

VEP NEWS

• VEP COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION •

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

February 2008

VEP MEETING

7:30 p.m. Tuesday
February 26, 2008

► Vista Park Community Room ◀
475 Hyde Park Drive

AGENDA

★ Overview of Code Enforcement Services ★

A presentation by Greg Peacock, City of San Jose
Code Enforcement Inspector.

★ Energy Savings & Available Rebates ★

A presentation by Francois Rongere, PG&E.

★ Updates ★

~ Martial Cottle Park ~

~ Vista Park Community Room Master Plan ~

~ City of San Jose Neighborhoods Commission ~

★ VEP Business ★

Discuss & approve 2008 Community Service Awards Program.

★ Your Concerns and Ideas ★

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

Everyone is welcome. Please invite your neighbors!

Where is the Vista Park Community Room?

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

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

VEP's February meeting

-Marilyn Rodgers & Dave Noel

► **Greg Peacock**, City of San Jose Code Enforcement Inspector, will provide an overview of Code Enforcement services. His presentation will include codes for illegally parked vehicles, property/yards that violate the "blight" code, and how to handle neighborhood issues such as noise and barking dogs.

► **Francois Rongere**, spokesperson for Pacific Gas & Electric will provide VEP residents an overview of opportunities to save energy and money using PG&E rebates in their homes.

► Brief updates will be provided by VEP Martial Cottle Park Committee Chair and Santa Clara County Martial Cottle Park Regional Task Force Member **Adina Pierce** on Martial Cottle Park; by **Eric Crane**, Aide to Councilmember **Nancy Pyle**, on an upcoming Vista Park Community Room Master Plan; and by VEP Vice President **Marilyn Rodgers** on the city's newly forming Neighborhoods Commission.

► VEP Business: VEP members will be asked to vote on program specifics for VEP's 2008 Community Service Awards. Members approved a \$2,000 appropriation at our January meeting, contingent on the board presenting additional program details for approval at this February meeting. (See article by **Dave Noel** in this newsletter.)

► VEP always allows time at our meetings for you to voice your opinions and seek VEP's help with neighborhood concerns. This is our "open microphone" opportunity for members. Please let us know what you think needs to be done and how we can help you do it.

We look forward to seeing you, your family, your friends, and your neighbors at our February 26th meeting. Please join us!

VEP membership update

-Jeri Arstingstall

Thank you to all for your membership renewals. We've received 279 as of February 12th. We reach out to 2400 homes and, in recent years, typically exceed 500 paid member households by the end of our membership drive in March.

Please take time today to renew your membership if you have not done so already.

Here are some comments from the membership renewals received to date:

- Another fun, productive year!
- Appreciate all you do for our community. Thank you to all the volunteers.

2008 is VEP's 39th year!

- Enjoy the annual parade.
- Enjoy the newsletter every time. Thanks!
- Good work is done--LOVE the newsletter
- Kudos to the executive officers, what a team!
- Thank you for "ALL" that you do for our community.
- Thank you for your continued hard work to keep our neighborhood a wonderful place to live.
- Thanks so much for all you've done and continue to do--we appreciate it all.
- Thanks, VEP. Very good community.
- The officers are doing a great job. Keep up the good work.
- VEP is the greatest!
- We are so lucky to have you to help keep our neighborhood in top shape in so many ways, and to some of you for a lifetime of dedication. Thanks with all our hearts.
- We are very grateful to the VEP association.
- What a wonderful job you all do. Thank you.
- You are doing a great job advocating for our community and keeping us informed about community issues and projects.
- You are doing a *GREAT* job!

Please remember, we can only do a good job if you help. Becoming a paying member is *step one*. Take that step today!

Renew your VEP membership today!

Your VEP membership renewal is overdue!

-Dave Fadness and Dave Noel

VEP membership is based on a calendar year, January through December, so it's time to renew your membership. We included a remit envelop in last month's newsletter. If you can't find it, use the form below. Please be sure to fill in the information requested, enclose your \$20 check made payable to VEP, and mail it back to us as soon as possible--while it's still fresh in your mind. That's all there is to it!

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

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Renew today and ask your neighbors to join our growing family. Thank you.

What is VEP Community Association?

- ☺ VEP is an all-volunteer organization of your neighbors working to improve our neighborhoods.
- ☺ VEP sponsors many projects and events that improve safety, our quality of life, and the appearance of our community.
- ☺ VEP volunteers make our neighborhood's needs, views, and concerns known to government at all levels.
- ☺ VEP was founded in 1969. We are one of the largest, most successful, and most continuously active and enduring grass roots volunteer organizations in Santa Clara County.

Why join VEP?

- ☺ To receive our newsletter nine times a year.
- ☺ To receive monthly email alerts.
- ☺ To keep our neighborhoods beautiful, safe, strong, and prepared.
- ☺ To participate in and support effective neighborhood activities and representation.
- ☺ To support VEP's annual *Community Service Awards* for high school graduates.
- ☺ To be part of an outstanding volunteer community organization with 39 years of success in our neighborhoods.

**** Membership Application ****

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

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

Last name(s): _____

First name(s): _____

Street address: _____

Telephone # _____

Email address(es): _____

Comments): _____

Can you give VEP a few volunteer hours? _____

I am willing to volunteer for: Beautification/clean-up projects VEP News/mailling prep Memorial Day Parade & Festival Distribute flyers Serve on a committee
Serve as a VEP officer or committee chair Other _____

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

Invite your neighbors to join VEP

Two new advertisers

-Dave Fadness

You'll notice two new advertisers in the month's newsletter: **Olsen's Pressure Washing** and **Saint Stephen's School**. VEP welcomes these businesses and gratefully acknowledges their financial support for our newsletter.

Whenever you're seeking the products or services offered by these or any of our advertisers, please give them serious priority consideration. Be sure to tell them you saw their ad in our newsletter and join us in thanking them.

When you do business with our advertisers, please let us know about your experience. Like them, we want to be sure you're satisfied. Also, if you're pleased with the services of a local company that may be interested in advertising, refer them to us.

VEP's 24th annual Community Service Awards

- Dave Noel

For our 24th consecutive year, VEP will offer grants towards higher education or vocational training for up to three graduating high school seniors with exceptional records of volunteerism and community service.

**VEP
Community
Service
Awards**

At our January general meeting, members unanimously approved the executive board's recommendation to fund \$2,000 for VEP's 2008 Community Service Awards, with the stipulation that the board present a proposal to members at the February general meeting outlining additional program details that were under consideration as part of a Constitution and By-Laws (C&BL) review.

Since our C&BL review is still underway, the 2008 Community Service Awards appropriation will need to conform to our existing C&BL rules. At the February general meeting, I will present a recommendation to award up to three Community Service Awards of \$665 each for a graduating high school student from Gunderson High School, from Andrew Hill School, and from our "At-Large" category. At-Large candidates may attend any high school or be home-schooled, and must live in San Jose.

Applications will be distributed to the administrations at Gunderson and Andrew Hill High schools by early March and will also be posted on VEP's website. VEP will ask each school to nominate three students and provide us their completed applications by April 22nd. If you know a Gunderson or Andrew Hill student deserving consideration for this award, please encourage them to talk to their principal or guidance counselor to ensure they are considered for nomination.

Our At-Large application form will be available on VEP's website by early March. The deadline for all applications is 9 p.m. on April 22nd, our normal VEP meeting night.

We will present our Gunderson and Andrew Hill awards at each school's respective senior awards night in late May or early June. If we have an At-Large winner, we will present that award at our May 27th general meeting.

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

Brian Bonnifield, Real Estate Consultant American Eagle Properties

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Cracked walls & related (un)settling problems

-Dave Fadness

Although problems are ongoing, it's been a long time since we've spilled ink over the subject of expansive soil and nagging cracks in walls and stucco. A caller recently inquired about problems now being experienced, reminding me that many folks have bought homes in our neighborhoods in the generation since this issue was a hot-button for VEP.

