Mercer Island Holiday Shopping Guide

Nestled between two major cities and surrounded by suburban malls, there is no shortage of shopping opportunities for Mercer Islanders, not to mention online sources. There are also great shopping opportunities right here on Mercer Island, which can save time, gas, and the cost of shipping. Not only that, it’s a great way to support the Mercer Island community while finding unique gifts. Now through December 24, shoppers can make a purchase at Tatters in the Town Center and a percentage of that purchase will benefit Mercer Island Youth and Family Services. Please turn to page 6 for fun local shopping ideas. Enjoy the season!

Mercer Island Voters Approve Funding for Parks

This fall, Mercer Island voters approved a 15-year Parks Operations & Maintenance Levy for $900,000 per year with 53.13% of the vote. The Parks Operations & Maintenance Levy replaces the current levy which pays for operations and maintenance of Luther Burbank Park and which expires in 2009. It also funds open space and forest restoration and school related park and recreation activities. Included in the total amount were costs associated with new parks capital projects that were to be funded by a separate bond levy. The bond levy was approved by 53.86% of voters, however it required a “super majority” of 60% of the votes and therefore did not pass.

On November 17, 2008, the City Council approved levying $882,000 rather than the full amount of $900,000, backing out $128,000 in maintenance and operations related to the bond levy that failed and levying only $110,000 from the 2003 Luther Burbank Park lid lift for small capital projects.

The levy includes annual funding as follows:
- Luther Burbank Park Operations and Maintenance ($370,000);
- Open Space Vegetation Management ($65,000);
- Pioneer Park ($77,000);
- School Related Park and Recreation Activities ($260,000)

For more information, please visit www.mercergov.org/parksmeasures2008.

Mercer Island Named a “Playful City USA!”

Mercer Island was one of 67 communities across the country honored by KaBOOM!, a national non-profit organization dedicated to bringing play back into children’s lives. Playful City USA is a national recognition program that honors cities and towns across the nation who put their children’s well-being first by recognizing and harnessing the power of play. Check out fun things to do on pages 4 and 5 or visit www.miparks.net for more great ideas for ways to play!

The New Winter 2009 Recreation Guide is Available!

New Law Prompts Significant Change To Residential Burn Bans

The Puget Sound Clean Air Agency will be imposing both Stage 1 and Stage 2 burn bans, often in sequence. Stage 2 burn bans are more restrictive than the more familiar Stage 1 burn bans and ban ALL wood burning, even from certified wood stoves and pellet stoves.

What does this mean? The Puget Sound region will likely have longer burn bans, and perhaps more of them; and more fines may be issued for people violating the bans.

What is prompting this change? First, in late 2006, the US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) tightened the 24-hour health standard for fine particle pollution, also known as PM2.5. And earlier this year, Washington State Legislature lowered the air-quality trigger for calling a burn ban to align with this new EPA standard. The reason for these actions is to better protect public health because the soot and smoke that makes up these fine particles are associated with serious health effects. The tiny size of these pollutants allows them to be easily inhaled, bypassing the immune system and proceeding deep into the lungs, where they can cause respiratory and cardiovascular problems, including premature death.

What does this mean if you heat your home with wood or pellet fuel? During a burn ban, please rely on your home's other, cleaner source of heat (such as their furnace or electric baseboard heaters) for a few days until air quality improves, the risk to public health is diminished and a ban is cancelled. If Puget Sound Clean Air Agency inspectors observe a burn ban violation, they will issue a Notice of Violation to the property owner and recommend a $1,000 penalty.

More info: To make sure you are among the first to know when burn bans are issued and cancelled, or advised when weather conditions indicate a ban is likely, sign up for e-notification at www.pscleanair.org/signup You can also check burn-ban status by calling the Burn Ban InfoLine at 1-800-595-4341. For more details about the burn ban changes, please visit www.pscleanair.org/airq/burnban/background.aspx.

Mercer Island Fire Department Recognized for Innovative Use of GIS Technology

Mercer Island recently received national recognition among the International Fire Service community in an article in the magazine On Scene, a monthly publication produced by the International Association of Fire Chief's (IAFC). The issue highlighted the growing need and reliance of the fire service industry on Geographic Information System (GIS) technology. GIS is a technology that provides solutions both at the administrative level in making operational and policy level decisions, but is also a tool that can be utilized by field personnel in mitigating emergencies.

