

VEP NEWS

• VEP COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION •

Representing More Than 2000 Families In The Blossom Valley Area Of South San Jose Since 1969

January 2009

VEP'S MEETING

7:30 p.m. Tuesday
▶ January 27, 2009 ◀

Vista Park Community Room
475 Hyde Park Drive

AGENDA

★ Internet Security★

Keeping You and Your Family Safe in the Internet Age
A presentation by Don Ferguson, SeniorNet Instructor and
Steve Clark, Santa Cruz Police Department

★ VEP Business★

Discuss and Approve 2009
Community Service Award Proposal

★ Updates and Announcements ★

Electronic Waste Event
Martial Cottle Park Plan
Memorial Day Festival and Parade
VEP Membership Drive

★ Your Concerns and Ideas ★

Your chance to voice your opinion and/or to seek VEP's help.

Everyone is welcome. Invite your neighbors!

VEP's January Meeting

By Joe Tajnai

An interesting meeting has been planned for January 27th to kick off 2009:

▶ **Internet Security – Keeping you and your family safe in the Internet Age.** Long time VEP member and SeniorNet Instructor Don Ferguson, and son-in-law Steve Clark of the the Santa Cruz Police Department will provide valuable information and answer questions regarding security concerns with today's online high speed access.

▶ **VEP Business – the 2009 Community Service Award Proposal** will be presented for discussion and approval by the members. (See article by Dave Noel.)

▶ **Updates and Announcements**
Electronic Waste Event – Gail Osmer, Volunteer Center of
Silicone Valley

Martial Cottle Park Plan - Adina Pierce
Memorial Day Festival and Parade – Dave Fadness
VEP Membership Drive – Marilyn Rodgers

▶ **Your Concerns and Ideas** - We always leave time to hear from you regarding concerns or issues that we can work together in resolving. This approach continues to make VEP neighborhoods strong, healthy, and attractive.

We look forward to seeing you, your family, your friends, and your neighbors at our January 27th meeting. Please join us!

November General Meeting Synopsis

By Adina Pierce

With the holiday season fast approaching, VEP members gathered at the Vista Park Community Room on Tuesday November 25th for our last general meeting of 2008.

Our first guest was **Nancy Pyle**, who presented a 5-year action plan for her second term of office beginning in January 2009. Her top priorities are: sustainability, youth, international reputation, sustainable green vision, and emergency preparation. See your November 2008 VEP News for more detail on these items.

Nancy is seeking feedback on her 5-year action plan and requesting comments be received by March 2009.

Nancy reported that ten new stores were opened at Oakridge Mall thanks to community input.

Considering the ongoing city budget challenge, Nancy asked:

What services should the city deliver?
What services can the city help facilitate?
What services that the city currently provides should be left to the residents?

Nancy announced that an emergency preparation kickoff event will be held the last Saturday in April at Pioneer High School. VEP member **Helen Castillo** is serving on the District 10 emergency preparedness committee, and she hopes to lead a pilot program in the VEP area.

Nancy's top five priorities for the VEP area are: Vista Park Community Room site improvements, VTA developments & traffic problems in the Capitol Expy / Narvaez Ave. area, Branham Lane improvements, Martial Cottle Park development, and sports fields (in partnership with San Jose Unified School District)

Following Nancy's presentation, we covered VEP business and announcements.

2009 is VEP's 40th year!

November General Meeting Synopsis (con't)

Dave Noel presented proposed updates to two sections of the VEP Constitution and Bylaws: Funds and Community Service Awards. VEP members approved changes to the rest of the C&BL at the September meeting, but requested these sections go back to committee for further refinement. The revised proposals for these two sections were approved unanimously.

Adina Pierce presented a brief Martial Cottle Park master plan update (see article in this issue).

Helen Castillo, Susan Iverson and **Adina Pierce** announced that **Santa** would visit VEP on Sunday November 30th, at our first ever **Santa at the Park** event.

Katherine Decker announced the Blossom Valley Christmas Tree lighting would follow the *Santa at the Park* event on November 30th at 6 pm.

VEP Board of Directors Appoints New Board Members

By Marilyn Rodgers

At the January 5th Board of Directors meeting, two new board members were appointed to fill open positions. New board members are **Debra Suydam** and **Helen Castillo**. Debra is a long time VEP volunteer. She has previously served as both the Hospitality Coordinator and the Volunteer Coordinator. Debra currently coordinates VEP's participation in the annual San Jose Daffodil planting, as well as assisting with the monthly VEP newsletter mailing preparation. She has her own business which develops and designs laboratories. Helen Castillo is currently the VEP Volunteer Coordinator and is enthusiastically working to develop a structured system for volunteers. Helen is a real estate agent with Ventura Barnett Properties.

These two new board positions were the result of a change in the VEP Constitution and Bylaws approved by the membership at the September general meeting. This revision expanded the Board of Directors to a seven members, and provided the Board authority to make appointments to fill open positions. Regularly scheduled elections will take place at the May general membership meeting.

Community Service Awards

By Dave Noel

Since 1975, VEP has been rewarding graduating high school seniors for their exceptional volunteer service with stipends for post-secondary or vocational training. It's hard to believe the 2008-2009 school year is already half over, and it's time to launch our 2009 Community Service Awards.

Members present at our January 27th general meeting will be asked to vote on the 2009 CSA proposal outlined below.

The 2009 CSA program budget was set to \$2000 when members approved on VEP's 2008-2009 annual budget at the September general meeting.

VEP Constitution and By-Laws changes approved by members at the November 25th general meeting changed two fundamental rules that govern the CSA program:

First, we may now pool all applications received from our three sources (Andrew Hill High School, Gunderson High School,

and At-Large), and then grant awards to the top "n" candidates, where "n" is the number of awards specified in the annual proposal.

Second, the eligibility of At-Large candidates has been reduced to students who live in the VEP area, or who are children of VEP members and live in San Jose. Previously At-Large eligibility was defined as a student who lives in San Jose and has been nominated by a VEP member.

