



FIG · GARDEN  
HOMEOWNERS  
ASSOCIATION

# Annual Membership Meeting

Wednesday, March 29, 2006, 7 p.m.  
Powers Elementary School, 110 E. Swift

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|-------------------------|--|
| Meeting Agenda:         | 4. President's report                        |
| 1. Call to order        | 5. Nomination of Directors and voting        |
| 2. Introductory remarks | 6. Discussion of matters of general interest |
| 3. Treasurer's report   | 7. Adjournment                               |

## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

*By Phoebe Wall Howard*

Dear Friends & Neighbors:

When I moved to Fresno more than 10 years ago, I lived in a rental with brown shag carpet. My husband and I shared an old car and saved every penny we could as writers. We finally had enough for a modest down payment and, after scouring properties throughout the community, fell in love with a home on Van Ness Boulevard. We were aggressively discouraged from buying in Old Fig by real estate agents, colleagues and friends. They told us we would never recoup our investment and our children would have no playmates. They told us that the good days in Old Fig were gone.

No question, the area was depressed.

The home we purchased had been on the market for three years. It had been burgled, as had others in the area. We actually found a cache of weapons on our property. Police officers picked up a parole violator in our backyard. Friends genuinely questioned whether we had made a good decision for the baby we planned to bring into the world. And thefts of property outdoors — including, but not limited to, Christmas Tree Lane decorations — was rampant. For the record, there are few things more depressing than replacing a stolen baby Jesus. The homes were lovely but aging and neglected. People weren't taking pride. We knew of families that were trying to dump their property in Old Fig with a desire to move north.

Today, there are 10 kids on my block. Young families are everywhere. Watching the refurbishment of old homes is amazing. Homes sell before signs are posted. Home values have skyrocketed.

Transformation of Old Fig was not a self-fulfilling prophecy.

Perhaps this is one reason why current residents are militant about protecting what we have — an historic and vital neighborhood in the heart of the city.

Our community revitalizes itself when people have faith and work hard. Thank you for all you do to support the neighborhood.

Please know :

- The annual Fig Garden Homeowners Association membership meeting will be held on Wed., March 29 at 7 p.m. in the cafeteria of Powers Elementary School. Families will discuss issues of concern.

*Three Board members are seeking re-election: David Boyd, Chris Campbell and Louise Yenovkian. They have spent their terms analyzing public documents, attending public hearings and protecting the interests of Old Fig.*

- Dean Alexander and a team of Old Fig families plan to coordinate the 2006 Christmas Tree Lane and its two walk nights again. The non-profit event celebrates its 84th anniversary this year. Donations fund the lights, equipment and manpower required for installation and deconstruction.

- A 4-0 vote this month by the Local Agency Formation Commission means that residents of Old Fig will have an opportunity to vote on whether to expand the historic police protection district. Areas proposed for annexation include the northeast portion of Old Fig, the southeast portion and Circle Drive. A comprehensive survey of our neighborhood was conducted by LAFCo for the Fig Garden Police Protection District. The application

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was based on the results. Mail ballots will be sent in coming months. The Fig Garden Police Protection District board of directors, while not required to do so, insisted on requiring a 2/3 approval. Old Fig is committed to more than just fast response time from law enforcement. We realize that proactive policing deters crime. Property crimes are up throughout the county. A \$299 per year assessment seems modest when families are installing security systems for \$1,500 plus annual fees or replacing bicycles and tools.

- Allied Waste is now the official waste hauler for Old Fig. Company officials are working to implement a dependable program. Our association is working to resolve any issues that homeowners identify as chronic.
- Families have asked if there's someone who can build wooden enclosures for waste bins. Old Fig resident Mike Colby is an established craftsman. Contact him at 226-8986 for an estimate.
- Homeowner Missy Heffron wants to provide assistance to seniors who have trouble moving their waste bins. Please email her at [www.oldfig.org](http://www.oldfig.org) if you're interested in helping.
- If you want to receive time sensitive e-alerts that involve law enforcement issues and notice of public hearings that impact Old Fig, email [phoebe@phoebehoward.com](mailto:phoebe@phoebehoward.com)



Stay involved ~  
 Respectfully,  
 Phoebe Wall Howard 225-3116/daytime

## MAIL SAFETY AND THEFT

*By Louise Yenovkian*

The U.S. Postal Service continues investigating mail theft. For more information on Mail/Identity Theft, visit [www.usps.com](http://www.usps.com) or contact the local Postal Inspection Service Division for our 93704 zip code at P.O. Box 882528, San Francisco, CA 94188-2528. Their phone number is 415-778-5800.

