

Sky High News

The Sky Lake - Highland Lakes Area Homeowners Association Newsletter

www.skyhighhomes.com | 2015

OUR MISSION:

To serve as the collective voice for the Sky Lake - Highland Lakes area neighborhoods and to promote an exceptional quality of life for our community through advocacy and involvement.

OUR VISION & OBJECTIVE:

Through an engaged, interactive and vibrant community, we intend to enhance security, safety, infrastructure, commercial development, traffic, schools, beautification and other areas with a three step process:

1. **Communicate:** Hold gatherings and discussions open to all residents to identify issues of critical concern.
2. **Educate:** Obtain, share and disseminate accurate information to fully understand these issues and potential impact.
3. **Advocate:** Bring forward our issues to our county officials for action.

Please contact us if you are interested in attending or hosting an informal gathering in your neighborhood to discuss how we can best address these issues.

Our Community:

We represent residents who live between North Miami Beach (but including Sky Lake) to the South, Hallandale to the North, Aventura to the East and 1-95 to the West.

Stay Informed!

1. Visit our website www.skyhighhomes.com
2. Email us at Freddimark@aol.com with your name and address for periodic e-bulletins.
3. Join our real time community portal www.Nextdoor.com with nearly 1000 neighbors.

Our Great Community Keeps Getting Better!

By: Lenny Feldman, HOA President

This year, thanks to your dedication and determination, the HOA was able to make significant progress to enhance our community in the areas of security, infrastructure, monitoring commercial development, and beautification. Some key accomplishments include:

- averting a one-time 40% average increase in our special taxing district (STD) assessments;
- implementing a new security provider and protocol in two (2) STDs;
- holding our first Security Expo with security/safety vendors;
- planting over 140 trees throughout the community;
- initiating traffic studies and plans to improve our major thoroughfares and school traffic;
- supporting neighborhood efforts to address traffic concerns from new developments;
- passing a lighting district resolution for improvements in outdated areas;
- securing funding to build a sidewalk over canals with high pedestrian traffic;
- initiating a strategy to improve the Ives Dairy Road Wall; and
- obtaining a commitment for a new fitness zone in our park.

Many of these efforts were achieved through the actions of Commissioner Sally Heyman and her team, with the assistance of county staff. We thank them for their support. I also applaud our HOA Board, committees and members as well as all participating neighbors for your insights, commitment and advocacy to bring these and other critical issues over, or at least closer to, the finish line.

We live in a "donor community" where, annually, we pay about \$1.2 million more in taxes than the value of the county services we actually receive in return. But, the STD tax increase we avoided combined with the infrastructure, beautification, and park project commitments obtained this year reflect a value over this donor amount.

However, our work is far from complete and many of us still want to see additional community enhancements. Your support by joining our HOA and increasing our voice will be critical to our future success. Just look at the numbers.

We reside in County District 4 which includes thirteen (13) cities in addition to our unincorporated "pocket" of Northeast Miami-Dade. Viewed another way, we reside in a greater unincorporated area of approximately 1.3 million residents spanning the county. So, when we go to our district and county officials or staff, our requests must be weighed against the needs of hundreds of thousands of other county residents. And county funds and resources are very scarce right now to begin with.

With this in mind, we look forward to your support and input in the coming year. Together, we will set our top priorities and act on them in a very innovative, focused and deliberate way to further enhance our community!

*HOA community outreach
at VABHOE Carnival.*



*HOA members at 209th Terrace
beautification project.*



Sky High News

Did You Know?

