

VEP NEWS

• VEP COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION •

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

October 2003

VEP MEETING

7:30 P.M. TUESDAY
October 28, 2003

GUNDERSON HIGH SCHOOL
★ Faculty Lounge ★

AGENDA

★ Las Brisas ★

An update by SummerHill Homes on their Las Brisas home development at Branham & Vistapark.
7:30 to 7:50 p.m.

★ Vista Park Community Room ★

A presentation and discussion of plans for a turn-key facility by SummerHill Homes.
7:50 to 8:15 p.m.

★ Park Issues and Updates ★

San Jose Parks & Recreation representative to discuss VEP area park improvements and issues, and answer your questions.
8:15 to 8:45 p.m.

★ Proposed VEP Dues Increase ★

Discussion & vote on a recommended increase in membership dues starting next year.
8:45 to 8:50 p.m.

★ Your Community Concerns ★

8:50 to 9:00 p.m.

Everyone is welcome. Please invite your neighbors!

Our October meeting

-Dave Fadness

Joe Head, Vice president of SummerHill Homes will attend our October 28th meeting to give us a quick update on their Las Brisas project and, with Councilwoman **Pat Dando**, will kick-off discussion of their plans to construct a turn-key Community Room facility at Vista Park. Your input is important to them in its design.

The community room will be built by SummerHill in lieu of paying parkland dedication fees for their Las Brisas project at Branham/Vistapark. The VEP Executive committee has submitted a "wish list" of design features and amenities (published in last month's newsletter) that we feel will meet

our community's needs.

Our concept is to have a multipurpose facility that can serve as any of the following:

- Restrooms for park visitors, open daily during daylight hours;
- Snack shack for use by groups and/or sports teams (having advance reservations);
- Community meeting room; and/or
- Recreation facility for future city programs.

San Jose Parks & Recreation's **Art Rosales** will present an overview of plans and improvements at VEP-area parks: Erikson Park; Meadows Park; Parkview Parks 1, 2, and 3; Terrell Park; and Vista Park. Your questions will be answered.

One piece of official VEP business will be discussed and voted upon: a proposed increase in our membership dues (see Bob Aquino's article below).

As usual, we allow time for members to bring their community concerns forward for VEP's consideration. We welcome your doing so, and will always try to help. That's our job.

Be sure to attend on Tuesday, October 28th. You'll be happy you did!

Daffodil Days

-Jeri Arstingstall

San Jose Beautiful's annual Daffodil planting event will be Saturday, October 25th, from 8:30 to 11 a.m. VEP is planning to participate, so we need you to volunteer a couple of hours.

Meet at the Arstingstall residence, 635 Gaundabert Lane, for refreshments from 8:30 to 9, then go plant daffodils! Bring a shovel or pick, and gloves.

For more information, or to sign up and suggest locations to plant daffodils, call Jeri at 281-1959. We will be concentrating on the median on Chynoweth near Pearl Ave. If you have any orange traffic cones, they will be greatly appreciated.

VEP dues increase proposed

-Bob Aquino

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Well, that's the realization that your VEP executive board has reached. Our monthly expenses are going up, and if we are to continue to provide the same level of information and services to our members, we are going to have to find a way to fund them.



Perhaps you've noticed that the newsletter has more ads than it used to. We've also raised the advertising rates to help make ends meet. Our membership is near an all-time high, as well. All that helps, but unfortunately, not enough.

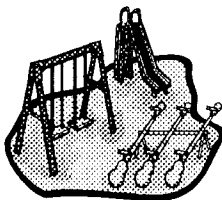
The only place to turn is to our members. The VEP Board is proposing to raise annual dues to \$20 per year from the current level of \$15. It's been *many* years since we raised membership dues, so we hope you will understand—and stay on as members.

According to our by-laws, we must submit any change in dues to the membership for approval. So, this proposal will be discussed and voted on at the October 28th VEP meeting. Please attend and let your feelings be known.

Neighborhood parks

- Dave Noel and Dave Fadness

Vista Park: This park is a featured topic of our October 28th general meeting. **Dave Noel** and **Jeri Arstingstall** worked with **Sandra Freitas** of San Jose Parks and Recreation to update www.sjarks.org/Parks/vista.htm, Vista Park's website. Together, we fixed errors in the park location and list of amenities, and we updated the photographs. The website now reflects major renovations that were completed late last year. Take a look and see the beautiful pictures Jeri took for us. If you'd like to help update the websites for any of our other parks, please let us know. We'll make it happen.



A small committee of neighbors is currently working with Parks and Recreation's **Art Rosales** and **Pat Dando**'s office to find a solution to inappropriate use of

the west ball field by adults who are evidently trying to best **Barry Bonds**. Problem is that home base is too close to New Compton Drive; many balls have been hit into the street, into neighbors' yards, and against neighbors' homes. This is a potentially dangerous situation, threatening pedestrian and automotive traffic and making it uncomfortable to be in one's own back yard.



We're looking at a range of possible solutions, including signs that prohibit adult use of that field, a high net fence, two possibilities for relocating the ball field, and (although no one wants this to happen) eliminating the west field. The committee's goal is to select a preferred alternative which will be presented to our membership, perhaps at VEP's November general meeting.

Cilker Park and Guadalupe Trail: As of this writing, the Guadalupe trail is being paved between Blossom Hill Road and Chynoweth (see also Pat Dando's article). Soon you will be able to walk, jog, or bike from the percolation ponds at Chynoweth to Almaden Lake Park and beyond.

Meanwhile, construction should start shortly on William H. Cilker Park on Winfield Boulevard between Chynoweth and the light rail tracks. This spur of land will be developed into a neighborhood park featuring lighting, evergreen trees, oak trees, and flowering plum trees that will serve as a gateway to the Guadalupe River Trail.

Meadows Park: New playground equipment has been installed at Meadows Park (on Bluefield Drive, two blocks west of Vistapark Drive). It looks fabulous! Go see it when you have a chance--and take your kids/grandkids along!

VTA meeting—LRT noise

- Gail Collins

Santa Clara Valley Transportation Authority (VTA) will hold a meeting in late October or early November 2003 to give residents living near light rail stations an opportunity to comment on the bell and horn sounds of VTA's new low floor light rail vehicles. The bells and horns on these new cars, which are now in service on the Baypointe to Santa Teresa (Guadalupe) line, are different from those on the old UTDC cars, and some residents have complained about them.



VTA's Operation staff has developed several alternatives to the cars' existing bells and horns, and would like your input on them.

If you are interested in attending this meeting, please contact Gail Collins in VTA's Community Outreach Department by telephone at (408) 321-5754, or by email

at gail.collins@vta.org for the exact meeting date and location.

Burglary scam

- Dave Noel

The San Jose Police Department issued a warning in late August about a burglary scam that is occurring in many cities, including three reports in San Jose.



This is their mode of operation: Two bogus sales or service personnel come to the home of an elderly person. The first one distracts the occupant to the rear yard on the pretext that they are tree trimmers, roofers, etc. Meanwhile the second person enters to steal money and jewelry in the house.

VEP Community Calendar

Sat, Oct 25 @ 8:30 - 11 am: Daffodil planting event sponsored by San Jose Beautiful.

Tue, Oct 28 @ 7:30 - 9 pm: VEP General Meeting at Gunderson High School. VEP encourages residents of Thousand Oaks, Pinehurst, and Rancho Narvaez neighborhood associations to join us for this meeting.

