



Mustard plants in "Super Bloom," April 25th.  
(Canoas Creek through Martial Cottle Park.)  
- Photo by Adina Pierce

## VEP Community Meeting

**WEDNESDAY, MAY 31st @7:00 PM**  
**Vista Park Community Room**  
**475 Hyde Park Drive**

~ Everyone is Welcome! Invite Your Neighbors! ~

### MAY MEETING AGENDA

#### - VEP's 2023 Community Service Awards -

Presented by the VEPCA Executive Board of Directors

#### - U.S. Congressman Jimmy Panetta -

Representative for California District 19

#### - Captain Stephen Donohue -

Southern Division Commander, SJPd

#### - District 2: Information & Updates -

From The Office of Councilmember Sergio Jimenez

#### - VEP Business Meeting -

Treasurer's Report, Upcoming Events & Summer Break

#### - Open Forum / Member Q&A -

A chance to voice opinions and/or seek VEP's help!

## PRESIDENT'S CORNER

By Alain Mowad

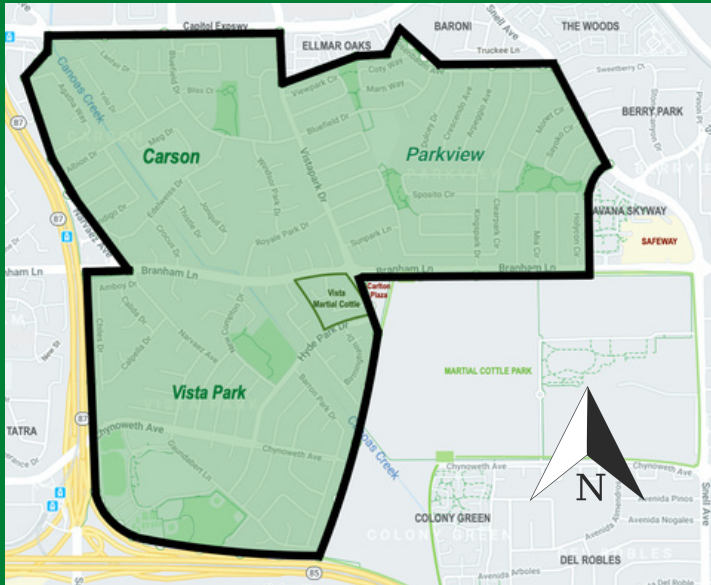
Thanks to everyone who was able to attend our March meeting. We were really happy to host Mayor Matt Mahan, who walked us through the City's budget process, priorities and timeline. In case you missed it, we recorded the meeting and posted it [online](#). The recap is on [Page 2](#).

On that topic, we have received several requests to record our meetings from members who cannot attend in person. Our trial with the March meeting worked perfectly, so we plan to record all future meetings and post them to our web site for anyone to review. Of course, if you can, we still strongly encourage you to attend in person to meet other neighbors in your community and engage with our special guests and Board members.

Well, it looks like Spring is finally here! I hope I didn't jinx anything by stating that. In any event, our last association meeting before the summer break will be held on May 31st at 7:00 PM, and we hope you will join us. U.S. Congressman [Jimmy Panetta](#), who represents California's District 19, and SJPd's Southern District Commander [Captain Stephen Donohue](#), will be our special guests. They are both looking forward to sharing updates as well as hearing from our members. We will also present the 2023 "Community Service Awards" to two local graduating high school students!

Remember that VEPCA takes a break from meetings and newsletters for the summer, but you can still reach out to the Executive Board of Directors via email, as needed. I'm looking forward to seeing many of you at our first meeting in the Fall! Read on for updates about local projects, and so much more!

## VEPCA Membership Area



VEP Community Association is a not-for-profit organization, supported by a board of volunteers. First established in 1969, it is one of San Jose's oldest community associations. VEPCA serves and represents homeowners in the Blossom Valley area of southern San Jose and has grown to encompass more than 2,800 homes. Its primary focus is on neighborhood beautification, safety and local civic affairs. This newsletter is emailed to all current VEPCA members, but is also available on line for all to view.

