



THE VHA FACTS – A REFERENCE GUIDE

For VHA Officers and Neighborhood Representatives

PURPOSE:

The intent of this document is to provide the VHA Officers and Neighborhood Representatives a sample “elevator speech” when meeting Villages residents and neighbors as well as a basis of VHA information and accomplishments.

FAQ:

Q. The VHA is often asked this question, “How is the VHA different from the POA?”

A. Rather than compare The Villages Homeowners Advocates with another organization we want to tell you who we are.

VHA VISION

Keeping the Dream Alive

VHA MISSION

The Villages Homeowners Advocates (VHA) is a lifestyle organization whose members are committed to championing the needs of Villagers through:

- Positive, constructive dialogue
- Problem solving
- Education
- Philanthropic efforts

VHA VALUES

The VHA is committed to excellence and driven by the following values:

- Honesty
- Integrity
- Accountability
- Independence

VHA FACTS

PURPOSE: This section is offered to provide more detailed VHA information for promoting the VHA. It includes the history, programs and accomplishments. The complete history of the VHA is posted on the website www.thevha.net

The VHA

The VHA was founded by residents for the residents in 1991. The VHA has access to the decision makers of the community and has earned collaborative trusted relationships with them. We call them our “Circle of Partners” and includes representatives from the Developer, District and local governments, law enforcement, the Health Care Community and Public Safety. Together we resolve issues to maintain aesthetic and safe surroundings and make improvements. We are a totally independent volunteer non-profit 501(c)(3) organization governed by Bylaws, led by elected Officers, a Board of Directors, some 100 Neighborhood Representatives and over 16,000 members.

The VHA funds beneficial programs and activities beneficial to members and Villages residents primarily through membership dues, fundraisers and donations.

Membership is \$25 per household for 2 years or \$100 for lifetime membership. Membership can be paid online at www.thevha.net with a credit card, cash or by check made out to The VHA and sent to the VHA Office 1104 Main Street, The Villages, FL 32159 (Spanish Springs).

VHA SPONSORED PROGRAMS

- **VHA Golf Cart Safety Clinic** – Golf Cart Safety Clinic educates residents each month with the Golf Cart Safety Video produced as a public service for residents in conjunction with representatives from Villages insurance and law enforcement. It is held the 3rd Wednesday of every month beginning at 9:00 AM at Colony Cottage Recreation Center. Golf Cart Safety Instructors are also available to bring the programs to Villages groups. The VHA worked with District Government and Villages Insurance for the creation of the Golf Cart Safety Brochure.
- **VHA Helping Hands (HH)** – A separate arm of the VHA, HH loans durable medical equipment (e.g. wheelchairs, walkers, crutches) free of charge to thousands of Villages residents a year. Call 352-973-2284 and a coordinator will contact you within 24 hours.
- **VHA New Residents Night** - This monthly meeting provides over 150 new and existing homeowners the opportunity to get valuable information from some 15+ community agencies to facilitate a smooth transition into The Villages. It is held the 2nd Tuesday of every month at varying Recreation Centers. Doors open at 6:30 PM with the program beginning at 7:00 PM.
- **The VHA Foundation** reviews requests for cash grants and then donates to groups and services supporting Villages residents and non-profit groups who meet grant requirements of providing support to aging residents and others in need of help.

