



BARRON PARK ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Markus Fromherz, BPA President



While the BPA Board takes a month off in summer, the BPA and many Board members continue to be active. There is a lot of interest in the future of our parks, and the new subcommittee on this topic is off to a promising start. (See the article in this newsletter and also our website.) The "Green Beans" environmental committee has been meeting regularly and is working on several current and future projects. (See the article in this newsletter.) There have been several neighborhood events, in particular, the always popular Movie in the Park in late August and, for the first time, a Get the Scoop back-to-school event with members of and candidates for the PAUSD Board. We are also considering our next Meet and Learn events. (If you're interested in sharing a skill or experience at a daytime or evening meeting, please let us know. Write to Catherine Hendricks at frenchrealtor@gmail.com)

I'd like to thank everyone who has been organizing, volunteering, and attending these events. Our community is so much richer for them!

The Board continues to work on our membership database to upgrade the technology and increase our outreach to neighbors in the apartment buildings along El Camino Real and Arastradero. Another ongoing project is to simplify the BPA

website and also to add blogging capabilities for more members. Look for an update later this year.

We are also continuing our BPA Community Happy Hour at Celia's Mexican Restaurant, 3740 El Camino Real. It's every *third Tuesday* of the month, 5:00–6:00 P.M. Why not join us? Meet your neighbors, catch up with friends, and your first drink is on the BPA!

Finally, if you haven't renewed your membership or if your membership is soon up for renewal, please renew now. Please complete your online membership at www.bpapaloalto.org. If you're not sure of your membership status, you can find out by writing to barronpark.paloalto@gmail.com. We also count on you to encourage neighbors who are not yet members to join. Thank you!

I hope you'll all have a great Fall!

BPA ADDRESS REMINDERS

- For the Barron Park Association home page, the BPA Newsletter archive, and to join or renew your membership, go to: www.bpapaloalto.org
- To confirm your BPA Membership status, write to: barronpark.paloalto@gmail.com
- To contact the BPA Babysitter list, as a

provider or if you need childcare: barronpark.paloalto@gmail.com

- Contact the President of the BPA at: president@bpapaloalto.org

- Contact the BPA Treasurer at: johnwadeking@gmail.com

- Correspond with the BPA Newsletter editors at: newsletter@bpapaloalto.org

- Contact the BPA "Meet and Learn" activities chair at: frenchrealtor@gmail.com

- Reach our BPA Historian at: dgrahampaca@gmail.com

- Contact the BPA Business Liaison at: pabloyang@yahoo.com

- Reach our Welcoming Committee at: gluce@cbnoral.com

- For information on our Emergency Services Volunteer program, write to: mauryg3@comcast.net

- To make a donation for the care of Bol Park's donkeys, Perry and Niner: Check payable to: "ACTERRA-Palo Alto Donkey Fund"

Mail to: ACTERRA
3921 East Bayshore Road
Palo Alto, CA 94303

- To make a donation to the Bol Park Native Plant Restoration Project:

Check payable to: "Friends of the Palo Alto Parks (FOPAP), for the Bol Park Corner Restoration Project"

Mail to: FOPAP
425 Grant Avenue, Suite 27
Palo Alto, CA 94306

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Our Wild Neighbors: The Western Screech Owl

By Jeralyn Moran and the Barron Park Green Beans

Do you ever wonder what might be happening in Barron Park at night? One of our active-at-night neighbors is the Western Screech Owl, which doesn't really screech at all. You might hear one hooting in an accelerating pattern, not an unpleasant sound.

The Screech Owls (genus: *Megascops*) are only found in the Americas, where they are mostly resident (non-migratory). All these owls are small (both sexes are about 7–9 inches in height, with a 20–24-inch wingspan; an adult weighs less than 11 ounces) – in fact they are the smallest owls found in North America!

A Screech Owl can live as long as 20+ years, but in the wild their average lifespan is only about three to seven years. They are hit by cars, grabbed by cats, raccoons, skunks, or large snakes. Other, larger birds like crows, or the Great Horned Owl, will make meals of them; as many as 70% of these birds die as babies or youngsters.

They silently hunt their prey by night, each bird typically hunting alone. They have adapted to human encroachment on their habitat better than most birds. During the day, they roost in natural cavities of large dead or living trees, behind loose boards on abandoned buildings or barns (or in suitable nest boxes), or in thick, scrubby brush if that's their only option. These same sites are where a Screech Owl Mom and Dad will build a nest, where they raise their young together (they are considered "socially monogamous"). The male provides almost all the food for the female and their babies during nesting, while the female incubates the eggs and protects the baby owls once they hatch. She stays with her young constantly for the first three weeks, then takes trips out to help the male hunt. The 'owlets' leave the nest to practice flying and hunting, but stay with their parents for about five weeks before (truly) venturing out on their own. Mom and Dad tend to re-use the same nesting site year after year.

