

**ATHERTON** family sues for right to live  
in new house. Page 5

# The Almanac

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

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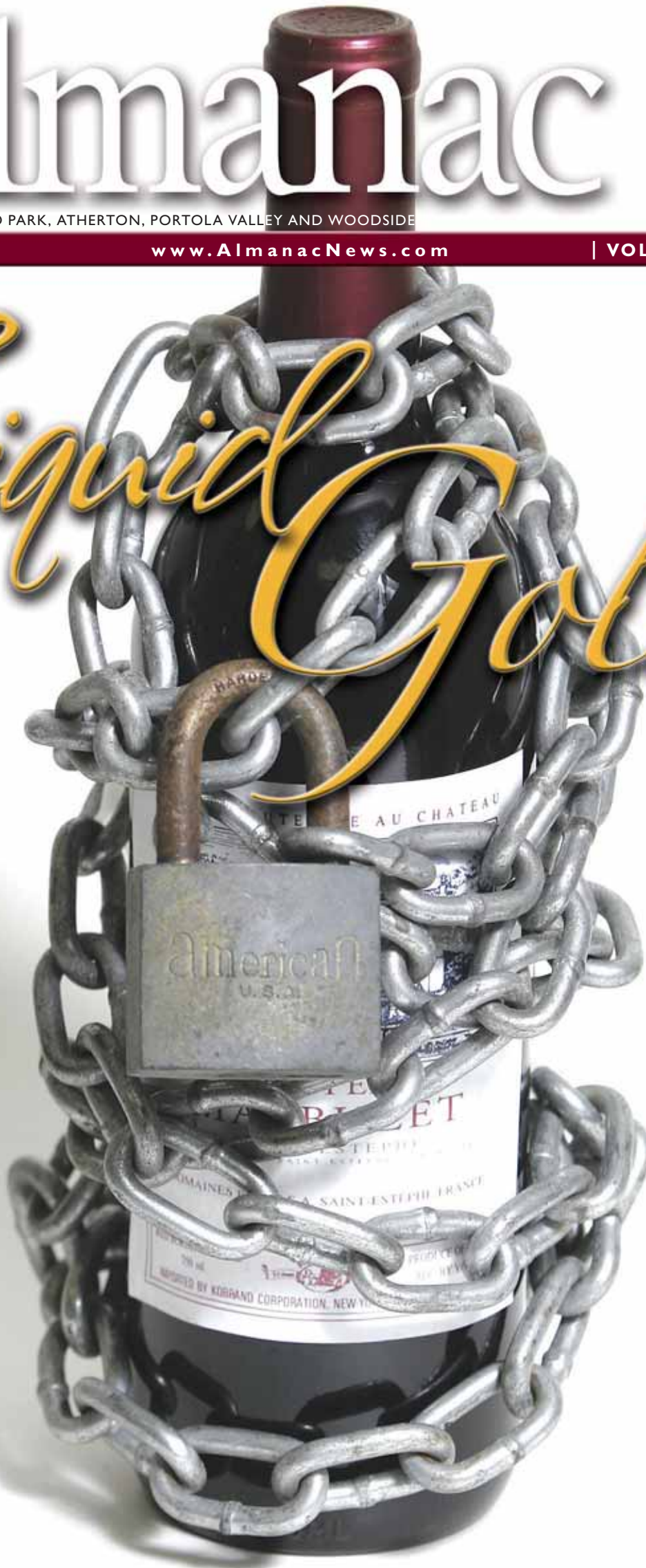
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| VOL. 42 NO. 30

## Liquid Gold

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— does anyone  
just drink  
wine anymore?*

*Page 14*



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# Inside

This week's news, features and community events.

## FIRST SHOT



Courtesy Dahlin Group

### Rooms with a view

Menlo Park developer David Bohannon is partnering with Marriott Hotels and Resorts to propose a seven-story, 206-room hotel near the intersection of Marsh Road and U.S. 101. If all goes well, the hotel could be up and running by 2009, Mr. Bohannon said. He presented this conceptual design to the Menlo Park City Council on March 20.

## Atherton

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- Couple sues to move historic urns to new home in same town. **Page 11**
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## On the cover

Is there anyone around here who isn't obsessed with wine? The Midpeninsula is a hotbed of wine connoisseurs and collectors, but in some cases, the fine wine is getting too valuable to drink. Photo illustration by Veronica Weber. Story begins on **Page 14**.

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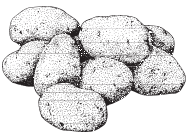
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# Local News

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## Atherton family sues to live in new house

By Andrea Gemmet

Almanac Staff Writer

Since they moved out of their old home in February, the King family has been moving every few days, bunking with friends and sleeping in hotels, while their newly built home in Atherton stands empty.

The Kings are suing the town of Atherton for the right to live in their new home, saying they were unfairly swept into the turmoil surrounding the town's building department. Their property was flagged as possibly having "irregularities" with its permits when the department was undergoing internal audits last year.

In October, when the new home was nearly complete, the town told the couple that it was stopping its inspections of the structure — the first indication the Kings had that there was a problem, they said. That notification essentially shut down the project.

"I feel like we've been caught in the middle of something," said Charlie King. "I've been spearheading this project, and I told my wife we would be in by Christmas. I told her, 'I really feel like I failed you.'"

The problem, according to town officials, is that the King family's home on a hillside property on Tallwood Court has a basement that protrudes too far above ground, and as a result, the two-story-plus-basement house is essentially a three-story house that exceeds the maximum size allowed.

Leslie King said they had wanted to avoid a lawsuit at all costs, but finally felt they had no other choice. The Kings are asking the court to force Atherton to conduct a final inspection and issue a cer-



Charlie and Leslie King fix breakfast for their kids, Evan, age 7, Grace, 5, and Will (seated), 11, at their temporary quarters in Leslie's parents' house in San Mateo. They are suing Atherton for the right to live in their newly built house on Tallwood Court.

tificate of occupancy so they can live in their new house.

"Their position is, they didn't intend to violate the law and if anything was missed, it's the fault of the town official who was checking the plans," explains Atherton City Attorney Marc Hynes. "Our position is, even if that were true, even if an official made a mistake, it doesn't give you the ability to obtain a violation of the zoning

ordinances. It's the community that suffers when there's a zoning code violation, and it shouldn't suffer because of an error in calculation."

Mr. King said they've had months of back and forth with city officials and thought they were close to a resolution when they received a nuisance abatement letter from Atherton on February 9 telling them they had 30 days to

resolve the problem.

"It's an unfixable problem. We'd have to tear the house down," he said. "Our position is that no judge in his right mind would require us to tear the house down."

According to Atherton's regulations, a basement cannot protrude more than two feet above ground or it is no longer considered a basement. Depending on the methodology used to calculate the average

natural grade—a calculation used to determine "ground-level" on hillside properties — the Kings' house is either a couple of inches or more than a foot higher than allowed, said Mr. Hynes.

In Atherton, basements are considered bonus square footage that is not counted against the maximum size of the house. If the

See **TALLWOOD**, page 23

## Proposed Oak Knoll School site plan raises neighbors' concerns

■ Some oppose a new parking lot that would replace a grassy play area.

By Marjorie Mader

Almanac Staff Writer

Plans to expand Menlo Park's Oak Knoll School by adding a multi-use building, a two-story classroom complex, a staff parking area and a large field raised concerns of neighbors and support from parents when conceptual plans were presented for the first time at a board meeting March 19.

About 50 people, mostly neigh-

bors, listened to the district's presentation, and focused the discussion quickly on the future of the grassy area at the front of the school, now used as a community playground. Under the plan, the grassy area would be replaced with a paved staff parking lot.

Other concerns revolved around traffic problems and the student drop-off and pick-up area.

The Menlo Park City School

District is developing plans for all four of its school sites to accommodate a projected enrollment boom.

Oak Knoll, which serves kindergartners through fifth-graders living west of El Camino Real, is situated on an 8.9-acre triangular site in a residential area bordered by Oak Knoll Lane, Oak Avenue and Vine Street.

The school opened in 1951 with 260 students, nine classrooms, a kindergarten and a multi-purpose room. Now there are 707 students, and enrollment is projected to increase to 725 students

when school opens Aug. 23.

Reorganization plans call for decreasing or "capping" Oak Knoll's enrollment at 680 to 690 students by increasing the capacity at Encinal School, which will expand from a grade 3-5 school to a K-5.

Over the years, more classrooms and 14 portable buildings have been added in a linear arrangement as enrollment has grown at Oak Knoll. The existing development limits options for expansion because it divides the site, leaving areas on either side of the existing classrooms for

development.

Portable classrooms will go away under the conceptual plan. This plan envisions a new, two-story multi-use building with a 10-classroom complex for fourth- and fifth-grades toward the front of the campus and set back from Oak Avenue. There would be an 85-foot buffer between the building and the street.

A staff parking lot with an entrance on Oak Avenue would be adjacent to the building. The parking lot would replace the

See **OAK KNOLL**, page 8



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## Shirley Martin plans to resign as Las Lomas district superintendent

■ The call to come “home” was too hard to resist, she says.

By David Boyce  
Almanac Staff Writer

Leaving one workplace for another can be a wrenching affair, particularly when you like where you are but feel compelled to go somewhere else.

“I think it’s all about going home,” said Shirley Martin, the recently appointed and soon-to-be-departing superintendent of the Las Lomas Elementary School District. “If it weren’t for Millbrae (School District), I would not go to any other district.

“I am so fortunate to have had the opportunity to be part of (the Las Lomas) district, to serve this district,” she told the Almanac last week after publicly announcing her resignation. “What a resource we have in our parents. ... I’ve made new friends and new acquaintances that will carry on.”

Ms. Martin said she notified the school board of her intent to resign on March 9.

On August 1, Ms. Martin will take over as superintendent in the Millbrae district, a group she was a part of for six years, “building programs there as a team.” The Millbrae team “was really a family unit working very closely together,” she said.

As director of instruction and curriculum, she left Millbrae last July to head the Las Lomas district, but now, that family has asked her to come back. Ms. Martin said she was not interviewed for the Millbrae superintendent’s position, nor did she face competition from other candidates. “I was pursued,” she admitted, wanting to be factual but not boastful.

During her remaining months with the Las Lomas district, Ms. Martin will be one of several district officials to interview candidates to replace retiring La Entrada Middle School Principal Dee Brummett.

### The tenure kerfuffle

In her eight months in the district, one notable incident involved a decision by the Board of Trust-

ees to reject a recommendation by Ms. Martin — in concert with La Entrada Middle School Assistant Principal Pattie Dullea and, at one point, Principal Brummett, Ms. Martin said — to deny tenure to Michael Dumbra, La Entrada’s Latin teacher and seventh-grade core teacher.

Without tenure, Mr. Dumbra would have been forced to leave La Entrada at the end of this school year. But La Entrada students, former students, parents and teachers rallied to his defense at a March 9 school board meeting, and in a unanimous decision, the board granted him tenure.

Asked about lingering aftereffects at La Entrada, Ms. Martin said she wasn’t aware of any.

*‘I think it’s all about going home,’ says Superintendent Shirley Martin.*



“I think the staff is moving forward from that situation,” she said. “I don’t see it as an ongoing situation. I have the utmost faith in the staff and their professionalism. ... They are focused on what’s best for the children and how they can work together to ensure they continue to have outstanding programs.”

### A bigger district

At Millbrae, Ms. Martin will replace Karen Philip, who, in January, was named deputy superintendent at the San Mateo County Office of Education, effective August 1.

The Millbrae district is bigger than the Las Lomas district. It has four elementary schools and one middle school; Las Lomas has one of each type of school.

Ms. Martin’s time at Las Lomas will add to a 36-year career in education that, in California, has included positions as middle school teacher, learning coordinator, acting principal and principal, she said.

