

April 2018  
ISSUE 23

# FRIENDS *of* VILLA GRANDE NEWSLETTER

## IN THIS ISSUE

- PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE
- PPP UPDATE
- PROGRESSIVE PARTY!
- NOD-A-WAY HOUSE
- RIVER WATER QUALITY
- VG POST OFFICE TIPS
- MAD HATTER REPORT
- TOWN HALL TOPICS
- PROPANE CONTRACT
- FIREHOUSE UPDATE
- POISON OAK FEATURED
- BOAT TIE-UPS AGAIN

## OUR MISSION

- ❖ RESTORE AND MAINTAIN PATTERSON POINT AS A RIPARIAN PRESERVE FOR LIMITED PUBLIC RECREATION USE
- ❖ PRESERVE THE HISTORIC AND UNIQUE CHARACTER OF VILLA GRANDE
- ❖ ENHANCE THE QUALITY OF LIFE IN THE GREATER VILLA GRANDE COMMUNITY

## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Happy Spring! It is always lovely to see the trees beginning to bloom. We have a new osprey pair in the river nest, so no vacancy (like the rest of Sonoma County) and hopefully osprey chicks soon!

Friends of Villa Grande has been busy supporting our community this winter. We hosted a party for new people in our community, many of whom lost their homes in the fires. We joined members in the community to establish a group looking at emergency preparedness. Thank you, Erin McKinney, for taking the lead on this!



We just had our Mad Hatter Ball which was a great success. So many people stepped up to help. Thank you, Andrea Buffa, for successfully leading this fun and fund-raising venture and thanks to members of the community who showed up in their Mad Tea Party best.

Victoria and Ken Wikle have moved and Victoria is stepping away from day-to-day management of Patterson Point Preserve. The FoVG board has voted to hire her as an on-call consultant. We thank Victoria and Ken

for their many years of service to FoVG, the board and to the community.

Rich Holmer is stepping down as chair of the Restoration Committee. He will continue on the FoVG board but we will miss his work as Restoration chair.

I am pleased to announce that Leah Norwood has graciously volunteered to take over as chair of the Restoration Committee. Leah has the perfect combination of skills and I am pleased to be able to appoint her as chair. Thank you Leah and welcome!

Spring leads to the kickoff of so many wonderful events in our community. Please review our calendar and join us for all the fun! ([villagrande.org/calendar](http://villagrande.org/calendar))

Thank you for being part of Friends of Villa Grande. You make a difference!

With gratitude and respect,

Kyla Brooke  
President, FoVG

## PATTERSON POINT: RESTORATION & CHALLENGES

Our ninth season at Patterson Point Preserve, which just ended, had us dealing with emergencies while pursuing our long range restoration plans. We began last fall by felling a diseased redwood next to the path; a week later, a large limb from the bay at the bottom of the path split off the main trunk. An ar-

borist was already scheduled to thin the bay forest near the upper path and he took care of the split limb at the same time.

Stewards and volunteers continued to remove ivy from deep within the Preserve, and new native plant seedlings were added to formerly weeded areas. Thanks to all who help out!

*To help with the ongoing and emergency costs of PPP, a donor has offered to match contributions earmarked for the Preserve up to \$1,000. All funds raised from this campaign will be targeted specifically to the restoration efforts on Patterson Point Preserve. Please contact [friends@villagrande.org](mailto:friends@villagrande.org) if you can donate.*

## PROGRESSIVE MIMOSA GARDEN PARTY

Circle Saturday, June 2 on your calendar for another Progressive Mimosa Garden Party. Once again, FoVG members will host three events, from 3:00 to 5:00 p.m., with food and

refreshment at each stop. Free to FoVG members, and only \$10 per friend you would like to invite along. To learn the party locations, RSVP to [friends@villagrande.org](mailto:friends@villagrande.org)

## NOD-A-WAY AND THE GIROT FAMILY

Among the most historic homes in Villa Grande is the charming “Nod-a-Way” cottage at the end of 2nd Avenue past Russian River Avenue. Probably built by the railroad or an early settler, the home was sold to the Schneider family in 1911. The family retains a 1906 note that asks the house to be relocated to the riverside corner of the property before moving in.



The Schneiders had five children, a daughter who drowned in 1914 near the cottage and another daughter who never married and died in 1928. The two sons, George and Nicholas, began the successful furrier “Schneider Brothers” on Post Street right next to the original Gump's in San Francisco. The third daughter, Charlotte “Lottie” Schneider, married Alfred Girot who helped his brothers-in-law run the family fur business.

Alfred and Lottie had two children, George (Popsie) and Alfred, Jr. who ran the Schneider Brothers until it closed in the 1980's. Popsie remembered as a child the family taking the J Church streetcar from Noe Valley to the Ferry Building and boarding the 8 a.m. ferry to Sausalito on the top deck. There, they caught the train to Santa Rosa, where they transferred to the Guerneville line, which stopped at Rio Nido, Guerneville, Northwood (then called Rio Campo) arriving in Villa Grande at noon, with the train whistle calling kids home for lunch.

