

City of Alexandria, Virginia

MEMORANDUM

9
4-22-08

DATE: APRIL 9, 2008

TO: THE HONORABLE MAYOR AND MEMBERS OF CITY COUNCIL

FROM: JAMES K. HARTMANN, CITY MANAGER 

SUBJECT: CITY COUNCIL RECEIPT OF FIRST NIGHT ALEXANDRIA'S
2007 ANNUAL REPORT

ISSUE: City Council receipt of First Night Alexandria's 2007 Annual Report (attachment).

RECOMMENDATIONS: That City Council receive the Annual Report from First Night Alexandria and thank the Board of Directors for its efforts on behalf of the City.

DISCUSSION: In 1994, the City of Alexandria began holding the First Night Alexandria program. Every year thereafter, with the exception of the year 2000, this annual celebration of the new year has been held. The event transforms retail stores, office lobbies, museums and public facilities into performance venues that showcase local, regional and national talent, and has become one of the regions premier New Year's Eve celebrations. First Night Alexandria has increased in popularity each year and drew over 15,000 participants to the December 31, 2007 celebration. Last year's program included 160 individual performances at 26 venues within Old Town Alexandria. The City provides First Night Alexandria annually with \$50,000 in City funding, and with logistical and staff support.

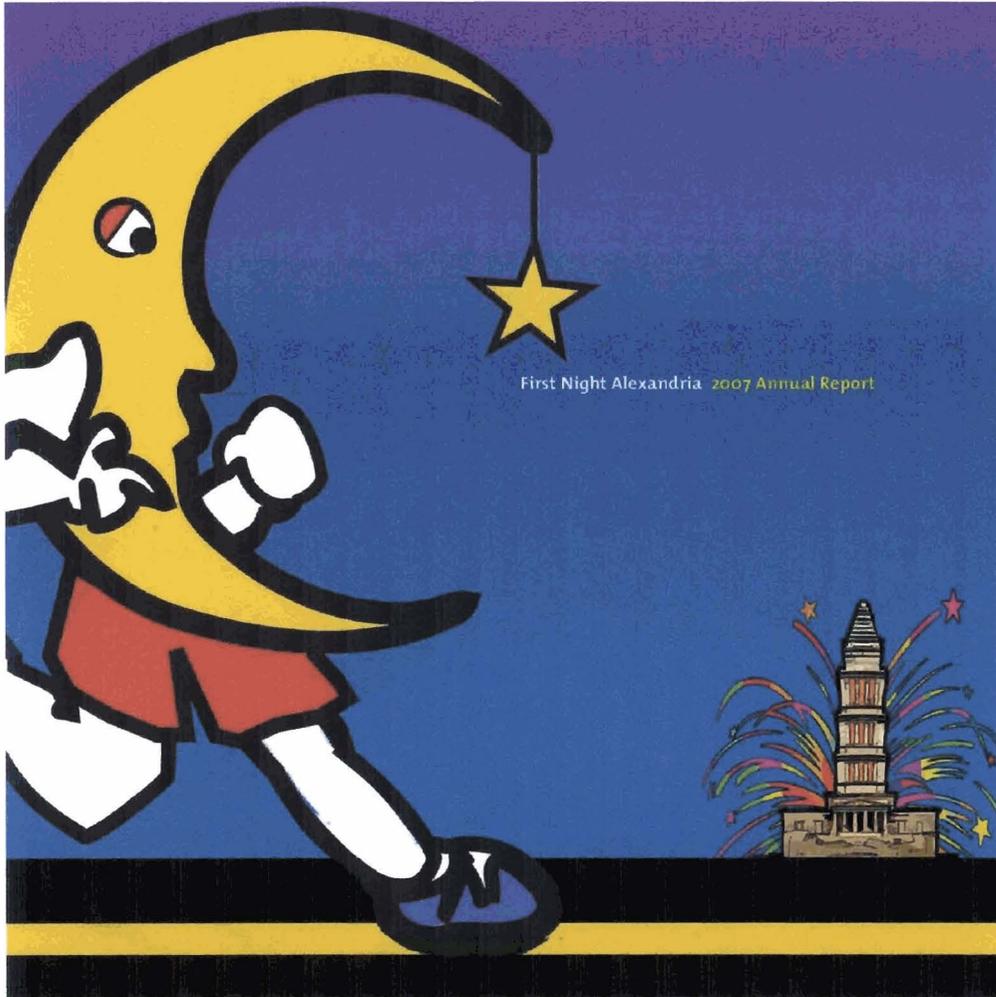
FISCAL IMPACT: None.

