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VEP-area schools may be closed

Five elementary schools and three middle schools are being considered for closure in the central part of San Jose Unified School District (SJUSD) next year. The elementary schools are Almaden, Randol, Hacienda, Allen, and Carson. The middle schools are Castillero, John Muir, and Steinbeck. One other elementary school may be closed in the northern end of the district as well.



SJUSD's decision whether to close one of the elementary and one of the middle schools will be made by December 9th. VEP needs to take a position; there is no time to delay.

If you live in Carson's attendance area (bordered by Gaundabert Lane, Vistapark Drive, Capitol Expressway, and Narvaez), and have pre-schoolers or toddlers who will be attending Carson School in the future, you need to make your voices heard about this possible school closure.

Of the elementary schools, Carson is one of the newest and has excellent facilities. It also has SJUSD's largest population of Special Education students. Most classes there are held in rooms with bathrooms and running water, necessary to accommodate those students.

If Carson is closed, no elementary campus currently has enough classrooms or is as suitably equipped to accommodate Special Education. Carson alone has what's needed.

Having Highway 87 close by makes access to Carson easy for buses that deliver Special Education students every day. Carson is also near light rail, and many student field trips to the Tech Museum, Center for Performing Arts, etc. are taken using public transportation rather than more expensive school buses.

If Carson is closed, the two closest elementary schools for our area would be Terrell and Allen. Allen is well over two miles away. Terrell is also nearly two miles

away; to get there, students would have to cross over the freeway and busy Branham Lane and Pearl Avenue--a highly-dangerous walking situation for young children, especially the freeway segment. The other choice would be having these students bussed by SJUSD which would negate some of the school closure savings.

Carson School is tucked into the middle of a residential area. How desirable would it be to you if SJUSD leased it to another organization or business?

78 new residences have just been built and occupied in the Carson attendance area. Older sections of Vistapark have a growing number of young families who have toddlers and pre-schoolers. A demographic study of the whole Carson attendance area should be done before Carson is considered for school closure.

Because personnel have changed at SJUSD, they may not be aware that we had a school closure in our community over 20 years ago--Josiah Belden Elementary (that's where Vista Park is today). Must our neighborhood suffer another elementary school loss?

You should also be aware that the District is considering closing Steinbeck, combining its students who are interested in the new magnet grant with those at Gunderson High School, to form a grade 6-12 school. If this is done, and Carson Elementary is closed, SJUSD will have decimated every one of their schools in our attendance area.

Save Our Schools!

We lost Erickson School last year. This would leave us with no elementary school in our immediate area. What do you think this will do to our children? Having no elementary school in our immediate area could have a serious negative impact on our home values.

A tentative timeline has been established (see the following article by Veronica Lewis). Please call the district office at 535-6000 for more information, or...

Contact SJUSD's superintendent:

Don Iglesias,

855 Lenzen Avenue, San Jose, CA 95126

535-6190.

And/or, contact our School Board member:

Veronica Lewis

469 Heatherbray Court, San Jose, CA 95136

267-1915

San Jose Unified School District update

-Veronica Lewis ()*

For residents living west of Vistapark Drive, I am your school board representative. I represent this area as a member of a board made up of five trustees. I have served on the Board of Education for the last five years.

All four of my children have graduated from San Jose Unified schools, and I now have a grandson attending Steinbeck Middle School. All of my children attended Carson Elementary School. I have been an active community member in our schools since 1973, when my first child entered into Carson.

School Closures & Consolidation

Because of declining enrollment and State budget cuts, SJUSD is now projecting a \$9-million to \$10-million shortfall for 2005-06 and a \$11-million to \$13-million shortfall for 2006-07.

Due to changes in the way the Santa Clara County Office of Education exercises its budget oversight responsibilities, and under provisions in AB1200, the County must certify to the State that the District is able to meet its budget obligations over the next three years. By November 1st we must take action on reductions for 2005-06 and 2006-07.

The District's decision to consider consolidation of schools was triggered by Criteria for Consolidation of Schools. Criteria requires the District to assess the need to consolidate schools when "the following two year trend for K-5 enrollment is projected to decline or remain at 75% of the District's K-5 instructional capacity". In the past five years, the District's elementary school enrollment has declined by 1500 students and is at 65% enrollment to instructional capacity.



Declining enrollment along with the current and projected State educational budget crisis has created the need to commence the school consolidation process.

Appointed by the SJUSD superintendent, an ad Hoc Advisory Committee will review and evaluate school consolidation scenarios developed by District staff. This committee will submit its findings to a District Staff Committee for final review. The Superintendent will submit a final recommendation to the Board of Education for approval.

This process was approved by the Board at its October 7th meeting. The tentative timeline for implementation is as follows:

October 19 = Ad Hoc Advisory Committee review of Staff Committee scenarios on school consolidation. Time: 6 - 8 pm in Board Room at District Office, 855 Lenzen Avenue, San Jose.

October 25 = Ad Hoc Advisory Committee evaluates school consolidation scenarios and develops recommendations. Time: 6 -8 pm in room 337 at District Office.

November 8 = Ad Hoc Advisory Committee finalizes recommendations and submits them to the Staff Committee. Time: 6 -8 pm in room 337 at District Office.

November 10 = District Staff Committee finalizes staff

recommendations and submits them to Superintendent.

November 11 = Ad Hoc Advisory Committee Public Forum in Board Room at District Office. Time: To be announced.

November 15 = Ad Hoc Advisory Committee Public Forum in Board Room at District Office. Time: To be announced.

November 18 = Board of Education meeting at 6:30 pm in Board Room at District Office. First reading of consolidation recommendations.

December 9 = Board of Education meeting at 6:30 pm in Board Room at District Office. Second reading and action on consolidation recommendations.

District to Hold Budget Talks

SJUSD is hosting community meetings to solicit input on its 2005-06 budget. We are facing a \$9 million deficit, due to declining enrollment, revenue decreases, and cost of living increases. The current budget situation as well as a projection for the next three years will be discussed at each meeting.

The meeting in our Trustee Area #4 is set for October 20th from 4 to 5:30 pm at John Muir Middle School Gym. There will be a district-wide meeting 7 to 8:30 pm on October 28th in the District Office Board Room.

For more information you can call Karen Fuqua, 535-6444 or email Karen_Fuqua@sjusd.org.

\$7.2-million *No Child Left Behind* grant

The Magnet Schools Assistance program aimed at improving student achievement, has awarded SJUSD a \$7.2-million, three-year grant to improve student achievement and increase educational options for parents through magnet schools, U.S. Secretary of Education, Rod Paige announced on September 22nd.

COIN Educational Software

Carl Perkins Funds pays for COIN Educational Software at SJUSD high school campuses. COIN is a web-based high school guidance system with an emphasis on career guidance and educational planning.



Wesley W. Terrell

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Vista Park Specialist



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In a recent California update on COIN, Gunderson High School was recognized as one of the top 10 California COIN Career Community Sites. California had over half of the top 25 schools nationally. This is just one of the effective implementation ideas for delivering career and educational planning services that are offered at Gunderson.

"Tie - One - On - Against - Tobacco"

Tie-One-On-Against-Tobacco is one of the theme days for Steinbeck's Drug Free Week, October 25 - 29. On that day we are encouraging every Steinbeck student & staff member to wear a neck tie, signifying their pledge to be tobacco free.

Leadership students will have a "store" set up for students to pick up a necktie prior to Tie-One-On-Against-Tobacco-Day. We could use your help! If you have any neckties, (the crazier the better) around your house that you are willing to donate to Steinbeck, please send them to Assistant Principal **Melani Hiles** at Steinbeck. For more information on this event contact Ms Hiles @ 535- 6395.

[() Ed. Note: Veronica Lewis is our Area 4 representative on and Vice President of the SJUSD Board of Trustees. Email her at Veronica_Lewis@sjusd.org.]*

Good news for animals!

-Laura Fulda ()*

Santa Clara County just got a lot more shelter space for stray dogs, cats and rabbits. The reprieve came October 1st when the City of San Jose opened its new Animal Care Center at 2750 Monterey Road.

This new facility will also house stray animals for Saratoga, Milpitas, Cupertino, and Los Gatos. With the addition of the San Jose Animal Care Center, the amount of shelter space for animals in Santa Clara County will double.