- **Merchants to Members Program** – This program provides members with substantial discounts at many commercial establishments in and around The Villages.
- **The VHA Voice, Website, Facebook Page** VHA Voice is published on the 1st Thursday of the month in The Villages Daily Sun Newspaper as the last page of Local News Section C. Our VHA Website www.thevha.net promotes all available VHA information and activities. Some website articles may be opened to Members-only. VHA Facebook posts VHA events directing visitors to login to the VHA website.
- **Educational Programs** – General Meetings and Area Vice Presidents’ programs feature prominent speakers and are open to either Members-only or to all Villages residents. Program speakers may include District Administrator, Representatives from District Departments such as Finance, Community Standards / Compliance, Representatives from Law Enforcement, Health Services and Community Watch.
- **Developer’s State of The Villages Annual Meeting** – This Members-only meeting provides the Developer the opportunity to update the VHA ahead of the Villages residents with highlights of accomplishments over the past year and a window into what is coming in the future.
- **VHA Town Hall meetings** are held quarterly as VHA Leadership and Neighborhood Representatives meet with representatives from the Developer, District Government and Law Enforcement to answer questions posed by membership and residents to provide answers to questions and updates on new happenings.
- **VHA Social Events** – VHA Bingo is held every month of the year as a fundraiser with members receiving an extra board when presenting a current membership card at the door. An annual VHA Volunteer Appreciation Evening is held in December to thank all VHA volunteers for their efforts. Throughout the year other programs are presented such as: **Pop Culture Trivia Night** and **Golf Cart Poker Runs**.

KEY PROBLEM SOLVING and IMPROVEMENT ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Community Wide

- Initiated the recommendation and promoted the solution to have the Recreation Department create The Villages Enrichment Academy (TEA) to replace the discontinued Lifelong Learning Center.
- Partnered with T&D Family of Companies to collect both product and monetary donations through our VHA Community Foundation to benefit people affected by Hurricane Harvey. The VHA and VHA Community Foundation also made a combined direct cash donation of \$10,000.
- Funded (over \$50,000) the Emergency Weather Radio Transmitter for The Villages and surrounding areas to insure that residents are alerted in times of pending danger. This transmitter was installed in partnership with Sumter County and NOAA (National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration) to improve insufficient coverage during 2007 Tornado.

- Negotiated an agreement with Owens Corning and Villages Home Warranty for 2011 blistering shingle replacement including products and labor. Resulting benefit valued at over \$6 million to residents.
- Mediated an agreement for warranty extension on underground HVAC refrigerant lines and restitution for failures occurring prior to the warranty extension. Benefitted over a thousand homeowners saving them out of pocket costs in the hundreds of thousands dollars.
- Proposed and supported the creation of local governmental committee (known now as Project Wide Advisory Committee PWAC) to provide oversight and recommendations of maintenance of common areas south of CR466 to share costs and mitigate risk.
- The Villages Regional Hospital -- Championed write in campaign to gain State approval for its creation. Provided funding for furnishing the Chapel in the hospital. Currently provided \$25,000 pledge to the TVRH Auxiliary Foundation to use for improving equipment, offerings, and health care for our residents. Note: The Villages hospital is now "UF Health" affiliated with Shands Hospital in Gainesville, FL.
- Worked in partnership with the District Government, Developer and other parties to resolve access point issues to medical complex.
- Donated specialized golf carts for use by Public Safety Dept., Sumter County Sheriff and Town of Lady Lake Police Dept.
- Gifted AEDs (Automatic Electronic Defibrillators) for use in several recreation centers.
- Implemented the placing of location number signage in golf cart tunnels.
- Played an active role in the formation of a local CERT in The Villages. These Community Emergency Response Teams are trained to quickly respond as needed to natural and man-made disasters. New teams continue to be formed and trained as our community grows.
- Played an active role in convincing local governments of the need for our own EMS and Fire Service.
- After September 11, the VHA collected over \$240,000.00 for the community wide United We Stand campaign to aid victims of the terrorist attack.
- Responding to the need for assistance following Hurricane Katrina, the VHA raised \$190,000 to assist our "adopted" city of Ocean Springs, MS in rebuilding their city specifically their Seniors Center and Recreation facilities. Hurricane relief funds were also collected and donated to the American Red Cross, the Salvation Army, the SPCA and the United Way.
- **VHA Annual Hoedown** - The VHA held the first ever Hoedown event February 2017 at the Villages polo field. Over 4,500 people attended from The Villages and surrounding areas. The Hoedown is a celebration of Central Florida Heritage. Attendees supported the VHA Community Foundation, Helping Hands Program and The Villages Hospital Auxiliary.

