

BARRON PARK ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

John King, BPA President



At the time of this writing, in mid-December, our nation, indeed, our world, is in the grips of a serious upswing of COVID cases and deaths that has forced us to cancel all holiday plans and the hope of spending time with friends and our extended families. Truly, this has now become the scariest health event we have ever experienced. My hope is that by the time this newsletter is published, the vaccines will be more widely distributed and the spread of COVID will have started to reverse course. I also hope we will have begun to open up our restaurants and other personal services that were hit so hard. Where has our government leadership been in supporting these hardworking people?

The Barron Park Association has been doing its best to provide leadership and support the needs of our neighbors. The Board has made donations of Target gift cards to Buena Vista residents and is also supporting neighborhood efforts to provide occasional lunches and virtual get-togethers for our senior residents.

Further, with our intervention, the blighted lot at the corner of El Camino and Barron Avenue was brought to the attention of a City of Palo Alto Councilperson who alerted the City Manager, and consequently the owner of the property was ordered to clean

it up. You can see the progress of the [cleanup in photos on page 19](#). Hopefully this will be completely taken care of, including putting up a promised fence, by the time of publication.

What will also have happened is that a New Year will have finally arrived. Let's hope we can all get back to some normalcy during this year. Continue to be good to each other as neighbors and hope to see you soon!

View this Newsletter in Full Color!

You can read this issue in full color and with live web links at <http://bpapaloalto.org/bpa-newsletter/> as soon as it's posted. While you're there, check out our Archive of past Newsletters. Your small screen is an easy way to review past activities in the 'hood and catch up on issues you may have missed.

Thanks! The Editors

Join the BPA or renew at: <http://bpapaloalto.org/join-the-barron-park-association/>

You can reach me at: president@bpapaloalto.org



Our newest donkey Buddy greets his pasture-mate Perry. Photo by Sharlene Carlsen. For stories about Jenny the donkey, as well as news about Perry and Buddy, please [visit page 14](#).

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EXPERIENCES OF RACISM

Systemic Racism in Barron Park, Part 2

By Douglas L. Graham, Julie Lythcott-Haims, and John St. Clair

Part One of this article appeared in the Fall 2020 issue of this newsletter and dealt with how our neighborhood became segregated. Part Two focuses on experiences of racism – mostly recent – in Barron Park. I interviewed a recent longtime African-American male resident and a current female resident who describes herself as multi-racial. They both told me of incidents that insulted and hurt them, perpetrated by white residents of Barron Park. I later interviewed a longtime Chinese-American resident, who told me about Black residents of Barron Park in the 1960s. All interviewees have read and edited their own sections.

We Take Pride in Supporting “Diversity”: Is It Justified?

The Barron Park Association and many Barron Park residents support the ideal of cultural diversity openly and with some enthusiasm. However, white residents do not, by and large, attend neighborhood holiday celebrations held by other groups, particularly those of Latinx and Asian heritage. Our verbal and fiscal support would be more impressive if our participation level were higher. One could reasonably challenge us: How authentic is our support of diversity?

Current Racism in Barron Park: John St. Clair’s Experiences

My first interviewee is an African-American man, well-known and well-liked in the community: John St. Clair III, a Barron Parker for 23 years who has worked in real estate since 1994. From 2008-2010, John was a Director on the Board of the California Association of Realtors. He has also been a Director of the Silicon Valley Association of Realtors and the Chair of the Palo Alto District (for the Palo Alto Realtors). He is currently with Keller Williams Realty. John has a BS in Economics from Santa Clara University.

Asked about his background. John said:

My mom (a single mother during most of my childhood) told me that I must work twice as hard to be half as good as any white person. She pushed hard on my education. My sister and I went to school 11 months of the year. I remember our school



John St. Clair, III. Photo courtesy of John St. Clair.

textbooks were old, many barely readable, with pages missing, scratched out sentences, etc. We realized that education was only part of being able to succeed in the world, because no matter how many degrees we earned, we were still Black.

These days, when my wife and I go to functions and parties, I am usually the only African-American person there. This does not bother me, just an observation. At times I have been told: “You are different from other Black people.” I didn’t really know how to digest that comment, and yet I knew the people saying it were not intending to be malicious. I always wonder what their experience has been for them to make this comment. So, I asked . . . and learned it was based on their inexperience with African Americans.

John believes that there are a few African-American families in Barron Park. I asked him if he thought it would be difficult for an African-American person to move into Barron Park today, and, if so, in what ways? He said:

It is not difficult to move into Barron Park. If people can afford to purchase a home here and desire to do so, then they will. However, blending in is another matter. I remember in 1997 when I purchased my first home in Barron Park, I did not exactly have neighbors knocking on my door welcoming me to the neighborhood with baked goods in hand. Nor did I expect it.

Occasionally when I saw them outside, most were friendly, warm, and welcoming. That is what I like about Barron Park.

However, not everyone is like this. While in Bol Park, on occasion, I have received looks of disdain from some people. It was as if they were questioning what I was doing there. I ignore them because I know that is not symbolic of Barron Park. Oh, by the way, these are people I have seen throughout the neighborhood over many years, and they have never spoken to me. However, I have seen them speak to and be friendly with other neighbors. Do not get me wrong, I do not expect everyone to speak to or be friendly to me. It does make you wonder what’s going on when you see them being friendly to everyone else except you.

John comes from the Midwest, and he said: “There was blatant racism there, here it is more subtle. Here, you’ll get looks of disdain, disapproval, and sometimes even disgust. Two people of equal stature (one a minority and one not) many times are treated differently. Often the differences are subtle but speak volumes to the person of color.” John has heard it said by a neighbor in Barron Park that: “Black people should go back to Africa.” He said he realizes that this is not the belief of 99% of Barron Park residents. It is disturbing that anyone in today’s world would have this antiquated view of an entire group.

To summarize: John believes it is hard to beat systemic racism, especially since many people do not realize they are being racist. Helping them to become aware and educating them is a good start.

Another Viewpoint: Julie Lythcott-Haims’s Experience in Barron Park When the Racism Became Blatant

I also interviewed Julie Lythcott-Haims, the well-known author of *How to Raise an Adult* and *Real American – A Memoir*. Julie, her husband Dan, and her mother Jeannie bought a home on Maybell Way in Barron Park in 2000. Julie has held two Deanships at Stanford after a career in corporate law. In Winter 2016 I wrote a story for this newsletter about



Julie Lythcott-Haims. Photo Courtesy of Julie Lythcott-Haims.

the ongoing Maybell Way Writers Group created by Julie. For this story, I read her memoir, *Real American*, before our interview.

Julie still has strong feelings about the original reception she received from her cul-de-sac neighbors when she moved in 20 years ago. She described it as a “very white street” with many original owners and where nobody was particularly welcoming. Her house needed extensive remodeling because it was built on the site where the old “state borrow pit” had been filled in. Neighbors were unhappy with the remodel and circulated a petition which came to a head at a meeting in Julie’s driveway. One neighbor said, “This doesn’t feel very Christian to me.” She and Julie went on to become friends. Another neighbor who was there that day has never spoken to her.

The neighborhood has changed in 20 years. Julie feels generally accepted by the current neighbors. Her leadership in creating the writers’ group has helped. She also became involved in Democratic party politics and was an elected delegate, representing our Congressional district, to the National Convention that nominated Barack Obama in 2008.

Julie talked about a party she attended that exposed the hidden racism in the Juana Briones Elementary School parent group and advised me to read her description of it in *Real American – A Memoir*. Selected parts of her account are included here (written in the present tense).

In 2009, the PTA (of Juana Briones School) throws a murder mystery party as a fundraiser. My husband and I volunteer to work at the event, mostly to do our part to help the school, but also to get to know the broader parent community a little better.

Ours is a middle- to upper-middle-class neighborhood in Palo Alto (specifically, the Maybell area of Barron Park), the heart of Silicon Valley Our neighbors are mostly American whites and first- and second-generation Asian and Indian immigrants, a few European immigrants or expats, and a handful of Blacks, Latinos, and Native Americans. The neighborhood’s politics lean heavily liberal. . . .

The party begins. The theme of the murder mystery is athletes marooned by a plane crash on a South Pacific island. Dan and I carry trays of food and drink from the kitchen to the backyard pool area where tiki torches help create an island feel. Lights float on the surface of the pool. Someone puts on some music. The guests begin to arrive.

