



Greenbelt Homes, Inc.

COMMUNICATOR

Bi-Monthly Publication of the Communications Committee

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INSIDE

President's Message	2
Board Highlights	2
Community Upgrade	4
Hoarding Policy	4
Summer Heat	4
New GHI Website	5
The Magic of Northway	5
Gardening Secrets	6
GHI Administrative Buildings to Use Wind Power	6
Prevent Drainage Problems	7
Insurance Disclaimer	7
Prevent Pet Obesity	8
It's a Date	8

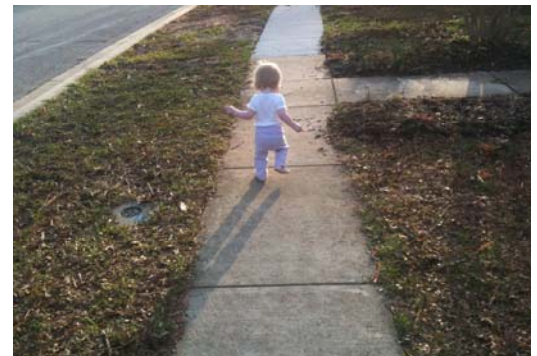
GHI: GOOD FOR FAMILIES AND GREAT FOR CHILDREN

By Laura Moore

Since moving into GHI two years ago, I have been pleasantly surprised at how family-friendly GHI is. Groups of children run around in the cul-de-sacs and playgrounds, play in the woods, visit neighbors, enjoy sharing my yard, and visit my cats and me. Retirees and parents in our community provide a watchful eye to ensure that everyone stays safe. I grew up in a similar neighborhood where my parents knew I could wander safely around and enjoy our streets and parks. I didn't think neighborhoods like that existed anymore!

Every school morning, children can be seen walking with their backpacks along GHI's extensive network of paths, headed out with their friends to Greenbelt Elementary School. Older children walk to the nearby award-winning Eleanor Roosevelt High School. When school is out, kids can be seen at playgrounds, the library, the Aquatics Center, Greenbelt Community Center, Greenbelt Arts Center, the skate park, and other family-friendly spots in GHI and surrounding Greenbelt. Greenbelt even has a parent support group, called "The Mamas and the Papas."

New GHI resident Anna Bedford said she considers Greenbelt a lovely community in which to raise children. "GHI seems like a particularly wonderful place for children, with its



Mary May in front of her GHI home.

Photo credit: James Riordon.

great systems of paths away from the roads, its underpasses, and its walkways through the woods, often leading to one of the many playgrounds," said Bedford.

New parents Martha Heil and James Riordon chose to raise their 1-year-old daughter Mary May in GHI after looking at many nearby neighborhoods. Martha explained, "There are paths to push the stroller on, lots of playgrounds nearby that are neat and clean, and classes for her at the Community Center. We love GHI because the streets are so safe we often see kids riding their bikes to the center to get an ice cream. GHI's community spirit means that babysitters and housecleaners are easy to find."

Martha continued, "We have lived all over the country -- and we couldn't find a better place to live as a family than in GHI."



"Like" us on Facebook: "Greenbelt Homes"



Follow us on Twitter: "GHImgmt"



Have an idea for a story?
Send GHI your story ideas.
See page 8 for details.

GHI BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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PAST PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

BY SUZETTE AGANS



Dear Fellow Members,

What an eventful time we are in! A new GHI website and page in the *News Review*; baseline information on the pilot project is available; Phase 2 of 3 of the Pilot Program will start this fall with increased insulation and testing of siding types; a well-attended Annual Meeting

has just occurred with new Board and committee members elected; and the Finance Committee will be hosting informational forums about changes in the property tax assessment on our units. These are opportunities I would hope all members will pay attention to, as it impacts your personal finances, your comfort in your home and your ability to find and use information on the GHI website.

I want also to thank everyone who has helped the Board and me over the last four and a half years that I have been on the Board. It has been my great pleasure to serve on the Board of Directors. I have learned much from the position and my fellow members and Board members. At times it has been challenging to find a workable solution to a problem and other times sheer fun because of the positive impacts or improvements made to GHI and the great people I got to work with. It is now time to pass the baton to another skilled, knowledgeable person to help run our cooperative. Thank you.

Respectfully, Sincerely and always Cooperatively,

Suzette Agans

GHI Mission Statement

Greenbelt Homes, Inc. is a cooperative that provides quality homes for our members and fosters opportunities for community. We will accomplish this by celebrating and respecting the historical legacy and ideals of the original Greenbelt plan.

