

NORTHWOOD NEWS

PUBLISHED BIMONTHLY BY THE NORTHWOOD-FOUR CORNERS CIVIC ASSOCIATION ■ JUNE 2020

County Pesticide Law Aims to Protect Public Health

By Karen A. Williams

Montgomery County has recently taken steps to reduce the environmental impact from chemicals found in lawn care products. The County's pesticide law restricts the use of most synthetic pesticides and herbicides—including "weed and feed" and pre-emergent products—on private lawns, playgrounds, mulched recreation areas, and childcare facilities. Most products with an EPA registration number on the label cannot be used on these areas.

Only organic and minimum risk products are now allowed.

Exposure to certain pesticides and herbicides has been linked to serious health conditions in children, including pediatric cancers, decreased cognitive functioning, and behavioral problems. Exposure for adults contributes to Parkinson's disease, diabetes, leukemia, lymphoma, lupus, rheumatoid arthritis, dementia, Alzheimer's disease, and a variety of cancers. Impacts on the environment include destruction of pollinators, aquatic wildlife, and bird and mammal birth defects and mortality. The purpose of the law is to protect public health by minimizing these potential hazards to people and the environment.

There are non- and less-toxic alternatives to harmful pesticides and management tools for growing a healthy, green lawn that do not pose a threat to public health. County residents who must use a pesticide to control weeds, insects, or diseases in their lawns can look for any one of the following designations on product labels to be compliant with the County law:

1. "OMRI"—Certified by the Organic Material Review

Institute for use in organic crop production. Most of these have an OMRI logo. See a list at <https://www.omri.org/omri-lists>.

2. "For Organic Gardening"—Listed by the

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No NFCCA Meeting in June

The June meeting of the Northwood-Four Corners Civic Association has been cancelled. Due to the coronavirus pandemic, all public schools—including our usual meeting place, Forest Knolls Elementary—have been closed.

We expect that our next meeting will take place on its usual, scheduled day, the second Wednesday in October (October 14th). That will be our annual membership meeting, when we vote for officers for the new fiscal year.

We plan to print the *Northwood News* at that time, but please also check our website for updates. If you have not already done so, we urge you to join the neighborhood listserv; see page 2 or www.nfcca.org for details. ■

WWW.NFCCA.ORG

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

During my last President's Message, I wrote about how the first quarter of 2020 had thrown us all some curveballs. Now, that seems like the understatement of the year! As the pandemic continues, we have all seen and heard reports of how deeply this crisis is impacting our community. The loss of life has been tragic and the continued rise of reported cases has been very discouraging. Yet, there has been some good news to shine a ray of light through the darkness. We have also heard stories about how neighbors have supported neighbors, how individuals have uplifted our community, and how resilient we all really are in the face of a crisis. The situation is still uncertain and a bit frightening; as of this writing, Montgomery County is still under a stay-at-home order until further notice. But, we will continue to come together as a neighborhood to make it through this pandemic.

Later in this newsletter, you'll find information on how to sign up for the NFCCA Community Cares Network as well as how to locate additional local resources on our website. I would also encourage everyone to monitor the County's Department of Health and Human Services COVID-19 website (<https://montgomerycountymd.gov/HHS/Right-Nav/Coronavirus.html>) for up-to-date information. The county site provides excellent information on where to get tested, how to protect yourself in public (wear your mask!), and data on emerging cases.

Please note that our neighborhood meeting planned for June 10 has been canceled as Forest Knolls Elementary School is still closed and the meeting space is inaccessible. The NFCCA Board will continue to provide updates about any virtual (or otherwise, if possible) neighborhood events we may hold during the summer. As your elected Board, we will continue to prioritize safety when it comes to planning or canceling any neighborhood events.

I am proud to be a part of such a giving neighborhood that supports, encourages, and uplifts others when we are all at our most vulnerable. I hope you and your families stay well.

