

VEP NEWS

• VEP COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION •

March 2005

VEP MEETING

7:30 p.m. Tuesday
March 22, 2005

GUNDERSON HIGH SCHOOL
→ Forum Area ←

AGENDA

★ Home Improvement Faire ★

Our eighth annual event!
7:30 to 9 p.m.

★ Your Community Concerns ★

Come to VEP's Home Faire booth to tell us about your neighborhood concerns, to join VEP, etc.
7:30 to 9 p.m.

Everyone is welcome. Please invite your neighbors!

VEP's March *non-meeting* meeting

- Dave Fadness

Three-time VEP former president, **John Marks** has single-handedly organized another *Home Improvement Faire* for us this year. This will be VEP's eighth annual event, and John has really knocked himself out getting vendors lined up to exhibit their home products and services for YOU.

This free event will feature a record number of home improvement exhibitors (see page 3 in this newsletter), free refreshments, and a no-purchases-required free raffle for C-A-S-H prizes. Just show up and enjoy!

All John ever asks in return for his dedicated efforts is to have you show up for an opportunity to review home improvement possibilities and to have fun meeting your neighbors. We all look forward to seeing you at our *non-meeting* meeting on March 22nd. Bring a friend!

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.

This year our focus is on finding candidates for secretary and treasurer. If you know how to take brief notes or know how to balance a checkbook, you are qualified. Give us a call today.

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.

VEP needs you! Please step forward for your community.

Mark your calendars now...

VEP's annual Community Garage Sale
is coming up on Saturday, April 2nd

Make your April 2nd garage sale a **BIG** success

-Debra Suydam

VEP's annual *Community Garage Sale* will be here in just a couple of short weeks. It's time to get ready!

The best way to help your old treasures find a new home is to increase traffic to your home. VEP will advertise this event in local newspapers and by distributing flyers around our neighborhoods, but your best resource is you.

Activity brings activity. Get your neighbors involved. People will pass by your street unless they think something is happening there. Try to get everyone on your street to join in. If your neighbors aren't selling, ask if you can spread out. Make sure you can be seen from the street. Put up balloons or signs. Have your out-of-area friends bring garage sale items that add to yours--make it a big, fun event.

As they say in the business, advertise, advertise, advertise! Make your garage sale visible. Get the word out to your friends and neighbors. A little energy and creativity now will pay off in big dividends, freeing up space in your garage and putting extra money in your pocket.

Note: Please be sure to take down and remove all signs, balloons, etc., after the garage sale is over.

1969-2005: VEP's 36th Year!

Membership drive

For those who haven't sent your dues, we're printing a copy of our membership application form in case you've misplaced your remit envelop. Please take care of renewing your membership today.

**** Membership Application ****

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!

Last year, we exceeded our membership goal. This is our 36th year, let's set an even higher record to 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 find. Renew today and ask your neighbors to join our growing family.

Remember that gift memberships can be a wonderful housewarming gift for a new neighbor.

-or-

Pass this form along to your neighbor. Invite them to join VEP today!

▶ VEP Community Calendar ◀

- Mon, Mar 21 @ 7:30 pm = VEP Community Picnic Committee meeting. Call (408) 629-9019 for location.
- Tue, Mar 22 @ 7:30 to 9 pm = VEP's annual *Home Improvement Faire* in the Forum at Gunderson High School.
- Sun, Mar 27 = Happy Easter!
- Sat, April 2 = VEP's annual *Community Garage Sale*.
- Wed, Apr 7 @ 7:30 to 9 pm = VEP Executive Committee Meeting (call for location).
- Tue, Apr 26 @ 7:30 to 9 pm = VEP General Meeting.
- Fri & Sat, May 20 & 21 = Gunderson Multimedia Faire.
- Mon, May 30 = VEP's annual *Memorial Day Community Picnic*.

VEP Community Service Awards

- Dave Noel

For our 21st consecutive year, VEP will offer Community Service Awards to graduating high school seniors who have demonstrated exceptional records of volunteerism and community service during their high school careers.

This year VEP members approved conferring up to three Community Service Awards of \$1,500 each. They will be offered to graduating high school students in three categories: Gunderson, Andrew Hill, and "At-Large". These grants must be used for higher education or vocational training.

Applications and informational flyers have been distributed to the administrators and career centers at Gunderson and Andrew Hill High schools. We have asked the designated administrator at each school to nominate three students and provide us their completed applications by April 26th. If you know a Gunderson or Andrew Hill student deserving consideration on this award, please encourage them to talk to their designated administrator

Joe Ortega at Andrew Hill High School

Jason Vilorio at Gunderson High School

to request that they be considered.

VEP's "At-Large" category is defined as a graduating high school senior residing in San Jose and nominated by a current VEP member. We require at least two candidates in order to grant an award. The At-Large application deadline is 9 pm on April 26th, our normal VEP meeting night. (To save postage, just bring your application to our meeting.)

An At-Large application form was published in the February VEP News and is also available on our web site at www.vepca.org. (If you need a copy, but don't have web access, contact me or one of the officers listed on the mailing page of this newsletter.)

Detailed instructions are included on the application forms.

We will present our Gunderson and Andrew Hill awards at each school's respective senior awards night in late May. Our At-Large award will be presented at VEP's May 24th general meeting.

