

# Gerstle Park Neighborhood Association

P.O. Box 150644 • SAN RAFAEL • CALIFORNIA • 94915-0644 • [HTTP://WWW.GERSTLEPARK.COM](http://www.gerstlepark.com)

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## **UPCOMING EVENT: ANNUAL PICNIC, THURSDAY SEPT. 15th**

GPNA's very popular Annual Picnic will be happening soon, so get your family ready and bring a dish to this fun event inside Gerstle Park! Save the date- Thursday Sept. 15th, at 5:30 P.M. We will once again be meeting at the Upper Redwood Grove in the park for this wonderful time-honored event. As usual, free hot dogs, chili and soft drinks will be provided, and we will be raffling off some very desirable prizes. And- because of the wonderful response they received at last year's picnic- we've once again engaged our own local band, "Swing Fever", to serenade us with their irresistible oldies while we eat, dance and schmooze! This is an opportunity to have a great time, meet new neighborhood residents, and get re-acquainted with your neighbors. You'll also meet your GPNA Board members, who are devoted to doing good work for our neighborhood. As part of the event, we plan to review some of the things that GPNA has accomplished over the past year. If you want a fun time as well as neighborhood updates, join us! Please bring a dish for this event, in accordance with the first initial of your last name:

**A-M:** bring a SIDE DISH OR SALAD

**M-Z:** bring a DESSERT

We hope to see all of you there!

## **A LITTLE "HOME IMPROVEMENT" AT GERSTLE PARK**

GPNA has coordinated efforts with the City of San Rafael's Parks and Volunteer Departments to secure needed mulch for the park area where the Gerstle Park Dragon lives. On two different days we provided the volunteer labor and equipment to grub out the weeds and install the mulch, and San Rafael city staffers identified and secured the type, quantity and supplier of chips needed to finish the project (due to the recreational nature of the area, specific considerations had to be met as to the type of mulch allowed). Bartlett Tree Service came through and delivered approximately 15 cubic yards of great wood chips for the job, and on July 9th the wheelbarrows, shovels and rakes were taken in hand. The result looks "terrific", to quote 9 year old Bailey, our youngest volunteer. We hope to focus on additional improvements, and we want to advise parents that although bees and wasps were seen in the area during the work, and though everyone was lightly dressed, no one was stung. As a precaution, however, we have asked the Parks and Recreation Dept. to clear up any underground nests. Many thanks to everyone who helped with the work- this area is a valuable part of the park, and it's wonderful to have it looking good again!

## **MAHON CREEK UPDATE**

GPNA is pleased to report that the San Rafael Department of Public Works is continuing to work with us and with Friends of Mahon Creek to address needed creek maintenance and the problem of our vulnerability to flooding in the areas near the creek. In a May meeting at the B Street Community Center, Andrew Preston, director of San Rafael's Public Works Department, summarized both recently completed and ongoing efforts:

The city has recently dredged portions of Mahon Creek downstream from B Street, where sediments had accumulated over the past decades. This action should expand the creek's capacity to drain its watershed during winter storms. Additionally, the city has hired Gerstle Park resident Al Cornwell and his firm, CSW Struber-Stroeh Engineering Group, to develop plans that would redirect storm water from the downtown area between 2nd, 3rd, D and B streets. Presently, the large amount of storm water from this area drains underground and into the large Mahon Creek culvert that goes from behind Latham to the corner of E and 1st streets. The rerouted drainage system would move this storm water down to the Lindaro Street pump station, where it would be pumped into the San Rafael Canal. Mr. Preston and the DPW's senior engineer, Scott Schneider, are also developing a plan for long-term maintenance of Mahon Creek that would take local wildlife into consideration. In addition to being the primary drainage channel for the downtown San Rafael, Gerstle Park and Sun Valley neighborhoods, Mahon Creek is also an important urban wildlife corridor- a rare privilege for such an increasingly urbanized area. Some notable bird sightings this last spring along our neighborhood's section of the creek were a pied-billed grebe, a black-headed grosbeak, and a pair of hooded orioles.

