



Winter 2003

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# Neighborhood News

## Letter from the President

*By Joni Jones, President*

### *Happy New Year! New Pace Car Program*

We are well into 2003 and I wanted to wish everyone a happy and prosperous new year. A magazine called "Good Living" named Austin the 4<sup>th</sup> best city to live in America and neighborhoods like the Great Hills Reserve is one of the reasons why! It takes the effort of every neighbor to make it so and I thank you all for doing your part. But if you feel you need to do more, please consider serving on the GHRHA board next year. The year begins in May when we have our annual meeting. We are looking for a new Vice President, Treasurer, Secretary, and people to serve and head up the Architectural Review Committee.

This year we set some significant goals and have achieved all but one. My goals were to give something back to the homeowners – we chose fire extinguishers and to have the addresses painted on our curbs thereby making GHRHA a safer place to live. We also wanted to get our website up and running which we did early last fall. Please check it out at [www.greathillsreserve.com](http://www.greathillsreserve.com). We have also incorporated the Westhills Estates into our phone directory to facilitate better communication between neighborhoods that are adjacent to us. We continue to pursue a greater degree of enforceability of our deed restrictions

by legal means and we plan to have this voted on at our annual meeting.

Finally, the one problem that continues to plague our streets is speeding. Beginning this month we are asking for volunteers to sign up and become part of our new PACE CAR PROGRAM. By doing so you pledge to drive the speed limit in the GHRHA and hopefully in the Dominion, the Arbor at Great Hills and other adjacent neighborhoods. Office Nelson continues to inform us that the majority of tickets for speeding in our neighborhood are given out to our own residents. So maybe this will be a start to controlling the speed limit along Yaupon, Fireoak and Cassia Drives. We will have stickers available (similar to the ones you see for sports activities) for the back windows of Pace Cars. We will not be seeing stop signs or speed humps from the city any time soon. We have talked, asked and been continually turned down for 2-3 years. Please consider this avenue to help with this problem.

You are what makes GHRHA such a good neighborhood to live – please stay involved.

### *Holiday Home Tour Update*

The 2002 Holiday Home Tour was a great evening! Four of our neighbors graciously invited us into their homes to enjoy their decorations, holiday cheer, and traditions. Special thanks to the wonderful neighbors who opened up their homes:

- **Jamie & Richard Loftin**
- **LaVonne & Wayne Danielson**
- **Brenda & Mike Terzich**
- **Peggy & Kevin Schott**

# Fight Your Taxes!

*An editorial*

My first thought at giving advice on how to save money on property taxes was to warn people that I am making no guarantees. These thoughts are my opinions on strategies that may have or have worked for me.

1. Take photographs of problem areas in your house when the problem happens. I had pictures of water-damaged areas inside and outside my house. I also had pictures of rotted wood, damage to my linoleum or wood floors, etc...
2. Get a listing of selling prices in your area. The county tax person will also have this and will always pick houses that maximize your chance of paying more tax. I had a prioritized list of houses that I felt were really comparable to my house, and why they were comparable.
3. Have a mind set that this is your

money - not someone else's.

4. Have a very pleasant dialogue with the county tax person. Always smile and suggest things. Never point fingers at them. Give factual information. If he or she mentions a house price in your area for a comparable house as say \$400,000, say: "Ok, can we look more deeply into that house's details." Look for things like the year it was built, does it have a pool, is it mostly brick, is that lot size much bigger than yours etc... You can now reasonably reply back. "My lot is almost half the lot size of this \$400,000 house". Also, "My house is 8 years older than that house", etc....
5. Allot time to go to Travis and Williamson Counties. Williamson gets it's tax info from the Travis tax database, but will ask you to an informal meeting sooner or later (at least it did for me). You will then have to contest the Travis hearing informally too. Plan on appealing to the formal hearing too.
6. There are property tax savings

consultants who will do the work for you for a fee. This way if you have other commitments like work or children, you do not have to give them up.

