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Neighbors InDeed Keeps Up with Current Issues

BY BARRY MACKINTOSH

Neighbors InDeed holds an annual all-hands meeting to inform volunteers about issues affecting Lincoln Hills and our residents. On September 29, three excellent speakers addressed topics of interest to the community.

Resident GARY LEONARD, a retired police chief, offered tips on home security derived from interviews with imprisoned “professional” burglars.

Not surprisingly, thieves favor unoccupied and unsecured homes believed to contain valuables in neighborhoods without watchful eyes observing suspicious strangers. So anything that can be done to make a home appear occupied, secured, and watched will help deter break-ins.

Among Gary’s suggestions:

- Noting and reporting unfamiliar people and vehicles
- A security bar inside the garage man-door leading outside
- Routinely locking the door between garage and house
- Security system signs—even if the house lacks one
- Covering garage windows to hide the absence of a vehicle
- A barking dog—or a sensor-activated recording of one
- Outside lights triggered by motion detectors

Resident JUDY PAYNE, a registered nurse and senior care consultant, spoke about issues surrounding aging residents that Handy Helpers and other home visitors should be sensitive to.

Judy noted that falls are a leading cause of serious and possibly fatal injuries. So if a resident appears unsteady when walking, a visitor might call attention to trip hazards like loose throw rugs and suggest that raised garage curbs and sills be highlighted with paint.

Judy also urged attention to signs that a resident might need ongoing assistance or care. Handy Helpers observing conditions affecting health or safety are to contact Larry Schurr or Herman Tijsseling, the program’s coordinators, who may arrange to inform the resident’s designated contact person or determine whether further action should be taken.

CHRIS O’KEEFE, Senior Director of Facilities and Maintenance for Lincoln Hills, discussed “green changes” in managing our community association’s extensive physical assets. Several environmentally friendly, cost-saving steps have been or will be taken:

- Computerized irrigation with modernized sprinklers and emitters has cut water use by 20 percent from five years ago.
- Replacement of turf by shrubs and bark in selected locations further reduces watering.
- A new weather station providing real-time soil moisture data will program irrigation even more efficiently.
- Retrofitting our streetlights with longer-lasting, energy-saving LEDs will substantially reduce our electric bills and maintenance costs.
- Non-caustic cleaners have replaced harsh chemicals in building maintenance.
- Grazing by sheep and goats has reduced mechanical mowing and improved open space management.

Chris encourages residents to report irrigation problems and other maintenance issues in common areas to him via his phone number or email address (in the back of the *Compass*) or the desk in either lodge.

Neighbors InDeed President JOAN BRANT-LOVE kicked off the meeting by noting the continued increase in the organization's services to residents. Neighbors InDeed received 4188 calls in 2009 and 5111 calls in 2010, and 4539 calls by the meeting date this year forecast a still-higher total for 2011.

Last year 53 percent of the calls were for Handy Helpers, 29 percent were for information and referral services, and 13 percent were for medical equipment loans. This year's calls are following much the same pattern.

All services are provided at no charge. But grateful residents have responded so generously with donations that Neighbors InDeed was recently able to contribute \$1000 to the Lincoln Hills Foundation, which previously had helped fund Neighbors InDeed.

Whether you need information about a household service, referral to a recommended service provider, assistance with a home maintenance task, or a medical equipment loan, Neighbors InDeed is only a phone call to 223-2763 away. Or dial the same number to learn how you can volunteer to help others benefit from these services. You'll be glad you did!