

**MAN STRUCK**, killed by train  
in Menlo Park. Page 9

# The Almanac


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

APRIL 9, 2008 | VOL. 43 NO. 32

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**PAGE 12**



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# 92.7% Current



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

Crises may sell newspapers, but at Alain Pinel Realtors, we conduct business based on market realities. Our clients are enjoying historically low mortgage rates.\* Credit-worthy buyers can easily find attractive mortgage packages. And our lending partner, Private Mortgage Advisors, funded 23 percent more loans in 2007 than in 2006.

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\* Source: Federal Home Loan Mortgage Corporation

Historical performance and data provided is not necessarily an indication of future performance.

# Inside

This week's news, features and community events.

## FIRST SHOT



Photo by Veronica Weber/The Almanac

### Accident's aftermath

Menlo Park police officers, Amtrak workers and San Mateo County sheriff's deputies gathered at the scene of a fatal Caltrain accident in Menlo Park on Monday, April 7. An unidentified male pedestrian was struck and killed by a southbound Baby Bullet train between Glenwood and Encinal avenues at around 8:35 a.m. See story on **Page 9**.

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- Menlo Park Presbyterian churchgoers head out into community for annual Compassion Weekend. **Page 7**

### Health & Fitness

- Women's Heart Health clinic studies gender differences of heart disease to diagnose and treat women more effectively. **Cover, Section 2**

### On the cover

Menlo Park companies are leading the charge on robotics research, and the PR-1 (pictured), a personal robot created by startup Willow Garage that is programmed to perform household tasks, is an example of what that research is producing. Photo courtesy of Willow Garage. Story begins on **Page 12**.

### CALLING ON THE ALMANAC

The Almanac offices are at **3525 Alameda de las Pulgas, Menlo Park, CA 94025**.

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To request free delivery, or stop delivery, of The Almanac in zip code 94025, 94027, 94028 and the Woodside portion of 94062, call **854-2626**.

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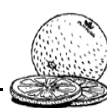
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### Small Portions Enjoy Big Appeal

We have all heard the warnings about obesity and its relationship to larger portions, also known as the "super sizing" of meals. Fad diets still come and go, but the fact remains that portion control is one of the best ways to reach and maintain a healthy weight. A survey of more than 100 professional chefs revealed that the hottest trend on current restaurant menus is smaller food portions. The small portions could be anywhere on the menu from appetizers to main courses to desserts—clients find them all appealing. The survey further revealed that "alternative source" menu items are very popular. Some of these include locally grown produce, grass-fed beef, and free-range poultry.



Small portions don't mean small taste. At ROBERTS MARKET, we can help you prepare a wonderful and delicious meal in the perfect portions. We are proud to offer you and your family freshly prepared meals that you can take home today, in a variety of portion sizes. So if you find yourself pressed for time visit our "heat and eat it" department for wonderful gourmet prepared foods. You can find prepared foods such as home-made hot soups, sandwiches, salads, and gourmet food stuffs.

*P.S. One former hot trend that seems to have lost its popularity is low-carbohydrate dough.*

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### This Week's Specials

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## WINE

### Value Wines

Here are a few recession busters to celebrate Spring weather with. All of these wines offer exceptional quality and value in their respective categories.

**Tsantali Rouge, Greece** ..... Reg \$7.99 **\$6.99**  
 Here's a fun, fresh, jaunty red with pretty spice and a smoky nuance.

**2006 Cortijo III Tinto, Rioja** ..... Reg \$10.99 **\$8.99**  
 This is simply delicious, with juicy, zippy fruit and lovely spice notes. Great bargain!

**2006 Gascon Malbec, Mendoza Argentina** ..... Reg \$10.99 **\$9.99**  
 90 points — *Wine Advocate* #174! This is a rich, smooth, polished red at a bargain price!

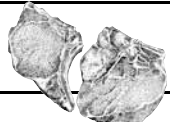
**2006 Tolosa Pinot Noir, San Luis Obispo** ..... Reg \$16.99 **\$14.99**  
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**2005 Olema Cabernet Sauvignon, Napa Valley**... Reg \$19.99 **\$15.99**  
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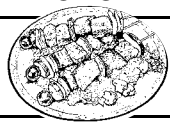
**2006 J.L. Chave Cotes-du-Rhone, Mon Coeur** ..... Reg \$19.99 **\$16.99**  
 Chave is one of the greatest, most elite wine makers in the world today. A taste of genius for cheap.


## MEAT/SEAFOOD

### Special This Week at Roberts

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# Local News

MENLO PARK | ATHERTON | WOODSIDE | PORTOLA VALLEY

## Siebel seeks lower assessment on Woodside estate

■ In a slumping housing market, how many more will try to lower assessments, reduce taxes?

By Marion Softky  
Almanac Staff Writer

It's not just billionaire Larry Ellison. Silicon Valley heavy-weight Tom Siebel, whose Siebel Systems merged with Mr. Ellison's Oracle in 2006, is also appealing the assessment on his 42-acre estate at 3000 Portola Road in Woodside.

In an appeal dated Sept. 18, 2007, an entity named "3000 Portola Road LLC" claimed that the land's assessed value of \$64.7 million had declined to \$30 million.

The appeal did not challenge the county's \$4 million assessment of the value of buildings and improvements.

No hearing date has been set for the appeal, said Jack Yaco, clerk of the county's Assessment Appeals Board. The property owner is still negotiating with the county assessor as to the value of the property.

If they can agree on a value, the board can approve it without a hearing, Mr. Yaco said. If not, there will be a hearing.

Mark Ong, Mr. Siebel's agent, declined to comment.

Mr. Siebel's property is part of Woodside's historic Mountain Home Ranch, and still includes the adobe built by pioneering lumberman Charles Brown before the Gold Rush. Mr. Siebel bought it from the children of railroad heiress Maude Schroll, who died in 1997.

This is not Mr. Siebel's first encounter with the county assessor. On May 8, 2007, the Assessment Appeals Board issued a decision denying a series of appeals filed by First Virtual Properties LLC, a predecessor to 3000 Portola Road LLC. These appeals challenged the values put on several properties, which Mr. Siebel bought separately from Ms. Schroll's four heirs through some complicated transactions.

In a 15-page decision, the appeals board set the value of the land at \$1.4 million per acre, or \$58.4 million for the whole estate, as of 2004.

### Tip of iceberg?

As news of the housing slump, foreclosures, and Mr. Ellison's \$3 million tax refund and dramatically lowered property taxes are making headlines, the assessor's

office is seeing a surge of inquiries from others who would like lower tax bills.

"We're seeing significantly more people," said Deputy County Assessor Terrence Flinn.

The increased numbers of inquiries have not yet translated into a surge of appeals, Mr. Yaco said. Appeals of 2008 assessments can be filed between July 2 and Nov. 30. In 2007, the board received about 1,000 appeals, slightly down from the 1,200 in 2006, he said.

"We try to keep current," Mr. Yaco said. "We process appeals as soon as possible, and set hearings as soon as possible."

Mr. Yaco noted that in most areas of San Mateo County, "prices are tending to hold steady. But it takes longer to sell."

Mr. Flinn said the assessor's office is selectively reviewing assessments in areas of the county

where property values are declining, such as new subdivisions in East Palo Alto.

Some people may even receive a lower assessment without having to appeal. "We're keeping track of sales and foreclosures," Mr. Flinn said. "We'll pick out areas that need to be reviewed. If we see an obvious situation, we would reduce the assessment."

"But we're not seeing a bunch of foreclosures in Woodside." ■

### ■ INFORMATION

The San Mateo County Assessor's Web site has extensive information on assessments and appeals. Go to [smcare.org/homeowner](http://smcare.org/homeowner). Or call the assessor's office at 599-1227.

## How school districts, towns share pain of Ellison refund

By Marjorie Mader  
Almanac Staff Writer

The cost of Larry Ellison's \$3 million property tax refund will be spread among the 139 taxing agencies — school districts, cities and special districts — throughout San Mateo County.

The refund is due to a decision last December by the county's Assessment Appeals Board to lower the assessment on Mr. Ellison's 23-acre Woodside estate by 60 percent, from \$173 million to about \$70 million, and make it retroactive to May 2004.

As a result of the reassessment, Mr. Ellison's annual property taxes on the estate — billed at about \$1.86 million in 2007 — were reduced to an estimated \$751,000, according to Terrence Flinn, deputy county assessor.

Under state law, the cost of large refunds is spread among all the taxing entities in the county proportionate to the amount of taxes they collect. The funds will be deducted from each agency's property tax revenue apportionment for the 2007-08 fiscal year, said deputy county controller Kanchan Charan.

The 24 school districts in the county will pay about 50 percent of the total refund, according to the county controller's office.

### Local impact

Of the local school districts, the largest share of the refund — \$188,631 — will be paid by the Sequoia Union High School District, which includes Woodside and Menlo-Atherton high schools.

The Menlo Park City School District's share is \$37,513. The Las Lomas district's is \$21,804. The Portola Valley district will pay \$16,279 while Woodside Elementary District's share is \$9,245.

These districts receive most of their revenue from local property taxes.

Local towns also will help fund the Ellison refund to the tune of \$19,794 for Menlo Park; \$10,030 for Atherton; \$3,633 for Woodside; and \$1,633 for Portola Valley.

In addition to the one-time refund, the 60 percent assessment reduction will result in continuing lower property tax revenues for the Portola Valley School District, the Sequoia high school district, and the town of Woodside. (The Woodside property is located in the Portola Valley School District, although children from that area have the option of going to either Portola Valley schools or Woodside School.)

Preliminary estimates show that the loss of revenue to the Portola

See REFUND, page 8



Madeline Levine, right, speaks to parents at Hillview Middle School about "The Price of Privilege."

Photo by Veronica Weber/  
The Almanac

## Author: Privilege no protection for teens

By Andrea Gemmet  
Almanac Staff Writer

It used to be easy to spot the kids who were headed for trouble, says Madeline Levine. The warning signs were so easy to read, everyone in the neighborhood could accurately predict which kid would end up in jail, or worse.

That's not the case anymore says the Marin County psychologist, who writes and lectures about a near-epidemic of kids who are hiding serious depression, drug addiction

and eating disorders beneath a veneer of achievement and popularity.

An overflow crowd of 550 people flocked to hear Ms. Levine speak at Hillview Middle School in Menlo Park on March 26, eager for advice from the author of the book, "The Price of Privilege." They listened with rapt attention to her cautionary tales, and leaned forward, en masse, when she listed off common sense solutions.

The event was sponsored by the Menlo Park City School

District PTO Council and the Menlo Park-Atherton Education Foundation.

Ms. Levine has spent the last year and a half giving weekly lectures based on her book, and almost everywhere she goes, she hears about a suicide in the community, she says. At her recent lecture in Lafayette, the suicide victim was a girl who was a straight-A junior high school student, she says.

"The suicide rate is up 78 percent for adolescent girls,

See PRIVILEGE, page 8

# Menlo Park cops to get 25% pay hike over three years

■ Higher pay is aimed at improving recruitment and retention of officers, officials say.

By Rory Brown  
Almanac Staff Writer

Menlo Park police officers are set to get a 25 percent pay increase over the next three years.

The city and the Menlo Park Police Officers Association have agreed in principle to a three-year

contract that would raise salaries for the city's line-level officers incrementally over the next three years, resulting in a total increase of 25 percent by January 2011.

The current starting salary for a Menlo Park line-level officer is \$70,204 a year. That amount would jump to about \$88,000 by 2011 if the contract is approved.

The city's goal has been to be an average payer in the area of law enforcement, but after the salary increases, the city will be the third- or fourth-highest payer among the 11 cities Menlo Park compares its salaries to, said Glen Kramer, the city's personnel director.

City Council members have already discussed the proposed contract in closed session, and appear to support the new deal.

"I think this agreement is good

for Menlo Park," said Mayor Andy Cohen. "It will fix us in for the long haul."

