

VEP MEETING

7:30 P.M. TUESDAY
March 28, 2000

GUNDERSON HIGH SCHOOL
Faculty Lounge

AGENDA

PRESENTATION: OAKRIDGE MALL EXPANSION
The developer and Oakridge Mall's manager
will attend to answer your questions.

Call for Nominees
Slate of VEP Officers for 2000-2001.
(Elections in April)

VEP's Annual Community Service Award
Vote on our recommended allocation of \$1000 for
graduating seniors from Andrew Hill and Gunderson High.

Your Neighborhood Concerns

EVERYONE IS WELCOME-INVITE A NEIGHBOR

Our March 28th VEP Meeting
-Greg West, VEP President

Our March meeting will give VEP members an opportunity to find out
the real details of the roughly 300,000 sq. ft. Oakridge Mall
expansion. This expansion will add about one-third to the mall's
current size and will include the building of a parking structure.
You may remember that this was a hot issue during the recent
campaign for District 10 City Council Seat.

Denial of my request made on behalf of VEP to the mayor and city
council for a delay in considering the project was the subject of
a last-minute campaign brochure attacking Pat Dando and promoting
Nancy Pyle. We will have the opportunity to discuss the project in
detail with Larry Green of Westfield America, Inc. (the owners of
Oakridge Mall) and Oakridge manager Kim Brewer, and to find out
what the real impacts of this expansion will be on our
neighborhood.

We have some business to take care of, as well:

- * VEP Board Elections will be held at our April Meeting. We will
call for nominees at our March meeting.
- * We need to discuss and vote on an Executive Committee
recommendation that VEP's annual Community Service Award be set at
\$1000 for a graduating senior from both Andrew Hill and Gunderson
High Schools who have displayed outstanding volunteer service in
our community during their high school years.

Be sure to come to the meeting at 7:30 PM on Tuesday, March 28th
in the Gunderson High School Faculty and Staff Lounge--and Bring a

Neighbor!

VEP needs YOU

-Dave Fadness

It's March, the month when we announce a slate of candidates for the VEP Executive Board. We would be very grateful to have you step forward as a volunteer.

We have the following leadership opportunities for you: President, Vice President, Secretary, Treasurer, and Newsletter Editor. No experience is needed, just a sense of community and a dedication to the quality of your neighborhood. Because you're a VEP member, we already know you have those traits.

Elections will be held at our meeting next month for terms that run through the end of April 2001. This means that you can start the new millennium as a VEP officer!

If you have questions or want to step forward, call any of the current officers listed on the mailing page of this newsletter. Do it today.

VEP's April Meeting Must Change

Due to the closure of Gunderson High School for Spring Break during last week of April, our meeting normally scheduled for April 25th will either need to change dates or change places.

If we change the date, we will move the meeting by a week one way or the other. We should have resolution and be able to make an announcement at our March meeting. In any case, the change will be clearly communicated in the April edition of the VEP NEWS and on VEP's Web site (<http://sites.netscape.net/vephoa>).

If we decide to hold the meeting a week earlier, the April issue of the VEP News will be published and mailed a week earlier as well.

VEP Neighborhood Garage Sale - April 29th

-Greg West, VEP President

Mark your calendars for Saturday, April 29th, the date of VEP's 2nd Annual Community Garage Sale!

We held this event last year with tremendous success. We'll build on last year's success and include some special neighborhood celebration activities this year. VEP will handle the publicity for the event by advertising in the San Jose Mercury News and the local papers (Blossom Valley and Almaden Times, etc.), so that you don't have to.

Since we are doing the publicity, we encourage you to abide by the City's sign ordinance and NOT put "Garage Sale" signs out on that day. From our experience last year, you will find that they won't be needed!

Watch for additional details in the April issue of the VEP NEWS.

VEP's Home Improvement Faire

-John Marks

Our fourth Home Improvement Faire is scheduled for Tuesday, May 23rd, and this year will include a VEP Information Table and refreshments (brownies & soft drinks).

The Faire features 18-20 contractors and tradesmen who will display their products and functions in the Gunderson High School Forum area. These exhibitors include painters, roofers, plumbers, fence builders, windows and doors, kitchens, water softeners and others. Be there on Tuesday, May 23, 7:30 pm. You won't be disappointed!

