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Midtown Residents Association Neighborhood Newsletter

SPRING 2010

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MRA's 2009 Accomplishments by Sheri Furman

MRA's biggest accomplishments in 2009 were in the areas of Midtown parks and emergency preparedness.

After more than 25 years, and several neighborhood meetings, work has finally started on the last portion of Greer Park. We are delighted to see the culmination of the efforts begun by Charles and the late Jean Scott in the 70s when they formed the original residents association. Seale Park will be getting bathrooms later this year, again after several neighborhood meetings were held to provide input.

We now have 3 Neighborhood Preparedness Coordinators and over 30 Block Preparedness Coordinators. Our vice-chair, Annette Ashton, has been spearheading this effort for years and the City Council formally recognized it by making emergency preparedness a Council priority this year.

We published two newsletters and over 40 weekly enews blasts and made sure your concerns were heard at City Hall when issues arose. We also attended or worked on: Alma Plaza Site & Design, High Speed Rail, "Meeting with the Chief" roundtable with Police Chief Dennis Burns, the US 101 Auxiliary Lanes Project, the Private Streets Initiative, and the City of Palo Alto Streetlight Pilot Project. And, of course, our 11th annual Ice Cream and Issues Social.

Your 2010 Priorities for MRA by Sheri Furman

- Preserve neighborhood quality
 - Bringing neighbors together (block parties, emergency preparedness)
 - Improving the Midtown Center
 - Sidewalk repair
 - Tree removal/trimming
 - Street repair
- Information on local issues / Keep informed of local news
- Traffic
 - Traffic slowing/enforcement
 - Bicycle paths/ Bicycle friendly streets / Keep Bicycles off the sidewalk
 - Impact of Oregon Expressway "improvement"
- Emergency/Disaster Preparedness, Block Coordinator program
 - Crime

APRIL 13: MRA GENERAL MEETING **The City Budget Process and Your Input** **Presented by City Manager Jim Keene**

Friends Meeting Hall, 957 Colorado --- Doors open 6:45; 7pm meeting start

City Manager Jim Keene will update us on the status of the City budget, including:

- How did we get here? What lies ahead?
- How much do you pay versus the cost of services you get?
- Do you know where your property taxes go?
- What services can be cut and which are essential?

What Are You Priorities? * Let the City Hear Your Concerns**

A REMINDER FOR US: Eureka, Haiti, Chile Quake and a Power Outage – Our need for self-sufficiency by Annette Ashton, Emergency Preparedness Chair

Do you have cash on hand? Water, food, extra medicines, flashlights, a way of contacting loved ones? These incidents remind us to check to see if we are prepared for an earthquake, a flood, or any disaster.

*“A 5.9 near Eureka, a 7.0 in Haiti and an almost unthinkable 8.8 magnitude quake off the coast of Chile. The continental plates continue to shift, and while it may or may not mean more imminent danger for our fault ridden area, it heightens our anxiety when one of those jolts from the San Andreas, Calaveras or Hayward disturbs our morning coffee.” **

What you do now makes a difference when the shaking starts. *Lessons of Katrina* tells us self-sufficiency is our best defense against natural disaster*, and neighbor helping neighbor is absolutely essential!

Being prepared for any kind of disaster means taking steps now to reduce damage that may occur, being ready to react when the shaking starts (drop, cover, and hold on), and having a plan and supplies on hand to survive while recover begins.

Is Emergency Preparedness in Midtown much ado about nothing? That's for you to decide. What I do know is that for those of us who have the minimum, which is a Family Plan and Supply kit, we have, at the very least, peace of mind.

Here are several important steps that you can do now to make sure you, too, have that peace of mind:

- 1) Sign up for the City of Palo Alto Community Alerting & Notification System (CANS). You can choose to be notified by any or all of the following: email, text, cell, work and/or home. To sign up for CANS, go to www.cityofpaloalto.org, click the Emergency Information tab, and then click Sign Up for Palo Alto CANS.
- 2) Have a Family Emergency Plan, talk to your family about escape routes and where to meet up. See <http://www.mimi.com/mra/pan/ep/prepare/famplan.pdf> and http://www.ready.gov/america/downloads/fep_download/FamEmePlan_Adult.pdf. Establish both an "out-of-state" and a local person to call to report status, as well as, establish a near home and an out of neighborhood meeting place for your family. Keep a list of the above in your home, work place, on your person, in your cell phone, in your car and in your emergency kit.
- 3) Have an Emergency Supply Kit for 7-10 days. Put one together or just simply buy a ready made one. See the PAN (Palo Alto Neighborhood) web site for supplies. <http://www.mimi.com/mra/pan/ep/supplies/supplies.htm#buy>. QuakeKare products are recommended as the best buy. Costco also has some excellent deals. See <http://tinyurl.com/ybgut77>. For brochures that list detailed supplies, see: <http://www.mimi.com/mra/pan/ep/supplies/homekit.doc> and <http://www.mimi.com/mra/pan/ep/supplies/gokit>. Don't forget to prepare a kit for your pet. See <http://www.uan.org/applications/store.cfm?navid=157>.
- 4) Purchase a land line (analog) telephone (no battery charger, no message center, no electric cord), just an old fashion phone that does not require any power. Any phone that requires electricity will not work.
- 5) In an emergency, stay tuned to local radio stations such as KZSU 90.1 FM and KCBS 740 AM/106.9 FM for the latest weather and storm information. To do so, make sure you have an emergency radio that works on batteries or buy a special one that is solar/crank/battery powered. See QuakeKare <http://www.quakekare.com/index.asp?PageAction=VIEWPROD&ProdID=57>.
- 6) A laptop, lanterns and lights that are battery operated are good to have. A camp stove, with sufficient propane, is useful for long outages
- 7) Stash a supply of batteries and propane. Your laptop and phone can be charged with by your car battery by use of a device called an inverter. It converts 12-volt DC power from a vehicle battery into 120-volt AC power, allowing you to power your mobile devices when the battery runs low. Purchase at Best Buy, Fry's, etc..
- 8) Keep a hard copy of all important numbers and important contact information. Place in a "go" kit with important items that you can take if you need to evacuate.
- 9) Stash a supply of cash with small bills. ATMs will not work if the power is out.
- 10) Have sufficient water on hand. The current recommendation is for 7 days - 1 gallon/person/day. The City's water transmission is dependent on power; utility pumps are electric.

- 11) If you have children enrolled in Palo Alto schools, please follow the District release guidelines. All schools have enough emergency supplies on site to keep the kids fed and comfortable until they are released to the approved adults on the emergency cards.
- 12) Make sure that you have a Block Preparedness Coordinator (BPC) for your street. Become one yourself or recruit one (see <http://www.mimi.com/mra/pan/ep/bpc/bpc.htm>.) Also consider becoming a first responder (PANDA/CERT).

* Editorial, San Jose Mercury March 2, 2010

Community Tapestry by Karen Holman, Palo Alto City Council

History is told in epics and in the smallest of tales. Both relate life in a given time regarding particular individuals from specific points of view. Interestingly, both are equally important in recording the tapestry that is a community's story.

Palo Alto's story is strikingly rich in innovation, advocacy, ingenuity, environmental leadership, diversity, architectural landmarks, and many other aspects of life here on the peninsula that have shaped not only our most local lives but life around the world.

The things that have always attracted me to Palo Alto are the large and, some would say, small stories. Rich in examples of innovation as well as kindness, our community benefits from the well-documented stories of Stanford University's founding, Hewlett-Packard, the Palo Alto Medical Clinic, Google, and Facebook. But we are enriched by the traditions reported less often that are the stitches that pull our busy lives together.

We are a community where volunteers care for a pair of donkeys in Bol Park, a commitment honored and dating back to when Mrs. Bol donated the land to create the park. The most generous gift of Mrs. Gamble allowed people to come together to create Gamble Gardens. University Art for many years had in its employ a man who handed out daffodils to passersby every spring. And when the AME Zion Church community could not make its mortgage payment in the 1930's, the other churches in the community came together not only to make that payment but to pay off the mortgage. Trees quite obviously and largely define our community's character. In the 1890s Woman's Club members took it upon themselves, typically by wagon, to water new street trees until they could thrive on their own.

This is the community that I love and cherish. The community I am proud to call my own. Looking forward while looking around.

