

Norbeck Hills Homeowner Association Newsletter

Summer 2005

President's Corner

As my term comes to an end, I would like to thank the community and the Board of Directors for allowing me to serve as the President of the Board. Together, in this last year, we have faced some difficult challenges and to my thinking, have made big strides in resolving most of the issues. To name a few, we have dealt with contracts, budget problems, a devastating fire to our neighbors, drugs, and crime. All in all, it is my thought we have come a long way. Block Captains and a couple of committees are now in place in an effort to make the community a better place to live.

I would ask all of the homeowners to continue to support the Board of Directors and get involved in the community. Owning a home is one of the biggest investments one can make in this lifetime. Only with your active participation and continued support can our community be a strong one.

In closing, I would like to thank the other members on the Board for their support and hard work. We put aside differences in personality, opinion, and self-interest to work toward getting our community to a place where everyone here would be proud to say they live here. A special thank you to those who assisted with the community clean up.

Jeff Chavis

The Pool Is Open and Our Swimmers Are In the Water

The Pool opened on Memorial Day on its full day schedule of 11:00 AM to 8:00 PM. for the weekend. With schools closing this will be the regular pool hours of operation for the summer, with only a couple of exceptions for Swim Team home meets.

The Anacondas have hit the water and began their practices on the Tuesday evening after the Memorial Day holiday. They are readying themselves for the series of Montgomery County Swim League "A" and "B" meets.

The Anaconda meets are Saturday mornings for the "A" team and Wednesday evening for the "B" team. Only six meets will be held at our pool this year. The dates and start times are:

June 18 - Saturday - "A" Meet 8:00AM-11:00AM
June 29 - Wednesday - "B" Meet 5:00 PM - 7:00 PM
July 2 - Saturday - "A" Meet 8:00AM-11:00AM
July 6 - Wednesday - "B" Meet 5:00 PM - 7:00 PM
July 16 - Saturday - "A" Meet 8:00AM-11:00AM
July 20 - Wednesday - "B" Intrasquad Meet 5:00 PM - 7:00PM

We are all proud of these young people and wish them a great season.

Please note that on days of home "A" meets there may be a slight delay in opening and on nights when the "B" meets are held, swimming after 4:45 PM is restricted to after the completion of the "B" meet. However, if you want to witness a competitive sports event in your own neighborhood at no cost for admission, please join the Anaconda's at the pool and cheer them on to their own personal best..

Trash - It Can Cost You

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As has been published in a number of past Newsletters, Norbeck Hills had a Trash Policy. The policy was mailed to all homeowners in December 2004. If you have misplaced it or cannot remember what it said, please go the Norbeck Hills Homeowner Association Website (www.norbeckhills.org) and refresh your memory.

Because of actions taken by persons within the community, who believe that they do not need to follow the policy, the Board is facing the possibility of having to increase the association dues even more to remove the eye-sores created by these actions.

When the Board can identify who is responsible for the trash violations, they are removing the violation and charging back the individual responsible for the cost of removal. However, there are still violations occurring for which the identity of the individual(s) is unknown. **Each homeowner in the community must realize that you will bear the cost of the actions of your neighbors; therefore, the Board asks that you assist in identifying the individuals who are violating the trash policy.**

Violations include:

- Failure to use a trash container with a lid for trash (**plastic bags alone are unacceptable because birds, rodents, and other factors cause these to rip and the contents are blown or left on our streets, common grounds, and sidewalks**).
- Failure to place trash and recycle out on the appropriate days and return the trash cans and recycle bins to the

rear yard by the evening of the day of scheduled pickup. **(The trash cans and recycle bins create an unkempt appearance for the community, and when the wind is blowing these receptacles end up in our streets, striking cars, etc.)**

- Failure to recognize that the trash contractor and recycle pickup will take **only** certain items. **(It is the responsibility of the homeowner/resident to educate themselves on items that must be delivered directly to the Montgomery County Solid Waste Transfer Station on Route 355 and Shady Grove Road.)**
- Placing trash and recycle out to early for pickup **(the earliest trash and recycle may be placed out after dusk on the evening before pickup)**.

Homeowners who are not sure of what can be placed at the curb and what conditions are for placement and pickup should check the Norbeck Hills Website (www.norbeckhills.org) and the Montgomery County Website (montgomerycountymd.gov). You may also register to be on the e-mail list for Recycle news by contacting Susanne.Wiggins@montgomerycountymd.gov and asking to be placed on one of her e-mail groups (e.g., holiday, hazardous waste, etc.).

