

Trail Writer

*The Official Publication of the
Winchester Trails
Maintenance Assoc. Social Committee*

Volume 4, Issue 12
www.winchestertrails.com

December 2008

President's Letter

Dear Winchester Trails Neighbors,

We held our annual meeting on October 9 at the MUD building and had a good turnout. A variety of issues including the election of two officers, the proposed 2009 budget and the effects of Hurricane Ike were considered.

The Board takes its budget responsibility to the homeowners quite seriously. As with any budget it is a balancing act between operating funds and a reserve balance that we must maintain at a proper level. In 2008, the Maintenance Fee was established at \$450 based on our projections of costs for the Trails which include general maintenance, street lights, the pool and tennis courts, landscaping, security, insurance and professional services. Even though we projected increased costs for a variety of expenses, some increased at an even greater rate than anticipated. From 2007 to 2008 we had an increase in costs of greater than 40% for general maintenance and 33% for the pool contract. While we had projected an escalation in those items, we certainly did not consider the magnitude of those cost increases. Due to that, we utilized some of the reserves to make those payments. We have considered some cost savings initiatives that could save the association as much as \$8,000 next year including relocating records storage, lateral ditch mowing, and reduced pool hours. Those cost savings were taken into consideration as we established fees for 2009 at \$470. Please keep in mind that all of our neighboring subdivisions pay more than we do. We will also strive to maintain the quality of our neighborhood you have come to expect.

One cost that was surprising was the renovation and repair of the clubhouse. We had originally intended on replacing the carpet in the clubhouse with tile and had established a budget of \$4500. However, as we started looking into the clubhouse we found many areas in need of attention including termite damage, extensive amounts of rotting wood, and roof leaks. In addition, we had some compliance issues to address as laws were enacted on the federal level. We chose to address these areas instead of allowing the deterioration to continue. The cost of the clubhouse renovation will exceed \$40,000. In order to minimize the impact to Maintenance Fees, we considered obtaining a loan for five years to amortize the cost. Ultimately, we decided to withdraw funds from our reserves to save the interest and other costs associated with the loan. Of course we must replenish the reserves. The positive to all this is the clubhouse will be in very good condition such that it can be enjoyed.

Hurricane Ike had a pronounced effect on our neighborhood with damaged homes, downed trees, destroyed fences and power losses. We should be proud of how fast we had the Trails cleaned up and how we helped each other. We streamlined the ARC process such that if a homeowner needed to replace a fence with similar materials, only notification was needed. We are also working with homeowners who suffered damage to the point their house is in violation of the deed restrictions. We had several inquiries concerning debris removal and whether the association or the MUD would take on that responsibility that is actually Harris County's. Our position is that while it is an inconvenience at the least and a health hazard at the worst, a small subdivision like ours would have had great difficulty in obtaining a

(Continued on page 3)

President's Note - December

Seasons Greetings!

I hope you had a great and peaceful Thanksgiving Holiday and look forward to Christmas. Your Board of Directors did not meet in November for several reasons including the renovation to the clubhouse. The clubhouse construction is now complete and many thanks go to Board member Paulette Walker and Ron Matthews who helped with much of the project. Without their help, we could have not obtained the quality product we did. Also, kudos to the MUD as they continue to make progress on the Park Plan. They are receiving the necessary approvals from state and county agencies to make this a reality.

Last month, my message was inadvertently left out so it is printed in this month's edition of the Trail Writer. Since that article addressed important issues such as Board elections, the annual meeting and Hurricane Ike, we felt it was necessary to get the information distributed even though it is a bit late.

*Until next month....
Walter*

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Winchester Trails

Winchester Trails Committee Chairmen

Clubhouse Rentals	
Linda Van Zuilekom.....	281-615-0335
Directory Editor	
Melissa Zmerzlikar	kmzmerz-wt@yahoo.com
Newsletter Editor	
Brenda Heaton.....	281-970-5323
Tennis Committee	
Johnny Hooker	281-890-9123
Yard of the Month	
Angie Drouin.....	281-955-0644
Stork Committee	OPEN
Social Committee.....	OPEN
Welcome Committee.....	OPEN

Maintenance Association Directors

Greg Johnson	832-237-8178
Jim Malone.....	281-890-3803
Ian McCrory.....	713-818-0138
Walter Sonne	281-894-7117
Paulette Walker	281-894-5708

Jim Malone is the security representative for WT.

