



Bell Tower Property Owner Association's

BELL TOWER NOTES



Happy Holidays!

Inside this issue:

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NEW ACTIVITIES COMMITTEE FORMED

Replaces the Former Social Committee

By Suzanne Ferguson

At the end of last season, things were looking gloomy for organized social activities at Bell Tower Park. A representative of the Social Committee announced at the April POA Board meeting that, because some long-time members were moving, and others were feeling burned out or too busy, the Committee had disbanded. After a wonderfully successful Tiki Hut Party in early April, it looked like a general collapse.

Several Board members, some former committee members and other association members weren't willing to let this happen. At the October POA Board meeting,

President Dave Barnes proposed a new committee, called the "Activities Committee," to be formed with the goal of organizing community events including not only clubhouse parties, but other activities such as group theater parties or baseball games, a book club or other interest groups, informal get-togethers, and other events to be proposed: whatever our residents would like. With the community WEB site as the central clearing house, people could "run something up the flagpole" and see who else would like to join.

At that meeting, responding to a request for volunteers, Susan Knutson raised

her hand. Along with former Social Committee member Kathy Soares, Susan got the word out so that others—from the old Social Committee or new—could join.

Together, a team made plans for the Holiday Party (see photo on p. 3), which has been announced as an Open House at the Clubhouse on December 16th from 3-6 p.m., serving desserts (including some great home-made sugar-free treats!), fruit and nuts, and beverages: coffee, non-alcoholic punch and wine. With support from the Board, the price has been set at \$7.50 for adults and \$5.00 for children. Payment can be made at the office (cash or check) up to December 10th.

CONTINUED ON P. 3 ➡

NEW WALK-IN GATE COMPLETED

A Safer Way to Enter From Andrea Lane

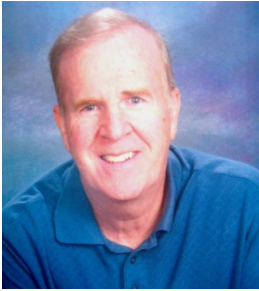
By Suzanne Ferguson

A walk-in gate has been constructed to the west of the exit gate to Andrea Lane. Primarily installed to help insure the safety of school children who are picked up by school buses at the intersection with Andrea Lane and our exit drive, the gate will also facilitate people's

walking to the restaurants and businesses in the adjacent shopping center. The gate is accessible by the same code used for the walk-in gate at the front entrance and the back gate to the Linear Park. Anyone needing this code should get it from an owner or the Management Office. □



A MESSAGE FROM THE POA BOARD



Dave Barnes,
President of
Bell Tower Park
POA

"We define 'team effort' as a cornerstone to accomplishing all our goals."

We have made great strides in so many areas during the past nine months. Our hard-working Board members and dedicated committee members have spent countless hours resolving issues to achieve the highest level of satisfaction for Bell Tower Park residents.

Safety has been a top priority. Besides renewing our efforts to keep vehicles from parking on the streets, we have installed coded walk-in gates at the rear (east) entrance to eliminate trespassers and at the Andrea Lane entrance for the school children to come and go to their bus stop safely. A bench and a bicycle rack for the students will be installed there shortly.

The pools are looking beautiful, the lakes are bubbling, the new trees and shrubs are burgeoning, and the recently planted seasonal flowers are blooming. The changes in our landscaper and pool service have been mostly positive, and we continue to work with them on enhancements and improvements.

We would like to welcome back all of our seasonal residents. We hope you notice all the positive changes since you were here last. In the next month or two you will see mulch being put down, our playground restored and reopened, additional landscaping, and more street lighting.

It is uplifting to have such a great group of people who work independently and also work well with each other. We define "team effort" as a cornerstone to accomplishing all our goals. Thanks for your trust and ongoing support. Together we all have one common purpose and that is to enjoy our beautiful In the community. Proper planning and working together makes it all possible.

Your Board will continue to talk with you about issues and work with you to maintain a happy, healthy and prosperous community.

"Sincere wishes for a wonderful holiday season."

