

Spring 2010

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Just in Time for Spring

by Terri Almeida



It's frosty as I write this, but spring weather will have arrived in time for our annual Ice Cream Social. This year's meeting will be on Tuesday night, April 27, at 7 p.m. Bob Brittain of the Library Foundation will present a 20-minute slide show and virtual tour of the new library, set to open in July. There also will be movies to entertain the kids. Don't miss this opportunity for a treat, a preview, and the chance to catch up with your neighbors.

We have two new Board members this year, Debra Minnigerode and Ann Skram. Welcome! The Parkmead Community Association is an all-volunteer organization that works hard to preserve the lovely neighborhood we all enjoy. There are currently two Board positions open so, if you are interested, please call 938-1176, email me at terria@astound.net, or contact a member of the Board.

Enclosed in this issue of the newsletter is the annual membership form. The fee for new and renewing members is still the phenomenally low rate of \$12 per year. In addition to the many social events, guest speakers and the Parkmead garage sale, the PCA plays an active role representing and beautifying our neighborhood. Here are just some of the ways your membership has and will continue to support the community:

- We helped install the Newell Pathway, and we hold a pathway repair work day every year.
- When the 680/24 interchange was being built, the PCA attended every planning meeting, and our input resulted in paving the sloped sides under the overpass and improving the lighting.
- We are responsible for the "No Freeway Access" signs added to direct traffic away from the neighborhood.
- Board members and neighbors actively participated in the Walnut Creek General Plan 2025.
- We attend City Council and Commission meetings.
- If an emergency arises, we have an organization in place to get the necessary information disseminated.
- We work to beautify public spaces in the neighborhood, such as the Deodora Tree bench and native plantings near Circle Drive.

Last spring Parkmead was recognized by the Walnut Creek Action for Beauty Council and awarded "Outstanding Neighborhood." We could go on and on, but hope you understand the many ways your \$12 helps us remain the outstanding neighborhood that we call home.

I look forward to seeing you at our Ice Cream Social on April 27.

COMING COMMUNITY SERVICE DAY

Saturday, April 24,
in conjunction with
Hillside Community
Church and
Parkmead
Elementary School



ICE CREAM SOCIAL

Tuesday, April 27,
7-9 p.m. at the Hillside
Community Church.



Bob Brittain provides a sneak
preview of the new Walnut
Creek library.

SUMMER BBQ AND BLOCK PARTY

Sunday, September 12.
Live music, free food and
lots of fun on Maple Avenue



Parkmead Garage Sale

Walnut Creek's biggest garage sale
begins at 8 a.m., **Saturday, June 5.**

The Parkmead Community Association provides publicity for the sale, shopping maps to participating homes, and balloons for mailboxes. Put your house on the map by emailing garagesale@parkmead.org, or by signing up on the Events page of our website (www.parkmead.org), or by calling Chris Sherwood at 872-6724.

Last year, more than 70 homes sold their stuff. There is no fee to join in, but we do ask that participants pay the annual PCA dues of \$12. Sign up to help make this the biggest sale ever!

CIVIC NEWS

What's New on Newell

by Pete Johnson

The PCA Board continues to work with the City of Walnut Creek on development projects that may affect our neighborhood. This includes the proposed project at 1500 Newell, any proposed development at Newell Promenade (across from Kaiser) and the vacant Pinky's – Sunrise strip mall on S. California. Under the Walnut Creek General Plan 2025, the "Parkmead Neighborhood" is to be involved in reviewing any projects in this two-block area that might impact traffic near our neighborhood as well as ensuring pedestrian and bike access through the area and retaining visual



Ready for Wrecking?

The low-down on the highrise at 1500 Newell

corridors toward Mt Diablo. We are working closely with Friends of the Creeks to encourage creek access.

We were involved in the public hearings on the "Village @ 1500 Newell" at S. Main, and that project has now been approved. It will be a four-story mixed-use building (condos over retail) with underground parking, and it replace the eight-story highrise and the 7-11 convenience store. A timeframe hasn't been announced for when this will happen, and the building permit is good for up to two years.

As a result of the 1500 Newell review, the city agreed to some traffic mitigations. They have already installed two "No Freeway Access" signs on Newell before the freeway. They are also considering the return of the left-turn arrow to

assist us in exiting the neighborhood at Newell onto S. California, but this depends on funding in 2010–2012.

The General Plan called for a "Specific Plan" to guide future development in this area, but under current financial realities the city cannot afford such an undertaking, normally done by staff and/or consultants. In coordination with Friends of the Creeks, the PCA Board officially asked the City to consider other options to ensure our early and close involvement in any proposed development or extensive remodel in the two-block area.

