



May 2024

Vol. 54, Issue 4

Kings Park West Civic Association

“If you can be anything, be kind.”

Hey neighbors!

It’s a blustery but sunny day as I write pen this note to you all; hopefully by the time you read it we will be well into enjoying lovely warm spring days!

Please mark your calendars for the annual Volunteer Appreciation event on May 14th, 6 pm. More details to follow, but we will gather at Royal Lake Park down by the lake (where the Braddock Nights concert series is held) to celebrate all the amazing volunteers that make our community the best little corner of the world!

As I have mentioned previously, I plan to step down as President this fall, so we are in search of a new, motivated person to take on this role. I’ve served two terms as President and it is time for someone new. I started volunteering with the KPWCA nearly 20 years ago. I was a Block Captain, then took on Membership, then Parks and Lake and finally President. I love bringing people together, making connections and solving problems, and that’s also what I’ve done over the course of my professional career. However, I have noticed in our Board meetings this year how fantastic it is to have new faces ideas and connections! My connections to the schools and scouts

So I ask everyone to ponder this question – what do you love most about KPW and where can your individual skill sets be brought to bear. In other words, what can you bring to the community? The way things have been done in the past doesn’t mean that has to be the case in the future.

As always, feel free to email me at president@kpwca.org or message me on Facebook with any ideas or suggestions. See you around the neighborhood!

Sarah G.J. Lennon
President, KPWCA

Help us continue to provide fun activities to all. Join at www.kpwca.org

OR

Scan the QR code to make the membership process even easier!



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How do I join the Kings Park West Civic Association? Send your name, address, and phone number, along with a check for \$25 to KPWCA, P.O. Box 7114, Fairfax Station, VA 22039-7114, or visit kpwca.org and pay via PayPal. Members receive the Community Directory and support from community programs like Scholarship Awards, community school activities, parks and lakes clean-up, and a free subscription to The Herald.		How do I get my news in The Herald? The easiest way to get your news items in The Herald is to email the editor at editor@kpwca.org . We invite items on neighborhood schools, churches, organizations, and other noteworthy neighborhood news. News items and letters will be published if deemed suitable and as space permits. We reserve the right to edit any item submitted to The Herald. Acceptance of news items does not constitute an endorsement by the KPWCA.	
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THE GARDEN CORNER

By Charlie Boring

The urban gardener has many exciting and fun ways to grow plants that not only beautify the landscape but make our gardens more organic, while conserving resources. This article will explore fun activities for making our gardens more “green.” Such projects are making a comeback with the organic gardening movement.

As we all know, the soil in much of Virginia has a high clay content. That fact makes the soil harder and restricts the growth of plant roots. We need to improve the soil in order to grow flowers, vegetables, and other crops. Adding compost to the soil attracts those beneficial organisms such as earthworms and adds needed nutrients to the garden soil. A gardener can purchase organic compost or compost plus manure that will improve your soil, but it is much more enjoyable, frugal, and green to make your own compost.

There are many ways to make your own compost pile, bin, or container; but in an urban environment, we are often concerned with making the compost bin aesthetic. You can purchase a compost bin online or at a local garden supply store that will be aesthetically acceptable; but where is the fun in that? I show here three methods that I use for the production of compost for my garden.

The first method is using a compost bin that I made from a black 32-gallon plastic barrel with a locking lid that recently sold at Home Depot for \$19.95. This site indicates the procedures that I used to build my compost bin <http://thehappyhousewife.com/frugal-living/diy-compost-bin/>.



You may want to produce two or three compost barrels to allow fresh garden and kitchen scraps to be added to one while the other is becoming usable compost. I use

primarily leaves for the carbon element of my compost pile and kitchen scraps for the nitrogen element. Experts say your compost pile will take from 3 weeks to a year to produce usable compost; however from my personal experience, using these procedures, it takes about 6 weeks, depending upon the following.

The speed of composting depends primarily upon: 1) the size of your compost pile - it needs to be at least 3 cubic feet; 2) the material used - the fastest compost maturation happens when the ratio of carbon to nitrogen is about equal; 3) the moisture level - compost should be as moist as a wrung-out sponge; 4) the frequency the compost is

turned - for the fastest maturity, turn your compost pile frequently, every week or more frequently.

It may be helpful to consider this in terms of a “green to brown” ratio. You will need a mix of green materials that are high in nitrogen and brown materials that are high in carbon.