Locked mailboxes protect against mail theft. They can be purchased over the internet or locally at various stores. Fresno Ag Hardware (Gettysburg and Blackstone) and Design Works (McKinley east of Blackstone) carry a variety of styles, colors and sizes.

Please Note:

- Use the letter slots at your post office to mail letters or give them to a letter carrier. Do not place mail in your box to be picked up.
- Pick up your mail promptly after delivery. Don't leave mail in your mailbox overnight.
- Don't send cash in the mail.
- Ask your bank for "secure" checks that can't be altered.
- Place a hold your mail when you are out of town.
- Install a locking mail box.
- Report all mail theft to a Postal Inspector.

## A MESSAGE FROM THE DESK OF: FRESNO FIRE CHIEF RANDY BRUEGMAN

The transition of fire service from Fresno County Fire Protection District to the City of Fresno occurred on January 1, 2006. The agreement is a long-term contract for service and will provide greater resources in a shorter period of time in the event an emergency occurs in the Fig Garden area. I also believe during the next Insurance Services Office grading we will see an improvement in classification, which should ultimately help with our insurance rates.

Since taking over the fire service, we have been working on station renovation projects, including several upgrades from wiring to painting and lighting throughout the facility. The crews stationed at Fire Station 20 on Wishon have done an extensive pre-planning effort for the Fig Garden area. As many of you are well aware, the setbacks and vegetation in the area offer unique challenges when an emergency occurs. In addition, we have already repainted and renumbered the hydrants to our system and have installed blue dots in the roadway to locate these hydrants during the night.

We invite you to come by to tour your fire station and meet some of the department's leadership and the on-duty crew during an open house on March 25, from 11 am to 2 pm.

It is our honor to be of service to the residents of the Fig Garden area. We look forward to becoming a greater part of your community.

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## Home Fire Safety Concerns

Stop and look around your home. Can you identify any dangers? Is food cooking unattended in the kitchen? Are there any candles burning unattended? Most home fires are a result of either candles or cooking. Always blow out candles before leaving the room and always use candleholders made of metal or glass. Remember a candle burning in your living room is subject to being bumped by pets or children.

Fires can also be prevented by regular cleaning lint behind dryers, cobwebs around water heaters, dust, and papers that collect underneath large appliances such as stoves and refrigerators should be removed.

## Children and Fire

Keep matches and lighters locked away so curious children will not find them. Children do not understand the power of fire. Teach your children that matches are “tools” not “toys” and while candles or campfires are beautiful they are also very dangerous. Only adults should have access to lighters and matches. If you are concerned your child may have an unusual interest in fire, the Fresno Fire Department has a free counseling service available entitled, “Juvenile Fire Education Program.” Contact Deputy Fire Marshal Don MacAlpine at 621-4446.



## Smoke Detectors

Smoke detectors are one of the first lines of defense in saving loved ones from fire. Check to make sure your house has at least one smoke detector in the hallway outside of the bedrooms and, preferably, one in each bedroom. If your household is in need of a smoke alarm, or you cannot install one yourself, call 621-4000 and the Fresno Fire Department will bring you a smoke detector and install it for free!

## Home Fire Escape Plan

If you have ever stumbled around in the dark, you know how difficult it is to navigate around your home. Imagine your children having to find their way out under a cloud of smoke. In movies, home fires are portrayed as very bright from the flames, but in reality a home fire is very dark with thick black smoke, which quickly fills rooms and chokes out the oxygen. Make sure your family practices a home fire escape plan. A home fire escape plan should include at least two exits out of the home and a designated meeting place outside the home, usually a large tree or street light.

## Home Address, Gates and Dry Brush

When firefighters are dispatched to your home for an emergency, the crew will quickly look for the correct address on your home or mailbox. If your home is set back from the main road, please have your address clearly identified on or near the main gate.

