

Lake Roland & Robert E. Lee Park The Dawn of a New Day

By Jeffrey Budnitz

I have frequently been asked by members of the community, "What has the Ruxton-Riderwood-Lake Roland Area Improvement Association done for me and my family?" Well, let me give you an example that goes a long way to answering that seemingly simple yet complex question.

Robert E. Lee Park and Lake Roland are often referred to as the 'hidden jewels' of our community. The Park represents 453 acres of wooded park land with the lake at its heart. Lake Roland is an approximately 100 acre man-made lake created by damming the Jones Falls in 1861 to serve as one of the first municipal water supplies for Baltimore City. The City stopped using the lake as a source of drinking water in approximately 1915.

One of the most significant complexities that has plagued the area for decades has been the status of the lake being a reservoir that no longer provides potable drinking water. Further compounding the problem is that the Park and Lake Roland, Baltimore City-owned assets, are located in Baltimore County. It is understandably difficult for Baltimore City Parks and Recreation, an agency that has significant economic pressure placed on it regarding the assets that it manages, to justify allocating resources to an asset located in Baltimore County. As a result, Robert E. Lee Park and Lake Roland, in essence, have been relegated to second class status.

In 2000, RRLRAIA's Robert E. Lee Park Committee established an initiative and agenda for the long term rehabilitation and stewardship of the Park and Lake Roland. The Committee, building on the significant works of another organization, the

Robert E. Lee Conservancy, began to assess what had worked and what had failed regarding previous Park-based initiatives. The primary objective chosen was to restore the Park to its former glory—a place everyone in the community could enjoy. In addition, we focused on the replacement of the pedestrian bridge, significant capital maintenance, beautification initiatives, general Park restoration, and environmental remediation, to name a few. In 2001 RRLRAIA developed a Community Plan, which was adopted as part of the Baltimore County Master Plan, in which many key Park-related issues were incorporated.

As a strategy, the Committee decided to take a three-pronged approach. Initially we would focus on working with Baltimore City, then Baltimore County, and finally with the State of Maryland. The long-term outcome we hoped for was a new custodian for the Park.

In August 2003, the Park Committee invited key individuals from the Baltimore City Department of Recreation and Parks, Roland Park Civic League, Robert E. Lee Park Conservancy,

Mount Washington Association, and Baltimore County Police for a roundtable discussion on a broad range of issues impacting the Park. The issues ranged from environmental erosion, criminal activity in the Park, the state of existing structures and the capital improvements required to restore them, off-leash dog issues ranging from community-driven complaints to potential health and environmental



Alex Shchetinkin and his dog, Jack, cross the pedestrian bridge in Robert E. Lee Park that has been closed because of structural damage. Sun photo by Lloyd Fox / July 22, 2008

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President's Letter

Dear Neighbors:

I am pleased to announce that we have begun the major task of revising the 2001 RRLRAIA Community Plan. This living document was created by the Association almost ten years ago and was adopted by the County Council into the County Master Plan in 2001. It is referenced by County elected officials and staff, the development community, the RRLRAIA Board, and members of our community as a guide for decision making.

We have retained the services of Al Barry, principal of AB Associates, a comprehensive land planning consulting firm, to lend his considerable expertise and assist us through the revision process. Likely topics include traffic, public safety, education, environmental issues, and community revitalization. We anticipate a targeted focus on the Falls Road corridor as we usher in the era of County responsibility for Robert E. Lee Park and envision a revitalized Falls Road commercial corridor. If you are interested in serving on a committee that will investigate issues around each of these topics, please contact the RRLRAIA office. You are also invited to our September Annual Meeting which will update the community on our efforts towards this complex and comprehensive task.

I encourage you to read this newsletter, especially the wonderful article about Robert E. Lee Park. The Board is pleased that the efforts of so many energetic community members culminated in the transfer of responsibilities for the Park from Baltimore City to Baltimore County. Their efforts will allow us to enjoy a safer and more attractive Park in the future. We look for it to become the jewel of our community as it had once been long ago.

I also encourage you to read the article about the West Towson Elementary School. As you may know, RRLRAIA supported an effort by neighbors of the proposed school to suspend construction until a legal determination could be made about the propriety of the School Board's actions during planning for this school. Specifically, the legal action sought to redress a precedent-

setting lack of community input during the site selection phase of this project. As an organization, we have long supported other neighborhood efforts to enforce public procedural standards. Knowing the intensity of feelings about the new school, the RRLRAIA Board solicited members for their opinions. More than 35% of members responded and the results indicated that two thirds of the respondents favored supporting the legal action.

However, I want to be certain that all our members understand that the subsequent support extended by the Association for the plaintiffs should not be confused with negative sentiment on this organization's behalf toward the new school. We are in complete agreement that alleviating the overcrowding which plagues the Towson elementary schools is a top priority. Baltimore County Circuit Court Judge Michael Finifter ruled that the plaintiffs had not sufficiently proven "irreparable harm" by the construction of the new school. Bulldozers and pile drivers arrived at the Charles Street site shortly after. We were saddened that an opportunity to hold the School Board accountable for its own policies was lost. We will now support every effort to hold the School Board to its offer for "...a conversation about how we can have a good relationship..." with the neighbors. We also will look forward to creating and supporting a community school of the highest caliber.

While the Community Plan, the Park, and the West Towson School have consumed many of our resources this spring, we have also been working on other continuing efforts. Members participated in Project Clean Stream with the Jones Falls Watershed Association in April. We meet regularly for requests from residents about zoning and design reviews. We continue to actively support efforts that have a positive and lasting impact on all of our community. If you would like to contribute to our efforts, especially helping with one of the Community Plan committees, please call our office to volunteer.

Best Regards,
Kathy Frederick Palencar

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Hello Mr. Fox

By Dottie Dowling

Hello! Allow me to introduce myself. I am your neighbor, the red fox, but you will never meet me while shopping at Graul's! After all, I am a wild animal that forages for my food in the woods. I eat insects, birds, mice, snakes, rabbits, nuts, berries, and fruit. I will not eat you! In fact, I'd like to take this opportunity to debunk many of the myths associated with my life and habits.

