

# The Village News

## Northwest Neighbors Village - A Community of Support

5425 Western Ave. NW \* Washington, DC 20015

(202) 237-1895 \* [www.nwnv.org](http://www.nwnv.org)

Volume 4, Issue 1

January 2012

### CALENDAR

**Sun., Jan. 8, 4-6 p.m.**

**Sunday Supper Salon** with master storyteller Liz Nichols. RSVP: (202) 237-1895 by 3 p.m. Thursday, Jan. 5. Bring potluck dish to share.

**Mon., Jan. 9, 2-3 p.m.**

**Gentle Yoga** with Dr. Linda in the Solarium, Lisner Home, 5425 Western Ave. NW.

**Mon., Jan. 16, NNV**

**Administrative Office closed.** **Gentle Yoga** with Sandi Rothwell in the Solarium, Lisner Home, 5425 Western Ave. NW.

**Wed., Jan. 18, 2 p.m.**

**NNV Book Club** at the home of NNV member Bernice Degler. *Straight Man* by Richard Russo will be discussed. RSVP: (202) 237-1895.

**Mon., Jan. 23, 2-3 p.m.**

**Gentle Yoga** with Sandi Rothwell in the Solarium, Lisner Home, 5425 Western Ave. NW.

**Tues., Jan. 24, 1-3 p.m.**

**NNV Men's Book Club** at the home of NNV member Bernard Hillenbrand. *Falling Upward* by Richard Rohr will be discussed. RSVP: (202) 237-1895.

**Mon., Jan. 30, 2-3 p.m.**

**Gentle Yoga** with Sandi Rothwell in the Solarium, Lisner Home, 5425 Western Ave. NW.

## On the Road With the Olivers, NNV Members

Konnichiwa (Hello)—Tom and I went to Japan last fall with the “Hostile Elders.” Elder Hostel’s Road Scholar trips all have a theme and this was the Edo Period. Edo, the original name of Tokyo, was the capital from 1603 to 1867. The list of emperors rivals that of British monarchs—dense and too convoluted to memorize. We went south and west; north was where most of the damage from the spring earthquake and tsunami was, but we did see one temple with a flaking façade that was being repaired.

The trip began in Tokyo where we found ourselves at the Apple Store the day of Steve Jobs’ death. A large sign in the window saying “Thanks for everything, Steve,” was surrounded by bouquets of flowers, then a narrow path and multiple rings of camera-toting media folk.

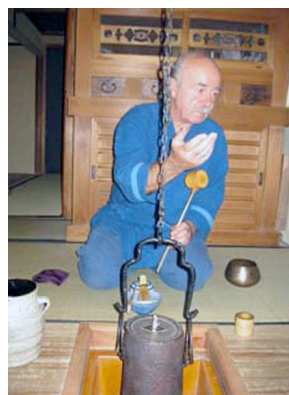
In the Kamakura neighborhood, we dodged our way through a huge fish market that sells to restaurants and retailers, then ate fresh sushi for breakfast—surprisingly, this seemed normal by then. One evening, we went geisha spotting in the Gion

District and espied three trainees. The give-away is the dead-white face makeup, elaborate kimonos, parasols and raised wooden shoes.



Kinkaku-ji (Golden Pavilion) in Kyoto was built by 3rd Ashikaga Shogun Yoshimitsu as a lavish retirement villa.

Tokyo is a huge, bustling city. Its subway system is many levels deep and would be confusing *even if* signs were in English. “Lost in the Tokyo Subway” would make an apt title for a horror film.



In Kyoto, we learned the tea ceremony from a master (a Canadian who was a Buddhist and looked like Santa Claus) and

his Japanese wife in their renovated traditional house.

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**Northwest Neighbors Village,**  
*A community network of support*  
 5425 Western Ave. NW  
 Washington, DC 20015  
 (202) 237-1895  
[www.nwnv.org](http://www.nwnv.org)

**Northwest Neighbors Village**  
 (NNV) is part of the Senior Services Network, supported by the D.C. Office of Aging. NNV is a nonprofit organization created to help the residents of Northwest D.C. live comfortably and safely in their neighborhood and homes as they age. NNV was founded in 2007.

