

Solar Energy Proposal: Higher Rates, No Planning

Ballot Measure B called City Hall power grab

By Katharine Russ

The Measure adopted by the City Council on November 7, 2008 to be placed on the Ballot on March 3, 2009 as the "Green Energy/Good Jobs Act (Measure B/Prop B)" has little to do with solar energy. The City's Charter prohibits amendments to the Charter without a vote of the people. Measure B would give City Officials the right to make changes with only a 2/3 vote by the City Council.

Built into Measure B is a Charter Amendment that will, for the first time in the City's history, give control over DWP's business operations to the politicians. So far, the City hasn't offered a solar plan. Measure B, Section 23.157(a) states, "The (DWP) Board shall present the plan to the Council/Mayor within 90 days" if the ballot measure passes.

Noel Weiss, a candidate for City Attorney, successfully defended the people against the proponents' effort to 'chill free speech' and convinced the Judge to reject the Schwartz suit. Weiss said, "When the Mayor and Council start dictating to the DWP which business decisions they should make, the ability of the DWP Board to keep rates low, make good business decisions, and otherwise run the Department is adversely impacted. This is a very, very dangerous precedent. Once this bad precedent is set, it will open the door to other potential abuses by the Mayor and Council. The costs have not been evaluated, the legal liabilities have not been evaluated, the revenues are unknown, and the profitability of the entire enterprise is completely up in the air."

Opponents say the driving force behind Measure B is the IBEW- the union representing DWP employees. Measure B would insure all the solar panels would be owned and installed by the DWP, and maintained by the

utility's workers, thereby excluding participation from the solar industry and the labor community. Section 23.161 of ordinance illustrates this, "Consistent with Section 675 of the Charter, the Board (DWP) shall have the power and duty to acquire, provide for, construct, extend, maintain, and operate all solar power asset improvements." Sec. 23.164 is broad, calling for the promulgation of regulations that address the transfer or sale of a customer's property if solar installations are rendered inoperable but 'B' does not explain what regulations might be enacted or why.

Mayor Villaraigosa's plan touts "the creation of good jobs, and promises to strengthen Los Angeles' economy, protect ratepayers, make L.A. a Center for Solar technology" but, in contrast, would end up costing ratepayers billions of dollars. Measure B calls for 400 megawatts (MW) of solar power by December 31, 2014 - an improbable feat as some estimates the project to have a \$7 million per MW price tag. 'B' does not address how many long-term and short-term "green" jobs are going to be created by a solar plan. 'Yes on B' campaign manager, Michael Trujillo said at the Saving LA Project (SLAP) meeting January 3 that the DWP would import electrical workers from New Mexico and Arizona for installations, if the DWP could not train enough people locally to do the work. What is the long-term benefit under the guise of "green collar" work if the City imports labor from other states and exports payments for solar cells to China?

Nick Patsouras, past president of the DWP, and candidate for City Controller, said in Court documents, "There is no provision under the Charter for the City Council or the Mayor to micro-manage the DWP's operations or issue specific mandates with regard to how and under what circumstances the DWP chooses to initiate a particular program. The fact that such a protocol



Guest Speaker Michael Trujillo, Campaign Manager for Yes on Measure B, was supported by DWP Representatives in the background during a Saving L.A. Project Meeting held on January 3.

was even contemplated would and should have been part of an extended public discussion before the Board itself. However, that did not occur in this instance. Given the fact that the City Council had to act by November 7, 2008, in order to meet the deadline to put a Charter Amendment and Ordinance before the voters, it was simply not possible for the Board to have the kind of public hearings necessary to consider such a far-reaching proposal and mandate as is contemplated by the Council and the Mayor."

Patsouras also remarked that the Department, on its own, had established a solar program designed to provide financial incentives to customers who install solar panels. He said programs to install solar panels on City buildings and other structures at a \$270 million cost (through 2017) required no Charter Amendment.

The plan to "silence" opposition to Measure B came to a halt December 8, when Superior Court Judge David P. Yaffe tossed out all but one count of the suit filed by

Continued on page 3

Sepulveda Veteran's Administration Under Fire



By Katharine Russ

Sepulveda - New Directions Sepulveda I and II LP (ND), a private company, and A Community of Friends (ACOF), developers of affordable housing, sparked outrage in the community when they asked for a variance. They need the variance to convert two medical buildings at the Sepulveda VA facility into a 149 unit low income, sober living complex.

Built in 1955, the 20 unit facility was designed as an inpatient hospital/ medical facility for veterans only. The

variance would allow the conversion of medical buildings for uses other than veteran's care.

While California Senate Bill 1220 allows the Sponsor of supportive housing to restrict occupancy to "veterans" meeting certain criteria, CEO Dora Leong Gallo, of ACOF has said publicly, such restrictions would violate long-standing federal housing rules that would block federal funding to ND and ACOF should it discriminate against non-veterans.

Congressman Brad Sherman opposed the project and the lease in 2006, and subsequently introduced legislation (H.R.1642) that would insure any homeless housing project be restricted to veterans only with adequate staff and security. Congressman Bob Filner, Chairman House Committee on Veterans Affairs, whose committee oversees the Department of Veterans Affairs, co-sponsored the bill. The Bill was received in the Senate, read twice and referred to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs. The bill remains inactive.

Two 75-year enhanced use leases (EUL) were approved last year by Filner, and are renewable indefinitely. ND and ACOF would have title to 7.5 acres and the improvements on the property during the term of the lease. The lease can also be reassigned to another entity and may be amended at any time. The sole pur-

pose of the EUL is to allow the VA to divest itself of urgently needed medical facilities. The Lessee can also purchase the property. There are no provisions for licensure or regulation.

Yet Filner, having full knowledge of the terms of these leases, went on national television and gave a scathing indictment of the VA, "We've had incidents of PTSD team leaders telling their people stop diagnosing PTSD. We can't afford it. It costs too much. Diagnose something else. That's a crime committed by our own VA. It's worse than that. We've had misdiagnosis of PTSD as personality disorder, because personality disorder is preexisting. Therefore, 'we don't have to take care of you!'" He said that it was hard to get information from the VA Administrators because they lie to the Committee.

The North Hills West Neighborhood Council (NHWNC) has asked for a full environmental review saying, "The mitigation measures offered are all standard, boilerplate conditions applicable to any project." Many feared the project would dramatically affect property values, subject small children to methadone addicts, public drunkenness, and increased traffic. In their 8-page letter of opposition to the Zoning Administrator,

Continued on page 3

In This Issue:

Home Depot Pulls Out of Sunland - Tujunga
Pg. 2

Community News
Pgs. 4-7

Calendar
Pgs. 8-9

Solar Energy: A Better Way
Pg. 12

COMMUNITY NEWS

Home Depot Pulling Out of Sunland-Tujunga



Community celebrates at McGroarty Art Center

Dismissed lawsuit against Los Angeles

By Katharine Russ

The good news came on Jan. 7, when it was learned Home Depot had dismissed the lawsuit filed against the City in December 2008. Hundreds of activists and residents cheered for what they said is good news and another major victory for Sunland-Tujunga.

This was a big surprise to the community, particularly because it appeared that Home Depot had begun lobbying State Officials. At the beginning of the holiday season, California State Senator George Runner, without any confirmation of facts, gave an inextinguishable endorsement to Home Depot. He also chastised City Officials, saying, "At a time when the economy is in a downturn and when retail chains are closing doors, you would think city leaders would embrace the few retailers that are still willing and able to invest in communities, particularly those who are re-opening closed retail

buildings. L.A. City leaders have put aside the needs of their constituency and instead misused CEQA as a means to a political end."

The Senator was never apprised of the fierce community opposition and agreed to study the issue further. Runner did, however, issue this statement when he learned of the monumental effort put forth by the community of Sunland-Tujunga. "My hat's off to the citizens who stridently fought to keep Home Depot from opening its doors in Sunland-Tujunga. While I continue to seek reforms of the frustratingly anti-business regulatory environment in California, which often times prevent businesses like Home Depot from moving forward, or impedes construction of essential roads and buildings, I applaud the people who took the initiative to stand up for a cause dear to their hearts and minds. I also believe it is especially important for citizens and leaders of smaller communities that lie in the shadow of behemoth cities like Los Angeles to chart the course of growth and development of their city. The citizens of Sunland-Tujunga are certainly empowered."

Earlier in December, Home Depot resumed their litigation against the City citing a violation of the Stipulation Order because it took longer than five months to process their Project application. The suit sought to reinstate the company's original remodeling permit.

The first signs of a pullout by Home Depot came when their website, www.homedepotsunlandtjunga.com disappeared on January 6. It was followed the next day with the release of a letter to the community from Jeff Nichols, Real Estate Director, Western Region HD, saying, "I am writing today to regretfully inform you that The Home Depot no longer plans to pursue this proposed store. As a result of this decision, the company is not pursuing our pending permit application and has also dropped its lawsuit against the City of Los An-

geles related to this project."

So what does this mean for the old K-Mart site? According to a letter released by Dan McManus, President of the Sunland-Tujunga Neighborhood Council (STNC), "The Sunland-Tujunga community has been engaged in a multi-year effort to stop Home Depot from opening a store at the old K-Mart site (8040 Foothill Blvd.) and to ensure that all applicable laws are followed and the Foothill Boulevard Corridor Specific Plan is followed and respected in the process. We intend to engage Home Depot since they still control the lease to the property. Simultaneously, we will seek to stimulate discussion with other businesses and community-minded developers to see if an opportunity exists to match the lease with a tenant eager to take part in the future of this great community."

Kathryn Gallagher, Senior Manager, Communications-The Home Depot, Western Division, said, "We are on the lease for 20 plus years so we are actively looking to sublease the site to another party. We have gotten numerous inquiries, and in the coming weeks and months, we'll continue to market the site to parties that would potentially be interested in subleasing it for the remainder of The Home Depot's commitment."