Living near water is their first choice, especially along creek corridors in open woodland areas. They have managed to make a living in certain urban areas such as Barron Park (the Matadero Creek and



Can you see me?

Barron Creek corridors are helpful habitats). They eat larger insects like beetles, moths, crickets, and grasshoppers, all these making up more than half of their diet. Small mammals such as mice, rats, or even bats, as well as smaller reptiles and

amphibians, such as frogs and lizards, and small fish are also on their menu.

At dusk look carefully in or near cavities in our older trees (like the oaks)—you might see one! I enjoy glimpsing one that is in residence on the Gunn High School property.

Our Barron Park Yards—OBPY

By Romola Georgia

The “Fresh Start” Season— Autumn 2016

Wandering through a plant nursery in September or October might give you the impression that it's time to stow away the tools and button up the garden until Spring. Nothing could be further from our California truth. The cool season is the perfect time to start new permanent plantings—perhaps a fruit tree or a native perennial shrub. Additionally, with a little planning, you can be harvesting veggies that your family loves and eats every day through much of the winter. Winter crops are a pleasure as they have fewer insects and diseases and use much less water once the winter rains kick in.

Growing Cool-Season Vegetables— Some Tips for the Barron Park Yard

- Identify and prepare your spot. Does it get six to eight hours of sun every day? Clean up any existing plant debris. Check your soil. If it is heavy clay, add up to 2" of compost to create a loose, granular structure.
- Plant at the right time. Cool-season plants need to get a good start during the long, warm days to be at an optimal size for the Winter.
- What to plant: Sow seeds directly: arugula, beets, carrots, chard, peas (including sugar snap peas, our favorite), radishes, and spinach.
- Transplant from seedlings: broccoli, cauliflower, kale, and other brassicas; also Asian greens, lettuce, and other salad greens. I particularly love planting broccoli because once the center stalk is cut, the plant will continue to send out side shoots which you can harvest for many weeks.
- Onions, garlic, and leeks: This very rewarding family is a champion in my kitchen. Use the largest garlic cloves from the heads you get at the market; plant them in September and October. Each clove will reward you with a new head in July. Onion sets go in a little later in November, while you can plant leeks throughout the Fall.

- How to plant. Keep the seed beds moist with daily sprinkling until the seeds have germinated. Check the soil moisture, and be prepared to water if rain is not regular. Your plants should just barely touch each other when they are full grown. Thin your rows or beds to achieve a good spacing.

- Care for your plants. Weed your beds regularly. Weeds compete for water and nutrients. Pests are rare in the cool season, but be alert for any damage to leaves and check with UC Santa Clara County Master Gardeners (408-282-3105) for remedies. Hand pick snails after dark or in the early morning. Use Sluggo to manage slugs.

- Harvesting your bounty. Regularly harvest leafy greens and lettuce by picking the older outer leaves, leaving the growing center to renew the plant. Gently tear the leaves off rather than cutting them, as stubs can introduce decay into the plant. You can also harvest a bed of lettuce or salad greens by cutting them to about 1"–2", then allow the plants to re-grow for another harvest. Most root crops (such as beets and turnips) can tolerate some harvesting of their leaves to use as greens, but don't take more than one-third of the leaves at any one time.

The Big Picture

The pleasure of eating fresh, delicious organic vegetables is not the only benefit of growing food in your Barron Park yard. When awareness of the drought brought water restrictions home to Palo Alto, a friend considered ripping out her modest veggie beds. She learned, however, that her chard and lettuce uses only a fraction of the water that commercial growers use. So she is actually saving planetary water by using a bit of her own.

Additionally, commercial growing methods have a negative impact on soil. Additives (including herbicides, insecticides, fungicides, and fertilizers) are destroying the biotic life within the soil on which life depends. Commercial operations are also causing a significant loss of topsoil. Researchers estimate that up to 24 pounds of

topsoil is permanently lost for each pound of crop harvested.

There are many reasons to take the plunge and plant a winter crop. Local nurseries are well stocked with seeds and seedlings. Better yet, you can pick up seedlings for your new winter garden at any of the Santa Clara County Master Gardener sales this Fall:

Fall Garden Markets. See <http://mgsanta-clara.ucanr.edu> for more information.