#### **Join or Volunteer**

NNV welcomes new members and volunteers. For more information, go to [www.nwnv.org](http://www.nwnv.org) or call the office at (202) 237-1895.

#### **NNV Board Members**

##### **Officers**

Janean Mann, President  
 Bob Holman, Vice President  
 Pat Kasdan, Secretary  
 Stewart Reuter, Treasurer  
 Steve Altman, Assistant Treasurer

##### **Directors**

Frances Mahncke  
 Joan Norcutt  
 Robert Parker  
 Michael Sams  
 Beverly Sklover  
 Jo-Ann Tanner  
 Ellen Witman

##### **Ex-Officio**

Marianna Blagburn, *Executive Director*

##### **Newsletter Team**

Barbara B. Oliver, Editor  
 Doris Chalfin  
 Pat Kasdan  
 Tom Oliver  
 Ellen Witman

## **NNV Records a Terrific Year**

While the word “terrible” might come to mind when one is thinking of two-year-olds, that is certainly not the case with two-year-old NNV. In March, we will begin our third year, having had a terrific second year in so many ways. Our wonderful group of members underline why we founded NNV in the first place—to help our neighbors remain in their homes as long as possible. Having had the opportunity to get to know so many of our members, I have come to appreciate how much they embody the exact opposite of the negative image of Washington created by some politicians and media. Our members and volunteers have contributed to this country and our community in many positive ways and continue to do so. Some have saved lives; others have saved souls. They help make this a better place to live. Our membership increased nearly 25 percent this year.

We also have a terrific group of service volunteers who have donated more than 8,000 hours of their time. They are truly caring individuals who constantly go the extra mile for our members. Our technical volunteers work in the office, put together our newsletter and draft grant applications to bring funds into NNV. Earlier this year, the D.C. Council, at the behest of Councilwoman Mary Cheh, adopted a resolution recognizing our volunteers’ dedication.

I am fortunate to have a terrific group of individuals working with me on the board, many of

whom are also service volunteers. In addition to donating their time to help govern NNV, they support financial operations.



This year NNV hired a new executive director, Marianna Blagburn. In only six months, Marianna has expanded our services, our outreach to the community and our efforts toward sustainability.

Financially, we ended the year with funds to help expand our programs for members and volunteers and upgrade our website. Since the funds from memberships cover only a portion of our operating costs, we need to rely on a range of donors. One of our strongest supporters is the Lisner Louise Dickson Hurt Home, which donates office space to NNV. Without the support of the Lisner Home, we would be unable to offer the range of services we perform. Others in our community, such as ANC 3/4 G, have also recognized the NNV by providing grants. Our members, volunteers and other neighbors helped us exceed our \$6,500 year-end challenge grant.

Thank you all for making 2011 a truly terrific year for NNV. Have a wonderful New Year.

— Janean Mann  
 President, NNV



*On the Road - Continued from page 1*

If there weren't a Peace Memorial Park in Hiroshima, it would be hard to persuade us of the devastation of WWII.

Other stops were Hakone, Kiso Fukushima and Tsumago where we learned about and got to try Japanese block printing. We



**Tom assembles a five-color block print at the Hiroshige Print Museum. Each of us wore an earpiece and receiver that let us hear the guide without being on top of him and over the din of a crowd.**

toured the Matsumoto city castle, took a bus to Takayama in Japan's Central Alps where we dined on Hide beef (similar to Kobe beef—very marbled and tender), visited a sake brewery and toured a merchant's house.



**Kamikachi**

One of my favorite spots was an unscheduled stop at Kamikachi—part of the Chubu-Sangaku

National Park—in Japan's Central Alps. It was peaceful, even with lots of tourists. I wished we'd had



**Garden of a high-class inn in Tsumago.**

time to explore the walkways.

As you can imagine, lots of temples (Buddhist) and shrines (Shinto) and gardens were on the itinerary. We saw moss, Zen (pebbles and rocks) and what we think of as Japanese gardens in Kunisaki, Kitsuki, and Yufuin. In

Yufuin we stayed in a high-class resort. And, as in most places we went, we were the only non-Asians.

