Owls in Your Neighborhood

A presentation by Garth Harwood, Director of the Hidden Villa Environmental Education Program
Las Cumbres Community Center
Sunday October 25, 2009
1:00 pm

Bring a dessert.
SSA will provide hot beverages and soft drinks.

This interactive presentation will feature an overview of the owls to be found in our area, including: identification of local owls, tips for finding them, their ecology and conservation, and ways you can help owls so they may coexist with us long into the future. Stories of exciting interactions with wild owls will also be included, as well as an opportunity to have your owl questions answered. Lifelike taxidermied owls and other owl-related items will be on hand too.

Garth Harwood, a former manager of the Santa Clara Valley Audubon Society (SCVAS), currently directs one of the largest-scale environmental education programs in our region at Hidden Villa in Los Altos Hills; over 20,000 student visitors per year! An avid birder and longtime user of the many parks along the Skyline corridor, Mr. Harwood has been seeking out owls for more than a decade, and is happy to host no fewer than 6 owl species in his own Pescadero backyard.

Directions to Las Cumbres:
The Las Cumbres entrance is located on Skyline Blvd, between Highway 9 and Black Rd. (5.5 miles south of Highway 9; 1.5 miles north of Black Rd.) Look for a small Las Cumbres sign and turn into the entrance on the west side of Skyline Blvd. Follow the road just past the long row of mailboxes and into the Community Center parking lot on the right.

Parking is limited, so please consider carpooling, and please leave your pets at home.
What Is Your SSA Board Doing?

By Judy Grote

- The SSA Summer General Meeting & picnic was held at Jaqua Ranch on Sunday, August 2nd. The focus topic was Mid Peninsula Open Space and California State Parks future plans. The featured speakers were Larry Hassett from Mid Pen and Carl Tallman from State Parks. Carl made those from the Alpine-Portola neighborhood very happy because he said the Old Haul Rd bridge looked on track to restart this Fall. Larry talked about some of the Fire Management projects Mid Pen planned and had completed—controlled fire burns (one recently at Russian Ridge) and opening up areas for grazing. The attendance was ~ 75. The next General Meeting will be held on Sunday, October 25th, 2-5 pm at the Las Cumbres Community Center and will feature Garth Harwood, Director of Hidden Villa Environmental Education Program, speaking about owls.
- The summer Skylines Newsletter was published to the Community. The next newsletter is being developed for distribution in October 2009.
- Fire Safe Council: The Council is still working on its 501c3. The Council is going to reimburse for chipping up to $200 instead of organizing it directly due to liability issues. A Masticator demo also is being planned for 10/3/09.
- Firesafe corridor on Old Haul Rd in Alpine-Portola Neighborhood. Light at the end of the tunnel! If the weather holds up (no real rainy weather during the next 2 months), the bridge should be complete this year. See the more detailed article in the newsletter.
- Land Use Planning & Building Permits: The Board committee is developing an inventory of all open space, county and state park units, water sheds in the SSA Community area. The focus is on 1) Identifying the physical attributes, management, public use, and public safety interfaces for each, and 2) identifying the common use access points.
- Public Works: This Board committee is looking into several issues: 1) Undergrounding power and telephone lines along the Highway 35 scenic corridor, 2) Better bicycle safety on Highway 35 (Skyline Blvd) by getting pathways on each side of the road as a long term objective, and 3) vegetation clearance on Highway 35 to increase visibility, avoid encroachment on bicycle lanes, and possibly provide more of a fire break.
- Public Safety: This committee is focused on 2 areas: 1) Getting more volunteers for the South Skyline Fire and Rescue, and 2) SSEPO's finding a central location for an Emergency trailer.

What happened to the guy who didn't pay his exorcist?
He was repossessed.

SPUG Quarterly Report

By Ruth Waldhauer

Skyline Propane Users Group (SPUG) was formed to benefit SSA members. For information about joining, or for members wishing current information on the agreement with Amerigas, Kamps Propane, or Suburban Propane, please contact Ruth Waldhauer at ruth_waldhauer@yahoo.com, or 650-948-1466. Information is also available on our website at www.southskyline.org.

Recent SPUG prices with Amerigas are:

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Recent SPUG prices offered by Suburban Propane are:

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Recent Kamps Propane SPUG prices are:

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The usual pattern of price dropping in summer is not what we see this year. Politics seems to be the governing force this year. Do what you can to conserve! The open market price is about $1.00/gallon higher than the SPUG price.

Prices are subject to change as frequently as wholesale prices change. The prices we post are for the first of the month. Our SPUG rate is based on automatic regular route deliveries on a keep-full basis, not “will-call” service. Some propane suppliers offer members 55 years of age or older a 2 cent/gallon discount in addition to the SPUG group price.

Those whose membership in SSA has lapsed will be disqualified from receiving the benefit of SPUG price for propane.
Skyline Adopt-A-Highway
By Ruth Waldhauer

Enthusiastic SSA volunteers picked up litter along Skyline from mile marker 2 to 6 in San Mateo County, areas adopted by SSA and SHS (Skyline Historical Association) on Saturday, September 12. Shown in the photo are Penny Hassett, Matt van de Rihn, Robert Bradford, and Ken Broome.

