

# *Gerstle Park Neighborhood Association*

P.O. Box 150644 • San Rafael • California • 94915-0644 • <http://www.gerstlepark.com>

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## **GPNA 31ST ANNUAL PICNIC ON SEPT. 11**

All Gerstle Park neighbors are invited to gather at Gerstle Park's upper Redwood Grove on Thursday, Sept. 11, beginning at 5 p.m. Free hotdogs, chili, soft drinks and dessert will be served from 6 to 7 p.m. Please, everyone bring a potluck dish to share, as follows:

**Last name beginning A to M:** Bring a Salad

**Last name beginning N to Z:** Bring Side Dish or Appetizer

Please note: We had a disastrous lack of salads last year, so pay attention to your initial above! Also, please provide an appropriate utensil for serving your potluck dish.

Join in the neighborly talking, eating and good times with kids and grownups, which will continue until 9 p.m. The picnic was on the same date last year, and we repeat that the significance of that date makes it a good day for the neighborhood to come together to celebrate a sense of community. Please join in in this wonderful, time-honored experience .

You can also pay your 2003 or 2004 membership dues at the picnic.

## **COME MEET WITH ASSEMBLYMAN JOE NATION ON SEPT. 16**

GPNA invites you to a neighborhood meeting with our California Assemblyman, Joe Nation, to discuss with him state legislative issues that impact neighborhoods like ours. The meeting is on Tuesday, Sept. 16, at 7:30 p.m.. at the B Street Community Center. Of particular interest are the mandates by the State of California and the Association of Bay Area Governments that govern housing density and neighborhood integrity.

The GPNA Board 's original neighborhood plan states that Gerstle Park has achieved its maximum density, and the neighborhood should not be subjected to new development. Although not all residents might agree, the present Board still subscribes to that view. However, most of you are aware that the State is mandating that each city provide for a certain number of new housing units, especially affordable and low cost housing, without regard for traffic, environmental, or quality of life impacts. In many cases the State requires more units than is possible in essentially built-out communities like ours. Therefore, the City of San Rafael has to look at every neighborhood for possible new housing sites. Now, a recently enacted law mandates that local government will have limited control over second units proposed for single-family homes, essentially ending the concept of single family homes. What kind of impact, if any, will these state mandates



have on neighborhoods like Gerstle Park? Is the loss of local control a beneficial way to achieve needed housing?

Since Mr. Nation helps to make state laws, we think it will be worth your while to speak with him about these and other issues. We hope to see you there so we can give him a warm welcome!

## **GPNA ANNUAL MEETING AND ELECTION OF BOARD OCT 30**

Mark your calendar for Thursday evening October 30 at 7:30 p.m. and plan to attend GPNA's Annual Meeting at the B Street Community Center. As usual, refreshments will be served. and we will review the year's activities and accomplishments for you as well as the major issues facing the neighborhood. Please bring your concerns and your ideas on ways we can make our neighborhood a better place to live.

We will have a list available of current members for the membership year of Nov. 1, 2002 to Oct. 31, 2003. so we can verify that you are eligible to vote at this annual meeting.

Our current By-Laws mandate these dates for our fiscal year and for the Board of Directors term. (Even if you have to pay 2003 dues at the Annual Meeting in order to vote, and your membership expires the next day, rest assured that your modest dues will have supported the activities of GPNA in the previous year!) You can also pay your dues at the meeting for 2004 as well if you wish

The GPNA Board is currently considering the possibility of proposing a few By-Law changes to the membership, especially to streamline and clarify some of our presently cumbersome membership procedures.

Additionally, we will be voting on our new Board for the year 2004.

If you are interested in serving on the GPNA Board, or if you know of someone who would like to serve, please contact one of the existing Board members or call Hugo Landecker at 456-0221 so additional names can be included on the ballots to be distributed at the meeting. Of course, nominations will also be taken from the floor during the meeting.

We look forward to seeing you there! Your interests as a homeowner or resident of Gerstle Park are best met by your contribution to the Board at these meetings. Board members want to do a good job representing your interests, but they need to hear from you to do so!

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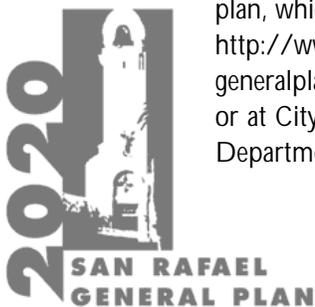
## **UPDATE ON SAN RAFAEL'S NEW GENERAL PLAN**

After three years of hard work, the San Rafael General Plan 2020 Steering Committee has turned over to the City Council a draft of the document that will guide San Rafael for the next 17 years. The new General Plan will have a big influence on neighborhood life, as it will govern decisions on land use, housing supply and density issues, traffic, recreation, historic preservation, arts and culture, economic development, and protection of neighborhoods.

