



Councilmember Rose Herrera
District 8

January 2013 Newsletter Message

Dear Neighbor,

As a community we do not always agree on everything, but we can all agree on the need to communicate our fears, hopes, and plans for a safer world especially for our children. The recent horrific events in Connecticut have revived the national conversation on gun safety to make sure that this never happens again. Even though Newtown is 3,000 miles away our entire country has been shocked by this latest tragedy where innocent children were the targets. We can be proud that California is a leader in enacting strict gun regulations. We have an assault weapons ban in place and a ban on high capacity magazines. State legislators are proposing additional legislation. The need to reduce gun violence and violence in general is important for San José as we struggle with how to reduce the number of homicides in our own community. Even though 46 homicides in 2012 pales in comparison to Chicago with over 400 or LA with over 500, this is one list where we want to continue to be at the bottom. In 2012, at least 18 of our 44 homicide victims were young people.

In a culture that often times glorifies violence we must find ways to change. Whether it is working to change gun policies, supporting more help for the mentally ill as well as keeping them from acquiring guns, monitoring and restricting violent video games from our children, or reviewing school safety, we must ask ourselves what more can we do? As a country, we have far more violent crimes than other developed countries. How to reduce violence is a conversation that must begin in our own neighborhoods. It's not a topic we would generally want to address during a holiday message, given the national moment, I feel it is important to start the discussion now. It will take the sustained support of the entire country including our community to really make a lasting change. President Obama set the tone and led the country by using the power of his office to call for action. Just a few weeks ago we have heard federal legislators step up in a bi-partisan fashion agreeing that action needs to be taken. Senator Diane Feinstein is reviving the assault weapons ban and there will be other bills advanced in the U.S. Congress where ultimately the policy needs to change. New York Mayor Bloomberg has been leading mayors nationally to address this issue because gun violence affects cities everyday. People are dying everyday across the country from gun violence. As the website, *Mayors Against Illegal Guns* puts it, "The issue of illegal guns is not conservative or liberal; it is an issue of law and order -- and life or death." Our Mayor Chuck Reed has joined this group and supports its goals.

I support bans on assault weapons and high capacity magazines and the move to close the loopholes on gun shows, internet sales, and sales between individuals (also know as a secondary market) where guns are sold without background checks. These sales constitute 40% of gun sales. These unregulated sales allow anyone to purchase a gun. When statistics show that people are dying from guns at almost the same rate as people dying from automobile accidents we have a moral duty to act. Another disturbing trend is that although there are record gun sales, overall gun ownership has been going down. This means that more guns are being sold to fewer people. Some folks are stockpiling weapons.

Approaching it from a public health perspective might give us the proper vehicle to make the necessary cultural and policy level changes. We've used the public health approach to address smoking and seatbelt use; we can use it to help move our culture towards a less violent one. We need to make violence less culturally cool. The event in Connecticut last month was horrific. We mourn with the families but we also have an opportunity and a moral obligation to do what we can to prevent future tragedies. As President Obama stated, "We can do better." He also said that just because we cannot prevent every tragic event it does not give us the excuse to not try.

The President is making it possible to enact changes and our community needs to speak out in support of these changes. Even though we're far removed geographically from this recent tragedy, we want to do everything we can to prevent these types of tragic occurrences across every community in America. As a community leader in San José, I am continually working with our District 8 Faith Leaders, school administrators, and as a member of the Mayor's Gang Prevention Task Force, to reduce violence. I invite you to be a part of that movement and encourage you to attend the upcoming 2013 Crime and Gang Prevention Summit in San José hosted by the Mayor's Gang Prevention Task Force on Saturday, February 2, 2013, from 8:30 a.m. - 1:30 p.m. For more information, contact Kristina Peralta in the Office of Mayor Chuck Reed by calling (408) 535-4800 or emailing mayoremail@sanjoseca.gov.

Only by having reasonable conversations and solution-oriented actions against senseless violent acts can we achieve peace in our communities. One of the families of a teacher who was lost in Connecticut suggested reading a story to a child as a way to honor her memory. It is not too late to make an effort to reach out to those individuals in our community who are lonely or hurting. You can also make a difference by generously donating to Second Harvest Food Bank by calling their toll-free donor hotline: (866) 234-3663 or by visiting their website at <http://shfb.org> or help by donating to the local Toys for Tots program by visiting their website at <http://san-jose-ca.toysfortots.org/local-coordinator-sites/lco-sites/default.asp>.

I want to wish you and your family best wishes for a healthy and prosperous New Year.

If you need assistance or have any questions, please contact my office at (408) 535-4908 or by e-mail at district8@sanjoseca.gov.

Regards,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Rose Herrera". The signature is written in a cursive style.

Councilmember Rose Herrera