



# Kensington Downs Newsletter

Fort Wayne, Indiana 46815

July 2008

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## PRESIDENT'S LETTER

It was about this time last year that I put a note in the newsletter about the tree trimming project that was about to start. Well, we removed several dead and dying trees at that time. There are more trees requiring removal, and the work will be done by the landscaping company that mows our common areas. Along with the tree removal, they are going to work on shrub removal around the entrance. Hopefully, the overall effect will be a cleaner look to a currently crowded area.

The annual meeting will be held at the Georgetown Library on Thursday, November 13, at 7:00pm. Mark it on your calendars!

A short reminder about trash pickup from the city's website: Residents should have their garbage out at the designated collection site (alley or curb) by 5 a.m. on the day of collection. If curbside collection, garbage can be set out **no sooner than noon the day prior to collection and containers must be removed from street view no later than noon the day after collection.** Due to route changes, collection times will vary. Bulky items (~~heavy furniture and non-free appliances~~) are to be placed with the garbage for collection. Residents must call the 311 Call Center 48 hours prior to their day of pick-up to schedule a bulk collection.

Finally, don't forget to check your property lines before planting and landscaping. Improvements should not be made in common areas. Also, care should be taken when planting in easements because utility companies are allowed access to the easement for repairs and adding services. You could be risking your plants if work needs to be done.

# Meet your Neighbors

It never ceases to amaze me how many people I *don't* know in Kensington Downs. For example, I was driving down Preakness Cove, and came upon a guy cleaning – what I assumed to be – *his* outdoor light at 7611. It turned out to be Richard – the son of Dorothy Shinn – who lives in Rancho Mirage, CA. And then Dorothy tells me that she has lived in the Villas for 20 years! One would think that, since I have lived in KD for almost 16 years, our paths would have crossed somewhere! Dorothy worked for GE “during the War – didn't everybody?” When her husband passed away, she moved from Parnell to Preakness. Dorothy also has a daughter, Linda, living in Indianapolis. Dorothy, it was great to meet you!

Fresh back from a trip to Canada – just pulled in the driveway, to be precise – was Welshire Blvd. residents Carl and Nancy Louraine. Nancy is the Executive Director of Turnstone Center for Disabled Children & Adults (and has been for 17½ years). Carl has worked at B. F. Goodrich for 33 years! Their children, Stephanie – just graduated from I.U. with a degree in linguistics – and Daniel – who works at Nutec – must share the limelight with “the fat cat,” Cleo. And if you don't believe Cleo is fat, stop by 8015 and ask to meet her!

When I rang the doorbell at 8009 Weeping Willow Court, the garage door went up. Sorry, it won't work for you. Kevin Holle was just getting ready to go outside through the garage when he heard the doorbell ring. Kevin and his wife Julie are the parents of 14-year-old triplets – Braeden, Quinton, and Keegan – and 12-year-old Jordan. Kevin is employed by the City Water Resources Department in the computer area, and Julie works with her family's business, Martin's Flag Shop in New Haven. They can make you any kind of flag or banner you want, Kevin said. Also, condolences to the Holle family on the recent passing of Julie's father.

It was fun meeting each of these families! I hope you get a chance to say “Hi” to a neighbor you don't know. I'll almost guarantee you'll be glad you did!

## 2008 Homeowner Survey Results

*(Editor's Note: The following article was written by Arlene Klapes, chair of the Homeowner Survey Committee comprised of herself, Jackie Chen and Joan Lewis.)*

Of the 234 surveys mailed out, 94 (40%) were returned. Many thoughtful and compelling observations were expressed. Our thanks to all who responded! Would the person who expressed interest in serving on the Safety & Emergency Preparedness Committee (but did not sign their name) please call Arlene Klapes at 749-7432. Thanks!

Regarding the proposed website, a majority of respondents (78%) indicated that they would use a website to stay current on KD community affairs. Our home page is now up on the internet, but it still needs more content. Go to [www.neighborhoodlink.com](http://www.neighborhoodlink.com) and find Kensington Downs by entering 46815 in the zip code box.

Much of the survey contained questions relating to the use and management of our eight zones of Common Area. Jackie Chen (Chair, Common Areas Planning Committee) offers the following summary. Of the 94 surveys returned, 58 responders saw trees in their “ideal” surroundings and 72 felt that our common areas should contribute to the “beauty” of our surroundings.