The cause

We live in an area that has expansive soil. Like a sponge, expansive soil expands when it gets wet and shrinks when it gets dry. Being built on top of this soil, our homes move accordingly. In the rainy season (or as a result of irrigation), the soil expands; in dry summer heat it contracts.

Trouble is, the moisture content under and around our homes is rarely uniform—neither is the expansion and contraction. This differential movement causes the stress cracks experienced in many of our homes.

The history

Even while our Vistapark subdivision was still being built, Arcadia began installing adjustable jacks under its single-story and five-bedroom homes. Folks tried adjusting their jacks but, again, they were working in vain against inconsistent seasonal expansions/contractions. Tightening jacks to remove "soft spots" in floors during the summer often meant floors were heaved up during winter rains. Movement and resulting problems persisted.

Responding to a growing number of complaints from VEP members indicating that their problems were not isolated incidents, we ran a NEWS article in November 1984 and January 1985 asking Arcadia homeowners to contact us if they had serious problems with cracks in interior/exterior walls, doors that don't close properly, and other manifestations of settling foundations. (Arcadia built ~800 homes in Vistapark.)

By early February, only 29 owners had responded. Concerned that our newsletter articles may not have been noticed, we put together a questionnaire and embarked in May upon a door-to-door outreach. We found that most homes showed at least some evidence of persistent cracking. By late summer 1985, a total of 160 questionnaires had been returned to us by homeowners having serious structural problems. Canvassing went on into March of 1986.

VEP formed a volunteer committee of seven members who met with soil and structural engineers, building contractors, insurance agents, and attorneys to determine the best ap-



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proach to fixing these problems. We also contacted Arcadia, asking without success for remediation.

VEP's September 1985 meeting was dedicated to this topic. 120 members attended. A group of 85 homeowners voted to proceed with a class-action lawsuit to be filed by a well-known local attorney who offered to take our case on a contingent basis.



In March of 1987, Arcadia's effort to have claims on homes over ten years old thrown out (10-year statute of limitations) was denied on the grounds of possible willful misconduct and fraudulent concealment. That decision was upheld by an appeals court.

In November of 1989 our class action was rejected by a judge who failed to grasp the identical pattern of damage evident in each model of Arcadia homes. A group of two dozen or so homeowners pressed forward in essentially individual claims. A few cases went to trial, but most were eventually settled out of court in 1991.

The result

Our attorneys prospered, but most plaintiffs ended up with too little settlement money to fully repair their foundations. A few people actually succeeded in claims against their insurance companies—several paying upwards of \$125,000 for full foundation replacement. Many folks still live with these problems, some serious, some just irritating appearance issues.

The downside

Meanwhile, responding to a glut of shifting/settling foundation problems similar to ours statewide, insurance policies were changed in the '80s to exclude coverage. In *Garvey v. State Farm*, the California Supreme Court upheld what is now typical earth movement exclusionary language in home insurance policies.

We knew before venturing into a class action lawsuit that doing so—even just knowing about these problems—would mean necessary disclosure to potential buyers. State law requires you and your realtor to disclose problems to the new owner. Failure to disclose can result in liability for you if problems occur after sale of your home.

The upside

Fortunately, common knowledge that these problems exist in our area didn't seem to significantly slow or devalue sales of our homes.

What can you do?

The obvious answer for people who are having serious problems or simply can't stand cracks anymore is to replace/reinforce their foundations. For all but the wealthiest among us, that would be cost-prohibitive.

Fortunately, there are some less expensive ways to minimize the effects of expansive soils. Because they're relatively cheap and easy, these should be done well in advance before patching and painting cracks.

First is to keep the moisture as constant as possible under your house and adjacent to your foundation walls. A simple first step is to divert water from downspouts as far as possible away from your home—to the street gutter, if you can. Second is to avoid having sprinklers shower your foundation wall—and don't soak plants near it.

Our homes have vents that allow air to flow under them. Keep those vents clear. If your home has a crawl-space access under the back porch or deck, replace the solid cover with a screened one, to maximize air flow. (You can just cut the center out of the old plywood cover, making it into what looks like a picture frame, then cover it with window screening to keep critters out.) Some folks actually add fans or blowers to improve air circulation.

Remember: Keeping the space under your home reasonably dry can reduce seasonal earth movement and minimize the risk of mold and dry rot problems.

If you have standing water under your home, by all means install a sump and an automatic sump pump. Consider having a licensed contractor who specializes in this kind of work install the system to code requirements. Make sure the pump discharges as far as possible from your home—preferably into the street gutter.



If you haven't already, do not radically alter your landscaping. When our homes were built, swales (shallow v-shaped depressions) were graded around them to allow water to flow away from foundations. These are often still visible in back and side yards, where water can be seen standing after a hard rain.

Some homeowners "rat proof" their homes, pouring concrete or laying heavy plastic sheeting (possibly covered by gravel) under their home to completely cover the space between foundation walls. This approach is made even more effective if a 3- or 4-foot wide concrete "skirt" is built all around your home. Where concrete walkways, etc., abut your foundation wall, use a suitable flexible sealant to close gaps.

Check when it rains to see whether water is puddling against or running under your foundation. Uneven settling can heave-up patios, slabs, and walkways, causing water to collect adjacent to your house. Take whatever action is necessary to remedy this.

Plant trees well away from your home's foundation. Roots of some trees can cause serious problems with foundations, underground electrical and plumbing, and other "hardscape" features in your yard; tree roots can heave-up patios, slabs, and walkways, too, causing drainage problems. Always be sure to check with a trained nurseryman when choosing plant species for your yard.

Let common sense be your guide. Now that you know that water causes your problems, take steps to remedy them. The foregoing techniques should produce noticeable benefit.

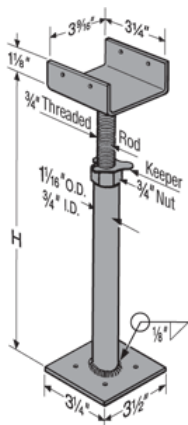
► NOTE ◀

If you've used a contractor (good or bad) to repair foundation, cracked wall, and other settling problems, please share that information with us. Call or email Dave Fadness 578-6428 or drfadness@sbcglobal.net. Thank you.

House jacks

-Dave Fadness

In response to calls from members who want to replace jacks that have failed under their houses, here's what you need and where to get them (courtesy of VEP member **Jan Bento**):



Manufacturer: Simpson Strong-Tie Company Inc.

Model J57 Floor Beam Leveler

Dimension H = 2" to 4"

Threaded Rod Length = 4"

Allowable Bearing Load = 4380 pounds

Material: 12 gauge plates, 3/4" threaded rod, 1-1/16" O.D. steel pipe.

Finish: None. Connectors installed in damp areas, or corrosive environments that are not exposed to rain or periodic washing, will deteriorate at a faster rate. Corrosion-resistant finishes and maintenance can improve the connector's service life.

Where to buy:

White Cap Construction Supply

595 Brennan Street, San Jose, CA 95131

Phone: (408) 428-2000

Fax: (408) 428-2001

Hours: Mon – Fri, 6 am – 5 pm; Closed on Sat & Sun.

Comply with codes + report criminal activity

-Dave Fadness

A long-time member of VEP submitted the following comments in response to our January NEWS article regarding neighbors' cooperation in keeping our neighborhoods safe and attractive:

1. Garbage and recycling containers. City code requires that all garbage cans and recycling containers be kept behind the front setback of homes (preferably out of sight, behind their front gate) except on pick-up days. Many people who live here now leave their garbage cans on the street or somewhere in front of their house all week, spoiling the appearance and impacting property values in our neighborhoods.

They also impede motorists' visibility, threatening the safety of pedestrians—especially small kids.

2. Report crimes in our area. Whenever you see someone suspicious or in the process of breaking the law, call the police. If everyone kept their eyes open and reported crime, we would have a much safer community. For example, to make/keep our beloved neighborhood parks user-friendly, people who use and/or live adjacent to parks should report any suspicious activity as soon as it occurs.

