

The Mountaineer

Walnut Mountain Property Owners' Association

Vol. 130

April 2012

Calendar of Events

Saturday, Apr. 20

WMPOA Board Meeting

The WMPOA Board meets the third Saturday of every month. Residents are welcome to attend the meetings.

Location: Walnut Mountain Clubhouse

Time: 9 - 10:30 a.m.

Saturday, Apr. 20

WMPOA Quarterly Meeting

Come join us for pastries, coffee and the latest information you need as a resident of Walnut Mountain.

Location: Walnut Mountain Clubhouse

Time: 11 a.m. - 12 p.m.

Saturday, Apr. 28

Walnut Mountain Flea Market

Come shop on the mountain at the annual Walnut Mountain Flea Market. If you'd like to set up a table, it's free for residents. Outside vendors will be charged a small fee. Contact the Administrative Office for more information.

Location: Walnut Mountain Campground

Time: 10 a.m. - 4 p.m.

Saturday, May 19

WMPOA Board Meeting

Location: Clubhouse

Time: 9 - 10:30 a.m.

Saturday, May 26

Pool Opening & Meet the Candidates Picnic

Welcome the return of summer at our annual Pool Opening & Meet the Candidates Picnic. Don't miss this fun and important neighborhood event.

Location: Clubhouse and Pool

Time: 12 p.m.

Saturday, June 16

WMPOA Board Meeting

Location: Clubhouse

Time: 9 - 10:30 a.m.

President's Report

Max Holstein

Board resignations and replacements

Since our last newsletter and Property Owners Meeting in January, two of our Board of Directors resigned. Nancy Troxell sold her home on the Mountain and is now splitting her time between her home in Buckhorn and out in Kansas City with her mother. I am sad to see Nancy leave the Mountain as she has been a good friend to many and has worked hard over the years to make Walnut Mountain a better place for us all. Nancy has not only served the Board but was one of the original "Painting Babes" that worked hard to spruce up the Mountain. The remodeling of the clubhouse was just one of the many projects she and several others tackled together. Nancy's term on the Board expires in July 2012.

Mary Alice McClure also submitted her resignation from the Board. While Mary Alice has not moved, she is spending a lot of time out of state with her husband, whose employment has required him to relocate. Mary Alice has headed up our Beautification Committee and has worked hard serving the Mountain. Her term expires in July 2013.

The Board was asked to submit names of potential candidates to replace Nancy and Mary Alice. At the March meeting, the Board, in accordance with the Walnut Mountain POA By-Laws, elected Paula Davis, a Walnut Mountain resident since 1998, to replace Mary Alice. Nancy Troxell's position was not filled at this time. The entire POA Membership will vote that position at the July Annual Meeting.

Water project

The water project is on schedule and moving rapidly toward completion. By the time you receive this newsletter, the new water line will be under construction on Walnut Mountain. The Ellijay Water Sewer Authority has been laying the line that will run from their tank and pumping station on Greenfield Road (about three miles from the Mountain) all winter. Thanks to the good weather, they have been making great progress. Emory DeBord, Water Authority Director and Walnut Mountain resident, indicated recently that within two weeks they will be lay the line under Turniptown Road at the fire station. It will then go up the hill to Walnut Mountain Road, at the curve below the clubhouse, down past the mail kiosk and up Skyview Drive to the new tank at the existing water plant.

The new tank has been under construction for several weeks and Emory indicated that they are about six days ahead of schedule. I have received comments from several residents about the quality of work both construction crews have preformed, especially the crew laying the water line out Turniptown Rd. (Continued on page 2)

President's Report

(continued from page 1)

They have been diligent in keeping traffic moving and making sure, at the end of the workday, that the road is cleaned of all dirt and construction debris. The new ditch lines are in, the area is seeded and covered with straw before the crew leaves each evening.

Once the crew starts laying the line on Walnut Mountain they will keep the roads open to traffic but residents will need to be mindful of the construction and keep speed to a minimum in the construction areas. Neither Walnut Mountain Road, nor Skyview Drive has the width of Turniptown Road. Emory assures me that they will continue to have "flagging crews" to assist in keeping our traffic moving.

We are still hoping that the cut over to the new water system will happen sometime during the latter part of April. For more information, see the FAQ insert included in the newsletter.

