

**SUPPORTING THE TROOPS: Menlo Park woman organizes holiday care packages for Iraq** Page 35

# The Almanac

**HOME & GARDEN DESIGN** inside this issue

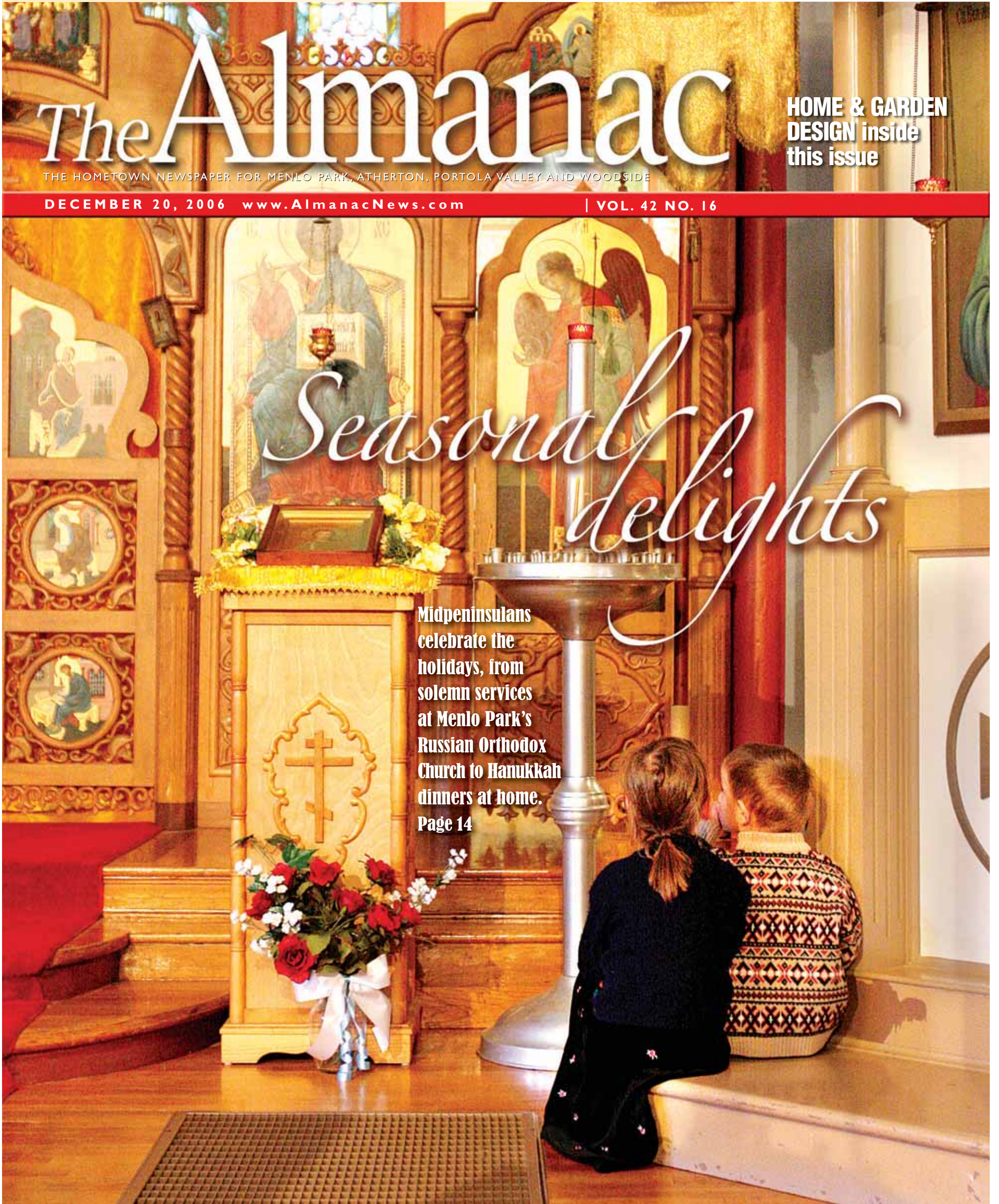
THE HOMETOWN NEWSPAPER FOR MENLO PARK, ATHERTON, PORTOLA VALLEY AND WOODSIDE

DECEMBER 20, 2006 [www.AlmanacNews.com](http://www.AlmanacNews.com)

| VOL. 42 NO. 16

## *Seasonal delights*

Midpeninsulans celebrate the holidays, from solemn services at Menlo Park's Russian Orthodox Church to Hanukkah dinners at home. Page 14





*For each new morning with its light  
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# Inside

This week's news, features and community events.

## FIRST SHOT



The Almanac/Marjan Sadoughi

### The view from inside

Kate La Barber, 3, examines a firefighter's helmet while sharing daddy Glen's lap with her sister Storie at the Woodside fire district's Station 19 in Emerald Hills. Neighbors got to clamber into fire engines, visit with Santa and explore the new station at the holiday open house on Dec. 13. For a related picture, see **Page 8**.

## Atherton

■ M-A theater supporters beat up on Atherton council for lawsuit. **Page 10**

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## On the cover

Sueta and Ivan Richter sit quietly at the Nativity of the Holy Virgin Russian Orthodox Greek Catholic Church in Menlo Park, one of many sights of the holiday season captured by Almanac photographer Marjan Sadoughi. Her photo essay begins on **Page 14**.

## CALLING ON THE ALMANAC

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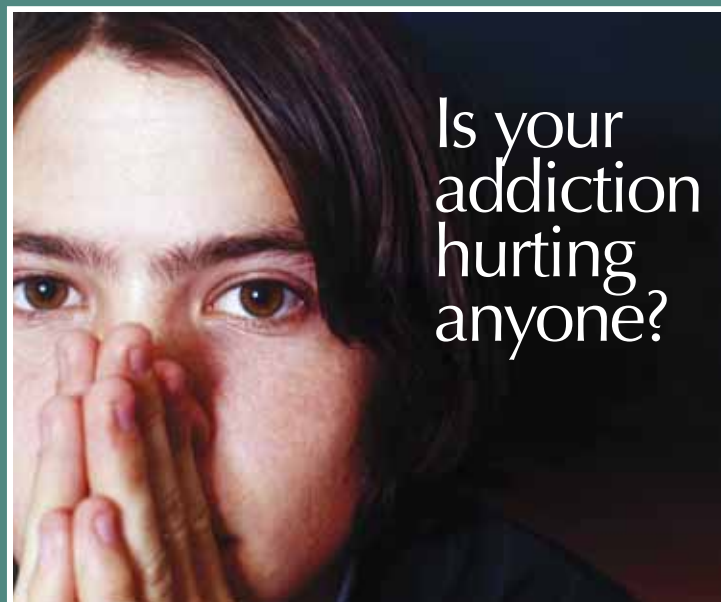
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# Local News

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## Taking a load off Santa

La Entrada School seventh-graders, members of a community service club, load up a fire truck at the school with goodies for less-fortunate kids. They are helping out with the Toys for Tots campaign, backed by the Menlo Park Fire Protection District.

The Almanac/Marjan Sadoughi



## Foundation pledges more for Town Center project

By David Boyce  
Almanac Staff Writer

The nonprofit TOSA Foundation, already credited with a \$1 million gift in April toward the building of the new Portola Valley Town Center complex, has made a pledge that could boost the project's revenues by another \$1 million.

The Portola Valley-based foundation is promising to match gifts dollar-for-dollar between Dec. 13 and March 27, up to a total of \$500,000, said Sally Ann Reiss, co-chair of the Portola Valley Community Fund.

The Community Fund is conducting a multi-year campaign to raise \$20 million for the Town Center. The current balance, \$13.1 million, represents gifts from "major donors" over the past two years.

Major donors are still being sought, but the TOSA pledge coincides with a town-wide mailing from the Community Fund announcing a public campaign seeking smaller gifts to

### ■ PORTOLA VALLEY

Bill and Jean Lane act to preserve scenic character of their property. **See Page 36**

help raised the additional \$6.9 million needed.

### Town officially lowers utility user tax

The Town Council of Portola Valley voted 4-0, with Councilman Richard Merk absent, to lower utility user tax bills in town by one percentage point after Feb. 1.

The current 5.5 percent tax on residential and commercial gas, water, electricity and telephone bills will drop to 4.5 percent. This new rate, which won approval by an 86 percent majority of voters in the November election, will expire June 30, 2010.

The rate will return to 5.5 percent after that unless voters

See **NOTES**, page 8

## New City Council withdraws challenge to Derry referendum

■ Council may also consider rescinding approval of two development projects.

By Rory Brown  
Almanac Staff Writer

After just one week together on the job, Menlo Park City Council members undid one decision made by the previous council, and two more items may head to the chopping block.

The council decided on Dec. 12 to drop a legal challenge to the petitions calling for an election on the Derry condo-commercial project in downtown Menlo Park.

In doing so, the council, with three new members sworn in Dec. 5, reversed an action taken two weeks before by the previous council.

Tuesday's vote to withdraw the legal challenge was 4-1, with John Boyle opposed.

Two more reversals may be on the horizon.

At its Dec. 19 meeting, the council is scheduled to discuss, and

possibly reconsider, the approval of a 33-home development and a medical office project proposed for the Linfield Oaks neighborhood.

Check AlmanacNews.com for news updates.

Councilman Andy Cohen requested that the council reconsider the two projects, labeling their approval "ill-advised council actions." He said that the developments will dramatically change the feel of the neighborhood and add significant traffic, sentiments echoed by neighbors who opposed both projects.

Mr. Cohen said he isn't set on calling for the council to rescind the projects, but he wants the council to "weigh its options."

### Derry challenge

The Derry project involves building 135 condominiums and 22,525 square feet of commercial space on a 3.4-acre site off Oak Grove

### ■ MENLO PARK

Check AlmanacNews.com for news updates.

Avenue near El Camino Real.

In September, the council approved zoning ordinances that enabled the building of the project, but opponents, led by the group Menlo Park Tomorrow, launched a petition drive to put the ordinances on the ballot. Petitions with 2,500 signatures, more than enough for an election, were presented to the council.

In mid-November, Jim Polart, representative of the Derry project developer, the O'Brien Group in San Mateo, proposed that the council challenge the validity of the petitions.

On Nov. 28, all council members but Mr. Cohen favored filing a "declaratory relief" action in court to see if the petitions are valid.

It was Mr. Cohen who pro-

See **DERRY**, page 8



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# Hanging up the Santa suit

For 40 years, Menlo's Bill Willau has played Santa for kids in Santa Clara County's Juvenile Hall

By Stephanie Cadora  
Special to the Almanac

Thursday will be Bill Willau's last gig as Santa for kids at Santa Clara County's Juvenile Hall.

For 40 years, the Menlo Park resident has been playing Santa, bringing gifts and gimmicks to the kids incarcerated at the San Jose facility.

In his 80th year, Mr. Willau says he's ready to hang up his suit and pass the gift-bag to someone



Bill Willau

else, although he will continue to buy gifts and organize the trips to Juvenile Hall. His son John, who has also been dressing up as Santa, will keep doing so.

