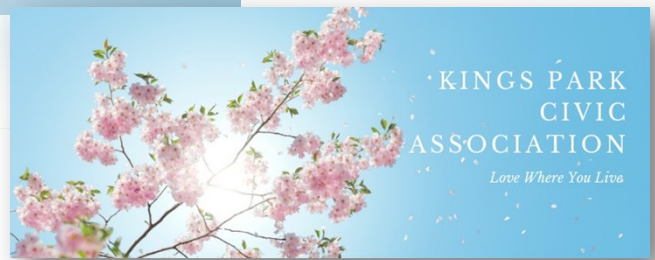




Kings Park Gazette

President's Corner

By Charlotte Hannagan



It sounds cliché but I can't believe it's the end of 2025! We've accomplished a lot this year, and I'd like to personally thank the KPCA board for their continued volunteerism—this neighborhood is better because of them, and I am so grateful for their support. If you see Susan Metcalf, Susan Cappa, Susan Malmberg, Leeann Alberts, or Eric DeTurk around the neighborhood, please give them a high five! We've also had many volunteers throughout the year who have continued to go above and beyond to provide the initiatives, events, and spirit that makes Kings Park such a wonderful place to live. We couldn't do it without you!

In 2026, we're looking forward to reinvigorating our membership numbers (*have any thoughts or suggestions? Send them our way!*). We also look forward to engaging with our newly elected Braddock District Supervisor, Rachna Sizemore Heizer. Several initiatives are ongoing and will impact Kings Park, so we will be sure to keep everyone in the loop and transmit important information, whether with regards to the future of Lake Accotink, the Braddock Road multimodal improvement project, electing a new Braddock School Board member, etc. Our wonderful community events are already on the schedule (check out page 3), and we'll also plan out Kings

Park Park and Adopt-a-Highway clean-up days.

We still have Kings Park holiday ornaments for sale if you are interested! These were inspired by a design from a Kings Park resident, and are available for \$20/each. Please fill out the form at bit.ly/kpcaornament and we'll be in touch.

Please remember to join the Kings Park Civic Association on an annual basis. **The \$30 dues (\$25 for seniors) help support our many initiatives.** For those receiving the hard-copy gazette, an insert is included and can be mailed back. For those viewing this online, the form is at the end of the PDF. The easiest way to join is always online, at www.kings-park.org.

We are always eager to hear from you, and look forward to seeing you around the community. You can reach us at KingsParkCivicAssociation@gmail.com or my cell is 484-431-6448.

Best wishes for a wonderful holiday season. Stay warm and see you around the neighborhood!



Warm
Winter
Wishes



About the Gazette

The Gazette is issued quarterly: January, April, July, and October. Suggestions and submissions should be sent to Charlotte at KingsParkCivicAssociation@gmail.com.

The KPCA reserves the right to not publish any material it deems inappropriate. To advertise, see the advertising form at www.kings-park.org or contact Charlotte Hannagan.





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Treasurer's Report

VP of Finance, Susan Malmberg

Since the August 1, 2025, start of the KPCA's fiscal year we have received **\$365** in income. The income was made up of \$255 in memberships and \$110 in donations. During the same period, we have incurred **\$6,797** in expenses. The expenses were for Gazette printing - \$246, grounds upkeep— \$2,140, donations—\$550, web hosting—\$168, State registration—\$25, and community outreach—\$3,668. This last category includes costs for NNO—\$36, Trunk or Treat—\$142, KP resident recognition flag—\$289, and special KP ornaments—\$3,201. We expect to sell the ornaments and gain income from the sales.

Thank you to all who became members this year and to those who made extra donations to help fund neighborhood activities. **Please remember to rejoin for 2026 and encourage you friends and neighbors to join KPCA so that we can continue to provide community events and fund neighborhood beautification projects.** Over the next three years we will be having the twelve nubs on Southampton Drive replanted with native plants. The existing plants will be reused in the Braddock road sign areas.

The KPCA wishes everyone a wonderful holiday season and a happy new year!