As committee chair, I recommend the following proposal for our 2009 CSAs:

1. Solicit a minimum of two candidates each from Andrew Hill and Gunderson High Schools via designated school administrators. Solicit At-Large candidates via publication in the VEP News and VEP emails.

2. VEP's CSA judges will select one winner from each category (Andrew Hill, Gunderson, and At-Large) that has at least one candidate the judges deem worthy of an award. The applicants' names will not be disclosed to the judges. The judges' decisions will be final.

3. If three awards are granted, each will be \$650. If one or two awards are granted, each will be \$1000. If the full amount of this year's appropriation is not awarded, the remaining amount will be returned to VEP's treasury.

Nominations will be solicited in February and March. Applications will be due in late April, and we'll grant our award(s) in late May/early June.

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

For more information or to volunteer to serve on the CSA committee, contact me at DNOEL1234@aol.com or 266-7183.

VEP Constitution and By-Laws Update

By Dave Noel

VEP's Constitution and By-Laws were updated in two steps last Fall. At our September 23rd general meeting, members voted unanimously to approve all the changes proposed by the C&BL committee, except for changes to two specific articles (sections) of the By-Laws. Those sections were "Funds" and "Community Service Awards".

The C&BL committee then updated the proposal for those two sections to address member concerns. At our November 25th general meeting, members voted unanimously to approve the proposed revised changes, as printed in the November VEP News.

Our new Constitution and By-Laws document is now available on our website.

Many thanks to our C&BL committee members who worked on this update for over a year: **David Noel, Dave Fadness, Marilyn Rodgers, Ginger Cardona, Adina Pierce, and Joe Tajnai**; with additional support from **Steven Kinsey, Lynne Kinsey, Susan Iverson, Greg West, and Loiose**.

Our City Forest needs Y-O-U-R Help Now

By Dave Fadness

Our City Forest (OCF) is the non-profit organization we and other volunteer organizations work with in our community tree planting projects. Their purpose is to provide trees, at no cost, for planting in public places like parks, streets, school yards, etc. Individual homeowners can request street trees, as well. OCF also assists in planting them.



In recent years, OCF has donated 267 trees to VEP--and have always sent volunteers to help us plant them. They've never charged us or asked us for one cent.

OCF is funded by individual donations and by a variety of public and private grants. Last year they had their funding cut by the City of San Jose. This year, they're being hit hard by the state budget crisis. As a result, they now desperately need your help.

The following open letter from OCF's Director **Rhonda Berry** is addressed to us. Please respond generously so their program can continue successfully. We need them.

Hello Friends,

You've probably heard of Our City Forest – the local nonprofit that has been the saving grace for San Jose's urban forest. Many of you may have even received one of the 47,000 free shade trees we have planted throughout hundreds of San Jose neighborhoods. In addition, your children most likely attend or previously attended schools or parks where OCF is planting and conducting environmental activities and classes.



There is probably no place in San Jose that hasn't been impacted by this "lean and green" nonprofit. Our air is cleaner, our water purer, our traffic calmer, our views more beautiful, our breathing easier, our summer days cooler, and our quality of life greatly improved thanks to OCF.

Unfortunately, OCF was informed last week that due to the state budget crisis, its state tree planting, tree care and education grant awards have all been frozen. OCF has also been instructed to "stop all work" on these grants unless there is other revenue to support its activities. Even reimbursements from the state for completed work have been suspended, creating a true financial crisis for us.

The City of San Jose has a "Green Vision", and we need a valuable resource like Our City Forest to help achieve that vision. The trees in our city are our "urban forest," the most valuable urban natural resource we have. OCF has been the leader since 1994 in not only bringing attention to the plight of our urban forest but also doing something about it with bold community-based initiatives.

OCF has motivated more than 100,000 residents to come outside and help plant trees! If OCF wasn't out there bringing in the funding for the trees, stakes, arborists, mulch, cement-cutting, trucks, planting coordinators, insurance tools, etc., we wouldn't have anything to help plant!

Your support is needed more than ever to help this wonderful nonprofit continue serving our community. With your support, OCF can continue to grow a healthier city and improve the quality of life in our neighborhoods, schools, and workplaces.

Please consider a tax-deductible donation of any amount which you can make either:

1. Online: link to www.ourcityforest.org; look for the "CLICK HERE TO DONATE" circle located on the tree trunk, or

2. Mail: send your check made out to "Our City Forest" to: Our City Forest, 151 W. Mission Street, Suite 151, San Jose, CA 95110

Thank you so much! If you need more information, please contact me at rberry@ourcityforest.org or call 408-998-7337 x106.

"The best time to plant a tree was twenty years ago. The second best time is now." - Anonymous

PG&E Shade & Save Program Extended thru April!

~ Free shade trees ~
Receive a free tree from Our City Forest and help make Silicon Valley more green. We plant trees in park strips, schools, parks, neighborhoods, and in other public areas that could use more trees.



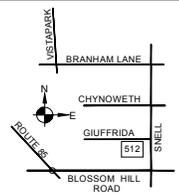
For more information, call OCF at (408) 998-7337 or visit <http://www.ourcityforest.org/pge/index.html>.

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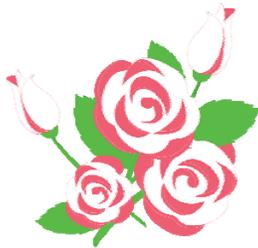
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It's Bare Root Tree Time

By John Marks

Most nurseries are fully stocked with bare root trees and roses now. If you are looking for unusual fruit trees to add to your garden, new this year is Cot-N-Candy, an early season, self-fruiting aprium (apricot and plum cross) that offers extra sweet, juicy 2-3-inch fruit. Flavov-rosa is a variety of pluot (plum and apricot cross) that produces very sweet, medium-size fruit with dark purple skin and red flesh. It ripens toward the end of May.



You can also plant a whole orchard with one tree called the Fruit Salad tree. It is a combination of peach, nectarine, plum and apricot all on the same tree.

California Dreamin' is a hybrid tea (long stemmed) rose with beautiful white flowers tinged in pink. It provides a strong citrus fragrance, is disease resistant, and grows well here. Pink Promise, another hybrid tea, not only offers a perfectly formed large pink bloom, it also is the official rose of the National Cancer Foundation (a portion of each sale goes to the foundation).

