



The Village News

Introduction to NNV's new strategic plan

By Gene Sofer

No organization can stand still. That may be especially true for Northwest Neighbors Village (NNV) which continues to meet the changing needs of our members and supporters.

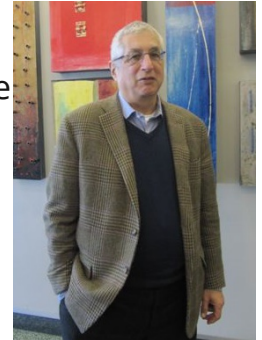
In 2019, NNV implemented a strategic plan that positioned our organization for growth. Since its adoption, we have significantly increased our membership, grown our community engagement, established NNV as a leader in the District's Village movement, increased our budget by more than 50 percent, and responded to the needs of more older adults from different age groups, diverse cultures, incomes, and backgrounds.

We have increased our membership from 239 members in 2018 to 294 in 2023, and increased the value of NNV's membership subsidies from \$9,800 to \$20,000. In 2018, our newsletter reached about 600 households; today we reach 3,500. Finally, we have played a leadership role in the creation of the D.C. Villages Collaborative, which brings together all 13 villages in pursuit of common interests and strengthens our collective impact.

The board knew it was time to build on the successes of our 2019 plan. Last year, with involvement from the board, members, volunteers, donors, and other interested parties, we embarked on a new strategic planning process. That process is now complete. On March 21, the Board unanimously approved a new plan intended to guide us through 2028.

The new plan focuses on creating a more

diverse and inclusive organization that reflects the demographics of our community, exploring new service models to support program expansion, expanding our reach to more older adults through strategic partnerships, and remaining a valued leader of the D.C. Villages Collaborative. The plan also focuses on achieving greater recognition and visibility to attract and engage volunteers, donors, and partners; engaging in advocacy work that promotes an age-friendly city; and securing new funding sources.



Gene Sofer

We think of this plan as aspirational with goals to work toward. Making it a reality will take all of us working together. We encourage you to get involved with NNV as a member, donor, volunteer, or supporter to help make our community a better place for older adults.

I would like to thank the members of the Strategic Planning Committee chaired by Rosemary Marcuss, to whom we are incredibly grateful. They include Susan Crawford, Judie Fien-Helfman, Morgan Gopnik, Ed Hayes, Monica Knorr, Linda Lateana, Janean Mann, and Eda Valero-Figueroa. Special thanks to Stephanie Chong, our outstanding Executive Director who so ably staffed the Committee.

[Click here to review NNV's 2024-2028 Strategic Plan.](#) Please don't hesitate to let us know if you have thoughts or comments.

Northwest Neighbors Village

a **community network of support** serving upper NW DC including American University Park, Barnaby Woods, Chevy Chase, Forest Hills, Friendship Heights, Hawthorne, Tenleytown, & Van Ness

P.O. Box 39135
Washington D.C. 20016
☎ (202) 935-6060
✉ info@nnvdc.org
🌐 www.nnvdc.org
📺 vimeo.com/nnvdc
Tax ID #26-1247521

NNV Board Members

Officers

Gene Sofer, president
Susan Crawford, vice president
Rosemary Marcuss, treasurer
Merilee Janssen, secretary
Morgan Gopnik, immediate past president

Directors

Richard Avidon • Jamie Butler • Shanti Conly • Judie Fien-Helfman • Ann Ingram • Gretchen Jennings • Monica Knorr • Lenore Lucey • Sam Smith

Directors Emeriti

Frances Mahncke • Janean Mann • Robert Parker • Stewart Reuter • Jo Ann Tanner

Team

Stephanie Chong, executive director
Heather Hill, volunteer and member services coordinator
Leslie Pace, communications coordinator

Newsletter Team

Pat Kasdan
Janean Mann
Pat Mullan

Up close and personal with Katrina Polk, Ph.D

By Merilee Janssen

In traditional societies, a “life calling” occurs “at the place where one’s great passion and gifts meet the world’s great need.” If that’s true, Katrina Polk surely has a calling to care for older adults. She’s been doing it since she was four years old.

