

# THE HELPFUL HOME

## NEWSLETTER

Issue #20

Winter 2007-8

### Some information about this newsletter



Here is your new Winter issue of the Helpful Home newsletter, from us at **STONEHOLLOW, Inc. FINE HOME INSPECTIONS**. I don't know about you, but I'm still trying to get used to the colder weather and the time change. The leaves have taken their sweet time to fall, and even with my super-duper leaf vacuum...my yard has taken a toll on my back & I've got blisters from raking out the beds and cuts on my hands from cleaning the gutters. You may have experienced water problems as a result of some of the crazy weather we experienced in late October and you may be contemplating waterproofing, sump pumps and other upgrades like generators. Winter, according to the Old Farmer's Almanac: "...will be about a degree milder than normal, on average. Precipitation will be a bit above normal across southern New England, and eastern Long Island and below normal elsewhere. Snowfall will be near to slightly below normal, with the snowiest periods in mid-December, mid- to late January, and mid-February. The coldest temperatures will occur in early and late December, mid-January, and early and mid-February". No big surprise there...but how are you gonna pay the fuel bills, stay warm and be happy in your home? The next few months will be a test for all of us with the price of gasoline going above \$3.50 a gallon and taxes rising. Yikes!! In our summer and fall quest to lower our heating bills we ended up reducing our usage by 16 kilowatts over the same period last year. But frankly with all the usage fees we ended up spending about the same amount of money per month...I guess that probably saved us a bunch, but it's hard to measure. My article for Consumer's Digest evaluating Fire



Oh, I am definitely not looking forward to this!

Extinguishers, Smoke Alarms and Carbon Monoxide Detectors should be out in January...what an experience. They are not easy people to write for...but the article should give you some direction with what to buy and best prices for various products. Projects around the house this winter are looking like interior painting, selling off lots of stored junk on e-bay, and maybe some carpeting. We will be checking to see if we've solved this old house's energy leaks, poor water pressure and watching over some of our older equipment. How about you...? Let us know what projects you are taking on. Call us on the Radio Show (Saturday mornings from 8-9 am 1400/1350 am) and let's chat about your progress. Remember we are doing Energy Audits, Safety Inspections, Infrared Evaluations for both water leaks and energy loss, Consulting for people keeping an eye on the quality of renovations and Pre-listing Inspections for people considering selling their home. We've got over 25 years in this field and many great ideas to share. Let us help you determine if your home is safe and operating properly. In this issue we have a new Winter Checklist and additional info about our ever growing services...please let us know what you think! Send e-mails to [steve@stonehollow.com](mailto:steve@stonehollow.com)

and let us know how we can better assist you.



Think the dryer lint really makes it outside?

**Stonehollow Fine Home Inspection**

**& Environ. Testing (800) 356-9611**

**Radon Testing, Water Testing, Lead  
Paint Surveys, Carbon Monoxide Tests**

Let us help you find the real condition of your home...for peace of mind... call us.

**1-800-356-9611**

**The Winter Helpful Home Check List:**

**Exterior Stuff:**

**Rooftops:** Sweep off the broken branches, leaves, and fallen debris before freezing weather. Winter is a great time to prune trees after the leaves are gone.

**Gutters...**are the drain protectors clogged? Carefully clean out all debris and rinse with a hose. I recently bought gutter drain inserts to help avoid clogs from Country Home Products The Insert's solid outer shell keeps leaves out, while the open underside allows the water to drain through the debris.

www.drpower.com



**Drainage:** Make sure leaders divert water away from the foundation. Try to avoid ponding as ice on walks and driveways become a hazard.

**Chimneys:** Make sure chimney caps are in place and screening to avoid animal entry.

**A/C Units:** Turn off power cover top only to keep crap out and branches from landing on them.

**In the yard:**

**Play Areas:** Put away the swings & play equipment. Cover and protect the grill, store tables, chairs, umbrellas & cover firewood to keep it dry from the weather.

**Irrigation Systems & Hose Spigots:** Make sure in ground systems are blown out completely and hoses, nozzles, etc. are drained and put away. Turn off interior feed valves for hose bibs and leave outside spigots open to avoid any trapped water.

**Pools:** Make sure swimming pool gates are closed and locked. Covers should be installed and keep water levels below tiles. Make sure folding ladders on above ground pools are locked in the up position.

**Interior Things:**

**Safety items: Every Season** Check batteries on Smoke, Heat & Carbon Monoxide detectors, Make sure all extinguishers are charged, and hang them in plain sight. Talk to your family about fire safety, have a fire drill and set up a logical meeting place for your family to gather in an emergency.