Council members are likely to sign off on the contract at their meeting on Tuesday, April 8, which is scheduled to start at 7 p.m. in the council chambers at the Civic Center, between Laurel and Alma streets.

Under the contract, the pay raises would start July 6, with a 6 percent increase in salaries, and a 2.6 percent increase in health

benefits for the city's 39 line-level officer positions.

Officers would also receive a non-cumulative "longevity" pay raise, starting in July 2010, based on their number of years of service as a Menlo Park officer.

The total estimated cost to the city over the three-year term of the deal is approximately \$1.72 million, according to a staff report from Mr. Kramer.

Pension levels would not change from the current "3 percent at 50" model, according to the contract. That's the highest level of pension benefits allowed by the Public Employees' Retirement System (PERS).

The proposed salary increases follow the departure of 30 officers over the last three years, 17 of whom resigned to join other law enforcement agencies. More than 40 officers have left over the past five years.

Officers have cited a mix of exhaustion, morale problems, lack of opportunities, and retirement as their reasons for leaving.

Detective Jeff Keegan, president of the Police Officers' Association, credited council members, City Manager Glen Rojas, and the police command staff for being open to upping salaries to address the high turnover rate.

"When you looked at what Menlo Park was offering, it just didn't compare to other departments," said Mr. Keegan, who was a member of the team that negotiated the agreement. "We're delighted the city saw there was a problem, and that the command staff rallied to the cause." He noted that officers who had been considering leaving Menlo Park are changing their minds.

"In this contract, we come a long way toward solving the serious and longstanding issue of turnover in our police department," said Councilwoman Kelly Fergusson. "[The departures] have been devastating to our police force."

"I think [the contract] is good, and I think it's necessary," said Councilman Richard Cline. "This gets us competitive and puts us in a really strong place. There's nothing excessive about it."

The Police Officers' Association voted 27-6 to accept the contract on March 16, Mr. Kramer said.

After the July 6 pay raise, salaries would also be raised 3 percent on Jan. 4, 2009; 6 percent on July 5, 2009; 2 percent on Jan. 3, 2010; 3 percent on July 4, 2010; and 3 percent Jan. 2, 2011.

Fully staffed, the department has 50 sworn officers. The department's sergeants, who are represented by the Menlo Park Police Management Association, would not be covered by the new agreement. ■

## WEST BAY SANITARY DISTRICT ADDITION AND RENOVATION TO THE WEST BAY SANITARY DISTRICT BUILDING SHELL AND INTERIOR IMPROVEMENTS

Sealed proposals for the Addition and Renovation to the West Bay Sanitary District Building Shell and Interior Improvements will be received at the West Bay Sanitary District, 500 Laurel Street, Menlo Park, California 94025 until **3:00 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 "ADDITION AND RENOVATION TO THE WEST BAY SANITARY DISTRICT BUILDING SHELL AND INTERIOR IMPROVEMENTS PROJECT."

The Work will include the furnishing of all labor, materials and equipment, and other appurtenances for the demolition of a one-story structure and the construction of a two-story structure office building with site improvements at 500 Laurel Street, Menlo Park, CA.

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: Plan Room, 4420 Hotel Circle Court, 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 16, 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 B License 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: 3/31/08

Published in THE ALMANAC on April 9, 23, 2008

# Forgoing services for service

Churchgoers head out into community for annual Compassion Weekend

By Jane Knoerle  
Almanac Lifestyles Editor

On the last Sunday of this month, the sanctuary of Menlo Park Presbyterian Church, usually packed with people, will be empty. Instead of dressing in their Sunday best that morning, churchgoers will don jeans and sweatshirts.

It's all part of Compassion Weekend, April 26-27, a time when the church cancels its regular weekend services to tackle projects in the community.

That weekend, Menlo Park Presbyterian Church will send out 3,000 volunteers to help build eight homes, assemble 7,000 AIDS kits, hold health care clinics, repair 10 local schools, and visit five senior centers, including Nazareth Classic Care Community and Atherton Healthcare Center, both in Menlo Park.

In 2006, MPPC's senior pastor, John Ortberg, asked the church's mission ministry to come up with "a way to live out our call to serve the world," says Mission Director Bennie Ingraham.

The result was Compassion Weekend, where, instead of attending church services, a massive work force focuses on improving "education, health care, and humanity" in the community, says Ms. Ingraham. "People liked the idea a lot," she says. "We could worship that weekend by serving."

The church uses its Easter offering (\$475,000) to fund the programs so nonprofits they are serving don't have to pay for supplies and materials.

Planning for Compassion Weekend, under the direction of Mission Pastor Mark Swarner, starts in November, when three volunteer leaders, one each for health care, humanity and education, are appointed.

The mission committee chooses worthwhile projects (21 this year) to be accomplished on the weekend. "Hundreds of hours go into preparation," says Nicole Laubscher, the church's communication director.

An information guide is assembled and printed that describes all projects in detail, noting location, for whom they would be appropriate,



**Last year** Menlo Park Presbyterian Church volunteers worked alongside students and their families to build benches and refurbish campus facilities throughout the Ravenswood School District in Menlo Park and East Palo Alto.

## Church invites community to join in

The Menlo Park Presbyterian Church invites all members of the community to join its congregation for the Compassion Weekend projects. Volunteers may sign up online at [mppc.org](http://mppc.org) or at the church office, 950 Santa Cruz Ave. in Menlo Park. Registration deadline for all projects is Monday, April 21. Beginning the week of April 14, registrants will be sent updates and details by e-mail or postal mail.

and shift schedule. A volunteer can sign up for a four-hour shift or elect to work all weekend.

Many families ask to work together, so there is even a place for 4-year-olds. The little ones can take part in a Sunday picnic at Flood Park put on for the homeless and poor who are clients of InnVision, formerly Urban Ministries in Palo Alto.

Eight-year-olds can work with their parents to help beautify the grounds and plant trees at Bayshore Christian Ministries in East Palo Alto.

The most ambitious project is construction or support work with Peninsula Habitat for Humanity at a new construction site at 122 Lincoln Ave. in Redwood City.

The project is cluster of eight town houses that low-income families purchase with no-interest loans. Most of the land and materials are provided by donations and much of the labor comes from volunteers, including 500 hours of "sweat equity" each family puts into its own home.

Volunteers will also paint a mural, designed by a com-

munity committee, at Onetta Harris Community Center, 100 Terminal Ave. in Menlo Park. The volunteers will help with site prep, painting, washing brushes, supporting the painters, and cleanup. There will be a block-style party Sunday evening to celebrate the project's completion.

In the church's locations in Menlo Park, San Mateo and Mountain View, volunteers will assemble 7,000 AIDS kits for caregivers in Africa and the Caribbean. The kits contain rubber gloves, flashlights, towels, ointment, a notebook, and cotton balls. "These are the things we have been asked for," says Ms. Ingraham.

In the past two years, 4,200 volunteers assembled 23,300 kits to be sent overseas, where they will be distributed by World Vision. The project is great for children or older adults, says the information guide.

At the end of both work days, there will be a worship celebration at 6 p.m. in the sanctuary at 950 Santa Cruz Ave. in Menlo Park. Volunteers are welcome to come in their work clothes, says Ms. Ingraham. "If they're dirty, that's OK." ■

## REAL ESTATE Q&A

by Gloria Darke



### Why wait?

Dear Gloria,

We just put our home on the market last week. The second day it was on an agent called and had an offer to present. Our agent told them that they need to wait for a week as we won't be looking at any offers until then. My husband and I would like this over with and don't understand the agents thinking. We have discussed this with her but would like your take on it.

Mildred J.

Dear Mildred,

This is a conversation that you and your agent should have had when you signed the listing. However, if you have priced the house competitively, and it sounds as if you have, and it shows well, your agent is implementing the right strategy for you.

In going through the daily activity update today, which we receive from our local MLS board, there are 10 properties which have sold in the last 48 hours. Out of those, 8 of them sold either at list price, somewhat over or considerably over asking price. To ensure that this occurs, you should wait so that as many people as possible see your home and have the opportunity to bid. Then you set a day and time for each agent to present their offer and you pick the one that is best for you, usually the highest offer. The fact that each agent knows that there are other people bidding tends to raise the price that a buyer will offer. It is definitely the way to go if you have done all of your pre-marketing fix-up along with competitive pricing. Living with the inconvenience of showing your home will be worth the trouble.

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

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# Old oak over dugout may have to come down

The Portola Valley Town Council may vote to cut down the old oak tree that leans over the home-team dugout at Ford Field on Alpine Road.

Six arborists say the tree should be removed because of its proximity to an active ball field, Planning Manager Leslie Lambert said in a recent memo to the council. Arborists say the tree's structural integrity is compromised by cavities and "severe" heart and sap wood decay, she said.

In any case, Ms. Lambert said, the arborists advise taking off the larger limbs and cutting the canopy back considerably, but that

## ■ PORTOLA VALLEY

even with external support added, the tree could still fall.

The council will discuss the tree's fate at its Wednesday, April 9, meeting, which begins at 8 p.m. in the Historic Schoolhouse.

Also on the agenda: updating the building code to formalize existing practices and align it with the state code; and amending the town's road maintenance budget to add \$400,000 from state Proposition 1B, all of which must be spent over the next three years.

**The oak** leans over the home-team dugout at Ford Field in Portola Valley.

Photo by Dave Boyce/The Almanac



## Privilege is no protection from teen problems, says author

### PRIVILEGE

continued from page 5

according to the CDC (Centers for Disease Control)," Ms. Levine told the crowd. "It's scarier because it's much harder to identify."

Parents can't rely anymore on the old checklist of warning signs: poor hygiene, withdrawal from friends, failing grades. And being from an affluent, educated family offers no special protection, Ms. Levine says.

"Upper middle class (children) have the highest rates of anxiety, depression, substance abuse, psychosomatic disorders. ... I'm not talking about a crabby daughter who rolls her eyes and tells you to go away while she slams her door," she says. "I'm talking about clinical depression."

There isn't much data on the children of the super rich, but there are a lot of studies on children from families who earn between \$120,000 and \$160,000 a year, and their rates of depression and anxiety disorders are three times higher than other children's, she says.

"Maybe they're kind of spoiled, but surely they have involved parents, so surely they're going to look better (than other kids) — but the trajectory is looking worse," Ms. Levine says, acknowledging that it seems counterintuitive.

From the 4-year-old who bragged to her about learning Chinese, and parroted, "I wanna go to Harvard," to the polite teenage patient whose long sleeves hid the word "Empty" carved into her forearm with a razor blade, Ms. Levine says she's seeing kids who aren't getting what they need from the parents who are trying to give them everything.

The constant pressure to have perfect grades, to get into mom's or dad's Ivy League alma mater, to excel at sports, look good, and be popular — Ms. Levine describes families

with a child-centered lifestyle that focuses on the outward trappings of success at the expense of emotional needs.

"If you don't have a workable sense of self, you're never going to do well or feel good about yourself," she says.

Children have to be allowed to develop a sense of self without fear of disappointing their parents, she insists.

"Kids are being pressured in a way that's damaging to everything we know about child development. More and more, it's, 'If you get into the right preschool, then you can get into the right school, and then go to the right high school and get into the right university — or you'll end up with a tin cup on Sand Hill Road.'"

Ms. Levine counseled parents to let go of the notion that their children have to become as wealthy as they are. "They may not do as well as we do financially — so what?"

With the exception of living in poverty, there's no correlation between happiness and wealth, she says. Parents, she adds, need to examine their own beliefs about what a child needs to be successful.

"There is a bill of goods we're being sold, that there are only 15 or 20 schools in America (that are worth going to)," Ms. Levine says. "The best predictor of who will finish college is if the child feels (the college) is a good fit. It doesn't have anything to do with grades."

No child would learn to walk if her parents refused to let her fall down and try again, and no parents would say to a baby, "You fall down one more time and you'll be flipping burgers for the rest of your life!" But while it's easy to let children learn from failures when they are young, parents feel they can't allow older kids to struggle with anything, for fear they'll fall behind, she says.

