



President's Message...by Liz Smith

Happy New Year to all our homeowners ! We hope that everyone had a safe and enjoyable holiday season and are ready to all get involved in the community we so love. That is why we all picked Gentle Woods as our home, ..to have a nice, safe place to raise our children and come home to after a long day at work.

There have been several changes in our association in the past year. As mentioned previously, we hired a new management company that has been doing a great job of making our forms and inspections comply with Florida law, keeping the accounting side of the association on track.

This has enabled everyone to access all forms, email us with any questions, view newsletters and maps of the community online, and is working on enhancing our website to have a community calendar accessible also. They have also helped to secure our ability to properly and efficiently collect dues and back dues, which helps the community's ability to improve areas.

We also have some changes on the Board to start the new year. Going forward, I will be staying as President, and Lena Williams will be staying on as Secretary/Treasurer. We would like to announce that Ken Rampersad, has been voted to the position of Vice-President by our community during the last election . Ken has been active in our commu-



nity since inception and cares a great deal about Gentle Woods.

We would also like to thank Jerry Bathe and John Kemper for their service in 2008 along with thanking Rudy Battistic, Jr., for his interest in being on the ballot for a position. We need more volunteers such as these people to make our community better.

We also want to thank each and every one of you who showed up at our meetings, emailed us questions, paid their dues and sent in requests before modifying their homes for fences etc. It makes running a community easier with input and suggestions from our homeowners.

2009, despite your political affiliation, is a time for renewal and increased involvement in our community and the United States in general (see article on page 2).

President Obama, in his speech at the Neighborhood Ball on inauguration night, mentioned the word 'neighborhood' came

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2009 Assessment Deadline is Jan 31st...



Deadline for submission of the 2009 Annual Assessment is Saturday January 31st.

Payments that are received with a postmark after this date will be subject to a \$25.00 Late Fee, Interest at 18 percent (18%) from January 1st, and Certified and First Class postage costs of approximately \$5.74.

Also, in accordance with Florida Statute 720.3085 any payment received will first be applied (in this order) to any interest accrued, administrative late fees, any costs and attorney fees incurred in this collection effort and then to any delinquent assessment.

If you have not mailed in your \$110.00 annual assessment, please do so today so you do not incur these additional collection costs!

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HOMEOWNERS' MEETING

**FEB 18rd AT 6:30 P.M. IN THE
PUBLIC LIBRARY ON 103RD
STREET**

Let's "Renew America Together"...

"We are one people; We are one nation; and together we will begin the next great chapter in America's story." — President Barack Obama

The President believes that we, as Americans, have a responsibility to help our communities and fellow citizens. In summoning a new spirit of service, he is calling on us to make an enduring commitment to our neighborhoods. Every time our nation faces crisis, our national experience has shown Americans rise to the challenge.

While government has an important role to play in helping rekindle our economy and addressing the problems of a distressed nation, President Obama believes each of us, as Americans, have a responsibility to do what we can for our communities and fellow citizens.

We are one nation...

The United States is once again at a crossroads and that is why the President hoped to use the occasion of his Inauguration to rally our nation to commit to service in our communities. We are asking for your participation in meeting this challenge.

In 1994, Congress transformed the Martin Luther King, Jr. holiday into a national day of community service to further commemorate a man who lived his

life in service to others. As a tribute to that legacy and the very real needs of our nation, the President and Vice President launched a national organizing effort on the eve of their Inauguration to engage Americans in service.



This national day of service fell on Martin Luther King, Jr. Day, and, unlike past calls to service, President Obama is calling on all Americans to do more than just offer a single day of service to their cities, towns and neighborhoods. He is asking all of us to make an ongoing commitment to our communities.

Never has it been more important to come together in shared purpose to tackle the common challenges we face.

The website <http://www.usaservice.org> is designed to help promote these events and for Americans to make their commitments, build communities, find opportunities to serve and share their results.

