

BARRON PARK ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER

P R E S I D E N T ' S M E S S A G E

Markus Fromherz, BPA President



Greetings, neighbors. This is my last column as President of the Board of the Barron Park Association. I am happy to announce that Richard Elder

has been elected as the new President by the Board and will start in this position at the beginning of 2017. Rich has been on the Board since 2014 and has lived in Barron Park with his wife Linda for over twenty years. The Board also elected Jon Affeld to the position of Vice President.

I've been on the BPA Board since 2010 and President for the last three years. I enjoyed the work (and I will stay on the Board), but I feel it is important that we turn over this position on a regular basis, ideally every year. This way, new ideas and new energy are constantly brought to the fore on the Board, and no one person remains in this position for too long. Most of the BPA's work is done by the Committee chairs and their committees, but the President runs the monthly meetings and represents the BPA toward the public, so he or she sets the tone and the pace for the BPA to some degree.

We are fortunate to have a strong Board, with several new members and Board candidates joining over the last two years. As you know, there is a lot of activity around various kinds of events, the environment, membership development, business relations, the newsletter, our website, community outreach, and much more. I'd

like to thank the members of the Board for their hard work and for their support over the years!

As regular readers know, I believe that the BPA has a very important role to play in building community in Barron Park. The BPA does this through neighborhood events, communication and education, and collaboration with the City. The BPA has been successful in helping to improve infrastructure, bringing ideas and concerns to relevant organizations and businesses around us, and bringing Barron

Park residents together.

You can support this work by maintaining your annual membership dues (www.bpa-paloalto.org) and encouraging your friends and neighbors to become members. In fact, this is the only way that the BPA can continue to be successful. If you can do more, please volunteer in whatever capacity you are able to help.

I hope you have a joyful holiday season and a healthy and happy new year. See you around the neighborhood!

INCOMING PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Richard Elder, Incoming BPA President



I will be assuming the role of Barron Park Association President in January 2017. First, I would like to thank Markus Fromherz for his leadership over the last three years.

He has brought in great new members to the BPA Board, organized and documented our Board processes so that the Board runs smoothly, and supported new events and more interaction between BPA neighborhood members and the BPA Board.

I have been a BPA Board member for two and a half years, and also manager of the

BPA email lists. I have been a resident of Barron Park for 23 years. When we bought our house in Barron Park, I didn't think much about the community I was joining. I found when I moved in that this was a friendly community with a strong identity and its own history and traditions. I believe that the BPA plays a strong role in maintaining that identity through sponsoring neighborhood events and facilitating neighborhood communication. This newsletter is a prime example of that. I look forward to more good community events next year,

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starting with our Annual Meeting in March.

We are hoping to have more cultural events such as the Lunar New Year and Holi celebrations held in the past. If there is a neighborhood cultural event that you would like to lead, please contact me. The BPA can provide help with sponsorship and logistics. We are also always on the lookout for new Board members, so if you would like to increase your involvement in the community, please come to a Board meeting.

Have a happy holiday and I look forward to meeting more of you next year.

Let's Meet For Lunch!

By Peter K. Mueller

Mark your calendars. Senior residents of Barron Park have been meeting regularly for lunch at 1:00 p.m. on the second Tuesday of each even-numbered month—that is, February, April, June, August, October, and December.

Our June and August lunches are picnics in Bol Park, with box lunches (sandwich of your choice, chips, fruit, cookies, and a drink) delivered by Driftwood Deli, for the low price of \$10. Bring your own chair.

In December we meet for our annual Holiday lunch and get-together at Cibo's (3398 El Camino), where we have a private dining room and enjoy accordion music and songs by our talented neighbors Jena Rauti and Gary Breitbard. Lots of fun!

In February, April, and October, we alternate between Da Sichuan (3781 El Camino) and Corner Bakery Café (3375 El Camino). Menus and prices vary.

Detailed notices are sent out via email the week before each lunch to give you a chance to look them over and sign up for your slot.

Seniors look forward to the bi-monthly lunch get-togethers to enjoy the camaraderie and the informal atmosphere and to get to know each other better.

Interested in joining us? Please contact Julie Spengler at 650-493-9151 or email at juliespengler@sbcglobal.net. We'd like to get to know you!

Bol Park Pathway: The Draft Plan

By Richard Placone, Bol Park Pathway Committee

The Bol Park Pathway Committee of the BPA has been apprised of a new "draft plan" for immediate upgrades to address the safety issues associated with our Bol Park pathway. This plan is the result of a number of meetings between members of the Bol Park Pathway Committee and City Transportation Staff. After close review, the Pathway Committee finds that the draft plan addresses the safety issues we described in our meetings and introduces the signage we all agreed upon. I anticipate there will be a community-wide meeting sometime in January 2017 with City Staff and Bol Park Pathway Committee members to take comments from residents.

This is an interim plan meant to address the most serious safety problems on the pathway. These improvements will be installed in the first few months of the new year. Meanwhile, Bol Park Pathway Committee members and City Staff will soon be engaged in the redesign of the current pathway into an improved pathway that will provide separate access for cyclists and pedestrians. Construction of the redesigned pathway is expected to occur in fiscal year 2017, which starts next July 1.

You may wish to consult the draft plan yourself. If you did not receive it in PDF form in a listserv message I relayed earlier this month, please email me at rcplacone@sbcglobal.net and I will send it to you. When you have seen the draft plan, please send me any comments at this email address, and I will incorporate them into our ongoing record.

The Committee and I thank everyone for their interest and input. Best wishes in the New Year.

Richard Placone, Chair Bol Park Pathway Committee, A Barron Park Association Committee, rcplacone@sbcglobal.net

BPA ADDRESS REMINDERS

- For the **BPA Home Page**, the **BPA Newsletter Archive**, and to join or to renew your **Membership**, go to: www.bpapaloalto.org
- To confirm your **BPA Membership Status**, write to: barronparkdotpaloalto@gmail.com
- To contact the **BPA Babysitter List**, as a provider or if you need childcare: barronparkdotpaloalto@gmail.com
- Contact the **BPA President** 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 our **BPA Business Liaison** at: pabloyang@yahoo.com
- Reach our **Welcoming Committee Chair** at: gluce@cbnocal.com
- For information on our **Emergency Services Volunteer Program**, write to: mauryg3@comcast.net
- To make your donation for the care of **Bol Park's donkeys, Perry and Jenny**: Online at www.barronparkdonkeys.org or write a check payable to: "ACTERRA-Palo Alto Donkey Fund," and mail to: ACTERRA, 3921 East Bayshore Road, Palo Alto, CA 94303

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.

Our Barron Park Yards—OBPY

By Romola Georgia

Choosing a Fruit Tree—Winter 2016

Though the winter season brings us darkness and cold weather, it is the perfect time to plan for a fruit tree.