From our article last month, this is worth repeating:

If you live on a street corner, please be sure to trim any shrubs that block the visibility of motorists and/or pedestrians. This is a serious safety issue: You needn't remove them, just keep them trimmed shorter so pedestrians and oncoming cars are clearly visible.

When driving, if you're approaching a corner where visibility is obstructed, please slow down and proceed carefully. Take it easy! Pedestrians should *always* be cautious, but especially so when visibility is limited at street crossings. Always look both ways when driving or walking.

Please help to make and keep our community safe and attractive.

Litter, litter everywhere

-Lisa Rose (*)

It seems like everywhere you look, litter is on the rise. What can be done about it? Volunteers can join the *Great American Litter Pick Up* which will take place on Saturday, April 12, 2008. This is a countywide event with each city and the county coordinating its own efforts. Kick off locations for the City of San Jose are still being determined.

If you would like more information, please contact **Servando Perez** at the City of San Jose Anti-Graffiti and Litter Abatement Program, (408)277-3208.



There is also a new number to report people who are littering from vehicles. That number is (408)277-4111. Members of the public can call this number from anywhere in Santa Clara County and report the time of day, location, make and color of the car, the license plate and what was thrown from the car. The registered owner will receive a strongly worded letter letting them know the fines associated



Wesley W. Terrell

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Vista Park Specialist



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with littering.

To report graffiti in the City of San Jose, please call (408)277-2758.

[(*) Ed. Note: Lisa Rose works with Santa Clara County's Integrated Waste Management Division, Green Business and Graffiti and Litter Abatement Programs. Check their website at www.ReduceWaste.org]

VEP Community Calendar

Mon, Mar 3 @ 7:30 pm = Memorial Day Parade & Festival planning committee meeting in the Vista Park Community Room. (Call Dave Fadness for details.)

Tue, Mar 4 @ 7:30 pm = VEP Exec Meeting in the Vista Park Community Room. (Call any VEP officer for agenda details.)

Tue, Mar 11 @ 1 pm = VEP NEWS articles deadline. (Email your articles to Dave Fadness at drfadness@sbcglobal.net)

Tue, Mar 25 @ 7:30 pm = VEP's Home Improvement Faire in the Forum at Gunderson High School.

Tue, Apr 1 @ 7:30 pm = VEP Exec Meeting in the Vista Park Community Room. (Call any VEP officer for agenda details.)

Tue, Apr 8 @ 1 pm = VEP NEWS articles deadline. (Email your articles to Dave Fadness at drfadness@sbcglobal.net)

Tue, Apr 22 = VEP General Meeting in the Vista Park Community Room. (Agenda to be announced.)

Sat, May 3 = VEP Community Garage Sale.

Sat, May 3 = VEP/Gunderson E-Waste Drop-Off Event.

Mon, May 26 = VEP Memorial Day Parade & Festival.

Help needed to distribute VEP event flyers

-Marilyn Rodgers

VEP is planning several events which will take place during March to May. These events include our March 25th Home Fair, our May 3rd neighborhood-wide Garage Sale, and our May 26th Memorial Day Parade & Festival. (Other events in the planning stage are a dumpster day on May 10th, an electronic waste pickup with Gunderson High School on May 3rd, and an election forum).



To be sure that residents of VEP are aware of these free events, we organize and distribute flyers to all homes. If you enjoy walking in the neighborhood on a beautiful day, consider volunteering to assist with this project. Usually one to two hours of your time is all that is needed.

Flyers will be available for distribution during the weeks of March 10th and 17th, and then again the weeks of April 14th and 21st. For additional information and to volunteer, please contact me at (408)225-7553 or MRodgersRN@aol.com.

VEP's Home Improvement Faire

-John Marks

Our 11th annual Home Improvement Faire is scheduled for Tuesday, March 25th, and this year will repeat a raffle for

MONEY. Exhibitors have ponied up about \$600 for cash prizes. You don't have to buy anything, just come, get a ticket stub, and wait to see if your number is called.



Contractors and tradesmen will display their products and functions in the Gunderson High School Forum area. Please make a special effort to come and match the effort of these suppliers to be there for you. Exhibitors include sunrooms, windows, bathroom remodeling, screens, plumbing, composting, doors, floors, kitchens, roofing, hardware, cooking, body and health care, pest control, photography, water softeners, gardening, painters, garage doors, and landscaping.

You won't be disappointed. Free goodies (brownies and soft drinks) will be provided by VEP.

Mark your calendar for 7:30 pm on Tuesday, March 25. We look forward to seeing you there.

VEP's area-wide garage sale set for May 3rd

-Dave Fadness and Ginger Cardona

Our annual Community Garage Sale will be held on Saturday, May 3rd. Make sure to mark it on your calendar now, and start gathering those treasures you no longer use from your garage, attic, and closets.

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

Your best resource is you--activity attracts more activity. Get your neighbors involved. People will pass by your street unless they think something is happening there. Try to get everyone on your street to join in. You might even pool all your neighbors' goodies into one big second-hand superstore. If your neighbors aren't selling, ask if you can spread out to their driveway.

Plan now to make sure you can be seen from the street. Put up balloons or signs. Have your out-of-area friends bring garage sale items that add to yours--make it a big, fun event on your street or cul-de-sac. A little energy and creativity now will pay off in big dividends, freeing up space in your garage and

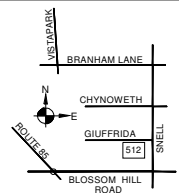
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VEP/GHS E-Waste Pick-Up set for May 3rd

- Dave Noel

VEP is teaming up with Gunderson High School and *Earth-care Recycling* to hold an electronics waste pick-up on Saturday May 3rd, the same day as the *VEP Community Garage Sale*. This will be a win-win event. Here's why:

- Gunderson High School will receive funds from the recycling value of the e-waste. Special thanks to VEP resident and GHS teacher **Rob Iverson** for being our GHS sponsor.
- Gunderson students will distribute flyers to the entire VEP community to advertise both events.
- After your garage sale, you can drop off any recyclable e-waste at Gunderson instead of putting it back in your garage.
- Press releases for the e-waste event will also promote VEP's Community Garage Sale.

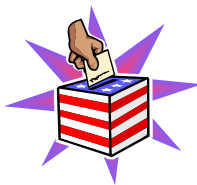
We also plan to ask if a charity such as the Salvation Army can have a truck at Gunderson to accept unsold treasures donated by VEP Community Garage Sale participants. If you can help arrange this, please contact me at DNoel1234@aol.com or (408) 266-7183.

[Ed. Note: Special thanks to our former President Dave Noel for organizing this e-waste event, a perfect adjunct to our annual Community Garage Sale.]

VEP Election Forum

- Dave Noel

Did you realize we have three elections this year? In addition to the recent primary election and the upcoming November presidential election, we will also have a June 3rd election. In early March we'll learn what will be on the June 3rd ballot, which we do know will include our city council seat.



VEP is tentatively planning to hold an election forum at our April 22nd or May 27th general meeting. Stay tuned...

Neighborhood scuttlebutt

- Dave Noel

Beverages and More has received Planning Commission approval to open a new store in the old Tower Records store at Santa Teresa Boulevard and Blossom Hill Road. About one or two percent of the sales floor is proposed to be use for wine and beer tasting on weekend afternoons.

Whole Foods is continuing the approval process to build a very large store at the Rite-Aid site at Blossom Hill Road and Almaden Expressway. The San Jose Planning Commission voted to deny their "Conditional Use Permit and Determination of Public Convenience or Necessity", and the developer is appealing this to the San Jose City Council.

4th annual Memorial Day event: help needed

-Dave Fadness

Planning is well underway for this year's *Memorial Day Parade & Festival* to be held on May 26. With your help, we can make this event bigger and better every year. Your involvement is encouraged.

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We need volunteers...

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

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



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

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

Above all, please be sure to mark your calendars, spread the word, and plan to attend with your family and friends on Monday, May 26, 2008.

Are you a Crafter? Know someone who is?

