

The Portola Valley Post

Fall 2011

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A Sense of Community



The charette 2003



Photos: Virginia Bacon

The Town Center has been an essential component in providing a sense of community for Portola Valley. We imagined it, funded it, built it and now enjoy it. It's a statement about our sense of aesthetics and our commitment to sustainability.

It's our downtown – it's where we meet and greet, gathering for events ranging from summer concerts, Holiday Fairs, energy expos to stargazing. We play on the athletic fields, tennis courts and playground. We learn in classrooms about everything from rocks and Legos to karate. It's our Emergency Operations Center and our recognized achievement in sustainable building.

The Town Center provides the place, but community isn't achieved by just proximity or shared territory. The relational dimension is also essential and the PVForum has provided an easy way to relate and communicate on topics as diverse as lost dogs and commercial airplane noise, bringing an on-going dialog to our Town.

And our community is unique. Where else will you find plastic Easter eggs filled with gold dust and poppy seeds?



www.portolavalley.net

Music, Art and More

The mission of the Portola Valley Cultural Arts Committee is to gather together neighbors to enjoy the Arts, whether musical or visual. This has been accomplished these past months in full measure.

The Town enjoyed three summer concerts featuring local bands organized by Paige Fulkerson much to the delight of all, many coming with kids and picnics to enjoy getting together on a lovely summer evening.



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Summer Concert Revelry

A collaborative Art Show was held in October at the beautiful Woodside Priory Gallery featuring nine local artists. An opening reception gathered some 200 neighbors for a viewing and to enjoy local wines from Fogarty Vineyards and Portola Valley Vineyards along with a sumptuous array of nibbles.

Some of the committee members helped Town Historian Nancy Lund with the highly successful Portola Valley Schools 150th Celebration.

The PV Holiday Fair Saturday, December 3

The Portola Valley Holiday Fair will be returning to the Historic Schoolhouse at 765 Portola Road on Saturday December 3. The Fair will be open from 10 am until 4 pm and is a great place to find unusual, handcrafted holiday gifts! The Girl Scouts will be offering goodies for sale as well. Many of last year's more than 30 vendors will be returning this year. The event is being organized by Jane Wilson and Crystal Ciancutti.

Mimi Breiner

From The Mayor

I was recently reminded of a Bruce Springsteen lyric: "We'd better start savin' up for things that money can't buy." I've always liked Springsteen and that lyric really struck a chord with me because in a strange way it combined two concepts that I believe have a big influence on our Town.

You can't buy a sense of community

The first is simply money. It's expensive to live out here. You have to work hard and save aggressively to afford it, or you've hit a jackpot or won a lottery prize. Last time I looked, our zip code was one of top ten in the U.S. in median income and housing prices. To get here, most of us have had to focus hard on making the money necessary. I think it has also affected our outlooks. Having gotten here, many have come to believe money can buy almost anything.

But the second concept in that lyric is that there are things "...that money can't buy." For example, you can't buy a sense of community. But it is something we all benefit from and need to invest in. It comes from people thinking about the common good, and simply acting neighborly. It means encouraging people to not think so much about their own well-being (often equated to the size of their money pile), and think more about the well being of the community as a whole.

So how do we build community? You get to know your neighbors and your neighborhood. You look out for each other, and plan how to help each other in an emergency. You think about how your actions will negatively affect others. You volunteer time at your neighborhood associations, Town committees and schools. You get involved and contribute to the community's collective intelligence. You look for ways to help our whole community to function more efficiently and effectively.

In the end, everyone gives up something personally, and in return, gets back something from the overall community.

I submit that you get back more than you give. We all benefit from a well-developed sense of community. Sometimes it may be hard to see clearly, but you will know it when you see it. And then you will realize how happy you are living in our Portola Valley.

So ask yourself, what have you contributed recently to our community?

Power of the PVForum

The PVForum has been a major contributor to the greatly increased sense of community that Portola Valley is now enjoying. Rebecca Flynn started the PVForum in 2004 and today about 1,700 residents have joined. Recently Rebecca (RF) responded to the Post's questions about the PVForum in the following interview.

The PVForum has exceeded my wildest expectations.