Swim season

The Walnut Mountain pool will open Memorial Day weekend. Our staff has uncovered the pool and is busy cleaning out the winter debris and making sure that the water quality is acceptable. Of course, nothing ever comes easy, or cheap, and we had to replace the pool pump and motor this past month. The old system was circa 1975 and the motor and pump wore out. We had rewound the motors about eight times over the years and they were at the point that replacement was the smartest way to go. While that resulted in several thousand dollars of unexpected expense, we were able to get the new system in place and it is operating beautifully.

As indicated in the article to the right, we are making the pool available in the early morning hours this year for adult lap swimming and are considering offering a water aerobics class.

Increased activity at the clubhouse

I am happy to note that board members Bunny Demeo (Recreation Committee Chair) and Jeff Long are in the process of increasing our sponsored activities at the clubhouse. A new flat screen television will be installed soon, thanks to the proceeds from the last Walnut Mountain yard sale. Activities are being planned that will provide several recreation options for our residents. A block party will be announced soon. We anticipate that will take place following the April Property Owners meeting.

I hope that residents have enjoyed the mild winter we have experienced and spring is already on our doorstep. We are truly blessed to be able to live, either full or part-time in such a beautiful spot. Many thanks to all that make Walnut Mountain a great place to be.

Welcome to our new Walnut Mountain Property Owners

L30 Don & Theresa Dowless
32 Owltown Drive

J277 Joe & Kristen Rastall
341 Valley View Road

G77 Mike & Kari Mears
739 Mountain Oak Road

F301 & F302 Steve & Stacy Soltis
53 Laurel Ridge Drive

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Pool will open early in the morning for adults

In response to the requests of several property owners, the Walnut Mountain Board of Directors recently voted to make the swimming pool available to adults during the morning throughout the pool season. Adults will be able to utilize the pool for lap swimming and water aerobics from 7:45 to 9:15 a.m.

Walnut Mountain resident Jeannie Thompson has agreed to act as the liaison for the lap swimming. We are asking interested residents to sign up with Jeannie so we know how many to expect. Telephone Jeannie at 706-889-3220 or email her at insight@ellijay.com.

Recreation Committee Chair Bunny Demeo is working to determine if there is enough interest in water aerobics to hold a class during the morning adult swim session. If you are interested in water aerobics please let Bunny know via email at bnb2ga@ellijay.com.

Again, these activities are available to those who sign up and will be held prior to the normal pool opening hours of 10 a.m.

Meet Paula Davis, our new board member

Paula Davis

Hello, I'm Paula Davis. I'm originally from Waterloo, Iowa. I have two children, Jerry Barman and Denyel Davis, both from my first marriage. Jim and I married in July 1997. Jim had three children from his first marriage, so that makes us a blended, blessed family with five children and ten grandchildren - seven girls and three boys!

When Jim and I married, we decided to move to the North Georgia mountains. We found our home here in Walnut Mountain in 1998. I have always loved the mountains, but never thought I would live in them. I used to dabble in painting and when I was little, I had painted some pictures on some old barn wood. Over the years and through the course of many moves, I thought I had lost these paintings, until I found them one day when unpacking a trunk of clothes. I yelled at Jim "Honey, we're home!" I had painted it, 40 years ago, and it was our home here on Walnut Mountain, right down to the mountains and the deer. The Lord obviously sent us here!

I've had numerous jobs, including working for the Waterloo, IA and Fayetteville school systems in numerous positions from office clerk to bus driver to computer teacher. I also worked as a supervisor for Target and took time off to care for my children.

Since moving to Ellijay, I've worked with the Gilmer County School System, first as a in-school suspension teacher. In 2005 I was promoted to the Attendance Coordinator (aka Truancy Officer) for Gilmer County Schools. I also represent the school system in the juvenile courts. It's a rewarding job for me as it provides me with the opportunity to truly help the kids and their families.

Jim was diagnosed with Parkinson's Disease seven years ago only to find out in January of this year. He also has MSA (Multiple System Atrophy), a progressive neurological movement disorder, so I spend time as much time as I can with him. We attend Cherry Log Christian Church. I've held many positions in leadership between schools, churches, and Parkinson's and now MSA! My hobbies are my grandchildren, gardening, playing games, traveling and all sports events.

Thank you for the opportunity to serve on the Board. I always have ideas and would love for you to share yours with me. Let's work together to make Walnut Mountain an even better place to live - where people care about each other and work together for the common good of our community. Thank you again for this opportunity to serve you!

God bless,
Paula H. Davis

Take Note!

