



The Saratogian

Fall 2011

Acts of Preservation

A number of native Saratoga bird species, such as the bluebird, tree swallow, and white breasted nuthatch, build their nests in hollows that develop in older trees when branches break off or woodpeckers drill holes. The populations of many of the cavity nesting birds that are native to this area have declined due to reductions in available nesting space. Consequently, the Santa Clara Valley Audubon Society has been helping to preserve nesting space for these local birds through its Cavity Nesters Recovery Program. Volunteers in the program place and monitor nesting boxes especially made for cavity nesting birds.



Bluebird eggs in Fremont Older Open Space Preserve

This year, the City's Parks and Recreation Commission joined forces with the Santa Clara Valley Audubon Society to support the efforts of the Cavity Nesters Recovery Program and help Saratoga's cavity nesting birds find homes in the community. Together, the Parks and Recreation Commission and Santa Clara Valley Audubon Society placed nesting boxes in Saratoga parks and open spaces. The nesting boxes were used by a number of local cavity-nesting birds that may not have otherwise found nesting sites. The Parks and Recreation Commission hopes to expand the program for the 2012 nesting season. Those interested in installing and monitoring nest boxes, should contact the Santa Clara Valley Audubon Society at programs@scvas.org.

To learn more about acts of preservation in Saratoga, read the article below on the El Quito Neighborhood tree planting and the articles about the City's General Obligation Bond refunding and the sign ordinance on page two.

El Quito Neighborhood Tree Planting

In March 2011, the El Quito neighborhood planted more than 100 trees. Over 150 volunteers and residents attended neighborhood-wide tree planting events to preserve the El Quito neighborhood's urban forest and cultivate a greener community. With funding from the El Quito Lighting and Landscaping Assessment District, every homeowner in the district was offered 2 free 15-gallon street trees. The tree planting events were organized by the El Quito Neighborhood Association with support from the City of Saratoga and Our City Forest.



El Quito Neighborhood Tree Planting

City Saves Millions in Taxpayer Dollars

In 2001, the City of Saratoga issued \$15,000,000 of voter-approved General Obligation (GO) Bonds to improve, renovate, and expand the Saratoga Library. The GO Bonds are tax-exempt debt obligations repaid through property taxes collected in the City. The City administers the payments on the bond debt, but does not receive revenue or expend any City funds for this obligation.

The 30 year GO Bonds were issued at competitive interest rates in 2001 (ranging between 5 - 6%); however, interest rates have dropped significantly since then. In late 2010, the City Council directed staff to begin the process of reissuing the City's Bond to take advantage of historically low interest rates. In addition to low interest rates, the City's AAA bond rating - the highest available - was expected to attract competitive rates.

In June 2011, the refunding sale of the City of Saratoga's General Obligation (GO) bonds was finalized. The lowest bid will save Saratoga property taxpayers approximately \$2.67 million over the next 20 years.



Sign Ordinance Update

This spring, the City of Saratoga began the process to update the City's sign regulations. The goal of the update is to preserve the character of the City and conform to the First Amendment of the U.S. Constitution. While sign regulations must be "content neutral", the updated sign ordinance may affect sign size, design, placement, lighting, and materials.



Samples of signs in Saratoga

To ensure the updated sign regulations resonate with the community, the City has been encouraging the public to assist in drafting the new rules by providing input to the Community Development Department. In May, City staff conducted a survey to get a sense for how the community feels about signs that are currently regulated. Staff also met with Chamber of Commerce members to better understand the viewpoint of local business owners in regards to signage. Additionally, the City hosted a workshop in June and study session in July to provide the public with opportunities to learn about and weigh in on the sign ordinance update. Public hearings are scheduled for August and September for those interested in getting involved.

More information can be found online at www.saratoga.ca.us or by contacting Cynthia McCormick at cmccormick@saratoga.ca.us.

Tips from the Traffic Safety Commission

The Traffic Safety Commission is a 7-member Commission that investigates, reviews, and analyzes traffic safety issues raised by the community and local public safety agencies. Part of the Commission's mission is to help increase the safety of Saratoga's streets by educating the public. Below are some tips from the Traffic Safety Commission to help you this fall.

