

# The Portola Valley Post

## What's Water Got To Do With It??

We all know water usage is the next big challenge for the State of California, so let's be proactive and get ahead of the mandates coming our way. Town staff has been looking into the best approach to establish a program to reduce water usage and promote conservation for the Town and its residents.

Through Cal Water, Bay Area Water Supply & Conservation Agency (BAWSCA) and the Department of Water Resources there are numerous opportunities for the Town to join in, including both commercial and residential programs. For example, check out rebate offers on replacement of older, inefficient toilets with high efficiency toilets, and purchases of high-efficiency clothes washers.



**Saving water is easy—we all can make a difference**

We have been working closely with Cal Water to prepare handouts for the community that illustrate how much water is used for certain tasks and outline water saving tips. Watch the Town's website and the mail for water conservation tips and programs available to you. As part of our Green Speaker Series, we will have two speakers focusing on water conservation on Tuesday, August 25.

## Earth Day Fair 2009



*Home Composting—up close and personal*



*Budding Entomologists*

## Walking in Portola Valley

*By Danna Breen*



*The Heart Tree*

Most every morning of my life at 8:20, rain or shine, I walk in Portola Valley. The girls still meet even though few of us have "drop off" any longer; most now have kids graduating from college. We had toddlers and kindergartners when we first started, usually gathering at "555" and sometimes at Willowbrook where we would start off to the trailhead and hop across the

rocks in the creek like ballerinas. Some of us are happy about the new bridge so we no longer have to negotiate the torrents in winter.

Colleen and Sue were in the first group of hikers and Tricia before she moved east after Dixon died. We used to zoom. Sometimes a few of us, topless on hot days—the goddesses of Windy Hill made it up and back in under an hour and a half to the top of the right breast of the mountain, balancing on the concrete marker to see the breakers at Pomponio Beach.

We were young and energetic, laughing and chatting our way to the top discussing classroom teachers, big Bertha, curriculum and child-friendly recipes. We all had the great fortune of leisure time. Over the years the subject matter has changed to politics, travel, literature, painful adolescent years and now we talk about aging parents and failing eyesight. We don't agree on a lot of things, and occasionally there is a snarl about politics or ethics, but the next day it is all forgotten as we visit whatever mundane detail is in the forefront of our minds. Increasingly, we don't depend on words, because our bonds are so tight we often don't need to talk. Groups of younger women now zoom past us and we reflect about how we once were. Sometimes we overtake my mom and her group of hikers and we reflect how we will be. And we climb on.

We love each other. The hikers would not necessarily be my best friends in life. We are an unlikely group to hang out, but the reality of being there everyday, the quotidian constancy and thread of stories keeps a level of intimacy rooted firm as if our friendships reflected the very nature in which we walk. We seem to know everything about one another right down to the simple details because of this daily reporting. Sometimes there is nowhere to hide.

*Continued on page 6*

## From the Mayor

Fall 2008 marked a historic milestone for Portola Valley as we moved into our stunning, new Town Center complex. The entire site sprang to life with the ceremonial cutting of the ribbon and hasn't paused in its forward momentum since. Our Community Hall quickly emerged as the "go to" place to hold an event in Town. Speaker series, presentations, Town meetings, classes and social events fill each day's schedule. The Library has been a magnet for residents of all ages with usage figures far exceeding those anticipated in its early life. Our staff has a home in Town Hall that befits their role in managing the affairs of our community. And the athletic fields provide countless hours of recreation for our residents as well as members of adjoining communities. As the inevitable shake down and de-bugging period nears an end, work continues on unfinished details and post-occupancy modifications. The awards are flowing in now as the project is recognized for its achievements in design and sustainability, and it's likely they will continue to pile up for some time to come. All in all, a fabulous success.

So what's next for Portola Valley? Should we take a breather and pat ourselves on the back for a job well done? Not a chance! We are moving faster than ever to address new challenges and are committed to tackling the most important issues facing our community. Given the abundance of wealth in our Town, and by this I mean wealth of experienced thinkers, dedicated volunteers, capable staff and generous donors, we have a responsibility to assume a leadership role for

other cities and towns to emulate.

