

# VEP NEWS

• VEP COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION •

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

January 2010

## VEP'S MEETING

7:30 p.m. Tuesday  
► January 26, 2010 ◀

Vista Park Community Room  
475 Hyde Park Drive

## AGENDA

### ★ Update on Branham Lane ★

Captain Vaughan Edwards, San Jose Police Department  
Sam Koosha, San Jose City Department of Transportation

### ★ The Coroner's Office ★

Presentation by Sgt. Manuel Rey, Chief Investigator  
Santa Clara County

### ★ VEP Business/Updates/Announcements ★

CSA Awards – Approve 2010 Awards  
VEP Membership Drive Begins  
Mayor to Award Honor to VEP at State of the City Breakfast

Candidates for Santa Clara County  
Supervisor, District 1 – “Meet and Greet”

### ★ Your Concerns and Ideas ★

Your chance to voice your opinion and/or to seek VEP's help.  
Everyone is welcome. Invite your neighbors!

## VEP's January Meeting

by Marilyn Rodgers

Topics that are planned for the January general membership meeting:

► **Update on Branham Lane – Follow-up on October Accident.** Captain Edwards of SJPD and Sam Koosha of San Jose DOT will provide a brief overview of activities/interventions which have been initiated to decrease speed of drivers on Branham, and to discourage racing. They will also provide suggestions and encouragement to residents on opportunities to be proactive participants in this endeavor.

► **The Coroner's Office – Sgt. Manuel Rey, Chief Investigator** for the Santa Clara County Coroners' Office will present an overview of the roles and responsibilities of the Coroners' Office. Information will include: when is an autopsy required by law, or when is it the decision/option of the family/next of kin; who can make decisions/final arrangements when a Healthcare

Advanced Directive is in place; for those who live alone - what information should be accessible to emergency personnel and staff of the coroners' office, to prevent confusion and delays in notification of next of kin.

### ► VEP Business/Updates/Announcements:

Members will be asked to approve the 2010 plan for the CSA Awards (see article in VEP News by Dave Noel)  
“Meet and Greet” the announced Candidates for Supervisor District 1 seat

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

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

## Do You YAHOO? Join the fun!

By Susan Iverson

Did you know that VEP has an online community too? You can find VEP in Yahoo! Groups. Yahoo! Groups allow members to exchange information quickly and easily, by using a web based forum to distribute email, photos and files. Utilizing the VEP Group at <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/vep/> will allow neighbors to stay informed about what is going on in the neighborhood, exchange information, and generally get to know your neighbors better.

Membership to the group is free of charge, and you can control whether you receive individual email, or a daily digest of emails. The group site will augment, and not replace, established VEP methods of communication, such as the monthly newsletter (which you are reading), email updates, and monthly meetings.

## VEP to Receive Honor from the Mayor

by Marilyn Rodgers

VEP Community Association has been named the recipient of the Mayor's award for outstanding service to the community from District 10. Councilmember Nancy Pyle nominated VEP for this honor. The award will be presented to representatives of VEP at the Mayor's State of the City Breakfast, scheduled for Thursday, February 18<sup>th</sup> from 7:30am to 9:00am. The event will be held at San Jose McEnery Convention Center, San Jose. VEP members are welcome and encouraged to attend. For additional information, see the article by Councilmember Nancy Pyle in the VEP Newsletter. Ticket information at <http://www.sanjoseca.gov/mayor/news/upcoming/upcomingevents.asp>.

2010 is VEP's 41st year!

## Our November General Meeting

By Dave Noel

VEP's November 24<sup>th</sup> general meeting featured a keynote speaker on stroke signs and symptoms. **Celeste Lange**, Stroke Coordinator for the Good Samaritan Hospital Stroke Center provided a wealth of practical knowledge. A stroke is like a heart attack, except in the brain. Medical attention within 90 minutes is critical for best chances of a full recovery.

Santa Clara County has eight primary stroke centers, which is the highest in the country second only to Florida.

If anyone has these symptoms, they need medical attention immediately:

Numbness, especially on one side  
Sudden trouble seeing  
Sudden confusion or trouble speaking or understanding  
Sudden trouble walking, dizziness, loss of balance or coordination  
Severe headache

Call 911 and use an ambulance. An ambulance can get through traffic faster, and paramedics perform medical pre-screening en-route to the hospital. This allows ambulance patients see doctors faster once they reach the hospital.

Risk factors for stroke are the same as for heart attacks:

High blood pressure  
Smoking  
Diabetes  
High LDL cholesterol  
Sedentary lifestyle

For most people over 50 years old, daily aspirin is a good preventative. In the US the typical dose is 80 mg, and in Europe 25 mg is used.

Following our featured guest, we had several announcements:

High Speed Rail: In the November 18<sup>th</sup> community meeting, it was announced that the proposed alternative route that went through the VEP neighborhood along Gaundabert Lane was no longer under consideration due to insurmountable technical issues. This route was not straight enough for the trains to travel quickly, and also this route presented major impacts to the light rail system.

Martial Cottle Park: The Environmental Impact Report for the design master plan was further delayed to approximately April or May 2010.

Branham Lane: In response to the recent fatal accident, VEP board members had two meetings with city staff and police. The automated traffic monitor trailer will be placed on both sides of Branham for 2-3 days per side each quarter. The Dept of Transportation may be able to speak at our January meeting.

Santa in the Park: This event will be held on November 29<sup>th</sup>.

Blossom Valley Christmas Tree: VEP members **Katherine and Dann Decker** will not be able to light their large cedar tree this year, but plan to light it next year. Tax deductible Donations are being accepted to the Blossom Valley Christmas Tree Fund to help defray next year's costs.