It has been my pleasure to organize the effort since May 2005. Ken Broome will now take over organizing and managing. Please volunteer to help by contacting Ken at broome.assocs@gmail.com or 650-529-1810. The sweep is done once every two months. The goal has been to recruit new people each time. Thus far there are 71 on the Honor Role with a few repeaters.

Skyline is our front yard!!! Let's keep it clean and beautiful.

Vista Point Clean-Up is on Hold
By Ruth Waldhauer

For the last two years the efforts of SSA volunteers picking up trash at the CalTrans Vista Point near Russian Ridge have been very successful. This beautiful spot became cleaner. Most visitors were using the trash cans, although a few scofflaws did litter, but SSA volunteers kept the site clean.

Visitors come to this spot from across the country and around the world for its scenic beauty. It is shameful to greet them with a trash dump.

In the past few months, some thoughtless, uncaring local individuals have been depositing bags of household garbage. The cans, overflowing, are left uncovered. Birds and animals scatter debris from the cans. Using gloves, I opened one of the garbage bags and found discarded junk mail. I returned the bag to the owner. Since that one time, I have had no luck identifying the culprits.

The Vista Point program is no longer working. The presence of the cans only attracts more garbage. The site is more littered than ever. SSA is removing the cans temporarily, and we will keep you informed. The day we removed the trash cans, we found a broken TV discarded next to the trash cans. The last straw!!!

Kunz Valley Trash (831-338-9050, http://kunzvalleytrash.com/) provided the service that removed and disposed of the trash from the cans. SSA found their rates to be very fair and reasonable. They service the SSA area south of the Vista Point. Green Waste serves the SSA area north of the Vista Point, and their rates are substantially higher than Kunz Valley Trash.

Alpine-Portola Neighborhood:
Old Haul Rd Bridge Update
By Judy Grote

After 3 long years, it seems like there is a high probability that the bridge to connect Old Haul Rd and provide a fire escape route for campers and residents on Portola State Park Rd will be completed by end of 2009 if the rainy season does not start early in earnest. The creek work was completed in the 4th quarter of 2008 so what remains to be done is the installation of the bridge. The bridge is not like the previous bridge, the supporting structure of which rested in the creek and thus was easily wiped out by a redwood tree that came down in a storm and went sailing down the creek. The new metal bridge spans from creek side to creek side.

Preparations for doing this bridge work were begun by the contractor in mid-September. On 9/28/09 we saw a very long truck going down to Portola Redwoods State Park carrying a metal bridge. The remainder of the bridge work should take no longer than 8 weeks when the bridge preparation work started. This means that by December, the work should be complete. If so, we will include a photo of the installed bridge in the next Skylines newsletter in January 2009.

Once the bridge is implemented, then residents can start the serious business of walking the Old Haul Rd to determine if there are other problems with using it as an escape route, and documenting and prioritizing the problems so we can get them fixed and have a working fire escape route.

Why are black cats such good singers?

They're very mewsical.
There’s History in Our Place Names - Part 3
The “Sunny Jim Bridge”
By Janet Schwind

The bridge from Oakland to San Francisco has been in the news because of its recent closure for repairs. Every newspaper article refers to it as the Bay Bridge. This simple version is understandable when one considers the official name of “James ‘Sunny Jim’ Rolph Bridge.”

Who was Sunny Jim? in the first half of the twentieth century, James Rolph Jr. (Sunny Jim) owned thousands of acres of land that stretched from Corte Madera Creek on the east side to Alpine Creek on the west. Skyline Ranch and later the Alpine Ranch in Corte Madera Canyon (now owned by Littlefield) were his country retreats from the rigors of political life. He enjoyed entertaining friends, riding the range, and hunting on this vast estate.

Rolph was born in San Francisco and rose to prominence in the aftermath of the 1906 earthquake. After a career in the shipping business, he was elected mayor of San Francisco and held that office for a record 19 years. Many of the city’s monuments and infrastructure were completed during his tenure. He was elected governor of California in 1930 after campaigning in every county in the state, sometimes by airplane. He cut a dashing figure and was a gifted orator. When he appeared before a crowd, the band would play his theme song, “There are Smiles that make you Happy.”

Sunny Jim’s cheery brand of optimism was ridiculed as the nation and state plunged deeper into recession, and he had difficulty managing the opposing factions in Sacramento. His health deteriorated and he died in office in 1934 at 64 years of age.

In 1936, as the bay bridge was being completed, some San Franciscans wanted to name it in honor of the departed governor. However, in the rival city of Oakland, the powerful publisher of the Oakland Tribune, Joseph Knowland, wouldn’t hear of it. In 1985 after Knowland’s death, the bridge received its official name. How does the name Sunny Jim Bridge sound?

Fogarty Wine Cork Bird House

To thank Dr. Thomas Fogarty for speaking and hosting the April SSA General Meeting at his winery, SSA presented him with a bird house made of wine corks. The artist, Ingemar Persson, using his talent and imagination designed and executed the bird house. The photo above fails to show the details, but be assured this is a work of art. The bird house uses Fogarty wine corks, and the dog house uses Martella wine corks. Since 1981 Michael Martella has been the Fogarty winemaker. He also makes wine under his own label, hence Martella wine corks. Ingemar Persson has the artist's skill to interject a bit of humor.