- Saturday, September 17, 10:00 A.M.–noon, in Palo Alto. Palo Alto Demo Garden, 851 Center Dr., Palo Alto.
- Tuesday, September 20, 11:00 A.M.–1:00 P.M., in San Jose. Berger Edibles Demo and Teaching Garden, 1553 Berger Dr., San Jose.
- Monday, September 26, 10:00 A.M.–noon, in Gilroy. South County Teaching and Demo Garden, St. Louise Hospital, 9400 No Name Uno, Gilroy.
- Saturday, October 1, 10:00 A.M.–3:00 P.M., at the Martial Cottle Park Harvest Festival, 5283 Snell Ave., San Jose.

Each event features a wide variety of vegetable seedlings for sale as well as people to talk to for garden tips and advice. Sales benefit the UC Master Gardener program.

Happy gardening!

California Native Plant Society Fall Sale

The California Native Plant Society Fall Sale will be held Saturday, October 15, 2016, 10:00 A.M. to 3:00 P.M., at the CNPS SCV Nursery at Hidden Villa, 26870 Moody Road, Los Altos Hills, west of Foothill College.

Resources:

www.cnps-scv.org
and www.cnps.org

DID YOU GET THE SCOOP?

By Greta Gize Olbrich

On Sunday, August 14, 2016, at Barron Park Elementary School, neighbors got together for an ice cream social—to say good-bye to summer and to usher in the new school year. Sponsored by the Barron Park Association (BPA), it was an afternoon when neighbors and community members could gather, not only to get a scoop of ice cream, but also to “get the scoop” on their Palo Alto Unified (PAUSD) School Board members and candidates.

We had the opportunity to meet a few of the candidates and talk to some of the incumbent school board members about issues and concerns of the PAUSD community at large. Todd Collins, Heidi Emberling, Jennifer DiBrienza, Melissa Baten Caswell, and Ken Dauber were all in attendance. We put them to work scooping ice cream and socializing with neighbors. Ken, Todd, and Heidi all live in the Barron Park neighborhood. Lydia Kou, a Barron Park resident who is running for Palo Alto City Council, was also at the social.

There were kids’ activities too: face painting, soccer, bubbles, and of course socializing with Perry and Niner, the famous “Shrek”-Bol Park Donkeys. The Gunn Jazz Band kept us entertained with their terrific tunes, such as “Take Five” by Dave Brubeck and The-Late-Show-with-Stephen-

Colbert theme song, “Humanism” by Jon Batiste. Thanks guys for coming to play for us on your last day of summer break.

- To become a member or renew your membership in the Barron Park Association and to help support wonderful community events such as this, please go to: <http://bpapaloalto.org>
- To learn more about the pool of Palo Alto school board candidates, please see <http://tinyurl.com/PAUSDcandidates>
- To learn more about the Palo Alto City Council race, please see <http://tinyurl.com/BPA-cityrace>
- The BPA does not endorse any candidates, but we do encourage everyone to register to vote and go to the polls on Tuesday, November 8. To register to vote or learn more about the upcoming election, please see <http://tinyurl.com/BPAvoteNovember>
- The last day you may register to vote is October 24.

Thank you to the BPA for sponsoring the ice cream fun! Thank you to all the volunteers and organizers, you pulled off a great afternoon, and thank you to the donkey handlers who walked the boys from their paddock over to the school and back.



PAUSD Board member Heidi Emberling, with a constituent, James (JJ) Rac.

All Palo Alto Voters Are Invited!

Please come and hear from our PAUSD School Board candidates

PAUSD School Board Candidate Forum
K-5th Grade Focus

Tuesday, October 4, 2016, 6:30–8:30 P.M.

Barron Park Elementary School MP
Room, 800 Barron Ave., Palo Alto

All interested Palo Alto voters—especially PAUSD parents—are invited to hear from our school board candidates! Barron Park, Ohlone, and Fairmeadow PTAs are co-hosting this K-5th grade-focused forum with all the board candidates. If you’d like to submit a question for the candidates please email your question to k5october4forum@gmail.com by October 3, 2016.

Please keep your questions related to K-5th grade issues. There will be separate forums for Special Ed issues on Saturday, October 1, 2016, 10:00 A.M.–noon (location TBD; check at <http://cacpaloalto.paloaltopta.org> and possibly also a forum for 6th–12th grade issues (Day, Time, Location TBD).

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Barron Park Association
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Kale Chips for Kids

By the Juana Briones Elementary School
Garden Club

We have a Garden Club at Juana Briones Elementary School, and one of the favorite snacks we raise and cook are Kale Chips. We grow Lacinato Kale for chips and also for pizza. Here is a simple recipe that you and your children can make at home for a quick snack.

Ingredients:

- 1 bunch Lacinato Kale (aka Dinosaur, Cavolo Nero, black kale, or Tuscan kale) — rinsed and dried
- Olive oil for baking
- Sea salt or Kosher salt
- Preheat oven to 250–275 degrees.

Wash and dry kale (important that the kale be dry or it will steam).