By: Bari Schanerman, HOA Immediate Past President

- Our HOA was established in 1968 (preceded by the Sky Lake HOA, but now part of our HOA) to bring residents together to serve as the collective voice of our community. Paying dues always has been voluntary unlike most HOAs. Because of this, our HOA functions similarly to a civic association.
- The HOA serves as an "umbrella" association that represents all the homeowners residing in the area west of Aventura, north of North Miami Beach (but including all of Sky Lake), east of I-95 and south of Hallandale. This area comprises nearly 3,500 homes and 13,000 residents. Some of these smaller neighborhoods have their own additional HOAs to address more specific needs of their residents.
- The dues paid to join our HOA are being used to fund small projects throughout the community. For instance, this year we dedicated funds to help beautify the more visible areas of the elementary school (VABHOE) and a roadway that serves as an entrance to one of our neighborhoods. We continue to ask residents to provide ideas for additional projects. We also use the funds to communicate through our website and newsletter. The amount that can be spent for these projects is directly tied to the number of members each year.
- The HOA has members, including board members, who are for, against or neutral to incorporation or annexation as a city. The HOA's objective is to ensure accurate information is disseminated regarding the incorporation/annexation process, facts and figures, but not to advocate for or against cityhood.
- The HOA's focus is to enhance security, safety, code enforcement, traffic flows, and beautification as well as to promote communication between residents and with the county to address the areas that directly impact our community.
- The HOA also is monitoring some major projects taking place between W. Dixie Highway and NE 26th Ave just south of Ives Dairy Road. An office building, apartment complex, condos, hotel and some other commercial developments are planned for the coming years. The HOA is not in a position to make decisions as to whether these projects should proceed and how they should be zoned or developed but it can provide input; there is a separate Community Council appointed by County Commissioners for that purpose.
- The HOA also is monitoring a possible increase in railroad traffic due to the commencement of the All Aboard Florida high speed rail from Miami to Orlando and proposed Tri Rail Coastal Link commuter train service possibly with a station in our community (along W. Dixie Highway). Several residents of our community, including two (2) HOA board members are on the FDOT committee designed to solicit input and perspective on traffic issues and infrastructure needs in this corridor.
- When neighbors join the HOA we will be in a stronger position to collectively express our concerns and desires effectively to the county to enhance our community. All members have the opportunity to get involved in the projects or issues they choose.

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SCHOOL UPDATE

DR. MICHAEL M. KROP SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL

By: Principal Dawn M. Baglos

With our "A" rating from the Florida Department of Education, a 90% graduation rate, and outstanding advanced placement recognition, Dr. Michael M. Krop Senior High School (MKHS) is truly taking Miami-Dade County by storm! Our school continues to offer quality educational opportunities for all students including dual enrollment courses, multiple advanced placement courses, an Academy of Hospitality and Tourism (AHOT), an Academy of International Business and Finance (AIBF), and an AP Capstone Program that provides dual graduation certificates - one from MKHS and one from College Board. The AHOT partners with FIU and Le Cordon Bleu. The AIBF is partnered with the Wharton School of Business through the Knowledge@Wharton program. Both, the AIBF and AHOT academies, seek individuals connected to the fields who are interested in speaking with students and offering internships.

Combine programs with our continued success in the four A's: academics, athletics, the arts, and activities, and there is no question as to why 97% of our graduating seniors continue their education at a two-year or four-year university. Come be a part of the amazing climate and excellence at MKHS by volunteering with our academies, attending our athletic and magnet performances, and joining our outstanding Parent Teacher Student Association.

All of the necessary information is located on our new website www.kropseniorhigh.org.

HIGHLAND OAKS MIDDLE SCHOOL (HOM)

By: Principal Chery Kushi

Highland Oaks Middle School received an "A" rating this past school year from the Florida Department of Education. There are over 200 students enrolled in high school credit courses in Algebra, Geometry, Spanish, Physical Science, and Biology. The after school clubs and sports hosts over 400 students in various after school activities and contests. Students participate in various community service projects to bring awareness to homelessness, pet agencies, and hunger to name a few. HOM teachers and staff are working diligently on providing their students with the knowledge and skills necessary to prepare them for the new Florida Standards as all students will be taking an End of Course Exam in each course this school year.

The Parent Teacher Student Association (PTSA) has numerous fundraisers throughout the year which help support many educational needs as well as the many afterschool programs. One easy way to help the PTSA is to participate in their collection of BOX TOPS FOR EDUCATION: Look for products with the Box Tops logo. Clip the logos and send them or drop them off at the school office. Each logo is worth 10 cents for HOM!