One woman comes around the side of the house in Blackface. At first I don’t really see what I’m seeing because I’m still bustling about trying to set things up according to the host’s plans, and because I would never in a million years expect to see someone show up in Blackface. But there she is, jaunty in her athlete’s uniform, skin burnished head to toe in a dark brown shoe polish, playing her assigned role of a Jamaican. . . . A white man assigned to play the part of “Tyrel,” a track athlete, wears a huge Afro wig and begins to dance at the center of a circle of the partygoers. Another white man shouts ‘Show us your jive dancing.’ The Blackface woman dances too.

I freeze watching these upper-middle-class white people, neighbors, and even a few friends drinking, laughing, goading the white man doing the mocking dance. The night is loud with music, hot with summer, and wild with this unleashed whiteness. Dan is watching from the other side of the crowd and looks over at me, his eyes wide with disbelief. I scan the crowd and see a Native American professor and his wife looking at each other. There are fifty whites and only a handful of us and they are drinking and laughing and egging each other on, and if I stand up and say something I am not certain enough of

them even know my name so as to respect my voice if I turn off the music and shout *WHAT THE F--- ARE YOU PEOPLE DOING*. I am more certain that if I turn off the music and say something, they will laugh and continue with their frat party dancing.

I reel backward, fade away from the taunting crowd, with stomach bile jumping up into my esophagus.

Am I safe here I am not safe here this is not happening here this is happening and I need to leave and I need to leave now this is not happening.

I grab Dan’s hand and we walk briskly away from the crowded backyard, through the house, and out the front door. I push the bile back down with deep breaths, fight back tears, ask myself if I dare to ask myself this question aloud.

Is this how white people act when we are not around?

I talk to the Native American professor. I write a letter to the school principal. Someone tells the Blackface woman that her getup offended me. She writes me saying she meant no offense. I Google “blackface” and send her the link. My doorbell rings and I open the door and suck in my breath as she stands there and apologizes in person. As far as I know, no one ever said anything to Mister Jive Dancing. I make a point of never again going to parties thrown by white people I do not know well.

The Role of Hidden White Racism

When authors write about the problem of “systemic” racism, they are often thinking about how the racism remains “hidden,” even though it was created in full view of everyone. It is hidden because we whites refuse to talk about it, except in code and in private. We want to believe we are non-racist, even though we enjoy all the advantages of being white. Why would any non-whites want to live amongst us?

Toni Morrison said: “In this country American means white. Everyone else has to hyphenate.”

Two Black Families Once Lived Here: Iris Chen’s Oral History

I interviewed Iris Chen, homeowner and resident on Ilma Way since 1966, because I heard that she knew of African-American families who lived in the neighborhood.

A Family on Maybell Avenue

One family lived on Maybell Avenue. The

house was an Eichler, built for the resident, who had had difficulties finding a house that he could buy in Palo Alto, because of his color. He was married, with two children. Perhaps because Iris is a sensitive woman and such a good listener, and perhaps because she is also “non-white,” he related his story of frustration. He said that Joseph Eichler, the famous builder (known to have been forthright in his stand against prejudice and racial discrimination) had offered to build a house for this Black family. It was built in the early or mid-1960s (I did some research on the “built” date and ended up having to estimate it.)

Appointed Ambassador

Iris recalls later reading that the owner of the Maybell Avenue house had been appointed U.S. Ambassador to an African country. This would have been during the Presidency of Lyndon Johnson when many former European colonies in Africa were just becoming independent.

Another Family

Iris knew of another Barron Park African-American family, who lived at 898 Ilima Court (on the corner with Laguna Avenue). They were an older Black couple with no kids and were there when Iris and her husband Reno moved to Ilima Way with their children in 1966. The Black couple moved out a short time later and their house was torn down and replaced. In 1966, Iris’s family was the second Chinese-American family in the area. Gloria and Ed Jong at 905 Ilima Way were the original owners and already living there in 1961. Today, Iris Chen is known to most people around our block, and with 54 years in her home, is recognized as the “senior” resident.

Taiwan to California in a Chinese Junk

The Chens’ story has been published several times, partly because of Reno’s unique mode of immigration from Taiwan in 1954. He and four other young Chinese men and one American sailed a Chinese junk from Taiwan to San Francisco; none of them had ever sailed a boat before. Reno had a successful career, beginning as a dishwasher in the City, then working on the assembly line at Ampex, and rising to be an engineer in the research division. His story was beautifully told by Iris and Reno’s daughter, Dione, in the book by Tim Stanley, *The Peopling of Silicon Valley, 1940 to the Present Day*. It is a compilation of oral histories published in 2017, and Reno’s story is given five pages.

How Could We Get “Un-Segregated”?

We are still haunted by our racism. In spite of the passage of many decades since the 1960s civil rights movement, there has been no movement to desegregate housing in the U.S., California, or Palo Alto. If anything, we have all drifted in the other direction. How could we un-segregate in the face of the national reluctance? I honestly do not know, and I have some skepticism about whether it is possible. All I know is that I would like for that to happen – if it could be done without violence and undue economic disruption.

My statement should raise the question in white readers’ minds: How important is our “comfort” compared to “justice” for other people? I believe that I would like to live in a neighborhood that included lots of African Americans, people of color, multi-racial people, Asian Americans, and all the other groups that have made America and are re-making the new America now. Is this a realistic dream?

Journalistic Honesty – My Personal Stake

I am white, and my heritage is mostly Scottish and other British groups. My wife is white, and of Italian and Swiss-German heritage. We adopted two children from Colombia in the 1980s; both are in their 40s today. They grew up in Barron Park, and, as our daughter used to say, became “coconuts” (white on the inside and brown on the outside). During their time at Juana Briones Elementary, JLS Middle, and Gunn High Schools, they encountered some, but not very much, white discrimination. It was hard to decide whether it was the “real thing” or just ordinary kid shunning by cliques.

In a quite different situation, I felt discriminated against in a national volunteer organization for which I served as national treasurer and director. At a social event, part of a national board meeting in Washington, D.C., the incoming president and other board members criticized me for adopting our kids (“you are bringing more Latinos into the country”), and made me feel uncomfortable about continuing to associate with the board. (I resigned from the positions.)

An Aggressive Skinhead Got More Reaction Than Expected

In the early 1980s, I had a violent encounter with a racist skinhead at the San Antonio Shopping Center in Mountain View. I was leaving a pizza parlor where the Juana

Briones PTA had been having a fundraiser, walking hand-in-hand with my son (he was, I think, a second grader). The skinhead accosted us and told me repeatedly that the boy “CAN’T BE YOUR SON!” He was angry and aggressive. I looked him in the eyes and saw Hitler. I flashed in fury and, for the only time in my life, was ready to kill someone. He looked in my eyes, and I guess he saw death, because he panicked and started to run away. I dropped my son’s hand and chased the skinhead for about two blocks through the parked cars and traffic, until I realized that no fifty-year-old was going to catch a twenty-year-old in good shape.

The Good/Bad Binary

In *White Fragility*, Robin DiAngelo writes about what she calls the Good/Bad Binary. She starts with a frequently heard statement: “He’s not a racist. He is a really nice guy.” This illustrates what she considers

... perhaps the most effective adaptation of racism in recent history: the good/bad binary. Prior to the civil rights movement, it was socially acceptable for white people to openly proclaim their belief in their racial superiority. But when white Northerners saw the violence black people – including women and children – endured during the civil rights protests, they were appalled. These images became the archetypes of racists. . . .

From then on,

... you could not be a good person and participate in racism; only bad people were racist. . . . To accomplish this adaptation, racism first needed to be reduced to simple, isolated, and extreme acts of prejudice. These acts must be intentional, malicious, and based on conscious dislike of someone because of race. . . . racists were mean, ignorant, old, uneducated, Southern whites. Nice people, well-intended people, open-minded middle-class people, people raised in the “enlightened North,” could not be racist. . . . While making racism bad seems like a positive change, we must look at how this functions in practice. Within this paradigm, to suggest that I am racist is to deliver a deep moral blow – a kind of character assassination. Having received this blow, I must defend my character, and that is where all my energy will go – to deflecting the charge, rather than reflecting on my behavior. In this way, the good/bad binary

makes it nearly impossible to talk to white people about racism, what it is, how it shapes all of us, and the inevitable ways that we are conditioned to participate in it. If we cannot discuss these dynamics or see ourselves within them, we cannot stop participating in racism.

