



# West Floral Park SUMMER 2019 **NEWSLETTER**

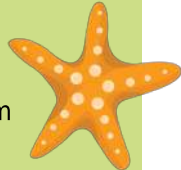
## WFPNA

*Where Neighbors Turn Into Family and Friends*

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Craig Blankenhorn  
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#### Open Garden Day Chair

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#### Beautification Chair

Judith Goldstein  
jgoldsteinvp@yahoo.com

## West Floral Park Difference Makers

by Donna Layne



Fire, passion, tireless work, and unrelenting commitment are what our featured West Floral Park “difference makers” have in common. All agree that what they do is his or her calling and they feel compelled to work hard to make a difference in other people’s lives. I am proud to introduce you to the following difference makers whom we also call neighbors.



**Rigo Rodriguez**, a Santa Ana Unified School District Board of Trustees member, is the youngest of thirteen children. His father was part of the Bracero farmworker program in the 1960s and Rigo was born in Salinas, California. He was educated in both California and Mexico. Rigo had to learn Spanish when he went to live in Mexico during high school, and at 16 years old, he was sent back to the

U.S. to be the nanny for his sister’s children. Rigo is a proud graduate of UCI where he received both his B.A. and M.A. in urban planning. He then went on to earn his Ph.D. from USC in urban geography. He currently teaches at CSULB and will be department chair next year. Rigo is married to Rosalba Hernandez who is a marriage and family counselor for Santiago College and they have three children ages 10, 13, and 15. Rigo and his family moved to West Floral Park in 2014 and he was elected to the SAUSD Board of Trustees in 2016.

Rigo is passionate about his work, and young children (infants to 8 years old) are dearest to his heart. This interest began with the birth of his own children and he was amazed at how fast children developed. He soon realized that most underserved children often miss important milestones during this period of growth. When Rigo became involved with three nonprofit agencies that worked together on a grant focusing on children ages 0-8 years old, early learning became a central part of his campaign for the school board. SAUSD needed a partner in this area so it joined forces with 50 nonprofits that are involved with the Santa Ana Early Learning Initiative, with the goal of giving children a better chance to become kindergarten ready.

### Upcoming West Floral Park Events

- August 10:** Progressive Dinner
- August 21:** General Meeting
- September 15:** New Neighbor Social
- October 5:** Oktoberfest



In his school board position, Rigo is continually looking for ways to better serve the children in Santa Ana. Through his leadership, SAUSD has started the Engage 360 afterschool program which offers more support to kindergarten students whose parents work, and he was involved in getting the wages of preschool teachers raised in order to recruit better-trained personnel. The District currently partners with UCI to train instructional aides in language arts instruction and last fall the District initiated a program in four different neighborhoods that encourages those communities to become more aware of the importance of early learning. So far, 130 parents have been trained to act as connectors between the neighbors and the Wellness Centers located at every school. As school enrollment declines in Santa Ana, it is Rigo's dream to take underutilized school sites and turn them into early learning centers. Rigo is fervent in his advocacy for young children and wants to ensure that our Santa Ana children are provided the best possible education and services to help them thrive in school and beyond.

**Charlotte Finklea**, a WFP resident since 1999, has always worked for organizations that have focused on the underserved. Charlotte got into fundraising after she ran her brother-in-law Joe Dunn's California Senate campaign. After that, she was a fundraiser for Cornelia Connelly School, Planned Parenthood, the Public Law Center and the Council on Aging in Southern California. Charlotte retired two years ago from her fundraising endeavors.



Charlotte then became involved early on in a non-partisan women's organization originating in South Orange County. This 501(c)(4) civic work group called WAVE, Women for American Values and Ethics, started out as a political action committee. WAVE established the goal of flipping four Orange County districts long held by Republicans in the 2018 midterm elections. All their fundraising drives, partnerships, volunteer training, and mobilization centered around this goal. They achieved success in all four targeted districts, electing new members to Congress who share their progressive American values and ethics.

