



# The SCFSC Fireplug

www.SCCFireSafe.org

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## Collaboration Leads to Greater Protection

*East Foothills and Milpitas residents benefit from FireSafe partnerships*

The City of Milpitas is located at the top of Santa Clara County north of east San Jose. The Milpitas hills include foothills and summits of the Diablo Mountain Range and are often identified with Monument Peak, which is accessed through Ed R. Levin County Park, home to Calaveras Reservoir.

In previous years, it has been a challenge to provide wildfire protection outreach to residents in the Milpitas hills due to the lack of central communication and accessibility. Thanks in large part to a partnership with Spring Valley Volunteer Fire Department (SVVFD), which is the first responder to homes in this area, the FireSafe Council has been able to expand our reach and provide chipping and education to homeowners living in these WUI communities.

SVVFD Assistant Chief and FireSafe Council President, Jerry Serpa, led a door to door effort in the Milpitas hills to promote our free Defensible Space Chipping Program. In 2010, the result was our first chipping project in this area for four homes. This small start has led to two more chipping projects in this area in 2011.

In addition to promoting our free Defensible Space Chipping Program, the FireSafe Council also participates in events and meetings such as SVVFD's annual Pancake Breakfast and 4<sup>th</sup> of July BBQ, to promote wildfire protection awareness to frequent visitors to parks and open space, including Ed R. Levin County Park, as well as to residents of WUI area.

Thanks to a \$39,368 grant from the USDI Bureau of Land Management through the California FireSafe Council, and generous matching funds donations, the FireSafe Council participated in 27 community events and meetings as part of our Community Outreach and Education providing education to over 5,000 adults and children.

"We greatly exceeded our grant objectives while keeping our costs low," states Chief Serpa. "In addition to our COE accomplishments, this grant funded programs that treated 36 acres of land, and helped protect 625 homes, 1,875 people and over 600 Million in property values."

Our Defensible Space Chipping and Sudden Oak Death Tree Removal programs are the only free fuel reduction programs offered for residents in WUI areas of Santa Clara County. In 2010, our Defensible Space Chipping Programs helped protect 4,380 homes, 12,990 people, and \$4.3 Billion in property values.

Learn more about Spring Valley Volunteer Fire Department by visiting [www.svvfd.org](http://www.svvfd.org)



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## A Bright Future in Fire for Students at James Lick High School in East San Jose

It was standing room only in the James Lick High School (JLHS) Library on the evening of May 16th as forty-one new inductees into the Fire Service Pathway Program proudly received kudos and warm congratulations from civic leaders, school administrators, parents and the community. The popular program trains students for college-level firefighter courses and other related public safety positions.

The Fire Service Pathway is a new four-year program at James Lick High School started in 2009–2010 academic year and prepares students for an entry-level position in the Fire Protective Industry for Fire Service related careers. Students from the Fire Service Pathway program are active volunteers with the FireSafe Council and FireSafe Council President Jerry Serpa (Assistant Chief, Spring Valley Volunteer Fire Department and JLHS alum) and Treasurer Allan Thompson (Alum Rock resident) serve on the Board of Advisors for the program. The FireSafe Council is proud to support the dedicated teachers, students and community members that have made this an innovative and successful program.



Top: James Lick HS Fire Service Pathway students pose proudly with San Jose Fire Department Chief Willie McDonald and Smokey Bear

Left: Roberta Cabigas, program advisor and JLHS teacher, is all smiles with the new inductees.

Photo credit: Judy Thompson

## FireSafe Director Spotlight: Getting to Know the Team

### *Allan Thompson, FireSafe Council Treasurer*

This month we're highlighting Allan Thompson, our Treasurer, member of our Board of Directors, and longtime supporter.

#### *How long have you been involved with the FireSafe Council? Why did you become involved?*

I was one of the original directors when the FireSafe Council was incorporated on October 21, 2002. The other original and also current director is Chief Dirk Mattern from Santa Clara County Fire Department, who was involved in the very beginning with predecessors to our council going back to 1997.

"Why" is much more of a mystery to me. As I remember it, my wife Judy heard about the FireSafe Council from Mike Will, who was then the Supervisor of Alum Rock Park (a City of San Jose Regional Park near us), and she suggested we get involved. And it just grew from there. I was a Vice President before I took over the Treasurer position from CAL FIRE Chief Dave Athey in 2005.

#### *What is your main role or area of expertise within SCFSC?*

I'm the Treasurer so finances have become my area of expertise for the FireSafe Council. I have a lot of experience in business management so I understood financial statements. And I'm a telecommunications engineer so I have experience managing projects and keeping track of details. But I didn't have any accounting experience so I had to learn about our grant and nonprofit accounting practices and how to use QuickBooks. As the FireSafe Council grew, we needed budgets and other financial tools so we could manage our growth. I'd say my real area of expertise is financial management, which is essential for any nonprofit organization.

#### *What are some of the biggest challenges and opportunities for the FireSafe Council?*

The FireSafe Council has grown very rapidly from a startup nonprofit completely dependent on Federal Grants to a much larger organization with many other sources of support. Our biggest challenge is to transition to a more stable organization which can do more work and is less dependent on Federal Grants. We now have an Executive Director, we've accumulated some "rainy day" funds, and last year was a very successful year for fundraising so we are well on the way with this transition.

#### *What is your favorite thing about Santa Clara County?*

We work in a very diverse group of communities and one of our challenges is to communicate with non-English speakers. Fortunately, Smokey Bear is a widely-recognized symbol of wildfire protection and we have developed programs like Smokey Story Times for young children as one way to communicate with non-English speaking families.

#### *Describe a memorable project or event. Why did it make such an impression on you?*

I love what kids say about Smokey. One of the kids from San Martin/Gwinn Elementary school, after hearing how Smokey lost his friends and home in a wildfire, wrote, "Dear Smokey, ... I felt short next to you because you were so tall. If you were dead I would have felt worse."



*Allan and Smokey accepting the Association of Fundraising Professionals Distinguished Volunteer Fundraiser Recognition from AFP Chair Debra Jones in 2009.*



*The Santa Clara County FireSafe Council (SCFSC) is a non-profit organization composed of individuals, public and private agencies and companies that share a common, vested interest in preventing and reducing losses from wildfires.*

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[www.SCCFireSafe.org](http://www.SCCFireSafe.org)

*“Mobilizing the people of Santa Clara County to protect their homes, communities and environment from wildfires.”*

## Support you local FireSafe Council

Thanks to the following who have made recent contributions to support our programs.

Chemeketa Mutual Water Company

Loma Prieta Resource  
Conservation District

City of San Jose

Loma Prieta Community  
Foundation

Holiday Lake Estates

Pacific Gas and Electric Company

*A special thank you to our recent individual donors and supporters!*

Tax deductible donations can be made online at [www.SCCFireSafe.org](http://www.SCCFireSafe.org)

If you prefer to donate by mail, please mail your check payable to the:

Santa Clara County FireSafe Council , 16174 Highland Drive, San Jose, CA 95127

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