

MERIFIELD ACRES NEWSLETTER

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Cable Television. Charter Communications is the service provider. Merifield Acres is now completely wired for cable television. The Charter Communications marketing team will be in place soon to answer questions concerning subscription and installation costs. Because MALA does not permit door-to-door solicitation or the general distribution of unsolicited advertising, MALA has agreed to deliver the information packets to our residents. These packets will provide subscription information as well as the telephone number (1-800-572-0330) that a MALA homeowner can use to invite a cable TV sales representative to meet with a resident interested in this service. MALA's participation in this effort is a service to our members and should not be seen as an endorsement of the cable TV offering. We are also protecting our *No Solicitation* policy. Charter Communications is aware of the problems caused during the cable laying effort and promise to repair any damage. A few metal driveway culverts were crushed during the cable laying operation. If yours was one of these, please ensure that Frank Clippinger or Dennis Hayes is made aware of the damage.

Service District Update. The petition to create a Service District for Road Maintenance in Merifield Acres was presented to the County Board of Supervisors on December 6, 2000. At the time of submission 52% of the property owners (representing 53% of the properties) supported the creation of a Service District. Fifty-five percent of those in favor of the Service District voted for using total assessed property value as the basis for allocating the cost among the property owners. Only 6.7% of the property owners voted against the proposal. The County Attorney reviewed the petition for legal sufficiency and reported to the Board of Supervisors that MALA's petition satisfied the requirements of the Virginia statute governing service districts. The County Attorney recommended to the Board of Supervisors that the required public hearing be deferred until the county Administrator and other staff members have an opportunity to work out the details of how the county will administrate the service district. Although the precise timing of the public hearing is undetermined, it is believed that the service district can be in place and operating for the fiscal year beginning on January 1, 2002.

Community Bulletin Board. A community bulletin board has been erected in the vicinity of the tennis court. This bulletin

board is for the use and convenience of Merifield Acres residents. Notices posted should have the name and telephone number of the person posting the note. Notes should be removed when they have served their intended purpose or when they become unsightly. Topics considered suitable for posting include notice of items lost or found, the availability of, or need for, personal services, and the sale/exchange of household items, tools or collectibles. Individual real estate "For Sale" postings by Realtors or property owners are not suitable. This bulletin board is a part of our community and should reflect the ambience we all want for Merifield Acres.

Merifield Telephone/E-Mail Directory. The 2001 Merifield Acres Telephone Directory is being distributed by hand to Merifield homeowners. If you were away when they were distributed, contact one of the MALA officers or your District Coordinator to obtain your copy (See the Community Bulletin Board for a definition of our districts and identities of the district coordinators). This directory is intended for the personal use of Merifield Acres residents only. Because this directory will also be used for emergency notification in the event of an accident or storm damage to a home or other emergency, it is important that the telephone numbers and E-Mail addresses be accurate. Errors, omissions, or necessary changes should be brought to the attention of MALA immediately.

Merifield Acres Trash Pick-up Service. Recently a local company contacted MALA seeking customers wishing to contract for a weekly trash pickup (\$16/month). A preliminary survey via E-Mail revealed only five property owners were interested in this service. A number of other property owners also responded and cited the litter and potential animal problems associated with putting trash/garbage out overnight for next-day pick-up. While the advantage of commercial trash pick-up for shut-ins or infirm people or those without a pick-up truck or van is recognized, I believe that this is something we can handle within our own community on a neighbor-to-neighbor basis. I am sure there is any number of pick-up truck owners (including me) who would be more than happy to routinely pick up a neighbor's trash and deliver it to the dumpster along with his own. Anyone needing assistance in getting his or her trash hauled, call me at 374-0148 or mala@kerrlake.com. You men who have pick-up trucks and would be willing to assist in this effort should also call me. I'll try to match trash with the closest hauler.