Imagine a child picking a ripe plum or tangerine, taking the first bite, and savoring it as the juice runs down his or her little chin. There is no better way for kids to learn to love fresh food and to understand where it comes from. Even when there are no longer kids in the house, the thrill of picking a fresh lemon or persimmon never seems to diminish for me.

Barron Park was historically part of the legendary *Valley of Heart's Delight* where vast orchards of flowering apricots and plums filled the air with a wondrous scent each spring. Our soil and climate are beautifully adapted to fruit tree growing. Here are some issues to consider when planning for a fruit tree:

- 1. What do you love?** Think about what fruit your family loves and will use. I always cringe when I see rotted fruit languishing on the ground under a Barron Park tree.
- 2. What can't be found?** There are so many wonderful varieties of fruits available that I try (mostly) to avoid planting what I can get easily at the grocery store.
- 3. What can only be enjoyed at home?** Some fruits, like apricots, are almost always tasteless in the market. They are fragile, hard to ship, and thus picked way too early.
- 4. What can you provide?** In a home garden, your commitment to keeping the tree small is your key to success. Small trees are easier to prune, pick, and protect from pests. Small-sized trees may allow you to incorporate more types of fruit into your yard.

Bare-root trees are dormant and not sold in a pot with soil. They are more economical than a potted tree and have the advantage of allowing you to examine the condition of the roots, the most important part of a new tree. Bare-root trees may include **Pome fruits** like apples, pears, and Asian

pears; **Stone fruits** like apricots, plums, pluots, nectarines, and peaches; and other popular fruits like persimmons, pomegranates, and figs.

Another factor in choosing your tree is climate adaptability. Many fruit trees require a long cold winter (think Minnesota) to set fruit and to thrive. Other varieties are happier in our milder California climate. This is known as "chill hours." A good resource for determining the "chill hour" requirements of tree varieties and other useful information on choosing, planting, and growing trees is the Dave Wilson Nursery website: <http://www.davewilson.com:8080/product-information/category/fruit-trees>

At planting time, dig a hole only as deep as the roots will go, roughen up the sides of the hole, make a mound in the center of the hole, and *do not* add any amendments. (This will encourage the roots to move out into the native soil.) The trunk should be cut to knee height (22"–24"). Position the plant, trim off any broken roots with a sharp pruner, and spread the roots over the mound of soil. Backfill the hole. Water once when half the soil is returned and again when all the soil is replaced.

Citrus trees are a wonderful addition to our Barron Park yards. They are as decorative as any purely ornamental plant, with beautiful glossy leaves year round. Most citrus fruit holds well on the tree so you can pick as you need it. Our family delights in harvesting oranges in the morning and slicing them to accompany weekend breakfasts.

There are many types of citrus trees. Within each type is an astonishing array of varieties. The most well-known are:

Oranges: Navel and Valencia types as well as Cara Cara and Blood Orange

Mandarins: Tangerine, Tangelo, and Satsuma

Lemons: Eureka and Meyer

Limes: Bearss, Mexican, and Rangpur

Other Citrus: Kumquats, Calamondin, Citron

Most citrus requires high heat to ensure sweet fruit. Plant in the spring in the sunniest, warmest location in your yard. A Southwest exposure is best, or plant near a wall or pool for reflected heat. Plant at the same level the tree originally grew.

The "standard" tree can grow to 25 feet. For our Barron Park yards, you probably want a dwarf (8'–10') or "true dwarf" (5'–6'). Check your variety for cold-hardiness. Our winters have nights that are very cold, sometimes dipping to freezing. You can use a floodlight or a string of Christmas lights (not LEDs) for some protection. But in a cold snap, if it is predicted to go below 30 degrees, cover your tree, making sure the cover doesn't touch the plant. Citrus tends to have a shallow root system. In the summer irrigate every 7 to 10 days.

Let's set 2017 as the Year of the Barron Park Fruit Tree! If you decide to plant a fruit tree, send a note to the editor (*newsletter at bpapaloalto dot org*) and we can make a count at the year's end. Happy gardening.

Questions?

Master Gardener Hotline: 408-282-3105 or *mgsantaclara at yahoo dot com*

Palo Alto Demonstration Garden: <http://mgsantaclara.ucanr.edu/demonstration-gardens/palo-alto-demo-garden/>

SPRING 2017, BPA Newsletter Deadline—Wednesday, March 1!

To all our Contributors:

Please submit articles and drafts (preferably in a Word file), along with any images, by Wednesday, March 1, 2017, to Myrna Rochester, *newsletter at bpapalto dot org* or *mbrbpa at sonic dot net*

If your Spring idea is still a query, please contact Myrna well in advance to talk about developing it. Note that our Spring 2017 issue is mailed in print format to all Barron Park households.

UPDATES FROM THE PASTURE

By Jenny Kiratli, Barron Park Donkey Project

Yes, we have donkeys in Barron Park, and the world is better for it.

Perry, our miniature donkey, returned from his respite stay at the Steinbeck Country Equine Clinic in Salinas on Tuesday, November 15. After being unloaded from the horse trailer and led to the path at Paradise Way, he strained at his lead and pulled his handlers along in his haste to get back to his home pasture. Once there, he raced around reacquainting himself with flora and fauna within his

"gated residence." Dr. Tim Eastman, owner of the Steinbeck Clinic, decreed our pasture as donkey heaven ("If I was a donkey, this is where I would want to go when I die.")

Later that evening, a new donkey was delivered as Perry's new companion and pasture mate. As donkeys are herd animals, we did not want to bring Perry home alone and searched to find the right match. "Jenny" is a standard Jerusalem donkey from Santa Clarita (in Los Angeles County) owned by an elderly couple who were no longer able to care for her. Jenny had previously lived in the company of cows. The last cow had died and she was very lonely. Within a very short time, she has accommodated to her strange surroundings which include noise from the VA Hospital and the Bol Park path, dozens of visitors, and Perry himself. She is extremely sweet and gentle, gives kisses to her handlers, and has the loudest bray around.

Sadly, there was an opening for a companion donkey due to the passing of Miner 49er (Niner) who had been Perry's constant companion for nearly two decades. After several days of high level care at the Steinbeck Clinic, Niner (age 32) succumbed



Michael Holland with "Jenny."

to an unidentified respiratory disorder. On Sunday, November 20, a Memorial Service was held in Bol Park for Niner, attended by over 100 residents. Mayor Pat Burt welcomed the community and remarked on the importance of donkeys for Palo Alto. Doug Moran, a longtime donkey handler, gave a beautiful eulogy that captured the



Miner 49er (Niner).



Doug Moran at Niner's memorial.



Photo: Donkey Project archive

Photo: Myrna Rochester

Photo: Jenny Kiratli

Photo: Jenny Kiratli

essence of Niner, and more than a dozen children and adults spoke about their personal connections and memories. The unexpected and spontaneous finale was provided by Gary Breitbard and Jena Rauti who led the crowd in a round of “Sweetly Sings the Donkey,” including the rousing chorus of HeeHaw, HeeHaw, HeeHaw, HeeHaw, HeeHaw!