Membership Update

VP of Membership, Leeann Alberts

As of December 1, 2025, **268** families have paid their 2025 KPCA dues. Membership in the KPCA continued to be ONLY \$30 per calendar year (\$25 for seniors).

As we look forward to 2026, the KPCA plans to sponsor many wonderful events and activities including: the 4th of July Parade and Band Concert, Trunk or Treat, the Kid's Holiday Party, Halloween and Holiday Decoration contests, Neighborhood Watch, New neighbor welcome, Nub/Entrance Maintenance, Community Meetings, KPCA Gazette, local government organization representation and more. Some of these events are for the entire Kings Park community, while others are for KPCA members only.

We need your volunteer support and your dues to sustain all of these events and to fund additional activities as time goes on!

To submit your membership dues for 2026, complete the membership insert

from this Gazette, include either cash or check, and mail

to Kings Park Civic Association, P.O. Box 1243, Springfield, VA 22151-1243.

You may also complete the 2026 Membership Form online at www.kings-park.org (after January 1st, 2026) and then submit your payment electronically via PayPal or via Bill Pay by setting up KPCA on your bank's bill pay option and have your bank mail the check! (Hint: making this an annual recurring transaction ensures that you never forget to pay your dues!). Or, use the QR Code seen above.

Let's uphold Kings Park's standing as the wonderful neighborhood that it has been since the 1960's!

Scan here to join the KPCA





Upcoming Events in Kings Park

VP of Events, Susan Metcalf

KPCA EVENTS

2026 SCHEDULE

MAY 02	YARD SALE AND JUNK REMOVAL DAY
JULY 04	4TH OF JULY PARADE & BAND CONCERT
AUG 04	NATIONAL NIGHT OUT
OCT 25	TRUNK OR TREAT
OCT 22	HALLOWEEN DECORATION CONTEST
DEC 04	KIDS' HOLIDAY PARTY (MEMBERS ONLY)
DEC 17	HOLIDAY DECORATION CONTEST



...AND SO MUCH MORE!

WWW.KINGS-PARK.ORG

Rachna Sizemore Heizer (she/her): Braddock District Supervisor

Rachna Sizemore Heizer has lived in the Braddock District for nearly 25 years, first in Kings Park and now in Dunleigh. Her children attended Kings Park, Kings Glen, and Lake Braddock. She served nearly six years on the Fairfax County School Board, first as an at-large member and then as Braddock District Representative. She is a lawyer, college professor, including five years at George Mason University, and disability justice advocate. Rachna earned both her Bachelor of Arts and her law degree from the University of California, Berkeley.

Before entering public service, Rachna practiced complex corporate and employment law, working on large-scale mergers and acquisitions, bringing strong financial and analytical expertise to her leadership roles. On the School Board, she chaired the Budget Committee and previously served as Chair and Vice Chair. Her accomplishments include securing collective bargaining rights, expanding access to advanced academics, mental health services, and inclusive education. As School Board Chair, she oversaw the development of a new strategic plan and improved accountability measures. She championed key hires, including the National Superintendent of the Year, the nation's first K-12 neurodiversity specialist, and Virginia's first twice-exceptional coordinator.

Rachna also has a deep record of community service, including roles on the Virginia State Social Services Board and the Fairfax-Falls Church Community Services Board. In 2019, she received Fairfax County's

Martha Glennan Disability Inclusion and Equality Award. She is also a national speaker on inclusion and strengths-based education, presenting at conferences such as the NEA Foundation's Symposium, the College Autism Network Conference, and the Online Learning Consortium.

In her spare time, she enjoys cooking, exercising, and cheering on her children. Rachna is excited to continue to serve the residents of Braddock District in her new role.

[Read the weekly Advisory & the monthly Braddock Beacon](#)





Emergency Preparedness Starts Now

VP of Safety, Susan Cappa

Emergency preparedness steps: If you had to leave home because of a disaster, what would you do? Well, there are steps that you can take to make yourself and your family safer. As usual, to increase your chances of success, you have to start thinking and planning BEFORE the disaster. After reading this article, take a few minutes to investigate the helpful guides produced by Fairfax county, to help you get started on your plans.