In 2018 WAVE became involved with migrant rights, taking on the task of educating its members and the community about the issues surrounding immigration, and providing them with opportunities to act. WAVE developed their legal clinic program for migrant rights in 2017 after a priest contacted them expressing fear for preschool-aged children's safety and well-being if their undocumented parents were deported. WAVE has expanded its outreach to include the environment, specifically focusing on climate change and clean energy, and on civic engagement through student voter registration.

Charlotte will be the WAVE Advisory Council Chair next year. She continues to work on ways to light the way for change and believes that women hold the power to make this come true. She believes that WAVE gives women an avenue to get involved and to make a difference.



**John Straw and Catharine Quinn** of Concern America tell the story of how people often walk by their North Broadway nonprofit office, notice their sign, come in and say, "I too am concerned about America." Even though their nonprofit's name is misinterpreted by many, they say it gives them a chance to start the conversation about what they really do. John is the Executive Director and Cat is the Field Program Coordinator. Concern America's mission is to transform need into self-sufficiency through health care, clean water, education, and economic opportunity for every community worldwide. Their specific work is focused in the countries of Guatemala, Colombia, and Mexico with the goal of training local community leaders in health care, water, education, and creating income.

John and Catharine met in the late 90's when both were field volunteers in Guatemala. Before moving to Santa Ana, they lived in Chicago where John was a teacher and Cat was a nurse. In 2010, they were invited to become a part of the Concern America leadership, and thus moved to West Floral Park, walking distance to work. They have two children, a son in his freshman year at Parsons School of Art and Design in New York City and a daughter who attends OCSA and wants to be a bilingual special education/speech therapist. John and Cat believe that their work is their life path and not just their job. They describe their work as humbling; "it's all about relationships and community." They are hopeful that the places they work will become places of peace, prosperity, and stability. John describes the world's problems as "complex" and each solution feels huge. He says it's helpful to focus on the humanity and dignity of every life.



"Living in the same city as you serve is risky," says **Steve Mendoza**, Executive Director for the City of Santa Ana Community Development Agency. The Community Development Agency is responsible for providing services in the areas of economic development, job training, affordable housing, and downtown development. The Agency plans, develops, and administers programs to accomplish the public policy goals of the Santa Ana City Council, Santa Ana Housing Authority, and Workforce Investment Board.

Steve has been involved in city government for 19 years, having served in the cities of La Mirada, Desert Hot Springs, and Los Alamitos before being hired in Santa Ana. Steve is a long-time resident of West Floral Park and the surrounding area, living first on Ross Street, then 19th Street, on Santa Clara Avenue, and now on Westwood Avenue. His husband Roy, an avid supporter of Steve's demanding job, was born in Santa Ana. Before Steve's decision to work for the City of Santa Ana, he asked himself why he didn't serve his own community. Knowing that he could walk to work and see what streets needed to be paved and where the

security issues were, convinced him to take the leap. Steve also wants to use his skills to build small city intimacy and accountability into a large city. He wants City Hall to be more approachable and for the residents to consider it the "people's house" where they can readily get services. He wants to ensure that everyone, including businesses, are treated fairly and equitably.

Steve likes to keep a low-profile. In fact, most of his neighbors did not know he served as Acting City Manager for six months before the current City Manager was hired. However, he is very proud of the work he did in getting "The Link" homeless facility funded and up and running in just 28 days. This was instrumental as it freed the City of Santa Ana from the lawsuit in not providing adequate beds for the homeless. He is now working with the Quality of Life Team in tackling the railroad encampments, working specifically on the railroad maintenance issue. Steve is also proud of the agency's Work Center which provides a link between employers and people in need of a job. The MainPlace Mall redevelopment is also one of his main focuses right now as he is concerned about the economic development of Santa Ana. His team was successful in getting the KidZania lease for the mall, which will hopefully draw in families, create excitement, and attract more businesses for Santa Ana and MainPlace. Steve's goal is to raise the quality of life for everyone who lives and works in Santa Ana.



