

## **2006 in Review, Mark Wright Open Space Vice-Chair**

We started the year with a new landscaper, Valley Crest. Early indications were positive but as the year wore on we found they were unresponsive and not at all proactive. For 2007 we will be returning to the landscape contractor we used in 2005, Blade Runners. Blade runners were more expensive than Valley Crest but as we all know you get what you pay for. We now have a 4-year contract with Blade Runners and the Open Space committee (OSC) is confident that Blade Runners will do a great job with our common open space.

After continued lobbying with the county, the Storm Water Management Ponds (SWMP) in our community were reviewed and many improvements were made at no cost to the HOA. Some of these improvements, such as the security bars, were for the safety of our children who have been using these structures as play forts. In addition the county cleared silt, created drainage channels and added further rip-rap. This will improve overall aesthetics; drainage; and most importantly remove pooling that made these areas susceptible to mosquito breeding. Please continue to report any issues to both the OSC and the county ([stormwater@loudoun.gov](mailto:stormwater@loudoun.gov)).

Other good news was the Milky Spore treatment performed in May which helps to prevent the emergence of Japanese Beetles. The common grounds were treated and 150 residents also had their lots treated. We had a very light year with Japanese Beetles, to some extent this was due to the dry 2005 but we also believe the treatment played a major role. The treatment will continue to work for years to come..... anyone that did not treat their lots is encouraged to purchase the Milky Spore from a local nursery.

The 2005 dry summer/fall took its toll on the shrubs and trees in our community. We lost many mature trees, which were removed early summer. Unfortunately we had insufficient funds available to replace all that was lost. Some replacements were performed in the fall with concentration was on high profile areas. 2006 was equally dry and we anticipate we will lose more of our shrubs and trees this year. Again with the allocated 2007 OSC budget it is unlikely we will be able to replace everything, and again concentration will likely be on high profile areas so please understand if we are unable to replace shrubs or trees in your immediate vicinity.

Some other projects undertaken was the installation of new benches in Sprucgrove Square, improvements to the Sprucegrove Tot Lot surroundings, reseeding of steep slopes behind Glen Robin Terrace and along Susan Leslie Drive, improvements to the Courts sign planting, Fire Lane and Road striping, installation of No Trespass signs in our recreation areas and the OSC worked with our Events committee on the Community Clean Up.

Sadly we also saw damage in our community due to inappropriate use or vandalism. This included the smashing the lights for the Ridges entrance sign, setting on fire a trash can at the Ridges main Tot Lot, the burning of a Perspex canopy on the Ridges main Tot Lot and extensive damage to the Courts main Tot Lot. This obviously has not only a fiscal cost to our community which either means planned improvements cannot be done or increases to our HOA dues. But also it will have an impact on the value of our homes as who wants to live in a community, which continuously appears in the county crime statistics. Please be vigilant and call the Sheriff's office if you see anyone damaging our community and also talk to your children to ensure they respect the facilities in our community and they only use the facilities that are age appropriate.

Looking forward to this year the OSC has a number of projects underway, this include; replacement of the Courts main Tot Lot (April), installation of stop signs in some on the Town Home areas; replacement of the bench at the Susan Leslie Memorial; more seeding and tree replacements (fall).

This will be my last article as an OSC member as I will be taking a seat on our BOT. The OSC is now down to just two active members. Please consider volunteering and helping the OSC in keeping our community beautiful.

## **Open Space Committee 2006 accomplishments**

With the cooperation and assistance of the BOT and PMP:

New Landscape company

Storm water retention pond improvements at all community storm water retention ponds

Milky spores application across community

Removal of dead trees and shrubs in community

Addition of new trees and plantings to include improvements to the Courts sign planting

Replacement of benches in Sprucegrove Square with two commercial grade benches

Reseeding of Steep slopes in two areas of the community

Fire Lane and parking lot striping

Installation of No Trespass signs in our recreation areas

Cooperative work with and the Community Events committee on the Community Clean Up

Repair of damaged play set at the large Ridges play ground

Coordination with Loudoun County Sanitation Authority to repaint community fire hydrants. We are first on their list of fire hydrants to be repainted in 2007.

Cooperative discussions with developer of commercial lot adjacent to the Community center

Planning and approval for new playground equipment at the large Courts playground