

The Menlo Oaks Neighborhood Newsletter



The Oak Leaf



May 2005

The Annual Picnic - Mark Your Calendars

Save June 12th for this year's Annual Picnic! Mark your calendar, gather your family, lawn chairs, blankets and contest entries and come to the grounds at Peninsula School. The picnic is from 4:00 – 7:00.

The food will be great as usual: chicken, burgers, and hot dogs cooked ably by your MODA board members, Joel, Marge (they're finally going to let me cook) , and Rich. Soft drinks, wine and beer will be provided.

Don't forget to bring a salad or dessert. We hope you will enter your dish in the contest. In order that your entry can be judged on time, please have it at the picnic by 4:30 with identification on the bottom. There is a Kid's category for desserts, too. It's great to see and taste the creative dishes the kids put together! Remona Murray will be looking for tasters to help her judge the entries. Remember this is all for fun -- Martha will not be there as a judge!

We have added some new attractions this year. In addition to Mr. Horsefeathers, we are planning to have a slide and two bounce houses, one for the little ones and the other for the older kids. These great attractions are being arranged by Celine Sanie.

Holly Still is hoping you may have an "interesting" white elephant you'd like to donate as a prize. If you're wondering, call Holly (phone: 322-9888 or email: vicepresident@menlo-oaks.org) or stop her as she makes the circuit with Baxter.

Don't forget, your annual dues pay for the picnic so come eat, drink, visit with neighbor and enjoy some super entertainment. It's better than take-out!

Coleman Avenue Issue

On the evening of March 12th the MODA Board held a meeting for the twenty property owners with road frontage on Coleman. The Board appreciates the effort of these people for making time in their busy lives and schedules to review the information packet sent to their homes and attending the meeting. Our sincere thanks go out to the Strahorns' for hosting the event. Only six owners were unable attend the meeting. We also received input from three non-attendees in the form of either a call or a letter.

The purpose of this meeting was to bring the Coleman owners up to date on the discussions between the MODA Board, the author of the petition Carla Dewar, San Mateo County Supervisor Richard Gordon and Director of Public Works Neil Cullen as requested by MODA members at the Annual Meeting.

Joel Wilhite President, Richard Collyer Editor, Remona Murray Treasurer, Mary Sapountzis, and Celine Sanie were the MODA Board members present at the meeting. Copies of the presentation and information packet we covered with the attendees is available on MODA's Web Site, www.menlo-oaks.org under Coleman Issue.

In addition to the "Pedestrian/Bicycle Facility Matrix-Coleman Ave.", presented at last year's November MODA Annual meeting, two other options were provided by Board Members at the March 12th Coleman Meeting. Option (7) creates a 4 ft compacted concrete graded shoulder, separated from the pavement by a raised berm and clear of parking on one side of the street. The last Option (8) was to implement a clearing of all debris, ivy, hedges and obstacles three feet in from the edge of the pavement via an ordinance for ALL of MODA's streets. This three-foot area would foster a feeling of being able to move out of traffic without accommodating parking in front of people's homes.

Calendar

Jun 7th	Special Meeting
Jun 12th	MODA Picnic

Aug 3	CERT Training Starts
Aug 6 & 13	Emergency Prep Class
for details: www.menlofire.org	

Coleman Ave Issue (cont)

Several of the attendees of the meeting voiced their concern for the safety of students choosing a non-vehicular way to school; the majority are concerned that the options in the matrix would increase the line of sight resulting in speeding and the occurrence of accidents. The closure of Coleman at the City/County line was discussed. It would lead to pushing the traf

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DSL Health in Menlo

Oaks

Over the last several months, I have been corresponding with several neighbors in Menlo Oaks about their DSL service. Several have commented on their slow service. It is true, with DSL the farther you are from the phone company the slower or non-existent the service becomes. We are all relatively the same distance from the central office (in Palo Alto). My service has been running for 5 years and I have found a few things that might explain some of the discrepancies.

To check the health of your service (DSL or otherwise), open up a web browser and search for "DSL Speed Test". You should see numerous links to choose from. Some sites require your computer to run a java client. If you don't have one installed or don't know what that is, the test won't work. Once you have the test up and running, it will take a minute or two. What you should see when the test completes is a result page showing the speed results for downstream and upstream data rates. Downstream describes the data being delivered to your house, upstream is the opposite direction.

If you selected a test server in a far away city you'll be testing more of their network instead of the one in your house.

On average, the numbers from the test usually don't change much but if they do, then this could be a clue that something is wrong or you are on a Cable modem which operates on a totally different system. In the case with DSL, if your results are always slow then it is time to roll up the sleeves and go to work.

My test data indicated my downstream was nearly 1.2Mb/s (mega bits per second) and 316kb/s upstream (kilo bits per second) of which they only guarantee the upstream rate of 256kb/s in my case. If your DSL service doesn't run within twenty percent of those rates then most likely the link is not operating properly.