- Dave Barnes

UPDATE FROM CARRIAGE HOMES



Robert Garland,
President
Carriage Homes Assn.

The Board would like to welcome home all of our seasonal residents. We look forward to catching up with everyone. We would also like to extend our thoughts and prayers to everyone that was impacted by Hurricane Sandy and the subsequent storm events.

For those that did not make the Board meeting on November 20, I would like to briefly summarize some of our financial highlights. Cardinal Management staff has been working aggressively with the Board to collect delinquent accounts, and these efforts have definitely paid off!

Only 9 of our 288 units, or approximately 3%, have delinquent accounts (90 days or more) as of October 31, 2012. This compares to 19 units, or 7%, at essentially the same time in 2011, and 30 units, or 10%, at the end of 2010. We will continue efforts to collect the remaining balances and will keep collections as one of our top priorities in 2013.

The aggressive collections campaign, combined with cost savings ideas throughout the year, has allowed the Carriage Homes to continue to "operate in the black," while fully funding our reserves and maintaining our

monthly assessments at a reasonable rate. I would like to thank Cardinal's staff and our Board members for their hard work throughout the year and give you our commitment that we will continue to look out for the best interests of all residents.

Finally, the Board would like to wish everyone the best over the upcoming Holidays. Stay safe, maintain positive attitudes, and enjoy life! ☐

Robert Garland

COURTYARD HOMES I BUDGET MEETING HELD

The Courtyard Board would also like to welcome back our seasonal residents, and hope that all escaped the terrible devastation of Hurricane Sandy.

Our annual budget meeting was held on Thursday November 29, 2012. The main purpose of this meeting was to approve the budget for 2013, which you all received in the mail with the notice of the meeting. For those of you that were not able to attend the meeting, please look at our community website to find the minutes of this meeting.

Our Courtyard association is currently operating better than budgeted for the year 2012, and we expect to close the financial year with a substantial surplus. For the main part, this is due to an aggressive collections campaign together with Pavese Law Firm and Cardinal Management. Presently we have 7 delinquent accounts left, including one account with a payment plan to pay for the amounts that are in arrears. We will continue to pursue our collection efforts for these delinquent accounts.

These measures together with cost controls on our other expenses have resulted in a decrease for our assessments in 2013 while fully funding our reserves.

We are grateful to Cardinal's staff and our Board members for their hard work throughout the year in looking out for Courtyard Homes residents, whether here at Bell Tower Park or far away..

Finally, the Board would like to wish everyone happy Holidays and a happy and healthy 2013.

Robert van Teeffelen, President

ACTIVITIES COMMITTEE (CONTINUED FROM P. 1)

Membership on the Activities committee is open, and residents—owners or renters—who would like to contribute their time and imagination to ramping up community life are heartily invited to participate. One opportunity already past was the decoration of our Christmas tree, with a team led by Maggie and Luis Martinez, but others events are coming up! Get in touch with Susan at taxdbk@aol.com.

While thanking all the members of the former Social Committee for their years of service, Dave Barnes also expressed his pleasure with the new efforts: "All members of the POA Board are delighted that residents have stepped up to help make Bell Tower Park not only a better place, but also a more social community of friends." □



Linda Gratz, Susan Knutson, Christine Merritt, Kathy Soares, and Kathy Gambino plan the Holiday Party. Not pictured, Barb Dalen.

“ISAAC” PROVES USEFUL

Lessons Learned from a “Near Miss” Storm

by Richard Roux

This was a busy year for BTP’s emergency planning. We developed our first Emergency Preparedness Plan, made arrangements for potential contractor support, and hosted a presentation from Lee County’s Master Emergency Planner. The projected approach path of then Tropical Storm *Isaac* provided us with an opportunity to exercise and improve our plan. Fortunately, *Isaac* by-passed Ft Myers, impacting us with less than tropical storm force winds, minimal 2.5’ of storm surge, and only about 4 total inches of rain.