**Winter cleaning:** Clean duct filters, lint lines and make sure bath and oven vents are flowing efficiently to the outside.

**Windows:** Remove window A/C units. Check storm windows to make sure they are closed and in there correct position. Put away screens to allow solar gain during the day. Label them so you know where they belong for next spring.

**Have you read my appliance book?**



[The Professional Inspector's Guide to Residential Appliance Inspection](#)

Price: **\$49.95 plus Tax & Shipping call 203-327-6824 to order.**

### Are You Listening?

Tune in WSTC 1400 am and WNLK 1350 am or listen to us on [www.stonehollow.com](http://www.stonehollow.com) on the radio archive page, and hear us on your computer! Our own Steve Gladstone... sometimes Matt, Sandi and Mark Gladstone are on the air Saturday mornings on "Around the House" from 8 to 9 am. Steve & his guests discuss home issues, maintenance, and safety. And you can call in. It's fun to listen, and you'll learn how to do things around your home. Tune in each week for trivia questions, prizes, lots of useful home info and we may just have the answer to the question you've wanted to ask.

### Photos of things inspectors see on inspections:

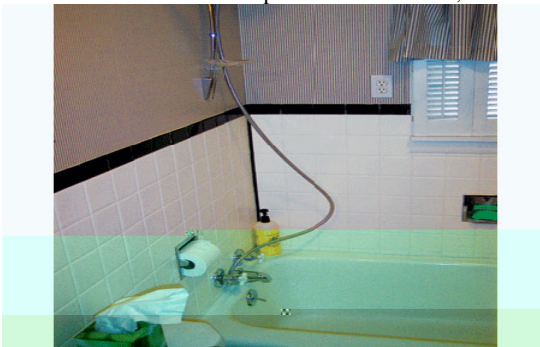
#### Would you recognize the problem?



When it comes to fireplace safety...there's not too much here. This hood was silconed into place with a damper mounted inside with a chain to open it. From Jim Quarello, JRV Home Insp. Wallingford, CT



Homeowner Plumbing...we'll make it bend with a torch... from John Cranor Cranor Inspections Glen Allen, Va.



While a window is never a great idea in the shower, this one has an outlet and the toilet paper roll! from Matt Fisher, Sherlock Homes Bloomington, Ind.

**Help Y**

eliminate unsafe conditions and explain the sometimes confusing equipment that is heating, cooling or trying to protect your home. Do you often wonder if bad things are happening in the attic, eaves and/or the crawlspace?

Our trained inspectors will get into those areas and double check them for your safety. We look at chimneys, heating systems, water heaters, and your panel boxes as well.

### For your protection:



Please hire an inspector who has **years of field experience, lots of technical knowledge, and who attends annual training & seminars, All of our inspectors are (A.S.H.I.) American Society of Home Inspectors-ASHI Certified Inspectors.**

**Household Tips: Radon-** A colorless, odorless, tasteless gas that enters your home naturally through your basement is the 2<sup>nd</sup> largest cause of lung cancer in this country. A simple 48 hour test of your lowest living areas can determine if your family is at risk. Radon can come in from the soil or enter your home from the water if you have well water. And it's easy to fix a home with higher than desirable radon levels. Testing water is inexpensive and checking your home every few years is a good idea. Call us to make an appointment. We use very sophisticated computers that measure the radon levels and give you a printout of each hour, so you know what the levels are. Mention you read about this here and we'll give you a special price for the test.

### The Great House Project...

This Winter: Sandi is itching to get some rooms that have lost their shine the benefit of a coat of color and some new carpet. Several windows

need drapes and shades and some new furniture may keep us busy while the cold weather slows our outdoor projects. The snow-thrower just got filled with fresh (and expensive) gas and we've taken out the ice melt and the snow shovels and car scrapers. Over the winter I generally sort through our stored stuff and e-bay the unwanted items. By the way the electric gate in the rear is working great.

[www.stonehollow.com](http://www.stonehollow.com)

e-mail us at:

[steve@stonehollow.com](mailto:steve@stonehollow.com)

### More Winter Tips:

Improve door weather-stripping on entry doors. We lose lots of heat from drafty doors and windows. On doors not typically used during the colder months, add insulation or plastic film to reduce energy loss and drafts.

If you have an attic pull down stairs, make a foam box to cover areas above the pull down & whole house fans. (Tremendous heat loss can result from these units not being insulated).

Make sure you have at least 12 inches of insulation in the attic. Make sure rubber garage door gaskets are in good condition. (They keep out drafts and rodents).

Make sure the garage door fully closes. Protect any garage piping from freeze-ups. This may require insulation and "heat tapes".

