

Volume 06, Issue 3

March 2006

# The Hickory Farms Newsletter

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*Hickory Farms Community Association  
Fairfax County, Virginia*

## **President's Letter**

Just as it seemed we might be on our way to spring, old man winter reminded us we are in Virginia and not the Caribbean.

As Jeff Altman mentioned in the last newsletter; Jeff, Donna and the kids will be relocating to New Jersey. The community cannot thank the Altmans enough for their dedication and contributions to the Association through the Board of Directors, the Social Committee and the E-mail ListServe. They will be missed and we wish them the best in the future.

Please stay in touch!

I want to introduce myself as the new President of the Hickory Farms HOA. There will be no drastic changes of policy or promises of better times ahead as is often the case when a new administration takes over in the Washington, D.C. Metro area. I think Hickory Farms' legacy of providing a welcoming neighborhood for families should constantly be developed and I hope to follow the example set by Jeff in continuing to foster those relationships.

Along those lines, I will echo earlier cries and ask for volunteers to continue to work in the Association. We currently have openings on the Board of Directors, Neighborhood Watch, Architectural Control Committee and we are always looking for new ideas to better the neighborhood. Even if you can't volunteer, if you have an idea for a way to make the community better please let me or one of the other directors know.

I look forward to getting to know you all a little better over the next couple of months.

See you around the neighborhood,

Mike

## **Inside this issue:**

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## **Join the Hickory Farms e-mail List**

If you were registered with the Hickory Farms e-mail group, you would have already received an electronic copy of this newsletter and received other information about our community! Visit [www.hickoryfarms.org](http://www.hickoryfarms.org) and click E-mail Service.

## **TREASURER'S REPORT**

**Jaime Gutierrez**

As of the end of February 2006, we have received the annual dues from 119 homeowners; this is the equivalent of 60% of the 198 homeowners in Hickory Farms. Enclosed with this newsletter you will find the Fourth and Final reminder of the "2006 Assessment Notice. **Remember that dues must be received or postmarked on or prior to March 31, 2006 or they will be considered late and a late fee of \$25 will be assessed.** Please don't wait to the last minute to mail your dues and run the risk of being late.

Some of the new homeowners have called inquiring as to when we mail the "Annual Assessment Bill", we do not mail any bills, and the Notice included in the newsletter is your Annual Assessment Bill.

If you are planning to sell your, 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.

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

## **NEIGHBORHOOD NEWS**

### **Welcome Back!**

Hickory Farms welcomes back Barin and Gopa Chakrabarti to Harvester Farm Lane. They report: "Glad to be back again. Our 2- sons who grew up here also came to visit. Everything in the neighborhood looks great!!"

### **Architectural Control Committee is seeking new members!**

The Architectural Control Committee of the Hickory Farms Homeowners Association is actively seeking to add interested homeowners to the committee. The committee holds the absolute minimum number of meetings possible based on the volume of applications received from other homeowners. With the spring fast approaching and folks getting their plans in place for renovations the committee could use your help. No experience is necessary. Call Mike Martin at 703-323-3995 or e-mail at [xaviar13@yahoo.com](mailto:xaviar13@yahoo.com) to volunteer.

### NEIGHBORHOOD WATCH

The watch schedule for March and April is provided below. Contact Dave Dempster at 703-503-0561 (ddhokies@cox.net) with any questions or to volunteer for this important neighborhood activity. Please note that that you can file a police report for minor neighborhood crimes on-line at [www.fairfaxcounty.gov/police](http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/police).

