

## December 2016

### Message from the Office of the President/CEO

"We must find time to stop and thank the people who make a difference in our lives."  
John F. Kennedy

As the holidays draw near and 2016 comes to a close, we present the "Year in Review" and reflect upon Columbia Association's accomplishments during the last twelve months. Eclipsing the celebration of these achievements, however, is our recognition that *people* make them happen.

It is with gratitude that we say "*Thank You*" to CA team members who fulfill our mission of "working every day in hundreds of ways to make Columbia an even better place to live, work and play" and pursue our vision of "making Columbia the community of choice – today and for generations to come." We recognize and thank our board members; village community associations - their respective board members and staff; community partners; and volunteers, especially our many advisory committee members, who contribute to the success of CA and our community.

We are fortunate to live in the "Best Small City in America." That accolade attests to the value, time, talent, and dedication of the people who make CA and Columbia so unique and special. Our success is due to you. Thank you for making a difference.

### Office of General Counsel

The Office of General Counsel ("Office") drafted, reviewed, revised, negotiated, and finalized approximately 175 contracts and other legal agreements.

The Office handled 108 covenant enforcement cases in various stages of litigation, opened 19 new covenant cases, and closed 31 cases.

The Office investigated, made and reported findings and recommendations on seven ethics complaints.

The Office analyzed the impact of, and determined appropriate CA positions on, 15 pieces of state legislation, and prepared statements/testimony regarding certain bills.

General Counsel was recognized by the Association of Corporate Counsel for her leadership role on the Small Law Departments Committee.



## **Office of Planning and Community Affairs**

### **Enhancing CA's Planning and Development Influence**

Planning and Community Affairs staff has worked this year to enhance CA's influence in planning and development of Columbia. Planning staff engaged in a range of activities including research and analysis; strengthening partnerships and relationships with governmental and nonprofit agencies; and participating in the policy and regulatory process for issues that relate to Columbia's development through advisory group participation, testimony, partnerships and other appropriate avenues. Of particular note is the impact of CA's efforts on the proposed (and now approved) Downtown Columbia affordable housing legislation. These efforts helped to increase CA's profile and influence on this very important legislation.

### **Community Building Speakers Series Events**

Columbia's Community Building Speakers Series hosted two speakers in 2016. In May, CA partnered with the African American Community Roundtable of Howard County to host University of Maryland, Baltimore County (UMBC) President Freeman A. Hrabowski, who spoke to the community on "Diversity Matters: Building on Columbia's History as an Inclusive Community." In October, CA hosted Rob Breymaier, Executive Director of the Oak Park Regional Housing Center, who spoke about "Sustaining Racial Integration in Housing in Columbia: Exploring the Model of Oak Park, Illinois." Both events were well attended, and the topics quite engaging for the attendees.

### **Connectivity**

The Community Planner led the bicycle friendly community application process, through the American League of Bicyclists, which resulted in Columbia receiving a bronze award as a Bicycle Friendly Community. This application was completed in partnership with Howard County Government and bicycle advocates. The designation brings tremendous recognition to the community and will help position the county to secure grants for projects that improve bicycle and pedestrian connections. One grant for funding for automated bicycle counters for use in Columbia and other areas of Howard County has already been secured. The addition of automated bicycle counters will complement CA's manual bike and pedestrian count program.

The Director of Planning and Community Affairs is serving as the only non-governmental representative on the county's Complete Streets Implementation Team. This year the group drafted a Complete Streets Policy and, in the coming year, will recommend changes to Howard County's Design Manual to ensure roads and bridges are in alignment with that policy.

## **Department of Sport and Fitness**

### **Clarabridge Survey**

Clarabridge was launched as Columbia Association's member experience management system. Clarabridge allows CA to improve how it collects, responds to and analyzes feedback. It also gives CA the ability to identify trends as they are happening; to see what we are doing well and where we need to make improvements; and, if improvements are being made, whether they are having the desired impact.

### **Community Open Houses**

Sport and Fitness held three themed open houses in 2016 – All Star! in February; the Olympics in June; and Yay! CA in November. Haven on the Lake held an Aqua Open House in September; and the Columbia Swim Center celebrated the reopening of SplashDown and its new body slides in October.

### **Personal Training**

Personal Training began a partnership with Howard Community College's Health Services Department in fall 2016 to offer internship opportunities to students who are interested in becoming personal trainers.

Personal Training also partnered with School Age Services to offer fun fitness classes to students in the after-school care programs at various elementary schools. There was no charge to students for the fitness classes.

### **HCC Challenge**

For the third year, CA partnered with Howard Community College in the HCC Challenge. CA led the group training runs, provided three-month memberships in preparation for the competition, and had six teams in the competition.

### **Community Health Division**

The Community Health Division received a \$2500 scholarship from "EMPOWER," a new initiative from the Howard County Health Department and Johns Hopkins Hospital, which addresses the maternal health disparities in African-American women. The scholarship enables 20 women to participate in CA's "Optimal Health for My Baby and Me" program.

## **Department of Community Services**

### **International Exchange and Multicultural Programs**

Cap-Haitien, Haiti joined Tres Cantos, Spain; Cergy-Pontoise, France; and Tema, Ghana to form the Columbia sister city quartet. The formal Sister City Agreement was signed in Cap-Haitien by the newly inaugurated Mayor, Jean Claude Mondesir, and witnessed by The Build Haiti Foundation Global Leadership Program participants.

