

Should Menlo Park expand shuttle service for school kids and Caltrain riders? Page 9

The Almanac

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

APRIL 2, 2008 | VOL. 43 NO. 31

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PAGE 10



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We bet you've never seen this headline in any recent media coverage of the real estate market. Yet it is fact—92.7 percent of all mortgages in the United States are current. What's more, the "sub-prime mortgage crisis" refers to a tiny portion of sub-prime mortgages. Sub-prime mortgages represent only a fraction of all mortgages—and the vast majority of these are current.

- Percent of U.S. mortgages that are current 92.7%
- Percent of U.S. mortgages that are sub-prime 13.2%
- Percent of sub-prime mortgages that are current 76.8%

Source: Mortgage Bankers Association, 3Q07 Report

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* Source: Federal Home Loan Mortgage Corporation

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Inside

This week's news, features and community events.

FIRST SHOT



Photo by Veronica Weber/The Almanac

Spelling keys

Chris de Trinidad helps Robert McAniff, at right, and Drew Usher with spelling exercises at the Boys and Girls Club in Menlo Park's Belle Haven neighborhood. Hewlett Packard recently donated 24 new computers to the club, which uses "Successmaker" software to help children in grades K-3 improve their spelling, math and reading skills.

Atherton

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Menlo Park

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On the cover

In large photo, David Winsberg, left, and Martin Guzman do the back-breaking work of planting pepper seedlings at Mr. Winsberg's Happy Quail Farms in East Palo Alto. In photo at left, Mr. Winsberg and his son, Andreas, tend the peppers, and at bottom, Mr. Winsberg is unloading seedlings. Those plants produce thousands of padrone, sweet and hot peppers that end up in local farmers' markets. For more scenes of the local farming life, see additional photos by Veronica Weber and story on **Page 10**.

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"One generation plants the trees; another gets the shade."

Chinese Proverb ~ George Tom

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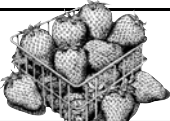


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Is there Spice in your Life?

If you have a penchant for spicy food, you may be searching for wines that go well with your favorite dishes. Here are some suggestions: A preference for Mexican and southwestern dishes calls for the tangy, herbal characteristics of Sauvignon Blanc to meld with the cilantro and lime flavors in your food. If you are more inclined toward Thai and Chinese food, you are likely to be better off with the sweetness of a Riesling, which will help to quell the heat. At the same time, Riesling harmonizes well with sweet-and-sour and coconut milk-based sauces. Finally, open a bottle of Shiraz (Syrah) to go with Indian and Middle-Eastern dishes that feature cumin, coriander, fennel, and/or cardamom.

Matching the perfect meal with the ideal wine is something the experts at ROBERTS MARKET can help you with. We pride ourselves on having an extensive knowledge of all things wine, including how to perfectly pair wine with food. We offer a wide variety of foods from all over the world, and the perfect wines to go with them. Come and see us!

HINT: Generally speaking, wine helps cleanse the palate of the temperature, texture, and flavor of spicy foods in preparation for the next bite.



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C+W WASHED RAW SUGAR 32oz.	\$2.49
METROMINT PEPPERMINT WATER 16 oz. — Plus Calif. Redeem Value	\$1.09
FANCY FEAST CAT FOOD 3 oz.	59¢

DELI

Come try out our selection of *Spanish Cheeses*

Sole Gran Queso <i>an ivory interior, sharp bite & lingering sweet finish. Great for cooking or shaved on a salad.</i> \$13⁹⁹ lb. \$13⁷⁹ lb.	Urgelia <i>Creamy like Härvarti with a slight Tallegio flavor. A fine cheese with a crusty baguette.</i> \$16⁹⁸ lb. \$14¹⁹ lb.
Cadi <i>Homestyle Mountain Cheese sharp "cheddary" curd cheese</i>	Iberico <i>Semi-soft, slightly creamy rich flavor & tartness mixture of cow, goat & sheep.</i>



JONATHAN — PRODUCE

WINE

New Pinots

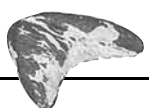

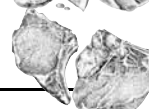
Spring has sprung. Is it time to put away our winter reds and break out the Pinots? Here are some recent arrivals that offer excellent quality at reasonable prices.

2005 Moniz Family, Carneros	\$19.99
<i>Sourced from a top Napa estate. 106 case production.</i>	
2006 Patassy Vineyard, Russian River Valley	\$24.99
<i>A fresh, juicy, spicy Pinot. Great value.</i>	
2005 Foghorn, Monterey	\$29.99
<i>Hand made in small fermenters. 300 cases produced.</i>	
2006 Goldeneye "Migration," Anderson Valley	\$31.99
<i>Supremely smooth and balanced.</i>	
2006 Moshin Vineyards, Sonora Coast	\$37.99
<i>A lively wine with aromas of bright fruit, floral notes, and spice.</i>	

Sale prices are net and do not qualify for further discounts.

MEAT

Special This Week at Roberts

KOBE TRI-TIP		\$21.98 lb.
JUMBO PRAWN 15 COUNT		\$20.98 lb.
HAWAIIAN PORK CHOPS		\$6.98 lb.
BENTLY STUFFED CHICKEN BREAST		\$9.98 lb.

Local News

MENLO PARK | ATHERTON | WOODSIDE | PORTOLA VALLEY

Menlo Park to buy \$15,000 of carbon credits

■ Some question whether supporting PG&E program is worth taxpayer dollars.

By **Rory Brown**
Almanac Staff Writer

A thumbs up and a \$15,000 check — that's what four of five Menlo Park City Council members agreed to give the new carbon credit program created by the Pacific Gas & Electric Corp.

Now it's up to Menlo Park residents and businesses to decide whether they want to follow suit.

On March 25, council members voted 4-1, with John Boyle opposed, to join PG&E's ClimateSmart program from April to December. Under the program,

the city will pay PG&E \$15,000 to offset the gas and electricity used in city facilities over the nine-month period.

PG&E officials say the city's payments will go toward various carbon-cutting measures, including buying conservation easements to save California forests from logging.

The payment to PG&E will have the equivalent effect of taking 250 cars off the road, according to PG&E spokesperson Katie Romans.

Some 20,000 PG&E customers are already signed up for the program, and with Menlo Park enrolled, PG&E officials plan a campaign to get all of the city's residents and businesses to participate in the program.

"I hope with the city joining ClimateSmart, it inspires residents and businesses to do the same," said Councilwoman

Kelly Fergusson.

But not everyone is on board the ClimateSmart program, including leading critic Councilman Boyle, who questioned whether a carbon credit program is the best use of city funds.

"We just committed spending taxpayer dollars to support a PG&E program," Mr. Boyle said. "Personally, I don't think that should be our highest priority right now."

Planning commissioners Louis Deziel and Henry Riggs — both of whom support Mr. Boyle politically — expressed similar reservations in e-mails to council members; they suggested that the city invest taxpayer dollars in local "green" projects such as planting more trees within city limits or converting city buildings to solar power.

"Why wouldn't we do something to

actually reduce the carbon footprint of our facilities rather than merely absolve our pollution?" Mr. Deziel wrote.

Mr. Boyle said the details of the program weren't vetted by the city's advisory Environmental Quality Commission, and suggested that "politics" played into the decision to put consideration of ClimateSmart atop the council's agenda. He said PG&E's proposal received immediate attention because the program's interim product manager is Gail Slocum, a former councilwoman and prominent figure in Menlo Park politics.

Top priority

Other council members say the decision to join ClimateSmart isn't political

See **CREDITS**, page 9

Atherton council race: Dobbie way out front in fundraising

By **Andrea Gemmet**
Almanac Staff Writer

The special election for the Atherton City Council is two months away, and one candidate has already done some serious fundraising.

Jim Dobbie, a member of the town's Planning Commission and the chair of the general plan committee, raised more than \$4,500 in campaign contributions for the June 3 election. That's about nine times as much as his competitor for the vacant council seat, general plan committee member Elizabeth Lewis.

Campaign finance reports were filed last week by the two candidates. The reports, which cover fundraising and campaign spending from January 1 through March 17, show that Mr. Dobbie amassed \$4,534 in donations, while Ms. Lewis raised \$496.