By the end of the 1930's, Alfred and Popsie were the surviving owners of Nod-a-Way. Popsie later purchased Alfred's share in the property though Alfred continued visiting Villa Grande, since he married Annette Jansen, first cousin to Gladys Jansen Vail,



Children on Bottom Row L-R: Al Girot, Jr, Annette Jansen, Vernetta Cheffins, George Girot, Sr. Lottie (adult) in striped dress.

who still owns property at the end of Willow Road.

Another summer resident, Barbara (Baba) Annis, spent time in Villa Grande as a young girl and teenager, staying at her uncle Lou Kingsley's place either above the store or at his house on Russian River Avenue (aka the Garden House). Baba was an excellent piano player so Popsie taught himself to play piano while he was a teenager, just so he could meet her. They were high school sweethearts, and they married in 1940.

One of Popsie's best friends was Bill Edwards, who owned the home now occupied by the Bornsteins a few doors down Russian River Avenue. After WWII, veterans Popsie and Bill had an ongoing horseshoe tournament that went on year after year. A chalk board with the score from a game they played in 1947 still hangs in the garage next to the house.

After Popsie's death in 2008, his children, Suzanne and George Jr., continued to use the cottage jointly until Suzanne's passing in 2014. George still remembers as a child coming to the river for whole summers where he learned to swim, boat and fish. He shares his father's love of old cars. Popsie owned 19 Buicks in his lifetime, including a classic 1938 model that George now owns. Villa Grande is blessed with families that have anchored this community for generations, including the Girots.

If you would like to share stories of your house, please contact Roberto Esteves: [esteves@comcast.net](mailto:esteves@comcast.net).

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## RIVER RECREATION RECOMMENDATIONS - WATER QUALITY

Last summer, water quality in the Russian River was poor due to high bacterial counts. The beach at Monte Rio was posted by the County as unsafe for swimming July 5-12. There is a correlation between the high counts at Monte Rio and Patterson Point, especially when the river mouth is closed, though our beach never quite reached the unsafe level.

The river after July 4 also had mats of floating algae and County testing found low levels of (toxic) anatoxin-a at Patterson Point. This toxin comes from blue green algae and is highly poisonous to dogs. It also causes problems for infants and persons with compromised immune systems. The County recommends:

- Stay away from algae in the water or on the shore.
- Do not drink or cook with river water.
- Don't let pets drink water, or lick scum at the shoreline.
- For any fish caught, throw away guts and clean fillets with tap or bottled water before cooking.
- Shower after river play, especially children and pets. If dogs lick their wet fur, they could ingest the toxin.

The County will monitor the water quality weekly and update the sign at the top of the path, or you can see the latest tests here: [tinyurl.com/VGalgae](http://tinyurl.com/VGalgae).

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## VILLA GRANDE POST OFFICE 101

Of course one shouldn't need a guide to using their post office, but maybe we do in Villa Grande. Although we have free post office boxes instead of home-based delivery, mail sent to a street address can be “returned to sender” if the PO box is not included. This is a problem for a vendor, such as Amazon, that doesn't allow PO boxes as addresses.

Our postmaster, Luke, suggests some alternatives in these cases. Simply include your POB number after your name when entering the address for an online order. Alternatively, place the POB

in the second address field usually reserved for apartment numbers.

Also, did you know mail placed in the blue mailbox is not picked up directly by the mail driver? All mail is first processed by Luke and then placed in the locked green mailboxes in front to be picked up by the driver at the times shown on the blue boxes! If you're concerned about making a pickup time, it's best to drop your outgoing mail in the “local” (Villa Grande) or “other” slots inside the lobby.

## MAD HATTER MADNESS

The Mad Hatter's Tea Party and Royal Ball, our annual fundraising party, was held on March 24, with 70 attendees helping to raise over \$2,400 for FoVG.

Thanks go to Mr. Trombley's Tea & Table in Duncans Mills for the wonderful tea and pots, Rosie's River Jewelry for the Mad Hat at the entrance and La Tavola Linens for donating the fine table linens (thanks to Nancy Lopes).

We also extend our thanks to all the FoVG members who helped to put on the party plus all the Wonderland denizens who made this event such a success!



The White Rabbit (Rock Ross) in his heralding garb, prepares to read the accusations against Alice.

## TOWN HALL: TOPICS THAT MATTER IN VILLA GRANDE

On Sunday, June 3, at 11 a.m. in the Firehouse Plaza, all locals are invited to attend a Town Hall to hear about and discuss three issues.

### Emergency Preparedness

After last fall's devastating fires, many Villa Grande residents realized how unprepared we were to respond to natural disasters. Facilitated by Erin McKinney, thirty local residents met several times and mapped out disaster preparedness strategies for fires, floods and earthquakes.

Committees have been focusing on response tasks, including Emergency Evacuation, Personal Preparedness, Contact/Communications and Medical Support. Come hear about how you might be better prepared and be ready to help others in the event of a disaster.