ATTACHMENT: First Night Alexandria's 2007 Annual Report.

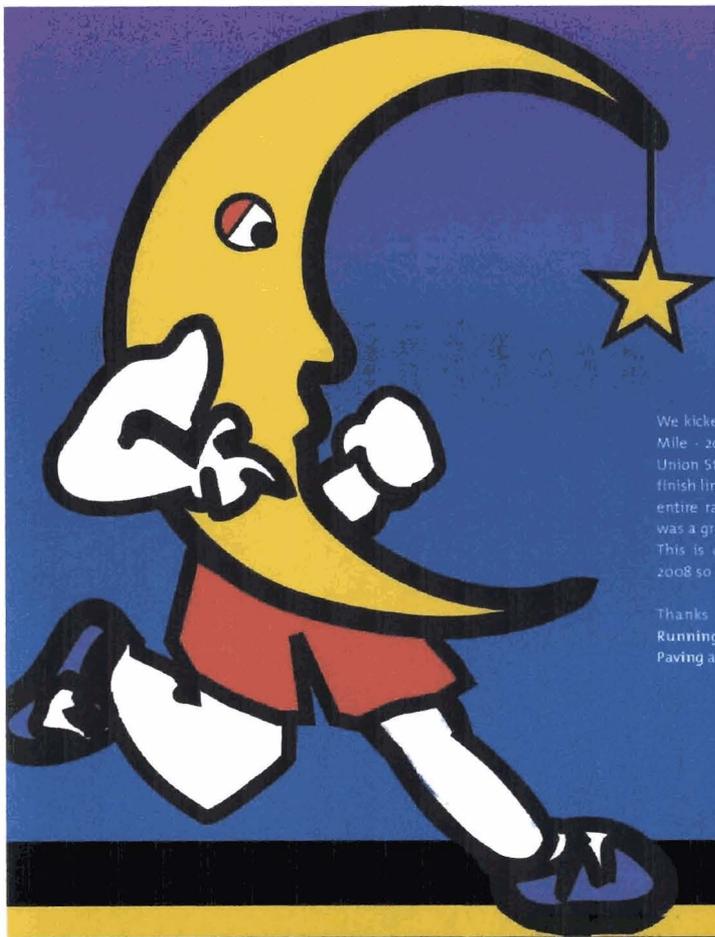
STAFF:

Kirk Kincannon, Director, Recreation, Parks and Cultural Activities

Jack Browand, Division Chief, Recreation, Parks and Cultural Activities



First Night Alexandria 2007 Annual Report



We kicked off this year with The King Street Mile - 200 runners from Market Square to Union Station. The first runner crossed the finish line in 4 minutes and 18 seconds! The entire race took less than ten minutes. It was a great start to a terrific New Year's Eve. This is certainly part of the planning for 2008 so start getting in shape now!

Thanks go out to race partner Pacers Running Stores and sponsors Virginia Paving and Fitness Together.

WAHOO!

First Night Alexandria, December 31, 2007...
the largest crowd we have had with 15,000 people enjoying
affordable, family-friendly entertainment in Old Town and Del Ray.

The streets, sidewalks and venues were jammed. Attendees tell us they want more venues and bigger venues. They want more entertainment. The majority of people who attend First Night have attended for three or more years. Each year they give us tremendous feedback and you will see some of it in the comments throughout this report. We wish we had larger buildings to offer; we wish more of the shops would stay open; we wish more of the quick food stores would stay open. Unfortunately, all of the people who work in those businesses want to celebrate with their families too! But as one attendee said, "...for all of that we wouldn't spend New Year's Eve anywhere else"! It's great family fun.

This year we had 26 venues with 36 stages. We accommodated 60 acts and more than 160 performances. There was something for everyone. The weather was perfect - cool and dry. Many folks found it easier to walk between venues than take the free shuttle buses because the traffic was so heavy!

