



*"To preserve and enhance the unique village character of Laguna Beach."*

# Newsletter

THE VILLAGE LAGUNA NEWSLETTER • MARCH 2009 • ESTABLISHED 1971

## SUPER Project Gets Mixed Reviews

At the February 17 Council meeting, Mary Anne Skorpanich of the County staff described the SUPER Project, the Army Corps of Engineers' proposal for slowing the flow of the creek and protecting the sewer pipes alongside it from erosion. The addition of a water treatment plant at the mouth of the creek has allowed the project to be described as a "water quality" project, and it was on water quality that the positive public comment focused. No one is against cleaning up the water that enters the ocean from Aliso Creek.

There was, however, a fair amount of thoughtful testimony, largely based on a 2006 concept report rather than the two-page summary made available to the Council, that raised concerns about the massive grading of the canyon and the creation of a new channel for the creek, with grouted-rock drop structures and armored banks, in the middle of our wilderness park. One speaker pointed out that the idea of using engineered infrastructure to control streams runs counter to a trend elsewhere in the country toward removing such structures and allowing streams to manage themselves. In the end, the Council voted 4 to 1 to support the SUPER Project while encouraging broad public participation in the planning of a project that is as environmentally sensitive as possible. Verna Rollinger opposed the motion, advocating the active pursuit of an

environmentally sensitive alternative.

At the Village Laguna general meeting on February 23, where Skorpanich was again the speaker, one participant summed up the discussion by saying that the consensus seemed to be support for the idea of protecting the sewer pipe (by moving it) and treating the water but opposition to the channelization of the creek. Asked whether making improvements upstream to reduce the stream flow would be an acceptable alternative, Skorpanich replied that the potential federal funding is linked to the current concept.

All but \$2 million of the 25% local share of the \$45 million cost has reportedly been committed. The 75% federal share is said to have been authorized but has not

yet been funded. The project turned up on the *Orange County Register's* (February 27) list of local "pork" projects in the recent spending bill; earmarked by Ken Calvert (R-Corona) and Loretta Sanchez (D-Garden Grove), the Aliso Creek Main Stem Project (aka SUPER Project) is slated to receive \$369,000.

Stakeholders' meetings are expected to resume in the spring, once the technical studies are complete, and the Council has asked that some of these meetings be held in Laguna. ≈



### MARCH GENERAL MEETING

Monday, March 23, 7 p.m.

Unitarian-Universalist Fellowship  
429 Cypress Drive

### APRIL BOARD MEETING

Saturday, April 4, 9 a.m.

Home of Ann Christoph, 31632 Wildwood

## Village Laguna Nominates Two For Environmental Award

This month the City's Environmental Committee will announce the winner(s) of this year's Environmental Award. Village Laguna has nominated two candidates, Tom Osborne and Arnold Hano. Excerpts from the nomination letters, the full texts of which are on our web site, are as follows:

"We nominate Tom Osborne for this year's Environmen-

*(Continued on page 2)*

# Village Voices

By Arnold Hano



Some 40 years ago, give or take a decade, I read an article in a science magazine, "Why Do Rivers Meander?" Because it was written in science lingo, I did not get much out of it, but I think I learned that rivers are wild spirits, full of energy and with a wonderful wanderlust that takes them hither and yon. And in their wildness, they sculpt the crust of the earth, creating such wonders as the Grand Canyon. They are the earth's true architects.

It is in their DNA; they do not like to be curbed, cribbed, confined. They especially do not like to be dammed. Damming a river is akin to violating its DNA. Do Not Abate.

We are confronted with a river/creek problem in South Laguna. Aliso Creek is a polluted version of its original clean, wild self. Once it created Aliso Canyon, carving out its serene beauty. Today it is treated as something standing in the way of progress.

First, a brief history lesson. Aliso Creek is millennia old. The cities that surround it are still cutting their baby teeth. Think of them as the Terrible Twos. They throw tantrums. They also throw filth into the creek. They treat the creek as a trash bin.

Our problem is twofold. We have to clean the creek; we believe it should be done at its source. And we have to keep it from turning into yet another flood drain, its energy imprisoned between concrete walls. Clean the creek; keep the creek free. Any project that does not do these two things is a failed project.