*"Everybody can be great...because anybody can serve. You don't have to have a college degree to serve. You don't have to make your subject and verb agree to serve. You only need a heart full of grace. A soul generated by love."*

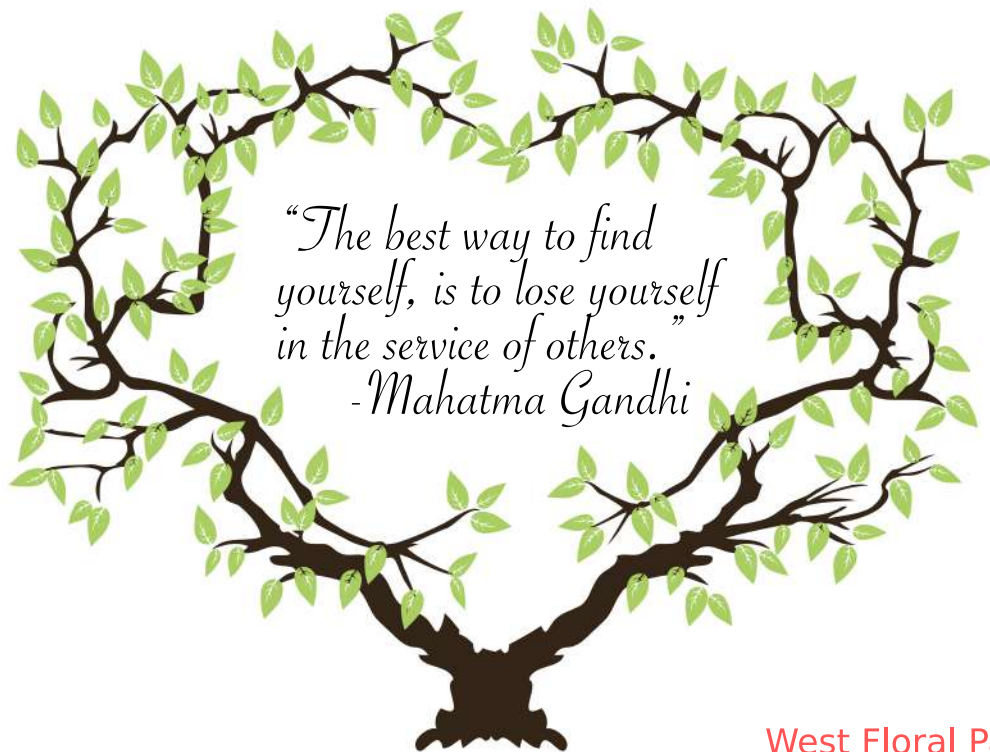
*— Martin Luther King Jr.*

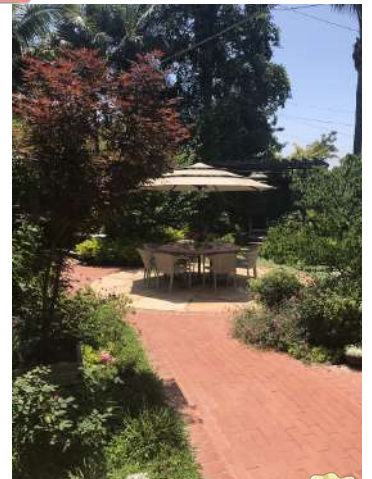
**Juan Laguna** was practicing law in his native Madrid, Spain when he met **Jane** who was there working on her M.A. in Spanish literature. They married and came to the U.S. in 1990 and West Floral Park in 1996 where they raised two children. Juan knew instantly that Santa Ana was an area that was waiting for him. Santa Ana had a need and Juan was welcomed by all; the churches, nonprofits, and the Latino community. His first job was with Catholic Charities, working for them mainly in immigration (court, appeals, family petitions, victims of crime). Juan is proud of being a silent partner in *Dimaya vs. Lynch*, a case that went all the way to the Supreme Court and of having a published opinion regarding victims of crime.



In the last few years the difficulty of Juan’s job has grown. He views the current enforcement of the 1997 immigration law as harsh and the cause of fear that is prevalent now. He wants the “common sense” approach to immigration to return, as currently the path to citizenship can take anywhere from four months to twelve months. While more and more new requirements are added, the road to citizenship is becoming more complicated. Juan points out that most people immigrate to find a safer place to live and work for their families. Although Juan doesn’t support illegal immigration, he acknowledges that it is harder than ever to take the path to citizenship. He believes it is his calling to offer human support, interaction, and legal advice. He firmly believes in treating all people as human beings by listening to them, respecting them, and offering them honest legal advice. Juan says that when in doubt, we should choose compassion.

