



Greenbelt Homes, Inc.

# COMMUNICATOR

Bi-Monthly Publication of the Communications Committee

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## COULD THIS BE THE YEAR THAT YOU TAKE THE STEP?

By Frank DeBernardo



*Will it be you filling one of these seats?*

Although May seems like a distant hope in the midst of this cold season, we all know that it will be here before we know it. So before that month's calendar gets filled with spring celebrations, make sure that you put a circle around the date for GHI's Annual Meeting and election: **Wednesday, May 18, 2011, 7:30 p.m.** at the Community Center.

The Annual Meeting is a time to learn the latest news updates about policies and projects in our cooperative. It's an opportunity to connect with neighbors who you haven't seen for a while and to meet new ones. Most importantly, it provides a good way for you to learn about the members who are candidates for the various leadership offices in GHI.

Might you be one of those candidates this year? Do you know someone who you think would make a good leader? One sign of a strong and healthy cooperative is that its members are actively involved in governance and decision-making. If you want GHI to stay the strong co-op that it has been for so many decades, then please take some time to consider the type of people that you would like to lead GHI. A good place to start is with the person in the mirror!

In 2011, GHI members will elect five two-year positions on the Board of Directors, three one-year positions on the Audit Committee, and five one-year positions on the Nominations and Elections (N&E) Committee.

- The nine-member Board of Directors makes decisions and policies for GHI. Although most of the work is done during their regular meetings twice a month on Thursday evenings, board members also stay involved through work sessions, special projects, hearings, and as liaisons to GHI's committees.
- The three-member Audit Committee is not charged with performing financial audits of GHI's accounts. Instead, this committee independently oversees all aspects of the cooperative's operations as well as actions of the Board. The committee reports its findings and conclusions to the membership in an annual report.

*Continued on Page 6*

**Upgrade Pilot Program**  
 Details on page 4.

**GHI Members on Facebook**



[www.facebook.com/ghi.coop](http://www.facebook.com/ghi.coop)



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

## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

BY SUZETTE AGANS

### GHI BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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Questions? Contact 301-474-4161 ext. 152 or blewis@greenbelthomes.net

Dear Shareholders,

It is a new year, a time for reflection and thoughts on GHI as a housing cooperative. Greenbelt Homes Inc., a cooperative corporation, is owned by its share (stock) holders. Unlike a public corporation that has shares bought and sold on stock exchanges which focus solely on profit, GHI is a not-for-profit corporation with a mission to provide quality housing to its shareholders or member-owners. When you sell your unit, you are actually selling your membership to the buyer, i.e., transferring your share to another person. However, the GHI charter does not allow issuance share certificates similar to stock paper certificates.

Like any shareholder, you have the ability to elect the Board, attend and vote in annual meetings and set the direction for the corporation through such actions. But unlike a for-profit corporation, GHI shareholder members are encouraged to participate through board-appointed committees and activities. These committees and activities provide recommendations, research and outreach on important issues facing the corporation.

The challenges of the past year prompted tough discussions and the Board had to make some difficult decisions. Having led most of the meetings, I learned that GHI board members are committed to providing quality housing to the members who have elected them. They always sought ways to understand the impact a policy would have on the membership while considering laws, tax implications, economic and cultural trends, and costs. It was not an easy task. And now we need your help. If you have ideas to present on these issues, step up. Run for the board or work on a committee, a short-term taskforce, or on an activity. GHI can only get better if you are willing to help!

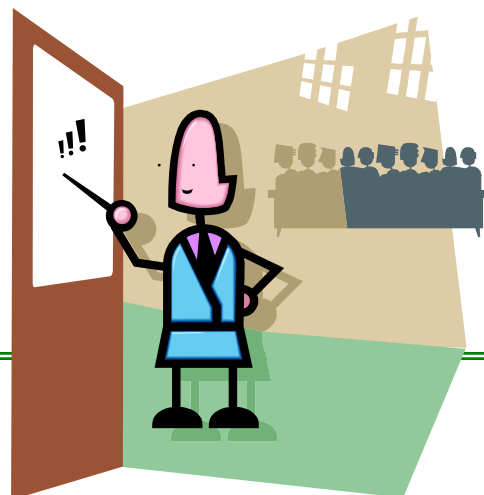
I wish each of you and your families, a healthy, prosperous New Year.

