



The Jacob Journal

A Newsletter from Supervisor Dianne Jacob

November/December 2007

After the Firestorm

Recovery and Review

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
Wynola

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



Seeking Assistance from Governor Schwarzenegger

Last month's edition of the *Jacob Journal* now reads like an eerie forecast: "Angel Fire Puts Rural Fire Protection to the Test" announced the headline. The edition marked the fourth

deputies to get people out of harm's way. The upgraded Regional Communications System, the internal network firefighters use to talk to each other, wasn't bogged down with busy signals this time.

Two County-owned firefighting helicopters and 20 new rural firefighting vehicles boosted the number of resources available to response coordinators, while the removal of dead and dying trees from

escape routes ensured that these trees did not fall and block important roads.

The revamped Emergency Operations Center, with its many technology upgrades, shined during the fires. The permanent placement of a CalFire official at the EOC helped officials track fire behavior in real time. The EOC's new software system kept crucial information

flowing to dozens of emergency agencies, allowing coordinators to work from the same page—a contrast to the frustrating information gap experienced by many during Cedar.

Cedar taught us how to better care for victims too. Before the flames were out, four Local Assistance Centers were already helping victims navigate the recovery

anniversary of the horrific 2003 Cedar Fire and by evaluating the County's response to this September's large Angel Fire near Julian.

Who knew that just as the *Journals* were about to reach mailboxes, the Harris, Witch and several other fires would test the region's firefighting capabilities on a scale that would tower over the Angel Fire and rival the dark days of Cedar.

There is no question that lessons learned from Cedar better prepared us for this second round of regional firestorms. Newer systems, resources and preventative measures proved their worth in lifesaving ways. Most notably, Reverse 9-1-1 greatly assisted Sheriff's



Looking south from Mount Helix as fire engulfs Mount Miguel on the morning of October 23



Fighting Harris Fire with water from Eastlake area



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**After
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process. These “one-stop shops” put resources available to victims together under one roof. From immediate needs like food, medicine and shelter, to financial assistance, insurance assistance, fraud protection and help with rebuilding, the County, in partnership with the State and Federal governments, did its best to get victims the answers they needed.

The County’s efforts to help victims will continue in the months ahead. At my request, the County has waived building permit fees for fire victims and expedited the permitting process.

In addition, the County approved a \$30 million Fire Cleanup Program to assist property owners with the removal of structural fire debris.



Surveying the damage by chopper, a message to firefighters on the property of a saved home

The program is voluntary and provided at no cost to property owners. Property owners whose homes and businesses were

were damaged or destroyed have been mailed information and many are choosing to participate. The important website: sdcountyrecovery.com will continue to post all available information about recovery services including additional information about debris removal.

As victims move on with their lives, the County will be taking stock of lessons learned from the fires.

As in fires past, preliminary damage reports have revealed that homes with defensible space and built to strict fire resistant standards were much more likely to be spared from fire.

In addition, we’ve learned that buildings served by narrow, winding driveways are uniquely challenging for fighters because truck access is difficult, if not impossible.

It is up to all of us to see that these lessons, and many others, are put into good practice in the months ahead.

The more time goes by, the less likely we are to remember the sense of urgency we now feel to make our region safer.

It is my sincere hope that we won’t let this this sense of urgency slip away.

Learning from fires often means tackling divisive subjects. But we owe it to victims who lost everything to ask and answer tough questions.



Round the Clock activity inside the County’s Emergency Operations Center, the coordination center during the fire

Will the region recognize that rural fire protection impacts the urban areas too and get behind the plan to consolidate and fund the many fractured fire districts in our most fire-prone areas?

Will our region’s utility help us research ways to prevent fires caused by power lines? Can the California Public Utilities Commission help us begin a meaningful discussion about plans to run a major energy transmission line through land prone to catastrophic wildfire?

Why do State and Federal agencies have differing philosophies on prescribed burns, fuel breaks and managing brush? If fire is a natural force of nature that gets rid of old growth and allows the land to renew itself, can prescribed burns help us protect areas choked with decades old vegetation?

These are some of the items I plan to take up in the coming year. If you’re worried about a particular fire issue, or if you have ideas to make the region safer, I want to hear from you. The time is now for all of us to reflect on regional fire protection.

Keeping Spirits Bright

Supervisor Jacob wishes to extend her heartfelt thanks to the many groups and individuals who, in ways large and small, came to the aid of evacuees and victims during the wildfires.



Chargers players join Supervisor Jacob at a visit the Rancho San Diego assistance center

From the Chargers players who brought needed smiles to the faces of victims in Rancho San Diego to the massive fund drive held by radio stations owned by Clear

Channel Communications, to the tireless work of East County's own Rescue Task Force to the East County cities that joined forces to care for unincorporated area victims in shelters, the outpouring of generosity was heartwarming. Thank you to every donor.

Supervisor Jacob says she's never been more proud to represent the people of San Diego County.



Spring Valley Teens Find New Place to Chill Out

Like, finally! Years in the making, the new Spring Valley Gym and Teen Center near La Presa Middle School is here at last.

The nearly 16,000 square foot facility is ultra modern and includes a recording studio, basketball and volleyball courts, computer lab, multipurpose room and a counseling and resource center.

Center supporters, including the Youth and Families Coalition and the Spring Valley Community Center worked tirelessly to secure County, State and Federal funding for the \$3.2 million facility. Land for the project was donated by the La Mesa/Spring Valley School District.

If you're a teen, roll by and stay awhile!

A Film that Fights Back



More so than other counties, San Diego County has managed to hold the line against methamphetamine, the deadly and powerful stimulant responsible for an inordinate amount of regional crime and violence. Still, meth along with the toxic chemicals used to manufacture it, maintains its nasty grip on users, families, our communities and the environment. You can help lessen meth's grip on our region by taking part in an historic television event.

On Wednesday, December 12 at 7 p.m., local television stations including KUSI, will air "Crystal Darkness: Meth's Deadly Assault on Our Families."

This program examines the horrific meth spiral and is a must-watch for families. Learn more at www.crystaldarkness.com and don't miss this show.



Coffee and Conversation

Got an idea to improve County government? Share your thoughts with Supervisor Jacob at her next informal community coffee!

Friday, January 31 at 8:30 a.m.

Mountain Empire Community Center,
976 Sheridan Rd.
Campo

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We hope to hear from you soon!

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