First and foremost among the issues we are aggressively addressing is the issue of sustainability. The long-term future of our Town relies on our ability to make material progress in our sustainability efforts. Portola Valley has committed to reducing greenhouse gas emissions through improved energy efficiency and reduced consumption of fossil fuels. In January of this year the Town Council adopted a Sustainability Element of the General Plan that defines our objectives and sets specific goals for our Town that serve as the basis for developing a strategic climate action program and campaign for our community. Efforts are underway to construct green building standards for new construction and major remodels, develop a "Green Up" campaign to address energy efficiency issues in older homes, and most importantly, develop a water conservation program to deal with impending shortages.

2009 will be the year in which we make significant progress in not only defining our sustainability goals, objectives and policies, but it is also the time for us to define the specifics of our climate action program and craft groundbreaking regulations that move us forward in achieving our goals. We need your input to succeed in our efforts and encourage you to become active participants in your local government. It will take courage and conviction on all of our parts to do the right thing to ensure our Town's and your children's future.

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### Stop Junk Mail

In an effort to reduce the amount of waste generated in the form of unwanted mail, a coalition of more than 110 Bay Area cities, counties, and businesses have launched the "Stop Junk Mail" campaign. The heart of the campaign is the on-line "Stop Junk Mail Kit" at [stopjunkmail.org](http://stopjunkmail.org).

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It's good to recycle your junk mail.

It's even better to stop getting it.

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The kit offers residents and businesses a simple solution to reduce unsolicited mail with online forms and ready-to-send letters to organizations designed to protect consumer privacy. The kit will remove your name from junk mail clearinghouses, credit card companies, and the like. It offers options to choose to stop only some types of mail or to opt out of the whole mess. Take action to reduce your junk mail - Now!

For more information and to download the Stop Junk Mail kit visit [www.stopjunkmail.org](http://www.stopjunkmail.org).

For more waste reduction tips visit [www.recycleworks.org](http://www.recycleworks.org)



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## Nature and Science Events

### ***Slowing Polar and Glacial Ice Melt***

The Nature and Science Committee is sponsoring several upcoming events at the Town Center. Opening the season on June 1 at 7:30 pm will be a talk by Leslie Field on the work she has been doing for the past couple of years with the Ice911 project, which is designed to slow the melt of the polar and glacial ice. Results in the Tahoe area this winter have been promising, so it's beyond the theoretical stage. Ice911 is one of very few initiatives having the potential to cool the planet's temperature in the next decade or two and help avoid dangerous global warming tipping points.

### ***Petroleum (Rock Oil) - What is it and How is it Found?***

On July 7 at 7 pm, Paul Heiple, a petroleum exploration geologist, will present a simplified three-step view of how oil deposits are found and some of the techniques involved in drilling for oil. Some light will be shed on the current world oil situation, such as why does the Middle East have so much? Why are all oils not the same, and what affect do these differences have on the cost of extracting and refining oil?

### ***Star Party***

With the assistance of the Astronomical Society of the Peninsula, local families will have the opportunity to look through telescopes set up by the soccer field, and see the far reaches of the solar system and beyond on June 26 at 8 pm. In addition, astronomy activities and exhibits will be set up in the Buckeye activity room.

*Yvonne Tryce*

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## A Wonderful Setting for any Event

Rent space in the beautiful new Town Center for your next event! The Town offers rentals ideal for many types of events, such as birthday parties, other types of private parties, meetings, seminars and presentations from local businesses and non-profit groups.

The Community Hall and activity rooms are available for rental by Portola Valley residents on a first-come, first-served basis. Each of the rooms in the Community Hall building have been designed to be multi-functional to host a wide variety of activities.

For more information, please contact Cindy Rodas, Office Assistant, [crodas@portolavalley.net](mailto:crodas@portolavalley.net), or (650) 851-1700, ext. 200.

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## What's New in Parks and Recreation?

With a new Town Center featuring new classrooms and newly renovated fields, the Parks and Recreation Committee has been busy ensuring that these new facilities are put to good use. We have over a thousand users of our soccer and baseball fields, numerous classes, and many more activities that make use of our picnic and playground areas. And there's more to come. The Town Center tennis courts open in May including an all-sport court with both 10-foot and 8-foot high basketball hoops.

