

# ***THE BROOKDALE BUGLE***

Web edition of the distribution scheduled for January 15, 2011



quick links to

[home sales](#)

[HALLOWEEN PARTY](#)

[BLOCK PARTY](#)

[TRANSITIONS](#)

## **President's Message**

I hope this Bugle finds everyone well along into a happy and prosperous New Year.

Thanks on behalf of Brookdale to all those who contributed to and participated in the community events of the last quarter - the Halloween party in the park and the Brookdale Block party on Dalton Road, both in October.

The current event of interest to our neighborhood is the whole issue of the rewrite of the zoning code for Montgomery County, a subject that sounds dull as dishwater but which in fact has the potential to seriously and negatively affect our community. I have sent out some communication on the subject via the listserv, but interested residents who are not on the listserv may want to contact me or their Vice Presidents to get additional information.

The essence of the matter is that the Montgomery County Planning Board was asked by the County Council about a year and a half ago to rewrite a very confusing zoning code so that it would be intelligible to residents without having to refer to a zoning lawyer. The Director of the Planning Board has expanded this project beyond all recognition and has engaged a consulting firm to develop an outrageous proposal which has most informed citizens of Montgomery County up in arms. The proposal would effectively do away with the master-planning process of community consultation (which has worked effectively for the past 20 years) and would establish a relatively unfettered process for the building of more than one home on what are

now single family lots. The argument for this move towards higher density in our neighborhoods is that Montgomery County has to anticipate a huge influx of new residents. The argument is bogus. The numbers for anticipated growth are driven by units already approved for development in the County or in the pipeline for approval. Further, this proposal of allowing developers to build more than one home on a single lot in older established neighborhoods, seems to have no precedent elsewhere in the country. I have written on behalf of Brookdale to both the Planning Board and to the County Council to express serious concern about the proposal.

The Planning Board (appointed by the County Council) has hopefully met in mid January and it is expected that they will have reviewed the work of the Planning Board staff and consultants in light of the original terms of reference and the reactions from the community. The hope is that the Planning Board staff will have been directed to return to the original terms of reference which were to simplify the current code. If that has not happened and this proposal receives any support of the Planning Board, various community associations will turn to the County Council, the original sponsor of this project and our elected representatives, to seek their intervention in derailing this initiative. I will keep you posted.

Finally, please mark your calendars for our annual meeting set for May 17th at 7:30 at the Wisconsin Place Community Center.

– *Marie Moylan*

### **The Old Trolley Car Bell** – *Laura Jeliaskov\**

Have you ever noticed an old, small, green truck driving through Brookdale accompanied by the clanging of a bell? If you have never gone out to investigate, you should know that it is the truck of John Vecchiarelli, a sharpener of knives with an intriguing history. Mr. Vecchiarrelli comes from a family of knife sharpeners that goes back to the early 1900s – eight or nine of his relatives immigrated to America in the 1920s from an area of Italy that was known for its tool sharpening businesses. Back in the 1930s, in America, John Vecchiarrelli's relatives had no trucks; they used small wheel-shaped knife grinders that they could strap to their backs like backpacks. These "backpacks" had wooden frames and a foot-pedal that started the spinning of the grinder. Now, John has the luxury of a truck to house all the equipment he

needs. There are two wheel-shaped knife grinders that are slightly misshapen in the back of the truck – a larger one for the actual sharpening, and a smaller one for refining. The rest of the truck is cluttered with other useful items, whether for loosening up stiff kitchen scissors, doing away with rust, or repairing stubborn lawnmowers. The truck's worn out leather passenger seat is torn in a couple places. When the knife grinders turn, the old truck rocks with the rhythm of the wheel and squeals under the strain. John has been in the business for about 15 years; the truck – for 38.

There were eight or nine of the Vecchiarelli men in the business when it first began. John has proudly carried the tradition into the 21st century. His father was the last Vecchiarelli born in Italy – he moved to the U.S. when he was 17 and continued the business here, in the DC area. It was all he ever did. John began accompanying his father on his rounds when he was in high school, during the 50s; so when his father died in 1999, John easily took over. His father worked full-time sharpening tools for seventy years, all the way up to his death at 88.

