



Wandering & Wondering

John Maybury

ONLY IN AMERICA

Scott McKellar forwards a rather sad public notice printed in last week's Tribune about a February 20 auction of personal property left to the National Mortgage Company, which apparently had foreclosed on property on Glencourt Way in Pacifica. Items sold off: construction cones, bags, hangers, lamp, papers/documents, boxes, shower curtain, trash cans, table stand, shampoo, shelving units, dresser, chairs, cords, dishes, pots/pans, microwave, toaster, clothing, vanity dresser, cabinet, jars, vases, tools, cleaning products, paint cans, crate, bucket, "and other items of miscellaneous personal property with no apparent value." Scott signed off this item with the comment: "Only in America."

NERDS FOR NATURE

On February 21, grassroots nonprofit Nerds for Nature (nerdsfornature.org) threw a Launch Party, gathering a diverse group of about 100 designers, technologists, scientists, planners, artists, and environmentalists to mingle and brainstorm the role of technology in shaping the future of environmental practice in communities throughout California, beginning with the Bay Area. The demand for the event speaks to a growing interest in finding new ways to use technology to understand, protect, and revive the natural world around us. The group believes this need can be addressed through appropriate software and hardware solutions that empower citizens with knowledge, in the form of open and accessible data, as well as shared environmental resources and tools to inspire and facilitate meaningful change to

fragile ecosystems. "We are connecting ourselves to do vital work for the future. We will learn together how to create public-facing tools for understanding and protecting our regional systems — such as air, parks, creatures, public health, water systems, waste stream, urban farms and gardens, restoration efforts, oceans, bays, reservoirs," says cofounder Chach Sikes. "We will do practical work, learning as much as we can, to prepare ourselves to build responsive technologies for climate change, environmental pollution and disasters." Like many of the Nerds for Nature organizers, Sikes is a longtime organizer and technologist working at the intersection of environmentalism and technology through projects such as Lemonopoly and Fruit Fence. Those projects use technology to help people connect with the real world around them, and that's the sweet spot for Nerds for Nature. "We might actually go learn how to measure a stream, which most of us don't know much about," says Sikes. "But by learning together, we will start to build our collective abilities and be able to create and share our projects with others. Where we are building things, we want to connect young people, parents, community organizations, cyclists, schools, maker groups and anyone else interested in building things that will really make our environment healthier. If we are doing a project on, for example, air quality, we can organize local workshops where residents in affected neighborhoods can get nerdy with us, by installing sensors and learning together how to monitor our air." Cofounder Laci Videmsky adds, "Open government initiatives typically send nerds to city halls. We should send nerds to bureaus of land, water, and energy. These are civic institutions, too!" Nerds for Nature is already collaborating with professionals from public-sector resource agencies as well as environmental nonprofits. Says cofounder Victoria Bogdan, "The worlds of things like civic technology and conservation are still fairly separate. Our group is seeking to listen to the needs, challenges, and ideas

of the environment side and bring them together with the imaginations, capabilities, and innovation of those involved in tech."

The event was headlined by talks from innovators who are already doing great work bringing technologists and nature lovers together, including Ken-ichi Ueda (creator of iNaturalist.org); Stanley Jones (Diligent Creative), who helped Oil Change International make energy finance data more accessible; and Carl DiSalvo, in town from the Public Design Workshop at Georgia Tech. "We're showcasing some great work that's already happening," says Nerds for Nature cofounder Dan Rademacher, longtime environmental journalist and editorial director at Bay Nature Institute. "But there's so much more that can happen when technologists and environmental folks unite around understanding, enjoying, and revitalizing the world around us. We've seen these partnerships grow between technologists and journalists, like with Hacks/Hackers, and between coders and civic leaders, like Code for America. Now it's time for nature!"

OK LIQUORS UPDATE

Also of interest in last week's public notices: Park Mall's OK Liquors former owner Chan Ok Lee has transferred assets and alcoholic beverage license to new owners Hasmukh B. Patel and Kai Patel.

SWAMI SEZ

"[Biology] is the least self-centered, the least narcissistic of the sciences—the one that, by taking us out of ourselves, leads us to re-establish the link with nature and to shake ourselves free from our spiritual isolation." (Jean Rostand, French biologist, 1894-1977; thanks to Clark Natwick for forwarding this quote from Jake Sigg's Nature News)

WASTING AWAY IN MAYBURRITOVILLE

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