

VEP MEETING

7:30 p.m. Tuesday
March 28, 2006

GUNDERSON HIGH SCHOOL
→ Forum Area ←

AGENDA

★ Home Improvement Faire ★

Our ninth 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 ninth 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 article below), free refreshments, and a 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 28th.

Don't miss it!

VEP's 2006 *Home Improvement Faire*

-John Marks

Our 9th annual Home Improvement Faire is scheduled for Tuesday, March 28th, and this year we'll repeat a raffle for MONEY. Exhibitors have ponied up about \$700 for prizes. You don't have to buy anything, just come and get a ticket stub, then wait to see if your number is called.

Numerous contractors and tradesmen will display their products and functions in the Gunderson High School Forum area. Exhibitors include suppliers of sunrooms, windows, bathroom remodeling, screens, plumbing, composting, doors, floors, kitchens, roofing, hardware, cooking, body and health care, pest control, photography, water softeners, gardening, painters, garage doors, and landscaping.

Please make a special effort to come and match the effort of these suppliers to be there for you. You won't be disappointed.

Free refreshments will be provided by VEP. Mark your calendar for Tuesday, March 28, 7:30 pm in the Gunderson High School forum.

We look forward to seeing you there.

A wonderful opportunity...

-Marilyn Rodgers

Have you been considering becoming more involved in VEP? If so, a wonderful opportunity awaits you!

In April, VEP has its annual election of officers. All offices (President, Vice President, Treasurer, Secretary, and Editor) are up for election. Current board members are willing to serve as President, Treasurer and Editor next year, so we need nominees for Vice President and Secretary. Please consider stepping forward for one of these two positions, bringing your passions and energy to the board. We need your help, and you can get the personal satisfaction of making a difference in our community.

Our Executive Board meets once each month for ~90 minutes to plan activities for the VEP community (including monthly general meetings), to act on any business item needing immediate attention, and to advocate for the VEP community. You will have the exciting opportunity of getting to know more of your neighbors within the VEP community, and of learning more about our larger community--the City of San Jose.

No experience is required. We are very fortunate to have a strong team of mentors on the current executive board, and a group of past presidents who continue to be very active and committed to VEP.

So, what are you waiting for? Jump right in--you'll like it! Call me or any other officer (our contact info is on the mailing page of this newsletter) for more information or to volunteer.

VEP Community Service Awards

- Dave Noel

For our 22nd 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 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 25th. If you know a Gunderson or Andrew Hill student deserving consideration for this award, please encourage them to talk to their designated administrator to request that they be considered.

- **Larrie Peters** at Andrew Hill High School
- **Sonia Gomez** at Gunderson High School

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. Our At-Large application deadline is 9 pm on April 25th, our normal VEP meeting night. (To save postage, just bring your application to our meeting.)

The At-Large application form is included in this edition of the VEP News. You may request a softcopy in Microsoft Word format by sending me an email (address below). Detailed instructions are included.

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 23rd general meeting.

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

Also contact me if you have suggestions for changing the awards program next year. If there is interest, I'll form a committee this coming autumn to formulate a proposal to present to VEP membership for approval.

Make your May 6th garage sale a **BIG** success

-Dave Fadness

This year, our annual *Community Garage Sale* will be held on Saturday, May 6th. Make sure to mark it on your calendar now, and start gathering those treasures from your garage, attic, and under the back porch.

The idea is to get everyone in our community to have a garage sale on the same day. The best way to help that priceless old junk find a new home is to increase traffic to your home. So, VEP will advertise this event in local newspapers and by distributing flyers around our neighborhoods.

Your best resource is you--activity attracts more 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. You might even pool all your neighbors' goodies into one big second-hand superstore. If your neighbors aren't selling, ask if you can spread out to their driveway.

Plan now to 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 on your street or cul-de-sac.

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.

★★ Upcoming Volunteer Events ★★

Unless otherwise specified, be sure to call Maria at 226-4614 to find out specifics and volunteer for these events.

- ✓ Prune Chynoweth palms = April 1 at 9 am (see article below).
- ✓ Memorial Day Parade & Festival planning meeting = April 3 at 7:30 pm (call Dave Fadness at 578-6428).
- ✓ Newsletter Folding and Labeling = April 17 at 6:30 pm.
- ✓ Plant Vistapark/Branham oleanders = April 22 at 9 am (see article below).
- ✓ Garage Sale + Memorial Day events flyer distribution = April 28.
- ✓ Newsletter Folding and Labeling = May 13 (TBA).

Volunteers needed for beautification projects

-Dave Fadness

VEP has two projects scheduled for April. We'll need your help to get these tasks done—the more help we have, the less time and effort each of us will need to expend. Please call me at 578-6428 or email me at drfadness@earthlink.net to be added to our volunteer list for one or both of these projects. I need to hear from you.

1. Saturday, April 1 at 9 am = Prune palm trees on Chynoweth Avenue.

We've always pruned the Chynoweth palms in January, but are doing it later this spring because in past years church groups expressed interest in getting fronds from us for their Palm Sunday

(April 9) programs. In case we don't get the pruning done in one day, starting on April 1 will give us time during the week to finish.

Meet at the corner of Chynoweth/New World. Bring an aggressive pruning saw (saber-type works best) and a step ladder, if you have one. If you need a saw or ladder, let me know a few days in advance. Wear old clothes, with long sleeves, and sturdy gloves and shoes. The best approach is to work as two-person teams, one cutting, the other stacking fronds. Stackers won't need saws or ladders.

2. Saturday, April 22 at 9 am = Plant oleanders at Vistapark/Branham.

We'll plant miniature oleanders along the front of the new wooden sound wall at Vistapark Drive and Branham Lane. The city is supplying us with 70 new 15-gallon plants.

Meet at the corner of Vistapark/Royale Park Drive. Bring a spade, a bow rake, a broom, and sturdy gloves and shoes. Wear old clothes and sturdy gloves and shoes.

VEP volunteers will have to remove the existing shrubs, first. If you'd be willing to help with that work, we'll set a time that's convenient some time before April 22. Our plan is to pull the old shrubs using a truck and chain.

With sufficient volunteers, these landscaping tasks should each only take a couple of hours—we'll be happy to have your help for whatever time you can give us, though.

Contact me today! Help us help ourselves to a better-looking community.

Now planning: Memorial Day Parade & Festival

-Dave Fadness

Plans for our Memorial Day Parade & Festival are moving along nicely. We have an excellent committee of dedicated volunteers, working to make this year's event a *spectacular* success.

Although VEP members approved limited funding for this event, we would appreciate (and will acknowledge in our event program) any cash or in-kind donations. Call me for more information about event needs—or—simply mail your check to VEP, indicating that the money is for the Memorial Day Parade & Festival.

We also need to hear from you if you have connections with an individual or group that would be willing to provide (free or very inexpensive) family-oriented entertainment on May 29. Please call me at 578-6428.

Also call if you are interested in working with our planning committee. Bring your talent and volunteer energy to our next committee meeting at 7:30 pm on April 3rd.

This will be a FAMILY event so, above all, we urge everyone to attend on Memorial Day, Monday, May 29.

