

GREEN SPACE

A publication of Greater Sandy Spring Green Space, Inc.

Volume 2 Number 3

Winter 2000

Letter from the President - John Chirtea

As you read this newsletter, you will find some exciting new initiatives being undertaken by Greater Sandy Spring Green Space, Inc. Preservation of our few remaining green open areas becomes more difficult with each passing day. Montgomery County's new **Legacy Open Space program** is one of the most aggressive programs to help us in preserving some of these areas. As stated in the recently proposed functional master plan for this program, "Legacy Open Space recognizes the critical need to act now to protect exceptional open spaces for our children and grandchildren. Current funding levels and open space protection programs are inadequate to protect critical open spaces. Legacy Open Space builds on our commitment to open space protection as a way to ensure the continued extraordinary quality of life in Montgomery County". We are hopeful that GSSGS will be able to dovetail its efforts with those of Legacy Open Space to help protect key properties in the greater Sandy Spring area. Stay tuned for our progress in the coming months, and as always, we count on and need help in meeting our objectives. Thank you for your continuing support as we move forward.

ADVISOR

Welcome New Board Member Derek Jackson

We would like to enthusiastically introduce Green Space's newest Board Member, Derek Jackson. Derek is a resident of Ashton, and a long time supporter of Green Space, and the Sandy Spring area community. In the short time since joining the Board, Derek has assumed a leadership role through his involvement with the Program Committee.

In this issue of the newsletter you will read his article about the Pipe Detective Program he is resurrecting in order to monitor illegal runoff into our area waterways. Derek also represented Green Space at the Montgomery County Birthday Party, joined the Audubon Naturalist Society watershed monitoring program, and helped to secure a \$1,000 grant from IBM. What is most impressive about Derek is his sincere love for this community, and the way his caring translates into committed action.

Our community is truly fortunate to benefit from not only Derek's energetic stewardship, but the contributions of the many other Green Space Board members who give generously of their time and

SANDY SPRING RURAL LEGACY TRAIL UPDATE

—Aleen Starkweather

The Sandy Spring Rural Legacy Trail has been planned for this area for some time. We have walked the route from Woodlawn to the Sandy Spring and participated in its layout, and the choice of a preliminary site for the bridge to cross the stream. So, we have all been anxiously awaiting work to start. I spoke with Lyn Coleman, Trails Planning Supervisor at MNCPPC, and received the following update.

The latest news is that MNCPPC is hoping to officially open the trail as part of the November 2001 Emancipation Day Celebration. We are all looking forward to that day. Anchoring the trail will be the old stone barn at Woodlawn. Bid proposals to do a feasibility study of restoration options for the barn will soon be requested by MNCPPC. Restoration will include developing parking facilities. The parking facilities and the barn will be used as a "trail head" for the Sandy Spring Rural Legacy Trail.

(continued on p. 4)

SANDY SPRING RURAL LEGACY TRAIL UPDATE (from

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THANK YOU!!!

We would like to start a new tradition of thanking people in our newsletter. If you make a contribution and do not want to be publicly thanked in this way, please let us know and you will remain an anonymous donor. In this issue we would like to thank all of you who made contribution since August:

Neal Abrams	Yale Lewis	Caroline Schaufler
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About the Green Space Ad

The Green Space Advisor is published by Greater Sandy Spring Space, Inc., P.O. Box 92, Spring, MD 20860. (301) 260-XXXX Website: sandyspringgreenspace.org
 Greater Sandy Spring Space, Inc. is a nonprofit corporation, established in 1988 to promote the preservation, protection, and balanced use of natural and historical resources in Montgomery County through education and the placement of conservation easements.

Volume 2, Number 3
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Editor
 Rosalind Zuses

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The Board of Directors meets at 7:00 pm the last Tuesday of each month in our 3rd floor offices above Ga Service Center (next door to Samu

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A LOVE FOR THE LAND

—Beth Brent

Lead by the small hand of my three year old son Ryan as we navigate a steep hemlocked hillside overlooking the Patuxent River, I am reminded why I enjoy working with Greater Sandy Spring Green Space—Certainly it is the land, but equally important, it is the people. David Hartge leads the way as he tells me about the 70 acres of land that has been in his family for the past 145 years and, protected by a conservation easement, will remain undeveloped into perpetuity.