## **ANNUAL HALLOWE'EN DECORATING CONTEST!**

Hallowe'en, October 31st, falls on a Monday this year - a perfect time for our GPNA Board talent scouts to walk through the neighborhood, looking for creative, scary and fun decorations. Wicked witches, ghastly ghosts and ghouls, creepy light shows, you name it - we'll be out and about, searching for the best Hallowe'en decorations to be honored in the next newsletter, coming out in November. So if you make your house and/or yard look really ghostly, ghastly or gory, you may be a winner! Remember, our neighborhood kids (of all ages), and especially our little trick-or-treaters, love to be welcomed by decorations that bring out the spirit of Hallowe'en. Let's give them a real treat this year, and light up the neighborhood for this fun holiday event!

## STREET CLEANING – THE BASICS, AND MORE

Street cleaning is always an important issue in our neighborhood. With fall just around the corner, now is a good time to consider maintenance tips for our streets year-round, and especially for the increased complications from leaves that our beautiful trees will soon shed.

San Rafael has two pieces of equipment to keep our streets clean. One is a sweeper, and one is a leaf machine. It's important to know the difference, because the two pieces of equipment make very few visits to our neighborhood and we want to make their visits as effective as possible. Sweepers clean streets, but have limited ability to reach dirt and debris because of parked cars. The leaf machine only runs during leaf season, which starts around late October and continues until all the street trees have shed their leaves.

The current schedule for residential street sweeping is one sweep every six weeks on a day that doesn't conflict with garbage pickup. Keep in mind that not all city streets are swept. Narrow streets or streets that are very steep, streets with no curbs, or streets that limit the sweeper's ability to turn around are not swept.

However, there are ways to make the street cleaning process more effective:

1. Best way: sweep and pick up yourself! You can get to where the machine can't, while getting a little exercise and making your street look great!
2. Get the debris out to where the sweeper can get at it. Every six weeks, if debris is moved out of the parking area and into the street, the sweeper can take it away. Please be mindful not to create a traffic hazard, and keep in mind that the sweeper only takes debris placed in long, low DRIFTS (not piles). If you pile up debris, the sweeper has to drive around it or it breaks the machine.
3. During leaf season (starts late October, or when leaves start to fall), gather leaves off the sidewalk, out of the gutter and into the road so crews can get at them with the leaf machine. Better yet, bag the leaves up and the leaf crews will take them away. If you perform maintenance regularly, your green waste containers can take most of the remaining leaves and you can avoid bagging them.

4. Storm drains: special attention needs to be given to our storm drains, because Gerstle Park is a low-lying area and can flood. Properly functioning storm drains are a must! Storm drain tips:

- a. Park your car with wheels "curbed" correctly, but not touching the curb! Tires resting up against a curb can make dams that cause water to go where we don't want it to, and leaves can quickly wedge behind tires, causing flooding over the curbs and into the roadway.
- b. If you see a lot of debris in a storm drain near you, please clean it out! These storm drains are systems we all rely upon, so you'll be doing a great service for everyone on your street.
- c. If you notice a malfunctioning storm drain or trouble spot, call San Rafael Dept. of Public Works at 485-3355, or Street Maintenance Manager Glenn Nunley, at 485-3373.

Visit the City of San Rafael website to learn about street sweeping logistics and to check schedules. Get the whole "scoop" at the Department of Public Works website:

<http://www.sanrafaelpublicworks.org/service5.htm>

## GARAGE SALE UPDATE

We want to thank everyone who participated in the annual GPNA Garage Sale this year. We had a rocky start a couple of days prior to the event due to an unexpected rain, but the weather cleared up for the big day, and folks were able to browse and shop under sunny skies. We hope this was a great experience for everyone, especially those who were new to the event. It's always fun, and we plan to continue having this June event in the years to come. Our GPNA Board President, Chandra Murphy, has enjoyed hosting the Garage Sale for the past two years. We greatly appreciate your participation, and want you to know that your registration fee helps us fund our other events, such as the annual picnic.

**TRAFFIC COMMITTEE MEETING: A FOLLOW-UP**

GPNA's Traffic Committee held a meeting on Monday, July 26th, as a follow-up to their first meeting, which took place on June 13th. The first meeting was well attended by over 30 very interested neighbors, and many of them handed us the completed traffic survey forms which they had received in the last newsletter. In this meeting, we welcomed new Committee members and began working on strategies to deal with the increasing traffic problems in the neighborhood. We also set up a schedule for future meetings, which will be held on the fourth Friday of every month at 7 PM, at the B Street Community Center. Our next meeting will be on August 26th.