Potential new benefit for VEP members

- Steve Gregerson

If you are like most people, you enjoy your independence—the freedom to do as you please and live life to the fullest. But there may be a time when you will need long-term care. And these days, long-term care services can be expensive.

That's why VEP's Executive Board has voted in favor of exploring the possibility of establishing a Sponsored Group benefit of Long Term Care insurance underwritten by John Hancock Life Insurance Company. These are individual policies that qualify for

group rates because of the association's organization. They could only be applied for on an individual basis and only if VEP members decided to take advantage of this benefit.

The Long-Term Care Insurance Policy is designed to help you plan for your future financial needs and to help protect against the high cost of long-term care. If you are unable to care for yourself, it will cover a wide range of long-term care services.

This policy would be offered to VEP members, spouses, partners, parents, parents-in-law, and children (including adopted & foster), between the ages of 18 and 84. You and your eligible family members may also qualify for additional premium discounts.

There is absolutely no benefit, cost, or obligation to the VEP association, but VEP members and their families are eligible for a group rate discount.

The VEP membership will vote on whether or not to adopt this new benefit at its meeting on April 25. Be sure to attend to get more information--and to VOTE on this proposal.

If you have any questions or would like additional information, please call Steve Gregerson, CFP, at (800) 972-2880, or email at steve.gregerson@thrivent.com.

Please **slow down** on Chynoweth!

-Dave Fadness

If you or members of your family drive on Chynoweth Avenue between Gaundabert Lane and Pearl Avenue, PLEASE obey the speed limit; **slow down and drive attentively**. Remember, there are pedestrians, occasional VEP volunteers working on the palm trees, bicyclists, and other motorists whose lives and safety depend on your using good judgment and sane driving habits.

The life you save may be your own!

In response to two more accidents that damaged four palm trees in the median there, VEP asked the city to analyze potential ways to slow traffic on this stretch of Chynoweth. Please watch this newsletter for developments in coming months.

★★ VEP Community Calendar ★★

Sat, Mar 25 @ 5:30-10:30 pm = Gunderson Booster Club's annual Crab Fest. (See article below.)

Tue, Mar 28 @ 7:30 pm = VEP's Home Improvement Faire, Gunderson High School *Forum*. (See page 1 of this newsletter.)

Sat, Apr 1 at 9 am = Prune Chynoweth palms. (See article in this newsletter.)

Mon, Apr 3 @ 7:30 pm = Planning Committee meeting for VEP's Memorial Day Parade & Festival. Call Dave @ 578-6428.

Wed, Apr 5 @ 7:15 pm = VEP Executive Board meeting. (Call any officer for further information.)

Sat, Apr 8 = Carson's annual *Walkathon*. (See article below.)

Sat, Apr 8 = *Great American Pick Up*. (See article in this newsletter.)

Sat, Apr 22 at 9 am = Plant Vistapark/Branham oleanders. (See article in this newsletter.)

Tue, Apr 25 @ 7:30 pm = VEP *Annual Meeting* at Vista Park community room. (Agenda to be announced.)

Wed, May 3 @ 7:15 pm = VEP Executive Board meeting. (Call any officer for further information.)

Sat, May 6 = VEP's *Community Garage Sale*. (See article in this newsletter.)

Tue, May 23 @ 7:30 pm = VEP meeting at Vista Park community room. (Agenda to be announced.)

Mon, May 29 = VEP's *Memorial Day Parade & Festival*. (See article in this newsletter.)

Gunderson Crab Fest!

- Matt Hewitson

Gunderson Booster Club's annual Crab Fest will be held on Saturday March 25. This event is the premier fundraiser for Gunderson athletics, activities, and other student organizations. The Crab Fest will feature piles and piles of FRESH Dungeness crab (all-you-can-eat), a full pasta and salad buffet, a no-host beer and wine bar, a live Hula show, and a performance by the San Jose SaberKitten Cheerleaders from the Arena Football League.

There will also be live and silent auctions featuring travel and entertainment packages, handmade crafts and artwork, and incredible autographed sports memorabilia.

Last year's auction even included a round of golf with Joe Montana that went for \$300 (not bad!). There is also usually a current or former 49er on hand (Eric Allen last year) to sign autographs and take pictures with the kids.

The Crab Fest is held at the Santa Clara VFW Hall, near Santa Clara University. It goes from 5:30-10:30 pm. Crab is served around 7 pm. The live auction and entertainment starts at dinner time.

Tickets are \$40 each and must be purchased in advance. To buy them, call me at Gunderson, 535-6340 x174, or email me at Matthew_Hewitson@sjusd.org.

Carson Survivor Walkathon

--Scott & Dianne Conry, VEP members

Come and join us at our *Survivor Walkathon* on Saturday, April 8, from 10 a.m. until 2 p.m.



Last year with VEP's help, Carson Elementary survived possible closure by the school district. This year the school continues to be challenged by additional cost reduction plans. Please consider pledging a Carson neighborhood child or enjoying our activities on April 8.

During the Walkathon, we'll feature the following events:

- Food court (hot dogs, pizzas, tamales, and egg rolls);
- Silent auction of items from local vendors and themed class baskets;
- Bounce house or inflatable slide;
- Crazy tribal hair;
- Tribal face painting; and
- Tribal cake walk.

With your support, we can help create a feeling of immunity from budget cuts for Carson Elementary School.

* * *

Attention High school students: Feeling "challenged" to meet your community hours? Earn easy hours of credit by helping out

during Carson's *Survivor Walkathon*. For hours and activities, contact Sandee Ruiz at (408) 265-8316 or email at sruiz@iname.com.

San Jose trail connections presentation

Whether you want to take your bike to work everyday or go for a leisurely stroll, the trail you use and its connections to other trails really makes a difference to your experience. Come find out about the current trail system in San Jose, the challenges being faced in expanding trail connections, and what the future holds.

Monday, April 3

5:30 to 7 pm

\$3 for Friends' members, \$6 for non-members

Presenter: Yves Zsutty

Program Manager, City Wide Trail System

This presentation will be held at the Guadalupe River Park & Gardens Visitor & Education Center, located at 438 Coleman Avenue. Space is limited, so reserve your spot early by contacting Kary Wilson at education@grpg.org or (408) 298-7657. Refunds for 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 call (408) 298-7657.

VEP forum for June Primary election

- *Dave Noel*

VEP is planning an election forum for the June 6th primary election. We anticipate the event will be held in late April or May in the Gunderson Theater. Watch for the final date, time, and location in your April VEP NEWS and by email.

There are many offices being contested on this ballot: Mayor; District Attorney; Sheriff; Board of Supervisors, Districts 1 and 4; County Assessor; 23 superior court judges; Santa Clara Valley Water District Districts 1 and 4; Santa Clara County Open Space Districts 2, 5, 6, and 7; and several statewide races, including governor. We now also have the Santa Clara County 1/2-cent sales tax measure.

We intend to cover the mayor's race and the 1/2-cent sales tax in our forum.

* * *

Almaden Valley Community Association will hold an election forum on April 27th, covering the mayor's and district attorney's races. Check their website www.avca-sj.org for location and time.

