

## SENIORS

# Introducing Alexandria's new Oral History Center

BY FRANCESCO DE SALVATORE

The Office of Historic Alexandria – which is the department of city government charged with the conservation, interpretation and promotion of Alexandria's past – has announced its newest program, The Alexandria Oral History Center. The center is a community-driven collaboration to document and preserve the memories and stories of Alexandria. The Center provides residents with oral history trainings and resources to conduct oral history interviews and community history projects. Additionally,



**FRANCESCO DE SALVATORE**

the center maintains a public archive to preserve oral histories for future generations. The center also deepens the public's engagement and understanding of Alexandria's past and present by producing public programs and resources with the oral history archive.

The center welcomes all residents of Alexandria to book an appointment with the manager and record their own oral histories. Following the recording, participants are provided with a copy of their oral history recording and a written transcript of the recording. Participants can also choose

to have their oral histories included in the Oral History Archive, where it will be made available to the public and preserved for future generations.

Throughout the year, the center will work on specific initiatives and projects about various topics and themes. One of the most recent projects the center is working on is National Centenarian Day on Sept. 22. The center is partnering with the Successful Aging Committee to provide Alexandrian centenarians and their families the opportunity to record and preserve their oral histories.

Residents who are interested in facilitating their own oral histories are invited to

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FILE PHOTO

The Alexandria Oral History Center is a community-driven collaboration to document and preserve the memories and stories of Alexandria.



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The StoryKit Program provided by the Oral History Center trains and supports participants to serve as oral historians and create their own oral history projects.

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participate in its StoryKit Program. The StoryKit Program trains and supports participants to serve as oral histori-

ans and create their own oral history projects. Additionally, the center lends recording equipment to participants in order to complete their oral history recordings. Partici-

pants can choose to record stories about any given topic and/or historical moment.

The center is also working on producing various public programs. In 2023, it will

launch a Listening Room series, which will include four public events throughout the year. Each public event in the Listening Room series will focus on a specific topic and

theme, and present edited oral stories to a public audience and a facilitated discussion. The first event of the Listening Room series will be in winter of 2023, and it will focus on stories about immigration in Alexandria.

Alexandrian centenarians and their families are encouraged to sign-up for an oral history recording by contacting 703-746-4821 or francesco.de-salvator@alexandriava.gov. Residents are also welcome to reach out about recording other oral histories and/or how to participate in the StoryKit Program. For more information about the Alexandria Oral History Center and to stay up to date on the center's programs and events, visit <https://www.alexandriava.gov/historic-alexandria/program/the-alexandria-oral-history-center>.

*The writer is oral history manager of the Office of Historic Alexandria.*