

Trail Writer

*The Official Publication of the
Winchester Trails*

Maintenance Assoc. Social Committee

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www.winchestertrails.com

July 2009

Dear Winchester Trails Neighbors,

On June 3, we had our regularly scheduled Board meeting. We had several topics that were discussed including the pool opening, park plan, security and a resident's expressed concern over quality of life in the Trails.

Several residents have asked me how much the pool is used. Well, the pool opened in early May with over 200 swimmers checking in during the day. That was one of the most highly attended opening we have had in some time. It probably did not help that the weather was just about perfect for a trip to the pool. Pool attendance has remained quite high and we expect that to remain so through the summer as it provides a good place to enjoy some family time. We will strive to maintain the pool in good working order to keep the experience both fun and relaxing.

By the time you receive this, the landscaping portion of the park plan maybe well underway. As you can see, the sidewalk and lighting has been completed along West Road. The MUD intended for a contract for landscaping to be let in June. This will certainly add to our area as the walls and the sidewalks have done. It certainly looks like quite a few are using the sidewalks.

As mentioned in last month's newsletter, we have had several instances of petty crime including the breaking and entering of residents' vehicles and homes. This has happened in all sections of the Trails. Other acts have included minor vandalism, trespassing, and throwing bags of trash or debris on lawns. If you witness any of this, please call the sheriff's department. We have a contract deputy, but Andy can only do something if we let him know what is going on in the neighborhood.

The quality of life issue that was brought to our attention pertains to deed restriction violations. Following Hurricane Ike, we instructed our management company, PCMI, to allow residents to recover and to complete necessary repairs. Most residents have finished the reconstruction of fences and roofs as well as other areas that were affected. However, there are some who have chosen not to maintain their property to the standards we have enjoyed. While we have regular inspections, PCMI cannot possibly all the areas that need attention. If you have a concern, please do not hesitate to call PCMI (281-870-0585) so they can investigate the situation, contact the homeowner if necessary and work to remedy the situation. Thanks for your help.

Until next month, Walter

Congratulations!! DI Dynamites

Submitted by Brenda Heaton



The DI Dynamites exploded with a Bang (Bang Elementary, that is)! While competing against the most talented competitors from around the world, these Destination Imagination (DI) Dynamites from Bang Elementary School placed FIRST in the Elementary Level of Operation Cooperation during Global competition which was held in Knoxville, Tennessee May 20-23. This was Bang's first DI group to reach global competition, outperforming 48 other competitors with a 47 point spread between their performance rating and the second place winners. Great job, Dynamites!!

The DI Dynamites team members are James Gutierrez and Ali Zaidi, third grade; Kevin Turner and Kaitlyn Zera, fourth grade; Mohammad Zaidi and Mustafa Khan, fifth grade. The team managers are Kathryn and Frank Gutierrez and the school sponsor is Kristine Ashmead.

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Jim Malone is the security representative for WT.
His email can be found on the Security page of the Trails website.

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Green Thumb Corner

This is the time of year when we can see the benefit of a low-maintenance landscaping plan that makes good use of perennials and native southwestern plants that are tolerant of the heat. Yaupon is an attractive small tree, and dwarf yaupon is an excellent hardy shrub for creating low hedges. Lantana, although considered a weed by some people, is a tough drought-resistant plant that is becoming more popular every year and is now available in a number of attractive colors. Check with the local nurseries for other naturalized Texas plants.

If you decide to do any lawn feeding during a dry spell, make sure that you water well to avoid the grass being “burned” by the concentrated fertilizer. And don’t forget to give the trees an occasional deep watering by allowing a hose to trickle at the base of the trunk for a few hours - particularly important if we have any prolonged dry spells.

If your spring annuals are past their best, don’t hesitate to pull them up and replace with fresh plants. Or plant seeds of quick-growing varieties (such as zinnia, marigold, petunia and portulaca) to provide color until late fall. Bear in mind that when your impatiens plants get too “leggy” you can cut them back and obtain a second showing for late summer and fall; just keep them well watered. And if you would like your own display of bluebonnets next spring, now is the time to sow seed (actually, anytime between now and January).

Established annuals should be fed every few weeks with a complete plant food. Liquid fertilizer works well, or you can make your own by dissolving a handful of 13-13-13 in a two-gallon watering can. Soak beds as needed and keep well mulched. Patio plants dry out very fast if they are out in the open, particularly clay pots, and hanging baskets also need frequent watering.

Tomato plants are usually past their best by the middle of July, and should be pulled up to allow reworking the bed ready for replanting in August. Although most popular tomato varieties are “indeterminate”, meaning that they will continue to grow and bear fruit indefinitely until killed by frost, you’ll get a much better crop of fall tomatoes by starting again with fresh plants. Peppers, on the other hand, can be left to grow through the summer into fall, and okra and eggplant are very happy in the heat.