We look forward to seeing you.

The VEP Welcome Committee

In an effort to boost our membership, Katherine Decker and Yvonne Reddy have taken on VEP's Welcome Committee responsibilities. Katherine and Yvonne have put together packages of goodies for our new neighbors including discount coupons for local goods and services, the VEP newsletter and, best of all, some of Katherine's homemade cookies. If you know of new families in your area please pass the word. (Simply call any VEP officer listed on the mailing page of this newsletter.)

If anyone is interested in working with the welcome committee, contact Katherine at our VEP meetings or by e-mail. Katherine's e-mail is DDD83055@AOL. And look for a regular feature in our newsletter that will include updates on welcome committee activities and a personal note from Katherine and Yvonne.

Computer Corner

-Bob Aquino

Well, it's that time again: OS time.

Many of you have undoubtedly read that our friends in Redmond have released a new operating system, Windows 2000. Now you might conclude that because you have Win 95 or Win 98 that Win 2000 is a successor product to that line of OSs. You'd be wrong.

Way back when, when Microsoft originally named Win 2000, it was supposed to be a grand unification that would reconcile the disparate branches of the family of Windows, Win 9X, and Win NT. But as the poet would have it, "The best laid schemes o' mice and men Gang aft a-gley." They couldn't do it in the time available. There is room for reasonable people to conclude that the job may never be done. This newer OS will be a new version of Win 9X and it will be dubbed Windows Millennium edition.

So should you switch to Win 2000? Emphatically not. The new OS

demands substantial resources from your computer, in terms of all phases of the hardware, processor speed, RAM, and disk space. As usual, Microsoft publishes a minimum hardware requirements spec and, as usual, it is woefully understated. Win 2000 is really an industrial strength OS, designed for servers and workstations.

Over and above the performance issue for home machines, the Windows NT family has always been fussy about hardware. Microsoft concluded, probably correctly, that it didn't make sense to support all possible versions of hardware that suppliers could throw at it. NT is an OS that was designed to be supported by an Information Technology department.

So when the Millennium edition comes out, should you switch? My thought is that you should only do it if it gives you a feature you really need. For example, Win 98 implemented USB (universal serial bus). That might be a reason to change. The same thing also applies to those of you who are presently using Win NT. Switch to Win 2000 only if it has something that you need. For example, NT did not support power management, Win 2000 does, so it may be worthwhile to upgrade if you have NT on a laptop.

And always remember the first rule of OSs: Let someone else take the pain. New OSs are notably buggy. Microsoft issues Service Packs which are patches to correct the bugs. Wait until their first one or two service packs have been issued before making your move to Win 2000.

Neighborhood Developments

-Greg West, VEP President

Continuation School News - Construction is ongoing on the John Muir Campus. The School District had previously indicated a desire to open the new Continuation School Campus this spring. Community Action in Robertsville (CAIR) is questioning whether the accelerated construction schedule is allowing the builders to abide by the construction noise mitigation requirements called out for in the CEQA document.

Eden Housing - You may have noticed that the Light Rail parking lot on the west side of the Ohlone/Chynoweth Station has, at least, partially re-opened. The only way into and out of the lot is through the Eden Housing construction and the stoplight at Pearl. The driveway to the east of Pearl is for transit busses only.

Oakridge Mall Expansion - This is the subject of our March 28th meeting.

Gunderson's Annual Golf Tournament

The Gunderson High School Athletic Booster Club is hosting their 6th Annual Golf Tournament at the beautiful Boulder Creek Golf & Country Club on Sunday, May 7th. Individual golfers will draw for team awards in this 4 person scramble format. Individual prizes will be awarded for low score (1st, 2nd, and 3rd), closest to the

pin, and longest drive. There will also be four hole-in-one prizes including one \$10,000 hole.

The entry fee for golf and dinner is \$100 for adults, and \$85 for students 18 and under. Non-golfer dinner is \$30. Tax-deductible corporate sponsorships are available. Entry form and fees are due by April 24. This event begins at 10 a.m. Dinner will be served at approximately 5 p.m.

