

VEP MEETING

7:30 P.M. TUESDAY
January 28, 2003

GUNDERSON HIGH SCHOOL
★ **Faculty Lounge** ★

AGENDA

★ **Internet Predators** ★

A presentation and Q&A on Internet predators and how to stay safe, by the San Jose Police Department
7:30 to 8:15 p.m.

★ **Gunderson High School** ★

A presentation by new school
Principal Demerris Brooks
8:15 to 8:45 p.m.

★ **VEP Community Service Award** ★

Discuss & vote on Exec Committee's recommended funding for this year's awards allocation
8:45 to 8:50 p.m.

★ **Your Community Concerns** ★

8:50 to 9:00 p.m.

Everyone is welcome. Invite your neighbors!

Our January meeting

- *Dave Noel*

Due to extensive outreach, I expect to have an exceptionally high turnout at our January 28th general meeting. As we kick off our membership year, we have put together a program of interest to the general community, and advertised our meeting to a very wide audience.

I saw the San Jose Police Department's internet safety presentation about a year ago at a Castillero Middle School PTSA meeting. I knew right away that it would be a good presentation for VEP. Whether you are a computer novice or an expert, you'll learn something. And don't worry, we won't get bogged down in technical mumbo jumbo like gigahertz and megabytes. Instead, we'll learn about how crooks operate and how to keep safe when using chat rooms, email, on-line shopping, and so on. And you'll probably come away surprised at what your kids and grandkids already know about computers.

Our January meeting will also be our first chance to meet **Demerris Brooks**, the new principal at Gunderson High School. If you have an eighth grader, you are currently in the process of selecting a high school for your son or daughter. This is an excellent opportunity to learn more about Gunderson.

One matter of business we must attend to is a vote on the appropriation of funds for VEP's annual *Community Service Award*. Greg West has done an article (elsewhere in this publication) explaining this recognition we give to

young volunteers is our community each year. We urge you to attend, express your views, then cast your vote.

Internet safety

-Dave Noel

Do your children know more about the internet than you do? Do they go on-line unsupervised? Are you concerned about on-line credit card and identity theft? Are you tired of spam? VEP Community Association invites parents and students to our monthly general meeting on Tuesday January 28th, 7:30 to 9 pm, in the faculty lounge at Gunderson High School.

Our guest speakers will be officers from the San Jose Police Department's nationally renowned Child Exploitation Unit. San José city councilmember Pat Dando has worked with San José Police Officers to develop a program that will help middle school students and their parents learn how to avoid becoming victims of Internet predators. They will teach us internet basics and simple things we can do to protect our children and ourselves from internet crimes.

Maybe you saw the following editorial in the San Jose Mercury-News. It serves as an excellent introduction to the importance of our January meeting.

The Mercury News

Friday, January 3, 2003

On the case, online

\$300,000 GRANT WILL HELP NAB CHILD PREDATORS

The cash from a recently awarded \$300,000 federal grant to the San Jose Police Department will arrive early this year, boosting the department's nationally renowned efforts in combating Internet crimes against children.

That money is good news for the region, as San Jose investigators will train law enforcement officers from nine nearby counties to properly investigate this growing criminal activity. The department will hire a full-time computer forensics expert solely devoted to child exploitation cases, and become one of 36 sites in a national police network.

The need for such specialized and broad enforcement should put families on high alert, particularly those in Silicon Valley.

Police agencies across the country are making headway but remain overwhelmed by the challenge of detecting, prosecuting and preventing sexual predators and pornographers who target an ever-growing generation of computer-savvy kids.

By 2005, an estimated 77 million children will be online.

The Internet is an invaluable educational tool that opens a universe to students. It's become a social and entertainment vehicle as well. Like the real world, however, the cyber one is rife with too many bad people who pick on children.

Approximately one in five youths aged 10 to 17 who regularly use the Internet receive sexual solicitations, reports

the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children. Less than 10 percent of these cases are reported to parents or authorities.

"Leaving a child unattended on the Internet is probably more dangerous than leaving a child alone in a public park," says San Jose police Sgt. Nick Battaglia, supervisor of the Child Exploitation Unit and author of the grant proposal.

Families would be wise to treat computers like cars. With privilege comes rules and safety guidelines. Close supervision can save lives.

[Ed Note: This editorial is reprinted with permission from the San Jose Mercury-News.]

CSA appropriation vote this month

- Greg West

The *Community Service Award* is VEP's attempt to reward area high school seniors for exemplary volunteerism during their high school careers and to encourage all students to carry the habit of volunteerism into their adult lives. The award is based only on the student's volunteer record during high school.

Awards are given to one deserving senior from each of the VEP neighborhood high schools, Henry T. Gunderson High School and Andrew Hill High School, and to one At-Large nominee. This year the VEP Executive Board is recommending a \$4500 budget (\$1500 per award category) for the membership to consider at the January meeting. Per the VEP by-laws, any money not awarded will be returned to the VEP general fund.

Any graduating high school senior that lives in San Jose may be nominated by a VEP member for the At-Large award. Gunderson and Hill nominations are made by the respective school's administration.

Nomination forms for the At-Large award will be available in the February issue of the *VEP News*, online at www.vepca.org, and from any VEP Board member after the February meeting. The nomination due date will be published in the February issue of the *VEP News*.

