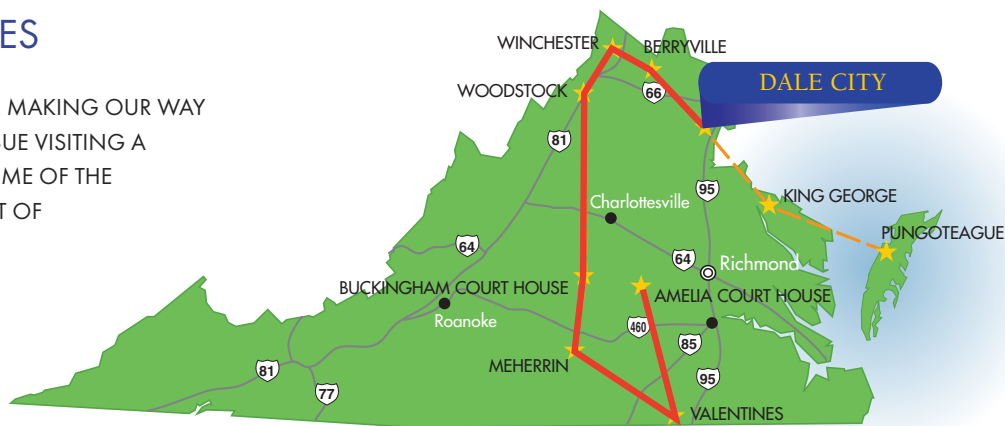


## DOWN HOME SERIES

AGAIN IN THE YEAR 2010, WE'RE MAKING OUR WAY AROUND THE REGION, EACH ISSUE VISITING A SMALL TOWN AND MEETING SOME OF THE FOLKS WHO MAKE UP THE HEART OF ELECTRIC CO-OP COUNTRY. ON THIS YEAR'S EIGHTH STOP, WE'LL BE ...



## DOWN HOME IN

# DALE CITY

Story and photos by Bennie Scarton Jr., Contributing Writer

What was once a mostly wooded, rural area of Prince William County is today one of the bright symbols of American capitalism and success.

This symbol, the growing community of Dale City, is not actually a city, since it is not incorporated.

However, thanks to the vision of a real estate developer, the late Cecil Don Hylton, Dale City has become one of the most prosperous self-contained communities in Virginia and is dearly loved by its approximately 63,000 residents.

It all started in 1968 when Hylton began construction activities in Dale City. Many myths surround Hylton and his choice of

names for the community. Some erroneously believe Hylton's middle name was "Dale." He actually chose the word because it aptly describes the "hills and dales" of the rolling countryside where he developed the community. His company, Hylton Enterprises, began Dale City about a mile east of Interstate 95 and has continued to build west in Prince William County.

The development has grown into 17 major housing or neighborhood areas, all of whose names end in "dale," built in alphabetical order ranging from the first, "Ashdale," to the most recent, "Trentdale."

The streets along Dale Boulevard (the main highway through the community) gen-

erally proceed alphabetically when followed east to west, with such names as Barksdale, Birchdale, Cherrydale, Cloverdale, etc.

Since the development's start, Dale City, some 23 miles south of Washington, D.C., has become one of the best self-contained communities in the state, and perhaps the whole country.

Today, Hylton's vision lives on in everything from excellent schools and churches and sparkling shopping centers to parks and recreation facilities — anything that modern society asks for.

Since the community is unincorporated, there is no mayor or city council to govern it.

Such duty generally is the responsibility of Prince William County Board of Supervisors representative **John D. Jenkins**, D-Neabsco District, who fills in as "honorary mayor, councilman and city manager."

Jenkins has served on the board since 1982 and his district covers most of Dale City. He is a member of numerous regional, state and national committees and serves in several veterans' organizations — including the Veterans of Foreign Wars, the American Legion, and Disabled American Veterans — as well as many other civic community groups. He is an ardent supporter of youth activities and programs in the area. He reflects the pulse of the community.

Like so many other military veterans, Jenkins came to Dale City, he says, "because of its affordable housing."

The first homes in Dale City sold for less than \$20,000; now they may top a half-million dollars.

"Hylton had a knack for building homes relative to the economy and he was very proud of what he accom-

John D. Jenkins serves as "honorary mayor, councilman and city manager" for "The Friendliest Little City Around."





## AT A GLANCE...

**POPULATION:** 63,616

**LAND AREA:** 15 square miles

**ELEVATION:** 230 feet

**FOUNDED:** 1968

**FACTOID:** A street in the city is named for Benita Fitzgerald-Brown, who grew up in Dale City. Fitzgerald-Brown competed for the U.S. in the 1984 Summer Olympics in Los Angeles, where she became the first African-American woman to win a gold medal in the 100-meter hurdles with a time of 12.84.