Ingemar Persson's woodturnings and furniture have been represented by galleries in New York, Connecticut, Florida, Texas, Los Angeles, and San Francisco. He has shown in national venues in New York (Armory, Lincoln Center, and Javitts), Washington, D.C., Baltimore, Los Angeles, and San Francisco. His work is prized by art collectors worldwide. You may recall the July 2003 SSA general meeting the program featured local artists and craftsmen. Ingemar Persson displayed some of his beautiful wood artwork for us.

Many thanks to Ingemar Persson for his contribution to the art world and his generosity to SSA.

Red Cross Disaster Drill

On Oct 24 from 10 am to 2 pm, the Mountain Emergency Response Corps (MERC) will hold a Disaster Shelter exercise at the Lakeside Elementary School Community Center. The scenario involves an earthquake that has caused significant damage and isolated the mountain area from the flatlands. The exercise will provide MERC members an opportunity to practice skills they have learned in Red Cross disaster service classes and to familiarize them with the facility. Also joining in the drill will be Loma Prieta Amateur Radio Emergency Service group – the Mountain Hams.

Members of the community are invited to participate in the drill as people needing shelter. If you have at least a half hour to spare to help out (perhaps exercising long dormant acting skills), please contact Leon Milburn at 354-7491 wrdad@peoplepc.com
MROSD Volunteers Observe the Birds and Bees in Tanoak Trees
By Leigh Ann Maze

As often happens in science one question begets another, which is how Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District docents became involved in a recent study looking at tanoak tree pollination. Tanoaks are abundant in the South Skyline region, growing in the understory of the redwood and Douglas fir forests and producing fragrant flowers in the late summer. Once logged for use in tanning hides, the tree has largely been ignored by the scientific community until now, as Sudden Oak Death (SOD) brings it to the attention of researchers.

Tanoaks not only contract and spread SOD, but are frequently victims of it. This has led scientists like plant pathologists Matteo Garbelotto and Katy Hayden at U.C. Berkeley and geneticist Jessica Wright with the U.S. Forest Service to collaborate on looking into whether there are genetically resistant tanoaks that might be used to replant areas decimated by SOD. The District has been participating in these studies for several years, and it has become clear that very little is known about tanoak reproduction. Are they mainly wind-pollinated like the “true oaks”, or do insects and birds play a role? Volunteer docents with the District were eager to help answer this question.

A team of nine volunteer docents visited carefully-selected tanoak trees in Windy Hill, El Corte de Madera Creek and Long Ridge Open Space Preserves. They watched a single cluster of flowers for ten minutes and recorded every visitor and general observations. From early July through mid-August, while the flowers were in bloom, volunteers completed 65 ten minute observations. They observed many insects visiting the flowers, mainly bees and flies, but also beetles, ants and others. The data will be sent to Wright and will contribute to the scientific knowledge of tanoaks

The study was a success thanks in large part to the extra effort of docent Debbi Brusco with coordinating, observing, and sharing her knowledge of ecology and insects. Docents Paul Billig, June Cancell, Dick Gehrer, Katherine Greene, Jack Owicki, Deborah Probst, Ann Reisenauer, and Sharon Thomas volunteered their time and expertise to make it happen.

Most importantly, the small study reveals that tanoaks not only provide food to wildlife with their acorns, but their flowers host an entire community of pollinators. This opens up many new and interesting questions about the role tanoaks play in the ecological web of life and the management of SOD that are yet to be answered.

What song does Dracula hate?
"You Are My Sunshine"

Master Gardener Project at the Presentation Center
By Carole Frost

In 2004 at Presentation Retreat and Conference Center, the Master Gardeners established a new demonstration garden called Presentation Center Retreat Demonstration Garden. The Presentation Center is an international retreat and educational gathering place; a peaceful 67-acre oasis tucked among the redwoods in the Santa Cruz Mountains just 20 minutes from Silicon Valley. Nestled in the woody foothills of Los Gatos, this organic sustainable garden provides an abundance of produce in the cool mountain climate.

Master Gardeners and Presentation volunteers literally recycled an abandoned tennis court into an organic, sustainable garden that provides fresh produce for the Presentation Center’s kitchen. Master Gardeners are working every Thursday, tending the garden and harvesting fruit and vegetables for the chef. If you would like to visit the demonstration garden please feel free to do so. The Master Gardeners are on hand every Thursday morning and would be delighted to have visitors and answer your gardening questions.

This unique garden was created by laying down a foundation of gravel on top of the tennis court, followed by soil and amendments, and finally installing a drip irrigation system. Initially straw was used to keep the weeds down and protect against marauding birds. After planting the young seedlings are covered with white cover cloth to prevent birds from attacking the seedlings and it also reduces sunburn. Bark was spread between the paths for a neat pathway. The pathways have held up through the winters, no washouts in this mountainside garden!

After five years of gardening in the mountains the Santa Clara County Master Gardeners have made many observations and learned from trial and error as to what will grow and produce well in this unique climate. We would love to share our experiences with you to help you to be a successful gardener in the Santa Cruz Mountains.