VEP wins *San Jose Beautiful* grant

-Dave Fadness

In case you missed seeing the announcement in our December *NEWS*, VEP was awarded a \$3500 grant by San Jose Beautiful. This money will be used to landscape three public facilities at gateways into our membership area: the median on Chynoweth between Pearl Avenue and Winfield Boulevard, the triangular median on the southeast side of Narvaez Avenue at Branham Lane, and the strip of land along the south side of Branham Lane where the SP Lick Spur railroad used to cross.

We will start planting at 9 am on Saturday, January 25th. This is an all-volunteer effort, so call Dave Fadness (578-6428) if you can spare a couple of hours that morning.

As conditions of the grant, VEP must match the \$3500 award with volunteer labor (at \$12 per hour), and is responsible for maintaining the landscaping for a period of three years.

The City of San Jose, Our City Forest, and our own dedicated member volunteers have all contributed already to what is sure to be a successful beautification project. C'mon out and help!

VEP Home Improvement Faire = March 25th

-John Marks ()*

Our sixth annual *VEP Home Improvement Faire* is scheduled for Tuesday, March 25th, and this will again include a raffle for cash. The exhibitors have ponied up enough for a prize of about \$500. You won't have to buy anything, just come, get a ticket stub, then wait to see whether your number is called.

This year's Faire will feature 18-20 contractors and tradesmen who will display their products and functions in the Gunderson High School Forum area. Exhibitor services include cracked driveway repair, student painters, roofers, plumbers, fence builders, windows and doors, kitchens, water softeners, rooftop sun tunnels, glass, mirror and cultured products, Tupperware, and others. We'll also include a VEP information table and refreshments (brownies & soft drinks).

Mark your calendars and be there on Tuesday, March 25th, at 7:30 pm. You won't be disappointed! We look forward to seeing you.

[() Ed. Note: VEP salutes John Marks for organizing this event year after year. John is a past president, VEP NEWS contributor, and long-time member of VEP.]*

Membership drive

- Dave Noel

If you are already a VEP member, you received a remit envelop with this newsletter. Please take a moment to send it in now. In the days of rising prices and taxes, you'll be glad to know your VEP dues have held steady for several years. The main reason for this is that all the work done by VEP is done by volunteers. We've also had eleven loyal advertisers, and we recently added two more, which helps defray our newsletter printing and mailing costs. (Please give our advertisers a chance at your business.)

Each January, we mail a letter to all our neighbors in the VEP area who aren't current VEP members. This letter gives a very nice overview of VEP, and I thought you might enjoy seeing it too, so here it is:

Dear VEP Neighbor,

Have you heard about VEP Community Association?

- VEP is an all-volunteer organization of your neighbors.
- VEP volunteers participate in a variety of activities, all of which benefit our neighborhoods.
- VEP volunteers make our neighborhood's views and needs known to government at all levels.

- Founded in 1969, we are one of the largest, most successful, and most enduring grass roots organizations in Santa Clara County.

Why join VEP for only \$15 per year?

- Receive our newsletter in your mail nine times a year, keeping you up-to-date and informed.
- Participate in and support the cost of neighborhood activities and representation.
- Contribute to our annual *VEP Community Service Awards* for high school graduates.
- Be part of an outstanding community organization with a long record of success in our neighborhoods.

VEP meets at Gunderson High School at 7:30 p.m. on the fourth Tuesday of Sep, Oct, Nov, Jan, Feb, Mar, Apr, and May. These meetings are held to get input from you and to allow you to meet and share your views with neighbors. We regularly invite key decision-makers as guest speakers, giving you first-hand opportunities to meet them and be heard by them as well. ***Everyone, whether a member or not, is welcome to attend our meetings.*** We hope to see you at a meeting soon--bring a friend.

Help keep your neighborhood strong and prepared. ***Please join VEP today by returning your check for \$15, made payable to "VEP", to P.O. Box 18111, San Jose 95158.***

If you would like additional information about VEP and current community issues, or would like to read text versions of back issues of the ***VEP News***, please visit our web site at <http://www.vepca.org>. Also, please feel free to call or email me with any question you may have.

We need your support! Join VEP today!

Examples of neighborhood activities that your annual membership supports:

- Planting and maintaining trees in the median of Chynoweth Avenue and on Branham Lane.
- Supporting Mr. Lester's wishes to develop a regional park on his 300-acre estate south of Branham Lane and eliminating planned extensions of Vista Park Drive and Chynoweth Avenue through his land.
- Challenging increases in high-density housing in our neighborhoods.
- Lobbying for safety improvements in and long overdue completion of neighborhood parks.
- Sponsoring clean up days in which 100s of cubic yards of trash are removed from our neighborhood.
- Lobbying the School Board, the City, and VTA for improved neighborhood school student safety.
- Developing a plan for and obtaining continued development of Vista, Meadows, and Parkview Parks.
- Winning important traffic safety, landscaping and sound wall improvements by working with the City and local developers on major projects.
- Lobbying to keep unwarranted traffic out of our neighborhoods and to implement traffic calming on our neighborhood streets.
- Awarding *VEP Community Service Awards* (post-secondary educational/vocational training stipends) each

year to graduating Andrew Hill and Gunderson High School seniors.

- Regularly sponsoring candidates' and ballot-issue forums.

Community Policing Center (CPC)

-Lt. Richard Calderon, SJPD

The *Community Policing Center (CPC)* is a location within your community where residents can visit to make reports or obtain information on police matters or city services. Community Policing Centers are staffed with San Jose Police Department beat officers assigned to your neighborhood as well as volunteers from our citizen VOLT program.