Included in the feature article on GIS technology is a map of Mercer Island illustrating the locations of existing Public Access Defibrillators. The Mercer Island Fire Department is currently involved in a study with King County EMS and the University of Washington Medical School to improve cardiac survivability, harnessing the power of GIS and existing data to improve reporting and make strategic decisions based on data.

As part of the IAFC’s new technology initiative, earlier this year the IAFC recently appointed a Technology Council. Mercer Island’s Fire Chief Chris Tubbs is one of sixteen members of this Council who has been asked to provide leadership in this emerging and important area for the nation’s fire service leaders. For more information, please contact the Mercer Island Fire Department at 206.275.7607.

Sewer Lake Line Replacement Project Awarded - $1.7 Million Below Estimate

Due to high bids received when the sewer lake line replacement project was originally bid in 2007, the project was repackaged and rebid this fall. The project was bid in three parts: A) lake line work B) pump station work and C) combination of both A and B. The engineers’ estimate for the full project was $20,820,417.

Bids were opened on November 13, 2008. Twenty-eight contractors representing 21 firms attended the pre-bid conference with ultimately 13 firms submitting bids. On December 1, Schedule A was awarded to Manson Construction in the amount of $14,797,295 and Schedule B was awarded to Stellar J Corporation in the amount of $4,328,548.60. The combined total of the two bids is $19,125,843.60. This is almost $1.7 million (8%) below the engineers’ estimate.

Funding

The City currently has $14.58 million in funding available for construction of the Sewer Lake Line Project. This is over 50% of the estimated total construction cost of $25.3 million. This funding includes a $7 million Public Works Trust Fund loan, $477,000 in federal grant funds, and $7.1 million in cash reserves. Based on the bids received, the City still needs additional funding of $10,767,000. Staff will pursue a second Public Works Trust Fund Loan in 2009 and submit an application in May. If successful, this money will be available beginning in 2010. Staff will also continue to pursue additional Federal Grant Funds for the construction of the project through both the State Legislature and our Congressional Delegation. Additionally funding for this project could be made available from revenue bonds, with the debt service on the bond paid from customer sewer rates. Staff estimates an increase of approximately 12% per year in the City’s sewer rates will be needed in 2009 and 2010 to provide funding for the Sewer Lake Line Project. The bi-monthly increase to an average sewer customer is estimated to be $7.90.

Schedule

The contractor for the pump station work (Schedule B) is expected to start work in January 2009. The contractor for the lake line work (Schedule A) is expected to start on July 2, 2009, the first day they are permitted to be in Lake Washington. For more information about this project, please visit www.mercergov.org/lakeline.
Important I-90 Updates

Bridge Closures Coming in 2009
The Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) will be replacing expansion joints on the I-90 floating bridge in 2009 which will require two 3-week closures on I-90. In May 2009, the expansion joints on the center roadway (reversible lanes) will be replaced requiring full closures of the center roadway. In July 2009, the expansion joints on westbound I-90 will be replaced requiring full closures of westbound I-90 and diversion of traffic to the center roadway. The eastbound bridge will not be affected by this project. Mercer Island residents should be alerted that this project is expected to impact traffic on the island as well as travel to and from Mercer Island. City officials are working with WSDOT to identify potential impacts and develop mitigation strategies. Please watch for more information as it becomes available. Sign up for email alerts on the WSDOT project site: http://www.wsdot.wa.gov/projects/i90/homerhadleybridgerepair or sign up for the City’s weekly electronic newsletter: www.mercergov.org/MIWeekly.

Tolling
The 520 Tolling Implementation Committee has been evaluating a variety of choices for highway tolling in order to fund the replacement of the 520 bridge. Some choices include tolling 520 only and other choices also include tolling I-90. The 520 Tolling Committee has hosted three public events on Mercer Island (August 13, November 17 and December 12) and received hundreds of comments and thousands of petition signatures from Mercer Island citizens. The 520 Tolling Committee will not be making a recommendation, but has been gathering information for a report to the state legislature which will ultimately decide how to fund the 520 bridge replacement. For more information, please visit www.build520.org.

