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It's time to pay your VEP membership dues

-Dave Fadness and Jeri Arstingstall

Annual VEP membership begins in January each year. So, it's time to renew your membership with a check made payable to VEP. You'll find a remit envelop in this newsletter. Please be sure to fill in the information requested, enclose your \$20 check, and mail it back to us as soon as possible--while it's still fresh in your mind. Simple as that!

In a very real sense, renewing membership is your vote of confidence and support for the work we do as VEP volunteers. Yes, we get an occasional "thank you," but proof positive of your appreciation is in your willingness to renew membership each year. We also appreciate the nice comments many of you offer along with your renewal—for that, we offer our thanks!

Last year, VEP had 561 paid member families. That's an all-time record. We thank **SummerHill Homes** for paying first-year membership dues for our 78 newest neighbors at Branham/Vistapark (Las Brisas).

We also thank the city for the grant we've used since September to mail our newsletters to all neighbors in our traditional membership area. That money is almost spent, so we'll have to cut-back our mailings to paid members only. February will be your LAST FREE newsletter.

If you enjoy reading this newsletter and supporting your neighborhood, please join VEP. This is our 36th year, let's set an even higher record—and show the world that our community is the proudest, best organized, and most caring of all.

VEP membership is the best value you'll ever experience. Renew today—and ask your neighbors to join our growing family. Thank you!

Gridlock in San Jose?

- David Noel

The city of San Jose is considering a major policy change that would allow gridlock at 13 intersections now, and more in the future. VEP executives oppose this change, and President Jeri Arstingstall sent a letter on December 6th expressing our views to the planning commission and city council. I encourage you to read the letter on our website, www.vepca.org, and send a letter of your own.



We will vote to formally ratify VEP's position on this proposal

at our January 25th meeting. Please be there to learn more about the issue and to offer your opinion.

As of this writing, the Planning Commission is scheduled to vote on a recommendation to the City Council on January 26th, and the City Council is scheduled to make a final decision on February 15th.

The Transportation Impact Policy establishes transportation improvements that developers must fund and build to mitigate additional traffic that their projects will create. While the city wants very high-density commercial and residential growth in targeted areas, some of our intersections are fully built-out and can't handle the additional traffic without either falling into gridlock conditions or sacrificing bicycle and pedestrian facilities in order to add lanes.

We realize that goals must sometimes be sacrificed to attain higher priority objectives. The current policy allows that. Here are the four choices the city council currently has when faced with a project that could cause gridlock:

1. Require mitigation;
2. Require the proposal to be reduced in scope until it complies with the current policy;
3. Reject the proposal; and/or
4. Approve the proposal, publicly acknowledging that it violates the policy but meets the greater good of San Joseans.

The proposed new policy would effectively add a fifth option:

5. Allow gridlock at specific intersections so that higher density developments can be approved without mitigation.

The current Transportation Impact Policy has its roots in San Jose's original General Plan, which VEP helped develop in 1975. We feel that the policy has served us well, and our elected leaders should continue to be held accountable to the voters for each project they approve that diminishes our quality of life.

Besides knowingly causing traffic congestion, we fear that rather than paying as we go, the new policy would likely result in future tax increases in order to fix the problems it would create now.

For more information, contact Janis Moore at (408) 277-4576, by email at janis.moore@sanjoseca.gov, or visit www.sanjoseca.gov/planning/eir/eir.htm.

VEP opposes lot split on Branham Lane

-Dave Fadness

At the city council's January 11 meeting, VEP spoke in opposition to a rezoning lot-split on the south side of Branham Lane, just east of Birkenshaw Place. The owner wants to build two homes on what used to be the Lick Spur Railroad right-of-way. Our opposition centers on concern over traffic safety.

Specifically, VEP asked that the council consider safety because, if built, the two residences would have direct ingress/egress onto Branham Lane.



There are no other homes fronting on the south side of Branham Lane between Monterey Road to west of Pearl Avenue; for good reason: safety. Although Branham is posted for a

maximum speed of 40 mph, traffic along this busy arterial typically moves much faster—often in excess of 55 mph. As a result, safety is a serious issue, both for anyone backing out of a driveway there and for motorists passing by.

As you know, we had a double fatality near there less than two years ago when a car traveling at high speed lost control and struck (and destroyed) trees in the median.

VEP has not been successful in getting more than occasional police monitoring of speed violations. On those rare occasions when speed traps were established for eastbound traffic, many citations were issued. Speeding on this reach of Branham Lane has been an ongoing concern in our community for many years.

No formal assessment of this safety problem was conducted. No specific proposals were offered for how accidents will be prevented if homes are built having direct, driveway access onto Branham Lane.

VEP President Jeri Arstinstall was at the council meeting with a small contingent of neighbors (including **Dennis & Maria Muth, Jeannette Harding, and Martha Kyriazis**) to explain neighborhood concerns. The council responded by delaying a decision for two weeks (to January 25th), allowing additional time for fact-finding and to look into the possibility of traffic calming on Branham Lane. Because January 25th conflicts with VEP's meeting, we're asking council to delay for another week.

For the complete text of VEP's January 7th letter, go to our website, www.vepca.org. Be sure to attend the next city council hearing on this subject.

VEP Community Service Awards

- Dave Noel

The VEP executive board will seek your funding approval for VEP's 2005 Community Service Awards at our January 25th general meeting. These awards are grants towards higher education or vocational training for graduating high school seniors who have demonstrated exceptional records of volunteerism and community service during their high school careers. This is VEP's 21st year of offering these awards.

The VEP board voted unanimously to recommend a repeat of last year's appropriation of up to three awards of \$1500 each; one each for graduating students at Gunderson and Andrew Hill, and one for a graduating At-Large student.

Our At-Large category is defined as a graduating high school senior residing in San Jose and nominated by a current VEP member.

If you know a high school senior with an outstanding volunteer record, make sure he or she knows about our award. We encourage Gunderson and Andrew Hill students to contact their administrators to request that they be one of the three students that each school will nominate.

At-Large students must be nominated by a VEP member. Our By-Laws require that we have at least two At-Large candidates in order to grant an At-Large award.

Our 2005 Community Service Award application forms will be

available in February, and the At-Large form will be published in the February or March VEP News. The form will be nearly identical to our 2004 form which is available on our website, www.vepca.org.

The application deadline is April 26, 2005.

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

Organizers needed for Annual Picnic

-Jeri Arstingstall

VEP's 2005 Annual Picnic will be held on Memorial Day this year. VEP Execs have chosen Monday, May 30th for this expanded event which we hope will become a holiday tradition. Plan to attend.

Our concept includes a costume parade with prizes for participants in various categories, games and prizes for kids of all ages, door prizes, food, and (of course) lots of family fun for all. Our goal is to include neighborhood schools in organizing, advertising, and providing volunteers to make these festivities a popular success.



