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weekends, donating time planting trees and bushes, weeding, painting over graffiti, watering, picking up trash, etc., people often mistake us for "weekend warriors." Most citizens assume that anyone who does work in public places is either a government employee or a convict.

We'd like to let the public know that we are VEP VOLUNTEERS, folks who care enough to give their free time to make our neighborhoods better.

To accomplish that, and as a small reward, we'd like to give our community work-day volunteers a t-shirt that tells all who see us that we are *VEP Volunteers*. We're asking for an amount not to exceed \$500. This should get us at least fifty brightly colored, silk-screened t-shirts.

★ Update on School Closures: We featured a presentation on proposed 2005 San Jose Unified (SJUSD) school closures at our October meeting. The District has been holding public meetings to arrive at a set of recommendations which will be acted upon by the Board of Education on December 9.



VEP wrote a formal response to the proposed closing of Carson Elementary School. A copy of this letter and a schedule of SJUSD meetings were sent to VEP members who have given us their email addresses.

We'll summarize what's happened to date and decide on any necessary last-minute strategies at VEP's 11/23 meeting.

★ Your Community Concerns: Bring your community concerns to VEP's attention. We're eager to work with you on finding and implementing solutions to problems—that's what VEP exists to do. Our ideas and marching orders come from and respond to you.

VEP wishes you a Happy Thanksgiving!

Martial Cottle Park update

- County Supervisor Don Gage

At VEP's November 23rd meeting, County Parks Director **Lisa Killough** and my Policy Aide **Rachael Gibson** will provide a status report on current activity at the Walter Lester property, or *Martial Cottle Park* as it is now officially known.

As most of you are aware, in October 2003 Mr. Lester donated 153 acres of land to the County and, in a separate transaction, sold State Parks 136 acres at a significant discount. The State and County then entered into an agreement whereby the County will develop and manage the entire property as the Martial Cottle Park.

The first step in that process will be development and eventual adoption of a master plan to guide operation and maintenance of the entire acreage. The master plan process will be inclusive of many stakeholders, perhaps most importantly the local community, and is expected to take approximately two years.



In the meantime, Parks has begun preliminary studies of how to open a small portion of the park to public access in the near future; **Lisa Killough** will elaborate on those plans at the VEP meeting.

As a condition of the property's transfer, Mr. Lester built into the transaction certain deed restrictions that seek to ensure that his vision for a historic agricultural park is maintained as the site is planned, developed, and operated. Here is the text of the recorded deed restriction:

"No part of the property shall be used for high intensity, organized recreational uses such as athletic fields, playgrounds, tot lots, swimming pools, play courts, amusement rides or similar uses, nor as a repository for historic structures that are relocated from other sites. The property shall be used exclusively as a public historical park that informs and educates the public about the agricultural heritage of the Santa Clara Valley, as exemplified by the Martial Cottle family, dating from the 1850s into the 20th century. The property may be used for passive recreational activities such as picnic facilities, trails, and other low intensity uses that may be incidental to the primary historic and educational purposes of the park, and for interpretative, passive recreational, agricultural education and research and commercial uses that area reasonably related to the history of farming in the Santa Clara Valley. In addition, commercial uses such as agricultural leases, produce stands, community gardens, farmer's markets, interpretative programs or similar uses may be allowed if reasonably related to the primary historical purpose of the park."

That's certainly specific! As the master plan for Martial Cottle Park progresses, this deed restriction likely will be the guiding force behind the park's ultimate development. I look forward with great anticipation to partnering

with the community on this historic master planning effort.

I hope this update answers some of your questions on Martial Cottle Park. As always, if you have any questions on this or any other County matter, please feel free to contact me at (408) 299-5010, or don-gage@garlic.com.

Branham and Snell Road Widening Project

During and after the property's transfer to the County, the City of San Jose informed the County of pending plans to widen both Snell Avenue and Branham Lane. As is the case with most capital improvement projects, the City had plans to widen these arterials long before Mr. Lester considered donating his property. However, those plans never reached fruition, and now the City is working with the County on completing widening plans.



Because it is now officially designated park land, the County cannot simply donate the acreage necessary to accomplish street widening; to do so would violate laws protecting park lands. However, recognizing that all local jurisdictions are feeling the budget pinch, County staff is working on an arrangement with the City whereby the City would contribute in-kind resources (such as traffic signals) in lieu of cash compensation, and the County would then convey the acreage necessary to widen the streets.

These negotiations take time, and have not concluded yet. However, I am confident that County and City staffs will continue to work cooperatively toward ultimate widening of both Branham and Snell.

VTA Transportation Forum

On November 23, 2004 there will be a forum to discuss the Valley Transportation Authority's (VTA) transportation plan 2030, also known as *VTP 2030*. The purpose is to raise awareness on transportation priorities in the county and to receive public feedback on the projects. VTP 2030 consists of transit, highway, and local road improvement projects in Santa Clara County.

This meeting will take place at 6:30 pm in the Board Chambers located at 70 West Hedding Street in San Jose. I hope to see you there and encourage your participation.

For further information regarding the VTP 2030, visit VTA's website: <http://www.vtp2030.org/>

School consolidation update

-Irene Shoberg ()*

An Ad-Hoc Committee has recommended to the SJUSD staff that Steinbeck Middle School be closed after this school year. There is a public forum on November 15th and the first reading by San Jose Unified's

School Board will be held on November 18, 2004.

A second reading and final Board Action will take place at the regularly scheduled School Board meeting on December 9, 2004 at 855 Lenzen Avenue. Citizens will have an opportunity to speak (be sure to fill out and submit a speaker card before the meeting starts at 6:30 pm). Call the school district at 535-6000 for further details.

**Save
our
schools!**

Dates for open forums and decisions for the elementary schools have been changed, as follows:

January 6 and 13, 2005, 6:30 to 8:30 pm Public Forums: Staff recommendation on Elementary School Consolidation in District Office, Room 129.

January 20^(*), 6:30 pm Board meeting/Public Hearing: Elementary School Consolidation Recommendation, first reading; District Office, Room 129.

February 10^(*), 6:30 pm pm Board meeting/Public Hearing: Elementary School Consolidation Recommendation, second reading and final Board Action; District Office, Room 129

^(*) Note: 1/20 and 2/10 dates are tentative, pending approval by the Board of Education on December 9, 2004.