Currently there are no other publicized plans for development in the two-block area, although owners of Newell Promenade mentioned possible plans for their property during the 1500 Newell hearings. Visit our website for updates or let us know (parkmead@parkmead.org) if you have questions or suggestions.

REAL ESTATE NEWS

This Amazing Market

by Lisa Lundquist

In California, home sales fell by 11 percent, yet the median home price increased by 14 percent from a year ago. In Walnut Creek in February 2009, the median home price was \$664,126; in February 2010, it was \$740,831.

In Parkmead, six homes are currently for sale, ranging from \$736,500 (a foreclosure) to \$1,288,000 (new construction). Since January 1, five homes have sold with an average sales price of \$380 per square foot. The average asking price to sales price was 98 percent, which tells us that these homes were priced correctly and the values in Parkmead are holding their own.

Home sales here have increased for two reasons. One is: Buyers are taking advantage of a government tax credit. If current home owners qualify, they can receive up to a \$6,500 credit. The first-time homebuyer tax credit is also still in effect – with up to \$8,000 in credit.

A second factor influencing the surge in homes sales: We are seeing

historically low interest rates. Today, a 30-year fixed rate for a conventional loan is 4.9 percent. Compare that to 1995 when the same rate was 9 percent!

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The Hatches

Fifty Years Ago

Katherine (“Kay”) Hatch was born in Raymond, Washington, in 1925. Her father, a secretary of the YMCA, transferred to Berkeley when she was three. Kay met her husband, Chester, at the Calvary Presbyterian church in Berkeley. They married and moved to Walnut Creek in 1956.



Schoolhouse Rock: Kay and Chester’s daughter Marilyn Squire (nee Hatch), left, plays with friends at Pied Piper Preschool, 1957

They purchased a two-year-old house at 1685 Arbutus Drive for \$13,000 and lived there for ten years. They started their family there – a son and daughter, both of whom went to Parkmead Elementary and then the “Upper Parkmead” intermediate school.

In 1966, they moved up the street to their current home at 1668 Arbutus, paying \$25,000 to Robert Wicks and his wife. Kay recalls, “He was a teacher at Acalanes. Our home was on the border of Los Lomas and Del Valle high schools, so our children could choose which high school to attend.” They picked Del Valle; son Larry graduated in 1969 and daughter Marilyn (who still lives in Walnut Creek) graduated in 1971.

Suburban life for the Hatches during the summer centered around the community swimming club, now known as Dewing Park Pool. The pool didn’t exist when the Hatches moved here in 1956, but Kay remembers that a neighbor who lived on Maple Lane, Sybil Sweger, “got interest in the idea by going house-to-house. The Wilsusans family (she was a kindergarten teacher at Parkmead) sold the land at a discounted price and received free dues to the club. The rest of us paid a flat fee to join.” All summer, the Hatches hung around the pool, enjoying potlucks and barbecues and swim teams. Kay worked there as a lifeguard and swimming teacher for ten years.

“There were lots of children in the neighborhood when we moved in,” recalls Kay. “Almost all the homes had two or three children who would roam the neighborhood freely. They rode their bicycles up and down the streets. We had Fourth of July parades and enjoyed water fights during the summer.”

A Parkmead babysitting club had about twenty families, most living near Arbutus and Poplar Drive. “It was a barter system. It allowed couples to go out to dinner or to the El Ray

movie theater. Sometimes the fathers even did the sitting.”

Kay can remember when Magnolia Way, at its top near the current Norman Court cul-de-sac, headed down the hill towards what is now the Rossmoor Safeway. Today it is a bike/walking path and residential streets, but fifty years ago it was a dirt road. “We called it the ‘Ben Scott Freeway’ because Ben Scott, who was about my son’s age, had a jeep and blazed the trail over the hill in order to go to Del Valle High School.” The Hatches used this dirt road to go to Grace Presbyterian Church on Tice Valley Road.

Kay and Chester still live at the home on Arbutus Drive. Behind the house used to be a horse pasture owned by State Senator John Nedjedly, and Kay can still recall the silhouettes of the horses against the morning sky. Back then the trees of Parkmead were new and “very small and there wasn’t much shade on the street.” The redwood that towers in her backyard was only six feet tall.

The tree, like the neighborhood, has grown.

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Dewing Park Pool

by Jodie Heng

In the Swim of Things: Larry Hatch, age 10, jumps into the Dewing Park Pool, 1961



It was 1957. The temperature was hitting 106°

and only one oak tree was available to offer a group of Parkmead/Saranap neighbors refuge from the sweltering summer heat. So, with a proclamation of “%\$# it’s hot here, we need a pool,” the Dewing Park Recreation Club took root.