## VEP Gives Memorial Day Proceeds to Community Schools

by Marilyn Rodgers

During November and December, VEP Memorial Day Event Coordinator Dave Fadness and VEP President Marilyn Rodgers attended PTA meetings at both Carson and Parkview Elementary Schools. Mr. Fadness presented a check to each PTA President. The checks represent proceeds from the VEP Memorial Day Parade and Festival. The intent of the VEP Memorial Day Parade and Festival is to provide a low cost old fashioned community event, not an event which is a fund raiser. However, as has been VEP's practice for the last several years, all proceeds from the event, after expenses, are given to the PTAs of the local community schools who partner with VEP. Criteria for disbursement of the proceeds include use of school facilities and supplies, the numbers of volunteers from each school involved in both the event pre-planning, as well as volunteers who participate and assist during the day of the event.



Accepting the check for Carson Elementary was PTA President Cherry Sanders and Principal Betsy Doss.



Accepting the check for Parkview Elementary was PSCA President Diana Johnson and Principal Debbie Roach.

Plans have already been initiated for the 2010 VEP Memorial Day Parade and Festival. For additional information, and to volunteer to help with one of the many activities, contact VEP Event Coordinator Dave Fadness at 578-6428 or [drfadness@sbcglobal.net](mailto:drfadness@sbcglobal.net) or Helen Castillo, VEP Volunteer Coordinator at [hcastillo@vbprop.com](mailto:hcastillo@vbprop.com).

## Gunderson High School Happenings

The new semester brings new activities to Gunderson. The theater department performed *A Midsummer Night's Dream* on January 13, 14 and 15 to appreciative audiences. This was the first time the students attempted Shakespeare. They did a fantastic job, and the technical crew shined.



Gunderson will hold its Winter Ball in the gym on January 23rd. The theme is "New York, New York".

An Open Mic night will take place in the Gunderson forum on January 27. The Black Student Union is hosting this first time event that will feature poetry, song and prose.

The annual Gunderson Poetry Slam is scheduled for the last week of March, with the final competition to be held the evening of Friday, April 2. Students will perform original poetry. Teachers and guests will also perform. This yearly event is always well attended and much loved.

Later in the spring, events will include the Multimedia Festival (April 29), featuring young filmmakers and photographers. In addition, the spring music concert will feature not only the Gunderson choir, but also the newly formed concert band. These students performed at the winter concert as well. The majority of them had never played an instrument before they enrolled in this class.

The much-anticipated annual One Act Play Festival will hit the stage May 19 and 20 in the theater.

As the first semester of the school year has drawn to a close, we are gearing up for the recruitment period for incoming 8<sup>th</sup> graders. Information about Gunderson has been put on our school website as well as distributed to all district middle schools. We are inviting prospective students and families to attend tours of the campus, shadow days and/or parent information sessions. We have been fortunate in that we have seen a steady increase in our enrollment over the past few years, and hope this trend continues.

Lastly, the issue that has taken up a lot of our time and has caused a fair amount of stress to schools and educators is the current state of the budget. As our elected politicians continue to try and decide what is right and fair for California, our schools and children feel the brunt of their indecision. Fortunately neither teachers nor students have felt any ill effects from our current budget crisis – there are plenty of supplies; all students have textbooks and access to necessary technology; and the school is in a good state of repair. In addition, since the construction projects are funded from bond money, this work has continued and will be completed. However, 2010-2011 will not be as rosy. Over the coming months, we will be learning how significantly our budget will be impacted, and the effect this will have on staff and families. As we learn more about these specifics, we will keep our families and communities informed. Thank you for your support as we chart these unknown and tumultuous waters.

For more information about Gunderson High School, please visit the new and improved school website at: <http://gunderson.sjUSD.org/Home/home.htm>

## Homeless Cats

By Human Society Silicon Valley

You may have seen them in our neighborhood; cats that aren't wearing tags and shun human contact. Homeless or feral cats are cats that have been abandoned or have grown up in the wild with little human social contact. These cats are un-owned and often times in poor health. Contrary to popular belief, these cats cannot fend for themselves outdoors. The average lifespan of a homeless cat is only two years (Los Angeles SPCA). Unaltered females tend to live out their lives in a constant state of breeding, and unaltered males inherently fight for and mark their territories



### What is TNR (Trap, Neuter, Return)?

TNR reduces homeless cat populations by surgically sterilizing cats so they cannot reproduce. TNR, when accompanied by ongoing homeless cat management, is the most effective, humane method of reducing homeless cat populations. Cats are trapped, taken to shelters or veterinary clinics where they are spayed or neutered, vaccinated and have their ears tipped/notched so they can be identified as part of a managed colony. Only healthy cats are placed back in their colony so there is not a health risk to other cats and animals. Sterilization helps make cats better community citizens; colonies gradually diminish in size. By reducing or eliminating yowling associated with mating, fighting and wandering, TNR makes colonies more stable, decreases the number of newcomers and improves the health of the cats. Furthermore, TNR saves money. It costs cities up to \$250 to pick up, house and euthanize one homeless cat. For the same price, they can spay/neuter five cats.

### Homeless Cat Facts

- There are an estimated 125,000 homeless cats in Santa Clara County.
- Cats represent two-thirds of all animals in shelters and are euthanized at a far greater rate than dogs or rabbits.
- Santa Clara County shelters euthanized approximately 14,000 cats in 2005 at a cost of approximately \$2.4 million.
- HSSV supports TNR.

Please call 408-262-2133 x 108 for currently offered programs through HSSV.



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## Baby, It's Cold Out There!

By John Marks

While you're keeping yourself bundled up, don't forget to offer some protection to the plants in your garden. Overnight temperatures hovering around freezing can cause plenty of damage.



