

# THE BROOKDALE BUGLE

Web edition of the distribution for January 2014

Photographs, addresses, emails, and phone numbers are ommitted. Look to your paper copy!

## **Vice President's Report** – *Dan Byerly*

In 1938, the Washington Star ran advertisements for "A Community of Distinctive Small Houses" built by Cooper Lightbown & Sons located near the corner of River Road and Western Avenue. They promised that "a visit will convince you of the charm and merits of this community."

Seventy-five years later, the residents of this community celebrated its "charm and merits" with new signs, wine-and-cheese events, book talks, pot-luck block parties, and an upscale soiree. Our spirit is high, and we hope that the enthusiasm will keep our community "distinctive" into our 100th year and beyond.

This fall, our annual Halloween party drew monsters, wizards, witches, and superheroes to the park for an afternoon of treats and games. Special thanks to all of the volunteers who pitched in to make the party a success. We also initiated a new tradition - the Spookiest House in Brookdale competition. This year's prize went to the Tripp family on Sherrill.

Unfortunately, this fall our neighborhood listserv expired, cutting off one of our most effective means of communication. Dave Montgomery has created a new Yahoo Group called BrookdaleCitizens to replace the old listserv. I would urge all neighbors to sign up. Dave has posted instructions in the Bugle. [See article below] You can receive e-mail at any e-mail address.

Bob Banach and the officers for the Citizens' Association have been following the construction of the new house on Willard Avenue. Following a Citizens' Association discussion, Bob expressed concerns to Councilmember Roger Berliner that the house may exceed the limits of a single-family home.

While Berliner's office has been very responsive, construction has continued. The officers of the Citizens Association were concerned that construction may have begun before the posted "comment" period had ended.

We want to remind all neighbors that all major building projects have posted notices of demolition and building permits. Neighbors can track and comment on projects through the Montgomery County Department of Permitting Services.

The new year promises to be another exciting year in Brookdale. I look forward to seeing you all around the neighborhood in our 76th year. [A Q&A with Dan Byerly can be found below]

## **Changes Underway for Brookdale Listserv – *Dave Montgomery***

Starting in 2005, Brookdale residents were able to communicate through an e-mail list (called a listserv) provided by piggy-backing on an account with comjet.com. Approximately 250 subscribers to the list made it a very popular medium to exchange information.

The free ride ended this fall, and a new list was needed. The Brookdale Executive Committee recognized that there is no perfect alternative but considered a switch to a Yahoo Group the best path for us.

After I set up the Group, word of its establishment spread through various means, and as of December, 47 people had subscribed to the Group.

If you want to use the Yahoo Group, you will have to act; the switch is not automatic. A "full" subscription will mean you can send and receive messages in much the same way that was possible with the old comjet listserv.

To subscribe (if you have not already done so), please go to the website at <http://groups.yahoo.com/groups/BrookdaleCitizens>. You should see instructions to join the group, BrookdaleCitizens.

You may already have a Yahoo account; e.g., you might be a member of another Yahoo Group. If so, you can use your existing account and add BrookdaleCitizens.

If you do not have one, you will have to open a Yahoo account. That process involves completing a "profile" of personal information. (Just follow the instructions.) We are not aware of any law that requires the personal information submitted to be accurate.

Once the account is established, you will select BrookdaleCitizens as a new group, and you will be in business.

If you do not want to submit a profile, you may join a "mailing list" without a Yahoo account. That option means that you will receive the messages sent to the BrookdaleCitizens list but you will not be allowed to post your own message.

Once you are fully subscribed, you may post a message by sending an e-mail to [brookdalecitizens@yahoogroups.com](mailto:brookdalecitizens@yahoogroups.com). As was the case for the old listserv, only subscribers can post; that is, you must send your message from the e-mail account that the computer recognizes as your subscription.

## **Rezoning and Brookdale Park**

### **– Bob Cope**

Geico has leased Brookdale Park to the Parks Department for what seems like an eternal number of years. The lease is a short-term, written lease and the rent is minimal, in the neighborhood of \$1 or so.