**VEP News** is typically published monthly, with the exception of the "Summer Break," June through August. VEP attempts to publish any and all articles that will be of general interest to our membership community. Articles, Images, and/or information may be submitted to the VEP News Editor. Business entities interested in advertising are welcome to contact the editor as well, for rates.

VEP News Editor: Rachel Witmeyer - [newsletter@vepca.net](mailto:newsletter@vepca.net)

### VEPCA EXECUTIVE BOARD of DIRECTORS

President: Alain Mowad - [president@vepca.net](mailto:president@vepca.net)

Vice President: Heidi Racherla - [vp@vepca.net](mailto:vp@vepca.net)

Treasurer: Marc McGeever - [treasurer@vepca.net](mailto:treasurer@vepca.net)

Secretary: Lisa Sanchez - [secretary@vepca.net](mailto:secretary@vepca.net)

Beautification: Brian Ferry - [beautification@vepca.net](mailto:beautification@vepca.net)

Web & Social Media: Adina Pierce - [socialmedia@vepca.net](mailto:socialmedia@vepca.net)

Membership - [membership@vepca.net](mailto:membership@vepca.net)

Visit VEP's website for information regarding your volunteer run association - <http://www.vepca.net>

### VEP SOCIAL MEDIA LINKS (CLICK & SHARE!)

IG <https://www.instagram.com/vepca95136/>

FB <https://www.facebook.com/vepca95136>

FBG <https://www.facebook.com/groups/vepca>

## March 29th Community Meeting Recap

Compiled by VEPCA Secretary Lisa Sanchez

What a great meeting we had in March, thank you to all who were able to join us!

We welcomed our special guest speaker, San Jose City Mayor Matt Mahan. Mayor Mahan reviewed the following slides, statistics and priorities for our city:

- Annual Budget Process Overview (Council to vote on Proposed Budget in June '23)
- 2022-2023 Adopted Budget
- General Fund breakdown by Department/Category (SJPd, Fire, Parks, DOT, City Admin, Housing...)
- 2024-2028 General Fund Forecast Incremental Surplus
- Estimated Service Level Structural shortfall in 2023-2024 for planning purpose
- Focus on Back to Basics: Community Safety, Homelessness, Clean Neighborhoods
- San Jose has lowest Homicide rate but slow police response, which is a priority
- Proposes doubling the hiring rate for SJPd. Best case will be to improve police headcount with 15-30 new hires yearly.
- Utilize technology by increasing license plate reader at high risk intersections
- Unsheltered Homeless: Scale up basic shelter at a cost efficient rate
- Invest in "Prevention" by identifying needs before homelessness occurs
- Proposed Mental Health Care Conservatorship Reform Bills
- Upgrading 311 Services & Response Time
- Encampment related blight is currently being addressed with a Cash for Trash & SJ Bridge Programs
- Clean up & beautify San Jose City Gateways (currently holding Cal Trans accountable for their space with weekly calls)
- Crime, Homelessness and Blight are the 3 major focus areas for San Jose





## Continued from Page 2

Mayor Mahan answered member's questions regarding the following topics:

- Crime uptick & release of repeat offenders
- Bike lane sticks/guards, along Branham
- Plan to increase SJ jobs and development

## District 2 Update

Focused on upcoming budget issues:

- Blight/homelessness is a major focus with upcoming programs

Sidewalk and street tree maintenance cost, looking to implement program that will transfer cost from homeowner to SJ City

- Hiring & Retention of City Staff is a priority
- Branham & Monterey abatement is complete with fencing. Land has been cleared and construction will begin. Residency targeted for 2024.
- VTA Santa Teresa Safe RV Parking development target April '23 (RV homeless will be notified)
- Kingspark/Branham light delayed. Design is in progress & installation is due by end of 2023
- Homeless RV camper vs. abandoned vehicles issues are handled differently. Report abandoned vehicles using 311.
- Potholes are being processed and filled within 3-4 days. Please report using 311.