Nina Royal, Vice President of Outreach said the STNC is reaching out to involve community members in the process of determining how they want the 11-acre site developed. "The STNC has begun handing out survey forms in order to encourage community input and to hold open public discussions to further engage our community in the process. Past surveys indicate that our community is hoping for a much needed General Merchandise store." Tomi Lyn Bowling, STNC's Business Representative is spearheading outreach to the business world on behalf of their community.

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COMMUNITY NEWS

Las Lomas files Appeal to Lawsuit



By Katharine Russ

Los Angeles - Jan. 16, 2009, Las Lomas Land Company announced its intent to appeal the ruling by Superior Court Judge David P. Yaffe last December, dismissing the lawsuit filed against the City of Los Angeles in June, 2008.

Carlyle W. Hall, Jr., counsel for Las Lomas, is seeking to 'vindicate' the legal rights centered on the LA City Council's vote on March 19, to terminate the environmental review of the controversial project in an untimely

fashion. "We believe our claims are meritorious and are convinced that there are fundamental legal issues that must be resolved by the Court of Appeal," Hall said in a press release.

Dan Palmer's resignation from Las Lomas Land Co. LLC in December came on the coattails of Yaffe's ruling to the lawsuit filed against the City of Los Angeles. Yaffe ruled that state law did not require the City Council to complete its preparation of environmental studies before considering the proposal by Palmer to build the mixed-use community.

Palmer's 26-page petition alleged violations of CEQA, violations of federal and state due process and violations of federal and state equal protection of laws, among other things and prayed for compensatory damages of \$100 million, plus attorney's costs. Palmer's mini city would have spanned 555 acres and included 5,553 multi-family homes, 2 million square feet of commercial, retail and a 300-room hotel in the north San Fernando Valley near the junction of the 5 and 14 freeways.

For years, the project was cloaked in controversy and appeared to spiral downward when Supervisor Michael Antonovich, State Assemblyman Cameron Smyth and

Los Angeles City Councilman Greig Smith called for investigations into the property's true ownership. Experts doomed the project citing traffic congestion, air pollution, earthquake threats and a host of other negative impacts. This, on the heels of a letter from Fred McHaddad, Van Nuys, to County Officials who said he was the rightful owner of 255 acres that Palmer had claimed to own.

Edward Park, spokesperson for Las Lomas Land Company, LLC, said, "The decision minimizes the very real fact that the City Council broke the law. We're disappointed that the court failed to recognize that the City must answer in Court as to the legality of the City Council decision to halt its review of the Las Lomas project."

Will Las Lomas come before the City Council again? Park says, "Las Lomas is a growth model for the region's future designed to incorporate sustainable building practices, recycled construction materials, and features that incorporate "greener" configurations to reduce energy consumption. It is not going to go away just because of one court decision from the Sunland-Tujunga community."

Continued from cover – Veterans

the NHWNC said, "It would become the first large apartment complex in the middle of a single family residential neighborhood and approval would open up, not only 7.5 acres, but the entire 160 acre VA property to further development of all kinds, including more low income and/or sober living housing."

The NHWNC has received dozens of letters from veterans in protest of the facilities. Some expressed fears over the fact that if ACOF, ND, or any other company operating this facility goes bankrupt, the lease will not revert the property back to the VA.

Peggy Burgess, Stakeholder/member NHWNC Land Use Committee, expressed her concerns, "These units will be occupied by persons who are homeless, chronically homeless, or who meet ONE of the following special needs categories as defined in the leases. They will not be occupied exclusively by veterans. Nowhere is the term 'disabled' referred to in either lease. According to the NHWNC, "The Sepulveda VA currently serves over 150,000 existing vets as far north as San Luis Obispo for outpatient care. The Westwood Facility is not equipped to handle all of them now. What will happen to the tens of thousands who will be returning from Iraq and Afghanistan with serious physical and emotional problems? The Sepulveda VA must be returned to the hospital facility it was designed to be."

Opponents fear that if these buildings are approved before Councilman Greig Smith's legislation to regulate sober living facilities is passed, the facilities would be exempt from any regulations.

Gallo said, "ACOF and ND, in 2008, worked to change state and federal legislation so that we could definitively say that the projects would be for veterans only, instead of the current 'veterans-preference' language. We were successful at the state level, and with the IRS program. Now we just need one more hurdle – clarity that we would not be in violation of federal fair housing laws. Our partner, ND, has clearly stated that we will not take any veteran on methadone." Gallo promised that any veteran approved for long-term housing would be drug free.

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Continued from cover – Solar Energy

Mitchell Schwartz, a political strategist, who has worked for Villaraigosa on past projects. His attorney, Stephen Kaufman, treasurer of the 'Yes on B' campaign and attorney/treasurer for Villaraigosa told the *LA Times* he had asked Schwartz, the only Plaintiff, to join the lawsuit. Yet Kaufman says, "A broad coalition of environmental, labor and health advocates supporting Proposition B made the decision to challenge the opposition's ballot argument to ensure that voters are presented with accurate information about the measure." Who are these organizations? Kaufman's client list also includes: Rocky Delgadillo, City Attorney, Eric Garcetti, Council President, Wendy Greuel, Janice Hahn, Jose Huizar, Jan Perry, Bill Rosendahl and Greig Smith, City Councilmembers who voted to place measure B on the ballot.

Ron Kaye, Chairman of SLAP, one of the defendants, said, "Measure B is a charter reform measure that destroys all safeguards against corruption and public oversight by giving the Mayor and City Council the ability to revise the plan at any time, in any way, and channel billions of dollars in public money to the special interests that fund their campaigns."

Chief Legislative Analyst, Gerry Miller, asked by Garcetti to contact PA Consulting Group, who currently has a 5-year contract with the DWP, to provide their views on a DWP owned solar rooftop initiative. Their 26-page report cited "DWP's critical lack of skills in strategic planning, financial analysis, and complex project management." The report went on to say, "Given the relatively immature state of this initiative, the risk of failure, significant cost overruns and technology issues is high." Their report was concealed from the Council by Garcetti until late December, markedly, after the November vote.

On March 3, voters will decide the merits of wrapping a City Charter Amendment around a solar energy plan that does not exist and without an environmental review under CEQA despite the fact that its provisions have clear environmental implications.

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COMMUNITY NEWS

Sun Valley

By Mary Benson

Sun Valley at critical "tipping point" - A major component of the Sun Valley Renaissance plan is setting aside resources to educate the next generation in new "green collar" and critical vocational skills. The vision is a series of small campus centers that are built using a European style non-traditional campus.

A Sun Valley Company receives award - US Chamber of Commerce Economic Development Administration announced in December, that \$2.8 million has been awarded to Sun Valley Care Development, Inc. in Sun Valley, to fund construction of a nursing and medical technology training facility in Sun Valley, sharing a campus with a Christian Community College. Instead of creating a traditional closed campus, the plan calls for integration of critically needed retail and commercial office space that will furnish a variety of uses including a bookstore, pharmacy, and medical offices and can offer "hands on" occupational training. The new facility will train at-risk young adults in the Los Angeles area, for vocational positions in the health care industry and help meet the region's long term health care needs. This investment is part of a \$4.05 million project that will help create 765 jobs and generate \$11.5 million in private investment.

The Sun Valley Neighborhood Council - will also consider asking for magnet designation for the re-purposed Byrd Middle School Campus on Sheldon Street.

The classrooms, gym, science and library are all being upgraded. We need a public-private partnership that will focus on new "green technologies" and a career path that utilizes technical training.

Our youth need a reason to stay in high school. The glaring statistic is that half the students entering high school are not graduating. They've dropped out along the way. We need to focus on a curriculum where kids can choose to get a job or paid internship after high school as an alternative entering college. Setting up an Educational Fund to make this vision a reality is directly linked to the cooperation of major recycling firms and heavy industry that will benefit from trained technicians and operators.

Sun Valley is City's garbage can - Without contributions offered by companies like Waste Management, Sun Valley will continue to be nothing more than the City's garbage can. At a January 15th community meeting at POLY High School, residents faced off against Athens Services, another Sun Valley Waste handler operating in Wendy Greuel's CD 2 District. Athens has refused to even discuss contributing to a community education fund. Wendy Greuel has not taken a formal position on whether to advocate for educational fees. Landfills and waste handlers in Council Districts 12, 7 and 6 who have already agreed to community contribution fees, are eyeing the refusal with great interest.

Sun Valley's Mervyns purchased by Kohl's - who announced they intend to start going through the plan-

ning process immediately to open their store there, which will take about 6 to 8 weeks. Council Office Planning Deputies are working to expedite it. Kohl's announced they are going for L.E.E.D, an environmental certification, in their plans to reconfigure the store.

If all goes well, the re-design and re-construction of the site will begin in early March. Sun Valley Area Neighborhood Council (SVANC) is hoping they will begin interviewing job applicants in July. The store will require a staff of about 125 employees. They are targeting to open in October, 2009.

Mervyns bankruptcy and subsequent closings could have been a huge set back for Sun Valley's revitalization plan. The SVANC was concerned with the viability of the entire Canyon Plaza Shopping Center, located at the Corner of Roscoe and Laurel Canyon. Mervyns was its anchor store and major employer in the area. Many of the employees live in surrounding neighborhoods.

Kohls will build within the realm of the "Sun Valley Renaissance" plans which were developed by the Economic Alliance of the San Fernando Valley in partnership with the community. While not a formal plan, it identifies key target areas for development. Kohls will be a big plus and the community is thrilled with the environmental upgrades they indicate will be made prior to their store opening.

Editor's note: Mary Benson is Vice President of the SVANC, Director Los Angeles Trails Project and writes for the NVR.

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COMMUNITY NEWS

Panorama City

By Tony Wilkinson

Street Gangs - The fact that gangs pose increasing challenge in the Panorama City area was underscored when 16-year-old Jose Luis Moreno was murdered in broad daylight while walking with friends in the 8900 block of Colbath Ave., Moreno had no known gang connections. Moreno was visiting his old neighborhood after his mother had moved the family to Pacific Palisades for safety. Youths shot at him and his friends after asking "Where you from?"

