



Sherman Oaks Neighborhood Association

Sherman Oaks Neighborhood Association is a volunteer group of residents working to make our neighborhood a better place to live, work and play. Newsletter funds are supplemented by a Community Action & Pride Grant from the City of San Jose.

Issue 121 of your local neighborhood newsletter.

Notes From the President

I want to start this year of my presidency off by thanking the board members and associates who have been working hard and who make being a president much, much easier. First up is outgoing President Michael LaRocca who has been a driving force; organizing meetings, making contacts, covering all the bases. Truth be told, no matter what our titles are, Michael is a lynchpin for us and can't be thanked enough. Marlene acts not only as our Treasurer, but is also heavily involved in trying to move the Bascom Library/Community Center from an empty building to a site we can all use. Incoming Secretary Layne has been helping Patrick Solomon review and update our website this year. Sheila has coordinated newsletter delivery while Jussi and Lisa cover multiple bases from organizing recycling drives to delivering newsletters. Outgoing Secretary Steve has been involved in covering issues at San Jose City College and the Bascom site. By sharing the workload we can get many things done. There's always room, however, for more volunteers. Again, thanks to all.

SONA will be on a serious campaign this year to add you to our list of online members for several reasons. First of all, it's expensive to deliver newsletters and our grant funding for this has been drying up. Second, it's the right thing to do. We need to reduce the amount of paper we use and become a leaner, greener community. Third, we need to expand our ability to contact each other and stay in touch. The recent McDonalds shooting and school lockdowns showed us how vulnerable we are when we can't communicate with each other. Because our newsletter is delivered monthly, we miss sending you vital information about your neighborhood. We also miss the general "chat" that makes life interesting and fun. Who's having a garage sale, who needs a gardener or plumber, who's looking for a babysitter, who's having a block party, who's selling their home? Online forums will allow us to build these neighbor to neighbor ties. At no point will your information be given out or sold to anybody, at no point will your info be published.

Based on your input, we are getting ready for a year with family game nights, pot lucks, block parties and evenings in the park. Our meetings will continue to have issues of interest to all. We look forward to a year of building neighbor to neighbor relationships, looking after our long term residents and welcoming new ones. We look forward to working with you.

See you at the meetings.....Randi

General Meeting

May 12, 2011

6:30PM

- ❖ **Coffee and Cookies**
- ❖ **Come Meet Your Neighbors and Let Us Know What's Happening in Your Part of the Neighborhood.**

7:00PM

- ❖ **Welcome**
- ❖ **Staff Reports**
- ❖ **Announcements**

7:15PM

- ❖ **San Jose Police Department**

7:30PM

- ❖ **Master Gardeners Presentation**
- ❖ **Programs, services and your questions answered. See page 2 for more details.**

7:50PM

- ❖ **Door Prize Drawings**

8:00PM

- ❖ **Adjournment**

Notes and News

PayPal is available on SONA's website! You can pay your yearly dues with just a few clicks, make donations and contribute to SONA's success. We simply cannot afford to mail out reminders to people, so we are hoping that you will use the PayPal option on the website's front page and make your contribution count. This is a secure and easy way to pay your dues each year and you can also opt to have your dues deducted every year from now on. What a great way to support your neighborhood from the comfort of your own home. **The SONA website is located at <http://www.sona-sj.com/>**

Our Master Gardeners presentation is a great time for anybody to bring general or specific questions about what goes on in your yard to an expert. The Santa Clara County Master Gardener program trains volunteers in all aspects of gardening. From designing a landscape to planting a vegetable garden, choosing trees, developing a backyard habitat or just trying to figure out what's eating your plants, these are the experts to call on and we'll have one available at our next meeting. Master Gardeners go through an extensive educational and training process and graduate after they complete a service project. They work to establish gardens in schools and nursing homes, conduct corporate outreach, run demonstration gardens and operate seasonal plant sales among other things. Master Gardeners operate a free hotline and can help you identify pests, choose a landscaper or steer you towards that perfect pepper plant. Learn more about the program or learn more about what's going on in your own backyard by attending our next meeting.

Friends of Bascom Library and Community Center are still working hard to identify alternatives that will allow our local site to be opened. Recent budget discussions still show the local site as being closed and the recent message from the Mayor indicates that this could be a long term "solution" to assisting in our city's budget crisis. So, while you are still expected to continue paying the bills, unless something changes, there will be no attempt made to open any of the facility. The Friends group meets the first Saturday of each month. You can find a schedule of meetings on our website, contact Marlene or join the Friends of Bascom Facebook group. Strategies are being developed and there are committees working on different components. A recent McClatchy News article (April 19, 2011) highlighted the Bascom Library site and the Friends of Bascom in an article addressing the national impact of reducing library funding. Other local facilities have remained open and new sites have been opened due largely to the impact of local residents making demands. If this is important to you, find out more on our website or attend the next meeting on Saturday May 7th at 10:30am in the Community Room at the Rose Garden Branch Library.

SONA is wondering if there are enough people out in the 'hood with produce to generate a produce exchange or produce give away. Do you have fruit trees that produce more than you need or want? Want to swap or take advantage of somebody else's extras? Who winds up with a load of zucchini, tomatoes or other produce during the summer? If you are interested, contact a board member.

