

NEWSLETTER

HOA Officers Elected

The homeowners association Board of Directors have elected the following officers for the 2009 calendar year:

President: David Sager

Secretary: Randy Sands

Treasurer: Russ Craig ❖

HOA Board Members

Along with the homeowners association officers listed above, the following neighbors are At-Large members of the Board of Directors:

Lisa Barksdale

Ed Herron

John O'Loughlin

Randy Sands

Peter Schmidt

Debbie Stine

Mark Wesolowski ❖

HOA Board Meetings

Regular Board of Directors meetings will be held at the Longwood Community Center from 7:00PM to 9:00PM on the following dates: Wednesday, June 17, Wednesday, September 23, and Wednesday, November 18. All homeowners are welcome to attend. ❖

HOA Web Site

The Brookeville Farms homeowners association web site is located at <http://www.geocities.com/bfmdhoa/>. This site includes information pertaining to the homeowners association such as ARC forms, minutes from previous board meetings, current and previous newsletters, as well as contact information for board members. ❖

Newsletter Articles

If you would like to submit an article to appear in the next homeowners association newsletter, or for any inquiries, please send them to David Sager (davids4001@gmail.com). ❖

Community E-Mail List

It was thought that a community e-mail list would make it easier to communicate with our neighbors in the Brookeville Farms community. To that end, our neighbor, Peter Schmidt, has created the e-mail address "bfneighbors@prstech.com".

It has been populated with the few e-mail addresses that Board members knew about. If you would like to be added to the list, or know of anyone else who would, please send Peter an email at (peter@prstech.com). ❖

Volunteers Needed!

The homeowners association is always looking for volunteers. Even if you can only spare a few hours, your help would be greatly appreciated. You can volunteer to be on a committee or to just help out. If you are interested, please send an e-mail to David Sager (davids4001@gmail.com). ❖

Recycling

Montgomery County collects recyclable paper, cardboard, newspapers, bottles, and cans on Thursday mornings. Please use the blue containers provided by the County. You should place your recycling containers at the end of your driveway late the night before or early in the morning. Please retrieve your recycling containers as soon as possible following pickup. If recycling day falls on a holiday, the recycling will be picked up the next day. If you would like to get e-mail notices about recycling and trash collection changes, you may sign up at the Montgomery County Division of Solid Waste Services web site, <http://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/content/dep/solidwaste/index.asp> ❖

Propane

Even though we all heat our homes with propane, what do we know about it? Other than it's too expensive! Propane naturally occurs as a gas at atmospheric pressure but can be liquefied if subjected to moderately increased pressure. It is

stored and transported in its compressed liquid form, but by opening a valve to release propane from a pressurized storage container, it is vaporized into a gas for use. Simply stated, propane is always a liquid until it is used. Although propane is non-toxic and odorless, an identifying odor is added so the gas can be readily detected.

Propane is not produced for its own sake, but is a by-product of natural gas processing and petroleum refining. The by-product nature of propane production means that the volume made available from natural gas processing and oil refining cannot be adjusted when prices and/or demand for propane fluctuate. Demand can also be met by imports of propane and by using stored inventories. Although imports provide about ten percent of the U.S. propane supply, they are vital when consumption exceeds available domestic supplies of propane. Propane is imported by land (via pipeline and rail car from Canada) and by sea (in tankers from such countries as Algeria, Saudi Arabia, Nigeria, and Norway).

Propane prices are subject to a number of influences, including the prices of competing fuels in each market; the distance propane has to travel to reach a customer; and the volumes used by a customer. More specifically, propane prices are affected by:

Crude Oil and Natural Gas Prices – Although propane is produced from both crude oil refining and natural gas processing, its price is influenced mainly by the cost of crude oil. This is because propane competes mostly with crude oil-based fuels.

Supply/Demand Balance – Propane supply and demand is subject to changes in domestic production, weather, and inventory levels, among other factors. While propane production is not seasonal, residential demand is highly seasonal. This imbalance causes inventories to be built up during the summer months when consumption is low and for inventories to be drawn down during the winter months when consumption is much higher. When inventories of propane at the start of the winter heating season are low, chances increase that higher propane prices may occur during the winter season.

Colder-than-normal weather can put extra pressure on propane prices during the high demand winter season because there are no readily available sources of increased supply except for imports. And imports may take several weeks to arrive, during which time larger-than-normal withdrawals from inventories may occur, sending prices upward. Cold weather early in the heating season can cause higher prices sooner rather

than later, since early inventory withdrawals affect supply availability for the rest of the winter.