The Mayor's office of Gang Reduction and Youth Development - (GRYD) has named Panorama City as one of only two GRYD zones in the San Fernando Valley. The other one is in Pacoima. The GRYD Zone will concentrate anti-gang funds in the area. Fabian Garcia has been named as project manager for the Panorama City GRYD zone. New Directions for Youth has been named the prevention contractor for the zone. An intervention contractor will be named in January. Police in the zone will gain a Community Law Enforcement And Recovery (CLEAR) unit this spring, which will bring eight additional gang officers along with probation and parole support.

Panorama City local census headquarters - The Census Bureau has leased the second floor of the Valley Gateway Building at Roscoe and Van Nuys boulevards as an early census office. The area covered by the office is the San Fernando Valley (except Glendale, Burbank, Sherman Oaks and Studio City), Santa Clarita Valley, Antelope Valley, Santa Monica, Malibu and Pacific Palisades. Other offices will open later in Woodland Hills and Santa Clarita.

Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa has created a special office to help assure a full count in hard-to-reach communities like Panorama City. Norma Vega, formerly the Mayor's representative in the East Valley, heads the new city census effort.

The Census Bureau will be hiring between 700 and 800 people in February to help with a physical housing unit enumeration that begins in March. Those interested should call the Census Jobs Hot Line (866-861-2010). Enter your ZIP code to be connected with

the local office. You will receive a testing appointment at a facility near your home.

Michael Carpenter, the recruiting manager, issued a special invitation to all neighborhood councils to help promote census job opportunities. If you would like for him to be a guest speaker for your organization, call 818-672-0143

LADWP application for grant - The Los Angeles Department of Water and Power (LADWP) has applied for a \$3.5 million project on the Woodman Avenue median between Lanark and Saticoy streets. The project would create a permeable strip to capture rainwater runoff. It would replace existing trees and asphalt with permeable soil, native Sycamores, and other native plants. Panorama City Neighborhood Council (PCNC) stakeholders originally suggested the demonstration project at their meeting. The PCNC Land Use committee has recommended that the Board support the project.

Police station boundaries changed - On Sunday, January 4, the area of South Panorama City, between Roscoe Boulevard and the railroad tracks, was reassigned from the Van Nuys Area Station to Mission Area station. This now unites Panorama City under a one police Station. Areas west of the 405 Freeway that were served by Mission upon its opening about three years ago has been returned to the Devonshire Station, and Mission gained Arleta from the Foothill Area Station. Foothill gained the balance of Sun Valley from the North Hollywood Area Station. This is the result of the opening of two new stations in the San Fernando Valley.

LAPD's Captain Villegas promoted to Commander - After serving very successfully for two and a half years at Mission Area Station, Commanding Officer, Captain Jorge Villegas, has been promoted to Commander and he will be joining the Command staff in the Operations Bureau-Valley Division (OBVD), which is headed by Deputy Chief Michel Moore. Both OBVD and Traffic Bureau are located in Panorama City.

Pacoima

By Maurice Pichon

A Candidate Forum will be held on Thursday, February 19, from 6:00 pm to 8:00 pm, at the Pacoima Community Center, 11243 Glenoaks Blvd., Pacoima. It's being sponsored by the Leader-to-Leader African-American Community Empowerment Think Tank (LLAACETT, pronounced "LACET") at the Pacoima Community Center located at 11243 Glenoaks Blvd., Pacoima. This candidates forum will focus on the upcoming March 3, L.A. City Primary elections for the office of Mayor, City Attorney, Controller, Councilmember (7th district), Community College Board of Trustees, and the five City-Wide Ballot Measures. All community members are welcomed to attend and hear "where" these candidates stand on important issues. Members of the community will be allowed to submit questions through the forum's moderator to the candidates at this event.

LLAACETT is the only African-American Think Tank located in the San Fernando Valley. It's goal is providing a forum through which African-Americans residing in the San Fernando Valley and its extended communities can address new and challenging issues within the areas of Education, Health, Economic Development and Politics. Visit lacet@earthlink.net for more information.

The 41st Pacoima Christmas Parade sponsored by the Pacoima Chamber of Commerce was held on Saturday, December 6. Community Activist, Mineola Vaults Newman, Co-Founder of the Pacoima Neighborhood Council and active in numerous organizations and activities, was honored as Honorary Grand Marshal. This year they named as Grand Marshals, those they consider heroes: The men and women of the L.A. City Fire Dept; L.A. County Fire Dept; Angeles National Forest Fire Service; Burbank Fire Dept; Glendale Fire Dept; Cal-Fire; City and County of Ventura, plus all the mutual aid agencies from Long Beach to Northern California to Quebec who also responded to fight the Marek, Sayre and Sesnon Fires were honored.

Arleta

By Al Piantanida

Arleta High School - On Saturday, January 17, their 25 member Cheerleading Team, along with three Coaches, won the First Place Trophy in cheerleading competition, and also captured the "Outstanding Showmanship" award. The event was hosted by Culver City High School, also a member of the large varsity division of the LAUSD, which is made up of ten teams.

The Mustangs Varsity Football Team - Captured the Invitational Title by defeating Franklin High School 31-8 in the city section invitational Division final at East Los Angeles College. The Mustangs finished the season with at 14-0 record and brought home the new high school's first championship title in any sport. It was a total effort lead by Head Coach Jeff Engilman and his dedicated staff and outstanding team members.

Business Watch- Plans are in process to establish a business watch program in Arleta in coordination with the LAPD, Council District Six, and ICON, a non-profit corporation. All businesses are invited to become involved by calling 818-897-9122 for further information.

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COMMUNITY NEWS

Fire Fighters in North Valley Wild Fires Honored



Fire Fighters (picture above) were honored last month for their outstanding efforts during the Sayer and Marek Wildfires. Los Angeles County Supervisor, Zev Yaroslavsky, sponsored a BBQ luncheon that was prepared and served by the Outback Restaurant in Northridge and took place in El Cariso County Park last month. Community members, including Senior Citizens from the park's Community Center, assisted him and were very gracious hosts. Yaroslavsky also recognized Fire Fighting compa-

nies from outside L.A. County and city, who who also reponed as members of the "Mutual Aid Agreement" and were not able to be attend. They also received a big "Thank You" during his presentation to recipients for their "valiant effort and outstanding performance during last fall's wildfires. He announced that he was also speaking on behalf of Supervisor Michael Antonvich, who represents the Marek Fire area but was not able to attend.

Sunland-Tujunga

Congratulations to our "Best Of" Business Awards!

By Cindy Cleghorn

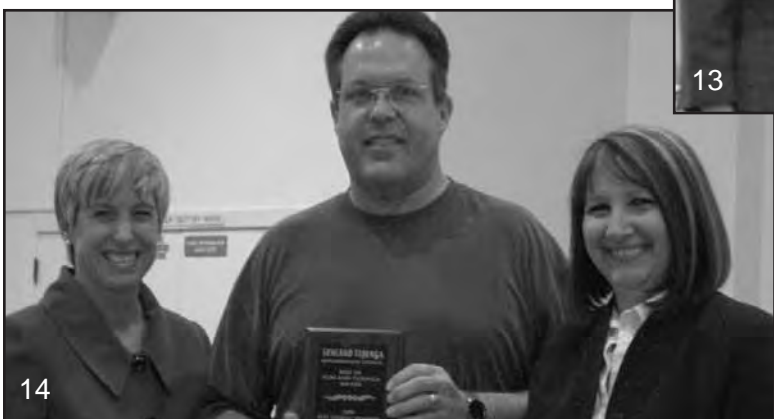
Each of the following businesses were recognized by STNC and Councilwoman Wendy Greuel at the January 14 STNC meeting.

Best Of Sunland Tujunga 2008 Winners:

1. BEST RESTAURANT - Joselitos West
2. BEST SUPERMARKET - Von's
3. BEST FAST FOOD - In and Out Burgers
4. BEST RETAIL CLOTHING - Rio's
5. BEST SCHOOL - Verdugo Hills High School
6. BEST ENTERTAINMENT - Arnie's Cafe
7. BEST CAFE - Wired Cafe
8. BEST COMMUNITY SUPPORTER - C&M Printing
9. BEST COMMUNITY GROUP - Little Landers/Bolton Hall
10. BEST POST OFFICE - Tujunga (won by just ONE vote)
11. BEST DELIVERY OF PARCELS - UPS
12. BEST FOOD DELIVERY - Pizza Hut
13. BEST STOREFRONT - Kathy's Creations
14. BEST OVERALL BUSINESS - Three way tie: Do It Center, Merithews and Jason's Honda

Land Use Committee News: Ten years ago the Angeles National Golf Club was approved to develop an 18-hole golf course in the Tujunga Wash area of Sunland. The City approved the development based on Conditions and Mitigation Measures in 1998. In 2005 additional conditions were imposed. It is now time to review the conditions as the ANGC moves forward to get their final Certificate of Occupancy. The City has scheduled a public hearing for the purpose of reviewing the conditions. It will be held at the Marvin Braude Center in Van Nuys on Friday, February 13, 2009 at 1:00 p.m. You are encouraged to participate by sending in comments to the City and/or attending the public hearing. You can also participate by attending our STNC Land Use Committee meetings. The STNC will also submit recommendations as a result of the various meetings. Visit the STNC web site at www.stnc.org for more info.

The STNC will host a Candidates Forum on Wednesday, February 18. Candidates for City Controller, City Attorney, LAUSD District 6 Board Seat are expected. This event will take place at North Valley Neighborhood City Hall, 7747 Foothill Blvd., Tujunga. This is an opportunity for you to hear from the candidates present and become more informed before voting on March 3, 2009. Info: stnc.org or 818-951-7411.



