



## 2011 Membership Drive Under Way

Please renew your Old Braeswood POA membership by completing the enclosed form and sending in your annual dues contribution (at any level) in the envelope provided. Your support allows us to enforce our deed restrictions, beautify the neighborhood, bring you fun neighborhood events, and informative newsletters and eBlasts throughout the year. Members will be acknowledged in the Old Braeswood newsletter. Thank you in advance for your continued commitment to our beautiful neighborhood!

## Crime Report

HPD recently made three arrests which may be related to recent burglaries in Old Braeswood in January on Glen Haven, Maroneal and Kelving. In connection with these arrests, some 170 stolen articles have been recovered. Detectives believe that these items were taken from homes in our area as well as West U, Southampton & Boulevard Oaks, River Oaks, and other nearby neighborhoods. It is further believed that these suspects are part of a larger burglary ring, so please continue to be vigilant because other suspects remain at large. Please call the RACS Patrol at 713.755.7628 when you see suspicious activity.

While this level of crime is highly unusual for our neighborhood, the Constables and HPD tell us that burglaries and thefts have increased all over Houston and all over the country. Other area neighborhoods report more solicitors than usual. HPD warns that, in some cases, these solicitors may be burglars who are casing homes. Recently, in River Oaks, several men who had been knocking on doors soliciting employment for yard work and tree trimming robbed a family who innocently opened their door. There have also been several similar reports of men soliciting employment for tree and yard work and who stole homeowner's wallets and purses. In another report, a well-dressed man rang door bells between 8 p.m. and midnight soliciting yard work and asking for food. Although it can be difficult to turn away those in need, *police advise that you not open your door to any unknown person.* Similarly, if a workman or public utility employee needs access to your yard, verify their employment first before allowing them access to your property, and never let them inside your home.

The RACS Constables provide a great service by patrolling the neighborhood and responding quickly to all types of calls, but RACS relies on you to be the "eyes and ears." Please keep the RACS number handy and program it into your cell phone. The number is 713-755-7628. Our patrolmen would rather respond to a false alarm than to a crime in progress, so don't hesitate to call them when you see suspicious persons.

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We also encourage you to support RACS through your semi-annual contributions. A RACS form can be found on our website.

***Be sure to see "Crime Prevention Tips from HPD and RACS (Rice Area Constable Service)" on page 4.***

## *Your House Has a History* by Susan Teich, OBPOA Historian

Although the older houses in Old Braeswood (OB) are what give the neighborhood its distinctive character, some recently constructed houses build upon Old Braeswood traditions. The house at 2322 Maroneal, home of married physicians G.G. Hsieh and Mark Hausknecht, does so in several ways.

Like the early OB houses, theirs is an architect designed house. And, like early OB residents, they chose an architect whose work they saw and liked elsewhere in Houston. The original OB houses shared architects with certain houses in River Oaks. G.G. and Mark found their architect by knocking on a door in West University and asking who designed the house. He was Cameron Armstrong. Then began the process of moving out of the ranch house they had owned for fifteen years, putting up with serious foundation problems, and demolishing it to begin building their current house. They were able to watch construction closely, because throughout they lived in a rental property they owned directly behind it, at 2317 Bellefontaine. Their builder was Maroneal neighbor Jeff West of Prism Builders.

OB houses built in the 1930s and 1950s, the two major periods of development in our neighborhood, made use of the latest technologies and home con-

veniences of the time. G.G. and Mark continued that tradition as well. Their heating and air conditioning are provided by a geothermal system with pipes sunk deep into the ground to make use of the earth's constant temperature. (For aficionados, it has a SEER rating of 30+.) It has tankless water heaters that heat water on demand. It is solar panel ready. The kitchen has a wall of hidden recycling bins. Large rain collectors in back dispense through spigots. Inside, the varied lighting sources are programmable to provide a coordinated "scene lighting." They also are programmable to duplicate historical patterns of usage. A wall pad in any given room displays labeled buttons for lighting specific areas. Speakers for music are programmable to provide different music in different rooms at designated times. Tall panes of glass in the living room have light filtering screens that operate by the touch of a button and retract out of sight. Throughout the house are art walls, large expanses for hanging art. The completed house reflects the architect's acknowledged influence, modernist Richard Neutra. All the ranch house furniture had to be replaced!