These can be events that engage people in direct service, or bring people together to reflect on Dr. King's legacy and how they can commit to becoming more engaged citizens.

We ask all of you to please create an event or sign up to volunteer today, even in our community there are people who need your help!.

Mark your Calendars NOW all the 2009 Meeting Dates have been set...

For everyone out there that uses Microsoft Outlook, a paper calendar, or other type of scheduling system, we've taken the time to set the dates for all of our regular and special meetings and events for the rest of 2009.

Hopefully this will help everyone get more involved and will allow you the ability to put our dates on your calendar NOW so you won't schedule something else in its place. We really need your presence and involvement this year, so we look forward to seeing everyone at the following events:

FEB 18: GENERAL HOMEOWNERS' MEETING

MAR 7: COMMUNITY CLEAN UP

MAY 2: COMMUNITY YARD SALE

MAY 18: GENERAL HOMEOWNERS' MEETING

AUG 8: COMMUNITY CLEAN UP

AUG 13: GENERAL HOMEOWNERS' MEETING

OCT 1: DEADLINE FOR NOMINATIONS FOR 2 POSITIONS ON THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS

NOV 19: ANNUAL MEETING AND ELECTIONS.

All meetings will take place at **6:30 P.M.** at the Webb Westconnett Regional Library, 6887 103rd St.

Community clean up days will be

followed by Pizza and sodas for volunteers, so you don't want to miss these fun events.

Finally, one of our Board members is a Real Estate Agent with Exit Real Estate Gallery and truly KNOWS the property values in our neighborhood so if you are interested in getting a free neighborhood report on the real estate values, average days on market for sales, average homes sold for the past 6 months, programs for homebuyers interested in buying the homes you are renting, etc, please contact **Lena Williams (904) 520-2330** or via e-mail at lena@propertyinjax.com or visit her website and request free information at www.lenawilliams.com

Covenant Amendments, Why the Need...



Unfortunately we did not receive enough responses last year to the proposed amendments to the Covenants & Restrictions to take any action, however, we strongly feel there is still a need to both modernize our governing documents and allow the Board some leeway on approving fencing other than the mandated 6-inch picket shadow-box designed

fencing.

We hope each of you will go online at www.gentlewoods.org and review the proposed changes that are brought about because of recent changes in the Florida Laws governing homeowner associations, specifically areas addressing fines, arbitration & mediation, architectural standards and assessments due to the growing foreclosure rate.

The Board of Directors in consultation with its attorney and management company representatives, have proposed a series of amendments that will help clarify association policies, remove old and outdated items like satellite dish placement, fence standards, garbage can placement, and other arcane items.

We ask every one of you to go

online and review the changes and if you see a need to amend another area we haven't addressed, we ask that you send an e-mail (or letter by U.S. Mail) with the specific wording you think needs to be changed or added. We will have those comments reviewed by our attorney and if warranted they will be compiled with the rest of the proposed amendments.

If we get enough responses, we will compile your suggestions and will go over them at the May 18th Homeowners' meeting and then send out the ballots so we can vote on them at the August 13th Homeowners' meeting.

Please help us get the governing documents in line with the current laws and make them work for the betterment of the entire community!

Operation Gratitude — Sending Care Packages to U.S. Troops...

As part of President Obama's national "Call to Service" you are encouraged to participate in community service. Making a care package for one of our troops overseas is a way for you to participate and help others.

Hundreds of thousands of American troops are deployed in hostile and remote regions of the world, including the Middle East, Afghanistan, Africa, Guantanamo Bay and on ships throughout international waters. The physical conditions they must endure are difficult and they may be separated from loved ones for long periods of time. **OPERATION GRATITUDE** seeks to lift troops' morale, and bring a smile to their faces by sending care packages addressed to individual service members deployed overseas. **OPERATION GRATITUDE** care packages contain food, toiletries, entertainment items and personal letters of appreciation, all wrapped with good wishes of love and support.

Here's how to do it.

