

THE VEP NEWS



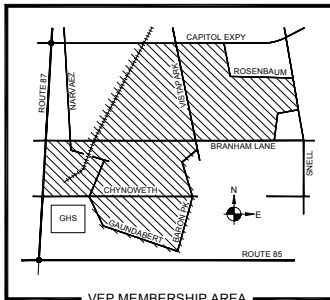
VEP Community Association

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

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.

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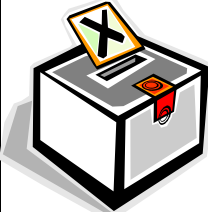

Vista Park

in the
7:30 pm

Be sure to attend
VEP's
October 26th Meeting

VEP Community Calendar

October / November 2010

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26 VEP Community Meeting - 7:30 PM - Vista Park Community Room	27	28	29	30
31 Halloween 	1 Dia de los Muertos 	2 Election Day 	3	4	5	6
7 End of Day-light Savings Time Fall back 1 Hour 	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20

**Santa is Coming to the Vista Park
Community Room
475 Hyde Park Drive**

**Bring your kids or the whole family
for a free photo with Santa. We will
also have arts and crafts, and light
refreshments.**

**Have a photo taken by photographer
Jeri Arstingstall of
Precious Moments in Time,
or feel free to bring your own
camera.**

**When: Sunday November 28th
Santa hours: 2 pm to 4 pm**

**VEP wants to thank you for your
support**

**Wishing you and your family a
joyous holiday season**



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VEP NEWS

• VEP COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION •

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

October 2010

VEP'S MEETING

7:30 p.m. Tuesday
► **October 26, 2010** ◄

Vista Park Community Room
475 Hyde Park Drive

AGENDA

★ Branham Lane Sewer System Project ★

Presentation by
Thuy Nguyen, Senior Civil Engineer,
San Jose City Department of Public Works

★ Vista Park - Phase 3 of Master Plan ★

Presentation by Evelyn Valez-Rosario and PRNS Staff

★ VEP Business Meeting/Announcements ★

Door Raffle Prize
Champagne Wishes and Chocolate Dreams

Approval of 2010-2011 Budget

Announcements & Updates
Santa in the Park – Thanksgiving Weekend Event
Vista Park Landscaping - November
Martial Cottle Park Design EIR

★ Your Concerns and Ideas ★

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

VEP's October Meeting

by Marilyn Rodgers

Topics that are planned for the October general membership meeting:

► **Branham Lane Sewer System Project.** Ms. Thuy Nguyen, Sr. Civil Engineer for San Jose City Department of Public Works, and John Aquino, Project Manager will provide an overview on the Sewer System Project currently being done along Branham Lane between New Compton Drive and Visatapark Drive. Many of you have voiced curiosity and/or concern regarding this project. Come find out more about this important project and have your questions answered!

► **Vista Park Phase 3 Master Plan Presentation.** Evelyn Valez-Rosario, Manager, and the San Jose City Parks & Recreation Staff will do a brief presentation to update members on Phase 3 of the project to complete the work surrounding the Community Room. Staff would like input from members on several components of the plan including deciding on a preferred design for the security gates for the community room building.

► **VEP Business Meeting/Announcements.** Members will be asked to approve the budget for 2010-2011. Announcements of upcoming events.

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

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

September General Meeting Synopsis

By Adina Pierce

VEP's first meeting after the summer break was held on September 28, 2010 in the Vista Park Community Room.

To a standing room only crowd, **Marilyn Rodgers** introduced **Laura Cowan**, Assistant to Councilwoman Nancy Pyle, new



Gunderson High School Principal **Dominic Bejarano**, and **Mike Wasserman**, candidate for Supervisor, Santa Clara County District 1.

Layla Suarez, new owner of Giacobbe's Restaurant on Pearl Avenue provided free appetizers. She announced that Tuesday nights is all-you-can-eat Spaghetti night at the restaurant, for just \$6.95 a person. They offer catering, and soon will be offering a delivery service.

2010 is VEP's 41st year!



Next, Candidates **Linda LeZotte** and **Dan Furtado** who are running for the District 4 Seat on the Santa Clara Valley Water District Board, each gave a five minute statement for their campaign.

The next presentation was given by **Alex Mordwinow**, Operations Manager for the San Jose City Department of Transportation, and **Tom Borden** from the Department of Public Works. They discussed the proposal for the special assessment district for street landscape maintenance.

