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The Prez says, *“School is back in session. Drive carefully!”* On behalf of the Countryside Valley HOA Board of Directors, I would like to wish you and your family a **Happy Labor Day**. This is one of a series of bimonthly newsletters to help keep you up-to-date on important information regarding our neighborhood and community. We hope you find it useful. If you are new to our neighborhood, welcome.

Having written dozens of newsletters, I find myself repeating myself quite a bit. For those who have resided in Countryside Valley for a number of years, it becomes “Blah, blah, blah.” Sorry about that. So, for this newsletter, I decided to be a little more creative. Hopefully, it will provide for a better read.

Living With an HOA

Growing up in Pittsburgh, Pa. in the 1960s and 70s, **we did not have restrictions on homes or properties**. Lucky for us. I remember my Dad burning branches, dead grass, wood, and anything else that would burn in our back yard. We could park where we wanted, trim the bushes or not, or leave the chipped paint on the eaves. No one in the neighborhood said anything other than to give compliments to residents with well-groomed lawns.

However, back then, it seemed that **homeowners took pride in their homes and properties**. Without some management company or HOA threats, people did cut their grass, trim the vegetation, plant flowers, and paint the chipped wood. Taking pride in one's home was a value that many of us today seem to have lost. Then came the advent of the homeowner's associations.

Usually associated with tract home developments, builders began forming associations to help guarantee the aesthetic appearance of the neighborhoods. **Boards were created and management companies hired to help enforce the CC&Rs** that govern those neighborhoods. In the 1980s, U.S. Homes began building several “Countryside” neighborhoods around what would be the Countryside Community Club. This included our neighborhood, Countryside Valley.

A set of CC&Rs were put in place, a Board was elected, and a management company hired to oversee its affairs. At some point, **the Board decided that they would do the work of the management company** to save money, and we have been without a management company ever since then. Today, a group of volunteers have agreed to manage the dues, pay the bills, oversee the parking situation, run monthly meetings, walk the neighborhood and send letters to remind residents about CC&R violations, write newsletters, ensure the gate is in working order, take minutes at the meetings, arrange for monthly maintenance of the common areas, and dozens of other things.

As a teacher, I notice each year that there are some students who work very hard to follow the classroom rules, expectations, and procedures. Other students are a little less diligent, while there are still the few that choose to consistently break the rules and suffer some kind of consequence for their behavior.

Which brings us to today. We have all chosen to purchase or rent a home in a lovely neighborhood that, like it or not, has a set of rules and restrictions affecting our homes, properties, and in some way our behavior. Some residents choose to meet the guidelines of the CC&Rs without fail. Others stumble every now and again, while still others choose to violate the rules and restrictions on a consistent basis.

This forces **the volunteer Board members to try their best to uphold the CC&Rs** and hold residents accountable for their actions. This is easier said than done. However, this Board continues to work together to help ensure that our neighborhood is one in which its residents are proud to live.

In education, **there is a growing trend for students to self-evaluate their progress** with regard to social, behavior, and academic measurements. They even go so far as to lead student-teacher conferences with their self-evaluations. This allows the student to reflect and build on their strengths while setting goals for areas of improvement.

So, I thought a **self-evaluation for us might be a nice change of pace to help us see what our strengths and weaknesses** are as residents of Countryside Valley. The idea is to read the following statements and answer “yes” or “no” to each. Like school, there will be a grading scale: 9-10 = A (excellent), 8 = B (good), 7 = C (fair), 6 = D (poor), and 5 or below = F (failing). We get a point for each “yes” to the following statements. Good luck.

1. My \$31 monthly dues are current.
Yes / No
1. My trash and recycling receptacles are in the garage or back yard on non-pick up days. Yes / No
1. I park my vehicles in my garage or driveway (original driveway, 2 across) not in the street. Yes / No
1. My windows are covered with actual window coverings and are in good shape. Yes / No
1. My yard is free of weeds, leaves and trash, and my vegetation is well trimmed and pruned. Yes / No
1. The stucco and wood eaves (fascia) are well maintained and painted in the last 10 years. Yes / No
1. My gate is in good shape and not in need of repair or replacement.
Yes / No
1. The sidewalk and/or street in front of my home are clear of dirt, rocks and other debris. Yes / No
1. The back of my home is not an eyesore to any of my neighbors.
Yes / No
1. Oil stains do not cover my driveway and my hose is hung rather than laying in the yard. Yes / No

How did you do? Were you able to evaluate what may be some of your strengths and possibly a couple of areas of improvement? These are the things the Board and everyone else who travels through our neighborhood notice, including realtors and prospective new residents. So, let's bring back some of that pride in home ownership and do our part to make our homes and properties look their very best, not because a Board or some CC&Rs say so, but because we want to be proud of where we live. Well, that is it. Thank you for taking the time to read the letter and doing your own report card. **Hopefully, we will all get A's in the near future.**

I would like to thank the current CVHOA Board of Directors for their time and commitment. They are:

- Beau Wilcox - Vice President
- Andy Woodward - Secretary
- Leo Race - Treasurer
- Liz McKethen - Member at Large

If you have any questions or concerns, contact us at our "hotline" number or email address. A reminder that all Board meetings are held the first Monday of each month at 7 p.m. at the Countryside Community Club.

Respectfully,

Todd Autenreith - President CVHOA