

MENLO PARK, ATHERTON city councils
slam plans for high-speed rail. Page 5

The Almanac

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

FEBRUARY 6, 2008 | VOL. 43 NO. 23

www.TheAlmanacOnline.com



**SECTION 2
FOOD &
DRINK:**
Menlo Park
chef specializes
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capitalists.

SCIENCE

it's elementary

In many local K-5 classrooms,
science education defies state trends

— PAGE 10



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Inside

This week's news, features and community events.

FIRST SHOT



Almanac photo by Veronica Weber

Balance at the Burgess

Allison Galbraith, left, Sarah Synnestvedt, Ursula Jongeblood and Alyssa Westfield practice on the balance beam during their gymnastics class at the Burgess Gym last week. Also last week, the girls, their parents and other gym users were invited to weigh in on what the new gym should look like during city-sponsored meetings. Other residents can comment on what they'd like to see in a new gym at the next meeting of the Parks and Recreation Commission, tentatively set for Feb. 20. See story, **Page 9**.

Menlo Park

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- Chef John Sakrison of Menlo Park specializes in the care and feeding of VCs. **Cover, Section 2**

On the cover

Textbooks and written exercises remain essential components of science education in elementary schools in Woodside, Portola Valley, Atherton and Menlo Park, where kids are scoring well above state and county averages. Photo by Veronica Weber. Story begins on **Page 10**.

CALLING ON THE ALMANAC

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THE ALMANAC (ISSN 1097-3095 and USPS 459370) is published every Wednesday by Embarcadero Publishing Co., 3525 Alameda de las Pulgas, Menlo Park, CA 94025-4455. Periodicals Postage Paid at Menlo Park, CA and at additional mailing offices. Adjudicated a newspaper of general circulation for San Mateo County, the Almanac is delivered free to homes in Menlo Park, Atherton, Portola Valley and Woodside. Voluntary subscriptions for \$30 per year or \$50 per 2 years are welcome from residents of the above circulation area. Subscription rates for businesses and for residents of other communities is \$50 per year and \$80 for two years. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to the Almanac, P.O. Box 7008, Menlo Park, CA 94026-7008. Copyright ©2006 by Embarcadero Publishing Co., All rights reserved. Reproduction without permission is strictly prohibited.

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STACY - DELI

Caffe, Per Favore

At home or in Rome, cap your meal with coffee. Here are some tips so you can order with the assurance of a native. Caffe in Italy is what we would call espresso (a very small cup of very strong coffee). Americano is American-style, but still stronger than most coffee drinkers here are accustomed to. Caffe corretto has a shot of grappa, cognac, or liquor in it. Freddo tis ice coffee, and hag is decaffeinated. Caffe latte has hot milk mixed in, and is customarily served with breakfast. Cappuccino is espresso infused with steamed milk, and drunk by purists only in the morning; caffe macchiato is similar to small cappuccino – coffee with just a drop of steam milk.



Are you a coffee aficionado? Are you up on the newly popular "designer" coffees? We carry an incredible collection of fine imported coffee. Bring several varieties home to try. We also carry the very finest and freshest in produce, meats, poultry, seafood, and much, much more. Tight on time? We have a great selection of prepared and ready-to-heat foods.

HINT: On a hot summer day, order graniadi di caffe con panne - iced coffee topped with whipped cream!

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Local News

MENLO PARK | AHERTON | WOODSIDE | PORTOLA VALLEY

Elections chief predicts highest turnout in 30 years

San Mateo County's top elections officer is predicting the highest voter turnout in 30 years for the presidential primary on Tuesday, Feb. 5.

"I believe California's overall turnout will reach 66 percent and San Mateo County's may reach as high as 71 percent," said Warren Slocum, the county's chief elections officer.

Voter turnout has not exceeded 60 percent since 1980, he said.

Among factors expected to drive the high turnout, according to Mr. Slocum: Voters can elect the first female or first African American presidential candidate for the November ballot, and California and the other 21 states voting on Super Tuesday are likely to be instrumental in

choosing the candidates of the Democratic and Republican parties.

"In the past few decades, the results of the California presidential primaries have not made a difference in the outcome of any presidential nomination process," he said. "This year they will.

Another factor driving the high turnout, he said, is the "semi-open" primary that allows voters who decline to state a party

ELECTION
★ 2008 ★

Polls will be open on Election Day, Tuesday, Feb. 5, from 7 a.m. to 8 p.m. To find your polling place, check the back cover of the San Mateo County voter information pamphlet (with sample ballot) sent to all registered voters in the county. You also can call the San Mateo County Elections Office at 312-5222. For more election information, including results, go to www.TheAlmanacOnline.com.

affiliation to vote in either the Democratic or American Independent party presidential primaries. More than 20 percent of the voters in the county are registered as "decline to state."

"Decline to state" voters who choose to vote in a party primary must request either the Democratic or

American Independent ballot. "Given the historically high concentration of Democratic voters in the Bay

Area, a semi-open primary and the high number of (decline-to-state) voters, I expect turnout to be greater this election year than any held in the past 30 years."

State voters

On the state level, there are 700,000 more voters registered than there were at this time before the last presidential primary four years ago, according to a report issued by California Secretary of State Debra Bowen. Total statewide registration is 15,712,753. Of those, 43 percent are registered as Democrats, 33 percent as Republican, and 19 percent as "decline to state."

The "decline to state" category has

See **VOTE**, page 8

Beechwood School wants to buy its site from city to upgrade the campus

By **Rory Brown**
Almanac Staff Writer

Beechwood, a private K-8 school that enrolls 170 children who live in east Menlo Park and East Palo Alto, pays the city \$1 a year to lease 635,000 square feet of land for its campus on Terminal Avenue in Belle Haven.

Now the foundation that operates the school — where families pay no more than \$150 a month for their children's education — has asked the City Council to allow it to buy the land from the city in order to make \$6 million in improvements.

The Palo Alto-based California Family Foundation, which established the school 21 years ago, says it wants to own the land because it would be easier to garner donations for the capital improvements, including building new permanent

facilities. The campus is now made up of several portable buildings.

The council plans to discuss the proposal at its meeting on Tuesday, Feb. 5, which starts at 7 p.m. in the Senior Center at 110 Terminal Ave. — just across a parking lot from the school, located at 50 Terminal Ave.

Why buy?

Beechwood School started as a K-1 school in 1986, when the city granted the foundation the \$1 a year lease and agreed to its request to build a campus for east Menlo Park and East Palo Alto students on what was then an abandoned field in the city's Belle Haven neighborhood.

The lease has stayed the same, but the school's enrollment and needs have grown, according to Principal David Laurence.

"There are big limitations to our site, so if [the foundation] purchases the land, we'll likely raise more money to build a much more suitable campus," Mr. Laurence said, noting his office also doubles as a classroom twice a week. He said the school could build a two-story facility to replace the current cluster of outdated portable classrooms.

"We're doing a really good job with the kids, but we need more space," said Marilyn Anderson, executive director of the foundation. "We're educating children, we're educating



Almanac photo by Veronica Weber

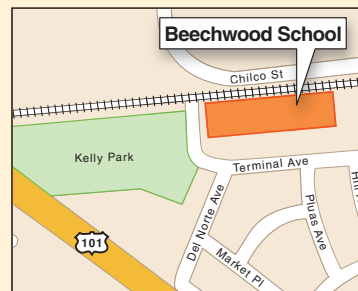
Beechwood School second-graders (at right) Tamaya Johnson, Artesia McLaughlin and Anthony Sanchez practice their dance routine during music class.

fellow citizens ... and we're making a difference."

About 35 percent of the students live in Menlo Park. Ms. Anderson said all of the students at Beechwood are on scholarship, with families paying, at most, \$150 a month for their children's education.

The school is highly subsidized by donations, with tuition fees covering just \$200,000 of the school's \$2 million annual operating budget, according to data provided by the foundation.

Asked about the value of the



Beechwood School is located at 50 Terminal Ave. in Belle Haven.

site, Ms. Anderson said it has not yet been appraised.

'An investment'

In a Jan. 22 letter to the city, foundation board member Richard Jacobsen stressed that the school provides an option for Belle Haven families who live in the Ravenswood School

District, which is known for high drop-out rates and low performance scores.

"It is important that committed families in that area continue to have other options for the education of their children," Mr. Jacobsen said in the letter. "The money which we have invested in the school and which we will invest in the school in the future is in fact an investment in the future of our community."

When asked if the city should sell the land to the foundation, Mayor Andy Cohen said an enthusiastic "yes." "This school is a success story for everybody," he said.

Other council members said they didn't know enough about the request to form an opinion on the foundation's proposal. ■

MEETING

With projects proposed for eastern Menlo Park on the agenda, the City Council will meet at 7 p.m. Tuesday, Feb. 5, at the Senior Center in the city's Belle Haven neighborhood, instead of its usual meeting place in the council chambers in the Civic Center. Due to the lack of broadcasting capabilities, the meeting will not be broadcast live on television or via the city's Web site.



Woodside firefighters, from left, Capt. Marshall Hird, Tim Richards, Frank Castillo and Dave Heckman take a break while battling the Harris wildfire in San Diego County last fall.

Southland fires have lessons for Woodside, PV, fire crew says

By Andrea Gemmet
Almanac Staff Writer

Racing down an empty freeway in their fire engine, firefighters from Woodside saw flames engulfing condominium buildings on either side the road. But they drove right through it and kept on going. They had another wildfire to tackle.

Woodside fire Capt. Marshall Hird was one of four firefighters from the Woodside Fire Protection District who spent a week in San Diego County in October battling the Harris fire, a fierce blaze that charred over 90,000 acres and is blamed for five deaths. While they were there, as many as 17 wildfires were raging in Southern California at one time.

"It was amazing. You'd look around for just miles and miles, and everything was burnt," Capt. Hird said.

As part of a strike team from San Mateo County, Capt. Hird and his Woodside colleagues Tim Richards, Dave Heckman and Frank Castillo spent much of their time protecting homes and other structures.

"We did a lot of good there, and saved a lot of structures, but unfortunately, a few times it wasn't safe and we had to move," Capt. Hird said. "One time we had to cut and run; we just disconnected the hose and left it on the ground and jumped in the engine. When we came back, the hose was burnt and the house had burned down."

While local firefighters are not exactly unaware of the potential for devastating wildfires right here at home, the experience was

still an eye-opener, Capt. Hird said. The fire traveled amazingly quickly, despite the fact that San Diego County doesn't have very much in the way of flammable vegetation compared with the Woodside and Portola Valley area, he said.

"It's just so much more dense here, in terms of fuel load," he said.