It seems there are three things that you fear most about me, none of which are true. One is that I will attack you, your family, or your pets. A second is that I will give you rabies or other diseases and the third is that I like to kill for the sport of it.

Let me begin with the belief that I will attack. As a general rule, I do not like humans, a dislike I have acquired through the ages. I have been running for my dear life from fox hunters for a very long time. Also I learned to fear being trapped for my lovely fur coat. For these reasons I have a long and abiding distrust of adult humans. I also avoid children and have no interest in household pets. They both frighten me!

As to the second fear, very few red foxes like me carry the rabies virus. Once we are infected we are felled by pain and die within days. The Department of Natural Resources reports that less than 5% of the fox population in Maryland is infected at any one time. The Center for Disease Control in Atlanta states that very few people in the United States become infected with rabies anymore. Furthermore, most victims are bitten by rabid bats not foxes.

I also want to assure you that rarely would I be the source of a mange infection for your pets. If I am afflicted by mange, I generally retreat to my den and die within three to four months. This skin parasite which causes me to rub off all my fur and bite myself often leads to infections that make me too weak to care about food. If you leave food outside for your pets, I might in my weakened state be tempted to steal that rather than have to hunt. I might drop parasites or their eggs near the food that could infect your pet. Furthermore, if I am infected with rabies, I could contaminate the pet food with my saliva and infect your pet. I strongly recommend that you feed your pets inside.

Thirdly, I have already told you of what my diet consists. I do not kill for anything but dinner. Most zoologists agree that I kill what I need and take uneaten kill off to a safe place for a future meal. Sometimes I am interrupted during a hunt and will leave the remaining carnage to run for cover. This may lead you to believe that I kill for pleasure. But I do not.



Cute, but not a good idea.
Photos courtesy Dottie Dowling

I am primarily a nocturnal animal who stalks my prey for dinner around twilight. In fact, most of my waking hours are at night. That is why you might hear me "screaming" outside your window some nights. I am communicating with my fellow foxes—perhaps even with a foxy lady or two! I assure you, the noises do not mean I am stalking your pets.

Although my habitat has changed as development has diminished my hunting grounds, I manage quite well on my own. For the reasons stated above, you should not feed me. Some friends leave treats for me in order to get great photographs. As you can see, I humor them and allow this to go on. Here I am stealing the dog biscuit left by

the friend who ghost-wrote this article for me. She is unusual but you should not follow her example. In fact, the Department of Natural Resources recommends that you avoid contact with all wild animals. However, through her kind efforts I hope you have learned about me and will find me to be just another neighbor among many here in Ruxton, Riderwood and the Lake Roland area. Like most, I have some good points and some bad.



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“Summertime and the Livin’ Is Easy”...?

by Frances Horich

As summer begins in earnest, new things happen in the garden daily...and all you have to do is keep up. Who’s winning at your house—the weeds or the gardener? My practice is to tour the place regularly and pull the gross offenders as I go. I don’t mean monthly, because then you’re talking about a whole day bent over. Every day, a quick survey will allow you to take care of it without committing huge blocks of time. At the same time, you can be cutting some stems for a vase inside. Note I didn’t say flowers. Often a branch with wonderful leaves is ornamental in and of itself.

That leads me to early summer job #1. If any of your spring flowering shrubs are in need of a haircut, now’s the time. Prune as soon as a shrub is finished blooming unless its blooming period is after mid July. Those plants are best pruned in late winter or early spring. The reason being that anytime you cut a stem, the plant is called to put out new growth. If that happens too late in the growing season to allow it to harden off before frost, you could



have winter kill. You also don’t want to risk cutting off flowers on plants that bloom on second year wood. How do you prune? Start at ground level and remove no more than a third of the plant. This will open it up and allow new growth from the bottom. If after you’ve done that, there are still branches that offend,

take them back to a crotch and make sure you don’t leave stubs that beckon to insects and diseases.

Plants heal themselves when cut, but you need to help them do it by cutting in the right place. Always keep in mind the natural outline and growth habit of your shrub and cut so that the branches grow away from the center—the more interior space and light, the better!

How about planting and harvesting? Don’t let the vegetables in your garden get too big. The more you harvest, the more you’ll get. For the vegetable garden, an occasional (monthly) bit of fertilizer will be appreciated. When a crop is finished, fill that spot with something for fall, like broccoli. And now to my favorite treat of summer: Zinnias. Sow the seeds on the Fourth of

July and you will have a magnificent display from August to frost and they won’t look horrible with mildew like the ones that went into the ground in May.

So you’ve got the weeding, pruning, harvesting, and planting taken care of. What’s next? Enjoying the fruit of your labors and tinkering. Don’t hesitate to move things around and fill in holes, maybe with some annuals on sale at the local nursery. The main thing is to remember you have to provide adequate water especially in the heat of summer—not just for the plants, but for you too!

Frances V. Horich, a landscape designer and horticulturist since 1982, designs gardens for clients throughout the Baltimore area. She can be contacted at fvhorich@aol.com or 410-925-9383.



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Four Winds Couple Wins Towson Azalea House Award

Rick and Patty Link’s South Wind Road home was chosen as the 2009 Towson Azalea House by the Towson Gardens Day committee. The prize was given at Towson Gardens Day, this year held on April 23rd. The Links have lived in Four Winds since 1996 when they bought the house from the Irvin family, owners of TDH Nurseries, who had planted the azaleas over the years since they bought the house in the fifties. According to Gwen Vaughan, co-chair of the committee, the Links’ “excellent care and skillful pruning...have made these azaleas especially light and fluffy in appearance.” Azaleas are the official flower of Towson.



We Went to a Garden Party...

Blakehurst residents invited neighbors and friends to a garden party in June at the garden area behind the complex. According to Chief Gardener Bob Blount, residents may choose one of the plots—ranging in size from 4' x 6' to 8' x 12'—and are free to plant what they wish. And what glorious gardens! Some were filled with tomato plants, raspberries, squash and lettuce while others contained an abundance of flowers. The area is entirely fenced to keep hungry deer at bay.

