

Peaceful Mountain Monitor

Monte Sereno Fall 2024 Community Newsletter

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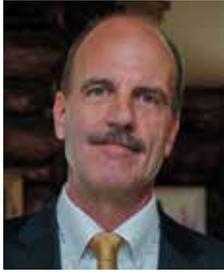
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A Message from the Mayor

Dear Neighbors,

It's hard to believe, but what you have in front of you now is the FALL issue of the Monte Sereno Peaceful Mountain Monitor Newsletter.

As I am sure everyone knows, 2024 is an election year. City Council elections are held every two years, with two seats up for election this year and three seats in 2026.

Monte Sereno has term limits, limiting councilmembers to serving two consecutive terms. This means that Councilmember Rowena Turner is no longer eligible to run for City Council. I want to thank Councilmember Turner for her hard work during the past eight years. The other open seat is the one currently held by Councilmember Bryan Mekechuk, who has decided to run for Council again this year. This year there were only two candidates for the two available seats. The Council passed a resolution at the August 20, 2024 Council Meeting to cancel the election and appoint the two candidates, Lisa Shannon and Bryan Mekechuk, to the Council, effective December this year.

The 2024 Monte Sereno City Picnic was held on Sunday, August 18. The event was well attended, with over 300 residents and guests joining their neighbors at Vasona County Park. Many of our service providers and partners were represented, including Santa Clara County Fire and the Los Gatos Monte Sereno Police Department. We were extremely fortunate with the weather - it can be very hot in the middle of August in our area, but we enjoyed the very mild 78F weather. I want to thank our hard-working staff for organizing another successful event.

The City Council, in collaboration with the Youth Commission, created the Monte Sereno Social Justice Award Program. This program establishes an ongoing message for positive change regarding social justice in the greater Monte Sereno community by acknowledging students' efforts in creating a more equal and inclusive community. The award includes a \$1000 check, payable to a charitable organization chosen by the winner. This year's award winner is Jane Wilde - who spent four days in Mexico during her Spring Break, building houses for the homeless.

The next person I want to mention is our Monte Sereno Citizen of the Year. This award is given by the City Council to a person who works tirelessly for our community, has had a major impact on our City, and goes beyond the call of duty to serve the City and its residents. This year, the Citizen of the Year Award goes to Liz Lawler - our former Mayor and Councilmember, and current Chair of the Better Streets Commission.

Liz has certainly had a significant impact on our city with her hard work and tireless efforts. This year, Liz is also running for state office - she is a candidate in the November election for State Assembly District 28, which includes Monte Sereno.

The Monte Sereno "Housing Element," which is the housing development plan the State requires all cities and towns to submit every eight years, was approved by the State recently. This is good news, but it also means that the implementation phase of the plan is next. As you may remember, Monte Sereno must add over 200 housing units during the current planning cycle. Many of these can be realized in the form of ADUs, and many residents have already decided to add ADUs on their properties.

Our City adopted a balanced budget in June for the fiscal year running from July 2024 through June 2026. For the first time, the City is utilizing a biennial (2-year) budget, which facilitates long-term planning. The City is in relatively decent shape financially with enough reserves to cover some unexpected expenses.

Once again, I want to call on Monte Sereno residents to consider joining the local Community Emergency Response Team (CERT). When a major disaster strikes, our local first responders may be overwhelmed and, in that case, CERT members may be called upon to help out. The CERT training also provides useful information to keep your own residence and family safe during a disaster. Please consider signing up for the training classes. All the information can be found at <https://www.losgatosca.gov/128/CERT>.

Another way to give back to the community and to learn more about how our Police Department functions is to attend the Community Police Academy. A quote from former Mayor Lon Allan about this - "I had the privilege of attending the Los Gatos-Monte Sereno Community Police Academy last year. And even though as a former City Councilmember I thought I really knew all about our Police Department, I was amazed by how much I learned. I strongly encourage any residents interested in how our Police Department functions to attend this Academy". Lon Allan would be glad to share his experience with you - feel free to contact him at lonallan@icloud.com. You can also find more information at <https://www.losgatosca.gov/2575/Community-Police-Academy>.