Redefining Racism

DiAngelo also writes that “In the post-civil rights era, we have been taught that racists are mean people who intentionally dislike others because of their race; racists are immoral” (like the skinhead I encountered). Therefore, if we reflect on our racial frames (for instance, the advantages that accrue to us because we are white), this violates the teaching that to have a racial viewpoint is to be biased. Unfortunately, writes DiAngelo, “. . . this belief protects our biases, because denying that we have them ensures that we won’t examine or change them.”

Why Is It So Hard for White People to Talk About Racism?

Robin DiAngelo says: “. . . the way that we are taught to define racism makes it virtually impossible for white people to understand it.” In the United States, the dominant ideology is individualism. The most important claim is that “. . . there are no intrinsic barriers to individual success and that failure is not a consequence of social structures but comes from individual character.” She goes on to write that “To understand race relations today, we must push against our conditioning and grapple with how and why racial group memberships matter.”

The Importance of Civil Discourse

In these articles, I have tried to explore the reasons why we live in an almost completely segregated neighborhood. I have also tried to expose readers to some current thinking about systemic (or, as Kamala Harris prefers, “structural” racism). I hope that I have stimulated some thinking and discussion about how we got this way and what we might be able to do (if anything) to change the situation.

If we do that, it is important that we not add to the cacophony of antagonistic rhetoric that is threatening to drown out voices of reason and humanity. It is essential that we discuss this in polite, dignified, dispassionate voices. We, as a nation, are in danger of losing our most prized possession, our free democratic political process. If we cannot discuss our common problems in a “civilized”

manner, our democracy, like so many others in the past, may degenerate into anarchy, mob rule, even civil war. So, keep your cool, neighbors, and as Lyndon Johnson used to say, “Let us reason together on this.”

Conclusion

This concludes the articles on racism in Barron Park. I won’t end as I usually do, by saying, “I hope you have enjoyed this article.” Who can “enjoy” reading about one of our most difficult social issues? I only hope that most of this article has made sense to you and that it has helped “bring home” some of the national issues as they apply to our neighborhood and to ourselves. May we all learn how to talk about this peacefully and with sensitivity.

You can reach me at dgrahampaca@gmail.com 650-493-0689, or Douglas L. Graham, 784 Ilima Way, Palo Alto, CA 94306. I would especially like to hear from you if you can supply either documentary or personal experience with housing discrimination and/or racist speech or actions by individuals in Barron Park. A short list of relevant reading material follows.

References

- *White Fragility – Why It’s So Hard for White People to Talk About Racism*, by Robin DiAngelo (Beacon Press, 2018)
- *The Color of Law – A Forgotten History of How Our Government Segregated America*, by Richard Rothstein (Liveright, 2018)
- *Real American: A Memoir*, by Julie Lythcott-Haims (St. Martin’s Griffin, 2018)
- *Palo Alto Remembered – Stories From a City’s Past*, by Matt Bowling (Palo Alto Historical Association, 2012)
- *The Peopling of Silicon Valley, 1940 to the Present Day*, by Tim Stanley (2 Timothy Publishing, 2017)

Reader Responses to Part One, Systemic Racism

Hi Doug,

Thank you for taking on the complex matter of segregation in otherwise-totally-perfect Palo Alto. When you have to spend most of a column laying the ground rules, you know it’s a lively topic.

I hope you find it runs to 10 chapters, as you peel more layers of the onion. To me, one of the bright sides of the current political

malaise is the raised consciousness about these important matters.

I’m very interested to discuss this with my 96-year-old neighbor who grew up on Middlefield Road and whose parents chummed with the Hoovers.

This is such a huge topic, but unless I missed your point, I think one of the most subtle elements comes early, in your first ground rule. What I think you mean by race not being determined genetically, is that we’ve learned that people who seem very different are remarkably similar genetically. It’s a story tied to eugenics and that whole sordid tale. You may need to expand on this for folks in further installments.

In any case, I look forward to more. I can’t go without saying we were disgusted by the CC&Rs on our Orme Street property 33 years ago. Our language is worse than what you quoted.

Best to you and Verna – Jerome Coonan



Doug,

I want to express my appreciation for your story in the Fall 2020 issue of the BPA Newsletter. It brought me to tears to be reminded that these sorts of practices occurred during our lifetime, and to be informed that they existed in an area where we live and which we love. Your story brought the acts and issues to light in a very stark way. For years I have been telling friends that one reason we love living here was because of the diversity of the people. It’s clear that as a society and even in our own area, we have much work left to do.

With gratitude – Art Liberman



Hi Doug,

I found your BPA newsletter article on race to be very interesting and shared it with my mom. You may be interested to know that when my parents were looking to rent an apartment in Redwood City in approximately 1960, they had difficulty due to discrimination against Chinese Americans. Properties advertised as “For Rent” were somehow inexplicably unavailable when they inquired.

They bought their first house in Palo Alto (near JLS Middle School) in 1961 and, fortunately, didn’t run into any problems. They bought their current house on Ilima Way in 1966 . . . and have lived here ever since.

Best – Dione Chen

Barron Park Elementary School Walk-a-thon!

By Chris Gebert Parikh, BPES



Neighbors placed flyers for the BPES Walk-a-thon all over Barron Park. Photos courtesy of Barron Park Parent-Teacher Association.

On October 9-11, 2020, Barron Park Elementary School (BPES) Parent-Teacher Association (PTA) invited students, families, teachers, and staff to participate on their own in a physically distant scavenger hunt "Walk-a-Thon" weekend in the neighborhood. You may have seen them walking and exploring!



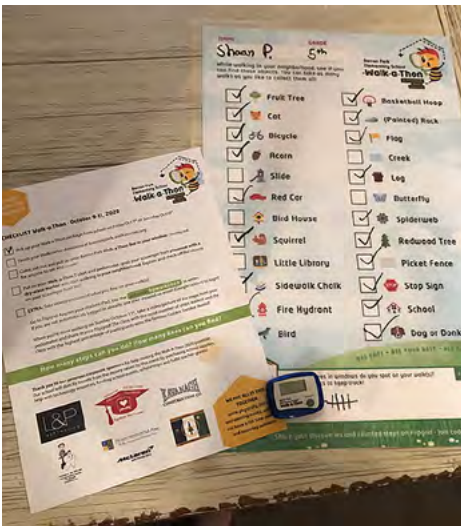
The end of a day well spent (l. to r., Jenna and Emerson McComb, Calliope Lopez, Neil Watters, Haley Harrier (first grade teacher at BPES), their dog Eddy Harrier, and Inez Lopez).

for the school through student, family, and corporate sponsorship.

If you would like to make a tax-deductible donation to BPES you may do so here:

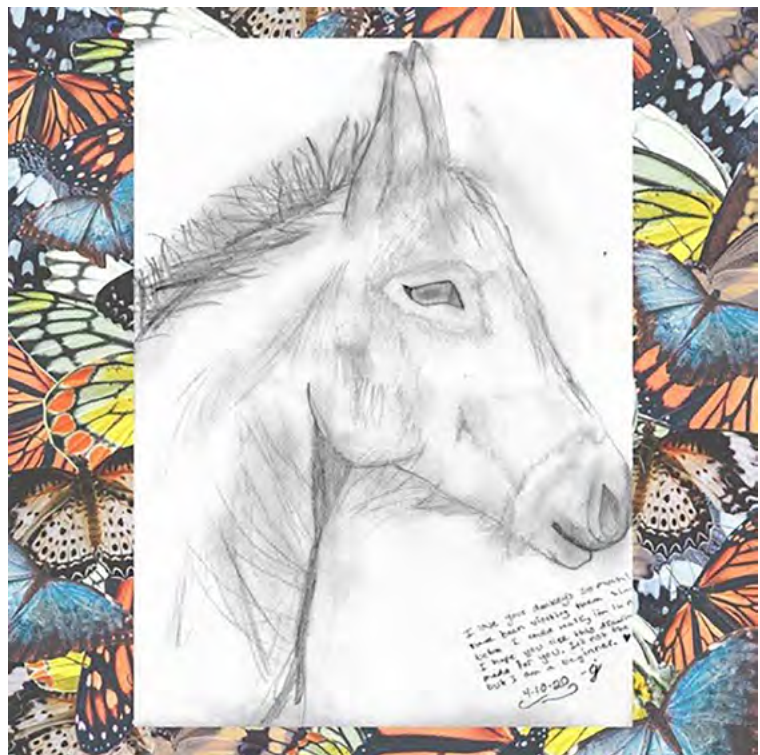
<https://barronparkpta.schoolauction.net/walkathon2020/give>

Barron Park PTA is a 501(c)3 non-profit organization, Tax ID: 77-0495556.



