

# Living Legends of Alexandria

## David Baker honored as 2023 Living Legend.

BY JEANNE THEISMANN  
GAZETTE PACKET

For David Baker, community service has been an integral part of a long and accomplished career in law enforcement.

The son of an Air Force officer, Baker grew up in a military family and moved often before settling in the DC area as a 10-year-old when his father was reassigned to the Andrews AFB Strategic Air Command.

“From a young age I grew up wanting to be a police officer,” said Baker of his chosen profession. “At least according to my mother, who said I spent time playing sheriff and chasing bad guys around the neighborhood.”

“My father was a nuclear physicist who also served in World War II and Korea,” said Baker, who also has a twin sister and two brothers. “He chose the military over a lucrative job offer he received after graduating from college. It was important to him to first be a patriot and to serve his country and that inspired my future service.”

Baker served as Alexandria’s Deputy Chief and Chief of Police after serving more than 20 years with the DC Metropolitan Police Department. He retired from the MPD as a Captain.

He first joined the MPD as a 20-year-old, assigned to the old #11 Precinct in Southeast Washington.

“It was the highest crime and lowest income area of the city, but to me it was full of hard-working people,” Baker said. “In those days most officers walked foot beats alone without a radio and pulled call boxes to check in with the station. You learn a lot of life lessons when you are out there by yourself. You learn to build relationships. You learn humility. And you learn and respect how people navigate through human suffering and difficult situations in their lives.”

Baker joined the Alexandria Police Department in 1990, serving 19 years including three as Chief of Police.

Throughout his law enforcement and community service careers, Baker earned the reputation as a caring, intelligent, innovative, and highly respected leader. He was known to be visible, compassionate, and engaging.

In the police department Baker initiated a Strategic Response Model of Policing that significantly improved police response and accountability. The department achieved record reductions in crime, increased community engagement, and benefitted from advanced use of crime analysis and other



PHOTO BY STEVEN HALPERSON/TISARA STUDIOS

David Baker was named a 2023 Living Legend of Alexandria.

technologies to help guide the department’s response to new or emerging challenges. Throughout, he believed in openness and transparency with staff and members of the community.

Baker led efforts to maintain the department’s national certification by the Commission on Accreditation in Law Enforcement. He partnered with George Mason University

to bring a criminal justice “cohort” college degree program to the department. This allowed officers and civilians interested in pursuing criminal justice degrees to do so after work hours at the police station. Approximately 40 officers of various ranks earned their undergraduate degrees. An additional 15 went on to earn graduate certificates or degrees.

Baker helped create a Citizen’s Police Chief’s Advisory Committee, which was the early precursor to what is now the Alexandria Police Foundation. He helped manage a successful city-wide police community liaison program to promote and enhance police-community partnerships. He then volunteered to be the long-time police liaison to the then Potomac West Business Association where he spent countless hours on and off duty meeting and interacting with residents and community leaders.

Baker brought these same qualities to Goodwin House Alexandria (now Goodwin

Living) where he served almost 12 years after retiring from the police force. There he distinguished himself as one of the primary contact people for many residents and their families. He worked to ensure and maintain resident safety, comfort, and well-being and was known as a “go to” person who worked tirelessly to solve whatever issue residents had.

Many times, he simply spent quality time sharing stories and learning from residents about important life lessons they experienced throughout their lives. For this and more, Baker received the 2012 Alexandria Commission on Aging Lois Van Valkenberg Excellence in Aging Award.

While at Goodwin House he joined the Senior Services of Alexandria Board of Directors where he served in many roles, including Board President. He was also appointed by City Council to Chair the Beauregard Small Area Development Plan Implementation Committee, for which he and his committee received a Proclamation of Achievement from City Council.

One of his favorite things to do was partner with former Goodwin Living resident and Senior Services Board member Admiral Mike McCaffree to deliver Meals on Wheels.

In addition to the Alexandria Police Foundation and SSA, Baker has served on the boards of the Friendship Veterans Fire Engine Association, the Alexandria Commonwealth’s Attorney Community Advisory Committee, City of Alexandria Budget, and Fiscal Affairs Advisory Committee, Carlyle Council Community Services Board; Jamieson Condo Association, City of Alexandria Commission on Information Technology; and Alexandria Child Advocacy Center Board of Directors.

Baker holds a master’s certificate in Criminal Justice Management from George Mason University and a bachelor’s degree in leadership and criminal justice management, also from GMU. He graduated from Session 139 of the F.B.I. National Academy, and from the Police Executive Leadership School, Jepsen School of Leadership, at the University of Richmond.

“Throughout my life many people have inspired me in so many ways,” Baker said. “Alexandria is a city with role models and mentors everywhere. It is unique in that regard. Everywhere I turned I met and was inspired by accomplished people who gave of themselves, who unselfishly volunteered their time and talents for the greater good of the community. I simply wanted to be a part of that by contributing as much as I could, wherever I could, for as long as I could. I highly recommend it.”

Baker fully retired in 2021 and he and his partner, Sandra, split their time between Alexandria and a new home outside Rehoboth Beach. He has two grown sons and especially enjoys being “Poppy” to his four grandchildren.

### BULLETIN BOARD

Submit civic/community announcements at [ConnectionNewspapers.com/Calendar](https://www.connectionnewspapers.com/calendar). Photos and artwork welcome. Deadline is Thursday at noon, at least two weeks before the event.

#### VOLUNTEERS WANTED

Alexandria Families for Safer Streets - Executive Assistant to AFSS Board of Directors. The agency is seeking an executive assistant to help coordinate a diverse group of tasks necessary to keep us on track and moving forward. Someone with office manager skills would be the ideal candidate. [www.volunteeralexandria.org](http://www.volunteeralexandria.org)

ALIVE! Volunteers are needed to assist with multiple programs relating to their Food Program, ALIVE! House, and Alexandria

Eviction Prevention Partnership Program will distribute food at Mobile Pop-ups and Truck to Trunk events, etc. <https://www.volunteeralexandria.org/ALIVE>

Assistance League of Northern Virginia is an all-volunteer non-profit organization that feeds, clothes and provides reading assistance and books to children in need. Assistance League’s programs touch the lives of hundreds of children in Fairfax and Prince William Counties and the City of Alexandria. There are many volunteer opportunities for community members to contribute to helping those in need. To learn more, email [info@alnv.org](mailto:info@alnv.org), or visit [www.alnv.org](http://www.alnv.org).

Join Friends’ Board. Those who care about SEE BULLETIN, PAGE 10