Today John drives the same 1973 truck that his father drove before him, clanging the same bell; a bell that belonged to a trolley car back when trolley cars filled the streets of Washington DC. The side of the truck is printed with the words, "TONY CUTLERY - TOOL GRINDERS – SHARPEN KNIVES – LAWN MOWER." You may ask, "Why *Tony* Cutlery?" Well, Tony Vecchiarelli was the name of John's father, the first one to own the truck. As to why the name has not been changed yet to match the current owner of the business, John says, "He's entitled to keep his name on the truck, wouldn't you think?" The truck is also still painted the signature green Tony always painted the four or five trucks he went through during his career, so "his customers could always recognize the little green van when it came through their neighborhood," John explains.

Because of his unusual job, John has definitely had his share of fame. One of his customers wrote a story about him in *The Washington Post*. Soon after that, NBC called and asked if they could follow him around while he worked. He agreed, and in 2002, he appeared on the NBC Today Show. He has sharpened the lawnmower of Tim Russert, who was the moderator of NBC's "Meet the Press" for 16 years. But

most important of all, John Vecchiarelli is famous among all his regular customers all around the DC area. Back in the 1960s, says John, there was plenty of business thanks to all the housewives who stayed at home during the week. Nowadays, however, he finds he gets the best business over the weekends. He goes out on his rounds most weekends; down to Cleveland Park, around Silver Spring, in this area of course...it is a rare thing, nowadays, to get your kitchen knives sharpened with a real, old-fashioned grind in the back of an old green truck by a man whose family has been in the business for almost a century. That could explain the excitement and curiosity most of us feel when we hear that old trolley car bell clanging. So next time you hear that bell, go out with your kitchen knives, scissors, and lawnmowers, and meet the amazing and legendary John Vecchiarelli.

[Editor's note: We will set up a time on a Saturday in early March when it is warm enough for Mr. Vecchiarelli to do business and notify you by website and listserve as to where he will be.]

\*Laura, a regular contributor to the Bugle, is 14, a 9th grader at BCC, and lives with her parents and sister Gabriela on Overbrook Road.

### **Westbrook Elementary School to Expand – *Jesse Witten***

The planned expansion of Westbrook Elementary School is moving ahead. Westbrook will get a gym and 15 additional classrooms as part of the planned construction. The new structure will be built on the upper blacktop area. Work is scheduled to begin in the January 2012 and be completed by August 2013. There will not be any renovations to the existing school building, and students will continue to attend school at the Westbrook campus throughout the construction.

The school building's current capacity is about 290 students, while enrollment this year is 403, requiring the school to use five portable classrooms. The Montgomery County Public School (MCPS) demographer projects enrollment will be 442 students by the 2013-14 school year. The expansion project will increase the capacity to 545.

The Westbrook PTA has set up a website with information about the Westbrook expansion,

<http://westbrookexpansion.wordpress.com/welcome/>.\*

\*Figures given on this blog differ from the above ones obtained from Bruce Crispell, the Director of Long Range Planning at MCPS on 1/3/11.

### **Brookdale Kids Enjoy Sports Classes at Wisconsin Place Recreation Center – *Mikel Moore***

Families in Brookdale are really enjoying the new Wisconsin Place Community Recreation Center. Last Fall, shortly after it opened, two neighborhood moms (Diane Tanman and I) approached David Branick, Director of the center. We have lots of neighborhood kids using the playground daily, but with cold weather approaching, could he set up a kids basketball class in their beautiful gym?

Even though the "Guide to Programs" winter schedule had already been printed, David responded by finding coaches and arranging a weekly class. The kids loved the class!! The two coaches kept the skill-building activities fun and targeted to the kids' level. The parents appreciated the indoor activity as an outlet for the kids' energy during the cold weather.

The class was offered again in December, along with a kids' indoor golf class starting in mid-January. Thanks to David for being so responsive to requests from our community!! The center also has open gym time scheduled through the week for kids, families or adults. Come check it out, go on-line, or call 240-777-8088.