As usual - feel free to contact me with questions or concerns about our City at ewolsheimer@cityofmontesereno.org, or leave a message for me at City Hall.

Evert Wolsheimer, Mayor



RAIN READY MONTE SERENO

COLLECT AND PROTECT STORMWATER

Also known as “green stormwater infrastructure” or “green stormwater features,” Rain-Ready landscaping is designed to slow the flow of rainwater and help it soak into the ground, instead of flowing over paved surfaces and into the storm drains. As rainwater flows over paved surfaces, it can pick up pollutants, such as motor oil, metals, pesticides, and litter. It then carries these pollutants into storm drains that flow directly to local creeks and the San Francisco Bay without any cleaning or filtering to remove pollutants. Rain-Ready features can also beautify your property! For more information, please visit <https://youtu.be/IF407DHNc8g>.



Rain barrels, rain gardens, permeable pavers, and other landscaping features can help you get “Rain-Ready.” Together we can collect and protect more water for our future!

PERVIOUS SURFACES



Traditional concrete and asphalt surfaces prevent water from soaking into the ground. Consider using permeable materials like gravel, porous concrete, or permeable pavers for your driveway, walkways, or patios. www.bit.ly/3LRXCle

RAIN GARDENS



A rain garden is a shallow, planted depression that allows rainwater to soak into the ground. By strategically placing native plants in low-lying areas of your yard, you can help filter out pollutants and add beauty to your landscape. www.bit.ly/3LP00iM

RAIN BARRELS



Placing rain barrels under downspouts is an easy way to collect and store rainwater. This water can be used later to water your garden, wash your car, or clean outdoor surfaces. It's a simple solution that conserves water and reduces runoff. www.bit.ly/3RqMrHr

After one inch of rain, an enormous amount of stormwater runs off into storm drains:

- **750 gallons** from a typical single-family
- **27,000 gallons** from a 1-acre parking lot

Learn more at www.cleancreeks.org.

Like and follow @cleancreeks on [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), and [X](#).



West Valley
Clean Water Authority

Campbell • Los Gatos • Monte Sereno • Saratoga



Fascinating Facts

Sarra Luksetich, A Special Resident

By Ruth Alexander

One of the oldest residents in Monte Sereno at 96 years old, Sarra was born in Peraia, Greece. She was a beautiful, delicate and fragile baby, weighing approximately 5 pounds, the first child of her parents. She was so small and frail, that her parents made sure the priest baptized her at home three days after her birth.

When Sarra was two years old, the family moved near Athena and lived there for about seven years. Sarra recalls that their family had a gray cat, who pushed itself near her face for warmth and she would push it away from her, because it displeased her.

Then the government provided her family with a home near Aigaleo, approximately a one-hour walk to Athens. Because of food scarcity during World War II, the children found leafy greens in a spring near their home. There was very little meat to eat during the war and one day, the family went into the mountains looking for food and caught a tortoise. The mom cooked the tortoise but did not partake in eating it; only the children and dad ate it. One of the younger sisters got lost for hours during that adventure. They looked everywhere for her and finally found her happily sitting in a tree.

After sixth grade, Sarra's parents could not pay for her education, so she decided to work for a lady who was a seamstress who worked out of her home. She did not love this job, so Sarra found another job making men's hats and enjoyed the creativity of this job better. She walked one hour to and from her work and it was a good way for her to exercise and keep fit.

When Sarra was 18 years old, she and her mother worked for a factory that spun rayon.