Strip the kale leaves from the tough center spine. Leaves can be left whole for spears or torn into potato-chip-sized pieces.

Place leaves in a bowl, and add a small amount of olive oil to lightly coat (a few teaspoons to start). Mix well. The leaves do not need to be completely coated with oil.

Salt to taste and place in a single layer on a large baking sheet. Make sure the leaves are not overlapping, as this will cause them to steam instead of crisp.

Bake at a low oven temperature (see above) for 6–12 minutes. Watch the kale, and when it begins to get crispy, it is done. Timing depends on oven temperature, so begin checking at about 6 minutes.

Note: Most recipes use a high temperature, but we found it easier to get the chips crispy without burning by using a lower temperature for a longer time.

The kids LOVE this snack, and of course it helps that they grow the kale and prepare the chips themselves (adults handle the oven and hot trays).

For information on the gardens at Juana Briones, contact Science Lab Teacher Karen Kessler kkessler@pausd.org

Home Grown Bike Palo Alto! Event Set for Sunday, October 2

By Linnie Melena and the Bike Palo Alto! Committee



From the Bike Palo Alto! archive

Bike Palo Alto! Sign-ups at El Carmelo Elementary School

Seven years ago, the Barron Park Green Team and its counterpart in College Terrace began what is now an annual tradition: Bike Palo Alto! This is a fun, free, family-friendly event designed to encourage residents to ride their bikes more often for local shopping and other trips around the city. Once again, participants will sign in at El Carmelo School (Bryant and Loma Verde), this year on Sunday, October 2, 2016, from 1:00 to 4:00 P.M. Participants may also pre-register at <https://bikepaloalto.org>

This event continues to grow in popularity, increasing to 650 participants last year.

The Barron Park Association has been a loyal supporter of Bike Palo Alto!, making annual donations of \$100 toward expenses. The majority of the steering committee continues to be made up of Barron Park residents and participation from Barron Park residents is always strong.

- At El Carmelo School, participants sign in and have the chance to learn more about basic bike maintenance and suggested

routes to schools and other local destinations, as well as how to fit their helmets and where to access maps and local biking information.

- Participants then choose from three self-guided routes that highlight some of the main bikeways in Palo Alto and connections to neighboring cities. On each route there will be shorter and longer options for riders age 8–80.

- As further motivation along the routes, there will be free treats provided by local vendors including, once again, smoothies made with bike-powered blenders!

- This year, the Downtown route will include a stop at the Bike & Roll Expo in front of City Hall (Bryant and Hamilton), featuring displays and demonstrations of innovative bicycles and other alternatives to car-based transportation.

Bike Palo Alto! depends entirely on volunteers. There are lots of ways to help, and it's fun. If you can help, please contact Joan Marx at Joan_Marx@arczip.com

Neighborhood to Be Canvassed on Improvements to Bol Park

By Doug Graham and Dick Placone

The residents of Barron Park are being canvassed by a committee of your neighbors, under the auspices of the Barron Park Association (BPA), to ascertain neighborhood opinions on what changes, if any, should be made to Bol Park.

The City of Palo Alto is working on a long-range plan to develop new features in all 31 city parks. This includes our own Bol Park. A committee of 25 Barron Park residents, headed by Dick Placone, has been organized into teams of about six people who will try to contact each household – including residents of condos, apartments, and trailers – by mid-October. The teams will then report to the overall committee and the results will be tabulated into a single report. Following the tabulation of the survey results, the committee will hold a community-wide public meeting to present the survey results to Barron Park residents for review and comments. After this, the survey results will be presented to the City. As the City staff begins to analyze the comments and ideas of Barron Park residents concerning Bol Park, the committee has been assured by City administration that committee members may work closely with City staff as the plans for Bol Park are finalized. The committee will continue to keep the Barron Park community informed of ongoing progress.

The History of Bol Park

In the early 1970s, the BPA was presented with an opportunity to acquire the then donkey pasture for purposes of establishing a neighborhood park. At the request of the BPA, the Board of Supervisors of Santa Clara County accepted an offer by the Cornelis and Josina Bol Family to sell the site for well below market value. County supervisors then placed before the voters of Barron Park (then an unincorporated island surrounded by the city of Palo Alto) a special district to tax ourselves to fund the park's acquisition and development. This passed by a large majority. Development of the park was financed by property taxes, a HUD grant from the Federal government, and private donations. The completed park was dedicated in April 1974.

Later that month, Southern Pacific donated its abandoned railroad right of way to the County. Plans were immediately put into place to convert the right of way into a shared pedestrian/bicycle pathway. In 1975, Barron Park residents voted to annex the community to Palo Alto. As part of the annexation, the city took over financial responsibility for Bol Park. It assumed the tax district debt, financed design and construction of the pathway, and agreed in writing to always keep Barron Park residents involved in ongoing management of Bol Park, a commitment it has honored to this day.

