

Gerstle Park Neighborhood Association

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



Quarterly Newsletter

Spring 2009

WELCOME TO THE NEW GPNA BOARD

On 4 March the Board met and welcomed new members and inaugurated our new president, Bob Beyea. We look forward to the work of this enthusiastic team of dedicated neighbors, and thank the outgoing board members for their valuable service rendered to the Association and all of us who live in Gerstle Park. Learn more about the new Board – and about our neighborhood – by visiting the GPNA website at <http://www.gerstlepark.com>.

The GPNA would welcome any residents who are interested in contributing to neighborhood affairs to contact us about joining the Board. You would work with some wonderful people and you would contribute to the quality and cohesiveness that makes our neighborhood a special place to live.

A MESSAGE FROM THE OUTGOING PRESIDENT.

It is with joy and sadness that I turn over the role of President of the Neighborhood Association to Bob Beyea. Bob is going to make a great President, as he has a very high level of commitment to this community, and is very organized and capable as well.

Within the City of San Rafael business offices, Gerstle Park has a reputation as a very active neighborhood. We've got folks who live here who show up at meetings regularly, keeping a finger on the pulse of what is happening, and advocate for our community regularly. Rumor has it that other neighborhood associations view ours as how they would like to be. All of that is great, and you as members of the community should feel happy and grateful that this is so. On the other hand, those of us who serve the community pay a big price of time and energy for this success and, ultimately, burn out trying to keep up the pace.

At this juncture our Board membership is approaching a critical low. Four members have completed their three-year terms including Dan Miller Jordis Weaver Tiffani Lendschmidt and myself. Two members are moving out of the neighborhood and one needs to cut back substantially due to other commitments. As such, we are left with a Board of six when we should have twelve. Six may seem like plenty to you, but when you factor in the quarterly newsletters, the Spring Fling, the Annual Garage Sale, the Annual Picnic, the Halloween Decorating Contest and Christmas Caroling as just the basis, then add advocating

with the city, championing disaster preparedness, handling all the e-mails and special projects and keeping an eye on development, we are grossly short-handed. A potential solution was proposed of ceasing to hold various events. This idea saddens me greatly... When I was a child we had a horse-drawn sleigh pass through our neighborhood every Christmas Eve. Santa was aboard and he had a gift with my name on it! There were elves that ran ahead of the sleigh, knocking on the doors to let folks know that Santa was coming, and handing out stockings full of candy. How did this magical feat happen? The neighborhood association!

Your neighborhood association makes your community special. When people talk about how great it is to live in Gerstle Park, they are factoring in the cool things that happen here in addition to the charm and proximity of the neighborhood. Let's make sure to keep this community great. I urge you to get over the hurdle of just "thinking about" joining the Board, and give us a call. Get involved! Even if you would be interested in helping with just one event, or taking on a single job, we truly can use (and need) your help!

I leave the Board, proud of the contributions I assisted making; delighted to know the Mayor, City Manager and other city officials on a first name basis; richer for the friendships that have deepened in this role and for the new friends I have made. Perhaps I would have stayed on longer if more people in the community got involved, lending a hand: many hands make light work! As long as we have many depending on the few, I foresee a steady turnover as we are only human, simply volunteers, and are compensated strictly by your appreciation and the sense of a job well done. SO GET OFF YOUR BOOTIES AND GIVE US A CALL! Let's keep Gerstle Park great!

SPRING FLING

Save the date everyone! Our annual "Spring Fling" Easter event is almost upon us. This is a very popular and well-attended event. Easter is back in April this year, and this year's event will be held on Saturday April 11th. Expect to arrive in the playground of Gerstle Park before 10am because once the kids are let loose at 10am sharp to collect Easter eggs, the candy will disappear in a hurry. We will supply some coffee and muffins from our own Muffin Mania. We have had success with splitting the older & younger kids in separate areas in the park for safety reasons. Contests and awards will also be part of this event.

OPEN SPACE TRAILS

GPNA approached the City about putting permanent trail maps at the entrances to our open space areas. These maps would be funded by GPNA at no cost to the City. Our motivation for this was that considerable confusion exists on the public access between our two major open space areas. Hikers frequently are misled by an existing sign on private property that misleads the public to think that they are intruding on private property. Our request was denied. This is a battle with City Hall that will continue to another day. In the meantime, GPNA will make open space trail maps that can be accessed on the GPNA website. Stay tuned for this.

NIGHTMARE ON CLORINDA AVENUE

Question: What is worse than having a backed-up toilet?

Answer: A backed-up toilet that must be repaired by paying a plumber \$17,000 to dig up the street to reach the offending sewer pipe.

This nightmare was faced recently by a Clorinda neighbor of mine. The problem was not the fault of the homeowner; there was a break in the sewer "lateral," that is, the four-inch pipe that connects the house with the main sewer pipe that runs under the street. In this case the break occurred where the lateral hooked up to the sewer main, far under the surface of the street.