She has a doctorate in institutional management from Pepperdine University; a master’s degree in education with an administrative credential from California State University, Fullerton; and a bachelor’s degree in education from the Oregon College of Education. She was an adjunct professor with La Jolla-based National University. ■

## Margaret Brush wins ‘achievement’ award

The SRI Organon Toastmasters Club recently honored Atherton resident Margaret Meier Brush with its “Communication and Achievement Award.”

Ms. Brush is president of the Children’s Health Council Auxiliary, a volunteer group that supports the coun-



Margaret Brush

cil’s work serving Bay Area children and their families coping with health and developmental challenges.

She has raised funds for the council since the early 1990s. “I believe in their values,” says Ms. Brush. “As a former teacher, I found that not every child fits easily into a

### PEOPLE

typical school environment for various reasons. The Children’s Health Council addresses the needs of those children.”

The club presents its award annually to a local leader who “uses communication skills to serve the community; advances a cause, idea or business; effects change; or improves the lives of others.”

## REAL ESTATE Q&A

by Gloria Darke



### Nobody’s business

**Q.** Dear Gloria, We recently purchased a home in this area. We were just transferred here from another state and my husband was due to start his job the first of April so we needed to get settled. There were so few homes to choose from that we ended up spending a lot more than we had intended. We would prefer to keep the price we paid for our property private but have been told by our realtor that it has to be published in your local multiple listings. I don’t consider this to be anyone’s business but ours. Why does that have to be made public and how can I prevent this from happening?

— Jane Harper, Menlo Park

**A.** Dear Jean, This has actually become quite an issue, not just in our board or in California but all over the U.S. I can’t speak for others boards but I can tell you that it is the rule of our Multiple Listing Service that if you use the service, and this is presumably how you found your home, that the sales price information belongs to the Multiple

Listing Service. If the price is withheld by the listing agent, who is responsible for the reporting, the agent is fined on a monthly basis and the Multiple listing service privileges are denied said agent until that price is disclosed. Even though it is your house and your seemingly private information, the listing information and sales information belongs to the board. I absolutely can see it from your point of view; however, your realtor and all of us have the ability not only to come up with a listing price for our clients who are putting their homes on the market, but to advise buyers like you as to what and why a property is worth based on comparable sales in the neighborhood. In addition, appraisers look to the MLS for sales information to appraise a property for a lender who is granting a loan to buyers like you.

Even though most people would not go to these lengths, the information is of public record at the county recorders office. So sorry to say, like most information any more, very little is private.

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



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Saturday, March 31<sup>st</sup>

10:00 am – 4:00 pm  
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10:00 am – 2:00 pm  
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Opening Night tickets are limited. Call 650.723.2997

All proceeds benefit the Art Acquisition Fund at the Cantor Arts Center at Stanford

[museum.stanford.edu/TM](http://museum.stanford.edu/TM)

# District discloses plans for Oak Knoll School

## OAK KNOLL

continued from page 5

grassy area at the front of the school that has been used as open space and a community playground after school hours.

The plan also calls for a large athletic play area in back, a revised student drop-off and pick-up area in front, and reconfigured parking with a total of 79 spaces — an increase of 13. Existing classrooms would be modernized and there would be extensive landscaping.

### Public reaction

Parent Mark Box credited the design team for doing a “great job.” He urged trustees to get the project started as fast as they can because “the kids already are here.”

“This has been an awakening process for me,” said Cherie Bogard, a neighbor on the Oak Knoll facility committee. “This is a pretty urban campus, and we’re in an urban area. There are trade-offs.”

Parent Jill Morgan said, “I hate the idea of paving over the front playground.” She suggested relocating the parking lot along Vine Street, saying that neighbors on Oak Avenue and Oak Knoll Lane will have to bear enough of a burden with the two-story building proposed for that section of the site.

Neighbor Ed Davila, who lives on Oak Knoll Lane, also spoke in support of keeping the grass field area — “a precious resource” for the community where parents bring their toddlers to play. Instead, he suggested that the district explore the option of using an easement (granted by Stanford University) along Vine Street as ingress and egress to the school so a parking lot could be built in back.

Parent Kurt Hafer, an Oak Avenue neighbor, said he was disturbed the district would turn a play area into a staff parking lot.

Menlo Park City Council member John Boyle asked the board to “enlighten us on what we can do or not do on Vine Street.”

After lengthy negotiations about 10 years ago, Stanford University granted the Menlo Park district an easement across its narrow strip of land between Vine Street and the Oak Knoll boundary. The district is responsible for landscaping and maintaining the easement. Part of the easement was to be used for ingress and egress to the staff parking lot that was developed off Vine Street as part of the 1995 facility bond measure. There was to be no other direct access to the school from Vine Street.

Superintendent Ken Ranella responded during the meeting that he would explore further the easement agreement with Stanford,

check with the former consultant for the earlier bond project, and clarify the details of the easement.

None of the current board members were on the school board during the time of the easement negotiations, and Mr. Ranella was not the district’s superintendent.

### Traffic/child care

“Traffic studies need to be done,” said parent Laurie Goldman, referring to the “hazardous environment” for kids walking and biking to school.

Superintendent Ken Ranella assured her that whatever the district plans, there will be traffic studies and an environmental review.

Kim Guthrie, a member of the Oak Knoll site design committee, said later that there was a small group of vocal neighbors who had strong feelings about keeping the front grassy play area and were willing to trade more parking space and a more efficient pick-up lane for keeping the play area. “We’re planning on the best way to operate our school,” she said.

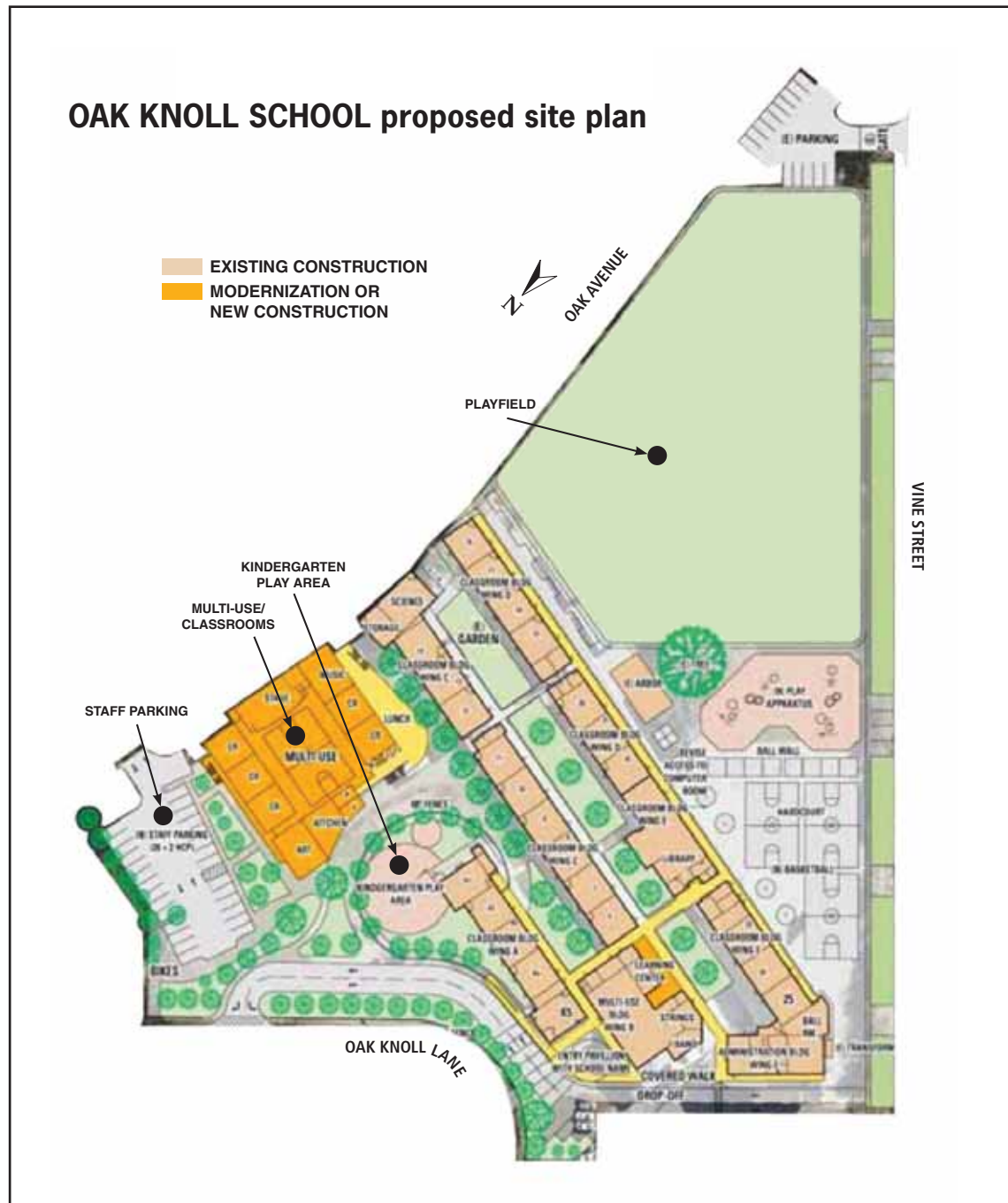
A few parents also raised the issue of the district providing on-site child care facilities. This topic is scheduled to be discussed at a Wednesday, April 4, board meeting, starting at 7 p.m. in the district office, Mr. Ranella said.

### Trustees’ comments

Trustees, after listening to public comment, discussed their views.

“I think the design plan the team has come up with makes the most use of the site” for students and the operation of school, said Trustee Laura Rich. She also is a member of the district’s facility committee. She suggested that the planners look at having different entrances for pedestrians and bicyclists. Along with the other trustees, she agreed the district needs a clearer understanding of the Vine Street easement.

Trustee Jeff Child said he was surprised that Oak Knoll neighbors wanted to decrease on-site



Schematic site plan/Deems Lewis McKinley

**Oak Knoll School** in Menlo Park will continue as a K-5 school with some major changes under the district’s reorganization plan. Key features: a new, two-story multi-use building connected to a two-story grade 4-5 complex with 10 new classrooms, and near a proposed staff parking area off Oak Avenue. The new staff parking area is opposed by Oak Knoll Lane and Oak Avenue neighbors because it would replace a grassy play area used by their children. The plan would result in a larger playfield in back, an improved student drop-off and pick-up area in front, modernization of existing buildings, and reconfigured parking with 13 more spaces.

parking, which, he said, is the opposite position taken by neighbors near Hillview Middle School.

During public meetings on the Hillview plan, neighbors said they wanted to get more traffic off the street and into lots at the school, and to improve the drop-off and pick-up area.

“We’ve got to improve the traffic flow,” said Trustee Bruce Ives. He suggested routing bicyclists off Oak Avenue and Oak Knoll Lane and onto safer streets, and encouraging “safer routes” to school for bikers and walkers.

Trustee Deborah Fitz said she wants the board to consider relocating some of the parking that is proposed near the front of the school and think through the traffic issue for pedestrian, bikers and cars.

“There are trade-offs,” said board President Terry Thygesen. “I want us to think long and hard about

maximizing the playing space.” She said she believes the larger playfield would be an important addition to the campus and would be used by students and the community.

“I don’t love the idea of putting down pavement for a tiny window of time in the morning and afternoon” for student drop-off and pick-up, she said.

## Oak Knoll plan not on April 4 agenda

Oak Knoll School’s proposed conceptual site plan for expanding facilities at the K-5 school in Menlo Park will not be on the agenda for the Wednesday, April 4, board meeting of the Menlo Park City School District.

Superintendent Ken Ranella said on Friday that more time is needed for the staff to further study the issues and analysis of the Oak Knoll plan.

“We need to circle back and review some of the ear-

lier options discussed” for Oak Knoll, he said.

Trustees face a full agenda at their April 4 meeting, which starts at 7 p.m. in the district office. They are likely to approve the preliminary plans for Encinal and Laurel school in order to move the master planning process forward.

Also on the agenda will be a discussion of the concept of providing child care facilities in the district in response to parents’ recent requests.