New HOV Lane
Westbound I-90 carpoolers, vanpoolers and transit are now able to travel in a new HOV lane between Bellevue and Mercer Island. The new HOV lane is a hallmark of the first stage of WSDOT and Sound Transit’s I-90 Two-Way Transit and HOV Operations Project. For more information about this project visit www.wsdot.wa.gov/Projects/I90/TwoWayTransit.

Farmers Market A Success!!!
The 2008 Farmers Market inaugural season was a great success, with some 19,000 customer visits during the 10 week season. A total of 32 food vendors from Washington State brought berries, vegetables, orchard fruits, cheese, sorbet, soup, honey, seafood, flowers, baked goods, ice cream, pizza, and more! Shoppers spent over $240,000 at the market, averaging over $900 each week per vendor, making the Mercer Island Farmers Market one of the most financially viable markets in the county.

Many thanks to the dozens of fantastic volunteers for making the market fun and friendly with assistance in music, events, greeting, signage, set-up, recycling, traffic control, and clean-up. The market was also supported by grants from the Mercer Island Community Fund, Washington State Department of Agriculture, and the City of Mercer Island.

In 2009, the market will open for 16 weeks beginning on June 21—mark your calendars now! The Farmers Market is currently looking for assistance in marketing, accounting, and volunteer coordination. Please visit www.mifarmersmarket.org or contact Callie at 206.232.8402 for more information.

Island Crest Way and Merrimount Intersection: Update
This fall, the Mercer Island City Council approved a public involvement process regarding the Island Crest Way and Merrimount intersection. Previously, City Council approved converting Island Crest Way from the current four-lane configuration to a three-lane configuration. Based on the continuing high level of community interest in this project, implementation of any changes to the Island Crest Way corridor will be postponed until additional public outreach is completed.

A panel of 15 citizens plus two council members has been appointed by the City Council to explore and discuss alternatives for improving safety at the Island Crest Way and Merrimount intersection. The citizens were selected from 45 applications and the panel has so far held two meetings. The citizen panel meetings are open to the public to observe. An opportunity for public comment will be provided at each meeting. Additionally, a community meeting is tentatively planned for February. The process is expected to be completed in the spring of 2009. Meeting minutes and updates will be posted to www.mercergov.org/IslandCrestWay or contact Project Manager Anne Tonella-Howe at anne.tonella-howe@mercergov.org or at 206.275.7813.
Family Friendly!
Skagit Eagle Watch: River Rafting Trip
Saturday, January 17, departs 9 am sharp! and returns at 5 pm

Each winter, up to 300 Bald Eagles congregate in the Skagit Preserve. Sightings of these magnificent and endangered birds are frequent in this protected habitat. With wingspans of up to seven feet, the eagle is truly majestic from close range. You'll float calmly and comfortably with other enthusiasts in astoundingly beautiful scenery.

Guides are experienced eagle watchers. The trip includes a delicious lunch. We put in at the Marble Mountain Skagit River Bridge and float 8 miles to Howard Miller Steelhead Park in Rockport. Join us!

The trip leaves from the Community Center at Mercer View. Special Instructions: Arrive at the Community Center with a swim suit under your clothing for ease of changing. Avoid wearing Cotton clothing; wet cotton is cold and provides no insulation. Synthetic, wool & neoprene clothing are warmest.

Age: 6 years to adult, youth fee (Ages 6-15 years with adult): $87, adult fee: $92. Register by phone 206.275.7609 or online at www.myparksandrecreation.com, code: 9206.

Preschool at CCMV
Now there are three options at the Community Center for preschoolers!

- **Registered Preschool**: Reserve a 3-hour space for your child on any day(s) the program is offered.
- **Drop In Preschool**: No need to pre-register, just drop your child off for 1 hour, or all 3 hours.
- **Parent Night Out** happens once per month. Reserve a space to drop your 2 to 8 year old child(ren) off at the Community Center from 5:30 to 9 in their PJs (if they want). We will provide dinner, games, stories, crafts and bed time stories while you enjoy an evening out.

