



December, 2024

Dear Friends and Supporters,

With your partnership in **Victoria Avenue Forever**, there has been much growth, planting and planning for the future along the Avenue. The Board of Directors are so thankful for your faithfulness to our mission, *to preserve, restore and beautify Historic Victoria Avenue through community volunteer efforts, education and advocacy*. We have seen encouraging progress toward navigating water issues along the Avenue and an increase in volunteers at monthly plantings. Over 20,000 Ragged Robin roses have been planted this calendar year along with dozens of median trees and clean-ups of pocket parks.

One of the top moments of 2024 was the approval of the Victoria Avenue Funding Plan by the entire Riverside City Council. The 5-year, \$840,000, plan will focus on infrastructure by repairing over 38,000 linear feet of irrigation system, applying over one million square feet of bark mulch to the center medians, increasing the propagation and planting of Ragged Robin roses, planting trees in vacant lots, adding an educational kiosk, bench and drinking fountain near Victoria Presbyterian Church, and so much more.

Additionally, the Board had another win at City Council. We requested that the proposed 49 single family dwellings scheduled to be built at La Sierra Avenue and Victoria Avenue be delayed until further study. Keep an eye on City Council news to learn of the proposed subdivision's progress.

The Board of Directors continues to meet monthly, except for August, and supports other agency's missions, including the Regatta, Public Works / Urban Forestry working with CAL FIRE, Old Riverside Home Tour and the Riverside Flower Show. For various reasons, three longtime 'gems' of the VAF Board of Directors are no longer serving with us.

Lori Yates was elected to the VAF Board in 1997 and retired from the Board in 2022. She served as Recording Secretary, Vice President and President during her tenure, was the Master of Ceremonies at the dedication at the Dr. Peter Lewis Garden in 2003, designed and developed the Hal Snyder Garden, published primary articles in **Victoria Avenews** and newsletters for over 20 years. Additionally Lori served as the liaison between VAF and over 19 Riverside organizations, such as KRCB, NCL, Citrus Park, and the Chamber of Commerce and helped the development and design of the Arlington Sports Park. Lori claims that her most favorite activity during her 25 years of service to VAF was the plantings. She enjoyed encouraging the young people to take ownership of the Avenue and said that "a planting day was good work among good company." We cherish her breadth of knowledge and history of VAF.

Darleen DeMason, Professor of Botany and Plant Morphologist, Emerita, at UC Riverside with over 107 publications, served on the Victoria Avenue Forever Board from 1998 until 2021. During her years of service on the Board, she held the roles of Recording Secretary, Vice President and President.

She contributed greatly to the professionalism of the organization during her tenure, including initiating and advancing the VAF web site, switching out tree species that were not performing well with other better adapted, water-wise species, gathering ALL of the newsletters from the beginning of VAF (1990), and writing scholarly newsletters for well over a decade. Darleen was a pivotal voice that furthered the organization's integration with the City and Public Works, including and perhaps most notably, designing and overseeing the installation of the Dammer's Butterfly Garden and stopping the round-a-bout at Washington and Victoria Avenue. We cherish her fortitude, leadership, insights and breadth of knowledge and history of VAF.

Marilyn Harris does not recall exactly when she joined the Board, but does DOES remember taking on the job of Commemorative Tree Chairperson; that momentous task began in 2012. Her favorite events and activities were the ideal planting of trees between Millsweet and La Sierra outbound parkway by family and friend donors who actually planted their donated trees in memory of loved ones. (Usually VAF Board members and volunteers do the planting of commemorative trees.) A few of the many memorable examples of such tree plantings include Chris and Jolyn MacArthur in memory of Shirley MacArthur, and the Buchmeiers, Cash's, Wight's and Niederkorn's in memory of Mother Eloise Niederkorn Williams. A total of 12 trees were planted by the families and friends of Ms. Williams. Marilyn recalls how very moving the plantings were. Many of the aforementioned folks have contributed additional trees through the years in memory of loved ones. Marilyn cherished her time on the Board. Asked who the five most inspirational people she worked with was a difficult question for her to answer, but she tried! Karen Williams, calligrapher who did not invoice VAF for years, Hal Snyder, Frank Heyming, Lori Yates, and Darleen DeMason.

Each of these remarkable women were instrumental in the establishment and sustainment of *Victoria Avenue Forever*. The magnificent, historical and resplendent parkway, Historic Victoria Avenue, that we enjoy year round is due in large part to the endless dedication of these three women. As you can deduce from this information, the Board of Directors has three **true gems** missing from our meetings, plantings, and writings. However, we will not abandon their vision and dedication to the mission. We hope to continue to restore, beautify, and preserve it by staying active and alert to the plans of the City of Riverside and engaging more volunteers to support us.

Work along the Avenue is made possible by your generous support! We are excited for what's ahead in 2025, and the many ways we hope to meet our mission's goals. Would you please consider making a year-end gift to support VAF? You can do so on the enclosed VAF membership renewal form. As always, check us out on social media, both Instagram and Facebook, and on our website at www.victoriaavenueforever.org.

Thank you for your continued partnership. Season's greetings to you and your families.

Sincerely,

Julie Sullivan
VAF Board Member