Each walker carried a pedometer and a list of items to spot.

Students helped raise money for BPES by walking steps while exploring for fun things in the neighborhood. Each participating student got a free T-shirt and a pedometer. Students walked 883,281 steps and over 315 miles cumulatively! Over \$25,000 was raised



Donkey sketch by a local artist. Part of our new donkey art series framed and curated by Sarah Vue.

Neighborhood Tree Walks from Canopy

By Indira Selvakumaraswamy, Canopy Community Outreach Manager



Trees and urban forests play an essential role in climate change mitigation and adaptation. As we all know, trees are nature’s natural filters and help reduce air and water pollution. Now more than ever, it is important that all of us understand and appreciate the value of trees and the role they play in capturing and storing carbon.

Did you know that one average-size tree, say a 30-footer, can store hundreds of pounds of CO2 over its lifetime and even longer if it’s used in building materials for a house or furniture? If this is the power of one tree – imagine what many trees lining your street can do!

Community trees also reduce the heat-island effect and reduce energy needs by helping to alter heating and cooling costs.

- Deciduous trees, planted on the south and west sides, will keep your house cool in the summer and let the sun warm your home in the winter, reducing energy use. (U.S. Department of Energy)
- Just three trees, properly placed around a house, can save up to 30% of energy use. (U.S. Forest Service Center for Urban Forest Research)
- Trees can improve physical and mental health and strengthen social connections. They get people outside, foster active living and neighborhood pride.

Having understood some key benefits of trees, here is a fun way to start learning and appreciating the trees in your neighborhood – Canopy’s Tree Walk Program!

Canopy’s Tree Walk Program consists of self-guided neighborhood tree walk routes throughout Palo Alto, Mountain View, East Palo Alto, and Menlo Park. These tree walks are a fantastic opportunity to spend time outdoors, enjoy the life-giving benefits of trees, and see how trees directly benefit your neighborhood. So, step out today, and

try the Barron Park Tree Walk <https://canopy.org/barron-park/> Enjoy nature’s most helpful and silent sentinels and don’t miss an opportunity to see all the 27 different tree species found in this Tree Walk. The Barron Park Tree Walk begins at Cornelis Bol Park near the intersection of Laguna Avenue and Laguna Court.

For high school students, here is an opportunity to come closer to nature, learn fascinating facts about trees, understand trees’ benefits in their school, neighborhood, and global environments while practicing nature-based wellness activities. Watch Canopy’s Bol Park Wellness Tree Walk on YouTube:

https://youtu.be/06Ph7h_N4hs
This Wellness Tree Walk is filmed in Palo Alto’s Cornelis Bol Park.

Click here for the map and list of trees from the walk:

<http://bit.ly/BPAtreewalk>

If you are a student at Gunn or PALY, completing this walk is part of your Living Skills coursework. Make sure to take



A Canopy-led tree walk meets under the Redwoods in Bol Park. Group walks will resume post-pandemic. Photo courtesy of Canopy.

the before survey <http://bit.ly/BPwalk1> and after survey linked here <http://bit.ly/bpwalk2> as well as below the map!



Perry and Jenny sketch by local artists, curated and framed by Sarah Vue.

ART IN THE PARK

Artist Mike Hamilton

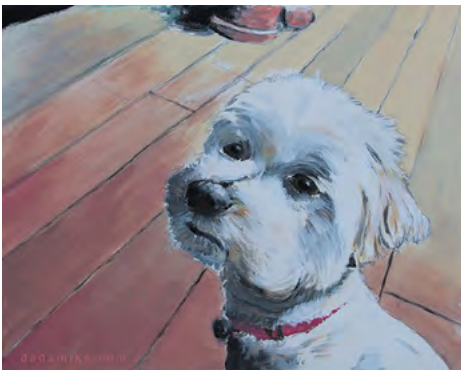
Artist Mike Hamilton grew up in the Bay Area and now resides in Barron Park. For most of 2020 he's been painting pet portraits in acrylic on canvas, mainly of dogs cared for by his mom's dog boarding business, Overnight-Dog, as well as pets living in other parts of the Bay Area. Mike is a huge fan and thinks our beloved pets are more than just animals; they are members of the family. Making a good pet painting involves more than rote reproduction. It also means trying your best to communicate the essence or spirit of the creature you are rendering. Mike has more examples of his work at <http://www.dadamike.com>



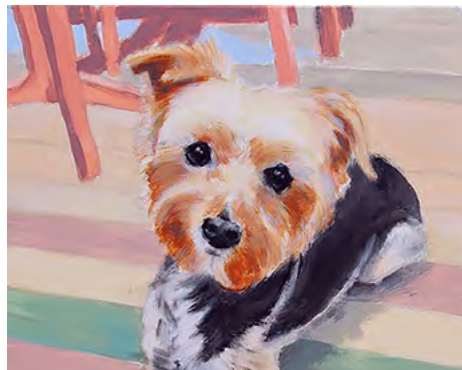
Elena and Emma. All paintings are acrylic on canvas.



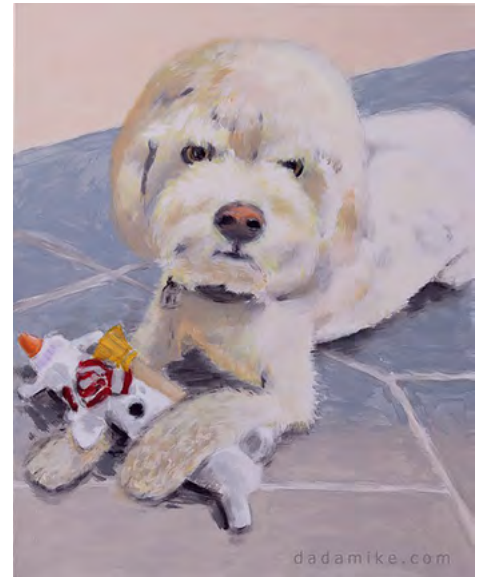
Dolly



Cassie



Lulu



Poodle

CALL FOR ARTISTS!

Do you enjoy the creative work in the BPA Newsletter? Would you like to see your art, photography, crafts, writing, published (or unpublished) book, etc., featured in a future issue? Please send your idea with a draft Artist's Statement and reproducible samples or a description of your work to Myrna Rochester at: mbrbpa@sonic.net



Created by Nathan Driscoll, Noun Project



Frosty and Junior

EMAIL LISTS

The Barron Park Association manages three email lists: *bpa-news*, *bpa-misc*, and *bpa-issues*. The email lists are hosted on Google Groups. To join a list, go to <http://bpapaloalto.org/bpa-email-lists/>. The link provides information about each list and an easy way to subscribe to one or more of them.

New Plants Coming Soon to Bol Park Native Habitat and Rain Gardens!

By Claire Elliott, Senior Ecologist, Grassroots Ecology

Fall is a time of dormancy for most plants that have evolved in Mediterranean climates like we have in California. However, in the winter things begin to happen. Annuals begin to sprout as the rains soak the soils, and some perennials, like the chaparral currants, surprise us with pretty flowers in December. Many perennials drop their leaves – but many are beautiful bare – like California Buckeye trees that have a gorgeous form that is only visible after their large leaves have fallen in late summer. Then the dayglow green of the young leaves budding out brightens our dark days in late January.

Visit a Bay Area meadow in fall and the plants will be mostly brown. Visit them in the spring and they are a riot of color. This was the situation for the Native Rain Garden (near the Matadero end of Bol Park), funded by Valley Water, planned by Grassroots Ecology, and installed with the help of many community volunteers in late 2018.



The Bol Park Rain Garden site before installation, Fall 2018. Photos courtesy of Grassroots Ecology.

As you can see in the photos, the garden began as a dry patch of lawn. After being planted with small perennials and seeded wildflowers, it became a haven for many species of native bees and butterflies visiting



Our Rain Garden in late spring.

plants like orange poppies, purple phacelias, and milkweed. Photographers were often seen clicking pictures of cool insects to post on iNaturalist or posing their family members in front of the spring color.

In early winter the garden still looks dry and brown, but the rains will soon bring up seedlings and refresh the perennial plants. Most of our annual grassland and meadow plants go dormant and dry in early winter, and that is why the Rain Garden is mostly brown until the rains start. A few perennial plants that normally stay green in the summer (e.g., buckwheats, sages, etc.) were planted here last year, but because the old lawn sprinklers were turned off and no other irrigation was added, many became stressed, and some will need to be replaced. Fortunately, almost 200 new plants have been propagated by the Grassroots Ecology nursery and are coming soon! Drip irrigation will be added to the rain garden to help these plants get established.

