



READWOOD

DuFief Homes Association Newsletter Summer 2026

President's Message:

Dear DuFief Community:

Greetings and salutations neighbors! June is here at last! The sun is warm, the grass and trees are green and lush, and the school bells are soon to chime the start of another summer here in our woodsy home. And with the changing of the seasons, it's time for my quarterly letter to update you all on the goings on with the HOA and neighborhood at large.

With the nicer weather, we have been taking stock of what needs fixed around the common areas in the neighborhood. As many of us have experienced, there are a significant number of trees falling in the woods and around our houses. While most of this is the responsibility of each homeowner individually, the Board is responsible for common areas, which has typically focused on the Turtle Pond. As I write, there's a fallen tree on one of the bridges over the creek that the Board has contracted to be removed. But as you walk around our beautiful green spaces and notice issues, please email us to let us know (board@dufief.org). The Green Team is also hard at work on our pollinator garden and cleaning up some other common areas. I was also happy to receive a viburnum and a witch hazel from the Green Team during their annual neighborhood free-plant-giveaway, and I hope everyone else who took part in this initiative is having luck with your new plants as well!

With the school year ending, that means it's time for our first Picnic at the Pond for 2026. The Board has voted for noon-4pm on Saturday, June 13th to gather together and chow down on some BBQ, as we all recapitulate what a treacherous winter we just endured (begone "snow-crete"!). As per the last few summer picnics, we'll have a large tent to keep you shielded from the elements, so the party can proceed rain or shine. In addition to the BBQ and sides (and vegetarian options), we'll have desserts and beverages, a bounce house for the kids, lawn games, music and more. We will also take this opportunity to celebrate 50 years of DuFief elementary, the school at the heart of our community. Also, our DuFief Green Team will have a table to answer all your questions about local plant-life and gardening tips to support our native ecosystems. The HOA Board members will also be milling about and happy to answer any questions you have or to discuss neighborhood business. As always, if you are interested in getting involved in the HOA, we're in need of new community members to serve on the Board and on other HOA committees. Please check your email for the Evite to RSVP so we can make sure we have enough food for all and hope to see you at the Turtle Pond!

That's all from me for now folks. Stay cool and hope to see you around the neighborhood.

Warmest regards,
Jared B. Smith
DuFief HOA President



DuFief HOA Community Picnic!

Date & Time

Sat, Jun 13

12:00 PM - 4:00 PM EDT

Location

DuFief HOA Community Pond

🌲 DuFief Bi-annual Picnic at the Pond!

It's time for our favorite neighborhood bi-annual tradition! All DuFief HOA residents are invited to join us for a day of food, fun, and community.

Saturday, June 13 | 12:00 – 4:00 PM DuFief Pond & Park (*Entrance off Coles Chance Rd.*)

🍷 The Highlights

- Food & Drink: Mission BBQ, snacks, and drinks (inc. beer) provided!
- Family Fun: Bounce house, music, and cornhole.
- Meet the Neighbors: Chat with our Welcoming Committee, the Green Team, and your HOA Board.

⚠️ RSVP Promptly!

To ensure we have enough food and drinks for everyone, we need accurate headcounts. Please RSVP with the *total number of guests* as soon as possible.

👤 Volunteers Welcome

Want to help with setup or activities? We'd love to have you! Contact: board@dufief.org

Treasurer Report – for Jun 8, 2026 Board Meeting

Reserve BOA Account balance as of 6/3/26:	\$47,063.06
<u>Reserve EagleBank 12-month 3.95% CD (Maturity 1-5-2027)</u>	<u>\$121,538.46</u>
Total Reserve Accounts:	\$168,601.52
Reserve Account balance May 2026 report	(\$168,599.92)
Operating BOA Account balance as of 6/3/26:	\$144,761.88
<u>Operating EagleBank 12-month 3.95% CD (Maturity 1-5-2027)</u>	<u>\$131,666.67</u>
Total Operating Accounts:	\$276,428.55
Operating Account balance May 2026 report	(\$278,120.91)
Total Reserve and Operating Accounts as of 6/3/26	\$445,030.07

