

Political Forum



by Greig Smith
Councilmember, 12th District

Sharing What's Needed Is the Best Part of LA

Recently, I had the pleasure of attending an event sponsored by the non-profit organization L.A. Shares. For those of you unfamiliar, L.A. Shares started in 1991 as a pilot program through the City of Los Angeles' Cultural Affairs Division. In 1994 it became an independent non-profit, though it still receives funding from the City of Los Angeles' Public Works Department.

Its mission is simple, but brilliant: to take donated, reusable materials such as computers, office furniture and supplies from local businesses and then donate these items to local nonprofits and schools. In so doing, businesses receive a tax deduction, and nonprofits and schools are able to get necessary and useful goods that are put to good use, instead of being sent to Sunshine Canyon Landfill.

The California Integrated Waste Management Act (AB939) requires that cities divert a certain percentage of their waste from landfills. This percentage is growing and in the City of Los Angeles, we have set a goal of achieving 70 percent diversion by 2020. To accomplish our goals, we have "blue can" and green waste recycling programs and materials recovery programs, like L.A. Shares.

More recent legislation (SB20) prohibits the disposal of e-waste in landfills. E-waste is any number of a growing field of electronic items that includes everything from computer monitors and motherboards to discarded cellular phones. Due to these and other regulations, the City must, at great expense, collect these items at hazardous materials drop-off centers. Often, these items are discarded when their owners upgrade to newer models. L.A. Shares is able to find a home for any working electronics, computer package or cell phone. In the case of the later, they are collected and distributed to battered women's shelters, where they can be used to dial 911 in an emergency.

L.A. Shares has an incredible Website (www.lashares.org) that matches the business community with the nonprofit community. Nonprofits and schools are able to log on to the site and prepare a wish list that prioritizes their needs. Once completed, that list will trigger a notification each time that an item is donated that has been listed. Since there are often several

Council District 12 includes these communities:

- Northridge
- Granada Hills
- Porter Ranch
- Chatsworth
- West Hills
- Encino
- Van Nuys
- Canoga Park
- North Hills
- Winnetka
- Reseda
- Lake Balboa

requests for any given item, a computerized "lottery" ensues and the winner is notified by email how to pick up their item.

In addition to the site, they have a fully stocked warehouse in Griffith Park, where they invite nonprofits and schools to go "shopping." At the time of my visit, they had invited members of the Twelfth Council District nonprofit community, including our neighborhood councils. I watched with delight, as our community leaders carried out bags loaded with notebooks, computer labels, paper, software and other items. One group scored a drafting table, mini-fridge, video camera and television set!

When speaking with the director, Bert Ball, he mentioned that virtually the entire contents of their warehouse had been donated by only four major donors! We were both left to wonder how many people and organizations could be served if even more businesses got involved and donated their surplus items.

L.A. Shares is absolutely an example of what's right in the City of Los Angeles. ■

Each month, Alive! invites political leaders to speak directly to City and DWP employees and retirees. Alive! brings you these views as a public service. The opinions of those on this monthly column are independent of Alive! and the City Employees Club of Los Angeles.

Mukri Appointed New GM of Rec, Parks, Faces Staffing Issues

■ Mukri, currently the GM of General Services, confronts the frustration of unfilled positions at Rec and Parks.

Jon Kirk Mukri, the general manager of General Services, was named the new general manager of the Rec and Parks department, which faces increasing financial pressure in the City budget. Mayor Jim Hahn made the appointment, which is subject to City Council approval.

Mukri will oversee a department that operates and maintains more than 375 sites for recreational use, including 123 recreation

centers, 58 swimming pools, 7 lakes, 7 camps, more than a dozen museums and historic sites and hundreds of programs for youths, seniors, the physically disabled and volunteers. This includes more than 15,600 acres of parkland.

Under the City's current hiring freeze, 22 percent of the department's 2,285 positions are vacant.

The agency is expected to suffer further

trimming as the City figures out a way to survive its current budget deficit, expected to be \$250 million for the next fiscal year.

"My job as general manager will be to convince the mayor and City Council not to keep these vacancies unfilled," Mukri told the Los Angeles Times.

Manuel Mollinedo, the outgoing parks general manager, leaves to direct the San Francisco Zoo.

"Jon's many years of experience make him an ideal leader for the Department of Recreation and Parks," Mayor Hahn said.

"Jon is the right person to lead the Department forward and he will be a fantastic asset to our team."

Before stints as

general manager and assistant general manager, Mukri was Managing Group Director for the Marine Corps Air Station in El Toro, General Manager of Navy Resale Activity in Long Beach, Officer in Charge of a supply center in Long Beach, and Logistics Officer/Financial Analyst for the United States Embassy in Manila. Mukri also served in the United States Navy for nine years. ■



Jon Mukri, General Manager, Dept. of Recreation and Parks.

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