Lessons brought home

The key lesson boils down to this: eternal vigilance. Property owners need to make a concerted effort every year to make their homes safe, Capt. Hird said. That means clearing dry brush, pruning back trees, mowing dry grass, and clearing leaves off roofs.

"The biggest message is that you've got to keep it going. Every year. It's not just a one-year thing," he said.

Woodside firefighters conduct annual property inspections in the district's neighborhoods on a rotating basis. Most people are responsive when firefighters point out dangers on their properties, but there are always some hold-outs, he said.

Help is available in the form of the fire district's free wood chipper program, and information about creating "defensible space" that could save a house threatened by wildfire is on the district's Web site, www.WoodsideFire.org.

Battling the Harris fire was exhausting work, but also a real educational experience, Capt. Hird said.

"You learn more in a week fighting fires down there than you could in a year of wildfire training back here," he said. ■

City plans walking tour of El Camino

Menlo Park residents, public officials and business owners have talked about the need to revamp properties along El Camino Real, and now everyone has the opportunity to walk the walk — literally.

The city will hold a walking tour of El Camino Real starting at 10 a.m. on Saturday, Feb. 9. The idea behind the walk is to allow participants to interact with city staff and a city-hired consultant to talk about the history and the potential future for properties along the city's main thoroughfare, according to Thomas Rogers, a planning

associate with the city.

To attend, meet at the intersection of El Camino Real and Encinal Avenue, or the intersection of El Camino Real and Live Oak Avenue at 10 a.m. Those who start at Encinal will tour the north end of El Camino, and those who start at Live Oak will tour the south. Both tours will run until noon.

After a break for lunch, the groups will switch sides, allowing participants to tour the other side of El Camino from 1 to 3 p.m. A walking tour of Santa Cruz Avenue is scheduled for Feb. 23.

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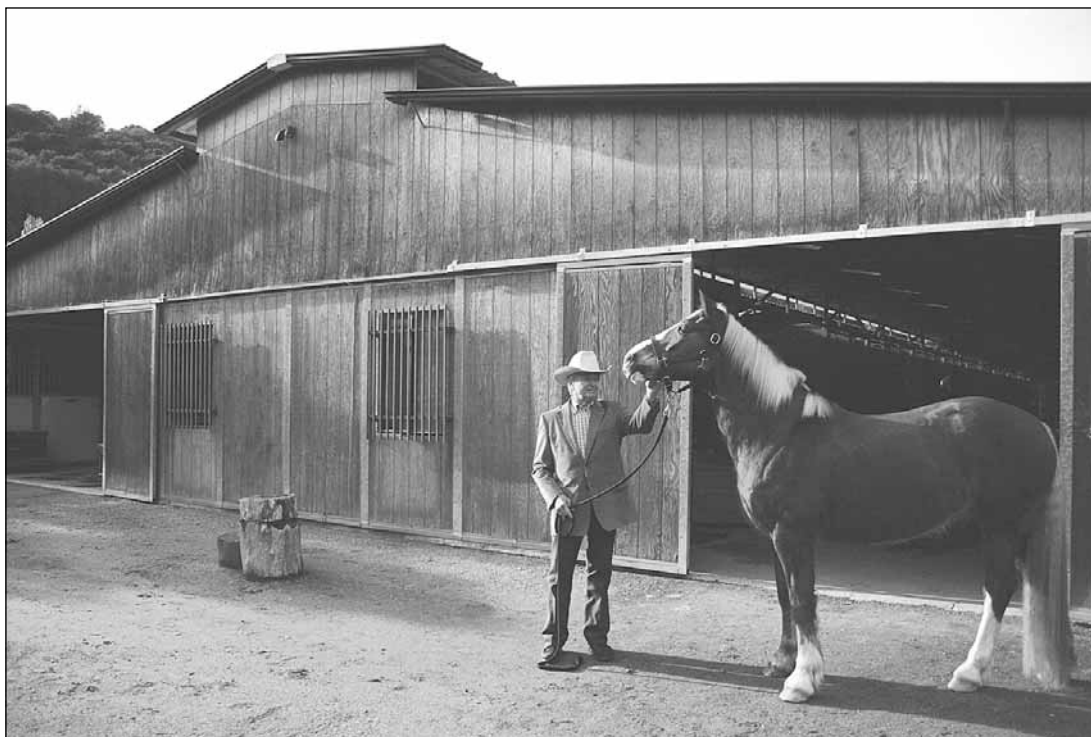
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Almanac photos by Veronica Weber

Horseman of the Year Glenn Atkinson with "Pablo" near his home in Woodside.

Atkinson: 'Horseman of the Year'

By Megan Rawlins
Special to the Almanac

The horseman's world is full of romance and mystique, hardship and majesty. On Jan. 26, this world recognized one of its own, Glenn Atkinson. He received the 2007 Outstanding Horseperson-Citizen award from the Mounted Patrol of San Mateo County.

Each year the Mounted Patrol recognizes a local horseperson for professional, charitable and community service, and for work to ensure that the area remains horse-friendly. Mr. Atkinson, a 33-year Woodside resident, certainly fits the bill. Born in Okeechobee, Florida, he got his first pony at age 5, when he and the pony were about the same height. It was love at first sight.

"I'd been riding probably since I was in diapers," Mr. Atkinson says. His father was a horseman; this life was in his blood. But, he adds, "It's different when you own [the pony]."

What followed over the next 75 years, he says, has been a life of horsemanship, building and managing equine facilities, and raising cattle.

Mr. Atkinson's day job was in the construction business; he remembers helping to build large parts of Interstate 280 in the 1970s as vice president and general manager of San Mateo-based construction firm L.C. Smith and Company. His construction expertise and love for horses conveniently converged.

"I've built six or seven barns that hold about 200 horses in Woodside," he says. "I'm still doing it." He offers his experi-

ence and expertise to horse facilities throughout the area.

In 1987, Mr. Atkinson and his wife, Nancy, started their own stable, Portola Farms, a barn complex in Woodside.

"I still run the place; I drive the tractors," he says. "I love watching the youngsters ride; 5-, 6-, 7-year-olds stopping, backing, turning [the horses]. It's a beautiful sight."



'I'd been riding probably since I was in diapers,' says Glenn Atkinson.

In the past 20 years, the Atkinsons have often opened Portola Farms to local schools and charities for fundraising events, which have raised hundreds of thousands of dollars.

Mr. Atkinson admits being naturally competitive. This tendency kept him at the top of his game when he played polo on a professional basis, competing all over the country. When Mr. Atkinson was 30, he says, his brother introduced him to this fast-paced and dangerous game. They played together at the Menlo Circus Club for 50 years, he says.

"We won a helluva lot more than we lost," he boasts. "We were unbeatable."

The adrenaline rush has always been a part of Mr. Atkinson's life. In 1944, he remembers, he was parachuting behind enemy lines to secure bridges and roads for Allied troops. He sustained injuries during the Battle of the Bulge.

At 83, Mr. Atkinson is no spring chicken, but no one seems to have told him that.

"I just did a five-day ride in Pebble Beach where we did eight hours a day in the saddle," he says. "And I ride the trails in Woodside; they're beautiful."

The horseman is a dying breed, and the popular, idealized vision of it rarely exists. Caring for and training the animals take a lot of time, work, money and space. Space, more than anything else, is increasingly becoming the limiting factor.

Mr. Atkinson has used his prominence in the local horse world and his position on the Architectural and Site Review Board of the town of Woodside to ensure the area remains horse friendly.

The award from the Mounted Patrol of San Mateo County cites his service to the equestrian community and his support in preserving the county's equestrian traditions, trails and stables.

Mr. Atkinson has been a member of the Mounted Patrol for 20 years. He played a key role in getting a new barn built at the Mounted Patrol grounds off of Tripp Road in Woodside.

The local division of the Mounted Patrol was established in 1942 as a mounted arm of the county Sheriff's Office. Today, the group organizes charity equestrian events, including the Fourth of July NorCal Junior Rodeo and the San Mateo County Horsemen's Association Show.

The members still help the sheriff when called upon. "He'll call us out for search and rescue missions when someone's lost in the mountains," he says, adding that they have always been very successful at finding people. ■

REAL ESTATE Q&A

by Monica Corman



A Break in Interest Rates

Q: I have a low-rate loan that is going to adjust later this year. I am pleased to see rates coming down but wonder if I should refinance now or wait a bit to see if rates come down further?

A: It is safe to say that interest rates will not be rising anytime soon, although they may fluctuate as they often do. You should keep watching interest rates carefully and when you think they are attractive enough and meet your needs, you should go ahead and refinance. You should also look at what the rate for your current loan would be after it adjusts. Perhaps it will be low

enough that you would do well to keep it and not have to pay title, escrow, and refinancing fees.

You should also consider your long term plans. How many years do you plan to stay in your house?

If you are only going to be there a short time (two years or less) you could let your rate adjust because it may cost you more to refinance than the adjustment will be. If you plan to be there a long time you should analyze your financial goals to decide how soon you want to pay off your entire loan. Once you make this determination, find a mortgage loan program that fits your needs.

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Two councils slam plans for high-speed rail

■ Big concerns over impact of grade separations on local communities.

By Rory Brown

Almanac Staff Writer

Local critics of California High Speed Rail are keyed up after city council members from Menlo Park and Atherton blasted plans for high-speed trains to zoom through the middle of both towns. But the fate of the long-planned rail project isn't up to officials from two towns — the decision will fall in the hands of all California voters.

Council members from both cities met Jan. 29 to talk about grade separations — building overpasses or underpasses to separate the Caltrain tracks from the roadway at intersections. A key variable in the grade separation discussion is high-speed rail.

The California High Speed Rail Authority is proposing a \$40 billion train system that would transport passengers

along a San Francisco-Central Valley-Los Angeles route at speeds up to 220 mph.

The rail authority is planning to use the Caltrain corridor to connect San Jose to San Francisco, and wants to build two additional tracks along the Caltrain line to accommodate the faster trains.

But a four-track system requires grade separations, according to state regulations, and that means the tracks and roadway would need to be separated at six local streets: Ravenswood, Oak Grove, Glenwood and Encinal avenues in Menlo Park, and Watkins Avenue and Fair Oaks Lane in Atherton.

The required grade separations, although paid for by the rail authority, would mean calamity to local communities, according to most council members.

"I think high-speed rail up the Peninsula is a disaster," said Menlo Park Councilman Richard Cline — a notion Atherton Councilman Charles Marsala was quick to second, comparing grade separations to the giant asteroid in the film "Armageddon."

The strong opposition excited local critics of high-speed rail, who have long argued that constructing grade separations would worsen congestion, be more costly, and severely impact nearby homes and businesses, as the state may want to obtain land outside of the current Caltrain right of way.