Yvonne and Ian Reddy provided the vision and impetus for VEP Annual Picnics. As a couple, they've done *all* the necessary work for several years. VEP thanks them for their organizing leadership and wonderful, untiring volunteer work. We will miss having them chair the picnic this year.

We need to get started now. An event chair (or co-chair) and a team of people are needed to share the fun and pride of organizing this picnic and bringing our neighborhoods together. If this sounds like something you'd be interested in, give me a call at (408) 281-1959.

Please do it today.

Furnishings donated for community room

-Dave Fadness

In response to our plea for help, furnishings for the new community room at Vista Park have been donated to us. VEP will, in turn, donate the furnishings to San Jose's Department of Parks & Recreation.

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By way of this donation, we'll have most of the equipment needed: tables, folding chairs, wheeled racks for chair storage, white boards, and waste baskets. Although it's not new, all items are in fairly good condition.



The Vista Park community room will be completed in April this year. We hope to move these donated furnishings in as soon as the city takes possession from its builder, SummerHill Homes. With that, VEP will at long last have a new, year-round meeting facility—with furniture!

Please respond when we call for volunteers to help clean-up the furniture before our inaugural meeting.

Thanks to palm-pruning volunteers!

-Dave Fadness

The weather on January 8th and 9th did NOT cooperate with our plans to prune the 161 palm trees in the median on Chynoweth Avenue. So, as this newsletter goes to press, the job is still a few days from completion.

VEP thanks the following individuals for volunteering to help with this strenuous semi-annual task: **Jeff & Ruth Dobles, Jim & Penny Martinez, Bob Shoberg, and Debra Suydam.** We also thank **Alan Cardona** for getting safety vests for us to wear while working in the middle of that increasingly busy (and high-speed) street.

VEP Community Calendar

Tue, Jan 25 @ 7:30 to 9 pm = VEP General Meeting: Code Enforcement and Action Line.

Wed, Feb 3 @ 7:30 to 9 pm = VEP Executive Committee Meeting (call for location).

Mon, Feb 14 = Valentine's Day!

Mon, Feb 21 = President's Day!

Tue, Feb 22 @ 7:30 to 9 pm = VEP General Meeting.

Wed, Mar 3 @ 7:30 to 9 pm = VEP Executive Committee Meeting (call for location).

Tue, Mar 22 @ 7:30 to 9 pm = VEP Home Improvement Faire in the Gunderson Forum.

Mon, Mar 27 = Easter!

Sat, April 2 = VEP Neighborhood Garage Sale.

Wed, Apr 7 @ 7:30 to 9 pm = VEP Executive Committee Meeting (call for location).

Tue, Apr 26 = VEP General Meeting.

Mon, May 30 = VEP Memorial Day Community Picnic.

Mark your calendars now...

VEP's annual Community Garage Sale

is coming up on Saturday, April 2nd

Call for VEP officers

- Jeri Arstingstall

VEP executive officer elections are just around the corner. We closed 2004 with 561 members, and yet just 12 volunteers do the vast majority of VEP's work.

We have incredible momentum, but are always looking for an infusion of new talent. Our executive board is comprised of a president, vice-president, secretary, treasurer, and newsletter editor. Nominations are announced in March for elections at our April 26 meeting. Term of office is one year. No experience is required—we work as a team.



If you'd like to meet great people, help set VEP's priorities, and make things happen for our community, please consider joining the board. You'll get to meet more of your neighbors, do great things for our community, and best of all, you'll feel good about yourself and have a good time.

For a preview of what we do behind the scenes, come to one of our executive meetings. All VEP members are welcome. Dates and times are listed in our calendar of events, call for location.

We need you!

San Jose Code Enforcement

What is our mission?

It is the mission of the Code Enforcement Division of the Department of Planning, Building, and Code Enforcement to work in partnership with the people of San Jose to promote and maintain a safe and desirable living and working environment. We help maintain or improve the quality of your community in three ways:

1. We administer a fair and unbiased enforcement program to correct violations of municipal codes and land use requirements.

2. We work with residents, neighborhood associations, public service agencies, and other City of San Jose departments to:

- Facilitate voluntary compliance with City laws and codes.
- Empower community self-help programs.
- Develop public outreach programs.
- Establish community priorities for the enforcement program.

3. We initiate special programs targeted toward specific problems in San Jose communities. These programs include:

- Project Crackdown
- Concentrated Code Enforcement Program
- Neighborhood Action Centers
- Community Improvement Program
- Multiple Housing Inspections

- Vacant, neglected, dangerous buildings
- Vehicle abatement

What codes do we enforce?

The Code Enforcement Division enforces regulations related to the following:

- Conditions of an existing structure that constitute a clear and present danger to the public.
- Building Code violations (building, plumbing, electrical, mechanical, disabled access, etc.), including construction or change of occupancy without permits.
- San Jose Municipal Housing Code (minimum standards for safe and sanitary housing).
- Zoning requirements for structures (such as use, location, configuration, and size) and land use requirements.
- Weeds on private, developed property.
- Swimming pool fences.
- Graffiti.
- Signs, including signs in the public right-of-way, failure to have required permits, illegal inflatable displays, balloons and pennants.
- Inoperable and abandoned vehicles on public streets and private property.
- Blight on private and public properties (old furniture, car parts, appliances, etc).
- Lawn parking.
- Early set-out of yard trimmings.
- Illegal dumping.
- Smoking.
- Water waste.

What tools do we use?

In most cases, the person responsible for a code violation is given an opportunity to voluntarily comply with the law and correct the situation.

Once the deadline in the Compliance Order has expired, the owner or responsible person is subject to one or more of the remedies listed below. (In addition to any fines that result from a remedy, fees may be charged after the second re-inspection for multiple housing properties.)

Administrative Citation - This remedy is designed to address minor violations. The fines increase with each offense. For the first offense, the fines are:

- Lawn parking = \$25.00
- Early set out of yard trimmings = \$25.00
- Inoperable vehicles = \$250.00
- Blight = \$250.00
- Illegal signs = (varies)

Civil Penalties - This remedy is used for major violations. The fine is recommended by the City but decided upon by an Appeals Hearing Board. The fine can be as much as \$2500 per day, starting from the date that noncompliance is established. Administrative fees also may be assessed.

Abatement - This remedy is used where the City needs to take action to abate a nuisance. In a typical case, the City's Code Enforcement Division will hire a private contractor to either demolish or board and secure a structure, or to clean a property of junk and debris.

Judicial Remedies - These are used where the other remedies are not considered to have a high probability of success. The two options are criminal prosecution or civil injunction.

Add VEP's website www.vepca.org to your "favorites" Do it today!

Mediation also is available.

How can I use the system?

