

# Gerstle Park Neighborhood Association

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



## Quarterly Newsletter

Spring 2008

### MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

Belated Happy New Year to those of you who were unable to attend the Annual Meeting. The meeting was held at the Trinity Church this year, where we enjoyed the cozy venue. In addition to electing the new Board, the theme was Emergency Preparedness with a goal of increasing understanding of this important issue and supporting the city's efforts. The reports were presented in a brief overview format, with an invitation to visit websites or contact representatives for more detailed information.

Steven Hancock, from the SRFD, talked about the CERT (Community Emergency Response Team – formerly DART) program and Get Ready Marin. The GPNA Board has elected to reimburse residents for 100% of the \$60 CERT training fee. CERT participants are extremely valuable resources to our community, and therefore we want to support as many people as are interested in getting trained. You can find out more about the program at [www.sanrafaelvolunteers.org/EVC/what\\_DART.htm](http://www.sanrafaelvolunteers.org/EVC/what_DART.htm)

Bradley Marks, also with SRFD, discussed the Vegetation Management Ordinance. Designed to protect San Rafael from wildfire devastation, the Ordinance is being rolled out across the city on a priority basis. Gerstle Park will be evaluated between August 2008 and August 2009. To find out whether your property may be effected by the defensible space requirements, please visit: [www.cityofsanrafael.org/Assets/Fire/Vegetation+Management+Program/Program+Overview+26+Compliance+Guidelines.pdf](http://www.cityofsanrafael.org/Assets/Fire/Vegetation+Management+Program/Program+Overview+26+Compliance+Guidelines.pdf)

Former Fire Chief Brian Waterbury discussed the Medical Reserve Corps [bwaterbury@co.marin.ca.us](mailto:bwaterbury@co.marin.ca.us), and Chris Hull introduced new technology aimed at advancing communication capability during emergency situations: <http://lready.com/schools>.

It looks like we are going to have a full Board this year! We have three newly elected members including Angelo Douvos, Jesse Burke and Kathleen Russell, bringing our number to 10, and I have already been contacted by two more individuals who would like to fill the remaining seats. What a blessing to have more hands to help! With some big goals ahead, including updating the GPNA website to reflect this great community, resolving our traffic quandaries and continuing to host terrific events, we need all the help we can get.

We have 237 renewed and new voting members, and we

are expecting another wave of renewals to come in (hopefully before this newsletter gets mailed!)

Please contact us should you have any issues or ideas, and please be patient with us as we work to meet your needs.

-Muriel

### DRAGON PAINTING UPDATE

WOW! Have you taken a look at the dragon lately? We couldn't be more excited about the way it turned out! After hosting the coloring contest at last year's picnic, Carrie Souza's design won the honor of being immortalized – at least in the eyes of this decade's children!

Jessica Lord, a professional faux finisher and decorative artist, spent over 40 hours completing the project, which included careful removal and disposal of decades of layers of old paint. She did some minor concrete repairs, and painted the dragon a fabulous metallic purple with metallic blue and green spots. The magical new look to our dragon has been officially unveiled, written about in the papers and we think the new look suits the dragon beautifully!

In addition to being reimbursed for materials, Jessica volunteered her time in hopes of expanding her client base, and, frankly, she couldn't resist the opportunity to get her artistic hands on that dragon! Please keep Jessica in mind when you have artistic specialty needs. [jwlord@mac.com](mailto:jwlord@mac.com) or 415.302.4572.

### IN MEMORY OF ROCKY SULLIVAN CO-OWNER OF MUFFIN MANIA

Rocky Sullivan, co-owner of Muffin Mania, passed away last Fall. A neighborhood icon, Rocky was adored by the local kids, some of whom would thank him for getting up extra early to make their muffins. Over the years, Rocky and his wife, Ilona, watched children grow up and have families of their own, who became second-generation fans of Muffin Mania.

Rocky and Ilona met in August 1968, the Summer of Love, in upstate New York, just a mile from Woodstock. They were married 37 years. They opened Muffin Mania in 1983 with a recipe brought with them from the east coast. Rocky updated the recipe to be healthier and created all of the flavors himself.