"The suit is heavy," says Mr. Willau, speaking of the physical exertion it takes to fill the role. "I come into a unit and, to break the ice, jump in a kid's lap. The kids always laugh. I also dance with kids. I've always been a crazy, happy Santa, and most kids respond."

Originally, he dreamed of being a Santa in an orphanage, but found there were no openings available. A police officer on his bowling team suggested he try juvenile hall. He did — and the rest is history.

For the holiday season, kids are encouraged to decorate the halls in preparation for Santa's visit. Mr. Willau recalls a 3-foot-high snowman made of thousands of folded origami as one of the best decorations he's seen.



"I've always been a crazy, happy Santa, and most kids respond," says Bill Willau of Menlo Park.

Carolers come along on the visits to each of the 11 locked units. But one time, some teens surprised Mr. Willau with a song they composed themselves. Four kids performed it to a hip-hop beat.

A restaurant provides a buffet in each unit, and

Costco decorates large cakes. Yet the highlight of the event has to be the gifts, which Mr. Willau purchases with the help of a wish list.

Each year, a 25-foot truck pulls up at the hall. The gifts, including games, movies, sports equipment, posters, books, electronics and CDs, are wrapped by staff.

Every kid gets to open a present. The gifts become property of the facility, and the kids share them.

Mr. Willau says he has raised about \$200,000 over the past 40 years, and about \$6,500 this year, mostly from Menlo Park and Palo Alto residents.

"I love Christmas," Mr. Willau says. "It's a wonderful time of the year. There is so much joy, and so much sadness."

One of his most poignant moments occurred at Lucile Packard Children's Hospital, where he was also a Santa for years. "I jingled the bells in the ear of a girl in a coma," he says with misty eyes, "and she responded."

"When I go to juvenile hall, I shake the hand of each kid, and give everyone a candy cane," says Mr. Willau. "This one-on-one is most important — it really touches them." ■

## ■ INFORMATION

■ To donate, make checks payable to St. Thomas Aquinas, JH, and mail them to Bill Willau, 20 Willow Road, #13, Menlo Park, CA 94025. Late donations will be saved for next year.

■ Anyone interested in taking over Mr. Willau's Santa role for next year may call him at 575-1093.

■ This year's holiday celebration will take place on Thursday, Dec. 21, from 5 to 9 p.m. at Santa Clara Juvenile Hall, 840 Guadalupe Parkway, San Jose (use police entrance). There will be pizza afterward at Amici's, 790 Castro St. near El Camino Real in Mountain View. Adults over 18 can attend the event, but since there's a limit on the number of attendees, call Mr. Willau at 575-1093 to reserve a space.

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## A few of my favorite things

A glowing tree trimmed with a photo of firefighters set the scene at the Woodside Fire Protection District's new Station 19 on Jefferson Avenue in Emerald Hills. On Wednesday night, Dec. 13, neighbors showed up for an open house/station warming party at the recently built station. Kids got to climb into a fire engine, sip hot chocolate and visit with Santa Claus amid festive decorations.

The Almanac/Marjan Sadoughi.



### DERRY

continued from page 5

posed that the new council reverse this action.

At the Dec. 12 meeting, he said the city should not file legal action on behalf of the O'Brien Group, and called the developer's challenge to the petitions "a questionable legal theory."

New council members Richard Cline and Heyward Robinson backed Mr. Cohen's proposal, as did Mayor Kelly Fergusson, reversing her previous vote to have the court review the petitions.

### Next step

Mr. Robinson said that his "intent is to fix this project, not to kill it."

He said the council's next step should be to rescind the zoning ordinances or put the issue to the voters, but he added that he hoped a third option would emerge: a new, compromise

project proposed by representatives of the developer and the referendum proponent, Menlo Park Tomorrow.

Derry project opponents have argued that the ordinances allow too many homes on the site — 39 per acre are planned for the Derry project — the buildings would be too tall, and there would be significant impacts on traffic and schools.

The O'Brien Group says the petitions could be invalid for two reasons:

■ The petitions did not include a specific notice required by state elections code to be printed on referendum petitions.

■ The project isn't subject to a referendum because the petitioners challenged adoption of the zoning ordinances behind the project, but not the general plan amendment that made the zoning changes possible in the first place. ■

### NOTES

continued from page 5

renew it at 4.5 percent or some other rate in November 2009.

In 2005-06, the tax brought in \$641,768 of the town's \$5 million of budgeted revenues.

### No discount for town on solar panels

A proposal is circulating among homeowners in Portola Valley, Ladera and Los Trancos Hills to

get together and buy solar panel systems at a 30 percent discount from Foster City-based SolarCity.

SolarCity has gotten the critical mass of homeowners it needs to make its numbers, said spokesman Tim Gnatek, but the town will not be a customer.

Mayor Ted Driscoll had considered having the town join the discount program for the Town Center's new rooftop system of some 70 kilowatts, but open bidding requirements have foreclosed that option. ■

## Parking ban on Raymundo Drive pits neighbors against trail users

By Andrea Gemmet

Almanac Staff Writer

For years, the Crystal Springs trail entrance on Raymundo Drive in Woodside was a hidden treasure. For those in the know, parking at the end of the tiny cul-de-sac brought you within a few steps of a lovely, woody trail that leads right into Huddart Park.

Unfortunately for the residents of Raymundo Drive, some of those in the know weren't outdoor enthusiasts, they were illicit marijuana farmers, vandals, drunken teens, or just inconsiderate boozers who blocked driveways and clogged the narrow street.

A parking ban enacted in July 2004 seems to have driven away the undesirables, but some Woodside residents say it's also deprived them of a favorite outdoor experience.

At the Dec. 12 meeting, the Woodside Town Council, citing health and safety reasons, decided to keep the parking ban in place and reject some residents' pleas to carve out a few legal parking spaces near the trail entrance. The vote was 6-1, with Ron Romines opposed.

Mr. Romines represents the Glens neighborhood, home to many of the residents upset about the parking ban.

"I don't see this as an excep-

### WOODSIDE

Check AlmanacNews.com for news updates. Post your views in Town Square on the Web site.

tional issue from a safety standpoint," he said.

Raymundo Drive, located off of Runnymede Road, is 7/10 of a mile long. Parking is prohibited on the last 2/10 of a mile, just before its intersection with Marva Oaks Drive.

"I think the problems the ordinance was intended to address have been (addressed)," said Woodside resident Susan Doherty. "Maybe it's time to ease up a little bit on those restrictions and see how it goes."

She was one of several Woodside residents who told the council that the parking ban has effectively cut off her family's access to the trail. Another resident argued that narrow, winding Raymundo Drive isn't any more perilous than many other roads in Woodside where parking is allowed.

However, the two families whose properties border the trail remained adamantly opposed to allowing parking on the street, citing accessibility problems for emergency vehicles, among other things. Earlier this year, the Fitches and the Esteps granted the

town an easement over portions of the trail that cross their properties to ensure that the trail would stay open.

"It's my safety, it's my grandkids', it's my husband's," said Janet Estep. "Please do not take away the no-parking signs on the cul-de-sac."

Town staff said that they could not identify anywhere to safely put a few legal parking spaces, and recommended against lifting the ban.

"There are virtually no pull-off areas where you can get all the way off of the pavement," explained Town Manager Susan George. "Our definition of safe parking is all the way off of the pavement."

Chief Armando Muela of the Woodside Fire Protection District acknowledged that the area is very difficult to serve, but declined to get involved in a political decision over whether or not there should be some street parking, Ms. George told the council.

The staff recommended against any parking spaces for traffic safety reasons, not just fire safety reasons, she said.

"This needs to be no-parking for health and safety (reasons)," said Councilman Dave Tanner. "I don't see how we can have parking that is substandard. If there's a loss of life, we can become liable." ■

# Belle Haven parents fight to keep child care worker Vanessa Carlisle

■ City plans to transfer her from the Belle Haven to the Burgess programs.

By **Rory Brown**

Almanac Staff Writer

The removal of a beloved employee from Menlo Park's Belle Haven child care program has members of the immediate community furious with the city, and ready to flex their political muscle to keep the community's program as is.

Menlo Park city officials say Vanessa Carlisle, a program assistant for the Belle Haven program, and labeled by parents as "the heart and soul" of the neighborhood's child care services, is slated to move to the Burgess child care programs on the other side of town.

The decision was authorized by City Manager David Boesch, who did not return repeated calls seeking an explanation for Ms. Carlisle's transfer.

Members of the lower-income and largely minority Belle Haven community — Ms. Carlisle included — are furious with the decision, arguing that the transfer of Ms. Carlisle, who has been with the program for 23 years, will be detrimental to the child care program.

"Kids get used to the same people, and to the same style of care," said Ms. Carlisle. "I've been completely disregarded as a person ... and what's best for the kids has been completely ignored."

Ms. Carlisle said she is scheduled to start at the Burgess program Jan. 2.

Parents are circulating petitions, and plan on packing the Dec. 19 City Council meeting to call for the city to keep Ms. Carlisle in Belle Haven.

"[Ms. Carlisle] makes our kids snacks, gives them hugs, and helps



Photo by Kainaz Amaria

Parents call Vanessa Carlisle "the heart and soul" of Belle Haven child care services.

them with their homework," said Marcia Dore-Perez, a resident of East Palo Alto with a child in the program. "Our children know Vanessa, and Vanessa knows them. If Vanessa leaves, this program is effectively done, and the parents lose their biggest advocate."

Ms. Dore-Perez, who organized opposition to a proposal last January to cut the budget and change the child care program to a less-structured "drop-in recreation" program, is leading the charge to keep Ms. Carlisle in Belle Haven.

"What [the city] tried to do last year through budget cuts, they're trying to do again through personnel cuts," Ms. Dore-Perez said. "All we want is a promise of hands off Belle Haven programs, and we want that promise held."

## Belle Haven decisions

Ms. Dore-Perez met, Dec. 15, with 20 members of the Belle Haven community to discuss the transfer of Ms. Carlisle, and the consensus of the group was clear: The city continually fails to get input from those who use Belle Haven services before

making decisions that vastly impact the community.

"The city is always saying that they want Belle Haven to be part of the community, but the policies just don't support that," said Matt Henry at the meeting.

"The city just doesn't get it," said Dawn Platt. "Vanessa's the heart and soul of our after-school program, and without Vanessa, this program's just going to die."

Councilman Andy Cohen, who often publicly advocates for Belle Haven programs, attended the community meeting, and said he would "fight for [Ms. Carlisle], no matter what," and plans on bringing up the issue at a future council meeting.

Council members Richard Cline and Heyward Robinson said there are questions surrounding the decision to pull Ms. Carlisle from the Belle Haven program, but both noted that personnel decisions are ultimately up to Mr. Boesch.

Community Services Director Barbara George and Senior Recreation Supervisor Michael Taylor were also contacted for this story, but deferred all questions to Mr. Boesch. ■

## New drop-off spots for donations, recycling

Drop-off spots for Goodwill donations and recyclable bottles and cans outside the Safeway on El Camino Real in Menlo Park will close, as the grocery store is being remodeled.

Local donations to Goodwill can be taken to the rear entrance of the Goodwill store at 711 Santa Cruz Ave. Goodwill accepts clothes, household items and electronics from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. For more information, call 324-9380.