Proceeds from this golf tournament will be used to support the Athletic Department and the seventeen different sports played at Gunderson High School.

For further information about the tournament, corporate sponsorships, or to get an entry form, please contact Trudy O'Neill (287-0191), Kanika Ahyo (224-0336) or Louie Aldama (972-1725).

Can You See Your Door from the Street?

-Dave Fadness

A recent bout of vandalism in our neighborhoods calls to mind the need for folks to consider the visibility of their front doors and windows. Clearly visible and lighted front windows and doors are an effective (and inexpensive) deterrent to home break-ins and other mischief.

Many homes in our area have overgrown landscaping that affords burglars and vandals all the protective cover they need while breaking in. Think about it: break-ins are crimes of stealth. Take away their cover and these criminals will head down the street to find an easier target.

So, take a critical look at your home from the street. Are there places where a thief could hide while working on entry to your home? Can you see your front door and windows from the street? Do you have motion-sensing lights that would help to expose/thwart unwanted visitors?

An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure. Take time today to check the security of your home. Then do what's necessary to correct any problems you find. Advise your neighbor to do this, too. You'll be safer-and a better neighbor-as a result.

Neighborhood News

-City Council Member Pat Dando

As your San José City Council member, I want to bring you up to date on recent activities and events in District 10.

New Police Services in Our Neighborhood

On Saturday, February 26, San Jose's first ever Community Policing Center opened at Westfield Shoppingtown Oakridge. Several hundred people joined the Police Department and myself for the open house and tour. You can view photos of the open house at the District 10 Website:

<http://www.ci.san-jose.ca.us/council/dist10/dist10.html>.

The Center is located at 947 Blossom Hill Rd., next to Michaels, and is open 10am to 3pm Monday, Wednesday and Friday; 4 to 9pm Tuesday and Thursday; and 10am to 6pm Saturday.

The Oakridge Community Policing Center serves the neighborhoods of Almaden, Blossom Valley and Santa Teresa. You can speak directly with a San José police officer to file crime reports, sign off on traffic citations, view the Megan's Law sex offender CD-ROM and have your children fingerprinted. Also, you can get information about Police Department services, such as Neighborhood Watch, Crime Stoppers, the Block Parent Program and Crime Prevention. Community groups can reserve the conference room, which seats up to 15 people, for public meetings.

Sex Offenders Removed from our Neighborhood

In January, an 85-year old resident was attacked and robbed in front of his home. The assailants were residents of a group home for juvenile sex offenders that was placed in our neighborhood by the state.

This sex-offender group home was the subject of a heated community meeting held by San Jose Police Chief Bill Lansdowne and myself. Nearly 200 residents, along with the Police Chief, local Assemblyman Jim Cunneen, and myself demanded that the California Youth Authority (CYA) close down the group home because its residents pose a significant risk to public safety.

The morning after the community meeting, I had a discussion with CYA Director Greg Zermeno who agreed to close down the home. The residents were removed from the home later that day and the home was officially closed within a week.

New Program Will Help Save Lives

In January, Council member Alice Woody and I proposed that the Vial of L.I.F.E (Lifesaving Information For Emergencies) Program be implemented throughout San Jose. The Vial of L.I.F.E is a simple program that ensures that firefighters and paramedics have vital medical information when they arrive at your home.

On February 23rd and March 1st, I had the privilege of introducing this new program to senior citizens at our community center and to residents of two mobile home parks in our district. The San José Fire Department and the San José Fire Fighters Union, Local 230 sponsor the Vial of LIFE Program.

Residents will be able to pick-up a Free Vial of L.I.F.E. kit from your local fire station, library, or community center by the middle of March. Please take advantage of this life saving program.

Easing Traffic In Our Neighborhoods

We must continue to work hard to reduce traffic congestion: I will continue to push to get the Highway 85/87 interchange and the third lane on Highway 87 under construction, using Measure A & B funds. Improved signal synchronization along Almaden Expressway is

also a priority project under Measure A & B. I will continue to pursue state grants that will fund the linking of additional signals in District 10 to the City's Signal Control Center. This will help reduce traffic delays.