Sarra's aunt's sister lived in the San Francisco Bay Area and played matchmaker for her. She knew a Greek lawyer who lived in Santa Clara County who sought a pretty lady from Greece to be his wife. The aunt's sister showed Sarra's picture to the lawyer, and he was smitten by her

beauty and was ready to commit immediately. He flew to Greece to meet Sarra, married her, and brought her to their new home in Santa Clara County. Sarra was 28 years old when she got married in 1956. Sarra enjoyed living in this rural open area with orchards, which was what Monte Sereno was like before it was incorporated in 1957 as a city. Sarra and her first husband were married for 3+ years before he unfortunately died and Sarra was left their home and farm. They had no children.

Sarra enrolled in an English school and met her second husband, the late Swetko, who was initially from Yugoslavia. They were friends for a few years before Swetko started courting Sarra. The two love birds first had a court marriage and followed later by a church wedding.

Initially, Sarra worked at an electronic company in the Silicon Valley. Then she was the chef for The Sisters of the Holy Names in Los Gatos for many years.

Sarra and Swetko had two beautiful children. Her daughter passed away at a young age. Sarra is very close to her son, who lives in Texas with his family.

Swetko grew up on a large farm in Yugoslavia, so he was an expert working their farm with lots of trees and Sarra learned a lot from him. Swetko planted more fruit trees and knew a lot about soil rotation and harvesting crops.

In conclusion, Sarra lives a good life in Monte Sereno by gardening (she uses gardening as therapy during life's challenges) and keeping her land beautiful and clean - she does lots of weed picking and cleaning to keep her busy and strong as an elderly person. She continues to do all of her own her gardening and cooking and keeps her home spotless at 96 years old. She loves eating fruit from the bountiful trees she has on her farm and loves cooking mainly Greek/Continental food (her favorite food is lamb with vegetables - Greek style) and she loves when friends visit her and keep her company.



Social Justice Award Winner

Jane Wilde



The City of Monte Sereno congratulates Los Gatos High School student Jane Wilde on being selected as winner of the 2024 Monte Sereno Social Justice Scholarship Award.

The Monte Sereno Youth Commission chartered the Monte Sereno Social Justice Award to recognize students working to support human rights and bring social change in their communities. The winner is selected annually in the month of May by the Monte Sereno Youth Commission.

Jane Wilde is an active community member, helping to fight homelessness. Jane shared traveling this year with Saratoga Federated Church to Tijuana, Mexico, where she assisted with the building of two homes for the homeless.

Jane has chosen Amor Ministries, Inc. as her recipient organization. The City of Monte Sereno donated \$1,000 to Amor Ministries, Inc. on behalf of Jane Wilde for her outstanding efforts in bringing social change.

Great work Jane!

Crime Map

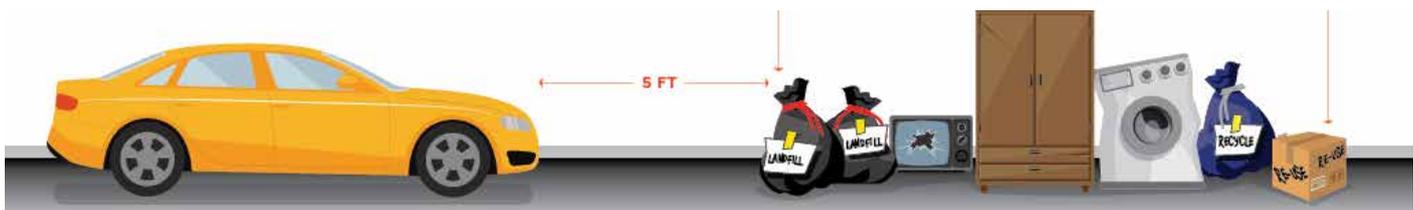
Los Gatos-Monte Sereno Police Department



Information about crime incidents occurring or the past history of incidents in a particular area is available online on the Crime Graphics Map. Crime Graphics is a map that can be navigated by the individual user to narrow down the area and date range and the types of incidents the viewer is interested in seeing on the map.