The Kings Park Civic Association membership form asks a few questions about special needs in case of emergency (below); however, there's much more to consider.

Special Needs

In case of an emergency/disaster would you need special help in relocating to a safe location? Yes _____ No _____

In case of an emergency/disaster would you be willing to help an elderly/physically challenged resident? Yes _____ No _____

Are you registered with the Fairfax County OEM Functional Needs Registry? Yes _____ No _____

Every emergency plan needs to include the following:

- How to get information: Sign up for local alerts. Register for [Fairfax Alerts](#) to receive information about traffic, weather, and other important notifications.
- Where to go:
 - Identify a shelter-in-place location in your home or business, such as an interior room with few windows.
 - Choose two places to meet in case you have to leave your home or business or are not able to return to your home:

- One location should be right outside your home (maybe across the street), in case of a short-term emergency.
- The second location should be away from your neighborhood (maybe at a friend's house), in case you cannot get home or you have to leave your neighborhood.

- What to bring: List important supplies and documents. Create a list of items that you will include in your go bag. Visit how to "[Assemble your Emergency Kits](#)" for more information. Don't forget things for your pets, too.
 - Fill out a contact card from www.ready.gov to help you keep your important contact information with you at all times.
 - Know your home or business' utilities. Document where and how to turn off the water, gas, and electricity safely; know which you can turn back on yourself (electricity: yes, water: if you know how, gas: never).
- How to contact others: In an emergency, consider texting instead of calling. A text message may get through when a phone call will not.
 - Look into online tools such as Facebook Crisis Response, or use Safety Check to connect with friends and loved ones during a crisis.

Details on how to assemble a Go Bag, what documents to take, and ways to notify others are in Appendix B, Family Preparation Planning, of the Community Emergency Response Guide [community emergency response guide](#). Find all emergency preparedness materials at the Fairfax County Government website, under Emergency Management and Security.

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Effects of a Designated Organic Kitchen Waste Collection Bin (Omnivorous) on Animal Attraction in the Kings Park Neighborhood: Experiment Summary

By Rob Nellis, Resident

Background: I have been collecting organic kitchen waste from my omnivorous household for disposal at Fairfax County Farmers Markets for several years now. When I speak to people about this practice, one of the most common questions I get concerns the attraction of animals. There seems to be a common perception that collecting organic kitchen waste in a separate bin will attract animals (particularly "pests") to one's property, but I have personally never experienced this issue. So, I decided to conduct an experiment to see what effect such a bin has on the attraction of animals. As a member of the "Kings Park Climate Corner", I thought this information would be interesting and useful for our neighbors who are on-the-fence about separating-out their organic kitchen waste for eventual off-site composting!

Setup:

Experimental Period: To ensure conservative experimental data, I installed a ventilated organic kitchen waste collection bin in the woods behind my house (instead of in a sealed bucket in my driveway, which is my normal routine). For two weeks (Nov 2-16, 2025), I used a trail camera to record animal activity around the bin. The bin started with 25 lbs of waste that I had saved-up, and I added an additional 30 lbs to it over the two week period.

Control Period: Then, I removed the bin, but kept the trail camera recording for an additional two weeks (Nov 16-30, 2025) to serve as a control.

Results: The trail camera recorded the following number of unique animal sightings (i.e., animals moving within the trail camera's frame) during each period:

Experimental Period: Squirrel (70); Fox (9); Raccoon (5); Bird (2); Deer (2)

Control Period: Squirrel (119); Fox (22); Raccoon (5); Bird (0); Deer (3)

Result Commentary: There were fewer unique animal sightings within each category while the bin was present than when it was absent, with the exception of raccoons, which remained the same. There were also only 2 total "interactions" with the bin itself during the experimental period: both times it was raccoons who briefly touched and sniffed the bin but moved-on quickly once they realized that they could not easily open it (see the link below for the footage of these interactions). It is worth noting that the bin itself did not affect the number of unique racoon sightings, and even with the bin there, less than half of the unique sightings resulted in any type of interaction.