The bottle and can recycling center will also be closed during construction. Recyclables can be redeemed for cash at the recycling center at El Camino Real

■ **MENLO WATCH**

For news updates, check [AlmanacNews.com](http://AlmanacNews.com), where you can also post news and views in Town Square.

and Fifth Street, in Redwood City, outside Chavez Market. For more information, go to [BottlesAndCans.com](http://BottlesAndCans.com).

## City closed, meetings canceled

The Menlo Park city business offices in the Civic Center and Onetta Harris Community Center

will be closed Dec. 22 to Jan. 1.

To view the holiday hours for other city facilities, go to [MenloPark.org](http://MenloPark.org).

The City Council will not meet Dec. 26 and Jan. 2.

## Relaxed parking

The city has relaxed parking restrictions for the downtown area, as it does each year during the holiday shopping season.

Through Monday, Jan. 2, police won't ticket cars that are parked downtown beyond the one and two-hour limits.

All other parking restrictions will be enforced, police say.

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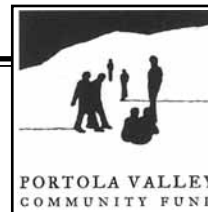


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# M-A theater supporters beat up Atherton council over lawsuit

■ They say lawsuit makes the town look “like a bunch of rich bullies.”

By **Andrea Gemmet**

Almanac Staff Writer

A group of Menlo-Atherton High School supporters, upset over the lawsuit Atherton filed last month against the school's performing arts center project, gave the Atherton City Council a tongue-lashing at its Dec. 13 meeting.

Several council members took pains to assure the crowd that they support building the new performing arts center on M-A's campus in Atherton.

Mayor Alan Carlson and Councilwoman Kathy McKeithen blamed the Sequoia Union High School District's board of trustees for halting negotiations and essentially forcing the town to file a lawsuit in order to protect its residents, some of whom are concerned about noise, traffic and parking problems from evening use of the theater.

Despite the legal challenge, Mayor Carlson said that Atherton recently reinitiated three-party negotiations with the district and Menlo Park, and that he was confident a compromise could be reached.

Those assertions fell on deaf ears, however, as project supporters, mostly Atherton residents, accused the council of making the town look “like a bunch of rich bullies,” and of trying to derail the performing arts center project to appease a few residents who live near the high school.

“Listen to the majority, and drop this lawsuit,” Atherton resident Susan Mohr told the council, saying that a vocal minority of Menlo-Atherton neighbors had too much pull over the Atherton council.

“I was embarrassed by the town's position. The town seems to have an early 20th-century view of children and teenagers — they should be seen and not heard,” said Lindenwood resident Nancy Sterling.

The legal challenge started when the school district ended a

“tolling” agreement with Atherton that stopped the clock on legal proceedings while negotiations went on among Atherton, the school district and the city of Menlo Park. Menlo Park is partially funding the performing arts center project in exchange for the right to use it. The district unexpectedly ended the tolling agreement in November.

“The effect of the district pulling that agreement was to require Atherton to file a lawsuit or lose all rights,” said Mayor Carlson. “If anyone's upset about the lawsuit, they should talk to the trustees of the (high school) district.”

Ms. McKeithen spoke about her years as a parent volunteer at Menlo-Atherton.

“I want you to have a performing arts center — so does every member of this council,” Ms. McKeithen said.

Key issues include environmental impacts from the project and how events would be regulated under Atherton's special events ordinance.

See **LAWSUIT**, page 11

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A charitable donation of the “Joy to the World” collection has been made to the Heifer Foundation in honor of these providers. For more information on the Heifer Foundation go to [www.heifer.org](http://www.heifer.org).

*Happy Holidays to All!*

# Alan Carlson named mayor

Councilman Alan Carlson was named the town's mayor for 2007 by fellow council members at their Dec. 13 meeting.

It is Mr. Carlson's second stint wielding the mayoral gavel — he served as mayor in 2002. The largely ceremonial position rotates among council members. They chose Jim Janz as vice mayor.

Outgoing Mayor Charles Marsala thanked his colleagues, outlined the council's accomplishments in the past year, and stressed the need for a new Atherton police station.

## Council OKs more code enforcement

The Atherton City Council on Dec. 13 voted unanimously to continue a pilot code enforcement program to respond to

### ATHERTON

residents' complaints. Robert Cushing of CSG Consultants Inc. will provide the town with one day a week of code-enforcement work for the next six months, at a cost of \$22,000.

Code-enforcement complaints range from problems with construction-site parking to barking dogs.

Councilwoman Kathy McK-eithen praised Mr. Cushing's noncombative style.

"All these years I've had code-enforcement complaints — I've gotten calls three, four, five times a week," said Ms. McK-eithen. "Now people are calling me to tell me how well an issue has been resolved. I've heard good things this week alone from six different residents."

## LAWSUIT

continued from page 10

"A lot has been said about how Atherton wants to shut down events at 9 p.m. — that's ridiculous, because it's not true," Mayor Carlson said, adding that all school and city of Menlo Park events are exempt from the 9 p.m. curfew.

"The discussion was about non-city of Menlo Park events. All we've asked is that Menlo Park ... not unilaterally change them without first getting Atherton's input."

Councilman Charles Marsala called for changes to the ordinance's school events guidelines.

"The school events guidelines are too restrictive," he said. ■



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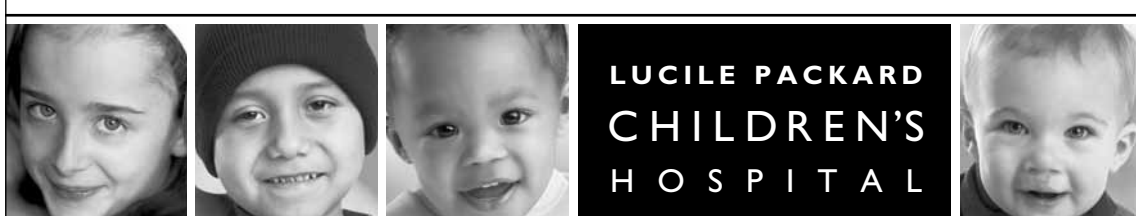
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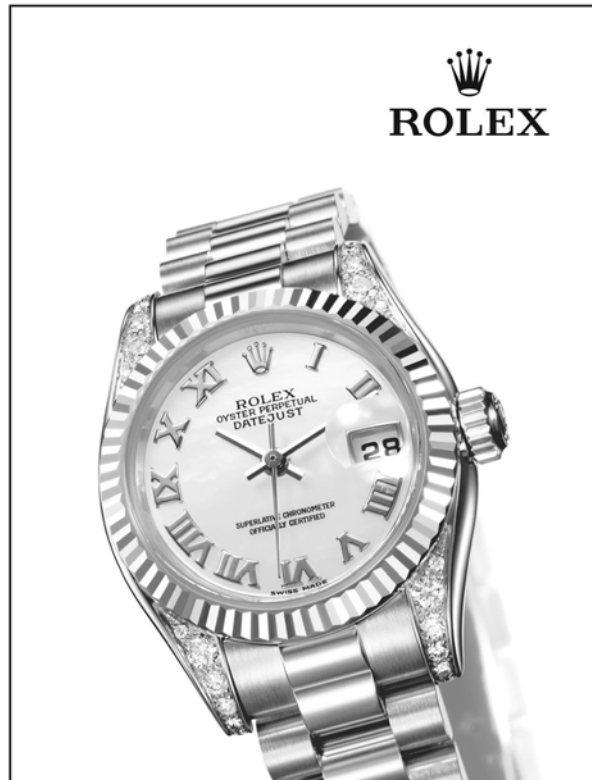
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  - Wednesday, January 24, 2007

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# Town acts to protect its trees

By Andrea Gemmet  
Almanac Staff Writer

It's been a long time coming, but the town of Woodside will have new tree protection rules in place in the new year.

"This has been an excruciating process," said Councilwoman Carroll Ann Hodges at the Dec. 12 council meeting, shortly before the tree ordinance passed on a 7-0 vote.

The new rules go into effect 30 days after the vote.

The new law:

- Requires property owners to get permits before removing a tree.
- Limits the circumstances when property owners can remove "significant" trees.
- Fines property owners who

## WOODSIDE

For news updates, check AlmanacNews.com, where you can also post news and view in Town Square.

remove trees without permits.

■ Protects some slow-growing native tree species by designating them as "significant" at a smaller trunk circumference than other types of trees.

At the meeting, the council fielded a request to exempt the fairways of the Menlo Country Club from the ordinance. Club representative Keith Simon said that the golf course's trees are often relocated or removed to enhance the playing experience.

But the council declined to reopen the lengthy and contentious negotiations that led up to setting rules that were agreeable to the council, town staff and members of the Woodside Conservation and Environmental Health Committee.

"I don't think we should make a change for the golf course," said Councilman Pete Sinclair. "I'm a homeowner, and I've got to ask for permission, so I don't feel bad that you have to ask for permission, too."

Several council members said they would consider amending the ordinance on behalf of the country club at a later date, but that they would not delay the adoption of the tree ordinance. ▀

# Boynton wins mayoral nod



Sue Boynton

Woodside Councilwoman Sue Boynton is the town's new mayor. At the Dec. 12 Town Council meeting, she was unanimously chosen by her colleagues to hold the honorary position and chair council meetings for the next year.

She's no stranger to the role, having wielded the mayoral gavel in 2003.

Councilman Ron Romines, a resident of the Woodside Glens neighborhood and the newest member of the council, was unanimously chosen to serve as

mayor pro tem. Every other council member has served as mayor at least once.

Ms. Boynton praised outgoing Mayor Deborah Gordon for her "critical thinking, negotiating skills and diplomacy," among other

things. She received a small metal statue of a bicyclist from town staff commemorating her outreach to the cycling community over the past year.

"I learned a lot from everyone on the council and in the town," Ms. Gordon said.

# Homeless vets programs win grants

The federal government is funding programs around the country to help military veterans, including in Menlo Park.

The Homeless Veterans Emergency Housing Facility, part of the Veterans Affairs hospital in Menlo Park, is set to receive two grants totaling \$42,000, said Kerri Childress, a spokeswoman for the Veterans Affairs Medical Center in Palo Alto.

The money, part of \$11.6 million from the U.S. Department of Veteran Affairs, will fund operating expenses for the homeless shelter's van and provide job training and referrals, along with counseling for substance abuse and mental health problems at Building 323-C at 795 Willow Road in Menlo Park.

Institutions receiving grants include public, private non-profit, and faith-based groups that operate programs to help homeless veterans.