The Hartges are perhaps a bit unusual in today's mobile culture—three generations live within shouting distance of each other on a small area of the 70 acres they call home. David's brother John and his wife Ellen raise their children, the seventh generation of Hartges, in the same place that he and David, and their parents played as children. They know this land and its stories as they know each other. Guided by their love of the Sandy Spring area, David's mother and father, Betty and Bill Hartge (Bill Hartge was one of the original Green Space Board members), initiated the conversation about how best to preserve intact a family legacy intimately connected to the land. The conversation led to consideration of a conservation easement.

A conservation easement is a legal agreement between a landowner and a land trust or similar entity that permanently limits the uses of the land in order to protect its conservation values. Donations of conservation easements, provided they meet federal tax code requirements, in most cases qualify as a charitable tax deduction. For example, a landowner who agrees to donate a conservation easement

which limits or prohibits development on his or her property would potentially receive a tax deduction for the difference in value between the land with the easement and the land without the easement. Donations of easements may also result in property tax reductions.

The financial incentives for encumbering property with a conservation easement can certainly be persuasive, but walking the property, it is clear that were money the priority, the Hartges would have sold their property to developers. So why the conservation easement? The answer for David is so simple that it seems almost self evident. They did it out of their love for, and connection with, the land.

We leave the cover of forest. I watch as Ryan tumbles forward into the lemon fall light filling the meadow we now traverse. Looking across the Patuxent into Howard County where 7 acres of the Hartge's 70 lies, I see a man walking his dog. I ask David how he feels about strangers walking in his back yard. He acknowledges the "No Trespassing" signs posted on the property, but is quick to say that he is happy to know that this is a place where people, particularly kids, can hook up with nature. Ryan is trying to skip rocks across the river's surface.

Once the Hartges decided as a family to protect the legacy of their land with a conservation easement, they turned to Maryland Environmental Trust (MET) for assistance. Green Space did not yet exist. MET provided a boiler plate easement, and the Hartges worked together as a family to decide upon the restrictions necessary to best preserve the property's conservation values and

still meet the family's current and anticipated needs as they relate to the property.

The end result was an easement that prohibits future subdivision and subsequent development, but allows for rather liberal use of the acreage closest to the residences. The Hartges have the option of building an additional residence within the residential area designated in the easement. They also continue to enjoy and work the land in the ways they have for the past 145 years, to include growing, harvesting and grazing. The primary limitation created by the easement, which they see as a plus, is the prohibition against subdivision.

As easement donors, the Hartges have the option to take advantage of the following tax savings benefits:

- ♥ A 100% Property tax credit on the unimproved land subject to the conservation easement for 15 years from the time the easement was executed. This credit does not apply to the tax bill on the dwellings.
- ♥ After that 15 year period, a property assessment reflecting its lack of development potential. This assessment is usually an agricultural assessment regardless of agricultural production taking place on the property.
- ♥ A one-time federal tax deduction for the difference between the fair market value unrestricted vs. the value of the land under easement.
- ♥ A reduction in the estate tax when the property is passed on to its heirs. This can significantly

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impact a family's ability to retain ownership of land.

- ♥ Montgomery County ordinance provides a tax credit for land sub-ject to a conservation easement. This applies only to the county portion of a property tax bill.

It is the hope of the Green Space Board that others in the community will feel compelled, as did the Hartges, to consider d either a conservation easen property to Green Spa purposes of protecting open into perpetuity.

If you are interested in becoming an easement donor, please contact Green Space at 301-260-8860. Green Space is incorporated as a not-for-profit organization under section 501(a) of the Internal Revenue Service Code. As such we are authorized to accept and steward donations of conservation ease-ments and land. Previous news-letters have described in detail the many easements we are

In appreciation of the Hartge family's continued pioneering spirit, I leave you with Rachel Carson's words:

"A child's world is fresh and new and beautiful, full of wonder and excitement. It is our misfortune that, for most of us, that clear-eyed vision, that true instinct for what is beautiful and awe-inspiring, is dimmed and even lost before we reach adulthood. If I had influence

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Departing from Woodlawn trail travels Northeast throo woods behind Friends Schoo the Sandy Spring. Wi Homes will build a small fo crossing the stream over into now a cornfield surround Spring. The trail then conti past the Spring to MD Rou Work on the trail is now awa harvest of the corn crop. harvest, a field walk of th trail will be arranged for cor representatives.

