

Hidden Trails Newsletter - January 2005

Happy New Year from your NEW Homeowners' Association Board of Directors!

The three-member Hidden Trails Board of Directors was initially elected in June 2002. At that time Lyon Homes had two seats on the Board and the homeowners had one seat. Last summer a second homeowner was elected to the Board when a Lyon employee resigned. That Board member, John Lindsay, remains on the Board. In November two homeowners resigned. HOA V-Pres Stacy Taylor sold his home and left the community, and HOA Pres. Eric Van Wechel (Lyon Homes VP), resigned after Lyon Homes closed their last escrow. The Board asked for nominations of interested homeowners to fill these spots, and five people responded. After interviews and research, homeowners Brian Swanson and Joseph Esther were appointed. Your new officers are Brian Swanson (Pres.), John Lindsay (Vice-Pres.) and Joseph Esther (Secretary/Treasurer). We fill the un-expired terms of the original Board, and our terms end in June. Elections for 3-year terms on the new Board will be held in June.

Brian is a licensed attorney and lives with his wife and their two dogs in the Groves neighborhood. He has served on the Architectural/Design Review Committee, since it was formed two and a half years ago. This committee, which is appointed by the Board, is charged with reviewing all applications for improvements. Occasionally, plans must be sent to a retained architect for review. The Design Review Committee has saved homeowners approximately \$12,000 in fees by doing most reviews itself. This is only possible through the dedicated efforts of this committee. If you would like to know more about volunteering with us, please contact any committee member.

John Lindsay lives in the Vineyards with his family, and has successfully run a small business for many years. Joe Esther and his wife live in the Orchards. He's a Realtor for a local real estate office. Together, your new Board looks forward to serving your needs as we endeavor to conduct HOA business fairly and efficiently.

HOA Meetings - Please Join Us!

For the past three years the Homeowners Association meetings have been held quarterly. Your new Board assumed office in December, and wants to get up to speed as quickly as possible. We also want to make it easier for you, our fellow homeowners, to communicate with us and to participate in your homeowners association. Accordingly, beginning in January the HOA will hold monthly meetings. January's HOA meeting will be held the first Thursday of the month, Jan. 6th, starting at 6PM, at the Escondido East Valley Parkway Community Center. Beginning in February, we will change the meeting start time to 7PM to hopefully allow more homeowners to participate. Ask at the desk and the employees will gladly direct you to the meeting room.

HOA meetings consist of a homeowner forum, where all homeowners can address the Board, followed by a Board session, where the Board conducts business. Once the homeowner forum ends, the Board meeting begins. Homeowners are invited and encouraged to attend this "Board Meeting". The Board often has a large number of agenda items to address, and tries to keep the Board portion of the meeting moving

efficiently. Time-permitting, members' questions or comments are allowed at the Board meeting. If you have an item, which you would like the Board to address, please contact Julie Menas and request that it be placed on the agenda. Please plan on attending the HOA forum so you can discuss your item with your fellow homeowners and the Board.

Starry, Starry Nights

Since moving to Hidden Trails many of us have been awed by the beautiful stars above us. Some homeowners actually picked their homes due to the night "view" they anticipated and found here. How could there be so many stars here, when before, while living in town, there were hardly any? Our skies are much darker here in the "country", on the edge of town. Light pollution makes smaller stars less visible and larger stars less bright. For outside lighting, it is important to shield your lights, use lower wattage bulbs, and to turn off lights (especially rear porch and balcony lights) off when not in use. Dark skies are a resource to protect and enjoy. If you look, you will see not only the Milky Way's stars, but constellations, planets, meteorites and even satellites.

Palomar Observatory is in the mountains to the east of it. The world-class 200 inch Hale Telescope was installed in 1948, and continues to make important discoveries. The Observatory depends on dark skies to do its research. The City of Escondido, recognizing the value of dark skies, and the proximity to the Palomar Observatory, actually enacted a lighting ordinance in an effort to preserve this resource.

If you or someone in your family is an amateur astronomer, you might check out the following resources: Reuben H. Fleet Science Center, <http://www.rhfleet.org> (go to astronomy, then to local astronomy); Palomar Observatory, <http://www.astro.caltech.edu/palomar> ; or Michigan State University's Abram's Planetarium, where you can subscribe to inexpensive monthly star charts (www.pa.msu.edu/abrams/skycalendar/index). Palomar and the Laguna Mountain observatories offer free tours (see the Fleet site above for Laguna tours). If someone has a telescope which they're willing to share, let us know and maybe we can plan a "star party" for our neighbors.

