

# OUR County

By Efren Carrillo (707) 565-2241  
ecarrillo@sonoma-county.org



The County welcomed good news this month, in the midst of extremely grim projections for our coming budget year. We received word of grant funds from the California Energy Commission, and the County's application was the 4<sup>th</sup> highest ranked in the state and one of only five applications funded statewide. The monies will be used to augment the efforts of the innovative Sonoma County Energy Independence Program (SCEIP). Sonoma County also received two additional awards through strategic partnerships.

This \$2,537,000 award will fund home energy audits, enhanced water conservation efforts, and augment the leveraging of additional funds. The SEP Award will create a more sustainable program overall by increasing effectiveness. SCEIP is a first of its kind energy and water conservation program launched in March 2009 by the Board of Supervisors and has to date put over \$20 million dollars into the local economy in home and business energy and water conservation projects. More information on SCEIP can be found at [www.sonomacountyenergy.org](http://www.sonomacountyenergy.org).

The North Coast Energy Independence Program has received funding to duplicate the successful Sonoma County Energy Independence program model. This \$4.3 million dollar application was the result of a joint effort of Sonoma, Mendocino, Del Norte, Trinity, Siskiyou, and Humboldt counties.

Finally, the Sonoma County Regional Climate Protection Authority will receive approximately \$1,195,000 as a partner in a regional residential State Energy Program proposal led by the Association of Bay Area Governments (ABAG). The funds will support energy efficiency home retrofits for the new Countywide Retrofit/Renewables Program which debuts in April.

That good news was welcome, as we continue to see the effects of the faltering economy on our budget, and the State continues to threaten funds intended for local government. Last fiscal year, we addressed a shortfall of \$26 million dollars. Projections for this year are \$35-50+ million in funding gaps. Seventy percent of our 1.3 billion dollar annual budget is mandated by statute for particular programs and restricted.

Last year, over 37,000 property tax bills were reduced. Sales tax revenues and tourism are both down...with both local taxes and those collected by the state to support infrastructure and safety net programs drastically reduced. While we are a large employer with approximately 3900 employees, this is a nearly 10 percent reduction from the over 4200 employed two years ago.

Resulting reductions in services will impact our community. The Board has made efforts to improve efficiencies by contracting some services out, and employees continue to strive to increase productivity and retain vital services. We must seek innovative methods to do more with less.

While we adapt and downsize, we also endeavor to find new ways to spur private employment growth which aligns with our commitment to the environment.

The energy programs listed in the first part of this article have proved a boon to some job sectors. Further development of private sector green jobs, spurred by SCEIP and other renewable energy programs is a priority of our economic strategy. Our Human Service Department is leveraging grant funds to train local workers for renewable energy production and system installation. These efforts put people to work and offer opportunity which is much needed during this difficult time.

Our office has been fielding many calls from people who are concerned about the implementation of SmartMeters by PG&E. Concerns ranging to accuracy of the meters to long range health effects of electro magnetic frequency (EMF) have been expressed.

PG&E has established a hotline for individuals concerned about this issue. Please call 1-866-743-0263 if you have questions, or to be added to a "last to install" list. Although the County has no ability to prevent installation, it is important for the public to have good information on the issue. A public forum is being planned to take place in late April, where we will bring in experts who will discuss the issue. We will work with all interested parties to ensure that concerns are heard and responded to in a responsible, informed process.

# Bunny 101

Learn how to be your House Bunny's Best Friend



- Housing
- Spay/Neuter
- Diet
- Bunny Proofing
- Toys
- Health



Saturday March 13th  
1:00 PM to 3:00 PM

Humane Society  
of Sonoma County  
5345 Highway 12 West

(5 miles west of Hwy 101 @ Llano Road)

Questions??? call (707) 542-0882

- Presented by House Rabbit Society
- Free (A \$5.00 donation to the Humane Society is welcome)
- Bring a photo for our bunny board.
- Door prize drawing for bunny gifts.

# Petaluma Rumors

By Michael "Bug" Deakin

707-799-4418

michael@heritagesalvage.com



## The Word Mangler

Introductory ramblings of a meandering mind in a town with an eclectic mix of citizens, iconic eggs, Victorian hearts, riverfront upstarts and an inviting sum of her parts! I shall introduce myself as a recent transplant, late of Occidental (how I love thee), owner of **Heritage Salvage**, a bit of a rabble-rouser (possible understatement), and a big fan of Petaluma.

## Intentions Indeed!

While I go about detailing some events, retailing others, emailing many and I'm sure, derailing some with rumored asides from the town with the inland tides, I would like to invite my fellow Petalumanaries to send me various reports of "happenings of wonder, items of blunder, claps of thunder and plans gone asunder."

I will try to get my research together for guidelines of community column, ie reporting on events in p'luma that you might not otherwise hear about . . . blah blah blah!!!

## Cool Runnings

For now, I will report on some cool events I have attended in February. I went to **Lagunitas Brewery** for a meeting of the **Petaluma Music Festival** folks, (formerly known as the Wine Jazz and Blues Fest) and you can volunteer...get involved.

I attended a cool gallery presentation at the **Mail Depot** on 40 fourth St. Maureen is great...the theme... our salvaged hearts, well represented by Petaluminary art!

**Mystic Theatre**, and many Petaluma Restaurants staged a great show and benefit for **Doctors without Borders** entitled "to Haiti with love", fab event, great music, too many restaurants to list donated 10% of their evening.

City council passes Target store application, "**chagrin**", but I carry on with the Locavore Torch! **The Seed Bank** and **Copperfields Books** presented an Evening with Michael Pollan, a resounding turnout, not quite packed to the rafters, tough in that building what with the ceiling and all.

**Coming in March . . .** The **Farmer-Veteran Coalition** is holding a **Food and Farming Veteran Career Fair** on March 5th from 9-4 in Santa Rosa <http://bit.ly/bno4Et> 4 days ago

**13 March: Bounty Farm Work Day** - Saturday March 13 (1:00 AM)

[www.petalumabouty.org](http://www.petalumabouty.org)