

THE VEP NEWS



VEP Community Association

P.O. Box 18111 San Jose, CA 95158
 Email: vepca@vepca.net Website: www.vepca.net

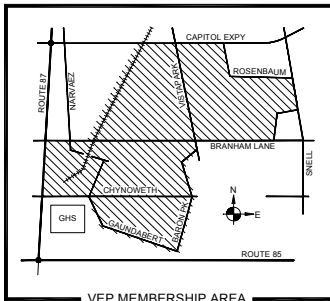
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Published monthly by VEP Community Association, a not-for-profit organization of volunteers established in 1969 to serve and represent more than 2000 homes in the Blossom Valley area of southern San Jose. VEP is dedicated to neighborhood maintenance 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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 Let us know at vepca@vepca.net.
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Check our website: www.vepca.net






Gunderson High School Forum

7:00 pm Tuesday,
 March 30

Be sure to attend
 VEP's March 30th
 March High School
 Gunderson

VEP Community Calendar

March / April 2010

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30 7:00 pm—VEP Faire Gunderson High School Passover Begins	31	1	2	3
4 Easter 	5	6 Passover Ends 	7	8	9	10 Carson Bazaar- Treasures, Treats & Crafts 10AM - 3PM Carson School Parking Lot
11	12	13	14	15 Tax Day 	16	17
18	19	20	21	22  Election Forum, 7:00-9:30 PM, Gunderson High School Theater Earth Day	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	1  VEP Neighborhood Garage Sale

VEP NEWS

• VEP COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION •

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

March 2010

VEP'S MEETING

7 p.m. Tuesday

► **March 30, 2010** ◀

Gunderson High School

Forum Area
622 Gaundabert Lane

★ AGENDA ★ VEP March Faire

Home Improvement and General Interest

Our 12th Year of providing VEP residents
An opportunity to explore home improvement,
Health, fitness, beauty, and general interest products and
services by expert craftsmen and service providers.
It's Free!

★ Please note – The March Faire Takes the
Place of the March Membership Meeting ★

Everyone is welcome. Invite your neighbors!

VEP's 12th Annual March Faire

by Debra Suydam and Marilyn Rodgers

The Annual March Faire returns this year, after a one year hiatus. This year, the fair has been expanded to include vendors involved in green or sustainability businesses, as well as health, fitness, and beauty, and general interest. Home improvement and repair vendors will continue to be highlighted. As this is a community activity, a special invitation is being extended to any VEP member or resident who owns a business.

The fair will begin at 7pm at Gunderson High School. The fair is free to all VEP area residents. Participants at the fair will have an opportunity to win cash raffle prizes offered every 15 minutes during the evening. More than 30 vendors are expected to be in attendance. Come explore possible products and services of interest to you and your family, while enjoying refreshments and networking with your neighbors! Its fun!

For additional information, contact Debra Suydam at 972-4231 or dsuydam@sbcglobal.com or Helen Castillo at 981-5902 or hcastillo@vbprop.com.

February General Meeting Synopsis

By Adina Pierce

VEP held its second general meeting of the year on February 23, 2010.

Marilyn Rodgers announced that VEP will be receiving an award at the City of San Jose State of the City Breakfast on February 18. More details and photos can be found in this issue.

District 1 **County Supervisor Don Gage** gave a state of the county address. Currently, the county has a 273 million dollar deficit. We have 93 million dollars in reserves, which is for emergency use.



He mentioned his support for Martial Cottle Park. There is a park charter fund hat is guaranteed to be used for the development of the park.

The Santa Clara County Parks Department recently purchased Rancho San Vicente, which is a 966-acre ranch located between Quicksilver and Calero County Parks.

A guest in the audience announced that on Tuesday, April 13 from 7 pm to 9 pm, AVCA will sponsor a District 1 County Supervisor Candidate Forum at the Almaden Community Center.

Our next guest was Maintenance Manager **Tom Ferguson** from the City of San Jose Department of Transportation. He has been in the department 15 years overseeing landscape. He came to discuss the options for maintenance of street landscaping in the VEP neighborhood.