On February 20, Dr. Katt (as she is known) took on a new challenge as the inaugural executive director of the D.C. Villages Collaborative. DCVC is a recently-launched project that brings together the strengths and reach of all 13 Villages in D.C. in order to increase our efficiency and effectiveness, serve even more older adults, and expand into currently underserved neighborhoods.

Of course, Dr Katt’s qualifications for this position include impressive professional and academic credentials and decades of work in the public and private sector focused on serving older adults. But as she says, “I am more than academic rigor and business innovation. I am a proud caregiver and grandmother!” I had the privilege of spending a couple of hours chatting with Dr. Katt about where she comes from, where she learned to care for elderly adults, and how she formed her broad understanding of the aging process.

Dr. Katt was born into a large, multigenerational family in Philadelphia. Her great-great-grandmother, Lulu (Waiters) Brown, moved there from South Carolina with other family members during the Great Migration of the 1920s. Lulu’s grandparents had been enslaved in Trinidad, and her mother was sold as a child to a sugar cane plantation in South Carolina.

Katt’s father was a military specialist for the Navy and his work often took him away from home. Katt’s mother also traveled often, so Katt and her brothers were cared for by their great-great-grandmother. “Granny” was in her 80s when Katt was a young child, and her vigor and purpose at this advanced age made a lasting impression on young Katt. Through a faith-based initiative, Granny prepared neighbors’ houses for their return from the hospital; many of these neighbors were older adults who were still younger than she was. Four-year-old Katt came along to help clean and make sure the houses were safe and welcoming. Thus, Katt started learning about the satisfactions of public service and elder care early in her life.



Dr. Katt

See **DR KATT**, Page 5

Northwest Neighbors Village (NNV), founded in 2007 and opened in 2009, is a nonprofit organization created to help the residents of Northwest Washington live comfortably and safely in their homes and neighborhoods as they age.

Join or volunteer

NNV welcomes new members and volunteers. For more information, call the office at 202-935-6060 or visit www.nnvdc.org.

The unexpected details about Paul Pearlstein

By David Cohen

NNV member Paul Pearlstein relishes unexpected details. They appeal to his wide-ranging curiosity, his wry humor, and his joy in surprises.

For a sampler of unexpected details, check the bylines for his book reviews. [Paul has reviewed for the Washington Independent Review of Books](#) since 2016. His reviews often appear on the Independent's lists of its most viewed articles. Here are excerpts from Paul's bylines. Each begins "Paul D. Pearlstein":



Paul Pearlstein

... is an attorney in Washington, D.C., and a former Reserve captain in the Army Signal Corps. He and his wife live two blocks from Politics and Prose and both love to read. Paul is also a musician who performs regularly with the Takoma Mandoleers, and a docent at the National Museum of American History. He gives tours there on Fridays and can talk for at least 30 minutes about Chester Arthur's girlfriend(s) and/or Franklin Pierce's alcoholism.

... has introduced many visitors to Cher Ami [a homing pigeon that saved a U.S. regiment in World War I and received the Croix de Guerre with palm]. He also served proudly in the U.S. Army Signal Corps, though he never handled a pigeon.

... praises covid-19 for giving him the opportunity to read with impunity.

... was in uniform and preparing to invade Cuba in October 1962.

... was one of 250 volunteer lawyers called to court in D.C. on Friday, April 5, 1968. There he stayed and represented those prisoners assigned to him until they were finally released from jail at 3:30 a.m. the next day.

... is a former Army captain who witnessed May Day 1971 up close. By the time of the demonstrations, he had morphed from a hawk to a dove and was representing draftees.

Born in Berlin, N.H., in 1938, Paul moved to Arlington, Va, in the early 1940s. By age 10, he had begun studying mandolin as a prelude to violin. The mandolin became a lifelong passion. For decades he performed with the Takoma Mandoleers, a mandolin orchestra dedicated to classical music. He still joins its rehearsals every Tuesday evening by Zoom.



Paul with the Takoma Mandoleers

At Washington-Lee High School, Paul began another lifelong passion: rowing. That passion led to the University of Pennsylvania and a crew program Paul liked.

