



Laurel Valley Echoes

February, 2007

Susan Pasquini, President

A Few Notes From the Board

Springtime is just around the corner and summer will be here before we know it. Mark your calendars for our annual meeting, which will be Saturday, July 14th. This year we are so pleased to be using the auditorium at the Great Smoky Mountain Heritage Center for our meeting. If you haven't had a chance to visit the museum, after the meeting would be a great time to look around.

Alan Doyle has provided a comprehensive article in this newsletter about our new trash compactor. Please take the time to read it. This is still a work in progress and the board welcomes any suggestions to improve the compactor area.

Carolyn Franks has submitted a very interesting piece about the benefits of dark skies at night and the availability of low-voltage outside lights. Decreasing the amount of artificial light in Laurel Valley at night will enhance the feeling of living in a mountain community. Next time I am at Lowe's or Home Depot, I will be looking at replacements for my front porch lights and hope many others will too.

Just a reminder that we own equipment to treat the wooly adelgids on our hemlocks - the equipment is available at no charge for residents (supplies must be purchased). Treatment must take place in cooler weather to be effective, so if you are interested in treating your trees, now is the time. Call Alan Doyle, 387-6202, to reserve the equipment. If you would like more information about the process, please call Ann Hughes, 448-0862

Laurel Road Repairs

There is a portion of Laurel Road between the dumpster area and Bear Den Road that has been badly damaged. Traffic on this area will only exacerbate the problem and may pose safety concerns. We have temporarily closed this section of the road until repairs can be made. We ask for your understanding and cooperation. THANKS!

Dark Skies in Laurel Valley

Each time I drive up Tolliver Trail after dark, I say a mental "thank you" to Cecelia Olinger, who turned off her automatic streetlight, and gratitude toward the two homeowners who have motion sensitive floodlights that only come on briefly as I go by. It's *good* to come home, leave the glare of city behind, and look up at the beautiful dark sky with its starry jewels of light to say.

But wanting the night sky's beauty is not the only reason for welcoming the lack of exterior light in Laurel Valley. According to the International Dark-Sky Association, (www.darksky.org), keeping the night dark is beneficial to the local wildlife. Catherine Rich, editor of *Ecological Consequences of Artificial Night Lighting*, says we are "...wreaking havoc on creatures with welcome physiologies far more delicate than ours, interfering with ...a dependable pattern of light and dark..." when we add constant bright light to their nighttime environment.

Too much light at night doesn't seem to be doing
(dark skies, cont.)

human beings much good either. We need darkness for health. According to the February 16 *Medical News Today* online, the human pineal gland synthesizes melatonin, but light at night cuts down on melatonin production. That matters because melatonin is a biological blocker of cancerous growth. Studies have actually shown that the incidence of breast cancer is 50% higher in women who have worked night shifts for years.

Many people in Laurel Valley have porch lights that are low voltage and under roofs. When you drive by at night notice how much less light-spill those cause, even though they provide very good security. The Stringfellows' home on Big John Cove is a good example. So we have decided to replace our own front porch lights with International Dark-Sky Association approved ones. They are available at both Lowe's and Home Depot. Just look for the IDA seal of approval when you buy.

Carolyn Franks

Everything You Want to Know about the Trash Compactor (and more!!)

For people who are not permanent residents of Laurel Valley and those who are, this is to make everyone aware that the new compactor system for our trash has been installed and is operational. The instructions for operation are on the compactor. Please read and follow these instructions. Although it seems to be a very complicated machine, it is not. **The compactor door facing the road is the only one unlocked. To insert your trash, all you need to do is lift the handle up, turn the handle and open the door. At this point I would like to remind you that it is for household trash ONLY. Close the door; turn the handle to lock it and push the handle back flush with the door. *It is very important to keep the handle pushed down flush with the door so it does not get broken off by a bear.* After the door is closed and latched, push the green start button on the control. You should hear the compactor start. If the door is open**

during operation, the compactor will shut off. You can also stop the compactor in case of emergency with the red stop button. If someone is playing games and pushes the red stop button down, when you try to start the compactor, it will not run. Simply pull the red button OUT and push the green button again. If at any time there is trash left in front, behind or on top of the compactor by people who are not intelligent enough to open the door, please help them out and deposit their trash for them. Once the compactor reaches 80% full, there is a small yellow light on the control that illuminates. If this light is on, please call me at 387-6202. After this light illuminates, we have approximately two days to have the compactor dumped. If the red 100% full light on the control is illuminated, and the compactor will not start, push the red emergency stop button in. This will reset the compactor. Pull the red button out and then push the green button, it will start. When the compactor is being dumped, they take the whole compactor and there is no place for your trash to be dumped. That process takes approximately two hours. If you go to the compactor and it is not there, please do not throw your trash on the ground! Bring it back at a later time.

Anyone that has any suggestions to improve the compactor area, please contact me. I would like to hear all of your comments and suggestions. You can call me at 387-6202 or e-mail me at adoyle52@comcast.net.

We are in the process of installing a video camera and motion sensor light in the compactor area. So be aware, that when you are in the compactor area you will be under video surveillance. This is placed there to prevent people from dumping on the ground and people from outside of Laurel Valley using our compactor. Anyone caught dumping illegally through license plate tracing, will be dealt with by the Blount County Sheriff. We are also going to install some type of fence or chain across the front of the compactor and around the control unit. This is to guide people to the door without walking across the control cable and hoses. They pose a trip hazard and we don't want anyone falling. I believe this

(trash compactors, cont.)

compactor is a major improvement for Laurel Valley and should eliminate our bear problem with the trash.

We plan to bring in a commercial dumpster for large items once in the spring and once in the fall. When we have a date set for this, I will post a sign on the dumpster door when the commercial hopper will be available for spring clean up of large items. We will have the dumpster available for approximately one week. The clean up date for fall will be in the next newsletter.

I would like to arrange a Laurel Valley clean up on Saturday, March 31st. I will need volunteers to help with clean up of the ditches along the roads in Laurel Valley. The plan is that we will supply trash bags to anyone who wishes to help. They can walk the sections of road they wish to walk and pick up the trash in the ditches. When the bags are full, tie them off and set them by the road. We will drive around and pick up the trash. I would like to start at 8:00 a.m. and we will end about 2:00 p.m. Please let me know if you would like to participate. I will be at the dump at 8:00 a.m. with the trash bags for those participating in the clean up. In case of inclement weather, we will try again on April 14th. Please call all of your neighbors to participate. It is important that we keep our neighborhood clean and beautiful!

Thank you in advance for your participation!

Alan L. Doyle
Road Commissioner

Our Laurel Valley Kittens

You may have noticed that there is a feral cat that has “adopted” the guardhouse. The guards have been looking after her and recently we have had a “blessed event.” There are five brand new baby kittens that need homes and they are as cute as cute can be. If you are interested in adopting one of our “Laurel Valley babies” or know someone who would provide a good home, please call Betty Jones, 448-0652

“Critters for Coffee”

The Blount County Humane Society is hard at work to raise funds for a no-kill animal shelter for our county. They are going to have weekly meetings to discuss their progress at the Coffeehouse (next to Dollar General) on Mondays, beginning February 26, from 12 – 1 pm. Anyone is welcome to attend. For more information, call Amy Wietlisbach, 44800765.