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Friends Visit from Sister City



Judy Johnson (third from left in front row) opened her historic home in Downtown Torrance to participants of the Torrance Sister City Association who are visiting from Kashiwa, Japan. Judy's home was one of the many stops made by the visiting group to learn more about Torrance's rich background and way of life. TSCA works closely with the City of Torrance, Torrance Unified School District and many volunteers as well as local businesses and organizations. See story, page 2. Photo by Charlene Nishimura.

Torrance City Council Supports Anti-Marijuana Summit

By Dylan Little

The Torrance City Council voted to join with the League of California Cities in requesting a state level summit to address the impacts of illegal marijuana grow operations on both private and public lands and develop strategies to end these operations. During the August 19 meeting, Mayor Furey explained that illegal marijuana cultivation has an adverse impact on Torrance.

The city of Torrance has a reputation of being tough on drugs, and according to the Torrance Police staff, illegal grow operations – whether on public or private land – are “contributing to a sense of lawlessness and impacting nearby communities where criminal activities are expanding,” as written in a staff report. Illegal marijuana cultivation is also having environmental repercussions as water is diverted from legitimate agricultural uses and land in state and national parks are destroyed to clear it for hidden grow operations.

“This resolution has an impact on public safety and the environment,” said Furey. “The impact to public safety is an increase in criminal activity due to indoor growing operations in the South Bay and the environmental impacts are the diversion of water for use to cultivate marijuana grow sites, destruction of fish and wildlife habits, soil contamination and water pollution.” This resolution is the only one on the docket for the League of California Cities September conference. The organization is hoping to persuade the Governor and state legislators to help cities come up with solutions to the problem as well the funding support to implement them.

While the merits of the resolution are clear to the Council, the city does have guidelines in place that must be met before the city will endorse this kind of action. The effects of the resolution must address one of three areas:

local control, city finances or public safety. During the August 12 meeting of the Ad Hoc State Legislative Advocacy Committee, city staff reviewed the resolution and the impacts of illegal marijuana cultivation and determined that it does affect public safety in the city and suggested the committee support the resolution, which they did.

“After studying the background materials on the resolution and discussing the issues with staff, the committee voted to concur with staff’s recommendation to support this resolution,” said Furey.

The Council also unanimously supported the resolution, although the specifics of what

the state can do to help cities with this issue aren’t known at this time.

The Council also accepted \$22,250 in donations to support the Toyota Sports Complex at 555 Maple Avenue. The funds were raised via the complex’s donor wall, with two large donors, Alcoa Fastening Systems and LA Galaxy South Bay Soccer Club, each donating \$10,000. To date the city-managed sports facility raised just over \$100,000 in donations. Of the donations taken in, the city has already spent about \$80,000 to purchase 16 goals of various sizes, netting, corner flags, and maintenance tools and equipment including a tractor.

See City Council, page 9

Weekend Forecast

Friday

Partly Cloudy
77°/64°



Saturday

Partly Cloudy
77°/64°



Sunday

Partly Cloudy
77°/65°



Community Banks Have Community Interests at Heart

By Laura Sorensen

According to a 2012 survey by California Bank & Trust, one in two Californian small business owners found it very important to have a trustworthy relationship with their bank. “Small business owners cited ‘access to capital’ and ‘knowledge and advice’ among the top items they depend on from their banking relationship,” according to CB&T’s website. What kind of bank can provide such important commodities to a small business owner? Perhaps a national bank; after all, they have billions of dollars in assets, branches all over the country, and make hundreds, if not thousands, of business loans every hour. But Rick Sowers, executive vice president of Bank of Manhattan, has another suggestion: look into the services a community bank can offer.