His email can be found on the Security page of the Trails website.

MUD #9 Officers

David Gurghigian, President.....	281-894-4140
Jeff Ottmann, Vice President	281-469-1465
Wayne Wilcox, Secretary	281-894-6233
Jim Giese, Assistant Secretary	281-890-5207
Sandor Karpathy	281-955-1138

To ask questions or report problems concerning the Winchester Trails Subdivision, call

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Upcoming Events December

- 4 Board Meeting 7 PM at the clubhouse
- 13 Holiday in the Trails-at the Clubhouse
5-6pm Photos with Santa; 6-8pm – Outdoor Fun
- 21 Winter begins
- 22 Happy Hanukkah!
- 22 01/05 - CFISD Student Holiday
- 25 Merry Christmas!
- 26 Happy Kwanzaa!
- 31 Happy New Year's Eve

Clubhouse Availability

Our neighborhood clubhouse is newly renovated and up and running! It has new tile floors and fresh paint and is much brighter. It is available for neighborhood residents to rent for parties, meetings, Bunco, dinners, etc. The clubhouse rate is \$10 per hour with a \$30 minimum. A security deposit of \$250 and a signed contract are required to secure your booking. The clubhouse holds up to 50 people and has a kitchen with a stove, microwave and fridge, as well as 6 tables and plenty of folding chairs. For more information please call 281-615-0335 or email me at clubhouse@winchestertrails.com or view the contract on our neighborhood website www.winchestertrails.com.

Linda van Zuilekom

Winchester Trails – Deadline

The deadline for the Jan. newsletter is Dec. 10th. All items should be sent to Brenda Heaton at grateful7000@sbcglobal.net

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Presidents Letter - (Continued from Cover Page)

contractor to perform those services. Harris County had trouble finding qualified contractors. In addition, the association would have had to levy a special assessment to clear the debris if we could have obtained a contractor. That assessment could have been hundreds of dollars and neither we nor the MUD can recover those funds from FEMA, but Harris County can.

Board members from the MUD attended the annual meeting and provided us with an update on the progress with the Park Plan. Essentially, the MUD is waiting on final approval of the plans from Harris County to permit construction and approval by the state to release funds for construction. Of course there will be some impacts to the approval schedule due to Hurricane Ike, but we all hope those will be minimal.

The Board has adopted a six public meeting program for 2009 such that meeting will be held every even numbered month such that we will have meetings in February, April, June, August, October and December. The Board will have a closed meeting in September to develop the annual budget. Please keep in mind that the Board and PCMI are in constant communication during the week through emails and phone calls.

Finally, Jim Malone and I were re-elected to the Board at the annual meeting. We appreciate the confidence you have placed in us..

Until next month...

Walter

Howdy Partner

December 2008

With regret, we say goodbye to Jerry and Carole Stenberg. They stepped up the last three years and helped out with our pool tag days. Heritage is getting two excellent residents and we will miss them. On the other hand, we are glad to welcome Greg Stenberg to the Trails. Greg purchased his parents home at 10318 Dude. Greg is an IT Director for a staffing firm and gets to telecommute from home. Great rush hour drive from the kitchen to the pc. Greg maintains his own website. Check it out sometime: www.gregstenberg.com.

We would like to also welcome, Reynaldo and Paula Gonzalez to 10511 Pearl. Reynaldo says they didn't have to move far to get to the Trails and we are glad they made the trip.

Also at 10414 Pearl, we welcome new residents, Brian & Ruth Grundmeier.

We hope to have more information in our next newsletter. Please email us if you know of a resident leaving or see a new truck rolling up to unload. We like to welcome each resident and give them a welcome packet to get started. Thank you.

Welcome Committee
welcome@winchestertrails.com



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Green Thumb Corner

Cooler weather means that things are not growing very quickly but there is still plenty of work that can be done in the yard and garden if you have some spare time on your hands, such as pulling up those usual winter weeds that appear in the lawn, particularly if the grass is in poor health. This is the season for soil cultivation, planting of new trees and shrubs, fertilization of established ones, pruning, mulching, clean-up and bed preparation. A little effort expended now, while it's pleasantly cool, will get things in good shape and reduce the workload when spring warmth returns.