If you are seeking relief from conditions on a property in your community, there are a number of options available to you:

1. Make contact with the responsible person. Describe your perception of the problem. Discuss how the problem affects you and possible solutions.
2. Attend your Neighborhood Association meetings and get involved with solving problems.
3. File a complaint with the City of San Jose, Code Enforcement Division 277-4528. A warning letter is sent for alleged violations and/or an inspector is assigned the case. Anonymous complaints are not accepted. All information is kept confidential.

High service demands can routinely cause cases to remain open for 30 or more days. These cases usually involve violations that do not affect the public at large and do not constitute a health and safety problem.

Important City of San Jose phone numbers:

- Information = 277-4000
- Code Enforcement = 277-4528
- Anti-Graffiti Hotline = 277-2758
- Streets and Traffic = 277-4373 (for illegal dumping; sidewalk, streets, and light repair; sewer leaks)
- Stray, injured animals = 727-6529
- Abandoned Vehicles
 - On the street = 277-5305
 - On private property = 277-5307
 - Free tow on private property = 277-4931
 - Building permits = 277-4541

[Ed. Note: This article was extracted from a City of San Jose departmental brochure. Attend VEP's January 25 meeting to hear Code Enforcement's Director, Jamie Matthews.]



Wesley W. Terrell

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President's message

-Jeri Arstingstall

Happy New Year!

Definition of *neighborhood*: the people living near one another: a section lived in by neighbors and usually having distinguishing characteristics.



This defines VEP Community Association. We have a wonderful neighborhood with wonderful people. **Wesley Terrell** one of our local realtors has recently become one of our neighbors, purchasing his home near Vista Park. Wesley has been very generous to VEP. He purchases VEP memberships for all of his transactions in the neighborhood.

I recently had the pleasure of brainstorming with Wesley about our newsletter mailing. He turned VEP on to one of our other neighbors, **Denise Simon** with Old Republic Title. I contacted Denise and, in exchange for a monthly ad, she agreed to provide the labels for our newsletters, which now saves VEP money on postage and speeds delivery to your door.

Katherine and **Dann Decker** decorated the tree in their front yard as a present to the community and they loved the response. The Decker's tree stands about seventy feet tall (an estimate from the crew that did the decorations). The star on top is four feet by four feet, made of one half inch plywood, painted, and decorated with clear white lights. There are 1250 lights, 600 ornamental balls, and 130,050 feet of garland. The power is supplied by twenty extension cords. The decorations took a crew of three people decorating, and two electricians, three days to complete. They rented an eighty foot boom lift to reach the top of the tree.

Some of our newer neighbors are not so new. It seems that Gunderson graduates are moving back into our neighborhood by purchasing homes. If this describes you, welcome back! You made a *great* choice.

Several VEP Execs and I put together a project wish-list for our new Councilwoman **Nancy Pyle**. This list contains 32 items we'd like to get done (and help with) in our membership area. To review the list, go to our website, www.vepca.org or call one of our officers to get a hard copy.

Councilwoman Pyle met with us on December 28 to review the list during a two-hour long tour of our membership area. Although no such list is ever static (items seem always to be added), VEP is dedicated to making strides with our new

councilwoman in successfully completing all listed projects over the next several years. Stay tuned, your help will be needed.

Home safety reminders

- Dave Noel

A VEP member alerted us to a situation over the holidays in which a prowler entered her house through an unlocked back door while her teenage daughter was home alone. The girl locked her bedroom door and called 911. The prowler did not steal anything, but went straight to her bedroom and tried to get in.

When the police came, the prowler was gone. Plenty of holiday gifts were out, but nothing was stolen. The police think the prowler may have been watching their daughter and knew she was home alone.

We commend the girl for having her wits about her in this frightening situation, and pass along her family's reminder to keep doors locked and stay alert.

On a similar note, we've received reports from our neighboring community association in Willow Glen of package and mail thefts over the holiday season. Just in case, we recommend you bring in your mail and packages as soon as possible, and watch for any suspicious activity.

For package deliveries, you can consider alternatives such as requiring signatures for package deliveries or having packages sent to a neighbor or to your work address.

A telling holiday poem

-Maragaret A. Jennings (*)

T'was the day before Christmas and all through the house
 You could hear vehicles cruise twenty feet from our house.

They screech as they race and stop at the light
 And roar as they impatiently wait at the light.

An occasional siren can be heard in the distance
 As it speeds ever closer, its volume increases.

As I rush to my window to see what's the matter
 It shakes and it rattles and threatens to shatter.

Our city government has decided to build
 On every vacant lot and each empty hill.

If I open my windows for a breath of fresh air
 All I get is noise and fumes; it just isn't fair!

Can't you help by putting in a thick, tall sound wall
 Or double pane windows so we can't hear noise at all?

[(*)Ed. Note: Our poet, Maragaret Jennings is one of many exasperated residents in the Branham-Vistapark Drive neighborhood.]



School funding crisis

- Jeri Arstingstall and Dave Noel

You may wonder why our public schools are experiencing a dramatic budget crisis when we voted for Proposition 98 as an amendment to the California constitution to protect school funding. Proposition 98 allows our lawmakers to override its

school funding protections during state fiscal emergencies, and they chose to do so for the 2004-2005 school year.

Our lawmakers are considering overriding Proposition 98 again for the 2005-2006 school year. A website called www.SavePublicEducation.org has been established to make it easy for you to send a letter to all California lawmakers requesting that they not suspect Proposition 98. By entering your name, street address and e-mail address into the system, an e-mail letter is sent automatically to the Governor, Senators, and Assemblypersons throughout the State of California.

SJUSD school consolidation update

On January 4th, San Jose Unified School District made a preliminary recommendation to close Randol and Cory elementary schools. Two public forums were held earlier in January and the Board of Education will have its first public hearing on January 20th. The second public hearing will be held before the board officially acts on consolidation at its regularly scheduled February 3rd meeting.



Rachel Carson Elementary, our neighborhood school, has been spared (for the time being). However, Superintendent **Don Iglesias** has stated that, if declining enrollment continues, more schools in San Jose Unified may need to be considered for closure.

Though we are happy that Carson was not chosen, our hearts go out to the folks whose elementary schools are being considered for closure. Randol is in the Blossom Valley/Santa Teresa area. Cory is near the Rose Garden.

After the closures are officially finalized on February 3rd, school boundaries will be redrawn in the school district. It is projected that Carson will grow by approximately 50 to 70 students.

Numerous VEP members contributed to making our community aware of the process of school consolidation and to assist in presenting facts to district personnel on the pros and cons of Carson's closure.

At San Jose Unified's December 9th school board meeting, our President **Jeri Arstingstall** spoke representing VEP. Her speech focused on how our community already lost Erikson last year and Steinbeck has already been chosen to close next school year. She explained the negative impacts on our kids and the property values in our community if another school is closed here. If there are no schools in our area other than Gunderson, a lack of support for future school parcel taxes could result.