—Samantha Jones

Communicate With Neighbors

NFCCA Listserv

To join: nfcca-subscribe@yahoogroups.com
[add "un" to unsubscribe]
To send messages to group:
nfcca@yahoogroups.com

Nextdoor/Northwood-Four Corners

<https://nextdoor.com>; enter your street address; choose "Northwood-Four Corners."

Twitter: @NFCCAMoCo

Facebook: www.facebook.com/nfccamoco

Park [on FB]: NFCCAPark ■

NORTHWOOD NEWS

Northwood News is published by the Northwood-Four Corners Civic Association. The NFCCA represents the ~1,485 households in the area bounded by Colesville Rd. (Rte. 29), University Blvd. (Rte. 193), Caddington Ave., and the Northwest Branch.

Any resident of this area is eligible to join the NFCCA. Annual dues are \$10 per household and may be paid at any Association meeting or mailed to the treasurer.

The *Northwood News* is published five times a year—in October, December, February, April, and June. To place an ad or discuss a story, please contact the editor.

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Visit Our Website

www.nfcca.org

Checklist of COVID-19 Symptoms

- | | |
|---|---|
| ■ Cough | ■ New loss of taste or smell |
| ■ Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing | This list is not all of the possible symptoms. Less common symptoms include gastrointestinal symptoms like nausea, vomiting, or diarrhea. |
| ■ Fever | [Source: CDC.] ■ |
| ■ Chills | |
| ■ Muscle pain | |
| ■ Sore throat | |

Pesticide Laws

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1)

USDA for use in organic crop production.

3. Products that have been designated as a minimum risk by the EPA, without an EPA registration number on the label.

Using organic management methods and avoiding the use of chemicals on lawns are not only better for people and the environment, but also healthier for the grass. The focus is on encouraging healthy, lush lawns that can resist weeds, insects, and diseases naturally. Organic lawn care creates favorable conditions for important soil microorganisms to thrive, aerates the soil, and encourages deep

roots. In addition, lawns that are treated only with organic pesticides and herbicides help to store climate warming carbon in the soil, soak up more storm water, and provide more oxygen.

Restrictions in the new law do not apply to control of tree pests, household pests, biting insects, and certain invasive plant species and noxious weeds.

The law does not ban the sale of any pesticides. Retailers will be required to display signs where prohibited pesticides are sold, informing buyers about the County law and identifying pest control options that are allowed for lawn applications. The County is currently developing signs for use by retailers. Previously purchased products that are no longer allowed under the law may be disposed of by taking them to the Household Hazardous Waste in the Recycling Area of the Shady Grove Processing Facility and Transfer Station in Derwood, Maryland (www.montgomerycountymd.gov/sws/hw).

Resources

- Information on the Montgomery County Pesticide Law: montgomerycountymd.gov/lawns/law.

- Information on organic lawn care: montgomerycountymd.gov/lawns.

- Email questions to: Ask-DEP@MontgomeryCountyMD.gov.

[Williams, a botanist specializing in crop diversity with the USDA Agricultural Research Service (ARS), has lived on Snowy Owl Drive for 20 years.] ■



An ARS agronomist displays test-plot-grown broccoli that will be used to determine pesticide residue levels.

NFCCA BOARD

The Board of Directors for the Northwood-Four Corners Civic Association serves for one year and meets every month except July and August. Current officers (until October 2020) are:

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We Are Selling Homes ... Covid-19 Carefully

With strict adherence to CDC guidelines and Maryland State guidelines for real estate activities, we are helping sellers and buyers. When personal meetings are required, to open a property for an assessment or an inspection to get to closing, we use masks and gloves and adhere to strict social distancing. We have increased our use of virtual meetings, virtual tours, e-signature contracts and strict social-distancing for when personal meetings are necessary. We have built web tools into our Team operations over the years and now we are deepening those tools for the duration of this pandemic.