Jane, who has been working as Juan’s attorney assistant since 2013, is also very passionate about their work. She writes and completes the paperwork that results in less wait time for pardons and petitions. Before starting to work full time with Juan, Jane was one of the founders of El Sol and Orange County Educational Arts Academy (OCEAA) charter schools in Santa Ana. She was one of the two parents who negotiated the charter with the district and was the Executive Director for two years at OCEAA until leaving in 2007. Juan credits the rise in success and the number of people his law firm helps with Jane’s joining the practice. Both Juan and Jane emphasize that the people who are on the legal path to citizenship experience a high level of stress and are brave to complete the application process. These same people want to do what’s right and legal, but are very afraid of what might happen to them along this path. Juan and Jane love the work they do. Juan says he is now a small-town Santa Ana lawyer with people who know and respect him and that he gets more than he gives. He gets “life” from his calling.





*Garden Tea Party*  
June 6, 2019

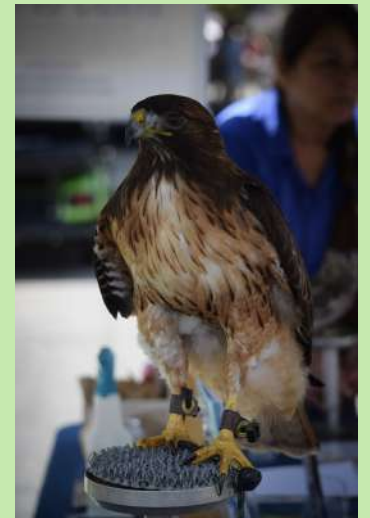


*A Beautiful Day in  
the Neighborhood!*  
**Open Garden Day 2019**



May 11th turned out to be a beautiful day in the neighborhood, just right for our 13th annual Open Garden Day. The weather was perfect and nine lovely gardens were open for almost 700 paid visitors to enjoy and be inspired. The beautiful keepsake Garden Guide created by our talented Mika Denny helped people navigate the gardens and all the other activities. Our Open Garden Day guided trolley tours were a hit and the Selfie Spot was back luring all to take a selfie in front of our fabulous garden wings.





The Westwood Promenade was bustling with things to buy, see, hear, eat, and enjoy. Hits on the promenade were the Birds of Prey booth, the Garden to Table demonstration, vintage cars, wonderful local artisans selling garden related items, mimosas, and the band Peanut featuring three of our own residents. Thank you to our event sponsors: Nichole Doughty and Mel Steiner of First Team Real Estate, Dana Roberts of Coldwell Banker Real Estate, Phil Schaefer of Seven Gables Real Estate, Dr. Bonnie Berger of Berger Active Chiropractic and Laser Center, Sandy DeAngelis of the DeAngelis Real Estate Group, the Vasquez, Olvera, and Chatelle families.



## 2019 Neighborhood Hero Award Winner: Karen Mittendorf

Congratulations to Karen who was awarded the West Floral Park Neighborhood Hero at the Communication Linkage Forum on June 27th. She was one of fifteen people citywide who were recognized for their contributions to Santa Ana.

Karen has contributed greatly to the success and well-being of our neighborhood. She has been Co-Chair of the Open Garden Day event for the last several years. In addition, Karen leads and coordinates our end-of-the-year “Adopt A Family” campaign that provides families with gifts at Christmas time. Karen is currently our Outreach Chair for WFPNA and plans the Garden Tea Party, the 4th of July Parade, neighborhood coffee mornings, and other events that make our neighborhood more inclusive. Karen works behind the scenes with our Santa Clara flags and our Bristol/Santa Clara garden entrance. We have all benefited from Karen’s tireless and unselfish efforts to make our neighborhood great.



