

# SKY HIGH NEWS

The Sky Lake-Highland Lakes Area Homeowners Association Newsletter

## 2020

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

### 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:

- Communicate: Hold gatherings and discussions open to all residents to identify issues of critical concern.
- Educate: Obtain, share and disseminate accurate information to fully understand these issues and potential impact.
- Advocate: Bring forward our issues to our county and state 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, at [skylakehighlandlakeshoa@gmail.com](mailto:skylakehighlandlakeshoa@gmail.com)

### OUR COMMUNITY

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

## President's Message

Dear Neighbors,

Many things have changed since the founders of the HOA began the process of organizing what is now one of the premier volunteer organizations in the county. One thing that has remained consistent, is that we are thankful for community involvement and volunteers willing to step in and help make our neighborhood what is today.

This was never more important, than after the results of the 2018 Incorporation vote were made official. Everyone involved was eager and willing to do their part to help keep the Skylake Highland Lakes area one that we are proud to live and work in. I would like to thank the HOA board members, as well as the general membership for all of your continued support.

As many of you know, the HOA works closely with our elected officials at both the local and state level. We are extremely fortunate to have Commissioner Sally Heyman as our District 4 Commissioner. She has helped procure funding for many of our area's projects including traffic calming devices and trees for beautification. We are also proud to be served by State Representative Barbara Watson and State Senator Jason Pizzo. Both of these legislators have been invaluable when it comes to providing needed services for our residents. Dr. Martin Karp, who is our Miami Dade County School Board Representative, has been instrumental in improving our neighborhood schools.

The HOA has accomplished many of our objectives this year, which you can read about in each of the Committee Chair's



columns. I would like to thank each of these chair people and their committees for all of the hard work that they put forth day in and day out.

If you are not already involved with the HOA, we would love to have you join us. We face many challenges in the upcoming year including traffic and transportation, growth and public safety concerns. If you are involved, and would like to become part of a committee, please reach out to me, or any HOA member. You can also email us at [SkylakehighlandlakesHOA@gmail.com](mailto:SkylakehighlandlakesHOA@gmail.com)

The HOA is a voluntary advocacy organization with a household membership of \$30 per year. These funds are used to enhance neighborhood beautification, provide security in times of emergencies and provide scholarships to area public school students along with countless other projects that we take on each year, both short and long term. Please take the time to fill out a membership application and help keep our community vibrant.

- Rick Schermer

# GOVERNMENT AFFAIRS AND GRANTS

By Bob Weisblum

The Government Affairs and Grants Committee serves as a liaison to our County and State Representatives. We try to work on issues that influence our community (hopefully positive) and regardless of outcome disseminate the information to the community so that the residents can be well informed.

Some of the highlights of the past year and ongoing issues going forward:

Miami-Dade County was to hold a grant writing workshop for us to learn how to apply for grants for our neighborhood improvement. To date, this meeting has not taken place.

Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) has proposed a massive construction project to build an overpass at Ives Dairy Road. The cost is estimated between 50 and 70 million dollars. Time length of construction is four years. Beginning construction is estimated within five years. The community was invited to participate in the discussion of the design but none of our suggestions were implemented. The HOA believes that after talking with our representatives there is time to stop this project and come up with a plan better suited for our neighborhood. We are deliberating on how best to proceed so stay tuned and please step up when we ask for community help and volunteers.



Aventura Train Station which is not in Aventura, but in our area, was pushed through very fast without community feedback. We will work with the county to encourage the construction of a pedestrian bridge from the Aventura Mall to the station at the same time the station is to be built. Otherwise, we are looking at more traffic gridlock in our area.

Highland Lakes finally received their speed humps and now it is time for Skylake to get them as well. Our list of streets sent to the

County that needed calming devices were turned down.

We have asked for the report on how the streets of Skylake are different than those of Highland Lakes. In addition, we have impressed upon the County that speeding on 18th Avenue has risen to alarming speeds and something must be done.

In 2020 FPL's contract with the County regarding Franchise Fees expires. According to the County, they will be looking at a shortfall between 20 to 40 million dollars. When asked what the plans are to make up the shortfall, the County did not have an answer at this time but one of their options is to raise the millage rate meaning a rise in our property taxes.