The Initial Objectives for Bol Park

It would be a neighborhood park, without features that would ordinarily be found in city-wide or regional parks. The new park included a play facility for children, an irrigated turf area for family play, a small picnic area with a few picnic tables, a pedestrian pathway following the course of Matadero Creek, with access to the creek, and several benches throughout the park. There was and still remains a strong emphasis on the park's natural environment, which included one acre left in a natural state at the south end of the park. This area included one or more of the Bol family farm implements and a small barn once used to house the donkeys. The empty barn later burned to the ground.

For more details, please go to the BPA website: www.bpapaloalto.org

For Bol Park history: go to the BPA website home page, select "BPA links" and choose the button for the BPA Newsletter. Select stories from the archive:

1. Newsletter for Spring 2016 (now posted) pages 3-7, "How the Neighborhood Created Bol Park," by Doug Graham—16 photos and one map.
2. Newsletter for Winter 2016, pages 2-3, "Bol Park Pathway," by Dick Placone—5 photos.

What's Happening to Retail on One Block Along El Camino?

By Winter Dellenbach

Have you wondered what is hidden behind all those covered windows on the East side of El Camino between the Vaping store, and North to Fernando Avenue, where the recently-closed physical therapy practice was? I and others did wonder, so we took a look.

3457 El Camino (formerly Quality Discount Tile): Through rips in the paper, we saw lots of big stacked boxes. At the back alley, vans from Coupa Café often loaded up at the service doors behind what we

could see had become a big warehouse. City Code Enforcement (CE) had already informed the building's owner as well as his tenant, who owns the Coupa Café chain, that such warehouse use was not a legal, given our City zoning and ground floor retail protection. The tenant responded by posting paper signs front and back that say "CC Restaurant Supply," then got the City to issue a permit to supposedly sell new and used kitchen equipment from 8:30–10:30 A.M. three days a week, thus

fulfilling the City requirement to provide "extensive retail services." No one has seen any customers; rather we see numerous Coupa Café vans loading supplies for its ten cafés and coffee stands at Stanford and in Downtown P.A., while locally we are stuck with what seems like a warehouse occupying a space that could provide two P.A. neighborhoods with useful services... such as a nice café. Reading the Municipal Code, I cannot explain the City's thinking. 3489 El Camino (former shoe shop): This

store shares a divided building with the Vaping store. You know it by its mirrored windows and door that mask the interior that has been divided into tiny spaces. The tenant, who also runs the VAM Café next door, has run online ads advertising workspaces for rent by the hour as well as Airbnb rentals—both illegal uses. The City has since shut down these attempts. The tenant then tried a Thai Meditation Hall—again shut down by the City. Several months ago, an appointment-only used sneaker shop was tried, where only a few shoes were displayed on a shelf at the VAM Café. It too has been shut down, all in response to a series of CE complaints. As of the first week in September, a used furniture business has “opened” five days a week according to the piece of paper taped to the door, yet it is always locked. We shall wait to see what becomes of that. So far, the City is enforcing compliance with City zoning codes by requiring legal use.

3491 El Camino (the Vaping store): A CE complaint resulted in the City’s enforcing its sign ordinance. Five animated electric signs on the side and some on the front were removed. The huge graffiti-like sign painted on the side of the building was painted over, making the corner at El Camino and Margarita / Matadero considerably less trashy looking.

3401 El Camino (legal physical therapy practice): Recently closed. It is uncertain at this time what is planned for the building.

Stay tuned as we learn more about these and perhaps other properties!

Winter 2016 BPA Newsletter Deadline Monday, December 4

To all Contributors:

Please submit articles and drafts (preferably in a Word file) along with any images, by Monday, December 4, 2016, to Myrna Rochester, *newsletter at bpapalto dot org* or *mbrbpa at sonic dot net*

If your Winter idea is still a query, please contact Myrna well in advance to talk about developing it.

Barron Park Association Green Beans: First Year Report, 2015-16

By Jaya Pandey

We are pleased to share that the Green Beans committee of the Barron Park Association has completed its first year successfully, growing close to ten members, ranging from children to grown-ups, all dedicated to building a Barron Park Green Community!

As we mentioned in our first introductory article in this newsletter almost a year ago, ‘Green Beans’ was formed as a new committee of the BPA with a focus on environmental issues, reviving the BPA committee that had provided the community with a forum and representation on environmental concerns, ranging from the Communication and Power Industries (CPI) to hydrogen refueling stations in the past.