COMMUNITY NEWS

Council District 2 is on the Move



*Councilmember
Wendy Greuel*

It is with great excitement and eagerness that my office enters 2009 with District Two's business to conduct. With a new year upon us, I am absolutely delighted to have the opportunity to serve you by working arm in arm with the community to get

things done. Let's get to work!

First, a subject on the mind of many that we will certainly work on over the course of the New Year is the Home Depot property. As most are aware by now, Home Depot has withdrawn from their proposed development and has dropped their lawsuit. They are currently exploring what to do next with the vacant lot. According to Home Depot representatives, they intend on marketing the property to other potential users. My office has received dozens of suggestions on what the community believes is the best fit for this particular lo-

cation and I appreciate each phone call, letter, and email I have received concerning this matter. For the past several years, I have said this community has many needs, including a general merchandise store, quality restaurants and movie theaters. Let me assure you that my office will be working closely with involved parties to ensure that not only will the new project be consistent with the Foothill Specific Plan, but the community's needs and expressed desires will also represent key factors in the decision making process.

Speaking of business in the North Valley, the forthcoming year will witness the continuation of our efforts to revitalize business in Sunland-Tujunga. In this last year alone we have made significant strides in pursuit of this goal. I protected and successfully appropriated a Community Development Block Grant to purchase old fashion street lighting for the business corridors at Commerce Ave. These businesses, along with all other businesses in Los Angeles, also benefited from my 4% business tax cut, which has helped businesses weather these difficult economic conditions and promote the creation of new jobs in a soft market.

Finally, understanding the health and vitality of a community hinges upon a strong relationship between the community and their public servants, my office will continue to plan, develop, and organize local service projects that aim towards beautifying the area and demonstrate that North East Valley residents mean business when it comes to protecting the character and integrity of their neighborhoods. My office has spearheaded a string of successful community related events, as our recent tree planting attracted scores of local volunteers for a green cause and our Shadow Hills Chip-A-Thon provided dozens of horses with microchips that will ensure their safety when lost or during an emergency. We plan on building off of these previous successes by developing even more projects geared toward reaching the full promise of the North East Valley. But there is one essential ingredient for this to happen.....you!

Please contact my North East Valley Field Office at 818 352-3287 if you have any ideas or if you would like further information on how to get involved. I look forward to hearing from you and have a beautiful and prosperous 2009!

Ten Tenacious Teens Traveled to DC



Photo courtesy Daisy Ramirez

On Inauguration Day, faculty members Daren McCrary (top left) and Will Reinhart (top center) share the historic events with their fellow travelers Caroline Gill, Julia Ginter, Steven Guillen, Kevin Maghakian, Mary Martinez, Rhory McConville, Mekayla Melahouris, Daisy Ramirez, Katie Ryder and Brittany Wright.

By Kathy Arellano

Mary Martinez hoped to photograph her grandfather's prisoner-of-war likeness. Daisy Ramirez wanted to visit the East Coast. Steven Guillen wanted to meet the president he had campaigned so hard for. These and seven other young people learned about democracy and harsh weather this week in Washington, D.C. where more than a million people gathered.

Ten Verdugo Hills High School students and two faculty advisers caught a United Airlines red-eye flight Friday, January 16, to attend the inauguration of President Barak Obama, to dance the night away at the Inaugural Ball, and to participate in a week's worth of classes aimed at changing the way they think about government.

The group went prepared with cold-weather clothing and lots of enthusiasm. During one meeting, Social Studies Department Chair William Reinhart told students about his Gore-Tex parka and Social Studies Teacher Daren McCrary, sporting a new beard, described the wool hat he planned to purchase.

"It no longer mattered how cold it was [at the National Mall]," said Ramirez. "We were thrilled to be a part of history, [to feel] the energy of the crowd and hear the words of our new leader."

The trip to the capitol is open to any student in grade nine through 12 who has a minimum 2.0 average. Attendees raise the money - \$2,500 each this year - to pay for the all-inclusive package offered by Close Up - a nonprofit educational agency created in 1971 and located in Washington, D.C. Close Up's classes immerse the teens in the mechanics of democracy and help teachers get their students excited about government.

"They may arrange for a [bipartisan] debate on major issues during which the students observe and participate," said McCrary. "Other times, students might attend

speeches and be able to ask questions."

McCrary and Reinhart have participated in this program since 1998, alternating years with other Verdugo faculty members. They coordinate interested students and guide them through fundraising. They offer their support and experience before, during and after the trip.

"Many of them have had to be very creative this year," said McCrary. "In these economic times, there've been family hardships - I know there've some real struggles with fundraising."

Traditionally, advisers plan this trip during Spring Break. but felt it was important for the group to attend the inauguration. The early travel date meant that teens had fewer months to raise funds.

"With the economy the way it is, my parents and I really had to work to get the money," said 12th grader Caroline Gill. "I'm still doing stuff around the house [to pay them back]."

The Close Up organization puts safety first and has excellent practices in place to ensure the well-being of their guests. Reinhart and McCrary pay close attention to the safety and security needs of their charges, too.

"We've never lost a kid and we've never brought back any extras," said McCrary. "We both have families - we're conscious of the safety aspect every step of the way. To learn more about Close Up, visit www.closeup.org.

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Arl - Arleta, **G.H.** - Granada Hills, **K.C.** - Kagel Canyon, **LA** - Los Angeles, **LVT** - Lake View Terrace, **LTC** - La Tuna Canyon, **M.H.** - Mission Hills, **NR** - Northridge, **NVCH** - North Valley City Hall, **Pac** - Pacoima, **S-T** - Sunland-Tujunga, **S.V.** - Sun Valley, **Syl** - Sylmar, **V.N.** - Van Nuys, **PC** - Panorama City

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Sunday, Feb. 1

Bolton Hall Museum
Presents "Horsin' Around"
10110 Commerce, S-T
Docent Tours
1-4 pm 352-3420

Monday, Feb. 2

City Attorney Forum
15725 Parthenia
7 - 9 pm
6:30 pm

SNC, Public Serv.
Sylmar Park
13109 Bordon, Syl
6:30 pm 367-6102

STNC LUC Commit
North Valley City Hall
7747 Foothill S-T
7 pm 951-7411

Tuesday, Feb. 3

Bolton Hall Museum
Presents "Horsin' Around"
10110 Commerce, S-T
Docent Tours
1-4 pm 352-3420

Angeles Golf Course/w
STNC/FTDNC Meeting
North Valley City Hall
7747 Foothill, S-T, Rm 104
12 pm

MHNC Safety Comm
16161 Sepulveda, MH
7 pm 892-2414

Wednesday, Feb. 4

NHWNC Gen Meet.
Holy Martyrs Aremen. Sch.
1667 Parthenia, NH
7 pm

Thursday, Feb. 5

PCNC Land Use
Mission Community Hospital
14860 Roscoe Blvd., PC
6:30 pm 894-7841

Friday, Feb. 6

Star Party
Lower Hansen Dam Park
Dronfield & Osborne
6:30 am - 8:30 pm 767-8677

State Senate Hearing
Mobile/Manufactures Homes
Mission College
11356 Elderidge, Syl
11 am - 2:30

Saturday, February 7

Friends of GH Library
10640 Petit, GH
10:30 am 368-5689

STA Bake Sale
Wired Café
10045 Commerce, S-T
8 am-11:30 am 353-9143

Free Foreclosure Counseling
MEND Center,
10641 San Fernando, Pac.
9 am to 1 pm

"Momentum" Benefit
Dance Performance
Performing Art Theater
CSUN 1911 Nordhoff, Nrdg
8 pm Gen. \$35 Students

MHNC Youth Outreach
10161 Sepulveda Blvd.
4 pm 892-2412

Sunday, Feb. 8

Bolton Hall Museum
Presents "Horsin' Around"
10110 Commerce, S-T
Docent Tours
1-4 pm 352-3420

Monday, Feb. 9

PCNC Outreach
PCNC Office (4th Floor)
14500 Roscoe Blvd., PC
6:30 pm 714-2133

SNC Land Use Com
Sylmar Park
10319 Bordon, Syl
6:30 pm

MHNC Zoning & Land Use
10161 Sepulveda, MH.
6:30 pm

Tuesday, Feb. 10

PCNC Commerce
Wells Fargo Bank
8548 Van Nuys Blvd., PC
2:30 pm 714-2133

SVANC Gen Meet
10631 Vinedale, SV
6:30

SNC Outreach Com.
Sylmar Park
13109 Bordon, Syl
6:30 pm

MHNC Board/Land Use
LAPD Mission Station
1121 Sepulveda, MH
6 pm

Wednesday Feb. 11

Rotary Club
Coco's Restaurant
10521 Sunland, S-T
7 pm 951-5299

STNC Gen. Meeting.
Mount Gleason Mdl. Sch.
Mt. Gleason, S-T
7 pm 951-7411

PCNC-Commerce Com
Wells Fargo Bank
8548 Van Nuys, PC
2: pm

Sylmar Woman's Club
Odyssey Restaurant
15600 Odyssey GH
11:30 am

FTDNC Equest. Meet.
9747 Wheatland, SH
7 pm

Thursday, Feb. 12

Lincoln's Birthday

FTDNC Exec./Gen Meet.
9747 Wheatland, SH
7:30 pm

N. Hills West NC Gen. Meet.
Sepulveda VA
16111 Plummer Bg22 N.H.ills
7 pm 893-8613

Foothill Comm. Police
Adisory Board (CPAB)
Villa Scalabrini Retire. Home
10631 Vinedale, SV
6 pm 756-8866

Granada Hills North NC
1st Baptist Church of GH
11011 Hayvenhurst, GH

Friday, Feb. 13

Public Hearing
Angeles Nat'l Golf Course
M. Braude Service Center
6262 Van Nuys, 1st floor, VN
1 pm

Saturday, Feb.14

Happy St. Valentine's Day

Care of Calif. Oak Trees
By Gary Knowlton
Little Landers Historical Soc.
Bolton Hall
11010 Commer, S-T
1 pm