Isaac’s path had initially been projected at Ft. Myers. It eventually by-passed us to the west, coming ashore near New Orleans and impacting Florida most in Tampa, where some areas received tropical storm winds and more than 30 inches of rain, an amount which would likely have caused flooding here in BTP.

Some of our community lessons learned included:

- The path of storms after their interaction with the near-by mountains of Cuba is very difficult to predict.
- A full 72-hours of reaction time is necessary to prepare and protect our community from an approaching significant storm.
- Our pre-planned contractor support for our Clubhouse’s shutter installation was inadequate.
- Beautiful, blue-sky weather can precede the storm and belie its potential severity. (For example, some of our more complacent residents were out untying and re-positioning pool furniture while the POA Board was attempting to

secure the balance of the equipment at the second pool.)

All these experiences were useful in updating and improving our plan. Some of the actions that our residents should anticipate for future storms include:

- 72-hour notice of a decision to protect our property.
- Immediate closure of all our amenities; deactivation of FOBs.
- Early pre-positioning and installation of clubhouse shutters.
- A potential need for limited resident help to secure our pool equipment.

While early closing of our amenities may be an inconvenience, it is hoped that residents will understand the need for such a measure and will use the closure time to prepare their own property and review their family emergency plan. Remember, many hurricanes start tracking in our direction, requiring a response. These hurricanes historically brush or hit Ft. Myers with at least tropical storm winds every 2.5 years and hit Ft. Myers with hurricane strength winds (>75 mph) every 9.3 years. So, *Isaac* didn’t count against either of these statistics.

Owners interested in more user-friendly shutters are reminded that the Building & Amenities Committee has planned an equipment demonstration (and wine & cheese party) for January 2013. Watch for the posting of more information on the WEB site.

“It is hoped that residents will understand the need for early closure of amenities.”



*The Nutcracker
Welcomes You to
the BTP Clubhouse!
Happy Holidays!*

BTP WILDLIFE: ROVER ANTS

By Jim Stewart

Those of you with swimming pools in your courtyard homes are probably familiar with little black bugs floating on top of your pool, especially after a rain. Welcome *Hymenoptera Formicidae*, spp. *Brachymyrmex*—commonly called rover ants, as identified by the University of Florida Entomology and Nematology Department.

The ones in your pool are females or males that have lost their wings after breeding and have fallen through the screens. Workers are tiny (1/16 inch long) and dark brown. According to bugs.com, they may be seen “excitedly running up and down vertical objects in yards, such as blades of grass, chairs, and fence posts.” They don’t fly.

The entomologists at UF report that rover ant “nests are usually not inside the home, but are frequently found outside in the soil next to the foundation. Workers will often forage indoors, how-

ever. They like to feed on honeydew from sap-sucking insects, including those found on plant roots.” Therefore, liquid sweet baits may help control them. Controlling sap-sucking insects on landscape plants near the house should also reduce the number of ants. On the other hand, the UF website says they’re not worth worrying about, as their season is brief.

The winged reproductive insects (*alates*) are attracted to lights, and a common complaint is the dead *alates* that end up swimming pools. Female *alates* are three times larger than male *alates* and workers, so they likely don’t fall through the screens, but could fall into unscreened pools.

Rover ants are a nuisance pest in the southeastern United States, Texas and Arizona but are not known to cause damage to structures or landscapes. They are seen mostly from May-August in the southeast. They do not bite, sting or transmit disease. So, for aesthetic reasons, keep your dipping nets handy.

BRIDGE CLUB REFORMING

The former Thursday Bridge Group has no leader and is looking for one. The group was meeting 1:00 P.M. - 4:00 P.M. on Thursdays at the Clubhouse. Alice Tuthill was given their supplies to hold until they get a new leader, as the former one moved away. Anyone who would like to take this responsibility, please get in touch with Alice (tuthillalice@yahoo.com).

WATER AEROBICS CONTINUES

Ladies’ water aerobics takes place at the clubhouse pool every Monday, Wednesday and Friday at 10:00 a.m. All Welcome !