VIRGINIA A. BOONE HIGHLAND OAKS ELEMENTARY (VABHOE)

By: Principal Scott Saperstein

Nestled amongst the beautiful oak trees in Northeast Miami-Dade, Highland Oaks Elementary School opened its doors in 1964 under the leadership of Mrs. Virginia A. Boone, who was the school's only principal until 1995. A year after her retirement, Mrs. Boone passed away and Highland Oaks was renamed Virginia A. Boone Highland Oaks Elementary School in her honor.

An environmental and ecological site, the school is situated on ten acres of hardwood hammock. It provides approximately 750 students with traditional and enriched instructional programs, including our uniquely designed "outdoor classroom", officially named the Senator Gwen Margolis Botanical Learning Center. Our student population, pre-kindergarten through grade 5, is comprised of a diverse study body.

Virginia A. Boone Highland Oaks Elementary School, fondly referred to as VABHOE, has earned twelve consecutive A's from 2001 to 2012 from the Florida Department of Education, and again earned an A rating in 2014. VABHOE attributes many of its accomplishments to the close partnership that involves school, parents and community. For instance, this year VABHOE was pleased to beautify our campus with numerous trees and shrubs thanks to donations and support from the HOA.

As always, we welcome your continued support in our BOX TOPS FOR EDUCATION program. Just send or drop off your box tops to us which are worth 10 cents per top for our school!

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Residents Band Together to Enact Security Improvements

By: Marc Hurwitz, HOA Vice President, Security

This has been a very busy year for the HOA's security committee. While there has been active participation from residents in the Highland Lakes/Gardens area, we continue to invite residents south of Ives Dairy who want to become involved with the security committee to respond to security concerns and enhance security services in those areas. The HOA is available to advise on creating or modifying special taxing districts and facilitate the creation of additional crime watch communities. We would be pleased if there were groups of residents who want to create HOA security sub-committees for their neighborhoods.

We held a community meeting to identify issues of interest. Of those, the issue that garnered the most interest was formation of a sub-committee to address the Special Taxing Districts in Highland Lakes and Highland Gardens.

That sub-committee, comprised of very dedicated residents, had many meetings and exchanged hundreds of e-mails in an effort to address ongoing resident concerns about the quality of service provided by their security provider. In response, the sub-committee held meetings with the county and the five county-approved security providers. The sub-committee subsequently recommended to the community a different provider, which was approved unanimously by over 200 residents who voted. The new vendor took over in late November. The change includes the continuation of periodic roving patrols that the prior vendor started, as well as upgrading the Highland Lakes cameras to license-plate-recognition-capable. Eventually, we hope these cameras will integrate directly with Miami-Dade police so that they will instantly alert the police when stolen vehicles or wanted individuals come through the gates. The sub-committee will continue to meet with the security provider to monitor quality of service.

On a related issue, the residents of Highland Gardens voted to add high-definition cameras to their gate. Commissioner Sally Heyman introduced and supported the necessary county ordinance. There will be a total of four cameras installed and they will be license-plate-recognition ready. The HOA is liaising with the county to ensure installation occurs.

For the coming year, the subcommittee for the Highland Lakes/Highland Gardens Special Taxing District intends to work on upgrading and beautifying the guard houses. We are contemplating short-term goals such as painting, signage awnings, and landscaping, as well as longer-term goals of addressing the roofs, air conditioning and windows. We have reached out to leaders in Oak Forest and Enchanted Lakes to assist them in obtaining similar enhancements.

We also have a new Miami-Dade Police Neighborhood Resource Officer with whom we are developing a robust relationship. The officer has been very responsive to the HOA's requests and concerns, to include issues that arise on Nextdoor.com, our community's information exchange site.

And finally, and perhaps most importantly, the police has asked that anytime, for any reason, anyone sees anything suspicious, do not hesitate to call the non-emergency police line. The more times the police are called, the more attention our community will receive. The non-emergency line is 305-4-POLICE.

Anyone who is interested in joining the security committee or has any security concerns, please don't hesitate to contact me at marc@xinvestigations.com.



Security Committee meets on new guard gate vendor and protocols



Neighbors exchange information at Security Expo.