STEP 1: Write a letter or a card to say "Thank You" to the soldier that will receive your package. You may decorate your letter however you'd like. Soldiers really like bright colors and drawings and would love to see your artwork. You don't need to put a stamp on your letter! It will be included in your package.

STEP 2: Make your Care Package. You can include such things as: AA Batteries; Crossword or Sudoku Books; Baby wipes or Purelle hand wipes; Ziploc bags; Playing cards; Writing notebooks; Pens; Stationary/note



cards; Beanie Babies; Packs of Gum; Girl Scout Cookies; Lip Balm; Socks; Toothpaste and toothbrush; Stamps.

STEP 3: Send your Care Package: Operation Gratitude is an organization that works with the military to find soldiers who need a care package. Please send your package to Operation Gratitude and they will get your package to a soldier. Address is: **Operation Gratitude, 16444 Regugio Road, Encino, California 91436.** If you cannot send a package, please make a financial donation to help this valuable organization continue its mission to help our service members. **Web address is:**

www.opgratitude.com

Fence Selection & Standards, it's more than you think...



Probably the most hotly contested area in this community is fence standards and the need for compliance with their specifications.

What you probably don't understand is that the requirement for 6-inch wide picket shadowbox fencing wasn't some standard the developer just picked out of a hat. It was actually mandated by the State of Florida in response to the building code enhancements that were enacted after hurricane Andrew tore apart southern Florida in August 2002.

Shadowbox fencing actually reduces the wind load pressing against a fence during high winds. The open slating

(spacing) between the fencing pickets allows air to go through the fence and thereby relieves the stress on the fence and reduces the likelihood of the fence collapsing and then being picked up and hurled into neighboring properties.

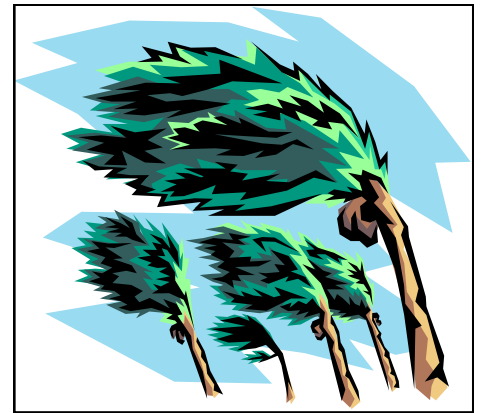
Hurricanes probably pose the single greatest threat to living in Florida. Winds in excess of 70 miles per hour can cause extensive damage and if the wind picks up an improperly installed fence, there's no telling of the damage and possible loss of life that can result.

That is specifically why the Covenants, Conditions & Restrictions go to great lengths to describe in detail the requirement that all fencing be constructed with 6-inch wide pickets and be assembled in a shadowbox configuration, not a privacy configuration nor board-on-board configuration.

However, with advances in technology some of the newer space-age fencing materials can actually withstand even greater wind loads than wood fencing

but the fact remains that until the governing documents are changed to allow the Board of Directors some flexibility in approving fencing materials and designs that are different than the specifications in the governing documents, those specifications must be followed to the letter.

As the story on page 3 about the proposed amendments to the governing documents highlights, the Board really needs your vote to amend the design standards so that you may legally construct or have installed some of the newer types of fencing that meet or exceed the new hurricane standards.



Weed Control Begins With Proper Management...



Proper management practices that encourage a dense, thriving turf are the best method of weed control. Healthy turf shades the soil so sunlight can't reach weed seeds ready to germinate. A thick turf also minimizes the physical space available for weeds to become established.

There are several management practices that will promote a healthy, dense grass.

- **Proper Turf grass Selection:** Proper management begins with selection of the best turf species or variety for a particular area. For example, heavily shaded areas will support only a few turf grass species. This results in thin, weak turf that is very susceptible to weed invasion. Good grass choices for shady conditions would be certain cultivars of St. Augustine

grass, zoysia grass, and to a lesser degree, centipede grass.