There’s not a lot of exciting gardening activity to write about at this time of year, so I usually take the opportunity to say a few words about composting. This is a great way to avoid those bags of grass clippings lining the curb on garbage day, and produce something useful in the process. Together with weeds, leaves, shrub clippings and vegetable scraps you can produce a rich and nutritious humus which can be used as a mulch or dug into the beds as a “free” organic fertilizer and soil enrichment. All you need is a little unused space in an out-of-the-way corner or behind the garage. I like to construct a number of adjacent open-fronted bins, about 5’ wide by 3’ deep and 3’ high, using scrap lumber or chicken wire (the latter is good because it allows aeration). Having more than one bin allows you to easily cycle the composting materials from one pile to the next,

(Continued on page 3)

Green Thumb Corner -
(Continued from Page 2)

every month or so, to get good aeration and mixing, a lot easier than trying to turn over the material in situ. You can throw almost any organic material in there, including tea leaves, coffee grounds and eggshells, but no meat products because you may attract foraging animals. It helps to arrange alternating layers of different textures, also to add a few shovels of soil every now and then to provide extra bacteria, and it should be kept moist.

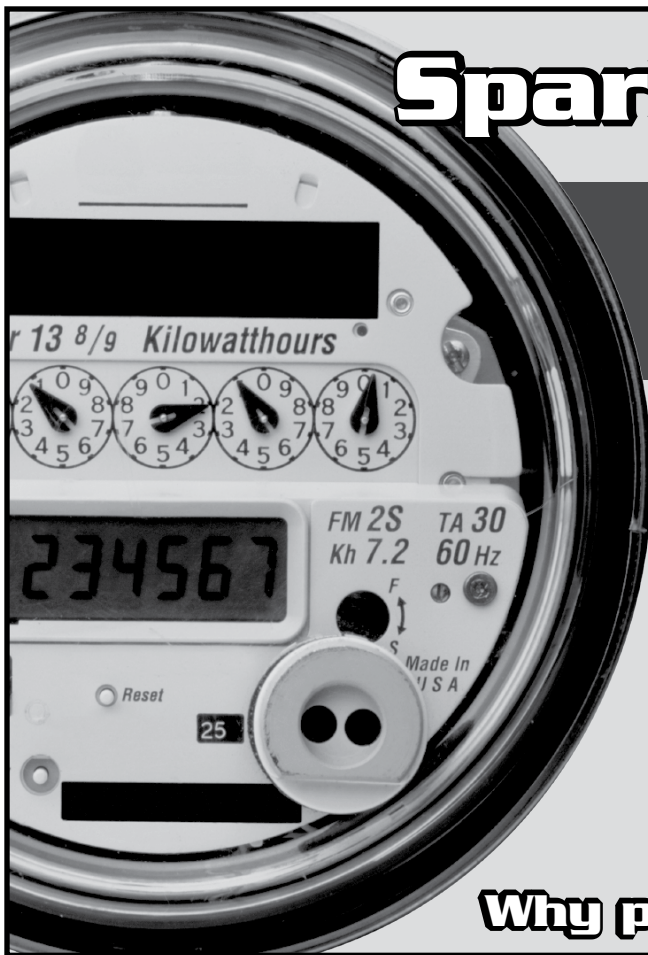
Phil Richards
Prich8935@aol.com

Are You Secure in Your Own Home?

Are you secure in your own home? Well I thought I was until I found out my golf clubs had been stolen right out of my garage. I know it had to be one of two days. I know the crooks had to go into my back yard to enter my garage and go out the same way. What I do not know is when the sneaky X?^?^\$ did it. Was it during the day or did the theft happen after dark? This question is the one that bothers me the most. The not knowing when my property was entered is the one part that worries me the most and it should worry you too. Golf clubs can be replaced. What if I had stumbled into these crooks? What happens now? Well I'll let your mind wonder here... This article is not meant to scare you but just maybe help prepare you for what might happen. In other words have you done everything in your power to secure your home and your surroundings? Have you taken every step to insure you are not a target for criminal activity? Things like knowing your neighbors and letting them know you will watch out for them and just maybe they will watch out for you or reporting activities that just do not look right to the Sheriff's

Department. Do you know what your children are up to now that they have all this additional time on their hands for summer? Have you made arrangements to have your newspapers picked up and your yard done while you are on vacation? Is my property secure with lights, locks and alarms? Well, I thought mine was and I was wrong. The Winchester Trails Homeowners Association provides as much security as the residents are willing to pay for however our deputies cannot be here every moment watching just your home. Our contract is an 80/20 contract which means they are in our subdivision 80% of their shift and 20% in the district for the balance of their time. In short, no one wants crimes of any kind to be committed but unfortunately in these trying times they are going to happen. Because it CAN happen to you give this topic some thought and really do all you can to reduce the chances that it will. Have a great summer!

Jim Malone
Security Coordinator Winchester Trails



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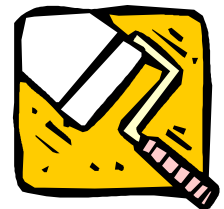
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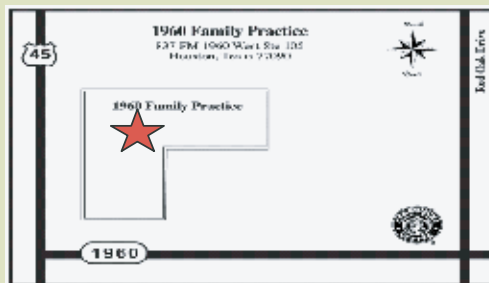
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MILESTONES

NEW TEENAGERS - HAPPY 13TH!