Miyajima, the island of shrines, is home to the huge red torii (shrine gate) that you may have seen in photos. It stands in water at high tide, and people walk at its base at low tide. Very tame wild deer roam the island. One of them snatched a Japan Rail pass out of a fellow traveler's hand and three people had to chase the deer and pry the ticket out of its mouth. It was easy to tell Anne's pass from everyone else's: the teeth marks!

A ride on the Yufu-no-Mori (the Romantic Train, so called because

of its old-fashioned shape, its wood and brass interior and its trip through the mountains and along streams) took us to Nagasaki, which is truly an international city and tourist oriented. At the bus stops, a recording in English explains that if you want to go to X, take bus number Y; signs and menus are in English and Japanese. The city was the only port open to foreigners during the



**Nagasaki Prefectural Art Museum**

Edo period. We visited Dejima, a small Dutch trading post, Tojin-machi, the Chinese quarter and Glover Gardens (former home of an expatriate Scots businessman) and other period houses of foreign traders. From there we traveled to Fukuoka by train and took a *small* plane (luggage limit 33 pounds) to Narita Airport.

## In Summary

The hands-on experiences were the most memorable—making soba (buckwheat and wheat flour) noodles at a cooking school with the help of very, *very* patient teachers who spoke only Japanese

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*On the Road - Continued from page 3*



was fun. I especially liked cutting the noodles extremely thin with a cleaver. The noodles, with dipping sauce and green tea, were lunch.

Speaking of green tea, I am now a big fan of macha, a powdered green tea that is sprinkled on food or put in hot water for a soothing beverage. Yum. Also liked Ojicha (roasted tea). We ate sashimi, twice made our own Japanese pizzas (egg, noodle, vegetable mixture that had consistency of an omelet one time and was more like egg and veggies on spaghetti noodles another time). Tom who eats sushi weekly at home was surprised he didn't care for other foods as much as he'd expected he would.

I developed a fondness for lotus root – very lacy and white – that was pickled or steamed, a variety of seaweed, many types of fish, and a vast potpourri of vegetables that I still can't name. Too much food as we were eating like Japanese on vacation: 17 bowls (albeit small portions)



of tastes, shapes and flavors. Even when we just tasted from

each bowl, it was a lot. These dishes were followed by a bowl of miso followed by a bowl of rice, which we declined.

I liked all the various uniforms of school children on field trips, gardeners, and bus drivers. I liked the variety of faces. I liked the various methods of creating walkways and fences. I liked the fanciful images of Buddha, and the bodhisattvas (enlightened beings) dressed in red offering caps, bibs and aprons. I liked the textures of the tiles, wood, plants, stones, and various forms of water.

All in all it was a memorable trip, but



it's hard to remember where we were and all we saw without the Cliff Notes, because we saw so much in a culture that is like nothing



else we've experienced.

Two weeks later, I still hadn't recovered from the 13-hour time difference and the seven miles of walking each day. Naps are not just for toddlers!

Sayonara,

— Tom and Barbara Oliver



## Remembering Michael Seremetis



NNV wishes to announce and express sincere condolences on the passing of member Michael

Seremetis, M.D., who died in his native Greece on June 27, 2011. Michael and his wife, Anastacia, joined NNV on the boundary launch of NNV into AU Park on Nov. 13, 2010.

Michael, well known thoracic and cardiovascular surgeon, came to America in 1951. He served in the United States Army for almost eight years, mostly as chief of surgery at the American Hospital in Paris.

He became a staff member of Georgetown University Medical School, trained graduate students at D.C. General Hospital Trauma Center, and performed thoracic surgery at the Washington Hospital Center and Holy Cross Hospital.

He retired in 2000 and was professor emeritus at the Medical School of Georgetown University at the time of his passing.

Michael is survived by his wife and four children, two boys and two girls. He will be deeply missed by devoted NNV friends and volunteers.

— Marianna Blagburn





## Village Social Events Give Chance to Mingle

Left - NNV Executive Director Marianna Blagburn in blue addresses holiday party goers, clockwise from top right: Beverly Sklover, Bonnie Coe and Joan Janshego.



