



## *The MARA News*

Spring 2016 Edition

**Montecito Area Resident's Association**

P.O. Box 150266,

San Rafael, CA 94915-0266

[Montecito.residents@gmail.com](mailto:Montecito.residents@gmail.com)

<http://www.montecitoresidents.com>

<http://montecito.nextdoor.com>

Facebook: "Montecito Area Residents Association"

*In the event of an emergency call 911. For noise issues, call the SRPD at 485-3000*

**N**ow is the time to join MARA. To become a MARA Member or renew your annual membership, please send your name, address, telephone number, and email address along with a \$10 check per person (\$5 for seniors) payable to "Montecito Area Residents Association," to MARA P.O. Box 150266, San Rafael, CA 94915-0366.

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### **MARA'S ACTIVITIES DURING THE PAST 12 MONTHS**

**On-going: enhanced communications** with the neighborhood, using NextDoor.com, Facebook, the MARA web site, and emails-- in addition to the Newsletter.

**On-going: responded to specific complaints/** issues brought up by individual neighbors, and tried to help them communicate with appropriate people in City Hall.

**On-going: MARA gave the City of San Rafael input on specific projects** in our neighborhood, such as the proposed condo project at 524 Mission, the new proposed fence around the Salvation Army property, etc.

**San Rafael High School:** MARA Board members attended and participated on the school's site facilities meetings, the new stadium committee, and meetings of the committee which will be drafting a Management Plan for SRHS sports facilities. (MARA was instrumental in getting the School District to agree to the

creation of the Management Plan, which will be very important to limit the negative effects of the school's sports activities on nearby neighbors.)

**Whistlestop:** MARA participated with many other organizations to oppose the destruction of the historic train station and its replacement by a five-story building with high density housing. This City-wide effort appears to have been successful: Whistlestop has halted its process of getting approval for this project, and is exploring another site on Third St. near Lindero to build their new building. This would save the train station, and be much better for senior housing.

**Measure E funds:** MARA Board members have participated on a committee which is overseeing the use of Measure E funds to replace or remodel all of the fire stations and police facilities, and the City's Emergency Operations Center.

MARA Board members have participated in organizing **Make A Difference Day**

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**Join us at our Annual MARA Meeting, Wed. 18, May 7pm - at Aldersly.**

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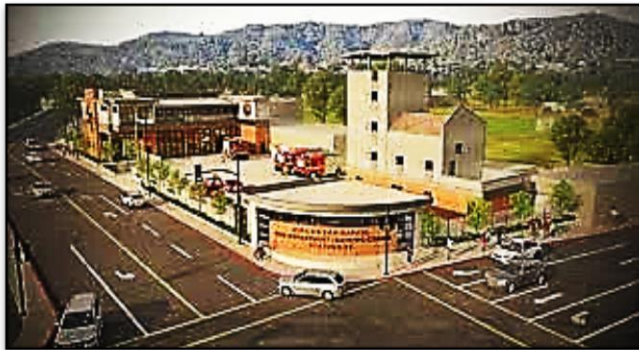
# SAN RAFAEL UPDATING POLICE AND FIRE SAFETY FACILITIES

By Jackie Schmidt

The re-building and remodeling of San Rafael's Police and Fire facilities, and the replacement of the Emergency Operations Center (EOC), is finally happening!

In 2013, Measure E-- which extended the Measure S sales tax for 20 years and increased the rate from .50% to .75% -- passed. The extra .25% was to be used to pay for the very much needed updating of police, fire and emergency facilities in San Rafael.

STATUS: Two fire stations, #52 (at Union & Third), and #57 (near the Civic Center) will be entirely torn down and new stations constructed at the same locations. The designs for each of these have been presented to the public and the City's Design Review Board. Construction is expected to be finished in 2018.



