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February 2004, Vol. 9 No. 1

Sorry for the delay in the first newsletter of the year but with a whole new board this year there was a learning curve. We will be increasing the frequency that you receive the newsletter, it will be bimonthly instead of quarterly. With this new expanded coverage we would like to add some new regular columns such as profiling one of our neighbors each issue. Also look for a new format starting with the April Issue. We have some other new things we are planning which will be revealed as we prepare them. We appreciate the hard work that the past board did over the last two years especially Linda Billingsly who has been invaluable in helping us transition. We look forward to a great new year. Please call or email myself or one of the board members if you have any questions or ideas for what you would like to see your homeowners association do for you.

Steve Bighouse

#### **INTOWN COMMUNITY CHURCH CONSTRUCTION SCHEDULE**

After they complete a large stack stone retaining wall at the south end of their site, a large underground water detention area which is a large concrete vault that will clean and slow the flow of runoff will be constructed. After this they will begin to bring in fill dirt to raise the grade of the site. There will be additional parking developed between the three houses along Houston Mill to replace lost present parking.

#### **NICHOLAS HOUSE INC., 1790 LAVISTA ROAD**

Many times, as we go about our daily lives, we don't notice some of the things going on in our neighborhood. Nicholas House is one of those—it sits very quietly behind St. Bartholomew's Episcopal Church. Nicholas House provides transitional housing for homeless families. It provides food, shelter, counseling, life skills, parenting, after-school tutoring, employment and transportation assistance, child care, job training and other services. The Executive Director is Doug Mendel, who can be reached at 404-633-8386. Or visit their creative web site at [www.nicholashouse.org](http://www.nicholashouse.org). Volunteers and donations are always needed.

#### **NEW COUNTY SIDEWALK ORDINANCE—A CONTROVERSIAL ONE**

The DeKalb County Commission recently passed an ordinance to allow communities to pay for their own sidewalks on their street by using a special tax district if 51 per cent of home owners agree. The county would pay upfront costs and then place liens on homeowners to recover construction costs during a 5-year period. Estimates of the cost are between \$1000 and \$4000 per home. In other cities where this has been approved, no sidewalks have been built with this kind of funding. Many people feel the county should pay all the costs, but money is scarce for such projects, even where they are needed for safety.

#### **TOCO PARK/COMMONS UPDATE**

On January 6th and 27th we presented our ninth and tenth statements to the Planning Commission and the Board of Commissioners. They have asked for another deferral for the rezoning request. It has been postponed for 90 days until the April meetings. We cannot afford to miss any of these meetings because you can never know what they are going to do. We are still optimistic but have had a major setback in that Tina Arbes, the County Greenspace Coordinator, has resigned and is leaving as of Dec. 31. She had handled all the negotiations for the County Commission. We are trying to assess how the new person will catch up on what has gone before, but we are receiving more support from other homeowners' organizations so the Commission realizes that we really want this park at Toco. Gale Walldorff made a statement that she would like to have all the options that would be available to turn this land into a park ready by the next time it is on the agenda. As of now everything is still moving toward it become park land leased by the county.

#### **KITTREDGE PARK EXPANSION PROPOSAL**

As mentioned above, the resignation of Tina Arbes also presents some problems with this project. She had done all the leg work on it, too. Thank all of you who responded to our email survey about the proposed expansion and use of Kittredge Park. We have some great new ideas to take to the table in the future. We were supposed to meet with the Commissioners last

month but it was postponed. In the meantime we have found out about an organization called the Active Living Research which has given Emory, the lead researcher, and other schools and the CDC a \$600,000 grant to study DeKalb parks. We are meeting with them hoping to have them study Kittredge as a unique area with great possibilities. The researchers are interested in promoting daily physical activity to combat the nation's epidemics of obesity and diabetes—the latest coordination between the public health community and those who design, build, and manage the built environment, including parks. We will let everyone know if they pick Kittredge for this important study

### **DEKALB SCHOOL OF THE ARTS PRESENTS “BYE, BYE, BIRDIE”**

The DeKalb School of the Arts presents us with opportunity to see great live musical performances by very talented high school students. This is in the Old Briarcliff High School at 2415-B N. Druid Hills Road that many of our children attended. The Principal, Susan McCauley, is very supportive of our homeowners' association and is always providing us with meeting rooms. Now it is our turn to support this wonderful school by attending a performance.

