

## HEART General Meeting Minutes 3/10/26

**Sue Mascaro**, Co-President, called the meeting to order at 12:00 pm. The meeting was held at *The Meeting House* in Oakland Mills. 114 members registered for today's luncheon, our most heavily attended meeting other than the December holiday luncheons.

### General Business and Committee Updates

#### Approval of October 14, 2025 General Meeting Minutes

**Janet Zimmerman**, Secretary, stated that the minutes of the meeting were published in the November 2025 newsletter. There were no questions or corrections. **Sally Ann Cooper** made a motion to approve the minutes; **Bruce Smith** seconded the motion. Members voted and the minutes were approved.

**Treasurer's Report:** **Ellen Hill**, Treasurer, reported the current balances: Checking \$39,450.51; Savings (other interest-bearing checking account) \$1,684.24 Scholarship \$2,192.78. More HEART members are paying by Zelle every month.

#### Featured Presentation: *Our Community at Work: Services and Volunteer Opportunities*

Based on members' feedback, four organizations provided details on their services and opportunities for volunteering.

##### **Tracy Broccolino**, President, *Community Action Council of Howard County*:

CAC has been in Howard County for over 60 years. It has five core programs: Early Childhood Education, (educating up to 400 students in 5 locations across the county), Energy Assistance (assisting households in imminent danger of utility cutoff and providing income-eligible homeowners and renters with weatherization which results in energy efficiency and lower electric bills), Food Assistance (sponsoring 14 food pantries throughout the county. The Howard County Food Bank was one of the first in the country to install a shopping model identical to navigating a grocery store. This restores dignity and choice to the families they serve. The food provided is fresh, healthy, and varied: sourced from local farms and grocery stores, and from our own community garden), Housing Assistance (offering housing assistance to low-income Howard County families. Assistance includes eviction prevention, first Month's Rent, One Month's Rent and assistance with other housing emergencies), and Weatherization (creating energy efficient homes by assisting households in imminent danger of utility cutoff and providing income-eligible homeowners and renters with weatherization which results in energy efficiency and lower electric bills).

CAC is a member of the MD Community Action Partnership. Families are not often prepared for a crisis. 70% of the people served are employed. Housing, financial condition, mental & physical health, and food security are the top causes of poverty in Howard County. Future plans include a CAC location in the Route 1 corridor. **cac-hc.org**

##### **Allison Smith** from *AOK Mentoring and Tutoring*:

Currently, AOK has 100 mentors and tutors serving elementary and middle schools. AOK supports the mentors and tutors who provide 45- minute sessions one time per week in each student's school. The purpose is to assist children during difficult times of their lives (new student, difficult family situation, etc.). Anyone may refer a mentee. The organization finds a match for the mentor. Those who wish to volunteer may apply on the website. Fingerprinting and a 2- hour training session are required.

www. **AOKMentor.org**

##### **Andrew Burkowske**, *Program Manager of Neighbor Ride*:

Neighbor Ride began in 2004. It is "a neighbor giving a neighbor a ride". They provide seniors (age 60 or over) with safe, affordable, volunteer-based transportation. The volunteer benefits with very flexible volunteer opportunities and schedules. The need for senior transportation has increased by 46% in recent years. Most rides are round trip but can be "split rides." Volunteers are needed and encouraged to apply. Their organization partners with the Food Bank and the Loan Closet (durable medical equipment) for deliveries. **Neighborride.org**

**Sheri Fox**, Administrator of the *Howard County Animal Control and Adoption Center* (part of the Howard County Police Department):

Part of the office includes investigators and programs for outreach to the community. The program has changed to encourage adoption of the animals and progress was noted. They provide rabies clinics, spay and neutering of pets, fostering (80 volunteers), medical fostering, partnerships with Grassroots and other organizations for housing pets temporarily, pet food bank, and partnerships with food banks to provide pet food. The organization is in need of donations. They have an Amazon Wish List for products, providing easy access for donations. <https://www.howardcountymd.gov/police/animal-control>

### **Recruitment & Retention**

New members were welcomed. **Ronnie Bohn** recently updated the HEART brochure. There was a drawing for February, March, and April birthdays.

### **HEART's Website**

**Karyn Littlejohn**, our webmaster, has revamped the HEART website. The website is open to everyone; it is no longer password protected. We are hoping more people will join our Facebook group.

### **Socializing with HEART**

**Sue Mascaro** announced Performances at Toby's in Columbia. Join HEART members for *The Wizard of Oz* (April 9), *Summer - The Donna Summer Musical* (Oct. 29), and *White Christmas* (December 17). Contact **Sue** to reserve tickets for Toby's (by phone (443-878-6883) or by email, at [scmascaro@gmail.com](mailto:scmascaro@gmail.com)). In addition, an *Endless Summer Happy Hour* will be scheduled in June.

### **Scholarship Committee**

**Lisa Davis** reported the deadline for applications for scholarships is April 1, 2026. HEART will award at least 4 scholarships for \$1,500 each. Information is posted on the HEART website. A 50/50 drawing was held today to support the scholarship committee. \$316 was collected. **Kathy Protokowicz** received \$158.00.

### **Serving the Community**

HEART continues to sponsor *Comfort Cases* and the *Howard County Food Bank* with donations. Both organizations accept donations throughout the year (in person, by mail, or through their website). Members donated generously to both organizations today. Today's economic world is difficult for many of our Howard County residents. *Comfort Cases* provides a backpack with books, journals, pajamas, a stuffed animal friend, and other essentials for youth required to move to a foster home. *Comfort Cases* was founded to provide a more humane touch for the children as they transition to new foster placements.

### **Necrology Report**

**Marlyn Oatts**, Chairperson, shared the names of HEART members who passed in 2025: Joseph Heaps, Barbara Greenfield, Judy Snyder, and Larry Cohen. Marlyn shared a beautiful poem recognizing the value of teachers.

**Susan Sellner** provided gifts to members attending for the first time and the clever travel-themed door prizes. Members thanked **Gail Zitney**, **Susan Sellner**, **Ann Drnec**, **Bonnie Taylor**, and **Donna Brackins** for the success of today's luncheon.

Respectfully submitted,

Janet Zimmerman, Secretary

Looking for the most up-to-date information from your organization?

Visit our website at <https://howardrspa.org>.

Like us on Facebook: Search for HEART, *The Association of Retired Howard County Personnel*.

**Next Luncheon & General Meeting: May 12, 2026 at 12:00 pm at *The Meeting House* in Columbia**