

ATHERTON probes building department for possible wrongdoing by employees. Page 5

The Almanac

THE HOMETOWN NEWSPAPER FOR MENLO PARK, ATHERTON, PORTOLA VALLEY AND WOODSIDE

JUNE 28, 2006 www.AlmanacNews.com | VOL. 41 | NO. 43

Seeing eye to eye

When a champion thoroughbred went blind in one eye, Denise Seymour knew just how to help

(Page 12)



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Inside

This week's news, features and community events.

FIRST SHOT



The Almanac/Marjan Sadoughi

First pitch

Woodside Town Council members, from left, Sue Boynton, Pete Sinclair, Mayor Deborah Gordon, and Dave Tanner, Woodside resident Sally Hartman, and Councilman Paul Goeld pitch dirt from their shovels on the future site of an athletic field at a groundbreaking ceremony for Barkley Field and Park. Construction of the nearly six-acre park, located just east of Interstate 280, off Farm Hill Boulevard, is set to start this summer. Ms. Hartman headed the campaign that raised \$2.2 million in private donations to develop the park on land donated by Woodsiders Claire and Noel Perry. When it opens next spring, it will be Woodside's first municipal park.

Atherton

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Menlo Park

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- Chemical scare highlights question: Who does what at Burgess Pool? **Page 10**

Grand jury report

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Money & Business

- Designing woman: Poletti Associates in Woodside is recognized as a top woman-owned business in Silicon Valley. **Cover, Section 2**

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On the cover

Denise Seymour and Devoncourt have a special bond — both horse and rider are blind in one eye. Thanks to Ms. Seymour's empathetic work with the thoroughbred, Devoncourt is back in the show ring and leaping over hunter course jumps just like he used to. Photo by Marjan Sadoughi. Story begins on **Page 12**.

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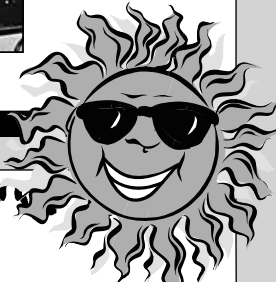



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BOB - WINE






Serving Order

It is very enjoyable to serve more than one wine during the courses of a meal, but in which order should they be served? As a rule, chilled wines should come before room temperature wines, and younger wines should be served before older ones. It also makes sense to serve lighter wines before heavier wines, white wines before reds, and red wines before sweet wines (unless the sweet wine is to be served as an aperitif or with a first course). Wines from the same region should be served in reverse order of their vintage (even if the younger wine is a better growth), though there are exceptions. The idea is to save the heavier, more complex wines for last.

We have a large selection of California and imported wines. Of course, you'll also find your favorite brands of beer and liquors. Additionally, we offer exotic cheeses from around the world, a large deli department, and fresh breads brought in daily. Since October is National Dessert Month to focus on the pleasure sweet, fanciful desserts, we can't help but invite you to try one of our popular Smoothees. They're a kind of non-fat milkshake made from fruit and yogurt. We hope to see you soon.

Hint: While old wines can be decanted to remove sediment, young wines can be decanted to help accelerate their maturation.


WINE

Think Pink Rosé Part II

Geex... if this isn't rosé weather, then it doesn't exist. Is there anything more delicious and refreshing than a cold, crisp, dry rosé when it's blisteringly hot? Here then are the new wave of heat beaters...


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Red-light blues

During a recent discussion about installing traffic cameras to catch red-light runners in Atherton, Councilman Alan Carlson's attention appeared to be piqued by one topic in particular: getting out of the expensive tickets.

Police Chief Bob Brennan explained to the council that not every ticket issued by mail would result in the collection of a fine, because drivers can't always be identified.

"So all you have to do to get out of a ticket is say that it wasn't you?" Mr. Carlson asked.

He apparently was unaware that the cameras take mug shots of the drivers, as well as photos of the offending vehicles' license plates, but he was quickly set straight.

"You're going to need a (fake) mustache," teased Councilman Jerry Carlson.

Atherton officials plan to go ahead with a trial of the red-light violation cameras at three intersections in town: Oak Grove Avenue and Middlefield Road; Marsh and Middlefield roads; and Fair Oaks Lane and El Camino Real. The town is allowing Redflex Traffic Systems to conduct a free trial to see if there are enough scofflaws to make it worth the cost of installing and operating the cameras.

What price comfort?

An Almanac reporter nearly fell off her seat when it was revealed that the 50 or so battered chairs for the public at Atherton City Council meetings had cost the town \$400 a piece. The utilitarian black chairs are, in this reporter's opinion, unattractive and uncomfortable.

Town staff included \$33,000 in the proposed budget for 2006-07 to replace them — that's \$660 per chair, a sum that council members considered outrageously high. At the special June 14 council meeting, they cut the amount to \$20,000.

"Maybe we should sell personal seat licenses, like the Oakland Coliseum," Councilman Alan Carlson joked.

Atherton investigates building department

■ No criminal wrongdoing found, city attorney says.

By **Andrea Gemmet**

Almanac Staff Writer

A months-long investigation into possible wrongdoing by employees in Atherton's building department has just wrapped up, said the town's city attorney.

City Attorney Marc Hynes told the Almanac he could not reveal any details about the investigation, due to the employees' right to privacy, but said that an outside attorney, Lance Bayer, was hired to conduct the inves-

tigation. Mr. Bayer completed his report and delivered it to City Manager Jim Robinson for review less than two weeks ago, Mr. Hynes said.

The investigation did not turn up anything of a criminal nature, he said. "It's not criminal. It does involve some personnel matters, and town rules and regulations," he said.

The town's investigation, costing some \$7,500, came to light after two residents demanded information at a recent City Council meeting.

Mr. Hynes said that if any disciplinary action occurs, it most likely would not be public information. Generally speaking, an employee's right to privacy would only be affected by criminal charges, such as in the case with the city of Palo Alto utility workers, he said.

Atherton Building Official Mike Hood had no comment about the investigation, saying he could not talk about it. He confirmed that he plans to retire, effective June 30, after almost 11 years as head of the town's building department.

Mr. Hood told the Almanac

that he's planning to move to the East Coast to restore an Eastlake-style Victorian built in 1880 that was once the home of the president of the B&O Railroad.

Public's right to know

Two Atherton residents, John Ruggero and John Sisson, protested to the Atherton City Council at its June 21 meeting, demanding that information about a rumored investigation be revealed to the public.

"If some sort of scandal is

See **INVESTIGATION**, page 8



The Almanac/Marjan Sadoughi

Sam Robertson spots a falcon as his mother, Jenny, picks butte blackberries.

They know how to pick 'em down on the farm

By **Jane Knoerle**

Almanac Lifestyles Editor

Despite last week's sizzling weather, moms and kids flocked to Webb Ranch farm to pick blackberries, loganberries and raspberries.

This is the third year for "U-pick" at the ranch, and now is the height of berry picking, which will end mid-July, depending on the weather. The pick-them-yourself berry patch includes boysenberries, olallie

and butte blackberries, loganberries and, the most popular, red raspberries.

This year, Webb also has two new U-pick patches: one planted in strawberries and another in watermelon and cantaloupes; melons won't ripen until late August.

U-pickers may bring their own containers or buy them at the ranch. Pickers are advised to wear gloves, long-sleeved shirts (so you don't get poked by thorns), hats, sunscreen and comfortable shoes. This is not the place for high heels or sandals. Pets are not allowed.

There is a \$3 entrance fee for each U-picker, except for children 5 and under and seniors over 60, who are admitted free. Berries sell for \$2 per pound.

The berry patch is open Wednesday through Sunday from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. If the temperature exceeds 100 degrees, the patch will be open only between 10 a.m. and noon. Hours for the strawberry and melon patches are 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Satur-

See **FARM**, page 8



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Marsala to seek re-election

■ Atherton mayor Charles Marsala is last of incumbents to declare.

By Andrea Gemmet
Almanac Staff Writer

Charles Marsala announced Friday that he is seeking a second four-year term to the Atherton City Council.

Mr. Marsala is currently serving as Atherton's mayor, a year-long position that rotates among the five council members.

He is the last to declare candidacy out of the three incumbents with terms on the council that expire in November.

Councilman Alan Carlson, who is completing his second term, and Councilman Jerry Carlson, who was appointed in January to complete the late Bill Conwell's term, both announced their candidacy earlier this month. So far, no non-incumbents have stepped forward to run in the November 7 election.

Mr. Marsala said he hopes to continue working on several challenges facing the town, including securing a longer running special parcel tax to give Atherton a more secure source of funding.

Voters approved a five-year parcel tax that raises a little under \$2 million annually and is used for both day-to-day operating expenses and infrastructure projects such as road repairs and drainage improvements. The council looked for alternative revenue sources to replace the parcel tax, but hasn't settled on anything yet.

Mr. Marsala said he thinks the town needs a longer-running parcel tax term so officials can focus on long-term planning rather than campaigning to get the tax renewed every few years.

"I think the parcel tax is still the way to go," he said. "It's not 100 percent equitable, but it's really, really close. And it's tax-deductible. We haven't found any other things that are tax-deductible."

Balancing the needs of residents and homebuilders is another key issue, Mr. Marsala said.

Next month, a new law limiting the length of construction projects to a maximum of three years will go into effect, with fines for projects that exceed the time limit. Mr. Marsala said town officials have to be careful so that in solving one problem, they don't cause another set of problems.

"I want to be careful that we don't overcor-



The Almanac/Marjan Sadoughi

Balancing the needs of residents and homebuilders is another key issue, says Atherton Mayor Charles Marsala said.

rect," he said. "Clearly, with the volume of construction that's going on we need to look at what controls we have in place, but as we do that, we don't want the pendulum to swing all the way to the other side."

Other issues he said he'd like to tackle during a second term on the City Council include updating police facilities, upgrading the tennis courts and Pavilion at Holbrook-Palmer Park, and improving emergency preparedness procedures.

Mr. Marsala said that during his term in office he has focused on building relationships with mayors and city officials in the region, and for the first time created an assigned position on the council for an Atherton representative to the California League of Cities.

The official nomination period for City Council candidates who wish to run in the November 7 election begins July 17 and closes at 5 p.m. on August 11. ■

Next month, a new law limiting the length of construction projects to a maximum of three years will go into effect.

Jellins: time constraints pushed his decision

By Rory Brown
Almanac Staff Writer

Menlo Park Mayor Nicholas Jellins said he feels good about his recent decision not to run for a third term on the City Council in November.

"I've thought about it a lot and I've made my decision," he said.

The time commitment is a main reason behind his decision, said Mr. Jellins, who was elected to his first four-year council term in 1998 and re-elected in 2002.

"It's no secret my obligation to my

■ MENLO PARK

Send your comment on this story to editor@AlmanacNews.com. Note if it's for publication, and if so, include your full name; residence (street and town); and phone number. Your phone number will not be published.

job as a council member requires a great amount of time that I'm unable to give to my job, work, family and my personal life," he said.

Mr. Jellins is serving with the

title of mayor for the third time, a post that involves chairing council meetings.

He jokingly added that because of the council's Tuesday night meetings, he's "never seen American Idol."

He said he would not rule out a decision "to reconsider or rescind" his statement, but he feels comfortable with it.

He added that he plans to remain involved in the community, specifically looking to provide "better

See JELLINS, page 9

REAL ESTATE Q&A

by Monica Corman



Moving Up

Q: We want to buy a larger house with more land in our same neighborhood. We will need the equity in our present house to afford this move. What is the best way to do this?

A: The easiest way to make this transition is to move to the next house first, and then sell your present house. In order to do this you will need a bridge loan or a similar kind of financing. Many lenders will lend this kind of short-term money secured by the equity in your present property in order to "bridge" you into your new one. Then when the property sells, this loan is repaid and it is not necessary to refinance. If bridging your present house won't work for you, you will have to employ a more traditional approach, i.e., selling your current house first, and then buying the next. This may mean you will have to rent accommoda-

tion if you don't find something to buy right away.

If you already live in the area you are looking to buy in, this proximity should allow you to stay close to the market. You should work with a realtor who really knows the area in order to know about properties not yet on the market and to advise you. If prices are rising in your area, don't wait too long to buy because the cost of the move up property will likely increase more than your present, lower priced property will.

As summer begins, this could be a very good time to find something. Usually the market slows down in the summer as more buyers and sellers are away. This may mean there will be less competition for properties and more time for you to put the necessary pieces together to make this move. If you decide now how you will make this transition, it will make the move easier for you.