We have some fun programs on-going and others coming soon. There is a full suite of class programs now available at the Town Center including art, creative writing, dance, science, and self defense. There's even a quilting group that meets every month. You can find more information on all of these classes and programs on the Town web-site at [www.portolavalley.net](http://www.portolavalley.net).

The Town's athletic fields are the envy of many of our neighbors! Keeping the fields in top shape becomes more and more challenging as costs rise. The Town Council has asked the Parks and Recreation Committee to review the current athletic field user fees and return with a recommendation concerning modifying them. It has been several years since the fees were last reviewed, and the Town must ensure that the fees are appropriate in light of rising maintenance costs.

The annual Zots to Tots race will be held on June 6<sup>th</sup> prior to the Town Picnic. The finish line will be back at the Town Center now that it's open. We look forward to seeing you all out there whether you're running, biking or enjoying the walk through our beautiful Town.

*Jon Myers*

## Green Poster Gallery Night

On Earth Day, April 22<sup>nd</sup>, the Corte Madera 6<sup>th</sup> grade class went on a walking field trip to the Portola Valley Town Center. Students met with the Town's Sustainability Coordinator, Brandi de Garmeaux. Brandi obtained a grant from San Mateo County RecycleWorks to support a poster-making project that involves professionally printed posters of student work explaining the various green building features at the Portola Valley Town Center. From the denim insulation to the creek restoration, have you ever wondered what makes the new Town Center so green? Mark your calendars for Tuesday, June 2 from 6–7 pm and find out during the CMS 6<sup>th</sup> grade “Green Poster Gallery Night” at the Portola Valley Town Center.

Official unveiling of professionally printed, student-made posters highlighting the green building features of the



*Students walking to Town Center*

ing features of the Town Center will occur. A showcase of Animal Design Challenge dioramas made with plants and animals designed with hypothetical adaptations for Earth's various climatic regions will also be on display. Friends and family

welcome, volunteers needed. Contact 6<sup>th</sup> grade Science and Art Teacher, Trenea Joi, for more info and out how to get involved! [tjoi@pvpsd.net](mailto:tjoi@pvpsd.net).

## The PV Garden Club Is One Year Old!

During its first year, the 81 active members of the Portola Valley Garden Club have enjoyed making and renewing friendships, and sharing ideas and expertise on gardening. Our members range from Master Gardeners and professional landscape designers to complete novices. We are interested in keeping our oaks and wildflower meadows healthy, and creating gardens that co-exist successfully with our wild animal neighbors.



*Club members enjoying another member's garden*

Our goals include:

- Promoting civic beauty
- Stimulating an interest in plants and gardens
- Furthering horticultural knowledge specific to our area
- Sharing extra plants and produce
- Helping decorate the Town Center for the holidays
- Participating in Town planting days and other beautification projects.

If you want to learn more, come to our meetings! We meet every third Thursday at 10, usually in the Town Center's Buckeye Room. Sometimes we take a field trip to a member's garden or another place of interest. If you'd like to join, talk with the Chair or Membership Coordinator at a meeting, or go to [groups.yahoo.com](http://groups.yahoo.com) and request to join the PV Garden Club. Note that we have annual dues of \$25 to cover the costs of the Town's required liability insurance and occasional speaker honoraria.

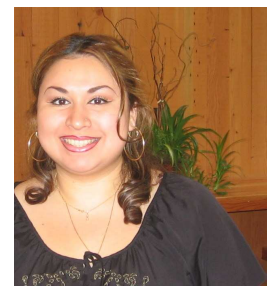
*Susan Adams and Pamela Dorrell*

## Welcome, Cindy

Hello, Portola Valley. My name is Cindy Rodas and I am the new Office Assistant at Town Hall. I am so very happy to join such a great staff and wonderful community. A native San Franciscan, I now call Redwood City home. I most recently served as an operations supervisor for Washington Mutual Bank. I ended my banking career in 2008 in search of new challenges and greater opportunities, which brought me to the extraordinary Town of Portola Valley!