Corona-Impact Felt in April in Local Market

March '20 did not show much corona-impact on our in Montgomery County (MoCo) market but, April shows severe impacts. Inventory of Active listings was down 25.8% from last year while, volume of Closed Sales was down 14.2% compared to sales in APRIL of last year! **Average Close Prices** were

up 7.9% in **APRIL '20** vs. **APRIL '19**. **Days on Market (DOM)** of Sold Listings was down substantially, from an average of 40 days in **APRIL '19** to just 24 days in **APRIL '20**. This faster pace of '20 sales indicates that both buyers and sellers are quick to make a deal. This is a major surprise. Homes are selling faster and with less hassle as buyers and sellers are adjusting to the realities that they need to move on with their lives!

Consider Me Your Virtual Real Estate Agent

We can connect thru Facetime, Skype, Zoom, you name it! We will connect you with a team of industry professionals who work together to provide you with a seamless experience from contract to close. Feel free to call to discuss how we can navigate through mortgage, title, and insurance requirements to ensure a smooth and successful closing while adhering to strict CDC guidelines.

Call Today for My Free Seller/Buyer Market Analysis

Sales in Northwood/Forest Knolls: Since January 1, 2020

ADDRESS	SALE PRICE	SELLER SUBSIDY	CLOSE DATE	STYLE	BR	BA/ HBA	DOM	LOT SQ FT	SUBDIVISION
305 Marvin Rd	\$575,888		2/25/2020	Cape Cod	4	2/1	7	5,769	Northwood Village
10824 Margate Rd	\$560,000		4/22/2020	Split Level	4	2/1	4	6,299	Northwood Park View
127 Southwood Ave	\$542,000		4/30/2020	Ranch/Rambler	3	2	4	10,258	Northwood Park
10228 Edgewood Ave	\$540,000		3/26/2020	Colonial	4	2/1	1	7,211	Northwood Park
10625 Eastwood Ave	\$475,000	\$1,000	1/31/2020	Cape Cod	3	2	40	6,473	Northwood Village
200 Hannes St	\$460,000	\$10,000	3/27/2020	Ranch/Rambler	4	2	2	10,150	Northwood Park
807 Malta Ln	\$455,000		3/23/2020	Split Level	4	2/1	5	6,742	Forest Knolls
10704 Lombardy Rd	\$453,000		1/27/2020	Ranch/Rambler	4	2	16	8,699	Northwood Park View
10312 Colesville Rd	\$450,000		4/15/2020	Colonial	3	2/1	3	8,497	Northwood Park
800 Malta Ln	\$445,800	\$2,950	1/15/2020	Ranch/Rambler	4	2	7	8,786	Forest Knolls
913 Loxford Ter	\$445,000		1/27/2020	Split Level	3	2/1	7	19,816	Forest Knolls
10158 Sutherland Rd	\$440,000	\$10,300	2/27/2020	Split Foyer	3	2	188	5,951	Northwood Park
10705 Lombardy Rd	\$430,000	\$12,900	4/7/2020	Ranch/Rambler	3	1/1	9	5,982	Northwood Park View
908 Caddington Ave	\$414,000	\$7,500	1/6/2020	Split Level	4	2/1	7	6,011	Forest Knolls
414 Irwin St	\$412,500	\$12,500	2/20/2020	Ranch/Rambler	4	2	8	6,008	Northwood Village
10703 Eastwood Ave	\$405,000		4/15/2020	Ranch/Rambler	2	2	69	6,676	Northwood Village
109 Northwood Ave	\$385,000	\$11,550	1/17/2020	Cape Cod	4	2	8	9,344	Northwood Park

Not all referenced properties are from my agent team or my broker. RETS data provided by BrightMLS is subject to change.