Mon, Nov 3 @ 6 pm: SummerHill *Las Brisas* community meeting in sales office, Branham Lane at Vistapark Drive.

Wed, Nov 5 @ 7:30 - 9 pm: VEP Executive Committee Meeting (call for location.)

Tue, Nov 25 @ 7:30 - 9 pm: VEP General Meeting at Gunderson High School. (Program to be announced.)

December: No VEP General Meeting.

Tue, Jan 27 @ 7:30 - 9 pm: Election Forum in the Gunderson Theater (District 10 city council candidates).

City responds to VEP concerns

-Dave Fadness

San Jose Vice-Mayor **Pat Dando** left VEP's May meeting with a list of neighborhood concerns—and, characteristically, took immediate action. The next day, she wrote a memorandum to Jim Helmer, Director of San Jose's Department of Transportation (DOT).

Ms. Dando's list included the following items:

- Condition of the street surface on Prince Royal Place;
- Repair of Branham Lane between Pearl and Snell Avenues;
- Parking problem on the west side of Vistapark Drive south of Victoria Park Drive;
- Tree pruning issues on Branham Lane, between

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Narvaez and Vistapark Drive; and

- Adequacy of the sound wall on the north side of Branham Lane, easterly of Vistapark Drive.

Mr. Helmer responded to each of these items, as follows:



1. Repair of Prince Royal Place is awaiting funding on the city's resurfacing backlog list. DOT staff inspected the street and feels there are no potential safety hazards.

2. Repair of Branham Lane:

- Snell Avenue to Vistapark Drive = Slurry seal scheduled for spring/summer 2004;
- Vistapark Drive to Narvaez = (Currently on backlog list);
- Narvaez to 300-ft. east of Joseph Speciale Drive = Slurry seal scheduled spring/summer 2004;
- 300-ft. east of Joseph Speciale Drive to Pearl Avenue = Slurry seal was completed in 2001.



3. The parking problem on the west side of Vistapark Drive was addressed by removing the parking prohibition on the east side, north of Viewpark Circle; an effort to help alleviate spillover from the apartments on Capitol Expressway.

4. Tree trimming on Branham Lane was completed by city crews in late June.

5. Adequacy of sound walls on the north side of Branham Lane will be evaluated in conjunction with widening of that street to six lanes, now scheduled for 2008.



We are grateful to Pat Dando, her staff, and to Jim Helmer and DOT for their prompt response to our requests. Although we haven't yet gotten 100% of what we asked for, within the confines of budget and schedule, we've done very well so far.

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Civil Service Commission vacancy

- Dave Noel

The San Jose City Council will be accepting applications until 5 p.m. Friday, October 31st for an appointment to the Civil Service Commission. This commission makes recommendations to the City Council and the City Manager, acts as an appellate body for personnel decisions, and appoints members to the City Council Salary Setting Commission. For more information, call 277-4429.

VTA progress

-Joe Tajnai

The final flurry of VTA construction work on Chynoweth Avenue is virtually completed. The new pump house stairs are complete and it looks to be the route of choice when getting to and from Gunderson.



The rock piles under the Rt. 87 ramps are permanent and are there to mitigate the runoff rain water that can come out of the columns occasionally. The V-ditches in the area have also been cleaned out and the surrounding area has been spruced up a bit as well.

With all that, plus the work that went on up inside the roadway, who knows what to expect when it gets wet, so watch for any changes in the area as the rainy season gets under way.

There is a plan to landscape at least some of the area. A beautification program will run between this November and June 2004. The VEP board will be contacting those responsible for this to see what their plan is.

Thanks to VTA's **Tiffany Thomas** for "digging" into VEP's questions and providing this information.

Chynoweth trash cans

- Dave Noel

Several neighbors complained about overflowing garbage around two trash cans located on the bike trail

where it meets the sidewalk on either side of Chynoweth Avenue along Hwy 87, just west of Gunderson High School. They apparently stopped being emptied many weeks or months ago.

John Brazil, San Jose's bicycle and pedestrian coordinator, is working hard to figure out which department is responsible for these cans and has the keys to unlock them. It turns out that trash cans on streets, bike trails and along highways belong to various departments. These two cans fit all three categories.

VEP has arranged to have the overflow cleaned up until this issue is resolved.

Street sweeping changes in 2004

Our New Schedule

Starting January 5, 2004, residential streets will be swept once a month. This is largely in response to the current budget shortfall. Streets are swept the day after garbage collection, between 7 am and 6 pm. This fall, residents will receive new schedule magnets with their 2004 sweeping and garbage collection schedule.



This change will impact all of our residents, and we appreciate your cooperation. We aim to provide the best service with the resources we have. Now it's even more important to remember to move your vehicles on sweep day.

Why We Sweep Streets

Street sweeping provides two key benefits to protect our watershed:

- First is the removal of visible debris from the road. Visit www.tymco.com/RegAirDiagram.html to see the inner workings of the truck.
- Second is the removal of heavy metals left by vehicles. These less visible chemicals harm the fish and wildlife in our creeks and Bay.

Improving the Sweep

The City monitors sweep quality to identify problem areas. In places where parked vehicles prevent street sweepers from doing their job, the City may post permanent *No Parking* signs or temporary tow-away zones. So, obey street signs and move your vehicles during street sweeping hours.

Avoiding Obstacles

Unfortunately, some situations prevent proper street sweeping. But there are ways you can help.

- Drivers go around yard trimmings piles as rocks or other unseen items can damage the sweepers. If you sweep debris after yard trimmings collection, save the residue for next week's pile.



- Street sweepers steer clear of tree branches lower than 13 feet because the trucks can break limbs. Call the City Arborist at 277-2762 for tree pruning permits.
- Drivers avoid broken curbs and gutters, which can damage the sweepers. To report broken curbs, gutters, and sidewalks, call the Department of Transportation Sidewalk Section at 277-3158.

Your Service Providers

Norcal Waste Systems and GreenWaste Recovery sweep streets and collect yard trimmings in San Jose neighborhoods. Both companies are committed to providing quality street sweeping and responsive customer service.

If GreenTeam collects your garbage and recycling, then GreenWaste Recovery sweeps your street and collects your yard trimmings. If Norcal collects your garbage and recycling, then check the hauler map on our website at www.sjrecycles.org to see whether GreenWaste Recovery or Norcal collects your yard trimmings and sweeps your street.

Resources

For questions or information, visit www.sjrecycles.org, or call Customer Service at 277-2700.

Neighborhood developments

- *Dave Noel and Dave Fadness*

Las Brisas: This Summerhill Homes development (78 single-family homes at Branham Lane/Vistapark Drive) is a featured subject at our October 28th VEP meeting.

Please attend for a complete update. We are also scheduling an on-site meeting at 6 p.m. on Monday, November 3rd.



Bella Villagio: Pinn Brothers' huge 357-unit housing project (Capitol Expressway at Vistapark Drive) is moving rapidly toward completion. VEP is still working with Pinn,

Councilwoman **Pat Dando**, and County Supervisor **Don Gage** to secure median landscaping and sound wall improvements promised at time of approval by the city council.

Westfield Shoppingtown: The Westfield Shoppingtown Oakridge Mall expansion opened to the public in a series of gala events starting on Thursday October 2nd and extending through that weekend. I think you'll agree the expansion is gorgeous, and the popular new restaurants were desperately needed. Yet to arrive is a new two-story Target store to be built at the location of the old Montgomery Wards store, which is slated to be torn down.