Resident Jinny Weiss enjoys raising vegetables and fruit, especially berries, from which she makes her famous pies. Garden clubber and flower judge Annette Richter raises flowers for her gorgeous and imaginative floral arrangements. Neighbors Loretta & Steve Waite and several Sisters from the Mission Helpers of the Sacred Heart were among the RRLRAIA neighbors enjoying the refreshments and camaraderie provided by Blakehurst owners, many of whom are former residents of neighborhoods in the greater Riderwood, Lake Roland and Ruxton area.



Ellen Perry and Jinny Weiss chat at Blakehurst garden party.



Head Gardener Bob Blount surveys the scene.



Loretta & Steve Waite talk with Annette Richter in the garden.

Photos courtesy
Nancy Worder Horst

Happenings in Towson

This summer, be sure to enjoy these fun family events:

Feet on the Street is a community block party held every Friday night from 6:00 to 9:30 p.m. on Allegheny Avenue just west of York Road. Bring your lawn chairs, friends and family, and enjoy live music, food, children's activities, beer, and wine. Parking is free.

Summer Evening Concert with Mood Swings Big Band is a great outdoor event happening at Hampton Mansion on July 18 from 5:00 to 9:00 p.m. Again, bring your lawn chairs. The Hampton Mansion is at 535 Hampton Lane, Towson.

Towson's Farmers' Market - Open every Thursday from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. through November 19th on Allegheny Avenue between Washington and York, the Towson Farmers' Market has great vegetables and fruit, as well as flowers, bakery items, and other homemade goodies.

The Kenilworth Farmers' Market is open late afternoon Tuesdays from 3:30 to 6:30 p.m. through mid-October. This market features fresh, local produce, Fire Fly Farms goat cheese, Atwater's breads, annuals and perennials, vegetable transplants, fruit, beef, cut flowers, and certified organic vegetables. The market is located on Kenilworth Drive at the Shops at Kenilworth.

Greenspring Station Farmers' Market—Every Saturday from 2:00 to 5:30 p.m. More than 20 local vendors selling fresh produce, gourmet items, breads, etc.

The Towson Chamber of Commerce sponsors the Farmers' Market, Feet on the Street and Summer Evening with Mood Swings. For a schedule of bands and other events, contact the Towson Chamber at info@towsonchamber.com or 410-825-1144 or visit their website: <http://www.towsonchamber.com>.

Pet Laws

- Dogs and cats must be walked on a leash when they are off the owner's property.
- Dogs and cats over three months of age must be vaccinated against rabies.
- Dogs and cats must be licensed at four months of age. New pets and all animals moving into Baltimore County must be licensed within thirty days. (Call 410-887-3630 for additional information)
- It is a violation of the law to allow dogs to bark excessively.
- If an animal bites someone, the owner and the bite victim must report the injury to the Police and Health Departments. You are responsible if your pet bites or injures another person or animal, or menaces people in the community.
- Owners are responsible for the timely removal of pet waste on public and private property.
- Violations of these animal laws may be subject to fines of \$25 for the first offense and \$100 for repeated offenses.

Source: Baltimore County Code, Animal Laws, Article 12
<http://www.baltimorecountymd.gov/Agencies/health/animalcontrol/index.html>

Stream Cleanup Most Successful Yet!

Thanks to our dedicated volunteers

By Helga Morrow and Susan Nestler

Project Clean Stream—what an appropriate name to attach to this rewarding day! On April 4th, 35 volunteers turned up to clean the Jones Falls and its tributaries that run along Falls Road and into Robert E. Lee Park.

Mothers, fathers, young children, adolescents, adults, company employees and RRLRAIA board members, along with a few neighbors, enthusiastically grabbed large plastic bags and gloves. They commenced a cleanup that resulted in the collection of 92 bags full of trash and also countless other dumped items such as three propane tanks, a bathroom sink, a refrigerator door, numerous tires, paint cans, buckets, car parts, and a long garden hose.

The 35 volunteers came from all parts of the county and the city to share in their committed effort to help save the Bay and the Jones Falls Watershed. It is rewarding for those of us who have sustained this effort over the years to realize that an increasing number of people are willing to give up their precious free time on the weekend to help the Bay recover.

Another group of ten volunteers picked up trash on the banks of Roland Run and the surrounding area from Thornton Ridge Road to Joppa Road. Because we have been doing this for so many years, most of what we picked up was food packaging, bags, cans, and other



Top left: Falls Road volunteers before beginning their arduous task. Top right: Dr. Richard Morrow, Falls Road Site Co-Captain handing out plastic bags to a group of volunteers. Center: Trash collection is displayed at corner of Falls and Old Pimlico roads. Bottom left: Oh so many alcohol bottles tossed into the thickets. Bottom right: A brave volunteer cleaning the ravine along Old Pimlico Road.

Photos courtesy Nettie Washburn



containers. The biggest item was a hubcap. Much of the trash was on the banks of the stream in front of the Royal Farm Store. Our group was very enthusiastic and all agreed to work again next year. It was a lot of fun. Instant gratification! The area looked so nice and green when we finished!

We have a long way to go yet, but the concern is there, the movement is growing, youngsters are participating and hopefully in the future the yearly clean-up will turn into a mass movement in which all will participate. See you all next year.



Going Buggy

Q. What would Maryland be in summer without mosquitoes?

A. The "Land of Pleasant Living!"

Or, as Mark Twain opined about mosquitoes: "Two could whip a dog and four could hold down a man."

The wet spring we've had may be a mixed blessing. While the drought is now a memory, the rains have left us with puddles and soggy wet areas that, combined with warm weather, "create perfect conditions for a sizeable mosquito population," according to the Maryland Department of Agriculture.

Mosquitoes are well known for the role they play as a vector in the transmission of diseases such as malaria, yellow fever and dengue fever. With the invasion of tiger mosquitoes into Maryland, West Nile virus has also become a concern. And our pets are susceptible to mosquito-borne heartworm disease.

