

OFFUTT RIDGE HOMEOWNER'S ASSOCIATION

Woodstock, Maryland

The Offutt Ridge Newsletter
Summer 2005

Tail Gate Party Aug. 28 - Details on page 7

The President's Corner
Sheila Abrams-Jones

The lazy, hazy days of summer! This is a wonderful time of year when we can all enjoy the great outdoors with barbecues, tennis, baseball, swimming in the pool (if you have one or a kind neighbor who is willing to share theirs), quiet nature walks, bike riding and roller blading. And just think, you can do all of those activities without ever leaving the neighborhood.

One of the activities that I am really looking forward to this summer is our Annual Community Block Party. The Party will have a little different twist to it this year (see page 7). It's always lot's of fun and a good opportunity to met your neighbors and find out what's going on in the neighborhood. So mark your calendar for **August 28** and I look forward to seeing you there.

Enjoy your summer!

All about Well Water Testing
Marge Mackey

Kevin Koepenick, Supervisor of Ground Water Management, Baltimore County Department of Environmental Protection & Resource Management attended the recent Offutt Ridge Homeowners' Mid Year General Meeting. Mr.



Koepenick, a geohydrologist and an expert on well water, discussed the recent letter about testing for radionuclides. Below is a summary of his presentation and the answers he provided to homeowners' questions about our wells.

First, Mr. Koepenick explained that Baltimore County established a pilot test of wells throughout the county after Anne Arundel County had detected elevated levels of radionuclides in some residential wells. The pilot test in Baltimore County showed that 10% of 70+ wells tested had elevated levels of radionuclides, and showed that

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Emergency Home Generator

John Mackey

We've all had it happen. Suddenly the lights go out and you start to wonder if and when they will come back on. You seem to worry more about the lack of water and flushing capability than electricity.

Well there is something you can do. You can purchase a portable or whole house backup generator. Generally, portable generators are gas powered pull-start systems with limited capability. Whereas the so-called whole house generators (15-25KW) are more automatic (starting, self testing, shutting down) and handle larger household electrical loads. More specifically, the whole house backup generator (15KW size) will power most things with the exception of heating, cooling and an electric dryer. It will easily take care of most basic stuff like 110 outlets, refrigerators, well pumps, sump pumps, stove tops and microwave ovens.

The two manufacturers I am most familiar with are Generac and Kohler. I know that Home Depot sells and installs Generac. The size you pick will depend on what electric services you want to keep running when the power shuts down, and the cost will rise with the size.

If you are interested in getting additional information give me a call. You will love the peace of mind that a generator can provide.

Yard Sale

On May 14, the HOA sponsored a Community Yard Sale. Although the turnout was not as large as expected, those who participated were very enthused. Perhaps this could become an annual event. Here are a few snapshots of the participants.



Next time, please join in the fun! If you've got suggestions to make this more successful, notify the Board.

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www.offuttridgehoa.org

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**It's Summer!
Down on the Farm**
Brenda Creighton

Memorial Day came at just the right time this year to make that perfect transition into the beginning of summer, no matter what the calendar says about the seasons. With Lydia out of school and our summer program planned, we are ready for all those exceptions to our regular riding schedule to occur as the families of our students start heading to the 'beach' or the 'cabin at the lake', wherever that may be. We will be here with the horses on their "night time out" schedule and day time in the stalls. They are there, waiting for attention.

Currently, our aged palomino, Whisper, is recovering from a mysterious leg injury. Langley is supposedly all better from his Lyme's disease, but he hasn't really gotten back into work yet. Rosy, our grey Arabian is pulling her load on the lesson schedule and remaining plump in spite of it. Domino is a newcomer to the farm, he is the dark horse with white spots on his rump. Those white spots were man made, unlike Romeo, Lydia's young Appaloosa, with the white rump and large brown spots.

The rest of the herd is faring well. With the cool wet spring, our pastures and paddocks are growing nicely.