- Ginger Cardona

VEP will be holding its annual *Parade & Festival* on Memorial Day. We invite our members or their friends to set up a table and sell their crafts. More than 2000 people attended our Festival last year. This is a wonderful opportunity for selling your crafts.

Please contact me at 227-0222 or at cardona@sbcglobal.net for more information.

VEP makes good things happen!

Free help with filing your taxes

Tax appointments are now available with Tax-Aide volunteers who are trained in cooperation with the IRS and AARP to assist lower income seniors and families in filling out their federal and state tax forms. This service is FREE OF CHARGE.

Tax-Aide volunteers are able to prepare basic Forms 1040-EZ, 1040A, or 1040 with Schedules A and B, and California State income tax returns only. One hour appointments for this service are available at 1 pm, 2 pm, and 3 pm on the following dates:

Thursday, Feb 28
Thursday, March 13
Thursday, March 27
Thursday, April 10

Call the Almaden Senior Program office at 268-1133 to schedule an appointment.

Looking for your ancestors?

- *John McCulloch, SeniorNet*

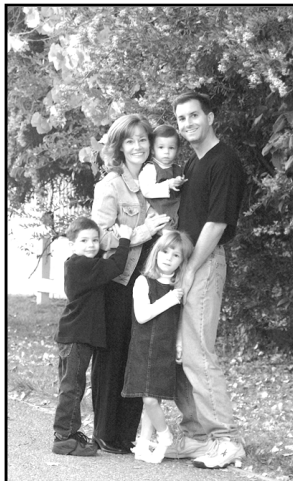
Thirty five million of us are descendents of one of the 58 families who came over on the Mayflower. Could you be one of them? To help find out, sign up for SeniorNet's new genealogy search class, *Family History Searching*, which examines free and for-fee websites. Your instructor leads you through some of the hundreds of resources out there on the web.

This class shows you how to find ancestors, cross validate to see if the information is correct, and hopefully find a few stories that might be out there about their time, immigration patterns, and other members of their (and hence your) family.

Not only are there census records, birth and death records, but also marriage, military, land, probate, and cemetery records. Much of this information is available online. No need to travel to Hartford, Connecticut or Tyler, Texas when you can find these records online. And if your relatives are from the old country, many church records from Europe are available thanks largely to the LDS church.

Registration for this and twelve other SeniorNet classes offered next session is 9 am on Saturday, March 8, 2008 at the Willows Senior Center, 2175 Lincoln Avenue (at Curtner Avenue). The sign up time for beginning classes is 10:30 am.

For more information about classes, go to our website at www.snscsj.org and click on Willows or call (408) 371-3999.



Precious Moments In Time



Family and Children Portraits



Weddings and Special Events



Photography by *Jeri Arstingstall*

★ VEP MEMBER ★

(408) 281-3393

The fee for each 8-week class is \$20 for SeniorNet members. Often a manual is provided. There is an annual fee of \$40 to join SeniorNet.

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.

SeniorNet is a worldwide organization which today supports over 240 learning centers. It is a non-profit organization founded in 1986 to provide computer education and access to people over age 50. All learning centers are run by volunteers.

VEP membership drive

- *Marilyn Rodgers & Debra Suydam*

VEP's Membership Drive for 2008 was successfully initiated on January 13th with the help of 17 volunteers, who helped prepare both the January VEP Newsletter and a recruitment letter for mailing. Each newsletter had a membership remittance envelope included in it. In addition, recruitment letters were mailed to all residents not currently VEP members. Many thanks to the following volunteers:

Bob Aquino
Mike Bousman
Sandy Bousman
Mark Callaghan
Stacie Callaghan
Jim Hicks
Frank Kistler
Adina Pierce
Marilyn Rodgers
Pamela Rodriguez
Linda Sandoval
Josie Supencheck
Debra Suydam
Joe Tajnai
Judy Thomas

Special recognition and thanks go to our youngest volunteers, **Juliana Pierce** and **Katy Tajnai**.

The mailing preparation was quickly accomplished in just two hours because of work done in advance by **Linda Sandoval**, **Mark & Stacie Callaghan**, and **Debra Suydam**.



This team effort also includes the efforts of behind the scenes volunteers such as **Jeri Arstingstall** who manages the VEP database and arranged for the printing of mailing labels for both members and non-members. Thanks also to **Dave Noel** for editing the recruitment letter; to **Dave Fadness** who edits

and assures that the newsletter goes out each and every month; and to **Bob Aquino**, who takes the newsletters to the post office each month for mailing--a large task this month, having membership recruitment materials included in the mailing.



In March, Part 2 of our Membership Drive will take place. Volunteers will be needed to help send out a reminder letter to members who have forgotten to send in their membership renewals. If you would like to volunteer for this project, please contact...

Debra Suydam at (408) 972-4231; dsuydam@sbcglobal.com
~ or ~

Marilyn Rodgers at (408) 225-7553; MRodgersRN@aol.com.

Update: Pearl Avenue Branch Library

- Domenic Onorato (*)

The Pearl Avenue Branch Library project is currently on time for completion in June. The contractor is proceeding with interior painting, lighting installation, carpet, counters, cabinets, shelving, various equipments, and miscellaneous other minor work.

Electrical and mechanical testing will begin in March. Touch ups and final adjustments will take place in April and May.

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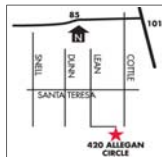
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Grand opening is schedule to take place this summer; an exact date has not been confirmed.

For additional information regarding the project or site construction, please contact me at (408) 535-8350 or by email domenic.onorato@sanjoseca.gov. You may also contact Frank Church or Bill McClain of Bogard Construction to address immediate issues or concerns at the project site.

Photos of Pearl Library construction activities are available online at www.NewSanJoseLibraries.com.

[(*)Ed. Note: Domenic Onorato works for the City of San Jose Department of Public Works' City Facilities Architectural Services & Branch Library Development Team.]

Neighborhoods Commission for San Jose

-Marilyn Rodgers

A new commission for the City of San Jose will be formed in late Spring--the Neighborhoods Commission. The purpose of this commission is to be an advisory group to the mayor and city council on issues and concerns to neighborhoods.

The original proposal for this new commission was developed by neighborhood leaders involved in the *Strong Neighborhoods Initiative* (SNI). While SNI only represented approximately 1/3 of our city, the new Neighborhoods Commission will have representatives from all ten city council districts. Each council district will have three representatives and two alternates on this new commission.



Traditionally, members of all city commissions have been appointed by the mayor and/or city council members. One of the unique aspects of the Neighborhoods Commission is that its members will be elected, rather than appointed.

Elections will utilize a caucus format. Those who will participate in the election process will be representatives of neighborhood associations. Each neighborhood association that is registered with the city will have one delegate. That delegate will attend the caucus and cast votes for the election of commission members for their council district. The caucus for District 10 will be scheduled for late April or May (tentatively set for May 3rd).

Anyone interested in running for election as a Neighborhoods

Commissioner needs to notify their neighborhood association. The term of office is two years. For additional information or assistance, please contact Marilyn Rodgers at (408)225-7553 or MRodgersRN@aol.com.

Help preserve open space in our county

Join the Santa Clara County Open Space Authority's Citizen's Advisory Committee (CAC). Its purpose is to provide public input to the Board of Directors and aid in fostering a positive public image of the Authority, as well as help to educate the public about the Authority's goals and accomplishments.

These five Citizen's Advisory Committee positions are now available:

- Business
- Agriculture
- Civic Organizations
- District 2 Representative (the Milpitas area)
- District 5 Representative (our Blossom Hill, Camden, Santa Teresa, Branham area)



To be eligible for consideration, prospective committee members must reside within the boundaries of the Authority and, if seeking a District Representative position, must reside in the District of representation. All positions should possess a general knowledge of and involvement in activities related to the position. District Representatives should have experience participating with community groups and organizations within the District of representation.

CAC members are appointed by the Board and serve for two-year terms ending in June or until the current term ends. The CAC is comprised of sixteen members made up of seven district representatives and nine interest group representatives. The CAC meets at 7 p.m. on the 4th Monday of each month, except December.

