

Tree-Tops

President's Message

By **Eli Hassid**, HOA Board President

Dear Residents,

Fall is over and we must say good-bye to the beautiful colors that it shows. I hope you had a chance to enjoy the changing of the seasons, specifically, by enjoying a lovely fall walk on the Muddy Branch trail. On behalf of the HOA, I want to thank those who helped with the picnic this year. I hope all of the residents who came enjoyed it as much as I did. Please join us next year.

Before it gets too cold, please check out the new slide and bucket seats on the swing set near the pond. We further improved the pond area by resealing the walking path, adding a guardrail, widening the path from Coles Chance Road and repairing the bridge on the south side of the pond.

Winter is here. Do not forget to winterize your outside spigots. In addition, when it snows and if you have a sidewalk in front of your property, please make sure you shovel that area. By keeping the common walking paths clear, we are all doing our part for the safety of the neighborhood.

Thank you once again for your commitment to the DuFief community, and I hope to see you at the Annual Meeting at the DuFief School on February 18, 2016. You will be reminded of the date in the coming weeks.

Regards,
Eli Hassid



DUFIEF HOMES ASSOCIATION

READWOOD

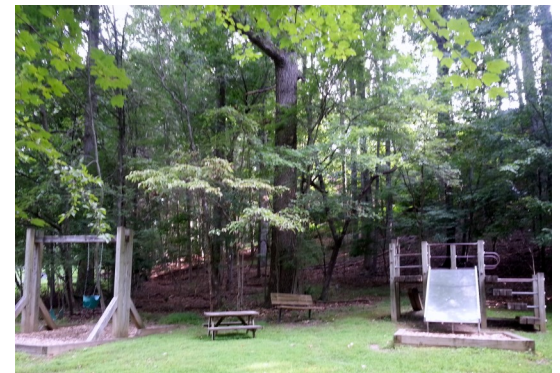
Special Thanks

Early this past spring the slide at the pond playground was found to be unsafe to use and was in need of repair or replacement. Kevin McGrattan offered to assess it for us. He felt it was possible to repair it and offered to do the necessary work. What had been expected to be a relatively easy fix quickly became more and more complicated. Little did he know his garage was going to be occupied by the slide for several weeks.

Finally, with the help of many friends and neighbors, the slide was moved back to the playground and reinstalled.

Our thanks to Kevin and all the others who contributed the time and effort involved in making this possible.

DuFief HOA Board



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Special points of interest:

- *Artist in Residence*
- *ARC Affairs*
- *Gardening*

Artist in Residence – Pictures of “the Old Country”

By **France Staudenmann**, *Happy Choice Lane*

One of my friends, who also hails from Switzerland, told me that the feeling of homesickness that weighed her down for years was finally lifted when her daughter offered her a picture of the Swiss Alps she had painted. The painting was prominently displayed in their home. I am no painter but the advice stayed with me. Whenever I travel to Switzerland, one of my greatest pleasures is to take pictures, crafting memories for tomorrow. This was especially true this past year.

For the last ten years, I have spent a few weeks every year in Amden, a small mountain village of some 1,700 inhabitants in Switzerland. I used to meet my sister there. After she passed away, I continued to spend my vacation in that village because I so much enjoyed the beauty of the landscape, the peace and quiet. Amden is located south-east of Zurich (about one hour by car), in the canton of St. Gallen, on a sunny plateau high above the northern shore of Lake Walensee. It is a popular hiking resort in the summer and family skiing resort in the winter.



A room with a view on the Murtschenstock. This is what I admired every morning.

Steep cliffs, well above 3,000 ft. high, border the lake, which has presented a challenge to traffic since ancient times. The roads along the lake are hewn out of the mountains, passing through galleries and tunnels. There are a number of quaint villages around the lake, among them Quinten, a hamlet of some 50 inhabitants, accessible only by

boat or, for the intrepid, on foot along a treacherous path going over the cliffs. Well protected from the northern winds, Quinten enjoys a quasi Mediterranean climate, where grapes, kiwi, figs, and palm trees grow. Local winegrowers produce excellent red and white wines, called “Quintner.”