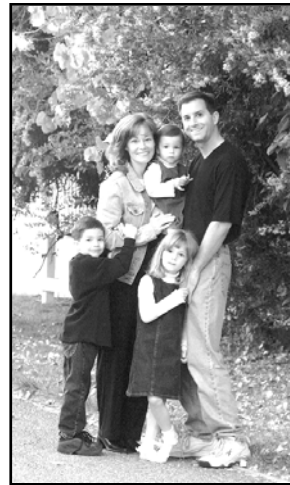
The options we have now are to 1. Remove high maintenance landscaping and convert to low maintenance 2. Take part in the Adopt-a-Street program 3. Expand the Assessment District network.

If approved by a 2/3s vote, the approximate annual cost per year (added to the homeowners property tax bill) will be between \$30 and \$55, depending on the level of service.

The VEP members in attendance voted in favor of continuing to get more information for the new Assessment District.

Next, **Marilyn Rodgers** discussed the new Goals and Objectives for the 2010/2011 year, and this was approved by the membership.

Adina Pierce and **Marilyn Rodgers** gave a brief update for the Martial Cottle Park project. They attended a meeting on September 22, 2010 where the Draft Environmental Impact Report was presented. The public has until October 22, 2010 to review the EIR document and submit any feedback to the County Parks Department. The final EIR will be published in November, then it will be presented to the County Board of Supervisors and State Park and Recreation Commission in December/January for approval. The design of the park will be developed in 2011.



Precious Moments In Time

Family and Children Portraits

Weddings and Special Events

Photography by Jeri Arstingstall

★ VEP MEMBER ★

(408) 281-3393

VEP Board of Directors Welcomes New Member – Katherine Decker

by Marilyn Rodgers

Long time VEP member and volunteer Katherine Decker, has joined the VEP Board of Directors. Born in Oakland, Katherine is a 5th generation Californian. She grew up in Calaveras County, eventually moving to San Jose in 1988 where she first lived in neighboring Tanglewood. In 1994, she moved to the VEP neighborhood. Katherine is a mother of two adult children, and the proud grandmother of two. She is a Registered Nurse with extensive experience in critical care. She works at Good Samaritan Hospital in San Jose. Katherine has been a VEP volunteer from the time she moved to VEP.

Many VEP residents know that Katherine and her husband Dann are the sponsors of the Blossom Valley Christmas Tree. For several years the Deckers provided additional Christmas cheer for VEP neighbors with the decorating of the 75 foot cedar in their front yard (located just south of Gunderson High School off of Chynoweth). The fun also included singing Christmas carols with neighbors, enjoying a cup of hot cider, and bringing canned goods and toys as donations for worthy local charities. Katherine is particularly interested in working on projects that will provide hospitality and outreach to new residents and members, and in educating our community about emergency preparedness. We are pleased to welcome Katherine to the Board!

October Meeting Raffle

Join us for the October 26th VEP General meeting and get a raffle ticket for a chance to win a sampler box of chocolates from Champagne Wishes and Chocolate Dreams. www.champagnechocolate.etsy.com



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Street Landscaping Maintenance – Special Assessment District Proposal

By Alex Mordwinow, Operations Manager, Department of Transportation, City of San Jose



At the September VEP meeting, City of San Jose staff presented an overview on landscape conditions and the options the VEP neighborhood has in maintaining landscape parcels within the VEP boundaries. Staff members shared general information about citywide landscape conditions and possibility of the formation of a special landscape district within the VEP boundaries.



Through tough financial times, the City has been forced to make difficult decisions. These decisions have meant placing landscape maintenance low on the priority list in order to sustain other city services, particularly police and fire protection. This has resulted in significant reductions to the maintenance budget and the numbers of staff. During the past few years, the City developed an option for increased service in areas which have voiced a desire for something more. While nobody likes the idea of paying additional taxes, or assessments, the creation of a landscape special district is that solution. The creation of a landscape district establishes a consistent revenue source that legally can only be used for the specific use of landscape maintenance within the boundaries identified during the establishment of that district. The district then becomes immune to the peaks and valleys of the City's general budget deficits, and landscaping can be consistently maintained in a condition that is planned and expected.