The demonstration garden has successfully grown many vegetable varieties, many of which were said would not grow in the Santa Cruz Mountains. The demonstration garden is meant to show the community what will grow successfully and showcase how to do it.

There are yearly open garden events when Master Gardeners guide visitors through the beds. Please watch for more information on the events in the skyline newsletter.

To learn more about the Master Gardener program of Santa Clara County please visit www.mastergardeners.org. Master Gardener Hotlines are available to answer all your gardening questions. San Jose hotline 408-282-3105 Mon. –Fri. 9:30-12:30 p.m. Palo Alto hotline 650-329-1356 Friday Only 1:00-4:00. The Presentation Center is located at 19480 Bear Creek Rd. www.presentationcenter.org
California Sagebrush Along the Dusty Skyline Trails

By Sarah Schoen

California sagebrush (Artemesia californica) brings a bit of the old west to Skyline. Also known as old man, the sprawling gray green shrub has a distinctive aroma.

California sagebrush has a turpentine smell, similar to culinary sage (Salvia, of the mint family). However, it is not related and is a member of the aster family. California sage’s chemical smell and bitter taste help to repel herbivores. The terpenes also inhibit other plants from sprouting. They get into the soil by evaporation during summer, and by washing off the plants in early rains.

Branching from the base, gnarly branches give way to wand-like twigs. The shrub grows 2 to 6 feet high. The thin, narrow leaves are 1/5 to 2” long with margins that are rolled under. Leaves are once or twice divided into narrow segments and appear gray due to the many appressed hairs. Flowers bloom August to November and often go unnoticed. Next time you think you might see knobs on the ends of the branches, take a closer look. Greenish or yellow-greenish flowers are mixed with the leaves. Each inflorescence has 20 to 50 flower heads. Each head has small tubular disk flowers (5 to 30), pistillate flowers (6 to 10) and no ray flowers. The flowers are wind pollinated.

Tens of thousands of seeds are produced per plant. Small resinous fruits with single seeds have a tiny crown of pappus hairs. The seeds are primarily distributed by wind. Germination of deeply banked seeds is aided by fire. California sage can also crown sprout following a low intensity fire. California Indians had a number of uses for California sagebrush, mostly medicinal. Many of these uses were adopted by the early Spanish. A tea was used to treat colds, coughs, and bronchial symptoms, as well as to alleviate menstrual cramps and ease labor. A bath was used to treat rheumatism. A poultice was used to treat asthma, or applied to the forehead to relieve headaches. Early Spanish referred to California sagebrush as Romerillo and thought of it as a panacea for all ills.

California sagebrush is found in the coastal range below 3000 feet from Marin County to about 200 miles south of the border with Baja California. Along Skyline it is found in chaparral, woodlands, and open hillsides. Further south and closer to the Pacific, it is a major component of coastal sage scrub (soft chaparral).

Take a Hike...

Thornewood Open Space Preserve

By Ruth Waldhauer

Conveniently located in the hills above the Town of Woodside and ideally situated for a quick morning or afternoon getaway, Thornewood is a 167-acre preserve offering nice, easy hikes or horseback rides through beautiful surroundings. The preserve’s ¼-mile Schilling Lake Trail gradually winds through sunlit canopies of big-leaf maples and moss-covered oaks and ends under the shade of the giant redwoods that surround the lake. Schilling Lake is an excellent site to view waterfowl during their migration, so please be sure your dog is on leash and at your side when visiting this sensitive wildlife habitat area.

The new multi-use Bridle Trail opened in May 2009 and connects with Schilling Lake Trail. Accessible to hikers, equestrians, and dogs on leash, the 0.7-mile long Bridle Trail ascends through a second-growth redwood and Douglas-fir forest near Dennis Martin Creek and emerges in a drier madrone and oak canopy forest.

Elsewhere on the Preserve, the Thornewood House, surrounded by 3.5 acres of landscaping and a breathtaking view of the valley, is an example of estate life of the 1920s. This 87-acre estate was willed to the Sierra Club Foundation and later given to the District. Currently, the house and 10-acre private leasehold are being restored and are closed to the public. However, the remaining 77 acres of the estate, including an easy walk along wooded trails leading to Schilling Lake, are open to the public throughout the year.

Access to the preserve is through a brick gate on the south side of La Honda Road (Highway 84), 1.6 miles past its intersection with Portola Road in Woodside. A narrow driveway winds through the woods for 0.3 miles before reaching the parking lot located on the west side of the driveway. Parking for approximately 9 cars is available here.
A Growing Concern: Marijuana Cultivation on Public and Private Lands

By Leigh Ann Maze

Increasingly, illegal marijuana cultivation is occurring on public and private lands in rural areas throughout California and the U.S. The Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District takes this issue very seriously and works closely with the San Mateo, Santa Clara and Santa Cruz County Sheriff’s Departments, who are responsible for the prevention and eradication of many marijuana gardens.

