

SAVE OPEN-SPACE AND AGRICULTURAL RESOURCES

# NEWS & VIEWS

Winter 2010

www.soarusa.org

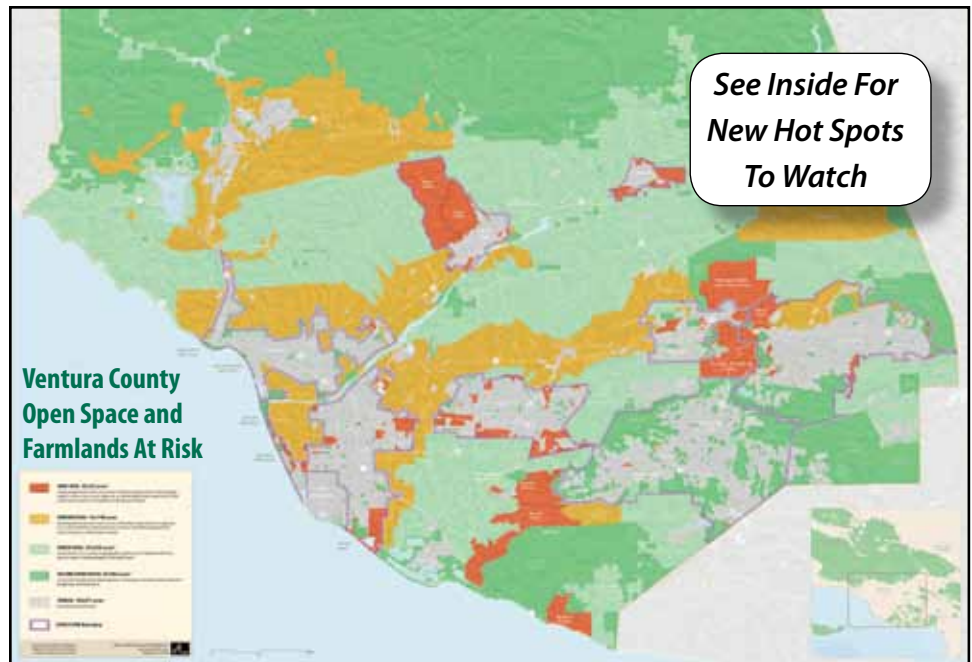
## Sprawl Projects Get A Jump In Down Economy

Empty storefronts, vacant office buildings and tracts of unsold new homes have not deterred developers who are lining up sprawling development projects now. They know that once approved, they've got close to a decade to begin construction. The downturn in the economy also means cheaper land prices and the ability for developers to sell any project as the "cure" to the economic slowdown.

For east Ventura County, developers are looking at projects that will result in the piecemeal elimination of over one thousand acres of natural open space. Projects are proposed that will cut further into the rural lands of the Tierra Rejada Valley and hills to the north. The method in the east county is to subdivide land in the unincorporated area down to its smallest allowable lot size.

In the west county, developers are preparing now to pave over thousands of acres of agricultural land, particularly along the 101 Freeway which could result in more than 200,000 new daily car trips, many of which will clog the already congested freeway. The projects approved during these economically difficult times are set to convert to urban uses the remaining agricultural land along the 101 corridor from Camarillo westward.

### New Wave Of Urban Sprawl Mounting



From the SOAR 2008 At Risk Report

Economic downturns in the past generated these same pro-development arguments and led to the approvals that paved over all of the San Fernando Valley.

This newsletter focuses on the new wave of urban sprawl that is building in Ventura County. We have always known that development pressure is relentless and every avenue around our SOAR laws will be explored and exploited by developers. ■ ■ ■

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# AT RISK

## EAST COUNTY

### No Country for Wildlife and Farms?

Development projects in the hinterlands, away from urban areas, are often approved without public input because not many in the public are aware of them, until the bulldozers arrive and then it's too late. There are a half dozen development projects for the Tierra Rejada Valley and hills to the north that are in the planning stage or working their way through the approval process at the county planning department.