The best time to plant native plants is after the first rains, that is, NOW! The pandemic has made organizing our usual teams of volunteers impossible at the Bol Park Native Habitat garden, but we plan to have small, socially distanced groups of staff and our

veteran neighborhood team plant as soon as possible. The new perennials will fill in and help keep the garden looking well-tended. To prepare for planting, we will also be continuing a process (started this past summer during weekly visits with high school stewards) called “deadheading,” or cutting back last year’s dry flower stalks. We will also add some new wildflower seeds to help create color and attract more pollinators this spring.

If you are interested in learning more about native plants and purchasing some for your garden, please visit the Grassroots Ecology Nursery website:

<https://www.grassrootsecology.org/nursery-sales>

We now have a new edition of our book, *San Francisco Bay Area Native Plants for the Garden*, and have recently posted our plant inventory, along with ways to purchase plants online. If you have questions please email claire@grassrootsecology.org

To support the Bol Park Native Habitat Project, please donate online to the “Bol Park Fund” at <https://www.friendsofpaparks.org/donations2> Or by mail or phone to FOPAP, Bol Park Fund, 425 Grant Ave., Suite 27, Palo Alto, CA 94306; 650-327-7323.

Community Fund Supports Vulnerable Neighbors During Pandemic

By Lisa Van Dusen, Executive Director, Palo Alto Community Fund

We have two separate realities in our community: In December 2020, just as the S&P 500 and Nasdaq reached all-time record highs, COVID-19 cases also hit a new peak. Food, housing, and other forms of insecurity continued to skyrocket. Consider:

- In Santa Clara County, more than 43,000 renter households are at risk of eviction in the coming months, roughly 16 times the typical number.
- 500,000 people currently receive food every month from Second Harvest – double the number they served pre-pandemic.
- One in ten students in the Palo Alto Unified School District (PAUSD) receives free or reduced lunch. (PAUSD 2019 data)

While I am new to my role at the Palo Alto Community Fund (PACF), having arrived in mid-July 2020, I am not new to recognizing these two separate realities.

The good news is that local nonprofits sprang into action with courage, commitment, and ingenuity. Despite limited resources, soaring demand, and wildly challenging operating requirements, these local heroes jumped in with the nimble innovation and unstoppable grit of startups.

PACF emerged as one of those nimble innovators, serving as a hyperlocal bridge for residents who want to channel financial, human, and other resources to where they are needed most in our local community.

Here are two examples of the Palo Alto Community Fund collaborating to meet our neighbors' needs this year:

- As the pandemic struck, approximately 60 families in the Palo Alto Unified School District (PAUSD) were especially impacted. No organization seemed equipped to bring needed immediate financial relief. A group of PTA and concerned community members – including a PAUSD School Board member and a PACF Board member – came together. Calling themselves “The Squad,” they worked with each other and partnered with PACF to raise money for food and other basic life needs gift cards for the families.
- Kafenia Peace Collective <http://kafenya.org>



Holiday relief: PACF and Los Altos Kiwanis representatives deliver toilet paper and water, plus a new bike and helmet to the Solario family. A partnership with the Kafenia Peace Collective, the Karat School Project, and Live in Peace enabled the delivery of vital support to RV residents on El Camino. Photo courtesy of the Karat School Project.

Karat School Project <https://theksp.org> and Live In Peace <https://liveinpeace.org> joined forces to support the approximately 48 families and individuals who live in RVs on El Camino Real near Stanford and elsewhere in Palo Alto. The group ensured that residents had food and fuel; school supplies and internet connectivity; diapers and devices. PACF partnered with these organizations, among others, to invest in the lives of these resilient neighbors who faced job loss, remote learning, and other challenges exacerbated by the pandemic.

Since March 2020, PACF deployed \$1.2 million in responsive grants to dozens of nonprofit organizations – including \$100,000 in mid-December – to provide direct support to the most vulnerable families and seniors:

- 500+ families supported financially to cover basic life needs, including food, rent, and childcare
- 175+ rents paid to ensure housing stability
- 2,278 counseling hours provided to K-12 students over the summer school break
- 8,000+ meals served through the Boys & Girls Club of the Peninsula.

This is only possible because our community has stepped up with generosity and compassion.

It can feel overwhelming taking care of your own family’s needs, much less knowing how to help neighbors in need during this prolonged crisis. Donating to PACF makes it easy to support ongoing local relief, recovery, and resilience efforts and be part of local solutions. PACF’s key focus areas include: uplifting the vulnerable, helping families, improving education opportunities, and enhancing community life for everyone in Palo Alto, East Palo Alto, and Menlo Park. Disparities of

opportunity and systemic racism continue to hold back people of color in our community. We stand with our grantees and the broader community in working to address these inequities now and in the years ahead. We hope you will join us.



Neighborhood food closet pop-up that was stocked (in part) by gift cards distributed by “The Squad,” a local group of concerned citizens that partners with PACF. Photo courtesy of PACF.

For more information, please view the following:

- Help local families: <https://paloaltocommfund.org/give/>
(Continued on bottom of page 11)

Why I Am Losing My Marbles

By Stephanie Enos

While reading the paper in our sitting room one morning, I heard a strange rustling sound that seemed to be very close by. I opened the front door to investigate. We have a covered porch where I have attached a ceramic cornucopia to the wall with different feathers I have collected over the years: hen feathers, hawk feathers, turkey vulture feathers. To keep them from flying off I had placed marbles at the bottom for ballast. When I went out to see what the kerfuffle was about, all the feathers were scattered on the ground, but the marbles had vanished. Well, well, I thought, who could be doing this, I wonder?

My curiosity was aroused: This called for a little experiment. I picked up all the feathers, counted out precisely 30 new marbles, put them in the base of the cornucopia, rearranged the feathers, and waited. Not for long as it turned out: Within about seven minutes, there was the rustling sound again and a commotion much as before. I peeped out just in time to see our resident scrub jay fly off in a hurry. Again, all the feathers were strewn about, and the 30 marbles? All gone!



Stephanie's front porch. Note container with collection of feathers. Photos courtesy of Stephanie Enos.

What on earth could it want with 30 marbles and how did it manage to steal them so fast? The scrub jay is part of the *Corvidae* family that includes crows, rooks, jackdaws, magpies, and jays, and, much like magpies, they seem to be attracted to bright shiny objects.



One blue marble found on the ground.

I would love to find out what they do with their hoard and where they keep them.

Somewhere in our immediate neighborhood are these hidden treasures.

No, I'm not losing my marbles: the scrub jay took off with all of them!

Spring BPA Newsletter Deadline — Monday March 1, 2021!

To All Our Past and Future Contributors:

Please submit articles (preferably in Microsoft Word) for the Spring issue of the Barron Park Association Newsletter, along with photos/illustrations (separate from text), by **Monday, March 1, 2021**, to Myrna Rochester at mbrbpa@sonic.net

If your Spring idea is a query — for an article, story, report, update, interview, announcement, review, anecdote, or artist's page — please contact us in advance. The Spring issue will be mailed in early April 2021, to all Barron Park households.

Announcements should be for events scheduled after April 15, 2021. Please keep this in mind, especially — and hopefully! — for school activities. Thanks!

(PACF Pandemic Relief, continued from p. 10)

- PACF 2019-2010 impact report: <http://bit.ly/pacfimpact>
- Latest PACF newsletter: <https://mailchi.mp/paloaltocommfund/want-your-donation-to-be-impactful-give-where-you-live?>
- Kafenia Peace Collective <http://kafenya.org>
Karat School Project <https://theksp.org>
and Live In Peace <https://liveinpeace.org>
- December Fireside Chat with Lisa Van Dusen, <https://bit.ly/37EqeB2>

BARRON PARK ASSOCIATION BOARD OF DIRECTORS

WINTER 2020-2021

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P.A. Neighborhood (PAN) Liaison: Doug Burns

BPA Board Meetings are held the 3rd Tuesday of most months at 7:15 p.m. Neighbors are welcome.