There's a difference between being intrusive and being overprotective, Ms. Levine notes.

Being overprotective can delay a child's development, but intrusive parenting can damage it, she says. Avoiding such damage means resisting the urge to correct your kid's homework or finish up a report when it's midnight and there's a big test the next day. It means not using PowerSchool (a Web site parents use to track their children's performance) to check up on your child's grades every day.

In fact, that's one of the solutions she proffered to the parents crowded onto bleachers and folding chairs in Hillview's multi-use room: Forget about grades.

"Forget about them for a day or a week or forever," she says. "Concentrate on the process. Learning is (about) effort and improvement."

Parents also need to "gut-check" themselves, she says. Are you putting all your emotional needs onto your child because you are depressed or unfulfilled, she asked.

Ms. Levine's other "profoundly simple" solutions include insisting that children get enough sleep — nine hours for teens, 10 hours for youngsters — and eat three meals a day. Also, limit media exposure, assign regular chores, and provide discipline.

Last, but not least: "Pay attention," she says. "Don't blow off things you don't want to see," Ms. Levine urges. "There's a tremendous amount of denial in affluent communities." ■

## Clarification

At its March 26 meeting, the Portola Valley Town Council heard a report from Councilwoman Ann Wengert who, as liaison to an ad hoc committee created to consider new rules on the size of basements, reported that large basements were not as big a problem in town as they had seemed and that the committee reached a consensus not to change the current rules.

The council did not voice objections to that consensus, nor did it take a formal position, as implied in an April 2 story in the Almanac. A formal statement may come when the committee issues its report.

### REFUND

continued from page 5

Valley district will be \$250,000 to \$300,000 for 2008, said Tim Hanretty, the district's assistant superintendent. This is about the cost of three teachers.

Ed LaVigne, the Sequoia district's assistant superintendent for administrative services, estimates his district's loss, independent of the refund, at about \$62,000 this year.

Woodside Town Manager Susan George said the town received about \$130,000 in tax revenue from the Ellison property in 2007. Because of the reassessment, the figure is likely to drop to under \$53,000. ■

## ■ INFORMATION

Madeline Levine will speak at 7 p.m. Wednesday, April 9, at Gunn High School's Spangenberg Theatre at 780 Arastradero Road in Palo Alto. Admission is free. A pre-event community reception starts at 6:15 p.m. For information, go to [www.paloaltopta.org](http://www.paloaltopta.org).

# Man struck, killed by train in MP

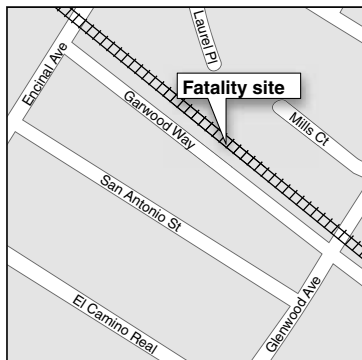
By Andrea Gemmet  
Almanac Staff Writer

A southbound Caltrain train struck and killed a male pedestrian on Monday, April 7, between Encinal and Glenwood avenues in Menlo Park.

The San Mateo County Coroner's Office had an investigator on the scene, and had not yet identified the victim by the Almanac's press time.

Both northbound and southbound trains experienced delays for several hours following the accident, and a special train bound for a San Francisco Giants baseball game was canceled, according to Caltrain spokeswoman Christine Dunn.

The accident occurred at 8:38 a.m. when southbound Baby Bullet train No. 322 struck a pedestrian on the tracks between Encinal and Glenwood



Map by Gary Vennarucci/The Almanac

The fatality occurred on the tracks between Encinal and Glenwood avenues.

avenues, Ms. Dunn reported. There is no pedestrian crossing in the area, she said.

An unidentified man reportedly stepped out of a grove of trees onto the train tracks, said Lt. J. David Triolo of the San Mateo County Sheriff's Office's

See picture on Page 3.

transit police bureau.

The Baby Bullet train was two blocks from its next stop at the Menlo Park station, so it would not have been traveling at its top speed of 79 mph, Ms. Dunn said. The train was slowing and sounding its horn as it approached the station, Lt. Triolo said.

Trains were briefly stopped in both directions as emergency personnel responded to the area, and then trains single-tracked through the area for about two hours. The southbound tracks were reopened around 10:15 a.m., Ms. Dunn said.

It was the fourth fatality on the Caltrain tracks this year, Ms. Dunn reported. ■

—Bay City News Service contributed to this report

# New Derry project backed by commission

By Rory Brown  
Almanac Staff Writer

The new version of the Derry condo-commercial project may be just one vote away from approval.

The Menlo Park Planning Commission approved the 108-condo project at its March 31 meeting, meaning the project is likely to come before the City Council for final consideration in mid-May.

Commissioners took a series of votes during a five-hour meeting to tweak aspects of the project, but support for the downtown development to move forward was unanimous, said Megan Fisher, an associate planner with the city.

The project includes plans for one-, two-, and three-bedroom condos; about 25,000 square feet of commercial space; and a 3,000-square-foot public plaza on a 3.4-acre site bordered by Derry Lane and Oak Grove Avenue, between El Camino Real and the Caltrain tracks.



Rendering courtesy of Steinberg Architects

The new Derry project, as seen in this view from Oak Grove Avenue, will likely go before the City Council in May.

The site is now home to several small businesses, including Foster's Freeze.

The project is a scaled-back version of a 135-condo development approved for the same site by the Planning Commission and City Council in 2006.

The residents' group Menlo

Park Tomorrow led a petition drive against that project, gathering enough signatures for a referendum, and the council opted to let the residents' group and the developer negotiate plans for a new, less-dense development rather than put the original project to a citywide vote. ■

# Budget cuts reduce number of assessment letters

Property value assessment are hot news these days. With everyone from Larry Ellison to Tom Siebel looking to have their homes reassessed in order to save money on property taxes, it's a safe bet that homeowners will be taking a close look at the property valuation notices sent out by the San Mateo County Assessor's office.

This year, however, many property owners won't be get-

ting those valuation letters in order to save the county about \$100,000, said County Assessor Warren Slocum in a statement. Properties with the standard 2-percent inflationary increase in value won't trigger notification letters, he said.

Properties with valuation changes due to new construction, change in ownership or decline in market value will still be notified by mail, he said.

"We prefer to mail valuation notices to all property owners, but we will not be doing that this year. It will save the county \$100,000 during a time when every department has been asked to make substantial budget cuts," he said.

Property owners who would like to appeal their assessments will have an extended deadline for doing so: the appeal period begins July 2 and ends Dec. 1.

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### PLANNING COMMISSION

April 16, 2008  
7:30 PM

**PUBLIC HEARINGS:**

- Miriam L. Haas Trust MERG2008-001  
10 Sandhill Court  
Review of a request to merge a 3.004 acre property with a 3.090 acre property resulting in a 6.094 acre property located in Rural Residential zoning.
- Karen & Edward Gihuly SDES2008-002  
376 Mountain Home Court  
Review of a proposal to remodel the existing main residence and to add a 431 square foot addition for a total main residence size of 5,988 square feet. A 1,498 square foot new exercise studio, a 1,484 square foot detached garage with an accessory living quarters, and a 493 square foot new pool house are also proposed. The plans incorporate a new swimming pool, a new driveway, and associated landscaping. The proposed materials include beige cement plaster with dark gray window trim to match the existing residence, gray slate roofing on the garage and addition to match the existing residence, dark gray pre-weathered zinc roofing on the exercise studio and pool house, and new tumbled ledge stone siding on all the structures.

All application materials are available for public review at the Woodside Planning and Building Counter, Woodside Town Hall, weekdays from 8:00 - 10:00 AM and 1:00 - 3:00 PM, or by appointment. For more information, contact the Woodside Planning and Building Department at (650) 851-6790.

Published in THE ALMANAC on April 9, 2008.

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## Menlo Park — Elegance Among the Heritage Trees

# Lane Woods

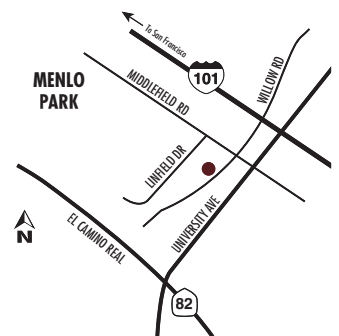
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Pricing effective as of publication deadline.  
Rendering is artist's conception. Map not to scale.



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## Oak Knoll School: Council won't call for full-blown environmental review

By Rory Brown  
Almanac Staff Writer

For months, Oak Knoll School neighbors have tried to slow down plans to rebuild the Menlo Park elementary school campus.

If the April 1 City Council meeting was any indicator, neighbors shouldn't expect council members to fight for the same cause anytime soon.

The council voted 4-1, with Mayor Andy Cohen opposed, to sign off on a city staff-authored letter that expresses some concerns with expected traffic flow and drainage impacts from construction on the triangular campus, but does not call for any drastic changes.

In particular, the council declined the mayor's proposal to ask the district to conduct a full-blown study of environmental impacts from the project — a process that would delay construction several months.

Council members said they still had questions about the impacts of the renovations on the surrounding neighborhood, but were hesitant to delay construction.

"I'm confident the school district is sincere in trying to do this right," said Councilman Richard Cline after the meeting. "The studies leave a lot to be desired, but I think we're going to be able to work together to get a successful outcome."

The Menlo Park City School District intends to replace the 14 portable buildings on the Oak Knoll campus, freeing up playground and field space by constructing a two-story multi-purpose building, a two-story classroom building, and modernizing existing classrooms.

The district has hired a consultant to draft a "negative declaration" — meaning the project does not require a full environmental impact study. The public comment period on the draft negative declaration ends April 9. A negative declaration is permitted if studies show that adverse

environmental impacts can be mitigated.

### Passive approach

In approving the letter, council members took a much more passive approach than what Oak Knoll neighbors had lobbied for.

Neighbors have objected to the district's plans to remove an enormous valley oak near the school's existing playground, and plans to build a 22-space parking lot and the two-story multi-purpose building near Oak Avenue. Other residents have questioned the lack of studies devoted to bike and pedestrian safety.

Since city-approved permits and curb cuts are needed for the current plan to be built, some residents hoped council members would step in and require

the district to conduct more thorough environmental studies.

"I am very concerned that this study, which concludes there is no impact on pedestrian and bike travel near the school, is very flawed in its methods and particularly in its conclusions," said John Fox, a bicycle commissioner and former Oak Knoll parent, in an e-mail to the council.

At the April 1 council meeting, Mr. Fox was one of about 10 residents to voice concerns about the project.

Other speakers, particularly those who live near the campus, said the district is simply ignoring their input — a perspective that resonated with Mayor Cohen.

"It's important that the district not leave people disenfranchised, but I think that's exactly how the neighbors feel," Mayor Cohen said after the meeting.