There are two types of landscaping:

Type 1 landscape consists of trees, rocks, and organic ground-

2010 is VEP's 41st year!

cover. It is paid for by the city's general fund, and maintained by city employees or contractors put out to bid.

Type 2 landscape includes landscape trees, groundcovers, flowers, and special features (fountains, statues, gazebos, tot lots). It is funded by a special assessments district - which means that property owners are taxed. There are currently 18 of these districts in San Jose. There are 8 new areas that are being considered as a special assessment district, and VEP is one of them.

Some examples of type 2 landscaping: Captiol Expressway Automall, Silver Creek Valley, and Evergreen.

We have a few options:

- Option 1: Allow the city to tear out landscaping
- Option 2: Do an assessment
- Option 3: Volunteerism - as a group or individually

If we choose the assessment, property owners would pay roughly \$50 a year which would include flowers and a very high level of service. This is an approximate dollar amount, and is not yet final.

A motion was called, and all were in favor to move forward on getting additional information about the assessment (including an estimate). We also agreed to initiate volunteerism in these areas.



Next, VEP President **Marilyn Rodgers** introduced Candidates for the Santa Clara County District 1 Supervisor's race.

The four candidates in attendance were: **Teresa Alvarado, Dr. Peter Arellano, Mike Wasserman, and Forrest Williams.**

Each candidate was allowed to make a three minute opening statement. At the end, there was a 'meet and greet' where neighbors were able to talk to them, and ask questions.

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VEP Receives Award from Mayor

by Marilyn Rodgers



On February 18th at the State of City Breakfast, VEP was honored by San Jose City Mayor Chuck Reed and District 10 Councilmember Nancy Pyle. The award reads "2010 District 10 Community Honoree presented to VEP Community Association, for outstanding commitment to building a stronger



community and a vibrant city." In attendance to accept the award for the VEP Community Association were members of the Board of Directors – Helen Castillo, Susan Iverson, and Adina Pierce. Two past presidents, Dave Fadness and Dave Noel also attended. The award was accepted on behalf of VEP members by President Marilyn Rodgers and Treasurer Ginger Cardona.

A picture and a detailed article listing VEP's accomplishments and contributions appears in the Almaden Valley Times at www.almadentimes.com. (February 26th – March 4th, 2010 edition, page 4.)

Check out the Talent at Pearl Avenue Branch Library!

By Shally Lin

On Saturday, March 27, we're having our 2nd annual kids and teens talent show! This is your chance to see the wonderful talent in your community. Come by and be amazed!



Do you like dogs? Have you ever met a rescue dog? Well, on Saturday, April 17, you can at the library! A presenter from the Alameda County Sheriff's Office Search and Rescue team will be here with her canine partner to talk more about what they do and how they train.

The Lizard Lady is coming to our library on Saturday, April 24. Come meet different reptiles and learn about some of the environmental issues facing reptiles today.

In story time news, there are two exciting ones coming up. First, we're introducing a new Baby Lapsit Story Time on the last Thursday of the month (starting March 25) at 11 am. This is a chance for parents/caretakers to learn fingerplays and songs to play with their babies. Lapsits are one-to-one between the caregiver and the child and is for children 18 months and younger.

There's also going to be a special Inclusive Family Story Time on Saturday, April 3 at 10:30 am. Inclusive story times are designed to meet the different needs and learning styles of all children, and they incorporate many interactive elements.



We're continuing to have fun after-school programs for kids and teens on Tuesday and Thursday afternoons at 3 pm. We'll be having word play, collage-making, an Earth Day craft, and paper-mâché in April. To find out what's planned for a particular day,

please check our calendar or website of events.

Thursdays at 11 am, we have Wii for Adults. All adults can come in and practice their bowling and golf skills on Wii Sports.

Don't forget! Camera Cinemas is offering a special promotion for SJPL library card holders. Show your library card at the ticket counter, and you can receive \$3.00 off each regular adult admission price. This offer is good through the month of June 2010. Even better, read the book, and then go see the movie! Recent examples of books that are also movies are Percy Jackson & the Olympians, Clash of the Titans and Diary of a Wimpy Kid.

