

Meanwhile in Graton...

By Hollynn D'Lil

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With Spring in full swing toward the Summer Solstice launch of Summer (June 21st), community projects abound in Graton. Last month's **Graton Variety Show** was a stellar example - with penguin tap dancers, a lutist, a flutist, storytellers, poetry, guitarists, a concertinist, singers and a Pachelbel performance in piano and violin to give the evening some class. About \$1,000 was raised for the Graton Community Projects and the Graton Community Club, but the value of the community spirit and the fun had that evening was priceless.

Mother's Day for me, though a private celebration with my daughter, was also a community exercise in climate protection as Chelsea and I journeyed over the bike trail to the Farmer's Market in Sebastopol - using alternate forms of transportation, she on a borrowed bike and me in my solar-powered wheelchair. Yes, solar-powered, because the batteries are charged off of the solar voltaic system installed on my roof. I have actually run other errands in Sebastopol utilizing the trail and my solar power!

Graton Day Planning meetings were initiated and will continue **every other Saturday at 10:00 in the back of Pinnacle**. Graton Day 2007 happens September 15th and needs more volunteers to make it happen as successfully as in the past. Events planned so far include the pie, zucchini and photo contests, night dancing on main street, music, great food, games and sports for the children, and much, much more, the more depending on you. Please plan on attending the planning days - **June 23rd, July 7th and 21st, August 4th and 18th, and September 1st and 8th.**

Volunteers continue to work at the **Graton Labor Center, Centro Laboral**, every Saturday morning, installing fencing, landscaping, decking and bathrooms. It's a wonderful addition to the community in more ways than one.

Bob Rawson reports that **Graton Community Service District** was fortunate to secure FEMA funding. The funds, he says "in excess of \$700,000 will allow us to dredge the sludge and sediment from our treatment ponds. The fly in the ointment has been obtaining access for large trucks and equipment down Ross Lane and the bike path. Truck access was blocked by a cluster of beautiful old oak trees. What to do? After consulting with neighbors it appears that a champion came forth in the person of **Jeff Kaus** of Health and Harmony Festival Fame, who has offered to allow the district access through his property and thus the oaks will be saved. Thanks are owed to our great neighbors on Ross

lane for coming together to solve this difficult problem. The project begins in June and should be completed by August."

The peace summit on the trail was held, and the **Trail Stewards of Graton** program is launched! Ms. Mary Burns, Director of Sonoma County Parks, acknowledged that the new program is a wonderful outcome from what started as difficult circumstances for everyone, referring to the severe cutback of all the foliage on both sides of the West County Trail last March that upset the local trail users and led to the meeting with Ms. Burns and her staff. "We look forward to working with all the volunteers to create a sustainable way of maintaining the trail for all its users" said Ms. Burns. Not only is the trail a habitat for the critters, said Allan Darrimon, Sonoma County Parks Maintenance Supervisor, "but it's the habitat of Graton Folks, too."

Meetings with Sonoma Parks Volunteer Coordinator John Ryan will start soon, and will focus on ways for volunteers to work with Parks personnel to create a restoration program for native plants along the trail. The beloved and bemoaned Himalayan blackberry bushes will receive attention, too, as volunteers and the park will "groom" the invasive bushes for the use and enjoyment of all users, two footed, four footed, non-footed, clawed and winged.

So that trouble spots can be identified for an item-by-item and case-by-case resolution, the parks department will establish 1/8 mile markers along the trail. When a berry bush is too rambunctious, a bicyclist can call in with a location so that the trail stewards and park personnel can go wrestle with it. This will be a great improvement over the one-size-fits-all destruction of all the vegetation on miles of the trail.

The markers also can be used to designate particular steward domains, as individuals, clubs, families, groups and businesses may want to adopt a particular portion of the trail to maintain and nurture. Imagine "owning" a piece of the trail and making it a lupine showcase!

