

# VEP MEETING

7:30 P.M. TUESDAY  
**September 28, 2004**

GUNDERSON HIGH SCHOOL  
→ Faculty Lounge ←

## AGENDA

### ★ VEP's 2004-05 Goals & Objectives ★

Discuss and vote on VEP's proposed plans  
for the coming year.  
(7:30 to 7:45 pm)

### ★ 2004 General Election Forum ★

District 10 San Jose City Council Candidates  
and  
pro/con speakers on the *Measure S* Library Tax.  
(7:45 to 8:55 pm)

### ★ Your Community Concerns ★

A chance for you to tell us about your concerns.  
(8:55 to 9 pm)

Everyone is welcome. Please invite your neighbors!

## Our September Meeting

*-Dave Fadness*

A list of proposed VEP *Goals & Objectives* (G&O) for the coming year follows in this newsletter. It will be discussed at our September 28<sup>th</sup> meeting. Any VEP member can ask to add, remove, or modify it. After appropriate discussion and/or amendment, approval is voted upon by members present.

Although G&O can be modified at any subsequent time by a vote of our members, the approved list serves as VEP's "marching orders" for the coming fiscal year.

As such, your input is very important. We want to be sure that our G&O reflect the desires (and energies) of our membership and community.

\* \* \*

Vice-Mayor **Pat Dando** is finishing her final term as our city council representative. To help you make a wise choice in electing our next council representative, we've invited to our September 28<sup>th</sup> meeting the two candidates vying for her office.

**Nancy Pyle** and **Rich De La Rosa** have agreed to attend that night. Following our usual format, they will each give a brief opening statement, answer questions posed by members of our audience (you), then close with a brief statement. This will be your chance to see and meet them in person—and to ask your most pressing questions.

*[Be sure to read the special insert in this newsletter featuring side-by-side responses to ten questions VEP execs sent these council candidates in advance.]*

\* \* \*

We will also have pro and con speakers on San Jose's **Measure S**, the *Library & Reading Protection Measure*.

The same general format will be followed for these speakers. You'll be able to ask questions, of course.

If it wins the required 2/3rds vote, *Measure S* will replace the expiring library assessment with an annual parcel tax in the same amount, \$25 for single-family residences and proportional for other properties. It would be adjusted for inflation capped at 3% annually, be limited to ten years, and be subject to independent audits and citizen oversight.

We include arguments from proponents ("Vote **YES** on Measure S") and opponents ("Vote **NO** on Measure S") in this newsletter. Please read them and come prepared to listen and ask questions on September 28<sup>th</sup>.

Our hope is that you will leave better informed that night. Don't miss this chance. If you're informed, you'll want to vote. We encourage you to go to the polls and want to help you to vote smart.

\* \* \*

We always allow time for YOUR neighborhood issues, so be sure to bring them along to share with us.

\* \* \*

We look forward to seeing you at 7:30 pm on Tuesday, September 28<sup>th</sup>. Bring your neighbors with you!

## Proposed *Goals & Objectives* for 2004-05

Each summer our Executive Board meets to assemble a proposed list of VEP *Goals & Objectives* (G&O) for the coming year. This list is then discussed at our September meeting. Any member can ask to add, remove, or modify it. After appropriate discussion and/or amendment, approval is voted upon by members present.

Although G&O can be modified at any subsequent time by a vote of our members, the approved list serves as our "marching orders" for the coming fiscal year.

As such, your input is very important. We want to be sure that our G&O reflect the desires (and energies) of our membership and community. Please read them and be prepared to comment at our September 28<sup>th</sup> meeting.

### **Proposed VEP Community Association Goals and Objectives 2004-2005**

#### **1. Continue to improve our community association.**

A. Values: Place first priority on volunteer efforts that reflect member-endorsed improvements in our community.

B. Leadership: Encourage regular turn-over of VEP officers to impart broader membership area representation, fresh ideas, new perspectives, and peak energy in our organization.

C. Membership: Increase membership and attendance at VEP meetings and events.

D. Fiscal Health: Maintain excellence in VEP's fiscal condition.

E. Volunteerism:

- a. Support our VEP volunteer coordinator.
- b. Develop functional committees that afford structured volunteer opportunities for VEP members and groom future VEP leadership.
- c. Continue our VEP Community Service Award program; increase student, faculty, and community awareness of awards.

F. Communication: Support VEP's Hospitality Committee; repair/replace meeting announcement street signs; improve electronic communication with and among our members; improve website access.

G. Visibility: Strive for positive public recognition through targeted communication and signage; contribute articles to other publications in our community.

**2. Promote community interaction, pride, and preparedness.**

A. Organize at least two community events.

B. Participate as volunteers in the San Jose Beautiful daffodil planting event and at least one other beautification project. Target such choices as Branham Lane (between Vistapark and Snell), the median triangle on Rosenbaum at Capitol Expressway, and the remaining parcel at Branham Lane/Narvaez.

C. Maintain our median plantings on Chynoweth (new + palm trees) and on Narvaez.

D. Encourage member participation in crime prevention and safety programs in our neighborhoods.

**3. Work to make local government and businesses responsive and accountable to VEP members.**

A. Sponsor election forums that heighten our members' awareness of candidates and ballot issues and encourage their participation as voters in all elections.

B. Monitor and react to plans for urban development in and around our membership area.

C. Encourage, monitor, and react to plans for transportation, libraries, parks, and other public infrastructure improvements in and around our membership area. Organize and communicate community priorities.

D. Work with developers and city/county government to install/maintain landscaping and sound walls in our membership area.

E. Work with SummerHill Homes and city government to satisfactorily complete the promised cul-de-sac and landscaping on Vistapark Drive and evaluate the need for traffic calming along Hyde Park Drive.

F. Monitor the community impacts (including traffic, parking, etc.) imposed by uses at Gunderson High School.

#### **4. Create and maintain high-quality public services in our area.**

A. Promote planning and related efforts to make the Lester property a park.

B. Monitor and provide input to the city's capital improvement plan for neighborhood needs.

C. Work with the city to develop, renovate, and maintain our neighborhood parks and to ensure that all (developer) parkland dedication fees paid in our neighborhoods are used for improvements to parks that serve our neighborhoods. Focus on completing the Community Room at Vista Park.

D. Work with the City to ensure that impacts of any proposed high-density development along the Guadalupe Corridor are fully mitigated; focus on building a city park at Capitol/Narvaez and improving traffic level of service there.

E. Monitor park conditions within our traditional membership area and work in cooperation with the city's Adopt-A-Park Program to assure that each park is adopted and quality is being maintained.

F. Monitor traffic problems along Branham Lane and require VEP member involvement during the design process for its widening between Vistapark and Snell Avenue and improvements between Narvaez and Vistapark.

G. Monitor and remain involved in VTA's proposed Capitol Expressway Light Rail project.

#### **Grant extends *VEP NEWS* circulation**

*-Greg West(\*)*

VEP extends a thank-you to the City of San Jose Department of Parks, Recreation, and Neighborhood Services for awarding us a \$5000 *Community Action and Pride* (CAP) grant to extend the circulation of the VEP NEWS to the entire roughly 2000 residences in the VEP neighborhood.

We are going to try to stretch the grant as far as we can to get as many issues from this one through May, 2005, to the entire neighborhood. Of course, VEP members will continue to receive all issues of the VEP NEWS in the mail as a benefit of membership regardless of how far we can stretch the grant.

Please see the following article for information on becoming a VEP member now at our special, mid-year reduced dues rate.

VEP members can join our email list to receive meeting reminders and any important neighborhood news that occurs between newsletters, such as community meetings and San Jose Police Department alerts; simply send an email to [vep@vepca.org](mailto:vep@vepca.org). Your email address will automatically be appended.

Visit our website [www.vepca.org](http://www.vepca.org) to view back issues of the VEP NEWS, for names and contact information on our

elected representatives, and for other interesting VEP and neighborhood tidbits.

[(\*) Ed. Note: Greg West is a past-president of VEP.]

## Membership update

VEP is at an all-time high of 538 paid memberships. Using our CAP grant (see story above), we'll get the word out to *everyone* in our membership area. Paid membership should grow dramatically as a result.

If you are not yet a member, please join now! Members are *guaranteed* to receive all of our newsletters; they'll only be sent to non-members as long as our CAP grant funding allows.

Use the following form to join VEP through December of this year. If you respond by October 15<sup>th</sup>, we're offering a discounted price for new members of \$10 per household.

### **\*\* Membership Application \*\***

None of the following information will be sold to or otherwise shared with any third party.