If you are interested in volunteering at a CPC, please contact VOLT Headquarters, (408) 277-8658.

The San Jose Police Department provides the following services:

- Police reports
- Questions answered regarding your community
- Information and referrals for other service agencies
- Traffic citation sign-offs
- Neutral ground for court ordered custody exchanges
- Acceptance of evidence
- Maps and directions
- Warrant walk-in
- Fingerprinting of children and the elderly
- Megan's Law access
- Voluntary surrender of weapons and ammunition
- Information on crime prevention
- A meeting room for non-profit or neighborhood associations.

Hours of Operation:

Mon, Wed, Fri = 10 am to 3 pm

Tue, Thu = 4 pm to 9 pm

Sat = 10 am to 6 pm

Sun = Closed

Location:

(Southern) Community Policing Center

879 #B Blossom Hill Road

San Jose, California 95123

408-360-8350

[Ed. Note: This article was taken with permission from the Jan/Feb 2003 Westfield ShopTalk newsletter.]

Recycling follow-up

- Roberta Dunlap & Michele Young()*

We here at the City of San Jose Department of Environmental Services want to thank VEP for inviting us to your November meeting, and providing us with valuable information on areas for improvement. Be assured, we want to work together to facilitate program improvements in garbage, recycling, yard waste, and street sweeping services. Here is some more background, based on the questions you asked us:

Garbage and Recycling

New, split body trucks allow for one-stop, fully automated collection of both recyclables and garbage. Each cart is

picked up and emptied into the “hopper” located on the top of the truck just behind the cab. A paddle, controlled by the driver, then pushes the material into either the garbage side or the recyclables side of the truck body. Any garbage residue that may be left in the hopper is not of sufficient volume to contaminate the recyclables.

Driver loads are audited to assure that the correct materials are kept on each side of the truck. The trucks are also being marked so residents can clearly see which side of the truck is carrying garbage and which is carrying recyclables.

We have been experiencing a higher level of contamination in the recyclables since the new program began. Please remember to put garbage in your garbage can only, and keep recyclables separate. It may look like they are going to the same place in the truck, but they are dumped at different facilities.

Some residents are concerned that others may be placing garbage in their recycling carts during the night. You can help reduce this type of contamination by placing your recycling carts at the curb in the morning instead of the night before.

If you have questions about what is recyclable, refer to the brochure you received with your recycling cart or call 277-2700 if you have further questions.

We have received many questions about the sorting of recyclables. Our staff is working on a virtual tour of the Recycling Facility so that residents can see how the process works. If you would like to schedule a tour for your group, please call 277-2700 to be connected with the customer service staff from the appropriate contractor.

Extra Garbage and Dumpster Days

If you have more garbage than will fit in your garbage cart, you will need to purchase an extra garbage sticker rather than placing the material in your recycling cart. Contamination with garbage can cause large amounts of recyclables to be contaminated and be sent to the landfill.

If you have large items such as couches, chairs, or tires, the city will collect three large items from your curb for one low price. Please call 277-2700 to schedule a large item collection. When the whole neighborhood wants to have a clean up day (bin day), you can coordinate that through your council office. Have the neighborhood association contact your council member and let them know that you want to be on the list for an upcoming neighborhood clean-up.

Yard Waste Collection

San Jose has been using the loose-in-the-street method of yard waste collection for many years. Although it may appear that the claw is damaging the street, we have been assured by the Department of Transportation that marks left by the claw are purely cosmetic and do not cause permanent damage to the road.

It is true that this type of technology can not collect all of the small materials, but you should not end up with materials strewn down your street. If you feel that the collection

team in your area is not using the equipment correctly, or is making an undue mess, please call customer service at 277-3780 to be connected directly with a supervisor from the company that serves your area.

In response to a small percentage (less than 1%) of residents who call about residue left by the claw, San Jose has implemented a yard waste cart subscription service. We did not take this service city-wide, because a majority of the residents still prefer the loose collection method.

Approximately 20% of all residents subscribed to a yard waste cart. If you would like to subscribe for the cart service, please call our customer service at 277-2700.

Because we have a dual method of yard waste collection, the trucks used are not side loaders like those for garbage and recycling. The rear loader trucks, which can handle the loose collection, must have a cart tipper added with manual loading needed by the driver.

Street Sweeping

Street sweeping is a new service for the Environmental Services Department, and we are learning with you. If you find that you are not getting a quality sweep for any reason, including dust plumes, or incomplete sweeps at the end of cul-de-sacs, or streets with no houses fronting them, please call customer service at 277-2700 so that we can have a route supervisor or transportation inspector assess the situation and have it remedied.

Your patience while we get each one of these areas working well, is greatly appreciated.

[Ed. Note: Roberta Dunlap and Michele Young are Environmental Services Specialists for the City of San Jose. They were speakers at VEP's meeting on November 26th.]

VEP community calendar

Sat Jan 25: VEP's *San Jose Beautiful* planting event, 9 am to noon.

Tue. Jan 28: VEP General Meeting - Presentations by San Jose Police on Internet predators and Demerris Brooks, Gunderson High School's new principal, 7:30 – 9:30 pm.

Wed Feb 5: VEP Executive Board meeting (call for location), 7:30 - 9 pm.

Tue Feb 25: VEP General Meeting at Gunderson (Transportation update; ASTRA March 4 ballot measure; expressways and light rail), 7:30 – 9:30 pm.

Tue Mar 4: Special Election, City of San Jose; get out and vote! (Voter registration forms are available at all VEP meetings.)

