

**April 2007
Issue 1**

Chesterfield Neighbors

Published by the Chesterfield Homeowners Association, North Aurora, IL
For up-to-date information, see our web site at www.chesterfieldhomeowners.com.

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Upcoming Board Meeting Dates:

The Board would like to remind all homeowners about our public meeting dates at the Messenger Library.

- April 30
- May 21
- June 25 (quarterly meeting)
- July 30
- August 27
- September 24 (quarterly meeting)
- October 29
- November 26
- December 17 (tentative quarterly meeting)

All board meetings will be held at 6:30 pm.

CHOA mission

Jim Biggs

Our mission is to create a transparent board that gives every one of our neighbors equal and easy access to all information about this association. In addition, this board wants to create a foundation and a set of standard operating procedures that all future board members can follow and build upon.

We want to create a process that will ensure fiscal responsibility to all future boards for the health and welfare of our neighborhood, create a community that people love to call home and that others envy, a place that realtors and other housing experts will think of first when recommending a place to live in North Aurora or the Fox Valley.

None of these steps

would be possible if not for the time volunteered by all our neighbors.

Thank you to everyone who took time from their busy schedules to attend the annual meeting and who were energized enough to be part of the process and take an active role in your association. I was pleasantly surprised at the turnout for the February budget meeting, where your new board was able to slash the supplemental budget from \$377 to \$138.

I would like to take a moment to express my gratitude to all the people who have stepped forward to volunteer their time. CHOA is going to need a continued community effort of volunteers in order to hold costs in line

and return to fiscal responsibility, as well as develop a better sense of community.

I especially want to thank Chris, Brian, Eric, and Randy, my fellow board members. They have dedicated many hours and given up more family time over these past few months than could reasonably be expected. In addition, many thanks to Barbara Young for her tireless work as webmaster and moderator for many years of our website and forum. She has also been indispensable as an editor and advisor for this newsletter.

As a homeowner and fellow board member I thank you all.

Supplemental fee – Coming in April!

The approved supplemental fee of \$137.92 per unit will make its way to homes in April.

Homeowners should expect to receive this billing sometime between April 1-15. The assess-

ment will have a 30-day grace period from the due date.

If you have any questions about the supplemental fee or the regular assessment that was sent out in late

February, please contact Debra Anastas at Legum & Norman; 630-858-8657.



“I didn’t think a mole was the perpetrator in my yard, but I wasn’t far off.”

The inconvenient truth about voles

Eric Eichelkraut

After the 2005 drought hit, I didn’t suspect that anything could take a harder toll on my lawn. Much of my grass was damaged that summer, and many patches were completely lost due to the lack of water. Late last winter we had a warmer than usual run of weather, so I began my nearly 10 month crusade to repair the damage. By the end of summer 2006; the raking, thatching, seeding, reseeding, professional lawn care, watering, mowing, edging, aerating and grub treatments had paid off. My grass was back, and hopefully back for good.

In December I noticed that there were small areas of peculiar grass loss in one area of our yard. Small divots of grass were missing, and it was evident that something was purposefully digging to get under ground level. We’ve all seen this, and there are a bevy of culprits to blame. Birds, rabbits, ground squirrels...you name it, they all like to dig for food. There wasn’t much I could do about it at that point. The ground was pretty hard, if not frozen...and there were only a few small problem areas.

A couple of days later, I was amazed to look at the same area, only to find swaths of missing grass. Tunneling paths of grass were completely gone, with several holes found within the area. This wasn’t the work of your usual suspects! It was time to figure out what was doing the damage.

My grandfather owned a farm when I was young, and I remembered the *mole* problems he used to have (not to be confused with the *vole*). If you haven’t experienced what moles do, they generally tunnel underground for food while pushing up the earth above them. I’m not sure about the extent of damage they do to the grass that rises above them, but I know the tunneling they made was very visible and became an eyesore on the lawn.

I didn’t think a mole was the perpetrator in my yard, but I wasn’t far off. After doing a little internet research, I soon found out what our problem was.

The critters that were ruining my lawn are called voles. For those who aren’t familiar with voles, don’t feel slighted. I’d never seen or heard of these little devils before either. As expected, there are many varieties of the vole species. Our encounter—and this is no big shock—was with the North American vole, often referred to in general parlances as a “field mouse.” They have the same size, appearance and coloring as a typical field mouse, so you’d never notice the difference between the two until you experienced their habits. Within a week of the initial damage to our grass, the voles in our yard managed to destroy a great deal of lawn.

Voles dig above ground, eating the grass as they make tunneling systems, also known as surface runways. Grass is food to the vole, but their purpose in tunneling is twofold. Along with foraging for other food sources, which include insects, roots, bulbs and other variants below the ground, their tunnels also serve as protection from predators.

Although voles spend a great deal of time making these tunnels while searching for food, they do not live in them. Instead, they create underground chambers where excess food is stored. Our particular voles had found refuge in a garden bed in our backyard.

