

**EX-ATHERTON COP** charged with filing false reports  
of golf clubs stolen from Atherton residences. Page 8

# The Almanac

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

MAY 21, 2008

[www.TheAlmanacOnline.com](http://www.TheAlmanacOnline.com)

VOL. 43 NO. 38



At  
home  
in the  
limelight

Woodside boy takes the stage with Broadway veterans  
Page 14

Vote **Elizabeth LEWIS**

ATHERTON COUNCIL

June 3<sup>rd</sup>

When this campaign began for Atherton Council, I promised to listen to rather than talk at voters. To do this, I mailed an Atherton Resident Survey.

Here's an update on your responses thus far:



Elizabeth Lewis

**18%** Only 18% of respondents feel that Atherton is on the Right Track.

**77%** 77% have had experience with the Atherton Town government, but 2/3 of these people say their experience was negative.

**50%** More than 50% of respondents said that they do not receive enough notice about important decisions being made by Town government.

When asked what issues the next Atherton Council Member should focus on, respondents provided important feedback. Here's a sample:

"...the Council should be friendlier to the Menlo Atherton High School and should not have gotten involved in a lawsuit with the school."

"Fiscal welfare of Atherton. Solid City management."

"...property rights and infrastructure maintenance..."

"More community outreach. Too much isolation."

"City Services, police, fire, and a more resident-friendly approach to home repairs."

"The Artifact issues – I thought this item was extremely misguided."

"Fiscal responsibility. Keeping Atherton safe."

## Atherton Neighbors for Elizabeth Lewis

Alan Carlson, *Former Mayor*  
Didi Fisher, *Former Mayor*  
John Fisher, *Former Mayor*  
Chris Cobey, *Former Mayor*  
Sheri Shenk  
*Past President, Friends of the Library*  
John Shenk  
Chris McDonnell  
Patty & Mark Davis  
Kristina & Mike Homer  
Bob Jenkins  
*Member, Environ. Programs Comm.*  
*Director, ACIL*  
Carolyn Jenkins  
Rose Hau  
*Former Member, General Plan Comm./Planning Comm.*  
Rob Faisant, *Former City Attorney*  
Nancy Faisant  
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Carolyn & Scott Feamster  
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Cynthia & John Lovewell  
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Janis & Bob Mondin  
Dena & John Denniston

Valerie Gardner  
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*Chair, Atherton Earth Week*  
Libby & Burgess Jamieson  
Julie Brody  
Bonnie & Joe Morey  
Dr. Diana Hawkins  
Clary & Dean Riskas  
Eileen & Andy Holtvedt  
Robin & Phil Taylor  
Leslie & Charlie King  
Terri Watters  
Joe & Gina Andrighetto  
Cliff Lavine  
Natalie & Joe Comartin  
Betsy & Tom Glikbarg  
*Member, Public Safety Comm.*  
Courtney & Michael Charney  
Missy & Jeffrey Morris  
Jillian Manus-Salzman & Alan Salzman  
Laurie & Rich Bassin  
Michelle & Dave Dollinger  
Helen Susan & William Grindley  
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Bill Hoy  
Rhoda & David Herron  
Sharon Meers & Steve Dostart  
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Candi & Nick Athens  
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Friends for a Better Atherton  
Virginia Chang Kiraly  
*Member, California Commission for Economic Development*

Vote **Elizabeth LEWIS**

ATHERTON COUNCIL

Visit [www.elizabeth2008.com](http://www.elizabeth2008.com) to become a Neighbor for Elizabeth

FPPC #: 1305204

# Inside

This week's news, features and community events.

## FIRST SHOT



Photo by Veronica Weber/The Almanac

### Just a drill

California firefighters carry a mock patient over a simulated collapsed building during a training exercise last week at the Menlo Park Fire Protection District's Baylands Structural Collapse Training Center.

## Atherton

- Ex-Atherton cop charged with filing false reports involving thefts of golf clubs from Atherton residences. The clubs were later found in his possession, D.A. says. **Page 8**
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## Menlo Park

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- Phillips Brooks School celebrates campus renovation. **Page 7**

## Family Almanac

- Lessons learned on playing field of life. **Cover, Section 2**

## On the cover

Ten-year-old Tony Sinclair of Woodside gets ready to debut as Chip, the enchanted tea cup, in a production of "Disney's Beauty and the Beast" staged by American Musical Theatre of San Jose. Prop master Jesse Vail adjusts Tony's costume in preparation for his big night. Photo by Veronica Weber. See **Page 14** for story and more photos.

