

Bell ^{WINTER} 2016 Gardens Today

**SEAACA'S
ANIMAL
INSTINCTS
SERVE BELL
GARDENS
WELL**

IN THIS ISSUE

- **SAVING LIGHTS AND MONEY**
- **MOSQUITO CONTROL**
- **LIFESAVING AED PROGRAM**
- **NEW MOTORCYCLE ADDED TO TRAFFIC TASK FORCE**
- **"SNAGIT" SOFTWARE HELPS LAW ENFORCEMENT**
- **KEEPING BELL GARDENS BEAUTIFUL**



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

MESSAGE FROM YOUR CITY MANAGER

At the City of Bell Gardens, we are always watching out for our community's health and welfare and this issue contains some helpful information to keep us well both physically and fiscally.

In case of emergency, more than 50 City employees have been trained in CPR and the use of life-saving AEDs (automatic external defibrillators) at City Hall and other City facilities. Bell Gardens was one of the first cities in Southern California to implement this public safety program more than 10 years ago. You'll also find some simple tips for deterring the threat of disease-bearing mosquitoes around the home and garden as well as links to more information from Public Health officials.

We're extremely proud of the City's Finance Department, recognized for the fifth consecutive year for excellence in reporting by the Government Finance Officers of the US and Canada. It's a testament to their professionalism and dedication to full transparency that ensures Bell Gardens is doing its best for all of our residents.

There's been a lot of growth and change at the Police Department; motorcycle patrols have doubled, and officers are once again part of a multi-agency traffic safety enforcement detail that makes our streets safer.

In this issue, we are also launching a "Did You Know?" feature that will highlight the origins of some of our local landmarks. We begin with Julia Asmus Park, which honors



a longtime community volunteer. Also, check out the new website of the Bell Gardens Golf Course, which highlights recent renovations and improvements and offers golfers more online services.

Bell Gardens is also home to thousands of pets, with the South East Area Animal Care Authority providing many services to make sure they are healthy and happy. Learn more about SEAACA's service to pets and their owners in our cover story.

Finally, the City Council has been working to update ordinances related to landscaping (especially with drought restrictions) and regulating massage establishments within the City limits, both important issues to Bell Gardens' quality of life. As always, your input is welcome on any City issue or concern. Get in touch with City Hall at www.bellgardens.org.

Philip Wagner

CITY MANAGER

SERVING OUR COMMUNITY

SAVING LIGHTS AND MONEY IS A BRIGHT IDEA

City staff has started replacing halide lights in City parking lots and park areas with LEDs (64 have been replaced so far). Not only do the lights burn brighter and more efficiently they also save money, as the cost for the new installations is about 30 percent less. As halide lights burn out, they will be replaced with LEDs.

Safety lights are the light fixtures mounted on top of the traffic signals at City intersections. There are four lights at each intersection for a total of 148 light fixtures Citywide. Six intersections have been updated to LEDs to date. LED fixtures are much more cost effective; high pressure sodium lights currently in use cost \$200 per fixture and last about one year, while LED replacements are \$250 with an expected life of 10 years. The City plans to replace seven intersections with the energy- and cost-saving LEDs every year.



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.

NEW WEBSITE TAKES GOLFERS TO THE LINK(S)

The recently-renovated Bell Gardens Golf Course has launched a redesigned website to highlight the best of the course and make the grounds and facility more accessible to all. The course has been called "a hidden gem of the Los Angeles golf community" known for the high quality of events and tournaments hosted there.

On the new site, www.bellgardensgolf.com, you can reserve tee times, search for tee time specials, book golf lessons, learn about the course features and see pictures of the grounds. You can also get a free round of golf by registering online. The remodeled banquet/meeting hall can also be reserved for weddings, business meetings, quinceañeras and private parties.



On the Cover:

SEAACA'S animal instincts serve Bell Gardens well

FINANCE DEPARTMENT AWARDED FOR TRANSPARENCY AND ACCOUNTABILITY

Kudos came from a high place for the City of Bell Gardens' Finance Department this summer, with the presentation of the Certificate of Achievement for Excellence in Financial Reporting for its annual financial report. The recognition came from the Government Finance Officers Association, which reviews more than 17,000 government finance professionals annually.

