

The ECHO

The Newsletter of the Randolph Civic Association

Volume 54, Issue 5

March 2011

2011 Neighborhood Priorities

A message from the Randolph Civic Association

At our February membership meeting RCA-Land residents provided their feedback on what the RCA should be focusing on in 2011. This yearly exercise helps the RCA Board better respond to community needs and focuses our efforts where they are most needed. We then take these priorities and share them with County leaders such as the County Council, the County Executive and our state delegation. Last year we identified three categories: Beautification and Revitalization, Safety, and Education. Each category had its own set of activities such as, but not limited to, restarting the Neighborhood Watch, strengthening the PTA, raising money for new signage, and increasing school capacity.

We're happy to say we've made progress in these areas. Viers Mill Elementary has an addition on the way and Wheaton High has a modernization planned. Two RCA members are serving on the Viers Mill Elementary PTA (one as President). We have begun the long, labor-intensive process of restarting the Neighborhood Watch, and we are now in the planning and design phase of new sign acquisition. However in all these areas there is still much to do.

At our meeting in February our discussion retained some similar themes. Again, our priorities for the year can be summarized into three categories, but they have been recast to align with the feedback we've gotten from members. The categories are: Services and Infrastructure, Safety, and Community Identity.

Services and Infrastructure focuses on services the County and State provides and major infrastructure ele-

ments that may be acquired through a Capital Improvement Plan item. These services include Pepco, Code Enforcement and Zoning. The infrastructure improvements identified are street/intersection improvements, Boiling Brook creek improvements, and a project to improve the state of trees in our neighborhood. The RCA will work with other communities, the County, and State to push for changes at Pepco. We will also seek funding, even in these difficult times, for critical projects in our community. We will push for changes in the way the County enforces code infractions. Many residents are tired of the slow, ineffective manner in which the County enforces code violation. We will seek new legislation if needed, and stay on top of County budget development.

Safety remains mostly the same. We need to continue building the Neighborhood Watch, but we need your help to do it. We will arrange for training for our volunteers. I can't stress enough how important volunteers are for this effort. The County cannot do this for us. We need your help.

Finally, we are going to spend time this year working on a basic building block of any neighbor-

hood, Community Identity. This includes tangible elements like new signs and landscaping, but also includes more events and outlets for our neighbors to meet each other. It also means that we will continue exploring the concept of bringing a farmers market to our community. Volunteers are also needed to bring this concept to reality.

If there is something missing from this list, we welcome feedback but appreciate volunteering. This list was developed by your neighbors, but that doesn't mean it represents every potential initiative. If you want to see RCA do more, step up and join us.



More volunteers like this are a priority

Upcoming Events

RCA Executive Board Meeting

March 3rd, 2010 8:00pm-10:00pm, Veirs Mill Recreation Center

RCA General Membership Meeting: Annual RCA Board Elections

April 7th, 2010 8:00pm-10:00pm, Veirs Mill Recreation Center

RCA Executive Committee and Committee Chairs for 2010-2011

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President's Message

by Dan Hoffman, RCA President

I hope you've taken a few moments and read what our neighborhood priorities will be for the coming year. This list was developed at the February 3rd RCA meeting (we also took suggestions prior to the meeting via email). The priority list makes up the work plan for the RCA Board and committee chairs for the coming year. The Board and committee chairs are all volunteers who engage in these efforts only to make RCA-Land a better place to live.

Throughout the year we get phone calls from people about specific issues, asking why we aren't doing more about it or working on the issue with the County. The answer is normally pretty simple and we try to convey it tactfully. For the moment though I'll just state the answer bluntly: Because you never showed up to an RCA meeting or offered to help. All-volunteer organizations are just that, all-volunteer. Alerting RCA to a concern is a necessary first step, but given our limited resources we cannot take on every initiative brought before us. I'll cite two good examples of issues that were communicated to RCA, but then backed up by effort.

The state of the signage marking the entrance to our neighborhood is mediocre at best. Some signs are a bit newer and nicer and some are eyesores. The only reason we have even a reasonable amount of upkeep is because of the efforts of people like Shaul Kopyto, Boy Scout Eric Uglem and Karen Helfert, among others. We now have a sign fund which many of you donate to each year to replace aging signs, but the money doesn't just spend itself. Matt Tifford has taken on the significant effort of working with vendors, getting prices, reviewing designs, and presenting ideas to membership. As a result we will get new signs in some locations in the near future (see article and the proposed design in this issue of the Echo). Another good example is Christiana Drapkin. She feels a farmers market would be a wonderful addition to our neighborhood. Rather than just asking the RCA to get her a farmers market she has driven the initiative. Time will

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RCA Telephone Number: (240)668-4722.

Recorded announcements of community events, 24 hours a day. Callers may leave messages.

Membership in the RCA is \$10.00 per year.

The *Echo* is the official publication of the Randolph Civic Association, Inc., P.O. Box 2202, North Bethesda, Maryland 20852. The *Echo* is published 8 times a year and distributed free to all residents of Franklin Park, Hilltop Square, Montrose Park, Randolph Hills, Randolph Farms, and Westminster. Deadline for submission of articles varies; the next deadline is noted in each issue. If you would like to send an article in for consideration, please email the article to info@randolphcivic.org.

The Randolph Civic Association was formed in 1955 and incorporated in 1958. As stated in the original Articles of Incorporation, the purposes of the RCA are "to stimulate interest in all community problems and improvements that will better the general welfare of the community [and] to pay strict attention to any attempt to lessen the value of property within its borders..."