A third characteristic of our neighborhood is that, throughout its history, families have tended to

cluster here. Former residents return to raise families. Neighbors are related. G.G. and Mark met as medical students at Baylor and returned after residencies on the East Coast, raising two sons on Maroneal. Now, G.G.'s mother, Rose Pu, lives on Bellefontaine, in the house behind them.

[This is the 16th article in a continuing series on houses and people in Old Braeswood. Suggestions for future columns are welcome.]



G.G. Hsieh & Mark Hausknecht's architect-designed home at 2322 Maroneal Blvd. continues the tradition of quality architecture in Old Braeswood.

## Annual Meeting Held Nov. 17

The Annual Meeting of Old Braeswood Property Owner's Association was held on November 17th at the beautifully restored home of John Neese, 2330 Underwood Blvd. Our special thanks to John for hosting the meeting and also to Sally Miller for coordinating the refreshments. Thanks also to the many volunteers who helped with set up and who brought an excellent assortment of hor d'oeuvres.

The annual elections were held and results appear on page 7 of this newsletter. The speaker for the evening was Minnette Boesel, Assistant for Cultural Affairs, HAHC (Houston Archaeological and Historical Commission) who explained new amendments to The City of Houston's Historic Preservation Ordinance. See right column of this page for details.

## Rebuild Houston Implementation

Since the passage of Prop. 1 in November, the city has been busy putting together an implementation plan for the new street and drainage fee and for use of the funds generated by this fee. The plan should be completed by July. The fundamental principles include lockbox funds that may be used solely for street and drainage system upgrades. Only properties exempt under State Law will be exempt from paying the drainage fee (state owned properties and institutions of higher learning). No one section will subsidize the other (residential/commercial/industrial). Appeals Process: a verification and appeals process will be developed. Rate Cap: all adopted drainage and street fee rates will be capped for 10 years.

Project Priorities: initially, the current five year CIP list will be used. New projects will be added when the comprehensive street and drainage needs reassessments have been completed. Needs assessment for streets will be based on technical evaluation and pavement condition reports generated by the Street Surface Assessment Vehicle (which you may have seen driving through the area). The preparation of a needs assessment for drainage will be based on technical calculations using the 1999 Comprehensive Drainage Plan and an updated Storm Water Enhancement Evaluation Tool, which is currently under development. For more information visit the city's website at <http://www.houstontx.gov>.



## Amended Historic Preservation Ordinance Shows Teeth

At the meeting on November 17, the featured speaker was historic preservation expert, Minnette Boesel, Assistant for Cultural Affairs, City of Houston Mayor's Office. Ms. Boesel has served as the executive director of the Downtown Historic District and owns a real estate firm specializing in historic properties.

Ms. Boesel explained new Historic Preservation Ordinance amendments, which were adopted on October 13, 2010, and include the following:

- 1) Elimination of the 90-day waiver for historic properties within a Historic District when a Certificate of Appropriateness is denied by the Houston Archaeological & Historical Commission (HAHC).
- 2) A revised historic district designation process which requires support from 67% of property owners, but can be initiated with the support of only 10% of the owners.
- 3) Clarifications regarding the use of new building materials within an historic district.

Prior to the adoption of the amendments, Houston's preservation ordinance was considered the weakest in the country. Now Houston's historic districts will enjoy protections "with teeth." The city's Historic Districts include: Audubon Place, Avondale West; Boulevard Oaks, Broadacres, Courtlandt Place, West 11th Place; Houston Heights; First Montrose Commons; Norhill Heights, Woodland Heights, Glenbrook Valley and the Old Sixth Ward.

Historic District designations protect entire neighborhoods, and are different from Landmark and Protected Landmark designations, which protect individual historic structures. District designation includes tax incentives and protects neighborhood character by protecting historical structures from demolition. In the coming months, each city historic district will develop their own architectural guidelines which will govern what additional types of alterations may be made to existing structures without HAHC approval. Despite the protections that district designation conveys, buildings can still be demolished under special circumstances. Regular maintenance and a number of other alternations can be performed without undergoing approval of the HAHC.

Braeswood, Section One, meets the criteria for designation as a city Historic District. Should anyone desire to take on this project, much of the required research needed for the application has been completed by architectural historian Stephen Fox, and has been printed in *Braeswood: An Architectural History*.