I'm sure you've noticed many changes in the roads inside and outside the mall property. VEP worked closely with Westfield during the concept design phase of these changes, and they are working well. We salute

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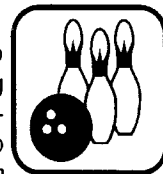
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Westfield for working VEP and implementing many of our suggestions.

Oakridge Lanes Bowling Alley: Bowling to pressure from the community, including VEP members, Westfield reversed its decision to demolish the bowling alley in order to build a parking lot for the mall. The *Blossom Valley Times* reports that an extended lease was signed on September 18th. Not only will Westfield save the bowling alley, but they will also fund a major portion of its extensive remodel and upgrade.



Lowes: A proposal is pending to build a Lowes Home Improvement Warehouse at the site of IBM's/Hitachi Global Storage Technology's Building 25 at the southeast corner of Blossom Hill and Cottle Roads.

Sycamore Terrace: A proposal is pending to build a 32-family development on 1.42 acres at the northeast corner of Almaden Expressway and Coleman Road.

Best Buy/Expo Design Center is applying for a permit to change their driveway onto Almaden Expressway from 3- to 4-lanes, allowing for 2 right turn lanes exiting the shopping center. Left turns still will not be allowed.

Fire Station: A 6,200 square-foot fire station is planned to be built on the north side of Hillsdale Avenue opposite the northerly terminus of Vistapark Drive.

Tamien Towers: The city council recently approved a very controversial project to build 260 housing units, including two 11-story buildings, on 3.18 acres on the site of the Alma Bowl on the northwest corner of Lick Avenue and West Alma Avenue. This fits the city's plan to build high-density residential projects near transit corridors. This sets a precedent for other areas in San Jose, potentially including ours.



Ice Skating Rink: The ice skating facility located at East Alma and South 10th is proposing to add a fourth rink.

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Cavalry Chapel: The church at the corner of Almaden Expressway and Hillsdale is proposing to renovate an existing 12,250 square-foot classroom building for private instruction and dormitory uses for approximately 75 students. They also plan to replace their 176-space parking lot at the corner of Foxworthy Avenue and Almaden Expressway with a ball field and a 1,200 square-foot modular building (with no on-site outdoor lighting or PA system).

Almaden Billiards applied for a permit to operate 7 days a week past midnight at the site of the former Baby Super Discount in the Safeway shopping center at Almaden Expressway and Chynoweth Avenue. A drive-through McDonalds is also slated to be built in the same shopping center parking lot.



Starbucks: There are plans to build a drive-through Starbucks in the Home Depot parking lot at the corner of Capitol Expressway and Timberloop Drive.

Branham Lane Family Apartments: There are plans to build 175 affordable apartments on 5.05 acres at the northeast corner of Branham Lane and Monterey Highway.

Edenvale Branch Library: A new 24,000 square-foot city library will be built at the southeast corner of Branham Lane and Monterey Highway. Construction is scheduled to begin summer 2005, with completion in early 2007. The new library will provide separate areas for children, teens and adults. It will have a technology lab, group study rooms, a community meeting room, and an internet café.



Speeding and traffic

-Joe Tajnai

With school back in session and the mornings getting darker and darker, it's time to take a moment and slow your pace a little, hang up your cell phone, and pay full attention to your driving and the safety of our kids.

Motorists need to keep a close watch for pedestrians,

not just at street crossings, but *everywhere* along the street—kids do dart out unexpectedly between parked cars, etc. The best precaution is to obey speed limits and stop signs.

Pedestrians need to be equally watchful of motorists. Teach your kids to be careful, staying always mindful of the potential life-threatening hazards of crossing streets.



On-line traffic complaint form

- Dave Noel

If you have traffic problems, report them! The more reports of trouble, the higher the priority assigned for enforcement. Check out the on-line form at:

http://www.sjpd.org/traffic_complaint_form.htm.

Gunderson's neighborhood impacts

-Jeri Arstingstall

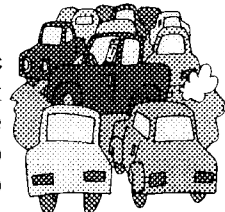
As those who live nearby know, there has been an increase in the use of Gunderson High School. While we encourage this activity and use of a very valuable asset to our community, the school district is unaware of the traffic and noise impacts in our community.

Gunderson High School is rented out on Saturdays to a German School. The school is rented out on Sundays to the Van Lam School (Vietnamese). Also on Sundays, Pop Warner has a permit to use the football field.

After taking some pictures and forwarding them to the school district and to the administrators for both Gunderson and the German and Vietnamese schools, we neighbors received some relief. The school district had a meeting with the users of the Gunderson property and all parties agreed to provide police patrol to help with the calming of the traffic.

This started out as a one month study and has proved to work well. Police will also be hired for Saturdays when the fields are used for the Almaden Youth Soccer League. The people who use the school property on weekends no longer have access to the loudspeaker system.

Gunderson's Monday to Friday traffic has gotten steadily worse over the last two years. San Jose Unified is in the middle of studying the situation. To date their only recommendation is to install 'No-U turn' signs along Gaundabert Lane. If you are a parent or are picking someone up at Gunderson High School, please be considerate of the neighbors; use the parking lot to wait and/or to pick up passengers.



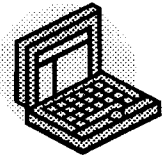
In summary, this problem is a result of the district renting out their facilities. All we ask of the district is to re-

spect the neighborhood as we respect the school.

Our September meeting

-Ginger Cardona, VEP Secretary

Principal **Demerris Brooks** provided an update of the construction at Gunderson High School, letting everyone know things are moving right along. There will be a Technical Building built on the Guandabert Lane side of the campus. It is possible that this will be a two-story building.



She also said that most students now have an Apple notebook computer and are using them for notes, homework, and taking some tests.

Two students from Gunderson who are part of the EAST program gave presentations on their projects.

First, **Megan Smith** spoke about the possibility of having a computerized digital sign in the front of the school. This would provide the school with an opportunity to better publicize functions. In addition to this, they would allow VEP and other organizations to announce their functions on the sign. The current program sign is in need of repair and not placed well for optimum viewing.

Second, **Mike Taormino** gave a presentation on repairs needed at the football field. He showed pictures of the poor conditions, including gopher holes, lack of grass, and lack of drainage. This has caused problems with a number of activities which are held at the field. The proposal is to change the field to an artificial surface used at a number of other schools and to add lights. This in addition to drainage would allow the field to be used more often and reduce maintenance costs.

Suggestions for VEP beautification projects were taken. Last year we landscaped two street median locations: at Branham/Narvaez and on Chynoweth, between Windfield and Pearl.

One area of interest being reviewed is the sound wall along Branham, just east of Vistapark. A second area is the Lester property, just across from the wall. We'd like to clean it up and remove the dilapidated grape-stake fence there.

VEP's Goals and Objectives for 2004 were unanimously approved. These goals and objectives are now posted on our website, www.vepca.org.

VEP Community Service Awards

- Dave Noel

As mentioned last month, we are considering a few minor changes to the community service awards. A committee will recommend changes and present these to the membership for a vote at our January 27th general

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meeting. At that time we will also propose funding for our 2004 Community Service Awards.

If you are interested in participating on the committee, please contact me as soon as possible.

