



Westside Village News & Views

5th Annual Westside Village Fall Festival – Wrap-up

On a glorious Saturday afternoon in early October, on the grounds of St. John's Church, we held what turned out to be our most successful Fall Festival yet. Over 500 guests attended, caught up with old friends, met some new neighbors, and generally had a blast.

This year's activities included every little one's favorite, a pony ride; the oh-so popular, and always crazy bounce house; a petting zoo, (they even had a llama!); a Color Me Mine pottery table; and face painting with the folks from Child's Play Activity Center. What was surely a big hit, and will be for years to come, was an exhibit hosted by Eco Station, an environmental education and wildlife rescue facility; snakes, komodo dragons and such were there for all to see, touch and hold.

Our local elementary and middle schools were represented as well as, for the first time, a team from Mathnasium, an exciting new math tutorial program with storefront learning facilities all over town. On a musical and artistic bent, the Cornerstone Music Conservancy joined us and introduced its programs, and a wonderful gallery of local artists work, organized by local resident Renate Lichter, was set-up for all to peruse.

Senior Lead Officer from LAPD's Pacific Division, Juan Ceja, strolled through the crowd addressing resident's questions and concerns. Our dedicated Neighborhood Watch leadership spoke with residents about the critical need for active Block Captain participation throughout the entire Village. And, of course, we want to acknowledge the brave firefighters from LAFD #43 who showcased a brilliant red fire engine for the kids to explore.

Jennifer Badger, representing Councilmember Jack Weiss' office, and Councilmember Bill Rosendahl each said a few words and Bill honored our Past President Stephanie Johnson with a certificate of appreciation for her dedication and extraordinary leadership. Special recognition was also awarded to past Board member Arnie Lifset for his years of generous service to the WVCA and neighborhood beautification. He also deserves kudos, along with Stephanie and Vice-President John Moyer, for jumping

You are invited to the Westside Village Civic Association 2009 Annual Meeting & Dinner

Tuesday, February 24, 2009
St. John's Presbyterian Church
Fellowship Hall

Southwest corner of National and Military
All Westside Village Residents are welcome.
Seats will be available for
latecomers who can not attend the dinner.

Dinner is \$5.00 per person.
Children 10 and under are free.

Program:
5:30 Registration

5:45-6:15 Mexican Buffet Dinner by Baja Bud's
Dessert, Coffee, and Refreshments

6:15 WVCA Business Meeting, including:
Reports by President and Treasurer and
Election of Officers and Directors
Guest Speakers: Senior Lead Officer Juan Ceja,
Councilmembers Rosendahl (CD11) and
Weiss (CD5) or their deputies

8:00 Closing remarks

in at a moment's notice to help restore order when our food service hit a snag.

As you know, the festival has become the WVCA's most costly endeavor and has been operating at a deficit for the past few years. With great thanks to the City of Los Angeles and the offices of both Councilmembers Rosendahl and Weiss, as well as the generous financial or in-kind contributions from the following, we were able to come in under budget. A big thank you to: **Mathnasium, Security Services, Matteo's Restaurant, Color Me Mine, California Solar, Family First Childproofing Services, Niko Niko Japanese Restaurant, Cornerstone Music Conservancy, Child's Play Activity Center and The Landmark Theater.**

The Annual Fall Festival is an event the WVCA Board feels passionately about; what better way to bring families together and celebrate our beloved community. As we look ahead to next October, we encourage you to share your ideas for sponsorships and exciting new exhibitors. Feel free to email us at westsidevillageboard@yahoo.com. We look forward to your input.

See all of you at the Annual Meeting, February 24th, at St. John's Church.

It's Almost Time To Vote Again!

Important local elections are being held on Tuesday, March 3, 2009 – including a six-way race for councilmember for the 5th Council District which includes a large portion of Westside Village as well as a less contested race in the 11th Council District.

In CD11, incumbent Councilman Bill Rosendahl has only one opponent – Harry “Craig” Wilson, a native of Los Angeles who works as a hydrographer (technician) for the DWP (www.WilsonCD11.com).

However, CD5 is a more hotly contested race with no incumbent seeking re-election and six candidates running for the office.