Lake Walensee

The most beautiful chalet in Amden was built in 1852. The wooden shingles covering the walls are typical of that area.



Chalet in Amden

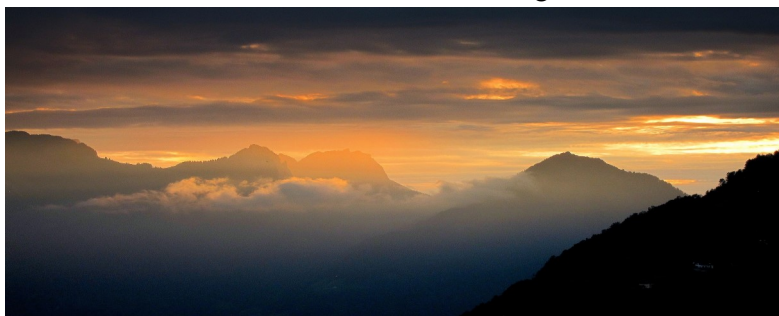
The pharmacy in the village of Appenzell, one hour by car north of Amden, is an architectural gem.

The Swiss painter Johannes Hugentobler painted medicinal flowers on the facade. The names of the flowers are written in calligraphy below each painting. Appenzell is renowned not only for its beautiful houses but also for its traditional practice of direct democracy. Every year on a Sunday in spring, the citizens gather in the town square for the “Landsgemeinde” to vote on laws and financial matters and elect members of their government and courts. Voting is done by a public show of hands. The first Landsgemeinde took place in 1294, three years after the foundation of Switzerland, and is carried on to this day.



Pharmacy in Appenzell

This past year was my very last visit to Amden. The place where I stayed, a guest house run by Franciscan sisters, who were present in Amden for the last 91 years, closed its doors at the end of September. The religious order decided to offer their spacious home to the state to transform it into a temporary shelter for refugees. Starting in November, it will lodge up to 120 refugees. My dearest wish is that the beautiful and serene environment will bring them peace and healing.



Pet Licensing Requirements

The **Montgomery County Police Animal Services Division** wants you to know that

Pet Licensing is now available ONLINE at www.petlicense.com/montgomerycounty

All dogs and cats, four months of age or older, must have a current rabies vaccination and a County pet license. The rabies tag provided by your veterinarian is NOT a County license – the license must be purchased separately.

Pet Licensing is important because

- It's the law;
- It shows responsible pet ownership;
- It promotes a healthy and safe pet population;
- It supports the community.

Details are available at the DuFief website: www.dufief.org and the Montgomery County Police Animal Services Division www.montgomerycountymd.gov/asd.



Treasurer's Report

By **Brian Frank**, HOA Treasurer

As of December 28, 2015, the Board has collected annual dues from 298 of the 306 homes in our neighborhood (97%). The annual assessments that we use to maintain our common areas in order to keep the DuFief neighborhood a popular area for homebuyers **are not optional**. Every household must pay the annual dues. The original notice for 2015 dues was sent to all homeowners at the beginning of January 2015.

Any homeowners who have not paid their dues are subject to a potential lawsuit which will include a request for interest and attorneys fees and may result in a lien on the property.

We have been very successful in collecting dues. All assessments have been collected for 2010 and all years prior. There is one homeowner who has not paid dues for 2011 and 2012, two homeowners

who have not paid dues for 2013 and 2014, and 11 homeowners who still owe for 2015.

The Board does not enjoy having to take neighbors to court; however, the homeowner assessments are no different than having to pay real estate taxes.

To those of you who have paid their annual assessments in a timely manner, "THANK YOU!" Those of you who have not paid the 2015 dues in the amount of \$190.00, please do so as soon as possible in order to avoid additional costs and a potential lawsuit.