Some green materials that may be available to the urban gardener are vegetable scraps, fruit scraps, egg shells, grass clippings, fresh tree and plant leaves, aquatic weeds, hair, seaweed and algae, garden weeds, bread, crackers, cake, pasta and cereals, manure (cattle, chicken, horse, and bird), coffee grounds, and tea bags.

Some brown materials are dry tree leaves, straw/hay, shredded paper, wood chips, sawdust, dead plants, and dead yard trimmings. More green products and a higher temperature will increase the rate of decomposition. Never add weed seeds, diseased plants, meat products, dairy products, pet feces, oils and grease, and pressure-treated lumber. Your compost should be damp, not wet.



I collect kitchen scraps (vegetables and fruit) in the container in the first picture and normally either transfer them to my compost barrel or to my worm factory shown in the second picture.

In the second picture you can also see about 2.5 gallons of worm castings/worm compost that I recently harvested from my worm factory. I will use the worm castings in my potted plants and in the garden. It is great fertilizer and a small amount produces great results.

The third method that I use to produce compost is the direct dig, dump and cover method. During the winter when my compost bin was not working efficiently due to the temperature, I dug trenches in my garden, dumped in my kitchen scraps and covered them up. When I turned over the ground during the spring, the soil was dark and rich. So far, my



garlic plants have been the big beneficiaries of my 2023 composting.

Before I end this article, let me show you how some of my artichoke seedlings are progressing in my edible landscape. The picture shows the artichoke seedlings near the pots that I use to cover them when the

temperatures drop below 35 degrees. Setting the seedlings out in this manner provides the necessary vernalization period to ensure flowering during the first year. If you do not want to harvest and eat your artichokes, they have a beautiful purple flower.

Have a great Spring in your garden!

Kings Park West Resident Leads Grassroots Lacrosse Campaign for Peruvian Olympic and Pan-American Games

Kings Park West resident and Peruvian American Isabelle Merchant, a 2022 graduate of Robinson Secondary, is spearheading an exciting new initiative as a member of Peru's Women's National Lacrosse Team. In a recent interview, Isabelle shared her journey and the team's efforts to grow the sport of lacrosse in Peru, aiming to prepare for the upcoming 2028 Olympic Games and the 2027 Pan-American Games.

"Lacrosse has been a transformative part of my life. It's more than just a sport—it's taught me about teamwork, perseverance, and leadership," said Isabelle. "Being a part of the Peruvian national team is a dream come true, and I want more young girls in Peru to have the same opportunities I've had."



As one of the first team players selected to travel to Peru and teach the sport, Isabelle is leading the charge in launching a grassroots recruiting program. The program aims to introduce lacrosse to girls across Peru, particularly in the city center and less-known areas. It will provide equipment, coaching, and opportunities for young athletes to learn and play lacrosse, building a strong foundation for the sport's future in the country.

"We're currently running a fundraising campaign to support this initiative," explained Isabelle. "Donations will go directly towards buying equipment, setting up training camps, and organizing community events to promote lacrosse. Every contribution, no matter how small, will make a big difference in helping us grow the game."

Developing strong lacrosse teams is crucial as Peru prepares for the 2028 Olympic Games, where lacrosse sixes will be featured. Additionally, with Peru hosting the Pan-American Games in 2027, the team aims to have a strong presence and showcase its capabilities as both host and competitor.

"We're also inviting interested players with Peruvian heritage from around the world to apply to be part of our team," added Isabelle. "If you have roots in Peru and a passion for lacrosse, we want to hear from you. This is a unique opportunity to represent Peru on an international stage and be part of an exciting journey." If you have or know someone of Peruvian heritage interested in representing Peru, please visit <https://pwlaxstaff.wixsite.com/my-site/contact>.

The team is calling on the community to support their efforts. "Please scan this QR code to donate and join us in growing the game we love. Together, we can make a difference and help us represent Peru in the upcoming international competitions."

For more information and to donate, scan the QR code.



KPW Recommends




by cathy deloach


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Dominion Energy, in collaboration with HomeServe, an independent home warranty company, offers customers budget-friendly emergency repair insurance plans. Recently, while my son was working at my house, he noticed the sound of running water: our main water supply line had sprung a leak! Luckily, we had signed up for the Dominion insurance coverage years ago and won't face any expensive repair costs. Paid monthly with your Dominion bill, these plans are a great way to avoid costly repairs to water, gas and sewer lines, and more. Without them, you could be responsible for all costs of repair! There are 13 warranties in all – check them out and see what might be best for your home.