Above - NNV members Bonnie Coe, Murray Strasberg and Robert Lubic connect at holiday party held at NNV Vice President Bob Holman's home. Social events offer opportunities to meet donors, members, volunteers and professional partners.



Above - From top left, NNV board member Steve Altman, Edith Couturier, Bob Parker, Ann Collins, Benita Lubic and Vivian Parker on sofa at holiday party.

— Holiday party photos by Janean Mann



Above - NNV Men's Book Group held their first meeting in December. Members are from left clockwise - Robert Blinn, Ed White, Elton Smith, John Collins, Bernie Hillenbrand and Stew Reuter. The group will focus largely on discussion. A second group is forming in February. If interested, please call Marianna Blagburn at (202) 237-1895. — Photo by Bernie Hillenbrand.

## Winter Emergency Preparedness

Are you prepared for a weather emergency in D.C.? A few minutes of planning and a detailed list will enhance your comfort and safety during a storm. Make sure you have a person in the neighborhood, preferably on your street, that you can call if you need help.

Stock up on emergency food and safety supplies for at least five to seven days for family members and pets. Supplies include drinking water, canned and dried food and a manual can opener. Check to ensure that prescription medicines are up-to-date and will last at least seven days. Keep a well-stocked first aid kit. Keep warm clothing and at least one blanket per person (and pets) in a special place for easy access.

In case of power failure, make sure you have a battery-powered radio for listening to local emergency instructions and a flashlight. Have extra batteries on hand for both the radio and flashlight. Try not to use candles; flashlights are safer. (Never use lit candles when reading, in case you fall asleep.) For outside of the home, have enough rock salt to melt the ice on walkways.

Become familiar with weather terms to help you prepare.

- *winter weather advisory*: Expect winter weather conditions to cause inconvenience and hazards.
- *frost/freeze warning*: Expect below-freezing temperatures.
- *winter-storm watch*: Be alert; a storm is likely.

• *winter-storm warning*: Take action; the storm is in or entering our area.

• *blizzard warning*: Seek refuge immediately—expect snow and strong winds, near-zero visibility, deep snow drifts and life-threatening wind chill.

Preparation and planning is the key to staying safe and comfortable during times of hazardous winter weather.

*Home Instead Senior Care is an NNV professional partner and local family-owned business dedicated to helping people age in their community in the comfort of their home.*

— Patty Maroon, Owner  
Home Instead Senior Care

### **NNV Preferred Provider Series**

*Periodically, NNV will feature articles on professional providers that serve the Village*

## **Jerry Liu Retrofits Homes in NNV Community**

For remodeling contractor Jerry Liu, his professional life is one of contrasts and consistency. One of his favorite projects was working on the construction of the National Gallery's East Wing. Another was remodeling the very rundown home of an elderly civil rights worker under the auspices of Rebuilding Together—a nonprofit to which he donates his skills in order to help low income residents have “warm, safe and dry” homes.

While Jerry worked on the East Wing, he came to the conclusion that civil engineering was not his forte, and he began house remodeling as D.G. Liu contractor. Today, roughly 87 percent of his business comes from repeat customers and their now-grown children. Jerry has done a lot of work on older homes like those found in Northwest D.C., including retrofitting houses to accommodate aging residents.

Jerry starts the process of retrofitting a home for aging in place by conducting an assessment of the physical surroundings. Some of the construction changes include widening doorways, installing grab bars, and reviewing counter and cabinet heights inside the home. Outside, he looks at walkways, porches and handrails. He will also provide a detailed plan for accomplishing stages of renovation, accompanied by cost. D.G. Liu Contractors has helped several villagers, all satisfied customers,

**“I’ve never felt we were giving anything to anybody, I’ve just felt like we all live here, and this is our community.”**

*Jerry Liu*

President  
D. G. Liu Contractor, Inc.



to make the necessary accommodations for staying independent at home.