Our Graphic Novel Contest is back again this year, and artists of all ages are invited to participate. Submissions are due by April 10. Check out all the rules and details at <http://www.sjlibrary.org/about/events/graphicnovel.htm>.

To find out more about these and other exciting events at our library, please go to http://www.sjlibrary.org/about/locations/pearl_ave/events.htm or come by the branch and pick up a calendar!

VEP Needs You

By Dave Noel

The VEP 2010-2011 Board of Directors election is just around the corner at our May 25th general meeting. We need some new blood to supplement the volunteer board that has been working so hard for you. If you're interested in joining the board, or even if you're just curious, please contact any board member listed on the mailing page of this newsletter.

We really need your help. Please step up now so we don't have to cut back on the great things we do for our community.

We have At-Large board positions that enable new board members to learn the ropes without taking on higher responsibilities such as President, Vice President, and Treasurer. OJT is available, and no experience is necessary. The leadership skills you learn on the board will be portable to your workplace.

We need you now more than ever. Please join us!

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



Become a fan of VEP on Facebook!

<http://www.facebook.com/pages/VEP-Community-Association/323623191370>

or search for VEP Community Association

Where is the Vista Park Community Room?

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

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

Community-Wide Garage Sale on May 1st

Our annual *Community Garage Sale* will be held on Saturday, May 1st. 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.

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Help Our City Forest Find Homes For Trees

By Our City Forest

Do you know an area in San José that could use more trees? Whether its your child's barren schoolyard, a local neighborhood lacking street trees or a shadeless park, nonprofit Our City Forest (OCF) wants to know. Simply send the location - address or cross streets - to jalbin@ourcityforest.org or call (408) 998-7337 x109. OCF will investigate planting shade trees to green the area.



Simply interested in a street tree for your home? Our City Forest has free shade trees available for San José residents. To apply, complete and submit a Tree Grant Application available online at www.ourcityforest.org or by calling (408) 998-7337 x121. Planting services are available for senior and disabled residents. If you would like to coordinate a tree planting in your neighborhood, contact (408) 998-7337 x124. OCF will guide you through the process and can provide volunteers, tools and tree delivery.

If you are concerned about providing proper tree care, OCF is here to help! Visit www.ourcityforest.org or contact our helpful staff at (408) 998-7337 x111 for more information on growing a healthy tree. You can also learn about trees and safety, hiring a certified arborist to prune your tree and more on the Our City Forest website.

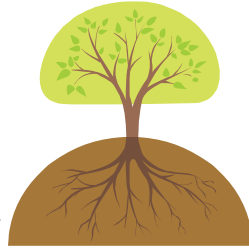
Our City Forest is committed to planting shade trees across the city because the benefits they provide affect us all. Did you know that a single mature tree provides the cooling equivalent of 5 average room air-conditioners running 12 hours per day (USDA Forestry Service)? By shading homes, a well-placed tree can also reduce cooling costs 10-50% (PG&E). Concerned about air pollution and health safety? Street trees provide oxygen year-round and can reduce particulate pollution up to 60%. These benefits, in addition to many more like protecting our watersheds from pollution, reducing flood risk and providing vital wildlife habitat, are all reasons to plant and grow our urban forest in San José.

Since 1994, Our City Forest (OCF) has worked to plant and protect our city's urban trees. In San José, residents are required to have a street tree in their parking strip, so OCF helps acquire the necessary permits, selects the right species and teaches proper planting and care. These trees improve the health of our city and can even increase a property's value by 5 to 15 percent! Visit us online or call (408)99-TREES to learn more.

Top 10 ways to Grow a Healthy Tree

Our City Forest (OCF)

1. Select an appropriate species. Most tree problems stem from not planting the "Right Tree for the Right Place. Do your research and get expert help to make sure the tree you choose will do well with the available space, moisture, soil type, and other conditions of your site. Find out what diseases could affect the species you are considering and the conditions that make them susceptible to problems. As a starting point, contact OCF for a list of recommended species.



