

VEP NEWS

• VEP COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION •

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

March 2008

VEP MEETING

7:30 p.m. Tuesday
March 25, 2008

► Gunderson High School Forum ◀
622 Gaundabert Lane

AGENDA

★ Home Improvement Faire★

Our 11th annual opportunity for you to explore home improvement ideas and products with expert craftsmen and service providers. It's free!

Everyone is welcome. Please invite your neighbors!

VEP's 11th annual Home Improvement Faire

-John Marks, Event Coordinator

This is a reminder that the VEP is holding its eleventh annual Home Improvement Faire on Tuesday, March 25th. It will be held in the Gunderson High School Forum area. Raffle prizes totaling over \$600 will be given away; tickets are free.

As last year, we will include a VEP Information Table and refreshments. More than 33 contractors and tradesmen will display their products and services. In addition to the usual roofers, painters, computer repairman, auto repair, plumbing, and health basics, we'll feature a realtor specializing in first-time buyers and representatives from our new advertisers, *Olsen's Pressure Washing service* and *Saint Stephen's School*.

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,

Mark your calendar for 7:30 pm Tuesday, March 25. You won't be disappointed, while you munch on free goodies provided by VEP. We look forward to seeing you there.

For questions, call me at 629-6433.

VEP's '08 MEMBERSHIP DRIVE IS WRAPPING UP...

Please be sure your membership renewal is received by April 1st to guarantee uninterrupted delivery of the VEP News and member emails. Clip and mail the form on page 2, or print a copy from www.vepca.net. Don't forget—do it today!

VEP's 2008 membership drive comes to a close

-Marilyn Rodgers

VEP's 2008 membership drive will come to a close the end of March. If you have not already sent in your membership renewal, please do it today! To prevent any interruption in receiving the *VEP News* or member emails, membership renewals need to be received by April 1st.

Several members have sent additional donations with their renewals this year. Thank you for your support! These monies will be used for the many projects that VEP does on behalf of its members and the VEP community. (You can also designate how you would like these extra funds to be utilized.) Many members have also sent notes of thanks – thank you. Again, we appreciate your continued support of VEP.

Here's a *very* good-neighborly idea for you: If you're looking for the perfect gift for a new (or not so new) neighbor, consider the gift of VEP membership.

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.
- ☺ It's simply the *right* thing to do!

Our membership application form is on the next page...

2008 is VEP's 39th year!

**** Membership Application ****

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

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

Last name(s): _____

First name(s): _____

Street address: _____

Telephone # _____

Email address(es): _____

Comments): _____

Can you give VEP a few volunteer hours? _____

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

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

Officer elections: VEP needs Y-O-U

- Marilyn Rodgers & Dave Noel

We plan to elect and install new VEP officers at our May 27th general meeting. Candidates are currently being sought for all offices:

- President
- Vice President
- Secretary
- Treasurer
- Editor

Pearl Avenue Library
Needs your support

Make a tax-deductible investment (large or small) in your own branch library's future. You can even arrange to donate in multi-year or convenient periodic installments. Here are three ways...

1. Donate online at www.sanjoselibraryfoundation.org.
2. Get a donation form from www.sanjoselibraryfoundation.org and send a check payable to "San Jose Public Library Foundation" to 150 E. San Fernando Street, San Jose, CA 95112-3580.
3. Call or email Dave Fadness to get a donation form and mailing envelope (578-6428 or drfadness@sbcglobal.net).

Be sure to specify that your gift is for the Pearl Avenue Branch Library. Please do it *today!*

A \$100+ Donation gets Your Name on our Donor Wall

Consider becoming involved in the leadership of your community association. As a VEP officer, you will have an opportunity to meet more of your neighbors and to learn more about our community, our city, our county, and our vision. You'll participate in setting the course for our organization and continuing its tradition of accomplishment. Past Presidents and seasoned board members are always there to assist you, sharing tasks as you learn the ropes. You will *enjoy* it.

So, if you're interested in joining a dynamic group of volunteer leaders who work for the pleasure of making our community great, please contact any officer listed on the masthead of this newsletter and/or attend an Executive Board meeting, held in the Vista Park community room at 7:30 pm the 1st Tuesday of each month.

Master plan for Vista Park community room

-Dave Fadness

Councilwoman **Nancy Pyle's** aide, **Eric Crane** announced at our February 26 meeting the kick-off of a master planning process for the unfinished areas around Vista Park's community room, VEP's new home.

We've been eager to begin landscaping there, but need a city approved plan before our volunteers can go to work. We even have a small pot of *San Jose Beautiful* grant money that's waiting for this purpose.

To that end, a VEP committee began work on March 17 to devise a draft plan with Parks staff and **Kathy Sutherland** of Pyle's office. When that draft is ready, we intend to present it to VEP members for feedback, modify it as needed, then get it approved by the city. Our goal is to have that draft proposal ready in time for VEP's May 27 meeting.

One piece of good news is that PG&E has finally agreed to allow the city to remove those big, ugly, unused transformers that clutter the view of our community room from Hyde Park Drive. Another key objective is to move the existing dumpster cage to another location. Those changes will make the site much more attractive and greatly improve police surveillance.

If you are interested in serving on our site planning committee, please contact me as soon as possible.

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 volunteer community service.

▶▶ APPLICATIONS ARE DUE APRIL 29TH ◀◀

At our February general meeting, members unanimously approved a plan to award up to three community service awards of \$700 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 were distributed to the administrations at Gunderson and Andrew Hill High schools in mid March and are also posted on VEP's website. VEP has asked each school to nominate three students and provide us their completed applications by April 29th. If you know a Gunderson or Andrew

Hill student deserving consideration for this award, please encourage them to talk to their administrator to ensure they are considered for nomination:

Andrew Hill = Noemi Ramirez
Gunderson = Jeannette Harding

Our At-Large application form is now available on VEP's website. If you do not have web access, call me at the number below.

The deadline for all applications is 9 p.m. on April 29th.

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.

We are currently considering proposing changes to the CSA program as part of a revision to our Constitution and By-Laws, which we plan to bring to the membership for a vote at our May general meeting. CSA changes would take effect in 2009. Among the changes is a proposal to group applications from all sources together and award one or more awards to the best overall candidates. This would likely mean that Gunderson and Andrew Hill schools would not receive a CSA award every year.

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.

Volunteers plant trees at Vista Park

-Dave Fadness

The rain held-off just long enough for our team of volunteers to plant and stake seven trees at Vista Park on Saturday, February 23. Except for replacements paid for by San Jose Parks, *Our City Forest* donated these trees and the help of three *Tree Amigos*, Louie, Debbie, and Renee.

Hats off to the following volunteers who gave a Saturday morning to make our community a more attractive place:

- ☆ Phil Bejar (a Vista Park Adopter)
- ☆ Aiko Fadness (breakfast caterer)
- ☆ Dave Gulizia
- ☆ Frank Kistler
- ☆ John Marks
- ☆ Dave Pfaff
- ☆ Brian Seymour (a DeAnza student)
- ☆ Bob Shoberg
- ☆ Josie Supencheck
- ☆ Joe, Katy, and Mindy Tajnai

We also appreciate the generous donation of coffee and condiments by **Starbucks**, 605 W. Capitol Expressway (next to Home Depot). Try them next time you go out for coffee; extend our thanks—they *always* provide coffee for VEP volunteer events.

★★ VEP Community Calendar ★★

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.)

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Thu, Apr 3 @ 7:30 pm = Memorial Day Parade & Festival Planning Committee in the Vista Park Community Room. (Call Dave Fadness for agenda details.)