Gates can be another problem. Our goal is to respond in four minutes or less to any emergency. If the fire apparatus is unable get through your gate, this will delay our response. Please consider providing local Fire Station No. 20 (located at 4537 North Wishon) with your gate code.

Dry brush and vegetation are fire hazards. Please clear any dry brush away from your home on an annual basis. Keep a three-foot clearance around any fire hydrant.

## Fire Sprinklers Save Lives

Recently, the City Council adopted a proposal to install a single sprinkler head in the kitchens of all new homes built in the city of Fresno. Statistics show 82 percent of all fires are in single-family and multi-family homes. Furthermore, up to 39 percent of all fires in homes start in the kitchen.

If you are planning to remodel your home, please consider installing fire sprinklers. The cost for this installation is approximately \$1.50 per square foot. Although you may consider this to be a costly preventative measure, consider the value of loved ones and family treasures.

## Your Safety Is Our Mission

Take the time to look over your home today and identify some preventative measures you can adopt to reduce the chances of a fire in your home. Preventing a tragedy starts at home with education. If the Fresno Fire Department may be of assistance, call 621-4000 or visit us at [www.fresno.gov/fire/](http://www.fresno.gov/fire/). We look forward to serving you.

For more information:

Fire Prevention Bureau: 621-4137

Operations Bureau: 621-4046

Fire Chief’s Office: 621-4002

## WASTE HAULER UPDATE

By Carolyn Dickson, Allied Waste

Allied Waste is part of the big change taking place within Fresno County and we're excited to be a part of this undertaking. We recognize that at times it has been frustrating for you, our customers, and equally for us, the Allied Waste employees, to provide the prompt and courteous service you deserve. We apologize for any inconvenience you may have experienced trying to contact us during this transition period.

### Why the change?

AB 939 is California's Integrated Waste Management Act of 1989. This Act required city and county governments to establish integrated waste management plans to divert 25% of solid waste from the landfills by 1995 and 50% by the year 2000. Methods to meet this goal could be through source reduction, recycling, composting and education. To date Fresno County has not met this diversion objective.

The biggest reason the diversion was not met has been due to the lack of alternatives for the residents and businesses in the county pockets. Green waste and recyclable materials were all being tossed in the trash and taken to the landfill.



### Why this method?

The Fresno County Board of Supervisors divided the county between haulers to provide recycling. Since there were now going to be three pick-ups available per household, it made sense to have one hauler in a particular area instead of three or four haulers providing three services each.

### What about pricing?

The pricing has been standardized. This means all haulers will be charging the same price for the same level of service.

### What can you put in the "Blue lid" cart?

- Paper (office, mixed, computer, colored, poster, construction, kraft, envelopes, news)
- Chipboard (cereal/cake mixes/rice/shoe boxes, paper egg cartons, paper towel/toilet paper cores, fabric softener boxes)
- Magazines, junk mail, catalogs, telephone books, milk/juice and the like cartons, frozen food boxes,

cardboard (3' x 2' x 2'), plastic – jars/bottles/bags (#'s 1-7), glass jars/bottles, cans (beverage/tuna/pet food), aluminum, tin, steel, small scrap metal.

All of the above materials can be put into plastic garbage bags before putting into your co-mingle cart.

### What can you put in the "Green lid" cart?

- Branches (less than 2 inches in diameter); brush; cut flowers; house plants; dead plants and bushes; grass clippings; leaves; prunings; shrubs; weeds; wood (uncoated, untreated); wood chips; yard trimmings and Christmas trees (placed in cart without stand, decorations or flocking) cut into two-foot sections.

Note: Larger items such as tree stumps and intact trees are considered bulky items and special arrangements must be made with customer service at 275-1551.

### Is there an annual clean-up?

You will be notified when we will be in your area.

### Will we be fined if we put something in the wrong cart?

No! However, if your recycling or greenwaste bin is contaminated with other materials not accepted in that particular cart, you will be given a notice with two options to resolve the problem. 1) remove the item(s) that's contaminating the cart or 2) pay a fee to have it dumped as garbage.