For answers to any questions you may have on real estate, you may e-mail me at mcorman@apr.com or call 462-1111, Alain Pinel Realtors. I also offer a free market analysis of your property.

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Portola Valley and Woodside lost millions in tax revenues

■ Grand jury blasts county for ignoring tax law.

For years, four towns in San Mateo County — including Woodside and Portola Valley — were entitled to millions of dollars in tax revenues that they weren't getting.

A 1988 state law says towns must get a minimum of 7 percent of the property taxes collected in their jurisdictions. Both Portola Valley and Woodside were under that.

But the county controller, who is responsible for allocating property taxes, apparently didn't know about the law, and the towns didn't either, according to a report last week by the San Mateo County civil grand jury criticizing officials for failing to abide by the law.

"Of the 17 counties with qualifying cities, San Mateo is the only county in the state that failed to comply," the report says.

The situation changed last year

when Portola Valley officials got wind of the law and pressured the county to pay up. Last November, the county conceded, paying the four towns \$2.6 million of the \$8.1 million they had failed to allocate over the previous 15 years, the grand jury report says.

The payments were for just the previous two years. Whether the

"San Mateo is the only county in the state that failed to comply."

GRAND JURY REPORT

county will pay any more is up in the air.

Town officials came in for blame, too, for failure "to protect their own interests." The report notes that the four towns — Coma and Half Moon Bay are the other

two -- received in 1988 at least 23 bulletins about the law from the League of California Cities.

Portola Valley Councilman Ed Davis took slight umbrage with this criticism, noting the town had no administrator in 1988 and the town clerks had their hands full.

Woodside Town Manager Susan George said she thinks the grand jury "did a good job of explaining a rather complicated (matter) and I don't have any disagreements with the recommendations and findings."

A big issue remains: Are the towns entitled to any more money? Portola Valley and Woodside have hired a tax lawyer, but negotiations with the county are "hung up" on trying to figure out how much the towns are owed, said Davis.

The county controller's office asserts that because the state found no problems during periodic audits of the county's property tax allocations, the county owes nothing more.

Atherton investigates building department

INVESTIGATION

continued from page 5

going on, we have a right to know," Mr. Sisson said during the meeting's public comment period. "If we have an inept city manager, we should know."

Mr. Robinson said that he could not comment on any investigation, particularly if it was a personnel matter.

Councilwoman Kathy McKeithen said that she and Councilman Jerry Carlson were pursuing the matter, and would know more by the end of the month, but could not comment further.

"I wish we could comment more," said Mr. Carlson. "We're awaiting some answers from attorneys. I think it's the responsibility of the council ... to know if there is any wrongdoing of the sort that the council should take action."

City Attorney Hynes, who was not at the meeting, told the Almanac that personnel issues are between the city manager who hires them and the employees in question. Typically, he said, City Council members would not be involved, although a city manager may give them information of a general nature.

Mr. Hynes said Mr. Bayer has done work for Atherton before,

mostly on code enforcement cases. Mr. Robinson said that the town has spent \$7,500 on Mr. Bayer's services over the past five to six months.

2003 investigation

This is not the first time Atherton's building department has come under scrutiny. In September 2003, Ms. McKeithen questioned

whether controversial remodeling projects at an Orchard Hills Way property had received preferential treatment in getting permits.

A town staffed investigation into a long list of

"perceived irregularities" failed to turn up any wrongdoing, and in November, four of the five council members found no problems other than a couple of "harmless errors" in Mr. Hood's handling of the permits.

The vote to "affirm the conduct of the building department and its building official" was 4-1, with Ms. McKeithen opposed, at the November 19, 2003, council meeting.

The matter did lead to the eventual change of some of Atherton's building regulations, including the institution of road-impact fees for landscaping projects.

Mayor Charles Marsala said

that he has confidence in Mr. Robinson's handling of the current building department investigation.

"I believe we have a very competent city manager and very knowledgeable city attorney," he said. "Their advice and managing of HR (issues) is correct."

Mr. Marsala said he frequently asks Atherton residents their opinion of the town's building department, and said that the most common assessment he hears of Mr. Hood is that he is "tough, but fair."

Mr. Marsala confirmed that he offered the use of his house for a retirement party for Mr. Hood.

"He's entitled to the same recognition that Atherton has given any other long-term employee," Mr. Marsala said. ■

"It's not criminal. It does involve some personnel matters, and town rules and regulations."

ATHERTON CITY ATTORNEY
MARC HYNES



The Almanac/David Boyce

A buyer's market

Shoppers are denuding the shelves at Portola Valley's John's Valley Foods, which is selling non-perishable groceries, including wine and liquors, at deep discounts in anticipation of the possibility that retiring owner John Meany won't find a buyer for the 29-year-old store. Business has been brisk, said Irene Meany, adding: "People said they were going to have a well-stocked bar and be ready for an earthquake."

FARM

continued from page 5

day and Sunday.

To visit the berry patch, turn right as you leave the produce stand on Alpine Road. Go under Interstate 280, take the first right at the green sign for Webb Ranch, then follow signs to the U-pick.

Webb Ranch's produce stand is open from 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. seven days a week selling fruits and vegetables from the farm. Two of the most popular items are

corn, which is picked hourly, and tomatoes. Corn should be ready mid-July, with tomatoes appearing early in August.

Webb Ranch dates back to 1922, when George Webb first sub-leased the land from Stanford University. The family moved to the ranch in 1929.

Gary Webb has managed the ranch since his dad, Stanley, retired in the 1980s. It is the only working truck farm on the Peninsula. For information, call 854-5417. ■

More services at Belle Haven Clinic

Residents of Belle Haven seeking nearby medical care will be able to get more services over longer hours starting about September, when the Belle Haven Clinic becomes a branch of the Ravenswood Family Health Center in East Palo Alto.

Ravenswood will add pediatric and pre-natal services, and extend hours. The clinic will be open five days a week instead of four, and have longer hours. "As we grow, we plan to be open some evenings and weekends," said Kathleen Alexander, develop-

ment director for Ravenswood.

In the first year, Ms. Alexander expects the new clinic will see an increase of more than 2,000 visits over the present 3,050 per year. If each patient averages three visits, "that's an additional 500 to 700 patients," she said.

On June 20, the San Mateo County Board of Supervisors approved transferring operations and management of the clinic from the county to the four-year-old health center based in East Palo Alto. The transfer will have "no

net county cost and will improve health care," said Nancy Steiger, CEO of the San Mateo Medical Center.

Ms. Alexander noted that the nonprofit health center could leverage different kinds of funding sources. "We're able to bring in money the county can't," she told the Almanac.

When the Ravenswood center takes over in September, the county staff will be transferred, and Ravenswood will provide doctors and staff, Ms. Alexander said.

Arrillaga pledges \$2.5 million to new Town Center complex

By David Boyce
Almanac Staff Writer

Another mountain lion is cruising the avenues of Portola Valley.

Resident and Silicon Valley property developer John Arrillaga, who said he has a particular interest in a new town library, has pledged \$2.5 million to the building of the new Portola Valley Town Center complex.

By pledging more than \$1 million, Mr. Arrillaga earns the status of "mountain lion," the name given to the top donors by the fundraising organization, the Portola Valley Community Fund.

The fund aims to raise \$20 million for the project, which

PORTOLA VALLEY

Send your comment on this story to editor@AlmanacNews.com. Note if it's for publication, and if so, include your full name; residence (street and town); and phone number. Your phone number will not be published.

will involve a new town hall, community rooms and a library.

The fund co-chair Sally Ann Reiss said she would not release fund's current balance until sometime in July. In April, she reported a balance of \$2.6 million in hand and written pledges for another \$2.4 million.

With his donation, Mr. Arril-

laga joins fellow Portola Valley mountain lions Bill and Jean Lane and John Morgridge, the chairman of Cisco Systems.

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"This pledge and the other generous gifts we have received recently add critical momentum to reaching our goal of fully funding the new Town Center," Ms. Reiss said in a statement. "We hope this gift will inspire all Portola Valley residents to make a contribution to this worthwhile project."

For more information on the fund, contact Ms. Reiss at 529-0829 or sareiss@sbcglobal.net. ■

Menlo Park dispatch center may handle San Carlos calls

By David Boyce
Almanac Staff Writer

The police department in Menlo Park could have three round-the-clock dispatchers to handle emergency calls rather than the current two if officials from San Carlos and Menlo Park agree to merge their facilities.

The two cities have been hammering out a five-year contract that would make San Carlos dispatchers employees of the city of Menlo Park and require all dispatchers to be cross-trained to handle emergency calls from both cities, said Jan Lanier, the communications manager for the Menlo Park Police Department.

The city councils of both cities would have to approve the agreement.

The major benefit to Menlo Park would be having a third dispatcher on each eight-hour shift, thus

lightening the load when Menlo Park is deluged with calls, assuming that San Carlos is not similarly inundated, Ms. Lanier said.

"There are times when Menlo Park is really, really busy," she said. The change wouldn't be noticeable to the community, she added.

San Carlos would pay an annual fee, designated in the contract by the city of Menlo Park, to cover the additional costs of adding four dispatchers to the staff, including their salaries, training and equipment maintenance, said Ms. Lanier.

The first year's fee would be \$574,713; it would increase by some 5 percent annually.

The city of Menlo Park would pay the new dispatchers' retirement benefits after they became city employees. The contract states that the San Carlos dispatchers could not be laid off, Ms. Lanier said.

The deal would save money

for San Carlos. Outsourcing dispatch services would save the city about \$245,000 a year, said Cmdr. Sandra Spagnoli of the San Carlos Police Department.

The San Carlos City Council had scheduled a vote on the deal for Monday, June 26 (after the Almanac's deadline). The Menlo Park City Council has not scheduled a discussion.

If approved, a merger would take four to six months to complete, Ms. Lanier said.

Why Menlo Park?

The cities of Menlo Park and San Mateo proposed mergers in late 2005, according to a June 26 memo by San Carlos Police Chief Greg Rothaus, a former commander with the Menlo Park Police Department.

San Carlos dispatchers rejected San Mateo's proposal because Menlo Park's technology is more familiar to them — a big concern, Ms. Spagnoli said.

The Menlo Park dispatch center has room for two more dispatchers per shift, according to Ms. Lanier. ■

JELLINS

continued from page 7

education for the poor and underprivileged in the community."

Running for county, state or federal office has also crossed his mind, he said.

'Process over politics'

Mr. Jellins is one of a three-member council majority that often votes together on major issues, including a recent push to privatize city services.

All three of the seats are up for election in November. The other two — Mickie Winkler and Lee Duboc — have not announced whether they will run.

Mr. Jellins maintains that he values "process over politics."

"I don't make up my mind on an issue based on who proposes it," he said. "I consider how the matter will be resolved on its merits."

He said some of his colleagues on the council — past and present — made decisions based on politics. He declined to name them.

In interviews with the press and in council discussions, Mr. Jellins often avoids taking a definite stance on major issues.

"I'll tell you what I know, and I'll tell you what I think, but not what I believe to be the conclusion," he said. "My personal views are not relevant to the job I was elected to do."

Council discussions have been contentious, as the council minority of Kelly Fergusson and Andy Cohen — sometimes referred to as "residentialists" — frequently disagree with the majority on major issues.

Mayor Jellins said the difference of opinions on the council and in the community is "no more exceptional than in prior years."

He did note that when he served his second term as mayor in 2002, the council was usually able to come to consensus and vote unanimously — a practice rarely followed under the current council, although it was unanimous in approving the budget last week. ■

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Who does what at Burgess Pool?

■ Chemical scare tests public-private partnership.

By Rory Brown
Almanac Staff Writer

■ MENLO PARK

Mr. Taylor said the city could address any safety improvements to the facility itself, such as installing a cover for the emergency stop button that was pressed by a child, causing the circulation pump to shut down.

He said Mr. Sheeper is responsible for decisions made about programming, which includes emergency protocol decisions.

It's up to Mr. Sheeper to determine whether an emergency warrants an evacuation, and how long the facility should stay closed, Mr. Taylor said.

In the case of the recent chemical scare, Mr. Taylor wrote

a press release and helped Mr. Sheeper assess the emergency, due to the "extraordinary circumstances," he said.

He said in the future, city staff will not be involved with the facility

unless there are concerns about safety or community access.

Addressing concerns

In addition to assisting with the June 16 emergency, Mr. Taylor also fielded a recent complaint about how the pool is operated.

