

Bell Gardens FALL 2016 Today

**TECHNOLOGY
MAKES BELL
GARDENS A
REAL HUB OF
PROGRESS**

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Everything you need for FALL- Complete recreation program information inside.

MESSAGE FROM YOUR CITY MANAGER

Over the last five years, the City of Bell Gardens has seen many changes and faced several challenges – and has emerged stronger and more efficient than ever. With prudent budgeting and the infusion of more than \$11 million in grants, your City has made steady progress towards financial stability, increasing economic development and improving public safety.

I continue to be inspired and impressed by the enthusiasm and professionalism of each and every employee for their willingness to do more with less and the City Council for their ability to make tough decisions to balance each budget.

The City's revenue stream is largely influenced by overall economic conditions, and despite the positive steps we have made in recovering from the "Great Recession," we still face some very critical fiscal challenges that come with the increasing costs of running a local city government.

On the positive side, the most recent fiscal year which ended June 30, 2016, included a projected surplus of over \$1 million even after directing \$200,000 into the Reserve Fund, now totaling \$2.5 million. This is a result of our commitment to a system of checks-and-balances anchored in transparency and accountability.



Our organization faced many obstacles in the past few years, but thanks to the leadership, dedication and talent of everyone involved, we have successfully provided outstanding public service in an efficient, resourceful, responsive, and cost-effective manner. I am very grateful for the exemplary work of our team, and it has been an honor to serve with them and as your City Manager.

I hope you enjoy this edition of Bell Gardens Today with news about technology, new street signs, Teen Court and Student Government Day, public safety projects and staff achievements. As always, your input is welcome on any City issues or concerns. Get in touch with City Hall at

www.bellgardens.org.

Philip Wagner

CITY MANAGER

SERVING OUR COMMUNITY

CARLOS RETIRES AFTER 29 YEARS WITH BGPD



In late June, after more than 29 years of service, Lt. Jose Carlos of the Bell Gardens Police Department retired. Joining the department in January 1987 at the age of 21, Carlos said that he was grateful for the opportunity he was given at such a young age.

"I've seen 30 graduations, 30 Cinco de Mayos," he recalled. "I've seen a bunch of unbelievable changes."

Asked why he chose law enforcement, Carlos said he didn't

make it as a professional baseball player and has always been "somewhat of a Boy Scout, wanting to help little old ladies cross the street."

"I really believe in helping others," he said. "I can't believe I've been paid to do this job."



CITY OFFICIALS

Bell Gardens City Council

Pedro Aceituno, Mayor

Jose J. Mendoza, Mayor Pro Tem

Priscilla Flores, Councilmember

Maria Pulido, Councilmember

Jennifer Rodriguez, Councilmember

Philip Wagner, City Manager

John Oropeza, Assistant City Manager

The public is welcome at all City meetings, which are held in the Council Chambers at City Hall, 7100 Garfield Avenue, Bell Gardens:

CITY COUNCIL

2nd and 4th Monday of the month at 6 p.m.

Notice of Special City Council Meetings will be posted at City Hall and City facilities.

EDUCATION COMMISSION

2nd Thursday of the month at 5 p.m.

PLANNING COMMISSION

3rd Wednesday of the month at 6 p.m.

RECREATION, CULTURAL AND YOUTH COMMISSION

3rd Thursday of the month at 6 p.m.

SENIOR CITIZEN COMMISSION

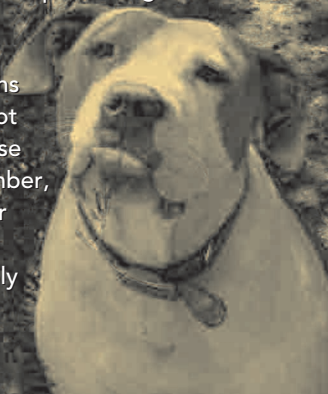
2nd Wednesday of the month at 6 p.m.

TRAFFIC AND SAFETY COMMISSION

1st Tuesday of the month at 5:30 p.m.

GOT A PUP? DON'T FORGET TO CLEAN UP!

The City of Bell Gardens wants to remind dog owners that they are required to secure their dogs on a leash and remove their dog's waste from public sidewalks, parks, or any other public property. Cleaning up after their dogs is part of being a responsible pet owner and is an important part of protecting the health, safety, and general welfare of our community. Citations may be given for not complying with these regulations. Remember, be a good neighbor and clean up after your pets or possibly face a fine.



On the Cover:

Technology makes Bell Gardens a real Hub of Progress

NEW SIGNS BRIGHTEN TRAFFIC CORRIDORS

Intersections in Bell Gardens have a new look, thanks to a series of new, illuminated street signs that were installed recently. The bright blue signs, which bear the Bell Gardens city seal and the name of the street, are part of the City's Capital Improvement Program.