Local Authors Exemplify Community Flair

By: Merle Saferstein, HOA Member - Sky Lake/North Miami Beach

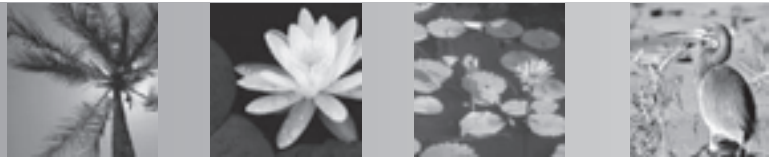
Have you ever read a book and wondered about the author? Perhaps you might be interested to know that we have three local authors whose lives are woven into the fabric of our community. Both Madelyn Lorber and Merle R. Saferstein raised their children in the homes where they still live. Rochelle Weinstein grew up here and now has a family of her own in unincorporated northeast Miami-Dade County.

Madelyn's debut novel, *The Eyes Have It*, is the first in a planned trilogy. She is also near completion on a collection of short stories, *Talking To Myself*. Rochelle Weinstein has written two novels, *What We Leave Behind* and *The Mourning After* and is currently working on a third, *Lake Coffey*, which is due to be published in April of this year. Merle R. Saferstein wrote *Room 732*, a collection of stories which take place at the Hollywood Beach Hotel.

All three women loved to write at an early age, and while they chose different career paths, they ended up becoming authors in their adult lives. Each is an avid reader and cherishes the written word.

Two additional noted, best-selling authors who grew up in northeast Miami-Dade are Brad Meltzer, author of fifteen books, and Sheryl Sandberg, author of *Lean In*.

Hopefully, you can pick up one or several of these books and see exactly what our local authors have to say.



Infrastructure, Beautification & Traffic Initiatives Galvanize Our Community

By: Bill Clayton, HOA Vice President - Infrastructure & Beautification

INFRASTRUCTURE

We are pleased to announce that Commissioner Heyman has allotted the necessary funds to build a sidewalk over one side of the canals on 209th Terrace and 214th Street which experience a high volume of pedestrian traffic. The HOA and residents advocated for these improvements so that we need not walk into the roadway to pass by these streets.

We also are addressing the condition of the wall along Ives Dairy Road. We have confirmed from the county that the walls/fences are on private property so those owners, with the support of the community could improve their condition. We are working with the county to confirm if a special taxing district would be feasible for such a project. Meanwhile, Commissioner Heyman and Florida State Representative Watson also are checking to see if state funds could be available for improvements.

Throughout the year, we also provided updates on the current and proposed developments along West Dixie Highway including a new office building, a hotel and several condominium / apartment complexes that could total nearly 700 units. The HOA was pleased to support the great efforts of our neighbors along 26th avenue to keep traffic away from the homes in that area and instead route it along West Dixie Highway.

Future projects for next year include updating the appearance of our guard gates. After a rendition is completed it will be presented to the community for approval. If you have suggestions, please contact us.

CODE ENFORCEMENT

The Code Enforcement Committee of our HOA continues to address code complaints as they are presented to us. David Promoff and Jacci Seskin handle all the complaints from south of Ives Dairy Road. Mort Braverman and Bill Clayton handle all complaints north of Ives Dairy Road. If you have any concerns please contact any of us or dial 311 to handle issues on your own. This year we worked with Sky Lake residents to address squatters maintaining a home in an unsightly condition as well as other situations across the community (for instance in Enchanted Lakes and Highland Lakes and along our roadways).

BEAUTIFICATION

During the Miami Dade Adopt-a Tree program in September and October, our residents donated the two trees offered to each homeowner annually. In total, 145 trees were obtained through the program. These trees were planted in the Highland Oaks Park with the help of a Wells Fargo Volunteer Project and along some roads throughout the community. Trees were also planted at Virginia A. Boone Elementary School during its volunteer



HOA and county officials planting trees from Adopt-A-Tree program.

Thank You Garmizos Garden Center for Supporting our HOA Beautification Projects!

Beautification Day project, along with hibiscus trees obtained through HOA donated funds.

