



Friends House Letter

*Friends House
Seniors Association*

June 2026

Change is a part of all our lives. Residents share their experiences with change.

Spring Change

by Jim Hersey

I grew up in Maine with cool summers, fall colors, snowy winters and then—mud season. When I moved here, I'd wilt in summers, shiver in drizzly winters, but—spring.

Change!

Not just the showy cherry trees, but in our Friends House woods, a whole season in just weeks of spring ephemerals—small flowers on the forest floor that compress their lives into the brief time before the trees above leaf out and shade them from the sun. I'm never sure when the circle round will begin, but every year the cycle is the same. A season to live before tall oaks shade out.



To start early, skunk cabbage uncurls as deep roots make heat to melt the snow.

Then, soaking up morning sun on the East facing hill, bright bloodroot cantilevers out beside the trail. Its name comes from its ruddy root sap once used by native peoples to make dye.



Soon, spring beauties paint pink swarths that blanket the brown leaved floor.



Next, sharp pointed stars against the curving leaves of rue anemone.

Now, the trout lilies —deep green dappled leaves, like spots on a new born fawn, thrust Dutch yellow hats, and grow sugar-coated seeds to induce the ants to carry to their nests and bury in the ground.



At last, beside the trail, all green, the elf cowled Jack-in-the-Pulpits entrance me with their goblet shape and fairy hood designed to push down the gnats again to double pollen drench before they fly.

Photos by Jim Hersey

It's done so soon spring's flower year, perhaps like our own lives to oaks must seem. I walk more slowly now with sticks to favor a bum knee. Still, I revel in the turning year, and the surprise of each spring's flowers. I find sweet comfort in the round.



Song of Change

by Patricia Mahone

Brisk cold winds blow. Kites fly overhead in a joyful dance.

Wake up! Wake up!

Look around. Listen. Smell the fresh scents. Feel the sun on your face.

The rebirth has begun.

Birds sing. Flowers unfurl their petals.

The warmth of the sun—So long hidden—has melted the ice and the brooks bubble and babble.

The water flows unhindered now over rocks and boulders.

The streams come to life sharing their joy.

The bubble and babble invites us to the peace and quiet of nature awakening.

Come, take in the joyful song.

It Was Time for a Change

by Joe Rainey

I was walking down the long 8th floor corridor from the elevator to the condo unit I had called home for 25 years. It was April of 2025. The hallway was a neutral color, nothing but numbers distinguishing one door from another. “I am alone and surrounded by strangers!” I thought. I realized I really knew almost no one in my building, and no one really knew me very well. I entered my condo, a familiar place, filled with too many things and not enough light. Outside was congestion, concrete and cars.

Suddenly, a knowledge that had been brewing just below conscious awareness came into perfectly clear focus. “I don’t want to spend the rest of my life here! I am ready for, hungry for, major changes in my life.” This was the push that broke my inertia. It was time to let go and make space for a fresh vision.

Perhaps you have had moments like this, when you knew it was time to leave the familiar behind, and change was in the air? Such transitional moments may stir many emotions. For me, there was excitement and grief, curiosity and optimism, anxiety and great relief.

Now came the next big question. If not this, then what? If not here, then where? I knew that I was attracted to the idea of community, though I had little real sense of what life lived in a community of meaning and caring might really be like. I knew that I wanted to be much more present to the natural world. I knew that I wanted more simplicity and serenity. And I knew that it was time to act. A dear friend told me about Friends House. Doors began to open, sometimes literally. To my amazement, within a few weeks my friend and I were shown an available unit that was beautiful, full of light and a great fit for my needs. I signed the contract and set the moving day for July 2025. I wanted to bring with me only things that I loved or actually needed, so I left behind more than half of my condo’s contents, feeling no regrets, only great relief.

I underestimated the extent of change that awaited me. The reality of life in community, the proximity to nature and the opportunity to try new experiences went far beyond anything I had imagined. I discovered that I could make new friends far more easily than I had thought possible. I started more new friendships in my first month at Friends House than I had in the previous 25 years. The welcoming kindness and shared values have been profoundly life changing.

I am home, and I am very grateful.

Looking Back

by Hugh Corbin

When Maris and I came to Friends House in 2009 from our first retirement in Barbados we were very pleased to end up in a cottage on FH Road. We were on the fringe of the outlier homes that looked onto a huge empty meadow and the pond. At that time there were the cottages and B, C, New C, D and E apartment Wings. There was a general Resident Association meeting. The cottages and wings also met separately once a month.

Every other month the cottagers would be divided into 6 or 7 small groups that visited in the homes of chosen hosts who provided snacks and drinks. The other monthly gathering was in the Miller Center again hosted by cottage volunteers. Each wing had similar arrangements.