**\*\* Please type or print legibly \*\***

Last name(s): \_\_\_\_\_

First name(s): \_\_\_\_\_

Street address: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Telephone # \_\_\_\_\_

Email address(es): \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Comments): \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Can you give VEP a few volunteer hours? \_\_\_\_\_

Mail your \$10 check to VEP, P.O. Box 18111, San Jose 95158. **This reduced price offer is only valid through October 15, 2004.** Thank you!

## Vote **YES** on Measure S

*[Submitted by the **YES on S Campaign**]*

Help us save San Jose's public libraries! Measure S will simply replace San Jose's current library assessment that expires at the end of 2004. Passing Measure S not only prevents significant cutbacks in library services, it also provides additional funding to replace outdated books and materials, update deteriorating equipment, protect library hours and improve other library services.

Measure S will help to keep our kids safe after-school and engaged in learning. San Jose libraries provide activities, like homework centers and tutoring, which serve hundreds of kids every day during after-school hours, the most critical time of day when kids are mostly likely to get into trouble. Passing Measure S will help prevent cuts in these after-school services that neighborhood San Jose libraries provide every day.

Many school districts are cutting back school libraries and staffing. As a result, many local public school and community college students are depending upon San Jose public libraries. By passing Measure S, we can ensure that our local libraries continue to meet the educational needs of all our students, no matter their age.

Unless Measure S is approved, budget cuts will force the City of San Jose to make serious cutbacks to librarians and library staff, and two-thirds of new library books and materials purchases. These cuts could result in libraries closing additional days each week, longer waits for assistance and computers, and very few new materials available.

In 1994, San Jose voters overwhelmingly passed Measure E, the library assessment that over the last decade has funded the purchase of 7 out of every 10 new books, more than 40 library staff positions and many programs that serve children, adults and seniors. Measure E also established funding for more than 400 computers, available for public use, and 47 self-checkout machines. This fiscal year is the tenth and final year of the current assessment district, and to sustain the existing funds, voters must approve Measure S on the November ballot.

For approximately \$25 per year for the average homeowner, our San Jose libraries will be able to maintain the books, hours and programs so many of us enjoy. Whether you use the library once per month or once a day, Measure S is a solid investment. Measure S is a dedicated source of funding, contributing directly to the Library's budget.

Vote YES on Measure S to save our libraries and prevent drastic cutbacks to San Jose's 17 neighborhood branch libraries!

## Vote **NO** on Measure S

*[Submitted by the **NO on S** Campaign]*

This is NOT a referendum on libraries. We all want our libraries to be adequately funded and well-run. That's why we ALREADY pay taxes.

Why aren't library users being asked to pay their fair share?

Please consider the following points:

Unjust Priorities: The city could cover the library costs that would be paid by this new tax, but they choose instead to spend tens of millions of dollars on new furniture for the extravagant new city hall. Why not simply move the current furniture or buy used furniture? Now they're threatening us

with library closures if we don't cough-up even more tax money.

Fines for overdue books go to the city's general fund.

\$807,458.65 was collected in fines for 2001-02.

\$841,167.83 was collected in fines for 2002-03.

\$974,023.80 was collected in fines for 2003-04.

Why isn't this money staying with the libraries?

Continuing Library tax: In November, 2000, voters approved the upgrade and expansion of the library facilities with passage of Measure O, the Library Bond measure. Measure O provides \$212-million over ten years. The City Council voted at their August 2004 meeting to increase the tax levy from \$25.80 for FY2003-04 to \$49.40 for FY2004-05, for a single-family home with a net assessed value of \$200,000. This is to pay for these and for other bonds.

Unfair tax: This proposed ten-year Parcel Tax makes no distinction regarding ability to pay.

Parcel taxes are regressive, especially for homeowners whose assessed value is protected by Proposition 13. A homeowner living in a modest home will pay the same parcel tax amount as someone who lives in an expensive mansion.

Some areas in San Jose will have four or more new local taxes on this ballot. If all of these pass, our annual property taxes could increase by hundreds of dollars.

Vote "NO" on Measure S.

Visit [www.VoteNoOnS.us](http://www.VoteNoOnS.us) for more information.

## Community Service Awards

- *Dave Noel*

As the school year came to a close, VEP's president **Jeri Arstingstall** presented our annual Community Service Awards at the Senior Awards nights for both Andrew Hill and Henry Gunderson high schools.

For those new to VEP, our community association is celebrating 35 years of continuous volunteer service to our neighborhood this year. In that spirit, 20 years ago, VEP began rewarding graduating high school seniors with exceptional volunteer service stipends for post-secondary or vocational training.

Congratulations to our 2004 winners, who each received \$1,500 towards their education

- Gunderson: **Parwant Kaur Sandhu**. Parwant is now attending UC Santa Barbara.
- Andrew Hill: **Rajwant Kaur**. Rajwant is now attending UC Santa Cruz, and majoring in Molecular-Biology.
- At-Large: We did not have any nominees this year so there was no award.

I'd like to thank our *Community Service Award Selection Committee* for selecting this year's winners: **Jeri Arstingstall, Debra Suydam, Dave Fadness, Aiko Fadness,**

**Greg West, Robin West, Stephen Kinsey, Joe Tajnai, Ginger Cardona, and Maureen Noel.**

If you know a high school senior with an outstanding volunteer record, make sure they know about our award. If they attend Gunderson or Andrew Hill, they can be nominated by their administrators. Our At-Large award is granted to a graduating senior from any school who lives in San Jose and is nominated by a VEP member.

This fall the process starts all over again. We begin with outreach to the schools, then we appropriate funds with a vote of the membership in January/February, we call for nominations in February/March, applications are due in late April, and finally we grant our awards in May.

If any members would like to propose changes to award categories, selection criteria, funding amounts, or any other rules, let me know right away. This will allow us time to convene a committee in the fall to finalize any proposals, and present them to a vote of the membership at our January general meeting.

## City commends VEP's 35 years of service

- *Dave Fadness*

VEP 35<sup>th</sup> Anniversary at 6/1/04 city council meeting:



Shown from left to right: VEP Past-President **Greg West**, **Josie Supencheck**, VEP Treasurer **Joe Tajnai**, VEP President **Jeri Arstingstall**, Vice Mayor **Pat Dando**, VEP Editor **Dave Fadness**, VEP Editor **Bob Aquino**, **Aiko Fadness**, VEP Vice President **Dana Belstler**, **Phil Bejar**, VEP Past-President **David Noel**, and **Maureen Noel**.

### City of San Jose **Commendation**

WHEREAS: The VEP Community Association was established in 1969 and currently represents over 2000 residents in the Blossom Valley community, and

WHEREAS: Fostering community interaction and pride are among the Association's highest priorities, which the residents have demonstrated through their countless neighborhood improvement projects, such as planting and maintaining over 100 palm trees on Chynoweth Avenue, landscaping bare median islands on Branham Lane, as well as adding new trees and flower beds in their neighborhood's parks, and

WHEREAS: The VEP Community Association promotes academic excellence and volunteerism among our community's youth by awarding scholarships to college-bound students in recognition of their dedication to the community, and

WHEREAS: VEP continually strives to keep residents informed about issues impacting the community by sponsoring election forums, monitoring and responding to development proposals, and distributing a comprehensive monthly newsletter which encourages its members to share their thoughts on neighborhood issues;

NOW, THEREFORE I, Ron Gonzales, Mayor of San Jose, together with Vice Mayor Pat Dando, and along with our colleagues on the City Council, on this 1st day of June 2004, do hereby congratulate and commend the members of the

#### VEP COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION

for their thirty-five years of dedicated service to the residents of Blossom Valley and the entire San Jose community.

Signed by:

The Honorable Ron Gonzales, Mayor  
Pat Dando, Vice Mayor

Attested to by: Lee Price, City Clerk.

#### Help wanted:

*-Dave Fadness, VEP NEWS Editor*

We're looking for a new VEP NEWS Editor. It's time for me to retire. Please consider volunteering for this position.

Pay = Nada.  
Satisfaction = Mucho.

If you know how to use word-processing (especially MS WORD and PUBLISHER), have email access, are skilled at spelling and English grammar (I'm not), like to work with people and words, have experience working on a newsletter or are an experienced writer or proof-reader, you are just the person we're looking for!

VEP publishes monthly newsletters September through May. We receive a wealth of articles in response to our monthly email solicitation, so you'll have plenty of material to work with. Contributors range from VEP officers and members to school and government officials.

Your job would be to send out the monthly email solicitation, edit articles, "paste" them up electronically in our standard format, and deliver the camera-ready artwork to the printer. Your text files are also posted on our website.

Our editor is a member of VEP's Executive Board. As a practical matter, in order to remain abreast of VEP activities, the development of our meeting agendas, and to coordinate officer newsletter inputs, the editor attends Executive Board meetings in newsletter months.