History is a continuum. We do live in a different world today than when HP's first employee had as his contract for 40 years a handshake. But the respect for each other, the hope in a spring bloom, the importance then and now of street trees, these values do not change.

I'D LIKE TO HELP SUPPORT MRA

Name _____

Address _____

Phone (home) _____ (cell) _____

Email _____

Amount enclosed \$ _____ Add me to enews (email required) Yes

Areas I'd like to become involved in:

- Traffic Schools Events Membership Parks Public Art
- Working with Midtown Merchants Newsletter Zoning/Developments

==== Send your \$15 membership payment to Sylvia Gartner, 824 Moreno, Palo Alto 94303 ====

Midtown Traffic Issues Report from February General Meeting *by Sylvia Gartner*

We had some surprise guests, the acting Battalion Chief of the PAFD, plus three firefighters. Representatives from the Planning Department were Gail Likens and Julie Caporgno.

Gail spoke about the Oregon Expressway improvements. The work was approved last fall, and the Santa Clara County traffic engineer will be drawing up plans. The funding is in place. Within the next year, the work will go out for bid. Gail anticipates great improvements in the signaling. The speed limits will remain the same. There will be a left turn lane from Middlefield and shorter signals, which should help with the backup traffic on Middlefield approaching Oregon. Ross Road will have bicycle type signals.

There was a discussion of possible traffic calming on Middlefield. The arterial streets were defined as Charleston/Arastradero, University Avenue, Middlefield Road, and Embarcadero Road. Jim Barbera suggested the possibility of colored crosswalks for Middlefield Road at the Midtown shopping district.

Police Chief Dennis Burns spoke, with a caveat that he had never worked traffic in his years with the PAPD. He stated that the Police Department tries to focus on the 3 E's: **Education** (schools, police department outreach; **Enforcement** (tickets); and **Engineering** (planning and transportation departments).

The Chief stated that the city has 6 traffic officers, headed by Sergeant Bonilla, who was also present at the meeting. He described the difficulty of qualifying to be a motorcycle officer, probably the toughest learning curve in the Police Department. The traffic officers try to focus on before and after the schools let out, for the safety of the children. The Chief talked about the Traffic Safety Community Network that meets once a month with a representative of the Schools (currently Camille Townsend of the School Board), a police representative, and a City representative.

The issue of cameras for red light violators has come up often. The problem is that the providers of the equipment apparently share revenue and want a certain guaranteed level of income from placing the detectors. This is an issue with the declining city budget.

The meeting then changed to discussion of increased speeding on Loma Verde. Many residents along that street attended the meeting. Various attendees spoke about accidents that had happened, near accidents, and general concern about heavier traffic due to cut-throughs and speeding on Loma Verde. Chief Burns stated that a street has to be rated for radar; otherwise a judge would throw out any ticket. Both Gail Likens and Chief Burns talked about the process of getting a critical mass of residents on that street to sign a petition that they wished traffic calming measures to be taken.

Greer Park Project Update *by Greg Betts, Director, City of Palo Alto Community Services*

The development of the vacant Phase IV area of Greer Park will include complete replacement of the park irrigation system, replacement of the children's play area, miscellaneous improvements to picnic areas, site furnishings and park landscaping. Phase IV will be developed for passive use and will include a lighted and landscaped perimeter pathway accessing several individual benches, a picnic area and a small open plaza that will serve as a focal point and gathering area.

To date Elite Landscaping continues the demolition work and trenching of soccer fields 1 and 2 throughout this week (March 1st). The forecasted rain is not expected to delay this phase of the project. Per the contractor's schedule, the main line irrigation installation will be complete by the end of next week (March 12). The project goal continues to be to have the soccer fields at the intersection of Amarillo Avenue and West Bayshore Road open and ready for use by June 15, 2010.

The projected duration of construction activity is nine months, from January 2010 through September 2010, during which time the park will remain closed to the public, except for the skate park. When the project is complete the interior of the space will be a turf meadow interspersed with several trees. The new design for the children's play area will carry a nautical island theme, but will retain its existing footprint. The existing sand will be replaced by resilient rubber surfacing and a smaller sand play area will be constructed adjacent to the new play apparatus. The existing interactive sculpture of a dolphin will remain and be integrated into the new design.

Seale Park Restroom Project Schedule *provided by Holly Boyd, Public Works Engineering*

Late August -- Begin Construction. October -- Construction complete.