Once again, Allied Waste would like to thank you for your patience in this transition and we are looking forward in making this change work for all of us involved – our community, city, county and state.



## PREVENT IDENTITY THEFT

By Tony Pings

With the increase of mail theft in Old Fig, it is time for all of us to be vigilant for crimes against our identity. Over the years, I have experienced three forms of theft. This includes false credit charges using my established credit account to charge new items, and the most disturbing, theft of my identity to open lines of credit. In each case, my interaction with the credit company was troubling. In all cases, the issue was resolved, but not necessarily cleared from my credit report. Based on my experiences, I can assure you that those who extend credit are interested in extending credit, not in clearing up your credit history.

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Because of this, I have a permanent fraud alert placed on my credit file. You can also have a 90 day alert. This requires anyone going through one of the

three credit reporting companies, to obtain approval from you through established protocols, such as calling you at a known phone number such as your home number. This process is generally effective at stopping identity theft, but is less helpful in using your established credit accounts. The major drawback to this is the process to open a new account (such as buying a car) will normally take two to three days.

In extreme cases, you can place a freeze on your credit file. This will stop everything for a period of time. If you are interested, the source for information is [www.fightidentitytheft.com](http://www.fightidentitytheft.com) or any of the credit bureaus (Equifax, Experian or Trans Union). The most unnerving part of my experience is that I was guilty until I could prove my innocence. This required photocopy evidence and police reports.



## CHARITY OUTREACH

*By Dianne Hanzlicek*

Plant A Row for the Hungry collects extra citrus and vegetables from home gardeners which is donated to Community Food Bank for distribution to their network of food pantries. There are citrus collection days every year in February and March. Last year, more than 25,000 pounds of citrus were donated which would otherwise have gone into landfills. Donations may be taken to the food bank at 210 N. Thorne or you may call the food bank at 237-3663 to make arrangements to take produce directly to a food pantry near your home. If you have questions or would like to volunteer to help PAR, please contact Dianne Hanzlicek at 226-1528 or [dianne738@cvip.net](mailto:dianne738@cvip.net).



## CHRISTMAS TREE LANE UPDATE

*By Dean Alexander, Lane Coordinator*

Christmas Tree Lane had an amazing year in 2005. We added new lights, decorated more trees and saw the addition of creative yard displays.

Fig Garden families coordinated the entire Christmas Tree Lane event; including the two walk-only nights.

Moving forward independently — and not redirecting lane donations to another non-profit group — allowed the lane to re-invest in infrastructure.

Despite heavy rain the first walk night, we had approximately 5,000 participants. The second walk night was a clear and spectacular evening that inspired an estimated 20,000 participants. Special thanks to the California Highway Patrol, Cocola Broadcasting, Fig Garden Village Merchants, Fresno City Council Member Henry T. Perea, the Fresno County Sheriff's Department, the Fresno High Marching Band, the Fresno State Marching Band, the Fresno State Women's Softball Team and the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers Local 100.

Expenses for the non-profit Christmas Tree Lane event continue to rise. We had two fires on the lane due to old lights. Installation equipment fees have risen so dramatically that the lane must buy its own manlift, which costs tens of thousands of dollars. Note: There is no official staff that coordinates Christmas Tree Lane. Everything is done with local families and volunteers, so donations are really important. Every dollar goes directly to the non-profit lane project. The neighborhood hopes to renew its non-profit partnerships in 2007.

We are currently planning this year's Christmas Tree Lane event. Financial demands require that the neighborhood exclusively host the walk nights a second and final year, in hopes of stabilizing the lane's income stream. Continued infrastructure improvements are still needed; providing additional power to light the trees, which requires a costly new electrical switch on the lane. In addition, worn electrical cable must be replaced.

The neighborhood considered last year whether to completely discontinue the 83-year-old tradition or re-invest. It chose to re-invest.

We are proud to live in Old Fig. Families return from around California to experience the lane drive they first enjoyed as children. We will be asking families to volunteer for projects in our September newsletter. With your help, we can do anything!



***In 2006, Christmas Tree Lane opens on Saturday, December 2 and continues through Tuesday, December 26. Walk nights will be Saturday December 2 and Tuesday, December 12.***

