



HURAnews

HARVARD UNIVERSITY RETIREES ASSOCIATION

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HURA Board Applauds President Garber's Letter

Last May, HURA President John Collins emailed the following message to President Alan Garber and Provost John Manning:

“The Harvard University Retirees Association Board of Directors applauds President Garber’s letter of April 21st ‘Upholding Our Values, Defending Our University,’ including the statement, ‘We stand for the truth that colleges and universities across the country can embrace and honor their legal obligations and best fulfill their essential role in society without improper government intrusion.’”

This letter included a preamble from Collins explaining why the HURA Board of Directors felt compelled to communicate with Garber.

“The Directors of the Harvard University Retirees Association are issuing this statement. While we are not speaking for the entire Association, we feel honor bound to show our support for you and for Harvard in these difficult times. We are proud



PHOTO BY JARED LEEDS / HARVARD UNIVERSITY

Harvard University President Alan Garber

President Garber responded to the letter:

“Dear John,
So many thanks to you and the members of the Board for your meaningful statement. More challenges ahead, but your encouragement is truly fortifying.
Best, Alan”

to be Harvard retirees, and we maintain our commitment to the University under your extraordinary leadership.”

In late April, Garber sent a letter to the Harvard Community addressing the “sweeping and intrusive” actions being proposed by the federal government, and the accusations being levied against the University by the government. Pointing out that the proposed actions by the federal government would be “severe and long-lasting” for the University, Garber explained the University’s plan for defending itself against these actions and accusations. The letter “Upholding Our Values, Defending Our University” can be read in full online.

<https://tinyurl.com/4zbrztzv>

The *Crimson* later reported that Garber said, “The University is seriously considering resolving its dispute with the White House through the courts rather than a negotiated settlement.”

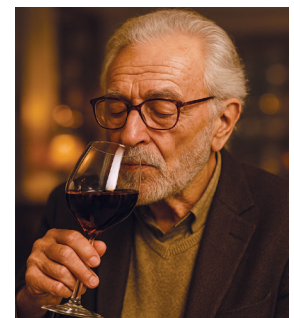
AGING AND ALCOHOL CONSUMPTION

Professionals at the National Institute on Aging have expressed growing concern about the effects of drinking among the older population.

Many people enjoy an alcoholic beverage or two on occasion with friends or

family, but alcohol can be addictive. As we age, alcohol consumption can also make existing health problems worse and have dangerous interactions with some medications.

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HURA PRESIDENT

John Collins
508-243-2184
hurapresident37@gmail.com

HURA MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY

Coral Sullivan
huramembership@gmail.com

HURA NEWS & E-LIST

Managing Editor
Malcolm Hamilton
781-641-2942
MCH12938@comcast.net

Editor: Ann Flentje
Editor: Ann Marie Menting
Editor: Ann Walter
Design/Production: Anne Parker
Printing/Mailing: Ken Toy

HURA WEBSITE

<https://HURA.Harvard.edu>

HURA FACEBOOK PAGE

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COMING EVENTS

Registration information is sent to HURA E-list subscribers a few weeks prior to the events. Email your questions to steveodonnell44@gmail.com. If you do not have email, call Steve O'Donnell at 617-686-9038.

**Wednesday, October 8, 2025,
1:00 p.m.**

Creation, Evolution, Preservation

This small group tour will focus on the architectural development of Beacon Hill. Using the Nichols House Museum on Mount Vernon Street as a primary example of a federal style building, we will discuss architectural and stylistic changes that have occurred over the past 200 years.



PHOTO BY JOHN PHELAN / WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

**Wednesday, October 22, 2025,
3:00-5:00 p.m.**

HURA Fall Reception

Reading Room, Harvard Faculty Club

Join your friends and colleagues for a relaxed gathering featuring hors d'oeuvres, sweets, and beverages. Catch up on the news and hear about HURA programs and events for the upcoming year.

**Saturday, November 1, 2025,
3:00 p.m.**

Football: Harvard Crimson vs.