Formed by the State Legislature in 1993, the Santa Clara County Open Space Authority is governed by an elected 7-member Board of Directors. The Authority's mission is "To preserve, protect and manage, for the use and enjoyment of all people, a well-balanced system of urban and non-urban areas of outstanding scenic recreational and agricultural importance." Included within its boundaries are the cities of Campbell, Milpitas, Morgan Hill, Santa Clara, and San Jose, as well as certain unincorporated areas of Santa Clara County.



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Application forms, position descriptions, and more information may be obtained at www.openspaceauthority.org, via email to: info@openspaceauthority.org, or by calling (408) 224-7476.

People interested in being considered for the CAC should submit the completed application form along with a cover letter and any other relevant information to the Authority's Administration office at 6830 Via del Oro, Suite 200, San Jose, CA 95119.

San Jose needs you

Applications are being accepted for City of San Jose Boards and Commissions for upcoming and future vacancies. YOU can make a difference in your community by serving on one of these commissions:

- + Advisory Commission on Rents (1 Landlord and 2 Tenant positions)
- + Airport Commission (2 positions)
- + Arts Commission (4 positions)
- + Disability Advisory Commission (2 positions)
- + Early Care and Education Commission (3 positions)
- + Historic Landmarks Commission (1 position)
- + Library Commission (2 positions)
- + Mobile Home Advisory Commission (1 Neutral position)
- + Parks & Recreation Commission (2 positions)
- + Senior Citizens Commission (2 positions)
- + Traffic Appeals Commission (1 position)

QUALIFICATIONS: You must live in the City of San Jose and have a commitment to being active in the community.

For information, contact the City Clerk at (408) 535-1252 or www.sanjoseca.gov/clerk/Vacancy.asp. Applications will be accepted through March 7, 2008 and will remain active and on file for one year from the date received.

VEP's vision for Martial Cottle Park

- Adina Pierce

At our January 22nd meeting a draft list of VEP's wishes and concerns for Martial Cottle Park was presented. There was a good turn-out at our meeting, and we were happy that residents of the Colony Green Condominiums, located at the south/east corner of Martial Cottle Park, were also in attendance. After a good discussion, a few minor changes were made to the document and it was approved by our membership.



Shown below are the items that were changed after publication in the January VEP Newsletter. These changes were made after we received feedback from the community via email, phone, and during VEP's general meeting, where they were formally approved. For reference, original item numbers are shown in parentheses.

1. (1) VEP endorses Walter Lester's vision for the development of an agricultural park.
2. (1) The scope of facilities and amenities under consideration should not be reduced prior to completion of the public input process. For example, a train used for park transportation should not be ruled out prematurely for financial reasons. (Our preference is first to optimize park design irrespective of financial considerations, then aggressively pursue public

funding and/or private grants to cover any revenue shortfalls.)

3. (4c) To facilitate security and privacy, provide a patrol-able buffer zone where the park abuts residences. Keep trails, train tracks, and other user facilities a minimum of 50-yards for low-impact uses and 100-yards for high-impact uses away from homes on Barron Park Drive, Wellington Park Drive, Birmingham Drive, and Colony Field Drive. Agriculture would be acceptable within the buffer zone.

4. (5) Consider dust mitigation in the park design and operational stipulations/contracts.

5. (6) In the perimeter design, consider the strong desire of pedestrians, motorists, and homeowners to have largely unobstructed views into the park and to the mountains beyond. Carefully consider the placement, size and selection of items that will obstruct these views, such as berms and trees. Berms, if used, should be well into the interior of the park, and no taller than absolutely necessary to meet their objectives.

6. (8a) Provide trail access for pedestrians, wheel chairs, dogs on leash, bikes, roller skates, and rollerblades. Pedestrian trail should be suitable for all-weather walking and not hard on knees.

7. (9) Farming/Landscaping

- a. Consider planting trees early in the process (possibly fast-track before the EIR), both oak trees interior of the park, and perimeter trees. In siting and selecting perimeter trees, consider Item 7 above, and coordinate efforts with the City of San Jose and VEP Community Association in conjunction with the Branham and Snell widening projects.
- b. Consider setting aside a nursery/tree storage area for Our City Forest - appropriately sited and with sufficient space for a potential future educational facility.
- c. Minimize the use of pesticides and get certified organic.
- d. Plant more orchards consistent with the history of our valley.
- e. Set aside a portion of the land for community gardens.
- f. Involve other agricultural groups such as FFA, 4H, and the UC Extension Agricultural Program.
- g. Include demonstration facilities for small and medium scale composting.
- h. Set aside a portion of the land for a farmers market.

This wish-list was sent on behalf of VEP to **Jane Mark**, Senior Planner for Santa Clara County Parks & Recreation Department, on January 25. It will be included for discussion at the February 20 Task Force meeting #3.

To view the VEP Martial Cottle wish-list in its entirety, please visit www.vepca.net, or call me at (408)362-0937 to get a hard copy via snail mail.

I want to thank the VEP Martial Cottle Committee that put a lot of work into creating this list. They attended several meetings to discuss what should be included and endured hundreds of emails to refine the document. Special thanks to:

- Marylou Avanzino**
- LuAnne Behringer**
- Mike Bousman**
- Kathryn Decker**
- Dave Fadness**
- Don & Linda Ferguson**
- Ellen Finch**
- Charlie Friedericks**
- Bob Glicksman**
- Jim Hicks**

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Ralph Linke
Dave Noel
Rainer Richter
Marilyn Rodgers
Pam Rodriguez
Lisa Rose
Deborah St. Julien

[Ed. Note: VEP thanks **Adina Pierce** for her inspired leadership as chair of our Martial Cottle Park Committee.]

www.crimereports.com

- Dave Noel and Adina Pierce

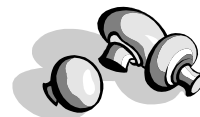
To check up on crime in your area, visit this website www.crimereports.com. You can enter an address and get a map that shows recent crimes reported in that area, including information about the date and type of crime, and final disposition. You can even sign up for automated email updates for crimes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

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

Rain brings mushrooms

-John Marks

There's lots of rain, and mushrooms and dandelions are sprouting everywhere.



Not to worry. Mushrooms are the fruiting bodies of millions of stands of mycelium (roots) that grow in the soil, in tanbark, and in rotting matter. They are needed by the microorganisms that convert fertilizers to the nutrients that your lawns, trees, shrubs, vegetables, and flowers use to grow. Truly, life would not exist without mycelium.

When the soil temperature is just right, moisture, and length of day combine to cause the mycelium to merge and send up mushrooms. These produce spores that take flight and grow anywhere that is acceptable. There is no way (nor would you want) to rid your yard of mushrooms. Just mow 'em down and forget about it.

Now to get a little techy: What's the difference between aluminum sulfate and sulfate of ammonia? None, except the former (also known as ammonium sulfate) doesn't have nitrogen in it. Both are used to change the pH of soil from alkaline to acidic, but the former takes longer. And ammonium sulfate doesn't have a bad smell, as some people claim. You can get

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hydrangeas to change color from pink to blue by adding ammonium sulfate.

Look for roses...

Most garden centers and nurseries currently are filled with plastic-wrapped bundles of bareroot roses. They cost from \$5 to \$15, take little effort to plant, and provide beautiful flowers nearly year-round. In our climate, roses never go truly dormant, so blooms in the depth of winter are common. I had a yellow rose bloom in mid-January.



Those who shop early will have a better selection, but the best buys may be in mid- to late-February, when the bareroots will begin to produce buds. Then nurseries will be eager to clear out their stock, and you will be likely to find reduced prices.

Pull those dandelion blossoms!

As you head out the driveway on your way to work or shopping, you've probably noticed a yellow dandelion blossom or two. Make a note to at least pull the blossom off before it goes to seed, preventing it from spreading all across your lawn. Even more important, if you see the fuzzy ball still on the stem, be SURE you grab it and dispose of it before it blows in the wind. If you have a dandelion stab, dig up the whole plant, or hit it with RoundUp.