••*Share the Road with Bicyclists*•• Drivers that enter the bicycle lane to pass other vehicles can be ticketed. Drivers commonly do this to pass vehicles that are waiting to make a left turn or to bypass stopped or slow moving traffic before making a right turn. Entering the bicycle lane to pass other vehicles obstructs bicycle traffic and can be dangerous.

••*Walk or Bike to School*•• The City frequently receives complaints about congestion around schools. Parents can help relieve congestion during school drop off and pick up hours by walking or biking with their children to and from school.



Students walking home after school

City Receives Distinguished Financial Reporting and Budget Awards

The Government Finance Officers Association of the United States and Canada (GFOA) awarded the City of Saratoga a Certificate of Achievement for Excellence for the City's 2009/10 Comprehensive Annual Financial Report and the 2010/11 Operating and Capital Budget. This is the 17th consecutive year that GFOA has recognized Saratoga's Comprehensive Annual Financial Report. These awards are the highest form of recognition in the area of governmental accounting and financial reporting; attaining these awards represents a significant accomplishment by a government and its management.

Welcome County Fire Chief Ken Kehmna!

In May 2011, the Santa Clara County Board of Supervisors announced the appointment of Ken Kehmna as Chief of the Santa Clara County Fire Department. Chief Kehmna began his career as a firefighter with the City of Campbell in 1987. In 1993, County Fire assumed responsibility for providing fire services to Campbell, bringing Chief Kehmna and his colleagues from Campbell into the Santa Clara County Fire Department. In 2007, Chief Kehmna was appointed as Deputy Chief of Operations and then became the Deputy Chief of Training in 2009.

The Santa Clara County Fire Department is a California Fire Protection District serving Santa Clara County and the communities of Campbell, Cupertino, Los Altos, Los Altos Hills, Los Gatos, Monte Sereno, Morgan Hill, and Saratoga. County Fire functions as a regional emergency services delivery system, partnering with other local jurisdictions to provide a high level of service and to supplement the services of smaller communities.



Fire Chief Ken Kehmna

Do You Read *The Saratogan*?

If you read *The Saratogan*, let us know and you could win a \$50 gift certificate from a Saratoga business of your choice! Just call (408) 868-1296, visit www.saratoga.ca.us/readership, or email saratogan@saratoga.ca.us by September 6, 2011 to let us know you read *The Saratogan* and you'll be entered into a free drawing. The winner will be announced at the September 7, 2011 City Council meeting - you do not need to be present to win.



Personal disaster supply kit

Personal Emergency Preparedness

Learn the basics of personal emergency preparedness this fall! The Santa Clara County Fire Department is offering free courses throughout the West Valley that will teach participants the basics of preparing for a disaster. Learn how to be on your own for several days after the next large emergency, build a disaster supply kit, treat life threatening conditions, prevent fires, use fire extinguishers, and deal with hazardous materials. For more information about personal emergency preparedness classes, including a schedule of upcoming sessions, call (408) 341-4422 or email stephanie.morrison@cnt.sccgov.org.

Garbage & Recycling Essentials

Need a refresher on the basics of waste management in Saratoga? Below are some tips to help you out.

- Garbage bins can be placed at the curbside after 12:00 p.m. on the day before your garbage collection day.
- Bins must be removed from the curbside by 12:00 p.m. on the day after your garbage collection day.
- At all other times, garbage, recycling, and yard waste containers may not be within public view. This means containers may not be stored in the front or side yard and need to be fully screened from public view by a fence, wall, landscaping, or some other structure.
- California law prohibits a number of household items from being disposed of in the garbage, such as batteries, electronic waste, fluorescent tubes, and thermostats. West Valley Collection & Recycling will accept many of these items at its drop off center. Call (408) 283-9250 for more information.
- Recycle plastic bags in your curbside recycling bin by bundling them together in a single plastic bag. Visit www.westvalleyrecycles.com/serviceareas/ for more recycling tips.
- Reduce waste through backyard composting and turn your food waste into rich soil. For information or to sign up for a composting workshop, visit www.reducewaste.org.



To learn more about *The Saratogan*, make comments, or suggest story ideas, contact Crystal Morrow with the Saratoga City Manager's Office at cmorrow@saratoga.ca.us or (408) 868-1275. You can also find *The Saratogan* online and sign up for email alerts at www.saratoga.ca.us/saratogan.