Post your views and comments on TownSquare: [www.AlmanacNews.com](http://www.AlmanacNews.com)

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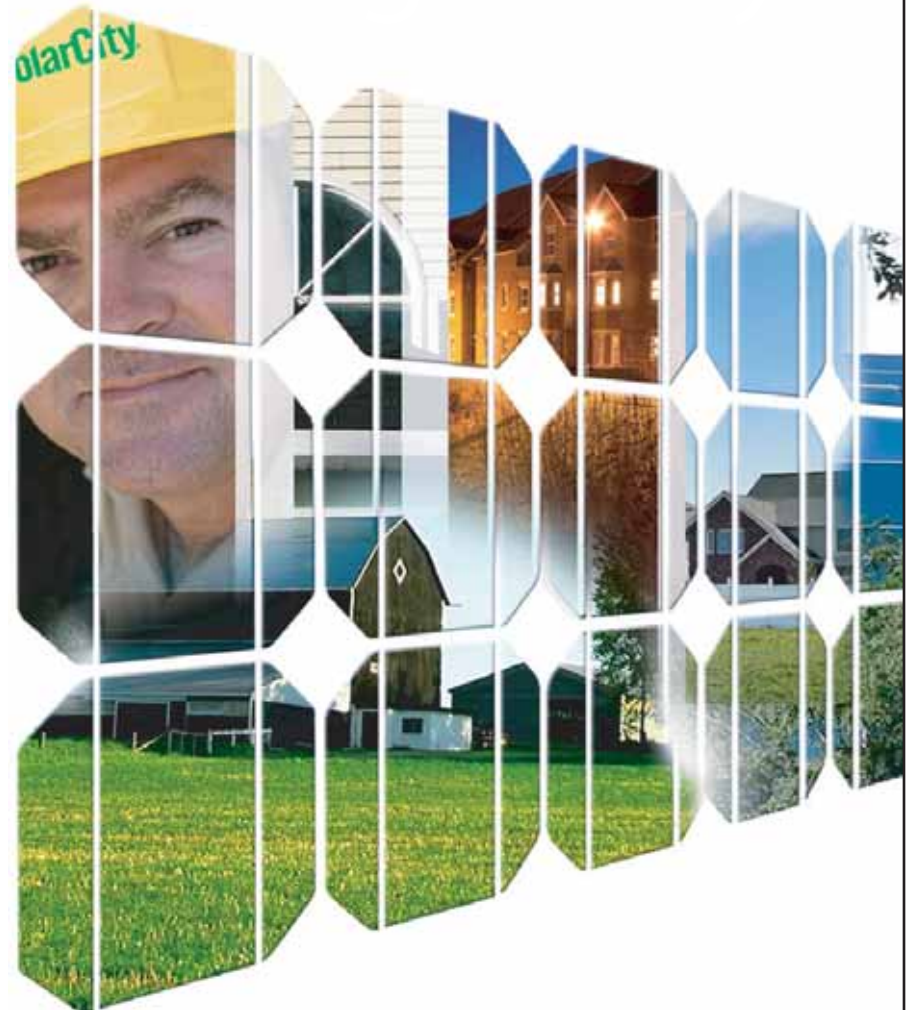
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Photos by **Marjan Sadoughi**

**COVER STORY**

# Seasonal delights

**T**he holiday season on the Midpeninsula doesn't look like anything imagined by Currier and Ives, but its subtle charms are no less festive.

What we lack in sleigh bells and snowflakes, we make up for in local traditions. Picking up a tree at Webb Ranch, bringing the kids to Burgess for breakfast with Santa, or playing dreidel with your brothers and sisters, all help make December a special time of the year.

For some, the Christmas season just wouldn't be the same without a stroll through Allied Arts or Filoli to admire the decorations. Maybe winter vacation means driving up to Tahoe and hitting the slopes, or maybe it's staying home and bask-

ing in the envy of out-of-town houseguests from colder climes. Channeling your inner lumberjack and chopping down a tree. Cookie baking, latke-making, shopping sprees and cider-swilling.

Addressing so many cards that your hand cramps. Decorating your house with tasteful restraint that would make Martha Stewart proud, or festooning the yard with so many lights that it can be seen from space. The smell of cinnamon and nutmeg, a bellyful of gingerbread men, singing carols in the car. The warm glow of a Christmas tree, a Hanukkah menorah or an Advent wreath can drive away the chill of cold, dark December days and send us gratefully into the New Year.

— Andrea Gemmet, Almanac staff writer



**Left-hand page, clockwise from top left:** Christmas trees at Webb Ranch are wrapped and ready to go; Zoya Bryner takes a break at the Christmas bazaar at the Menlo Park Russian Orthodox Church known as the Nativity of the Holy Virgin; Julie Nickson of the Peninsula Volunteers trims the tree at Little House; "Snowflake the elf" hands out candies during the Breakfast with Santa event at Burgess Recreation Center.

**Above, clockwise from top left:** Rabbi Yosef Levin lights the Hanukkah menorah; Father Innokenty swings an ornate censer at the Nativity of the Holy Virgin Russian Orthodox church; Sueta Richter lights a candle during a recitation of the Bible at Nativity of the Holy Virgin church; Rosemary Pia, left, gleans decorating tips from Sandy Gallagher at Allied Arts' traditional shop; playing dreidel are the Levin siblings, Menucha, Esther, Fraida and Yisroel.

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10:30 a.m. Holy Eucharist with Choir and Casavant Organ

**December 24, Christmas Eve**

5:00 p.m. Family Service for Children of All Ages  
10:00 p.m. Pre-Service Music: Charpentier’s *Midnight Mass*  
10:30 p.m. Choral Eucharist  
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# Holiday Fund



The Almanac/Marjan Sadoughi

**Ashayla Vickers** chats with her kindergarten friend during an after-school academic program at Flood School run by the Boys & Girls Clubs of the Peninsula.

## Holiday needs rise, but giving is sluggish — so far

By **Marion Softky**

*Almanac staff writer*

In San Mateo and Santa Clara counties — among the wealthiest in the country — Second Harvest Food Bank provided food for 162,000 people every month last (fiscal) year. That’s 4 percent more than the 156,000 people who needed charity food the year before.

With the cost of living — rent, gas, PG&E bills — going up faster than wages, “pay checks are being stretched thinner and thinner,” says Lynn Crocker, communications manager at the food bank.

The rising need for food provides a measure for the growing need for all kinds of services to poor and vulnerable people in our communities.

But donations are coming in slowly. So far Second Harvest has reached one-third of its financial goal for its holiday food drive. “We started off strong, but dropped off after Thanksgiving.”

Second Harvest Food Bank is one of 10 local charities that will benefit from people donating to Almanac’s Holiday Fund this year. Gifts are matched to the extent possible by generous donations of foundations, civic groups and individuals.

The 10 charities, which have been profiled over the last three weeks, help people with many

problems and few resources. More than just helping people with immediate problems — like homelessness or substance abuse or violence — they help people, especially children, solve their problems and build their lives.

Some of these charities have launched creative new programs. The new Opportunity Center in Palo Alto, run by InnVision, has built on the programs for the homeless and near-homeless developed by the Urban Ministry of Palo Alto and the Clara-Mateo Alliance in Menlo Park. New facilities include well-equipped drop-in centers for singles and families, a medical clinic, and 88 modern apartments for low-income clients.

On Dec. 14, the San Mateo County Board of Supervisors celebrated five years of progress by the Ravenswood Family Health Center in East Palo Alto. The party took place at the Belle Haven Clinic, which is taking on new levels of community medical care under the Ravenswood center.

“We’re not just about immunizations and pills,” said Executive Director Luisa Buada. “We’re about prevention, helping build more healthy lifestyles, better

eating. Our job is to keep people well and out of acute care.”

With 20 programs to support youth and families in stress, Youth and Family Enrichment Services is focusing attention on growing problems of methamphetamines, and helping foster kids make the transition to independent living.

“If you’re on meth, you’re not paying attention to the kids — which leads to abuse and neglect,” says Executive Director Bob Rybicki. “It destroys the mind; it’s a disease of the brain. It’s a huge issue for the county.”

At Ecumenical Hunger Program in East Palo Alto, Nevada Butler connects to the individuals who come for help; each one has a story.

“We’re seeing a lot of people out of work for various reasons,” she says. “It’s a tough year for a lot of people who have not had the experience of not having income.”

Supervisor Rose Jacobs Gibson agrees about the needs of the near-poor. “A lot of people who are still working have great needs,” she says. “The rent is going up faster than the income.”

“In the spirit of Christmas, I hope people will recognize there is a great need.” ■



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## Holiday Fund donors

As of Dec. 14, 2006

**Anonymous (26 gifts).....\$12,795**

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**In honor of:**

- Jean & Bill Lane for volunteers and the unfortunate
- Phyllis Quilter for Frank N. Blum, EE & Adm. J.F. Quilter, USN
- Susan Bryan & Frank Adams for Helen G. Elliott
- Anne & Stephen Galli for Louise & Wayne Dalton
- Kathy & Doug Stevens for Nancy Stevens
- Shirley & John Reiter for the loyal volunteers at the Palo Alto Food Closet

**In memory of:**

- Anonymous for Jerry Crowley
- Anonymous for Charles H. Holmes
- Anonymous for Marlene Kron
- John Barbour for Richard H. Barbour
- John Giovanzana for Mary Giovanzana
- Carolyn & Colon Gulledge for Esther Johnson
- Catie & Dennis O'Leary for Margaret Collins
- Jo Ann Rogers for James H. Rogers
- C. Sauer for Lucile Roberts
- Valerie & Keith Van Sickle for E. Jerry Light & Kenneth Van Sickle
- Abby Wilder for Robert Homans & Fessenden Wilder
- Eli Yasek & Mike Fleice for Rufus, the Wonder Dog

**TOTALS: As of Dec. 14 2006, 81 donors have given \$48,730 to the Almanac's Holiday Fund.**

\* The asterisk designates that the donor did not want to publish the amount of the gift.

# Giving to the Holiday Fund

Your gift helps children and others in need



Contributions to the Holiday Fund will go directly to the programs that benefit Peninsula residents. Last year, Almanac readers contributed more than \$100,000, and with available matching grants, over \$150,000 was raised for 10 agencies that feed the hungry, house the homeless and provide numerous other services to those in need.

Contributions to the Holiday Fund will be

matched to the extent possible by generous community corporations, foundations and individuals, including the Rotary Club of Menlo Park, the David and Lucile Packard Foundation, and the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation. No administrative costs will be deducted from the gifts, which are tax-deductible as permitted by law.

All donations to the Holiday Fund will be shared equally among the 10 recipient agencies.