Resident Sandra Horwitz sent an e-mail to the City Council, questioning the amount of space allotted for recreational swimming.

She said too many children were packed into a small portion of the lap pool.

Although Mr. Sheeper sets the programs and schedule, Mr. Taylor said he responded to the e-mail because Ms. Horwitz showed concern about "community access."

Mr. Taylor said any staff time he devotes to the aquatics center — including writing a press release or responding to concerns — is included in what the city has budgeted for the city's aquatics program.

He added that over time, the city's responsibilities versus those of Mr. Sheeper's staff should become better defined.

"We're learning as we're going along," said Mr. Taylor. "We're still trying to figure it out, but so far, everything seems to be going OK." ■

The three-pool facility was built with \$6.8 million in city funds, but is operated by Tim Sheeper, head of a private, for-profit competitive sports program.

Eight children using the children's pool at about 3 p.m. June 16 experienced symptoms including burning eyes and throats, shortness of breath, violent coughing and other symptoms, according to a fire district official and a mother at the pool who tried to help; it was the mother, a registered nurse, who called 911.

Police and fire district paramedics rushed to the scene, treated the children, and took one child to the hospital.

Some people — including the fire district battalion chief who arrived on the scene — suspected a problem with the chlorine flow, but Mr. Sheeper said the pool's circulation pump was accidentally turned off, and people panicked when it was restarted.

Michael Taylor, the city's acting community services director, issued a press release June 22 assuring residents that "the city considers the safety and well-being of all participants in its programs a very high priority," and that "additional procedures will be implemented to ensure that a similar incident does not occur in the future."

But the facility is owned by the city, and operated by Mr. Sheeper, so making safety improvements isn't a straightforward process.

'We're learning as we're going along. We're still trying to figure it out, but so far, everything seems to be going OK.'

MICHAEL TAYLOR,
ACTING COMMUNITY SERVICES DIRECTOR

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Council swiftly approves budget despite revenue gap

■ Menlo Park plans to draw \$1.8 million from reserves to close an anticipated gap.

By **Rory Brown**
Almanac Staff Writer

Menlo Park is raising fees, cutting programs and eliminating jobs, but the city is still \$1.8 million short of covering its costs.

The City Council, at its June 20 meeting, unanimously approved the city's budget, which calls for \$32.5 million in spending in the fiscal year starting July 1 — a 9 percent increase over the current year.

Revenues are expected to rise 4 percent, partially due to an anticipated \$2.2 million increase in property tax income.

The council approved \$1.16 million in cost cuts for personnel and operations; and it agreed to

\$378,000 in fee increases. The city expects to draw about \$1.8 million from its \$21 million of unallocated reserves to bridge the gap between revenue and spending — a gap due largely to higher wages and benefits for employees, said City Manager David Boesch.

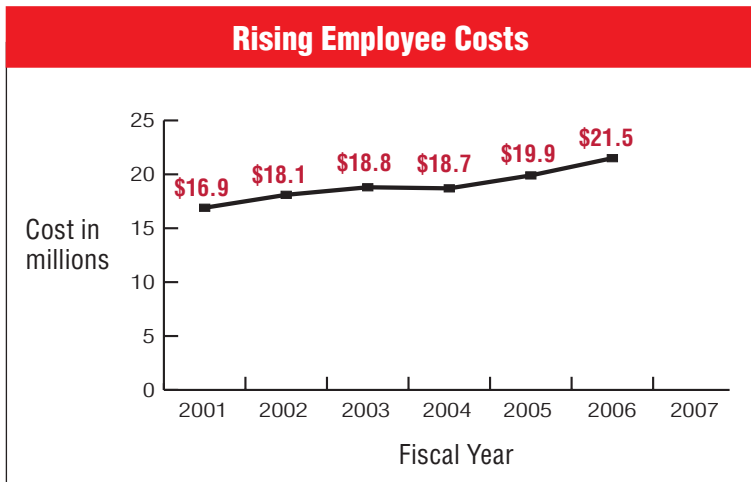
About \$21.9 million of the city's expenses — about 67 percent — are personnel-related. Annual personnel costs have grown from about \$16.9 million in 2000-01 to an estimated \$21.5 million today.

The city's annual sales tax revenue, which was the city's largest source of income at one time, has plummeted from about \$12.5 million to \$6.1 million over the past five years.

Employee costs

Rising employee costs weren't addressed in the city's recent "your city/your decision" process, which encouraged residents to express their views on budget issues through a community-wide survey and workshops.

During the budget process, city staff said increasing employee costs would be dealt with separately. Contract negotiations with the Menlo Park Police Officers



Source: Menlo Park 2006-07 budget

Annual employee costs have increased about \$4.6 million in Menlo Park since 2001, despite a reduction of about 30 full-time-equivalent employees. The numbers are for fiscal years ending June 30 of the year shown.

Association and Police Managers Association — two of the city's four labor bargaining units — are currently under way.

The survey, workshops and the council's March and April budget deliberations focused on deciding what city services to cut and/or fees and taxes to increase to balance the city's budget.

The council raised fees for 13 city services, including gymnastics classes, child care programs and parking permits.

The city will also eliminate five full-time-equivalent jobs, but they are all vacant positions.

In January, when the city has a better handle on actual revenues for the year, the council plans to consider other budget strategies, including charging non-residents fees for Belle Haven programs or reducing staff in the city manager's office.

Privatization debate

Budget meetings in March and April were contentious, and debate often centered on the potential savings of privatizing city services.

The privatization debate briefly resurfaced at the June 20 meeting.

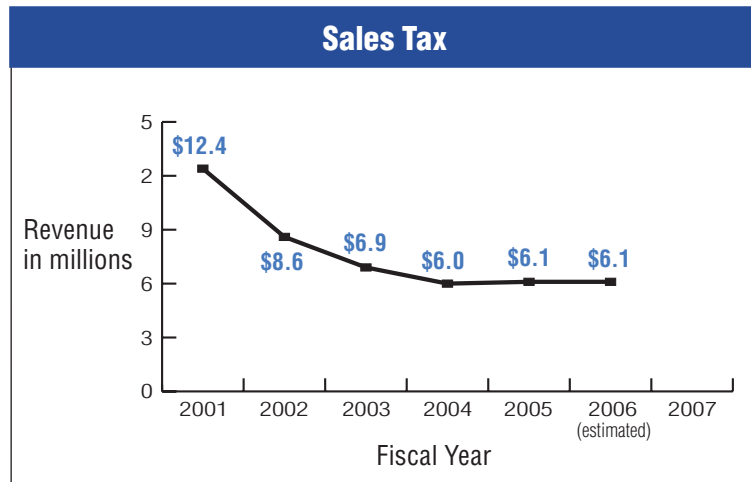
Councilwoman Kelly Fergusson questioned staff's estimate that turning the city's new aquatics center over to a private operator will save the city \$415,000 a year.

"There's no question in my

mind that the pool could have been a profitable center for the city," Ms. Fergusson said.

Councilwoman Lee Duboc — who in February voted with council members Nicholas Jellins and Mickie Winkler to privatize the pool — maintained that privatizing the center is saving the city through cutting personnel costs.

The overhead costs associated with the facility — staff costs that won't disappear with privatization — haven't been defined.



Source: Menlo Park 2006-07 budget

Menlo Park's annual sales tax revenue dropped by half in two years and has stayed down. The numbers are for fiscal years ending June 30 of the year shown.

Ms. Fergusson said similar overhead costs won't be saved if the city privatizes its child care programs.

The city is currently seeking bids from private operators to take over the new Menlo Children's Center, action approved in April by council members Duboc, Winkler and Jellins.

Tax measure

On July 18, the council plans to discuss results from a community-wide poll on what tax

measure residents might support on the November ballot, Mr. Boesch said.

A 1 percent utility tax could add about \$800,000 a year to the city's coffers, according to city staff.

Ms. Fergusson said if the council doesn't pursue a tax measure in November, the city would have to endure "substantial cuts that would really affect the quality of life in Menlo Park." ■

■ MENLO PARK

Fee increases		
Service	New fee	Percent increase
School-age child care	\$415 per month	7.5%
Preschool child care	\$1,178 per month	10%
Downtown parking permit	\$534 per year	6%
Heritage tree removal	\$160	60%
Encroachment permit	\$131	31%

Source: City of Menlo Park

The Menlo Park City Council has approved \$378,000 in fee increases for city services and programs. Above are examples.

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Seeing eye to eye

When a champion thoroughbred went blind in one eye, Denise Seymour knew just how to help

Denise Seymour's eyes are crystalline blue flecked with gray. The one on the left is the eye she was born with. The one on the right is a painstakingly hand-painted prosthesis, a replacement for the eye she lost when she was 14 years old.

Growing up near the Mounted Patrol grounds in Woodside, Ms. Seymour, 52, was an avid horseback rider from the age of 6, when her parents bought her a pony named Poppy.

"I used to terrorize Woodside," she says. "I rode all over town. Whenever I spent the night at my friend's house, I'd ride my pony



Denise Seymour talks soothingly to Devoncourt in his stable in Pescadero before saddling him up for a practice ride.



Moving as one, Denise Seymour and Devoncourt sail over a “coop,” one of several jumping obstacles typical to a hunter course.

over, and my pony would stay over with her pony.”

Even after severe inflammation—uveitis—claimed her right eye, Ms. Seymour continued riding, showing horses with Willow Tree Farms in her teens, and riding seriously in her 20s.

Fast-forward to early 2005. Alexis Flippen, a friend from Charter Oak Farms in Woodside, told Ms. Seymour that her thoroughbred gelding had developed a terrible infection in his right eye and might have to have it removed. Ms. Seymour empathized with the horse immediately.

Devoncourt, a prize-winning show horse, had a scratched cornea that became swollen and infected. Medication to reduce the swelling left the horse susceptible to a devastating fungal infection that left him blind on one side.

Ms. Seymour immediately offered to work with Devoncourt, since she knows intimately what it takes to compensate for being blind in the right eye.

“Court,” at 17.3 hands, was too big to be a race-horse, but was a good-looking and talented show hunter, a competition in which horses are judged on their movement and manners as much as their form when jumping over obstacles. Previous owner John French rode him to a world championship before selling him to Woodside resident Nancy Robinson, Ms. Flippen says. After she bought Court, she rode him in sidesaddle competitions, winning twice at the Grand Nationals in her divi-

sion, she says.

But after losing half his vision, nobody knew if Court would jump again.

When Ms. Seymour rides him, she makes sure to watch out for anything on his blind side that could startle Court. Because horses are prey animals, their eyes are located closer to the sides of their heads, she explains. To lose sight on one side must be a very unsettling feeling for a large animal programmed to watch for predators in order to avoid becoming dinner.

“If I see something to the right that may spook him, I turn his head so he can look at it,” Ms. Seymour explains.

Watching the duo go through their paces at a jump-filled ring at the Pescadero farm where Court is stabled, it’s hard to believe that both horse and rider are visually impaired. They move fluidly around the ring and sail smoothly over the “fences and gates.” The only cue is that Ms. Seymour counts off the strides on the approach to the jumps.

“I don’t have the best depth perception,” she says. “I have to rely on the rhythm. I count off, one-two, one-two.”

Trainer Ron Keller of the Pescadero-area Full Cry Farm says the biggest challenge for a rider like Ms. Seymour is being able to judge the proper takeoff spot for a jump.

“Even if I don’t get Courtie to the perfect spot, he

will take the jump,” Ms. Seymour says. “He’s never stopped with me, he’s never refused to jump. He takes care of me.”

Mr. Keller says he consulted with another trainer who had experience working with a horse blind in one eye for advice on reintroducing Devoncourt to jumping.

“I was amazed, as far as how he performs, there’s not much difference,” he says.

While the horse seems at ease in the ring, he is restive in his stall. Devoncourt wears a protective eye mask that makes him look like the result of some sort of horse/housefly hybridization scheme, and a metal grate covers the open top of his stall door to prevent him from nipping passersby. Even so, it’s a vast improvement over his disposition before he lost sight in his eye and started working with Ms. Seymour.

“He was a rogue. He would bite and kick,” Ms. Flippen says. “I had to put him with my other two horses to settle him down.”

Although Devoncourt was ornery back in the barn, “he’s very mannered in a show ring,” she says.

Ms. Seymour says she never tries to force Court to do anything, instead relying on positive reinforcement and liberal use of sugar cube rewards. Court may not have the sweetest disposition,

See **SEEING EYE TO EYE**, page 14

‘He was a rogue. He would bite and kick.’

