

The Hale Hotsheet!

Real Estate News and More from Maryland's Eastern Shore

Happy New Year!

It's January. It's cold, it's wet, my boat is out of the water, and football season is almost over. And what do we have to look forward to next? February – the shortest month that always seems like the longest to me! Ugh! But despite these winter woes, there is a spring to my step as we enter 2009. Change is in the air and, regardless of where that change may ultimately take us, with change comes hope. So here's what I hope for in the new year:

I hope that as a global community we work even harder to protect and preserve our environment. Whether on a personal level that means converting your home to solar or wind power, supporting the Chesapeake Bay Foundation, or simply redoubling your recycling efforts, I hope we all take the next step this year.

I hope that regardless of politics and prejudices the nation and the new administration work together to restore confidence and pride in our companies and businesses, and in their workers. There is an emotional paycheck that comes from doing a job well and, although it won't pay for the groceries, it will give you a sense of accomplishment that makes the prospect of another day exciting.

I hope that we each try at least once this year to "pay it forward". Sounds cliché, but you don't have to look very far these days to find someone who needs your help, whether it's an elderly neighbor looking for a ride to the doctor's office, or a young child that could benefit for a lifetime by having you as a mentor. Regardless of how pinched we may feel in our wallets, we all have time and talents we can share. I hope we do more of that this year.

Of course, I also hope that the real estate market goes gangbusters in 2009 (and read on for my take on why that just might happen!), and I hope that the next time I open my 401(k) statement, the numbers will actually go up! Most of all, I hope that each and everyone of us gets time to enjoy with friends and family life on the Eastern Shore. It just doesn't get much better than this!

"Don't knock the weather; nine-tenths of the people couldn't start a conversation if it didn't change once in a while."

-Kin Hubbard

Extra! Extra! 30-year Mortgage – 4.25%!!!

Quite the headline I'd say, and it's true, it came across my desk this week. Rates are dropping faster than the wind chill index, and now may be a great time to refinance. But there are more than a few caveats to these loans which are worth exploring before you rush to put pen to paper on an application. I checked in with Trey Rider of the Wye Mortgage Group in Easton. Trey told me "Mortgage rates have dropped to the lowest point in almost 40 years according to Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac, and the mortgage industry has recently experienced a refinance boom due to these sub 5% rates. However, due to the issues faced recently in the mortgage market, credit and income verification are more important than ever, and lenders will want to see borrowers who have managed their finances and credit well and still have significant equity in their home. But if you meet those standards, you will save a lot of money every month at these new rates."

Generally you will need equity in your home of at least 20 – 25%, and a credit score of 720 to access the lowest rates. And your debt to income ratio should be no higher than 45% (in the past 55% was considered acceptable). And these low rates do not apply to non-conforming or jumbo loans; for Talbot County that means anything above \$443,750. Finally, keep in mind that your home will have to be appraised by a licensed real estate appraiser who will look toward recent sales in your area to verify the value of your home; your assessed value (which for many of us just went up!) or what your local Realtor thinks you can sell your home for don't have any bearing on what the bank will see.

To find out if refinancing makes sense for you, check out the Refinance Calculator at Bankrate.com, or call Trey at 410/770-8786.

Making a Difference...

Many of our homes here on the Eastern Shore sit empty for part of the year. Seems like a shame to me, but there may be a way to make that a good thing. Vacations for Veterans is a nonprofit organization created to provide recently wounded veterans and their families with a week of free lodging donated by a vacation homeowner. Donations are tax deductible, and it is a chance to show in a very real way your appreciation for our veterans' honorable service to our country. For more information, go to www.vacationsforveterans.org.

Our Newest Feature...

As the Hale Hotsheet evolves, it occurs to me that you might want to hear from someone other than me on issues that affect you and your home. So I am pleased to introduce our first "guest columnist", Cecily Schneider of Cecily B. Home Staging and Re-Design. Take it away Cecily!

Now that the holidays are over, this is a great time to reorganize and revitalize yourself and your home. So, here are a few suggestions to help you become the "new year, new me" kind of person if you are struggling with the winter blues.

SEE THE LIGHT: We all need sunshine. It makes us feel better and it makes our homes look better. Get more light into your life by cleaning all the glass in your home from every window pane to picture to print on the wall, picture frames and all mirrors. I've found the best glass cleaner to be Hope's Perfect Glass. You can find it at Lowe's. When all that glass shines, it is amazing how everything just sparkles. If you are selling your home, it will enhance all the house's best features and let more sunlight in which is what buyers want to see.