About 50,000 animals in the Bay Area are killed through euthanasia every year," said **Christine Benninger**, president of Humane Society Silicon Valley

(HSSV). "With the addition of the city's new shelter, we have doubled the amount of resources and shelter space for animals in Santa Clara County. All too often, animals have been euthanized because they were sick or needed prolonged therapy or had a behavioral problem that made them hard to adopt.

Benninger says the opening of the city shelter is great news for HSSV, which had been housing San Jose's stray animals. "We housed nearly 29,000 animals last year," she said. "Now we will only have about 10,000 animals a year, which will allow us to focus our time and resources on our core mission: finding more loving homes for pets through a comprehensive program of adoptions, spaying/neutering, and humane education. Our staff is looking forward to spending more quality time with the animals so that more of them can be placed in our adoption program."

Last year, HSSV performed nearly 6,200 spay/neuter surgeries. Benninger says the Humane Society hopes to expand that program to reduce the number of unwanted pets. It has spearheaded a homeless cat coalition to develop a comprehensive program to manage the feral cat problem in Santa Clara County. She notes that in six years, one female dog and its offspring can be the source of 67,000 puppies; in seven years, one female cat and its young can produce 420,000 kittens.

Benninger says HSSV will continue to house stray animals for the cities of Sunnyvale, Santa Clara, Monte Sereno and Campbell. The shelter will also continue to take in ALL owner-surrendered animals and work closely with other shelters, cities, and rescue groups to find homes for adoptable animals they don't have room to shelter.

The Humane Society's new 24-foot animal van will enable the organization to reach out to rescue groups, shelters, and other animal welfare agencies to bring animals to the shelter for rehabilitation and adoption. "The bottom line is now we can dedicate our time and resources to finding more loving homes for pets," Benninger said. "At the end of the day, that's really what it's all about."

[() Ed. Note: Laura Fulda is Director of Marketing & Communications for the Humane Society Silicon Valley. She can be reached at laura.fulda@hssv.org or (408)727-3383.]*

Pet responsibility

-Dana Belstler

We've all seen them: loose dogs running down the street. Sometimes they look happy and seem to know

*** VEP ***
It's working for you!

where they are going. Other times, they seem confused; searching faces, in hopes of recognizing their caregivers.

You can always tell a lost pet from a "free-roaming" pet.

With the dangers on our city streets, allowing your dog to run free is just plain irresponsible. Aside from potentially getting lost, they have a very good chance of being hit by a speeding car. Once "Fido" leaves your driveway, there is also a potential for abuse.

Dogs that are on city streets must be on leashes and accompanied by their owners. If you allow them out front of your property, make sure you are watching to be sure they don't stray onto a neighbor's lawn or down the street.

To help keep pets safe, you may want to consider padlocking your back gate(s) to ensure the wind, the PG&E meter-reading person, or kids retrieving lost balls don't leave your back gate unlatched--the number one way lost dogs get out is through open gates.

PG&E is equipped with special equipment for just this scenario. They don't mind, and you will be guaranteed that your dog will be safe from escaping out of an open gate, if left out back. Another perk of padlocking gates is that it helps deter potential home thefts.

Consider accepting your dog into your house more often. The Humane Society of Silicon Valley has a good article on this subject under "Dog Behavior" - "Backyard Dog" at www.hssv.org.

These animals rely on you to keep them safe. Being pack animals, you are their family. Do your part to make sure that you are a responsible pet owner and a responsible member of our community.

Help wanted:

-Dave Fadness, VEP NEWS Editor

We're looking for a new VEP NEWS Editor. It's time for me to retire. Please consider volunteering for this position.

Pay = Zero.

Satisfaction = Infinite.

Qualifications = You should know how to use word-processing (preferably MS WORD), have email access, be skilled at spelling and English grammar (I'm not), and like to work with people and words. It would be best that you've had experience doing a newsletter or are an experienced writer or proofreader. You should have a Windows-based, IBM-compatible system.

If so, you are just the person we're looking for!

VEP publishes monthly newsletters September through May. We receive a wealth of articles in response to our monthly email solicitation, so you'll have plenty of mate-

rial to work with. Contributors range from VEP officers and members to school and government officials.

Your job would be to send out our monthly email solicitation, edit articles, "paste" them up electronically in our standard (PUBLISHER) format, and deliver the camera-ready artwork to the printer. Your text files are also posted on our website.

Our editor is a member of VEP's Executive Board. As a practical matter, in order to remain abreast of VEP activities, the development of our meeting agendas, and to coordinate officer newsletter inputs, the editor attends Executive Board meetings in newsletter months.

If you don't have PUBLISHER, VEP will provide a copy for your use. It's easy to learn and use (even I can figure it out!).

Importantly, if you are interested in doing this, I will provide help any time you need it. Other members of our Exec Board will be available to help you as well. VEP work is collaborative—don't be concerned that you'd accept this responsibility, then be abandoned to figure out how to do it on your own.

We need YOU!

Give me a call at 578-6428 (day or evening) or email me at drfadness@earthlink.net. I'll answer any questions you have—and won't do a hard-sell on you. Promise!

Do it today. I'm still waiting to hear from you!

Greg West on County Parks Commission

Upon recommendation by San Jose Vice Mayor **Pat Dando**, County Supervisor **Don Gage** appointed VEP Past-President **Greg West** to the Santa Clara County Parks and Recreation Commission replacing **John Redding**, who moved from the area. This two-year appointment was confirmed by the County Board of Supervisors on September 28th.

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VEP President **Jeri Arstingstall** was excited about the appointment, saying, "We are happy that Greg was appointed to the commission to represent Don Gage's supervisorial district, including VEP neighborhoods. We look forward to Greg's participation on the commission, given the upcoming planning for Martial Cottle Park."

The purpose of the seven-member commission is, in part, to act in an advisory capacity to the County Board of Supervisors in matters relating to public recreation in County park facilities. Greg stated that he is "...pleased to have been appointed to the Commission by Supervisor Gage, and will work to the best of my abilities to advise the Board consistent with the needs and desires of the people of Santa Clara County and of District 1."

Greg served three terms as VEP's president from 1998 to 2001 and continues to serve VEP as an active board member and its web master.

Vista Park ball field relocation

-Julie Mark (*)

Our original schedule for the Vista Park Ballfield relocation has slipped because the scope of this project grew more complicated in order to provide a satisfactory playing field.



The original project concept was to dismantle the backstop and erect it in a new location; this would have resulted in a beautiful backstop on an unlevelled and bumpy surface that would be subject to pooling water. More comprehensive grading, irrigation, and drainage design was required to provide the best field for the approved budget. We are now set to move forward on the safety aspect of the project.

We will be completing the project in two steps as a result of continued safety concerns. On October 1st, we posted project signage, followed by dismantling of the existing backstop. The salvaged backstop material will be placed on the infield and be fenced.

The second phase will be grading, irrigation, the new

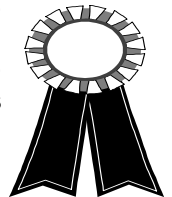
backstop and infield, and reseeding and maintenance of improved turf areas. This will be performed by a general contractor that our General Services Department is in the process of bidding. A walk-thru has been done with prospective contractors and bids are due the week of 10/18.

[(*) Ed. Note: Julie Mark is a manager in San Jose's Parks, Recreation, & Neighborhood Services (PRNS).]

SummerHill is following through

-Dave Fadness

Three important beautification projects SummerHill Homes has promised VEP are inching along through the city's plan-check/approvals process, which is nearly complete. Those projects include providing a landscaped cul-de-sac at the stub end of Vistapark Drive, repainting the sound walls on the north side of Branham Lane, and building a community room at Vista Park. As soon as SummerHill gets final approvals, these projects will be underway.



SummerHill Homes built the 78 new homes at the corner of Branham Lane and Vistapark Drive. The last home has now been sold and their work on-site will soon be complete.

SummerHill has cooperated with virtually all requests VEP and adjacent neighbors have made for amenities that will soften the impact of their project in our community and leave our area looking better than it did.

VEP thanks SummerHill and those neighbors for working to improve this "in-fill" housing project, a textbook example of how a fair-minded, organized community can work successfully with a responsive, quality-conscious developer.

Our greatest benefit will soon be realized in the building of a community center at Vista Park. Ground has already been broken. We aim to make that facility VEP's home for at least the next 35 years. Our sincere thanks to Vice Mayor **Pat Dando** who helped broker this turn-key project between SummerHill and the San Jose Parks & Recreation Department.