Mr. Dobbie's campaign reports having spent more than half of its

funds, leaving \$1,723 in the bank. Those expenditures include more than \$400 for signs and stickers, almost \$1,100 for envelope and letter printing services, and a total of \$925 in postage.

Ms. Lewis' campaign reported that it did not spend any campaign funds.

Mr. Dobbie's biggest contributors to date are Hermann and I.S. Christensen, who each gave \$900. The next biggest contributors are Casper Offutt, with \$500, and Sandy Crittenden, with \$300. Mervin and Roslyn Morris gave \$250. All of Mr. Dobbie's listed donors are Atherton residents.

Ms. Lewis reported a \$100 donation from Bob Jenkins, a real estate broker and a director of the Atherton Civic Interest League. She received \$99 contributions from four sources: former Atherton City Council members Dianne

See **CAMPAIGN**, page 8



Photo by Dave Boyce/The Almanac

Dimmed lights for a cause

JZ Cool restaurant in downtown Menlo Park went semi-dark between 8 and 9 p.m. Saturday night, March 29, in concert with businesses and individuals around the world who turned off inessential lights to save energy and observe Earth Hour 2008. Menlo-Atherton High School was the only local participant listed at EarthHourUS.org, but Kepler's Books and Magazines also turned off a few interior lights.

Portola Valley council drops law limiting basement size

By **Dave Boyce**
Almanac Staff Writer

The town of Portola Valley will not impose controversial new limits on the size of residential basements after all, the Town Council decided at its March 26 meeting.

Council members agreed last week that the current rules governing basement size are enough for now, and that they will not finalize approval of an ordinance they gave

preliminary approval to last December.

That vote touched off a community debate and prompted resident Paul Seipp to launch an online petition, gathering some 260 signatures from opponents indignant about an issue that they thought violated property rights and was out of step with green building practices, given a basement's temperature-stabilizing effect of storing heat in the winter and coolness in the summer.

The ordinance, which banned full

basements for homes larger than 4,000 square feet above ground in a one-acre zoning district, was meant to slow extensive development of below-ground spaces, and reduce the greenhouse gas emissions connected with excavation and off-hauling of soil.

At a packed meeting on January 9, opponents let loose on the council, which responded by setting the ordinance aside and handing off the issue to an ad hoc committee.

The committee met on March 20 and reached a consensus: Don't change the rules that allow basements that follow the footprint of a house.

"It was a very spirited but, in the end, a very even discussion of all the issues," Councilwoman Ann Wengert told her fellow council members last week, referring to the ad hoc committee's March 20 meeting.

One outcome of the committee discus-

See **BASEMENT**, page 8



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Veronica Weber/The Almanac

Lisa Conrad, pictured in her Menlo Park home office, is headed to Sacramento on April 7 to present her idea for a state law to address deceptive sweepstakes practices.

Menlo Park woman among 'oughta be a law' winners

Lisa Conrad of Menlo Park is one of three winners of state Sen. Joe Simitian's "There Oughta Be a Law" contest.

Ms. Conrad, one of 429 who submitted ideas for new state legislation, proposed a law addressing deceptive sweepstakes practices, particularly those aimed at the elderly, Sen. Simitian, D-Palo Alto, said March 26 in a press release.

"Scamming the elderly to take part in these sweepstakes is a frighteningly common problem out there," Ms. Conrad told The Almanac. "The people behind these things are preying on people."

The other two winners are a Sunnyvale couple who propose revising a law that forced them to cut off the tops of redwood trees in their back yard because they shaded a neighbor's solar panels; and a Los Altos Hills physician who would require state agencies to develop outreach programs for veterans returning from Iraq and Afghanistan with traumatic brain injuries.

The three winners will have their ideas introduced as legislation, have the opportunity to testify at a legislative hearing on their bill, have lunch with Sen. Simitian in the state Capitol, and will receive a California state flag that has flown over the Capitol, the senator said.

During the past six years, 11 winning entries have been signed into law, he said.

Ms. Conrad said her idea was prompted by her concern about

friends and family members who were victims of deceptive sweepstakes practices.

She said her sister is a consumer rights attorney in Oregon, where laws are tougher on deceptive sweepstakes, prompting her to pro-

'Scamming the elderly to take part in these sweepstakes is a frighteningly common problem out there. The people behind these things are preying on people.'

LISA CONRAD

pose changes to California's stance on the issue.

The bill, SB 1400, seeks to strengthen consumer protections and prohibit sweepstakes sponsors from selling or sharing customer names and personal information.

"Folks are told they're 'specially selected' or have 'already won' when that's just not the case," said Sen. Simitian. "Gimmicks like so-called 'official' documents abound; and sweepstakes pitches too often skirt the 'no purchase required' provisions of state law."

Ms. Conrad said representatives from the New York-based Direct Marketing Association have already contacted Sen. Simitian's office with concerns about her proposed law.

Other winners

Sunnyvale residents Richard Treanor and Carolyn Bissett did not

propose a new law but a revision of a 1978 law governing solar panel installations in homes. They were recently forced to cut off the tops of redwood trees in their backyard because they shaded a neighbor's solar panels in violation of the law even though the trees were planted before the neighbor installed the solar panels.

"Right now a new neighbor can move in next to your home, install a solar energy system and then, under threat of criminal prosecution, force you to take an ax to your trees if and when they grow," Sen. Simitian said.

He has introduced a bill that would provide an exemption from the law for existing trees. "Our state ought to be able to strike a sensible balance between trees and solar energy," he said.

Los Altos Hills physician Jerome Blum is concerned that California veterans returning from Iraq and Afghanistan are not being properly treated for traumatic brain injury. His winning proposal would require the California Department of Veterans Affairs and the California National Guard to develop and implement outreach programs for those types of injury.

"It's the least we can do. It's about making sure these vets get the treatment they need and are entitled to," Sen. Simitian said.

Bay City News Service contributed to this report.

REAL ESTATE Q&A

by Monica Corman



Down Payment Assistance

Q: My parents are going to provide the down payment for me to buy a property. I plan to pay them back a bit each year but if I can't, they will forgive the loan. Should I list them as co-owners of the property or co-signers on the loan?

A: The lender you choose will give you guidance on this. If the lender says you qualify for the loan on your own financial strength, your parents will not need to be listed as co-borrowers. They don't need to be burdened with liability for the loan if you can do it on your own.

Many parents and relatives give their children money for a down payment and most lenders are fine with this. They may ask you to provide a gift letter from your parents so that it doesn't look like you are borrowing 100% of the money needed. The lender will probably want to be sure that the money from your parents does not need to be repaid. If the money is a gift, you don't need to list your parents either as co-owners or as mortgagees.

You should consult your accountant before you decide how best to treat your parent's money. Their payment may have tax implications to them and to you that you should be aware of.

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

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New 'community engagement' manager hired

By **Rory Brown**
Almanac Staff Writer

Cherise Brandell, a 19-year employee of Battle Creek, Michigan, has been hired as Menlo Park's "community engagement" manager — a new full-time position formed to make the city's decision-making process more inclusive.

Ms. Brandell, 50, currently has a similar job in Battle Creek, serving as the director of the city's Neighborhood Services Department since 2003. She's worked in the areas of public information and community engagement for the city of 55,000 residents since 1989.

Ms. Brandell will start the new Menlo Park position on May 12, according to Menlo Park Personnel Director Glen Kramer. She will be paid about \$101,000 per year — an increase from the \$75,000 per year she made in Battle Creek.

New position

The City Council earmarked funds for the community engagement post last June — about seven months after former council members Lee Duboc and Mickie Winkler were ousted in the 2006 election.

Ms. Duboc, Ms. Winkler, and former council member Nicholas Jellins were widely criticized by residents for making decisions without enough public input, including the swift decision to privatize the city's aquatic center.

"There were specific concerns under the previous council about the way the public wasn't

always involved in decisions," said Councilman Heyward Robinson, who ran against the former majority in 2006. "We really want to engage the public and make sure they're part of the process, and now we have someone whose job is to focus on just that."

'Wowed' by Menlo

Ms. Brandell said that she attended Menlo Park's March 6 El Camino Real community workshop, and was "wowed" by the 100 people or so who attended the meeting.

"Clearly, there's a lot of interest [in Menlo Park] about government and people having a say, and that's really exciting," she told The Almanac.