Dartmouth Big Green

Including Fall Fest for young and old alike.

1:00-3:00 p.m.:

- Live Music
- Food Trucks
- Raffles & Giveaways
- Inflatables & Yard Games



PHOTO BY JOHN CHASE / HARVARD UNIVERSITY

**Thursday, November 13, 2025,
Time to be announced**

Paul Revere House

This guided tour will explore downtown Boston's oldest building (1680), one of the few remaining 17th century dwellings in urban America. After a short North End walking tour, lunch will be on your own. A list of nearby restaurants will be provided.



COURTESY ARCHERHOTEL.COM

**Friday, December 5, 2025,
11:30 a.m.-2:00 p.m.**

Holiday Luncheon at David Rubenstein Treehouse Conference Center,

20 Western Ave., Allston, Mass.

The Oakley Country Club is unfortunately unavailable, but we're excited to invite members to Harvard's new facility, called by developers "the front door of the Enterprise Research Campus at Harvard University."

Registration details will be found in the Nov/Jan. issue of *HURA News* and by email closer to the date.



[HTTPS://RUBENSTEINTREEHOUSE.HARVARD.EDU/](https://rubensteintreehouse.harvard.edu/)

**Wednesday, June 10, 2026,
11:30 a.m.-2:00 p.m.**

HURA Annual Meeting, Loeb House

(1912), which served as the residence of Harvard presidents until 1971. Since then, it has housed the offices of Harvard's Governing Boards.

President's Report

Our Bylaws, which were recently updated and approved by the membership, say that the president will deliver an annual report on the state of the Association. So, let me say that 2024-2025 was a banner year for HURA. We offered 21 programs—50 percent more than ever before. They included lectures, book talks, historic house tours, holiday gatherings, sporting events, visits to museums and other cultural institutions, and more. Over 900 members and guests registered for at least one HURA program this year, an all-time high.

HURA worked with Harvard Human Resources and the IT department to migrate our website to a new University-supported platform. The result is an updated and invigorated site. It is still being developed; we are adding new features and have



plans for more. Websites are always dynamic works in progress.

We also revitalized HURA's Facebook page, where we will feature photo-

graphs and information about events and provide other material relevant to members' interests. HURA member Linda Collins has taken on this task.

We adopted an online program called Eventbrite to manage event registration and payments. No longer do you have to fill out paper forms and mail in checks—unless you want to. Nor will our treasurer have to deposit hundreds of checks each year. We can all thank HURA Vice

President Steve O'Donnell for this wonderful achievement. It is truly a game changer for us and for you.

Finally, also on the technology front, in collaboration with the Harvard Federal Credit Union, we adopted an online system called Clover for membership renewals and dues payments. Renewals are nearly complete for this year, and we've heard nothing but praise for how easy and efficient the new system is. Membership Secretary Coral Sullivan and Treasurer Vicki Johnson are to be thanked for this long-awaited accomplishment!

The state of the Harvard University Retirees Association is strong, made so by our active and engaged members who, combined, represent a total of 31,661 years of service working at Harvard.

John Collins, HURA President

Treasurer and Membership Reports

Treasurer's report

At the Annual Meeting in Loeb House on June 11, 2025, HURA Treasurer Victoria Johnson gave a brief report on the Association's financial health.

I'm thankful to say that despite these challenging times, HURA is in good financial condition. Our reserves are healthy, and we continue to offer subsidized events to the HURA community.

We have many to thank for our financial health. We appreciate both new members and continuing members for providing us with an important revenue source: membership dues. We are also very grateful to the University for its generous financial support. Event fees from

members also help to defray a portion of event costs.

In terms of expenditures, I expect our spending this year to be consistent with that of the prior year, around \$100,000.



Our largest line item is programs and events. We subsidize events to keep attendance costs down, which takes about 65 percent of our budget. About 35 percent of our membership registered for at least one program this year.