Property owners, please take note of the companies advertising in The Mountaineer and consider using their services. Their ads help to defray our publishing costs.

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Mountain Living

Lee Gilreath, Vice President

Life is good on Walnut Mountain and as residents we need to take advantage of each day. This winter was one of the mildest that I can remember, with only a few dustings of snow and not many days with below freezing temperatures. Spring officially arrived March 21 and with it comes strong frontal systems capable of producing severe thunderstorms, lightning, hail, and those dreaded tornados.

Vandalism on Mountain

Recently our community has experienced a significant level of vandalism. On several occasions the automatic gate arms at Gate 1 have been torn off, road signs stolen and port-a-lets at building sites turned over. In addition, the wooden children's play set next to the tennis courts was destroyed and large sections of it thrown over a fence and into the woods, along with a picnic table and trash can.

Police reports have been filed and several of our board members have met with Sheriff Nicholson concerning this activity. As a result, the Sheriff has agreed to have periodic patrols through the community and plans to attend our upcoming quarterly WMPOA meeting on Apr. 21 to address our residents and answer any questions you may have.

In the interim, residents are encouraged to remain vigilant and to take note of any unusual or suspicious activity and/or vehicles in our community, *particularly late at night and during the very early morning hours.*

Residents may call Jeff Long at 850-212-3110, the WM Office or any Board Member to report such observations. It goes without saying that anyone observing criminal activity should immediately call 911.

Preparing can make all the difference

A little thoughtful planning is crucial to dealing with severe weather emergencies that can come upon us with little to no warning in this season. Take a few simple steps to be prepared.

- Store up non-perishable food that doesn't require electricity to prepare.
- Stock up your emergency water supply.
- Check your property for dead limbs and trees and remove if necessary.

Walnut Mountain has several systems, including telephone, email and web-based notification systems to proactively alert residents of conditions on the mountain prior to and during critical situations. Please contact Twila at the administration office for further information and to ensure your contact information is on file and up to date.

Road conditions

Walnut Mountain roads are deteriorating at a pace that, if nothing is done, there will be no roads as we know them. The board has tasked the Property Manager with soliciting estimates from paving companies for hourly or daily costs to begin hot-patching holes. As we all know, everything costs money, and with the price of oil rising, this will be expensive. Our goal is to begin repairing the roads as best we can the very near future. Please feel free to contact me at 706-669-1694 with suggestions for improving Walnut Mountain.

Coming Soon! New website and e-newsletter

Nicole Hawthorne, Communications Chair

We're in the final stages of constructing a new website for Walnut Mountain. One of the many benefits to this new site is that it will allow us to deliver *The Mountaineer* and other communications to you electronically. Look for details about our new site and communication strategy soon!

Sign up for Walnut Mountain news via email

If you are interested in receiving your edition of *The Mountaineer* electronically, please send your request and email address to me at njhawthorne@gmail.com.

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It's bear time

Jeff Long, Security Chair

With the onset of much warmer weather and an earlier spring, it's a sure bet that the bears will be "waking up" and resuming their wanderings around the Mountain in search of food

The diet of bears typically consists of berries, insects, grasses and meat; however, their exceptional sense of smell often attracts them to easy-to-get non-natural foods such as **pet food, bird seed and human garbage**. When these sources of food continue to be readily available, in time bears will lose their natural fear of humans, and have been known to break into parked vehicles and homes in search of food. When this happens, these "nuisance bears" can become dangerous, and will most likely be captured and killed by wildlife officials. Conversely, once these non-natural sources of food are removed, bears will move on to seek out their more typical food sources, and will resume their natural feeding patterns in the wild.

How you can help us and the bears

Here are some things you can do to help us safely enjoy the presence of bears and other wildlife in our community.

1. Do not leave your garbage bags outside your residence or in your vehicles. Take them directly to the dumpsters.
2. Put your garbage in the dumpsters – not on top of or beside the dumpsters. It is not often that every dumpster is full, so taking the time to find one with room for your trash will help tremendously.
3. Keep dumpster doors closed and latched.
4. Be especially alert while using the dumpsters after dark, and don't hesitate to make noise when approaching the dumpster area.
5. Do not leave pet dishes outside your residence.
6. **Do not feed the bears or the deer.**

Thanks for your continued cooperation in helping us keep Walnut Mountain beautiful and safe.