I will be managing the rental of our Activity Rooms and the Community Hall in Town Center, which is a great place to hold any event from small meetings or gatherings to large banquets, birthday parties and even weddings! The Community Hall is also home to the Town's many classes and activities for children and adults. I will be working with the instructors to develop, schedule and implement programs each quarter to bring new and exciting activities for all. I look forward to meeting residents registering for classes or inquiring about classes or room rentals. I can be reached at [crodas@portolavalley.net](mailto:crodas@portolavalley.net) or (650) 851-1700 ext. 200.

When I am not working at Town Hall, I enjoy spending time with my family, watching movies and visiting new places. Portola Valley is an absolutely wonderful place to spend the majority of my day. I take pleasure in my new commute, rather than dreading my previous commute. Working at the *new* Town Center is a great *new* beginning for me.





## “Viajando en Espanol” Comes to Ormondale

On April 16th, Ormondale School sponsored a brand new event - “Viajando en Espanol” - a day filled with special activities designed to increase students’ global awareness through the exploration of Spanish-speaking countries around the world. Regular school lessons were suspended for the day so students could “visit” a selection of Spanish-speaking countries, sampling different aspects of each country’s unique culture, including art, literature, music, food, and games. Ormondale’s School Site Council sponsored this set of experiences designed to support the PVSD strategic plan which calls for creating global students who understand and value other cultures and perspectives.

With passports in hand, students got a great sense of daily life in the countries they visited. Hands-on activities were the order of the day with the children enthusiastically participating in a variety of experiences. Students became Argentinian gauchos, learning whether they really could lasso that steer out on the pampas. Some perfected their salsa dancing while others created spectacular malus, patterned

after the beautiful artwork of Panama’s Kuna Indians.

Students learned about the unique species of the Galapagos Islands and the delicate ecostructure of the Amazon basin. Everyone had the chance to sample a wide assortment of delicious culinary treats – many children experienced their first taste of plantains and got to try an assortment of cheeses not ordinarily found in the typical American child’s menu. The day concluded with a spirited performance by the Ballet Folklorico, sponsored by the Ormondale PTO.



*Argentina Lasso*

“Viajando en Espanol” was a rousing success and will continue next year with the goal of making sure each Ormondale student’s passport bears the stamp of every Spanish-speaking country by the end of third grade!

*Anne Campbell, Superintendent*

## Safe Routes to School

Safe Routes to School (SRTS) programs throughout the nation are being used to encourage more children to walk or bike safely to school. Four years ago, starting an SRTS program in Portola Valley was an opportunity to make walking and bicycling to school safer for children and increase the number of children who choose to walk, bike or even bus to school. On a broader level, it's healthy, helps ease traffic congestion near schools, improves air quality and it's economical.



Creating a partnership with the Town of Portola Valley has been the key to establishing a "designated" off-road safe route that links the schools (Ormondale & Corte Madera), with the new Town Center as well as with Ford Field. Establishing regular bike/ walk to school days (optional Wednesdays), a Bike Rodeo for 3<sup>rd</sup> grad-

ers and two yearly bike/walk/bus events has also helped increase the community’s awareness of the SRTS program in Portola Valley.

But MORE needs to be done, and more can be done! We live in one of the most beautiful places in the world; the weather is great and most live close to the

schools (if you don't, you can take the bus from various locations). Yet in a recent car counting exercise, there were approximately 237 cars dropping kids off at Corte Madera School, there are only 375 kids in the school! So what can you do?

### What small change can you make?

Small steps by each family can make a huge difference! Here are some great ideas:

- Meet a friend and walk/bike or bus to school (orange dots now on bus stops)
- Take the bus to the library or to baseball practice
- Have one pick up location, instead of two
- Make a challenge for your grade to see what grade can have the most participation

Removing cars from the street is the easiest and fastest way to make a direct impact on our community’s carbon footprint. Fewer cars mean safer streets! To see the new SRTS map, the SamTrans bus route, or to help with promoting SRTS, visit [www.portolavalley.net](http://www.portolavalley.net) or contact Shelly Sweeney at [sbsthrock@aol.com](mailto:sbsthrock@aol.com)

*Shelly Sweeney*

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## Walking in Portola Valley

All of us have saved fortunes on personal trainers, therapists and medications. I certainly would have been institutionalized by now. One of my paradigms for the hike has always been to “bitch” on the way up. In hard times, I have frothed at the mouth and cursed and strained with everyone weighing in, and when we get to the top, I have dropped the baggage. I even go through the motions of putting down the heavy, heavy load and descend clear headed, light and renewed.