For the spring schedule the school is presenting “Bye, Bye, Birdie”, a popular and very lively musical. Performances are at 8 PM on Mar. 25, 26, 27 and April 1, 2, and 3 and a matinee at 2 PM on Mar. 28. One of these will be a dinner theater to be announced later. The show tickets are usually \$8, except the dinner one, and \$6 for children. The parking is easy, or you can walk.

There will also be a winter dance program in the Conant Theater at Oglethorpe U. Campus on Jan.23-34 at 8 PM and Jan. 25 at 2 PM.

### **CUSTOMARY HOME OCCUPATION (BUSINESS IN THE HOME) DEFINITION**

“Home occupation means an occupation customarily carried on by an occupant of a dwelling unit as a secondary use which is clearly incidental to the use of the dwelling unit for residential purposes and operated in accordance with the applicable provisions of the DeKalb County Zoning Ordinance” (from code book.) Home businesses are area where we try to maintain accurate lists. The current list available is for 2002, as we have not received more current information. Our neighborhood has 11 home occupation or business licenses. The county rules regarding these licenses are very strict; including, no outside employees, no public contact, no signs in yard, no outside storage of materials, no commercially-marked vehicles, etc. We may post the list of these special business licenses on our web site. All Section Representatives have the lists. This public information is available in the business license office of DeKalb County. To find out if a business license has been issued, call 404-371-2461. Code Enforcement handles violations of business licenses at 404-371-1240.

### **CODE ENFORCEMENT**

We now have our own Code Enforcement officer at the Central Precinct. His name is J. D. Heckert and may be reached at 404-294-2641 or email at [jdhecker@co.dekalb.ga.us](mailto:jdhecker@co.dekalb.ga.us). The improvement for him is that he wears a police uniform and drives a regular police car. His duties mainly cover Code Enforcement but he also has full police authority.

The DeKalb County Commissioners have recently passed two new ordinances of interest—one is a new noise ordinance (including barking dogs) and the other is Code Compliance. We will try to summarize these on our web site. You may try to review them at the county web site, [www.co.dekalb.us](http://www.co.dekalb.us).

### **LANDLORD AND LANDLADIES**

We try to keep accurate information on rental property owners in our subdivision. These property owners include one resident owner, but also our other landlords and landladies. Currently, there are 23. We feel it is important to keep in contact with these owners as they are also interested in property values. Each quarter, we send a copy of our newsletter along with a cover letter to our list of nonresident owners. They receive our alerts also. This spring we made an extra effort to collect the names, phone numbers, and e-mail addresses of the renters of the properties. Our Block Captains from Neighborhood Watch helped a great deal with this effort. As a result, the renters also get our crime alerts and other messages of interest. The effort has already paid off when we asked the renter's help with parking problems—in turn, we have helped renters with other problems. We may post the list of the non-resident owners on our web site for your information. All Section Representatives and Block Captains have property owner lists. Contact them if you need this information. This public information is also available on the DeKalb county web site.

### **NEWS OF INTEREST**

- North DeKalb Mall (Market Square) was recently purchased by Developer Charlie Hendon. He has developed several shopping centers. The plans include adding additional outdoor space. They have announced that there will be a Rhodes Furniture and are in negotiations with several other retailers. In addition, they may be adding some townhouses and a county park to the site.
- The new Toco Hills Police precinct has been put on hold.
- The Open Campus School's new space is scheduled to be completed during the summer of 2005 at which time the DeKalb School of the Arts will take over the rest of the school after some renovations to the building.

**NEW MERRY HILLS NEIGHBORS**

*Welcome to all new members!*

Penny Siqueiros, Wembley Court  
Ronald Gonsler, Merry Lane  
Peter and Pesach Globus, Holly Lane  
Jay Kessler, LaVista Road  
Jordana & Kivi Bernhard, Christmas

**NEW PROPERTY OWNERS**

2066 LaVista Road, Agio Corporation, 1195 Briarcliff  
Place Atlanta, GA 30306  
1279 Christmas Lane, Fred Milani, 3677 Briarcliff Road,  
Atlanta, GA 30345

**NEIGHBORHOOD WATCH**

Listed below are the crimes occurring since the last newsletter:

- Attempted break-in in November on Holly Lane. Alarm ran them off.
- On Christmas Lane, a couple of strange things have occurred: one night a garbage can full of garbage was moved from the owner's property to another over the hill and dumped onto someone else's driveway. Their mailbox was also pushed over.
- Also someone seems to be going up the street opening mailboxes and leaving them open. If you walk, take time to close them to protect the mail. A strange woman in an old car was seen peeking into a mail box on Merry. No report of a loss.
- A home on Christmas Lane has been burglarized again. The front door was kicked in and the burglars took some CD's, a CD player, a play station, and other electronics.