The most at-risk plants include bougainvilleas, hydrangeas, hibiscus and other tropical and subtropical plants. Avocado, guava and citrus trees — particularly lemon, lime and loquat — also can suffer, as can broad-leaf plants such as banana. There isn't much that gardeners can do if the cold lingers over several successive nights. But on a short-term basis, here are some simple steps to take to protect the most vulnerable plants or at least reduce the effects of frost.

Move frost-sensitive plants in containers to warmer spots, such as inside the house or garage or up against a wall with a southwest exposure. No southwest wall? Any wall of the house is likely to be warmer than out in the middle of the garden or patio. Roof overhangs also offer some protection from cold.

**Water.** Well-hydrated plants are less susceptible to freezing because they retain heat better. Thoroughly water the soil around the base of the plant, preferably in the morning. Keep water off foliage. Spraying an anti-transpirant product such as Cloud Cover, Wilt Pruf or Wilt Stop also may help.

**Drape fabric** — old sheets or lightweight blankets work just as well as commercially-available "plant blanket" products and burlap bag material, spread over frost-sensitive plants. Use bamboo sticks as supports for small plants and larger stakes for small trees and shrubs. The tops of the stakes should be a bit higher than the top of the plant, and the fabric should not touch any of the foliage. Thumbtacks, twist ties, staples, even duct tape will hold the fabric in place. Clear plastic sheeting can be used in a pinch, but make sure it isn't making contact with foliage. Shrubs and trees also can be wrapped loosely in burlap.

**Cardboard boxes** can provide protection for smaller shrubs and plants in containers. Cut one end of the box on three sides to make a hinged lid that can be opened during the day when temperatures are warmer.

A 100-watt light bulb designed for outdoor use, connected with an outdoor-rated extension cord, can be hung in the interior of frost-sensitive trees. Strings of outdoor-rated holiday lights also can be strung through tree branches and around shrubs. The lights will generate enough heat overnight to reduce frost damage.

Finally, step away from the pruning shears. As difficult as it may be, resist the urge to cut off frost or freeze damage right away. This will only cause the plant to send out new foliage that will be even more vulnerable the next time temperatures drop this low — and since it's not even officially winter, you can count on that happening.

Also, some plants will recover even if they look sad and awful right after the frost. On ornamentals, wait until new growth emerges in the spring to see what needs trimming. On citrus, wait several months to allow the tree to recover, then prune away frost-damaged twigs and branches.



## Santa Teresa Library

By Dave Fadness

Here's the perfect solution to your search for a worthwhile tax deductible donation: the new Santa Teresa Branch Library. The *San Jose Public Library Foundation* is now raising funds needed to furnish, equip, and provide collections, media, computers and the host of other things that transform a new building into a fully functional, user-friendly library.

You can help to make that happen and get permanent recognition in proportion to your generosity.

Why are private donations needed for a public library? Like the Pearl Avenue Branch and others here in San Jose, this branch is being built with money San Jose voters approved in a general obligation bond passed in 2000. State law prohibits spending that bond revenue for furnishings and equipment. Most other library money is used to cover operating costs.

So, each new library relies on donations from citizens and local businesses to supplement city funds. This public/private model has worked with great success at other recently opened San Jose libraries. The Santa Teresa Branch is next. That's our challenge and we hope you will help us succeed.

This perennially busy and overcrowded library was originally built in 1984. It will be replaced on the same site (next to Kaiser Santa Teresa) by a 22,000 square foot state-of-the-art facility, nearly twice bigger than the old one. Its thousands of patrons, children and adults of all ages are very eager for opening day.

Grand opening for the beautiful new Santa Teresa Branch Library is set for 11 am on February 6<sup>th</sup>. A special Donor Reception will be held from 6 until 7:30 pm on Wednesday, February 3<sup>rd</sup>. We want you to be a part of that celebration.

Please accept this opportunity to leave a generous legacy for coming generations of library patrons. A variety of donor recognition possibilities are offered, depending upon the size of your gift. For as little as \$100, you can have your name(s) permanently listed on one of our Donor Walls; you might even choose to sponsor a room or an area within the library and receive special recognition there, as well.

Donated money will be carefully administered and spent by the 501(c)(3) non-profit *San Jose Public Library Foundation*. Money you give will only be used for furnishings and equipment at the new Santa Teresa Branch Library.

To donate, contact Mary McLane at (408) 808-2174 or email [mary.mclane@sjplf.org](mailto:mary.mclane@sjplf.org). You can visit the *Foundation* website ([www.sjplf.org](http://www.sjplf.org)) for more information or to download a pledge form. Alternatively, call me day or evening at (408) 578-6428 (or email at [drfadness@sbcglobal.net](mailto:drfadness@sbcglobal.net)) and I will get the necessary donor materials to you.

Be sure to specify that your gift is for the Santa Teresa Branch Library. **Thank you!**

**VEP helps you solve  
community problems**

## Happy New Year! From the Pearl Avenue Library

By Kaye Moore

Well, the time for New Year's Resolutions is upon us, and if you haven't made one yet, think about making one that is definitely sustainable, and won't cost you a bunch of money. Consider taking our line dancing, Integral Tai Chi (a blend of Yoga and Tai Chi) or our Zumba class. All of these are free to you. Tell yourself you will only purchase 3 books this year, and get the rest here at the library. If you want to be more frugal, you may consider checking out our huge volume of *The Tightwad Gazette*, which has handy hints for everything from wrapping gifts to storing steel wool pads.



If you were one of the lucky ones that received a Barnes & Noble Nook (an electronic book reader) for Christmas, you do not need to purchase all those downloads. You can use our digital library (Overdrive) and download ePUB or PDF format books, and transfer them to your Nook. If you have questions, come see me.