Matt Sauter just mowed our hayfields, so first cutting is in. The fields looks so neat and tidy, like having a huge lawn across the street. Can't wait to get my big chestnut gelding

out and go trotting and cantering circles over there.

However, day to day, there is still the normal work to be done. The work of bringing horses in and out, cleaning stalls, fixing fences, and weeding the flower beds.

Every routine seems to be interrupted with the unexpected contingency of a flat tire or a stalled truck, a broken fence, or runaway horse. Time meant for cooking supper and returning phone calls is used unloading hay or hosing down an injured leg. Errands that were meant to be run get cancelled in favor of a day spent training an unbroken horse.

I can tell you from personal experience that I would much rather be living this life interrupted than the one I had two years ago. Day in, day out, sitting on my couch and waiting to recover from kidney failure. Watching the horses from the sun room and wondering if I would ever ride again. As frustrating as the stops and starts of daily life can be, I'd rather be doing this, than nothing.

Tally Ho! Yee Haw! I am back in the saddle again. (and yes, the bichons are happy that we have a new John Deere for them to ride.)

Gypsy Moths
Mary Lyons

ALERT - URGENT
What's the Worst that Could Happen?

We could lose every tree in

Offutt Ridge to the destructive gypsy moths.

They're back, in numerous locations in our community, eating blue spruce tree needles and hardwood tree leaves. The caterpillars are active now, and, left unchecked, they will completely defoliate the trees they attack. Without leaves, the trees have no way of getting their nourishment, and if attacked again next year by this year's offspring, the trees will die. It will take a concerted effort to control them because they are windborne, blowing from tree to tree, and also have a tendency to hitch-hike on vehicles. Our neighborhood would lose much of its value, beauty and comfort if we lose our trees.

Check your trees now! Do not wait for the caterpillars to defoliate your trees and lay next year's eggs. Look on the undersides of branches for light tan, spongy masses about 2 inches by 1 inch long. The masses (egg cases) lie flat under the branches. If you scrape the egg case with your finger, you'll feel that it's downy, soft and spongy, and see that it is speckled with dark pinhole marks where the eggs have hatched. We have already seen these egg cases on some trees along Peddiccoat Court. The caterpillars that emerged are eating our trees. Even if you don't see the egg cases, inspect carefully for caterpillars. The caterpillars themselves are usually difficult to spot because they sleep during the day and feed at night. But many of ours are active during the day. They are

distinctive because they have 4 or 5 body segments with blue dots, and 6 or more segments with reddish dots. Some people are allergic to any caterpillar, so you may want to refrain from touching them. The third clue that you have gypsy moths is their droppings. You may see your tree branches littered with the caterpillar droppings, resembling green or brown coffee grounds. Various web sites state that the egg cases can also be seen under lawn furniture, so check there, too. To kill the caterpillars, the homeowner can spray with Ortho Systemic Insect Killer (previously called Isotox). It contains the ingredient "acephate", and the label states that it will kill Gypsy Moth Caterpillars. Be sure to read and follow precautions carefully because of its hazards to humans. Usually, the caterpillars begin at the top of the tree, so you will need a pump that projects the spray to the tree top. On a large scale, some communities with massive infestations have requested aerial spraying.

The University of Maryland web site also recommends the use of sticky bands around the tree trunk, but states that the bands should be in place in April, before the eggs hatch. This could be an approach we can take next spring to prevent the caterpillars that hatch and drop to the ground from climbing back into the hardwood trees.

If you want to see what the egg masses look like, or to see their damage, contact Mary Lyon at (410) 521-5507, 3309 Peddicoat Court.

IN THE GARDEN

with Sheila Abrams-Jones

Mulch: You Can Have Too Much of a Good Thing

One of the best things you can do for the trees in your yard is to mulch them with organic mulch. A well-aerated, composted organic mulching material is best for properly mulching a tree. Some of the preferred materials for mulching trees include bark, grass clippings, shredded leaves, and pine needles.

Mulch properly applied provides the following benefits:

Provides Insulation - A layer of mulch acts as insulation for tree roots, protecting them from extreme summer and winter temperatures.