We are facing a project called the SUPER Project, not because it is super or superior or anything other than an acronym. It is another piece of failure. When you cannot define your product, use an acronym. British Petroleum did not want American consumers to think that (1) it was foreign and (2) it was fossil fuel, so it became BP on your television screen with wind turbines turning merrily in the background. The SUPER Project hides its bones with flashy flesh. You might as well call it STUPOR Project: Senseless. Travesty. Useless. Poorly planned. Overpriced. Ridiculous—STUPOR. But word games won't solve problems. We have to take this project seriously. It has legs. Even Barbara Boxer has signed on.

To turn it into a feasible plan, we have to study it, come up with sensible alternatives, and sell the plan to the public. People are wary of what is going on. They don't trust the Army Corps of Engineers, a feckless agency that dams rivers and then un-dams them as the rivers die. And we are expected to laud the appointment of this agency to lead the proposed project. Common sense tells us that there must be a simpler, wiser, less costly plan than the one thus far presented.

So I advise you to study the project, listen to such authoritative voices as those of Ann Christoph, Jinger Wallace and Barbara Metzger. Read Armando Baez's letter in the March 6 *Indy*. It is a measured and telling response to the specious SUPER project.

This is just the beginning. But it's never too early to be heard. Speak up. We are the credible environmentalists in this town. We—you—are being called upon.

Now. ≈

## Environmental Award, continued from page 1

tal Award because we consider him the driving force in getting our city included in the U.S. Mayors' Climate Protection Agreement. Making it his mission to have our city added to the list of those committed to reducing global-warming pollution, Tom educated himself by attending conferences on municipal environmental policy led by university scientists and gathering information from leaders in other cities that had already signed the agreement. He arranged to have several of them speak to local civic organizations about their experience, built a network of community support for the idea, and discussed the issues with City Council members. Then, as a member of the Environmental Committee, he chaired the committee's 20-member Climate Protection Work Group and was a coauthor and one of the editors of the Climate Protection Action Plan produced by the group.

"Global warming is our most significant environmental challenge, and Tom's tireless and effective efforts have moved our city in the direction of doing something about it. We hope that you will formally recognize those efforts by choosing him for this year's award."

"Arnold Hano has led environmental insight and action in Laguna Beach for more than fifty years. The adoption of a citywide height limit that precludes new high-rise buildings anywhere in Laguna Beach is probably the accomplishment that is most memorable, but his continuous involvement in nearly every major issue our community has faced has changed the direction of our city markedly. Our town is more livable, more beautiful, and more united and positive in our approaches to solving problems because of Arnold Hano. As

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his wife, Bonnie, puts it, 'Arnold's contribution is that he's very inventive, develops ideas and galvanizes people behind a cause. And he does that with humor and heart.' . . .

"In the late 1960s Laguna Beach had a councilmember who proposed banning dogs from the city's parks and beaches. The community, with Hano's involvement, organized to object to the dog ban. A compromise allowing dogs to visit some of the parks and the beaches during certain hours was worked out. This success alerted citizens to their power, and when a proposal surfaced to build hotels 100' tall on the beach front, they were ready to take it on. An ad hoc committee was formed with the Hano's leadership, and an initiative to limit the height of buildings in Laguna Beach to 36' was submitted to voters. On August 3, 1971, the 'Anti-High Rise' initiative passed 3 to 1. Laguna Beach became the only city in the country to use the initiative process to impose a citywide height limit. . . .

"After the election the ad hoc committee became a permanent organization, Village Laguna. Hano was the founding president and served two terms. He and Village Laguna were deeply involved in preventing the development of Laguna Canyon in the proposed Sycamore Hills project.

Community efforts resulted in obtaining the 'buckle' of the greenbelt, now called the James Dilley Preserve. Other issues tackled in subsequent years included obtaining state bond funding for more open-space purchases, writing of the General Plan documents, design review policies, the sign ordinance, and outdoor-display policies, supporting the Coastal Act and the Coastal Commission, and working with the emerging environmental impact report process—all foundation components of today's environmental policies.

