

Inside City Hall

Beyond the headlines

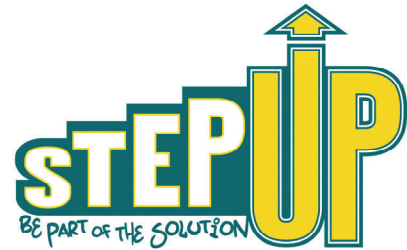
Volume 22

December 5, 2007

THUMBS UP TO ALL SUPPORTERS OF THE

GANG SUMMIT: The climb to the Summit has been months in the making, and the end result is over 1,000 people taking part in the day-long event, “Step Up to Solutions”, from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. Dec. 6, at the Visalia Convention Center. Support from community leaders, businesses, educators, non-profit, community, and faith-based organizations has been nothing short of outstanding. A total of 400 scholarships were made available through the generosity of the City of

Visalia, Chamber of Commerce in Visalia, Tulare and Porterville, and Stan Simpson and Buckman-Mitchell Insurance, for anyone who wanted to come, but for whom financial circumstances would have prevented their attendance. Media sponsors in print and radio helped promote the event, and in-kind sponsors provided needed materials. Summit committee members stepped up from CSET, Visalia Unified School District, Tulare County Sheriff’s Department, Young Lives and Reaching Youth, Tulare County Board of Supervisors, Visalia Chamber of Commerce, City of Visalia and Visalia Police Department, Tulare County Office of Education and Tulare County Administrative Office, and the Wittman Community Center. This week’s Summit is a step – a significant one—toward combating gangs in Tulare County. And thumbs up to all who have made this step possible.



PLAYGROUND GETS A MUCH NEEDED

MAKEOVER: A well-equipped playground can now be enjoyed by preschoolers at the North Visalia Child Development Center thanks to a collaboration between First 5 Tulare County, the City of Visalia and Tulare County Office of Education. The new playground, which was dedicated on Dec. 3, is at the child development center at the Manuel Hernandez Community Center. The center is operated by the TCOE Child Care Educational Program, which provides



Head Start services for 40 low income 3- and 4-year-olds. The area includes a large climbing module and a sandbox located in an area with pour-in-place cushioning made of old tire material. It includes a large shade structure to protect children from the sun. There is a new bike path, highly durable grass, a cement pad that holds activity tables and another that holds a playhouse. Sixty percent of the \$95,500 renovation was financed through a First 5 Planning Capital Grant. The City and TCOE split the cost of the remaining 40 percent. City maintenance staff did much of the work themselves, including demolition

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of the old concrete and equipment, installation of the sprinkler system and planting of the grass. Child Care maintenance staff designed the yard and built the playhouse.

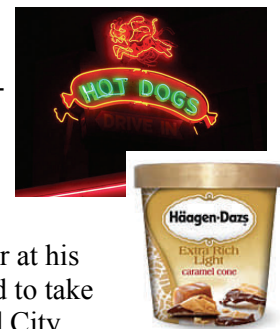
TWO FREE PLACES TO LEAVE YOUR FALLEN LEAVES: Visalia’s falling



leaves have two places to land for free. Now through Saturday, Dec. 22, take your yard trimmings, grass clippings, leaves, branches, unpainted wood, and lumber scraps to two free Fall Drop-Off locations: Tulare County Compost BioMass, at 24478 Road 140 (Lovers Lane), from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. Monday through Saturday; and Wood Industries at 7715 Avenue 296, from 7 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Friday and 8 a.m. to 3 p.m. Saturday. Commercial gardeners are limited to a maximum of a one-ton vehicle and 12-foot trailer, and City of Visalia residents may receive one-yard of free compost for each load of material. Proof of residency—a utility bill or driver’s license—is required. All commercial gardeners must provide a valid City of Visalia Business License. For more information, call 713-4500.