### PHOTOS:

TOP RIGHT: Mayor Mahan with VEP Executive Board Members Heidi Racherla, Lisa Sanchez, Alain Mowad and Adina Pierce.

BELOW: Mayor Mahan with VEP Community Members





# BEAUTIFICATION NEWS

By Brian Ferry

Hi, Friends! The rains seem to have slowed down at last, and we are off and running with a few beautification events!

First, many thanks to those of you who showed up at the Great American Litter Pickup on April 22nd. We had about 35 folks pitch in to fill over 30 bags of garbage from the area and Vista Park is looking great! VEP will definitely continue to participate in this annual event!



Next, thanks to the District 2 office, VEP was able to host a community dumpster event on Saturday, May 6th. Even under a light drizzle of rain, we filled about 3 dumpsters, and that doesn't even include the scrap metal, e-waste or Goodwill donations we collected! We're going to plan another one of these events for a date in August 2023, so watch for an announcement! Also, I'd like to personally thank Helen Chapman with the District 2 office for her "above and beyond" service in making this event happen!



Coming up, we'll have a park work day on Sunday, June 11 at Vista Park Community Room, from 9:00am - 12:00pm. Bring your yard tools and we'll spruce up the park! Dads of all ages love this event!

As always, if you have any beautification requests, offers, or suggestions, please don't hesitate to email me at [beautification@vepca.net](mailto:beautification@vepca.net) See you out there!

## VEP's 2023 Community Service Awards

By Rachel Witmeyer

Each year, VEPCA accepts applications for our "Community Service Awards" to honor graduating high school seniors with excellent records of volunteerism.

Traditionally, VEP offers three categories for which an award can be given: 1 for a student at Andrew P. Hill High School, 1 for a student at Gunderson High School, and 1 for a student who attends another school but lives within the boundaries of VEPCA neighborhoods. Each awardee receives a scholarship that can be applied towards college tuition, or other educational expenses, like textbooks.

This year, VEP is proud to announce two winners of the 2023 Community Service Awards:

**Chau Thai** - Andrew P. Hill High School

**April Le** - Gunderson High School -

Each student was honored as a winner at their individual schools' "Awards Nights" on Wednesday, May 17th. They will also be honored at the May 31st VEPCA Community Meeting.



ABOVE: April and Chau, at their respective "Awards Nights."



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## Groundbreaking for the Monterey / Branham Emergency Interim Housing Community site

On April 13th, 2023, we broke ground on the City's newest and largest Emergency Interim Housing Community located in District 2's corner of Monterey Road and Branham Lane. I am proud to be a champion of solutions like this as we continue working towards ending homelessness.



EIHC's are built quickly, efficiently, and with the goal of integrating residents right into neighborhoods while providing services and support for people who are transitioning into permanent housing. Here are some quick facts about this EIHC:

- Before this site, San Jose had successfully built more than 400 EIHC units since 2020. This is all thanks to our ecosystem of partners who are aligned with our goal: [LiveMoves](#) who operates these safe and dignified homes, the City's Housing Department and other City leadership, our past and present Mayors and Council, John Sobrato who committed private funding, the County and State for providing additional funding, and General Contractor Devcon Construction, Inc.
- This EIHC is made possible by a \$51.55 million grant from the [State of California Project Homekey](#).
- This will be District 2's third EIHC site
- This EIHC site will house 204 units, the largest in our City
- EIHC's can be up and running within a year of groundbreaking. These units will be arriving from a company in Tracy
- In addition to safe and stable housing, LifeMoves will provide residents with case management, crisis intervention, employment services, community development, and community integration
- The City Council approved my recommendation to display local artwork on our EIHC's buildings and prioritize housing folks who have already resided in this particular community

In the past, my Council colleagues and I have been met with strong resistance from some residents about EIHC's and other quality solutions that alleviate our City's homelessness issues. But we are at a crisis, and we need to do something. Doing nothing is not an option. The good news is, we have proven that solutions such as EIHC's work.

