



## *The MARA News*

Early 2006 Edition

Montecito Area Residents' Association

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<http://users.cwnet.com/ourfence/>

## Whether You'd Like to Join MARA or Simply Renew Your Membership, Now's the Time

Annual memberships expired December 31. To become a new MARA member or renew your existing membership, just send us your name, address, telephone number (along with your e-mail address if you wish), and a check payable to "Montecito Area Residents' Association" c/o MARA, P.O. Box 150266, San Rafael, CA 94915-0266. Membership is \$10 per person (\$5 for seniors).

MARA welcomes not only residents, but also the retail, commercial, and other organizations in our neighborhood, and invites them to be members as well.

Come to the annual meeting in mid-May and you can participate in the election of officers, voice your concerns, and offer your support and ideas.

You can also e-mail us at either [mara@cwnet.com](mailto:mara@cwnet.com) or [montecito.residents@gmail.com](mailto:montecito.residents@gmail.com), or visit us online at <http://users.cwnet.com/ourfence/>.

## (Exceptionally) Good Neighbors



This issue of *The MARA News* is dedicated to all the community-minded residents who quietly go about making our neighborhood a great place to live—from the good man who voluntarily tends the Happy Valley Garden at Mission and Union, to those who regularly weed City-owned plots, to the mom who picks up trash when she and her daughter go for a walk. Thanks also to the members who attend meetings to keep an eye on new construction and City projects. And to the many who, in addition to maintaining their own yards, gladly help out a neighbor too.

## Tivoli Festival Raises Funds for Katrina Victims

by Kay Corlett

Hans Christian Andersen's 200th birthday was celebrated at Aldersly's 59th Annual Tivoli Festival this year. As usual, Montecito neighbors, together with visitors from other parts of Marin, San Francisco, and the East Bay, came to enjoy a lovely day. We feasted on Danish open-face sandwiches—*abel skeevers*—and there were myriad things to buy, from white-elephant items and books to homemade cakes, breads, and cookies.

Frank Jacobsen, a Lutheran minister who now lives at Aldersly with his wife Frances, was the chairman of this year's festival. The Jacobsens have been associated with the community for many years, and Frank's kindly yet energetic management made the whole affair run smoothly.

As Pastor Jacobsen recalls, Aldersly was founded in 1921 by the Danish people in California to be a place of retirement for men and women of Danish heritage. In those days there was no Social Security; if one could no longer work and had no family, life was bleak. The Danes all contributed what they could to purchase and maintain a farm which was then on the outskirts of San Rafael. Each year, they had a reunion, using it as a fundraiser to help cover the costs of Aldersly's operation. The annual festival is called *Tivoli* after the famous amusement park in Copenhagen, Denmark. Today, Aldersly is licensed by the state and welcomes people of all nationalities.

In view of the damage suffered by people of the Gulf States as a result of Hurricane Katrina, Aldersly's Residents' Club decided to dedicate Tivoli proceeds to helping the hurricane victims. That amount was matched by Aldersly administration, and employees contributed a handsome sum also. As a result, \$4,500 was donated to the Red Cross for this purpose.

## The Dawgs Can Be Proud

In October 2005, approximately 200 students and 110 supportive adults turned out for San Rafael High's Dawg Pride Day (on the citywide Make a Difference Day) to spruce up the school grounds. These volunteer crews weeded flower beds, trimmed bushes, restored the old garden area, moved equipment into the new weight room, did baseball-field maintenance, and cleaned up the entire campus and along Third Street.

## New Development Planned for 524 Mission

When Montecito Area residents viewed the first plans submitted by West Bay Builders for a development at the corner of Mission Avenue and Irwin Street, they felt the project was too massive, and not in keeping with other homes in the area. They expressed their concerns to the City and the builder.

The builder was very cooperative, and immediately redesigned the project to reduce its density by 25%. These 15 townhomes (condominiums) will form a gateway to the area and will be an asset to the neighborhood. They will resemble old-fashioned row houses, where each condo is a "dirt to sky" vertical dwelling unit attached to the adjoining unit(s) at the sides. The roof lines will resemble those of Victorian homes in the area. Parking will be beneath each unit, accessed from an interior commons.

Current tenants have agreed to and will receive monetary and other assistance to relocate.