In the last three years, the GPNA Board has been consistently adding its input to the plan so that Gerstle Park's needs and concerns would be heard. One of our biggest issues was the Steering Committee's proposal to zone the site of Short School for high-density multiple housing units. After a GPNA-sponsored neighborhood meeting with city officials last December that revealed strong opposition, this idea was dropped and we have been promised that the site will be zoned for single-family housing only if it ever is declared surplus by the School District. This issue will be closely watched.

The next step for the draft plan will be public hearings held by the Planning Commission and then the City Council, with final adoption possible in May of 2004. GPNA will continue to monitor this process. Eventually we hope to participate in drafting a new neighborhood plan as part of the General Plan.

We urge you to acquaint yourself with the draft plan, which you can view on the web at: <http://www.cityofsanrafael.org/generalplan> or at City Hall, Community Development Department.



## **LOST CANARY REPORT**

On August 6, we received a report from a neighbor that a lost yellow/white canary was hanging about the Gerstle Park tennis court. We are passing along the word in the hope that its owner will find it.

## **TOT LOT RENOVATIONS PROCEEDING**

The San Rafael City Engineer is now detailing the plans for the new preschool tot lot in Gerstle Park. The plans will soon be submitted for bidding, and it's expected that the contract for the actual work will be issued sometime in August. If all goes well, ground breaking may begin sometime in early September.

The City has determined that the existing big kids' swings are aging and need to be replaced. If this work can be done this fall as well, the City has asked for neighborhood volunteers to help with the labor of removing the existing sand around the swings and replacing it with bark. If you would be interested in being contacted as a volunteer when this job is finally scheduled, please call Chandra Murphy at 482-8033 or email her at [murphdtm@yahoo.com](mailto:murphdtm@yahoo.com). She plans to make it a fun day for the helper crew!

## **GPNA ANNUAL GARAGE SALE A SUCCESS!**



Our annual Garage Sale, held on June 14th in Gerstle Park, was very successful, netting \$1,000 to support GPNA activities. Many thanks to all who participated, and all who donated food and articles for sale. Although the feedback we received about this event was quite positive, we regret that there wasn't more advance notice, so that more people could have participated. We will try to give more advance notice next year. Anyone with suggestions on how to improve the Garage Sale for next year can contact Chandra Murphy at 482-8033. By the way, special thanks to Chandra for a job well done as chair! We also thank all of you who began or renewed your membership in the GPNA.

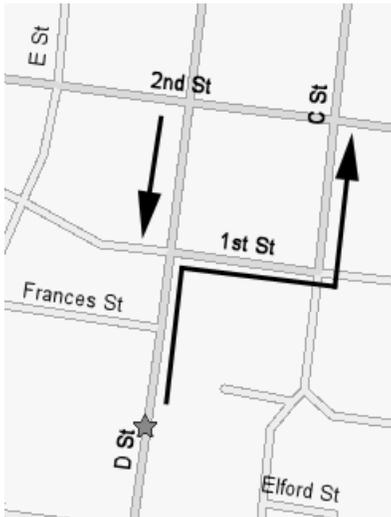
## **GERSTLE PARK BOARD MEMBER TO SERVE ON CITY COMMISSION**

Board member Chandra Murphy, who was a local liaison with the Park and Recreation Department during the long planning phase of the renovation of Gerstle Park's pre-school play area, has been selected to fill a vacancy on the City's Park and Recreation Commission. Chandra is looking forward to serving on the commission, and thinks that, being a woman and a full-time mom, she can bring a new perspective to the job. She would like to see some great park renovations accomplished for the benefit of San Rafael families and residents of all ages. She feels that the needs of teenagers could be better met. All of this is a challenge in an era of tight funding, but she is interested in reaching out to other communities to see how they have solved similar issues.



## **TRAFFIC CONCERNS**

GPNA has endorsed changing D Street to a two way street between First and Second Streets. Presently northbound traffic must make a jog to First and C Streets before proceeding to downtown or onto Second Street.. Thus, the flow of traffic that passes homes at the intersection of First and C Streets is heavy, extremely confusing, and unsafe.