At the November 2015 Board meeting the Board voted to increase the annual assessment by three percent (3%) as permitted in the Covenants. The assessment for 2016 is \$195.70 and will be due on January 31, 2016.

**We have collected
97 % of 2015 dues.**

If you have questions or would like to discuss your annual assessments, please feel free to contact Brian Frank at 240-606-5100.

“Celebrate Design”

By **Linde Fuller**, *Happy Choice Lane*

The following is based on a recent Washington Post article by Roger K. Lewis, practicing architect and architect emeritus of the University of Maryland, describing Montgomery County’s first design award, honoring excellence in architecture, landscape architecture and urban design.

The Montgomery County Planning Department, together with the Potomac Valley chapter of the American Institute of Architects, created the “Celebrate Design” award to encourage people to advocate for and expect top-quality design. In Montgomery County and elsewhere, design excellence is rarely considered, discussed, advocated for or demanded. Serious pursuit of design excellence almost always takes a back seat to coping with pragmatic needs and pressures, some decidedly negative.

The Planning Department’s year-old Design Excellence Initiative is also exploring the creation of community design guidelines and encouraging every county and municipality to develop design guidelines and institute systematic design reviews. This is the most effective way to enhance the quality of buildings as well as the quality of the public realm, the urban and suburban environments, where buildings reside and which buildings help shape.

We, here in DuFief, are lucky that Miller & Smith Inc., when planning and building our development, cared about design quality, about more than just meeting zoning and building code requirements. It is clear that they paid attention to fundamental aesthetic attributes—site planning and landscaping, building massing and geometry, scale and proportion, materials and colors, textures and details, use of light.

Let’s take Montgomery County’s “Celebrate Design” initiative as an inspiration to pay attention to the design features of our unique neighborhood and to maintain its mid-century modern architecture when executing renovations, additions, and repairs, so that our homes, with their earth-colored wood siding, big windows, modern straight lines, flat-panel front and garage doors, will continue to blend into the landscape as if they were part of it. And, who knows, maybe we will win Montgomery’s “Celebrate Design” award one of these days.



Before doing exterior work to your home, please go to

www.dufief.org - Architectural Review

**to apply for prior written approval for additions, alterations,
and/or improvements.**

A Garden of Mistakes

By Carolyn Carlson, Brandy Hall Lane

I am ashamed! I wrote an article for the Readwood entitled “Deer-resistant Plants for Shady Gardens.” Prior to going to print, Ken Bawer, a board member of the Maryland Native Plant Society, weighed in on the information I provided. What a mess I had written!

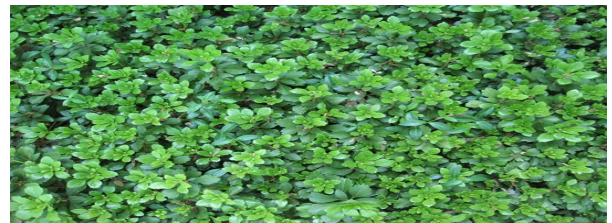
The plants I touted are all lovely to look at. You can buy them in nurseries. Deer usually don’t eat them. They are mostly disease and pest-free. So then, what’s not to like?

THEY ARE ALL NON-NATIVE, INVASIVE SPECIES THAT ESCAPE INTO OUR WOODLANDS.

INVASIVE! Lenten Rose (*Heleborus x sternyii*)



INVASIVE! Pachysandra (*Pachysandra Terminalis*)



INVASIVE! Periwinkle (*Vinca Minor*)



You can read up on these plant problems at <http://dnr2.maryland.gov/wildlife/Pages/habitat/wabadplants.aspx>. Millions of dollars and countless volunteer hours are spent each year removing these “weeds” from our woodlands. Our yard, too, is full of them but I didn’t know they were the bad guys.