The Miami Foundation ran a contest called The Public Space Challenge encouraging County residents to submit ideas to improve local neighborhoods. We had several of our neighbors submit great ideas and one of our entries was picked to be a finalist. The entry was to improve traffic at the intersections of Miami Gardens Drive and West Dixie Highway and Ives dairy Road and 24th Avenue. We are proud that there were over 200 entries and we were one of the 34 finalists but unfortunately not a winner. We will continue to look for funding for this project.



## COMMUNITY OUTREACH

By Cathy Pieters

### TOY DRIVE

Once again, the HOA HOLIDAY TOY drive in association with Officer Battle of the Miami-Dade Police Department was a resounding success.

Thanks to our very generous board members, neighbors, friends and local businesses for all the wonderful toys we collected.

Your generosity is greatly appreciated and made a lot of children very happy this holiday season.

### SUPPLY DRIVE

Hurricane Dorian was a storm of epic proportions. We decided to do a collection for those in need but as the devastating proportions of this storm were revealed on a daily basis we realized that the outreach effort was beyond our capabilities. So we advised our neighbors to drop off supplies for those in need at the numerous drop off points throughout the counties. We thank our neighbors for helping the many people effected by Hurricane Dorian. Your generosity makes a difference.

# Parks, Lakes and Beautification

By Marc Frankel

This year has seen a greater focus on bringing more of our tax dollars back into our community starting with our local parks. We commenced the year with meetings with Miami Dade Parks and Open spaces planning officials to discuss the current state of Ojus Park and Highland Oaks Park, advocating for infrastructure upkeep and additional capital improvements. These discussions are ongoing.

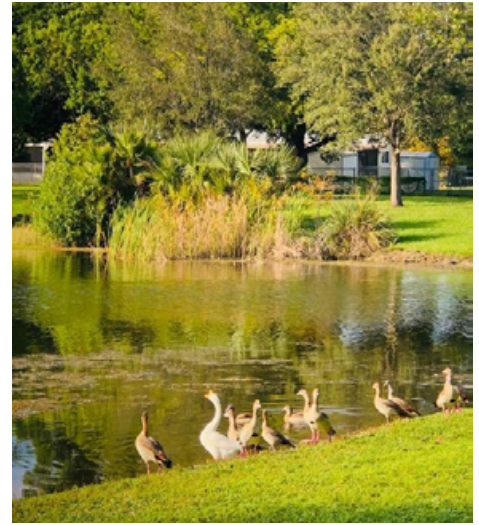
Highland Oaks Park has seen an improvement in maintenance and cleanliness. Regular cleaning of the jogging path is being done, and repairs are being made on critical infrastructure such as the foot bridges as problems arise. A clean-up of the wetland area bordering 23rd Avenue was done recently, removing large articles of refuse and construction debris that had been illegally dumped and had accumulated there, and we recently met with Parks Department managers and representatives of DERM to address needed clean-up of overgrown areas and clearance of invasive species from the wetland areas. In terms of Capital Improvements at Highland Oaks Park, we are currently working with the county on improving the overall park experience. Ojus park has also been addressed with requests for painting of park buildings, new signage and better upkeep.

We have fostered and cooperated in the development of new Park related programs, such as guided bird watching walking tours at Highland Oaks Park sponsored by the Audubon society and Championed by area resident Aaron Rubin. Who knew that Highland Oaks Park was one of the premier "Birding" destinations in Miami-Dade county? We have some 140+ species of birds, some of them quite rare, calling the park home at various times of the year. Amazing! This year also saw the commencement of a new Movie Night program by the parks department with a free screening of Disney's Aladdin at Highland Oaks Park. This event was attended by over 70 people and the HOA participated by helping to market this free event and provided fresh popped popcorn and cold drinks for purchase during the show. Hopefully, with its success, this program will continue forward on a regular basis.