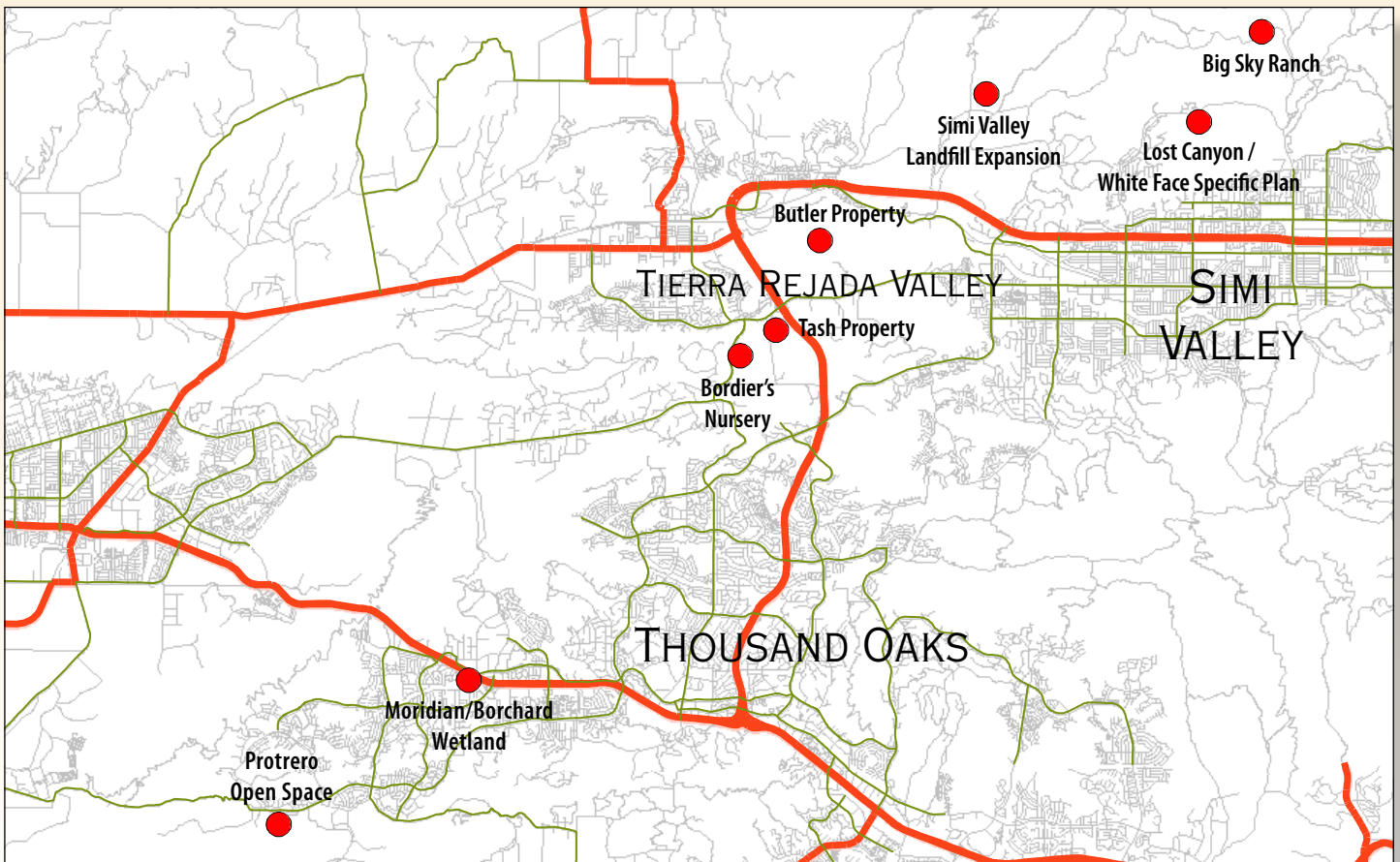
The continual subdividing of large parcels of open space into 10-acre lots is gradually suburbanizing the Tierra Rejada Valley. SOAR would require a vote of the people if the properties were being rezoned from open space or farmland. However, by subdividing into the smallest parcel still allowed in the Open Space zone, farms and ranches are being converted into residential