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

Tue, Apr 29 (tentative) = VEP General Meeting in the Vista Park Community Room. (June Primary Election Forum.)

Thu, May 1 @ 7:30 pm = Memorial Day Parade & Festival Planning Committee in the Vista Park Community Room. (Call Dave Fadness for agenda details.)

Sat, May 3 = VEP Community-Wide Garage Sale.

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

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

Tue, May 27 = VEP General Meeting in the Vista Park Community Room. (Officer elections & other items to be announced.)

Volunteers needed for flyer distribution

-Marilyn Rodgers

During the month of May, VEP plans and coordinates several events for the community. To be sure all VEP residents are aware of these exciting events, VEP volunteers distribute flyers. So, if you enjoy walking on a beautiful sunny spring day, consider helping us distribute flyers.

Flyers for our May events--our Garage Sale, e-Waste collection, and annual Memorial Day Festival--will be distributed during the last two weeks of April by GHS students and VEP. About two hours of your time is all that is required.

For additional information, and to volunteer, contact Marilyn Rodgers at MRodgersRN@aol.com, or (408) 225-7553.

VEP Election Forum

- Dave Noel

In preparation for the June 3rd election, VEP is planning an election forum in late April, tentatively April 29th. The candidate filing period just closed and we are investigating what elected offices and ballot issues we should cover. Watch your April VEP News.

Our District 10 City Councilmember **Nancy Pyle** is up for reelection to a second four-year term. She is being challenged by real estate developer **Ashraf Madraswala**. We anticipate having these candidates debate at our forum.

Brian Bonnifield, Real Estate Consultant
American Eagle Properties

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Office: 408-377-3000 x107

Home: 408-226-6004

Community-Wide Garage Sale on May 3rd

-Dave Fadness & 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.

We want to get everyone in our community to have a garage sale on the same day. The best way to find a new home for your unused stuff is to increase traffic to your home. So, VEP will advertise this event in local newspapers and by distributing flyers around our neighborhoods.

Activity attracts more activity. Your best resource is you--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 home and putting extra money in your pocket.

e-Waste pick-up set for May 3rd

- Dave Noel

VEP is teaming up with Gunderson High School and *Earthcare Recycling* to hold an e-waste pick-up from 9 am until 4 pm on Saturday May 3rd, the same day as VEP's *Community-Wide Garage Sale*. Special thanks to VEP resident and Gunderson teacher **Rob Iverson** for being our GHS sponsor.

This will be a win-win event. Here's why:

- Gunderson High School will receive funds from the recycling value of the e-waste.
- Gunderson students will distribute flyers to the entire VEP community to advertise both events
- After your garage sale, you can drop off your recyclable e-waste at Gunderson instead of putting it back in your garage.
- Press releases for the e-waste event will also promote the Garage Sale.

Examples of e-Waste you can drop off on May 3rd

~ Electronics ~

TVs, VCRs, audio equipment, speakers, cameras, phones, copiers, fax machines, wire, power tools, etc.

~ Small appliances ~

Microwave ovens, toasters, blow dryers, curling irons, electric shavers, vacuum cleaners, etc.

~ Computer items ~

Monitors, desktop & laptop computers, internal parts and peripherals, printers & cartridges, scanners, etc.

We also plan to ask if a charity such as the *Salvation Army* can provide a truck at Gunderson to accept unsold treasures from VEP area garage salers. If you can help arrange this, please contact me at (408) 266-7183 or DNoel1234@aol.com.

VEP Memorial Day Parade & Festival

-Dave Fadness

Here's what we have lined up so far for this year's *Memorial Day Parade & Festival* to be held on May 26:

- ★ Carson-Parkview All-American Kids' Choir
- ★ Fair Middle School Choir & Marching Band
- ★ Sylvandale Middle School Marching Band
- ★ Town Square Harmonizers Barbershop Quartet
- ★ Andrew Hill High School JROTC Color Guard, Saber Team, Drum Squad, and Drill Teams
- ★ Sunny & Twinkles and the Gunderson High School Clowns
- ★ San Jose *Sharkie* (tentative)
- ★ San Jose Mounted Police
- ★ Disc Jockey Mike Lopez
- ★ Costume Awards
- ★ Our City Forest's mascot *O2 Tree*
- ★ Childrens' game booths
- ★ Face Painting & Crazy Hair make-up
- ★ Field games for kids of all ages

We will begin our parade at Vista Park this year. As in past years, our Festival will be held at Parkview School. *Mojo Burger* will prepare and sell food for us, generously donating a portion of their proceeds to Carson and Parkview Schools. Bought using funds donated by community members and local businesses, drinks and pre-packaged treats will be sold by our volunteers; any and all net proceeds will be donated to Carson and Parkview Schools.

Carson, Parkview and Gunderson are co-sponsors of this free event. VEP members approved a \$2000 budget to cover expenses.

With your help, we can make this event bigger and better every year. Your involvement is encouraged. 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 Parkview School.

Call me at 578-6428 or email me at drfadness@sbcglobal.net if you're willing to help even in a small way. Don't wait because you think someone else will step forward; 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.

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, March 27
Thursday, April 10

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

Update: San Jose Neighborhood Commission

-Marilyn Rodgers

The City of San Jose will have a new Neighborhood Commission by the end of summer 2008. This commission is unique in that the commissioners will be elected, rather than being appointed. Each City Council District will have three commissioners and two alternates elected to the new Neighborhood Commission.

The election process will be by a caucus format, one of which will be held in each council district. The dates for the caucus elections are still being determined, but will be held sometime between May 17th and June 14th. Each neighborhood association that is registered with the city will have one representative who will cast votes at the caucus.

Any resident of the city may run as a candidate for neighborhood commissioner. However, they must be a resident of the council district in which they are a candidate. If you are interested in becoming a neighborhood commissioner, you need to:

- ◆ Inform your neighborhood association of your interest/intent of becoming a candidate;
- ◆ Submit an application to the City Clerk between March 3 and April 4, 2008;
- ◆ Prepare and submit a written statement (up to 250 words) explaining your candidacy, skills/experience, and prior service to the community;
- ◆ Attend the election caucus for your council district, and answer questions regarding your qualifications to be a commissioner;
- ◆ Commit to attending monthly commission meetings starting in the Fall 2008.

Commissioners are elected for a 2-year term.

For additional information and assistance, please contact Marilyn Rodgers at MRodgersRN@aol.com or (408) 225-7553.

Our City Forest

Make a difference in your community while giving back to our environment! Our City Forest is a local nonprofit dedicated to inspiring citizens to plant, care for, and appreciate our urban forest. These 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 more green. We plant trees in parking strips, schools, parks, neighborhoods, and in other public areas that could use more trees.

Spring '08 Tree Amigo Course
(begins May 7th)

Free 18-hr course designed to educate and empower individuals to coach volunteers, conduct planting demonstrations, coordinate tree plantings, and become familiar with the tree species and services that Our City Forest provides.

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 our city.



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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.

Free Monthly Tree Tours

(1 pm every third Saturday of each month)

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. For the month of March OCF will be showing the film *A Crude Awakening: The Oil Crash*; explore the world's dependence on oil and imminent extinction of this precious resource. Next movie night is on March 27th at 7pm. Location: 151 West Mission Street, San Jose.

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. Bi-lingual individuals are highly encouraged to reply.

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.

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.

Daffodils bring cheer to our neighborhoods

- Dave Noel & Dave Fadness

Each year since 2001, VEP volunteers have planted daffodils in and around our community in conjunction with the City of San Jose's *Daffodil Day* program.

