

# *Whitehills Neighborhood Association of East Lansing Spring NEWSLETTER 2011*



## **President's Message**

Dear Neighbors:

It has been one year since I agreed to take on the presidency of the Association that represents our wonderful neighborhood. Although the newsletter typically is only sent to paid WNA members, this particular edition is being sent to all all homeowners within our boundaries (Abbott Road, Lake Lansing Road, Hagadorn, and Saginaw).

After an unseasonably cold spring, I can't wait to go out into my yard and get my hands into some dirt! The WNA Board of Directors is busy as well, with landscaping and picnic plans. When I think about all that needs to be accomplished, I am puzzled as to why fewer than half of our homeowners have done their part by paying their annual dues, which are a modest and affordable \$40. I write with the assumption that you moved to this neighborhood because of all the wonderful things it offers, and that you love it as much as I do. I would like to hear from you with your concerns and ideas for activities or projects that you think are important.

The WNA Board of Directors, many members of which have served for over 10 years, is dedicated to seeing that Whitehills is cherished, protected, enhanced and heard, but we need contemporary ideas and enthusiasm. Currently, the vice-president position is open, and there is also room for members-at-large. I am happy to announce that Hillary Henderson was elected at our last Board meeting as a member-at-large liaison to East Lansing Schools, and Maureen Mayhew as a member-at-large and temporary chair of the Welcome Committee. We are delighted to have them "on Board"!

Many issues come to the Board's attention: entrance landscaping and repairs, after-hours loitering and littering at the school, egging, street lights out, unleashed dogs, accumulation of trash, unfamiliar footsteps in someone's yard, suspicious activities, neglected exterior home maintenance, building permits that breach our covenants, etc. We try to deal with all of them, with the generous help of Board members and other neighbors who take these issues seriously.

We have a great picnic planned on July 10 that merges the ice cream social with a summer gathering, giving our busy young families, as well as our longtime neighborhood members, a chance to meet casually. Please join us in the fun. If you would like to help with children's games, activities, food, or clean-up, please contact me at 517-332-1575.

Have a wonderful summer!

Roberta McElmurry

President, WNAEL

## Tree Tips

Ahh Spring, that wonderful season when the days begin getting longer, the flowers begin to bloom and the landscapers and tree companies begin their seasonal barrage of door litter that they call advertising.

While I'm all for supporting the entrepreneurial spirit of these individuals, I am also concerned about some of the services I see being offered, primarily as it relates to tree services. There are several things any homeowner should be aware of before hiring someone to do work on their trees.

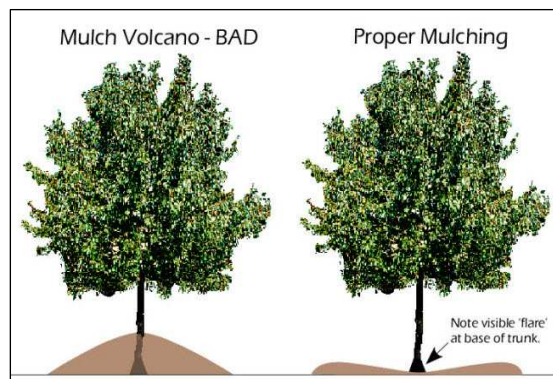


First, **ASK FOR PROOF OF INSURANCE** and then phone the insurance company if you are not satisfied. A reputable arborist carries personal and property damage insurance as well as workers' compensation insurance. Many homeowners have had to pay out large amounts of money for damages caused by uninsured individuals claiming to be tree experts. You could be held responsible for damages and injuries that occur as a result of the job.

Second, **DON'T TOP YOUR TREES** (or hire anyone that will)! If you feel that you need to top your trees, please do yourself a favor and just remove it. Space won't allow a full discussion of why but rest assured, it is ugly, unhealthy for the tree, not practiced by professionals in the industry and will create more long-term maintenance and safety issues than it solves.

Please review more specifics at: <http://www.treesaregood.com/treecare/topping.aspx>

Third, **MULCH WIDE, NOT DEEP.** We've all heard too much of a good thing can be bad. This also care, specifically mulching. Trees can benefit proper mulching. However, they can suffer just as apply it incorrectly. As a general rule of thumb, a 3-organic mulch spread evenly under the canopy of touching the trunk is appropriate. We have a name piles of mulch found pushed up against trunks of mulch volcanoes! It's bad, don't do it. For more



the saying that pertains to tree greatly from well when we 4" deep layer of the tree and not for the enormous trees every year, information visit:

<http://www.treesaregood.com/treecare/mulching.aspx>

Trees are valuable landscape assets. They provide beauty and shade, along with a number of social, environmental, community, and economic benefits including increased property values. For these reasons, they require an investment of time, money and expertise for the proper selection, planting, care, maintenance and removal. Please keep these tips in mind the next time you hire a tree or landscape service.