We have worked closely with the Special Assessment District for Highland Lake and made great strides in improving the overall health of the Lake. FWC Biologists have toured the lake and reported it as being in excellent condition at the time of inspection. As a result, we were granted a license for and have undertaken a restocking of over 400 Triploid Grass Carp for weed control as well as forage fish such as bluegill and shad to mitigate predation on the carp and to enhance the amount of forage available to the fish in the lake. We are also trying to address conditions in Sunswept Lake with the county and

have been in communication with Miami Dade County Department of Environmental Resource Management regarding repairing and bringing back into operation the long-neglected water control structure in Highland Oaks park. This should help to begin to restore the balance of Sunswept Lake to where it was in years past by starting to reduce the currently high salinity levels in the lake due to tidal inflow of brackish water from the Oleta River and the rising salinity gradient of the water table due to sea level rise.

Finally, in regard to beautification, we continue to agitate with the county for better upkeep and improvement of the landscaping on the central thoroughfare of our area, the Ives Dairy Road Corridor. This continues to be an issue where our area does not receive the attention that we should, but we are working diligently to get this addressed and will continue to do so.



## THE MADNESS HAS STOPPED – OR, AT LEAST, LESSENERD

By Bill Clayton

We all know that South Florida traffic can drive you to distraction. But in Highland Lakes, at least, things are moving more smoothly and promise to improve further.

For years, non-resident commuters trying to avoid the frustration that is Ives Dairy Road have cut through Highland Lakes. Not only has this clogged the narrow residential streets, but speeding drivers who often ignore stop signs have endangered pedestrians and pets.

The Sky Lake-Highland Lakes Area Homeowners Association has worked many years to poll the community and communicate with Miami-Dade County administrators and elected officials for a solution. After much struggle, speed bumps were installed on several of the main routes through the neighborhood, including but not limited to, Highland Lakes Boulevard, Northeast 207th Street, and Northeast 209th Terrace.

Anecdotal evidence suggests that these well-marked speed bumps have reduced both the amount of traffic and its speed.



Given this success, the Association hopes to extend its efforts to other neighborhoods.

Another major improvement is the completion of what is hoped to be the first step in relieving the gridlock near Aventura Waterways K-8 Center on and around Northeast 26th Avenue and Northeast 209th Terrace. The County completed a dedicated turn lane for school drop-off and pickup traffic, which has reduced what at times can become an almost unmoving blockage around the school.

The Association and other involved entities continue to discuss additional improvements that could further reduce the congestion and improve safety for parents and children trying to get to school. Both of these projects benefitted from the support of County Commissioner Sally Heyman.

A new traffic flow plan has been completed for drop-off and pickup at Highland Oaks Middle School on and around Ives Dairy Road. This project will be monitored through the year to gauge its success and whether more modifications would help.

The Association is keeping its attention on another long-running traffic issue. Traffic at Northeast 207th Street and Northeast 23rd Avenue clogs during drop-off and pickup times at Virginia A. Boone-Highland Oaks Elementary School. In particular, drivers seeking to turn left from 207th onto 23rd can become trapped behind the slow-moving school traffic. Some impatient drivers will pull into the oncoming

traffic lane to get around, which is both a violation of law and an extreme hazard.

The County has been sitting on a completed plan to change the intersection and add a left-turn turn lane. However, the project has never been funded and, therefore, sits in limbo. The Association will continue to push the project.

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# SCHOOL UPDATE

## The Neighborhood School Scene

By Sharon Curtis

Living in the Skylake/Highland Lakes area offers its' community and residents a plethora of choices for dining, shopping, and religious affiliation as well as parks and recreation. Fortunately, the same can be said for the many educational choices offered to families of school aged children. The varieties offered are as different as those we educate.

The immediate area offers traditional public elementary, middle and high school.

- Virginia A. Boone Highland Oaks Elementary (VABHOE)
- Ojus Elementary
- Highland Oaks Middle School (HOM)
- Dr. Michael M. Krop Senior High School (KROP)

There is also Madie Ives K-8 Preparatory that offers the neighborhood a K-8 Preparatory Academy and BridgePrep Academy of North Miami Beach is the community's first Charter School.