Conclusion: The data gathered during this experiment suggests that separating organic kitchen waste into a designated bin does not increase the number of animals attracted to a location (in fact, the data shows relatively fewer animals when a bin is present). Notably, the only "pest" animals sighted were raccoons: they did not show undo interest in the bin, nor did they act destructively toward it, nor did the presence of the bin increase the number of racoon sightings.

Follow-Up and Link: I plan to compose a comprehensive report; once it is ready, I will include a link to it as well as all of the camera footage and data analysis in a future newsletter. For now, please see the link below which includes only the racoon interaction footage, which I thought readers would find the most interesting. Please reach-out to kingsparkclimatecorner@googlegroups.com with any questions regarding this experiment or for information on our community efforts to reduce the amount of organic kitchen waste being sent to landfills!

<https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1yhkOV-wGzJqA-mCuzlpJmZzqgmpoXWP?usp=sharing>





Update on StoryCorps at the Kings Park Library

The October Gazette featured the Kings Park Library, one of only 10 libraries in the United States chosen to host monthly programs reflecting the One Small Step initiative created by [StoryCorps](#).

Each program is promoted as *One Small Step Conversation: A Civics Lab Event*. The events feature guest speakers and activities that encourage respectful conversations and bridge political divides.

According to Kings Park Librarian Susan Martin, who leads the Civics Lab events, “The purpose is to bring people together who share different points of view and to encourage dialogue and discussion. It’s a way to learn each other’s stories and strengthen our communities.”

The program kicked off in July with James Walkinshaw, who was then representing the Braddock District on the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors; he won a special election on September 9 to serve as the area’s Congressman.

Since July, the library has held five more Civics Lab gatherings, including a movie screening in October.

“Libraries are community hubs – a perfect place for people to come together, meet in person, and share their stories,” notes Susan. “Civics Lab participants have told us that they really appreciate

meeting people from their own community and having meaningful discussions.”

You can register for upcoming Civics Lab programs and stay up to speed with the library’s varied mix of other events and activities [here](#):

Introducing a New Civics Lab Offering: Listening Stations

Walk into the library, go to the Telephone Listening Station, and dial 1, 2 or 3. You’ll hear a two-minute StoryCorps One Small Step story. It’s a conversation between two people who don’t know each other, have different political views, and try to find common ground through their discussion.

Susan adds that the library offers a “bookmark service” that includes directions on how to participate in a longer StoryCorps conversation.

Mark Your Calendar: Upcoming StoryCorps Civics Lab events take place on January 12 and February 2. If you’re interested, please sign up and take the opportunity to add your voice, enrich these conversations, and build a stronger community.



“LITT’L BIT O’ BRIT” TOUR

By Sandy Kester, Kings Park resident since 1999

Awright, guv’nor? Here for the tour today? I ‘ave been scribblin’ away on the ‘istory or etymol’gy – that’s the fancy word for where a name comes from, innit? [isn’t it] – of this street in our own backyard in Kings’ Park. Now, Kings’ Park, as ya might’ve clocked [guessed], is a nod to the ol’ king o’ England ‘imself, right? All the streets ‘round ‘ere are named after some posh spot in the UK or a toff [gentry] from British ‘istory. An’ today, we’re ‘avin a butcher’s [look into] at Salisbury Court. Blimey, where to start?

