

# Helping the Homeless

Community Lodgings benefit raises \$33,000, honors volunteers.

BY JEANNE THEISMANN  
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**M**ore than 200 people turned out March 27 for the 6th annual "Spring Forward to Union Street," a fundraiser to benefit Community Lodgings and honor the service of long-time volunteers and board members Doug Henry and Ed Harris.

"This has been an incredible group of people to work with," said Harris, who served as treasurer for the organization. "From the founders, to the board to the staff, they are all terrific people."

For the second year, Union Street Public House donated the venue and food for the event, which raised more than \$33,000 for programs that serve homeless and low-income families.

The evening featured a live auction that included a trip to watch a taping of ESPN's Emmy-winning show "Pardon the Interruption," an original oil painting by Ellen Welch Granter and an opportunity to name a character in the upcoming novel "The Skelton Box" by Bryan Gruley.

The event culminated with an awards presentation thanking Henry and Harris for their many years of service to the organization.

"It's been a pleasure to serve with this organization," Harris said. "It's a double bonus to be able to work with some great people and do some good for the Alexandria community."

Sponsors for the evening were Nixon Peabody, Maggie and Rob Johnston, McMurray Dispute Reso-



**Union Street Public House chef Rich Gunter and manager Jennifer Russell prepare the buffet for Community Lodgings supporters.**

lution, Harried Hairshirt Harriers, Donna Cramer of McEneaney Associates, Mortimer and Associates, Systems Engineering Group, Speck-Caudron Investment Group and BB&T.

Founded in 1987, Community Lodgings' mission is to lift families from homelessness and instability to independence and self-sufficiency through transitional and affordable housing programs, and youth and adult education programs held at the Fifer Family Learning Center.

For more information, visit [www.communitylodgings.org](http://www.communitylodgings.org).



**Executive director Bonnie Baxley with Mary Tiemann and Mary Hellem, who founded the non-profit private label tea company CommuniTea Calling to benefit Community Lodgings.**

**Community Lodgings board chairman Chris McMurray, left, and Ed Harris, who was honored for his many years of service to the organization.**



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## Dirty Business

Turning fossil fuels into energy is a dirty job, but Houston-based GenOn says somebody's got to do it. The corporation's coal-fired power plant on the banks of the Potomac River in Alexandria has long been the source of air pollution and political frustration. The City Council's efforts to shut the plant down were abandoned in 2008, when the elected leaders reached a \$32 million settlement in an effort to reduce particulate matter released into the city's air. So far, a windscreen has been installed. But the vast majority of improvements outlined in the settlement have yet to be accomplished.

"The plant should be shut down," said **Ted Glick** of the Chesapeake Climate Action Network. "We should be moving toward wind power and solar power instead of relying on fossil fuels."

To that end, Glick and his colleagues at the network are planning to host their annual "Artists for the Climate" event here in Alexandria. The April 17 rally will start at 7 p.m. at the Crown Plaza, where a number of authors, poets, singers and activists will voice their displeasure with the coal-fired power plant. After that, the group will fire up their candles and launch a three-block march to the plant, which organizers call one of "the oldest and dirtiest plants in America." A spokeswoman for GenOn acknowledges that the plant is old, but says the company has invested millions to improve its environmental performance.

"In recent years, the station provides power on intermediate or peak demand days, usually the hottest or coldest days of the year when electricity is at its greatest," said **Misty Allen**, director of external affairs for the corporation's eastern region. "The rest of the time the plant does not run."

## Goodbye 7-Eleven

Some are thanking heaven that a 7-Eleven will not be opening a new location on Upper King Street, although others are upset they won't be able to purchase a Slurpee within earshot of the King Street Metro Station. The Dallas-based corporation withdrew its special-use permit on March 30.

"Well, I'm not happy about it," said **Jim Melton**, a 34-year resident of Harvard Street and a vocal supporter of the special-use permit application. "Now we have to start over, and I'm afraid something more inappropriate might come in."

After 7-Eleven filed the permit in January, several neighbors launched a petition to oppose the application before the Planning Commission and ultimately City Council. As is often the case with 7-Eleven applications, arguments against the proposed land use included late night hours, noisy trash removal, traffic congestion and alcohol sales potentially contributing to a sense of moral turpitude. The Upper King Street application had the added dimension of being located in a highly visible spot along the city's prized commercial corridor.

"We won," declared Upper King Street Civic Association President **Trey Hanbury** in an email to neighborhood residents.

## A Set of Twelve

More and more, retailers are shuttering their brick-and-mortar locations to sell merchandise online. But Alexandria businessman **Richard Kinnon** is going one step further by trying to bypass retailers altogether and sell his glass-bead game directly online. Kinnon and his business partner invented the game "Dodeccamente" back in the 1980s, long before they realized that the structure of the contest aligned with a philosophy outlined in the **Herman Hesse** classic "The Glass Bead Game." Now they want to relaunch the game for the 21st century. And what better way to do that than creating a website and offering the merchandise online.

"We relish the challenge," Kinnon said over coffee one recent afternoon. "We feel like we're kind of catching the zeitgeist."

The game, which sells for \$29.99, is a cross between Chinese checkers and backgammon. Glass beads are placed at three layers, which reflect a trinity of participants. Kinnon says this is an aspect of the game that conveys cultural values because players can think of the trinity as social classes, medieval orders or even religious hierarchies. "We like to look at it this way," he says while rolling the dice, "the secrets that you learn for yourself all come under the law of twelves."

— MICHAEL LEE POPE