We can be proactive in protecting our families—and our pets—from these pests. You can help reduce the number of mosquitoes by remembering some basic facts:

- Mosquitoes require standing water to breed (as little as a teaspoon!)
- Most mosquitoes don't fly far from breeding to feeding.
- Mosquito larvae can thrive in any container capable of holding water.
- Mosquito development requires that water be standing/stagnant for a week.

Be vigilant about eliminating standing water because mosquitoes that bite you are probably coming from nearby.

With these facts in mind, consider a weekly check of your property to eliminate mosquito breeding sites.

Continued on page 9

Membership

We are here for you on an ongoing basis, working to maintain and improve our community. Your membership dues entitle you to the benefits of these efforts. You will also receive our membership directory, informative newsletters, *emailed crime alerts and other important announcements, and invitations to special neighborhood events such as the upcoming Annual Meeting, Dumpster Day and the annual Holiday Party in the Woods.

Please make an investment in your community and mail your dues to: RRLRAIA, P. O. Box 204, Riderwood, MD 21139.

*If you are a member and do not currently receive our email messages, please send an email to rrlraia@comcast.net and type "Add to Email List" in the subject line.

(We do not share our email addresses or publish them in the directory without permission.)

Types of Mosquitoes

The most common type of mosquito in our area is *Culex pipiens*, a known transmitter of West Nile Virus. *Culex pipiens* is usually active in the dawn and dusk hours, and is typically less active during the day. The flight range of *Culex pipiens* is less than a mile.

The Asian Tiger mosquito (*Aedes albopictus*), a non-native mosquito, has become a significant pest in our area and is also a vector for West Nile virus. You can easily recognize an Asian Tiger mosquito—it is black and white, smaller than other mosquitoes, has black and white banding on the legs and abdomen, and a white "racing stripe" down the back of the head and thorax. The Asian Tiger is usually out during the day. It is a vicious biter, a vigorous breeder and tends to fly low where it bites children and the legs and ankles of adults.

Asian Tigers breed ONLY in small containers: cans, bottles, bottle caps, children's toys, wading pools, trash cups, old tires, anything that can hold as little as a teaspoon of water. Since large-scale spraying is not effective against Asian Tiger mosquitoes, the only way to be rid of them is by eliminating their breeding places. Asian Tigers are extremely weak flyers with a range of only about 50 feet. If you have Asian Tigers look carefully around your property or your adjacent neighbors' property for their source.

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Baltimore County Police Crime Tips for Summer

- **Keep your doors locked at all times (front, back, basement, and side doors)**—even when you are just working in the yard! One out of five burglaries in the County is through unlocked doors or windows.
- **Lock garage and tool shed doors** after you have finished yard work. If your gardens are a distance from the house, lock them while you work.
- **Always lock the windows** when you leave the house. (Burglars recently entered several Ruxton homes through open windows, one on the second floor.)
- **Roll up windows, close sun roofs, and lock the doors of your vehicles.** Thieves are tempted by the contents of your car. Worse yet, they will steal the vehicle. Better a hot car than a missing one!
- **Do not leave bicycles, dirt bikes, scooters or other expensive toys** out. Some thieves work with trucks that look as though they are legitimately picking up articles donated for charity. In fact they are stealing bikes and lawn equipment (BCP suggest that bicycle owners engrave bikes).
- **Be a good neighbor.** If you see people doing something suspicious in your neighborhood, **call 911**. You don't need to provide your name. The Police will quickly dispatch a cruiser to check out the situation.
- **Beware of deception burglars.** Working in teams, they approach the victim posing as a legitimate utility worker, contractor, salesman, or even a friend of a neighbor. While one person distracts the victim, another moves through the house searching for valuables. Often the victim isn't aware of these thefts until hours later when the thieves are long gone. Be alert!
- **Beware of other burglary schemes.** Always ask for identification from anyone wanting to enter your property or home for an inspection. Professional contractors rarely solicit door to door. If you need work performed, the RRLRAIA office maintains a list of contractors who have been referred by other members.

Be safe. Enjoy a burglary-free summer!

For further information visit www.baltimorecountymd.gov/Agencies/police/media/crimeprevention_homes.html



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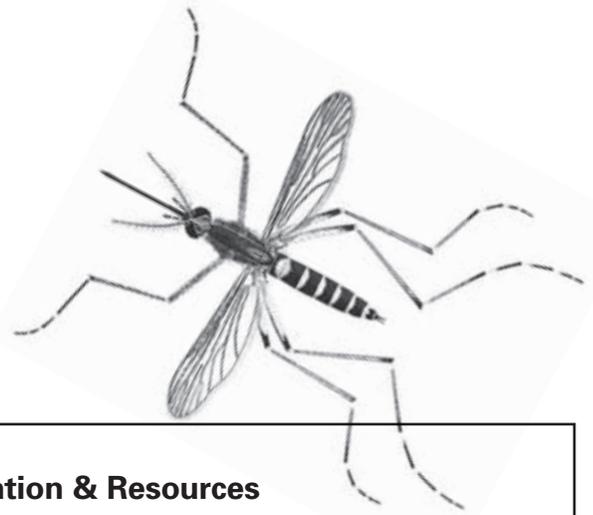
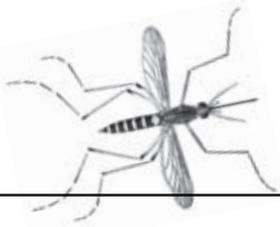
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Tips to Rid Your Community of Mosquito Breeding Sites