As stated in last month's VEP NEWS, our neighborhood elementary school, Rachel Carson, is one of the schools being considered for closure. If Carson is chosen for closure, there will be no San Jose Unified elementary school in our VEP neighborhoods.

This is an important issue to every homeowner in VEP, whether you have children who attend Rachel Carson or not.

Attend the meetings listed above and make your voices heard, write letters to the San Jose Unified School Board members and to Superintendent Don Iglesias. Information can be found by referring to the District website at www.sjUSD.org or call the district at 535-6000 and ask to speak to someone about school con-

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solidation.

Be sure to attend the November 23rd VEP meeting for further updates.

[()Irene Shoberg is a VEP member and the Categorical and Library Assistant at Rachel Carson School.]*

Tell us about your favorites

-Dave Fadness

Because our newsletters have grown in size the past couple of years, our costs to produce it—and space for additional advertisers--have grown as well.

We need your help. The best possible way we know of to find potential advertisers is to ask you, our members, who you've had particularly good luck with in buying goods and services. It's always been our preference to feature advertisements for those companies who have done a good job for one or more of us.

After hearing from you, we will write to offer the recommended businesses an opportunity to advertise in our newsletter. Your name will not be disclosed (unless you ask us to) and we will not pester the merchants.

Here's what we need from you:

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Please write, call, or email your recommendations to me. Mail to me, care of VEP's address. My telephone

number and email address are shown on the mailing page of this newsletter.

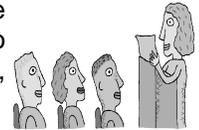
We'd appreciate hearing from you as soon as possible.

Keep us in mind in the future, too, as we're always happy to have references available when other members call to ask for them. (Let us know if you have BAD luck with any of our current advertisers, too.) Thanks!

President's message

-Jeri Arstingstall, VEP President

VEP had another very good turn-out at our October meeting. A lot of great information is shared every month for our neighborhood. If you have an interest or a topic you would like to hear about at an upcoming meeting, please let me know.



October proved to be another busy month for VEP. Our Secretary, **Ginger Cardona** and I met with San Jose Unified's Superintendent **Don Iglesias** to talk about how VEP could help the school district. We talked about potential school closures, the District's budget concerns, and maintaining their number one goal of educating students to be well-rounded citizens.

VEP participated in the city's 10th Annual Daffodil Planting on October 23rd.

As this of this newsletter's is press time (one week after the election), we still do not know who our new District 10 city council person is. Whoever will take Vice Mayor Dando's place has some pretty big shoes to fill. VEP execs are working on a list of items for that new person to work on after being sworn-in.

VEP Hospitality Committee member **Katherine Decker** is encouraging our community to decorate for the holidays. This is an excellent opportunity for you to walk around our neighborhoods, enjoy the decorations, and meet and greet your fellow neighbors. I know Katherine and her husband Dann are going all out, so be sure to drive or walk by their home on Devon Park Court.

On behalf of VEP, I hope you all have a safe and happy holiday.

Daffodil Days

- Dave Noel

On October 23rd, VEP planted 800 daffodils in our area. This was our 4th year participating in San Jose Beautiful's annual daffodil planting event, and it was San Jose Beautiful's 10th year running this popular event.

Early next year you'll see new daffodils blooming at the following locations:

- Parkview I Park entrance on Bluefield Drive;
- Median island at Rosenbaum Avenue and Capitol Ex-

pressway; and

- William H. Cilker Park entrance on Chynoweth Avenue at Winfield Boulevard.

When you see these daffodils, please think of VEP and our sixteen wonderful volunteers who planted them:

Debra Suydam, Jeff Ismail, Michael Strauss, Joe Tajnai, Katy Tajnai, Pamela Rodriguez, Robert Rodriguez, Dave Noel, Maureen Noel, Bryan Noel, Lou Baldock, Ilkka Kallio, Jennifer Ang, Nell Ang, Michael Strauss, and Jeri Arstingstall.

We'd like to extend a special thank you to VEP members **Fred and Lois Koslowski** for generously donating the use of a self-propelled trencher again this year. Fred and Lois own *A Rental Center*. When you need rental equipment, please patronize them at 15721 Los Gatos Boulevard in Los Gatos, 356-0424.



The wonderful thing about daffodils is that they come back every year, so you should see daffodils popping up all over from our 4 years of planting. Once our daffodils emerge from the ground, please keep your eye out for folks spraying weeds and ask them not to spray the daffodils.

Finally, I'd like to thank our parks manager **Art Rosales**. He arranged a meeting with VEP leaders and parks maintenance staff prior to planting day to help select planting locations and communicate where to avoid applying weed spray. They also gave us park maps that showed where utility lines were so we could be careful not to disturb them with the trencher.

Our volunteers at Cilker Park expressed interest in working with VEP to officially adopt that park through the City of San Jose Adopt-A-Park program. Watch for updates in upcoming issues of the VEP News.

San Jose pets given amnesty

-Debra Suydam

In celebration of the opening of the new City of San Jose Animal Care Center, they will license your pet with no citations, no late fees, and no penalties for 45 days starting October 15th.

Every person who owns a dog or cat over the age of four months is required by law to license their animal (Ordinance 20128.7.08.610). Dog and cat owners who fail to comply with licensing requirements are subject to costly penalties! A license tag should be securely fastened to your pet's collar or harness and worn at all times.

In order for the Animal Care & Services to license your pet, you must have proof of current rabies vaccinations. The first rabies vaccination is good for one year, the second vaccination given one year later and subsequent (or booster) vaccinations are valid for three

years. You can get the rabies vaccine from your local veterinarian or a vaccine clinic.

Just give them a call at (408)578-PAWS (7297) and help protect your dog or cat now! After the amnesty period, all citations, late fees, and increases in fees will apply, so please hurry. Amnesty ends November 30, 2004.

Amnesty information: All dogs and cats are required to have current rabies vaccinations before being licensed. Animal Care & Services will offer the rabies vaccine for only \$5.00 on the dates listed on their web site

www.sanjoseanimals.com/licensingInfo.asp

To take advantage of this opportunity, just bring your pet to the new facility at 2750 S. Monterey Road (south of Umbarger Road, near the Santa Clara County Fairgrounds). You can also purchase a license there.