Web site: www.randolphcivic.org

Neighborhood News in Brief

- The Montgomery County Division of Highway Services (DHS) received about \$6.7 million to improve seven roadways that, due to their deteriorated condition, were designated as high priority projects under DHS' inventory of countywide roadway conditions. **One of these paving projects will upgrade four-and-one-half lane miles on Randolph Road from the east of Nebel Street to Rock Creek Bridge.** Repairs include removing and replacing defective curbs and gutters; removing and replacing defective sidewalks; full-depth pavement patching; removing and replacing pavement surfaces; and installing pavement line markings and raised, reflective pavement markers. All seven projects should be completed in fall 2011.
- **Doggy Etiquette.** This is a great neighborhood for dogs. We have big parks, nice sidewalks, and plenty of stray rabbits to chase. Though one thing the RCA receives frequent complaints about involves people who fail to clean up after their dog. Although fines are rarely imposed, cleaning up after your dog defecates is the law. Snow on the ground made poor clean-up even more obvious, as neighbors sledding in Randolph Hills Local Park found. Little brown piles on white snow reminded us that dog owners in this neighborhood need to be more diligent with cleaning up after their pets, even if it's in your own front yard.
- **Thank you to Kendra Fletcher for all her hard work and creativity in her role as the Echo advertising coordinator!** Unfortunately Kendra is having to step down from this role and we are searching for someone who can take on this responsibility. The role involves reaching out to potential new advertisers and coordinating with existing ones. Don't worry, there's no cold calling involved and the time commitment is reasonable. Please contact Dan Hoffman at dan@randolphcivic.org if you are interested.
- **Welcome Cindy Zelaya as the new chair of the membership committee! And a big thank you to John Kehoe for his years of service in this role!** John maintained our membership database and managed the logistics of processing hundreds of renewals each year. Thank you John. If you have any questions about membership please contact Cindy at (301)984-1006.

Do you have a quick bite of news you'd like to share with the neighborhood? Please feel free to submit a few sentences to info@randolphcivic.org by the deadlines posted on page 9 of this issue. Thank you!



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The Return of the Randolph Hills Stream Team

by Amit Sharma

The world's most important park is the one near you--where you can escape and reconnect with nature. You may even have a favorite spot--where you walk your dog, ride your bike, take a run, have a picnic, or experience the quiet beauty of the park.

One of the reasons why Randolph Hills Park is very special is because of the proximity of Rock Creek, which adds to the aesthetic appeal of Randolph Hills. However, the Rock Creek environment is under duress due to a variety of factors. As you all know a lot of runoff pollution and trash flows into our streams. Natural erosion and trash from shopping centers, parks, and storm water systems are seriously threatening the Rock Creek environment.

Fortunately, an organization called the Friends of Rock Creek Environment (FORCE) was formed to combat the increase in pollution. FORCE is a nonprofit organization working to protect Rock Creek, which flows through Montgomery County and Washington D.C.

I joined FORCE last year because I want to help make sure future generations can enjoy Rock Creek Park as much we have. FORCE has been asking citizens to adopt a section of the creek by forming what they call stream teams. So last fall I started a Randolph

Hills Stream Team and led a small cleanup effort around the main Rock Creek stream that flows between Randolph Hills Park and Dewey Park. This spring we will be joining with the Boy Scouts to support them in their annual cleanup project. Additionally, we plan on organizing at least two more projects this year in the Randolph Hills area – one trash cleanup project and one invasive plants removal project.

Invasive plants, if left unchecked, can potentially destroy entire sections of our great park. FORCE has partnered with a local organization called Weed Warriors to fight these invasive plants. I encourage anyone interested to attend a weed warriors training session. It is a free three-hour class and becoming a weed warrior really helps preserve the park's natural environment. Plus, it's a lot of fun!

Ultimately, all we are asking for is a small amount of everyone's time to help preserve Rock Creek Park. Both FORCE and Weed Warriors have numerous events throughout the year so there are plenty of opportunities to help out if you are unable to attend a Randolph Hills cleanup effort. If you are interested in volunteering please send me an email or give me a call and I will place you on our list for the next project. I will also be able to provide you with more information regarding the Weed Warriors training session. Amit Sharma, Randolph Hills Stream Team, p: 240-793-5975, ado2687@gmail.com



Amit Sharma and Members of the Randolph Hills Stream Team Volunteers

February Membership Meeting Minutes

by *Christiana Drapkin*

Call to Order at 8:10 p.m.

Our first guest speaker Police Officer Michael Prather gave a community safety report. Arrests were made in a few burglaries on Rocking Horse Road. One suspect was from the neighborhood, the others charged had come from outside the community, and one may have had a gang affiliation. Other common crimes are thefts from vehicles, which occur all over the county. Looking at the reports from August 2010 through January 2011, our “condensed community” is stable. Suspicious activities get called in by neighbors and residents. Officer Prather commends us for such vigilance and reiterates, “If you see something, say something.” For non-emergency issues, do not hesitate to call (301) 279-8000. For emergencies call 911.

Neighborhood Watch: Officer Prather has not held training sessions in other Rockville communities in the last two to three years. We will need more volunteers to sign up with our Neighborhood Watch initiative, in order to become an effective community watch group. Training of all volunteers will take place over a 3 week period, with a 2-3 hour training session. RCA encourages all residents to get involved – at your own level of involvement: learning how to be better “eyes and ears”, joining the neighborhood watch patrols, or being a block captain. For more information and to sign up, please contact David Matera at safety@randolphcivic.org. Officer Prather was asked if police would issue a summons to property owners who do not clear snow from their sidewalks. This is not a police matter, but a civil matter, to be reported to the County. A negligent property owner can be fined, and a business owner would receive higher fines. Residents who wish to report an unshoveled sidewalk can call 311 (240-777-0311 for outside county). Reports must include an exact address so the County can contact the property owner.

Our second guest speaker, Amit Sharma, lives here in Randolph Hills and is a member of the Randolph Hills Stream Team, as part of the Friends of Rock Creek. Most of us here benefit from our proximity to Rock Creek Park, enjoying the greenery, walking our dogs, bringing our children to the playground or the sports fields, or just going for a walk in the greenery. You can become a Weed Warrior: join a one-day, 3-hour course, learn about invasive species that crowd out our native fauna and other environmental issues, get certified and start hacking away! Join in the big April clean-up, together with our local Boy Scout team that RCA supports, and find out about the numerous activities through the year, either along Rock Creek or throughout the County. Find more information at www.FriendsofRockCreek.org

Special Discussion 1: PEPCO. After our “three strikes” of power outages throughout the year, we expected the Veirs Mill Rec Center to be overflowing with concerned RCA neighbors. But, sad to say, our meeting was sparsely attended. Remember, what we residents of Randolph Hills do and discuss, is all done by our indi-

vidual volunteer contributions, our spare time after work and parenting, our good-will and neighborly engagement with each other, and our desire to do something positive for the community. We do need your presence and active engagement, in order to continue as the collective community voice that we have grown into.