- Turn over or drill holes in the bottoms of trash cans and don't leave lids lying upside down.
- Dump bird baths or flush weekly with fresh water.
- Empty potted plant saucers, outdoor pet bowls, and children's toys that can accumulate water.
- Check for water trapped in tarps used to cover pools, sandboxes, and woodpiles.
- Clean rain gutters to allow water to flow freely.
- Dispose of empty beverage containers, plastic wrappers, discarded toys, etc.
- Keep outdoor grills covered and close vents.
- Fix dripping outside water faucets and window air conditioners to prevent water from puddling.
- Remove old tires or drill drainage holes in tires used for playground equipment.
- Turn plastic wading pools upside down when not in use or store them inside.
- Check ponds, tree holes, and water-holding low areas for mosquito larvae.
- Turn wheelbarrows upside down.
- Fill in depressions under decks, porches or outbuildings.
- Replace flexible plastic pipe with smooth pipe; the grooves can hold enough water for mosquitoes to breed.
- Screen sump pumps and outside drains.
- In the garden, use porous landscape cloth instead of plastic to prevent weeds.
- Cut down and regularly mow bamboo stumps so they can't hold water.
- Cap open chain link or plastic fence posts.
- Check construction sites/do-it-yourself improvements to ensure that proper backfilling and grading prevent drainage problems.
- Store plastic/metal pipes/plumbing supplies with elbows pointed down, not up.
- Inspect flat roofs for pooling water.
- Roadside ditches containing stagnant water can produce large numbers of mosquitoes. Report such conditions to a mosquito control office.

Information from: Maryland Departments of Agriculture and Health & Mental Hygiene; Centers for Disease Control & Prevention; Baltimore County; and Montgomery County.

Information & Resources

- 24 Hour Hotline—1-866-866-2769 provides recorded informational messages.
- Mosquito Control Insecticides—Information regarding specific mosquito control insecticides, including a label and material safety data sheet (MSDS) for each product, and ways to reduce exposure to an insecticide being applied is available online from the Maryland Department of Agriculture (http://www.mda.state.md.us/plants-pests/mosquito_control/index.php).
- If you have concerns/complaints about standing or stagnant water in owner-occupied residences, recreational areas or large commercial sites contact the Department of Environmental Protection & Resource Management (DEPRM), deprm@baltimorecountymd.gov or 410-887-4065 (website: www.baltimorecountymd.gov/go/deprm). For residential rental property contact County Code Inspection & Enforcement, pdenforce@baltimorecountymd.gov, 410-887-8099 or 3351 (website: www.baltimorecountymd.gov/Agencies/permits/pdmcdine.html).

West Nile Virus Information/Resources:

- Department of Health & Mental Hygiene (DHMH)—www.edcp.org/html/west_nile.html
- Centers for Disease Control & Prevention (CDC) <http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dvbid/westnile/>
- Maryland Department of Agriculture (MDA)—<http://www.mda.state.md.us/plants-pests/mosquito>

Notary Service Available

Complimentary notary service is available to RRRRIA members at the Association's office. Just stop by if the flag is out or call 410-494-7757 to make an appointment.

Delightful Devon Hill

By Bliss McCord

Taking the shortcut to Lake Falls Village from Charles Street, I pass Boys' Latin and start down the hill. About half way down, something on the left catches my eye. There is something—some dark buildings—winking past the trunks of the evergreen veil obscuring my view. My foot taps the brake pedal. They are not sinister. They beckon to me with the gentleness of a whispered secret from the past.

The community of Devon Hill was once an estate its first owners called "Idlemont." The house was the 19th century summer home of the James O'Connor family and there were numerous employees and outbuildings integral to its upkeep. There were



Windy Gates nearly 100 years ago.
Photo provided by Martin Azola

stables, a carriage house, housing for domestics, a maintenance shop, springhouses (the site was blessed with a natural water source), and a sewage system. There was also a tenant farmer.

In 1881, railroad and investment executive Joseph W. Jenkins, who was reported to have made and lost fortunes, purchased the property from the O'Connor family for \$13,000. By the late 1880s, he had moved his wife and children out to the country and by 1920, the additions and renovations they had made to the house coalesced into the grand mansion we recognize today. The shingled Queen Anne-style country house, which they renamed "Windy Gates," was the centerpiece of an estate that, in its heyday, lolled down the rolling hills stretching along Lake Avenue from Roland Avenue to Falls Road. At the westernmost end loomed what is still known to locals as "Cow Hill." Such was the canvas upon which the Boston landscape firm Olmsted Brothers (as in Frederick Law Olmsted, creator of Central Park and father of American landscape architecture) created formal English-style gardens, a pond, and gazebo in the 1890s. This manicured setting, along with anecdotal tales of lavish parties and classical concerts, suggests the ease of a bygone time when an invitation to a house party at Windy Gates might promise boating on the pond, croquet, and a refreshing afternoon nap in preparation for a merry evening.

Those times are best captured today by fading photographs, but for five generations of Jenkins progeny (including Coopers and Whedbees), life was good at Windy Gates.

The estate, though certainly the central gem, was actually part of a jeweled necklace of five properties that for many years comprised a family compound of 200 acres. First, Joseph Jenkins purchased "Edgewood" (911 W. Lake) for Eliza and Ellen, his two unmarried sisters. This is the large piece of property now owned by the Josephite Fathers just east of Devon Hill. Around 1900, Jenkins' brother, Michael, bought an old farmhouse not far from Windy Gates (822 W. Lake) and named it "Llewellyn." In the early 1920s, he hired respected Baltimore architect Lawrence Fowler to alter its Victorian style. Michael never had children but Joseph did, thirteen in fact, but only four survived to maturity. His daughter, Elenor, married James Simpson Whedbee and they moved into Edgewood. Louisa married John Crossan Cooper in 1900 and they lived at Llewellyn until the 1940s, when they purchased Windy Gates. In 1928, son Ernest Michael Jenkins built another Lawrence Fowler house, 907 W. Lake Avenue, and Thomas Courtney Jenkins purchased "Denbigh" (also called "Dembeigh") at 912 W. Lake.

