

NEWS

Get ready: something's shaking in this year's parade



Photos courtesy of the East Bay Community Samba School
Dancers with the East Bay Community Samba School will lead a large throng of parade-goers down Highland Avenue at the tail-end of the 4th of July Parade.

By George Alexander

"It's a first," declared July 4 Committee Chairman Carla Betts, before elaborating on her point. "We actually have an entry in the parade that has requested to be last."

The parade entry that Betts is referring to is the East Bay Community Samba School, which will be making its debut in the Piedmont parade on Saturday, July 4.

Each year the Parade Committee processes entry forms from a wide array of community groups eager to participate in the parade down Highland Avenue. Very often entrants request that they be placed "near the front if not first" in the parade. For that reason, the request of the East Bay Community Samba School is noteworthy.

"We are going to be BIG and LOUD," explained Samuel Daffner, founder and director of the family-friendly samba school five years ago and a Piedmont resident.

"We look forward to the community falling in behind us and having some fun," he said.

Since its inception, Daffner's Emeryville-based samba school has doubled in size. Now, more than 100 people participate in its activities, including its annual participation in the Carnival parade in San Francisco.

"We know how to have fun," offered Daffner.

Daffner is a husband and father of two teen-aged daughters; he also is the manager of the technical training division at Pixar Studios in Emeryville. On top of all that, Daffner is a life-long musician.

In addition to being a member of the award-winning Berkeley Jazz Ensemble, Daffner has studied percussion throughout the world, including Cuba and Nigeria. About 20 years ago, he traveled to Rio and Salvador, Brazil, where he discovered samba and the phenomena of samba schools.

Like most samba schools, Daffner's group is more than just a place of learning dance and music. It's a hub of community and culture, one that represents a community – in this case, the East Bay.

Unique from other samba groups, the East Bay Community Samba School celebrates community, kids and family. For that reason, the group plays down the nudity and the sexual themes often associated with Brazilian samba; instead, they emphasize their passion for the underlying music and dance.

On July 4, the East Bay Com-



Piedmont resident Sam Daffner is director of the East Bay Community Samba School, a brand-new entry in this year's Piedmont parade on July 4.

munity Samba School will be playing its 2009 theme song, *fiveAoVivo*, (which translates to "five-Alive"), a tune composed by Daffner to celebrate the group's fifth year of operation.

Daffner anticipates that 80 members of his samba school will march down Highland Avenue on July 4 – about 30 drummers and musicians, and 50 dancers. Some of the dancers will perform routines choreographed by EBCSS Artistic Director Nives Wetzel de Cedral, while others in the "Spirit Section" will dance "free-style" or do whatever they please.

For more information about the East Bay Community Samba School, go to www.samba.byosmosis.com or contact Daffner at samba@osmosis.com. In the meantime, get ready for some exciting dancing, drumming, music and a huge amount of energy at the back of the parade. This is one year it will pay not to be first.



Piedmont resident MaryJane Lowenthal, a therapist at the West Oakland Medical Therapy Unit, helps celebrate the delivery of a garden box by Piedmont Eagle Scout candidates, Tommy Adams, Carl Hendrickson and James Ryan.

Piedmont Scouts create garden box for pediatric facility

Delivery day finally happened on Wednesday, June 10, for three members of Piedmont Boy Scout Troop 1, all candidates for Eagle Scout.

One day before school let out for the summer, Tommy Adams, Carl Hendrickson and James Ryan delivered a wheelchair accessible garden box – Ryan's Eagle Scout project – to the West Oakland Medical Therapy Unit at 1240 18th Street. The facility serves

children with neuromuscular, musculoskeletal, and muscular diseases, and the raised garden box will provide therapy for the children, many of whom are in wheelchairs. Over the past year of planning and working, Ryan's proposal was approved by the Piedmont Boy Scout Council and many Scouts in Troop 1 helped with its construction over several work days.

Letters

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are the damages they could cause their neighbors. These neighbors voluntarily put up \$287,000 for the engineering study, which could be lost if the project does not go forward or is long-delayed. The neighborhood also is the beneficiary of a very low construction bid; in fact, in the Piedmont Hills District, the construction bid received this year was 52% less than the one received in 2007 and the Hampton-Sea View bid similarly was low.

If the Kurtins' lawsuit delays the Hampton-Sea View District project from going forward and the current low bid is lost, they could be financially responsible for paying any difference between the current low bid and a subsequent higher bid. And, in the worst-case scenario, if Piedmont were to

suffer a catastrophic earthquake while the lawsuit is delaying construction, the Kurtins potentially could be responsible for all consequential damages, including damages caused by utility lines falling on houses and lying in the streets for days or weeks.

Obviously, the Kurtins love litigation more than they profess to love democracy, but they will learn that lawsuits are not much fun, and in the end their lawsuit is going to cost them, perhaps dearly.

In the meantime, because of their unilateral action, their neighbors will continue to be denied the benefits of a fair election, will continue to face danger from overhead utility lines and will continue to be denied a view of the sky unobstructed by power lines and poles in their otherwise beautiful neighborhood.

-Guy T. Saperstein



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Westies & Scotties join 4th of July Piedmont Parade

Calling all Westies, Scotties and owners to join the East Bay Westies as they march, skip, and sashay in the 2009 Piedmont 4th of July Parade.

The Parade begins at 11 a.m. on Saturday, July 4, at Highland Avenue and Park Way in Piedmont, and ends six blocks later at Piedmont Park, where the East Bay Westies will continue the celebration through the afternoon.

To be part of the fun, call 510-965-9811, or e-mail dee444@mac.com. Details on where and when to assemble, what to wear, etc. will be available next week, so don't delay.

Dude by Herb Stansbury



"Have you thought about begging?"