Truck parking on Capitol Expressway

-Jeri Arstingstall & Dave Fadness

Some of our members expressed concern about the number of big-rig trucks parking overnight and weekends on the north side of Capitol Expressway, west of Vistapark Drive (in front of the Albertson's Shopping Center). Merchants were not pleased, either. Parking there is an attractive nuisance and a traffic hazard, as the large trucks block visibility and force bicyclists into busy traffic lanes.



VEP responded by calling the County Roads Department. They agreed to post "no parking" signs and request San Jose Police to strictly enforce them. We expect the expressway to be rid of parked trucks within the next couple of weeks.

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

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your calendar.]

Tue, Nov 23 @ 7:30 - 9 pm = VEP General Meeting at Gunderson High School: presentations by the San Jose Dep't of Transportation on widening Branham Lane; by the city and county on Martial Cottle Park; and welcoming of the winner of District 10 City Council election.

Tue, Nov 23 @ 6:30 pm = Valley Transportation Plan 2030 public meeting at the County Board of Supervisors chambers. (See Don Gage's article.)

Thu, Nov 25 = Happy Thanksgiving!

Fri, Nov 26 @ 5 pm = Debut of the new Downtown Ice Rink at the Circle of Palms.

Fri, Nov 26 @ 5:30 pm = *Christmas in the Park* Tree Lighting Ceremony at Plaza de Cesar Chavez Park.

Sun, Dec 5 @ 8:30 am = San Jose Holiday Parade. Further information/map will be available at a later date--arrive early at Cesar Chavez Plaza to get a seat.

Holiday break

- Dave Noel

The VEP News staff will be enjoying a break in December. Paid VEP members will receive a one-page newsletter/holiday card. Our next full newsletter will be published in January. Any urgent news items will be sent via email to our members who have provided us their current email addresses.

If you are not a paid member of VEP, please join now using the membership application in this newsletter. Grant funds that have allowed us to send this newsletter to all residents living in the VEP area will soon run out. Please join now to ensure that you will continue to receive the *VEP News*.

Vista Park community room furniture

-Dave Fadness

Good news: The community room at Vista Park is being built and will be finished next spring. Bad news: The city doesn't have any money to buy furnishings. (It's

evidently been spent on furnishings for their new city hall!) So, unless VEP gets creative, there will be no tables or chairs for use at community events and our monthly meetings. That means we'll have a building we can't use unless we sit on the floor.



We need your help. Please let us know if you are aware of folding or stacking chairs and tables a white (or chalk) board, waste containers, and audio-visual and other conference room equipment that may be coming available from your employer, church, school, etc. We'd like to have them donated to the city (us) but, if priced reasonably, VEP may be able to raise funds to buy them.

Oak Grove School District

-Manny Barbara, Superintendent

Our top priority for the Oak Grove School District is always the safety of students and employees. We are continually examining policies and practices around safety issues as we strive for the safest environment possible. Each school has developed two types of safety plans.

Emergency School Plans address safety concerns centering around such potential disasters as fire and earthquake. For example, students and staff regularly practice "duck and cover" (earthquake) and fire drills. Each school maintains emergency supplies consistent with a District-wide standard. School building codes are at the highest standard of all facilities throughout California.

Schools also are prepared for such possibilities as unwanted intruders to the school campus. Schools collaborate with City staff through *Code Red* training in response to intruders.

Safe School Plans address school climate safety issues to ensure a harassment-free environment for our students; e.g., not allowing bullying, sexual, or racial harassment.

Currently we are particularly concerned about traffic safety around our schools. Each school has developed safety routes for dropping off and picking up students. We are working in collaboration with the City of San Jose Police Department to ensure that traffic laws are obeyed around schools.

We ask all of the VEP community to be especially careful when driving around schools during the peak starting and ending times in the morning and afternoon.

As always, please feel free to contact me through our web site at www.og.sd.k12.ca.us or by phone at (408) 227-8300 if you have additional questions or concerns.

*** VEP ***
It's working for you!

Help Gunderson while holiday shopping

Gunderson's parent organization is asking for VEP members' support for *Gunderson Day* at Almaden Fashion Plaza's Barnes & Noble Bookstore.

Please consider doing some of your holiday shopping between 9 am and 10 pm on Friday, December 10, 2004. If you present the attached voucher, Gunderson PTSA will receive between 15% and 25% of the amount you spend. Profits will go to PTSA programs, including scholarships for our graduating seniors.

Thank you! We appreciate the community support that has helped keep our scholarship program alive. Please note: this voucher is valid only at the Almaden Fashion Plaza store.

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Bookfair for: Gunderson High School PTSA
Friday, December 10, 2004
9 am to 10 pm

Optional:

Name: _____

Address: _____

E-mail: _____

Present this voucher at the register at the time of purchase.

A percent of the sale will be donated to Gunderson, according to the following schedule:

Net sales less than \$2000, 15% donated

Net sales \$2000 - \$10,000, 20% donated

Net sales more than \$10,000, 25% donated

The following transactions are not included in the Bookfair totals:

The purchase of Gift Cards.

The purchase of Reader's Advantage memberships.

The purchase of café consumables.

*** For Office Use Only ***

Register#: _____

Transaction #: _____

Amount of sale before tax less purchase of Gift Cards, Readers Advantage Memberships, and café consumables:

\$ _____

Happy holidays, neighbors!

-Katherine Decker, VEP Hospitality Committee

Let's all join in celebration of life, joy, and happiness.

This is our first annual holidays decorating event. Let's all decorate our homes to show our neighborhood holiday spirit.

Come one, come all. Take a winter walkabout to view our masterpieces. While out and about looking over the creative and dazzling decorations in our community, choose your favorite. Email your vote to vepca@vepca.org. Be sure to include the home's address.

Happy holidays, neighbors!

Gunderson High School happenings

-Cary Catching, Interim Principal

I am pleased to share with our community some of the exciting events that are happening at Gunderson High School this year.