If a landscape district is formed, property owners will pay the established assessment when they pay their annual property taxes. Along with the City's contribution (which would be what

the City would have paid for maintenance of the parcels within the district boundaries), the assessments paid by the property owners will be transferred to a special fund. This fund is managed by the City's Maintenance District Staff. A small percentage of the fund will go toward staff and city overhead, and the remaining balance is used only for landscape maintenance, repairs and renovations.

To maintain the landscape areas initially identified with the VEP area, the City created and presented two estimates, describing two different levels of service. The first estimate represents an optimal maintenance option at an annual cost of \$160,000. This estimate would include all weed abatement, plant pruning, plant replacements, water, tree care, management and inspection. The second estimate represents a minimal maintenance level to sustain and clean up what exists now at an annual cost of \$90,000. The estimate includes approximately 2,950 properties within the proposed district boundaries. The approximate average cost per property would be \$55.00 for the optimum service, and \$30.00 for the reduced level of service.

During the September meeting, a number of residents asked about the possibility of adding additional maintenance sites to the potential district.

Next steps include having the City staff prepare and present to VEP representatives, additional maintenance options and asso-

Total Cost	Maintenance Cost / Sq. Ft.	Level of Service	Cost Per Unit / Year
\$160,000	\$1.00	Optimal	\$55 / Unit Annually
\$90,000	\$0.55	Minimal Maintenance/ Cleanup	\$30 / Unit Annually

ciated additional costs. City staff will then take direction from the representatives on whether to proceed in the process to create a special district. A special district can only be created by a majority vote of property owners within the district boundaries, and can also be disbanded in the future by the same method.

Staff members of the Department of Transportation will be attending another VEP meeting in the future (date to be determined), to discuss in greater detail the special district options, and any other landscaping concerns you may have.

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Support San José's Green Vision – Register Tree Planting Online!

By Our City Forest

Do you live in San José? Have you planted a tree lately? If so, visit www.ourcityforest.org/everytreecounts and register it today! Its quick and easy – simply answer a few basic questions about your tree.



As thanks for supporting this initiative, residents who register the trees they've planted in San José will receive a **\$10 OSH coupon*** (*\$10 off a purchase of \$50 or more) This special offer can be redeemed via a link provided on the "Thank You" screen after submission.

Developed by Our City Forest, this online registry program – called *Every Tree Counts!* – is helping to record our city's progress toward the Green Vision 100K tree-planting goal. Every tree planted counts, from the fruit tree added to a backyard landscape to the seedling planted at a local park.

Wondering about the Green Vision? Announced by Mayor Chuck Reed in 2007, this fifteen-year plan is meant to transform our city into a greener, more environmentally friendly and sustainable city. The Green Vision sets 10 goals for San José including the planting of 100,000 new trees in the city, diverting 100% of waste from landfills, and reducing per capita energy use by 50%. To learn more, visit the City of San José website at www.sanjoseca.gov/greenvision/.

Why plant trees in the city? Shade trees vastly improve the quality of life in urban areas. One large shade tree can reduce the need for air conditioning and lower energy use by 10 - 50 percent. Trees also improve air quality by removing particulate pollution and absorbing excess carbon dioxide. But that's not all — city trees also help to reduce noise pollution, screen urban views and protect our watershed by minimizing erosion. One tree can even increase a property's value by 5 to 15 percent!

If you are interested in a shade tree for your street, park or school, contact Our City Forest! OCF has **free** shade trees available for San José residents. To apply, simply 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.

Our City Forest is a 501(c)(3) urban forestry nonprofit that has served the San José area since 1994. With help from city and state grants and local contributions, Our City Forest has distributed \$5 million worth of free trees and services to neighborhoods, schools and agencies, including nearly 50,000 15-gallon shade trees.

Communication with Our Members

by Marilyn Rodgers, Adina Pierce, Susan Iverson

Face to face communication is usually the most meaningful and rewarding. Monthly membership meetings between September and May, special events and projects provide this opportunity. However, we have many non-face to face opportunities as well – they are as follows:



As you are reading this newsletter, you already know about our Number 1 (and most popular) way to communicate with our members – through the **VEP NEWS**. Our members continue to tell us how much they enjoy receiving and reading the newsletter.

We continue to evaluate and utilize electronic means of communicating with our members, particularly in between editions of the newsletter (remember **e-distribution of the newsletter** is available upon request as well).

E-mail alerts – if you have e-mail and would like to receive monthly e-mail Alerts, please be sure we have a current e-mail address. (We usually send one or two e-mails per month, so we will not fill your mailbox with junk e-mails; and e-mail addresses are confidential).

