



## LOS TRANCOS WOODS & VISTA VERDE Newsletter – June/July 2012

### **Ratty Solution**

Roof or Norway rats (similar in appearance to laboratory rats) sometimes invade our houses, our cars and our gardens. We may be inadvertently “inviting” them in, if we are providing food, water, or shelter. Remember it is much better to discourage them from living here, than to try and get rid of them, especially with poison. Any poisoned rat becomes potential food for wildlife and domestic animals with disastrous results. Sadly we have already lost neighborhood pets to rat poison. An alternative to rat poison is the Rat Zapper. It is a battery-operated unit consisting of a small box. You prime it with dog food for 1 week then turn it on. Merely place it in the area the rodents frequent. Check it frequently and empty the dead rodents into the garbage, then reset it. Cindy Russell removed 15 rats last year with her Rat Zapper. Rat Zappers can be purchased at the local hardware store. Or the classic rat-trap hidden from pets works well.

Although it takes a little more time, it is much more effective to take away their cozy living conditions.

- 1) Seal or screen all holes leading into your house or outside sheds. Install a rat-guard on your utility line and cut away overhanging branches from your house and shed roofs.
- 2) Pick up all garbage and fruit tree droppings around your yard and secure your garbage can and lid.
- 3) When putting pet food and water outside, be sure you take it in each night.
- 4) **Clear away ivy** which is a favorite living and breeding area for rats. Any area that has an accumulation of leaves, logs or debris is prone to rat inhabitation. Clear it.

If roof rats have no cozy place to live, we will quickly see a reduction in their numbers.

*Submitted by Linda Drey-Nightingale (with information from Wildlife Rescue and Cindy Russell)*

### **Hacking One's Sanity**

We have just finished a marathon of tedium and worry to disinfect and restore *everything* in our two personal computers, both of which were hacked. It took weeks, and two experts.

The saga began when one of the computers was acting strangely, then refused to respond to any commands. From what we have learned (let us know if we are wrong, techie neighbors), this is the definition of “hacked” as opposed to “infected with a virus”: the computer and all its functions were completely taken over (and info therein used?) by the hacker(s). We found a professional to diagnose and fix the problems, then discovered that the other computer had been hacked as well. We moved on to notifying banks, airlines, etc. of possible breaches of personal data. After paying the “cleaning bills,” we had to have all the software reinstalled.

In retrospect, we suspect that it was either just-lapsed protection (Viper) along with unsecured WiFi and a computer left on overnight or invasion through our e-mail contact network. Perhaps this information will help to spare any of you who might be as computer unsavvy as we? We hope so.

*Submitted by Lenora Ferro and Tom Brignand*

### **Our Local Poets**

In our little hamlet of Portola Valley the grand tradition of poetry thrives. From verses of a soggy, boggy frog to the pack-animal hunting mentality of human bullying to thrills of mountain biking, from dire comparative world economic inequalities to NFL hero dreams, from mesmerizing onomatopoeic beauty of raindrops to revelations of perfection's slippery slope and *more*, PV's schoolchildren made a showing of remarkable talent in this year's communal celebration of the art form. 31 winners, chosen from a record 438 entrants to the 2012 Portola Valley Annual Poetry Contest, shared their poems with an audience equally enthusiastic and worthy of the poetic gifts on offer. The event (prizes and refreshments included), celebrating National Poetry Month, is sponsored by Friends of the Portola Valley Library, in collaboration with library staff and schools. This year was the 13<sup>th</sup> annual celebration in PV. Congratulations Everett Miller, Joseph Puglisi, and Samantha Ramsey on your winning entries!

*Submitted by Lenora Ferro for Friends of PV Library*

### An Accomplished Neighborhood

- Ben Archer, ENS, USNR, was selected by his classmates at the Tulane University School of Medicine to receive their 2012 Humanism in Medicine Award. He also had his first professional research publication presented at the 18<sup>th</sup> International Meeting on Advanced Spine Techniques in Copenhagen.
- Andrew Kaiser, son of Jean Seto, is graduating from Valley Forge Military Academy and going to Santa Clara University in the fall.
- Justin Cowperthwaite just graduated from USC with a dual degree in Computer Engineering and Business.
- Alexandra Swan will graduate with a Masters in Management Science program from Duke's Fuqua School of Business.
- Daniel Glenn graduated with a BA from Miami University at Oxford, Ohio

### Emergency Preparedness

The updated Community Resource Guide will be published soon. Take a look at your listing in the Guide and be sure each piece of information is correct. To make changes contact either Yvonne Tryce (VV) or Cindy Rowe (LTW). Your Guide is a wealth of knowledge about Emergency Preparedness. While you are checking your listing, also check out pages 1-21 and the back cover, so that in an emergency you can go directly to the information that you will need.

*Submitted by LTW & VV Emergency Preparedness Coordinators*

### Notes from Los Trancos Woods Community Association

The LTWCA Board met on the second Wednesday of May. Key topics of discussion included:

- Better joint Community Picnic coordination with Vista Verde
- Improving communications between the Board and the Los Trancos Woods community
- The impact on the community from garbage cans left at the side of the road for extended periods of time
- The recent series of Water Board decisions, and the importance of prioritizing preservation of their land

More detailed minutes can be found at [www.lostrancoswoods.org](http://www.lostrancoswoods.org). Our next meeting is tentatively scheduled for the second Wednesday in June. Community members are welcome to attend. Please call Tom Thayer to confirm location and time.

### Garbage Cans!

We are fortunate to live in a rural community with easy access to Silicon Valley. We have been spared many of the plagues associated with rural communities in beautiful areas, e.g., rusted out cars, old toilets in the front yard, etc. However, there is one plague that is proving resistant to a cure in Los Trancos Woods: **GARBAGE CANS**. Most of us bring the empty cans in sometime on Monday, garbage pickup day. But there are a few who store them throughout the week at the side of the road. Now this may save a little time and effort on Sunday and Monday, but it means the rest of us have to be confronted by their garbage when we drive or walk by. Let us all help to make and keep the Woods beautiful by bringing in the garbage cans promptly. Thank you.

*Submitted by Tom Thayer, President, LTWCA*

### Neighborhood Notes

- Words of wisdom for **ridding your yard of thistle**, those prickly, stickery, jabbing plants – bag them if they have any flowers at all. Once the plant has a flower, even if pulled, the flower will mature into seeds while the plant is laying on the ground dying. Thistles are annuals and you can easily rid your yard of all thistles within three years. That is, if your neighbor does not cultivate them. Let us banish these unwelcome plants from the neighborhood.
- **Rainfall data** is most likely done for the season. Gene Hunner reports: April – 4.1", May - .1", and total for the season 25.0".

### Community Associations' Web Sites

The web site addresses are:

<http://lostrancoswoods.org/>

<http://www.vistaverdepv.org> NEW

The group e-mail list is:

[VistaVerdeLTW@yahoogroups.com](mailto:VistaVerdeLTW@yahoogroups.com)

[VistaVerdeCommunityAssoc-subscribe@yahoogroups.com](mailto:VistaVerdeCommunityAssoc-subscribe@yahoogroups.com).

*Thank you, Jerry Jensen & Rob Kalman for maintaining web sites*