For Board Meeting Schedule write to: president@bpapaloalto.org

www.bpapaloalto.org

A New Barron Park Business: State of Mind Slice House

By Jim Smith, Owner, State of Mind Slice House

We are very excited to bring our family's award-winning pizza restaurant, State of Mind Slice House, to the Barron Park/Ventura neighborhood. Our family has lived in the area for more than 80 years. My father, Dr. Sydney Smith, operated the El Camino Veterinary Hospital at 4040 El Camino Real for more than 50 years. I raised my family in this neighborhood, my oldest son Lars and his wife are raising their son and daughter in Palo Alto, and we continue to live on Ilima Court. My wife Taia and I are retired public school teachers, who met while working together at the former Gatehouse Restaurant on Lytton in downtown Palo Alto nearly 40 years ago.

Three years ago, our restaurant team opened State of Mind Public House and Pizzeria in downtown Los Altos. It has always been our dream to open a location in Palo Alto, so last March we signed a lease to occupy the historic Taco Bell building at 3850 El Camino Real, and we're hoping to open our doors in early 2021.

The ownership team has a lengthy and impressive résumé in the restaurant and pizza business. Chef Lars Smith has been making pizza since his high school days, starting at Pizza My Heart in Palo Alto. He is a competitive pizzaiolo and has won numerous awards. He is a Premier Member of the US Pizza Team, won the International Pizza Challenge in Las Vegas in 2017, and competed at the World Pizza Championships in Italy the following year. This past fall, Lars won the inaugural Virtual U.S. Pizza Championship and recently captured first place in two categories at the Real California Pizza Contest.

Andrew Smith, another Palo Alto native, is the beverage manager and runs the front of the house. He curates the beer and wine list, which represents the best of California's independent brewers and vintners. Cristina Smith, Lars's wife, is the business manager/events coordinator. They met 15 years ago while working at the Palo Alto Pizza My Heart. Amy Alcantar, business partner and Jackie of all trades, is also a Pizza My Heart alum who's worked with Lars for over 10 years.

The State of Mind Slice House, as the name implies, will offer pizza by the slice, along with whole pies and gluten-free options. It's modeled on New York slice shops with a



Our State of Mind team: l. to r., Lars Smith, Cristina Smith, Jim Smith, Amy Alcantar, Andrew Smith. Photos courtesy of Jim Smith.

California twist. The selection will run from traditional (cheese, pepperoni, mushroom) to more exotic (duck, kale, chorizo, and potato). We'll offer a variety of "grab-and-go" salads and San Francisco's own "IT'S-IT" ice cream sandwiches. Everything is made in house from scratch, save the desserts, using the freshest ingredients available locally. We expect to be open from 11:30 a.m. to 10 p.m. daily.



Heirloom Goat (Cheese) Pizza from State of Mind Slice House.

We're excited to share our love of great food, beverages, and service with you, our neighbors. We're looking forward to seeing you in early 2021! In the meantime, you can pick up



Cheese and pesto gluten-free pizzas.



Winterland salad: greens, kohlrabi, pomegranate, ricotta salata, and pistachio with citrus dressing.

or take delivery from our Los Altos location: <https://stateofmindpublichouse.com>

Nature's Wonderful Ingredients: Mustard Seeds

By Jaya Pandey, BPA Green Beans Committee

Mustard seeds (*Brassica nigra*) and mustard greens, used in traditional South Asian cooking, are known to have numerous health benefits. Among other effects, mustard seeds in the diet are known to regulate metabolism, to protect from infections, and to lower blood sugar. In Southeast Asia, mustard oil is also used for cooking, adding a unique flavor to dishes.

Mustard greens are nutrient-rich, containing calcium, copper, magnesium, and fiber, as well as almost the entire daily value of vitamins C and K and sizable amounts of vitamins A, B6, and E. The greens have a strong, spicy flavor and so are usually served boiled, steamed, or stir-fried. When pickled, they retain their anti-oxidant properties.

Here are a few tips for cooking with mustard seeds or mustard leaves/greens:

- Slow cook 1 cup of yellow toor dal or lentils of your choice (ratio of lentils to water is approx. 1:1.5). Add 1/4 teaspoon



Ingredients: Left, Black mustard seeds; Right, Toor Dal (yellow lentils). Photos by Jaya Pandey.

turmeric, salt to taste, 1-2 crushed garlic cloves, 1 finely chopped tomato (or tomato purée), about 1/4 cup finely chopped onion. Heat approx. 1-2 tablespoons olive oil, and sauté 1/2 tablespoon of mustard seeds and 1-2 green chilies broken into halves. Add all to the cooked lentils. Add a squeeze of lemon, and garnish with

finely chopped cilantro for a soothing, warm lentil soup.

- Slow cook 1-2 finely sliced raw bananas and approximately 1/4 cup finely chopped cilantro in 2-3 cups of vegetable broth. Add 1/2 tablespoon cumin seeds and 1-2 tablespoons crushed mustard seeds while bananas are still cooking. This makes a nutritious soothing soup.
- Mustard greens can be sautéed lightly with fenugreek seeds, finely chopped green chilies, and garlic and used as a side dish.

Enjoy!



White radishes with mustard greens, sautéed in olive oil with red chilies, fenugreek, bay leaves, coriander and mango powder.

BPA EMAILS AND WEB LINKS

WINTER 2020-2021

- **BPA Website:** <http://bpapaloalto.org>
- **BPA Newsletter Archive:** <http://bpapaloalto.org/bpa-newsletter/>
- **BPA Membership (Join/Renew):** <http://bpapaloalto.org/join-the-barron-park-association>
- **Membership Questions:** Lisa Berkowitz Landers at barronpark.paloalto@gmail.com
- **BPA Email Lists:** Join at <http://bpapaloalto.org/bpa-email-lists> or write to: listmanager@bpapaloalto.org
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- **BPA Newsletter Editor:** Myrna Rochester at mbrbpa@sonic.net or newsletter@bpapaloalto.org
- **BPA Business Liaison:** Paul Yang at pabloyang@yahoo.com
- **Support for Buena Vista neighbors during COVID:** Karen Ratzlaff at karen_ratzlaff@hotmail.com
- **Welcoming Committee Chair:** Gwen Luce at gluce@cbnorcal.com
- **Emergency Services Volunteer Program:** Maurice Green at mauryg3@comcast.net
- **BPA Historian:** Douglas L. Graham at dgrahampaca@gmail.com
- **BPA Webmaster:** Maurice Green at bpawebman@bpapaloalto.org
- **Barron Park Donkeys:** To volunteer, donate, or to purchase merchandise go to: <http://barronparkdonkeys.org> or contact Jenny Kiratli at barronparkdonkeys@gmail.com
- **Barron Park Cool Block:** To start a Cool Block team post pandemic, email Hilary Glann at hglann@gmail.com
- **Bol Park Native Habitat:** : Donate to the Bol Park Fund at <https://friendsofpaparks.org/donations2> Or by mail or phone: Friends of the Palo Alto Parks (FOPAP), Bol Park Fund, 425 Grant Ave., Suite 27, Palo Alto, CA 94306; 650-327-7323. To volunteer contact Rich Elder at rich.e.elder@gmail.com

ART IN YOUR YARD

We know that Barron Park has many examples of outdoor or “yard” art, either made by you or other artists. We’d love to see photos of them in upcoming newsletters. Please send reproducible photos to Myrna Rochester at: mbrbpa@sonic.net Tell us something about the art, but you don’t need to include your street address.



Sculpture by Creative Mania from the Noun Project

Memories from the Pasture

By Jenny Kiratli, Head Donkey Handler

We lost our beautiful, sweet Jenny on November 18, 2020. She was dearly loved by so many and we miss her. I have received many notices and stories from the community and share some of these memories here. Full stories and more photos will be featured on our website: www.barronparkdonkeys.org

Jenny joined us on November 15, 2016, as a new companion for Perry after Niner's death. Jenny was born in the desert, probably the Mojave Desert, captured in a roundup by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), and lived with Robert and Laura Vance in Santa Clarita for 15 years. It was clear from her first day with us that she was her own donkey. We provided a separate enclosure for her during the early getting-to-know-you period, and she seemed happy to be on her own. This was a huge transition for her from a quiet field where she lived alone to our comparatively bustling pasture – with planes flying overhead, constant construction at the VA, myriads of passersby on the path and at the gate, and Perry.