"There's the NIMBY (not in my backyard) issue here, for one," said Menlo Park resident Martin Engel after the meeting. "But this beyond-expensive project, given the state budget, is the most incredibly stupid idea for California, whether or not it's in [Menlo Park's] backyard."

Mr. Engel, who lives adjacent to the tracks, is starting a non-profit group with neighbors Morris Brown and Mike Brady called "Derail" to oppose the high-speed rail project.

Proponents

Local proponents say grade separations would allow traffic, bicycles, and pedestrians to pass over or under the tracks, reducing congestion and improving

safety. Supporters also say the project has huge environmental benefits, with the potential to take cars off crowded freeways.

"I think the [Menlo Park and Atherton] council members missed the mark," said Jim Bigelow, chairman of the Menlo Park Chamber of Commerce Transportation Committee. "There needs to be some political reality ... and these council members need to get a lot more informed."

Menlo Park Councilman John Boyle didn't declare support for high-speed rail or grade separations, but after the meeting he questioned the reasoning behind his colleagues' opposition.

"For individual council members to take a position on high-speed rail, when we haven't had discussions about it as a council, I think that's premature," he said. "It's better to engage and work with [state transportation groups] rather than just say, 'Hell no.'"

Up to the voters

High-speed rail depends on the approval of a \$10 billion

bond measure slated for the November ballot.

The bond needs a majority vote (50 percent plus one) to pass, and further study and planning would get under way for the San Francisco-to-Los Angeles connection. The rail authority has proposed building the system as far north as Sacramento and as far south as San Diego.

Atherton Councilman Jerry Carlson said the state's efforts should focus on improving local transit networks rather than connecting the northern and southern parts of the state.

"It's too bad it's not a \$10 billion bond measure to work on regional transportation," Mr. Carlson said. "High-speed rail only helps some people."

Mayors Andy Cohen of Menlo Park and Jim Janz of Atherton also opposed plans for high-speed rail and grade separations, but had to do so as citizens during the public comment period of the meeting. Both councilmen own homes adjacent to the Caltrain tracks, presenting a potential conflict of interest. ■

Eshoo endorses Obama

By Renee Batti

Almanac News Editor

Congresswoman Anna Eshoo, D-Menlo Park, threw her support to Democratic presidential candidate Barack Obama on Jan. 30, stating that the Illinois Democrat is best suited to lead the country.

"I've thought long and hard about making this choice, and it moves beyond gender or race," Ms. Eshoo told the Almanac last week. "I've chosen to support Barack Obama because I think he's the best suited for [the presidency]," she said. "He inspires me."

"So many of his qualities are really a profile of the district I represent," she continued. "I'm excited. ... And I'm really looking forward to Tuesday."

In a prepared statement, Rep. Eshoo elaborated on the characteristics she believes Sen. Obama shares with her Bay Area constituents, saying he is "innovative, collaborative, optimistic and dedicated to change as a way to make things better."

"Senator Obama's candidacy is historic, and so is the reaction to it. He has brought thousands of disaffected and

skeptical people back into the political process and he has struck a chord with thousands of young voters."

Yee endorsement

State Sen. Leland Y. Yee, whose district includes Portola Valley and Woodside, also is endorsing Sen. Obama. He had backed John Edwards before he dropped out of the race.

Spokesman Adam Keigwin said the endorsement by Sen. Yee, the first Chinese American senator in California history, is expected to provide a significant boost to the Obama campaign. "Asian Americans make up 14 percent of California's population and in 2008, turnout within the community is expected to be at an all-time high," Mr. Keigwin said in a press release.

In the press release, Sen. Yee commented: "As Senator Ted Kennedy so eloquently said ... with Barack Obama we will turn the page on the old politics of misrepresentation and distortion. I believe that Barack's message of hope has captivated America unlike any candidate in recent times." ■

Sheeper plans dome for Burgess Pool

By Rory Brown

Almanac Staff Writer

Tim Sheeper, whose private company operates Menlo Park's public Burgess Aquatics Center, is planning to purchase a 6,600-square-foot, 20-foot-tall plastic dome to place over one of the pools.

The dome, which could be up by the end of the month, will cover the smaller, instructional pool at the aquatics center, providing a warmer and

"more comfortable" environment for swimmers during the cold fall and winter months, Mr. Sheeper said.

"This can truly make the pool more of a year-round experience," Mr. Sheeper said, noting his company, Team Sheeper LLC, will pay to purchase and maintain the dome, but he plans on donating the enclosure to the city.

He said the dome, which stays inflated thanks to several fans, will likely be inflated from November through

March each year.

Mr. Sheeper would not say how much the dome costs, but said it is custom-made by a company named Ameri-Brand. He said he's still "working out the details" with the city's planning staff regarding the engineering of the dome.

Mr. Sheeper's company is two years into a five-year contract with the city to operate aquatics center. He took over the \$6.8 million publicly funded facility in 2006. ■

MP police substation could move forward ... finally

After more than three years of delays, financial hurdles and coordination problems, efforts to build a 3,800-square-foot police substation east of U.S. 101 could finally move forward at the Menlo Park City Council's Feb. 5 meeting.

Council members will consider spending an additional \$457,000

to build the substation, where officers would be stationed, and residents could obtain police reports and parking permits, as well as pay their water bills.

The project was approved by the City Council in November 2004, but several years of design changes and other problems

have kept the project from moving forward, said Police Chief Bruce Goitia in a staff report.

With the additional funds, construction can finally start on the project, he said.

The total cost of the substation, after the additional funds, is estimated to be \$2.23 million.

VOTE

continued from page 5

grown the most in the past four years, from 16.43 percent of total registrants to 19.37 percent, according to the report.

While the overall number of registered voters has grown, the percentage of eligible voters who

are registered actually dropped slightly in the past four years, from 69 percent to 68.5 percent, the report says.

Students at polls

Around 400 high school students from 23 San Mateo County public and private high schools have been preparing to work at polls across

the county on Tuesday, according to the county Elections Office.

The students underwent two hours of after-school training, including in how to use the eSlate electronic voting system.

The students are paid \$125, but some choose to donate their earnings in order to receive community service credit.

School election: no candidates yet

■ Deadline to file is Friday, Feb. 8.

By Marjorie Mader

Almanac Staff Writer

With the spotlight on “Super Tuesday” presidential primaries, some people in the community may not be aware that there is a deadline this week for candidates to file for a special all-mail election to fill the fifth seat on the board of the Portola Valley School District.

As of The Almanac’s press deadline on Monday, no candidate had filed.

The filing deadline for the May 6 all-mail election is 5 p.m. Friday, Feb. 8. The election was called by the board to fill a seat left vacant when board member Donna Carano resigned Oct. 18. After the election, there will be almost two years remaining on the term.

The board decided to call the election after it deadlocked 2-2 on appointing one of two applicants for the board seat: Karen Jordan, a former board member whose four-year term ended in December; and Brad Turner, who came in third in the Nov.

■ SCHOOLS

6 election to fill two seats on the board. (Mr. Turner received 790 votes, 27 votes shy of Steve Humphreys’ vote total.)

Ms. Jordan was supported by board members Ray Villareal and Judy Mendelsohn, the top vote-getter in the Nov. 6 election. Mr. Turner was supported by board members Don Collat and Steve Humphreys, who was elected Nov. 6.

In a letter to the community written by board president Villareal and signed by the other board members, the board said: “While we had two excellent candidates who could serve the board very ably, it became clear that members of the community held strong opinions and that they were applying different criteria in assessing the strengths of the two candidates.”

Given the board members’ differences in opinion about who would be the best candidate and “feedback from the community expressing strong and differing opinions,” Mr. Villareal said, calling an election will allow the community to

choose its representative for the vacant seat and will focus the school board and the administration on their main mission — “working together on behalf of our schools.”

In the background was the possibility that relatively few community members could successfully challenge whomever the board appointed, and that would result in a special election.

The May 6 election raises some “what if” questions. For example what if nobody files for the vacancy? In that case, there is no election. The board would then appoint someone, assuming three of the four board members can agree on the person.

What if only one person files? There would be no election and the board would appoint the person who filed.

For more information about filing, go to www.shapethefuture.org or call the San Mateo County Registration-Elections Division at 312-5293. Prospective candidates may make an appointment to get more information by calling Lupe Sanchez, candidate filing officer, at 312-5222. ■

Have you had your say on new gym?

By Rory Brown

Almanac Staff Writer

Efforts to build a new Burgess Gym with Menlo Park taxpayers’ dollars got off to a confusing start last week, as gym user groups and neighbors were invited to weigh in on what the new gym should look like, but the general public was largely left out of the picture.

To kick off efforts to build the new gym, the city held several “focus group” meetings aimed at garnering input from people who frequent the gym — such as residents in adult sports leagues, or parents with children in the gymnastics program — and those who live nearby.

At the meetings, a city-hired consultant took a written record of suggestions about what should or shouldn’t be incorporated into the design of a new gym.

Although fliers about the meetings were handed out at the gym to sports participants and distributed to the neigh-

borhood, there was little public notification of the meeting to the rest of the general public and the press.

Sports user groups and neighbors may be most impacted by the design and features of the new gym, but the new facility will be paid for by the next wave of funding from Measure T — the 2001 bond proposal passed by Menlo Park voters to improve the city’s parks and recreation facilities.

“My understanding is that the city was looking for more of a sample of the community rather than opening it up to everybody,” said City Manager Glen Rojas of the meetings. Mr. Rojas added that the city may opt to hold more meetings to get more public input.

City Councilman Richard Cline said he plans to push the city manager to “restart the meetings entirely” and make sure the entire public is notified.

“There’s an imperfect notification system in the city,” Mr.

Cline said. “In order to build a community project, we have to get more community input.”

Parks and Recreation Commission Chairman Nick Naclerio said the aim of the focus groups was to get specific input from people who are familiar with the gym, not to block public input.

“We’re not trying to exclude anyone from providing input,” he said. “We’re trying to figure out the deficiencies with the current complex, and what people want in a new complex. Everyone will get their say.”

