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ISSUE 16

# FRIENDS *of* VILLA GRANDE NEWSLETTER

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## 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

This is my second tour as president, the first being during the formative years of the Friends of Villa Grande when we evolved from a series of community meetings into a membership-controlled charitable corporation. Since then we accomplished the seemingly impossible: we raised the money and bought what became the Patterson Point Preserve, and then undertook a mammoth restoration project, which in a few short years and although far from finished, has transformed the property. And now we have gained possession of and are restoring the historically significant Villa Grande firehouse.

The people here are wonderful, but I want to give a special tip of the hat to all the magnificent volunteers who have worked so long and hard at what we do. The hard physical labor is much appreciated, but I want to also give additional thanks to all who do the long meetings, the committee work, the record keeping, the fundraising and all those dozens of things that keep the organization running so very well. To all these wonderful friends and neighbors, I say this (I'm a veteran so I can use it): Thank you for your service.

Ken Wikle  
President, FoVG

## UPGRADE FOR VILLA GRANDE FIREHOUSE

Over the past months, Rich Holmer, Ron Bosch, Rock Ross, Roberto Esteves, Victoria and Ken Wikle and Elizabeth Eichold power-washed, primed, sealed and then painted the old firehouse with two coats of "fire engine red." FoVG hired Matlock Roofing to replace the decrepit tin roof using a windfall \$2,000 donation by a film company that shot a commercial off Patterson Point. Suzie Baxman and Elizabeth are sprucing up the "V.G.F.D." letters with a coat of gold paint, and the next project will be to stabilize the foundation of this historic community resource.



Rock Ross primes the historic firehouse.

## PROPANE PROGRAM PROGRESS

As most of you know, one of the benefits of membership in Friends of Villa Grande is access to discounted propane pricing. The program, now ending its sixth year, is available to homes in Villa Grande, to the west on Moscow Road and in the Terraces all the way to the Monte Rio fire station. Our current 3 year contract with Northern Energy Propane is being renewed, through their new owner since

May 2013, Amerigas. The transition has had its challenges, as Amerigas' billing system did not carry over FoVG membership information. With the issues now resolved, we are putting the finishing touches on a new contract (2015-2017) that will continue the discount for existing as well as new subscribers. For more details on the program, please contact [friends@villagrande.org](mailto:friends@villagrande.org).

## NIGHT IN VENICE: A MASKED BALL IN VILLA GRANDE

Masks, feathers and fantasy will turn this winter's FoVG fundraiser into a magical evening of fun on January 24th. The General Store will be transformed into a Grande Venetian Villa, minus the canals. Masked revelers are invited to arrive at 7 p.m. and enjoy Venetian "cicchetti" (appetizers). The "Grande Gondoliers," a local trio, will begin playing dance music at 8 and Italian desserts will be served starting at 9. The sparkling evening will feature two signature drinks: prosecco and aperol (plus non-alcoholic alternatives) with the appetizers, and Venetian coffee (which includes brandy and whipped cream) with desserts. Masks

are obligatory for all attendees, so come in disguise and have a ball! Tickets include one drink and are available in advance for \$55 per person. This event is limited to 55, and reservations are required. To reserve your spot, go to [tinyurl.com/VGVenice](http://tinyurl.com/VGVenice)



## PPP TRAILHEAD MAKEOVER

The area at the top of the path leading to Patterson Point Preserve has been undergoing changes over the past few months. As presented at last July's community meeting, the effort is designed to improve the information offered to visitors, restore native plants and reduce the visual clutter of the plastic bins and facilities in the area.

**Information Panels and Signage** Four panels have been created and placed alongside the trail in two sets of two to welcome and inform visitors to PPP. The first panel, "welcome," names the Preserve and describe the roles of FoVG



Natalie Robb-Wilder and Rich Holmer work on screening panels.

and Sonoma County Agricultural Preservation and Open Space District. The second, "visitor's guide" panel is designed to explain the rules and information about the use of the Preserve, and will include an improved, more secure donation box. The third panel is for "river" information, and will describe the estuary project, water testing and provide an update on the river water quality during the summer. The fourth panel, "land," will focus on environmental education regarding the birds, mammals, and plants in the Preserve.

**Restoration** Much of the focus this winter is the ongoing weeding of invasive plants and the creation of a hedgerow or natural fencing between the Preserve and adjacent neighbors. Part of the entry section has been sheet-mulched to reduce the non-native grasses and plants that were blanketing the area. Three part-time environmental stewards (Julie, Vickie and Josh) are hand weeding areas where native stands of indigenous plants are being threatened by non-natives. More ivy and Armenian blackberries are being removed from along the paths to the river below the fork. Work is also proceeding at the more remote areas of the Preserve where native stream dogwoods (*Cornus sericea*), California blackberries (*Rubus ursinus*), snowberry (*Symphoricarpos albus*) and other native plants are starting to make a comeback.