There are relatives who still recall playing at Windy Gates. In those days, there was reportedly a playhouse complete with a pulley system that ferried sandwiches from the main house to children having too much fun to stop their play. The basement floor was as slick as ice and made a great skating rink on rainy days. Playing outdoors was as natural as sleeping. But sadly,

Continued on page 11

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Delightful Devon Hill

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all things seem to have a natural lifespan and slowly, as time went on, things began to change. The first house to leave family ownership was Denbigh, which was sold in 1947. Next, the Josephite Fathers bought Edgewood for its aging and ailing priests in 1962. Boys' Latin School purchased Llewellyn about the same time and then later acquired 907 W. Lake Avenue in 1970. Finally, only Windy Gates remained.

John Crossnan Cooper died in 1980 and as the maintenance of the estate had become increasingly burdensome, his heirs came to the difficult conclusion that it was time to sell Windy Gates. The demise of a grand old house and the time and place it represented can be a sorrowful affair and the owners made it clear that it was important to them that the house and property be treated with the respect one would accord any aging relative who has had a full life. At the same time, there was a movement in the world of residential development toward the protection of valuable old houses while finding new uses for them. Segmenting important major houses into condominiums to make them more affordable was being done in both England and America. The looming alternative, the common practice of razing and replacement with modern and often characterless subdivisions, may have been financially preferable to some buyers, but it clearly was not what the owners wanted. Then they hit upon a solution. They would offer the property to developers in a winner-take-all contest. The challenge was simple: for a fixed sales price, the developer presenting the most inspired and pleasing plan would be selected as the next owner of Windy Gates.

Along came Baltimore developer Martin P. Azola, with his background in historic restoration (Rockland Village) and passion for preservation. Over time and in consultation with the owners and the architectural firm Peterson and Brickbauer, an agreement was reached. In 1983, ownership of the property at 910 Lake Avenue passed to Devon Hill Limited Partnership (builder/developer Azola and three other partners) for \$800,000.

In most cases, this event would have relegated Windy Gates to the list of unique and historical properties allowed to pass into memory. But Azola remained true to his word. Dividing the 100+-year-old house into five condominium apartments, he managed to bring it up to modern standards while maintaining its original character and unique architectural features. He looked to the local landscape for clues for a name for the development. Cow Hill hardly sounded refined but it gave him an idea. He began to research breeds of cattle for inspiration. Guernsey? Holstein? He finally stumbled upon Devon. It had the ring of a British manor house – perfect.



A summer's day paddle on the pond.
Photo provided by Martin Azola

Today, apartments in Devon House, as it is now known, are as varied as the house itself. Depending on the apartment, one might find a working marble fireplace, one with an inglenook (little seats flanking the hearth), or elaborate carvings or tile, an unusual window, wall-to-wall bookcases with leaded glass, or elaborate interior paneling and molding. All have 10' ceilings, hardwood floors, and restored marble baths, all have views of the Jones Falls Valley and the grounds restored by Azola—with stone staircases, formal terraced gardens and paths, and a screened and shuttered gazebo—and all sit just

inside the Baltimore County boundary, a significant property tax advantage.

The second part of Azola's plan involved the construction of three other buildings for additional condo sales. These echo

Continued on page 13

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West Towson Elementary School Update

Ground has been broken for West Towson Elementary School on N. Charles Street and is on track to open in August 2010 according to Kara Calder, a school district spokeswoman.

Members of the RRLRAIA board have spent hundreds of hours studying, discussing, and researching issues relating to this school. There is no question that additional seats are needed to relieve overcrowding, particularly at Rodgers Forge Elementary School. There is, however, debate about whether the current site, which already houses the Ridge Ruxton School, is the best solution. We have been frustrated by the lack of process followed by Baltimore County Public Schools (BCPS) and in our year-long effort to communicate with school officials.

In April, several members whose homes are adjacent to the school site filed a legal complaint against BCPS and requested a donation from RRLRAIA. Knowing that passions are high on each side of this issue, we polled our entire membership to clarify community sentiment before making our decision. Over 35% of our members responded. The text of the May 1st letter and the results appear to the right.

Based on these results, the board voted to donate \$2,500 towards the plaintiffs' legal fees with the conditions that RRLRAIA have input into any settlement discussions and that the funds be reimbursed if damages are recovered.

We want to reiterate that we are not opposed to a new school. We are, however, extremely concerned about the lack of process. Even at this late stage, we have not had any conversations with school officials to discuss routine matters normally associated with a construction project. To us, this is a greater policy issue. One member summed it up this way:

"This is a qualified 'yes'. I agree with offering monetary as well as moral support to neighbors who are threatened by incursion that could impact their home values. However, the Association should be aware of two facts of life:

1. Neighborhood residents' first reaction to most change in or adjacent to their community is to assume it will have a negative impact.
2. Governments thrive on precedent. Once they get away with bypassing their own policies for one project, it becomes the precedent upon which future 'shortcuts' are based.

Because number 2 is a larger threat, I agree with providing monetary support for this action."

*(see Winter 2009 and Fall 2008 issues of **Neighborhood NEWS** for previous articles on this issues—rrlraia.org)*

Letter mailed to RRLRAIA Members

You are probably aware that Baltimore County Public Schools (BCPS) is planning to build a second school on the Ridge Ruxton School site on N. Charles Street. For over a year, our board members have been monitoring the need to solve the overcrowding in area elementary schools, the Baltimore County Public School's decision to build, and the legal complaint filed last week by adjacent homeowners. The basis of the lawsuit cites the failure of BCPS to follow its own policies and procedures in reaching its decision to build, and the result is damaging the personal property of our community members. The residents who have filed suit have requested a small amount of financial assistance from RRLRAIA to pursue their case. Before making a decision with regard to that request, we thought it best to survey our members for their input in that decision.

The lack of process by the school board and BCPS, including the avoidance of community input, is the type of issue that RRLRAIA has a long history of working to correct. Although the needs of the children in crowded schools weigh heavily, and is a matter of great importance, the failure of the BCPS to follow required procedures and guidelines in the process of deciding where to place the school, and not taking into consideration the effect of the placement of the school at the Ridge Ruxton site upon the adjoining neighborhood, could have long-term implications for our community. The failure of governmental agencies to follow procedures enacted to protect communities from decisions made without seeking community input or considering the effect of a project upon a community's future, could negatively impact us in the future, when in a non-school context, the county were to ignore the opinions of and effect upon a community with regard to a different project.