### ■ INFORMATION

For more information about Oak Knoll facility plans, go to [www.mpcsd.org](http://www.mpcsd.org). On the left, click on “Facility Development” and the sub-link “Primary Schools.” Then click on the “pdf” file link for the March 19 meeting. To send comments to the trustees, e-mail [board@mpcsd.org](mailto:board@mpcsd.org).

# SM County supes set to reject Stanford's Alpine Road trail

By Marion Softky  
Almanac Staff Writer

After more than a year of study and fierce local opposition, the San Mateo County Board of Supervisors appears ready to turn down Stanford's offer to finance a trail along Alpine Road — along with \$8.4 million Stanford offered to build what neighbors and opponents call the "Alpine Road sidewalk."

Supervisors Rich Gordon and Jerry Hill concluded in a four-page memo March 20: "It is not in the interest of San Mateo County and the region to accept this offer."

The full board will consider formally rejecting Stanford's proposed trail, and the money to pay for it, at its regular meeting Tuesday, March 27, at 10 a.m. at 400 County Center, at the corner of Bradford and Hamilton streets in Redwood City.

Stanford's offer to pay for a 16-foot multi-purpose trail in San Mateo County stems from its general use permit from Santa Clara County in 2000, which allowed Stanford to add almost 5,000 square feet of new building on campus. As mitigation, Stanford was required to build and maintain two recreational trails, one north and west of campus.

Rather than build the northwest trail on its own open lands, Stanford chose to plan it across San Francisco Creek in unincorporated San Mateo County and Portola Valley, from the Menlo Park border to Arastradero Road.

In rejecting the trail, supervisors Gordon and Hill cite the necessity of moving Alpine Road into the bank across from Stanford Weekend Acres to provide enough room for the proposed trail, and the massive work that would be necessary on the creek between Piers Lane and Ladera, where the stream comes within a few feet of the highway.

Instead, the supervisors recommend allowing the Stanford money to revert to Santa Clara County in hopes the county will establish a program of regional

grants to local agencies that can be used to mitigate the effects of Stanford's development.

The supervisors' action is totally independent from Portola Valley, which is planning a trail within its jurisdiction that would use \$2.83 million offered by Stanford.

Stanford spokesman Larry Horton said the university has no comment at this time. It is evaluating the memo and consulting with Santa Clara and San Mateo counties, he said.

## Reactions

"Thrilled and ecstatic" were the adjectives used by Ginger Holt of Stanford Weekend Acres, the old summer home community squeezed between Alpine Road and San Francisco Creek just past the Menlo Park boundary.

Residents of the 120 homes have been leaders in opposing the "sidewalk" for reasons of safety. They already face scary traffic getting out of half a dozen exits onto busy Alpine Road; they fear additional hazards involving hikers, bicyclists and even strollers if the trail is built.

"\$8.4 million for 1.6 miles is just outrageous," Ms. Holt said.

"This provides an opportunity to have more efficient use of funds and greater recreational impact."

The Committee for Green Foothills also welcomed the board's anticipated action. "Stanford tried to get out of its obligation to build a trail crossing its land ... by moving the trail to San Mateo County," wrote Executive Director Holly Van Houten. "This sidewalk is not wanted by the community and is too destructive to the environment."

Lennie Robert of Ladera said she hoped that Santa Clara County can make the funds available as soon as possible. "There are many better uses for the money than the Alpine Road sidewalk expansion," she said. "Everybody, including Stanford residents, wins in the creation of a grants program that makes the best use of these funds."

Meanwhile, the Committee for Green Foothills has filed an appeal of the lawsuit it brought against Stanford's proposed trail along Alpine Road because there had been no environmental review. The suit was rejected last October since it had not been filed within a 30-day limit. ■

## Rejection won't affect PV trail

If the San Mateo County Board of Supervisors agrees with the recommendation of supervisors Rich Gordon and Jerry Hill and rejects Stanford University's offer of a new \$8.4 million trail along Alpine Road east of Ladera, it won't matter much to the future of that part of the trail that extends into Portola Valley.

Stanford has also offered to spend \$2.8 million to improve Portola Valley's one-mile of partially paved trail that starts at the town's border with Ladera, but the offer is independent of Stanford's offer to the county as well as independent of the

complications affecting the county's trail.

The Portola Valley trail is rural when compared to the county's two-mile stretch that runs right next to a busy arterial road and San Francisco Creek and homes in the Stanford Weekend Acres neighborhood, said Portola Valley Mayor Ted Driscoll.

"It's basically a completely different situation," he said.

Portola Valley and Stanford officials hiked the town's trail together about three months ago and the town is awaiting a plan from Stanford, Mr. Driscoll said. "We're hoping to get less of a sidewalk and more of a rural trail."

## Collectors invited to show off collections in Portola Valley

Collectors of all types of objects are invited to share and show their cherished collections at the first annual "Portola Valley/Woodside Collectors' Night" on Wednesday, April 4, at Corte Madera School from 5:30 to 8:30 p.m.

Collections include, but are

not limited to: insects, stamps, coins, quilts, rocks/minerals, shells, tea pots, photography, art, automobiles, curios and more. This inaugural event is sponsored by the Portola Valley Science and Nature Committee.

For an application to display

a collection, e-mail teacher Treena Joi at [tjoi@pvsd.net](mailto:tjoi@pvsd.net) or pick up one in the Corte Madera School office.

Set-up will be from 3:30 to 5:30 p.m. in the Corte Madera School multi-use room at 4575 Alpine Road in Portola Valley.

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# Duane Cronin: Perhaps 'the most talented small winemaker' in U.S.

By Renee Batti  
Almanac News Editor

■ OBITUARY

Duane Cronin "decided how he wanted things to be — as was typical of his entire life," said his sister, Joy Holtz of Arkansas. As Mr. Cronin battled the longtime illness that finally took his life earlier this year, Ms. Holtz said, he decided that news of his imminent death should not be widely publicized, and that his

memorial service would be a private, family affair.

The Woodside resident and acclaimed winemaker died Jan. 14 at

age 61. Family and friends gathered at his home for a sad but "joyous affair" to celebrate his life on Jan. 20, Ms. Holtz said.

Mr. Cronin launched Cronin Vineyards in Woodside in 1980, after leaving behind his career at IBM. His limited-production wines — primarily chardonnays, pinot noirs, cabernet sauvignons and merlots — won many followers among wine lovers favor-



Duane Cronin

ing complex wines made in the Old World tradition.

The wines also won the approval of many a wine critic. In a 2004 column in Food & Wine magazine, Richard Nalley included the 1999 Cronin cabernet sauvignon in his "10 top bottles" listing. And he wrote: "Retired computer consultant Duane Cronin may just be the most talented small winemaker in America. His wines have Old World balance and proportion coupled with beautiful Santa Cruz Mountain fruit."

"He prided himself on his wines' being handcrafted," noted brother-in-law Brian Holtz. "He felt he had to do it all himself."

For Mr. Cronin, the challenge wasn't to make a lot of money, but to make great wine, Mr. Holtz said.

Born outside Chicago, Mr. Cronin earned a bachelor's degree in electrical engineering from Iowa State University. He worked for IBM for his entire career in technology.

He began making wine in his garage soon after buying his

Woodside property off Old La Honda Road in 1975, his family said. He was part of the Santa Cruz Mountains Winegrowers Association, serving as president at one point.

His last commercial vintage of Cronin Vineyards wines was 2000, wines bottled shortly before the time his illness began to sap his energy, said his sister, Joy Holtz. "His standards were extremely high ... and he wasn't up to doing any more (major) production," she said.

K&L Wine Merchants in Redwood City (klwines.com) has agreed to purchase the remaining inventory of Mr. Cronin's winery and personal collection to sell, with a portion of each sale going to the Duane Cronin Trust. The trust has been set up to support Mr. Cronin's two sons — Joseph, 16, and Samuel, 13 — and contribute to their college education, Mr. Holtz said.

In addition to his two sons and the Holtzes, Mr. Cronin is survived by his wife, Nancy; another sister, Connie Bradley; and two nephews and a niece. ■

## Construction decisions loom for Portola Valley council

By the time the Portola Valley Town Council meets at 8 p.m. Wednesday, March 28, council members should know whether they will have access to a \$4 million line of credit from the county — money the town may need to complete funding of a new \$20 million Town Center complex.


The five-member San Mateo County Board of Supervisors is set to vote on the council's request for the line of credit at its Tuesday, March 27, meeting. The resolution needs a four-fifth's majority to pass.

Groundbreaking is set for late April and the council faces decisions on whether to go ahead with the whole project as planned or reduce it to fit a smaller budget. The line of credit is important because the town will need cash to meet tight construction schedules, said Town Administrator Angela Howard.

Private donors have given or pledged \$12.3 million, Ms. Howard said. The council also set aside \$3 million from the town's general fund. If donations don't fill the gap — some pledges may not be fulfilled until 2009 — the council prefers to borrow money from the county and pay it back from property tax revenues plus about 4 percent interest, Mayor Ted Driscoll said.

At the Wednesday meeting, the council is also expected to discuss the benefits and risks of going ahead with the whole project in one phase — a new Town Hall, library, community hall and recreation facilities.

Bids for heavy construction work have come in lower than expected in staff estimates, Ms. Howard said. The council is set to award contracts on heavy construction at a meeting on Wednesday, April 4.



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# Atherton couple sues to move historic urns to their new home

By David Boyce  
Almanac Staff Writer

An Atherton couple has filed a lawsuit over a City Council decision that prevents the couple from taking a pair of antique urns with them to their new home in another part of town.

The suit against the town of Atherton is the latest step in the effort by residents Randy and Lisa Lamb to win possession of the cast-iron urns which, they said, they resurrected in 1999 at a cost of \$10,000 after finding

them in disrepair in the front yard of their new property at 51 Laburnam Road in the Lindenwood neighborhood.

The urns, about 5 feet tall on their pedestals, date from at least 1937 and were part of the estate of Silver King James C. Flood, said Deputy Town Planner Lisa Costa Sanders in a staff report. The estate was more or less defined by the walls of the Lindenwood neighborhood, now home to some 76 parcels.

The Lambs had asked for and received a permit from the Plan-

ning Commission to move the urns to their new Atherton home on Park Lane. A new artifact preservation law permitted such a transfer as long as the artifacts were maintained, entered in the town's artifact inventory, and stayed within town boundaries, Ms. Costa Sanders said in the report.

But a group of Lindenwood neighbors appealed the Planning Commission decision to the City Council, which overturned the commission on a 4-1 vote on Jan. 17. Councilman Charles Marsala dissented, saying that the urns had become the Lambs' property.

City Attorney Marc Hynes said at the time that he expected to find "half a dozen" justifications for the council's decision, including the urns' historic value and relevance to the Flood estate. The town did not own the urns, but was within its rights in prevent-

ing their relocation, he said.

Mayor Alan Carlson had offered to compensate the Lambs for the urns, but no one on the council seconded his motion.

The Lambs' suit, in part, asks the court to set aside the council's decision, reinstate the Planning Commission's permit giving the Lambs the right to move the urns, and declare the urns personal property and not subject to the artifact preservation law.

The suit also asks for compensatory and punitive damages and reimbursement of fees. ■

## GM completes land purchase for new Menlo Park auto mall

General Motors Corp. has completed the purchase of 22 acres of land at the intersection Bayfront Expressway and Willow Road in Menlo Park for a new auto center, the city announced March 22.

GM bought the land from Tyco Electronics, which for some time has wanted to reduce its 81-acre research and development complex, formerly owned by Raychem Corp., said Dave Johnson, the city's business development manager.

The city anticipates that GM will develop 8.5 acres of the land for GM dealers (the brands have yet to be decided) and then sell the remaining 13.5 acres to non-GM auto dealers

or "complementary destination-type retail," Mr. Johnson said.

Mayor Kelly Fergusson said in a press release that the city is "poised to renew a critical revenue stream" from auto sales taxes, a stream that has sharply declined in recent years with the closure of several auto dealers on El Camino Real.