We also like to express our appreciation to **Joe Tajnai** and **David Noel** who also spoke at that meeting and for the various other VEP members who attended to support VEP. **Irene Shoberg** attended all the public ad hoc committee meetings and wrote articles for our VEP newsletters and letters to district personnel. She also attended VEP meetings as a resource person to answer questions our members had.

VEP extends its thanks to **Bruce McGuy**, Carson's PTA President, and to **Barbara Jackson**, Steinbeck's PTSA President for their service on the District's Ad Hoc Committee.

* VEP * It's working for you!

Oak Grove School District news

-Manny Barbara, Superintendent

Public education has been at the forefront recently as the Governor unveiled his budget for the coming year. Concurrently, a Rand Corporation study described how California public schools have been grossly under-funded over the past 25 years, and how this lack of funding has impacted students.

Over the last several years, California schools have suffered more than \$9.8-billion in cuts. These cuts have come during a time of unprecedented and increasing accountability. The impact on the Oak Grove School District has been to close two schools and cut \$3-million. Neighboring districts have been in a similar situation, having to cut programs and close schools, as well.

Despite these challenges, I am proud of the work of our teachers and all staff who continue to respond to the challenge of increased accountability and reduced resources. For example, your local school, Parkview, met the 800 API target this past year.



I also appreciate the community support over the years through passing of bond measures and our current parcel tax. Because of these two community-supported measures, our school buildings have been upgraded and modernized. We have been able to maintain resources such as our after school literacy academies, library clerks, and needed supplies. Thank you for your support!

My concern for the coming year and the next is to attempt to keep our popular class size reduction program at grades K-3, allowing a teacher to student ratio of 20 to 1.

If you do not have students in school, why should you care? For starters, good schools affect property values. Parents look to good schools before making decisions as to where they live. More importantly, public education affects the children who will be the adults of the future and will be productive members of society.

As always, please feel free to contact me regarding any matters pertaining to the Oak Grove School District. We are a major part of the community and want to work with you in maintaining a positive neighborhood environment throughout the VEP area.

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Andrew Hill considers charter conversion

-Mike Winsatt ()*

Which East Side Union High School District school has one of the highest UC acceptance rates in Santa Clara County, is the only school in the state of California to meet its API growth targets three years in a row, and the only district school named a *Blue Ribbon School of Distinction* semi-finalist? Some in the community will be surprised to discover these honors belong to Andrew P. Hill High School.

Home to award winning programs, dedicated teachers, and motivated students, Andrew Hill has a reputation for being the best kept secret on the east side. The school's Medical Magnet program is the oldest and one of the most successful district magnets. Other model programs the school offers include the Biotechnology Academy, the multimedia small learning community, and one of the largest JROTC programs in the Bay Area. With the addition of the International Baccalaureate Program, offering the most distinguished and rigorous college preparation curriculum available to students, Andrew Hill High School has truly become a model for success.



The threat of budget cuts from the state and a district embroiled in its own budget crisis has left the staff concerned about the status of their successful programs. Combined with a desire to continue improving student services and academics, Andrew Hill's staff voted in mid-December to consider converting to a charter school, beginning at the earliest in 2005-06.

A charter school is a public school. It receives state funding in the same manner as traditional public schools and can offer all of the services a comprehensive high school provides. The primary difference is school governance. Instead of being run by the board of trustees, the school is governed by teachers, parents, students, and site administrators. The school's advisory board has greater options in determining curriculum, site administration, and school expenditures.

"The vote we took is the first step in a long and exciting process. It doesn't mean that we are now a charter school," said one teacher. "All we are doing is exploring our options to continue building on our current success."

A committee is forming to develop the charter proposal and a vision for the school. Once a draft is prepared, an official meeting will take place this spring to seek input from parents and community members. For more information, contact

(408) 347-4100.

[()Ed. Note: Mr. Winsatt is an instructor and the International Baccalaureate Coordinator at Andrew Hill High School.]*

Gunderson High School happenings

-Cary Catching, Interim Principal

Gunderson and other middle and high schools in San Jose Unified School District will begin student recruitment activities in January. We will conduct a series of recruitment tours which allow prospective students and their parents the opportunity to visit our campus, observe a variety of classes, and receive information on the many programs and services we offer.



Tours begin at 9 a.m. on January 12, 19, and February 2. We will also host a Parent Information Night on February 3 at 6:30 p.m.

Finally, we will be offering a "shadowing" program to allow interested students the ability to go to school with one of our current students. He/she would be able to go to all classes, meet other students and teachers, and get a taste of high school life.

For more information on or to sign up for any of Gunderson's recruitment activities, contact Phyllis Appleby at 535-6340.

Save the dates! Gunderson will be hosting a *Multimedia Faire* on May 20 and 21. The faire will be an opportunity to showcase the technological talents of Gunderson students and their peers throughout the district.

Events being planned include a Friday evening reception with guest speaker, technology demonstrations and classes, an exhibition hall, a silent auction, and much more. Keep your eyes open for more information--and--if you would like to help with any of the above activities, please contact Cary Catching at 535-6340 or cary_catching@sjud.org.

Gunderson's Athletic Department will host its 5th Annual Crab Feast on February 12 at the Italian American Heritage Hall. This year's theme will be *An Evening in Hawaii*. Ticket prices are \$35 for a regular ticket and \$50 for a VIP ticket.

For more Crab Feast information, please contact Suzann Osborne at suzannlosb@sbcglobal.net.

John Muir recruitment tours

-Jeri Arstingstall and Dave Noel

If you have a child in fifth or eighth grade, this is the time to visit middle and high schools and make your selection for next year. Here is a list of the remaining tours at John Muir. If you can't attend on of these tours, be sure to call the school to arrange a private visit.

Daytime tours: Thurs Jan 20, Feb 3 & 10, 9:00-10:30 am

Evening Tour: Thurs Jan 27, 5:30-7:00 pm

In each case, meet in the school's library. For further information, contact Principal Shannon McGee at 535-6281 or Shannon_McGee@sjud.org.

VEP, A friend in need!

Message from city hall

-Nancy Pyle, District 10 City Councilwoman

Many thanks for the honor and privilege to serve as council member for District 10. My goal is to serve you well, to continue the good work that has been started by **Pat Dando**, to get to know as many of you as possible, and to help our district thrive.

My office personnel consists of Chief-of-Staff **Ana Maria Rosato** and policy aide, **Lee Wilcox**. As we finalize our staff I will keep you informed. We moved into Pat Dando's office space over the holiday break and were ready to go on January 3rd, our first official day of business. We have the same phone number, (408) 277-5251.

We are indeed fortunate to have so many dedicated and talented individuals on the VEP Executive Board. They are very committed to making our neighborhoods the very best possible, volunteering personal time to make things work. I'm grateful that they conducted a recent tour of the VEP area to point out to me problems that need resolution. I also received a "wish list" which provides an on-going goal.