Sunday, Feb. 15

Bolton Hall Museum
Presents "Horsin' Around"
10110 Commerce, S-T
Docent Tours
1-4 pm 352-3420

Elks Famous Omelete Bar
S-T Elks Lodge #2098
10137 Commerce, S-T
7\$ 9 am-12 pm 352-2098

Monday, Feb. 16

Presidents Day

STNC/LUC Comm
North Valley City Hall
7747 Foothills, S-T
7 pm 951-7411

Tuesday, Feb. 17

Public Hearing /Zoning Admin
Re: Veterans Admin. Proposal
Marvin Braude Center
6262 Van Nuys, VN
9 am 894-7425

Community Police Advisory
Board (CPAB)
11121 Sepulveda, MH
8:30 pm

PCNC Rules & Finance
PCNC Office (4th Floor)
14500 Roscoe Blvd., PC
5:30 & 6:45 pm 714-2133

Bolton Hall Museum
Presents "Horsin' Around"
10110 Commerce, S-T
Docent Tours
1-4 pm 352-3420

Neighborhood Watch
NV City Hall
7747 Foothill, S-t
7 pm 756-7766

MHNC Beauti. & Cult. Com
10161 Sepulveda, MH.
6:30 pm Wednesday, Dec. 17

Rotary Club
Coco's Restaurant
10521 Sunland, S-T
7 pm 951-5299

Pacoima NC Gen. Meet.
Pacoima Comm. Center
11243 Glenoaks, Pac
6:30 pm

No .Hills West NC
Sepulveda Va
16111 Plummer, N. Hills
7 pm 893-8613

Wednesday, Feb. 18

Mission CPAB
Mission Police Station
11121 Sepulveda, MH
6:30 pm

Candidate Forum
STNC 7pm
7747 Foothill

Thursday, Feb. 19

PCNC Safety Com,
Plaza del Valle
8614 Van Nuys #BPC
5:30 pm

STNC Safety Comm.
NV City Hall
7747 Foothill S-T
6 pm 951-7411

S-T SERVS
NV City Hall
7747 Foothill S-T
6:45 pm 563-1962

STNC Outreach Comm.
NV City Hall
7747 Foothill, S-T
7:30 pm 951-7411

Friday, Feb 20

Zone Hearing Variance
Sepulveda Veterans Admin
6262 Van Nuys,
9 am



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Mark YOUR Calendar

Saturday, Feb. 21

PCNC Health Fair
Plaza Del Valle
8600 Van Nuys Blvd., PC
10 am - 4 pm 984-2133

Sunday, Feb. 22

Washington's Birthday

Monday, Feb. 23

GHNC Board Meet.
Van Gogh Elem. School;
17160 Van Gogh St. GH
6:30 pm

PCNC Public Safety
PCNC Office (4th Floor)
14500 Roscoe Blvd., PC
6:30 pm 984-2133

SNC Gen. Meet.
Hubbard St. Elementary
13325 Hubbard, Syl
6:30 - 9:30pm

Wednesday, Feb. 25

MHNC Senior Outreach
10161 Sepulveda, MH.
11 am

MHNC Outreach/Youth Com.
10161 Sepulveda, MH.
7 pm

Mixer
Pacoima Chamber of Comm.
12653 Osborne, Pac
Rocky's Restaurant
6:30 pm

STNC Exec. Committee
NV City Hall
7747 Foothill, S_T
7 pm 951-7411

Thursday, Feb. 26

Panorama City NC
Mission Community Hospital
14860 Roscoe Blvd., PC
6:30 pm 785-9355

SNC Gen. Meet.
Sylmar Elementary School
12319 Phillippin Syl
6:30 - 9:30pm

MHNC Senior Com.
10161 Sepulveda. MH.
6:30 pm

Sunday, Mar. 1

Bolton Hall Museum
Presents "Horsin' Around"
10110 Commerce, S-T
Docent Tours
1-4 pm 352-3420

Tuesday, Mar. 3

Bolton Hall Museum
Presents "Horsin' Around"
10110 Commerce, S-T
Docent Tours
1-4 pm 352-3420

Thursday, Mar. 5

PCNC Land Use
Mission Community Hospital
14860 Roscoe Blvd., PC
6:30 pm 894-7841

Sunday, Mar. 8

Bolton Hall Museum
Presents "Horsin' Around"
10110 Commerce, S-T
Docent Tours
1-4 pm 352-3420

Monday, Mar. 9

PCNC Outreach
PCNC Office (4th Floor)
14500 Roscoe Blvd., PC
6:30 pm 714-2133

SNC Land Use Com
13515 _ Hubbard, Syl
6:30 pm

MHNC Zoning & Land Use
10161 Sepulveda., MH.
6:30 pm

Tuesday, Mar. 10

PCNC Commerce
Wells Fargo Bank
8548 Van Nuys Blvd., PC
2:30 pm 714-2133

Bolton Hall Museum
Presents "Horsin' Around"
10110 Commerce, S-T
Docent Tours
1-4 pm 352-3420

Sunday, Mar. 15

Bolton Hall Museum
Presents "Horsin' Around"
10110 Commerce, S-T
Docent Tours
1-4 pm 352-3420

Tuesday, Mar. 17

Happy St. Patrick's Day

Bolton Hall Museum
Presents "Horsin' Around"
10110 Commerce, S-T
Docent Tours
1-4 pm 352-3420

PCNC Rules & Finance
PCNC Office (4th Floor)
14500 Roscoe Blvd., PC
5:30 & 6:45 pm 714-2133

Elks Famous Omelete Bar
S-T Elks Lodge #2098
10137 Commerce, S-T
7\$ 9 am-12 pm 352-2098

Sunday, Mar. 22

Bolton Hall Museum
Presents "Horsin' Around"
10110 Commerce, S-T
Docent Tours
1-4 pm 352-3420

Monday, Mar. 23

PCNC Public Safety
PCNC Office (4th Floor)
14500 Roscoe Blvd., PC
6:30 pm 984-2133

Tuesday, Mar. 24

Bolton Hall Museum
Presents "Horsin' Around"
10110 Commerce, S-T
Docent Tours
1-4 pm 352-3420

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COMMUNITY NEWS

You Should Know

Safety issues regarding Mobile/Manufactured Homes will be heard by the California Senate Select Committee, which will be meeting in Sylmar, Friday, February 6. This is the result of the massive destruction of Mobile Homes caused by the Wild Fires in the North San Fernando Valley in October of last year. The hearing will include participation from law enforcement and fire protection authorities, the Mobile Home park industry, and homeowners. They will be addressing annual inspection and the testing of Fire Hydrants, emergency plans for a park system to locate disabled and elderly occupants, and also increasing exits from the Parks. Glenn Bell, President of a mobile home advocacy group, Neighborhood Friends, is encouraging homeowners to attend this meeting and let their voices be heard by giving their input. It's being held at Mission College, 13356 Eldridge St., Sylmar, from 11:00 am – 2:30 pm. They can also call John Tennyson, or Stephanie Reed, at 916-651-1517, prior to meeting date to express their views.

Sepulveda Veterans Administration Zone Variance and site plan review hearing will take place on Friday, February 20, at the Marvin Braude Center, 6262 Van Nuys Blvd. at 9 am

Lopez Canyon Truck School's Mitigated Negative Declaration, (MND) has been issued by the L.A. City Public Works Dept., dated January 15, 2009. It has a 60 day review period. Interested parties must send their comments to Wayne.Tsuda@lacity.org or christine.cart@ci-wmba.ca.gov. Several organizations involved will be requesting an extension because they want more time for public review.

A Veterinarian Tax may be on the horizon. The State of California is looking into initiating a 9% Sales tax on all Veterinary Services, including medicine, in order to generate more funds to help balance the budget. However, opponents such as community activist Mary Benson of Sun Valley, who is an animal advocate, says, "I wonder why the veterinarian profession was singled out? Is this a sign of things to come and will other professions such as Accountants, MD's, Dentists, etc., be next?" She and other opponents to such a proposal also believe it trivializes the role of Veterinarians whose training and licensing, which is as rigorous as Medical Doctors who care for people, are being treated unfairly. They are also concerned that the increased cost of surgeries, neutering and general health care of animals will be neglected due to the decline in the economy. No other information is available at this time. Interested parties should call the Governor's Office at 916-445-2841

Free foreclosure counseling is being offered. The Los Angeles County Neighbor Works Center for Foreclosure Solution is offering confidential foreclosure prevention counseling at No Charge. The date is Saturday, February 7, from 9:00 am – 1:00 pm at the MEND Center, 10641 San Fernando Rd., Pacoima. Bring your mortgage statement and monthly budget. HUD certified counselors and select lenders will be on hand to assist with loss mitigation, fraud identification and prevention, credit recovery and budgeting. The session is open to the public. For more information, call 888-895-2647.

Free tax service is being provided – by AARP Certified Tax-Aide Volunteers for Seniors 60 and older and they are also including middle and low-income persons. Membership is not required. Bring last years income tax return, Social Security Card, all income documents, W-2's, 1099's, interest, dividend, brokerage statements, 2008 property tax bill and any other documents showing income. Appointments will be taken for service at the Sunland Senior Center at 8640 Fenwick Ave., Tuesdays 9:00 am – 12:00 pm, Call 818-353-9571 for appointment, or information regarding other locations closer to you.

How to care for your Oak Tree. Well-known arborist, Gary Knowlton, will give a very informative lecture on the planting and care of native California Oak Trees. He will discuss tree care including signs of disease, pruning, watering and the area inside the drip line. Also, laws governing native oaks will be discussed. This free program is presented by Little Landers Historical Society and will take place at Bolton Hall at 10110 Commerce Ave., Tujunga, Saturday, February 14, at 1:00 pm.