Recently, a Steering Committee has emerged to take on management and oversight of the Barron Park Donkey Project. Accomplishments have included: securing Perry’s return, acquiring Jenny, and arranging tree work to improve the pasture. Plans are underway to upgrade the website and develop a comprehensive volunteer training program in advance of recruiting new volunteers. Applications are now available for volunteer openings for donkey handlers; please contact *jkiratli@yahoo dot com* for information. Additional plans include expanding educational opportunities involving local schools.

Support for the Barron Park donkeys is entirely through charitable donations to cover food, supplies, veterinary care, and land use. The donkeys’ pastoral home is provided through a lease agreement with property owner James Witt.

The fiduciary agent for the Donkey Project is the Palo Alto nonprofit Acterra (Action for a Healthy Planet, www.acterra.org). A major effort is being launched with a five-year goal of raising \$125,000 to ensure care and coverage into the future. The City of Palo Alto has approved a matching grant of \$10,000, to be followed by an additional grant of \$5,000. To take advantage of the matching grant, please plan to donate during this fund-raising period!

You may donate online at www.barron-parkdonkeys.org or by sending a check to Acterra, 3921 East Bayshore Road, Palo Alto, CA 94303 (be sure to note: Donkey Project). A Barron Park street-by-street challenge will be announced soon. Any amount is welcome!

Wander by the pasture along the Bol Park path, and experience the phenomenon of donkeys in the heart of Silicon Valley. One important caution—please DO NOT feed them, not even apples or carrots, as these can be dangerous to their health. Help us protect these beautiful animals. They are our community treasures.

Stay Calm and Bray On!

El Camino Business Update

By Bob Moss

Since my last report in February 2016, there continue to be changes in occupancy on El Camino Real between Adobe Creek and Page Mill Road, along with an increase in vacancies. However, overall vacancy rates remain low.

Artillery Games at 2951A closed, and the site is vacant.

Orthopedic Sports Medicine at 3401 closed, and the site is vacant.

Blossom Birth Services, a nonprofit serving young families, has leased the building at 505 Barron Avenue. Renovations have been completed; an Open House is scheduled for January 6, 2017.

The Jewish Study Network offices at 3626 and 3628 El Camino are now vacant.

At 3630, a space previously occupied by Inhabiture, vacant for months, is now occupied by Percolata Inc.

Papa Murphy’s Pizza at 3850 closed abruptly this past spring, and the site is vacant.

The Compadres site at 3877, vacant since the restaurant closed in October 2010, had a redevelopment application filed in November 2014 and approved in 2015, but there has been no activity.

Rice Thai Cuisine at 3924 has closed; it is now under new management and renamed Siam Fine Thai Cuisine.

At 4153A El Camino Way, DF Machining was replaced by Instrumental, Inc.

The former site of 4141 El Camino Bar recently had the walls repainted on the El Camino side, covering the murals.

At 4200 El Camino, Midas Muffler, later

Meineke Automotive, closed in 2014, and the site is still vacant. American Tire is supposedly opening there. Other “future” tenants had earlier been identified at this site, but never moved in.

Days Inn at 4238 El Camino is now The Palo Alto Inn.

Hyatt Palo Alto at 4290 is now Crowne Plaza Palo Alto.

Vacancy rates under 5% are basically considered full occupancy. On El Camino vacancies have increased slightly since February.

There are eight vacancies on the Ventura side: 2951A, 3401, 3527, 3585, 3877, 4141, and 4117. The Combes site at 3585 has been vacant for more than 40 years. The former Compadres site at 3877 (closed in October 2010) was approved for redevelopment as a mixed-use site, with ground floor retail and housing above, in early 2015. However, no work has been undertaken. The former Curves site at 4117 has also been vacant for years with nothing proposed for it.

Nine vacancies are on the Barron Park side: 3606 (vacant more than 40 years), 3626, 3628, 3632, 3710, 3850, 3892, 4050, and 4146. The lots at 3710 and 4146 have also been vacant for decades. Each had several developments approved, but nothing was built.

The building proposal for 2755 El Camino—the VTA parking lot at Page Mill-Oregon—is now proposed at 60 small residential units—that is, far more development than zoning allows. This proposal was reviewed by the City Council in October but no action has been taken.

Vacancy rates	Aug. 2015	Feb. 2016	Nov. 2016
El Camino on Ventura Side	5.14%	5.51%	6.90%
El Camino on Barron Park Side	1.78%	2.05%	3.14%
El Camino Way	0.00%	2.28%	2.28%
Total Vacancy including El Camino Way	3.63%	2.99%	4.46%

New to Barron Park: Blossom Birth Services

By Dominique Vincent, Assistant Director, Blossom Birth Services



Photo: Jane Gee

Babywearing Support

Storytime

Co-working

■ Meet the Doulas

■ Consultations: Lactation, Sleep, and Babywearing

■ Beanstalk Shop (with retail and resale items)

Blossom is a community nonprofit that has been in operation since 1999, serving families all across the Bay Area. Our mission is to provide resources and support for a healthy, informed, and confident pregnancy and parenting journey.

There have been many changes in Palo Alto, and after almost a decade on California Avenue, we were obliged to find a new location to continue services. Blossom is excited to make Barron Park home and we are thrilled to remain in Palo Alto. Since we are new to the neighborhood, we would like to extend the offer of your First Yoga Class Free to all Barron Park residents. When you visit or call, make sure to let the front desk know you are a BP resident to take advantage of the offer.

Overview of Blossom Services:

■ A comprehensive Yoga program that includes:

Daily Pre-/postnatal Yoga classes, with two classes per day Monday through Friday

At least one Yoga class each day on Saturday and Sunday

Mom/Baby and Mom/Toddler Yoga

Prenatal Yoga Teacher Training Program

■ A myriad of birth preparation classes

■ Baby care classes

■ Many different support groups for pre- and postnatal support:

Parent/Baby Groups, including Russian and Japanese language

Pre-/Postpartum Mood Support Group

Breastfeeding Support

Lastly, we hope you can join us at our Open House, scheduled for Friday, January 6, 2017, from 3–6 p.m. If you are unable to make it that day, feel free to drop in during our office hours (Monday–Friday, 10–2 p.m., and Saturday, 9–12 p.m., or by appointment).

Thanks for welcoming us to the neighborhood! We'll see you at the next BPA meeting.