We did not have quite as many activities as now but it was much easier to get to know everyone in our community of 100 souls. The Commons was always filled with people as the library, elephant shop, country store and art room were all a short walking distance from each other.

The space also housed the mail boxes next to a two paneled exhibit wall which was regularly dressed with seasonal greetings and all kinds of art and crafts from embroidery and table mats to cartoons and paintings. There was also a photographer's showcase and the Wellspring Mini-gallery in Flower Alley.

Residents made our own coffee in big pots in a corner of the Dining Room that came to be called the "Kaffee Klatch." All day people would gather at the large round table and sit and talk. And every month the Dining Room would be decorated with signs and posters, with window, ceiling and wall displays of seasonal celebrations including Chinese New Year, Mardi Gras, Halloween et. al. Things for constant conversation.

Yes, so many good things have changed. But I wonder if fifteen years from now someone else will be looking back and writing about how Friends House has changed.



Changing My Mind

by Libby Schleichert

Recent research says that our human minds tend to stay stuck in fight-or-flight mode. Addicted to self-blame, distress, and fear, we unconsciously cling to our negative storylines.

Author Pam Grout offers a way out of this conundrum. She invites us to view life without these limiting thoughts—and with love and gratitude instead. Doing so regularly sends innumerable blessings out into the world. I've been deliberately attempting this task. I take time to write out affirmations and to note all I appreciate in my life. So far, so good. (No Power Ball or lottery winnings yet.)

Pam also affirms that we humans are Light-filled, Holy, Divine Beings. She says we are here solely to be joyful. How to get to joy? Try taking in the wonder and magic that we ourselves are and that the Universe presents to us every day: That beautiful sunset, those cardinals at our feeder, the monarch butterflies and hummingbirds returning to our garden! Gratitude, awe, wonder—these can lead us to the happiness we seek and to untold delights as we share it.

As poet Mary Oliver wrote, "You do not have to be good. You do not have to walk on your knees for a hundred miles through the desert repenting. You only have to allow the world to offer itself to your imagination"

Change

by Diane M. Copley

Change happens to us all. We change from childhood to adulthood. Many of us change from singlehood to being married. Sometimes marriages end in divorce or the loss of a partner through illness, causing some to change partners. We change jobs, change buses to get to school or work, change countries sometimes for more exciting jobs or just to experience different cultures.

Cultural changes have changed the way we live. Some adapt well to change while others may find it hard or resist.

We can change our mind, change a dressing, give change.

What we cannot do is avoid change in its many forms. Change is inevitable.

What one hopes is that, in spite of the different changes throughout our lives, we have learned to adjust, take them in stride and hope we have become a better person because of them and reach out with kindness to some who may be struggling with change.

Are you ready to vote?

by Martha Hale



Do you remember when your father took you to the polling place to show you how he voted? Do you remember when another relative told you not to bother voting? Do you remember the pride you felt when you voted for the first time? How many of us have had the chaos of mixed up ballots? **WE ALL HAVE** this year.

You will be getting a postcard telling us:

TO VOTE AGAIN on the new ballot you will get. SO... It's time to vote again.

And here are three ways to do so IF you are registered to vote in Maryland. (If you want help in registering, or with other questions come to the Bistro from 11:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. or look at the big poster in the Bistro.)

~ 4 ~ Friends House Letter, June 2026

3 WAYS to Vote

1. VOTE in-person EARLY

7am-8pm **June 11 through June 18**
AT THE SANDY SPRING FIRE STATION

OR

2. VOTE In person Tuesday June 23
FOR THE PRIMARY ELECTION go to
SHERWOOD HIGH SCHOOL

(The full election will be on November 3)

OR #3

3. Mail-in ballot can begin when you get your ballot. Fill it in and return it **by JUNE 23 by putting it in a Dropbox outside the Sandy Spring Fire Station.**

It must be mailed in by June 23.

Don't forget how important it is to vote for your choices!

Buckeye by Patrick Ryan

Book Review by Kerry Stoltzfus

Patrick Ryan's novel is set in small town Ohio in the years between WWII and Vietnam. Readers at Friends House may identify with their parents and their own growing up years as I did. An incident early on propels the novel and the interactions of the characters. On a day in May 1945 Margaret comes into Cal's hardware store asking if they have a radio.

"None for sale," he says but we have one in the office downstairs and she proceeds to descend the steps. Cal follows and tunes in the radio as President Truman announces that the war in Europe is over. Margaret took Cal by the shoulders and kissed him.

The author then fills in the story of the main characters, Cal and his wife Becky, Margaret and her husband Felix. The author explores how the choices we make in our early years sometimes fashion lives of regret and a longing for forgiveness. Their stories bring nuance to how their lives are shaped and unfold over the sweep of the novel. They are of course flawed yet the reader will really care for them. I kept hoping all the best for each one.