Oak Grove School District

-Manny Barbara (*)

The Oak Grove School District (OGSD) serves over 11,000 students and spans an area of approximately 21 square miles. The quality of our schools affects not only the families we serve, but the greater community as well. One of our priorities is to keep the community informed on school district activities.

I appreciate the opportunity to share information about Oak Grove through the VEP newsletter. We hope to use the neighborhood associations such as VEP as a

means of interacting with community members who may not have students in our schools. Whether you have school age children enrolled in our schools or not, the quality of our schools ultimately impacts everyone. Everyone knows that good schools, for example, can have a positive impact on property values.

Each year our Board of Trustees establishes focus areas for the coming new year. These focus areas reflect federal and state legislation, student test performance, and input from the parents, staff, and the community. You may access these priority areas identified in our Five-Year Plan through our web site www.ogsd.k12.ca.us.

Our web site includes other important district information, including the agenda for the regularly scheduled meetings of our Board of Trustees, usually on the second and fourth Thursday of each month (may be changed because of holidays). I am also available to meet with the neighborhood associations such as VEP and look forward to doing so.

You can also contact me directly through my district email address, superintendent@ogsd.k12.ca.us. Our District community newsletter, *The Report Card* also contains information about OGSD. The fall edition will be distributed in this month.

I look forward to meeting many of you during this school year.

[(*) Ed. Note: Manny Barbara is the Superintendent of Oak Grove School District, which includes Parkview Elementary and Hermann Middle Schools serving the VEP area.]

Pat Dando's retirement dinner

-Dave Fadness

Our District Ten City Council Member, San Jose Vice Mayor **Pat Dando** will be forced to retire after serving us since 1995. Because of term-limits, she cannot run for another term on the council.

Pat Dando has been the best councilperson we have ever had. She has worked hard and smart to fulfill virtually every request VEP has brought to her attention. Dando is a believer in *Neighborhoods First*, her motto and top priority at city hall. She practices what she's preached, as well—meeting with homeowners who need help, pushing for funds that build needed projects in our District, and working hand-in-hand alongside community volunteers on beautification and clean-up projects, for example.

We consider Pat Dando to be a very good friend.

A retirement dinner is being held for her on Sunday, November 14, 2004. Held at the Downtown San Jose Marriot, 301 S. Market Street (at San Carlos), the event

will start with No Host Cocktails at 5 p.m. Dinner will be served at 6 p.m. Price is \$55 per person. All proceeds will be donated to benefit charitable causes important to Pat.

Questions regarding this event will be answered at (408) 286-8718.

VEP is sending its president, vice-president, secretary, and treasurer. Those officers will pay to have their spouses attend. Past presidents and our editor will also pay to attend. We want to have a good turn-out as a tribute to the many things Pat Dando has done for us.

If you plan to attend, we want to be sure you're seated with us. Please call me (578-6428) or Jeri Arstingstall (281-1959), or attend our October 26 VEP meeting and let us know that you'll be at Pat's party so we can coordinate seating arrangements. We need to hear from you by October 26.

Crunch! (an after-school workshop)

Fall is the time that apples start ripening on trees all over the valley. Join the Friends of Guadalupe River Park & Gardens on Friday, October 22, 2004 from 3:30 to 5 pm for a *crunchtastic* time tasting several varieties of apples, creating apple art, using the seeds to make musical instruments, and putting together an apple pie to take home to bake. Anything left over will go to the worms! Please bring a rolling pin from home.

This workshop is designed for children five years of age and older and will be held at the Guadalupe Garden Center, 715 Spring Street, in San Jose. The fee for the workshop is \$5.00 per child. All children must be accompanied by an adult.

Space is limited, so reserve your spot early by sending a check to: Friends of Guadalupe River Park & Gardens, 50 West San Fernando Street, Suite 1100, San Jose, CA 95113. Visa and MasterCard are also accepted via phone or mail.

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Interim principal at Gunderson

-Cary Catching

As of September 28, 2004, I will be assuming the role of Interim Principal at Gunderson High School. Demeris Brooks, the current Principal, has taken a leave of absence. We anticipate her return to Gunderson in January, 2005.

I look forward, with pride, to continuing the good work that has already begun under Ms. Brooks' leadership. Gunderson is currently in its second year as 1:1 laptop school. Both students and teachers are exploring the many ways technology can be used in the classroom. In addition, we were recently awarded a six-year accreditation from the Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC).

I look forward to working with you and your student. Please do not hesitate to contact me (408-535-6340 or at cary_catching@sjsud.org) should you have any questions or concerns.

VEP Community Calendar

[Note: VEP General Meetings are always held at 7:30 pm on the fourth Tuesday each month, Sep thru Nov, and Jan thru May. Be sure to include these dates in your calendar.]

Sat, Oct 23 = *Daffodil Days* (volunteer daffodil planting day). See article below for details.

Tue, Oct 26 @ 7:30 - 9 pm = VEP General Meeting at Gunderson High School. (See page 1 for our agenda.)

Sun, Oct 31 = Happy Halloween!

Tue, Nov 2 = General Election. **GET OUT and VOTE!**

Wed, Nov 3 @ 7:15 pm = VEP Exec Meeting (call for

details).

Sun, Nov 14 @ 5 pm = An evening of celebration honoring San Jose Vice Mayor **Pat Dando** @ Downtown San Jose Marriott Hotel. (See article in this newsletter.)

Tue, Nov 23 @ 7:30 - 9 pm = VEP General Meeting at Gunderson High School: presentations by the San Jose Dep't of Transportation on widening Branham Lane; by the city and county on Martial Cottle Park; and welcoming of the winner of District 10 City Council election.

VEP A friend in need!

Daffodil Days

- Dave Noel

As we have for the last three years, VEP will again participate in San Jose Beautiful's annual *Daffodil Days* planting program. Saturday October 23rd marks the tenth year for this popular event which has planted 205,000 daffodils in the City of San Jose to date.

This year 35,000 more daffodils will be planted across the city, and 800 of these will be planted in our area. VEP will plant 500 in the area west of Vistapark Drive, and will help the Cilker Park neighborhood plant 300 in their brand new park.

Please call either of our coordinators if you can volunteer for this fun event or if you have suggestions on specific locations to plant. On planting day, we will have our cell phones on so you can call to see where we need the most help and what supplies we may need.

Event Coordinators

East of Vistapark: Debra Suydam @ 972-4231; cell 375-9191.

Cilker Park: Dave Noel @ 266-7183; cell 718-2808.

Timelines

East of Vista Park: Meet at Parkview Elementary School, 330 Bluefield Drive (east of Vistapark Drive) 8:30 to 9 am = Refreshments and work assignments. 9 to 10:30 am = Plant daffodils at various sites.

Cilker Park: Meet at Cilker Park (Winfield at Chynoweth). 9:30 to 10 am = Refreshments and work assignments. 10 to 11 am = Plant daffodils at Cilker Park.

These timelines are staggered to take advantage of a trencher which we'll use to do the hard digging for us. This is the second year that VEP Members **Fred & Lois Koslowski** have generously donated the use a trencher for this event. They own "A Rental Center" in Los Gatos.

What to Bring

Please bring gloves and a shovel with you. Wear bright

colored clothing for safety. Some other items that may come in handy are brooms, orange cones, a pick, and a cell phone. We will need several heavy-duty rakes or hoes at Cilker Park to move the chipped wood ground cover before and after trenching.

High school students are welcome to join us. Please bring your volunteer worksheet so we can sign it for you.

Carson School's *Harvest Festival*

- Irene Shoberg (*)

Come, join the fun! Bring your friends, family and neighbors to the Carson Elementary School *Harvest Festival* this Friday, October 22nd. We'll have plenty of food for dinner, including BBQ chicken, salad, egg rolls, and pizza, as well as popcorn, cotton candy, and snow cones.

There will be plenty of games for the kids too. Win a live gold fish or try your luck with *Flip a Frog*. All players are winners!

A disc jockey will be on hand to provide festive music for your enjoyment. Say "Hi" to the San Jose Police Department's canine and mounted units. The San Jose Fire Department may also make an appearance.

Join us to dance to the music, pick up a pumpkin, play the games, win a cake, and go home happy!

Carson Elementary School is located at 4245 Meg Drive. We hope to see you there!

[(*) Irene Shoberg is a long-time member of VEP and the Library Assistant at Carson Elementary School.]