DE-CLUTTER: During the holidays, a lot us put things away to make room for holiday decorations. I always have a rule that I put away the things that are not my most favorite. They go into a box and under a bed in the guest room. Many of the items then go on to charity because when the decorations are down, I always look around and think that our home looks better with less "stuff". You know the saying "less is more"; a de-cluttering of your home will de-clutter your mind and soul. And buyers looking at your home will see the house and not your things. If you have a lot of stuff throughout your home and you are selling, it can make your home appear smaller and cluttered. Potential buyers like openness and a feeling of space. And buyers want to visualize themselves in the home, not be overwhelmed by photographs of you and your family. So, go through each room and remove a few items and a few photos. Large or small it will make a big difference.

FIRST IMPRESSIONS: Do count! The front of your home should really look great no matter what season. It's easier in warmer months because of blooming plants, but there are plenty of things you can do in the winter. Frame your front entrance with pots filled with evergreens or pinecones or an assortment of interesting cut branches (birch, magnolia, berry bearing). Sweep and clean dead leaves and prune any bushes that obstruct water views or landscape views from the house. A potential buyer may decide to not even go inside if the front entrance is not maintained and looking "Wow!". Besides, you'll feel better and look at your home with pride when it looks its best.

For more ideas, please call me at 410/829-3593, or email ceci@goeaston.net. And enjoy your winter!

What to Do and See in Talbot County!

- Feb 2 – **Spaghetti Dinner**, 5pm – 7pm
Oxford Fire Co. All you can eat - \$8! BYOB
- 6 – **Eileen Ivers & Immigrant Soul**, 8pm
Avalon Theatre www.avalontheatre.com
- 6 – **First Friday Gallery Walk**, 5-9pm, Easton
- 8 – **Pancake Breakfast**, 7am – 11am
Oxford Fire Co., All you can eat - \$8!
- 13 – **"My Three Angels"**, Tred Avon Players, 8pm
thru March 2nd, Oxford Community Center
- 14 – **Country Church Breakfast**, 7am – 10am
Trappe United Methodist Church
- 20 – **Ronnie Spector**, 8pm, Avalon Theatre
- Mar 2 - **Spaghetti Dinner**, 5pm – 7pm
Oxford Fire Co. All you can eat - \$8! BYOB
- 3 - **Robert Cray Band**, 8pm, Avalon Theatre
- 6 - **First Friday Gallery Walk**, 5 – 9pm, Easton
- 6 – **Baltimore Symphony, Mozart's "Requiem"**,
8pm, Todd Performing Arts Center, Wye Mills
- 8 – **Pancake Breakfast**, 7am – 11am
Oxford Fire Co., All you can eat – \$8!
- 13 – **Eastern Shore Chamber Music Festival**
For more information call 410/819-0308
- 14 – **Country Church Breakfast**, 7am – 10am
Trappe United Methodist Church
- 19 – **Mid-Atlantic Symphony Orchestra**, 7:30pm
Avalon Theatre www.avalontheatre.com
- 20 – **Antiques Show & Charity Fundraiser**
Waterfowl Festival Building, thru Mar 22
- 28 – **Saffire Uppity Blues Women Farewell Tour**
8pm, Avalon Theatre

And that's just a small sample of what's going on in Talbot County! For additional information, please visit www.tourtalbot.org/events.

The Hale Hotsheet's a Hit!

I have been overwhelmed by the very positive feedback I've gotten on the Hale Hotsheet! Glad you are enjoying it, and if you have any ideas about what should be in the next issue, please let me know. And if you would like to share the Hotsheet with anyone (I am grateful for any referrals!), you can find this issue and the past issues in PDF format on my website. Thanks for your support and we'll try to keep it hot!

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The Hale Hotsheet!

