

Volume 05, Issue 1

January 2005

Happy New Year!

The Hickory Farms Newsletter

Who to contact

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*Hickory Farms Community Association
Fairfax County, Virginia*

President's Letter

Dear Neighbors,

Happy New Year!! On behalf of my fellow Board members, I'd like to wish you and your family a happy and healthy New Year. The Community is quite active as we head into the New Year. Please see enclosed articles about a series of different initiatives being organized by fellow Hickory Farms' homeowners. I encourage you to participate, and don't hesitate to follow-up with the organizers if you have any questions.

Another issue that arose in December was the notice that homeowner's received regarding trash collection. AAA announced that they are raising rates, again. This was an issue that the Board addressed after the last increase. At that time, we decided to stay with AAA. We will revisit, but the lack of competition in the area makes this a challenge. We will provide more info on this as we move through the process.

As a reminder, don't forget that your annual HOA fee is due. The \$100 fee is staying constant compared to the last several years, and provides the funds to upkeep our common areas and support our community events.

Finally, I encourage you to contact me with any questions or concerns you may have about the community.

Again, Happy New Year to all!!

Jeff Altman

Inside this issue:

President's Letter

Treasurer's Report

**Neighborhood
Watch Report**

**Home Improvement
Projects/Information**

Assessment Notice

The next Hickory Farms' Homeowners Association Board Meeting will be held Tuesday, January 18. All HOA members are invited. For details on meeting time and location, please contact Jeff Altman at 703-978-0309 or jalt0629@hotmail.com.

Treasurer's Report

The year 2004 has been another successful one for Hickory Farms. All but one homeowner paid their dues, which ultimately resulted in the placement of a lien on that property to ensure its eventual payment. An additional \$1050 in un-budgeted money was received by the Association, as 30 homeowners paid late fees on their dues payments and 6 homeowners put their homes up for sale during the year.

Please keep in mind that the annual dues (\$100) for the calendar year 2005 will be payable to the HFCA beginning January 1, 2005 and are due no later than March 31, 2005. Dues received after March 31 will be subject to an additional \$25 late fee. Thanks to those homeowners who have already paid their dues for 2005.

If you are planning to sell your home in the upcoming year, keep in mind that you will need to obtain a VPOAA package from the HFCA. The package is required by law, and is usually obtained by your realtor or title company. You may also request the VPOAA package directly if you wish.

The following are the steps for obtaining a VPOAA package:

1. Contact the Treasurer. Let him know when the package is needed and where it should be sent.
2. Draft a check for \$50, payable to the HFCA. The check can be mailed to HFCA, P.O. Box 2239, Fairfax, VA 22031-2239; or make other arrangements with the Treasurer as necessary.
3. Please allow 7-10 days from receipt of the check by the Treasurer to the date the VPOAA package can be released, as we must allow time for the check to clear. Should time be critical, cash payments can be accepted and a written receipt will be provided.

I want to thank all of the homeowners who have helped to make my job as the Treasurer for the past two years successful and enjoyable. I would also like to thank my fellow (and former ones as well) board members who provided me with the help and support I needed from them during the past two years. I am sure Jaime will do a great job as the new Treasurer of your Board. Please also help him and make his job easier by noting your Lot number on your payment.

Bob Bentley

REMINDER: Hickory Farms HOA annual dues are due by March 31. Dues are \$100. Late fees are \$25, and are charged based on postmark date. If you have any questions, please contact Hickory Farms' Treasurer, Jamie Gutierrez, at jagutierrez1@cox.net.

NEIGHBORHOOD WATCH

Marc Fogleman

Thankfully, we have had another relatively quiet month. No new reports of crimes or suspicious activity. I'm sure most everyone has noticed that the street sign at the corner of Harvester Farm and Cotton Farm has somehow become disengaged from the pole. We have reported this to the Fairfax County Dept. of Public Works and this should be repaired in short order.

The Fairfax County Police Department has issued the following tip: always lock your doors, even while at home. Deadbolt locks are recommended for most hinged exterior doors. The West Springfield Crime Prevention Unit provides home security surveys for residents living within our district. This is a free service and involves a crime prevention officer evaluating your home to determine measures that you may need to take to make your home more secure.

If anyone is interested in volunteering a few hours of their time in becoming a watch volunteer or be available as a substitute, please contact me at foglemarc@aol.com, or phone me at home in the evenings at 703.764.0295.

Below is the Watch List for January and February. Have a safe and happy holiday season!