2. Don't change the level of the surrounding soil. Because roots need air to survive, most tree roots are found in the upper 18" of the soil. Removing or adding soil around your tree can damage roots and lead to a decline in health and stability.

3. Protect the tree from damage. This is especially important for the trunk and roots. For newly planted trees, a trunk guard or staking can provide an effective barrier. Be careful with weed-whackers or lawn mowers - they can cause severe trunk damage and stress which lead to decay and slowed growth and establishment. Fences and structures in contact with the trunk or branches can also cause damage.

4. Use mulch at the base of the tree but away from the trunk. Apply a thick layer (3-4") of wood chips, or mulch (not shredded bark), under the canopy of the tree but away from the trunk. Properly applied mulch improves soil texture, soil moisture, keeps down weeds, and contributes to tree health. For more information, visit the Our City Forest website.

5. Provide early structural pruning. Early pruning promotes good structure and removes defects that could become significant in the future. Contact OCF for step-by-step guidelines.

6. Keep the base of the trunk clear. Clear the area around the trunk of any organic matter, competing vegetation, excess moisture and/or debris. Too much moisture around the root collar can invite decay. Any mulch should not touch the trunk directly.

7. Monitor for damage and changes in health. Look for damage, especially on the trunk by the base of the tree and where staking is in contact with the tree. Call an expert if you notice that portions of the canopy are wilting, dying, or changing color out of season or if you spot signs of pests or disease. Mushrooms on the stems or at the base of the tree may indicate decay and should be investigated. For more information on signs of a potential hazard, visit OCF online or call (408) 99-TREES x111.

8. Consult an arborist before doing any construction or trenching. (Choosing a qualified, certified arborist to provide tree care services is very important. Contact Our City Forest at (408) 99-TREES x111 for help selecting a tree care professional.) If you plan on doing any construction, trenching, or landscaping on your property, you risk damaging a tree's roots. This damage from removing or adding soil around your tree can lead to decline in health and stability. Paving or compacting the soil under the canopy of the tree takes air out of the soil and can also impact the health of roots.

9. Hire an experienced, certified arborist to prune your tree. (Choosing a qualified, certified arborist to provide tree care services is very important. Contact Our City Forest at (408) 99-TREES x111 for help selecting a tree care professional.) Proper pruning can improve the health and longevity of your trees. However, improper pruning can create high-maintenance, unsightly, unhealthy, and potentially unsafe trees. It is important to invest in an experienced, professional tree care service.

10. Consult with an arborist to develop a Tree Health Care Plan. (Choosing a qualified, certified arborist to provide tree care services is very important. Contact Our City Forest at (408) 99-TREES x111 for help selecting a tree care professional.) For a long and healthy life, trees need proper maintenance. Hire a certified arborist to assess the state of your trees and give you a better understanding of the frequency and scope of maintenance recommended for your piece of the urban forest.

Remember: **DO NOT "TOP" TREES.**

Give a Day - Get a Day

By Dave Fadness



Our Memorial Day Parade & Festival co-sponsor Parkview School Community Association (PSCA) has signed us up for Disneyland's "Give a Day-Get a Day" campaign. This campaign encourages and rewards volunteerism. Each person who participates in this program will receive a free 1-day, 1-theme park ticket to Disneyland® Resort or Walt Disney World® Resort. Disney is giving tickets to one million volunteers this year. PSCA registered our May 31 event for this campaign.

Interested Parade & Festival volunteers need to sign up for the program. On or after March 31st, go online and Google "Give a Day-Get a Day" to get to the Disney website. Then search for our activity by keying-in our 95136 zip code. Complete the registration form and confirm the time you plan to volunteer.

To be eligible for tickets, you must pre-register at the Disney site, then complete and verify your service obligation. Ticket quantities for this program are limited. Only one ticket per person, regardless of the number of times you volunteer. You must be at least 18 to sign up and may only sign up a maximum of eight members of your household. Children must be at least six to participate in the program. Your voucher for a free ticket must be redeemed by December 15, 2010 and be used on the same day of redemption.