Help wanted

-*Mary Albin*

Certified Lifeguards are needed for the upcoming summer season (May to September) at Encore Pool, located at the corner of Bluefield Drive and Rosenbaum Avenue. We offer flexible hours. Contact the pool at (408) 226-6445. Leave your name and phone number and we will return your call.

Additional voting poll places needed

-*Marilyn Rodgers*

The County Registrar's Office is in need of additional polling places within VEP. If you would like to utilize your garage for a voting place, or would like additional information, please contact Ed Morello at the Santa Clara County Registrar of Voters Office at 408/282-3074 or at Ed.Morello@ROV.scc.gov.org. We are in Precinct #1082.

They need polling places for both the June 6th and the November 7th general election. A small stipend is paid for this use of space.

Don't let LITTER trash our community!

Volunteer with other concerned citizens to pick up litter in your community at the 2006 *Great American Pick Up* on Saturday, April 8, 2006. Volunteers are encouraged to bring their own pick-up stick and gloves. All youth under 18 need supervision and transportation to get to clean-up sites.

Here's the day's schedule:

- 8:30 a.m. – 9 a.m. = Meet at one of these locations: Residents of District 9, meet in Room 6 at Kirk Community Center, 1601 Foxworthy Avenue (just east of Meridian). For residents of District 10, meet in front of the Almaden Library & Community Center, 6445 Camden Avenue (off Almaden Expressway).
- 9 a.m. – 11 a.m. = Pick up litter in designated areas.
- 11 a.m. – 11:30 a.m. = Leave bags of litter at designated sites and travel to lunch.
- 11:30 a.m. – 12:30 p.m. = Free lunch for volunteers; meet at Center for Employment Training, 701 Vine Street in the Auditorium.

For more information or to sign up, call (408) 535-3500.

Work to start on Martial-Cottle Park

-Greg West (*)

The Santa Clara County Parks and Recreation Commission reviewed the Department's FY2007 (beginning July 1, 2006) Capital Improvement Plan at its March 1st meeting. \$700,000 is allocated in the plan for Martial-Cottle Park. Of that amount, \$400,000 is for preparing a comprehensive master plan, including CEQA environmental documents, and \$300,000 is to develop access and community gardens as a first-phase development of the park.

The \$700,000 funding for activities in FY2007 are coming from two sources. \$250,000 for master plan development will come from the Parks and Recreation Department budget, supported primarily through the County Park Charter Fund, coming up for renewal on the June, 2006 ballot. In addition, the Santa Clara County Open Space Authority approved a grant of \$150,000 for the master planning process at its February 9th meeting. The Open Space Authority also granted an additional \$300,000 for the Phase 1 improvements at the same meeting.

The Parks and Recreation Commission will consider recommending the Capital Improvement Plan to the County Board of Supervisors at the Commission's April 5th meeting.

[(*) Ed. Note: Greg West is a past-president of VEP who is now a member of the Santa Clara County Parks and Recreation Commission.]

Lester Property (Martial-Cottle Park) patrolling

-Marilyn Rodgers

Starting in February, the Lester Property (Martial Cottle Park) was included in the regular rounds made by County Park Rangers assigned to the Hellyer, Coyote Creek Parkway, and Santa Teresa Parks Unit of the County of Santa Clara Parks and Recreation Department.

Park Rangers assigned to this responsibility are pleased to know that VEP members have a special interest in this property, and they are eager to enlist our assistance. If you observe any inappropriate activity in or around the property, they would appreciate a call. Their contact number is (408) 225-0225.

Neighborhood scuttlebutt

-Dave Fadness

- San Jose's Department of Transportation expects to have signs posted by the end of this month prohibiting commercial vehicles in excess of five tons on Vistapark Drive, south of Capitol Expressway. This restriction will apply 24/7.
- Santa Clara County Roads and Pinn Brothers Housing have signed a landscaping maintenance agreement. This clears the way for Pinn to complete landscaping work in the median of Capitol Expressway, Snell to Bluefield. They will plant remaining trees and apply ground-covering mulch that will make our reach of Capitol one of the most attractive in the entire County Expressway system.

Pinn built the high-density residential units on the northeast corner of Capitol and Vistapark. Before their project was approved by the city council in December 2001, VEP asked for and Pinn promised to donate a range of amenities; landscaping the Capitol median was one of them.

- VEP's proposal to landscape the median triangle on Rosenbaum Avenue (at Capitol Expressway) is still on hold. We're asking County Supervisor **Don Gage's** help in winning approval to beautify this site as a volunteer project.
- VEP has offered to landscape the barren parcel at the northeast corner of Branham/Narvaez. San Jose's Department of Transportation has given us the go-ahead to proceed. Working with our city arborist, we now have a landscape design.

To avoid difficulties we've encountered in other beautification projects like this, we're wisely pursuing the installation of water service there before getting underway. VEP volunteers will plant 33 trees and apply ground-covering mulch like what we used on the Narvaez median island across Branham Lane. Watch this newsletter for updates.

- VEP is working with San Jose's Department of Transportation to find ways to discourage speeding on Chynoweth Avenue, Gaundabert/New World to Pearl Avenue. Speeding there has been chronic and city engineers are proposing "traffic calming" techniques. Expect to see the discussion of a proposal on an upcoming VEP meeting agenda, perhaps by May of this year.

Our City Forest

~ Tree Art class & contest now enrolling ~

Trees in the City will be the primary subject of an *Our City Forest* class now open for enrollment for K through 12th grade students. Various drawing and painting techniques will be taught by an experienced artist. Prizes will be awarded to winners!

Classes meet on Saturday, from noon to 1:30 pm. Each class will be unique, not building off the previous one, so if you miss one, don't be discouraged from attending the next.

Class Schedule:

- Session 1 = March 18
- Session 2 = March 25
- Session 3 = April 1
- Session 4 = April 8
- Session 5 = April 15

Classroom Location: Classes will be held at the *Our City Forest* Office at 595 Park Ave, Suite 100, San Jose; on the NE corner of Park Avenue and Montgomery (Bird), just off Hwy 280 (Bird exit).

Sign up and information: Contact Jake Miller at (408) 998-7337 or jmiller@ourcityforest.org.

~ Auto body mechanic/repair needed, ASAP ~

Our City Forest's trusty 1993 Dodge Caravan was in an accident recently (not our fault), and has now been salvaged. It was side-

swiped and received body damage to the sliding door and right side. We can't afford to pay the expensive body repairs.

If you know how to repair body damage and would like to take a look, please give us a call. We are willing to pay for the repair, but it has to be at a discounted rate from the regular-priced quotes we received. *Our City Forest* is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization, so you will receive a tax-deduction receipt for the equivalent market value of the work provided.

Please help us bring back our reliable, low-miles van!

For more information, contact Jake Miller at (408) 998-7337 or jmiller@ourcityforest.org.