Over the past 20 years the type of marijuana cultivation has changed from small individually-operated grow sites to large 5,000 plant operations run by organized crime groups. It has become typical to have armed guards camped out on site, particularly during the harvest season in August, September and October. Because the gardens tend to be located in hard-to-reach areas away from roads or trails, the District posts signs at all primary trailheads asking residents and visitors to stay on open, designated trails in order to safely enjoy the preserves.

Public safety is the first priority for the District. Rangers are on duty 365 days a year, including three resident rangers, and actively patrol the preserves and surrounding access roads daily. They are in tune with the rhythms of the neighborhood and notice and follow-up on anything unusual or suspicious occurring in or around the preserves. Observations made by District rangers have led to the prevention and eradication of marijuana gardens.

The Sheriff’s Department actively searches for marijuana gardens, mostly on foot and by vehicle, and also by air. Neighbors have observed their low-flying helicopters in the past. Sheriffs eradicated gardens from the Skyline Ridge, Monte Bello and Windy Hill Open Space Preserves last year, and this year gardens were eradicated in the Monte Bello and Coal Creek Open Space Preserves.

When a garden is found, the Sheriff’s Department treats it as a criminal investigation and eradicates the plants. Afterwards, the District cleans-up the mess left behind by the growers by removing all infrastructure, such as retention ponds and irrigation line, to make it difficult to continue marijuana cultivation in the future.

Residents who notice anything unusual on public or private land in the community should immediately retreat from the area for their own safety and contact a District ranger or their Sheriff’s Department to follow-up. Please notify a ranger of unusual activities on or near District land. Signals of possible marijuana cultivation include vehicles regularly parked along roadsides at the same locations, people going into the woods with supplies, well-worn or flagged foot paths, black irrigation piping, fertilizer, pesticides or trash, stockpiles of food, camouflaging, and water impoundments.

Useful Contact Information:
Cregg Dibert, Santa Clara County Sheriff’s Department (408) 391-5297, cregg.dibert@sho.co.scl.ca.us
Mike Damigo, Santa Clara County Sheriff’s Department (408) 421-6753, mike.damigo@sho.co.scl.ca.us
San Mateo County Sheriff’s Department, Narcotics Task Force (650) 573-3991
Santa Cruz County Sheriff’s Department (831) 471-1121
Santa Cruz County Anti-Crime Team, Narcotics (831) 454-2320
Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District, Skyline Field Office (650) 949-1848

The Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District is a public agency whose mission is to preserve open space land, protect the natural environment and provide for ecologically-sensitive recreation and education. The District manages over 57,000 acres of public land from Los Gatos to Half Moon Bay, and is a neighbor to many residents in the Skyline area. www.openspace.org

Castle Rock Park Ranger Retires

Miles Standish, the full time Ranger at Castle Rock State Park retired on June 30 after 29 years of service in the park.

Miles began his career with the California State Parks in 1967 working one summer as an Interpretive Specialist at Prairie Creek Redwoods State Park. He then went on to work as a State Park Ranger at Henry Cowell, then several more parks over the years such as Big Basin, Portola Redwoods, San Francisco Maritime State Historic Park, Taylor State Park, and Mt. Diablo State Park.

After Graduating from U.C. Berkeley in 1980 Miles came to work and live in Castle Rock State Park. Miles and his family became an integral part of the mountain community. He was not only a Park Ranger but our local Peace Officer. As a Park Ranger he played a very significant role in the community surrounding Castle Rock. We wish him the best in his new career. Miles is currently attending Law School and is hoping to finish up next year.

What do you get when you drop a pumpkin?
Squash!
South Skyline FireSafe Council
First Year Accomplishments
By Dick Schwind

We started up the South Skyline FireSafe Council just a year ago. There have been some setbacks, but think we have accomplished much.

First, though, are you wondering, “What is a FireSafe Council”? It is a non-profit, mostly all-volunteer organization (ours is all volunteer) for promoting homeowner’s defensible space and community wildfire defenses in the WUI (Wildland - Urban Interface), where housing meets unsettled lands. This describes our area. We are registered in California with the CA FireSafe Council, along with a couple hundred other councils. It acts to support the FireSafe Councils and as a clearing house for federal grants that are aimed at improving wildfire defenses in communities.

Both Santa Clara and San Mateo Counties have FireSafe Councils. Even so, it appeared to us that forming our own council centered on the junction of all three of our counties was a good idea. We were right. Coordination with these two FireSafe Councils plus a complementary organization in Santa Cruz County (see ‘Chipping...’ article on page 7) is yielding attention and services to our area that otherwise we would not be receiving.

Our Council start up was preceded by a promise of backing from the SSA and from the Santa Clara County FSC. Pat Congdon, a long-time South Skyline resident, past SSA president, volunteer firefighter, and past president of the Santa Clara County FireSafe Council agreed to be our president. He was a great help getting us started until he recently moved off the skyline and resigned.

We have a set of bylaws that parallel those of the SSA. Our Board members are Dick Schwind president, Ken MacLean Vice President, Judy Grote Secretary, John DeLong treasurer, and Martin Bligh (at large). SSA Board member Gary Gechlik has written our incorporation and nonprofit applications and submitted them. We have area coordinators for our chipping coordination, see the chipping article.