President's message

-Jeri Arstingstall, VEP President

I would like to thank the VEP community for a record attendance of 71 people at our *Election Forum* last month.

There is always something going on in the VEP area. Parkview Elementary held their *Walkathon* on October 9th. **Cathy Jones**, PSCA President, and her crew did a fantastic job. Their silent auction alone was worth attending.



Special thanks to **Alan** and **Ginger Cardona** for making new A-frame street signs we use to announce monthly VEP meetings—a very big job. Alan designed the new signs to include a white board on both sides for use in announcing our other events.

Debra Suydam, **Dana Belstler**, and **Dave Noel** are heading up our *Daffodil Days* event on Saturday October 23rd. (Look for full details in Dave Noel's article in

this newsletter.)

VEP is now asking every homeowner/resident in the San Jose Unified School District to please take an active role in upcoming decisions regarding school closures. Remember: whether or not you have children, school district decisions could dramatically influence our property values and the character of our community. (Please see the article in this newsletter for details.)

If you have any community concerns, please do not hesitate to contact VEP.

Opinion: That's not *my* trash...

-Dana Belstler

Okay, I admit it--my one serious pet peeve is trash! People think of trash as being impersonal, incognito; something the street sweeper will pick up. WRONG!

Living at the end of a court (on a relatively traffic sparse street), I can tell you for a fact that all of the trash in the Vistapark Drive vicinity ends up in my front yard!

You think I jest? I have found Chevron credit card receipts (yes, with the card number embossed in all its glory!) and statements with social security numbers. I've found letters, water bottles, McDonald's trash, school homework and even a couple of \$20 bills! The piece de resistance? The top of a check box that was mailed (I hope it made it!) to an individual in MILPITAS! Aren't there any street courts in Milpitas, for crying out loud?



We live in a very pretty area. Granted it is San Jose, not Los Gatos or Saratoga; but we have the power to change that! Look at Willow Glen (which by the way, is San Jose); they managed to take an area within San Jose and kick it up a notch. Because of their neighborhood pride and greedy desire for higher home values, they are now reaping the rewards of tremendous equity



Precious Moments In Time

Family and Children Portraits



Weddings and Special Events



Photography by Jeri Arstingstall

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Jesting aside, we in the Vista Park and Vistapark Drive vicinity, have the power to make our neighborhood very desirable. We have tree-lined streets, many neighborhood parks, and homeowners that are slowly adding curb appeal and taking pride in their homes.

With the Lester property now officially named Martial - Cottle Park, and that decrepit retaining wall on Branham Lane, east of Vistapark Drive, hopefully getting a face-lift one day, we have an opportunity to become a very, very desirable location.

So the next time you see a piece of trash on your lawn or in the street out front, pick it up! I know it's not yours, but that one selfless act will enhance the neighborhood tremendously. After garbage pick-up, sweep the curb in front of your home; it will make it look so much more neat and desirable. Yes, there will always be that one home--that one (okay, maybe two) bah-humbug neighbor who doesn't care. So what? Who needs them anyways?

We have a wonderful community neighborhood, with more people who care than those who don't. So pick up their trash, sweep their curb, it is a small sacrifice to make to insure our community is a more charming and desirable place.

Neighborhood developments

- Dave Noel

Hillsdale east of Hwy 87. 26 single-family attached residential units (e.g. condos) are proposed for a 1.6 gross acre site on the south side of Hillsdale Avenue, 420 feet east of Highway 87, along the creek. VEP execs submitted a letter opposing this project since it incrementally increases the burden on our infrastructure, such as the northbound Hwy 87 onramp at Narvaez, without contributing to solutions to mitigate that burden.

Happy Halloween!

VEP breaks membership record!

VEP is at an all-time high of 541 paid member households. We offer our thanks to all who have joined.

The City of San Jose CAP grant we received has allowed us to outreach to our entire neighborhood. VEP membership has increased as a result.

Here are two quotes from new members:

Chuck and Salete Tucker say, "Enjoyed our first meeting 9/28/04."

Stacey Steffens says, "Thanks for the free newsletter. It inspired me to finally (after 17 years) sign up."

It is never too late to join. Please use the following form to join VEP through December of this year. If you respond by November 1st, we're offering a discounted \$10 per household price for new members.

** Membership Application **

None of the following information will be sold to or otherwise shared with any third party.

** Please type or print legibly **

Last name(s): _____

First name(s): _____

Street address: _____

Telephone # _____

Email address(es): _____

Comments): _____

Can you give VEP a few volunteer hours? _____

Mail your \$10 check to VEP, P.O. Box 18111, San Jose 95158. **This reduced price offer is only valid through November 1, 2004.** Thank you!

Computer corner

-Bob Aquino, VEP's Computer Guru

One of the problems of adjusting to a reduced income is that we cannot indulge in the retail therapy of buying the latest model computer every couple of years. So, what's a retired or unemployed computer geek to do

when it seems like the computer world is passing him by, leaving him in a technological backwater?



The first piece of advice I'd give is to seriously evaluate your unhappiness with your present system. Don't be seduced by GHz numbers. I've said in this column before that, in most cases, the only time the average home user (not a gamer) will be aware of the performance differences is when the system boots up or loads a program.

If those delays don't bother you, your system ain't broken, so don't fix it.

But if you feel that your old machine needs to be critically evaluated as to its continued life, what goes into the upgrade or buy new decision?

Picking up today's Fry's ad, I see a 2.53GHz Celeron based system with 256K DDR Ram, a 40G hard drive, a combo CD RW/DVD ROM integrated graphics with 64MB of shared memory, a 10/100 networking connection, a 56K modem, two USB ports, and Win XP Home edition selling for \$499 after rebates. Interestingly, no floppy is mentioned.

A couple of observations are in order. The system is weak on RAM. It has 256KB but 64KB are committed to the graphics functions. I'd really like to see an additional 256K on the system. Done at Fry's that's probably an added \$75 to \$100.

Now let's make some estimation of the capabilities of your present system...

If you have a home network or broadband connection, you already have a network card. No advance there. You probably also have a CD ROM drive. If you would want to add a CD RW so that you can burn your own CDs the same ad shows a \$30 drive.

Chances are your old system doesn't have a USB port. This is almost a necessity if you plan to do digital photography; it's the interface used to download them. But don't fret! They run \$5 to \$10.

If you're crowded for hard drive space, you can find 40G drives for about \$40. Assuming that your system uses PC100 memory, you can get 256KB SIMMs for about \$40.

But suppose your system has slowed down? There are lots of things that you can do that don't cost anything. #1 is to get rid of programs that you don't use. Clean out old files to give yourself more breathing room. Get rid of icons on your desktop for rarely used programs.

Then, defrag your hard drive. If you don't have a defrager, or are impatient with the speed and finickiness of the MS version, I highly recommend *Diskeeper Lite* from Executive Software. It's free, and it does a good

job of compacting files so that they don't spend a lot of time disk searching.

If (and only if) you've backed up ALL of your files, another thing you can do is to re-install the OS. A more effective method is to wipe your hard drive clean and re-install, but doing so is definitely not for the faint of heart or an amateur. I don't generally recommend it.

If you have the compatible hardware, and are using Win 95, 98, ME or NT, I'd recommend replacing the OS with Win XP. It's a much more stable system and tends to run faster, surprisingly enough.

I certainly would not presume to advise you as to what you should do to without knowing all the circumstances. Ultimately the decision is personal and yours exclusively. My only advice is not to jump precipitately for a new system without considering the alternatives.

Happy computing!

VEP-area beautification

-Dave Fadness

VEP's adopted list of goals for the coming year includes our participation in "...the *San Jose Beautiful* daffodil planting event and at least one other beautification project."

Many of our readers may be unaware of what VEP has already done to beautify our community. In 1995 we were awarded a *San Jose Beautiful* grant that enabled our volunteers to plant 143 palm trees in the median of Chynoweth Avenue. (Our volunteers have planted and maintained a total of 161 palms there.) Yes, those trees were planted by VEP *volunteers* (not by the city). A stipulation on receipt of grant funds is that we had to maintain the trees for three years.

We're still maintaining them nine years later. We prune all of them twice annually. Trees occasionally get destroyed in car accidents (thankfully, the trees prevent cross-over head-on collisions!); to assure survival of replacement trees, we hand-water new plantings every other day for four- to six-months.