This arrangement probably dates back to when Geico first built its office building, and this arrangement is specifically recognized in the 1998 Friendship Heights Sector Plan.

At the time of the 1998 Sector Plan, the Geico property, along with the Park, was basically zone R 60 with the footprint of the Geico office building being zoned CO (Commercial Office).

The 1998 Sector Plan recommended that approximately nine acres of the Geico land that directly abuts Friendship Boulevard and Willard Avenue be rezoned to the TSM (Transit Station Mixed Use) zone, permitting the construction of three office buildings along Friendship Boulevard, ranging from nine stories at the bottom of the hill to five stories at the top of the hill, and permitting the construction of low-rise apartment buildings along Willard Avenue.

The 1998 Sector Plan also recommended that the remainder of the Geico property, that is, that property abutting Brookdale, be rezoned to permit construction of 11 townhouses per acre. At the time of construction, Brookdale Park would then be deeded over to the Parks Department.

The County Council adopted the Sector Plan on Jan. 27, 1998, and at that time the Geico property nearest Brookdale was immediately rezoned to the appropriate townhouse zone (R60 TDR 11 units per acre). The townhouse zone was a Euclidian, fixed zone and thus immediate rezoning to a fixed zone was appropriate.

But the remainder of the Geico property was not rezoned immediately. This is because the TSM zone is a non-Euclidian, floating zone, which requires the actual filing of a zoning application looking towards a full zoning hearing before a hearing examiner.

This in fact subsequently occurred and a zoning hearing was held. Eventually the zoning application was granted and the property was rezoned TSM pursuant to a development plan, which was filed and approved by the Planning Board.

The development plan is an important document, since it contains all of the conditions and binding elements that Geico agreed to in order to have the property rezoned to the TSM zone.

And one of the binding elements is the requirement that Brookdale Park be transferred over by deed to the Planning Board once it begins redeveloping the property.

The purpose of this exercise in early 21st century history is to set the foundation for how all of this zoning stuff, and of course Brookdale Park, will be handled under the new zoning code, since eventually Geico's TSM property may be rezoned to the new CR zone.

The simple answer, and hopefully the right answer, is that a change to the CR zone should not change things.

First, the new CR zone states that any development under the CR zone must substantially comply with the dictates of the master plan.

Second, and even more important, the County Council has been working on a grandfather clause that would preserve prior development plans, and the grandfather language drafted by Council staff now states that any development on land subject to an approved development plan must satisfy the binding elements of the development plan unless changed by a subsequent Master or Sector Plan.

And so it seems that Brookdale should be protected, but this is one of those things that requires constant vigilance.

### **Meet Your Neighbor: Dan Byerly** **– Christine Ryan Jyoti**

They haven't been in Brookdale for long, but both Dan Byerly and his wife, Kate Clark, have taken active leadership roles in our community. Dan, who is currently serving as acting president of the Brookdale Citizens' Association (there is a rotating presidency this year), took over the Wohlshire vice president position from Kate when they welcomed their son, Alexander, last year.

Dan designs online social studies textbooks for Discovery and has worked as a history teacher and a curriculum director at charter schools in D.C.

The family, which also includes Jolene, a golden retriever, lives on River Road.

*Q: How long have you and your family been living in Brookdale?*

A: Kate and I moved to Brookdale from an apartment in Woodley Park in 2010. Except for a short stay in Boston, we have lived in the D.C. area since 2003.

*Q: What attracted you to the neighborhood?*

A: We loved the charming brick houses, the yards, and the trees, all so close to the Metro. We were looking for a house during the Snowpocalypse winter of 2009-2010, so we had plenty of time to surf Redfin and weigh all the options. We took forever to decide. One day, when the city was shut down by snow, we came up to look at this house again and saw dozens of kids sledding down the hill in Fort Bayard Park. We knew that this was the area for us.

