

Building Oakland

Reprints from A Fresh Look at Oakland, the weekly e-newsletter from Mayor Jean Quan
January 16-March 27, 2011

January 16, 2011



Volunteering for Oakland: Jo Budman at Brookfield Elementary

North Oakland resident **Jo Budman** has always been a doer, even before she retired. Her work with foster youth in the [CASA program](#) strengthened her conviction to help build volunteerism in East Oakland schools to provide support for young students' early literacy and self-confidence. Two years ago she asked the principal at Brookfield School if he needed help. He asked if she could build volunteer support for the students.

Jo soon recruited other volunteers to read to the

students and improve reading literacy. Along the way, she learned about the [Oakland Literacy Coalition](#), (OLC) a new organization made up of literacy service providers, businesses, education stakeholders and the City of Oakland. Jo persuaded them to choose Brookfield as one of their priorities.

Today, five nonprofits in the newly named **Brookfield Literacy Zone** serve the preschool and the elementary school in order to bring more literacy services and volunteers to Brookfield. Even more exciting, the Brookfield Community has accepted the challenge of reading 50,000 books by the end of the summer of 2011 and are well on their way to achieving this goal.

"When I first volunteered two years ago, there was little parent involvement at Brookfield. Today, we are building an active community of parents and volunteers...and student literacy is improving, inspiring and infectious."

Consider joining my call for 2000 volunteers to work with our students and youth. You can sign up at www.oaklandschoolvolunteer.org/yes

January 23, 2011

Building Community Through Interactive Art: Our Oakland: Eastside Stories



Our Oakland: Eastside Stories--Can art build community? Ask Rene Yung, (left) the artist and project director for "Our Oakland," an integrated public art project in the new East Oakland Community Library that creates a new platform for community storytelling and is already reshaping East Oakland's image.

"The idea is to collectively highlight the positive assets in East Oakland that are too often overlooked, and create a platform for individual voices from and about the community," said Yung in a [2009 OaklandLocal](#) interview.

In the interview, Yung notes that the goal is to present a more balanced picture to counter the violent images and dramatic headlines that make up most of the public knowledge about East Oakland. "That kind of persistent negative portrayal starts to stymie community hope, and without hope you can't imagine change," Yung states. "Our Oakland' is about re-telling and re-imagining East Oakland in order to inspire people to take action for positive changes in their community."

This is exactly what we are trying to achieve with our block by block organizing in Beat 33 and surrounding neighborhoods (see #2 below)--through words, actions and art!

You can see part of the project -- art glass in a 65-foot clearstory window and an Interactive Pod--when the new [East Oakland Community Library at 81st Avenue in East Oakland opens this Saturday, January 29](#). You can also log on to the [interactive website](#) which provides a digital archive of community stories about East Oakland and hosts storytelling events to build a new community online that will help build community on the ground in Beat 33 and nearby. It tells "the other story" of East Oakland, the assets and rich heritage in an often overlooked community.

***Our Oakland:Eastside Stories** is a unique and creative approach to Oakland's Public Art Program. In 1989, the City of Oakland adopted a Public Art Ordinance and an Oakland Redevelopment Agency resolution authorizing the allocation of 1.5% of municipal capital improvement project costs to commission and acquire public art. For more information about the public art program, contact [Steven Huss](#).*



January 30, 2011



Building Oakland: Robin Jones on Seminary Avenue

Her wiry haired rescue dog Elvis is what inspired **Robin Jones** to do her part to keep Oakland beautiful. She was tired of taking her small terrier out for a walk and finding trash on the streets of her East Oakland neighborhood. Robin signed up with the city's Public Works Adopt-A-Spot program and for the past year and half, she has volunteered her time to pick up the litter along Seminary Avenue from Hwy. 580 to MacArthur Blvd.

"Sometimes people driving by in their cars honk their horns or wave from their window to show their appreciation while I'm picking up litter," said Robin. "That is the best feeling of all."