Once you bring your plant home, make sure to keep it moist. It's a good idea to soak the plant for several hours before planting. Inspect the plant's roots; healthy plants will be symmetrical around the trunk. If roots are knotted, broken or appear diseased, the plant should be discarded, or if possible, returned and exchanged.

Dig a hole at least as wide as the roots and amend the soil with organic material (compost or mulch) that equals one-third to one-half of the amount of soil removed and mix thoroughly. Mound the soil in the middle of the hole and place roots over the mound, backfill with amended soil, and as you fill the hole use your hands to firmly tamp down the soil to remove air pockets. Make a water basin slightly wider than the root system, and fill with water.

Keep you new plant moist for the first couple of weeks. Once established, deep water once or twice a week should be sufficient. In six to eight weeks add a layer of mulch to conserve moisture and keep the weeds away.

DO NOT TOP TREES: Topping trees is very harmful to proper tree growth and appearance. When a tree is topped, it is shocked into producing fast growth to the sides of the topped branches. The new growth will look very unnatural as it matures over time, and will also be weaker than normal growth. For full details, see your April 2006 VEP News (available at www.vepca.net).

Rose Pruning Time

By John Marks

It's Tough-Love time for roses; that means stripping leaves, taking shears to lanky canes, and ripping out suckers. This isn't brain surgery; anybody can do it and should. You don't have to thin out the center of the plant, but you should clip an interior cane that crosses another. And do remove the leaves, so the rose will think it's going dormant. Cut above the node, where the a new shoot will grow. And if you make a mistake, don't sweat it; roses are pretty good at handling themselves. and feed them compost if you have some. If you're interested in some easy lessons, and tips from the masters, you can get three hours of instruction and practice at San Jose's Heritage Rose Garden at Spring and Taylor (or Coleman and Taylor) from 9 a.m. to noon every Wednesday and Friday. For more info, go to www.heritageroses.us.

Let the aphids come, and then two weeks later, the lady-bugs will come and eat the aphids.

www.crimereports.com

By Dave Noel and Adina Pierce

To check up on crime in your area, visit www.crimereports.com. You can enter an address and get a map that shows recent crimes reported in that area, including information about the date and type of crime, and final disposition. You can even sign up for automated email updates for crimes in the area you selected.

For your convenience, we have links to [crimereports.com](http://www.crimereports.com) and California's Megan's Law website on our homepage, www.vepca.net.

Helpful City of San Jose Phone Numbers:

By Dave Noel

Abandoned Shopping Carts	(408) 535-3500
Abandoned Vehicle on street	(408) 277-5305
Barking, Injured or Stray Dogs	(408) 578-7297
Blighted Properties	(408) 277-4528
Graffiti 24-hour Hotline	(408) 277-2758
Household Hazardous Waste Disposal	(408) 299-7300
Inoperable Vehicle on Private Property	(408) 277-5305
Potholes	(408) 277-4373
Recyclables Scavenging	(408) 277-4528
San Jose City Hall Customer Service	(408) 535-3500
Street Light Repair	(408) 277-5517
Vista Park Community Room Reservations	(408) 268-2053



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Martial Cottle Update

By Adina Pierce

Things are moving along quickly in the planning phase of Martial Cottle Park. After the October 23, 2008 public workshop, VEP submitted a document outlining concerns we had about their three alternatives. The main points are:

We do not support an entrance on Branham Lane

We would like the proposed buffer zone between the homes along the western edge of the park increased

At the December 10 Task Force meeting, the county presented another alternative. The main changes were the absence of a dog park, and lake. It was determined that a dog park does not fit within the guidelines of the deed restrictions for the park. Instead of a lake, they are proposing a wetland area.

At the meeting, Marilyn Rogers and Mike Bousman spoke about VEP's disapproval of the Branham Lane entrance. Because of this, the design alternative is being re-worked, and will be presented at the next meeting in February (the meetings originally planned January were rescheduled) .

Adina Pierce and Charlie Friedericks also spoke to the planning team before the meeting, expressing our concerns about the proposed 30 foot buffer zone. We feel this is not enough, based on privacy and security concerns.

If you would like more information about Martial Cottle Park and VEP's involvement, please contact:

Adina Pierce at 408-362-0937 or adinap@yahoo.com

Marilyn Rogers at 408-225-7553 or MRodgersRN@aol.com

Upcoming Meetings:

Community Workshop #3

Date: Tuesday, February 10, 2009

Time: 6:30 pm to 8:30 pm.

Location: Gunderson High School - Forum/Cafeteria

Task Force Meeting # 6

Date: Tuesday, February 17, 2009

Time: 6:00 pm to 8:00 pm.

Location: Gunderson High School – Media Center/ Library



Overlooking Martial Cottle Park at the snowy Mt. Hamilton

Add VEP's website www.vepca.net
to your "favorites"



Precious Moments In Time

Family and Children Portraits

Weddings and Special Events

Photography by Jeri Arstingstall

★ VEP MEMBER ★

(408) 281-3393

Santa at the Park

By Adina Pierce

On Sunday, November 30, the first annual Santa at the Park event was held in the Vista Park Community Room. Santa was accompanied by Jingles, the Elf. This was a free community event hosted by VEP. **Jeri Arstingstall** of Precious Moments in Time donated her photographic expertise, and took over 60 portraits of children and families with Santa. Craft tables were set up so the kids could color and make Holiday cards while they were waiting. Cookies, hot cider, and hot chocolate were served.

After the Santa in the Park event, Santa also made an appearance at the **Decker's** Christmas Tree lighting ceremony.

If you had your portrait taken, and still have not downloaded your file, please contact Adina Pierce at adinap@yahoo.com.

Thank you to **Helen Castillo, Susan Iverson, Jeri Arstingstall, Adina Pierce**, for your time and effort in organizing such a wonderful event for the community. Also thank you to Santa and Jingles for donating your time to make this day truly special.



