

The Oak Leaf

Newsletter of Broad Run Oaks



The Survey Says ...

Almost two years ago the residents of Broad Run Oaks expressed interest in adding new amenities to the community. The Board of Directors was tasked to perform a feasibility study following the 2010 Annual Meeting of the Homeowner's Association. The results of that survey, as well as some additional research done by the Board in conjunction with Armstrong Management Company, were shared with residents during the 2011 Annual Meeting, which was held on Saturday, September 24th. Residents and Board members discussed the information and it was decided that a survey would be sent to all homeowners to allow them to voice their opinion on the addition of amenities to the community. The amenities survey was sent out to all homeowners within Broad Run Oaks in November with a goal of assessing the overall community's interest in improving the amenities within our neighborhood, as well as to determine the specific amenities residents were willing to fund.

Survey input was requested by the end of 2011 and the results have been tabulated. Unfortunately, not all residents submitted responses to the survey—only 139 inputs were received, which is only 36% of our community. Of those homeowners that did take the time to respond, the majority do support adding more amenities within our community—68% of respondents.

The survey asked residents to identify which of the following amenity combinations they supported (NOTE: the percent of respondents that supported each combination follows the item in parenthesis): Pool & Clubhouse (56%); Pool, Clubhouse & Tot Lot (48%); Clubhouse Only (17%); Tot Lot Only (17%); Pavilion & Tot Lot (13%); and Pavilion Only (9%). Some respondents wrote in an additional combination of Clubhouse & Tot Lot (5%). Overall, those that responded favorably to the addition of amenities within the community noted via comments that they felt the added amenities would enhance community cohesiveness and increase the value of their property.

Despite the support of the majority of respondents, there were a large percentage (32%) of respondents who do not support the addition of any new amenities. The rationale given for this ranged widely, but the most common reasons given were all financial. Many residents noted the current state of the economy as a detriment to the addition of amenities, expressing concern that it was not an appropriate time to think about putting more expense on our residents. This same theme was supported by other homeowners who expressed concern about being able to afford the special

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assessment and/or the increased Homeowner's Association dues. Other reasons provided included parking concerns, concerns about the estimate being too high, requests for additional information to make a more informed decision, and even a comment that additional amenities would diminish the quality of life within Broad Run Oaks. There were also respondents who felt additional amenities would not improve the value of their property.

The backside of the survey delved into how the Board should consider funding the proposed amenities (NOTE: ~20% of the submitted surveys did not have any information completed on the backside of the form). The majority of those who responded were interested in spreading the expense over a two year period via monthly installments (47%), with spreading it over a year through two payments (18%) and paying in full (13%) coming in as second and third choices, respectively. The question about a smaller assessment for only a clubhouse was only supported by 18% of respondents. However, this could have been due to a lack of understanding of the rationale behind the question (i.e., they did not attend the Annual Meeting, review the online information from the Board's initial research, or read the Fall Newsletter that noted we could potentially put in a small clubhouse with little to no increase in dues). Several respondents also proposed charging a usage fee rather than increasing HOA dues as a way to pay for upkeep of the added amenities.

The reverse of the survey also asked respondents to confirm their continued interest despite the fact that additional amenities would cause an increase in HOA fees—56% of respondents noted they were still interested despite the added expense.

Lastly, the survey tried to gain an initial assessment of the residents that would be most affected by the addition of amenities—those whose homes back up to the tennis court area. The results were evenly split with a slight majority (57%) supporting the addition of amenities.

Whether or not you agree with these opinions, the Board was pleased to have input from all sides of the issue. Remember, the survey was simply the next step in the process. The Board wants to have the opinion of all Broad Run Oaks homeowners prior to moving forward with any further investment of community funds to perform additional research, assess the exact location, and/or develop specific plans for construction. The Board plans to discuss these survey results and the next steps at the next meeting of the Homeowner's Association, which will be held at **7 p.m. on Thursday, February 2nd** in the library of Glenkirk Elementary School.

You're a Mean One, Mr. Grinch!

Karen Decker, Neighborhood Watch Coordinator

It may sound like a fairy tale, but it certainly seemed like the Grinch visited several Broad Run Oaks residents who had holiday decorations vandalized in December. Due to this recent vandalism, I wanted to take a moment to remind everyone the importance of getting involved to keep our community crime free.

As everyone is aware, the police can not be everywhere all the time. For this reason they are very dependent on the "eyes and ears" of citizens to aid them in stopping and solving crimes within our community. If all residents would take the initiative to notify the Prince William County Police whenever suspicious activity is occurring, many crimes could be prevented.