Call Today for My Free Market Analysis: 301-346-9126

Northwood Neighborhood Real-Time Report: No Log-In Required: www.ciment.com/northwood

Dist. 19 Virtual Town Hall Provided Key Leg. Updates

By Samantha Jones

This year, the Maryland General Assembly (MGA) took the extraordinary step of ending the legislative session early due to the risks posed by the COVID-19 crisis. Every year, our legislative representatives hold town halls and forums after the sessions end to discuss which of their bills passed and what their upcoming legislative priorities may be in the next year's session.

This year, our District 19 State representatives held their legislative town hall on April 22. During the District 19 town hall—which was virtual and cohosted by the Montgomery County Democratic Party—Delegates Bonnie Cullison, Charlotte Crutchfield, and Vaughn Stewart, and Senator Ben Kramer, provided updates on a variety of bills.

The representatives were also joined by Sean O'Donnell, the Program Administrator of the Montgomery County Public Health Emergency Preparedness and Response team. Mr. O'Donnell provided many helpful updates about the county's response to the pandemic, including information about how positive cases are reported by ZIP code.

Our delegation had a very busy session in Annapolis but, unfortunately, a lot of their hard work was cut short by the early *sine die* (the final day of the legislative session). Del. Crutchfield, who serves as the Chair of the Juvenile Law Subcommittee

in the Judiciary Committee, noted that many criminal justice bills simply didn't get the chance to be heard by the House of Delegates. We can expect that Del. Crutchfield will take up a number of those bills during the next sessions, including bills concerning juvenile offenders.

Del. Cullison reported on her critical role as the Chair of the Insurance Subcommittee in the Health and Government Operations Committee. At the start of the pandemic, this subcommittee was key in hearing and passing a bill that expanded telehealth coverage to include mental health providers. This bill has already taken effect and allows mental health providers to use telehealth services to treat their patients directly in their homes.

Despite the short session, Del. Stewart championed and was able to pass the Textbook Transparency Act, which requires public colleges to disclose if a course uses low-cost or digital materials for classes. Given the increasing likelihood that Maryland college students will be taking summer or even fall classes online, this bill could have a huge cost-saving impact for local students.

In the State Senate, Sen. Kramer spent the session working to improve transparency in prescription drug costs. During the town hall, he noted that prescription costs are often prohibitive for seniors and low-income residents. He plans to continue

working on bills to improve transparency around medication costs during the 2021 session.

The District 19 town hall provided a helpful overview of the work our representatives took on our behalf in Annapolis and shed light on their future priorities. While the MGA will not be reconvening in 2020, it is important to share your opinions on our representatives' upcoming legislative agendas. You can find our elected officials' contact information (for all County, State, and Federal positions) on the NFCCA website at www.nfccca.org/NSLreps.html (under "About" and "Government Representation"). ■



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Quarter of a Million Hits for NFCCA Web in 2019

By Jacquie Bokow

Perhaps you'll be interested in the kind of traffic the *nfcca.org* website generates. Perhaps not! But here's the news anyway for last year.

Our total number of "hits" (or items downloaded) was 248,142, with an average of 20,678 per month. The monthly average of total "visits"—meaning individuals visiting at least one page of our website—was 4,040.

The most popular pages dealt with the NFCCA organization. They rank as follows:

1. The "Newsletter" page, which contains links to PDFs of past newsletters and the search engine for individual stories.
2. The "About" page with details about the NFCCA and our neighborhood, communications (listserv, Nextdoor, Twitter, Facebook), plus links to our government representatives and county services.
3. Our "Board" page, which lists current board members. I admit I was surprised that this was viewed almost 2,300 times last year!
4. Our "Area" page, which shows a map of NFCCA's territory.
5. The "Join" page, which delineates what your dues do and don't pay for, and where you can pay your dues online.
6. The current *Northwood News* rate card, which would only be of interest to business owners thinking of advertising.

7. The "Member Check" page, where neighbors can check their own member status. I guess the 1,739 people

who visited this page last year must be the type of individuals who already paid their dues, as we certainly don't have this many members!