Post: *Are you surprised by the success of the PVForum?*

RF: The PVForum has exceeded my wildest expectations. I'm impressed how many things have been repurposed and recycled, how much useful information has been passed along to people, how willing people are to help each other out. People in PV are very knowledgeable and generous with their time, information, and money and share it with so many so often. I feel very privileged to live in Portola Valley.

Post: *What inspired you to start the PVForum?*

RF: In 2004, PV was going through its latest (and thankfully, last) round of "What to do with the Town Center built on the earthquake crack." I was a member of the Palo Alto Menlo Park Mother's Club (now the PAMP Parents Club), a huge, thriving club with a very active email forum for parents looking for advice on parenting, children, baby stuff, etc. I was also actively involved with the Town Center planning effort, and I realized that most people in Town really had little idea about what was going on with the Town Center, or with anything else related to the Town, its governing bodies or issues facing the Town or community. I felt we really needed some type of Town crier to communicate all that was going on and to give residents an opportunity to express their opinions. At the time Yahoo Groups was an ideal forum to accomplish my goals.

Post: *How did you promote the PVForum?*

RF: I went to a Town picnic with a few flyers and sign up sheets. I contacted friends and acquaintan-

ces in PV and posted some notes to the schools' Tuesday Post, and wrote an article that appeared in the PV Post newsletter. When I had time, I sent out email invitations to people whose email address I had. From that point, it has mainly been word of mouth, friends telling friends. The Town website now promotes the PVForum, as do some of the real estate agents in Town, for which I am very grateful.

Post: *How often have you had to intervene to stop an inappropriate thread?*

RF: More often than I wish, given the time involved and the pain to my heart. I step in when the opinions expressed are hurtful, personal, inappropriate (which I define by the basics of civil discourse), or excessively repetitive. There are occasional flare-ups when people react emotionally to an issue they feel passionate about.

As people post, they develop a personality that everyone else notices, whether it is a good one or a bad one. Hopefully, most people want to be known for their helpfulness, generosity, humor, expertise, and, yes, passion as opposed to their temper! Fortunately, there are only a few individuals in the community who behave inappropriately, so I really haven't had to intervene too often. And the PVForum community helps out, too, by reacting to posts that are beyond the pale.

Post: *How do you deal with inappropriate posts?*

RF: I am exploring options to deal with this issue. Everyone has different opinions and tolerances. I firmly believe in freedom of speech and created the PVForum to allow everyone in Town the ability to express their opinions. I try to gently remind people to take more care in their postings and remind them that their postings do persist forever.

Post: *How can residents sign up?*

RF: To join the PVForum, please search for PVForum at www.yahoogle.com. Be sure to include your name, address and phone number with your request to join or send an email with your contact info to PVForum-owner@yahoogle.com.

Our Favorite/Most Memorable Posts to PVForum

Grizzly Jones won, hands down!

"...let the record show Grizzly Jones has brought a wide variety of topics to the table ranging from protecting your loved ones against mountain lions, to the inspirational actions of an 80 year old man who is training for "The Boston Marathon.but judging from the feedback, you would think I was a member of Al-Queda."

"I asked residents of PV if they were aware of an aggressive black llama on Georgia Lane who allegedly jumped a fence and head butted a Portola Valley resident right in the face on Easter Sunday."

".... if confronted by a mountain lion, I would simply put the cat in a pile driver and snap his neck like a chicken (because that's exactly what I would do)."

First good clothesline day in awhile

My friend Ruth wrote this week that she had finally put up her retractable line and how thrilled she was even though her first load was dampened by last Friday's rain...but I reminded her that a finish rinse on the line by sweet rain water can be a lovely touch. When I garden consulted for young Phyllis, a fairly new resident to the valley, she said that she hoped I could find somewhere for her to string her clothesline. I asked if I could hug her! They used to laugh at me 15 years ago on the Conservation Committee when I said we should give everyone in town some rope and pins when they move in. Ah... but they convert slowly.

I got a postcard from my kid travelling in India yesterday waxing on about clothelines of all crazy things. He was having some kind of 20 something epiphany about the honesty, vernacular and the connectedness of all things through the metaphor of a clothesline. WO! Verrrry 20. On the card there was a watercolor of a clothesline with the Himalaya in the background. He thanked me for using a line all these years and said I was "honestly" fantastic Geez. Now there's a mother's day present!"