Association Management. We are an Association that operates through the efforts of volunteers and even volunteers like to be able to get away from time to time -- and they should be able to do so without adversely affecting MALA's effectiveness. In the

absence of the person normally responsible for a particular function, we must have the capability of acting on security issues, compiling disclosure packets, and operating the MALA computer programs, to cite but three examples. The Board recently approved a suggestion that the Association's really critical functions, i.e., Treasurer, Secretary, and the Architectural, Common Areas, Roads, and Security Committees each recruit an understudy (or two) to serve as a back up in the event the principal is temporarily absent or otherwise unable to function in a timely manner. We are now well covered in the Road Committee with an active committee of four people and the Architectural Committee has three elected members. The point of this is that, we (like the Marine Corps) are looking for a few good men and women who are willing to serve their community in this important way. Only the Treasurer understudy job needs special abilities - that person should be computer friendly and enjoy learning how to use the Association's business management system. This person will not be required to handle cash or be responsible for the basic Treasurer requirements. Persons interested in assisting our community in this way should contact any MALA officer. Persons interested in assisting the Treasurer should give Garry Wilburn a call (374-2904).

Neighborhood Security. Shortly before Christmas a Merifield resident noticed a strange car in Merifield that seemed to be without a destination. She also noticed that there had been some decorated mailboxes that had been trashed. A call to 911 reporting the car description and license number brought almost immediate response. The teenage vandals (thankfully not Merifield residents) were apprehended the next day. An alert neighborhood watch paid dividends in this case.

MALA Road Sign Vandalism. We had a serious incident of vandalism one Saturday night in mid-January when a group of juveniles with a motor vehicle waged a successful campaign of pushing over 10 MALA roadside signs as well as the steel pole at the Merifield entrance (used for Christmas decorations). The persons involved were subsequently identified and the matter was referred to the Sheriff. The damage was repaired in a professional manner by the families of the teen-agers involved.

E-Mail Addresses. The Postal Service recently raised the rate of first class mail to 34¢ and already is considering an additional rate increase. We now have some 158 E-Mail addresses in our system, including 130 residents. With the number of E-Mail addresses that we have, we are able to save almost \$400 per year on postage alone, not to mention savings in printing, paper and envelopes. We also are investigating using E-Mail to send out our annual invoices in the future. The point of all this is to

ask those of you who are on the Internet, and have not already given us your address, to please do so now. Not only does this save a lot of money, it also facilitates communications, and it makes doing the Association's work a lot easier for the volunteers that are contributing their time and effort. Simply send MALA an E-Mail (mala@kerrlake.com) and you'll be in the system.

Serving on the MALA Board of Directors. Every year one third of the Board members complete their term in office and must be replaced (or be reelected). This election takes place at the annual meeting and this year, for the first time, if you are unable to attend the annual meeting, you will be able to vote for candidates seeking seats on the Board using an absentee ballot. Serving on the Board is an important role because the Board is the group that sets the policies that govern our association. They also formulate the Association's annual budget and decide what will and won't be included before presenting the budget to the membership for your approval. The Board is your first line of defense in ensuring that MALA spends your money on only that which is absolutely necessary. Property owners willing to serve on the Board should pass your names to me (mala@kerrlake.com or 804-374-0148) and I'll see that the names are given to the nominating committee when it goes to work in preparation for the annual meeting.

Deer Warning Signs. Hearty thanks goes to **David and Charlotta Howell** for their contribution of three deer warning signs for Merifield Acres roads. Hopefully they'll cause us all to be a little more alert to the dangers posed by our burgeoning deer population.

Coming Events.

a. The annual MALA **Easter Egg Hunt** for our short people (and short guests, too) will be held on Saturday, April 14th. **Cindy Carter** (374-4376) will need some helpers to assist the Easter Bunny with the fun and games.

b. Mark Sunday, May 27th on your calendars now. That's the date for MALA's **2nd Annual Memorial Day Pig Pickin'**. We'll have more details on these events as we get closer to the dates. We intend to ask our own premier meteorologist, George Holzworth, to assist in ensuring we have good weather for these events this year.

c. One more date to mark on your calendar - **Lakefest Weekend** - July 21-22.