The SSA included us in their January membership form from which we received generous donations that the SSA matched. Originally we planned to provide free chipping with those funds, but this turned out not to be feasible. Therefore we now offer a reimbursement for chipping costs, presently up to $200 for situations that do not qualify for the county free chipping programs. See the accompanying article on chipping.

We are also working with the San Mateo - Santa Cruz Counties team writing a CWPP, Community Wildfire Protection Plan, to see that our area is properly represented in this important planning document. We still need volunteer help, so call/email me! Dick Schwind at schwindr@yahoo.com, or 408-867-9422.

Skyline Emergency Communications
By Sherry Niswander

Good communications during an emergency is well documented as a key element in handling local emergencies such as wildfire and earthquakes. SSEPO (South Skyline Emergency Preparedness Organization) has been working on emergency communications for the past two years and will kick off a communications plan in December that can be adopted by all local neighborhoods.

Basics of the communication plan involve the use of GMRS radios to keep neighbors in touch with each other and HAM radios with other neighborhoods and outside emergency services in instances of the breakdown of normal services such as telephone and internet. It will also include a phone tree procedure for wildfires, escape route/evacuation plan procedures, equipment recommendations (radios, antennas and scanners) and scripts for use in radio drills. These are simple and relatively low cost steps that can make a huge difference during and after a major event.

The County Office of Emergency Services is providing communications guidelines that have been developed and proven successful for other rural areas. SSEPO has used the Portola Heights neighborhood as a beta test for a communication plan. They currently run monthly GMRS radio drills to gain experience with using low cost GMRS portable radios. A program to get neighbors licensed for HAM radio use is underway. (Ham radios, which can use repeaters already in place, greatly enhance the range of communications).

Each neighborhood may adopt the standard plan and be locally lead by a Neighborhood Coordinator. SSEPO will offer its skills to Skyline neighborhoods to develop the communications plan and obtain the proper equipment. This will include a grant up to $750 from SSEPO to get the local programs rolling.

We encourage all interested residents to attend the important SSEPO meeting on December 6th at the MSROD ranger station at Alpine Road & Hwy 35, 1:30 to 3:00 when the final communications plan will be introduced. In the meantime SSEPO members will be pleased to work with residents to start the planning process. Right now some neighborhoods do not have designated coordinators, which is a priority. You may contact Sherry Niswander at 650-559-0677 (sherry@andersonniswander.com) or Peggy Wargo at 650-941-7173 (peggwyargo.wargo1@gmail.com).

La Honda Fire Brigade will be giving a CERT Training the end of January, 2010. They do not have definite dates set yet, but you can check their website at www.lahondafire.org in the next month or so for specific information on dates and times.
Chipping for Defensible Space -- Free or Reduced Cost

By Dick Schwind

SSFSC, The South Skyline FireSafe Council has been busy promoting defensible space chipping. There are different arrangements for each county plus the SSFSC option, as explained here.

SANTA CLARA COUNTY: Its FireSafe Council, the SCFSC (Santa Clara County FireSafe Council) now has funds to provide free chipping for defensible space for Santa Clara County homeowners. We are coordinating this for them until their funds are exhausted. Email or call me or your area coordinator (see below) for status and coordination. They want to do several homeowners’ chipping at a time to minimize their travel costs.

SAN MATEO COUNTY: The SMFSC, San Mateo County FireSafe Council was notified last spring that they would be awarded a grant for defensible space chipping. If all goes as hoped they should start to get funds about the end of the year. Through our coordination with them they expect to do a number of days of chipping for San Mateo County homeowners in our FireSafe Council. We expect to do the coordination for them for this chipping. Please call or email me for status (see bottom).

SANTA CRUZ COUNTY has no FireSafe Council, but the Resource Conservation District of Santa Cruz County along with CalFire in Felton are serving that function. The Conservation District, like the above San Mateo FSC, was notified last spring that they would be awarded a grant for, among other items, defensible space chipping. They also hope to receive funds by about the end of the year. We expect to arrange the coordination for homeowner defensible space chipping with them for our Santa Cruz County homeowners in the same way as the other two counties. Call or email me for status.

SOUTH SKYLINE FIRESAFE COUNCIL chipping reimbursement: For defensible space chipping after last July 1 that does not fit in the above categories, you can apply to us for a reimbursement presently up to $200 for your cost of chipping. We must have (or have had) one of our area coordinators come see what you are chipping before you do the chipping and you need to send us receipts for your chipping costs. Call me or your area coordinator to discuss this and arrange for an inspection.

The piles must be properly stacked. Please contact your FireSafe Council Area Coordinator for advice and to sign up for one of the above chipping programs: Oak Ridge: Ken Maclean 354-5636; Las Cumbres: John Drew 408-395-9955 or Bill Hult 408-354-8988; Indian Rock Ranch: Beth Seagraves 408-872-0891; other Skyline area south of Rte 9; Ken Maclean 408-354-5636; Rte 9: Bo Gimbal 831-338-9475; Skyline area from Rte 9 to Page Mill/Alpine: Jim Craik 408-868-9577; Portola Heights: Bill Sorich 650-949-0761; Alpine - Portola Park Rd-Middleton Tract (open); Crazy Pete’s area: Ken Broome 650-529-1810; and other Skyline area from Alpine/Page Mill to Old LaHonda Rd: (open).