What a thrill it was to see so many beautiful examples of holiday spirit in our VEP neighborhoods. The most spectacular example was the tree at the Decker's home which needed an 80-foot crane to complete. Not only did the tree get a write-up in the Mercury News and other papers but the Decker's visitors also filled six bags of donations for City Team and the Second Harvest Food Bank. Home made cookies and cider were available to onlookers. Even Santa was impressed and inspired to visit.

Please let us know your concerns and problems--we are here to help. Future columns will be dedicated to specific goals for our district.

Computer corner

-Bob Aquino, VEP's Computer Guru

Well it's a new year, and it seems like an opportune time to do a few of those little housekeeping computer chores that we all put off because they are not that interesting. One of the problems with not doing these things is that there is a gradual buildup of overhead garbage that erodes performance. Who knows, if you happen to do the right thing, your old computer will regain some of the pep it had when it was young.



First on the list is to clean out your files. Take a look at what you have on your hard drive, and dump what you will never use.

One place on my system that really balloons is in email. Do you really need that letter from Aunt Mildred dated February 17, 1998? If you have a directory that is designed to collect junk email, empty it. Ditto for your recycle bin.

If you have archiving capabilities, such as in Win XP archive files that you hardly ever use, but may want to reference in the future. Archive all your old digital photos, after re-viewing them to see if they are worth saving at all. It's amazing how pictures that were great when you took them don't look all that good after a few years of aging in your computer.

Next, be brutally honest with yourself. All those neat utilities and shareware programs that you downloaded and promptly

forgot ought to be swept out. The same thing applies to any programs that you loaded and have not accessed in a year. If you have the CD of the program, you can always reload it when you need it. Make sure that you remove programs by means of the Add/Remove function in the control panel.

Once you have done all this, check to make sure that your Virus and Spyware protection is up to date, then scan your hard drive.

Check your Startup Folder to make sure that you aren't loading a bunch of stuff you don't need. Finally, when you've done all of the above, defragment your hard drive.

SeniorNet teaches surfing—Web surfing!

- John McCulloch, SeniorNet Publicity Coordinator

Are you over 50 and want to learn more about computers? Haven't tried email yet? SeniorNet, a non-profit organization founded in 1986, offers reasonably priced classes in three San Jose locations and 240 locations worldwide. Classes start every couple of months.



Here is an example of recent offerings:

- Introduction to Computers
- Windows XP
- Best of Internet (including E-mail and buying on E-bay)
- Fun with Google
- Digital Images (saving and editing your digital pictures)
- Word Processing (3 levels)
- Fun with Graphics
- File Management

The cost is \$20 per class, and there is an annual fee of \$40 to join SeniorNet. Most classes are 2 hours/week for 8 weeks. SeniorNet is primarily run by volunteers. If you would like to volunteer, please join us.

For more information or to get on SeniorNet's mailing list, call one of the centers below, or visit www.snscsj.org.

- Vineland Branch Library, 1450 Blossom Hill Road, (408) 268-1073.
- Willows Senior Center, 2175 Lincoln Avenue, (408) 448-6400.
- Cypress Senior Center, 403 South Cypress Avenue near Stevens Creek and Winchester, (408) 244-1353.

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Software makes inventory a snap

-Sandra Fleishman ()*

Did you get a great new digital camera as a gift this year? Use it to make a home inventory to help take stock of losses in a disaster and cut insurance claim processing time, suggests the nation's insurance industry research arm.



The Insurance Information Institute this month added an incentive for homeowners and renters to take that advice: an offer to make inventorying less tedious. The institute's Web site www.iii.org provides free downloadable software for performing an inventory, said spokeswoman Carolyn Gorman. The software leads users through each room, coaching on which items to photograph and how to record prices paid.

"It used to be that taking inventory of everything you owned was confusing and difficult," Gorman says in a news video on the institute's Web site. "It was hard for many people to figure out what to inventory, what to take pictures of and where to put" the list for safekeeping.

The software will "make a home inventory simple and easy," said Jeanne M. Salvatore, the institute's vice president of consumer affairs, on the video. "It will help to speed up the claims process, and more importantly you can take that electronic list and either e-mail it to yourself or e-mail it to somebody else."

She added, "And this way, if your house is destroyed, at least that list will be living in cyberspace."

Gorman said those who sign up for the software don't have to worry about "cookies" that might trigger insurance pop-up ads. "We're not interested in who you are...We understand from agents that this can help people get organized, help speed up claims, and that those who do inventories feel they got a fairer settlement."

Now, she said, "Precious few people do it."

[()Ed. Note: This article was taken (without permission) from the 12/25/04 Washington Post.]*

Freecycling

- Dave Noel

You've heard of Ebay, the auction website. Perhaps you've even heard of Craig's List (www.craigslist.org), a free on-line

classified ad website that is probably the San Jose Mercury News' biggest competition.

Now there's Freecycling (www.freecycle.org), a free email-based service that started in 2003, with groups in over 2000 cities worldwide. San Jose's group is very large, with 2500 members already. It's is a great way to get rid of things you don't need but could be of use to others, and a great way to find things you do need, even obscure things...

Like an old TV, VCR, computer or appliance you don't want anymore, but hate to donate since it needs some work or maybe it's too old or heavy. Perhaps you are getting a new pet and you'd like some free supplies. Or you lost the charger for your old cell phone, and figure *somebody* must have one they don't need anymore. Maybe you're looking for period pieces as props for a school play. Or maybe you need moving boxes. You can get them for free, and *freecycle* them again after your move.

The possibilities are endless. Check it out.

Dumping leaves in your garden

-John Marks, VEP's Green Gardener

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



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

Winter Chores

Checklist: Clean rain gutters. Leaves and other debris will hamper drainage and may promote rusting and roof damage. Use binoculars to inspect roof from the ground. Make sure that water flows away from house at down spouts. Trim branches around the roof line to keep squirrels, roof rats (squirrels are just fur-covered rats) and other pesky animals off the roof. Inspect crawl space after rain for water accumulatil as indications of water damage on the subfloor and joists beneath the kitchen, laundry, and bathrooms. Clean condenser coils or fins beneath or behind the fridge.

Turning Over Weeds

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

Pre-emergent herbicides are the real answer. When applied to the surface of the soil after removing all the weeds, the chemicals provide a layer that kills the emerging sprouts of nearly all weeds. The pre-emergents are easy to spread, but

must be done before the summer or winter weeds sprout to ensure complete control. Products are called Preen, Amaze, and Preclude and are sold locally. Applying twice yearly, February and August-September means no more tilling and no more weeds!

[Note: The above items were extracted from the 1/10/03 San Jose Mercury-News.]

Are Coffee Grounds Good for Plants?