In Battle Creek, residents regularly meet with neighborhood services staff to raise any issues and concerns, and the department ensures that the issues get proper attention from the city, Ms. Brandell said.

She said that besides improving the relationship between neighbors and local government, the department has worked with

residents to design new recreation facilities, prioritize street repairs and other infrastructure improvements, and increase accountability around rental properties.

Assistant City Manger Audrey Ramberg said Ms. Brandell is "incredibly well-qualified" for the new job.

Mr. Kramer said 107 people applied for the community engagement position, and Ms. Brandell was one of five finalists interviewed for the job. ■

building permits for their home on Belbrook Way.

The special election is being held to fill the council seat vacated by Alan Carlson, who moved out of Atherton in December. There will be another Atherton council election in November, when the terms of Jim Janz and Kathy McKeithen expire. ■



Courtesy, Battle Creek (Michigan) Enquirer
Cherise Brandell

'There were specific concerns under the previous council about the way the public wasn't always involved in decisions.'

COUNCILMAN HEYWARD ROBINSON,

CAMPAIGN

continued from page 5

and John Fisher; former Planning Commission member Rose Hau; her campaign treasurer, Atherton resident Sharon Shenk; and Maryann and Steve Ackley, Atherton residents who were entangled last year in a dispute over expired



Photo by Veronica Weber/The Almanac

A gentle touch

The logistics of unloading a new stainless steel deli counter may be preoccupying these workers at this moment on Monday morning, March 31, at the new Roberts Market on Alpine Road in Portola Valley. Construction should be finished around mid-May and the store could open for business in early June, owner George Roberts told The Almanac.

Woodside councilwoman charged with DUI

Woodside Councilwoman Carroll Ann Hodges spent Friday night in the First Chance substance-abuse facility in San Carlos and had to take a cab home the next day — the consequence of being pulled over by the California Highway Patrol and being charged with drunken driving, she told The Almanac.

A breathalyzer test after being stopped in her car at 10:30 p.m.

on March 28 on Woodside Road just off Interstate 280 showed her blood-alcohol level at 0.12 percent, she said. State law establishes intoxication at 0.08 percent or above.

"I've got a changed life ahead of me for a while," Ms. Hodges said. "It's something I'm very dismayed about. ... It was sheer stupidity on my part."

With her license now suspended, she can apply for a pro-

visional license in 30 days, she said. It's fortunate, she added, that she lives within walking distance of the grocery store and Town Hall.

Ms. Hodges had been returning from a party in Palo Alto for Craig Britton, who retired as general manager of the Mid-peninsula Regional Open Space District. Her table at the party offered more varieties of wine than she was used to, she said.

talking about it again and again and again," he said.

A balanced approach

An even-handed community discussion may have been the natural outcome, given that Mayor Maryann Moise Derwin chose the members of the ad hoc committee so as to reflect a diversity of views, Planning Manager Leslie Lambert told The Almanac.

"It was a pleasant surprise. It was a pretty fair and solid cross-section of Portola Valley, with generally thoughtful people who were able to cut right

to the chase on this," Mr. Seipp said. "There was a general sense that the big hot-button issue in Portola Valley is the carbon footprint and being eco-friendly in construction practices."

Resident and committee member Craig Buchsbaum did not really buy claims about the environmental costs of building a traditional basement. "I'm a little bit skeptical, without knowing all the details, as to the most efficient way to cut down on the use of petroleum products," he said. "I think that what everybody thought is that the basement battle wasn't worth fighting." ■

BASEMENT

continued from page 5

sion: The town may focus on guiding residents in building better basements, such as with the use of permanent Styrofoam forms that eliminate the need for traditional wood forms and provide insulation, said resident and architect Clay Baker, who was on the committee.

"I would rather see 2,000 square feet of well-built basement than 1,000 square feet of bad basement," he told The Almanac. "There are lots of things we can do there to make it a friendlier place and an environment to live in."

Basements should not be isolated from the issue of sustainable construction, Mr. Baker said, though he thinks they will continue to be a topic of interest. "I think we're going to end up

Correction

The story in the Almanac's March 26 edition about the construction project at Oak Knoll School in Menlo Park misidentified changes to the plans sought by nearby neighbors. The

residents would like the planned two-story multi-use room to be moved to the area of the back basketball courts. They do not prefer that the building stay at its proposed site with a sunken, below-grade foundation, as mistakenly reported in the story.

Should city expand shuttle service for school kids, Caltrain riders?

By Rory Brown
Almanac Staff Writer

■ MENLO PARK

Menlo Park may look at making dramatic changes to the city's shuttle service, which now provides midday transit for residents going to senior centers and hospitals.

City staff recommends that the City Council authorize a \$35,000 study that would examine the prospects of expanding the service to take Hillview Middle School and Menlo-Atherton High School students to school, and local Caltrain riders to the train station during morning commute hours.

The topic is on the council's agenda Tuesday night, April 1.

The study, which would focus on where shuttles could stop in Menlo Park neighborhoods before taking riders to school or the train station, is among project priorities council members may approve for the fiscal year starting July 1.

The full list of projects will be considered as a regular business item during the April 1 meeting, which starts at 7 p.m. in the council chambers at the Civic Center, between Laurel and Alma streets.

The study stems from a push by the city's Transportation Commission, an advisory body to the council, to examine shuttles as an alternative to the headache-inducing traffic jams that surround local schools each morning. The city is focusing on accommodating middle and high school students because they're older and more likely to use the shuttle service independently, according to Transportation Manager Chip Taylor.

"Shuttles are sort of the capillaries of a larger transit arterial system," said Martin Engel, a member of the Transportation Commission. "There are a lot of details to be worked out, and that's where the experts come in, but this is worth a look."

Help from schools

Council members said they're receptive to the idea of shuttles, but stressed that a key component is getting local schools to help plan and fund a new shuttle program.

"Despite people liking the idea [of shuttles], nobody's really ready

to embrace it," said Mayor Andy Cohen, noting he's already brought up the idea with school officials.

Ken Ranella, the superintendent of the Menlo Park City School District, said the district "isn't strongly engaged" in any efforts with the city to form a shuttle program for local schools, but said the idea is worth considering.

The city runs a midday shuttle service, providing free round-trip service from the Onetta Harris Community Center in the Belle Haven neighborhood to Stanford Hospital, making stops at the Veterans Affairs Medical Center, both of Menlo Park's libraries, the downtown area, Stanford Shopping Center, and other locations.

The 20-seat shuttles also stop at the Menlo Park Caltrain station, but not until after 10 a.m. The study would look at how shuttles could pick up riders earlier in the day to accommodate a larger portion of local Caltrain riders.

"We're just starting to scratch the surface with this shuttle talk," said Councilman Heyward Robinson. "But it's great we're talking about it, and starting to think seriously about alternate modes of transportation." ■

Taking the next step on El Camino Real

■ April 3 workshop to tackle how housing, parks, stores and more could renew main thoroughfare.

By Rory Brown
Almanac Staff Writer

Menlo Park residents can get a first look at a range of plans to improve properties along El Camino Real on Thursday, April 3, when the city hosts its second workshop aimed at tapping public opinion on how to overhaul the city's main thoroughfare.

The workshop is set for 7 to 9 p.m. in the Burgess Recreation Center, at 700 Alma St.

Design, Community and Environment, the Berkeley-based firm hired by the city to turn community input into a greater plan for

El Camino Real and downtown Menlo Park, will unveil three rough plans to renew the area.

The plans range from "less intense" to "more intense" development, and outline where public plazas, parks, new bike and pedestrian crossings, and homes and businesses could be built along the El Camino Real corridor, said Dahlia Chazan, a DC&E associate.

She said the plans are based on the results of about 2,000 responses to a citywide mailed survey regarding El Camino Real, and ideas and concepts mentioned by some of the 100 people or so who attended the

city's March 6 workshop.

"We're going to ask people to divide into groups, and actually draw on these maps," Ms. Chazan said. "In some cases, people may physically cut something off one map and paste it on another. It's a hands-on process."

DC&E staff hopes workshop participants will help generate a rough design so the firm can come back May 1 — the date of the third workshop — with renderings and a more specific plan for residents to discuss, Ms. Chazan said.