Ten years of *Northwood News* articles are now searchable from the newsletter page. By far the most popular—with almost 2,000 downloads just in 2019—is "The Untold History of Gittings' Cross Roads," a two-part "History Corner(s)" column by Ken Hawkins that appeared in the October and December 2016 issues. This article (combined online into one story) consistently receives thousands of hits every year since it was published.

There was quite a run last October on views of the second in a series on making your own fermented foods. The article on making kombucha, by Risi Idiokitas, was downloaded almost 600 times, but only during that month. Recommended for some taking a class, perhaps?

More than 600 people downloaded our PDF on "Animal Tracks" (under the "About" page, under "Environment"). This is this one-page printable sheet showing the hoof/paw prints of various animals (chipmunk, dog, squirrel, cat, skunk, rabbit, raccoon, deer, and bear).

International Visitors

The top foreign country by far was Germany, with more than 12,000 hits during 2019. Second up was the Czech Republic, with about half that number. This was followed by visits from the European Union, the Russian

Federation, China, Ukraine, Brazil, and Kenya (there are too many more to list here). Throughout the entire year, we only had one visit each from the countries of Austria, Belarus, Belgium, Bhutan, Bulgaria, Catalan Community, Guatemala, Namibia, Pakistan, Taiwan, and United Arab Emirates. I guess they didn't find us too interesting.

A little weird is some of the "referrer" websites, meaning the sites that people jumped from to ours. I can't help but wonder if something on our website translates into something profane in Russian (someone who speaks Russian, please check for me!). That, at least, would explain referrals from *prostitutki-moskvi.msk.ru* (as well as *mydirtystuff.com*, *pornhive.org*, *doxysexy.com*, and *sexreliz.com*). But what about *allfoodindustry.ru*, *solitaire-game.ru*, or *sportcar.moscow*? Just comrades idle at work? What about *voloslove.ru* ("volos" is "hair" in Russian) or *www.pechikamini.ru* ("stone fireplaces")? Are Russian students using some of our articles on *school-essay.ru*? How can gambling in Russia (*argo-casinos.ru*, *ivi-casinoz.ru*) be involved?

Thesilverbee.com contains real estate news for Silver Spring, so perhaps they check out our neighborhood periodically. But *www.nextgenerationshoes.fi*, a website for footwear designed in Finland and assembled in Estonia?

I've saved the absolute strangest for last, of course: *cannibalcheerleader.com*. ■

The NFCCA Community Care Network is Available to Assist Those in Our Neighborhood Who Need Help

By Samantha Jones

In response to the COVID-19 crisis, the NFCCA has established a Community Cares Network to help organize efforts by neighbors to support one another. The goal is to provide assistance for our neighbors who might be: (1) part of an at-risk population (older than 60, living with a health condition or immunodeficiency); (2) staying at home because they are in quarantine, sick, or having symptoms; or (3) on the front line in responding to the crisis (health professionals, sanitation workers, etc).

Our Community Cares Network will help identify how best to help our neighbors who are “socially distancing” themselves, who fall ill, or who are essential services providers. Volunteers can sign up to pick up and deliver groceries, carry-out food orders, prescriptions, or other essentials. Volunteers may also want to make periodic phone calls to offer emotional support and social interaction for those who are self-quarantined, especially those who live alone. Homebound individuals may also need technical support, such as computer

help or Skype training, so they can stay in touch with their loved ones. We are hopeful that COVID-19 won’t seriously affect our neighborhood, but those who fall ill may also need help with dog walking and pet care. As a community, we will do what we can to support each other and get through this crisis together.