When choosing a school for your family's needs these are just a few of the highlights within our neighborhood schools. VABHOE, offers a Spanish emersion program beginning in kindergarten and regular Spanish as a language class. HOM, offer a traditional middle school curriculum in addition to a full range of sport and art afterschool activities including a robotics team. The two K-8 campuses allow children to remain in a familiar environment during their formative years all the while preparing them for the eventual transition to high school.

At Dr. Michael M. Krop Sr. High School, students can choose from a wide range of core classes in addition to AP Classes that will help prepare them for college. There is the opportunity to matriculate into the triple "A" program - Academy for Advanced Academics - in conjunction with the FIU Biscayne Bay Campus. This program offers enrollment to students grades 6-12 the opportunity to take college or

home education programs and help students achieve an early start on their college education.

Our neighborhood also offers a number of resources for private and parochial elementary, middle and high school education sponsored by the local Jewish community and local area synagogues as well as St. Lawrence Catholic Church.

Whatever your student may need you will be able to find it here in your backyard!

For additional information, please contact the schools directly to set up a tour and for a complete public school calendar please visit: [Dadeschools.net](http://Dadeschools.net)



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# PROPOSED SLATE FOR 2020 HOA BOARD OF DIRECTORS

## OFFICERS AND BOARD OF DIRECTORS

### EXECUTIVE

#### PRESIDENT:

Rick Schermer Oak Forest

#### IMMEDIATE PAST PRESIDENT:

Marc Hurwitz Highland Gardens

#### VICE PRESIDENTS:

Mort Braverman Highland Lakes  
 Bill Clayton Highland Lakes  
 Marc Frankel Highland Lakes  
 Jacky Needelman Highland Gardens  
 Stephanie Ruiz Highland Gardens

#### TREASURER:

David Promoff Enchanted Lake

#### SECRETARY:

Freyda Hyman Enchanted Lake

## BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Alexandra Alazrachi	Highland Lakes
Brenda Auerbach	Highland Gardens
Marcela Gomez-Bogomolni	Highland Lakes
Erica Chao	Highland Gardens
Alex Ciklik	Skylake
Sharon Curtis	Country Squire
Howard Fine	Enchanted Lake
Philip Holcman	Highland Lakes
Madelyn Langbaum	Sunswept
Max Lichy	Presidential
Leigh Needelman	Highland Gardens
Cathy Pieters	Highland lakes
Norman Pieters	Highland Lakes
Aaron Rubin	Highland Lakes
Eitan Sasson	Highland Gardens
Cyd Sinai	Coventry
Ahuva Stadlander	Highland Lakes
Bob Weisblum	Skylake

**Our next meeting will be  
January 29, 2020**

## BECOME A MEMBER

Name (s) \_\_\_\_\_

Phone # (s) \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

(Please include zip code)

Email\* \_\_\_\_\_

*\* Only used for HOA communications. Please print clearly.*

Special Interests: \_\_\_\_\_

### Committees:

Membership \_\_\_\_\_

Communications \_\_\_\_\_

Security & CERT \_\_\_\_\_

Traffic, Infrastructure \_\_\_\_\_

& Code Enforcement \_\_\_\_\_

Parks & Beautification \_\_\_\_\_

Government Affairs \_\_\_\_\_

Community Events & Schools \_\_\_\_\_

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**Food Truck Festivals bring the community together.**



**Congrats to the Weisblum Family for winning the Miami Herald Hunt, after 35 years of trying!**



**Past HOA Presidents enjoying the Food Trucks together: Mark Hurwitz, Rick Schermer (current President) Bari Schanerman and Lenny Feldman**



**2019 HOA Board with FL State Rep. Watson, Dr. Karp-Miami Dade School Board member, Commissioner Heyman and FL Senator Pizzo**



**Thank you to Food Truck sponsors Dairely & Jay Bell with BPM Environmental Solutions**



**Senator Pizzo attends HOA meetings**



**Thank you to Food Truck sponsors: Judy Luck Jordan, Esther Sabag-Peart and Mona Silber Heisler**

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## Sky Lake Highland Lakes Area HOA Membership

By Freyda Hyman and Ahuva Stadtlander

**Did you know that you can become a member of a group of committed professionals for only \$30 a year or 8.2 cents per day? Have you ever wondered why you should become a member of the HOA?**

*This past year, the efforts of the HOA resulted in:*

- The county adding speed humps to enforce traffic dampening measures;
- The county's addition of a dedicated turn lane at the entrance to Aventura Waterways K-8 School;
- Paying for and providing roving security during the threat of hurricane Dorian when the county declined to do so.
- Organizing the Food Truck event with entertainment;
- Arranging free tours in Highland Oaks Park to showcase the 164 varieties of birds and butterflies;
- Coordinating with the County Parks to provide free family movies in Highland Oaks Park.