VEP Website – www.vepca.net – find current information, highlights of upcoming events, as well as historical information on the website. Our website is intended for use by both members and non-members. Look for an increasing amount of information to be available on the website in the future.

VEP - Yahoo groups and Facebook – for those members interested in additional electronic access and use "social media" sites, VEP has a **Yahoo group** and is on **Facebook**.

What is VEP Community Association?

- VEP is an all-volunteer organization of your neighbors working to improve our neighborhoods; VEP is our community's "homeowner's association".
- VEP volunteers participate in a variety of activities, all of which originate in and benefit our neighborhoods.
- VEP volunteers make our neighborhood's views and needs known to government at all levels.
- Founded in 1969, we are one of the largest, most successful, and most active and enduring grass roots volunteer organizations in Santa Clara County.

Why join VEP?

- To receive our newsletter nine times a year, keeping you up-to-date and informed.
- To participate in and support neighborhood activities and representation.
- To contribute to our annual VEP Community Service Awards for area high school graduates.
- To be part of an outstanding community organization with a long record of success for our neighborhoods.



November 2nd Ballot Issues



San Jose Measure V

Measure V would amend Section 1111 of our City Charter to change the mandatory arbitration process for police and fire department employee disputes.

Currently, Section 1111 requires that unresolved disputes about wages, hours, or terms and conditions of employment between the City and the applicable police or fire employee organization be submitted to a three member Arbitration Board. The City and applicable employee organization each select one arbitrator and they jointly select the third as the neutral arbitrator who serves as the Board's chair. If the parties cannot agree on the neutral arbitrator, they strike names from a list provided by the State. After the arbitration hearing, the parties submit a last offer on each issue, and the Board, by majority vote, decides each issue by selecting the last offer that most nearly conforms to factors traditionally taken into consideration in the determination of wages, hours and other terms of public and private employment. Section 1111 lists a number of these factors, including the City's financial condition and its ability to pay the award's cost, but does not specify a priority.

This measure would change the arbitration procedure as follows:

If the parties cannot agree on the neutral arbitrator, then either party may request the Santa Clara County Superior Court to appoint a retired Superior Court judge.

Arbitration hearings must be open to the public and documents submitted are public records, unless provided otherwise by law.

State law governing arbitrations shall apply only to the extent that they do not conflict with Section 1111.

This measure would also change the factors considered by the Arbitration Board. The Board must determine which party's last offer satisfies certain financial factors, is in the best interest and promotes the welfare of the public, and most nearly conforms to the traditional factors. The primary factors, however, are the City's financial condition and its ability to pay for compensation (defined to include wages and benefits) from ongoing revenues without reducing services. Further, substantial weight must be given to the rate of increase or decrease in compensation for other City employees.

The Board could not issue an award that would (1) increase the projected cost of compensation at a rate that exceeds the rate of increase of certain revenue averaged over the prior five fiscal years; (2) retroactively increase or decrease compensation for service already rendered, excluding base wages; (3) create a new unfunded liability for which the City would be obligated to pay; or (4) interfere with the discretion of the Police or Fire Chiefs to make operational or staffing decisions.

This measure would also allow court action for failure to comply with Section 1111. Lastly, the measure provides that if a court determines that any portion of Section 1111 is not valid or enforceable, then Section 1111 will be inoperative and there will be no compulsory arbitration for police and fire employee disputes.

A "yes" vote is a vote to approve the changes described above. A "no" vote is a vote to maintain the existing Section 1111.

[Ed. Note: This is the official City Attorney's Impartial Analysis.]

San Jose Measure U

Measure U, if approved by a majority of voters, will enact an ordinance taxing marijuana businesses at a rate of up to 10% of their gross receipts for the privilege of conducting business within the City. This tax will be in addition to the current business tax imposed on businesses in San Jose. The marijuana business tax will tax gross receipts from the planting, cultivation, harvesting, transporting, manufacturing, compounding, converting, processing, preparing, storing, packaging, and wholesale and retail sales of marijuana and ancillary products in the City, whether or not carried on for profit.

This tax will not take effect until the City Council, by ordinance, sets the rate of the tax, which cannot exceed 10% of gross receipts. The City Council may, at any time, set a lower tax rate for all marijuana businesses or establish differing tax rates for different categories of marijuana businesses, subject to the maximum rate of 10% of gross receipts. The City Council may also increase the tax rate from time to time, provided the rate set does not exceed 10% of gross receipts.