And what about those fireworks?
We have a 20-minute display in ten minutes! We learned that pauses in fireworks are OK on the 4th of July but when it's midnight on New Year's Eve, we want lots of boom and color in a condensed period of time!

It's a ten minute finale!



"The new, one-mile-at-twilight race up King Street is an unbelievably exciting way to kick off First Night!"

Mary Anne Martins, Virginia Commerce Bank

The success of First Night Alexandria, in fact the event itself, would not be possible without the support of more than 150 volunteers on December 31. These volunteers sell admission badges at all venues and provide information to attendees, nearly half of whom traditionally come from outside Alexandria. For their efforts, they receive free admission, a box dinner and a souvenir apron – all of which were made possible because of the sponsorship of the Alexandria Hotel Association, Burke & Herbert Bank & Trust Company and McLaughlin Ryder Investments.

We can never adequately thank the army of supporters First Night Alexandria enjoys. First Night Alexandria is a private, non-profit organization that has an independent board of directors. The City of Alexandria, through various grants, provides approximately one-third of the approximately \$200,000 budget to produce the event. The generosity of businesses and individuals provides the second third. The final third of the budget comes from the sale of admission badges, the price of which is purposely kept low to make it an affordable way for families to spend New Year's Eve together. Imagine, also performances for just \$5! Children 12 and under have been and continue to be free when accompanied by a paying adult. For the past several years, we have also offered free admission to active military personnel. Please take note of our sponsors listed in this report, we couldn't do this without them!

First Night Alexandria was cancelled on December 31, 2000. These are the individuals and businesses that made sure we had an event in 2001 and have supported us every year since. THANK YOU!

The Honorable Bill Euille, Mayor, Alexandria
Alexandria Chamber of Commerce
Alexandria Commission for the Arts
Alexandria Convention and Visitors Association
Alexandria Gazette
Brecher Design Group
City of Alexandria

Colonial Parking
DASH (Alexandria Transit)
Embassy Suites Hotel
David and Martha Martin
Meetings and Events of Distinction
Old Town Business and Professional Association (formerly KSMET)

Volunteer Sponsors

Alexandria Hotel Association
 Burke & Herbert Bank & Trust Company
 McLaughlin Ryder Investments

Transportation Sponsor

Alexandria Buick, Pontiac, GMC, Saturn

Race Sponsors

Pacers Running Store
 Virginia Paving
 Fitness Together
 Nike

Web Site Sponsor

New Target

For the fifth year, a dedicated group of teens from Alexandria and Fairfax sponsored by DeVry University and Mayor Bill Euille, planned and executed their own venue at the Durant Memorial Center on Cameron Street. It was a dance party this year, complete with a DJ and music videos. Chris G, a hip hop dancer from T.C. Williams High School, performed.

Teen Venue Sponsors

DeVry University
 The Honorable Bill Euille Mayor, Alexandria



Loyal Supporters

Aintry, LLC
 Alexandria Guide Magazine
 Armed Forces Benefit Association
 BB&T
 Club Managers Association of America
 Comcast
 EYA, LLC
 Lorena Granados
 Deer Park Water
 Digital City Kiosks
 Dominion
 Extra Space Storage
 Focus Data Solutions
 Generations Dance Studio
 Gratitude Enterprises
 Hard Times Café
 Krekeler Brower Wealth Advisors
 LCOR
 Mount Vernon Voice
 Renner and Company CPA
 Sun Newspapers
 Tugboat Public Relations
 Virginia Lottery
 Jennifer Walker Realtor,
 McEneaney Associates, Inc.
 Dolly Riegert Woodruff Team
 at Prudential Carruthers Realtors
 WIZW
 WTOP

Friends of First Night

Bugsy's Pizza
 Clarke & Sampson
 Forum One Communications
 Generous George's Positive Pizza
 IDI Companies
 Joe Theismann's Restaurant
 Larson/Koenig Architects
 Old Dominion Boat Club
 Rotary Club of Alexandria



Public Safety personnel from the Alexandria Police, Sheriff, and Fire departments are partners with First Night Alexandria. They keep us safe on December 31 and every other day of the year. Thank You!

Along with these community-minded organizations, the following Alexandria businesses, non-profit organizations and churches opened their doors for this successful community celebration. We thank them and hope you will be back to visit them throughout the year.