We will maintain, protect and enhance the assets of our cooperative including the buildings, architectural design, open space plan (woods, walkways, playgrounds), while preserving the financial stability and sustainability of our cooperative community.

We will promote member diversity, member and community involvement, and education regarding our rights and responsibilities as co-op members.

We are the keepers of our property, and we have the right to expect that all of us will act responsibly to protect and care for that which each own and treasure together.

BOARD MEETINGS AND HIGHLIGHTS

The GHI Board meetings are held in the Board Room of the GHI Administration Building. Meetings are usually held twice a month on Thursday evenings at 7:30 p.m., except during the summer when meetings are held once a month. Please check the calendar on page 8 or the GHI website for details. With the exception of executive sessions, all meetings are open to the membership.

Board Actions During March and April 2011:

POLICIES

- Developed a proposed hoarding policy that will be made available to members for a 30-day comment period.
- Entered into an attorney-client agreement with the law firm of Lerch, Early & Brewer.
- For waste pipe replacement in the pilot program homes being tested energy efficiency:
 - The cost of assisting participants to cope with the loss of running water during replacement will be included in the cost of the community-wide upgrade.
 - Reasonable repair costs of damage done to kitchens and bathrooms during the replacement will come out of replacement reserves.
 - Costs of anticipated repairs will be included in the replacement cost of waste pipes when the replacement reserve is next reviewed.
- Other policies established for the pilot program:
 - The cost of the contract for writing bid specifications will be included in the financing of the community-wide upgrade.
 - Air conditioners removed during the program will be stored by GHI until a heating/air conditioning decision is made for the community-wide upgrade.
 - If hired labor is used to assist members to remove and return attic items while insulation is being installed, the cost will be included in the funding for the community-wide upgrade.

COMMITTEES

- Received a recommendation for rules on smoke detectors from the Architectural Review Committee.
- In conjunction with a disaster plan for animals already in progress, tasked the Companion Animal Committee to develop a broader plan for members as well.

CONTRACTS

- Employee uniforms for maintenance personnel (G&K Services--3-year contract).
- Services for the pilot project (Falcon Group, \$12,995) .
- Replacement of slate roofs on 43 homes (Northeast Contracting Group, \$494,135).

OTHER AUTHORIZED EXPENDITURES

- A used cargo van (not to exceed \$15,540).
- Display equipment to be used in marketing GHI homes (\$615).
- Contribution to the recovery effort for Japanese cooperatives (\$250).
- Replacement of components on homes in the pilot program (doors and windows for 28 homes; siding and waste pipes for 8 frame homes) (\$222,940 from replacement reserves) .
- Replacement of doors, windows, and siding on 13 additions in the pilot program(\$13,075 from the Addition Maintenance Reserve).
- Building upgrades to 28 pilot homes and 13 additions in the pilot program (loans of \$255,511 from the GHI Replacement Reserves Fund, and \$28,870 from the Addition Maintenance Reserve Fund, respectively).

MISCELLANEOUS

- Allowed members at 4E Ridge Road to purchase a portion of the common area basement for their personal use.
- Established task forces to review the addition maintenance reserves program and to seek a consultant to assist in the transition of the retiring General Manager.

COMMUNITY UPGRADE PROGRESSES

The pilot program for energy efficiency is underway!

GHI staff and member volunteers are working hard to make your homes more comfortable, more efficient, and more attractive now and to the next generation of members.



Working with partners, GHI has gathered information on energy use and members' comfort in 28 test homes. This summer, GHI will be soliciting for contractors to install new doors, windows, and insulation in those pilot homes. We're hoping that these homes will be improved before the heating season begins this winter, so that we can gather more information on how big an impact these changes will have on members' energy bills.

Want to know more? Contact Eldon Ralph, the assistant general manager at GHI; Jim Cohen, chair of the buildings committee, or Tokey Boswell, GHI's Board of Directors liaison to the committee:

- eralph@greenbelthomes.net, 301-474-4161,
- jimcohen@umd.edu
- tokeyray@netscape.net, 301-830-0655.

TAKE THE EDGE OFF SUMMER HEAT

As GHI members, we live in homes built before World War II, a time when energy was cheap. Energy costs have skyrocketed but you can take steps to save money on escalating energy costs and conserve cool air as temperatures climb:

- Clean your air conditioner filter and coils. To clean the coils, unplug the unit, and use a vacuum cleaner to remove dust from the heat exchanger. For units in first-floor windows, hose the unit from the outside to clean the exterior heat exchanger.
- Use fans to cut costs. Ceiling fans and window fans can make your air-conditioning unit more efficient. You can run the A/C at low levels and supplement with the fans, which are much cheaper to operate. Also consider using small desktop fans, which can cool a small space.
- Use blinds and curtains to block heat. In the cooler mornings, open the windows and blinds/curtains, and then close them during the hot afternoons. For a hot upstairs bedroom, in the evening, use the A/C unit briefly to cool the room, then open the window and use a fan.
- Use appliances in off-hours—early in the morning or in the evening, to conserve energy. Consider grilling, eating cold food, or using a microwave to minimize use of electric stoves.