Gunderson was recently awarded a Federal Magnet Grant along with several other schools in our district. The purpose of this grant is to refine and increase innovative technologies in the arts and sciences. The ultimate objective is to increase and stabilize the school's enrollment, thus creating an exciting, active, and engaging learning community. To this end, we will be increasing our recruitment efforts beginning in January by inviting 8th graders from across our district to attend informational meetings and tours on site.

Gunderson's leadership class has been actively engaged in beautifying our campus. Most of the work has been to the internal open areas, including cleaning out trash and dead brush, prepping the ground for planting, and creating student-centered areas for posting informational flyers and bulletins. They've also applied for two grants through the City of San Jose in an effort to increase these beautification opportunities.

Keep your eyes open for progress on Gunderson's football stadium/track/soccer field. We anticipate that this work will be completed very soon, though unfortunately, not before the football season ended (there's always soccer and track though!). Once the fields are

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done, we would like to hold a celebration. If you have any thoughts about this, please contact cary_catching@sjusd.org.

Gunderson is proud to announce that it will stage a distinctly Santa Claran interpretation of Anton Chekhov's *The Cherry Orchard* this fall. This Russian classic, celebrating its centennial in 2004, depicts a Russian landscape drastically changed by an emerging merchant class, urban sprawl, and expansion of the railways. The story takes place on a once secluded cherry orchard whose agricultural significance has been eclipsed by the value of its acreage.

Gunderson's Drama Club has chosen to revisit this play and set it in the postwar Santa Clara Valley, most commonly written about by local Nobel Laureate John Steinbeck. Studying on a campus that was once orchards and is now connected to downtown San Jose by light-rail, Gunderson students have undertaken the task of revisiting those heady days when even the most idyllic locales, including our own, are intruded upon by change.

The Cherry Orchard will play December 8, 9, 10, and 11 at 7 p.m. in the newly remodeled theater on our campus. For questions, please contact kevin_kaye@sjusd.org.

Finally, the *Gunderson Foundation* is in the process of planning a district-wide Multimedia Faire to be held at Gunderson in the spring. All interested community members are invited to attend a planning meeting on Tuesday, December 7 at 6 p.m. in the Gunderson Faculty Lounge. Contact cary_catching@sjusd.org for more information.

Winter Concert at Gunderson High

-Ryan Roark, Music Director

An enjoyable, one-hour Winter Concert program will feature two sparkling choirs, a swingin' jazz band, and some very talented soloists. Musical genres range from jazz to classical, including holiday favorites.



Date = Thursday, December 16 @ 7:30 p.m.

Tickets = \$3 at the door (no advance sales)

CD recording = \$8

Admission plus CD = \$10

Contact Person = Ryan Roark

Telephone = (408) 535-6340

Be sure to attend this concert.

Local business complaints

There are very few state or local laws governing a business' operating practices or policies. For instance, no businesses are required to issue rain checks or to accept returned merchandise, unless defective. Businesses are free to set their own return policies, but should have these policies posted if the business doesn't offer a full cash refund.

It's smart shopping to ask about the store's return policy before making any purchase. If a clerk or manager offers you an exception from the posted rules, be sure to get it in writing before leaving the store.

To file a complaint about a local business in Santa Clara County, including false advertising problems, write to the Consumer Protection Unit of the Santa Clara County District Attorney, 70 W. Hedding Street, San Jose, CA 95110. As may be appropriate, you can also check with Consumer Mediation Services, (408) 792-2880, or Small Claims Court Advisory, (408) 792-2881.

Complaints may also be registered with the local Better Business Bureau. In Santa Clara Valley, the BBB is at 2100 Forest Avenue, San Jose, CA 95128. (408) 278-7400. A wise shopper will contact the BBB before patronizing a local business to see if there's a pattern of complaints.

[Ed. Note: This article was adapted from the San Jose Mercury-News' Action Line.]

Salts in potting soil steal nutrients

-John marks, VEP's Green Gardener

If you have planted strawberries or other crops in a barrel, you may notice the berries getting small, or the leaves turning brown. This may happen even though you water frequently and feed with *Miracle-Gro* and sulfate of ammonia.



The problem is that many potting soils are high in salts. This causes burning of leaf edges. It will also lock up nutrients, and plants slowly starve, as indicated by small berries. Try mixing two to three tablespoons of vinegar in two gallons of water and pouring the solution into the planter. This will counteract salt buildup in the soil.

A couple of days later, pour a solution of *Miracle-Gro*

and water into the planter. You will have to live with the burned edges for a while, but if you do this a couple of times a year, whatever you are growing will do better.

Veggies that lose moisture

Although your harvest of cucumbers and other fleshy veggies yield large, healthy, and impressive results, they may lose their firmness, becoming limp after six to ten hours. Cleaning and storing at refrigerated temperature will not help.

The problem is that all fleshy vegetables lose moisture within a few hours after picking, some faster than others. Commercial growers cover their crops in wax right after picking to retain moisture before sending them to market. You are doing nothing wrong, it's just the nature of the veggies; just don't pick them unless you intend to eat them soon after.

Trimming Rhododendrons

Rhododendrons that are planted in the yard may become overgrown need to be pruned in the winter or early spring. But severe pruning without preparation can destroy blooms next year.



To rejuvenate an old, leggy Rhododendron, first feed and water the plant in the summer so that it is strong and healthy, and able to withstand severe pruning. In the winter cut one-third of the old limbs to 8-12 inches from the ground.

The following year, cut off an additional one-third of the old stems; a year later cut down the last third. This may take about four years, but you'll retain some flowers every year.

Try to find old growth rings and make your cuts above one of these. New shoots will emerge from these growth rings. If the Rhododendron is too old and growth rings are not visible because of the bark, make the cuts 12 inches from the ground and hope that new growth will emerge from the hidden growth rings. Or, you can severely prune the entire shrub now, but it may be a few years before any flowers are seen.

Bulbs go in NOW

There is still time to plant spring-flowering bulbs. Most nurseries and garden centers remain well-stocked with dozens of colorful selections. To help you plan your garden, check out www.bulb.com for a wealth of information and tips about how to choose, plant, and otherwise care for your bulbs. That site is maintained by the Netherlands Flower Bulb Info Center (where else?).