7. Ask your neighbors if they have advice for you or if they have successfully contested their taxes.

8. Know a reasonable amount - i.e. in detail - of any house that sold close to you if that selling price was in your favor. If that house sold for more than you think your house is worth, know exactly why.

## Summer Backyard Tour

*Just like the Holiday Home Tour, but you can wear shorts!*

The Holiday Home Tour was such a success that we decided to have another one just like it, but tour each other's backyards.

The date is May 31, 2003. Look for more information on the web (or as a flyer), as we get closer to the date.

Would you like to host a segment of the tour? Contact Elizabeth Lescher at [elescher@hotmail.com](mailto:elescher@hotmail.com), or 918-9350, or you can fill out the online form at [www.greathillsreserve.com](http://www.greathillsreserve.com).



*On February 8, 2003, enough snow fell in Austin to build a 6" snowman!*

### Real Estate News

**House Sales November 1, 2002 – January 31, 2003**

*Compliments of Sheri Brummett, Coldwell Banker, R. Smith*

**Actives**

Address	Bdrms	Bath	List Price
10406 Cassia Cove	4	2.5	\$319,900
7779 Yaupon Drive	4	3	\$334,900
7768 Yaupon Drive	4	2.5	\$359,900
7704 Yaupon Drive	5	3.5	\$479,000

**Solds**

Address	Bdrms	Bath	SqFt	Sold Price	\$p/sqft
7800 Blue Lilly	4	3	appx.3420	\$325,000	\$95/sq.ft
7791 Yaupon Dr	3	2.5	appx.2677	\$320,000	\$119/sq.ft
7741 Yaupon Dr	4	3.5	appx.3468	\$370,000	\$106/sq.ft
7532 Fireoak Dr	4	3	appx. 2911	\$360,000	\$123/sq.ft
7795 Yaupon Dr	3	3.5	appx.2785	\$384,500	\$138/sq.ft

*\*Average days on market was 60 and average price per sq.ft. was \$116.00. Current average days on market in the Austin MLS is 5 months. Email [callsheri4homes@austin.rr.com](mailto:callsheri4homes@austin.rr.com) if you have any questions I can help with or provide comps in the area for challenging your tax appraisals this year!*

## Volunteer

The Homeowners Association is looking for residents to get involved.

- May 12 is the meeting where Reserve residents vote in their new officers. We need volunteers for Officers (Vice President, Secretary, and Treasurer)
- The Architectural Review Committee needs members. Call Brenda Barron at 918-2737 or email her at [architecture@greathillsreserve.com](mailto:architecture@greathillsreserve.com)

## Newsletter Opt Out

Want to save a tree? Instead of getting the Great Hills Reserve newsletter delivered to your door, have it delivered to your inbox.

The newsletter will be formatted in Adobe Acrobat, so all you need to view the newsletter is the free reader that you can download from Adobe! When the newsletter is ready, you will receive a notification by email that you can view the newsletter at the Great Hills Reserve website.

### How Do I Opt-Out?

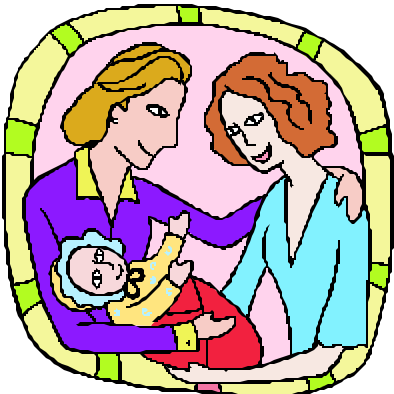
To opt out of receiving a paper copy of the newsletter, fill out the online form at [www.greathillsreserve.com](http://www.greathillsreserve.com), or email [newsletter@greathillsreserve.com](mailto:newsletter@greathillsreserve.com).

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*Are you a Babysitter? Do you mow lawns? Do you need some publicity?  
Get your info in the newsletter! Email me at  
[newsletter@greathillsreserve.com](mailto:newsletter@greathillsreserve.com)*

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## Congratulations!