Another significant line item is the HURA newsletter. It provides timely information on current events, bene-

fits, news, and profiles. (This is a good time to give a shout out to Managing Editor Malcolm Hamilton and the team that works hard to produce the newsletter.) It is HURA's only item that reaches all members.

I'd also like to express thanks to Phillips Brooks House leaders, who allow us to hold our monthly board meetings, as well as other events, in their Harvard Yard building. PBH has about 1,200 Harvard student volunteers who run more than 50 social service and social action programs. This year HURA was again one of the sponsors of their annual auction to support the Summer Urban Program, student-run summer camps serving more than

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Aging and alcohol

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Sometimes, families, friends, and health care workers may overlook or misinterpret the effects of drinking on older people, mistaking it as the side effects for other conditions related to aging, such as a problem with balance.

The effects of alcohol change as we age

As you grow older, your body handles alcohol differently. Some older people feel the effects of alcohol more strongly without increasing the amount they drink. This can make them more likely to have accidents such as falls, fractures, and car crashes. Health problems or prescribed medicines may require that you drink less alcohol or avoid it completely. Also, older women are more sensitive than men to the effects of alcohol.

Other people develop a harmful reliance on alcohol later in life. Sometimes this is a result of major life changes, such as the death of a loved one, moving to a new home, or failing health. Such changes can cause loneliness, boredom, anxiety, or depression. In fact, depression in older adults is often linked with drinking too much.

How does drinking damage the body?

Drinking too much at one time or having too many drinks over the course of a week, increases the risk of harmful consequences, including injuries and health problems.

Drinking too much alcohol over a long time can

- Lead to some kinds of cancer, liver damage, immune system disorders, and brain damage.
- Worsen health conditions such as

osteoporosis, diabetes, high blood pressure, stroke, ulcers, memory loss, and mood disorders.

- Make some medical conditions hard for doctors to accurately diagnose and treat. For example, alcohol causes changes in the heart and blood vessels. These changes can dull pain that might be a warning sign of a heart attack.
- Cause some older people to be forgetful and confused—symptoms that could be mistaken for signs of Alzheimer’s disease or a related dementia.

Getting Support

- To find alcohol treatment for yourself or a loved one, visit the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism NIAAA Alcohol Treatment Navigator at <https://alcoholtreatment.niaaa.nih.gov/>.
- Find information on how to change habits around alcohol consumption by visiting the “Rethinking Drinking” website at <https://rethinkingdrinking.niaaa.nih.gov/>.
- To find out how to help someone you know who drinks too much, visit NIH’s website on alcohol misuse at <https://tinyurl.com/54mx39tr>.

Cautions about mixing alcohol and medicines

Many medicines—prescription, over the counter, or herbal remedies—can be dangerous or even deadly when mixed with alcohol. For example,

- Combining aspirin with alcohol increases the risk of stomach or intestinal bleeding.
- Drinking alcohol when taking cold and allergy medicines (antihistamines) may cause sleepiness.

- Combining alcohol use with large doses of acetaminophen (Tylenol) may cause liver damage.
- Drinking alcohol when taking some medicines, such as cough syrups and laxatives, which already have high alcohol content, can add to the effects of drink.
- Combining alcohol with the use of sleeping pills, pain pills, or anxiety/anti-depression medicine can be deadly.

How alcohol affects safety

In older adults too much alcohol can lead to balance problems and falls, which can result in hip or arm fractures and other injuries. Older people have thinner bones than younger people, so their bones break more easily. Studies show that the rate of various types of fractures in older adults increases with heavy alcohol use.

Adults of all ages who drink alcohol and drive are at higher risk of traffic accidents than those who do not drink. Drinking slows reaction times and coordination and interferes with eye movement and information processing. Older drivers tend to be more seriously injured in crashes than younger drivers.

What is alcohol misuse or alcohol use disorder?

Alcohol misuse or alcohol use disorder is a pattern of drinking that can cause harm to a person’s health and social relationships. Current recommendations for alcohol consumption are no more than two drinks a day for men and one daily drink for women. And recently, more doctors are saying that any amount of drinking is dangerous for older people.