Remember with July 4th falling on a Monday, recycle days will be one day later than their normal day that week (e.g. Thursday vs Wednesday and Friday vs Thursday).

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The Board is trying hard to control costs, but is living with a very restricted budget. If it is forced to order services to cleanup after those persons who will not take the proper level of responsibility for their trash and recycle, the costs will have to be passed back through an assessment to the community. In prior years the figure for cleanup has reached \$30,000. This would mean that every home could be required to pay an additional \$70 per year. Therefore, please help us to help you.

Offenders - get educated and change your behavior

Non-Offenders call the Management Group 301-948-6666 and report any violations, you will not be identified - you will be anonymous.

Montgomery County Code Inspections at Norbeck Hills

Montgomery County has assigned an inspector from the Department of Housing and Code Enforcement to our community.

With the increases in taxes and the values of home, Montgomery County is working to insure that homeowners investments in their property is protected by inspecting all homes for violations of Montgomery County Code. These inspections may result in citations for such items as failing to mow the grass, rotting wood on homes, storage of trash and debris around homes, deteriorating fences, and building projects that do not display proper permits.

You should be aware that the County can also cite the Association for items left on the common grounds, including discarded items such as sinks, fence boards, pallets, etc. The Association can be fined for violations, so help us to keep our costs down by properly discarding items or reporting anyone who is placing items on the common grounds. The Association does not budgeted funds to remove items from the common grounds (see Trash - It Can Cost You article above). Because, there is not enough money to haul these items away when they are left by unidentified persons, a special assessment or increase in assessment may be necessary, if homeowners do not take responsibility for discarding of these items properly.

Lawnmowers have been appearing on the common areas and in the creeks. These items can be taken to the Solid Waste Transfer Station located on Route 355 near the intersection with Shady Grove Road by any homeowner. Please visit the Montgomery County Recycle web site to understand what items you must deliver yourself, what items you can recycle from your home or have the county pick up (appliances, etc.), and what is trash not a recycle item. (Montgomerycountymd.gov).

Community Cleanup Activities Report

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Thanks to all who assisted with the Community Cleanup held on May 21, 2005.

Approximately 20 persons came out for this activity and removed an enormous number of items and bags from trash from the community. Some of the items of note that were found discarded in the woods and on the common grounds, were exercise equipment, automobile parts, a truck tool case, and lawn mowers.

To celebrate this accomplishment, refreshments were provided by the Board of Directors to the neighborhood volunteers and donated food establishment gift certificates totaling \$120 was awarded through a drawing.

There was a number of our neighborhood teens (middle school and high school) that contributed their time to clean up the neighborhood and community service credit hours were earned. These young people were impressive in their team work, independent action, and diligence in pulling many of the larger items out and placing them at the street for pickup. We also had a number of our younger children who worked with the adults and made us all proud.

Again, a huge **THANKS** to those who participated. **What an accomplishment!!!!**

A Dog Owners' Responsibilities

All Dog Owners, please act responsibly and in accordance with the law.

Montgomery County Code, Section 5-203(a) (2) states "An owner must not allow an animal to damage or defecate on property outside of the owner's property. An animal may defecate on public property or the common area of property in which the owner shares an interest if the owner immediately removed and disposed of the feces by a sanitary method approved by the Director. Feces may be picked up in a plastic bag. If this bag is placed inside another plastic bag, it may be put out for disposal in your normal household trash." **A FINE OF \$100 IS IMPOSED FOR VIOLATION OF THIS LAW.**

Dog Owners must clean up after their pets when they defecate on the common grounds, the county easement, or on another homeowner's property.

The Board receives complaints every time it meets regarding irresponsible dog owners. The By-Laws of the Association allow the Board to take action to restrict the use of its common property when necessary. We encourage **DOG OWNERS** to self police to ensure that they do not lose the ability to walk their dogs on the common grounds because of the actions of a few. All are encouraged to seek information to identify the offenders and report the offense to the County (240) 777-5960 or (240) 773-5925. You can remain anonymous.