This is the fifth consecutive year that Bell Gardens has received the award. The Certificate of Achievement is the highest form of recognition in the area of governmental accounting and financial reporting.



"This award is the culmination of the department's hard work," said Will Kaholokula, Director of Finance and Administrative Services for the City of Bell Gardens. "It forces us to research and prepare additional schedules such as management discussion and analysis. Our department employees work very hard in a spirit of full disclosure and transparency, making sure that they process information accurately and provide accountability."

Kaholokula said that the challenge of receiving the award means that the City has the opportunity to continually grow and improve.

"We're not moving backwards," he explained. "We continue to improve with the feedback we receive from this group. The continuity within our financial staff and their dedication to growth ensures that we improve a little each day."



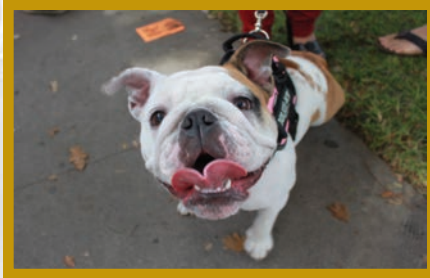
Bell Gardens Today is published quarterly by the City of Bell Gardens to provide information to the community about the City's programs, services and activities.

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.

SEAACA'S ANIMAL INSTINCTS SERVE BELL GARDENS WELL

Got a furry family member that needs a license? Or lost a treasured pet? How about finding the perfect companion for walks and trips to the park for exercise? SEAACA



– the Southeast Area Animal Control Authority – is ready to help with all of the above and more.

In 1984, Bell Gardens became part of a joint powers authority that empowers SEAACA to provide animal control services to more than 900,000 residents in 14 cities, including Bellflower, Buena Park, Downey, Lakewood, La Palma, Montebello, Norwalk, Paramount, Pico Rivera, Santa Fe Springs, South El Monte, South Gate and Vernon. Under this authority, SEAACA operates their Care Center in Downey, which has the capacity to shelter 400 animals at once.



the City of Bell Gardens and involved personnel from the Bell Gardens Police Department and the Recreation and Community Services Department.

They have jurisdiction to enforce animal care and control laws and investigate cases of animal abuse and neglect, sometimes removing animals from dangerous situations as well as rescuing abandoned, sick or injured animals. They respond to vicious animal concerns and

animal bite reports. SEAACA staff emphasize that people should accept pets are members of the family and that animals of all kinds should be treated with respect, care and compassion.

In addition, SEAACA provides educational information on area wildlife, such as snakes, raccoons, squirrels, possums, coyotes and bats. For more information,

visit their website at www.seaca.org or call (562) 803-3301.



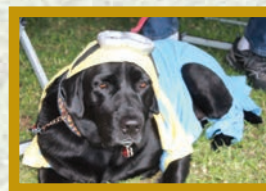
Neither the City nor SEAACA traps wildlife; residents are responsible for contracting (and paying for) professional animal trappers for nuisance wildlife.

SEAACA is dedicated to ensuring animal welfare from a pet owner's perspective, promoting responsible pet ownership; providing compassionate sheltering for found animals, including veterinary services for Care Center animals and low-cost vaccinations, spay and neuter and ID chip services for all

animals in the region and responding to public safety issues involving animals in the community.



They do their best to reunite lost pets with their owners and are advocates for community adoption events, such as the recent Bell Gardens Dog and Cat Adoption Day, which was held on October 16 at Veterans Park. The first-time event was sponsored by



MOSQUITO CONTROL KEY TO GOOD HEALTH

Residents of Bell Gardens might notice an increased amount of mosquitoes in the area and should be aware that they could carry diseases, some of them life-threatening. Mosquitoes lay their eggs along the waterline of any water-holding container, both indoors and outdoors.

While West Nile Virus can only be transmitted to humans via mosquito bite, wild birds are commonly infected with the virus. If you find a dead bird, do not touch it, call Vector Control at (877) 968-2473 or visit www.westnile.ca.gov.