The muffins enjoyed a cult following. A restaurant in Redding would regularly have muffins sent up via Greyhound bus. A former customer who moved to the east coast

routinely ordered muffins to be shipped overnight and one local resident would send care packages of cinnamon squirrels to his daughter attending college in Colorado.

A talented musician, Rocky wanted something to fall back on until his musical career took off. Over the years, Rocky was always on the brink of stardom but unfortunately he never broke through. According to Ilona, Rocky had no regrets about his musical career because he felt he gave it his best shot. He played the guitar, but only to write lyrics and he sang in the band. As one rock critic described his voice, "Rocky Sullivan sounds like Bruce Springsteen wishes he could." He was popular in Europe and had a loyal following in the United States. To read more about Rocky, click here: <http://www.bay-area-bands.com/bab00021.htm> and to hear some of his music, go here: <http://www.bay-area-bands.com/>

Rocky battled lupus for over 30 years but never let it interfere with his responsibility to his family and his restaurant. Described by his family as a true gentleman, he was a loving husband and a dedicated father. Friends called him a renaissance man, whose quiet intelligence and extensive vocabulary amazed them. Diagnosed with a bone marrow disorder in July and with his immune system weakened by the lupus, Rocky knew his time was limited. Unable to speak the last 12 days of his life, he began writing his last love song to Ilona. It was titled "Bronx Angel" and he was almost finished when he died. A musician friend finished the song and set it to music. One line of the song reads "How can you win every battle but still lose the war?"

Luckily, Rocky was able to appreciate the true extent of his impact on Gerstle Park. Before his death, he stood in Muffin Mania and told Ilona that he really understood the impact they had on the neighborhood. Indeed, it is such a landmark that realtors list proximity to Muffin Mania as a benefit to nearby properties. It would truly be hard to imagine our neighborhood without it.

For the time being Rocky's shoes are quite literally being filled by his son Dylan, a graduate of the pastry program at the Culinary Institute of America in St. Helena. Dylan and his wife Natalie are helping Ilona run the restaurant and have begun staying open on Sundays. In addition, beginning in the spring, they will offer pre-made sandwiches to go when you pick up your morning coffee and muffin. They currently make sandwiches in the morning upon request.

Rocky is survived by his wife Ilona, their sons Dylan and Jarrett, and Dylan's wife, Natalie. He also leaves a large Gerstle Park family that misses him and is so grateful for his contribution to this wonderful place that we live.

## SHORT SCHOOL UPDATE

Four or five years ago some 60 Gerstle Park residents turned out for a meeting with the mayor over talk that the Short School site at Bayview and Marin Streets might be sold and as many as 40 residential units constructed. The mayor gave his assurance that no such plan was in the works.

The new superintendent of San Rafael Schools, Michael Watenpaugh, recently provided an update on the status of Short School to Angelo Douvos, the new GPNA board member who has been appointed our representative to the school district. The Superintendent pointed out that the city of San Rafael is under constant pressure from the state to provide affordable housing, but because of a small increase in elementary district enrollment there is no plan to sell Short School at this time.

The school district recently signed a three-year lease with UHS School, a private school which is using one classroom for young kids from throughout the county who suffer from serious learning disabilities such as autism. Teacher Lynn Young and an aide are doing good work with these kids. The GPNA expects to receive details soon regarding the school district lease with the UHS School.

## UPDATE ON NEIGHBORHOOD REMODELS

GPNA has a committee that reviews all applications for new neighborhood projects that require City Planning Department review and public hearings. Some of the things we consider in our reviews include maintaining the character of the neighborhood, privacy impacts on properties, adequate parking, architecture, encroachments, and compliance with the San Rafael Municipal Code. Our goal is to improve our neighborhood and maintain its character.