Improve your vocabulary, reduce hunger

- Dave Noel

Check out www.freerice.com. You'll find a catchy multiple choice vocabulary test. For each correct answer, the website says it will donate twenty grains of rice to the United Nations World Food Program.

Our City Forest

You can make a difference in your community while giving back to the environment. Our City Forest is a local nonprofit dedicated to inspiring citizens in the planting, caring for, and appreciation of the urban forest. A variety of volunteer opportunities are available:

~ Free Shade Trees ~
(Available year round)

Help save our urban forest! Receive a free tree from *Our City Forest* and help make Silicon Valley greener. We plant trees in parking strips, schools, parks, neighborhoods, and in other public areas that could use more trees.

~ Planet Tree ~

Calling all teachers in San Jose! Introduce your K-12 students to their amazing urban forest with one of our fun and informative classroom presentations. From tree anatomy to at-home conservation techniques, we guarantee that your class will leave with a new appreciation of trees in the city. Call (408) 99-TREES ext.123 now to schedule a FREE presentation with Planet Tree at *Our City Forest*.



~ Volunteering with Planet Tree ~

Interested in teaching the youth of San Jose? Come join *Our City Forest* as an Environmental Educator. We offer free training in classroom presentation techniques and urban forestry. No prior experience is required, only a passion for spreading the word about the wonder of our city's forest. Contact our education department at (408) 99-TREES ext.123 for more information.

~ Free Monthly Tree Tours ~

(1 pm every third Saturday of each month)

This is an opportunity to lead or attend a free downtown tour where you'll get to know San Jose's street trees. You'll be amazed at all the trees you'll learn to identify. Open to all--feel free to invite family and friends. Location: Corner of First and St. John Streets.

~ OCF Movie Night ~

Come learn the state of the world with hand picked documentaries from *Our City Forest*. Each month we will cover a different environmental issue, from the water crisis to electric cars. Movie night will be held the last Thursday of every month and is free for everyone. Next Movie night is on February 28th at 7pm. Location: 151 West Mission Street, San Jose, CA 95110.

For more information on any of these opportunities please contact Our City Forest at volunteer@ourcityforest.org or call (408) 99-TREES. Flexible time requirements and short-term involvement accepted. No experience required but please come with a passion for community involvement. Bilingual individuals are highly encouraged to reply.

For more information, call (408) 99-TREES.

"Going Green" in VEP: rebates and recycling

-Marilyn Rodgers

City and county officials are providing leadership and have started aggressive campaigns in recent months to establish the City of San Jose and the County of Santa Clara as leaders in "going green"--particularly as it relates to public buildings and public property. These initiatives have the potential for saving taxpayer dollars in the future, as well as being good for the environment. Their efforts should be applauded. Many businesses have already started "green" initiatives.

If you would like to know which businesses in the San Francisco Bay Area are "green", contact VEP member and guest speaker at our January meeting, **Lisa Rose**. Lisa is the Santa Clara County Coordinator for the Green Business Program. She can provide you with a catalog of businesses in the San Francisco Bay Area that have "gone green". Her contact information is (408)282-3166 or lisa.rose@aem.sccgov.org. You can also encourage businesses to "go green" by:



- Supporting Green Businesses;
- Encouraging your employer, and their vendors, to "green"

their operations; and/or

- Encouraging businesses, where you are a customer, to look at the advantages of going "green".

As residents of VEP, we can also make changes in our homes that will save us money and be good for the environment (see the article in VEP's January newsletter for suggestions and informative websites). If you have already started by changing many of the light fixtures in your home to CFLs (compact fluorescent lights), congratulations! You will have a significant dollar savings in energy bills over the life of these lights which use approximately 75% less energy and last approximately ten years.



You may be concerned if you have heard that these lights need to have special handling when you dispose of them. Yes, that is correct--do not put CFLs in your household trash. These bulbs (as well as the old ones they replaced) should be disposed of properly.

Several local retailers will take CFLs (as well as collecting small batteries) for disposal. OSH has containers in their stores for this purpose. Other retailers involved in the program are Lowe's, Costco, RiteAid, Safeway, and WalMart. Be sure to thank these retailers for their involvement in this program, and encourage other retailers where you shop to start. To find a retailer near you, visit the following website: pge.com/cfl. Look for the blue and gold stickers for instant savings on bulbs from PG&E.

PG&E, the State of California, and the federal government (through their Energy Star programs for appliances, as well as rebates on solar systems) are actively providing rebates to consumers who are switching to appliances and/or other energy efficient systems. If you are interested in pursuing more in depth information regarding solar systems (but may have missed the presentation at our January VEP meeting) including rebates, there will be future opportunities:

- A *SolarCity* representative will be at VEP's Home Fair at Gunderson High School on March 25th.
- President **Joe Tajnai** and VEP member **Helen Castillo** will initiate additional information meetings, if there is interest. Contact Joe at vej@tajnai.com or 578-5882, or Helen Castillo at hcastillo@vbprop.com.
- Visit the website www.gosolarcalifornia.ca.gov (California Solar Initiative).

PG&E offers rebates on a variety of energy efficient appliances and systems. Some examples of possible rebates are:

- \$75 on high efficiency clothes washers
- \$50 on high efficiency automatic dishwashers
- \$100 on swimming pool pump motors and controllers
- \$30 on energy efficient storage water heaters
- \$375 on attic and wall insulation
- \$300 on Cool Roof
- \$50 on Energy Star room air conditioners
- \$600 to seal your central air conditioning system ductwork

~ Free Smart Energy Plan ~

Make your home its most energy efficient. For forms and additional information visit pge.com/smartenergy or call (800) 933-9555.

At our February 26th VEP meeting, a guest speaker from PG&E will provide additional opportunities for saving money, including information on current rebates available.



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A message from VEP's president

- Joe Tajnai

I have received more positive comments about our go-green theme lately than for any other series of meetings in the recent past. I think that this says a lot about our community. Remember that every little bit helps.

To this end, I have found that the Kill-a-Watt meter presented by Solar City is a VERY useful device in determining power usage; not just instantaneous usage, but also accumulated over days or weeks. My microwave oven, for example, costs me \$9.50 to use just about every month.



VEP Past President **Steve Kinsey** was so enamored with the device that he did some research and discovered that Channel 7 news talked about the Kill-A-Watt device a couple of weeks ago.

Googling "Kill A Watt", finds different places where this device can be purchased on-line. Also check the KGO TV website (click on 7 On Your Side, then energy gas guzzler) where you can see the entire story. This story also gives you a link to PG&E that lends out many types of devices.

Remember to check all your suspect devices, not just the ones that are on. My computer, for example, costs \$4.25 a month just to leave OFF! Oh well, at least now I know how much I am wasting.

Oak Grove School District news

-Manny Barbara, Superintendent

As part of our school choice efforts, there are three options I want to bring to your attention:

The Junior Kindergarten class is an option for children eligible for enrollment in kindergarten for the 2008-2009 school year and born between September 1 and December 2. This option is available for parents who may want to consider an alternative to preschool and want to give their younger kindergarten-eligible child a "gift of time." Classes mirror curriculum similar to a regular kindergarten class, five days per week, with an extended 260-minute day. If you are interested in further information, please contact **Joyce Millner** in the Educational Services Division at 227-8300, Ext. 251. Space is limited to 40 students (20 to 1 enrollment maximum for each class).

A second parental choice option is our INDIGO Program located at Frost Elementary School, 530 Gettysburg Drive. INDIGO is a parent participation program, focusing on a discovery approach to learning. It started as a grades K-3 program three years ago and will expand to a K-6 program for 2008-2009. If you are interested in learning more about the INDIGO alternative program, please contact **Risa Quon** at 227-8300, Ext. 266.

Some parents prefer to educate their children at home. We have an excellent Independent Study/Home Schooling partnership designed to meet the interest of these families. Parents have access to curriculum materials and special program opportunities. If you are interested in the Independent Study/Home Schooling partnership, please contact **Karen Moga** at 578-6032.