# Crime Prevention Tips from HPD and RACS

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1. **Call the RACS Patrol Service at 713-755-7628** when you see any suspicious persons or activity.

2. **Program the RACS Number into your Cell Phone** and take it with you on walks. Order replacement RACS phone stickers when you send in your RACS dues.

### 3. **Burglar Alarm System Reminders**

a. **Set your burglar alarm.** Security systems don't work unless you set them, so set you alarm even if you only plan to be away for a few minutes. It takes 2-3 minutes for most burglars to get in and out of your home with your valuables.

b. HPD also recommends that your alarm system include an **outdoor siren** so that your neighbors will know when your alarm goes off. The recent crooks have ripped the security alarm wall units off the wall to stop the siren, but even if they do that, your alarm company will be alerted.

c. **Consider upgrading your alarm system.** HPD suggests that you add glass breakage sensors to your alarm system package and that you also make your alarm audible to the outside.

d. **Ensure your alarm permit is current.** Police may not respond to calls from residences without a current permit. However, if a panic alarm is tripped, police will be dispatched, but you will be charged for the visit and fined \$300 for operating an alarm without a permit. To check the status of your alarm permit call the City of Houston Alarm Permit Division at 713-581-7410. Because the Constables are in our area more frequently and usually respond much faster than HPD, you might consider connecting your alarm system to the Constable Dispatcher (713-755-7628). To register or renew your alarm permit visit: [https://www.houstonburglaralarmpermits.org/Citizen/City/Houston/ATB\\_RegistrationSCitizenNew.aspx](https://www.houstonburglaralarmpermits.org/Citizen/City/Houston/ATB_RegistrationSCitizenNew.aspx).

e. RACS subscribers may give the Patrol number, **713-755-7628**, as the first number to be called by the security company in case of an alarm event; because the Constables are in the area they can usually respond faster than HPD.

4. **Lighting** – Add more exterior lighting and turn on your lights at night. Our Patrol officers report that our streets are very dark and neighbors are not leaving on their lights. Law enforcement officials are unanimous that this is one of the easiest and most effective crime deterrents to use. Please leave exterior lights on at night. Also, adding motion sensing lighting around the perimeter of your home is a low cost and effective crime deterrent. If your home is the most well-lit on the block, chances are a burglar will move on to another home.

**Street Lighting is also important**, so make sure your street lights are working. If not, report them to Centerpoint Energy at 713-207-2222 or visit <http://cnp.centerpointenergy.com/outage> and fill in the information requested.

5. **Locks & Doorframe Reinforcement** - Keep your doors and windows locked and make sure you have double cylinder deadbolt locks with a minimum one-inch throw in the locked position. Deadbolts should use a heavy-duty strike plate secured with three (3) inch steel screws to prevent doors from being kicked-in.

6. **Security Film to Strengthen Glass** - Many homeowners enjoy beautiful glass doors or large windows in back, which are easy for criminals to case as well as to break in. It is not recommended to have glass on or near your doors but if you do, HPD recommends that you buy and apply safety/security window film, available at many of the big hardware stores, to make it difficult for criminals to break the glass. There are several brands available. Comparison videos can be found on YouTube.

7. **Engrave Valuables** – Should your electronics ever be stolen, they have a better chance of being recovered if they are engraved with your information, usually your drivers license number. HPD will engrave your valuables free of charge if you bring them to HPD's South Central police station.

8. **Confuse the Enemy** - To fight these crooks, **HPD suggests that you vary your daily routine** and come and go from home at different times.



**(Crime Prevention Tips, continued from Page 4)**

10. **Communicate With Your Neighbors** and let them know if you are having work done. If you are going out of town, have a neighbor pick up your papers and check on your house each day.

11. **Post a "No Soliciting" Sign By Your Front Door.** Metal signs are available at Bering's and hardware stores. You can also create a low cost sign with a label machine. This may help deter burglars posing as solicitors from casing your home. Several years ago neighborhoods could apply through a city program to keep solicitors out, but this has been ruled unconstitutional. The only deterrent now available is to post a no soliciting sign at your front door. If a solicitor remains on your property, they can be hauled off to jail for trespassing if you have a sign posted.