Our first year at Green Beans has been busy: developing a committee charter and a team structure, deciphering effective communication channels for community outreach (such as the BPA website and the Bol Park kiosk), creating a space in the community for our committee, and weighing in the voices of all the members to share their environmental concerns. Some of our interests included conserving tree frogs, sharing information on zero waste with the community, indoor and outdoor air pollutants, identifying the need for drought-resistant landscaping, as well as helping Barron Parkers get to know our co-existing wild neighbors (the screech owl being the latest—see the article in this newsletter). At the beginning of 2016, the committee also rolled out a community-based Carpool Club to facilitate ride-sharing on a regular basis among BPA members with common destinations. We are always looking for new ideas to increase awareness.

At Green Beans, while we have a spectrum of activities, we believe the youth of the community must remain an integral part and focus of what we do, and look forward to their participation. For the coming year,



the youngest member of the committee will be busy learning about the lifestyle and basic habitats of the Pacific tree frog and its conservation in Matadero Creek.

The BPA Green Beans committee encourages youth of the community to apply for our Youth Environmental Service Project Grant that provides local middle- and high-school students a chance to engage with an environmental service project serving the Barron Park community. Eligible youth may use this grant, for example, toward obtaining a Girl Scout Silver or Gold Award, a Boy Scout Eagle Rank, or simply to engage themselves with the community while making a sustainable impact on our local ecosystem. Grant applications will be received and processed year round, and youth are encouraged to send a simple letter of intent to the BPA Board or directly to the Green Beans team.

To conclude, as a committee, our coming years are promising: we plan to expand and bring in new alliances and partnerships to meet the environmental goals of the Barron Park neighborhood. Join us if you would like to be part of Green Beans!

Contact info: BPA Board, email: *bpa-board at googlegroups dot com*

Green Beans, email: *greenbeans-bpa at googlegroups dot com*

EMAIL LISTS

The BPA has four email lists: *bpa-news*, *bpa-issues*, *bpa-misc* and *bpa-jobpostings*. They are hosted at Google Groups. To join the lists, go to the BPA Website: *BPApaloalto.org* and click on the tab near the top of the page: “BPA Email Lists.” This link provides information about each list and an easy way to subscribe to one or more of them.

New Principal at Juana Briones Is a Familiar Face

For long-time Gunn administrator and former Juana Briones parent Tom Jacoubowsky, his new job is also a homecoming.

By Todd Collins

Tom Jacoubowsky is the new principal at Juana Briones Elementary School. But don't be surprised if he looks familiar: Tom has been part of the Palo Alto schools and the Juana Briones community for almost two decades, both as an administrator and a parent.

I sat down with Tom recently in his "fish-bowl" office, looking out on two sides onto the school's courtyard and playgrounds. The blinds were up and there was a steady stream of young students smiling, waving, and sometimes even knocking on the window to say hi to "Mr. J." Between hellos, I got the scoop on his new assignment, and what is happening at one of our two neighborhood elementary schools.

You've been in Palo Alto a long time. How did you get here, and what has your path been to Juana Briones?

I grew up in Redwood City, and I started my teaching career at Menlo-Atherton High School, teaching history and also as the track and field coach. I really enjoyed doing both, but in 2001 had an opportunity to come to Gunn High School. I started out there as an economics teacher, but soon served as both Athletic Director and Dean of Students. After a few years I became Assistant Principal, and was in that role for nine years. I was there for 14 years in total and honestly never thought I'd be there so long.

Last year brought a change, as I was asked to be the interim principal at Jordan Middle School. I'd never worked in a middle school before, but it was a great year, and a

Photo by: Lifetouch Photography



Tom Jacoubowsky, Juana Briones principal

fantastic learning experience for me.

They were able to find a long-term principal at Jordan for this year, and Superintendent McGee asked if I would consider this role. I jumped at the chance for a few reasons.

First, I have always had an interest in working at the elementary school level. The work we do is so critical to set the foundational stage for academic success for students.

Second, of course I knew Briones was already a great and well-managed school. Principal Lisa Hickey, who preceded me, did a wonderful job with the teachers, the staff, and the community, and was always a great cheerleader and advocate for the school. I knew I was coming into a good situation.

Finally, it is something of a homecoming for me, since my son Bryce had been a student at Briones when I was working at Gunn. When I told Bryce about the opportunity, he was excited for me. I asked him what teachers he had particularly liked, and after thinking a few seconds he told me, "I liked all my teachers." That was a pretty good recommendation.

That's interesting that you've now seen all three levels in the district—elementary, middle, and high school. Have you had any insights that impact how you see things at Briones?

The biggest insight for me has been the importance of reading and writing and how it ultimately impacts a student's success in all subjects. There's no getting around it.