Community Christmas Tree

Katherine and Dann Decker have reported that 9 barrels full of food and toys were collected for Second Harvest Food Bank and City Team Ministries. They extend their thanks to all who turned out of the tree lighting, The Blossom Valley Times media, **Nancy Pyle**, and to all who donated to the Blossom Valley Christmas Tree Fund. Tax-deductible donations to the Blossom Valley Christmas Tree Fund can be made at any Wells Fargo Bank. It only takes 1000 \$5.00 donations to keep the tree going every

Oak Grove School District

(Parkview Elementary School)

By Manny Barbara, Superintendent



As of this writing, the state budget remains unsettled. School districts are expecting a reduction of \$300 per student retroactive to July 1, 2008. This translates to a \$3 million reduction to our District on top of the \$5 million already cut over the last several years. We have been able to sustain some of our key programs, such as class size reduction at grades K-3, only because we have already closed schools and have enjoyed the support of the greater community with the renewal of the Parcel Tax in 2006. One proposal from the Governor would reduce the student instructional year from 180 to 175 days. All of us in public education are anxiously awaiting the impact of the final budget, once it is signed by the Governor.

And after 36 years serving in the Oak Grove School District, I will be retiring at the end of this school year. I started in 1973 as a school psychologist and served in various capacities at all three intermediate schools (Bernal, Davis, and Herman) and as a principal at Baldwin, Oak Ridge, and Davis Schools. It has been my honor and privilege to serve as Superintendent for the past 10 years. Oak Grove has been like a second family to me over the years, and I have been fortunate to work with so many outstanding staff, parents, students and community members in my various roles. Thank you. Our Board of Trustees will begin the process of selecting a new superintendent and is in the process of soliciting input from the community. There are two open Community Forums being held by Leadership Associates, the search firm hired by our Board of Trustees. The first will be on Wednesday, January 21 at 6:00 p.m., at the Oak Grove School District Office, 6578 Santa Teresa Boulevard. The second will be held on Thursday, January 22 at 8:15 a.m., at Christopher Elementary School Library, 565 Coyote Road. You may also attend the public Board Meetings on Thursday, January 22 and Thursday, February 12, starting at 7:30 p.m., at the District Office.

As always, please feel free to contact me regarding any matters pertaining to the Oak Grove School District.
email: superintendent@ogsd.k12.ca.us Phone: (408) 227-8300 ext. 202

Carson Elementary School

By Betsy Doss, Principal

Happy new year from the Carson Cougars. January is an exciting month for us. On Monday, Jan. 12, we were able to use our new grass field for the first time. The students had a great time playing tag, kickball and soccer. Of course, the 75 degree weather made it an extra special day. I also want to inform parents that Carson will be hosting Kindergarten Tours on Jan. 26, 27 and 30. Please call Corinne at 535-6287 for a reservation. The tours will start at 8:30 am each day. Yes, it is already time to start thinking of the next school year.

Carson is holding its annual "Star Gazing" night on Jan. 29 at 6:00 PM. We are hoping for a nice clear night.

More good news...a group of dedicated students and parents have been interested in refurbishing our garden. So, we wrote a grant and will be receiving \$5,000 to support bringing the garden back to life. We are interested in making it a neighborhood project with garden plots available to VEP members. More news to come on this in the Spring!

Gunderson High School Happenings

By Cary Catching, Principal



I am pleased to share with our community some of the exciting events that are happening at Gunderson High School over the next few weeks.

As the first semester of the school year has drawn to a close, we are gearing up for the recruitment period for incoming 8th graders. Information about Gunderson has been sent out to all 8th grade families who live in our enrollment area. We are inviting them to attend tours of the campus, shadow days and/or parent information sessions. We have been fortunate in that we have seen a steady increase in our enrollment over the past few years, and hope this trend continues.

The issue that has taken up a lot of our time and has caused a fair amount of stress to schools and educators is the current state of the budget. As our elected politicians continue to try and decide what is right and fair for California, our schools and children feel the brunt of their indecision. As a result of the current budget crisis, SJUSD has instituted a mandatory spending freeze. Fortunately, many of us saw this move on the horizon and spent money on materials and supplies early in the year for later use. This means that neither teachers nor students should feel any ill effects – there are plenty of supplies; all students have textbooks and access to necessary technology; and the school is in a good state of repair. In addition, since the construction projects are funded from bond money, this work has continued and will be completed. The 2009/2010 school year will definitely feel more of an impact though. As we learn more about these specifics, we will keep our families and communities informed. Thank you for your support as we chart these unknown and tumultuous waters.

Finally, a pleasant reminder to our neighbors... The Gunderson property does not house a dog park. Many of our athletes and coaches (especially those who play soccer) have noticed an increased amount of waste on the fields. Dogs, leashed or unleashed, are not allowed on the facility. If you decide to bring your dog on campus irregardless of this rule, please be courteous enough to clean up after Fido. The students appreciate it!



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San Jose Unified School District

By Veronica Lewis, Board Vice President

I am sure all of you have been hearing about our State Budget Crisis; here are some thoughts and comments regarding the Governor's latest proposal. Recently our Superintendent, Don Iglesias mentioned this quote " There is an old saying, how we treat the most vulnerable in our society is a sign of who we are as a people. Clearly our children are the most vulnerable. They can't vote, they don't have lobbyists, they aren't eligible for a bailout, and they are easy pickings for politicians. They just have us, the educators who care about them and their future, and the legislatures who realize and understand the impact of these devastating cuts".



Mr. Iglesias also provided the following information about our District: San Jose Unified has made great gains in student literacy levels and graduation rates, (second in the nation), narrowed the achievement gap by 20%, high school graduates twice as likely to go to college. All this progress is at risk with the recent budget proposal currently being discussed by our Governor and legislators. Public schools educate 90% of the children in California...your children, your grandchildren, your brothers and sisters, nieces and nephews. In spite of California being close to last in the nation among states in per pupil spending, they have already taken a \$3 Billion hit this year. In the last couple of years in SJUSD, we have cut librarians, increased class size, reduced teaching staff, support and administrative staffs. We have closed schools, closed programs and reduced budgets. The level of cuts being proposed for 2009-10 are catastrophic and threaten to erase all of the improvement we have made". What the Governor's proposal means to SJUSD: 2008-09 , \$10 million cut (mid year cut of 5%) \$275 per student. 2009-10: \$10 million cut 5% ongoing (\$275) Additional \$ 6 million cut (3%) (\$190) . Our reserves cannot sustain this level of cut in revenue. We will have to cut programs, and look at furlough days and consider a reduction in the length of the school year. We are making every effort to provide our local legislators with the devastating affects to our school district . Although we can hope for the best but in reality, we must prepare for the worst.