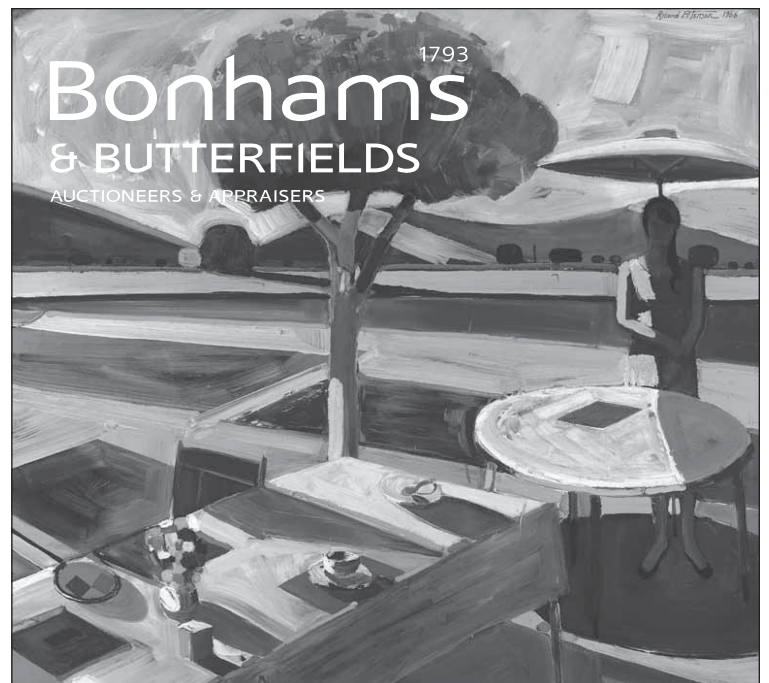
Mr. Naclerio said residents can comment on what they’d like to see in a new gym at the next meeting of the parks commission, tentatively scheduled for Feb. 20. He said parks commissioners will discuss the new Burgess Gym at each monthly meeting until narrowing the options down to three potential designs that will go before the City Council. ■

Russ report: Local rainfall total is 13.6 inches

Another inch of rain fell in central Menlo Park over the last week, said Cotton Street resident Bill Russ on Monday, Feb. 4.

That brings the total from Mr. Russ’ rain gauge to 13.6

inches since July 1, 2007, compared to 4.95 inches at this time last year. The rain season runs from July 1 through June 30. The normal seasonal total for the area is 16 to 18 inches, Mr. Russ said.



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COVER STORY

SCIENCE

it's elementary

THE EXTRAORDINARY IS ORDINARY IN MANY LOCAL K-5 CLASSROOMS, WHERE SCIENCE EDUCATION IS DEFYING STATE TRENDS

By David Boyce

A drawing of a bean sprout by science aide Gwen Solomon at Oak Knoll Elementary School makes the connection to the day's third-grade science lesson — placing sprouts in water-filled tubs in anticipation of a bush-bean crop seven weeks later. Beans are dicotyledons, meaning that they emerge from their seed cases with dual leaf-like appendages rather than the single appendage in a monocotyledon such as popcorn.

Take two steel balls, one being about twice the size of the other, and two cups filled with the same amount of water. Put one ball in each cup and explain which cup will show the most change in the water level and why.

If you're a parent of primary-school kids and live in the Almanac's circulation area, it's likely that your children won't have trouble with this question. On annual standardized science tests, students from local elementary schools routinely turn in above-average scores.

The same cannot be said for much of the state.

California ranked 43rd, just ahead of last-place Mississippi, in fourth-grade scores on standardized science tests administered in 44 states in 2005, according to data from the National Assessment of Educational Progress, a unit of the U.S. Department of Education.

More recent results for the Bay Area in 2007 show about 46 percent of public school fifth-graders scoring above average on state science tests.

These statistics lead off a recent survey of 923 Bay Area teachers in grades K-5 that concludes that the teachers are not receiving enough training in science instruction. Of the respondents, 36 percent report receiving no science training at all in the last three years, and another 20 percent less than three hours.

The survey also concludes that teachers feel much more prepared to teach arithmetic, English and the humanities, and that 80 percent teach science less than 60 minutes per week.

The survey was done in October 2007 by the University of California at Berkeley's Lawrence Hall of Science and WestEd, a San Francisco-based nonprofit education research agency. The results may understate the problem in that "district personnel and teachers who took the time to respond ... were more likely to be more engaged in science education than those who did not."

This gloomy picture seems a world away from public schools in Atherton, Portola Valley, Woodside and Menlo Park, where officials report that primary grade teachers have been training in science instruction for years and that science topics are significant part of class work every week.

At Woodside Elementary School, for example, fourth- and fifth-graders receive three hours of science instruction per week, while third-graders





Almanac photo by Veronica Weber

2007 SCIENCE TEST SCORES FOR LOCAL FIFTH-GRADERS

District SCHOOL	Advanced	Proficient	Basic	Below basic	Far below basic
Las Lomas					
LA ENTRADA	39%	39%	19%	2%	2%
Menlo Park					
ENCINAL	33%	49%	15%	2%	1%
OAK KNOLL	54%	29%	10%	1%	6%
Portola Valley					
CORTE MADERA	38%	53%	9%	0%	0%
Woodside					
WOODSIDE	26%	50%	20%	4%	0%
Ravenswood*					
BELLE HAVEN	1%	3%	33%	20%	43%
JAMES FLOOD	0%	0%	42%	35%	23%
WILLOW OAKS	2%	9%	53%	21%	16%
San Mateo County					
	15%	32%	32%	12%	9%
California					
	9%	28%	37%	15%	11%

Source: California Department of Education

The fifth-graders from the well-funded Woodside, Las Lomas, Portola Valley and Menlo Park school districts scored above state and county averages on the 2007 science test. Students scored less well in Menlo Park schools in the Ravenswood City School District, where incomes tend to be low, English is often not the primary language at home, and resources such as trained teachers and science-program funding may be in short supply.

**Note: Lisa Pruitt, the director of professional development for the Ravenswood district, declined to talk with the Almanac about K-5 science instruction. Ms. Pruitt said she did not want to participate in a discussion that could serve to validate the conclusions of the October 2007 survey that is the basis for this story.*

get one and a half hours, says teacher and science specialist Kevin Kinsella.

Likewise in Menlo Park schools, third-graders study science for an hour and a half per week, and it's closer to four hours for fourth- and fifth-graders, says Jo Sauer Mitchell, assistant superintendent for curriculum and instruction.

An important local factor: engaged Silicon Valley parents who tend to be well educated, comfortable with science, actively supportive of science programs in school, and generous during fundraising campaigns. School foundation gifts of \$1 million a year are common locally.

"The community that we are in is kind of ready or poised to do better than average," Mr. Kinsella says of Woodside.

"Parents expect a strong academic program in all the areas," says Claire Abrams, the curriculum adviser for the Las Lomas district. "We need to provide a full-service academic experience for kids."

"Not every school district has a foundation like we have and the (state) budget keeps going haywire," she adds. "One year, you have money and one year, you don't. How do you plan for that? It takes money to run a good school and meet everybody's needs."

Indeed, science test results published by the state tell the story. At La Entrada in the Las Lomas School District, 68 percent of fifth-graders received above-average scores in 2007, while in the Woodside district, the number was 76 percent.

In Portola Valley, 91 percent of fifth-graders got above-average scores in 2007 at Corte Madera School. At Encinal and Oak Knoll in Menlo Park, the numbers were 82 percent and 83 percent.

Preparing the ground

Science is a vast and complicated series of topics, but learning about it has to start somewhere. In the third grade at Oak Knoll School, students

study concepts associated with matter and energy, plant and animal life, and some astronomy, says teacher Sue McCrary.

Right now, the students are growing bush beans hydroponically in the classroom over the next seven weeks. They embed bean sprouts in floating platforms in tubs of water, but only after reviewing what they've got in their hands: a dicotyledonous seedling with leaves, roots and a stem.

Gone are the days when dicotyledon — a double-leafed seedling versus a single-leafed monocotyledon — first came up in a high school survey course. The finer points of recognizing mature monocots and dicots in the field will come, but the foundation has already been laid.

With this botany lesson, third-graders can explore other disciplines. How many seeds does a single sprout produce? How many seeds from 10 plants? How many in three years? Can it be shown in a graph? Is the bean plant's life cycle worthy of a letter describing it to a friend?


Such connections are suggested as exercises in the workbook that comes with the boxed science kits for the teachers.

A systematic approach

The teaching of K-5 science used to be a "helter-skelter" kind of thing, says Oak Knoll third-grade teacher Sue McCrary. Last year, Menlo Park schools district-wide adopted the Full Option Science System, a package developed by U.C. Berkeley's Lawrence Hall of Science. FOSS is used in the Menlo Park, Las Lomas, Portola Valley and Woodside school districts.

The kits, which contain everything a teacher needs, reflect the state's content standards for science and make life much easier for teachers, many

See **SCIENCE**, next page



EYE CARE NEWS

Presented by Mark Schmidt Licensed Optician

A PRACTICAL OPTION

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P.S. Photochromatic lenses are an especially suitable option for those eyes are particularly sensitive to light.

Mark Schmidt is an American Board of Opticianry and National Contact Lens Examiners Certified Optician licensed by the Medical Board of California. He can be easily reached at Menlo Optical, 1166 University Drive, Menlo Park. 650-322-3900.



Almanac photo by Veronica Weber

Lily Edelstein, a third-grader in Oak Knoll Elementary School in Menlo Park, applies herself to the study of the life cycle of bush beans.

“I would be very surprised to find a kid who says, ‘I don’t like my science class’”

— **Jo Sauer Mitchell**, assistant superintendent, Menlo Park City School District

SCIENCE

continued from previous page

of whom tend to be uncomfortable teaching science, says Ms. Abrams of the Las Lomas district.

“Science is difficult,” she says in an interview with an Almanac reporter. “I think it’s the fact that people like you and me never had to study it much.”

By training most K-5 teachers in the same program, it “levels the playing field so that all kids are getting an equally rich science experience,” she says.

The Menlo Park district has one person spending eight to 10 hours a week replenishing the kit boxes, Ms. Mitchell says.

In Portola Valley, teachers add their own materials, literature and favorite experiments, Ormondale School Principal Jennifer Warren says. “Ormondale has always had a love of science, so weaving in the traditional favorites that are linked to the grade level content-standards has been a key part of this new (kit) adoption process.”

At Woodside Elementary, students in grades 3 through 5 study science in a dedicated classroom, a rarity in elementary schools and a boon to a science teacher, Mr. Kinsella says.

School districts with the wherewithal to afford science specialists tend to have them travel from classroom to classroom with their equipment on a cart, and they tend to be shared among schools, he says.

Having a science background is another rarity, he says. Mr. Kinsella has a bachelor’s degree in biological sciences and a teaching credential in life science. Oak Knoll’s Ms. McCrary was a pre-med student in college.

An offer they can’t refuse

What if a kid doesn’t like science? “You can’t say, ‘I don’t feel like taking science,’” Ms. Abrams says, adding: “I’ve never seen a kid, when they’re doing a lab, who isn’t somehow excited or engaged in what they’re doing.”

“I would be very surprised to find a kid who says, ‘I don’t like my science class,’” Ms. Mitchell says.

“I think it makes a difference when they’ve seen it, talked about it, and actually touched it,” Ms. McCrary says.