## Woodland Pass Entrance to Whitehills

Our neighborhood association president, Roberta McElmurry, has volunteered to adopt the median at the intersection of Abbott Road and Woodland Pass, but needs the assistance of interested, energetic homeowners who are invested in making our neighborhood bloom. Many have inquired why the WNAEL doesn't mow and manage that entrance. The answer is that it is not within our boundaries. The City of East Lansing is responsible for maintaining the median, but that is not going to happen in this time of budget shortages.

Besides the hands-on-the-ground assistance of volunteers, Roberta reports that the following is needed: (1) contribution of perennials; (2) landscaping donations to purchase shrubs and mulch for the entrance; (3) **all** homeowners paying their dues so that the Whitehills Neighborhood Association can add to the funds for the general landscaping budget ; (4) help with establishing a "Whitehills Estates" sign on Woodland Pass – we need designers, fundraisers, and installers!

This project, which benefits all homeowners, is too much for one person to take on. Let Roberta know that you will help. You may email her at: [wnael@wnael.com](mailto:wnael@wnael.com); or leave her a message at 517-332-1575.

## **Ever wonder what your dues money is used for?**

Our neighborhood has over 420 homes. Each household has the opportunity to become a member for a mere \$40. Your dues are utilized in a number of ways:

- To provide you with an informative newsletter and website ([www.wnael.com](http://www.wnael.com)) to keep you up-to-date on what is happening in the neighborhood.
- To provide you with safety through our Neighborhood Watch program. Neighbors can notify the board of any unusual activities and that information is blasted out to paid members.
- When specific issues arise, such as restructuring our schools, your association organizes special task force groups to fight for what's best for our neighbors and community.
- To offset the costs of keeping our neighborhood entrances looking attractive.
- To provide members (you and your family) with fun activities so you can get to know your neighbors.
  - Summer Picnic (July 10 this year)
  - Halloween Parade
  - Winter Gathering

The role of your neighborhood association is an important one. You get all this and more. You get a board that is dedicated to keeping our neighborhood informed, safe and attractive.

## **The Wall That Surrounds Us**

One of the attractive features of our neighborhood is the distinctive brick wall that surrounds us. It provides the neighborhood with safety, reduces sound and gives the entrances a distinctive look. BUT, did you know that if the wall decays or collapses, it is the responsibility of the homeowner on the property that it meets to cover repair costs and to do so in a style and manner that replicates the original wall structure.

It is recommended that if you have a brick featured wall touching your property that you remove trees that are within 6' of it. If not, the root system will eventually disrupt the fence, causing it to collapse, as a section of the Lake Lansing wall did last year.

The fence entrance areas are the responsibility of the association. Currently, on Foxcroft, the garden/fence area is in great need of repair. The neighborhood association is reviewing bids to repair the damage before the fence collapse.



## **Foxcroft Entrance Repairs Badly Needed**

The east entrance wall at north Foxcroft is crumbling and the light cannot be made operational until the wall is repaired. So far, the WNA has sought several bids, and it looks as if the cost will be between \$4,000 and \$5,000. Fewer than 200 homeowners have paid 2011 dues out of over 450 households. This does not provide sufficient funds for taking care of major projects, yet everyone who lives here benefits from the diligent maintenance of neighborhood entrances. The majority of the annual budget is utilized in tending entrances and common areas. The WNA is attempting to save enough to repair the crumbling walls, maintain our current level of entrance appeal and establish a new entrance sign on Woodland Pass. Every residence's payment of annual dues will make this possible. If you have not yet participated by paying your dues, send a check for \$40 to our treasurer, Kathy Daugherty. Go to our website: WNAEL.com and download a dues application. If you don't have internet, call Roberta McElmurry at 517-332-1575 and a dues application will be delivered to you.

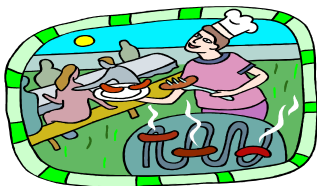
**NOTE: Road construction beginning May 26 on Foxcroft from Lake Lansing Road to Applegate. Check with the City of East Lansing for details.**



## WNA Neighbor-to-Neighbor Alert System

With summer fast approaching, and many people out of work, we should be on heightened alert for unusual activity in our neighborhood. Get to know all of the neighbors on your street. Let your immediate neighbors know when you are going to be gone. Alert the ELPD about anything that seems odd or unusual. We are the eyes and ears that keep Whitehills safe.