*What does the future hold?*

Known future issues affecting the community that require your immediate support both by becoming a member and by becoming involved include:

- County proposed US1 overpass that will adversely impact the traffic on Ives Dairy Road and will undoubtedly affect our area;
- County funded Aventura train station to be built currently without input and consideration of our community;
- Awards and scholarships provided to both middle and high school exemplary students;
- Continued roving security during weather disasters;
- Park improvements that enhance its use;
- Beautification projects of common areas;
- Continuing financial contributions to the after school public school programs;
- Providing resident education on various topics that impact our community.

Other reasons to become a member and support your HOA include getting to know your neighbors and becoming one voice for an area that is often overlooked by the County.

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We have just completed our first full-year in the Florida State Senate, and it continues to be an honor to represent all of you. Legislative Session begins January 14, 2020, but we've been busy in the district, and in Tallahassee, over the last several months, gearing up for the fight to bring back dollars and sense to Miami-Dade. My staff and I remain committed to making sure your voice is heard, and invite you to call (305.795.1205), click ([pizzo.jason@flsenate.gov](mailto:pizzo.jason@flsenate.gov)) or write (5582 NE 4th. Court, Miami, FL 33137) on any issue of importance.

**Jason Pizzo, State Senator**

Hope you had a great Holiday Season and I wish for all a joyous, peaceful, safe 2020. As always, my office staff and I are available to assist with county issues and concerns.

### County Commissioner Sally Heyman & Staff

Dear Fellow Residents,

The 2019-2020 school year is nearing the midpoint, and a number of new initiatives have already been implemented throughout the school district. Recent proposals that I have proffered include exploring the creation of an intergenerational program matching seniors with pre-K students, extending programming beyond the current age limit to students with autism, and evaluating the current procedures from the hiring to the development phases for temporary instruction (substitute teaching). In addition, an expanded effort to implement later start times for our high school students is now underway. For further details visit <http://district3.dadeschools.net>. Please do not hesitate to reach out to my office should you wish to speak about these issues or any other concerns related to the public schools in our community. My staff and I are available to assist you and can be reached at 305-995-1369 or at [martinkarp@dadeschools.net](mailto:martinkarp@dadeschools.net).

### Dr. Martin Karp, Miami-Dade School Board member

"Today's patience can transform yesterday's discouragements into tomorrow's discoveries. Today's purpose can turn yesterday's defeats into tomorrow's determination." -William Authur Ward

As we prepare with anticipation for 2020, let us reflect on all that has transpired this year. Although we've faced many changes, causing many to encounter disappointments, my hopes are to stay encouraged with patience in the days to come. For with patience comes strength that will enable us to become better citizens for our state and nation.

### State Representative Barbara Watson



# Food Trucks

This past year we had two amazing **GREAT NEIGHBORHOOD FOOD TRUCK FESTIVALS**.

Both events were well attended and hopefully a good time was had by all. There were delicious foods from hamburgers, tacos, poke bowls to Kosher pizza and scrumptious churros and ice cream. Covered seating and lighting was available and music rocked the hood!



Special thanks goes to Cathy Pieters and her team for their hard work in planning each of the events.

A big thank you goes to our generous sponsors:



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- **Vicky Goldman** of <http://miamifoodtrucksevents.com> for organizing the food trucks
- **Mylene** for her fabulous face painting in October
- **Violeta** for her fabulous face painting in March
- **Ian the Balloon Animal** guy on Stilts
- **Guillermo** who does all the set up and clean up for the event



• **Sharon Curtis and Cheryl Kushi**, Principal of Highland Oaks Middle School, for advertising the food trucks on the school's digital board.