Thirty-seven intersections were upgraded, for a total of 127 street signs installed. The signs feature state-of-the-art LED technology, making them brighter and more energy efficient.

PTM General Engineering Services was awarded the contract in August 2015 and completed the project in April 2016. Measure R funding allocated to the City helped to cover the project's total cost of \$398,732. Measure R funding is a half-cent sales tax for Los Angeles County, which was voter approved in November 2008, to finance transportation related projects and programs.



Bell Gardens Today is published quarterly by the City of Bell Gardens to provide information to the community about the City's programs, services and activities.

Visit us at www.bellgardens.org for updated city information.

Go to www.bgrecreation.org for recreation programs and events. Follow us on Facebook and Instagram.

TECHNOLOGY MAKES BELL GARDENS A REAL HUB OF PROGRESS

Being on the cutting edge of technology, especially in communication, is a priority for the City. Over the last few years, the City Council and staff have made changes to improve the public's ability to interact with staff, made great strides in public safety and saved the taxpayers a significant amount of money.



amount the City would save by making the change. At the time of the conversion, the cost for city phone service was \$27,000 a month – a cost that was immediately cut by \$7,000 a month. In the first five years, the City saved \$420,000 and with the system now in its third generation, the savings continue to grow. Monthly costs for the system are now down to less than \$15,000.

Traditionally, cities and large companies use an analog system, which requires purchasing a data line and phone line for each user. The City Council action allowed the City to replace the entire system, which involved detailed logistics and took four months, but resulted in a centralized system with 400 voice and data line drops at seven facilities (City Hall, Police Department, Senior Center, Neighborhood Youth Center, Veteran's Park, Ford Park and Public Works) that provides efficient and exemplary service to anyone interacting with the City.

One of the first changes was made in the way the City communicates. In 2007, after researching the possibilities for increased efficiency, security and cost savings, the City changed over to a VOIP (Voice Over Internet Protocol) system, becoming the first city in California to do so.

"We were the first government agency in the state to go with VOIP," said Nick Razo, Senior Management Analyst and manager of the city's information systems. "A lot of cities heard about it, but didn't move forward because they didn't know enough about the technology. We spent some time educating City staff and the Council and they approved it."

The biggest selling point for the VOIP – which not only includes communication such as phone calls and faxes, but also information and data, such as emails and document management – was the

amount the City would save by making the change. At the time of the conversion, the cost for city phone service was \$27,000 a month – a cost that was immediately cut by \$7,000 a month. In the first five years, the City saved \$420,000 and with the system now in its third generation, the savings continue to grow. Monthly costs for the system are now down to less than \$15,000.

The staff at City Hall is also working on streamlining document availability and processing. An important first step was putting the Bell Gardens Municipal Code online at www.bellgardens.org, allowing anyone access to the regulations and procedures governing the City.



Technology has provided the Bell Gardens Police Department with additional tools that have created greater efficiency in different areas of their operations. Administratively, new hardware and software have helped to better record, analyze and report on things such as scheduling. In terms of field operations, new technology such as mobile and portable radios have prepared them to better communicate both among their own units as well as other police agencies by creating greater reliability, which translates to improved officer safety.

By reducing the steps required to gather information or find a solution to a particular problem, technology has made the BGDPD more efficient. Department officials have seen an increase in the number of persons accessing information, mostly through social media platforms; residents are becoming more comfortable reporting crime and it is creating greater support of the Bell Gardens Police Department mission.

“Our goal is to provide as many online resources as possible and communicate as best we can what the police department is doing to improve safety and the quality of life in Bell Gardens,” said Bell Gardens Police Chief Robert Barnes.

Computer Aided Dispatch provides a record of all calls that are received or dispatched. Officers can be dispatched via their computer terminal in their police unit, benefiting from more efficient record keeping and enhanced officer safety by accessing information about locations, individuals and prior incidents.

Cameras are also part of the technological support provided to the Police Department, with locations in public places around City Hall and some City parks, giving the Police Department the ability to view in real time and record events, activities and potential crimes.

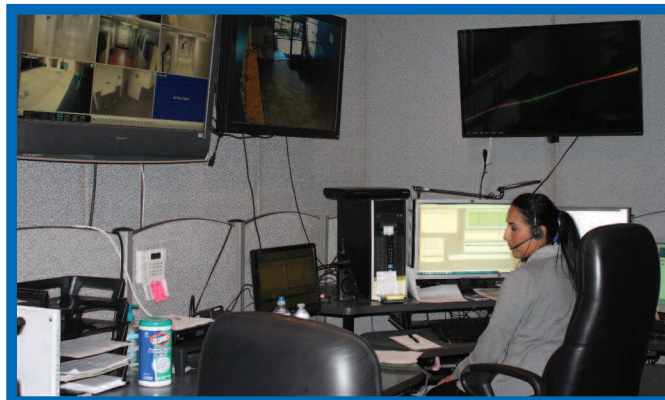
In addition, license plate reader cameras, in use on some police vehicles and in various stationary locations around the City, allows officers to determine if vehicles are stolen or have been used in a crime, or if the registered owner is wanted by any police agency. This program



helped bring about a 13 percent increase in stolen vehicle recoveries over the last year.