"The more people ... there, the more it reflects the community's vision," said Thomas Rogers, an associate planner with the city. "We're hoping at a minimum to get the turnout we got at the last workshop ... and continue the momentum." ■

an impact and move forward on a council priority. It's a very small investment that we can leverage quite a bit."

Ms. Fergusson said joining the ClimateSmart program is one of many "short-term" measures the city can take while creating a larger, more comprehensive climate action plan that will go before the council in December.

"We need to act on a lot of dif-

ferent fronts because we're in a crisis situation," she said, noting that the city could opt out of the program in December.

Mitch Slomiak, co-chair of the city's Green Ribbon Citizens' Committee, said he's happy to see the council "lead by example" and continue to raise local awareness about global warming.

"I'm encouraged to see Menlo Park take initiative," he said. ■

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CREDITS

continued from page 5

— it comes down to addressing climate change with minimal city resources.

"Environmental stewardship is an official council priority," said Councilman Heyward Robinson. "I saw [joining ClimateSmart] as a very cost-effective way to make



FRESH FROM THE FARMS

PICTURES OF LIFE IN THE FIELDS

PHOTOS BY VERONICA WEBER



By Renee Batti
Almanac News Editor

Americans have begun to think more carefully in recent years about the food they and their children eat, asking a range of critical questions: Where does the food come from? How are the spinach and the tomatoes and the apples grown, and how much time does it take to get the produce from the field or orchard into the market bins?

Are the animals raised humanely, and the fish harvested in a sustainable way? And are the hens laying those eggs that end up on the breakfast table caged and given antibiotics?

Residents of the Bay Area are in the vanguard of the movement to know about their food's sources, and to eat foods produced as close to home as possible. That's one of the reasons outdoor farmers' markets have proliferated in San Francisco and many surrounding cities and towns in recent years.

At the farmers' market, many shoppers relish the chance to speak directly to farmers and their helpers, to ask when the grapes and the figs, the broccoli and the lettuces, the savory and the basil were harvested, whether they were sprayed, and what practices were used to treat the soil that nurtured them.

But in general, what they learn from the producers as they fill

their carts and canvas bags with fragrant produce and freshly laid eggs is only half the story. The long hours, seven-day work weeks, sometimes back-breaking labor, and the anxiety resulting from unpredictable weather or unforeseen pest problems — those are facts of the farming life that are often overlooked.

David Winsberg of Happy Quail Farms is one of the regulars at the Menlo Park, Palo Alto and San Francisco Ferry Plaza farmers' markets — a producer recognizable by the rows of shiny red, yellow, purple and orange peppers bordering his stall.

His farm is probably as close to the Midpeninsula markets as any

other: in a mostly residential area in East Palo Alto. There, he grows his sweet, hot and padrone peppers, along with rhubarb, cucumbers, horseradish and a few other crops, in a one-acre plot behind his house and on a few nearby parcels of land he leases to grow the bounty he brings to market.

The son of a Florida pepper farmer, he raised quail on his property for a time, selling their eggs to Chinatown markets, before deciding to try to follow in his father's footsteps and grow peppers.

Farming the property for 26 years now, Mr. Winsberg has a faithful clientele, including a handful of first-rate restaurants such as Boulevard, Rubicon, Aziza



and Zuni in San Francisco; and Euvia and Lavanda in Palo Alto.

He is largely responsible for introducing the padrone pepper to Bay Area palates, and is now the largest producer of the increasingly popular pepper in the country, he says.

He also keeps chickens on the farm, and brings some 30 dozen fresh eggs to market every week, he says.

On weekends, he's joined by his wife and two teenage sons to sell his produce in outdoor markets. His mother-in-law and brother-in-law staff the stall at the Saturday Palo Alto market so he can make the trip to the Ferry Plaza market.

The farming life offers many

rewards; Mr. Winsberg notes that most people aren't lucky enough to "get to see the fruits of their labor." He says he enjoys "being able to take something from seed to consumer."

But farming has disadvantages as well: no income during the winter and early spring; and long hours tending the soil and crops, even during those months when there's no produce to sell. During

those months, he takes a break from the markets, but he'll be back with the first of his spring harvest within weeks.

Tony Mellow of Mellow's Nursery and Farms in the Morgan Hill area grows and harvests year-round, which means he works "seven days a week, pretty close to 100 hours a week... and no vacation."

Part of that schedule is due to that fact that he sells his produce

at a long list of markets, including Menlo Park, Palo Alto, Redwood City and Cupertino. He also sells at the San Francisco Heart of the City market in the Civic Center two days a week, and serves as president of the organization that runs it.

Mr. Mellow is a third-generation farmer, and has farmed for some 45 years — since growing Halloween pumpkins in Sunnyvale when he was 7. His parents sold their plants and produce at the pioneering Alemany Farmers' Market in the 1940s, he says.

Mr. Mellow says he grows "a little bit of everything" now because

THE LONG HOURS, seven-day work weeks, sometimes back-breaking labor, and the anxiety resulting from unpredictable weather or unforeseen pest problems — those are facts of the farming life that are often overlooked.

Clockwise, from top left: Tony Mellow readies the soil for planting tomatoes and other crops at one of his farming sites in Morgan Hill; David Winsberg, left, and Martin Guzman plant padrone peppers at Happy Quail Farms in East Palo Alto; Manuel Aguilera waters tomato seedlings in a greenhouse at a Mellow farm site; Felipe Winsberg puts a padrone pepper plant in the ground at Happy Quail Farms.

See **FROM THE FARMS**, page 12



FRESH FROM THE
FARMS
 PICTURES OF LIFE IN THE FIELDS



FROM THE FARMS
continued from page 11

the markets have become so plentiful that shoppers are dispersed more widely and, consequently, there are fewer customers at each one, he says. “You can’t grow a whole bunch of any item, because it won’t sell,” he explains.

But the range of his crops is impressive: apples, stone fruit, kiwi, tomatoes, cabbage, broccoli, cauliflower, radishes, mustard, fava

beans, celery, and much more. He also grows flowers, including roses, tulips, carnations, snapdragons and sunflowers.

“I would get bored (growing) just one crop,” he says.

He farms more than 110 acres, split into different parcels across the Morgan Hill area; there’s also a 4.5-acre parcel in Sunnyvale.

Mr. Mellow says farming “came easy to me,” even if keeping the long hours gets difficult at times.

He sums it up: “I’m married to my work.” ■

Clockwise, from top left: Jaime Olaizola, left, and Rolando Cabrales tend to heirloom tomato seedlings at a Mellow farm site; Martin Guzman waters pepper plants at Happy Quail Farms; workers in a Mellow farms greenhouse plant heirloom tomato seedlings last week; these peppers from Tony Mellow’s farms made it to the Menlo Park Farmers’ Market last Sunday; cauliflower from Mellow farms; shoppers at the March 30 Menlo Park Farmers’ Market enjoy the fruit of the labors of farmers like Tony Mellow and David Winsberg.

Big plans brewing for garbage pickup and recycling programs

By Marion Softky

Almanac Staff Writer

The countdown has started to Jan. 1, 2011 — that's 1/1/11 — when residents of 12 San Mateo County communities will enter a new era for better and greener garbage pickup and recycling.

It's the date that two new franchises will kick in: for collection of garbage, recyclable materials, and organic waste in Bayside communities from East Palo Alto to San Bruno; and for operating the new Shoreway recycling center and the transfer station in San Carlos.

Both services are now provided by Allied Waste Services, which took over from BFI in 2005. Allied Waste just finished converting its trucks to biodiesel fuel early this year.

At the same time, the present recycling center, at 333 Shoreway Road, just east of Bayshore in San Carlos, will be torn down, and a \$20 million Shoreway Environmental Center will be built to accommodate an additional 50,000 tons per year of recyclable materials.

"I expect it to be the largest and the greenest facility of its kind in the solid waste industry, anywhere in the U.S.," said Kevin McCarthy, executive director of the South Bay-side Waste Management Authority

(SBWMA), the joint powers agency managing the process.

Over the next year, SBWMA will be evaluating bids for two contracts currently held by Allied Waste Services:

■ Four proposals have been submitted for neighborhood collection of solid waste, organics, and materials for recycling. The franchise will cover 12 cities, including Menlo Park and Atherton, plus unincorporated areas represented by the West Bay Sanitary District and San Mateo County. Woodside and Portola Valley are not included; they have separate franchises with Green Waste Recovery.