This Measure does not legalize or otherwise permit marijuana businesses in San Jose.

The revenues from the tax imposed by Measure U will be subject to the annual audit performed by the City's independent auditor which is reported in the City's Comprehensive Annual Financial Report.

A "yes" vote is a vote to permit the City Council to impose, by ordinance, a new business tax on marijuana businesses at a rate of up to 10% of gross receipts in addition to the current business tax. A "no" vote is a vote not to permit the City Council to impose, by ordinance, a new business tax on marijuana businesses at a rate of up to 10% of gross receipts.

[Ed. Note: This is the official City Attorney's Impartial Analysis.]

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CRIME STOPPERS

San Jose Measure W

Measure W would amend our City Charter to allow the Council on or after November 3, 2010, to (1) adopt an ordinance excluding any officer or employee hired after the ordinance's effective date from any retirement plan or benefit of any retirement plan then in existence, and (2) provide a retirement plan or plans for such officers and employees that are not subject to the current minimum requirements set forth in the Charter. In addition, the proposed Charter amendment would require any new or different retirement plan established on or after November 3, 2010 to be actuarially sound.

Charter Section 1500 requires the Council to provide retirement plans for the City's officers and employees unless an exception applies. Charter Section 1501 currently allows Council to exclude certain persons from any or all retirement plans. The Charter also currently allows the Council to change any retirement plan or adopt different retirement plans for the City's officers and employees. However, the current Charter provisions require that any new retirement plan for most City employees meet certain minimum requirements set forth in Charter Sections 1504 and 1505.

The proposed Charter amendment would allow Council to adopt an ordinance to exclude City officers and employees hired on or after the ordinance's effective date from any existing retirement plans or benefits. Such an ordinance would be subject to the requirements of applicable law. The proposed Charter amendment would also allow Council to establish a retirement plan or plans for such employees that do not meet current minimum requirements set forth in the Charter for City retirement plans.

Currently, only the retirement plans for police and fire employees are required by the Charter to be actuarially sound. The proposed Charter amendment would require that any new or different retirement plan established by the Council be actuarially sound.

Voting "yes" would amend the Charter to (1) allow the City Council, by ordinance, to exclude officers and employees hired on or after the ordinance's effective date from any retirement plans or benefits then in existence and from the current minimum retirement provisions specified in the Charter, and (2) require in the Charter that any new or different retirement plan be actuarially sound.

Voting "no" means that no changes will be made to the Charter's retirement provisions.

[Note: This is the official City Attorney's Impartial Analysis.]



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VTA Measure B

State law authorizes the Santa Clara Valley Transportation Authority (VTA), following a noticed public hearing, to impose an additional motor vehicle registration fee of up to ten dollars (\$10) on each motor vehicle registered within the County of Santa Clara (County). The proceeds of this fee can be used for congestion and pollution mitigation programs and projects that bear a relationship to or benefit the owners of motor vehicles who pay the fee. Such a fee must be approved by a majority of the voters voting in an election. Not more than 5 percent of fees collected may be used for administrative costs associated with the programs and projects.

The VTA Board of Directors (Board) proposes to add a \$10 fee on each vehicle registered in the County. Proceeds of this fee would be used for the following purposes: repair potholes, repave and maintain local streets, improve traffic flow on local roads; improve safety; pay for other congestion and pollution mitigation projects; and provide matching funds for federal and state funding. The expenditure plan allocates the fee revenue to transportation-related programs and projects, consistent with the Metropolitan Transportation Commission's regional transportation plan and VTA's valley transportation plan. Eighty percent of the fees collected would be allocated to local road improvement and repair; 15% to the countywide program; and up to 5% for program administration, with unused program funds disbursed through the countywide program.

Any vehicle that is exempted under the Vehicle Code from payment of registration fees would be exempted from the \$10 fee. The expenditure plan would be audited annually and periodically reviewed by the Board to determine if any modifications would be necessary. If the fee is approved, it would apply to any original vehicle registration and renewal registration occurring on or after six months following the adoption of the measure by the voters. Collection of the fee does not have an expiration date.

A "yes" vote is a vote to approve an additional \$10 fee annually on each motor vehicle registration that is paid within the County of Santa Clara.