Within a month’s time, the voles in our yard inflicted a great amount of damage. Nearly 20 different zigzagging paths of missing grass and turned-up soil were found throughout the front and back yards. The tunnels themselves are a swath of grass loss 2-6 inches wide, and up to 30 feet in length. There are also outlying areas, which I call “hot

The inconvenient truth about voles, continued

spots,” places where the voles ventured away from the tunneling to dig into the earth for an additional source of food. Those areas were wider in damage to the earth, grass and other vegetation. A mental picture should start to be forming about the destruction these nasty critters are capable of!

Assessing a way to control the voles wasn't difficult. The internet is laced with all sorts of suggestive vole-specific traps and killers. Many of these were somewhat expensive however, and I didn't want to waste time waiting on shipping. So I gave easy-to-find d-Con a try. I purchased the bait-boxes (commonly used for rats or mice) and selectively placed them in areas the voles were fre-

quenting the most. I also laid them by the garden bed where they had made underground chambers.

Within 10 days of placing the bait boxes, I'd found two vole victims within close proximity to the garden. Over the next month I found two more in the front yard. As the voles did damage to my neighbor's yard too, he searched thoroughly and found what seemed to be a more established nest under his backyard shed. Nearby, another vole appeared to have fallen victim to the bait boxes. This vole was larger than the others, and we suspected it may have been the mother of the others we had found.

We're not sure if we've cleared the area of vole presence, but no further damage has been found since placing

the bait boxes. Regardless, we'll continue to leave the traps and scan the yard periodically.

If you have tunneling in your yard that seems like the ones I've described, act quickly, unless you want your yard to house these small living lawn mowers!

Activities and committees

Jim Biggs

I was once told that we might be able to get people to come to board meetings, but good luck getting and maintaining a group of volunteers.

I beg to differ. I know that people are communal by nature, and given the right opportunities we will seek the company of others. So it is up to us collectively to come together and find what motivates us and makes us want to hang together. Whether it's a beautification/garden club, an activities committee, or a morning tea club, we can build community and enlarge our circle of friends to include the people next door.

I know this to be true because it happen to me. My family moved to Chesterfield from Ohio by way of Florida, Tennessee, Indiana and places long forgotten. When we arrived here we knew no one. Since then we have accumulated a group of friends that includes ten families that regularly party at each others house,

go to sporting events together, play pickup ball together, meet for movies, go bowling, see a play, and generally just enjoy each others' company. I would like to enlarge that circle and to make all of Chesterfield a place where friends instead of acquaintances live.

Activities that can help us do this might include:

- a community garage sale (I am interested in promoting one for this spring)
- an annual summerfest filled with games, laughs, and a general good time
- a fall festival where barbecue aroma fills the air
- a Halloween party for the entire neighborhood
- a Christmas decorating contest that attracts people from miles away
- an Easter egg hunt for the kids

There are endless possibilities to

explore that can create friends and a tight-knit community. We are still defining goals, roles, and responsibilities for the various committees, and there will be a place for everyone who wants to make friends while making Chesterfield a great place to live.

Please contact the board with your ideas and desires for Chesterfield.



Chesterfield Neighbors

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We're on the Web!

See us at:

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Community spirit at its best

There have been numerous sightings on various occasions in the past four weeks of residents picking up garbage and debris on the fence line and landscaped areas along Butterfield Road, as well a family driving around the neighborhood picking up garbage in the parkways.

So whoever you are, the Board would like to extend our appreciation of your time and effort. You are definitely setting an example for others to follow.



Is this your cat?

Since January, many Chesterfield residents have been visited by a good-sized black and white cat (sex unknown). One resident allowed the cat to sleep in her garage during the coldest days. Other residents report that this cat likes to sit outside their patio doors and visit with their indoor pets.

If this is your cat, your neighbors are concerned for its health and safety. Some people on the Chesterfield online forum have discussed trapping the cat and turning it over to Animal Control, if necessary. Please understand that the life span of an outdoor cat is less than five years, while that of an indoor cat averages 12 years and can be as long as 20 years. We don't want this nice kitty to fall prey to a car or a coyote.

May 11 is Spring Clean-Up Day in North Aurora

On Friday, May 11 you can put out large items to be hauled away for free – No garbage stickers required. **Free pickup does not apply to yard waste or regular garbage.**

So if you've got an old sink, stove or sofa, haul it out to the curb on Thursday night, May 10. If it's "good junk," it probably won't last until morning!

Make this YOUR newsletter!

Chesterfield Neighbors is not the newsletter of the Board of Directors (well, except for this first issue). We welcome articles from all Chesterfield homeowners and residents.

If you have some interesting information you'd like to share with your neighbors (gardening tips, recipes, local information of general interest), send your submission to board@chesterfieldhomeowners.com or mail it to our management agent (see box at left) marked "Chesterfield Neighbors newsletter."