To all of you American Girl Doll Lovers out there on the Forum (You know who you are!)

We have a whole herd of these dolls--five (5) of them in fact--that we can no longer clothe and feed. I don't know all of their names, but for Kit and Kayla, and she comes with an entire Native American village, including the model campfire, teepee, bearskin rug, etc. The other dolls are randomly associated with cheerleading, skiing, etc. We have the green metal table and chairs, a steamer trunk, and so many outfits that your child will never be bored!

I did a quick tally, and calculated nearly \$2,000 in dolly stuff that my daughters basically never played with. Now that the dolls are teenagers, they are eating me out of house and home, and who can afford to send quintuplets to college?

Any offer over \$500, and I will deliver them all to your door any time. There may be a few pieces missing, but the website seems pretty easy to navigate for replacement parts (for the outfits, not the dolls).

Found sum of money

On trail on alpine rd. There was a young teenage girl walking toward us with some red paint on her face. Anyway ask your kid and email to describe amount.

Lost Money Claimed – right amount

\$77,456.00.

And some catchy subject lines:

- **Is 11:37 pm too late to stand outside and call your cat whilst clapping?**
- **Are you missing a white peacock?**
- **Rattlesnake Needed**
- **Rabbit Poo**
- **Rabbit Poo Gone**

Stars and Insects

The Star Party and Insect Day at the Portola Valley Town Center were huge successes with both events hosted by the Town's Science & Nature Committee. Amateur astronomers brought out telescopes on Friday evening September 16th, and volunteers turned the Community Hall into an invertebrate extravaganza on Sunday afternoon, September 18th. And more big plans are coming!

During the Star Party, which was directed by committee member Andrew Pierce, star gazers strolled among more than a dozen volunteers and their telescopes, some powerful enough to see distant galaxies and star clusters in amazing detail. After admiring objects in the night sky, many folks came inside for the warmth of the Alder activity room and enjoyed the astronomy exhibits, while children made star-finder guides and lunar observation charts to continue the fun at home.

At the Insect Day, inspired and organized by committee member Trenea Joi, visitors enjoyed a variety of insect related arts and activities. Trenea brought a beautiful exhibit of mounted insect specimens, live praying mantises to hold, and edible chocolate covered crickets and mealworms for the daring to consume. A merry band of explorers foraged aquatic insects in the creek with naturalist Paul Heiple.



Meanwhile, Artist Foster Beigler took all comers in a frenzy of block carving and printing helping people create some lovely artwork.

The San Mateo County Mosquito Abatement District shared terrific local and exotic insect collections and provided information about reducing mosquito populations. Andy Browne and Susan Cann provided information about the endangered honeybees, and Susan organized volunteers from the local Bee Keepers Guild and groups promoting integrated pest management.

Another highlight was a presentation on Lyme Disease and research with local parents Bonnie Crater, Gayle Collat, Kathleen O'Rourke, and Nicole Miller. If you are interested in taking part in a study of ticks and the incidence of Lyme disease in Portola Valley, they are soliciting volunteers and promoting awareness in this area.

Now, George Comstock has arranged with the Town to have radio-controlled flying on

Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday mornings before 9:00 a.m. on the Town fields. Instruction will be provided by appointment.

And looking ahead to spring, plans are in the works to have a Geology Day with activities related to rocks, fossils, earthquakes, and other geologic topics. Watch for the details!

Yvonne Tryce, Nature and Science Committee

PVSD 150th Birthday—A Community Celebration



The October 2nd celebration of the school district's 150th birthday was an afternoon of nostalgia, reminiscences, and reconnecting with friends from years past. Lisa McLean summed up the feelings of many when she lifted a hand to the top of her head and said, "I am filled up to here with joy!"

An actual count of participants is impossible, but estimates are from 650 to 700. Honored guests arrived in vintage cars. First district superintendent, Tony Rose, now 90, remembered everyone who sought him out to say hello. Long-time teachers greeted former students with hugs and smiles. Many alumni had searched out former classmates in advance for reunions and promised to stay in touch.