■ Seven companies have bid on operation of the new recycling center and transfer station. "We're looking for companies with a track record of innovation and great customer service," Mr. McCarthy said.

When the SBWMA awards the contracts in spring 2009, Allied Waste may continue to hold one or both of the franchises, Mr. McCarthy said. The skills are very different for running a garbage collection service and operating a state-of-the-

art recycling facility, he noted.

However, Allied Waste will continue to dispose of the waste collected at the transfer station in San Carlos at its Ox Mountain landfill at least through 2019, Mr. McCarthy added. "Regardless of who operates the transfer station, the trash will still go to Ox Mountain."

Green plans at San Carlos

There will be lots of action at the waste collection site in San Carlos over the next couple of years, as the present recycling center is torn down and the new environmental complex built.

The Shoreway Environmental Center will have many green building features as well as state-of-the-art recycling programs. It is joining the PG&E ClimateSmart program to reduce its carbon footprint.

Residents and businesses will be able to put all their cans, bottles and papers in a single container; the new center will have equipment to process "single stream recycling."

There will also be a new environmental center so that school children can learn more about waste and recycling, and demonstration

Menlo Park garbage rates rise; biggest dumpers hardest hit

By Rory Brown

Almanac Staff Writer

Menlo Park garbage rates are on the rise, but the less trash residents throw out, the smaller the impact the rate increases are likely to have on their garbage bills.

City Council members voted 5-0 on March 25 to raise rates from 5 to 14 percent for homes and businesses. Higher rates are needed to cover rising charges from Allied Waste, said city staff.

Rates will increase 5 percent to \$11.96 a month for a single-family home with one 20-gallon trash can, and 10 percent to \$12.55 a month for a home with one 32-gallon can.

Rates will rise 14 percent for single-family homes with two or three 32-gallon cans, to \$32.21 and \$48.30 a month,

respectively.

Council members said the single-family home rate increases, which will go into effect July 1, will encourage residents to recycle and compost since those with smaller cans face smaller rate increases.

The council also raised rates for multi-family residential units and businesses, retroactive to Jan. 1.

Multi-family and commercial rates were raised 10 percent for customers with one 32-gallon can to \$16.03 per month, and 14 percent for customers with two or three 32-gallon cans, to \$37.19 and \$55.81 a month, respectively.

Rates for commercial bins were raised 14 percent retroactive to Jan. 1. Businesses will be charged monthly rates of \$142.88 for a two-yard bin, and \$214.32 for a three-yard bin. ■

gardens. "Then kids can go home and tell their parents to recycle," Mr. McCarthy said.

The nearby transfer station, where garbage trucks dump their loads, will be expanded and made

more efficient and convenient for customers bringing loads. "Our goal is to improve service to our customers," Mr. McCarthy said. The present facilities are "outdated and inefficient." ■

■ INFORMATION

A number of local agencies and companies can provide information on solid waste collection, recycling, and other questions:

■ South Bay Waste Management Authority (SBWMA): 802-3500; rethinkwaste.org.

■ Allied Waste of San Mateo County: 592-2411; alliedwastesanmateocounty.com.

■ San Mateo County Recycleworks: 1-800-442-2666; recycleworks.org.

■ GreenWaste Recovery: 569-9900 (from Woodside and Portola Valley); greenwaste.com.

Allied Waste performance to be reviewed

The South Bayside Waste Management Authority will hold a meeting to evaluate the performance of Allied Waste Services on Thursday, April 3, at 10 a.m. in the San Carlos Council Chambers at 600 Elm St.

A staff evaluation of Allied Waste collection services in 2007 is available on the agency Web site: rethinkwaste.org, under "What's New."

For information, call 802-8500.

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**WEST BAY SANITARY DISTRICT
ILLINOIS PUMP STATION RECONSTRUCTION PROJECT
EAST PALO ALTO, CA**

Sealed proposals for the Illinois Pump Station Reconstruction Project, in East Palo Alto will be received at the West Bay Sanitary District, 500 Laurel Street, Menlo Park, California 94025 until **2:00 PM on Wednesday, May 7, 2008** at which time they will be publicly opened and read. Bids shall be labeled "West Bay Sanitary District, Proposal for "ILLINOIS PUMP STATION RECONSTRUCTION PROJECT, EAST PALO ALTO."

The Work will include the furnishing of all labor, materials and equipment, and other appurtenances for the reconstruction of the existing sanitary sewer pump station and the construction of new gravity sewer mains and manholes. The pump station renovation will include concrete construction, wet well construction, replacement of emergency generator and fuel tank, and replacement of existing pumps and pump control panels.

The contract documents may be inspected at the office of the West Bay Sanitary District; San Francisco Builders Exchange, 850 So. Van Ness Avenue, San Francisco, California 94110; Reed Construction Data, Attn: Jeannie Kwan, 30 Technology Parkway South, Suite 500, Norcross, Georgia 30092; Peninsula Builders Exchange, 735 Industrial Road, Suite 100, San Carlos, California 94070; Santa Clara Builders Exchange, 400 Reed Street, Santa Clara, California 95050; Builders Exchange of Alameda, 3055 Alvarado Street, San Leandro, California 94577; Construction Bidboard Incorporated, Attn: Michael Schafer, 4420 Hotel Circle South, Suite 215, San Diego, California 92108; McGraw-Hill Construction Dodge, 11875 Dublin Blvd., Suite A118, Dublin, California 94568; and, Contra Costa Builders Exchange, 2440 Stanwell Drive, Concord, California 94520.

Copies of the Contract Documents may be obtained at the office of the West Bay Sanitary District upon payment of a check or money order in the amount of \$40.00 for each set. The check or money order must be issued to the West Bay Sanitary District. All payments are nonrefundable.

A pre-bid meeting will be held at **10:00 am on Wednesday, April 23, 2008** at the West Bay Sanitary District office in Menlo Park, California.

Each bid proposal shall be accompanied by a certified or cashier's check or a proposal guaranty bond payable to the order of the West Bay Sanitary District in an amount not less than ten percent (10%) of the amount of the bid as a guaranty that the bidder will execute the contract if it be awarded to him in conformity with the proposal. The successful bidder will be required to furnish a performance bond in an amount not less than one hundred percent (100%) of the contract price and a labor and material bond in an amount equal to one hundred percent (100%) of the contract price.

The District ("Owner") reserves the right to reject any or all bids and to determine which proposal is, in the judgment of the District, the lowest responsible bid of a responsible bidder or group of bidders and which proposal should be accepted in the best interest of the District. The District also reserves the right to waive any informalities in any proposal or bid.

Bid proposals received after the time announced for the opening will not be considered. No bidder may withdraw his proposal after the time announced for the opening, or before award and execution of the contract, unless the award is delayed for a period exceeding forty-five (45) days.

Pursuant to the provisions of Public Contract Code Section 22300, and upon the request and at the expense of the Contractor, securities equivalent to the amount withheld by the District to insure performance under the Contract may be deposited with the District, or with a state or federally chartered bank as escrow agent who shall deliver such securities to the Contractor upon satisfactory completion of the contract. Only those securities listed in Government Code Section 16430 or other securities approved by the District are eligible for deposit. The deposit of securities with an escrow agent or the District shall be made in the form and on such terms and conditions as the District may require to protect the interest of the District in the event of the Contractor's default. The Contractor shall be the beneficial owner of any securities that are deposited and shall receive any interest thereon.

Pertaining to Sections 1770, 1773, and 1773.1 of the California Labor Code the successful bidder shall pay not less than the prevailing rate of per diem wages as determined by the Director of the California Department of Industrial Relations. Copies of such prevailing rates are on file at the District office of the West Bay Sanitary District and which copies shall be made available to any interested party on request. The successful bidder shall post a copy of such determinations at each job site.

In accordance with the provisions of California Public Contract Code Section 3300, the District has determined that the Contractor shall possess a valid Class A License or a combination of the Class C licenses indicated in Article B8.01-License Requirements, at the time that the contract is awarded. Failure to possess the specified license(s) shall render the bid as non-responsive and shall act as a bar to award of the contract to any bidder not possessing said license(s) at the time of award.