Once you get those bulbs in the ground, give yourself a little instant gratification by planting winter-color annuals on top. Good choices for sunny spots include pansies, violas, primrose and Iceland Poppies. For shady or dappled spots, try cineraria and cyclamen.

I have a lot of blue iris bulbs, for free to anyone interested. Just call John @ 629-6433 to get directions to my house.

VEP, A friend in need!

Help wanted: pruning Chynoweth palms

-Dave Fadness

We prune the 161 palm trees on Chynoweth Avenue in January and July each year. This job typically takes approximately 24 man-hours. My side-kick Frank won't be able to help me this coming January, so I'm asking for volunteers.



This job can be scheduled around whatever days/times are convenient for those involved. My preference is for the weekends of January 8-9, or 15-16. Needless to say, if there are more than two of us, we'll be able to finish in one weekend. Volunteer for as much time as you can give. Any amount of help you can offer will be appreciated; it's okay if you have to leave before the job is done.

It's nice and cool in January, so mornings or afternoons qualify. We can work as a team or individually. A two-person team is best, as one person can cut fronds while the other stacks them in piles.

Traffic is a potential hazard, so we don't want youngsters working in the street median without parental supervision.

What's needed? If done by hand, a sharp, aggressive, saber-type pruning saw works best. If we can get a motor-generator and reciprocating electric saw donated, that's even better. Now that some of the trees are getting taller, we also use a ladder, which I can supply. Gardening gloves (VEP can supply these) and a long-sleeved shirt are a MUST, as the saw-toothed edges on fronds can otherwise result in nasty scratches and puncture wounds.

I will do a quick training demonstration the first day. We cut fronds close so they won't impede future pruning and the tree trunks look uniformly like pineapples.

Give me a call at 578-6428 (day or evening) if you can help with time or equipment. Thank you!

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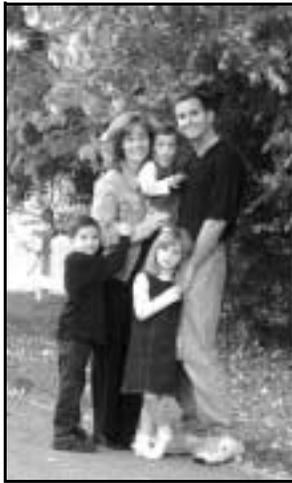
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Weddings and Special Events



Photography by Jeri Arstingstall

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VEP membership

VEP membership has increased as a result of a City of San Jose CAP grant that has allowed us to mail our newsletters to *everyone* who lives in our traditional membership area (see map on mailing page). We now have an all-time record of 558 paid member households—and offer our sincere thanks to all who have joined.

Please use the following form to join VEP through 2005.

**** Membership Application ****

Note: none of the following information will be sold to or be 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 \$20 check to VEP, P.O. Box 18111, San Jose 95158. Thank you!

VEP Community Service Awards

- Dave Noel

20 years ago, VEP began rewarding graduating high

school seniors with exceptional volunteer service stipends for post-secondary or vocational training.

If you know a high school senior with an outstanding volunteer record, make sure he or she knows 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.

Our 2005 Community Service Award application forms will be released in February. The forms should be nearly identical to our 2004 forms which are available on our website, www.vepca.org. The application deadline will be April 26, 2005.

If you have any other questions, or would like to volunteer to help the Community Service Awards committee, contact me at (408) 266-7183 or DNoel1234@aol.com.

Traffic congestion standards under fire

-Dave Fadness

In 1975, the citizens insisted on imposing a traffic level of service (LOS) standard in San Jose's original General Plan as a way to assure that urban development did not diminish our quality of life. That requirement is also reflected in adopted city council policy.

Simply stated, the impact of any project that reduces the traffic level of service below LOS "D" must be mitigated. LOS ranges from "A" (no congestion or delays) to "F" (gridlock). LOS D exists when an intersection is operating at 90% of its theoretical capacity, or when average stopped delay times range from 28 to 37 seconds.

This LOS standard typically shifts the cost of transportation improvements onto new growth. In effect, it provides the city with a revenue source for the infrastructure needed to support growth, protecting urban services for existing (and new) residents. It also gives the city the ability to deny or reduce their size of projects that would violate this measurable congestion standard.



Politicians typically do NOT like measurable standards. Maintaining LOS D has been a contentious issue from day one.

Under constant pressure from developers, exceptions have frequently been allowed. Downtown and the Golden Triangle industrial areas, for example, have been designated as special development zones, wherein LOS D is either waived or based on overall averages. This means that development can go on unimpeded despite traffic gridlock.

And the council is NOT prohibited from a finding of "overriding need" for a given project, thereby side-

stepping LOS D policy. This, in part, may answer your question why traffic seems to keep getting worse, despite having a LOS D requirement on the books for 29 years. It's policy, not law.

Now being proposed is a sweeping change in traffic LOS policy. It's an outgrowth of what is now being heralded as "Smart Growth", and is based upon the newly-launched theory that maintaining LOS D is itself a negative impact. In order to swallow this, you have to accept several assumptions: (1) that development (especially high-density development) absolutely **MUST** occur, (2) that the council can't say "no", (3) that the only way to mitigate traffic is to build wider streets and roads, (4) that arterial street traffic will somehow dissipate without impact via adjacent neighborhood streets, or (5) that many of us will eventually just give up our cars and start using public transit.



Specifically, under the proposed new policy, thirteen major intersections in San Jose will be "protected" from the LOS D requirement. Others may be added at council's discretion after an environmental impact report (EIR). Exceptions may also be applied to other impacted intersections if traffic mitigation means limiting right-of-way for public transit, reducing pedestrian walks or bicycle lanes, or imposing 'undesirable aesthetic' changes.

A draft EIR has been prepared to evaluate the effects of this proposed policy change. It is available for public review; call Environmental Project Manager Janis Moore at (408)277-4576 or email janis.moore@sanjoseca.gov and ask for a copy or information on "Modifications to the City of San Jose's Transportation Impact Policy."

To allow time for public input, the city has extended its EIR comments deadline and hearing schedule, as follows:

- December 2 = Community meeting in the evening (time to be announced) in the council chambers at city hall;

- December 6 = Deadline for written comments on the EIR (close of business day);
- January 26, 2005 = Planning Commission meeting (time to be announced) in the council chambers at city hall; recommendation to city council;
- February 15, 2005 = City Council meeting (time to be announced); final decision on policy.