Many people don’t even know that these small, lender-focused institutions exist in their area. Sowers admits that even with 11 years’ experience in the banking business, he didn’t know the difference between a community bank and a national bank. He had spent many years flying all over the country giving highly-paid advice to national banks, so when a friend began to talk about starting Bank of Manhattan, Sowers didn’t understand the appeal of opening a bank with only one branch that served a tiny market niche. Bank of Manhattan currently has only \$500 million in assets, a number that seems large unless it’s set against the trillions of dollars that move in and out of national banks. Bank of Manhattan has no way to compete

See Community Banks, page 10

TerriAnn in Torrance

A Walk at the Marsh on a Sunday Afternoon

By TerriAnn Ferren

After swimming for two hours in the pool, what could I do with 7-year-old Madison Jane on a Sunday afternoon to make memories for us both? Then it dawned on me: we have a fabulous nature preserve right in the middle of town. I have visited the Madrona Marsh Nature Center and Preserve on several occasions and have written two articles concerning the marsh: "Right in Our Own Backyard" (*Torrance Tribune* August 4, 2011) and "Something's Bugging Me" (*Torrance Tribune* June 12, 2013).

Quickly, I called the marsh office from poolside and discovered there was a nature walk at 2 p.m. What luck! We left the pool, had lunch, and headed to the marsh. Driving down Carson Street, Madison asked me, "Is the marsh in Torrance?" I told her yes, then I thought that was a great question because it is rare to have such a chunk of nature available to everyone right smack in the middle of town.

Pulling into the parking lot, I glanced at my watch, noting the time -- 1:58 p.m. -- and I hoped the walk hadn't started. We hurried up the steps into the Nature Center, signed our names, and paid the small fee to the friendly volunteer and we were told to wait in the classroom for the tour to begin.

Immediately, Madison Jane noticed the bunnies in the atrium and asked me if she could hold one. The sign on the window

immediately slathered Madison Jane's face with the cream. Right away I liked Hilary. I mean, really, who else would think about sunburn on a little girl?

Mark Christiansen, who works at the marsh,



Purple Sage, the flowers with nectar bees love.

opened up the back door and we began our tour right outside the nature center to the north of the building. We saw all sorts of grasses and plants that are native to our sandy soil. We snaked around the back and west side of the garden ending up in front of the center by the beautiful Milkweed plants. Mark told us that the Milkweed attracts Monarch butterflies and that's why the naturalists place that particular plant right by the front walkway.



Madrona Marsh Preserve.

said the bunnies were up for adoption but the atrium was closed to visitors at that moment, so we headed into the classroom at the east end of the building. Tables and chairs were set up classroom style and pictures of bugs and animals were everywhere. Madison was excited.



Madison Jane holding Scooby the gopher snake.

After pouring a paper cup of lemonade and nibbling tiny cookies, our tour guide for the walk, Hilary Jamieson, entered the classroom and introduced herself. Hilary is a graduate of West High School and grew up with the marsh. She told us we would be walking around the preserve while she identified the plants and trees indigenous to our area and explained how the Tongva Indians, who lived on the land of the South Bay, used the vegetation. We were ready for the tour! Leaving the classroom, Hilary brought out a tube of sunscreen and I

Nestled next to the Milkweed was a plant that is candy to bees -- Purple Sage. Hilary picked one petal of the delicate flower and showed Madison Jane how to suck out the nectar. This was a beautiful example of why bees' honey tastes so sweet. We hadn't even left the grounds of the nature center and had already learned so much.

Crossing the street, we noticed that we were the only two taking the nature tour that particular Sunday afternoon. Two marsh volunteers, Ruth McConnell and Carolyn Coulter, joined us as well as Mark Christiansen, so Hilary had five of us at her heels. Actually, I was the only one ill-equipped for a walk in the preserve because I had left the house that afternoon hurriedly wearing sandals. What was I thinking? To top it off they were wedge heels, so you can imagine how challenging it was for me to walk on and off the paths that day.

Right away we spotted ants in the dirt. Big ants. Smiling, Hilary told us that the ants are female - you can tell because they are working so efficiently and diligently. Hum. Heading west, we stopped at important bushes and plants where Hilary explained what the berries were used for, how small animals use the bushes for shelter, and how the marsh volunteers work hard to make sure all the trees and plants, eventually, are only 'native.'