West Bay Sanitary District
Board of Directors
San Mateo County, California

Dated: _____

Published in THE ALMANAC on April 2, 23, 2008

Saturday workshop to focus on green-building techniques

By Dave Boyce

Almanac Staff Writer

■ PORTOLA VALLEY

The interactive green-building workshop being held Saturday morning, April 5, in Portola Valley will have plenty of local talent, with five resident architects and a resident alternative-fuels consultant scheduled to speak about building and remodeling homes to green standards.

The free workshop, with opening remarks by Town Councilman Steve Toben, is scheduled to run from 9 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. in the multi-use room at Corte Madera Middle School at 4575 Alpine Road.

Alternative-fuels consultant Stefan Unnasch will give an update on the town's carbon-dioxide footprint and talk about the latest research in lowering a home's footprint, he told The Almanac. Single-pane windows, sliding glass doors and drafts are principle culprits, he said.

Noted green-design consultant Ann Edminster will talk about the GreenPoint rating

system. The system assigns point values to green features such as bamboo floors, low toxicity paints and solar water heaters, which are particularly quick in paying for themselves, she said.

(The San Mateo County Board of Supervisors recently adopted the GreenPoint system and requires residents in unincorporated county communities to build in at least 50 points for a new home or major remodel.)

Architects Clay Baker and Carter Warr, both of Portola Valley, and architect Peter Duxbury will present three green-oriented projects: a minor remodel (under 500 square feet), a major remodel, and a new home, said Planning Manager Leslie Lambert.

Following the presentations, these speakers will spread out to guide group discussions along with Portola Valley architects Sharon Refvem, Iris Harrell and Jeff Clark, and architect John Hermansson. ■



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Could Bayfront Park become Bedwell Park?

Menlo Park Mayor Andy Cohen is campaigning to get Bayfront Park a new name.

At the City Council's March 25 meeting, Mr. Cohen suggested the city rename the 160-acre park after Michael Bedwell, Menlo Park's city manager from 1964 to 1990, who died March 9 after a fight with heart and lung problems.

Mr. Bedwell was city manager during efforts to cap what was a garbage dump at the intersection of Marsh Road and Bayfront Expressway, and create a park on the closed landfill.

■ MENLO WATCH

Mayor Cohen said he has asked City Manager Glen Rojas to put the issue on a future council agenda.

Two speakers paid tribute to Mr. Bedwell during the public comment section of the meeting — Mark Flegel, CEO and president of Flegel's, and Palo Alto resident Jim Lewis.

Derry project update

The 108-condo Derry project was scheduled to go before the Menlo Park Planning Commission on Monday, March 31, just after the Almanac's press deadline.

For a news update on what action the commission took, go to TheAlmanacOnline.com.

Students compete in state geo bee

Samuel R. Falkenhagen, an eighth-grader at La Entrada School in Menlo Park, and Daniel Menche of Menlo Park, an eighth-grade student at Grace Lutheran School in San Mateo, will compete at the state level of the National Geographic Society's Geography Bee on Friday, April 4, at Cosumnes River College in Sacramento.



Daniel Menche

State-level competitions on geographic knowledge will be held across the country on that day, with hundreds of fourth- to eighth-graders competing for spots in the national finals on May 20-21, the National Geographic Society reported in a press release.

First prize in the national competition is a \$25,000 college scholarship.

This is the second year Daniel Menche has ranked first in his school. He also sings in the Ragazzi Boys Chorus, plays the piano, and has a strong interest in science. He lives with his grandparents, Donna and Howard Menche.

Bilingual education: Sen. Yee honored

State Sen. Leland Yee, whose district includes Woodside and Portola Valley, has been honored with the Advocacy Award from the California Association for Bilingual Education for his contributions to bilingual education and educational equity for English learners.

Sen. Yee, D-San Francisco/San Mateo, has introduced several legislative bills that strive to increase language services, according to his office. In 2005 he sponsored a bill, which became law, requiring hospitals and clinics to include a patient's principal spoken language on medical records.

Fight for survival

This picture of sparring polar bears by Atherton photographer Larry Calof is among those that will be exhibited at Atherton Gallery in Menlo Park from April 3 through the end of May. Shrinking Arctic sea ice poses a threat to the bears' survival, said Mr. Calof, who shot the pictures in Canada's western Hudson Bay territory. A reception for Mr. Calof will be held from 5 to 8 p.m. Thursday, April 3, at the gallery, 700 El Camino Real.

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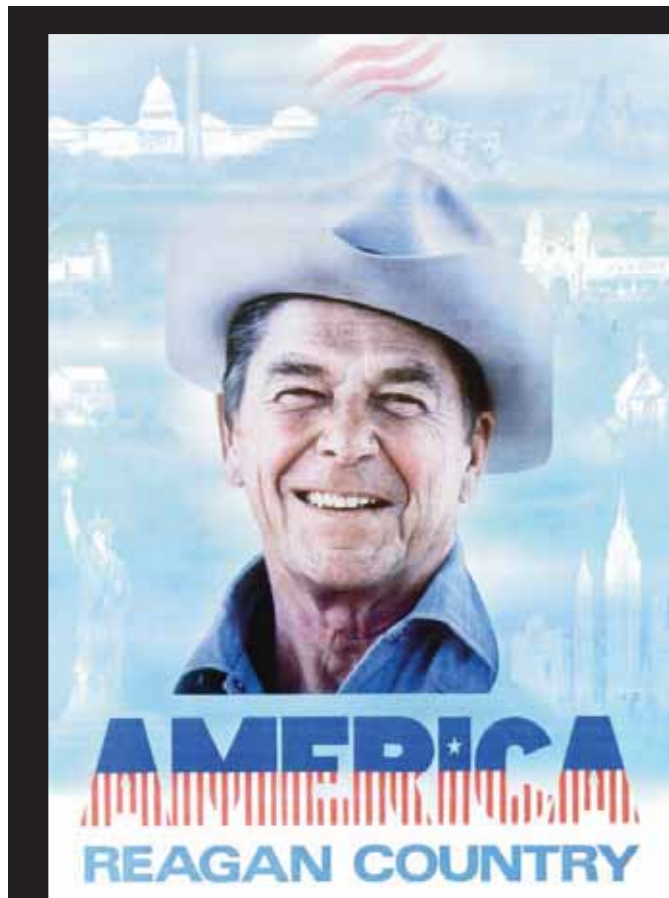
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Menlo woman pleads not guilty in freeway construction-zone crash

By Dave Boyce
 Almanac Staff Writer

Menlo Park resident Erica Barragan, 28, pleaded not guilty to charges of felony drunken driving in connection with a multiple-injury accident early on the morning of June 10, 2007, at a road construction site on U.S. 101 near Marsh Road.

Ms. Barragan entered her plea at a March 26 arraignment before Judge Clifford Cretan in San Mateo County Superior Court, said Chief Deputy District Attorney Steve Wagstaffe.

She remains out of custody on \$50,000 bail. A jury trial is set for 8:45 a.m. July 28, with a pretrial conference on July 1 at 1:30 p.m.

Ms. Barragan is alleged to have been behind the wheel of a Lexus that had two passengers inside and that rear-ended a Ford Windstar with five people inside that had slowed for a construction

zone marked with "numerous traffic cones and traffic signs," Mr. Wagstaffe said.

The 1:30 a.m. collision forced the Windstar into a collision with a Volvo station wagon in front of it, which then collided with another vehicle, he said. All five people in the Windstar were taken to the hospital with injuries, including lacerations that required sutures and a broken leg that has required 10 surgeries to repair, Mr. Wagstaffe said.

Officers found Ms. Barragan to have a blood-alcohol level of 0.10 percent, Mr. Wagstaffe said. The threshold at which a person is legally considered intoxicated is 0.08 percent. They also found an open bottle of tequila in the car, he said.

Officers also discovered drunken driving on the part of the Windstar's driver, who was subsequently prosecuted, Mr. Wagstaffe said. ■

■ 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

Fraud reports:

■ Home equity account possibly compromised from new unauthorized account, first block of Irving Ave., March 23.

■ Unauthorized use of canceled credit card, DeBell Drive, March 24.

■ Burglary report: Tools stolen from garage, first block of Stevick Drive, March 26.

■ Petty theft report: Cell phones, cash and PE clothes stolen in four separate incidents, Menlo-Atherton High School at 555 Middlefield Road, March 27.

MENLO PARK

Grand theft reports:

■ Bicycle stolen, first block of Coleman Place, March 21.