It used to be in San Rafael that the homeowner's responsibility for maintaining the sewer lateral extended only from the house to the property line, generally the curb. In 1979 that responsibility was extended from the house all the way to the point where the lateral pipe joins with the sewer main pipe.

My neighbor tried to make the case that the cause of the problem opposite his house was an improper connection at the point where the lateral and main sewer pipes join. The City, he feels, should have picked up the tab. The City, through the Public Works/Sanitary District, denied his claim and told him his only recourse was to go to court. My neighbor decided that the legal costs would probably be more than the nearly \$17,000 he was out of pocket. He wrote a check to a private plumbing company for the repair; he remains an unhappy camper.

Andy Preston, the retiring Public Works Director for San Rafael, told me that during his 27 years on the job, in only three instances did the City pay for or help pay for repairs to sewer laterals. The City will help only in unusual cases such as damage to laterals from tree roots or from City construction projects.

Part II of this sewer saga will appear in the next GPNA

newsletter. It will include information about long-range plans to replace and repair aging sewer laterals in San Rafael and programs of assistance to homeowners in repairing laterals in other Marin jurisdictions.

If you are a homeowner who has had a problem with your sewer lateral, please give me a call at 457-0651.

Angelo Douvos, GPNA Board Member



C STREET FLOODING ISSUE

GPNA needs to start a committee to address the C Street flooding issue. We haven't had a flood for awhile, but it will happen again. The primary cause of flooding is overflow from Mahon Creek that drains a major part of our City. Of particular concern is that portion of the creek across from the Second Street side of the transit center. We all drive by, but nobody notices the problem. The creek makes an abrupt sharp turn at that point, there is a deteriorated bulkhead and a rail trestle that obstruct flow of the creek and cause a backup of water onto C Street.. Voters have approved the SMART rail transit system and a replacement trestle will have to be constructed. We would like to see the creek realigned for better flow and a flow friendly trestle constructed. In addition is the global warming issue with the accompanying rise of sea level. The City is currently studying this issue and is drafting a report. GPNA needs help! Please call Hugo Landecker 456-0221 <clandecker@saber.net>.

VEGETATION MANAGEMENT

Last year the City adopted a vegetation management ordinance. Our Fire Department will be enforcing the ordinance this coming August, September and October in our neighborhood. GPNA wants property owners be aware that this will occur and take steps to comply. Compliance can be very expensive, so be forewarned. Strict compliance is mandatory and non-compliance can result in expensive penalties. Generally, all properties west of Clark St, upper Grove St, south of Antonette St and east of Martens Blvd are affected. We suggest you call the San Rafael Fire Department or visit:

http://www.cityofsanrafael.org/Government/Fire/Vegetation_Management_Program.htm

LIVING IN HARMONY WITH NEIGHBORHOOD WILDLIFE

One of Gerstle Park's special attributes is that we live in a city surrounded by wilderness. We have urban life and we have wildlife. We can experience the natural part of California without having to travel far beyond the borders of our own neighborhood.

Yet with this benefit comes a certain responsibility. There are things we can do to live in harmony with our wildlife. There are also things that we may be doing which could be causing more harm than good.

Here are a few tips to help guide you when encountering wildlife:

Don't feed or try to pet wild animals. Keep wild things wild! Feeding, whether direct or indirect, causes wild animals to associate humans with food and will potentially lead to aggressive behavior. In addition, foods that we may feed them may not be part of their natural diet, therefore may cause illness. Animals that rely on natural food will remain wild and keep a safe distance from people.

Secure your garbage. Secure your garbage in tough plastic containers with tight fitting lids and keep in secure buildings when possible.

Keep your pets safe. Animals such as coyotes view cats and small dogs as potential food and view large dogs as competition.

Feed pets indoors. Outdoor feeding attracts many wild animals to your door! Everyone likes a free lunch, especially those uninvited guests such as rats.

Keep bird feeding areas clean. Use feeders designed to keep seed off the ground as the seed attracts many small mammals that larger animals prey upon. Remove feeders if wild animals are regularly seen around your yard.

Avoid Poisons. Using poisons to control rodent problems can cause many unintended effects. A poisoned rodent could expire inside a wall, which could mean you would need to remove sheetrock to extract the animal. According to Wildcare (our neighborhood wildlife experts), many of their hawk and owl patients come to them because of secondary poisoning from eating rats that have digested over-the-counter poisons. Essentially, we are poisoning animals that help to control the rat problem. Wild animals are not the only ones at risk. In Marin alone there are over 100 cases of accidental dog poisonings due to the ingestion of rat poisons every year.

Know the Law. Regarding relocation of wild animals, the law states that if a wild animal is captured it must either be released 100 feet from where it was captured or be killed. The reasoning is that moving animals to new locations can spread disease or create orphans when mothers have been moved.