In 2002, we applied for and were awarded a second grant. We used it to landscape the median islands on Narvaez at Branham Lane and on Chynoweth at Pearl. These two projects were completed in January, 2003. A three-year maintenance agreement was also stipulated for these two sites. VEP volunteers have been watering, pruning, and removing trash at these sites on an ongoing basis.



Also part of the second grant was planting bushes to replace those that have died over the years on Branham Lane, just west of New Compton Drive. This August, our volunteers planted 18 miniature oleanders there, and

have been watering them regularly since. Before long, the gaps will be filled with pretty, flowering bushes.

We've tried for several years to get permission to clean up and plant trees along the south side of Branham Lane, from Vistapark Drive to Snell Avenue. Thwarted on every attempt by bureaucratic red tape and ownership issues, we are still trying—stay tuned.

We're also considering volunteer beautification projects at other sites, like the barren median island on Rosenbaum at Capitol, the dusty vacant lot on Branham Lane at Narvaez, the weed- and trash-strewn strip of land along Chynoweth, east of Pearl Avenue, and the desolate-looking sound wall along Branham Lane, east of Vistapark Drive. Adding redwood mulch to finish the palm-lined median on Chynoweth has also been suggested. VEP's annual participation in *Daffodil Day* is another example.

The primary ingredient for success in these projects will be our volunteers. Get involved...

First, by letting us know if you see anything amiss at any of the sites we've already improved. We need to increase the sense of community "ownership" of our neighborhood gateways. YOU can help.

Second, let us know if there's a site that needs attention. Yes, we may ask you to help improve it, but that's the way we make things happen at VEP—by group involvement. Working together makes big jobs a manageable small effort for each participant.

Finally, when we call for help on volunteer projects, be there! Remember: The project you suggest or the one closest to where you live may not be scheduled first, but we'll do them one at a time until they *all* get done. Your help will expedite this process.

It's OUR community. Let's work together to make/keep it *the* best in San Jose. That's what VEP is all about. Join us.

Fall fundamentals

-John Marks, VEP's Green Gardener

What! You don't have a compost receptacle or pile? You can learn how to compost yard waste and food scraps, and get a schedule of free how-to composting classes through the Master Composters' program. Just call 299-4147. We'll have some literature on this topic at our October VEP meeting.



I routinely throw grapefruit and orange peelings, coffee grounds, onion tops, wilted greens, banana peels, apple cores, carrot peelings, over-ripe fruit, radish tops, celery tops, and trimmings from most meal preparations into a plastic corner box that sits in our sink. That gets carried to our outdoor compost container, which is no more than 18-

inches square and 2-feet tall with a lid. You can get attractive compost boxes from Orchard Supply. Give it some thought!

Yes, it's time to get the ladders out and peer into the rain gutters. There, you'll find stray tennis balls, toys, and worst of all, a bunch of rotting leaves. Not only will they rust out your gutters, but render the downspouts useless. So plan to get up there on a sunny Saturday and clear them out.

The leaves that fall on the ground can be tossed into the compost pile, too. Or you can use the lazy gardener's method by raking them into garden beds and use them to cover exposed soil. The leaves will break down over the winter and turn into rich garden humus by spring.

Cool-season vegetables to plant included broccoli, cabbage, cauliflower, peas, radishes, green onions, beets and lettuce grapefruit.



The *National Gardening Association* web site, www.garden.org is full of general information for gardeners. One of its most useful features is a localized report. There are also how-to basics, on-line courses, a horticultural dictionary and plant name finder, events calendar, message board, seed swap and links to a children's gardening site. You can search the site's library for articles.

Plant spring-flowering bulbs, including daffodils, tulips, hyacinths and crocus now.

If the recent heat wave sizzled your bougainvillea, don't over-react and take it out. The branches and roots are still healthy and will have new growth, more leaves, and dazzling flowers next spring.

Rose lovers take note: Barbara Milo Ohrbach's 16th book on roses, "Roses for the Scented Room: Beautiful Ideas for Entertaining, Gift-Giving and the Home" (Clarkson Potter, \$25) is now available. This lavishly photographed book covers everything from the history of the rose to selecting the best varieties and decorating with roses.

Her helpful suggestions in buying, gathering, conditioning and arranging roses include picking roses from the garden in the early morning when their scent is strongest, and reviving drooping roses by inserting a straight pin in the stem to perk up droopy rose heads. Interesting recipes include rose-petal vinegar, jasmine rose tea, rose cuticle cream, and rose-petal splash and fabric wash. There is also a source list for books, suppliers, catalogs, organizations and associations.

How to Stop Ants

Here's a sure-fire way to get rid of ants. Mix four teaspoons of boric acid power (which you can find in most pharmacies), three cups of water, and one cup of

granulated sugar in a saucepan. Bring the mixture to a boil and stir to dissolve the solids. Place several small, shallow lids of the solution near the invading ants. Container such as caps from gallon jugs and bottle caps work well.

This solution can be harmful to children and pets if consumed in LARGE amounts, say officials with the state Poison Control Center hotline, so be a little cautious.

The ants eat the sugary solution and carry it back to their nests. The boric acid forms crystals in their stomachs and the ants die from exploding stomachs. Other ants eat their dead partners and they, too, will die.

[Ed. Note: "How to Stop Ants" was abstracted from Action Line, San Jose Mercury, 8/28/04 issue.]

Vroom, vroom

-Dana Belstler

Let's face it, we're living in a society that doesn't bother to come up for air. You see it all around you: 24 hour stores, food service, employment—it's non-stop action, a rush to get to the next big event.



That high-speed action spills over onto our neighborhood streets, and you do know who the guilty parties are? You! Yes, YOU!

The speed limit on Vistapark Drive is 35 mph. It's 25 mph on the smaller side streets. Unfortunately, there are individuals who believe they are on the freeway and not a neighborhood street. The same is true for Branham Lane, east of Vistapark Drive. This two-lane (country atmosphere) road might as well be the speedway at Indy.

What's my favorite evening past time? It's listening to road rage as individuals refuse to let the other lane merge, where Branham goes from two lanes to one. Let's see, you *know* the lane ends, so what do you do? Yeah! That's it, speed up and don't let the sucker in! What does that individual do? Lean on his horn and proceed to tailgate until they turn off.

Okay, we have a very selfish individual whose grumpy, ego-bloated act ruins the commute of another and, through their actions, indirectly creates noise pollution for those homes and the elderly facility on Branham. BRILLIANT!

Just so you know, the side affects of speeding are not just causing noise pollution and ruining someone else's commute and day, in some instances it can lead to injury and death. It also contributes to high blood pressure and potential heart failure.

I'm not a saint. I've been guilty of some ego myself (yes, it is true!). But please remember when you're driv-

ing through our neighborhoods that you're not on an expressway or freeway. Watch your speed, particularly on the smaller side streets where kids and animals are more concentrated.

Who knows? If you try doing the speed limit, you might notice what a beautiful neighborhood you live in.

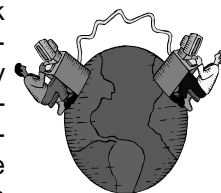
On-line safety

-Rosemarie Shaheen Healy, M.A. LMFT (*)

A landmark Study on Computer Use

How is this computer age effecting our teens that are in the critical years of accumulating social skills that will affect the outcome of the rest of their lives?

In a landmark study conducted by researchers at Carnegie Mellon University, findings showed that people who spent even a few hours a week online experienced higher levels of depression and loneliness than they would have if they had used the computer network less frequently. Furthermore, those participants who were lonelier and more depressed at the start of the two-year study were not more likely to use the Internet. Instead, Internet use itself appeared to cause a decline in psychological well-being. The results of the \$1.5 million project ran completely contrary to expectations of the social scientists that designed it and many of the organizations that financed the study.



"VEP" Community Association

What does "VEP" stand for?

How did we get that odd name?

Well, "VEP" represents the first three letters of our original subdivision names here in 1969:

V = **V**istapark;

E = **E**ncore (and **E**cho Valley); and

P = **P**arkview Valley.

That's all there is to it!

Of course, we've grown over the years to include the Blossom Heights subdivision and others, including Las Brisas in 2004. But our original **VEP** name stuck, and we've been known by it for 35 years. Some like to think of us as...

Very Energetic People

See the mailing page of this newsletter for a map of VEP's core membership area. We also welcome members from outside these boundaries who share common interests.