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Parks & Lake Update

Hello neighbors, here are our continuing plans for Spring-Summer 2024.

Earth Day Cleanup: On April 20th, volunteers at Lakeside Park and Royal Lake Park spent 2 hours picking up trash. The effort was organized by the Road Raiders of the KPWCA.

Kelley Newsad, co-chair of Parks & Lake, led her volunteers in the Royal Lake area. A local boys' volleyball team did an amazing job gathering trash to keep our parks and lake pristine. A big thank you to Kathy Gross for stepping in to lead the group at Lakeside Park and to the McKeown family, whose son Ollie wants to "save the Earth."

Road Raiders: We have one additional planned event this academic year:

- June 8 @ TBD...the plan is to continue working on improving the trail by Shane's Creek

Further details will be emailed and posted to the KPW Facebook group and the community signage boards.

If you'd like to join us, please send Kelley Newsad an email at parks@kpwca.org

And if you have an area of our community that is neglected by VDOT/sidewalks that need special attention, please let me know!

***"Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world: indeed, it's the only thing that ever has."** - Margaret Mead*



Kings park West Neighbor Assist

Some residents may still feel reluctant to call us. Don't be. Our volunteer handymen will call and arrange a time to come and see the scope of your project. They have lots of talent, so most jobs are within the scope of our service. We can advise you of potential options if we don't have the skills needed (like fixing old KPW plumbing).

Since we are no longer connected with the KPW Civic Association, our handymen may require that you agree to allow them to work and sign a form releasing them from any damage that might happen. The Civic Association insurance does not cover us. To date, we have completed well over 100 separate services without incident. We don't expect any issues. We encourage you to ask questions about

what we are doing. We want you to be happy with our service.

The handymen are also residents of KPW and are dedicated to helping you stay and enjoy living in your KPW house by reducing the cost that commercial companies charge to send someone to do these tasks. A reminder: these services are offered to all KPW residents. The labor is free, but we will ask you to cover the cost of parts and other materials involved.

Just send us a request with your name, address, and contact information at KPWNeighborAssist@gmail.com

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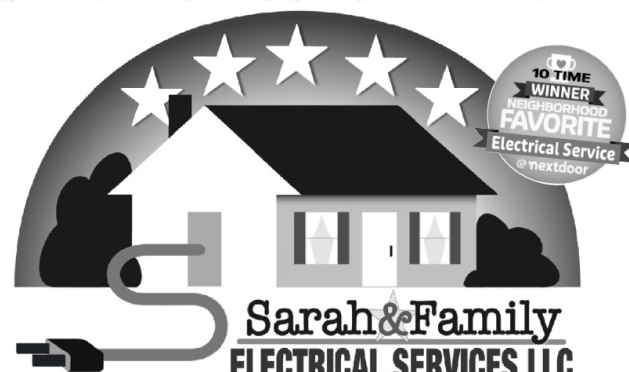
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Wildfires and Prescribed Burns: Part 1

By Greg Sykes (greg@grsykes.com)

In recent years, people have become increasingly aware of fires in natural areas. From annual prescribed burns (aka controlled burns) at Prince William Forest to the 2023 Canadian wildfires (approximately 16 miles to over 2,000 miles away, respectively), our Fairfax neighborhood felt the impacts. The haze taints the sky, and the occasional ash fallout looks like snowflakes. Regardless of the fire's origins, too much smoke in the air is unhealthy to breathe—stay alert to bad air quality warnings! We really are part of a global community. Let's get a better understanding of this force that can be both destructive and rejuvenating.

Prescribed burns are a series of small fires set in a designated plot predetermined by park managers or other authorities. The flames may clear deadwood, destroy invasive plants, maintain meadow habitats, activate native plant seeds that need fire to germinate (i.e., fire climax plant communities), and, ironically, prevent large-scale wildfires. Burns release nutrients back into the soil.



Figure 1. Smoke from a Prince William Forest-controlled burn suddenly billows into Royal Lake Park.

Depending on how the burn is orchestrated, it can either clear understory growth from mature forests or preserve meadows by killing young trees before they mature. Finally, some plants and animals need meadow habitats to survive so using fires to halt reforestation increases local biodiversity. Buffer zones that will not catch fire surround the burned sectors. Keeping the site away from buildings, scheduling burns to last during daylight hours, conducting this work only when the winds remain calm, and preparedness to extinguish flames outside of the zone are added safety measures. These small fires stay relatively cool; each one dies back when it comes to the burned section of a sister fire, so none get too hot.

