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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 time last year we were lamenting rain, floods, landslides and broken roads. This year we're nervous about lack of rain and the threat of a viral pandemic! While Villa Grande sometimes feels like it's not a part of the outside world, we still need to take COVID-19 seriously, and I hope you're all doing what you can to stay healthy and happy.

On a more upbeat note, our annual fundraiser this year is all about music and dancing - we're calling it Disco Daze. See below for details, and if our previous events are any indication, this one will be a blast. Should we need to cancel it, of course your ticket will be refunded.

Also in this newsletter are progress reports on improvements to Villa Grande's infrastructure, working with Sonoma County. Special thanks to Roberto and Rich for taking the lead on this

important work. There is also an article about one of the oldies and goodies houses in our little town, Sol Y Rio.

With power outages and evacuations in our small community this past year, it is so important to step back, take a look and a stance about what is important. As a community, we are blessed in our resourceful people who will stop at nothing to help others out. Let's be supportive, not just as friends and neighbors, but as people who live in a small area who can make a difference in each other's lives. Thank you for making a difference in mine!

With gratitude and respect,

Kyla Brooke
President, FoVG

Disco Daze

A fundraiser for
Friends of Villa Grande

May 2, 2020 • 6:30 - 10:00 pm
Monte Rio Community Center

\$75 in advance - \$80 at the door

Musical host Drew Beck from NYC will provide songs from the golden age of dance music all night



Our annual fun-raiser will be a hot night of disco at the Monte Rio Community Center. Platform heels, bell-bottoms and fringe will abound as Drew Beck, a renowned New York DJ, will be flying in to town to play the best dancefloor tracks from the 70's and 80's.

Hearty appetizers by Componere Fine Catering will keep the juices flowing, including

those at the no-host bar. The Party starts at 6:30 p.m. with the "Last Dance" at 10. \$75 in advance, \$80 at the door. A portion of the proceeds will fund emergency resources for Villa Grande.

To order tickets, email or go online:
friends@villagrande.org
cutt.ly/DiscoDaze

SOL Y RIO

Nestled on the corner of Third Street and Russian River Avenue is the charming cottage owned by Jim and Marcy Beck dubbed "Sol Y Rio" for Sun and River, but also to honor Marcy's Uncle Sol. It is one of the lucky properties in town with enough sun to grow roses.

The property was originally purchased in 1903 by "unmarried woman" Gertrude Ish, who built a two-bedroom cabin two years later. The photo shows the house in 1906 after a snowstorm, years before additions altered the roofline.

In 1978, Gertrude sold the house to Jim and Carla Rowe, who lived there as full-time residents with their kids Gretchen and Tim.

Jim was an amateur musician, playing Hammond organ, and a master fisherman whose take was featured on the wall of King's Sport & Tackle in Guerneville. His occupation was animal control officer, but he became a cabinet maker after he was injured on the job and set up a professional shop in the detached garage. One of his cabinets can be found in the "Lois," another turn of the century home just around the corner.



Sol Y Rio in the 1906 snow.

The footprint of the original house was expanded over the years to add rooms and incorporate at least two porches. An interior redwood wall was removed - with help from Rich Holmer - to create a large central dining-living room, and the wood was reused to build the dropped ceiling that's still there today.

The house was sold a couple of times, first to Jerry Howard (1989) then to Gary Tanner (1992), but it earned its place in literary history when AIDS activist and Names Quilt founder Cleve Jones bought it in 1994. Here Cleve wrote his first of two memoirs, "Stitching a Revolution," where he mentions overlooking Third Street from his office window and writes about relationships with his Villa Grande neighbors.

Marcy and Jim bought the house in 2000 and extensively remodeled the interior, moving the kitchen, replacing the fireplace and removing another wall to bring the yard's seven redwoods into view. They also had a modern foundation installed - after 95 years on piers - so the house should be good for at least another 95.

PRESERVE & FIREHOUSE PLAZA MAINTENANCE



Villa Grande resident and artist Natalie Robb-Wilder helps re-level and refresh the Preserve's entrance sign.

Our five-year lease of the VGFD firehouse with the County requires FoVG to keep the adjacent swale clear in order to allow drainage from Willow Way to the nearby culvert. The recent work of a volunteer FoVG team to clear out debris has us ready for any spring storms.

Another ongoing issue is the overhanging limbs, which pose a falling threat as well as an unnecessary fire hazard. With the County's permission, FoVG hired workers to trim the trees back to a safe level.



Firehouse Plaza with the trees trimmed.

BOAT ANCHORAGE

It's time to start thinking of lazy summer days on the river. Once again, FoVG is offering boat tie-ups on the gravel beach to members for \$150. If you are a member by April, you may apply to attach your canoe or kayak to our chain from May 16 to October 17.

There are 16 slots available, one boat per household. If we receive more applications by May 15, a drawing will be held. If fewer than 16 member households apply, additional slots will become available. To apply, email Roberto at friends@villagrande.org.

IMPROVING VILLA GRANDE'S INFRASTRUCTURE

Third Street Access With the permission of the Sonoma County Roads Department, on February 25th FoVG contracted for the removal of several "widow makers" from the redwoods near the entrance to the Preserve. These precipitously hanging branches posed a threat not only to pedestrians, but also to cars parked at the end of Third Street.