**Screening Panels** The major visual change to the trailhead area has been the installation of screening panels to soften the view by visitors entering and leaving the preserve. The panels provide a visual screen of the portable toilet, the tool storage box, various recycling and garbage bins, the overflow weed pile, plus any large trash items waiting to be hauled away. The goal is to keep the entrance appearance as uncluttered and natural as possible, while supporting the ongoing restoration and cleanup operations. The screens are built from recycled redwood fence stakes, along with boughs, limbs and other natural materials gathered from the area. They are designed to be removable as needs change, or in the event of flooding.

## HELP OUT - JOIN A COMMITTEE!

FoVG operates as an all-volunteer, community-based non-profit organization. In addition to the Board of Directors, which is elected annually, there are several committees that provide advice to the BOD and planning for the organization. Committee members serve on a calendar year schedule, so we're looking for new recruits starting in January. The standing committees are:

The **Restoration Committee** creates the annual restoration plan, including a budget, and ensures all restoration work adheres to the Conservation Covenant created by the Sonoma County Agricultural Preservation and Open Space District.

The **Recreation Committee** advises the Board on related activities, including the boat anchorage, beach use and the 4th of July celebration. The committee also considers any issues addressed by the Recreational Covenant created with SCAPOSD.

The **Estuary Committee** monitors and reviews the Sonoma County Water Agency's ongoing Estuary Management project for the Russian River. This is the project that directly affects the river levels during the summer, and is important to all recreational users. This past summer, SCWA added a sampling device (the orange ball in the river across from Patterson Point) to monitor water quality. For more information on the project: [tinyurl.com/RRestuary](http://tinyurl.com/RRestuary)

The Board is also considering a **Membership Committee** that will greet new residents and provide better communication between FoVG and its membership. Included in its charter would be oversight of the propane discount program on behalf of FoVG members.

If you are interested in serving on a committee, please email [friends@villagrande.org](mailto:friends@villagrande.org) expressing your choice.



Three cormorants stand guard while one swims

## COMMUNITY EDUCATIONAL+SOCIAL POTLUCK

A group of neighbors and friends joined forces to hold a Villa Grande potluck party to end the summer season in late September in the town square. Representatives from the Sonoma County Sheriff's Department, Monte Rio Fire Protection District and Sweetwater Springs Water District made brief presenta-

tions and answered neighbors' questions. The event was a big success, with plenty of Villa Granders meeting each other for the first time. Thanks to the organizers: Andrea Buffa, Pat Patricelli, Ruben Garcia, Ron Bosch, Rock Ross and Victoria Wikle.

## VILLA GRANDE'S GOT TALENT!

Did you miss the first (possibly annual) Villa Grande Talent Show over the Labor Day weekend? It was a Rich Holmer and Nancy Lopes production of a way-way-off-Broadway talent-fest featuring local singers,

players, yo-yo tricksters, dancers, poets and actors struttin' their stuff on the plywood boards (literally) of Firehouse Plaza. Get to work on honing your talent, just in case it comes around next year!

## UPCOMING EVENTS

**January 24**  
**A Night in Venice**  
**Masked Ball**  
**January 24, 7:00 p.m.**

**Deadline for FoVG**  
**Committee Member**  
**Applications**  
**January, 2015**

**PPP Restoration**  
**Work Parties**  
**1:00-4:00 p.m.**  
**Every Saturday**

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

ON THE WEB AT  
**VILLAGRANDE.ORG**

**SHEET MULCHING CONTINUES**

Covering weedy areas with newspapers and cardboard might seem odd, but it works very well for killing weeds. This work-in-progress at the trailhead area shows a section covered in newspapers and cardboard, before the wood chips are added on top.



**HETEROMELES ARBUTIFOLIA (TOYON)**

A native evergreen shrub 6 to 10 feet tall with spectacular bundles of red berries. Common all along the west coast, toyon is one of the plants we are using to build the hedgerow in PPP. Also called California holly, it's abundant in the hills above Los Angeles gave rise to the name Hollywood.



**FOVG MEMBERSHIP FORM**

July 1, 2014 - June 30, 2015

RENEWAL  NEW

BENEFACTOR	\$ 1,000	TWO FREE TICKETS TO ALL EVENTS
PATRON	\$500	ONE FREE TICKET TO ALL EVENTS
FAMILY MEMBERSHIP	\$100	LIST NAMES BELOW
CONTRIBUTING MEMBER	\$50	SINGLE MEMBERSHIP
DISCOUNT MEMBER	\$25	LOW INCOME

ADDITIONAL PATTERSON POINT PRESERVE DONATION (\$1-\$1 MATCH) \$ \_\_\_\_\_

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

Name of member/family members: \_\_\_\_\_

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

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

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

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

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

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

Please send check and form to FoVG  
 PO Box 28, Villa Grande, CA 95486  
 or online through Paypal at  
[villagrande.org/FOVG/Membership](http://villagrande.org/FOVG/Membership)