Veronica_Lewis@sjusd.org



San Jose Named "Most Secure" Big City

By Office of Mayor Chuck Reed - City of San Jose

San Jose was ranked first among large metropolitan areas for "Most Secure U.S. Places to Live," according to research conducted by Farmers Insurance Group .

The rankings used several variables including crime statistic, extreme weather, risk of natural disasters, environmental hazards, terrorism threats, air quality, life expectancy, and job loss numbers. The study divided 379 U.S. municipalities into three groups: large metropolitan areas, mid-size cities, and small towns. The study ranked Corvallis, Oregon and Olympia, Washington first among small towns and mid-size cities respectively.

High School Theatre is Alive and Kicking

By Cathy McFall, VCS Theatre Department

Do you love theatre? Have you ever thought of investigating High School Theatre? With the demise of our own American Musical Theatre of San Jose and with the economy affecting how we carefully spend our dollar, so many high schools in the area have wonderful theatre programs that don't cost an arm and a leg to attend. It is an affordable and interesting alternative to try. These shows are performed by energetic and enthusiastic high school students who are thrilled to be on stage. The audience's are always a positive experience with proud parents, family, faculty, staff and friends cheering on their actor's.

This spring Valley Christian High School is very proud to announce the production of Victor Hugo's *Les Miserables*. This is a classic story of one man's struggle to redeem himself and another man's efforts to bring him down. Jean Valjean is a man forced by circumstances into a life of crime when he steals bread to save his sisters starving children, and ends up behind bars for 19 years. Upon his release, the destitute Valjean attempts to rob the home of a bishop, but the bishop has mercy on him, and Valjean realizes the meaning of forgiveness, becoming an honest and upright businessman and civic leader. But Javert a former guard at the prison where Valjean served his time, is now the chief of police, and he is determined not to let Valjean live down his criminal past.



Valley Christian High School Theatre is state of the art, comfortable and easy to find. Located at 100 Skyway drive, right off Monterey Highway in south San Jose. Parking is free and just a short walk to the theatre

.Showdates and times are 7:29 pm, March 12, 13, 14th. 19th, 20th and 21st. 25th, 26th, 27th and 28th with matinees at 2:00 pm on the 21st and the 28th as well. Cost is \$14.00 for general and adult admission, \$12.00 for students and seniors and \$10.00 for children 12 and under.

You can purchase tickets from your computer by going to the www.vcs.net website and following the prompts or you can call Cathy McFall at 408-513-2438 and order tickets over the phone.



Susan Iverson

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December 13 - 10 am to Midnight



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5th Annual Memorial Day Event: Please Help!

By Dave Fadness

Planning is already underway for this year's *Memorial Day Parade & Festival* to be held on May 25. This event is getting bigger and better every year. With your help, we can continue this positive trend. Your early involvement is encouraged.



We need volunteers...

- To find entertainers and parade participants.
- To develop event games and attractions.
- To find event sponsors and donors.
- To pick up and return equipment the day before and after.
- To post parade route "NO PARKING" signs the day before.
- To help with set-up the morning of the event.
- To help with booth duty and event games.
- To help clean-up after the event.

Your help in taking care of one or two of these details will make this event successful for kids of all ages in our community. Let me know if you or someone you know will add to the fun.

If you or a neighbor have an antique, classic, or hotrod car, have them give me a call if they're interested in showing it off in our parade. If you belong to a service group or other organization, we'd like to have you there with us—especially if you'd be in costume—anything from square dancing or scouts to...well, you name it. We also need trucks to move items to and from our Festival site.

Call me at 578-6428 or email me at drfadness@sbcglobal.net if you're willing to help even in a small way with our fifth-annual *Memorial Day Parade & Festival*. Don't wait because you think someone else will step forward or because it's long from now; we need your ideas now and to know now whether your help will be available.

Above all, please be sure to mark your calendars, spread the word, and plan to attend with your family and friends on Monday, May 25, 2009.

Crafters Wanted

By Ginger Cardona

VEP Memorial Day Festival will have an area to sell crafts. We are looking for people interested in creating and selling items. Please contact me if you are interested. (Information on the back of the newsletter.)

Paulina's Day Care

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- ★ Open from 6:00AM to 5:30PM.
- ★ VEP Member.
- ★ For more information and referrals call (408) 227-1294.

Upcoming Volunteer Events

Volunteer Corner

By Helen Castillo

Welcome to 2009 it looks like its going to be a good year already! VEP is off and running in preparing for the upcoming events

There is a list of events that take place throughout the year. Please look at the list and see if there is anything you are interested in helping out with. Your help is needed and appreciated.

Volunteers needed throughout the year for the following Events

1. If you would like to write an article that you believe is informative to our community. You can write an article and send it to our Editor Susan Iverson. Deadline is 2nd Friday of the month. All articles must approved by the board members.
2. 3rd week of the month from Sept-June we will need 5 volunteers total to help fold/label and deliver the news letters to post office.
3. In January and March on the 3rd weekend, the kick off membership drive for VEP begins. 15-20 volunteers will be needed
4. Distribution of flyers - need 30 volunteers for each month flyers are distributed October, March, and April. Each volunteer will distribute about 125 flyers in the neighborhood.
5. CSA student awards given annually 5-8 volunteers needed starts in January, winners announced in May. 6.
6. Help out with the Home Fair in March.
7. Beautification/ clean-up projects, 10-30 people needed. 1- 2 events per year will let you know in advance.
8. The Memorial Day Parade event 30-60 volunteers needed, there will be a sign-up sheet at the January's meeting for specific jobs. Here are some examples.
 - Help get donations
 - Set up booths/ day of event.
 - Take down booths
 - Work booths
 - Pick-up trash
 - Pick-up ice chests for event
 - Work a booth on the day of the event
 - Make calls to the schools and other volunteers

Disaster Prep Voluneters

30 Volunteers needed to take part in the Disaster/Emergency Preparedness VEP Team starting January 2009. We will be educating ourselves for an emergency and brainstorm ideas at meetings. If you would like to take part please call the number below. The main objective is to have VEP prepared for when a disaster hits.