Close off gaps around your house, crawl spaces under porches and sheds. Raccoons and other critters use such areas for resting and raising young. The best long term solution is to keep your property in good repair and use appropriate and humane deterrents to discourage wildlife from taking up residence.

Trim your trees in autumn, not spring. Understandably, spring is the time that we want to get outside and do yard work. Yet it is also the time that birds are in the trees nesting with their young. So, be courteous to our feathered friends and do tree trimming in the autumn when there are no active nests present.

Prevent collisions. Birds have a difficult time distinguishing between a tree or other natural object and its reflection in a window. There are simple and inexpensive ways to prevent this problem. A common solution is to apply decals to windows. You may also consider using streamers, wind chimes or reflective tape.

Tell your neighbors. Pass this information along since your efforts to assist neighborhood wildlife may be unsuccessful if neighbors are out of the loop.

Need Help? We would like to thank Maggie Sergio from Wildcare's Wildlife Solution Service for her contribution to this article. The Wildlife Solution Service can help you identify pests, assess reasons for problems and provide humane and effective solutions, such as removing what is attracting animals and sealing entry and exit points. For further information please call Wildlife Solutions at 415-456-7283 X23. You can also visit Wildcare at 76 Albert Park Lane in San Rafael where you can purchase decals for your windows.

ST. VINCENT'S

Gerstle Park residents who attended our Annual Meeting in January had a good opportunity to hear from Steve Boyer, the executive director of St. Vincent DePaul Society of Marin, which is located on B Street, between Second and Third Streets. Steve was invited to respond to a complaint that clients were creating problems by congregating in greater numbers than before on the sidewalk in front of the dining room and across the street.

Steve, eager to be a good neighbor, outlined ways that St. Vincent's has been trying to minimize congestion on B Street sidewalks. The main entrance to the dining room is now in the adjoining alley, where clients can socialize with friends. There is a rule, strictly enforced, not to loiter across the street. Steve promised there will be renewed efforts to monitor the situation.

ST. Vincent's continued from page 3)

Steve Boyer's effort to reach out for support from the Gerstle Park community provides an opportunity for the neighborhood to learn more about St Vincent's and perhaps to help improve the lives of people less fortunate.

St. Vincent's, that is affiliated with the Catholic Church, is best known for its dining room. Hot meals, provided with dignity and a welcoming manner from 6:00 a.m. until 1:00 p.m., have been provided since 1981. Help is extended to all comers, no questions asked. The free kitchen, operating without government support, has been open every day since then and has served over 2,000,000 meals.

Nourishing meals are only a part of what St. Vincent's provides to the poor and homeless. Emergency assistance takes many forms: help with rental deposits and utility payments, limited motel stays, transportation, referrals for medical needs, blankets, clothing, etc. In 2008 there were over 1,000 home visits designed to keep low-income people from becoming homeless. Last year 75 people were helped to move off the streets into permanent housing.

There are many ways that Gerstle Park residents can support St. Vincent's programs. Volunteer opportunities are many, not just in the kitchen and dining room. Donations of food, money, old cars, blankets, sleeping bags, warm clothing, etc, would be much appreciated. Local residents are always welcome to drop in to visit the newly-renovated dining room and to learn first-hand of St. Vincent's programs

Persons wanting to help St. Vincent's should contact Volunteer Coordinator Cris Jones at crisj@vinnies.org. GPNA Board member Angelo Douvos can be reached at 457-0651 if there are concerns about local homeless programs.

GPNA CALENDAR

April 1	Wed	Board of Directors Meeting
April 11	Sat	Spring Fling - Easter Egg Hunt
May 6	Wed	Board of Directors Meeting
June 3	Wed	Board of Directors Meeting
June 20	Sat	Neighborhood Garage Sale
July 1	Wed	Board of Directors Meeting
August 5	Wed	Board of Directors Meeting
September 2	Wed	Board of Directors Meeting
September 20	Sun	Annual Picnic
October 7	Wed	Board of Directors Meeting
October 31	Sat	Hallowe'en Contest Judging
November 4	Wed	Board of Directors Meeting
December 2	Wed	Board of Directors Meeting
December		Christmas Caroling (TBD)
January 6	Wed	Board of Directors Meeting
January 28	Thu	Annual Meeting

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

Membership Year Runs from January 1st through December 31st

Individual: One Voting Member: \$15.00 (\$10.00 Seniors Age 65 or Older)

Household: Two Voting Members: \$20.00 (\$15.00 Seniors)

New Member ♦ Renewal

Gerstle Park T-SHIRTS: Child & Adult \$15ea. _____ / _____
Quantity Size

Additional Donation: \$ _____ Total Enclosed: \$ _____

Name: _____ Phone: _____

Address: _____

Email Address: _____ Date: _____

Do you wish to receive our quarterly newsletter via email instead of home delivery? Yes ♦ No

Are you interested in volunteering? Yes ♦ No