All afternoon, folks relaxed to the strictly local music of the student/alumni Corte Madera Orchestra; two generations of Pollocks, Jim and Jeff, and their friends; Acoustic Therapy and Windy Hill. It was standing-room only in the historic schoolhouse for a panel discussion on the past, present and future of the district. Displays of year-books, art work, DVD's of Community Productions from the '80s and a slide show of school history were parts of the memorabilia display in the Community Hall.

In the words of one participant, "Such the perfect day from the bouncy house to the roasted corn to the bands on the performance lawn and the panel in the school house! It was a chance for the community to come together and celebrate this place we all share, and for further strengthening the bonds between the school district and the Town."

Nancy Lund

A Word on Being a Good Neighbor

How fortunate neighbors are when they know and respect each other so well that they can easily discuss and solve any problems that arise. Everyone can lay the groundwork that will make things easier should a dispute occur.

Having created even the tiniest bit of goodwill is of enormous value when a problem arises

Long before you complain, before you even have a problem, get out there and meet your neighbors. The long-range benefit of simply being able to call someone by name, of creating even the tiniest bit of goodwill, is enormous when a problem arises. This is something that every one of us should do and do sooner rather than later. A simple self-introduction followed by a cordial "good morning" or "hello" on a regular basis will put you on the right footing and make future communication easier.

This approach is in your own best interest and will make you a better neighbor while helping avoid future conflict. Knowing your neighbor is a win-win situation for everybody.

If You Have a Dispute with a Neighbor

While you may agree that Portola Valley is a great community, you might wish your neighbor wasn't part of it.

Most neighbor disputes are about noise, parking, fences and tree or landscape maintenance.

What do you do when you and your neighbor have a disagreement?

- **Deal with the issue directly and in a timely manner.** As time passes the issue becomes much bigger than it was in the beginning, both parties become increasingly irritated and the chances of solving the problem yourselves decrease with time.
- **Avoid email communications.** Email is one-way communication until someone responds. Too much is left to interpretation by the reader. You may think you are being tactful but the reader may think you are being harsh and unreasonable.
- If you're dealing with an issue that's gone past the point where you and your neighbor can settle the matter, **get professional mediation help.**

Mediation helps disputing parties communicate and understand their concerns and needs in a situation, identify and consider possible solution options, reach a mutually agreeable solution and put the agreement into a written form. A mediator has no decision-making authority. Unlike a judge or an arbitrator, a mediator does not decide what is right or wrong or make suggestions about ways to resolve a problem. Mediation is based on the voluntary cooperation and good faith participation of all parties.

The Peninsula Conflict Resolution Center's community mediation program is available for free or very low cost to everyone who lives or works in San Mateo County. PCRC is the primary provider of mediation services in San Mateo County and is considered to be a leader in the field of community mediation.

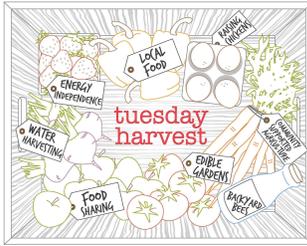
PCRC has experience in dealing with neighbor disputes about noise, fences, parking and yard/tree maintenance. PCRC offers mediation services for free or very low cost to residents of San Mateo County.

If you have questions about whether a situation might be appropriate for mediation, please do not hesitate to contact PCRC.

For more information, call PCRC at 650-513-0330. By going to the PCRC website <http://www.pcrweb.org/> you can open a mediation case with just a click and some basic information.



Tuesday Harvest



Cultivating fresh and local ideas, every second Tuesday of the month.

Mark your calendar! Our new speaker series – the Tuesday Harvest - begins in January 2012. Every second Tuesday of the month we will feature a new speaker on topics that will make your life more enjoyable *and* sustainable. Stay tuned to www.empowerportolavalley.com for more information!

Is Your Home Due for a Checkup?

When it comes to efficiency, your house is a system – heating, cooling, plumbing, walls, windows and other components all working together. For example, in cold months, warm air from your heater can escape through gaps in your attic, cracks around your windows and leaks in your duct system. A certified professional can give your home a “check-up” to test for air leakage, moisture problems and gas leaks. You will then receive a list of recommended improvements, resulting savings and available rebates.