Repeating the burns every several years prevents too much fuel from accumulating that would otherwise build higher than desired temperatures when alight. Much preparation and understanding of how fire dynamics impact that area go into controlled burns; private citizens should never attempt setting open fires to their suburban yards and gardens as having open fires is illegal in Fairfax County!

Indigenous peoples across the world did a version of prescribed burns. In North America, the importance was lost to newly arrived Europeans. Yet, some early colonists marveled at the grand trees and majestic forests, saying how one could gallop a horse

through the woods—results of American Indian controlled burns. The Indians in what would become Virginia ignited areas for many reasons, such as clearing forests for better hunting, driving animals in a direction to be hunted, and agriculture.

Due to Eurocentric misconceptions, native know-how took the back burner to the fire suppression dominating wild land policies over the last several centuries. With fuel accumulating faster than it could rot away, small sparks could burst into large wildfires. Without burns, seeds from fire climax plants would not germinate, and ecosystems shifted. Within the past several decades, scientists rediscovered the important role fire plays in the environment. Locally, Huntley Meadows Park, Ellanor C. Lawrence Park, Elklick Preserve, and Poplar Ford Park have a total of 82 acres that the Fairfax County Park Authority (FCPA) manages with prescribed burns. Controlled burns would not be done in the Royal Lake watershed because much of the parkland is in stream valleys that are too wet for reliable burns. Drier, upland sections are too close to homes.

Simply stated, a wildfire—including forest, grass, bush, and brush fires—is an uncontrolled and unpredictable burn in natural areas. One can start from natural occurrences, such as lightning strikes or even spontaneous combustion of materials



Figure 2. The charred ground surrounded by low-cut turf borders is where a recent prescribed burn occurred at Ellanor C. Lawrence Park. This burn maintains a meadow habitat.

like dried grass on a hot day. Humans catalyze other wildfires when sparks, high heat sources, or flames contact vegetation, especially dried husks, through acts such as:

- accidents (e.g., falling live power lines or roadside vehicle fires)
- carelessness (e.g., tossing smoldering cigarette butts, improper campfires, or setting off fireworks in unsafe areas or detonating illegal ones that land in combustibles)
- arson (e.g., deliberately lighting fires without proper authorization or pyromania)

Factors facilitating the initial spark to grow into an inferno include:

- the amount of combustible material present
- how dry that fuel and ground is
- oxygen, humidity, and wind
- natural containment (e.g., waterways or stoney flats)
- timeliness, accessibility, capability, and effectiveness of the firefighting response

Favorable fire conditions are often found in the dry, western states. The wetter East Coast sees dead plant matter decomposing more readily than out west or frequent rains preventing a fire to catch. Still, wildfires do occur along the eastern seaboard when the conditions are right. Sometimes, neighbors expressed concerns regarding how a suburban wildfire would look in their neck of the woods. [Part 2](#) of this series has tips on preventing wildfires and looks at a wildfire case study that happened at Royal Lake Park.

If you spot a wildfire, call 911! For suspicious activity that does not immediately pose a threat, call Fairfax County non-emergency dispatchers; the West Springfield office number is 703-644-7377.

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KPW Real Estate Corner
by Cathy DeLoach



Woodleigh Chase Senior Living Community and Kings Park West



Earlier this month, I visited [Woodleigh Chase](#), the fantastic new senior living community just outside KPW, to review paperwork with a former neighbor. Upon entering the lobby, I ran right into another client from KPW who had recently relocated to Woodleigh Chase. It appears that this senior facility is wildly popular among KPW residents transitioning from single-home ownership.

As the migration from KPW to Woodleigh Chase plays out through the rest of the spring and summer, we anticipate a decided increase in real estate inventory. How will this impact our real estate market?

As-Is Home Market

Homes listed “as-is” with less focus on appealing to younger buyers, will be priced lower and require both cosmetic and functional updates. With recent substantial increases in home values and historically higher interest rates, these lower-priced homes will provide some buyers with the opportunity to purchase (finally!) in KPW after years of low inventory, bidding wars, and increasing prices. These buyers may choose to undertake DIY projects or gradually improve their property as their finances allow.

The as-is market will also attract flippers who will swiftly renovate the homes and resell for a substantial profit. The lower selling prices of as-is properties are likely to statistically decrease the property values in our community.