For rates, reservations or more info, please call 206.275.7791

Let's Go to the Hop, Oh Baby!
Sunday, January 11
Dance lessons 4 pm – 5 pm, Live Music & Dancing 5 pm – 7 pm

Does the music of the 50's & 60's rock your socks? If so, you will want to limber up those “Elvis Lips” and bring your shakin’ hips to the Arts Council Sock Hop! We are going back in time so be prepared to kick off your penny loafers and saddle shoes and roll down your socks for some great dancing to live tunes. Costumes encouraged! Prizes awarded for best costumes. No costume? No worries! Costumes are not required...just throw on a pair of blue jeans! No dance partners needed either. Come by yourself or bring some friends! Bring the whole family! Each ticket includes a hot dog and a root beer float. Fee: $7.00 (ages 3 and under free with paid adult)

"Sweet Cakes" - Valentine’s Day Tea for Senior Adults
February 12 ~ 2 pm to 3:30 pm

Join us for a special afternoon Valentine’s Day Tea on February 12 between the hours of 2 pm to 3:30 pm at the Community Center at Mercer View. Enjoy a relaxing afternoon with friends as you enjoy flavorful teas and the scrumptious finger foods, sweet cakes, and other valentine treats. Make a special valentine, play some Valentine’s Day trivia, enjoy the entertainment, and visit with others in a festive atmosphere. Bring your favorite tea cup or tea pot and share its special significance or history. Registration required. Call 206.275.7609 to reserve your spot for this one of a kind Valentines’ Day event. Transportation available. Fee: $5.00

Family Valentine’s Party
February 13 ~ 6:30 pm to 8:30 pm

Get on your dancing shoes for an unforgettable night! Bring your whole family to celebrate Valentine’s Day with dancing, refreshments, photos, games and more! Love is in the air as you make unforgettable memories at this wonderful family fun event. Age: 2 – 12 yrs (accompanied by an adult) Fee: $16.00 per child and one family member, $5.00 for each additional family member. Register by phone 206.275.7609 or online at www.myparksandrecreation.com, code: 9236

Kids’ Birthday Celebrations at the Community Center

The Community Center at Mercer View is THE location for your next birthday party bash! The Birthday Celebration includes the room for two hours on either a Saturday or Sunday, activities, games for you to play with your guests and decorations; The Community Center staff will also take care of ALL the clean-up! Call 206.275.7609 today to book.
The Mercer Island Arts Council presents...

Indoor Art Gallery
Beautiful paintings and artwork of regional visual artists are featured regularly at the Community Center at Mercer View. The artwork is for sale and a percentage of the sales goes toward supporting the arts and cultural programming of the Mercer Island Arts Council.
- Through December 19: M.I.V.A.L. Holiday Show
- January 5–February 20: Jose Orantes
- February 23–April 10: SUMI painters

Into the Ring with Perry Lorenzo
For a unique opportunity to learn and prepare for Seattle Opera’s Summer 2009 production of The Ring, join Perry Lorenzo, Seattle Opera’s Education Director for this exciting lecture series. Location: Community Center at Mercer View. Free.
- Session 3: Feb. 26, 2009, 6:30 pm, Into Revolutionary Philosophy: The Thoughts of Wagner’s Questioning Mind
- Session 4: Apr. 23, 2009, 6:30 pm, Into Political Revolution: The Overthrow of the Gods

Classics On Film at the Community Center at Mercer View
Film Noir Retrospective with Lance Rhoades, Film Historian
Film introduction at 6:15 pm, films begin at 6:30 pm
- Thursday, January 8: The Maltese Falcon, Dir: John Houston. Starring: Humphrey Bogart
- Thursday, January 22: Double Indemnity, Dir: Billy Wilder. Starring: Fred MacMurray; Barbara Stanwick
- Thursday, January 29: Laura, Dir: Otto Preminger. Starring: Gene Tierney; Dana Andrews
- Thursday, February 26: Out Of The Past, Dir: Jacques Tourneur. Starring: Robert Mitchum; Kirk Douglas
- Thursday, March 12: Chinatown, Dir: Roman Polanski. Starring: Jack Nicholson; Faye Dunne
- Thursday, March 19: Rififi - French film with Mercer Island Sister City Association, Dir: Jules Dassin (inspired "Ocean's 11 films.") tarring Jean Sevais
- Thursday, April 2: Dead Men Don't Wear Plaid, Dir: Carl Reiner. Starring Steve Martin; Carl Reiner

Call for Musicians! Mostly Music in the Park 2009
Performing artists are needed for the 2009 Mostly Music in the Park Outdoor Concert series. Concerts run Sunday & Thursday evenings in July & August for an hour and a half. Please submit performance packs and CD's to Mostly Music in the Park, 2040 84th Ave. SE, Mercer Island, WA 98040. MySpace and other Internet sites will not be considered in lieu of a packet with CD. Submission deadline: January 15, 2009.