When she is not working her shift as a nurse at UCSF Medical Center, Robin spends an hour three times a month on Saturdays and Sundays cleaning up the busy street running through the Mills College neighborhood. Sporting a fluorescent safety vest and blue rubber gloves, Robin works fast to remove all kinds of litter and debris. Then, she carries two large plastic trash bags back to her house to sort in bins and recycle the glass bottles. Robin, who is originally from Australia, said taking care of her neighborhood is her way of giving back and building community.

Submitted by Kamika Dunlap

For more information about the City's [Adopt-a-Spot program](#), call 434-5113.

February 6, 2011

Building Oakland: Frank Rose on 98th Avenue

Although Frank Rose is president of the Board of Directors... he says children are the real heart of the organization. Located at a gated compound at 816 98th Ave, the [East Oakland Boxing Association](#), provides a community garden and boxing facilities to youth in East Oakland.



"We want to show people in the East Oakland community that we have an oasis," Rose said. "We are providing kids with educational and fitness programs as well as teaching them how to grow their own food." A state of the art gray water tank filters water from the building for the garden and they have launched a fund raising campaign to build a brick pathway along the vegetable and fruit garden.

Many youth in the area regularly hang out at the 1940s era industrial buildings used as a boxing gym. Also nearby two buildings serve as classroom space for the SmartMoves education program, where kids can get help with homework and take computer classes.

The goal is to provide young people with a safe and nurturing environment to achieve academic success, build self-esteem and learn life skills. "I want the gym to be a place where kids can come to stay when they are in trouble," Rose said.

Currently, the facilities are open year-round Mondays, Tuesdays, and Thursdays from 3 to 6 pm. On Wednesdays and Fridays operating hours are from noon to 6 pm. However, there are plans to extend the hours to include weekends and more programming for young women.

Above: Youth Intern/Garden Coordinator Cris Cruz, Rohland Moland (17), Frank Rose and Peter Moland (14).

Submitted by Kamika Dunlap

The EOBA recently received recognition from the CA State Legislature for being "Dedicated to the Sustainable Future of the Community" and the CA State Assembly for "Collaboration on Green Jobs and a Green Economy and Commitment to Providing Youth with Work-Readiness Training, Leadership Skills, and Guidance". EOBA also received the "Green Hero" Award for efforts in making Oakland a greener city. For more information go to the EOBA website at www.eoba.org or call 430-8056.

February 13, 2011

Building Oakland: Cynthia Slater in West Oakland



On weekdays, Oakland resident **Cynthia Slater** (far left) is a Human Resources director at UC Berkeley. On weekends, she transforms the lives of five and six year old children at the Willie Keyes Recreation Center, 3131 Union Street in West Oakland.

Since 2008, together with other volunteers from the [Oakland Baha'i community](http://www.oaklandbaha'i.org), Cynthia

spends her Saturdays promoting "spiritual empowerment" through art and music projects. In addition to providing healthy snacks for children in need, the volunteers teach 10-20 children such basic values as kindness, generosity, community, and love through cooperative, non-competitive games.

"Forming bonds and ties of friendship and love between kids and their families" has helped her "understand the underlying issues in community and community building." Most of all, Cynthia is passionate about her volunteering because she is unlocking hidden potential -- she is helping youth "understand that they have innate abilities within themselves to achieve."

--Submitted by David Drabkin

On Saturday, February 26, readers are invited to attend an "Appreciation and Encouragement Brunch," at the Willie Keyes Recreation Center from 11 a -2 pm.

February 20, 2011



Building Oakland: Alex Miller-Cole, San Pablo Corridor Coalition

Just last October, Alex Miller-Cole "discovered" St. Andrew's Plaza in West Oakland when he volunteered in the 2010 Oakland Parks Coalition "Love Your Parks" Survey last October.

"Despite the fact that I have lived only blocks away from the plaza for the past 11 years, I had never set foot in the park before that day," he said.

While others might have bypassed the park, which attracts the homeless, Alex did not. "I became involved and learned that they simply have no where else to go.

That was enough for me. I believe in change through action!"

Alex "adopted" St. Andrews Plaza through the City's Adopt-a-Spot program and motivated neighbors and friends to join him twice a month for the park clean ups. A member of the newly formed [San Pablo Corridor Coalition](#) (SPc2), he invited them to join him, as well.