A "no" vote is a vote not to approve an additional \$10 fee annually on each motor vehicle registration that is paid within the County of Santa Clara.

[Ed. Note: This is the official County Counsel's Impartial Analysis.]

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Halloween Happenings

Goblyns Glen / The Witching Hour

Weekends through Oct 31st

6:30p to 11:00p

at [Oak Meadow Park](#), Los Gatos, CA

Price: 10.00

Phone: (408) 395-7433

Age Suitability: All Ages

Creator: Goblyns Glen

Goblyns Glen is a fun and creepy experience for children of ALL ages. Enter a world of enchantment and spooky thrills as you trick or treat your way through. As you tour the town, you will meet different characters, take in marvelous Halloween displays and have fun! There will be vendors, food, and fun for entire family. Goblyns Glen will close at 8:30, then at 9pm The Witching Hour will open with all new effects and scares. It will be the same Glen, only intensified beyond belief, not for little ones

Trick-or-Tree Tour in Downtown San José

Saturday, Oct 30 2:00p to 4:00p

at [St. James Park](#), San Jose, CA

Price: FREE

Phone: (408) 998-7337

Age Suitability: 18 and up

Calling all tree-lovers and trick-or-treaters! You're sure to get in the Halloween spirit on this "spooky" stroll through St. James Park. With an Our City Forest arborist as your guide, you'll learn about our city's beautiful trees and view some gorgeous fall color!

****Costumes encouraged! This is a free event.****

RSVP to education@ourcityforest.org or call (408) 99-TREES x123. For more information, visit www.ourcityforest.org.

Spend the Night at the Zoo

Saturday, Oct 30 6:00p to Sunday, Oct 31 9:30a

at [Happy Hollow Park and Zoo](#), San Jose, CA

Price: \$55

Phone: (408) 794-6420

Age Suitability: All Ages

Creator: Happy Hollow

Happy Hollow Park & Zoo Family Sleepover
Be our guest for a wild sleepover and enjoy the thrill of the zoo after dark. Your family will participate in animal encounters, hands-on activities, games, crafts, and behind-the-scenes tours. Your adventure includes a late-night snack and breakfast the next morning. You can choose between tent camping in the Crooked House Meadow or sleeping in the Learning LODGE.

Kathy's Kookies

ayearofcookies.blogspot.com

By Kathy Wood, Baker

Sighs and snores could be heard from my kitchen at the end of the day on January 2nd. The mixer, measuring cups, mixing bowls, and cookie sheets celebrated a full year of daily work by relaxing on their individual shelves after the last cookie recipe was accomplished.

Several pounds of flour, sugar, and butter along with dozens of eggs, bags upon bags of chocolate chips, and a full warehouse-size roll of parchment paper have passed through my kitchen in the past 365 days. New tastes were discovered, such as the spice, cardamom, and I found that dates don't taste as bad as I thought they did when I was a child. Chocolate, ever my favorite, was used in so many different ways I never thought possible, but always ended in a delicious cookie.

Through this experience I have baked some cookies that I will probably not bake again, yet others have been added to the Favorites list. I have learned some different techniques, have found unique utensils at thrift shops, bought cookie cookbooks at garage sales, and always had something to share at parties (I'll bring cookies!!!). I was amazed as I neared the end that I was still finding recipes that hadn't been tried. I now believe there's not a cookie out there I couldn't whip up.

This recipe begins with a cake mix and ends with happy taste buds. It is quite simple and is a great bar cookie to tote to your next get-together.

French Vanilla Coconut Macaroon Bars. Ingredients: 1 package French Vanilla Cake Mix, 1/3 cup margarine or butter, 2 tablespoons water, 1 teaspoon vanilla, 1 egg, 1 ½ cups coconut, ½ cup semi-sweet chocolate chips. Instructions: Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Spray a 13x9-inch baking pan with cooking spray; set aside. Place cake mix in large mixing bowl. With pastry blender or fork, cut in butter until mixture resembles coarse crumbs. Add water, vanilla, and egg; blend well. Stir in coconut; mix well. Press dough evenly into prepared pan.

Bake for 16-22 minutes or until bars are golden brown and edges begin to pull away from sides of pan. Cool 15 minutes. In small saucepan over low heat, melt chocolate chips, stirring constantly. Drizzle over bars in desired design. Cool 1 ½ hours or until completely cooled. Cut into 24 bars. (Cheryl Osborn, Flushing, MI, "Pillsbury The Million Dollar Bake-Off" cookbook, Minneapolis, MN, 1996.)