With these improved communication systems and an enhanced online presence on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram, change is still in motion. Enhanced interagency communications are being planned for the Bell Gardens Police Department.

Look for a new and improved City website coming in 2017. And never underestimate your City's ability to lead the way in providing state-of-the-art service to all its residents and visitors.





BGPD GOES PINK FOR BREAST CANCER AWARENESS

Residents of Bell Gardens will be seeing a lot of pink during the month of October, as the Bell Gardens Police Department joins 20 Southern California law enforcement agencies in the 2016 Pink Patch Project, a collaborative cancer awareness and fundraising effort in partnership with the Los Angeles County Police Chiefs' Association.

During October, uniformed personnel will wear pink patches on their uniforms to bring awareness and educate the public in early detection and prevention of breast cancer. The public is encouraged to participate in this fundraising effort and may purchase pink-trimmed collector patches for \$10 and

commemorative T-shirts for \$20 from the Bell Gardens Police Department, with profits going to The City of Hope in Duarte.



The campaign is designed to bring attention to the fight against breast cancer and help cancer research organizations and support groups in their efforts to combat the disease. Both men and women can be diagnosed with breast cancer and, while a diagnosis can have a profound impact on patients and their loved ones, it is also a disease that can be treated with surgery, radiation therapy, hormone therapy and chemotherapy.

To get a patch or T-shirt, visit the BCPD station at 7100 Garfield Avenue. For more information on the patch project, visit www.pinkpatchproject.com.

CITY STAFFERS RECEIVE DISASTER TRAINING

All full-time civilian employees of the City of Bell Gardens received disaster training during the first week of June. Conducted by Captain Scott Fairfield and Officer Armando Andrade of the Bell Gardens Police Department and Captain Matt Lavesque of the Los Angeles County Fire Department, the training focused on surviving an earthquake or an active shooter incident.

“Given the long-standing potential for earthquakes in

California and the number of incidents locally and nationally involving mass shootings, it is necessary to remind our employees how to appropriately respond to natural or man-made disasters and critical incidents,” said City Manager Philip Wagner.

Wagner added that the purpose of the classes was to mentally prepare employees how to effectively respond to

each situation, as well as provide them with information on their roles and responsibilities in the workplace during such incidents, whether they occurred during or after work hours.



BELL GARDENS HOMES SAFER THANKS TO RED CROSS AND VOLUNTEER HELP

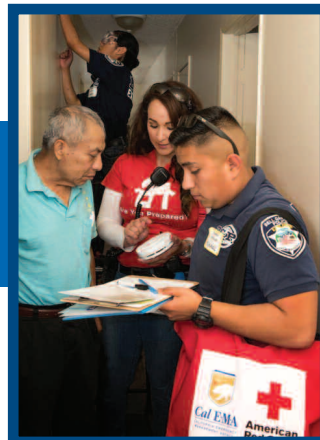
Recently, 128 volunteers from the Bell Gardens Police Department, the American Red Cross, State Farm Insurance and the community visited more than 200 Bell Gardens homes to install free smoke alarms. Five hundred and sixty-nine alarms were installed – more than twice the number installed in a similar fire prevention event last summer. In addition, 96 alarms were handed out by volunteers for self-installation.

The event was part of a nationwide disaster preparedness effort sponsored by the American Red Cross, which has a goal of reducing injuries and deaths from home fires by 25 percent in the next five years. Along with the smoke detectors, residents also received information on

reducing home fire fatalities and injuries, and making family emergency plans.

The volunteers broke up into 36 teams, many of them bilingual, and visited 210 homes within the Bell Gardens city limits. Overall, 973 people received information about being prepared in case of disasters such as fire, earthquake and flooding.

After their hard day's work, the Bicycle Hotel and Casino provided lunch for the volunteers. Edison International also provided support for the campaign.



BGPD HONORS EMPLOYEES OF THE YEAR



The Bell Gardens Police Department recently held a ceremony in the courtyard of City Hall to honor some outstanding employees for their service in 2015. Three individuals were singled out as the best in their field, selected by a vote of department and command staff.

Sgt. Paul Camacho was named Supervisor of the Year. He is a detective who oversees the Special Investigation Unit that focuses on gang and narcotics enforcement; Officer Ruben Catani, who is assigned to patrol, was named Officer of the Year and Records Clerk Elizabeth Gutierrez was named Civilian Employee of the Year.