Sat	Jan 1	Angel Meza	Jason Meza
Fri	Jan 7	Eric Maribojoc	Clarisa Dacanay
Sat	Jan 8	Bob Montgomery	George Rosenkranz
Fri	Jan 14	Rich Pernicano	Steve Mathews
Sat	Jan 15	Pete Scala	Rose Scala
Fri	Jan 21	Stan Lee	Jim Marshall
Sat	Jan 22	Pam Barrett	Tom Barrett
Fri	Jan 28	John Verheul	John Cotner
Sat	Jan 29	Robert Cooke	Lorna Cooke
Fri	Feb 4	Rob Mikula	Sharon Mikula
Sat	Feb 5	Ron Cruz	Louise Cruz
Fri	Feb 11	Jaime Gutierrez	Ed Wagner
Sat	Feb 12	Stefan Schwarz	Christine Schwarz
Fri	Feb 18	Harry Herchert	Ginny Herchert
Sat	Feb 19	Bob Bentley	Nancy Bentley
Fri	Feb 25	Bill Galinis	Diana Galinis
Sat	Feb 26	Larry Russe	Chris Russe

Services offered by Eva Ai-Kim (Hickory Farms resident)
10770 Lee Highway, Fairfax, Va 22030 (Next to Super H Mart)
 (703) 507-0797

- Highlight, Color, Perm, Cut & Style, Eyelash Perm/Color
 - Facial, Microdermabrasion, Remove moles, warts, age spots...
 - Permanent Makeup: Eyebrow, Eyeliner, Lip liner, Full lips, Beauty marks
- Valuable Gifts or Complementary Facial*
20% Off For Hickory Farms Neighbors

Home Improvement Projects/Information

Interior Walls Dingy? Do they Need Painting?

Ed Kiechlin is checking for interest in a group purchase of interior painting services. If you are interested, e-mail Ed at ekiechlin@worldnet.att.net or call 703-978-4028. Ed would also like to hear about good licensed and insured interior painters.

Be Considerate of Your Mailman!

The mailman can deliver our mail more quickly if he/she doesn't have to leave the truck to walk around trash cans. Help the mailman by placing your trash cans at least 12 feet away from your mailbox.

Thinking About Replacing Your Furnace, A/C, Heat Pump, or Water Heater?

If you are interested in participating in a group purchase of one or more of these items, please e-mail Kirk_Randall@Hotmail.com (that's an underline between Kirk and Randall) and tell him what you're in the market for. E-mail contact is preferred. If you don't have e-mail, leave a message at 703-425-0210. Act quickly, as our best deals are for work done January – March, traditionally the slow season for this work. Here are some things you might want to consider.

I am leaning towards a contractor that sells American Standard/Trane products. They are manufactured by the same company. These products have been rated by Consumer Reports magazine as being the most reliable. Please e-mail me your experience with this brand as well as others.

- Consumer Reports magazine has some information on choosing heating and air conditioning system in its 2004 "Best Buys for Your Home" available at the Fairfax City library. Or, Kirk has copies if you're interested in this project.

- The average life of an air conditioner is about 15 years (heat pumps are even shorter) and about 10 years for a water heater. If you have an original A/C or heat pump, it's living on borrowed time. Newer air conditioners use almost half as much electricity as older ones. An original gas furnace will likely last longer than an original air conditioner or heat pump, but they're probably operating significantly below 60% efficiency (the minimum these days is 80% and you can buy units that are up to 96% efficient).

- If you still have your original heat pump, consider yourself blessed; some of your neighbors are on their third. The newer heat pumps are much more efficient and supply air that is considerably warmer than the older ones.

- New efficiency standards for air conditioners and heat pumps take effect January 2006. The minimum efficiency rating (called SEER) is going from 10 to 13. Our original A/Cs and heat pumps were under 10 (maybe even under 8). It could take a number of years to pay for the price difference between a SEER 10 and a SEER 13. So, if you are planning to replace your A/C or heat pump sometime soon and you don't plan to live in your home for more than a few years, you might want to buy a lower efficiency unit now, while they're still available.

- If you have a heat pump and electric water heater, have you considered converting to a gas furnace and gas water heater? Several Hickory Farms residents already have. You're in luck if Washington Gas has already run a gas line down your street. If your street doesn't have gas, however, WGL needs a certain number of customers to justify laying a gas line – they generally need an 80% participation rate along the route of the line. Read their brochure at <http://eservice.washgas.com/library/pdf/convkit.pdf> for more information. A few years ago, it

was a no brainer to convert to gas. Besides the comfort a gas furnace gives you, gas appliances were cheaper to run than heat pumps and electric water heaters, and lasted longer. With the recent rise in gas prices, however, the cost advantage is less dramatic. With gas, you can also convert to a gas dryer and fireplace. Talk to your neighbors to see if there's enough interest on your street to pursue a conversion.

●If you have a four or five bedroom colonial, then you know how difficult it is to cool the upstairs bedrooms during hot summer days. Because the second story ductwork is in the attic (and it's a pretty lame design), these homes are good candidates for a dual zone system – one furnace/AC or heat pump for the basement and first floor, and a second heat pump (in the attic) for the second floor. It's more expensive than a single whole house system, but you'll be a lot more comfortable because you don't have to keep the first floor and basement frigid during the summer just to keep the upstairs comfortable.

Free Income Tax Assistance Available

The Fairfax City Regional Library, 3915 Chain Bridge Road will offer tax assistance every Saturday in February, 10 a.m. – 2 p.m. through the Internal Revenue Service's Volunteer Income Tax Assistance program.

Are you On the List?