"Our biggest success is having people show up and help. We actually have park patrons who don't even ask--they just grab a broom and help. It is truly heart warming to see that people really do care and just need to see some initiative to get involved."

To find out more about park stewardship, contact the Oakland Parks Coalition at www.oaklandparkscoalition.org. To learn more about the City's Adopt-a-Spot program, call 434-5113 or go to www.oaklandpw.com/page283.aspx.

February 27, 2011

Building Oakland: James McBryan & Anca Mosoiu--Online Volunteer Tracking for the City and others



James McBryan and Anca Mosoiu are two fans of the Morcom Rose Garden who also happen to develop websites professionally. They volunteered their creative professional skills to develop an online volunteer tracking system for the Morcom Rose Garden, where Anca used to hang out

as a teenager and James helped maintain as an adult volunteer.

The program, called "**OurVolts**" allows volunteers to find projects, sign up, log their hours, track their activities at project sites, and share data. It allows the city or sponsoring nonprofit to use this data for grant writing and project management. The online program is so user friendly that it has been adopted by the San Jose Rose Garden and is now being rolled out by the City to track volunteer hours in the city's parks and other locations.

"It saves me a ton of time," said Tora Rocha, Public Works Park Maintenance Supervisor who supervised the Rose Garden at the time. "This way, our volunteers keep track of their own hours and can alert me to maintenance issues without having to track me down."

"It's a matter of using technology to be more productive," explained Anca, owner of [Tech Liminal](#), a downtown storefront salon offering IT coaching, developer services, and community networking.

"We wanted to create something that could be used by different types of organizations, and are recruiting a variety of volunteer-based organizations to alpha test the program," added James, who owns [TwoMile.com](#), a virtual website business with a partner in Denver that creates technological tools to promote positive social change.

As you can imagine, they spent many hours making sure the program was easy to use for volunteers and sponsoring organizations alike-all on a pro bono basis. Clearly, this project was a labor of love for James and Anca.

To find out more about OurVolts go to www.ourvolts.com.

March 6, 2011

Building Oakland: Jo-Ann Donovan- the Laurel Art Garden

Most drivers probably speed by the 35th Avenue and Delaware Street highway 580 entrance....

However, it's worth slowing down to take a closer look. For the past eight years, a group of dedicated community activists have worked hard to clean and beautify this neighborhood through an innovative art installation called the Laurel Art Garden.



Jo-Ann Maggiora Donovan, a native Oaklander, [jewelry maker](#), and President of the Laurel Village Association, originally helped reclaim this abandoned space and revitalize it into a thriving "pocket park." In addition to the regular bulb and native plantings, tree trimming, and weeding, members of the Laurel Village Association decided to take the project one step further: the garden would boast both plants and artwork.

With help from Richard Cowan in my then Council Office, the Laurel Village Association has transformed this space through the [Oakland Adopt A Spot program](#). While cleaning the Laurel Art Garden, Jo-Ann discovered several abandoned hubcaps and, with the help of her husband, began painting them so that "the neighbors across the street have something pretty to look at instead of the stretch of wire fencing when the flowers aren't blooming." Today, the fence itself has bloomed, with various artists and sculptors offering to help contribute even more to the efforts -- all with little to no funding, just pure creativity and donated paint! Here's to getting active and uncovering beauty in unlikely places throughout your neighborhood!

Submitted by David Drabkin

March 13, 2011

Building Oakland: Leslie Masler and the Fruitvale Presbyterian Senior Center

Last year, when the school district was forced to discontinue its Older Adult Program due to state budget cuts, patrons and staff of the Fruitvale Presbyterian Senior Center struggled to keep going.

Then along came **Leslie Masler**, former president of the Montclair Lion's Club and an independent travel agent from Berkeley's Northside Travel. She had stopped by to consider a one-time donation, and ended up regularly volunteering at the Senior Center.



"I was inspired by Center Director Julie Jones' energy and determination to keep that center going. Her exuberance was contagious. I wanted some of that," said Leslie.

Leslie found a way to combine her love of cooking and her desire to give back. Every second Wednesday of each month, Leslie hosts a fund raising luncheon at the center. She purchases all of the food, which she then prepares, caters and serves. Everything is farm fresh and according to the Center patrons, delicious. For \$5, guests receive an entree, vegetable, salad, dessert and ice tea. Leslie donates all proceeds to the center.