—Alexis Flippen, Devoncourt’s owner

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COVER STORY



When he's not in the ring, Devoncourt wears a protective mask to keep him from accidentally injuring his blind eye and to protect his good eye.

SEEING EYE TO EYE
continued from page 13

but he's got a serious sweet tooth. Ms. Seymour just taps a spot on his neck and the horse instantly bends his head around to lap up a treat.

"We complement each other," Ms. Seymour says. "I'm not the most confident rider, but he gives me confidence. We just work well together."

Ms. Seymour, an oncology nurse, trains with Court at least four days a week, she says, despite traveling all over as an

oncology drug representative with Schering-Plough Health-Care Products.

"I do it for fun, but I also want to do it right," she says.

She says being visually impaired has never slowed her down.

"As far as my eye, I've never, ever had a limitation with it," Ms. Seymour says. "The only thing I can't do is play tennis. I think because the ball and I are both moving, when I go to hit it, I'm way off."

She has competed with Devoncourt, earning top rib-

bons at shows in Woodside and Pebble Beach. They are on the waiting list to enter the Menlo Charity Horse Show at the Menlo Circus Club in Atherton in August. The horse show benefits the Peninsula Center for the Blind and Visually Impaired, a fitting event for a team that's suffered painful eye ailments.

Ms. Seymour says no one ever discovered the cause of the uveitis that permanently damaged her optic nerve. After enduring searing pain and five surgeries, her eye finally had to be removed, she says.

Devoncourt's corneal abrasion could have been caused by something as innocuous as a fly or a speck of dust, Ms. Flippen says, and it was only after months of treatment and a long stay at U.C. Davis Veterinary Medical Teaching Hospital that the horse, though permanently blinded, was able to avoid having his right eye removed.

"We have such a great bond. I think he knows that I can't see out of my right eye as well," says Ms. Seymour. ■



Trainer Ron Keller helps Denise Seymour and Devoncourt prepare for shows, and has ridden the horse himself in Grand Prix competitions.

■ INFORMATION

The Menlo Charity Horse Show will be held August 8-13 at the Menlo Circus Club, 190 Park Lane in Atherton. The horse show benefits the Peninsula Center for the Blind and Visually Impaired, also known as Vista Center for the Blind and Visually Impaired. Information is online at MenloHorseShow.com. Tickets are \$10 daily or \$35 for the week; children 12 and under are free.

Las Lomitas may seek 'substantial' increase in parcel taxes

■ Enrollment growth and rising costs for special-needs kids are shrinking reserves.

By David Boyce
Almanac Staff Writer

■ SCHOOLS

With reserves narrowing, the Las Lomitas Elementary School District is looking at asking voters to increase parcel taxes, maybe from \$196 to \$450 a year.

"If we don't pass a substantially increased parcel tax, we could face having to do significant cuts," said David Bailard, president of the school board at its June 21 meeting.

Due to hiring more teachers because of a steady climb in enrollment over several years and rising costs for special-needs students, general fund reserves are expected to fall to just 2 percent of annual spending during the 2006-07 budget year, said Mr. Bailard.

Trustee Lee Anderson concurred. "I agree with you on the assessment of the limb that we are going out on," he said.

Last year at this time, the estimated reserve was \$1.36 million, about 11 percent of expenses. For the year starting July 1, the estimated reserve is \$284,000, just 2 percent of the \$14.5 million the K-8 district plans to spend during the year. (The district has also set aside \$909,000, part of which is a mandatory reserve for economic

uncertainties.)

The district's \$196 annual parcel tax expires in 2008, but the board is looking at asking voters to renew and raise it a year early.

What about property tax revenues? They're expected to rise 7 percent, or \$718,000, over the next year, said Business Manager De Modderman.

If they don't rise further, the board could be looking at a parcel tax of as much as \$450,

'I agree with you on the assessment of the limb that we are going out on.'

BOARD MEMBER LEE ANDERSON

said Mr. Bailard. In an interview afterward, he took pains to point out that nothing is decided yet and that any tax increase would depend on what voters say they would support.

In a presentation, poll researcher Brad Senden included a campaign timetable for a parcel tax measure on the March 2007 ballot.

Currently, the Las Lomitas district's \$196 parcel tax is about the same as that of the Woodside

Elementary School District. In Portola Valley, the parcel tax is \$290; in Menlo Park, the total tax is \$436 per parcel.

A parcel tax requires approval by two-thirds of the voters. If the measure passes in March, the board could decide to change the tax rate in the summer of 2007, said Mr. Senden.

The Las Lomitas district has "an extremely strong base" of support for schools, said Mr. Senden. New residents tend to see a parcel tax as a "good tradeoff" in that strong support for schools tends to raise property values, he added.

Seniors 65 and older who own and reside on their property may apply for an exemption to a parcel tax.

Rising costs

Special education money from the government never matches actual costs, said Mr. Bailard. This school year, the Las Lomitas district plans to take \$1.9 million from the general fund for these kids. These costs have gone up about \$1 million over the last four to five years, he said.

A rising enrollment means more teachers. For the next school year, the district is planning to hire six more teachers, including two for academic subjects, one for physical education, and specialists in reading, behavior and student support.

due to rising staff costs.

Materials funding has dropped by about \$57,000 since 2001. Only six people in the department work full time, and hours for the main and the Belle Haven libraries have been scaled back.

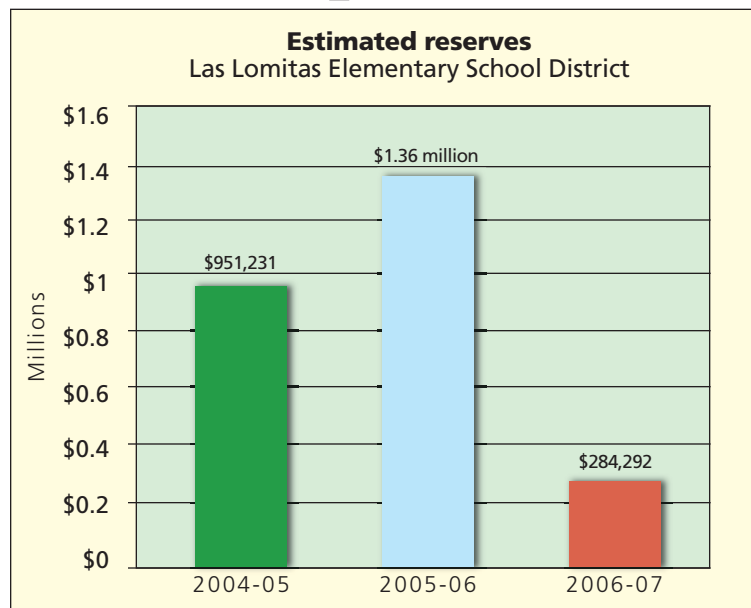
The Library Commission sent a memo to the council in March stating that the city's libraries — both the main library in the Civic Center and the Belle Haven branch — are on the brink of "total dysfunction" due to budget cuts.

The city will pull the funding from its \$21 million of unallocated reserves.

review, totaling \$3,311 in revenue.

The county will collect information for a year, and then decide whether to make the cuts permanent.

Board president Jerry Hill encouraged residents of county-governed areas to save money by installing solar panels. Quoting former Vice President Al Gore, he said, "Fossil fuel is a finite resource, and we have already used half of it."



Discretionary reserves of the Las Lomitas Elementary School District are expected to drop sharply for the 2006-07 school year to cover rising enrollment and special education costs. Not shown are reserves of 6 percent to 7 percent of overall expenses set aside for economic uncertainties.

Enrollment is expected to rise by 18 students this school year and by 116 in the next five years, projection consultant Tom Williams told the board. "Clearly, you're (enrollment is) going up," he said. "Probably, you're going up at a slow but steady pace."

Is either Phillips Brooks or Woodland school — both on sites owned by the Las Lomitas district — at risk of losing its campus to Las Lomitas students if enrollment grows as expected? "I don't see any justification to open a school with these numbers," said Mr. Williams. ■

Boost for library: Winkler wins more funds

As most Menlo Park city departments endured another set of budget cuts, the city's libraries received some good news.

At the request of Councilwoman Mickie Winkler, the council agreed at its June 20 meeting to add \$50,600 to the library department's materials budget.

Ms. Winkler said the city's funding of the libraries is relatively low, considering an estimated 379,000 people use the main library each year.

About \$1.78 million — 5 percent of the city's budget — is allocated for the library

■ MENLO PARK

department.

She added that cuts to the department's materials budget have caused a decline in the quality of the collection and customer satisfaction.

Overall funding of the department has been consistent, but less of that money has been devoted to the materials budget



Mickie Winkler

County cuts permit fees for solar panels

Residents of unincorporated San Mateo County who want to fight global warming and help the planet — and those who just want to save money — will soon find it a tad cheaper.

The San Mateo County Board of Supervisors on June 20 halved the building fees for installing photovoltaic systems on rooftops, from the present \$690 to \$345.

The board also eliminated fees for reviewing the design of

solar installations and obtaining an exemption from further reviews.

"Now is the time to create incentives for solar panels," said Supervisor Adrienne Tissier, who with Supervisor Rich Gordon introduced the proposal.

Over the past 12 months the county issued 18 building permits for solar installations, bringing in \$12,420 in revenue. It has issued seven exemptions from design

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Foundation gives record \$1.6 million to school district

■ Funds support 'essential programs' and personnel, and provides one-time grant to offset cost of enrollment growth.

By Marjorie Mader
Almanac Staff Writer

The nonprofit Menlo Park-Atherton Education Foundation gave a record \$1.6 million annual grant to the Menlo Park City School District last week. It surpasses the previous record of \$1.5 million given last year.

The gift will fund five programs the district and foundation consider essential: — libraries, science, technology, music and teaching excellence. The funds will also pay for teachers to staff the programs at the K-8 district's four schools: Laurel, Encinal, Oak Knoll and Hillview Middle.

This year's grant includes a one-time allocation of \$100,000 to defray the district's rising

expenses due to growing student enrollment.

Peggy Propp, foundation co-president with Carol Fields, presented the check to school board President Laura Rich during the board's June 21 meeting.

Trustees expressed great appreciation for the grant, which amounts to 6.7 percent of the district's \$24 million budget for the 2006-07 school year. Trustee Carol Orton called the gift "phenomenal."

Growing student enrollment is the biggest factor increasing the operating expenses of the district, said Ms. Rich. "Thankfully, our community is dedicated to supporting excellent public schools through private donations to the

■ SCHOOLS

foundation," she said.

She said that dedication is evident, also, in the recently passed \$91 million bond measure to upgrade and expand facilities at the four school campuses.

In addition to the \$1.6 million grant, the foundation board recently voted to transfer \$150,000 from its fundraising efforts to its Endowment for Excellence in Teaching, which will fund professional development programs for district teachers.

Where dollars go

The \$1.6 million grant is targeted for the following programs:

■ **Libraries:** \$461,816 for librarians at the four schools, plus expansion of the collections, and supplies and materials.

■ **Hands-on science:**

\$186,800 for support personnel, facility costs, instructional supplies, materials, and a new focus on a scientists-in-residence program.

■ **Technology:** \$461,384 for technical support personnel, instructional support within elementary technology labs, and the Hillview broadcast studio.

■ **Music education:** \$30,000 to buy instruments, musical scores and methods books.

■ **Jeanie Ritchie Grants:** \$60,000 for innovative learning projects proposed by teachers and approved by the Jeanie Ritchie Grants Committee.

■ **Excellence in Teaching Initiative:** \$100,000 for training, collaboration and professional development of teachers and the certificated staff, and for promoting the further development of the foundation's growing Endowment for Excellence in Teaching.

■ INFORMATION

Nearly 2,200 children are enrolled in the district's four schools. The staff includes 154 teachers and administrators and 77 classified staff members. To learn more about the Menlo Park-Atherton Education Foundation, visit www.mpaef.org.

■ **21st Century Classroom Project:** \$200,000 to extend the use of technology among representative teachers through the purchase of equipment, software and supplies that complement a rigorous training program.

■ **One-time allocation:** \$100,000 to offset the immediate impacts of growth in student enrollment, enabling other standard revenue sources to grow. ■

Teacher-development endowment reaches \$1.5 million

By Marjorie Mader
Almanac Staff Writer

The Menlo Park-Atherton Education Foundation has raised \$250,000 from

new charter members, triggering a matching grant of \$250,000 and bringing its teacher-training endowment to \$1.5 million, foundation officials have

announced.