~ O2, the Big Green Oxygen Machine ~

Volunteers are needed to make appearances as *Our City Forest's* "O2" mascot at plantings, outreach events, and schools. Our O2 Mascot Volunteer needs to be at least 6 feet tall, and be able to work well with kids and adults. O2 is a silent mascot, so no verbal skills are needed, just be a friendly tree! Kids love O2 so he/she really attracts attention and is a great conversation starter for the benefits of urban trees.

For more information, contact Monica Nañez at (408) 998-7337 or mnañez@ourcityforest.org.

Volunteers needed

San Jose City Hall has hundreds of visitors each day. We are looking for dedicated volunteer residents that can make a commitment to give tours of city hall.

Training will be provided, and you will be able to sign up for dates and times that fit your schedule. Tours take about 1 - 1½ hours and groups sizes are limited to 15.

If you are interested in sharing your pride with others by becoming a volunteer tour guide, please email the Customer Service Call Center at customerservice@sanjoseca.gov or call (408) 535-3500.

Family Watchdog (Megan's Law)

- *Dave Noel*

A new website has been created to help you find out what sex offenders may live near you. To do so, go to the website www12.familywatchdog.us and enter your address. You'll get a map very much like a Mapquest or Yahoo map, but with colored boxes indicating locations of registered sex offenders. Click on the boxes to get the name, picture, and offenses of the person at that location.

Note that Nevada, Pennsylvania, Oregon, Rhode Island, South Dakota, and Vermont do not currently provide addresses for registered sex offenders.

To sign up for free automated email notifications when sex offenders move into your zip code, visit the Safe Community Alert Network at www.scanusa.com. Visit www.meganslaw.ca.gov for a map of registered sex offenders and other related information.

Anonymous phone calls

- *Dave Fadness*

Occasionally, VEP's officers get anonymous calls, usually phone messages. These messages are usually complaints about something that's going on or about to happen in our community. Sometimes they're complaints about decisions we've made.

We get many calls from members (not all are pleasant) and welcome and return those that include the caller's name and contact info. VEP's purpose and our officer's dedication is to serve our community's needs and desires.

Remember, though, we're volunteers. We get work done in our community by working with (not for) our members. If you call and refuse to leave your name, it means to us that you're not really interested in working together to find or effect a solution to the problem you're complaining about.

What do we do with such complaints? Sorry to say, although we discuss them, we don't give them much credence until the callers step forward to identify themselves and offer their help and/or suggested solution.

Those who call to complain about decisions we've made typically didn't participate in our inclusive decision process, a process that takes time and consumes plenty of ink in our newsletters. VEP *never* makes major decisions without notice that they'll be discussed and debated at a scheduled general membership meeting (open to the public). After discussing them, we ask for a vote by members present. If even *one* member raises a reasonable concern during this process, we always do our best to accommodate them.

When you call us, PLEASE let us know who you are and how we can get back to you. Help us do our job by working with you.

South substation for San Jose police

-Susan Cox ()*

In March 2002, the voters in San Jose approved a general obligation bond measure to construct and renovate police and fire facilities. The largest project in that bond measure is the construction of San Jose's first police substation.

This substation is needed for San Jose because our police department is currently centralized and it can take 30-minutes for our officers to travel to their patrol beats in the Almaden and Blossom Valley neighborhoods of south San Jose. Staging and deploying our officers from the new substation will mean more productive patrol time for our residents and businesses.

The substation will be a full-service facility where any resident, visitor, business, or employee can conduct any police related transaction they need to. The substation will house patrol officers, investigators, police records and information, Megan's Law computer access, a community meeting room, and a processing area for those in police custody.

The city has purchased a 10.5-acre parcel for the substation on Great Oaks Boulevard, just north of the Highway 85 and Great Oaks interchange.

The total project budget, including the land acquisition, is \$65 million. The project design will be completed in September of 2007 and the construction will be complete in July 2009.

[()Ed. Note: Susan Cox is Capital Program Manager for the San Jose Police Department. She wrote this article for the VEP NEWS.]*

President's message

-Jeri Arstingstall, VEP President

As you read this, VEP will have just celebrated two exciting events. Thanks to Robert Topf, Principal of Parkview Elementary School, and Manny Barbara, Superintendent of Oak Grove School District, VEP was chosen as the recipient of Oak Grove School District's **Community Involvement** Vision Award.

The Vista Park Community Room held its grand opening on Saturday, March 18th. VEP is very grateful to SummerHill Homes for making this dream come true for us. VEP would also like to thank the city and the parks department for working with SummerHill Homes.

VEP needs your help in upcoming community projects please see articles in this newsletter for further details.

Oak Grove School District news

-Manny Barbara, Superintendent

Now is the time of year when many parents begin to register children for kindergarten. This is a momentous occasion for any family. I want to take a moment to share with you what the Oak Grove School District has to offer.

~ Our students are succeeding ~

Our student state testing results continue to increase in all tested subgroups. We met all 2005 State and Federal performance targets in all areas.

Fifteen of our schools have been recognized as Distinguished Schools, including all three of our intermediate schools. Two more schools are currently being considered for Distinguished School status and are likely to receive the award.

For our accelerated high-achieving students, we offer geometry at the intermediate school. Our success rate is among the highest in the county. (If you are a kindergarten parent, this may seem like a long time away, but I thought you may like to know that students receive accelerated instruction where appropriate.)

Eighteen school and District programs have received the Santa Clara County School Board Association's *Glenn W. Hoffmann Awards*, the highest total in the county. We also have received two prestigious *Golden Bell Awards* from the state California School Boards Association, most recently in 2005.

We were recognized in 2005 by Springboards Schools and Applied Materials by receiving their overall District Achievement Award.

~ Quality educational programs ~

We continue to have small class sizes of 20-to-1 in all kindergarten through third grade classes. Furthermore, we are one of just a couple of districts that have all-day kindergarten at all schools.

All schools have a Visual Performing Arts instruction at grades 4-6.

We target instruction for high achievers with pre-algebra at all K-6 elementary schools, including after school academies.

For students needing additional help, summer school and extended day and week academies are provided.

~ Parent and community involvement and support ~

Thanks to community support through passing a school bond, our school facilities have been modernized and upgraded significantly. Because of an existing Parcel Tax first passed in 1991, we have been able to maintain critical programs.

We listen to parents and attempt to meet specialized needs. Our most recent new alternative parent participation program is the INDIGO program, which is housed at Frost Elementary School and emerged as the result of parent request. The Independent Study and Bilingual Waivers Programs emerged in the same manner.

~ Our schools are clean and safe ~

All schools have Emergency and Safe School Plans, reviewed and modified annually as necessary. Our school facilities have been upgraded to the highest state standards.

~ Our employees care ~

Our dedicated teachers participate in a strong professional development program. We strive to have all students succeed. When parents bring issues before us, we will do all we can to meet your needs.

Finally, we are a very open school district with a stable Board and administration that provides strong fiscal oversight in providing a safe and academically challenging school environment. We encourage and have a lot of parental involvement and opportunities to participate in the decision-making process at both the school and district level.

If you have any questions about the Oak Grove School District, please visit our website at www.ogsd.k12.ca.us, or feel free to contact me at: (408) 227-8300, Ext. 202, or by email: superintendent@ogsd.k12.ca.us.