We're now getting to enjoy the results of that work. The look of our community is stunning for the hundreds of smiling yellow daffodils that cheer us at this time of year. We owe a real debt of gratitude to everyone who has helped make the impending arrival of spring so special in our neighborhoods!



Please consider stepping forward next time we call for Daffodil Day volunteers—which typically occurs about the first weekend in November. A couple of hours of your time will pay big dividends in satisfaction and community pride for years to come!

www.crimereports.com

- Dave Noel & Adina Pierce

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



Wesley W. Terrell

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sign up for automated email updates for crimes in the area you selected.

For your convenience, we have links to crimereports.com and California's Megan's Law website on our VEP homepage, www.vepca.net.

A message from VEP's president

- Joe Tajnai

We are very pleased to say that Vista Park maintenance has improved dramatically in recent months. Playground equipment has been restored to good working order, graffiti has all but disappeared, and the turf is looking much better. This turn-around is a real credit to the new maintenance staff.

Unfortunately, the sandbox at Vista Park has clearly become a problem. In light of the proliferation of sand into surrounding areas and clogged drinking fountains, the VEP Board feels it may be time to do something about the sand.

We've spoken with City Parks' maintenance staff about their concerns regarding debris (including the potential of broken glass) and nesting wasps in the sandbox. Despite ongoing efforts to keep them clean, adjacent walkways and wood chip ("fibar") covered areas are getting covered with sand, which is unattractive and impossible to remove without hauling the fibar away and replacing it.

City Parks predicted these issues when we worked with them in designing the playlots. The VEP Board has come to realize that, although the sandbox is popular with little kids, in terms of safety and maintenance it was a mistake.

Staff is now considering replacement of the top layer of fibar in the rest of the play areas. Our concern is that it will be contaminated with sand almost immediately. The VEP Board feels that it's time to remove the sand and replace it with fibar. Subject to your suggestions, we will make this recommendation to City Parks later this month.

Your input on this and any other neighborhood issues is appreciated; call me at 578-5882.

Martial Cottle Park

-Adina Pierce

County Park's third meeting of the Martial Cottle Park Master Plan Task Force was on Wednesday, February 20 at Gundersen High School. The main point of discussion was the Draft Program Document for Martial Cottle Park Master Plan that was released on February 14, 2008. This 142-page document is now available on the parkhere.org website for the public to view.

Other items of interest on the parkhere.org website:

- Maps/Figures for the Draft Program Document
- Summary of Public Comments Received (VEP's wishlist is included in this)
- Summary of Task Force Comments Related to Agriculture
- Martial Cottle Park Project Schedule
- Martial Cottle Park Master Plan Case Study Report

The next Task Force meeting is not scheduled at this time, but it will be sometime during the summer.

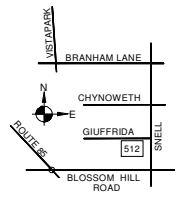
If you have any questions about this project, please contact

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[Ed. Note: Adina is VEP's representative on County Park's Martial Cottle Park Master Plan Task Force. She also chairs VEP's own Martial Cottle Park Committee.]

Neighborhood scuttlebutt

- Dave Fadness

Branham Lane and Snell Avenue: Widening projects on these two streets have been delayed for many months due to complications over right-of-way acquisition. Most recently set for hearing last month, City Council and County Board of Supervisors approval of the land acquisition agreement has been delayed again.

The attorneys are back at their keyboards, hashing out another contract iteration intended to resolve what are said to be a couple of relatively minor (albeit, post-eleventh hour) issues. Bottom line: The contract that was thought to be ready and agendized for approval will have to be brought back onto the Council and Board agenda calendars. My guess: at least another one to two months.

Our condolences...

VEP sends condolences to **Wesley Terrell** and the Terrell family for the loss of his dear mother, Phyllis. She lost her battle with cancer on January 3, 2008. She leaves her loving husband of 37 years, Richard, and her other son, Rodney, who resides in Southern California. Her contributions to the community will be very much missed. Please hold the Terrell family in your prayers.

[Ed. Note: Wesley Terrell is a VEP member who has generously supported our organization through personal donations and advertising in this newsletter. A realtor specializing in our area, he has long made it a practice to pay first-year VEP membership for his homebuyers.]

Oak Grove School District news

-Manny Barbara, Superintendent

A lot of uncertainty remains regarding the state budget and its impact on public education funding. The Governor has proposed suspending Proposition 98, the initiative passed by voters to guarantee a minimum funding amount for public education. Proposed reductions for 2008-2009 are over \$4-

billion dollars. California already ranks near the bottom in school funding when compared to other states. The state has already reduced public education funding by \$9-billion since 2000!

The impact to the Oak Grove School District is significant, totaling approximately \$7-million in reduced funding. This is on top of the over \$4-million in reductions since 2000, while also closing two schools. We are committed to maintaining key programs that are priorities for our community, such as our Class Size Reduction Program at grades K-3 and the Visual and Performing Arts Program at grades 4-6.

Thank you, Oak Grove community, for your support of our schools through the renewal of the Parcel Tax in 2004. Because of this, we have been able to maintain the quality education we provide for our students.

Kindergarten registration has begun. We are proud to offer extended-day kindergarten at all of our schools, plus a Junior Kindergarten option for students with September 1st through December 2nd birthdays. Please contact our Educational Services Division if you are interested in the Junior Kindergarten Program.

As always, please feel free to contact us on matters pertaining to the Oak Grove School District through our web site at: www.ogsd.k12.ca.us or 227-8300. Our web site also includes Board meeting agendas and minutes, Board Policies, and our District priorities, as listed in our Five-Year Plan.

San Jose Unified School District update

-Veronica Grijalva Lewis, Trustee area #4

Governor Schwarzenegger has declared a fiscal emergency and has asked for 10% cuts on all state department budgets, which included the Department of Education. San Jose Unified doesn't expect to have to make cuts immediately because of good reserves resulting from a huge reimbursement claim for mandated costs that were owed by the state. Those reserves exist because the Board of Education approved placing one-time reimbursements for the mandated costs into reserves. These reserves will help us weather the storm of mid-year cuts.

The Board approved the formation of a K-8 school at Allen @ Steinbeck. Beginning in the 2008-09 school year, two sixth grade classes will be added with approximately 62 students, with Allen @Steinbeck achieving a full K-8 status in 2010-

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2011.

On January 24th the Board of Education approved the Conversion Charter for Bachrodt Elementary. This Conversion Charter has brought tremendous support from the teachers and San Jose Teachers' Association (SJTA).

Pioneer High School received the California Department of Education's new *Service-Learning Leader School Award* on March 4th.

Broadway High School was recently recognized as a Model Continuation High School. The Recognition Program is a partnership of the California Department of Education and the California Continuation Education Association (CCEA) that identifies and recognizes outstanding programs.

The California Association for Bilingual Education (CABE) honored San Jose Unified School District with the first CABE Distinguished District Award. The award was presented to Superintendent Iglesias on March 6th at the CABE Conference.

One final update for the community: The stadium lights projects have been approved by the State Department of Architecture and the process to obtain contracts for construction and installation. The parking lot shade structures and rooftop installation for Gunderson campus has also been approved and work has already begun.

Please contact me at veronica_lewis@sjusd.org if you have any questions. Refer to the district website (sjusd.org) for instructions on how to register so that I can receive your emails.

News from Carson School

- Betsy Doss, Principal

California State Testing (STAR) will run April 29 to May 9. Our students and teachers are working hard to make sure that all students in grades 2-5 are well prepared in their academic areas.