Wed Mar 5: VEP Executive Board meeting (call for location), 7:30 - 9 pm.

Tue Mar 25: VEP General Meeting at Gunderson (annual Home Improvement Faire, election of officers), 7:30 – 9:30 pm

Wed Apr 2: VEP Executive Board meeting (call for location), 7:30 - 9 pm.

Tue Apr 22: VEP Annual Meeting at Gunderson (program TBD), 7:30 - 9 pm.

Tue May 27: VEP General Meeting at Gunderson (program TBD)

Oakridge is growing better

-Phillip St. Pierre, General Manager

The impressive redevelopment plan for Oakridge is quite evident with the massive steel structures erected on the Blossom Hill side of the property. We are extremely pleased with the progress thus far, and we are looking forward to unveiling a beautiful new center in Fall 2003.

When the expansion is complete, the ultimate reward will be obvious: Borders Books & Music, a state-of-the-art 20-screen Century Theatres, a beautiful new Food Court, five sit-down restaurants, Children's PlayTown, seventy specialty stores, and two multi-level parking structures.

We would like to express our sincere gratitude to our friends, patrons, and retailers for your tremendous support, patience and loyalty as we continue building a brighter future for Westfield Shoppingtown Oakridge. The excitement is building!

[Ed. Note: Phillip St. Pierre is General Manager of Westfield Shoppingtown Oakridge.]

Neighborhood developments

-Dave Noel and Dave Fadness

Branham Lane at Vistapark Drive – Summerhill homes has obtained their PD Permit and Tentative Map from the city and is now targeting a May or June 2003 start for construction of their 78 single-family homes on this 8.8-acre parcel. Work is still proceeding with the city on landscaping plans for the adjacent termination of Vistapark Drive.

New Library – A new San Jose city library will be built at the southeast corner of Branham Lane and Monterey Highway. This could be a very convenient location for many VEP members.

Neighborhood news

Past VEP Treasurer **Mark Schoenberg** reports that some **Gunderson** students are volunteering to keep Vista Park clean. We applaud these volunteers!

You may remember the dirt piles in front of Gunderson after the November 2nd daffodil planting event. Gunderson volunteers found themselves with a lot of displaced dirt after cleaning, adding soil amendments, and planting daffodils and other plants. Perennial VEP volunteer **Frank Lettieri** quietly visited Gunderson with his shovel, broom and wheelbarrow one day and cleaned up the dirt that had become an eyesore after the rains hit.

VEP members **Dave, Maureen, Bryan and Justin Noel** planted approximately 225 daffodils at Erikson Elementary School, along the full length of the perimeter fence on Fell Avenue and Minas Avenue. They also pruned the grape vines that were taking over the sidewalk along Minas Drive.

Gardening tips

-John Marks, VEP's Green Gardener

Dumping Leaves in the Garden

Those leaves that you pile into the garden hoping for the lazy man's composting to occur won't cut it. A lot of nitrogen is lost when raw organic matter lays on the top of the soil or is tilled into it. The bacteria that do the decomposing use up lots of nitrogen when they work, leaving little for the plants. This is why leaves should be composted BEFORE they are added to the soil. Though the addition of organic matter is commendable, you have to supplement the soil with nitrogen when using un-decomposed matter such as leaves.

Use sulfate of ammonia every other month at the rate of five pounds per thousand square feet and water it immediately afterward. This high-nitrogen fertilizer will help your vegetables thrive by offsetting the loss of nitrogen used up by the bacteria. You'll like the price, too (\$3 per 20-lb bag) and the ease of application. It's available at OSH and nurseries.

Turning Over Weeds

Some people think the easiest way to assassinate a bed of weeds is to turn the soil over. You're just sowing weed seeds for the future. When tilling the soil, you will turn up weed seeds that have been dormant in the soil since your grandmother did the same thing. They sprout when exposed to light and moisture.

Pre-emergent herbicides are the real answer. When applied to the surface of the soil after removing all weeds, these chemicals provide a layer that kills the emerging sprouts of nearly all weeds. Products are called Preen, Amaze, and Preclude and are sold locally. Applying twice yearly, February and August-September, means no more tilling and no more weeds!

The pre-emergents are easy to spread, but must be done before the summer or winter weeds sprout to ensure complete control.

Add Color to Your Garden

Want color plantings? Winter-bedding plants are a top choice for quick color in the garden. Since the winter season is the time of short days and cold nights, it's best to stick with pansies, viola, primrose, sweet alyssum, stock, snapdragons and English daisies. We have some snapdragons from last year that are still blooming, and will continue into next year. For larger plantings, go for bareroot roses, fruit and nut trees, berry vines and grapes.

Winter Chores

Checklist: Clean rain gutters. Leaves and other debris will hamper drainage and may promote rusting, roof damage, and mosquito breeding. Use binoculars to inspect roof

from the ground. Make sure that water flows away from house at down spouts. Trim branches around the roof line to keep squirrels, roof rats (squirrels are just fur-covered rats) and other pesky animals off the roof. Inspect crawl space after rain for water accumulation and for indications of water damage on the sub-floor and joists beneath the kitchen, laundry, and bathrooms. Clean condenser coils or fins beneath or behind the refrigerator.

Dandelions in your lawn?

I've noticed dandelions beginning to blossom. Some have even turned into the white spores that will invade your lawn.

You have about one day to snap off those yellow blossoms before they form the white fuzzy spores. So, make sure you snap them off or your lawn will soon be overrun with dandelions.