Gunderson High School happenings

-Cary Catching, Principal

Congratulations go out to Gunderson's Girl's Basketball Team. They were the only public high school team to make it all the way to the semi-final round in the CCS tournament. In addition, their Coach John Drake was named Coach of the Year, and guard Anna Harp was named the Most Valuable Player of the league. Two other players, Venese Morgan and Clarissa Diaz, were selected to the all-league 1st and 2nd teams, respectively.

Gunderson's baseball and softball teams have begun play on our new athletic facilities. At this time, only the competition fields (those closest to the freeway) have been released to the school by the contractor. Because we are still trying to facilitate grass growth, these fields will be locked during non-game hours. The practice fields and multi-purpose area between the fields should be available for play by late May.

Speaking of fields, over the last few weeks we have noticed an increase in the number of people bringing their dogs onto campus to run and relieve themselves. We would like to remind the community that dogs are strictly forbidden on the turf field. Because the grass has not fully grown in the back of the school, we are asking that dogs and people stay off that area for now as well. Finally, please make sure dogs are leashed whenever students are on campus. There have been incidents of dogs biting students at other campuses; we obviously want to prevent such an occurrence at Gunderson.

Finally, a construction update: Work is beginning on our new classroom building. Equipment and a trailer have been brought onto the site. Once the rains slow down, there will much more activity on this side of campus. The projected completion date at this time is the end of November.

My next Principal's Coffee is April 7 at 7:30 a.m. Community members are always welcome.

VEP/Gunderson litter pickup event a success!

-Marilyn Rodgers

On Saturday morning February 11th, Gunderson High School and VEP had its first joint Litter Pickup Event.

Many thanks for the great response from Gunderson. **Trish Buttrill** did a super job coordinating for the high school. Several teachers and coaches encouraged their students to be involved. Gunderson principal, **Cary Catching** was very supportive of the event, and was there to assist all morning.

Most important were the 44 students who participated. VEP gave all students verification of volunteer hours for their records. An

amazing eighteen very full orange bags of litter were collected in less than two hours!



The areas covered were: in and around Gunderson High School, both sides of Chynoweth from Hyde Park to Pearl, a portion of Gaundabert, in and around Vista Park, and a portion of Hyde Park and New Compton Drive. Supplies including orange bags, orange pickup sticks, and orange vests were all donated by the City of San Jose's Anti-Litter Program. Drinks and snacks were provided by Rodgers Enterprises.

VEP thanks the following students:

Ashley Morales, Lillian Nguyen, Anthony Nguyen, Jade Estrada, Ashlie Vallez, Tanya Martinez, Bryan Pastoral, Alexa Abraham, Clarissa Diaz, Laura Peterson, Jonathan Claude, Nina Khuu, Sam Whang, Abeil Tekle, Valdemar Gonzalez, Teresa Beuter-Gau, Jennifer Geronimo, Jennifer Diaz, Monique Grant, Allysa Farmer, Steven Gregory, Ahmad Jaber, Joe Daneault, Ahmed Abdi, Keder Jama, John Harvey, Moses Kinnah, Tahsina Haq, Aysia King, Jackie Miller, Navjeet Kaur, Marbel Simenez, Kahlilah Hodge, Yessenia Rodriguez, Linda Chao, Anna Harp, Brian Ho, Venese Morgan, Filmon Habt, Javier Yepiz, Jeremy LeBaron, Timmy Dang, Hayg Azarian, and Duc Lam.

The event could not have taken place were it not for the support and supervision of the teachers and the adult volunteers from VEP. In addition to Trish Buttrill and Cary Catching, thanks to teachers **Ken Weiblen, Kevin Hadnot, Art Castaneda** who supervised a group of students around the school, and to **John Drake** who supervised a group of students on Gaundabert and then up and down Cynoweth from Hyde Park to the school.



Our special thank-you to the adult VEP participants, **Debra Suydum** who supervised students in and around the school, to **Christine Butler** who supervised a large group of students on both sides of Chynoweth between the school and Pearl, and to **David Claude** who brought his own two children and supervised several others in and around Vista Park and New Compton Drive.

At the close of the event, John Drake commented "It was nice being out in the fresh air, doing something good for your community, and especially nice when people driving by honked and said "thanks," or "good job!"

Pearl Avenue Library

- Dave Noel

The sixth and final community meeting regarding the new Pearl Avenue Library was held on March 2nd. Neighbors learned about the final architectural plans and saw more detail on the interior and exterior plans for the building and landscaping.

The library will close around April 1st, and groundbreaking will occur this fall. Construction will take about two years. The building will be about twice as big, but still be on a single level. It will feature a "green" design, maximizing natural light inside the building with a view out to a garden outside.

The new library will have a community room with a capacity of about 54 people. It will have 54-55 parking spaces, compared with the current 50 spaces. It will have 22 public computers.

* * *

The Almaden library will open on May 13th, and the Cambrian library will open in late 2006/early 2007.

For more information, call (408) 535-8450, or visit the website www.NewSanJoseLibraries.com.

Membership update

-Jeri Arstingstall

To all of our VEP neighbors who have renewed, THANK YOU!

We take the comments you write in membership remit envelopes each year very seriously and we enjoy reading them. Here are a few of the many comments we received. Most of them are thank yous, geared around our wonderful newsletter.

- "VEP Delivers: Thank you to all for your impeccable service to our community."
- "Do appreciate all the work VEP does."
- "God Bless you for all the good that you do."
- "The newsletter seems to be bigger and better than ever--good work!"
- "We read your VEP letter page by page and we are pleased with the information that is in it. Thank you for your good work and we wish you a prosperous 2006."
- "We appreciate what you have accomplished in 2005 and for the past 25+ years."
- "Keep up the good reporting--enjoy your paper--has information for me."
- "One of the reasons we are proud to live in this neighborhood is because of our great homeowners group. Thanks for all you do!"
- "Our neighborhood "Shines" among many, thanks to your tireless effort. Thank You!"
- "Thanks for all you and others' hard work to make our community a safer and better area, too. "

Here are a couple of questions that have been written in, along with my responses:

(Q) Too many vehicles are parked on the streets in our neighborhood.

(A) Vehicles are allowed to park on the public street for up to 72 hours. If you are seeing a recurring trend or a vehicle abusing the city's code, please call the city of San Jose Parking Compliance Office at (408) 277-5545.

(Q) I would like more news about school field and building progress via newsletter.

(A) Cary Catching the principal of Gunderson High School has been providing information by way of her monthly articles in our newsletter. You can also contact her at (408) 535-6340 or cary_catching@sjusd.org.

What is VEP Community Association?

- VEP is an all-volunteer organization of your neighbors working to improve our neighborhoods; VEP is our community's "homeowners' association".
- VEP volunteers participate in a variety of activities, all of which originate in and benefit our neighborhoods.
- VEP volunteers make our neighborhood's views and needs known to government at all levels.
- Founded in 1969, we are one of the largest, most successful, and most active and enduring grass roots volunteer organizations in Santa Clara County.

Why join VEP?

