

Country Grove Newsletter

October 2005

The Country Grove Neighborhood Association Newsletter

[http:// www.countrygrove.org](http://www.countrygrove.org)



Plans Under Way to Perk Up the Park

by Katy Culver, CGNA Board

The Country Grove Neighborhood Association is starting a new drive to transform our park into a destination that's more attractive to all our neighbors.

Currently, the park is quite useful for soccer practices and games, but many neighbors complain that the limited playground equipment, lack of shade trees and benches, and absence of a shelter make it of little use for other activities. We'd like to change that.

Because of ever-tight budgets and how recently our park was developed, the City of Madison has no immediate plans to make improvements. However, the city does have a strong matching-grant program that will enable us to better the park on our own.

Neighborhoods all over the city have used this program, which matches fundraising dollar for dollar. If a neighborhood wants a shelter, for instance, and it costs \$20,000, they raise \$10,000 and the city may match it with \$10,000 from the grant program.

In the coming weeks, I will be meeting with parks planning staff to learn the details of the program and generate a "Chinese menu" of options. Currently, we would like to get information on costs for:

- improved playground equipment
- shelter (with electricity)
- park benches and picnic tables
- shade trees
- sand play area
- tennis courts

The last item in that list is the least likely, I've been told, because courts are already installed in the nearby park on Williamsburg Way. We've also learned that a skating rink, a request often raised by neighbors, is an impossibility because of both the limited budget for maintenance and the drainage requirements for the soccer space.

The costs attached to any project we undertake will be high. To purchase just two banks of swings like the ones we already have would run us about \$6,000. But we hope a solid fundraising strategy involving both neighbors and business combined with hard work and energy, will generate enough for us to make improvements.

Once we have a sense of the costs, the Board hopes to create a "Perk Up the Park" subcommittee to draft and implement a strategy, including prioritizing proposed improvements. If you are interested in serving on that subcommittee, please e-mail me at president@countrygrove.org. We would love to have your help.

Together, I believe we can build a gathering space that will draw us in and make better use of a beautiful spot right in our own backyards.

A message from County Board Supervisor Mike Hanson –

Greetings:

I think we can kiss the warm weather good bye until April '06, which is a scary thought. With the fall season upon us, this means budget time on the County Board. Before I get into budget items, I thought I would update you on a controversial issue that faced the Board.

As you may have followed, the Chairman Kevin Kesterson issue finally came before the Board in September. Our Chairman had made some embarrassing comments and the slippery slope continued as he tried to backtrack. Additionally, he

made some offensive comments about law enforcement and never seemed to climb out of a downward spiral. I did vote for his removal based on principles that government needs to be kept clean. This whole situation became a political mess, as many were jockeying for power. These are the types of tactics that disenfranchise citizens from local politics, and I am staying away from such discussions and actions. I have 1,000 other things I could be doing besides slinging mud and sneaking for political power. Thank you for your support in my decision with this vote. Ultimately Kevin stayed as our Chair because a 2/3 vote was needed for removal and it was not there.

Switching gears, with budget time here it is again asked that we try to make cuts to departments in order to meet tax levy limits. Although I agree that there are some departments that should face cuts, I am disappointed in the lack of growth in some areas. For instance, the District Attorney's Office (with shared funding from the state) has not kept up with county growth during the last decade. There are several cases that the District Attorney simply will not prosecute due to a lack of resources. I think this can become a slippery slope down the road as we look at quality-of-life issues in our community. There will be plenty of controversy on the Board floor regarding this year's budget. Although it is too early to predict where monies will fall, you have my assurances that I will not vote for a tax increase more than "inflation + growth," as that seems like a fair equation.


Finally, our area has seen a rash of cars being broken into or having windows smashed out. Unfortunately these are difficult crimes to solve due to numerous factors, including the fact they occur usually late at night without witnesses and very little, if any, evidence is left at the scene. The best we can do as a neighborhood is be vigilant, report suspicious activities to the police and lock all of our doors. Although we live in a generally safe neighborhood, we are not immune to crime. My sense is that these specific crimes are related to youthful individuals who may live nearby. My neighbor actually chased two teenagers as he caught them in his car, by chance, at 2 a.m. The fact that they fled on foot and were juveniles tells us that

they seem knowledgeable about the area. Again, please report suspicious activity to the police, because you never know when your suspicions are linked to ongoing investigations or may be the piece that the police have needed to help solve a case.

If you have questions or comments please feel free to contact me at 206-5550.

Take care and stay warm.

Mike Hanson
County Board Supervisor

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A Word on Fences – Mitch Kite

The CGNA board is requesting that all fences regardless of height be approved by the Architectural Committee. Although fences four feet in height or less do not necessarily need approval (as stated in the covenant), we are trying to be proactive on fences so no one gets caught off guard.

Believe it or not, fences are the number one cause of arguments between neighbors. Landscaping changes and trailer parking are other big sore spots.

When a fence application is submitted to the Architectural Review Committee, we verify that the fence height or design is not violating any City of Madison ordinances.