Parents can help, too, by limiting activities the night before our tests. Avoid having guests for dinner or skip a night activity if it means being out late. Be sure your child gets to bed on time and sets the alarm for the next morning. On tests days, plan an energy-boosting breakfast. Try to include both protein (eggs, yogurt, milk) and carbohydrates (fruit, oatmeal, toast).

Carson students and staff are once again joining forces with the American Heart Association, raising funds to support efforts to reduce heart disease. Did you know that cardiovascular disease ranks as the #2 cause of death for children under fifteen? Please help a child you know from Carson participate in this worthwhile cause.

JUMP ROPE FOR HEART

April 8 at 11 am

Please join our students and staff in a "jumping" extravaganza!

Field Renovation at Carson will begin on May 9 and continue over the summer. The large baseball field will not be available for student or neighborhood use until October 2008.

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Gunderson High School happenings

-Cary Catching, Principal

As many of you have noticed, construction projects abound on the Gunderson campus, the most noticeable being our solar project. A solar "T" structure is being erected in the back parking lot adjacent to the football stadium. In addition, panels were recently loaded on the roof of our main building. It is projected that our solar system will be up and running by the end of April.

Gunderson's new marquee is also being installed. Our hope is to begin to put announcements on it prior to Spring Break.

Congratulations go out to Gunderson senior **Misha Balingit**. Misha was selected along with San Jose Police Chief Rob Davis to co-host Project Cornerstone's Asset Champion breakfast at the Fairmont Hotel on March 6. Misha is an excellent representative of Gunderson and young people all over San Jose. She was bombarded with accolades after the event was over!

Finally, by mid-March, Gunderson will have received the lists of incoming students for next year. It is projected that our enrollment will be up by approximately 60 to 80 students. Congratulations to everyone who has helped to spread the word about our school.

Just a reminder, Gunderson's Spring Break is fast approaching. There will be no school from March 21 through March 28.

Zwaggle: parents helping parents

- Dave Noel

Zwaggle (www.zwaggle.com) 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.

The view from city hall

-San Jose City Councilwoman Nancy Pyle

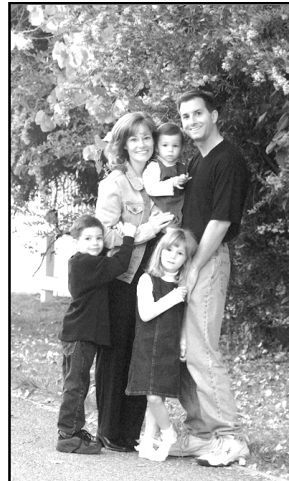
I firmly believe that District 10 is a safe community. However, I also realize that as safe as we are, there is no guarantee that crime will not have an impact on our lives.

Our San Jose Police force does an excellent job of patrolling our streets and keeping our families safe, but even they cannot be everywhere at every time. Criminals are constantly looking to take advantage of easy opportunities. It is up to each of us, working in collaboration with our friends and neighbors, to make sure that these criminal acts are thwarted.

It pays to be vigilant and take steps to ensure one's personal safety and the safety of our community. Neighborhood awareness is a great first step, but in order to be truly prepared I encourage each of you to take advantage of opportunities the city offers as we work to create safer neighborhoods, business areas and recreational gathering spots.

New additions to the police department and the Southern Substation that is opening in 2009, will accentuate the great service we receive from the SJPd. In the meantime it is up to each of us to personally build upon the security and safety which the SJPd provides for our families.

The City's Neighborhood Watch Program is key in educating residents on ways to be an active participant in fostering a safe and secure community. The Neighborhood Watch Pro-



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gram focuses on informing the community on ways to discourage, deter, and prevent crimes such as burglary, auto theft, car break-ins, and personal crimes which often occur in or near homes. Issues such as vandalism, graffiti, drug dealing, and gang activity are also addressed when applicable.

I am committed to keeping this community safe. Whether it is the \$2.3-million from District 10 that I allocated towards the construction of SJPd's South Substation or my continued fight to not only maintain but increase funding for the Neighborhood Watch program over the past three years, I promise to stand up for your safety and the security of this community.

I implore you to explore the possibilities that our Neighborhood Watch program can provide to your neighborhood. For more information, please give Dirk Parsons a call at (408) 277-4133 or visit <http://www.sjpd.org/crimeprev/neighborhoodwatch.html>.

~ Paid Summer Internship Opportunities ~

Each year the Metropolitan Transportation Commission sponsors a High School Internship program. The purpose of the program is to introduce high school (10th, 11th, or 12th grade) students to career opportunities in the field of transportation, and to provide MTC's transportation partners (such as traffic engineers at city and county public works departments or planners at transit agencies) with assistance.

Gain exposure and valuable experience in various transportation related careers. Apply for the Summer Metropolitan Transportation Commission High School Summer Internship Program. Work sites are available throughout the Bay Area including sites in the following cities: San Jose, Oakland, Orinda, Pittsburg, San Ramon, Napa, San Mateo, Benicia, Healdsburg, San Rafael, and San Francisco.

All positions will be posted on MTC's website at http://www.mtc.ca.gov/jobs/high_school/index.htm. Applicants must be at least 16 years of age and have a 2.8 GPA or higher (students with a GPA lower than 2.8 must submit two letters of recommendation). Graduating seniors are also eligible to apply. All applications are due by Friday, March 28th.

San Jose's General Plan update

-Dave Fadness

Last fall, the San Jose City Council appointed a 37-member task force to update our General Plan. The product of this

two-year long effort will be a revised long-range blueprint for the physical development of our city, the *Envision San Jose 2040 General Plan*. Councilwoman Nancy Pyle appointed me to represent Council District 10. We're just getting underway.

In 1975, San Jose adopted its first General Plan, GP'75. It was a reflection of citizen desires for improved planning at a time when our city was experiencing exploding growth; worsening traffic; declining park, library, police, and fire services; schools on double-session; and uncertainty as to how the needs of a rapidly growing population were going to be met.

GP'75 set year 1990 as its planning horizon, establishing

- Major strategies (for Economic Development, Growth Management, etc.);
- Goals & Policies (like transportation, police, fire, library, and other levels of service);
- A Land Use & Transportation Diagram.

It also set up a regular review process, twice-annual in the first few years of fine-tuning, then once annually from the early '80s. Yielding to pressure for urban development, starting about eight years ago, the city council undertook as many as four reviews each year.

Comprehensive GP updates are done far less frequently: one in 1984 (Horizon 2000), another in 1992 (GP 2020). The current *Envision San Jose 2040* update was spurred by the 2006 mayoral campaign; all candidates including now-Mayor Chuck Reed made the case for a comprehensive update. Among the driving forces were major development challenges in Coyote Valley, North San Jose, Evergreen, etc., and questions surrounding our city's ability to sustain continuing growth without impacting services desired by its residents.

Being a *bedroom* community is a fundamental problem San Jose has faced for decades. In the heyday of rampant growth, our city was happy to have developers build homes and install streets and other infrastructure, then sit back and collect property taxes. Other cities invested in a more forward-looking way, encouraging a balance of commercial and industrial development to support their residents.

As a result, San Jose provides far more housing per capita than other cities in Santa Clara County. Too many San Joseans work and shop elsewhere, contributing their tax money to the coffers of adjoining cities. This *economic* imbalance poses serious *fiscal* impacts in San Jose.

Recognizing this, in the late '70s our city council called for a

major emphasis on improving the jobs-housing balance in San Jose. When voters overwhelmingly approved Proposition 13 in 1978, the folly of San Jose's lop-sided dependence upon property taxes became a fiscal bust.

Unfortunately, after thirty years of talking about it and making *some* progress, the lack of focus on achieving a jobs-housing balance continues in our city. In fact, in recent years, San Jose officials have bragged about getting A+ ratings from regional government for building housing. We're even rezoning vacant jobs-producing land for residential use!