Superintendent Ken Ranella said the district "has addressed concerns the best it can," and noted there have been five public meetings devoted to the Oak Knoll plans. He said district officials have also met separately with neighbors to hear out their concerns. ■

*'I am very concerned that this study, which concludes there is no impact on pedestrian and bike travel near the school, is very flawed in its methods and particularly in its conclusions.'*

JOHN FOX, MEMBER,  
BICYCLE COMMISSION

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Courtesy of Paul Keitz Photography

# DAVE MORRIS

## Portola Valley

## School District

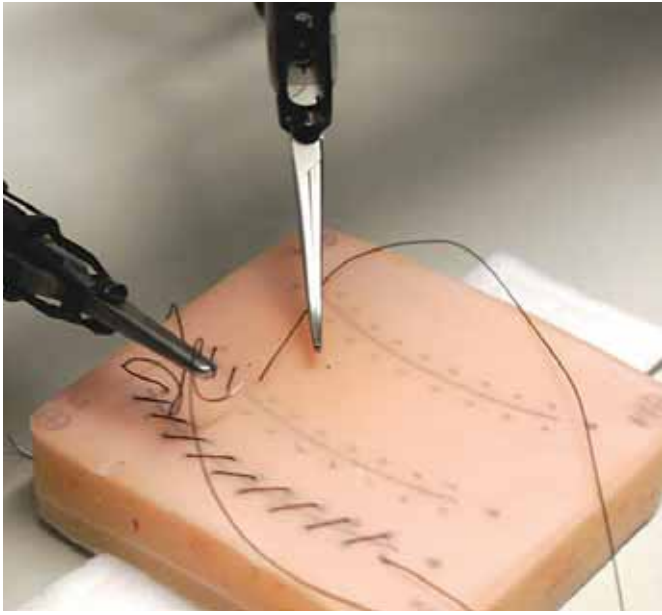
## Governing Board

### All-mail special election

### Ballots mailed APRIL 7

### Return ballots by MAY 6

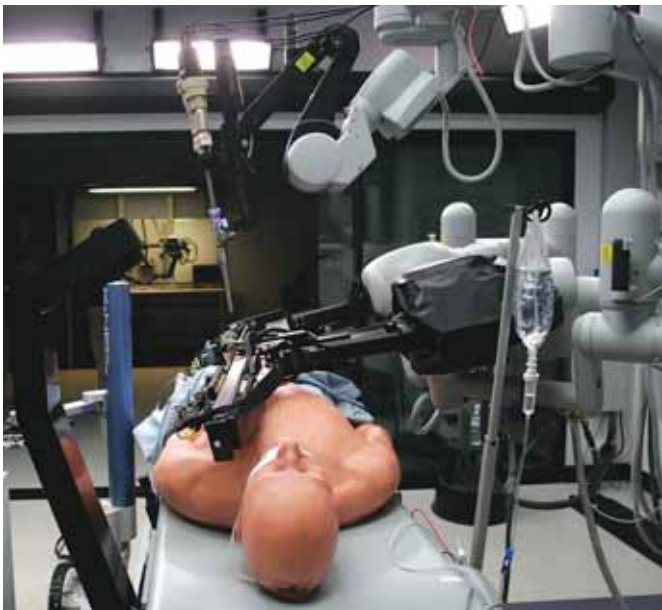
Committee to elect Dave Morris, 4600 Alpine Rd., Portola Valley, CA 94028 david.g.morris@sbcglobal.net



COVER STORY

# ROBOT

## REVOLUTION



STORY BY RORY BROWN  
PHOTOGRAPHS BY VERONICA WEBER

# Menlo Park companies are building robots that can save lives, clean the house, and even drive you to work.

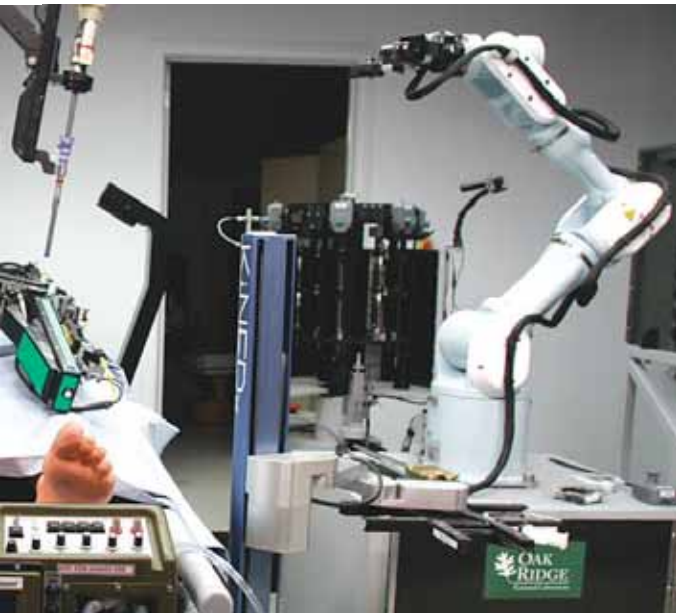


Photo Courtesy of Willow Garage

## Robots have invaded Menlo Park.

But these aren't the war-waging, evil-doing, programmed-to-destroy-all-humans robots of H.G. Wells novels or the "Terminator" movies. These robots are very real, and they're here to help.

Two Menlo Park firms — startup Willow Garage and renowned think tank SRI International — are among the growing number of Silicon Valley companies leading the charge on robotics research.

From robots that pick up children's toys from the living room carpet to others that stitch up soldiers' wounds on the battlefield, these robots are actually being built and tested in Menlo Park. Tech experts say it's only a matter of time until they hit the mainstream.

"In the 1980s the big thing was personal computers. In the 1990s it was the World Wide Web. The next big thing is robots," said Paul Saffo, a Stanford professor and futurist. "Robots are about to sweep into our lives, and they aren't going to look like your grandfather's robots."

### Willow Garage

Robots have already swept into the lives of the 20-some employees at Willow Garage, the startup that set up shop at 64 Willow Road in the city's Linfield Oaks neighborhood in 2007.

Although parts and tools are scattered around some of the startup's offices, don't let the "garage" name fool you. The company has a state-of-the-art building located behind the Sunset magazine campus, complete with a cafe, ping pong table, and plenty of beanbag chairs.

The company is financed entirely by private (and anonymous) investors who created the business to research non-military applications for robots. The name pays homage to big technology firms that

got started by bouncing ideas around in a home garage, said Willow Garage President and CEO Steve Cousins.

In its one-year history, the company has built a solar-powered robotic boat that can independently navigate ocean waters for up to a year and collect data for scientific research, and a retrofitted Ford Escape hybrid that can drive itself short distances, using a system of global positioning software, sensors, cameras and "LADAR" — a form of laser radar.

Mr. Cousins said the company shares all of its research and robots with universities across the country.

"With robots, we're at this stage where we expect to see this huge growth," Mr. Cousins said. "The goal here isn't the return of capital; it's to have a positive impact on the world. ... Technology can have a huge positive impact on things if it's done right."

The company is currently working on the PR-2, the second model of the PR-1, a personal robot programmed to perform household tasks, including cleaning the house. The 4-foot-tall robot looks similar to R2-D2 from the "Star Wars" films, but has a knack for cleaning that rivals the "Rosie" robot from "The Jetsons" cartoon.

"You show the [the robot] what a room is supposed to look like, then you take it out of the room, mess up the room, bring the robot back in, and it puts everything back in its place," Mr. Cousins said.

When Mr. Cousins says "everything," he means it. The robot can fluff pillows, neatly restacks coffee table magazines, and put away toys scattered on the floor. He acknowledged there was "a lot of trial and error" in creating the technology.

"If the robot is supposed to reach down and grab something, it can't be off by an

See **ROBOT REVOLUTION**, page 14

**Robotic surgery** technology being developed at SRI International's Menlo Park campus is already in use at various hospitals. Through the use of virtual reality, surgeons can use robots to remotely stitch up wounds (see pictures at top), or perform more complex surgeries (as shown in the second and fourth rows).

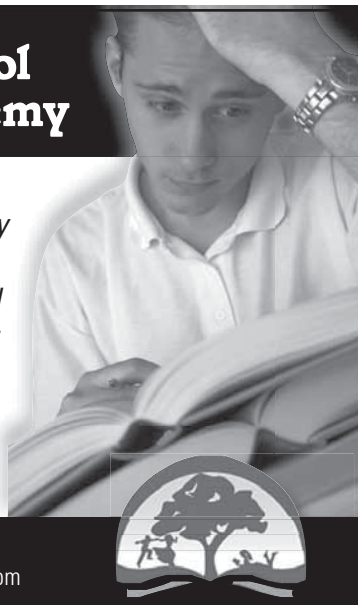
**Willow Garage** President and CEO Steve Cousins, pictured in the second and third rows, says the robotics industry is set for "huge growth." The Menlo Park startup is building personal robots (shown at the far right of the third row), and a solar-powered robotic boat (see page 14).

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## COVER STORY ROBOT REVOLUTION



**Local robotics achievements**, including Willow Garage's self-navigating robotic boat (top left), and SRI's TraumaPod system (bottom left) are garnering a lot of attention. At right, Steve Cousins holds a piece of one of Willow Garage's personal robots.

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## Menlo Park robots breaking new ground

### ROBOT REVOLUTION

continued from page 13

inch," he said. "Robots are more complicated than computers, because you have to address the issue of how they perceive things and act in the world. It's one thing for a robot to see a coffee cup and note its position. It's another for it to see the same cup there two hours later, pick it up and put it in the sink."

But don't expect the company's personal robots to be available for purchase quite yet — Mr. Cousins said Willow Garage is giving finished robots to universities and other research labs to make them easier to build, and more efficient before they head out on the market.

### SRI

At SRI, a government-funded effort to research how robots could be used to tend to injured soldiers has morphed into the Trauma Pod — a system that enables a surgeon to remotely operate on patients with the help of robots.

Under the system, surgeons plug into what's called the "da Vinci" a virtual reality machine,

and can operate on a patient up to 1,200 miles away. When looking through the machine (named after Leonardo da Vinci because of his interest in movement and engineering) the surgeon sees a three-dimensional image of the patient.

Using a mix of hand movements and voice commands, the surgeon directs the robots to conduct the operation, said Pablo Green, a principal engineer on the project.

If a wound needs stitching up, the surgeon uses various robotic arms to examine, clean and stitch up the wound. If the surgeon needs gauze, he/she says "gauze" and a robot will open a pack of gauze and apply where the doctor directs.

Eventually, surgeons will be able to use the system to work on patients across the world, or even in space, Mr. Green said.

He noted several local hospitals, including the Stanford and the University of California San Francisco medical centers, use the technology on site because the robots make "less invasive" incisions in patients. Some 700 of the systems have been built, and cost about \$1 million each, he said.

"The da Vinci provides all the dexterity of your hands with the advantages of a minimally invasive procedure," said Tom Low, director of SRI's medical robotics program. "We've replaced a team of technicians and nurses with robots."

### Changing perceptions

As quickly as robotics research is gaining momentum among local companies, there's still the big hurdle of getting people to let go of the perception of robots as clunky or dangerous, a la the industrial robotic arms found in automotive factories, or the infamous, albeit fictional, "HAL 9000" robot from Stanley Kubrick's "2001: A Space Odyssey."

"When we talk about robotic surgery, people think of something from a sci-fi movie with some scalpel coming at them," Mr. Low said. "Part of this is showing people that this is safe, and surgeon controlled."

"Robots are coming ... and if you want to stay ahead of the game, you'll get on board," said Mr. Green. "People may think of robots in an automotive factory as large and dangerous, but they ... can be very delicate." ▀



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# Radios change lives in Kenya

Portola Valley woman abandoned high-tech career to improve the lives of Africa's very poor

By Dave Boyce

Almanac Staff Writer

A staple in emergency kits these days is a small radio powered by batteries, a wind-up generator and a solar panel. They're offered as premiums in public-broadcasting pledge drives and may be handy someday, but lacking a major earthquake or wildfire, they may see little use.

In Africa, they're used every day. Wind-up, solar-powered radios are vital avenues for the very poor who struggle to survive and educate themselves, as Portola Valley resident Paige Fulkerson came to appreciate after a 17-day trip to Kenya last May.

Ms. Fulkerson, 45, is married to attorney Tim Fulkerson and is the mother of two young children. Behind her is an 18-year Silicon Valley career, much of which involved smoothing the integration of merged companies. She was board president at Windmill School, a preschool in Portola Valley, for the 2005-06 school year.

In June 2007, she joined the Freeplay Foundation and is now employed full-time as U.S. director of West Coast fundraising. Freeplay, a nonprofit based in London and South Africa, provides durable radios for selected poor communities in Africa.



Paige Fulkerson

At a Portola Valley restaurant, Ms. Fulkerson talked with The Almanac about her experiences distributing radios in Kenya, including in the West Pokot district.

## Kenya's Wild West

A March 2007 news story on the Web site "Kenya Today" describes West Pokot as Kenya's Wild West, "bandit country, where cattle rustling, bloody feuds, combat between neighboring ethnic groups and heavily armed men is the order of the day."