Proposed Hoarding Policy: Comment by July 5



The Mutual Ownership Contract (MOC) that members sign when joining GHI requires members to maintain a safe and healthy environment. However, some serious situations involving hoarding have come to GHI management and the Board of Directors for resolution. As a result, the Board has structured a hoarding policy to assist in working through such issues for the benefit of all concerned. Of utmost concern with hoarding are the risks present to the member, to the member's neighbors and to the structure(s) should a fire occur, or if first responders called for a medical emergency cannot reach and assist the victim. The enclosed insert, a drafted policy dated March 2011, is being issued to the membership for a 30-day comment period before action by the Board is taken. Please submit comments to Joan Krob, director of member services or e-mail them to jkrob@greenbelthomes.net by July 5, 2011.



THE NEW GHI WEBSITE IS HERE

By JoAnne Fournier

After years of planning and an intensive year of work, the new GHI website is now up and running! This new site combines the information from the two previous GHI websites into one location: <http://www.ghi.coop>. Visit the site today and give us your feedback by taking the online website survey.

All of the pages have a fresh new design and a cleaner and more organized presentation. There are six major topics listed at the top and bottom navigation bars: **Home, Join Our Community, Member Resources, About GHI, The Upgrade, and Contact Us.**

New features include:

- Updates on Latest News and Alerts and a new searchable Calendar
- A new feature called “I Want to,” where you can request service, find member rules, browse the Members Handbook (aka the Greenbook), view homes for sale, and volunteer for committees and task forces;
- A new navigational feature to make it easier to search the Member Handbook;
- A new Service Request Form to make it easier for GHI to contact members and set a mutually agreed upon time for repairs,
- Placement of all online forms on a single page (Contact Us),
- An improved site map (at the bottom of the home page,)
- Improved searchability.

THANK YOU to all the members who filled out survey forms, attended trainings, and tested the GHI website: The GHI staff, especially **Christine Gyemfi**, the staff liaison, and **Gretchen Overdurff**; the Board of Directors and **Suzette Agans** for their support; and members of the Website Task Force **Tom Jones, Eileen Boswell, JoAnne Fournier, Christine Gyemfi, Cynthia Newcomer; Anna Socrates**, who edited the pages; and everyone who volunteered their time and expertise in the creation of the new website. It really did take a coop to create a new website!

THE MAGIC OF NORTHWAY COMPOST AND GIANT SUNCHOKES



*The Giant Northway Sunchoke
“Waiting for Jack”*

The new GHI member in 36 Court scratched his head at the fast-growing clump of plants; neighbors reported they had never seen anything like it. As it grew inches a day, some feared the clump might be the dreaded invasive bamboo rather than just a tall sunflower. But as its bright yellow but seedless flowers reached 12 feet, another possibility arose: the Jerusalem artichoke or “sunchoke” – a far cousin of the sunflower with no link with either Jerusalem or artichokes.

The case was settled in the fall with the discovery of the knobby and edible sunchoke roots – they have a nutty flavor and a crisp, water chestnut-like texture and can be prepared in many ways much like potatoes. As for why the sunchoke chose the new member’s service-side yard, the only explanation seems to be the application of Northway Fields compost to that yard in early spring. So if you would like to give it a try, get yourself some Northway compost and contact edfallon at gmail.com to get some sunchoke tubers next fall.

In Search of Gardening Secrets

By Anna Socrates

You wouldn't guess from my overgrown front yard that *The Secret Garden* is one of my favorite books. What's not to love about



this story? By restoring a neglected garden, sickly and sour orphan Mary Lennox finds health, happiness, friends, and family. I'll settle for some fresh air, exercise, flowers, and vegetables though. This year, vowing to restore my own garden, I sought advice and tips from gardening neighbors and friends. Here are their tips.

Follow the sun: Since my yard gets partial sun, most people recommended growing herbs. Last year, Ginny Jones--the "Lavender Lady," known for her lavender bushes along Ridge and Southway--gave me cuttings from her sage, mint and lavender plants. Jenn Errick recommended thyme, oregano, and lemon balm, perennials that grow like weeds and need virtually no care or replanting--but Jenn warned that these plants can take over a yard.