Please understand that you must take action to correct this problem, the Board

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cannot be everywhere at all times to do this for you. Also, be aware that the County had stated that they have received numerous complaints of dog feces and inappropriate actions by pet owners in our community, but need details to correct the problem.

Propane and Grilling Safety

It's that time of year when there is nothing like a grilled hot dog, steak, or piece of BBQ chicken. But, please be careful while grilling this summer when storing your grills. The U.S. Fire Administration reports that there are over 6,500 grill fires resulting in nearly \$26 million in property loss each year. The Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC), reports that of these gas grills account for over 600 fires.

The Consumer Product Safety Commission and the Fire Department recommend that all grills, when being used should be 10 to 15 feet from any structure.

Propane grills should be properly turned off (a home in McLean, Va. and one in Montgomery Village, MD, were destroyed by early morning fires that were blamed on propane grills). Additionally, special care should be taken to properly maintain and store gas grills to minimize the possibility of explosion.

The CPSC recommends that owners and operators of gas grills:

- 1) check grill hoses for cracking, brittleness, holes, and leaks (make

sure there are not sharp bends in the hose or crimping),

- 2) move gas hoses away from hot surfaces and dripping grease,
- 3) keep propane tanks upright,
- 4) never store a spare gas container under or near the grill or indoors,
- 5) car or car trunk (heat causes pressure inside the container to increase),
- 6) make sure the spark ignitor is consistently generating a spark to create a flame and burn the gas. If the flame is not visible, the heavier-than-air propane gas may be escaping and could explode,
- 7) Never bring the propane tank into the house and store at a safe distance from the house.

For Your Safety Have Your Roof Checked

The homes in the community are aging and with this come concerns regarding leaking roofs.

Two homeowners in the townhomes have reported recently that they have had leaks that have caused damage to their ceilings. **Don't stop reading.**

One homeowner's leak was where the townhome abuts the neighboring townhome and the leak was caused by a problem with the neighbor's house. The rake board (board that sits under the

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shingle at the gable of the house) had rotted; therefore, the caulk would not hold and water was running under the rake board and under the shingles of the damaged house.

Another homeowner's bedroom ceiling collapsed on her while she was sleeping due to a leak in the roof. There was no early telltale stain on the ceiling to give any warning of the problem. However, the insulation in the attic had absorbed the moisture caused by the leak and had become so heavy that it collapsed the ceiling. It was bad enough that this happened to the homeowner, but picture the impact if this had happened over a toddler's bed or a crib.

Keep your home in good repair and make sure to check for the not so obvious.

You Are the Eyes and Ears for the Management Group and the Board of Directors

The Board of Directors and the Management Group make frequent walks within and around the community; however, they cannot be everywhere all the time. Therefore, we need you be the eyes and ears for them.

For those of you who utilize the pool, please let the Board know through the Feedback link on the Norbeck Hills Web Page (www.norbeckhills.org) or call the Property Agent at 301-948-6666, if there is anything that you see that you believe is improper or in need of correction with regards to the Pool Contract or the Pool itself. We request, however, that if this relates to the control

of the pool that, you bring it to the pool manager or lifeguards attention to get it addressed immediately.

If you live in the townhomes and streetlights or signs are in need of repair, please also report these either to the Board or the Property Agent.

If you observe anything that you would like use to address regarding the Lawn Contractor, again please contact us.

We want to hear from you and have an opportunity to address your concerns in a timely manner.

Paint-Ball at Norbeck Hills

A number of residents who live near the wooded areas of the community reported to the Board that there has been paint ball activities (adults and children) in the woods and on the common grounds of the community.

While the paint in a paint ball is water soluble, the paint defaces the property until it is washed off. Additionally, the sting of a paint ball impact is significant and may result in eye injury or injury to small children. Therefore, the Board views the use of paint ball guns on the property to constitute both a safety and vandalism risk. For these reasons, the Board requests that homeowners who observe paint ball activities call the Montgomery County Police (240) 279-0000, immediately. The Board views the use of a paint ball gun by a resident and/or their guests to be a violation of the "exclusive use of common property" covenants found in the Declaration of the community.

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Going on Vacation

When leaving for a vacation please take the following steps.

Arrange for a neighbor to put out and/or retrieve your trashcans and/or recycle tubs.

Arrange to have lights come on and go out in various parts of your house while your away, so that it is not obvious you are gone (timers may assist in this).