To request assistance or to volunteer, visit www.nfcca.org. There, you can access the Community Cares Network form, and check out our COVID-19 Resource Guide [www.nfcca.org/covid.html] for other local resources. ■

Oh, You Mean *That* Montgomery County

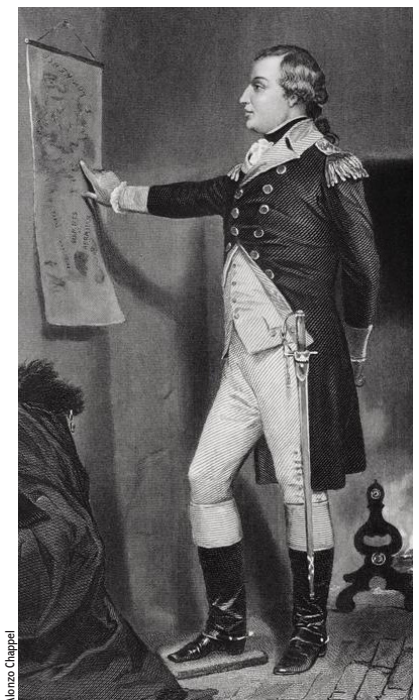
By Ed Levy

One sunny morning you leave your Silver Spring home and slide in behind the steering wheel. Three hours later, you cross the Montgomery County line. Before you wonder if you’ve made a wrong turn, you realize that you’ve left the Montgomery County with the highest population—in Maryland—and arrived in the Montgomery County with the second highest popula-

tion—in the northern suburbs of Philadelphia.

These two counties are among the 18 counties named “Montgomery” in the United States, 16 of which are east of the Mississippi River and 12 of which have a population of fewer than 75,000 people. Rounding out the top six most populated Montgomery Counties are: Texas (northern Houston suburbs) at third, Ohio (Dayton) at fourth, Alabama (Montgomery City) at fifth, and Tennessee (Clarksville) at sixth.

Most of the counties (including ours) were named to honor Major General Richard Montgomery, who, serving under Benedict Arnold, died on the last day of 1775 when attacking Quebec City during the



Continental Army’s unsuccessful invasion of Canada during the Revolutionary War. ■



A Solar Co-op Gave Us Peace of Mind, Saved Us \$

By Bob Loube

We had been interested in purchasing solar panels for a long time, but we were not sure how to evaluate the information we received from various installers. Then, last spring, a notice was posted on the neighborhood listserv about a solar-buying cooperative, Solar United Neighbors (SUN). We attended a meeting in Rockville and left feeling confident that we had found the way forward.

SUN is a nonprofit group. Every year, it organizes temporary co-ops of potential buyers in a number of geographic areas. This year you can still join the Montgomery County buyers' co-op as late as August 31 by going to <https://coops.solarunit-edneighbors.org/coops/montgomery-county-solar-and-ev-charger-co-op>.

There is no fee to join the buyers' co-op and there is no obligation to purchase and install solar panels. The obligation associated with joining the co-op is that you provide

the co-op with your telephone number. The co-op will pass on that number to the company the co-op eventually chooses as its provider.

When the company calls, you can (1) tell them you are no longer interested, (2) make an appointment with a sales person and, after finding out what the company is offering, turn them down if you choose, or (3) make an appointment with a sales person and sign a contract to install the solar panels.

According to its web page, SUN began in 2007 when a son of Anya Schoolman, a D.C. resident, and his friend saw Al Gore's movie "An Inconvenient Truth." At first glance, an investment in solar seemed to be too expensive. But Anya wondered if a bulk purchase might make solar affordable. She got the boys to knock on doors in their neighborhood. Eventually, 45 neighbors purchased solar panels with the first group, the Mt. Pleasant (D.C.) Solar Cooperative. Since then, they have organized buyers' co-ops in 12 states and the District of Columbia, helping 4,600 families invest more than \$93 million in solar panels.