Strategies to help cut back or quit drinking

Many older adults decide to quit

drinking in later life. Here are some ways to accomplish that:

- Count how many ounces of alcohol you are getting in each drink.
- Keep track of the number of drinks you have each day.
- Decide how many days a week you want to drink. Plan some days that are free of alcohol.
- In place of alcohol, try drinking water, juice, or soft drinks that have bite, like ginger beer, nonalcoholic “mocktails,” or low-alcohol beer.
- Remove alcohol from your home.
- Ask for support from your family and advice from your health care provider.
- Admit you have a problem and need help.
- Talk to your doctor. For tips on how to broach this sensitive conversation, visit <https://tinyurl.com/yxr2jfdb>.

Learn your patterns, plan ahead

As you evaluate your alcohol use, you may find that you drink more often in particular settings or in reaction to certain emotions, such as stress or boredom. Take time to learn about your habits and plan on ways to make a change. For example,

- Avoid people, places, and situations that may trigger your drinking.
- Avoid drinking when you're angry, upset, or have had a bad day.
- Plan what you will do if you have an urge to drink.
- Stop using alcohol as a reward for a bad day or completing a difficult task.
- Learn to say “no, thanks” when offered an alcoholic drink.

Your body changes as you age, and that can affect daily routines. Adjust your alcohol use so you can enjoy your life to the fullest.

Adapted from material provided by the National Institute on Aging and the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism.

Ukrainian Visitors to Boston Pops

HURA member **Ellen Kane** wrote to tell us how much a young Ukrainian couple enjoyed going with her to the Boston Pops. They were absolutely thrilled, stunned, enraptured, ecstatic!

“I’m so happy I was able to get tickets for them, and they were able to have their own magical experience in Symphony Hall with the Pops—and thank you for facilitating it! They don’t know what the future holds for them, but they felt the power of music bringing people together and helping to transcend other realities in the world, for at least a while.

“Simon, who works in audiology, spent some of the concert with his eyes closed, telling his wife, Dasha, that he wasn’t asleep, but just wanted to concentrate and savor the sound. They were astounded to see the accompanying film clips and to join in such a festive event at such a special place.

“And on their way back to the car, they walked in silence for about 10 minutes, as Dasha said, ‘Because there were so many feelings, we just couldn’t speak.’

“I thought you’d enjoy knowing you had two very grateful recipients of the tickets HURA provides.”

PET PEEVES

Speech patterns *like, you know, I mean*

Podcaster Joe Rogan warned, “You’ve got to get scared that people who are not criminals are getting, like, lassoed up and deported and sent to, like, El Salvador prisons.”

This makes one wonder what is “**like**” lassoed? Perhaps it’s hog tied. That’s sorta like lassoed. And what is “like” an El Salvador prison? Maybe it’s a Guatemalan prison. Is that like one in El Salvador?

Another of our pet peeves is the use of “**you know**,” a phrase that fills the gaps in someone’s speech while they search for the next word or phrase. It used to be “ahh” or “umm” that uncertain speakers used. AI-assisted closed captions on your TV screen now actually print the frequent “you knows,” making them doubly

annoying. Some speakers are even using both with “ahh, you know.”

“The floods in Tennessee are ahh, you know, unprecedented. Nothing has been seen like them, you know, in decades.” Well, yes, we do know. The July 2025 floods in Texas killed 80 people. Hurricane Helene in 2024 killed 250 people, many from floods, and some of them right in Tennessee. So, you know, um, you should probably do your research, too.

I mean!! This says it all:

“110 mph! I mean, that’s no way to put it unless you’re on, like, you know, in Loudon (NH) or NASCAR. You shouldn’t be driving that fast on any of these New Hampshire roadways,” Officer Wood said.

Sent along by your HURA editors

Top Dog

Since August 2022, Sasha, a black Labrador Retriever, has brought joy and happiness to Harvard students, faculty, and staff, according to Officer Steven Fumicello of the Harvard University Police Department (HUPD). Sasha, too, is with the HUPD, with the official title of community engagement dog. Fumicello, who is Sasha's companion on the force, says she quite simply makes people happy.