*Q: What do you think makes Brookdale so unique?*

A: The neighbors. We received such a warm welcome from our next-door neighbors, who had us over for dinner soon after we moved in, and from Betsy Norton, who has become our dog's best friend. The parties are great for kids and grown-ups.

Kate and I both were very close with our neighbors as kids and we wanted to raise our own children in a place where they could have that same sort of experience growing up. We also wanted to be close enough to D.C. that we could still shop or head downtown anytime. Brookdale is a hidden gem.

*Q: What motivated you to get involved with the Board?*

A: Kate and I were very supportive of the Safe Streets initiative and went on the first safe streets walk. We loved the idea of the neighbors working together to make the neighborhood better-lit and safer. When Diane Tanman asked Kate to be Wohlshire VP, she happily agreed. As a member of the Citizens' Association Board, I wanted to make sure that discussions about traffic calming and pedestrian safety included perspectives from some of the main roads - River, Willard, and Western - as well as the local neighborhood roads. I hope that I can help keep Brookdale safe and welcoming.

*Q: How can residents get involved in Brookdale?*

A: My first suggestion to any Brookdale resident is to join the new e-mail list. The informal neighbor-to-neighbor communication about everything from electricians to tag sales is the digital equivalent of swapping stories over the back fence - I think it really brings us closer. I would also urge residents to volunteer to help out at a party or event. It is a great way to meet people before the event, which will give you more people to chat with at the event. Finally, if you have a concern or want to start a new tradition, please bring it up. You are probably not alone.

*Q: How did you pull off such a great Halloween Party?*

A: Everything I know about throwing a Halloween party, I learned from Diane Tanman, who organized and ran the party for several years. I asked her what to do and where to set up various stations. We had several volunteers show up early to help set up. Arman Tanman hung and ran the piñata and several other neighbors helped clean up. It was a great team effort. My biggest role was crowd control - a skill I learned in my days in the classroom. I hope everyone had a good time.

## **The Willow Tree** **– Laura Jeliaskov**

This past fall, the obtrusive portables were finally lifted from the front lawn to reveal once more the brick façade of good old Westbrook Elementary School. The concrete walk up to the front steps is framed by an open green lawn dotted with saplings. The flagpole sits prominently on the grounds again. No more dust, no more bulldozers.

But the most beautiful thing about the end of the Westbrook reconstruction is a small willow tree that still sits beneath the windows of the main office. It was planted about 10 years ago, in honor of a woman named Christy Meyer. Mrs. Meyer was a first-grade teacher at Westbrook up until her death in 2004, when she lost her battle with cancer.

I was a part of the last class to have her as teacher for a full year. Although her students may have been very young, Mrs. Meyer had a real impact on their lives - after more than 30 years with MCPS, she knew exactly how to cater to each child's unique set of learning skills. Her compassion touched the lives of all those around her, young and old, and her dedication to teaching was something truly exceptional.

In her desk drawer was a shoebox always filled with an impressive supply of new and glittery purple, green, blue, and red pencils. The words, "I'M A MEYER MARVEL" were printed on them in gold lettering. If you did anything worthy - outstanding work, showed good leadership skills, were caring - you would be awarded a Meyer Marvel pencil. It was quite the honor.

I believe those pencils served as more than a simple prize-box reward; they were a part of our first-grade identities. With each Meyer Marvel pencil added to our pencil box, we gained confidence.

My unsharpened Meyer Marvel pencils still sit in a pencil case in a drawer down in the basement, along with all my first-grade book reports, drawings, and spelling tests. I still think of her encouraging smile, and how she always used to tell me to project my voice so that I could be heard. I still carry her advice with me.

And so I am very glad that her willow tree has survived the construction, emerged from the dust, and still stands on the front lawn of Westbrook Elementary School.

### **Memorial in Brookdale Park for Jean Junior – *Don Junior and Betsy Norton***

Friends and family of Jean Junior (6/1/32 - 5/1/12) gathered Sept. 21 in Brookdale Park to commemorate her life and loving ties to Brookdale.