Once your home is properly sealed and insulated, heat won’t escape and you won’t have to run the furnace as often, saving money and improving your home’s comfort and health. Start the process by finding an Energy Upgrade-qualified contractor to perform a home energy assessment at www.empowerportolavalley.com.



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You will also find more information on energy- and water-efficiency programs available to Portola Valley residents like the Acterra High Energy Homes program and the latest rebates.

Join the conversation. Connect with us on Facebook to stay updated on Portola Valley’s residential energy health and become part of the solution: www.facebook.com/empowerportolavalley

Brandi de Garmeaux



How to Green Your Holidays



Holiday Lights

Switch to LED lights, which are up to 90% more efficient, cooler and last longer. If one light goes out, the string still works. Another option is solar-powered lighting. Set lights on a timer to save more energy. Find tips on recycling old lights at www.portolavalley.net. See cost comparison below.



Gift wrap

Turn recycled magazines, newspaper, old posters, out-dated maps or kids' coloring book pages into wrapping paper. Make the wrapping part of the gift – such as a scarf or kitchen towel. Use a reusable item for the wrapping – a canvas bag can hold gifts and then be reused for grocery shopping. If you buy wrapping paper, look for recycled content paper. For large items, skip wrapping paper and hide in a clever location.



Holiday Cards

Consider sending a photo or holiday e-card. Or create a holiday album on a photo-sharing site like Flickr or Shutterfly and circulate that instead of a traditional card. When buying paper cards, look for recycled content paper, handmade paper or an alternative-fiber paper.



The Tree

Consider whether to invest in a live or artificial tree – each choice has pros and cons.



Holiday Parties

Send out invitations by email. Borrow or rent glassware, plates and flatware. If using disposable items, look for biodegradable products.



Gift Giving

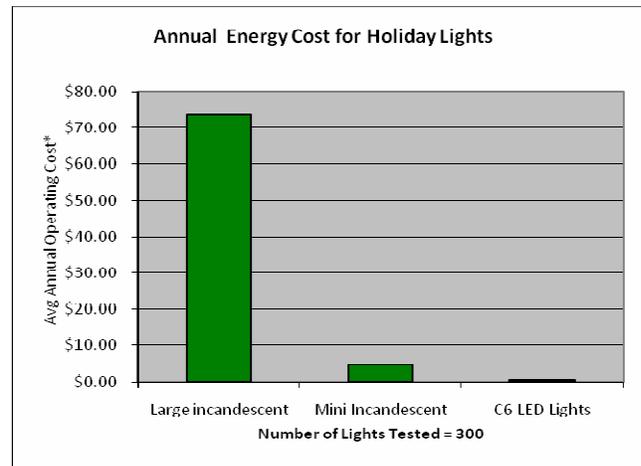
Give a "good as new" gift – antiques, an early edition book or vintage jewelry. Check local craft fairs and shops for handmade items. Gift an "experience" – tickets to the opera, a tennis lesson, membership to a local museum, a horseback riding lesson or a subscription to a local food co-op that delivers fresh produce. Donate to an organization or charity on behalf of the recipient. Institute the practice of giving handmade or found gifts – create a family recipe book, reprint a favorite photo and have it framed, make

seasonal cookies. For your eco-friends, give an environmentally focused gift – reusable lunch bag, travel coffee mug, rechargeable batteries or a home energy monitor. Creativity is key to green gift giving!

To find more fun tips visit <http://earth911.com/news/2008/11/17/8-ways-to-green-your-holidays/>

Happy Holidays!

Source: Adapted from the article "How to Have a Green Christmas" <http://www.mahalo.com/how-to-have-a-green-christmas>



* Based on testing done by PG&E

** Based on annual operation of 225 hours per year (5 hours/day for 45 days)

*** Calculated using average PG&E residential rate as of August 2009, \$0.156 kWh.

Source:

<http://www.pge.com/includes/docs/pdfs/myhome/saveenergymoney/rebates/light/products/ledholidaylightsfacts.pdf>

Brandi de Garmeaux