We had the pleasure of hearing from Jamie, an EIHC resident who expressed his gratefulness for a house key, shower, meals, independence, and continuous staff support.

He's gotten the help he needed to find a job, he gives back by volunteering to pick up garbage, and he's made progress with his case worker to find permanent housing.

Moving forward, I hope that other San Jose Councilmembers will take the lead in implementing EIHC's in their respective Council Districts. We also must continue services, support, funding, and protective policies for those already living in apartments so that we can reduce number of people falling into homelessness.

As the site is developed, we will provide construction updates when available. For questions about this site, please contact my office at [district2@sanjoseca.gov](mailto:district2@sanjoseca.gov)

## Great American Litter Pick Up volunteers help beautify our City

We celebrated Earth Day on Saturday, April 22nd by joining our **District 2 Neighborhood Associations** and thousands of others across the country for the Great American Litter Pick Up! It's our biggest clean-up event of the year, with event locations all over the City.

We were happy to support our District 2 N.A.'s who hosted GALPU sites this year: Roundtable, [VEP](#), Hellyer-Christopher, Hayes, Great Oaks, Oak Grove, and Blossom Valley. Thank you to our N.A. leaders, BeautifySJ team, San José Parks, Recreation and Neighborhood Services, and of course, volunteers for cleaning up our community.

**INTERESTED IN ADVERTISING WITH US?**

**REASONABLE RATES!**

**CONTACT: [NEWSLETTER@VEPCA.NET](mailto:NEWSLETTER@VEPCA.NET)**



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VEPCA MEMBER  
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## Native Plant and Pollinator Day

Celebrate National Pollinator Week by joining us at Martial Cottle Park for a Native Plant and Pollinator Guided Walk. Learn about the importance of pollinators and how native plants help them. The 45-minute guided walk will be about 1.5 miles round trip on paved paths. Families are encouraged to attend. Meet at the Martial Cottle Park Visitor Center at 9:00 AM to join the guided walk. Additional pollinator activities will take place from 9:00 AM – 11:00 AM throughout the park. Registration is required for the walk only.

Space is limited on the guided walk. Registration Required. Sign up at [Native Plant and Pollinator Day Walk Tickets, Sat, Jun 24, 2023 at 9:00 AM | Eventbrite](#)

For more information, please contact Parks Program Coordinator Jackie Zizana at [Jacqueline.Zizana@prk.sccgov.org](mailto:Jacqueline.Zizana@prk.sccgov.org) or (669) 288-9125. Admission is free. \$6 parking fee



## In The Park After Dark Movie Night

Enjoy a FREE feature-length movie under the stars with family and friends. Come early to learn about the park and talk to a Ranger. Meet on the lawn with a chair or blanket, flashlight and snacks. No dogs please. Questions? (408) 535-4060

Saturday, June 10th: 8:30 to 10:00 PM  
Admission is free. \$6 parking fee



## Sturdy as an Oak

Explore the majestic heritage oak trees that adorn the Martial Cottle Park landscape with a volunteer docent. In this one-mile easy walking tour, you will explore their role in preserving animal and human survival of the past, present, and future. Meet at the Visitor Center with comfortable walking shoes.

Reservations required. Please sign up at [Sturdy as an Oak Tickets, Sat, Jun 17, 2023 at 10:00 AM | Eventbrite](#)

Questions? Contact Jackie Zizana at (669) 288-9125.