## INFORMATION

The Konditorei cafe at the Ladera Country Shopper shopping center at 3130 Alpine Road in Ladera is showing a collection of Ms. Fulkerson's photographs through April 30.

"My first 24 hours there were astonishing," Ms. Fulkerson says. After landing in Nairobi, she and Freeplay Executive Director Kristine Pearson took a United Nations flight to West Pokot, then overland via 4x4 for four hours to meet villagers at a school and begin the process of handing over radios.

Their vehicle was vintage, particularly the arm rests. "They were all used up," Ms. Fulkerson says. "By the time I got there, my elbows were bloody. The road was so rugged you wondered if you had all your teeth."

About 200 yards from the school, they got out and walked, meeting families who had walked for hours to get there, Ms. Pearson says. Children in bright ceremonial clothing escorted them and sang a wel-



Photo by Kristine Pearson

**These Masai women**, who live on a homestead near Kenya's Amboseli National Park, listen for the first time to their Lifeline radio, a wind-up, solar-powered radio donated by the Freeplay Foundation.

coming song, Ms. Fulkerson says. At the school, there were handshakes all around.

"That was the moment," Ms. Fulkerson says. "To walk there and to shake the hands of all those people who were so sweet. ... I had this ridiculous smile. There'll be no other job in my life that the first day will ever compare with

the contrasts and the beauty."

For dinner, the Kenyans sacrificed a goat, which Ms. Fulkerson says she ate from her hands, tearing pieces off with her teeth.

Twenty-four hours later, the two women missed a flight from Eldoret to Nairobi and had to

Continued on page 18



Sunday, April 20, 12 to 4 p.m.  
Woodside Elementary School  
3195 Woodside Road, Woodside

Sponsored by the Town of Woodside, the Conservation & Environmental Health Committee, and Woodside Green.

Join your community at Green Fair 2008 for a day of fun and fresh discoveries on how to 'green up' your life, featuring:

- Exhibits ~ tools for reducing our "carbon footprint." Talk to experts about solar energy, home energy audits, alternative fuel vehicles, local organic foods, gardening and a host of other interesting topics.
- Tim Cain, award-winning children's singer/guitarist.
- Prize drawings for attendees who walk or ride bikes.
- A tasting of local, organic foods (*Tickets required, see below.*)
- Wildlife Associates will present some beautiful wild creatures and explain their place in our changing world.
- View inspiring 'green-theme' video clips.
- Display of children's art on the theme of global warming.
- The Woodside Village Band.

The event is free. Tickets for the organic foods tasting are \$10 for adults, \$5 for children under 12 and will be available in a limited quantity at Town Hall through April 16. Call 851-6790.

# Woodside's Kathleen Scutchfield gives conservation easement to POST

The Toto Ranch, 952 acres along Highway 1 south of Half Moon Bay, won't be developed

into luxury homes thanks to the generosity of its owner, Kathleen Scutchfield of Woodside.

Ms. Scutchfield donated a conservation easement worth \$7.9 million to POST (Peninsula

Open Space Trust) to preserve the scenic vistas and rich natural resources on the property.

"I've seen how development has been creeping up and down the coast and feel it's important to make a statement and save the land just as it is, in its open, natural state," said Ms. Scutchfield.

A native of Texas and longtime supporter of POST, Ms. Scutchfield is active in many causes. She co-founded the nonprofit Until There's a Cure Foundation, which raises funds for development of an AIDS vaccine, for care and services to AIDS patients, and for AIDS education. She is also trustee emeritus of the San Francisco Ballet, and an avid equestrian.

Ms. Scutchfield and her late husband, Donald, purchased the Toto Ranch in 1982. The land is currently used for open space and grazing.

The conservation easement, which permanently restricts development on the property, protects five acres of prime agricultural soils, as well as grassland and hardwood and evergreen forests.

It also preserves a corridor along Tunitas Creek and its tributaries, which provide habitat for rare and endangered species, including steelhead trout, Coho salmon, red-legged frog, white-tailed kite, peregrine falcon, golden eagle, and marbled murrelet.

Without this easement, the ranch would have been a likely candidate for a luxury second-home subdivision, said Walter Moore, executive vice president of POST, a nonprofit land trust based in Palo Alto.

"Properties similar to Toto Ranch have become very attractive to very wealthy private buyers," Mr. Moore said. "Up to seven lots of more than 100 acres could have easily overwhelmed the slopes of this rolling coastal terrain and threatened its watershed and wildlife habitat."

For information on POST, call 854-7696; or go to [openspace.trust.org](http://openspace.trust.org).

## Time to apply for Grand Jury

People interested in improving government in San Mateo County by participating in the next Grand Jury have until the end of Friday, April 18, to file their application.

Judge George A. Miram of the San Mateo County Superior Court, adviser for the Grand Jury that will serve from July 1 to June 30 next year, encouraged interested people to apply so the county can obtain a cross-section of the population.

Judge Miram will interview applicants; those qualifying will be selected by a random draw.

For information or applications, call 599-1711, or write to: Grand Jury Clerk, Court Executive Office, 400 County Center, Redwood City, CA 94063.

## Register Now for the 3rd Annual Big Bear Run, Sunday, May 4th, 2008

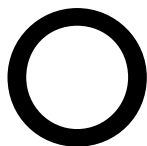
Supporting Menlo-Atherton High School Athletes



**Time:** Race-day Registration - 8 AM. Warm up - 8:30 AM. Start time - 9 AM sharp. **Pre-registration:** Pick up race T-shirts and bibs on Thursday, May 1st, 1:30 PM to 3 PM or on Friday, May 2nd, 2:30 to 3:30 PM at the T-Lot by the gyms. **Location:** Menlo-Atherton High School, 555 Middlefield Road, Atherton, CA 94027. (Race will start on Ringwood Avenue side of M-A.) **Course:** A flat, 5K race/walk that starts at M-A, weaves through Lindenwood and ends on Coach Parks Field. Everyone is invited. Refreshments and entertainment provided. **Awards:** Ribbons or Medals for 1st, 2nd, 3rd male & females in age groups: 12& under; 13 - 19; 20 - 29; 30 - 39; 40 - 49; 50 - 59; 60+. Gift certificate for overall winner, male and female. **Entry Fee:** **Early Registration:** By April 28th: \$20 for Adults / \$10 for Students 18 and under. **Late and Race Day Registration:** After April 28th: \$25 for Adults / \$15 for Students 18 and under. **REGISTER TODAY!** Please make check payable to M-A Athletic Boosters and mail entry form (below) and payment to: Big Bear Run, 9 Helen Place, Menlo Park, CA 94025. Interested in sponsoring the event? Please contact Michele Culhane: [michculhane@pacbell.net](mailto:michculhane@pacbell.net) or Kim Young: [kyoung@moragne.com](mailto:kyoung@moragne.com).



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### On-line Registration available at [www.active.com](http://www.active.com)

Gender (circle one) M F Age \_\_\_\_\_ Date of Birth \_\_\_\_\_

Last \_\_\_\_\_ First \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_ City \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_ Email \_\_\_\_\_

T-Shirt Size (circle one) Youth M L Adult S M L XL XXL

Waiver: In consideration of your accepting my entry, I, intending to be legally bound, do hereby for myself and my heirs, executors, administrators waive and release any and all rights and claims or damages I may accrue against the persons and organizations affiliated with this race for any and all injuries that may be suffered by me while participating in or enroute to or from the event. I attest that I am physically fit and sufficiently trained for competition, my physical condition verified by a licensed M.D. during the last six months. **For safety, no skates, no headphones or dogs are allowed.** As part of the waiver, I acknowledge that I have read and understand all of the above.

X

ALL ENTRANTS MUST SIGN WAIVER. IF UNDER 18, A PARENT OR GUARDIAN MUST SIGN. DATE 3/27/08

## Neighborhood cleanup includes medicine cabinet

When we take prescription medications, our bodies don't absorb them completely and the residues go down the toilet. Since most sewage treatment plants don't remove these residues, they enter the water supply in tiny but detectable amounts.

Removing these contaminants from the water supply may be a matter for regional governments, but the town of Portola Valley, at the request of Councilman Steve Toben, is taking on a related issue: how to dispose of expired drugs, whether prescription or over-the-counter.

The town is inviting residents to bring such medications to Ford Field, the baseball diamond on Alpine Road at Westridge Drive, between 8 and 11 a.m. on Saturday, April 12. Representatives from the San Mateo County Sheriff's Office will be on hand to properly dispose of the drugs.

This free event for residents only is part of the neighborhood cleanup held each spring.

Residents must bring a copy of a garbage bill and can use this opportunity to dispose of old furniture, electronic equipment, appliances, plastic toys and scrap metal, says Assistant Town Administrator Janet McDougall.

Not welcome are hazardous wastes, including oil and grease, paint, refrigerators, freezers, air conditioners, pesticides and batteries, she says. For a complete list, go to [www.portolavalley.net](http://www.portolavalley.net)

### ■ PORTOLA VALLEY

Portola Valley residents (bring garbage bill as residency proof) are invited to participate in the drug-disposal day and neighborhood cleanup from 8 a.m. to 11 a.m. Saturday, April 12, at Ford Field, on Alpine Road at Westridge Drive. For more information on Portola Valley's drug-disposal event, call Assistant Town Administrator Janet McDougall at 851-1700, ext. 18. For information on drug-disposal programs in other communities, go to [www.baywise.info](http://www.baywise.info) and click on the "Medicine" link.

and locate the cleanup day item in Town News.

### Tainted water

The Associated Press recently completed a five-month investigation of drinking water supplies in metropolitan areas and communities nationwide. The findings show detectable levels of "a vast array of pharmaceuticals, including antibiotics, anti-convulsants, mood stabilizers and sex hormones."

The contaminants are far below the level of medicinal doses; water companies avoid discussing the issue because "the public 'doesn't know how to interpret the information' and might be unduly alarmed," the AP said.

The Environmental Protection Agency is looking at the issue, but is not yet ready to issue regulations, the AP said.

## Council supports parks tax measure

By Dave Boyce

Almanac Staff Writer

The Portola Valley Town Council supports a measure on the June 3 ballot that would generate new revenues for parks and recreation-related activities in San Mateo County by increasing the sales tax by one-eighth cent for 25 years.

On a 4-0 vote March 26, the council backed Measure O, which would fund youth after-school and summer programs; maintenance of parks, trails, recreation areas, and park facilities; and open space, according to the text of the ballot measure. Councilman Ted Driscoll was absent.

A similar measure in 2006 failed despite the fact that 55 percent of the voters favored it. To pass, this tax measure requires the support of two-thirds of the voters.

Each city or town and unincorporated county areas would receive a percentage of the funds based on population, with 1.357 percent

going to Portola Valley — about \$205,000 using 2002 sales tax figures, said Town Administrator Angela Howard.

For more information on Measure O, go to [www.shapethefuture.org](http://www.shapethefuture.org) and click on the "Roster of Local Measures" link on the home page. ■

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## Changing lives in Kenya

Continued from page 15

hire a driver. The drive over a steep mountain pass included roads with no lights or lanes, with overloaded trucks “blasting by,” and frequent roadblocks, many preceded by spike strips, and manned by soldiers looking for smugglers.

“There was every opportunity to be dragged out, raped and left for dead, all of us, and nobody would know. Nobody,” she says.

Their passport: the symbolic importance the soldiers gave to a white woman sitting in the front seat next to a black man, Ms. Fulkerson says.

Before going to Kenya, she says, she gave much thought to her family responsibilities in Portola Valley. Her husband was accepting of her decision to go, she says.

“I wanted to get outside of a comfort zone that I think people stay in here,” Ms. Fulkerson

says. “All the concerns that you have as a naive Bay Area (resident) ... we’re so insulated from the real issues.”

Another kind of insulation: living in wild backcountry on less than a dollar a day. The “Lifeline” radio from the Freeplay Foundation aims to help poor Africans get access to vital information.