To protect neighborhoods, we need additional traffic enforcement, both photo radar and traffic enforcement officers. Also, we must change city policies to direct staff to be proactive in allowing neighbors to participate in determining the traffic controls in their neighborhoods: stop signs, crosswalks, traffic circles, speed bumps, etc.

Stopping Road Construction During Commute Hours

In order to help ease traffic delays during commute hours, my colleagues and I on the City Council recently adopted an ordinance that places a limitation on the hours construction work may take place on city streets. Construction on arterial roadways will no longer be allowed from 6:00 to 8:00 a.m. and from 3:30 to 7:00 p.m.

Apply for City Permits from the Comfort of Your Home

On November 29, 1999, I hosted a focus group to discuss ways to make the City's building and planning process more customer-friendly. It was very clear that the group wanted the ability to apply for permits over the Internet. The good news is that the City has made eleven different permits available online and funds have been allocated to place even more complex permits online. By the end of this year, all City permits should be available from the City's website.

New Law Protects Neighborhoods Against Large Buildings

In order to protect the character of our neighborhoods, a new ordinance was recently enacted that places design guidelines on home construction and on the remodeling of existing homes. This ordinance is designed to prevent large houses from being placed on small lots and homes that occupy more than 65% of the lot will no longer be allowed. Additionally, houses greater than two stories, or over 30 feet in height, will need to have their design approved by the City Council at a public hearing.

Making it Safe for our Children to Walk to School

The three main priorities of parents and school officials are more adult crossing guards, additional red curbs around the school, and increased visibility at cross walks.

A school may attain adult crossing guards by making a written request to the Department of Streets and Traffic. I would be more than happy to assist schools or parent organizations if you need these city services near your child's school.

I appreciate your input. If you would like information about any of the items listed above, or if you have any questions, concerns, or suggestions, please do not hesitate to contact me at (408) 277-5251. I can also be reached via e-mail at pat.dando@ci.sj.ca.us.

Please take some time to visit my website at:
www.ci.san-jose.ca.us/council/dist10/dist10.html.

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.

And haven't you noticed, weeds come slithering out of the soil with the slightest tug. Now's the time to scout around, pulling up those milkweeds and others you can spot. 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 the garden. You can prune now, also, especially roses and fruit trees.

But 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). Plan on moving them to four-inch containers, then to one-gallon buckets outside as we move towards May.

What exactly are we waiting for before planting them? Consistent daytime temperatures of 70 degrees. Right now, plant winter vegetables such as broccoli, cabbage, peas and beets for a spring harvest. Put in pansies, snapdragons and calendulas.

When will the soil be ready for general planting? Squeeze a handful of soil, and 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. Rake up leaves you might have missed earlier, to help the soil dry out, and get them off the lawn. Leaves provide hiding spots for over-wintering insects.

And what about feeding the 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 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 it. 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 branches 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. Plant summer-blooming bulbs, corms and tubers, including begonias, calla lilies, canna lilies, dahlias and gladioluses.

Follow-Up on Meeting with Chief Lansdowne

-Pat Dando, San Jose City Council Member

I want to take this opportunity to respond to the issues raised at the VEP Meeting I attended with San Jose Police Chief Lansdowne.

1. Kids drinking in Vista Park at night - Patrol officers have increased their presence in the area and are walking the interior of the park during the evening hours. Special attention is given to Friday and Saturday nights.
2. Stop Sign Needed at Gunderson High School - Stop signs have been placed at the exit to Gaundabert Lane so traffic will stop before exiting the high school.
3. Replace "No Parking" signs on Chynoweth Avenue and Chynoweth Court -These signs have been reinstalled.
4. Police motorcycle officer riding on sidewalk along Chynoweth - San José Police Department motorcycle officers do not routinely ride on sidewalks. However, they occasionally use the sidewalk along Chynoweth adjacent to Gunderson High School to access the bike and pedestrian trails. Those trails are patrolled as a result of prior complaints of vandalism and drinking in these areas.
5. Police/traffic enforcement needed at John Muir School from 7:30 to 7:45 - This is an on-going problem and is worked on a regular basis by patrol officers and the Traffic Enforcement Unit. Officers have met with school officials and are actively enforcing traffic and parking violations before and after school.
6. Radar enforcement for speeding problems on Massachusetts Drive - The Traffic Enforcement Unit is aware of this problem and monitors the street on a regular basis. Enforcement occurs primarily during peak the peak traffic hours that occur prior to and, at the end of Gunderson's school day. Additionally, traffic enforcement has been increased along Chynoweth and twenty-five citations were recently issued there within a few hours.
7. Vietnamese school needs traffic control on Sundays from 10:00 am to 12:30 pm. - The Vietnamese School meets at Gunderson High School on Sundays from 9:00 am until noon. The school has used volunteers in the past to direct traffic in the parking lot. The Police Department is in the process of meeting with school officials regarding their need to hire additional personnel for traffic control if traffic continues to cause a hazard on the roadway.
8. Vandals spray painting license plates - The Police Department is hopeful that an increased patrol presence will diminish the