As I have stated before, composting your used coffee grounds, or adding them around plants directly is helpful to plants. You can also get a 10-lb. bag of grounds from Starbucks and put them around plants like pumpkins, tomatoes and peppers this spring.



Coffee grounds are slightly acidic, which helps lower the pH, making it easier for plants to grow and get nutrients from the soil. This should be done in moderation, however, because it takes a long time for coffee grounds to deteriorate. Mix them with other organic materials and use as a mulch.

Watering Toe

to make a great water bubbler for watering your vegetable or flower garden, place one old sock inside another old sock, and then place a piece of brick in the toe. Now wire the socks to the end of a garden hose, and use it in your garden.

More Watering

bury cans, with both ends removed, between your veggies; fill the cans with little rocks. Water directly into the cans, and the water will run through to the roots.

Quick Garden Mulch

Yesterday's news makes an excellent garden mulch. Put down up to three alternating layers of single newspaper sheets, and then lay three inches of grass clippings over the top. Great project for the winter.

House Plant Mulch

a layer of granulated charcoal on top of potting soil in your house plants filters out any unwanted additives in the water.

Homemade Hothouse

You can make a vacation hothouse for your house plants while you're away by loosely draping a plastic dry cleaning bag over a coat hanger frame. This will retain soil moisture for up to two weeks.



Precious Moments In Time

Family and Children Portraits

Weddings and Special Events

Photography by Jeri Arstingstall

★ VEP MEMBER ★

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Friends of the Guadalupe events

Beyond Rakes - A Garden Tool Workshop

Saturday, January 29
10:30 AM - 12:00 pm (*)

\$12.00 members \$15.00 non-members

Instructor: Master Gardeners.

Maybe you have too many tools, or not enough, OR maybe you never seem to have the right tool - whatever the case, the Master Gardeners will provide you with all the information you need to have the right tools for the type of gardening you are involved in. Join us to see what tools are in their sheds and how to keep your tools in great shape.

A River Connects it All - Guadalupe River Park Trails

Wednesday, February 2
6:00 - 7:30 pm (*)
Free!

Instructor: Dennis Korabiak, Program Manager, San Jose Re-development Agency.

The Guadalupe River Park Trails will be completed and open for use this summer, from the Children's Discovery Museum to near the airport. Discover nooks and crannies along these trails that range from public art to a children's carousel. Dennis will describe park amenities, the signage plan, and have you eager and ready to traverse this great park!



The Native Americans of the Guadalupe River

Wednesday, February 9
6:30 - 8:30 pm (*)
Free!

Instructor: Mark Hylkema, Santa Cruz District Archaeologist, California Department of Park and Recreation.

Coastal Native Americans from Soledad and Monterey to Livermore and San Francisco are collectively called the Ohlone, but are a diverse group of people that encompassed more than 50 tribes, each with their own language variations and traditions. Join Mark to find out more about the local Native Americans and their customs, as well as how they used the abundant resources that surrounded them.

(*) All events will be held at the Guadalupe Garden Center, located at 715 Spring Street. 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. Refunds for the events will only be made if the event is cancelled or if there is a waiting list. For more information please visit www.grpg.org or contact Kary Wilson, the Education Coordinator, at education@grpg.org or 408-298-7657.

Find out what's going on in San Jose

- Dave Noel

Looking for something to do? Have friends or family visiting? The San Jose Convention and Visitors Bureau has a calendar filled with activities in San Jose. Check it out at: www.sanjose.org/events.

Another great website is www.artsopolis.com. Artsopolis is packed with info on the Silicon Valley arts scene. While you are visiting their website, you can sign up for free weekly emails with 50% off specials on plays and other events in the



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coming week.

VEP's November meeting

-Ginger Cardona, VEP Secretary

Our last meeting of 2004 had record attendance.

Pat Dando talked about her decade as a city councilperson and working with VEP. The most recent accomplishment is a community center at Vista Park, which is now under construction. As always, Pat stepped up and gave us a check for \$5000 to furnish it--part of a grant she was able to access. We thank Pat for her resourcefulness and for always understanding what will benefit our community the most.



Nancy Pyle was introduced as our new councilperson. She said she had big shoes to fill following Pat Dando. Nancy will continue Pat's work and has agreed to view our projects and concerns first-hand. We welcomed Nancy and look forward to working with her.

San Jose DOT's **Rene Cordero** and **Chris Ching** spoke about widening Branham between Vistapark and Snell. Funding was defined a few years ago for widening both Branham and Snell. Due to budget shortfalls, Snell has been postponed for another year.

A four-lane road is being proposed for Branham. Included are trees, sidewalks, and a center median. The design is not completed and the city is very interested in feedback from our community. VEP has already submitted a number of concerns regarding noise, speed, safety, and visual appearance.

The City is still in the process of acquiring needed property from the County. If this happens soon and everything else moves as planned, construction should begin next summer. VEP will continue to monitor the project and ensure that all member concerns voiced at the meeting or in writing are considered.

The Lester property was acquired last year, a first step in the joint county/state governments' effort to develop *Martial-Cottle Park*. Owned by **Walter Lester's** family since 1864, **Ethel Cottle** (Mr. Lester's mother) first started the idea of a park. Mr. Lester is following through with her wishes. His vision for this park is defined in deed restrictions and cannot be changed.

Martial-Cottle Park will be almost 300 acres, larger than Vasona. It will be devoted to agriculture, similar to Ardenwood Farms and Emma Prusch Park, with trees and berms around its perimeter so, when you visit, you will not see the urban bustle outside. Our shared focus is to get people enjoying the park as soon as possible.

Over the next year, getting funds for a master plan and environmental study will be the priority. VEP will continue to work closely with the parks commission and County Supervisor **Don Gage's** office to monitor progress. By being appointed to the County Parks Commission, former VEP President **Greg West** has increased our visibility in the creation of the park.

Our meeting ended with an update on school closures and covered a few VEP administrative details. (Details available on request by any member.)

VEP history in a nut shell: 2000-2002

-Greg West

The following is another in a series of summaries of VEP history taken from our newsletter archives. This summary covers the years 2000 through 2002. VEP is scanning archived newsletters and making them available on-line at our web site www.vepca.org. Check it out!

2000 VEP Board urges opposition to Calpine's Metcalf energy center; membership stays neutral. VEP execs urge opposition to *Airport Traffic Relief Initiative* after city council cuts deal with *Airport Traffic Relief Alliance*. \$40M in Measure B funds are allocated to completion of 85/87 interchange at Santa Teresa Blvd. First Community Policing Center opens in Oakridge Mall.