We encourage high school students to actively volunteer in their schools and in their community. Please pass the word about our Community Service Awards to any high school seniors you know are active volunteers. Prospective candidates are encouraged to contact us if they need more information or an application. Applications are distributed in February and due in late-April.

Congratulations once again to our 2003 winners:

Andrew Hill: **Phuong Truong**, now attending UC Santa Cruz.

Gunderson: **Alysia Bosworth**, now attending Pomona College.

At-Large: **Shannon Drach** (Leigh High), now attending Biola University.



'Tis the season to be pruning

What is the Best Way to Prune Orange Trees?

Orange trees need little pruning compared to other fruit trees. In fact, they prefer to have a skirt of leaves all the way to the ground. This protects the trunk which can get sunscald when exposed to strong sunlight. Citrus trees bloom and bear fruit on new growth, so cutting off branch tips will reduce the size of your crop.



If desired, you can prune off the dead twigs and small branches found on the inside of the tree, but be aware of the sharp thorns, as these can give nasty scratches!

Keeping Ants Off Fruit Trees

Ants will climb into plants, shrubs, and trees to get access to the sweet exudate of certain sucking insects (aphids, mealybugs, and scale). They use the exudates as a food.



Wesley W. Terrell

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Prevent their access to any shrub or tree that you see them invading by spreading Tree Tanglefoot Pest Barrier around the stem or trunk. Wrap a 3-inch wide band of masking tape around the trunk near the base. Spread a 2-inch or so wide band of Tanglefoot over the tape. Ants can't cross the gooey, stick stuff. Replace the tape and Tanglefoot as needed.

How to Prune Lavender

Some say that lavender should be cut back almost to the ground in the early winter. But that's a care technique applicable only in the Eastern U.S.

Lavender in California should be pruned after flowering in mild-winter areas. You can use hedge shears to cut them back, or prune off stalks that have spent flowers on them. You'll get better results if you prune off the stalks. Make your cut just above a junction, leaving at least an inch of the leafy stem. Your lavender will be more bushy and compact as a result.

How to Grow Parsley in Pots

Parsley is easy to grow in pots, and with restricted sunshine. But use transplants from a nursery, since the seeds aren't reliable and often take several weeks to sprout. Plant in a commercial potting mix. Keep the mix moist. Fertilize monthly with a water-soluble complete fertilizer, such as Jobes or Miracle-Gro. Your parsley will grow all winter, but it is best to replace old plants every spring.

[Ed. Note: These hints were extracted from the June 20, 2003 San Jose Mercury News gardening section.]

Beauty with bulbs

-Kary Wilson

Join the *Friends of Guadalupe River Park & Gardens* for an enjoyable Saturday morning (November 1, 2003, 10 to 11:30 am) learning about bulbs. Whether you are planning a spring flower border that will enhance your yard and garden or want to grow your own distinctive color bowls to sit on a patio or balcony, this class will show you how.

Fall is the prime time to plant and you will learn which bulbs do well and how to grow them. Discussions will include: soil preparation, site selection, and the wide variety of bulbs available to ensure success for your spring garden. You will also learn how to "force" bulbs into bloom for the Holidays.

The class will be taught by Barbara Stott, the Garden Manager at Crow Canyon Gardens in San Ramon. The cost to attend is \$8.00 for Friends' members and \$10.00 for non-members.

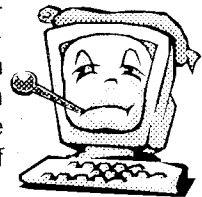
Space is limited, so reserve your spot early by sending a check to *Friends of Guadalupe River Park & Gardens*, 50 West San Fernando Street, Suite 1100, San Jose, CA 95113. Visa and MasterCard are also accepted via phone or mail. For more information please contact the Education Coordinator via email at education@grpg.org, or call (408) 298-7657.

Call VEP for help with your community problems

Computer corner

-Bob Aquino, VEP's Computer Guru

Because of several computer crashes, one involving my computer and one in my VEP co-editor's, I have become sensitized to the need to protect yourself against the worst. I'll spare you the details, but suffice to say they were painful. I lost all of my historical emails. In this particular case, it wasn't a great loss since the bulk of them were merely stuff that I hadn't gotten around to cleaning off. But I do have some suggestions as to protection of your system.



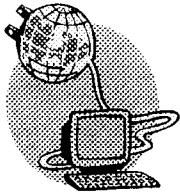
To repeat from my last column, be sure to have current virus protection and DO NOT open attachments from people you don't know. In fact, be careful of attachments from people you do know. They might be unknowingly infected.

Next, back up your files regularly. Here's a tip that could simplify that task, given that hard disk storage is so cheap. Most desktop computers can accommodate another hard drive. Get a second hard drive of, say 40GB, and install it.

Set up your applications so that they store their files on the second hard drive, leaving the programs themselves on the main drive. Then save your backups on the main drive. The main drive is the drive most likely to crash and if it does, your files are safely parked. If you have problems with the second drive, you can restore them easily.

If you happen to have a second computer, say a laptop, open up accounts to your ISP and email providers. One of the most frustrating things about having your computer down is the sense of isolation, not being able to read your email or surf the web. Additionally, much of the technical support for programs is Web- or email-based. Many companies' telephone support is via area code 900; you pay by the minute.

When backing up files, don't neglect archiving important emails, and particularly your address book. Losing that could result in a lot of work to put it together again



If you have a DSL or cable modem connection, be sure to install a firewall to prevent intrusion. I know people who stay online 24/7. Personally, I don't think that's a good idea. You are exposed to the outside world while your computer is unattended. I believe in turning it off if you're not there or downloading.

I was lucky when my computer crashed. It started becoming more and more unstable, so I had warning and made sure that my files were backed up. My colleague was not so lucky.

To sum up, the best policy is to assume that your computer will someday crash and be prepared for that event. You'll sleep better at night.

Good computing!

Boys & Girls Club

-Fred McCasland, Unit Director

In every community, boys and girls are left to find their own recreation and companionship in the streets. An increasing number of children are at home with no adult care or supervision. Young people need to know that someone cares about them.

Boys & Girls Clubs offer that and more. Club programs and services promote and enhance the development of boys and girls by instilling a sense of competence, usefulness, belonging and influence.

Boys & Girls Clubs are a safe place to learn and grow--all while having fun. It is truly The Positive Place For Kids.

Here's what we offer: homework assistance individual tutoring, educational games, computer skills, Internet safety, sports leagues, mentorship, job training, community service projects, teen centers, health leadership clubs, teen dances, youth entrepreneurship, nutrition, drug and alcohol prevention, gang intervention, violence prevention, soccer, basketball, recording studio, football, pool tables, drawing, painting, summer camp, mural paint-



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ing, foosball, environmental education, print making. Check with your local Club to find out what programs are available.

We have three centers in South San Jose:

1. The Village of the Four Seasons that serves the children at the mobile home park on Ford Road.
2. Miner School (Learns) Our new site that serves the students that attend George Miner Elementary.
3. Levin/Southside Clubhouse which serves all of South San Jose that is located on Edenvue Drive next to Caroline Davis Intermediate School.

The Boys & Girls Club of Silicon Valley (Levin/Southside Clubhouse) located next to Caroline Davis Intermediate School, is now open for educational & recreational services.

Hours of operation: Monday through Friday from 2 – 7 p.m. Homework assistance will be available starting Monday, September 22, from 3:30 to 5:30 p.m. daily. Membership Fee: \$20.00.