My #1 priority is to convince my Task Force colleagues to extend the current concept of *sustainability* beyond just environmental considerations. Evidence of government's escalating fiscal problems fills our news media every day. I believe that until we have a solid economy and fiscal stability, we can't honestly claim to be a sustainable city.

Owing to poor economies, many (if not most) cities around the world cannot afford the luxury of concern over social and environmental issues. To adequately support our continuing desire to address those concerns in San Jose, our city's fiscal and economic house has to be put in order.

As such, it's vitally important that we (1) maintain a central focus on fiscal and economic factors in planning our city, and (2) that we formally and more frequently check to assure that progress is being made. For San Jose to be truly sustainable requires that we achieve economic, fiscal, social, *and* environmental balance.

* * * * *

These are some of the key issues the Task Force will focus on in developing *Envision San Jose 2040*:

1. Future Growth Projections

- How much projected job, population and housing growth will San Jose need to accommodate?
- How do San Jose's projected growth rates relate to that of the greater Bay Area region?

2. Land Capacity

- How much and what type of land will be required to accommodate future new employment, housing and all other uses anticipated?
- How much land is currently available, both vacant and underutilized, in the San Jose 2020 General Plan?
- What are the current and future trends and projections for the types and intensity of employment and housing development expected?
- What amount and type of land will be required for all uses and activities, including commercial, recreational, schools, churches, etc.?
- What is the realistic holding capacity of the South Almaden Valley Urban Reserve (SAVUR)?
- Verify the location of the 15% Slope Line to confirm those areas considered appropriate for future urban development.

3. Infrastructure and Services

- What is the current status of the City's infrastructure capacity and service levels?
- What is the level of unfunded capital infrastructure needs and deferred maintenance?
- What are the projected infrastructure needs and service level expansions required to serve both the existing community and projected new growth?
- What are the projected services needs of other public and outside agencies; e.g., schools, health care, etc.?

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4. Economic and Fiscal Analysis

- How do the projected infrastructure and service level demands of the updated General Plan impact the City's economic and fiscal health and stability?
- What are the economic and fiscal implications of the proposed mix of land uses?

5. Environmental Resources

- How can the General Plan protect, restore, and enhance San Jose's environmental assets; e.g., habitat protection, energy conservation, green building practices?

6. Social Equity

- How can General Plan policies support social equity?

7. Proposed Envision 2040 General Plan Land Use Plan

- What is the optimum land use plan and capacity to accommodate projected future growth in the manner that most effectively achieves the Guiding Principles?
- How much growth can/should occur in transit corridors, other infill locations and the urban reserves?
- What are the existing infrastructure capacities available/needed to serve transit corridors, other infill locations, and the urban reserves?

If you have questions or ideas about this update process please call, email, or ask me at a VEP meeting. By way of this newsletter, I will try to keep VEP members apprised of important public documents and meetings.

Meanwhile, to follow the Task Force's progress, check on our meeting schedule, and/or to download the materials it's provided, go to the following website:

http://sanjoseca.gov/planning/gp_update/default.asp

A message from our County District 1

- Don Gage, Supervisor and VTA Board Director

The Capitol/Narvaez/SR 87 interchange has made the list: Santa Clara Valley Transportation Authority (VTA) Directors have included improvements to the troubled interchange on the project list in our transportation planning document, Valley Transportation Plan 2035.

While the list of projects is still subject to change, the VTA Board voted on March 6 to approve it and send it on to the Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC) to be considered for inclusion in the MTC's Regional Transportation Plan (RTP2035), a similar transportation planning document for the entire Bay Area.

The VTP2035 list identifies Capitol/Narvaez/SR 87 interchange improvements as a \$10-million project. While they will likely cost more than that, transportation plans are required to be limited to the amount of revenue dedicated to transportation that VTA and MTC can reasonably expect to be available during the plans' 25-year span.

The VTP2035 and RTP2035 plans are scheduled for adoption later this year and early next year.

[Ed. Note: This is very good news. VEP sponsored two recent forums on this important subject that featured representatives from the City of San Jose, Santa Clara County, and VTA. Our goal was to work with those agencies to have Capitol/Narvaez/SR 87 interchange improvements added to VTA and MTC projects lists, the first crucial step in funding. We thank Supervisor Gage, Councilwoman Pyle, and VTA staff for working with us to achieve this goal. Next, we need to lobby to get interchange improvement work completed long before



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the plan's sunset year 2035.]

A message from County District 4

-Supervisor Ken Yeager

Each year, my fellow county supervisors and I establish policy priorities to provide a framework for our advocacy efforts with the State Legislature and the Governor. State priorities focus on programs funded by the state of California, not the federal government. About one-third of the county's general fund revenue comes from state grants and allocations, more than from any other single source of income. This is why working with the state is so important.

This year, we have five main state policy priorities. The first is reforming health care. In 2008, the California state Legislature and voters will consider significant health care reforms. Without adequate funding and other protections for counties and public hospitals, which provide the health care safety net, health care reform cannot be successful.

Valley Medical Center continues to provide excellent medical services for residents throughout the area. The county is diverting scarce resources to fund more than half of a seismic retrofit for VMC. The improvements are expected to cost about \$1.2-billion, but without more funding assistance from the state, the county may not be able to finish seismic retrofitting by the state's 2013 and 2030 deadlines.

Because of our push for health care reform, we also recognize the importance of sustaining social services programs, many of which are used by those with health issues. Providing services to abused children, seniors, dependent adults, and low-income families is a key component of county affairs.

In order to maintain these programs in full, however, we need more state funding. Last year, Supervisor Liz Kniss and I voted to preserve many drug and alcohol and mental health programs, but we need more state funding to maintain our level of service. The state mandates that counties must provide many of these services without additional state funding, and the county can't afford to maintain all of these programs alone. These social programs are necessary for the well being of our community, and through an increase in state funding, the programs will be able to assist more residents.

Another of our state policy priorities concerns our county's jails. Currently, the county's correctional facilities are over capacity, and without additional state resources, cannot accept additional state prisoners. While we understand that re-entry

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facilities will provide vital rehabilitative programs to inmates about to leave state custody, the county budget is not large enough to build and maintain these facilities. If the state wants us to absorb additional state prisoners, the state must allot additional funding for our county.

The county also plans to work with the state to repair California's crumbling infrastructure. In 2006, voters approved numerous bonds for infrastructure repairs. We are ready to start improving our local infrastructure according to the voters' wishes, but we cannot begin repairing freeways, transit corridors, and utilities until we receive the promised funding.

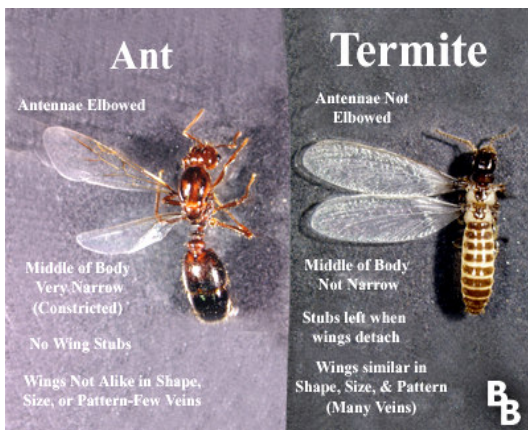
These priorities will continue to be our top issues when we meet with state representatives throughout the year. I look forward to working with these representatives to ensure that our issues are heard.

As always, I encourage you to contact my office if you have any concerns. You can reach me at 299-5040 or via e-mail at Ken.Yeager@bos.sccgov.org.

