

President's Message

Neighbors, serving as our association's President over the past year has been a challenge to say the least. It is not a position I ever sought to hold, but nevertheless, I am honored to do so. Getting calls at 4am from our answering service because the front gates won't open is not what I would call one of the perks of the office. Ah, the gates...what's going on with the gates? A question I have answered at least a hundred times since I took office last September. Here's the short version: a freeze, bad replacement parts, lightening strikes, power supplies, no electricity, no phone service, broken ground loop detector, bad receiver, broken wiring, and the swerving septic truck that hit and tore off an entire gate section. I'm pretty sure I've spent more time with the gate repairman than with my own family over the past few months. As a fellow resident, I understand the importance of a functioning gate system and I don't want to minimize the issue. We are dealing with a gate system that was never meant to handle the amount of traffic it is forced to endure on a daily basis. We will continue to try to resolve the gate issues as they arise, and get them back in reliable, working order.

Our biggest and most overlooked issue is Self Governance. Years ago, the Association became the responsibility of the residents, rather than of Marrero Land. Yes, that means "we", the residents of Barkley Estates, bear the burden of maintaining our little slice of paradise. After Barkley Estates became a gated community, the residents became responsible for maintaining our own streets and lighting. If a light breaks, the association pays to get it fixed. If the streets need repairs, it is paid for by us, the residents. Because we are a gated community, Jefferson Parish bears no responsibility for these things. I am proud of the fact that we have been able to keep our yearly assessment dues low, and still keep Barkley Estates one of the premier neighborhoods in the Greater New Orleans area. The streets will become a major issue in the coming years. They continue to age and deteriorate and will need major repairs at some point. As you know, last year we did some minor street repairs, and that alone cost \$27,000.00. This is a drop in the bucket compared to what will need to be done in the future. The ongoing maintenance of our streets is extremely important and will have to be addressed in the very near future. My goal has always been to increase (or at least maintain) property values and find viable solutions to maintaining our streets and community; all without raising our association dues.

Community Service. A term we all hear repeatedly. What does this mean for residents of Barkley Estates? It means that Barkley's Association relies on volunteers to conduct daily business and repairs without receiving compensation for their efforts. We have 409 home sites, yet the pool of volunteers who help run this community consists of only about 25 people. Each of these people contribute in some way, whether it be with governance and/or the maintenance of our community. *We need additional volunteers.* Yes, I am asking for your help. We have come a long way in streamlining the duties of Board and Officer Positions so that the transition for future members will be as seamless as possible. Our hope is that new members can build on what we have learned and make the job of managing the community easier. With the upcoming elections, my hope is that you will consider becoming an involved member of YOUR community. Maybe your ideas are the solutions to our problems. We will need new people to occupy the various positions to continue running Barkley Estates on a community volunteer basis. If we ever find ourselves in a situation where no one volunteers to fill these positions, we will have no choice but to hire a Management Company to maintain the neighborhood. This is a huge expense, and would most certainly raise the Assessment dues we each pay on a yearly basis. We desperately do not want this to happen. I urge each of you to please consider becoming involved in the Barkley Estates Community Association. Become a voting member, run for an office, volunteer to be on one of our many committees; no time commitment is too small.

On a personal note, one of the greatest joys of my involvement in the community has been meeting many of you and making new lifelong friends. We are neighbors, all part of one larger community. Our property values increase and decline together, we curse the gates together, we hunt for Easter eggs and eat crawfish together. For better or worse, we are truly in this together. It will take all of us working together to continue to make Barkley Estates a place we can all be proud to call home.

Steve Peterson
President, Barkley Estates Community Association