One bush had bristles on it that were quite sticky - so sticky that they stuck on everyone's clothes. Come to find out, that particular plant, the Cocklebur plant, was the inspiration for Velcro, according to Hilary. Walking down the path, it got muddy. Madison Jane heard Hilary say we might

see tiny frogs so she was on the lookout. We marched toward the 'frog area' and bent down to hunt for frogs. These little frogs were not easy to see because they are the color of dirt. But Mark caught a frog in his hands and cupped it close, showing Madison Jane. She squealed with delight and wanted to hold it. She finally held it and wanted to keep it, but Hilary explained we only look at the frogs and then let them go. Madison complied but

not just holding it, she had Scooby wrapped around her arm, her wrist and her hand! It freaked me out, but of course I didn't let her know that. Seeing a little girl who was hesitant at first to catch a frog now allowing a snake to drape around her neck confirmed this afternoon's adventure was a big success.

Our little troop had a wonderful time and I was quite surprised when Hilary told me this was her first nature walk tour. She was

"Would you like to take your own nature walk? The preserve is located at 3201 Plaza Del Amo, Torrance, and is open Tuesday through Sunday 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Call 310.782.3989 or access www.torranceca.gov to check the calendar for upcoming special events."

began looking in the grasses intently trying to catch a frog for herself. With the help of Mark, she did it. She caught the tiniest little frog I ever saw and then let it go near the ground in another patch of grass.

The ground was now muddy and tall toolies were everywhere. Looking around, you wouldn't know you were in the heart of Torrance! Hilary told us the Tongva Indians used the toolies for beds and shelter. We then saw eight to ten white Snowy Egrets and a Mallard duck floating in the small pond. This pond used to be huge during the wet season but since the drought, all that is left is a large puddle. That must be why the animals are so close together. They are sharing the water supply. Madison was delighted. She laughed and smiled as she looked at the elegant Snowy Egrets.

We then made our way away from the mud and little pond over to the area where water would be, if we had had any rain. This bone-dry area reminded me once again of how precious life-giving water is to us all. Walking to the east end of the marsh we spotted grasshoppers and Harlequin beetles on Bladderpod plants (*Isomeris Arborea*). Madison got brave and held a Harlequin beetle, which looks somewhat like a ladybug with an oil-slicked looking, multicolor shell. She let that little bug crawl from one hand to the other and it finally flew away.

We had been in the marsh for about two hours before heading back toward the preserve office and museum. We all looked like we had an adventure -- especially me with my muddy sandals, purse dragging, and hat a bit askew. Inside the building we washed our hands and Hilary told us we could get more lemonade and cookies. Madison Jane made a beeline toward the classroom. I went to wash up a bit more.

I was thinking what a great time Madison and I had on our very personal tour through this marvelous marsh. Then I entered the classroom again and found Madison Jane holding Scooby, the gopher snake! Well,

remarkable and her knowledge and expertise were flawless. She truly is perfect for this job and has found her passion. Hilary Jamieson and Mark Christiansen together make a great team. The Madrona Marsh is lucky to have them both.

Madison Jane was chatting how much she loved holding Scooby the snake, and how



Hilary Jamieson, our tour guide for the day.

she had caught and held the tiniest frog. It was indeed a day to remember and one I hope she won't forget. I know I will always remember how we spent one warm afternoon in August at one of the last remaining vernal marshes in Southern California.

Would you like to take your own nature walk? The preserve is located at 3201 Plaza Del Amo, Torrance, and is open Tuesday through Sunday 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Call 310.782.3989 or access www.torranceca.gov to check the calendar for upcoming special events. If you have any questions, be sure to speak with Beth Scott, Program Coordinator at the Marsh. She is full of information and always there to help!

Sunday afternoon walking through the Madrona Marsh Preserve and Nature Center is a perfect way to relax, learn about the history of our area, and have lots of fun. I do, however, recommend sensible shoes. •



Wilderness in the city. All photos by TerriAnn Ferren.