

THE TOWN COURIER

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Soccer Connection

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Campaigns, Candidates and City Politics

By Sonya Burke

It's an election year in the city of Gaithersburg. Voters go to the polls on Nov. 8 to elect three City Council members.

All three of the first-term incumbents, Jud Ashman, Cathy Drzyzgula and Ryan Spiegel, have indicated they are running for reelection.

But it was candidate Tom Rowse who was the first to pick up his candidate's packet shortly after 9 a.m. on July 11, the first day the filing information was available for residents interested in running for city office.

"The early bird gets the worm," Rowse posted on *The Town Courier's* Facebook page.

Spiegel, Ashman and Drzyzgula were not far behind Rowse. The incumbents all visited City Hall before 11 a.m. to pick up their packets. All of the candidates running for Council have to submit a petition with 100 signatures of qualified voters to run for election. Petitions and associated

■ **CITY POLITICS**
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"We've Got Spirit! How About You?"

The Lakelands Lionfish and the Kentlands Kingfish faced off for a B meet at the Kentlands Pool earlier this month. Kylie Parker is seen leading the cheers here. At press time, the Kentlands Kingfish, Lakelands Lionfish and Diamond Farm Stingrays finished their regular season 5-0 and were headed to divisionals with their top swimmers. For more swim team coverage, turn to pages 14 and 15.

Photo | Phil Fabrizio

Kentlands and Lakelands Battle on the Links

By Brooke Thaler

There's Mickelson vs. Woods. U.S. vs. Europe. Nicklaus vs. Palmer. They are the greatest golf rivalries of all times, according to *Golf Digest*. But what about — Kentlands vs. Lakelands?

Kentlands resident Brett Egloff and Jim Morris of Lakelands decided to find out. They have been golfing together for years and have gone on golfing trips with several of their friends, who represent both neighborhoods. They started talking about which neighborhood had better golfers.

"Our neighborhoods aren't competitive, are they?" joked Egloff.

They decided to hold a team golf tournament to officially battle it out. Four years ago, they created the Kentlands vs. Lakelands Ryder Cup Matches. Two teams of eight follow Ryder Cup rules.

The format is simple: 36-hole team matches are played in a single day. They start with a two-man best ball match in the

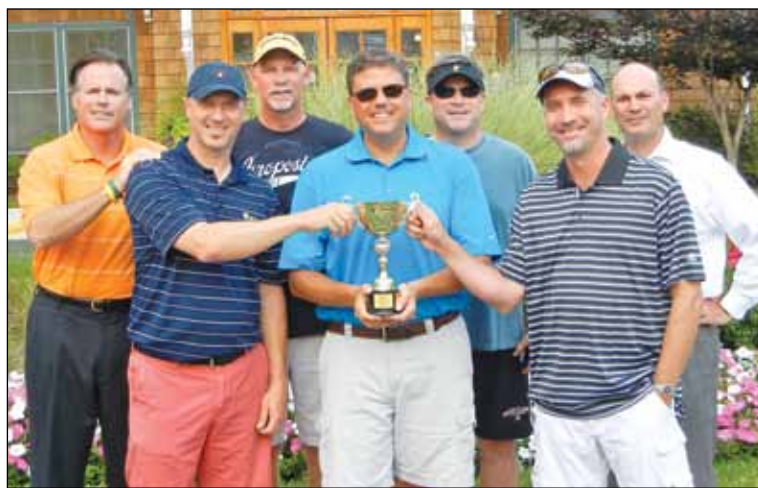


Photo | Submitted

2011 Kentlands golf team, from left to right: David Hull, Tim Clark, John Moore, Brett Egloff (Team Captain), Rick Hinton, Dave Elder and Jamie Winslow. Not pictured: Brian Dietz.

morning — two Kentlands team members vs. two Lakelands team members — ending with singles matches in the afternoon. One point is given for each of the front nine hole matches, the back nine hole match, and the overall 18 hole match.

Since there's no golf course in either of the neighborhoods, the venue changes every year. This year's tournament was held at

Worthington Manor.

After the winner is determined, the players head back to the neighborhood, trophy in hand, where they hit the local bars and "everyone drinks from the cup," said Egloff.

This year they coincided with the Kentlands Pub Crawl and ended at the Tiki Bar, which they

■ **BATTLE ON THE LINKS**
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Welcome to Potterville

By Mike Cuthbert

The real craziness happened Friday at one minute past midnight when two of the 10 Kentlands Stadium theaters filled up, but we caught a smaller crowd at its more civilized debut Friday morning.

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Photo | Phil Fabrizio

Kathleen and Linda Redmond of Lakelands at the Kentlands theaters.

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A Swim Story of Success

By KRISTA BRICK

Twelve-year-old Lakelands Lionfish Jonathan Liniak stood at the start giving a thumbs up to his mom just before his 50-meter freestyle race against the Kentlands Kingfish.

