

CHESTERBROOK WOODS CITIZENS' ASSOCIATION

E-NEWSLETTER - July 2008



CWCA 2008 ANNUAL DUES

Thanks to all the residents that promptly paid their 2008 Annual Family Dues of \$20 and to the many residents that put in a little extra for the Association to use towards multiple neighborhood initiatives. The very minimal \$20 per household, per year, covers snow removal, Neighborhood Watch supplies, the annual CWCA meeting, the annual Halloween Party, CWCA website, Annual Directory, printed newsletters and office supplies, among other things.

If you have not already paid your dues, please do so now so that we can get the CWCA 2008 budget in order. There is a large amount of time and effort required to individually remind non-payers via email/postal mail (as was done last year), so please take the initiative to pay your Annual Dues now so that volunteer neighbors do not have to spend time reminding residents to pay. If you are uncertain whether someone in your family already paid your 2008 \$20 dues, please contact CWCA at ChesterbrookWoods@gmail.com.

CWCA \$20 ANNUAL DUES

Covering services from April 2008 - March 2009

CWCA Dues provide the following services to you and your neighbors:

- Private Snow Removal Service Contract
- Neighborhood Watch Supplies (cell phone, flash lights, car/street signs, etc.)
- Annual CWCA Meeting
- Annual Halloween Party
- CWCA Website
- Annual Directory
- Multiple printed Newsletters for 530+ homes
- Dues Reminder Letters (please note: we are hoping to remove this expense this year by receiving payment from residents without having to send out multiple postal reminder notices)
- Miscellaneous Office Supplies

Please pay \$20 now to cover your family's share for continuing these valuable neighborhood services for the year ahead.

Given the very low dues amount, each year some residents send in more than the minimum amount and CWCA thanks those residents for their generosity.

CWCA \$20 Annual Family Dues Notice

Covering services from April 2008 – March 2009

Please submit a check to "CWCA" for \$20 (or more) along with this form & send to:
Charles Hoyt, CWCA, 1532 Woodacre Drive, McLean, VA 22101

If you have not yet paid last year's (2007) \$15 Dues, please add that in for a total of \$35.

NAME(S) (Please print) _____

STREET ADDRESS _____ PHONE _____

EMAIL _____ DUES AMOUNT \$ _____

a) Does your current Directory listing need to be revised with any info above?
YES NO

b) If you are not in the current Directory, do you want to be added?
YES NO

c) If you want separate listings for adults with different surnames, list the names above, with any different phone numbers/email addresses, etc. and check here.

d) If you want to be on the CWCA Email List only and do NOT want your email printed in the Annual Directory – check here: On Email List Only

CWCA YOUNG ENTREPRENEURS LIST

Please see below for updated list of the 22 Chesterbrook Woods Young Entrepreneurs who have offered to help neighbors. This is a private list, available and to be used only by CWCA residents. If any teens would like to be added to this list or want to update their current listing, please contact **Lisa MacArthur** at 703.534.2266 or LisaMacarthur@cox.net.

BE NEIGHBORLY

CWCA has been contacted recently by residents requesting attention to the following:

- Doggy waste disposal - neighbors applaud the effort whereby residents are picking up after their dogs while out on walks in our neighborhood, but there is a request that dog owners throw away their doggy waste in their own trashcans, not the trashcans of other neighbors (on their walking routes). Please be courteous.

CWCA VOLUNTEERS

We have had multiple changes in CWCA positions over the past three months and wanted to update everyone as well as let you know of Association opportunities related to these changes.

Thanks to **Virginia Dillion** for 30 years (!) of hard working, dedication to our Neighborhood Watch program (since it's beginning in 1978). Almost anyone who was directly touched by Neighborhood Watch either through volunteering or contacting the group regarding security questions, has met Virginia Dillon and experienced her strong and caring commitment to our neighborhood first-hand. Virginia and her husband, Wilton, recently moved out of Chesterbrook Woods. Virginia's daily involvement in CWCA's Neighborhood Watch will be sorely missed but her impact carries on through all that she developed for our program.

We are currently seeking out new residents to help oversee CWCA's Neighborhood Watch Committee. If interested, contact CWCA Security Director, **John Glowacki** at 703.533.0717 or joke4kiki@yahoo.com.