Science literacy is increasingly important and a science-lite path is not really an option anymore, Mr. Kinsella says.

Toward that end, the science programs in the Woodside, Menlo Park and Las Lomas districts regularly benefit from the districts’ annual “fund-a-need” fundraising efforts.

The science program at Woodside has produced many participants in state science fairs, as have the programs in the Las Lomas, Menlo Park and Portola Valley districts.

Science instruction can produce interesting dilemmas. On the wall in Mr. Kinsella’s classroom is a collection of unanswered student questions: Where do comets get their water? What makes a planet start moving? Are meteors on fire in the atmosphere or are they vaporizing?

Occasionally, he says, a student will resolve such puzzles with: “It’s that way because God made it that way.”

“There are many different ways to find answers to things,” he says. “Eventually, you have to choose what works for you.”

For Woodside seventh-grader Cammie Merten, concerns about global warming grew out of a class taught by Mr. Kinsella on naturalist John Muir and the valley that was lost to sight after the damming of the Tuolumne River to create the Hetch-Hetchy reservoir.

“I think that had something to do with my science project this year,” she says.

Cammie built two solar water heaters — one with unpainted copper pipe and the other with black plastic tubing — to determine which material was better at retaining heat. Her conclusion: plastic tubing loses heat more slowly than copper and reaches operating temperature faster after overnight darkness.

“I don’t want our planet to become all polluted,” she says. “I want our planet to stay healthy and I know that solar products are one way to cut down (on) fossil fuel use.” ■

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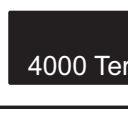
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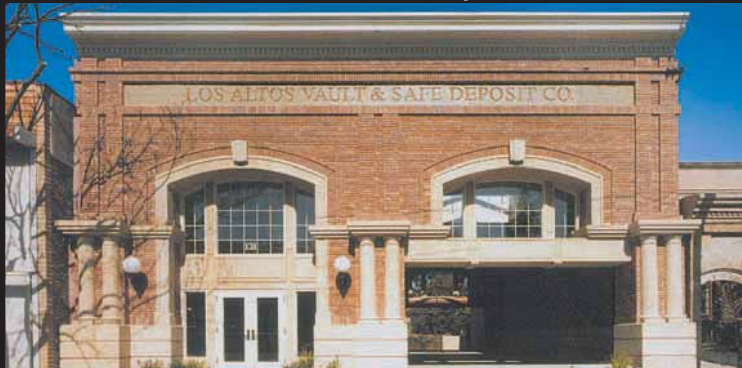
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Park supporters kick off new campaign for sales tax

By Marion Softky

Almanac Staff Writer

Park supporters are ready to try, try again to pass a 1/8 cent sales tax measure to maintain and improve parks in San Mateo County and its cities.

In 2006, Measure A suffered an agonizing defeat, garnering 55 percent of the vote on a crowded ballot — far short of the two-thirds needed to pass.

The need for money dedicated solely to parks has not gone away, so park advocates are preparing to do it right this time.

“When times get tough, what goes first? Parks,” said Supervisor Adrienne Tissier, president of the Board of Supervisors, to an enthusiastic crowd of mayors, city council members, park officials and enthusiasts gathered at a San Mateo office building Jan. 31. “We need to get ahead of the curve.”

Sponsors are conducting polls and assessing support for a new measure. They haven’t yet decided whether to put a measure on the ballot in June or November. Supervisor Jerry Hill noted that to put the measure on the June ballot, the board needs to act at either of its regularly scheduled meetings on Feb. 12 or Feb. 26.

This time supporters of Parks for the Future want to raise \$500,000 to campaign for the measure; the \$250,000 raised in 2006 “wasn’t quite enough,” said Supervisor Hill.

The measure’s backers got off to a good start last week. Ambassador Bill Lane of Portola Valley donated \$25,000; Audrey Rust gave \$25,000 on behalf of POST (the Peninsula Open Space Trust); and the county Parks and Recreation Foundation gave \$50,000.

It’s not just county parks and open spaces that need maintenance and protection, Ms. Rust said. City parks and recreation programs are crucial for the experience of residents and families. “It’s important that city parks are well taken care of.”

The 1/8-cent sales tax would

raise approximately \$16 million a year. This would mostly go to city parks and recreation departments, and to county parks. The Ladera and Highlands recreation districts, and the Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District would each receive a small share.

This really would be extra money for parks, supporters say. The ballot measure requires that agencies maintain their existing funding for parks in order to get the new money.

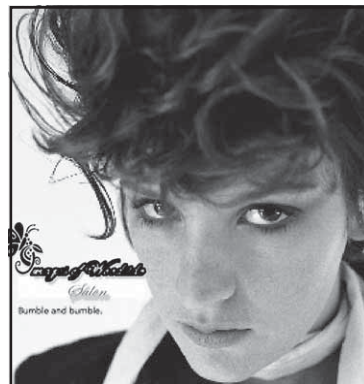
The tax measure would cost the average person \$18 a year, supporters said.

Julia Bott, executive director of the Parks and Recreation Foundation, urged people to give money, and to contact friends and potential supporters. “We have to have \$500,000 to reach people,” she said. “We also need people to reach people.”

For information, call the foundation at 321-5812; e-mail Ms. Bott at Julia@SupportParks.org; or go to supportparks.org. ■

‘When times get tough, what goes first? Parks.’

SUPERVISOR ADRIENNE TISSIER



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Requiring teaching about climate change

A bill authored by state Sen. Joe Simitian, D-Palo Alto, that would require climate change to be added to the environmental studies curriculum of California schools passed the Senate Jan. 30 on a 26-13 vote. The bill, SB 908, now goes to the state Assembly for consideration.

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February 2008

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Tuesday, February 12

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Representatives from local organizations

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AARP Driver Safety Program, Fridays, February 8 and 15, 9 a.m. – 1 p.m.

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What You Need to Know About Warfarin, Wednesday, February 13, 6 – 8 p.m.

A PAMF pharmacist will discuss what warfarin is, why you are taking it and how you can help yourself.

Learning About Heart Failure, Wednesday, February 13, 2:30 – 4 p.m. and Friday, February 22, 10 – 11:30 a.m.

This class, taught by a cardiology nurse practitioner, discusses medications used in treatment, dietary requirements, weight monitoring, self-care, activity guidelines, and symptom recognition and reporting, and more.

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PAMF’s specially trained volunteers will provide advice and answer questions about the advance health care directive. No cost.

Support Groups

Cancer (1st & 3rd Tuesdays) • **Diabetes** (1st Wednesday) • **Multiple Sclerosis** (2nd & 4th Mondays) • **Sleep Apnea** (1st Thursday) • **Alcohol and Drug Education** (Every Tuesday) • **Healing Imagery for Cancer Patients** (February 6 & 20)

For information on class fees and to register, call the Education Division at 650-853-2960.



**CITY OF MENLO PARK
STATE OF CALIFORNIA**

ENGINEERING DIVISION

NOTICE TO BIDDERS

FOR

**SAND HILL ROAD RESERVOIR #2 STAIRWAY
MEDIABLASTING & COATING PROJECT**

1. **PRE-BID MEETING.** Bidders are required to attend a pre bid meeting to discuss the project scope of work. The pre-bid meeting shall be held at 10:00 A.M. on **Wednesday, February 13, 2008** at the Menlo Park Engineering Division located at **701 Laurel Street in Menlo Park, CA**. Failure to attend the pre-bid meeting shall be grounds for disqualification for bidding on this project.

2. **BID OPENING.** The bidder shall complete and submit the blue copy of the Proposal to the City Council form that is inserted in the Contract Documents. No other copy of the Proposal Section will be accepted. Sealed bids, containing said blue copies of the completed Proposal Section, and subject to the conditions named herein and in the specifications for **SAND HILL ROAD RESERVOIR #2 STAIRWAY MEDIABLASTING & COATING PROJECT** addressed to the City of Menlo Park will be received at the office of the Engineering Division up to **2:00 p.m., Wednesday, February 20, 2008**, at which time they will be publicly opened and read.

3. **WORK DESCRIPTION.** Abrasive blast cleaning and coating of interior stairway of Sand Hill Road Reservoir No. 2, including worker protection and disposal of hazardous and non-hazardous materials and doing all appurtenant work as shown on the plans and described in the specifications with the title indicated in paragraph 1 above, and on file in the Office of the Engineering Services Manager. Reference to said Plans and Specifications is hereby made for further particulars.

4. **WORKING DAYS.** The work under this Contract is to be completed in **ten (10)** working days.

5. **CONTRACTOR'S LICENSE.** A Class **C-33** Painting and Decorating Contractor's License is required for this work. No bid will be accepted from a Contractor who has not been licensed according to Chapter 9, Division 3 of the Business and Professional Code.

6. **BID DEPOSIT.** A Bid Deposit equals to at least ten percent (10%) of the total amount of the bid shall be placed in the sealed Proposal. The Bid Deposit shall be in one of the following forms: cash, cashier's check or certified check payable to the City, or bidder's bond in favor of the City executed by an authorized surety company.

7. **PERFORMANCE BONDS.** Performance guaranty bonds as set forth in Section 2-3 of the Special Provisions will be required from the successful bidder.

8. **CITY'S RIGHT TO REJECT BIDS.** The right is reserved, as the interest of the City may require, to reject any or all bids, or to waive any informality or minor irregularity in the bids.

9. **GENERAL PREVAILING WAGE RATES.** The Council has ascertained the general prevailing rate of wages applicable to the work to be done. A tabulation of the various classifications of workpersons to be employed and the prevailing rate of wages applicable thereto is on file in the Office of the Engineering Services Manager.

10. **OBTAINING THE PROJECT PLANS AND CONTRACT BOOK.** The Project Plans and the Contract Documents may be purchased at the Engineering Division upon payment of \$40.00 for each set. Project Plans and the Contract Book will be mailed to prospective bidders upon payment of \$40.00 plus \$10.00 for postage and handling.

11. **OBTAINING THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION SPECIFICATIONS.** The State of California Department of Transportation Standard Specifications and Standard Plans may be purchased at the State of California Department of Transportation Publication Distribution Unit, 1900 Royal Oaks Drive, Sacramento, CA 95819; Telephone: (916) 445-3520; Fax: (916) 324-8997.

12. **WITHDRAWAL OF PROPOSALS.** Any bid may be withdrawn at any time prior to the time fixed in the public notice for the opening of bids only by written request for the withdrawal of the bid filed with the Engineering Services Manager. The request shall be executed by the bidder or his/her duly authorized representative. The withdrawal of a bid does not prejudice the right of the bidder to file a new bid. Whether or not bids are opened exactly at the time fixed in the public notice for opening bids, a bid will not be received after that time nor may any bid be withdrawn after the time fixed in the public notice for opening of bids.