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

2005 VEP Home Improvement Faire

7:30 - 9 pm Tuesday, March 22

Our 8th Home Improvement Faire is scheduled for 7:30 - 9 pm Tuesday, March 22nd, and this year we'll repeat a raffle for MONEY. Our exhibitors have donated enough for about \$700 in prizes. You don't have to buy anything to enter our raffle, just come, get a ticket stub and wait to see if your number is called. VEP will provide free brownies and drinks. Our exhibitors will be there for you, so please make a special effort to attend. You won't be disappointed.

The following contractors and tradesmen will display their products and functions in the Forum area at Gunderson High School. Exhibitors include sunrooms, windows, bathroom remodeling, screens, plumbing, doors, floors, kitchens, roofing, hardware, cooking, body and health care, pest control, photography, gardening, painters, garage doors, and landscaping. Here are this year's participants for reference: (*VEP NEWS* advertisers are shown in **boldface italics**; see their ads in this newsletter.)

- Advantage Remodeling
- Affordable Sunrooms
- Almaden Kitchens
- All Seasons Remodeling
- BMS Construction
- Amazon Health Company
- Anderson Windows
- ***California Bathroom & Kitchen Remodelers***
- California Painting, Dry Wall, Texturing
- Capitol Automotive
- California Roll-Out Shelf
- Carpet One
- Century 21, Sandra Sample
- ***Century 21, Jeff Spedding***
- ***Century 21; Wes Terrell***
- ***Consolidated Plumbing***
- Dance Kraze
- Day & Night Heating & Air Conditioning
- Electrician, Rhino Electric
- Denny's Magic
- Fireplace Inserts
- First Capitol Home Financing
- Floors-R-Us
- Garage Door Store
- Goyeau Realty
- Gunderson High School
- Holy Family School
- Home Repairs
- Insultex
- Michael's Construction
- Morazan Roofing
- Old World Cobble
- Pampered Chef Cooking
- Pest Control
- Precision Flooring & Carpets
- ***Precious Moments in Time***
- Renaissance Solartube
- Roll-Out Shelves
- RoofCo
- South Valley Home Repairs
- Screens On-Site
- Summer Winds Nursery
- Tupperware
- Varsity Painting
- ***VEP Community Association***
- Wayne Thomas Landscaping



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Volunteer opportunities

Tree Amigos: Help the environment by becoming a *Tree Amigo*. Learn the ins and outs of planting trees in neighborhoods and at schools. For more information and/or to register, call (408) 998-7337 or e-mail dscott@ourcityforest.org.

Tree Teachers: *Planet Tree* instructors teach children grades K-12 about trees and the environment. If you can help at least two hours weekly during school hours and enjoy teaching children in a classroom setting, call *Our City Forest*. Training is provided. E-mail dscott@ourcityforest.org or call (408)99-TREES.

An upcoming event: Attend the *Trees & Global Warming* presentation on Thursday, March 24th at 6:30 p.m. at the *Our City Forest* office, 595 Park Avenue, Suite 100, San Jose. Call (408)998-7337.

For more information contact: **Rhonda Berry**, President & CEO *Our City Forest*, rberry@ourcityforest.org, or call 408-998-7337. Check our website at www.ourcityforest.org.

Neighborhood developments

4558 Birkenshaw Place: The rezoning has been approved by the city. The owner will be building two homes in addition to the current one. Built for the owner's family members, the homes will front on Branham Lane. Public Works' **Timm Borden** will work with the city's Department of Transportation to implement "traffic calming" measures on Branham Lane.

Councilwoman **Nancy Pyle** has also made a commitment to ensure that this happens. Driveways for these new homes will be planned so that access will not require cars to back into the street. The property owner has also agreed to meet with our community during the design process.



Vista Park: On behalf of VEP, **Dave Gulizia** has submitted a grant application to plant shade trees in the southwest corner of Vista Park. VEP thanks Dave for working toward this vision to plant trees there. If you are interested in helping, please call Dave at (408) 629-1876.

San Jose Unified School District: VEP has been monitoring SJUSD school closures and the desire of some Almaden Valley residents to break away and form a new South Valley School District. VEP polled members present at our February

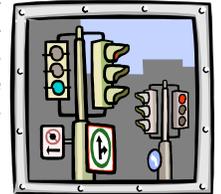
meeting to see whether they wanted us to take a formal position on this proposal. Our members agreed that we should wait to see whether this concept is advanced beyond the early talking stages. Although splitting the district as is currently proposed could have significant impacts on our members, it is too early to weigh-in.

The view from city hall

-Councilwoman Nancy Pyle

Transportation: Moving District 10 Forward
My office has been busy working on the many issues over which VEP had voiced concerns. As a result, you should soon see potholes in your neighborhood being fixed!

Many of these concerns such as speeding on Branham, potholes, and red-light runners were at the top of VEP's list. To address these concerns, my staff and I arranged a tour with Captain Farmer of the San Jose Police Department. I alerted him to the speeding concerns along Branham Lane and red-light runners at the intersection of the Capital Expressway and Vistapark Drive, as well as at Branham Lane and Vistapark Drive. This close working relationship with the Police Department will greatly increase our chances for success.



In addition, my office has also been working with the City's Department of Transportation, which is now studying speeding on Branham Lane and traffic signals around VEP neighborhoods.

Code Enforcement: Working With Our Community
Code violations have also been brought to my attention. Although I strongly feel the first step in solving many of these problems is working with your neighbors, I understand that at times this strategy alone may not be effective.

My office has been working with Code Enforcement on a list of possible violations that VEP members forwarded to my office. As this process moves forward, I will continue to work with city staff to address concerns in your neighborhood and to use prevention strategies in order to decrease future problems.