chance of this occurring on a regular basis. However, due to the nature of this type of vandalism, it is often difficult to catch a perpetrator in the process of committing the crime.

If you have any additional questions, please do not hesitate to contact me during regular business hours at (408) 277-5251.

[Editor's Note: Ms. Dando submitted this article in January, 2000. VEP decided to hold off publishing it until after the march 7th election.]

Employment opportunities

The Willow Glen II Homeowners Association is looking for energetic people to work as attendants at their community pool on Monet Circle. Responsibilities include greeting guests, confirming that their membership is up to date, maintaining the pool area for cleanliness, ensuring that pool safety rules are being followed, and making sure that everyone is having a good time. Lifeguards are also needed.

If you are interested, please call Kevin Moore at 363-0594 or email at willowglenhoa@lakmail.com.

President's Corner

-Greg West, VEP President

I had the unique opportunity over the last couple of months to serve with some outstanding community activists on a grass-roots effort for campaign reform in District 10. The effort was the District 10 Fair Campaign Practices Committee. Although the concept had been around for a while, the Y2K version was incubated by Almaden Valley Community Association (AVCA) Board Member John Redding. Other members of the committee were AVCA President George Bettisworth, VEP Vice President David Noel, Times Community Newspapers (Almaden Times, Blossom Valley Times, etc.) Executive Editor Carl Laucher, and AVCA Webmaster and Board Member Bob Boydston.

The purpose of the committee was to help insure that the District 10 Council Seat campaigns were issues-centered and that campaign claims were true and verifiable. We also wanted to insure that our neighborhoods were not littered with campaign signs by asking the candidates to adhere to San Jose's sign ordinance.

The committee was chartered to monitor campaign materials and claims made by candidates for fairness and accuracy. If the committee found egregious violations, it was chartered to publicize those to our communities through the VEP and AVCA websites, and through the Community Times papers and the SJ Mercury News.

We asked the D10 Council Seat candidates to sign an agreement chartering the committee and a Fair Campaign Practices Code. Nancy Pyle and Pat Dando signed the agreements; Bill Garbett did not. (Interestingly enough, Garbett received no complaints during the

campaign).

The committee members and candidates were concerned about the logistics of how the committee would monitor campaign material in a timely fashion. This problem worked itself out very quickly. The opposing campaigns were much more efficient at monitoring the agreement and highlighting possible violations than the committee ever could have been.

A personal case in point: As a condition of committee membership, I agreed to be a neutral party, that is, not to support any of the candidates in the campaign. My wife, Robin, on the other hand, was an active Dando supporter and decided over my objection to post a Dando sign in our front yard. My dilemma was the impropriety of appearing to actively support Dando versus the impropriety of trying to censor Robin's political expression. Peace at home prevailed.

As a tribute to the efficiency of the candidates' monitoring capabilities, within a day or so of the sign being posted, the Pyle campaign (reasonably) filed a complaint with the committee questioning my neutrality.

All in all, I would like to think that the committee had an impact on keeping the campaigns more issues focused than they otherwise might have been. The campaigns, for the most part, lived up to the agreements.

There were a couple of transgressions that the committee felt needed some action, and actions were taken. (The committee charter and actions will be archived on the VEP Web site, <http://sites.netscape.net/vepha>, for some period of time.