Dan Hoffman gave a quick overview on how PEPCO works. It is a privately-owned entity with publicly traded stock (and is run differently from WSSC, for example). PEPCO is a State-regulated agency, and our County government has limited authority. In our recent winter storm outages we had many downed trees and broken limbs. Trees that may affect PEPCO’s electricity delivery are not the purview of PEPCO but are managed by the County. In the wake of our state-wide budget cuts Montgomery County’s tree trimming budget was lost. We can call in and report a branch or a tree that may lean over or hang over a power line, PEPCO shall respond. Trees that have fallen on utility lines should be reported to PEPCO at 1-877-737-2662. Trees that have fallen on private property are the responsibility of the property owner. The County’s Office of Consumer Protection advises homeowners to deal with established tree removal businesses only. Of course, we also value the verdure of a healthy tree canopy. Although budgets have been slashed recently, we should pursue calls for reinstating the county’s tree replacement program, under the CIP. Even when our economy was humming and our budgets were healthier, tree removal and replacement schedules could lag behind by two years.

Overall, RCA members reported numerous outages, from the past two winters’ storms, the summer storms, and unexplained “fair weather” outages. There was a general feeling that our infrastructure suffers from a lack of upkeep. Some “drop lines” (leading from the street line to individual houses) look old and frayed and may be as old as the houses themselves. One resident reported that his house is at the end of a street and has suffered from frequent outages, and is usually the last to regain power. His father, who resides there, depends on an oxygen tank, and his health and safety were compromised by the outages. Randolph Hills residents have experienced various lengths and frequencies of power outages, sometimes on the same block. We want to find out which parts of the power grid are more vulnerable, which substations continue to fail. At the meeting, RCA members asked for volunteers to collect some information from Randolph Hills residents: how often and how long they were without power at specific addresses and specific dates. We will follow up with a letter to PEPCO and to County legislators. **Karen Helfert, Bob Walker, and Christiana Drapkin have volunteered to collect such data. Please call one of them, or email with the information.** State Legislator Brian Feldman introduced State legislation regulating PEPCO’s performance. How strict will these standards be? What fees or penalties should be implemented? What effect will such State legislation have? On the County level, Roger Berliner has called for reli-

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President's Message

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only tell if we can bring a farmers market to RCA-Land, but she is taking the lead.

People like Matt, Shaul, Eric, Christiana and Karen didn't just complain, they stepped up and helped. I know it has become an overused rallying cry, but John F. Kennedy's famous phrase has never been more applicable. In our case, ask not what the neighborhood can do for you, but what you can do for your neighborhood. We have a great group of volunteers, but given the size and needs of our neighborhood we should have more. There are many volunteer opportunities that fit all schedules and interests. Attending general membership meetings is a simple way to show support. If Thursday evenings don't fit your schedule, we have events throughout the year like the Rock Creek cleanup, Community Bazaar (formerly the yard sale) and Community Day Picnic. If you prefer to help from home on your own schedule, we are currently seeking a new advertising coordinator for the Echo or perhaps you could write an article for the Echo. If public safety is your area of concern, contact our public safety chair (see page two) to find out how you can help with the Neighborhood Watch. If you cannot spare any time at all, at least pay your RCA dues and kick in a little extra. You can always direct the donation to something specific like new signs. As you can see, there are plenty of opportunities to help.

So here's what I'm asking of every RCA-Land resident. Pick something this year that will help your neighborhood and do it, even if it's just attending some RCA meetings. Read the neighborhood priorities article on the front page and if one of those things resonates with you, email me and offer to help. If there is something important to you that is not on the priority list, first ask yourself, "Did I show up to the RCA meeting?"



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Viers Mill Receives Top Rating; Simple Ways You Can Help Fund Our Schools

by *Lindsay Hoffman*

We know Maryland has excellent public schools – and this was confirmed for the third year running when Education Week, the College Board and Newsweek all recently ranked our system as number one in 2011. And, on a more personal level, RCA-ers can be even more proud. One of our neighborhood elementary schools, Viers Mill Elementary, has received the highest rating available from GreatSchools.org. This national nonprofit focuses on the improvement of schools and parental involvement and is funded, in part, by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. GreatSchools develops its ratings by analyzing test scores and comparing them across other states' results. Viers Mill has received a prestigious 10 of 10 rating – one of just a few in the county! With such devoted faculty and staff, our kids can't help but succeed.

Budget woes, however, continue impacting our children. Funds for extracurricular and cultural activities were decimated by recent budget cuts. But the VMES PTA has stepped in and is committed to keeping these clubs, plays and performances alive. We are grateful to the Randolph Civic Foundation for a donation that supported our fall production of "Pinocchio"! The PTA also provides teachers with additional teaching tools and classroom supplies in addition to supporting our Family Fun Nights and Family Learning Nights.

There's an easy way for you to help us support our neighborhood's kids. Many of our local grocers offer education rebate programs that donate funds to the PTA. Safeway, Giant, Harris Teeter and Target all allow you to designate a school (or multiple schools) for donation. Simply link your rewards card to the school and everything else is automatic. Without anyone spending an extra dime, the PTA raised nearly \$500 this fall using this simple tool.

Finally – have you noticed the Box Tops for Education label on many of your grocery staples? Each one of those is worth ten cents to your local school! They really add up! So, please cut them off and set them aside – a PTA representative would be happy to collect them from you. Just email us for this or any other information at VMESPTA@hotmail.com.

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February Minutes

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ability standards that need to be tied to PEPCO's performance and rates.

Special Discussion II: 2011 Neighborhood Priorities. At our RCA meeting a year ago, we wrote up many ideas, wishes and priorities for our neighborhood. Dan Hoffman presented us again with these lists, and we held a review on what we have accomplished over this past year; what issues are still relevant today; which problems have been solved, and what concerns no longer seem relevant today. Here are the action items from last year.