Neighbors Working Together: A Collaborative Approach
For two months, my office worked diligently with VEP leadership, the property owners, and city staff to resolve the traffic safety and code enforcement concerns regarding rezoning application for the property located at 4558 Birkenshaw Place.

Some community members felt that driveway access on the eastbound portion of Branham Lane would be dangerous because of frequent speeding. My office alerted the San Jose Police Department and the Department of Transportation, both of which will be examining this issue.

In addition, community members raised a concern about weeds in the adjacent lot, which is also owned by the applicant. My office has worked with the applicant to ensure the adjacent lot is in compliance with all codes. We will continue to monitor this site.

After clearing all the legal hurdles concerning this rezoning application, the City Council voted on March 1 to approve the proposed rezoning and directed the Director of Planning, Building and Code Enforcement to work with the applicant to

provide safe egress and ingress at the site.

By working together collaboratively, neighbor-to-neighbor, we will unify our district to create a more wonderful community.

Coming soon: traffic gridlock in San Jose

- Dave Noel

In the January and February *VEP News*, we reported that the city of San Jose is considering a major policy change that would allow traffic gridlock at 27 intersections now, and open the doors for gridlock at many more intersections in the future.



Our city's existing Traffic Level of Service (LOS) policy is currently being reviewed together with plans for major growth in the North First Street ("Golden Triangle") area, downtown, and other parts of San Jose.

Dave Fadness and I attended a 4-hour long city council study session on February 14th. The review process for these growth and traffic (gridlock) proposals will continue through about June 2005. We'll keep you posted.

Our opinion: *Smart? growth*

-Dave Fadness & Dave Noel

It's all about growth in San Jose politics. Always has been. Now they call it "Smart Growth." Hey, who'd sensibly argue against *smart* growth?

It's humbug, a package of gifts that developers wouldn't have dreamed to ask for years ago. Here and in Sacramento, hundreds of millions of public dollars are pouring into construction and rent subsidies annually. Liability protections are being granted, preventing consumers from filing lawsuits against unsafe or shoddy construction. Review processes are being "streamlined" to make permitting easier—less subject to public review. Lot sizes have shrunk dramatically in an obsessed push for higher and higher density. Project EIRs are being watered-down; but even when they're identified, adverse impacts are ignored and mitigations waived, ostensibly to make housing more "affordable."

San Jose recently started "reviewing" its General Plan (GP) four times each year! After 30-years, our city's plan suddenly needs to be reviewed every three months instead of once each year? Doing so virtually assures the kind of urban planning chaos that rampant growth thrives upon.

The latest push is to systematically dismantle time-tested GP growth controls, allowing growth to go forward without paying its own way. Currently under threat is traffic level of service and parkland dedication. To avoid having to say "no" to growth, our council proposes to "protect" intersections from traffic relief, stripping away citizen-imposed mitigation requirements that provide safeguards against deteriorating quality of life. We'll pay for these mistakes.

What's "smart" about growth that destroys the quality of its host? Isn't that what we call *cancer*?

San Joseans must rise in defense of existing growth controls, must make growth and the quality of urban services highly visible issues now—and in every election campaign. We must demand stability, restoring once-annual General Plan reviews. Demand the truth about how much growth is being

planned and how it impacts our everyday lives and pocket-books. Demand safeguards that assure growth in San Jose will, in fact, be smart.

Call/email the city council *today!*

New phone fee supports 9-1-1 call system

- Dennis Rockstroh (*)

Q: I just received my latest SBC bill and noticed a new line item not on any of my previous bills. This one is called "Local Government Fee, \$3.50."



I contacted SBC's 800 number and was told that this is a new "utility tax" that we, the voters of San Jose, had passed at our last election to be effective on January 1, 2005.

I don't remember any "Utility Tax Measure" on the last ballot. Did I miss something? Did we vote on the utility tax? If it's not what SBC says it is, then what is it?

A: Nope, nobody asked us, the People. Probably because they can figure out our response.

The city doesn't like to call it a tax, preferring to call it a fee.

The San Jose City Council approved charging residents \$1.75 a month for each phone in August, and it went into effect in January. Business phones will be charged \$13.13 a trunk line.

The new tax, er, fee is called the *Emergency Communications System Support Fee*. My jaw dropped when I saw my bill. I mean, I argue with the phone company over pennies.

The fee goes on all phones, home and cell. I've got four phones, costing \$7 a month, or \$84 a year in extra phone bills.

The money is intended to improve 911 service in the city. Starting in January, 911 calls made from cellular phones within San Jose were answered by city dispatchers instead of the California Highway Patrol in Vallejo. The CHP will still answer 911 calls placed near a highway.

The city said that this change is designed to streamline emergency dispatch and response services in San Jose. Some telephone users will be exempt. Customers with lifeline ser-



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vice, non-profit hospitals, educational organizations and government agencies are exempt from this fee.

Whoa. In other words, they won't be paying this fee for the phones at city hall. Doesn't sound fair, does it?

If you want to tell City Hall what you think, the folks there are taking feedback any time on anything at www.sanjoseca.gov/feedback.html. Don't be shy.

More handy numbers: If you have a conflict with a neighbor over a tree, fence, noise, whatever, there is free or low-cost help for you through most city halls or county governments. In San Jose, contact the county *Dispute Resolution and Mediation Program* at (408) 792-2327.

Here's how to contact Action Line: Mail: San Jose Mercury News, 750 Ridder Park Drive, San Jose, CA 95190. E-mail at actionline@mercurynews.com On the internet, go to www.mercurynews.com/mld/mercurynews/news/columnists/action_line/ Telephone at 1-(888) 688-6400 or fax at (408) 288-8060. Live Online: noon-1 p.m. Mondays at www.mercurynews.com.