Termites!

-Judy Elrite (*)

Termites--those pesky, potentially devastating little creepy bugs. We have our 'unfair' share of them and, if you own a home, you may too. The average person does not know what they really look like (see pictures), how to spot the signs of their presence, or what to do except call an exterminator.



Because I am on the board of a condo complex, we have to



deal with termites pretty regularly and it gets expensive.

Sadly or gladly, there are more than 53,000 websites that deal with termites; from identification, to advertisements for extermination, to alternative treatments. In checking for the basic "Termites 101" at <http://www.utoronto.ca/forest/termite/trmts101.htm>, It appears that we have two types of termites around here.

I don't pretend to be an expert, but I have learned that subterranean termites (soil-tunneling termites) leave shelter 'tubes' behind on exterior walls or inside your garage (if you have boxes or furniture stored against the walls in your garage they will likely tunnel into those for a little snack on the way into the interior of your walls).

Wood-inhabiting termites produce 'fecal pellets' that look like grains of sand. So if you see little piles of what looks like sand in window sills or along corners or edges of walls, you've likely got wood inhabiting termites and it's time to take action. By the time you see the pellets, they are already munching on the structural integrity of your house.

There are a number of exterminators to call, but always trying to reduce costs, we decided to investigate a little. In checking www.insectguide.net for more information and pictures I found there is a link to www.dowagro.com. This led me to 'alternative methods' such as orange oil.

Since we are conducting an investigation that could benefit us all, I have to ask: Has anyone out there had experience with the use of orange oil as a termite exterminator? Part of our investigation is to check with anyone that might have used or investigated it recently.

If you have, please email the results to Jazae@sbcglobal.net.

[(*) Judy Elrite is a VEP member and also a member of the board of directors at Colony Green, a nearby condominium complex off Chynoweth Avenue.]

Eliminate unwanted catalogs

- Dave Noel

Here's a website that may help save a tree and reduce your junk mail. Visit www.catalogchoice.org to opt out from receiving unwanted catalogs. Catalog Choice is a free service that lets you decline paper catalogs you no longer wish to receive.

March madness

-John Marks

Haven't you noticed, weeds come slithering out of the soil with the slightest tug. Now's the time to scout around, gathering and pulling up those milk weeds and any others you can

spot.

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

What exactly are we waiting for before planting them? Day-time temperatures of 70°F.

Cold, damp weather will bring out snails and slugs in droves. They will feast on the tender new growth of bulbs and winter plants. Hand pick, or use bait, but don't let them go unchecked because they will mow down your garden. You can also prune now, especially roses and fruit trees.

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

When will the soil be ready for general planting? Squeeze a handful of soil; if it sticks together like putty, it's still too wet. If it crumbles and falls from your hand, it's okay to dig and plant.

It takes at least five rainless days for soil to dry out. Rake up leaves you might have missed earlier, to help the soil dry out and get them off your lawn. Leaves provide hiding spots for over-wintering insects.

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

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

Use herbs as landscaping plants. Chives and parsley add attractive foliage among blooming flowers. Rosemary and woolly thyme will take off and make attractive, drought-tolerant ground covers. Wildflower seeds can still be sown and are suitable in many areas where other plantings don't seem to thrive. Plant summer-blooming bulbs, corms and tubers now, including begonias, calla lilies, canna lilies, dahlias, and gladioluses.

Share your bounty and get a tax deduction

- Dave Noel

Do you have too much fruit on your backyard tree? Consider donating it to Village Harvest. The fruit will go to people who need it, and you'll get a tax deduction. Can't pick it yourself? Village Harvest's volunteers can pick it for you. For more information, visit www.villageharvest.org or call (888) FRUIT-411.

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Solar power here in VEP?

-Helen Castillo

Because I believe in helping our community in anyway possible, I have volunteered to look into a solar program for our area.

One of my goals is to help us become more knowledgeable about solar for our homes. I have met with *Solar City* and also have talked to **Kathy Sutherland**, of Councilwoman **Nancy Pyle**'s office who gave me names of other residents who did a community solar program.

Those folks used *Sun Run Generation LLC* to install solar on their homes. I am going to meet with them to find out more on going solar and what they have to offer. I want to interview a couple more companies so that I can report back to you my findings. Before we recommend solar power to VEP homeowners, we really have to gather enough information to be sure we've found the best company and best value to us.

Here are just a few questions that have come to mind: How much will it cost to install solar? How fast will we be able to recover our investment? What about service life and repairs? Are there companies that we can sell our power back to?

You can help by calling me at (408) 981-5902 if you are willing to share knowledge about solar power or know someone who will. I am also looking for folks who would like to participate in a round table discussion on this topic.

Ten things to know before you go solar

-Bruce Karney, *SolarCity.com*

Are you thinking about installing solar photovoltaic panels on your roof? Good for you. Here are ten things you should know before speaking with a solar salesperson:

1. Your system will not need batteries. At night, you will get your power from PG&E's grid, just like you do today.

2. State rebates and Federal tax credits are an important part of the cost/benefit decision. California state rebates are declining step-by-step. The maximum rebate in San Jose is currently \$1.85 per AC watt. For the next year or so, rebates will probably decline faster than prices, so when a sales person tells you it is cheaper to buy now than to wait, it is the truth.

3. Make sure you understand PG&E's electricity rates. There are five tiers, based on usage, and higher tiers cost

more. The Tier 1 rate is \$0.12/kilowatt-hour (kWh), Tier 2 is \$0.13/kWh, Tier 3 is \$0.22, Tier 4 is \$0.31 and Tier 5 \$0.35. If your monthly electric bill is over \$230, you are paying part of your bill at the very highest (Tier 5) rate. Solar electricity costs most homeowners about 15- to 20-cents per kW after rebates. **When you add a solar system to your roof, you eliminate the most expensive tiers first. So, the more you spend on electricity now, the higher the return on investment you will get from solar.**

4. Solar panels last 30 to 40 years, losing approximate 0.5% of their efficiency each year. The only required maintenance is to hose them off a couple of times each summer. The inverter, which converts direct current from the panels to alternating current used in your home, will need to be replaced after about 15 years. Expect to pay \$1000 to \$2000 for this in 2023.

5. Ideally, a solar system will go on a south or southwest-facing roof. However, the direction it faces does not matter as much as you might think. West, southeast, and east-facing roofs all produce very satisfactory levels of electricity production.

6. You should find out how much electricity your home uses each month. If you keep old bills, great. Otherwise, request the data from PG&E. Also think about how your electricity needs will change over the next ten years. If your family is growing, you will use more power as your kids grow. On the other hand, if your nest is about to become empty, your bills will soon decline and stay low. If you plan to replace incandescent lights with CFLs or do other things that will make a big difference in the amount of electricity you use, you should ask the salesperson to base their bid on your PLANNED electricity use, not your actual use.

7. Solar power's natural enemy is shade. You and the sales rep will have to think about the growth of trees over 10-30 years. Some trees that shade your roof may be several houses away from yours. Even if your current neighbors are friends and will trim their trees if you ask, what if they move in two years and the Grumpy family moves next door?

8. Most families that go solar switch to "time of use" (TOU) metering. Under time of use, the price of electricity depends on the time of day you use it, whether it's a weekday or weekend, and whether it is summer or winter. Though it's more complicated than the rates we're used to, switching to this rate plan can save solar owners 10-20%.

9. It is very hard to predict how much value a solar system will add to your home. People who install solar systems generally plan to stay in their homes a long time, so re-sales are

rare. I think it is fair to say that five or ten years from now when electricity costs twice what it does today, potential buyers will appreciate--and pay more for--a home with a low electric bill.