My pledge to this community is to make it a memorable, fun, safe and rewarding experience. Your help in anyway is needed and very much appreciated. If you have any question please don't hesitate to call Helen Castillo your volunteer coordinator at (408) 981-5902.

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District 10's Second Annual Senior Walk

Councilmember Nancy Pyle

On Wednesday, February 11th Councilmember Nancy Pyle of San Jose's District 10 is hosting the second annual *Westfield Oakridge Winter Walk and Resource Fair for Seniors*. This event will begin at 8:30am in the Sears courtyard of the Westfield Oakridge Mall located at 925 Blossom Hill Road in San Jose. Registration and a free healthy breakfast will take place from 8:30am to 9:00am. A resource fair focused on tips for healthy seniors as well as a guided walk around the mall with senior specific instructional exercise stations will take place between 9:00am and 10:30am. A raffle featuring tickets to the SAP Open Tennis Tournament and a variety of other prizes will take place between 10:30am and 11:00am when the event ends. This is an event no senior should miss!

Street Light Shutoffs

By Stephanie Holm, Office of Nancy Pyle

The City has shutoff approximately 900 streetlights along arterial streets throughout the City as an ongoing General Fund reduction strategy. DOT, the Police Department, and the Office of Economic Development worked together to identify locations where shutoffs could occur without impacting public safety or economic development, but we have received calls from people who feel that residential areas, not just arterial streets are being impacted. Councilmember Pyle recently requested additional review of the light locations to make sure that we are doing everything we can to prevent any impact on residential areas. If there are any specific lights that have been turned off that VEP is concerned about, please email Stephanie.Holm@sanjoseca.gov the light pole number and the location so that we can review specific issues on a case by case basis.

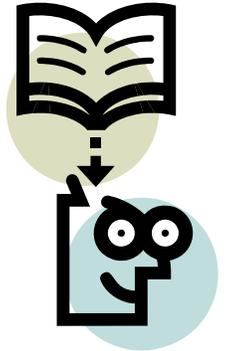


**Renew your
VEP membership
today!**

Events at the Pearl Avenue Branch Library

By Jane Cronkhite, Librarian

Zumba Dance Aerobics is a fun way to get fit while incorporates Latin rhythm and dance on Tuesdays, January 13, 20, and 27 at 6 pm.



Get that Job! on Fridays January 16, 23, and 30 at 4 pm. Join us for a three week series on job searching, building your resume, and, and interviewing skills. The workshops require preregistration at the library's customer service desk.

Survival English for Seniors is a beginning/intermediate class on listening and speaking English. The class is offered every Tuesday and Thursday from 9-11 am from January 20-June 4, 2009. Enrollment is open through www.metroednet or (408) 723-6450.

Learn more about the history, art, culture and dances of Persia at Ballet Afsaneh on Saturday, January 24 at 11:30 am.

Children in grades 4-7 are invited to our Children's Read and Win Game on Monday, January 26 at 3:30. We will read *The Witch of Blackbird Pond* by Elizabeth George Speare.

The library now offers Gaming Fitness for Adults on Thursdays at 10:30 am. Enjoy gentle exercise, even while you sit, playing the Nintendo Wii with games like bowling, tennis, and golf.

Story Times:

- NEW! Spanish-English Story time (Cuentos en Inglés y Español) for toddlers and preschoolers is on Tuesday, January 6 at 11:30 am.
- Pajama Story time for all ages is on Wednesday, January 7 at 7 pm.
- Preschool Story time for ages 3-5 is every Wednesday at 11:30 am.
- Toddler Story Time with Stay and Play for ages 18-36 months is every Friday at 10:30 am.
- Family Story time is held on Saturdays at 10:30 am. Regular events and workshops:
- The ESL Conversation Club meets on Mondays at 5 pm.
- The library now offers Internet Basics training and Internet Básico en Español on Tuesdays. Internet Basics meets 11 am. Internet Básico meets at 6 pm.
- Wii Gaming for Teens is every Thursday at 4 pm.
- Teens, are you looking to volunteer in your neighborhood? Join teensReach on Friday, January 2 at 4 p.m. Teens must be 13 years or older to participate.
- This month's Children's Craft will be a surprise craft on Friday, January 23 at 4 p.m. All materials will be provided.
- The Pearl Avenue Book Club will discuss *Not a Genuine Black Man* by Brian Copeland on Wednesday, January 28 at 6:30 pm.

Friends of the Pearl Avenue Branch Library:

- The Friends of the Pearl Avenue Branch Library will meet on January 20 at 6:30 pm. For more information on the Friends, please contact Wilma at (408) 226-0890.

Pearl Avenue Branch Library is located at 4270 Pearl Avenue. For questions please call 808-3053 during business hours.

It's Time to Renew Your VEP Membership

By Dave Fadness and Dave Noel

VEP membership is based on a calendar year, January through December, so it's time to renew your membership. You'll find a remit envelop in this newsletter. Please be sure to fill in the information requested, enclose your \$20 check made payable to VEP, and mail it back to us as soon as possible--while it's still fresh in your mind. That's all there is to it!

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

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

What is VEP Community Association?

VEP is an all-volunteer organization of your neighbors working to improve our neighborhoods.

VEP sponsors many projects and events that improve safety, our quality of life, and the appearance of our community.

VEP volunteers make our neighborhood's needs, views, and concerns known to government at all levels.

VEP was founded in 1969. We are one of the largest, most successful, and most continuously active and enduring grass roots volunteer organizations in Santa Clara County.

Why join VEP?

To receive our newsletter nine times a year.