The Garden Club

Laura Nizinski

The Walnut Mountain Garden Club was organized in 1998. The most visible of our activities are the patriotic displays, along with the fall and Christmas decorations. To make Walnut Mountain more appealing, we introduced the street signpost mini-garden in 2001 and we're bringing it back!

How it the street sign mini-garden works

Many of our street signs are overgrown with weeds but with a little care and effort, we can make a big difference. Volunteers can adopt and establish gardens. Choose a street signpost, clean up the area, plant a few flowers or add some decorations. Seasonal themes are welcome. You maintain the spot and keep it appealing. Choosing a sign post close to your home can make the job a little easier. If you can help, please sign up at the mail house or call me at 706-635-3672.

"Adoption" is on first call basis. I am excited about this renewed project.

Thank you!

Thank you to Susan Harden, Evelyn and Neil Schoonejongen, and Barbara and Don Nickle, along with our maintenance staff for their efforts to refurbish the garden at the Welcome Station/Mailbox area. The Garden Club is donating solar lights to add to the beauty of this area.

Join the Garden Club

Members and guests are welcome at our meetings, usually held the second Thursday of each month at 6 p.m. at the clubhouse. Potluck suppers precede the meeting. Mountain beautification, providing gardening tips and community service are our goals. The fellowship is an added bonus. Come join us, meet your neighbors and bring some new ideas to the group.

Our next meeting on April 12 will have an Easter theme, so wear your Easter bonnet. Participate in our "Best and Worst" contest, and then join in a special Easter egg hunt. Our May 10 meeting will have a Cinco de Mayo theme. At our June 14 meeting, we'll honor fathers. I hope to see you at our next meeting and we look forward to enjoying your street signpost mini- gardens!

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Spring: Magic on our Mountain

Nicole Hawthorne

When the grayness of winter is no longer to be borne, spring makes a most wished for appearance. Daffodils are your first clue, followed shortly thereafter by forsythia and

cherry blossoms. Spring comes to the mountain slowly, and so, when the kelly green finally comes into full bloom, the warmth and verdant beauty are more deeply appreciated. Each season on the mountain is unique, with its own sights, smells and sounds. No matter the date on the calendar, there is beauty found here.

On languid, breezy summer days, stirring leaves sound like the ocean. Porches beg to be visited and, occasionally, napped upon. Sweet tea, lemonade and good books are all to be savored there until the sun finally takes her leave late in the evening, as whippoorwills sing lullabies and fireflies signal "good night" to all in their own brand of Morse code.

Fall is crisp, with colors so stunning, from the clear blue skies to the autumn leaves, it takes your breath away. God takes a paint brush and lovingly applies colors from His most coveted palette. Busy squirrels remind us of the urgent need to prepare for the approaching winter. Smoke from the fireplaces and leaf piles wafts across the mountain - a wonderful smell and sure sign of the season. Doors remain open on warm Saturday afternoons. Listen closely, and you'll know how the Dawgs are doing from the cheers or groans emanating from within.

Winter has a stark, barren beauty all its own. On cold, clear days you can see forever - a view only available in the stripped down landscape of winter. Sunlight strikes the ancient ridges in different ways, creating a depth and dimension blurred in the softer seasons by lush foliage and the bluish haze that lends its name to this region. When it snows, the deer may be your only visitors. Winds shriek and howl, for what seems like days on end, bringing an added appreciation for our cozy cottages and roaring fires.

Spring brings the return of birds singing pretty tunes. Warm afternoons turn fragrant with the arrival of wisteria, honeysuckle and azaleas. Muted shades of winter are replaced with vibrant hues. Fuchsia, yellow and periwinkle make bold statements, loudly proclaiming the return of life to the mountain. Animals and people come out of hibernation to appreciate the happy scene. Even when frightening, violent storms unleash bolts of intense lightening and thunder so loud the very mountain itself seems to shake, there is a peace in knowing the morning light will chase away the mist that blankets the mountaintop after the storm.

Experiencing the joy and beauty that is spring on Walnut Mountain is a privilege for those blessed enough to call this magical place home. Perhaps because it is a season of renewal, we greet it more fondly. Whatever it is, spring serves as another reminder of why, to quote Dorothy, there is no place like home. There is no place like our mountain.



Photo by Nicole Hawthorne

Walnut Mountain Garage Sale

Members of the Walnut Mountain Recreation Committee are starting to make plans for the 12th Annual Walnut Mountain Garage Sale to be held this year on Friday, Sept. 7 and Saturday, Sept. 8 at the clubhouse.