## SRHS Construction Progresses

San Rafael High School's Administration Building, which houses its new theater, is finished, with full occupancy expected by the spring semester. The science building, art facility, library, gymnasiums, and swimming-pool areas are also completed.

Unfortunately, however, the winter storms flooded one of the gym floors, making it unusable for the time being, until repairs can be made.

### MARA Monitors Construction Spending

Meanwhile, MARA members continue to attend the SRHS Site Committee meetings to monitor the progress of the bond-fund construction.

### SRHS Emergency Contact

Calls about noise and emergencies regarding the high school may be made to 492-3233, an ↗

after-hours message line. This and other information is located at the District Web site, [www.srhc.org](http://www.srhc.org), under the "Emergency Contact" link, and at the SRHS Web site, [www.sanrafael.srhc.org](http://www.sanrafael.srhc.org).

## Construction Alerts

If you see new construction occurring in your area and you're concerned, don't assume the builder has obtained the necessary permits from the City. Call the Building Department at 485-3365 and make sure.

## Area Business News

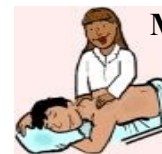
**Whole Foods** opened its expanded parking lot on Mary Street and has submitted plans to the City for the expansion of its kitchens.



**Elephant Pharmacy** opened in December at 909 Grand Avenue.



Two service stations at Third and Grand are now under new signs. Gawfco became **Valero** and Grand became **Chevron**.



**Massage Envy** opened up at 219 Montecito Plaza (next to Redwood Credit Union on Third). It has nine rooms and a staff of 16, so you can drop in and treat yourself to a therapeutic massage between shopping stops.

**Marin RC Cars** moved from San Anselmo to 115 Third Street in May 2005. It sells remote-controlled cars, boats, planes, and helicopters. Test drives can be made on either of two tracks, one indoors, one outdoors.



**Marin Services for Men** (485-6736) is a community-based, group-oriented residential setting supporting clean and sober living guided by the 12-step model. It has an exercise room and offers recreational activities, vocational services, and other supportive assistance to up to 16 men. Director Lindsay Ferguson told MARA they will be employed and held to very high standards, to help them succeed with the program. He also said there will be a supervisor at the home 24 hours a day.



## United Front

MARA commends **United Markets** for over 50 years of community support and for continually seeking new ways to assist schools and many other beneficial organizations in Marin. Its Community Card program alone has yielded over \$200,000 in donations to local schools.

# Heirloom Mystery Roses Flourish in the 'Hood

by Jackie Schmidt

As you are walking around the neighborhood, or if you come across an old garden, take a good look at the roses. Maybe you'll see some that are particularly beautiful or different. Sometimes old roses don't even look like what we usually think of as roses.

In fact, older roses can be gigantic bushes, or 30- to 40-foot-high climbers clambering up trees or covering a freestanding garage. Their blooms differ from modern hybrid tea roses—old roses can be tiny or like grandmother's "cabbage roses," or elegantly nod downward on their stems, a lovely sight from below. They tend to come in soft pinks, buffs, yellows, and creams, even a few of the darker magentas. They have a grace and elegance that goes missing in some of their brighter-colored modern cousins.

What's fun is finding these beauties, many of which are the survivors of years of little or no care—by definition, these roses don't need pampering, spraying, or constant pruning. Some are "mystery roses" whose identity has been lost over time, their current owner knowing nothing of their ancestry.

Over the past 30 years a widespread popular movement has sprung up, to save these old roses from extinction.

Because our neighborhood is the second oldest in San Rafael, with houses built here in the +1880s, the possibility exists that you may discover one of these "mystery" roses yourself.

I have a number of these roses in my garden on Grand Avenue. Many are tea roses, which thrive in our Mediterranean climate.

One day, a visiting old-rose expert was fascinated by two of my tearose bushes. One displays soft pink blooms; the other, buff or soft yellow ones touched with pink, depending on the weather. Both bushes are huge, over 10 feet by 15 feet, and were planted when the house was new in 1905. The expert tried to identify them but couldn't. She took cuttings in hopes of propagating them and putting them back into commerce.

"Grand Avenue Giant" can be seen at [www.rosefog.us](http://www.rosefog.us), and "Schmidt's Buff Tea" will be available soon from Vintage Gardens in Sebastopol.