These included technology companies like Intel, Hewlett Packard, AT&T, and Apple Computer.

Participants in the study used mostly social features of the web such as email and internet chat more than passive information gathering like reading or watching videos. But they reported a decline in interaction with family members and a reduction in their circle of friends that directly corresponded to the amount of time they spent online.

Do you know what your teen does on-line?

As a member of the counseling staff at the high school I work at, I have observed more than once very bright and capable students slipping academically due to the use and overuse of the Internet. Personal profiles, Instant Messaging, RPG (role playing games), Live Journal, Xanga.com, Lan Parties, Counterstrike? Have you heard of these? Your teens have! And chances are they are spending a lot of time on them. Have you any idea what they are doing? Just last year the Dean of Discipline and myself logged into an internet site called myplace.com and found several of our students misrepresenting themselves in rather disturbing ways, looking for "new friends" to communicate with. OMG! (Do you know what that means? Come on, get with it!)

Some Basic Rules and Guidelines

What is the solution here? Is there one? Researchers say that as with anything that is highly attractive or addictive, moderation is the key. There needs to be a balance of time spent in close proximity relationships, face to face communication, and embodied and consistent love and support from family and friends. Our teenagers need help in discerning what is real world and what is cyber world. Parents need to teach their teens how to make good decisions, how to form secure and meaningful attachments, and how to look at the information highway with a critical eye. Teenagers are more likely to explore out of the way nooks and crannies of cyberspace, reach out to people outside of their immediate peer groups, and sadly, they're more often preyed upon as victims by child molesters and other exploiters. Read "Katie.com" by Katherine Tarbox, for insight into this frightening and critical issue.



As parents, we can insist on some basic rules for online safety for our teenagers:

- Keep your identity private
- Never get together with someone you "meet" online.
- Never respond to e-mail, chat comments, or instant messages that are hostile, belligerent, and inappropriate or in any way make you feel uncomfortable.

Some suggested guidelines for Parents:

- Talk with your teens about what they can and cannot do online.

- Be reasonable and set reasonable expectations.
- Be open with your teens and encourage them to come to you if they encounter a problem online.
- Learn everything you can about the Internet.

Be a Role Model

Technology is here to stay. It is up to us as parents to be vigilant in our observations and education about the advantages and the disadvantages of the Internet. As in all other parenting responsibilities, the best strategy is to be a role model for healthy behavior when it comes to Internet usage. Take your teen with you to the market or Home Depot to run some errands, sift through nails and carrots, and make small talk with employees and neighbors. Build community with your neighborhood. One teacher at my school said that it takes her husband six hours on a Saturday to do the yard work because he factors in visiting with all his neighbors outside!

Turn off your own computer and sit down in the living room with a good book in the evening. You will be much more approachable if your teen wants to sit with you and chat about his or her day. And don't forget to make time for a family meal together. As we advance technologically, let's not forget the basics of family and communities living that are imperative for the formation of a well-integrated and balanced human being.

Goodparents offers a variety of classes in Santa Clara and San Mateo counties focusing on helping parents improve their relationships with their teens. They are offering a "Parents and Teens Together" class at John Muir Middle School for three Mondays starting November 8th at 7 p.m. Their "3 Steps to Parenting Teens" for six Tuesdays starts 7 p.m. November 2nd at Lincoln High School. For more information or to receive their free email newsletter, visit www.goodparentsinc.com.

*[(*Ed Note: This article is used with permission from **goodparents inc.** ©Copyright 2004, goodparents, inc. Palo, Alto, CA. All rights reserved, including foreign language translation.]*

New San Jose Outreach Policy

- Dave Noel

The San Jose City Council recently adopted a new outreach policy that dictates how residents are notified of proposed projects near their homes. Their new policy is a culmination of about two years of work from active community volunteers and negotiations with developers and city staff.

Generally, developers are required to notify all residents within a certain radius of their proposed project to announce public hearings on the project. The radius is typically based on the size or nature of the project.

What is dramatically different from the previous out-

reach policy is that now the City Planning Department will be responsible for notifying neighborhood associations (such as VEP) when projects are proposed within their areas of interest. Previously, there was no mechanism to ensure that neighborhood associations were notified at all. (That's why we rely on members like you to let us know whenever you receive a notice of public hearing.)

We expect it will take some time for the improvements to take hold, and VEP is committed to help the city as it works out the logistics of this significant new commitment. I wrote a letter on the subject to the Planning Commission and City Council on behalf of VEP, very supportive of the new policy, and offering suggestions for further improvement in either the policy itself, or the implementation of the policy. Our letter was publicly acknowledged at Planning Commission and City Council hearings during the policy approval process.

VEP's letter included copies of two previous letters we wrote in late 2001 recommending improvements to the city's outreach process. In 2001, we were very disappointed at the poor quality of outreach for a proposal to increase the number of residents in a "group home" in our area. Our letters protested the fact that those outreach letters were written in bureaucratic language, barely recognizable as English, and which were distributed only to homes that shared a common fence with the group home.

Free parenting support line

- San Jose City Councilman Dave Cortese (*)

There are times when every parent wonders... "Am I doing the right thing?" "Is my child okay?" "Should I contact my doctor?" The pediatric nurses at the Parent Information and Referral Center (PIRC) are ready to answer your questions about topics such as:

- Children's health
- Growth and development
- Safety
- Behavior

The pediatric nurses can also help you learn about special resources available for children in your own community. PIRC nurses also welcome questions from grandparents, day care providers, teachers and others in the community who care for children.

Call (650) 498-KIDS (5437) or (800) 690-2282, 7am until 11pm, seven days a week. Translators are available. PIRC is a FREE community service provided by Lucile Packard Children's Hospital. You can also contact the nurses by email at pirc@stanfordmed.org. For more information go to <http://www.lpch.org/ForPatientsVisitors/PatientServices/PIRC/parentInformationReferralCenter.html>

[(*) Ed. Note: This article was reprinted from Dave Cortese's Aug/Sept email newsletter. Dave notes "this is

an incredible resource that I have personally used on a number of occasions. My advice to those of you with children is to copy this number and paste it on your fridge!)]

Our September meeting

-Ginger Cardona, VEP Secretary

We had record attendance at our Election Forum this year. Council candidates **Rich De La Rosa** and **Nancy Pyle** were able to share their positions on a number of issues during a debate. Bond Measure S was also debated. Measure S is the initiative to continue San Jose's parcel tax for libraries.



VEP Goals and Objectives for this year were reviewed and overwhelmingly approved. These goals and objectives can be found on VEP's website. Highlights include monitoring the Branham widening project and the Lester property.

Newsletter editor **Dave Fadness** wants to retire. VEP is currently looking for a replacement. If you are interested, please contact Dave or **Jeri Arstingstall**.

Daffodil Day is scheduled for October 23rd. Possible locations were discussed, with the focus being east of Vistapark Drive. There are a number of parks in addition to a school which will provide possible planting areas. **Dave Noel** will be leading a group for planting at Cilker Park. Please contact **Debra Suydam** if you will be able to participate.

The City of San Jose grant to help with our newsletter distribution was finalized. We thank **Greg West** for leading this project. He was able to secure a grant to mail the VEP newsletter to all 2400 homes in the VEP area. This expanded newsletter distribution will continue until the grant funds have been depleted.

The next VEP meeting will be October 26th at 7:30 pm in the Gunderson Faculty Lounge.

New SJPD Crime Report website

- San Jose City Councilman Dave Cortese (*)

San Jose residents can now track crime in their neighborhood through a recently-unveiled feature which can be located via the "My Neighborhood" link at www.sjpd.org. The feature lets users see the number and types of 911 calls for police service near their homes.

Citywide data on crime reporting patterns also are available, and individuals, businesses, and organizations can sign up for e-mailed neighborhood and city crime alerts.

[(*) Ed. Note: This article was reprinted from Dave Cortese's Aug/Sept email newsletter.]

Secondary units ("Granny Flats")

- Dave Noel

The city of San Jose currently does not allow new secondary units or "Granny Flats" to be built on single family residence zoned parcels. The state recently required all cities to review their secondary unit laws. San Jose recently completed a round of community meetings to determine whether its law should be changed and, if so, what it should allow.



The city proposed a set of rules that would limit the size of the secondary unit (and thus the number of occupants) and the parking requirements for secondary units.