12. **Do Not Open the Door to Solicitors.** Do not fall prey to magazine scams or to burglars posing as utility workers. Magazine scams have been prevalent for years. We suggest that you not ever buy magazines from door to door salesmen. Most of these young people will tell you they are part of a contest to help better their lives, when actually they are taking your money for magazines you may never see and possibly to steal your identity. The utility worker scam has been used recently in the Heights and the Memorial Villages. A person posing as a utility worker tells the owner that they need access to the back yard or home to perform some utility work. The homeowner leaves the door unlocked while another member of the burglary ring slips inside the home undetected. If you must let workers in your back yard, ensure they have proper badges and are wearing official uniforms and are in marked vehicles with their company logos. Take down their name and badge number. If they need access to your yard, do not leave your door unlocked.

### Volunteer Needed

Do you like to write or have layout or graphic design skills that are going to waste? Then we need you! Our newsletter is produced using MS Publisher software that is simple to learn. Content is supplied in advance by board members and committee chairpersons. The Newsletter volunteer's job is to make it pretty and digestible. Submissions are always welcome. For more info, contact Susan Teich at 713-839-7234.

### Join Old Braeswood's Yahoo Group!

Visit this link to get started: <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/OldBraeswoodNeighbors/>. This is a real time group where you can send messages to other member without delay. The Yahoo group has been very helpful for tracking down lost pets and even helping the RACS Constables track down thieves.

### Sign up for Old Braeswood eBlasts

Would you like to receive up to the minute news and crime alerts electronically? Subscribe to eNews and Crime Alerts by sending a message to [info@OldBraeswood.com](mailto:info@OldBraeswood.com).

### 2010 Real Estate Review

by Dawn Gervais, Realtor® Consultant

\*From January 1, 2010 to December 31, 2010 \* 12 Properties Sold \*

HOMES SOLD IN OLD BRAESWOOD IN 2010				
	List Price	Sale Price	SP/LP %	DAYS ON MARKET
Min	\$349,500	\$349,500	76 %	6
Avg	\$929,400	\$827,950	92 %	127.5
Max	\$1,895,000	\$1,725,000	102 %	360
Median	\$704,000	\$690,000	93 %	86

HOMES CURRENTLY ON THE MARKET: 9

HOMES UNDER CONTRACT: 2

MINIMUM LIST PRICE: \$449,000

MAXIMUM LIST PRICE: \$1,350,000



# WELCOME

New

## Neighbors

**Carmen Adorno &**

**Edwin Reyes**

2101 Glen Haven

**Shane & Matthew Axcell**

2411 Dorrington

**Richard & Mary Beavers**

2250 Glen Haven

**Alpesh Shah**

2300 Underwood

**Jenny & Sam Tavor**

moved from Glen Haven to

2355 Bluebonnet

**Kelly & Edward Nwokedi**

2334 Underwood

## *The Curious case of the Missing Park Toys*

*by Matthew Kelley, Old Braeswood Park Corp.*

Even before my family and I moved into the neighborhood, I would often bring my children to play at Old Braeswood Park. Some of the features that drew us to this particular park were that we loved the well-maintained grounds, modest size, and there always seemed to be a cool breeze even in the warmest August afternoon. In addition to those features, what really made Old Braeswood Park special was that the park was filled with gently used toys. The ever-changing assemblage of toys provided intrigue for the kids because every visit to the park was a different game to play. The toys ranged from shopping carts, bikes, scooters, cars, lawn mowers, bulldozer, picnic tables, or a kitchenette.



In December someone took every single toy in the park. According to reports from the neighbors the toys were removed from the park on the evening of the 8<sup>th</sup>. We don't have any information on who may have taken the toys. Joe Clegg (the park toy repairman) noticed that the toys had been removed from park and generously made and donated a wagon for the children.

I hesitate to request neighbors drop off toys to the park because the park could become inundated with toys. Having said that, if you have a gently used toy please consider bringing it to the park for the children to enjoy (we would like to keep the quantity of toys to about 50 max.). Some neighbors have already done so.

Also, become a Facebook fan of Old Braeswood Park by going to the following link, <http://www.facebook.com/pages/Old-Braeswood-Park/371350790030>.