Still in negotiation is the of the trail from the Spring t 108. Two trail possibilities Meeting House Road, whi private road; or creating a n alongside Sherwood High A sidewalk along MD108 people safely from the trai Sandy Spring Museum Sherwood High School is al discussed.

Green Space will cont participate in the Trail process, and will most certai part of the Trail's inaugurat

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What is a Pipe Detective?

—Derek Jackson



No, it isn't a vocation learned through a mail-order correspondence school. No, it doesn't require a polygraph test. And no, it isn't a role graphically depicted by a Hollywood superstar in any movies available at your local video store!! Actually, it is exactly what it says. Still confused?? Read on.

No, I'm not going to let you off that easy. First a little background. As I'm sure most of you are aware, the Sandy Spring/Ashton Master Plan area is comprised of two major watersheds - the Northwest Branch and the Patuxent. These watersheds are fed by many 1st, 2nd, and 3rd-order tributaries, such as the historic Sandy Spring. These tributaries are home to a diverse population of biologic life and were recently classified by the Montgomery County Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) as having good to excellent health. Of course, we all want to believe that these conditions will continue to exist for all eternity. And rightly so. But the truth is - continued development is wreaking havoc on the health of our precious watersheds.

Development creates impervious surfaces - driveways, roadways, rooftops and parking lots.

When it rains on these impervious surfaces, the end result is something called urban stormwater runoff. Urban stormwater runoff goes into storm drains, hopefully into a stormwater management facility, and then directly into streams and rivers. Unmanaged stormwater runoff contributes to Channel erosion, flooding, thermal pollution, sediment build up, and the spread of toxins and excess nutrients into the waterways. These bi-products are the biggest threats to the health of a watershed. And if that isn't enough, most of the stormwater management systems (better known as Best Management Practices, or BMPs) in place today only reduce the pollution threat by 80% or less.

Hold tight!! We're getting closer to revealing the answer!! The legend of the Pipe Detective is right around the corner!!

If it's any consolation, Montgomery County has set some of the highest standards in the nation when it comes to both the implementation of BMP's and the protection of its watersheds. Some would consider this a contradiction, especially considering that the high standard of BMP's is a recent occurrence and developments built more than 15 years ago have little, or no form of effective BMP. In addition, the sheer number of BMP's in Montgomery County alone places tremendous pressures on the DEP staff to monitor them. Because of this, Montgomery County DEP organized a program in 1996 called the Pipe Detectives Program. Volunteers were recruited and trained by DEP staff to monitor BMP outlets for illicit discharges. An illicit discharge is all of the watershed threats defined earlier

emanating from a stormwater outlet. Pipe Detectives are assigned specific outlets to monitor on a regular basis, especially during dry periods when nothing should be seen flowing from a stormwater outlet, and document their findings. Any unusual findings are reported to the proper Montgomery County agencies.

Ta Da!! There you have it, the definition of a Pipe Detective!!

Unfortunately, lack of citizen participation and DEP staffing pressures put an end to the program. And that is where we, the citizens, need to step forward. Green Space is planning on resurrecting the program in the Sandy Spring/Ashton Master Plan area. If you are interested in helping to maintain the good quality of our local watersheds and have some spare time, this is your OPPORTUNITY to excel!

Become a Pipe Detective. The training is free and the rewards are awesome!! Call me at 301-421-1370, or email me at derekj@us.ibm.com for further details.

In future issues of the newsletter, I'll tell you about ways to minimize the impact of urban stormwater runoff to our watersheds. In addition, I'll also keep you informed of other watershed conservation issues and efforts ongoing in our community. Let's preserve our precious watersheds for generations to come!

P.S. Please notice the newsletter insert titled - WATER POLLUTION ISSUES. It contains all the important phone numbers to call when a water quality problem is observed. Put it on the fridge and don't hesitate to call if you witness any incident relating to the defined

Green Space Advisor

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Name _____

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Special Interest: _____

Date of Application: _____

Annual dues are \$25 per pe

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