

New School: Make your voice heard!

If you drive along Charles Street near the Baltimore County Board of Education, you can see a new school rising from behind Ridge Ruxton. The new West Towson Elementary School is scheduled to open August of 2010. It will have capacity for 451 students. It already has a designated principal, Sue Hirschfeld, who was most recently at Fort Garrison Elementary in Owings Mills.

Will your children go to the new school next year? It has not been decided, according to Baltimore County Schools spokesman Charles Herndon. The school, he said, is primarily being built to alleviate overcrowding at Rodgers Forge and Riderwood Elementary schools. And while common sense would dictate that Southland Hills children would go to the new school, Herndon said, no boundaries have been decided yet.

But the county has a timetable for a decision, Herndon says. The county's redistricting committee is holding a forum at 7 p.m. Wednesday, Jan. 6, at Loch Raven High School to solicit the public's opinion. This will be the best chance to comment and have a vote on the redistricting. On Feb. 9, the committee will make its recommendation to the superintendent, which will then make a recommendation to the Board of Education. There will be another meeting at Loch Raven at 7 p.m. Feb. 24 for the public to weigh in once again. A decision will be announced March 9.

Santa Claus Comes to Town

Santa Claus will be visiting the Presbyterian Home for a fun-filled breakfast from 9:30 to 11 on Saturday, Dec. 12. Come on over and have breakfast with Santa in the Home's auditorium. The event is free, but if you would like to make a donation to the House of Ruth in the holiday season, please do so at <http://www.hruth.org/wish-list.asp>.

Is that Santa Riding By?

On Dec. 14, please come out and join your neighbors for an evening of holiday music and caroling. At 5:45 p.m., the Towson High School band and their choir will get the holiday cheer started at the corner of Dixie Drive and Alabama Road. Then, around 6:10 p.m., Santa Claus will ride through the neighborhood on the Lutherville Fire Department's fire truck. Immediately after Santa's visit, the band will lead us to the Presbyterian Home for cookies, cocoa and more caroling. Hope you can join your neighbors for the festivities.,

Halloween Haunt

Thanks to all who attended and helped plan the Southland Hills Halloween Haunt, which was held on its rain day this year at the Presbyterian Home. It was a pleasure to see so many neighborhood children in great costumes. Thanks to all of our costume contest judges also, and to Maureen Webster and Kelly Walsh for all of their planning.



POOL NEWS

Towson Swim Club Becomes A Reality – Almost

It has taken nearly three years of hard work, persistence and patience to turn the old Towson jail site into a swim club that will become a centerpiece and gathering place for our neighborhood. And we're almost there! Close to 200 people have given their deposits and signed up to become members of the pool, which is set to open in 2011.

The numbers are enough for the board to continue pursuing the project. But they are not quite enough for the pool board to secure all of the financing it needs for the project.

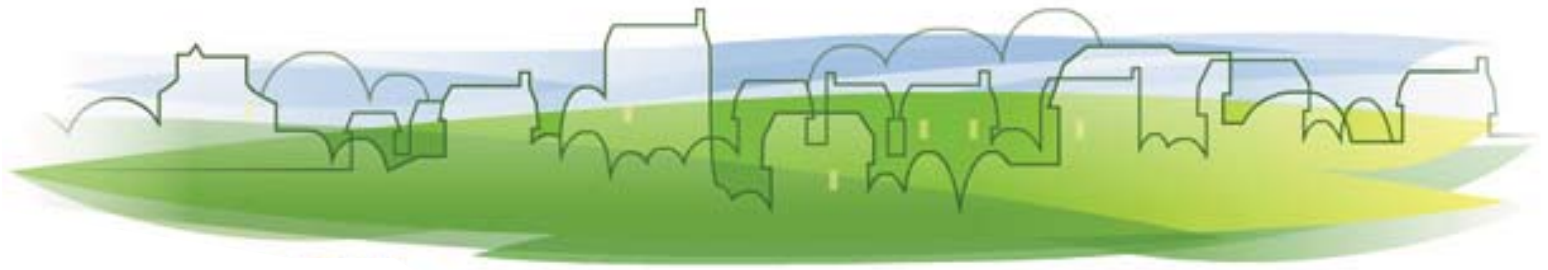
So, the board is asking those who have already joined the pool to recruit at least one more family. The board is aware that the holidays are a difficult time to make such a request, especially with a recession. But timing is what it is. It took this long to get the county to deed the land for the pool and for the board to put together the project. It simply can't wait another year or even another six months until the economy improves to collect the funds.