Residential & Commercial Listings Winter 2008

Exceptional Value! Meticulously maintained two-bedroom rancher with large living room, eat-in kitchen, basement workshop, and enclosed breezeway to garage. Subdividable two-acre plus lot, large barn with water and electricity and carport. Central location close to Federalsburg, Preston and Hurlock. This is a great starter home or investment property and priced to move quickly at \$225,000! For a virtual tour, please visit <http://www.realestateshows.com/361822>

Down a country road to the most perfect two-bedroom home! Completely remodeled with two full baths, light and airy master with cathedral ceiling and walk-in closet, hardwood floors throughout, new refrigerator, microwave, washer/dryer, and lots of storage! Want more? How about built-in bookcases, crown molding, large screened porch, a private brick patio off the master bedroom and the cutest one-room cottage! Still want more? ½ acre lot is beautifully landscaped, circular drive provides easy access, carport is convenient to the front and back door, and there is raised floor storage shed. Best part? This country home is only five minutes from the Easton By-Pass. Charm and convenience, and priced to sell at \$275,000! For a virtual tour, please visit <http://www.realestateshows.com/363425>

Build the home you always imagined on this stunning 3.5 acre wooded, waterfront property. Very secluded (but within minutes of Easton), with expansive views across the Choptank to deeded conservation land. In other words – your view guaranteed to stay spectacular! Already perced, and located in the prestigious High Banks community, and, very important, not affected by recent Critical Areas legislation. All it needs is you and a dream! Motivated Seller - \$495,000! <http://www.realestateshows.com/364653>

If when you think of Oxford you think of sparkling days and glorious sunsets, views for miles down the Tred Avon and out to the Bay, and a home that says “Welcome” to family and friends, then you must think of this exceptional property. Enjoy spectacular sunsets from the unique second-floor living area with open floor plan, fireplace, large deck, and screened-in porch. And peruse the Chesapeake Bay for miles from the third-story cupola with sitting bench & captain’s wheel! Two bedrooms and adjoining bath upstairs are perfect for visiting family and friends; and you can relax in the first floor master suite, including den with wood stove, and laundry. And this listing includes half-ownership in the adjacent lot with dock and bulkhead mounted boat lift. Truly an amazing find at \$1,200,000 (and we didn’t even tell you about the wine cellar!) For a virtual tour please visit <http://www.realestateshows.com/361664>

Truly elegant home at the end of a private cul-de-sac on the shores of Porters Creek in St. Michaels. Family and friends will be comfortably entertained in the “open to the water” formal living room with fireplace, dining room, and family-style kitchen with fireplace. Or step onto the large screened porch and brick patio for sweeping views down the lawn to the dock and creek. First floor *and* second floor master suite (with separate study area), two large guest bedrooms with shared bath, and an unfinished 2nd story space with potential for a light-filled artist’s studio. Large two-car garage with separate workshop, beautifully handcrafted trimwork throughout, mature landscaping, six feet of water at the dock – this is a home where you will make memories that last a lifetime! \$1,300,000. For a virtual tour, please visit <http://www.realestateshows.com/361625>

Want more information on these properties or search for all MRIS listed properties on the Eastern Shore? You can do all that and more at www.haleproperty.com. It’s your gateway to your dream. Because really...

... *Why would you want to live anywhere else?*



www.LacazeMeredith.com

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Wicklows Manor...

...one of the Eastern Shore's most dramatic waterfront homes!



This is the place to truly call home! Handsomely appointed, private Georgian brick residence on three acres, poised on 260' feet of shoreline. Sandy beach replete with colorful sea-glass. Circular brick driveway and arched breeze-way entrance to welcome your guests. Over 5,200 square feet of attractively defined interior with traditional and European details. Elegant faux touches including black and white marble entryway, checkerboard kitchen floors, crackled and striae mantles and book cases. Two sumptuous oversized ensuite bedrooms each with fireplace, plus a luxurious master suite with two baths and private wrought iron balcony for morning coffee or afternoon time outs. Elegant living room, formal dining room, den, elevator and sun filled porches overlooking the glittering vistas. Large billiard room. Kitchen with handmade Italian backsplash, and eat in sun-porch. Cozy pool house with screened in porch, fireplace, sauna, kitchen, and loft bedroom overlooking an 18' x 38' enclosed in-ground heated pool. A guest apartment includes a kitchen, living room, bedroom, and bath. Three car garage, detached workshop, and private writer's studio with winding path to the shoreline. Deeded deep water 66' floating dock and boat slip in private Bachelor Point Marina and a new, 140' pier on property with full electric, water and remote controlled boatlift. Tucked away in the prestigious hamlet of Bachelor's Point, and a stroll, or bike ride into the charming, historic village of Oxford. Exceptional value for this magnificent setting, \$3,900,000.



For more information, please visit www.wicklowsmanor.com.