Cooperatively yours,  
Suzette M. Agans



## BOARD MEETINGS AND HIGHLIGHTS

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 pm, except during the summer when meetings are held once a month. Please check the calendar on page 8 or visit [www.ghi.coop](http://www.ghi.coop) for details. With the exception of executive sessions, all meetings are open to the membership.



## POLICIES

- Tabled a policy statement on interior inspections.
- Revised the subleasing policy by adding criteria that allow subleasing by members faced with financial hardship or crisis during the current housing market downturn.
- Removed blanket approval for kitchen renovations from the rules and regulations.

## COMMITTEE REPORTS, REFERRALS AND EXPENDITURE

- Approved the following allocation of year-end excess over expenses and other unallocated funds: \$219,692 to be applied to 2011 Real Estate Taxes; \$20,000 for the web redesign; and the remainder to contingency funds.
- Approved an expenditure of \$150 for distribution of raffle prizes by the Buildings Committee.
- Endorsed a “new member” campaign that will include a quarterly raffle of a \$100 certificate to the co-op supermarket. Members who successfully bring in a new member during any given quarter will have a chance to win the certificate.

## EXCEPTIONS TO RULES AND REGULATIONS

- Disapproved an exception allowing installation of a curtained accessory structure at 44J Ridge Road.
- Granted an exception allowing two decks in the gardenside yard to remain in place at 44J Ridge Road.

## CONTRACTS AWARDED

- For conversion of the boiler room at 9N Southway to storage space (Gott Custom Contracting, Inc., \$21,143).
- For fall repairs of concrete sidewalks at 22 GHI sites (CPE, Inc., \$8,983).
- For repairs to 8J Plateau Place (Gott Custom Contracting, Inc., \$26,894).

## OTHER ITEMS

- Scheduled the annual membership meeting for May 18, 2011.
- Approved yard plats for 1 and 3 Courts Gardenway; 29 and 31 Courts Ridge Road.

**Approved contributions as follows: \$1,000 to the City of Greenbelt Emergency Relief Fund; \$500 to Greenbelt Arts Center’s restroom renovations; \$250 to the Greenbelt Labor Day Festival; \$200 to NASCO Institute’s low-income scholarship fund (sponsored by North American Students of Cooperation); and \$50 to National Co-op Month.**

# INVESTING IN OUR FUTURE

By Sylvia Lewis, Treasurer

For over 20 years members have been contributing to the Replacement Reserve Fund to cover the cost of replacing windows, doors, baseboard heaters, siding on frame homes, and other building components which are approaching the end of their useful life in 2015. We can take advantage of this opportunity to make our homes more energy-efficient and livable through a Community-Wide Upgrade.

Technologies have advanced, and energy costs have risen since these items were installed. Although we could simply replace what we now have, it may be beneficial to consider other improvements as well. That is the purpose of the Pilot Program – to see what types of improvements work well for GHI homes and can be delivered at a reasonable cost. Undertaking a Pilot Program to test the effectiveness and costs of our options, is a prudent and a wise investment.

Here's why:

- Actions taken now to prepare for that multi-million dollar investment will pay for themselves through efficiencies and lessons learned.
- It is reasonable and strategic to do a small-scale project first and learn from the process before attempting it on a large scale. Without a Pilot Program, we would need to start making improvements to all 1600 homes without the benefit of a test case.



- Replacement Reserve Fund financing will be used for Pilot Program improvements for existing components.
- Other improvements that have been proposed for the Pilot Program (increased insulation, different heating and cooling systems) may benefit members in the long run in terms of energy savings and increased comfort. These improvements haven't been saved for and would need to be financed through grants or loans.
- The Upgrade in 2015 is the most important financial decision facing GHI in the next several decades. It is worth investing in the Pilot to make sure we can maximize the benefits. (Yes, this is in here twice! It's that important!)

*The 2015 Upgrade will be the most important financial decision facing GHI in the next several decades.*

*For more information, come to the GHI Community-Wide Town Hall Meeting on January 23 (See flyer for more information).*



## SAVE THE DATE !

### Pilot Program Workshop for Members on January 23

Members are invited to attend a workshop in the gymnasium of the Greenbelt Community Center Building on Sunday, January 23, 2011, beginning at 2:00 p.m. The Board of Directors and Buildings Committee will provide updates on the status of the Pilot Program and seek inputs from members about how to plan for the proposed Community Upgrade Program that is scheduled to start in 2015.