Alexandria Red Cross
 Alexandria's Union Station
 Alleyne AME Zion Church
 Athenaeum
 Atrium Building
 Baptist Temple Church
 Campagna Center
 Del Ray Artisans
 Del Ray United Methodist Church
 Durant Memorial Center
 Elizabeth Stone Gallery
 Embassy Suites Hotel
 Imagine Artwear
 Jefferson-Houston School
 Little Theatre
 Lyceum
 George Washington Masonic Memorial
 Mt. Vernon Recreation Center

Nickells & Scheffler
 Old Presbyterian Meeting House
 PTO Atrium
 St. Elmo's Coffee Pub
 Society for Human Resource Management
 Torpedo Factory
 Washington Street United Methodist Church
 Uptowner Cafe



"First Night Alexandria is the premier family event that brings the City of Alexandria together at the end of the year. For me to be part of it reinforces my love of being an Alexandrian."

Michael Geissinger, Alexandria Guide Magazine.

Facts and figures that make a difference to all of our wonderful sponsors:

50% of attendees come from outside Alexandria. Many of them from Arlington and Fairfax Counties.

Hotels in Old Town love First Night; many offer special packages including admission badges.

95% of the attendees rated their experience as wonderful, fun or entertaining.

Average expenditure of attendees over and above the price of their badge was \$47.

Approximate return to Alexandria exceeded half a million dollars.

Many restaurants were specifically mentioned on surveys as destinations for dinner on December 31.

Cash outlay is approximately 210,000. Once you include all of the pro-bono support provided, the total cost of producing this event exceeds \$500,000!

First Night Alexandria's largest single expense continues to be great entertainment!

The sale of admission badges covers only one-third of the operating costs of First Night Alexandria.

87% of respondents said they would not have come to Alexandria on New Year's Eve if there were not a First Night!



"We had a visitor from Japan, and First Night was an outstanding venue for her to experience a variety of music (which was excellent!) and other fun as well as the beauty of Old Town."

"Friendly, cheerful badge-sellers at the venues we visited were all knowledgeable, enthusiastic, and kind; they were the friendly face of Alexandria! My thanks to them for making us feel welcome."

"Appreciated the variety."

"Everything was very well organized and first-rate. The best New Year's Eve we've ever had!!"

"It was a wonderful evening. The selection was good. The shuttle went smoothly. Pickup for badge worked well."

"Very good variety, excellent entertainment, a very good value."

"We loved it - you did a great job!"

"Not enough time to see everything I wanted to see!"

"Kids activities were great. My son really enjoyed the model boat that we made and sailed at Jefferson Houston School."

"Really enjoyed the music and dancing at Torpedo Art Factory..."

"Thanks for organizing the night!!!"



"Our office loves supporting FIRST NIGHT - it gets everyone involved in the Alexandria community and the badges are a great way to thank clients and staff."

Laura Machanic, New Target, Inc.

First Night by the numbers

Attendance
15,000

Rode the bus
to venues
57%

Stages
36

Found out
about First
Night Alexandria
through the
internet
31%

Venues
26

31%

Performing acts
60

Previous
attendees, lived
in Alexandria
or were told by
a friend or
relative about it
42%

Total performances
160

42%

Where did they
come from?

Alexandria - **50%**
Va, MD, DC - **40%**
Other - **10%**

Read about it
in the newspaper
28%

Attendees
came by car
75%

Heard about it
on the radio.
1%

First Night Alexandria will always face challenges. How do we continue the terrific success we have experienced in recent years? The weather, as we learned in 2006, is a key element, although it is not, contrary to some suggestions, under our control or that of the City! What we can influence is the future of this vital community event.

The number of attendees coupled with the growing number of returnees requires First Night Alexandria to continue its evolution. The ongoing success of First Night Alexandria will require the effort of more than a few dedicated volunteers and businesses supported by a dynamic Board of Directors and the best City partnership anywhere! To remain a true community event, support must expand to meet the demand. More support must come from other communities - the same communities where attendees come from.

Income:

Grants	\$63,000
Individual Contributions	\$9,400
Corporate Sponsors	\$50,000
Badge Sales	\$92,000
Miscellaneous	\$2,000

Expenses:

City Services	\$28,000
Marketing	\$30,000
Entertainment	\$58,000
Management	\$45,000
Fees, Insurance, Supplies	\$52,000

Net **\$3,400**

ROI to Alexandria App. \$500,000

Fundraising for 2008 begins NOW!