The Los Gatos-Monte Sereno Police Department encourages the community to access crime data at the Crime Graphics Community Portal:

<https://lgpd.crimegraphics.com/2013/default.aspx>



Make the Most of Extra Services

Managing household waste has never been easier! West Valley Recycles provides residents with a variety of no-cost services to simplify recycling and disposal of unwanted materials.

Available Services Include:

- **On-Call Bulky Cleanup Program:** Schedule up to 3 times annually the pick-up of three (3) cubic yards of reusable, recyclable, and/or landfill materials (bagged or boxed), plus three (3) large items, including furniture or appliances, and one (1) electronic waste item (not to exceed 150 lbs each).
- **Household Batteries:** Place batteries (A, AA, AAA, B, C, D, 9-volt, and button cell-type) in a

company provided fluorescent bag atop the landfill cart.

- **Cooking Oil:** Request a free jug, fill it with used cooking oil, and place it next to the recycling cart.
- **Extra Cardboard:** Bundle and tie cardboard (no larger than 4'x4') and place it next to your recycling cart.
- **Extra Yard Trimmings:** Set out up to six (6) times annually 32-gallon equivalent of extra yard trimmings, bundled or bagged (no larger than 3' in length or 6" in diameter) next to the organics cart.

Visit westvalleyrecycles.com for details.



Citizen of the Year Liz Lawler

Since moving to Monte Sereno, Liz Lawler quickly became involved with local issues. She was particularly interested in the safety of children walking and biking to school. Beginning with potholes on her street, Ms. Lawler joined neighbors, who banded together to lobby the City to fix the potholes. Consequently, the City created the Better Streets Commission (BSC) and Liz was appointed as a commissioner. The City created the Pavement Management Program, which the BSC oversees. Over the past several years, the streets of Monte Sereno have been repaved and improved to ensure safety and longevity.

In 2018, Liz was elected to the Monte Sereno City Council, serving four years and for one of those years including the Covid pandemic, as Mayor. During that year, Liz

ensured the City office remained open and residents had access to City services. She also ensured the City upgraded to the latest technology, so residents could easily participate remotely in City Council meetings.

During her time on Council, Ms. Lawler worked to preserve the City's character and the privacy it offers its residents, as well as safeguarding citizen tax dollars with a balanced budget. After serving on Council, Liz returned to the BSC and currently serves as Chair. Recent projects have included addressing the dangerous S-curve on Daves Avenue in order to make it safer for residents.

Liz Lawler was elected Citizen of the Year, because she loves her Monte Sereno community and has worked tirelessly to make it a great place to live.

CERT from a Volunteer's Point of View



Scott and Lorraine Hepworth attended the Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) Academy in 2018 and graduated as CERT members for the greater Almond Grove area in Los Gatos.

Behind St. Mary's Church, they established an Incident Command Post (ICP) and stocked the post with emergency supplies, plus General Mobile Radio Service (GMRS) and ham radios, to communicate within a square mile west of Highway 17 and south of Highway 9, covering over 1255 addresses, including both residential and downtown commercial areas of Los Gatos.

CERT members use this ICP for practice exercises, communicating with field teams of volunteers, and then with the Los Gatos-Monte Sereno Police Emergency Operations Center (EOC), just like they would in a real disaster. The Hepworths also participated in fire drills and water distribution exercises for both Los Gatos and Monte Sereno residents.

Their team activated in January 2023 when storms caused extensive damage, such as fallen trees, downed power lines, mudslides, and power outages. The Hepworths drove their vehicle through the streets and roads of Monte Sereno to check for hazards and talk to residents and then report damages to the EOC.

One of the goals as CERT volunteers is to help individuals, households, and neighborhoods be

better prepared ahead of time and to be more resilient in the event of a disaster. Volunteers also aim to assist families and others as needed before professional first responders can arrive, which could be several days. When requested, the Hepworths give Zoom presentations about the CERT program.

Listed below are some action items, which individuals and families can do to prepare ahead of time for emergencies.

Pick something from this list today and do not put off getting it done.

