

NEWSLETTER

HOA Officers

The homeowners association officers are:

President: David Sager
Secretary: Randy Sands
Treasurer: Phil Craig ❖

HOA Board Members

The following are At-Large members of the Board of Directors:

Shane Hickey
Chris Milke
John O'Loughlin
Bret Stine
Chrysa Thear
Mark Wesolowski ❖

HOA Board Meetings

Regular Board of Directors meetings are held from 7:00PM to 9:00PM. The dates are: Tuesday, February 2 (Annual meeting); Thursday, April 8; Tuesday, June 8; Thursday, September 9; and Thursday, November 4. Until social distancing restrictions are removed, these meetings will be virtual. All homeowners are welcome to attend. ❖

HOA Web Site

The Brookeville Farms HOA web site is located at www.bfmdhoa.info. This site includes information pertaining to the HOA such as Architectural Review forms, minutes from previous board meetings, current and previous newsletters, as well as contact information for board members.

Dog IDs

Recently, following our morning walk with my dog, Eddie (a Labrador Retriever), I approached my house and saw a yellow Lab/Golden mix dog in my front yard. I saw no handler nearby. She was very friendly and very interested in Eddie. She followed us up the driveway and into the garage. Fortunately, she was wearing a collar with a single tag. The tag had her name on one side, Ellie, and a phone number on the other. Thus, I was able to reunite her with her owner.

This incident reaffirms the importance of having readily accessible identification on your dog. While a microchip is important, it is not as useful as the basic, long-used, and highly reliable collar and tag. Dog collars range in price and material, from simple nylon to durable leather, in virtually every color imaginable, to fit your own (or your dog's) sense of style. You can even get collars with embroidering or an engraved plate for identification purposes, making it doubly effective. Whatever style you choose, be sure it's strong enough to keep from slipping off. It should be comfortable, but also designed to stay on.

A dog tag just needs a little information to serve its purpose. Tags are relatively inexpensive so it's a good idea to have duplicates in case one becomes lost (or the collar it's attached to goes missing). In fact, the more tags the merrier: you'll soon listen for the familiar jingle when minding your dog. Along with the ID, a rabies tag serves the dual purpose of proving that your dog has been vaccinated (as required by law) along with being uniquely numbered to help potential rescuers find you should you become separated. Montgomery County provides a tag when you license and register your dog. You can add that tag to the collar as well. While tags don't cost much, you shouldn't skimp on price when it comes to an ID tag. Choose a quality tag that can handle solid engraving that won't dull or rub away over time. Remember: your dog is less likely to be returned if the tag is illegible. ❖

Germs, Be Gone!

As much as we all wish we could go back to a time when social distancing was a foreign concept and masks were just something you wore with a Halloween costume, it's clear by now that COVID-19 isn't going anywhere. At least, not anytime soon. One consequence of the pandemic is that our collective concern over cleanliness remains at an all-time high. Here are a few ideas on how to enhance your home and reduce the transfer of germs during the era of COVID-19.

Install touchless faucets

This isn't just a feature for public bathrooms anymore. Installing a touchless faucet is a quick and easy project that you can take on in your own home. No handles or knobs means fewer surfaces touched and less of a chance of cross-contamination occurring after hand-washing or handling messy foods. Touchless faucets aren't just for the bathroom: You can install one in the kitchen—or even a utility sink.

Switch to automatic soap dispensers

After you've upgraded to a new contact-free faucet, why not take the cleanliness to the next level? Since the best way to fight germs is hand-washing, you may also want to consider installing sensor-operated soap dispensers. Like touchless faucets, touchless dispensers also help eliminate most surface contact during the hand-washing process. You can opt for a sleek, commercial-grade dispenser that requires some installation, or choose a battery-operated stand-alone model if you're on a budget.

Upgrade to a bidet or touchless toilet

Worried about another toilet paper shortage? Install a bidet in your bathroom. No toilet paper, no problem! You can purchase a stand-alone bidet or a bidet toilet-seat attachment that works with your current toilet. You can also purchase a smart toilet with or without a built-in bidet. Many smart toilets come fully equipped with digital controls, touchless gushing, and Bluetooth connectivity, plus self-cleaning features to relieve you of your toilet-scrubbing duties.

Use smart lighting for touchless illumination

Think of how often you touch the light switches around your house—then think of how many germs could be lurking there. Switching to a smart lighting system can help reduce the transmission of germs. You control the lights from your phone, and with a smart system, you can control the lighting even when you're away. This not only helps with home security, but also cuts down on your energy costs.

Eliminate contact with smart door locks

Just like light switches, door locks can be a breeding ground for germs as people go in and out of the house. Digital keypad and smart door locks can help reduce human surface contact. Their features often include keyless options, voice activation, and biometric identifiers.

Take it outside year-round with space heaters

Outdoor hangouts have traditionally been limited to the summer months. But keeping your activities outside doesn't have to be out of reach, even on

cooler days—and it can help minimize the risk of transmitting the virus. The solution - an outdoor patio heater.