Data from other pools in the area suggests the swim club will fill quickly once it is built and have a waiting list. If you are waiting until it's built to join, please consider joining now, so that it can be built.

Already, many – but certainly not all – of Southland Hills and West Towson families have signed up. If you have friends in Rodgers Forge or Anneslie who might be interested, please be sure they know about the pool. A family membership to a swim club within biking/walking distance would make a great holiday gift.

For those of you who have already signed up: the Towson Swim Club is asking for the \$275 initiation fee originally due in November to be handed in on or before April 1, 2010 (before that date you will also complete a form that selects your summer membership type for the summer of 2011!) And the Membership Certificate cost of \$1,975.00 must be paid in full on or before December 21, 2009, OR in three monthly installments as follows:

- a. \$675.00 due on or before December 21, 2009 (originally, the deadline was December 1);
- b. \$650.00 due on or before February 1, 2010;
- c. \$650 due on or before April 1, 2010.



Safety Reminder

The Towson Times is reporting a higher-than-usual number of break-ins in the area. These seem to be concentrated in Rodgers Forge, but it's good for all of us to be aware of them. Lock your back doors, keep your porch lights on at night and just be on the lookout for any suspicious activity. There is a lot of work going on in the neighborhood – both county-related projects and private home renovations – so there may be unfamiliar vehicles coming through. The best way to combat against crime is to be aware of your surroundings and pay attention to any sudden changes.

Cleaning out that sewage

If you have a clogged sewer line and you're not sure if the blockage is on your property's or the county's, you might want to hold off on calling the plumber. The county will perform a courtesy cleanout if you have a clean out access near the property. If the clog ends up being on your property you will still need to hire a plumber but again if you are not sure going to the county may be a good first step. And in the end, it might save you at least \$400.

Library Book Drive

We're fortunate to live within walking distance of one of the best county resources: the Towson Library. Not only does it have a castle and books galore, but it also has story times, art projects, book clubs and activities nearly every weekend.

The library is beginning to prepare for one of its major fundraisers, the 16th Annual Friends of the Towson Library Book Donation Drive. The Friends of the Towson Library is accepting donations of nearly new adult and children's books, DVDs, CDs and videos through mid March 2010 for their 16th Annual Book Sale. Please do not bring condensed books, magazines or encyclopedias. The Book Sale will be held in April 15-18, 2010. Donations may be dropped off at the Towson Library circulation desk. A receipt is available upon request. Questions? Call the library at 410-887-6166.

One fun thing to do...

If you haven't been already, the Shops at Kenilworth is displaying its annual Holiday Train Garden. The model trains feature replicas of many of the mall's stores, with hidden characters – Clifford! Blue's Clues! Spongebob! – that are sure to delight the little ones. The mall is offering extended holiday hours, too. For more information, go to www.theshopsatkenilworth.com/events.htm.

If you have nominations of fun things to do in the Towson area, please send them to rkobell2002@yahoo.com. We will include one in each newsletter.



STOP: Dixie and Chesapeake

Equipment is blocking the stop sign at Dixie and Chesapeake. Please remember to stop there coming down Chesapeake, and be careful on Dixie until the county finishes the project.

Dues due...

A record number of our neighbors have paid their dues this month! Nearly three-quarters of Southland Hills residents filled out their comment cards and paid the dues that help SHIA fund neighborhood programs. If you've forgotten, it's not too late. Send your dues to Cathy Berger, 20 Dixie Drive, Towson, MD 21204.

If you have news for the Southland Hills Insider, please send it to rkobell2002@yahoo.com. Thanks!