspects of the home that had gradually become a sources of distinctively personal satisfaction to both seniors.

Kirby Thornton, a former electrical engineer, has been exploring his passion for woodworking for many years. Helen Thornton, a one time research analyst, revels in creating shimmering objets d’arte from fused glass. When not pursuing their hobbies, the couple might otherwise be found taking in the scenery from the wide, rustic-style front porch that now graces the home’s front elevation.

For all the quiet simplicity that abounds in every direction though, the Thornton’s lifestyle accommodation has been decades in the making, beginning with purchasing the 2,900 sq foot house and garage in the late 1990s.

“We were attracted to the relaxed ambiance of a log home,” Kirby Thornton said. “There were changes we wanted to make from the first, but since we were both busy, modifications would have to occur in phases.”

The first step was acquiring more storage space.

As Kirby Thornton tells it, the couple hired Foster Remodeling Solutions of Lorton to remove an unneeded balcony, add a floor above the open garage and apportion the space for storage and other uses to be determined.

Soon Kirby Thornton decided that the windowless garage loft would work fine as a place to take up woodworking. He had actually purchased a lathe from the home’s previous owner. Helen Thornton, seeing the loft’s potentials as a studio, acquired a kiln and began fusing glass.

The pursuit of one’s muse being all-absorbing, the pair spent little time worrying about the fact that the workspace provided zero natural light, or that it was hard to stand erect under the four foot high ceiling that dominated much of the floorspace.

About the only change to the physical



PHOTOS BY LARRY COLFER

**Rough-hewn timbers — the handiwork of Foster master carpenter Mike Borman — is integral to the aesthetics of a new front elevation that is both inviting and whimsical. Red cedar trim and molding provides sympathetic color accents.**

space in this interval was the introduction of a partition designed to keep wood dust on Kirby Thornton’s side of the studio.

Even so, as full retirement dawned, both saw there was now time to reconsider the larger “wish list” of remodeling preferences.

“We knew we would have to change the studio roof line to get the head room and natural light we wanted,” Kirby Thornton said. “About this time, Helen was looking into front porch ideas in log home magazines. We sketched out several designs of what we thought we wanted. That’s when we called Foster Remodeling back in.”

But the first surprise inspired another pause: Turned out the front porch seen as spanning the entire front elevation couldn’t be built because of its proximity to a part of the home’s septic system.

“The symmetry, the curb appeal, was important to us,” Helen Thornton said. “We wanted a balanced facade on both the house and the garage. We were kind of at a loss.” Fortunately, Foster’s team led by Chris Arnold came up with an innovative solution.

Foster’s architectural concept call for a faux peak on the main house at exactly the same pitch as the one above the garage which is, in turn, reinforced by the peak of a front-facing archway that defines the ground-level entrance to the porch.

A porch swing occupying the far corner now fleshes-out the portrait of a restful care-free idyll amidst flowers and trees. For an expanded view, there’s a large Velux skylight overhead.

Underfoot, a flagstone patio lends color and texture, a natural tonal complement to the dark-stained log siding. Kirby Thornton says the couple selected the color palettes

at a nearby stone yard over several days, and played with combinations until they found what they wanted.

Rough-hewn timbers, the handiwork of Foster master carpenter Mike Borman, is integral to the aesthetics of a new front elevation that is both inviting and whimsical. Red cedar trim and molding, meanwhile, provide sympathetic color accents.

To fashion studio space useful to all, Foster found a way to elevate the headroom to fully six feet, freeing up all 770 square feet of floorspace. A front-facing dormer featuring a pair of double hung windows invites generous southerly light. Kirby’s wood shop — equipped with a lathe, a drill press and table saw — is tucked snugly behind a new partition. Helen Thornton uses two kilns to produce her work.

Matching the logs needed to “pop up” the second level also entailed a close examination of existing details.

“We spent quite a while researching options with various vendors, which is a challenge when you’re working with a 30-year-old exterior,” said project manager Chris Arnold.

Summarizing the well-planned lifestyle shift, Kirby Thornton says the couple are frequently in the studio at the same time.

A window in the interior partition allows each spouse to witness the other’s progress, if so inclined. It’s a working environment, but also a place of interaction and play.

The distinctive by-products of the Thornton’s labors are mostly donated to friends, children and grandchildren. Kirby Thornton is keen on picture frames and book cases; Helen Thornton recently completed a glass bird bath.

“This is a very sweet place to be spend-



**Underfoot, a flagstone patio lends setting-appropriate color and texture. The Velux skylight allows needed available light.**

ing this time in our lives,” Kirby Thornton said. “Perfect in fact.”

Foster Remodeling Solutions will be holding an open house in its expanded design and selection center Saturday, April 22 from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. There will be three seminars. A workshop on Aging-In-Place will be held at 1 p.m. The design center is located at 7211-H Telegraph Square Drive, Lorton, VA 22079. To RSVP call: 703/550-1371, or contact us at [www.fosterremodeling.com](http://www.fosterremodeling.com)

John Byrd ([byrdmatx@gmail.com](mailto:byrdmatx@gmail.com)) has been writing about home improvement for 30 years.