*One design for new fire station at Union & Third St.*

Fire station #51 (currently at the corner of Fifth and C St.), which has been in constant use since 1917, will also be torn down and replaced. The new fire station #51 will be a part of the new San Rafael Safety Building, which will take up the entire block of Fifth St. from C to D Streets, right across Fifth from San Rafael's City Hall. It will be about one block long and a half-block wide.

In addition to a new fire station #51, the new Safety Building will include SR Fire and Police

Headquarters, a new Emergency Operations Center, and the central police station.



*One design for the new Safety Building on Fifth St.*

The current Emergency Operations Center is located in the City Council Chamber in City Hall, but engineers have said that the Council Chamber might fall down in an earthquake, so it is being incorporated into this new, seismically safer, building. The new Safety Building will be 2 stories high, with an underground garage.

An Open House to present the design of this new Safety Building to the public was held at the old fire station #51 in March. There was also a Design Review Board meeting about this in March.

Fire stations #52, 57, and the new Safety Building are being addressed first, because they are the most expensive, and the City will be bonding the sales tax (i.e., borrowing the money to be repaid by the sales tax), and is taking advantage of the current low interest rates to save money. After these projects are done, all of the remaining fire stations in San Rafael will be extensively remodeled to bring them up to modern standards.

*MARA will post information about this on an on-going basis on NextDoor.com – stay tuned!  
And, you get more info by going the city's website: <http://www.cityofsanrafael.org/facilities/>*

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## SAN RAFAEL HERITAGE

By Constanza Perry

**A** new non-profit organization called San Rafael Heritage promotes and protects the preservation of San Rafael's historic and architecturally significant buildings and supports other historical and preservationist organizations in Marin County.

- SR Heritage wants to prevent "The needless destruction of structures of historic, architectural or aesthetic value [that are] essential to the economy and general welfare of the public." (San Rafael Historic Preservation Ordinance.)



*San Rafael's old train station – now being used by Whistlestop.*

- It wants the City of San Rafael to act promptly to update its 1968 list of architecturally and historically significant buildings, to expand the list to include deserving buildings that were omitted from the original list, to clarify and strengthen the existing historic preservation ordinance, and to consider adopting a Mills Act, or Historical Property Contract program, to encourage restoration and proper maintenance of historic buildings through tax benefits.

- It seeks City (of San Rafael) designation of Landmark status to any appropriate San Rafael resource of local, state, or national historic significance.
- It promotes knowledge and appreciation of San Rafael's rich architectural and historical legacy among its citizens.
- It assists elected and appointed government officials in San Rafael and Marin County as they deliberate matters relating to historic resources.



*San Rafael's original Carnegie Library*

- It will support to any viable entity that seeks to fulfill the mission of a Marin history museum or historical society to collect and preserve artifacts, documents, and photographs relating to history of Marin County.

MARA thinks this is all commendable and recently donated \$100 of seed money to support it.

*For more information go to the group's website: <http://www.sanrafaelheritage.org/>*

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### SHOPPING CARTS – AND MORE

If someone has left a shopping cart in the neighborhood, please call the store where it came from:

**Whole Foods:** (415) 451-6333. **Trader Joe's:** (415) 454-9530. **Rite Aid:** (415) 457-7744.

**Tuesday Morning:** (415) 453-9816. **Petco:** (415) 457-5262.

If there is trash on public property – the street or sidewalk – please call the city's Department of Public Works: (415) 485-3355. The DPW will pick up trash on Mondays.

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## A BALD EAGLE IN OUR NEIGHBORHOOD

By Constanza Perry

**O**ur business neighbors at 101 Surf Sports, located on the Canal at 115 Third Street, offer water safety classes, kayak, paddle board, windsurf kite lessons, and more. On their morning group training paddle on Sunday Feb 21st they saw an American bald eagle! As David Wells, of 101 Surf Sports, described it:

The group rounded the Marin Islands and pulled up for an uncharacteristic chat session. With a nice tide pushing us around the corner we stopped to talk and look at Mt. Tamalpias. As we talked Jim Robinson, one of the paddlers, looked up in a tree and said simply "Bald Eagle." And there it was,



*Eagle. This is not the eagle they saw.*

majestically perched in the naked limb of a large old pine tree. This is one big bird.

