

Looking ahead to what 2015 has to offer

WELCOME 2015! Most everyone gets excited about the New Year: A time for promises, fresh starts and anticipation. It is also a time for reflection of things past.

The Districts are no different. It has been quite a year for us in 2014 and 2015 looks to be just as exciting.

OK, a lot of folks don't think of local government as "exciting." However, that is what sets the Districts apart. Our employees, elected officials and residents are truly passionate about what we do and it shows. If you aren't familiar with us, there are numerous ways to get on board with what is happening and a new venture planned for 2015.

We are available every Wednesday at 8 a.m. to welcome you at our Sumter Landing offices, provide updates about what is going on, answer your questions and quell rumors. And, of course, if you rather stay in your pajamas, just log into our website at districtgov.org. You can find just about anything you are looking for and you can sign up for e-notifications. E-notifications will send info to you when important things are happening in The Villages such as road closures, recreation center closures, utility issues, and much more. In fact, some news outlets count on our website for their info – so get it first from us! We also provide agendas for all board meetings, minutes of what has transpired, financial reports, special events coming up and, of course, you can always contact us through the website and we will answer your questions directly.



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COLUMNIST

During the recent elections, many candidates and elected officials expressed concerns that not enough residents knew about their local District governments. There are 15 different government entities and 77 elected officials providing your District services along with the Amenity Authority Committee. I understand why many residents would prefer to enjoy the wonderful lifestyle afforded to them in this wonderful community rather than to spend time learning about what makes this place tick.

However, for those of you that have an interest, we have numerous opportunities to learn and get involved. District Orientation every Thursday (except for New Year's Day – today!) at 10 a.m. in our Sumter Landing offices provides an overview of who we are and what we do. For the more curious, there is the Resident Academy which is a two half day program that delves more deeply into our government structure.

Of course, there are also meetings for each of the Districts each month in addition to advisory committees. They are all open to the public, and you are invited to attend. Our website provides information about all the meetings. In addition, the Architectural Review Committee (ARC) agenda is now on the website so you can

check out the applications and requests that are submitted on a weekly basis. The members of the ARC are volunteers that put countless hours into assuring this community stays as aesthetically appealing as the day you moved here.

And, in 2015, we will be starting a new outreach program: We will be visiting postal facilities to answer questions, pass on your concerns to the appropriate parties, provide hand outs with helpful information, and, most importantly, get to know you! So, when you see our District folks, please, stop and say hello, share your thoughts and don't hesitate to ask questions. However, if we miss you at the postal facility, and you have a question and do not want to take the time to go online, just drop it in the District drop box and it will get to us to address – before a small problem becomes a big one!

There are a lot of construction projects underway and planned for 2015 – both for the District and the Developer. Please remember they are not "recreation" activities: stay away from the construction. Your safety is important to all of us and you will enjoy the finished project much more than an injury from being where you should not be exploring.

There is another major safety concern at this time of year – When walking, running or biking, please remember to wear light-colored clothing and something reflective or blinking so you can be seen before and after the light of day. And,

of course, please, please, watch the speed in your golf carts.

Finally, I wanted to take this opportunity to say thank

you to so many of our District partners who help make this community a very special place: The Developer who is always receptive to our District requests, to our elected officials who know what it means to work as a team, to

our employees who embody the core values and live them every day, to the Villages Homeowners Association who works cooperatively and positively approaches resolving issues, to the Daily Sun for your consistent and accurate

coverage of District activities and, to our residents, because you truly make working for you a joy and a privilege.

My hope and prayers for all of us in this coming year are that we are joyful in our hearts and healthy in our

bodies! Thank you for a great 2014 and I look forward to seeing you here, at Our Place, throughout an outstanding 2015!

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