Community Action in Robertsville (CAIR) files unsuccessful suit against SJUSD opposing relocation of Broadway Continuation School to the Muir Campus; SJUSD agrees to reduce size from 350 to 200 students; school opens in spring. VEP teams with AVCA and the Times Community Newspaper Group in forming D10 Fair Campaign Practices Committee. VEP sponsors D10 Candidates forum (**Pat Dando, Nancy Pyle, and Bill Garbet**). Oakridge Mall expansion gets Planning Commission and City Council approval in two consecutive weeks; Westfield featured at February meeting to discuss the Mall expansion plans; VEP raises concerns over traffic control and parking.

VEP supports Dando's successful plan to remove Chynoweth and Vista Park Drive rights-of-way through the Lester property from the city's General Plan; GP changes also include rezoning the driving range on Capitol at Vista Park Drive for high density development.



Katherine Decker and **Yvonne Reddy** form *VEP Welcoming Committee*. City council passes "Monster Home" ordinance. "Don't sweat petty things...or pet sweaty things." **Sharon Pardon** elected to VEP Board. **Smita Das** (Hill) and **Nicole Kristal** (Gunderson) win \$1000 VEP Community Service Awards.

California suffers rolling blackouts and high energy bills due to electricity supply shortages resulting from deregulation and market manipulation. City moves ahead with Vista Park Phase II development; VEP forms advisory committee; Meadows and Parkview Parks improvements also initiated. Several

Call VEP for help with your community problems

cars vandalized on Massachusetts Drive in one weekend. VEP requests NASCOP traffic enforcement in neighborhood.

City council begins broadcasting meetings on cable channel 37A. Gunderson student, **John Soriano**, stabbed to death at Chynoweth light rail station. VEP holds Congressional Candidates Forum (**Mike Honda** and **Jim Cuneen**). **George W. Bush** becomes president, aided by Supreme Court decision in close election.

2001 Happy New Millennium! Summerhill Homes buys 10-acre walnut grove at Branham and Vista Park Drive to develop roughly 80 single-family homes; VEP supports GP change for the property. PG&E featured at February meeting to talk about power crisis. Steinbeck and Muir middle schools ranked in State's top 5% for test score improvements.

VEP members approve Constitution and By-Laws updates including organization name change to *VEP Community Association*. 50% of respondents to a VEP neighborhood survey ranked neighborhood developments as a top VEP issue. The Lester property and neighborhood safety and crime were also ranked among the top concerns; 60% say they have used VEP News advertiser services. VEP holds School and Community Safety Panel discussion with SJUSD, VTA, and SJPD moderated by **Pat Dando** in wake of Soriano tragedy.

City redraws council boundaries; VEP stays in D10. New D10 teen center, "the Spot" opens on Bret Harte campus. **Dave Noel** elected to first of three terms as VEP President. Construction of Home Depot and Best Buy begins at Almaden and Route 85. Andrew Hill adds Biotechnology Academy to program.

VEP Board supports HR1486, allowing Mr. Lester to escape paying taxes that would force the sale of some of his property. VEP Board opposes increasing city's GP review frequency to more than yearly. **Eric Espino** (Gunderson) and **Guadalupe Rodriguez** (Hill) win \$1000 CSAs. Espino also carries 2001 Olympic Torch.

Five cars on Chiles Court broken into in one evening. Westfield changes Oakridge expansion plans to include 20-screen movie complex, parking garage, and demolition of Oakridge Lanes. Group homes hits VEP's radar; VEP requests changes to noticing procedures. Construction begins on 765-unit Tuscan Hills development on Communications Hill.

\$400K approved for trail projects including Guadalupe River Trail from Blossom Hill to Branham. **Bill** and **Bertha Rogers** honored for logging 1500 hours maintaining Parkview III Park. Membership approves addition of "At Large" award to VEP Community Service Award. VEP plants 800 daffodil bulbs. VEP protests "negative declaration" at planning commission for 357-unit Bella Villaggio development at Vista Park and Capitol; Commission agrees; city council approves project under the condition that Pinn Bros. complete traffic and sound mitigation, and improve landscaping.

2002 Phase II work at Vista Park begins. City enhances waste pick-up to include yard waste

bins and twice monthly street sweeping. VEP has "Dumpster Day" east of Vista Park Drive in conjunction with Pat Dando's office; 700 cubic yards of junk removed. Voters approve SJUSD (\$429M) and ESUHSD (\$298M) school bond measures.

VEP holds first annual Community Picnic on Cinco de Mayo. VEP meets with VTA and DOT on 85/87 interchange design improvements. City implements VEP requested traffic calming measures around Gunderson and Erikson. VEP and Rancho Narvaez endorse plan to replace "College of the Crayons" with five single-family homes approved by city council. Gunderson neighbors raise concerns over weekend soccer field use at Gunderson, citing traffic, illegal parking, litter, and drinking in public as concerns.

VEP wins San Jose Beautiful grant for landscaping street medians on Narvaez and on Chynoweth. VEP asks Summerhill to work with the City to build a turn-key bathroom in Vista Park. **Tamsen Lee** (Gunderson) and **Yvette Lopez Rivera** (Hill) win \$1000 CSAs. VEP holds election forum covering SJUSD Board (**Aaron** and **Lewis**), 23rd State Assembly (**Diaz** and **Bloomberg**), Measure J (ESHUSD parcel tax), and Measure B (VTA tax for BART to San Jose). Vista Park re-opens after phase III improvements.

VEP member **Gay Brasher** leads Leland speech and debate team to second national 1st place standing in three years. VEP plants 2500 daffodil bulbs with Gunderson students and Willow Glen II volunteers. **Neil Bray** and San Jose SoftBall volunteers truck in 560 tons of fines to finish softball fields at Vista Park.

SJUSD revokes soccer league field use permit at Gunderson. City's DOT agrees to VEP's suggested traffic calming and safety improvements at Winfield and Chynoweth intersection. VEP members endorse plan for Guadalupe trail park on Winfield between Chynoweth and 85.



"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 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.

☺ FLASHBACK ☺

This article is reprinted from the
January, 2001 VEP NEWS

President's corner

-Greg West

Although the Columbine High School tragedy is probably the most well known incident of school students tragically taking the lives of class mates, Columbine is not an isolated occurrence. More recent tragedies have happened in West Paduca, KY, Flint, MI, and now in our neighborhood in San Jose.

Remember when...

On November 29th of last year, a Gunderson High School junior, John Soriano, was stabbed to death

shortly after school in the Ohlone/Chynoweth light rail station by a group of people including other Gunderson students during a confrontation. The stabbing occurred in broad daylight and in front of witnesses. All but two of the assailants have been captured and will stand trial as adults.

Tragedies like this shock us, cause us to be outraged, and make us seriously question our beliefs in our systems and institutions that are supposed to help us keep our children safe, especially around schools. But, it is clear that something in our society is breaking down, and the schools alone can't fix it.

On March 1, 2000, the San Jose Mercury News reported school crime rate statistics collected by state education officials showing increases in crime state wide in most categories and an increase in the property loss per student as a result of those crimes in 1999. These statistics indicate a higher probability of tragedies like this occurring and show that they can occur anywhere.