The goal is a \$2 million endowment, from which earnings will fund ongoing professional-development programs

for the 154 teachers and administrators in Menlo Park City School District.

When the goal is reached, the foundation will launch the first endowment for teacher development among the 550 education foundations in the state, said foundation co-presidents Carol Fields and Peggy Propp.

Schools need an ongoing source of funds for teacher training because such money is often cut when districts face budget pressures, they said.

Teacher training programs focus on such areas as advancing the use technology in education, and "differentiated instruction," which varies teaching methods based on the learning styles and needs of students.

Four schools are in the K-8 district: Laurel, Encinal, Oak Knoll and Hillview Middle.

Foundation board member Peg Phelps is spearheading the endowment campaign. Formed in 2003, the Endowment for Education Excellence initially raised \$1 million from charter members over a two-year period.

Last June, a group of 10 local families announced the challenge grant of \$250,000.

This endowment "is investing where it counts for children — in our teachers," said Linda Darling-Hammond, professor of education and director of the School Redesign Network at Stanford University. "If teach-

ers are to ensure successful learning for students, they must be prepared as diagnosticians, planners and leaders who know a great deal about the learning process and have a wide repertoire of tools at their disposal."

Three committees, staffed by volunteers and consultants serving pro bono, manage the endowment. There are committees for fundraising and investment, plus an advisory board of educators.

June Flora, a former foundation president, chairs the advisory board. Other members are Ray Pecheone, director of the Stanford School Redesign project; Ann Lieberman, senior scholar at the Carnegie Institute for the Advancement of Teach-

Schools need ongoing funds for teacher training because such money is often cut under budget pressures.

ing; Floyd Gonnella, former San Mateo County superintendent; Terri S. Bailard, former Redwood City School District board member; Char Singleton, another former

foundation president. Ex-officio members are Ken Ranella, Menlo Park district superintendent; Laura Rich, president of the Menlo Park board; and Carol Orton, Menlo Park district trustee. ■

■ INFORMATION

During its 24-year history, the foundation has granted more than \$14 million to the Menlo Park City School District. To learn more about the Endowment for Excellence in Teaching, go to www.mpaef.org.

Universal Design for Your Home

"It was terrific, excellent source of information." -Workshop Attendee

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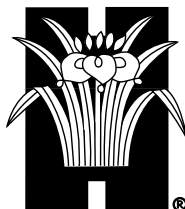
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For more information or to pre-register for the workshop, call Carol Langley at (650) 230-2900. No credit cards accepted. Class fee is \$20.00 if pre-registered, or \$25.00 at the door.



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Hearing on Beltramo project

A proposal by developer John Beltramo to build a 26,800-square-foot office building and 16 two-story rental townhouses on El Camino Real in Menlo Park is scheduled to go before the Planning Commission July 10.

The development is planned for a site at 1460 El Camino Real, near Valparaiso Avenue.

The proposed two-story office building would face El Camino Real, and the townhouses would front San Antonio Street.

The proposal includes plans for underground and ground-level parking.

■ MENLO WATCH

The commission is scheduled to consider the proposal at 7 p.m. in the council chambers at the Civic Center, between Laurel and Alma streets.

Child care meeting

The criteria that will be used to decide what operators will be in the running to take over the city's child care programs will be discussed at the June 28 meeting of the Child Care RFP Committee.

Assistant City Manager Audrey Seymour is expected to outline the criteria to the committee, an

eight-person task force of parents, appointed officials and child care specialists. The group will ultimately recommend who they think is best fit to run the city's toddler, preschool and school-age programs housed in the new \$3.4 Menlo Children's Center.

The criteria includes: the quality of the proposed program; affordability of tuition rates; company qualifications; proposed budget; and what costs, if any, the city would still cover.

The deadline for proposals is July 14, and committee members are scheduled to identify their top-ranked proposals at an August 23 meeting.

The committee is scheduled to interview potential operators in September.

The city is also expected to submit a bid to prove it can compete with private operators.

The committee is scheduled to meet at 6:30 p.m. in the Burgess Recreation Center at 700 Alma St.

Meetings canceled

The Menlo Park City Council will not hold its regular meetings July 4 and 11. Meetings are scheduled to resume July 18.

2006 Concert Schedule

MENLO PARK SUMMER CONCERT SERIES

WEDNESDAYS 6:30-7:30 PM

6/28 Delta Wires
Blues

7/5 Emily Lord
Country/Rock

7/12 Fun Moon Rude
Rockin' Blues

7/19 Hale Vaskin
Jazz

7/26 Tom Rigney
W/ Rigomania
Cajun Zydeco

8/2 Wanted
Country

8/9 Primary Colors
Featuring Nate Fruit
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8/16 Floorshakers
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Coach pleads no contest to sexual assault charges

Former Palo Alto middle-school coach Bill Giordano of Menlo Park faces a maximum prison sentence of five years after pleading no contest June 23 in San Mateo County Superior Court to 10 counts of lewd acts upon a minor.

The minor is defined in the charges as someone age 14 or 15 who is at least 10 years younger than the perpetrator, said a spokeswoman for the San Mateo County district attorney's office.

The former Jordan Middle School teacher's plea change came just days before the scheduled start of his jury trial. Mr. Giordano was originally charged with 21 counts of lewd acts on a minor, age 14 or 15.

A judge placed a five-year maximum prison sentence on the plea deal. Mr. Giordano is scheduled to appear in court for sentencing on August 22.

Upon his release from prison, Mr. Giordano would have to register as a sex offender for the rest of his life.

Mr. Giordano, who began

teaching at Jordan Middle School in 1991, allegedly engaged in a three-year relationship with a 14-year-old student in the early 1990s, according to San Mateo County Deputy District Attorney Steve Wagstaffe.

The alleged victim, now in her late 20s and living in Pennsylvania, claims that her sexual encounters with Mr. Giordano began in December 1991 after he hired her to babysit his son, according to Mr. Wagstaffe.

Mr. Giordano allegedly molested the victim almost weekly, ending the relationship in March 1994 when she was 17 years old, Mr. Wagstaffe said.

The woman did not report the molestations until memories of the encounters surfaced during a counseling session in 2005, Mr. Wagstaffe said.

Mr. Giordano was arrested at his Menlo Park home on August 18, 2005, and has been free on more than \$1 million bail since September.

— *Bay City News Service*

Talk: geology evolution in Bay Area

Geologist Russ Graymer will describe new ideas about the evolution of the Bay Area derived from decades of geologic mapping, in a talk at the U.S. Geologic Survey in Menlo Park on Thursday, June 29.

The program starts at 7 p.m. in Building 3 of the campus at 345 Middlefield Road.

He will touch on such subjects

as what the Bay Area was like when dinosaurs were roaming; the faraway places some of our rocks came from; and how the San Andreas Fault system has rearranged the region and what that means for future earthquakes. And volcanoes in Berkeley!

For information, call 329-5000, or go to online.wr.usgs.gov/calendar.

HoopStars

The Mercenaries team won the county-wide 7th grade division basketball championship in the HoopStars League on May 21 at Burlingame High School. The Mercenaries, which include five students from La Entrada School, edged the Run and Gunners 32-31. Pictured are, front row, from left: Audrey Proulx, Jesse Perkins, Christian Perkins and Davante Adams; back row, from left, Coach Scott Peters, Ian Proulx, Max Schmarzo, Miles Anderson, T.J. Braff and assistant coach Tom Proulx. Not pictured is Austin Braff.



Caltrain hearing on fare, parking hikes

By Marion Softky
Almanac Staff Writer

Soaring fuel prices bug more than just drivers. Just ask Caltrain.

The difference between paying \$2.10 per gallon and \$2.40 a gallon for diesel fuel will cost Caltrain a budget-busting \$1.5 million.

The Caltrain board (JPB) is proposing to cover about \$1 million of the agency's increased fuel costs by raising fares and parking fees. If approved, the hikes would take effect later this year.

The board has set two meetings on the proposals:

■ On Wednesday, June 28, at 6 p.m., a community meeting to take public comments, at SamTrans headquarters, 1250 San Carlos Ave. in San Carlos.

■ On Friday, June 30, at 1 p.m.,

a public hearing to take public comment and make a decision, also at SamTrans headquarters.

The board is proposing two alternatives for increasing fares: an increase of 25 cents per zone; and a 25-cent increase in base fare, plus 25 cents per zone. The proposal includes an increase in parking fees from \$1.50 to \$2 per day, and parking passes from \$15 to \$20 per month.

Caltrain budget

Fuel costs were just one factor pushing up costs for the passenger rail line running down the Peninsula between San Francisco and Gilroy.

On June 1, the three-county Caltrain board approved an operating budget of \$83.4 million for fiscal year 2006-07 (starting July 1) — up 8 percent from the current fiscal year.

For 2007, projected revenue increases are more than offset by increased expenses.

On the revenue side, farebox revenue is up by more than 9 percent, thanks to fare increases, higher ridership, and the popularity of the Go Pass program,

according to the staff report.

The three participating counties increased their contributions to running the railroad by 3 percent. San Francisco is paying \$6.8 million; San Mateo County, \$15.8 million; and Santa Clara County \$15.2 million, according to Jonah Weinberg of SamTrans.

On the expense side, fuel costs were already up 19 percent (at the originally estimated \$2.10 per gallon); operations and maintenance are up 8 percent; and employee wages and benefits are up 18 percent.

Transit watcher Jim Bigelow, chair of the Menlo Park Chamber of Commerce transportation committee, warned that Caltrain has dangerously low reserves — especially since the board voted to take the final \$550,000 deficit out of reserves of about \$1.5 million. The alternative was to raise the contributions by member agencies by 1.3 percent.

That action leaves Caltrain with \$1 million in reserves.

"They cannot run all year and be solvent if the price of diesel continues to rise," Mr. Bigelow pointed out. ■

Workshop on 'more livable' county

People interested in making San Mateo County more livable can sign up for an interactive workshop on "Designs for Healthy Living" on Thursday, June 29, from 8:30 a.m. to 12:20 p.m. at the Belmont Sports Complex, 550 Island Parkway.

Two talks will focus on planning and designing healthier

communities, and two will discuss the "Grand Boulevard Project." This would convert El Camino Real into a Grand Boulevard that supports healthy communities linked to transit.

The program is free. To register, call Angela Sajuthi at 573-2737, or go to smhealth.org, and click on link under "What's New."

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Community

NEWS OF LOCAL PEOPLE AND EVENTS IN THE COMMUNITY

Lyme disease lookout: avoid those ticks

Residents report frustrations with getting the disease diagnosed and treated; authorities say its rare in this area

By Marion Softky

Almanac Staff Writer

Stan Gage never saw the tick that gave him Lyme disease more than 15 years ago.

The 32-year resident of Los Trancos Woods did notice a red bull's-eye rash. But it was a couple of years later that he began having flu-like symptoms. Then excruciating pain in his large joints forced him to give up running on local trails.

"There was no swelling, no tenderness," he says. "The joints just hurt like hell, and normal pain killers don't help."

Some 10 years later, Mr. Gage passed out a few times and had a heart block. Now he's on a pacemaker, takes antibiotics every day, and is mostly free of symptoms.

"I'm pretty good," he says. "I've had no recurrence, but I've been taking antibiotics every day since 2003."

Mr. Gage — and other local residents who live with chronic Lyme disease — report huge frustrations with getting the disease diagnosed and treated.

Symptoms can be intermittent and variable, and may not totally match the official criteria, they say. And many doctors don't believe in Lyme disease here, they grumble.

"I do not believe the tests currently out there detect Lyme disease effectively," says Mr. Gage; he claims that current tests come in with a high rate of false negatives.

Mr. Gage finally got his Lyme disease confirmed by one of the top Lyme disease laboratories in the country, Igenex of Palo Alto. Now he sees what he calls an "LLD" (for Lyme-literate doctor) from Nevada City, who also practices in Palo Alto.

'Hard to prove'

Dr. Mary Ann Carmack of Menlo Park, head of pediatrics at the Palo Alto Medical Foundation, agrees that diagnosis of Lyme disease, particularly chronic Lyme disease, is very controversial. "It is hard to prove," she says. "The symptoms are vague and can be caused by other things."

