

News From Our Elected Officials

This column will provide you with a monthly update from our elected officials at the county, state and federal levels, in terms of the current priorities and issues they are working on that impact Fairlington. Below is a message from Arlington County School Board Member Libby Garvey.

Fabulous Fairlington

I hope Fairlingtonians are enjoying the summer. Every year I think again how lucky we are to have pools and tennis courts and great neighbors to enjoy them with.

I wanted to report briefly on two things: the recent primary and the Superintendent Chat in Fairlington.

Fabulous Fairlington votes: The term “fabulous Fairlington” was used by someone who looked at the turnout from our community on primary day this June 13. As readers know, there were simultaneous Republican and Democratic primaries that day. Turnout is traditionally quite low for primaries everywhere, including Fairlington. In fact, I was asked by one campaign to greet voters at a *different* Arlington precinct because Fairlington did not even make the top 10 precincts for expected turnout. Well, we have turned a corner! Fairlington turned out incredibly well for my primary this June.

Statewide turnout for this June 13 primary was 3.4%. The Arlington County turnout was 9.3% — three times more than the statewide turnout. The Fairlington turnout was 15%, almost 5 times more than the state turnout. We had the highest turnout of any precinct in Arlington and, while I have not been able to determine turnout for every precinct in Virginia, I think we may well have had the highest turnout in the state.

This is important because many elections are really determined by the primary vote, not the vote in the fall, which often just ratifies what happened in the spring. Communities that turn out for primaries get noticed and have quite a bit of influence. This is very good for our community. Congratulations and thank you.

Superintendent Chat: By the time you read this, our Superintendent, Dr. Robert Smith, will have held this summer’s “Superintendent’s Chat” in Fairlington on July 27. For several years he has been visiting communities to meet with folks and talk about our schools. FANS: Friends of Abingdon Neighborhood School invited Dr.

Smith to speak and answer our questions.

As many of you know, FANS is working hard to get the news out about Abingdon and its new GIFT program. This instructional program is unique in its design because of its emphasis on personalizing instruction to the individual with music instruction for all students, a broad array of after-school enrichment activities, assessment through digital portfolios and a collaborative model among staff for instruction. It is based on Howard Gardener’s theory of multiple intelligence.

Project GIFT (Gaining Instruction, Fostering Talents) provides an exciting school focus for Abingdon. Test scores have improved markedly and interest in Abingdon and its program is increasing quite a bit. To stay posted on neighborhood involvement with Abingdon, please e-mail Amy Suardi at fans@fastmail.net. I encourage everyone, whether you have children in our schools or not, to contact Amy at FANS. Healthy schools involve their communities and healthy communities are involved in their schools.

As always, feel free to contact me about school and community issues at libby73@verizon.net. Or check out the Arlington Public Schools Web site at <www.arlington.k12.va.us>. The Web site has lots of information. I look forward to seeing many of you around the neighborhood. Enjoy your summer.



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Neighborhood News

continued

Friends of Abingdon Neighborhood School

To better reflect the scope and inclusiveness of their organization, FANS have changed their name from Fairlington Advocates for Neighborhood Schools to Friends of Abingdon Neighborhood School. At their June 20 meeting, FANS discussed some of their goals. Besides spreading the news about Abingdon's successful teaching programs, FANS would like to help make Abingdon a community school. Historically, schools have been seen as centers of the neighborhood — places where families and residents of all ages have meetings, take classes, celebrate, and work on community projects together.

Joanne Uyeda, Abingdon's principal, also talked at the meeting about how teachers challenge and meet the needs of children at different learning levels. She emphasized that Abingdon's teachers are experienced in differentiated teaching. Children are assessed at the beginning of the year, and teachers group them according to ability and assign activities of varying difficulty. English as a Second Language children are taken out of regular classes for several hours of high-intensity language instruction.

Uyeda also noted that Abingdon has a gifted program. The school's gifted teacher works with all children and teachers throughout the grades to locate and encourage particular gifts. In third grade, children are identified as gifted and are offered specialized instruction.

For more information about Abingdon's unique programs or to sign up for the FANS e-newsletter, please send an e-mail to fans@fastmail.net or call Amy Suardi at 703-820-0656.



Colleen Weiser, PTA Co-President and Treasurer, Tina Masciangioli, PTA Co-President, Dana Andy and Amy Suardi, FANS organizers. Photograph provided by Amy Suardi.

FANS Parents' Night Out

FANS is having a Parents' Night Out at Kyoto Japanese Restaurant at the Bradlee Shopping Center on Wednesday, August 30 at 7:30 PM. FANS encourage anyone to come for casual conversation with other parents. Please R.S.V.P. to 703-820-0656 or fans@fastmail.net.

County Offers Homeowner Grant, Tax Relief Programs

The Arlington County Board has raided the income and asset limits to reach more residents with two programs that provide assistance to Arlington homeowners with low and moderate incomes. The Homeowner Grant Program can reduce the impact of higher real estate taxes by provide a \$600 grant to qualifying homeowners. The Real Estate Tax Relief Program reduces or eliminates payment of real estate taxes for a homeowner residing in his/her own home who is 65 or older or permanently disabled.

To be eligible for either program, residents must meet the following requirements: household income may not exceed \$77,407; assets, excluding the home, do not exceed \$340,000; and the home was purchases prior to and inclusive of December 31, 2005. Application deadlines are August 15 for the Real Estate Tax Relief Program and December 31 for the Homeowner Grand Program. Contact the county's Department of Human Services to learn more about these programs at 703-228-1350 or www.arlingtonva.us/grants.