## 2019 Most Beautiful Yard Award: Matt and Susie Bailey of 19th Street

A favorite at this year’s Open Garden Day, Matt and Susie's front yard is West Floral Park's recipient of the Most Beautiful Yard Award from the City of Santa Ana. The Most Beautiful Yard Awards are recognition of the hard work and pride exhibited by Santa Ana residents and are awarded to residents who strive to beautify their homes and neighbor-hoods in the City of Santa Ana. Congratulations!







Independence Day in West Floral Park is so wonderfully unique. It's an explosion of red, white, and blue bunting, and flags hanging from houses and trees as far as the eye can see. It's kids decorating bikes, wagons, and dogs. It's joining as one big family to parade through the streets waving and cheering as other neighbors cheer us on from the curb. It's walking from house to house, sharing a cocktail, beer, or sodas while gorging on ribs and burgers, brauts and hotdogs, potato salad, cole slaw, and desserts galore. It's an outpouring of love for country, tradition, family, and friends all culminating in fireworks at sunset. Why would anyone want to be anywhere else?



# Flamingo Bingo!



West Floral Park had its first ever Flamingo Bingo event on June 29th and it was an absolute hit! Over fifty neighbors gathered for a potluck meal, drinks, and ten exciting rounds of bingo. We had some fun prizes that went to our bingo winners courtesy of Annie Corcoran and Harrison Zierer. It was so fun to see some new faces: established residents joining us for their first ever social event, in addition to some brand new neighbors as well. Thanks to David Vrbecky and Kurt Eisenburger for opening their yard and hosting this wonderful event!



# Join us for an upcoming social event!

Mark your calendars! The ever-popular Progressive Dinner is August 10th! This year we will go back to a POTLUCK style and drop the price to \$20 per person. We will be sending out more information soon to explain how to sign up. As always, if you have questions or want to lend a hand setting up or cleaning up, call Michele Chatelle at (714) 356-1606.



And don't miss out on October 5th when we host our annual Oktoberfest celebration. Craft beers, bratwurst, and our annual chili cookoff are just a few of the things to look forward to at this always fun event.



## Treasurer's Report by Ian Gibson

as of July 10, 2019

Checking: 16,357 Savings: 8,099

Revenue	Budget	YTD	Expenses	Budget	YTD
Membership Donations	7,000	7,575	New Neighbor Welcoming	300	180
Newsletter Advertising	2,500	3,000	General Meetings	350	211
Social Events	11,700	2,247	Community Events	670	-
Open Garden Day	12,500	16,628	Community Outreach	450	164
<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>33,700</b>	<b>29,450</b>	General Operations	2,750	1,504
			Open Garden Day	9,650	11,341
			Social Events	12,300	3,591
			Neighborhood Watch	200	200
			Newsletter/Communications	4,250	812
			Beautification	2,100	874
			<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>33,020</b>	<b>18,877</b>
			<b>Balances/Total</b>		<b>10,573</b>

We provide the Treasurer's Report each quarter and provide copies at each General Meeting to let you know what's going on with our WFPNA funds.

Should you have any questions, please contact Ian Gibson (nosbig8585@gmail.com).

# Welcome New Neighbors!

**In April we welcomed:**  
Jonathan & Marissa Martinez  
*W. 20th Street*

Mai Do  
*N. Westwood Avenue*

**In May we welcomed:**  
Doug & Juliet Schulein  
*N. Rosewood Avenue*

Aaron & Bonny Troyer  
*N. Greenbrier Street*

**In June we welcomed:**  
Ivan & Marvely Oliveres  
*W. 19th Street*

We would like to welcome the following people to West Floral Park. These new neighbors will be invited to our New Neighbor Social in September. If you happen to see them, be sure to say hello and welcome them to our neighborhood!



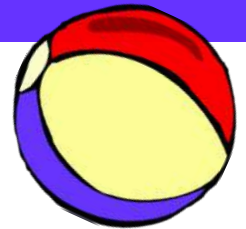
## Our Newsletter Staff

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Proofreading.....Kari Gibson

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Photography: Claire Alex, Michele Chatelle, Nancy Collins, Richard Collins, Annie Corcoran, Brian Dawson, Melinda Jordan, Donna Layne, Karen Mittendorf, David Vrbecky, & Harrison Zierer



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