Fri	Mar 3	Bob Bentley	Nancy Bentley
Sat	Mar 4	Ron Cruz	Louise Cruz
Fri	Mar 10	Larry Russe	Chris Russe
Sat	Mar 11	Jaime Gutierrez	Ed Wagner
Fri	Mar 17	Debbi Buchanan	Scott Buchanan
Sat	Mar 18	Harry Herchert	Ginny Herchert
Fri	Mar 24	Pingjun Li	Wang Chan Cheng
Sat	Mar 25	Greg Gillette	Kathy Gillette
Fri	Mar 31	Dave Maurer	Sanjeev Munjal
Sat	Apr 1	Bob Sottile	Lee Sottile
Fri	Apr 7	John Kitzmiller	Brand Niemann
Sat	Apr 8	David Froberg	Beverly Froberg
Fri	Apr 14	Ron Arnold	Charles Walters
Sat	Apr 15	Kirk Randall	Mike Martin
Fri	Apr 21	Bob Cosgriff	Don Klingemann
Sat	Apr 22	Jeff Lindsay	Larry Rogers
Fri	Apr 28	Angel Meza	Jason Meza
Sat	Apr 29	Eric Maribojoc	Clarisa Dacanay

#### Will your child start school this September? Give us a call!

If you live in the Oak View school boundary area, please contact us, so we can give you information about our kindergarten program and registration process. You'll want to learn about our wonderful teachers, challenging programs and the special orientation we have planned for you on March 20. We will also hold informal meetings on February 23 and March 9. Call for more information.

Oak View Elementary  
 703-764-7100  
[www.fcps.edu/OakViewES/](http://www.fcps.edu/OakViewES/)

## **Heating and Air Conditioning Group Buy for Hickory Farms Homeowners LIMITED OFFER**

Last year's group purchase of heating and air conditioning items was so successful that we have arranged for a repeat deal with A-1 Heating and Air Conditioning. You can get good deals on heat pumps, air conditioners, gas furnaces, water heaters, humidifiers, and air cleaners.

Hickory Farms homeowners get a 20% discount from A-1's regular prices. You get an additional 3% discount if you pay by check.

A-1 offers American Standard (makers of Trane equipment) and Carrier furnaces, heat pumps, and air conditioners, Maytag and other quality water heaters, and Aprilaire humidifiers.

March and April are traditionally slow months for heating contractors; that's why A-1 is willing to cut Hickory Farms homeowners a deal. This offer expires March 31, 2006 and may not be combined with other discounts or coupons. Hickory Farms homeowners are eligible for zero down payment (full payment due upon completion). A-1 guarantees your complete satisfaction.

American Standard products are rated highest for reliability by Consumer Reports. A-1 is rated very high by Consumer Checkbook Magazine for both quality and pricing. A-1 is also rated well by the Better Business Bureau and the Fairfax County Office of Consumer Affairs.

As with all major purchases of services, do your homework. The Hickory Farms web site article on choosing a contractor is reprinted below. The version on the web site, however, will take you directly to each organization mentioned in the article.

The average life of an air conditioner is about 15 years (heat pumps are even less) and about ten years for a water heater. If you have an original air conditioner or heat pump, it's living on borrowed time. 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.

To participate in this group purchase, call A-1 at 703-451-1100 and say you are with the Hickory Farms group deal. Kirk Randall

### **Tips for Choosing a Building Contractor**

- Ask for a copy of the contractor's current insurance certificates.
- Check the contractor's Virginia contractor's license and disciplinary actions with the [Virginia Department of Professional and Occupational Regulation](#)
- Check out the contractor's license with the [Fairfax County Division of Public Works and Environmental Services](#).
- Check the contractor's complaint record with the [Fairfax County Department of Cable Communications and Consumer Protection](#).
- Contact the local [Better Business Bureau](#) for a further check of the contractor's past performance. The BBB tracks many businesses, not just BBB members. However, you should look for BBB membership. Not being a member is not necessarily bad, but being a BBB member is better because the business has promised to abide by the BBB Code of Ethics and resolve disputes using BBB sanctioned arbitration procedures.
- See if the [Washington Consumers Checkbook](#) has an article about the project you are planning. This quarterly magazine is a DC version of Consumer Reports Magazine. It rates local businesses in a variety of areas, including quality of service and price. Highly recommended! If you can't subscribe (but please do, as it supports a great organization), you can read it at the local library. [www.checkbook.org](http://www.checkbook.org) has some useful information and you can purchase individual articles on line.
- Ask for customer references, particularly from those who have had projects similar to yours, and are neighbors. If possible, inspect the work performed by the contractor. Ask the reference if they are a friend of or affiliated with the contractor in any way. Ask the reference if they remember the name of the

employee who worked on their home; if they were satisfied, ask the contractor that that individual worker be specified in your contract.