Beautification: For the April clean-up we had almost 100 volunteers, including our local Scout groups, report for duty and clean up along Rock Creek. Our fund for new entrance signs has grown, and we're making progress to design and hopefully install some new signs this year. Signage regulations have changed, and we have to comply with the new guidelines. Abandoned properties are less of an issue and hopefully a welcome indicator of the health of our neighborhood and our stabilized property values.

Farmers' Market: Despite some initial committee meetings and Christiana Drapkin's subsequent efforts, approaching various commercial property owners, we were not able to get a firm commitment for one of the suitable spaces to establish a farmers market. Organizing a new farmers market takes the dedicated work and ongoing organizational effort of a core group of volunteers, which we don't have at this point. If we do get a formal commitment from a commercial property owner, we can get back to the starting point and pick up with this project. Otherwise, we will have to abandon the quest for a local farmers market at this time. Please respond if you're willing and able to contribute to this work group with your involvement.

Education: Veirs Mill elementary school is on track; GPES modernization, and middle-school and high-school developments are on track; funding is important. As of the RCA general meeting, a CIP meeting was scheduled for the following Tuesday. George Gadbois, our Education Committee Chair, continues attending these planning meetings.

Traffic: RCA members had presented our issues, concerns and ideas, and worked with County and Transportation Department officials. Chad Salganik and Dan Hoffman served on an advisory committee this past year, focusing on the cut-through traffic on Rocking Horse Road, and on improvements to make the streets more pedestrian-friendly.

New Priorities for 2011:

Beautification: Advocating for a physical buffer zone between the commercial Kronstadt property (zoned I-4), adjacent to the residential buildings. The entire industrial park, as it changes hands and is affected by the construction of the MARC station, will become part

of the White Flint II planning.

PEPCO: tree-trimming and maintenance; evaluating power lines, transformers, sub-stations and "drop" lines to individual houses.

Code Enforcement: putting teeth into meaningful building codes and environmental regulations. There are two agencies that regulate: Permitting Services, and DHCA, neither of which seems to make effective moves about actually removing violations. Education about codes and regulations must be improved and must reach the public, including trash removal and parking issues.

Neighborhood Watch/ Safety Committee: At this time, we have 20 active volunteers; we need many more in our neighborhood of 1,340 homes. Come and join in our safety education and/or patrols.

Beautification / Community Identity: Sign replacements design and funding; planning more neighborhood events.

Infrastructure / Traffic: Boiling Brook - Rocking Horse intersection improvement. Boiling Brook and Rock Creek cleanup and improvement.

Old Business:

Education Committee Chair George Gadbois reported on the round-table commission that is planning the ongoing construction and restructuring plans of Edison High School and Wheaton High School. The Board of Education is holding their next work session on February 28, and a public hearing is scheduled for March 15. George will attend and represent RCA's position on preserving Wheaton HS as the independent, excellent comprehensive high-school with its magnet programs.

RCA Signs: Matt Tifford presented us with a variety of new designs and guidelines. Today, our existing signs with masonry posts or concrete footings are no longer permitted; new height restrictions apply as well. A new, durable alternative is "sign-foam", which can have the look of carved wood. Matt's research was thorough and the results look great. Matt will work with a committee to decide on a unifying design and font.

New Business:

Call for Nominations to serve on the RCA Board of Directors: Please submit your nominations by the first Thursday of March, 3/4/11, the next Executive Meeting. All positions are up for vote. Votes will be held at the next RCA General Membership meeting on April 7th.

Organizational Reform Commission

Recommendations: The County convened a panel to recommend changes to the organizational structure to weed out duplication. It is recommended that the Park Police will be merged with Montgomery County Police Department; it is recommended that park user programs be merged into the County Recreation Department.

Minutes of the previous meeting were approved by unanimous voice vote. Treasurer's Report will be submitted, with projections and budget, at the next meeting. The meeting was adjourned at 10:20 p.m.

Neighborhood Watch Update

by Dave Matera, RCA Public Safety Committee Chair

Hello everyone. I hope everyone has enjoyed, for the most part, a less-snowy winter, even though it has been so cold. As I write this, the weather is forecasted to be warming up this week, which leads me to think: SPRING!

On that note, as everyone knows, springtime brings out our neighbors to venture outside once again, and unfortunately, it can also bring out those that are looking for an opportunity to strike against us. To that extent, our neighborhood watch program has been underway now since last year, but has hit a snag in the fact that most people have been involved in family-related activities and work, and less involved in being an extra set of eyes. We have made progress, but so have the petty criminals who have struck numerous times this past few months, specifically for those of you who live on Rocking Horse Road. Now for the good news, my contact with the Montgomery County Police stated that several arrests have been made in these cases, closing them out. However, investigations are still ongoing for some of the others.

Last year, we had an influx of volunteers who have either decided to become block captains [thank you!] or those that would rather just to be vigilant with an extra pair of eyes. However, it seems that interest in this has waned. Be advised, being an extra set of eyes does not involve really much at all. When you are out walking your dogs, children, or just walking with a buddy, we all can take part. It is recommended that when you walk, have a phone with you. This way, if you see something, you can say something by contacting the County Police non-emergency number at 301-279-8000. For life-threatening emergencies remember to dial 9-1-1. We all, as neighbors, can make a difference. A little goes a long way in restoring our neighborhood's vitality and helping the police reduce crimes in our area.

Those that are interested in the active part of patrolling the neighborhood will form teams comprised of at least two volunteers that will patrol the neighborhood, either by car, foot, bike, motorcycle, horse, or whatever you would like for a few hours at a time. I will put our new volunteers in touch with our scheduler, Ms. Mara Greengrass, once you have been properly trained. The training is upcoming, and will be conducted by the county police. Keep in mind the more volunteers we can recruit, the more often we will develop regular patrols in RCA-Land.

A final thought: remember, folks, that our best defense is common sense. Put things of value away and out of sight (this goes for items in your vehicles to items in and around your homes). That is one of the biggest deterrents. Another suggestion is to not be afraid to spend a few bucks a month on a home security system. An idea for everyone, if money is tight, is to think about your priorities. An alarm system, for example, costs less per month than your cable/TV bill.