Discourages Weeds - Mulch discourages weeds, which also compete with trees for both water and moisture.

Conserves Moisture - Mulching helps conserve moisture by reducing the amount of water that's lost through evaporation from the soil surface. A layer of mulch reduces the amount of water that must be applied by irrigation.

Adds Organic Matter to Soil - As organic mulches decompose, they improve soil fertility and structure. Decomposing organic mulches also provide food and a favorable environment for beneficial soil organisms, such as earthworms and "good" fungi.

Reduces Soil Erosion -

Mulches reduce soil erosion and soil compaction, as well as improving water entry into the soil.

Protects Trunk- A circle of mulch around a tree decreases the chances of damage to the tree trunk from string weed trimmers or mowers.

Looks Nice- An attractive layer of mulch around trees and shrubs provides a more uniform look to a landscape.

Improper mulching, however, can kill trees. And, improper mulching or mulching mistakes are easy to make.

One of the most common mulching mistakes is over-mulching. Too much of a good thing isn't better. In this case, it can kill trees by suffocation. When too much mulch is applied, it limits the amount of oxygen that's getting to the roots of the tree. The excessive mulch also slows evaporation of soil moisture and the soil stays wet for long periods...exacerbating the lack of oxygen in the soil. Excess moisture at the base of the tree can also favor bacterial and fungal disease that can attack and kill inner bark tissue. Another common mistake is placing the mulch against the trunk of the tree.

An interesting way to improperly mulch trees is with mulching "volcanoes." Mulching volcanoes occur when gardeners apply a tall pile or mountain of mulch (or sometimes soil) around the base of the tree. These do nothing to help a tree... and are an easy and quick way to

kill it through suffocation and collar rot.

So what is the "proper way" to mulch trees? Proper mulching involves applying a two to four inch layer over the area around the trunk, extending out to the dripline or beyond. The larger the area, the more beneficial to the tree. The ideal way of mulching is to apply mulch over the entire root system..., which can be an area, as much as two to three times the spread of the branches and extending well beyond the dripline. However, it is very important to keep the mulch six inches away from the trunk of young trees and one foot away from the trunks of older, mature trees.

Be good to your trees- they're a good investment in your property and they are good for the environment. But remember...mulch is very beneficial for trees, but too much mulch or mulch that's applied improperly, especially like volcanoes, is bad for trees.

How Deep is Your Well?
Marge Mackey

Baltimore County maintains the documentation that was filed when your well was dug. To get a photocopy of that documentation, including your well's depth and output rate, simply send a letter to Kevin W. Koepenick, Baltimore County Department of Environmental Protection & Resource Management, 401 Bosley Avenue, Room 416, Towson MD 21204. The letter can consist of a single line saying "Please provide me with well information for (your

address)". This service is free.

What's New with Our Web Site?

www.offuttridgehoa.org
Rich Jackson

Over the last two months lots of changes ave been made. The site has received a complete facelift. New color schemes and fonts have been added to increase the appeal of the site. Changes like these will happen at least once a year in order to keep the site fresh and interesting. If you haven't visited our web site, you could be making a big mistake. It's the place to go to find out what's going on in the community. So stay current, visit each time you log on to the internet.

The HOA Board meets once a month. Want to know what they discuss during those meetings? The current and past meeting minutes are posted on the **Secretary** page of the web site. The same is true for the general meeting minutes. If you're new to the commutnity, reviewing the minutes is a great way to catch up on past events.

Need information on schools, county government or U.S. agencies. Want to read what's being said in newspapers in other cities. How about information on home repairs or what's happening in the world of sports. Go to the **Links** page for that information and lots more.

The Offutt Ridge Homeowners' Association is governed by the **Offutt Ridge HOA Declaration of Covenants, Conditions and Restrictions** and **HOA**

BYLAWS. Want to know what's in them? Both documents are on our web site in their entirety.

Recently, two new pages have been added to our site. **Neighbor Referrals** and the **Newsletter Schedule**.