We need to understand what lead up to this tragedy involving Gunderson students and what might have prevented it so that we can address how to keep it from ever happening again.

VEP Board Members have met with the school district and the city to express our concerns as a neighborhood and to understand how we can be a part of the longer term solution and recovery plan. We will meet with VTA as well. In addition, the school district has been invited to our January meeting as a community outreach effort.

But we also need to understand the actions taken in the immediate aftermath of this tragedy to evaluate our belief in our institutions since the true test of character comes in the face of tragedy.

The Gunderson High School students, staff and administration and SJUSD could have reacted no better in the wake of this tragedy. In a letter dated December 5, 2000 responding to my December 4th letter to the school board, our school board member, Veronica Grijalva Lewis, outlined actions taken by the Gunderson administration and the district to address the immediate situation.

The actions included the district sending a support team, including several counselors, to Gunderson the day after the tragedy to help students and staff deal with the tragedy. The San Jose Police were called in to help SJUSD maintain campus security and student safety in the aftermath of this violent event.

Several local agencies were called in to support the students, staff and administration, including the Center for Living with Dying, ACT, the Garder Family Care Corp., and Right Connection. The students and administration organized and held a candlelight vigil in memory of John Soriano two days after his death.

Gunderson students, staff and administration, school board members, and top school district administrators including the Superintendent, Dr. Murray, and the Assistant Superintendent, Dr. Torres, attended John's viewing before his funeral to express condolences and support for John's family.

Gunderson set up a memorial fund to benefit John's family and to help defray some of the expenses of losing a young family member (again, thanks to those of you that responded to our email calling for contributions to this fund).

As a result of all of these activities, no subsequent violence occurred although there could have been racial undertones to the tragedy, and Gunderson is well on its way to recovery, at least in the short term. And, this, I believe, is an indication of the truly outstanding character of Gunderson High School.

Dialing 911 on cell phones

- Dave Noel

Did you know that 911 calls made from cell phones in San Jose are answered by out of town dispatchers? While this is soon to change, it's good to know that there are local numbers that will connect you with San Jose dispatchers:

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

You may want to program these in your cell phone now. Here is a way to remember them. The numbers begin with 277, the prefix for all San Jose city government offices. The 911 number ends with 911. In the middle, 8 logically comes between 7 and 9!



My opinion: What's it worth?

-Dave Fadness, Editor

What is your home worth? What is your time worth? What value do you place on your neighbors?

I've always watched the prices of homes in our community. Reading those realtor door-hangers is revealing. They occasionally show large differences in the selling price of same-model homes. You've probably noticed this, too.

What is your home worth? There's an obvious connection between a home's appearance and its selling price. A home like mine recently sold for roughly \$100,000 less than market price. There's another one for sale now for \$50,000 below market. That's a lot of money.

You can look at that 50-grand two ways: if you neglect your property, it's money you lost; if you take care of your home, it's money you made.

What is your time worth? Let's consider return on investment: Assume the average length of home ownership is seven years. Further assume keeping a yard looking nice takes an average of three hours and \$10 in supplies per week. In seven years, that equates to 3 hours x 52 x 7 = 1092 hours, and \$10 x 52 x 7 = \$3640. If that well-maintained yard brings \$50,000 more when the home is sold, the owner will have

earned an equivalent hourly rate of \$42.45. Not bad!

If the owner spent \$3000 to paint the home's exterior, his/her net equivalent hourly rate would be \$39.71. Still not bad!

Double the above hourly rates for the folks whose home recently sold for \$100,000 less than market; if only they had known! Many of us spend less than an average of three hours per week keeping our yards looking nice, too. The point is, it really pays to do that work.



A huge added bonus is the pride and satisfaction of living in an attractive home--and--avoiding the risk of having very unhappy neighbors.

What value do you place on your neighbors? Home prices are typically based on "comparables", an analysis of what same-model homes have been selling for in the same community. So, if you fail to maintain your property, then sell it for a depressed price, you've effectively lowered the future asking price for other nearby homes. This is a cruel trick to play on your neighbors—and a slippery slope that eventually drags down the appearance and value of entire neighborhoods.

Most people understand this simple logic, but don't do the numbers to see how a few hours and a few dollars spent in routine maintenance can pay big rewards.

It's not always that folks are lazy and/or simply don't care. A growing number of us have real economic or physical limitations; we now have many older and widowed neighbors in our community. (Guys, if you died or became disabled, could *your* wife do the yard work? Wouldn't you appreciate it if your neighbor gave her a helping hand?)

If a home in your neighborhood needs work, offer your help.

Remember: If/when you sell it, your home's price will be based on comparables. The hourly rates estimated above apply to time you spend on your neighbor's home and yard as well as your own. Needless to say, helping your neighbors is satisfying even without economic benefit. Just do it!



Bulletin Board Ads

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

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.

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.

FREE BULBS: Blue iris bulbs, for free to anyone interested. 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.

A letter from Gunderson's Principal

- *Gary Catching*

Gunderson High School is an *Integrated Technology in the Arts and Sciences Magnet*. We take great pride in our ability to infuse technology into all aspects of the curriculum. As a result, doing an exceptional job of preparing young people for professional lives in Silicon Valley and beyond. As you learn more about our school, I believe you will agree that Gunderson offers a challenging and rewarding array of academic and technological opportunities.

The educational needs of Gunderson students are met in a variety of ways, including:

- Mac iBook computers for all students' school+personal use
- An optional, extended day to optimize program choices
- Additional classes in language and math for students needing to build these skills
- Extensive tutoring programs
- Outstanding counseling services
- Open enrollment in all Accelerated, Honors, and Advanced Placement (AP) classes.
- AP classes in Math, Foreign Language, English, Science, Art, and Social Studies
- State-of-the-art facilities: a completely wireless campus, newly remodeled theater, and soon-to-be-completed video production studio

This combination of challenging academic programs and innovative technology makes Gunderson an excellent choice for many students—including you! We have a diverse group of learners and a staff committed to meeting their educational needs.

Check our website: www.vepca.org

7:30 pm at Gunderson

Be sure to attend
 VEP's
 January 25th
 Meeting

THE VEP NEWS



VEP Community Association

P.O. Box 18111 San Jose, CA 95158

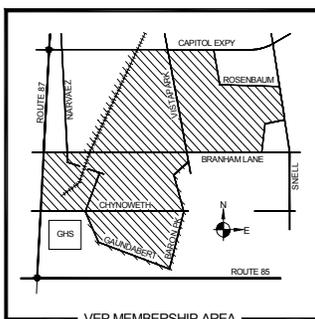
Email: vepca@vepca.org Website: www.vepca.org

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

VEP
 Meeting
 7:30 pm Tuesday,
 January 25