Call 224-7997 if you have questions. The links below have more information about the club and the programs that we provide:
www.bgclub.org www.bgca.org www.careerlaunch.net

Santa Clara County Assessor on-line

- Dave Noel

Are you curious about the assessed value of your home? What about your neighbor's home? Do you have a renter nearby and want to find the address of the owner? To find all this and more for free, visit

www.scc-assessor.org

then click on "Lookup Property Records Here!"

Add VEP's website
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- ◆ References

Home maintenance tips

You've heard how a stitch in time saves nine. It's as true for your home as anything else in your life. When you notice a problem, address it as soon as possible. A bit of maintenance now will save a lot of maintenance (and heartache) later. It is also important to practice good preventive maintenance.



For example, keep windows, porches, and fixtures well-caulked. These minor details go a long way in protecting your investment and keeping your utility bills in check.

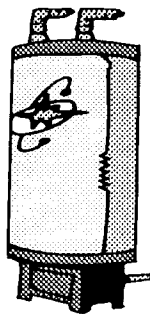
Be sure to keep a home maintenance and repair journal. Some items in your home may only need to be looked at yearly and it's easy to forget when the furnace or hot water heater was last checked.

While it is sometimes necessary to delay a repair, try not to make this the norm. It's always easier to budget ahead of time and usually cheaper in the long run. A busted hot water heater can do a lot of damage if you have a finished area close by. And you definitely don't want to be surprised in the middle of summer with an air conditioner that suddenly decides not to work. Plus, you'll have the added headache of waiting additional time for the repair person to show up.

As a general rule, the return on home maintenance is dollar for dollar. Besides, when it's time to sell, you'll have a lot less to do.

Water heater settings: how hot?

The debate over the best water heater setting continues. If the setting is too high, energy use results in high utility bills. If the setting is too low, bacteria may grow. Many homeowners set their water heater at 140 degrees (Fahrenheit). If you talk to an energy expert, you'll hear that 120 degrees is sufficient to provide for a family's hot water needs. Using the lower setting will save quite a bit of energy compared to the 140 degree setting.



Most dishwashers operate satisfactorily at the lower setting. Some state energy codes, in fact, suggest temperatures as low as 100 degrees for the proper setting since higher temperatures can cause scalding. This is a particular concern for children and older people who could be burned by water that is too hot in the bath or shower. Always check the temperature of the bath before getting in or putting a child in the tub. Run the water to a safe, comfortable temperature before getting into the shower.



Despite the advantages of the lower setting on the water heater, there may be drawbacks. Studies in recent years have shown that warm or tepid water systems can become breeding grounds for bacteria such as the type that causes Legionnaires' disease. Some engineers suggest that water heaters not be set below 122 degrees in order to prevent conditions that might foster bacteria growth.

Very recent research presents arguments on both sides of the debate. Because of the uncertainty, choose the setting that makes you most comfortable. If you are concerned about bacteria, keep the thermostat at the 140 degree mark, but be mindful of the setting. Water at this temperature can cause burns. On the other hand, a setting just above 120 degrees will save energy, and discourage health dangers as well.

Cutting boards: plastic or wood?

Research was conducted at the University of Wisconsin to determine if plastic or wood cutting boards are more hygienic. It is common practice to rinse wood cutting boards with bleach to kill suspected bacteria. It is commonly assumed that plastic cutting boards, because they are not porous, require only soap and water to clean them.

The researchers soaked plastic and wooden cutting boards with raw chicken juice that was spiked with liver bacteria. The bacteria thrived on the plastic cutting boards for hours, even after they were washed with hot, soapy water. The identical bacteria died within three minutes on the wooden cutting boards before the boards were washed. Researchers suspect that the wood fibers dehydrate the bacteria, which then die, while the plastic cutting boards do not interfere with the stability of the bacteria.



Regardless what kind you use, always wash your cutting boards after they have come in contact with food.

[Ed. Note: This article was taken from Brian Bonnifield's website. Brian is a long-time VEP member, a real estate professional, and an advertiser in this newsletter.]

Hey...
Get around to it!

School liaisons for VEP

- Dave Noel

Do you have a student at Andrew Hill High School? If so, **WE NEED YOU!** VEP is establishing liaisons for our local schools in order to improve our connections with them. We are starting with the high schools, but if you'd like to be a liaison to an elementary or middle school, we'd welcome that help too.

I want to thank **Laura Probert**, a VEP member and Gunderson PTSA president for enthusiastically volunteering to be our Gunderson liaison.

The purpose of our liaisons is to solicit articles from the schools for publication in the VEP News, and to solicit articles from VEP for publication in the schools' newsletters. At the high schools, our liaisons will also help increase awareness of our annual Community Service Awards. Our liaisons can also help find volunteers from VEP and the schools to help in each others' projects, fundraisers, and initiatives.

Come one, come all!

-Irene Shoberg

Rachel Carson Elementary School will be holding its annual Harvest Festival on Friday, October 24th, from 5 to 9 pm. Join us at 4245 Meg Drive for food, games, and good old-fashion family fun.

The children will be square dancing for our entertainment. Live music and live animals are just some of the activities planned. High-Five Pizza will cater the event.

We're all invited to attend.

Gunderson High scholarship fundraiser

-Mary Olson, Gunderson PTSA Treasurer

The Gunderson PTSA is requesting your participation in a fund-raiser to raise money for scholarship funds.



On Wednesday, November 12th, simply present the attached voucher when making purchases at the Barnes and Noble store at Almaden Fashion Plaza. Gunderson PTSA will receive between 15% and 25% of the amount you spend. Proceeds will go to the PTSA scholarships for graduating seniors.

We need your help to keep the scholarship program going, so we encourage you to join us in doing some of your holiday shopping at Barnes and Noble with this voucher on Nov 12th.

In addition to books, the store has a wide selection of music CDs, calendars, magazines, stationary, and other gift ideas.

For more information, or additional copies of vouchers,

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contact Mary Olson, 225-5878. We will attempt to have vouchers available at the October VEP meeting, as well. Thank you!

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BOOKFAIR VOUCHER

Store #2909. Location: 5353 Almaden Expressway

ALMADEN FASHION PLAZA

9am to 10pm Wednesday, November 12th, 2003

I support the Bookfair for: Gunderson High School PTSA.

Optional:

Name: _____

Address: _____

Present this voucher at the designated register at the time of purchase. A percent of the net sale will be donated to the organization according is as follows:

For net sales < \$2000, Amt. Donated = 15%

For net sales of \$2000 - \$10,000, Amt. Donated = 20%

For net sales >\$10,000, Amt. Donated = 25%

The following transactions are not included in the Bookfair totals:

- The purchase price of Gift Cards
- The purchase of Reader's Advantage membership
- The purchase of consumables

**** For Office Use Only ****

Register # _____ Transaction #: _____

Amount of sale before tax, less purchases of Gift Cards, Readers' Advantage memberships, and cafe consumables: \$ _____

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Gunderson, the 1:1 laptop school

-Karen Fuqua

Have you noticed students walking to and from Gunderson all carrying the same black carrying case? Wonder why? As part of a Qualified Zone Academy Bond initiative, San Jose Unified has issued laptops to all

Gunderson students and teachers for school and home use. This money can only be used for technology and/or facilities. It cannot be used to support regular general fund items such as salaries or instructional materials. "Enhancing Learning in a Vertical Slice" is an initiative providing

all Gunderson teachers and students with laptops and on-campus wireless Internet access.