Watch for time/date announcements in the Mercury-News. We will attempt to get update VEP members via email. We plan to write a formal response and will post it on our website, www.vepca.org.

Capitol Expressway median trees

Trees in the Capitol Expressway median, Snell to Narvaez were trimmed recently by our volunteer *phantom pruner* (not by the County).



The presence of overgrowth, heavy masses of olive-like fruit, and strong winds during an October storm combined to break limbs on many of these sadly neglected trees. Two newly-planted trees east of Vistapark Drive had also been struck by an automobile.

Pinn Brothers Construction (*Bella Villagio*) is in the final process of obtaining permits from County Roads to complete their work, planting trees and applying wood-chip mulch to the median, from the Snell end to Copperfield Drive. They will also take on maintenance. This is being done at the request of VEP.

VEP history in a nut shell: 1996 – 1999

-Greg West

The following is another in a series of summaries of VEP history taken from our newsletter archives. This summary covers 1996 to 1999. VEP is scanning archived newsletters and making them available on-line at the VEP web site www.vepca.org.

1996 New City Councilmember **Pat Dando** proposes using the competitive process as a tool to provide better city service at lower cost. City proposes 4-phase development of Vista Park. \$250K Phase I ground breaking occurs in May.

Pac Bell rolls out plan to wire the neighborhood with fiber optic cable at January meeting. VEP plants an additional 120 palm trees in the Chynoweth median in March. City imposes fines of \$50 to \$75 for putting yard waste out more than 24 hours before pick-up. VEP opposes \$4.45M city subsidy for Eden affordable housing project at Ohlone-Chynoweth light rail station after finding out that this project is planned in addition to the Bridge housing project (not opposed by VEP) at the corner of Chynoweth and Winfield. Costco opens in Almaden Plaza. Dando calls for better community out-

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reach for housing projects.

Parkview Valley and Echo Valley developer, **Ed Rosenbaum**, dies. VEP election forum features pro and con speakers for nine ballot measures, three each from the city, county, and state.

1997 Councilmember Dando speaks at January meeting. VEP co-hosts county supervisorial election forum with AVCA, Pinehurst, and Thousand Oaks. City recognizes VEP as an Outstanding Volunteer Group. VEP begins 1997 with about \$3800 in its treasury.

Remember when...

City passes less restrictive "group home" ordinance to conform with State law. Earthquake insurance increases 3x over previous year. VEP celebrates Vista Park Grand Opening (completion of Phase I development) in May. VEP has first Dumpster Day in conjunction with city, ridding the area of 810 cubic yards of junk. VEP Vice President, **Mark Schoenberg** put VEP on the World Wide Web.

City Planning Commission and City Council approve (7:3) Eden Housing Project despite VEP protest. Newly elected County Supervisor, **Don Gage**, speaks at May meeting. **Jake DeHaeseleer** and **Josie Supencheck** named District 10 Outstanding Volunteers of the Year. **Andrew Hitchcock** (Gunderson) and **Saul Verduzco** (Hill) win \$750 VEP Community Service Awards. Past VEP president, **Sally Hess** graduates Summa Cum Laude from San Jose State. VEP begins lobbying for completion of Parkview 3 Park. 2nd term VEP President **Jane Elkins** moves from VEP; VEP secretary, **Jasmine Ocegueda** steps in to fill her spot.

Assisted Senior Living facility plan for Vista Park Drive and Branham presented at September meeting. VEP endorses plan. Lester property park plan shared with VEP at October meeting; wins overwhelming VEP endorsement.

1998 California deregulates electricity. Parkview 3 Park gets new playground equipment. Mercury News writer, **Gary "Mr. Roadshow" Richards** speaks at February meeting. City considers changes in parkland dedication fees. San Jose Airport Traffic Relief Initiative placed on ballot, to force traffic and transit improvements before airport improvements are completed; sponsors negotiate traffic relief measures with city and actively campaign against the initiative.

VEP, Pinehurst, and Thousand Oaks co-sponsor Mayoral Candidates forum with candidates **Ron Gonzales**, **Kathy Napoli**, **Bill Chew**, and **Pat Dando**. VEP opposes building of a bridge over the Chynoweth percolation ponds to mitigate traffic for a proposed high density housing and retail Arcadia development at Almaden and Chynoweth; Planning Commission (5:0) approves project EIR.

Jill Carter and **Jay West**, both of Gunderson win \$750 CSAs; Hill submitted no nominees. Nine Gunderson seniors selected for the Santa Clara County Youth Hall of Fame. VEP negotiates deal with property owner to leave a perimeter of walnut trees at Vistapark and Branham. VEP member **Gay Brasher** named SJUSD Teacher of the Year. City approves 67 single family homes on 7.4 acres at Branham and Pearl (old Lucky supermarket site).

1999 City enacts storm sewer and garbage collection tax increases. PG&E presents at January meeting. The SP Lick Spur crossing of Narvaez rezoned to allow building of two single-family homes. City broadens Chynoweth Ponds Bridge traffic study at VEP's request. Members approve dues increased from \$12 to \$15.

State Assemblymen **Mike Honda** and **Jim Cuneen** speak at March meeting. Gunderson receives \$400K BASRC Digital High School grant. Police Chief **Bill Lansdowne** speaks at April meeting. Arcadia withdraws application for high density housing/retail development at Chynoweth and Almaden, eliminating need for Chynoweth Ponds bridge.

Edith Lester dies in April. Eden Housing receives full funding. SJUSD considers moving Broadway Continuation School to Gunderson Campus; settles on relocation to Muir Middle School campus after opposition from VEP and Gunderson's PTSA. One Hill and 13 Gunderson seniors honored at Santa Clara County Youth Hall of Fame. City enacts \$250 fine for violating yard sale sign ordinance.

Andrew Pew (Gunderson) and **Mariah Rayes** (Hill) win \$1000 VEP CSAs. Muir Middle School designated California Distinguished School. VEP holds first Community Garage Sale. A General Motors EV1 electric car shows up in the neighborhood. VEP endorses General Plan changes to Single Family Residential for 10 acres at Vistapark and Branham; removal of Chynoweth and Vistapark rights-of-way through Lester property.