If you don't have PUBLISHER, VEP will provide a copy for your use. It's easy to learn and use (even I can figure it out!).

Importantly, if you are interested in doing this, I will provide help any time you need it. Other members of our Exec Board will be available to help you as well. VEP work is collaborative—don't be concerned that you'd accept this responsibility, then be abandoned to figure out how to do it on your own.

Give me a call at 578-6428 (day or evening) or email me at drfadness@earthlink.net. I'll answer any questions you have—and won't do a hard-sell on you. Promise!

Do it today. I'm waiting to hear from you!

## VEP Community Calendar

*[Note: VEP General Meetings are always held at 7:30 pm on the fourth Tuesday each month, Sep thru Nov, and Jan thru May. Be sure to include these dates in your calendar.]*

Tue, Sep 28 @ 7:30 - 9 pm = VEP General Meeting. (See page 1 for our agenda.)

Wed, Oct 6 @ 7:15 pm = VEP Exec Meeting (call for details).

Sun, Oct 10 = Target grand opening at Oakridge Mall.

Tue, Oct 26 @ 7:30 - 9 pm = VEP General Meeting; presentations by our school districts' superintendents and by the Humane Society.

Sat, Oct 30 or Nov 6 (TBA) = Daffodil Days (volunteer daffodil planting day).

Tue, Nov 2 = General Election. **GET OUT and VOTE!**

Wed, Nov 3 @ 7:15 pm = VEP Exec Meeting (call for details).

Sun, Nov 14 @ 5 pm = An evening of celebration honoring San Jose Vice Mayor **Pat Dando** @ Downtown San Jose Marriott Hotel.

Tue, Nov 23 @ 7:30 - 9 pm = VEP General Meeting; presentations by the Department of Transportation on widening Branham Lane, and by the city and county on Martial Cottle Park; welcoming of the winner of District 10 election.

## Police news

*-Dave Noel*

### Megan's Law

If you missed our April general meeting, you missed an excellent presentation by San Jose's new police chief **Rob Davis**. Among the items he discussed was access to the Megan's Law database of sex offenders.

Rob explained there are three categories of sex offender: High-Risk, Serious, and Other. You can view the identity and general location of all registered High-Risk sex offenders on the SJPD website, [www.sjpd.org](http://www.sjpd.org).

You can access the identity and general location of Serious sex offenders at the Oakridge Community Policing Center located at Westfield Shoppingtown Oakridge. Information about "Other" sex offenders is not available to the public.

For more information, visit [www.sjpd.org](http://www.sjpd.org).

### SJPD outreach

One of Chief Davis' goals for the San Jose Police Department is to improve their website and other electronic communications. They are well on their way!

In addition to providing access to Megan's Law information, you'll find many useful items on the SJPD website [www.sjpd.org](http://www.sjpd.org). You can see current crimes and missing persons, view crime statistics, report crimes, and so on.

You can also sign up for email alerts for crimes in our area of San Jose. Here is how:

Go to [www.sjpd.org](http://www.sjpd.org). To the right of the chief's picture and under "My Neighborhood," click on "Top Local Issues." A map will pop up. Click the location on the map that you are interested in. A page will pop up which includes the picture of the police captain for your area.

On that page, under and to the right of the captain's picture is a box titled "Receive Neighborhood Email Alerts." Fill in your e-mail address. Then check the appropriate box (individual, organization, school, or business) and click on the "Enter" button.

### President's message

*-Jeri Arstingstall, VEP President*

VEP had a very busy and productive summer. We started in a big way on June 1<sup>st</sup>, receiving a formal commendation (reprinted in this newsletter) from the city council, in recognition of VEP's 35<sup>th</sup> anniversary. At the end of June we participated in the Cilker Park Opening.

The VEP exec board met over the summer months and has finalized a set of recommended *Goals & Objectives* for the coming year. You'll find the list in this newsletter and will have an opportunity to weigh-in before a vote on them at our September meeting. We have a very enthusiastic board and are very lucky to have the experience of past presidents and officers to help us with this important annual task.

July was another very productive month. Vista Park was officially adopted by VEP with the help of **Phil & Leslie Bejar** and **Clay Sperry**. **Dave Fadness** and **Frank Kistler** spent three days pruning our beautiful palm trees in the median on Chynoweth Avenue. We were also amazed at the response of the city's response in picking up the cut fronds within mere hours of being notified.

In August, the City of San Jose announced that VEP was awarded a \$5,000 *Community Action and Pride (CAP)* Grant. We'll use that grant money over the next year to send our newsletter to all ~2000 homes within our membership area, hoping to boost paid membership as a result. Special thanks to **Greg West** for preparing and presenting our grant application.

Receiving the grant required VEP to attend a series of four classes put on by San Jose's *Neighborhood Development Center*. Greg West and I attended these classes. We met

a great number of people who have the same passion that we have for this great city.

VEP is so fortunate to have had our 35 years of experience. Many of the people who were in the classes are just starting to get neighbors involved in their neighborhoods. So, for all of you who volunteer and continue to volunteer, VEP would like to THANK YOU.

Also, in August **Dave Fadness**, and **Chris & Dana Belstler** did an outstanding job of painting the old Vista Park sign and planting 18 oleanders along the south side of Branham Lane, just west of New Compton Drive.

\* \* \*

You may have followed the news about San Jose's decision to impose an increased "911" tax surcharge and to increase to five the limit on how many pets residents are allowed per household. I wrote letters for VEP, asking that they not increase the 911 tax and that they get community input before deciding about increasing limits on pets. To no avail—the council passed both proposals as presented.

\* \* \*

I end this message with a thank-you to some very special young adults. These young people are students at Holy Family Education Center. Whenever VEP needs a chore done they gladly help out. These young VEP volunteers are **Michael Bejar** his sister **Nicole Bejar**, **Alex Shaffer** and his sister **Sara Shaffer**. These young students don't have to be asked--*they* call me and offer to be of help.

They've spent time maintaining the median island at Chynoweth and Winfield, taking down garage sale signs that don't ever seem to get taken down, and picking up litter at Vista Park. I've enjoyed watching their enthusiasm for volunteering--and thank their parents for raising such fine individuals.

We look forward to seeing you at upcoming VEP meetings. If you have any questions, concerns, or compliments please give me a call or send an email.

## Community heroes

*-Dana Belstler*

What is a hero? According to Webster's Dictionary, a hero is a person noted for feats of courage or nobility of purpose, especially one who has risked or sacrificed his or her own life.

That definition aptly describes the five individuals who saved our home from burning to the ground and saved the lives of our pets on Tuesday, March 16, 2004.

I received a call from my husband that day and immediately knew something was wrong. Chris was up in Redding where he'd received a call from our neighbor. He exclaimed, "Our house is on fire!"

I went cold with fear and started hyperventilating. My first and only thought was about my animals.

It was the longest fifteen minute drive of my life. I had a glimmer of hope when I saw a fire truck in the street and our house still standing. I raced up to the door and was

greeted by the fire chief. My first words were, "Are my animals okay?"

He confirmed they were all fine and proceeded to tell me this wonderful story:

Five complete strangers happened to be driving down Branham Lane. In a chain of events, seeing smoke and flames, the first individual pulled over and the rest followed. Three of the men jumped over the sound wall to get to our house. A lady and another man drove around to find the front of our house. They went through the back gate and proceeded to break the sliding door's glass window and start evacuating our house pets.

Someone called 911 while others worked on extinguishing the fire. By the time the fire department got there, the fire was contained and our animals were safely outside. It was *truly* a miracle.

If you have driven down Branham, east of Vistapark, in the past months, you have likely noticed the smoke-covered wall and boarded windows; that's our house. Every once and a while, we hear a friendly honk and my husband and I just look at each other and smile.

We like to think it is one of our heroes passing by and saying "Hi".

Chris, Dana, "Buster", "Max", "Bird", "Rudy" and "Spreckles" would like to thank from the bottom of our hearts **Sharon Sherick, James Richards, Carlos Amaya, Ronnie Miranda**, and another unnamed hero. They saved our home and our lives.

These are true heroes--*our* heroes.

## A note on e-mail addresses

*-Bob Aquino*

VEP's April general meeting featured San Jose's Chief of Police, **Rob Davis**. He was a highly informative and entertaining speaker. We didn't know that he could make it to our meeting until after the newsletter had been sent.

Those who are on our email list received a letter telling them of this addition to the April agenda. This is exactly the reason we have an email list—to keep you up to date with VEP.