[(Ed. Note: This article was taken without permission from the Friday, March 4, 2005 edition of the San Jose Mercury News.]*

President's message

-Jeri Arstingstall, VEP President

Help us help you. VEP has many dedicated volunteers. We spend many hours working in your neighborhood. Why do we do this? I think it is for the fact that, as a result, our neighborhoods are among the finest in San Jose.



This past month we've seen thousands of cheery yellow beauties smiling at us as we walk and drive around the VEP area. Those daffodils have been planted every year for the past four years by many VEP volunteers.

Thanks to the efforts of **Debra Suydam**, we're now planning our annual community picnic. Please mark your calendar for Monday, Memorial Day, May 30th. Committee members **Yogendra** and **Uma Singh**, **Rose Valadez**, **Dave Fadness**, and **Dave Noel** met with Debra on March 6th to set goals and brainstorm ideas. Their next meeting is set for 7:30 pm Monday, March 21st. If you are interested in attending, please contact Debra at (408) 972-4231 for the location.

John Marks has done an outstanding job of lining up many vendors for VEP's eighth annual *Home Improvement Faire*. We are looking forward to seeing the largest turnout yet for this event.

VEP has been working with **Bob Cushing** from San Jose's Code Enforcement Department to resolve issues that have been brought to VEP's attention. For more information on Code Enforcement please go to www.sanjoseca.gov/codeenforcement. They've already had many abandoned cars removed from the VEP area.

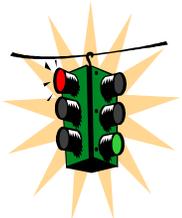
We've also been working with the Public Works Department and the Department of Transportation to have potholes fixed in VEP area streets.

Red light runners

- Dave Noel

VEP executives have been very concerned about red light runners, particularly at Capitol Expressway and Vistapark Drive. We were happy to learn in his *State of the City* address that the mayor has proposed funding in this year's budget for "rat boxes" at 50 intersections in San Jose.

Rat boxes are small lights that allow a police officer to see when a traffic light has turned red from the opposite side of an intersection so they can determine if a car has run a red light.



VEP sent the following letter to San Jose councilmembers **Nancy Pyle**, **Judy Chirco**, Mayor **Ron Gonzales**, and key folks in the Departments of Transportation and Public Works on February 24th:

Dear Councilmembers Pyle and Chirco,

VEP Community Association was extremely pleased and pleasantly surprised to hear the following in Mayor Ron Gonzales' 2005 State of the City address on 2/9/05:

"In the safest big city in America, crossing the street should be safe, too. Tonight, I propose that we... crack down on the 'red-light' runners who put the safety of our residents in jeopardy. ...We'll install new equipment at 50 high risk intersections to help catch red-light violators. ...In addition, we'll put in countdown signals at 50 busy intersections to let pedestrians know how much time they have to cross, and flashing lights and lighted crosswalks at critical locations that will slow down drivers and show walkers where to cross safely."

We would like to take this opportunity to formally request that the intersection of Capitol Expressway and Vistapark Drive be included in the list of 50 intersections to receive these important safety improvements. Of all the intersections in our local community, we feel this one has, by far, the worst red light running problem.

In fact, more than a month before the Mayor's speech, we singled out red light running at this intersection in our "Community Wish List" for Nancy Pyle:

"Work with the County to provide beefed-up patrol or cameras to discourage motorists from running red lights on Capital Expressway at Vistapark Drive. This is a growing safety threat to pedestrians and other motorists."

After we submitted our "Community Wish List", we were honored to host tours of our community with Nancy Pyle and Lee Wilcox, then later with Timm Borden of Public Works and Rene Cordero of DOT. On both tours, we visited this intersection, and both times we witnessed multiple red light runners in both directions on Capitol Expressway.

We are interested to know how the city will select the 50 intersections. We think it would make sense to gather data from our police officers who patrol our streets. While we haven't been as alarmed at red light runners at these intersections, we feel they should also be considered for possible inclusion on the list of 50:

- Almaden Expressway and Blossom Hill Road – the busiest intersection in our local community
- Almaden Expressway and Branham Lane – the gateway to our neighborhood middle school, John Muir Middle School (and also Broadway High School); and note that enrollment at John Muir will be increasing this September with Steinbeck Middle School closing.

If San Jose implements photo enforcement for red light runners in the future, we request that the intersection of Capitol Expressway and Vistapark Drive be considered for that program as well.

Soon after we sent this letter, a fatal accident occurred at Capitol Expressway and Narvaez—caused by a violator who ran a red light.

California has high academic standards!

-Manny Barbara (*)

California ranks 44th in the amount spent per student in public education. However, we are among the top states when it comes to high academic standards.



Many people do not realize that states establish their own academic standards and assessment systems. Not all state standards across the country are equal.

California has five levels of measuring whether students meet standards: Advanced, Proficient, Basic, Below Basic, and Far Below Basic. California students must score in the "proficient or advanced level" in order to meet standards. Students who meet California standards are on course to meet the California State University and University of California academic requirements.

It is possible to meet standards in one state, but to fall short in another. Students who score in the "basic level" on the California State Test do not meet California standards, but would meet standards in Texas.

Many of us adults would not have taken algebra until Grade 9. However, to be considered at standard in math, a student in California is expected to complete and pass algebra by Grade 8. We are especially proud in Oak Grove that we have over 120 students exceed the grade 8 algebra requirement by completing and passing a high school-level geometry class by the end of Grade 8.