Thanks, also, to **Edie Ashton** for being our first Welcome Committee member over a year ago and for all her visits to new families moving in. With Edie now stepping down from Welcome Committee Chair, we have multiple openings in our Welcome Committee. If any resident is interested in joining this Committee, please contact CWCA at ChesterbrookWoods@gmail.com.

And, last but not least, thanks to **Pat Stearns** for her many years as a Block Captain on Forest Lane. Pat stepped down recently and found her own replacement, just a few doors down. **Robin Waugh** is the new block captain on Forest Lane for 1519 - 1607 house numbers. Welcome Robin! If any resident in Robin's route would like to contact her, please do so at 703.917.0515 or RWaugh1@cox.net.

Not Easy Being 'Green'

McLean residents go to lengths to make their homes eco-friendly.

[By Mike DiCicco](#)

Wednesday, July 02, 2008

When **Jim Talens'** neighborhood in McLean lost power briefly during one of several recent thunderstorms, Talens, as usual, was unaware that the electricity was down. The electrical inverter in his garage had immediately begun drawing power from six "deep discharge" batteries, and the house was running on energy gathered from the sun.

The solar panels in his front yard and the elaborate system that channels their energy into the batteries and into his home are part of Talens' effort to both minimize his impact on the environment and save backup resources for his home. "I think everybody should do what they can to conserve energy," he said. "And with my background, this is my effort."

Although he now works as a real estate agent, telecommunications lawyer and teacher of English, he was originally an electrical engineer, and he also had help from a friend who had recently rigged up a solar-powered backup system in his house. Nonetheless, he said, "Conceptually, it's not that difficult for even a non-engineer."

When the batteries are full, energy from the solar panels flows into the house, and nine "critical circuits" in the house are hooked to the backup system in case of a power outage. Talens said he could have electricity for four days to a week without a connection to the power grid, so long as he was frugal and did not run climate control. After the batteries died, a signal would be sent to the generator in his back yard, which would power the house while it recharged the batteries.

Another source of his electrical experience, and another reason he wanted to have backup power, is his interest in ham radios, which have been a hobby of his since age 13. If a disaster knocked out electrical and communication lines, Talens, a member of the Amateur Radio Emergency Service (ARES), could still send and receive communication, thanks to his backup power system and the 70-foot radio tower in his backyard.

One thing the system was not designed to do, however, was to save money. "These things are difficult to justify economically," he said, noting that it would take "a very long time" to recoup the cost of building the solar power system. "It's regrettable that local governments don't help the average user with the cost of this stuff," he said.

Far more cost-efficient is the 1,600-gallon tank in his backyard that collects rainwater from his roof via a pipe from the downspout. He has connected a hose to the tank with an electrical pump and uses the water for watering his lawn and plants and for washing his car. At a cost of about \$500 for the tank and related parts, Talens figured the water-collection system, in addition to preventing runoff, would take no more than a few years to pay for itself.

Also, the water is drinkable, so that the Talens household would have up to 1,600 gallons of clean water to play with in the event of a water main break like the one that recently occurred in Montgomery County, Md.

Talens has also modified his once-gas-powered lawnmower so that it now runs on batteries, charged by the batteries in his garage. "So, in effect, I'm mowing my lawn with the power from the sun," he said, adding that the mower is self-propelled and "really works well."

In a nearby home, **Rose Wells** has taken "green" living to another level. When she installed a 1,600-watt solar electric system in her house three years ago, she decided she would use no more power than the solar panels on her roof could generate. She is still hooked to the electric grid, running on grid power by night and solar power by day, but her electric meter continues to crawl backward, as the solar panels put more power into the grid than she takes out.

"It isn't easy. I haven't used my clothes dryer in years," said Wells. "It's pretty Spartan around here." In the winter, the house is kept at 55 degrees Fahrenheit, and the central cooling system hasn't been used in years. The temperature in Wells' bedroom is more regulated, with the help of a highly efficient, ductless, mini-split air conditioning unit and a solar-powered air heater.

The heater is a large, black panel on the side of her house that gathers the sun's heat, covered by a glass pane that traps that heat. A solar panel in the upper right corner powers the fan that draws air from the basement through the heater and into the bedroom. The air that comes blowing in through a duct in her bedroom closet can reach temperatures up to 120 degrees, said Wells.

This time of year, the house's south- and west-facing windows are covered with reflective fabric to keep out the heat.