**This year, the following agencies will be supported by the Almanac's Holiday Fund:**

- **Boys & Girls Clubs of the Peninsula**  
Provides after-school academic support and activities for 2,600 young people, 6 to 18, at clubhouses in Menlo Park's Belle Haven neighborhood, East Palo Alto and Redwood City and offers programs at Flood and Belle Haven schools in Menlo Park and McNair School in East Palo Alto.
- **Ecumenical Hunger Program**  
Provides emergency food, clothing, household essentials, and sometimes financial assistance to families in need, regardless of religious preference, including Thanksgiving and Christmas baskets for more than 2,000 households.
- **Family Connections**  
Provides free pre-school programs for children from low-income families in Belle Haven, parts of Redwood City and East Palo Alto. Parents must be involved in the education program, which operates on the Belle Haven School campus and the Clara-Mateo Homeless Shelter in Menlo Park Monday-Saturday mornings.
- **Ravenswood Family Health Center**  
Provides primary medical and preventive health care for all ages at its clinics in Belle Haven and East Palo Alto. It also operates a mobile clinic at school sites. Of the 16,500 registered patients, most are low income and uninsured from the ethnically diverse East Palo Alto, Belle Haven, and North Fair Oaks area.
- **InnVision Peninsula Programs**  
Works with homeless and at-risk families and individuals to reach self-sufficient living. Services reach 6,000 via Opportunity Center of the Midpeninsula, Palo Alto Food Closet, Hotel de Zink Rotating Church Shelter, Breaking Bread Hot Meals, Clara-Mateo Alliance Shelter, and Elsa Segovia Center.
- **St. Anthony's Padua Dining Room**  
Serves hundreds of hot meals six days a week to people in need who walk through the doors. St. Anthony's, funded entirely by voluntary contributions, is the largest dining room for the needy between San Francisco and San Jose. It also offers emergency food and clothing assistance.
- **Second Harvest Food Bank**  
The largest collector and distributor of food on the Peninsula, Second Harvest Food Bank distributed 30 million pounds of food last year. It gathers donations from individuals and businesses and distributes food to some 162,000 people each month through more than 700 agencies and distribution sites in San Mateo and Santa Clara counties.
- **Shelter Network**  
Provides short-term shelter and transitional housing and services to more than 3,100 homeless people and children each year. Offers five programs for families and individuals to become self-sufficient and return to permanent housing.
- **Teen Pregnancy Prevention Coalition**  
Provides educational programs for youth and adults to help teens make healthy choices that will result in lower rates of teen pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases. Its "Teen Talk" program last year served 3,650 youth at 23 public school sites in the county.
- **Youth and Family Enrichment Services**  
Provides over 20 programs to help people who struggle with substance abuse, domestic violence, mental health, relationship and communications issues. The mission of YFES is to strengthen communities by empowering youth, families, and individuals to overcome challenges through counseling, education, and residential services.

Name of donor \_\_\_\_\_ Amount \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Street address \_\_\_\_\_

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I wish to designate my contribution as follows:

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**The Holiday Fund, The Almanac, 3525 Alameda de las Pulgas, Menlo Park, CA 94025**

**The foundations and companies named below provide major matching grants to the Holiday Fund.**



The David and Lucile Packard Foundation



The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation

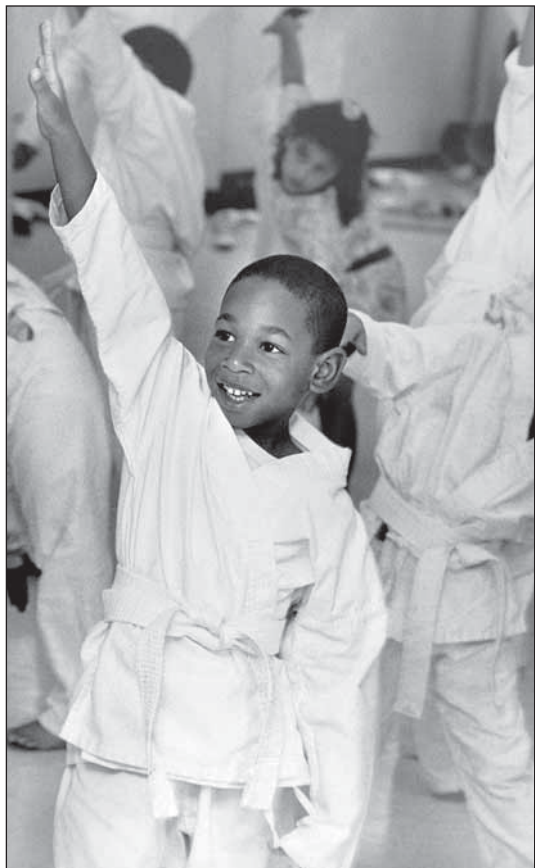


Rotary Club of Menlo Park

For more information about the Peninsula Community Foundation go to [www.pcf.org](http://www.pcf.org). The Almanac will make every effort to publish donor names for donations received before Dec. 31, 2006, unless the donor checks the anonymous box. All donations will be acknowledged by mail.

## Reach high

At the Boys & Girls Clubs of the Peninsula, some 2,600 kids, ages 6 to 18, participate in recreational and after-school academic support programs.





# PENINSULA Christmas Services

## ST. LUKE'S CHAPEL IN THE HILLS ANGLICAN

The 1928 Book of Common Prayer

### Sunday, December 24, CHRISTMAS EVE:

5pm Family Holy Communion Service  
10:00 pm Lessons and Carols  
11:15 pm Candlelight Holy Communion Service

Monday, December 25: 11:00 am  
- Holy Communion Service

26140 DUVAL WAY • LOS ALTOS HILLS  
(650) 941-6524 www.stlukeschapel.org



## Christmas at Grace Lutheran Church

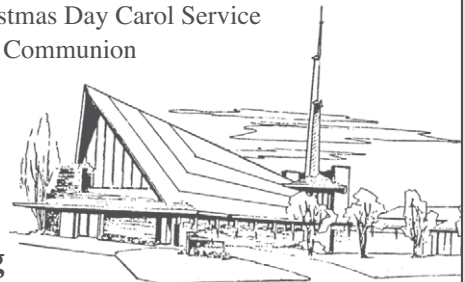
3149 Waverley Street, Palo Alto • 650.494.1212

### Sunday, December 24

10:00 A.M. Fourth Sunday in Advent with Communion  
4:00 P.M. Family Candlelight Service  
6:00 P.M. Choral Candlelight Service with Communion  
10:00 P.M. Candlelight Service with Communion

### Monday, December 25

10:00 A.M. Christmas Day Carol Service  
with Communion



www.gracepa.org

## Stanford Memorial Church

Christmas Eve and Christmas Day Services

### Sunday, December 24, 10:00 am

Christmas Eve University Public Worship

Sermon by the Rev. Joanne Sanders, Associate Dean for Religious Life

Music featuring a guest vocal quartet and University Organist Dr. Robert Huw Morgan

### Sunday, December 24, 5:00 pm

Christmas Eve Ecumenical Family Service

Children's sermon by the Rev. Joanne Sanders, Associate Dean for Religious Life

Includes carol-sing and musical offerings by University Organist Dr. Robert Huw Morgan

Please bring new, unwrapped toys or clothing as a gift offering to be distributed to needy children. (This is a popular service; please arrive early. Doors open at 4:15 pm)

### Sunday, December 24, 9:00 pm

Christmas Eve Festival Eucharist & Candle-lighting Service

Sermon by the Rev. Scotty McLennan, Dean for Religious Life

Music featuring Bay Brass and University Organist Dr. Robert Huw Morgan

### Sunday, December 24, Midnight

Catholic Christmas Eve Mass

### Monday, December 25, 10:30 am

Catholic Christmas Day Mass

For more information, please call 650-723-1762 or visit <http://religiouslife.stanford.edu>



## LOOK FORWARD TO CHRISTMAS WITH JOY

A JOURNEY THROUGH ADVENT AT LADERA COMMUNITY CHURCH

DEC. 3 9:30 A.M. WORSHIP SERVICE  
11:00 A.M. ADVENT FESTIVAL WITH  
SOUP LUNCH & HANGING OF THE GREENS  
(RSVP: 854-5481)

DEC. 10 9:30 A.M. WORSHIP SERVICE  
11:00 A.M. HOLIDAY CONCERT BY  
MTN. VIEW HIGH SCHOOL'S MADRIGALS  
12:30 P.M. MEAL-SERVING TO THE  
HOMELESS (SIGN UP WITH LINDA  
AT 851-1787)

DEC. 17 9:30 A.M. WORSHIP SERVICE FEATURING  
VIVALDI'S GLORIA. CHOIR AND  
ORCHESTRA DIRECTED BY MARK HANSON

DEC. 24 9:30 A.M. SCRIPTURE & HOLIDAY CAROLS  
5:00 P.M. CHILDREN'S CHRISTMAS PAGEANT  
9:00 P.M. COMMUNION SERVICE

### Ladera Community Church

3300 Alpine Rd., Portola Valley www.ladera.org

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speaking.

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SATURDAY, DECEMBER 23

6:30\* & 8:00 P.M.

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 24

5:00\*, 6:30, 8:00, 9:30 & 11:00 P.M.

\*SHEPHERD'S VILLAGE CHILD CARE AVAILABLE

Menlo Park Presbyterian Church  
950 Santa Cruz Avenue, Menlo Park  
650.323.8600 www.mppc.org





# PENINSULA Christmas Services

## INSPIRATIONS

A resource for special events and ongoing religious services. For more information call Blanca Yoc at 326-8210 x221 or email [byoc@paweb.com](mailto:byoc@paweb.com)

### St. Bede's Episcopal Church

2650 Sand Hill Road, Menlo Park, 854.6555  
[www.stbedesmenlopark.org](http://www.stbedesmenlopark.org)

*Celebrate the Season of  
Promise Fulfilled!*

#### **Sunday, December 24th - Christmas Eve**

4:00 p.m. Christmas Pageant and Holy Eucharist

10:00 p.m. Festal Choral Eucharist

#### **Monday, December 25th - Christmas Day**

9:00 a.m. Holy Eucharist with Carols, Rite I  
There will be no nursery care.

#### **Sunday, December 31st - New Year's Eve**

9:00 a.m. Holy Eucharist with Carols, Rite II  
There will be no nursery care.



### HOLY TRINITY EPISCOPAL CHURCH IN MENLO PARK

#### JOIN US FOR CHRISTMAS

##### Christmas Eve

9:30 am	Sunday Morning Eucharist
4:00 pm	Children's Christmas Story
6:00 pm	Candlelight & Carols Eucharist
9:30 pm	Christmas Carol Sing
10:00 pm	Festival Choral Eucharist

##### Christmas Day

9:00 am Christmas Day Eucharist

##### New Year's Day

8:00 am & 10:00 am services only

330 Ravenswood Ave., Menlo Park 326-2083  
(between El Camino Real and Middlefield Road)  
[www.trinitymenlopark.org](http://www.trinitymenlopark.org)

### BETHANY LUTHERAN CHURCH



*We yearn for the  
innocence, peace,  
and purity found  
at Christmas.*

**Join us on...**

#### CHRISTMAS EVE

**5:00 P.M. Families Christmas Service:** All children are encouraged to participate in the retelling of the Christmas story.

**8:00 P.M. Christmas Cantata "Once Upon A Night"** is performed by professional vocalists and musicians.

**11:00 P.M. Service of Carols & Candles:** Familiar Christmas carols and the glow of candles make this a special late night service.



1095 Cloud Ave., Menlo Park  
854-5897

## St. Denis Parish



*St. Denis Catholic Church*  
2250 Avey Avenue, Menlo Park

**CHRISTMAS EVE—4:00 & 6:00 PM**  
**CHRISTMAS DAY—7:30 & 10:30 AM**

## CHRISTMAS MASS

*Our Lady of the Wayside Catholic Church*  
930 Portola Road, Portola Valley



**CHRISTMAS EVE—5:30 & 9:30 PM**  
**CHRISTMAS DAY—9:30 AM**

*Merry Christmas*

[www.StDenisParish.org](http://www.StDenisParish.org)

# Norovirus appears under control

By David Boyce

Almanac Staff Writer

One more resident of The Sequoias retirement facility in Portola Valley came down with gastrointestinal illness over the weekend, but many have recovered from the weeklong outbreak attributed to the highly contagious norovirus, a spokeswoman said.