1. Register with AlertSCC for county-wide alerts on cell, email, or landline to know what's happening: <https://www.sccgov.org/sites/oes/alertscc/Pages/home.aspx>.
2. Keep a 3-day water supply – one gallon per day per family member for drinking (including pets) – more for washing and cooking.
3. Keep a week's worth of non-perishable food on hand, plus a can opener.
4. Keep a personalized "Go Bag" for each household member, updated seasonally.
5. Keep copies of important papers inside or near to Go Bags – passports, insurance, prescriptions, etc.
6. For more information, <https://www.losgatosca.gov/2520/General-Preparedness>



PICNIC IN THE PARK

On Sunday, August 18, 2024, Monte Sereno residents, councilmembers, staff, and agency partners enjoyed a delicious picnic at Vasona Lake County Park. This event was a wonderful community celebration. Monte Sereno looks forward to seeing everyone again at next year's event in August of 2025.





City of Monte Sereno
 18041 Saratoga-Los Gatos Road
 Monte Sereno, CA 95030-4299

Neighborhood Watch Program



Neighborhood Watch is one of the most effective and least costly ways to prevent crime and reduce fear. Members involved in Neighborhood Watch learn how to make their homes more secure, watch out for each other and the neighborhood, and report activities that raise their suspicions to law enforcement. Watch groups are not vigilantes. They are extra eyes and ears for reporting crime and helping neighbors.

It is important to communicate with your neighbors, host events in your neighborhood, know who may need help in a disaster, get to know each other, and be the eyes and ears for your neighborhood. It's an unfortunate fact that when a neighborhood crime crisis goes away, so does enthusiasm for Neighborhood Watch. Work to keep your Watch Group a vital force for community well-being.

Find out more information about the Los Gatos-Monte Sereno Police Department Neighborhood Watch Program, including a map of existing neighborhood watch locations and how to start a program in your neighborhood, at: <https://www.losgatosca.gov/146/Neighborhood-Watch>.



Update to Online Building Permits

The City of Monte Sereno now has online permits for rooftop residential **energy storage systems (ESS)** and residential **photovoltaic systems**.

These permits are available online on the [Online Building Services](#) website by clicking on the desired permit type under the "Obtain Minor Building Permit" heading. Projects that meet the established criteria (determined through online questions) will be approved and issued in real-time online. Project plans are required to be uploaded so City staff can reference them, but the permit is issued in real-time online.

If you have any questions or need assistance, please contact us at BuildingDepartment@cityofmontesereno.org.

City Newsletter Statement of Purpose

This is the official city newsletter to communicate current issues, services, and activities in Monte Sereno to the residents of the city — to facilitate, encourage, and improve interaction between the residents and the city government. The newsletter is published twice a year.

Graphic Designer: Michele Kwong

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SERVICE PROVIDERS

POLICE.....**911**

Los Gatos-Monte Sereno Police Department
 Business/Non-Emergency.....(408) 354-5257
 After 5 pm(408) 354-8600

FIRE: Santa Clara County Fire Department.....**911**
 Business/Non-Emergency.....(408) 378-4010

ANIMAL CONTROL/SHELTER
 Silicon Valley Animal Control.....(408) 764-0344

GARBAGE & RECYCLING
 West Valley Recycles.....(408) 283-9250

ELECTRICITY/GAS
 Silicon Valley Clean Energy.....(844) 474-7823
 Pacific Gas & Electric.....(800) 743-5000

ROAD OBSTRUCTIONS/ISSUES
 City Streets.....(408) 354-7635
 After Hours Emergency.....(408) 354-8600
 Highway 9 (Caltrans).....(510) 286-4444

SEWER
 West Valley Sanitation.....(408) 378-2407
 After Hours Emergency.....(408) 299-2507

WATER
 San Jose Water Company.....(408) 279-7900

STORM DRAIN SPILL REPORTING
 West Valley Clean Water Authority.....(408) 354-5385