If you are a VEP member, but not yet on VEP's email list, please include your email address on your dues envelop or contact any one of the board members and we'll see that you are added. An easy way to do this is to simply send an email to [vep@vepca.org](mailto:vep@vepca.org) (your address will be appended automatically). If you are not yet a VEP member, please join and ask to be added to our email list. You'll be glad you did!

Don't worry, we will NOT share your email address with any third party.

## VEP salutes its volunteers

*-Dave Fadness*

Hats off *again* to **Frank Kistler**, a man who is always there when we need help with community projects! Early last July, Frank spent the better part of two days helping prune the 161 palm trees in the median of Chynoweth Avenue.

Thanks to **Jeri Arstingstall** and **Aiko Fadness** for supplying delicious lunches for our two-man team. We also thank City of San Jose's **Frank Bowman** and his crew for showing up to remove ~2500 cut fronds the morning after we finished pruning.

We also thank **Doug Douglass** and **Quy Dinh** for watering our median landscaping projects on Chynoweth and on Branham Lane. **Jeri Arstingstall** and **Michael, Nicole**, and **Leslie Bejar** helped to remove trash and replace supplemental watering devices at the Chynoweth site that help our plantings survive summer heat. Looks good, doesn't it?

VEP Volunteers also spent several days pruning trees and undergrowth along the Highway 87 bicycle path south of Chynoweth. Not only does it look much better, but pedestrian safety was benefited by improving visibility.

Last but not least, thanks to **Chris** and **Dana Belstler** for the work they did in planting 18 miniature oleander bushes last month on Branham Lane (at New Compton) and for the beautiful job they did restoring the old (north end) sign at Vista Park.

We owe a debt of gratitude to these dedicated and talented VEP volunteers!

## Great American Cleanup

-Dave Noel(\*)

VEP members **Josie Supencheck**, **Dave Noel**, **Bryan Noel**, **Justin Noel**, **Jim Hicks** and **Earnestine Hicks** were among many other San Jose residents who participated in this year's city-wide *Great American Clean-Up*.

This annual event is held on a Saturday before or after Earth Day, which is on April 22<sup>nd</sup>.

[(\*)Note: This is a correction of a May VEP News article in which I missed crediting two VEP members, **Jim** and **Earnestine Hicks** who participated in this great event.]

## Branham Lane widening project

-Dana Belstler

The widening of Branham Lane east of Vistapark Drive was scheduled to have started this fall. Although preliminary design work has started, construction work has been put on hold indefinitely.

Reason: In order to proceed with the project, the city requires a segment of the old Lester property, which is now owned by Santa Clara County. Originally thinking that land would be "donated" to them by the county, the city was surprised to learn that they would have to purchase it from them.

Vice Mayor **Pat Dando** and her office have been heavily involved in negotiations with the county to obtain the land

and re-start the widening project. VEP is working closely with Vice Mayor Dando and San Jose's Department of Transportation (DOT) to stay informed regarding progress and outcome of the negotiations.

VEP also plans to be very involved with the city in the design of this project. Noise and traffic issues are a huge concern to our members living along that street and we want to be sure that their concerns are addressed. Fortunately, DOT is eager to work with us.

DOT's Mr. **Rene Cordero** welcomes questions, thoughts and suggestions from our community on this project. VEP will form a small subcommittee of volunteers to provide that input. I will chair VEP's committee and serve as our liaison to DOT.

Mr. Cordero has agreed to attend our November 23<sup>rd</sup> VEP meeting to present a project update and answer any questions. We will also invite a representative from County Supervisor **Don Gage's** office to attend that meeting.

This will be a very good opportunity for YOU to speak up!

Mark you calendars. We hope to see you there!

## Neighborhood developments

- *Dave Noel*

Winfield Blvd & McAbee Road: The city of San Jose is preparing a General Plan change to permanently remove a planned future connection of Winfield Blvd and McAbee Road (behind Almaden Lake Park).

Starbucks: A drive-through Starbucks has opened at the Bank of America at Westfield Shoppingtown Oakridge.

Trader Joe's: Trader Joe's is moving from their existing location on Almaden Expressway at McAbee to a much larger location in the former Strouds building near Costco.

Branham & Cherry: Three single-family detached homes are planned for the northeast corner of Branham Lane and Cherry Avenue.

Almaden Expressway & Coleman Road: 32 multi-family attached residences are planned for the 1.42 gross acre site at the northeast corner of Almaden Expressway and Coleman Road (remember when there was a gas station there?).

Capitol Expressway & Copperfield Drive: A 5,200 square foot retail/commercial building is proposed at the Albertsons shopping center at the northeast corner of Capitol Expressway and Copperfield Drive.

Group home: A residential service facility on the east side of Luneta Court approximately 270 feet northerly of Lanfair Drive is applying for a permit to house up to 12 residents and 2 staff members in a single-family residence.

Erikson School: SJUSD has leased classrooms to the County Office of Education for special education courses, and to Metropolitan Education for adult education classes, including painting, photography, and ESL.

Vista Park community room and ballfield relocation: Construction of these projects was supposed to start the first

week in August. Unfortunately both of these projects have been delayed and we don't have new start dates at this time. Stay tuned for updates.

## Street lights

*-Bob Aquino*

If you know of a street light that does not come on or go off properly, get the pole number and report it by calling the city street light maintenance number, 277-5517. You'll get a voice-activated system that is available round the clock.

Don't hesitate to do this for your neighborhood.

## VEP Board responds to Capitol light rail

*- Dave Noel*

*[In June, the VEP Executive Board submitted a letter to VTA in response to their draft Environmental Impact Report (EIR) for the Capitol Corridor Light Rail Extension. VTA wants to run a two-track light rail transit (LRT) line down the median of Capitol Expressway, from Alum Rock Avenue to Route 87. In our immediate area, VTA proposes stations at Monterey Hwy, Vistapark Drive, and Route 87--including a possible train storage facility at the park-and-ride lot at the northwest corner of Capitol and Narvaez.*

*The following article is excerpted from our cover letter. The complete text of our response is available on VEP's website, [www.vepca.org](http://www.vepca.org).]*

VEP has many serious concerns about the proposed light rail alternative for the Capitol Expressway corridor, especially Phase 2, from Rt. 101 to 87. Our community is bordered on the north by Capitol Expressway, from Narvaez to Snell. We already experience gridlock in this area, and the light rail alternative will dramatically worsen these conditions, plus add safety and LOS problems by removing acceleration/deceleration lanes.

We challenge the underlying assumption that implementing light rail in a transit corridor increases its total capacity. While this may be true in theory, it is *clearly* not true in practice, especially in Santa Clara County. Common sense tells us that to make light rail successful, it needs to rapidly move people from home to work. This line will not be rapid, and it will not connect homes with jobs.

We'd prefer a more positive approach, making existing transit more desirable (like increasing bus service frequency, providing express service, etc.) rather than VTA's current attempts to make traffic congestion so intolerable that people are forced to use transit. Unfortunately, due to operating inefficiencies, a series of other bad LRT route decisions, and their reliance on sales taxes instead of farebox revenue, VTA cannot afford the service they already have in place.

VTA is on the verge of bankruptcy; transit is being cut back, fares are being increased, and new sales taxes are being considered in a desperate attempt to stay afloat. Opening the operation of Vasona LRT is apparently being delayed one year to avoid worsening their fiscal crisis. It is patently absurd to add another low-ridership LRT corridor.

We believe that the underlying motivation to build this light rail corridor is to enable high-density housing development. Traffic studies in the EIR must take this into account. We find it cruelly ironic that the EIR shows that this corridor could better serve existing and new housing by NOT building light rail.

Not only can buses do the job at a small fraction of LRT's cost, buses allow flexibility to adjust routes to meet the needs of transit users. We fear that funds used for LRT will come at the cost of transit operations on existing lines. We urge VTA to stop spending money on this project, and use all available funds instead to properly run the transit system it already has.

Based on the low turnout at public hearings for this EIR, it is clear that the public has not been notified in a meaningful fashion of the major negative impacts this project will have on their lives. We spoke with neighbors who will lose land to VTA if LRT is built, and they tell us they were not notified of that fact. They claim they hadn't even received the public hearing flyers. Clearly, if everyone who might be at risk of losing land had been notified of that fact, the public hearing would have had much higher attendance.

Given VTA's dire financial situation, we find it outrageous that ~\$700-million might be spent on a project which will, as stated in the EIR, make transportation worse instead of better. If we must plan now for distant-future transit, why not study running light rail to Coyote Valley, using dedicated rights of way, enabling rapid transit from homes to planned future jobs?

*[Ed Note: VEP has not received answers from VTA to the 38 questions in this letter, or to the 23 questions we asked in a 4/17/03 letter, all focusing on issues in or near our neighborhoods.]*

## Fall check-up

- John Marks

I trust you've been pulling the heads off those dandelions all summer. If not, you should have. Every time you walk to the car to go somewhere and you see a yellow dandelion blossom, don't think, "I'll have to dig that up when I get home." It'll never happen.