Of the 50 to 52 cases of illness among residents and staff at The Sequoias since Dec. 10, only eight or nine have yet to recover, said Susan Rotella, vice president of operations for Northern California Presbyterian Homes & Services, which operates The Sequoias.

"We feel confident that we're on the down side," she said.

Two Sequoias residents tested positive for norovirus. Most of the affected residents at The Sequoias were in the independent living section. Two cases occurred in the

medical care facility. Their symptoms were consistent with norovirus; they were treated as if they had it "so that we can be aggressive in intervening," Ms. Rotella said.

Over the week, the San Mateo County Health Department has been dealing with a norovirus outbreak at several health and residential care facilities in the area, including the county's San Mateo Medical Center and the Bonnie Brae Terrace retirement community in Belmont.

Health Department spokeswoman Beverly Thames would not confirm that The Sequoias was included in the list of affected facilities. Asked if two cases at a facility were enough to confirm an outbreak, she said that two is all an epidemiologist needs.

She echoed Ms. Rotella's optimistic view about the current outbreak. "We're hoping that we're done," she said.

Sequoias residents have been taking their meals in their rooms and community activities have been suspended during the outbreak. It is Sequoias policy, and a health department recommendation, to maintain such restrictions until 72 hours have passed with no new cases.

Norovirus is a highly contagious gastrointestinal illness that can cause diarrhea, cramps, headaches and vomiting. While there is no cure, the Centers for Disease Control recommends bed rest for 24 to 48 hours and liquids to replace those lost due to diarrhea and vomiting.

The CDC does not have data on the outcomes when norovirus strikes an elderly care facility, but is starting a program to ask state health departments to collect information, said Christine Pearson, a CDC spokeswoman. ■

# Student who brings pellet gun to Woodside High is suspended

A Woodside High School student has been suspended and is in Hillcrest Juvenile Facility in Belmont after an unloaded pellet gun that resembled a 9-mm semi-automatic handgun was found in his backpack Dec. 6.

Sheriff's deputies found the gun when the student, whose name is being withheld because he is a minor, was referred to the principal's office after being disrespectful in class, said Lt. Ken Jones of the San Mateo County Sheriff's Office.

Bringing a pellet gun — more powerful and dangerous than a BB gun — on campus is a felony, Lt. Jones said.

The backpack contained neither ammunition nor the compressed gas cylinder that makes the gun work. The student said a friend gave him the gun and that

he forgot it was in his backpack, Lt. Jones said.

Pellet guns are readily available at sporting goods stores and do not require a license for purchase, said police.

# Web savvy folks help county

A makeover estimated to cost \$35,000 is in the works for the Web site of San Mateo County's Human Services Agency, thanks to a grant from the San Francisco-based Taproot Foundation, which offers volunteer services from business professionals with an interest in helping nonprofit and governmental organizations.

The 60-year-old Human Services Agency serves some 8,000 people and families in the county.

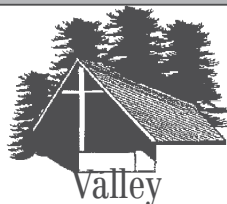


## PENINSULA Christmas Services

### Christmas Eve Services Sunday, December 24

Worship Service with Carols .....10:25 am  
Children's Pageant .....6:00 pm  
Organ Christmas Music .....10:40 pm  
Candlelight and Carol Service .....11:00 pm

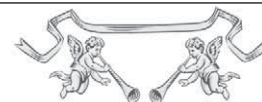
**First United Methodist Church of Palo Alto** 625 Hamilton Ave.  
Palo Alto, CA 94301  
650-323-6167 www.firstpaloalto.com



### Valley Presbyterian Church

945 Portola Road  
Portola Valley, CA  
650-851-8282  
www.valleypreschurch.org

Sunday worship:  
10:30 am  
Christmas Eve Services:  
10:30 am - Family Service  
5:00 pm - Family Candlelight Service  
10:00 pm - Lessons and Carols  
Candlelight Service



### Come & Celebrate Christmas Eve at Christ Episcopal Church

815 Portola Road, Portola Valley, CA 94028  
650-851-0224

*Kinder Service 3:00 p.m.*

*Features Christmas carols, children's sermon  
(for Children 6 years and under)*

*Choral Eucharist 5:00 p.m.*

*A joyous traditional service featuring adult choir*

*Christmas Day*

*Holy Eucharist 10 a.m.*



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### UNITY PALO ALTO

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Wednesday, Dec. 20, 7:30 pm  
Sunday, Dec. 24, 5:00 pm  
Sunday, Dec. 24, 8:00 pm

Services Sunday at 8:45 and 11 am  
Except Sunday, Dec. 24, one service, 11 am  
Childcare and youth programs available.

3391 Middlefield Rd.  
650-494-7222  
www.UnityPaloAlto.org



### ST. MARK'S EPISCOPAL CHURCH

#### CHRISTMAS EVE

❖ 4:00 pm *Children's  
Christmas Pageant  
& Eucharist*  
(childcare available)

❖ 10:00 pm *Festive Choral  
Christmas Eve  
Eucharist*

#### CHRISTMAS DAY

❖ 10:00 am *Holy Eucharist  
with Carols*

600 Colorado Ave., P.A.  
(650) 326-3800

### Christ Episcopal Church

*Nurturing Minds and Hearts*

Come grow with us

#### Christmas Eve Services

Christmas Pageant 5:00 pm  
Holy Eucharist 9:00 pm

Please call (650) 948-2151 or visit www.ccla.us for details

1040 Border Rd, Los Altos (650) 948-2151

# School board may buy church site to house Summit charter school

Members of the Sequoia Union High School District board are poised this week to authorize spending \$5.9 million in bond funds to buy a church in Redwood City that the district hopes to tear down to make room for Summit charter high school.

Although the matter has never been discussed at a public meeting, the school board will be asked to approve the purchase of the church and the 66,000 square feet of land it sits on at its Dec. 20 meeting.

The action is on the agenda's consent calendar, meaning that the board can act without comment — from either the board or the public.

Currently, Summit Preparatory Charter High School is located in 17 portable buildings installed over the summer on the tennis courts on the campus of Sequoia High School in Redwood City.

The Baptist church is located on two contiguous plots at 414 Fourth Ave. and 435 Fifth Ave. The two church buildings probably don't meet state standards for schools, but the portable buildings now being used by Summit could be moved there if the lots were cleared

of existing buildings, said assistant superintendent Ed LaVigne, the district's financial officer.

"We think that this residential area would be a great place for a small school like Summit," Mr.

LaVigne said. "We have been looking for a home for Summit for a long, long time."

The trustees meet at 5:30 p.m. in the Birch Room at 480 James Ave. in Redwood City.

## NEWS BRIEFS

### Atherton holiday closures

The town of Atherton's administrative offices and branch post office will be closed Monday Dec. 25 and Monday, Jan. 1, for the Christmas Day and New Year's Day holidays. Call 752-0500.

### Woodside holiday closures

Woodside Town Hall will be closed the week of Dec. 25 and will reopen Jan. 2. Call 851-6790.

### Caltrain holiday schedule

Caltrain will operate on a Sunday schedule on Christmas Eve, Christmas Day, New Year's Eve, and New Year's Day.

On New Year's Eve, Caltrain will offer free rides after 11 p.m. to encourage partygoers to use the train as their designated driver. It will also add three post-midnight southbound trains to its regular holiday schedule. The trains will leave San Francisco at 12:45 a.m., 1:30 a.m. and 2 a.m., making all local weekend stops.

For more information, go to [www.caltrain.com](http://www.caltrain.com).

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8 - 10 AM  
Families visit with Santa over a hearty breakfast buffet and Santa's helpers lead you in Christmas carols. \$14.95 per person

**TEDDY BEAR TEA** December 2, 9, & 16  
3 - 5 PM  
Pianist and storyteller Liz Cirone entertains while guests enjoy finger sandwiches and holiday sweets. Children are encouraged to bring their favorite teddy bear. Adults: \$28, Children (10 & under): \$15

**CHRISTMAS DINNER BUFFET** December 25  
11 AM - 6 PM  
Adults: \$65, Children (5-12): \$30

**NEW YEARS EVE** December 31  
5:30 - 10 PM  
Four Course Prix-Fixe Menu  
\$80 per person, \$100 for Lobster Entree

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# HOLIDAY EVENTS

## "Merry Art at Main"

Holiday show features contemporary art and fine crafts by 23 artists. Through Dec. 23. Holiday hours: Mon.-Fri., 11 a.m.-4 p.m.; Sat.-Sun., 10 a.m.-3 p.m.. The Main Gallery, 1018 Main St., Redwood City. [www.themain-gallery.org](http://www.themain-gallery.org)

## "Bethlehem A.D."

The annual live nativity Dec. 21-23, 6-9:30 p.m. Attractions include two baby camels, a miniature horse and more. Visitors walk through the living re-creation of Bethlehem on the first two nights and a drive through option begins on the third night. Free. Peninsula Christian Center, 1305 Middlefield Road, Redwood City. Call 366-8212. [www.bethlehemad.com](http://www.bethlehemad.com)

## Stanford Symphony Orchestra

Jindong Cai, director Dec. 23, 8 p.m. The orchestra features pianist Aaron Kofman, winner of the Concerto Competition, in Ravel's Piano Concerto for the Left Hand, and the Stravinsky classic Rite of Spring. \$10/\$5. Dinkelspiel Auditorium, 471 Lagunita Dr., Stanford. Call 723-2720. <http://music.stanford.edu>

## Children's Holiday Tea

Ages 6 and up accompanied by an adult. Entertainment includes the "Merry, Merry Christmas" show. Dec. 20, 1-2:30 p.m. \$15. Gamble Garden, 1431 Waverley St., Palo Alto. Call 329-1356 ext. 0. <http://gamblegarden.org/>

## Christmas Caroling and Chili Supper

Go Christmas caroling to retirement centers; chili supper after. Families and children welcome. Dec. 21, 5:45 p.m. Optional donation. First Baptist Church, 305 N. California Ave, Palo Alto. [www.firstbaptist-paloalto.org](http://www.firstbaptist-paloalto.org)

## "Keep the Yuletide Gay"

Presented by Theatre Q. Christmas comedy by Dale Albright. Through Dec. 30. Thu.-Sat., 8 p.m.; Sun., 2 p.m. \$10 previews/\$25 opening night/\$20 regular/\$15 seniors. Dragon Theatre, 535 Alma St., Palo Alto. [www.theatreq.org](http://www.theatreq.org)

## Children's Christmas Pageant

Sun., Dec. 24, 5 p.m. Ladera Community Church, 3300 Alpine Road, Portola Valley. [www.ladera.org](http://www.ladera.org)

## Christmas Eve Candlelight Service

Sun., Dec. 24, 6 p.m. Sing and hear the Christmas story in celebration of Jesus' birth. Free. First Baptist Church, 1100 Middle Ave., Menlo Park. Call 323-8544. [www.firstbaptist.com](http://www.firstbaptist.com)

## Seniors Holiday Party Luncheon

For seniors 60 years and older. Call 322-3742 for reservations. Lunch served starting at 11:15 a.m. \$2 contribution suggested. La Comida, 450 Bryant St., Palo Alto. Call 322-3742. <http://avenidas.org>

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Here are some sure-fire suggestions:

### Pecan puffs

(The Harried Hostess Cookbook)

- 1 cup butter
- 1/2 cup sugar
- 2 cups flour
- 2 teaspoon vanilla
- 2 cups finely chopped pecans

Combine all ingredients and mix well. Roll dough into 1-inch balls and place on cookie sheets. Bake a 300 degrees for 15-20 minutes. Roll in powdered sugar while warm. Makes 4 dozen.