■ Jewelry stolen sometime recently, 1800 block of Oakdell Ave., March 21.

Burglary reports:

■ Jewelry and video game equipment stolen, 300 block of Ivy Drive, March 22.

■ Navigation device and satellite radio stolen, 800 block of Arnold Way, March 24.

■ Car stereo stolen, 1400 block of Almanor Ave., March 24.

■ Vehicle side window smashed, 4500 block of Bohannon Drive, March 26.

■ Registration information, briefcase, laptop computer, birth certificate, sandwich and soft drink stolen from vehicle, 1000 block of Noel Drive, March 27.

Fraud reports:

■ Credit cards used several times after wallet lost, 700 block of Laurel St., March 21.

■ Unauthorized use of credit card, 1400 block of O'Brien Drive, March 24.

■ New account opened in victim's name, 200 block of San Luis Drive, March 27.

■ Hit-and-run report: One person taken to Stanford Hospital and Santos Sanabria, 63, of Menlo Park booked into county jail on charges of felony drunken driving and leaving the scene of an accident, Willow Road and Newbridge St., March 21.

■ Spousal abuse report: 600 block of Sharon Park Drive, March 22.

■ Indecent exposure report: White male adult in 40s with brown hair, beard and sunglasses fled on foot after exposing himself, 300 block of Sharon Park Drive, March 25.

WOODSIDE

Burglary reports:

■ Purses stolen from two locked vehicles after windows smashed, 800 block of Runnymede Road, March 20.

■ Digital music player stolen from locked vehicle, Canada College at 4200 Farm Hill Boulevard, March 25.

■ Stolen vehicle report: Pickup truck that could be started with pliers, 100 block of Marva Oaks Drive, March 21.

■ Fraud report: Debit card used to withdraw \$1,200 from ATM machines on the Peninsula, 2000 block of Alameda de las Pulgas, March 21.

■ Incident report: Bloody rag found next to two locked bicycles, Fox Hill Court and La Honda Road, March 22.

PORTOLA VALLEY

■ Theft report: Tax documents stolen from briefcase in unlocked vehicle, 1000 block of Meadowood Drive, March 19.

■ Burglary report: Tools stolen from construction site, 100 block of Deer Meadow Lane, March 24.

WEST MENLO PARK

■ Burglary report: Sliding glass door broken and computers, jewelry and personal information stolen from residence, 2000 block of Sharon Road, March 24.

■ Theft report: Tailgate valued at about \$275 stolen from truck in parking lot, Dutch Goose parking lot at 3567 Alameda de las Pulgas, March 24.

■ Fraud report: Unauthorized change of address initiated for credit card, 2000 block of Ashton Ave., March 19.

LADERA

■ Burglary report: Tools and movie camera stolen after someone accessed the residence by cutting through with power saw, 900 block of Mesa Drive, March 19.



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Community Health Education Programs

April 2008

Events and Lectures

What the Traveler Needs to Know Tuesday, April 8, 7 to 8:30 p.m.

Gary Fujimoto, M.D., PAMF Travel Medicine

This talk will focus on food and sanitation in some overseas travel destinations, the latest vaccination recommendations and requirements, avian influenza and other emerging infectious diseases, malaria prevention, travelers' diarrhea and jet lag.

Hearst Center for Health Education, Level 3, Jamplis Building, Palo Alto Medical Foundation, 795 El Camino Real, Palo Alto. RSVP to 650-853-4873.

Classes

Learning About Heart Failure, Wednesday, April 9, 2:30 – 4 p.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.

Taking Charge of Your Body, Mondays, April 14 – May 19, 6 – 8 p.m.

A six-week course focusing on healthy living and managing your lifestyle through exercise and healthful eating.

What You Need to Know About Warfarin, Wednesday, April 23, 6 – 8 p.m.

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

Supermarket Tour, Tuesday, April 29, 2 – 4 p.m.

Learn techniques for making healthier food choices in a local supermarket with dietitian Karen Ross, M.S., R.D.

Support Groups

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

Damien Suttle

Computer specialist

■ OBITUARY

Damien Arthur Suttle, a graduate of Menlo-Atherton High School and Brown University, died Feb. 29. He was 26 and suffered from bi-polar disorder.

While attending Menlo-Atherton, he lettered all four years in varsity wrestling, qualifying for CCS his junior and senior years.

At Brown University in Providence, Rhode Island, he majored in computer science and was a teaching assistant for a nationally renowned professor of computer science, his family said.

After graduation from Brown, he became an information technology auditor and Sarbanes-Oxley specialist at PriceWaterhouseCoopers, and then at McKesson Corp. On the side, he started his own business: Assisting Solutions LLC.

He was brilliant and passion-

ate about his interests, say family members. They say he was a master of computer technology, film, comedy, video games, freestyle wrestling, Texas hold 'em, and, most of all, friendship. He was an avid snowboarder, backpacker, fisherman, golfer, tennis player, chess player, and pool player.

He is survived by his mother, Terri Kwan, and father, John Suttle; sister Jessica Suttle and brother J.J. Suttle; stepmother Mojdeh Suttle; stepfather Joe Gumina; grandparents Jack and Betty Suttle; step-grandmother Shokoo Vjeh; and many aunts, uncles, cousins and friends.

Donations in his name may be made to the National Alliance on Mental Illness, P.O. Box 759155, Baltimore, MD 21275-9155. Its Web address is www.nami.org.

TAIJIQUAN TUTELAGE OF PALO ALTO

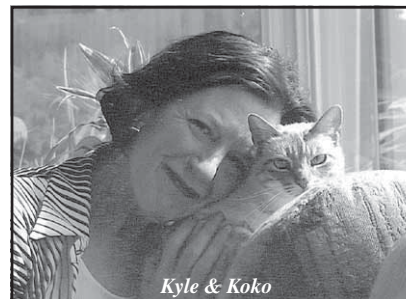
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New Voices for Youth films spotlighted April 7 at Sequoias

Menlo-Atherton High School students from troubled areas in East Palo Alto and Menlo Park will show videos they have made on tough issues—such as gangs, drug addiction, and attitudes about teen sex—on Monday, April 7, at 7 p.m. at The Sequoias, 501 Portola Road, in Portola Valley.

The budding movie-mak-

ers have filmed their own experiences as part of the New Voices for Youth, an award-winning program at the Computer Academy at Menlo-Atherton that is sponsored by the Leagues of Women Voters of South San Mateo County and Palo Alto.

For information, go to newvoicesforyouth.org.

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TOWN OF PORTOLA VALLEY

PUBLIC NOTICE

The Town of Portola Valley is accepting bids for the Town Center Project Phase 2B / Sausal Creek Day Lighting Phase 1 – Bid Packages 19, 22, 26-29, 32, and 35

Bids are due to the Public Works Department at Town Hall on Wednesday, April 23, 2008 by 3:00 p.m. at which time they will be opened and read aloud. Bids shall be submitted in sealed envelopes marked on the outside "Town Center Project Phase 2B / Sausal Creek Day Lighting Phase 1" followed by the appropriate bid package number. Fax bids or bids received after the designated time will not be accepted. Copies of construction documents are available at the Public Works Department:

Town Hall
765 Portola Road
Portola Valley, CA 94028
650-851d-1700 ext. 10

Published in THE ALMANAC on April 2, 2008

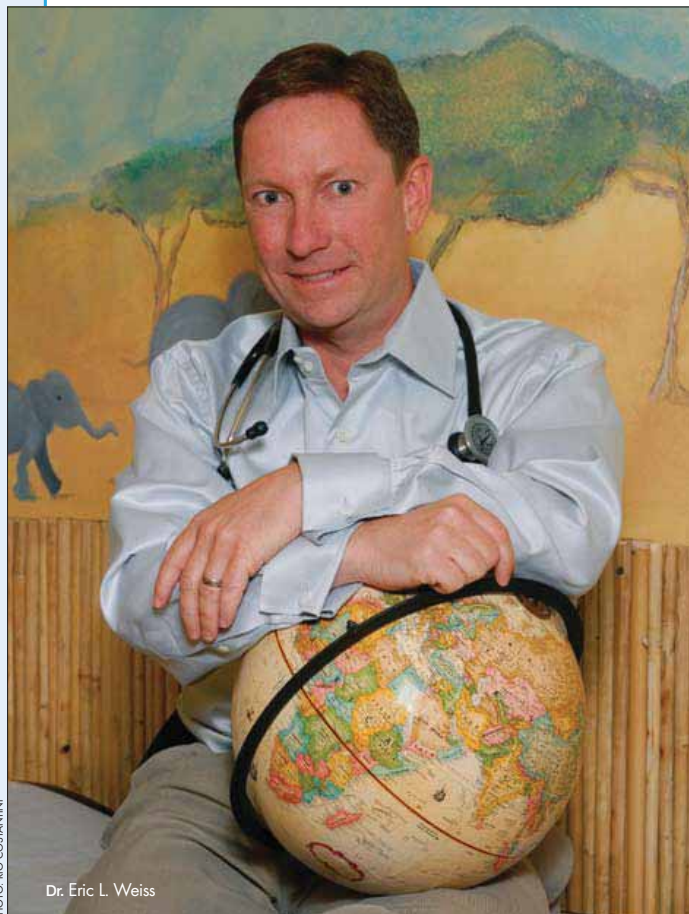


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Dr. Eric L. Weiss



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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.