The Mercer Island Arts Council was established in 1985. Its mission is to nurture, promote, and support high-quality cultural arts activities for the community. More information: www.mercergov.org or call 206.275.7609


Visit the City website! www.mercergov.org
The Food Pantry Needs Your Help!

Friends of the Food Pantry

The Mercer Island Food Pantry is recruiting sponsors to be “Friends of the Food Pantry” by committing to provide one type of item as it is needed for a period of six months. A sponsor would commit to receiving a call whenever the pantry is low on that particular item and be willing to bring in replacements as needed. If you are interested in becoming a sponsor, please call Cheryl Manriquez at 206.275.7869.

Island Drop Off Locations

The Mercer Island Food Pantry currently has two island drop off locations. There are bins at Banner Bank (2918 78th Ave SE) on the north end of the island, and at Curves on the south end (8435 SE 68th Stt, #100). Please drop off non-perishable foods during normal business hours at these locations. Please check the expiration dates. Thank you for your donations!

Great Ways to Support Youth and Family Services

- All Island Fund Drive - Mail arrived in Island homes in early November requesting general program and operating support for Youth and Family Services. Please note! To get a tax deduction for 2008, donations must be received by December 31.
- Tatters Holiday Sale - Make a purchase at Tatters in downtown Mercer Island between now and December 24 and a percentage of your purchase will benefit Youth and Family Services.
- Giving from the Heart - February 11, 2009 at the Community Center at Mercer View. MIYFS Foundation’s biggest fundraiser of the year. Enjoy breakfast and coffee with friends and hear inspiring speakers. To be a sponsor, table captain or to make a reservation, call 206.275.7611.

Check it out! The Foundation has a new Web site at www.miyfs.org. Learn about YFS programs! Make a donation online! Get involved! For more information about YFS, please call 206.275.7611.

Mercer Island Quarterly

Page 6

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Storm Season Is Here...But You’re Ready, Right?!

High winds and rain on the night of November 11 were a reminder that storm season is here. Are you ready? There’s no better time than the present to get out those flashlights and battery-operated hand crank radios in case there is a power outage. Should a disaster occur such as a severe storm or earthquake, Mercer Island residents need to be prepared to shelter in place for at least 7 days. There will be minimal assistance and it will only be for people with life threatening injuries. The Community Center at Mercer View is the City’s only emergency shelter. Since the maximum capacity is 250, the community center shelter would only be for victims in need of critical medical attention and displaced elderly or children. It’s up to you to care for yourself and your family, so don’t put off getting prepared! Helpful tips and checklists are available at www.mercergov.org/emergencyprep.

Should a disaster occur, the City of Mercer Island will utilize all available means of communication to inform the community about disaster impacts and recovery efforts. Residents are encouraged to:

- listen to 710 KIRO*, KOMO 1000 and 88.9 fm (MIHS radio station) on their battery-operated radios
- watch for flyers and postings on the Island
- contact out-of-area friends and family to check the City’s website or RPIN (www.rpin.org)
- talk to neighbors to share information.

*Please note that in January, KIRO will start broadcasting news on 97.3 fm. KIRO 710 will be retained as a sports station so in emergencies, 97.3 fm would be the most likely station for announcements.

The City will in most cases also open an information line at the City’s main number: 206.275.7600, or dial “311” from any Mercer Island landline. Further information about how to get information in an emergency can be found at www.mercergov.org/emergencyinfo.

Businesses: Are YOU Ready?