Proximity of Supply – Due to transportation costs, customers farthest from the major supply sources (the Gulf Coast and the Midwest) will generally pay higher prices for propane.

Unlike the price of electricity, natural gas, coal, and heating oil, the price of propane gas is highly flexible. While there may be some excellent, customer-focused dealers, there are those who will take advantage of the fact that most people don't understand the propane gas business model and its pricing structure. Most propane users are in the dark regarding prices because no dealer publicizes rates and many won't even tell you their rates when you call them. The vast majority of customers are captives to their dealers. Apparently it is up to each individual consumer to monitor propane prices to determine if they are being charged a fair price.

It is very important to conduct your own propane pricing research on a regular basis to ensure that your price is competitive. If your supplier's prices are not publicly posted, consider the following methods of research:

- Make sure all your delivery tickets clearly show your propane price per gallon. If these documents fail to show your price per gallon, contact your supplier and request that your price per gallon be included on future delivery tickets. Without being aware of your price per gallon, you will be unable to compare propane prices offered by other suppliers in your area.
- Call your current supplier once or twice per month, especially during the winter heating months and anonymously inquire about their standard price per gallon. Contact other suppliers in your area and inquire about their standard price per gallon at the same time. Ask for both the current customer and new customer pricing information for a customer that purchases your approximate propane volume each year. Note prices for both purchased and leased tanks.
- After receiving a propane delivery, contact other suppliers to compare their price per gallon with the price per gallon that appears on your suppliers recent delivery ticket. Keep a record of the pricing information by date and supplier to review periodically.
- Check the Energy Information Administration (EIA) web site (www.eia.doe.gov) to determine the directional trend of propane prices. If the national

pricing average is going up or down during the past few weeks, compare the direction of your supplier's pricing for the same time period. The directional pricing movement will not be identical; however, the pricing should follow the same general direction.

- Ask your friends and neighbors about their propane pricing.

Each propane consumer is ultimately responsible for ensuring that propane pricing is competitive. If it becomes evident during your random price surveys that your supplier does not offer competitive propane pricing, it may be in your best interest to change your propane service to another supplier.

The Energy Information Administration (EIA) is an independent statistical agency within the U.S. Department of Energy whose sole purpose is to provide reliable and unbiased energy information. According to the EIA, the average residential propane price on 2/22/09 was \$2.32 per gallon.

Some propane suppliers that service the Brookeville area are:

AmeriGas
1573 Tilco Drive
Frederick, MD 21704-6650
(301) 620-9046

National Propane Buyer's Cooperative
22318 Clarksburg Road
Boys, MD 20841
(301) 515-0098

Suburban Propane
31 Derwood Circle
Rockville, MD 20850-1263
(301) 251-0606

United Propane
4987 Winchester Boulevard, #4
Frederick, MD 21703-7435
(301) 829-2828 ❖

It's Not a Muzzle!

by Dr. Steve Velling, Ashburn Village Animal Hospital, www.ashburnanimals.com.

Have you ever been on a walk and seen a dog wearing what looked like a muzzle? It may have been a nice color, and the dog was walking very calmly, not at all what you'd expect from a dog wearing a muzzle. In fact, that dog was most likely wearing something called a Gentle Leader or Halti headcollar, and those who

own one often swear that they simply could not walk their dog without it.

Many people, whether they have a big or small dog, have been pulled over and subsequently injured from having their dog become excited while on a leash and then lunge forward. I know of an elderly woman who, while walking her little terrier, was pulled off her feet and then broke her hip when her dog saw a squirrel and took off after it. When I see a dog come into our clinic pulling so hard that it is literally choking itself, I take that as a chance to recommend to the owner a different way of walking their dog.

The concept is simple—if you have control of the head, you have far better control of the dog versus a collar around the neck or a harness around the body, which can almost encourage a dog to pull. The two straps (one over the nose, one behind the head) apply control and light pressure to the head and mouth. A dog is still free to bark, pant, eat, or drink, but the person walking the dog will notice that it is much easier to walk Fido. Other advantages are that it offers control for all people, no matter the size of the dog or person, so a child can usually walk a big dog, because they control the dog's head and neck. In addition, it is safer and more effective than a choke chain or prong collar, and can be used on puppies as young as eight weeks of age.