Gunderson is the first of three schools in San Jose Unified School District to participate in this research-based initiative. This pilot program will be extended to Steinbeck Middle School teachers and students in Fall '04 and Allen Elementary School teachers and 4th and 5th grade students the following year.

This past summer, Gunderson teachers worked with Apple Computers and received extensive professional development in the integration of technology into the curriculum. Teacher professional development will continue throughout the year.

With the use of software applications, Gunderson students will now be able to receive immediate feedback on their writing and math assignments; they will also be able to do extensive history and science research and communicate with students and faculties throughout the world. Based on research, the expectation is a rise in student achievement levels, attendance rates, and student engagement. To see the project in action visit

<http://gunderson.sjUSD.k12.ca.us/mainmov.html>

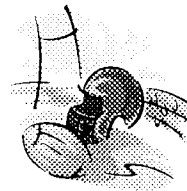
[Ed. Note: Karen Fuqua handles Public Relations & Community Development for San Jose Unified School District.]

Happy Halloween!

Gunderson Homecoming 2003

-Phil Hophan

Friday, October 31: Gunderson High School leadership class and the Key Clubs of San Jose will be sponsoring a Benefit Halloween Fair from 6 to 8 pm in the GHS Outdoor Plaza on the night of Halloween. We would like to invite you and yours to this fun-filled family event!



Key Clubs from twenty schools around the Bay Area will be setting up unique, family-style games and food booths for all to enjoy after trick-or-treating! Tickets for the booths can be purchased and all proceeds will be donated to a local cancer foundation. Lot's of free candy, bobbing-for-apples, face-painting and lots, lots more! Look for our flyers and contact the school for additional information!

Following the Halloween Fair, all members of the local community are invited to see the leadership class in action at our annual Night Rally! The Night Rally is an age-old tradition that will run from 8 to 9:30 pm. This event is free and open to the public.

Not to be missed, this year's "Scary Movies" theme is sure to be fun and exciting. There will be music, skits, class-competition games and of course, the crowning of our Homecoming Court.

A family-family styled event, our Night Rally will be loved by all! By the way, booth space is available for any group or individual who would like to contribute. Contact the school for more information.

Saturday, November 1: GHS leadership, our PTSA and Boosters will be sponsoring a Tailgate Party in the Gunderson High School parking lot, from 12 noon to 3 pm, as a preface to our Junior Varsity and Varsity football games against Leigh High School. You can't beat the BBQ food, game booths, and food booths sponsored by the clubs and organizations of GHS, and a car show and good music before settling in for a couple of great football games. Gunderson's Junior Varsity plays at 3:30 pm and our Varsity team at 6 pm.



Look for our "Day of the Dead" decorations in front of the school and stop by for some great food and the company of the Grizzly community!

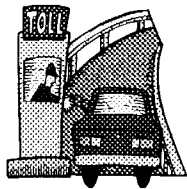
The Leadership Class of Gunderson High School thanks you for your support.

Neighborhood news

-Vice Mayor Pat Dando

Easing Traffic Woes in San Jose

For several months, I have been encouraging my colleagues on the VTA Board of Directors to look at creating High Occupancy Toll (HOT) Lanes in San Jose.



A HOT Lane allows a solo driver to pay a toll to ride in a carpool lane while still promoting and encouraging carpooling. Other states and cities in California are finding that these lanes actually help ease congestion and generate revenue to be spent on local road, transit, and highway projects.

I am eager to hear your thoughts about this proposal and experiences you may have from using HOT lanes in other cities.

Stimulating the San Jose Economy

As you may know, the City Council recently heard over 20 hours of testimony from business and community leaders in San Jose on how we can improve the business climate in our city.

I am pleased to work with the mayor to develop a bold plan to stimulate the local economy and create 4,600 new jobs by cutting bureaucracy at city hall, reducing taxes and fees on businesses, and offering incentives to companies to stay, expand, and relocate to San Jose.

On September 30th, the City Council approved this plan which will hopefully help get our economy moving again.

Blossom Hill Library Near Completion

Construction of the new Vineland Branch Library on Blossom Hill Road is quickly wrapping-up. This 24,000-square foot library is expected to open to the community in January---which is less than four months away!

It will feature a diverse collection of books and research materials, comfortable seating areas, a technology lab with 37 computers, a variety of study rooms to accommodate small and large groups, an Internet café, and will offer special story telling programs for young children.

Grand opening festivities will be held on January 17th.

Mount Umunhum Update

I have been working to open the summit of Mount Umunhum to the community. Mount Umunhum is the home of the former Almaden Air Force Station and is rich in unique plant and animal life, coupled with a first-rate view of the bay.

This area is closed to the public due to high levels of asbestos and lead contamination. For nearly two years, I have been working with the Open Space District, our local Congressional Representatives, and the White House to obtain Federal funding to revitalize this area for public enjoyment.



Good News! This winter the US Department of Defense will be working on the mountain to evaluate the costs of a clean-up as well as a process for opening the summit

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Enhanced Services for Local Senior Citizens
Improving the quality of life for our city's senior citizens has been one of my priorities. Through a special partnership with Albertson's Grocery Store, residents of Le Mirador, a senior housing community in South San Jose, can conveniently order their groceries & prescriptions online and have them delivered without having to leave home. Albertson's generously donated several computers to Le Mirador to help launch this program.

As San Jose continues to build new housing for senior citizens, I would like to see this program expanded across our city. Additionally, I am working with Pioneer High School on developing a program for students to visit senior housing complexes and teach computer skills to the residents.

Homework Centers

Raising my three children has made me very aware of the daily struggle to insure that our children not only do their homework, but that they understand their assignments.

I supported funds to ensure that every elementary, middle and high school in District 10 will have a homework center this school year. Homework centers are not only located at schools, but also at libraries and community based organizations. They provide students with a place to work on projects, receive tutoring, and complete school assignments.



I hope your children will take advantage of these services.

[Ed. Note: This article was extracted from Pat Dando's Fall 2003 newsletter. For the full text or more information, call her office at (408) 277-5251, email her at pat.dando@sanjoseca.gov, or visit her District Ten Website at www.patdando.com.]

VEP
A friend in need!

Community Meeting

Representatives of
★ **SummerHill Homes** ★

will meet with VEP and the neighbors of
their

★ **Las Brisas Community** ★
(Branham Lane @ Vistapark Drive)

To discuss:
Plans for the west wall, median landscaping and
the cul-de-sac on Vistapark Drive, construction
timing and impacts, and *YOUR* concerns.
Be sure to attend...

6 p.m.
At the sales Office

Monday, November 3

The scope on leaves

During the fall, the average San Jose home produces about 20 pounds of leaves each month.



Leaves are a fabulous, free resource for nourishing your garden. Mulching with leaves will provide soil nutrients and insulation, encourage worms, prevent weeds, and increase water absorption. Fall is the time to get ready for spring. Here are some tips:

- Cover planting beds and areas under shrubs with a 2- to 4-inch blanket of leaves.
- Put fall leaves into your compost heap to balance those extra food scraps from the holidays.

Fall is the peak season for yard trimmings collection in San Jose. Help our drivers do a great job in your neighborhood:

- Keep piles to 5 x 5-foot sizes. (Drivers cannot collect one long row of leaves.)
- Sweep piles away from storm drains to prevent clogging.