Prevent that plant from multiplying by going over and plucking the blossom; if it's already progressed to the fuzzy ball, all the more important to trot over and close it into your hand and throw away, before the wind spreads the spores.

Here are five September to-dos:

1. Test your soil for pH and nutrients. Contact your local master gardener extension office at 299-2638 between 9:30 am and 12:30 pm, Monday thru Friday for a test kit and instructions. Cost is about \$10.
2. Add "lime" to acid soils with a pH of 6.0 or below. Ground dolomitic limestone usually is recommended.
3. In cold-winter regions, dig up begonias, dahlias, gladiolus and other tender bulbs or tubers. Store them in a cool, dark, airy location.

4. Plant trees and shrubs. If the soil is still warm but air temperatures are cooling, wait until the soil has cooled so moisture stress is reduced.

5. De-thatch Kentucky bluegrass or fine fescue lawns. Rent a de-thatching machine or hire a lawn care company.

\* \* \*

The best way to control crabgrass--that familiar annual weed with blue-green leaves and spreading stems--is to maintain a dense, healthy lawn that will out-compete it and prevent it from establishing. Mow at a height of 2-1/2 to 3-1/2 inches, and cut the grass frequently so as not to remove more than one-third of the leaf blade at one time. Also, water deeply and infrequently. Fertilize to encourage a vigorous lawn.

Weed killers are another option. The most effective among them are pre-emergent types that kill weed seeds as they sprout. It's essential to apply the herbicide before the crabgrass emerges from the soil. This happens in spring when soil temperatures are greater than 55° to 60°F for seven to ten consecutive days. Check with your local extension service for timing, or monitor the soil temperature yourself using a soil thermometer inserted at an angle just below the surface.

Don't apply weed killers prior to seeding or in an area that's just been seeded.

FOR SALE

Tall bearded iris bulbs. Easy to grow, they thrive on neglect and are drought resistant. Three for \$1. Call Dave at 266-7183 or email him at [DNoel1234@aol.com](mailto:DNoel1234@aol.com).

## Half-Price ticket offer for arts events

- Dave Noel

Have you heard of **Artsopolis**? It's a free weekly email subscription that alerts you to offers for half-price tickets to Silicon Valley arts events. Artsopolis Weekly eSavers features highlights of Silicon Valley's diverse arts and cultural scene. To subscribe, go to [www.artsopolis.com](http://www.artsopolis.com) and click on "Half-Price Tickets".

## Oak Grove School District's 5-Year Plan

-Manny Barbara & Jacquelyn Adams (\*)

Our District focus areas and priorities are established annually and adopted by our Board of Trustees in the form of the Five-Year Plan. This document outlines focus areas, objectives, and activities to achieve those objectives. The Five-Year Plan is available from your school principal and can also be accessed through our Oak Grove website [www.ogsd.k12.ca.us](http://www.ogsd.k12.ca.us).

Focus areas are determined in a number of ways that reflect state/federal legislation and community input. Community input is solicited in a variety of methods, including the District Advisory Committee (DAC), consisting of parent representation from each school, Board and/or Superintendent meetings with Home & School Clubs or School Site Councils, and parent surveys.

[(\*) Ed. Note: This is an open letter to homeowner groups. Manny Barbara is Superintendent and Jacquelyn Adams is

*Board of Trustees President of the Oak Grove Elementary School District, serving VEP members who live east of Vis-tapark Drive.]*

## Computer corner

*-Bob Aquino, VEP's computer guru*

Welcome back from summer! Since we are heading into fall, I thought that I'd do a little article on housecleaning of our computers.

At the risk of sounding paranoid, I have to say that there are a lot of bad guys out there and, with high speed connections, there are lots of opportunities for them to sneak into your computer and play some of their nefarious tricks on you. So what to do? I won't bore you with the anti-virus lecture, except to say that if you surf the net at all, you need protection.

Unless you have a really compelling need for being online 24/7, turn off your computer when you aren't using it. It saves electricity and may save you some headaches. If you want, you can leave your modem on.

Over and above the minimum, there are a number of other things you can do. If you have DSL or a cable modem and multiple computers accessing the net, chances are that you have the access point feeding into a router. That router can act as a hardware firewall to protect you IF... I say "if" because you'll need to change your default password for the router. Otherwise, outsiders can hack into your systems.

If you have WinXP install Service Pack 2 (SP2): In addition to plugging many holes in security, SP2 has modifications to Internet Explorer that block most pop-ups when you are surfing. You can download SP2 by going to Internet Explorer, clicking on Tools-Windows Update and following the instructions. I wouldn't advise doing this on a 56K modem, as the file is large. If you are using a modem, you can request a CD from Microsoft, or call me at 629-5459, and I'll LEND you a copy.

In addition to viruses, there is a whole other world of irritation out there, generally referred to as "Malware". This includes tracking cookies, key loggers, AdWare, Spyware, and a lot of garbage that tends to slow down your computer. This stuff is generally not caught by anti-virus software.

Fortunately, there are two FREE programs that will help you with this junk. You can download them off the net. *Spybot Search and Destroy*

[www.safer-networking.org/en/index.html](http://www.safer-networking.org/en/index.html)

and *Ad-Aware*

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

are quite effective in eliminating this stuff. Again, if you are on a 56K modem, give me a call and I'll LEND you a copy.

It's sort of the nature of the problem that there is not a one size-fits-all Spyware program, so get both. The first time you run them, they may take some time to go through all your files, but be patient. Both programs allow you to quarantine offending files, which is a good thing, since there is a small possibility that they may impact the way

you do things. I would leave the quarantined files on the drive for a while before deleting them. After you have the programs loaded, run them occasionally to get rid of any new trash that has been dumped in your system.

Needed: If you can copy a 5.25" floppy to a 3.5" floppy or 100Meg Zip, please call Dave at 578-6428 (day or eves).

## “VEP” Community Association

What does “VEP” stand for? How did we get that odd name?

Well, “VEP” represents the first three letters of our original subdivision names here in 1969:

V = Vistapark;

E = Encore (and Echo Valley); and

P = Parkview Valley.

That’s all there is to it! Of course, we’ve grown over the years to include the Blossom Heights subdivision and many others. But the original name VEP stuck, and we’ve been known by it for 35 years. (Some like to think of us as **V**ery **E**nergetic **P**eople.)

*[Ed. Note: See the mailing page of this newsletter for a map of our core membership area. We also welcome members from outside these boundaries who share common interests.]*

## When to call 311 vs 911

- Dave Noel

How do you decide whether to call 311 or 911?

Here’s the answer: If an activity is in progress, call 911.

If the activity is not in progress, call 311 and provide any information that may help the police, such as time of day you noticed the activity, etc. If you aren’t satisfied with the response from 311, you may ask to speak with a supervisor.

If possible, get license plate numbers. If the police don’t catch the individuals, they can look for their car. More importantly, they can visit the home of the registered owner. Parents are normally very responsive when they hear their car has been spotted near possible drug dealing.

Finally, you can talk to Lt. Commander **Jack Farmer** at 408-277-5530. He is in charge of our area, and well in tune with our issues. He has been very responsive to our traffic concerns near Gunderson, for example.

\* \* \*

By the way, did you know that cell phone calls to 911 are handled by a call center *outside* of San Jose? That can delay a response to a local emergency. The City of San Jose has made the following phone numbers available for cell phone users to access its emergency call center:

- 911 calls (emergency) = (408) 277-8911
- 311 calls (non-emergency) = (408) 277-8900

## Opinion: Computerized voting machines

-Bob Aquino (\*)

I'm stepping out of my *Computer Corner* to publish an opinion on the upcoming election. This is not an opinion on the "who" or "what" but the "how" of the election.

If you followed the story in the papers, you know that there has been considerable controversy concerning the new computerized voting machines. My personal feeling on this is that people objecting to the current system have many valid concerns. Because I feel this way, I will opt to submit an absentee ballot, even though I will be in town. (In fact, I will be working as a precinct worker.)

To me, the two most cogent arguments against computerized voting machines are:

1. There is no paper trail. Therefore, a recount is not really possible.
2. The voting machine software is proprietary. This leaves the system susceptible to manipulation by the manufacturer.

If I have learned anything from the Enron, Worldcom, Tyco, M-Clone, etc, etc, etc. affairs, it is that corporate America is only trustworthy when the doors are open so that the fresh air of public scrutiny can blow through. Proprietary software is a closed and sealed door.