Neighbor Referrals is the result of a suggestion by one of your neighbors. It is where you can find service providers that your Offutt Ridge neighbors have utilized and had a good experience. All Offutt Ridge residents are encouraged to send positive referrals for inclusion on this page. A referral submission link is located on the page.

Newsletter Schedule provides the time frame for the submission of articles and the publishing of the newsletter. Refer to this schedule to make sure your article is included in the next newsletter.

While we're on the topic, copies of all the newsletters are on our web site. Go to the **Newsletter** page to view them. In response to a suggestion made by one of your neighbors, the newsletter files were recently converted to **PDF** format. This format produces a clear display and an excellent copy when printed. In other words, you can print a copy of the newsletter from our web site that will be just like the one you received in the mail. Adobe Reader is required to view and print these files. If you don't have it, there is a link on the page which directs you to the adobe site for a free download.

When you enter our web site you'll find a list of **HOT NEWS** items. This information covers recent news of importance to our community that the Board wants disseminated in a hurry. You should read the hot news items often. They constantly change.

Need to contact one of your HOA Representatives? All representatives are listed on the **HOME** page of our site. In addition, access to their email addresses is provided.

So... What's new with our Web Site? You tell me! Suggestions for improving our site are always welcome. Email your suggestions to the HOA Webmaster. Our web site is a valuable community resource. Visit everyday!

A COOL DRINK FOR YOUR TREES
Marge Makey

The Offutt Ridge Homeowners Association bought 3 gator bags during the drought to help keep community trees alive. You can borrow them anytime you want, to keep your old trees from wilting or to give your new trees a good start. The gator bags are made of thick green plastic, hold 10 gallons of water, and have small holes at the bottom so that the water slowly drips at the base of the tree. The bags are at John Mackey's house, so give him a call on (410) 496-2687 if you want to use them.

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there is no correlation between the results of the tests and the location of the well or depth of the well. He also showed a map that included wells tested on Davis Avenue, and he pointed out that one homeowner's well tested OK, while his neighbor's well tested with high levels of radionuclides.

Based on that pilot test, Baltimore County is recommending that all well owners have their wells tested. However, Mr. Koepenick said that his office was cautious not to raise undue alarm, and said that implementing any remediation was a choice for each homeowner. It is true that drinking water with excess amounts of radionuclides over many years may cause an increased risk of getting cancer. But, he also stated that many factors in our environment and life style also may cause increased risk. Our decisions must be based on the severity of the results, and how it fits in with our overall health management plan.

According to Mr. Koepenick, it is a misconception that our well water comes from an underground stream that flows under our property and into our wells. The water for our wells comes from rain water that filters through the ground down to the bedrock where it is trapped in fissures under pressure. Our wells are drilled into this bedrock. The composition of the bedrock gives each of our wells its own quality of water, explaining why some of us need filtration systems (or radionuclide

remediation systems), and some of us do not. He also emphasized that fertilizers, herbicides, and pesticides when used according to directions do not affect our well water because of the filtering action of the soil above the well.

Mr. Koepenick concluded his presentation by asking that we forward test results to him to provide the county with additional data on well test results. His address is:

Baltimore County Department of Environmental Protection & Resource Management
401 Bosley Avenue
Room 416
Towson, Maryland 21204

If you would care to share the information, the **HOA Board** would like to hear about your test results as well.

Summer Riding at the Farm
Brenda Creighton

As the school year ends, summer vacations begin and schedules change. Even ours. Our weeks of summer riding programs will affect the Saturday lesson schedule. As a reminder, check your calendar and mark no lessons on these Saturdays whether or not your child is coming that week here at the farm.

Our program weeks are:

- June 27th (Barn Buddies)
- July 11th
- July 25th
- August 8th

This means there will be no lessons on the Saturdays of:

- July 2ⁿ
- July 16th
- July 30th
- August 13th

Offutt Ridge Riders should come if they are scheduled or they and other students can opt for a Sunday afternoon lesson those weekends.