Road Drainage Study Community members and Villa Grande's representative to the Municipal Advisory Committee met with Roads to discuss paving and drainage issues in Villa Grande. The head of Roads suggested that if the community provided a survey of drainage problems, they would be willing to address the situation.

Subsequently, Rich Holmer and Roberto Esteves met with Coastland Engineering, a civil engineering firm that works with Roads, for a walk-through, inspecting every drain and road "lake". Coastland has offered pro-bono services to produce a report detailing Villa Grande prob-

Town Square Cleanup In our discussions with Roads, we shared concerns about encroaching vegetation on former parking areas, including the Town Square and the "Boat Plaza." As part of its "vegetative management program," Roads had its Sonoma County Youth Ecology Corps spend two days clearing bamboo and ivy along Fourth Street and the Town Square.

There were also discussions with Roads about modifying the road surface to improve access during the rainy (i.e.: muddy) season. The County offered to pave the Third Street right of way with asphalt, but FoVG requested permission for an alternative, placing gravel instead, to ensure proper drainage for the street's redwood trees.

lem areas, specifically: Second Street at East Street, ponding near the Post Office entrance, ponding at Fifth Street and Russian River Avenue and poor drainage behind the old hotel.

The FoVG Board intends to pursue a public+private partnership with Coastland and the Roads Department to implement recommendations that are economically feasible.

We invite everyone to attend a presentation of the drainage study at our annual Villa Grande Community Meeting. It will be on the Firehouse Plaza at 10:30 a.m. on June 27, and we look forward to your input.

This has substantially increased the available parking while reducing the fire fuel potential. There is still more cleanup work to do in the area, including weeding in the adjacent park, so on Saturday, June 27 at 1:00 p.m., FoVG will sponsor its annual Town Square volunteer work day. Mark your calendar and bring your work gloves!

SPRIGGIN' IN THE PRESERVE

Last December 19, STRAW (Students and Teachers Restoring a Watershed) came to the Preserve to sprig 35 arroyo willows and 30 stream dogwoods. They trained Sukey Robb-Wilder, Linda Fisher and Leah Norwood on the process and then marked the willows with white flags and the dogwoods with orange.

You can see them on the hill to the left of the path split, along the river side of the path to the right of the split and also above the gravel beach.



A healthy willow sprig.

STRAW also broadcast-seeded a pound of *Festuca rubra* molate (red fescue) along the neighbor access path, on the second swale and above the gravel beach. Red fescue grass is recommended by arborist and environmental consultant Harold Appleton in his addendum to our Land Management Plan. It is shade and drought tolerant, doesn't mind standing water and, most importantly, it provides excellent erosion control.

PROPANE UPDATE

As you may already know, FoVG has extended its contract for discounted propane service with AmeriGas for two more years, but there have been some recent glitches. AmeriGas was acquired last fall by UGI and their Cotati office has had staff and operations changes. They not only lost their local manager, but also drivers and customer service staff.

Customer service is now based in their Placerville office, and the number of drivers is back to normal. We appreciate your patience during this transition, and please let us know if you have questions regarding your billing or service at friends@villagrande.org.

CALENDAR

Disco Daze Dance
Patterson Point Preserve
Monte Rio Community Center
Saturday, May 2
6:30-10:00 p.m.

**Boat Anchorage
Application Deadline**
Friday, May 15

Community Meeting
Firehouse Plaza
Saturday, June 27
10:30 a.m. - Noon

Town Square Cleanup
Volunteers Welcome!
Saturday, June 27
1:00 - 3:00 p.m.

**Fourth of July
Speeches & Parade**
Saturday, July 4
4:30 p.m.

**FoVG Annual
Membership Meeting**
Katie & Kyra's House
21852 East Street
Sunday, July 12
10:00 a.m. - noon

**Off the Beaten Path
Tours and Presentation**
Saturday, September 12
3:00 - 6:00 p.m.

FoVG Board Meetings
First Saturday of the Month
Old Hotel, 21849 East Street
10:00 a.m. - Noon

Online at:
villagrande.org/calendar

ON THE WEB AT
VILLAGRANDE.ORG

BIKE LOCKUP

Jim Beck installs the new five-bike rack in the utility area that will make it easier for visitors to ride rather than drive to the Preserve. Thanks to Natalie, Leah, Phil and Lon who helped make it happen and will be adding to the natural screening around the rack.



“OFF THE BEATEN PATH” RESCHEDULED

The Patterson Point “Off the Beaten Path” event that was the victim of the mandatory evacuations last fall is now rescheduled for September 12, from 3-6 p.m. If you were registered, please let Roberto know if you can make the new date at friends@villagrande.org. The event was sold out, but he’s keeping a stand-by list in case slots open up.

WESTERN SWORD FERN

As one of California’s most common ferns, the Western Sword is well represented in the Preserve. *Polystichum munitum* is a native, preferring the understorey of moist coniferous woodlands. The leaflets, or pinnae, can be up to 6 inches long, and alternate on the stalk. Mature plants can reach 6’ high. The fern has a reputation among practitioners of the healing arts for relieving pain.



MEMBERSHIP FORM

July 1, 2020 - June 30, 2021

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