Outside, she has made her yard part of the "local food movement," which seeks to eliminate inefficiencies involved in transporting food. "Little by little, I'm doing away with the grass and putting in gardening," she said. She uses a method known as "lasagna gardening," laying newspaper over the existing lawn, covering it with grass clippings, sawdust and other nutrients and allowing it to decompose for a year or so before planting in it. She gathers the grass clippings from her neighbor's curbsides and the sawdust from a woodshop near a friend's house. Coffee grounds given away by Starbucks also provide nutrients. She pointed out that the yard made use of "a ton of things that would go to the dump."

The crops growing on trees, vines, stalks and bushes in her front and back yards include but are not limited to carrots, tomatoes, radishes, onions, peppers, runner beans, figs, grapes, kale, asparagus, kiwi fruit, peaches, apples, jujubes, zucchini, pumpkins, cherries, hazelnuts, Japanese apricots, Asian pears, oregano, basil, persimmons, nasturtiums, blueberries, blackberries, strawberries, raspberries, cranberries, mulberries, juneberries, elderberries and native pawpaw.

The young pawpaw trees, actually, have not yet borne fruit, and Wells says she is waiting in anticipation, as she has never laid eyes or taste buds on what was said to be George Washington's favorite fruit. While the tree is remarkably hearty, the fruits are too delicate to transport to market, hence their rarity.

"I'm using this little one-third acre of land that I have here productively," she said. One largish patch of grass remains in the front yard. She is working on terracing the backyard.

Wells figures about half of her watering is done with runoff from her roof, depending how rainy the season. One downspout terminates in a 70-gallon tank, while the others flow into permeable piping that runs under the gardens.

She has no garbage disposal, so that food scraps won't put nitrogen into the Chesapeake Bay, and she uses biodegradable clothes detergent so she can pipe her washing machine's water into the garden. "You sort of have to be a maniac to do these kinds of things, but I guess I am," she shrugged. She'd had to wait until her children left home to fully step up her efforts. "If I had a family, of course, they wouldn't stand for it."

She also walks half a mile to catch a bus to the Metro to get to her job with the federal government because she no longer owns a car.

Coming of age in California during the late 1960s, "we all thought we were earth mothers," she said. "It makes me happy to be self-sufficient and that I'm walking lightly on the land, as they say. And it's really amazing how giving nature can be, and it makes you feel like you've got to respect that and not want to harm it."

She noted that her solar power system, like Talens', would probably never pay off in her lifetime in a state where electricity rates are low and no incentives are offered for installing such systems. It had cost \$15,000, \$2,000 of which was funded by the federal government.

One McLean resident who is working to create state subsidies for residential solar power systems is Del. Margi Vanderhye (D-34), whose home gets about 25 percent of its power from rooftop solar panels. Her and Wells' homes are currently two of only 26 houses in the state that put power back into the grid on a sunny day.

The rest of her electricity, she said, comes from "green energy" purchased through Pepco. This energy is created by wind turbines or from trapped landfill gases.

Vanderhye's husband, Robert, an attorney and energy specialist, said burning methane released by landfills was a particularly innovative solution. "What you're doing is taking pollution and turning it into energy," he said.

Because these options are little-known, Margi Vanderhye, said, she recently got a bill passed that would make power companies inform their customers of "green" energy options.

In their home, she and her husband also use efficient Energy Star appliances, compact fluorescent bulbs and timers to minimize their energy consumption, she said. Her husband said the couple would also use a solar water heater, which he called the most cost-effective way there is to heat water, if they hadn't already taken up their prime roof space with the existing solar panels. In Northern Virginia, he said, a solar water heater will pay for itself in about four years.

Margi Vanderhye said she and her husband had always been mindful of the environment. "We've been recycling ever since we were first married, even when we had to throw our stuff into the back of the car and take it to a remote site because no one else was doing it," she said.



Photo by Mike DiCicco

This system runs solar energy in and out of a set of batteries in Jim Talens' garage.



Photo by Mike DiCicco

Rose Wells shows off one of the first figs on her fig trees. The fig is one of many varieties of fruits, vegetables and herbs she grows in her yard.

Both Jim Talens' and Rose Wells' homes will be stops on the Washington, D.C. Solar Tour October 4 and 5. For more information, visit www.solartour.org.