REVISED WELCOME PACKETS FOR NEWCOMERS

By Suzanne Ferguson

In response to several comments from new residents, the Communications Committee reviewed the packets that were given out by our Management Office to people moving in. While some of the information simply needed updating, the committee could see why some new residents might have wanted or needed more information about Bell Tower Park.

In addition to revising and adding information, some of the new items added to the physical packet were welcome letters from the Presidents of the POA Board and the sub-association board from the new owner’s neighborhood and a sheet devoted to logging into the BTP Community WEB site.

After discussion, the Committee also recommended that, while the packet itself should continue to be distributed by the Office, there should also be some personal contact from a neighbor—both to get acquainted and to help the newcomers with orienting themselves to the community and the area. Jim Stewart, a Communications Committee member and a resident of Courtyard II, volunteered to coordinate greeters for new residents. The committee is seeking representatives of all the sub-associations to visit new residents in their areas.

Also included in the welcome packet will be a special presidential greeting for renters, as it has been pointed out in a number of POA meetings that renters generally are less well oriented toward community amenities and rules than new owners.

Anyone interested in helping out with this effort to make our new neighbors welcome, please get in touch with Jim Stewart (LUKING@aol.com, or 433-5235).

FOLLOWING THE TAMAMI TRAIL

By Jim Stewart

The Tamiami Trail is the southernmost 275 miles of US Highway 41. It starts in Tampa and ends in Miami, thus, the contraction of Tampa and Miami for its name. Originally called the Miami-Marco Road, its name changed when politicians enforced the Tampa starting point. From Tampa the Trail goes south through the towns of Bradenton, Sarasota, Venice, Port Charlotte, Ft. Myers, and Bonita Springs to Naples.

From Naples, there are two ways to cross the wilderness of Southern Florida: the fast and dull route or the slow and interesting way. I-75, completed in 1993, is the so-called Alligator Alley super-highway taken by about 21,000 motorists a day. It is kind of a misnomer because the highway has fencing on both sides to keep animals off the road, so you can probably only see an alligator if you stop at a rest area and happen to glimpse one in the canal.

But the slow and interesting way is to take the 80 mile stretch from Naples to Miami that comprises the Tamiami Trail. It traverses the Everglades, Big Cypress National Preserve, and Fakahatchee Strand State Preserve, home to the famed and elusive "ghost orchid."

The Trail passes Miccosukee Indian villages, campgrounds, the Shark Valley segment of

Everglades National Park, a canoe input at Turner River, the "Oasis" rest stop where you can definitely see dozens of big alligators, the Big Cypress Welcome Center where manatees can be seen in winter, and the seasonal studio of nature photographer Clyde Butcher. You can stop at roadside airboat rides, gift shops and an occasional restaurant serving blue crabs and other swamp-land delicacies.

There are a lot of sights to see when you take the Trail, including the Big Cypress Boardwalk and roadside pull-outs where you can usually see alligators and many wading birds. At Ochopee, there is the smallest post office in North America. The post office measures 8 feet 4 inches deep and 7 feet 3 inches wide.

Its postmaster has said, "The only time this post office seems small is when I have a snake in here with me. I'm probably the only postmaster in the U.S. that has a special stick for catching snakes." It remains to be seen whether this post office will survive the proposed new cuts to the U.S. Postal Service.

Another interesting landmark is the Dade-Collier Airport. In 1968, the Dade County Port Authority began construction on what was supposed to become the world's largest airport. The Miami Jetport was to be located 36 miles west of Mi-

ami, just across the Collier County line. It was to be a six runway supersonic airport. The project would also transform the Tamiami Trail into a multi-lane expressway.

Conservationists were worried about the impact an airport that size would have on the environment of the Everglades and Big Cypress. After several court hearings, a ban was placed upon further development. The widening of Tamiami Trail as a part of the Jetport was stopped. One runway had already been completed; so it was allowed to be used as a flight training center. It remains today as a part of the Dade-Collier Training and Transition Airport.