South Skyline Fire and Rescue

By George Johnson

There may be a feeling of fall in the air, but the fire season has not yet ended. In fact in our area the month of October still presents prime fire conditions. Please continue to be vigilant. Keep leaves cleaned off the roof, in gutters and roof valleys. One of the major threats from a wildfire is airborne embers. These can be pushed by the wind a half mile or more in front of the main fire body and start spot fires and structure fires. Should these embers land on a roof with a dry leaf or dry needle build up, a fire is very likely to start. So not only is good ground clearance needed, but also good roof maintenance as part of your defensible space.

Now is also a good time to inspect and clean the fireplace chimney or wood stove for the winter heating season. Each year we have a few chimney or stove pipe fires in our area caused by the lack of proper maintenance and cleaning. When you are on the roof, also check for proper tree limb clearances. If as the chimney is being inspected you need to duck under or work around tree limbs, these are to close and should be pruned back.

Do you have a blue reflector marking your home water tank? The reflector needs to be readily visible when a fire truck approaches your home at night on your driveway. This will help us find your tank should you have a fire. Use additional reflectors as needed. This can make a big difference when every minute counts. Remember also to have good clearances along your driveway, both vertical and horizontal. Fire trucks have gotten bigger over the years and should a city fire truck be assigned to protect your home they need to feel safe in accessing your property.

Check the South Skyline Fire and Rescue website at http://www.southskylinefire.org/ for information and pictures about the blue reflectors and water tank fittings. There is also a picture blog about the construction work being done at our Las Cumbres fire station. The contractor, South Bay, is making good progress and should be done by the end of October. A big thank you to all those that have donated money to this project. It is great having the support of the South Skyline community.
Mountain Lion Information

Recent sightings of mountain lions in the SSA area have caused concern by some. The following reliable information comes from the Mountain Lion Foundation, www.mountainlion.org.

Human encounters with mountain lions are rare and the risk of injury or death from an attack is infinitely small. Since 1890 only 21 people have been killed by mountain lions on the entire North American Continent.

According to current statistics, your chances of being killed by a domestic dog are more than ten times greater. In California, about two people every year are killed by pet dogs and thousands more are treated in hospitals for severe bites and injuries (National Canine Research Center). The Hunter Incident Clearinghouse reported that in just the year 2002 alone, hunting accidents in the United States killed 89 people and injured 761. NOAA estimates about a hundred people are killed every year in the US by lightning. On the list of daily “dangers” faced by Californians, mountain lions are but a footnote.

Mountain Lion Safety Tips:

1. When it comes to personal safety, always be aware of your surroundings, wherever you are; conduct yourself and attend to children and dependents accordingly.
2. Landscape for safety. Remove vegetation that provides cover for cougars. Remove plants that attract wildlife (deer, raccoons, etc.). By attracting them you naturally attract their predator the cougar.
3. Don't feed wildlife. Don't leave pet food outside. Both may attract cougars by attracting their natural prey.
4. Keep pets secure. Roaming pets are easy prey for cougars.
5. Confine and secure any livestock (especially at night) in pens, sheds, and barns.
6. Don't approach a cougar. Most cougars want to avoid humans. Give a cougar the time and space to steer clear of you.
7. Supervise children, especially outdoors between dusk and dawn. Educate them about cougars and other wildlife they might encounter.
8. Always hike, backpack, and camp in wild areas with a companion.
9. Never run past or from a cougar. This may trigger their instinct to chase. Make eye contact. Stand your ground. Pick up small children without, if possible, turning away or bending over.
10. Never bend over or crouch down. Doing so causes humans to resemble four-legged prey animals. Crouching down or bending over also makes the neck and back of the head vulnerable.
11. If you encounter a cougar, make yourself appear larger, more aggressive. Open your jacket, raise your arms, throw stones, branches, etc., without turning away. Wave raised arms slowly, and speak slowly, firmly, loudly to disrupt and discourage predatory behavior.
12. Try to remain standing to protect head and neck and, if attacked, fight back with whatever is at hand (without turning your back) people have utilized rocks, jackets, garden tools, tree branches, and even bare hands to turn away cougars.

Lit Night in La Honda

By Ruth Waldhauer

On the last Wednesday of every month, anybody can read anything aloud to a friendly bar crowd at Sullivan's Pub near the La Honda Post Office. I am delighted to have attended most of the readings. You will hear poets and prose writers, ranging from those with established reputations, to neophytes, to high school students and their teachers. Come at 6 pm for a quick supper. The readings begin about 6:30.

For photos of the recent prose, poetry, and even cartoon readings see http://www.flickr.com/photos/25914857@N03/sets/72157621935503639/

Thefts in the Skyline Area

There have been several incidents of theft along Skyline over the last few months. Items have been stolen from cars and outbuildings, mail from mail boxes, and in one case someone attempted to steal a truck but was unable to exit through a security gate.