This month and the next two are best for planting trees and shrubs. Before planting, check drainage by digging a hole and filling with water - if it takes more than 24 hours to drain, you will need to improve the situation by digging an 'X'-shaped trench pattern filled with good soil to provide drainage away from the center (or find a better location!). Another plan is to create an elevated mound for planting, and this also adds a nice accent to the landscape. Another tip for a poor drainage area - avoid the temptation to plant a tree in a hole filled with a good porous medium, because you may just be creating a "sponge" that causes waterlogged roots; always backfill the hole with the same soil that you dug out. Unfortunately, one of the most common causes of failure is a waterlogged root system due to our poor-draining clay soil, so avoid low areas at all costs. Trees should not be fed during their first season, except for the application of a weak solution as a root stimulator. Established

trees can be conveniently fed now while the ground is quite soft from recent rain. Feed trees by using a stake or a length of pipe to drive a series of holes a foot deep and a foot or so apart around the drip line, and apply a small handful of general-purpose fertilizer (such as 12-24-12) in each hole. A good rule of thumb is to apply a total of about one and a half pounds for each inch of trunk diameter. If your pine trees have very pale green or yellowish needles, that's a sign that the soil is too alkaline, and the cure is to include a soil acidifier with the fertilizer (an iron supplement such as Ironite serves the purpose well). Magnolias also need acid soil conditions, so use special azalea/camellia fertilizer or add a soil acidifier.

Pansies may still be transplanted this month. They can really brighten up an otherwise dull yard, whether in beds or containers as they don't need much attention, but they will benefit from a monthly feeding of manure, super-phosphate or a liquid high-phosphate product. More blooms will be promoted by removing spent or faded flowers.

December is the last chance for planting spring-flowering bulbs. But remember that tulips should be kept in the refrigerator until the end of the month and then planted between Christmas and New Year's Day (a convenient chance to get a little exercise between the two holidays!). Azaleas and camellias may be moved at this time and should be kept moist to reduce the risk of cold weather damage. Acidify the soil if necessary. It's a good idea to check the pH value with one of the chemical kits available from the

nurseries, or with a meter.

Clean up the beds where fall flowers have finished, and prepare next year's beds now to allow time for settling and weathering, adding lots of humus and also gypsum to break up the clay. In established shrubbery beds a good layer of mulch is just as important in winter as in the heat of summer. Water well and watch out for winter drought. Be prepared to protect tender plants; cloth makes a better cover than plastic, but you can use the latter by rigging a "tent" arrangement to prevent the plastic from touching any foliage. You never know when we might get a surprise early frost, so be prepared for quick action. Potted plants can be moved into the garage (put nails in the overhead beams for hanging baskets) and if it's really cold you can leave the lights on to provide some warmth.

Some industrious neighbors will probably be harvesting fall tomatoes until the first good frost and there may be a few spring/summer pepper plants that have continued producing through this season. There are just a few things that can be planted this month - asparagus, chives, parsley and onion plants - but the main priority right now is preparation of beds for next spring.

HOLIDAY TIPS: Winter pruning of evergreens such as holly, yew and juniper provides useful trimmings for Christmas decorations, and you can also use the clusters of red berries from nandina shrub and if you're short of Christmas gift ideas for your family or friends, how about a good gardening book?