## CrimeWatch

*Officer John Nelson*

Over the past several months we have seen an increase in residential burglaries and burglary of vehicles in the Great Hills area. Please keep your doors and windows locked and alarms set. Do not leave items in your car.

A pattern may be developing that indicates the suspect/suspects are targeting houses near green belt areas and Great Hills Park. If you see someone wandering in the green belt or park keep an eye on them. We are not positive that the suspects are using the green belt or park to scout homes or use the undeveloped area to approach the houses, it just appears that a pattern is developing. If you see anyone who appears suspicious call 9-1-1, and please try to provide a good location. Even if you do not live near the park or green belt DON'T LET YOUR GUARD DOWN!

John Nelson #131  
Senior Police Officer,  
Northwest District Representative  
(512) 974-5556, Fax (512) 974-1280  
[john.nelson2@ci.austin.tx.us](mailto:john.nelson2@ci.austin.tx.us)

Anna Yan was born on October 24, 2002 to Joanne Chin & Hong Yan who live at 7306 Shasta Cove.

Kathryn Grace was born on September 18, 2002 to Shanna & Wes Jones who live at 7600 Fireoak.

## Great Hills Reserve Homeowners Association

PO Box 202643  
Austin, Texas 78720-2643

### President

**Joni Jones**

918-1787

[president@greathillsreserve.com](mailto:president@greathillsreserve.com)

### Vice President

**Ajit Gokhale**

401-9644

[vice\\_president@greathillsreserve.com](mailto:vice_president@greathillsreserve.com)

### Treasurer

**Pat Dreiling**

331-7886

[treasurer@greathillsreserve.com](mailto:treasurer@greathillsreserve.com)

### Secretary

**Kathy Balazs**

219-1527

[secretary@greathillsreserve.com](mailto:secretary@greathillsreserve.com)

### Safety & Block Captain

#### Coordinator

**Sheri Brummett**

335-9602

[crime@greathillsreserve.com](mailto:crime@greathillsreserve.com)

[block\\_captain@greathillsreserve.com](mailto:block_captain@greathillsreserve.com)

### Newsletter Editor

**Elizabeth Lescher**

918-9350

[newsletter@greathillsreserve.com](mailto:newsletter@greathillsreserve.com)

### Communications Distribution

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335-9602

[crime@greathillsreserve.com](mailto:crime@greathillsreserve.com)

### Reserve Directory

**Tom Wood**

918-3876

[tom-wood@austin.rr.com](mailto:tom-wood@austin.rr.com)

### Architectural Review

**Brenda Barron**

918-2737

[architecture@greathillsreserve.com](mailto:architecture@greathillsreserve.com)

### APD District Representative

**Officer John Nelson**

974-5556

[john.nelson2@ci.austin.tx.us](mailto:john.nelson2@ci.austin.tx.us)

# Upcoming Events

**May 12, 2003**  
**GHRHA Meeting**  
**Time TBD, Laurel Mountain**

Vote for the 2003 – 2004 Board officers, vote on changes to the association Deed Restrictions.

**May 31, 2003**  
**Summer Backyard Tour**  
**Time & Location TBD**

Visit with your neighbors, tour their backyards, eat, drink, and socialize.

**Remember: If you have a complaint about a neighbor, please be sure your complaint falls within the deed restrictions first, as these are the only areas this committee enforces. And if you would like a response to your complaint, please include your phone number or email address with your communication.**



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TomU@TheUsseryGroup.com

**Tom Ussery**

## *I want to be part of the Pace Car Program!*

By completing this form, and placing the Pace Car sticker on my car, I agree to drive the speed limit in the Great Hills Reserve and surrounding Great Hills communities.

**Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Address:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Phone Number:** \_\_\_\_\_ **# of Cars:** \_\_\_\_\_

Please return to Joni Jones at 10305 Nolana Cove, fill out the online form, or email at [president@greathillsreserve.com](mailto:president@greathillsreserve.com)