If you're a Disney fan, this program provides an incentive for you and your family to become VEP volunteers.

Connect with Your Neighbors!

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.

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.



From last year!

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 by 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/or 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 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 31st. Don't miss the fun!

VEP Memorial Day Parade & Festival

Co-sponsored by Gunderson, Carson, and Parkview Schools

Mark your calendars and be sure to join our Parade & Festival fun!

Monday, May 31st

- Parade leaves Vista Park at 11 am ◀
- Festival follows at Parkview School ◀

Bring your friends and entire family

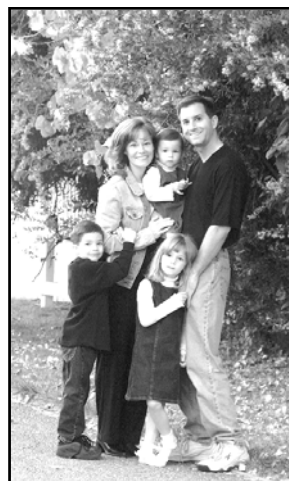
➤ For general information contact ◀
Dave Fadness at 578-6428 or drfadness@sbcglobal.net

➤ To volunteer contact ◀
Helen Castillo at 981-5902

➤ For craft booth information contact ◀
Ginger Cardona at 227-0222 or cardona@sbcglobal.net

➤ To donate contact ◀
Marilyn Rodgers at 225-7553 or mrodgersrn@aol.com

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★ VEP MEMBER ★

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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.

VEP's Membership Drive Coming to a Close

Between the months of January through March, VEP has its annual membership drive. March 31st will mark the close of this year's drive. 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. (There is a form included in this VEP newsletter, or you can print one from the website at www.vepca.net. Send the completed form, with your check for \$20.00 to VEP, P.O. Box 18111, San Jose, Ca. 95158.)



** 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 _____

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!

Wondering Why There is No Article About Your Favorite Topic?

It's because you haven't written it yet! You may be so used to seeing the same names ever month that you assumed the staff writing positions were highly coveted and competitive! While we truly appreciate the regular contributions of our board and past presidents, this is a community newsletter and we love community input. Is there something you would like to see covered in an upcoming newsletter? Have a local human interest story to submit?



Articles are typically due the first Friday of the month, and follow some very simple guidelines. For more information, or to be added to the distribution list to receive a reminder email, contact vepeditor@sbcglobal.net.

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Update from Neighborhood Watch Program - Vista Park/Wellington Area

by Sherri Goodrum

(In August 2008, VEP Member Sherri Goodrum started a Neighborhood Watch Program with her neighbors in the Vista Park/Wellington area. The following is taken from a recent email Sherri sent to neighbors/members of that Neighborhood Watch. The email was sent February 24th. If you would like to be included in email distributions or for additional information, contact Sherri at email address is sgoodrum@juniper.net.)



This is an update from the Vista Park Neighborhood Watch Program. I spoke to the police department about these issues and responses are provided below.

Burglaries

Since January 1st, there have been two burglaries within 1/2 mile of Vista Park. To help protect your home, the police department recommends:

- getting a burglar alarm with motion detectors on windows and garage door
- locking your side gate
- getting flood lights
- fitting a dowel flatly in your window sill tracks or use window locks
- cutting back hedges
- be vigilant of what is going on in your neighborhood.
- Call 911 if immediate police attention is required or 311 for non-emergency

Burglary locations:

- January 14 - 4900 Block of Avery
- February 5th - 4900 Block of Chiles Drive

Trash Rummaging

There have been people going through our neighborhood trash containers. Please be sure to shred sensitive documents and mail with your name on it. You can call the police non-emergency line at 311 to report this incidence (however police have been slow to respond, as they must prioritize all crime related issues as received).

Sexual Assault

On February 8th, a sexual assault took place on the 500 block of Branham Lane East. I spoke to a Sergeant in the Police Department who pointed me to the Press Release article and police sketch of the suspect posted on the San Jose Police Department Website. <http://www.sjpd.org/iNews/viewPressRelease.asp?ID=344>

Anyone with information on this case is urged to call Detective Justin Palmer or Detective Jason Kidwell of the San Jose Police Department's Sexual Assault Unit at (408)277-4102. Persons wishing to remain anonymous may call Crime Stoppers at (408) 947-STOP (7867).