The following candidates have filed for the election according to the L.A. County Office of Elections and the information about them is taken from their own websites. To get more information on the candidates, please visit their websites (in parenthesis after each candidate's name) or attend a candidate forum. Our Council representative is our strongest link to L.A. City government, please take a few minutes to learn about our candidates and take the time to vote on March 3rd ... or make it easy and vote by mail!

ADEENA BLEICH

(www.adeenaforcitycouncil.com)

“It is no secret to those who know me that making a positive change in our community is tantamount to my daily life. I see great opportunity in local government as a

tool to make these positive changes. Because I want to ensure that this change happens quickly and efficiently, I have decided to run to become the next Los Angeles City Councilmember for the 5th district. I hope that you will join me in my effort to make every single one of our neighborhoods be the best that it can be. It is my sincere hope that these changes will improve the City of Los Angeles as a whole.”

RON GALPERIN

(www.rongalperinforcitycouncil.com)

“It's time for a change. It's time for our local government to work for us all. It's time for leadership with vision and integrity. This is why I am seeking to represent Los Angeles' 5th Council District. I am a strong community advocate for real planning, better ways to keep us moving, and leadership that's responsive to the people.... As your next City Council member, I pledge to continue to serve the community I live in with energy, creativity, and a commitment to getting things done. Together, we will strengthen our communities and meet the challenges of today and of tomorrow. Your support is vital in my campaign to replace outgoing Councilman Jack Weiss in March 2009. I invite you to contact me, to sign up for e-mail alerts, to volunteer, and to contribute. Join me in making a change.”

PAUL KORETZ

(www.paulkoretz.com)

“I will create a planning process that ensures more involvement and input for 5th District residents and makes their interests paramount. I will make completion of our transit system through the Westside a top priority. And I will always seek community input before advancing transit proposals. I will work with environmental leaders to create a greenprint for Los Angeles – a plan to make L.A. one of the most environmentally-friendly cities. I have been honored to serve as a local member of the State Assembly for the past six years and for the prior 12 years as City Councilmember in West Hollywood. Currently I am running for the City Council in the 5th District where I grew up and live. As the child of a holocaust survivor, I was raised with a deep sense of responsibility to help heal the world and to leave it better than I found it. During my many years of public service I have worked to do just that, fighting hard to improve our environment, public safety and health, and to end discrimination and intolerance. I hope that you will consider this website your direct link to me. Please visit often, since I will regularly post the most up-to-date campaign/election news and information on important issues and events happening across the District.”

ROBERT SCHWARTZ

(www.robertforcitycouncil.com)

“Engaged and Involved Communities. Robert will be a Councilman for the people and our neighborhoods and represents true change at City Hall. Safe Communities. Robert believes that the first responsibility of local government is to keep our residents safe. Better Planned Communities. Robert envisions a district with residents taking an active role in the planning of their communities.

Faster Moving Communities. Sadly, Los Angeles is synonymous with gridlocked streets and a car culture. Robert believes LA is ready for a cultural change and can do so without leaving the car-dependent behind. Healthy Communities. As the world confronts global warming, Robert will ensure the Fifth District is doing its part in contributing to a cleaner and more sustainable city. Educated Communities. The future of our city is unquestionably tied to the education of our children. Robert's campaign is dedicated to improving our school system. Saving Film Production. Our city is now confronted with forty states offering financial incentives to studios and producers, robbing Los Angeles of film production, significant revenue, and good paying jobs. I will personally lobby our legislators in Sacramento to correct this problem and restore Los Angeles' rightful claim as the film capital of the world. With over thirty years of executive experience in the entertainment industry, I have the perspective and expertise that will be needed to accomplish this task and will do so with the urgency it deserves."

ROBYN RITTER SIMON

(www.robynrittersimon.com)

"Everyday people are asking me why I want to run for city council. Many believe serving as a council member is a thankless job plagued with problems that can never really be resolved... but this is not how I view the opportunity. I want to be a strong advocate for our community. I believe safety is of the utmost importance for the city. I view the job of councilperson as a chance to initiate policy that will enhance the lives of individuals and their families. I see applying my business acumen to foster a healthy commerce climate so that a small or large company can flourish and invest in our city. I see working with school facilities, in cooperation with students and parents. I see bringing people together. The most valuable skill I have learned in my career is the ability to listen. Being responsive and sensitive to how passionate people feel toward their communities is a trait necessary to succeed in representing you. I have always taken the time to hear what people want and need. I intend to be the most responsive public servant possible so that your voice is heard. The 5th district deserves a leader who is balanced and battle tested."