MIDTOWN – People define our history...a continuing story...

Bob Schneeveis -- Friend and Midtown Neighbor

Interview and photos by Jeb Eddy

The north end of Silicon Valley is known for its decades of academic and industrial innovation, much of it in electronics and medicine. There is also a thriving community of less visible inventors, experimenters and DIYers -- and one of the active, very creative members of this segment is Bob Schneeveis, a resident of Midtown.

For pay, Bob, 64, works at Stanford Medical Center, crafting by hand truly unique machined instruments for researchers -- tools that help them to see and/or measure small things happening in nerve systems, vision, and others.

He grew up in Wisconsin; his family was in what would today be called the "recycling" business, but in those days the term "junk dealer" was more common. By the age of 16, Bob was speeding a motorcycle on back country roads, and had found pleasure and skill in using his hands with tools and machines. The U.S. Coast Guard sent Bob to helicopter mechanic school at the Sikorsky plant in Connecticut. Bob became the chief mechanic for the San Francisco squadron of Coast Guard choppers. It's a job where you really have to know about electricity, hydraulics, metal, mechanics, communications -- everything. During his service, when the Coast Guard was called for rescue of sailors whose boat was thrashing dangerously in stormy wind and water, Bob was also a guy on the low end of a cable suspended from a helicopter, reeling the people up to safety.

His knowledge, experience and modest confidence are evident in the relaxed, smiling manner in which he talks.

Bob's garage has a small set of power tools for cutting metal, welding, threading, assembly, disassembly, again and again. For decades, Bob has been particularly interested in electric-powered transportation. In 1993, Bob and over a dozen friends built an all- electric race car, and came in second in races on the Indy-type track in Phoenix.



At his home in the northeast corner of the Midtown area, one current project is an all-electric motorcycle. For full disclosure: the author of this article has been a friend and admirer of Bob Schneeveis for over 15 years. I have ridden that motorcycle. It's a dream. Quiet, smooth... I want one.

Bob's son Kent lives in College Terrace and at one time made and sold compost bins at the California Avenue Farmer's Market, made of recycled redwood fencing. (I own one). Bob also has a daughter living in Colorado.

If you see a somewhat unusual vehicle around Midtown or elsewhere, there is a good chance it is our clever neighbor Bob, continuing on his never-ending learning curve.

Act Locally by Jill Matzke, Membership Chair

Your support for MRA helps keep our neighborhood strong! In just the past few weeks we have made an impact on traffic, neighborhood trees, parks, emergency preparedness and other important local concerns. Please continue supporting MRA through your annual dues and consider joining us in one of these volunteer committee areas. You can make a difference!

- **Traffic:** assure that MRA traffic concerns are heard and addressed
- **Communications:** help get the word out on MRA activities
- **Events:** help coordinate meetings, other events.
- **Membership:** grow the participation of neighborhood residents in our activities
- **Zoning:** represent MRA on land use decisions affecting our area
- **Parks/Beautification/Art:** assure our local parks and public spaces are maintained and improved
- **Business Relations:** enhance neighborhood relations with local businesses

Email jillmatzke@yahoo.com if you are interested or call Jill Matzke at 650.493.3309.

Upcoming Events and Meetings

- **April 13: MRA GENERAL MEETING: The City Budget Process and Your Input Presented by City Manager Jim Keene**
What Are You Priorities? *** Let the City Hear Your Concerns
Friends Meeting Hall, 957 Colorado --- Doors open 6:45; 7pm meeting start
- **12th Annual MRA Ice Cream Social – September 12**
Hoover Park — 2901 Cowper — 1:00-4:00 PM

Please let us know (MidtownNews@att.net)
if you would like to receive our periodic electronic enews
and/or if you have a new email.

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Midtown Residents Association
824 Moreno
Palo Alto, CA 94303

Your financial support enables us to pay for the modest expenses of MRA: postage, events, etc.

Please note the date on your label on this newsletter is the date you last paid or sent a check.

To join or renew online: go to our web site www.MidtownResidents.org and click the left icon "Become a Member".
If by check (\$15): make your check out to MRA, and send to our treasurer Sylvia Gartner, at 824 Moreno, Palo Alto,