



The Solano Avenue Association

2008 Annual Newsletter - January 2008

1563 Solano Avenue #101 Berkeley, California - 94707 510.527.5358 Info@SolanoAvenue.org

Has it been a while since you have heard from the Solano Avenue Association?

In late 2006, Lisa Bullwinkel resigned her position as the Executive Director and Events Producer. Allen Cain, Board Member for over ten years, took over. Allen Cain also owns Albany Video Service, an electronics repair business on San Pablo Avenue in Albany, established in 1994.

Many changes have taken place since then, and with those changes have come a very productive 2007 for the SAA Board of Directors. We are proud of our accomplishments. Some of our 2007 highlights include:

Our **Annual Meeting and installation** of the SAA Board of Directors at Urban Forest Home (February)

First annual **Lunar New Year Parade** (February)

Solano Avenue Stroll "Going Green - It's Easy" (Sept.)

First annual **Pumpkin Party** on Solano, costume contest and community celebration (October)

First annual **Santa on Solano**, a joint venture with the Albany Chamber of Commerce

Additionally, SAA:

- Upgraded the Solano Stroll street banners;
- Produced an electronic newsletter;
- Produced a Comcast Cable T.V. ad holiday blitz;
- Subsidized print advertising for Solano Avenue Merchants: have a presence in the Berkeley Conventions and Visitors Bureau magazine, with thousands distributed at hotels, convention centers and airports throughout the San Francisco Bay Area.

Plus, we:

- Upgraded our Membership Directory
- Expanded our Gift Certificate/School Scrip program which has brought over \$100,000 to participating SAA Members (since its inception),
- Begun a weekly litter removal program
- Completely face-lifted SAA's Website and added video

Join us to plan the spring activities (possible art and wine festival in May) and to improve the regional advertising and outreach program.

We have also recommended the discontinuation of the Berkeley Business Improvement District assessment, a source of concern for some of the merchants at the Berkeley end of Solano Avenue.

The loss of the BID means that the Cable television advertising and dedicated street cleaning, and other things that benefited the Berkeley end of Solano will have to be bought from our voluntary dues.

Do you know about our E News Letter?

Twice a month the SAA produces an "E News Letter" putting people in touch with what is happening on Solano Avenue. We keep you posted on who is coming and going, current events, crime alerts, and much more!

This electronic method is a great way of keeping track of the Avenue while being environmentally conscious, and sending out a physical newsletter only annually.

Please have your email address added to our E News Letter subscription list!

We would like to acknowledge the 2007 Board of Directors:

President - Robert Cheasty
Law Offices of Cheasty & Cheasty

Vice President - Harry Pruy
Solano Cleaning Center

Treasurer - Beth Wright
Beth's Book Keeping Service

Secretary - Virginia Jones, Red Oak Realty

Immediate Past President - Dr. Jay Bunker
Chiropractor

Jason Alabanza, Mechanics Bank (Albany)
Ray H. Anderson, Estate Liquidation Services
Gay Austin, Berkeley Hills Realty
John Cowee, Architectural Concepts
Jennifer Long, Vara Healing Arts
Debbie Perkins - Kalama, KNA Copy Centre
Janet Snidow, The Powder Box Salon
Tom Taylor, Art Thou Graphics

Allen Cain
Executive Director and Events Manager

Please Mark Your Calendars!

February 07th - Thursday 5:30/8PM
Annual Meeting at the PriPri Lounge
1309 Solano at Pomona

February 10th - Sunday 1/5PM
Lunar New Year Celebration and
Parade - Cornell School

We would like to acknowledge those who helped make the 2007 "Going Green – It's Easy" Solano Avenue Stroll one of the best:

First, our Major Sponsors:

Albany Ford, Albany Subaru, BART, Berkeley Hills Realty, California Bank and Trust, Comcast Television, Fit-Lite by 24 Hour, Red Oak Realty, and the Cities of Albany and Berkeley.

Thank you to those who provided delicious food to the volunteers, and electricity to the performers:

Andronico's Market, Cactus Taqueria, The Law Offices of Cheasty and Cheasty, China Village, Copy Central Flowerland Nursery, Fonda, High Cotton Living, Ideas for Elements, Kirin, KNA Copy Centre, Longs Drugs, R.E. Mortgage, Schmidt's Tobacco Pub, Solano Cellars, Sushi Solano, Sweet Basil, Tanahill Realty, Tangerine Food Bar, The Church on the Corner, The Eunice Gourmet, Today's Rave, and Zand Market.

President's Message - 10 Points:

2007 marked significant changes for Solano Avenue, and the Solano Avenue Association.

First, we welcomed a **New Executive Director**, Allen Gain. Our Executive Director for the prior 16 years, Lisa Bullwinkel, had to step away for health reasons (she's doing great now) and the Association had to amp up its participation to carry on.

Second, we worked with the **police** of our cities to **successfully catch the armed robbers** who held up four of our restaurants at gun-point (they hit many Asian restaurants in the area), and to help catch, monitor and deter petty thieves and scam artists.

Third, February 2007, the SAA launched the **first annual Lunar New Year Celebration** - a sidewalk parade on Solano with stops along the way to put on a show. The performers, mostly ages 4-12 from the numerous Asian and Chinese after school programs, charmed the audiences. Choral singing, Asian dance and martial arts thrilled, with skill, fun, forgivable mistakes and wide-eyed innocence.

Fourth, 2007 saw the **first annual Pumpkin Party** for Halloween, Dia de Los Muertos, Thanksgiving at Ray's Pumpkin Patch (Solano at Masonic). The height of the evening: the hilarious costume contest (great prizes) with kids of all ages tramping across the stage with hideous, scary, beautiful, intriguing and one-of-a-kind get ups for judges and the audience to ooh and aah over. Free food, fabulous pumpkins, solid music, magic by Tye The Magic Guy and romping fun rounded out the party.

Fifth, **enhanced street cleaning**, more **rapid email** about significant issues; continued close work with the cities of Albany and Berkeley; plan set for improved holiday decorations and sales.

Sixth, **advertising**. 2007 holiday season: we **ran t.v. ads on Comcast** for the Avenue during the holidays; **continued collaboration with print media**, placing stories and advertising, trading sponsorships of our events for free coverage and advertising of the Avenue.

Seventh, "**Santa on Solano**" promotion, (jointly with the Albany Chamber) with a free photo-op for the kids with Santa drawing shoppers from all over the region.

Eighth, this year we asked Berkeley to **stop the BID** (Solano Avenue Business Improvement District), the City of Berkeley's imposed fee on Berkeley merchants on Solano. The money was spent to improve the Avenue, and for dues to join the SAA, but it was opposed by some business owners who objected to mandatory fees while the Albany half of the street had no BID. Even though Albany merchants matched the BID with voluntary dues, and Berkeley merchants got additional services from the BID, the **SAA concluded** negative feelings from some merchants made it **counterproductive**.

Ninth – The **audit** of the **BID** gave a **clean bill of health** for the BID. The City of Berkeley's audit of the BID concluded that **all funds were properly accounted** for, after reviewing all income and expenditures. The full Audit was requested by the BID Board, Lisa Bullwinkel and the SAA Board.

Tenth - We invite all of you to renew your **membership in the SAA**, or to join if you have not in the past. The Association is dedicated to **building a sense of community** along and around Solano. We integrate our businesses with our surrounding community, letting people know what we offer, **celebrating our urban core** together, holding events that draw the regional to Solano, banding together for advertising, safety, representation and maintenance. **Share the joy and the work.**

We wish you all a **happy, safe and bountiful 2008.**

Robert Cheasty, President – SAA Board of Directors