Phil Richards



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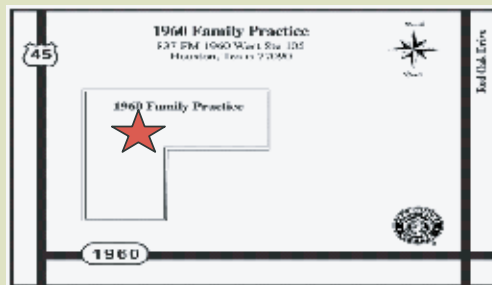
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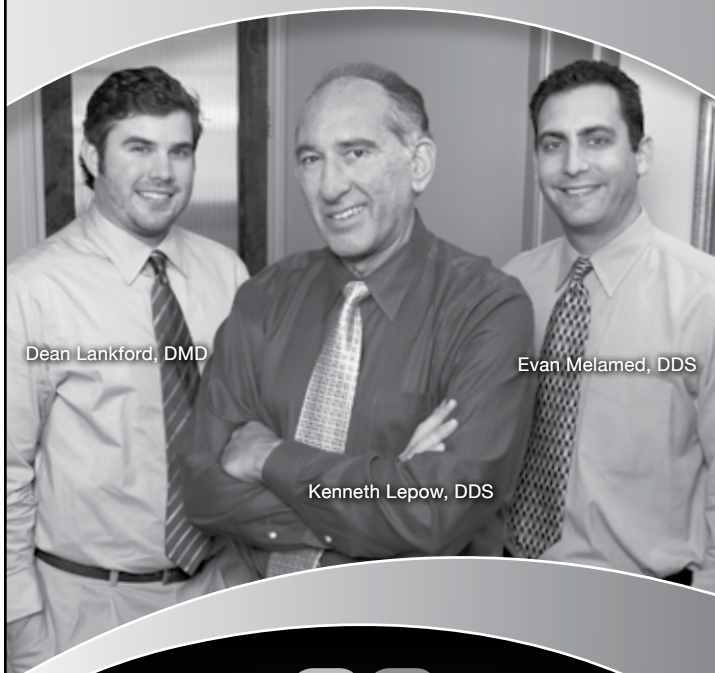
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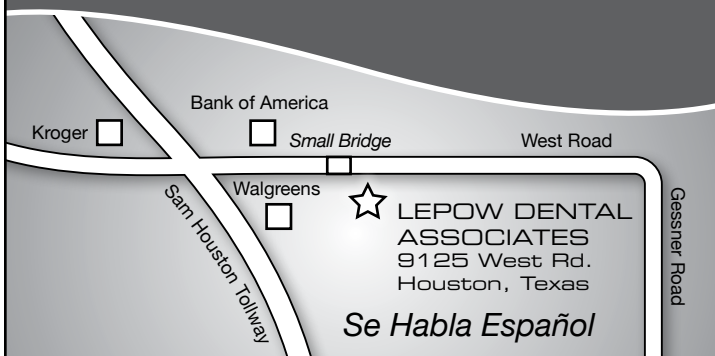
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MILESTONES

New Teenagers - Happy 13th!

12/12 - Alexis Atchison
12/22 - Hannah Schatz

New Drivers - Happy 16th!

12/22 - Connor Thomas
12/24 - Will Kelly
12/27 - Jennifer Miller

New Voters - Happy 18th!

12/02 - Sabrina Read
12/20 - Elizabeth Kelley
12/23 - Kim Griffin

New Adults - Happy 21st!

12/03 - Brian Gorka

Happy 25th Anniversary!

12/17 - Paul & Laurie Curry

Happy 35th Anniversary!

12/15 - David & Nancy
Rigoulot
12/20 - Jack & Mary Davis
12/21 - Glenn & Diane
Brinkmeyer

Happy 40th Anniversary!

12/07 - Bill & Alice Brunson

Melissa Zmerzlikar
kmzmerz-wt@yahoo.com

Calling all Volunteers

Stork Volunteer Needed

We are looking for a new Stork Volunteer – you will welcome the new arrival with a stork (we have downsized so not very big) and gather information to print in the newsletter welcoming the families new addition to the Trails.

Social Committee Chairperson Needed

If you like parties and enjoy hosting gatherings then this is the spot for you! We are looking for a volunteer to facilitate social gatherings for the Trails you will be working with Paulette Walker.

Welcome Committee Person Needed

You will welcome new residents into the Trails give them packet of information, take down their information then write small articles introducing the new family into the Trails for our newsletter once a month.

If you are interested in any of the above positions please contact Ron Matthews @ 832.878.1005 for any questions. Thank you!



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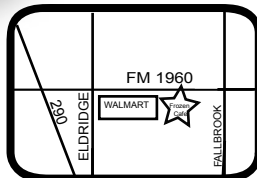
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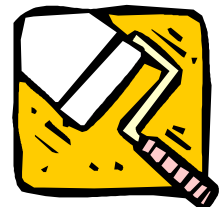
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Winchester Trails

Neighbors Night Out

Good food, good conversation, and a cool evening made for an enjoyable Neighbors Night

Out on Wagon Trail Road.

Officer Andy, our patrolman, visited with us as well.

For those who could not attend, we look forward to visiting with you next year.

Thanks to Frank & Margi Hall for organizing the evening.