## VOLUNTEERS AND GHI IN THE 21ST CENTURY

*New Approach Lets Members Choose Their Area of Interest*

By Sylvia Lewis

GHI is wealthy in the experience, expertise, and knowledge that members bring to our community. Since its creation in 1952, our co-op has flourished because members were willing and able to share their gifts. But society has changed in the last 70 years, and fewer members have the time or interest to volunteer to spend in monthly committee meetings. This doesn't necessarily mean that members have lost interest in volunteering for GHI. But it does mean that GHI must try new approaches that take into account the needs and interests of current members so that they can be more active in our co-op.

So GHI is setting up Task Forces that allow members to participate in the area of their specific interest, rather than serving on a committee. For example, instead of taking part in a Member Activities Committee that meets monthly to plan activities throughout the year, members can volunteer to be on a task force to plan the Labor Day float and booth, House and Garden Tour, or the annual GHI Yard Sale.

If there is no interest among members to volunteer for an event, then there will not be an event. In the past, there have been times when an excessive amount of GHI staff time has been spent putting on an event when there has been insufficient volunteer involvement. Again, this lack of involvement was not necessarily due to members' lack of interest, but rather may reflect their lack of time and interest in serving on a committee.

Some committees, such as Buildings and Finance, will need to remain intact because their responsibilities are broader and their recommendations to the board are fundamental to the health of GHI.

The new volunteer structure is still evolving, but the involvement of members will be critical to the effectiveness of both committees and task forces. For the new system to work we need a volunteer database that identifies member interests and skills. Please participate today! Go to [www.ghi.coop](http://www.ghi.coop) for the Volunteer Interest Form, or call the Member Services Office at 301-474-4161 ext. 138. We look forward to hearing from you!

## HOLIDAY TREE COLLECTION



Your discarded Christmas tree can be recycled. The Public Works Department will pick up trees at the locations listed below in GHI and process them through the wood chipper. The chips will be used as mulch around trees and flower beds. Please bring trees to any of the following areas up until **February 4, 2011**.

- Ridge Road, 73 Court (opposite playground)
- Plateau Place and Ridge Road (corner on playground side)
- Research Road and Hillside Road (corner)
- Ridge Road, 44 Court (Area near playground)
- Eastway and Crescent Road (corner)
- Ridge Road, 21 Court (across from Green Ridge House)
- Crescent Road and Ridge Road (playground at junction)
- Parkway (corner across from 58 Court Crescent Road)
- Parkway (corner across from Community Church)
- Southway, 7 Court (playground at Little League field)
- Ridge Road, 11 Court and 13 Court (area between courts)

### THANK YOU, ANNE MARIE!

By Brenda C. Lewis

For the last three years, Ann Marie Saucier volunteered as the layout editor for your *Communicator* newsletter. Judging from the many compliments we get on the appearance of the newsletter, she did her job exceedingly well. The job of layout editor is more complicated than it looks. It can be difficult to anticipate the number and length of articles when they are finalized.

Even after that "must-have" article is written and edited; it may still be changed or even eliminated at the last minute -- so additional adjustments are often necessary. When Ann Marie first volunteered for the Communications Committee, she was also working with GHI's Marketing Committee. Her dual roles, and her high-pressure salaried job left precious little time -- but she always managed to find the time for her volunteer job as the *Communicator's* layout editor. Her strong sense of placement and graphic style was exceptional. She would lay out the newsletter, generally taking only a weekend to do so. And those last-minute layout changes were made without complaint--always assuring that the job was done well.

We are going to miss you, Ann Marie. Thanks for serving so well.

## GHI AND THE CITY OF GREENBELT TO IMPROVE SNOW RESPONSE

By Matt Berres

In the months that followed “Snowmageddon” in 2010, GHI and the City of Greenbelt have been diligently updating their snow plans to be better prepared to deal with large snow events.