Try a sanitizing closet

These days, it's not just the Roomba that's helping us keep our homes clean. From hands-free trash cans to refrigerators with sensors for touchless opening, tech tools and gadgets are making it easier than ever to keep our homes clean. One product that has exploded in popularity in recent months is sanitizing closets, which use ultraviolet light to sanitize garments to minimize the spread of pathogens. ❖

Safe Online Shopping

Create Strong Passwords

Use a different password for every retailer and service you have an online account with. That way, if your password is exposed in a data breach, you will be less likely to become a victim to account takeover fraud through credential stuffing attacks.

Keep Security Software Updated

Check for updates regularly, especially your anti-virus software, and definitely before you embark on an online shopping spree, as this software can help to prevent hackers from getting into your accounts.

Avoid Buying Common Goods from Unknown Sellers

A hacker may set up a website designed to look like a legitimate seller, but with no plans to ship you any goods you may buy. Before purchasing from any seller, perform an Internet search for their legitimacy and check the Better Business Bureau for any scam reports. Duplicate favorable reviews found on different sites are a red flag of false product promises.

Choose Safe Payment Methods

Your credit card offers greater protection over a debit card, especially if you need to dispute fraudulent charges, and will safeguard your bank account from unauthorized withdrawals. Avoid using a check or money order, if you can, or your money may disappear with little to no recourse.

Take Caution Buying Through Ads and Offers

Before you think of making a purchase through an ad on Instagram or Facebook, or even downloading a coupon, perform an Internet search about the ad you received for words like "complaint" or "reviews" and you may uncover a scam related to the promotional offer.

Watch Out for Unsecure Websites

Look for the padlock symbol followed by “https” and the site link. Be cautious of secure-looking sites which are actually fake websites, often by swapping numbers for letters, misspelling names, or adding additional words or characters to known website addresses. If you are going to buy from a reseller, only purchase from those with very positive feedback. Resellers with negative reviews or no reviews may be scammers.

Beware of Surveys

You have probably seen these before on social media: “Take this survey to find out your spirit animal,” or something similar. Once you click on the link you need to answer a set of questions that often expose information regularly used to answer online security questions or authenticate your identity.

Ignore Strange Emails

Many companies send special promotions and discounts. Some hackers try to capitalize on this and catch victims through phishing scams. Don’t fall for scams promising unrealistically deep discounts or free merchandise. You know what they say — if it’s too good to be true, it probably is.

Watch Credit Card Statements

Keep a close eye on your credit card statements for any activity that looks suspicious. If you do find anything unexpected, report it immediately. Sign up for alerts and notifications for all your charges. ❖

Use Compostable, Not Biodegradable, Dog Poop Bags

When you pick up your dog’s poop, you do everyone a favor, but if you want to do the environment a favor as well, you’ll need to use the right poop bag. A regular old plastic bag can pollute oceans, choke animals, and poison soil, so you probably use one listed as “biodegradable.” But not all bags are what they seem. Here’s how you can choose the right type of bag for your dog’s poop.

Read biodegradable bags carefully

When a product is biodegradable, it means the material is made to break down and return to the earth, hopefully without harming our water, soil, and air. Unfortunately, though, “biodegradable” has its limitations. Some biodegradable products must be disposed of in a particular way; if they aren’t, they may not return to the earth the way we think, and that includes our dog’s poop bags.

Use compostable bags over biodegradable

Choosing a different bag may be the easiest way to help the environment. Use a compostable bag instead of a biodegradable one, as compostable bags decompose while returning nutrients back to the earth. They’re usually made of

food products like potato starch and other plant materials, which make them good for proper decomposition. Marine biologist Richard Thompson conducted a study at Plymouth University on the difference between biodegradable and compostable, reporting that “in the underwater environment, the compostable bag disappeared completely within three months,” while the regular plastic bags and biodegradable ones were still able to hold five pounds of groceries.

Use a compostable paper bag

Another option is a paper bag, which removes plastic from the equation entirely, eliminating any risks of plastic chemicals leaking into the earth. In addition to using paper bags, you can use compostable paper bags to be sure they’ll break down quickly and eventually feed the soil. ❖

Q. How can I keep my car windshield and windows from fogging up in the winter?

A. Car windows can quickly steam up in winter when moisture in the warm cabin air creates condensation.

To clear a foggy car windshield and/or windows, make sure your climate control system is in fresh-air mode (running it in recirculation mode will cause moisture to accumulate). And although it might seem counterintuitive, you should turn your car’s air conditioning on. It will dehumidify the air, which will reduce the chances of a foggy car windshield. Plus setting it to a high temperature should keep the car toasty, too. ❖

“A little more kindness, A little less speed, A little more giving, A little less greed, A little more smile, A little less frown, A little less kicking, A man while he's down, A little more "We", A little less "I", A little more laugh, A little less cry, A little more flowers, On the pathway of life, And fewer on graves, At the end of the strife.” — Mark Twain

“We need to look infinitely harder at who we elect to any office in our land — at the office seeker’s character, at their morals, at their ethical record, their integrity, their honesty, their flaws, what they have said about women, and minorities, why they are seeking office in the first place, and only then consider the policies they espouse.” — John F. Kelly