**On Saturday, February 6<sup>th</sup>**, there is a lot of excitement happening. The Santa Teresa branch is finally opening up after a long absence, and the Pearl Avenue Friends are hosting a book sale here at Pearl. Come buy some books here and then run over to Santa Teresa for the celebration.

**Saturday, February 13<sup>th</sup>**, we have a Chinese New Year celebration happening at 11 am, complete with Lion Dancing and Kung Fu demonstrations.

The following **Saturday, February 20<sup>th</sup>**, we are having the Master Gardeners group come to Pearl to give an exciting and fact-filled presentation on Growing Your Own Food at 1 pm. I've seen these ladies more than once, and they are energetic, knowledgeable, and a lot of fun.

**Pride and Passion: The African-American Baseball Experience**, a national traveling, interactive exhibition that chronicles the remarkable history of baseball's Negro leagues and the challenges and success of African-American baseball players, will be the feature of "Black History Month" at the Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Library in February 2010. The exhibit, located in the main exhibit area on the second floor, opens February 6 (with a reception from 2 – 4 p.m.) and continues through March 12. Admission is free. More detail about the exhibit and related events is posted at the event website: [www.sjlibrary.org/prideandpassion.htm](http://www.sjlibrary.org/prideandpassion.htm). For more information, call (408) 808-2397.

If you want a continuous flow of news from us, we are on Twitter, or you can always check our web events. See you soon!

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## Stability Reigns in SJUSD as Veronica Grijalva Lewis is Elected President of the San Jose Unified School District's Board of Education

Veronica Grijalva Lewis was elected unanimously by her colleagues as president of the San Jose Unified School District's Board of Education. The election was held during the Board's Annual Organizational Meeting on December 10, 2009. Mrs. Lewis' was first elected to SJUSD's Board Education in 1994. Veronica is serving her 4th continuous term as Trustee of Area 4. During this time, Veronica was elected three times as board president.

"I am honored to be Board President and working with my fellow Board Members and our community to meet our goals of: providing safe schools, continuous student achievement, attracting and retaining qualified teachers and staff, while maintaining a balanced budget," said Mrs. Lewis. "During these difficult times the Board will be challenged to meet these goals, but as President, I intend to provide the leadership to continue to move our district forward."

Veronica Lewis is extremely dedicated to her position and knowledgeable of District activities. Mrs. Lewis currently serves as the Board of Education's representative on several District & local education committees including: SJUSD's Bond Oversight for Measure C and Measure F, Safety, Voluntary Integration Plan, CAC – Special Education, Shaping Health as Partners in Education (SHAPE), Internal Audit, the Coordinated Health Council and the County Committee on School District Organization. Mrs. Lewis also serves as the alternate representative to Metropolitan Education Committee. In previous years President Lewis has also been the Board Representative to the Budget Advisory Committee, District English Language Advisory (DELAC), PTA, and GATE. Veronica has been instrumental in re-engaging the Gunderson High School Foundation.

Veronica Lewis has always been a very accessible Board Member. Superintendent's Brown Bag Lunches, community meetings or school events will find Ms. Lewis present and interested in the expectations of the community.

Veronica also has a personal interest in the District as all four of her children attended San Jose Unified schools and her grandson is currently enrolled in SJUSD.

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## San Jose Unified News

By Veronica Lewis

During the December regular board meeting, Superintendent Don Iglesias announced he will retire on June 30, 2010. Superintendent Iglesias started his career in San Jose Unified eight years ago as Deputy Superintendent and six years ago he was appointed Superintendent of Schools. He announced his retirement now to allow adequate time for the School Board to determine a selection process for the next Superintendent. He has assured us that he is truly focused on the needs of our district and will continue to fulfill his responsibilities through June with total commitment. A full version of the text can be found @ [sjuds.org](mailto:sjuds.org).

As the newly elected Board President I made the following statement:

*"Although we are saddened by our Superintendent's announcement to retire, we respect and support his decision. In the next few weeks we will develop a plan that will include a process and a timeline for electing his successor. We will focus on selecting a successor that is capable of continuing to move our district forward and upholding the standards set by our current Superintendent. As Board President I will be using the California School Board Association guidelines to guide us in developing a process. The Board's role in developing the selection process is to keep a focus on the vision, mission and core beliefs of our district and community, which will include a component that will give an opportunity for input from our community as well as our staff. Once the Board develops a process we will inform members of the community and district of the process and the timeline we plan to follow. During this time we will continue to work and support our Superintendent. His leadership will continue and we will provide a smooth transition once we select a new Superintendent, I thank Don for his dedication to our district and students. His passion and love for our students has moved us forward in many ways. He has extended his arms around our 32,000 students and held them as the first priority of his decisions. He has given years of service to our district and it is very much appreciated. I thank his wife Cathy and his daughter ILY for sharing him with us. We wish Don well and hope to have a process in place by mid-January.*

At the Special Session held January 5, 2010 the Board of Education voted unanimously to enter into a Memorandum of Understanding with the California State Department of Education regarding participating in the Federal Race to the Top Program. If the State's application is approved it could mean \$4 to 5 million, one time funding, over three years for SJUSD.

## Oak Grove School District

By Tony Garcia, Superintendent



The new year finds students and staff in Oak Grove working toward mid-year assessments and continuing to have our students strive to meet their potential.

There has been quite a bit of activity in our State related to meeting the requirements to apply for the Federal Race to the Top (RTTT) dollars. I will share the position our District will be taking as well as update you on the happenings in Oak Grove.