If you are interested in further information, you can review the State standards at your local school, at the Oak Grove School District Office or on the California Department of Education web site.

[(*) Ed. Note: Mr. Barbara is Superintendent of the Oak Grove School District.]

Rachel Carson Elementary School news

-Irene Shoberg (*)

Rachel Carson School tours will be conducted by our Principal, **Katie Milligan** on the following dates and times: April 11th at 8:30 am and April 13th at 5 pm. Please call the school at (408) 535-6287 if you wish to take a tour. Also, if you know anyone who might be interested in touring Carson and lives in the San Jose Unified School District, but outside VEP's newsletter distribution area, please invite them to take a tour.



The annual Carson **Walkathon** will be held on Saturday, May 14th from 9 am to 2 pm and will have an Olympic theme. Once again, there will be prizes for the participants and food and music for all. This event is not only a fundraiser for the school but a fun day for the community. Come and join us. We welcome all visitors.

Carson's **Open House** will be held on May 17th from 6:30 to 8 pm.

During both the Walkathon and the Open House, some of Carson's wonderful volunteers will be holding a book faire. All proceeds go to support Carson's Media Center and are used to buy new books for our students.

Call the school at (408) 535-6287 if you have any questions about any of the above events.

[(*) Ed. Note: Irene Shoberg is a long-time member of VEP and the Library and Categorical Program Assistant at Carson School.]

Gunderson High School happenings

-Cary Catching, Interim Principal

Congratulations go to our Gunderson's Varsity Girl's Basketball Team for making it into the CCS semifinal round. This is the first time the girls have had an opportunity to play in the CCS Tournament. Though an underdog team most of the way, they showed everyone that they belonged there. We look forward to going to CCS next year as well, and are very proud of all the players and coaches.

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As many of you have noticed, the football stadium project is almost complete. Gunderson's sports teams and physical education classes have begun to use the facility. The track is also open for community use when school groups are not using it.

Because this was a large investment, we will be very conscientious with regard to field usage. As such, there are a few restrictions as to what is allowed (and not allowed) on the field and track: no dogs or other animals, no bicycles, skates or skateboards, no sodas or alcohol, no gum, sunflower seeds or nut shells. Please take some pride in the appearance of your neighborhood school and help us protect our investment!

Save these dates: Gunderson High School 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. Some of the 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.

Also, if you would like to help with any of the above activities, please contact me by telephone at 535-6340 or by email at cary_catching@sjusd.org.

We can especially use your support if you have services or other items you would like to donate to the silent auction. Some suggestions are gift certificates to restaurants, spas, etc.; bottles of wine; tickets to sporting and community events; and home items, to name a few.

A reminder: Gunderson's Spring Break is fast approaching. There will be no school from March 25 thru April 1.

VEP area swimming pools

-Dave Noel

There are two swimming pools in the VEP area east of Vista Park Drive. One is owned and operated by *Willow Glen I Homeowner's Association*, the other by *Willow Glen II Homeowners Association*.



Folks living in these organizations' respective membership areas may purchase primary memberships. Folks living outside the membership areas may purchase associate memberships.

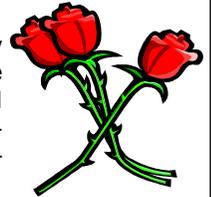
Willow Glen II's pool opens on April 23rd and closes October 2nd this year. If purchased by April 23rd, associate memberships are currently available at \$325. The price increases to \$350 after April 23rd. For more information, contact **Jessie Perez** at (408) 578-3398 or email her at Jessie_Perez@msn.com.

We are seeking membership information about Willow Glen I. If you have a contact in their organization, please let me know—or have them contact me—at DNoel1234@aol.com or (408)266-7183. We'll publish their info in the April *VEP News*.

Friends of Guadalupe volunteers needed

Friends of Guadalupe River Park & Gardens needs volunteers to help in the following ways:

Rose Garden Work Days every Wednesday and Saturday, 9 am until noon. Groups are welcome. Assist with garden maintenance and plant care in the Heritage Rose Garden. Volunteers can help on a weekly basis, or occasionally as their time allows.



Courtyard Garden Work Day every Wednesday, 9 am to noon.

Help with weeding, raking, mulching, planting, and much more.

Compost and Drought Tolerant Garden Workdays are held the first Thursday of every month. Join Master Composter **Phil Cornish** at the Guadalupe Gardens' Compost Demonstration site to perform routine maintenance of the many compost systems in operation. You'll help maintain both regular hot compost piles and worm bins. This is a great way to learn by doing, or to figure out which bin is best for your house. It's also a great way to exercise and give back to the community.

Or join our Education Coordinator **Kary Wilson** in the Drought Tolerant Garden in weeding, raking, mulching, planting, adding signage, and keeping track of the plant material there. Meet at the Garden Center, 715 Spring Street in San Jose.

Office Volunteers are always needed for various tasks. Times and tasks vary, so call us to see what is currently available.

Water Wizard Festival volunteers are needed for this May 27, 2005 event. A variety of opportunities exist, such as preparing materials ahead of time, setting up the fun stations the day before, teaching the youngsters the day of, and so much more!

For more information about these volunteer opportunities, visit the *Friends'* website www.grpg.org or contact Volunteer Coordinator **Lucy Perez** at lperez@grpg.org or 408-298-7657.

Spring gardening tips

-John Marks, VEP's Garden Editor

I begin by reminding readers to pull the tops off any blossoming dandelions in your yard NOW—and be sure to capture and destroy those that have become fuzzy with seeds.