For more tips on preparing yard trimmings for curbside collection, visit www.sjrecycles.org

Spotlight on plastics

Plastics are everywhere in our lives--from water bottles to disposable razors. But just because something is

plastic doesn't mean it's recyclable.

Not all plastics are recyclable in San Jose. Plastic shoes, garden hoses, wading pools & toys, bubble wrap, PVC pipes, tarps, credit cards, and disposable razors all go in your garbage cart.

Only three types may go into your recycling cart:

Plastic containers labeled 1 through 7, plastic bags, and Styrofoam.

Check your *San Jose Recycling Guide* for a list of recyclable plastic items and visit www.sjrecycles.org for more information about plastics.

President's message

- Dave Noel, VEP President

Next year VEP proudly celebrates its 35th year of continuous service to our community. Where were you in 1969? If you were in the VEP community, perhaps you were one of our founding members. Or perhaps you supported VEP downtown as we fought for and won a traffic light installed at Capitol Expressway and Vistapark Drive.



Things were a lot different in 1969, but in many ways they were the same. Our members rallied to get parks, playground equipment, and safe activities for our kids. We had social events. We met with movers and shakers in the community, like Mr. Ed Rosenbaum.

During 2004, each issue of the VEP News will feature a retrospective of our 35 year history. In 1970, our president reflected on our first year. He said it may not seem like much happens from day to day, but looking back, it was amazing what we accomplished in just one year. That has continued, and we now have 35 years of tremendous accomplishments to be proud of. It will be fun to reflect on them next year.

A recurring theme in any voluntary organization is lack of volunteers willing to lead projects and our organization. VEP nearly disbanded at least a couple times in our history for lack of new leadership. If you've been waiting on the sidelines, please step up and join the executive committee by calling any of us listed on the mailing page of this newsletter. We can use help on projects now, and we need to train new volunteers to be our future leaders. Let's keep up the great work as we start our next 35 years!

Finally, if you are a long time VEP resident, please call or email Dave Fadness to share your history. If you'd like to write something for the VEP News, we'd love to publish it.

Our membership continues to climb even though our membership drive ended last spring. It now stands at 448 families, only two short of our record breaking 2002

membership. Thanks to everyone, and welcome to our newest members!

If you have new neighbors, please tell them about VEP and encourage them to join. Better yet, offer them their first year's membership as a welcoming gift. For more information, see www.vepca.org.

20 sneaky credit card tricks

[Continued from last month's VEP NEWS.]

Credit card companies can be as slippery as a handful of greased Jell-O. They have all kinds of tricks to gouge your wallet and drive up your bill. While arguably unfair, all these tricks are legal, leaving you no alternative but to stay as informed as possible to protect yourself. Read your statement, report any irregularities immediately, and watch for these sneaky credit card company tricks...



Cash advance fees and rates: Don't take cash out of your credit card. Read the fine print on your statement and you'll see it's a very bad idea. Your card might have a really low rate for purchases, but the rate for cash advances is much higher. There is no grace period and you're going to pay a fee, usually 2% to 4% of the amount advanced. And your payments will be applied to the lower-interest balance before they're applied to your cash advance.

Reverse the late payment, but up the rate: Credit card companies may forgive a late payment, but they could still punish you by raising your rate.

Increasing the rate based on other accounts: Your credit card company may use your late auto loan payment to justify a rate increase. They frequently check your credit report and look for any late payments to justify raising your rate.

Fixed rates aren't fixed: A fixed rate only means the credit card company has to give you 15-days notice before raising your rate. You can call and ask them to lower it, but they don't have to do it. Here's how:

Make the call for a lower rate: A five-minute phone call to your credit card issuer could save you hundreds, even thousands, of dollars in interest charges. It can't hurt to ask. Be prepared to move your account if they don't do anything for you.

Raising your rate for no reason: They don't need a reason. They can just do it--it's in the agreement. If they won't give you a lower rate, get a new card and cancel the old one.

"Free gifts" cost a bundle: Did you *really* think they'd give you something for nothing? Throw away those offers that come in your credit card statement. While free "gifts" from credit card companies and department

stores might seem like great offers, they are disasters waiting to happen.

To protect your finances, avoid the following offers:

Shun department store cards: Department store cards should be shunned altogether. They typically charge 18% to 22% interest. You should also avoid offers to increase your credit line.

Skip those "skip payment" offers: Another little present is the opportunity to skip a payment or defer payments on a new purchase for 30- to 90-days. Department stores often do this around the holidays for big-ticket items. Experts advise that you say "no thanks" to skip-payment offers, especially if you are close to maxing out your credit limit.

When minimum payment isn't enough: Even if you go over your credit limit, card companies will sometimes require a minimum payment that is not enough to bring you under the limit. Another enticement that might be crowding your mailbox is an invitation to transfer balances to a new card. These are tricky. Balance transfer offers typically come with a super-low introductory rate for no more than six months.



A 0% to 6% APR holds a strong appeal, but a close look at the fine print reveals pitfalls. New purchases are subject to a much higher rate. Consumers should try to get a low rate that is fixed until the balance is paid.

Beware of balance transfers: Balance transfers can have another hidden hit. Some of them are treated like cash advances, for which banks usually charge a fee of 2% to 4% of the amount transferred. Cash advances also are charged a higher interest rate and carry no grace period.

The best thing consumers can do is set a budget. Set spending limits, put aside cash, and make sure there is enough money to cover emergencies.

Selling credit card theft insurance: You don't need theft insurance for your credit card. If it's stolen, you are only liable for \$50, at most.

Selling disability coverage: Credit card disability insurance will make debt worse, if it ever kicks in. One Bankrate reader wrote in to say she developed cancer and her credit card company kept finding reasons not to activate her disability insurance even though she paid for it every month.

But credit card disability insurance is a really bad idea anyway. Even though you don't have to make payments, the debt piles up all along. And you can't use the card during that time either.

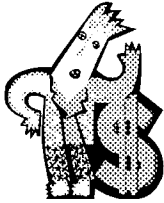
Setting low minimum payments: It'll take forever to

pay off your balance if you only pay the minimum. Most credit card companies set the minimum payment at 2% of the debt. At that rate, you could be paying for life.

Cards that cost more in fees than they give in credit: If you've got shaky credit, you could fall prey to a really bad credit card deal, like the card with \$360 in fees that leaves you with a \$19 credit limit.

Balance-transfer fees and disappearing low rates: If you're not careful, you'll get socked with unexpected fees and soaring rates when you transfer your balance. Before transferring a balance, ask if there is a fee. Also, ask how long the low rate lasts.

Those low rates on credit card offers are usually only good for six months. If you are late on one payment, the low rate is immediately replaced with a much higher rate. Another note of caution: When you transfer a balance from one card to another, wait to see the balance appear on the new card before closing the old one.



Zero-percent offers--with a big catch: Those zero-percent offers sound like a good idea until you miss a payment or the introductory period ends. After that, you end up with a sky high rate.

Charges for charging abroad: In addition to the 1% currency exchange fee on Visa and Mastercard, some major banks are charging a 2% fee on credit card and debit card purchases made outside the United States. After a vacation's worth of spending, those fees will add up.

Shrinking grace periods: The grace period is the time between when you make a charge on your credit card and when that amount starts building interest. Many credit card companies are shrinking that time down to 20-days, meaning that by the time you get your bill, you may already be paying interest.