- **Proper Cultural Practices:** Proper fertilization, watering, mowing, and control of other pests are required to produce a dense turf that will prevent weed infestation. If turf is over- or under-watered, over- or under-fertilized, or mowed too low or too infrequently, the turf is weakened and cannot compete with weeds. Damaged areas resulting from using unsharpened mowers increase time needed for turf recovery, allowing for weed invasion. It is very important to understand that weeds don't create a void, they fill a void.

- **Sanitation:** It is extremely important to prevent the introduction of weeds into lawn areas. A good practice is to wash off mowers and trimmers used in weed-infested areas before mowing or trimming in weed-free areas. Similarly, rototillers should be thoroughly cleaned prior to and after using to minimize dispersal of weed seeds found in the soil. Yard clippings that contain weeds should be properly disposed of or composted to reduce the possibility of unwanted contamination

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from the word 'neighbor' and that is what our Board has continually encouraged from the first turnover meeting. Get to know your neighbor... not only to help them, but in turn if we all watch out for one another then there will be less crime and more knowledge of community meetings and events just from word of mouth alone. Also you will find out we have great people living in Gentle Woods!

We are working on several issues to improve our community and I urge you to read each and every page of this newsletter. We had several people at the meetings who stated they had not receive notices, bills etc. The Board wants to assure you that several notices and newsletters have been sent out regarding meetings. All our notices, by law, are sent via first class mail. They are also available online through our website (address listed on the front of this newsletter). Our new management company has verified everyone's address of record, so if there are any reasons why you feel you have not received any of our mailings be sure to contact the management company especially if you change addresses. Most importantly do not throw out these mailings assuming they are just another advertisement!

We also would like to advise homeowners to take down any holiday decorations and political signs and prepare for the upcoming lawn growing season. Our inspections do not stop just because it is winter, weeds continue to grow all year long so get a head start now before the weeds take over and it be-

comes a more costly issue of replacing sod.

We have seen many great improvements with how people are taking pride in their property, along with increased community activism regarding increases in the crime rate.

Our neighborhood is not alone in this situation. We have had many incidents of car and home break-ins, some just by kicking in the front door so make sure your alarms are monitored. There are also inexpensive ways to reinforce your doors and keep burglars from breaking glass and unlocking your windows to gain access. These are all available at the local hardware chains.

We cannot express the importance of also calling the police when you notice any unusual behavior or incidents. They have told us repeatedly that they need to know so they can increase patrols in the area. Knowing your neighbor and watching out for one another probably is the most important way to prevent these break-ins from happening in the first place

Please get involved in the community. We need everyone's help as no community or Board can do it alone. Please join us at our next meeting on February 18th, and share your thoughts and recommendations for improvements, and meet some of the very people who are already working hard to improve our community. Thank you so much for your past and continued support. See you in February at the HOA meeting

Liz Smith, President!

Questions & Answers...

Q1: I heard you were constructing a playground on the vacant lot on Gentle Oaks Drive North, is this true?

A1: Great question! One of the things we will be working on this year is taking suggestions what to do with this vacant lot on Gentle Oaks Dr N now that the Association owns the property. However, we want to STRESS that nothing has been decided at this point and won't be decided until we have several more discussions with everyone. The main telephone equipment for the neighborhood is located in this area and we may not be able to construct anything more than a few benches to sit on and maybe a barbeque grill. If you come to the homeowners' meeting on February 18th, we would love to hear what you think should be our focus for this recreation area.

Q2: I got a bill when I received a 3rd Notice of Violation, I do not agree with these fees and won't pay them.

A2: The fees for sending the 3rd and 4th notices of Violation by Certified and First Class mail are required to comply with the Florida statutes. Since you did not respond to either of the two or three previous notices or you did not correct the problem, the fee is required because our management company must send an inspector to re-inspect your property and to begin building a case file for a hearing if the problem is not corrected. These fees are authorized and must be paid or you can incur additional late fees and interest.