Sasha is a graduate of the Puppies Behind Bars program, a nonprofit that trains incarcerated individuals to raise service dogs for veterans and first responders. Canine graduates of the program can also serve as community engagement animals, focused, as Fumicello explains, on assisting others in managing anxiety, stress, and mental health challenges, and can also provide bereavement support or solace during bouts of homesickness. The possibility of bringing such support to campus in a warm and comforting package helped spur the University's post-pandemic decision to apply for one of the program's dogs.

Acceptance into the program also meant training for the dog's new companion—so Fumicello spent two weeks at the correctional facility that trained Sasha, learning to handle the animal, support her training as a service animal, and engage in public access testing to ensure she could remain stable and controlled in different public situations and environments.

The result: a human-dog team that can remain focused and unruffled in any of several stressful situations that can arise within a campus population of approximately 46,000 students, faculty, and staff.



HURA member Linda Collins and Officer Steven Fumicello hold the portrait that Linda painted. In the foreground, Sasha waits patiently for her next assignment.

The healing role dogs such as Sasha can play in helping humans navigate life's rough points is backed up by science. Studies of dog owners have shown that the owners have lower blood pressure and lower cholesterol and triglyceride levels than people who do not have a dog, differences not explained by diet, smoking, or body mass index.

Research also has shown that stress and other emotional situations can be tempered by what is called the pet effect. A 2023 *Harvard Health* online article reported a study that found that interacting with a dog, especially petting the animal, stimulates the human brain's prefrontal cortex, which helps regulate emotions. According to Elizabeth Frates, MD, an associate professor part-time at Harvard Medical School and immediate past president of the American College of Lifestyle Medicine, who was interviewed for the article, petting lowers

cortisol, the stress hormone, and raises oxytocin, the feel-good hormone.

Although Sasha and Fumicello's primary beat is the college's Cambridge campus, they have visited more far-flung areas of Harvard, such as Countway Library at Harvard Medical School, the Business School, and the Law School. If they are available, the duo can also visit area hospitals, veterans, nursing homes, and other police departments, as they did in October 2023, when Sasha and Fumicello traveled to the Maine State Police's Family Assistance Center following the gun violence in Lewiston.

Fortunately, though, the team primarily attends events where their presence can be counted on to spread good cheer. During walks on campus, hands extend to pat Sasha on the head, scratch her back, or hug her. Sometimes she gets to show her understanding of more than 50 commands, from the usual "sit" and "stay" to the more people-pleasing ones of "salute," "peekaboo," and "take a photo."

And pose for a photo Sasha does. A quick check online reveals many photos of Sasha and Fumicello on the job. Instagram is filled with photos and videos of Sasha posing with new students, graduates (yes, she wears a mortarboard and a canine-appropriate robe), visiting families, and party goers, including ones to celebrate her birthday.

Sasha has become part of the fabric of Harvard. In 2024, she was named a Harvard Hero.

Another academic year is underway and Sasha and Fumicello are once again doing what they do so well: showing up whenever and wherever they can to brighten someone's day and to make them smile.

Readers may find all of her online links at https://linktr.ee/sasha_hupd.

Treasurer and Membership Reports

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600 disadvantaged children and teens in Boston and Cambridge.

*Victoria Johnson,
HURA Treasurer*

Membership Secretary's report

HURA has nearly 1,300 members. During 2024-25, hundreds of members attended at least one event, either in person or through Zoom, and many brought a guest. That number is up substantially from last



year. We're already making plans for next year's activities, and we hope even more members and guests will join us.

All members benefit from the receipt of quarterly issues of

HURA News (mailed to home mailing addresses) and regular updates that are sent via the E-list.