To receive monthly email alerts.

To keep our neighborhoods beautiful, safe, strong, and prepared.

To participate in and support effective neighborhood activities and representation.

To support VEP's annual *Community Service Awards* for high school graduates.

To be part of an outstanding volunteer community organization with 40 years of success in 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? _____

I am willing to volunteer for:

- Beautification/clean-up projects
- VEP News/ mailing prep
- Memorial Day Parade & Festival
- Distribute flyers Serve on a committee
- Serve as a VEP officer or committee chair
- Other _____

Please let us know: I prefer getting my newsletters by email.

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

Electronic Waste Recycling Event

By Gail Osmer

Almaden Valley residents will be able to recycle their electronic waste and old TV's on January 31st. from 9am to 3pm during a free event at Almaden Community Center, 6445 Camden Ave. This event is sponsored by The Volunteer Center of Silicon Valley.

All computer and electronic equipment will be accepted, including: desktops, laptops, monitors, printers, copy and fax machines, stereos, DVD players and telephones.

For more information call Steve Ramona at 943-9943



Disaster Preparation Volunteers Needed

By Helen Castillo

*Please look for the sign up sheet for at our January Meeting

*Starting January -we need volunteers to participate in a pilot program put on by the city of San Jose emergency preparedness district 10. -it will consist of meetings and a two hour home and family disaster preparedness training class. Imagine, in two hours you can learn about.

1. Hazards you should prepare for in San Jose
2. Ways to reduce the risks of loss and injury before disaster strikes
3. How to create a disaster plan
4. What you should include in your personal and family disaster supplies
5. Opportunities to become even more involved and disaster prepared.

For more info or would like to help call Helen Castillo- 408-981-5902 or hcastillo@vbprop.com

Less is more

Contributed By Dave Fadness

It's called the big box syndrome. We buy more stuff at big-box retailers. We drive bigger cars to haul all that stuff home. We have bigger homes to put everything in. Yet somehow we still don't seem to have enough room for everything.

Here are some specifics: In the 1950's, the average woman in the U.S. had four pairs of shoes. Today, it's thirteen pairs (and many more for a lot of women). In 1970, the average size of a home was 1,400 square feet. Today, it's 2,340 square-feet. So, if more space and more clutter go hand in hand, even-with that additional space, how can you get clutter under control?

Here are some ideas about how to simplify, pare down, and focus on what's really important...

~Pretend that you are moving~

It's time to pare down. If you had to move, would you take it with you? Do you really need three hair dryers? Or what about all of those books; do you really need to keep all of them? Donate what you don't need.

~Keep only what you love~

Ask yourself, do you really have to keep it? If not, go ahead and get rid of it. Put more focus on using the things that bring you happiness.

~The benefits of less~

Less stuff equals more time. With less stuff, there's less to clean, organize, and dust. With less stuff, your house looks uncluttered and cleaner. Let this fact motivate you.

~Learn to love containers~

Containers instantly add order to chaos and are the secret weapon of organizers everywhere. Put all the kids' shoes in a tub, the newspapers in a bucket, fingernail polish in a basket, and so on.

~Everything in its place~

Yes, this is something your mother always said--and she was right. When everything has a place on a shelf, in a cabinet, or in a bin, you'll avoid counter clutter and junk-filled drawers.

~Remember the two-year rule~

If you haven't used something for two years, chances are you won't use it again. This particularly applies to clothes. Get rid of it!

~Don't get buried under sentimentality~

Sure, it's nice to keep possessions you cherish, but do you really *need* your high school prom dress? If you are keeping your wedding dress, have it professionally boxed at a dry cleaners and put it in storage. What about your children's collection of stuffed animals? Keep one to pass on to the next generation, then donate the rest.

~One in, one out~

This rule is pivotal to maintaining the simple, clutter-free existence you've worked so hard to achieve: If something new comes into your house, something old has to go out.

~Maximize your storage~

There are all sorts of helpful items these days that help you make the most of small spaces. Ottomans with removable tops are the perfect place to store toys, board games, or extra bedding. And under-bed baskets are great for storing large or awkward items.

~Organize by bits~

It's going to take awhile to go through your entire house--after all, it may have taken you up to twenty years to acquire all of

your current clutter. So be easy on yourself and try not to attempt too much in one sitting. Start with one closet and give yourself a six-hour limit.

~Controlling the paper chase~

If stacks of paper are overwhelming your kitchen counters, desktop, and tabletops, here are a few quick ways to get them under control:

Have your recycle bin ready. When you bring in the mail, toss out the junk mail right away.

Read and route. When paperwork enters the house, read it and route it to the other appropriate family members.

Create in-baskets for everyone. Every family member gets one for signed permission slips, phone messages, bills, etc.

Keep a communal calendar. Post everyone's schedule on one calendar, and keep all schedules and invites in a binder for backup.

Take bill paying online. You can receive and pay your bills on the Internet for a happy, paperless existence.

~Secret weapons~

Here are the essential tools that help you contain clutter:

Over-the-door vinyl shoe organizers. These aren't just for shoes anymore. Install one on the closet door in your child's room for an easy place to put small toys.

Small stacking bins with drawers. Use a few of these in a cabinet—one for first aid, one for kids' medicine. You can pull out the entire drawer for easy access.

Sliding shelf baskets. You can buy these in a variety of home improvement stores. Install one in the pantry and you'll be able to pull out everything on the shelf. No more finding four-year old cans of soup way in the back behind stacks of pasta boxes!

Sub shelves. These help you create a shelf within a shelf and are especially handy for tall cabinets with few shelves. For example, install the extra shelf, put plates on the bottom shelf and then place mugs or glasses on top of the sub-shelf unit.

~Straighten up your house~

Once you've organized your house, keeping it that way is easier.

Do one room at a time. Attack one room at a time, even if it's one room a day (or one room a week).

No zigzagging. Have a plan to start at one end of the room and methodically work your way across.

Go for instant gratification. Do the things that make the biggest difference first. Make the bed. Recycle the stack of newspapers. Put away the laundry.

Get it out. If something belongs in another room, put it there.