We also notify all adjoining neighbors of the planned work and seek their approval. The point here is that if we get resident plans in writing before

the work is done, we can review them and make sure there are no surprises for anyone.

Chain-link fences are *highly* discouraged.

If you have an opinion on this subject go to the forum section at: Countrygrove.org and let's begin a discussion.

A message from the Alderman,

Dear Neighbors,

Halloween: Well, it happened again! The annual Halloween event on State Street ended with unruly behavior that endangered public and law enforcement safety. Like you, I have grown tired of this event and the behaviors associated with it. This event will cost us, the taxpayers, well over \$500,000 this year, possibly reaching \$750,000 when all the checks are signed. The amount we spend in just two nights could add 7 to 10 officers to the street every day. This event must become professionally organized, like any other festival, and funded by the attendees and those businesses that profit from it... or be ended.

Budget: The Mayor has introduced his Executive budget. I have offered over \$1.1 million in cuts. I have proposed that we eliminate three "pork-barrel" projects. These projects range from \$80,000 bus shelters (the cost to build a one-bedroom condo) to railroad crossing upgrades that do nothing, but prevent train whistles from blowing. These whistles must sound in order to prevent accidents or the city must spend \$10 million to upgrade the crossings. The few residents that live adjacent to the railroad track crossings purchased their homes with the railroad tracks in place. The rest of the city should not be forced to pay millions to appease a relatively few number of residents that purchased their homes fully aware of the century old railroad tracks next door. Overall, I want to commend the Mayor on a responsible budget that is very close to the limited tax increase I have been fighting for over the past two years. As I have always maintained, this reduction in the growth of Madison's property taxes

can be accomplished without cutting essential city services... this budget is proof.

Overture: The council has decided to gamble our tax dollars in the stock market to subsidize Overture. The council overwhelmingly supported (I was one of five "no" votes) a shaky refinancing scheme that, in order to work, requires the market to produce 8.25% return on investment over the next six years with no reinvestment of earnings and no allowance for losses in the first two years. I believe that alders have a fiduciary responsibility to the taxpayers and this decision puts the financial stability of this city at risk.

Police: The new police staffing assignments should add two new beats to the West Precinct. Our side of the city is woefully underserved. The fact that our neighborhoods remain safe is a tribute to the officers of the West Precinct and the tremendous job they do with such limited resources.

Crime: While still one of the safest in the city, there has been an increase in property crimes in our neighborhood. Please remember to park your cars in the garage and close the garage door. If you must park outside, make sure to bring any valuables inside and lock your vehicles.

South High Point: The light at the intersection of South High Point Road and CTH. PD is now active. Please be mindfully of its presence when coming over the hill. Construction of the new South High Point will begin this spring and will eventually connect all the way to Mineral Point Road.

Pool: The Glacier Pool has been approved and ground breaking will begin soon. The pool is scheduled to open Memorial Day 2006. There are still memberships available and registration is now open to all neighborhoods. After the first 200 charter memberships are sold (cost \$250) the initiation fee will increase (\$450). The annual dues for 2006 are \$395.

Traffic Calming on East Pass: The traffic calming previously approved for East Pass has been put on hold. The contractor hired to complete the project has gone out of business. This means that all of the

2005 projects will not be completed this year. My hope is that the previously approved projects will be completed in the spring and will not have to compete for 2006 funding. It is my understanding that the contractor's bonding company will reimburse the city for the cost of the contracts.

Smoking: This has become one the most divisive issues in recent city politics. I support the "smoking ban." And as a Small Business owner and liquor license holder, I worked with the implementation team for 14 months to help prepare for the law. Additionally, I authored legislation to help small businesses, but the council ultimately rejected it. This legislation would have put this issue in front of the voters and provided for a hardship exemption for any establishment that had lost more than 10% of its gross sales. I believed this was a fair solution for those few establishments that were still struggling to comply and believe it was rejected by those who want to exploit this issue for political gain, as witnessed with the recently announced recall attempt of the Mayor.

If you have any further questions about these or any other city issue, please do not hesitate contact me. As always, I appreciate the faith you have placed in me and will continue to fight for some "common sense" in this city.

With High Regard,



zbrandon@cityofmadison.com
1-800-749-2875

FUN HAD BY ALL AT ANNUAL
PICNIC

The CGNA annual picnic was held September 11 at the Country Grove Park. Many neighbors came out to eat, play games, chat with old friends, and meet new neighbors. Children participated in three age-

specific heats of the three-legged race and crab walk. And, then there was a relay race where teams ran with swimming "noodles" between their legs (hands in the air!). Gifts baskets were awarded to the newest neighbor attending the picnic, as well as the neighbors who have lived in Country Grove Estates the longest. All the neighbor kids were given coupons from Culver's, as well as enjoyed the balloon artistry and face painting of Gigglin' Gil the clown.

Thank you to our neighbors, Scott & Katy Culver and Bill & Armande Fruhling, for providing the grills to make our lunches. And, a special thank you to Zach Brandon, Stuart Geenen, Dave Lundal, and Mike Smith for the set-up and tearing down of the neighborhood tent.