estate lots. The fencing, night lighting, and urban uses associated with these ranchettes are choking off a vital wildlife corridor that links wildlife in the Santa Monica Mountains with the Simi Hills and Los Padres Forest. Losing the link will reduce the ability for these species to survive in our region and also lead to more wildlife straying into residential areas.

#### Tierra Rejada Valley

- **Tash Property:** The 58 acres of farmland owned by George and Debra Tash in the southeast quadrant of Tierra Rejada Road and Sunset Valley Road has been divided into 10-acre parcels in anticipation of ranchette development.
- **Bordier's Nursery:** The 390 acres of farmland in the southwest quadrant of Tierra Rejada Road and Sunset Valley Road that used to belong to Bordier's Nursery awaits disposition from foreclosure. Much of the valuable topsoil was graded away for flood control purposes and in anticipation of adding greenhouses. The land is zoned OS-10 which means it is in the

*continued on following page*







open space zone and could be subdivided into 10-acre lots.

- **Butler Property:** In the hills north of Tierra Rejada Road and east of the 23 Freeway, the Butler property aims to add roads and 39 houses on 505 acres of rough terrain.

coastal sage scrub and 50 acres of riparian habitat in order to construct 364 houses. As a result there will be 100 acres of annual brush clearance, 2 miles of paved road, a dam and estate lots in a plan that “de-clusters” what was to be more compact

- **The Big Sky Ranch** north of Simi Valley is being considered for development of movie sound stages with up to 300 employees on 60 acres of the 200 acre ranch.

## Simi Valley Hills

- **Simi Valley Landfill Expansion:** In the hills to the north of Simi Valley, Waste Management is looking at expanding its landfill into 165 acres of open space and farmland. SOAR has called for mitigation measures to include dedicating the land between the landfill and Moorpark College for open space preservation which will preclude further inroads to development to the north and guarantee wildlife passage.
- **Lost Canyon/White Face Specific Plan:** A recent amendment to this specific plan will eliminate 400 acres of



development. It is particularly alarming because the open space land to be developed was set aside as a mitigation for earlier development but never transferred to the Rancho Simi Recreation and Park District. Approval rests with the City of Simi Valley.

## Other Hot Spots to Watch

- **The Moridian/Borchard Wetland** property fronting the south side of the 101 freeway between Borchard and Wendy Roads in Thousand Oaks is a 36-acre wetland. One of the last remaining wetlands in the Conejo Valley, SOAR is encouraging the preservation of the land for a natural park.
- **Potrero Open Space**, which borders both the State and National Park in Newbury Park (across the street

from Dos Vientos), was recently annexed into the City of Thousand Oaks. The 326 acres of natural open space lies outside the City’s CURB line. Annexation gives the City the ability to rezone the property if SOAR land use measures are allowed to expire. ■■■



## Join the SOAR Rapid Response Team

*It is important to have a SOAR rapid response team ready to comment or send emails on proposals before the Board of Supervisors or City Councils. Sign up for the rapid response team by emailing us at [rapidresponse@soarusa.org](mailto:rapidresponse@soarusa.org).*

## WEST COUNTY

# The 101 Traffic Jam

The most visible developments in Ventura County are those along the Highway 101 corridor on the Oxnard Plain. The conversion of this prime farmland does not trigger a SOAR vote because it was inside the urban boundaries of the cities of Camarillo and Oxnard when the original SOAR growth boundaries were created.