Trudy Lecher, Beautification Chair, also had trees planted along 209th Terrace through the donation of HOA funds. The HOA selected this beautification project as it was along a major entrance into the Highland Lakes neighborhood. Large oak trees also were planted at the north entrance to our park obtained by the county through Commissioner Heyman to beautify that area. If there are suggestions for other areas that you would like to see beautified, please let us know.

TRAFFIC

After years of complaints in reference to school traffic, we are seeing some signs of progress. A traffic meeting was held with Lenny Feldman, Trudy Lechner, Bill Clayton and county officials from Public Works and Development Services. Concerns and possible suggestions were addressed. A follow-up meeting was held with Lenny Feldman, Dr. Martin Karp and school officials to also address these concerns. As a result, traffic is now being directed at the south entrance of the Aventura-Waterways School to ease some of the congestion there. We continue to discuss options, including a traffic study, to see what other solutions will improve traffic flow and to identify additional parking areas.

Some of our board members also are serving on the FDOT Citizens Advisory Committee created to study traffic improvements at the Biscayne Blvd intersections with Ives Dairy and County Line Roads. We will continue to exchange ideas and information between the community and the Committee.

As you can see, the HOA has been very busy working to make our community safer and more attractive through its code enforcement, infrastructure, and beautification and traffic initiatives.

If you have ideas for improvements in your neighborhood please tell us. Although HOA as well county funds and resources are limited you may be surprised to learn of the innovative ways we can support such initiatives in our community.



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It Seems Like Only Yesterday

By: Rhoda (Lipschitz) Stein, HOA Board Member - Highland Woods (Sky Lake)

As the song goes, "it seems like only yesterday". Circa 1955 the bulldozers were out there in force clearing the land which became the most beautiful residential section in the entire Northeast Dade area. There was nothing north of Miami Gardens Drive except empty land, clumps of brush, a few palm trees, lakes and the Gory cement plant on the corner of N.E. 18th Ave. The builders were visionaries: Freeman, Santi Brothers, Goldman, Schreiber and others. After Sky Lake they plunged north to Highland Woods, Highland Lakes, Highland Gardens, Chateaux, Oak Forrest, Highland Ranch, etc. all the way to the county line at 215th St.

Our area became a magnet for young families, professionals such as doctors, dentists, lawyers, accountants, real estate agents and business people. The winding streets were beautifully laid out and it was calm and peaceful. Children played ball and bicycled completely without fear. In fact, families went on vacation without locking their doors.

The forerunner to the present HOA was the Sky Lake Homeowners Association in 1959. Arthur Snyder was the first HOA President who went on to become Mayor of North Miami Beach and many years later also the first mayor of the City of Aventura.

The only public schools available to us (the originals) were Ojus elementary and Norland junior and senior high and the children were bused to the schools in the northwest. Then with great enthusiasm the Highland Lakes Schools were built around 1967.

All shopping and restaurants were at 163rd street before the mall was built. Houses of worship came along which our children attended and graduated from. We had great times each year at our yearly HOA dinner dance at the old Diplomat Hotel and made many lifelong friends. A new concept, the condominium started popping up all over the area, such as Jade Winds. This brought hordes of snowbirds fleeing the frozen north.

A great improvement through the years was the Highland Oaks Park complex, which gave us meeting rooms, athletic fields and facilities which are in constant use by all age groups supervised by a great staff of hard working dedicated people.

We have always taken pride in our community and accepted responsibility for keeping up its well-kept appearance resulting in our home values constantly appreciating. Thank you to all our past leaders and our energetic and focused new President Lenny Feldman.

Yes, we have come a long way. Progress is great and inevitable with more to be done. However when I pull into my secluded and serene street with its canopy of old oak trees after living on it for 54 1/2 years I am grateful that this is my "home sweet home" and would not want to live anywhere else.