Each program reflects our District focus to offer as many school choice options as possible. In addition, the regular school choice opportunities offered for our schools are available as well. Information on these and other District programs and priority areas can be accessed from our web site at www.ogsd.k12.ca.us.



News from Carson School

- *Betsy Doss, Principal*

Students, staff and parents are enjoying the spring-like weather. Recess seems to be the favorite time of day for everybody!

February is a busy month with Valentine's Day, the President's Days and our special Cougar Spirit day, "College Day." On "College Day" students and staff wore their favorite college shirts, sweatshirts, and hats. Everyone was talking about going to college and what it takes to be a good student. We learned where all our teachers went to college and where many of our students hope to go.

Our PTA has also planned a special family science night at the DeAnza College Planetarium on February 22. The Planetarium will be reserved for Carson Families. It will be a fun and educational night.

During the month of February, Carson has also been hosting parent tours for families interested in attending Carson next year. I have had a great time "showing off" our wonderful

school. Our prospective families see hardworking students and teachers and leave with a positive feeling about Carson. I can't wait to welcome them next year.

Message from the SJUSD Board of Education: Due to the unprecedented proposed reduction in state funds for K-12 education in the 2008-09 school year and beyond, the San Jose Unified Board of Education has postponed moving forward in revisiting the current District Strategic Plan. Town Hall meetings, designed to receive public input regarding District goals and objectives, will be rescheduled when the severity of the fiscal impact is known.

You can view the current SJUSD Strategic Plan online at: http://www.sjUSD.org/pdf/board/Strategic_Plan.pdf.

Gunderson High School happenings

- *Cary Catching, Principal*

We've recently completed recruitment activities at Gunderson. In addition to several tours, prospective families also participated in Shadow Days and a Parent Information Night. We are pleased to announce that, as a result of these efforts, we more than surpassed the numbers from last year of students and families that attended our recruitment activities, and thus, learned more about Gunderson. We will not hear what our incoming student numbers are until mid-March, but we are hopeful for a large freshmen class.



You have probably noticed some construction on campus, especially in the back parking lot. Solar panels are being installed. In the back parking lot, they will be in the form of T-structures. When complete, they will look like four rows of carports. Starting next month, solar panels will be installed on the roof of the main building.

The other construction project you will be seeing has to do with the installation of the stadium lights. This project is expected to be completed by the end of March. Once again, thank you to the community for your support of this project. The students, families and staff are very appreciative.

Just a reminder, San Jose Unified School District and Gunderson will not have a Winter Break this year. Instead, we will be taking two days off for the President's Day holiday, February 18 and 19. In addition, Spring Break will follow on March 21 through March 28.

Finally, I would like to refer you all to our website. A recent study by *School Wise Press* identified Gunderson as being extremely successful in our efforts to get students into college. In particular, we have demonstrated this success with our minority students; students who are considered to be living below the poverty limit; and students who come from families whose parents did not go to college. School Wise Press identified Gunderson as being second in the county at getting these populations of students into college. A full copy of the study can be found on our website.

Zwaggle: parents helping parents

- *Dave Noel*

Zwaggle is an online community for parents. Using a points-based sharing system, parents give away items they no longer need and obtain items they do need.



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San Jose District 10 public safety update

-San Jose City Councilwoman Nancy Pyle

~ Police substation project moves forward ~

This long awaited project, scheduled to be complete in 2009, will greatly enhance San Jose Police Department's ability to serve the District 10 community. The new, state of the art building will house 30 percent of the police department's work force and provide critical backup for emergency communications in the case of a disaster. It will also provide a convenient place for residents who would like to file a crime report, speak with an officer or inquire about an impounded vehicle to do so 24 hours per day.



The primary source of funding for this project is a multi-million dollar bond that was approved by voters five years ago. All contractor bids on the project came in above the city's estimates, so I contributed \$2.3-million of District 10 Capital Dollars to cover a large portion of the funding gap. Those dollars came from the sale of city-owned surplus property in our district and would have gone back to the General Fund and does not jeopardize our District money. Completing this project will greatly enhance the safety of District 10 residents and this contribution will make construction possible.

Creation of the substation will not only enhance the department's ability to fight crime, it will also reduce greenhouse gas emissions from police cars. Many police officers live in District 10 and south county and they are currently required to drive downtown to check in, drive back out to District 10 and back into downtown to book a suspect. Finally, officers are required to go back downtown at the end of their shift. Not only is all this driving harmful to the environment, the hour it takes officers to drive downtown is an hour that the officers are not where they need to be.

~ Oakridge Community Policing Center will remain open ~ Residents always have the ability to speak with a police officer, file an accident report, turn over weapons or schedule an appointment to fingerprint their children at the Oakridge Community Policing Center. The center is open 10 am - 3 pm on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday; 4 pm - 9 pm on Tuesday and Thursday; and 10 am - 6 pm on Saturday. Officers at the center can also be reached by phone (408) 360-8350.

~ New Southern Division captain selected ~ Captain **Dave Cavallaro's** exemplary service to SJPD's Southern Division has lead to his promotion to Deputy Chief of the Bureau of Administration. In his new role, Dave will be responsible for recruiting, hiring and training of police officers and non sworn staff, permits, secondary employment units, the new police substation project, EVOC center, and other infrastructure projects.

Taking over the position of Southern Division Captain will be **Vaughan Edwards**. Vaughan has 30 years in law enforcement, 25 with San Jose Police Department and 5 years with the Santa Clara County District Attorney Bureau of Investigations. He is returning to the Bureau of Field Operations as the

Southern Division Commander. He was most recently assigned as the commander of the San Jose Police Department Assaults/Juvenile and Missing Persons Unit. Previously, he was the commander of the Santa Clara County Regional Auto Theft Task Force. In addition to working as a patrol officer, supervisor, and lieutenant, he has been assigned to the Homicide Unit, Internal Affairs Unit, Training Unit, Spe-



cial Operations; M.E.R.G.E. and the Burglary Prevention Unit.

The debate over high-rises in neighborhoods

-Ken Yeager, County Supervisor, District 4

If you drive along Highway 87 between downtown San Jose and Almaden Valley, you have undoubtedly seen the 11-story, 120-foot Tamien Tower rising out of nowhere. When people unfamiliar with its history see it for the first time, they ask me, "What the heck is *that* doing there?"

Tamien Towers was approved in 2003 while I was a city council member, when a developer proposed building the two high-rise towers. I opposed the project because of its height and because there were no nearby shops or jobs people could walk to, forcing residents to drive, leading to more congestion in a neighborhood already beset with its share of urban problems. I felt it was bad planning, but was unpersuasive in my argument, losing the vote 10 to 1.



I believe that history is proving me right. Drive by Tamien Tower and decide for yourself if it fits into the neighborhood. Because the council approved two towers on the site, next imagine a second tower standing beside the existing one and observe how out-of-place both will be.

I am aware of the arguments in favor of Tamien and future Tamiens, namely that we need density if the investment in mass transit is to be realized. I get it. I also know climate change is the most critical issue of our day, and we will all be held accountable for how we did or did not reduce greenhouse gases.

But I also understand that the choice isn't between either high-rises or traditional housing of 8 units per acre. I believe we can achieve density at rates much greater than what NIM-BYs want and still not destroy a neighborhood's suburban feel.

I raise the development issue because four 120-foot towers may be built as a single project on property owned by VTA near the one-story Mel Cotton's store on West San Carlos and Sunol. The worst thing that could happen is for new residential high-rises outside of downtown to be approved without the public knowing the full ramifications, much like what happened with Tamien Towers.

There are many examples throughout San Jose of excellent

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higher density projects that do not reach 120 feet. One development I offer as evidence is the Del Monte condominium and townhouse project at Auzerais Avenue and Sunol Street, around the corner from the VTA property. The project is in my former City Council district and was approved by the council in 2005.