Roughly 22 years ago, he discovered another passion—helping others. After hearing a radio commercial seeking volunteers, he began donating his time several weekends a year for what is now Rebuilding Together. “I’ve always felt this obligation to give back to the community,” says Jerry. “I came to Washington and was able to build a business in a community that trusted me. Now it is my turn to reciprocate.” Other members of his staff also

volunteer. Sometimes there are as many as 20 to 30 people working on one house. Sponsors generally donate equipment. Rebuilding Together does only remodeling, focusing on low-income residents, many of them seniors.

Jerry says he has tried to build a culture of service within his firm and it is this culture that encourages his other employees to donate their time to Rebuilding Together and to provide the same quality of service to their paying clients.

— Janean Mann

## **Resolution of Municipal Bonds Tax**

The D.C. Council has passed permanent legislation to replace the temporary legislation, making income from non-D.C. municipal bonds owned prior to Jan.1, 2012, exempt from D.C. income taxes.

Income from municipal bond funds can be exempt if the fund provides written or electronic substantiation that bonds were acquired prior to Jan.1, 2012. Income from any bonds the fund has purchased after that date will somehow have to be separated out for taxation.

Exempt from taxation, as well, are bonds issued by instrumentalities of D.C. and the Metropolitan Washington Regional Airport Authority. Exempt by federal law are bonds from Puerto Rico, Virgin Islands and American Samoa.

— Gilda Schenker

## Awakening to Aging: NNV Growing in Strength and Depth

Optimism abounds in the New Year and the chance to be even better is within our reach. Northwest Neighbors Village is poised to strengthen and deepen its presence in the communities it serves: Chevy Chase, Forest Hills, Tenleytown, American University Park and North Cleveland Park. In January 2011, NNV had just launched into the last three neighborhoods, expanding its membership ranks by 52 additional members and gaining 26 new volunteers. The vibrancy of the village model took root in the community. NNV programs and events broadened to consider what it needed to know to stay independent in our homes.

Since opening in March 2009, NNV met its goal to create a community and a network of support to affect the overall health and wellness of members. NNV empowered members with information on long-term-care insurance, estate planning, public safety, utility services, pedestrian safety, heart disease, low-vision supports and fall prevention. Volunteers provided more than 2,000 hours of donated time allowing members to stay local. Participation at social occasions has been a rousing success, with 35 to 55 members at every event; NNV's bad-weather buddy system kept members connected during a hurricane threat. Wellness programs increased the quality of members' strength, balance and flexibility. In short, the village affected the education, sociability and overall wellness of members. NNV's 2011 fundraising strategies, accompanied by careful stewardship, allowed NNV to expand programs and exceed budgetary goals.

For the first time, NNV has a full-time, paid executive director, and, in 2012, will add much needed part-time, paid administrative help. NNV will keep its commitment to members to support independence at home as they grow older. NNV will

continue to educate members on the spectrum of aging, provide options and resources when needed, and strengthen the gift of community along the journey of 2012.

— Marianna Blagburn

### Doris Chalfin Serves as a Technical Volunteer



— Photo by Kathy Beck

Because many NNV volunteers fall into the same age bracket as members, there is only a fine line between the two, but that works to everyone's advantage. Doris Chalfin is a case in point. Doris

was introduced to NNV during the organization's startup period and became an active volunteer during the summer of 2009. She has interacted with both the members and other volunteers ever since.

Doris was raised in Westminster, Md., in a family that loved music, and Doris has played at least four instruments. She still takes piano lessons and often practices with an NNV friend.

As a foreign-service officer's wife, she spent 13 years abroad in Africa (where both sons were born) and in France. Eventually she returned to this Northwest D.C. neighborhood and joined Heldref Publications, where she first handled subscriptions, went on to keep the company budget and later managed the publication of several psychology journals and a music review magazine.

During her 27-year employment at HP, her children grew up, married and moved to their current residences. Also during this period, Doris began classes in t'ai chi, which she continues.

After retirement, Doris felt the need to become more active in the local community. For the past two years she has worked in the NNV office. She also attends the weekly yoga class and the book group. "The yoga class provides me with an excellent contrast to t'ai chi," she notes. And she finds the book group very satisfying, commenting, "It's a diverse group of people who all listen to each other and learn."

In addition to her connection with NNV, t'ai chi and piano lessons, Doris is an usher at the Kennedy Center and, most recently, has become an active volunteer with the Chevy Chase Friends of the Library (FOLIO).