The WNA board has met with East Lansing Police Department several times. We have been sending out email blasts to our paid members when alerts are indicated. Many of you have replied that you like this system. The city now has computer data which we will soon be receiving – and passing on to our paid member emails. If you wish to be on this list, let us know.



**SAVE THE DATE – JULY 10, 2011**

## *WNA Neighborhood Picnic in the Park*

- **What:** The board of Whitehills Neighborhood Association will host a summer picnic for members and non-members
- **Where:** at Patriarche Park, corner of Abbott Road and Saginaw Hwy, East Lansing. *Plus*, the softball field has been reserved from 5:30 until 8:00 p.m., so bring your mitt, ball, bat and talents with you for a rousing good game.
- **When:** Sunday afternoon, July 10, 2011, from 4 PM until dusk

**We have reserved the entire pavilion (seats 120) next to the play structure for you. Each neighborhood household will bring a family-size dish to pass – salad, side dishes or dessert.**

- **Free** to paid WNA members
- \$40 for unpaid homeowners within our boundaries. The household family picnic fee will include 2011 membership in the Whitehills Neighborhood Association of East Lansing

### **WNA Board will provide:**

- Grilled entrée (Hamburgers, hot dogs),
- Lemonade and other non-alcoholic beverages
- Ice-cream

**Please reserve spaces** for your household by calling 332-1575 or emailing [wnael@wnael.com](mailto:wnael@wnael.com)

**Come and meet new neighbors, catch up with friends, take a break from summer vacation**

**Our Patriarche Pavilion Permit includes the consumption of wine and beer** – so BYOB if you wish. We'll see you there, rain or shine! If you wish to be a Business (\$50) or Good Neighbor (\$25) Sponsor to help with picnic expenses, your contribution will be gratefully accepted, and your sponsorship acknowledged by signage at the event, with thanks from the WNA Board of Directors. Please send your Business or Good Neighbor donation to Kathy Daugherty or Roberta McElmurry at P.O. Box 1213, East Lansing, 48826. For further information, you may call Roberta at 517-332-1575.

## **Keeping Up Appearances**

With the long, dark winter months ended, there is a flurry of activity in the neighborhood as homeowners mow, weed, seed, plant, window wash, trim trees, reroof and otherwise take care of and improve their properties. A few things bear repeating, all of which are addressed in the contractual covenants that bind your property:

All trash containers must be placed in completely enclosed storage areas (i.e. garages) after weekly trash collection. This is not only a property covenant, but a City of East Lansing ordinance. Chronic violators will be fined.

Tempting as it might be, homeowners are not allowed to keep RVs, commercial vehicles, trailers, boats, wave runners, tractors or other such items on their property, unless stored in a completely enclosed and permitted storage unit such as a garage.

If you have plans to re-landscape, build a deck, install a fence, pool house or pool, or expand the footprint of your home, you must submit your plans to the WNA Covenants/Pride committee for assurance that your home improvement projects fall within the provisions of the covenants that apply to your property. It is not sufficient to have a building permit from the City of East Lansing. Grantor approval from the WNA is also required.

Please submit your proposed plans, or bring any neighborhood covenant issues, to Thomas Jones, 1625 Hitching Post Road, 517-332-1683. Drop off your plans well in advance of project commencement to avoid the complications and expenses that can result when projects are not in compliance with applicable covenants.

## **East Lansing Proposed School Closing**

For the latest updates and details on the "Save Whitehills Elementary" efforts, contact Hillary Henderson at [hillhenderson@hotmail.com](mailto:hillhenderson@hotmail.com).

## **Photographer(s) Needed**

The WNA is looking for camera buffs who would like to take and submit photographs of our neighborhood and official WNA activities for posting on our website. Please contact Roberta McElmurry at 517-332-1575 to volunteer your talents for this occasional project.

### **WNAEL Board Members:**

President: Roberta McElmurry (517-332-1575)

Treasurer: Kathy Daugherty (517-336-4321)

Secretary: Mary McDaniel

Covenants/Pride Committee: Thomas Jones (517-332-1683)

Landscaping: Elizabeth Vanis and Kevin Sayers

Newsletter: Meri Anne Stowe

Members-at-large: Hillary Henderson

Thomas Jones

Maureen Mayhew

Roy Saper

Kevin Sayers

Meri Anne Stowe

Elizabeth Vanis

**Website Administrator:** Michael Mackoul