

neighborhood news

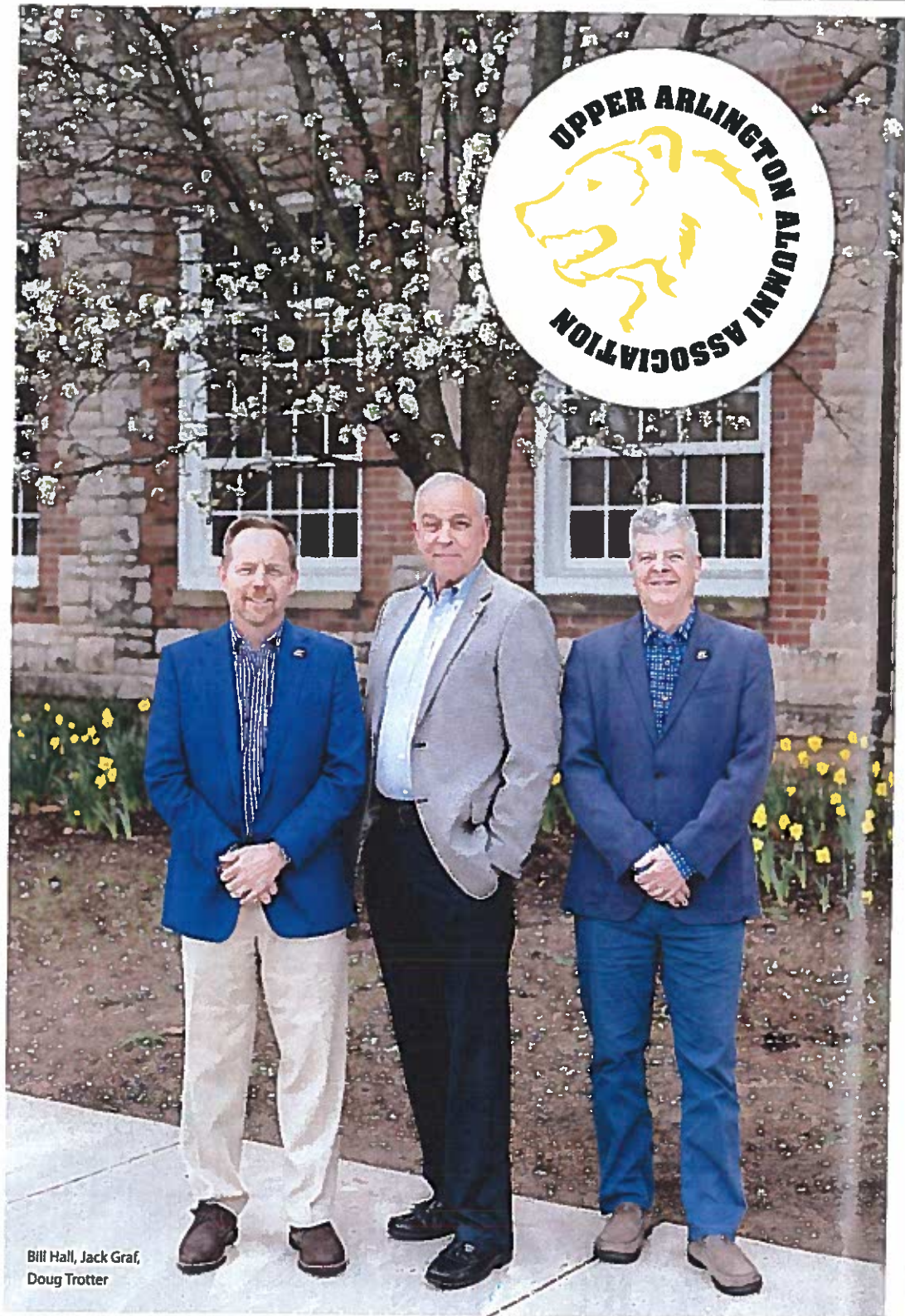
Written by UA resident Kristin Greenberg
Photo by Emily Sommer Photography

NOT YOUR REUNION YEAR?

It's Still A Great Time To Connect With UAAA

Jack Graf, UAHS Class of 1965, slowly reaches for his wallet and proceeds to pull out a handful of bills. The action does not seem to correspond to the question: What is your favorite memory from UAHS? That is until he explains. "I worked concession in high school and was taught to stack cash all facing in the same direction. I still do it today."

When he was asked to participate in the Upper Arlington Alumni Association (UAAA), Jack recognized a perfect opportunity to give back to the community that has had a lasting impact on him and his family. As Secretary, Jack is one of several volunteers who is currently working on reorganizing, redefining and rebranding this organization. President Doug Trotter, UAHS '72, and Vice-President Bill Hall, UAHS '76, round out the officer slate, which functions under the umbrella of the Upper Arlington Education Foundation (UA+Ed). The UAAA and the UA+Ed share the support and guidance of their Executive Director Alice Finley and Assistant Director Megan Potts.



Bill Hall, Jack Graf,
Doug Trotter

"People may not know what we are all about or even that we exist," says Doug. "To better serve this unique UA community which has so much Golden Bear pride, it was time to re-think how and why we are connecting people together."

The first step is now complete – clarifying the UAAA's purpose. Built upon the incredible work done since the organization's founding in the late 1980s, the officers have instituted three areas of concentration going forward: facilitate communication between the schools, alumni, faculty and the community at-large; promote the tradition, pride and reputation of

excellence of our school district; and, develop a spirit of giving to benefit the UA schools.

Also new is the elimination of a membership fee – all graduates, including those who just were handed their diplomas a few weeks ago, are automatically members of the Alumni Association. “We want everyone to feel included, and it’s difficult to structure programs around an annual \$20 payment,” Bill observes. “We want to generate compelling reasons to give, focused on specific programs or projects.” In fact, you don’t have to be a UAHS graduate to contribute. The UAAA welcomes involvement and support from anyone who has an interest in the success of the UA school district.

Now efforts have turned to developing the most effective communication channels through which to reach alumni and others. “Different generations may require varying social media strategies and content to keep them engaged,” remarks Bill. “We want everyone to find meaning in and be excited about the information we share.”

Representatives from the UAAA even attended Idea Day at the high school this year in an effort to create relationships with existing students.

Soon a formal request for feedback will be sent to alumni registered in the alumni database, asking for input on how the UAAA

could be more valuable to the community. If you are an alum who is not registered, someone who wants to give feedback, or simply have a question, all contacts can be made through the UAAA’s website bearalums.com. “We will have opportunities for people to participate on several committees, such as Image & Re-branding, Outreach & Communication, and Recognition & Open House,” urges Doug. “It’s a perfect ‘jumping in’ point for anyone who is interested.”

Meanwhile, perhaps the most widely-known and visible function of the UAAA continues, as they are the central organizational point for the July 4 class reunions. A new highlight of that celebration is the recently implemented annual Open House at UAHS, which allows alumni and community members alike to tour the high school, shop at the school store and attend a short ceremony. Mark your calendars for this year’s date on Saturday, July 6, from 1-4 pm. The UAAA displays UAHS memorabilia and coordinates awards for Outstanding and Distinguished alumni.

“Someone confided in me once that they were more interested in their fellow high school alums than their college ones because they spent all of their childhood together,” Jack says while the others nod in agreement. Bill adds, “We want to be that professional organization that keeps alumni and interested community members in touch with each other and the great work of our UA schools whether they live close by or far away.”



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