Chief Robert Barnes said that the trio were recognized for their positive attitude, commitment to the department's core values and work ethic. Congratulations to the honorees!

OFFICERS COMPLETE LEADERSHIP TRAINING



Bell Gardens Police Chief Robert Barnes and Lt. Brendan Kirkpatrick attended the graduation of Bell Gardens Police Officers Miguel Torres and David Torres from the Deputy Leadership Institute. The Institute is a groundbreaking leadership development program created by the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department and designed to enhance the officers' ability to be leaders in the communities they are entrusted to protect. Over the last four years, 10 officers from the Bell Gardens Police Department have completed this training. Congratulations to Officers Torres and Torres for their accomplishment!

FREE SUPPER & SNACK PROGRAM BOOSTS HEALTH BENEFITS

Thanks to the charitable foundation Empowered 4 Life, nearly 100 children in Bell Gardens receive nutritious and free supper and snacks at two park locations on weekday afternoons.

Children up to the age of 17 are welcome to receive the well-balanced meals, which are served at the Neighborhood Youth Center at 5856 Ludell Street (supper between 3 to 4 p.m., snack at 6 p.m.) and at Veterans Park at 6662 Loveland Street (supper between 2:30 and 3:30 p.m., snack at 5:30 p.m.).



Empowered 4 Life provides the meals, which include eight ounces of milk, three ounces of fresh fruit and vegetables, four ounces of grains and two ounces of cooked meat. Their efforts are an attempt to reverse the impacts of malnutrition and homelessness in the area. Recreation staff note that the children's activity levels are higher, which directly influences their overall health.

"Staff has noticed an increase in their energy, they are more eager to participate in games and activities," said Ana Avalos Ramirez, Recreation and Community Services Supervisor.

For more information about the Free Supper and Snack program, contact Ramirez at (562) 806-7654 or email anaavalos@bellgardens.org.

TEEN COURT CHANGING LIVES FOR THE BETTER IN BELL GARDENS

Teen Court, a diversion program created by the Los Angeles County Superior Court to give youthful offenders a second chance, is paying off in a positive way for Bell Gardens. Now in its third year, this year's program involved more than 30 students who got unique exposure to career possibilities, hands-on experience running a courtroom and doling out justice to their peers, all the while earning academic credits.

Bell Gardens High School activities director and Teen Court advisor William Renner said that several students have been inspired to learn more about court-based careers such as law, interpreting, social work, court reporting and law enforcement because of their experience with Teen Court.

In 2014, Renner took his students to Santa Fe High School in Santa Fe Springs to see their program in action and everyone came back enthused about starting one in Bell Gardens. Now, every month, one or two defendants between the ages of 11 and 17 come before the Bell Gardens Teen Court and plead their cases. The Bell

Gardens City Council Chambers in City Hall provides the courtroom setting.

According to the Superior Court, the program, which is in practice in 24 schools and districts in Los Angeles County, is designed to intervene in the lives of youthful offenders at the first opportunity, when they commit low-level offenses, to discourage them from moving on to more serious crime. Offenders can be found not guilty or be convicted; those found guilty receive punishment chosen by the Teen Court participants which can include writing a letter of apology, community service, keeping grades up or attending therapy.



HIGH SCHOOL SENIORS GET HANDS-ON EXPERIENCE AT STUDENT GOVERNMENT DAY



One hundred and twenty high school students took over City Hall April 28 during the City of Bell Gardens' annual Student Government Day. The seniors from Bell Gardens High School were welcomed by City Council members as they assembled in the Council Chambers.

KILFIT Athletics owner/trainer and former NFL linebacker K.C. Asiodu gave a motivational presentation before the students were given an opportunity to tour various city departments and facilities, some of them shadowing specific staff members while others worked on group projects within the larger City departments. More than 70 staff members mentored the students, sharing information about jobs and departmental activities and responsibilities.



Along with the time spent with their mentors, the students also participated in a mock City Council meeting. Class of 2016 City Council Members on the dais included Student Mayor Destiny Leon, Student Mayor Pro Tem Damaris Llamas Bencomo and Student City Council Members Melissa Cortez, Leslie Luqueno and Maira Zaragoza.



The day wrapped up with a luncheon hosted by the Bicycle Hotel and Casino, with keynote speaker Ted Iskenderian from Jet Propulsion Laboratory, who encouraged students to "reach for the stars"; he also commended City personnel for being good servants in the community. The event concluded with a challenge from the Mayor Pro Tem for the students to be active in their communities and to take on new endeavors with eagerness and enthusiasm.

The program, which is coordinated by the Bell Gardens Recreation Department, is a cooperative effort of the City of Bell Gardens, Bell Gardens High School and the Bicycle Hotel and Casino and has been giving high school seniors insights into local government for more than 40 years.