Oak Grove submitted our intent to apply for RTTT participation. Our District did not however sign the Memorandum of Understanding to actually apply and take part if our State is awarded the funding. School districts are being asked to sign and commit to mandates of four elements or actions without having the State clearly provide the components of the mandates. I support some of the mandates in general as they will make school districts continue to review what is successful, what is not being successful, and what accountability models are needed. There are too many unknowns however that we are being asked to commit to and that is why nearly 50% of the school districts in the State did not even agree to the intent to apply. If and when a second round of funding is available and a clear plan is presented, Oak Grove will revisit our position.

The new Community Center, in partnership with the City of San Jose, is moving right along. Projections indicate a spring opening. This will provide a needed community center with a full gymnasium and theatre for our school district and the community. Along with the Community Center, the Santa Teresa branch of the public library is in the final stages of completion. These two great new resources will strengthen the community at large.

Thanks to our voters who approved our bond, Oak Grove is moving along with the approval of architectural firms to design gymnasiums at our other two intermediates school sites. These two facilities will also benefit community groups as well as our school programs.

## Martial Cottle Park Update

By Adina Pierce

The County Parks Department has scheduled the next Task Force meeting for the Martial Cottle Park Master Plan project.

DATE: Monday, February 1, 2010

TIME: 6:30 – 8:30 pm

PLACE: Gunderson High School – Media Center/Library  
22 Gaundabert Lane, San Jose, 95136

The purpose of the meeting is to seek the Task Force Committee's input and comments on the Draft Martial Cottle Park State Park General Plan/ County Park Master Plan Report. The general public is welcome to attend.

Once the meeting location, agenda and draft report are finalized, additional information will be posted on the County Parks Department's website [www.parkhere.org](http://www.parkhere.org).

For more information, please contact Adina Pierce at 408/362-0937 or [adinap@yahoo.com](mailto:adinap@yahoo.com) or Marilyn Rodgers at 408/225-7553 or [MRodgersRN@aol.com](mailto:MRodgersRN@aol.com).



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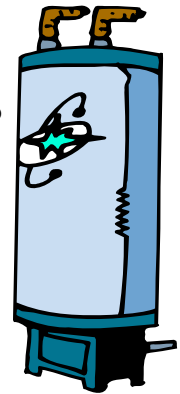


## Save Money on Water Heating

By Dave Fadness

With energy prices going into high orbit, more of us are getting serious about ways to cut costs. Here's a suggestion that'll help you trim your PG&E bills.

Heating water takes a lot of power. You may remember from your physics classes that it takes more heat energy to raise the temperature of an ounce of water than any other substance. Unless you've studied heat transfer, you may not know that greater temperature differences drive greater heat losses—in other words, the hotter something is, the more energy it loses to the environment.



In this case, it's your water that's hot. It's your money that's paying to heat it. The hotter you keep it, the more heat you lose to the environment. Your water heater is on every hour of every day. The heat it's losing isn't doing anything but costing you money—day in and day out.

So, in addition to wrapping your water heater and insulating hot water pipes, it makes very good sense to lower your water temperature setting to just that necessary for your daily needs.

Most of us have our water temperature so high that, to avoid scalding ourselves, we always have to mix cold water with hot when we shower. That's typically true when we do laundry, too. So, why not turn your water heater down to the point where you don't have to mix so much cold water for it to be comfortable.

Recognizing that there's a lot of water in your water heater, the way to do this is to bump the heat down a bit every couple of days until you just barely have to add cold water to be comfortable when using the hot water tap. (Some in your house may like hotter showers than you do, so use their comfort level as a guide.) Make sure to check the operation of your dishwasher and washing machine, as they may require slightly hotter water (you could try different detergents, too, as some work fine with cooler water).

Once you find the right water temperature, use a permanent marker to mark the setting on your water heater's dial. That way you can turn your water heater down when you go on vacation and easily return it to your ideal setting. Always consider setting the water temperature down when you go away for more than a few days—many water heaters even have a "vacation" setting on the temperature dial.

It's easy to adjust your water heater settings, so try it. Every little bit helps. Spend your money on things you need, not on heating the environment.

### Note

The plumbing in your home may be getting old and fragile, so it's always best to check for leaks after you make adjustments or repairs. Although changing water temperature certainly should not cause a leak, it's best to be watchful: I change to the "vacation" setting the night before, then check the next day before leaving.

## Community Service Awards

By Dave Noel

It's time for members to discuss and vote on the 2010 VEP Community Service Award program specifics. Our By-Laws provide a framework but allow flexibility. The budget was set in September to \$1,000, down from \$2,000 last year due to some necessary belt tightening.



The VEP board considered two options for recommendation to our members. The first option would have us grant a single award for \$1,000 for the best student from among all nominations received from Andrew Hill and Gunderson High Schools and VEP area At-Large nominations. The second option would allow the judges to divide the \$1,000 among up to 3 students, one per category.

The board recommends the second option to the membership:

*Up to 3 awards at judges' discretion, evenly distributed among selected winners. Nominations solicited from AHHS, GHS and in our newsletter. School administrators will be asked to nominate at least 2 students per school with no upper limit. No more than 1 award per category (AHHS, GHS, At-Large). OK to grant an award in a category with only 1 nominee. OK not to grant an award in any category if judges feel the candidate(s) don't merit an award.*

Further, the board recommends: *if two or more awards are granted, then one of them must be granted to a Gunderson student.*

Following the member vote at the January meeting, we'll solicit nominations in February/March, and applications will be due in late April. We grant our awards in late May/early June. Due to printing costs, we won't print the application in the VEP News, but it will be available on line and by request.

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

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## Census Safety

By Dave Noel

The Better Business Bureau advises caution in giving info to census workers in the upcoming census to avoid becoming a victim of fraud or identity theft.

Legitimate census workers will gather information about every person living at each address including name, age, gender, race and other relevant data. But, how do you tell the difference between a U.S. Census worker and a con artist?