• **The Humane Society** who brought some of their adorable adoptable doggies to the event. This little cutie pie was adopted on the spot right there at the event! [www.humanesocietymiami.org](http://www.humanesocietymiami.org)

[humanesocietymiami.org](http://humanesocietymiami.org)

- All of our ladies and men in uniform who attended

If you would like to be sponsor or help out in anyway or even have a suggestion to help us make these events even greater, please contact: Cathy Pieters [scatherbrain@gmail.com](mailto:scatherbrain@gmail.com) or 305 527-4711

**OUR NEXT FOOD TRUCK FESTIVAL WILL BE Sunday, March 15th!**

Hope to see you there!







*Spring Season*  
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## BE IN THE KNOW


by Erica Chao


- Follow us on Facebook! For all the latest news and events happening in the community, be sure to give us a like and follow - <https://www.facebook.com/skyhighhoa>.
- Neighbors are using the NextDoor and RING/Neighbors app to communicate and stay vigilant. However, we shouldn't be stopping there - the police depend on each one of us to report anything that is suspicious in the area, and burglaries, robberies or any other crime that has occurred to your property. Call 911 for an emergency or 305-476-5423 (or 305-4-POLICE) to help keep all of our neighborhoods safe.
- Did you know there's an app for that? Yes, 311 now has an app. Noticed a problem in the community that needs attention (trash piles, abandoned property or cars, etc.) please report it to the county hotline by dialing 311 or download the app.
- Volunteer with the HOA via our numerous committees. Have a teen that needs community service hours? We have them to spare! Have ideas for ways to improve what we are already doing? We have a committee that needs you!
- The HOA recognizes outstanding students in our neighborhood for their scholastic achievement, community service and extracurricular involvement. This past year's recipients of the HOA Outstanding Service Award were Hannah Bregman-Krop Senior High School and Alice Kim & Sal Feldman- Highland Oaks Middle School. Is your family an HOA member? If so, your child can be next!




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- Adult Education; Lifelong Learning; Adult Bar/Bat Mitzvah
- Auxiliary Groups for Youth, Young Professionals, Women, Men and Seniors



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contact Member Services at (305) 937-1880, [info@atjc.org](mailto:info@atjc.org) or [www.atjc.org](http://www.atjc.org)  
20040 NE 30th Avenue, Aventura, FL 33180**

Sky Lake-Highland Lakes Area HOA  
P.O. Box 630721  
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## COMMUNITY EMERGENCY RESPONSE TEAM - CERT

Our HOA has an active Community Emergency Response Team and is currently in search of new members. The CERT group is activated (when needed) after a disaster or emergency event takes place. The responsibilities include surveying the area, rendering assistance where needed and reporting their findings back to the CERT leader, or first responders.

Most recently, the CERT team was prepared during the threat of Hurricane Dorian in September 2019, which fortunately passed offshore and the team was not called into action.

The CERT training is led by trained professionals including emergency managers, fire rescue and police personnel. We are looking for additional residents to take part in the CERT training, which is held numerous times throughout the year. This is one of the most important tasks you can take part in to help the entire community.

We need our residents to come forward and help after a disaster, but it is also important to understand what to do and how to do it, while assisting our community in times of need.

We will publicize future class offerings as they are announced. For more information, please contact me at [rickschermer2@gmail.com](mailto:rickschermer2@gmail.com)

## GET INVOLVED!

**Membership** - The backbone of the HOA! Communicates the value of membership and develops programs/events to promote a strong membership base. Includes the Welcome and Newsletter committees.

**Beautification and Parks** - Work on projects to improve our common areas.

**CERT** - Community Emergency Response Team- Residents are trained in emergency communication.

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

**Crime Watch** - Establishes networks of neighbors to promote safety in our neighborhood.

**Security** - Security concerns within the HOA community boundaries and special taxing districts.

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

**Education** - Communication liaison between schools and the HOA and the impact they have on the community as a whole.

**Food Truck** - Plans and coordinates food truck events.

**Government Affairs** - Communicating community issues with local government.