[Ed. Note: Mr. Marks extracted portions of this article from the 1/10/03 San Jose Mercury News.]

Book sale

-Dave Fadness

Friends of the San Jose Public Library will hold book sales on January 26-30, February 23-28, March 23-30, April 21-26, and May 18-24 this year. If you've never attended one of their book sales, you owe it to yourself to do so--and buy some books.

A non-profit organization established to support San Jose public libraries, *Friends* also encourages folks to volunteer to help set up, sort and replenish books, and operate the cash register. They also gratefully accept book and cash donations.

Call (408) 275-1515 for further information.

President's message

- Dave Noel, VEP President

I hope you all had a great holiday season and are off to a great new year. VEP started the year off like a rocket, primarily due to our need to complete our planting project early enough in the year to take advantage of the rainy season as the new plants take root. The amount of volunteer design and coordination time going into this job is staggering. We simply couldn't have taken on such a large job without the incredible efforts of **Dave Fadness**, our project coordinator extraordinaire. The devil's in the details, but Dave has them nearly all worked out and we expect a wildly successful event on January 25th.

I also want to thank in advance our many volunteers who will help plant at our event, and nurture and water the plants over the next three years (we'll credit them by name in the February News). VEPers **Fred** and **Lois Koslowski** donated a dump truck, and **Doug** and **Donna Douglass** donated their watering tank-trailer.

We also have benefited greatly from many helpful people in several San Jose City departments, including City Arborist **Ralph Mize**, DOT Maintenance Supervisor **Frank Bowman** and the incomparable **Spiros Kolomvotos**, who

Frank assigned to assist us in handling the millions of details that make a project successful. What a guy!

Browning Ferris Industries (BFI) is donating fifty cubic yards of *Pro-Chip* mulch, which will give the two medians a functional and beautiful red, top covering finish.

And finally, Our City Forest (OCF) has been a wonderful asset to us. Their Arborist and Director of Operations, **Christian Bonner** has been tremendous. Not only did OCF help select the trees and bushes, provide them to us at discounted prices, but they also are providing expertly trained volunteers to all three sites that we will be planting on January 25th. OCF is a non-profit organization, and they accept tax deductible donations. For more information, call them at 998-7337.

I'm excited about our January 28th meeting. I think you'll agree that we've done a good job finding guests with topics relevant to your everyday life, and that is proven by our very good attendance numbers at our meetings. This month, as we kick off our membership drive, I've reached out extensively beyond the bounds of the traditional VEP area to invite the community to see VEP in action and to share in the excellent program we've put together.

You'll notice something different in our calendar of events. This year we are moving our annual Home Improvement Faire up to March instead of May. This should be good for several reasons. First, we think March may be better timing for people planning to do home improvements. May is more associated with graduations and vacations. Second, this allows VEP to have a conventional business meeting in May.

In recent years, there was a long stretch between the conventional business meetings in April and September. Again this year, VEP past president **John Marks** has graciously volunteered to chair the Home Improvement Faire. This takes a great deal of coordination, and we are grateful to John for all his volunteer efforts. Last year we tried something new. We asked each vendor to contribute \$25 towards prizes to be given away at the end of the evening. We're doing that again this year.

I hope to see you at our planting event on Jan 25th and at our meeting on January 28th. Bring a friend.

Computer corner

-Bob Aquino, VEP's Computer Guru

When I first started to write this column a number of years ago, I would dispense advice as to the "sweet spot" in the computer price structure, that is the price point at which the buyer got the best combination of performance, stability, and cost. It amazes me how far technology has carried us.

On the typical entry level computer, we've gone through multiple versions of DOS to several versions of 16 bit Windows to, by my count, seven versions of 32 bit Windows. Processor speeds have gone up from 4MHz to about 2.4GHz (a factor of 600), memory size from 64KB to typically 265MB, hard drive size from 10MB to 40GB. Devices that didn't exist then are now commonplace, flat panel dis-

plays, DSL, wireless Internet, CD-RW, DVD, Bluetooth, etc., etc., etc.

The question becomes, what is the optimum computer for the average, non-technical user? The answer with respect to system performance is surprisingly simple. IT DOESN'T MATTER! If you buy a computer that was designed in the last year or two, you will not be able to tell the difference in the vast majority of applications that you use.

Feature set is, of course a different issue. A DVD-RW might be important to you and a 'don't care' for me. I might desperately need (or lust after) wireless Internet, and you might never understand why. Each buyer makes decisions based on perceived needs. Fact is that, in the matter of the basic box, any processor with a speed in excess of about 1GHz will do very well for the typical user. Your decision as to what to buy should be determined by your budget, not computer performance.

I recently attended a luncheon where the speaker was Andy Grove. He commented in much the same vein. Grove projected that we would be seeing processors of 10-20GHz over the next number of years. What has happened is that the continuing race between hardware and software has, for the time being, been won by hardware.

There are no "killer apps" that can effectively use all the cycles our computers present us with. The one potential application Grove cited as possibly requiring it is accurate real-time speech recognition. His guesstimate is that the software folks would have accomplished that by the end of the decade.

I guess that until then, I'll have to continue to pick out my column with my index fingers.

Vista Park dedication ceremony

- Dave Noel

We couldn't have asked for a nicer day for our Vista Park dedication ceremony on November 16th. It was a beautiful culmination of 20 years of community activism resulting in a wonderful park for current and future generations to enjoy, largely due to the vision and persistence of VEP volunteers.