Thank you, stay safe, and keep your eyes and ears open.

Girl Scout Troop 1028

by Tania Bingcang

Our group has been eager to start activities since that heavy snow storm late January caused us to cancel some meetings. Old Man Winter may have the upper hand but he cannot stop our troop from selling cookies! The first batch of orders arrived along with some extras which were sold out very quickly and were distributed by our very dedicated troop mom Shauna Blanchard-Mbangah. Our thanks to Shauna for all the preparation and time she has given to this effort.

Next on the agenda is the World Thinking Day event which will be held on the afternoon of February 27 at Blair High School. The event will be focusing on European countries, each to be represented by troops in our local area. Our girls are showcasing the country Romania. This is a very exciting event for the girls. They are proud of their hard work and it culminates on this special day. Our meetings therefore have been focused in preparation for this creative event. The Daisies had a wonderful time sewing small-sized flags of Romania. The Brownies worked creatively to make a poster of this fascinating country which will be used during the event itself. The Juniors enjoyed concocting a Romanian drink called Orange Jada. All of these activities and projects added to the girls' excitement for World Thinking Day. We are truly very proud of what our girls have done. Again, these would not have been possible if not for our dedicated parent-volunteers.



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RCF President's Message

by Matt Tifford

Volunteers Needed! Over the winter our sign fund-raising effort focused on investigating the possibility of county or state grant money to help offset the cost of the new signs. Once the community approves a new sign layout we will be able to get a firm price for replacement, but we are estimating the cost at \$2500-\$3000 per installed sign. As of this writing, it doesn't seem likely that we will be successful in obtaining grant money, but we will keep you informed if anything changes. Over the next few years, we will work towards raising enough funds to replace all of the existing wooden signs, and are looking into the possibility of adding signs at the Randolph Road entrances at Rocking Horse Road and Lauderdale Drive. Currently we are focusing on the Boiling Brook and Schuylkill signs, primarily because we have volunteers who are motivated to get those signs replaced. If there is a sign which you would like to see replaced sooner rather than later, please contact me to find out how you can help. We are also looking forward to sprucing up the sign area landscaping this spring. We are pursuing a combination of volunteers and commercial landscapers to mulch and put in new plantings at as many of the sign mulch beds as possible. This is another project where we could use your help! If you are interested in finding out how you can help with either of these beautification projects, feel free to contact us at 240-389-4723, or e-mail us at info@randolphcivicfoundation.org.

RCF Executive Committee for 2010-2011

OFFICERS

President

Matt Tifford
11235 Ashley Drive
301-770-4377

Vice President

Lindsay Hoffman
4602 Wilwyn Way
301-775-9807

Secretary

Bob Walker
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301-881-0283

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Mike Saunders
12107 Hunters Lane
301-468-9268

Karen Helfert
11429 Ashley Drive
301-468-0236

George Gadbois
4718 Topping Road
301-770-5386

The Randolph Civic Foundation originated in 1996. It was formed to provide educational and charitable services to the Randolph Community.

www.RandolphCivicFoundation.org - Phone: 240-389-4723

Note to Echo Contributors:

Deadlines for the remainder of the 2010-2011 Issue year are:

April 2011 March 11th
May 2011 April 15th
June/July/Aug 2011 May 20th

News from Girl Scout Troop 1079

by Leora Hernandez

This troop is for girls in the 6th to 8th grade. At the Cadette troop level the girls have opportunities to grow leadership skills, earn SSL hours, and have lots of fun! We currently meet at Viers Mill Elementary School every other Monday from 7:00 – 8:30 pm on the stage in the all-purpose room. We are looking for additional girls and parents to join us in providing a fun and meaningful program.

The troop is currently working on the Breath Journey which will help them become more aware of environmental issues. They have learned how noise and technology can interfere with our caring about nature.

We are also preparing for our first World Thinking Day Service Unit Celebration. Our troop is learning about Israel and will teach the Dreidel game and serve homemade Challah bread to the other participants.

It's Cookie Time!!! Cookie sales have started and we will be at Loehmann's Plaza Safeway on March 4th from 4pm - 8pm and at Wheaton Giant on March 19th from 2pm - 6pm. Our troop is participating in Gift of Caring by taking cookie donations for Stepping Stones Shelter based in Rockville.

Girls in the 6th to the 8th grade – are you interested in joining us? Contact Leora Hernandez at 240-418-2984 for more information.

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RCA Pursues County Power Outage Relief

At the February General Meeting, the RCA voted to draft a letter to our County leaders regarding tree maintenance. The County is in the midst of budget formulation now and the RCA is working with other communities to rally support for this concept. RCA Environment Chair Matt Tifford has drafted this letter and it has been approved by the RCA Board:

County Executive Leggett and Council President Ervin:

As you know, older neighborhoods like those of the Randolph Civic Association have suffered from increasing instances of multi-day power outages over the last few years. The severe deficiencies in Pepco service are well chronicled, but we are writing to ask for assistance in a separate but related area. In our community, outages have been exacerbated by aging trees that decades ago were planted directly under power lines. Over the years, these trees grew up and over the lines, and now are slowly dying from age and disease, shedding limbs which invariably take down power lines during every storm.

Due to the budget crisis, the County does not have funds in the operating budget to properly care for these aging trees, most of which desperately need either pruning or removal. We understand that Pepco plays a part in tree maintenance around lines, but they will not replace dying trees or regularly maintain mature trees. Also, in many cases these trees may not impact power lines, but instead pose hazards to people and property during storms. As a result, residents in neighborhoods like ours will continue to experience significant challenges during and after storms when large limbs block our sidewalks and roads. This also increases the cost of post-storm clean-up for the County.

Due to this we are asking for funding for a one time County-wide CIP item, possibly funded by Pepco, from which civic and homeowners associations can apply for tree maintenance assistance. Funds would be distributed based on the age and state of trees in the neighborhoods making the request. In appropriate situations we would like mature, County-owned trees to be replaced with one of the smaller or "Minor" trees on the county's approved list. The details and logistics of this initiative should be developed in coordination with communities, environmental groups, and the appropriate County agencies.