She said that after hosting the first fundraiser, she was won over by the wisdom and kindness of the seniors.

"The thought of this Center not continuing broke my heart. It may seem like a gift I'm giving, but in actuality, it's a gift I'm receiving, where I can do my hobby and fill my heart."

Every second Wednesday of the month, 12:15pm, Fruitvale Presbyterian Senior Center, 2735 MacArthur.

*Contributed by Julie Jones
Photography by Tim Chapman*

March 20, 2011



Building Oakland: Oakland Rotary's "Oakland Reads"

<<Oakland Rotarian Giovanna Tanzillo presents three books each to 22 third graders at Millsmont Elementary School.

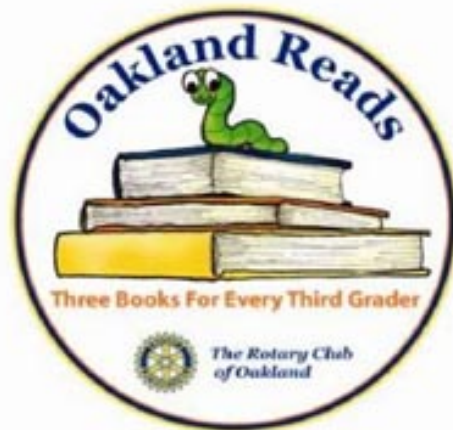
This week, 100 volunteers from The Rotary Club of Oakland #3 donated 12,700 books to 75 public schools in Oakland and Emeryville in a three-day blitz.

"By delivering a free backpack containing three books to every third grader in Oakland and Emeryville, Oakland Reads is designed to provide children with enjoyable books to own and take home," said Travis Neal, co-chair of the clubs Youth & Education Committee. "Third grade is a crucial time to build reading proficiency or a child risks falling behind in school," added Ginni Ring, the other co-chair.

The planning and logistics for the effort-- now in its fourth year--begins in the fall. There are last year's books to be inventoried, new books to be vetted and ordered, books to be sorted and packed in boxes labeled with the correct number per classroom and the name of the teacher for each of the 228 traditional and charter classrooms receiving books.

Additional classroom book sets for K-2nd grade students are distributed to the neediest schools. Also included are book sets for patients at Children's Hospital & Research Center Oakland and for youth in programs at Lincoln Child Center and the East Bay Agency for Children. Earlier this year, Oakland Rotary donated over 3,000 additional books to Oakland-based literacy groups through the Oakland Literacy Coalition.

For more information, visit [Oakland Rotary's website](#).



Contributed by JoAnn Driscoll

March 27, 2011

Building Oakland: Howard Nathel at Campbell Village

Through his volunteer work at the Office of Parks & Recreation and formerly with Students Run Oakland, **Howard Nathel** mentors, trains and tutors students all over Oakland. He has been a catalyst in the success of OPR's [Radical Roving Recreation](#), a program that caters to underserved youth and young adults offering academic assistance, employment opportunities, promotion of health awareness and physical activity, social and mental development, cultural arts, crime prevention and peaceful conflict resolution at Campbell Village Recreation Center.



"I love working with kids; I think I get more out of it than I give to the kids," said Howard, a former scientist at Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory. Howard has been volunteering for four or five years in various capacities in Oakland.

His math and science tutoring have made a difference in the lives of high school students at Castlemont, MetWest, Oakland Tech, and now at Campbell Village Recreation Center in West Oakland. He derives pleasure in the "a-hah" moments when students "get-it", and from accolades of appreciate parents.

"I am very fortunate in that I have the luxury of flexible time and the resources to volunteer. It takes commitment--you have to be consistent, discipline, and compassionate to build trust with the students," he said. These same tenets are how he raised his own son. "Being a big kid myself makes things easier."

In addition to his work with Oakland youth, Howard serves on the Board of the [Friends of Oakland Parks & Recreation](#). He encourages more people to volunteer, reminding them to be realistic about balancing their volunteering with their work, family and other commitments.

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