Here are some of the projects recently reviewed:

**2 Alvina:** approved for a new rear addition

**343 D St:** an appeal was filed and upheld re: changes necessary to front stairway design

**Safeway:** change of color scheme

**42 Estates Court:** approved for an upper story addition

**162 Greenwood:** approved for modifications to retaining walls, possible upcoming Code Enforcement action

**128 San Rafael:** upcoming hearing on second story addition

**174 Greenwood:** new single family home, application not yet complete

**35 Grove St:** new second story addition: approved

**8 Treanor:** new single family home: approved

# NEIGHBORHOOD PRIORITY SURVEY RESULTS AND ACTIVITIES

In 2007, the GPNA Board distributed a survey asking residents to prioritize activities for the Board's focus going forward. In order of importance, here's the top issues chosen by responding residents and a summary of the Board's activities provided by Board President, Muriel Ballard:

## **1. Represent GPNA interests to the San Rafael City Council, City Staff, Federation of San Rafael Neighborhoods (74)**

We have held meetings with the City specifically to learn how we can be better perceived. We learned the city has a difficult time sorting out who was coming before the City under the title GPNA - advancing their own agendas and who was coming to the City actually representing the neighborhood. We have been working closely with the city to establish who actually represents the neighborhood - and also working hard at presenting reasonable, well-considered material.

## **2. Encourage safe and calm traffic for automobiles and pedestrians (72).**

We spent an enormous amount of time meeting with the City to advance our objective to improve traffic conditions. This is a subject fraught with conflicting visions and ideals, yet we have prevailed and expect to see changes in the near future. There will be a Community Meeting soon, where a plan will be introduced. The first steps should include a Stop sign at First and C Streets, where two people were hit last year, and changing the traffic pattern on D Street to two-ways through to 2nd Street. We hope this will take a great deal of traffic off of the residential streets. Keep an eye out for the meeting announcement.

## **3. Encourage the protection of existing open space near Gerstle Park (66).**

Hugo Landecker does a great job overseeing the management of overgrowth on the trails, as well as encroachments and homeless encampments. He is nearly single-handedly to thank for the quality of our adjacent trails. Let us know if you can help keep this work going.

## **4. Clean-up and beautification efforts along neighborhood streets (56).**

We halted the erection of a hideous chain link fence at Short School and will be having the Neighborhood signs repainted shortly. We've begun using beautiful signs to announce our various events. We awarded Center Point a Beautification Award for keeping their property meticulously groomed and are planning to give out more of these awards.

## **5. Disseminate information and encourage neighborhood participation on legislative issues that affect the community (48).**

We coordinated an informative Emergency Preparedness program at the Annual Meeting. We alerted the community about opportunities to meet the City Council candidates. We regularly send out emails regarding pertinent matters. We will be here to make sure the community is aware of and gets to vote on serious issues that may affect the community.

## **6. Plan/Manage Events: Neighborhood Picnic, Garage Sale, Spring Fling, Christmas Caroling, Holiday Home Decorating, Annual Meeting (46)**

We have enhanced these various events in a variety of ways. We changed the day of the picnic from Thursday night to Sunday afternoon so more families could attend and not have to worry about getting the kids to bed on a school night. We tried a new band. We provided a special hunt for the younger children during the Spring Fling, and provided a balloon artist to keep the kids entertained and friendly while hunting their eggs. We provided coffee and muffins for the adults. We lost our head Caroler this year - so we'll be looking for someone new, as well as printing new songbooks. As always, we provided awards for Holiday Home Decorating.

## **7. Encourage preservation of historic structures in Gerstle Park (44)**

We've just completed a non-toxic Restoration Project of the dragon in the park. We had bilingual signs installed to maintain better respect and order from those enjoying the park.

## **8. Planting Trees (43).**

We did not plant any trees this year. Though San Rafael is known as an official "Tree City" and has been for 25 years. Go to this site for more info: <http://www.arboday.net/programs/treeCityUSA/treecities.cfm?chosenstate=California>

## **9. Monitor building activity within Gerstle Park neighborhood boundaries (40).**

Please see Hugo Landecker's report in this Newsletter. We review all plans and make an effort to alert homeowners should their project not be in alignment with the codes.