He took his mark, splashed his start, and swam his way 25 meters to the other side and back again. By all accounts it wasn't a remarkable race for those watching, but for a teen

who struggles with autism, the race was another win in his battle against the developmental disorder that challenges him daily.

Jonathan is one of a growing number of kids diagnosed each year with autism, which is a general term used to describe a group of complex developmental brain disorders known as pervasive developmental disorders — not otherwise specified (PPD-NOS). According to Autism Speaks, it is estimated that one in every 110 children is diagnosed with autism. The numbers are even lower for boys.

For Jonathan, symptoms of the disorder began when he was just 18 months old, showing up as a language delay, one of the red flags for



Photo | Stacy Soler

Liniak finishes with a smile.

the disorder.

His dad, Tom Liniak, said Jonathan would focus on things like ceiling fans and other things that rotated. He said he and his wife, Natalie, denied the diagnosis at first, then rushed to find treatment and have since learned to find ways to support their son and encourage him to reach his potential.

"We were told this has no cause, no cure, and the therapies are all new and we don't know if they work. Here is the air, now grab it and hold onto it," Liniak said.

What the Liniak family did was find their own ways to help their son and other kids living with developmental brain disorders. Liniak quit his job as a patent attorney, and the couple formed what is now known as SPORTS PLUS, a nonprofit organization that offers year-round co-ed sports and swimming programs for kids with mild to moderate autistic spectrum disorders, Attention Deficit Disorder and other develop-



Photo | Stacy Soler

Lakelands resident Jonathan Liniak swims for the Lionfish.

■ LINIAKS Continued on page 11

Eco-Goats Raise Money for Izaak Walton League

By SONYA BURKE

The Izaak Walton League of America (IWLA) hosted a fundraiser entitled "Goats, Cheese and Wine" on July 7 at the conservation organization's headquarters off Muddy Branch Road in Gaithersburg.

Guests paid \$20 a ticket for an experience that allowed them to preview two herds of goats grazing behind an electric fence on the property. Over 125 people attended the event, including special guests, and over \$1,500 was raised for ongoing conservation work at the league.

The 40-plus goats are also tasked

with eradicating the invasive plant species growing on seven acres of property, including three acres owned by the city of Gaithersburg.

An invasive species is a non-native species whose introduction is likely to cause economic or environmental harm to human, animal or plant health. Some of the invasive plants on the property include mile-a-minute vine and autumn olive.

The goats are considered an environmentally friendly way to clear the property of invasive species because the animals use less energy than mechanical methods of removal, are more effective than volunteer labor and are better for water quality than chemical methods of

eradication.

The goats arrived on July 5 and were expected to be grazing for 16 days.

At press time, Sustainability Education Program Coordinator Rebecca Wadler said the goats were preparing to leave for their next assignment.

"We will miss them greatly but appreciate their hard 'work,'" said Wadler. "We can't wait to move on to the next phase of restoring the area to native habitat for wildlife. Too bad goats aren't good at planting trees as well!"

City officials said they hope to employ the goats again and identified Little Quarry Park in Kentlands as one overgrown area that may benefit from the grazing goats in the future.

To watch a video of the goats grazing at the headquarters of the IWLA in Gaithersburg and to learn more about the forester in charge of the project: go to http://video.gaithersburgmd.gov/Eco_Goats.wmv.



Photo | Submitted

The eco-goats are grazing on land at the Izaak Walton League in Gaithersburg.

AROUNDTOWN

COMPILED BY SONYA BURKE

Smoking Ban Goes Into Effect on Aug. 12

The Montgomery County Council approved a Board of Health regulation that prohibits smoking in certain common areas of multiple-family residential dwellings and certain playgrounds relating to those dwellings. An amendment added to the bill on July 12 will ban smoking within 25 feet of playground areas on privately owned property that has a primary purpose to serve the residents of more than one dwelling.

Officials said the ban, which will go into effect on Aug. 12, got momentum from studies that have looked at the impact of secondhand smoke. The regulation prohibits smoking in indoor common areas of multi-family dwellings, including hallways, lobbies and laundry rooms.

"This regulation will not deny anyone their rights, but it will protect the rights of people who do not want to be impacted by second-hand smoke — particularly children," said Council member George Leventhal. "People who live in multi-family communities do not have the choice to easily avoid the second-hand smoke created by others. Now those who want to avoid smoke in the common areas of the place they live will be able to do so."

The regulation, in addition to addressing public common areas of multi-family residences, was expanded to include areas within 25 feet of playground areas of privately owned properties. This could include playground areas of townhouse communities and subdivisions communities of single-family homes that have common playground areas.

Teen Curfew

Montgomery County Executive Ike Leggett introduced a bill on July 12 that proposes the establishment of a curfew for minors. He said the bill is intended to address issues relating to increased gang activity, violence and crime involving minors, and he noted that the bill would be similar to existing bills in Prince George's County and the District of Columbia.