Jean and her family first came to Brookdale in 1967 and returned to their Harrison Street home between and following Foreign Service assignments in Africa and Europe. Jean was a familiar face as she patrolled Brookdale along with friends and earlier with her dog, Mace, chatting and laughing with neighbors.

The brief ceremony in the park was to dedicate to Jean a beautiful custom-made wooden bench and a young Cornelian Cherry dogwood. Imbedded in the bench is a plaque with Jean's name and a fragment from a poem she loved. Many recounted fondly the support and friendship she offered, her sympathetic ear and her quiet solace for those in need.

This spontaneous initiative was made possible only by voluntary contributions from Jean's friends and admirers. Nancy Liebermann, Dawn Sikkema, and Betsy Norton led the effort and worked closely with the Montgomery Parks Foundation to ensure a beautiful and lasting tribute to Jean that all visitors to the park could enjoy.

After the ceremony, attendees retired to Maggiano's for lunch, conviviality and stories of Jean.

## **Halloween Party**

Brookdale's annual Halloween party in the park Oct. 27 was a big success, thanks to organizer Dan Byerly with help from many neighbors including Diane and Arman Tanman, Elsa Skaggs, Sophie Pestieau, Lisa O'Brien, and Marina and Matthew Bowsher.

## **Real Estate Listings**

### **– Phyllis Wiesenfelder**

Home sales continued their upward trend in 2013. Inventory is low and the demand for homes is high. The driving force that continues to place Brookdale homes in the top tier of residential sales is location, location, location. Great schools, superb recreational opportunities, a wide variety in fine dining, shopping, and entertainment, and a close-to-everything location supported exceptional results.

Here is the real estate activity since August 30, 2013, in the neighborhood:

### **Under Contract**

- 5009 Westport Road. Colonial built in 1960 with 4 Bedrooms, 4 Full Baths. Listed for \$1,129,000

### **Sold Properties**

- 4800 Park Avenue. Colonial built in 1933 with 4 Bedrooms, 3 and 1/2 Baths. Listed for \$976,000 and sold for \$1,003,000 in 3 days.
- 4627 River Road. Cape Cod built in 1938 with 3 Bedrooms, 2 Full Baths. Listed for \$789,000 and sold for \$775,000 in 18 days.
- 4711 River Road. Split Level built in 1966 with 3 Bedrooms, 3 Full Baths. Listed for \$910,000 and sold for \$892,000 in 12 days.
- 5333 Saratoga Avenue. Colonial built in 1947 with 3 Bedrooms, 1 Full and 1 Half Bath. Listed for \$725,000 and sold for \$725,000 in 6 days.
- 5200 Westport Road. Cape Cod built in 1951 with 3 Bedrooms, 2 Full Baths. Listed for \$950,000 and sold for \$942,000 in 14 days.

### **Rented**

- 4600 Overbrook Road. Colonial built in 1936 with 5 Bedrooms, 4 Full Baths. Listed for \$4,995 and rented for \$4,200.
- 5205 Saratoga Avenue. Rambler built in 1950 with 3 Bedrooms, 2 Full and 1 Half Bath. Listed and rented for \$3,100.
- 5200 Western Avenue. Colonial built in 1937 with 3 Bedrooms, 2 Full Baths. Listed for \$3,650 and rented for \$3,500.

## **Brookdale Real Estate Going Strong** – *Mark Luther*

To say the market for our real estate is really strong is practically an understatement. There is currently one home on the market (5327 Willard Avenue, asking price is \$749,000, built in 1946, described as a "fixer upper" by the listing agent) in our community.

The number of homes sold in Brookdale in 2013 was 16, with an average price of \$929,000. That is a 7 percent increase from 2012, when only nine homes sold with an average price of \$865,000. In 2013, the homes sold in Brookdale were on the market for an average of 10 days and sold for an average of 101 percent of their asking price.