As we start the hike, we decide if we have enough time to “summit.” For many of us it is meaningful to summit. The higher I climb, the clearer I see. I love looking up in the course of a day when I am in Palo Alto or along 280 and smiling when I witness that I stood on top of the mountain that very morning.

When the kids were small and there was a move to exclude the Windy Hill climb from the 8<sup>th</sup> grade graduation activities, I protested loudly and advocated for the return of this tradition and ceremony. The act of summiting for me and for my children was important; it was like looking back at your childhood, how far you have come. For my kids, once you could summit Windy Hill you had reached an important point in life. Now my son Ry has a bluegrass band called the Windy Hill String Band.

The very elemental, biologic joie de vivre of starting off every morning with my pup and muddy, worn Merrills shapes my entire life. I walk therefore I am. During really hard times of my life—divorce, four children, Stephen dying, I could open myself to the nourishment of the nature around me, the hawks, wild turkeys, Lazuli buntings in the grove near the top, the heart tree, the pungent chaparral in summer, and the ‘dusting of snow’ of the Coyote bush in winter. I love to be above the low clouds in sparkling sunlight looking down on the white blanket of fog covering the Peninsula. I am comforted.

I love the seasonal treasures, Toyon, Houndstongue, lizards, negotiating the ruts in a torrential rain. I am contemplative and spiritual in these moments...and then the sound of Pat howling like a coyote to indicate that she is coming up behind us or Ruth’s wonderful laugh, Angela’s British “Bloody Hell” as she slips and slides in the mud, Sue’s wide-eyed fear of dog altercations, and all manner of girlfriends cackling brings me back to a place of love, friendship and deep appreciation for my life. I am happy.

I looked for a specific quote in one of my Feng Shui books as I prepared to write this story and instead I came across a different line, “This is the place I have always been looking for.” I wrote it down in my journal as it was meaningful to me in that moment. I then picked up the novel I was reading, turned to chapter two and noted the first line of the chapter, “This is the place I have always been looking for.” I startled, somewhat incredulous and then smiled. This is my life, the place I have always been looking for. Walking in Portola Valley.

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## Recommendations for Portola Valley Green Building Rating System

The Town conducted Public Workshops on Sustainable Building in Portola Valley on February 28<sup>th</sup> and March 15<sup>th</sup>. The purpose of the workshops was to elicit feedback on the green building rating system that the Town is considering for new construction and major remodels. Town staff also presented potential strategies for addressing the sustainability of existing homes. Public participation and input is very valuable as we move forward to educate the community and actively take measures to reduce our carbon footprint and promote sustainability.

The Town wants to encourage a new approach to thinking about building and use of space in homes. It’s not about “green” points or score, but it is about homes and rebuilding that result in site improvements and structures that are better for the environment and healthier for the occupants based on careful consideration of specific factors:

- Energy Efficiency
- Resource Conservation
- Indoor and Outdoor Air Quality
- Water Conservation
- Community Quality

As we move forward with final recommendations to the Town Council for a green building point rating system, we are transitioning from using the San Mateo Green Building Checklist to the Build it Green (BIG) Checklists for New Homes and Existing Homes. While we work towards phasing in the BIG Checklist program, we have begun requesting that the BIG Checklist voluntarily accompany all Architectural & Site Control Commission (ASCC) applications received as of April 1, 2009.

## New Town Website

The Town of Portola Valley is pleased to present its newly redesigned Town website. Along with a clean new appearance, our new website offers improved navigation and new features, such as:

- The latest information on the Town's on-going development of a more sustainable community including links to information and resources for sustainable living for residents
- An in-depth Town Calendar that allows users to search by category
- A new section for Town Center classes and online registration
- A page for each committee
- Additional ordinances and regulations from Building and Planning
- Details for each field and rental facility
- A sophisticated Content Management System

If you haven't already, we encourage you to visit our new website, as it was designed with YOU, the end user in mind. Please bookmark the site for ongoing reference, as we will be continuing to develop and include new information and features to benefit our Portola Valley community. We look forward to hearing from you!