DAVID VAHEDI

(www.votevahedi.com)

"As an elected member of both my neighborhood council and my homeowner association, I have seen our city fall short on important issues such as traffic, development, and infrastructure. I have also seen how special interests have increased their influence at city hall. I want to be your Councilmember because I believe you should have a leader who puts residents first. I also believe you deserve a leader whose main goal is to improve your quality of life through the prompt delivery of quality city services such as pothole repair, sidewalk repair, and tree trimming. I care about this district and believe its best years are still ahead of us. Together we can make the changes necessary to make this belief a reality."

Money Matters

You may have noticed that the annual dues notice is a little different this year. We have added a line for extra contributions in addition to the \$10 dues. We are doing our best to avoid an increase in the dues in 2010, but expenses have gone up while our income has not.

If all the families in Westside Village were to join the WVCA, we could continue and expand our current programs without a dues increase. Please encourage your neighbors, especially new arrivals, to join the WVCA.

What do you get for your dues?

- **This newsletter, which keeps us informed of local issues critical to maintaining our unique community**
- **The WVCA website, www.westsidevillage.org, presenting the latest developments in the neighborhood**
- **The annual meeting, an opportunity to hear from our City Council representatives, LAPD Senior Lead Officer, and other community organizations**
- **The annual Fall Festival, an afternoon of food and fun for all ages**
- **Support for the Neighborhood Watch and its email alerts of suspicious activity**
- **Support for neighborhood improvement projects, such as tree planting and maintenance**
- **Satisfaction in knowing that you are part of an organization dedicated to improving the quality of life in your neighborhood**

If you have any suggestions for ways to increase membership, please send them to westsidevillage-board@yahoo.com.

Ray Bradbury Program at Palms Library

The meeting room in the Palms-Rancho Park Branch Library will be dedicated in honor of distinguished local author Ray Bradbury on February 21, 2009 at 3:30 pm. Mr. Bradbury will speak about his new book *We'll Always Have Paris*.

Space is limited, so be sure to RSVP with the library by calling 310-840-2142.

Please note: Mr. Bradbury will sign only copies of his new book at this program.

The WVCA donated \$500 in October 2006, to expand the collection of Ray Bradbury's books at the library after the Board of Library Commissioners approved naming the meeting room in his honor.

Billboards: Local Residents Called to Action

Recently, some homeowners in Westside Village have found that they are living in the shadow (or under the fluorescent glare) of an electronic billboard. Most of us have experienced the flashing commercials that compete for our attention at intersections. Billboards are appearing in greater numbers and in new forms, such as “super-graphic” signs that embrace the expanse of high-rise buildings. It is no surprise that many local residents are appalled by this development and are seeking ways to fight the blight.

Opponents to billboards claim that such “off-sight signs” are unsightly, distracting, unsafe, and detrimental to the character of local neighborhoods. This belief is so prevalent among homeowners, that smaller cities such as Long Beach, Beverly Hills, Santa Monica, and Culver City have instituted citywide billboard bans. Many cities across the United States restrict billboards to highways and do not allow these signs to invade residential areas.

Among those at war with billboard companies in Los Angeles are Dennis Hathaway, president of Coalition to Ban Billboard Blight, and City Councilmember Bill Rosendahl. It is apparent that both grassroots and government efforts are necessary. (To express our appreciation for Rosendahl’s strong representation of our district in this area, the WVCA board is sending him a letter of support and commendation.)

There have been two recent victories in the fight: a three month moratorium on billboards and super-graphics (which began in December), and most importantly, a federal appellate court ruling issued in early January that upheld a Los Angeles citywide billboard ban prohibiting new off-site signs.

As WVCA residents, we must continue to voice our opinions about this issue to our city council and to the mayor. Business representatives and developers will consistently fight all limitations on signage, claiming that billboards are critical to their income. We must let the city know how their decisions will impact our property values, our safety, and our quality of life.