We are asking for your feedback on this issue. Please call, email, or return the slip below by May 15 to tell us your position. Please include your name and address so we can verify membership (we will not divulge individual responses).

The results:

- 226 Yes, I'd like you to use RRLRAIA funds to protest the lack of policies and procedures followed by BCPS in addressing the school overcrowding situation.
- 111 No, I don't support the use of RRLRAIA funds for this purpose.
- 22 No opinion



Your House May Be Historic!

If your house is over 50 years old, you may qualify for state and/or county tax credits to fund rehabilitation and repairs to your roof, HVAC, windows or even paint. In addition, if you are considering selling your home, historic tax credits can make a house more affordable for buyers by helping fund historic rehabilitation projects as well as reducing property taxes.

The tax credit program is intended to encourage and facilitate rehabilitation of historic properties, that is, a property either on the Baltimore County Final Landmarks List, individually listed on the National Register of Historic Places, or contributing property located in a National Register or County Historic District.

Both Baltimore County and the State of Maryland offer tax credits for costs incurred to rehabilitate historic properties. Baltimore County's tax credit is 20% of the expenses for eligible rehabilitation work totaling at least \$1,000. Maryland's Heritage Preservation Tax Credit Program provides Maryland income tax credits equal to 20% of the qualified capital costs expended in the rehabilitation of a certified heritage structure.

Interested in learning more? Information on the Baltimore County tax credit is available at http://www.baltimorecountymd.gov/Agencies/planning/historic_preservation or contact Karin Brown, Office of Planning, kebrown@baltimorecountymd.gov, or 410-887-3495. Information on state tax credits can be viewed at <http://www.marylandhistoricaltrust.net/taxcr.html>.

Delightful Devon Hill

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the design and materials of the original and seem to quietly roll across the landscape, dark wood against velvety green, surrounded by a canopy of trees, some of them very old. The effect on a summer's day is one of quiet serenity and gentility. In addition, eight building lots were offered for sale. One featured the original carriage house, one a farmhouse, and one included the old stables, which Azola purchased for his own family and resurrected over the course of the next 20 years. It, like his other projects, pays homage to the past, while residing comfortably in the present. In 1984, Azola's meticulous work was recognized when his company was awarded the grand award for a residential rehabilitation project from the National Remodelers Council of the National Association of Home Builders for his restoration and development of Devon Hill.

Although the way of life at Windy Gates may have passed into memory, the ghosts of those days still gently cling there, around a corner of the old music room or tucked into Cow Hill and they will remain there so long as there are people interested in worlds in which they have never played a part.

The author wishes to thank Mr. Azola for access to his business archives. Information for this article was gathered from newspaper and trade journal articles written at the time of Devon Hill's development.

Jeff's Grilled Romaine Salad

Courtesy of Graul's Market

2 heads romaine hearts
8 tbsp. Terra Medi White Wine Vinegar
8 tbsp. Graul's Signature Extra Virgin Olive Oil
sea salt to taste
fresh cracked pepper to taste

Rinse off the romaine hearts and split them length wise so that you have 4 halves. Sprinkle 2 tbsp. white wine vinegar on each half and a little sea salt and cracked pepper. Allow to rest for 5 minutes (some of the vinegar will run out). Place the romaine halves face down on a hot grill over a medium flame (reserve any extra vinegar that seeped out) and allow to cook for about 5 minutes or until some browning occurs. Flip them to the other side and pour reserved extra vinegar over the hearts, remove from grill and plate. Drizzle each heart with 2 tbsp. Graul's Signature Extra Virgin Olive Oil and a touch of sea salt and cracked pepper. Enjoy.

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Lake Roland & Robert E. Lee Park

continued from page 1

impact, cutting of new trails, and last but not least, individuals who had actually taken up permanent residence in the Park. This approach created a groundswell of interest.

Two important developments resulted from this meeting. First, Baltimore County Police officially accepted law enforcement responsibility and committed to be the first responder if a public safety and/or criminal event occurred within the boundaries of the Park. Second, a joint City/County Parks Department Concept Plan was developed that included a variety of objectives for the Park. These included replacing the pedestrian bridge, erosion control, and remediation of the soil on the peninsula. The remediation request was a direct byproduct of the Baltimore City Health Department's findings of excessively high bacteria levels due to dog excrement, a public health threat to which our organization first alerted them.

When Baltimore City proposed the selling of park lands adjoining Racquet Road, Copper Hill Road and Lakeside Drive for residential development, the Association and the Committee requested that the County rezone all of Robert E. Lee Park to RC7, which would reduce the density of homes permitted from one per acre to one per 25 acres. The request was approved, and the Park is the only property lying within the Baltimore beltway to receive an RC7 zoning designation, which effectively makes development in the Park economically untenable. Councilman Kevin Kamenetz was instrumental in this effort, and he has been a key ally in the Association's efforts to rehabilitate and preserve the Park.

In 2004, based on Baltimore City's unwillingness to invest in the Park, our Committee

turned its focus to Baltimore County. Our initial meeting with Bob Barrett, Director of Baltimore County Department of Recreation and Parks, was rather memorable.

When we posed the idea of Baltimore

County taking over Robert E. Lee Park and Lake Roland, he thought we were kidding. Yet after a series of meetings, Barrett realized the potential of Robert E. Lee Park's becoming Baltimore County's version of New York's Central Park. Our organization cited the example of Fort Smallwood Park, a Baltimore City-owned park located in Anne Arundel County and how that County had been able to establish a long-term lease with Baltimore City, in effect taking over the Park.

Through 2007 and 2008, Barrett shepherded the Park takeover concept through various Baltimore County agencies building

widespread support and culminating in a meeting between Bob Barrett, Councilman Kamenetz, County Administrative Officer Frederick J. Homan and our Park Committee. The long-term outcome of that meeting was Baltimore County Executive Jim Smith's 2009 budget request to the legislature focused on funding for Robert E. Lee Park and Lake Roland. Smith went to Annapolis twice in March of 2009 to formally make his request before both the House and Senate Finance Committees.