At the request of the GHI Board, a special task force comprised of GHI members and staff has reviewed GHI’s winter storm procedures. The Winter Storm Task Force presented its report to the GHI Board on October 21, 2010. Primary recommendations included making Winter Storm Procedures and maps widely available to members, clarifying the breakdown between staff and member responsibilities for snow removal, improving mid-storm communication between staff and members, and enhancing coordination with the city.

The newly updated GHI Winter Storm Procedures will be posted on the GHI website this fall along with links to maps that highlight priority areas for court plowing and sidewalk clearing. All members are encouraged to review the procedures before winter sets in.

GHI and city staff met to discuss their respective jurisdictional responsibilities and brainstormed about how to work together better. A key outcome was a commitment to maintain frequent communication before and during winter storm events. Also discussed was how to improve coordinated sidewalk-clearing efforts where city- and GHI-owned



Photo by Kelly Lawson

*Last year’s record snowfall proved challenging for everyone.*

sidewalks converge, as well as contingency planning for maintaining ample pedestrian access during severe snow events such as last winter’s. The city also shared their plan to conspicuously demarcate fire hydrants throughout Greenbelt to help reduce instances of hydrants getting buried by piles of snow.

**More than 100 trees were planted by GHI staff in October to replace trees killed in the 2010 winter storms!**

Although everyone hopes we will not face another winter of massive snows, this advanced planning will certainly aid the collective storm response in the future.

### COULD THIS BE THE YEAR THAT YOU TAKE THE STEP?

*Continued from Page 1*

- The five-member N&E Committee helps to identify candidates for available positions on each of these three elected bodies and conducts fair and expeditious elections.

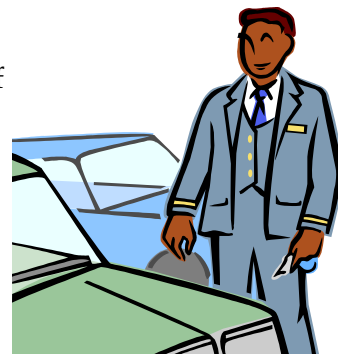
When folks talk about what a great place GHI is, the biggest reason one reason is that there are so many wonderful people here who are community-oriented. That spirit is evident in the many activities and projects we have here, as well as in the personal interactions we experience. You can help to keep that spirit alive by considering putting your name in for one of the offices described above. You can help by identifying people who have talents and vision which would benefit GHI.

The members of the N&E Committee are glad to talk with you about how to run for office or about possible candidates that you may identify. We can be reached by using the following contact information: Kathleen Gallagher, 301-466-0774, Ann Landry-Lombardi, 301-345-3077, Robin Everly at robin.everly@verizon.net, and Frank DeBernardo at FDeBernardo@aol.com. The next issue of the *Communicator* will feature more details about how to run for office, but you can find all the information now at [www.ghi.coop](http://www.ghi.coop) (click on “Elections”).

## HOW TO HANDLE A PARKING PROBLEM

By Gretchen Overduff

From time to time a member may find that someone else has parked in their reserved parking space. Although this is annoying and can be an inconvenience, GHI has a procedure for handling such rule violations. GHI does not routinely enforce reserved parking spaces. Members are encouraged to monitor and resolve parking problems among themselves. However, abuse of the parking privileges may be brought to the attention of the management office in writing, giving the license number and a description of the vehicle. GHI will investigate the complaint during normal business hours. Illegally parked vehicles will be stickered with a warning notice, giving the owner 24 hours to move the vehicle or it may be towed at the owner's expense.



A parking violation is not considered an emergency. Please do not call the after-hours emergency on-call service about such a problem. To assist you in handling the problem, we have included in this issue of the *Communicator* a flyer that you may place on the windshield of the offending vehicle, which is a friendly way of asking the owner of the vehicle to abide by the parking policy and move their vehicle. In instances where the offender continually abuses the policy, the matter may be referred to the Member Complaints Panel of the Board of Directors.



Angella and her husband Ben enjoying College Park Airport

## WHO'S WHO IN GHI: ANGELLA FOSTER

By Marat Moore

Creative artists thrive in our big-hearted community of small GHI homes. One is Angella Foster. A dancer, choreographer, and most of all, a storyteller, her choreography has been performed as far afield as Moscow and as close to home as the Community Center. Her new work, *Speechless*, premiered at the Kennedy Center Millennium Theater in October and was presented as part of an Artful Afternoon in Greenbelt in November.