Below, we have listed some important resources and contact information. Please take time to send an email, write a letter, or make a phone call. Some suggested messages include:

- **We want a ban on new off-site signs... no exceptions.**
- **We want a halt on conversions of conventional billboards to digital signs.**
- **We want to see illegal signs cited and removed promptly (without “grandfathering in” illegal signs when a new sign ordinance is adopted).**
- **We want to see a billboard inventory completed as soon as possible.**

Let’s follow the examples of other cities. As residents, we must join together to make the message loud and clear. We’re the ones who are impacted.

www.banbillboardblight.org

Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa

200 North Spring St., Rm 303, Los Angeles, CA 90012
(213) 978-0600 — mayor@lacity.org

District 11-Bill Rosendahl

City Hall Office (213) 473-7011
200 North Spring St., Rm 415, Los Angeles, CA 90012
councilman.rosendahl@lacity.org

District 5-Jack Weiss

City Hall Office (213) 473-7005
200 North Spring St., Rm 440, Los Angeles, CA 90012
councilmember.weiss@lacity.org

Valentine’s Day Best And Worst List

As Valentine’s Day quickly approaches, we are all reminded of the successes and blunders of Valentine’s Days past. With that in mind, we thought we’d print a list of the best and worst Valentine’s Days (please don’t be offended if you’re best is printed as the worst – we’re just having a little fun).

The opinions expressed here do not reflect those of anyone who’s of any importance to your life, just someone who’s had some good and bad Valentine’s Days and has a sense of humor about the holiday.

BEST	WORST
Weekend in Mammoth, snuggling on the ski lift by day and in front of the fireplace by night while the kids get to stay with the grandparents.	Weekend in Vegas standing behind your man at the blackjack table as he loses the money he could have spent on something more romantic.
Breakfast at Tiffany’s (literally picking out your favorite piece as a gift).	Gumball dispenser ring.
A beautiful bouquet of roses with a hand-written card.	He forgot it was Valentine’s Day altogether.
Taking off from Santa Monica Airport on a private jet for a special evening.	Getting stuck in traffic on National Blvd. and missing your Southwest Airline departure.
Buying your loved one a new car.	Buying your loved one a household appliance.
A nice dinner at home with an “I love you” and nothing fancy.	Dinner at Arby’s.



Karen Jessen-Stecher, born in Germany, raised in Denmark and now a 15 year resident of Westside Village, was sworn in as an American citizen on September 8, 2008 in order to vote in this historic election. On November 3rd, she went with her husband Joe to the polling place at Charnock Elementary School. In her excitement to vote for Obama, Karen arrived quite early and was the first to vote. Both Karen and Joe shared that memorable experience together. Westside Village welcomes new citizen (and long-time resident) Karen Jessen-Stecher.

Westside Village Neighborhood Watch continues to improve its communication network.

Neighborhood Watch Update

Happy New Year Westside Village residents. We are very pleased by the progress we've made as a community during the past year. We have many blocks throughout Westside Village who communicate regularly about the concerns and interests, which has made for a stronger bond among neighbors.

In August the Westside Village Neighborhood Watch (WVNW) launched a website (<http://westsidevillagewatch.blogspot.com>) where we post the latest crime alerts in our area. This site also provides relevant emergency contact information, safety tips, service information and upcoming programs for our community. Most of the crime alert information posted on our site comes from our residents and is corroborated by Senior Lead Officer Juan Ceja. When we post a crime alert for our neighborhood, we hope it will help to make you aware of crime trends in the area, but also will remind you to set your alarm or lock the gate to your back yard or to bring items from your car into the house at night.

Or biggest success of the year occurred after a home burglary on Midvale this past September. One of the burglars dropped a store receipt in the home, which had some of his information on it. The resident found this seemingly odd item the following day and gave it to the LAPD detectives. Coincidentally, a neighbor had noticed two men parked on the block that

afternoon that looked suspicious to him. Without putting himself in jeopardy, he took a picture of the car as they were driving away which captured the make, model and license plate number. This photo was sent to the WVNW and in turn was sent to SLO Ceja. After some investigation by the detectives, they found the car and license was registered to the same individual whose information appeared on the receipt found in the home, which put him at the scene of the crime. The individual was picked up and given the evidence against him, he confessed. He is now spending the next four years in state prison. Thank you so much to the victim of this crime for following through with the LAPD and a very big thank you goes out to the neighbor whose keen awareness of his neighborhood and his willingness to safely photograph the individuals helped lead to a conviction.

