

HIDDEN TRAILS HOMEOWNERS ASSOCIATION

DECEMBER 2007 NEWSLETTER

HOA Officers (*all are volunteers): President: James McNair (760) 743-1386; Vice-President: Bob Dunbar (760) 741-5334; Secretary/Treasurer: Jane Abbo.

Design Review Committee: Co-Chairs: Marcus Harrel & Darryl Turner, Rick Wood; adjunct members: Karen Burns, Ellie Montalvo.

Property Manager: Fabiana Lansner (flansner@menas.com), Menas Realty (760) 942-2667 or (858) 270-7870. Please visit web site www.menas.com for information on who to contact for billing or repairs.

Escondido Police Department: 911; non-emergency = (760) 839-4722.

Escondido Fire Department (Fires, fireworks, rattlesnakes in yard): 911; non-emergency = (760) 839-5400

Henry Avocado (grove issues like avocado theft, sprinklers, dumping): 745-6632

City of Escondido, Public Works (Ryan Park, streetlight issues): 839-4668

City of Escondido, Code Enforcement (graffiti): 839-4650

Valley High School (kids in neighborhood during school hours, etc.): 291-3275

East Valley Community Center: 2245 East Valley Parkway, 839-4382

Broken sprinklers in HOA landscaping: Menas Realty (760) 942-2667

After the Fire: Well, we survived another one! Fire got to the end of Oak Valley Lane. Our community received the reverse 911 call about 6:30 on Monday morning, 10/22. I went down the street, making sure that my neighbors had been warned. It turned out that 3 of the 14 homes on our street hadn't received a call. My wife and I were lucky to have a friend offer to shelter us. We stayed packed until returning home on Thursday afternoon, never sure whether our "refuge" might also be evacuated. It seemed like people were nicer to one another for the first week or two after the fire, including more courtesy on the freeways and at work.

HIDDEN TRAILS HEROES:

Ordinary people can make a difference in our community. Our community is more than the homeowners. It includes renters, visitors, service-providers (police, fire, postal, UPS, etc.), and those who maintain our yards. As the fires moved towards east Escondido late Sunday night (10/21), while most of us were sleeping, a few people were alert. Two Hidden Trails homeowners, resident Rich Perkins and Nancy Spicer, knew the fire was moving our way, and late Sunday night they sought out and warned the grove workers that the fire was heading our way.

We've all seen these humble workers as they walk or ride past in trucks or quads, going about their daily business of irrigating, maintaining the grove and harvesting the avocados. Most are immigrants from Mexico and South America, come here to make a better life, often doing hard and dangerous work for low pay, and still managing to send a

portion of their savings home to their families. Nancy notified Rogelio, the grove manager, about the approaching fire. Alerted, these hardworking migrants soon sprang into action. They immediately activated the grove's irrigation systems, and then they waited for the fire.

The grove workers, who didn't flee from the fire like most of us, stayed behind and stood ready. They bravely battled the fire as it approached the groves. Their water pressure eventually failed them as the power went out, so they used shovels to jump on each ember and patch of smoldering leaves and grass, preventing it from spreading. They did an excellent job in fighting the fire as best they could, quickly jumping on the hot spots and preventing the fire from doing more damage than it did. The grove workers stood strong and fought the fire until it was just too dangerous.

Late Monday evening Detective Heath from the Escondido Police Department was driving through our community looking for hot spots. He saw the flames threatening the homes on Hidden Trails Road and immediately contacted the fire department.

Rich, one of a handful of homeowners who stayed behind in the neighborhood (to prevent looting and try to help battle any approaching flames), was in constant contact with the firefighters and police patrolling Hidden Trails. Rich saw fire in the canyon below Oak Valley Lane, burning up the dried marsh. He notified Detective Heath, who soon had ten fire trucks rolling into the neighborhood to control the fire. The fire eventually burned into the grove on both sides of Oak Valley Lane,

None of us lost our homes. Mr. Frey, who owns the avocado grove, and Henry Avocado, which manages and harvests the grove, have a significant loss. There will likely be less work for the workers to do. A large portion of the grove was burned.

Heroes don't call themselves heroes. That's what the rest of us call them. The grove workers battled to protect the grove, but protecting the grove protected our homes. The Hidden Trails community owes a debt of gratitude to our heroes: Henry Avocado's grove manager Rogelio and his dedicated workers, homeowners Rich Perkins and Nancy Spicer, and our brave Firefighters and Police Officers. Adversity helps bring a community together.

A THANK YOU LUNCH FOR ABOUT 15 GROVE WORKERS, HOSTED BY THE HOA, IS BEING ORGANIZED BY HOA SEC./TREAS. JANE ALBO AT 12:00 NOON DECEMBER 08TH AT THE SMALL PARK ON THE CORNER OF HIDDEN TRAILS AND WILLOW TREE. BE SURE TO STOP BY WITH A KIND WORD OF THANKS FOR THESE HEROES.

Unwanted "Volunteers". When landscaping our yards we are allowed a nearly unlimited choice of plants. There are a small number of plants which are prohibited. Sometimes a homeowner will plant one or more of them without reviewing our Rules & Regulations which list most of the non-approved plants. All too often, though, these

plants have the habit of just showing up in your yard uninvited. They are deposited by the wind, or a bird.

Several of these plants are turning up in our community. Once they take hold, they can easily spread into HOA maintained areas, creating increased maintenance (and higher HOA fees). **Please watch for, and promptly remove pampas grass (large grass clumps with white plumes or flowers), tamarisk (shrub or tree with small leaves and pink flowers) and several species of palms (they start as a seedling).** If you have a plant in your yard that is doing well, but wasn't planted by you, take a second look at it. If it's one of our non-approved plants, please take care of it right away!

Design Review Committee (DRC). This committee has openings for residents who care about their community. Your DRC meets monthly to review plans and discuss community design matters. Contact any member if you'd like to attend this meeting. Homeowners Marcus Harrell and Darryl Turner are co-chairs.

Landscaping: When the builder or landscaper planted our trees, they were typically staked to allow the newly-planted tree to develop its root system. Nurserymen advise that these tree stakes should be removed after a growing season, to allow the tree to naturally sway and develop stronger roots in response to the breezes (and winds) that frequent Escondido. Please review your landscaping, and remove tree stakes that are no longer needed.

Holiday Lights: Soon it will be the season for decorating our homes and yards with holiday lights and displays. Some of us like to extend that holiday feeling throughout the year. Others feel that lights left up throughout the year look tacky and lower property values. Please be sure to remove your lights and displays no later than January 15th.

Christmas on the Prado (newly named December Nights): The City of San Diego has a tradition of opening many of the museums in Balboa Park for free visits the first Friday and Saturday evenings (5 – 9PM) of December. In addition there are performances, singing and delicious home made and ethnic foods to sample (bring cash!). Rain or clear skies, the park will be alive with energy.

First Night (Escondido): The past few years the City of Escondido has hosted an event known as First Night, held New Year's Eve. A variety of performances are provided, and delicious food. Tickets are sold at my local merchants, or "at the door". This even provides a family friendly alternative to alcohol-fueled celebrations.

Holiday Safety: Be sure to keep water in your Christmas tree, and turn the tree lights off when you are not at home. Do not store gifts in your car or trunk...otherwise the "bad guys" may steal them while you're sleeping. Volunteer wanted to chair and re-activate the Neighborhood Watch committee.

December Board Meeting: 6PM Wednesday December 5th at the usual place, East Valley Community Center. All homeowners and residents are welcome.

Editor: Brian Swanson. Please contact Brian with comments and ideas for future articles (760) 739-5451.