Drive by the project and you'll be surprised by the density reached with only 50-foot heights. It accomplishes everything San Jose is trying to achieve with transit-oriented development. In addition, there is a human scale to the project that allows people to meet one another in common areas, which is in sharp contrast to Tamien where tenants must drive into their underground parking, ride the elevator up to their units, then open and close their front doors.



Fifty-foot structures are by far the most common form of high-density housing being built not only in San Jose but all over the Bay Area. Drive along the BART line in

the East Bay outside of downtown Oakland or along Caltrain on the Peninsula and you'll see examples of 50-foot buildings, not 120-foot high-rises. Why, then, should San Jose build them as tall as 120 feet when other cities are unwilling to suffer the congestion and pollution that such density brings to neighborhoods?

Another argument I frequently hear is that San Jose's General Plan allows for 120 feet near a transit station. But as I argued with Tamien, the general plan doesn't "mandate" a certain height; it simply permits it should the council approve it. If 120 feet were mandated, then why even go through the sham of soliciting community input?

This is where things currently stand with the VTA site: A developer has an option to buy the property from VTA. At the request of the VTA board, the developer must seek public input on the proposal, and that will occur soon. Afterward, the proposal will go back to the VTA Board and then to the San Jose City Council, which has final approval. The developer has been quite frank about wanting to build multiple towers of 120 feet.

Now that we've begun to see the mistakes made with Tamien, it's time again for residents in San Jose and all Santa Clara County cities along BART/light rail lines to discuss what they want their cities to look like in the future. Do we want 120-foot high-rises scattered around our neighborhoods, or can we achieve our environmental and housing goals with high-rises located downtown and possibly in business and commercial centers outside of residential areas? We need our city planners to explain what our housing goals are and to suggest options on how best to meet them.

I know building pop-up high-rises with little or no relationship to transportation, pedestrian access, and neighborhoods is not good planning. Nor can I support this degree of change to the urban fabric of our community without the public knowing the consequences of such decisions. There needs to be more thinking and a better grasp of the impacts of these high-rise designs upon our neighborhoods. Let's get the public and our neighborhoods involved with these decisions early in the process, not at the last minute.

[Ed. Note: Supervisor Yeager's points are relevant to our area because VTA also wants to replace its park-and-ride lots with high-density housing at Capitol Expressway-Route 87.]

Santa Clara County Assessor info on-line

-Dave Noel

Are you curious about the assessed value of your home? What about your neighbor's home? Do you have a renter nearby and want to find the address of the home's owner? To find all this and more for free, visit www.scc-assessor.org then click on "Quick Hits", and then click on "Look up Property Records".

Dog parks

-Adina Pierce

It may not be for everyone, but if you have an active dog and enjoy letting it run around the park off-leash, dog parks are for you!

What is a dog park? It is a fenced in area in a portion of a park that is designated for dogs (and their humans) only. They typically have an area with fresh water, and plenty of space to play and run around.



Here is a list of dog parks that are located within a few miles of VEP neighborhoods:

- Fontana Dog Park (Golden Oak and Paseo Pueblo in Almaden Valley)
- Delmas Dog Park (Park Avenue and Delmas Avenue)
- Butcher Dog Park (Camden and Ross)
- Hellyer Park

Some basic rules must be adhered to when visiting the dog parks:

1. Owners must accompany their dogs in the park at all times.
2. No more than two dogs per person are allowed at one time.
3. Children are not allowed in the dog park unless accompanied by a guardian.
4. Owners are responsible for picking up after their dog. (Doggie bags are provided in the park.)
5. All dogs must wear proof of license and have proper vaccinations.
6. Dogs in heat are not allowed in the park.
7. Dogs with bad behavior will be required to leave the park.

For more information, go to www.sjpark.org/dogparks.asp.

VEP's January meeting

-Jim Hicks, VEP Secretary

VEP President **Joe Tajnai** opened the meeting with a warm welcome.

The evening's first speaker was **Adina Pierce**, who represents VEP on the County's Martial Cottle Park Master Plan Task Force. As Chair of VEP's own *Martial Cottle Park Committee*, Adina presented a draft "Wish-List" developed by our committee to represent VEP's desires for this new regional park. After accepting changes suggested by those in attendance (see the article by Adina Pierce in this newsletter), a motion was approved to adopt the amended list. VEP's Wish-List will be presented to the County's Task Force at their February meeting.



Our next speaker was **Lisa Rose**, a VEP member and the Coordinator for Santa Clara County's Green Business Pro-

grams. Ms. Rose presented an overview of "green" opportunities available for VEP residents to implement in their homes and small businesses. These opportunities are both environmentally friendly and provide cost savings.

She discussed four areas of environmental interest. They included energy efficiency, water conservation, pollution prevention, and waste reduction/recycling. Her topics focused on businesses; however, she discussed tips and awareness-ideas that applied to home owners, as well.

Ms. Rose outlined the requirements and benefits of becoming a Certified Green Business. In order to meet the Green Business requirements, Green Businesses must be in compliance with all environmental regulations AND implement a number of specific measures in each of these four areas:

- ◆ Energy Conservation
- ◆ Water Conservation
- ◆ Solid Waste Reduction & Recycling
- ◆ Pollution Prevention

This program is conducted by The Bay Area Green Business Program, which is a successful partnership of environmental agencies and utilities that assists, recognizes and promotes businesses and government agencies that volunteer to operate in a more environmentally responsible way. Over 1,000 businesses and public agencies have been certified since 1996.

Ms. Rose's presentation ended with many tips for homeowners. She offered tips in the same four areas as the businesses above. For example, a hazardous waste tip is to take old paint, pesticides and chemicals to the household hazardous waste program. Call (408) 299-7300 or visit www.hhw.org to make an appointment.

For more information and to get additional tips, you may contact Lisa Rose at Lisa.Rose@aem.sccgov.org or (408)282-3166.

Our final speaker was **Bruce Karney**, Community Programs Manager for *SolarCity*, who presented an overview of residential solar programs. His presentation included a description of solar and how it works, its costs, and federal/state incentives. *SolarCity* works with community groups, non-profit organizations, and businesses. They have successfully implemented programs in Mountain View, Palo Alto, and with several other community based groups throughout the Bay Area.

Those in attendance received quite an education about the benefits of using solar energy systems. Mr. Karney was successful in mobilizing 119 homeowners in the Mountain View area to install solar systems. He outlined the cost saving of having a group of homeowners installing systems together.

He also discussed the current energy rebate program. It started out at \$2,500 per KW and will decline to zero in 10 years. PG&E has a tiered rate structure and depending how much usage a household uses, the actual costs depends on the tiered rate.

To determine how much energy a particular household uses, he suggested that owners consider purchasing the Kill-A-Watt meter. This device plugs into any electrical outlet and records the usage at that outlet. Do a Google search by typing "Kill-A-Watt." For example, look at www.ChooseRenewables.com. The device costs approximately \$25.

David Noel, Coordinator of VEP's annual Community Service

Awards (CSA) program, presented a brief overview. At the end of his presentation, he asked for a motion to approve \$2,000 funding for 2008 CSA scholarships. The motion was seconded and passed.

Our meeting ended with an open session regarding community concerns. One concern was increasing graffiti in our area. If you see any graffiti, please call (408)277-2758. In addition, attendees were reminded of the *Neighborhood Watch* program being presented at Parkview School at 7 pm on October 23, 2008.

Our meeting adjourned at approximately 9:10 pm.

"VEP" Community Association

What does "VEP" stand for?

How did we get that odd name?

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

- V** = Vistapark;
- E** = Encore (and Echo Valley); and
- P** = Parkview 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 36 years. Some like to think of us as...

Very **E**nergetic **P**eople

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.

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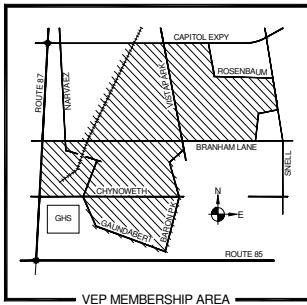
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Check our website: www.vepca.net

Community Room

Vista Park

7:30 pm in the

February 26th Meeting

Be sure to attend VEP's