

Green Ridge House Gazette

Bring Your Own Bag!

Starting January 1, 2024, both the City of Greenbelt’s **Bring Your Own Bag ordinance** and the similar Prince George’s County **Better Bag Bill** go into effect. This means all retail stores, grocery stores, restaurants, and other establishments will be prohibited from providing single-use plastic carryout bags to customers. Customers may request a paper or reusable bag for 10 cents per bag.

These laws were passed to protect the health and safety of people and wildlife. Plastic bags are made from materials that release harmful gases into the environment. They are not recyclable and contribute to litter, which causes public nuisance and harms animals. When improperly disposed of in recycle bins, they damage machinery in recycling facilities. But even when properly disposed of in the trash, they take hundreds of years to decompose and break down into tiny plastic particles that contaminate the soil, water, and food chain.

Everyone is encouraged to use reusable bags made of cloth or other durable materials when shopping. The 10-cent fee is meant to reduce the demand for single-use items. To assist in making this change easier, the County is providing a limited number of free reusable bags. **All Green Ridge House residents will be getting one free reusable shopping bag by January 18.**



Inside This Issue

Winter fire safety.....2

Winter fire safety (cont.).....3

Renter’s Tax Credit.....3

Free Covid19 and flu treatment...4

Ongoing events at GRH.....4

written by Shakita Point and Flora Li

Did you know that December, January and February are the peak months for heating fires? Heating is the second leading cause of home fires in the United States. 40% of fires come from space heaters and home heating equipment.

However, it's important to stay warm, especially in the winter. For an older person, a low body temperature can cause many health problems such as heart attacks, kidney problems, liver damage or worse. Older people are also more likely to have illnesses that can make it harder for your body to stay warm. For example, thyroid problems can make it hard to maintain a normal body temperature, diabetes can keep blood from flowing normally to provide warmth, and memory loss can cause a person to go outside without the right clothing. Some medications, both prescribed and over the counter, can affect body heat as well.

To keep your house warm and bill friendly without using space heaters (which can raise your electric bill), set your heat between 68-70°F. Close off all unused rooms and dress warmly even if you are just staying in the house. During the day, if the sun is out, open the curtains to let the warmth in. During the night, or during the day if the sun is not out, draw the curtains for insulation to keep heat from escaping through cracks in the windows. Finally, make sure you're always eating enough food to keep up your weight. Try to have hot foods and liquids. If you drink alcohol, do it moderately if at all, since alcoholic drinks make you lose body heat. If you do use space heaters, make sure to keep each heater at least three feet away from anything that can catch fire and burn. This includes papers, blankets, and cloth-covered furniture. Always plug your space heater directly into an outlet, never into a power strip or extension cord, since those can catch fire more easily. No matter what methods you use for heating, make sure your fire alarm is working and ready to warn you if something goes wrong.



Most information here is courtesy of the Greenbelt Volunteer Fire Department website.

This season's topic was suggested by a Green Ridge House resident. If you have a topic to suggest for the next Green Ridge House Gazette, let the Service Coordinator or her assistant know!

One method of fire protection is having a portable extinguisher in your home. Portable extinguishers can be bought at any home improvement store such as Home Depot and even online on sites like Amazon. They are good for putting out small fires, though there are limitations to what they can do if a fire grows or spreads rapidly—in those cases, you should get out and get to safety. Be sure you have read all instructions on your fire extinguisher so you are familiar with them in case of a real emergency, and know how to keep them maintained. Some extinguishers need to be shaken monthly, and others need to be pressured tested every few years. When picking a fire extinguisher, make sure it is a multipurpose one that has the label of an independent testing laboratory. Make sure your fire extinguisher's parts are all working and not dented or rusted.



Always keep your fire extinguisher in an easy to access place near an exit, and be sure your back is facing a clear exit when using it.

An easy way to remember how to operate a fire extinguisher is with one word, **PASS**:

Pull the pin and hold the nozzle away from you.

Aim the low point at the base of the fire.

Squeeze the lever slowly and evenly.

Sweep the nozzle side to side.

Renter's Tax Credit

The Renters' Tax Credit Program provides a direct check payment of up to \$1000 to renters who meet certain requirements. If you are a senior or disabled adult who has paid more than a specified amount in rent for your income level last year, you may qualify for a tax credit. Income requirements and details for workshops will come out early February—keep an eye on the table in the lobby! Workshops will be in March 2024.

Keep in mind that Renter's Tax Credit applications typically take a very long time for the state office to process. Most people are not notified about whether they will get a payment until closer to the end of each year or even sometime in the next year. Those who qualify for this credit from the state will also automatically qualify to receive checks for half the amount they get from the state from the County and the City.

Free Flu and Covid19 Tests and Treatments

4

The National Institutes of Health (NIH) is funding **Home Test to Treat**, a program that provides **free at-home flu and Covid19 tests and treatments** for those who are eligible. By signing up on the Home Test to Treat website, you can get access to free test kits, telehealth appointments, and flu or Covid19 treatment (if prescribed) that will be delivered to your home or pharmacy.

At this time, enrollment is limited to those who are uninsured or have Medicare, Medicaid, or Veterans Affairs healthcare **AND** those who are currently testing positive for Covid19 or flu. If you enroll and are not currently testing positive, you can get free test kits shipped directly to your home, and get free telehealth care and treatment if you later test positive. If you enroll because you are currently testing positive, you can receive telehealth and treatment but will not have access to test kits.

For more information or to enroll, visit:

<https://www.test2treat.org/>

Ongoing Events at Green Ridge House

Grocery Distribution: Mondays from 1 PM – 1:30 PM in the Dining Room, when available.

Monthly Produce Delivery: Every third Thursday of the month.

Strong Seniors Fitness Class: Tuesdays from 11 AM – 12 PM in the Community Room.

Tai Chi: Wednesdays from 10 AM – 11 AM in the Community Room.

Chair Yoga Class: Thursdays from 10 AM – 11 AM in the Community Room.

Wii Interactive Games: Thursdays from 1:30 PM – 3:30 PM in the Community Room.

Glenda's Chat and Chew: Every third Wednesday of the month at 2:30 PM in the Community Room.

Arts for the Aging: Every fourth Wednesday of the month at 2 PM in the Community Room.

Crochet and Needlepoint Group: Every second Thursday of the month 11:30 AM – 12:30 PM in the Library.