"Loved every minute...walked from Potomac River to Masonic Temple...saw 5 great performances... for \$10.00 healthy walk, happy people, family atmosphere!"

"The entire First Night was OUTSTANDING. JOB WELL DONE!!"

"Thanks for making First Night Alexandria a happy memorable experience!"

"The entertainment was great and well worth the money. I think it's a great family entertainment value."

"Fun family event. Liked the race too!"



"I love being a part of First Night Alexandria because it is, without a doubt, the very best New Year's Eve celebration in the greater Washington, DC area every year."

Monica Bell, Gratitude Enterprises

"I am pleased to be a part of First Night Alexandria because I believe in the organization and its mission in providing a world-class, top-notch New Year's Eve event, like no other!"

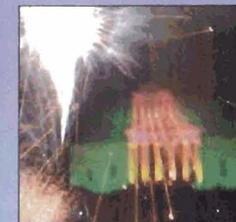
Veronica Santos, Comcast

Since 2002, **New Target** (www.newtarget.com) has been our web partner creating an inviting and user-friendly site. Each year we experience more visitors who spend more time on our site, purchasing admission badges, listening to samples of the performers and planning their routes for December 31. The graphic design of the site comes from **Brecher Design Group**.

In 2007, **New Target** completely rebuilt the site to make it more user-friendly – and admission badge sales doubled over 2006! The site is more fun and easier to update more frequently. Sponsors are acknowledged in rotation on every page and listed on the sponsor page.

More than 60,000 visits were recorded to the First Night Alexandria home page in December 2007 alone. An average of five pages were viewed during each visit and visitors spent more than four minutes per session!

"I liked being able to listen to bands on the web ahead of the actual event."



First Night Alexandria has a very hard-working, dedicated Board of Directors. Each member of the Board graciously gave of his or her time, pro bono assistance and/or financial support. We are indebted to each of them for their time and energy.

Honorary Chair, Mayor William D. Euille

2007 Board of Directors

Officers

Michael Geissinger, President
 Alexandria Guide Magazine
 Mary Anne Martins, Secretary/Treasurer
 Virginia Commerce Bank
 Charlotte Hall, President-elect
 Potomac Riverboat Company
 John J. Renner, Jr., Renner and Company, CPA
 Past President

Directors

Monica Bell, Gratitude Enterprises
 Kerry Donley, T.C. Williams High School
 Daniel Fannon, Fannon Printing
 Laura Machanic, New Target
 Sean McEneaney, McEneaney Associates Realtors
 Page Moon, Focus Data Solutions
 Fred Parker, Hard Times Café
 Veronica Santos, Comcast
 Chris Wolz, Forum One Communications
 Dolly Riegert Woodruff, Prudential Carruthers Realtors

Staff

Ann M. Dorman, CMP, Executive Director
 Richard F. Dorman, CAE, Executive Vice President
 John Irvine, MPA, Media & Marketing
 Ginny Kelly, Volunteers
 Lauren Smith, Special Assistant

For five years a dedicated group of teens has served on a special task force to plan and execute a talent competition and a venue for teens. This year's task force members are:

Lorena Granados, Chair
 Kirsten Banks
 Mayron Gezaw
 Chris Green
 Samalia Yabarow



Design: Brecher Design Group, Inc.
 Photography: Michael Geissinger
 Alexandria Guide Magazine
 Website: New Target

Friendly crowds, people of all ages - from kids to their grandparents, enjoying rockabilly dancing, cool jazz, and elegant chamber music. It's our family's favorite night on the town!"

Chris Wolz, Forum One Communications



"As the Mayor of Alexandria and a sponsor of First Night Alexandria, I am proud to be associated with this affordable, family-friendly, alcohol-free New Year's Eve celebration. It is the perfect ending for all of the holiday festivities that take place in this great City, from the holiday tree lighting the evening after Thanksgiving to all the Campagna Center events the first weekend in December right through to December 31. We hope you will join us this year when the City of Alexandria becomes a stage!"

Honorable William D. Euille, Mayor, City of Alexandria



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2007 Annual Report