The information we received from the completed surveys shows us that speeding and pedestrian safety are the two top issues for residents, followed by specific problem intersections and various other traffic/sp speeding problems that will need addressing in an overall plan.

The GPNA Traffic Committee wants to build a team of committed residents who will work together to promote calm and safe traffic through residential neighborhoods in San Rafael. We want to identify specific streets, intersections and crosswalks that need to be modified for safety. We also want the City of San Rafael to prioritize and adopt a neighborhood traffic calming policy, as many other communities have done.

All these measures would greatly improve the quality of life for residents.

We will continue to work with the city's traffic engineer on implementing these improvements, and on imposing restrictions on certain types of traffic. Meanwhile, we will also work with nearby businesses and residents who have been reported as causing specific traffic problems in our neighborhood, provide education regarding traffic problems and remedies, and encourage the San Rafael Police Department to provide more traffic patrols in the neighborhood. Enforcement is an important part of traffic calming, and the SRPD will give more attention to our streets if they are regularly informed and reminded of problems by concerned and observant residents.

This is a large and important undertaking that could significantly improve the quality of life in Gerstle Park in the coming years. There will be much to do, and we will keep you posted about our progress through this newsletter and our GPNA website. We will also be providing you with information on what you can do to help with this vital issue. **The GPNA Traffic Committee will meet again on Friday, August 26th, at the B St. Community Center at 7 PM. We hope to see more concerned residents at this meeting. Your participation is welcome- and needed! Please feel free to email us at dan.miller@gerstlepark.com**

**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: **\$15.00** per household ( **\$10.00** seniors) - 1 voting member

Payment Type: \_\_\_\_\_ Term of membership is from January 1<sup>st</sup> to December 31<sup>st</sup>

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

Welcome to GPNA!

For your Convenience....Quick Whom-to-Call Reference Numbers

**Non-Emergency Police Related Problems: 485-3000**

(traffic, homeless, noise, non-emergency crimes, etc.)

**Beat Officers: 485-5773 PLUS ext # for individual Officer** (see below)  
or email [beat1@srpd.org](mailto:beat1@srpd.org) or [beat2@srpd.org](mailto:beat2@srpd.org)

**Code Enforcement Issues: 485-3097**

(illegal building, fences, second units, etc.)

**Parking Enforcement: 485-5333**

**Home and business security checks: 485-5773**

When prompted by the menu, enter 115050, and the pound key.

**Graffiti Abatement Hotline: 485-5326**

**Street Tree and Gerstle Park/Albert Park questions: 485-3375**

**St Vincent Dining Room Issues: Steve Boyer: 454-3303 ext #8**

**GPNA Board President Chandra Murphy: 482-8033**

\*\*Know your Police Beat and the Current Schedule!

The Police website also has much info for you, at [www.srpd.org](http://www.srpd.org)

Beat 1

**Todd Berringer**, M,T,W, 6a-6p, phone ext. 111501, email: [Todd.Berringer@srpd.org](mailto:Todd.Berringer@srpd.org),

**Bill Drolla**, Th,F,Sa, 5a-5p, phone ext. 111347, email: [Bill.Drolla@srpd.org](mailto:Bill.Drolla@srpd.org)

**Dan Hanlon**, M,T,W 5p-5a, phone ext. 111190, email: [Dan.Hanlon@srpd.org](mailto:Dan.Hanlon@srpd.org)

**Allan Castaneda**, Th, F, Sa 5p-5a, phone ext. 111512, email: [Allan.Castaneda@srpd.org](mailto:Allan.Castaneda@srpd.org)

Beat 2

**Aaron Piombo**, M,T,W 5a-5p, phone ext. 111499, email: [Aaron.Piombo@srpd.org](mailto:Aaron.Piombo@srpd.org).

**Eric Cogbill**, Th,F,Sa, 5a-5p phone ext. 111506, email: [Eric.Cogbill@srpd.org](mailto:Eric.Cogbill@srpd.org)

**Justin Graham**, M,T,W 5p-5a phone ext. 111494, email: [Justin.Graham@srpd.org](mailto:Justin.Graham@srpd.org)

**James Bellamy**, Th,F,Sa 5p-5a phone ext. 111518, email: [James.Bellamy@srpd.org](mailto:James.Bellamy@srpd.org)

In the absence of a Community Policing Officer, any communication issues should be reported directly to Chief Rohrbacher at 485-3000.