I feared during this process that the campaigns were saving the "hit pieces"--the negative campaign materials containing personal attacks and gross distortions of fact that would be gross violations of the Campaign Practices Code--until the last couple of days before the election when the committee would not have time to react.

My fear was founded. I got two hit pieces in the mail in the two days before the election. One questioned Pat Dando's claim to be a teacher, even though Pat had previously produced a teaching credential from another state proving that she had been a credential teacher.

The other was a gross distortion of Pat Dando's role in the denial of my request to the mayor and city council on behalf of VEP for a delay in the city's Oakridge Mall expansion decision, and a gross exaggeration at VEP's reaction to that denial.

Although it is true that Pat did not support my request, she was very proactive in insuring that we were given information relating to the project and to the approval process as quickly as it could be provided after we asked for it. For instance, I got an email back from the City Planning Department explaining the process very quickly after I e-mailed the request for the delay.

The committee did not investigate the origin of these "hit" pieces since they were delivered so close to the election. I would like to think that the Pyle campaign abided by the agreement that Nancy signed and that the pieces were produced and mailed by third-party Pyle supporters with out Pyle campaign knowledge.

I would also like to think that the voters in District 10 were intelligent enough to see these "hit" pieces for what they were, and that the 3-to-1 margin by which Pat Dando won was, at least in part, a referendum on negative campaigning in District 10.

In summary, I don't think that the process worked quite the way that anybody had envisioned when we began. But, I think we did have an impact on keeping the campaigns focused on issues for the most part. I think that this was a worthwhile first step, and maybe it will have an impact on campaigns in the future. It certainly was an experience that I will not soon forget.

Bulletin Board Ads

MR. FIX-IT will repair leaks, sticking doors, locks, latches, lights, and life's little ills. No job is too small. Call John Marks @ 629-6433.

PET-SITTING WORK NEEDED: 15-year old will pet-sit, dog-walk. Is flexible and reliable. References available. Call Alex @ 224-0853.

BABY-SITTING WORK WANTED: 17-year old, experienced baby-sitter. References available. Call Becky @ 225-5878.

GARAGE SALE SIGNS: I have "A-frame" garage sale signs that I will loan you for your garage sales. Call me in advance to reserve them. Brian @ 226-6004 or at RE/MAX Valley Properties, @ 978-9000, ext. 228.

Affordable Tree Trimming and Landscaping Services

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* * *

VEP will print free ads for its members for transactions involving less than \$250, for lost-and-found, for announcements of general interest to our community, and for kids under 18 or retirees who are looking for work. Free ads must be submitted monthly for publication.

Commercial ads cost \$1.00 per line per month, 10 lines maximum, must be prepaid before publication, and may only be run once per calendar quarter. Commercial ads must be submitted quarterly. No graphics allowed. For information on full-sized ads with graphics (camera ready), contact VEP'S Treasurer listed on the mailing page of this newsletter.

One line contains 50 characters, including spaces. Mail to VEP, P.O. Box 18111, San Jose, 95158. Ads must be received no later than the 10th of the month for inclusion in that month's newsletter. 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.

What is a Buyers' Market?

-Blanche Evans

No matter what town you are living in or where you want to move, the home buying and selling market will be swinging toward one of two directions. Either it will be in a buyers' market or a sellers' market, or sometimes, a little of both.

Most real estate practitioners consider a typical market to be one in which homes take an average of six months to sell. REALTORS(r) keep track of this number by keeping up with the days on the market (DOM) of every home listed and sold. That means that in the MLS, there are likely to be at least six months worth of inventory (homes) on hand to sell for the number of buyers in the market. If the number rises above six months inventory on hand, then the market is swinging into a buyer's market.

If it falls below, it is becoming a seller's market. A buyer's market is one in which there are too many homes on the market for the number of buyers. Homes take longer to sell and prices fall.

Sometimes buyers believe that winter time is a buyers' market. Although it is true that there are fewer buyers, there are usually a compensating fewer homes on the market as well. Homes offered for sale during slower times of the year are generally aggressively marketed, and may not sell for a significantly lower price than they would if they were marketed in a busier period.

