

## Every Neighborhood Needs One

“Neighborhood Speak”-----by Steve Patterson—Federation of SR Neighborhoods

Every Neighborhood should have an individual who is passionate about its needs, possesses the institutional memory and keeps its neighborhood association on track and on mission. Not every neighborhood has this person, but one that does is Gerstle Park. Hugo Landecker was one of the founding members of the Gerstle Park Neighborhood Association back in the 1970's. He has gone on and off the Board of Directors over the years, but he has never gone away. He works tirelessly on behalf of the neighborhood, never seeking out recognition, only recognizing what needs to be done and doing it.

Hugo stays in tune with, as well as intelligently informed about, neighborhood development and land use issues while doing so with the blessing of the Gerstle Park Neighborhood Assoc. He oversees the annual Neighborhood picnic, historical preservation, recent history walks with the Marin Historical Museum, as well as investing in “coaching” new neighborhood people who want to get involved and contribute in the Gerstle Park Neighborhood. Hugo is always the person who goes to Design Review Board meetings, Planning Commission meetings or City Council meetings when Gerstle Park representation is required and a speaker must stand up and be heard. He is also the representative for Gerstle Park on the Steering Committee of the Federation of SR Neighborhoods.

One of Hugo's real passions for the last 20 years has been the French Broom removal in the open space areas, particularly in the space above Gerstle Park. This area can be hazardous beyond just poison oak. A number of years ago Hugo stumbled upon a homeless encampment and was beat up and hospitalized. Now he uses that experience and rarely works alone, but organizes work groups for Saturday events. He also coordinates this with the City of San Rafael Volunteer Coordinator and the SRPD Open Space Officer.

Just recently, Hugo organized a 25 person work crew to pull broom, till soil and plant bulbs and mature plants. The focus of this work crew was on an unimproved city right-of-way that forms a major gateway into San Rafael. It is a sliver of property on upper D St next to Wolfe Avenue that you see whenever you go up/down Wolfe Grade. The city had essentially abandoned all maintenance of this strip of land and it was overgrown with weeds, French broom and other non-native vegetation. Hugo saw an opportunity to beautify and add value to a major entrance to the City that no one cared about, but that many people see. The clear eyed Hugo really saw the potential and the opportunity to do something impactful, once again. In this effort, Hugo never looked for any acknowledgement or recognition as he proceeded in his unselfish manner and actively recruited the neighborhood people who showed up to help out (SEE picture). This coming spring the visual value of Hugo's organizational effort will be evident for all to enjoy. Neighborhoods need more Hugo Landeckers.

When there is so, so much negative news that the media spins out to their readerships, genuine positive efforts are often overlooked and often even neighbors are too busy to notice what is happening around them.

'Tis the season. Happy Holidays!

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