### Gift coffee cake

(The Harried Hostess Cookbook)

- 1 pkg. yellow cake mix
- 1/4 cup butter (cold)
- 1 cup brown sugar
- 3/4 cup chopped walnuts
- 3 eggs
- 1 1/2 cups sour cream

#### Topping

Process 2/3 cup of cake mix with the cold butter until crumbly. Mix in sugar and walnuts by hand. Set aside.

#### Cake

In another bowl, beat eggs. Stir in sour cream. Blend in remaining cake mix.

Pour half of the cake batter into 2 greased and floured loaf pans. Sprinkle with half the topping. Repeat. Bake at 350 degrees for 40-45 minutes. Makes 2 coffee cakes. Freezes well.

### Toffee bars

- 1 cup butter
- 1 cup brown sugar
- 1 egg yolk
- 1 teaspoon vanilla
- 2 cups sifted flour
- 1 cup semisweet chocolate bits
- 1 cup chopped walnuts

Cream butter, sugar, egg and vanilla. Add flour, mix well. Stir in chocolate bits and nuts. Pat into ungreased 9-inch by 12-inch pan. Bake at 350 degrees for 18 to 20 minutes. Cut into bars while warm. Cool.

### No-fail mocha nut fudge

- 1 jar (7-1/2 ounce) marshmallow creme
- 1 cup sugar
- 2/3 cup evaporated milk
- 1/2 stick butter
- 3 tablespoons instant coffee powder
- 1/4 teaspoon salt
- 1 package (12 ounce) semisweet chocolate bits
- 1 cup chopped walnuts

Combine marshmallow creme, sugar, evaporated milk, butter, coffee powder and salt in medium-size saucepan. Bring to a full boil. Boil five minutes over medium heat, stirring constantly. Remove from heat.

Add chocolate bits, stirring until chocolate is melted and smooth. Stir in 1/2 cup nuts. Pour into foil-lined 9-inch square baking pan. Top with remaining nuts.

Chill for at least two hours or until firm. Cut into squares. Cover tightly and store in refrigerator.

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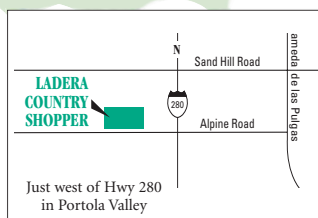
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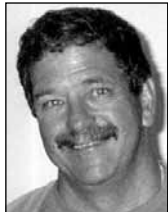


## OBITUARIES

### John 'Jack' Philip Fleming

Career in finance, friend to many

A Memorial Mass for John "Jack" Philip Fleming of Portola Valley was held at Santa Clara Mission on Dec. 9 with more than 1,000 family members, friends and associates attending.



Jack Fleming

Mr. Fleming, 55, died at Stanford Hospital on Dec. 6 after complications following a massive heart attack. His immediate family was at his bedside with his brother Monsignor Terry Fleming as they celebrated Mass.

Jack Fleming began his career in finance as a tax attorney at Deloitte, Haskin & Sells after graduating from Santa Clara University in 1973 with a bachelor's degree in business and a law degree from Santa Clara Law School in 1976. His career continued with growing Silicon Valley firms: Intel, Convergent Technologies, Unisys, and Linear Technologies.

He served as Linear Technologies' international controller and legal counsel at the time he retired in 2001 to spend more time with his family and pursue his volunteer interests in the community.

Monsignor Fleming described his brother during the service in Santa Clara as "a man of great faith who had an economy of religion."

Anyone looking at Jack's resume, he said, might conclude

he couldn't hold a job, but the reality was that head-hunters sought his expertise in finance and management for ever-more challenging positions.

"Jack was seen on a daily basis, walking in the hills of Portola Valley with his dogs and a big smile for everyone he met," said his wife Chrsi. The last word he spoke to his family members was "Smile."

"He always will be remembered and cherished in the hearts of everyone who knew him," said Chrsi Fleming.

They met when he was serving on the board of directors of the Santa Clara University Alumni Association and were married in 1981. The Flemings moved a year later to Portola Valley, where they raised their three children, Colin, Molly and Brendan.

Mr. Fleming was president-elect of the Santa Clara University Alumni Association, vice president and treasurer of Alpine Hills Tennis and Swimming Club, and a volunteer at Sacred Heart Nativity School in San Jose.

He is survived by his wife Chrsi, children, Colin, Molly and Brendan; and two enormous and loving families, the Smith family of Los Angeles and the Fleming family of Ohio.

A second Memorial Mass was held Dec. 12 at Monsignor Fleming's parish, St. Brendan, in Los Angeles.

Remembrances in honor of Jack Fleming may be made to: Santa Clara University Alumni House or Sacred Heart Nativity School, both at 500 El Camino Real, Santa Clara, CA 95053.

### Angeline Delagnes

101-year-old resident of Menlo Park

Angeline Marie Delmas Delagnes, a native Californian who lived in Menlo Park for the past 64 years, died peacefully at her home on Dec. 11. She was 101.



Angeline Delagnes

Ms. Delagnes was born in Oakland to parents who emigrated from Agnac, France. She graduated from Oakland High School in 1923. She was married to Gaston Delagnes, who preceded her in death more than 56 years ago.

Ms. Delagnes had many interests. She spent years as a volunteer at the French Hospital in San Francisco and later at Stanford Medical Center. She was a champion lawn bowler at Palo Alto Greens for many years and a member of Little House in Menlo Park for 45 years. Last year she received an Acorn Award from Little House for surpassing the 100 mark.

Ms. Delagnes was an avid gardener who cultivated more than 100 varieties of roses and 48-year-old orchids that bloomed every year. She enjoyed playing bridge, backgammon and dominoes, say family members. Entertaining family and friends at her summer home at Lake Tahoe was a 50-year tradition.

Ms. Delagnes is survived by her son, Andre Delagnes of Atherton. She is also survived by four grandchildren, two step-grandchildren, 14 great-grandchildren and relatives in Paris and Agnac, France.

Services have been held. The family prefers that donations be made to Peninsula Volunteers, Inc./Little House, 800 Middle Ave., Menlo Park, CA 94025.

## OBITUARY POLICY

The Almanac publishes obituaries about people who lived in Atherton, Menlo Park, Portola Valley and Woodside, or played a prominent role in these communities. These obituaries are news stories, written by Almanac staff writers, based on information provided by mortuaries and family members. There is no charge. Due to space limits and other reasons, these stories may not include all the information a family wishes. Some families choose to write their own memorial announcements, and purchase space to publish them in the Almanac. For information about that, e-mail Blanca Yoc in the Advertising Department at byoc@paweekly.com, or call 326-8210, ext. 239.

## POLICE CALLS

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

### ATHERTON

**Burglary report:** Residence entered and fingerprints found but nothing taken, 300 block of Walsh Road, Dec. 10.

**Domestic violence report:** Woman taken to hospital with head lacerations after falling, first block of Cowell Lane, Dec. 13.

### MENLO PARK

**Robbery report:** Two boys arrested on assault charges and robbery of handheld video game and \$200 in cash, 1200 block of Carlton Avenue, Dec. 13.

**Assault with deadly weapon reports:**

■ Boy in custody after throwing two knives at mother's boyfriend, 1300 block of Willow Road, Dec. 10.

■ Man armed with knife arrested after assaulting mother and threatening brother, 200 block of Newbridge Street, Dec. 11.

**Auto burglary reports:**

■ Stereo stolen, 1500 block of San Antonio Street, Dec. 9.

■ CDs stolen and ignition damaged, 1200 block of Carlton Avenue, Dec. 9.

■ Stereo stolen, 800 block of Coleman Avenue, Dec. 10.

**Grand theft report:** Alcoholic beverages worth over \$750 stolen, 1000 block of University Drive, Dec. 12.

**Stolen vehicle reports:**

■ 1994 gray Honda Civic, 300 block of Laurel Avenue, Dec. 9.

■ Blue/yellow 2005 Husquavarna TC250 motorcycle, 600 block of Sharon Park Drive, Dec. 10.

■ White 1996 Acura TI, 1100 block of Willow Road, Dec. 12.

■ Black 1990 Toyota Camry, 800 block of Hamilton Avenue, Dec. 12.

**Fraud reports:**

■ Identity theft, 300 block of Middlefield Road, Dec. 8.

■ Attempt to cash stolen check, 400 block of Wisteria Drive, Dec. 12.

■ Unauthorized use of credit card, 600 block of Hamilton Avenue, Dec. 12.

### WOODSIDE

**Burglary report:** Several tools taken from unlocked vehicles, 3300 block of Tripp Road, Dec. 9.

**Stolen vehicle report:** 1984 white Ford Ranger, 700 block of Canada Road, Dec. 8.

### WEST MENLO PARK

**Theft report:** Laptop computer and case, sunglasses stolen from unlocked vehicle, 3000 block of Alameda de las Pulgas, Dec. 8.

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**Senior Staff Writers**

Marion Softky, Marjorie Mader

**Staff Writers** Andrea Gemmet,

David Boyce, Rory Brown

**Editorial Intern** Stephanie Cadora

**Contributors** Barbara Wood,

Bryan Wiggan, Kate Daly,

Bill Rayburn, Miles McMullin,

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**Special Sections Editors**

Carol Blitzer, Sue Dremann

**Photographer** Marjan Sadoughi

## Design & Production

**Design Director** Raul Perez

**Assistant Design Director**

Katie Cvitkovich

**Designers** Linda Atilano,

Gail Thoreson, Elise Eisenman,

Eric Kinnaird, Nancy Hwang,

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## Advertising

**Advertising Manager** Neal Fine

**Display Advertising Sales**

Roxanne Bates

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**Representative** Donna Berryhill

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## Advertising Services

**Coordinator** M.J. Hayden

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editor@AlmanacNews.com

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## WHAT'S YOUR VIEW?

All views must include a home address and contact phone number. Published letters will also appear on the Almanac Web site, www.AlmanacNews.com, and occasionally on the Almanac's Town Square forum.

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# Charter school deserves a break

Parents and supporters of Summit Prep must be wondering why the Sequoia high school district is so reluctant to issue a charter renewal to the remarkably successful charter school at the same time it is conducting a very public search to find the school a permanent home.

This bewildering conduct comes as the district takes over financial responsibility for Summit, at a cost of \$2.3 million a year (\$6,200 per student). The 375-student school is now located in portable classrooms on the Sequoia High School campus in Redwood City, after spending its first three years in a surplus bank building.