## GPNA BOARD MEMBER VACANCY

The departure of GPNA Board member Roger Coale leaves an opening on the Board for the remainder of the year, and possibly beyond if the new Board member is voted in at the next Annual Meeting in January. The only requirements for the position are a genuine concern for our neighborhood, a commitment to keeping it a great place to live, and one free evening (usually the first Thursday) of every month. Board members enjoy an inside track on what's happening or being planned in the neighborhood, as well as a strong voice in deciding vital neighborhood issues. We thank Roger for his years of service on the GPNA Board, and we also thank Board member Tim Firman for taking over Roger's duties as Vice President. If you want to join our Board and make a difference in the future of your neighborhood, call GPNA Board President Chandra Murphy at 482-8033, or email her at [murphdtm@yahoo.com](mailto:murphdtm@yahoo.com).

## NEIGHBORHOOD VOICES: THE HISTORY COLLECTOR

Tom is a retired carpenter and longtime Gerstle Park resident, and lives in a house built by his father in the 1940's. Tom's father also built 4 other residential structures on the same block, and as a building estimator-turned-contractor, he was the building supervisor for Marin General Hospital and Marin Catholic High School. Three generations of Tom's family, beginning with his great-grandfather, operated a carriage-making firm in San Francisco, which they started back in 1865. After the advent of the "horseless carriage" they started making handmade, individually-styled bodies for automobiles. The family business was prominent in the city and lasted until 1973, and the building used for their work is now a historical landmark. Tom has a scrapbook in which he has preserved old drawings and photos of the different horse-drawn carriages and auto body styles made by his obviously talented forbears, as well as originals and copies of old receipts and orders, and patents that they obtained for many features of their craftsmanship.

His family's involvement in so much local history has influenced Tom to become what he describes as "a history nut", and as a result he has furnished his inherited house with exclusively old things. "I don't have anything new in my house", he says. "I prefer to collect things that possess a lot of character and memories". Tom loves good coffee and has a large collection of old coffee grinders in different styles and sizes, as well as a variety of old kitchen artifacts and implements, all carefully cleaned and prominently displayed. He has a particular liking for small old stoves, and over the years

has collected many of them. Some are over 100 years old, but all are clean and shining, and they serve as décor in all the rooms of his house. Some have lovely iron details, and some retain their original painted exteriors and flower decorations. Although there are quite a few, they are well-placed so as not to give an appearance of clutter. Not surprisingly, his kitchen stove is a well-preserved old O'Keefe and Merritt in the characteristic art deco style.

On the walls of all the rooms are beautiful old clocks which he has rescued from oblivion, and which work perfectly, because Tom has cleaned and repaired them. He has hung old stained-glass panels on many of the windows, providing both privacy and a soft filtering of light. He even has an old wind-up Victrola-style phonograph in his living room, in good working order, of course.

On the wall space unoccupied by clocks, Tom has hung lots more history, such as old local maps, family photos, and more mementos of his family's business. Collecting his old treasures and documents has meant a lot of research and leg work, but Tom is an occasional docent for the Marin Historical Society and has been able to make copies of many old documents in their collection; he has also found much local and family history at the San Francisco Historical Society. Occasionally, he has even obtained documents from people who contacted him because they recognized the family name.

Other than what he inherited from his family, most of the furniture and decorations in the house were bought as throw-aways from yard sales and thrift shops, and Tom takes pleasure in restoring them to their original beauty. A 200 year old Chinese table made of teak and rosewood and carved with intricate double swirls stands against one wall in the living room, and serves as a stand for a very old half-size harp, painted in a soft green with gold-colored filigree, as well as a large ornate cash register and a hardware-store scale, both circa 1900. Outside on the porch near the front door entrance stands an old beautifully carved stone planter, which he has filled with flowers.

Surrounded as he is with reminders of local and family history, it's easy to see how Tom has developed his passion for saving attractive and/or useful old things from being thrown away and forgotten. "At some point", he laughs, "I may not be able to walk around in here." But although his rooms are filled with the results of his collecting and it's sometimes hard to know where to look next, nothing looks out of place, and the overall impression is of a houseful of loved things.