VEP has second Dumpster Day with *Neighborhoods First!* removing 800 cubic yards of stuff. City approves \$1.6B budget. VEP takes no stance on the Calpine Power Plant after presentations by Calpine and Santa Teresa Community group. City enacts ordinance on front yard paving. City approves low income senior housing project at Capital and Vista Park Drive.

☺ FLASHBACK ☺

This article is reprinted from the
January, 1996 VEP NEWS

A JAR FULL OF MEMORIES

- Barry Wallace

While visiting my parents' house last September, I happened to notice a flyer on the kitchen table. It was an invitation to attend a community meeting concerning

development plans for Vista Park. The fact that the city was planning a total re-landscaping there piqued my interest greatly because, in 1976, I was a member of the first sixth grade class to attend Belden Elementary School. Belden is gone now, and Vista Park will take its place.

In the fall of '76, the two sixth grade classes, taught by Msrs. **Bruce Compton** and **Dan Flannigan**, decided to bury a "time capsule." Both classes gathered various things that were priceless to us at the time, including school items, cassette tapes, pictures, and letters that we thought should be passed on to future generations. I can't remember all that we put in the capsule, too many years have passed since then.

About a week after I saw the flyer, I started making phone calls to Councilwoman Dando's office and to the San Jose Department of Parks & Recreation. I left messages about my concerns with Vista Park and about the time capsule. I expected some mild curiosity, but when Council Member Dando and Parks & Rec Director Art Rosales called me back to find out how they could help me, I was impressed!

In the past few months, I've been in touch with them several times about retrieving the time capsule. Plans are now being made to do so and to have another sixth grade class bury a new time capsule during dedication of the park this year. We would love to have as many as possible of the original classmates of Mr. Compton's and Mr. Flannigan's class be there for the unearthing or our time capsule. Hopefully it's still in one piece.

So, if you are a member of the 1976 sixth grade class at Belden School, or know someone who is, don't hesitate to call me. Hopefully we'll find our jar full of memories!

Neighborhood news

-Vice Mayor Pat Dando

As most of you know, due to term limits, I will be leaving office at the end of the year. Thank you for the privilege and opportunity to represent you on issues of importance to our District 10 neighborhoods and the city at large.

Since my election in May 1995, your support and willingness to work with me has led to many successes that we should all celebrate: new or rebuilt parks, trails, libraries, community and teen centers, more programs for seniors and children, as well as a homework center in every school. Citywide, I have sponsored policies to improve the business climate, promote public-private partnerships, reduce domestic violence, increase childcare, abate graffiti, protect neighborhoods from sex offenders, and address the needs of our police and fire departments.

We have done a lot, but we have more to do. I look for-



ward to continuing our partnership of putting "Neighborhoods First" as I return to my role as a community volunteer and activist.

Streamlining State Government

Earlier this year, Governor Schwarzenegger appointed me to the California Performance Review Commission. After hearing from people throughout the state, the commission recommended a bold plan to re-energize how our state works, to eliminate confusing bureaucracy, and to bring back a true sense of accountability. For more information, please visit www.cpr.ca.gov.

New Small Business Assistance Program

In late October, the *Silicon Valley Workforce Investment Network* launched its Small Business Initiative to provide training, technical assistance, and mentoring to help small and new San Jose companies grow, thrive, and create jobs. Through this initiative, local small businesses will have better access to information and services that can help them hire and train employees, develop business and marketing plans, reduce costs, increase sales, and become more profitable. For information, call (408) 928-1300 or visit www.svwin.org.

Improving Care for Stroke Patients

Together with Santa Clara County health officials, the Stroke Awareness Foundation, and local hospitals, I am working to develop new measures to educate residents and emergency medical personnel on the risk factors and symptoms of stroke. This program consists of two major components: public outreach and education seminars to educate residents on the warning signs, symptoms, and treatment of stroke; and specialized training for emergency medical and hospital personnel to better serve stroke patients. Additionally, we hope to launch the new training protocols for paramedics and hospitals by the end of the year. If you are interested in hosting a seminar, please contact me.



San Jose Airport Report

Major changes to our airport are beginning to take shape. Construction of the new terminal project has begun and, as the city continues to plan and develop an efficient, user-friendly airport, your input is needed. I invite you to complete a survey to help select concessions and services for roughly 17,000 square feet of retail space. The survey can be found at

http://survey.sanjoseca.gov/airport/ncc_survey.htm

New Runway Opens

After several months of reconstruction and improvements, the airport re-opened Runway 30-Left. With two runways again in operation, one will be used for arriving flights and the second for departing flights, thus ensuring on-time flights and more efficient travel for passengers.

Coyote Valley Task Force News

As a member of the Coyote Valley Task Force, I am involved in the process to develop an all-encompassing blueprint for this undeveloped area of our city. Your input is essential to creating a smart plan that provides a

strong balance of jobs, housing, and recreational opportunities. A Task Force meeting is scheduled for Monday, December 13th from 5:30-7:30 p.m. in Room 202 A at 151 West Mission Street (this is adjacent to City Hall). For more information, please visit www.sanjoseca.gov/coyotevalley.

Sports Complex Update

One of the most commonly asked questions my office receives concerns the lack of sports fields in our district. Recognizing this need, I have been working with San Jose Unified School District, the Almaden Youth Association, and the City's Parks Department to develop a sports complex on McKean Road.

The City Council is slated to discuss and act on the merits of the proposed sports field plan on December 7th.

VEP's October general meeting summary

-Ginger Cardona, VEP Secretary

Superintendent **Manny Barbara** shared Oak Grove School District's (OGSD) priorities and concerns with our members. (See their website www.ogsd.k12.ca.us.)

OGSD has 11,600 students in 19 elementary and middle schools. OGSD students graduate into the Eastside Union High School District.



Safety is the number one priority. All schools have emergency and safe school plans. These deal with intruders and code-red training.

Oak Grove has the highest number of eighth graders in algebra for the entire state. The API target score is 800. The district started with one school meeting this criterion, and now has eight. There are 14 California Distinguished schools.