# ***The Swamp?***

***By Jackie Chen***

My previous article, last October, provided a whirlwind synopsis of our subdivision's natural history. Many of you, perhaps, were as surprised as I was to learn that we live on cleared swamp land.

What exactly is a swamp? – It is wet woodland.

Let's revisit the settlement and early development of our area. The early settlers desired drier land for farming so drains were dug. Then fields were cleared of trees. But what happens to the soil when trees are cut down?

1. Immediately it begins to lose organic nutrients.
2. The mineral portion washes away at a rate increased by 5 or 6 times the previous rate.
3. In winter time the ground freezes more deeply and loses the ability to absorb snow melt. Flooding of low lying areas increases.
4. During rainy seasons, more rain hits the ground and further increases chances for widespread flooding.
5. In dry seasons, higher grounds become susceptible to drought and fire.
6. Year round - cold temperatures become colder and warm temperatures hotter; the wind blows unchecked.

Some think that the solution to the newly created wet areas is additional drainage. This may solve water problems in your backyard but at the expense of creating or increasing them in someone else's backyard. It also does not solve the ongoing loss of fertility as organic matter is consumed by crops, burned off by sunlight or washed away by sheet erosion. It may further increase the danger of drought in dry seasons.

Nevertheless, many farmers did just that, installed drain tiles. And the fields dried out. Then a developer bought the field and the soil was covered with roofed structures, asphalt streets, and concrete driveways, patios and sidewalks – none of which catches or absorbs water. More drains were installed; but at times, we still have too much water.

Could there be another solution to our water problems besides more drains? Here are the results of a few studies completed in the last decade which suggest one possibility. A study by the town of Sacramento, CA found a tree canopy prevents 36 % of the rain which hits it from reaching the ground. Eugene, OR discovered that acreage which is 58% covered by leafed trees will reduce peak storm drain flows by 25% compared to non-leaf conditions. Scientists at the Center for Ecology and Hydrology in Bangor, England compared pasture land to a neighboring pasture newly planted with trees. They found the 2-3 year old woodland to be 60 times more effective at absorbing water than the grazed land. We have "grazed land" in our neighborhood. It is not grazed by cattle, sheep, or goats; it is grazed by lawn mowers instead.

Neighbors, do you have a good spot or spots for a tree in your yard? If you must remove a tree, can you plant another to take over its job? Perhaps contact the city for a street tree.

By converting some of our lawns to tree canopy gardens, we can decrease the amount of water hitting our yards, increase the soil's water absorbing capacity, reduce incidents of standing water, moderate the wind's force, and reduce our lawn mowing expenses. Pruning of trees is needed much less frequently than mowing of grass. Chipped prunings provide great rough mulch for making new garden beds or to place on less visible portions of existing beds. The mulch will decay and add organic matter to the soil, thus providing - FREE FERTILIZER! Fallen leaves provide protective winter mulch for perennials and more free fertilizer for next year's growth. The presence of more trees will reduce the amount of water flowing into our county drain system, and this will be greatly appreciated by our downstream neighbors! Thus, trees and the canopy they provide are a natural alternative to drainage tiles for reducing water problems.

For those who are interested in learning more about historical landscape changes, I recommend two books available from the Allen County Public Library. The first, [The Trout Pool Paradox: the American Lives of Three Rivers](#) by George Black, traces the changes in three rivers in Connecticut during the mid 1800's thru the present time. Despite its title, it is filled with stories of colorful historical figures who engage the reader in events of humor, pathos, and intrigue and by this means draws them into the life of these rivers. The second, [Changes in the Land: Indians, Colonists, and the Ecology of New England](#) by William Cronon goes even farther back in history. This book traces the conflict between two economic systems and the land use and management protocols that grew out of them. It dispels the mistaken notion that the open, often park-like forest which Europeans found when they arrived on America's shore was the result of natural processes. Instead it shows from historical documents that the forest was deliberately managed by the Indians to keep that openness, which was better for hunting than overgrown thickets. Both books provide food for thought, suggesting that we can learn much from the mistakes of previous generations and pointing out that there is no pristine past to which we either can or should return.

## Bits and Pieces

Joan Lewis needs volunteers to help proofread and update the Association handbook. Please call her at 450-0762 if you can assist with this project.