There were about two and half acres available on Olympic Blvd., a suitable setting for a swimming pool. The Beckers, Crawfords, Schrodgers, Richardsons and others decided to form a committee and explore acquiring the necessary land permits with the goal of creating the legal structure necessary to develop a community pool. There was, of course, a minor detail or two to dispose of first, like getting an unlicensed crossing permit against a non-operating railroad track but, with the help of a licensed neighborhood attorney who provided his service *pro bono*, the plans moved forward.

Initially, a handful of members agreed to toss in \$10 each to get the plan underway. As the initiative moved forward, members would later contribute about \$500 each to finance the pool construction. The membership was capped at 200 families. Neighborhood acquiescence mandated that no swim meets would be held at the pool. That plan, however, didn’t last long, as Dewing Park Pool had its first official swim team in 1961 under the masterful coaching of Bud Solarno.

What began as an effort to cool off in the summer of 1957, Dewing Park Pool, 53 years later, continues to be a base and an attraction for the Parkmead and Saranap communities. For more information, visit the Dewing Park Swim Club/Team website, www.DewingPark.com, or call 360-4844.

By and Bye

by Pat Lickiss

As I write this article for the Parkmead community newsletter, I do so with very mixed feelings, because it will be my last. At the conclusion of this school year, I will be retiring after 37 years in the district, with a total of 23 years at Las Lomas. For the past 17 years, I have had the honor to serve as the Las Lomas principal, for which I will be forever grateful. The community, students, staff,



parents and alumni combine to make Las Lomas a truly wonderful place.

In addition to being the high school principal, my wife, boys and I have lived in Walnut Creek for 26 years, raising our sons and having them attend Parkmead, WCI and Las Lomas. Our happiest years were the 13 that we spent on Maple Lane. The Parkmead community is wonderful and one of the reasons that Walnut Creek and Las Lomas are so great. I thank all of you, and I know the Parkmead Community will continue to thrive!

Let Us Know

- ~ Fires? Crime? Earthquakes? We send out email blasts when there are emergencies in the area. We also send out emails billboard upcoming events, like our summer Garage Sale or fall Pizza Party. Let us know your email address.
- ~ Are you the original occupant of your home? Our "History Project" is looking for original residents of the Parkmead area. If you've been living here for five decades or more, let us know.
- ~ Are you interested in having a mini-block party with your immediate neighbors? We can help you set up the event, and the PCA will pay some of the costs. Let us know.
- ~ Want to participate in the community-wide garage sale in June? Let us know.

Email us at parkmead@parkmead.org and let us know.

Revision and Renovation

by Kathleen Scott

Spring is planning time in schools everywhere. On March 10, a team of staff members and parents met to revise two pieces of our site plan: Writing and Math. The team wrote action steps to sustain our staff and students' work in writing, and we drafted a plan to help teachers implement a new math program. With technology embedded into the new curriculum, action steps include support for tech and teacher training. Next year, we'd like to include community members who are not parents or staff members on our site planning team. If you enjoy collaborative planning, good company and good food, contact me at 944-6858 about serving on the Site Planning Team.



Our Parkmead neighbors should know about the summer work that will busy our site all summer long. Measure C, passed by the community several years ago, provides funds for major playground and field renovations at all WCSD schools. This summer, Parkmead and Murwood playgrounds and fields will be completely renovated. The Azalea Circle will be closed and, of course, playgrounds and fields will be unavailable. Traffic will flow to Keyspot over a different route than in past years. Any minor inconvenience will be worth it when we celebrate our beautiful new grounds in the fall.

Finally, we'll hold our third Community Day at Parkmead on April 24th, which is also Earth Day. This neighborhood-wide event not only beautifies our school and neighborhood, it builds a great sense of community and partnership. Look for details on signs around the neighborhood or on the school marquees or on the Parkmead Community Association website.

Fight Crime. Be Friendly.

Are you interested in setting up a Neighborhood Watch program for your immediate neighborhood? While both the County and City presented their Neighborhood Watch programs at PCA's spring Ice Cream Social in 2006, the County no longer has its program, due to budget cuts. The City, however, still has its program.

The Walnut Creek City Police Department has a crime prevention coordinator: 943-5885. They will meet with small neighborhood groups – about 12 to 20 homes – as long as the host home is in the City. Nearby unincorporated neighbors can be invited. The goal is "mutual surveillance," so ideally it should be neighbors within reasonable distance of each other. If you pursue this, please let the PCA Board know (parkmead@parkmead.org).