U.S. Census workers will have a badge, a handheld device, a Census Bureau canvas bag and a confidentiality notice. Ask to see their identification and badge before answering questions. Don't invite anyone you don't know into your home.

US census workers will not ask for Social Security, bank account or credit card info, and they will not solicit donations. Do not give your Social Security number, credit card or banking information to anyone.

The Census Bureau might ask for basic financial information, such as a salary range. You don't have to answer questions about your financial situation.

Census workers may contact you by telephone, mail or in person at home, but they will not contact you by Email. Be on the lookout for Email scams impersonating the Census, and don't click on any links, or open attachments in emails that claim to be from the Census Bureau.

The Census Bureau is not working with Acorn, so nobody from Acorn should approach you on behalf of the Census.



*Precious Moments In Time*



Family and Children Portraits



Weddings and Special Events



Photography by Jeri Arstingstall

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## VEP Memorial Day Parade & Festival

By Dave Fadness

We need new ideas, new talent, and lots of volunteer help to make our 2010 *Memorial Day Parade & Festival* bigger and better than last year's. You can be a part of this success.

Scheduled for Monday, May 31, this will be our sixth year. Planning is now underway--your involvement is needed and encouraged. Join our steering committee or...

Call me (578-6428) or **Dianne Conry** (224-8456) if you or someone you know can add to the fun.

We need entertainers. If you belong to a service group, are involved with Scouts, a school group, a sports league, a music or dance group, a gymnastics team, a performing arts troupe, or have any special talent you'd like to share, we'd like to have you there with us—especially if you'd be in uniform or in costume. We want to entertain our community by showcasing the many talents we have in our midst.

We need parade participants If you or your 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. Consistent with safety and its family orientation, we're open to anyone and anything that will add interest and color to our event.

We need crafters. If you are or know someone who makes and sells crafts, please call **Ginger Cardona** (408) 227-0222 for information on free booth space at our Festival.

We need sponsors and donors. The net proceeds from this event are shared with our school PTAs, so we try our best to keep VEP and event participants' costs low. Donations are what make this possible. Give **Marilyn Rodgers** (225-7553) a call if you have a business or have contacts with businesses that would be willing to make cash, packaged food /drink, or other donations to our event. We will acknowledge all donors in our Memorial Day Program and in our VEP newsletter.

We need a photographer, at least one volunteer who will take lots of digital pictures of our event.

We need lots of hands-on volunteers. Call **Helen Castillo** (981-5902) if you are available...

To help with ideas for event games and attractions.

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/tear-down the day of the event.

To help with booth duty, ticket sales, and event games.

To help clean-up during and after the event.

Your help in taking care of one or more of these details will lighten our load and make this event successful for kids of all ages in our community. Remember, none of us gets paid--everyone works as a volunteer in VEP activities.

Call (578-6428) or email me at [drfadness@sbcglobal.net](mailto: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** or because Memorial Day is long from now; we need your ideas and to know now whether your help will be available.

Above all, please be sure to mark your calendars, spread the word, and plan to attend with your family and friends on Monday, May 31<sup>st</sup>.



## My Opinion: What's it worth?

By Dave Fadness

What is your home worth? What is your time worth? What value do you place on your neighbors?



What is your home worth? There can be large differences in the selling price of same-model homes within our community. Those differences are typically related to appearance and condition of the home itself or of those nearby. Not long ago, home like mine sold for \$50,000 below market. That's a lot of money.

You can look at a 50-grand difference in selling price two ways: if you neglect your property, it's money you lost; if you take care of your home, it's money you made. Unfortunately, it's not always what you do to your home, it's what your neighbors do (or don't do) to theirs that causes a price difference.

What is your time worth? Let's consider return on investment: Assume the average length of home ownership is seven years. Further assume keeping a yard looking nice takes an average of three hours and \$10 in supplies per week. In seven years, that equates to 3 hours x 52 x 7 = 1092 hours, and \$10 x 52 x 7 = \$3640. If that well-maintained yard brings \$50,000 more when the home is sold, the owner will have earned an equivalent rate of \$42.45 per hour. Not bad!

If the owner spent \$3000 to paint the home's exterior, his/her net equivalent hourly rate would be \$39.71. Still not bad!

The point is, it really pays to do that work.

A huge added bonus is the pride and satisfaction of living in an attractive home--and--avoiding the risk of having very unhappy neighbors.

What value do you place on your neighbors? Home prices are typically based on "comparables", an analysis of what same-model homes have been selling for in the same community. So, if you fail to maintain your property, then sell it for a depressed price, you've effectively lowered the future asking price for other nearby homes. This is a cruel trick to play on your neighbors—and a slippery slope that eventually drags down the appearance and value of entire neighborhoods.

Most people understand this simple logic, but don't do the numbers to see how a few hours and a few dollars spent in routine maintenance can pay big rewards.

It's not always that folks are lazy and/or simply don't care. A growing number of us have real economic or physical limitations; we now have many older and widowed neighbors in our community. (Guys, if you died or became disabled, could *your* wife do the yard work? Wouldn't you appreciate it if your neighbor gave her a helping hand?)

If a home in your neighborhood needs work, offer your help.

Remember: If/when you sell it, your home's price will be based on comparables. The hourly rates estimated above apply to time you spend on your neighbor's home and yard as well as your own. Needless to say, helping your neighbors is satisfying even without economic benefit. Just do it!

## Councilmember Pyle selects VEP Community Association for the District 10 State of the City Award for 2010!

Office of Councilmember Pyle

Councilmember Pyle nominated the VEP Community Association for the annual State of the Award to honor VEP's 40 years of Community Service. Each Councilmember has the opportunity to select one community member or organization from their district to receive this award each year.