- To receive our newsletter nine times a year, keeping you up-to-date and informed.
- To participate in and support neighborhood activities and representation.
- To contribute to our annual VEP Community Service Awards for area high school graduates.
- To be part of an outstanding community organization with a long record of success for our neighborhoods.

**** Membership Application ****

Note: none of the following information will be shared with any third party.

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

Last name(s): _____

First name(s): _____

Street address: _____

Telephone # _____

Email address(es): _____

Comments): _____

Can you give VEP a few volunteer hours? _____

Mail your \$20 check to VEP, P.O. Box 18111, San Jose 95158.
Thank you!

VEP highlights 2005

-Dave Fadness & Dave Noel ()*

As we enter our 37th year, our all-volunteer organization celebrated a record year of achievement in 2005, setting records in paid membership, monthly attendance, beautification projects, and bonds with our members, schools, local businesses, and government. Here are some of the keys to our success.

Monthly meetings. VEP executives meet monthly to conduct business and prepare for eight general meetings each year. In 2005, our topics ranged from neighborhood issues to West-Nile virus to government policy discussions. We always feature appropriate experts, elected representatives and decision-makers as guest speakers. We publish and mail a 16-page newsletter to all members every month that school is in session.

Goal setting. Each summer our Executive Board compiles a detailed set of Goals & Objectives. Debated and approved at our September general meeting, our G&O serve as our marching orders for the coming year, and the basis for a “wish list” we distribute annually to our city and county representatives. Our success springs from being organized, focused, and willing to work smart and hard to reach our goals.

Community Beautification. Each year VEP completes at least two beautification projects and maintains those done in past years. We’ve participated in San Jose Beautiful’s Daffodil Days event for the last five years, and we’ve planted over 200 trees since 1995. VEP received the Mayor’s 2005 Outstanding Service Award for this continuing work.



Chynoweth Avenue median landscaping, January 2003



Cilker Park daffodils, planted by VEP in 2004



Mayor’s Volunteer Award, October 2005
Maureen Noel, Dave Noel, Marilyn Rodgers, Dave Fadness, Josie Supencheck, and Aiko Fadness



Parkview Elementary tree planting
December 2005

Grants. As the scale and cost of our projects increase, outside help has become necessary. VEP won three grants each from San Jose Beautiful and Our City Forest for beautification projects. In an effort to increase membership and awareness of VEP, we also won two CAP grants to temporarily expand distribution of our newsletter to all households in our membership area. Two of our executives have attended NDC classes and found them very worthwhile.

Social Events. VEP hosts three fun events each year: a Home Improvement Faire, a Community Garage Sale, and a Memorial Day Parade & Festival. We also sponsor election forums. These events strengthen ties between our members, schools, government, police, firefighters, and local businesses.

Community Service Awards. For 21 years, VEP has rewarded graduating high school seniors for outstanding volunteer community service. This year we will give three exemplary young people stipends of \$1500 each for post-secondary education or vocational training.

VEP officers. The key to our long-term success has been finding and grooming new leaders to bring their passions, energy and ideas to the ever-changing challenges in our neighborhoods.

When founded in 1969, "VEP" stood for the first three subdivisions in our area. We've grown to a membership area of 2000 homes, roughly bounded by Route 87, Capitol Expressway, Snell Avenue, and Chynoweth Avenue. We like to say that VEP = Very Energetic People.

We welcome you to attend our general meetings held the fourth Tuesdays of January, February, March, April, May, September, October, and November. We currently meet in the Gunderson High School Faculty Lounge, but expect to move to our new home at the Vista Park Community Room in April. For more information, visit www.vepca.org or contact Dave Noel at dnoel1234@aol.com or 408-266-7183.

[()Ed. Note: We wrote this article for the Neighborhood Development Center's Spring 2006 newsletter. As a branch of the City of San Jose's Parks, Recreation, & Neighborhood Services department, the NDC provides training and support to San Jose neighborhood associations and their leadership.]*

News from San Jose District 9

-Judy Chirco , District 9 City Councilwoman

~ City boards and commissions ~

It takes every one of us working together to make San Jose a great place to live. I am grateful for all of you who volunteer of your time in the schools, coaching youth sports, picking up litter, or helping a senior.

Currently, District 9 has sixteen individuals serving on fourteen of the city's 27 commissions. I offer my thanks to all who are giving of their time and talents to make San Jose a better place to live, work, and play.

~ San Jose Family Camp ~

Now is the time to get your reservations in for San Jose Family Camp which will be open from June 16 through August 13, 2006.

The camp is open to everyone. Cost is per night, based upon whether or not you're a resident of the City of San Jose. Prices include three meals, lodging in tent cabins, and activities within camp. The camp is located in the heart of the Sierras just off Highway 120, near the west gate of Yosemite National Park. This is a great place to spend a couple of days or a week.

- Mail-in Registration: Begins April 3, 2006. Mail applications into the San Jose Family Camp Office, Leininger Center, 1300 Senter Road San Jose, CA 95112.

- Walk-in Registration: Begins May 2, 2006. Applications can be made in person at the Family Camp Office. Their office hours are Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday from noon to 4 p.m.
- Fax-in Registration: Begins May 2, 2006. Applications can be faxed to the Family Camp office at (408) 277-5426.

For more information, please call (408) 277-4666 or visit their website at: <http://www.sanjoseca.gov/prns/familycamp.asp>. Their email address is familycamp@sanjoseca.gov.

~ Instructors wanted for Camden Community Center ~

Bridget McKay has joined the staff at Camden Community Center as the person responsible for the various fee classes offered. She is very interested in offering new and innovative classes for the community.

Bridget is looking for talented individuals who have special skills and enjoy sharing their expertise with others. Individuals may already have a background in training or teaching; however, that is not a requirement. Instructors are now needed for arts, crafts, exercise and wellness, dance, and music. Please call her at (408) 559-8553 for additional information.

~ Battery/ Fluorescent Lamp Recycling ~

On February 9, 2006 a new California State law made it illegal to place any batteries or fluorescent lamps in the trash. Both batteries and fluorescent lamps contain hazardous materials and present a threat to humans and the environment when broken, incinerated, or dumped in landfills. This law applies to all batteries and all fluorescent lamps, tubes and compact fluorescent bulbs.

For additional information about where you can drop off batteries and fluorescent lamps, visit the Santa Clara County Household Hazardous Waste Program website at www.hhw.org.

* * *

If you wish to receive periodic emails from my office please visit the District 9 website at www.sanjoseca.gov/district9 and click on "Join Judy's email list". As always, if you have any questions, comments or concerns, please feel free to contact our office at District9@sanjoseca.gov or (408) 535-4909.

The view from city hall

-Nancy Pyle, District 10 City Councilwoman

On countless occasions my office receives e-mails and phone calls from residents concerned about community safety. As these individuals work with my staff, we are better equipped to report safety concerns and find solutions to these problems. I believe this interaction is critical to the health, safety and success of our District. Additionally, it also reflects the importance of being an active resident when it comes to local community safety.

Just a few weeks ago, a distressed resident e-mailed my office with concerns over his family's shopping experience at a local shopping center. After writing a response to the e-mail, I was able to coordinate a meeting between Captain Farmer of the SJPD, myself and the shopping center's General Manager.