Kenya is one focus, but Freeplay is also active in Mozambique, Rwanda, Tanzania, South Africa and Zambia, says Ms. Pearson, the executive director, in a telephone interview from London.

With a radio, villagers can hear the BBC and Voice of America, but the heart of Freeplay’s effort is the existing network of local stations, where there is advice on when to plant crops, on the issue of female circumcision, and on how to stay healthy amid “a panoply of diseases,” including AIDS, cholera, yellow fever and meningitis, Ms. Pearson says.

Distance learning over the radio is critical for many children orphaned by AIDS and with responsibilities at home that make going to school impractical.

“These kids are living on their own,” she says. “Who teaches them? The amount of radio programming is very extraordinary. It’s by far the primary medium of communication in the developing world.”

### A gift for sharing

If a Lifeline radio can be said to be owned, the owner is a community that agrees to share it.

In introducing a radio to a community, it is common practice to arrange a listening group, Ms. Pearson says, with the capacity to be heard by 40 people in an outside setting, more if there are walls and a roof.

The radio’s guardian is often a woman. “They can multi-task” and tend to share information more readily than men, Ms. Fulkerson says.

Among several awards listed at Freeplay’s Web site, San Jose’s

Tech Museum of Innovation recognized Ms. Pearson in 2005 with a Global Humanitarian award for “technology benefiting humanity in the education category.”

In finding and engaging communities, the foundation collaborates with nongovernmental organizations, government

ministries and broadcasters, Ms. Fulkerson says. Freeplay monitors a community’s use of the radio over time.

Lifeline radios are made of hard plastic and have the shape of an elongated blue purse with a bail handle. The tuning bands are rainbow-colored to

distinguish between short-wave and AM/FM, and an antenna slot accepts any random piece of wire. The crank is on the back and the solar panel is in a waterproof detachable case with an 8-foot wire lead.


They’re rugged and reliable, Ms. Fulkerson says. “It can get wet and you can shake it out. You can drop it. You can have a goat pee on it. It’s pretty indestructible.”

User manuals, typically a single page of illustrations, are drawn by local cartoonists using the local language, with the reverse side used for programming information, the Web site says.

About \$70 U.S. covers the cost and distribution of one radio, Ms. Fulkerson says. For more information, go to [www.freeplayfoundation.org](http://www.freeplayfoundation.org). ■

*‘I wanted to get outside of a comfort zone that I think people stay in here. All the concerns that you have as a naive Bay Area (resident) ... we’re so insulated from the real issues.’*

PAIGE FULKERSON



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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, April 24
- ✱ **NEWBORN CARE 101**

Often touted as our “most fun” class, this interactive program teaches the specifics of newborn care, including bathing, temperature-taking, changing diapers, swaddling, soothing techniques and more. Infant doll models are used to allow for hands-on practice.




- Saturday, May 3
- ✱ **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.


- Saturday, May 10
- ✱ **NEW FAMILY PROGRAM**

This program features a selection of support groups designed to help families throughout the first nine months after birth, offering something for everyone. Enrollment includes participation in Mother & Baby Mornings and Couples Coffee.

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

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## Council to review redesigned Cañada College housing plan

### ■ WOODSIDE

The Woodside Town Council may endorse a redesigned plan for new hilltop apartments for faculty and staff at Cañada College at the council’s 7:30 p.m. meeting on Tuesday, April 8, in Independence Hall.

A subcommittee of Mayor Ron Romines and councilmen Peter Mason and Dave Tanner met with representatives from the college and the architect over the past few weeks to attempt to resolve a dispute over the scale of the 56- to 60-unit apartment complex.

The college’s 131-acre campus straddles Redwood City and Woodside, with most of it located in Woodside, including the 3.8-acre site proposed for the apartments. The site looks down

on parts of Woodside.

The college cannot proceed with construction until the Woodside council agrees to de-annex the site and redraw the town boundary to put the site in Redwood City, where zoning laws allow multi-family buildings.

The council may also agree to join the Cities for Climate Protection Campaign, which would begin a process to learn how much greenhouse gas Woodside’s town government is responsible for. Developing an emissions baseline is considered a first step in a community’s effort to lower its emissions.

# Decision near on Corte Madera School principal

By Marjorie Mader

Almanac Staff Writer

## ■ SCHOOLS

A decision may be made this week to name a new principal for Corte Madera, the grade 4-8 school in the Portola Valley School District. The current principal, Joel Willen, is retiring in June after a 42 year career in education, including the

past four years at Corte Madera.

Superintendent Anne Campbell said the search for a principal is entering its final phase, and narrowed on Thursday from a pool of 23 applicants to four finalists. The next step was visits with the finalists at their school sites.

Teachers, staff, trustees, parents and community members took part in the selection process, which included screening of paper documents and two levels of interviews.

The district also conducted an in-house search for candidates, following a procedure used last year when Jennifer Warren was hired as principal of Ormondale, the K-3 school, to take over from Eva Gal, who retired last June. However, there were

no applicants from within the school district.

"We had a really good pool of applicants," said Superintendent Campbell. They included seven principals and 13 assistant principals with experience in middle and primary schools in both the public and private sector. Most of the applicants were from the Bay Area.

"Joel has done a wonderful job of giving Corte Madera a sense of stability," said Superintendent

Campbell. "We're looking for someone who has experience with middle school kids, can build on this, and take it to the next level." It also helps, she added, for the candidate to have a sense of humor.

The new principal will start July 1. The district's total compensation package for principals with eight years of experience ranges from \$112,000 to \$140,000 a year.

The school board's next meeting is Wednesday, March 9, starting at 7 p.m. in Room 1001, Corte Madera School, 4575 Alpine Road, Portola Valley. ■

## High school beef not contaminated

By Rory Brown

Almanac Staff Writer

Contrary to an earlier assumption, 1,960 pounds of ground beef sitting in the main freezer of the Sequoia Union High School District is apparently safe to eat.

District officials say they mistakenly assumed that the meat was part of the Jan. 31 recall issued for beef products from the Chino-based Hallmark/Westland Meat Co., reported it as potentially contaminated, and did not serve the beef at any of the district's campuses, including Menlo-Atherton and Woodside High Schools.

After taking a closer look at the U.S. Department of Agriculture code numbers on all 49 of the 40-pound cases of beef, officials realized none of the district's meat actually passed through the Chino slaughterhouse. That means Sequoia Union was not among the hundreds of school districts across

the nation affected by the recall, said Assistant Superintendent Ed LaVigne.

The meat will be served at the district's cafeterias, Mr. LaVigne said.

The Agriculture Department issued the recall following the release of undercover video footage showing workers at the Hallmark/Westland facility forcing cows that could not stand on their own onto a slaughterhouse floor. Regulations prohibit the sale of meat from cows that cannot stand because they are more vulnerable to mad cow disease.

The recall covered a two-year period, so Mr. LaVigne noted that the Sequoia district may have previously served meat that came from the Hallmark/Westland facility, but he said no food-related illnesses have been reported on any of the district's campuses.

Even if beef from the facility is consumed, the chance for illness is "extremely remote," according to the Department of Agriculture Web site. ■

## M-A High stages 'Bye Bye Birdie'

The musical "Bye Bye Birdie" begins a four-performance run at Menlo-Atherton High School with a 4 p.m. show on Thursday, April 10, followed by an open house at the school.

Other shows are on Friday night, April 11, at 7 p.m.; Saturday, April 12, at 2 p.m. and 7 p.m.

The performances will be in

the new gym and directed by M-A senior Brooke Costello.

Tickets are \$8 for adults and \$5 for students and are available at the door and from the box office in Room M-2 from noon to 3:30 p.m. on school days.

For more information, contact drama teacher Patrick Maier at pmaier@seq.org or 322-5311, ext. 8615.

## School scores with Giants' runs

Belle Haven Elementary School in Menlo Park is one of five Bay Area schools that will benefit every time the San Francisco Giants score this season.

In a partnership with KNBR AM-680, Wells Fargo's Adopt-a-School program will donate \$100 to local schools for every run the team scores.

The money will be used to help fulfill the schools' wish lists,

which include requests for computers, books and other school supplies.

Last season, the Giants scored 683 runs, which resulted in \$68,300 in contributions to local schools. Through the program, Wells Fargo has donated nearly \$300,000 in the past four years.

To learn more about the schools wish lists, visit [www.knbr.com](http://www.knbr.com) and click on Adopt-a-School.



## NOTICE OF PUBLIC MEETING AND NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING CITY OF MENLO PARK PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING OF APRIL 21, 2008

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that the Planning Commission of the City of Menlo Park, California, is scheduled to review the following items:

### PUBLIC HEARING ITEMS

**Use Permit/Alexander and Whitney Hoermann/351 Terminal Avenue:** Request for a use permit for a first floor expansion and second story addition to an existing single-story residence that would exceed 50 percent of the existing floor area on a substandard lot with regard to lot width and to construct a detached secondary dwelling unit in the R-1-U (Single-Family Urban) zoning district. Request for a variance for the detached secondary dwelling unit to allow a 10.5-foot wall height and 14.2-foot overall height where nine feet and 14 feet, respectively, are the maximum heights permitted per Section 16.79.040 of the Zoning Ordinance.

**Variance/James Clendenin/1075 Windsor Drive:** Request for a variance to allow an attached garage to encroach ten feet into the rear yard setback where twenty feet is required in the R-1-S (Single-Family Suburban) zoning district.

**Use Permit/Phillip A. Kamangar/665 Cambridge Avenue:** Request for a use permit to demolish an existing single-story, single-family residence and detached garage and construct a new two-story, single-family residence on a substandard lot with regard to lot width in the R-2 (Low Density Apartment) zoning district.

**Use Permit/Dennis J. O' Connor/1170 Santa Cruz Ave:** Request for a use permit to demolish an existing single-story, single-family residence and detached garage and construct a new two-story, single-family residence on a substandard lot with regard to lot width and lot area in the R-E (Estate) zoning district. The project includes a request for a six-foot tall front fence where four feet is the maximum height allowed in the front setback.

### PUBLIC MEETING ITEMS - None

NOTICE IS HEREBY FURTHER GIVEN that said Planning Commission will hold a public hearing on public hearing items in the Council Chambers of the City of Menlo Park, located at 701 Laurel Street, Menlo Park, on Monday, April 21 2008, 7:00 p.m. or as near as possible thereafter, at which time and place interested persons may appear and be heard thereon. If you challenge this item in court, you may be limited to raising only those issues you or someone else raised at the public hearing described in this notice, or in written correspondence delivered to the City of Menlo Park at, or prior to, the public hearing.

The project file may be viewed by the public on weekdays between the hours of 7:30 a.m. and 5:30 p.m. Monday through Thursday and 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. on Friday, with alternate Fridays closed, at the Department of Community Development, 701 Laurel Street, Menlo Park. Please call the Planning Division if there are any questions and/or for complete agenda information (650) 330-6702.

Si usted necesita más información sobre este proyecto, por favor llame al 650-330-6702, y pregunte por un asistente que hable español.

DATED: April 3, 2008

Deanna Chow, Senior Planner  
Menlo Park Planning Commission

Visit our Web site for Planning Commission public hearing, agenda, and staff report information:  
[www.menlopark.org](http://www.menlopark.org)

Published in THE ALMANAC on April 9, 2008.

# Willows traffic study gets green light

By Rory Brown

Almanac Staff Writer

After weeks of impassioned e-mails on both sides of the issue, Menlo Park City Council members opted to move ahead with a traffic study for the Willows neighborhood.

The traffic study, estimated to cost \$120,000, was one of more than 30 projects council members endorsed when they voted 4-1 on April 1 to approve a list of items to be funded in the fiscal year that starts July 1.

Councilman John Boyle opposed the vote, but he didn't speak out against the traffic study. He said the council, in general, was taking on too many projects for the next fiscal year.

Willows residents are split on whether the traffic study is a good

thing for the neighborhood.