TULARE, VISALIA MAYORS FACE OFF IN THE HAAGEN-DAZS-TAYLOR’S HOT DOG CHALLENGE:

What’s a few hundred hot dogs or cases of gourmet ice cream bars between mayors? In the case of Tulare Mayor Craig Vejvoda, Tulare Union’s 63-14 loss Friday night is the El Diamante Miners’ gain to the tune of cartons of Haagen-Dazs ice cream. Visalia Mayor Jesus Gamboa and Vejvoda came up with a challenge of their own before the Valley Football Playoffs Game. Each secured school shirts signed by all the players of their city’s respective team for the other to wear at his own City Council meeting in honor of the winning team. The Mayors also agreed to take snacks to the winning team at their respective school. Tulare Mayor Vejvoda and City Manager Darrell Pyle will deliver the cases of ice cream bars to the team at its Rally on Dec. 7, in the school gymnasium.



ROTARY OFFERS TO HELP BUILD OUTDOOR AMPHITHEATER: Visalia Rotary Community Foundation submitted a letter of interest to the city of a joint public-private partnership to establish a “Rotary Amphitheater” as part of the new East Downtown Civic Center Master Plan. City Council’s acceptance of the letter allows City staff to continue to work with the Rotarians to develop a long-term sponsorship plan and agreement that could make the concept of an outdoor amphitheatre a reality. Parks and Recreation Director Vince Elizondo said much work is needed to be done on the concept. The scope can range from a facility that can accommodate several hundred people to one that holds 10,000 people. Early discussions point to a concept of a mid-sized amphitheater that can hold several thousand people with a modestly designed stage area. No timeline has been given for the project.

PUBLIC WORKS PROJECTS POSTED ON TIMES-DELTA WEBSITE: The City of Visalia has teamed up with the Visalia Times-Delta to provide weekly updates on city public works projects involving major city roadways on its website (www.visaliatimesdelta.com). For the week of Dec. 3, the following Public Works/Development projects are being conducted and may interrupt major routes of transportation within the City of Visalia:



- At the request of Southern California Edison Co., the installation of a new conduit to an underground vault at the northwest corner of Doe Avenue and Shirk Street; work to be done Monday through Friday, 7 a.m. to 4p.m.; work expected to be completed Dec. 14th; responsible contractor/contact is Don Bailey, H.P. Comm. Inc. 909-630-2210.
- Sewer installation on Green Acres Drive between Midland and Hyde Way; work to be done Monday through Friday, 7 a.m. – 4 p.m.; expected completion date is Friday, Dec. 7th; responsible contractor/contact is Adam Ennis, City of Visalia , 713-4323.
- Building remodel and upgrade of sidewalk and electrical reconstruction at the northwest corner of

Locust and Acequia; work to be done Monday through Friday, 7 a.m. – 4 p.m.; expected to be completed Friday, Dec. 7th; responsible contractor/contact is Joe Leal, Longview Development Co., 804-7421.

- At the request of Southern California Gas Co., a high-pressure gas main will be installed along Floral Street, from Race Avenue to School Avenue, and along School Avenue, from West Street to Floral Street; work to be done from 7am - 4 pm, Monday through Friday; expected to be completed Friday, Dec. 7; and responsible contractor/contact is Ed Ayala, ARB Construction, 949-254-0529.
- Street construction and widening at the new elementary school construction at Pinkham and Laura will include intermittent closure of Pinkham Street from Dec. 3-7; work to be done Monday through Friday, 7am 4 pm; expected to be complete Sunday, Dec. 23; and responsible contractor/contact is Dane Northcut, Oral Micham Construction, 564-5010, and Mark Dunn, Dunn Sand, at 734-5733.

SEARCH BEGINS FOR NEW FIRE CHIEF: With Interim Fire Chief Greg Glass currently at the helm of the Visalia Fire Department, recruitment has begun for a permanent Chief. Former Visalia Deputy City Manager Gary Brown, who oversaw Fire, Police, and General Services, is now with Avery Associates and responsible for overseeing recruitment of candidates. The position requires strong leadership skills, sound fiscal management and budgeting expertise, and skilled in emergency preparedness, operations, and disaster planning. Desirable candidates should also have new ideas for providing municipal fire prevention and suppression services for a growing community. The filing date for this position is Dec. 17, although the actual selection process has yet to be finalized.