**1.** Like many military veterans, John Jenkins came to Dale City because of its affordable housing. **2.** Terry Collins lives in Nottingdale, where neighbors are “almost like family.” **3.** Long-time resident Mickey Clapham describes Dale City as a great place to raise children. **4.** Keeyana Mahoney of the Dale City Boys & Girls Club, whose goal is to shape area youth into responsible community residents.

plished. He and his wife, Irene, were very community-minded and contributed a lot to hospitals, churches, schools and art centers that bear his name,” says Jenkins, who also has a park in Dale City named after him.

Hylton began his career as a “huckster,” a young man who sold farm goods and produce at the farmers’ market in Washington, D.C. He later began a sod business after several requests from his regular clients. He ran several dozen trucks and pioneered new technologies in the industry.

After the post-war housing boom began, he moved into the home-building business. Throughout his career, he constructed apartments, commercial shopping centers and

more than 22,000 homes. Along the way, he began his own sewer company, Dale Service Corp., Inc. (now Virginia American Water), as well as the first cable television companies in Prince William County.

The housing and commercial construction, which began more than 40 years ago, is still continuing along with active reconstruction work in the community by Hylton Enterprises. Dale City has a local bus service that runs through the community and Jenkins has stressed that sidewalks be built along the roadways to allow for walking, to cut down on vehicular traffic.

**Terry Collins**, who has been a resident of Dale City for 17 years, says “I like living in the Nottingdale area since everyone keeps his or her property up. As neighbors, we are all

almost like family. My home is also close to Andrew Leitch Park, where my family spent a lot of time having fun in the outdoors.”

**Mickey Clapham** has lived in Dale City for 21 years and loves everything about the community. “We lived in Springfield and were looking for a larger house. We found what we liked in Dale City and moved in. It was a great place to raise my children,” she says while working on the attractive landscape in front of her home.

One of the most popular recreational and educational youth facilities in the community is the Dale City Boys & Girls Club, which has a membership of 750.

“We are very family-oriented, wanting to become a vital part of the community,” says **Keeyana Mahoney**, interim branch





**1.** Karen Giacometti, principal of Beville Middle School. **2.** Holley Young in front of Sharron Baucom Dale City Recreation Center. **3.** Ernestine Jenkins in front of VFW Post 1503 Post Home. **4.** Sheila Colville at Dale City Neighborhood Library. **5.** Dale City Volunteer Fire Department Station Battalion Chief Shawn Crispin at the station.

manager, who has worked at the site for 11 years. “Our goal is help our youth grow up and become responsible residents of the community.”

### SCHOOL PRIDE

Dale City is proud of its schools and the people who educate its students. Among their ranks is 31-year-veteran educator **Karen Giacometti**, principal of Beville Middle School, with 1,050 students.

“I like the diverse population of Dale City. With so many different nationalities, it brings a wealth of knowledge to the students, learning from each other. I believe we have the best middle school achievers in the county,” she says. It is an International Baccalaureate World School.

For indoor recreational and fitness activities, you can’t beat the Sharron Baucom Dale City Recreation Center, which has as its motto, “Where Everybody Fits In.”

**Holley Young**, general manager, says “We have lots of options under one roof to promote the health and wellness of residents with the sole purpose of making their lives better.” The center has been serving the area since 1976 and has proven to be a community-oriented recreation center, offering swim lessons, massage-therapy services, adult and youth sports, small group personal training, triathlon training, summer camps and children’s and adult’s instructional camps.

Jenkins’ wife, **Ernestine**, is active in nearly every organization in Dale City, ranging from serving as vice president of the Dale City Civic Association to a similar position in the Democratic Party. She also heads up the Dale City Fourth of July Parade, one of the largest in the state.

“I don’t believe there is a more friendly and sincere community anywhere in the country than Dale City. We are all one big happy family, with big hearts and the motto of ‘what can we do to help the community,’” she says. She is also active in the Dale City Veterans of Foreign Wars, whose building serves as the community meeting grounds for weddings, corporate meetings and other activities.

As the community continues to grow, so does the need for more up-to-date emergency fire and rescue services.

The newest updated station is Dale City Volunteer Fire Department Station 10, which replaces the old station down the block, housing six vehicles to provide fire and rescue services to the area.

Battalion Chief **Shawn Crispin** has been a firefighter for 16 years, starting his career as a cadet in high school.

"This is the occupation I've always wanted ... answering the call to help people. I like the residents of Dale City and the 19 career staff around me, plus the 30 or 40 volunteers," he says.

There are six shopping centers, with a variety of services, scattered throughout the 15-square-mile community. Among those is Center Plaza Shopping Center on Dale Boulevard, which has housed the popular Dale City Music since it was founded in 1977 by the late Joseph Parker and his son Bob, who still owns the facility.

The firm is a mecca for musicians, as all types of musical-instrument sales, rentals, lessons and repairs are offered.

"Musicians have come to know — whether they are purchasing a new or used instrument or want to talk to someone about repairs — we are the place to go," says John Colbert, who has been a sales associate for 17 years at the company.

Colbert says he has enjoyed his long stay with the firm, "because it's exciting to see young people start their musical careers and see how they progress through the years." Some of the instructors at the shop have been teaching for more than 25 years. The shop supports the local band and orchestra programs with affordable instrument rentals and prompt professional repairs on-site.