It literally looked like a small child sitting in the tree. We were still on the drift of the tide and just allowed the tide to carry us on by.

It was a pretty special sighting. As a lifelong resident of the area I have never heard of any sightings... We can only hope it is a sign of resurgence, and that seeing them becomes the new normal.



*Two river otters lounge on 101 Surf Sport's dock.*

There are also neighborhood river otters which like to come by and sun themselves on 101 Surf Sport's dock after a meal of salmon and crab parts from next-door Western Boat & Tackle. River otters are making a big comeback in San Rafael along San Rafael Creek (the canal) and along our San Pablo Bay in the marshland estuary and ponds. (Along the Shoreline Park levee road trail.)

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## A WALK BEHIND MONTECITO SHOPPING CENTER

**A**long the Canal waterway behind Rite Aid in the Montecito Shopping Center there's an intriguing area called "Abe Blumenfeld Landing." It's just by the bridge over Grand Avenue. Most spectacular is a 105-foot sailing ship docked there, the *SS Active*. A flyer states that "the Sailing Ship Active ... enables youth in the county of Marin to experience boating in the San Francisco Bay..." but the phone number given to contact the program reaches a machine which says that no voice mail box has been set up for that

number, and Google searches reveal nothing else about either the ship or the program.

In addition to the tall ship, some small boats are on display at the Landing. One has a sign stating that it's an International Star Class Vessel. Another boat is described as a dory of the type used on Grand Banks fishing in the 1900's. There's a dugout built out of Mahogany by Indians in British Honduras, and several unmarked vessels. What they are all doing there is a mystery, but it's worth a visit.

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## VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES IN OUR NEIGHBORHOOD

### ALDERSLY RETIREMENT COMMUNITY

326 Mission Ave., San Rafael

Contact: Gina Pandiani

(415) 453-3281

- **WHO:** Readers, craftsmen/women, events helpers
- **WHAT:** Read to visually impaired seniors; make crafts to be sold to help residents whose means are unexpectedly depleted; events helpers.
- **WHEN:** Readers at times mutually convenient; crafts activities are held every Saturday morning from 10:00 to 12:00. Biggest event is Tivoli festival (Sept. 18 this year)
- **WHERE:** At Aldersly.
- **WHY:** “Aldersly is dedicated to serve the needs and improve the quality of life of older people from varied cultural backgrounds, according to the Danish tradition and spirit of respecting and caring for their elderly.

### SALVATION ARMY

351 Mission Ave., San Rafael

Contact: Anna or Alexander Williams – or Carl Van Doymi

(415) 459-4520 (or just stop by)

- **WHO:** People willing to help with Food Pantry; office support.
- **WHAT:** Distribute food to needy individuals; answer phones; do data entry.
- **WHEN:** Food Pantry is Tuesday mornings, 8:00 am to noon. Office support is needed each week day between 8:00 am and 5:00 pm. You select your hours.
- **WHERE:** At Salvation Army building on Mission Street (NOT the store).
- **WHY:** “The Salvation Army serves underprivileged people of Marin – primarily people in poverty or with disabilities.”
  - NOTE: Their busiest time is between Thanksgiving and Christmas each year. They always need help during that time.

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### HUCKLEBERRY YOUTH PROGRAMS

361 Third St., Suite G (Montecito Plaza)

Contact: Jasmin Stevenson

(415) 258-4944

- **WHO:** Tutors for high school classes
- **WHAT:** Work with young people to overcome barriers to education.
- **WHEN:** After-school hours –1:00 to 5:00 pm, Mondays through Fridays
- **WHERE:** At the Huckleberry Youth Programs suite.
- **WHY:** “Huckleberry ...empowers young people to: 1. Stay out of trouble with the law; 2. seek a safe place in times of crisis; 3. improve their physical and emotional health; and 4. finish high school and go on to college. Because when all kids have the chance to succeed, the entire community is stronger.”

