

OPINION



PHOTOS CONTRIBUTED

Front row, from left, are: Dr. Alexis Malkin, Mary Lee Anderson, Kym Robertson and Josh Dunning. Back row are David Baker, Kevin Osborne and Jim Lindsay.

Using Technology To Enhance Life

BY MARYANNE BEATTY
MEALS ON WHEELS PROGRAM MANAGER
SENIOR SERVICES OF ALEXANDRIA

Technology can be intimidating to learn and use, but when you get past the fear, it can enhance your life in many ways. That was the takeaway from Senior Services of Alexandria's June Speaker Series last week at Beatley Central Library. David Baker, SSA's board of directors' vice chair, kicked off the event that featured several local experts talking about everything from audio books and library services, high tech for low vision to technology devices for senior care in your home.

Kym Robertson with the Talking Books Program, and Adult Services Coordinator Kevin Osborne with the Beatley Central Library gave an overview of the technology programs offered at Alexandria Public Libraries. The Library of Congress' National Library Service for the Blind and Physically Handicapped (NLS) program produces novels, nonfiction, magazines and other recreational reading materials on digital cartridges that are loaned to libraries across the country. By enrolling in the talking-book program, audio books are available free at the library or by mail along with the operating device. If you are looking to read books from a Kindle or an iPad and not sure which one is best for you, the library has "tech" experts who can help you make an informed decision on what's right for you. Library "drop in" hours are every Tuesday from 3-5 p.m. To get the hours for the Adult Services Desk to make a one-on-one appointment go to www.alexandria.lib.va.us.

Dr. Alexis Malkin with the Low Vision Learning Center gave an overview of the vision rehabilitation services offered to individuals who are visually impaired. Some of the electronic aids include electronic

magnifiers and other optical and electronic visual aids to cope with chronic vision loss. To find out more, go to www.lowvisionservices.org or call 703-652-7803.

Josh Dunning from AARP's Driver Safety program discussed how vehicles and roads have changed and discussed the benefits of the AARP Smart Driver Course. The course is designed to help update driving skills and knowledge of the rules and hazards of the road, learn about normal age-related physical changes and how to adjust your driving to compensate and how the effects of medications can have on driving. Auto insurance companies in most states provide a multi-year discount to course graduates. To find out more and how to register go to www.aarpdriversafety.org.



Kevin Osborne, coordinator of Adult Services at the Beatley Central Library, holds an iPad from the "Tech Petting Zoo."

Jim Lindsay, president of ACCfamily (formerly known as Adult Companion Care), gave an overview of technology for senior care in the home including the use of sensors and monitors for caregivers of loved ones with dementia or other memory issues. This technology can ease some of the stress caregivers face and ACCfamily can discuss various options. Visit their website at www.accfamily.com.

To download copies of the presentations, go to SSA's website at www.seniorservicesalex.org. SSA's Speaker Series will start again in

the fall with Senior Law Day on Saturday, Oct. 18 at First Baptist Church, 2932 King St., Alexandria. If you have any topics for the 2014/2015 Speaker Series, email Mary Lee Anderson at executivedirector@seniorservicesalex.org or call SSA at 703-836-4414. Just a reminder to watch SSA's monthly cable 30-minute television show, "Senior Living in Alexandria," every Sunday at 2 p.m. on Comcast Channel 70. You can also find it on YouTube, just search for "Senior Living in Alexandria." Thanks to Mitch Opalski at Synergy HomeCare for sponsoring this program.

Celebrating Champions

Reflections on the T.C. Williams Class of 2014

BY DR. ALVIN L. CRAWLEY
SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOL

Since arriving at Alexandria City Public Schools in October, I have enjoyed the exhilarating experience of getting to know this community. I've had the pleasure of meeting so many passionate parents, teachers and students. The commitment and desire to achieve among those involved in this wonderful and diverse school division has instilled me with a great sense of pride.

That pride reached a new apex on Saturday when I took part in the graduation ceremony for the T.C. Williams Class of 2014 at George Mason University's Patriot Center.

Upon my introduction to this class at a homecoming pep rally in the fall, I could see it was brimming with hardworking students, talented leaders, inquisitive scholars, savvy entrepreneurs and accomplished athletes, artists and performers.

As the months passed, we learned of the next steps for this senior class. Those steps include some of the best universities in Virginia and the country. Some have made commitments to the U.S. armed forces. Many stand poised to join the workforce.

On Saturday, we sent these graduates out of the doors of our high school one last time. We celebrated them for what they have accomplished and what we know they will accomplish in the future. To stand among the families, teachers and administrators who helped these students reach graduation day was something special. It was the entire school community under one roof.

It is my hope that ACPS has done everything it can to prepare these students to excel in their postsecondary choices.

The school division provided a wealth of courses, skills training, extracurricular activities and networking opportunities for our seniors. Many took full advantage of these chances to develop leadership skills and fuel their interests and talents, making lifelong friends along the way.

Moving forward, as superintendent, I have placed a priority on continuously providing students with a rich and rigorous instructional program, maintaining safe and supportive learning environments and helping students develop resiliency skills to maintain healthy lifestyles. This process begins as soon as students enter our halls. I remain committed to ensuring this is a reality for our students. I am committed to ensuring that our schools are filled with caring, dedicated adults working with our students.

As one traditionally does while speaking at graduation ceremonies, I offered our departing students some advice. I urged them to take advantage of every opportunity to achieve their goals and to strive to make a difference every day. I told them there would be ups and downs, but it's important for them to get back up and keep moving when they do fall. They will forever be Titans. Today and every day, we remain committed to our past, present and future Titans.

I also encouraged our graduates to look for opportunities to give back to ACPS. The positive impact of caring adults must extend beyond the interior of our schools. We need champions for our students — people encouraging them to do their very best each day.

The Class of 2014 is filled with champions — champions in the classroom, champions on the playing field, champions in their families and to others.

As a community, let's celebrate them. And let's honor them by moving forward, building a brighter future for our next class of graduates.

BULLETIN BOARD

Email announcements to gazette@connectionnewspapers.com. New Trolley Hours

Beginning June 29 the King Street Trolley will start 10 a.m. daily and from Thursday-Saturday will run until midnight. From Sunday-Wednesday the last trolley will run at 10:15 p.m. The trolley runs daily every 15 minutes. Contact DASH at 703-746-DASH or email DASHBus@AlexandriaVA.gov.

THURSDAY/JUNE 19

Food Truck Program Public

Hearing. 7 p.m. Charles Houston Recreation Center, 901 Wythe St. This public hearing is an opportunity for the community to provide comments to the Park and Recreation Commission on the Parks and Recreation Policy on the subject of food trucks being introduced into Alexandria. Visit www.alexandriava.gov/FoodTrucks.