10. You can't lower your electric bill to zero. PG&E will still charge a monthly "account fee" of about \$8 that covers services like maintaining the grid and coming to read your meter.

Before you invest in solar, take the time to identify electricity wasters in your home. Conserving energy should always come before investing in solar. You may find you can reduce your bill by as much as 30%.

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".

E.D.I.T.H. (Exit Drills In The Home)

People can survive fires in their homes if they are alerted to the fire and get out quickly and stay out!

How to act smart and survive...

Install smoke detectors on every level and in each sleeping area of your home, including the basement. Remember to keep them in working order! Batteries should be tested once a month and replaced twice a year, at the beginning and end of Daylight Savings Time.

Develop an escape plan of your house and practice it often with every member of your household. Even consider installing an automatic fire sprinkler system in your home.

1. Plan your escape today! Once a fire has started, there is NO time to plan how to get out. Sit down with your family TO-DAY and make a step-by-step plan for escaping a fire.

2. Draw a floor plan (birds-eye-view) of your home with clearly marked escape routes from each room. Indicate all doors and windows, as well as stairways, porches and porch roofs. Mark two ways out of every room, especially sleeping areas.

3. Establish a central meeting place outside your home. After escaping a fire, immediately go to that meeting place and wait for the fire department to arrive. This meeting place allows a count of everyone in the household, which could then inform the fire department if anyone is missing or trapped inside the burning house. Never go back into a burning house for any reason; let trained fire fighters do their job!

4. Practice, practice, practice your escape plan often! Appoint a "fire chief" (typically father, mother, grandparent, etc.) to hold 'realistic' fire drills in the home and have everyone participate. Speed is vital, so get out quickly and carefully. Pretend some exits are blocked by fire and practice alternative escape routes.

Test doors before opening them! While kneeling or crouching at the door feel the crack between the door and its frame and then reach up as high as you can and touch the door with the

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back of your hand. If you feel any warmth at all, do not open the door; use an alternate escape route. If the door feels cool, wedge your foot so you can slightly open the door with caution. Note: As a precaution, sleep with bedroom doors closed. It helps to hold back heat and smoke.

As you exit your home, remain low to the ground, on your hands and knees, crawling low under the smoke. Smoke contains deadly gases and heat rises; therefore, cooler and cleaner air will be near the floor.

If you are trapped, close all doors between you and the fire. Stuff cracks around the doors to keep smoke out. Wait at a window and signal for help. If there is a phone in the room, use it to call 911 and report exactly where you are.

5. Be prepared! Make sure everyone in your household can unlock all doors and windows quickly, even in the dark. Windows or doors with security bars need to be equipped with quick-release devices, and everyone, including small children, should know how to use them.

FIRE PREVENTION IS YOUR BEST FIRE PROTECTION

Be careful when smoking and when using matches, gas appliances, electrical devices/outlets. Avoid misuses of electrical appliances and outlets. Have heating equipment cleaned and checked for repairs regularly. You CAN prevent fires and protect your loved ones by remembering that...

▶▶ SMOKE DETECTORS SAVE LIVES ◀◀

VEP's February meeting

- Dave Noel

VEP strives to have interesting speakers on a wide variety of interesting topics at our general meetings, and February was no exception.

In response to several neighborhood issues, VEP invited **Greg Peacock**, a City of San Jose **Code Enforcement** Inspector, to speak at our meeting. Greg provided an excellent overview of Code Enforcement services and related information.



Code Enforcement is staffed seven days each week but is stretched pretty thin. Greg covers a large area of San Jose, including all of the VEP area south of Branham Lane.

Greg explained that Code Enforcement is responsible for dealing with junker cars on private property, and the Department of Transportation takes care of abandoned cars on city streets.

Here are some phone numbers to keep handy:

- ▶ Code Enforcement (blight, junk cars, etc) = 277-4528
- ▶ Abandoned shopping carts = 535-3500
- ▶ Animal complaints = 578-7297 (press # for a live person)
- ▶ Noise complaints = 311

Following Greg's presentation, **Francois Rongere**, spokesperson for Pacific Gas & Electric provided an overview of opportunities to save energy and money using PG&E rebates in their homes. Francois presented very interesting information regarding energy efficiencies gained since 1970 when the government began to promote energy efficiency using a combination of regulations and rebates.

PG&E offers rebates to stimulate industry to invest in new product designs that yield higher efficiencies. Once the new efficient products are commonplace, the rebates are no longer needed. As a notable example, the efficiency of refrigerators has improved dramatically since 1970. For each dollar spent on rebates, two dollars are saved.



Overall, California energy use is better than the U.S. as a whole, and almost as good as Europe.

For current PG&E rebates and a personalized energy usage report, visit pge.com/smartenergy or call (800) 933-9555. Francois surprised all attendees with a goodie bag including a free compact fluorescent lamp.

Some VEP members raved about a product called Kill-A-Watt. This item lets you know how much electricity each appliance is using. It retails for about \$30 and can be found for \$18.50 plus shipping on Ebay.

There was no significant news to report regarding VEP Martial Cottle Park since submittal of VEP's approved wish list last month.

Eric Crane, Aide to Councilmember **Nancy Pyle**, introduced two speakers on the topic of the upcoming Vista Park Community Room Master Plan. Parks Manager **Evelyn Velez-Rosario** and landscape architect **Michael Wharton** announced plans to remove the old transformers in about 3-4 months, and for the city to remove and replace the dumpster enclosure. Concrete pads and fencing will also be removed. Evelyn and Michael also discussed landscaping ideas and drainage improvements needed in the vicinity of the community room.

VEP executives requested that the city work with us ASAP to complete a Community Room Area Master Plan including landscaping. VEP volunteers are eager to begin planting and we have grant funding for this purpose that expires this summer.

VEP Vice President **Marilyn Rodgers** provided a brief update on the city's newly forming Neighborhoods Commission.

David Noel, VEP past president and coordinator of the annual Community Service Award (CSA) program, presented a proposal on how best to use the \$2,000 approved by mem-



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bers at the January general meeting. Because our Constitution and By-Laws changes are not ready, we will need to operate the program under the existing rules of having three categories: Andrew Hill, Gunderson, and At-Large. Since \$2,000 doesn't divide evenly into two awards, a motion was accepted and passed unanimously to award up to three \$700 awards for the three categories.

The meeting closed with the traditional open session regarding community concerns and news. VEP past president and Editor **Dave Fadness** updated members on Pearl Avenue Library construction progress. The library will open this summer and donations are still urgently needed for equipment, furnishings, and extended collections. The city's bond funding is only allowed to be used on the "brick and mortar" facility, and everything else requires additional funding.

The eScrip program

-Dave Fadness (*)

Introduced by Electronic Scrip Inc. (ESI), the eScrip program is a fundraising program for schools and organizations that directly support the education of youth. It allows participating merchants to contribute a percentage of your grocery loyalty card, credit card, and/or debit/ATM card purchases to the school or organization of your choice. ESI is a California (San Mateo) based corporation dedicated to establishing relationships between commerce and community to provide resources to organizations that support children.

The eScrip program brings ease of use and other advantages to year-round fundraising. It streamlines the whole fundraising process and puts the recipient organization, the kids, their parents, and the community in the winner's circle. The eScrip program is a program.