Decades later, it led to Paul's helping to found a rowing program on the Anacostia River, which has become the Anacostia Community Boathouse Association.

From UPenn, Paul went to the University of Virginia Law School. His review of a new book about Sacco and Vanzetti made it into a student publication, the Reading Guide. Paul says, "I was thrilled." He's been "writing book reviews and articles ever since"—for the American Bar Association, the D.C. Bar, and now the Washington Independent Review of Books.

Paul followed Army service in France with a law practice in Washington. One focus of his practice was real estate. When Paul needed a notary for a client's deed, a friend referred him to Merry Mills. The usual notary fee of 50 cents struck Paul as too little. When he asked the friend what to do, she recommended inviting Merry out. Paul took Merry to the opera "Boris Godunov," which led to an encore: marriage. In January, Paul and Merry celebrated their 43rd anniversary.

Paul is the proud father of Laurie, David, Adam, and Susanna--ranging from their late 30s to their 50s--and a proud grandfather of three. He still talks to each child every Friday.

See **PAUL PEARLSTEIN**, Page 5

Old Urban Naturalist

By Jane Whitaker

Spring is upon us and it's my favorite time of year. One can feel life renewing and see it bursting forth in all manner of ways.

Our bird friends are getting territorial and singing their mating songs. Some are migrating north – the juncos, purple finches and white-throated sparrows, to name a few. In the coming month we'll welcome the southerners -- catbirds, warblers and indigo buntings.

Butterflies will emerge and many insects will appear, including gnats and mosquitos – a necessity the birds need to eat. It's the insectivores that have to migrate to a ready food source. Alas, also appearing will be another prominent invertebrate: spiders!

It's been said that 60 percent of our population has an aversion to them. Some experience arachnophobia – an irrational fear of the little creatures or anything that resembles them. Spiders are poorly understood by most of us and even their webs give us the creeps.

Let's try to give them a rational look and come to appreciate how fascinating they are. Furthermore, we need to understand the role they play in our environment.

Spiders have eight legs, no antennae, and a head and abdomen in contrast to insects that have antennae a head, thorax and abdomen plus six legs. They are in the taxonomic class Arachnida. Other Arachnids are horseshoe crabs, ticks, scorpions, and harvestmen (daddy long-legs). Ticks bite and suck our blood, transmitting disease. Scorpions have a poisonous stinger on their tails but daddy longlegs are plant-eaters and cannot bite. Their second pair of legs are used as antennae. My children used to pick them up and play with them.

Spiders are carnivorous and have fangs with which to bite their prey and inject poisonous venom. But do not fear! Their fangs are tiny and they only bite humans if they feel trapped. Such a small amount of venom is

injected that other than possibly hurting a little bit it is harmless to us. It is now believed that most harmful spider bites are actually bacterial infections. The only poisonous spiders in our area are the Black Widow and the Brown Recluse. In the D.C. area we are unlikely to encounter either of them due to their scarcity and habitat preferences.



Black Widow Spider (l.) and Brown Recluse Spider (r.)

Spiders are quite fascinating. Most spin webs out of spider silk which is strong and partly sticky, the better to capture their prey. Each species of spider spins a unique web. The orb weavers spin the broad webs that have filaments radiating from the center. They are a garden variety of animal and their webs are the ones we often walk into on hikes or see in the morning glistening with dew. The web is spun by specialized organs on the abdomen called spinnerets which reel out the silk filaments as the spider is spinning its web. If you are fortunate to see a spider spinning its web you should stop and watch. It generally takes less than an hour for the spider to spin its creation.

Once in place the spider waits on the edge of the web for an unsuspecting insect to fly into it. Immediately the spider rushes into the web, grabs its prey and injects it with paralyzing venom. It then wraps the prey in sticky silk and takes it to its nest to feed on it. The spider doesn't get stuck in its own web as some of the filaments are not sticky and the spider knows where they are and walks on them. The sticky filaments are used by humming birds to line their tiny nests and keep them intact.

However, spiders have their own enemies. They are prey to birds and wasps in particular. I watched a house wren bringing food to its nest one day and was astonished to see almost all its prey were spiders.