Admission is free. \$6 parking fee



R. Horil

## Friends of Martial Cottle Park Needs Your Help!

Friends of Martial Cottle Park needs your help in keeping the organization running and supporting programs and projects at Martial Cottle Park. With donor help, we have funded the Hedgerow Project, the Youth Program Fund - providing transportation to the park for school programs-, the What's Growing Signs showing what is growing in the Jacobs Farm's fields, Farm Equipment Refurbishment and are currently working on the Life-Size Farmer Cutouts.

As with any volunteer organization, members of the board are rotating off the board in the coming year and we need volunteers to step up and take their places. Board positions include President, Vice-President, Secretary, and Treasurer and members-at-large can include membership committee chairs and social media and communications chairs. Please see the attached descriptions of board positions.

Please consider volunteering for a board position. Please contact us if you would like to help or would like additional information. [info@fomcp.org](mailto:info@fomcp.org)



Thank you for your support.

*Friends of Martial Cottle Park Board*

## What should you read next?

By Jayshree Reddy



I used to devour books in my twenties, for some reason the last 5 years I can't seem to concentrate on books. Too much Netflix or just work and more work, who knows? Thanks to my book club I've gotten back to books, they've kept me on track with wonderful discussions! Does Vista Park have a book club? Should we form one?

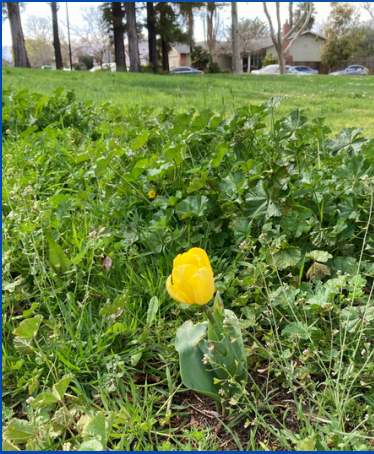
Here are my 5 book suggestions:

1. [Lessons in Chemistry](#) – set in the early 50's and 60's, this book talks about women's equality. An engaging quick read about a single mother's life and career.
2. [The Namesake](#) - story of an immigrant family from Calcutta, India, to New York this book talks about the family's struggle to maintain their traditions while trying to understand and belong to American culture.
3. [Seven Husbands of Evelyn Hugo](#) – who doesn't like Hollywood and a tell-all? This fictional book is about an aging Hollywood star and her tell-all book.
4. [Food Rules: An Eater's Manual](#) – with so many different diets, weight loss, health and so much tied to food. This book is a good read about 64 rules of food and how to better our relationship with food.
5. [All About Love](#) – is there ever a 100% or is love a lifelong journey? Read this lovely book on not just romantic love but all forms of love.

Lots of love from your neighbor, Jayshree



# NATURE IN OUR NEIGHBORHOODS



A lone tulip blooms among the weeds at Parkview Park I.  
Photos: Rachel Witmeyer, March 23rd



Snow on Mt. Hamilton - Again! View from Bluefield Dr.  
Photo: Rachel Witmeyer, March 29th



Double-Rainbow over Martial Cottle Park. Photo: Adina Pierce, March 29th



LEFT: Snowy Egret perched in  
a back yard next to Martial  
Cottle Park.  
Photo: Adina Pierce, April 7th

RIGHT: Red-Winged Blackbird  
at Martial Cottle Park  
Photo: Robert Witmeyer,  
April 26th





# NATURE IN "SUPER-BLOOM"

Mustard plants returned in vast numbers and grew to amazing heights at Martial Cottle Park.

Photos: Robert Witmeyer, April 26th



"Where's the fence???"



## Coyote Sighting

on Hyde Park Drive,  
March 29th.

Photo: Adina Pierce

**Do you have  
photos of our  
community  
to share?**

Send them to  
[Newsletter@vepca.net](mailto:Newsletter@vepca.net)





## Project Updates

From Valley Transportation Authority

### Branham Station Transit-Oriented Development

In January 2023, VTA's Board of Directors approved a time-limited collaboration with nonprofit developer, Charities Housing, for pre-development background research toward a feasible, affordable homeownership concept for the 3-acre site at Branham Lane and Narvaez Avenue. This area currently serves as a Park & Ride Lot for VTA bus and light rail passengers at Branham Station.