Proponents said the city needs to at least study cut-through traffic and speeding trends through the neighborhood, but critics have argued that the city looked at similar issues in 1993, which led to the controversial installation (and eventual removal) of traffic circles and other traffic-calming measures.

Council members sided with neighbors who said a recent influx of new families with young children to the Willows should prompt the city to take a close look at improving neighborhood traffic safety.

"The majority of us who live [in the Willows] have small kids," said Willows resident Marcia Beaver. "I see near-misses every day."

"It's important, at this point, for

the city to get more data about traffic patterns in the Willows," said Councilwoman Kelly Ferguson, who lives in the Willows. "We're getting a lot of safety complaints from the neighbors." ■

## Correction

A story in The Almanac's April 2 issue about Menlo Park garbage rate increases mistakenly reported that the rate will increase to \$11.96 a month for a single-family home with one 20-gallon trash can. In fact, that rate will increase to just \$5.64 a month. The other listed rate increases are correct.



Photo courtesy of San Mateo County Parks Department

## A controlled burn

It was no April Fools joke for the non-native Coyote brush and broom plants that live in Wunderlich Park, which borders Woodside. The county Parks Department and local and state firefighters set fires on the morning and early afternoon of Tuesday, April 1, for the dual purpose of consuming piles of non-native plants and creating a fire break in the park.

## Atherton workshop on zoning code

Atherton residents have another chance to weigh in on proposed revisions to the town's zoning code at a public workshop set for 7 p.m. Wednesday, April 9, at the Pavilion in Holbrook-Palmer Park, 150 Watkins Ave.

It will be the third workshop on the zoning code, a set of regulations that control a building's size,

height, setback and a myriad of other development details.

Atherton's City Council decided to hire a consultant to help revise the zoning codes for clarity and consistency in the aftermath of a series of audits of the building department.

Information about the workshop is online at [www.ci.atherton.ca.us](http://www.ci.atherton.ca.us).

## Low-income seniors eligible for rebates

It's tax time again, but this year, starting May 2, rebates based on the federal Economic Stimulus program will be mailed to those taxpayers who qualify for them, including many people 65 or older who are not accustomed to filing tax returns because their incomes are too low.

To receive a check, however, you need to first file a tax return.

Any senior who received Social Security benefits of \$3,000 or more in 2007 is eligible for a rebate of \$300 for an individual or \$600 for a married couple filing jointly, said Merijane Lee, a Portola Valley resident

and a volunteer member of the Internal Revenue Service's Tax Advocacy Panel. Panel members include citizens who act as liaisons for taxpayers.

Filing can be done on paper with a Form 1040A or electronically, Ms. Lee said. Enter AARP TaxAide into a Web search engine to find a local agency that offers assistance with filing.

Rebates phase out for incomes over \$75,000 for individuals and over \$150,000 for couples filing jointly.

For more information, go to [www.irs.gov](http://www.irs.gov) and click on the "Rebate questions" link.

## Jordan Savara joins Peak Performance

Chiropractor Jordan Savara recently joined Peak Performance Chiropractic in Menlo Park. He graduated in 2007 from the Palmer College of Chi-

ropractic West with a degree of doctor of chiropractic. He also has a degree in physiology from Michigan State University.



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## ■ OBITUARIES

### Alma Helmers

Former director, Woodside Parents Nursery School

Alma M. Helmers, a teacher and director at the Woodside Parents Nursery School for 18 years, died March 31 at her home in San Carlos. She was 61.

Ms. Helmers was twice awarded "Teacher of the Year" in recognition of her inspiration to young children, say family members. She retired in 1992.

Ms. Helmers treasured time at her vacation home in the mountains, being at the ocean, and traveling the world, say family members.

She is survived by her husband of 27 years, Bob Helmers; sons Brian and Michael Durham; sisters Andrea Willett and Dorothy Skoufos; a brother, Andy Pelissier; and five grandchildren.

A memorial Mass was held April 4 at St. Charles Church in San Carlos. The family prefers donations to Mission Hospice in San Mateo. Arrangements were under

the direction of Crippen & Flynn Carlmont Chapel.

### Roy Breunig

Longtime Menlo Park resident

Roy I. "Bruno" Breunig, a resident of Menlo Park for more than 30 years, died March 9 at the Palo Alto Veterans Affairs Hospital in Palo Alto. He was 79.

Mr. Breunig was a native of Columbus, Ohio, and attended Ohio State University. He served in the U.S. Marine Corp during the last days of World War II. Until his retirement, he worked as a salesman for transfer and storage companies.

Mr. Breunig was a faithful patron of the Menlo Park Library. "He was a great reader and enjoyed visiting the library several times a week," says his friend, Darla Tupper.

Mr. Breunig is survived by his siblings, Marion Pesola, Joseph Breunig, Florence Kerchner and Gladys Hamilton; and special friends, Ruthe Tyson and Darla Tupper of Menlo Park.

Memorials in his name may be made to the Menlo Park Library.

## Hillview champs

This Hillview Middle School sixth-grade girls basketball team, coached by Paulette Gottuso, finished its season undefeated March 13 when it beat a team from La Entrada School in the division championship game at the La Entrada gym. Pictured are Coach Gottuso (on floor, with team trophy); first row, from left, Samantha Gottuso, Toni Battaglia and Sarah Fishback; middle row, from left, Lauren Nathan, Kelley Eason and Hailey Warren; and back row, Elizabeth Inman, Pauli King, Assistant Coach Tom King, Emma Heath, Assistant Coach Glenn Fishback and Tessa Dignum. Not pictured: Assistant Coach Bob Beckstrom.



## NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING

### CITY OF MENLO PARK CITY COUNCIL

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that the City Council of the City of Menlo Park, California is scheduled to review the following items:

**Planned Development Permit Extension, Vesting Tentative Map Extension, and Planned Development Permit Amendment/Beltramo's Investment Co. Inc./1452 & 1460 El Camino Real and 1457 & 1473 San Antonio Street:** Request for the following: 1) a two-year extension of a Planned Development (PD) Permit for the construction of a new 26,800-square-foot, two-story commercial building with at-grade and subterranean parking and 16 two-story townhomes with partially submerged parking, 2) a two-year extension for a Vesting Tentative Map for the creation of 16 residential lots with associated common areas and one commercial lot for condominium purposes not to exceed 40 commercial units on an approximate 1.5-acre site, and 3) a Planned Development Permit Amendment to modify condition 6.30.1 regarding installation of a temporary 8 foot high plywood noise barrier around the perimeter of the project site. The applicant proposes to install a chain link fence around the construction site with black or green netting, and provide a solid plywood fence where the property abuts residential uses. The rezoning from C-4 (General Commercial, Applicable to El Camino Real) to P-D (Planned Development), the PD Permit, and the Vesting Tentative Map were previously approved by the City Council in August 2006.

NOTICE IS HEREBY FURTHER GIVEN that said City Council will hold a public hearing on this item in the Council Chambers of the City of Menlo Park, located at 701 Laurel Street, Menlo Park, on **Tuesday, April 22, 2008 at 7:00 p.m.** or as near as possible thereafter, at which time and place interested persons may appear and be heard thereon. If you challenge these items in court, you may be limited to raising only those issues you or someone else raised at the public hearing described in this notice, or in written correspondence delivered to the City of Menlo Park at, or prior to, the public hearing.

On March 10, 2008, the Planning Commission recommended to the City Council to approve the proposed request subject to the recommendation in the staff report with the following modifications: 1) reduce the extension period for the Vesting Tentative Map and Conditional Development Permit (CDP) from two years to one year, with the ability for an additional one year extension subject to Planning Commission approval, and 2) modify condition 6.30.1 of the CDP regarding the required locations of the eight-foot high plywood noise barrier.

The project file may be viewed by the public on weekdays between the hours of 7:30 a.m. and 5:30 p.m. Monday through Thursday and 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. on Friday, with alternate Fridays closed, at the Department of Community Development, 701 Laurel Street, Menlo Park. Please call **Deanna Chow**, Senior Planner, at **650-330-6733** or email her at **dmchow@menlopark.org** if you have any questions or comments.

Si usted necesita más información sobre este proyecto, por favor llame al 650-330-6702, y pregunte por un asistente que hable español.

DATED: April 3, 2008

Sherry M. Kelly, Interim City Clerk

Visit our Web site for public hearing, agenda, and staff report information: <http://www.ci.menlo-park.ca.us>

Published in THE ALMANAC on April 9, 2008.

## ■ 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

**Grand theft report:** Tools valued between \$10,000 and \$15,000 stolen from construction site, 100 block of Catalpa Drive, April 2.

**Petty theft reports:** Backpacks, school books and wallet stolen, Menlo-Atherton High School at 555 Middlefield Road, April 1 and 2.

### MENLO PARK

#### Burglary reports:

■ Car stereo stolen, 1100 block of Windermere Ave., March 28.

■ Car stereo and wallet stolen, 700 block of Pierce Road, March 28.

■ Global positioning system stolen from vehicle, 400 block of Ivy Drive, March 28.

■ Laptop computer stolen from office, Ultra Clean Technology Systems & Service at 150 Independence Drive, March 29.

■ Plates, crystal bowls and vase stolen from residence, 300 block of Pope St., March 29.

■ Extension cords, welding cables, electrical box and radio stolen from residence, first block of Willow Road, March 31.

■ Cash stolen from residence, 1300 block of Mills St., April 1.

■ About \$400 in cash stolen after break into vending machine, Mermaid Inn Motel at 727 El Camino Real, April 2.

**Grand theft report:** Bicycles stolen from backyard, 1000 block of Sevier Ave., March 28.

**Vicious animal report:** Off-leash Labrador retriever bit child on arm but no medical attention needed at scene, 200 block of Elliott Drive, March 29.

**Child protective services report:** 1300 block of Henderson Ave., March 28.

**Domestic violence report:** 1100 block of Madera Ave., March 30.

### WOODSIDE

**Grand theft report:** Family member admitted stealing \$1,400 in cash from locked bathroom pantry to buy drugs and paraphernalia, 1000 block of Portola Road, March 26.

**Burglary report:** Items of value stolen from residence via unlocked door, 200 block of Woodside Road, April 1.

### PORTOLA VALLEY

**Grand theft report:** Unauthorized charges on victim's credit card totaling \$1,700 and application received in mail to apply for identity protection, 100 block of Cherokee Way, March 27.

## Caltrain Join Power Board elects officers

Redwood City Councilman Jim Hartnett is the new chair of the Peninsula Corridor Joint Powers Board, which runs Caltrain. The board elected Mr. Hartnett, who represents San Mateo County on the board, at its January meeting.

Don Gage, a Santa Clara County supervisor who also serves on the Santa Clara Valley Transportation Authority board, was elected vice chair of the Caltrain board.

During 2007, average weekly Caltrain ridership grew 9 percent, said spokeswoman Christine Dunn. The commuter railroad also undertook several construc-

tion projects including a \$35 million project to improve the Palo Alto train stations and a \$20.5 million project to improve the Burlingame Caltrain station.

The Caltrain board has nine members, with representatives from each of the three counties through which the rail service operates: San Francisco, San Mateo and Santa Clara. The board meets the first Thursday of each month at 10 a.m. at 1250 San Carlos Ave. in San Carlos, two blocks from the train station.

For more information about the board or Caltrain, go to [www.caltrain.com](http://www.caltrain.com).

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

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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.

## Time running out for Oak Knoll oak

Residents who live near Oak Knoll elementary school are finding out that their school district is not willing to change its remodeling plans to suit the needs of neighbors.

In this case, although the Menlo Park City School District has been hit with a litany of complaints, it is pushing ahead with plans to replace 14 portables with a two-story classroom building, remove an oak tree that is said to be 300 years old, and relocate a parking lot.

The district board already has decided that revamping the small, triangular school site just off Sand Hill Road does not require a full-blown environmental impact report. Instead the district approved a "negative declaration," which means that the board believes any impact can be mitigated, or overcome.