- Get written estimates from several contractors. Be sure to specify the work you want done and the materials to be used so that the estimates will be comparable.

- Insist on a written contract, as required by the Fairfax County Home Improvement Code and Virginia state regulations, and make sure that it includes all agreements regarding the work to be done and materials to be used.

- Be sure the contract specifies that you will be furnished with a signed mechanic's lien waiver or release from suppliers of materials or subcontractors. In the event that a contractor does not pay a subcontractor or supplier, state law provides that those working on the improvement project may obtain a lien against the property. Without a lien waiver, if your contractor fails to pay a subcontractor or supplier, you could be liable for the debt.

(A copy of this article, including clickable links to the organizations cited, is on the Hickory Farms Web Page)

### **Where are the Tree Guys?**

Our tree work group purchase was delayed because of the large amount of snow storm work that is keeping contractors busy. We're cooling our heels a while until the pace of work shows down a bit. So, it's not too late to join in. If you are interested, please e-mail Mike at [xaviar13@yahoo.com](mailto:xaviar13@yahoo.com) (703-323-3995) or Kirk at [kirk\\_randall@hotmail.com](mailto:kirk_randall@hotmail.com). Describe what type of work you want done with enough specificity so that an estimator can find the tree and know exactly what you want done. Include your name, e-mail address, and phone number. As with last year, each homeowner would sign an individual contract with the tree company and is, of course, not obliged to go with the company selected. The chosen contractor will be licensed and insured.

### **Prevent Cold Weather Pipe Breaks**

Every year, the fire department responds to hundreds of minor water pipe breaks. Although generally not a real danger, water

freezing in cold and hot water pipes can cause serious problems. While the freezing takes place, the pipe begins to swell and may burst. In most cases, the actual break doesn't appear until the water begins to thaw. The following tips may help prevent frozen pipes in your home:

- Shut off water to unheated areas of your home and to outdoor faucets. Don't forget to drain these pipes. Open cabinet doors and service access ways so heat can get into these otherwise hidden areas where pipes are located.

- Leaving a faucet on with a slow trickle may or may not keep the pipe from freezing – you can't count on this method. There are some specially designed, UL-approved heat tapes that can be used in unheated areas, but, you need to be cautious. If these are used, be sure to follow the directions exactly; a slight variation could cause a fire.

- Locate the shut off valves for both the hot and cold water, and the power shut off for the hot water heater. If a pipe freezes, first shut off the water valve to that pipe (and the water heater if it's the hot water pipe). Then slowly thaw it out. Never use a torch; it thaws the water too quickly and weakens the pipe, almost always guaranteeing the pipe will break. Room temperature heat and careful use of a hair dryer are good methods.

- If the pipe breaks, quickly shut off the water valve. Call a plumber to fix the break correctly. At this time you may consider having the pipe or pipes rerouted through less vulnerable areas.

- When should you call the fire department? Call if the water gets in or near electrical outlets or panels, or if the water threatens a pilot light or power to a water heater or furnace.

If you have any further questions, please contact your local fire and rescue station, Fairfax County Fire and Rescue Department's Public Information and Life Safety Education Section at 703-246-3801, or visit [www.fairfaxcounty.gov/fire](http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/fire). (From Fairfax County January 2006)

## FOURTH NOTICE

### Hickory Farms Community Association 2006 Assessment Notice

**Please pay by March 31, 2006**

The 2006 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 January 1<sup>st</sup>, 2006**

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.

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#### HFCA 2006 ANNUAL ASSESSMENT

The Assessment of **\$100** is payable by **March 31, 2006**.

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

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

Your name: \_\_\_\_\_

Lot Number: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_