## *Thank you Trees for Old Braeswood Donors*

Thank you to the following neighbors who have generously contributed to the Trees for Old Braeswood Program. In February, new trees will be planted on Main, Braeswood and Kirby and in several other locations throughout the neighborhood. Visit

### **Johnny Acorn (\$500+)**

The Barrett Family  
Samy & Molly Khalil

### **Tree Lover (\$250+)**

Julie Cohn & John Connor  
Eileen & Joseph Corriere  
Lisa & Raymond Dubois  
Susan & Len Teich

### **Tree Hugger (\$150+)**

Marilyn Archer & Jack Eby  
Christine & Ernesto Infante  
Lollie Reed  
Mollie & Randy Schaffer

### **Forester (\$100+)**

Patricia & Ian Butler  
Claire Coale (In memory of John E. Whelan)  
Lisa & Charles Cusack (In Memory of Paul  
Krammes who taught us to feed the squirrels)  
Annette & John Eldridge  
Fran & Michael Feltoovich  
Gloria Pepper & Bernard Katz  
Samia & Kamal Khalil  
Melissa & Daniel Levin  
Dorry & Carroll Shaddock

### **Friend (\$50+)**

Biman & Bhagvanti Das  
Ruth & Neil Davis  
Barbara & Louis Green  
Jay Plotkin



## SAVE THE DATE!

Old Braeswood  
Spring Meeting

**7:00 p.m. Thurs.**

**April 14, 2011**

**4 Braeswood Court**

**At the Home of Sherrie &  
Garrett Walsh**

You're invited to a  
**“WELCOME NEW  
 NEIGHBORS”  
 COFFEE**



Saturday, March 5, 2011

9:00 - 11:30 a.m.

Hosted by G.G. Hsieh & Dawn Gervais

2322 Maroneal Blvd.

713.660.9520

This is an Open House Coffee, so stop by at your leisure. All neighbors welcome!

**2011 OBPOA  
 Officers & Chairpersons**

President	John Eldridge
1 <sup>st</sup> Vice Pres.	Susan Teich
2 <sup>nd</sup> Vice Pres.	Buddy Steves
3 <sup>rd</sup> Vice Pres.	Ryan Maierson
At-Large	Sam Bernstein
At-Large	G.G. Hsieh
Treasurer	Brent Whiteley
Secretary	Dawn Gervais
Past President	Dee Murray
Architectural Review	Marilyn Archer Matthew Kelley
Block Captains	Sally Miller
Historic	Susan Teich
Newsletter	<u>VACANT</u>
Park	Matthew Kelley
Enforcement	Sam Bernstein John Eldridge David Robins
RACS Rep	Ryan Maierson
Rice U Liaison	Bob Birenbaum
Social	G.G. Hsieh
Trees	Carroll Shaddock
University Place	Kathy Lord
Welcome	Dawn Gervais
Manager	Evalyn Krudy

**Recycling & Trash Schedule**

Household Trash — Tuesdays

Yard Waste

Tuesdays

Recycling



Alt. Tuesdays

(Feb.1 & 15, March 15 & 29, April 12 & 26)



***Garden Club Invitation***

The Old Braeswood Garden Club, organized in 1939, welcomes all women in Old Braeswood to join the Garden Club. Our motto is "Friendship." Actual gardening is not required. To join, please call President Christine Infante at 713-667-3675.

In accordance with Chapter 39 of the City's Code of Ordinances, trash may not be set on the curb for collection before 6 p.m. of the day preceding pick up. Please remind your yard service not to leave bags on the curb during the week. Please also remind crews not to blow leaves or other debris into the storm sewers, as this clogs the system and creates the perfect conditions for mosquitoes—and is against the law. For more trash rules, visit [www.houstontx.gov/solidwaste](http://www.houstontx.gov/solidwaste).



# Your Neighborhood Remodeler/Builder



  
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**OLD BRAESWOOD  
PROPERTY OWNERS ASSOCIATION**

P.O. Box 541346  
Houston, TX 77254-1346

Phone: 713-807-1787

Email: [info@oldbraeswood.com](mailto:info@oldbraeswood.com)

[www.oldbraeswood.com](http://www.oldbraeswood.com)

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RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

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**MEMBERSHIP EDITION NEWSLETTER  
& DIRECTORY UPDATE  
FORM ENCLOSED  
(Please return by 4/15/11)**