Los Angeles City Public Libraries Website offers new free Online resources. Library cardholders can now access its' new resources and free content online 24 hours a day, seven days a week. They include a large and growing collection of videos, music, audio books, lectures and other audio and video content that can be downloaded for free and viewed on computer, MP3 players or Laptops. To see a video tutorial about the Library's online resources visit <http://inside.lapl.org/training/camtasia/OnlineResources> or www.LAPL.org

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PUBLIC SAFETY

What the New Year Brings



*Captain Joe Curreri
Commanding Officer,
Foothill Area
Los Angeles Police Department*

With the New Year comes opportunity and change. We have an opportunity to make this year an even safer one for everyone who lives, works or visits the Foothill Area. We, on the Los Angeles Police Department, are committed to work diligently to keep the Foothill Area, arguably, the safest Geographic Area within the Los Angeles Police Department (LAPD), but we cannot reach that goal without the partnership of our business and residential community members. I urge everyone to become an active member of Neighborhood or Business Watch. Through these programs you will learn about emerging crime trends to better enable you to protect yourselves, your loved ones and your property. You will also have closer access to the officers who patrol the streets where you live and/or work.

The New Year also brings changes in Area boundaries within Operations-Valley Bureau and personnel changes as well. On January 4, the new Topanga Area opened its doors under the command of Captain John Sherman. With the opening of Topanga Area, the boundaries of all LAPD Areas have changed. Foothill Area has transferred all of its territory west of the Golden State Freeway to Mission Area. In return, Foothill Area has acquired the remainder of the Sun Valley Area, which had previously been part of the LAPD's North Hollywood Area.

Please make note of the changes in our Basic Car numbers. They are as follows:

16A11 (Formerly 16A37) SLO John Walker
(818) 634-0652

16A35 (Formerly 16A65) SLO Larry Martinez
(818) 634-0705

16A59 (Formerly 16A89) SLO Richard Wall
(818) 634-0754

16A23 (Formerly 16A53) SLO Adriana Mungia
(818) 634-0685

16A77 (Formerly 16A97) SLO Michelle Rodriguez (818) 634-0755

16A81 (Formerly 15A03) SLO Ester Vasquez (818) 634-0854

There will also be a change within the command of Operations-Valley Bureau, as Commander Jerry Szymanski will retire on January 31.

The opportunities and changes brought on by the New Year will be an exciting challenge for us all. I look forward to working in partnership with all the various Foothill communities to make it our safest year yet.

Eye on Public Safety

By Nina Royal

Wild animals have been displaced by Wildfires - Megan Cottier, Field Deputy for Councilmember Greig Smith, issued a recent warning regarding wild animals displaced by the Wildfires. The San Fernando Valley wildfires have burned over 20,000 acres, removing the natural home of many wild animals. Coyotes and other wild animals are now seeking food and water in foothill neighborhoods close to the burn areas.

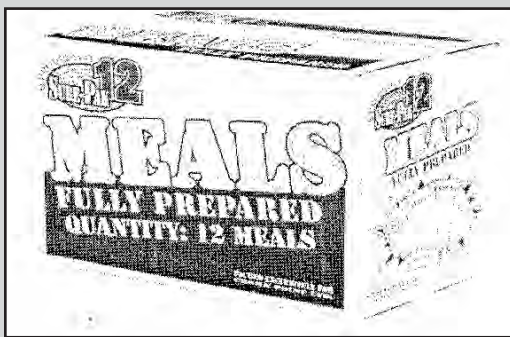
Coyotes, racoons, skunks and other wild animals generally avoid people. However, pets should be kept indoors after dark. Never leave dog or cat food outside because it attracts these and other wild animals. Do not touch or attempt to feed or capture wild animals. The Department of Animal Services advises residents to leave them alone unless the animals appear injured, sick or aggressive. In that case, report them to the East Valley Animal Shelter, at 888-452-7381. Or, you can call 311 in Los Angeles for another shelter that may be closest to you.

Los Angeles City is Recruiting Volunteers for its Crisis Response Team - Also known as CRT, the trained volunteers performed heroically during the train crash in Chatsworth and the San Fernando Valley Wildfires. They are called out at the request of either the Police or Fire Department—sometimes both. Some of the services they provide are immediate on-scene crises intervention, attendance to the victims' comfort needs, and they act as liaisons between victims and emergency personnel and more.

New CRT member training will begin on Tuesday and Thursday evenings starting January 27 through March 12, at the LAPD Academy in Westchester. Call 213-978-0697 for further information, or email LACRT@lacity.org.

Traffic Alert in Mission Hills - Persons driving through Mission Hills are in for a surprise. Councilmember Richard Alarcon, along with members of the Mission Hills Neighborhood Council, participated in turning on the switch for a newly installed traffic signal at the corner of Brand Blvd. and Arleta St. on Thursday, January 22. Brand Blvd. is used as a shortcut between Sylmar and Mission Hills and has had more than its share of accidents. Community activist, Joe Pinoy Lozano, who was advocating for the project, was ecstatic and eager to cross the street with the signal for the first time.

Urgent Recall Notice



This notice was received from Linda Underwood, Webmaster for the L.A. City Fire Department Disaster Preparedness Unit's "Community Emergency Response Team" (CERT) She urges everyone to check their "emergency supplies" for a possible Salmonella contaminated product of Peanut Butter packaged in 1 oz. and 2 oz. Squeeze Packets. A Class I Recall notice has been issued for the ready to eat (MRE) meal from Boca Grande Foods. The potentially Salmonella contaminated peanut-based product was supplied to SOPACCO, Inc. and in-

cluded in certain cases of Sure-Pak 12 Meals, pictured above. This type of MRE's are commonly found among supplies stored or carried by Disaster Response Team Members and is also used by the general public.

Lot numbers possibly affected are 8261, 8278, 8285, 8287, and 8294. 8320, 8322, 8330, 8350, 8357, 8358, 9003, 9012 visit: www.cert-la.com or http://www.fda.gov/oc/po/firmrecalls/bocagrande01_09.htm for more information.

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Is fluoridated water a cause of unexplained problems in horses ?

Vets and doctors are not taught to recognize the varied signs of fluoride toxicity. Dr Krook has explained how fluoride works insidiously at the cellular level. It inhibits enzymes, the chemical catalysts which underpin all cellular chemistry, including the energy-production mechanisms of the mitochondria. It also alters the mineral makeup of collagen, bringing about changes to the bones and teeth. It hardens the soft tissue of cartilage, tendons and ligaments causing joint pain which mimics the symptoms of arthritis.

This information was printed in the letters section of Western Horseman Magazine April 2008

COMMENTARY

Solar Energy: A Better, Cheaper, Faster Way



By Ron Kaye

A decade ago, S. David Freeman, then general manager of the Department of Water and Power (DWP), began spending millions of ratepayer dollars on a massive public relations campaign to promote his solar energy initiative.

Millions more were given away to every City Council member's favorite community groups with the same supposed goal: Channel 100 megawatts of solar power into Los Angeles by 2010.

Fast-forward to today and what do we have? Freeman's legacy of the scandal over the PR contracts he started, with exactly 12 megawatts of solar energy in L.A. with but one year to go.

There are a lot of reasons for the failure. And the fault lies with Freeman and his successors in running the DWP.

What makes it so outrageous is that the mayor and City Council have put Measure B on the March 3 ballot to give the DWP a monopoly on owning, installing and maintaining rooftop solar units on government, commercial and industrial buildings with the goal of generating 400 megawatts of electricity within five years. And what's more incredible is that the mayor and the special interests that back Measure B and stand to reap billions of dollars in profits from it cite Freeman, as if he were Saint David, as one of the architects of this scheme.

What Measure B is about, and what Freeman was, and still is about, is protecting the DWP's monopoly on power generation in L.A. This seems to remain the case,

even though opening up the renewable energy program to private enterprise would provide the city with more electricity from clean, non-polluting sources faster, cheaper and better than what's proposed. Here are some prime examples:

The DWP and its powerful union, IBEW Local 18, opposed solar energy so strongly that they did their best to keep the program, giving 30 percent subsidies to home owners; tightly limited and barred solar companies from offering to install solar units at their own cost; and split the revenue from power generation with the home owner. It's called third-party ownership and the fee to the homeowner is called a feed-in tariff. While DWP doesn't allow that, it's being used all over the state.

In the San Francisco Bay area, a group of community activists got together and formed a buyers' collective group called One Block Off The Grid (<http://1bog.org>).

What they did is to educate homeowners on solar energy and then get groups of them together and invite solar companies to bid. They negotiated a group deal at the lowest prices, got dozens of people to go solar and saved thousands of dollars.

And for those who couldn't afford the upfront investment, they negotiated group deals for solar companies to pay the full cost of the units. The companies got the subsidies and provided feed-in tariffs to the homeowners. But not in L.A.

The campaign against Measure B (<http://www.votenameasureb.com>) is now working with One Block Off The Grid, and there will be an announcement in early February that the buyers' collection

is coming to Los Angeles to help more people to acquire solar energy at the best price. Were that to happen, the DWP would be forced to give up its monopoly and allow third-party ownership. The irony is that Measure B makes the DWP the third-party owner of all major solar installations in L.A. And that's one of the worst things about Measure B, even if you believe we have to go solar no matter how high rates go, no matter how much graft and corruption it allows to occur.

If the goal was simply get the most solar energy at the best price in the fastest time, City Hall would scrap Measure B and order the DWP to conduct real studies on technology and costs. They would allow community groups to discuss it and raise the public's consciousness about the need to conserve water and power and landfill space and lead more environmentally sensitive lives.

Then, they could let private industry compete on equal terms with the DWP on price and quality and induce more individuals and companies to go solar. But that isn't the goal. The goal is to preserve the DWP's monopoly no matter what it costs the public, and to channel contracts to the special interests that keep our elected officials in office.

All I am saying is give the public a break, give free enterprise a chance. Let's reap the benefits of clean energy and clean government. Defeat Measure B and we can have both.