Under the deal with GM, the city will give the corporation half of its sales tax receipts from the sale of GM cars at the site for 15 years or until GM receives \$10 million.

The first dealerships could open within 24 to 48 months, said Mr. Johnson. A traffic study and environmental review are required, as is a rezoning from industrial to commercial use.

## Woodside Village Church installs full-time pastor

After two years without a permanent leader, the Woodside Village Church installed its new full-time pastor, Michael E. Harvey on Sunday.

"Pastor Mike" has been serving as the Village Church's part-time, temporary pastor for more than a year. An ordained Lutheran pastor, Mr. Harvey was selected after a lengthy search process.

The installation included a procession of clergy, with representatives from the Lutheran and United churches, said Terry Stoker, a member of the Village Church's worship board. A reception in Guild Hall welcomed Pastor Mike and his wife Karlene.

Ordained in 1991 through the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, Pastor Mike came into the ministry after a career in the banking industry. Following

ordination, he served as associate pastor to Hope Lutheran Church in San Mateo, and then as senior pastor from 1994 to 2005.


He was invited to serve as a temporary part-time pastor of Woodside Village Church, and in January was voted by the congregation to serve as full-time pastor.

The Woodside Village Church is a congregation of the United Church of Christ (Congregational). Worship services and Sunday School are held regularly each Sunday at 9:30 a.m. and everyone is welcome.

The church is located at 3154 Woodside Road in Woodside. For information, call 851-1587.



Pastor Mike Harvey



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- Sunday, April 15
- ✱ **INFANT & CHILD CPR**

As part of our "Baby Safe Program," parents and other childcare providers will learn the techniques of infant and young child CPR and obtain essential information about environmental and transportation safety for newborns.




- Monday, April 16
- ✱ **STAYING CLOSE WHILE STANDING BACK**

Julie Metzger, RN, developer of the popular "Heart to Heart" seminars, offers parenting strategies for guiding children through adolescence. This event takes place in the Fairchild Auditorium at Stanford University Medical Center.


- Wednesday, May 23
- ✱ **TEEN HEALTH LINE**

Teens can get immediate answers from registered nurses about health-related topics such as, sexually transmitted diseases, eating disorders and other issues. Call (888) 711-TEEN (8336) from 12 pm to 8 pm on weekdays, and from 8 am to 8 pm on weekends. All calls are anonymous and confidential.

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# Rotary Club awards \$68,000 in scholarships

■ Nobel Prize winner Doug Osheroff will speak at awards ceremony.

Twenty-two local high school students will receive a total of \$68,000 in scholarships from the Rotary Club of Menlo Park at an awards presentation Wednesday, April 4, at the SRI auditorium in Menlo Park.

The students — from Menlo-Atherton, Eastside Preparatory and Sacred Heart — will receive either a \$5,000 or \$2,000 scholarship during the ceremonies,

which will include presentation of scholastic achievement awards to more than 75 other high school students.

Speaker for the evening will be Dr. Doug Osheroff, a Stanford physics professor who won the Nobel Prize in 1996.

Narrowing the field of 32 applicants was a difficult task, said Rotary members Jackie Schoelerman and Harlow Johnson, co-

chairs of the scholarship committee. Each student presented a lengthy application.

The winner of the Drue Kataoka Arts Scholarship was selected by a separate committee that included Ms. Kataoka.

Many of the applicants shared compelling stories about the challenges they have faced. Here is detail on three of the \$5,000 scholarship winners:

■ Ingrid Hernandez was born in Guatemala and lives in East Palo Alto. She has a total GPA of over

4.0 at Eastside College Preparatory School in East Palo Alto. Ingrid pursues soccer, photography, and psychology in addition to academics. She traveled to Princeton for a weekend Humanities Symposium with 60 other high school seniors from across the U.S. She has tutored, babysat and worked in a Berkeley psychology lab to earn money. Ingrid is considering Stanford and Santa Clara universities.

■ John "Robbie" Eaton of Menlo Park scored 2370 on the SAT (two 800s and one 770 in writing). He says that, blessed with a supportive family and a quality education at Menlo-Atherton High School, he hopes to give back to his community because he believes that "to whom much is given, much is expected." He volunteered at Hiller Aviation Museum in San Carlos and helped design and build a flight simulator for kids. He also performs in the school M-A Jazz Combo. Robbie has been accepted at Stanford.

■ Rocio Lopez has a 4.0 GPA at Eastside College Preparatory School in East Palo Alto, where she lives. Born in Mexico, Rocio has two passions: theater and journalism. Her performance credits span the gap from Shakespeare to the Snoopalooops Choir.

For writing, she received a first place award from the National Scholastic Press Association and an honorable mention from the Journalism Education Association. Her plans for next year are still waiting in the wings.

Winners of \$5,000 scholarships are:

■ John D. Russell Scholarship (\$5,000), Ingrid Hernandez, Eastside Prep, and John "Robbie" Eaton, M-A; Robert Paroli Scholarship, Rocio Lopez, Eastside Prep; Doris and Ormand Rector Scholarship, Ryan Duchin, M-A; Business and Professional Scholarship, Ramon Meacham, Eastside Prep; Arthur and Cleora Flegel Foundation Scholarship, Laura Nunez-Aguilar, Eastside Prep; MG Tsui Scholarship, Amanda Chaun, M-A; and Rotary Foundation Scholarship, Noel Cruz, Eastside Prep.

Winners of \$2,000 Rotary Honor Scholarships are:

■ From Menlo-Atherton: Marta Pinilla Aguilar, Sienna Beckman, Nicole Bitler, Rita Bullwinkel, Irina Degtiar, Mio Frisk, Thomas Kozlowski, Rotem Lenchner, Byron Ruby, Jany Sun, and Lauren Swartz.

■ From Sacred Heart Prep: Larisse-Ann Ortiz-Luis and Michael Mahoney. Megan Putnam of Sacred Heart Prep won the Drue Kataoka Art Scholarship.

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## Robbie Eaton nominated for Presidential Scholarship Award

Menlo-Atherton High School senior Robbie Eaton has been selected as a finalist for the U.S. Department of Education's U.S. Presidential Scholars Program, the federal government's most prestigious honor for secondary school students, said M-A spokesman Chris Preimesberger.

Robbie, a Menlo Park resident, has also been named a finalist for a National Merit Scholarship along with six other M-A seniors: Jennifer Brandon, Irina Degtiar, Laura Macmillan, Daniel Moyer, Jennifer Park and Molly Wachtel.

The U.S. Presidential Scholars Program, established in 1964, selects up to 141 of the nation's 16,000-plus National Merit Scholarship candidates among high school seniors to recognize their accomplishments in a wide range of areas: academic, athletic, the arts, and community service. Robbie is believed to be the first M-A student to receive an invitation to apply for the award.

He is an AP (advanced placement) scholar with a 4.3 grade point average in an advanced standing/honors curriculum. He is president of the Quiz Kids Club (which competes with other Bay Area schools in general knowledge on local television), president of the Latin Club, a member of the Menlo-Atherton jazz band (he plays tenor saxophone), and is a member of the varsity swim team.

Robbie is a volunteer at the Hiller Aviation Museum in San Carlos, supervising student training and helping conduct educational tours. He is considering Stanford and MIT to continue his education next year.

Robbie's older sister, Kelly, is currently a freshman at Stanford on the swim team. She was the California state female athlete of the year in 2006.

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# Tensions ease over building review controversy in Atherton

By Renee Batti  
Almanac News Editor

Tension appears to be easing between officials of the local fire district and the town of Atherton. Over the past few weeks, they have hotly debated the implications of a recent civil grand jury report citing shortcomings in Atherton's home-building approval process that may have led to safety hazards in some homes.

In two meetings last week, decision-makers from both the Menlo Park Fire Protection District and the town agreed that both parties shared part of the blame for a less-than-perfect process, and that the best way to proceed is to focus on the future.

The future will include a joint meeting between the Atherton City Council and the fire district board on May 21 to discuss measures to address the grand jury's concerns.

In the wake of several internal investigations of the town's building department last year, the San Mateo County Civil Grand Jury launched its own investigation of the department, and in February released its report. The document stated, among other things, that the jury found "mounting evidence of irregular or improperly issued building permits that should motivate the town to examine fully all open permits for health and safety problems."

The grand jury made six recommendations, including a fire district review of "all substantial construction projects with open building permits for potential health and

safety violations"; and a district examination of all projects built during the 11-year tenure of former building official Mike Hood that were not reviewed for fire safety.

Since the grand jury report was released, staff members of the town and the district have met to try to work out the extent and details of any collaborative, corrective efforts that might be undertaken to address the grand jury's recommendations. But some elected officials — most vocally fire board member Peter Carpenter and Atherton Mayor Alan Carlson — have engaged in a testy public exchange about the implications of the jury's report.

At the March 20 fire district meeting, and at the Atherton council meeting the next night, none of the earlier rancor was present. Atherton Mayor Carlson attended the fire board meeting, and fire board member Bart Spencer, along with Fire Chief Harold Schapelhouman, attended the Atherton council meeting.

"We had an excellent meeting," said fire board president Ollie Brown, who said Mayor Carlson's comments during the meeting were "very positive and upbeat."

But while both groups of elected officials appear ready to work together to try to address the issues raised by the grand jury, several thorny questions present major challenges as the process proceeds, including:

■ Who will pay for the hundreds of additional hours of fire district staff time likely to be needed if the grand jury's recommendations are acted on?

■ What action can be legally taken by the town to force homeowners to comply with safety regulations if violations are found during the reviews? And, what action should the town agree to take?

■ Will residents who bought homes built in violation of safety regulations have legal recourse against the permitting agency — the town of Atherton?

During earlier meetings between

Chief Schapelhouman and Atherton town staff, more than 500 open projects and projects built during Mr. Hood's tenure were identified as potentially in need of fire district review, according to a report compiled by the fire chief.

At the February fire board meeting, the board had authorized the hiring of a fire safety engineer to help conduct the building permit reviews recommended by the grand jury, and made it clear that Atherton

would be expected to pick up the costs of the reviews.

Mr. Brown said that the board last week, at the recommendation of Chief Schapelhouman, agreed to assign Bob Blach, a fire inspector already on staff, to help the town's building department with building plan reviews.

The question of who would pay for the extra fire district staff time needed for the reviews was not discussed, Mr. Brown said. ■

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**I**s there anyone on the Midpeninsula who isn't passionate about wine?

Sometimes it seems as if anyone who isn't terracing his backyard with grape vines is busy stocking his basement wine cellar with fancy French wines and California cult cabernets.

"From Los Altos to Redwood City, that's where the wine people live," says Don Fox, owner of the Wine Bank storage facility in Menlo Park. "There are probably more fine wine shops in this area than in any other place in the world, and more tasting bars. And it's centered in Atherton, Menlo Park and Palo Alto."

Wine collecting "is the next big ego-pleaser," says Menlo Park winemaker and collector Mark Chamness, who writes a wine column for the Almanac.

"It's romantic, it's historic, and it shows you have good taste," he says.

So in January, when news spread about the daring theft of an Atherton collector's entire cellar, the national media seemed shocked that anyone would have \$100,000-worth of wine lying around the house.

Locally, people seemed more shocked by the thought of someone losing his wine collection and having to start over.

The reaction among members of his wine groups, says Mr. Chamness, was, "Oh (expletive)!"

Of course, there were other tantalizing oddities about the Atherton wine heist, in which a thief or thieves made off with more than 450 bottles when the homeowner was away on vacation.

There was no sign of forced entry, and the culprit, who clearly knew what he or she was doing, left behind four bottles of relatively inexpensive wine, says Detective Sgt. Joe Wade of the Atherton Police Department. It's intriguing to think that a cat wine burglar executed a carefully

planned heist, he says.

"Did they leave the four bottles because they were snooty, or because they didn't have time?" he says. "It's definitely a strange case. We get a lot of strange stuff, but we never had anybody report a burglary (of) wine."