Arrange for someone to pick up your mail or have it held at the post office

Cancel your papers or have someone pick it up

Ask a neighbor to look for and remove door flyers that may be left

How to Cancel the Gazette

All residents in the community receive a complimentary copy of the Montgomery County Gazette. If you wish to have this delivery stopped, please contact the Gazette directly at 301-670-7350.

Homeowners please note that newspapers are not allowed to accumulate outside of your home where visible from the street. It is the homeowners/residents responsibility to collect and properly dispose of the newspapers, including the Gazette.

While homeowners should take action to stop delivery if they are not interested in reading the newspaper, if you observe that a neighbor is not picking up their

Gazette and letting them start to pile up on their sidewalk, call the Gazette and stop the delivery of the paper to this address. You will be doing yourself, the neighbor, and the community a favor by reducing the clutter and trash that creates a curb appeal problem for the neighborhood.

Update on Fire Victims

Our Fire Victims are still in need of your donations of money or articles. Please visit the Norbeck Hills Website to learn more about what articles are needed (www.norbeckhills.org). Donations can be made at the Bank of America in Olney to the Norbeck Hills Fire Victims Fund.

Reconstruction of the homes is in abeyance awaiting the issuance of a building permit by Montgomery County. The neighbors on either side of the Peterson home will be able to start their reconstruction only after the Peterson home has been framed.

Call for Court and Street Captains

Court and street captains are still needed for a number of streets and courts within our community. Participation on this Committee is fun and affords you a opportunity to meet your new neighbors and assist them with getting settled in the community by providing them with information on trash collection days; recycling days and county rules for packaging of recycle; and general information about the area and the community. The Court or Street Captain program is provides a central point to

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turn to for information on the community (both the new resident and those who have lived here for a while benefit from this).

If you live on:

Boastfield Lane
Sandy Knoll town homes
Jenner Court
17500 Longview Lane
17600 Longview Lane
or Sir Walter Road

and would like to volunteer for this program, please contact Ravi Parkhie of The Management Group 301-948-6666 or the Board through the link on the Norbeck Hills Homeowner Association website (www.norbeckhills.org). Your participation will be rewarding to you and provide all of your neighbors with a place to turn when they have questions or concerns about the community and allow the Board to communicate information quickly to the community through these channels.

Letter to the Editors:

I would like to say that I have been in this neighborhood for some years and I have never seen the community look so inviting. I would like to personally thank those who helped with the neighborhood cleanup day. I have never seen that many people and especially the kids turn out to clean up "their" community and to take such pride in it. I am not well; otherwise I would have been out there with a trash bag and having fun as well. I am on the other hand very unhappy with how so many of my neighbors (owners and renters) sit back and believe that someone should do

something for them. We have a drug problem in this community and I have seen things change. The elements here are not wanted and will have to find somewhere else to sell, distribute and use their drugs. We in the community do not want them here.

I want to also thank the Board members that have turned this community around in such a short length of time. I was never quite sure what the board was doing that was seated for 6 years; I did not realize that one person could sit on a board for that length of time. I never really saw the trees trimmed, but maybe once but I did see a structure go up at the pool, that surprised me because I wondered where the money was coming from to even construct such a thing. Then I found out after reading the budget from last year and also hearing from neighbors that we were in the process of being sued because of outstanding debt that was carried over from 1996. I was appalled at hearing this, to say the least.

I love this community, we have grown so much in that it is truly diverse now and there are so many different cultures in place, which assists with ensuring that everyone in the community is treated with respect. At least that is what I thought before I learned from a neighbor that the swim team was making slanderous innuendoes at some of the board members with racial undertones. Again, I have been in this community since the beginning and I have never heard or seen such disregard for other neighbors as I have recently. If the community is to grow, then it must stand together, not divided. We have drugs in our community; heck we had children

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from the community stealing from our neighbors, this is very sad to say the least. For those of you, who see things and don't call the police, shame on you. If someone is parked in your space and its not a friend of yours or the neighbor did not ask, then you call that tow truck company. I know that I have seen the neighborhood newsletter put when recyclables are collected as the same with the trash, so lets help keep the neighborhood beautiful. I love this community and my neighbors, if we work together then we can accomplish so much together. I hope that we will stand as one and one for all within this community! Again, thank you Board members for working together to make this community a wonderful place to live and come home too.

Sincerely,

Concerned Neighbor