

VILLAGE RESIDENTS ASSOCIATION

Public Meeting

April 9, 2008

7:00 p.m.

Four Corners Room/Community Center

COMMUNITY ANNOUNCEMENTS

- The VRA is offering a \$30 gift card in a random drawing for residents of the Village who post on the new Village Message Board at <http://groups.google.com/group/albanyvillage>. The Message Board is a great way to sell or buy items in the Village.
- April 12 is Cal Day. There will be events and tours all around campus, many of which are good for young children.
- April 26 will be a Noon-Jam on the Village green (the grassy area near the playground between East and West Village). There will be live music. Bring a picnic lunch.
- Hypnosis workshop (tomorrow at 7pm)
- Two financial workshops about saving as student families and financial planning on a low budget (April 19th and April 26th 10am-12pm)
- This Friday will be Family Friday. The movie that is being showed is “Alvin and the Chipmunks”.
- The yard sale will probably be at the end of this month.
- There has been a rise in the number of vandalism incidents. Toilet paper is disappearing from bathrooms, trees are being vandalized, kids are damaging laundry rooms, etc. Please keep an eye out in your area for vandalism, and don't be hesitant to report it.
- The tagging of unsafe items in outside areas is almost finished.
- Soon the Villager will be sent out entirely electronically to a listserve of all residents in the Village. The Village Office is trying to go digital and conserve paper.

TRANSFER, RE-ENTRY & STUDENT PARENT CENTER

Alice Jordan, the Coordinator of Student Parent Programs for the Transfer, Re-entry & Student Parent Center (TRSP), addressed us regarding the services available at the TRSP. She also gave us some interesting historical information about advocating on behalf of Village residents:

- Alice was once a graduate student and single parent here. She is the one who started the Sick Child Care Project (previously known as Wheezles and Sneezles). She also started the TRSP. Her father was an academic during WWII and as a child she lived in WWII housing. She is very conscious of the lifestyles of graduate students.
- Alice started Wheezles and Sneezles in 1978 using money generated through grants to fund childcare for sick children. She worked through the power structure of UCB in order to get space for the program. (It now runs out of an apartment in West Village. More information at <http://www.sickchildcareprogram.com>)

- Alice also started the Family Resource Center in the Village. (More information at http://universityvillage.berkeley.edu/fam_frc.htm)
- Alice was also on the Future of Family Housing Task Force and has tried very hard to help keep rents down in the Village.
- There used to be a toddler care center in the Village. It closed and hasn't been reopened.
- People tend to think of "student family housing" as just graduate students. That is not true. There are as many, many undergraduate students who have children.
- Some time ago, the University offered dependent health insurance to students. That was discontinued because it became prohibitively expensive. The problem was that families who could, opted out. That meant that the risk was not spread out among students, and the program was unable to pay for itself. Alice doesn't think that having the University as the primary health insurance for dependents is necessarily the way to go. She thinks it would be better to have scholarships and fellowship money cover the cost of insurance through other sources.
- The only freshmen not guaranteed housing are freshmen who have dependents. Current VRA Board Member Ginelle Perez, has been a strong force for inclusion of freshmen student parents. After the new West Village sections open, there should be room for inclusion for all incoming student families.
- There are currently 146 unmarried student parents. Out of undergraduate students who have families, many are single parents (40-50%).
- Student parent families with both parents being students tend to be financially fine because they receive two financial aid packages.
- Graduate student families tend to be fine financially because they can borrow more.
- Single parent undergraduates have the hardest time.
- The Single Parent Grant was designed to alleviate some of the problem, but that only provides \$300 per month to 15 single parent families. Now that Section B is gone, it is obviously not enough.
- Many undergraduates are hitting the student loan maximum and going to private loan providers (possibly at high interest rates).
- Almost all undergraduate students who come in with kids are from community colleges and come here with an associates' degree. Community colleges are designed to be feeder schools to the UC System. What has occurred is that lots of single moms needed to go to school because of welfare reform. They were provided with financial aid sufficient to take care of 18 months of training, however, and after that received no financial support.
- There are many students who rely on state subsidized childcare to pay for all of their childcare.
- There is currently a University committee looking into the childcare needs of UCB students.
- TRSP does active outreach to undergraduate students. International students don't get reached, and neither do students who have children while they are here. TRSP is designed to help transfer, re-entry, and single parent student families. However, they serve anyone who comes in to their office. TRSP services include: drop-in crisis intervention, counseling, workshops, and more. They try to create a campus-based community for student parents.

- Alice wants to impress on members of the VRA that they will have to fight for everything they get in the Village and as student families. If we are to pursue affordable housing, we will have to do so with strength and dedication.

Prepared by:
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July 7, 2008