Encourage native plants: Given our unpredictable weather and heavy clay soil, native plants are good choices, since they have already adapted to the Maryland climate and soil. Suzette Agans suggested woodland poppy, woodland asters, red cardinal flowers, and butterfly weed (note, she's not talking about butterfly bush, which can be an invasive plant). Suzette, Jenn, and Ed James mentioned the National Arboretum spring native plant sale as a good source of native plants. Useful information on native plants and their evil twins, invasive plants, is available on the GHI website at www.ghi.coop/content/invasive-plants-green-menace.

Build up the soil and raise your beds: Raising vegetables might involve more work. Leah Cohen suggested starting with containers to experiment with soil, sunshine, and drainage conditions. Jenn thought that radishes, arugula, Swiss chard, parsley, cilantro, and bush-style green beans are good annual vegetables to start from seed, because they grow readily,

even in our clay soil. Ed James encouraged me to grow peppers, beets, radishes, and carrots in raised beds. He recommended Community Forklift for low-cost building materials and the Northway Fields mulch pile for starter mulch, but he suggested I buy bags of topsoil, until I could successfully create my own compost (a long-term project) because commercial topsoil has necessary minerals and nutrients.

Take advantage of local resources: GHI may not be home to Dickon Sowerby, the redheaded nature wunderkind of *The Secret Garden*, with his menagerie of tame woodland creatures and birds, but we have quite a few avid gardeners in GHI who will happily advise you, share cuttings, and show you some tricks. John Henry Jones always appreciates gardening help in his community garden plot and he will coach you. Ed James gave me a quick tutorial on how to build up soil and create raised beds. Ginny Jones helped me plan out and execute a flower bed and a stone walkway. For more formal instruction, contact the Beltsville Garden Club (www.beltsvillegardenclub.org). Our Greenbelt Farmers Market is a great resource. Some vendors sell starter plants and flowers, and if you need advice, just walk over to the Master Gardeners' booth, which is staffed most Sundays. For more information on the Master Gardeners, see <http://mastergardener.umd.edu/local/Prince%20Georges/index.cfm>. And of course, check out the CHEARS Three Sisters Demonstration Garden project (<http://chears.org/gardens/>).

With all these good suggestions and resources, I'm ready to work on my yard. And if it rains? I'll just curl up again with *The Secret Garden*.



Garden photos courtesy of Suzette Agans

HELP PREVENT DRAINAGE PROBLEMS IN YOUR YARD

By Eldon Ralph, Assistant General Manager

During the last 12 years (1998–2010), GHI spent more than \$500,000 to correct drainage problems at 50 sites in our community, hiring contractors to install new underground pipe systems at those locations. Most of the problems occurred near frame homes, which have less extensive storm drainage systems than masonry units. Drainage has emerged as a problem in GHI for several reasons:

Swale problems. Swales are shallow grassy channels in yards that move water from buildings into storm drains or wooded areas. Swales can be blocked by fallen leaves, shrubs, patios, fences, landscape borders, topsoil or sod, and trees. A blocked swale can interfere with drainage at adjacent units. We estimate that 25% of GHI’s drainage costs were due to interference with swales.

Flat yards. If the longitudinal grade of the swale is not steep enough, the swale can collect silt over the years, causing water to “pond” during rainstorms. Also, with flat grades, proper drainage of sidewalks and other paved areas is hard to maintain. As the paved areas gradually settle, adjacent grassy areas can build up and prevent water from crossing the hardscaped areas.

Accumulation of leaves and yard debris. Yard debris and leaves can collect at fences, hedges, and sidewalks or in drains across the width of sidewalks. When the debris is not removed, they can create a compost dam which blocks water flow.

The maintenance department now has a dozen work order requests relating to drainage complaints that can only be remedied through the installation of underground drainage systems. For the past 13 years, GHI has appropriated funds to rectify drainage problems at approximately four sites per year. Although some of the drainage problems are due to flat yards, members can prevent or address the problems caused by swale blockage or fill-in. Members should inspect their yard swale. Where is it located? Is it blocked? It’s also important to contact GHI if you are planning to undertake a major landscaping improvement (e.g. installation of ponds, pavers, patios, retaining walls, grade changes). Written approval for these projects is required from the Technical Services Department.