Updated Home Market

Homeowners aiming for a higher return on investment, seeking a larger sum at closing, will continue to enhance their homes before listing to attract buyers looking for a move-in ready property. These homes may necessitate several weeks of contractor prep work but are likely to sell quickly after listing for a significantly higher price than those offered as-is. The higher sales prices will tend to statistically increase overall property values.

If you are considering selling your home, explore both options (as-is vs. updating) to determine the selling scenario that best suits your current and future needs. Each approach has its pros and cons, and not one solution fits all! Prospective buyers should ensure their agent provides pricing insights into similar floor plans with varying conditions. It's not unusual for there to be a \$200,000 difference in asking price between as-is and updated properties. Buyers purchasing as-is should assess the cost of upgrades-after-purchase to determine their best course of action.

Current KPW Sales Statistics	
Active or Coming Soon Listings:	4
Number of Properties Sold YTD:	20
Average Sold Price:	\$834,952 (\$655,000 to \$1,010,000)
Average List Price:	\$814,829 (\$649,999 tp \$965,000)
Average Days on Market:	12

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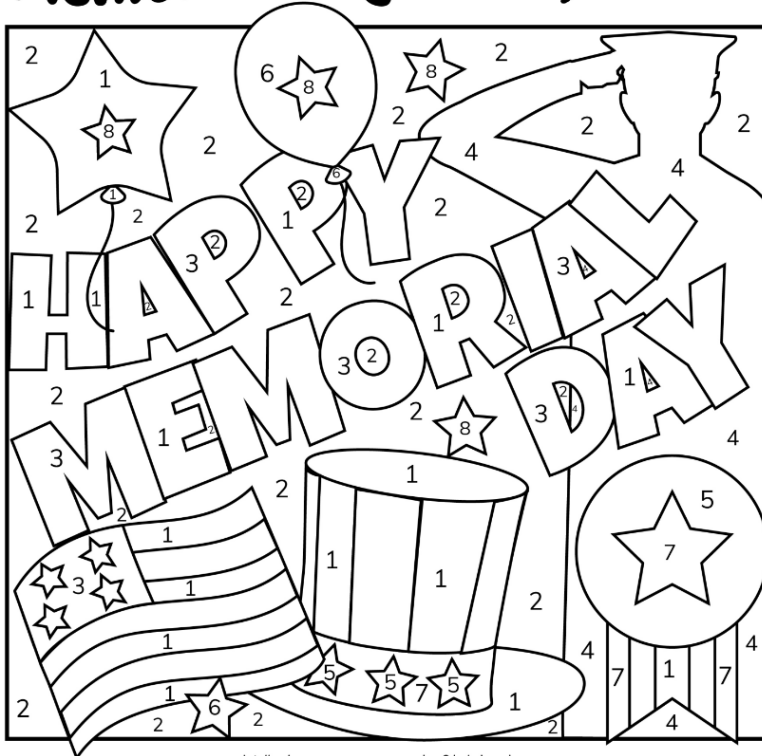
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3					4		
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3					2		6
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Coloring

Memorial Day Color By Number

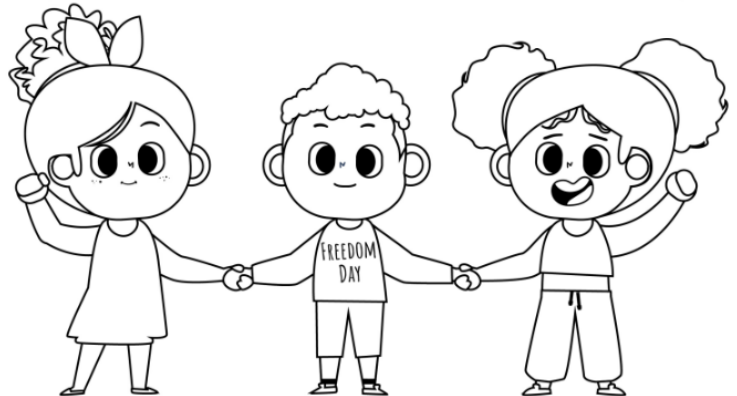
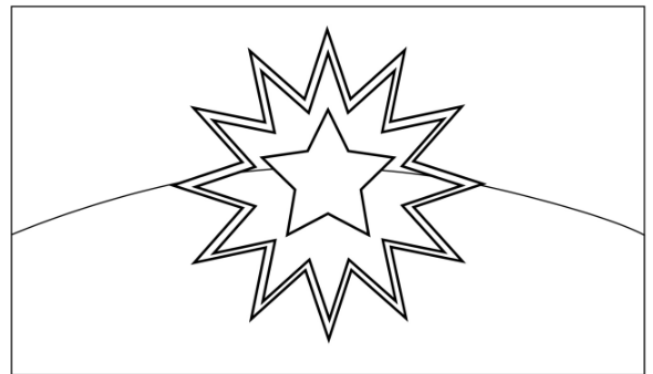


White areas are left blank.