Our dedication ceremony was featured as the cover story on the December *Blossom Valley Times*. Their article went into detail on the history leading up to this wonderful event, and featured two great color pictures. The first shows the ribbon cutting ceremony, featuring young **Aaron Nguyen** cutting the ribbon with lots of happy on-lookers. The second picture shows VEP volunteers **Kathi Hansen** and **Josie Supencheck** planting daffodils with city council-member (now vice mayor) **Pat Dando** as part of the park dedication event.

The park dedication was featured again in the January edition of the *Blossom Valley Times* in the article *Blossom Valley's year in review: The top stories of 2002*.

Over the next few months, we will see the softball backstops installed and the basketball hoops improved. This work will complete phase three of a four-phase project.

The highlight of phase four will be a bathroom, and we are setting our sites on a community room where groups like VEP could meet. VEP executives are hopeful that this could be built in conjunction with the housing development that SummerHill will soon be building at Branham and Vista Park.

If you don't receive the *Blossom Valley Times*, you can pick up a copy of this monthly free newspaper at the Pearl Avenue Library, among many other places. Call the Blossom Valley times at 494-7000 to locate a copy.

VEP is working with the *Blossom Valley Times* to expand their home delivery to the VEP area. We plan to list our upcoming events in the Blossom Valley Times Community Calendar and perhaps contribute articles from time to time.

Vista Park playground equipment

-Dave Noel and Joe Tajnai

Several Vista Park play lot construction quality issues are being addressed by the city at VEP's request. Here is a letter we wrote on January 14th to **Joshua Howard**, our extremely helpful staff member in **Pat Dando's** office. Joshua has already begun taking action on the issues raised in our letter.

"Members of VEP continue to report playground equipment safety and workmanship quality issues at Vista Park. Most are related to hardware (missing or loose fasteners, threateningly exposed steel shafts, and/or improper component installation) that often lead to accidents which, to date, have fortunately been minor. We're hoping that these problems will be covered under the construction vendor's warranty--the manufacturer should be made aware of and be held accountable for these deficiencies--and that repair can be achieved quickly, before a serious accident injures one of our children.

On opening day, many screws were noted loose or missing, and several play equipment items (e.g. a large plastic disk) literally fell off the equipment and were taken to neighboring homes for safekeeping. Neighbors quickly replaced missing safety screws with everyday screws as a temporary replacements. This was promptly reported to PRNS, then again at the dedication ceremony on 11/16/02.

The following is an list of specific problems noted on January 5, 2003, and is not intended to be a comprehensive list:

- *The Spaceship has a device on the roof which allows someone inside to turn a knob to rotate something on the outside. There is nothing bolted to either end, resulting in a 4 inch by one inch impalement hazard.*
- *The Yellow Motorcycle is missing several bolts. It can rotate 360 degrees and fall over sideways. A 32 pound girl was thrown to the ground when the motorcycle rotated 90 degrees then fell over on its side.*
- *A special bolt was found on the ground directly under the large play apparatus. There could be many more missing bolts.*

- *The short slide on the big apparatus is not bolted into the available threaded holes at the top.*
- *The rocking pathway on the big kids play lot does not rock since the bolts were over tightened.*

Please check whether the sand digger is properly installed, in the correct location, and if the sand depth is too deep. A child fell down and cut his head since he had to reach down about two feet to dig sand. Also, the sand is migrating to the wood chip and gravel areas. Is the sand digger installed too close? Similarly, the playhouse in the sand area has a shelf that is not directly over the sand.

The following item may be a maintenance concern that is out of scope of the construction contractor:

The basketball hoops did not have hoop nets, which are essential for safety. A resident installed inexpensive nets as a temporary fix. The basketball court is badly cracked, uneven and grass is apparently starting to grow up through it, creating a tripping hazard.

Thank you for your initiative to ensure these safety items are resolved as quickly as possible.”

Homeowner tips

Here are some smart things homeowners can do to protect their safety and investment:

APPLIANCE SAFETY

Most of us take our household appliances for granted until they break. But there is one safety feature we all must be aware of and check on periodically.

Household appliances that burn fuel, such as water heaters, furnaces, and sometimes clothes dryers, must be vented to the outside. You can and should check the draft of these appliances. This is an important maintenance item and is absolutely critical to the well-being of the home's occupants. Byproducts of combustion can be hazardous.

You can find out if your water heater is venting properly by locating the draft diverter or hood. It is a funnel shaped piece of flue pipe that connects to and usually sits on the top of the water heater. When you hear the burner come on, hold a piece of tissue paper close to the opening of the draft hood, near the bottom. The paper should pull in. If it doesn't, the water heater is back drafting.

Be sure that your water heater only has a single draft hood in place. Oftentimes, the old draft diverter isn't removed when a new water heater with its own draft hood is installed, creating a common double draft hood configuration which can easily lead to the spillage of flue gases into the living area.

Check for corroded pipes that can allow flue gases such as carbon monoxide into your home. Do not repair with aluminum foil or makeshift measures. Call in the experts.

You can also test for flue spillage from the base of a water heater by holding a mirror near the suspected leak area. If

the mirror becomes foggy, this indicates the spillage of flue gases which also can contain carbon monoxide. This condition indicates defective venting and needs to be corrected.

It's important to avoid storing combustible materials near your water heater. Do not place any items on top of the water heater. Keep the area surrounding the appliance free of clutter to avoid fire.