See **Old Urban Naturalist**, Page 7

DR KATT, *continued from Page 2*

In grade school, Katt reached out to the elderly in her community on her own, in personal and practical ways. Before the days of pill organizers, she helped older neighbors organize their medications using Dixie cups that she labeled. She brought her homework to visit with aging Black women who couldn't read, and taught them to read using her spelling words. Katt often arrived home from school much later than expected, to her parents' dismay, after helping elderly folks cross the street or carrying home their groceries.

When Katt grew up and had her own family, her great-grandmother, grandmother, and mother helped care for her children, so she knows firsthand the blessings of multi-generational family care. She now spends as much time as she can with her own five grandchildren, along with providing part-time caregiving for her 92-year-old grandmother. Hers is a family that respects and values its elders and provides for and cares for them. They are the foundation for her work in aging services and her commitment to ensuring that our older adult neighbors live in supportive communities where they are valued and can age with dignity.

Dr. Katt values the unique character and neighborhoods of each of the thirteen Villages in Washington, and she looks forward to advocating for sustainable funding, expanding our reach, and promoting intergenerational programming. She has a broad understanding of the aging process, which, she's convinced, begins much earlier in life than is traditionally thought. From mid-life on, caring for others, maintaining healthy eating and exercise habits, and seeking social connections and avocations that can sustain us into old age, are excellent preparations for our elder years.

A "life calling" is far more than a job. To be called to a particular act of service involves the whole person: her physical vigor, her mental acuity, her creativity, her emotional investment, her courage and persistence. In Dr. Katt, we are lucky to have far more than a highly competent professional; we have a great heart as well as a great mind committed to advancing the Village model.

PAUL PEARLSTEIN, *continued from Page 3*

Paul became an NNV member in 2021. "I am a joiner," Paul says. He has served as president of the George Washington Inns of Court, which offers GW law students advice and support; and president of the Counselors, a social group of lawyers and judges. He has also taught courses in many settings on legal practice, divorce law, bankruptcy law, and real estate.



Paul celebrating a recent birthday

At 86, Paul walks with a rollator. Despite that, he works out two hours a day, attends the NNV program of Chair Yoga on Zoom every Monday (he is an avid fan of Mayu), and participates in an NNV Zoom Chat every other Tuesday. On Thursdays, he regales visitors to the National Museum of American History with anecdotes about American presidents.

Some of Paul's recent book recommendations:

Dark Money: The Hidden History of the Billionaires Behind the Rise of the Radical Right by Jane Mayer

([Paul's review is here](#));

Einstein: His Life and Universe and *Elon Musk*, both by Walter Isaacson; and *The Covenant of Water* by Abraham Verghese.

Check each book for unexpected details!



Tickets for a Cause

Save the Date:

NNV's annual Tickets for a Cause virtual gala in support of our volunteer services is coming May 30th!

[Click here to learn more](#)

Recent Events

In January, NNV worked with Georgetown Village to present a conversation with Linda Crichlow White, Immediate Past-President of the Afro-American Historical and Genealogical Society, James Dent Walker Chapter-DC, and co-author of *Back There, Then, a Historical and Genealogical Memoir*. She spoke about the history of *Higher Education for African Americans 1850 to 1954: A little about attendance at HBCUs and PWIs*.



Linda Crichlow White presenting



Stephanie Chong, Linda & Lynn Golub-Rofrano, Executive Director of Georgetown Village



Linda, NNV members Alice Hayes & Merilee Janssen, & Georgetown Village Member Diana Dennett

In February, David Oldfield led the first of his Four Seasons of Creativity for Elders program, Creating Your Personal Legacy Box.



The Life Mapping group and their finished boxes



And in March, Paul Levi and Cathy Waldman performed a wonderful four-hand piano concert.



Paul Levi and Cathy Waldman at the performance in Lang Hall at the Levine School of Music

New Members Q1, 2024 -

We welcomed 11 new members and 9 new volunteers this quarter. If you'd like to join your neighbors as a member and/or volunteer, now is the time!