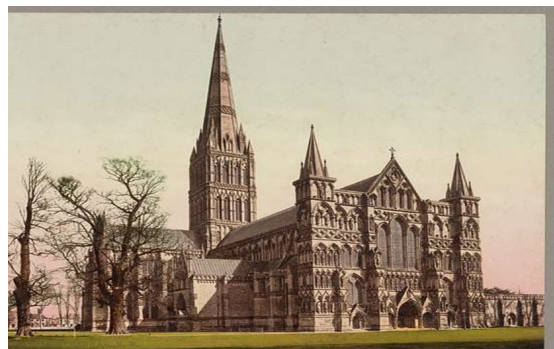
Salisbury, me ol’ mate, takes its name from that proper famous city down in Wiltshire, England – ya know, the one wiv the massive cathedral that’s got a spire taller than yer auntie’s beehive ‘airdo. The name itself? Well, listen up, it goes all the way back to the Romans, believe it or not. They called it Sorviodunum or summink [something] like that. The ol’ English folks twisted it into “Searobyrig” or “Searesbyrig.” Let’s break it down, right? “Searo” comes from “searu,” meanin’ armor or a trap, like a fort, an’ “byrig” is just “burgh” or “burh,” which is Old English for a stronghold or fortified home. But some clever clogs [annoyingly smart] reckon it’s folk etymol’gy – ya know, people muckin’ about wiv words – an’ it really stems from that Roman bit, meanin’ “fort at the gentle river” or “dry ground fort.” Either way, it’s been Salisbury since 1227 when they changed the name New Sarum to Salisbury and it became an official city. Salisbury, the city’s cathedral, ‘as ties to the crown an’ all

because it houses that Magna Carta, which King John ‘ad to sign back in 1215 to keep the barons from ‘avin a right barney [loud argument]. An’ don’t get me started on Stonehenge nearby (8 miles) – that’s prehistoric but it adds to the mystique of this area, dunnit[doesn’t it]? Or maybe the name is a wink to the 3rd Marquess o’ Salisbury, that Victorian Prime Minister bloke, Robert Cecil, who was a big cheese in British politics and served three terms or thirteen years. ‘E was from the Cecil family, lords o’ the manor in Hatfield House, an’ ‘is title comes straight from that Wiltshire city. So, either way ya slice it, it’s pure British ‘eritage on a plate.

Walkin’ down Salisbury Court ‘ere in Kings’ Park, ya can’t ‘elp but feel a bit o’ that ol’ British charm, even if we’re thousands of miles away from the real deal. Thanks for takin’ this tour wiv us.

Now, fancy a cuppa[cup of tea]?”

Cheers,
Love!





KP Library: A Smorgasbord of Services for All Ages

The library, located on Burke Lake Road across from the Kings Park Shopping Center, offers a treasure chest of services and programs – and it's walking distance from our neighborhood! Here, we'll put the spotlight on three: a job service, a new partnership, and creative offerings for children.

Job Search and Career Resources

It's been a challenging time for job hunters, with some companies announcing layoffs and others putting hiring on hold.

If you're looking for a job or in a career transition, our library can help! The excellent online resource, [Job Search & Career Resources](#), is a great place to start.

- The site's Job Search Toolkit offers a variety of options, from an online job search guide to articles and expert advice.
- Want information on resumes, cover letters, portfolios, and references? [Career One Stop](#), sponsored by the U.S. Department of Labor, is an easy-to-navigated guide to job search planning and resources tailored to specific needs and interests.

Here are three sites that the Kings Park librarians say are especially helpful:

[BrainFuse JobNow](#) includes many resources for job seekers, including live interview practice, coaching, and resume help. Live online tutoring is available every day from 2 to 11 p.m. EST.

[BrainFuse VetNow](#) offers online guidance for military service veterans and family members. Career resources, skills-building, and a writing lab are just some of the choices.

[LearningExpress Library](#) is another free online resource for patrons, providing practice tests, tutorials, and e-books to help with academic and professional goals. Some examples: GED and citizenship test prep, career certification exams, and basic skills improvement in reading, writing, and math.

Feel free to stop by the library or call 703-978-5600 if you'd like more information about these or other job-related services.

Interested in Free Streaming from WETA?

The Fairfax County Public Library announced a new partnership with local PBS member station WETA in November.

The partnership grew out of a shared mission and vision: Both public television and public libraries focus on informing, engaging and inspiring their communities with trusted sources of information and entertainment. Their offerings respect a diversity of views, culture and heritage.

Live TV streaming of every WETA channel, including WETA UK and WETA PBS Kids, is now available FREE to county library customers.

The library system and WETA kicked off its partnership with events at four different libraries last month highlighting the premiere of "The American Revolution" documentary series produced by, among others, Ken Burns.