Weaving together dance, gesture, text, and live music, *Speechless* explores the struggle of parents of special needs children with communication issues to care for and understand their silent children in an increasingly noisy world. The Greenbelt performance was followed by "an interactive movement experience for all ages," says Foster.

It was the city's vibrant arts culture that brought Angella Foster and her exceptional talent to Greenbelt. As an MFA student in dance at the University of Maryland, she worked at the Clarice Smith Performing Arts Center, and came to Greenbelt to help plan the screening of "The City," an historic documentary about the city's creation.

"It was love at first sight," she says of Greenbelt. "I went home and told my husband that as soon as we could

move, I wanted to live here." Three months later, they purchased a GHI home on Laurel Hill.

For a choreographer who loves the narratives of daily life, Greenbelt --immersed in stories-- was a great find, with its New Deal history and the stream of tales that emerge in the pages of the *Greenbelt News Review*, conversations at New Deal and chats in the aisles of the Co-op. That's one reason that she decided to base her dance company, a light dance theater ([www.alightdancetheater.org](http://www.alightdancetheater.org)) in Greenbelt, because the city's values of "authenticity and generosity of spirit," aligned with hers.

And she's returning the favor -- since last summer, she's been teaching dance classes at the Community Center, and also teaches in-school classes at Springhill Lake Elementary and Greenbelt Elementary Schools.

What's next in her creative career? "When I let myself dream, I envision my fledging company surviving and eventually flourishing in our own community performing arts center using our gifts to educate and inspire the people of Prince George's County."

*If you missed seeing Speechless in Greenbelt, you can still catch it at Dance Place in Washington, DC. On Saturday, January 29 at 8 pm and Sunday, January 30, at 4 pm.*

*More information is available online at [www.alightdancetheater.org](http://www.alightdancetheater.org).*

## It's a Date: January/February 2011



Jan 3	Bylaws Task Force	7:00 pm
Jan 11	Nominations & Elections Committee	7:00 pm
Jan 12	Architectural Review Committee	7:30 pm
Jan 13	Board of Directors Meeting	7:30 pm
Jan 16	Board Retreat	12:00-5:30 pm
Jan 17	Communicator Task Force	7:00 pm
Jan 18	Yard Line Ad Hoc Committee	8:30 am
Jan 19	Woodlands Committee	7:00 pm
Jan 20	Finance Committee	7:00 pm
Jan 23	Town Hall Meeting	2:00-4:00 pm
Jan 26	Buildings Committee Companion Animal Committee	7:00 pm 7:30 pm
Jan 27	Board of Directors Meeting	7:30 pm
Feb 8	Yard Line Ad Hoc Committee Nominations & Elections	8:30 am 7:00 pm
Feb 9	Architectural Review Committee	7:30 pm
Feb 10	Board of Directors Meeting	7:30 pm
Feb 16	Woodlands Committee	7:00 pm
Feb 17	Finance Committee	7:00 pm
Feb 21	Communicator Task Force	7:00 pm
Feb 23	Buildings Committee Companion Animal Committee	7:00 pm 7:30 pm
Feb 24	Board of Directors Meeting	7:30 pm

## 2011 GHI Maintenance Schedule

Tentative	WSSC water line replacement
May-Sept	Community beautification inspections
May-Aug	Trim painting
May-Aug	Replace frame home porches
May-June	Spring gutter cleaning
May-June	Sprint concrete repairs
June-Sept	Slate roofs/copper gutters & downspouts
June-July	Addition roof repairs
Jul-Aug	Underground utility repairs
July-Sept	Parking lot repairs
Oct-Nov	Fall concrete repairs
Nov-Dec	Fall gutter cleaning



### Maintenance Department Notice

The maintenance reception desk is **CLOSED** for lunch between noon and 1:00 p.m. daily. You can reach the main front desk reception for emergency service during that time.



From everyone at GHI and  
the  
Communicator Staff

### COMMUNICATOR SUBMISSIONS

Please submit information for the next issue to Brenda Lewis at [blewis@greenbelthomes.net](mailto:blewis@greenbelthomes.net) (do not submit to individual task force members).

**January 20 is the due date for articles for the March/April 2011 issue.**