What I found most interesting was that if a city allows granny units, then State law forbids the city from imposing public notification and hearings requirements on secondary units. That means that your neighbor would be able to go to the city, submit plans, and receive a permit to build without notifying you.

The proposed parking requirements would severely limit the number of homes that could have granny units, despite otherwise having sufficient land. For the purposes of parking, the main house must have two covered spots, and still have room for one more car for the granny unit. The driveway apron and the street would not qualify as allowable spaces for the purposes of approving a granny unit.

My thoughts are:

1. If we'd have to give up local control in the permit process, we shouldn't allow granny units.
2. If parking requirements alone would severely limit the number of granny units allowed, then the city is spending too much money pursuing granny units compared to the very limited amount of additional housing granny units would offer.
3. Allowing secondary units breaks the trust that homeowner's have with government. When you buy a home in a neighborhood zoned for a certain housing density, the city should not later change that density.

VEP History in a nut shell: 1991- 1995

-Greg West

The following is another in a series of summaries of VEP history taken from our newsletter archives. This summary covers 1991 to 1995. VEP is scanning archived newsletters and making them available on-line at the VEP web site (www.vepca.org).

1991 City begins recycling and yard waste pick-up programs. City Parks Commission Chair, **Joseph Guerra** and the Parks Commission reject VEP's revisions to the Vista Park Master Plan to include volleyball courts, softball fields, and additional basketball courts. Guadalupe light rail line opens on

Call VEP for help with your community problems

April 25.

City's 5-year *Capital Improvement Plan* includes widening of Branham from Vista Park to Snell after '95, completion of Chynoweth through the Lester property by '95, widening of Snell from Chynoweth to Branham by '92, and completion of Vistapark Drive through the Lester property by '95. City Housing Initiative calls for high density housing within 3/8-mile of light rail stations, with no maximum unit density. City backs off on "no truck" commitment on Hwy 87.

3500 - 5000 unit development of Communications Hill discussed at March meeting. Council member **George Shirakawa** visits March meeting. **Steve Kinsey** elected VEP President.

Sierra Club injunction against Hwy 87 construction is overturned. City Planning Commission proposes zoning two parcels of the Lester property for high density development.

Brian Dunbar (Andrew Hill) and **Amrita Tahiliani** (Gunderson) selected by VEP for \$500 *Community Service Awards*.

Gunderson, Steinbeck, Pioneer, and Muir considered for school closing in '92-'93 school year if Measure A does not pass. Meadows Park master plan presented to VEP. SJPD begins helicopter patrols. VEP redistricted into City Council District 10. Parkview School over-enrolled by 60 students causing 1/2, 2/3, and 3/4 classrooms.

1992 VEP sent letter protesting Communications Hill development to Planning Commission. VEP starts 1992 with \$3030.35 in the bank. Council member **Joe Head** visits February meeting. SJPD Chief **Lou Cobarruvias** visits March meeting to address neighborhood crime concerns. **John Marks** begins "Green Gardener" column in VEP News.

Jerry Strangis presents Communications Hill development plan at April meeting. **Bob Aquino** and **Dave Fadness** take VEP News editor responsibilities once again from **Jeanette Jackson**. VEP hosts city council candidates **Joe Head** and **Ray Bowdle** as well as a Stadium measure "G" discussion at May Election Forum.

Natalie Escobedo (Andrew Hill) and **David Ohlson** (Gunderson) win VEP's \$500 CSAs.

City proposes General Plan change to designate 16% of Lester property "Transit Corridor High Density Resi-

dential (12 or more units/acre). New city council member **Joe Head** agrees to recommend that the high density proposal be tabled for a year while he and the city work to secure the rights-of-way for the widening of Branham, the completion of Vistapark Drive to Cahalan, and the ultimate designation of the property as a county park.

VEP hosts State Assembly District 24 candidates **Jim Beall** and **Charles Quackenbush** as well as a spirited County Transportation Measure "A" discussion at its October Election Forum. Southern Pacific finally lists abandoned Lick Spur property with Cunningham Associates for ultimate sale to adjacent property owners.

1993 VEP members reject proposed constitutional amendment to increase membership area to include all single family housing tracts south of Rosenbaum, west of Snell, north of Branham, and east of Vistapark Drive.

Mayor **Susan Hammer** visits February meeting and discusses administration priorities: economic development; youth and schools; and public safety. Bussing under SJUSD consent decree begins. VEP loses its appeal to City Council over concerns about the 103-acre Brandenburg development on the north side of Capital at Vistapark Drive. Hwy 87 opens south to Santa Teresa without truck ban.

\$32K allocated for Vista Park planning becomes part of \$147K parks budget cut. City enacts ordinance prohibiting placing of yard waste at the curb more than 24 hours before collection.

Kevin Springer (Andrew Hill) and **Reena Mishra** (Gunderson) win VEP's \$500 CSAs.

County holds hazardous waste material pick-up at the Chynoweth light rail station, but does publicize to VEP neighbors because of the high cost of hazardous waste disposal. SJUSD Board of Education member, **Richard Couser** and Oakgrove Elementary School District Superintendent, **Tim Cuneo** visit October meeting. VEP jointly hosts Mayor **Susan Hammer** neighborhood meeting with Pinehurst and Thousand Oaks Homeowners Associations.

City agrees to conduct a detailed traffic noise study on newly opened Hwy 87 to determine if a truck ban is warranted. City Capital Improvement Plan identifies \$314K in funding for Vista Park phase I build out by '95.

1994 VEP holds first *Home Improvement Faire* in January. VEP Neighbor **Ron Burda** successfully lobbies the city to repair Vistapark Drive between Branham and Hyde Park Drive. VEP neighbor **Tony Mollica** mounts one-man anti-graffiti campaign on Chynoweth. City forms Department of Neighborhood Services headed by Director **George Penn**. Dr. Penn speaks at March meeting. **John Marks** elected VEP President.

Normandin Chrysler/Plymouth is recognized for 25 years of support of VEP as a continuous advertiser and for hosting meetings in VEP's early years. City creates anti-graffiti program.

VEP \$750 CSA awarded to **Vikki Herrera** (Gunderson). Andrew Hill did not submit nominees.

VEP surveys members on waste collection satisfaction and finds that responding VEP members are, for the most part, satisfied with the service (but not the cost). VEP hosts 24th Congressional District candidates **Jim Cuneen** and **Ed Foglia** as well as SJUSD Board candidates **Tom Corchero**, **Richard Couser**, **Veronica Lewis**, and **Christopher Migleo** at October Election Forum. **Bob Aquino** begins "Computer Corner" feature in VEP NEWS. District 10 City Council Member **Joe Head** resigns.

1995 135-unit Bridge affordable housing project proposed for 6-acres adjacent to the Ohlone-Chynoweth light rail station. Cilker plans 204-unit market-rate units on additional 4.6-acres. VEP executive committee conditionally supports both projects after Bridge and Cilker present at two VEP meetings. City Council unanimously approves the project with no conditions.

Candidates for vacated District 10 Council seat, **Pat Dando** and **Mari Maben** attend April candidate forum before May run-off election.

Karen Erickson (Andrew Hill) and **Victor Mitre** (Gunderson) awarded VEP's \$750 CSAs.

Hwy 85/87 connector ramp funding from Measure A tied up by State Supreme Court. Council Member Dando issues a memo to Mayor and Council recommending that the Lester property receive Open Space designation in the City's General Plan. City Council agrees to the change. Mayor Hammer proposes San Jose Greenbelt.

Past VEP President and volunteer-supreme, **Sally Hess** and family move from VEP neighborhood. VEP Master Plan for Vista Park presented to Council Member Dando and City Council. Dando sets aside \$250K for phase I development. **Tony Mollica** and **Woody Davis** plant 18 palm trees on the eastern end of Chynoweth. VEP wins a \$2000 *San Jose Beautiful* grant to plant trees on the rest of Chynoweth, from Pearl east to Hyde Park.

Pat Dando initiates "Neighborhoods First" program.
(cont'd next page)

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

Mark Schoenberg establishes VEP on-line bulletin board. VEP neighbor, **Ron Burda**, takes up garage sale sign graffiti cause.

☺ FLASHBACK ☺

This article is reprinted from the
August, 1993 VEP NEWS

OPINION: SOME BAD CHEMISTRY

- Tom Corchero, VEP Vice President

Once again the almighty dollar speaks louder than common sense and reason in the City of San Jose. Supposedly we have an environmentalist mayor, a "let's clean-up and make our neighborhoods safe" city council, and a "clean-air" county board of supervisors. Campaign rhetoric strikes again.