We have asked the City to look at options to routing this much traffic through a residential area when it isn't necessary. The effort should be to preserve peace and safety for residential areas whenever possible. On the other hand, we don't want San Rafael's traffic system forced into failure. We need a win-win solution.

The City traffic engineer studied our proposal and found unexpectedly that in the morning peak traffic period the intersection of Third and D Streets would fail and cause westbound traffic on Third to back up. This would be the result of the number of vehicles that proceed west on Third and make a left turn onto D Street. We are still looking for ways to solve this problem.

## **DISASTER ADVICE FROM CHIEF BRIAN WATERBURY**

Gerstle Park resident Chief Brian Waterbury helps coordinate Disaster Area Response Training for the San Rafael Fire Department. As in the past two newsletter issues, he has some well thought out advice for area residents:

A disaster will strike quickly, with little or no warning and with devastating effects. It can force you to evacuate your entire neighborhood or confine you to your home. What would you do if your basic services such as water, gas, electricity or telephone were cut off? San Rafael Fire and Police department personnel will be on the scene after a disaster, but due to the nature and magnitude of the event, may not reach everyone right away.

Community members can, and do, cope with disasters by preparing in advance and working together as a team. Knowing what to do is your best protection—and your responsibility.

Here are some suggestions on what to include in an emergency supply kit, which should have enough items that you and your family might need for a period of at least 72 hours (3 days). Store these items in a sturdy and easy to carry container. Include in your kit:

- A three day supply of water (one gallon per person per day) and non-salty food that won't spoil.
- One change of clothing and footwear per person, and one blanket or sleeping bag per person.
- A first aid kit that includes your family's prescription medications.
- Emergency tools including a battery powered radio, flash light and plenty of extra batteries.
- An extra set of car keys and a credit card, cash or travelers checks.
- Sanitation supplies.
- Special items for infant, elderly or disabled family members.
- An extra pair of glasses.

Keep important family documents in a waterproof container. Keep a smaller emergency kit in the trunk of your car.

Working with neighbors can save lives and property. Meet with your neighbors to plan how your neighborhood could work together after a disaster until help arrives. Enroll in and encourage others to take specialized training such as the San Rafael Fire Department's Disaster Area Response Team (DART) Program. Know your neighbors' special skills (e.g., medical, technical) and consider how you could help neighbors who have special needs, such as disabled and elderly persons. Make plans for child care in case parents can't get home.

Remember, in time of need it all boils down to human being helping human being. Do your part, enroll in DART!

For more information on how you can enroll in the San Rafael Fire Department's DART program, phone 485-3308.

**A REPORT FROM A D.A.R.T. TRAINEE**

Roberta Kemp, a long-time Gerstle Park resident, recently completed the Disaster Area Response Team (D.A.R.T.) training held by the San Rafael Fire Department for city residents which teaches them techniques they can use to help themselves and their neighbors survive a major catastrophe. Here is what Roberta said about the training:

"D.A.R.T. is a feel-good course in how to ready yourself, and those around you, in the event of a disaster such as earthquake, flood, or fire. These disasters are bound to touch us, sometime.

"I enjoyed the course, and found it interesting and very helpful. The firemen leading the class were fun and very responsive. There were all ages represented in the class, but I was the only one from our Gerstle Park area in my group of 25 in July. I wonder why?

"I happily endorse this program and hope more neighbors will consider signing up for D.A.R.T. training. After all, we need to be able to take care of ourselves, and thereby be able to help others."

Roberta encourages you to call the San Rafael Fire Department to inquire about upcoming D.A.R.T. training sessions. GPNA reminds you that GPNA will reimburse half the cost of the \$40 class to Gerstle Park residents who complete the training.

**THE GERSTLES AGAIN—AND STILL!**

In our Summer 2003 issue, we printed a letter from Audrey Whiteman, great-granddaughter of Lewis and Hannah Gerstle, who purchased Violet Terrace, now Gerstle Park, for their summer home. That letter elicited another communication we would like to share with you:

Hi Cynthia,

I just read the letter from Audrey Whiteman in the GPNA summer newsletter. Thought you ought to know that there are a couple of members of the Gerstle clan right here in San Rafael. My great-grandmother was Alice Gerstle Levison (1873-1973), one of Lewis and Hannah Gerstle's daughters. I and my family live almost in the GP neighborhood; I think we're officially residents of the farthest east portion of the West End. Our children (ages 8 and 5) play in Gerstle Park regularly and attend Sun Valley school. They're both immensely proud that the Gerstle family donated the park land to San Rafael.