There are several preventive measures you can take around your homes:

- Remove or drill holes in the bottom of all plant pots, saucers, barrels, bins and tires
- Use screens on windows and doors
- Change the water in birdbaths and fountains weekly
- Cover trash cans, toys, rain barrels and recycling bins
- Shake out tarps or coverings
- Clear roof, rain and street gutters regularly
- Filter, clean and chlorinate pools and spas

- Report any abandoned pools, hot tubs or fish ponds to Vector Control



- Stock ornamental ponds, fountains and water

gardens with mosquitofish and remove excess vegetation

- Repair broken or leaking faucets and watering equipment

- Wear insect repellent containing DEET, Picaridin, IR 3535 or oil of lemon eucalyptus

- Wear loose fitting long pants and long sleeved shirts when outdoors

The Greater Los Angeles County Vector Control District is governed by a Board of Directors, which includes a member of the Bell Gardens City Council.

For free assistance or to report mosquito problems call (562) 944-9656 or visit www.ReportMosquitoes.org.

SPECIAL PASSPORT DAY SCHEDULED SATURDAY, DECEMBER 3 AT CITY HALL

The City of Bell Gardens is holding a special Saturday Passport Day on December 3, from 8 a.m. to 2 p.m. at City Hall.

Passport fees for individuals under 16 years of age are \$80 for the passport book and \$15 for the passport card; fees for individuals age 16 and over are \$110 for the passport book and \$30 for the passport card.



All fees are payable to the U.S. Department of State by check or money order. A \$25.00 execution fee is payable to the City of Bell Gardens by cash, check or money order.

To apply for a U.S. Passport, you must bring the following:

- One recent Passport Photo (2x2)
- Valid proof of identification (applicant or parent of minor)
- Completed application for a passport (use black ink only)
- Evidence of U.S. citizenship (Certificate of Citizenship or certified copy of birth certificate)
- Passport fee in the form of check or money order
- \$25 execution fee, payable to City of Bell Gardens

All forms are available at the City of Bell Gardens City Clerk's office or can be downloaded online from:

<http://travel.state.gov/content/passports/en/passports/forms.html>

Additional information is available on the website, or you may call the Department of State at (877) 487-2778 or the City of Bell Gardens City Clerk's office at (562) 806-7706.

Appointments are required for this event; call (562) 806-7706 to make an appointment.

LIFESAVING AED PROGRAM GOING INTO SECOND DECADE

Looking after the public’s safety and well-being has always been a priority of Bell Gardens. That’s why the City was one of the first in Los Angeles County to install AEDs – Automatic External Defibrillators – in several civic buildings and police patrol vehicles, back in 2005.

Fast forward to today, when nine of the life-saving devices are available – three in City Hall, and one each at the Police Department, Senior Complex, Veterans Park, Public Works Department, Ford Park and the Golf Course as well as three police patrol vehicles with their own AEDs. More than 50 employees at City Hall and all sworn personnel at the Police Department have been trained in cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) and defibrillator use.

Why is this important? An AED is a portable device that automatically diagnoses a life-threatening cardiac rhythm and can provide electrical therapy to allow the heart to reestablish a normal beat. An electronic voice prompts users through each step, including where to

place the pads and ensure everyone’s safety. If the AED determines that no defibrillation is needed, there are safeguards to prevent any accidental shocking. They are simple to use and, in an emergency, every minute counts. The sooner a patient receives CPR and defibrillation, the better their chance of survival with minimal after-effects.

According to Senior Management Analyst Nick Razo, who established the AED program for the City, training for both City Hall staff and the Police Department is provided on a regular basis to ensure that the latest techniques are used.

To learn more about CPR and take a class in your neighborhood, contact the American Red Cross or the American Heart Association.



OFFICER VICTORIA VALDEZ RETIRES AFTER 26 YEARS OF SERVICE

After more than a quarter-century with the Bell Gardens Police Department, where she started as a records clerk and left as a patrol officer, Victoria Valdez has retired. Valdez started working in the station in 1990, and quickly observed that by becoming a sworn officer, she could prove that if you put your mind to something, you could achieve it. Driven by a desire to make a difference in her community and serve as a role model for young people, she became a sworn officer in 1996 and worked on several youth programs, including being an advisor to the Explorers,

working with the DARE (Drug Abuse Resistance Education) program, and teaching in the Juveniles At Risk program. During her career, Valdez also worked as a Detective in the General Investigations Unit. Among other things, she worked with detectives on sting operations to combat prostitution and auto theft in the City of Bell Gardens.