Holidays in the Trails

Saturday,
December 13, 2008

Festivities

At dusk...Residents set out luminaries
5 – 6 p.m. Cookies and pictures with Santa
at the Clubhouse
6 – 8 p.m. Fun Activities

Please contact Mitzi Costello at 281-250-8384
to order luminary kits, to donate cookies
and/or to volunteer to assist with this event

*Season's
Greetings*



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Pet Holiday Tips

Submitted by Dr. Cammie Teliha

The fall holiday season is a wonderful time for fun, food, family and friends all of which can be overwhelming for you family pets. The extra activities of the season can dramatically change the household routines, sights, and smells around the home. Therefore, it is import to consider these holiday activities from your pet's perspective and safe guard your furry friends to ensure that everyone in your family enjoys a happy and healthy holiday season.

First it is important to understand the hazards that our pets face as the holidays approaches. The following are some basic hazards that each pet can face during the holidays:

- Rich, fatty foods can be very dangerous to both cats and dogs. Many holiday foods such as turkey, smoked ham, garlic, onions and chocolate can cause GI upset, vomiting, diarrhea and even death.
- All bones, especially turkey bones, can cause intestinal tears and obstruct the digestive tract.
- Even grapes and raisins can be dangerous for dogs and can lead to kidney failure.
- Caffeine and alcohol can be toxic and should never be given to our pets, no matter how funny Uncle Pete thinks it might be.
- Cooking aids like aluminum foil, string and holiday decorations can all be very enticing for any pet, but each can be very dangerous and potentially deadly if ingested.

In addition to these specific hazards, the fact that the family routine can change dramatically can be very stressful to any pet. As parties occur, or when family and guests spend the night, pets can be overwhelmed with the noises and interactions which often leads to unwanted behaviors such as aggression, soiling and possibly running away.

With all these hazards to contended with my recommendation is to develop a simple and direct plan that everyone, both young and old, family and guest, can quickly understand and support.

Holiday Game Plan:

Post the Rules: How often have you heard your guest say "Oh, just one bite won't hurt"? The problem is if everyone offers your pet a little nibble there is no way to know what might have caused your pet to get sick. Preventative safety measures are the best strategies. By simply letting everyone know the rules your pet well be safer and there won't be any confusion about your expectations from both family and friends.

No Table Scraps: With so many holiday health hazards involving food and diet, this simple recommendation will ensure a healthy and well fed pet throughout the holiday season. Discourage family members and guests from indulging

your pets with inappropriate treats. Food that is high in sodium and fats, such as peanuts, chips, poultry skin and other meats can cause an inflammation of the pancreas which can lead to pancreatitis, a potentially life threaten condition. Always try to maintain the same feeding schedule as the rest of the year and if Uncle Pete just can't resist, have a small amount of veterinary approved pet treats on hand.

Tidy Tidy Tidy: This means everything from food to decorations. I know that this is easier said than done, but if everyone knows the game plan you will be more successful than you might expect. Decorations might not seem like a good meal, but the holiday season can seem like a buffet smorgasbord to some pets. Keeping the house neat with decorations out of reach will discourage bad behavior and help you keep track of the ornaments that go missing. Keep leftover foods out of reach and in tightly closed containers and make sure garbage cans are secure and all trash bags and places in trash can. It only takes a couple of minutes for a pet to tear up a trash bag and devour whatever is inside.

Time Out: When animals are stressed they can often become unpredictable and behave erratically. This is never good for a party. Be mindful of how scared you cat might get with a house full of strangers or how hyper Fido can be when all of the cousins are over. Providing a quiet out of the way spot for your pet to relax and get away from all of the holiday activities can go a long way to ensuring a comfortable get together for everyone. Consider a pet time out when you sit down to eat. This will serve double duty by limiting the temptations for everyone. Cats are especially well served if they can hideaway in a back bedroom until everyone has gone home.

Be Prepared: This is especially true during the holidays. Always have your pet fully vaccinated and maintain your records for easy access. If your pet bites a guest the first question the ER will ask is "Is the animal vaccinated for rabies." If you can answer yes and provided current documentation you will greatly reduce all medical concerns and your potential financial obligations. Also, keep your veterinary hospital and the emergency veterinary clinic numbers handy. Your veterinarian can provide you with the closest emergency clinic information, this is especially important during the holidays when many animal hospital are not open.

The holiday season should be fun for everyone, including you family pet. By putting together and Holiday Game Plan you can ensure the health and safety of your pet and you guests. Remember to share you plan with all of your family and friends, maintain your pets regular diet and schedule, keep hazards away and be prepared and ready to take action of your pet becomes sick. By following these simple guidelines you can ensure that your pet will be healthy and happy for the holidays.





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