With skyrocketing prices on elite Bordeaux and other fine and rare wines, it's probably not surprising that an enterprising crook would skip the jewelry and plasma screen TVs and head straight for the wine cellar.

"The market is incredibly hot," says Joe Zugelder, the fine and rare wine buyer for K&L Wine Merchants. "The 2005 vintage Bordeaux seemed to touch off a firestorm of price increases."

The rising prices are no problem for the well-heeled, but the many wine collectors of more modest means are being priced out of the Bordeaux market.

"The 2005 was trumpeted as a great, great vintage, and some of the first growth is \$1,000 a bottle, and it's not even in the bottle yet," says

Story by **Andrea Gemmet**



Mr. Zugelder, referring to the elite “premier cru” French wineries. “The audience has thinned out for these collectible wines. The people who remain seem to be carrying the market.”

That’s not to say that the non-billionaires among the wine collector ranks have given up and become philatelists. The vagaries of the marketplace are among many issues that wine collectors, from novices to experts, must grapple with.

Highly prized bottles of wine bring bragging rights, but also headaches. Is it worth what you paid? Was it stored properly? Is it counterfeit? Will it lure thieves to your wine cellar? And when you finally open it, will you even enjoy it?

## Selecting

Unless you are buying directly from the winery or chateau, avoiding counterfeit wine is a major concern.

If you get a great deal on an expensive wine in an online auction, there’s a risk that you’ve purchased cheap wine wearing a forged label.

“Counterfeiting is a big deal,” says Mr. Fox of the Wine Bank. “We do wine sales as well, and we sell older wines, and I’m really paranoid about that. If we get in a bottle and I have the slightest suspicion, I’ll take out a bottle I know and compare them side-by-side, not just the label but the glass, the patterns embedded in the glass, and the foil.”

While many winemakers take some steps to make it difficult to forge a bottle, such as marking corks with the winery’s name, modern technology makes it almost ridiculously easy to fool the uninitiated.

“We need to be vigilant for obvious signs of fraudulent wines,” says Mr. Zugelder. “There are no definitive books on it; I have to do it based on my experience.”

For wine collectors who can’t make regular

pilgrimages to the source, wine can be bought online, at auction, and at the Bay Area’s bounty of wine shops.

The types of collections, of course, are as varied as the collectors. Some specialize in a particular varietal from a number of producers, or every variety that a particular winery produces. There are horizontal and vertical collections — the same type of wine from the same winery over a span of years, for instance. There are trophy hunters who focus on extremely rare or difficult to procure wines. And there are the speculators, who are essentially investing in wine futures in the hopes that a young wine purchased now will turn a profit after being stored for a period of years.

Robert M. Parker’s extremely influential reviews in the *Wine Advocate* tend to be taken as gospel by both speculators and neophytes.

“The (hundred-point) grading system that he instituted is easily transparent to the novice,” explains Rebecca Rapaszky, a wine consultant and events coordinator for Beltramo’s Wines and Spirits in Menlo Park.

“When the scores come out, there’s a great sense of excitement. People try to call stores and buy up the wine, try to corner the market,” Ms. Rapaszky says.

More experienced wine collectors, who understand the subjective nature of wine appreciation, tend to pay less attention to a wine’s score, she says. Beltramo’s focuses on selling to a customer’s individual sense of taste, she says.

Local wine collector Steve Patchel calls his 1,200-bottle cellar modest by Peninsula standards. He and his wife got interested in wine because they like to cook and wanted to know more about pairing wines with food, he says.

He’s not a big fan of the wines prized by Mr. Parker, which tend to be over-manipulated with lots of oak, and extractions so high “it’s like grape jelly,” he says.

The key question should be, “What did nature give us that year?” Not, “What did you learn at UC Davis?” he says, referring to the university’s viticulture and enology program.

People who rely on the Parker wine scores don’t trust their own palates, he says.

“We collect to drink, not to speculate or to show off trophy wines,” Mr. Patchel says. “We drink it and we share it with friends.”

His “modest” cellar did contain some wines from Bordeaux that dramatically increased in value, which he ended up selling.

“That was never the intent — the intent was to drink it. But if somebody wants to give you \$400 a bottle for some grape juice you’ve got, good for them,” he says. “We used that money to buy some other wines. It wasn’t meant to pay off somebody’s college education.”

He buys from a range of sources, he says, depending on what he is after. If he’s looking to learn about the wine, he’ll go to a local wine shop that holds tastings. Wines he already knows he likes he’ll buy online, he says. He finds auctions a bit risky, he says.

“With auctions, you really have to do a lot of your own homework,” Mr. Patchel says. “Just

like when you buy antiques, the provenance of wine is important.”

## Storing

A lot of people compare fine wine to art, and there are some parallels. You don’t want to damage an expensive painting by hanging it near a sunny window, and you don’t want to ruin good wine by storing it improperly. It’s got to be kept out of the sun, at a cool temperature and at a relatively high humidity, particularly if you are planning to age the wine for a number of years.

“The cork could dry out and the wine evaporate, so you want the humidity to be high,” says Mr. Chamness. “A lot of French wines have mold on the cork and that’s a good sign, because it shows it was stored at high humidity.”

The ideal storage temperature is 57 degrees Fahrenheit, but as long as it doesn’t get too hot, the temperature is less important than the humidity level, says Mr. Fox of the Wine Bank.

“The humidity has to be correct for the cork. If the cork fails, the wine spoils and you’re toast,” he says.

Most of his customers have home cellars full of wines that are ready to drink, but keep young wines that need years of aging at the Wine Bank, Mr. Fox says.

“Fine wines need to be put down for five to 30 years before they are drinkable, and we’re going to provide much better climate control,” he says.

Bottles of young wine may be cheap, but collectors have to factor in the energy costs of climate-controlled storage, either at home or off-site, for a number of years. For collectors like Mr. Patchel, the cost of storing the wine is well worth it.

“We do it for the joy of buying a bottle for \$30 or \$25 and finding that five years later, a rough, tannic wine has turned into a gorgeous, beautiful, velvety taste sensation,” he says. “Wines evolve; they are giant biochemical experiments going on in a bottle. You have some idea of how they’re going to turn out, but it’s not certain, and hopefully you’ve guessed more right than wrong.”



See **LIQUID GOLD**, page 16

Photo Illustrations by **Veronica Webber**

# COVER STORY

## LIQUID GOLD

continued from page 15

Improper storage makes buying old wines risky. Beltramo's favors privately negotiated trades between collectors, rather than opening the "can of worms" that comes with buying wines from someone's cellar, says Ms. Rapaszky.

K&L buyers look very carefully at provenance and condition before buying the contents of a cellar, and the Wine Bank allows customers to sell wine on consignment.

"We are the liaison between the buyer and the seller, and we need to protect ourselves by buying properly stored wine," says Mr. Zugelder of K&L. "If you buy a \$200 bottle of wine that's bad, someone has to answer for it."

Another potential pitfall is "corked" wine, a situation that occurs when bacteria infiltrates the bottle and spoils the wine. An estimated 2 to 10 percent of bottles become corked. And it doesn't matter if the wine was stored perfectly, it could still be corked.

"You can't cook with it, you can't do anything with it. It goes down the drain," says Mr. Patchel.

If you just bought a bottle of wine that's corked, most stores will take it back. That's a little harder to do when it's one that's been in your cellar for several years, or wine that you bought online or at auction.

"You're pretty much stuck," says Mr. Patchel.

### Protecting

So you've decided which wines to collect, you've studied up on the going prices, you've bought them from a reputable dealer and you've secured space at a storage facility or built a home cellar. Now, you've got to think about safeguarding your wine.

It's probably safe to say that most homes that include a walk-in basement wine cellar are probably already equipped with a home security system. Storage facilities may add extra layers of precaution, such as surveillance cameras. Customers at the Wine Bank put their own locks on their storage facilities, says Mr. Fox. "You have your own key. We don't have access to your wine and we don't want access."

At K&L, which also offers wine storage, people have to check in and out, and their driver's licenses are checked, says Mr. Zugelder.

If you think you need insurance for your wine collection, you should probably just go ahead and get it, says Mr. Patchel. Even though most people are more likely to lose wine to corked or dropped bottles, it's worth the cost of insurance, he says.

"It's a valuable asset, but we don't tend to think about it," he says.

The wine that was stolen from Atherton was insured, says Detective Sgt. Wade. Police are still investigating the case and following up on leads as well as tips from people who think they may have seen the stolen wine up for sale, he says. The most notable missing bottle is a

magnum of 1959 Chateau Petrus, and the police have warned local dealers and sellers to keep an eye out for it, he says. But that's the exception.

"Some of the wine is just unidentifiable. There are no serial numbers; you can't trace them," he says.

The victim is a customer at K&L, says Mr. Zugelder, and he provided the shop with the list of stolen wines. But even if the same wines that were stolen come up for sale, it's difficult to know for sure, since individual wine bottles don't usually have distinctive characteristics.

"Someone could say, 'You bought five bottles that were stolen from me,' but it's not provable unless they've taken pains to mark them in some covert fashion," Mr. Zugelder says.

Receiving stolen wines is a huge concern, says Ms. Rapaszky.

"You'll see that happen within the same market within 24 hours," she says.

"Wine is lost and then mysteriously, someone says they found these cases of wine they want to sell."

### Drinking?

It's time. You've got a case of beautiful wines that have reached their prime and are just waiting to be decanted. What do you do?

The easy answer is: You drink it. But what if that case of wine has appreciated wildly in value?

"If I have a bottle that, 10 years ago, I bought for about \$50 or \$60 and the market (for it) is up to \$600, I'd have trouble looking my kids in the eye, knowing their college fund is not paid up, and still drinking a \$600 bottle," says Mr. Fox, a wine collector himself.

Other collectors find themselves looking to sell wine that is perfectly good, but it turned out that they just don't like it, he says.

That's aside from the speculators who are just looking to turn a profit. For those who don't plan to drink it and don't want to go through the hassle of buying and storing the wine themselves, there are a number of wine investment funds.

But even passionate collectors may find that they've overbought and have far more ready-to-drink wine than they can possibly consume, says Mr. Zugelder. "There's a great fear of letting it turn to vinegar in your cellar," he says.

Mr. Zugelder says he also deals with collec-



tors who are selling off part of their collection in order to make room in their cellars for new purchases.

"I think it's a hobby that borders on addiction. It's a compulsion," he says. "People complain in one breath about their lack of cellar space, and in the same breath, ask how many bottles of a certain cabernet we have, and can they buy all of them?"

There's no doubt that for some people, the thrill of the hunt is a big factor in their enjoyment of collecting wines, says Mr. Fox.

"These are collectors. They probably collected other things as kids," he says. ▀

### ■ INFORMATION

- Beltramo's Wines and Spirits, Beltramos.com, 1540 El Camino Real, Menlo Park. 325-2806
- K&L Wine Merchants, KLwines.com, 3005 El Camino Real, Redwood City. 364-8544.
- The Wine Bank, WineBankOnline.com, 1320A Willow Road, Menlo Park. 327-9200.
- LocalWineEvents.com, online calendar of tastings and other events.
- ERobertParker.com, the influential wine critic's online home.

# MP housing project gets boost

■ Developer to give \$2.5 million toward construction of 22 homes for low-income families.

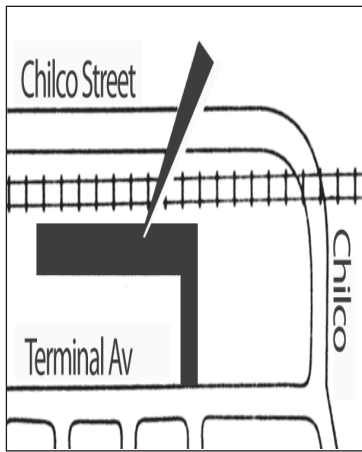
By **Rory Brown**  
Almanac Staff Writer

Habitat for Humanity people have talked about building low-income housing on a Menlo Park site for six years, and now that talk is finally getting somewhere.