Look around—you may have antique roses in *your* garden! For more information about heirloom roses, go to [www.heritagerosesgroup.org](http://www.heritagerosesgroup.org) or ↗



[www.heritagerosesfoundation.org](http://www.heritagerosesfoundation.org), two organizations dedicated to saving and sharing these lovely old beauties.

## Committee Meets with Traffic Engineer

MARA's Traffic Committee met with City Traffic Engineer Nader Mansourian to discuss traffic problems in the Montecito Area. Topics included:

**Mission Avenue and Irwin Street**—Impact of the construction to begin later this year on 15 townhouses.

**Mission Avenue and Hetherton Street**—Requested City to contact Caltrans re bottleneck during commute hours which blocks both westbound traffic on Mission and traffic turning from Grand onto Mission.

**Third Avenue and Union Street**—Ongoing traffic congestion may be alleviated somewhat when Trader Joe's and Whole Foods open their new stores in Novato. Trader Joe's expects to open in late January, while Whole Foods is still in the process of getting permits from the City of Novato.

**Mission Avenue at San Rafael High School**—Due to construction, and sandbags to prevent more flood damage, pedestrians must walk in the street in peril of overzealous drivers rounding the outside curve near the gym. Also, a construction fence was struck on at least two past occasions when drivers were unable to negotiate the inside curve. And event attendees often park illegally on the unconcreted sidewalk areas.

## Decision re Yearly Yard Sale

- People in the neighborhood said they wanted another neighborhood yard sale in 2005, as this has typically been a very successful event.
- Accordingly, MARA e-mailed people, made numerous phone calls, labored to set a date that would not conflict with other public events, placed paid ads in the *Marin IJ*, and got the *IJ* to mention the event on its "Across Marin" page.
- MARA's cost: Approximately \$125
- Response:

- Result: MARA will not sponsor the event in 2006.

# SRHS Update

Area residents Matt Guthrie and Scott Kaplan met with San Rafael High principal Judy Colton in December 2005 to discuss the formation of a liaison committee to address three key issues:

- Noise, lights, and parking at and around the school
- Pedestrian safety along the Mission Avenue perimeter
- Use of school facilities by non-SRHS groups

## Noise, Lights, and Parking

MARA has had many complaints of excessive noise at the school (misuse of the loudspeaker system, starter pistols firing off at 6 a.m. for swim teams, loud buzzers on for hours at a time, the roar of cooling-unit fans on a gym roof), lights left on unnecessarily at night, debris left by event attendees, and vehicles parked on playground blacktop near the tennis courts behind the gym—both a danger to students and damaging to pavement not rated for vehicle weight.

## Pedestrian Safety—Mission Avenue Perimeter

It is well known that students and others who use the unpaved sidewalk along SRHS's Mission Avenue boundary are often at risk. The danger zone extends from the end of the new concrete sidewalk in front of the gym all the way up the hill to Embarcadero.

To avoid parked vehicles in their path, pedestrians usually venture out into the roadway—a stretch of perimeter that includes a blind curve at the Belle Avenue–Belle Court–Mission intersection, and a T-intersection at Jewell where Mission winds uphill. ➤

For many years MARA has requested a concrete sidewalk there. As a stopgap, various neighbors and school administrators have asked the San Rafael Police Department to ticket those who park their vehicles there. Regardless, the violations continue and no sidewalk installation is scheduled.

## Use of School Facilities by Visiting Groups

Use of SRHS's facilities by outside groups, including other schools, appears to be on the increase. Whereas some of this use is inevitable, MARA would like to see it monitored and controlled such that traffic safety is observed and potential negative impacts on the neighborhood reduced.

In the past, visiting groups have been among the worst offenders in terms of noise, trash, and illegal parking. The cost of wear and tear on the fields and other facilities comes out of SRHS's school budget or is simply "absorbed" by the students, who get to use deteriorated school facilities or have fewer resources available for themselves.

It is MARA's recommendation that non-SRHS groups be allowed to use the facilities only under a standardized contract that sets terms regarding fees, hours, lights, noise, parking, cleanup, and concession sales. User fees should reflect the true cost to SRHS, including overhead for administrative oversight.



TO COMMENT or be involved, please write or e-mail MARA (see contact information on page one).

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**SUPPORT YOUR NEIGHBORHOOD ASSOCIATION . . . JOIN NOW!**