So if you have a big unruly dog that you dread walking, or a little dog that barks at everything while out on a walk, then consider getting one of these headcollars. I really think you will like it. ❖

Spring Gardening Tips

from the American Horticultural Society

Growing Annuals from Seed

Growing annuals like zinnias, marigolds, and tomatoes from seed is easy and economical. The exact time to start seeds varies with the plant and with your location. In general, it's about six weeks before the date of the average last frost in your area. Seed catalogs and packages usually list the number of weeks needed when starting seeds indoors.

Use a potting mix specially formulated to start seeds; you can find such mixes at almost any garden center or hardware store. The mixes are sterile, provide the drainage that seedlings need, and are sometimes enriched with fertilizer. Fill peat pots or other seed-starting containers with the mix and thoroughly moisten it. Then sow your seeds of choice following the directions on the packet. Place the containers on a tray in a very sunny window or under a grow light.

Never allow them to dry out. As soon as the seedlings develop four leaves, use scissors to thin out your seedlings, leaving just the healthiest looking ones.

After all danger of frost has passed, place the trays of seedlings outdoors in a sheltered place for several days, gradually lengthening the time they are exposed to the sun and wind to prevent scorching the leaves, before transplanting them into the garden.

A little TLC for your perennials

Herbaceous perennials and grasses, a group of diverse and reliable plants that return to the garden year after year, can greatly benefit from a little extra attention in the spring. Here are some tasks that will help your plants get off to a healthy start.

- Remove winter mulch from around the crowns of perennials.
- Cut back any parts of the plant that were left up for winter interest, such as flower stalks and seed heads.
- For evergreen perennials, remove any dead leaves.
- When new growth is about three to four inches tall, dividing and transplanting may be done. For spring-flowering plants, wait till they are finished blooming.
- Begin placing stakes to support the growth of tall or fragile perennials.

Pruning early-blooming shrubs

Shrubs that bloom early in the year, such as forsythia, form their flower buds the previous year. In the rush of the spring season, there are always so many chores to do it's easy to forget that these early flowering shrubs need pruning immediately after bloom. If you wait too long before getting around to it, you'll cut off next year's flower buds. And if you don't prune at all, these strong growers will quickly turn into giant tangles.

As soon as the last flowers fade, use a pruning saw to cut off one-fourth to one-third of the biggest, oldest stems at ground level. Use pruning shears to shorten all of the stems to two or three feet from the ground. If you wish to greatly limit the shrub's size, you can cut the branches as far back as six inches from the ground. By the end of the growing season, new branches will have formed. These will arch gracefully from the center and will be covered with new flower buds for next year's spring show. ❖

www.GreatYardSale.com

Our neighbor, Peter Schmidt, has created a new web site called www.GreatYardSale.com. It is intended to

be a virtual yard sale, somewhat like Craigslist. Here are some features:

- It's free.
- While the site isn't strictly limited to the Olney-Brookeville area, the goal is to assist with LOCAL community sales of goods, just like a real yard sale. It has locations like "Olney-Brookeville", and not just "all of Maryland". Buyers and sellers are likely to be your neighbors.
- It's small, and managed by a person in the local community (Peter). So he can make changes and respond to any issues as needed.
- Instead of a five-day expiration on ads like on Craigslist, there currently is a six-month expiration for GreatYardSale.com. So goods can sit and "cook" as needed.
- It's completely secure. Your e-mail address and other info is held confidentially, unless or until you desire otherwise.
- This program has great features, like keyword searches, most recent ads, browsing by location or category, RSS feeds, all sorts of cool stuff.
- It does not facilitate any money changing hands. That is a private matter between the buyer and the seller.

The new website was created primarily as an adjunct to the Olney-Brookeville Exchange. While the Olney-Brookeville Exchange is perfect for community involvement, interaction and communication - and is often used for selling personal goods, it is not really intended or designed to easily facilitate selling things. This new website is designed towards buying and selling personal items. So it can be thought of as sort of a "sister" site to the Olney-Brookeville Exchange.

So like all new websites - there is the chicken-or-the-egg problem of becoming big enough to be useful. But if all goes well, it will end up being a great place for the community to safely and easily exchange goods. So if you get a chance, please check it out and PLEASE help us get rolling by placing an ad for something to sell. Who knows - you might even sell it or find something you need. It's EASY to use. ❖