Poor ventilation, corroded pipes and surrounding clutter are cause for a potentially lethal situation. If you're not sure about the potential problems, have your water heater checked regularly and save yourself the worry of wondering whether or not you and your family are safe.

YOUR HOME AND THE IRS

You may not have current plans or any intention of selling your home, but unexpected lifestyle changes or job relocations can alter those plans. In the case of such an event in your life, are you prepared to prove to the IRS any capital improvements you've made on the home you intend to sell?

As you probably know, the IRS won't tax your profit on the sale of your house based on improvements you've made to it. But proof of the expense of such improvements is vital to this process. You must be able to provide proof of each and every expenditure.

It's nothing personal, the IRS simply won't take your word for it. Even that obviously new bathroom in the second floor expansion won't be proof enough. The brand new family room addition is obvious to the neighbors, but that won't do it for the auditors. They're going to want to see receipts. And they'll want to see cancelled checks, too.

You'll want to keep records that show the purchase price, closing costs, and any and all improvements you made to your property for as long as you've owned it, and for another three years after the sale.

Create a file with this information and staple receipts and cancelled checks together. It's also a good idea to include the purchase of any new appliances, in case they will remain with the house.

Perhaps you've filed some of them in the desk drawer, but others are in the file cabinet. Pick up an accordion file at the office supply and, if you haven't already, start collecting all the paperwork, receipts, and related information to make next year's tax filing as painless as possible. Then, if it becomes necessary to sell your home, all of these items will be in one place.

[Ed. Note: This article was taken from Brian Bonnifield's website. Brian is a long-time VEP member, a real estate professional, and an advertiser in this newsletter.]

News from *Grizzly Country*

-Linda Shipes (*)

Kudos to Some Great Artists: The Drawing, Painting, Design classes of Gunderson High School received second place and a cash award of \$300 for their prize winning en-

try in the Christmas in the Park Tree Decorating Contest in Downtown San Jose.

The "Birds of a Feather All Flock Together for the Holidays" tree and the area surrounding it was decorated with over 120 brightly painted hand made paper mache birds, the smallest of which was over ten inches tall.

Hard Work Pays Off: On Thursday, December 19, 433 Gunderson High School students were recognized for earning between a 3.0 and 4.0 grade point average during the second grading period ending November 22. Each student's name was entered into a drawing for a great prize! The Saturn dealership on Capitol Expressway donated two vehicles to Gunderson High School until the end of March or for 6,000 miles. The leadership students identified the criteria for one giveaway which was to a staff member.

The winner of that vehicle was **Phil Hophan**, social Studies teacher and Leadership Instructor, in acknowledgment of his hard work and tireless efforts. The student winner of the drawing for the second car was **Jihad Rabah**.

Leading the Way into the Future: The GHS Leadership Class is looking forward to a great start to the second semester--the kids have so many ideas that can and will impact the local community. We will continue to have our Campus Project Days throughout the semester--at least once per month--and we are always looking for ideas for areas of the campus that need attention and/or projects the local community would like student assistance with.

If you have any suggestions of a space in the campus that needs our help please let us know as soon as possible, or if you have a community-wide or even household project that you need a little extra help with, again please contact us!

The student leadership wants to continue to improve its public image, especially among the residents of local neighborhoods. If you have a suggestion for how you might see students contributing to that issue, please let us know.

Community Clean-Up: As you may already know, Gunderson Leadership has adopted Chynoweth Avenue between the light rail station and Gaundabert Lane. Our crews are out on the first Saturday of each month cleaning up the street, light rail station, and campus. They always welcome anyone who wants to offer a helping hand. Come join us and enjoy a little fresh air and the enthusiasm of 30+ teenagers.

Gift of Reading: During the month of December, Gunderson students participated in the *Gift of Reading*, a book drive sponsored by San Jose Mercury News, Kids in Common, and many Silicon Valley businesses. There was a little friendly competition among the English classes, with a pizza party for the class who brought in the most new or gently used books for children in need. Mrs. **Collette Kirker's** fourth period honors English class blew everyone else out of the water with a total of 207 books. They were treated to pizza, cookies, soda and a visit from Mrs. Santa Claus.

[(*) Ed. Note: Linda Shipes is the Program Specialist at Gunderson High School.]

Two fundraisers slated at Gunderson High

-Candra Bailly

1. Gunderson High school is hosting their 3rd Annual Crab Feast on February 1, 2003, in the Gunderson Gym. Guaranteed are good food and good fun. We will have a raffle, silent auction, live auction, Hawaiian Dancers and a live band. The grand prize for the raffle is 50,000 American Airline Miles.

The only way to win is to come to the crab feast and purchase a raffle ticket. For more information contact your favorite coach, **Kanika Ah Yo** at 224-0336 or **Candra Bailly** at 281-0343.

2. *Escrip* is any easy fundraiser for everyone to participate in. It is as simple as going to the grocery store and doing your weekly shopping. In fact that is how it works. You simply register your Safeway Club or PW Market cards with *Escrip* and every time you shop, Gunderson Athletics get a donation.

To register is simple. Just log on to the *Escrip* web site and follow the instruction for supporter registration. You can find us by our ID number 473420 or Gunderson High School Booster Club. Please help our athletes by joining today.

[Ed. Note: Candra Bailly is Secretary of the Gunderson Booster Club.]