During the coming year, the library will offer specially curated book recommendations and in-person programming based on PBS shows and topics.

Want more information? Check the Fairfax County Library [news](#) announcement or ask a member of the Kings Park Library staff.

Services and Programs for Children

Did you know that the Kings Park Library offers:

- A variety of events and activities for teens, school-age children, and babies and toddlers. You can review the events calendar online or stop by the library and pick up a printed copy. Here are just a few examples of the interesting options: a beginning robotics program and a chopped cooking basics workshop.
- Guided learning tablets with pre-loaded apps, stories and videos tied to specific themes.
- A sensory kit with fun items that allow users of all ages to explore a range of sight, sound and touch sensations.



Library displays, like this one at the "checkout counter," reflect the library's focus on all ages!

Ryan Minton
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<https://www.facebook.com/RyansLandscaping.NOVA>

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Style
PRINCE

Address

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List Price

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Style	Address	List Price	Sold Price	Subsidy (Seller's Credit to Buyer)	Final Sold Price	Final Price Reduction/Increase	Date Closed
KING	5518 KEMPTON DR	\$709,000	\$709,000		\$709,000	\$0	09/05/25
DUKE	5518 VENTNOR LN	\$719,000	\$719,000		\$719,000	\$0	09/08/25
DUCHESS	8527 PARLIAMENT DR	\$679,000	\$679,000	\$20,000	\$659,000	(\$20,000)	09/19/25
DUKE	8714 CROMWELL DR	\$689,000	\$689,000		\$689,000	\$0	09/23/25
KING	5304 KINGS PARK DR	\$845,000	\$845,000	\$6,500	\$838,500	(\$6,500)	10/15/25
DUCHESS	8717 VICTORIA RD	\$815,000	\$835,000		\$835,000	\$0	10/16/25
QUEEN	5205 SOUTHAMPTON DR	\$770,000	\$770,000		\$770,000	\$0	11/06/25
KING	8441 THAMES ST	\$650,000	\$560,000		\$560,000	\$0	11/21/25

Provided by Susan Metcalf, Corcoran McEneaney

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Safe Streets for Fairfax County

VP of Safety, Susan Cappa

Living in Fairfax County, it's clear that the county was designed for cars. However, in the past few years, there's been a change. More people want to walk or bicycle instead of drive! Unfortunately, when it comes to a contest between a pedestrian and a vehicle, the pedestrian loses. However, now there are organizations advocating for pedestrian and bicycle safety. One of the most effective is the Fairfax Families for Safe Streets (FSS; <https://novasafestreets.org/ffxfss/>), and I attend their monthly meetings. It gives me a new appreciation for pedestrian safety and how difficult it can be to achieve. Since I started attending two years ago, it's been very interesting to witness this group evolve from a people who had been hit by cars, to a formidable group of experts in pedestrian safety with diverse goals to improve safety and impressive results.

Because most pedestrians don't have a clue about safe practices, education is one primary goal. Members give talks at schools, hand out materials at subway stops, and organize a day of remembrance to focus on the sad effects of traffic accidents. Another worthy goal is to produce facts which help guide discussion. FSS has produced a near miss report, which shows dangerous streets in Fairfax County and is very useful when determining which areas need most

attention. They are also active in community traffic planning and participate in studies. Another goal is increased communication. Meetings are conducted on zoom and members of the police, VDOT, and supervisors' offices regularly join FSS members and observers (like me) to give briefings on their projects. To keep the level of information flowing, the FSS group produces a newsletter. I've included a link to the November newsletter. <https://mailchi.mp/c3433a9dc9cd/may-updates-from-fairfax-fss-14187274?e=68f99333ba>. If you'd like to subscribe, follow the instructions on the newsletter and get added to their mailing list. Finally, the FSS group spends a lot of time working with the State Legislature, to ensure that laws passed throughout the state include protection for pedestrians. Just recently, they've been instrumental in having speed sensors installed near schools and on other busy roads, to make drivers more aware of how fast they're going.

The next meeting of FSS is on January 5. I'll be there and you can attend, too.