Smith requested \$3 million in State funds to address "critically necessary repairs" in the Park infrastructure that would be matched with \$3 million in County funds for a total of \$6 million. The transfer of Robert E. Lee Park to the County would be contingent upon receiving full funding from the State.

The Association diligently pursued our elected officials to keep this matter from drowning in the fiscal backwaters. We reached out to Chairman Conway of the House Appropriations Committee to voice our support for the County's request. Our state elected officials (Senator Brochin, Delegate Frank, Delegate Aumann and Delegate Lafferty) vigorously pursued their fellow House and Senate members to support the request. The combined efforts succeeded as both the House and Senate approved full funding. In April, Governor O'Malley signed the budget into law. The funds will become available July 1, 2009 at which point Baltimore County Recreation and Parks Department will begin their efforts in earnest. The community will be able to affect these efforts by contributing input at meetings to be held in the fall of 2009. Eventually, a Robert E. Lee Park Council will be formed on which RRLRAIA will play a prominent role.

Of course, the Association couldn't have done this without the support of countless individuals, public officials, and elected representatives who saw this initiative through. We would like

to thank Louise Hildreth, Jane Lawrence, and Robert Macht of the Robert E. Lee Conservancy, Baltimore City officials Nan Rohrer, Connie Brown and Gennady Schwartz, Sgt. Moffet and Sgt. Fink of the Baltimore County Police, County officials Bob

Barrett, Frederick Homan, John Markley and Jean Tansey, and our elected representatives Senator Brochin, Delegates Aumann, Frank and Lafferty, County Executive Smith and Councilman Kamenetz. All of these individuals and others too numerous to mention helped move the future of Robert E. Lee Park and Lake Roland in a positive direction.

The question posed at the start of this article is a valid one. I hope the Association's efforts on your behalf have been amply demonstrated by the long term and extensive work performed by many RRLRAIA individuals in order to facilitate the transfer of

Proposed Budget for Robert E. Lee Park Improvements

Component	Design	Construction	Total
Bridge/Replacement	\$276,000	\$2,557,600	\$2,833,600
Roadway Improvements/Parking	\$121,000	\$1,122,720	\$1,243,720
Dog Park and Erosion Improvements	\$195,000	\$1,807,000	\$2,002,000
Total:	\$592,000	\$5,487,320	\$6,079,320



Robert E. Lee Park to Baltimore County. As Baltimore County gets underway toward healing the Park, the Association hopes you ask a very different question, "What can I contribute to the future of the Park?" Neither Baltimore County nor your elected officials nor the Association can save and preserve this community gem alone.

(Please visit RRLRAIA.org and click on "Current Topics" for Jeffery Budnitz's more comprehensive review of the history and process of the Park take-over.)

Save the Date

RRLRAIA Annual Meeting

Thursday, September 24

Members will receive a postcard with complete details.

Baltimore County's First Dog Park

The Reisterstown Recreation and Park Council's Dog Park Committee is now accepting registrations for the new, long-awaited Baltimore Animal Recreation Center (B.A.R.C.) Park at Hannah More—Baltimore County's first off-leash dog park. Registered dogs and their owners may use the park from sun-up to sun-down each day of the year. To become a member, all dogs must have proof of current rabies vaccination shots and licensing. Membership costs \$25/ family per year. The B.A.R.C. Park at Hannah More features two off-leash areas for dogs to roam and socialize with other dogs. The larger area is 1.5 acres and the smaller area is .75 acres. Each area features a dog water fountain.

The Dog Park Committee is looking for sponsors to help fund the dog playground equipment project. Registration forms and material can be found at www.reisterstownrec.com or contact barcparkathannahmore@yahoo.com for more information.

Home Sales in Ruxton / Riderwood / Lake Roland

Sold Properties from February, 2009 – June, 2009

*Courtesy of the Whit Harvey Group,
Coldwell Banker Residential Brokerage*

ADDRESS	SETTLE DATE	LIST PRICE	SOLD PRICE
700 Abell Ridge Circle	3/25/2009		425,000
712 Abell Ridge Circle	4/30/2009		400,000
1015 Boyce Avenue	6/9/2009		533,500
604 Brightwood Club Drive	6/9/2009	810,000	800,000
403 Brightwood Club Drive	4/28/2009		465,000
6325 Canter Way	3/31/2009	649,990	620,000
642 Charles Street Avenue	6/4/2009	439,000	420,000
3 Clan Chattan Lane	5/29/2009	849,500	840,000
4 Clan Chatten Lane	6/17/2009		1,495,000
4 Coldwater Court	3/24/2009		450,000
7920 Ellenham Avenue	4/7/2009	399,000	350,000
8213 Jeffers Circle	3/16/2009		281,500
8217 Jeffers Circle	2/5/2009		272,000

18 Lacosta Court	4/10/2009	349,900	309,400
6 Leadburn Court	3/3/2009		465,000
1408 Malvern Avenue	3/24/2009	849,500	800,000
312 North Wind Road	5/6/2009	1,498,000	1,400,000
538 Piccadilly Road	3/18/2009	499,875	480,000
513 Piccadilly Road	5/6/2009	445,000	430,000
6209 Pleasant View Avenue	4/7/2009	359,000	359,000
8104 Rider Avenue	6/3/2009		435,000
1218 Ridervale Road	5/13/2009	241,500	241,500
7919 Ruxway Road	4/30/2009	339,000	296,000
7900 Springway Road	1/22/2009		374,800
8120 Thornton Road	3/31/2009	469,000	440,000
1021 Wagner Road	4/8/2009	1,395,000	1,310,000
1300 Wine Spring Lane	3/11/2009		1,690,000
1218 Wine Spring Lane	4/28/2009	500,000	445,000
205 Woodbrook Lane	4/11/2009	2,150,000	1,850,000

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