“My favorite part of this job was mentoring youth and letting them know they could go wherever they wanted in life and do what they wanted to do,” she said. “I wanted them to see what I became, despite the challenges in my life, and give



them hope.” Now that she’s retired, she looks forward to spending more time as a volunteer with Ghetto Rescue Foundation (GRF), which rescues dogs in the Los Angeles area and finds them families.

NEW MOTORCYCLES ADDED TO TRAFFIC TASK FORCE



The City Council recently approved the purchase of a 2015 BMW motorcycle for the traffic enforcement unit that was reinstated by the Bell Gardens Police Department in March. The department already has a 2012 BMW motorcycle and two officers have been assigned to that unit. Officer Esteban Perez and Officer Robert Lopez will focus enforcement on problem areas around school zones, pedestrian safety, traffic violations at problem intersections, drunk driving, and reducing the number of injury and hit and run traffic collisions.

The City also received a grant from the California Office of Traffic Safety in the amount of \$70,000 to assist with education and selective enforcement of these violations. The grant also funds participation in

a multiagency Traffic Task Force, which is an extension of the Police Department's existing traffic program.

As part of the selective enforcement of the violations mentioned above, the Task Force deploys monthly in one of the involved coalition cities; Bell Gardens, Bell, Huntington Park, South Gate and Vernon, to address that city's specific traffic issues. Currently, there are 8 to 12 motor officers on any given deployment. Bell Gardens Police Chief Robert Barnes said that there are plans for the California Highway Patrol to join the task force for various future deployments.

AROUND THE STATION

BELL GARDENS POLICE PROMOTES TWO OFFICERS

Lt. Dennis Timmons and Sgt. Rigoberto Barrios were recently promoted. Both have been assigned to the Field Services Unit.

Sgt. Barrios started with the department in August, 2003 as a Police Officer. He was assigned as both a General Investigation Unit Detective and Special Investigation Unit Detective, served as a Field Training Officer and is part of the Police Department's Special Operations Team. He is also the past president of the Police Officers Association. Barrios is now assigned as a Patrol Sergeant.

Lt. Timmons started with the department in March, 1989 as a Police Officer and was later assigned as a Detective in the General Investigations Unit and as a Senior Officer on patrol. He was later promoted to Sergeant and worked as a Field Services Supervisor as well as supervisor for the General Investigations Unit before being promoted to Patrol Lieutenant. He is currently assigned to Field Services overseeing the patrol division and Neighborhood Watch Program.



NEW OFFICER JOINS FORCE

Bell Gardens Police recently welcomed Officer Erick Oertel, who comes to them from the Banning Police Department. During his eight years with Banning PD, he gained valuable experience from his many different assignments, most recently with their gang suppression team. Officer Oertel has successfully concluded his field training and is currently serving the residents of Bell Gardens on patrol in the Field Services Unit.

"SNAGIT" SOFTWARE HELPS LAW ENFORCEMENT SHARE INFO IN REAL TIME

BGPD has a new tool in its crime-fighting kit in SnagIt, a new image-capturing software program. SnagIt will allow officers to capture anything on their computer screens and use that image for criminal and non-criminal investigations.

"Our officers are constantly learning new technologies to help them on the job and we want to make sure they

have the best tools to assist with investigations and to serve the public," said Lt. Brendan Kirkpatrick. "Officers will be able to 'grab' real-time information and get it out to the public."

This technology will be especially useful for missing persons and capturing images from videos where a crime has occurred. In the past, several pieces of software had to be used to do something that was supposed to be simple, and there was a large learning curve.



DID YOU KNOW?



Several parks in Bell Gardens are dedicated to groups and individuals who have made significant contributions to our City and its quality of life. You may have played basketball or enjoyed a family barbecue at Julia Asmus Park on Jaboneria Road, but how much do you know about Julia Asmus?

A long-time resident of Bell Gardens, Julia Russ Asmus was a dedicated volunteer who gave her time and talents to several organizations, both public and private, all for the betterment of her community.