### Community Identification

Residents of Villa Grande, including many in the Terraces, have expressed frustration with commercial companies and services that conflate us

with Monte Rio. Since many street names are similar, emergency responders have been known to go to the wrong address in Monte Rio instead of Villa Grande. Several residents have begun a dialog with County officials about revising the "Community Identifier" for Villa Grande, and are including Terraces residents as well. A survey is being prepared for public distribution, which will include background information.

### Septic Update

There has been a lot of activity and discussion regarding the new standards for septic systems along the River. The issue is on the agenda for the May 8, 2018, Sonoma County Board of Supervisors meeting. Rich Holmer and Kyla Brooke serve on the Ad Hoc Committee of On-site Wastewater Treatment Systems - Residents of the Russian River, which is committed to working with government entities to develop reasonable regulations. A member of this committee, Pat Abercrombie, prepared a question and answer summary included with this newsletter.

## PROPANE DISCOUNT EXTENDED

We are pleased to announce that Kyra Wink, FoVG Membership Chair and Chris Love, AmeriGas's General Manager, have worked to extend the discounted propane program for FoVG members. The contract is for two years, then renewable for another two, and it should keep the discount at the same level it has been since 2017.

The new contract redefines the FoVG-Amerigas service area to be above and below Moscow Road from Main Street/Bohemian Highway to

Casini Ranch. Current members outside this smaller area will be grandfathered in and may keep the FoVG discount as long as they remain members in good standing by paying FoVG annual dues by September of each year.

The Membership Committee will send an email detailing the pricing to current subscribers. If you are a member within this service area and are interested in details of the contract, please contact Kyra or Roberto at: [friends@villagrande.org](mailto:friends@villagrande.org)

## FIREHOUSE UPDATE

It's been a three-year project, but the Firehouse is now stabilized and ready for another hundred years as a community treasure. With its new roof, bright red paint job, electricity inside and out, and most recently, the elimination of wood-boring pests plus a new floor, the fire-

house is primed for its next stage of life. Storage units and shelving will soon be added and plans are pending to replace the temporary outside stage with a more permanent structure.

Special thanks to Ruben Garcia and Jon Box for their leadership in making this project real.

## CALENDAR

**Boat Anchorage**  
Sign-up deadline: May 12  
First tie-up day: May 19

**FoVG Board Meetings**  
Old Hotel - All Invited  
First Saturday Each Month  
10:00 a.m.

**FoVG Garden Party**  
Saturday, June 2  
3:00-5:00 p.m.

**VG Town Hall**  
Firehouse Plaza  
Sunday, June 3  
11:00 a.m.

**Town Square Cleanup**  
Saturday, June 30  
11:00 a.m.

**Independence Day**  
Celebration & Parade  
Wednesday, July 4  
4:30 p.m.

**FoVG Annual Meeting**  
Kyra & Katie's House  
21852 East Street  
Saturday, July 7  
10:30 a.m.

**Member Appreciation**  
Full Moon Party & Potluck  
21865 Russian River Avenue  
Saturday, September 22  
6:00 p.m.

Online at:  
[villagrande.org/calendar](http://villagrande.org/calendar)

ON THE WEB AT  
VILLAGRANDE.ORG

**WESTERN POISON OAK  
(TOXICODENDRON DIVERSILOBUM)**

Shown here in its spring mostly-green presentation, the plant looks almost benign, but don't think about touching it. PPP has several patches of poison oak that we're monitoring, but they are far enough off the main trail to not pose a nuisance. Later in the year, the distinctive red leaves warn you to stay away. Oddly, it is in the same family as the cashew!



**CANOE AND KAYAK ANCHORAGE**

Once again this summer, we are offering boat anchorage on the gravel beach to members for \$150. If you are an FoVG member as of April 2018, you may apply to attach your canoe or kayak to our chain from May 19 until October 13.

There are 16 slots available, one boat per household, and the deadline for application is May 12. If we receive more than 16 applications, a drawing will be held. To apply, contact Roberto Esteves at: friends@villagrande.org



**MEMBERSHIP FORM**

July 1, 2018 - June 30, 2019

Renewal  New

Circle one member category below:

BENEFACTOR	\$1,000	2 TICKETS TO FOVG EVENTS; UP TO 2 VOTING MEMBERS
PATRON	\$500	1 TICKET TO FOVG EVENTS UP TO 2 VOTING MEMBERS
HOUSEHOLD MEMBERSHIP	\$100	UP TO 2 VOTING MEMBERS; LIST NAMES BELOW
CONTRIBUTING MEMBER	\$50	SINGLE MEMBERSHIP
LOW INCOME	\$25	LOW INCOME

ADDITIONAL DONATION \$ \_\_\_\_\_

TOTAL PAID: Cash/Ck/PayPal: \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Last/First Name of member/household members: \_\_\_\_\_

Mail Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Local Street Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Propane Discount: (circle) Yes No

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Please send check and form to:  
FoVG, PO Box 28, Villa Grande, CA 95486  
or online through Paypal at:  
**villagrande.org/Membership**