The Process

The first step in the buyer's co-op process is to at-

SIZE/PRICE COMPARISON

Example of Typical Design	4kw	8kw
Average MoCo Solar Price		
@\$2.70 per watt installed	\$10,800	\$21,600
26% Federal Tax Credit	-\$2,800	-\$5,600
Maryland Residential Credit	-\$1,000	-\$1,000
Net Cost	\$7,000	\$15,000
Estimated Life-Time Savings	\$22,100	\$44,100
Net Profit	\$14,100	\$28,100

tend an information meeting where a SUN representative answers questions regarding financial and technical issues related to purchasing solar panels and explains how the co-op works. The financial questions include how much a typical solar installation costs, the impact of state and federal credits on the purchase, and whether there are alternatives to paying the entire purchase price immediately. The table above, provided by SUN, illustrates the relationship between the size of an installation, the purchase price, and state and federal credits.

The Net Cost is the sum of the initial cost less the federal and state credits. The life-time savings are based on the amount each panel is expected to generate over the life of the panel. Each panel should generate electricity over a 25-year period. The productivity of each panel is estimated to reduce somewhat over time. The life-time savings also assumes that the cost of purchasing electricity from Pepco will increase over time. Therefore, even though the table shows an illustrative profit, your profit could

(CONTINUED ON PAGE 9)



Solar Co-op

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 8)

easily be greater or less than the profit shown if any of the assumptions used to generate the example changes.

On SUN's web page there is a section on frequently asked questions. I am providing their responses to three technical questions that were important to me.

The first technical question is: **how does solar electricity work?** Solar panels are made up of photovoltaic (PV) cells made of silicon. When the sun's rays hit them, these cells convert sunlight to electricity. Individual cells are wired together to form a solar panel. Panels are typically three feet by five feet. The electricity produced by a single solar panel is not enough to power a home or business, so multiple panels are needed. The number of panels varies by installation, but every solar system (also called an "array") will include a series of panels mounted and wired together.

The electricity generated by solar panels takes the form of direct current (DC). However, most appliances and electricity-consuming objects (called "electric load") require alternating current (AC). To convert the solar electricity from DC to AC, an inverter is needed. Once the electricity is converted to AC, it is connected to your home's electric network. When your generation is less than your usage, you will purchase the difference between generation and usage from Pepco. When your generation is greater than your usage, you will sell electricity



to Pepco. The electricity that you sell is credited at Pepco's billing rate to you. This process is called "net metering."

The second question is: **how large a system should I purchase?** The size of your optimal solar array will be influenced by many variables. Your installer will estimate how many panels can fit on your roof given its footprint and shade susceptibility to determine the ideal size of your system. If the size of your roof is limited (meaning fewer panels can be installed), installers can compensate by offering high-efficiency panels. Installers will also use geospatial data to determine the optimal system size for your property, as roof orientation to the sun and climate factors will affect how much electricity your system produces. Then, of course, there is your budget. Installers work closely with clients to maximize the amount of solar they install for the customer's budget.

A third basic question is: **will my system operate when Pepco shuts down?** The answer is *no*. The power shuts down in order to protect Pepco's repair crew that will be trying to fix the outage. If you want your solar panels to continue producing electricity

even when the grid goes down, you will need to pair your solar array with batteries.

Once the financial and technical questions were answered at the meeting, the SUN representative explained that the next step would be to solicit bids from local solar panel installers. Two companies responded to the request. A group of about ten co-op participants (along with the SUN representative) met to review the responses. Our review process focused not only on price but also on whether the installer would guarantee completion by December 31, whether the installer would replace roofs if necessary, and how the installer would help the customer obtain the necessary approvals from Pepco.

The group picked a winning bidder in the middle of the summer. The winning bidder then called all of the members of the co-op to set up a time to discuss each member's individual needs. The sales representative showed up at our house with a satellite picture of our roof that included our roof's dimensions and some knowledge of the shading impacts of nearby trees. The sales representative asked to see

(CONTINUED ON PAGE 10)

Solar Co-op

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 9)

our Pepco bills to determine how much electricity we were using and what price we were paying, and he also asked about our budget. With that information, his software generated a design for solar panels for our roof, the estimated output of those panels, and how much we would save over the next 25 years.