NOTE: At present, construction on the east end of the Trail (up to about mile-marker 30, nearing Miami) makes the road pretty slow; but you can visit all the attractions on the western end quite handily.

The history of the Tamiami Trail is continued on the BTP Community WEB site under the "Communications Committee News" menu item.



Egrets and Wood Storks near mile-marker 60.

Photo by Helen Franklin



Smallest Post Office in the U.S.:
Ochopee, FL 34141

NEW LIBRARY AREA AND SHELVING

By Suzanne Ferguson

During the past summer the Bell Tower Park community honor-system library underwent a transformation. From the crowded and disordered shelves in the Clubhouse living room, the library was moved to new shelving in the anteroom just in front of the Fitness Room.

Resident Johanna Hill came forward to answer an appeal by the POA Board for someone to oversee the display of books. In her initial sorting, she removed

and gave to charity several topics of special interest and over-worn volumes, such as nurses' training books, outdated travel books, and a 2000 book on "how to make a million bucks."

Since all the books don't fit in the current shelving, Johanna decided to rotate the offerings, keeping some in storage if necessary and returning them to circulation from time to time as needed to keep the shelves full and the selection fresh. Johanna visits the area every other day to add and arrange the books.

Johanna stressed that community participation in donating books is necessary so as to afford a wide selection for readers, enough to replenish the shelves with new offerings. With residents returning and donations increasing, as time passes the needs may change. The Board has expressed a willingness to consider additional shelving if needed.

If you would like to communicate with Johanna, you can leave her a note in the basket on top of the shelves. Happy reading! ☐



"Community participation in donating books is necessary to afford a wide selection for readers."

DID YOU WANT TO KNOW?

By Jim Stewart

Q. If you have a left turn green signal and are making a U-turn, and a car coming into the roadway from your left (as frequently occurs, for example, at Andrea Lane and U.S. 41) makes a stop and turns on the red, who has the right of way?

A. The Lee County DOT says, "The person who has the red light must stop and yield to all traffic before proceeding at an intersection where they are making a right on red. The person with the green light will always have the right of way over the person with the red light." But here is an editorial note. Don't assume everyone making a right turn on red will give you right of way when you are making a U-turn. Many of them will turn in front of you. Be watchful!

Q. How many of our residents go north for the summer?

A. Well, I did a poll that is probably as good as the political polls we have seen. I counted garbage cans in front of houses on Monday morning. Came up with almost 300. Since we have almost 500 units, I am claiming about 40% of our residents are snowbirds.

Q. What are the hours of some nearby drug stores and pharmacies?

A. **Walmart:** Store Hours: Open 24 Hours
Pharmacy: M – F 9am – 9pm, Sat 9am – 7pm, Sun 10am – 6pm

Target: Store Hrs. M – Sat 8am – 10pm Sun 8am -9pm
Pharmacy M –F 9am – 9pm Sat & Sun 9am – 6pm

Costco: Store & Pharmacy M – F 10am – 8:30pm,
Sat 9am -6 pm, Sun 10am – 6pm

CVS: (in the Bealls shopping center, U.S. 41 & Cypress Lake)
Store hours: Daily 7am – 10pm
Pharmacy: M – F 8am – 9pm, Sat 9am – 6pm, Sun 10 am-6 pm

Walgreens : (U.S. 41 & College) Store & Pharmacy 24 – 7

Publix: (Summerlin, across from Barbara B. Mann Concert Hall)
Store Hours: 7am -10pm
Pharmacy M – F 9am -9pm, Sat 9am – 7pm, Sun 11am – 6pm

UPDATES ON LINEAR PARK, BUFFER-ZONE NATURE TRAIL

By Suzanne Ferguson

The projected closure of a segment of the John Yarborough Ten-Mile Linear Park that runs to the east of Bell Tower Park has now been postponed twice; resident Susan Kehoe has stayed in touch with Lee Coffee, the Supervisor of Lakes Park and the Linear Park regarding the proposed work. He plans to close the walking trail north of our bridge at the last possible moment. In late November, brush clearing and draining of the filter marsh north and east of the bridge had begun, but the trail was still open. The portion toward the south of the bridge is scheduled to remain open during the work.