Kings Park Royal Resident

The story of the traveling flag

As you may recall, the KPCA honors residents who have gone above and beyond to better our community. **Nominations for Royal Flag recipients can be sent to KingsParkCivicAssociation@gmail.com for consideration.**

Since our fall edition of the gazette, the Royal Flag made its way to a few wonderful Kings Park residents.

The 14th recipient of the Royal Resident flag was **Joe Cornell**! The person who nominated them highlighted his initiative in organizing the Kings Park Annual League, which brings neighbors together on a regular basis during the NFL season, and provides good-natured fun and competition amongst friends, old and new. The success of the KPAL is evident in how much it's grown over the years, having now become a competition with two leagues (and 2 flags going up in the neighborhood!). We are lucky to have someone like Joe in our neighborhood to help bring people together. Initiatives like this make Kings Park such a wonderful place to live!

The next recipient was **Karen Vahouny**. The person who highlighted her mentioned her composting initiatives, her informative articles in the quarterly KPCA gazette, and her enthusiasm in educating the community about county

programs and resources available to everyone. We are grateful to have someone like Karen who cares about the community, looks to get others involved, and is eager to start initiatives to make Kings Park such a wonderful and sustainable place to live!

The 16th recipient of the Royal Resident flag is **Robert Cohn**. The person who nominated Rob highlighted their work in dressing up as the man in red for many many years at the KPCA kids' party (including this year!), and Evelyn Ahlstrom Cohn also as being his helper. They've made so many children smile throughout the years, and we are grateful to them taking on this role over and over again. We are lucky to have people like Rob and Evelyn in our neighborhood that care about the community, and a family that brings joy to others, especially amongst the youngest crowd!





Climate Corner

By Karen Vahouny

Fourth in a continuing series

It's been one year since we launched this column, and I'm so grateful for your suggestions and feedback. I've also had two residents reach out to ask what they could do to help; as a result, we created an informal "climate corner committee." Many thanks, Rob Nellis and Alex Magnuss!

I also appreciate the support of Charlotte Hannagan, KPCA president, for her enthusiasm and encouragement.

The year in photos

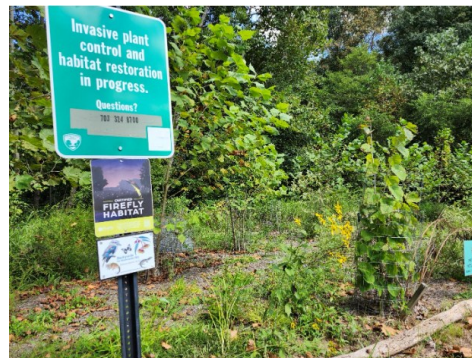


Our extended family eco-team's "build a garden" project for a homeless shelter in Alexandria will likely result in a return visit during 2026 to update it and add more plants. We're also exploring opportunities to create a garden for a Fairfax County elementary school or support the county's food-sharing efforts.

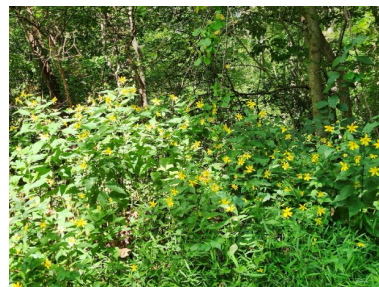
Request: If anyone has examples or photos from any type of earth-friendly volunteer project you've done this past year, I'd love to include it in an upcoming column!



We've been replacing meat-based dinners with more plant-centric options like poke bowls.



Kings Park resident Beverley Rivera, a Fairfax Master Naturalist, has played a major role in the success of the program at Lake Accotink to remove invasive plants around the creek. The volunteer team's work allows the native plants to flourish and improves the health of the lake and its surroundings.



Another example of a spot near the lake where native plants are now flourishing.



Our KP "climate corner committee" worked with a Kings Park Elementary School class to collect pumpkins after Halloween and bring them to the composting bin at the Wakefield Farmer's Market.



