



Neighbors Rescue Baby Kites

By Nora MacLellan, NCWP Board Member

On that windy April 21, our neighbor was walking her dog on Billowvista Drive in Playa del Rey, when she came upon four juvenile kites that had been blown out of a tree along with their nest. Two of the kites did not survive the fall – they turned out to be the females, which were larger. While my neighbor stood guard over the two surviving male kites to protect them from any predators (cats, crows, etc.), she called my husband Douglas for assistance. Without stopping to think, he immediately grabbed a pair of sturdy gloves, a cardboard box, some towels, and jumped in the car. He drove around the corner and gently put the two living kites in the box with the towels and put the dead kites in a plastic garbage bag.

A number of additional neighbors joined the action to help out. One neighbor immediately got online to find out what to do with the birds and found the Ojai Raptor Center, which rescues raptors in trouble. The Center had a nearby volunteer who happened to live in Venice, less than a half-hour away, and they contacted and dispatched her. While waiting for her to arrive, my husband pulled out one of our dog kennels and gently placed the cardboard box and kites into it. Everyone was so careful to minimize handling of the kites; Douglas was the only one to actually handle them. He had put them in his car and then transferred them to the kennel. Douglas also has a very calming nature about him so that both of the boys eventually settled down a bit when he spoke to them.

The volunteer arrived very quickly, and she drove the kites immediately to the Ojai Raptor Center. Upon their arrival, they were immediately fed the equivalent of two mice. We knew that we should not try to feed or water them ourselves, because we would require special equipment and the proper training to feed birds this young. We last heard that the kites have been released back into the wild after thriving under the care of the Ojai Raptor Rescue Center. They do have a web site and facebook page that has pictures of the kites being released. We are an animal-loving community here, and we understand the fragile bond that we have with the wildlife that shares our very urban environment. It's folks like The Friends of Ballona Wetlands that have taught us how to respect the wildlife around us, and more importantly, how to interact with that wildlife when needed.



Douglas MacLellan and one of the rescued kites, saved by a neighborhood. Photo (c) 2010 and courtesy Nora MacLellan

The Missing Voice in Education

By J.D. Webster, Chair of the Neighborhood Council Committee on Education

For those of us charged with playing close attention to the educational segment of community life, the term "RIF (Reduction in Force)" is a frequently heard term in our circle. The continually changing budget deficit numbers have contributed to numerous changes on our campuses. The principals at Westchester High School and Orville Wright Middle School are no longer there. LAUSD contract agreements, which place a high priority on seniority in the district, mean some district administrators are returning to school sites. Some school site administrators are moving back to classrooms. Classroom teachers are finding themselves moving to new schools or are without a job. The LMU School of Education and the IDesign leadership team have also experienced changes. We have now learned that LAUSD Superintendent Ramon Cortines has announced his intention to resign before his contract expires.

With all of these changes, the words of Reinhold Niebuhr come to mind, "God grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, courage to change the things I can and wisdom to know the difference." From this local Westchester Playa vantage point, there is little that we can do about these administrative changes. Letters and other efforts to save the jobs of valued teachers and administrators are usually met with "it's about the contract" if there is any response at all.

We can, however, do a lot about the local culture of education in our community. Enhancing partnerships with those who are currently involved to create the tools for our educational expectations is possible. In response to decisions that are made elsewhere, the voices of educators, parents and students are present and active at the local decision-making table. The often unheard voice at that table is the voice of those who do not belong to the groups just listed. These are the people, who with their votes, decide if bond measures pass or fail. These are the people, who by their choices and the actions that followed those choices, made this community the highly desirable place we have chosen to live. These are the people, who more than ever before, are invited to make their presence felt as we respond to the opportunity to change from asking permission to taking the lead in creating a fresh, vibrant educational community.

Already in place are governance councils in each of our local schools. The Neighborhood Council and Chamber of Commerce Committees on Education and the dynamic, community-based Westchester Playa Educational Foundation are responding to "the things we cannot change" with ideas and actions about the things we can and must change.

Not so long ago none of these groups existed. They were

created, because someone saw a need and built the relationships that were necessary to bring their vision into reality. Your involvement is welcomed and appreciated in each of these groups. If something more is needed – expressing it in one of these groups can be the first step in adding that piece to the network.

If your voice is not heard, who will say what needs to be said? If what needs to be done is not done here, where will it be done? If what needs to be changed is not changed now, when will it be changed?

You are cordially invited to choose a school in your area, and let them know of your interest. If you need assistance, feel free to contact me. I, and many others in this community, will be happy to help you find the place for you to be involved.

This IS the time. This IS the place, WE are the people. Let's do what needs to be done. Let's do it together. Thanks for your time.

The NCWP Education Committee meets on the fourth Tuesday at 6:30 p.m. at Loyola Village Library at 7114 W. Manchester Avenue, in Westchester.