## EDITORIAL

The opinion of The Almanac

Summit's initial effort to get the long-term charter was rebuffed in May of this year, when the district gave it just two years, saying it needed time to conduct "due diligence" on the application. Among the conditions attached to the shorter charter was a ban on the popular legacy program that guaranteed seats for the children of early volunteers who gave 30 hours or more work to the school.

Other stipulations said the school's demographics should reflect trends in the district. The district is suspicious of Summit's successful test scores, questioning whether the student body represents the district's wide range of abilities, including the needs of special education students and English language learners.

These demands are a very real intrusion into Summit's operations, and according to Summit's attorney, have no justification in the state regulations governing charter schools.

Charter schools are established to provide an entirely different learning experience for students, especially those who would

get lost among the 2,000 or so students in huge district high schools. Many families prefer the intensely personal Summit approach, which makes sure teachers and counselors check-in often with students to ensure they are on track.

The Sequoia district certainly has the responsibility to hold the bar high for any school it charters; there is a lot of district money involved.

But that responsibility does not include the right to demand that Summit's student population echo the district's demographics, any more than the district would demand the right to approve what teachers are hired. The trustees should not forget that Summit is a "charter" school, which means that it operates under a very different set of guidelines.

The district has told Summit that it will not consider its charter renewal petition until August of next year. Supposedly, that would give the district time to assess the school's performance this school year. Summit officials and families say they need an earlier decision, so they will have time to appeal if the request is denied.

Given Summit's track record, we think the district should grant them the renewal they are seeking. The school recruits many of its students from minority and low-income households in the Redwood City area. The school consistently has many more applicants for its 100 seats than it can accommodate. Its standardized test scores of 863 and 851 have exceeded the district's 800 target in the last two years, an achievement of which the school is rightfully proud.

We hope the Sequoia district finds Summit a home soon, and that it backs up that commitment by giving the school a five-year charter along with it. After four years of high achievement, Summit deserves it.

## LETTERS

Our readers write

### Packs of cyclists need strict rules

Editor:

I read, with great concern, your article last week regarding a cyclist hurling a water bottle at an elderly woman on Portola Road.

Even more concerning was the explanation that he intended to hurl the bottle at a passing motorist. What is happening with bicyclists in our community? Have they forgotten that they are visitors?

They often disobey our traffic laws, run stop signs, travel three or four up (or more) on narrow roads and make it impossible for motorists to drive safely. And they feel it is OK to bring their crazy rage to our neighborhood while they conduct their exercise? It's shocking that the only comment from the president of the Alto Velo cycling club is that "he wasn't part of our club," as if he is not aware of the childish excesses, disrespect, and disregard for our community that the club exhibits every week.

Why doesn't the Palo Alto

See **LETTERS**, next page



Jac Audiffred Collection

## Our Regional Heritage

During the 1930s, the Woodside Inn was located at the corner of Woodside and Mountain Home roads, site of the present Roberts market. Members of the Neuman family purchased the inn and moved it to the rear of the site, clearing the way for their own store.

LETTERS

Continued from previous page

Cycling Club stay in Palo Alto if they can't show respect to other neighboring communities?

As a veteran marathon runner, these cyclists have attempted to run me down, shouted unnecessarily at me, spat at me, cursed at me, and generally disregarded my safety for their own. They have no decorum as visitors in our community, which, frankly, derives no benefit from them. I have run, for many years, in New York City, and received much better treatment, even from the taxi drivers.

I think it is time that regulations around bicycling be either introduced or enforced in Woodside to prevent this type of unacceptable conduct in our community. Why not disallow packs of more than four bicyclists at any time? Or ban them outright if they can't behave themselves. To paraphrase Winston Churchill, "This ridiculousness is something we should not up with put."

Woodside Town Hall, we look for you to help us here.

**Paul Smith**

Phillip Road, Woodside

**No need for more council members**

Editor:

The idea that adding two seats to the Menlo Park City Council will help achieve consensus is silly.

Two more people mean two more points of view, and two more obstacles to agreement. Unless, the idea is to load up the council with more no-growthers to augment the current no-growth majority, so it takes even more time to clear all of them out after their ideas fail yet again. The whole proposal is reminiscent of the Supreme Court packing scheme of years ago. It should be as soundly rejected.

**Brian Schar**

Laurel Avenue, Menlo Park

**Council needs to be cautious in union talks**

Editor:

More than one Menlo Park City Council member has counted on union support in his/her public aspirations, yet I believe they also realize the impact of city employee costs on our budget and, therefore, on our quality of life.

While city workers should never be paid poorly, have no health care nor lack retirement commensurate with their private peers, none of this seems to be genuinely at risk in the current negotiations.

What is at risk is our city's financial future, both in regard to current employee costs, and any commitments to future conditions or hiring that the union may request. Indeed, the council

# Time to think regionally, act locally

By **Emmett D. Carson**

In my first five weeks as CEO of the newly created Silicon Valley Community Foundation, I have been overwhelmed by the vibrancy and innovation taking place throughout our community.

People with ideas and energy are constantly finding new ways to collaborate with each other to form new ventures with the promise of making our lives easier, more efficient and more fulfilling. There appears to be a widespread understanding that the region's economic success depends in large part on the fortunes of the tech industry regardless of whether one works in that industry or their community is tied to that industry. Unfortunately, that same recognition of interconnectedness does not appear to have permeated the region's thinking about our charitable giving.

The energy, passion, innovation and desire to collaborate that characterize the region's approach to business development are not readily evident when one examines the charitable landscape. People in San Mateo and Santa Clara counties are generous; however, that generosity is often specialized around a very narrow area of interest and localized to a



Emmett D. Carson

particular community. When this occurs, the philanthropy takes place without a broader regional context that could enhance and strengthen a community's local work.

In other words, understanding regional trends and opportunities would better allow individuals to direct their charitable giving in ways that would strengthen their local communities. Collaborating with others throughout the region on common interests is far more likely to result in the same innovation and risk-taking that we see all around us in Silicon Valley. It would also help to interest all donors in all areas of the community as being worthy of their attention and support.

The issues of affordable housing and health care, inadequate public education, increasing traffic congestion and preserving open space cannot be solved without understanding the regional context in which local solutions will be implemented. In my first week, I was made aware of three entirely new and completely separate multi-city initiatives involving public schools in which the proponents had no knowledge of the other efforts and no easy way to find out about their existence.

The hope and aspiration of the new Silicon Valley Community Foundation is to become a place where regional strategies can be developed and local solutions tested, and where successful, replicated. We aspire to be a place where like-minded donors can share ideas,

find common cause and represent a new vanguard in bringing innovative solutions to myriad challenges facing our communities.

As you consider contributing to the Almanac's Holiday Fund and other worthwhile causes this holiday season, I ask that you take the time to consider how your gift will not only serve specific local needs but reinforce a larger strategy. If you'd like to learn more about how giving locally can also support the region as a whole, the community foundation as well as other organizations are certainly prepared to help.

Yes, this will take time and will require more than writing the check. It will, however, result in developing a new civic ethic in which our children and grandchildren will be the beneficiaries for decades to come. I recently read a bumper sticker that said that we all do better when we all do better.

Imagine what a difference we could make if we acted on that belief this holiday season.

*Peninsula Community Foundation and Community Foundation Silicon Valley are merging to become Silicon Valley Community Foundation — a catalyst for inspired philanthropy and community engagement serving all of San Mateo and Santa Clara counties. To learn more, visit [www.siliconvalleycf.org](http://www.siliconvalleycf.org).*

*Emmett D. Carson is president of the Silicon Valley Community Foundation.*



may find that the commitments made in the happy-go-lucky 1990s cannot be funded into the future.

When they are behind closed doors in Tuesday's negotiations, our council still represents 31,000 residents of Menlo Park, not just the 250 who are so powerfully represented in that room. This will be a far-reaching test of the freshman class.

**Henry L Riggs**  
Callie Lane, Menlo Park

**M-A parent embarrassed by district's behavior**

Editor:

I am a Menlo Park resident and the parent of two M-A students. I read your recent article and editorial about Atherton's lawsuit against the Sequoia Union High School District over the new performing arts center and it reinforced where my sympathies naturally lie, which is with M-A. Atherton's claims seemed frivolous. I decided to go to a meeting at M-A on Nov. 29 to learn more about how I might help the school and also to better understand the controversy.

Pat Gemma, superintendent of the Sequoia district, was the main speaker. He emphasized how important it was that M-A be a good neighbor to Atherton

and what steps it had taken to be just that.

But what I heard told a very different story: I left believing that M-A was acting arrogantly, the town bully, and the farthest thing from a good neighbor possible.

Two things struck me as, frankly, sickening evidence of M-A's arrogance. The first was related to Pop Warner football. The school has for many years allowed Pop Warner football extensive use of its athletic fields. Because my son played football at M-A, I am familiar with Pop Warner. It is a large, noisy group. It competes head to head with M-A's own programs for time on the fields and, if nothing else, creates a lot of traffic as the two groups transfer the fields.

I learned at the meeting that Pop Warner has for years begun a day-long round of football games on the M-A fields at 7 a.m., on Sundays. The games, of course, are accompanied by crowds, cheering, screaming, and a loud PA system and high-volume whistles. Atherton neighbors had complained, I think quite understandably — I

mean 7 a.m. on Sunday morning is early — and some compromises had been worked out (although they amounted to two days of football starting at 9 a.m., instead of one day, plus new whistles and muffled speakers).

But this is what shocked me. Superintendent Gemma unilaterally decided these compromises were sufficient and told Pop Warner to go ahead, that they need not deal with Atherton further on the issue; I believe he might have even said, "just ignore Atherton," but if he didn't, he certainly implied it.

After giving that approval, which he was at pains to stress was his legal right — in other words he didn't have to ask Pop Warner for any compromise in the first place and could have let Pop Warner continue — he then advised Atherton that he had unilaterally given Pop Warner the go-ahead.

The second thing that shocked me was how rudely a gentleman from Atherton was treated when he tried to speak and explain Atherton's point of view. Mr. Gemma just shut him down,

saying the meeting was not for the purpose of hearing that type of comment. I received notice of the meeting from the M-A parents' electronic newsletter. The notice did not say this is a meeting to rally the troops against Atherton; I believe it said something like "learn more about the lawsuit." I assumed when I went I was going to learn about the controversy. I was surprised that this gentleman was not allowed to speak, and I was embarrassed as a member of the M-A community at how he was treated.

In sum, I left feeling that Atherton was acting out of understandable frustration compounded by legal helplessness, and that M-A is a very difficult neighbor and is giving at most lip-service to being a "good neighbor." The school, I learned, is the top dog in terms of controlling the use of its facilities. Its neighbors really have no legal rights. But I certainly don't want the nearest neighbors of the school where I send my kids, the possible first responders in an emergency, to hate my kid's school. Menlo-Atherton should really think a little harder about the feelings of its neighbors and less about its own prerogatives.

**Mary Dumont**  
Cerro Manor, Menlo Park





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www.tomlemieux.com

T: 650 329 6645  
F: 650 329 7822



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