

THE VICENTE CANYON VOICE

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VCNA to Hold Annual Neighborhood Meeting and Potluck on September 12

VCNA's third annual meeting and potluck will be held on Sunday, September 12, at the home of Marty and Nelsi Held, 210 Alvarado Road, from 4:00-7:00 p.m. Come meet your neighbors and discuss issues of importance to the neighborhood, then stay to share dinner and libations. All area residents are welcome and encouraged to attend.

This year's meeting will focus mostly on neighborhood emergency preparedness, a very important topic in light of the major quake in Turkey and the recent temblors in the Bay Area. Invited guests include Oakland and Berkeley City Council members Jane Brunner and Polly Armstrong, our public safety officers, and the fire-fighting crew at the newly opened fire station.

Please bring a dish to share. Grills will be provided for those who wish to barbecue. Wine and soft drinks also will be provided, compliments of the Association.

Information Updates Needed

Help us help you. Each year, VCNA updates its resident information database. If you're new to the neighborhood, the Association, have made e-mail or phone number changes, or have never submitted a contact information sheet to us, please complete and submit the form in this newsletter.

The information will be used to distribute neighborhood bulletins by e-mail, to quickly send information about community meetings, police alerts, and local issues. All information will be treated confidentially and will not be distributed for any commercial purpose.

Everyone is urged to contribute \$10 to the Association to fund newsletter printing, food and drinks for neighborhood events, and photocopying for Steering Committee meetings. This is a very small investment in the improved safety, greater involvement, and enhanced property values that result from the Association's work.

Vicente Neighbors Bid Farewell to VCNA Founder Peter Rachor

By Chris Johnson, VCNA President

In late July, we witnessed the departure of friend and Vicente Canyon Neighborhood Association founder Peter Rachor. Rachor, a telecommunications executive, moved into the neighborhood in 1994. For five years, he owned and occupied the house at 260 Alvarado Road.

Rachor's contributions to the neighborhood have been significant. In 1996, working with other neighbors, he formed the Vicente Canyon Neighborhood Association. Initially, VCNA was organized to address the ever-important issues of emergency response and neighborhood preparedness. In conjunction with local fire departments, Rachor coordinated emergency response training programs for neighborhood residents. He worked tirelessly on a wide range of traffic and public safety issues. He organized several Earth Day cleanup efforts and frequently represented the neighborhood at city commission and council meetings.

Rachor's move will not take him far: His new home is in the South of Market district in San Francisco. In a recent conversation, Rachor commented, "I feel sad to be leaving. I love this neighborhood and hope to be able to return before too long. I will certainly stay in touch with the friends I've made here. For me, it's simply a matter of needing to be closer to my business in San Francisco."

Rachor is CEO of Streetspace, an Internet-related startup headquartered on Townsend Street in San Francisco.

Tunnel Road Study Committee

By David Kessler, VP, North Hills Phoenix Association

Everyone will have noticed that the Claremont Hotel Light is in operation. The Tunnel Road Study Committee, which includes Oakland, Berkeley and CalTrans officials as well as residents, will be assessing its impact as well as exploring options for improving traffic circulation throughout the area. Please see the North Hills Phoenix Association website for some current discussion topics (<http://www.nhphoenix.org/>). Your comments and suggestions are important input for policy makers. The group meets next on September

15th. A good person to direct comments and questions to is Iyackuddy Jeeva, City of Oakland Traffic Engineering, 238-6109.

Getting to Know Garber Park

By Barry Miller

Right in our collective backyard is a little-known neighborhood treasure called Garber Park. This 14-acre open space is located on the steep hillside between Alvarado Road and Claremont Avenue, just above the Claremont Hotel. The park was deeded to the City of Oakland as permanent open space during the early 1950s and has been left "as is" for the last 40 years or so. Today, Garber Park provides a scenic backdrop for our neighborhood, habitat for wildlife, and a buffer from the City below. Many of us take the park and its amenities for granted. Perhaps even more of us are not even aware that it exists at all.

While Garber Park is a neighborhood treasure, in its current condition the park also has the potential to be a hazard. Much of the park perimeter is covered with dense, non-native vegetation, and the forest floor contains a large amount of potential fuel for a wildfire. The Oakland Department of Parks and Recreation plans to bring goats into the park later this season to address some of the immediate hazards, but a longer-term solution which preserves the ecology of the park while improving neighborhood fire safety would be ideal.

Members of the Vicente Canyon Neighborhood Association (VCNA) have been exploring the feasibility of a citizen-based vegetation management program for portions of the park. A small committee of interested residents has met several times, walked the park (dodging its poison oak and stinging nettles!), and given thought to several "pilot" projects to begin this effort.

The committee is seeking neighborhood residents, particularly Garber Park neighbors, to join us. The City of Oakland has lent its support to the program and has offered to remove any vegetation and brush that we haul to the street.

Tentatively, our first project will tackle the park's short frontage along Alvarado Road (the tight curve between the 800 and 900 blocks). We hope to undertake this project on a Saturday morning during late September or early October – more details will be provided at the neighborhood potluck. Other efforts to selectively thin vegetation and remove invasive weeds along the park perimeter will be initiated in the future. Longer-term projects might include restoration of remnant trails in the park, including the nearly completely overgrown

Claremont-to-Evergreen Trail and the Rispin-to-Alvarado Trail.

If you are interested in joining this effort, please contact Barry Miller at 845-2404 or Bill McClung at 841-8447.

Oakland Zoning and Planning Issues

By David Kessler, VP, North Hills Phoenix Association

The North Hills Phoenix Association is very concerned about zoning and planning issues in Oakland. In addition to concern about inadequate enforcement of city codes, there is fear that recent proposals -- such as one to create a Zoning Hearing Officer, who would hear many cases instead of the Planning Commission -- would weaken citizen ability to halt runaway development. Information about these proposals is on the Oakland News Web site (<http://www.oaklandnews.com/>).

The NHPA plans to invite City staff to meet with the community about zoning and planning issues. This event is scheduled for October 21st at the Hiller Highlands Clubhouse, probably at 7:30 P.M.

Vicente Canyon Neighborhood Association

The Vicente Canyon Voice is published by the Vicente Canyon Neighborhood Association. The following neighbors comprise the Steering Committee: Chris Johnson - President, Louise Miller - Vice President, David Kessler, Georgia Wright, Bill McClung, Matt Morse, Jeanie Cecka, Deborah Lesser, and Ann Smulka. And of course, the unforgettable, but departing Peter Rachor.

We welcome your involvement in the group. For more information, call Chris at 848-4580 or Louise at 848-5203.