

The Jacob Journal

A Newsletter from Supervisor Dianne Jacob

June 2001

Serving the Cities of:
El Cajon
La Mesa
Lemon Grove
Poway
Santee

Serving the communities of:
Agua Caliente
Allied Gardens
Alpine
Barrett
Blossom Valley
Bostonia
Boulevard
Campo
Canebrake
Casa de Oro
Crest
Cuyamaca
Dehesa
Del Cerro
Descanso
Dulzura
Eucalyptus Hills
Fernbrook
Flinn Springs
Granite Hills
Grantville
Guatay
Harbison Canyon
Jacumba
Jamul
Julian
Lake Morena
Lakeside
Mount Helix
Pine Hills
Pine Valley
Potrero
Ramona
Rancho San Diego
Rolando
San Carlos
San Pasqual
Santa Ysabel
Shelter Valley
Spring Valley
Tecate
Tierra del Sol
Vallecitos

Serving the Indian Reservations of:
Barona
Campo
Cosmit
Cuyapaipe
Inaja
Jamul
La Posta
Manzanita
Mesa Grande
Santa Ysabel
Sycuan
Viejas

We Stand Stronger After Challenging Times

On May 24, 2001, I delivered my annual State of the East County Address. I am pleased to share with you an excerpt from my remarks.

I've had the pleasure of representing the East County on the Board of Supervisors for eight years. In those eight years I have never experienced a more eventful time than the first four months of 2001.

The East County has stared down disaster on top of tragedy on top of crisis. The Viejas Fire and two schools shootings have tested our schools, our emergency agencies, our families and the character of our entire community. This year, I am aware of just how remarkable a place our East County really is. When life throws us curves, we respond with ability, dignity and unity.

When a 10,000 acre brush fire swept across the beautiful hills near Alpine, we gathered at the Alpine Community Center, took stock of what our neighbors needed, supported our firefighters and supported each other.

While firefighters, many of them volunteers, surrounded homes and fought back flames, we made lists of names to help unite neighbors with missing neighbors. We kept track of lost pets and missing livestock.

Residents volunteered their homes for overnight shelter. Donations poured in from East County businesses. Local markets created separate aisles for tired and thirsty firefighters. In gratitude, the clerks would not accept money from those working to protect the community.

Restaurants sent hundreds of meals. Truckload after truckload of water and supplies arrived at the community center. I was truly moved.

The East County tribal nations of Barona, Sycuan and Viejas made generous monetary gifts. East County children gave up their allowances to help fire victims recover from the drama. A Brownie troupe in Santee collected money in a jelly jar.

Believe me, I am determined to see that all monetary donations, collected to benefit fire victims go to help those fire victims!

I learned an important lesson during the Viejas fire. It was this: In the grimmest of times we are presented with opportunity; the opportunity to stand together, the opportunity to survive a crisis and the opportunity to be stronger because of it.

This idea was tested again when shots rang out on two of our high school campuses. As a former teacher and past president of the California School Board Association, the events that unfolded at Santana and Granite Hills rattled me like none other.



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Standing Stronger

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We kept hearing the same words on our radios and televisions. Senseless. Unthinkable. Tragedy. All words that fail to describe our anguish. The true test of our community was our reaction to the shootings.

In the seconds and minutes following both shootings, the law enforcement response was flawless. The San Diego County Sheriff's Department, the El Cajon Police Department, the responding firefighter/paramedic agencies, the District Attorney's office... all are heroes.

Grossmont Union High School District officials worked tirelessly and quickly to restore normalcy to Santana and Granite Hills. Granger Ward and his staff of teachers and administrators knew that each school was, in a sense, its own small community. District officials had the foresight and diligence to bring the students back to campus, shielding them from the media, giving them the time and the protection to grieve and heal together.

We had two mayors who remained positive in the wake of the shootings. Randy Voepel and Mark Lewis served as calm voices of reason. They took care of hundreds of small details. They were consummate community leaders.

The East County business community allowed the moms and dads of Santana and Granite Hills students to miss work to care for their families. No questions asked. Some businesses launched trust funds. The faith-based community gave of their time and facilities for gatherings and debriefing sessions. Community organizations like the Boys and Girls Clubs of East County provided a place for students to be together.

The students themselves were remarkable. They put on brave faces. They put on their school colors. They cheered and they vowed to keep up the spirit of their high schools. Most importantly, the community keeps talking. The dialogue continues. The school district, law enforcement and the County meet regularly to find ways to stop violence on campus. School resource officers have been put in place at every campus throughout this school year and the move is on to fund additional officers for next year.

I want every teacher to have the phone number of the County's invaluable Community Assessment Teams. CAT teams respond to reports of troubled kids by making house-calls to link families with social services. Whether it's a parent's drug addiction, or a mental health problem or the trials of divorce, CAT teams help families deal with problems together.... before kids get arrested.

After the fire and shootings, the entire nation has grown to know about our deep community spirit. Indeed, we are poised to tackle the future.

I want the East County to benefit from promising fields like biotechnology, software development, wireless and Internet communications. I am convinced that East County is the perfect location for the nation's top minds to develop new technologies.

There are 100 acres in Santee's Town Center which represent a cutting-edge future for us. Working with the City of Santee, this summer, the Board of Supervisors will look at bids to transform those 100 acres into a new high-tech campus. Our East County is on the forefront of emerging business right now. I want us to stay that way in the future.

There are wonderful plans to expand the existing Space and Defense Technology Consortium with the exciting new SPIN project.

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The 4.5 million dollar Satellite Planning Information Network could mean up to 4-thousand high-tech, high-paying jobs for East County. Special thanks to the East County Economic Development Council for making this a reality.

Lastly, I want to look at the big picture for a minute. Let's think about the outstanding students we are honoring tonight. As we make plans to keep pace with the future, we must make sure our sons and daughters are prepared to embrace it. The Grossmont High School District and the Grossmont-Cuyamaca Community College District have made it possible for these students to develop vital trade and technical skills that are so very crucial to the East County economy. More students should have the opportunity.

If you believe that vocational classes are somehow secondary to math or science, I want you to think of our state's electricity crisis. Without power, there's no machinery. Without a saw there can be no product. Without products, there's no business and without business, there's no future.

We cannot underestimate the value of fields like drafting, mechanics, automotive technology, woodworking, plumbing, working with electricity. They are the jobs that make up the backbone of our community. We are dooming our own future if we don't encourage our young people to enrich their lives through vocational classes.

I want to issue a challenge: To the teachers that give of themselves in vocational classes and are often frustrated at how disproportionate the funding is compared with academic classes, write down a wish list. From hammers, saws, and tools to aprons and safety masks. Write it all down and send it to me.

To the businesses in the East County who've proven you can help your community even in the face of fire and violence. I want to know if you are willing to answer those wish lists. If your business has extra tools, call me. If you have old equipment or if your business can make a donation to make sure that East County schools get kids interested in the line of work that is the heart of your business, call me.

To school administrators: Open the door to more vocational education classes in our schools and instill the value of these essential professions in our students. A year from now, I'd love to report that our East County community pulled together once again and was able to enhance our vocational classes with the support they truly deserve.

To anyone who thinks that "community" is an old-fashioned word and to anyone who thinks that the days of circling the wagons to tackle community problems are over, I wish they'd witnessed what we experienced in the East County this year. We are San Diego's East County and we are stronger than ever before.

Join me for Coffee and Conversation...

Friday, June 22, 2001, 8:30 a.m. to 10:30 a.m.

Barrett Junction
Highway 94, Dulzura

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Jun-01

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