Upwards of 600 patrons turn out on some days to use the Dale City Neighborhood Library, which opened in 1986. "We are a small library, but we have a little bit of everything," says Sheila Colville, library section supervisor.

Though operating in one room with only 2,475 square feet of space, the library offers a service that is conveniently located in the heart of the community. It contains some 26,000 items including books, audio books, CDs, DVDs, magazines and its most popular feature — three public Internet computers.

The facility is staffed by three employees and 35 volunteers. According to Colville, "We couldn't stay open without their help. The volunteers do the same thing we do — assist the public in helping them get the information they need. We all enjoy meeting people."

## FOCUSED ON FRIENDLY

The motto of Dale City is: "The friendliest little city around," and while it isn't actually a city, you will find its residents to be indeed very friendly, whether in Hillendale or Mapledale or Queensdale or one of the other "dales" that dot the changing landscape. ■

## IF YOU GO...

**Waterworks at Andre Leitch Park** — Located at 5301 Dale Blvd., Dale City, features five acres of fun, and is a favorite waterpark spot for tots to teens. 703-680-7137. [www.pwcparks.org/waterworks](http://www.pwcparks.org/waterworks).

**Sharron Baucom Dale City Recreation Center** — 14300 Minnieville Road, Dale City. Has been serving the area since 1976 as a community-oriented recreation center. 703-670-7115. [www.pwcparks.org/dcrc](http://www.pwcparks.org/dcrc).

**Chinn Aquatics & Fitness Center** — Located nearby at 13025 Chinn Park Drive, Prince William, now in its 18th year of providing aquatics and fitness services with a variety of programs and camps to choose from. 703-730-1051. [www.pwcparks.org/chinn](http://www.pwcparks.org/chinn).

**Leesylvania State Park** — 2001 Daniel K. Ludwig Dr., Woodbridge, offers four hiking trails to explore the Potomac River's rich natural and historical features. Also, enjoy fishing, canoe tours, guided historic and nature walks, concerts and festivals. 703-730-8205. [www.dcr.virginia.gov/state\\_parks/lee.shtml](http://www.dcr.virginia.gov/state_parks/lee.shtml).

**National Museum of the Marine Corps** — 18900 Jefferson Davis Highway, Triangle. The collections of uniforms, weapons, vehicles, medals, flags, aircraft, works of art and other artifacts document more than 250 years of Marine Corps history. 877-635-1775. [www.usmcmuseum.org](http://www.usmcmuseum.org).

**Occoquan** — Tracing its roots to 1734, the historic town today is known for art galleries and antique shops that offer hard-to-find items and one-of-a-kind specialties. Also here are spring and fall craft shows. 703-491-4045. [www.occoquan.org](http://www.occoquan.org).



**Veteran sales associate John Colbert of Dale City Music, a mecca for area musicians.**



**The Hylton Memorial Chapel is one of a dozen churches in the community.**

**Rippon Lodge** — 15500 Blackburn Rd., Woodbridge. Possibly the oldest house in the county, it was built about 1725 with an addition in 1800. The house is used for special events and interpretive programs. 703-499-9812.

**Lazy Susan Dinner Theatre** — U.S. Highway 1, Woodbridge. An evening begins with cocktail hour and a buffet dinner of Pennsylvania Dutch entrees; then comes a Broadway musical or other exciting entertainment. 703-550-7384. [www.lazysusan.com](http://www.lazysusan.com).

**Prince William Forest Park** — 18100 Park Headquarters Rd., Triangle. At the park, visitors enjoy hiking and biking while anglers try their luck in the north and south forks of Quantico Creek. Also available, cabin, tent and RV camping. 703-221-7181. [www.nps.gov/prwl](http://www.nps.gov/prwl).

**Locust Shade Park** — 4701 Locust Shade Dr., Triangle. This 400-acre park has batting cages, miniature golf, a driving range, playgrounds, tennis courts, a volleyball court, hiking trails and picnic pavilions. 703-221-8579.

**Potomac Nationals at G. Richard Pfitzner Stadium** — 7 County Complex Ct., Woodbridge. Carolina League baseball. 703-590-2311. [www.potomacnationals.com](http://www.potomacnationals.com).

**Mill House Museum** — 413 Mill St., Occoquan. This house museum of Occoquan history is all that remains from the first automated gristmill in the nation. The mill was built in the 1750s and remained in operation until 1924. 703-491-7525. [www.occoquan.com/History/HistoryFrm.asp](http://www.occoquan.com/History/HistoryFrm.asp).

**Fourth of July Parade** — Each year has more than 120 entries on two miles of Dale Boulevard, and is one of the largest in Northern Virginia. 703-590-2506.

**Potomac Mills Outlet Mall** — In Woodbridge. Has more than 225 stores and, according to the Virginia Tourism Corp., is the 10th most popular tourism site in the state. 703-496-9301. ■