Thank you for your consideration,

Matthew Tifford
Environment Chair
Randolph Civic Association

Snow Shovelling Fine Follow-up

by Mark Nensel

Following publication of our article "Snow: What to Do" in the Jan/Feb 2011 Echo, I heard from a Franklin Park resident who mentioned that the \$50 fine for non-shovelling of one's sidewalk no longer exists. She said that she had talked to the county a number of times, reporting un-shoveled sidewalks, and the only result was that the country had sent the offender a letter. The law, which is in the Montgomery County Code as Sec. 49-24A ('Accumulation of snow and ice on property prohibited'), came as a result of 'The Pedestrian Winter Safety Act of 2001'. According to a Montgomery County Council news release announcing the Act's passage, the law "requires a written warning about a violation before imposing a \$50 civil fine if, within 24 hours after the warning, the situation is not corrected". At the RCA community meeting on February 3rd, visiting MCPD officer Michael Prather was asked about the fine's current status. Officer Prather replied "technically, the fine still exists". But he made it clear that chasing down non-sidewalk-shovelling residents is not a high priority for Montgomery County police officers. The fact is, an ice and snow-covered sidewalk is an extremely dangerous walking situation, especially for commuters trying to walk down our neighborhood sidewalks trying to catch a bus or walk to the Metro. Following Thunder Snow, when it remained very cold and the ice did not melt, conditions were very treacherous. Residents could break hips, arms, wrists and coccyx bones from such a tumble. It is only neighborly and considerate to your fellow human beings to shovel your sidewalk after it snows. Please do it. It is the law!



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Troop 1083 News

By Ben Pitkin, Assistant Scoutmaster

Troop 1083 conducts two major fundraisers each year: a Christmas tree sale in November-December and a mulch sale for which orders are accepted until late February. In both cases—trees and mulch—the troop provides free local delivery. Mulch deliveries will take place the weekend of March 11–13. We want to offer sincere thanks to all who supported us at the tree sale and bought mulch from us.

In late January, Troop 1083 scouts attended the Montgomery District Klondike Derby at Little Bennett Regional Park for two days and two very cold nights of camping and gaming. The scouts slept out in tents and cooked outside too. The temperatures dropped into the single digits at night, plenty cold enough for all the scouts to earn their symbol of polar bear brotherhood, the polar bear patch. The Derby events included various tests of Scout craft, first aid and life saving skills and knowledge and teambuilding exercises. WEBELOS II Scouts from Packs 1081 and 493 joined the Troop Saturday evening for some lessons in fire building and enjoyed dinner before returning home to their warm beds to sleep.

The first weekend in February was a busy one for Troop 1083 scouts. The weekend began with a cabin campout in St James, Pennsylvania (near Gettysburg). Scouts took part in an extensive junior leadership training program that provided them with useful and practical skills that can be used not just in scouts but in school, at home, and in the community. Thanks to the adult leaders and elder scouts who prepared the informative and entertaining programs!

Scouts barely had time to unpack their campout gear before heading to the Winter Court of Honor (COH) Sunday afternoon. As the troop continues to grow and the Scouts stay focused on their goals, the award and achievement tallies just keep piling up! At this COH, Troop 1083 Scouts earned a total of 41 merit badges and 15 rank advancements. All the boys deserve congratulations; special mention goes out to Nicholas Kurtz, Cameron Lett, and Noah Stitt, each of whom advanced two ranks since the October COH; and Robert Skaats, who earned three merit badges since October.

Upcoming events include a ski trip to Ski Liberty, March WEBELOS Weekend, and campouts at Patapsco Valley State Park and Washington Monument State Park (with the latter also featuring whitewater rafting in Harpers Ferry WV). If you are a boy who has finished the fifth grade you can join us. We meet Monday night at 7:30 at Viers Mill ES, or call Scoutmaster Dave Talbott at 301-933-0048. Check out the Troop's web page at www.troop1083.org.

Venture Crew 1083 News

By Ben Pitkin, Corresponding Secretary

In January the Venture Crew participated in an annual midwinter competition of scout skills called the Montgomery District Klondike Derby. The Derby is held at Little Bennett Regional Park near Clarksburg, and involves camping out in (and being fully prepared for) the less-than-toasty conditions.

In the Derby itself, participants go from station to station; at each they are tasked with demonstrating (or cleverly improvising) various scoutcraft, wilderness survival, and backwoods engineering skills. Examples are as varied as building a fire in the shortest possible time; identifying plant and animal species; tying various types of knots and explaining their uses; winter rescue techniques; building and testing a catapult; providing first aid under disabling conditions; and even the caber toss (of "Highland Games" fame). Of course, prior to the event, each team must construct a sled or wagon to haul their equipment from station to station. Venture Crew 1083 is a well-seasoned group with plenty of cold-weather experience. They laughed at the cold and had a great time in conditions that would reduce most people to whimpering, shivering stacks of misery.

Speaking of cold and laughing, on February 11, Crew 1083 hosted several other Crews from all over the region (one came all the way from Sabillasville, near the Pennsylvania line) at an "Introduction to Curling" event in Laurel. You may recall the Crew tried curling last year, so some of us were "old hands" this time around – although, watching us play, there wasn't necessarily any evidence that we learned much last year. Curling is lot harder than it looks, but it is also more fun than it looks like when you see it on TV!

Venturing is open to coed youth aged 14 through 21. Crew meetings are every second Monday night, from 6:30–7:30 pm at Viers Mill ES. Why not join us? Bring a like-minded friend so you'll already know someone else at the meeting! For more information, contact crew advisor Greg Skolnik at 301-942-3755.

DAVID S. SCHLUTZ, D.M.D.



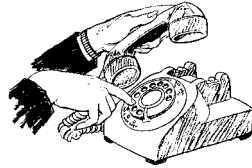
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DENTIST

The RCA Hotline

240-668-4722 (4RCA)

Calls Received January 10th, 2010
through February 17th, 2011



General Note: The RCA gets a lot of calls about code violations (untagged cars, tall grass, etc). Please note that phone numbers for agencies that handle such matters are published on the website. You don't have to leave your name or phone number. The RCA is here to help everyone keep our neighborhood as orderly as possible, so please use these numbers. Please call the RCA as well. We appreciate knowing and learning about our community.