The Blossom Team: Mora, Dominique, Jeanna, Jenn, Meg, Robyn, Jennifer, Kris

Blossom Birth Services

505 Barron Avenue, Palo Alto, CA 94306

www.blossombirth.org

Phone: 650-321-2326

Email: blossom@blossombirth.org



Photo: Myrna Rochester

Ribbon-cutting by Blossom Staff and P.A. Chamber of Commerce as Blossom opens in Barron Park

BARRON PARK ASSOCIATION BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Markus Fromherz, President

Richard Elder, Incoming President

Jaya Pandey, Vice President

Jon Affeld, Incoming Vice President

Vacant, Secretary

John King, Treasurer

Maurice Green

Christian Kalar

Lisa Berkowitz Landers

Gwen Luce

Peter K. Mueller

Myrna Rochester

Paul Yang

■

Committee/Activity Chairs

Business Liaison: Paul Yang

Email Lists: Richard Elder

Environment: Jaya Pandey

Events: Jon Affeld

History: Douglas L. Graham

May Fête: John King

Membership: Lisa Berkowitz Landers

Neighborhood Safety & Emergency Preparedness: Maurice Green

Communications: Myrna Rochester

Parks & Creeks: Christian Kalar

Bol Park Future Committee:
Richard Placone

Seniors: Peter K. Mueller

Traffic & Streets: Vacant

Zoning & Land Use: Vacant

Welcoming: Gwen Luce

■

BPA Board 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.

For Meeting and Happy Hour locations write to *President at BPApaloalto dot org*

www.BPApaloalto.org

ART IN THE PARK—BARRON PARK ELEMENTARY, SECOND GRADE

This project was shared with us by a Fall Semester Second Grade art class at Barron Park Elementary School, taught by Charlene Temple.

Charlene explains: Here are some Leaf prints from one of my Second Grade classes at Barron Park. The name of the artist is at the bottom of each print.

I talked to the students about looking at the overall shape of the leaf they chose. They either free-hand drew or traced their leaf onto a piece of scratch foam (Styrofoam) and added leaf details (by hand) to give it some detail and texture. Each student printed their leaf printing plates and created cards to give their parents as a holiday gift.

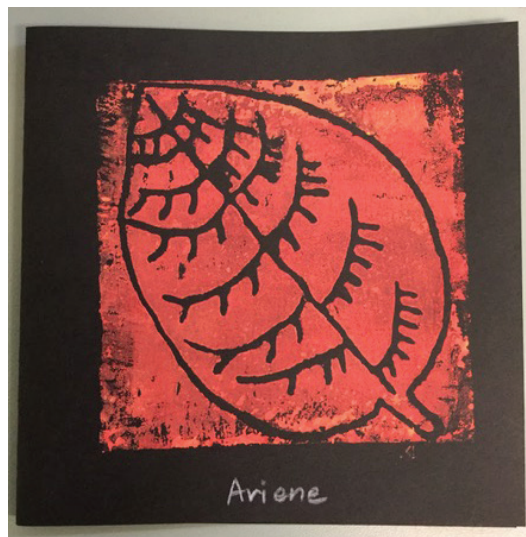
Bol Park Native Plant Restoration Project

Help us improve the natural beauty of Bol Park while providing habitat for native insects, birds, fish and other animals.

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



Getting to Know Your Neighbors: The Song Dog of Silicon Valley

By Jon Affeld and Jeralyn Moran

Clever, curious, cunning and crafty. Some would even say wily. Strangely similar to our pet dogs, they look like industrial versions of our domesticated companions if they still had to work for a living. With no free handouts in nature for them to rely upon, they have remained wild, authentic, and efficient in their function as top predators. They are vigilant generalists that help to suppress pest populations like rodents and to maintain a healthy, bio-diverse, and robust ecosystem. By comparison, they don't have the glamour, social structure, and physical advantages of their larger cousin, the wolf, that primarily focuses on hunting large hoofed mammals. No, the North American Coyotes are our closer allies and must use their wits, hustle, and tenacity to survive.

Name:

The Coyote is a member of the canine family. Its scientific name is *Canis latrans*, and it is closely related to the American Gray Wolf and the Golden Jackal found in Europe, Asia, and the Middle East. Its English name has Aztec, Mexican, and Spanish ancestry and is usually associated with a smart but tricky, mischievous, or rebellious nature. Other common names include North American Jackal, Prairie Wolf, and Song Dog.

Description:

Weighing up to 45 pounds, the Coyote looks similar in appearance to a small German Shepherd dog. However, it has a pointier nose and ears, a bushy tail, and dark streaks down its front legs and hind areas. It also makes unique, high-pitched vocalizations including yapping noises and has the gait of a wild endurance hunter.

Habitat:

The Coyote is native to California and ranges throughout North and Central America. Its original habitat was Southern and Western grasslands but has recently extended into Eastern forests and Northern mountains to fill vacancies left by other larger predators like wolves, bears, and mountain lions. Increasingly, due to native habitat loss, it is also moving into urban areas in search of resources from human populations.



Photo: <https://princelaw.files.wordpress.com/2014/05/eastern-coyote.png>

Behavior:

Very social, but not as formal as its cousin the wolf, Coyotes usually work in small, matriarchal family units. They rigorously protect their territory boundaries of about 20 square miles but will temporarily cooperate with other individuals for hunting and play.

Females typically inhabit a den to raise pups in the Spring and are completely monogamous. They can and will attempt to breed with domestic dogs. Hybrid offspring are called *Coydogs*.

They are most active at dawn and dusk through most of the year and will roam between three to nine miles a day looking for food. Coyotes are true omnivores and will opportunistically feed on fruits, nuts, insects, reptiles, amphibians, birds, and small mammals. They prefer to hunt but will scavenge when necessary. When times are good, they will consume 90% of their diet from meat protein.

Threats:

Occasionally, wolves and mountain lions will injure or kill Coyotes to protect their cubs or food sources. However, humans are the primary threat to Coyotes. Destruction of natural habitat, removal of their primary competitors, and temptation from human gardens, pets, and garbage have drawn

Coyotes closer to human environments.

Fun Facts:

Coyotes can run up to 40 mph, sometimes walk on their toes when hunting, and have been observed jumping chain link fences as tall as 14 feet high.

Coyotes are quick, tough, and aggressive predators. Although it's extremely rare, they have attacked small children and will prey upon domesticated pets and animals if easily accessible. Even though they may look like dogs, they can never be trusted completely or tamed. If they attempt to interact with humans, they must always be made to feel uncomfortable and unwelcome, for their sake as well as ours.

In order to coexist with Coyotes, here are a few suggestions based on guidelines from the California Department of Fish and Wildlife and the Native Animal Rescue organization:

- Never approach, attempt to touch or feed a Coyote
- Secure your pets and reinforce outdoor enclosures (above, around, and one foot below)
- Remove outdoor pet food, water bowls, or excess garden fruits and vegetables that have fallen to the ground
- Lock up your garbage cans and other outdoor food sources
- Actively discourage Coyotes from coming to your area with negative reinforcement (sometimes called hazing) by making loud noises, flashing lights, spraying water, scattering mothballs and ammonia-soaked rags around your perimeter
- Alert authorities if you see a Coyote acting aggressively or attacking humans

When encountering a Coyote in the open, the following actions can be taken to avoid conflict:

- If the animal is at a distance, just enjoy the chance to observe it—Coyotes are generally shy, just trying to live their lives, and not looking for human interactions.
- If the coyote is coming toward you, look straight at it, stand tall, keep small pets/children next to you, don't turn away or run.