**MHHA MEMBERSHIP FORM**

**Homeowners and residents in the Merry Hills neighborhood are encouraged to join the Merry Hills Homeowners Association. Dues are \$20 annually for new members and renewing members (or more, if you choose to make a greater donation). Membership is renewed annually in January. Complete this form, make your check payable to the Merry Hills Homeowners Association, Inc. and mail your check with this form to:**

**Treasurer  
Steve Jenkins  
1385 Holly Lane,  
Atlanta, GA 30329**

<b>New Member (Y/N):</b>		<b>Renewing Member:</b>			
<b>Owner:</b>		<b>Renter:</b>			
<b>Name(s):</b>					
<b>Street address:</b>					
<b>City:</b>		<b>State:</b>		<b>Zip:</b>	
<b>Home phone:</b>		<b>Office phone:</b>			
<b>E-mail address(es):</b>					
<b>List me in the membership directory, which prints names, street addresses and home phone numbers of members (does not list E-mail addresses): (Yes/No)</b>					
<b>List my name in the membership directory: Exactly as above, or as follows:</b>					
<b>I am interested in volunteering for:</b>					
<b>Board position</b>		<b>Section representative</b>			
<b>Zoning</b>		<b>Welcoming newcomers</b>		<b>Other</b>	
<b>Neighborhood Watch</b>		<b>Membership</b>			
<b>Newsletter</b>		<b>Website</b>			
<b>I can volunteer for:</b>	<b>1-2 hours/year</b>		<b>1-2 hours monthly</b>		<b>More than 2 hours monthly</b>
<b>I can contribute the following expertise to the Association:</b>					

## MERRY HILLS HOMEOWNER ASSOCIATION BOARD MEMBERS

### SECTION REPRESENTATIVES

Your section representative is your neighborhood contact for any comments or problems.

- Section # 1: 1252-1330 Merry Lane, 1235 Christmas Ln., 2002-2066 LaVista Road & 2178 LaVista Rd  
Representative: Erin Di Chiara  
section1rep@merryhills.com
- Section # 2: 1331-1413 Merry Lane, 2771-2801 North Druid Hills Road  
Representative: Doug and Tracy Callas  
section2rep@merryhills.com
- Section # 3: 1246-1341 Christmas Lane, 1724 and 1725 Pine Tree Circle  
Representative: Arlene Gross  
section3rep@merryhills.com
- Section # 4: 1348-1448 Christmas Lane  
Representative: Tracy Alexander  
section4rep@merryhills.com
- Section # 5: 1722-1755 Reindeer Drive, 1708-1798 Holly Lane  
Representative: Shirley Brickman  
section5rep@merryhills.com
- Section # 6: 1260-1402 Holly Lane  
Representative: Charlene Shikany  
section6rep@merryhills.com
- Section # 7: 1406-1519 Holly Lane, 2487-2515 North Druid Hills Road  
Representative: Jorn Winter  
section7rep@merryhills.com
- Section # 8: Weatherstone Townhomes  
Representative: Roy and Ariana Foss  
section8rep@merryhills.com

### COMMITTEE CHAIRPERSONS

- Zoning: Amy Zapatka  
zoning@merryhills.com
- Neighborhood Watch: Todd Brown  
watch@merryhills.com
- E-mail Administrator: Steve Jenkins  
mailinglist@merryhills.com
- Newsletter: Lauri Trainor  
newsletter@merryhills.com
- Webmaster: Flo Wolf  
webmaster@merryhills.com
- Flagman: Larry Gilger  
flagman@merryhills.com
- Welcome Committee: Val Schlorff and Virginia Smith  
welcome@merryhills.com

Have an item for the MHHA Newsletter? E-mail to newsletter@merryhills.com by February 23rd.
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### OFFICERS

- President: Steve Bighouse  
president@merryhills.com
- Vice President: Flo Wolf  
vicepresident@merryhills.com
- Secretary: Traci Lanford  
secretary@merryhills.com
- Treasurer: Steve Jenkins  
treasurer@merryhills.com