My father, Peter Gerstle Levison, has recently (with my mother) moved to the Lucas Valley area of San Rafael. And in San Anselmo lives 90+ year-old Ted Lilienthal, another Gerstle descendant, who spent his boyhood summers at "Violet Terrace". I bump into him periodically at United Markets; he's in great shape and possessed of a keen memory.

The Gerstle and Sloss families are very active in keeping the family history alive. We had our most recent family reunion in September 2001, in the redwood grove in the park. I'd estimate there were 200 people there, many from far-flung areas of the country. I think it's a natural thing for all of us to be interested in the future of the park and how it can best serve the people of San Rafael. I read the GPNA newsletters regularly.

Regards,  
Beth Levison

We thank Beth Levison for so kindly contacting us. It is really neat that children descended from the Gerstle family are still playing in this lovely place!

**Gerstle Park Neighborhood Association (GPNA) Membership Application**

Please complete the information below and return with your check to:  
GPNA, P.O. Box 150644, San Rafael, CA 94915-0644

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Do you wish to receive this newsletter at your home?  Yes  No

Would you like to be included on our mailing list?  Yes  No

Email Address: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

New Member  Renewal

Amount Enclosed\*: \$ \_\_\_\_\_ \*Annual donation: **\$10.00** per household ( **\$5.00** seniors) - 1 voting member

Payment Type: \_\_\_\_\_ Term of membership is from November 1<sup>st</sup> to November 1<sup>st</sup>

How did you hear about GPNA?  Friend  Newsletter  Other: \_\_\_\_\_

Welcome to GPNA!



## **NOW: SOME GERSTLE HISTORY**

For over 20 years, we have had in our family's possession a book called "Our City: The Jews of San Francisco" by Irena Narell, (Howell North Books, San Diego, 1981). We are just now getting around to reading it and were delighted to discover that the central families described in the book are none other than the Gerstle and Sloss families, as well as the Levison, Haas, Lilienthal, Fleishhacker families and other prominent San Franciscans.

The Gerstles' "Violet Terrace" is extensively featured, in fact the prologue is a description of a 1975 picnic held for 200 family descendants in Gerstle Park. It says in part:

"Grand and great grandchildren of the original Slosses and Gerstles contributed reminiscences of a summer haven so central to their lives that it held the memories of laughter as well as tears. Third-generation descendants remembered being married on the grounds, while others in the fifth and sixth generations had never before set foot on the well-kept pathways and lawns."

Ms. Narell tells the story of Lewis Gerstle's and Louis Sloss's experience as German Jews who emigrated separately to California in the 1840's. They met each other in Sacramento, and became life-long business partners, first in Sacramento and then, in 1862, in San Francisco. Eventually they established the highly successful Alaska Commercial Company. They married sisters, and always had houses next to each other in San Francisco. The details of their business dealings are fascinating to read, as are their loving concern for their wives and children and for their community. They held strong, middle-class values that success did not seem to corrupt.

For instance, Ms. Narell relates:

"Lewis liked having his children properly dressed at all times and objected to sloppiness on general principles. On Sundays, even after the Gerstles bought a country estate in San Rafael, the girls had to wear uncomfortable pink flannel dresses in the heat of summer. Dresses of embroidered cotton were also fashionable. Underneath were corsets, corset covers, lace underdrawers and a double flannel skirt. Even with summer clothes they wore heavy black stockings."

The Gerstles rented the existing "Violet Terrace" for the summer of 1881 before buying the property.

"The plumbing was immediately modernized, and a greenhouse and a new stable were added. Marshy areas in the vicinity were drained to help exterminate a plague of

mosquitoes. A separate building for the servants, containing eight bedrooms, with a laundry and storerooms, was erected ... About 1890 Lewis had another house, a two-story 'architectural monstrosity,' built on the property and called it the Cottage."

A third house was built by the Gerstle's married daughter Clara. A summer pavilion in the redwood grove, chicken coops, and an orchard contributed to the good life. (Remains of the orchard can still be seen above the tennis court.) In 1883, the Slosses had purchased neighboring property (fronting on Grove Street) and built a large house with rooms for nine servants. Providing water in San Rafael for family and entertaining needs was very expensive, and the book reports that Louis Sloss told his guests to drink all the champagne they wanted ... just don't touch the water!

