

# Healdsburg Happenings

By Mike McGuire

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## Our Kids, Our Schools

The Healdsburg Boys and Girls Club hosted their first annual Youth of the Year Awards this past week. Local families turned out to support more than a dozen Club Members who were honored for their excellence in leadership, art and academics. The Club has been going through an incredible transformation over the last couple of years; it is really exciting to see a growing student population joining the Club along with a new set of parents who are becoming involved in this wonderful community institution.

The budget situation is difficult all throughout the County, and Healdsburg schools are feeling tremendous pain since the State has cut \$18 billion from public education over the past 24 months. As a former school board member, I find it extremely frustrating that our schools consistently seem to be on the losing end of Sacramento's budget priority list. The Healdsburg Unified School District is facing a \$2.3 million dollar short fall this coming year and the Board is beginning to consider potential reductions (these are difficult decisions for all involved). Cuts being considered include the summer school program, adult education, instructional days and numerous teaching and administrative positions. It's time we all start to speak up to ensure our local public schools have the tools and the funding they need to thrive.

## Expanded Community Gardens Take Bloom

Thanks to the generosity of the Healdsburg community, we have raised enough funding to expand our community gardens (over \$16,000 has been brought in over the last several weeks). Healdsburg's first community gardens were planted 3 decades ago and the demand continues to grow. I have been proud to co-chair the expansion efforts of our gardens and we will be breaking ground on the new plots, located on the Healdsburg Community Center campus, in the next 4 weeks!

## Festivals, Fairs & Fun

It's been another busy month of delicious crab feeds for good causes including those hosted by the Russian River Rotary Club and the Sonoma County Democratic Party. The Cloverdale Citrus Fair and Parade was a great success, as was the Wild Steelhead Festival in Healdsburg. I'm looking forward to participating in these again next year.

## Congratulations to Cloverdale

Kudos to the Cloverdale City Council and Mayor Carol Russell as they prepare to adopt a new city plan, centered around the planned return of rail service and development of a "greenway." The only way to revitalize our cities is to focus on transit-centered development, affordable housing and open space development.

## Happenings in Healdsburg

Healdsburg is one of the few towns with two parades a year. Most people know about our FFA Twilight parade in May. Our lesser known parade happens on St. Patrick's Day, with a vibrant crew leading an early morning parade from the B & B Lounge to the Downtown Plaza and back, with a stop for an incredible version of "Oh Danny Boy," complete with bagpipes! Truly one day where everyone can be Irish (and by the way, the green beer starts flowing several hours before the parade kicks off).

We are heading into the season of wine events, but the Pigs and Pinot Festival on **March 19 and 20<sup>th</sup>** at the Hotel Healdsburg is special, with proceeds going to Healdsburg Schools. The money is also used for the Share Our Strength Charity, whose goal is to end child hunger in America. We are lucky that our county is ahead of the curve, with its Safe Routes to School, and Healthy Students, and Healthy Kids initiatives.

Finally, that same weekend through Sunday, **March 21**, Healdsburg will be having a Downtown Sidewalk sale. The plaza is always a great place to come and relax and soak up some local charm – so come support our local merchants, and get great deals.

# Spirit of Santa Rosa

By Nina Tepedino

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## The Politics of Spring

In the neighborhoods of Santa Rosa, there are signs of winter's departure. As I write the acacia is ready to pop, the tulip magnolias are bursting forth and the lilacs even have buds. So many signs and sights to report. The spirit of Spring is knocking at our consciousness....opening our hearts. There are sounds of sadness, too, in the Santa Rosa environs....sadness about no Spring sports programs, librarians and libraries cut, the medical marijuana dispensary voted down, the SMART rail route still being deliberated (hopefully in our favor!) and the rumblings about a new courthouse site in the downtown area.

All this does not calm the human spirit. These are not new sprouts of progress. Where are our priorities? Are our passions so misled, that we can challenge the spirit of our people....our children? How can we let economics do this? The budgets rule our quality of life. Our politicians and local boards need to create some novel and effective ways to replenish the accounts, don't you think? I would like to thank **Schools Plus** for their continued commitment to our schools.

## How Green is Our Valley?

Well, according to the Gallup-Healthways Well-Being Index, we seem to be the Chosen Spot ( a term used by Luther Burbank and just this past week in our local PD editorial, too) This indeed is a happy gift. To be listed as number 5 and one of the healthiest areas to live in the state of California and to be so high on a national list, is welcome news. I am very happy about where I live, too. I did know why and now it is official. So, lets enjoy being happy and healthy. It will give us the energy to do good works and make the right decisions. By the way, I need to thank the Press Democrat for doing a fine job of reporting our local news. It comes to my apartment door every morning and certainly inspires my own reporting.

## Events to Celebrate

Our local Santa Rosa electric car company, ZAP, has won a contract to build an experimental battery-powered mail van for the US Postal Service. Hurray!

Try to include the **Year of the Tiger** in your festivities in the coming weeks too. **St. Patrick's Day** is coming and if you wear your green, a lepracaun will do a dance, the best you've ever seen!! If you have Irish roots and have always wanted to know the Gaelic language of Ireland, there is a teacher named Kathleen here in SR. You can find out more by calling 526-0177.

Try to take those walks along the valley's streams, which have come alive again and don't give up saving and improving our wonderful parks. Right? Try not to forget our Fair Trade Stores and to support our local banks and Credit Unions, too.

We need to celebrate the news about Food Stamps being accepted at our Farmer's Markets. Yes! A very important development for our struggling young families who are really beginning to change eating habits and live healthier lives!

**Parking Meters** If you are not an avid walker, like I am, and you need to have a car to take advantage of all the events and sites that I recommend, you will be happy to know that some changes are a foot!! The City of Santa Rosa is holding a series of meetings to seek input on parking policy in SR, including ways that parking policies can be improved. The next meeting is Mar 10 at 10:30 AM to noon in the Central Library, 3rd and E Sts, SR where parking your car can be tricky, Bring your ideas.

**Look Up!** A Reminder.....don't forget the Santa Rosa Junior College Planetarium. The current and new show, "Mars to Saturn, Cancer to Virgo" is at 7 and 8:30 pm from Feb 26 to March 28 at 1501 Mendocino Ave.

**In Memoriam** - Howard Zinn (1922-2010) "Join a peace organization!", he said, just two months ago in a speech at Boston U. His activist voice will be very missed. You can join our very own **Peace and Justice Center** here in SR on Sebastopol Ave., as an action in his memory. The center is celebrating its 25th year.

As you till the soil and choose your plants, may the PEACE illuminate your hearts.