2020: 305 homes / 306 have paid – 99.7% for 2020 Dues: \$220.27

2021: 305 homes / 306 have paid – 99.7% for 2021 Dues: \$226.88

2022: 304 homes / 306 have paid – 99.3% for 2022 Dues: \$233.68

2023: 304 homes / 306 have paid – 99.3% for 2023 Dues: \$233.68

2024: 302 homes / 306 have paid – 98.7% for 2024 Dues: \$240.00

2025: 299 homes / 306 have paid – 97.7% for 2025 Dues: \$245.00

2026: 265 homes / 306 have paid – 86.9% for 2026 Dues: \$245.00

Delinquencies: All Years delinquent Total: **\$15,272.55**

Seven homes delinquent 2025 or prior Total: **\$7,193.19**

Expenses from May 1 to May 31, 2026

1. AppFolio	\$ 302.82
2. Zoom	\$ 17.50
3. Solitude Lake	\$ 228.69
4. PPR	\$ 2,304.17
5. Bluehost website hosting (\$15.00 + \$21.19)	\$ 36.19
6. USPS – annual PO Box rental	\$ 242.00
7. Play-N-Learn (deposit playset maintenance)	\$ 100.00
Total	\$ 3,231.37

Deposits made from May 1 to May 31, 2026

1. Annual Dues received	\$ 735.00
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Reminder:

The DuFief HOA covenants permit the maximum dues assessment to increase by up to 3% per year. The Board has decided to increase the Maximum Annual Assessment by 3% from \$255.35 for 2025 to \$263.00 for 2026. However, the board also decided to keep the annual dues assessed for 2026 the same as the 2025 dues of \$245.00, rather than the maximum amount allowable. 2026 dues will be \$245.00 per lot.

For those of you who wish to make payment by check, please mail your check to DuFief Homes Association, Inc., PO Box 3034, Gaithersburg, MD 20885. Please feel free to contact our HOA Treasurer, Fred Mingo at treasurer@dufief.org if you have any questions and or need assistance.

Fred Mingo, Treasurer



DuFief Green Team

This month, the Green Team is highlighting invasive plants growing in our gardens and our surrounding parkland. Check out the article below by Roger Rasnake, Green Team co-leader, and also visit our table at the upcoming picnic where we'll have more information. It's important that we're all aware of the plants we inherited from previous owners of our homes, perhaps unknowingly planted ourselves over the years (like me) and many that continue to be sold by local nurseries.

Removing Invasive Plants from the Pond Area

We held an invasive plant removal morning at the pond on Saturday, April 18, focusing on garlic mustard before it went to seed. Four of us managed to pull out a substantial amount of it on the eastern side. Get on the list for future weed removal mornings at dufiefgreenteam@gmail.com.

Pollinator Garden

The Pollinator Garden at Dufief Drive and Rte 28 has come through the harsh winter well. The perennials are spreading nicely and the shrubs are growing tall and even flowering. We're holding

work mornings on the first Saturday of the month for anyone who can contribute an hour. We meet at 9 a.m. and are usually done by 10 a.m. If you'd like to join us, let us know at dufiefgreenteam@gmail.com. No experience necessary!

Nature Walk

Our next nature walk will be on Wednesday, June 17, at 9:00 a.m. We'll meet at the Pollinator Gardens and walk along the Muddy Branch Trail for an hour or so, looking for early summer blooming plants and birds with fledglings. Let us know if you'd like to join us at dufiefgreenteam@gmail.com. We have a growing list of our sightings during these walks on the [Dufief website](#).

Shrub Giveaway

We still have a few young shrubs left after our giveaway in April. We'll be bringing them to the picnic to find new homes, or you could pick one up ahead of time by emailing me at moiradavenport@gmail.com. Both witch hazel and nannyberry are available.

Countering Non-native Invasives in DuFief

--Roger Rasnake

A major challenge to a healthy and thriving natural environment here in DuFief is the proliferation of non-native invasive plants (NNIs), that is, plants from elsewhere that grow rapidly, push out native plants, and fail to provide basic support for the ecosystem. We see NNIs all around us, in the woods, in the parks, and in our yards.