Think my baking days are over? Not quite. The new year has brought 52 Cakes. Baking a different cake every day was not practical and not good for our waistlines, so once a week the baking equipment pulls together to create a new cake recipe. Go to 52cakes.blogspot.com to begin the journey to have cake and eat it too!



Career Closet

By Dave Noel

If you have women's suits and business attire that you'd like to give away, consider the San Jose Career Closet. They are a volunteer-based organization that provides business attire and other services. They assist women to choose clothing that will help them gain and retain employment, advance their careers and improve family stability. Career Closet thrives with the help of dedicated volunteers and is committed to helping women be successful. Last year, they assisted more than 1,800 women for that all important job interview.



For more information, call (408) 451-1200, or visit www.careercloset.org.

Thank You to Our Volunteers

by Helen Castillo and Marilyn Rodgers

Thank you to all of our VEP Volunteers! As an "all volunteer" organization, we appreciate all of you, and we feel we never tell you often enough. We continue to look for meaningful ways to highlight the important work volunteers are doing for our organization. In the next few weeks we will be contacting many of you to ask for your thoughts and feedback as to what might be helpful to volunteers in keeping them abreast of new opportunities to volunteer as well as what type of volunteers and volunteer activities we are in immediate need of filling.

Eliminate Unwanted Catalogs

by Dave Noel

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

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!

High Flying Fun Closer than you Know!

By Susan Iverson

About a year ago I discovered a great new way to spend the wee hours of the morning. Sometimes as early as 4 o'clock in the morning, we will meet in an open field to start the set-up. After about 40 minutes, we launch into the sky! Hot air ballooning is an addicting, but little known sport. Most people associate hot air balloons with a few movies, a weekend in Napa, a festival in New Mexico, or a way to get around the world in 80 days. But it would surprise most people to learn hot air balloons fly frequently and locally on a fairly regular basis. And just about anyone can join in the fun.

Many balloons fly out of Morgan Hill airport, Tracy airport, and Santa Rosa airport on weekends when the weather is good. And good for balloonists means light or no wind, clear skies, and mild temperatures. Festivals go on through out the year, both in our own backyard and in surrounding destinations. They can be as close as Reno, or as far away as Albuquerque, NM, but also some great ones occur in Medford and Albany OR, and in Montague CA.



The most amazing part of any festival is the mass ascension. Although the balloons leave the field at various times, they are in the general area for the first 10 to 30 minutes. Colorful balloons fill the sky, seeming to hang like ornaments over the field. Balloons come in variety of shapes, sizes and colors, and many are 'special shapes', such as stage coaches, Noah's Ark, or even the Energizer Bunny.

While attending a festival can be amazing from a visual standpoint, getting involved is an amazing experience. Helping out with inflating and launching a balloon is called 'crewing' and is easy to learn and easy to do. Getting involved can be as simple as holding the throat of a balloon while a fan blows air. And finding a balloon that needs extra crew is as easy as walking out on the field and asking if they need help. Many festivals have booths where attendees can volunteer to crew. Crewing is voluntary, and there is never a guarantee that you will get a ride, but if you find a balloon crew that you like, you will enjoy some amazing experiences and likely get a ride to float above the earth.

Check out www.hotairballoon.com to find a balloon festival near you.



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“Thank You” to Our Advertisers

by Marilyn Rodgers, Ginger Cardona, Susan Iverson

We want to take this opportunity to thank our Advertisers. They play an important role in VEP's continued fiscal health. Many of them have been loyal supporters of VEP for many years. Others are new to VEP. Whether long term or new, advertisers appreciate knowing when their advertising dollars are effective and bring them business. Please take a moment to look through the VEP Newsletter with particular attention directed to the advertisers. If there are products or services that you, your family, or friends may be in need of, contact our advertisers first. And....most importantly, be sure to mention that you are a member of VEP, and saw their ad in our newsletter!!

Do you have a business, or know of a business that may benefit from advertising in the VEP Newsletter? We currently have an open position for an advertiser.

VEP NEEDS YOU!!

by Marilyn Rodgers

There are several opportunities for you to volunteer for your community association! We are offering members the opportunity to “test” the waters...to learn what it is like to be a board member, by being an “assistant” to a board member. Opportunities include – assist the Webmaster, Newsletter editor, or Volunteer Coordinator. The time commitment would be approximately 2 hours per month. Come on, volunteer...you'll enjoy it!