Summer is the time for our annual membership dues collection of \$20 per member (a fee unchanged for many years). This year we successfully rolled out a new online payment option. Our bank, the Harvard Federal Credit Union, recently teamed up with Clover, a global online payment app. Members can now use Clover to pay dues with a credit card or with Google Pay. Of course, members may still choose to send a paper check, as in the past. This summer, all members received membership renewal communications both by email and by the traditional mailed letter.

Please let me know if you have any questions at huramembership@gmail.com.

*Coral Sullivan,
HURA Membership Secretary*

IN BRIEF

Tax deductions for seniors

Below is a description of certain provisions from the One Big Beautiful Bill Act, signed into law on July 4, 2025, as Public Law 119-21. These go into effect for the 2025 tax year.

New deduction for Seniors: Effective for 2025 through 2028, individuals who are age 65 or older before the last day of the taxable year



may claim an additional deduction of \$6,000. (\$12,000 for a married couple where both spouses qualify.) This new deduction is in addition to the current additional standard deduction for seniors, \$2,000 (single) and \$3,100 (married, filing jointly).

The new deduction phases out for taxpayers with modified adjusted gross income over \$75,000 (\$150,000 for joint filers).

Taxpayer eligibility: This deduction is available for both itemizing and non-itemizing taxpayers. Find more at Tax Deductions for working Americans and seniors.

<https://tinyurl.com/38nj59pj>

IRS Newswire: FS-2025-03

Tax on Social Security benefits

The Bill also ensures that nearly 90 percent of Social Security beneficiaries will no longer pay federal taxes on their benefits. This is not a change in taxes; it's the deduction that's changed.

The beneficiary pays no tax if adjusted gross income is under \$25,000 (single) or \$32,000 (married filing jointly).

Up to 50 percent of benefits can be taxed if combined income is between \$25,000 and \$34,000 (single) or \$32,000 and \$44,000 (joint).

Up to 85 percent of benefits can be taxed if combined income exceeds \$34,000 (single) or \$44,000 (joint). This is not a change from the current regulations. *from Blog.SSA.gov*

Dying without a will

Most people assume their assets will simply pass to their loved ones when they're gone. But in Massachusetts, dying without a will means the state—not you—decides who gets what.

The reality is often more complicated and more stressful than people realize. Property can end up with unintended relatives or get tied up in court for months—even years.

If you don't have a will, even a simple one, notarized and witnessed at signing, or haven't updated yours in years, now is the time to take action.

Save the poison help number

(800-222-1222) in your cell phone so you'll have it in case of an emergency. Each poison control center is staffed with doctors, pharmacists, and toxicologists who can answer your questions 24/7. Make sure you have this number handy!

**HARVARD UNIVERSITY
RETIRES ASSOCIATION**
c/o Membership Secretary
Coral Sullivan
P.O. Box 95
Wayland, MA 01778

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HURA's 2025 Annual Meeting at Loeb House

The conversation between HURA director Jamie Hoyte and President Emerita Drew Gilpin Faust focused largely on her 2023 memoir, *Necessary Trouble: Growing Up at Midcentury*. Of the origin of the title, she explained that civil rights activist, Rep. John Lewis had honored her by taking part in a number of Harvard events where he had said, “Get in good trouble, necessary trouble.” She then shared her perspectives on black/white relations, describing her upbringing in Virginia in a segregated society.

Currently, she is researching Patrick Henry and noted being moved by his “Give Me Liberty or Give Me Death” speech that urged one not to accept the illusions of hope, expecting that naturally things will get better. Instead, he urged people to stand up and say “No” to violations to our values and our liberties.



PHOTO BY JIM BRICKER

Guest-of-Honor, Harvard President Emerita Drew Faust, HURA President John Collins (center), and HURA Director Jamie Hoyte.

HURA is a tax-exempt 501(c)7 all-volunteer organization. Membership is open to benefits-eligible retirees of Harvard University and is complimentary the first year until the renewal period the following June 30. Thereafter dues are \$20 annually. Visit HURA at www.HURA.harvard.edu and on Facebook at www.facebook.com/HUretirees.