Residents may need to be more mindful about keeping valuables locked up. Being more alert to potential crime and notifying neighbors of suspicious behavior is another effective deterrent to residential crime, even in the mountains. Reporting incidents of thefts in the Skylines newsletter is one way to keep neighbors informed. If you have first-hand information you would like to share, please send it to Skylineseditor@earthlink.net.

Since Skylines is only published quarterly, we also encourage people to post notices to the SouthSkyline YahooGroup in a timely fashion so other locals are alerted to a problem. Details can be as vague or specific as you are comfortable posting. If you need more information about joining the SouthSkyline Yahoo Group, OR if you wish to have your details posted vaguely and anonymously, contact Georgia Stigall at georgiastigall@yahoo.com for help with this. She is the list owner for the SouthSkyline YahooGroup (not affiliated with SSA but many SSA members are subscribed to it) and is available to post on others' behalf while also protecting identities and other sensitive information.
FOR SALE

Georgia's Homeowners: Several varieties of bags, pillowcases and other fabric goods & gifts. Made in South Skyline region. Phone 650-941-1068 or visit http://www.CoastalSeams.com

FREE

Free fire fitting. This fitting will allow the connection of a fire hose to your water supply and can be utilized by the fire department to access the water necessary for fire suppression. South Skyline Fire and Rescue, web site, http://www.southskylinefire.org/ in the "Help us help you" section.

WANTED

Part time caretaker for elderly lady who would feel most comfortable with another female. Looking for someone who lives in the Skyline area. Contact Lesley 650-948-8837.

RENTALS

Mtn. living near Los Gatos. New addition has own entry, bathroom, loft, living area, kitchenette, shared laundry. Community pool, hiking trails. Non smoker, nature lover. $950 mo. includes PG&E, water, furnishings. madgeiverson@verizon.net.

SERVICES

Certified Computer Technician - Computer repair, Upgrades, Security checks, Computer Cleanup and Optimization, Software and Hardware Installations, Internet Setup, Network Systems, Custom Built Computers, and much more. A+ Certified Technician and Network+ Certified Professional. For information or appointment please call Dustin Myers (408)354-5830 or Email at Dimidnightfire@aol.com

Local handyman and brush/tree defensible space work. Inexpensive. 408-867-2784

Real Estate

My clients are ready for a simpler life.
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SC4 Amateur Radio Club Welcomes those interested in amateur radio for emergency communications and neighborly talk. Simple exam: No Morse code. License is free. We offer classes. Visit www.sc4arc.org or write: SC4ARC
PO Box 237
La Honda, CA 94020

Sullivan’s Restaurant
Family owned and operated.
650-747-9220
M-F-Coffee and breakfast goodies,6:00am-10:30am
Th.-5:00pm-8:30pm
Fri. lunch-11:30am-1:30pm
Fri. dinner- 5:30pm-10:00pm
Sat. Breakfast, lunch, dinner-8:00am-10:00pm
Sun.-8:30am-8:00pm
Live music on the weekends.
Second Thursday every month- The La Honda Historical Society
Last Wednesday of every month- Lit Night

The Mountain Terrace
Charming and rustic atmosphere. Now available for private events. Open for wine tasting on Sat. and Sun. 12:00-4:00. (650) 851-1606

Yerba Buena Nursery reminds Skyline neighbors that Fall is prime planting time for California Native Plants. We are fully stocked with high quality native plants and offer expert consultation advice and delivery service. Christmas Tea Reservations are now being taken. See www.yerbabuenanursery.com for more information. Open Tu-Sat 9-5. 19500 Skyline Blvd. Woodside (650) 851-1668.

Skyline Broadband Service
1 Mbps symmetrical broadband is now available in the South Skyline area. http://SkylineBroadbandService.com 650-917-9279

Classified Guidelines
- Any ads over 35 words may be shortened due to space issues.
- Please limit text to a short description and contact information.
- Ads are free to members. See the back page for membership information.
- Deadline for Ads for the January issue will be January 1, 2010.
- Send ads to skylineseditor@earthlink.net
SSA Calendar

General Meeting – October 25 at Las Cumbres Community Center 1:00pm

Business Meetings at 7:15 pm:
Thurs. November 12
Thurs. December 10
Thurs. January 14

(Call Fred Glover for location and directions)

President Fred Glover  408-354-7121
Editor  Patti Begley  408-867-3973

Join SSA Today

For just $15 a year, your membership dues to the South Skyline Association will provide the funds to publish the Skylines newsletter, offer free classified ads, allow membership in the South Skylines Propane User Group, and provide speakers for our general meetings. Send your dues to:

SSA Membership Chairperson
22400 Skyline Blvd. Box 35
La Honda, CA 94020

Membership forms can be found on www.southskyline.org.

Skylines Is Published Once A Quarter

Skylines invites individuals to submit articles and artwork.

Policy on Classified Ads: Ads are free to SSA members. No continuing ads will be accepted. They must be resubmitted for each issue.

Skylines News Articles: The deadline for submitting articles for the next issue is December 19, 2009.

Send all ads and articles to: Patti Begley c/o 22400 Skyline Blvd #35, La Honda CA 94020, or SkylinesEditor@earthlink.net, 408-867-3973

We reserve the right to edit all submissions. We assume no responsibility for omissions, incorrect information or personal opinions.