■ If the coyote continues its advance toward you and you feel threatened, make loud noises (yell at it, bang on things), throw objects at it, and act dominant. You are not trying to hurt them, just frighten them away.

Respecting these amazing animals may sometimes feel intimidating. However, as Camilla Fox of Project Coyote (a national nonprofit organization based in Marin County that promotes coexistence between

people and wildlife) points out, “Coyotes help keep rodent populations in check by eating gophers, squirrels, and rats. More rodent-eating predators on the landscape like coyotes and birds of prey mean less rodenticides and other deadly poisons that kill non-target animals” (<http://sfenvironment.org/news/update/coyotes-in-the-city>) Thus, it is also important to keep in mind the benefits they bring to the environment as well as the responsibilities.

Extremely adaptable and ideally suited to our region, Coyotes will regularly seek out opportunities in Barron Park. Like many in Palo Alto, they commute long distances and are drawn to this area because of its high quality of life. With the proper precautions, we can prosper together, and they will happily assume their crucial role as a top predator and earn their living regulating our ecosystem so that it remains healthy and sustainable.

Local Park Stewardship with Grassroots Ecology

By Erin Banks Rusby and Claire Elliot, Grassroots Ecology

In a region like Silicon Valley that is facing pressure to accommodate rapidly growing communities, ongoing education about local ecology and conservation is a must if we hope to inspire people to protect the natural resources our region has to offer. At Grassroots Ecology (formerly Acterra Stewardship), we work in the South Bay to foster an understanding of environmental issues through hands-on volunteer opportunities that deepen people’s connection to this lovely corner of Earth we call home.

Our land stewardship program engages volunteers across 22 different sites, from Redwood City down to Los Gatos, to restore native ecosystems. Volunteers are integral to this work, and get to enjoy our beautiful outdoor places while helping us with habitat restoration. This includes installing native plants and maintaining restoration sites by removing invasive plants. By planting locally native plants that have co-evolved with native wildlife over thousands of years, we are helping to feed the greater food web from the ground up. Because native plants have evolved in the local climate, we are also promoting ecologically resilient ecosystems capable of withstanding the effects of global warming. All together, by engaging the community in hands-on restoration, we in turn promote the resiliency of our own communities.

Our water quality monitoring program takes volunteers out once a month to monitor Stevens Creek as well as the four Palo Alto creeks, empowering them to take action to protect the land and water in our neighborhoods. Through a generous grant

from the City of Palo Alto, we train volunteers to help us collect data to assess creek health. We look at parameters such as water temperature, pH, and dissolved oxygen that can indicate how hospitable (or not) a creek is to aquatic life. By monitoring every month and comparing our data to known acceptable values, we can establish a baseline of what is normal for a given creek and track trends over time. We can compare our data against our baseline and acceptable values and report out-of-the-ordinary data to the City of Palo Alto for follow-up. Simply having more people observing the creeks can also reveal potential problems, as was the case when volunteers discovered oil leaking into Matadero Creek in the winter of 2014.

In Barron Park, we have involved Gunn AP Environmental Science students in creek monitoring, including measuring creek flow and identifying creek bugs that are indicators of creek health. Bol Park neighbors help with our monthly creek monitoring on Matadero Creek. Neighbors have also helped with creek and meadow vegetation management: removing vinca and other weeds and planting native plants that support local birds and wildlife. We are particularly excited about replacing Italian buckthorn and cotoneaster shrubs with toyon and coffeeberries that not only provide berries for the birds, but also the birds’ main course—the insects that can’t eat buckthorn and cotoneaster but can eat the leaves of these native shrubs.

Our meadow project (at the curve in the Bol Park lower path up to the donkey pasture) was initiated during a drought,

but several buckwheats, blue-eyed grass, and native grasses that provide food for skipper butterflies have done well. Two winters ago, milkweeds were added, and a few made it through the dry spell. These milkweeds, along with additional milkweed propagated by the Palo Alto Garden Club, the established plants installed by neighbors near the donkey pasture, and the neighborhood native garden near Matadero and Laguna will provide food for monarch butterflies.

Grassroots Ecology has also helped to maintain the native plantings along the bike path and on Strawberry Hill that were installed by the Santa Clara Valley Water District when the creek diversion channel was built under the bike path. These plants include our state grass—purple needlegrass—and lupines. Also, a lovely remnant native stand of hayfield tarplant grows at the top of Strawberry Hill.

By building a network of individuals who promote stewardship of our local natural areas, we hope to foster more resiliency in our communities. If you’re interested in volunteering with Grassroots Ecology’s habitat restoration or water quality monitoring programs, check out our Eventbrite page where we list all volunteering opportunities, visit grassrootsecology.org, and follow us on Facebook and Instagram. We hope to see you soon!

Grassroots Ecology, 3921 East Bayshore Road, Palo Alto, CA 94303
www.grassrootsecology.org
 Email: info@grassroots.ecology.org
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Our Neighborhood Preschool Makes a Big Impact

By Tom Gannon, Barron Park Preschool



Young minds and bodies painting unique art.

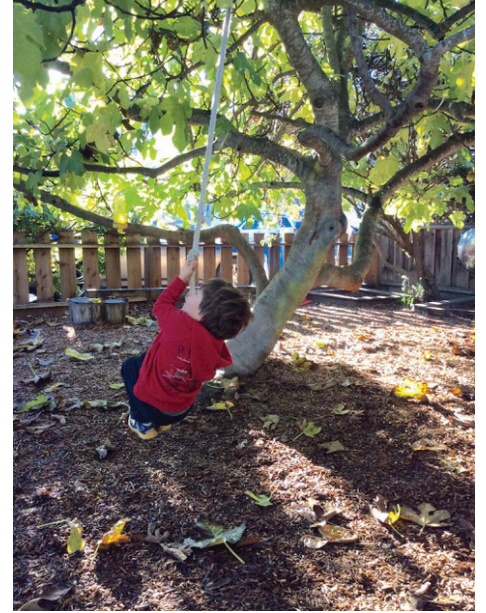
On the corner of Kendall and La Donna Avenue sits Barron Park Preschool (BPP)—a modest yellow and white Eichler-style building that holds a rich history of fostering child development dating back to the early 1970s. The preschool provides a blend of classic preschool traditions with current (some might say pioneering) best practices in a creative, play-based environment that is uniquely warm and supportive. “Barron Park Preschool is full of love, warmth, joy, and creativity. The teachers treat each child as the amazing future adult he or she would grow to be. I wish I could be a kid again so I could go to this school,” says Elinor Taussig, a current parent.

Upon entering, we see children in the art studio creating sculptures with cool-melt glue guns and recycled materials, watching eye-droppers of paint drip down a block of ice in a water table, manipulating clay with rolling pins and a pasta maker, grinding wheat berries into flour, or painting at an easel with three-foot long brushes.