*[(\*) Bob Aquino is a former president of VEP and perennial Co-Editor of this newsletter. His "Computer Corner" column appears regularly.]*

## Is your home grounded?

-Dave Fadness

Back in the '70s, a large number of Arcadia-built homes experience problems with rupturing water lines. The pipe that connected from the water meter to our homes was not suitably wrapped, so it corroded rapidly. Corrosion was accelerated by galvanic action, as the pipe was also used as the primary electrical ground for our homes' wiring system (that's why it couldn't be wrapped).

At that time, we old-timers were much younger and struggling to make our ~\$325 per month mortgage payments. To help make ends meet, many of us became do-it-yourselfers. Although VEP negotiated a 50% reimbursement package with Arcadia, numerous homeowners chose to replace the pipe themselves.

The typical approach was to use a PVC replacement; it was easy and seemed smart, because the result was corrosion-resistant.

Recognizing that some of these weekend plumbers were not aware of the dual function of that pipe, we ran numerous articles in the *VEP NEWS* cautioning folks who used PVC to be sure to restore their home's electrical ground. We have no idea whether everyone got the message.

So, I'm going to try again...

If you have any reason to think your metal water pipe was replaced with a plastic one—or—if the grounding lug from your electrical system has been disconnected from the metal water pipe, be sure to get a copper grounding rod from your favorite hardware store and install it ASAP. Using a copper rod, designed for this purpose, is the preferred approach, and one that allows easy visual inspection.

Water pipes typically enter homes near and on one side or the other of the garage door. (There's usually a shut-off valve nearby.) Check to see whether the pipe coming out of the ground is metal. Also check to see whether a ground wire is securely clamped to the pipe. The ground clamp may be inside your garage.

If the pipe coming out of the ground is plastic, be sure a copper rod has been driven into the ground and the electrical ground wire is securely clamped to it. In all probability, that stake will be installed close to the water pipe. If there is no grounding stake, install one. Any qualified plumber or electrician can help you do this (our newsletter advertiser, CPI is very expert at this).

Trouble is, without a shovel, you may not be able to tell whether a previous owner patched-in a PVC pipe. Worse, many of us have added concrete walks, etc, that make it very difficult to perform this inspection.

If you're unsure, get an expert to check for you. PG&E may be willing to help.

## Water District offers tax exemption

- *Dave Noel*

Are you a low-income senior? If so, you may be eligible for exemption of the Clean, Safe Creeks special parcel tax. This tax was approved by the voters and appears as one of the many supplemental taxes itemized on your property tax bill. Not only might you be eligible to waive this supplemental tax, but you might also be able to retroactively recoup this tax if you paid it in the last three tax years.

2001/2002 tax year eligibility requirements:

- Born before 6/30/1937;
- Resided in the home that you own; and
- Total household income was less than \$32,850 (based on income for 2000).

2002/2003 tax year eligibility requirements:

- Born before 6/30/1938;
- Resided in the home that you own; and
- Total household income was less than \$35,175 (based on income for 2001).

2003/2004 tax year eligibility requirements:

- Born before 6/30/1939;
- Resided in the home that you own; and
- Total household income was less than \$35,400 (based on income for 2002).

2004/2005 tax year eligibility requirements:

- Born before 6/30/1940;
- Resided in the home that you own; and

- Total household income was less than \$35,625 (based on income for 2003).

For more information, call **Julie Wilson** at the SCVWD Tax Hotline: (408) 265-2607, ext. 2810.

## Santa Clara Valley watershed birds

In 2001, the *San Francisco Bay Bird Observatory* (SFBBO) conducted a ten-month survey of bird populations using six urban riparian (streamside) study sites along Coyote Creek and the Guadalupe River. They examined diversity, abundance, and productivity of the birds and how the birds related to the presence of an overflow channel in the area. This study is an exciting look at what is happening in Santa Clara County in regards to bird populations and the changes that are being made in our watershed that directly relate to wildlife habitat.

The San Francisco Bay Bird Observatory (SFBBO) is a not-for-profit organization dedicated to the conservation of birds and their habitats through research, monitoring and educational activities. Scientific information is provided to governmental agencies, industry, and the public to support informed resource management decisions for the San Francisco Bay area.

**Sherry Hudson**, Land bird Program Director and Biologist with SFBBO, will present a summary of survey results in a presentation with the *Friends of Guadalupe River Park & Gardens* at the Guadalupe Garden Center on Thursday, September 23, from 6 - 7 pm. A \$5.00 fee will be collected from each attendee and shared between the SFBBO and the Friends.

Space is limited so please reserve a spot by emailing **Kary Wilson** or at [education@grp.org](mailto:education@grp.org) calling at (408) 298-7657.

## Computer school for senior citizens

-Dave Noel

A non-profit organization called *SeniorNet* holds computer classes for senior citizens (age 50+) at 237 learning centers nationwide, including three in San Jose:

- Vineland Branch Library, 1450 Blossom Hill Road, (408) 268-1133
- Cypress Senior Center, 403 South Cypress Ave, (408) 244-1353
- Willows Senior Center, 2175 Lincoln Ave, (408) 448-6400

Classes are held multiple times each year. For current information, contact the learning centers above or visit SeniorNet's website at [www.SNLCSJ.ORG](http://www.SNLCSJ.ORG).

Classes include *Introduction to Computers* and instruction in Word, Digital Images, AOL, E-mail, Cards 'N More, Internet, Windows XP, Web Security, Web Searching Genealogy, and File Management. The cost is \$20 per class. Most classes are 2 hours/week for 8 weeks. There is a \$40 annual fee to join.

## Scarecrow-making workshop

Celebrate autumn the old-fashioned way with the *Friends of Guadalupe River Park & Gardens* making scarecrows and drinking cider on Saturday, September 25 from 9 am until noon (drop in between 9 and 11 am). Bring your friends, family and/or co-workers for a morning of creativity and play time together. Then take your creation home to decorate your front porch or enter it into *Scarecrow Row* at Pumpkins in the Park!

The workshop will be held at the Guadalupe Garden Center, located at 715 Spring Street in San Jose. The fee is \$15.00 per group (one scarecrow allowed per group, maximum of five people per group). Scarecrow building materials are included in the workshop fee. Choose from a variety of shirts, pants, decorations, and plenty of stuffing to construct your very own life-sized scarecrow. Children under sixteen years of age must be accompanied by an adult.

Space is limited, so reserve your spot early by sending a check to: Friends of Guadalupe River Park & Gardens, 50 West San Fernando Street, Suite 1100, San Jose, CA 95113. Visa and MasterCard are also accepted via phone or mail. For more information please visit [www.grpg.org](http://www.grpg.org) or call (408)298-7657.

### Scarecrow contest

Unique, creative scarecrow displays have become a tradition at *Pumpkins in the Park*. Schools, youth organizations/facilities, neighborhood groups, families or individuals, businesses, office groups--in short, everyone--is invited to join the fun and make a scarecrow!

Scarecrows will be judged by the general public (using touch screen voting booths from the Registrar of Voters) on October 9, between 10 am and 4 pm at *Pumpkins in the Park*. To enter the contest, please register by Friday, October 1. There is no fee to enter the contest.

Scarecrows made at the Friends of Guadalupe River Park & Gardens scarecrow making workshop on September 25 can enter their creation as well. For contest guidelines, registration forms, and general *Pumpkins in the Park* info, call (408) 298-7657, visit [www.grpg.org/PIP](http://www.grpg.org/PIP), or send an e-mail to [scarecrows@grpg.org](mailto:scarecrows@grpg.org).

## Extreme summer vacation

-Dana Belstler

For the first two weeks in August, my husband and I were on Grand Cayman Island, battling 90+ degree weather, 200% humidity (well okay, so I'm exaggerating a BIT) and mosquitoes that drank bug repellent just to cool off (see previous disclaimer). We were there to help build cages for an endangered **Blue Iguana** breeding facility located in Grand Cayman's *Queen Elizabeth II Botanic Park*.

What is so special about these beautiful, giant lizards is that they are located only on Grand Cayman Island (located southwest of Cuba) and cannot be found any place else in the world. They are now considered functionally extinct; their number is so low, it is undetermined as to how

many are left on the island. Their number is guesstimated to be around 15 to 20 in the wild, and it continues to drop.

The *Blue Iguana Recovery Program* is not financially supported by the Cayman Government, as it conflicts with development of the small island. One man, along with the National Trust of Cayman, has been working for the past ten years to keep this species in existence.

This program receives very small grants from zoos and the National Trust, but it is not enough to keep things going. With only 40,000 residents on the island, the program has limited financial help from only those people interested in saving this giant reptile.