■ INFORMATION

A Lyme disease support group meets the second Tuesday of every month, from 6 to 8 p.m., at El Camino Hospital in Mountain View. For information, call 800-216-5556. The San Mateo County Health Services Department also keeps watch on Lyme disease; call 573-2346 for information. The following Web sites carry information on ticks and Lyme disease:

- Centers for Disease Control, www.CDC.gov
- California Lyme Disease Association (CALDA), Lymedisease.org
- San Mateo County Mosquito Abatement District, smcad.org
- IGenEX Research Laboratories in Palo Alto, Igenex.com.

Several messages emerge from the ordeals of Mr. Gage and other local residents afflicted with Lyme disease:

■ Lyme disease is rare in this area; most ticks don't carry it.

■ Diagnosis of Lyme disease can be difficult and controversial.

■ Early discovery is important to cure the disease.

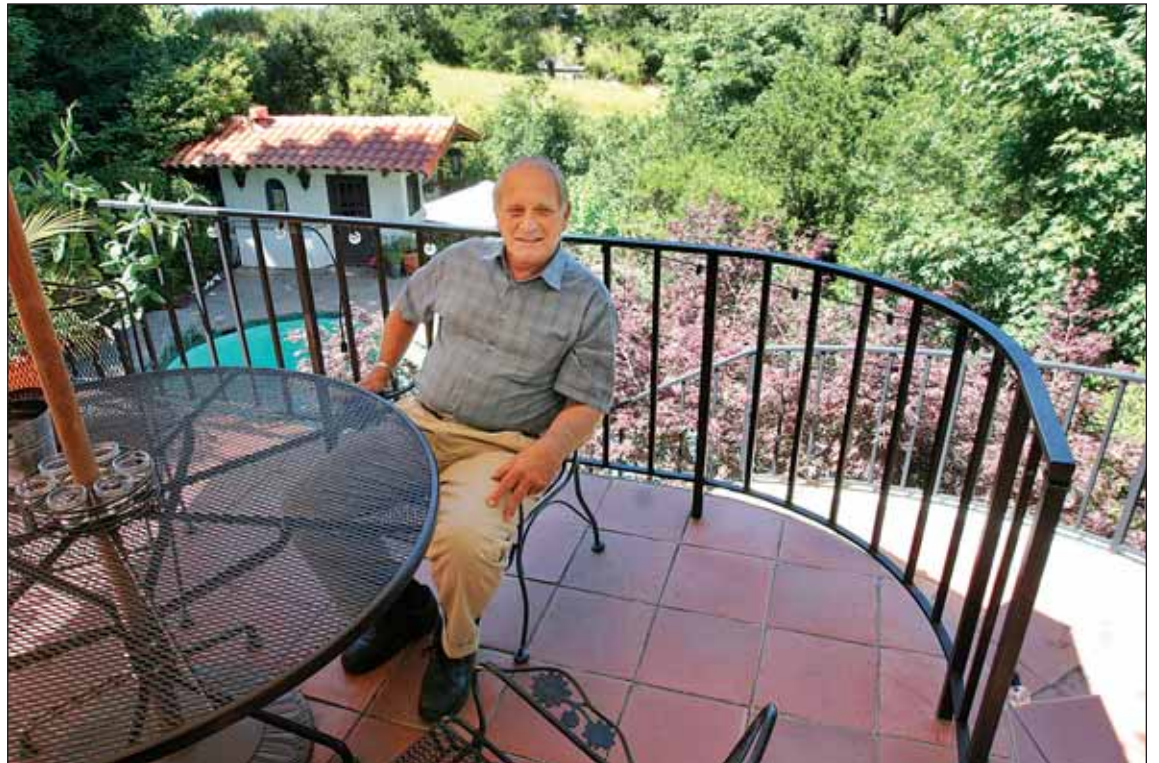
■ Preventing tick bites is even better.

'Hidden epidemic?'

The state Legislature has recognized the importance of Lyme disease by declaring May as "Lyme Disease Awareness Month."

Lyme disease occurs worldwide and is a "hidden epidemic" in California, says Phyllis Mervine, president of the California Lyme Disease Association. It can affect the brain, the heart, joints and other organs.

Lyme disease is carried by a bacterium, *Borrelia burgdorferi*,



The Almanac/Marjan Sadoughi

Stan Gage, at his Portola Valley home, says his joints "just hurt like hell, and normal pain killers don't help."

and is transmitted to humans through the bite of infected black-legged ticks, according to the Centers for Disease Control Web site.

This is the tiny, pinhead-sized "deer tick" that brushes off grass and vegetation onto passing animals and people in wildlands and backyards. Even invisible nymph-stage ticks can transmit the disease without alerting the victim.

If the tick makes it into the skin, it may or may not create the classic bulls-eye rash. It sucks blood for a few weeks, may raise an itchy red welt, and eventually drops off.

The likelihood of contracting Lyme disease from a tick bite in this area is low. Only about 3 to 5 percent of ticks collected around the county were infected, according to Angela Rory, assistant vector ecologist with the San Mateo County Mosquito Abatement District. The district collects ticks from hiking trails around the county and tests them for Lyme disease.

Dr. Carmack says the clinic sees "vanishingly few" cases of Lyme disease. "It is very uncommon to see Lyme disease in this area," she says. "If

caught early, it is easily treatable with antibiotics."

Prevention

"The important message is prevention," says Dr. Carmack. "Try to not be bitten by a tick."

To avoid picking up ticks, Dr.

Carmack recommends wearing light-colored clothes and spraying them with a repellent like DEET. After being out in tick country, Dr. Carmack urges people to inspect themselves and their children.

See **LYME DISEASE**, next page



Source: California Dept. of Health Services

Lyme disease is transmitted to humans through the bite of infected black-legged ticks, such as these, shown on a finger. From left, are a nymph, an adult male and an adult female.

Jensen & Hauser

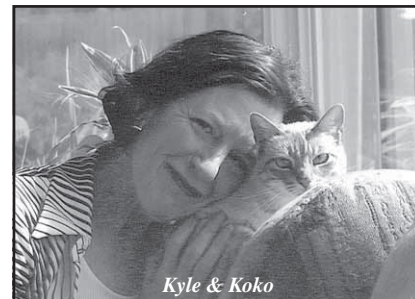
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Look out for rattlesnakes

This is the time of year to look out for rattlesnakes. The reptiles like the warmer weather, according to Dr. Bob Norris, associate professor and director of the division of emergency medicine at Stanford University School of Medicine.

The only rattler native to this area is the Northern Pacific rattlesnake, which is moderate in size, about 4-feet long, with fairly toxic venom and a somewhat tolerant personality, said Dr. Norris.

Stanford treats about six rattlesnake bites a year. Rarely does anyone die.

"If you get bit by a rattlesnake, don't wait to get medical care, the venom starts working immediately," he said. "Victims get a funny taste in their mouths and their muscles start to twitch."

For more information, go to mednews.stanford.edu.

Help for active seniors

San Mateo County residents 55 and older who want to work -- and even get paid -- by local nonprofit or public agencies may be able to find help with the Family Service Agency Senior Employment Services.

The agency may be able to

NOTEBOOK

provide paid work experience, classroom training to upgrade job skills, assistance in searching for jobs and marketing skills, and a job match-up service to meet immediate needs.

Anyone interested may call 403-4300 for information, or go to familyserviceagency.org.

Samaritan House needs medical volunteers

Now that the Redwood City Free Medical Clinic has expanded to include dental and eye care, the charity Samaritan House is looking for medical and dental professionals willing to volunteer even a few hours a month to help patients.

The Free Medical Clinic usually sees about 3,000 patients a year, who are mostly low-income and uninsured.

Clinic Director Dr. Jason Wong said he now has a waiting list of 150 potential patients for eye care, and 200 who need a dentist.

Especially needed are dentists, dental assistants, dental hygienists, ophthalmologists, optometrists, primary physicians, nurses, and medical assistants.

"Volunteering can be very simple and easy," said Michele Canning, volunteer director for Samaritan House. Many volunteers increase their hours "because they enjoy it so much."

For information or to sign up, call Ms. Canning at 341-4081, ext. 33, or go to SamaritanHouse.com.



Corté Madera School photo

Tennis champs from Corté Madera are, in the top row from left, Sam Cronin, Kevin Bui, Yash Patel, Aaron Ebert and coach Dan Flahavan; middle row, Geoff Lalonde, Will Strober, Jack Matteucci, Jeff Windsor, Alex Heaney, Kayla Emmerson, Sophie Emmerson and Ronnie Thompson; and first row, Sahil Khanna, Avi Shah, Joe Davison and Patrick Chase.

Corté Madera wins league tennis title

Corté Madera School's varsity tennis team defeated Menlo School 5-4 recently to win the tennis league championship.

This is the first time in 10 years that the Portola Valley school has taken the league tennis title, said Principal Joel Willen.

The team, made up of 16 players in seventh and eighth grades,

finished the season with a 10-1 record.

With the match tied at four games apiece, Alex Heaney came back from being down 7-4 to win in a tiebreaker 8-7.

"This come-from-behind win exemplifies the heart of this team that played with tenacity and perseverance all season

long," said Coach Dan Flahavan, physical education teacher and athletic director at Corté Madera School.

To win the championship, Corté Madera had to defeat La Entrada and Menlo in a single elimination playoff. Earlier in the season, Corté Madera lost to Menlo 7-2.

Eshoo votes against war resolution

Rep. Anna Eshoo, D-Atherton, has voted against a non-binding resolution supporting the government's policy for the war in Iraq. The resolution passed the House of Representatives June 16 on a vote of 256-153.

A "yes" vote indicated support for the government's policy on an open-ended engagement in Iraq with no withdrawal date set

for American troops.

Speaking on the floor of the House, Rep. Eshoo said that almost two-thirds of the American people "have now lost faith in the president's war in Iraq."

Saying "we all support and honor our troops," she added that there is a difference between Iraq and the war on terrorism.

"Some people in the Congress, unlike people in the country, do not want to acknowledge that. So where are we today? Our intelligence agency demoralized, intelligence manipulated, the American people ashamed of what we are doing instead of being proud."

She concluded that Congress needs to have a debate about the war in Iraq. "We need a debate about alternatives," Eshoo said.

LYME

continued from page 19

"That's probably the single most important message," she says.

If a tick starts biting, Dr. Carmack says: "Don't panic, but time is critical. It requires 32 to 76 hours for the infection to be transmitted."

If you find a biting tick, grab it with tweezers close to the skin, and gently pull it out, Dr. Carmack advises. "Do not jerk or twist it; do not squeeze or crush a tick." And

don't believe the folk tales about unscrewing it. Then disinfect your skin and wash your hands.

If symptoms occur, seek medical advice.

Early symptoms of Lyme disease include fever, headache, and the characteristic bulls-eye skin rash — although not everyone gets all symptoms. Left untreated, the infection can move to the joints, the heart and the nervous system, says the CDC.

There are some happy outcomes. Marie Nightingale of Los Trancos

Woods contracted Lyme disease about 12 years ago, when she was 6. She spent two horrible years with treatment by intravenous antibiotics, says John Nightingale. "It was mostly lethargy, and all sorts of weird symptoms."

By fourth grade, she was significantly better, although she still had ups and downs through eighth grade, Mr. Nightingale says.

Last week Marie completed her freshman year at the University of California at Davis. ■

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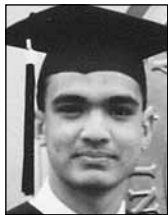
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OBITUARIES

Anuj Mohan
Software engineer

Anuj Mohan of Mountain View, who worked as an engineer and software architect at KANA, a Menlo Park high-tech company for six years, died June 11 at El Camino Hospital. He was 30.



Anuj Mohan at MIT graduation in 1998.

Mr. Mohan was injured in a near-drowning accident on May 17 at his apartment complex swimming pool. The accident left him with extensive brain damage and in a coma. He spent almost four weeks in the hospital before an infection finally took his life.

During his stay in the hospital, people flew in from around the world to visit and support him, according to his sister-in-law Hema Sareen Mohan.

Mr. Mohan was a graduate of MIT with bachelor's and master's

degrees. He had just completed his first year in the MBA program at the Wharton School of Business at the University of Pennsylvania.

While living in the Bay Area, he founded and directed the Software Entrepreneurship lecture series of the 8,000-member MIT Alumni Association of Northern California.

When his father, Aditya Mohan, was diagnosed with kidney failure while living in India, Mr. Mohan worked to bring his parents back to this country and in touch with doctors at Stanford Medical Center, according to his brother, Neal Mohan. Six months ago, Mr. Mohan's father received a kidney transplant. Anuj Mohan became an active advocate for the National Kidney Foundation.