Please note: Because of Montgomery County budget cuts, the center's hours are being reduced. Also, the "Guide to Programs" with the schedule of class offerings is no longer mailed out to residents. Pick up a copy at any county recreation center or public library, or go on-line to: [www.montgomerycountymd.gov/rec](http://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/rec)

### **Brookdale Halloween Party 2010 – *Laura Jeliazkov***

This year's Brookdale Halloween Party was yet another great success! There was a wonderful turnout, with Sumo wrestlers, Ninja Turtles, witches, kitties, trains, vampires, sorcerers, and much, much more. A big thank you to the Brookdale inhabitants who helped to organize the party this year: Crystal August, Diane

Tanman, Sophie Pestieau, and Alice Winkler. Thanks to them, there were tons of fun activities for the many party-goers to enjoy. Waiting for the candy-anxious kids were two piñatas: a skull and a jack-o-lantern. There was one table set up with delicious snacks and another set for crafts – Batman, Ninja Turtles and Vampires worked alongside Wizard of Oz characters, cats, and fairies, decorating paper bags with Halloween stickers. Clumps of brightly colored balloons dotted the park, and a life-size paper skeleton clung to a tree. A CD player serenaded the party-goers with Halloween songs such as "The Monster Mash," and a smiling pumpkin piñata dangled in the air from a string that had been flung up in the air over and over again until it triumphantly arched over the high branch of the tree. So thank you to all who came and celebrated with your neighbors. We are already looking forward to next year's party!

**REAL ESTATE ACTIVITY, September 1-December 31, 2010 – Phyllis Wiesenfelder\***

*HOME SALES*

5017 Brookdale Road was originally listed 9/24 for \$1,220,000 and was re-listed (11/11) for \$1,149,000. The listing has been withdrawn as of 12/31, which means that it is off the market for now. It is a colonial, built in 1936 with subsequent expansions, and has 5 BRS & 3 full baths

4725 River Road was originally listed on 10/25/10 for \$640,000, adjusted to \$639,000, and withdrawn from the market on 12/22/10. Built in 1949, 3 BRS, 1 1/2 Baths.

5206 Saratoga Avenue settled on 9/8/10. Originally listed on 4/8/10 for \$849,000. It had a price adjustment to \$787,000 and sold for \$785,000 with a \$2,750 seller subsidy.\*\* It is a 1949 colonial with 3 BRS/ 3 1/2 Baths.

5014 Park Place was originally listed on 4/22/10 for \$799,500. Price was adjusted again on 9/3/10, when it was re-listed for \$724,900. It settled for \$725,000 on 10/1/10. It is bungalow built in 1913 with 5 BRS & 2 1/2 Baths.

5204 Keokuk was listed 09/09/10 for \$899,900 and settled on Oct. 14th for

\$899,000. It is a colonial built in 1957 with 4 BRs & 2 1/2 Baths.

4803 Park Avenue was listed for \$835,000 on Oct. 8th and settled Nov. 5th for \$810,000. It is a rambler with 3 BRS and 2 1/2 Baths.

4722 Merivale Road was listed on Oct. 7th for \$799,900 and sold Nov. 12th for \$775,000 with a seller subsidy of \$1,200. It is a 1950 colonial with 3 BRs and 2 1/2 Baths.

4703 Overbrook Road--has been on and off the market--rented, etc. On May 8th, it was listed for \$1,595,000 and then listed again on Oct. 4th for \$1,435,000. It settled on Nov. 19th for \$1,435,000. It is a colonial built in 2006 with 6 BRS, and 5 1/2 Baths

5303 Sherrill Avenue was listed for \$1,039,000 on 10/17. There were 15 to 16 offers and the house settled for \$1,189,000 on December 15th. It was a colonial (a rambler that was expanded--popped up). Originally built in 1951. 4 BRS, 4 full Baths

5017 Westport Road--listed on 10/27 for \$899,985 and sold on Dec. 20th for \$890,000. It is a 1966 colonial with 4 BRS, 2 full Baths, 2 half Baths

#### *RENTALS*

4803 Dover Ct--listed for \$4,500 on 8/15 and rented on 9/4 for \$4,500. 1946 colonial--3 BRS, 2 1/2 baths

5210 Western Ave--listed for \$4,700 on 8/11 and rented 9/20 for \$4,400. 5 BRs, 3 Baths. Colonial built in 1939

5307 Baltimore Ave--originally listed for \$3,500 on 9/3. Rented for \$3,250 on 11/3. 1947 colonial with 4 BRs & 3 1/2 Baths.