The City Council on March 20 voted unanimously to approve a partnership between developer SummerHill Homes and the nonprofit to build a 22-home project off Terminal Avenue in the city's Belle Haven neighborhood for low- to very-low-income families.

Palo Alto-based SummerHill will give Habitat \$2.5 million, and in exchange for the donation, the council agreed to scale back the number of below-market-rate homes the developer has to build when constructing another housing project off Willow Road.

"It's so great to see this project get a financial boost," said Mayor Kelly Fergusson, who noted she first viewed the plans as a planning commissioner in



Twenty-two homes are planned for this site at 297 Terminal Ave. in Menlo Park's Belle Haven neighborhood.

2002. "This project adds a new dimension to the city's housing stock."

Habitat plans to build 22 single-family homes at the 1.5-acre site, between Beechwood School and fire station No. 77. The estimated cost of the project is \$8.3 million, and with SummerHill's donation, Habitat is now able to cover those costs, said Mary

Boughton, the nonprofit's executive director.

"We're so thrilled," she said. "We've been working on trying to get this project going for so long. So many families in Menlo Park need low-income housing."

The project still has to undergo traffic studies and environmental review, and to win council approval.

The homes will be reserved for Menlo Park families whose annual incomes total \$56,500 to \$90,500, Ms. Boughton said.

SummerHill is building 33 homes in the city's Linfield Oaks neighborhood at 75 Willow Road. The homes will sell for \$1 million to \$2 million, said Elaine Breeze, a senior vice president.

Under the city's affordable housing ordinance, five of those homes have to be sold for about \$325,000, but in return for the contribution to Habitat, the city is requiring the developer to provide just two on-site below-market-rate homes.

For more information about the Habitat project, call the Redwood City Habitat office at 368-7434, or go to PeninsulaHabitat.org. ■

# City executives get higher salaries

Menlo Park's top employees are getting a raise.

The City Council voted 4-1 on March 20 to authorize up to a 4 percent salary increase for the city's executive managers — the city manager, assistant city manager and depart-

ment heads. Councilman Andy Cohen voted against the pay boost.

"I want to send a message to our staff of how much they're appreciated," said Mayor Kelly Fergusson.

All employees recently

received a pension benefit increase, effective March 2009, but only top management got a raise, creating a sore point with labor unions representing city employees.

The salary increase is retroactive to Jan. 7.

# Egg hunt in MP

Menlo Park's Community Services Department and the Menlo Park Fire Protection District will host the annual Menlo Park egg hunt from 10 a.m. to noon on April 7 at Burgess Park.

Children under 8 are invited to partake in the egg hunt and other games and crafts. Parents are reminded to bring cameras for photos with the Easter Bunny.

In the event of rain, eggs and candy will be distributed at the Burgess Recreation Center at 10 a.m. For more information, call the Community Services Department at 330-2200.

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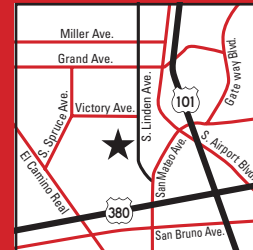


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# Community

NEWS OF LOCAL PEOPLE AND EVENTS IN THE COMMUNITY

## Discussion yields little movement on dogs and rural trails

■ Council faces tough choice in weighing issues.

By David Boyce

Almanac Staff Writer

It's a tough nut for the Portola Valley Town Council, the question of what to do about leashed and unleashed dogs walking where they're not allowed, in the wilder parts of Portola Valley's Coalmine Ridge trail system.

After a six-week community discussion among a select group of citizens from both sides of the issue, some points of agreement have emerged that may peel a thin outer layer or two from that nut. But the essence of it is still there, waiting for the council to deal with it.

The discussions — the last meeting was held Tuesday, March 20 — did not achieve consensus but did clarify some facts and “sharpen” the coun-

### ■ PORTOLA VALLEY

cil's choices, said Councilman Steve Toben, who formed the group and kept things civil, when necessary.

Mr. Toben said he expects action from the council in April or May.

### The dilemma

The six miles of rural trails on Coalmine Ridge are on private land owned in common by Portola Valley Ranch neighborhood residents, who granted the town a conservation easement for the trails in the 1970s. That easement gives the council regulation authority.

The community discussion, over three meetings and three group hikes since January, assembled 10 formal participants, five from each side.

Residents supporting the current no-dogs policy say that



The Almanac/David Boyce

Portola Valley Councilman Steve Toben, left, Los Trancos Woods resident Nancy Bovee, center, and Trails and Paths Committee member Denise Gilbert joined in a group effort to search for an answer to the question of whether to formally allow dog walking on the town's rural Coalmine Ridge trail system.

dogs threaten wildlife and scare hikers, particularly when the dog is unleashed, a reportedly frequent occurrence and a violation of San Mateo County law.

Residents who want the policy changed say that dogs have been walked in there since before the Ranch neighborhood existed. People who walk dogs on leashes deserve a quiet wilderness experience, too, they say.

The town has 30 miles of trails where dogs are allowed, but they are criticized as “sidewalks” in comparison with Coalmine Ridge trails.

The key issue is the impact of dogs on wildlife of Coalmine Ridge, Mr. Toben told the Almanac. “The way I read the literature (on such impacts), it's a very tough question to answer.”

Among the factors to be weighed: the number of dogs per day on a trail, whether they are leashed, and whether wildlife, as is claimed by its advocates, is truly unused to and intimidated by dogs that have “never been totally excluded (from these trails) in 100 years,” Mr. Toben said.

In a recent informal survey done over two weekdays and three weekend days, Trails and Paths Committee members Lynne Davis, who generally supports dogs on the trails, and Denise

Gilbert, who does not, parked at the intersection of Alpine and Willowbrook roads to watch for people with dogs entering and leaving the trail system.

They reported seeing 32 dogs. Eighteen of them wound up on no-dog trails and 15 were let off their leashes, typically after they were far enough away from the road so as not to be detected, Ms. Gilbert said.

The survey is too small to be conclusive and “very difficult” to extrapolate and draw conclusions from, Ms. Davis said. “We would have to do many more days to feel confident with what we did,” she added.

Dogs on these trails predate the Ranch subdivision, said committee member and dog-walking advocate Nancy Bovee of Los Trancos Woods. “There is a lot of very stalwart non-compliance because they feel they have been bought out of an experience they had before.”

Such sentiments resonated with resident Gene Chaput, by his own admission a veteran dog-walker on these trails. “I moved here so I could use and enjoy what we have here, not look at it through a plastic visor. ... People want to keep this Jurassic Park on the Ranch. I, for one, don't agree with it.”

In an interview, Mr. Toben noted a “sense of loss” among dog-walkers with more “No dogs” signs appearing in recent years. “Naturally, they feel a sense of regret and loss that they don't have access to that beautiful area. ... I certainly don't discount the regret that they feel about it.”

Still, residents from the two

camp are confronting each other on the trails. “The status quo is pretty hostile right now,” Mr. Toben said. “These encounters are happening. They are happening with greater frequency than we like.”

Linda Elkind, a planning commissioner and observer said that dogs don't belong on the trails because impacts are unknown and leash-law compliance is “extremely difficult” to monitor.

Other animals also cannot ignore a dog's territory marking, she added. “It's his way of saying ‘I live here. I belong here. ... We need (a no-dogs policy) not just to be observers (of nature), but we need it there to keep the balance. It's a little island, six miles, that has some links to open space in the area.’”


### Some agreement

Committee members were agreeable to avoiding actions to increase the visibility of the trails to the wider Bay Area, to improving signs regulating trail use, and to minimizing damage from off-leash dogs.

Owners who let dogs off their leashes might be more receptive to admonishment from other dog walkers than from dog-less hikers, said Ms. Bovee, adding that a policy allowing dogs could increase compliance.

Ms. Bovee also briefly considered the notion of a prescriptive easement, a legal concept that lends weight to facts on the ground. Dog-walkers, for example, could have rights derived from many years of using the trails. “If the laws are constantly being broken, something is not quite right,” she said. ■

# Peninsula Easter Services



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# Alleluia!

### Holy Week Services

<b>April 5</b>	<b>6:00 pm</b>	<b>Seder Meal</b>
<b>April 6</b>	<b>Noon &amp; 7:30 pm</b>	<b>Good Friday Services</b>
<b>April 8</b>	<b>9:30 am</b>	<b>Easter Festival Service</b> (Children's Easter egg hunt follows)
	<b>11:15 am</b>	<b>Informal Praise Service</b>

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# Concert celebrates Easter season

A concert celebrating the Easter season will be held Friday, April 6, at 7:30 p.m. at the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints at 1105 Valparaiso Ave. in Menlo Park.

"Songs of the Savior" will feature the Valparaiso Singers, directed by Judith Stewart, with James Welch, organist. They will be joined by Janet Galbraith, violin; Karen Chang, flute; Mandy Croft, oboe; and Sharon Davis, guest soloist from San Francisco.

The program will include works by Beethoven and Faure and contemporary composers, John Rutter, Dale Wood, Gilbert Martin, Mack Wilberg, and Barlow Bradford.

Admission is free and the public is welcome.

## 'Life Stories' at Ladera church

Sheila Dunec will offer a class called "Life Stories" at Ladera

## AROUND TOWN

Community Church.

Two, ten-week sessions are offered: Thursdays, from 1:30 to 3:30 p.m., March 29 through June 7; and Fridays, from 9:45 to 11:45 a.m., March 30 through June 8.

Through "memory association exercises," students will learn how to recall "long forgotten, but important, incidents" and put them down on paper, she says.

Ms. Dunec says she will also teach techniques that "promote new understanding of their life experiences" and "engage in search to discover enduring values in their life stories" in order to pass these on to future generations.

The fee is \$150. Registration is limited. Ladera Community Church is at 3300 Alpine Road, Portola Valley. For more informa-

tion, call Ms. Dunec at 565-8087.

## Woodside benefit for sick children

Saddle Up, a trail ride benefit for St. Jude Children's Research Hospital, is being held at the San Mateo County Mounted Patrol grounds in Woodside on April 14, beginning at 10:30 a.m.

Participants are asked to contribute or raise from sponsors at least \$35 in order to join the ride, said volunteer coordinator Doug Hutten. All of the money goes directly to Memphis-based St. Jude's Hospital to treat and find cures for children with serious diseases such as cancer, AIDS and sickle cell disease, he said.

More information about the hospital is online at StJude.org. Those interested in participating in the Saddle Up ride should register with Mr. Hutten by calling (415) 215-9763.



The Almanac/David Boyce

## The little guy prevails

A striped steel bollard is no guarantee of protection for this young sycamore trying to make it along the busy thoroughfare of the Alameda de las Pulgas in West Menlo Park. The county Public Works Department installed bollards to fend off too-frequent batterings by distracted drivers. This one has taken a whack, but the sycamore still stands.

## New Bay Trail maps available

New maps of the San Francisco Bay Trail to guide walkers, skaters, cyclists and wildlife enthusiasts along the San Francisco and San Pablo bays with ease have been published, the San Francisco Bay Trail Project reported.

The San Francisco Bay Trail is a continuous shared-use path that, when complete, will encircle San Francisco and San Pablo bays, extending more than 500 miles, according to the project.

Consisting of paved paths, dirt trails, bike lanes, sidewalks and signed bike routes, the Bay Trail network will ultimately

link the shoreline of all nine Bay Area counties, passing through 47 cities and crossing seven toll bridges

According to the San Francisco Bay Trail Project, the set of six maps feature more than 270 miles of completed trails and showcase attractions in all nine Bay Area counties.

The maps feature 40 recommended routes with parking and transit information and can be purchased as a set of six for \$15.00 or individually for \$3.50 each.

More information about the trails and purchasing maps is available online at <http://www.baytrail.org>.