The award will be presented at the State of the City breakfast on Thursday, February 18<sup>th</sup> at 7:30 am. Councilmember Pyle is inviting the community association board to attend as her guests.

The bulletin will display the following message about VEP's service:

*"Since 1969, VEP Community Association has provided leadership in community service, devoting hundreds of volunteer hours each year to improving the quality of life in San Jose. VEP has beautified Blossom Valley by adopting, landscaping, and maintaining city streets and parks, planting more than 300 street trees and thousands of daffodils. Collaborating with area schools and businesses, their annual Memorial Day Parade & Festival further promotes community pride and identity. VEP members provide valuable input to government through service on numerous boards, commissions, and task forces. For 25 years, VEP has inspired and rewarded the next generation of volunteers through its Community Service Award scholarship program. The Award will be presented to VEP at the 2010 Community Breakfast."*

Other members of VEP Community Association are also encouraged to attend the breakfast. Tickets are available online for \$25 <http://www.sanjoseca.gov/mayor/news/upcoming/upcomingevents.asp#SOTC>. The Mayor is also offering a limited number of free tickets that do not include breakfast. Please contact his office to reserve your seat (408) 535-4800.

If you would like to sit with other members of the District 10 community, please email your receipt confirmation to [Stephanie.Holm@sanjoseca.gov](mailto:Stephanie.Holm@sanjoseca.gov) and we will save you a place at the District 10 table.

Mayor Chuck Reed and the San José City Council  
Cordially invite you to a very special event

### The 2010 Community Breakfast

Featuring The State of the City Address and Recognition of Outstanding Citizens

Thursday, February 18, 2010  
7:30 a.m. to 9:00 a.m.

Seating is Limited

San Jose McEnery Convention Center  
150 West San Carlos St.,  
San Jose, CA 95113

Tickets Must be Purchased  
by February 5th

For more information, visit [www.sanjoseca.gov/mayor](http://www.sanjoseca.gov/mayor) or call (408) 535-4800.

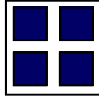
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### Advertiser Spotlight Wesley Terrell, Century 21 Agent

By Susan Iverson

VEP advertisers make it possible to provide VEP's monthly newsletter, the main form of communication to VEP members. To show our appreciation, and to help support their business, VEP News is highlighting a different advertiser each month.

Wesley Terrell received his California real estate license in 2002 and has been serving our beloved Vista Park neighborhood for the last 8 years. After graduating Cum Laude from UC Davis in 1999 with a degree in finance he initially trained for his dream career in the NFL. Unfortunately, a knee injury shattered his dreams, so he went to work for the now defunct Excite.com internet company. Along with many other technology workers his role burst with the internet bubble in 2001.

Before charging back into corporate America, he was one evening (for reasons he can't really pinpoint) looking in the classified section of the SJ Mercury News and came upon some ads for career nights at local real estate companies. Wesley attended several which didn't appeal to him but when he went to the one at his current office, Century 21 Champion, it appealed to him instantly. The firm touched upon his athletic background because they had a coaching program & gave an instruction manual or "real estate playbook". The football player in him Wesley was hooked, and he signed on that evening, and here he is 8 years later.

Wesley believes that in sales you have to be a customer of your product in order to promote it successfully. His parents are original owners on Massachusetts Drive, attended Belden Elementary School (which previously sat on the site of Vista Park). Wesley is a graduate of the Gunderson High School Class of 1994, and lives on Wellington Park Drive. Being a realtor for Vista Park comes naturally, as he grew up as part of the community.

*"I've seen all the areas of San Jose and there's no place I would rather live than Vista Park, because of the home models, convenience to shopping, freeways, schools, and medical facilities but most of all the community pride and lasting friendships I've developed with my friends throughout my life in the area.*

*I think that I bring a unique perspective to my role as a Realtor being able to lean upon my experiences with all the facets of the neighborhood. Basically, I just look at myself as a local kid who made good & is serving the same area which helped make me who I am today " - Wesley Terrell*

## High Speed Rail Initiative 85/87 Alternative Route Update

by Marilyn Rodgers

The informational meeting on the California High Speed Rail Initiative Alternative Route 85/87 held November 18<sup>th</sup> at Gunderson High School Auditorium was very well attended. The meeting was sponsored by VEP Community Association in collaboration with sister neighborhood association Pinehurst. Members of the California High Speed Rail Initiative project team provided an informative overview prior to announcing that the 85/87 alternative route had been permanently dropped from consideration and further study. This alternative had been determined not to be feasible from an engineering prospective. The remainder of the meeting was a spirited question and answer session. Vice Mayor Judy Chirco and Stephanie Holm representing Councilmember Nancy Pyle's office, were among several members of city staff and elected officials who attended. Study and recommendations on the remaining possible alternative routes will continue. For additional information, or to contact the Ca HSR Authority, phone at 1-800-881-5799 or e-mail at [highspeedrail@circlepoint.com](mailto:highspeedrail@circlepoint.com), or see VEP's website [www.vepca.net](http://www.vepca.net) for a link.

## Update on Fatal Traffic Accident on Branham Lane

By Marilyn Rodgers

As most of you know, on October 22<sup>nd</sup> at approximately 9:45pm, there was a 3-car accident resulting in the death of Alyson Snow. Ms. Snow was driving her Volkswagen Jetta east on Branham Lane when her car was struck from behind. Two young men, 18 and 21 year-olds from South San Jose, were racing their vehicles on Branham, heading east from Narvaez and Branham toward Vista Park Drive.