Climate Corner—*continued*

By Karen Vahouny

Update: The Kings Park pilot composting project

In order to encourage interest in composting, last spring I'd offered to pick up compostable food scraps from the first 10 interested residents and bring the bags every Wednesday (from spring through fall) to the drop-off bins at the Wakefield Farmer's Market. Free! A handful of people signed up, so we got the "trial run" experience. Plus, another benefit was being able to meet some of the people who work for Burke-based [Future Acres Urban Farming](#), the organization that collects the compost at all the county's markets.

One more positive: Word traveled within our Kings Park community and encouraged another valuable result: curiosity!

People are recognizing that:

1. Composting doesn't require a "heap" of effort. Off-the-shelf composting bins are available online (if you don't want to build your own). If you're not interested in the DIY approach, the county makes it easy to bring compostables in plastic bags (better yet, compostable plastic bags!) to its free drop-off program at all 10 area farmer's markets.
2. Composting reduces landfill waste. Food scraps are the single most common material sent to landfills, comprising about one-fourth of all landfill waste. Landfill waste causes air and water pollution.

The next step: I've just started to investigate options for creating a compost program in Kings Park that would include buckets (with lids) for your compost storage; a central location here in our neighborhood where you could dispose of your compost when your bucket is full; and weekly pickups of the centralized compost can by an outside provider. Offering one central location for compost pickup, versus a provider having to drive to individual houses, would result in a dramatically reduced price per person/family. This could also be a model for other neighborhoods like ours who are not part of a homeowners' association.

Stay tuned for more information.

Want to eliminate or reduce leaf-raking/blowing from your to-do list?

I'm so glad I was able to join the county's Third Annual Climate Action Conference on Oct. 18, a half-day event with a range of outstanding speakers and variety of exhibits centered on the impact of climate change on our water resources.

One of the (many) things I learned was that leaves can help reduce erosion and water runoff into storm drains. That water can contain pesticides, fertilizers and pet waste that flow from

our creek to Lake Accotink to the Chesapeake Bay, damaging the health of our water system.

And here's another takeaway: Fallen leaves can actually improve your lawn!

According to county information, some alternatives to raking and blowing leaves include:

- Leaf-cycling: Fallen leaves will decompose on your lawn, forming a layer of material on the soil that can provide shelter, food, and nesting materials for insects (like fireflies) and small wildlife (like turtles).
- Using a mulching electric lawnmower enriches the soil with nitrogen and other nutrients while reducing the need for fertilizer and harmful gas-powered tools.
- Collecting leaves around your plants can also help insulate them for the winter.
- Raking your leaves and composting them: If you can't mulch all your leaves, you can put them in a compost bin. Another option is to put the leaves in compostable paper bags or in plastic bins that can be picked up (by your local trash company) with your yard waste.

One more tip: I used to cut back my native plants and perennials in the late fall. Then I learned that these also give food and shelter to birds and helpful insects, as well as nutrients to the soil. So now, instead of cutting them back, consider delaying your pruning until late winter or early spring.

I'd love to hear from you!

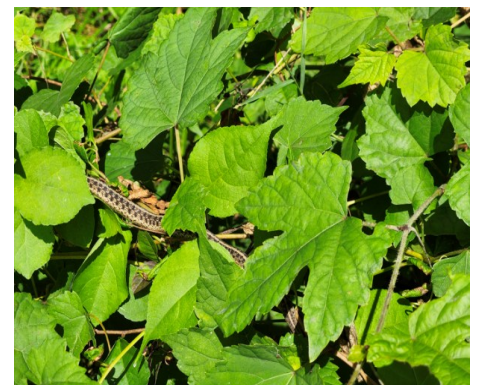
Suggestions for future Climate Corners? All ideas and feedback encouraged!

Email Karen Vahouny: kvahouny@gmail.com OR

Call or text 703-624-2674

A visual game for your kids

Have your child or children take a look at this photo and ask if they can find the "hidden creature." We thought this would be a fun, teachable moment relating to being caretakers of our environment. You can reinforce that snakes, bees and other creatures are assets for our earth – what they do and why they're such a valuable part of nature.





Winter Edition

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