

ACCOMPLISHMENTS & EVENTS

Recreation & Cultural Activities

Recreation Facilities. The City's Recreation staff worked with the Park and Recreation Commission, Recreation Center Advisory Committees, and neighborhood groups to plan major facility improvements. The FY 1997-2002 Capital Improvement Program approved by Council in May significantly increases funding for recreational facilities:

- ❖ \$1.6 million to renovate and expand the Mt. Vernon Recreation Center in FY 1997;
- ❖ \$2.5 million to renovate and expand the William Ramsay Recreation and Nature Centers in FY 1997;
- ❖ \$3.4 million to complete the renovation of Lee Center and Nannie J. Lee Recreation Center by FY 1998;
- ❖ \$800,000 to renovate the Durant Center by FY 1998; and
- ❖ \$317,000 to improve Simpson Stadium in FY 1997.

In April, City Council established the Cameron Station/Recreational Task Force to explore the concept of a multi-generational, multi-use recreational facility at Cameron Station or another West End site. The nine-member citizen Task Force will report back to Council in October. The federal government will convey 64 acres of open space at this former Army base to the City. Anticipating that this land will be available by the fall, Council authorized improvements to the West End Park at Cameron Station, including the renovation of a softball field, development of a state-of-the-art playground area, and renovation of the existing tennis and basketball courts. In the East End Park at Cameron Station, Council approved a soccer field, four outdoor tennis courts, retention of the picnic areas, and renovation and landscaping of the pond areas. The City leased the West End Park from the federal government to make this area available for public use during the summer of 1996.



The Maury Elementary School playground in Rosemont is a popular location for supervised summer recreation programs sponsored by the City and by Hopkins House.

World Wide Web. Alexandria Library established a presence on the World Wide Web with a main home page and separate home pages for each of the branch libraries. (The library's main address is <http://www.alexandria.lib.va.us>). Information on hours, programs and other services are posted there, as well as interactive maps to allow the user to get detailed information on each branch location. Four computer terminals at the Barrett Branch and one at the Burke Branch provide free public connections to the Internet and the World Wide Web courtesy of Jones Communications. Classes introducing library users to the Internet were started in the spring and were filled as soon as notification was posted. The free classes are sponsored by Wheat International Communication and taught by its employees.

Performing Arts Center. The Northern Virginia Community College will soon begin construction of the Rachel M. Schlesinger Concert Hall and Arts Center at its Alexandria campus. The \$9 million center includes a 1,000-seat theatre and will be a shared-use facility for the College and the communities of Alexandria and Arlington. The Alexandria Symphony Orchestra will base its operations there when it opens in the fall of 1998. Major funding for the center comes from local jurisdictions and private donors, including a \$1 million contribution by James R. Schlesinger. Alexandria and other Northern Virginia local governments pay a

New Central Library. Planning for the new central library at Duke and Pickett Streets, across from Cameron Station, proceeds on schedule. The Alexandria Library Board approved the building program and an architect selection committee chose the local firm of Pierce Goodwin Alexander & Linville in association with world renowned architect Michael Graves, who will be the principal designer for this landmark building. At approximately 46,000 square feet, the new central library will nearly double the size of the Barrett Branch. The new facility is scheduled to open in late 1999.

Library Dedication. Hundreds of citizens attended the dedication of the newly renovated and enlarged Kate Waller Barrett Branch Library that reopened on September 10, 1995. The Barrett Library on Queen Street showcases the new computer system that has access to the library's catalog, CD-ROM reference tools, and other on-line databases. With the reopening of the Barrett Branch, total circulation of books and other materials rose to more than half a million, a 20% increase over the previous year. By the end of 1995, the Library's registered cardholders exceeded 101,000.

portion of the college's operating and capital costs.

City History. The Lyceum opened a new ongoing exhibition titled, "Building a Community: Alexandria Past to Present," the first permanent, and comprehensive historical exhibit of Alexandria under one roof. From Native Americans, who hunted and fished in this area as recently as four hundred years ago, to the construction of the Metro station at Van Dorn Street, the exhibit depicts many of the people and events that have shaped this community. The exhibit opened in October 1995, just as delays in the approval of the Federal budget forced most of the museums in Washington to close, bringing many additional visitors to Alexandria.

Fort Ward Museum and Historic Site. Fort Ward Museum opened an exhibition called "In the Path of War: Alexandria, Virginia 1861-1865," which described soldier and civilian life in the Union-occupied city during the Civil War. The exhibit and lecture series focused on Alexandria's role as a major military headquarters, transportation center, and hospital base for the Union Army and profiled notable Alexandrians who fought for the South during the conflict. The exhibition was accompanied by publication of a Street Guide to Civil War Alexandria. The Guide is part of an effort by Alexandria, Fairfax County and Arlington to promote tourism of Civil War sites in Northern Virginia.