- 1 Red
- 2 Gray
- 3 Blue
- 4 Dark Green
- 5 Gold
- 6 Light Blue
- 7 Navy
- 8 Yellow

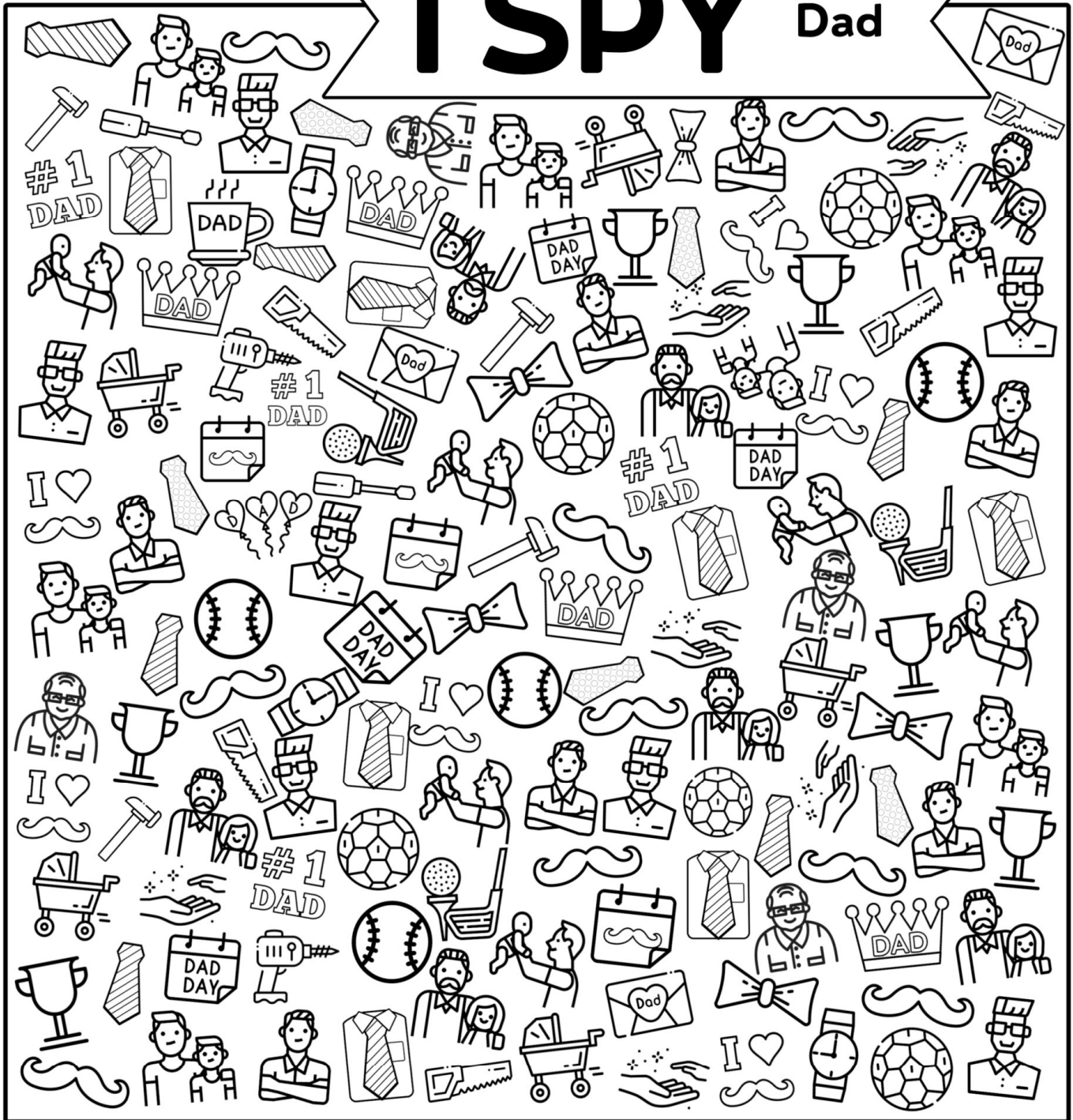
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Activity Page

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