DECEMBER HOLIDAY HAPPENINGS

Cookie Exchange

Join neighbors for a Holiday Cookie Exchange Sunday, December 14, at the home of Mike & Carrie Smith. The fun will begin at 2 p.m. Bring 3 dozen cookies and pick which 3 dozen you would like to take home! Please also bring your recipe written on a recipe card to share if someone wants your secret!

The Smith family lives at 3204 Country Grove Drive.

RSVP to 845-5458 by 12/01/05.

Bring your cookies and your appetite. Coffee and warm cider will be provided.

Holiday Home Decorating Contest

Ok, neighbors! Here's your chance to show everyone in Country Grove that your block/zone is the best! Decorate your home for the holidays and receive free cookies! That's right! The block/zone with the highest percentage of homes decorated for the holidays will have bragging rights for the next year that their street rules the neighborhood in terms of being the best decked out for the holidays. Each participating home will also receive a plate of free cookies from the CGNA as a reward. Judges will determine whether your home qualifies as "decorated" on December 18. A wreath on the door just doesn't cut it with this crowd! You must have

some type of holiday light(s) on your home to qualify as “decked” the evening of the judging. Judges will be evaluating between 7:30-9 p.m. on the 18th.

Make sure you're home is looking good for the holidays and add in making our neighborhood look festive this holiday season. Remember, judges will determine the winners on December 18. Look for the winners to receive their treats after this date.

The winning zone for 2004 was Zone 12 -- which included all the houses on Cranbrook, as well as 3734-3754 and 3737-3749 Country Grove Drive. Zone 12 had 93% of their homes illuminated for the holidays the evening of the judging last year. Will your area be able to beat that this year?

Cookie Exchange Sunday, December 4, 2 p.m.
Holiday Home Decorating Judging December 18

Neighbors being Neighborly

We would like to make a greater effort to be good neighbors here in Country Grove. Please let us know if you have a member in your own family or a neighbor who deserves some recognition! Whether it's having a baby, a graduation, placing in an academic or athletic event/competition – we want to know what our neighbors are doing! We would also like to know if someone could use a little assistance – maybe a yard mowed or a meal brought in during a time of illness or grief.

Finally, we want to welcome our new neighbors! If you see a moving van arrive or notice new neighbors moving into their home, please greet them! In addition, please let one of our Social Committee members know. We are hoping to establish a Welcome Committee for the neighborhood. If you are interested in serving on this committee, please contact Alicia Lundal (848-2006). And, if you have a service, product or business that you would like included in a welcome kit for new neighbors – please let Alicia know that as well. We were able to deliver & welcome 6 sets of residents over the summer months with a new neighbor gift bag.

NEIGHBOR ACCOLADES!!!

A number of our young neighbors from competing swim clubs across Madison participated in the annual All City Swim & Dive Meet held in Middleton on August 5 and 6. Congratulations to the following neighbors:

Nick Menninga (Country Grove Drive) finished 1st in Freestyle in the Boys 9-10 age group, and 11th in Individual Medley. In the Boys 8 & under age group **Ryan Menninga** (Country Grove Drive) finished 11th in Freestyle and 11th in backstroke. Ryan's relay teams finished 8th in the Medley relay and 10th in the Freestyle relay.

Chloe Theissen (Woodstone) placed 11th in the Girls 11-12 age group diving competition.

Andie Smith (Country Grove Drive) finished 13th in the Girls 8 and under Freestyle, and her relays in the Medley and Freestyle finished 6th and 5th, respectively.

Way to go Country Grove swimmers & divers!

Congratulations to the **Emmerich family** of Country Grove Drive! Mark & Pam are the proud new parents of Mallory Catherine. She was born July 30 (8 lbs 2 oz, 18 ½ inches). Mallory joins big sister Madeline in the Emmerich family.



Thwart the Thrill Thieves

Most of us have heard by now about the seasonal garage thefts that have popped up in our neighborhoods as spring arrived the last few years.

But a different trend seemed to hit with some thefts this summer. A number of people had bikes or scooters stolen from their garages, only to have

them dumped in other people's yards after the thieves were done joy-riding.

If stolen items are dumped in your yard, you can call the police and they'll have them hauled away. But the owner may actually be just a few streets over.


Neighbors who are missing items and those who find them can use the Country Grove Neighborhood Association website to find each other. If you find something or lose something, go to www.countrygrove.org, roll over "Communications" and click on "Forum." You'll find a bulletin board for "Lost and Found."


We hope this new way of contacting each other will help us solve one of the problems garage-nabbers pose. And remember, the best bet is to always keep your garage door closed when you're in the house or in the backyard.

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EMAIL: DIANAHAUSE@KW.COM

For a listing of current and past board members, past newsletters, articles and discussion about our neighborhood go to www.countrygrove.org.

If you would like to advertise in the next Newsletter and/or in our next Membership Directory please contact Josh Soper at jdsoper@charter.net or 848-3508


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