Music, Kids Zone activities, a Cowboy Stew cook-off, plus many more booths and shows entertained residents

Area or Region Specific

- VHA Neighborhood Representatives spearheaded resident discussions and meetings with District 1 CDD Supervisors, who in turn lobbied the AAC for the Multi-Modal Path Reconstruction Project north of CR 466, including payment of the project with amenity funds.
- Resolution of Wales Plaza Road maintenance in original section of The Villages. No one had accepted responsibility for this short section of road. After much discussion and unyielding perseverance, the VHA fostered an agreement that Lady Lake will resurface and assume responsibility for ongoing maintenance with funding from Lake County.
- When concerns arose about polybutylene pipe that used in manufactured houses, the VHA assisted residents by securing an agreement with the DuPont Corporation for inspection and replacement of the pipes as needed.
- The VHA arranged the assistance of the State Attorney's office in successfully investigating and shutting down a driveway painting scam operation that was defrauding residents by collecting payment in advance and then disappearing.
- Worked with CDD Board of Supervisors to implement street crossing paths and additional signage for Village Entries.
- Hosted numerous informative presentations covering local social and resident orientation issues: CDD Government structures, Deed Compliance and the Architecture Review Committee (ARC) Process, How our CDD monies are spent, as well as services provided by our Fire and Community Watch Departments.
- Hosted several lifestyle education programs covering topics such as Active Shooter Awareness, Golf Cart Safety, and responding to heart cardiac emergencies using CPR and AED devices.
- Introduced our residents to local officials by hosting presentations from the cities of Fruitland Park and Wildwood.
- Initiate and assisted residents in the formation of numerous local village social clubs.

VHA ORGANIZATION / PROCESS / PARTNERSHIPS

VHA Regions: Because of the vast size and varying needs of The Villages residents, the VHA is organized into three Areas, each headed by an Area Vice-President. Each area is comprised of Regions corresponding to the local government Community Development Districts.

- North Area – North of CR 466 – Regions Lady Lake/Lake County, (CDDs) 1-4.
- Central Area – Area South of CR 466 and North of SR 44. Region (CDDs) 5-11.
- South Area – Area South of SR 44. Regions (CDDs) 12 - 14 and beyond.

Executive Board (EB): The President and the Executive Vice President are the elected VHA Officers. The Area Vice Presidents North, Central, and Far South, and the Secretary and Treasurer are appointed. The EB manages operations of the VHA.

The Board of Directors (BOD) is the principal VHA governing body that operates in accordance with the Bylaws and the powers derived from the Bylaws as delineated in the Policies and Procedures Manual. The Board is composed of a minimum of nine (9) Board members including the VHA President, Treasurer and Immediate Past President. The BOD establishes policy, oversees the performance of the VHA in accordance with the Bylaws and may act as consultants for VHA programs and committees.

The Advisory Board (AB) includes Directors, Program Coordinators and Committee Chairs meeting monthly to provide reports and discuss operations.

Area Vice Presidents work with their area **Neighborhood Representatives (NR)** as ambassadors between the VHA and their neighborhood constituents. They are “the eyes and ears” of the VHA

VHA “Circle of Partners” include: Representatives from the Developer, District and local governments, law enforcement, health care and public safety involved with the residents of The Villages, FL working together with positive, constructive dialogue.

SUGGESTED “ELEVATOR SPEECHES”

PURPOSE: This section is offered as a guide when preparing to promote the VHA answering the question “Why Join the VHA?”

The following “elevator Speeches are provided to give you some thoughts as you interact with others and the discussion of “Why Join the VHA” or What is the VHA” arises. Hopefully some of the information provided here may be of some help to you as you engage in conversation.