13. **RELIEF OF BIDDERS.** As stated in Public Contract Code Sections 5100 to 5108, inclusive (State Contract Act) concerning relief of bidders and in particular to the requirement therein, that if the bidder claims a mistake was made in his/her bid, the bidder shall give the Engineering Services Manager written notice within five (5) days after the opening of the bids of the alleged mistake, specifying in the notice in detail how the mistake occurred.

14. **DISQUALIFICATION OF BIDDERS.** More than one Proposal from an individual, firm, partnership, corporation, or combination thereof under the same or different names will not be considered. Reasonable grounds for believing that any individual, firm, partnership, corporation or combination thereof is interested in more than one Proposal for the work contemplated may cause the rejection of all proposals in which such individual, firm, partnership, corporation or combination thereof is interested. If there is reason for believing that collusion exists among the bidders, any or all proposals may be rejected. Proposals in which the prices obviously are unbalanced may be rejected.

15. **PREVIOUS DISQUALIFICATION, REMOVAL OR OTHER PREVENTION OF BIDDING.** A bid may be rejected on the basis of a bidder, any officer of such bidder, or any employee of such bidder who has a proprietary interest in such bidder, having been disqualified, removed, or otherwise prevented from bidding on, or completing a federal, state, or local project because of a violation of law or a safety regulation.

16. **RESPONSIBILITY FOR VERIFYING CONTRACT ADDENDA.** All bidders shall verify if any addenda for this project have been issued by the City of Menlo Park. It is the bidder's responsibility to ensure that all requirements of Contract addenda are included in the bidder's Proposal.

17. **ESCROW FOR SECURITY DEPOSIT IN OF RETENTION.** Pursuant to Public Contract Code Section 22300, for monies earned by the Contractor and withheld by the City to ensure the performance of the Contract, the Contractor, may, at its option, choose to substitute securities meeting the requirements of said Public Contract Code Section 22300.

18. **SHORING AND BRACING.** Pursuant to the provisions of California Labor Code Section 6707, each bid submitted in response to this Notice to Bidders shall contain, as a bid item, adequate sheeting, shoring, and bracing, or equivalent method, for the protection of life and limb in trenches and open excavation, which shall conform to applicable safety orders. By listing this sum, the bidder warrants that its action does not convey tort liability to the City, Engineer and their employees, agents and consultants.

19. **AFFIRMATIVE ACTION.** Each prime and subcontract bidder will be required to comply with the City of Menlo Park Affirmative Action Program as set forth in Council Resolution No. 2340. Guidelines and report forms are provided with the Contract Documents and shall be considered part of any Contract made pursuant thereto. The prime contractor and each subcontractor shall complete the City of Menlo Park Compliance Report and submit it with the bid proposal or within 48 hours of the bid opening if you are the lowest or second lowest bidder.

20. **MINORITY EMPLOYMENT PROGRAM.** Prime contractors and subcontractors must submit their Minority Employment Program (MEP) to the Engineering Services Manager with their bids or within 48 hours of the bid opening.

Dated: January 31, 2008

SHERRY M. KELLY, Interim City Clerk
Published in THE ALMANAC on February 6, 13, 2008.

Menlo merchant sentenced for murder conspiracy

A Menlo Park jewelry store owner was sentenced Jan. 30 in San Mateo County Superior Court for masterminding a plot to kidnap, rape and murder a female employee after she resisted his romantic advances.

Ricardo Zambrano, 38, of Fresno was sentenced by Judge Thomas Smith to 39 years to life in prison on charges of conspiracy to commit murder. He was arrested following the June 2005 kidnapping by gunpoint of a woman who worked at his store inside the Mi Rancho market on Willow Road.

"He is among the most dangerous people that I've dealt with in my 11 years as a prosecutor and I'm glad that he won't be harming anyone in the near future," said Deputy District Attorney Morris Maya.

Mr. Zambrano was convicted

in April of conspiracy to commit rape, kidnapping for the purpose of rape, kidnapping in the commission of a carjacking, threatening a witness and false imprisonment, but the jury deadlocked 11-1 on charges of conspiracy to commit murder.

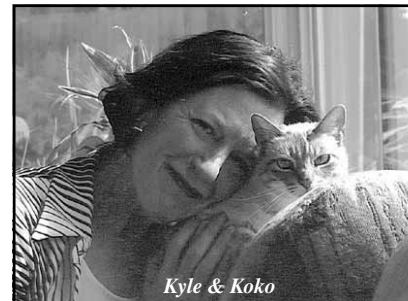
His original sentence was up to life in prison, but he would have been eligible for parole in as few as seven years so a retrial was requested, Mr. Maya said. A jury found him guilty of the conspiracy charges Nov. 16.

Alfonzo Cuevas Gonzalez, a 40-year-old Fresno man, carried out the kidnapping after being hired by Mr. Zambrano. Mr. Gonzalez carjacked the victim, a woman in her 20s from Mexico, and drove her to Fresno. At that point the plan went sour when he could not find his accomplices. The victim eventually escaped with the help of a Fresno woman who had foreknowledge of the plan.

A separate jury convicted Mr. Gonzalez in March of conspiracy to commit murder, conspiracy to commit rape, kidnapping and felony threats. He was sentenced to 35 years to life in prison June 8.

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TEMPORARY CLOSURE OF LITTLE PEOPLE'S PARK IN PORTOLA VALLEY

Little People's Park at the Town Center in Portola Valley will be closed temporarily beginning Monday, February 11th to allow for modifications to playground equipment within the park. It is anticipated the park will reopen on Saturday, February 23, 2008, unless inclement weather forces delay of completion of the work.

Please check the Town's website at www.portolavalley.net for up to date information concerning this closure.

The Town regrets any inconvenience to our citizens, particularly our very special "little people."

For more information, please feel free to contact Janet McDougall at (650) 851-1700, ext. 18.

MP board to consider after-school child care

When the bell rings to end the school day, where do the kids of working parents go?

Many Peninsula school campuses offer after-school care.

On Tuesday, Feb. 5, the board of the Menlo Park City School District is set to consider whether its schools should start doing the same.

According to Superintendent Ken Ranella, board members need to address the fundamental question of whether the district should sponsor the

operation of after-school care on its campuses. If the answer is yes, a flood of other questions will need to be dealt with.

The topic is especially timely as the district is facing a projected jump in student enrollment, and is embarking on a number of campus construction projects over the next three years.

The meeting starts at 7 p.m. and will be held in the boardroom at the district office, 181 Encinal Ave. in Atherton. For information, call 321-7140.

State Senate passes identity theft bill

The California State Senate has passed a bill that would allow prosecution for identity theft cases in the county where the victim resides.

State Sen. Joe Simitian, D-Palo Alto, co-authored Senate Bill 612 and praised fellow senators Friday for voting 40-0 in favor of the legislation.

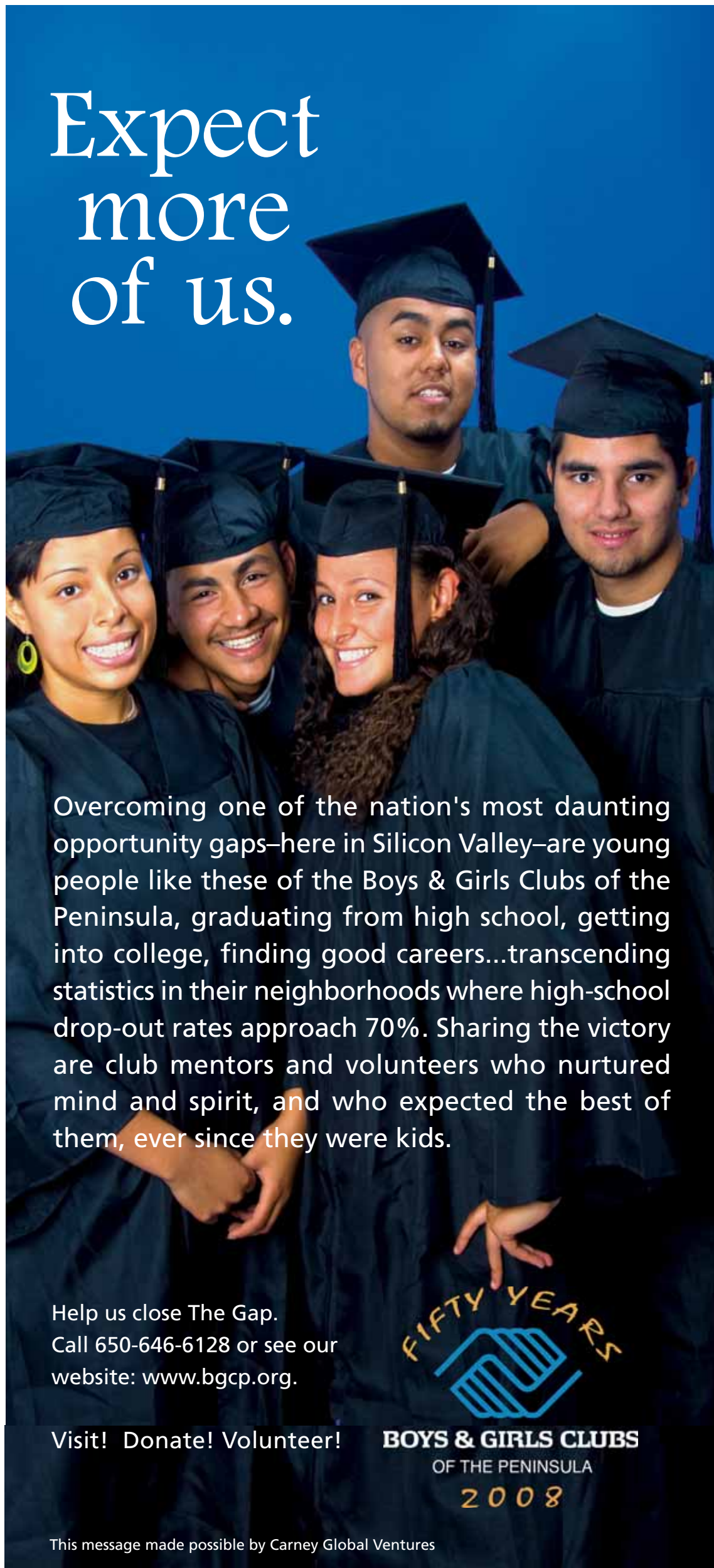
Current law permits prosecution in the county where the theft occurred, or where the information was illegally used, even when both locations are

hundreds of miles from the victim's home, according to Sen. Simitian's office.