We encourage you to take advantage of this no-cost way to donate to your favorite among these school groups:

- ◆ Gunderson High School Boosters
- ◆ Gunderson High School Associated Student Body (ASB)
- ◆ Hayes Home & School Club
- ◆ Holy Family School
- ◆ Parkview School Community Association
- ◆ Rachel Carson School
- ◆ Science at Gunderson High School
- ◆ Terrell School PTA

How does the eScrip program work? Supporters (like you) register any or all of their existing grocery loyalty, debit, and credit cards for use in the program. Participating merchants (like Safeway, Macy's, and Eddie Bauer) make contributions to enrolled organizations, based on purchases made when you use those registered cards. Be sure to ask your favorite merchants whether they participate in the eScrip program.

By using your registered cards at participating merchants, you generate donations based on a percentage of purchases. Every month, your designated recipient organization receives all merchant contributions. A summarized report listing supporters, merchants, and contributions amounts is available online.

There is no up front cost to recipients. A 15% administration fee is deducted from supporters' contributions each month. eScrip has found this to be the most effective way for groups to generate a large number of supporters.

How much can my group receive? Based on expenditures at

participating merchants of \$400 per month (for example), the chart below illustrates eScrip's extraordinary fundraising power. Expenditures can be for food, clothing, travel, entertainment, as well as miscellaneous family purchases.

Number of supporters	Average amount each supporter spends monthly	Total amount eScrip donates per year*
50	\$400	\$12,000**
100	\$400	\$24,000**
200	\$400	\$48,000**
500	\$400	\$120,000**

*Based on 5% average merchant donation.
**Does not reflect eScrip's 15% administration fee.

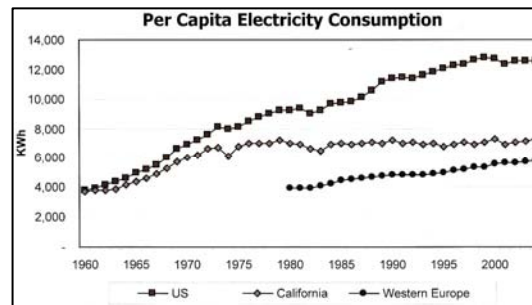
Keep in mind that with the eScrip program, extended family and friends who live in and out of town can also participate, supporting your worthwhile programs.

[(*) Ed. Note: This article was extracted from the eScrip web-site.]

PG&E's customer energy efficiency programs

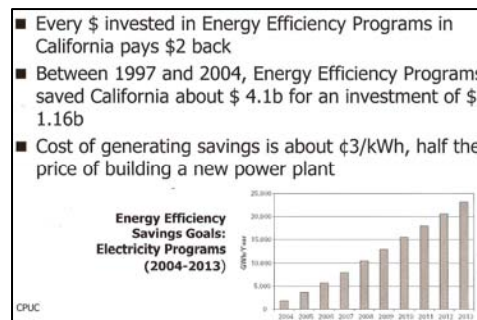
-François Xavier Rongère (*)

The following graph illustrates dramatically why it can be claimed that *energy efficiency* is the foremost energy resource in California. Although per capita energy consumption in the U.S. has risen continuously over the decades since 1960, California's has remained almost constant since the early '70s. We know our population has grown, so this amazing achievement can be credited to improvements in California's energy efficiency.



Improving energy efficiency results in a big benefit to our environment. The savings in 2003 alone represented 16-million tons of avoided CO₂ emissions per year, the equivalent of removing 3.2-million cars from our roads.

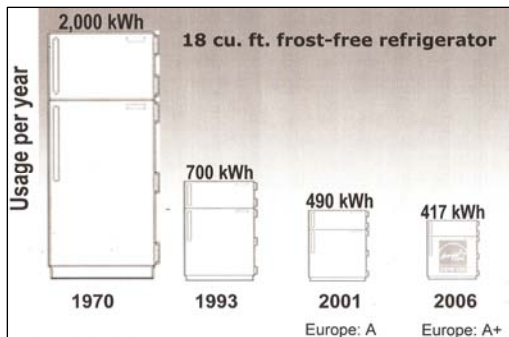
Here's the bottom line: Every dollar invested in energy efficiency programs in California pays back \$2. Between 1997 and 2004, energy efficiency programs have saved California



about \$4.1-billion for an investment of \$1.16-billion. Cost of generating savings is about 3¢/kWh, half the price of building a new power plant.

A classic example of improvements in energy efficiency over the years is the home refrigerator. In 1970, a typical 18 cubic foot frost-free refrigerator consumed 2,000 kilowatt hours (kWh) per year. Owing to improved design, that rate went to 700 kWh per year; in 2006, the same size refrigerator, operating at the same temperature, consumes as little as 417 kWh per year. (Keep this in mind in deciding whether to use your old energy-guzzling refrigerator as a back-up unit in the garage!)

Importantly, despite improvements in efficiency, the cost to buy a typical 18 cubic foot frost-free refrigerator has gone from \$1270 in the mid-70s to about \$462 in 2001 (measured in constant 1983 dollars).



Design improvements are driven by incentives from companies like PG&E; moreover, our use of these newer appliances is encouraged by further incentives to buy them—like rebates and reduced monthly power bills.

Energy efficiency is smart energy. Here are some simple ways to save energy and money:

Dishwasher

- Wash only full loads in your dishwasher.
- Use the energy saver, air dry cycle.
- Open the door and let dishes dry naturally.

Refrigerator

- Clean the coils.
- Keep your refrigerator temperature between 38°F and 42°F
- Keep your freezer between 0°F and 5°F.

Buy ENERGY STAR® Appliances. ENERGY STAR® qualified appliances use 10-50% less energy and water than standard models.

Your home

- Seal Air Leaks
- Use weather stripping and caulking to seal air leaks around windows, doors, ducts, and any openings in the walls, floors, or ceilings.

Heating/Cooling

- Inspect, clean, or change the filters in your heating and cooling systems once a month.
- Lower the water heater temperature to 120° F or "low."

Lighting

- Replace old incandescent bulbs with a Compact Fluorescent Lamps (CFL).
- New CFLs:
 - Have equivalent light quality as incandescent bulbs.

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

- Use up to 75% less energy.
- Last up to 10 times longer.
- Energy saving tip: Turn off lights as you leave a room.

Use the *SmartEnergy Analyzer*™ (pge.com/smartenergy) to:

- Discover potential energy savings in your home.
- Create a personalized energy report.

Rebates and incentives are available from PG&E and some manufacturers on the following products and services (for a complete list, visit pge.com/cfl):

Appliances:

- Clothes Washer
- Dishwasher
- Water Heater

Heating and cooling:

- Duct Testing
- Furnace
- Whole House Fan
- Air Conditioner (room only)

Instant savings on lighting:

- Lighting discounts at retailers
- Hardwired Fixtures (interior & exterior)
- Torchieres
- CFLs

Refrigerator recycling:

- Receive \$35 from PG&E
- Reduce your annual electricity bill by up to an average of \$250
- Help prevent the emission of up to 10 tons of CO₂ into the atmosphere

To participate, contact PG&E's recycling partner, JACO Environmental at (800) 299-7573 or www.appliancerecycling.com.

For PG&E Residential Customer information:

Smarter Energy Line: (800) 933-9555 or pge.com/res/rebates

For PG&E Small Business Customer information:

(800) 468-4PGE or pge.com/biz/rebates

[(*) Ed. Note: Mr. Rongère represented PG&E as our guest speaker at last month's VEP meeting. The foregoing article was adapted from his PowerPoint presentation.]

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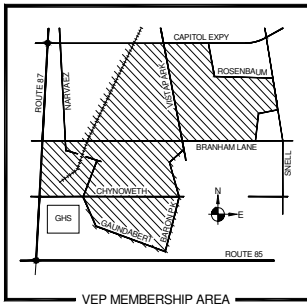
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