Although Doris has lived in the neighborhood for a long time, her relationship to NNV has made Northwest D.C. more like a home base. "The aging process is a little scary for single people like me," she says. "I like the feeling of having a support group in my community. It's reassuring to know that you are not alone."

— Lois Berkowitz



## Homeowners Eligible for Free Energy Audit

The District of Columbia has a number of energy-related benefit programs.

All homeowners are eligible for a free energy audit. Your home will be inspected to identify ways to reduce heating and cooling costs, after which you will receive a detailed report suggesting how you can improve energy efficiency in your house. Normally, such an assessment would cost several hundred dollars.

You may also be eligible for additional programs which provide assistance in paying utility bills and even, in some cases, free replacement of aging furnaces, air-conditioning systems and water heaters. Eligibility does not take

into account assets such as the value of your home or your savings and investments but only income from these assets and from sources such as employment and Social Security. We are all aware that, because of the current state of the economy, income from savings and investments has fallen to very low levels. A one-person household can qualify for benefits with a maximum income of \$21,311; for a two-person household, the maximum is \$27,868. Details of these programs are on the web at [www.ddoe.dc.gov](http://www.ddoe.dc.gov) and, by telephone, from the mayor's call center at 311.

— Bob and Sharon Wolozin

## Who Are These Village People?

NNV, in concert with Historic Chevy Chase DC, is conducting an oral history project with NNV members by volunteers. "We are the first village, of 130 villages nationwide, to do a project of this nature," said NNV Executive Director Marianna Blagburn. "Our stories bring us together through connections we didn't know we had."

Joan Janshego of HCCDC and Marianna have trained a dozen volunteers who will interview NNV members in two to three 45-minute visits during January, February and March, using a standard list of questions for consistency. A transcript of each interview will be given to the interviewee and archived in the NNV office. Joan will interview the members who live in Chevy Chase, D.C., and those stories will

also become permanent records of HCCDC.

The stories will form the basis of an exhibit on "radical aging" to educate others about village life and who these village people are. "We plan to place the exhibit in the Chevy Chase and Tenleytown libraries, which serve people within the boundaries of the NNV community: Chevy Chase DC, Tenleytown, North Cleveland Park, American University Park and Forest Hills," says Marianna.

Thirteen members of NNV have agreed to be interviewed. If you are interested in adding your story to this oral history project, please contact Marianna Blagburn at (202) 237-1895.

— Barbara B. Oliver

## Community Calendar

### Movie Mondays, 2 p.m., Chevy Chase, D.C. Public Library

- **Jan. 9**—*The White Balloon*, Iran, 1996, not rated
- **Jan. 23**—*Before the Rain*, Macedonia, 1995, rated R
- **Jan. 30**—*Unstrung Heroes*, Andie McDowell & John Turturro, USA, 2003, rated PG

### Mon., Jan. 9, 7:30-9:30 p.m.

#### **Advisory Neighborhood**

**Council 3-4 G**—monthly meeting. Chevy Chase Community Center, Connecticut Avenue and McKinley Street NW.

### Wed., Jan. 11, 1-2 p.m.

#### **Relief from Spinal Stenosis—**

Johns Hopkins spine surgeon A. Jay Khanna will describe innovative treatments to restore mobility and improve quality of life. Friendship Heights Community Center, 4433 S. Park Ave., Chevy Chase, MD. Free; please register at (301) 896-3939 or [www.suburbanhospital.org](http://www.suburbanhospital.org).

### Tues., Jan. 17, 7:30 p.m.

#### **Chevy Chase Citizens**

**Association**—monthly meeting with Ward 4 Council member Muriel Bowser. Chevy Chase Community Center, Connecticut Ave. and McKinley Street NW.

### Thurs., Jan. 19, 10:30 a.m.

**Avalon Senior Cinema**—See a current feature film for only \$6.75 for patrons aged 62 or more (the usual senior price is \$8.25).

### Wed., Jan. 25, 7 p.m.

**2nd District Metropolitan Police Dept. Citizens Advisory Council**, 3320 Idaho Ave. NW.