Noteworthy transactions over the past year:

5009 Westport Road is under contract with a list price of \$1,129,000. This home features 3 bedrooms and 2 baths upstairs as well a bedroom and bath on the main level. This is a good example of just how high the demand is for our community.

5301 Sherrill Avenue: Listed for \$699,000 and sold for \$750,000 in less than one week. This all brick colonial featured 3 bedrooms and one bathroom on the upper level (no powder room on the main level). The kitchen and baths were not updated.

5002 Westport Road: Listed for \$649,000 and sold for \$705,000 in one week. This split level home featured 2 bedrooms and 2 baths. The kitchens and baths were not updated.

4508 Dalton Road: Listed for \$1,000,000 and sold for \$1,086,000 in one week. This home featured 3 bedrooms and 2 baths upstairs with and updated/expanded kitchen.

Again, the demand is very strong for our area. In my opinion, while the transactions noted above showed buyers paying over the original asking price, I believe all of those buyers made great decisions to purchase a home in our community.

While interest rates will probably rise in 2014, I do not believe this will have a dramatic effect on the home values in our neighborhood. The trend of people who desire the ability to walk to transportation and shopping is only growing. To summarize, if you are considering the sale of your home for any reason in 2014, you are in a very good position.



Mark Luther is a resident of Brookdale and the principal broker with Access Real Estate. Feel free to contact him with questions at 301-466-5520.

## **Transitions**

### **Birth**

- Josh and Jennifer Rothenberg now have a son, Samuel Bradley Rothenberg.

### **New Neighbors**

- Alan Bender and Vanessa Brown, and their 1-year-old son, Wyatt Bender, are new neighbors.
- Sacha de Lange, Josh Alloy and their 2 children have moved in on Dalton Rd.

## **Briefs/Notices/Classifieds**

### **Road Repairs on Park Place – Bill McCloskey**

Contractors for WSSC, the water company, in December upgraded roadway patches originally made by the workers who replaced some pipes during the summer in the 5000 block of Park Place, the one-block strip that adjoins Boundary Park near River Road and Western Avenue. They promised to come back in the spring to do a curb-to-curb (even though there are no curbs) repaving of the block.

### **Art Show – Dave Montgomery**

Dave Montgomery announces his solo show in the Garden Gallery of the Visitors' Center, Quiet Waters Park, 600 Quiet Waters Park Road, Annapolis, Maryland. Please visit February 19 to March 30, 2014. The reception will be held 2-4 pm, Sunday, March 2. Include an Annapolis restaurant on your trip, and you'll have a pleasant outing. In his exhibit of "Complementary Diptychs" he displays pairings of photos and digital compositions in which each one of the pair strengthens the other. More information, with pictures and directions, is at <http://www.PhotoArtBeyond.com>.

### **Bus Shelter Improvements – Bill McCloskey**

About a year after Brookdale volunteers canvassed the neighborhood to spot needed security upgrades, the advertising firm responsible for the bus shelter at River Road and Western Avenue has electrified the advertisements and thus provided additional lighting for enhanced safety of walkers and those using the bus stop. Unfortunately, as

of late December, the shelter at Western Ave. and Cortland Street had gone dark. A complaint had been filed with Metro.

## **Pedestrians at River and Willard**

Westbrook Principal Jennifer Lane has sent out the following message:

*Hello Westbrook families,  
I've been asked by the State Highway Administration to determine the approximate number of students who walk to and from school who may cross MD 190 (River Road) at Willard Avenue. Please respond to me directly if any of your children who attend Westbrook cross at this location on a regular basis. The State Highway Administration is planning to upgrade the traffic signal equipment at this intersection and would like to have a better understanding of the school related pedestrian traffic at this intersection.  
Any information you can provide will help them to make informed decisions.*

*Thank you,*

*Jennifer S. Lane  
Principal  
Westbrook Elementary School  
301-320-6506*

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Visit Brookdale online at <http://www.brookdalenews.org>  
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