Editors Note: Ron Kaye is the former Editor of the Daily New and Chairman of the Saving LA Project, t www.RonKayeLA.com

What is it all About?



By Robert Barbera

As chairman of Americanism Educational League I am often asked this question: "what is AEL all about?" My mentor and predecessor here at AEL, Mr. Gerry Sheppard, was motivated by a tremendous drive to do whatever possible to encourage young people to become excellent

students. Teaching students about America's history and values has always been our main goal, but we also believe that in the process of doing that we help the students achieve excellence, not only in school but in their own lives as well.

All of our programs encourage students to meet various challenges, whether it is researching an essay topic, writing reviews of our videos, excelling in debate or mastering investigative journalism. I have had the joy of seeing the work-product of our participants. They are all quality students who followed instructions, researched topics, showed initiative, and made excellent presentations.

Many of the students delved into topics with little prior information.. They thanked us for challenging them in areas so they became more acquainted with the topic. As a consequence we not only reward the winners we also provide incentive for thousands of students to read, think and learn. This is the core of good citizenship.

We cover grade school, high school and college/university students with our programs. The participating

students will be the leaders of the next generation. We help ensure that future statesmen, entrepreneurs, scholars and public servants are equipped with the knowledge of what made America great.

I am inspired by our success. We have seen a past winners of our essay contest have their children and/or students participate in recent contests. I am amused to see our college journalism contestants cover the same issues I witnessed while attending college. I am thrilled to witness the debate contestants prepared to speak intelligently on both sides of a topic. Our surveys on the large number of students who watch our videos consistently show that our service is a vital help to American history teachers.

So what is AEL about? It's about serving students and teachers...and by so doing serving America.

Granada Hills

The Annual Holiday Parade sponsored by the Granada Hills Chamber of Commerce took place on Sunday, December 7. The Route began on Chatsworth Ave. at Petit and ended at Zelzah Ave. Scouts, picture below, carried a banner depicting for this years theme, "Favorite Holiday Movies"



Photo courtesy Richard Fisk

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SOUND OFF

Don't Sell our Veterans Short

I am a veteran. I am a nurse. I am also very aware of the needs of our veterans from the past wars, the current wars, and the wars in the future. Don't sell our veterans short in search of profit. They earned the very best care for the wounds they have suffered, both mental and physical, in defense of our country. Keep Sepulveda VA for Veterans.

*Captain Margaret C. Henrich, Retired
USAF Nurse Corps 1960-1966
Northridge*

Help Save Our Public Transportation

Increases in traffic, population and auto emissions are making our health and quality of life suffer. This is when we need better transit as shown by the passage of Proposition R. Sacramento is working on a budget that will eliminate state funding for public transit. It will effect not only Los Angeles Metro, but also municipal bus lines, such as San Gabriel Foothill Transit, Santa Monica Big Blue Bus, Long Beach Transit, etc. Once the budget is passed, it will be too late to stop cutbacks in service. The time to act is NOW! Please contact the Metro board members and Sacramento to voice your outrage.

On Feb 4, there will be a public input hearing at 6:30 pm in the Marvin Braude Constituent Center, 6262 Van Nuys Blvd, V.N., regarding bus lines 794 and 724.

*Donna Gooley
Valley Village, CA*

Thank You!

I want to thank everyone for your very generous donations for Holiday projects. I have been blessed with support from family, friends, business associates, community groups, and the council office who helped me to bring joy to those in need in Arleta and neighboring communities.

You helped to make it possible to have Christmas parties and events for needy children of all ages, senior groups, veterans, the homeless and many unfortunate families.

You also helped support the LAPD's Foothill and Mission Stations, LAFD Station No. 7, and Arleta High School's Toy Drives that brought joy to many children.

Together, we helped donate over 10,000 toys and stocking stuffers, including food and clothing for many needy persons during the holiday season. God Bless you all.

*Al Piantanida
Arleta*

Stop Measure B

Please try to get the word out to your families, neighbors and friends regarding how important it is to get out on March 3, to vote No on L.A. City's Ballot Measure "B" regarding solar energy.

You can read more about how the City sued Ron Kaye (editor of the L.A. Daily News for 23 years) and the "Solar 8", who wrote and signed the opposition statement to Measure "B" for the voters' pamphlet which points out the fraudulent nature of this ballot measure.

Mayor V. and the L.A. City council were so worried that the truth would hurt the measure's chances, they sued Ron Kaye, and seven other ordinary citizens who oppose the measure. The lawsuit was an attempt to silence and intimidate opponents of the measure. (All paid for by the unions who keep Mayor V. and his ilk in office.)

Measure "B" is not about promoting solar energy: It is about paying unions back for supporting the mayor and council. Read more about the opposition to this measure and the lawsuit, and read the court's decision at www.ronkayela.com

*Nancy M. Norris
Granada Hills*

We Don't Need any "Bail Out!"

In a sneer to all the "doom and Gloom" people that seem to be everywhere these days, Sunland-Tujunga seems to be breaking the mold of conventional "recession/depression" thinking. We have lots to celebrate as well.

My community works hard and plays hard. As for a "bail out," we don't need the Government's help. My community is a good example of what any community

can do if they pull together for a common purpose."

As a Painting Contractor I know (and feel) the construction and economy slow down. But I noticed, just by ignoring all the bad news I have more attention to focus on my business to keep it going.

Not only are we still celebrating our "David Vs Goliath" well deserved victory over Home Depot, we are sponsoring a "Foothill Laff Night. I am inviting

you to join me and my great community on Saturday, February 7, at 6 pm to enjoy a night of laughs with "The Comeday Machine' at the Sunland-Tujunga Elks, 10137 Commerce Ave. in Tujunga

*Richard Stewart
President
Sunland-Tujunga-Shadow Hills Rotary Club*

Solar Energy: The Right Way

For more than three years and more recently as President of the Department of Water and

Power Board of Commissioners, I fought to end waste, inefficiency and contracting abuses in the city-owned utility. I also sought to create a Ratepayer Advocate to protect the public in the future.

Now we're being asked to give a blank check to the DWP and City Hall to spend billions of dollars on the nation's largest solar energy initiative ever -- a proposal that has no planning, no financial analysis, no engineering study.

Approval of Measure B on the March 3 ballot would be a costly mistake. It will cost ratepayers dearly; set back hopes for reducing our dependence on fossil fuels and provide the special interests and politicians with a license to steal.

I resigned from the DWP Commission in October right after this measure was introduced without even being brought to the DWP board, right after my efforts to bring transparency and accountability by creating the Ratepayer Advocate were brushed aside.

From my experience as an engineer, businessman and 30 years as a watchdog on government spending, I can tell you as a fact, the DWP isn't up to the job managing a solar energy this big and this important. As things stand, the DWP just doesn't have the managerial skill and experience to handle a \$3.6 billion solar initiative that's supposed to deliver within five years more than 30 times as much solar energy as the DWP has been able to deliver in the last 12 years.

Despite its high wages and benefits, the DWP has a very hard time recruiting and keeping workers and maintaining existing water and power facilities. Its management and staff are already overburdened trying to fulfill the Department's commitment to complete a multi-billion dollar investment to bring those facilities up to date.

Just 11 months ago, DWP management felt the best it could do was managing a program to add 20 megawatts of rooftop solar energy to government buildings. Now, it is being asked to own, install and maintain a 400-megawatt system on commercial and

industrial buildings as well, plus, oversees a public/private solar energy program twice as big.

If past performance is any measure of future success, the DWP isn't up to the task of handling this much money. A wind farm in Utah was financed by Lehman Bros., the failed investment firm, and now the DWP faces losing that project as part of its renewable energy portfolio, or being hit with big cost increases.

Measure B is a blueprint for disaster and the public will get the bill. Let's go back to the drawing board and come up with a renewable energy plan that makes fiscal sense and common sense. A Plan that will also protect ratepayers from catastrophic increases in their bills and deliver what we all want: A renewable energy program that we can afford, that is well planned and managed, and makes Los Angeles the center of a thriving clean energy industry.

*Nick Patsaouras
Former President
LADWP Board of Commissioners*

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THIS & THAT

Mark Seigel – A Good Man



Local businessman honored for contributions to the community

By Kathy Arellano

You don't have to be an outstanding woman to gain recognition from a nationally known women's group – Mark Seigel is proof of that.

Seigel will receive the Golden Nike award during the Business and Professional Women's League of Sunland-Tujunga's (BPW) annual awards dinner on February 24 at the Sunland-Tujunga Elk's Lodge. This award recognizes his

dedicated efforts to empower women as well as his consistent involvement in civic activities.

The BPW, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization was started in the mid-50s and was the first research and education institution of national scope solely dedicated to issues that affect working women. According to BPW Foundation guidelines, their programs, grants and partnerships were designed to positively impact the lives of thousands of women and their families in communities nationwide.

Seigel has given his full support and encouragement to Cindy Cleghorn, a mainstay of the Sunland-Tujunga Neighborhood Council as she grew a business and became increasingly involved in community politics.

Throughout high school and college, Seigel took part in student government and local issues, but his community 'calling' surfaced after he earned his FCC Amateur Radio License and got involved with Ham Radio.

His interest in communications enabled him to lend his skills to public safety and emergency programs, as did his Community Emergency Response Team certification.

During his time as president of the Pasadena Radio Club, he provided safety communications for events such as the Rose Parade and the Angeles Crest 100 Ultra-marathon.

When he moved to Tujunga, he was asked to work with the Sunland-Tujunga Town Hall Council. Later, he became the Sunland-Tujunga Neighborhood Council Certification Chairman, helping the group become a Certified City of Los Angeles Neighborhood Council. He is also one of the city's seven Certified Independent Elections Administrators, overseeing Neighborhood Council elections and ensuring the integrity of the process.

Seigel presently holds the STNC board position of Treasurer, but his involvement has included participation on the Land/Residential Use Committee, the Bylaws committee, the Budget Committee, and Logistics Committee. He has also served on the Outreach and Safety Committee.