— Bay City News Service

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# GoGo wants to do the work for you

By Jane Knoerle

Almanac Lifestyles Editor

■ BUSINESS

If you're looking for someone to house sit, mind the baby, or walk the dog, Kathy Cronin hopes you will call GoGo Menlo, the all-in-one concierge service.

Ms. Cronin is the new owner of the service, which was started in 2005. As a second-grade teacher at St. Raymond School, Ms. Cronin is pretty busy herself, but says she has a great director, Hayley Lewis, and a staff of 12 to see things run smoothly at GoGo Menlo.

During summer vacation, she will also take part in the concierge service, especially planning day trips for children. Ms. Cronin says she likes kids. Not only is she a teacher, but for the past five summers she has been the director of Sacred Heart Summer Camp in Atherton.

The GoGo Menlo staff is made up of college-age students, both men and women. Each undergoes an extensive training program, including CPR and safety certification, she says. The

service tries to find a good match between worker and client.

Many clients are working mothers or frazzled moms with three or more children. GoGo staffers drive kids to after-school sports and music lessons, or to get a haircut.

If you hire a GoGo staffer, she can make up a gift basket and deliver it, or tie on an apron and serve at a cocktail party. At Christmas, the service provided entertainment and babysitting for children who accompanied their parents to a party for 200. It has also kept children entertained at a wedding reception.

As for baby-sitting, staff members do more than sit. They come supplied with arts and crafts and board games, prepared to spend time with the kids instead of parking them in front of the television. They can even babysit overnight.

The concierge service is available on a monthly basis. The smallest service is 21 hours for

\$270. The largest is 40 hours for \$840. This averages between \$20 and \$27 per hour for services. The workers are paid between \$10 and \$18 an hour, depending on their seniority.

Kathy Cronin is a hometown girl. She attended St. Joseph's Elementary School and St. Francis High School, and graduated from Santa Clara University in 1996. She earned a master's degree in educational technology from Pepperdine University and is completing her work toward a California teaching credential at Notre Dame de Mur University.

Ms. Cronin is a member of the Junior League of Palo Alto/Mid Peninsula. Her parents, Ellie and Larry Cronin, live in Menlo Park. Her grandparents, the late Punch and Anna Marie Lyon, were also Menlo Park residents.

She says she's enthusiastic about her new business. "I love to help this community where I grew up," she says.

To contact GoGo Menlo, call 440-0707 or go to www.GoGoMenlo.com. ■

## Hearing Wednesday on salt pond restoration

People interested in plans to restore the salt ponds ringing San Francisco Bay to productive marshland are invited to a public hearing on the environmental impact report (EIR) Wednesday, March 28, from 6 to 8 p.m. at the NASA Research Center, Eagle Room, Room 943, in Mountain View.

The EIR analyzes the impacts of plans to restore the 15,100 acres purchased from Cargill in 2003 for habitat protection, flood management, and limited recreational access. It includes the "Ravenswood Pond Complex" on the Menlo Park Bayfront, extending from Bayfront Park east past Highway 84.

The public may testify at the hearing, or submit comments on the EIR until April 23.

A copy of the EIR is available at

■ NOTES

the Menlo Park Library, 800 Alma St. The EIR, and instructions to get to the hearing or submit comments, can be reached online at southbayrestoration.org.

**Saturday forum on immigration**

The public is invited to a free half-day forum on "Immigration: Opportunities and Challenges" on Saturday, March 31, from 9:15 a.m. to 12:15 p.m., at Hewlett Packard headquarters, Building 20 auditorium, 3000 Hanover St. in Palo Alto.

Five speakers will discuss different facets of immigration: Richard Hobbs, director of the Office of Human Relations for Santa Clara County; Steve Levy, director of

the Center for the Continuing Study of the California Economy; Alex M. Saragoza, associate professor of Chicano Studies and Ethnic Studies at UC Berkeley; Jayashri Srikantiah, associate professor of law and director of the Immigrants' Rights Clinic at the Stanford Law School; and Larisa Casillas, director of the Bay Area Immigrant Rights Coalition.

The forum is sponsored by the World Affairs Council of Northern California, the Leagues of Women Voters of Los Altos/Mountain View and Palo Alto; and Avenidas.

Check-in starts at 9 a.m. For information, call the World Affairs Council at 415-293-4600, or go to itsyourworld.org.

**Nominations sought for business awards**

Monday, April 2, is the deadline to submit nominations for business awards to Samceda, San Mateo County's chief organization representing businesses.

Samceda will present half a dozen awards at its 2007 Awards of Excellence Luncheon on Wednesday, April 25, at noon at the Crowne Plaza in Foster City.

Nominations may be submitted in six categories: David D. Bohannon Award of Excellence; Business Innovation and Good Management; Public Agency; Environmental Action and Community Service; and a Small Business Award.

For information or a nomination form, call Samceda at 345-8300; or go to samceda.org.

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# Stuart Weiss brings butterflies back to Edgewood Natural Preserve

By Marion Softky  
Almanac Staff Writer

On March 15, biologist Stuart Weiss of Stanford Weekend Acres spotted Edward I fluttering over the early goldfields at Edgewood Natural Preserve.

Edward (the name given him by Dr. Weiss) was the first threatened Bay checkerspot butterfly he spotted in the serpentine wildflower fields since the population disappeared there four years ago; the orange, black and white butterflies were victims of fumes from the nitrogen compounds spewed by more than 100,000 cars a day driving on nearby Interstate 280. The fumes fertilized invasive rye grass that choked plants that support the butterflies.

Edward was there because of a program engineered by Dr. Weiss to re-establish the butterflies in their historic habitat. Over the last two months, Dr. Weiss has brought at least 1,000 fuzzy black caterpillars to Edgewood from a healthy checkerspot population on Coyote Ridge, south of San Jose. He lovingly planted them on little patches of *Plantago erecta*, an obscure plant that only grows in the harsh serpentine soils east of the San Andreas Fault. Also called California plantain, it is the essential host plant that checkerspot larvae depend on.

"It's exciting," says Dr. Weiss in an interview a week after he spotted Edward, as we walk Edgewood's serpentine fields looking for more butterflies. "This demonstrates that we can do things in the face of all the threats to biodiversity."

Over half an hour, Dr. Weiss spots four of the elegant butterflies near the top of the long hill where people driving south on I-280 can see large yellow patches of massed wildflowers about this time every spring. By April, he hopes that slope will also be aflutter with butterflies.

## Dr. Checkerspot

Walking slowly along a transect covered with early blooming goldfields, owl's clover, and an occasional California poppy, Dr. Weiss refers to his initials, SBW, as: "Sure Beats Working."

Yet Dr. Weiss is working. And his research on butterflies has illuminated the loss of checkerspots, and led him into ecological research in many other fields, from endangered clapper rails on the Bay shore, to adjusting microclimates in vine-



Photo by Stuart Weiss

Edward I butterfly at Edgewood Natural Preserve.

yards to achieve better harvests.

Butterflies never occurred as a subject of study to the Philadelphia kid who picked Stanford over Har-

were sitting in a classroom with 300 others."

Mr. Weiss — he didn't get his Ph.D. until 1996 — began studying

plants and butterflies at Edgewood Park back in 1983, when the site had been bought for a golf course. He mapped habitat and counted caterpillars in the serpentine grasslands that provide spectacular displays of native wildflowers each year. The soil is so thin and poor on these hills that the exotic plants

and grasses that came with the Europeans can't survive, leaving the natives, adapted to hostile soil chemistry, to show off in the spring,

After a monumental political battle between the golfers and the native landscape lovers, the golfers lost. The county declared Edgewood Park a natural preserve in 1993.

*'This demonstrates that we can do things in the face of all the threats to biodiversity.'*

STUART WEISS

vard for college. He recalls catching his first checkerspot working for Paul Ehrlich at Stanford's Jasper Ridge Biological Preserve in April 1979. Dr. Ehrlich's pioneering studies of checkerspot butterflies at Jasper Ridge laid the base for his international reputation as a guru on population threats.

"It was so much fun. I ended up pretty hooked," Dr. Weiss admits. "I was chasing butterflies in fields of wildflowers while my friends

See **BUTTERFLIES**, page 22

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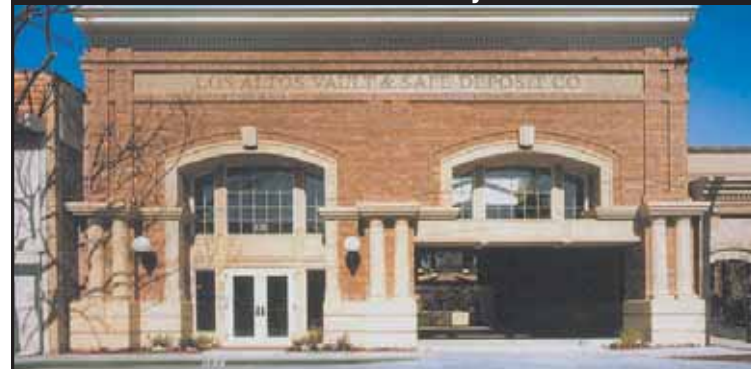
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# Stuart Weiss brings back butterflies to Edgewood

## BUTTERFLIES

continued from page 21

But the butterflies were in trouble. The population, estimated at close to 5,000 in 1997, was gone in six years.

### Drive-by extinction

Anyone walking the serpentine hills of Edgewood Park can see and hear the traffic on I-280.

Dr. Weiss led the study that identified fumes from I-280 as

the indirect cause of the die-off of butterflies, and crafted the plan to restore them. His work has been supported by the San Mateo County Parks and Recreation Foundation, the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, the Friends of Edgewood Natural Preserve, and San Mateo County.

As the exhausts from more than 100,000 cars per day on the freeway drifted downwind over the Edgewood grasslands, their nitrogen oxides fertilized the nutrient-poor grasslands. As a result, Dr. Weiss discovered, Italian ryegrass flourished; it choked out the plants that supported the butterflies, and the butterflies dwindled and disappeared.

Dr. Weiss notes that the introduction of catalytic converters to control air pollution in the 1990s made the effect worse. Catalytic converters produce ammonia, and ammonia is an even stronger fertilizer. "It is feeding them fertilizer in the most efficient possible way," he says. "It's drive-by extinction."

The invasive grasses had to be controlled before the butterfly



The Almanac/Marion Softky

**Stuart Weiss** is looking for Bay checkerspot butterflies amid the serpentine wildflowers at Edgewood County Park. The threatened butterflies are being re-introduced after they disappeared at the park four years ago; fumes from nearby Interstate 280 fertilized invasive rye grass that choked the plants that support the butterflies.

### INFORMATION

For information on Dr. Stuart Weiss and the project to restore the Bay checkerspot butterfly to Edgewood Natural Preserve, contact his consulting firm, Creekside Center for Earth Observations, which he runs out of his home in Stanford Weekend Acres. Call 854-9732 or go to [www.creeksidescience.com](http://www.creeksidescience.com). Information is also available from Julia Bott of the San Mateo County Parks and Recreation Foundation at 321-5812, or go to [www.supportparks.org](http://www.supportparks.org).

could be successfully re-introduced. Goats proved ineffective, and burning couldn't be arranged. However, mowing, partially supported by grants from PG&E, has reduced the rye grass to the point where the Plantago has recovered, and the caterpillars have been re-introduced.

Now the caterpillars have pupated and are ready to fly free in the next few weeks. They have a brief and busy life, as they fly, mate, sip nectar from the serpentine flow-

ers, and lay eggs at the base of the Plantago. And most die in less than a couple of weeks.

The hope is that enough eggs will survive to launch new generations of butterflies at Edgewood. A female lays 500 eggs; and they hatch in seven-to-10 days. "Only a tiny fraction survive," says Dr. Weiss. "If two survive, it replaces the population. If four survive, we've doubled it."

Dr. Weiss remains hopeful. We've got Edward I and Edwin," he says. "I'm hoping for Edith." ▀

## Edgewood Park wildflower tours, information

From now until June 10 is the time to view the annual display of native wildflowers blazing on the hillsides of Edgewood Natural Preserve.