Mr. Mohan spent the first years of his life in Florida and Michigan before moving to India with his family in 1985. In 1994, he returned to the United States to attend MIT.

Mr. Mohan's family has established a scholarship in his name to help Bay Area students attend MIT and Wharton. For more information on the Anuj Mohan Scholarship Fund, visit www.anujmohan.com.

Mr. Mohan is survived by his mother, Dr. Deepa Mohan, father, Dr. Aditya Mohan; brothers Neal and Kapil Mohan, all of Mountain View.

Charles P. Stewart
Architect

A private memorial service will be held Saturday, July 8, for Charles P. Stewart, 87, who died June 21. The service will be held from 2 to 5 p.m. at his Portola Valley home.

A native of Oak Park, Illinois, he graduated from the University of Illinois at Champaign, where he earned a degree in architecture.

In 1956 he and his family moved to California, where, as a member of the American Institute of Architects, he worked for the firm of Skidmore Owings & Merrill for many years. Upon retirement, he volunteered as a docent at Filoli Center and was a member of the Portola Valley Garden Club.

Mr. Stewart is survived by his son Chuck of San Juan Bautista, and a granddaughter. He was preceded in death by his wife Grace and younger son Bill.

Memorials may be made to a favorite charity. Arrangements were under the direction of Roller Hapgood & Tinney Funeral Home.

Meyerhof services

A memorial services for Walter E. Meyerhof, professor emeritus of physics at Stanford University, is set for 3 p.m. Sunday, July 16, at the university's Faculty Club.

Mr. Meyerhof, a Menlo Park resident since 1949, died on May 27 from complications of Parkinson's disease. He was 84.

In 1997, Mr. Meyerhof established the Varian Fry Founda-

tion Project, based in Menlo Park. He did so to honor and spread the word about Varian Fry, an American who helped 3,000 to 4,000 Jews and other persecuted individuals to escape from occupied France during World War II. Mr. Meyerhof and his parents were among the refugees he helped.

The family requests that memorial donations in Mr. Meyerhof's name be made to the Varian Fry Foundation, care of Professor Justus Rosenberg, Bard College, P.O. Box 5000, Annandale-on-Hudson, New York 12504.

■ POLICE CALLS

This information is from the Atherton and Menlo Park police departments and the San Mateo County Sheriff's Office. Under the law, people charged with offenses are considered innocent until convicted.

ATHERTON

Burglary report: Home ransacked, Atherton Avenue, June 16.

Auto burglary report: Stereo stolen, Menlo-Atherton High School at 555 Middlefield Road, June 20.

Grand theft report: Bicycle stolen, Hawthorn Drive, June 16.

Animal complaint reports:

■ Pedestrian said she was growled at by pit bull, whose owner was cited for a municipal code violation, Camino Por Los Arboles, June 18.

■ Healthy and playful dog left alone on residential construction site cries at night, Atherton Avenue, June 19.

Fraud report: Selby Lane resident claims several charges on her credit cards after losing her wallet somewhere between Atherton and San Francisco, June 20.

MENLO PARK

Burglary reports:

■ Computers and tools stolen from construction trailer, 100 block of Constitution Avenue, June 16.

■ Computers missing, 100 block of Bay Road, June 17.

■ Gardening tools stolen from vehicles, 100 block of O'Brien Drive, June 19.

■ Computer stolen, 1100 block of Laurel Avenue, June 22.

■ BIRTH

Menlo Park

■ Alicia and Darren Phelan, a daughter, May 17, at Sequoia Hospital.

■ HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATE

■ Helen Grace Edwards of Menlo Park graduated June 3 from Santa Catalina School in Monterey.

Grand theft reports:

■ Laptop computer stolen, 400 block of Pope Street, June 16.

■ TV stolen, 100 block of Terminal Avenue, June 20.

Auto burglary reports:

■ Window smashed, 700 block of Pierce Road, June 17.

■ Wallet stolen, 1600 block of Marsh Road, June 17.

■ Vehicle ransacked, 2000 block of Menalto Avenue, June 21.

Stolen vehicle report: Golf cart stolen and crashed into wall, 1300 block of Willow Road, June 19.

Fraud reports:

■ Identity theft, 1100 block of Laurel

Street, June 16.

■ Social Security number stolen and disability compensation stolen, 1200 block of Mills Street, June 19.

WOODSIDE

Burglary reports:

■ Computers and jewelry stolen from residence, 100 block of Old La Honda Road, June 14.

■ Open door and drawer dumped out on bed, 300 block of Woodside Drive, June 16.

Vandalism report: Spouse accused of using pocket knife to puncture tires on her husband's vehicle after argument over unfaithfulness, 2000 block of Woodside Road, June 19.

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Woodside's bike overload

The town of Woodside is not happy with its popularity as one of the Peninsula's premier spots to ride a bicycle. Several weeks ago, the Town Council underlined this displeasure when it turned down a request for a third organized bike ride in July, one over the town's arbitrary limit of two per month.

The vote was a by-the-book response that did not take into account the nature of the ride, which would raise funds to fight Lou Gehrig's Disease (ALS), or that the ride organizers had made a considerable number of concessions to the town in an effort to get the permit. During the discussion, some council members

called the hilly Jefferson Avenue portion of the route unsafe, despite the course having been approved by the town's own bicycle committee as well as the county Sheriff's Office.

As far as we can tell, the so-called dangerous course was not the real reason the town said no to this ride. Instead, the council seemed to agree with strong testimony against the permit from five of the seven members of the public who spoke. Two council members who voted no, Ron Romines and Sue Boynton, argued that increasing amounts of road rage among drivers was reason enough to keep more bike riders off the street.

This circuitous logic was challenged by Mayor Deborah Gordon, who rightfully pointed out that cyclists do obey the laws and hardly deserve to be barred from town simply because an upset resident might fly into a road rage.

We agree. And frankly, we believe the legal underpinnings for Woodside, or any other town, to require organized bike rides to have a permit are very shaky. For example, in the state vehicle code, bicycles are treated the same as automobiles. Do automobile events that choose to use Woodside streets need a permit? The answer is no, unless they require a service from the town.

In reality, most organized bike rides have virtually no impact on the town, especially if they are just passing through. In most cases, there are no road closures, no rest stops, no need for parking, no need for additional police, as riders are instructed to obey all traffic laws and use bike lanes, not the main roadway.

There are also questions about the legal basis for restricting the number of approved rides to two per month. If the council can approve three rides on some months, why not three or more all months? Unless two rides are scheduled for the same time on the same day, is there a plausible reason for a two-ride-a-month

EDITORIALS

The opinion of The Almanac

Pool incident raises questions

Who is in charge at Burgess pool? More precisely, who's in charge of emergency procedures?

And what is the protocol when an emergency occurs at the pool, which is no longer operated by the city of Menlo Park, but by a private contractor?

On June 16, a young swimmer somehow managed to turn off the water circulation system. When the pump was restarted, at least one witness reported seeing a vapor cloud over the pool, and eight children became sick — some gasping for air, coughing and vomiting. One child was taken to the hospital for observation.

Tim Sheeper, the private contractor who operates the pool, told the Almanac that no gas escaped from pool machinery and that the water in the pool was tested immediately and was fine.

But our concern is not what happened after the "accident," but who was in charge during the incident. Only after a mother — an off-duty nurse — insisted there was a need to call for help, grabbed a phone and dialed 911, did Mr. Sheeper's staff also call 911. The children were obviously in distress, and something

See **POOL**, next page

See **WOODSIDE**, next page

LETTERS

Our readers write

One resident sees cyclists violate the law

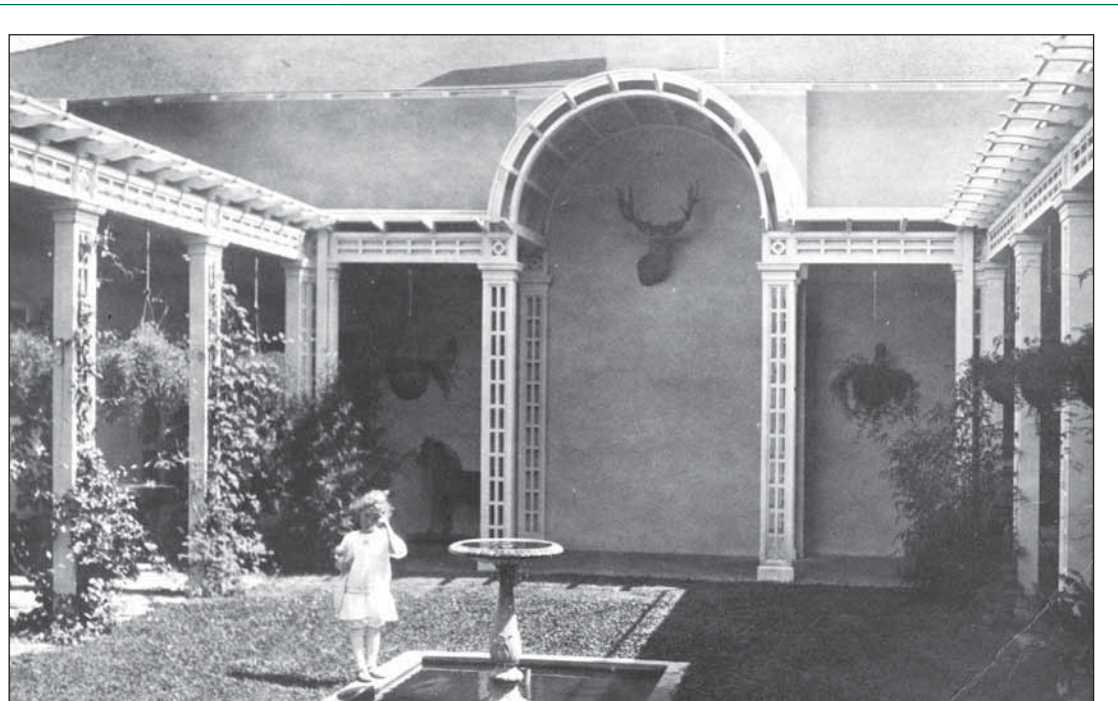
Editor:

In last week's article on Woodside's decision to decline the application for a bike event, the mayor was quoted as saying that the citizens who complained about bicycle riders constituting a hazard to town residents were not correct; the "riders do not violate any laws."

As a long-time resident of the town, living in upper Woodside (off Skyline Boulevard) I have encountered numerous incidents of riders crossing over the double lines, passing just before blind curves, and truly creating real dangers for the cars attempting to navigate the tricky stretch of Highway 84 on the way down from Skyline.

There are really no good bike

See **LETTERS**, next page



Portola Valley Archives

Our Regional Heritage

In this photo, taken around 1926, little Patricia Law stands by the fountain in the courtyard of the Portola Valley mansion Villa Lauriston, built by her father Herbert Law. Just a couple of years later, when Patricia was 5, Mr. Law began a second mansion, to be occupied by his daughter. Never totally completed, it burned in a horrendous fire in 1971.

LETTERS

Continued from previous page

lanes on this piece of highway, and the riders have to be on the road with the cars, not being able to really move to the right for fear of going off the paved road and onto the soft shoulder — which is a real hazard. I do not believe they should be permitted to come down this road.

Alvin I. Haimson
Big Tree Road, Woodside

Just the facts, please

Editor:

In last week's editorial you express the hope that a replacement for Menlo Park Mayor Nicholas Jellins will improve the level of civility on the City Council.

If you are sincere in wishing this, I respectfully suggest you more closely monitor your own newspaper for its accuracy in uncovering and reporting the facts in its stories. When you print rumor and opinion in support of your editorial positions, as in your coverage of the 911 call from Burgess Pool, those rumors and opinions are quoted as fact by those who agree with your positions, and the acrimonious debates are fueled.

If you truly want a less acrimonious political scene, why not be a model of constructive fact-finding and discussion that can produce compromise?

Lucey Bowen
Campo Bello Lane,
Menlo Park

Editorial on Mayor Jellins misguided

Editor:

Your editorial last week about Mayor Jellins' announcement that he would not run for another term on the Menlo Park City Council is, in my opinion, entirely misguided.

I have watched the bickering on the council for some 20 years and am amazed at the city's inability to govern itself given the preponderance of affluent and intelligent persons who are residents of this little haven next to Stanford University.