The BPW is inviting the public to attend his awards dinner on Tuesday, February 24, 2009 starting at 6:30 p.m. at the Sunland-Tujunga Elks Lodge, 10137 Commerce Avenue, Tujunga. \$25 donation, reservations are preferred. For more information, contact Sally Hall at (818) 370-8809.

NAACP Coordinating Waste Collection Day

By Maurice Pichon

The San Fernando Valley Branch of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) is coordinating an E-waste collection station in the San Fernando Valley as part of the civil rights organization Centennial Green Program.

The California State Conference of the NAACP has selected February 20, 2009, as the kick-off day for what is being referred to as the NAACP E-waste collection program.

Their list of electronics that qualify as E-waste includes: televisions, computers, monitors, LCD desktop monitors, laptop computers with LCD displays, LCD televisions, Plasma televisions, portable DVD players with LCD screens, Halogen Light Bulbs, FAX Machines, cell-phones and

items with Cathode Ray Tubes (CRT's). CRT's are found in virtually every home and office in the country. These CRT's contain two to ten pounds of lead, which is a known toxic substance and can not be disposed of in landfills. This is an opportunity for everyone to remove those aforementioned items, along with other E-waste objects from your home, garage and other storage areas on your property.

The collection site will be set-up by the NAACP in the Encino Market Parking Lot, at 17400 Victory Blvd., Encino, (at the intersection of Victory and White Oak St.), on February 21, 2009, from 9:00 am to 3:00 pm.

All Residents of the San Fernando Valley are invited to drop-off all their unwanted household electronic equipment (E-waste) to be recycled and/or disposed properly, at no charge.

Come Laugh with Us!

By Richard Stewart

Everyone needs a good laugh to help eliminate stress especially during these trying times. The "Foothill Community Laff Night" offers an opportunity to have a good time while helping to sponsor LAPD's up coming "Baker to Vegas Relay Run." The proceeds of this event will also help purchase running suits for our local Police Officers.

Mark your calendar for Saturday, February 7, starting at 6:30 pm. For only \$20, you will have a great time with your friends while enjoying the entertainment of "The Comedy Machine"- four professional Standup Comics guaranteed to keep you in stitches.

This event is a community effort co-sponsored by Sunland-Tujunga's Rotary, Lions, Kiwanis, Chamber of Commerce, Neighborhood Council, and Elks community organizations. It will take place at the Elks Lodge, 10137 Commerce Ave., Tujunga.

Tickets can be purchased from any of the above organizations. For further information call the Elks Lodge, 818-352-2098, or the STNC office, 818-951-7411.

Editor's note: Richard Stewart is the STNC Service Representative and President of the S-T Rotary Club

Nina Royal – A Woman of Achievement



Local organization applauds contribution

By Kathy Arellano

This isn't the first time Sunland-Tujunga homeowner/activist Nina Royal has been singled out for her exemplary work in the community, but it is the most recent.

The Business and Professional Women's League (BPW) of Sunland-Tujunga will honor Ms. Royal during a February 24 dinner at the Sunland-Tujunga Elk's Lodge, presenting her with the coveted Woman of Achievement award.

The BPW Foundation, its familiar title, was started in the mid-50s and was the first research and education institution of national scope solely dedicated to issues that affect working women. A 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization, BPW programs, grants and partnerships were designed to positively impact the lives of thousands of women and their families in communities nationwide, according to BPW Foundation guidelines.

Royal exemplifies the ideals that BPW has set and has played a large part in the formation of, and advocacy for many of the community empowerment programs that now exist in our foothills community. Here's just a sample of her work:

- S-T Involved Residents - evolved into Sunland-Tujunga Neighborhood Council, (STNC) who recognized as Certified Advisors to the City of Los Angeles
- Elected and serves as Vice President-in charge of Outreach and Safety Chair of the STNC (served as treasurer and secretary in past years)
- Town Hall Safety Meetings
- No Home Depot, Save the Verdugo Hills Golf Course, etc.
- Neighborhood and Business Watches
- S-T Observation Patrol, an innovative gang/drug elimination program
- S-T Safety and Emergency Response Volunteers Services (ST-SERVS) – {Sunland-Tujunga has the distinction of having one of the most CERT trained members in the City of Los Angeles}
- S-T Representative, Community Police Advisory Board (CPAB) – Foothill Division
- S-T Representative, LADWP Integrated Resource Planning Committee (IRP)
- S-T Foothill Corridor Business Specific Plan
- S-T, Sun Valley, Lake View Terrace Scenic Corridor Specific Plan

Royal has been recognized by the police and fire departments, the Chamber of Commerce and local businesses as someone who gets things done. She is currently publisher and editor of the North Valley Reporter, a community newspaper whose mission is "Keeping You Informed" regarding important issues.

"It's my desire to inform and unite the North Valley communities to work together and support each other regarding common issues where communities can make a difference," said Royal. "[I want to] help make our neighborhoods a stronger, more vibrant place to live."

Royal's life accomplishments exemplify true selflessness and dedication to the community she loves. She is an inspiration to all those who know her.

The Public is invited to attend the Awards Dinner to be held at the Sunland-Tujunga Elks Lodge, 10137 Commerce Avenue, Tujunga, on Tuesday, February 24, 2009 starting at 6:30 p.m. \$25 donation, are preferred. Contact Sally Hall at (818) 370-8809 for further information.

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Wintering

By Marlene Hitt

With the temperatures in the 60s and the sun shining every day, wintering is not an issue here. Yet preparation for the future is part of life on the grand scale.

Which of us does not have a story of a mouse or a squirrel hoarding birdseed or dog food in strange places? I read of a mouse who systematically swiped kibble to place it in a large vase in the shed, and in the strings of the piano. Later one member of the family found her bottom desk drawer ledgers entombed in more than 25 pounds of dog food.

We had a similar experience with a squirrel. The first hint was a strange banging in the engine when I went shopping. When the motor stopped, the noise stopped, so I reasoned that the banging must be mechanical in nature. Each day the sound became louder until, on the way up Big Tujunga Canyon, my husband heard it too. He got out to look at the engine, opened the hood and nearly fell over when something like a rocket shot out and landed across the highway. Then we saw the inside of the engine compartment filled, in every little nook, piles of birdseed. All this time we had thought half the birds in Southern California were eating from our feeder.

Diana Kappel-Smith writes that a mouse has no sense of judgment in these things. Once his hoarding program had been switched on – by hormones released in him by short autumn days, there was nothing but the passage of time that could have turned it off. And what of the great amount of hoarding? *Enough* isn't in a mouse's autumnal vocabulary.

This preparing of food leads to a question I had: When did people start canning? In pioneer days? When glass jars were invented? Well, googling is a good thing and I found that preserving came first, with foods put up in ceramic pots with meats, fruits and vegetables vinegared or salted. My mother's family had a bed of sand in the cellar to store root vegetables.

In the case of potted meats, baked morsels were shielded from contamination by complete immersion in melted fat and a tied-on cloth or leather covering.

Canning was begun in the time of Napoleon when a Nicholas Appert was called to action by Napoleon to preserve food for his army. It was said that "the army marched on its stomach", so Appert developed a system of precooked, airtight sealed, well processed food in newly designed wide-mouthed glass jars stoppered with hand cut corks fitted to the irregularities of the hand blown glass, sealed with a compound of lime and skim milk, then finished in a boiling water bath. Appert declared that the meats, vegetables, fruits, soups and gravies would last a year.

By the time of the Civil War the jars had screw tops and lids, and home canning became a domestic institution. World war II Victory gardens were urged by the government and home preservation as well so that commercial goods could go to the soldiers.

Canning has given way to freezing or to no preserving at all since the local markets are close and plentiful. What the heck would happen if the markets ran dry?

Happy wintering! Editors note: Marlene Hitt is Past Poet Laurette of Sunland-Tujunga

THIS & THAT



Carrick's Journey -Part Fourteen

By Tomi Lyn Bowling

As Drake followed along the path behind two guards he could not help but notice how long this village was. It seemed to wind around with one row of homes on either side of the path, and all were well hidden beneath the tall and thick forest. Drake was quietly taking it all in and noticed how many people came out of their homes to watch the strangers. It was curious to Drake that there were very few children and even when there was a child present, there was only one in each household. He turned and looked down the road to the house they had been staying in and noticed how much his family stood out with all of his siblings playing out in front compared to everyone else. So many children to one family was clearly an oddity to this village. He also could not help but notice that the few children that were in the village were anxiously migrating to his family for a play. Reluctant village parents could do little to hinder the strong intentions nor to stop them from running down to the little cabin. The nervous parents just followed slowly to keep a watchful eye on their wee ones.

He could no longer see the house with his siblings playing out in front. The path wound and wove around up a hill and down again. It grew darker as they walked further and deeper into the forest. Along with the encroaching darkness came a drop in temperature that was really quite significant. Drake was worried about his mom and slowed down and turned to Maddie while offering her his jacket. Maddie had been friendly with the guards in the back and had already been covered in one of their coats. So Drake only asked, "Are you OK Maddie?" and she nodded to him that all was well. Drake went back to the head of the line with the front guards. Out of breath now Drake finally turned to Fanella and asked, "How much further to this place?" Fanella, the hearty soul that was far more athletic than just about anyone in the village, including Drake, giggled and said, "We're almost there." and pointed to a speck in the distance. Drake replied, "Of course." as though he could see it was very close but thought to himself, "She thinks that's close? I need a rest." Fanella knew Drake was tired but went along with the farce.

As they finally started down the narrow path that led to two tall doors that appeared to go nowhere, the doors opened, the guards fell behind and Drake, Fanella and Maddie proceeded forward. The large doors slammed shut behind them almost creating an echo in the stairwell leading to the long hall. As they rounded the corner of the fourth turn down the steps Drake could hear a familiar sound. Whisker's laughter, a belly laugh that could be heard for quite some distance, was floating up the stairwell.

...to be continued.

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