Weather policy --Yes, it is nice we are having weather. And this is how Lydia and I deal with it. When it is hot, or hot and humid, 90 degrees would be the limit, we don't ride. Admittedly, sometimes it gets to ninety and I am out in it and still doing lessons or training. But watch for those

heat advisories or call and check.

Rain. Well, if it is just a light rain, a mist, a sprinkle, we'll ride in that. Downpours, we'll do barn lessons for half price. For thunder and thunderstorm forecasts, we cancel. I don't want the kids around the horses during thunder and lightening. I don't want you to feel you need to drive over here when severe weather is forecast. Sometimes, those thunderstorms just blow through, and life goes on. So if you want to wait and see or just delay the lesson by a half hour, we can probably make the adjustment.

Again, if you are an Offutt Ridge Rider, you've made a commitment to be here to take

care of horses. So you need to be here to work with us as we work around the weather.

Summer Riding-- So with all those exceptions, when can you ride? Well, summer mornings on the weeks that we don't have our camps are great times to spend two hours at the barn. We will schedule lessons weekdays between 9:30 and 11:30am upon request. You can come for just an hour, or stay for two. You can add in some extra lessons or switch off your regular time 'after school' or on Saturday.

As we say, there is always something to do at Offutt Ridge Farm.

TAIL GATE PARTY!!!

Joan Heit

Offutt Ridge is having a Tail Gate Party

**On Sunday, August 28
(the last Sunday in August)**

**Tot Lot on Amanda Court
3:00
(rain or shine)**

Mark your calendars; take a dish to share, a blanket or a folding chair, your smile, and if you wish music of your choice to be played with a variety of other music supplied by our neighbors.

There will be a 20x30' canopy, tables, drinks, a 'boom box', and games for all ages. Paper products will be supplied.

Be prepared to have an excitingly fun afternoon with your neighbors, and if you like, invite a friend to the Tot Lot on Amanda Court, Sunday, August 28 at 3:00pm. We look forward to seeing you!

Expense Summary for 2005 as of 6/21/05

Marge Mackey

Item	Projected Cost	Spent to Date	Balance Remaining In Line Item For 2005
Community Maintenance			
Monument Lights	\$5,000.00	\$0.00	\$5,000.00
Tennis Court (new net)	\$500.00	\$219.27	\$280.73
Tree Replacement	\$1,000.00	\$0.00	\$1,000.00
Weeding/mulch (Tot lots, tennis, monument)	\$2,000.00	\$750.00	\$1,250.00
Tot lot equipment maintenance	\$0.00	\$50.00	-\$50.00
Subtotal	\$8,500.00	\$1,019.27	\$7,480.73
Community Activities			
Dumpster	\$1,000.00	\$0.00	\$1,000.00
Summer block party	\$200.00	\$0.00	\$200.00
Fall activity	\$100.00	\$0.00	\$100.00
Plants for new homeowners	\$125.00	\$62.86	\$62.14
Yard sale advertisting	\$100.00	\$35.00	\$65.00
Subtotal	\$1,525.00	\$97.86	\$1,427.14
Business costs			
Accountant	\$150.00	\$125.00	\$25.00
Taxes	\$70.00	\$0.00	\$70.00
Web Site	\$250.00	\$248.83	\$1.17
Insurance	\$220.00	\$956.00	-\$736.00
Lawyer	\$0.00	\$322.34	-\$322.34
General Meeting Room & Food	\$200.00	\$216.65	-\$16.65
Checking account fees	\$12.00	\$0.00	\$12.00
PO Box	\$76.00	\$76.00	\$0.00
Office Supplies	\$250.00	\$118.06	\$131.94
Subtotal	\$1,228.00	\$2,062.88	-\$834.88
Grand Total	\$11,253.00	\$3,180.01	\$8,072.99
Checking account balance	\$7,469.13		
Savings account balance	\$1,642.37		
Total available now	\$9,111.50		
CD balance available in July	\$11,680.69		
Dues outstanding	\$164.60		
Grand Total	\$20,956.79		