In the spring, a seasonal adjustment occurs, and more homes come on the market. Buyer activity picks up as families with children (still the single largest buyer demographic) buy homes so they can move during summer vacation. A buyers' market can easily exist in the spring, if conditions dictate - that there are more homes than buyers, falling prices, and longer DOMs.

Sometimes a buyers' market can be created that lasts for a long time. The exit of one or more major employers from a community, a natural disaster such as a flood or earthquake, or some other catastrophic event can affect home values in an area for years.

Seasonal or not, any time there are more than six months' inventory on hand, there is a glut of homes on the market. Whenever there is a surplus of homes, and prices begin to drop, sellers will work harder to attract buyers, including adding incentives such as owner-financing or a large "redecorating allowance."

As homes become more competitive, buyers realize that their interest is at a premium and they will increase their demands to sellers. Those nice chandeliers that normally would not be included in the purchase price of the home, now become a bargaining chip for the buyer. The buyer may ask the seller to provide a home warranty at the seller's expense, or for the seller to pay more of the closing costs than usual out of the settlement proceeds, or any number of other contingencies.

People who have occupied their homes for many years may be able to sell their homes at a profit in a buyer's market because they have built equity, but they will find that if they have performed little or no improvements the home will compare even more poorly with the glut of homes on the market and it will command bottom dollar.

Sellers who are in a must-sell position may take little or no profit from the sale of their homes, or may even be forced to take a loss. The homeowners who are most hurt by a buyer's market are those with little or no equity built into the home. If they are forced to sell, they may have to come to the closing table with cash to pay their mortgage off or allow the home to be repossessed by the lender.

The one certainty that can always be counted upon is that one side of the market will never stay on top forever. In fact, it can turn on a dime. The same area that remains depressed for a period of time can make a comeback as lower prices stimulate reinvestment.

[Editor's Note: This article was taken from VEP Treasurer Brian Bonnifield's real estate website.]

The Flip Side: Deep Thoughts...

If at first you don't succeed, destroy all evidence that you tried.

A conclusion is the place where you got tired of thinking.

Experience is something you don't get until just after you need it.

For every action, there is an equal and opposite criticism.

He who hesitates is probably right.

Never do card tricks for the group you play poker with.

No one is listening until you make a mistake.

Success always occurs in private, and failure in full view.

The colder the X-ray table, the more of your body is required on it.

The hardness of the butter is inversely proportional to the softness of the bread.

The severity of the itch is proportional to the difficulty of the reach.

To steal ideas from one person is plagiarism; to steal from many is research.

To succeed in politics, it is often necessary to rise above your principles.

Two wrongs are only the beginning.

You never really learn to swear until you learn to drive.

The problem with the gene pool is that there is no lifeguard.

Monday is an awful way to spend 1/7th of your life.

The sooner you fall behind, the more time you'll have to catch up.

A clear conscience is usually the sign of a bad memory.

If you must choose between two evils, pick the one you've never tried before.

Change is inevitable....except from vending machines.

Don't sweat petty things....or pet sweaty things.

A fool and his money are soon partying.

Money can't buy love. But it CAN rent a very close imitation.

Plan to be spontaneous tomorrow.

Always try to be modest. And be proud of it!

If you think nobody cares about you, try missing a couple of payments.

How many of you believe in telekinesis? Raise my hands...

Attempt to get a new car for your spouse-it'll be a great trade!

Drugs may lead to nowhere, but at least it's the scenic route.

I'd kill for a Nobel Peace Prize.

Everybody repeat after me... "We are all individuals."

Chastity is curable, if detected early.

Don't be sexist; broads hate that!

Love may be blind, but marriage is a real eye-opener.

Hell hath no fury like the lawyer of a woman scorned.

Bills travel through the mail at twice the speed of checks.

Hard work pays off in the future. Laziness pays off now.

Eagles may soar, but weasels aren't sucked into jet engines.

Borrow money from pessimists - they don't expect it back.

Beware of geeks bearing gifts.

Half the people you know are below average.

99 percent of lawyers give the rest a bad name.

42.7 percent of all statistics are made up on the spot.

A conscience is what hurts when all your other parts feel so good.

If at first you don't succeed, then skydiving definitely isn't for you.