Like other school districts, budget cuts have affected OGSD. Owing to budget cuts and no growth in student population, two schools had to be closed two years ago. The school district expects to lose 600 students over the next three years.

The Humane Society has opened a new shelter. **Christine Benninger**, president of the Humane Society was there to explain the benefits and functions of this facility.

Six years ago, the Humane Society worked with the cities to discontinue providing animal control. The cities would then provide their own animal control and the Humane Society would provide strays, lost and found, animals, which must be confined, or be held due to legal issues.

The Humane Society will now focus on placing animals. Still in transition, they still perform some functions which will be turned over to the new shelter.

The Humane Society is looking to build a new facility in Milpitas, close to the Great Mall. That shelter should be complete in 2 years and will include an educational center, boarding, grooming, vet center, and an adoption community center.

Cary Catching is the interim principal at Gunderson High School. Her updates revealed that student enrollment is currently at 1072, an increase from 2% over last year. This year, Gunderson has 12 new teachers in a variety of subject areas. All teachers are accredited in their subject.

Congratulations are in order for Gunderson as it has just been through an accreditation process by Western Association of Schools and Colleges. They were given the second highest level possible, a six-year accreditation with a three-year review.

San Jose Unified District was awarded a federal magnet grant for seven schools working to become art and science magnets. Gunderson is one the schools to receive the benefits. Some of the money will be used on recruitment of students.

Using Measure C and F funds, San Jose Unified (SJUSD) school facilities upgrades continue. **Ty Williams** and **Susan Davenport** attended to give us an update on their program.

Gunderson - The stadium is scheduled to be completed by the end of November. The old portables are scheduled to be replaced. Specialized instruction changes for measure F will begin soon. These changes include computers, wireless networks, and a new building. White boards will be installed. Stage curtains will be replaced. There is a second phase of field upgrades to handle the baseball and softball fields. In addition, shower and locker rooms were just completed and restrooms are currently being renovated.

Carson - Kitchen renovation is complete. A central kitchen will now provide lunches for all District schools, so Carson's kitchen was modified to install warming equipment. White boards have been added to all classrooms for elementary schools.

John Muir - Underground utilities are being upgraded. Restrooms are scheduled for renovation. Shower and lockers rooms will also be renovated. White boards will be added to all classrooms.

Steinbeck - Steinbeck is currently scheduled to have its showers and locker rooms renovated. White boards were installed in classrooms. Measure F provides specialized instruction needs for its being a technology magnet.

Pioneer - Renovations, including the fire rebuild, are currently being designed. The football field has been completed and is now wider to accommodate field hockey and soccer. Specialized instruction program includes upgrades to the science lab. In addition to HVAC and underground utilities upgrades, all classrooms will also have white boards.

Veronica Lewis, SJUSD Board Trustee for our area, discussed the difficult subject of schools closures. Closures are inevitable due to declining enrollment and budget shortfalls. SJUSD has a \$9M shortfall.

Over the last five years, enrollment declined 1500 students. When declining enrollment reaches a 75% mark, a committee is automatically formed to review school closures. Three schools will be closed next year; two elementary and one middle school.

There are a number of factors being reviewed with each school. These include the number of students being displaced, transportation of students to schools, available facilities, and possible leasing of schools property, among many others. A final decision is scheduled for December 9th. Please reference the web site www.sjUSD.k12.ca.us for a current listing of meetings.



Bulletin Board Ads

CRAFTS: *Artisan's Network* presents a gift show November 19 & 20, 10 am until 4 pm at 684 Tarrytown Court, San Jose. Hand-painted scarves, unique pottery, novel pillows, cards, holiday décor, and more. Have a custom glass bead made on the spot!

FOR SALE: Nordic Track Pro, excellent condition, \$50.00 OBO; Salton Automatic Food Warming Tray, like new, \$8.00. Call Sil @ 224-1920.

TALL BEARDED IRIS BULBS: Gorgeous large flowers, easy to grow, thrive on neglect, don't need watering. 3 for \$1. Dave @ 266-7183 or email DNoel1234@aol.com.

NEEDED: VEP needs free (or inexpensive) but good folding/stacking chairs and tables, a white (or chalk) board, waste containers, and audio-visual and other conference room equipment for the Vista Park community room. Call Dave @ 578-6428.

FREE BULBS: Blue iris bulbs, for free to anyone interested. Call John @ 629-6433.

COLLECTING MILITARY ITEMS: Uniforms, leather, web gear, bayonets, knives, personal items, photos, etc. Top \$\$\$ paid. Call Doug @ 210-9725 or 629-7436.

HANDY-MAN: *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: _____

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" 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 = **V**istapark;

E = **E**ncore (and **E**cho Valley); and

P = **P**arkview Valley.

That's all there is to it!

Of course, we've grown over the years to include the Blossom Heights subdivision and others, including Las Brisas in 2004. But our original **VEP** name stuck, and we've been known by it for nearly 36 years. Some like to think of us as...

Very Energetic People

See the mailing page of this newsletter for a map of VEP's core membership area. We also welcome members from outside these boundaries who share common interests.

Check our website: www.vepca.org

7:30 pm at Gunderson

Be sure to attend
 VEP's
 November 23rd
 Meeting

THE VEP NEWS



VEP Community Association

P.O. Box 18111 San Jose, CA 95158

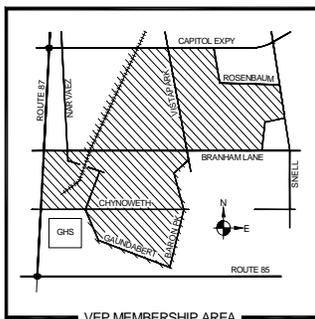
Email: vepca@vepca.org Website: www.vepca.org

Published monthly by VEP Community Association, a not-for-profit organization of volunteers established in 1969 to serve and represent more than 2000 homes in the Blossom Valley area of southern San Jose. VEP is dedicated to neighborhood maintenance and improvement in its membership area as well as to active involvement in civic affairs. This newsletter is mailed monthly to all members in good standing, to our advertisers, and to schools and government officials serving our membership area. For membership or paid advertisement information, contact our Treasurer or write to the address listed above.

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VEP MEMBERSHIP AREA

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 Meeting
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