Started in 2001 as a way to help earn additional money to cosmetically upgrade the clubhouse, the revenues generated have purchased new appliances, cabinetry, countertops, flooring, and furniture for the kitchen. The two main floor restrooms have been renovated and new banquet tables purchased. Other decorating upgrades include new glass dinnerware, and yes, even Wally the Bear who stands to greet visitors at the clubhouse door have all been purchased with garage sale monies.

How it the garage sale works

Residents donate household items. The committee sorts, prices, and displays items and the money generated, less expenses, goes to upgrades. While the WMPOA Board budgets for capital improvements and maintenance, the supplemental funds generated by the garage sale have helped enhance not only the appearance of the clubhouse, but also the social gatherings hosted there.

How you can help

As the approaching spring and summer bring opportunities to redecorate, reorganize, and replace, please consider saving your donations for the garage sale. The only requirements are that donations be clean and in working order. We do not accept clothing. With your help, we can have another successful year. More information will be made available as the sale approaches, but until then if you have any questions, please contact Evelyn Schoonejongen or Lois Hoffman.

Supplying Walnut Mountain with Water: Frequently Asked Questions for Residents

What is happening?

After years of operating our own water system, Walnut Mountain is transitioning to water provided by the Ellijay-Gilmer County Water & Sewer Authority (Water Authority), effective April 2012. Several months of construction are nearly complete, allowing us to purchase water from the county and distribute it via our own pumping system.

Why are we making this change?

As the community grew over the years, demand for water increased, adding to the complexity and cost of operating our own water system. The state required us to become a Class 1 water system, which involved additional government oversight, hiring more employees and maintaining the mandated certifications. We currently operate under the same guidelines and regulations that govern the City of Atlanta's water systems. While we are able to produce quality water, we do so at great cost and our ability to sustain our water production operations into the future is of growing concern.

What are the benefits?

There are numerous benefits to the residents of Walnut Mountain in making this change, including:

Securing our water supply

Over the last few years, extreme drought has taken a toll on our lakes - the source of our water here on the mountain. In that same time, the number of homes and full-time residents on the mountain increased, adding to the demand for water. Transitioning to water provided by the county gives us a more reliable and stable source of water for the entire community. It also gives us the ability to increase capacity in the coming years as the mountain continues to grow.

Lower operating costs

Purchasing water from the county is a far less costly option than maintaining and upgrading our own production system in the coming years. The Water Authority fronted the cost of construction and structured our water rates so that we'll pay back the initial costs associated with the project over a six-year period at a cost nearly equivalent to what we'd pay to produce our own water in that same time period. Over the long-term, we expect to reduce our expenses by eliminating the day-to-day costs, as well as expensive emergency repairs, associated with producing our own water. After six years, our purchase rates will decline substantially.

Financial flexibility

When we no longer have to produce our own water, we'll be able to begin utilizing our capital improvement funds to upgrade existing water distribution lines throughout the neighborhood, many of which are over forty years old and are currently located under our roads. The Board understands that the condition of the roads are of great concern to many residents, but from a financial and construction perspective, we must first replace and relocate the distribution lines before we can begin major paving projects.

Will this change the quality of our water?

It is unlikely that you will notice any changes in odor and/or taste in our water. County water meets all state quality requirements.

Will this affect our annual dues and monthly water allotments?

One of the greatest benefits of this project is that we'll be able to maintain our annual dues and increase your monthly allotments from 3,000 gallons per household to 4,000 gallons. This is not to say that other issues and needs won't affect our annual dues in the future, but the transition to county water will not create additional costs to homeowners at this time. Our 2012 dues remain the same as they were in 2011. After the first six years of our agreement with the Water Authority, our water rates will decline and future Boards will collaborate with homeowners to decide if we should reduce individual water assessments or put the savings toward additional improvements for our water distribution systems.

Where can I learn more about Walnut Mountain's transition to county water?

If you'd like more information regarding our agreement to purchase water from the county and distribute it via our own pumping systems, please refer to the front-page article in the April 2011 Mountaineer newsletter. Additional financial information is available in the 2012 Walnut Mountain POA budget. You may also contact Board President Max Holstein with questions by email at max@ellijay.com.

Blue Sky Cabin Rentals

Management

We are currently accepting applications for new cabins to be added to our rental program.

❖ Why rent your cabin?

- Income from rentals will help pay down your mortgage, while your property values continue to increase
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