Put up reflectors on your driveway to alert visitors and the snowplow... of the edges. Make sure house numbers are visible in case of emergencies. This could save your life.

Do not close attic venting, attics should be cool and well vented. Check to see if your attic is getting wet from condensation on pipes & roof nails.

Run bath exhaust vents...get moisture from bathing & showering to the outside. Always run oven vents to pull smoke, heat, odors, and grease to the outside, and make sure your dryer is properly vented and not kinked.



### Successful Selling in a down turned market...by Sandi Gladstone

Have you been thinking about selling your home? Maybe you decided not to sell it last year when the market was really crazy and people were getting lots more for their home. Are you kicking yourself now for missing the boat. The truth is you will have to be a crafty seller to get a good price for your home in this current market. But take heart, it's not all bad news. Steve and I have worked with several sellers over the last few months advising them to fix-up, straighten-up and organize their sale in such a way as to get that home sold as quickly as possible. "Staging" your home is only part of the process. Having a team with years of experience will make a big difference. Sometimes the actions required have been subtle, and sometimes they've been more substantial. But all those homes have sold. Our sellers not only got back their investment, but they have moved on to new homes that they found at discounted pricing. We are positive that by following the right steps and putting a bit of energy into your home you can still move your sale to the top of the list. And beware with mortgage requirements changing day by day the longer you wait to get started the rules and costs may change radically. If you are interested please give me a call on my cell 203-536-0498 or at the office at Weichert Capital Properties & Estates- 203-661-5400.

**Our Newsletter Sponsors: Please let our sponsors know you heard about them on the radio or in the Newsletter.**

#### Sandi Gladstone- Realtor®

**Weichert Capital Properties & Estates**

If you're buying, selling, or just thinking about it...call me for exceptional service and great customer care.

Office: 203-661-5400 [www.sandigladstone.com](http://www.sandigladstone.com)

Cell: 203-536-0498 Fax: 203-661-6703

#### Karp's Truevalue Hardware

Since 1926 485 Hope Street Stamford

Stamford's Hardware Supermarket

203-327-0460 7 Days a week

Great Selection, Personal Service, Friendly, Professional Do-it-yourself Advice.

#### Resource Systems

Computer Consultation, Web Design & Site Maintenance, Computer Software & Hardware Troubleshooting call Ed Kivell 203-329-3660

#### DeerDefence

The Pinnacle of Protection with steel web fencing Ask your local landscaper or Call: 203-550-8350 [www.deerdefence](http://www.deerdefence)

#### Associated Water Industries

488 Glenbrook Rd. Water Treatment Service, Pumps, Parts, Water Treatment Chemicals, Irrigation System Parts...324-9561

#### Homeguard Environmental

48 Union Street Stamford, Lead, Asbestos, and Mold Mitigation Services done safely & properly. Call 203-323-8000 Fully Licensed & Insured.

#### Oasis Environmental Solutions

Inc. Radon Mitigation Installations EPA Approved, PO Box 514 Redding Ridge, Ct. Jim Jasensky call for an estimate 203-268-6305

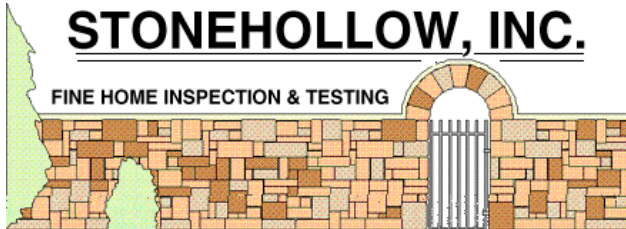
Roccie's Asphalt Paving Driveways, walks, aprons & curbs, parking lots, Belgium block (203) 324-0311 for all your paving needs.

#### Lifetime Garage Door Co.

Overhead doors, openers, touch pads, superior service and parts. 203-323-4165. find us at...[www.lifetimedoor.com](http://www.lifetimedoor.com)

Listen Saturday mornings 8-9 am on WSTC/WNLK 1400/1350 "Around the House w/ Steve Gladstone"

Address Correction. If this newsletter reaches you in error, or you do not wish to receive it, or you need a spelling correction: e-mail us at: [steve@stonehollow.com](mailto:steve@stonehollow.com), and we'll fix it!



The Helpful Home Newsletter can be downloaded for free by your home inspector. Please feel free to pass this information on to others. Copyright 2007 HPN, Inc.

**If you would like us to mail you hard copies, send \$5.00 for a one year subscription to:**

**Helpful Home Newsletter  
154 Overbrook Drive**