The more we share information in Westside Village, the more difficult it becomes for criminals to move about in our neighborhood and the more likely it is that they will target other areas where they can operate more easily, undetected. As we continue to develop our communication network, the role our Block Captains play is invaluable. We'd like to thank each and every one of them for making Westside Village a stronger community block by block. If you do not know who your Block Captain is, please contact WVNW at westsidevillagewatch@gmail.com and we will provide you with their contact information.

Community Emergency Response Team (CERT)

We've had a number of residents take the Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) training program, taught by the LAFD Firefighter department. All that have taken this course have learned valuable information about how to keep our community safe in the event of a disaster and have found the classes to be stimulating and quite fascinating. If you are interested in attending this free training program offered by the City of Los Angeles, please contact us at the Westside Village Neighborhood Watch (westsidevillagewatch@gmail.com) or go to <http://www.cert-la.com> for more information.

A recent article in the LA Times highlighted statistics given by the USGS that earthquake activity more than doubled in Southern California in 2008 compared to the previous year. These are potential warning signs of how important it is to prepare ourselves for a major earthquake. We will need to rely on our neighbors as it may take several days or longer for emergency personal to come to our aid after the "big one". A reminder that "Drop, Cover, and Hold On" is the appropriate action to reduce injury and death during earthquakes. You can get more information on the WVNW website (<http://westsidevillagewatch.blogspot.com>) regarding earthquake preparedness and earthquake checklists.



Westside Village Dedicated Neighborhood Patrol

Security Service Systems (SSS) continues to patrol our neighborhood, but we no longer receive a dedicated patrol car eight hours a day because we have not met the subscriber threshold required to support 56 hours of patrol per week. Many subscribers have benefited from SSS's close proximity by calling them with reports of suspicious activity in the neighborhood where LAPD might not have been able to respond quickly. The presence of the patrol is a very important component to deter criminal activity from coming into Westside Village. Westside Village Neighborhood Watch has no affiliation with SSS, but they do have the most subscribers in Westside Village than any other patrol and we feel that they provide an excellent level of service. We understand these are difficult financial times for many, but if you are able, please support this effort by subscribing to the Westside Village Dedicated Patrol by contacting George Aceves of Security Service Systems at 310-477-2095 or ssspatrol@aol.com.

Please send any feedback regarding safety in Westside Village to westsidevillagewatch@gmail.com. Thank you to all our neighbors for your support and for making Westside Village a wonderful, safe community.

You Are Here

But if you listen hard enough, you can sometimes hear the lives already lived in your new house

By Jeffrey Levin (a freelance writer based in Los Angeles)

Nancy and I had looked for a home for a long time, harboring the fading hope that we could find something affordable in a city where the process of purchasing a house has come to demand the instincts of a piranha. One Sunday afternoon of open houses about five years ago, we stepped into a small house on the Westside, walked through its living room/dining room to the kitchen, and looked out at its courtyard patio. "I like this," whispered Nancy. It was her birthday, and I said, "OK—but if we buy it, you're not getting any other presents."

The house was unoccupied, and the sole overt and personal evidence of the previous owner was hanging behind glass, framed in wood, on a bare living room wall—a half-century-old city form requesting a building variance for an addition. In neat printing on the form, the owner, whose first name was Charles, wrote that the addition "will provide adequate kitchen and sleeping for a family of 6 now sleeping in two bedrooms.... Family cannot afford a larger lot and house."

For me, that brown, brittle paper hanging on the wall begged the question: What lives had been lived in this now empty home? It hadn't occurred to me that this was something I'd be asking when buying a house. But that piece of paper—revealing the obvious but overlooked truth that people put themselves into their houses and leave traces of themselves behind—left me wanting to know more.

The first fact I learned intrigued me. Charles was both the original owner and the only owner of the house for more than 60 years. His family was selling because Chuck, as he was better known, had died several months earlier. When our bid was accepted over another's, it was, we were told, because we were a family. As one of Chuck's sons later told us, he liked the idea of the house once more having children in it. I peppered him with questions about the house and his father, and a few weeks later he gave us a copy of the original deed and a photograph of the house when it was first built.