Here's to another great year! \$

Sky Lake-Highland Lakes Area HOA
P.O. Box 630721
Miami, FL 33163-0721

To:

Sky High News

Slate of Officers and Directors

Officers:

Lenny Feldman	President	Highland Ranch
Mort Braverman	Vice President	Highland Lakes
William Clayton	Vice President	Highland Lakes
Marc Hurwitz	Vice President	Highland Gardens
David Promoff	Vice President	Enchanted Lake
Stephanie Ruiz	Vice President	Highland Gardens
Don Shannon	Vice President	Ojus
Freyda Hyman	Secretary	Enchanted Lake
Lynn Wenguer	Treasurer	Highland Lakes
Bari Schanerman	Past President	Highland Lakes

Directors:

Brenda Auerbach	Highland Gardens	Ed Margolis	Sunswept
Isaac Bendrao	Oak Forest	David Miller	Highland Lakes
Amy Chafetz	Oak Hammock	Jacky Needelman	Highland Gardens
Mark Greenspan	Highland Lakes	Jason Neufeld	Highland Lakes
Cristina Hiraldo	Sunswept	Sid Rabin	Highland Lakes
Jose Klahr	Highland Lakes	Andrew Rodman	Coventry
Madeline Langbaum	Sunswept	Jacci Seskin	Sky Lake
Trudy Lechner	Highland Ranch	Ron Silver	Highland Lakes
Erik Levin	County Squire	Rhoda Stein	Sky Lake
Max Lichy	Presidential	Robert Weisblum	Sky Lake

Important Numbers/Sites

- New or Replacement Gate Cards 305-375-2702
- Code enforcement - Bulk Pick-up – Illegal Dumping - 311
- Miami Dade Police – non-emergency 305-476-5423
- Highland Oaks Park – 305-932-2164
- Miami Dade County – www.miamidade.gov
- Homeowners Assoc. – www.skyhighhomes.com

A Message from Our Commissioner

By: Commissioner Sally A. Heyman

As we embark on 2015, I wanted to thank the Sky Lake-Highland Lakes Area Homeowner's Association for working with my office to improve the quality of life in our community. I, along with my staff, look forward to continuing to work together to reach our common goals and to assist you with issues at the county level.

Have a safe, happy and healthy year.

Committees - Get Involved!

Beautification and Park – Work on projects to improve our common areas.

CERT – Community Emergency Response Team – Residents are trained.

Code Enforcement – Set up teams to deal with issues that impact our neighborhoods.

Crime Watch – Establishes networks of neighbors to promote safety in our neighborhoods.

Security - Security concerns within the special taxing districts and other neighborhoods without guard gates.

Infrastructure, Development & Traffic – Monitors commercial development and suggests improvements for roadways, utilities and common areas.

Please contact Lenny Feldman, lfeldman@strtrade.com for more information.

Invoice for Annual Dues

January - December 2015

Sky Lake - Highland Lakes Area Homeowners Association

Become a member or renew your membership for
only \$30.00 per year.

Name (s) _____

Phone # (s) _____

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(Please include zip code)

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* Only used for HOA communications. Please print clearly.

Special Interests: _____

Committees: Beautification _____ Code Enforcement _____

Crime Watch/Security _____ Parks _____ Membership _____

CERT (Community Emergency Response Team) _____

Monitoring Development _____

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Top 5 Reasons to Join the HOA

- **Inform:** Receive current and accurate information about security, traffic, commercial development, schools and initiatives impacting you and your family.
- **Educate:** Exchange ideas to maintain and increase home value, enhance home/personal safety, and minimize homeowner costs (e.g., taxes, insurance, utilities).
- **Support:** Enable hard-working community volunteers to maintain communication through the HOA website and newsletter, hold events, and improve our neighborhoods.
- **Network:** Gain support for your business and find others with similar interests by building relationships with other engaged neighbors.
- **Advocate:** Become part of the voice that shares concerns and works to find solutions - increased membership attracts the attention of officials to address our needs.

Please support our neighbors who have placed ads in this newsletter! To include your business in the future, please contact Lynn Wenguer at lww@aol.com

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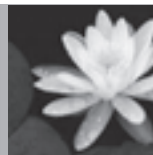
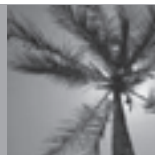
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