Under Bill 25-11, minors (defined as age 18 and under) would be subject to the curfew from 11 p.m. until 5 a.m. on Sunday, Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday and from 12:01 a.m. until 5 a.m. on Saturday and Sunday. A minor would not be allowed in any public place or establishment in the county during curfew hours. Parents and establishment operators would be held responsible for allowing minors to violate the curfew. Parents could be required to attend parenting classes if their child is found to be in violation of the curfew.

The bill was introduced and is expected to be discussed by county leaders again in September.

Fountain Costs QOP Community Thousands

Although it sits in the city's right of way, the Quince Orchard Park (QOP) community maintains the art in public places "Heron and the Sun" fountain located in the traffic circle at Orchard Ridge Drive and Mill Green Avenue.

QOP Community Manager Ruchita Patel said \$6,240 is budgeted this year for utilities and weekly maintenance. She said the electric bill runs about a \$1,000 a year, and the water bill is \$700. The remaining \$4,540 is for weekly maintenance.

The bronze piece of art was installed in 2002. The artist is Darrell Davis, and he received the Dorris Brunner Rosser Award for Sculpture at the 10th an-

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■ **LINIAK**

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mental disorders.

"I struggled with how to help my son. I was his dad and I felt like I was failing him," Liniak said.

That's when Liniak said he turned to the one thing he felt was an important component for all kids' development — sports. Because autism is an invisible disorder, Jonathan was often frustrated when he attempted to join mainstream team sports leagues, as part of the disorder is a processing issue with directions. Programs specific for disabled kids didn't work either because physically Jonathan was capable of competing with his age range.

"We were caught between two programs where typical programs were too difficult and programs for disabled kids looked at Jonathan like, 'Why are you here?'" Liniak said.

Through a lot of research and testing, the Liniaks developed SPORTS PLUS in 2005 with programs specifically designed to create sports, recreation and social opportunities for children like Jonathan. The organization combines the resources of college-level athletes with physical therapists, speech-language pathologists, special education teachers, taekwondo black belts to children's entertainers. It started with soccer and now has grown to track and field, volleyball, floor hockey, yoga, sports camps and swimming for kids ages 5 through 17 years.

Jonathan excelled at soccer but was afraid to put his face in the water to try swimming. For autistic kids, directions are literal and evidence is concrete; swimming seems to go against all things natural like using their feet on the ground to move forward and keeping their head out of the water to breathe. That was until he watched his younger brother Robert, 10, compete last year in a Lakelands Lionfish swim meet.

"Jonathan liked the food at the concession stand, he liked everyone cheering for his brother, and he turned to me and said, 'Dad, I want to join the team,'" Liniak said.

From that point, swimming in his first race was Jonathan's goal. To help him get used to the sound the starter makes, his parents bought a horn that makes the same sounds, and Jonathan practices diving into bed when he hears the noise. He worked on swimming freestyle, first making it just one third of the way across, then all the way to the other side. Swimming in the 9/10

age group, Jonathan had to learn to swim 50-meters, understanding that once he reached the other side he had to swim back to the start.

June 22 in a meet against Stonebridge, Jonathan entered his first race.

"To see him and know this was his goal, not my goal. He wanted to do this. The challenges he faces to get to this point, I couldn't even face one of his challenges. The role models have reversed. He is my inspiration," Liniak said.

That first ribbon hangs on a bulletin board in his room.

"He cherishes it. ... It means so much because he earned it," Liniak said.

About 300 to 400 kids a week in Montgomery and Howard counties are reaching their own goals thanks to the SPORTS PLUS program.

"We are training for life. Sports gives you the tools for life. If you have a goal, you can achieve it," Liniak said.

Brother Robert is proud his older brother is on his team.

"It is amazing. This is such a big step. I almost wondered if it would work out, but he really pushed himself," Robert said.

Lionfish Coach Brooke Hoffman, a third grade teacher at Clopper Mill Elementary School and a winter swim coach with the Hydro-Sonic Tiburones where Robert swims, said she was excited to have Jonathan join the team. Hoffman said she works with Jonathan to swim freestyle when he is on his stomach so he doesn't get confused by other strokes like breaststroke and butterfly that are also forward-facing. She and her coaches use specific phrases like "eyes to the sky" to help with literal translation of directions.

"Our kids encourage him. To see him finish the race, get out and smile was really great," Hoffman said.

Jonathan continues to swim on the Lionfish team, attending practices, turning in faster times, and filling up that bulletin board with more ribbons of his accomplishments.

"Our goal is to help him reach what his potential is," Liniak said. "I don't know what that is, but I know we haven't reached it yet. I want his life to be as full of choices as it can be. I worry about the future for him every day."

For more information about autism and other pervasive developmental disorders, visit www.autismspeaks.org. For more information about SPORTS PLUS, visit www.playsportsplus.org.

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