Visit our website to learn more about joining our community of mutual support and engagement. www.nnvdc.org

OLD URBAN NATURALIST, continued from Page 4

Many species of wasps have evolved to use spiders as part of their life cycle. Mud daubers are the large blueback wasps that build mud tubes inside barns and outbuildings as well as on rock cliffs. The wasp catches a spider, paralyzes it with its venom, carries it to the mud tube, lays an egg, then seals the tube. When the egg hatches the emerging embryo feeds on the spider to develop.



Mud Dauber Tubes

Another interesting spider uses its silk to weave a balloon that it then uses to transport itself in the breeze to another site. I could go on but it would take a book to describe the variety of webs used by the spiders.

If you're interested in investigating further, the Ohio Division of Wildlife offers free guides on several wildlife topics including wildflowers, birds, moths, and of course spiders. Their list of [downloadable PDF guides is available here](#). The spider guide (Publication 5140) is available to [download here](#).

Stop, look and listen! Enjoy spring in all its glory.

A fine dessert for upcoming holidays and picnics

By Barbara Oliver

This rich, almond-flavored, fine-grained pound cake can be served as is or dressed up for any occasion. It pairs perfectly with sweetened berries; nectarines or peaches; or topped with confectioners' sugar and slivered almonds. It's as close as I've come to matching Rowena's almond pound cake, sold over the years at Washington National Cathedral's Flower Mart.

Ingredients

CAKE

2 cups butter (or margarine) softened
2 cups granulated sugar
5 large eggs, room temperature
2 cups all-purpose flour
1 tablespoon vanilla extract
2 tablespoons almond extract

ALMOND GLAZE

1/2 cup water
1/2 cup granulated sugar
1 tablespoon almond extract

OPTIONAL TOPPINGS

1/4 cup confectioners' sugar
Slivered almonds

Directions

Preheat oven to 350°F

FOR CAKE: In a bowl, with electric mixer at low speed, beat together butter and sugar until light and fluffy, 3-5 minutes. Add eggs one at a time, beating well after each addition. Beat in

vanilla and almond extracts. Stir in flour, mixing until just combined.

Pour batter into a greased 13x9x2-inch baking pan. Bake for 35-40 minutes or until a wooden pick inserted in the center comes out clean. Remove from oven.



Barbara Oliver

FOR ALMOND GLAZE: In a saucepan, combine water and sugar; bring to a boil and cook for 5-7 minutes. Stir in almond extract. Drizzle glaze on top of warm cake. Top with almonds. Cool cake completely and sprinkle cake with powdered sugar. Serves 12-16.

Notes

Cake can be baked in two 8-inch square metal pans for 35 minutes, swapping pan positions in the oven every 15 minutes. Drizzle glaze on warm cakes, top with almonds. Cool and sprinkle with confectioner's sugar.

Cake can be baked in a Bundt pan for 60 minutes; test with a long wooden skewer. Turn warm cake out of pan and drizzle or apply glaze with a wide pastry brush; then add slivered almonds. Cool and lightly sprinkle with confectioner's sugar.

Source: adapted from several pound cake recipes.

Volunteer of the Quarter: Cynthia Grant, providing priceless protection and support to our members

Cynthia Grant joined us as a volunteer a little over a year ago, and has since provided rides to social events, medical appointments, and grocery stores. She has helped staff behind the scenes with events, and she has even helped with member tech support! Several months ago, she was quick to respond to a member in need.

When Elinor S. tested positive for Covid, she was prescribed Paxlovid and needed to start the treatment immediately. She called NNV and requested a volunteer to pick up her prescription and provide a no-contact delivery.

Elinor wrote to tell us that she breathed a sigh of relief when she heard that a volunteer had signed up to pick up the Paxlovid. But almost immediately thereafter, her oldest friend called to say that she had organized to get the drug to Elinor immediately.

She continued, "NNV's rapid action to secure a volunteer, and Cynthia's stepping up to do it was not for nothing. As I said, I was no longer living in fear of not getting the medication in time. It just confirms my belief that NNV is a priceless protection for our members."

We are all so very grateful for Cynthia and all of our NNV volunteers!



April is Volunteer Appreciation Month!

Thank you for all that you do to improve the lives of our members and NNV staff!