The Friends of Edgewood Natural Preserve invite the public on free docent-led wildflower tours every Saturday and Sunday through June 10.

Walks start at 10 a.m. from the Old Stage Day Camp on Edgewood Road at the park entrance. (Take I-280 to the Edgewood Road exit, north of Woodside; travel east on Edgewood about a mile and turn right in the parking lot at 10 Old Stage Coach Road.) Walks run until about 1 p.m. Participants should bring water, sunscreen and a snack.

In addition, walks will start from the Clarkia Trailhead, nearer the meadow flowers on Canada Road just east of I-280, on six Saturdays from April 7 through May 12.

For information, call 1-866-GO-EDGEWOOD; or go to [www.friendsofedgeswood.org](http://www.friendsofedgeswood.org).

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**The Kings' new house** on Tallwood Court in Atherton stands empty because of a dispute with the town over its size.

The Almanac/  
Veronica Weber



**TALLWOOD**

continued from page 5

Kings' basement isn't a basement, then the house is 1,800 square feet bigger than allowed, Mr. Hynes said.

Mr. King said former building official Mike Hood was well aware of the basement height issue, which is why they were confident that everything was fine when their building plans were approved.

"(Mike Hood) got out a big red pen, and marked our plans and said, 'You cannot build higher than this. If you build it higher, I'll make you take out a chainsaw and cut off the top of your house,'" Mr. King told the City Council at its March 21 meeting.

At that meeting, Mr. and Ms. King and their three young children delivered a personal plea to the council to be allowed to temporarily occupy their home while the dispute gets sorted out.

"This has been a very difficult time for our children," Ms. King said. "Their schoolwork is being negatively affected. They don't know what to expect from one day to the next. My kids just want to sleep in their own beds and be able to have their friends come over."

Temporary occupancy is not something the town wants to consider, because it makes it much harder to fix the problems, Mr. Hynes told the Almanac after the meeting.

He said the Kings do have options for addressing the problem.

"There are number of things that could be done, none of them are particularly pleasant, but they need to get rid of 1,800 square feet," Mr. Hynes said. "They could remove a couple of accessory structures, they could tear down and rebuild the house, or possibly, they could wall off and not use 1,800 square feet of the basement."

He said he believes issues with the Kings' house came up independently and later got included in the audits of the building department that were being conducted by the town to discover and address procedural and other problems with the way the department conducted business. ■

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## Play ball: Little Leagues start seasons

Major League Baseball may not start until this Sunday, but the Menlo-Atherton and Alpine/West Menlo Little Leagues threw out their respective first pitches of the season on March 24.

### Alpine/West Menlo

Thirty-eight teams representing children ages 4 to 9 participated in the Alpine/West Menlo Little League opening day ceremonies at La Entrada School.

Teams from the league's three

age levels — T-ball, coach pitch, and pitching machine — all took part, said parent volunteer Juliet Wilson.

The ceremonies included the singing of the national anthem and donuts for the kids, she said.

Alpine league games start Saturday, March 31.

### Menlo-Atherton

More than 500 children, ages 6 to 12, took part in M-A Little League's opening day ceremony

at Burgess Park.

The ceremony included team introductions, opening remarks by Menlo Park City Councilman Andy Cohen, and recognition of longtime volunteer Vince Sakowski, said board member Steve Bouret.

The first game of the season followed the ceremony, in which Lutticken's beat Morgan Stanley 4-0 in a match up between two majors teams.

Council members John Boyle and Richard Cline also attended.

## OBITUARIES

### Kathleen Craig Epperly

Tennis Club founder

Kathleen Epperly of Menlo Park died March 7 following a year-long battle with lung cancer. She was 73.

Born in Philadelphia, Ms. Epperly received a bachelor's degree in economics from the University of Pennsylvania in 1955.

She and her husband, Bill Epperly, lived in Menlo Park for 40 years. During that time, Ms. Epperly and a few friends formed the Menlo Park Tennis Club, an open, public-court tennis ladder that grew to 200 members ranging from teenagers to seniors. The club lobbied successfully to

have three new courts built at Nealon Park in the 1970s.

In addition to Bill, her husband of 51 years, Ms. Epperly is survived by three children, Christine Level of Sebastopol, Doug Epperly of Shelter Cove, California, and Allen Epperly of Arcata, California; and six grandchildren.

Observance of her passing will be private and limited to family.

In lieu of flowers, the family prefers that memorial donations be made to the Sequoia Hospital Pulmonary Rehabilitation Clinic, 170 Alameda de las Pulgas, 2nd Floor, Redwood City 94062.

### Norman Edwin Dilling

Grew up in Menlo Park

Norman Edwin Dilling, who

grew up in the Menlo Park area and attended Las Lomas district schools and Menlo-Atherton High School, died March 13. He was 37.

While attending Foothill College, he met Stacey Leonheart. They married and had two sons, Bradley and Justin.

He managed Ace Hardware in Palo Alto, and for the past eight years worked for the Randall family, managing the Moulding Company in Santa Clara, family members said.

"Although his life was cut short, he was a wonderful son, brother, father, uncle and friend," say family members. "Norman will always be with us in spirit."

A memorial services was held at Roller Hapgood and Tinney, 980 Middlefield Road in Palo Alto on March 21.

## NOTES

### Judged named to hear Morrow motion

A Santa Clara County judge has been appointed to hear a defense motion to dismiss the case against accused murderer Joseph Eli Morrow in April, allowing the long-delayed case to proceed with a target to begin a jury trial within weeks, according to the San Mateo County district attorney's office.

The district attorney's office reported on Friday that retired Santa Clara County Judge Thomas Hastings will hear the motion on April 2 before the case returns to San Mateo County Superior Court.

Mr. Morrow, 58, is accused of killing his 37-year-old wife, Donna, on Dec. 19, 1991, and burying her body on their 36-acre property above Los Gatos.

### 'Shocking' dispute

Menlo Park police are still investigating conflicting stories of a dispute over money that ended with one man allegedly shocking the other with an electric device and hitting him with a pipe. The quarrel occurred in the 900 block of Florence Lane in Menlo Park

on Tuesday, March 20. The two men are acquaintances, says Nicole Acker, department spokeswoman.

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## 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

**Grand theft report:** Three backpacks containing wallets, keys, and other items stolen from aquatics locker room, Sacred Heart School, 150 Valparaiso Ave., March 19.

**Burglary report:** Thieves took two pieces of furniture from master bedroom and system for sprinklers from garage of staged house for sale, 100 block of Fenwood Drive, March 22.

### MENLO PARK

**Grand theft report:** Power cords stolen, 500 block of College Avenue,

March 21.

### Fraud reports:

■ Fraudulent charges on bank account, 300 block of Waverley Street, March 22.

■ Attempt to use stolen credit card at gas station, 700 block of Willow Road, March 22.

### WOODSIDE

**Auto burglary report:** Tote bag containing emergency/survival kit stolen through smashed front passenger side window of car, 200 block of Hardwick Road, March 21.

### LADERA

**Theft report:** Wallet, DVD player, Garmin GPS and other valuables stolen from unlocked vehicle, 3000 block of Alpine Road, March 21.



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## WHAT'S YOUR VIEW?

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the Viewpoint desk at 854-2626, ext. 222.



One concept of the three- and four-story apartment, retail and office complex proposed for 1300 El Camino Real by Sand Hill Management Co.

## Time to work on El Camino

The recent decision by Sand Hill Property Co. to abandon a 134-unit rental housing project in downtown Menlo Park underscores the need for the City Council to begin action as soon as possible to update zoning on El Camino Real.

The Sand Hill firm acted after three council members said they could not support the housing plan, which would have required the city to allow more than twice the density (40 units per acre) permitted in the current zoning. Instead, the firm said it would apply to build retail and office space on the 3.45-acre former Cadillac dealership site that conforms to current zoning.

Another major downtown housing plan, for 135 condominium units on Derry Lane near Oak Grove Avenue, is also trading water, since voters approved a call for a referendum on the project. With the City Council's permission, the developers are in negotiations with Morris Brown of Menlo Park Tomorrow, the group that organized the successful petition drive that halted the project.

But after nearly five months of negotiations, there is no indication that the two sides are near agreement on a compromise plan. Mr. Brown said he was pleased that the

rental housing plan was withdrawn, saying the height and density of the buildings were out of step with the city's current zoning.

Both projects faltered due to the lack of a clear understanding of what the City Council will permit to be built on El Camino. Clearly, the present council is not willing to approve a high-density housing development that would require three- to four-story buildings. Current zoning is geared for retail and office space, but as auto dealers abandon large parcels, mixed use with housing and retail is what developers say has the best chance for success.

Mayor Kelly Fergusson and Vice Mayor Andy Cohen need to lead the charge to come up with a firm development plan for El Camino Real. The city has already sponsored a design charrette and could participate in a study of El Camino by a joint powers group that represents all 20 cities in San Mateo County. Menlo Park needs to begin planning now if it expects to keep pace with its neighbors in Redwood City and Palo Alto, which both have invested in major downtown improvements.

No one wants the council to act hastily, but it is time to move ahead on a plan for downtown. The longer the council waits, the more difficult it will be to attract the very best projects to upgrade the city's share of the "Grand Boulevard."

### EDITORIAL

The opinion of The Almanac



## Our Regional Heritage

This undated aerial photo shows El Camino Real in Menlo Park in the late 1940s or 1950s after widening of the signature street had taken place. The major east-west streets visible, from left to right, include Menlo, Santa Cruz and Oak Grove avenues. Note the Menlo Park Presbyterian Church (steeple visible on Santa Cruz Avenue), which long ago moved further west to the site covered by foliage in the photo. Also note the housing along Santa Cruz where Flegels furniture store is today.

Photo by Mark Flegel

### LETTERS

Our readers write

#### Lost opportunity for BMR housing

Editor:

The 1300 El Camino (Cadillac) project offered Menlo Park its first major new rental apartments in decades. It was a transit-oriented complex that would have provided 134 rental units, including 22 below market rate (BMR) units, as well as retail and office space.

One of the City Council's complaints about this project was there was not enough retail. Another was that we have enough rental units in the city and, because our city would not get tax revenue from the rentals, the apartments should be condos.

The height, setback and density of the project were assailed but the council gave no hint to the developer about what numbers would be acceptable. The council was not willing to work with the developer to come up with a compromise plan.

So instead of much-needed housing and tax-producing retail, it looks like we will get a grocery store and offices, neither of which will generate much in

the way of tax revenue.

While the City Council and community members continue to talk about the need to update the general plan and residential zoning ordinances before agreeing to go forward with projects, nothing has been done to begin the process. As Brielle Johnck noted last week, this process could take quite some time. In essence, a moratorium has been created without public discussion or vote of the council.

An El Camino task force is under consideration. While this is potentially a good way to solicit community input, we already have had charrettes, the county has a "Grand Boulevard" commission composed of elected officials, and who knows how many other groups or agencies are working on the same two miles or so of Menlo Park real estate?

Add to that the Green Ribbon Task Force on Global Warming, which should also be involved with this vital discussion, and we now have a lot of overlapping groups and interests that don't communicate with each other.

Back to our BMR units. We are left to wonder about the commitment of our council members to the BMR program and affordable housing. Council members

serve on various housing boards and commissions, but whose interests do they represent? Do they really represent the 500 or so households on our BMR list or other Menlo Park residents who might benefit from expanded and more diverse, potentially affordable, housing options? Or do they represent their own reelection interests?

**Elizabeth Lasensky**  
Fremont Street, Menlo Park

#### Why put your child in danger?

Editor:

Last week's photo of 5-year-old Hanna Kopisch riding her tiny bike in a narrow space between a row of parked cars and moving traffic is compelling.

Clearly, measures need to be taken to make pedestrians and bikers safe. But until something is done, why would parents knowingly put a child in this kind of danger day after day?

**Maria Ploeger**  
Marmona Drive, Menlo Park

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