Both cities are moving rapidly to develop the land and their plans will likely result in more than 200,000 new daily car trips, many of which will be on the Ventura freeway. Below SOAR lists some of the highest impact projects. SOAR is most concerned about projects that will pave over open space and prime agricultural land, particularly Sakioka Farms, Jones Ranch and the Conejo Creek Project.

## Oxnard

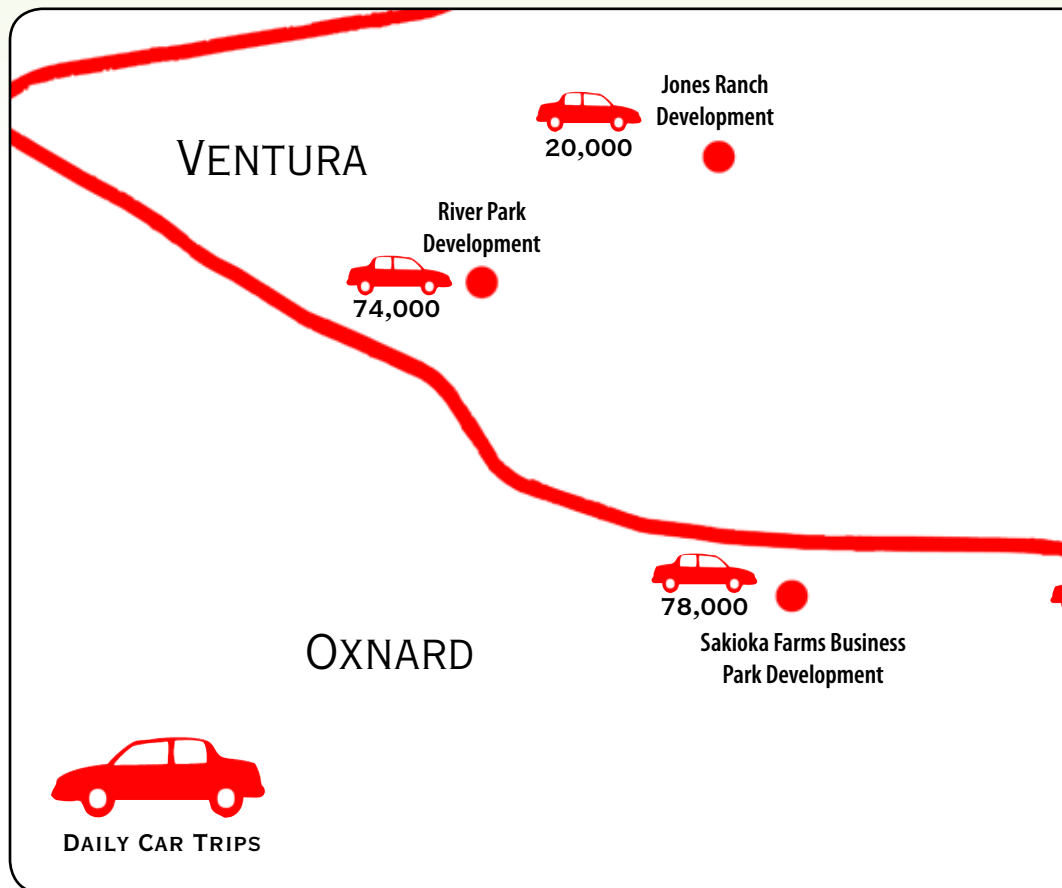
- **Sakioka Farms Business Park Development: Over 78,000 new daily car trips:** This plan calls for light industrial buildings on close to 300 acres and a business and research park on roughly 130 acres. Together the construction would create about 8.5 million square feet of new mixed-use industrial and business space, which would also include high-rise buildings. **This project will result in the loss of 430 acres of prime agricultural land and an estimated 78,000 additional car trips a day are expected to be generated by the development.** A draft EIR was presented to Oxnard City October, 2010.