Speeding Cars – Slow Down and Save Lives

Remember, our children and families live in Hidden Trails. Please observe traffic signs. The maximum legal speed within our community is 35 MPH, and far too many cars and trucks are exceeding it. Some of us are hitting freeway speeds as we travel Hidden Trails Road. This behavior is of great concern to your neighbors. Several accidents have already happened. Please slow down, and tell your guests and contractors to slow down. Police enforcement will be increased as necessary to bring about compliance. If you notice vehicles regularly speeding, please contact the Escondido Police Department for assistance.

Noise Concerns - Let's Hear it for Peace and Quiet

Many homeowners tell me how much they love our peaceful neighborhood. Some of us enjoy the calls singing birds and, at night the calls of the owls that live in our avocado groves. Others simply enjoy the quiet. With our often-stressful days at work, it is

especially important that we be able to relax at home and to sleep peacefully at night. Some homeowners work from home, are day sleepers or are retired. In our quiet neighborhood sound travels much farther than in the city.

There are a number of noisemakers (no, not the kind often associated with New Year's Eve parties) that can make life hard on our neighbors. The number one complaint I hear is about barking dogs. While most dog owners are responsible, there are a small number of nuisance barkers. Some dogs bark throughout the night, others at night. Although occasional daytime barking is understandable, chronic barking is unacceptable. **Should your dog be chronically barking during the day, or any barking after dark, be assured that it is disturbing your neighbors.** Our HOA and the City of Escondido have rules regarding dog barking. Resources for dog owners include their veterinarians and trainers.

Other common neighborhood noise concerns include **radios playing loudly** while some homeowners work in their open garages, **car alarms** going off excessively, and **mowing lawns or other loud activities** before 8AM on weekends. Please be considerate of your neighbors.

Motorcycles and Pocket Bikes

We've all seen those noisy little mini-motorcycles in the ads, and on our streets. After Christmas, we may see more of them. Pocket bikes are often operated by children and, with their low profile, are hard to see. I saw a pocket bike racing a car up Hidden Trails on Saturday. This all makes for a hazardous situation. They cannot be licensed and are illegal to operate on the street. **If you or your children have these pocket bikes, please do not operate them in our community.**

There have also been a number of complaints about **motorcycles racing up and down the streets**, loudly revving their engines early or late, or repeatedly riding back and forth in front of the owner's house. Some of the motorcycle complaints are generated by visitors to our community, so please share these concerns with any motorcycle-riding guests. If you have concerns about pocket bikes or motorcycles on our streets, please contact the Escondido Police Department and/or Menas Realty. For motorcycles in the groves, please call Henry Avocado and/or the Escondido Police Department.

Holiday Lights – What Goes up Must Come Down

It is heartwarming to see the many beautiful Christmas displays in Hidden Trails. But, as beautiful as our displays may be, and although some of us might like to keep our lights up year-round, all good things must come to an end. Please be sure that your holiday lights are removed once the season passes.

Nature News - Swallows

Since moving here, all of us have had some kind of encounter with wildlife. This might include those mice which seek a warm home in our garage, or the coyotes which howl when the sirens go off in the distance. For a lucky few, this includes swallows nesting

under their eaves. Nowadays there are fewer barns or bridges to use, so swallows seem to prefer homes with views with habitat ponds nearby, and often build their mud bottle-shaped homes near the top of the roof, beneath the eaves.

Swallows are cute and very beneficial. They can consume up to 2,000 flies and mosquitoes in a day (what goes in must come out!) They arrive around March 19th (St. Joseph's Day) and leave towards the end of summer. If they start to build a nest on the side of your house, and you don't want it there, you can hose it off (they keep building), knock it off before completed (may work) or, before they arrive, apply a very fine netting from beneath your eaves and extending about 24" downward. The netting is supposed to be small enough so as not to trap small birds or be visible. I'm told that this product can be located on the internet. Once the nests are built, however, state and federal laws forbid molesting the birds --- you'll have to wait until they leave in late summer. A possible remedy (works for pigeons) is to place a fake owl on the roof. Owls eat some birds, so swallow and pigeons are afraid of them.

Volunteer Opportunities

Your community depends on dedicated volunteers. There are often small, as well as larger tasks, which need someone to step up and follow through to completion. If you have a skill or time, please contact Julie Menas and provide your name/phone/address/email so the Board can contact you to discuss opportunities.

Articles by Brian D. Swanson (HOA president and chair, Architectural/Design Review Committee). Contact Brian at bswanson@sempira.com or (619) 699-5115.