Remember when...

Driving by the Chynoweth light rail station on August 8th, I noticed some trucks labeled CHEM PAK and people wearing white suits of some kind in the parking lot. There was a multi-colored tarp covering the trucks and some barrels. I knew something was going on there, but had no idea what it was.

On my way home later that morning, I pulled in to see what was going on. At the parking lot entrance there was a small sign indicating that the County Hazardous Waste department was conducting a pick-up of hazardous chemicals in our area.

What a great idea! I was curious, though, as to why area homeowners hadn't been notified about this so we could dispose of our chemicals in a safe manner.

I went home to gather the chemicals I had, then returned to the disposal site early that afternoon. When I arrived, there was a group of about ten to fifteen men and women in white chemical suits standing around as though waiting for something.

The lady that greeted me told me I was a little bit late. She said I should have been there earlier. They were closed.

I could handle the fact that they were closed, but what I heard next really angered me. When I asked why there hadn't been any advertising of the pick-up day in our neighborhoods (or in the city in general), I was told that "Due to the high cost to the city to pick up and dispose of hazardous waste, the city doesn't like or want to advertise about these pick-up days." They told me that I could call a county number to make an appointment for next month in Gilroy because not many people will drive that far to dispose of their chemicals. My other option was to drive to Mountain View.

I was flabbergasted.

Maybe I'm naive, but I have been under the impression for a long time that our city and county public safety officers, and even the state and federal governments have requested us to safely dispose as soon as possible any and all hazardous chemicals in our homes. It is completely absurd to be told that the reason for not letting the public know that a collection day exists is a lack of money.

Most people want to protect the environment but don't have the time or don't know where to how to safely dispose of hazardous wastes. If properly informed of opportunities to do so easily, we will have fewer dangerous chemicals in our homes.

Taxpayers are paying for a disposal program; government's job is to make it readily available to us.

Recycling and disposal

- Dave Noel

Do you have old paint, pesticides, computer monitors, batteries, or any other toxic waste to get rid of? Call the Santa Clara County Household Hazardous Waste Program at (408) 299-7300 to make an appointment for a free drop-off of your household hazardous waste.

For more information, visit www.hhw.org. They even have a "freebie" shed to share supplies like fertilizers, pesticides and cleaners dropped off by others.

Cell Phones

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



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

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

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

SeniorNet sharpens your image

- John McCulloch

So, your kids bought you a digital camera and you took some pictures. Now what do you do?

To learn how to transfer this pot full of pixels, come join SeniorNet. A class is offered to show you how to save them on the hard drive of your computer. But that's not all. You will learn how to brighten them up, increase the contrast, resize them, improve the focus, crop them, and delete that distracting tree in the background.

You will soon discover that you could have a whole new hobby just modifying every photo to your liking. Then you can go back and scan-in that scratched black and white picture of your Great Aunt Bertha and make it look like new.

This isn't the only class to be given. SeniorNet also offers Introduction to Computers, Word Processing, E-

mail, Searching the Internet, Buying on E-bay, Windows XP, AOL and others. SeniorNet is open to anyone over 50 years of age.

Each two-hour class is held once a week for up to 8 weeks, some are shorter. The price for a typical class is \$20. Each student works from a designated computer following the steps the Instructor displays in front of the class. Coaches are available to keep everybody on the same page.

For more information or to place your name on SeniorNet's mailing list, call one of the centers listed below, or visit www.SNLCSJ.ORG.

- Vineland Branch Library, 1450 Blossom Hill Road, (408) 268-1133.
- Cypress Senior Center, 403 South Cypress Ave near Stevens Creek and Winchester Blvd, (408) 244-1353.
- Willows Senior Center, 2175 Lincoln Ave, (408) 448-6400.

SeniorNet is a worldwide organization which supports over 240 learning centers. It is a non-profit organization founded in 1986. The purpose is to provide computer education and access to people over 50. There is an annual fee of \$40 to join SeniorNet. It is primarily run by volunteers. If you would like to volunteer, please join us.

Community Service Awards

- Dave Noel

20 years ago, VEP began rewarding graduating high school seniors with exceptional volunteer service stipends for post-secondary or vocational training.

**VEP
Community
Service
Awards**

If you know a high school senior with an outstanding volunteer record, make sure they know about our award. If they attend Gunderson or Andrew Hill, they can be nominated by their administrators. Our At-Large award is granted to a graduating senior from any school who lives in San Jose and is nominated by a VEP member.

This fall the process starts all over again. We begin with outreach to the schools, then we appropriate funds with a vote of the membership in January/February, we call for nominations in February/March, applications are due in late April, and finally we grant our awards in May.

If any members would like to propose changes to award categories, selection criteria, funding amounts, or any other rules, let me know right away. This will allow us time to convene a committee in the fall to finalize any proposals, and present them to a vote of the membership at our January general meeting.



Bulletin Board Ads

CRAFTS: *Artisan's Network* presents a gift show November 19 & 20, 10 am until 4 pm at 684 Tarrytown Court, San Jose. Hand-painted scarves, unique pottery, novel pillows, cards, holiday décor, and more. Have a custom glass bead made on the spot!

U.S. MILITARY ITEMS WANTED: Top \$\$ paid. Call Doug at 978-3093 or 629-7436.

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

* * *

Bulletin Board advertising rules:

1. Bulletin Board ads are limited to four (4) lines of text. One line contains 50 characters, including spaces.

2. VEP will print **free** Bulletin Board ads for its members for one-time transactions involving less than \$400, for lost and found, and for services offered by kids under 18 or retirees over 60 years of age. Free ads may be published in a maximum of three successive issues of the VEP News per submission. After three issues, non-renewed ads will be dropped without notice.

3. VEP will print commercial Bulletin Board ads for its members for \$6 per issue of the VEP News. (A commercial ad is one that offers goods and/or services for a fee. The VEP President and/or Editor has final say in determining whether an ad is commercial.) Ads must be prepaid before publication and be of four (4) lines or less in length (see 1, above). Commercial bulletin board ads may be published indefinitely so long as payment is received in advance of publication. Non-renewed ads will be dropped without notice. No graphics allowed.

4. Bulletin board ads and payment must be received at least 12 days prior to the fourth Tuesday of the month for inclusion in that month's newsletter. Mail to: VEP, P.O. Box 18111, San Jose, 95158.

Use the following form as a guide for submitting an ad:

NAME: _____

PHONE # _____

AD WORDING: _____

The VEP Executive Board reserves exclusive right to refuse any ad for any reason. VEP does not certify nor is it responsible in any way for the claims, goods, or services of any advertisers.

Check us out at www.vepca.org

7:30 pm at Gunderson

Be sure to attend
 VEP's
 October 26th
 Meeting

THE VEP NEWS



VEP Community Association

P.O. Box 18111 San Jose, CA 95158

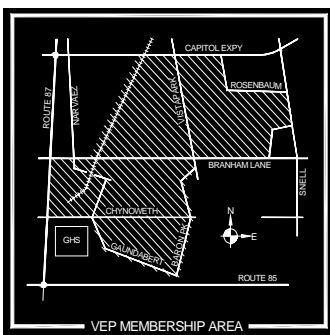
Email: vepca@vepca.org Website: www.vepca.org

Published monthly by VEP Community Association, a not-for-profit organization of volunteers established in 1969 to serve and represent more than 2000 homes in the Blossom Valley area of southern San Jose. VEP is dedicated to neighborhood maintenance and improvement in its membership area as well as to active involvement in civic affairs. This newsletter is mailed monthly to all members in good standing, to our advertisers, and to schools and government officials serving our membership area. For membership or paid advertisement information, contact our Treasurer or write to the address listed above.

VEP EXECUTIVE OFFICERS

PRESIDENT	JERI ARSTINGSTALL	281-1959	pres@vepca.org
VICE PRESIDENT	DANA BELSTLER	226-0755	vp@vepca.org
CO-SECRETARY	GINGER CARDONA	227-0222	sec@vepca.org
TREASURER	JOE TAJNAI	578-5882	tres@vepca.org
EDITORS	BOB AQUINO	629-5459	newsed1@vepca.org
	DAVE FADNESS	578-6428	newsed2@vepca.org

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VEP
 Meeting
 7:30 pm Tuesday,
 October 26