The San Rafael property provided the Gerstle and Sloss families with summer homes for fifty years. The Gerstles had seven children, the Slosses had six, and the children of those children had the run of the two estates, which were never fenced off from each other. Eventually there were so many that the younger generations couldn't assort all the cousins and the uncles and aunts, and usually had to cope with four grandparents and two great grandmothers. Fifty people for lunch was an ordinary occurrence. (Another source has told of the children hiding themselves under the great sweeping limbs of one enormous tree - still on the property - when grownup visitors came that they didn't care for..)

We'll share more of this great local history with you in the next newsletter!



## **CHRISTMAS CAROLING GURU NEEDED**

It's hot. That means Christmas is just around the corner! That means that GPNA needs a lively, wonderful person, or set of persons, to take on the job of chairing our annual Christmas caroling evening. You may remember that last year we had to cancel this event, since every member of the Board was overwhelmed with responsibilities and could not take on the job. Well, we are still overwhelmed! So if you would like to help out, please call Hugo at 456-0221 or email him at [clandecker@saber.net](mailto:clandecker@saber.net)

We have a date set for Thursday, Dec. 11. The Board already has caroling books, and we are exploring a location for carolers to meet. Volunteer jobs to be done include simple publicity through newsletter, email, and signs, planning an hour's caroling route through at least part of the neighborhood, helping the crowd warm up their voices at the meeting place, and shepherding them through the route. Finding someone with a musical instrument and a loud voice would help with this! Simple refreshments should be organized for an after-singing social time; the Board will help with cookies.

## **INTRODUCING THE NEW EDITOR OF THE GERSTLE PARK NEWSLETTER**

Lil Walters is a resident of the Gerstle Park neighborhood who has recently returned to her Gerstle Park home after an absence of a few years. Lil saw our request for a new editor in our last issue, and decided this would be a good way for her to become reacquainted with community life in Gerstle Park. She volunteered to be the new editor, starting with the Winter 2003 issue. She brings to the job a love of words plus a lot of experience in crossing t's and dotting i's for other organizations.

She joins our most excellent Ken Goudey in the newsletter effort. Ken will continue to do the layout and get the newsletter printed, and Ken's wife Eve will continue to supervise newsletter delivery volunteers. Cynthia Landecker, who has been the editor for three years, leaves a job she has very much enjoyed doing.

If you ever have any suggestions for the newsletter, please email Lil at [jplw@sbcglobal.net](mailto:jplw@sbcglobal.net)

## **TENNIS ANYONE?: GERSTLE PARK TENNIS COURT OPEN**

The tennis court above Gerstle Park's redwood grove is once again open for use after a very long closure. Although the City still has no funds to fix the cracks in the cement, the safety of the court does not appear to be compromised.

## **SOMETHING SPOOKY THIS WAY COMES**

Yes, indeed. . .on Hallowe'en night, Friday, Oct. 31, strange eerie creatures from the GPNA Board will be wafting through our neighborhood to check out our decorating efforts in GPNA's annual Hallowe'en Decorating Contest. So if you make your house really ghostly, ghastly, or gory, you may get an, um, modest reward! For the last few Hallowe'ens, our neighborhood seems to import hundreds and hundreds of little trick-or-treaters, who really appreciate the decorated houses that welcome them with a sense of fun!

## **LOST PETS DON'T GROW ON TREES (PLEASE!!)**

One of our neighbors has asked us to remind those of you who are trying to find your lost pets to please:

1. Not staple or nail notices about Fluffy or Polly into the bark of live trees. Holes can cause irreparable damage to our neighborhood trees. There are plenty of telephone poles around!
2. After a reasonable amount of time, or when the pet has been found, remove your notices before they become dreary and meaningless tatters festooning the neighborhood.

It is sad and frightening to lose a pet, and everyone certainly wants to help return lost pets to their anxious owners. But pet owners are more likely to get happy cooperation if they follow the above suggestions. Thanks!

## **UPCOMING EVENTS:**

- September 4: Monthly Board Meeting\*
- September 11: Annual Picnic
- September 16: Joe Nation Meeting
- October 2: Monthly Board Meeting\*
- October 30: Annual Meeting
- October 31: Halowe'en Decorating Contest
- November 6: Joint Board Meeting, Old and New Board Members\*

\* If you desire to address the GPNA Board of Directors, or to attend a Board Meeting, please contact Hugo Landecker at 456-0221 (or email: [clandecker@saber.net](mailto:clandecker@saber.net)) for meeting location and time.



**The Gerstle Park Neighborhood Association Quarterly Newsletter**

Year 2002-2003 Number 4 of 4

All articles written by GPNA board members.

Editor: Cynthia Landecker      Layout: Ken Goudey

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