Elevator Speech #1 – Bullet oriented comments -gives you more of background data to formulate your discussion with residents

- The Villages Homeowners Advocates as the largest lifestyle group is 501(c)(3) non-profit organization.
- Rather than compare the VHA with other organizations we explain who we are
- Following our Mission for positive constructive dialogue – the VHA meets with representatives from Developer, District, Law, local governments to learn answers and solve problems
- Educate residents through monthly New Resident Night and Golf Cart Safety Clinic and other programs throughout the year.
- Philanthropic efforts through Foundation Committee reviewing grant requests to provide donation and VHA Helping Hands lending durable medical equipment to residents.
- Members have access to information VHA website, discounts through Merchants to Members, entrance to Members-only programs and perks at Bingo.
- Membership for the household is one payment of \$25 for two years or \$100 lifetime.
- VHA accomplishments include (list several as time permits) i.e. Initiating the recommendation to establish TEA – The Enrichment Academy; recommending signage at golf cart tunnels.

Elevator Speech #2 – More narrative than bullet formatted document – again meant to provide you with factual data and background of our philosophy. You tailor to your needs/preference

Residents often ask our team members to provide a brief introduction of who the Villages Homeowners Advocates (VHA) are and what exactly they can accomplish. Residents often will request a comparison our organization with other lifestyle groups. For this brief introduction we will only discuss the first question, who we are and what we can accomplish.

The Villages Homeowners Advocates (VHA) is the largest and most respected Resident advocacy group in the Villages. We ask questions. Our Circle of Partners include district, county, state and federal government representatives and all agencies within their control plus importantly, a developer representative. Our quarterly Town Hall Meetings provide the forum. Residents ask the questions; we assemble representatives from our Partners and get the answers. Contacting a Neighborhood Representative or any other leadership team member can start the process of solving problems.

On a monthly basis we provide two programs opened to all residents and their guests. One is New Residents Night which is a forum designed to provide the first line of information for new residents. We have assembled fifteen agencies to provide an overview of services they provide. Our teams provide informational programs targeted to the interests of different areas of the community. Also, we provide a monthly golf cart safety course at no charge.

We believe education is one of the most important aspect of our organization. We believe it is necessary to understand how the community operates. With these educational programs, our vision of "Keeping the Dream Alive" is reality.

Our accomplishments are numerous and well known

*VHA Helping Hands loaning Durable Medical Equipment

*Leading the effort to create the Enrichment Academy after the closing of The School of Lifelong Learning

*Roof replacements after faulty roofing materials discovered

*Tens of thousands of dollars donated through our philanthropic efforts

*Hundreds of other problems solved on a yearly basis

We hold a 501C3 Internal Revenue status as a non-profit organization. We can and will accept tax deductible donations. This status prohibits us from participating in political party activities. The VHA does not engage in any type of candidate/political party activities or endorsements. Our focus is on providing accurate and complete information on topics of interest to our members and the community at large.

Our mission is positive, constructive dialogue, problem solving, education and philanthropic efforts.

Elevator Speech #3 – A different narrative with shorter discussion and less historical information

The Villages Homeowners Advocates (VHA) is the largest and most respected Resident advocacy group in the Villages and we invite you to join and help us be your voice. We are not a traditional HOA (homeowners association) that some of you may be familiar with. We are an all-Volunteer non-profit organization. We are dedicated to preserving our Lifestyle, maintaining the property value of our homes, and “Keeping The Dream Alive”. Our 15,000+ members gives us standing in our discussions with our Partners and the larger our membership, the louder our voice becomes when we speak.

We believe that by regularly meeting and working with our Partners which includes: The Developer; the District Government; Local Law Enforcement; the UF Hospital System; County and Local Government Leaders; and many other local partners that we can work together to help provide solutions to most, if not all, problems.

Governance in The Villages is unique and can be difficult to understand at first. It is much different than many other parts of the country and can take some time to become knowledgeable about. We'd suggest you consider attending the New Resident Orientation program offered by the District government. This is offered twice a month and is approximately 2 hours in length. A more robust orientation program is also offered by the District Government and is known as the Resident Academy. Both programs are free of charge and can really help a new resident better understand the how the Community Development District form of government operates and how it impacts on you as a resident of The Villages.