Chuck and his wife bought the lot in March 1939, then chose a basic floor plan. The original 900-square-foot house had, from today's perspective, the astonishing sale price of \$3,195. They paid an additional \$90 for a fireplace, \$5 for two extra electrical outlets and \$10 for another window.

The July 1939 photograph of the completed house shows a view to the east with nothing but fields. In the year the world went to war, the Westside of Los Angeles was more fields than families. And more white than ethnically diverse. The original deed stated that the property "shall not be sold or conveyed to any person other than one of the white or Caucasian Race." This was the only thing about the house's past that made me blanch. Six and a half decades later, the immediate neighbors are Iranian American, Egyptian American and African American.

I learned that Chuck made the place more his own when he got his variance, doing the bulk of the work on the addition himself. Well, not exactly. Chuck's son told us that after his father had marked the outline of the addition's foundation, he gave his three boys shovels and told them to start digging.

As we prepared the house to move in, I found myself thinking a lot about Chuck and looking with respect at the effort and creativity he put into his home. There were things we changed, but I felt compelled to preserve parts of his handiwork. We did upgrade some floors, windows, lighting and the heating system. And, like Chuck, we put the family to work. My daughter and her uncle cut new molding and the rest of us helped to install it. But we admired the home's basic layout that Chuck's family had conceived over backyard lunches, with plans sketched on paper napkins, and we did not change it.

I thought Chuck would be pleased that we kept the solid pine kitchen cabinetry that he built, and I

cleaned up the original wrought-iron hinges and reinstalled them. In the breakfast nook was a casement window that lacked a metal crank. Poking about in the garage, I found several boxes of casement hardware—dusty but never used—and installed the crank on the window. It gave me satisfaction to finish a little job Chuck never got to.

Because of my own forays into film and TV work, I felt another connection to Chuck. For most of his life, he worked at MGM, first as a script clerk and later as an editor. I loved the story told by Chuck's son of how he once telephoned his wife and told her to hurry over to Musso & Frank in Hollywood, where he was having lunch with "friends." She didn't bother to change out of her house clothes or fix her hair—a decision she regretted when she arrived at the restaurant and found her husband sitting with, among others, Clark Gable.

My curiosity piqued, I spent several hours at the Academy of Motion Picture Arts & Sciences library. The one film I found that officially credits Chuck as the editor was called "Separate Tables," released in 1958. Two of its actors walked away with Oscars.

In a city where the history of big places is often ignored, the history of small places is invisible. But not this small place. Not to me. This house feels right not only because the layout works, and there's enough space that my children have their own rooms. The house also feels right because I know something of its history and it touches me. It had been one family's home—children played here once and children play here again. The house feels right because it had an owner who lovingly shaped and cared for it—and also cared for those around him. This house was home to a man who, until his late 80s, frequently ambled over to neighbors' homes, toolbox in hand—handyman-in-residence. There are times now when I could use him.

On the day we closed escrow, we went to the house to pick up the keys. We smelled a gas leak as soon as we walked in, and Chuck's son—in a final act of responsibility for the family home—led my son and me underneath the house to find the source and close it up. Afterward, we sat on the patio to talk. "It must seem strange," I said, "coming here knowing that the house is passing out of the hands of your family." He didn't answer directly, but as we talked his eyes drifted around, taking in the place one last time.

I later realized the comment was as much for me as it was for him. These walls already hold memories for us. But although the house remains in one place, time doesn't. My children grow and change, and one day they will leave to enact the adult chronicle of their lives. The house will pass to others. When that happens, a part of me will remain, as Chuck has, adding silently to the past of this place.



Santa came to town. On Tuesday December 16, 2008, Senior Lead Officer Juan Ceja and members of the Los Angeles Police Department brought Santa Claus and his sled to visit children of all ages in Westside Village. They visited Palms and Clover Elementary Schools and made a stop on the 3500 hundred block of Greenfield Avenue where Jeanne Parker had cookies and hot chocolate for Santa, his helpers and the neighbors.

Photograph by Michelle Kawata



Please let us know what you think.

If you wish to contribute to News and Views, please email us at westsidevillageboard@yahoo.com
Visit us at www.westsidevillage.org

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Fun times at our 2008 Fall Festival.

Photographs by Andy Comins