Born in Gulnare, Colorado on Sept. 25, 1919 to Yugoslavian immigrants, Julia Russ grew up during the Great Depression. She left Colorado in 1938 with her first husband and son, putting down roots in Bell Gardens, where she spent the rest of her life. After her first marriage was annulled, she went to work for several optometrists and met Roy Asmus, a patient who swept her off her feet. They married in 1947 and celebrated 67 years of marriage together.

Julia loved children, and the Asmus family grew by two in 1961. She became a licensed day care provider, caring for many youngsters who stayed in touch with her long after they had grown. She was a volunteer with the Montebello

Unified School District, serving at various schools from elementary through high school level. Both Julia and Roy were devoted servants at St. Gertrude the Great Catholic Church, each of them receiving Papal Awards.

Along with her volunteer work, Julia was interested in the well-being of the business community and she became the manager of the Bell Gardens Chamber of Commerce. She was also a member of Soroptimist International of Bell Gardens, Senior Citizens Young at Heart, the St. Gertrude Altar Society and the Regional Library Council.

Her selfless giving was recognized by several elected officials; she was named Outstanding Older American by the City of Bell Gardens in 1986 and given the Woman of Courage Award from the California Assembly in 2002. In 2003, in honor of her service to the young people of Bell Gardens, the Rio Hondo Boys and Girls Club named her Woman of the Year.

On August 22, 2002, the City of Bell Gardens held the dedication ceremony of Julia Russ Asmus Park, recognizing the numerous years of service she dedicated to the City and all of its residents. According to her family, she was quite proud of this particular honor.

Julia Russ Asmus passed away September 1, 2016, at the age of 97. Her legacy lives on in the laughter of the children who play in "her" park and the volunteers who continue to make Bell Gardens a great place to live.



KEEPING BELL GARDENS BEAUTIFUL WITH UPDATED LANDSCAPE RULES

In August, the City Council approved changes in the City's Municipal Code that takes into consideration new trends and restrictions brought about by the drought. The changes focus on parkways, drought-tolerant materials, efficient irrigation and artificial turf.

The City encourages residents to use drought-tolerant plants and efficient irrigation in conjunction with hardscapes and prohibits the use of hardscape with little or no vegetation. To assist property owners, the Community Development department has a list of recommended live plant materials, including trees, shrubs, ground cover and turf. The use of fountains, boulders, bridges, rock, gravel, decomposed granite or other similar hardscape materials cannot exceed 50 percent of the total landscaped area, and artificial turf cannot take up



more than half of the landscaped area.

Parkways must be landscaped and maintained by property owners, who are prohibited from using artificial turf in the strip between the street and home or business structure. Irrigation must be provided by permanent sprinklers or drip watering systems and all areas are to be

maintained in a neat, clean and healthful condition.

If artificial turf is used, it cannot be indoor or outdoor plastic or nylon carpeting and installation must be done by a state licensed contractor with a valid Bell Gardens business license.

A complete list of the changes are listed in detail in the Bell Gardens Municipal Code Title 9 Zoning and Planning regulations, Chapter 9.34, "Landscaping."

CITY ACTS TO RESTRICT MASSAGE PARLORS

Recent action by the City Council tightened up the restrictions on massage parlors within the City limits, allowing them to operate with a conditional use permit only in the heavy commercial (C-4) zone.

State regulatory changes in 2008 and 2011 weakened local control of massage establishments, equating them with personal service businesses such as chiropractors, beauty and nail salons. The state formed the California Massage Therapy Council and removed nearly all local control and oversight of massage establishments. This resulted in an increase in both illicit massage establishments such as brothels and incidents of human sex trafficking.

In 2014, Governor Jerry Brown signed legislation that significantly revised existing laws and allowed more local control of massage establishments. At that time, there

were three establishments within City limits that provided full body massage and to date, the City has not received any new permit requests.

With the amendments to the Bell Gardens Municipal Code Chapter 5.46, the City regains the land use authority to restrict any new massage establishments to the C-4 zone only. The revisions expand and strengthen the permitting process for massage establishments and their employees. Not only will it strongly regulate the number of massage establishments in the City, it will also regulate operations, transfer of ownership and compliance with all state and local restrictions.