Outcomes of this new working partnership have included plans to increase the presence of security and an ongoing collaboration between the shopping center, the SJPD, and VTA to deter unwelcome and problematic guests.

In addition, I plan to increase my office's outreach to local schools, working with the administrations to support and ensure the safety of our community's greatest asset, that being our children.

Through the vigilance of proactive residents, my office is able to remain informed of your concerns and act quickly to ensure the comfort and safety of all District 10 residents. Each of you can be just as active in our community when it comes to safety.

As a District 10 resident, your safety is one of my top concerns.

* * *

Volunteer needed: A bicycle "Roadeo" is a simple bike course designed to teach children basic skills needed to be a safe bicyclist. As a Bicycle Safety Course Assistant, you will be monitoring and assisting youth ages 5-15, through bike course stations and checking bike helmets for proper fit. If you're interested in helping to keep San Jose's young bike riders safe, and if your foot fits the pedal, please contact Veronica Posada, School Safety Education Coordinator with the City's Department of Transportation, at 975-3296 for more information.

* * *

To contact me, call (408) 535-4910; fax (408) 292-6478; or email me at district10@sanjoseca.gov. You can also visit my website at www.sanjoseca.gov/district10.

Granny units

- *Dave Noel*

On November 29th last year, the San Jose city council approved a pilot program to allow up to 100 new secondary "granny" units to be built in San Jose during 2006. According to the March 2nd Almaden Resident, only one permit has been issued to date, city-wide, and only seven more applications are in process.

On March 14th, the city council voted not to levy parkland dedication/parkland impact fees to people building granny units. These fees could have cost from \$5,000 to \$15,000.

In my opinion, it still seems to me the city could have generated more affordable housing units by simply buying them outright than by spending all the money it did on nearly two years of studies, meetings, and hearings on granny units.

March madness

-*John Marks, VEP's Green Gardener*

It's truly maddening when you can't get out there and dig around because of the rain. The ground is muddy, the lawn is soggy, and there's so little warmth that seeds barely have the urge to sprout. Although, I must admit, I've got snow peas about a foot high now; but it took a month.

Have you noticed? 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.

What about those little six-packs of tomatoes and peppers that are beckoning from the nursery shelves? Go ahead and buy them, but keep them indoors in a sunny window to help them grow bigger and stronger (you'll save a bundle from what you'd have to pay later for the same size plants). Move them to four-inch containers, then to one-gallon buckets outside as we get closer to May. What exactly are we waiting for before planting them? Consistent daytime temperatures of 70°F.

Right now, you can plant winter vegetables such as broccoli, cabbage, peas and beets for a spring harvest. Put in pansies, snapdragons and calendulas.

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

Now is also the time to start summer vegetable and flower seeds indoors to transplant outside when the soil warms. Get peas, lettuce, spinach and carrots going from seed. You can also put in broccoli and cauliflower transplants. Don't forget summer-blooming bulbs, corms, and tubers, including begonias, calla lilies, canna lilies, dahlias, and gladioluses.

Cold, damp weather will bring out snails and slugs in droves. They will feast on the tender new growth of bulbs and winter

plants. Hand pick, or use a bait, but don't let them go unchecked because they will mow down your garden.

When will the soil be ready for general planting? Squeeze a handful of soil; if it sticks together like putty, it's too wet. If it crumbles and falls from your hand, it's OK to dig and plant. It takes at least five rainless days for soil to dry out.

To help the soil dry out, rake up leaves you might have missed earlier and get them off the lawn. Leaves provide hiding spots for over-wintering insects.

What about feeding birds? They're building nests and starting families. You can attract hummingbirds to feed in your garden by planting fuchsias. Planted now in partial shade and away from drying wind, fuchsias will bloom from early summer until frost. Fuchsias can be planted in the ground or in containers, and trailing types do well in hanging baskets.

The trick to fuchsias: lots of moisture and using a potting mix that retains moisture. They also benefit from mist spray. In containers, use wood or light colored plastic; dark plastic pots retain too much heat, and feeder roots can be burned. Encourage bushy, flowery growth by pinching dead blossoms, and use liquid fertilizer. The more small pinches you make now on growing tips, the more flowering branchlets you'll have this summer.

Use herbs as landscaping plants. Chives and parsley add attractive foliage among blooming flowers. Rosemary and woolly thyme will take off and make attractive, drought-tolerant ground covers.

Wildflower seeds can still be sown and are suitable in many areas where other plantings don't seem to thrive.

Emergency preparedness resources

-Marilyn Rodgers

If you have decided that you want to become better prepared in case of an emergency or disaster, but are wondering where get supplies and equipment, the following information may help you get started.

First, plan to attend VEP's *Home Faire* on Tuesday, March 28th. A few disaster/emergency preparedness vendors have been invited to participate.

Home Improvement stores such as OSH, Home Depot, and so forth are places to start. They carry items such as flashlights, storage containers, straps and other materials to hold furniture and large appliances in place, and emergency generators.

Grocery stores have bottled water and packaged food items.

Military surplus and sporting goods stores have a variety of survival and/or camping gear with such items as sleeping bags, tents, canned foods, lanterns, and clothing and boots.

There are also specialty stores for disaster/emergency preparedness which have stores and/or websites. Many of these stores/websites develop made-to-order kits which include food, water, first aid kits, etc., for families of two or four, or kits for your office or car. Additionally, they offer everything from water to individual items of interest for preparing for emergencies.

The following vendors were taken from a list developed by *San Jose Prepared*. They have indicated interest in supporting VEP.

1. The Bee Hive Country Store – Survival Food & Supplies
Mr. Frances LeBaron (Will be at VEP'S *Home Faire* on 3/28.)
(408) 264-3531
2. Earth Shakes, Inc.

Burlingame, Ca. 94086
(650) 548-9065 or www.Earthshakes.com

3. Simpler Life Emergency Provisions
San Jose, Ca. 95170
(408) 973-1222 or www.SimplerLife.com

Vista Park Community Room: Your vision?

- *Dave Noel*

VEP began working on Vista Park in 1980, when San Jose Unified School District wanted to sell Belden Elementary school for home development. We worked with the city to save the parcel and, ultimately, to build the beautiful park we enjoy today.

When SummerHill Homes approached us about the 78 new homes they planned to build at Branham and Vista Park, VEP leaders saw an opportunity of a lifetime. We pitched our idea to SummerHill and then-city councilmember Pat Dando. Together, we brokered a deal to allocate the parkland dedication funds from those new homes to building the community room and restroom facility that officially opened on March 18th.

Unfortunately, as with all parks, libraries, and community centers in San Jose these days, there is very little operating money available. Thus, while VEP will now have a new home for our meetings, there won't be city funds to run recreation programs at building for the foreseeable future. The room is available for rent by groups like VEP, boy scouts, private birthday parties, and so on, but the rental fees and deposits are fairly steep (VEP got a break in recognition for all we've done to make the building possible).

So what's next? Glad you asked...

