

*Derwood Station Homeowners Association, No. 2*  
*Derwood, MD 20855*

May 24, 2006

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*2006—07*

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## **Tot Lot Vandalism Task Force**

Dear Homeowner:

As you may recall, in 2001 the Derwood Station #2 and Derwood South Homeowner Associations jointly invested \$25,000 to create the Tot Lot. It has been a wonderful success, enjoyed by many families in the neighborhood.

**What's going wrong?** Unfortunately, the Tot Lot seems to also have become a late night gathering point for teenagers, who have not respected it. In recent months, vandalism on and around the Tot Lot has escalated, including fire damage to the playground equipment, as well as spray paint graffiti, and litter (including beer bottles and opened condoms). In the past 3 years, the HOAs have spent more than \$3,000 to clean and repair the damage. (This amount could have purchased and installed two additional garden benches.)

**What are we doing about it?** Vandalism is reported to the Montgomery County police. Also, the HOA has—and will continue—to legally pursue restitution from anyone discovered damaging or defacing our property. In this regard, parents are reminded that they are liable for damage caused by their children.

However, the first line of defense is the community. Therefore, the HOA Board is forming a "Vandalism Task Force" to develop strategies to prevent this vandalism. Some possibilities are to form an official "Neighborhood Watch" program under the criteria established by Montgomery County Police Department, install motion sensors, flood lights, and possibly surveillance cameras, etc.

**What can you do to help?** As a part of our community, there are actions that all homeowners can take:

1. The Tot Lot is closed from dusk to dawn. If you see or hear anyone there at night, or see suspicious activity, please promptly contact the Montgomery County Police Department at 301-279-8000. When calling, you may request to remain anonymous;
2. Talk to your family about how vandalism degrades our community, in terms of cost and quality of life. Young children playing at the Tot Lot have been physically hurt by damaged equipment, and are scared by the defacements. This is not fair to them;
3. If you notice any new vandalism or other unsafe conditions at the Tot Lot, please contact The Management Group Associates (TMGA) at 301-948-6666;
4. If you are interested in joining the Vandalism Task Force, please contact Angel Tirone (at tirone@jhu.edu or 301-948-4802) or TMGA (at 301-948-6666). **We plan to have a kick-off meeting in mid-June.**

We cannot do this alone. We need the help of every homeowner to prevent this from continuing and keep our Tot Lot clean, safe, and fun for our children.