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MAIL 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.

Tax system needs overhaul

Last week the Almanac broke the story that Oracle mogul and billionaire Larry Ellison won a huge tax reduction on his Woodside estate, an action that will cost the Portola Valley School District about \$250,000 this year, and also takes a chunk out of the Sequoia High School District (M-A and Woodside) and the town of Woodside.

The story line — the 14th richest person in the world uses his legal team to win lower taxes on the most extravagant home built on the Peninsula in years — was a guaranteed headline winner in the Chronicle and other Bay Area dailies, and even trickled into a blog in the Wall Street Journal.

EDITORIAL
The opinion of The Almanac

And then there is the overlay of the California budget crisis that is expected to take away \$4 billion or more from schools this coming year if Gov. Schwarzenegger has his way. Local schools, even those usually insulated from the state's worst budget crises since nearly all of their revenues come from local property taxes, will feel the pinch of the Ellison case. How could he do this at such a terrible time in the state's economy?

Mr. Ellison hasn't been available for comment on the tax reduction case, but even if he was, he should not have to apologize for doing what homeowners have a right to do if they feel their taxes are unfair. The law applies to Mr. Ellison the same as it does to any other homeowner, large or small. Despite the appearance of being a horrible skinflint, the Scrooge of Woodside, Mr. Ellison is guilty of nothing more than paying a lot more to build his home than it is worth today.

That is the crux of his tax case, which attacks the county's tradi-

tional method of basing home assessments on the cost to build or replicate them, rather than their value in today's market. Mr. Ellison imported Japanese craftsmen to help build a Japanese emperor's 16th century estate on his 23-acre property, which includes a main house, a two-bedroom guest house, three cottages, a barn converted into a gym, a five-acre man-made lake, two waterfalls and two bridges.

In its ruling, the assessment appeals board that reviewed Mr. Ellison's case found it highly unlikely that anyone would pay the assessed value of \$173 million, based on the improvements made on the property since Mr. Ellison bought it in 1995. Instead, using a different method, the appeals panel agreed with Mr. Ellison that the market value of the property was only \$69 million — more than \$100 million below the old assessed value. As a result, Mr. Ellison's property tax plunged, from \$1.8 million in 2007 to \$751,000 this year. And the reassessment is retroactive to 2004, which means county taxpayers ultimately will pay Mr. Ellison a \$3.06 million refund.

But that \$3 million is only the beginning of the loss the school districts will suffer. In 10 years, more than \$10 million will be lost to county coffers due to the reassessment decision, which is not subject to appeal. And with the notoriety of Mr. Ellison's case, we expect that other owners of extravagant homes will line up for their own reassessments that could impact other schools, fire districts and municipal governments.

The biggest loser in this tax case was the Portola Valley school system, which is especially vulnerable to huge swings in tax revenue.

See **TAX OVERHAUL**, next page



Atherton Heritage Association

Our Regional Heritage

Clara Bransten is about to be launched into the pool at Atherton's Circus Club by Van King and Paul Warburg in this 1926 photo. Bob Sutton is resting on the pool deck.

LETTERS

Our readers write

Let's use local trees to reduce carbon

Editor:

The idea of purchasing credits through a "carbon program" is tempting for a thoughtful family. However, planting for carbon capture — among the highest of green goals — works as well for local trees.

When we're talking about public money like the proposal discussed by the Menlo Park City Council March 25, this is important. Unlike technology opportunities at remote dairy farms as suggested by PG&E and other carbon credit concepts, trees planted within the city limits offer direct benefit to our citizens in terms of air quality as well as beauty.

But we can do still better. The environmental impact of deferred city maintenance is unmentioned but significant. If, for example, we maintained our roads so that they didn't need foundation rebuild due to erosion (Valparaiso Avenue is a vivid example), the net carbon impact of maintenance is far less than removal of failed road surfaces, recompaction and full repaving operations.

There are many similar issues like delayed replacement of old vehicles and low-efficiency building and service equipment, the upgrade of which would ultimately pay for themselves as the price of energy inevitable goes up. These measures remain largely unfunded in our city budget.

I urge our well-meaning council to keep our tax money and

good deeds within Menlo Park and take care of our facilities and infrastructure. It may not be as flashy as bragging that we joined the latest green trend, but it would make a real difference. And that's what we really want.

Henry L. Riggs
Callie Lane, Menlo Park

City loses on delayed Derry project

Editor:

We, the citizens of Menlo Park, will never know what the settlement with the Derry project included.

TownSquare

Join the conversation on www.TheAlmanacOnline.com. Click on links under the TownSquare banner.

A group of private citizens, Menlo Tomorrow, who were not elected or appointed by any official body, sued the developer, the O'Brien Group, and after months of secret negotiations, reached a secret deal.

People who signed the Derry referendum petition did not necessarily agree with having a secret body that had secret negotiations and which then decided to become a private "planning commission" for the city.

Many of those same Menlo Tomorrow members are also part of Mayor Andy Cohen's kitchen cabinet. At least we can make that public.

So now the Derry project is more than two years late in getting started. It will have five fewer below-market-rate units, which have a value of about \$1.5 mil-

lion. It is saddled with \$2 million in public benefit fees, more and expensive parking requirements and less profit margin. Additionally, the Derry project finds itself caught in the current financial crisis, which is not friendly to any development, let alone one so encumbered with public and secret restrictions.

This project is a beautiful example of transit-oriented development, one that Menlo Park will be proud of. Had there been no referendum or protracted negotiations, the project would be almost finished, with people looking forward to moving into their new homes.

I wish the O'Brien Group good fortune with their grant application so that the project can proceed. It would be a shame if Menlo Park lost out on this well-designed, transit-oriented project.

Elizabeth Lasensky
Fremont Street, Menlo Park

Someone will pay for no-cost grant

Editor:

I was certainly relieved to read in your March 26 editorial that "...it makes perfect sense for the City [Menlo Park] to support a state grant for the Derry project, which won't cost anything..."

Obviously The Almanac has discovered a way to keep government expenditures from costing anything. If we can only apply this innovative methodology to state and federal expenditures, we can eliminate all deficits.

Isn't it time for The Almanac to acknowledge that someone must pay the \$3.78 million? Could it be the taxpayer?

Tom Tebben
Arbol Grande Court, Menlo Park

taxable revenue to escape untouched.

As far as we know, anyone who builds a home in California today will pay tax on the cost of improvements, and given past market conditions, that always worked in the owner's favor. But Mr. Ellison, knowing the tax code at the time, chose to spend more than \$200 million to build his exotic home, and in the process incur a tax liability that he has now successfully challenged. Will this precedent apply to anyone else? Perhaps, but right now it looks as if Mr. Ellison, and his team of lawyers, have found another loophole in the state's wacky tax code, but one that leaves the rest of us out in the cold.

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TAX OVERHAUL

continued from previous page

But just as important to Portola Valley and the state's other school districts is the need for a stable funding mechanism, no matter what happens in the economy. Proposition 98 was designed to be that mechanism, but now there is talk of setting it aside and drastically cutting school support.

It is no secret that the governor and Legislature are seriously handicapped when it comes to reforming the state's tax policies. Loopholes abound, from Proposition 13 to corporate gimmicks that enable huge amounts of otherwise

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