



# The Solano Avenue Association

Annual Newsletter      January 2010

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## Please Mark Your Calendars!

### SAA ANNUAL MIXER

Wednesday, March 17 (Saint Patrick's Day)  
5:30 / 7:00 pm

Six Degrees on Solano 1403 Solano Avenue

## We would like to acknowledge the 2009 Board of Directors.

President – Harry Pruyin  
Solano Cleaning Center

Vice President – Sang L. Rowand  
Farmers Insurance, Albany

Treasurer – Jason Alabanza  
Mechanics Bank, Albany

Secretary – Virginia Jones, Red Oak Realty

Immediate Past President – Robert Cheasty  
Law Offices of Cheasty and Cheasty

Ray H. Anderson, Estate Liquidation Services

Gay Austin, Berkeley Hills Realty

Jason Bellevue, RAF Investments

John Cowee, Architectural Concepts

Alaina Palega, Solano Kids

Debbie Perkins-Kalama, KNA Copy Centre

Susan Powning, By Hand

Memo Robles, Casa Oaxaca

Janet Snidow, The Powder Box Salon

Tom Taylor, Art Thou Graphics

Allen Cain

Executive Director and Events Manager

## 2010 Calendar of Events

February 6: Lunar New Year Celebration

March 17: Annual Mixer

August 12: Solano Stroll Kick-Off Party

September 12: Solano Avenue Stroll

October 31: Halloween on Solano

First Three Weekends in December:  
Santa on Solano, and Other  
Winter Season Activities

## 2009 Winter Season Window Storefront Decoration Contest Winners Receive \$500 Each

Harmonique    Orchard Florist    Rose Nouveau

Free 2010 SAA memberships are also being offered to  
**Pugnacious Pet Provisions** and **Lava 9**.

*Thank you to the SAA E-Newsletter recipients who took the time to vote for your business neighbors.*

## The Association Lights Up The Street for the Winter Season

We never imagined how challenging it would be to light up 85 poles that do not have built-in electricity. We wish to thank the merchants and property owners who provided the electricity that made the lighting possible.

*This was a \$15,000 project that would not have been possible if it were not for income earned by the Solano Avenue Stroll. That's 85 poles at about \$200 each. We are asking for donations (see below).*

Our goal with the lighting and contest was to inspire merchants to step up and decorate. Even if you do not celebrate the holidays, rest assured your participation makes a difference. Can you image what Solano Avenue would look like if every merchant took the time to decorate for the winter season? This would increase foot traffic which means increased revenues and exposure.

## The SAA E-Newsletter

Twice a month the SAA produces an "E-Newsletter" 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, sending out a paper newsletter only once a year.

Please join our E-Newsletter subscription list!

## 2010 Membership Information

Berkeley's membership rotation is from January to January. Albany is June to June.

This year we are adjusting our membership structure. Among the changes is a new alignment of membership dues and supplemental categories. Additional modifications include a line item asking SAA members *and non-members* to donate towards winter lighting.

We are encouraging more people to participate in our gift card program (SAA gift certificates/scrip). Solano Avenue gift cards are now good at over fifty stores!

## **We would like to acknowledge those who helped us produce the 2009 "Come Together" Solano Avenue Stroll.**

First, our Major Sponsors: **John Nakamura at Albany Ford, Saleen, and Subaru**, KGO-TV Channel 7, AC Transit, Alta Bates Medical Group, Safeway, and the Cities of Albany and Berkeley. Our Media Partners include Bay Area Rapid Transit (BART), Comcast, *The East Bay Express* and the *Daily Californian*.

**Thank you to those who provided delicious food to the volunteers on the day of the event and electricity to the performers:** By Hand, Cactus Taqueria, The Law Offices of Cheasty and Cheasty, China Village, Copy Central, Domino's Pizza, Flowerland, Fonda, Harmonique, Ideas for Elements, King Tsin, KNA Copy Centre, CVS Pharmacy, Schmidt's Tobacco Pub, Six Degrees On Solano, Solano Oriental Rug Gallery, Tannahill Realty, Tangerine Food Bar, The Church on the Corner, The Eunice Gourmet, Today's Rave, and Zand Market.

**Thank you to the generous Solano Avenue restaurants who donated food to the kick-off party and the volunteers (including the SAA Board of Directors) who make it happen.**

A special thank you to the host of the 2009 kick-off party, **Mechanics Bank, Albany and Jason Alabanza**. We would also like to acknowledge **Amelia Chellev at California Bank and Trust** and her staff for opening her doors on a Sunday and acting as the Stroll headquarters, for over a decade.

## **Did you know that there are people who work behind the scenes every day to make Solano Avenue a better place?**

For instance, local attorney Robert Cheasty, and Albany figure Alan Maris both take time to pick up trash on Solano Avenue. In fact, Allen Cain, SAA Executive Director (following his 2008 New Year's resolution to exercise daily), finds himself picking up trash and taking [illegal] signage off of poles while making two rounds on Solano every weekday morning. We recommend that you take the time to honor their individual efforts by helping out and doing your part. Keeping a tidy storefront is good for you and your neighbor's business.

**Consider joining the Solano Avenue Association Board of Directors.** We meet on the second and fourth Tuesdays of the month. We meet weekly during "Stroll season". You can become an "unofficial director" like Pat Benson from Harmonique, who has committed a significant amount of time and energy to the Avenue unofficially. **Thank you, Pat Benson.**

We would like to acknowledge outgoing SAA Board Members Gay Austin, Berkeley Hills Realty (twelve years on board!); Susan Powning, who is retiring from By Hand (three years on board); and Virginia Jones from Red Oak Realty, who dedicated seven years to the Association. We cannot thank you enough.

## **President's Message**

My name is Harry Pruyn and I own Solano Cleaning Center at Talbot and Solano, established in 1964 (almost fifty years ago). I live and have deep roots in Albany. I have been serving on the SAA Board for five years. As a parent and resident near Solano, it is nice being part of an organization that produces community-driven family events – all free to participants. In this economy "free" means a lot.

2009 represents a monumental year for the Association. We invested almost twenty thousand dollars in the winter season with lighting, a decoration contest, and the Santa on Solano program (a joint venture with the Albany Chamber of Commerce), which brought 2000 families to the district with the promise of a free photo with Santa Claus.

We encouraged kids to trick-or-treat on Solano and we estimate over 500 families participated. Next year the merchants will all be more prepared as we did not expect such a significant turnout for a first-run promotion. We also redesigned our gift cards and expanded the gift card program to over fifty businesses.

In 2010 we are excited to announce that the Albany Theater will host the Lunar New Year Celebration, which has outgrown its original location in front of Cornell School. This represents a significant advance for the festival and a big step for the theater, opening its doors to the community by hosting a free lineup of top Asian performers and artists.

I have one more year left as president of the Association and I expect it to be a challenge given the state of our economy. Now is not the time to look for a stimulus package or handout because it's not there. We cannot wait for somebody to fix our economy and bring us customers. It is up to us – individually. What are you doing to improve your visibility and customer base? Did you market yourself during the Solano Stroll? If not, why? You had 300,000 people walk by on one day and you got how many interested potential customers?

Please remember: Everything, everything, everything you say or do is a reflection of you and your business and how your customers perceive you and your business. Do you know your merchant neighbors and do you work together to improve business? Harry Pruyn.