## BLUE RIBBON AWARD FOR NEIGHBORHOOD IMPROVEMENT

503 D Street is one of the very few fully commercial buildings in our mostly residential area, housing six offices. Recently, the building was repainted and newly landscaped to prepare for being put up for sale. Barbara Strick, the building's manager, showed us around and credited the owners for the very satisfying results.

New casement-style windows replaced the old windows and gave a more "homey" look to the building, very appropriate to fit in with the surrounding private homes. A new paint job for the whole building in a beige-gray color with dark green trim looks understated but fresh, and the outdoor carpeting on the back deck was replaced by slate tiles in shades of brown, blue and beige. A new deck railing, painted to match the new color, replaces an old wooden trellis, and new modern-style lighting fixtures add a sleek finishing touch.

The building enjoys a generously sized front yard, as well as a patio-style front walkway leading to the offices. New planter urns along the walkway hold attractive potted palms, and the front yard, previously just ivy and weeds, has been redone in a neat, low-maintenance style, with redwood mulch and decorative grasses and ferns (the low-lying, deep blue-green mondo grass adds bright accent spots), as well as Santa Rosa daisies, some small but attractive trees, and a few well-placed boulders. The sign structure in the front yard was painted to match the dark green trim on the building, and now the bold orange lettering listing the building's tenants really stands out.

The building's owners are to be congratulated for their classy, understated improvements, which not only make the building more attractive to prospective buyers, but make it look more in keeping with its residential surroundings.

## WELCOME TO SAN RAFAEL'S NEW FIRE CHIEF (AND SOME IMPORTANT FIRE PREVENTION TIPS!)

John Montenero has joined the San Rafael Fire Department as interim Fire Chief for one year. Chief Montenero currently resides in Fairfax, and brings 43 years of experience to the job. He replaces San Rafael's former Chief, Bruce Martin, and plans to carry on the progress made by his predecessor, with a strong emphasis on team goals. Vegetation management, DART (Disaster Area Response Team) training, and "chipper days" (the Fire Department provides a chipper machine so that people can bring their yard waste to be converted to usable mulch) are all programs that interest our new Chief. The Fire Department continues to be very committed to working with neighborhoods on all of these programs, as they are essential tools for managing fire risk in our area.

At a recent meeting of the Federation of San Rafael Neighbor-

hoods, Chief Montenero discussed the importance of preventive measures and reminded us that response time isn't the entire picture for successful fire control. Certain home improvements, such as vents that don't let sparks come in as easily, chimney caps, and fire sprinklers can all lessen fire risk. Precautions such as closing windows if a fire is in the area, maintaining a defensible zone with vegetation planning, and using gas barbecues versus charcoal are other ways to prevent fires. And we should all remember to exercise extreme caution when working with gas-operated weed whackers or other garden tools that may set off sparks. All these measures can help prevent or minimize fire damage. The Fire Department has excellent handouts on all of the above, and they are willing to be available to inspect a property for fire risk. All residents are encouraged to be informed on these important safety issues. Also, please remember that the Fire Department depends on residents to notify them of hazardous situations. If you see such a hazard in the neighborhood, you are encouraged to call them at 485-3304, so they can investigate and correct the situation as necessary.

## 2005-2006 CALENDAR OF EVENTS

**September 1:** Monthly Meeting - 7PM\*

**September 15:** Annual Picnic - 6-9PM

**October 6:** Monthly Meeting - 7PM\*

**October 31:** Hallowe'en Decorating Contest

**November 3:** Monthly Meeting - 7PM\*

**December 1:** Monthly Meeting - 7PM\*

**December 15:** Christmas Caroling

**December 20-30:** Holiday Decorating Contest

**January 5:** Monthly Meeting - 7PM\*

**January 26:** Annual Meeting

## COMMUNITY MEETINGS

Cultural Affairs Commission - 1st Wednesday


Design Review Board - 1st & 3rd Tuesdays

City Council - 1st & 3rd Mondays

Planning Commission - 2nd & 4th Tuesdays

Fed. of S.R. Neighborhoods - 3rd Tuesday

\* Guests are Welcome! If you desire to address the GPNA Board of Directors, wish to attend a meeting or need more information on Gerstle Park Events or Community Meetings, below, please contact Chandra Murphy at 415-482-8033 or Tymber Cavasian via email: [tymber@gerstlepark.com](mailto:tymber@gerstlepark.com)



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