"Local prosecutors are likely to be more aggressive on behalf of local victims," Sen. Simitian said. "The existing system actually favors the criminal rather than the victim of identity theft."

Under SB 612, a judge would ultimately decide where to hold the trial.

State senators Dave Cogdill, R-Modesto, and Bob Margett, R-Glendora, co-authored the bill.



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OF THE PENINSULA
2008

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Emerson School
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Open House
Parent Information
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OBITUARIES

Frank Waters

Longtime Felton Gables resident

Frank Waters, a retired colonel in the U.S. Marine Corp, died at his Menlo Park home, with his family at his side, Jan. 16 after a brief illness. He was 90.



Frank Waters

Mr. Waters was born in Knoxville, Tennessee, and graduated from the University of Tennessee, where he was an ROTC student. He was also a competitive swimmer and held a number of swimming records. After graduating in 1940, he joined the Marine Corps as an officer.

He served throughout World War II, first in the Atlantic on board the USS New York, and later in the Pacific, where he took part in the battle of Iwo Jima and was wounded in action.

In 1948 Mr. Waters married a young war widow, Margaret "Peggy" Farrel, and became father to 4-year-old Bill.

During the Korean War, Mr. Waters served as liaison officer between the First Marine Division and the 10th Army Corps. Following the war, the family lived in several locations, including North Carolina, Virginia, San Diego and Hawaii.

His final tour of duty was as professor of naval science at Stanford University from 1962 to 1964. At that time the Waterses moved to Menlo Park's Felton Gables neighborhood.

In 1964 Mr. Waters began an 18-year second career as deputy director of the Golden Gate chapter of the American Red Cross in San Francisco. He was prominent in fundraising for the Red Cross and the United Way, and took part in many Red Cross field activities.

During retirement, the Waterses traveled, enjoyed their dachshunds and socialized with family and friends, say family members. He played tennis for many years and was an avid bridge player. Mr. Waters was active for many years in the Peninsula Kiwanis Club and Sons in Retirement.

He is survived by his wife of 60 years, Peggy; son Bill Farrel; and two grandsons. Services will be announced at a later date. Burial will be in Alta Mesa cemetery.

Russell Sommers Jr.

Former Menlo School and College employee

Russell "Ski" Sommers Jr., a longtime resident of Menlo Park, died Jan. 12 at the Veterans Affairs hospital in Palo Alto. He was 82.

Mr. Sommers was born in Trenton, New Jersey, one of a family of six. He joined the U.S. Navy in 1942 at age 17 and served until 1946. He moved to California, where he met his future wife, Hazel Ator. They were married in 1950.

Mr. Sommers was employed by Ideal Cement Co. in Redwood City for 24 years until it closed. He then worked at Menlo School and College for 16 years until his retirement. He enjoyed hunting and fishing and spending time with his family.

Mr. Sommers is survived by his wife, Hazel Sommers of Menlo

Continued on next page

LUCILE PACKARD CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL

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Your Child's Health University

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* BECOMING GRANDPARENTS

Designed for new and expectant grandparents, this class examines the change in labor and delivery practices, the latest recommendations for infant care and the unique role of grandparents in today's society.

- Thursday, February 21

* PREPARING FOR MULTIPLES

Are you expecting twins, triplets or more? With the potential for early delivery, expectant parents of multiples are encouraged to learn everything there is to know about carrying and delivering multiple infants.

- Sunday, February 24

* INFANT AND CHILD CPR

Parents and other childcare providers will learn the techniques of infant and child CPR and how to avoid choking hazards. Mannequins are used to provide hands-on training.

- Wednesday, February 27

* HEART TO HEART SEMINAR ON GROWING UP

Informative, humorous and lively discussions between parents and their pre-teens on puberty, the opposite sex and growing up. Girls attend these two-part sessions with their moms and boys attend with their dads.

- For Girls: Mondays, February 25 & March 3
 - For Boys: Thursday, March 13 & Tuesday, March 18

Call (650) 723-4600 or visit www.lpch.org to register or obtain more information on the times, locations and fees for these and other courses.

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Colloquium

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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 the law, people charged with offenses are considered innocent until convicted.

ATHERTON

BURGLARY REPORT: Interrupted at construction site and suspect fled in gray sedan, first block of Michaels Way, Jan. 27.

FRAUD REPORT: Fraudulent use of son's credit card, first block of Callado Way, Jan. 29.

DOMESTIC DISTURBANCE REPORT: Coffee table kicked into fireplace and boxes thrown, first block of Maple Ave., Jan. 30.

MENLO PARK

Burglary reports:

■ Forced entry into vehicle and wallet stolen, 1100 block of Carlton Ave., Jan. 26.
 ■ Items stolen via unlocked door, 300 block of Sharon Park Drive, Jan. 28.
 ■ Items stolen via broken vehicle window, 600 block of Sharon Park Drive, Jan. 30.

Stolen vehicle report: Gray 1989 Toyota Camry stolen, 200 block of Van Buren Road, Jan. 28.

Fraud reports:

■ Identity theft, 1800 block of Oak Knoll Lane, Jan. 26.
 ■ Fraudulent use of credit card, 700 block of Santa Cruz Ave., 300 block of San Mateo Drive, Jan. 29, Jan. 31.
 ■ Attempt to cash fraudulent check, 700 block of Santa Cruz Ave., Jan. 29.
 ■ Credit card stolen and used, 500 block of Willow Road, Jan. 31.

Grand theft reports:

■ Theft of satellite receiver from porch, 300 block of Barton Place, Jan. 25.
 ■ \$2,700 stolen from unlocked safe, 1200 block of El Camino Real, Jan. 27.

WOODSIDE

Burglary report:

■ Vehicle window forced open and iPod and wallet stolen, with attempted use of credit card, 3000 block of Edison Way, Jan. 26.

■ Steering wheel damaged and items stolen from van after window broken, 3000 block of Woodside Road., Jan. 28.

Battery and assault report: At soccer field, Woodside High School at 199 Churchill Ave., Jan. 23.

Stolen vehicle report: Vehicle stolen, 800 block of Glencrag Way, Jan. 26.

Vandalism report: Damages over \$5,200 done to vehicle in parking lot, 3000 block of Woodside Road, Jan. 27.

Fraud report: Unauthorized use of credit card with charges over \$24,000, 400 block of Maple Way, Jan. 28.

PORTOLA VALLEY

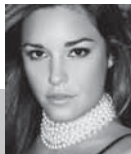
Burglary report: Purse stolen after vehicle window smashed, Arastradero Road at Alpine Road, Jan. 29.

Theft report: Theft of mail that may have included tax information, 4000 block of Alpine Road, Jan. 27.

LADERA

Incident report: Possible theft of noisy white rooster, 100 block of Escanyo Way, Jan. 23.

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 **EL CAMINO REAL/
DOWNTOWN VISION PLAN**

UPCOMING EVENTS

El Camino Real Walking Tour
 Saturday, February 9, 2008, 10 a.m. - 12 p.m. and 1 p.m. - 3 p.m.
 North Section: 1600 El Camino Real at Encinal Avenue
 South Section: 815 El Camino Real at Live Oak Avenue
 * Both tours will run during each time slot.

Speaker Series: Frederic Knapp
 "Preservation and Prosperity in Downtown Environments"
 Wednesday, February 13, 2008, 6:00 p.m.
 Menlo Park City Council Chambers
 701 Laurel Street, Menlo Park

Downtown Walking Tour
 Saturday, February 23, 2008, 10 a.m. - 12 p.m.
 Menlo Park Caltrain Station
 1120 Merrill Street, Menlo Park

Community Workshop #1
 Thursday, March 6, 2008, 7:00 p.m.
 Recreation Center Ballroom
 701 Laurel Street, Menlo Park

*Participants are encouraged to walk or bike to all events. If driving is necessary, participants are asked to carpool and park in appropriate City lots or on-street.

For more information, please contact Thomas Rogers
 throgers@menlopark.org or (650) 330-6722

http://www.menlopark.org/projects/comdev_eocrdowntown.htm



Corner of El Camino Real and Ravenswood/Menlo Avenues in the early 1980s and today.

Continued from previous page

Park; brother Donald Sommers and sister Harriett Peters of New Jersey; daughters Sue Munson and Mattie Sommers of Grass Valley, and Vickie Morales of Menlo Park; five grandchildren; and four great-grandsons.

In accordance with his wishes, no services will be held.

Ann Jencks Guy

Former Peninsula School teacher

Ann Jencks Guy died Jan. 20 of a sudden stroke at her home in Albany. Ms. Guy was active, in good spirits and making plans

right up to the end, according to her friend Peggy Law. She spent December in Rome with her son, Frederick, and family.

Ms. Guy and her husband, George Guy, lived and raised their family in Los Trancos Woods from 1956 to 2000. For many years, Ms. Guy taught at Peninsula School in Menlo Park.

She is survived by her children, Frederick Guy, Jenny Guy, Sarah Seward and Matthew Guy; and four grandchildren. Her husband, George, died in 2006.

A celebration of Ms. Guy's life will be held later in the year. For more information, contact the family at 510-524-6362.

Inspirations

St. Bede's Episcopal Church
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on Sunday
 8 am Holy Eucharist, Rite I
 9 am Soulwork — Education for Adults
 10 am Sunday School — Children's Worship & Education
 10-11:30 am Childcare
 10:15 am Holy Eucharist, Rite II, with hymns, choir, & organ

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 A resource for special events and ongoing religious services. To inquire about or make space reservations please contact Blanca Yoc at 650-326-8210 x221 or email byoc@pawekly.com

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Editor & Publisher

Tom Gibboney

Editorial

Managing Editor Richard Hine

News Editor Renee Batti

Lifestyles Editor Jane Knoerle

Senior Staff Writers

Marion Softky, Marjorie Mader

Staff Writers Andrea Gemmet,

David Boyce, Rory Brown

Editorial Intern Megan Rawlins

Contributors Barbara Wood,

Kate Daly, Bill Rayburn, Miles

McMullin, Katie Blankenberg

Special Sections Editors

Carol Blitzer, Sue Dremann

Photographer Veronica Weber

Design & Production

Design Director Raul Perez

Designers Linda Atilano,

Gail Thoreson, Eric Kinnaird,

Joanne Lee, Laura Don,

Gary Vennarucci

Advertising

Advertising Manager Neal Fine

Display Advertising Sales

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Advertising Services

Receptionists Renee Meil,

Liz Reiter

Circulation, Classified,

& Legal Advertising Bill Rayburn

Published every Wednesday at

3525 Alameda de las Pulgas,

Menlo Park, CA 94025

(650) 854-2626

FAX (650) 854-0677

e-mail news (no photos please) to:

editor@AlmanacNews.com

e-mail photos with captions to:

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The Almanac, established in September, 1965, is delivered each week to residents of Menlo Park, Atherton, Portola Valley and Woodside and adjacent unincorporated areas of southern San Mateo County. The Almanac is qualified by decree of the Superior Court of San Mateo County to publish public notices of a governmental and legal nature, as stated in Decree No. 147530, issued November 9, 1969.