Walk through the art studio into the “big room” and see the children building block structures that can be walked on, climbed in, or crawled under. They are using a pulley to lift a basket of toys up to another



Color mixing with watercolors, eye droppers, clear tubes, and imagination.



Hanging out on the rope swing under the Mission fig tree.



A solo artist creating on a big canvas.

Photos courtesy of Barron Park Preschool

child on the loft, listening to a story in the library area, taking care of their “babies” in the dramatic play area, constructing train tracks that span the length of the room, or engaged in an exciting cooperative game of Uno. One step up into the “little room” can bring a visitor into a lively game of freeze dance, or to witness the joy of children spinning and twirling on the platform swing. The energy is positive, warm, and fun. Vanessa Jade, one of the BPP teachers, notes, “The school feeds my needs as a human being to make a difference in the world, teachers (including myself) and parents grow personally and together as a community.”

One of the unique activities utilized by the teaching staff of BPP is providing children with “design challenges” where four- and five-year olds employ the strategies of design thinking to solve problems through prototyping and creative iterations. The design challenges begin with a storyline that includes an antagonist, a protagonist, and a scenario that asks the children to come up with a solution. Using limited resources such as tape, scissors, aluminum foil, pipe cleaners, and cardboard, the children turn their ideas into three-dimensional prototypes to share with the group. Some recent examples of design challenges are: “How might you get across the classroom if the floor turned into hot lava?” “How might you float a sunflower seed across the ocean?” and “How might you keep an animal safe from a predator?” As a BPP teacher and creativity expert, I like to explain it this way: “The design challenges foster creative thinking, collaboration, personal self-expression, and a chance for the children to hear each other’s ideas. These challenges are setting the early building blocks and neural pathways that 21st century learners will need to succeed in a rapidly changing world.”

Parents and visitors find themselves drawn into a space where children’s ideas and interests are embraced and scaffolded by the BPP teachers as the curriculum unfolds. “The major difference between BPP and the other preschools we visited is the staff genuinely cares very much about the development of the children and takes great pride in creating a joyous and

immersive environment so the children can learn the essential skills of life,” said Sampson Shen, a current parent. Following the children’s interests has led to the creation of a school grocery store, doctor’s office, ice cream shop, butterfly habitat, zoo, farm, forest, and more.

Children also utilize two large yards (outdoor classrooms) complete with rich garden areas, a climbing wall, merry-go-round, water tables, a beautiful Mission fig tree with low limbs for climbing and bountiful fruits in the summer, tricycles for riding, loose parts for building, and two huge (to a three-year-old) sand areas including a mud kitchen, water, and “real” metal shovels (because real work requires real tools).

Outside the school gates, neighbors may see the children and teachers walking through the neighborhood holding loops of the walking rope. Being a true neighborhood school allows children to witness the changing of the seasons in our neighborhood gardens, take exploratory walks to Bol Park, or just mail a letter at the big blue mailbox on the corner of Barron and La Donna.

Barron Park Preschool has always been known for its down-to-earth approach to supporting children’s development. Einat Lehav, a parent of a BPP alumnus says, “Barron Park Preschool created the atmosphere of wonder, beauty, respect, and security to our son to begin his engagement with the world.” Barron Park Preschool incorporates the best of several approaches—as well as creating practices of its own—to create a whole-child, play-based, emergent curriculum program. The preschool’s mission is to educate today’s learners in what the teachers and parents lovingly call “the Barron Park Way.” The school’s philosophy acknowledges social-emotional learning as the base needed for children to be creative problem solvers, resilient learners, socially competent, and intentional in their interactions with the world around them. The program may be best described by current BPP parent Karen Lasker: “Barron Park Preschool emphasizes social-emotional development in an engaging, loving, and creative way that makes the children and us parents feel

part of the family. The years our daughter spends in BPP lay strong foundations toward a whole, resilient, and giving adult.”

Local colleges (De Anza and Foothill) also find the combination of traditional and pioneering approaches interesting and important. BPP is a teaching preschool that rotates college students through as they gather credits in Early Childhood Education. Their mentor program is under the supervision of Craig Price, a California mentor teacher, who has been with BPP for over 30 years. Craig reflects that, “At first the mentees come to ‘teach’ the young, dynamic tribe and then come to realize just how independent and capable the preschoolers are as creative problem solvers and original artists. The (college) students then bring this heightened teaching awareness to their own learning community.” The students spend time at the preschool learning the subtle nuances of the Barron Park Way while building up hours of observation, curriculum development, and classroom management.

Kim Adams, the school’s owner for the past 15 years, is a Positive Discipline Parent Educator. Both Kim and I speak locally and nationally on the topics of creativity in early learning environments as well as Positive Discipline. The preschool will periodically host parenting classes and welcomes participation from our Barron Park neighbors. “I understand just how special it is to have our preschool located in this unique and charming neighborhood. I strive to do my best to be a good steward of the privilege of owning the Barron Park Preschool,” says Kim.

The preschool is small and in high demand, however we have always tried to give preference to Barron Park residents. We welcome visitors and would love to get to know more of our Barron Park neighbors. The school will be hosting an open house in the spring celebrating our 15-year anniversary under Kim’s ownership.

The school would also love to reconnect with any alumni who may still be in the area. For more information or to schedule a tour, contact Barron Park Preschool via our website at www.barronparkpreschool.com or call 650-493-7597.

MEET YOUR ELECTED OFFICIALS



Photo: Felipe Munera Savino

Todd Collins

Incoming Member, Palo Alto Unified School Board

I'm excited to have been chosen to serve our community on the Board of the Palo Alto Unified School District. Our family has lived in Barron Park since moving

to Palo Alto 12 years ago, and our three children have attended all our neighborhood schools (Barron Park, Juana Briones, Terman, and Gunn).

Like many other families, an important reason we moved to Palo Alto was for the strong schools, and my top priority as a Board member is to keep our schools strong. That starts with sound fiscal management. Not everyone is aware that our District spends nearly twice as much per pupil as the typical California district. We need to make sure those funds are spent prudently to benefit our students, and that we have a healthy reserve when inevitable downturns come. My other priorities include addressing student stress, improving our special education programs, and better serving our District's low-income students.

Please don't hesitate to contact me directly at tcollins@pausd.org or at 650-403-2084. You can also just stop by anytime at 4035 Laguna Way.



Photo: Paige Parsons

Kenneth Dauber

Member, Palo Alto Unified School Board

I've lived on Paul Avenue in Barron Park since 2002 with my wife Michele and our children (now down to one at home, Elliot, who's 16). I was elected

to the PAUSD Board in 2014. Before that, I was part of a group of parents and community members advocating for policies to improve the social and emotional well-being of our students in response to the tragic suicides in our community.