Unfortunately, some neighbors do not agree, and they said so last week during testimony to the Menlo Park City Council, where they had hoped to convince council members to strongly oppose the project's current design. But although the council seemed sympathetic to some of the issues raised, the votes were not there to do anything more than approve a letter stating the city's concern.

Now, with a 30-day comment period set to expire this week on the school board's approval of the "neg dec," it does not look as if the board intends to make any substantial changes to the Oak Knoll plans, regardless of what the



neighbors say. And that is too bad, although to be fair, the district faced an incredible challenge to squeeze all the new classrooms and other facilities needed into the odd-shaped site bordered by Oak Avenue, Oak Knoll Lane and Vine Street. With unhappy neighbors around every corner, the district has just not been able to quiet the concerns that continue to roil the neighbors.

We hope at least some of the issues can be worked out after construction begins. The plan to accommodate bicycle traffic is an example, and there may be others that can be changed without redoing the entire design.

Oak Knoll School will continue to be a tremendous resource to everyone in the neighborhood for years to come. Its useful life will be measured in decades, so if the district can implement some small but significant changes, it should do so.

By the same token, neighbors should not expect the district to design the school site according to their precise wishes. Some sacrifices will have to be made on both sides.

If we could have our druthers, we would hope some way can be found to save the centuries-old oak tree. This is an icon that the district should make every effort to save. It would be tragic to mow down such a historic tree for any reason, but to do it in the name of progress at an elementary school sends a terrible message to its students, who, we presume, are learning to care for their environment.

**EDITORIAL**

The opinion of The Almanac

**LETTERS**

Our readers write

### City gets good value with Climate Smart

I applaud the Menlo Park City Council's recent 4-1 decision to subscribe to the low-cost Climate Smart greenhouse gas offset program for a nine-month trial on city-owned facilities.

It adds another dimension to the city's effort to reduce greenhouse gases and it leverages valuable city dollars without taking staff time away from important efforts. It adds 2 percent or 3 percent to electric and gas rates, thereby improving the cost-effectiveness of energy efficiency projects.

For under \$1,700 per month the city takes financial responsibility for its share of electric and natural gas-related climate protection costs instead of just talking about it. All the money collected by the nonprofit program is spent on greenhouse gas reduction activities, starting with forest preservation and dairy methane-capture projects, which produce the biggest carbon offset bang for the buck.

By its timely action the city took advantage of Climate Smart's free offer of \$15,000 worth of marketing various emission-reduction opportunities to the residents and businesses.

**Tom Kabat**  
Pope Street, Menlo Park  
Climate Smart participant



Portola Valley Archives

### Our Regional Heritage

Portola Hall, the residence of Edgar Preston and later spice merchant August Schilling, stood at 1533 Portola Road near Old La Honda Road in Woodside for 71 years. Razing it in 1953 was not easy because of a burning ban, 2-foot thick stone walls, and thousands of bees that had taken up residence.

### Group responds to critic of Derry settlement

Editor:

The letter last week from Ms. Lasensky concerning the Derry mixed-use project is erroneous, misleading and faults the wrong parties.

Menlo Park Tomorrow (MPT) is proud to have offered the council an attractive alternative now supported by the developer.

In addition, the City Council retains existing options under the referendum petition to rescind approvals or put it on the ballot. Our work was constructive and embraced as such. Our work will help move the project and El Camino revitalization forward.

Ms. Lasensky's approach is unfortunately counterproductive and represents a narrow interest base that does not balance benefits with impacts.

Menlo Park Tomorrow did not sue the developer. Our group circulated a referendum petition which gathered over 2,500 signatures and which was certified by the county as valid. The City Council supported Menlo Park Tomorrow's discussions with the developer to review the project and address concerns raised before and during the referendum.

See **LETTERS**, next page

## LETTERS

Continued from previous page

These discussions led to an agreement that is a better result for the city and for El Camino Real, including both housing and retail vitality. Yet, Ms. Lasensky seeks to tear down these positive strides.

The agreement's development terms have been fully and publicly disclosed, as the city attorney confirmed to the City Council at its Nov. 27, 2007, public meeting. The Planning Commission and council have the final word on acceptance or rejection of the agreement. They can also put it on the ballot following the referendum petition or rescind prior approvals.

With a lot of hard work, Menlo Park Tomorrow and the developer gave them one more very positive alternative. The Planning Commission has just voted to accept the agreement as a first step, all as part of a better public process.

There are no secret restrictions. There are no "more and expensive parking requirements." Rather, our work helps address parking concerns and improve the success of retail and other project components, many of which are also enhanced.

Yes, the developer has a lower profit margin and indeed the city will receive \$2 million in unrestricted public benefit funds. And, given the scale of the project and the inevitable burdens on city infrastructure it will impose, that is perfectly fair. Instead, Ms. Lasensky's views and approach are mistaken. Those mistaken perspectives were rejected by the voters when incumbents running for re-election to the City Council, who had supported the (original) project, were soundly defeated.

## Pact aims to boost police recruitment

By Andy Cohen

We expect much from our city staff, and it is my observation they seldom disappoint. The city has a longstanding policy of paying the average in our local labor market, and this generally results in attracting candidates who perform at a very high level for the community. We have indeed been fortunate.

However, there are several professions where the average wage is being pushed upward at a rate that dramatically exceeds inflation due to a shortage of qualified individuals. One such area is law enforcement.

Over the past three years, we have found that paying what we do for law enforcement professionals has caused Menlo Park to become a training ground and

stop on the way to a more lucrative career in law enforcement ... elsewhere. We have struggled to pay the average, we have fallen behind, and it's not working. In fact, the current police officer salary ranks 10th among our 12 comparison cities.

The fact remains we are in a highly competitive market for experienced officers, with a shrinking pool of qualified candidates due to the high standards and training required to function as a police officer. If the turnover rate in our police department continues, mandatory overtime will cause burnout among those who are left; and because of the need to focus on police patrol and training, service to the community in the area of traffic enforcement, investigations and code enforcement will suffer.

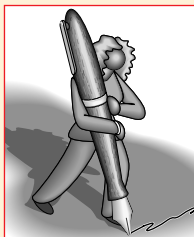
We cannot allow Menlo Park's police department to become a revolving door. We

simply must stabilize the situation. We believe that this contract, which we anticipate will elevate our rank to third or fourth among our competitor cities in the next three years, will help us achieve the stability we seek.

This is not a complete solution. We are also working from within to build teamwork and expand our recruitment efforts to ensure we attract the best-qualified individuals possible.

On a positive note, we have recently hired a number of promising individuals, some as laterals from other police agencies, and others who come from the police academy and are new to the profession. This three-year agreement will give us time to strengthen the culture in the police department, so that Menlo Park is seen as an employer of choice, can fully staff specialty positions, and is able to maintain the high quality of public safety service we have all come to know and expect.

**Andy Cohen is mayor of Menlo Park**



GUEST  
OPINION

There indeed has been a delay in getting this project built. Had Ms. Lasensky and others been more balanced in weighing the interests of all of Menlo Park in the first place, that could have been avoided. Meanwhile, Menlo Park Tomorrow fully supports the revised new project. The last hurdle is review by the City Council, which we expect in the next month. We are optimistic it will be approved and a much better project with better support will move forward.

**Morris Brown**  
Menlo Park Tomorrow  
Live Oak Ave, Menlo Park

### No cutbacks in Menlo Park's public works programs

Editor:

In a letter last week, Henry Riggs claims that Menlo Park's public

works programs for road maintenance, energy-saving building upgrades, vehicle fleet management, and urban forest stewardship are "largely unfunded." As a three-year councilwoman and 2007 mayor, I would like to set the record straight.

Menlo Park is investing \$4.4 million in repaving and repairing city streets this year alone. This is the largest investment in street maintenance in Menlo Park's history—hardly "unfunded." In addition, the city just completed repaving Sand Hill Road and Valparaiso Avenue with federal and state grant funds in excess of \$1 million.

Regarding energy use, Menlo Park has already undertaken systematic energy consumption audits in most municipal buildings. Based on audit results and structured return-on-investment criteria,

numerous upgrades have been made to improve energy efficiency, lowering the city's utility bills. For example, a recent library heating and cooling system upgrade paid back the initial investment in less than two years, and saves taxpayers \$19,000 every year. Additional audits and upgrades are planned.

"Greening" Menlo Park's vehicle fleet is occurring within the constraints of current market choices and annual budget allocations. Two "hybrid" replacement vehicles were purchased in the past two years, and the city is sending letters to local auto dealerships requesting better cost-effective alternative-fuel vehicle choices in coming years.

Menlo Park's proactive tree-planting program is widely admired. The City Council authorized \$180,000 in the current fiscal year for planting hundreds of new trees. Mr.

Riggs' assertion that the city should plant even more would require hiring new staff, an option I oppose. Investing in Climate Smart is at least 30 times more cost-effective in terms of tons of carbon offset.

As a licensed civil engineer, I keep a watchful eye on the city's infrastructure investments. City staff is doing an excellent job. Mr. Riggs' claim that the city is "flashy" at the expense of public works basics is simply not supported by the facts.

**Kelly Fergusson**  
Menlo Park councilwoman

### Towns should watch out for billionaire builders

Editor:

If nothing else, the Larry Ellison situation (Almanac, March 26) will serve as a strong disincentive for towns like Woodside, Portola Valley, and Atherton to acquiesce to the whim of any billionaire, with more money than sense, who applies to their building department and town architectural review board to build the castle of his or her dreams.

This situation can and should serve as a strong legal precedent for towns to say "no" to the next billionaire who approaches them with plans for their 12th century Irish castle, surrounded, of course, by a moat, a drawbridge, jousting fields, and a group of poor tenant farmers (for historic flavor and color).

The daydreams of a billionaire may sound amusing, but can turn into a negative for a town, as has just been proved in the Ellison situation.

Woodside is now stuck with a billionaire who lobbies to lower his taxes because of his own mistake — that mistake being his own dream house.

**Mary Perkins**  
Woodside

## Here's what they're saying on Town Square

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

Posted by Michelle, Menlo-Atherton High School community

Ken Ranella, 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. I sincerely hope the district becomes strongly engaged in this, or any other efforts to create a viable transportation system to get kids to and from school collectively. The traffic congestion and waste of fuel resulting from the current "every mom for herself (and her kids)" approach to school transport is ridiculous, irresponsible and damaging for all.

### Construction Noise

Posted by needknowledge, a resident of Central Menlo Park

We have a new neighbor who is tearing down a house in order to build a new one. Not

the issue. A year ago Mother's Day, a Sunday, the job began, and they started cutting down a huge tree at 7 a.m. The job was quiet until the demolition began a few weeks ago. The tree trimmers were back, working on Easter Sunday. We asked them to stop, and they did, after we reminded them of the rules, and told them we'd call the police if they didn't.

We've tried to be neighborly and talk to the workers, and every time, they play dumb, blaming the boss who never seems to be on site. We've called the building department, hoping they'd send someone in authority out to talk to them, but were told they couldn't do anything, and we should call the police if the rules are broken.

Call the police? Are they kidding? I want my police out catching speeders and bad guys, not enforcing the building department's rules and regulations! What's the point of having rules if they aren't followed?

### TownSquare

Join the conversation on  
[www.TheAlmanacOnline.com](http://www.TheAlmanacOnline.com). Click on  
links under the TownSquare banner.

### Councilwoman charged with DUI

Posted by pleased, a resident of another community

Wow! For once a public official can admit wrong doing. Good for you Ms. Hodges. Best of luck to you. Glad you did not hurt or kill anyone, including yourself.

Posted by Kristin Greene, a resident of another community

This is horrible for so many reasons. "More varieties of wine at her table than she was used to?" How does that have anything to do with a grown woman's choice to get behind the wheel after drinking? Three people I know have read this statement and have all come to the same conclusion. This politician is blatantly placing blame outside of herself. Not someone I would invite to any of my evening soirees less she tip the bottle a bit too much and attempt to blame her bad decisions on her host. Shame on her.



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