## **10. Promote health and safety such as DART, Neighborhood watch, and vegetation management programs (39).**

See the summary of the Disaster Preparedness session held during our annual meeting and #5 above to learn what's happening in this area.

## GPNA CALENDAR

<b>March 29</b>	Saturday	Broom Pull
<b>April 2</b>	Wednesday	Board of Directors Meeting*
<b>May 7</b>	Wednesday	Board of Directors Meeting*
<b>June 4</b>	Wednesday	Board of Directors Meeting*
<b>June 21</b>	Saturday	Neighborhood Garage Sale
<b>July 2</b>	Wednesday	Board of Directors Meeting*
<b>August 6</b>	Wednesday	Board of Directors Meeting*
<b>September 3</b>	Wednesday	Board of Directors Meeting*
<b>September 21</b>	Sunday	Annual Picnic
<b>October 1</b>	Wednesday	Board of Directors Meeting*
<b>October 31</b>	Friday	Hallowe'en Decoration Contest Judging
<b>November 5</b>	Wednesday	Board of Directors Meeting*
<b>December 3</b>	Wednesday	Board of Directors Meeting*
<b>December TBD</b>		Christmas Caroling

\* Guests are welcome! If you would like to address the GPNA Board of Directors, wish to attend a meeting, or need more information on Gerstle Park Events or Community Meetings, please contact [muriel.ballard@gerstlepark.com](mailto:muriel.ballard@gerstlepark.com)

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P.O. Box 150644  
San Rafael, California 94915-0644



## A HANDY WHO-TO-CALL LIST FOR GERSTLE PARK RESIDENTS

*San Rafael Police Emergency (for mobile phone use)	485-3393	Housing Code Violations	485-3097
Abandoned Vehicles	485-3033	Humane Society	309-6339
Barking Dogs	485-3000	Illegal Construction	485-3365
Building Inspect./permits	485-3365	Library	485-3104
Business Licenses	485-3051	Litter	485-3407
Center Point Liaison	456-3036	Marin General Hospital	925-7000
City Attorney	485-3080	Marin IJ	883-8600
City Clerk	485-3066	Marin Recycling	453-1404
City Manager	485-3070	Marin Sanitary Service	456-2601
Assistant City Manager	485-3475	MMWD	945-1455
City Planning Department	485-3085	MMWD Emergency	945-1500
Chamber of Commerce	454-4163	Neighborhood Associations	485-3085
Code Enforcement	458-5038	Noise Disturbances	485-3000
Community Center	485-3333	Parking Issues	458-5333
Community Development	485-3085	Parks Dept.	485-3355
Community Policing	485-3114	PG&E	800-743-5000
Dangerous Animals	309-6339	Planning Department	485-3085
DART Information	485-3488	Police Department	485-3000
Design Review	485-3085	Potholes	485-3355
Drainage Problems	485-3355	Public Library	485-3323
Earthquake Supply Center	459-5500	Public Works	485-3355
Easements/Encroachments	485-3365	Public Works Emergency	485-3385
Emergency Operations Coordinator	485-3111	Reserving Gerstle Park	485-3333
Emergency Preparedness	458-5002	San Rafael Connects (Gerstle Park)	485-3383
Film Permits	485-3051	Satellite Dishes	485-3085
Fire Chief	485-3304	Sewers	485-3375
Fire Prevention	485-3367	Street Maintenance	485-3375
Graffiti Hotline	485-5326	Tenant/Landlord Disputes	499-7454
Hazardous Material	485-3308	Traffic Unit	485-3034
Health Department	499-6907	Tree Removal (street trees)	485-3375
Historic Buildings	485-3085	Wildlife Pick up	883-4621

\* 911 calls from mobile phones are often routed outside of Marin. For emergencies, use this number to call the San Rafael Police from your mobile phone.

For additional contacts and resources go to: [www.cityofsanrafael.org](http://www.cityofsanrafael.org)