Pre-paid gift credit cards worth less than you pay: The fees on these cards can make them worth less than they cost. And they can expire rapidly--making them worthless. You'd be better off giving cash.

Is anyone there? If you want to talk to customer service, you better have a lot of time to kill. Credit card companies don't want to save you money at their expense. So they will transfer you and put you on hold until you are blue in the face. The name of the game is *Frustrate the Customer Until They Give Up and Go Away*.

This trick isn't limited to the credit card industry, either. When I wanted to lower my bill, a certain cell phone company spent an hour and a half putting me on hold, transferring and "accidentally" hanging up on me. Persistence pays off--but it's exhausting!

♥ Bulletin Board Ads ♥

ABC'S & MORE: Licensed family childcare in the Vistapark neighborhood. Infants and up. 7am-6pm, M-F. Call Kristine at 224-7616 or email: alexanderkristine@hotmail.com

AFTER SCHOOL & WEEKEND DAY CARE: On Vistapark Drive, near Rachel Carson and Parkview Elementary Schools. Call Peggy @ 224-2243 or 250-3236.

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

GOING ON VACATION? Responsible, experienced 13-year old is available for pet, house, and yard care. Call Matt @ 225-5878.

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

NEIGHBORHOOD NOTARY PUBLIC: Call Peggy at 224-2243 or 250-3236.

VEP will print free ads for its members for transactions involving less than \$250, for lost-and-found, for announcements of general interest to our community, and for kids under 18 or retirees who are looking for work. Free ads must be submitted monthly for publication.

Commercial ads cost \$1.00 per line per month, 10 lines maximum, must be prepaid before publication, and may only be run once per calendar quarter. Commercial ads must be submitted quarterly. No graphics allowed. For information on full-sized ads with graphics (camera ready), contact VEP'S Treasurer listed on the mailing page of this newsletter.

One line contains 50 characters, including spaces. Mail to VEP, P.O. Box 18111, San Jose, 95158. Ads must be received no later than the 10th of the month for inclusion in that month's newsletter. Use the following form as a guide for submitting an ad:

NAME: _____

PHONE # _____

AD WORDING: _____

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

Aluminum wiring

On April 28, 1974, two persons died in a home fire in Hampton Bays, New York. Fire officials determined that the fire was caused by a faulty aluminum wire connection at an outlet.

Since that tragic accident, the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission staff and other government officials have investigated numerous complaints from homeowners throughout the nation who have had trouble with small gauge aluminum branch circuit wiring. The Commission has also had research conducted that shows that homes wired with aluminum wire manufactured before 1972 ("old technology" aluminum wire) are 55 times more likely to have one or more connections reach "Fire Hazard Conditions" than is a home wired with copper.

The hazard investigated by the Commission staff occurs at connections to old technology aluminum wire, such as at outlets or switches or at major appliances such as dishwashers, furnaces, etc. Corrosion of the metals in the connection, particularly the aluminum wire itself, causes increased resistance to the flow of electric current as that resistance causes overheating.

Homes built before 1965 are unlikely to have aluminum branch circuit wiring. Homes built, rooms added, and circuits rewired or added between 1965 and 1973 may contain aluminum wiring.

In 1972, manufacturers modified both aluminum wire and switches and outlets to improve the performance of aluminum wired connections. Sale of the old style wire, switches and outlets still on dealers' shelves, however, continued after 1972.

Trouble signs

Signs of trouble in aluminum wire systems include warm-to-the-touch face plates on outlets or switches, flickering lights, circuits that don't work, or the smell of burning plastic at outlets or switches. Unfortunately, not all failing aluminum wired connections provide such easily detected warning signs; aluminum wired connections have been reported to fail without any prior indications or problems.

What the homeowner can do

If you have noticed any of the trouble signs, have a qualified electrician determine whether the problem is caused by deteriorating connections to aluminum wiring. **DO NOT TRY TO DO IT YOURSELF.** You could be electrocuted or you could make the connections worse by disturbing them.

If you are not certain whether your home has aluminum branch circuit wiring, you may be able to tell by looking at the markings on the surface of the electric cables which are visible in unfinished basements, attics or garages. Aluminum wiring will have "Al" or "Aluminum" marked every few feet along the length of the cable. (Note: the marking "CU-clad" or "Copper-clad" in addition to the "Al" or "Aluminum" means that the cable uses copper-coated aluminum wire and is not covered by this message.)

Can the problem be fixed?

One method of eliminating the risks associated with old technology aluminum wiring terminations is to eliminate the primary cause--the aluminum wire itself. Depending upon the architectural style of your home and the number and locations of unfinished spaces (e.g., basements and attics), it may be relatively easy to rewire your home. A new copper wire branch circuit system would be installed, and the existing aluminum wire would be abandoned inside the walls. This is the most expensive method of repairing an aluminum wired home, but if you can afford the cost, it is also the best method available.

Since it may be impractical to rewire some types of aluminum wired homes (e.g., condominium units), or since re-wiring may be prohibitively expensive for some homes (e.g., split-levels with no unfinished areas), the Commission staff attempted to find a repair method which would permit the continued use of existing old technology aluminum wire. The main criteria to be met by such a repair method are:

- It must permit the repair of every connection to, or splice between, aluminum wire in the home,
- The repaired connections must be permanent but must result in a system that can be maintained without the need for special switches, wall outlets or other connectors,
- The repair technique must be practical for use in an occupied and furnished home.

The CPSC-sponsored research, laboratory tests, and demonstration projects identified only one method of repairing existing aluminum wire circuits which meet these criteria. That repair is known as the *crimp connector* repair.

The crimp connector repair consists of attaching a piece of copper wire to the existing aluminum wire branch circuit with a specially designed metal sleeve and powered crimping tool. The metal sleeve is called a COPALUM parallel splice connector and is manufactured only by AMP Incorporated. This special connector can be properly installed only with the matching AMP tool. This tool makes a permanent connection that is, in effect, a cold weld. An insulating sleeve is placed around the crimp connector to complete the repair.

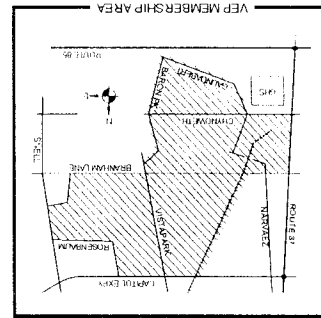
To determine whether the COPALUM crimp connection method of repair is available in your area, you may wish to call the manufacturer of the COPALUM connector for a list of authorized electricians who are doing aluminum branch circuit repair work in your area. You may write to:

AMP Incorporated
Attn: Aluminum Wire Repair Program
Mail Stop 140-13
P.O. Box 3608
Harrisburg, PA 17105-3608
Phone 1-800-522-6752

[Ed. Note: VEP-area homes have been found to have a mix of aluminum and copper wiring. The foregoing article will be continued in next month's VEP NEWS. In the meantime, you can obtain the rest of this article, entitled "Repairing Aluminum Wiring" (CSPC #516) by visiting the Consumer Product Safety Commission website: www.cspc.gov.]

VEP
Meeting 7:30 pm
Tuesday, October 28

[REDACTED]



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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 our Treasurer or write to the address listed above.

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

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VEP Community Association



THE VEP NEWS

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 7:30 pm at Gunderson

Check us out at www.vepca.org