When I was at Gunn, we had three levels of 9th grade Biology: Biology 1, plus a slightly accelerated Biology 1A, and Biology Honors. All three are great courses, and all three meet the UC admissions requirements.

The students were free to choose what level they would take without much direction. But every year, we would see some kids struggle; some would drop to another class, and others would want to drop but couldn't for scheduling reasons. While changing lanes isn't a major problem, we clearly weren't doing the best we could at helping kids get into the right course where they would be happy and successful.

We did an analysis to figure out what were the best predictors of student success. We looked at middle school grades overall, middle school science grades, STAR test math scores. None of those really told us anything about which kids would do well in which classes.

But then we had the idea to look at STAR test English and Language Arts (ELA) scores. And that turned out to be the best predictor. Students with higher ELA scores were more successful in accelerated 9th grade Biology classes. It's no accident that virtually all college admissions require four years of high school English.

That really carries through to the work we are doing at Briones. We have a big emphasis throughout Palo Alto on reading and writing. We have made a big investment in training our elementary teachers in the Columbia University Teachers College Reading and Writing Project. This has been a big effort, but well worth it, since the reading

Join us at the next BPA Senior Lunch

October 11, at 1 p.m.,
at Da Sichuan, 3781 El Camino.

RSVP to: Julie Spengler, 650-493-9151
juliespengler@sbcglobal.net

and writing foundation from elementary school ultimately drives overall academic success, in high school and beyond.

It's been a while since you were a parent at Briones. Have things changed?

If anything, it has gotten even better than when Bryce was here. There is such a great community here, and it is incredibly welcoming, not just to me as the principal, but to all the families and community members who come to the school.

I make a point of always being out, during drop-off and at lunch, to make sure to connect with the kids and their families. We have a small, close-knit community here, and those personal connections are so important to making sure we do a good job as educators.

I heard a rumor that you did your own TED talk. Is that true?

Yes, the Gunn students put together a TEDx event every year, and they invited me back last year to give a talk called, "College Is Part of the Process of Life, It's Not Life Itself." That's a particularly important message for so many of our high school students, who get so wrapped up in college admissions, and see it as such a high-stakes, make-or-break event in their lives.

Even when their parents are urging them not to worry or telling them that everything will be ok, it is hard for them not to get anxious about it. How many times have kids heard, either from their own parents or their friends' parents, "The reason we live here is for the schools"?

For most adults, of course, college is an important part of our lives, but it is just a part. If you ask an audience of adults, "How many of you owe 100% of your success in life to college?" almost nobody will raise their hands. Most of us took various paths to, through, and after college to get to where we are; it usually isn't just a straight line. We need to give kids the space to explore and find their own path.

(Ed: You can see Tom's TEDx talk on YouTube at https://youtu.be/m_FonZW1MhA)

Any closing thoughts?

Just that I think I have the best job in the district! I feel like I have been given a great school to work with, and really feel we can make a positive impact here on the lives of our students.

Business Beat: Palo Alto Martial Arts

"Building a strong body, mind and spirit"

By Andrew Cheav

Our studio, Palo Alto Martial Arts, at 3773 El Camino, is owned by Grand Master Kwangil Bae. Grand Master Bae has been doing Taekwondo for almost 40 years and has been an instructor in Taekwondo for 30 years. He is an 8th Dan (Degree) Black Belt in Taekwondo.

The two main categories our students compete in are Kyorugi (sparring), which we see in Olympic Taekwondo, and Poomsae (forms), a series of memorized movements performed by students.

Rachel Bae, Grand Master Kwangil Bae's daughter, is 15 years old and has been doing Taekwondo for almost her entire life. She is a 3rd Dan Black Belt. Rachel, with two other students from our sister studios (Eagle Taekwondo and Dowongyuei) in Southern California, first competed as a team of three in "Synchronized Poomsae" at the US Open Taekwondo Championships in February 2016 in Reno, Nevada.

In this category, not only must they perform the Poomsae with speed, power, and precision, but all three must perform all moves at the same time. Rachel and her teammates won first place in Synchronized Poomsae, and they are now the faces of Synchronized Poomsae in the United States.

Several months later the same team competed at the California State Championships. (State Championships count as National Championship Qualifiers, so Rachel and her teammates scored high enough at State to qualify for Nationals.) Similarly, the team scored high enough at Nationals to qualify for the US Team Trials, sponsored by the governing body of Taekwondo in the United States—USA Taekwondo—and held in late August 2016 at its headquarters in Colorado Springs, Colorado. There, they competed for the chance to represent the United States; these are similar to Olympic trials. The three

girls won first place at Team Trials, thus allowing them to join the US National Poomsae Team. Palo Alto Martial Arts is proud to have produced such an amazing athlete, and we look forward to seeing Rachel compete in the future for the honor and glory of the sport of Taekwondo.