Perry was fascinated by her and was never far from her outside the enclosure. When we opened the gate, she would explore the pasture with Perry not far behind. For the first few days, she seemed to tell him to “back off, Buster” by raising her hind leg as if to kick him and giving him a look. But they were also engaging in sequential dirt-rolling. Perry would roll and roll in the dirt pretending that he didn't care if she noticed, then walk away. She would subsequently go to the same spot and roll in the dirt. This might repeat a few times. None of us knew the exact meaning of sequential dirt-rolling, but they clearly did. After a few days, we removed the enclosure, and Jenny settled in comfortably as Perry's significant other. Perry established himself as the alpha donkey as it was his pasture after all – and Jenny allowed him to think that, often following behind him and even resting her head on his back.

She began to settle into the routine of being a Barron Park donkey and quickly became a neighborhood favorite, going to the gate on her terms and otherwise standing out of reach, grazing, seemingly unaware of the



Jenny the donkey with Jenny Kiratli, January 2017. Photo courtesy of Jenny Kiratli.

throng of admirers. The first time I saw her go to the gate during her first week or so, it was to greet an older couple with two small children. I felt that she initially thought it was her previous owners and their grandchildren who used to visit her in her prior home. She always seemed to have a predilection for children, sticking her massive head through the gate to nuzzle them in strollers or just getting a nose pat from a toddler.

Jenny was highly intelligent and watched us all. She had special relationships with each of the handlers as well as many neighborhood regulars. She studied us as we opened the shed to get her food. One day, when the handler had left the gate unlocked, she handily opened the gate latch and then proceeded to open all three hasps and knobs on the

main shed as if she completely knew what she was doing. Once she got into the shed, she was very selective, opening the tin with her favorite food. It was quite a struggle to get her out of there! She definitely thought of it as a game.

My favorite memories of Jenny were walking up to the gate and finding myself eye-to-eye with her beautiful, deep brown eyes and holding the full weight of her head in my arms or standing with her head rested on my shoulder. Being with her made me feel as if everything was alright, even if only for that moment. She was such a loving and complex donkey – moody, inquisitive, intelligent, calm, majestic. It was so difficult to say goodbye, but I will treasure the memories and continue to tell her stories at the gate.

Days with Jenny: Neighbors' Stories

By Gitanjali Bhattacharjee, Stephanie Kaplan, Jenny Kiratli, Caroline Rose, Lila Sanchez



Jenny enthusiastically greets one of her many fans. Photo courtesy of the Donkey Project.

A woman came by the pasture to let us know how much Jenny had meant to her family. She mentioned that her son has autism. She said that when her son learned that Jenny had passed he insisted the entire family visit the pasture to pay their respects.

Another woman brought by a dozen roses and said that her daughter had been crying all day so she had to do something to bring her some peace.

From Caroline Rose (Barron Park resident):

I walk by the donkey pasture a lot, maybe six or eight times a week. I loved Jenny from the start; she seemed to be a very sensitive animal – and oh, those eyes! If she wasn't at the gate when I arrived, she would sometimes come when I called her. One day, to get her attention, I said, "Don't you want to come and see your Aunt Caroline?" That led to my singing a bit of the song "Sweet Caroline," and she responded by walking right over to me. She really seemed to like the singing, so after that, I would always call for her that way, and it got her attention nearly every time. One afternoon close to the end of her life, when Jenny was a fair distance from the gate and no one else was around, I burst into

singing, more loudly and gaily than usual. She immediately responded with a long, loud bray and a brisk walk over to me. It was a special moment with a very special animal who will

be dearly missed.

From Stephanie Kaplan (handler):

When I started as a handler, Perry was forthright and demanding of attention while Jenny, once she'd gotten her breakfast, was fine wandering off without much interaction. She pulled her head away when I tried to scratch her neck while she was eating; while Perry leaned into the affection. She came up to the gate as I entered the paddock, but I got the sense that it was only because my arrival meant food. I started following her when she finished so I could say goodbye, but she never responded. A few weeks in, she went on her post-breakfast wander; I said goodbye to Perry (who I had been fending away from Jenny's food); and then I walked out to say goodbye to her. As usual, I squatted down to look her in the eye while she snuffed at the ground, and I scratched her neck. I rose up, turned toward the gate, and took about a dozen steps when I heard hooves walking up behind me. I slowed but didn't dare turn around. The next thing I felt was Jenny's head and long nose pressed against my back. I stood there for a moment drinking in the feeling before turning around and giving her a full head, cheek, nose, and



Tribute to our donkey Jenny by an anonymous artist. Photo by James Witt.



Jenny and Perry “chilling” in their pasture. Photo courtesy of the Donkey Project.

neck scratching – eye-to-eye in the middle of the field. From that time forward, we mutually engaged with each other when we were together – she decided my heart was in it.

From Gitanjali Bhattacharjee (handler):

I only came to know Jenny and Perry earlier this year, when shelter-in-place meant that I was working from home and desperate to get outside. Though I enjoyed getting to know both donkeys, it was Jenny who really fascinated me – she clearly had a mind and will of her own, and I got the sense (however anthropomorphic) that she was thinking a great deal about things. Some days she would quickly come up to the gate to greet me, sniffing me all over and making it very hard to comply with the no-petting order. Other days I could tell that although she knew I was there, she had other, more important items on her agenda to take care of than greeting me. I appreciated her insistence on boundaries, though I’m sure not everyone felt the same way. A few times, I observed a little girl who seemed absolutely enamored of Jenny and would stand at the gate calling her over and over and over again, growing more frustrated when, despite her best and most persistent efforts, Jenny remained out of reach. Jenny would stand near the troughs, within sight, as if to make the point that she wasn’t a regular pet, to be subject to the whims of humans!

I learned from watching others interact (or try to interact) with the donkeys that my best bet at getting to know Perry and Jenny was to sit quietly and let them get to know me – I joked to my friends that donkey socializing seemed to consist of standing near each other in silence, maybe munching on some leaves. I took the same approach and found that Jenny gradually warmed up to me. She greeted me at the gate more often than not, and I felt thrilled each time she came to say hello. Among other things, learning to interact with Jenny forced me to take time away from the hustle of life as a graduate student to be present in nature. I always felt rested and calm



Jenny and Perry awaited visitors to their pasture. Photo courtesy of the Donkey Project.

BARRON PARK ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER

WINTER 2020- 2021

Barron Park Association

724 Barron Avenue
Palo Alto, California 94306

EDITOR

Myrna Rochester

LAYOUT

Hilary Glann

PROOFREADER

Gwen Luce

CONTRIBUTORS

Gitanjali Bhattacharjee,
Dione Chen, Jerome Coonan,
Claire Elliott, Stephanie Enos, Hilary Glann,
Douglas L. Graham, Mike Hamilton,
Stephanie Kaplan, John W. King,
Jenny Kiratli, Art Liberman,
Julie Lythcott-Haims,
Jaya Pandey, Chris Gebert Parikh,
Karen Ratzlaff, Caroline Rose, Lila Sanchez,
Indira Selvakumaraswamy, Jim Smith,
John St. Clair, Lisa Van Dusen

PHOTO/ILLUSTRATION CREDITS

Barron Park Elementary School, Canopy,
Sharlene Carlsen, Stephanie Enos, Grass-
roots Ecology, Karen Holman, Karat School
Project, John W. King, Jenny Kiratli, Julie
Lythcott-Haims, Creative Mania and Nate
Driscoll (Noun Project), Palo Alto Commu-
nity Fund, Jaya Pandey, The Punn Family,
Jim Smith, John St. Clair, Sarah Vue

PRINTER

Prodigy Press

after sitting for 10 or 20 minutes with the donkeys, more present in the world and less overwhelmed by it.

Lila Sanchez (handler)

When I first started feeding the donkeys, Jenny would always bite my clothes and nudge me, and I thought it was out of impatience. Looking back, I think that was just her way of showing love.

Perry Gets a New Buddy

By Jenny Kiratli, Head Donkey Handler



Buddy, a 21-year-old, long-haired, chocolate miniature donkey, is Perry's new companion. Photo by Karen Holman.

On Saturday, December 6, we welcomed Buddy to the Donkey Pasture. Donkeys are herd animals, and so it is not healthy for a donkey to live alone. Due to the generosity of Woodside resident Kerry DeBenedetti, we were able to acquire a new companion quickly to fill the great void left by Jenny's death. Kerry knew that Perry would be lonely and grieving and initially offered her own donkey Buddy as a loaner while we worked with rescue groups to identify the right match. But upon visiting the pasture, she declared it "donkey heaven" and decided that Buddy was the perfect match for Perry, and our pasture was the perfect home for Buddy.