We need to know what types of programs and activities YOU want to see at the community room: Daycare, after school care, senior programs, enrichment classes, what's your vision??

Would you like to volunteer to make that possible?

Do you know of a service provider who could provide these programs at a reasonable cost? They may be able to get a credit towards their rent of the building in recognition of services provided to the community, but they would need to pay their own staff and janitorial costs.

Please contact me at 408-266-7183 or DNoel1234@aol.com with your ideas. Together, we may be able to bring your vision to reality.

Animal shelter life

-*Elizabeth Takahashi (*)*

I am a new volunteer at an animal shelter. Although I have yet to put in my first hour as a volunteer, I've been through an orientation and a couple of classes on how to handle dogs and cats. I already have to face some hard realities about life in an animal shelter.

The dog the shelter's animal behaviorist used as an example on dog handling is due to be put to sleep tomorrow. Ah, you think, dog handling, demonstration dog; the dog must be a problem, right? No. I am a new volunteer, remember? The shelter doesn't let volunteers handle problem animals, and if they were going to, it wouldn't be new volunteers handling them. I'll tell you more about her later.

Let me tell you about some of the hard realities in an animal shelter and, before you run to get a sign and start picketing outside a shelter upsetting the animals inside with your noise, I hope you will hear me out to the end.

A shelter's staff does everything it can do to make life easier for the animals in its care. The animals it euthanizes are old, physically or mentally sick, or injured. They can also be young and healthy but, unfortunately, no one wants them and they are taking up space another, possibly more adoptable animal might occupy. The staff works with the animals daily and gets to know them very well, so it hurts them horribly every time an animal has to be euthanized to make room for another one.

Shelter life is hard on a dog. They are stuck in a cage for days on end, watching people go by. Neighboring dogs are barking. Soon stress and the over-stimulus takes its toll and the dog starts going a little crazy, developing behavior problems. Volunteers at the shelter try to make life a bit easier by taking the dog on walks now and then, but some of the dogs are not mentally able to live life in a cage. Their behavior and mental condition deteriorate and the dog is "put to sleep".

Shelter life for a cat is even more difficult. In addition to the stresses that dogs have, cats are highly susceptible to diseases which may get them killed.

Why does a shelter have to kill at all? There are "No Kill" shelters, but they carefully pick and choose the animals they accept, giving preference to those they think they can quickly find homes for. They leave the old, the sick, the injured, and the difficult ones to city-run shelters, who have to take every animal. Like city shelters, "No Kill" shelters have problems with space and they want to get their animals in and out quickly to make room for more.

The dog I mentioned earlier, Renee, is a perfectly happy, sweet, playful 8-month old dog. She is learning to walk nicely (without pulling) on a leash and will sit on command. She likes playing catch and fetching. Yet the shelter is about to "put her to sleep". Why? She is a pit bull terrier—a "pit bull". The staff at the shelter says that 30% of the animals they take in are pit bulls. Most of them never get adopted.

Few of the adoptable pit bulls ever make it up to the public viewing area where they can be adopted. Of the ones that do get adopted, many are returned to the shelter.

Pit bulls have a bad reputation. However, a dog behaviorist evaluates each dog in the shelter. Those put up for adoption have passed his tests. They are good dogs.

Before I met Renee, I don't think I ever would have considered a pit bull. Now I'm very sorry I can't take her. I wish someone would save her life. Unfortunately, she's been up for adoption for over two months. That's much longer than the average dog gets and she's taking up space that another dog might have, a dog that could get adopted.

Now, in memory of Renee, who will be dead by the time you read this, I would like to ask three things of you. Number one, before you buy an animal, be it a puppy or dog, kitten or cat, rabbit, etc., please visit a shelter to see the animals they have up for adoption first.

My second request is that you consider having your animal spayed or neutered. Reducing the stray population may give shelter animals a better chance when waiting for adoption.

Finally, since many the dogs are surrendered to shelters because of behavior problems, please consider taking your new pet in for a basic training class before problems develop.

[()Ed. Note: Elizabeth Takahashi is a VEP member.]*

Jury duty scam

- Dave Noel (*)

Here's a new twist scammers are using to commit identity theft: the jury duty scam. Here's how it works:

The scammer calls, claiming to work for the local court and claims you've failed to report for jury duty and a warrant has been issued for your arrest. Catching you off guard, the scammer then asks you for confidential information for "verification" purposes.

Specifically, the scammer asks for your Social Security number, birth date, and sometimes even credit card numbers and other private information--exactly what a scammer needs to commit identity theft.

So far, this jury duty scam has been reported in Michigan, Ohio, Texas, Arizona, Illinois, Pennsylvania, Minnesota, Oregon, and Washington.

In reality, court workers will never call you to ask for social security numbers and other private information. In fact, most courts follow up via snail mail and rarely, if ever, call prospective jurors.

Never give out your Social Security number, credit card numbers, or other personal confidential information to anyone who calls you.

[()Ed. Note: This article was adapted from www.snopes.com, an urban legends website that sorts out scams from real issues.]*

Cash rewards for tips on crimes

What is Crime Stoppers?

Crime Stoppers is a non-profit organization made up of a volunteer Board of Directors of concerned citizens who are dedicated to doing something about crime in our community. They have formed a partnership between the community, police departments and the media in order to assist our communities in the battle against crime.

What does Crime Stoppers do?

Crime Stoppers operates a 24-hour telephone line, (408) 947-STOP (7867) for citizens to report crimes or criminal activity.

Callers remain ANONYMOUS.

Callers don't give their name and they are given a code number. If their call results in an arrest, they are eligible for a CASH REWARD of up to \$1,000. Directions are clearly given as to where and how the reward will be given.

NO ONE EVER KNOWS WHO THEY ARE.

The statistics...

Over the past 25 years, the Crime Stoppers program has provided information to Santa Clara County law enforcement agencies that has resulted in more than 800 arrests and the confiscation of over \$10,000,000 worth of drugs and goods.

What can YOU do?

Life in Silicon Valley is fast. And although you would like to do something to help and make a difference, your time is limited. However, you can help make a difference.

Crime Stoppers is NOT funded by federal, state or local agencies. Our only source of funding comes from tax deductible, corporate, business, and individual contributions. 100% of funds raised go directly to reward payouts and increased public awareness.

Don't you think it's time to get involved?

Crime Stoppers has already made an impact on your life and you never knew it. You can help your community by contributing to Crime Stoppers. To make a personal, business or corporate tax-deductible contribution, send a check to:

Silicon Valley Crime Stoppers
1671 The Alameda, Suite 100
San Jose, CA 95126

To host a fundraiser or find out about our volunteer program, call (408) 947-7867. For information on Crime Stopper's annual golf tournament at Silver Creek Country Club on May 1st, call 947-STOP or 997-1198.

Remember, Crime Stoppers works because of people like you.
Call (408) 947-STOP.

★★ Bulletin Board Ads ★★

HELP WANTED: Certified lifeguards for this summer season (May to September) at Encore Pool. Call (408) 226-6445.

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

WANTED: Volunteers to serve as 2006-07 VEP officers. Call any current officer listed on the mailing page of this newsletter.

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.

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.

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.