For more information on Taekwondo and our studio, please visit our website www.baetkd.com or email us at info@baetkd.com

Palo Alto Martial Arts
Member of World Taekwondo Federation
Member of World Taekwondo Headquarters (KUKKIWON)
3773 El Camino Real
Palo Alto, CA 94306
Phone: (650) 666-2969
Email: info@baetkd.com
Website: www.baetkd.com

Tournament website:
www.tigerclawwopentkd.com



Photo by: Member of the Dowongyuei Studio

The Synchronized Poomsae Team: l. to r., Rachel Bae, Vivian Cao, and Iris Kang

Barron Park's Movie Night in the Park!

By Lydia Kou

This year's Fourth Annual Barron Park Movie Night in Bol Park featured the original 1965 Rogers and Hammerstein's *The Sound of Music*. The event was free of charge with over 200 people attending. Our free admission is made possible by the annual membership dues of you and your neighbors, that is, the members of the Barron Park Association (BPA), with additional funding by the City of Palo Alto's "Know Your Neighbors Grant."

In previous years, we've shown *Wall-E*, *Brave*, and *Frozen*.

The film is presented at dusk on a large blow-up screen in the inner section of Bol Park. This year we had a little challenge with wind at the beginning of the showing... but that calmed down very soon. Attendees are encouraged to bring a picnic before the showing and to socialize with neighbors and friends. In the past, we have arranged for food trucks, which may be an option in future years. Moviegoers bring their own chairs, blankets, and goodies to add comfort and make it a fun experience. Alcoholic beverages and smoking are not permitted.

No movie is the same without popcorn, and freshly popped popcorn was made available before the movie started.

Proceeds from popcorn purchases are dedicated to the donkey fund, for the maintenance of Niner and Perry, our neighborhood pride and joy. If you haven't visited with Niner and Perry, opportunities are available. Walk the pedestrian/bicycle trail behind Bol Park, and you will come upon Niner and Perry's paddock home. On Sunday evenings at 6:00 P.M., you can see them being fed and an opportunity is provided for you to get to know Niner and Perry and their volunteer handlers.

Next year, we hope to sponsor our Fifth Annual Movie Night in the park. We encourage membership in the Barron Park Association to help fund this and other events. However, most importantly, let's all try to be the neighbor who knows a neighbor. That is what being a Barron Parker is all about.

To confirm your membership status, please write to: barronpark.paloalto@gmail.com

To join, renew, or rejoin the Barron Park Association, go to www.bpapaloalto.org where you can sign up and pay your dues online. Membership starts at only \$20 annually; any amount goes a long way. Please encourage other Barron Park residents—who may not yet know about the BPA—to join.

Watch out for Movie Night 2017!



Photo by: Lydia Kou

Comfortable seating in Bol Park at Movie Night 2016

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■

BPA meetings are held the 3rd Tuesday of most months at 7:15 p.m.

Neighbors are welcome.

BPA Community Happy Hours are held the 3rd Tuesday of every month at 5 p.m.

E-mail President at BPAPaloalto.org for locations

www.BPAPaloalto.org

ART IN THE PARK—JIM COLTON

I took up photography at the age of 13 in my home state of Minnesota when I inherited a Voightlander 120 film camera with a leaky bellows. I taped up the bellows and set up a darkroom in the only bathroom in my family's home of seven. I've been a photographer ever since. I have improved my photography skills considerably by joining the Palo Alto Camera Club. During the last decade, through photography, I have tried to capture the people and cultures of other countries, including Vietnam, Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar, Guatemala, Argentina, and Chile.

In February 2015, I was a visiting artist to Cuba. This status allowed me to wander freely, mainly in Havana, and engage with numerous Cuban citizens. I quickly gravitated toward learning about how common Cuban citizens have been living under the Castro regime since the Revolution in 1959. My photographs document what I found.

You can see more of Jim's photos at www.jimcolton.zenfolio.com
james dot colton10 at gmail dot com
 650-464-1775



Havana is filled with beautiful Spanish colonial architecture. There aren't many cars, but almost all are American cars from the 40s and 50s that Cubans have ingeniously kept running without access to American parts.



The Spanish colonial architecture is beautiful even though it is not well maintained. Buildings and parts of buildings collapse on a regular basis for lack of maintenance.



The great music and colorful dress of Cuba is illustrated by this typical dance of the Santería religion.



The government's claim of full employment means that everyone has a job, but often it only lasts for two or three days a week. So Cubans have little money but lots of free time they use to play games or socialize.

BARRON PARK ASSOCIATION
NEWSLETTER
FALL 2016



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