Indeed, without Mr. Jellins and his allies, it is doubtful if today Stanford's new hotel complex would have been approved and environmentalists would have foreclosed any discussion of using Bayfront Park for playing fields.

The Steve Schmidt, Paul Collacchi (former mayors and council members) and Andy Cohen (current council member) axis regards Stanford as

WOODSIDE

continued from previous page

limit, or a limit at all?

Even council member Pete Sinclair was queasy about denying a permit for the ALS ride: "As much as I hate to say it, we don't own the roads. We can't say we don't want to share our roads with bicycles."

There is no question that Woodside probably has more than its fair share of cyclists, especially on weekends. The riders come for the scenery and rural atmosphere that make the town so special for visitors and residents alike.

But if Woodsiders look around, they will see that bicyclists are not the only visitors. On many weekends, motorists line up bumper-to-bumper at Canada and Woodside roads as they head to the Coastsides. And then there are the noisy motorcycles, the scourge that 20 years ago caused an uproar similar to today's upset over bicycles.

It may take time and some statesmanship, but rather than kowtow to a few angry residents who see red over bicycles, Town Council members should put staff to work on a plan to ease the bicycle congestion, and to educate both cyclists and residents in ways to get along.

Unless the scenery changes, or bicycles become extinct, we don't see much hope for ending Woodside's attraction to weekend warriors, whether they are on two wheels or four. At least the bicyclists are quiet and don't foul the air.

POOL

continued from previous page

needed to be done.

But in the hurriedly drawn-up contract between the city and Mr. Sheeper, we are not sure it's clear who is responsible in an emergency. It is particularly telling that Michael Taylor, the city's acting director of Community Services, and not Mr. Sheeper, issued a press release about the incident on June 22, six days after the event.

We think the city needs to immediately address the following issues:

- How could a child deactivate the water-pumping system? This should be easy to prevent.
- How did the system emit a cloud of vapor that in all likelihood made eight children sick? Pool experts should be able to figure out what happened.
- What is the protocol when an incident like this occurs? We would hope lifeguards would err on the side of caution and call 911 immediately.

It is doubly ironic that Mr. Sheeper blames the parents for overreacting to this incident. We understand that he has been around swimming pools all his life and may have seen this type of emergency before. But when a valve is accidentally turned off, and eight children become sick, calling 911 is not an overreaction.

an enemy and seems to wish Menlo Park might resemble, say, Ames, Iowa. Their resurgence gives you hope? Be careful what you wish for.

Leon G. Campbell
Albion Avenue, Woodside

Another try

Somehow, the correct location of the Bank of America branch that was located on El Camino Real in Menlo Park slipped

through our fingers again last week.

(In case you missed it, on June 14, we mistakenly put the 1940s office on Santa Cruz Avenue.) As stated in last week's photo caption, the bank was on El Camino, but between Santa Cruz and Oak Grove avenues, not Menlo and Santa Cruz, as numerous readers eagerly pointed out last week. We stand corrected on the correction, and truly regret the error.



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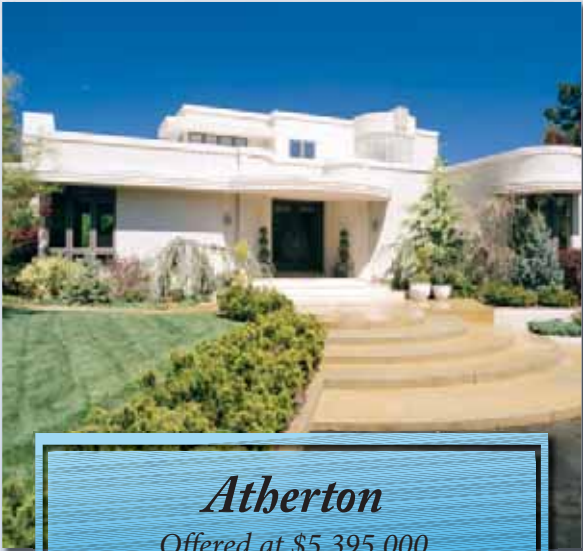
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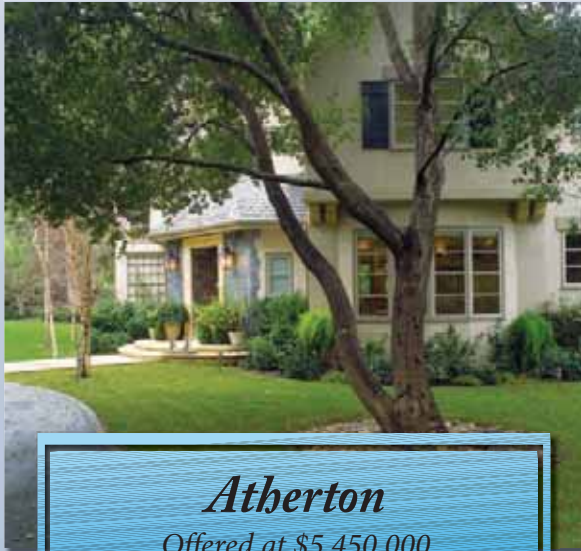
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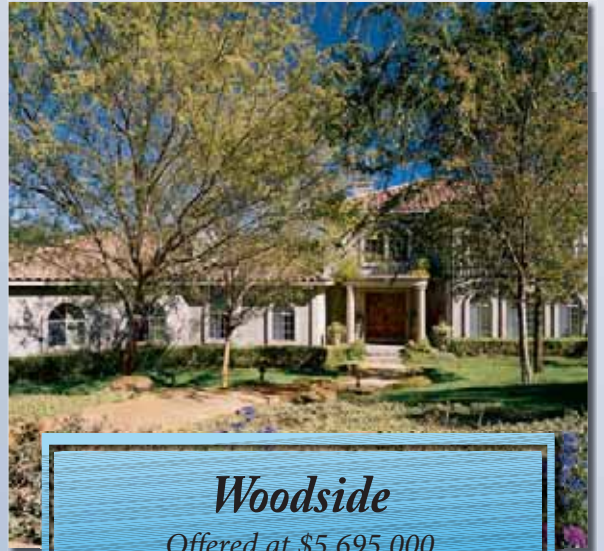
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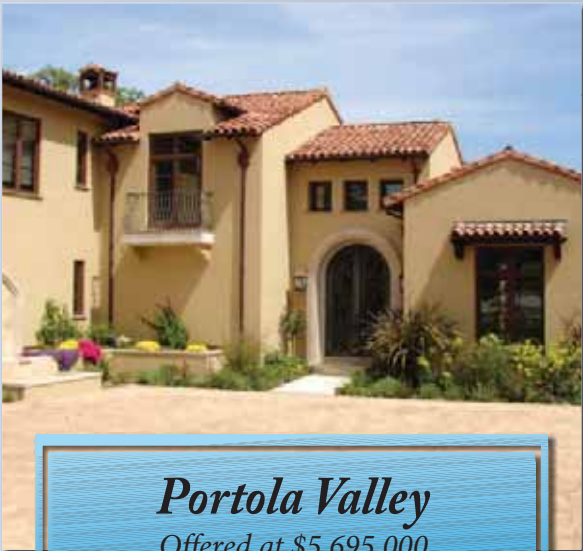
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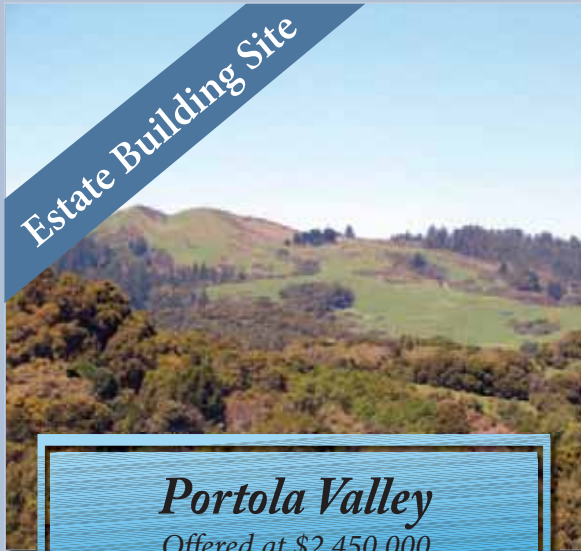
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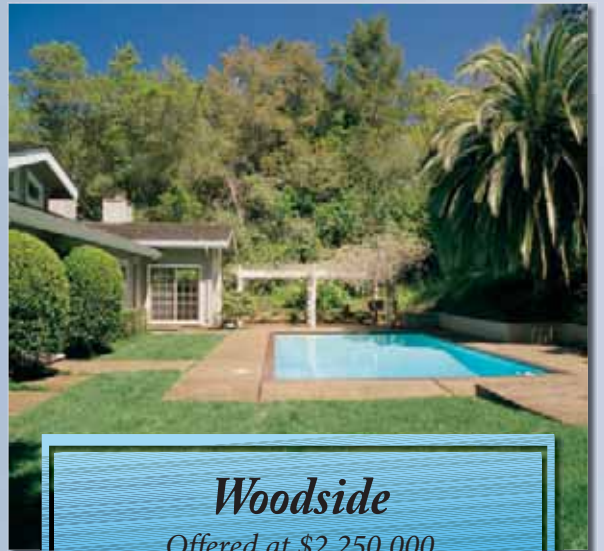
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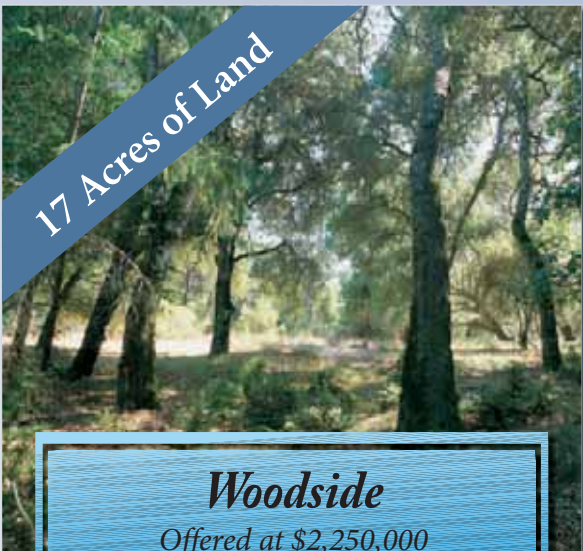
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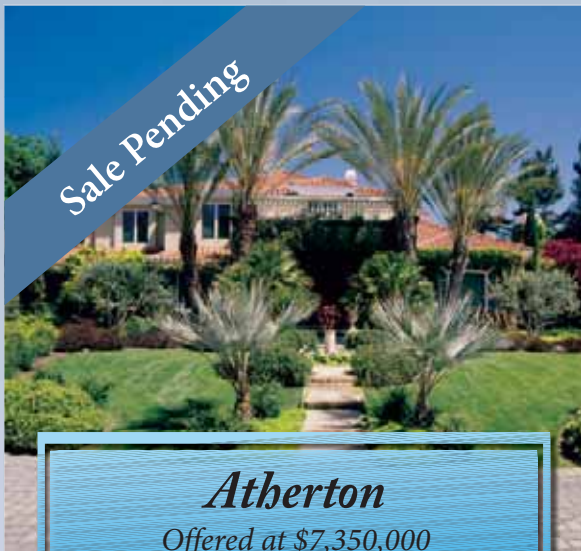
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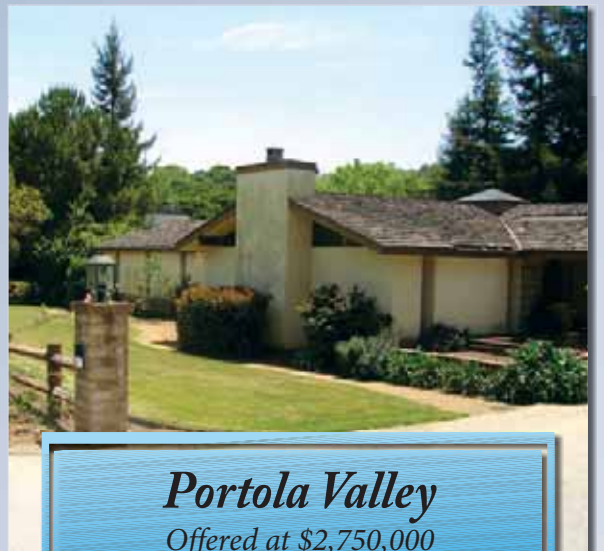
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