For the skeptical person who might believe that a salesperson would over-estimate the amount of electricity that our system could generate, there is an easy way to double check that estimate. The National Renewable Energy Laboratory has a calculator on its web page (pvwatts.nrel.gov). I entered the ca-

capacity of the system we were purchasing and our street address and the calculator returned the amount of kilowatt-hours our system would generate. That estimate was very close to the estimate provided by the salesperson.

Our system was installed in October 2019 and was approved for generation in November. The output of any solar system obviously depends on the number of daylight hours in a month and whether its is sunny or cloudy. In December, our average daily output was 16 kWh, with a low of 3 kWh and high of 29 kWh. By April, our average daily output had increased to 40 kWh, with a low of 7 kWh and a high of 67 kWh. In April, our solar panels generated more electricity than we

used.

The co-op saved us more than 20 percent off the installed cost of our solar panels. We know this because, in January 2019, before we attended our first co-op meeting, we had requested an independent estimate from the same company that the co-op ended up choosing that fall. That early estimate was 20 percent more than we paid through the co-op. Given the time needed for decision making, installation, and inspection, if you wish to have the job finished by December 2020, now is the time to begin.

[Loube, an economist who testifies on behalf of public interest groups before state public utility commissions, has lived on Cavalier Drive almost 31 years.] ■

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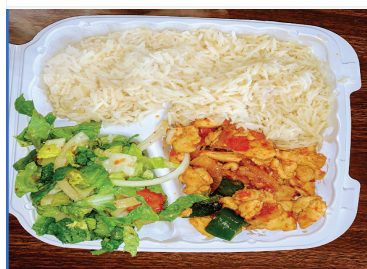
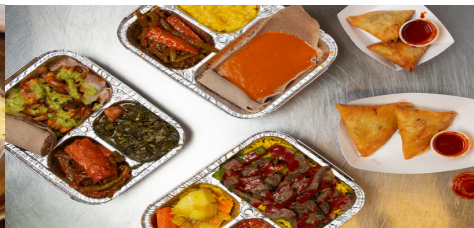
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Positive Happenings In Our Neighborhood

By Julie Whitcomb

During these scary and uncertain times, it is good to see some wonderful and positive things that have happened and are still happening in our neighborhood!

1. Dogs and Cats

Neighborhood dogs, and their people, are going on more walks and exploring different neighborhood streets and paths. More dogs and cats are being fostered and adopted, which is great. We all need a friend in times like these. Woof! Meow!

2. Neighbors

With so many more people walking around, we are meeting more of our neighbors, from a safe distance, of course! People who have never had time before are getting the chance to connect with those around them.

3. Yards

People are spending more time in their yards. They are planting flowers and vegetable gardens and caring for them.



That extra care combined with the blossoming springtime is making the neighborhood look beautiful.

4. Artists

Creative children and young adults are drawing colorful chalk pictures and sayings on sidewalks. Bright rainbows and Mustangs drawings are hanging up in house windows. Painted rocks appearing around trees with bright colors and designs are bringing a touch of happiness to the neighborhood.



5. Celebrations

A drive-by birthday celebration for a 96-year-old man was held with horns honking, signs waving, and family, friends and neighbors clapping and cheering for him. Other neighbors held a surprise 60th birthday greetings for a friend with signs and balloons outside the front window in the rain. Congratulation signs are being put up to celebrate graduating seniors.

6. Happy Hours

People are getting together outside on their lawns, spaced six feet apart. Wheth-



Photos by Julie Whitcomb

er they are having a picnic, enjoying a morning coffee, or having wine and cocktails, they finding ways to connect and spend time together.

7. Greetings

Young children are looking out their windows and calling out friendly greetings to people walking by. More of us are smiling and waving to our neighbors from passing cars, across streets, and from our yards!

[Whitcomb lives on Chiswell Lane.] ■



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