01-12-11 (Wed) at 11:35am. Not Anonymous. Caller is a resident of Randolph Hills at 119xx Rocking Horse Road. Caller wants to spread the word that there have been many break-ins on Rocking Horse Road, all during the day between 7:30am and 10:30am. Just recently, there was an attempted break-in when a burglary suspect was interrupted – which is what caller and the police feel happened. Caller urges everyone in RCA that, if you see anything at all, even if you don't think it's anything, please call 301-279-8000 or even 911 and report it immediately. This has become a bad situation and we all need to be vigilant.

01-31-11 (Mon) at 9:22am. Anonymous. Caller is a long time resident of the neighborhood – since 1971. Caller lives on Brentford Drive and is reporting that trees have been down and blocking caller's road since the storm on the 25th. There's only one way into the neighborhood here – God forbid something happens. *(RCA Note: Montgomery County has instituted its new 311 service – a non-emergency government information and services number. It's the best place to call for these matters and any other time you need to reach the county for assistance with a non-emergency. Learn more about this service at www.montgomerycountymd.gov/311)*

02-01-11 (Tues) at 11:05am. Not Anonymous. Received via Info@RandolphCivic.org. Dear Sirs, as you all are aware, we again lost power during the last storm, and I guess we were lucky it was only for 36 hours! Is there anything that the RCA can do to represent the citizens of Randolph Hills in front of PEPCO, other than invite PEPCO to a meeting which happened in November, but of course it did not do any good. At the last hearing, at the Montgomery County Court House, one of our citizens from Franklin Park testified, a lot of good it did he lost power in his home for about 12 hours, he lives in Hunters Court.

While traveling through the neighborhood I noticed that it is basically Schuylkill Rd, ironic it is a snow emergency route, and west of Schuylkill Rd where most power outages occur for days on end. What is the PEPCO explanation? I have lived on Troy Rd since 1986, never have I experience the power loss like I have over the last two years. It has cost me a bundle, since I decided that in order to keep the house somewhat warm I converted my wood-burning fire place into a gas burning fire place. My next door neighbor decided he needed to install a gas generator that would kick on immediately after the power went on; two other neighbors have found the need to purchase generators. I am next in line, these are expenses made by the residents of Randolph Hills which would not be necessary should we have dependable electric supply, of course added to these expenses are the loss of revenue to businesses, and the loss of money due to constantly having to clean out the refrigerators and freezers. We suffer power outages worse than in a third world country, yet we live a few miles from the White House.

I call for a unification of the residents and members of the RCA to collectively stop paying PEPCO bills until some resolution to this continued problem is present, maybe PEPCO will listen to us that way. They don't care that there are elderly people, sick people, infants and children of all ages who need to keep warm, some of us are healthy enough and can afford to go to a hotel, but why should we have to make this extra expense, or should we send our bills for the added expenses such as the hotel bills, generators, fireplace conversions and spoiled food to PEPCO. I am getting pretty sick and tired of the power outages.

Please tell me if there is something we collectively can do.

(RCA Note: Although the RCA does not feel that you should stop paying your power bill, we are communicating with County and State leadership regarding Pepco. This was discussed at our last RCA meeting along with the steps we are taking.)

02-12-11 (Sat) at 1:54pm. Not Anonymous. Received via Info@RandolphCivic.org. RCA, I frequently get "surprises" in my mailbox; outbound mail items from other residents on Ertter Drive, mistakenly placed in my mailbox by the Postal Service. The mail service has been so bad over the past year that I now keep a log of mail errors with date and nature of mistake, for the purpose of reporting to the postmaster at 80502. The log for 2010 had 30 mistakes! Please let the residents of RCA-land know that valuables (such as checks and Netflix CDs) should not be placed in outbound mail boxes, as they may not reach the intended destination.

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Lifestyle Spa	(301) 468-9770
Loehmann's	(301) 770-0030
Parcel Plus	(301) 468-2177
Royal Martial Arts	(301) 770-1007
Safeway	(301) 770-3665
Sherwin Williams	(301) 984-7124
Subway	(301) 881-4672
West Marine	(301) 230-0945

Community Fixtures:

Welcome Home Reentry Program

By Melissa George

The Prison Outreach Ministry has been providing services to the incarcerated since 1984. Initially, the organization provided toiletries and other necessities to inmates in the D.C. Jail. After witnessing firsthand the high rate of recidivism, Prison Outreach Ministry broadened its focus and launched its Welcome Home Reentry Program in February 2006, which partners trained mentors to work with persons as they re-enter society. After starting in the District of Columbia, the program has grown to include Montgomery County in 2006, and Prince George's County in 2008. Eventually the program will expand to the Maryland counties of Charles, Calvert, and St. Mary's. The Montgomery County program is coordinated by Melissa George; her office is located at 11651 Nebel St. The Prison Outreach Ministry's website is www.prisonoutreachministry.org

The Welcome Home Reentry Program was established to meet the challenges faced by individuals returning to society following incarceration. In a twelve-month period, approximately 10,000 persons return home to Washington D.C., Montgomery County and Prince George's County after being

released from incarceration. Most of these individuals face a variety of barriers and have great difficulty managing the most basic necessities for successful reintegration. Daunting barriers exist, such as reconnecting with jobs, housing, and their families, as well as gaining access to needed substance abuse and health care treatment. Many newly released individuals are estranged from family and friends because of problems related to extended substance abuse and end up living in homeless shelters or boarding house rooms devoid of established familial support. Because the navigation of services can be complex and the wide-array of needs can be mutually related, dependent and depressingly cyclical (i.e. an individual can't obtain a job without proper credentials, but you can't obtain proper credentials without a place to live, and you can't obtain a place to live without a job, etc.), individuals returning to the community need successful community members to help guide them and navigate the social service system.