As a School Board member, one of my major priorities is improving the well-being of our students. For example, since I was elected I have worked to improve our high school students' sleep by supporting a new block schedule and ending early morning academic classes at Gunn. I advocated for better funding for mental health services for students who need them, including opening Wellness Centers at both high schools. I have also continued to work toward effective implementation of our district homework policy. This policy is intended to ensure that our students don't face excessive homework loads. However, we don't yet have a system to enable teachers to know how much time students actually spend on homework. That is a top goal for me this school year.

I have also worked toward more responsible budgeting, for closing the achievement gap, and for improved communication and cooperation with families that have students with special needs. I invite you to contact me to talk about the issues I've mentioned or any other concerns you may have. You can reach me by email at kdauber@pausd.org or by phone at 650-906-4340. My website is www.kendauber.com, where I post blog entries about District issues and also dates and times for community office hours. You can also email me to receive my blog as a newsletter.



Photo: The DuBois Family

Tom DuBois

Member, Palo Alto City Council

I'm Tom DuBois, and I live near Bol Park, having recently moved to Barron Park from Midtown. I grew up in rural Ohio, lived all over the world, and settled in Palo

Alto in 1995. Both of my kids have gone through Palo Alto schools; my youngest is currently a freshman at Gunn.

I am halfway through my first term on the Council. My focus thus far has been on all things Community: this year I'm the

liaison for Palo Alto Community Child Care, the Chair of the City School Committee, and Council Liaison to Lytton Gardens. So it's everything from infants to senior assisted living!

I'm concerned about safety along the Caltrain corridor and traffic and parking issues citywide. I'd like to see us move forward with increased choice through broadband to the home. I've been heavily involved in water recycling efforts for the City. I believe a moderate pace of growth, particularly in terms of office space, is needed to let the character of Palo Alto thrive as we move forward.

I'd love to hear from my Barron Park neighbors. Please get in touch with any questions, concerns, or feedback. My website is www.votedubois.com; I'm on Facebook at <https://www.facebook.com/votedubois/>; or you can simply email me at tomforcouncil@gmail.com



Lydia Kou

Incoming Member, Palo Alto City Council

My experience from years on the Barron Park Association (BPA) Board was a major influence on my campaigns and on how I hope to serve on City Council. At that

Photo: Light11B Productions: Joe Garapolo and Christian Pease.

time, the BPA, under Doug Moran's presidency, was involved not just in community building within Barron Park, but in keeping residents informed about what was happening that might affect them at City Hall and other government bodies. This included augmenting the announcements of meetings with descriptions of the issues to be discussed, to make residents aware of when they needed to participate, and allow them to participate more effectively, either at the meeting or by email submissions. I was repeatedly impressed by the amount of residents' expertise and knowledge of local conditions and the history of issues.

Getting better information to and from residents was a significant part of my campaign and I want that to continue. I will be sending out information as issues come onto Council agenda to keep you informed. You can help me by collecting the real data—your concerns and experiences. I also would appreciate your help, if you have the expertise, to do the analyses and lay out the results for different audiences: residents, Staff, Commissions, and City Council. Realize that City Staff doesn't work for City Council, but rather for the City Manager, who is accountable to Council—Council members can't direct Staff to produce such informational messages. However, I hope that what the residents produce will encourage a shift in how Staff reports are written.

If you would like to receive communication updates from me or to reach me for other matters, please email me at *lydiakou@gmail.com*

BARRON PARK ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER

Barron Park Association
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La Posada at Buena Vista, December 3, 2016

Photo: Oren Schneurson



All our thanks to the Buena Vista Park community for hosting the Fifth Annual Holiday Community Posada, a warm and welcoming event, on Saturday, December 3. The wonderfully lit and decorated street was crowded with neighbors from all over the city—following the traditional Posada path with (battery) candles, watching the amazing dancers from the Cubberley Center-based Raices de México (<https://raicesdemexico.wordpress.com>), and enjoying plentiful drinks and snacks. By now, La Posada is truly a neighborhood tradition.

Photo: Elliot Margolies



Photo: Elliot Margolies



A Time to Tell Your Thoughts: The Maybell Way Writers Collective

By Douglas L. Graham

Friendship and Mutual Trust

The living room is filled with cheerfully bubbling chatter. It is November 19, 2016, and the monthly meeting of the Maybell Way Writers Collective is about to begin. Today's moderator is calling the group of five women to order. Several women, including the group's leader, are unable to attend this month, but that fact seems to have little impact on the women's enthusiasm. Three of the women have brought their writings to be read and discussed by their friends. The emphasis in this group is on friendship and mutual trust. In the three years that they have been meeting and writing, their friendships have become firmly established and are deepening.

The Writers Collective Leader

The leader, Julie Lythcott-Haims, moved into the cul-de-sac neighborhood in Barron Park in the millennial year 2000. She was delighted to find a house near her new job as an administrator at Stanford University, and close to the public schools that she and her husband Dan wanted their children to attend. Julie's mother Jeannie Lythcott made that dream possible when she agreed to combine assets with them and they became a three-generational household. Both Sawyer (now 17), and Avery (now 15) are students at Gunn High School, a short walk from their home.

Writers Collective Membership

Stacey Ashlund
Ellen Cohen
Nancy Cohen
Ida Holmes
Samantha Holmes
Kathleen Long
Jeannie Lythcott
Julie Lythcott-Haims
Janet Negley
Natalie Varney
Rita Varney

Julie and Jeannie expected that the cul-de-sac location would be a close-knit, friendly environment. They waited patiently for a "welcome wagon" or some friendly neighbors to ring the doorbell. However, that didn't happen.

The "Borrow Pit"

What did happen was the family's discovery that the house—and the cul-de-sac—had a history, and it was a history that was going to affect them in a major way. Maybell Way was developed by Doug Couch as "McLaughlin Glen #2" in the spring of 1959. The cul-de-sac runs northwest off Maybell Avenue, just west of Juana Briones School. Couch built the 14 houses of Maybell Way on fill. The land had previously been excavated by contractors acting for the state, and the excavated soil was used as fill for construction of the "Bayshore Highway," a forerunner of the Bayshore Freeway, created to get the through traffic away from El Camino Real, which was U.S. Highway 101 at the time. The result was an enormous "state borrow pit," which was used as a fill source from 1933 until at least 1949. It was 760 feet long, 280 feet wide, and up to 20 feet deep in spots. At some time between 1949 and 1958, someone (possibly Doug Couch?) started to fill in the pit. Whoever was responsible, the fill was not uniformly successful, and this resulted in settling and subsequent damage to several houses over the years since.

A Slope in the Floors

In the negotiations leading up to the family's purchase of their home in 2000, it was disclosed that there was a six-inch slope in the floors between the front door and the back room. They also found that soil samples had been taken to get a permit for a backyard swimming pool in the 1980s (which was never built). The report showed that part of the house had settled 4½ inches. The soil was described as "loose." After the Loma Prieta earthquake in 1989, the house settled another 1½ inches. It was determined that the buyers would have to demolish the existing house and sink columns 20 to 50 feet to bedrock

as a secure foundation for a new house.