Since all of our homes are the same distance from the central office (or CO for short) we should all expect to get roughly the same numbers. When my DSL connection was first installed, it too wasn't nearly as fast as it is today. I found the solution to the speed problem buried in the technology. By simply moving some devices and changing a few wires, I was able to go from 300kb/s downstream to the speed I am clocking today.

How it all started...

The crew that came out to install the DSL service was desperately trying to get in and get out as fast as possible. The very second they saw green lights and could ping a web site, they packed up their truck and left. This is standard operating practice as they are trying to perform as many installs as possible in a day. When the contractors came to install the service, they asked me where my computer would be and placed the equipment next to my computer.

When the phone company installed the service at our house they added a "splitter box" and put it next to the DSL modem where the phone was previously. The splitter box was connected into an existing phone jack and splits the line into two circuits, one for data and the other for voice. The phone is reconnected to the voice side and the DSL modem is connected to the data side. The other side of the DSL modem is connected to a firewall and eventually into my computer.

What the installers don't tell you is that long wires are notorious for attenuating high frequency energy like high speed data. In other words, the farther down the wire the energy travels, the weaker the signal becomes. This effect makes it harder for modems to recover the energy the farther it is from the CO and why some people can't get DSL. To receive the best possible service, the DSL modem must be able to get as much signal from the CO as possible. What I discovered was a huge improvement when I moved the splitter as close as possible to the box where the wires from the phone company terminate.

Discovering High Speed

The crucial element for improving or maintaining the quality of the DSL carrier I discovered is to move the equipment as close as possible to the phone box. The next best technique is to put the DSL modem on a dedicated connection to the splitter box. The important concept is to intercept as much of the high frequency energy (your data) as soon as possible and not let any of it get into other wires feeding extension phones in the house. By keeping the modem connection to the splitter as short as possible and putting the splitter as close to the outside box as possible, more of the DSL energy can be preserved. The voice connection doesn't care where the splitter box is placed because those signals aren't affected by longer wires.

Most DSL modems are not rated for outdoor use, but the splitter box was. Since the Ethernet signal can travel over 1000 feet using CAT5 cable, the DSL modem can be placed in an out of the way location but somewhere near a power outlet.

My splitter box is now inches away from the phone company box. I used a foot of twisted pair wire to connect between the phone box and the splitter box. The DSL modem is only 3 feet from the splitter. After making those few changes my link has never been slower than 1.1Mb/s. I also connected the power supply to a small UPS to protect the equipment since it deserves as much protection as the computer you would use with it. Since then, my network has never failed with only a few DNS server problems which are out of my control.

Joel Wilhite

Editors Note: The article that follows is a great, but long article. I have removed a fair amount of the original article due to space constraints. However, I feel that the content is very helpful. So I will have the original, unedited, version of the article posted on the MODA web site with this newsletter. If you wish to read more details, along with graphics, please download the PDF from the MODA web site.

fic back on to City streets. The question is does it create more traffic tie-ups on other streets? What is the impact on Bay and Ringwood and is that the real solution for our neighborhood?

Many of our longer time Coleman neighbors noted that installment of the traffic circles did reduce the speed of traffic. This attempt to reduce the line of sight may have resulted unintentionally in the pedestrians and bikers feeling unsafe. The lack of drainage and the current parking situation often forces pedestrians and biker to the middle of the street. The neighbors pondered the unforeseen manifestations of any other major change to Coleman Avenue.

The meeting concluded with a request for input directly from the Coleman neighbors about their individual concerns. Concerns were voiced about impact on the fences, driveways, trees, hedges, drainage, and parking. There was an overwhelming desire to preserve the look and feel, in keeping with the rest of the neighborhood. More concern was put on not creating an environment that fostered speeding down Coleman on the way to and from school. A solution that is of flexible design and low impact was preferable over creating space for bikers and pedestrians resulting in an increase in the speed of vehicles.

Coleman residents agreed that by removing parked cars during school hours, trimming or removing hedges/shrubs and small tree limbs by the roadside would increase pedestrian/bike safety. The MODA Board would like to acknowledge the property owners on ALL of our streets who foster a safe place for pedestrians to pass without finding themselves in the road.

Joel Wilhite
Holly Still
Remona Murray
Celine Sanie
Rich Collyer
Mary Sapountzis

Fences, walls and hedges - Zoning Regulations

SECTION 6412. Fences, walls and hedges shall be subject to the following regulations, except as provided in Section 6412.1:

(a) Fences, walls, and hedges not exceeding four (4) feet in height may occupy any front yard area.

(b) Fences, walls, and hedges not exceeding six (6) feet in height may occupy any side or rear yard area, provided:

1. That they do not extend into any required front yard.

2. That, in the case of a corner lot, they do not extend into the side yard required along a side street or into that portion of the rear yard abutting such side street which is equal to the width of the side yard required on said side street.