Q3: Why can't you make the annual dues payable later in the year? January 31st is so close to the holidays and hard for me to find the money to pay.

A3: While it would be easy to say that we could extend the deadline to April or sometime later, the Association would have to recalculate all of the bills to add the additional 3 to 4 months to the annual amount as a pro-ration if we were to change the

deadline to a later date. Because this is an annual bill we feel it is better to plan accordingly throughout the year so that the funds are available to pay the bill, which is actually due on January 1st but not considered late unless the payment is not postmarked by January 31st.

Q4: The house across from me continues to have a trailer in the driveway and their yard is always a mess. I thought this was a violation?

A4: You are correct, it was a violation and was addressed. This was a case of a tenant living in a soon-to-be foreclosed house and the owner was not responsive to our requests to correct the problem. Our attorney contacted the tenant and they removed the trailer and mowed the lawn. Unfortunately they were evicted the following week when the bank took back the house. This does highlight the problems being faced as the foreclosure rate jumps. The Association will go the extra distance to get both the city and the courts involved so the neighborhood will not adversely suffer because of these neglected properties.

Q5: Are there any plans to provide a extra police presence in the neighborhood? I thing we really need this because of all of the break ins.

A5: Unfortunately due to our tight budget, we have not allocated any funds for this, however, if we collect the projected dues payments on-time and are successful with some of the impending legal actions on properties with large outstanding balances, we should be able to fund stepped up patrols. However, if you continue to let the police know of problems they will step up patrols without us having to pay for off-duty officers. If you get involved with our Neighborhood Watch program, that too will help make crooks think twice before coming here.

What's being considered for the community...

Playground/Recreational Area—We will start looking at ideas on how to best utilize this open area now that the Association owns the property. If you have any suggestions, please send them to us.

Website Enhancements—Although we don't pay anything for our web page, Florida Property & Association Management is having their entire website redesigned to meet the new 64-bit Internet standards and in the process will be adding several new features to our community link. Some of them will be a community calendar and more interactive forms. We are looking into the possibility thanks to Ken Rampersad, of having some of our documents made bilingual.

Front & Rear Entrances—Vandals have yet again caused us to get the fencing pressure washed. In addition, when the roadway on Morse Ave is finished we will also be getting quotes to have the stucco repaired and the columns and front entry sign repainted. Depending on the estimates and our budget, we may be able to get this done later in the year after the hurricane season passes. In the community if the amendments to the governing documents on fencing do not pass, we will have no choice but require those owners with 4-inch wide picket

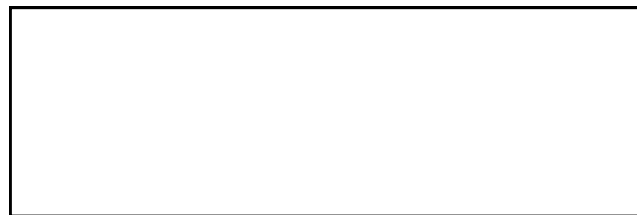
fencing to replace the fencing with approved 6-inch wide picket fencing.

Landscaping—A new lawn vendor takes over on February 1st and we will be looking at ways to improve the landscaping, shrubbery and announcement board. We will also be looking into the costs to installing palms and other small tropical plants in the center island as well as in the two beds immediately to the left and right of the entrance to help beautify the look of the neighborhood. The sod will be replaced in the front areas this spring and the area will be treating the weeds over the next two months, so if you see the area looking dead, it is on purpose!

Security Cameras — There has been a lot of talk about installing them at the front entrance to both watch the children at the bus stop in the morning and afternoon as well as to record tag numbers of all vehicles coming into the neighborhood at the front entrance. We know this is a very expensive proposition and will see if there are any city funds available to assist us. We understand several other neighborhoods have been successful in getting some sort of help from the city so we too will research this to see if we can get any funds to help offset the enormous costs associated with this effort.



Gentle Woods Homeowners' Assn
P.O. Box 350210
Jacksonville, FL 32235-0210



Return Service Requested