Often people fail to act because they are not sure what they are observing is worth a call to the police. With this in mind, a good rule of thumb is: if you are in doubt, call the police immediately—especially since police response time is very valuable at this point. While some people may feel they are bothering the police, especially if the suspicious activity seems to be nothing at all; the police would rather respond to the suspicious circumstance and, as a result, possibly deter someone from committing a crime.

What is suspicious activity? A few examples are listed below:

- A strange truck or car parked at your neighbor's home while they are away
- The sound of breaking glass
- People peering into vehicles and/or removing tags, gasoline, or auto parts
- Apparent business transactions conducted from a vehicle or on street corners
- A constant flow of strangers to and from a particular a house on a regular basis, especially at late hours
- A vehicle driving slowly through the neighborhood and/or traveling the same street repeatedly
- Persons standing around, possibly acting as a lookout
- Teenagers walking through the neighborhood past their curfew

The above examples are certainly not all inclusive and only touch on a few types of suspicious activity. Residents are encouraged to call the PWC Police to report any and all suspicious activity, even if you believe it is too minimal to report. I can not stress enough the importance of doing so. Not only does it help the PWC police department do their job, it helps ensure that our community will be safe and crime free.

Emergency: 911

Non-emergency: 703-792-6500

When calling, remain calm, describe why you are calling, and give a detailed description of the suspect or vehicle involved, as well as the last known location or direction of travel. Remember our community depends on all of us to do our part.

I hope everyone had a wonderful Holiday season. Be safe, stay alert, and, of course, stay out of the cold.

Architectural Review Committee

by Mike O'Loughlin, Chair

We all are still waiting for winter to start. But the cold and snow can come at any time, usually when we least expect it. So I hope you have taken advantage of the nice weather so far and winterized your home. Just Google "winterize your home" and you will find many good recommendations. When the snow does come here are a few reminders:

- Homeowners are responsible for clearing snow off sidewalks in front of their property
- Remove snow from entire sidewalk to accommodate wheelchairs and strollers
- Please shovel access paths to mailboxes so mail can be safely delivered
- Clear an area of one foot around any fire hydrant near your home
- Parents of school children should help ensure bus stops are also cleared of snow
- Make sure your front lamplight is functioning property to help keep yards and roads visible

Homeowners are reminded that the Architectural Review Committee (ARC) is in place to monitor the neighborhood and ensure residents adhere to the Architectural Guidelines which are available in the Association Documents portion of our website (www.broadrunoaks.com/BRO_Docs.htm). Our next inspection of the community is scheduled for the end of January. Say 'Hello' to our new committee members if you see them braving the cold to inspect the neighborhood. We really are nice people.

As always, if you have questions about inspections and/or the exterior modification application process, email the committee at arb@broadrunoaks.com. Since the application review/approval process is now done completely electronically, the ARC now only meets quarterly. Residents are welcome to attend our meetings—just check the website or use the email address to contact us for meeting information.

The Architectural Review Committee hopes everyone had a safe, enjoyable holiday season, and wishes everyone a prosperous 2012.

Looking for more Broad Run Oaks information or have something to share with the community?

Visit our website (www.broadrunoaks.com) or (<http://www.facebook.com/pages/Broad-Run-Oaks/163709803643269>)



The Art of Giving
by Karen Decker, Chair

Social Committee
Melanie Smallwood, Chair

The act of giving becomes very predominant during the holiday season, but giving is an act that does not have to be limited to these celebrations. However, since the holiday season reminds everyone about giving, it presents an opportunity for me to share some words of wisdom about the true art of giving.

Giving, really has no boundaries and for the most part it is something that does not come with a price tag attached. I mean how often do you ever really get something for free in life? But giving truly is, especially since very often giving is not the act of donating money or belongings. Instead it is a smile offered to a stranger, the sharing of special knowledge, a helping hand or support during a difficult time. Giving is something that can embody our spirit through discreet acts of kindness. It certainly does not have to be grand or showy to have true impacts.

The true art of giving is to give from the heart without any expectation of anything in return and its purpose is something that will fill your heart with joy. As I read somewhere, one of life's most basic laws is "every single act of love, kindness and generosity will multiply and return to you many times over." The more you give the happier you will feel.

The holiday season is a wonderful time that brings the spirit of giving into all of us. Remember though, just because the traditional holidays are through, you should continue giving each and every day. How wonderful life can be if we would always give from the heart in our own special way. These words of wisdom are my gift to all of you. Make sure you live your life to its fullest and always bring a smile to everyone who passes along your way. The cost is free.