Voluntary subscriptions are available for delivery to homes in Menlo Park, Atherton, Portola Valley and Woodside at \$30 per year or \$50 for 2 years. Subscriptions by businesses or residents outside the area are \$50 for one year and \$80 for two years.



WHAT'S YOUR VIEW?

All views must include a home address and contact phone number. Published letters will also appear on the web site, www.TheAlmanacOnline.com, and occasionally on the Town Square forum.

TOWN SQUARE FORUM

POST your views on the Town Square forum at www.TheAlmanacOnline.com

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your views to: letters@AlmanacNews.com. Indicate if it is a letter to be published.

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or deliver to: Editor at the Almanac, 3525 Alameda de las Pulgas, Menlo Park, CA 94025.

CALL

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

Facing the challenge of rising tides

Getting your arms around global warming is not easy. The more we learn about the energy-guzzling sins of our past, the more we realize there will be hell to pay down the road — but no one knows for sure when that will be.

Unfortunately, signs of warming are widespread and often out of sight, from rising temperatures, vanishing polar bear habitat and accelerating glacial melt. Those who choose to ignore these faraway and often far-off warning signs can just say, “things aren’t that bad.” And even when we do believe that a crisis is coming, it is all too easy to ignore our carbon footprint as we fill the SUV up with another tank of gas.

But although we may not be concerned enough, we luckily have some serious public servants in the Bay Area who are totally focused on what global warming will mean for us. These people work for the alphabet-soup agencies such as BCDC (San Francisco Bay Conservation and Development Commission), ABAG (Association of Bay Area Governments) and others.

Their message comes with a good news/bad news component. The good news is that we are getting the bad news early, although unless we mend our ways in a hurry, the bad news is going to get really bad. Here are some of the key points of last week’s cover story Sea Level Rising:

- The sea level in the Bay is already rising — it was up 6 inches in the 20th century.

- Our best case scenario, if we find a way to effectively reduce our output of greenhouse gases, is a 3 degree increase in temperature, which would raise Bay sea levels 5 to 7 inches by 2100.

- If we do nothing, the temperature would rise up to 10 degrees, pushing the Bay sea level up 1 meter — more than 37 inches — by the turn of the century.

In both cases, estimates are based on warming temperatures expanding the world’s oceans (remember your early science — warming water expands, freezing water contracts), and does

NOT include increases from melting icecaps in Greenland and Antarctica, which scientists say could add another 5 to 7 meters to high tide levels.

All of this somber news, and the specific impact points of Bay Area flooding, are included in a presentation given to county supervisors and city councils by Will Travis, executive director of the BCDC. And perhaps for the first time, these governing bodies are getting a sense of just how this serious problem will continue to grow and grow, if it is not contained.

Maps included in the presentation show water lapping over the runways at San Francisco International Airport, over the Bayshore freeway in Palo Alto and across the Bayfront Expressway in Menlo Park, into the Bohannon Industrial Park, with a 3-foot rise in sea level. Mr. Travis said the projections are based on a report by the California Climate Action Team.

The job of protecting vital government institutions, as well as private property, falls to local, regional and federal agencies, which will be forced to make hard decisions on what to do with each property that could be overrun by the rising tides. If an airport, freeway or industrial park is deemed worth protecting, financing would have to be found for expensive levees built strong enough to hold back the water and withstand severe earthquakes.

Given the magnitude of the possible impact, the big question is what action local government agencies will take in the wake of the sobering scenarios contained in the BCDC report. Is there enough political will to invest resources now to prepare for the almost certain inundation of large portions of our shoreline?

To combat the “Inconvenient Truth” of global warming will require a worldwide response, but local communities will have to act on their own to counter some direct impacts. The BCDC report is a tool that we hope will awaken local agencies to add tidal protection plans to their list of challenges in the years ahead. This report cannot and must not be ignored. There is much to do, but thanks to Mr. Travis and others who moved this study forward, we at least know what we are up against.

EDITORIAL

The opinion of The Almanac

LETTERS

Our readers write

Thankful for police response to mail theft

Editor:

The reader who bemoaned the use of police assistance to catch two attempted mail thieves might want to illuminate herself and others by reading the most comprehensive book to date on identity theft.

MSNBC reporter Bob Sullivan has written “Your Evil Twin” for that very purpose: to show readers how easy it is for anyone’s identify to be stolen, how few cases are ever prosecuted (1 in 500) and how incredibly vulnerable every U.S. citizen is to ID theft in all its varying forms.

I would suggest that after reading Mr. Sullivan’s book, your readers will be thankful that the police assistance that was given in Portola

See **LETTERS**, next page



Atherton Heritage Association

Our Regional Heritage

Atherton resident Robert R. Gros, left, stands with UN Ambassador Henry Cabot Lodge and former Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev, right, during a tour of San Francisco in 1959. Mr. Khrushchev and Mr. Lodge were in the city to attend a superpower summit that year.

LETTERS

Continued from previous page

Valley was not only needed, but immensely valuable.

Any ID theft victim will tell you of the frustration, fear for one's safety, time spent to deal with the crime, and money spent to put one's life back into some semblance of order.

**Mary Perkins
Woodside**

Facts about diesel locomotive

Editor:

Katie Ferrick's letter in your Jan. 29 issue contained some factual errors which I would like to comment about and present the actual truths.

The diesel-electric locomotive is not 19th century technology. Rudolf Diesel of Germany invented the engine in the mid-1920s and it was first utilized in the United States by the Central Railroad of New Jersey in 1928. The railroads completed conversion from steam to diesel in 1958. I rode the last day of steam here on the Peninsula, as I was a daily commuter for over 40 years.

As comparison, the internal combustion engine predates the diesel to the late 1890s — that is the 19th century. We still use the automobile as our primary transportation.

An aside: The Caltrain of today is the most fuel and labor efficient of the modes of transportation. We can carry 400 passengers 8 miles on a gallon of fuel and do this with a crew of three. That is the equivalent of 10 buses or five light rail cars.

**Arthur L. Lloyd
SamTrans, Caltrain
board member
Arapahoe Court, Portola Valley**

City should restore lanes to El Camino Real

Editor:

I, like many people, was stuck on El Camino Real last Tuesday evening. It took 40 minutes for me to travel from downtown Menlo Park to downtown Palo Alto.

The accident on 101 certainly caused problems for all of us but who made it worse? The city of Menlo Park needs to accept blame. The transition from three lanes to two lanes and back to three lanes on El Camino not only lengthened everyone's trip Tuesday but it causes delays every day. El Camino used to be three lanes north and south, but since the installation of the middle median we pay daily in lost time and burned fuel.

Influential lobbies like "Trees for Menlo" are also responsible. It is time for Menlo Park to face the music and restore El Camino to its former self.

I ask you all to at least e-mail

the Menlo Park City Council (city.council@menlopark.org) and demand the change to the roadway. If you have the time, go to the council meeting on Tuesday, take the microphone for your allowed three minutes and tell them what you think. It doesn't take a two hundred thousand dollar consultant to figure this out, just a bit of common sense.

**Pat White
Santa Cruz Avenue, Menlo Park**

High school bond worthy of support

Editor:

Thank you for your excellent coverage of Measure J, the Sequoia Union High School District bond measure. As a district parent for five years now, I, too, support this measure. My children have gotten a great public education and I know what it takes to make that possible. I would like to see those opportunities continue for future students. Also, I like the practical aspect of the bond investment — vocational and technical education, energy efficiency, facilities we can be proud of as students, parents, and community members.

Considering what is covered, the cost seems very reasonable. I expect the investment will be reflected many times over in increased property values, a benefit to all, not just households with students.

Vote Yes on Measure J.

**Nancy Arbuckle
Nimitz Avenue, Redwood City**

Theater staff members deserve swift, open process

Editor:

We are outraged and dismayed by the city of Palo Alto's abrupt closure of the Palo Alto Children's Theatre and the suspension of four respected staff members. Five days later, the police have offered no explanation to justify this drastic measure and provided no timetable for their investigation.

Meanwhile, this action has disrupted a core community service and had a traumatic effect on many of the kids involved.

The theatre is an irreplaceable resource that helps make Palo Alto unique and has given generations of kids the chance to perform in professional-quality shows. This is largely the result of the staff members — Pat Briggs, Michael Litfin, Alison Williams and Rich Curtis — who have devoted their lives to creating this extraordinary place that the kids call their own.

A lifetime of excellent and dedicated service to the community earns these people the right to a swift and open process so they aren't unfairly subjected to speculation on the Web and elsewhere.

**Paula Collins, president
Friends of the Palo Alto
Children's Theatre**



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TOWN OF PORTOLA VALLEY
VOLUNTEER YOUR TIME & TALENT

THE TOWN OF PORTOLA VALLEY SEEKS DEDICATED VOLUNTEERS FOR THE FOLLOWING TOWN COMMITTEES:

Community Events Committee
Meets as announced; appointed for a one-year term.
This Committee organizes the annual Blues & Barbeque Open Space Fundraising Event, the Town Picnic and the Volunteer Appreciation Holiday Party.

Conservation Committee
Meets fourth Tuesday of each month, 8:00 p.m.; appointed for a one-year term.
Conserve environmental (water, air, lack of noise) and aesthetic amenities of Portola Valley as outlined by the General Plan, the Open Space Plan and the Conservation Element. Propose program and projects to enhance aesthetic and environmental qualities of Portola Valley.

Parks and Recreation Committee
Meets third Monday of each month, 7:30 p.m.; appointed for a one-year term.
This Committee meets to develop, promote and maintain quality recreational and community enrichment programs, recreational facilities and park areas in the Town of Portola Valley.

Teen Committee
Meets as announced; appointed for a one-year term.
This Committee meets to promote awareness of the unique needs of teens, as well as to provide visibility to teen contributions to our society.

Traffic Committee
Meets first Thursday of each month, 8:15 a.m.; appointed for a one-year term.
This Committee meets to assist the Town in advising ways and means for safer conditions regarding motor vehicles, bicycles, pedestrians and road conditions and to encourage proper traffic enforcement.

Interested residents may apply by sending a brief letter of interest to:
Town Administrator Angela Howard
Town of Portola Valley
765 Portola Road, Portola Valley, CA 94028
-or-
E-mail: townhall@portolavalley.net

For questions, please contact Sharon Hanlon at Town Hall 650-851-1700 ext.10
Published in THE ALMANAC on February 6, 2008.

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