\*An agent for Long & Foster Realtors. For more information contact PhyllisW[AT]Inf.com.

\*\*A seller subsidy is a contribution by the seller towards the buyer's closing costs at settlement.

## **Annual Block Party Great Success – Marie Moylan**

Brookdale residents hosted the annual block party on Saturday October 2 on Dalton Road. The turnout was even better than last year (perhaps 100 people, with a large proportion of children). And this year the east side of River Road was very well represented! The team that put together the event were Regina Crosson and Marie Moylan (organizers), Eric Sanne (pizza chef) and Judy Rivlin (pizza sous-chef), Mike Makuch (music man), Mike Freeman and Linda Hallman (firepit organizers and s'mores makers) and Bob Banach (stage director). And of course all the wonderful food contributions came from people throughout the neighborhood. Particular mention on that score goes to Bill Geary who makes his famous jambalaya every year and every year it gets better. The weather was perfect. Once the children had worn themselves out, the adults were able to sit around the pit fire until the wee hours telling stories.

## **NOTICES**

### **New Block Captains**

There is a new block captain for the 4700 block of Merivale. She is Liz Kaufman at 4715 Merivale. Her email address is emokeefe[AT]verizon.net and her phone number is 301-656-6234. Jimmy Mrose, 4719 River Road, is the new block captain on the north side of River Road in Wohlshire. He can be contacted at 301-718-7860. Thanks, Liz and Jimmy, for taking on this job for the community!

### **Volunteer Opportunity**

Thousands of adults in Montgomery County can't read or write well enough to fill out a job application, help their kids with homework, or understand prescription drug labels. You can help by becoming a volunteer literacy tutor. Attend a tutor information session and learn how you can make a difference in someone's life. Sessions will be held at the Rockville Library at 7:30 pm on January 6 and January 31. For more information, call the Literacy Council of Montgomery County at 301-610-0030, email info[AT]literacycouncilmcmd.org, or visit [www.literacycouncilmcmd.org](http://www.literacycouncilmcmd.org)



The Literacy Council of Montgomery County, established in 1963, is a non-profit, educational organization dedicated to helping adults learn to speak, read, and write English. Shelley Block (Brookdale Resident) is Public Relations Coordinator of the Literacy Council and provided this information.)

### **Tacheron Recognized**

In December Mette Tacheron, artist living on Sherrill Ave., won best in show for her pastel drawing "Fou" in the Christmas Show at the Yellow Barn at Glen Echo. The prize conveys \$500. Mette engages in a wide range of media: charcoal, watercolor, oil, and sculpture. Congratulations, Mette, on this recognition!

### **Little Falls Watershed Alliance**

The Little Falls Watershed Alliance won one of *Bethesda Magazine's* Green Awards this year, and an article on the Alliance appeared in its November/December issue. The Alliance has a "new, improved" website with lots of neat information about the watershed at [www.lfwa.org](http://www.lfwa.org).

### **Tree Planting Programs**

Two programs for helping you plant a tree still have money. Check Leaves for Neighborhoods and Marylanders Plant Trees coupon program, accessible through the Brookdale Website, [Community Information page](#).

## **TRANSITIONS**

### *Births*

At 4611 Harrison Street, Guillaume and Armelle Gruere and daughter Alexia (2), welcome new baby girl Anouk.

At 4618 Harrison Street, Axel Schimmelfennig and Catriona Purfield welcomed a new baby girl, Niamh Aine, on December 15. She joins older brother Cian (4).

### *Newcomers*

Steen Steensen just moved to the neighborhood and is living at 5210 Western Ave. which he says is "perfect for him." He is from Denmark, working with the Embassy of

Denmark taking care of food and agricultural affairs which he expects to do for the next five years. For the last 25 years he has been posted to embassies mostly in Asia, Middle East and Europe. He says, "I already feel at home in D.C. and will be looking forward to having a good time here with great neighbors."

Jeff Baker and Sofie Björling from Sweden have moved into 4720 Merivale Road with their children Jonas (14) and Emma (16). Sophie is a diplomat with the Swedish Embassy, and Jeff is on leave from his job in Sweden while he studies Information Technology.

Hai and Tracie Vuong and new baby Ella (who is almost 3 months old) moved to 5305 Baltimore 3 months ago.