Buddy is 21 years old and a long-haired, chocolate miniature donkey. He is super gentle and easy going, especially with children. Buddy has settled in to Barron Park life with ease and only a few days of harassment by Perry who needed to exert himself as alpha donkey. The two donkeys meander through the pasture together and even eat side-by-side with no fuss. We are so glad to welcome Buddy to the pasture and encourage everyone to come and meet him. Just be sure to pay attention to Perry first – as he is still the



Perry and Buddy get to know each other under the supervision of handler Denise Sanders. Photo by Sharlene Carlsen.

resident star and expects adulation from the masses.

Join us any Sunday in Bol Park between 10:00 a.m. and 11:00 a.m. for a great opportunity to greet Buddy!

Don't forget: No petting during COVID and no feeding of donkeys ever. Thank you.

The Barron Park Donkey project has incurred extra expenses this year. All our funding – for food and supplies, veterinary bills, and leasing land – comes from the good will of the community, that is, donations. To donate, inquire about volunteering, or buy merchandise, go to: www.barron-parkdonkeys.org or contact Jenny Kiratli at barronparkdonkeys@gmail.com



Buddy samples the Bol Park grass. Photo by Jenny Kiratli.

Barron Park News in Brief

Good News from Buena Vista Mobile Home Park

By Karen Ratzlaff

The food pantry at Buena Vista was closed until January 3 for the holiday break, giving Residents Association President Maria Martinez and her hard-working volunteers time with family and R & R, but is now back in full swing. Many, many thanks go to the Barron Park Association and to the dozens of individual, generous neighbors who donate loads of groceries, other essentials, and gift cards to BV families struggling with job loss and underemployment. Special thanks to Nakia of We Hope for securing a donation to purchase a fridge for the BV food pantry.



Karen's Jeep filled with Buena Vista donations, December 2020. Photo by Karen Ratzlaff.

In addition, we're happy to announce a new project: my church (Palo Alto Vineyard) has set up a 501(c)3 nonprofit, Buena Vista Partners, that will allow folks and foundations to provide financial support for the direct benefit of Buena Vista residents. By mid-January the incorporation papers will be filed, the bank account set up, and a website <https://buenavistapartners.org> will be in place.

2020 was like no other I've lived through, and through all the hard things and the sad things, I've been blessed getting to meet so many compassionate, generous folks wanting to help their neighbors at Buena Vista. Thank you for being you! However you celebrated the recent holiday season, I hope it was joyous and full of peace and love. See you in the New Year!!

For more information, you can contact me at: karen_ratzlaff@hotmail.com

New Community & Senior Activities!

By The Editors

Despite the enormous disruptions that continue to dominate our lives, the sociable and hardy residents of Barron Park keep finding ways to meet, to share, and to exchange greetings, news, and opinions. Masked walkers in the neighborhood and in Bol Park almost invariably run into acquaintances and neighbors, albeit on the other side of the path. New relationships are forming every day.

Thanks to the good-natured organizational skills of high school junior Vivek Punn (backed by his family), we now have new and satisfying ways to connect. Earlier in the fall, more than 40 neighbors were delighted to find a large, healthy basil plant on their doorstep – a surprise gift from the Punn family. Many of those plants are still thriving, giving us salad ingredients and pesto well into the winter.



Sing-along with Vivek Punn, who organizes our Senior Connections. Photo courtesy of the Punn Family.

On Saturday, December 5, a sizable contingent of Barron Parkers met on Zoom for a free-wheeling conversation while enjoying a Driftwood Market lunch, funded by the BPA and facilitated and delivered by Vivek. Finally, on Wednesday afternoon, December 23, again organized by Vivek along with John King, a brilliant group of singers enjoyed a Zoom holiday singalong, led by our own Gary Breitbard on accordion and Jena Rauti, song leader.

Warm thanks to everyone involved in creating these new community and senior connections – Vivek Punn, the Punn family, John King, Gary Breitbard, Jena Rauti, and all the neighbors who participated. We're looking forward to more virtual gatherings in the near future and, eventually, in-person get-togethers. If you have ideas or input about new activities, please write to: barronparkseniorconnections@gmail.com

It's the Great Conjunction, Charlie Brown!

By Hilary Glann

On the Winter Solstice, neighbors sought high ground and unobstructed southwest views to see a rare cosmic event: the Great Conjunction of Jupiter and Saturn. Last seen in the night sky during the time of Genghis Khan, the Great Conjunction refers to Jupiter and Saturn's being just 0.1 degree apart in the night sky at the peak of the conjunction.

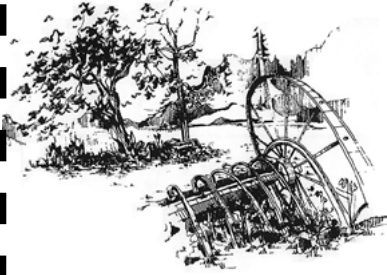
Masked and distanced neighbors converged on Strawberry Hill near Gunn H.S., on hilly upper Matadero Avenue, and in their own yards with telescopes, binoculars, and enthusiasm to view the event. While the Conjunction's peak was often obscured by passing clouds and by the bright streetlight at the top of Strawberry Hill, better visibility was enjoyed on other late December evenings.

2021 promises many occasions to look to the stars, including an early morning conjunction of Venus and Jupiter on February 11, a total lunar eclipse on May 26, a Venus-Mars conjunction on July 12, a vivid display of the Perseid meteor showers on August 12 and 13, and the Draconid meteor shower on October 8.

Visit <https://nationalgeographic.com/science/2020/12/ten-spectacular-stargazing-events-to-watch-in-2021/> to learn more. Also, the *New York Times* offers an astronomical event calendar you can synch with your Google or IOS calendar: <https://nytimes.com/interactive/2020/science/2020-astronomy-space-calendar.html>

Additional resources:

- The Texas McDonald Observatory YouTube channel offers livestreams on astronomy topics including our solar systems, nebulas and other galaxies: <https://youtube.com/user/mcdonaldobservatory>
- The Mt. Wilson Observatory offers virtual 'star watch parties' for major astronomical events: <https://youtube.com/watch?v=pZtXOguk63U>
Visit <https://twitter.com/MtWilsonObs> for updates on Mt. Wilson events and other information.



2021-2022 Barron Park Association Membership

Thanks and Happy New Year to all members and supporters of the Barron Park Association. Our membership cycle begins April 2021. It's fine to renew early! Or take out a new membership at any time. Memberships submitted after December 1, 2020 will extend through March 2022.

Your annual dues support BPA-sponsored and Committee activities, including our quarterly Newsletters, Happy Hours, Senior Connections, neighborhood project support – and soon, hopefully – May Fête, Movie Night, and other social events.

Join online at: <http://bpapaloalto.org/membership-form> using PayPal, or mail this completed form with your check to:

**Barron Park Association
724 Barron Ave.
Palo Alto, CA 94306**

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| Total Contribution: | \$ _____ | | |

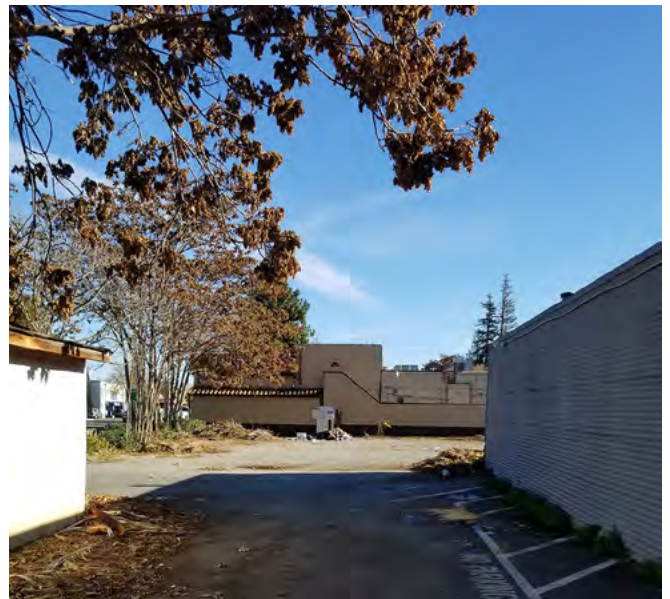
Check payable to: Barron Park Association.

Note: Membership and contributions are not tax deductible.

(Before and after photos of the clean-up of the blighted lot at the corner of El Camino and Barron Avenue. See story on [page 1](#).



Corner of Barron and El Camino, before start of cleanup. Photos by John King.



Barron and El Camino, late December 2020, cleanup in progress.

BARRON PARK ASSOCIATION
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