Spring cleaning often means a lot of yard waste out on the street. We all have those times when we generate a lot of extra for trash day, but just because the rainy season is (hopefully) coming to an end, that doesn't mean you should ignore where exactly you place the materials. Make sure that you keep the gutter portion of the street clear. Even if it's not raining, neighbors are washing cars, testing new sprinkler systems and that often means water running down the street. Yard waste should not be swept along into the drainage system.

The neighborhoods with "rolled" or soft curbs have a request: Keep the cars and trucks off of the curb and sidewalk areas. For some reason, people think that those soft curbs are there to help keep cars off the streets. Cars belong on the streets, not blocking sidewalks and making it difficult for pedestrians, especially those with children or those who are disabled, to get through the neighborhood. Please regard these curbs just the same as a standard curb and gutter and keep all wheels in the street. If you don't pull up onto the sidewalk by jumping a curb, you shouldn't. If you have gardeners or contractors, remind them as well because it has created a safety issue along some of our blocks. We don't want pedestrians in the street.

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SONA's newsletter is published monthly and distributed to 1500 residences. All ad copy is due by the 15th of each month. Newsletter editor is Randi Kinman. Our all-volunteer group welcomes your participation. Feel free to contact any of us with ideas or questions.

San Jose Police Activity Mayor's Gang Task Force

Our thanks to Lt. Michael Knox and members of the Mayors Gang Task Force for coming to our April 2011 meeting. The recent murder at the McDonalds on Bascom at Fruitdale, the subsequent school lockdown and other issues were discussed at length.

While schools were placed on lockdown status, nearby residents were not informed of the situation and had no idea that SJPD was looking for suspects. Routing of traffic during this incident and during other accidents or crimes was thoroughly discussed. Because we are adjacent to busy streets and the county hospital, SONA residents want to work with SJPD to ensure future incidents are handled with care regarding the "downstream" affects.

The ongoing problems for creek side residents were brought up and residents were able to speak to SJPD after the meeting. Residents continue to be stymied by the multiple jurisdictions (SJ Water Company along the creek, SJPD on the street) and the ongoing criminal activity without ongoing follow up by authorities.

Some residents reported an increase in burglaries or suspicious activity in their area, but the statistics do not reflect this trend. This means SONA residents must report all suspicious activity and crime. This is the only way SJPD will know there is a problem. Reporting people who are acting suspicious could help them identify an emerging pattern that will trigger an increase in patrols. Reporting all crimes (even if you aren't filing an insurance claim) also triggers the process of identifying a need for more police presence. When in doubt or when it's not a crime in progress or life threatening, call 311.

The shooting also triggered extra activity at Del Mar High School. The Gang Task Force staff described how they operate on a day to day basis, working with staff, parents, youth and school officials to identify potential problems and re-direct youth towards non-gang related activities. When any incident occurs that could be gang related, activity is stepped up. There is not only more police presence on campus, additional resources are brought to bear that reduce the rumors and direct youth towards appropriate expression of fear, anger or agitation. The closest youth centers are in different council districts, which means our youth are not able to participate in the organized sports leagues or other services.

SONA residents expressed appreciation for the ongoing presence of the task force and supports developing local activities for our youth. Residents also expressed support for SJPD and the benefit they continue to provide. We look forward to working with SJPD in the future.

SunWork Renewable (and Affordable!) Energy Project

Our thanks to Reuben Veek from the SunWork group for patiently waiting during our April meeting and also providing us with a great program for local low energy use homes. This non profit targets homes that do not use a lot of electricity (\$150 or so per month) and partners with trained volunteers to install solar systems on those homes. SunWork provides the entire package; surveying your home and the energy use, designing the system, handling the rebate paperwork and continuing through the installation and inspection phase until your system is up and running. You wind up with a professionally certified and installed system and lower energy bills.

While solar systems are not new, they have been expensive in the past. Costs have come down, but by combining lower costs, the non-profit and certified volunteers, SunWork has opened solar up to a new market. By providing these services at a third the standard cost, they are able to address the needs of households who might not think they can afford a solar system. For many, in this age of belt tightening, living on a limited income has often meant not being able to afford the upgrades to your home that would allow you to reduce your energy costs. Those with the greater need often have less ability to buy into a system. And, few of us want to handle the paperwork, oversee the installation or deal with the inspection process, so the one-stop shop is a great alternative.

You can read more about the program by going to www.sunwork.org, emailing them at info@sunwork.org or calling their Palo Alto office at (650) 520-9918.



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Summer Activities

While SONA has a few activities in the hopper for this summer, there are other groups providing great things for those summer days and night. The SJ Parks and Rec Department has an ongoing list of classes, outings, pool hours and programs that you can obtain online at www.sanjoseca.gov/prns or by picking up a catalogue at City Hall or branch libraries and community centers. Remember that PRNS also runs cooling stations during those days when the heat is just too much.

The Guadalupe River Park Conservancy has programs for youth and adults along with summer camps. You can sign up online at www.grpg.org, visiting the main office at 438 Coleman or calling 298-7675.

You can hop over to Campbell and Los Gatos using the Los Gatos Creek Trail and take advantage of farmers markets, concerts and other free fun events.

Downtown San Jose hosts concerts and festivals along with museums and parks, all just a short hop on light rail away. Grab the kids and cool down in the fountains at Plaza de Caesar Chavez, explore the Children's Discovery Museum during the day or head out for an adult date night and enjoy the outdoor dining.

Have a tip for having fun? Let us know and we'll spread the word. Join us later this year for game night and an evening in the park. Have a safe and fun summer.