Kai and Ashley Wong and their daughters Madison (10), Makayla (10), and Sophie (4) moved to 4501 Cortland Road this fall from Warner-Robbins, GA. Kai works for GEICO and Ashley for the Library of Congress.

Gon and Anne Gelius, and their children Victor and Johanna, moved into 4600 Overbrook.

### *Death*

William McElroy of 5013 Brookdale Road died October 12. See following Remembrance.

*If you are a newcomer, we hope you have already received a warm welcome. We would like to publicize your presence and other transitions in the Bugle. Please send items to the secretary, as listed on the website.*

### **Remembrance of Bill McElroy — Robert L. Cope**

My wife and I and our children have been blessed for 35 years by having Bill McElroy, his wife, Kathy, and their children as our neighbors. Bill passed away on October 12 from complications arising from his recent bout with lung cancer.

Brookdale is also home to some of Bill's other family members. A relative of Bill's,

Henry Ferrell, lives on Dover. Kathy's mother, Alice Child, along with Kathy's brother, Danny Child, Danny's wife, Mia Child, and their daughter, Anjali, live on Dalton Road.

Irish eyes were truly shining in 1939 when Bill was born in Dublin, Ireland. He attended University College, Dublin, where he received a B.A. in mathematics in 1960 and a master's in mathematics the next year. Bill then traveled to Georgetown University, where he began working on his Ph.D. in economics. While at Georgetown, he met Kathy, and they were married in 1964. Bill was 24 and Kathy was 19. Bill received his Ph.D. in economics from Georgetown in 1967. While at Georgetown, he specialized in mathematical economics and econometrics.

Bill and Kathy moved to Bayard Boulevard in 1975. In 1976, Bill, Kathy, and their daughter, Dominique, moved to their current residence on Brookdale Road. Hugh was born shortly after the move to Brookdale Road.

Bill was active in the Brookdale Citizens' Association; he delivered the most recent edition of the Brookdale Bugle to the residents on Brookdale Road. In 1980, Bill was instrumental in fighting the developers who filed an application with the state of Maryland seeking a declaration that Boundary Park, located between Western Avenue and Park Place, had been abandoned and was therefore ripe for development. While on sabbatical from Georgetown, Bill traveled to Annapolis, Rockville, and the District of Columbia researching land records to determine whether Montgomery County held title to Boundary Park. His research showed that a record plat was filed in 1899 to divide a large tract of land into residential lots. The plat also showed that some of the land was dedicated to create a road (Park Place) and to create a small park. Specifically, the plat showed that the area that now comprises Boundary Park was dedicated to "Parking." When I expressed concern to Bill that we did not want a huge parking lot, Bill pointed out that "Parking" is defined in Black's Law Dictionary (4th Ed.) as a strip of land, intended to be kept as park-like space, that is not built upon, but beautified with turf, trees, flowers. With this information in hand, we then filed our memorandum. Within a few months the developers dismissed their application.

Bill was an avid golfer, and when my two daughters took up golf (they would later

play college golf), it was Bill who always encouraged them, bought them books, and supplied golf balls from his endless supply. Bill never played a round of golf without leaving with more golf balls than he started with. Bill was also an avid tennis player, playing tennis with many neighbors at Little Falls Swim Club.

Bill was a true Irish Catholic. As an Irishman, Bill could tell great stories, had a great sense of humor, and was a terrible punner. As a Catholic, Bill was a daily communicant and worked most Saturdays at Martha's Table. The Irish flag is green, white and orange. Legend has it that green represents Irish Catholics, orange represents Irish Protestants, and white represents the hope that both Catholics and Protestants will live in peace. Although Bill was definitely green, his heart and soul are best represented by the white portion of the Irish flag.

Bill was a gentle person and we will all miss him.

*The Brookdale Bugle* is a publication of the Brookdale Citizens' Association.  
It comes out three times a year - January, April, and September.  
Editor                      Gwen Lewis  
Assistant Editor        Deborah Kalb  
Layout (hard copy)    Steve Langer

The deadline to submit articles, notices, and ads for the April 2011 issue of the Brookdale Bugle is 9 p.m. March 27. Don't delay. Be early.

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[\[Return to the beginning of this document\]](#)[\[To home\]](#)