"Recently Hano has been a consistent participant in Planning Commission workshops to rewrite the land use element of the General Plan. He is involved with the Resource Center and the Homeless Task Force. At a recent Council meeting he expressed concern about the future of Laguna's businesses. . . .

"This environmental work involves dedication — meeting after meeting, column after column, year after year. This is where Hano has been, never giving up, never losing interest, always optimistic that we Lagunans will find a way toward the best answer. This is why Arnold Hano deserves the Environmental Award, recognition for a lifetime of service and inspiration to the community." ≈

## Village Laguna Joins the Parade!

Village Laguna's entry in the Patriots' Day Parade highlighted our environmental concerns. We appreciated the

opportunity to try out Nancy Gasparotti's electric car and a fleet of electric bicycles from Kevin Penrose's Electric Cyclery.



**Join Village Laguna!** Pay annual dues of only \$25 per member or \$45 per family (Basic membership) and receive our informative monthly newsletter, attend fun parties, stay informed at our monthly meetings, participate in our annual Charm House Tour, and support local city and school board candidates. (If you are already a member, check your membership status on the mailing label. For example, 1/1/2009 means you paid your membership dues for 2008 and you need to pay your dues in January 2009 to remain current.)

If you would like to join Village Laguna or if you need to renew, please clip and return this form with your check. If you are already a member, why not share this application with a friend or neighbor?

Name(s) \_\_\_\_\_ Phone # \_\_\_\_\_

Street Address \_\_\_\_\_ Email \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP Code \_\_\_\_\_

I would like to volunteer for \_\_\_\_\_

I have enclosed my check in the amount of \$ \_\_\_\_\_ for the following membership:

- Basic** – \$25/person, \$45/family
- Supporter\*** – \$120 per family (includes 2 T-shirts)
- Sustainer\*** – \$240 per family (includes 2 Charm House Tour tickets and 2 T-shirts)

*\*Contact Treasurer Doug Reilly at 494-4137 or reillyd@cox.net if you want automatic payments monthly or quarterly*

**Mail to: Village Laguna, P. O. Box 1309, Laguna Beach, CA 92652**



P. O. Box 1309  
Laguna Beach, CA 92652

FIRST CLASS MAIL

**MARCH  
GENERAL MEETING  
Monday, March 23, 7 p.m.  
Unitarian-Universalist Fellowship**



## My Favorite Local Business

By Jackie Gallagher

Tom Williams is the owner of My Laguna Office (303 Broadway, Suite 104), and he is the one you will most often see behind the counter there. My first visit to MLO was an emergency; I had known that the store was there but did half of my office shopping and shipping out of town. Since that first visit I've become a fan. Tom carries supplies like boxes in all shapes and sizes and recycled ink cartridges that are cheaper than new and just as good. His shipping service, which includes USPS, FedEx and UPS, is available six days a week at very competitive prices, and I save on gas. When my Internet is down at home or in the office, I can use one of six Internet- and business-ready computers. SKYPE, webcams, AIM, Yahoo and ICQ are all available, and I can

rent a laptop by the day. Mail box rentals, graphic design, faxing, copying and gift wrapping are just a few more of the services Tom offers. He also has a web directory called [lagunalists.com](http://lagunalists.com) that lists companies in Laguna—great if you're a new small business, and it's free.

Tom is very service-oriented, and if he doesn't have something, he'll direct you to where you can get it. Stop in or visit his web site ([www.mylagunaoffice.com](http://www.mylagunaoffice.com))—tell him Jackie sent you. ≈

## Update on the Village Entrance Project Scheduled for March 23

After many years, the completion of the Village Entrance Project is still uncertain. The project, on City-owned land between City Hall and the corner of Broadway and Forest, has been planned to include a park between the street and the creek and a parking structure between the creek and the hillside. Now the City is in the process of preparing an environmental impact report, and several alternatives are being studied.

Bob Borthwick has been involved with the project for many years, having studied it with his UCI landscape-design students and participated in the winning design team in the City-sponsored competition. At our March meeting he will trace the evolution of the project and describe the currently proposed alternatives. We'll meet on Monday, March 23, at 7 p.m. at the Unitarian-Universalist Fellowship, 429 Cypress Drive. ≈