Please remember, the Helping Hands Committee is here to give back to community members in need of assistance. If you need help, or if you would like to volunteer on the committee to help your neighbors, contact helpinghands@broadrunoaks.com.

Too often we underestimate the power of a touch, a smile, a kind word, a listening ear, an honest compliment, or the smallest act of caring, all of which have the potential to turn a life around – Leo F. Buscaglia

Due to the cold weather the Social Committee is taking a long winter's nap! Once the weather warms up, be on the look out for information about the Annual Egg Hunt!

Remember, you can contact social@broadrunoaks.com to provide feedback and/or recommendations for social committee events. We also welcome you to join / volunteer with the social committee during 2012. If you do not have time to join or volunteer, we at least hope you and your family will attend our 2012 events—we look forward to seeing you!



Open Space
Ric Seaman, Chair

Although the weather outside has not yet been frightful, the cold and frost of winter are not very friendly to the plants around our monuments or in other community open spaces. That's one of the reasons why we decided to spice up the monuments with lights and wreaths for the holiday season. Do not worry though, we will have that pop of color that spring annuals bring before you know it.

In the meantime, remember that regardless of the season homeowners are responsible for their property. This includes the sidewalks that border their property—be sure to remove snow from these areas to keep pathways clear for those who continue to brave the cold and walk outside. In addition, we as a community, are responsible for the overall appearance of Broad Run Oaks. With that in mind, please be considerate of others by not throwing trash along our roads or common areas and being sure to clean up after your pet as you walk and enjoy the neighborhood.

Please remember that the Open Space Committee was formed to maintain the common areas of the community. If you notice any of these areas in need of attention be sure to report them via email to openspace@broadrunoaks.com.

Enjoy the winter weather and be safe!

**Community
Contacts**

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- Jim Decker.....Vice President
- Debby Riplinger.....Secretary
- Brian Tower.....Treasurer
- Naresh Santram.....Member-At-Large

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This newsletter is an official publication of the Broad Run Oaks Homeowners Association. Publication in this newsletter of resolutions, rules, regulations, and meetings duly adopted or called by the Board of Directors serves as official notice to the membership and residents of the meetings or the adoption and implementation of these enactments of rules for the purpose of enforcement.

Newsletter Articles: The next edition of *The Oak Leaf* will be the Spring edition. Article topics and suggestions will be accepted until April 6th. Submit ideas and/or inputs to Paula MacDonald, *The Oak Leaf* editor and Communications Committee Chair at:

communications@broadrunoaks.com

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From the President:

Residents, Neighbors, and Friends:

I hope you had a wonderful holiday season with your friends and families, but now the holidays are gone and winter is moving in, bringing the cold weather and freezing temperatures with it. As we head into these months of frigidness I wanted to provide a few reminders. Try not to put salt on concrete driveways or sidewalks to melt snow and ice, as it will cause damage over the years. Instead, use a shovel or a snow blower to remove the snow before it has the opportunity to form a coat of ice. Also, please do remember to clear the sidewalks around your property. Children use the sidewalks to get to the school bus and other residents walk their pets, give them a safe walkway to use. Speaking of pets, remember to ensure they have the protection they need on cold winter nights. Bring them inside on nights when the temperatures will drop below freezing or, at a minimum, put them inside the garage on such nights. Remember, your pets are part of your family and they love you unconditionally—take care of them. Be willing to assist your neighbors when they need help, a small act of kindness can often reap big rewards.

On another note, over the coming months the Board will be determining the appropriate next steps in regards to the addition of amenities within our community. We will also try to ensure that we are appropriately sharing information with residents. The results of the survey, which were detailed on page 1 of this newsletter, will be discussed at the next Homeowner's Association meeting. All residents are encouraged to attend to discuss the topic. Hopefully, by the time spring rolls around, we will be ready to have a special meeting / barbecue to, at a minimum, release additional information and, possibly, even put the chosen amenities to a vote.

Lastly, I want to offer my personal thanks to Jeff Riplinger and Jim and Karen Decker for their assistance with the decorations at the front entrances. I also want to thank all the other residents that offer their time and energy to volunteer within our community. Whether it is as a member of a committee, helping with a community event, or just cleaning up trash along the street, the hard work of these people are helping Broad Run Oaks to improve, year after year.

Sincerely,

Paul MacDonald
President, Broad Run Oaks HOA

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The next meeting of the Homeowner's Association will be on Thursday, February 2nd. We will discuss the results of the amenities survey and next steps in the process. Please join us.