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### TRIPS FOR KIDS MARIN

610 Fourth St., San Rafael

Contact: Mariel Reyes, Rides Coordinator

(415) 458-2986, ext. 3

- **WHO:** Adults who love biking and advocate for getting more kids on bikes.
- **WHAT:** Ride leaders, bike mentors, bike maintenance workers, office volunteers.
- **WHEN:** Rides are on weekends. Bike maintenance, office workers during the week. Call to find out when you can serve.
- **WHERE:** Trips for Kids takes underserved kids on scenic day-long mountain biking adventures in gorgeous local parks.
- **WHY:** Help kids learn bike skills, self-confidence and environmental awareness. “Most of all, TFK Rides provides the opportunity for kids to just be kids!”

### CERT – Community Emergency Response Team training.

If you who wish to step beyond preparing your home and reach out to help your community in an emergency, train to be a Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) member. This 18-hour national program will teach you skills to organize and help out in your neighborhood and community in the event of a large scale disaster.

To register, call Maggie Lang, Marin County CERT Coordinator at (Wk.) 415 485-3409 or (Cell) 415 279-6529.

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## IN MY BACK YARD: MENTORING NEIGHBORHOOD BOYS

By Bryn Deamer

Nearly five years ago, two young high school students (sisters) and members of the Bahá'í Faith, asked us if we could help them find some children that they could practice their children-class abilities on while earning credits for volunteer community service at their high school. They had tried in their own neighborhood but there were not enough young children. They had noticed when they came to our home, there seemed to be lots of children in the area. So they and their parents, Sherna and I, picked a couple of weekends and canvassed the neighborhood for any parents willing to have their children come to a Saturday virtues' class.

We ended up with some 15 children, ages 4 to 10, plus four or five mothers and their toddlers coming to our house. While the young teachers shared songs, uplifting stories, co-operative games etc., the mothers practiced English with us and some other volunteers. For a period of nine months our house rang with love and laughter as the classes took place. All too soon they came to an end; the young teachers moved on.

However, one 10-year-old boy kept coming, so every Saturday for the next year one adult volunteer came to our house to share with him workbooks known as the "Junior Youth Empowerment Program." We took



*Day at Kehoe Beach, near Point Reyes.*

him to the library over the summer and by reading a lot he earned tickets to his first ever baseball game. His dad didn't want to go (he's a soccer fan), so I took the 10-year-old on the ferry to the Giant's game.

Eventually he moved on to Davison Middle School and made friends with another boy from Park Street and started bringing him to our home as well. We provided homework support but also took them both to such things as the Opera in the Ball Park, riding bicycles at Samuel P. Taylor State Park, camping in Yosemite, and many other places.

They were joined by a third and then a fourth young man. The YMCA generously let us add them to our family membership so now up to three times a week some or all of them will arrive on our doorstep and ask if they can go to the "Y".



*Opera at AT&T Park in San Francisco*

Now they are 15 and in San Rafael High School. For a couple who had no children (us), it has been, and still is, a joy to share with these boys their difficult years of adolescence. There are still many challenges in the years ahead, but by opening our homes and hearts we feel that at least we have given four young men a safe place to hang out, a non-judgmental friendship in which to feel free to ask any questions -- and know that even if we don't know the answer we respect their questions.



*Visiting Monterey Aquarium*

Our experience reflects the words written by the elected leadership council of the Bahá'í Faith: "While global trends project an image of this age group as problematic, lost in the throes of tumultuous physical and emotional change, unresponsive and self-consumed ... [we] ... are moving decidedly in the opposite direction, seeing in junior youth instead, altruism, an acute sense of justice, eager-ness to learn about the universe and a desire to contribute to the construction of a better world."

*(The Universal House of Justice, April 2010.)*