What plants are we talking about? Just a few years ago, garden stores and landscapers were commonly selling a number of plants that do real damage, and many of us still have them growing in our yards. Bamboo is a special challenge, with aggressive growth and a deep, resistant root structure. Japanese barberry, planted because of its color and because the deer don't like it, has spread into the woods and is creating thickets that are difficult to control (just take a look at the path entrance at the end of Pebble Hill Lane to see a good example). Wineberry and multiflora rose, brought here on purpose, have become the scourge of the forest. The most common NNIs we have in our yards are Nandina ("heavenly bamboo"), English ivy, Chinese privet, autumn olive, bush honeysuckle, butterfly bush, burning bush, and garlic mustard, among others.

Where do NNIs come from? The short answer is, just about everywhere. Many were brought intentionally – for example, even in colonial days, settlers brought plants along from Europe and Africa because they liked to cook with them. Many invasives also started out here as ornamentals; folks liked the flowers or fall colors and planted them. Others got here by accident. For instance, the pesky, ubiquitous Japanese stiltgrass apparently arrived here before 1920 as packing around porcelain imported from Asia. NNIs found in Maryland come from every continent except Antarctica.

Why are NNIs a problem? You don't have to be a Buddhist to recognize both that all things are connected and that our natural world is rapidly changing (and not for the better). Because NNIs evolved in another environment in Asia or Europe, they arrive in America with few natural enemies, either plant or animal. They've left behind the insects and diseases that controlled them in their home territory and proliferated here, germinating early and pushing out the native plants.

Native plants have evolved over millennia here alongside insects, birds and other wildlife, and they have established a balanced relationship. For instance, many insects have adapted to survive on a single or limited set of species and, if that plant disappears, so do the insects reliant on them. Most of us have heard of the tie between milkweed and Monarch butterflies, but this tight relationship is reproduced between hundreds of host plants and insect species.

The Cornell Lab of Ornithology estimates that nearly three billion birds have disappeared in North America since 1970. And why is that? Mainly, because their habitat is shrinking and changing – and

NNIs contribute greatly to that change. During breeding, birds overwhelmingly rely on caterpillars to feed their young. And not just a few caterpillars – for instance, it's estimated that a pair of chickadees needs 6,000 to 9,000 caterpillars to sustain one set of nestlings in the two weeks they're in the nest. With the expansion of NNIs and disappearance of native plants, the associated insects decline, and, likewise, birds lose their food sources. So planting native plants – trees, shrubs, and herbaceous perennials – can directly reverse these tragic losses and begin to rebuild a healthy ecosystem.

What can we do about NNIs? The physical removal of NNIs is a big task, but in the parks, volunteers are pitching in to do just that. The Montgomery County Weed Warriors program is a good way to join that effort. However, the task is less onerous in our yards. If you have NNI shrubs or plants, you can remove them and replace them with natives. Many great options exist for this.

NNIs can be controlled and we can all help restore the natural balance that formerly existed in our forest environment. The Dufief Green Team is excited to share more information about how we can do that, and we will be especially happy to suggest good alternatives for the NNIs that you may want to take out. Come chat with us at the picnic on June 13! Or just drop us a line –

dufiefgreenteam@gmail.com.



Meet Robert Nersesyan (Robert Ners)

Robert is a rare musical talent. He is a Dufief neighbor and a 6th grade student at Frost Middle School who has dreams of being the next Bruno Mars. We hope you can join us at our community picnic and enjoy a wonderful performance by Robert.

"Ever since Robert was 7 or 8 years old, he would sit at the piano every afternoon, not practicing scales or repeating songs, but building entirely new compositions. Each one was different. Some were playful and unpredictable, others were so heavy with feeling that his parents found themselves sitting quietly, unsure why their eyes had filled with tears.

"Where did you hear that?"

"I didn't hear it," Robert was replying. "It just needed to exist.

His parents tried to help. They bought books—beginner theory, children's songbooks, even advanced guides they barely understood themselves. Robert flipped through them politely, then returned to the piano and ignored everything inside.

They found a teacher, (a neighbor in Dufief), a kind woman who had taught for thirty years. She listened to Robert play once, then twice, then sat back in her chair with a puzzled smile.