If you were registered with the Hickory Farms e-mail group, you would have already received an electronic copy of this newsletter and learned about other information about your community! Join now by sending a blank e-mail to hickoryfarms-subscribe@yahoogroups.com

Flooring, Tile, & Carpet Discounts Now Available

A group discount is now available to Hickory Farms homeowners and residents for hardwood and tile flooring, carpeting, countertops, and banisters. The company is Chase Floors and Tile in Fairfax. 703-385-8112. www.chasefloorsandtile.com Chase has been in Fairfax for close to 10 years. Their showroom is at 11114 Lee Highway, very close to the Borders bookstore. The installers are employees of Chase and are bonded and insured. A BBB search shows no pending issues, and 1 resolved incident over the past 3 years. They said they have had only 1 incident over 8 years, but I haven't independently confirmed this.

Workmanship – Lifetime warranty on the installation

Discounts – \$1.00 off per square foot of hardwood material – 15% off complete carpet purchase – 15% off tile (material only)

Price Match Offer – Chase will match prices of competitors if it is an apples-to-apples comparison. That is, if the product is installed with a lifetime warranty.

Availability of Service – Immediate. Ask for Sami or Mike at 703-385-8112 and say you're with the Hickory Farms group purchase. January is a slower time of year, so work could be scheduled relatively quickly. At this time there is no deadline to act, but the firm may cut the deal at any time.

Additional Services – Countertops, banisters, and other flooring materials available.

Contacts – Contracts will be done individually, similar to the siding purchase. Experiences both positive and negative are encouraged to be shared. Please contact me at rmikula2000@yahoo.com or 703-323-0917.

If you are seriously interested in hardwood flooring, Kirk Randall (703-425-0210) has extra copies of consumer information on the subject.

If you have not done so already, please contact me to let me know you're interested as I want to track the number of folks who are participating.

For those who may wish to use an alternative vendor, I've heard recommendations for Clawes Carpet in the Twinbrook Shopping Center. I did contact them, but did not hear a follow-up in a timely manner. Robert Mikula (project coordinator)

Dumping on Common Grounds

The common grounds are part of everyone's back yard. However, in several areas, yard debris such as grass clippings and branches are being dumped. PLEASE do not dump debris in the common areas. Besides being unsightly, these dumping areas draw rodents and other wild animals into our neighborhood. Your trash service will pick up yard debris separately for recycling from spring through fall. It will even pick up debris as part of your trash service during the winter. If you have been putting debris in the common areas, please move it out to the street on debris day or haul it to the Fairfax County dump on West Ox Road. Although it may be wooded area, the woods can't decompose more debris than it generates itself. In other words, the clippings and branches you dump in the common area overloads the area's ability to decompose the material.

Last Chance to Get in on Group Purchase of Tree Trimming / Removal

Thanks to everyone who has signed up for the tree trimming group purchase. We have about 20 people who have already signed up, but it's not too late! E-mail me at xaviar13@yahoo.com with a short description of what types of work you would like done and I'll add your name to my list. If anyone has any questions I can also be reached by phone at 703-323-3995.

For those already signed up, I am in the final stages of negotiating with the contractors, verifying their insurance coverages, and will be making a decision on which contractor to utilize soon. I'm anticipating the work commencing in late January and into February

and as we get closer the contractor will be getting in touch with you to specifically discuss the work with you and to provide you with an estimate. After you are given the estimate you will be able to decide what work you would like to be performed. I would like everyone to provide me with their final list of the work they have elected to have performed so I can attempt to ensure we're getting similar prices for similar services.

The Hickory Farms Web Page is Now Online at

www.hickoryfarms.org.

Check it out!

Hickory Farms Community Association 2005 Assessment Notice

Please pay by March 31, 2005

The 2005 Hickory Farms Community Association (HFCA) annual assessment is \$100. The assessment is used for maintenance of the common grounds; insurance for the association and Board members; semi-annual neighborhood picnics; the Neighborhood Watch program; and, the costs of managing and operating your Association.

You can help conserve your Association's financial resources—and your own—by submitting your payment in a timely manner. Payments postmarked after the due date will be considered late and will be charged an additional \$25 late fee. In the event an owner's check is returned, the owner will reimburse HFCA for any expenses incurred for the returned check.

This year's assessment of \$100 is due March 31, 2005

The HFCA is committed to maintaining and improving the equality of life in Hickory Farms, to maintaining our property values and to resolving issues of concern to our neighbors. Assessments (and late fees) are collected in accordance with your By-laws to cover Association expenses, which are outlined and approved by the homeowners at each Annual Meeting.

If you are not a property owner and are not responsible for paying the assessment, please forward this notice to the property owner promptly.

Please complete the coupon below, detach and mail it with your check to the address on the coupon.

HFCA 2005 ANNUAL ASSESSMENT

The Assessment of **\$100** is payable by **March 31, 2005**.

Please make your check payable to **HFCA** and mail to:

HFCA
P.O. Box 2239
Fairfax, VA 22031-2239

Your name: _____

Lot Number: _____

Address: _____