A Bold New House Design

Since the old house needed massive, expensive structural improvements just to be livable, let alone to provide the accommodations that the three generations needed, Julie, Dan, and Jeannie approved their architects' bold plan, which was unlike the 1960s-style architecture of the other houses on the cul-de-sac. The simple geometric design was very cost-effective and allowed them to get the room configurations they needed while staying within budget. They were delighted that the City's design review committee loved it. The permit was issued and construction began, whereupon some neighbors, unhappy with the second floor and with the overall design of the house, started circulating a petition to stop the project. The architect recommended that the family invite everyone on the cul-de-sac to meet and discuss the project over bagels and coffee. Nine people showed up. One of the key things Julie learned in that meeting was that some of the neighbors didn't seem to know each other any better than they knew Julie, Dan, and Jeannie. One neighbor who had signed the petition began to have a change of heart. She told the group that she was "a Christian and that this wasn't a very Christian way for a set of neighbors to behave." Julie was struck by this neighbor's kindness, which seemed to dissipate the anger in the group. The formal opposition to the project petered out. The house was finished, and the family moved in during the summer of 2002. They lived in it for the next decade without the social situation on the cul-de-sac changing significantly.

Julie's Turning Point

In 2013, a turning-point event occurred: their next-door neighbor Nancy Kerr died. Julie was struck by how little she knew about the woman. And, in that moment, she knew she had to do something about it. No more waiting for the Welcome Wagon. She wanted to do her part to build a stronger sense of community on Maybell Way. Julie was a MFA student at California College of the Arts at the time, where she

experienced both the power of writing as a way to know oneself and the joy of sharing one's writings with a group of empathetic people. She had some ideas on how to go about setting up a writing group. She was deeply interested in knowing her neighbors better and thought that a writing group might be a mechanism for doing so, accessible to all. She consulted with her mother Jeannie and with the most senior neighbor—Rita Varney. Both liked the idea. In particular, the three of them thought it might be a way to support a neighbor who'd recently lost her husband and was growing reclusive—the same neighbor who'd stepped up years ago and said the petition against Julie's house was not a Christian thing to do. In general, building community was to be one of the fundamental principles behind the formation of the group.

Setting up the Collective

Julie designed invitations on nice card stock for the first meeting of the group. They were sent to everyone on the cul-de-sac. Nine people showed up, and the age range was nearly 50 years. It was clear that most of the women did not know each other well. Julie explained that the group would be serious about the writing and the discussions. The writings would be given the attention they deserved. The meetings would be friendly and fun, but not casual gatherings. Julie had deliberately chosen to call it a writers collective "to give it some heft, an edge even, to suggest that something was going on, something perhaps a bit transgressive of the community norm." Julie did not hide her larger agenda, which is to build "community." "The goal is to become a block (the cul-de-sac) where your neighbors know each other and there is a spirit of feeling connected and at home." The group agreed to meet monthly and experiment with writing something personal about their lives.

Membership

See the sidebar for a list of the current members. It includes three mother-daughter pairs (Rita and Natalie, Ida and Samantha, and Jeannie and Julie). Ellen Cohen and Nancy Cohen are not related.

The Meetings

The meetings have continued for three years now; only a few have been cancelled.

Attendance has varied from as few as four up to the full membership of eleven; typically, it has been five or six. The two-hour meetings have an easy, warm atmosphere, with food and drink. Julie usually moderates the meetings, although others in the group are quite capable of standing in for her (an example of this was the meeting I attended on November 19). Julie usually shares her own writing only if there is time at the end.

The Writings

Rita Varney, the oldest member, has written a piece almost every month, and Julie feels that she has the makings of a captivating memoir. Jeannie Lythcott has written a children's story. Natalie Varney writes very amusing stories and has been pleased at how "people have laughed at the right time." Several of the women were already accomplished writers. Kathleen Long has written regularly for the Huffington Post. Julie is the author of *How to Raise an Adult*, a *New York Times* bestseller, published in 2015. Her next book is called *Real American* and is a memoir about race in America—to be published in 2017.

The Results

Julie has been delighted to discover that all the women have much in common "in spite of our chronological differences." Julie said, "Stories of others help us all to feel more 'seen' (visible to our neighbors as real, complete people)." "The writings have improved and become more professional," in Rita's opinion, even though that has not been the main purpose of the group. Natalie observed that "several of the women (in the group) had never previously spoken to Rita even though she had been a resident on the cul-de-sac when they came and had lived here the entire time they did."

Natalie said, "Julie has had the experience of telling one of Natalie's stories like she (Julie) had been there – but the story was from this group." Janet Negley summed up the group this way: "We of course critique each other's work—but it is a place to tell your thoughts." I used her thought (slightly modified) as the title for this article.

The Story of Nancy Schaeffer

At the November 19 meeting, the group was celebrating Rita's 96th birthday, and

someone retold Rita's story of one of the first residents on the cul-de-sac, Nancy Schaeffer, who moved there in 1959. She was very neighborly, tried to get to know everyone, kept a list of the neighbors for years. Eventually she lost her husband, then her daughter moved to Argentina. At first, she was stricken hard. But then she decided to fulfill her long-held goal of living in France. She saved up her money and learned French. She moved to France and lived in an inn that she had gotten to know—and love—from previous travels. Shortly thereafter it turned out that the elderly owner could not continue operating the inn. Nancy volunteered to take it over, but soon felt overwhelmed. One day she was bemoaning her troubles to the owner and he said, "Nancy: DO NANCY," and she did. Rita says, "It warms my heart."

What Does This Story Mean?

My belief is that this account of the Maybell Way Writers Collective will mean different things to different readers. To me, it offers a fresh idea, an approach that could help build better neighborhoods, that would truly be "homes," not just collections of houses inhabited by random strangers.

Would You Like More Background?

Go to the Barron Park Association website (www.bpapaloalto.org) and click on the BPA Newsletter archive. Stories that are relevant to this article include:

1. Spring 2004, pg. 13, "Meet Your Barron Park Donkey Handlers," by Don Anderson. Includes a half-page bio of Jean Lythcott.
2. Summer 2005, pp. 10–16, "Dancing in the Park at the May Fête," by Sue Luttner Coonen. Jean Lythcott and Julie Lythcott-Haims were May Fête Co-Chairs that year.
3. Summer 2006, pg. 1, photograph of May Fête Co-Chairs Jean and Julie, "May Fête Brought Out the Sun," by Sue Luttner.
4. Winter 2014, pp. 4–8, "The State Borrow Pit and Origins of the BPA," by Douglas L. Graham. A detailed story of the pit and the building of Maybell Way.
5. Summer 2016, pp. 10–11, "Profile: Astrid (Rita) Varney of Maybell Way," by Douglas L. Graham. A two-page bio of Rita.

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