- **River Park Development: Over 70,000 new daily car trips:** The largest mixed-use project in Ventura County history: 680 Acres, 2,800 homes (1800 houses, 1,000 apartment and/or condominium units), 800,000 sq ft of retail and commercial space, 300-room hotel/convention center. This project is under construction with much of it already completed.

- **Jones Ranch Development: Over 20,000 new daily car trips.** 2,500 homes on 165 acres of strawberry fields along Vineyard and Central. SOAR opposed its approval last spring at the Oxnard City Council meeting and the project has been put on hold pending its return to the Council at a future date.

## Camarillo

- **Conejo Creek Properties Development: Over 25,000 new daily car trips.** 2,500 homes, 100 + acres of industrial development, 50+ acres of retail/commercial on 740 acres of farmland floodplain at the bottom of the Conejo Grade between Camarillo Springs and the Pleasant Valley/Santa Rosa Rd. interchange. Draft EIR to be presented to Camarillo City Council Jan. 2011.
- **Springville Development: Over 10,000 new daily car trips.** 1440 residences on 174 acres. Very high-density development along the 101, between Las Posas and Central, in the strawberry fields where the new Springville interchange is currently being constructed. Approved for development.
- **Airport North Specific Plan Development: Over 25,000 new daily car trips.** 338 acres of retail/commercial/light industrial development, north of Home Depot along the Airport side of the 101 in Camarillo. First phase, 44-acre Paseo Camino Real, approved to proceed.





# GROUPS FORMED TO OPPOSE SOAR

*They push pro-development policies*

In the last year two groups have formed in Ventura County, both with essentially the same purpose, to challenge land use regulations and allow virtually unregulated development of land. Both organizations strongly oppose SOAR and threaten our goal to stop urban sprawl in Ventura County.

The two groups, Citizens Alliance for Property Rights (CAPR) and the Coalition of Labor, Agriculture and Business (COLAB) are primarily organizing large land owners and those who profit from land development. Over the years, COLAB's extremist land use positions have been very divisive in Santa Barbara County.

They are a force we must counter. They organize turnouts of speakers when land use issues are in front of the Board of Supervisors or City Councils. They regularly lobby city and county staff for pro-development interpretations of rules and regulations, and many of their members have announced their intentions to oppose elected officials who support SOAR.

Well funded and profit driven, they make our Rapid Response Team efforts even more important.

Sending emails to members of the Board of Supervisors and city council members and speaking at land use hearings can have a tremendous effect on the decisions of elected bodies.

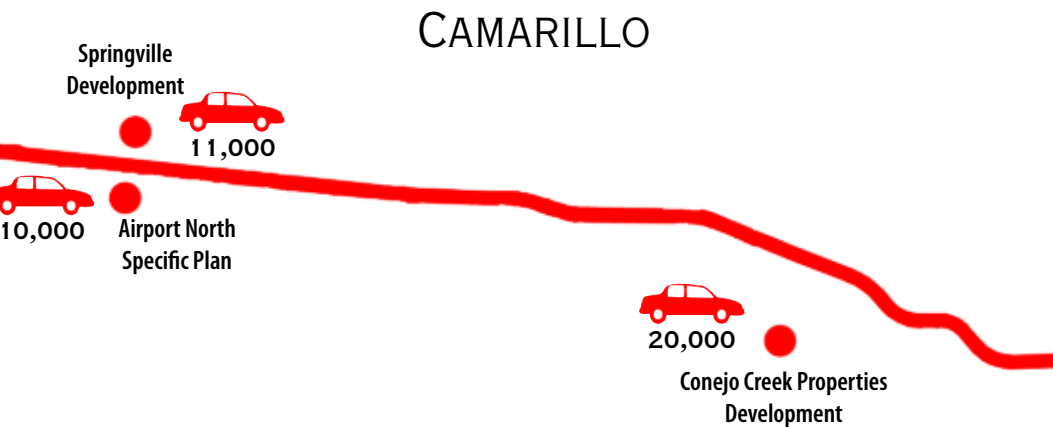
Please sign up for the SOAR Rapid Response Team to receive timely action alerts and do all you can to send a vigorous message in support of open-space and farmland in Ventura County.