Statistics show businesses that have a disaster plan in place are 41% more likely to stay in business than those that don’t. In the event of a disaster, the City of Mercer Island will not be able to transport people off of the Island. Businesses, just like our city staff and our citizens, must be prepared to take care of themselves, their employees, their families for 7 days. In the event of a disaster, employees must feel confident that if they are stuck on Mercer Island and their families are elsewhere that those families will be taken care of. If you could not get home to your loved ones, what plan do you have in place to care for them? Here are the basics of what every person working on Mercer Island should have:

1. Emergency Kits: water, food, sleeping bags, flashlights, generators & fuel to shelter employees in place and keep your business running.
2. Out of Area Contacts: Someone outside of the region to help family members connect and also someone not far away who could take care of your family if you can't leave the island.
3. Ability to Assist in a Disaster: We will need to rely on each other to get through a disaster and stay in business, we can only do that by working together.

The following website will provide you with the assistance you need to create a plan for your business. www.disastersafety.org/business_protection. For further assistance, please contact Jennifer Franklin, Mercer Island Emergency Preparedness Officer at 206.275.7905 or jennifer.franklin@mercergov.org.

Save With Every Flush

Did you know that toilets are the biggest water wasters in the home? Whether you have a very old toilet or a modern model, the new generation of 1.28 gallons per flush WaterSense toilets and the 1.6 gallons per flush FlushStar toilets will save you water and money. Most households can easily save thousands of gallons of water and more than $100 a year on utility bills by installing a WaterSense toilet, without sacrificing performance.

When choosing new toilets, look for the WaterSense or FlushStar label - these labels are your guarantee of performance, efficiency and quality. They have been independently tested and proven to perform, and are available in local stores. For more information, visit www.savingwater.org. For more ways to conserve water, please visit www.mercergov.org/waterconservation.

Utility Assistance Program

The City of Mercer Island is offering assistance with City water, sewer line maintenance, and storm drain charges in 2009 to low income seniors and disabled persons. Those residents who are eligible will receive 50% reduction in utility charges. Applicants must be responsible for payment of utility bills and living at the address receiving services or must reside in a rental unit served directly by the City of Mercer Island. If you are interested in receiving an application or have questions about the program, please call Cheryl Manriquez at 206.275.7869.

First Aid with Adult CPR
- Saturday, January 10, 2009: 9 am to 3 pm
- Saturday, February 28, 2009: 9 am to 3 pm
- Saturday, March 28, 2009: 9 am to 3 pm
$30 by check or cash the day of the event

Infant/Child/Adult CPR
- Thursday, January 22, 2009: 7 pm to 9 pm
- Wednesday, February 11, 2009: 7 pm to 9 pm
- Wednesday, March 11, 2009: 7 pm to 9 pm
$15 by check or cash the day of the event

Classes are held at the Main Fire Station, 3030 78th Ave SE
Call 206.275.7607, Monday through Friday to reserve a space.
Have YOU Tuned Into Mercer Island TV Yet?!

Mercer Island’s own cable station, MI-TV Channel 21 is now on air! In addition to airing live and replayed City Council meetings, MI-TV Channel 21 is also home to a new program, Mercer Island View. Tune in to learn more about your community and get valuable information. Other educational programming and important announcements air between the scheduled programs.

NEW! Council meetings, Mercer Island View, and other programs are now available ONLINE. Visit www.mercergov.org/MITV for more information.

Let us know what you think about the programming! An online survey is available at www.mercergov.org/MITV or contact Joy Johnston, Communications Coordinator at 206.275.7791.

What Do YOU Want to Know? Subscribe to MI Weekly!

Join hundreds of your neighbors who have discovered the fastest way to get current news! To request a weekly email of the most current City news, please email joy.johnston@mercergov.org or visit www.mercergov.org/miweekly.

Mark Your Calendar for Leap for Green 2009!

The Second Annual “Leap for Green” Earth Day Celebration will be on April 18, 2009. Over 1,000 people attended this fun family event in 2008. We can’t wait to do it again! www.mercergov.org/LeapforGreen

Interested in helping? Please contact Joy Johnston, Communications Coordinator at 206.275.7791.

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To learn more about the Mercer Island City Council, please visit the City website. Council Meeting agendas and supporting documents are uploaded to the website the Friday before each meeting.

www.mercergov.org

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