A new park on Winfield Boulevard

-Dave Noel

The preliminary master plan for a new park on Winfield Boulevard and gateway to the Guadalupe River Trail was published in the November VEP News. The master plan was formally adopted by a unanimous vote at the January 14th city council meeting. VEP past president **Greg West** was present at the council meeting to speak in favor of the preliminary master plan. He also applauded City Staff for the planning process, public meetings, and attentiveness to neighbors' concerns and suggestions for the park design. **Vice Mayor Dando** and Park & Rec project manager **Todd Capurso** did an excellent job making sure this park meets the local community's needs.

Our council member, now Vice Mayor **Pat Dando** has written, "When complete, this park will be a great asset to the community and I am looking forward to celebrating the opening of the new park with the community next year. I truly appreciate VEPs active interest in their neighborhood, and am anxious to get working on our next project."

The new park will be named sometime in February. VEP executives **Dave Noel** and **Dave Fadness** formally nominated the name "William Cilker Park", and wrote the following letter in support of this nomination:

Honorable Councilmember Dando:

“... we ask that you please consider giving William H. (Bill) Cilker’s name to the subject new park.

Although not a member of VEP, Mr. Cilker has been a loyal friend of our organization for many years, always ready to assist us in any way he can. We first knew him as a neighbor, the quiet fellow who owned the farm on old Pearl Avenue. He showed up at a public hearing in our community one night decades ago to donate land for a safe walkway to Gunderson High School along what was then Ogan (now Chynoweth) Avenue. Having previously assumed the land would be very expensive if available at all, city and school district officials were taken aback, as we were, by this generous and accommodating gesture of community-mindedness. Mr. Cilker won our admiration that night and has earned it on every occasion since; whenever we needed his help.

His is a pioneer family of ranchers, orchardists, and philanthropists in San Jose and Santa Clara County. He dedicated the land now used for the Chynoweth-Ohlone light rail station, the Route 85/87 interchange, and the Bridge and Eden Housing projects. These projects stand on what we long-time VEPers remember as his family farm. Moreover, he has set in place quality controls for maintenance of those properties that will stand for generations to come, assuring our children and theirs the good quality of life we our-selves strive for as volunteers. Bill understands and shares our passion for this valley. It’s his home.

We cannot think of a more fitting way to honor this dear friend than to give his name to a park on land that once was fields where he worked and played as a boy. Please give our request your serious consideration.”

Traffic Calming

-Dave Noel

Lane changes at the left turn from westbound Chynoweth Avenue to southbound Winfield Boulevard will be implemented within the next couple weeks. The intent is to slow down traffic making that turn.

As if to prove the need for this traffic calming, a car crossed over the sidewalk at the completion of this turn recently and knocked a “Bike Route” sign down to the ground. **Dave Noel** contacted **Henry Servin** in the San Jose Department of Transportation, and amazingly, the sign was replaced just one day later.

Traffic complaints?

-Dave Fadness

If you have problems with speed freaks and other traffic crazies on your street, be sure to file a *Traffic Incident Complaint* with the San Jose Police Department. To make this easy for you, we’ve included a copy of the form on our VEP website. Check it out at www.vepca.org.

Remember: Our cops won’t attend to problems they don’t know about. Their work priority is based upon number of complaints filed. Don’t file a complaint, don’t expect action. Easy, isn’t it?

VEP's most frequently asked question

- Dave Noel

Do you know what VEP Community Association's most frequently asked question is? Believe it or not, it's not "Why isn't there a bathroom at Vista Park?" It's "What does VEP stand for?" VEP stands for the first three housing developments in our area, way back in 1969 when VEP was founded. They were **V**istapark, **E**ncore, and **P**arkview Valley. In addition to these, there were Echo Valley and Blossom Heights.

Soon the individual housing development names faded, but the name VEP has lived on. So, when someone asks you what does VEP stands for, tell them: **Very Excellent People**. (If you're wondering about the bathroom at Vista Park, see the Vista Park article.)

Bulletin Board Ads

NEIGHBORHOOD NOTARY PUBLIC: Call Peggy at 224-2243 or 250-3236.

GOING ON VACATION? Responsible, experienced 13-year old is available for pet, house, and yard care. Call Matt @ 225-5878.

AFTER SCHOOL & WEEKEND DAY CARE: On Vistapark Drive, near Rachel Carson and Parkview Elementary Schools. Call Peggy @ 224-2243 or 250-3236.

MR. FIX-IT will repair leaks, sticking doors, locks, latches, lights, and life's little ills. No job is too small. Call John @ 629-6433.

Sunset Magazine Indoor Gardening Handbook. High quality, ten sections, 100 pages. FREE. Call John Marks at 629-6433.

* * *

VEP will print free ads for its members for transactions involving less than \$250, for lost-and-found, for announcements of general interest to our community, and for kids under 18 or retirees who are looking for work. Free ads must be submitted monthly for publication.

Commercial ads cost \$1.00 per line per month, 10 lines maximum, must be prepaid before publication, and may only be run once per calendar quarter. Commercial ads must be submitted quarterly. No graphics allowed. For information on full-sized ads with graphics (camera ready), contact VEP'S Treasurer listed on the mailing page of this newsletter.

One line contains 50 characters, including spaces. Mail to VEP, P.O. Box 18111, San Jose, 95158. Ads must be received no later than the 10th of the month for inclusion in that month's newsletter. Use the following form as a guide for submitting an ad:

NAME: _____

PHONE # _____

AD WORDING: _____

The VEP Executive Board reserves exclusive right to refuse any ad for any reason. VEP does not certify nor is it responsible in any way for the claims, goods, or services of any advertisers.