The Blue Iguana Recovery Program and the National Trust are working with a handful of US Zoos in a breeding program to help preserve the species should they not survive on Grand Cayman. Currently, Indy Zoo in Indianapolis has successfully bred the two Blue Iguanas the recovery program sent to them. This work has been done under the endangered species act and meeting stringent guidelines of the USDA. Indy is the only zoo which has had success, which does not bode well for the Blue Guys.

In between swinging hammers, shoveling dirt, and swatting mosquitoes, we were privileged enough to not only get up close and personal with an endangered animal, but to meet several extremely selfless people from all over the USA and the UK who donated their time, money, sweat, blood and tears (literally!).

Those two weeks were eye opening. Aside from the "Survivor" flavored atmosphere (I confess! I voted two people off the darned island!), we realized what an uphill battle it is to try and save a species from disappearing off the face of the earth. The politics, bureaucracy, and disinterest of most people is incredible.

If you would like to learn more about these beautiful giant lizards or wish to help protect them from extinction, please visit [www.cyclura.com](http://www.cyclura.com) under "**Cyclura**" and "**Blue Iguana Support**" and also, "**Battle against Extinction**". Also visit [www.blueiguana.ky](http://www.blueiguana.ky).

The Blue Iguana is legally classified as an endangered species. All donations are tax deductible.

## West Nile Virus

*[This article is adapted from a memo that was distributed to City of San Jose employees on July 21<sup>st</sup>.]*

The Santa Clara County Vector Control District received confirmation on July 21, 2004 that a dead bird found in San Jose tested positive for West Nile Virus (WNV). This is the first confirmation of the presence of WNV in Santa Clara County. There have been no human cases or mosquitoes found with the virus here or in surrounding counties to date.

Having killed 600 persons nationally and sickened another 10,000 over the last five years, it is considered the fastest-moving vector-borne disease the U.S. has ever seen. Vec-

tors transmit pathogens from one host to another; in this case mosquitoes carry the virus from bird to bird, bird to human, and bird to animals (primarily horses).

While there is no human vaccine or treatment, any resident can play a major role in helping prevent the virus from gaining a stronghold in San Jose through these actions:

Target the Source: As you go about normal routines at work or home, urge property owners and managers to drain or treat stagnant water sources including such seemingly innocent mosquito breeding areas as birdbaths. Even small sources must be drained, changed, or treated weekly. Report stagnant water or mosquito activity to County Vector Control at 792-5010.

Report Dead Birds: Birds are highly susceptible to the virus and helped spread it coast to coast in just three years (1999 to 2001). If you see recently dead birds--particularly crows, blackbirds, and raptors such as hawks and owls, report them immediately to the State at 1 (877) WNV-BIRD (968-2473). Do not touch the birds; they will be collected for testing when appropriate.

Fight the Bite: To avoid being bitten, wear protective clothing with long sleeves particularly at dawn and dusk when mosquitoes are most active. Consider spraying clothing with insect repellent containing DEET, which has proven safe and effective even for children according to the Centers for Disease Control.

Help Educate the Public: When speaking with residents or neighbors, help the city to speak with one voice on this important public health issue.

Even a cup of stagnant water can breed thousands of mosquitoes. Help protect yourself and your neighbors by draining standing water. To avoid being bitten, wear protective clothing and use an insect repellent containing DEET, particularly at dawn and dusk when mosquitoes are most active.

## VEP history in a nutshell: 1987 - 1990

—Greg West

The following is another in a series of summaries of VEP history taken from our newsletter archives. This month, we cover 1987 to 1990. VEP is scanning archived newsletters and posting them on-line at the VEP web site ([www.vepca.org](http://www.vepca.org)).

**1987** The Guadalupe Corridor Joint Powers Board, by a 3-1-1 vote, endorses VEP's request to reduce the height of the 85/87 interchange by 13-feet, at an estimated additional cost of \$1.85M. County Supervisor **Susanne Wilson** and City Council members **Iola Williams** and **Jim Beall** voted for approval. County Supervisor **Rod Diridon** opposed. Final approval for this change is given by the Transit District Board comprised of County Supervisors Wilson, Diridon, Lofgren, Legan, and McKenna. Pinehurst Resident's Association files a lawsuit over proposed grade-separated Hwy 87 intersections, claiming that the Guadalupe Corridor project violated CEQA. VEP asks for changes at Capitol Expressway and Branham Lane intersections at its April meeting.

Santa Clara County Traffic Authority approves feasibility study of Hwy 87 intersection modifications proposed by VEP and Pinehurst. City Council kills proposed modifications by a 10-1 vote to move forward with the existing designs (**Nancy Ianni** opposed) at meeting attended by 150 VEP members.

Two dead bodies are found in a pickup truck at Parkview Park II.

Court denies Arcadia's petition to bar VEP's class action lawsuit against them over cracked walls. City holds public hearing on Parkview Park II problems. Volunteer, **Lois Rodden** letters VEP's A-frame meeting signs. **Christy Pine** and **Rebecca Wightman** win VEP Community Service Awards (CSA). New VEP member, **Lisa Miller** agrees to chair Vista Park Improvements committee.

VEP exec committee takes no position on the mixed use development of the Hillsdale Quarry site north of Capitol Expressway. Construction begins on Safeway shopping center and medium density residential at the northwest corner of Branham and Snell. Ogan Avenue renamed Chynoweth as it is reconfigured for Hwy 87 construction.

**1988** Steinbeck students and staff donate 2000 cans of food and 50 turkeys to the Rescue Mission downtown. Carson School nominated for National Elementary School Recognition Program. VEP passes Constitution and By-Laws changes to CSA, dues, and Officer Indemnification. Vista Park Improvement Committee plans "phased" improvements based on survey of 1000 homes closest to the park and City budget constraints. VEP holds Neighborhood Flea Market, raising \$4500 of needed \$15,000 for park improvements.

Hwy 85 (West Valley Freeway) ground-breaking happens in April.

VEP hosts Candidates' Forum for City Council in May, and State Assembly in October. Council candidates **Judy Stabile**, **Holly LeRoy**, and **Keith Lowry**, and assembly candidates **Dom Cortese** and **Buck Norred** attend. VEP lobbies for and wins pedestrian crossing safety improvements for the Hwy 85/87 interchange. **Joey Bolano** and **Irene Redondo** win CSAs. November meeting featuring presentation on earthquake preparedness--11 months before the Loma Prieta earthquake—is cancelled and rescheduled for January. Lick Spur land transfer held up by lot size change concerns. Vandalism problems plague 85/87 construction workers.

**1989** City restores street sweeping after 10-year absence. Vista Park Improvement Committee holds Bowl-a-thon fund raiser. Developers of apartment complex behind Safeway change building setbacks from adjoining property lines to 30-feet (from 5-feet) after presenting plans at March VEP meeting. City meeting on Parkview Park II renovation stirs controversy over plans to re-contour the park.

Guadalupe light rail will be completed on time. To encourage light rail ridership, Route 87 highway construction from Alma to Capitol will be delayed two years, for completion in

1993. State Senator **Dan McCorquodale** visits VEP neighbor to talk about neighborhood crime. City-donated used swing set and picnic tables are installed in Vista Park by San Jose Conservation Corps. Parkview II Park renovation plans finalized.

Thought for the Month (October): "Time flies like a bullet; but fruit flies like a banana."

Parkview School holds 7<sup>th</sup> Annual Pumpkin Patch Festival. City expands yard waste recycling program. Loma Prieta earthquake strikes at beginning of 4<sup>th</sup> game of the World Series (A's vs. Giants at "the Stick"). Santa Clara County Superior Court denies class action motion in cracked walls suit, effectively ending the suit in a win for Arcadia. Vista Park Committee rolls out proposed Master Plan for park to City Department of Parks and Recreation.

**1990** Councilmember **Judy Stabile** and City Traffic Operations discuss results of Branham Lane Traffic Study concluding that "traffic is not excessive for a street of this character," at VEP January meeting. VEP requests "pork chop" medians at Heppner and Royale Park/New Compton.

VEP President, **Steve Olson** is transferred to Seattle; Secretary **Bob Aquino** steps up to fill Steve's remaining term.

PG&E responds to VEP letter about frequent (monthly) power outages; says ten of last twelve outages are due to equipment failure. Eagle Scout, **Dave Johnson** and friends install basketball poles, backboards, and rims at Vista Park, paid for by Vista Park Committee fundraisers. VEP and City Department of Parks & Recreation hold Grand Opening for Phase 1 of Vista Park. City meets with VEP to continue Vista Park master planning process.