So now, what should I do about these and other bad guys in my surroundings, such as Japanese barberry, heavenly bamboo, or leatherleaf mahonia? First, I will gradually remove what I can without denuding the landscape. Secondly, I can pluck out seedlings before they mature. I can remove plants that have escaped into my neighbors’ yards, with their permission of course. I can plant environmentally friendly “good guys” and encourage them to spread...in my yard. (Ferns are on the “good” list as well as bleeding heart, both deer-resistant and non-invasive.) And finally, I can become involved at a weed-pulling expedition in Muddy Branch Park. (Go to www.muddybranch.org for details.)

Not all non-native plants are culprits, however, but it is better to buy native plants. When you buy plants, go to your nursery armed with some good information. For a list of deer-resistant native plants, again go to the maryland.gov website or to www.mdflora.org for a list of nurseries that sell native plants. Purchase *Native Plants for Wildlife Habitat and Conservation Landscaping*, or download the pdf from <http://www.nps.gov/plants/pubs/chesapeake/>. And ask your nurseryman if the plant you are considering is native.

I am not discouraged. I have been gardening for many decades and I appreciate opportunities to learn more. I’m convinced that native plants are the way to go. But I am still ashamed.

**DuFief
Homes
Association**

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The Annual Homeowners Meeting

will be held at the DuFief School

February 18, 2016

Potluck Dinner at 6:30 pm, Meeting at 7:30 pm

Please email board@dufief.org to RSVP for the Dinner

At the Annual Homeowners Meeting on February 18, 2016

Ken Bawer, certified Weed Warrior Supervisor for the Muddy Branch Alliance, will present an introduction to the problem of non-native, invasive plants in Montgomery County. He will present

**A Gardening Philosophy for the 21st Century:
“How I learned to stop worrying and love the chaos in my garden.”**

Visit the **Muddy Branch Alliance** web site at www.muddybranch.org
to see the “Calendar” for Muddy-Branch-related activities:

- Weed Warrior events (removal of non-native invasive plants)
- Trash pick-ups
- Wood Duck box maintenance
- Nature hikes, and more

We Want You to Know About
The MONTGOMERY COUNTY COMMISSION ON COMMON OWNERSHIP COMMUNITIES

Montgomery County recognizes that a substantial proportion of all its citizens now live in condominium and homeowner associations, and in housing cooperatives, generally called "common ownership communities." In order to serve better the special needs of these communities, to act as their advocate, and to maintain and improve the quality of life in these communities, the County created the Commission on Common Ownership Communities. The Commission operates under the authority of Chapter 10B of the County Code.

The Commission has 3 basic duties:

Education: the Commission provides free information to both members and to governing bodies about their rights and duties under Maryland law, as well as advice on how to properly operate the association and to avoid complaints. Among other tools, it offers a "Manual and Resource Guide" for boards of directors, and detailed information on architectural control, assessments, and meetings. It publishes a newsletter summarizing recent developments affecting common ownership communities. Commissioners will also speak to communities and their boards on request and welcome invitations to do so.

Legislation: the Commission advocates for common ownership communities concerning proposed laws and regulations at the local and State level.

Dispute resolution: the Commission can hear and resolve certain disputes between members of the communities and their governing bodies, and its decisions are legally binding on the parties. Copies and easy-to-read summaries of its decisions are posted on its website and reviewed in its newsletter.

The Commission is composed of 15 volunteers who are appointed for 3-year terms. 8 members must be residents of common ownership communities and the other 7 must be professionals who work with the communities, such as property managers, lawyers, developers and realtors. Every Fall, the County publishes a request for applicants to the Commission to replace those whose terms are due to expire.

For more information on the Commission and its services, visit its website at www.montgomerycountymd.gov/ccoc. If you have questions, CCOC prefers to be contacted by email at: CCOC@montgomerycountymd.gov. To receive information by email about CCOC news and events, sign up for them by going to www.montgomerycountymd.gov and following these links: 1. "I Want To;" 2. "Register, reserve, enroll;" 3. "eSubscription;" 4. "Create an Account;" 5. "Consumer Protection;" 6. "CCOC."