To join the Rapid Response Team, just send an email to [rapidresponse@soarusa.org](mailto:rapidresponse@soarusa.org). Thank you.

## Other Hot Spots to Watch

- **Cañada Larga:** The Ventura City Council voted 4-3 to study expansion of the city boundary into the pristine Cañada Larga valley. SOAR spoke strongly against this expansion. The issue will come in front of the city council again in the near future.
- **Ormond Beach:** Negotiations continue regarding how the Oxnard City Council will zone land near the Ormond Beach wetlands. This important wetland area is one of the small remaining wetlands areas on the coast of California and needs a large buffer from development to function properly. Hearings will continue in front of the Oxnard City Council. SOAR supports permanent protection of the lands needed to preserve this rare and vital ecological resource.

## COMING DOWN THE ROAD — 200,000 NEW DAILY VEHICLE TRIPS







**Debbie Diamond:  
SOAR Volunteer Extraordinaire**

There is no one in the SOAR organization with more passion and energy for the cause than Debbie Diamond.

Debbie's infectious energy and optimism are exactly what a grassroots organization like SOAR needs. Whenever we face a challenge, Debbie volunteers to play a key role in solving it.

For five years, Debbie Diamond alone has solicited, picked up and coordinated virtually every raffle and silent auction item SOAR has handled. That includes six annual 5K run events and the SOAR ten year celebration.

Debbie is ably assisted by her spouse Wolf Breiman. The two of them have been key players in every SOAR event and project for the last 12 years.

We cannot thank Debbie enough and we hope you take a moment to let her know how much you appreciate her efforts.

### *Our Mission*

*SOAR's mission is to make Ventura County a better place to live by limiting urban sprawl, protecting open space and agricultural lands, and promoting livable and sustainable communities in the county and surrounding regions.*

## CREATING A SUSTAINABLE REGIONAL FOOD SYSTEM FOR SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

### **Urban-Rural Roundtable Spurs Action in LA**

Los Angeles is waking up to the value of eating fresh, healthy foods grown close to home – and to the importance of supporting the farms and farmers that grow that food.

Earlier this year farmers, distributors, retailers, food service directors, urban planners, hunger activists, and community leaders of all stripes from San Luis Obispo to San Diego came together for a series of meetings to discuss how to create a healthy and sustainable regional food system in Southern California.

Called the Los Angeles Urban-Rural Roundtable, the meetings generated a set of policy recommendations that were delivered to Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa's Los Angeles Food Policy Task Force in April.

Their recommendations aimed to align and coordinate urban and rural actions and incentives to:

- **Protect and steward** agricultural and natural resources throughout the region;

- Increase opportunities for regional food producers and distributors to access and **develop local markets** for their products;
- Ensure **access** to healthy and sustainably produced foods, particularly in underserved communities in both urban and rural areas; and
- Build a regional **foodshed identity** that celebrates and adds value to the foods grown in our region.

The roundtable was facilitated by SOAR Executive Director Karen Schmidt, and numerous Ventura County agricultural and community leaders participated in the process. In October, Mayor Villaraigosa announced the formation of a regional food policy council that will work to carry out the task force and roundtable recommendations.

For more information visit [www.goodfoodla.org](http://www.goodfoodla.org) or contact Karen Schmidt at [kschmidt@soarusa.org](mailto:kschmidt@soarusa.org).





## Volunteer Efforts Make 6<sup>th</sup> Annual 5K Run A Success

Volunteers are the key to a grassroots organization like SOAR. Our recent 6<sup>th</sup> Annual 5K Run brought out some of our finest volunteers as we hosted over 200 runners on Ventura County's best 5K course.