07/07 - Emily Hickey
07/08 - Blake McDermott
07/10 - Kayla Schwarze-Martin

NEW DRIVERS - HAPPY 16TH!

07/04 - Joshua Hester
07/16 - Victoria Turner
07/18 - Sara O'Shea
07/23 - Jena Foreman

NEW VOTERS - HAPPY 18TH!

07/01 - Wesley Scales
07/18 - Mindy Rice
07/25 - Kyle Calbat

NEW ADULTS - HAPPY 21ST!

07/13 - Andrew Lum
07/22 - Nikki Popovich
07/22 - Travis Powell
07/30 - Elizabeth Montgomery

HAPPY 5TH ANNIVERSARY!

07/11 - Arthur & Paulette Walker

HAPPY 15TH ANNIVERSARY!

07/01 - Steve & Diana Thomas
07/16 - Stephen & Caroline Young
07/23 - Andrew & Mary Gwynne

HAPPY 20TH ANNIVERSARY!

07/21 - Bert & Danette Isaacs

HAPPY 25TH ANNIVERSARY!

07/28 - Ken & Connie Hood

HAPPY 30TH ANNIVERSARY!

07/07 - Fred & Joan Wamhoff

HAPPY 35TH ANNIVERSARY!

07/06 - Tom & Denise Stephens

Melissa Zmerzlikar *directory@*
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Part II: Internet Security Software

Security is a multi-faceted and important part of modern computing. There are many threats Internet users face on a daily basis. Last month I talked about wireless network security, as it is a very important part of securing your computer if you use wireless networking. This month I want to talk about a slightly broader topic: Internet security software.

Back in the days before the Internet, the only real security threat to your computer was a virus-infected floppy disk. Remember those floppy-transmitted viruses? Their purpose was typically some sort of malicious destruction of data on your system's hard drive. As the Internet matured, those viruses adapted to the new transmission medium. Many still had the purpose of data destruction or even denial of service attacks that would bring networks and servers to their knees with the flood of network traffic (remember the Melissa virus?). However, the bad guys evolved and figured out they could do and obtain things far more valuable than simply destroying data. They also recognized that the Internet is a huge network of interconnected computers, with much computing power and bandwidth at their disposal. The viruses began to mutate to better take advantage of this.

The term virus doesn't necessarily apply anymore. Malware has become the de facto term for describing all sorts of "bad" software

(i.e. trojans, worms, spyware, grayware, etc.), even though malware tends to spread and act in many ways like the viruses of old. While viruses still do exist with the purpose of destroying data or denying service, malware's job these days is to collect data and transmit it to the bad guys, or to utilize your computer's resources and Internet bandwidth without your knowledge. What can the bad guys collect? Just about anything: personal information, user IDs and passwords, financial information, surfing habits, you name it. And why would they want to use your processing power and bandwidth without your knowledge? There are many reasons, but the main one is simple: to send spam without the possibility of being caught.

For these reasons, Internet security software is extremely important. What, exactly, does this software do? Today's software actually performs many functions, but the most important is malware protection. They do this by monitoring – in real time – what files are saved or modified on your system, or if any changes are made to the system registry (Windows users). If activity matches a pattern in the software's database, it prevents the change and protects your system from infection.

Well, most of the time. Something that is extremely important when it comes to security software packages: you absolutely must

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Part II: Internet Security - (Continued from Page 9)

keep them up to date. Unfortunately, this means that you have to pay an annual fee to your provider of choice in order to receive updates. However, the price of an annual subscription is generally orders of magnitude less than, say, identity theft! Many of the folks I help out with computer problems got a new computer a year or so ago, and it had security software installed from the factory, and everything was OK until just recently. The first thing I check: is the software's pattern definition database up to date? I've found that infection occurs regularly on systems where the Internet security package subscription has expired. Yes, it will continue to protect you from older threats already "known" to the software, but new threats – and they appear every day - aren't covered because the software hasn't received updates, and therefore doesn't "know" about them. So the bottom line is to keep your subscription current and keep the security software updated!

Other functions provided by more complete security packages: spam control, firewall protection, even URL filtering to keep kids (or maybe even some adults!) from visiting sites they probably shouldn't.

There are many vendors available: Trend Micro, McAfee, Norton, Kaspersky, AVG, just to name a few. While I prefer Trend for many reasons (I use one of their enterprise products to protect my

company's network, and what I recommend to home users – and no, I'm not a rep or trying to sell their product for any commission or anything; just telling you my preference), the others are good – and it doesn't matter what you have. Just have something! Renew those subscriptions when it starts nagging you about it. And most importantly, keep it up to date! If you don't, your personal information could be at risk, or your computer could be used as a spam cannon – all without your knowledge.

Next month I'll wrap up with an article about firewalls. Until then, happy and safe computing.

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