## Piecing it Together

The Town of Portola Valley now has several opportunities on a drop-in or regular basis for people to knit, sew, quilt, chat and create. Whether you wish to learn a new craft, find the inspiration to start a new project or simply need the impetus to continue/complete an ongoing one, your clubs are now meeting! Depending on the level of interest, we may be working on group projects together later in the year, so perhaps come along with a suggestion or two? Essentially, these are flexible, fluid and sociable

community groups which are open to all.

Those who knit, crochet or needlepoint meet in the Buckeye Room at the new Community Hall every Tuesday between 12:30 and 3 pm. Those interested in any of the 'Fiber Arts' of quilting, embroidery, felting, etc. meet, again, in the Buckeye Room between 12:30 and 3 pm on the fourth Thursday of every month. We look forward to seeing you!

*Jane Wilson*

## The Sequoias • Spring News

During the wild weather of these past winter months, residents at The Sequoias have been looking forward to spring. First signs of this happening are the arrays of camellias, (some showing flowers soon after Christmas) planted next to the buildings, in all shades and shapes. Then the azaleas bloom, erratically, with large and small blossoms, underneath the camellias and rhododendrons. On the hillsides, the jonquils and narcissus appear, as well as those which thrive on our patios. And in April, the tulips made wonderful displays in a variety of colors. There is a spectacular white dogwood on the edge of one patio, as well as many dwarf maples, now leafing into spring.

The last months have been busy with teams working on the Re-accreditation process, involving staff and residents. Lots of work involved, but it's all for our benefit. The cutting garden, under Anne Braham's green thumb, received a generous gift from the families of Phillis and Eric Stanford, who lived for over twenty years in Portola Valley before moving to the Sequoias. Phillis was renowned for her beautiful flower arrangements, while Eric became a vital member of the finance committee. Their gift, which was celebrated in Charlotte's Garden on March 10th, will establish an endowment for the garden as well as help with its maintenance in perpetuity.

We have all been trying to understand what is needed in each apartment to make sure that our television sets will become digital, or already are. The new array of channels becomes less challenging when we know we can still easily find programs on our favorite PBS sites. We have been enjoying a series of programs shown in Hanson Hall as well as in our homes from The Teaching Company. Life at The Sequoias is a never-ending series of great programs, music and entertainment, plus the delight of new friends as they become residents here. Come join us in the swimming pool!

*Trish Hooper*

## Green Speaker Series 2009

The Town of Portola Valley is pleased to announce the launch of our Green Speaker Series: Local Heroes on Local Issues. This series will provide you with the tools and resources you need to make your home more efficient, to conserve resources and to make sustainable choices. We found local Bay Area talent who will address issues relevant to Portola Valley. Check the Town website [www.portolavalley.net](http://www.portolavalley.net) for more information.

**Every Fourth Tuesday**, April to September 2009, 7 pm. - 9 pm.

*April 28 - **Energy Efficiency***: “Energy-Saving Fixes to Include When Remodeling” with Suzanne Emerson, and “There is Always Room for Improvement - Greening a 1910 House with a 2005 Addition” with Paul Welschmeyer

*May 26 - **Green Building/Deconstruction***: “Green Building: Why it is Better for You, Your Wallet and the Planet” with David Edwards, PhD. and “Deconstruction and Building Materials Salvage” with Ted Reiff

*June 23 - **Green Interior Design***: “Green Building Comes Inside - Decision Making for Interiors” with Kirsten Flynn

*July 28 - **Renewable Energy***: “Everything You Always Wanted to Know About Solar Energy But Were Afraid to Ask” with Craig Rush

*August 25 - **Water Conservation***: “Rainwater Harvesting and Closed-Loop Landscape Design” with Bobby Markowitz and “Landscape Irrigation Efficiency” with Chip Krug

*September 22 - **Food & Climate Change***: “Food & Climate Change” with Chef Laura Stec

For more information or to RSVP, please contact Brandi de Garneau at 650.851.1700 ext. 222

## Save the Dates

**Town Picnic, Saturday, June 6**

**Blues & BBQ, Sunday, September 13**

Volunteers are needed for planning and executing both events. It's a great way to have fun and meet your neighbors. For more information or to volunteer, please contact Michael Bray, [michael@braycentral.com](mailto:michael@braycentral.com).



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