Crabgrass: How to beat this annual weed
The best way to control crabgrass—that familiar annual weed

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



Weed killers are another option. The most effective among them are pre-emergent types that kill weed seeds as they sprout. It's essential to apply the herbicide before the crabgrass emerges from the soil. This happens in spring when soil temperatures are greater than 55° to 60°F for seven to ten consecutive days. Check with your local

extension service for timing, or monitor the soil temperature yourself using a soil thermometer; insert at an angle to just below the surface.

Better apply the pre-emergent NOW, owing to wet spring and early growth. Caution: Do not apply weed killers prior to seeding or in an area that's just been seeded.

Stopping nuisance olives and other annoyances

To prevent them from bearing, you can spray trees such as olive and liquid amber (thorny balls) in the spring, just after blossoms form and before fruit sets. You'll need two products: a hose sprayer bottle and a floral fruit eliminator concentrate.

Ortho makes a *Tree & Shrub Spray-ette*, available from Payless Rockery or Summer Winds Nursery for \$13.95; it can shoot 25-feet up into a tree—even higher if you use a step ladder.

The *Floral Fruit Eliminator* concentrate is made by Monterey Lawn & Garden Products (\$13.99), available from Orchard Supply. Avoid getting spray on your face or hands, and if spray drifts onto a car, wash it down afterwards (it's better to move the car first). I used this product last year and it worked!

It will prevent other trees such as crab apple and plumb from bearing as well; ironically, if used on green tomatoes in the autumn, it will hasten ripening but not damage the fruit. Spray it on the trees when they are full bloom, this month at the latest, to eliminate seedpods. Liquid amber trees have insignificant blossoms in small clusters, yellow in color.

Brown grass and toadstools

As your lawn comes back at this time of year, you may notice fungus spots and brown areas that aren't greening up very well. Both problems can be cured by fertilizing with a heavy application of sulfate of ammonia now; about six pounds per thousand square feet is not too much, but water first, and water after ward. You'll be pleasantly surprised at the low price of this product.

Mushrooms and toadstools are the fruiting bodies of soil-inhabiting fungi. They assist in the decomposition of organic matter. Life could not exist without them. If you find them unsightly, knock them over with the back of a rake; they will melt and disappear.

And haven't you noticed at this time of year, weeds come slithering out of the soil with the slightest tug. Now's the time to scout around, pulling up those milk weeds and others you can spot.

Cold, damp weather will bring out snails and slugs in droves. They feast on the tender new growth of bulbs and winter plants. Hand pick them, or use a bait, but don't let them go

unchecked because they will mow down your garden.

You also can prune now, especially roses and fruit trees.

SeniorNet teaches surfing... Web surfing!

- Dave Noel

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. Typical offerings are:

- 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 two hours per week for eight 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.SNLCSJ.ORG.

- Vineland Branch Library, 1450 Blossom Hill Road, (408) 268-1703.
- Willows Senior Center, 2175 Lincoln Ave, (408) 448-6400
- Cypress Senior Center, 403 South Cypress Ave near Stevens Creek and Winchester Blvd, (408) 244-1353

Highlights of VEP's February meeting

-Ginger Cardona, VEP Secretary

More than 70 people attended VEP's February meeting, setting another record. Here's an overview of what took place that night.

Captain **Jack Farmer** oversees our area of the city for the San Jose Police Department. Sergeant **Larry McGrady** is in charge of the swing shift here. Both officers attended and spoke.



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Almaden and Coyote Valleys.

Captain Farmer announced that a new police substation will be built on a portion of the old Cottle Road IBM site. This substation will allow officers to report directly and do bookings, which minimizes costly commute time to/from police headquarters downtown. The substation will be complete with detectives and a holding center. It will be operational seven days a week, twenty-four hours a day, starting in the spring of 2008.

In addition to the substation, another new item is equipping patrol cars with a map of each school. With a touch of a button, the officer will see a full diagram of the schools so they will know right where to go when called upon.

If you would like to view crime statistics, see e-mail addresses, or review the *Megan's Law* website for our area, you can go to www.sjpd.org. Captain Farmer can be reached at 227-5530. Sergeant Larry McGrady's cell phone number is 655-4744.

There were many questions regarding SJPD's use of tasers.

Almaden Youth Association (AYA) is working to create playing fields for youth soccer, baseball, and softball. AYA was revived in 2002 with the mission of handling the lack of sports fields and improving the condition of existing fields in San Jose.



Dan Kennedy and **Dan Smyth** were there to discuss AYA's plans for sports facilities on a 35-acre portion of a 77-acre school district owned site in Almaden Valley. Because this property has been set aside for a future school, its use for sports fields can only be interim.

Instead of permanent structures, trailers may be used for snack shacks and portable bathrooms will be brought in for games, consistent with an interim use. The site will also be gated and limited to youths. Adult leagues will not have access. With roadway improvements and generous parking, they will need five million dollars. Raising this money will be done in a variety of ways, including corporate donations and children holding carwashes.

Gunderson's Interim Principal **Cary Catching** was there to update everyone on the school's sports fields. Improvements there will include moving and updating the baseball and softball fields, adding softball and baseball batting cages, and

creating two game and one practice soccer fields. Construction will begin in April and take approximately one year to complete. During construction, the new synthetic turf field and front grass area will be used for the after school sports as well as PE classes.

A group of residents frustrated by San Jose Unified School District school closures has proposed formation of a *South Valley School District*. This subject was briefly discussed to make everyone aware of the proposal and to poll members regarding whether VEP should take a stand. It was agreed that VEP will continue to monitor the proposal, but wait to take a formal position.