The Trail Stewards of Graton and Parks personnel will walk the trail at least twice yearly to plan trail maintenance and native plant restoration. "We envision the trail becoming a model for community stewardship and native plant restoration." said John Ryan.

Contact me if you want to become a Trail Steward of Graton!

Peace Making: "We can go on building and destroying until we either destroy ourselves or destroy the ability of our world to sustain us. Or... we can grow up." Octavia Butler, *The Parable of the Talents*, 1998.

Our Town, Occidental

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Congratulations Graduates!

Wow, it's June already. First off, congratulations to all our graduates... High School and College.

I know how proud I am of my graduate. My son Alex is graduating from El Molino (30 years after his dad) and will be traveling in Europe over the summer returning this fall to attend the JC. Such a major accomplishment. Our Town is so proud of each of our grads.

Defensible Space

Here in Occidental the wind blows strong and the rolling hills and valleys make for tough access both for Firefighters and for the Bombers. Sudden Oak Death and strong wind storms have created an ample fuel supply. There is a limited water supply, (especially this year) and a lot more homes than in the past. Each structure on your property needs a fire defensible space of 30 to 50 feet on level ground and up to 100 feet on a slope. Beyond this distance attention should focus on removal of brush and dead trees throughout your property. If your water system is dependent on electricity a gravity feed tank of 500+ gallons near your home and/or located around your property will make the difference. Fire moves fast and there isn't a lot of time to think. Have a wild fire plan with your family and your neighbors. Consult with our local Fire Department or contact Fire Safe Sonoma at (707) 565-1152 for more info.

Heaven in the Hills...Occidental Arts and Ecology Center

Just a bit up Coleman Valley Road from Our Town is the Occidental Arts and Ecology Center (OAEC) home of the oldest continuously operated School of Permaculture in the state. Set on 80 acres the center is organized around the 5 acre Mother Garden which serves to teach and demonstrate organic gardening, seed saving and the preservation of food crop diversity. As my host, Philip Tymon put it, "To preserve the many heirloom varieties of plants that are starting to disappear due to the 'buy it at Safeway' mentality of our modern world". These gardens have been a source of inspiration and training for thousands of gardeners and farmers for over 30 years. The Center also offers training to schools across the state to instruct and support teachers, parents and kids to start and sustain school gardens and to cultivate ecological literacy in school communities. The OAEC is also an Intentional Community.

Called "The Sowing Circle" it consists of the co-owners of the property who, since 1994, have worked together to create a democratic community that is ecologically, economically and culturally sustainable. There is an Arts Program which has its own outdoor theater. It is an amazing work of art in itself. There are regularly scheduled events there. Every Wednesday is Garden Volunteer Day where you can participate in the day to day maintenance of the Mother Garden as well as enjoy an amazing lunch at the charming dining hall and interact with the knowledgeable staff. This is a drop in weekly event. There are also regularly scheduled tours (I got a private one.) twice a month. There are classes and community events and so much more than I can cover here. They have a web site at WWW.OAEC.ORG or you can contact the OAEC office at 874-1557 ext. 201. Really inspiring and incredible. Take a tour and check it out!

Occidental Hardware

If you haven't been into Occidental Hardware lately you're in for a pleasant surprise. Restocked and under new ownership for the last year, Mike and Naomi Santiago have worked hard to create a well supplied local hardware store that meets the needs of Our Town. I am grateful every time I don't have to drive an hour for a pipe fitting or a tube of caulk.. Mike has many years in the trades and can answer your questions. They can handle special orders delivered to the store as needed, usually in the same week and best of all they're local. Check it out or call the store at 874-3441 and support our local merchants whenever possible.

Big Summer Ahead

The planned work on the Harmony Village Project will begin soon and the face of Our Town will change again. More than ever as a community we must pay attention and stay involved. The water situation and over development are real issues for our community. We have a say in what happens only if we are aware and involved. We are all in this together.

Don't miss the Friday Farmers Market 4pm until dusk through the summer in downtown Occidental!!!