On a cool morning after a gentle rain, there was no dust and no heat as runners registered and ran on a course manned by an outstanding group of new and veteran SOAR volunteers:

Merrill Berge	Joy Kobayashi
Mary Borland	Angel Mayorga
Bonnie Biddison	Joel Mayorga
Bob Brown	Christine Magie
Mark Burley	Paul Magie
Joseph Connett	Roseann Mikos
Rick Conrad	Larry Older
Debbie Diamond	Nancy Older
Elzbet Diaz de Leon	David Sheehan
Tom Gnad	Julie Tovias
Carolyn Greene	Janet Wall
Kelli Ham	Ali Widmar

Thank you all for keeping SOAR's 5K Run alive and well. We are planning on adding a 10K run to the race next year and will need more volunteers. Let us know if you are interested in helping plan and/or staff the 7<sup>th</sup> annual run scheduled for October 9, 2011.



## SOAR *Foundation Circle* GOING STRONG

JOIN BY DECEMBER 31 TO  
SECURE YOUR SPOT AT THE SPRING FC EVENT!

Last year we called for 50 SOAR supporters to step up to the plate with an annual donation of \$500 or more to provide the funds needed to keep SOAR at the forefront of the fight to stop urban sprawl in Ventura County.

SOAR members generously answered that call. We met our target, and the first-ever SOAR Foundation Circle was launched. We are well on our way to meeting our target again this year – but we're not quite there yet.

As evidenced in this newsletter, the need to monitor and respond to threats is growing. We hope you will **join the 2011 Foundation Circle with a \$500 donation by December 31** of this year to make sure that SOAR is able to continue holding the line against the relentless pressure to pave over our remaining farmlands, wildlife corridors and greenbelts.

All 2011 Foundation Circle members will be invited to our 2<sup>nd</sup> annual Foundation Circle Brunch on the Riviera this spring. Participants will engage in key discussions with the SOAR board about the future of SOAR and Ventura County while they enjoy a delicious locally grown meal on a beautiful deck overlooking the Pacific at the top of the Ventura Hills.



*Thank you to everyone who has already signed on to the 2011 SOAR Foundation Circle this year with their donation of \$500 or more:*

Marilyn and Al Adam	C.E. Mabry
Anonymous (2)	Paul and Christine Magie
Patricia Feiner Arkin and Edward Arkin	Douglas and Mary Jo McLeod
Leslie Ogden and Steve Bennett	Dr. Roseann Mikos
Gail Topping and George Berg	Leo and Vieno Molitor
Jay Clancy and Merrill Berge	Dawn and Roger Mortara
Ron de la Peña & Claudia Bill-de la Peña	Lowell L. Novy, D.V.M.
Cheryl and John Brant	Sherry and Bob O'Hollaren
Debbie Diamond and Wolf Breiman	Nancy and Larry Older
Brian Brennan	Linda and Al Parks
Mark and Penny Burley	Wilma Poe
Elzbet Diaz de Leon and Joseph Connett	Colleen Robles
Marjorie Herring and Gary Cramer	Brian Rocheleau
Chuck Cronin	Fred and Gail Rosenmund
Tom Ritch and Janice Davis	Nancy Settle Vaniotis
Kate and Bill Faulkner	Daniel Silver, M.D.
Wendy Sauter and Bob Guthrie	Hank and Sue Stoutz
Steven and Marsha Hively	Betsy Patterson and Al Stroberg
Mindy Cooper-Smith	Chuck Thomas
and Robert James III	Jame M. Tolmach
Java Frost	Craig and Sara Jane Underwood
Jay and Linda Kapitz	Tom and Kerry Weisel
Edward and Diane Keay	Jason and Jodi Womack

**SOAR - THE MEASURE THAT KEEPS ON GIVING!**



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# IN MEMORIAM



**GEORGE "SPARKY" ANDERSON**

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FEBRUARY 22, 1934 – NOVEMBER 4, 2010

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BASEBALL HALL OF FAME, SOAR SUPPORTER, FRIEND