Baby steps. Avoid going from one floor of your home to another without returning an item to where it belongs. Keep a basket next to the stairs to collect items that need to be put away, and grab one each time you go by.

~What to do with un-needed stuff~

1. Donate to charity. Try charityguide.org or justgive.org or goodwill.org.

2. Give it away. Post your unwanted items on Freecycle.org (a San Jose group) or freemesa.org.

3. Sell it online. Try ebay.com or craigslist.com.

4. Set it aside (but don't wait) until VEP's annual Community-wide Garage sale in May. You'll probably be able to unload many of those unused treasures for cash, then conveniently donate the rest on the same day. Watch your VEP NEWS for the date.

[Ed. Note: Portions of this article were taken from a 2007 real estate newsletter produced by Buffini & Company.]

City of San Jose Green Vision Update

By Office of Mayor Chuck Reed

At the California Clean Tech Open's third annual awards gala, Mayor Reed presented the winners and runners up with the inaugural San Jose Prize for Green Vision Innovation. A total of 13 start-up companies received a prize that includes a year of furnished office space at the Environmental Business Cluster as well as donated services from a number of private sector companies. The Prize for Green Vision Innovation attracts emerging companies to San Jose to grow and create Clean Tech jobs within the City.

Borgata Recycling has opened a 19,000-square-foot manufacturing and warehouse facility in San Jose. The new recycling center will convert used tires into construction materials, creating an environmentally-friendly and cost effective solution. The company is also in the process of developing technology to turn the tires into diesel fuel.

Mayor Reed joined San Francisco Mayor Gavin Newsom and Oakland **Mayor Ron Dellums** to announce a regional partnership to transform the Bay Area into the Electric Vehicle Capital of the United States. Working with the global electric transportation company, Better Place, the region will work to expedite permitting and installation of charging outlets and create a regional standard for Electric Vehicle infrastructure Regulation

San Jose City Parkstrip Tree Rules

By Dave Noel

Here's quick reference to the rules regarding street trees:

PERMITS:

- You need a permit to plant or trim a street tree
- The permit is free
- A permit is not required if you use a pre-approved tree service (see website)

VERTICAL CLEARANCES:

- 8 feet from sidewalk to canopy
- 13 feet from street to canopy

PLANTING CLEARANCES:

- See City Code #13.28.190, reprinted in the May 2006 VEP News (available at www.vepca.net).

FOR MORE INFO:

- www.sanjoseca.gov/transportation
- Ralph Mize, 277-2756, ralph.mize@sanjoseca.gov



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Gone Phishing

by Dave Noel

Phishing is the term used to describe sneaky ways crooks try to get you to reveal personal information via the internet or phone so that they can access your bank account and so on. A few recent scams involve persons pretending to be from the IRS (bogus tax refund), Social Security Administration (bogus cost of living increase), or the local courthouse (bogus jury duty).

Just remember a simple rule: never give out your personal information to someone who contacts you. Only give your information to people you contact and trust.

Never use hyperlinks in emails you receive to access bank accounts, ebay accounts, and so on. Instead, open a new browser window, then go to the institution's official website, or call the institution by phone.

Don't keep your social security card in your wallet, and be very wary of giving your social security number to anyone.

How many of you have fallen for this one: Click here to view an e-card from a friend... now enter your email address and password. Guess what, no e-card. But pretty soon someone might use your email account to send spam, so be sure to change your password immediately if you get fooled into revealing it to a "phisherman".



Where is the Vista Park Community Room?

"Vista Park" is a city park; it's at the intersection of Hyde Park Drive and New Compton Drive, here in our VEP community. We meet in the Community Room which is on the east side of the park, at 475 Hyde Park Drive. It's easy to find...

From its intersection with Branham Lane, take Vistapark Drive south to Hyde Park Drive (that's where Vistapark Drive ends). Turn right on Hyde Park Drive and drive a few blocks to just beyond the bridge over Canoas Creek. The parking lot and Community Room will be on your right. (If you get to the stop sign at New Compton Drive, you've gone too far.) We look forward to seeing you there!

VEP Community Calendar

January / February 2009

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
25	19 Martin Luther King Day 	20 Friends of the Pearl Avenue Branch Library - 6:30pm Inauguration Day!	21	22	23	24
25	26 Read and Win - Pearl Ave Library - 3:30pm Lunar New Year	27 VEP General Meeting - Vista Park Community Center - 7:30 pm	28	29 <i>Pfeiffer's People</i> (Gunderson Drama Department) 29th @ 7:30pm, 30th and 31st @ 7pm	30	31 E-Waste Recycling - Almaden Community Center 9am to 3pm
1	2 VEP Exec Committee Meeting - 7:30 pm - Vista Park Community Center Ground Hog Day	3	4	5	6 VEP NEWS Articles Deadline	7
8	9	10 Martial Cottle Community Workshop #3 6:30 pm to 8:30 pm. @ Gunderson High School	11	12	13	14 Valentine's Day 
15	16 President's Day 	17 Martial Cottle Task Force Meeting # 6 6:00 pm to 8:00 pm @ Gunderson High School	18	19	20	21
22	23	24 VEP General Meeting - Vista Park Community Center - 7:30 pm	25	26	27	28

THE VEP NEWS



VEP Community Association

P.O. Box 18111 San Jose, CA 95158

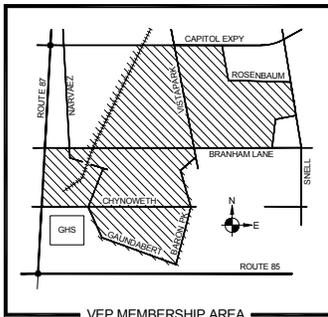
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Published monthly by VEP Community Association, a not-for-profit organization of volunteers established in 1969 to serve and represent more than 2000 homes in the Blossom Valley area of southern San Jose. VEP is dedicated to neighborhood maintenance 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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Volunteer Coord.	Helen Castillo		hcastillo@vbprop.com



Check our website: www.vepca.net

Community Room

Vista Park

in the
7:30 pm

January 27th Meeting

Be sure to attend
VEP's