This land has the potential for a transit-oriented housing development. Transit-Oriented Developments (TOD) allow people to live, work, play and connect with each other near public transportation, which helps clear the air, ease traffic, and add infrastructure investments to the community.

This collaboration period will incorporate initial feedback VTA received from previous community engagements and studies to develop a project vision, an overview of alternatives, design concepts, and the next steps for future engagement. Site and soil analyses may also take place in the coming months for the project team to gather technical data to inform the work.

VTA will host a community meeting later in the year to share and discuss plans with the community for the site.

For those new to the project or anyone who may want a refresher, please visit the project webpage:

[www.vta.org/branhamdevelopment](http://www.vta.org/branhamdevelopment)

Sign up for updates here: [www.vta.org/about/subscribe](http://www.vta.org/about/subscribe)

### Capitol-Branham Access Study: Community Engagement Round 2



The VTA has set-up an online survey to gather community input. Please take the survey if you have't already.

Survey Link Open Until May 31st:

<https://bit.ly/Capitol-Branham-Survey>

You can also follow the Project on Social Media for More Information and Updates!

[VTA Capitol-Branham on Twitter](#)

[VTA Capitol-Branham on Facebook](#)

## ~ DATES TO REMEMBER ~

### VEPCA COMMUNITY MEETING



Wednesday, May 31st - 7:00 PM

@Vista Park Community Room

SEE DETAILS on [PAGE 1](#)



### SJ PUBLIC LIBRARY: SUMMER LEARNING

<https://www.sjpl.org/summer>

2 Months of Reading Challenge & Free Events!

Preregister in May / Runs June 1st to July 31st

### IN THE PARK AFTER DARK MOVIE NIGHT

@Martial Cottle Park

Saturday, June 10th - 8:30 PM to 10:00 PM

SEE DETAILS ON [PAGE 6](#)

### VEPCA BEAUTIFICATION EVENT

Sunday, June 11th - 9:00 AM to NOON

Meet @Vista Park Community Room

SEE DETAILS on [PAGE 4](#)



### STURDY AS AN OAK

@Martial Cottle Park

Saturday, June 17th - 10:00 AM

SEE DETAILS on [PAGE 6](#)



### NATIVE PLANT & POLLINATOR DAY

@Martial Cottle Park

Saturday, June 24th - 9:00 AM to 11:00 AM

SEE DETAILS on [PAGE 6](#) / FLYER on [PAGE 10](#)



### ROSE, WHITE & BLUE

### PARADE AND FESTIVAL

<https://www.rwbsj.org>

July 4th - 9:45 AM to 3:00 PM on the Alameda



### SANTA CLARA COUNTY FAIR

<https://thefair.org>

July 26th - August 6th

### SAN JOSE SUMMER JAZZ FEST

<https://summerfest.sanjosejazz.org>

August 11th-13th



### VEPCA SUMMER BREAK

June through August

Community Meetings Resume in September







# ***Native Plant and Pollinator Day***

**Celebrate National Pollinator Week at  
Martial Cottle Park**

**June 24, 2023**

**9:00 am - 11:00 am**

**Free Admission! (\$6 Parking)**



## **Native Plant and Pollinator Guided Walk**

**9:00 am - 9:45 am**

Meet at the Visitor Center. The 45-minute guided walk will be about 1.5 miles round trip on paved paths.

## **Pollinator Related Activities**

**9:00 am - 11:00 am**

Join us at the Ethel Lester Picnic Site to meet some of our Park Partners and enjoy fun activities.

**Families are encouraged to join.**

For More Information Contact Jackie Zizana, Parks Program Coordinator at  
(408) 535-4062 or [Jacqueline.Zizana@prk.sccgov.org](mailto:Jacqueline.Zizana@prk.sccgov.org)