PLAZA BUSINESS PARK GOES TO PLANNING COMMISSION: The Planning Commission is in the process of reviewing a 28 acre development proposal comprising offices, hotels and limited retail businesses along Plaza Drive at Crowley Avenue east of the Auto Mall in West Visalia. Their next meeting to discuss this development is scheduled for Feb. 14, at 7 p.m. in the City Council Chambers. They will be discussing issues of zoning conformance and General Plan consistency. The Planning Commission and City Council previously approved the 53,000 square foot two-story Fresno Pacific University as a part of the Plaza Business Park Project. The Plaza Business Park is being proposed by local developer Craig Mangano and designed by Canby Associates Architectural Inc.

CANDY CANE LANE PARADE COMES, GOES IN STYLE: When people gather in the dark of night 40,000 strong, problems seem to come with the setting. Not so with the 2007 Candy Cane Lane Parade, put on Nov. 26 by the Downtown Visalians and Alliance.



Some call it progress, others a sign of stepped up suppression efforts making a difference in minimizing conflict. Maybe it was the time involved before, during and after the event. Here is a sampling of city staff hours:

- **Before:** Public Works used 104 man hours installing the familiar Candy Canes, holiday wreaths complete with candles and garland over Main Street and side streets and an estimated 20 additional hours for the electrician to test all the light bulbs.
- **During:** 291 hours of coverage during the Parade by 44 Visalia police officers and 53 volunteers, including Reserves, VIPs and Explorers.
- **After:** In the aftermath, Public Works and Parks and Recreation staff put about 45 man hours into the clean-up and trash haul-off which was accomplished overnight.

COUNCIL APPROVES VALLEY OAK GOLF COURSE RENOVATION: The City Council approved the use of revenues from the Valley Oaks Golf Course in renovations to irri-

gation and golf holes over the next two years. Actual amounts authorized were \$1.7 million for replacement of the course's irrigation system, and \$150,000 for greens repair. Net operating profit from the course for the fiscal year 2006-07 was its best at \$534,289, and this year's is up 40 percent to date over the previous year. Net profit since 2000 is \$1,700,698.

LOW-RIDER SQUAD CAR MAKES DEBUT: After drawing a mixture of laughter and applause at the Candy Cane Lane Parade, the Visalia Police Officers Association's new "low-rider" squad car made its official debut at a press conference on Dec. 4. Originally purchased by the Visalia Police Association, the 1993 Chevrolet Caprice comes complete with chrome wheels with black spokes, 14-inch whitewall tires, black and white upholstery, sound system, custom art and hydraulic shocks that cause the car to hop. The car was the brainchild of Agent Lance Brooks, who came up with the idea three years ago of using a low-rider squad as a way to reach out to admiring youths. The car was paid for through donations from the Police Activities League (\$1,000), businessman Roger Vogt (\$2,500) and Brock Robertson (\$500). The workmanship includes local artist Alberto Herrera's scene painted on the trunk, upholstery by Nico Santos, Pro-Hopper Co., in LA donated the hydraulics, and the stereo was courtesy of Gambio Saucedo of Visalia and the Life Car Club. Don't look for it cruising down Mooney Boulevard any time soon, Brooks said, adding the car will be used in parades, exhibitions, and car shows. It will either be trailered or receive a police escort to avoid any confusion with the real thing.



COMMISSION APPROVES PLANS FOR PARKS: At a special Parks and Recreation Commission meeting Dec. 4, plans for two parks and a replacement for the playground at Recreation Park were approved. The new neighborhood parks are at an as-yet-unnamed 5-acre park at Prospect Avenue and Linwood Street near Oak Grove School and the three-acre Sorooptimist Park at County Center Drive and Visalia Parkway, adjacent to Cottonwood Elementary School. The playground at Recreation Park will have equipment installed that can be used by children with disabilities.

DEVELOPER EYES CALDWELL AVENUE: Site plan discussions begin today with a Pasadena developer who plans to build a 82,500-square-foot shopping center at the intersection of West Caldwell Avenue and Court Street. The center is to include a specialty market, a major drug store, retail restaurant and office space. Plans call for it to be anchored with a 13,000-square-foot specialty market and a drug store. Economic Development staff will be pursuing restaurants currently not in this market area.