VEP holds Ballot Initiative and Candidates' forums in two consecutive months. Vista Park Committee, chaired by **Lisa Miller**, receives award from San Jose Beautiful and the City Parks and Recreation Department. Summer meetings cancelled due to high cost of using Gunderson facility. **Kim Dinh** and **Lori Mena** win CSAs. **Arlando Smith** hired as principal of Gunderson. **Walter Lester's** representative **Ed Piggins** discusses Mr. Lester's County Park plans for his property at VEP September meeting. Parks & Recreation and Councilmember **Iola Williams** host New Look Dedication for Parkview II Park.

### ☺ FLASHBACK ☺

This Letter to the Editor is reprinted from the  
January, 1990 VEP News.

Dear VEP NEWS,

Regarding the "Code Enforcement" article in the November 1989 newsletter, as a homeowner I am as concerned as anyone about maintaining the quality of our neighborhoods. I am also concerned about the economic realities of the Silicon Valley. Here property values and rental costs have skyrocketed, making it extremely difficult, if not impossible, for some to obtain, maintain and retain housing. This is a tension and human reality we must also face.

Maybe too many people live next door because that is all they can afford.

I felt the article smacked of the "not in my neighborhood" syndrome. I feel like this at times, because I am concerned about the appearance and property values in my neighborhood. I also feel like I need to remember what it was like for my mother to raise three children by herself. At times that meant our yard did not look so great, or that we even had to share housing costs with extended family or others.

This is just a plea for a more balanced outlook. The article might have also suggested trying to talk to our neighbors before calling Code Enforcement. Yes there are those "surly" neighbors. But, maybe there are also some people who would talk with us about solutions if we approached them with mutuality and respect. Such an approach might not only enhance the outward appearance of our neighborhoods, but nurture the more essential quality and true essence of what the word *neighborhood* is all about.

Sincerely,  
**Deborah St. Julian**

*NOTE: Thank you, Deborah for this contribution! We encourage all of our members to contribute to the VEP NEWS. It's your newsletter, so, speak out and let us hear from you.*

## Superior Court Records are available on-line

*-Dave Noel & Dave Fadness*

Here's good advice to follow before you hire any type of contractor. Check on them in the Superior Court Records of Santa Clara County.

Now it's easy to do, as they have a Public Access Case Information Site on-line at: [www.sccaseinfo.org](http://www.sccaseinfo.org).

Also be sure to check with the *Contractor's State Licensing Board* to see whether the contractor you want to hire has a license, is insured, and/or has any claims or complaints filed against them.

The Licensing Board has an office in downtown San Jose. They have excellent information on your consumer rights and what to look out for to protect yourself against unscrupulous contractors.

Do these easy checks BEFORE you sign a contract. You will be happy you did—you could be VERY unhappy if you don't.

## All aboard Caltrain's faster trains!

*- Ken Yeager (\*)*

Caltrain is moving faster down the tracks. With the eagerly anticipated arrival of Baby Bullet service, passengers can now get from San Jose to San Francisco in under an hour. Caltrain's new schedule offers the highest level of service in the railroad's 141-year history and the first reduction in travel time in close to a century.

It took two years of construction to do the necessary track improvements to allow for the faster train rides.

If you haven't taken Caltrain for a while, you should know that passengers must purchase tickets at the automated ticket machines at the station prior to boarding. Second, there are 17 new passenger cars for increased comfort. Lastly, for Giants fans, special train service runs on game days with extra service and an expanded schedule.

For the past three and a half years, I have served on the Joint Powers Board that oversees Caltrain. This Board is made up of nine members, three from each of the counties where Caltrain operates service: Santa Clara, San Mateo and San Francisco. As a Director, I have had a unique opportunity to participate in improving Caltrain service to an unprecedented level.

With the debut of the new, faster train service, Caltrain truly arrived in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Five morning and five evening commute trains serve six Baby Bullet stations: San Jose Diridon, Mountain View, Palo Alto, Hillsdale, Millbrae, and San Francisco. Baby Bullet trains do not travel faster than the regular trains. Rather, time is saved by making fewer stops.

A train from San Jose to San Francisco which now takes an hour and 36 minutes on a local train will be cut to just 57 minutes on a Baby Bullet train. To support this additional service, Caltrain revamped its entire schedule to provide a more efficient and timely mix of local, limited-stop, and express train services during the week.

Weekend service also returns after two years of track construction work. Weekend passengers will benefit from hourly service to nearly all Caltrain stations between San Francisco's Fourth and King Streets station and the San Jose Diridon station. A weekend shuttle bus will make the link between the Tamien station in San Jose and Caltrain's Diridon station.

Their new schedule and the debut of Baby Bullet service are only some of the improvements for Caltrain. Over the coming decades, the long-term goal of electrification will be realized. The Caltrain Electrification Program would convert Caltrain from diesel-hauled to electric-hauled trains.

Along with reducing noise and improving regional air quality, electrification would further increase speeds and performance. Electric trains can accelerate and decelerate faster, particularly important when stations are relatively close together, as they exist now along the Caltrain system.

Further, electrification of Caltrain will accommodate future high speed rail, an idea that is gaining momentum to provide a transportation alternative between Los Angeles and San Francisco.

For additional information on ticketing, station locations, the revamped schedule and other Caltrain news, please visit [www.caltrain.com](http://www.caltrain.com) or call 1-800-660-4287.

As always, please don't hesitate to contact me at my office (408) 277-5166 or ken.yeager@sanjoseca.gov for further information on Caltrain or any other issue affecting San Jose residents.

[(\* Ed. Note: *Ken Yeager is a San Jose City Council member, representing the Willow Glen area.*]

## Bulletin Board Ads

FOR SALE: Tall bearded iris bulbs. Easy to grow, they thrive on neglect, are drought resistant. 3 for \$1. Call Dave at 266-7183 or email him at DNoel1234@aol.com.

HELP! If you can copy a 5.25" floppy to a 3.5" or 100Meg Zip floppy, please call Dave at 578-6428 (day or eves).

FOR SALE: Sony 26-inch TV, oak console; \$75. Sharp Fax machine, UX510 w/extra cartridge; \$75. Smith Corona memory typewriter; \$75. 8-HP rotor tiller; \$100. Call 227-7663.

U.S. MILITARY ITEMS WANTED: Top \$\$ paid. Call Doug at 978-3093 or 629-7436.

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.

\* \* \*

### Bulletin Board advertising rules:

1. Bulletin Board ads are limited to four (4) lines of text. One line contains 50 characters, including spaces.
2. VEP will print **free** Bulletin Board ads for its members for one-time transactions involving less than \$400, for lost and found, and for services offered by kids under 18 or retirees over 60 years of age. Free ads may be published in a maximum of three successive issues of the VEP News per submission. After three issues, non-renewed ads will be dropped without notice.
3. VEP will print commercial Bulletin Board ads for its members for \$6 per issue of the VEP News. (A commercial ad is one that offers goods and/or services for a fee. The VEP President and/or Editor has final say in determining whether an ad is commercial.) Ads must be prepaid before publication and be of four (4) lines or less in length (see 1, above). Commercial bulletin board ads may be published indefinitely so long as payment is received in advance of publication. Non-renewed ads will be dropped without notice. No graphics allowed.
4. Bulletin board ads and payment must be received at least 12 days prior to the fourth Tuesday of the month for inclusion in that month's newsletter. Mail to VEP, P.O. Box 18111, San Jose, 95158.

Use the following form as a guide for submitting an ad:

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

PHONE # \_\_\_\_\_

AD WORDING: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

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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.

## VEP's advertising policy

- *Dave Noel*

At our May executive meeting, VEP executives finalized a new advertising policy for the VEP News. You may have noticed a few changes in the rules for bulletin board ads in our May issue of the VEP News. These minor changes simplify administration of these ads and clarify which ads should be free.

The new advertising policy also included some rule changes for our commercial (graphic) ads. Until May, we operated with a cap of twelve graphic ads per newsletter pending adoption of a new comprehensive advertising policy. Our new policy caps commercial advertising to 25% of the space on any page except the mailing page, and no ads on page one. It also clarifies what ads we can accept. We take into consideration such items as VEP member recommendations/complaints, and how many similar (competitive) ads we can carry simultaneously.

Although our bulletin board ads are free or very inexpensive for our members, you may not realize that our loyal graphic advertisers pay \$240.00 per year to advertise in the VEP News. These funds significantly help defray our printing and postage costs and help keep our membership dues low. VEP's new advertising policy also slightly modified our billing cycles and payment due dates.

Please consider using our commercial advertisers when you are in the market for the goods or services they provide. While VEP does not endorse our advertisers, many of the advertisers were referred by VEP members, and VEP will discontinue an ad if we get complaints from three separate VEP members.

Check our website or contact any of the VEP executives listed on the mailing page of this newsletter for a copy of our new Advertising Policy.