Guest writers...YOU!

- Dave Noel

We often receive notes from VEP members, especially realtors, who want to get more involved in our local community. Do you want to get your name or topic of interest out to our community?

Here's an idea: Submit an article to the *VEP News*.

You don't have to be a great writer or speller; we can polish your article. All we ask is that it be of general interest to our members and of fewer than 400 words. It can be about our community, our city or county, your hobby, a charitable or service group you belong to, your thoughts about what VEP is (or should be) doing, homemaker tips, or whatever.

We publish our full newsletter in January, February, March, April, May, September, October and November. Our newsletter article deadline is generally midday on the 2nd Tuesday of the month. Our newsletter arrives in mailboxes about ten days later.

If writing isn't your cup of tea, we have many other ways to get you involved in our community. Just contact any of the board members listed on the mailing page of this newsletter or send an email to vep@vepca.org. We'd love to hear from you—and see your by-line on an article in the *NEWS!*

Credit card rip-offs

SCENE 1: A friend went to the local gym and placed his belongings in a locker. After the workout and a shower, he came out, saw his locker open, and thought to himself, "Funny, I thought I locked it." He dressed and just flipped through his wallet to make sure all was in order.

Everything looked okay—all cards were in place. A few weeks later his credit card bill came: a whopping bill of \$14,000! He called his credit card company and said that he did not make those transactions. Customer care personnel verified that there was no mistake in the system and asked if his card had been stolen.



"No," he said, but then took out his wallet, pulled out the credit card, and sure enough, a switch had been made. He found an expired credit card from the same bank in his wallet. A thief had broken into his locker at the gym and switched cards.

Verdict: The credit card issuer said that since he did not reported the card missing earlier, he would have to pay the

amount owed to them. How much did he have to pay for items he did not buy? \$9,000! Why were there no calls made to verify the amounts swiped? Small amounts rarely trigger a "warning bell" with credit card companies. It just so happens that all those small amounts added up to big one!

SCENE 2: At a local restaurant a customer paid for his meal with his credit card. The bill for the meal came, he signed it, and the waitress folded the receipt and passed the credit card back to him. Usually, he would just take it and place it in his wallet or pocket. Fortunately, this time he actually took a look at the card and found that it was the expired card of another person.

He called the waitress back and she looked perplexed. She took the expired card back, apologized, and hurried back to the counter under the watchful eye of the man. All the waitress did while walking to the counter was wave the wrong expired card to the counter cashier, who immediately looked down and took out his real card. No exchange of words, nothing! The waitress brought it back to the customer with an apology.



Verdict: Make sure the credit cards in your wallet are yours. Check the name on the card every time you sign for something and/or the card is taken away for even a short period of time. Many people just take back a credit card without even looking at it, assuming that it has to be theirs.

FOR YOUR OWN SAKE, DEVELOP THE HABIT OF CHECKING YOUR CREDIT CARD EACH TIME IT IS RETURNED TO YOU AFTER A TRANSACTION!

SCENE 3: A woman went into a pizza restaurant to pick up an order that she had called in. She paid with her Visa Check Card which, of course, is linked directly to her checking account. The young man behind the counter took her card, swiped it, then laid it flat on the counter as he waited for the approval, which is pretty standard procedure.

While he waited, he picked up his cell phone and started dialing. The woman noticed the phone because it's the same model she has, but nothing seemed out of the ordinary. Then she heard a click that sounded like her phone when she takes a picture.

The clerk then gave her card back, but kept the phone in his hand as if he was still pressing buttons.

Meanwhile, the woman wondered what he was taking a picture of, oblivious to what was really going on. It then dawned on her: it was her credit card. She then started paying closer attention to what he was doing.

He set his phone on the counter, leaving it open. About five seconds later, she heard a chime indicating that the picture had been saved. If she hadn't had the same kind of phone, she probably would never have known what happened.

She immediately called to cancel her card as she left the pizza restaurant.

Verdict: Be aware of your surroundings at all times. Whenever you use credit or debit cards, take caution and don't be careless. Notice who is standing near you and what they are doing when you use your card. Be especially aware of cell phones because many have built-in cameras these days.

When you are in a restaurant and the waiter/waitress brings your card and a receipt for you to sign, make sure you completely scratch the number off. Some restaurants display only the last four digits, but a lot of them are still printing the whole number on receipts. Completely obliterate that information before signing the voucher.

Being a victim of credit card fraud is not fun. The truth is that they can get you even when you are careful, but don't make it easy for them.

Cell phone recycling

-Dave Noel

Help endangered animals and dispose of your old cell phone at the same time. With every cell phone donated, Happy Hollow Park and Zoo will receive funds from the Wireless Foundation to help preserve one of the most endangered species on earth, the Orangutan, and its habitat.

The phones are sent to ReCellular where they are refurbished and sold at low rates as an alternative to buying new phones. The resulting funds are distributed by the Wireless Foundation to the Balikpapan Orangutan Society and to help several domestic safety, school and community watch programs.



You can drop off your old cell phone and get a tax receipt at the Happy Hollow front castle entrance Monday through Sunday 10 a.m. to 5 p.m., or mail it to: Happy Hollow Cell Phone Recycling, 1300 Senter Road, San Jose, CA 95112.

For more information, please call 408-277-3065, or visit www.happyhollowparkandzoo.org.

AVCA elects new slate of officers

-Dave Fadness

VEP's sister organization, Almaden Valley Community Association (AVCA) represents residents in the 95120 zip code area.