"I can teach him technique," she told the parents afterward, "but I'm not sure I can teach him music. He already... speaks it."

Robert is 11 years old now, and already released 4 songs on all major music platforms. He also wrote over a dozen orchestral compositions and loves writing lyrics, singing and performing all his songs."

EXPERIENCE

Winner, MMEA Maryland Young Composers Competition. May 2026

Winner, MMEA Maryland Young Composers Competition. May 2025

Coach Bolton, High School Musical, Frost Middle School, November 2025

Munchkin, Wizard Of Oz, Wootton High School Musical, March 2025

Winner, Singing at Dufief School Talent Show, February 2025

EDUCATION

Piano Lessons, Tozoni Music School, 2018-present

Vocal Lessons, Webb School, 2024-present

Composition Lessons, Dasa2.com, 2024-present

Performance Coaching, Armonia & Co., 2025-present

SPECIAL SKILLS

- Songwriting: 10+ original songs, notations and lyrics
- Proficient in the song-writing application Ableton Live
- Foreign languages: Russian (fluent), Armenian (beginner), different accents and sounds
- Painting, Jewelry design and making

↓ Member of CCCC (Collegiate Choral Composition Community): <https://www.choralcomposition.com/pre-collegiate>

↓ 2025 Maryland Young Composers Competition, winner (look under DAW, Notation, and Songwriter Elementary to 9th Grade): <https://www.mdmea.org/ycp-performances>

↓ 2026 [MusicTeacherGifts.com](https://www.musicteachergifts.com) 13th Annual Youth Composition Competition, Winner, division under age 15

↓ Spotify: <https://open.spotify.com/artist/3QScCCR XV6FXUqCfP6RKm>

↓ Apple Music: <https://music.apple.com/us/artist/robert-nerses/1873273564>

↓ Amazon Music: <https://music.amazon.com/artists/B0GKQ2F6Q7/robert-nerses>

↓ YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/@RobertNerses>

↓ Instagram: <https://www.instagram.com/robertnersesofficial/>

↓ FB: <https://www.facebook.com/robertnerses>

↓ TikTok: <https://www.tiktok.com/@robertnersesofficial>

↓ Singing Armenian language during National Showcase Talent Show in NC:

Preview YouTube video Deh Pari indz hett (Dance With My Valentine) #armenian #armeniansong #armenia #valentinesday



Preview YouTube video "Dance With My Valentine" Official video. Author and performer Robert Nerses.



Preview YouTube video "Looking out the window" Official video. Author and performer Robert Nerses.



Preview YouTube video Far Away Official video



*****Do you know a neighbor that deserves to be highlighted in the next Readwood? Please let us know.



PQP (Praise, Question, and Polish)

Praise the board or your neighbors for a job well done. Ask a Question about Dufief that a neighbor or the board may be able to answer for you. There's always room for improvement. Please feel free to submit thoughts and comments to share with our neighbors. Submit to Readwoodeditor@gmail.com. Comments can be published with or without your name.

Neighbors Helping Neighbors



****This is your space to offer or ask for services from DuFief neighbors. Do you babysit, petsit, tutor, do yard maintenance, troubleshoot technology issues, or need recommendations or assistance? If you would like to list a service or a request in our next Readwood, please send an email to Readwoodeditor@gmail.com.

Hello neighbors! My name is Tracy Weatherford and I own an at-home baking business called Tracy's Treats. I make custom-order cakes, cupcakes, cookies, and more! All fresh ingredients and no preservatives. I have pictures on Facebook and Instagram and can be reached via email or text to place orders or answer questions. I love baking and making people happy with delicious treats! 240-994-0783, tracystreatsmaryland@gmail.com

Are you interested in adding plants native to Maryland to your garden to attract pollinators and beneficial insects? **The Dufief Green Team** is available to help you get started. We can discuss the selection of plants for sun or shade, dry area or wet, and which are more deer resistant than others. Or if you would just like to exchange ideas about ecological gardening practices, get in touch with us at Dufiefgreenteam@gmail.com

Sandi Shapiro (Readwood Editor)
readwoodeditor@gmail.com

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 better serve 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. Eight members must be residents of common ownership communities and the other seven 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."