

LAURA FREESE: Only in San Juan

## San Juan Is Close to 'Build Out'



**S**an Juan Capistrano is almost built out. Did you know that? What does this mean? Basically, our city covers 14.3 square miles and 37,895 of us call it home. Our projected maximum population at the time of incorporation was 40,000 residents, so we are only about 2,000 neighbors away from making our community complete. And this may happen sooner than you think, as our latest population projection puts us at 40,876 by 2010. So, we are pretty darn close to our limit!

Every building project has three critical elements of success: a good plan,

rows, but what do we want? From what I have gleaned from some residents, we picture our downtown as walkable, with plaza-type settings. We also envision our city to be a haven for unique, charming businesses with unique, charming merchandise; not souvenir shops or "big box" stores. And if appropriately designed and located, we can and, economically, need to support suitable light industry and financial institutions.

Another special gift of ours to southern Orange County is our open space, trails and equestrian community. Too often we are teetering on the brink of losing these precious resources. Many communities around here have pristine

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a stable foundation and the finishing touches that tie everything together and illuminate the strengths.

Well, we have a good fundamental plan—the City's General Plan, adopted in 1999. With a few minor tweaks and upgrades, it will continue to serve us just fine. And we clearly have a stable foundation: our history, Mission, swallows lore, train station, equestrian community and absolutely unique charm that can only be found in San Juan. And now, to envision the finishing touches to our city... to make it a masterpiece.

I figure we need to address four key areas in moving from today to build-out: Residential, Business, Open Space and Redevelopment.

Starting with residential, we need to decide how many new homes can still be constructed without the city being overbuilt, and stick to it. Of equal importance to the number of new homes is deciding the types of homes and how densely they are packed in. Remember, we still need about 200 affordable houses and neither they, nor any development, should be an afterthought. We need to plan our work, then work our plan.

Moving on, we need to decide what type of business community we want to be when we grow up. Currently, we are playing a no-progress tug-of-war with our business vision. Back and forth, trying to decide what type of business community we should champion. It's a given that we don't want anymore-fast food

multi-lane thoroughfares, but SJC is one of the few cities that highly regards the natural flora and fauna of our hillsides and ridges and wants to protect it. Open Space "R" Us, and our build-out must reflect this precious signature San Juan Capistrano asset.

And finally, address redevelopment of the more needy buildings and plazas of our town. Parts of the city that look (I hate to be so blatant but must say it...) dumpy and cheap. We need to pressure the owners of these older, crummier plazas to step up to the plate and work with the city on the redevelopment of their properties. The city is here to help, but they must have the desire.

In every one of my articles, I ask you, the people of San Juan Capistrano, to step forward and voice your opinion to the city leaders. Now is the time to tell them how you want us to be 10 years from now. We are almost built out; we have only a few, but important, nooks and crannies left. We have differing opinions and a full "spectrum of values" (as Mayor Sam Allevato puts it). If we don't voice our opinions, these nooks and crannies could very well be filled with liabilities rather than assets. Ask the Commissioners and the city councilmembers to carefully and methodically study each issue. Then come up with finishing touches for SJC which are beautifully and uniquely ours.

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## JENNIFER CONNELLAN: Future Focused It's Summer... Now What?



**S**o the kids are officially out of school for the summer. Phew! The school year is finally behind us.

You can relax and enjoy your children without the headaches from homework battles and carpool lines. No more long-term projects to worry about. Forget about the problems in algebra! Now your child just has three long months to relax. Nothing to do for 90 days. No classes for 2160 hours. Just endless amounts of time to do... what?

Three months is a long time. You do not want your kids to lose ground going into the next school year, nor do you want them to have hours upon hours of idle time. When kids get bored, they get in trouble. That is why police officers so often dread the summer months!

Before you start to panic, I have some suggestions for you. As a general rule of thumb, structure is a very good thing. Of course you want to give your kids their well-deserved free time and fun, but it needs to be balanced with constructive activities. Here are a few ideas:

- **Before leaving this academic** year completely behind, have a short re-cap conversation with your student about it. Praise them for what they did well ("I saw your writing skills really improve this year." "You did a great job on your second semester final exams.") You might even want to create an "accomplishment list."

Then discuss any difficulties they had. Try to refrain from criticism, and instead allow them to voice what they felt was problematic ("I didn't do well in Spanish." "I didn't do all of my homework in math.") Then, brainstorm together about ways in which they can prevent the same thing from happening next year. This can segue

nice into what you would like them to do this summer to stay on track or catch up or get ahead for next year.

- **Have a summer requirement** that your kids do at least two things that will help them prepare for the next academic year. You could require that they read two novels and discuss them with you. It would be especially helpful if you read the books along with them. Or you might have them do a certain number of hours of tutoring for a course in which they struggled last year. For subjects like math and Spanish, it is crucial that they have solid foundational knowledge. If they had problems last year, it is likely that they will struggle next year unless you are proactive this summer.

- **Get them involved in something** they are passionate about! If your child loves computer gaming or programming, sign him up for a program that helps him explore it more fully. For example, there are some incredible courses for teenagers interested in Web design, video production, 3-D modeling, etc., offered by a company called Digital Media Academy. For those students interested in film, acting, dance or photography, check out the School of Cinema & Performing Arts, [www.socapa.org](http://www.socapa.org). Whether your student is an outdoor enthusiast, a poet in training, or fashion designer-to-be, summer is a perfect time to fuel their passion and use it to help them connect to their future dreams.

Above all, have fun with your kids! Enjoy who they are becoming. Encourage all the positive character traits you see in them. Tell them you love them. Laugh at their jokes. Have spontaneous adventures. Go camping. Go to the beach. Enjoy the sunshine. It is summer, after all.

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## Teacher, Student Honored

*The Capistrano Dispatch*

Dana Hills High School teacher Tammie Wingen was honored as the Mayor's Educator of the Year on Tuesday, while Dana Hills High School senior Brooke Kenamer was named Youth of the Year.

Wingen, an anatomy and physiology, health science, biology and integrated science teacher and director of the school's medical academy, has always incorporated fun, innovative ways to engage and spark her students' creativity and interest inside and outside of the classroom. She takes education to the next level through

hands-on experiences. She encourages students to participate in a variety of field studies and volunteer in hospital settings.

Kenamer was cited for her huge heart, positive attitude and passion for her peers, community and life. She works with special-needs kids at school; assists new students at Dana Hills as a member of its Link Crew and is involved in numerous organizations. She has been deeply involved in the American Cancer Society, trying to raise awareness of the disease.

Kenamer has made the honor roll each semester at Dana Hills and is a member of the National Honor Society.