Last year's President **Bob Boydston** and Treasurer **Roland King** have retired from AVCA's eight-member board of directors. **Nancy Pyle** resigned last month as a Director and is being replaced by **Art Boudreault**.

The following people have been elected for 2005-2007 terms:

Brian Bonnifield, Real Estate Consultant **American Eagle Properties**

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- Lee Dimmitt, President
- Ray Strong, Vice President
- Gari Soule, Treasurer
- Carol Hallett, Secretary.

Their biographies appear below.

Lee Dimmitt is a native of San Jose who has lived in Almaden Valley since 1968. He served in Korea and Vietnam as a Navy carrier pilot and a flight instructor, retiring as a lieutenant commander after 20 years of service in the Naval Reserves. Lee also retired from Pan American Airways as captain after 25 years of flying international routes, and is an active general aviation pilot flying out of San Jose.

An active member of the Woodside of Almaden Homeowners Association since 1977 and a recipient of the Golden Gate Award for outstanding achievement in Toastmasters, Lee became a member of the Almaden Valley Community Association in 1997. He served the last four years as AVCA's vice president and its Communications & Membership Manager.

Ray Strong is a Computer Scientist at the IBM Almaden Research Center. He was born and raised in Dallas, Texas. He received a BA degree from Dartmouth College and MS and PhD degrees from the University of Washington in Seattle. He has lived in San Jose since 1976 and in the Almaden Valley since 1979.

Ray has a long term interest in politics. He has been a member of the Libertarian Party since the year of its founding in 1972 and is its past Santa Clara County chairman. Ray has served two years as AVCA's secretary.

Gari Soule has been a San Jose resident since 1968 and an Almaden resident since 1985. He earned his BS degree in business from San Jose State in 1970 and has been a mortgage loan officer for the past 20+ years. Gary has served as a director of the Almaden, Blossom, Central Valley Realtors Marketing Association, co-chair of the Rose garden Willow Glen Realtors Marketing Association, a member of the Santa Clara Association of Realtors, and was Finance and Budget director for the Women's Council of Realtors.

Carol Hallett is a second generation San Josean whose roots to community run deep. She moved to the South Almaden Valley Urban Reserve (SAVUR) in 1989 where her family has owned property since 1971. Her 33 years in the high tech industry have led to extensive world travel.

AVCA holds meetings on the 2nd Monday of each month. The public is invited to attend. Check their website www.avca-sj.org or contact AlmadenAVCA@aol.com for more information.



Bulletin Board Ads

SHUTTERS FOR SALE: Beautiful wooden white plantation shutters. Fit Yellowstone model living and dining room. Must see to appreciate; great value at \$400. Call Barbara @ 365-1114.

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.

CANNA LILLYS: 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:

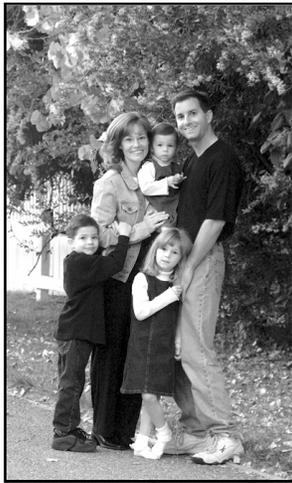
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Daffodils brighten the VEP community

-Dave Noel

On October 23rd, VEP volunteers planted daffodils at many locations in the VEP area for the fourth year, participating in San Jose Beautiful's annual **Daffodil Days** event. VEP residents will be greeted by these cheerful springtime flowers all over our community—hats off to the volunteers who planted them! Enjoy these before and after pictures of daffodils we planted at our brand new Cilker Park (Winfield Boulevard at Chynoweth Avenue).



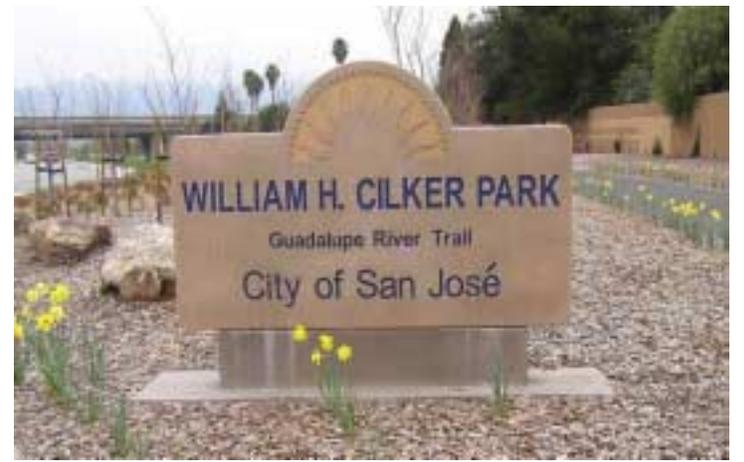
Planting Day



Flowers in Bloom!



Planting Day



Flowers in Bloom!

Check our website: www.vepca.org

7:30 pm at Gunderson

Be sure to attend VEP's March 22nd Home Improvement Faire

THE VEP NEWS



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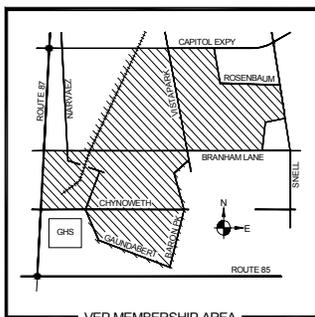
Email: vepca@vepca.org Website: www.vepca.org

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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