### **School Age Services**

During the past year, the School Age Services (SAS) program addressed some programs needs and the suggestions of the parents in a positive way. Wait lists have been an ongoing concern, and this year, for the third year in a row, we were able to negotiate additional space in one of the schools. The addition of the music room at Centennial Lane elementary school, together with the hiring of two additional team members, allowed us to remove 30 children from the wait list and provide after school care for them.

SAS continued to participate in the Maryland State Department of Education's Quality Rating Improvement System (QRIS), maintaining a level 2 rating and earning \$20,000 in state funding for our efforts. The funds allowed CA to add the Compass Awards program to our curriculum, a program tied to the social-emotional goals of the Howard County Public School System. CA was also able to maintain the art, personal training and martial arts enrichment programs, at no cost to our families, while adding a free music program.

### **Volunteer Center Serving Howard County**

The Volunteer Center Serving Howard County (VCSHC) successfully completed and received a continuation grant from the Governor's Office on Service and Volunteerism. The \$20,454 award will be used to help build the capacity of local nonprofits through the use of volunteer management best practices.

In August 2016, the VCSHC was asked by Howard County Government to assist with the registration and referral of potential volunteers in response to Ellicott City's July 30th flash flood.

Since October 1, 2015, the VCSHC has registered 1,141 new volunteers, with 143 connecting to volunteer opportunities and eligible to be counted as recruited and managed Volunteer Generation Fund volunteers. Thirty-four new organizations registered, making 321 the total number of organizations registered with the VCSHC. Four volunteer focused e-newsletters were sent to 6,900 recipients, with an open rate at 20%; and four partner staff e-newsletters were sent to 433 recipients, with an open rate of 30%. In a 12-month period [volunteerhoward.org](http://volunteerhoward.org) received 15,672 website views and 7,836 unique users.

### **Columbia 50<sup>th</sup> Birthday Celebration**

The Columbia 50th Birthday Committee continued its fundraising and program planning for the celebration which will be held March-September 2017. In 2016, a website was created, community meetings were held, and commitments for programming were made by over 40 community organizations.

The Department of Communications and Marketing has been an integral part of communications and marketing efforts to support the celebration. Marketing and communication support has included brochure design and street flag design; taking photographs and producing videos of daffodil plantings; and preparing large-scale publications to be disseminated throughout the greater Columbia area. Support from the department will continue over the next 10 months.

### **Department of Open Space and Facility Services**

CA's Open Space and Facilities Construction Division constructed and repaired several amenities for CA. The Columbia Swim Center Splash Down reopened in October with a rebuilt stair tower and new body slides. The slides are the first segment of a multiyear renovation plan.

At Haven on the Lake, a new conference room, with a dedicated HVAC system and sound insulation package, was constructed. The locker room re-configuration and upgrades were completed at The Still Point Spa.

Three large projects at the Supreme Sports Club were completed. Upgrades to the Yoga room, including installation of the new Video on Demand, were made; the upstairs men's and women's locker rooms were re-built, with new lockers and finishes; and the ADA ramp access to the lower skate entrance was added, allowing better access to the lower level of the building.

The Open Space Capital Improvement Program completed repairs and upgrades to seventeen tot lots in various locations in Columbia.

Major repairs to the Cedar Lane pedestrian overpass near the Swansfield neighborhood center and pool were completed by the end of summer. The bridge repairs addressed structural and safety concerns, and the bridge reopened prior to the start of the new school year.

## **Department of Administrative Services**

A staff team led by Administrative Services has been investigating budgeting software applications to make the budgeting process more efficient and to provide more analytics on the data. The team anticipates making a selection shortly and implementing the software in time to use it for the FY 2019/2020 budget cycle.

The new membership structure team is working on the implementation plan for the new memberships. The data conversion and upload is on schedule with Daxko/CSI, the membership software provider, and progress is underway on the development of a communication plan.

## **Department of Communications and Marketing**

### **Websites**

CA's new website was rebuilt and launched in April 2016. We continue to build out features and information that add more value for the user. A comparison of September 2015 to September 2016 user analysis shows that the search engine optimization (SEO) employed in the web pages is reaching a greater number of users and page views, and people are finding the pages they seek much faster. A new feature on the home page that enables visitors to opt-in to CA's various eNewsletters has resulted in approximately 175 new contacts each month who receive our information.

Haven on the Lake's website was rebuilt and launched in November 2016. Similar improvements in statistics that attest to increased usability are expected by November 2017.

### **Yay! CA**

YaY! CA was developed as the marketing theme for FY17 and FY18. The theme has been incorporated into direct mail pieces, articles, events for team members, Open House events, and outdoor graphics at all three clubs.

### **Digital Signage**

Digital Signage was installed at CA Headquarters and at the Supreme Sports Club as a first step in bringing this feature to more facilities. By the end of FY17, digital signage will also be installed at Columbia Gym, the Athletic Club and the Swim Center. The digital signage platform enables CA to identify the general manager of each facility and provide information about upcoming events, new programs and classes, and current schedules and schedule updates.

### **Events**

In 2016, Communications and Marketing (C&M) added events designed to engage a wider range of the community, including informational sessions for real estate agencies, new community residents, and Columbia Association's first annual Veterans Day event. Two sessions of Excite! Columbia were held and over 2,000 people attended Kids Day. C&M also supported other areas of CA with their events and assisted at events at which CA was a sponsor.

### **Buy-A-Brick Program**

In November 2016 C&M launched the 2017 Buy-a-Brick Program in a new 50<sup>th</sup> Birthday Commemorative Section. The brick sale will continue through February 24, 2017 for bricks to be placed at the Downtown Columbia Lakefront in summer 2017, as part of the 50<sup>th</sup> Birthday celebration activities.

*Happy Holidays from CA*