As a result of this tragic incident, VEP initiated meetings with Councilmember Pyle's office and members of key city departments to determine what actions, if any, could be taken to deter or prevent such an incident from happening again. There will be an update on actions taken, as well as what proactive steps residents can take. City residents are encouraged to report traffic enforcement issues occurring on any city street. Reporting can be easily accomplished online through the San Jose Police Department Traffic Enforcement Unit's website at [https://www.sjpd.org/\\_forms/TEU\\_Request\\_Form.asp](https://www.sjpd.org/_forms/TEU_Request_Form.asp)

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## VEP Sponsors 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual Santa in the Park

by Marilyn Rodgers and Helen Castillo

Santa in the Park was held on Sunday, November 29<sup>th</sup> at the Vista Park Community Room. This is a free event for the community, sponsored by VEP. All who attended were treated to hot spiced cider and other good things to eat. The children had an opportunity to use arts and crafts supplies while waiting for their turn to have a picture taken with Santa Claus, and...

to tell Santa what they were hoping he would bring them for Christmas. Parents enjoyed an opportunity to make new friends and network with VEP neighbors.

Several people mentioned how much they appreciated an opportunity to have a professional picture taken with Santa, while not having to wait hours in line at the local mall. Special thanks go to VEP Board Member **Helen Castillo** for organizing the event and providing the both the tasty goodies and the art



supplies for the children, to Santa (who was assisted by the very patient and talented VEP member **Gus McGuy**), and to Past President **Jeri Arstingstall**, owner of *Precious Moments in Time* for the professional pictures she took of everyone. (Jeri even finally agreed to briefly being in front of the camera for a picture with Santa.) Attendees stated they hoped *Santa in the Park* will be an annual event.



## Wesley W. Terrell

★ VEP Member & Resident ★  
Vista Park Specialist



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### Helpful Phone Numbers:

By Dave Noel

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

### To Report Graffiti...

Phone #

Vandalism <i>in progress</i>	9-1-1
Vandalism <i>from a cell phone</i>	277-8911
Vandalism <i>after the fact</i>	3-1-1
On libraries, parks & community centers	277-4741
On painted curbs & on the street	277-3626
On street signs	277-4691
On all expressways	494-1307
On bus stops	321-5800
On light-rail	321-2300
On Highway signs	(510) 536-0413
On Highway roads	436-0930
Taggers <i>anonymously</i>	947-7867
San Jose Information Center	535-3500
Anti-Graffiti Hotline	277-2758



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## It's Time to Renew Your VEP Membership

By Dave Fadness and Dave Noel

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

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

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

### What is VEP Community Association?

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

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

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

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

### Why join VEP?

To receive our newsletter nine times a year.

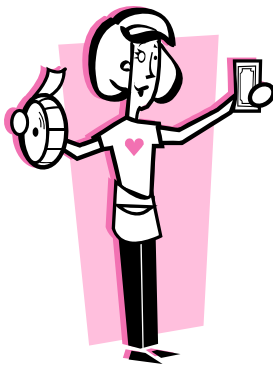
To receive monthly email alerts.

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

To participate in and support effective neighborhood activities and representation.

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

To be part of an outstanding volunteer community organization with 40 years of success in our neighborhoods.



## ENTER TO WIN FREE VEP MEMBERSHIP!

Bring your completed Membership Application, with payment, to the VEP General Meeting on Tuesday January 26th, and be entered in a drawing to have your membership fee returned to you! Imagine, all the great benefits of VEP Membership, for free!

**Invite your neighbors to join VEP**

## \*\* 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 \_\_\_\_\_

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

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

### VEP Membership Benefits Word Search

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S A N T A S U N D A Y P

M E E T I N G S A W P I

Word List  
CSA Awards  
Newsletter  
Daffodil  
Parade  
Meetings  
Advocacy  
Neighborhood  
Santa Sunday

# VEP Community Calendar

## January / February 2010

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
17	18 Martin Luther King, Jr's Day	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26 VEP General Meeting - 7:30 pm - Vista Park Community Room	27	28	29	30
31	1 Gunderson HS Blood Drive 8am -2pm Contact Rob Iversen— 408-506-8700 to Donate 	2 Groundhog Day  Board of Directors Meeting, 7:00pm, Vista Park Community Room	3	4	5	6
7	8 	9	10	11	12	13
14 Valentine's Day 	15 Presidents' Day  <i>Washington Lincoln</i>	16	17	18	19	20
<b>ESUSD, SJUSD, OGSD WINTER BREAK — NO SCHOOL</b>						
21	22	23 VEP General Meeting - 7:30 pm - Vista Park Community Room	24	25	26	27

# THE VEP NEWS



## VEP Community Association

P.O. Box 18111 San Jose, CA 95158  
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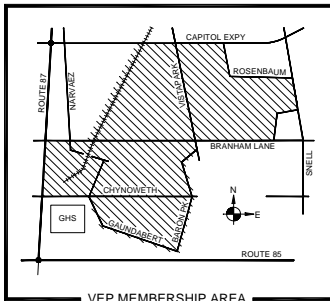
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Published monthly by VEP Community Association, a not-for-profit organization of volunteers established in 1969 to serve and represent more than 2000 homes in the Blossom Valley area of southern San Jose. VEP is dedicated to neighborhood maintenance and improvement in its membership area as well as to active involvement in civic affairs. This newsletter is mailed monthly to all members in good standing, to our advertisers, and to schools and government officials serving our membership area. For membership or paid advertisement information, contact

### VEP BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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Treasurer	Ginger Cardona	227-0222	cardona@sbcglobal.net
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Director	Helen Castillo		
Director	Debra Sudyam		

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 Join us at <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/vep/>



Check our website: [www.vepca.net](http://www.vepca.net)

Community Room

Vista Park

in the  
 7:30 pm

Be sure to attend  
 VEP's  
 January 26th Meeting