Registered Sex Offenders

Please note - there seems to be an increase of sex offenders in our surrounding area. For more information on specific neighborhoods where offenders are registered, go to the websites provided below. You can sign-up for automatic alerts. Four years ago, voters overwhelmingly approved Jessica's Law, which bars all sex offenders on parole from living within 2,000 feet of a school or park. Unfortunately, many sex offenders are not on parole and can live wherever they want.

- www.crimereports.com
- <http://www.meganslaw.ca.gov/>
- <http://www.familywatchdog.us/> - provides map legend for crimes against children, rape and sexual assaults.

For more information, please go to the San Jose Police Department Website at www.sjpd.org

For crime report updates, sign-up at www.crimereport.com

Please get to know your neighbor, and look out for each other!



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Gunderson High School Happenings

The Gunderson High School Mock Trial team did very well in this year's competition. Although they didn't win the county trials, they did win one of the competitions against Monte Vista High School, a veteran and seasoned team. Their two losses were by a narrow margin of just one point to very experienced teams. Their stellar rookie performance is unprecedented. Watch out for this team next year.

The week of March 8 was 80's week at Gunderson. Students dressed up each day in 80's regalia and lunchtime activities took place. For two days during lunch, the Gunderson theater held the first annual "Mr. Sadies Pageant". All of this activity led into the annual SADIES dance, taking place on March 13.

Senior Women, a campus club advised by teacher Sonia Rebelo, continues the dress drive for the Princess Project Silicon Valley. These students are collecting prom dresses and other accessories that will be donated to the Princess Project, an organization that provides free prom dresses and accessories to girls who might not otherwise attend prom because of the expense. The deadline for collecting is March 31; so if you have some formal wear that you'd like to donate, bring it on by!

The Athletic Department will be holding its first annual golf tournament at Santa Teresa Golf Course on Friday, April 30 starting at 2pm. If you're interested in playing, you can contact Gunderson Athletic Director, Herb Espiritu.

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. 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.

To learn more about Gunderson, visit the new and improved school website at: <http://gunderson.sjUSD.org>

March Madness

By 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 up those milk weeds, so start pulling up those milk weeds and others you can spot.

But what about those little six-packs of tomatoes and peppers that are beckoning from the nursery shelves? Go ahead and buy them, but keep them indoors in a sunny window to help them grow bigger and stronger (you'll save a bundle from what you'd have to pay later for the same size plants). 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 degrees.

Cold, damp weather will bring out snails and slugs in droves. They will feast on the tender new growth of bulbs and winter plants. Hand pick, or use a bait, but don't let them go unchecked because they will mow down the garden. You can prune now, also, especially roses and fruit trees. Right now, plant winter vegetables such as broccoli, cabbage, peas and beets for a spring harvest. Put in pansies, snapdragons and calendulas.

When will the soil be ready for general planting? squeeze a handful of soil, and if it sticks together like putty, it's too wet. If it crumbles and falls from your hand, it's OK to dig and plant. It takes at least five rainless days for soil to dry out. Rake up leaves you might have missed earlier, to help the soil dry out, and get them off the lawn. Leaves provide hiding spots for overwintering insects.

And what about feeding the birds? They're building nests and starting families. You can attract hummingbirds to feed in your garden by planting fuchsias. Planted now in partial shade away from drying wind, fuchsias will bloom from early summer until frost. Fuchsias can be planted in the ground or in containers, and trailing types do well in hanging baskets. The trick to fuchsias: lots of moisture using a potting mix that retains moisture. They also benefit from mist spray. In containers, use wood or light colored plastic; dark plastic pots retain too much heat, and feeder roots can be burned. Encourage bushy, flowery growth by pinching dead blossoms, and use liquid fertilizer. The more small pinches you make now on growing tips, the more flowering branchlets this summer.

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