(c) On any parcel of land having a street frontage of one hundred (100) feet or more, and located in any "S" District requiring a minimum building site of twenty thousand (20,000) square feet or more, fences, hedges, or walls not exceeding six (6) feet in height may be erected in any part of the yard area, except as limited by Paragraph (d).

(d) On any corner lot, the maximum height of fences, walls, hedges, and growth located within fifty (50) feet of the intersected street lines shall not exceed four (4) feet in height; provided that nothing in this section shall prevent any fence, wall, or hedge from occupying any portion of the lot area that a main residence may occupy under the terms of this Part.

(e) Where trees are located within fifty (50) feet on the intersected street lines, the main trunks of such trees shall be trimmed free of branches to a height of seven and a half (7.5) feet above the curb grade.

SECTION 6412.1. With regard to the height limits set out in Section 6412, whenever there exists an abrupt shift in the height of the land at the boundary line between two different property owners, the lower owner may erect a fence, wall or hedge on the boundary to a height limit set out in Section 6412, and in no event more than twelve (12) feet high.

Coleman Ave - What's Next?

What is next? The business before us includes a range of options and as always, doing nothing is still one of the options. Due to the number, 83 of our 164 membership that year, of MODA households that signed the petition circulated and submitted to the County. The County has asked MODA if a survey of the District is warranted. Finding a balance between pedestrian, bike and motor vehicles in a place with 3,300 cars a day is a difficult task.

A motion was made at the April 4th MODA meeting in support of option (7), see newsletter insert. Since the Coleman meeting the Board has received three additional formal proposals submitted for MODA members to consider. If you would like to propose an option, you can do so by sending an email detailing your proposal to webmaster@menlo-oaks.org or to Richard Collyer at 441 Arlington Way, by Memorial Day. Hard copies will be made available upon request from Holly Still, VP - 530 Bay Road.

According to the MODA by-laws the Board requires authority from the lesser of one fourth (currently @ 183) or 50 of MODA membership to form an opinion to be delivered to the County. MODA board is calling for a Special Meeting on June 7th at 8pm to discuss and vote on proposals at Peninsula School auditorium. This is your forum to voice your support of the various proposals submitted to MODA. The county will use the results of this meeting to decide their course of action regarding Coleman Avenue. As you are all aware, many parties outside of MODA have expressed their opinions about what should become of Coleman Avenue. Please attend this meeting to voice your opinion as to the future of one of our neighborhood streets.

President's Note: MODA is here to keep the neighborhood informed about issues and help any and all members to be heard while promoting good will. MODA is set up to provide direction and support operating solely from the annual dues and the commitment of our volunteers.

First Annual Neighborhood Spring Cleaning - April 9

Approximately a dozen MODA adults and children participated in the First Annual Neighborhood Spring Cleaning. Residents met in front of The Peninsula School and received a garbage bag and a map outlining their "pick up" route. Enough trash was picked up during the two-hour event to fill the back of a pick up truck and warrant a trip to the local dump. A lunchtime BBQ was enjoyed by all participants.

Holly Still

Wanted: Used Ink-Jet/Toner Cartridges & Used Cell Phones

Our non-profit 501 (c) (3) junior rowing club (NORCAL CREW) is collecting used ink-jet cartridges, laser/toner cartridges and used cell phones. If you or your company have any used cartridges or used cell phones you would like to donate, please contact me. This is an ongoing project.

Holly Still
322.9888
hollystill@sbcglobal.net

Help The MODA Picnic Organizers!

- Please remember to label your dish with your name and address.
- With the use of a small PA System for the day's event.
- Volunteer to be a host, barbecue cook, contest judge or on clean up crew.
- Donate prizes (i.e. toys or gift certificates from your business).
- Remember to pay your \$20.00 annual dues.

Fire Hazards

If you see a fire hazard area (i.e. weeded lot or alleyway), you can report the problem by calling 650-688-8400 or emailing mpfd@menlofire.org.

Did you know that.....

- Over the past three years Arlington Way has had 9 significant tree permits granted for the removal of Oaks, mainly to new construction.
- Most significant tree removals, even oaks, require that they be replaced with only a five (5) gallon tree of varying type from apple to a crape myrtle - unless otherwise specified by the county.
- You can check your permit status on-line at www.co.sanmateo.ca.us/ click on Living Here, Property Information, Permits, On-line Permit Center, Check the Status of Permit, then type in the street number and street name in all caps.
- For speeders call the CHP dispatch number (707) 551-4100 with a license plate number, time of day and vehicle description.
- The CHP has designated 1-800-TELL CHP as the number that shall serve as the point of contact for the public to access the CHP for non-emergency purposes (e.g., accident reports, tow questions, CHP office locations, vehicle theft tips, community outreach programs).

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ABOUT THE OAK LEAF:

The Oak Leaf is published by the Menlo Oaks District Association and is distributed to all homes in the Menlo Oaks neighborhood of unincorporated San Mateo County.

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