Meanwhile, extensive clearing was accomplished during October on the



Woodland Buffer-Zone Trail

path that winds through the Lee County-regulated natural buffer zone running along the north side of Bell Tower Park. After a summer in which the trail was virtually impassible because of downed trees, junk, and weeds, Upland Services, with whom we contract for upkeep of that area, responded to a call from our CAM to get the pathway cleared.

It is now a pleasant walk on which you might meet a grand old gopher tortoise, among other critters. Access this trail either at the NW corner of our property (behind Hyde Park) or the extreme NE end (north of the walk-in gate to the Linear Park), or from the circle at the north end of Avon Park. □



Sample Food Arrangement by Kathy Gambino

**BELL TOWER PARK
HOLIDAY PARTY
SUNDAY – DECEMBER 16TH
AT THE CLUBHOUSE
3 TO 6 PM**

**JOIN FRIENDS, NEIGHBORS FOR DESSERT,
WINE, PUNCH, COFFEE AND FELLOWSHIP**

COST: \$7.50 ADULTS \$5.00 UNDER 12

**PAYMENT DUE TO THE BTP OFFICE
BY MONDAY, DEC. 10TH !**

FROM THE EDITOR

Welcome to *Bell Tower Notes* Volume 2, #1. Your Communications Committee is happy to be able to produce this newsletter with the participation of so many residents of our community. We are open to new ideas and contributions—and there are always new contributors—whether to make things happen or to report them.

We were especially delighted to see the upgrading

of our library and the forming of the new Activities Committee in the past several months, with volunteers coming forward in time of need, and we happily anticipate seeing what new “activities” Bell Tower Park residents will come up with.

How about a Theater Party coordinator? Florida Rep has a great season on tap. Or an outing to a “special” restaurant? There are rumors of an

incipient Book Club—who would like to be involved in that?

The Communications Committee itself is seeking someone who likes to do layout, since our original layout editor, Richard Roux, is busy with other responsibilities. Can you use MS Publisher or another layout program? Is it fun for you? If so, please get in touch with me ASAP!

scf@case.edu ☐

HELP WANTED! Talents needed for Bell Tower Park projects

This column is planned to be a “regular” part of Bell Tower Notes. We need to recruit new people to our committees, and we know there are people out there with the time and talent to make great contributions to Bell Tower Park. Find your niche. Or suggest a new niche!

Communications Committee

WEB site:

- Assistant Webmaster for the Communications Committee Webpage
 - Manager for the proposed Resident Directory (needs database skills)
 - Activities Website Coordinator to maintain webpage, facilitate contacts
- Contact, Richard Roux,
richard.roux@ymail.com

Bell Tower Notes: Reporters, photographers, layout editor. Contact, Suzanne Ferguson scf@case.edu

Activities Committee

This committee is new and welcomes anyone with ideas for activities that our residents may be interested in: theme parties, informal coffee klatches or monthly TGIF parties; groups to go to the theater or musical events; a Restaurant Club, a Book Club; groups to attend baseball games or hockey. Whatever you can come up with! Contact, Susan Knutson, taxdbk@aol.com

Buildings and Amenities Committee

Someone with commercial interior design experience & skills. Contact Richard Roux, Richard.roux@ymail.com

Welcome Committees

People to act as “greeters” for their neighborhood to visit newcomers and answer their questions; make sure they have copies of the rules, know how to get on the website, etc., know that they are needed on committees, Contact, Jim Stewart, IUKing@aol.com ☐



**SUZANNE FERGUSON,
EDITOR**

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Richard Roux
Jim Stewart*

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*Jim Stewart
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Meetings of the Communications Committee are regularly held at 2:00 PM on the second Tuesday of every month at our clubhouse. Please check the WEB site's events calendar for confirmation of the exact time and date.

REMEMBER: WE'RE ON THE WEB!

WWW.BELLTOWERPARKCOMMUNITY.COM