**VEP helps you solve
community problems**

Don't Forget to Vote!

Vote by Mail or in Person

Did You Know?

**If you vote by Mail, you can also
Drop off your completed mail ballot at any local
Polling Place on Election Day – November 2nd!**

Hazardous Waste

By Dave Noel

As of February 2006, it is illegal to dispose of items classified as Universal Waste in your trash or recycling cart. Here are some items and disposal methods:



Household batteries, Fluorescent light bulbs and tubes, Mercury thermostats and thermometers

Call the County's Household Hazardous Waste Collection Program at (408) 299-7300 to find free locations to drop these items off. OSH will accept fluorescent bulbs and Radio Shack will take household rechargeable batteries.

Computer Monitors and TVs with cathode ray tubes, Flat Screen TVs (LCD and plasma)

Call Recycle Plus Customer service at (408) 535-3515 for a Large Item Collection appointment. The current cost is \$23 for a full computer system or TV. Other recyclers may take these items for free.

If your items are still useful or repairable, you can offer them to others via Craig's List or a local freecycle email group, such as groups.yahoo.com/group/sanjosefreecycle

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Gunderson Updates

School is in full swing, and so are activities at Gunderson. We just completed College Week, campus clubs have been established and are busy planning events, and Homecoming activities kept everyone busy during October. Activities included a day rally with a surprise teacher flash mob, a night rally with Disney themed class skits, a week of Spirit Days with dress up themes, a Saturday night dance and of course, the night football game against Lincoln.

Gunderson Idol was a huge success. The event was fun and very well attended with the theater being close to sold out for every performance.

Gunderson is proud to announce that with the support of our amazing student body, the school won the "GOT MILK" breakfast challenge by increasing our breakfast consumption on campus. With this win over San Jose High and Willow Glen High, Gunderson ASB will receive \$3,000!

San Jose Repertory Theater came to Gunderson in October and performed Tennessee Williams' play, "The Glass Menagerie" in the Gunderson Theater. Drama students, theater techies and the entire junior class were treated to 2 performances by professional actors.

The Gunderson Foundation held a very successful wine tasting/ fundraising event at Joseph George. The Foundation continues to grow in number. If you are interested in becoming a member or attending any of the fun foundation events, contact the school.

October was also RESPECT month at Gunderson, highlighting the second tenet of GRIZZLY PRIDE (Personal Responsibility, Respect, Integrity, Diversity and Excellence). Students continue to receive Grizzly Paw Dollars for demonstrating all of the positive attributes of Grizzly Pride. Additionally, Student of the Month winners are selected with the monthly Pride focus. September was PERSONAL RESPONSIBILITY month, and all classes held a competition for the best attendance. The class that won had a lunchtime pizza party thrown for them.

San Jose Leadership Academy is dedicated to developing community leaders for San Jose's future. Juniors are given

the opportunity to use and strengthen problem-solving and leadership skills in an experiential learning process. Participants in this program are selected based on character and passion for the community and a desire to change ideas and attitudes in other people to improve the community. Students get an in-depth look at our community and learn how to take an active role in affecting change. The juniors chosen this year for this very prestigious program are Patrick Boyle, Genella Cox, Brandon Levi, Colton Bentz, Julio Valdez and Amber White.

Gunderson High School has done it again! For the fifth time, in as many years, a Gunderson student has received the honor of STUDENT of the YEAR from the Silicon Valley Chamber of Commerce. His San Jose Leadership Academy peers chose Nick Ben last June. Nick was honored at the annual "Legends and Leaders" award ceremony at the Fairmont Hotel in October, and received a \$3,000 scholarship from the Silicon Valley Chamber of Commerce. We are all very proud of Nick.

"VEP" Community Association

What does "VEP" stand for?

How did we get that odd name?

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

V = Vistapark;
E = Encore (and Echo Valley); and
P = Parkview Valley.

That's all there is to it!

Of course, we've grown over the years to include the Blossom Heights subdivision and others, including Las Brisas in 2004. But our original **VEP** name stuck, and we've been known by it for 36 years. Some like to think of us as...

Very Energetic People

See the mailing page of this newsletter for a map of VEP's core membership area. We also welcome members from outside these boundaries who share common interests.

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