2011 GHI Maintenance Schedule	
Tentative	WSSC Water Line Replacement
May-Sept	Community Beautification Inspections
May-Aug	Trim Painting
May-Aug	Replace Frame Home Porch Decks
May-June	Spring Gutter Cleaning
May-June	Spring Concrete Repairs
June-Sept	Slate Roofs/Copper Gutters & Downspouts
July-Aug	Underground Utility Repairs
July-Sept	Parking Lot Repairs (CR60, HI13)
Oct-Nov	Fall Concrete Repairs
Oct-Nov	GDC Garage Door Replacement
Oct-Nov	Rental Garage Roof Repairs
Nov-Dec	Fall Gutter Cleaning

FROM THE MAINTENANCE DEPARTMENT
 Maintenance reception desk is **CLOSED** for lunch between noon and 1 p.m. daily. You can reach the main front desk reception for emergency service during that time.

ADDRESS UPDATE REQUEST
 All GHI members are asked to update their telephone number and email addresses. Call Shawnta in the maintenance Office at 301-474-4161, ext. 127 or email maintaa@ghi.coop.

CONGRATULATIONS
 To Barbara Jacobs of 2A Woodland Way, the winner of the Communications Taskforce Survey drawing for a \$50 Coop Gift Certificate!

THANK YOU
 To everyone who completed a survey. If you have not yet turned in your survey, take it online at www.ghi.coop or return the one included in this issue of *The Communicator* to the GHI offices by **June 30**. We value your input!

Tips to Help Prevent Overweight and Obese Companion Animals

From the Companion Animal Committee



As people across our nation struggle with weight and obesity, it should be no surprise that increasingly more companion animals are overweight and obese as well. Recent veterinary surveys suggest that more than half of our nation's cats and dogs are overweight. This means that more companion animals will be affected by weight-related diseases such as arthritis, diabetes, high blood pressure, and kidney disease, costing guardians millions in medical costs. In addition, many joint problems resulting in surgery are caused by a companion animal being overweight.

To calculate how much food you should be giving your companion animal, divide the animal's weight by 2.2. Multiply this figure by 30 and then add 70. This will give you a good idea of how many calories an inactive spayed or neutered companion animal should need daily. As each companion animal is different, it is still a good idea to talk to your vet about a proper weight for your companion animal before putting your companion animal on a diet. Once you know how much to feed your companion animal, always use a measuring cup to carefully measure the amount of food.

Most companion animals don't require a high carbohydrate diet. Look for low- or no-grain food with a protein source as the first ingredient. Be aware that treats can add a lot of calories to a companion animal's diet. Consider treating your dogs to vegetables, such as baby carrots, green beans, celery or cucumber, or fruit, such as sliced apples and bananas. Many dogs love ice cubes. For cats, try a flake of tuna or salmon. Help your companion animals be more active. Walk your dogs regularly and encourage your cats, especially indoor cats, to chase a laser pointer or special toy.

It's a Date: June/July 2011



Jun 8	Architectural Review Committee	7:30 pm
Jun 10	OFFICES CLOSED	
Jun 12	Pre-Purchase Orientation	11:00 am
Jun 14	Yard Line Ad-Hoc Committee	8:30 am
Jun 15	Woodlands Committee	7:00 pm
Jun 16	Finance Committee	7:00 pm
Jun 20	Communicator Task Force	7:00 pm
Jun 21	Companion Animal Committee	7:30 pm
Jun 22	Buildings Committee	7:00 pm
Jun 23	Board Meeting	7:00 pm
Jun 24	OFFICES CLOSED	
Jun 27	Pre-Purchase Orientation	7:15 pm
Jul 4	OFFICES CLOSED-Independence Day	
Jul 7	Special Board Meeting	7:30 pm
Jul 8	OFFICES CLOSED	
Jul 13	Architectural Review Committee	7:30 pm
Jul 14	Board Meeting	7:30 pm
Jul 18	Addn. Maintenance Task Force	7:00 pm
Jul 18	Communicator Task Force	7:00 pm
Jul 19	Companion Animal Committee	7:30pm
Jul 20	Woodlands Committee	7:00 pm
Jul 22	OFFICES CLOSED	
Jul 27	Buildings Committee	7:00 pm

Please note: Information is subject to change. Check the GHI website at www.ghi.coop for the latest info.

GHI Insurance Disclaimer

GHI members may obtain homeowner's insurance from an insurer of their choice. An insert in the previous issue of the GHI *Communicator* provided a sample description of the HO-6 coverage for coop and condominium homes that GHI suggests for member properties. The insert was intended to be illustrative rather than an endorsement of any particular insurance firm.

COMMUNICATOR SUBMISSIONS

Please submit information for the next issue to Brenda Lewis at blewis@greenbelthomes.net (do not submit to individual committee members).
Articles are due July 25 for the fall issue.