How can you help? Become a Volunteer Mentor. According to the Ministry's website, the Reentry Program is looking for "volunteers who are spiritually and morally strong men and women who are role models demonstrating God's love, forgiveness, and compassion". Volunteers will be trained to develop supportive relationships with persons returning to the community from incarceration, offering guidance, moral support, assistance, and practical information about employment, housing, and social services. Volunteers will help returnees reintegrate successfully into their communities by providing spiritual and moral support. Additionally volunteers will help returnees acquire the basic human services so they can pay fees to obtain birth certificates, drivers' licenses or non-driver licenses for identification purposes; tokens for public transportation to go on job interviews, security deposits to secure appropriate housing, and so forth. The aim is to provide men and women returning to the community after incarceration with a sense of belonging while fostering positive ties to the community.

The website offers a Mentor-'Mentee' story that illustrates one individual's transition and transformation: "Nathan has been meeting with his mentor, John, since March 2010. They have established a very trusting relationship and John has helped in ways beyond what words can express. John has visited Nathan at work during lunch breaks, he has accompanied him on his apartment searches, he has communicated with his probation officer, he has taken him to lunch and, most importantly, he has listened to and encouraged Nathan when he has needed it the most. When Nathan first met John he reminded John that joining this program was a year commitment for both of them, to which John responded 'Nathan, this is a lifetime commitment'." (continued on page 15)



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Welcome Home Reentry Program (continued from page 14)

Nathan expressed how much this simple phrase meant to him. He said that he had never heard anything like this before from his family or friends. He has never felt like anyone has been committed to helping him 'forever' and feels incredibly lucky and fortunate to have met John and his family. On the day of Nathan's release, John and his wife picked him up and took him to his new apartment. On the way, they stopped at Target to buy him some essentials for his new life on his own (bath towels, sheets, cleaning supplies, hygiene products), things that Nathan might otherwise do without and that most of us take for granted. Nathan did have some money saved but not enough to pay for his rent and security deposit and these items and have anything left over to eat, etc. While Nathan is only 23, he has unfortunately experienced many things in his life that most young men his age should not have to face. However, he has also had the misfortune of missing out on some of life's simplest and greatest pleasures and lessons. Fortunately, his mentor is an incredible role model and 'father' figure. John has taught him how to respond in certain difficult situations, how to dress more professionally, how to interact with employers and how to treat your family well. These are lessons that Nathan is learning as he watches John's interactions with others and hears his stories. Nathan's behavior shows that he is absorbing at least some of it!"

If you are interested in volunteering, contact Melissa George at the following numbers - 240-773-4206 and/or 240-678-4211, or e-mail her at melissa.george@montgomerycountymd.gov. Her office address is 11651 Nebel St. Rockville, MD 20852

RCA-Land residents and business provide 'Shelter in the Storm'

by Mark Nensel

As of press-time for this edition of the Echo, it appears that our major local snow event of 2011 will have been the January 26th seven-inch dumping that has since come to be known as the 'Thunder Snow'. A few days later, on January 31st, the following letter to the Editor of the Washington Post was published. It shows that even on the most difficult of evenings, residents and business-owners of RCA-Land are indeed a welcoming and considerate community:

Shelter in the Storm, by Jeffrey Frances, Rockville

Last Wednesday evening, after exercising at the Jewish Community Center of Greater Washington, I tried to drive the four miles home to Aspen Hill. Traffic was snarled, and I found myself sandwiched between cars on Rocking Horse Lane [sic] in Rockville. The residents had come out to help to push stuck cars up over the hills.

Here I was in my little Honda Civic wearing gym shorts. After about an hour, the quart of water I had consumed began to create some discomfort. I want to acknowledge the kindness of a Rocking Horse Lane [sic] homeowner who allowed a guy wearing shorts and a sweatshirt to come inside and use the bathroom. It must have seemed strange.

After giving up on getting to Randolph Road, I ended up at **Randolph Hills Shopping Plaza, where I took refuge at Pizza Leo's/Asteroids**. Of five customers, I was the only one not buying food, because I eat only kosher. But the owner, Mohamed, and his brother, Lotfi, were warm and welcoming to all of us. We shared stories, charged our cell phones and drank excellent jasmine tea.

By 11 p.m., plows were visible on the street. One member of our group, who had hoped to get home to Owings Mill to see his baby girl, never did see the promised tow truck, but Mohamed offered him a ride to a hotel. The rest of us went our separate ways.

If not for the owners of this small restaurant, we would have been in a real bind. They remained open late and extended kindness not only to customers who bought food but to at least one person who could not eat due to religious dietary restrictions and bought only an iced tea. I left with the comment that Pizza Leo's/Asteroids was "the best restaurant I never ate at."

The next day, when I went shopping at the grocery store in the plaza (Kosher Mart), I stopped in to shake Mohamed's hand and show my 8-year-old daughter this excellent example of a place where they know how to show kindness to others.

**Randolph Hills, Randolph Farms, Franklin Park
and Montrose Park Market Update...**

<u>Address...</u>	<u>List Price</u>	<u>Sold Price</u>	<u>DOM</u>	<u>Subsidy</u>	<u>Date Settled</u>
12108 Hunters Lane	\$363,450	\$345,000	36	\$0	13-Oct-10
4729 Wyaconda Road	\$359,000	\$359,000	62	\$10,770	18-Oct-10
11012 Troy Road	\$359,900	\$356,500	65	\$0	20-Oct-10
4626 Creek Shore Drive	\$365,000	\$362,000	10	\$0	9-Nov-10
11423 Schuylkill Road	\$310,000	\$300,000	10	\$10,000	10-Nov-10
11808 Ashley Drive	\$274,900	\$273,500	68	\$0	6-Dec-10
12114 Hunters Lane	\$374,900	\$367,500	45	\$10,000	15-Dec-10
4905 Macon Road	\$369,000	\$369,000	31	\$6,000	17-Dec-10
4706 Red Fox Road	\$365,000	\$365,000	11	\$0	20-Dec-10
4616 Coachway Drive	\$359,000	\$359,000	194	\$9,000	30-Dec-10
4716 Red Fox Road	\$367,000	\$360,000	10	\$500	11-Feb-11



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