### CALLING ON THE ALMANAC

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

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 News: **Ext. 213**  
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 ■ E-mail letters to the editor to:  
**letters@AlmanacNews.com**

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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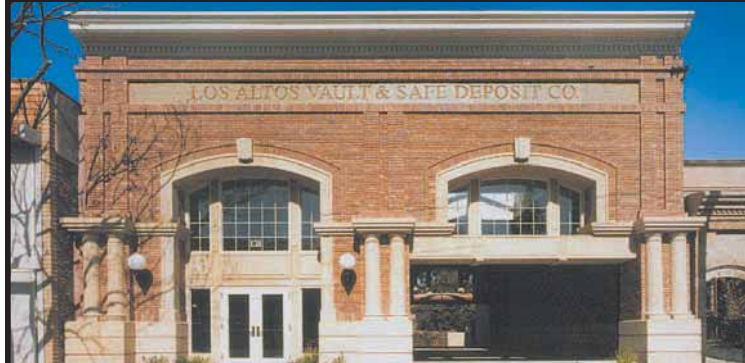
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## Wine

### Chardonnay

Check out our recent Chardonnay acquisitions. Here are a few recommendations of new wine purchases we feel offer exceptional taste and quality.

**2007 Foxglove,** \$12<sup>99</sup>  
San Luis Obispo County  
*Richer and better than ever.*

**2006 Fritz,** \$17<sup>99</sup>  
Russian River Valley  
*Creamy and buttery. An affordable Rombauer.*

**2006 Alfaro,** \$22<sup>49</sup>  
Lindsay Paige Vineyard  
*A Burgundian Chardonnay from the Santa Cruz Mountains.*

**2006 Tally Oliver's Vnyd.,** \$31<sup>99</sup>  
Edna Valley  
*Talley has elevated this vineyard to reserve quality.*

**2006 Ridge Estate,** \$39<sup>99</sup>  
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*The '05 version of this ranked #2 on the Wine Spectator's Top 100 of 2007!*

**2006 L'Angevin** \$44<sup>99</sup>  
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## Deli

### Memorial Day B.B.Q.

Roasted Garlic Lime  
Chicken Breast

**\$6.99** lb.

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Baked Beans

**\$5.99** lb.

Potato Salad -  
Yellow Potato or  
New Potato

**\$4.89** lb.

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## Roberts Tip of the Week

### A White with Real Color

While white wines are generally regarded to be lighter and less assertive than reds, that does not mean that a white wine necessarily lacks personality. Take Chardonnay, for instance. This popular varietal possesses all the rich, full-bodied character that most people could ask for. In fact, some Chardonnays are downright full of drama. Most are aged in oak barrels, which imparts a distinctly toasty flavor. In addition, Chardonnays can be produced with pronounced buttery and creamy flavors and aromas that can spark romance with some Chardonnay fanciers. However, pairing foods with these rich wines can be tricky. Serve with such summery dishes as crab, lobster, and corn. Other rich seafood dishes are likewise well paired with Chardonnay.

We have the knowledge and expertise to help you pick a great white wine. At ROBERTS MARKET, our experience means an easier and enjoyable wine experience. We can advise on the perfect white wines for your tastes. Whether you are looking for domestic or imported wines we are your best source. Don't forget fresh cut flowers from our floral department to grace your table.

*HINT: Produced in the Burgundy region of France, Australia, the U.S.A., and all over the world, Chardonnay comes in a variety of styles.*



## Free car wash!

At approximately 11:30 a.m. on May 15, a sprinkler at Fremont Park in Menlo Park was swiveling 360 degrees, shooting streams of water onto University Drive, and any cars that happened to pass by.

Although the sprinkler was providing free car washes, spraying water on to pavement in 90-degree heat doesn't quite fit the city's pledge to be green as can be. Unless the city is trying to grow some new pavement, in which case it ought to aim some sprinklers at the potholes on Menlo Avenue.

## Speaking of water ...

Menlo Park Vice Mayor Heyward Robinson hastened to notify The Almanac that the City Council kicked the bottled water habit and has been enjoying pitchers of Hetch-Hetchy's finest up on the dias since November. He e-mailed the newspaper upon seeing last week's item about the Menlo Park City School District ditching bottles for pitchers of tap water in honor of Earth Day.

Not to be outdone, Ted Driscoll of the Portola Valley Town Council happened to mention that he and his colleagues have been bottle-free for a whole year.

## Campaigning with a bang

And congratulations are in order to Atherton's two City Council candidates, who managed to keep cool and collected at Thursday night's candidate forum despite the wonky sound system that interrupted their comments with a series of alarmingly loud banging noises.

Elizabeth Lewis and Jim Dobbie, who are running for the two years remaining on Alan Carlson's council term, handled themselves with more aplomb than The Almanac's reporter, who grew increasingly skittish with each earsplitting crack in the Pavilion at Holbrook-Palmer Park.

When asked about the town's budget, Mr. Dobbie quipped that some new microphones and speakers might need to be included.

Short Takes is edited by Andrea Gemmet.

# Presbyterian church plans campus overhaul

■ Community auditorium, gym, and recreation center all floated as potential additions.

By **Rory Brown**  
Almanac Staff Writer

Plans are in the works to expand Menlo Park Presbyterian Church's Santa Cruz Avenue campus, and church officials say all Menlo Park residents stand to benefit from the church's new look.

The church has signed contracts to purchase two adjacent properties — the 14,950-square-foot parcel at 1155 University Dr. and the 16,300-square-foot parcel at 1187 University Dr. — as part of efforts to overhaul the campus and build a new community facility, said church business manager Bill Frimel.

Among the ideas for the new building: a performing arts center,

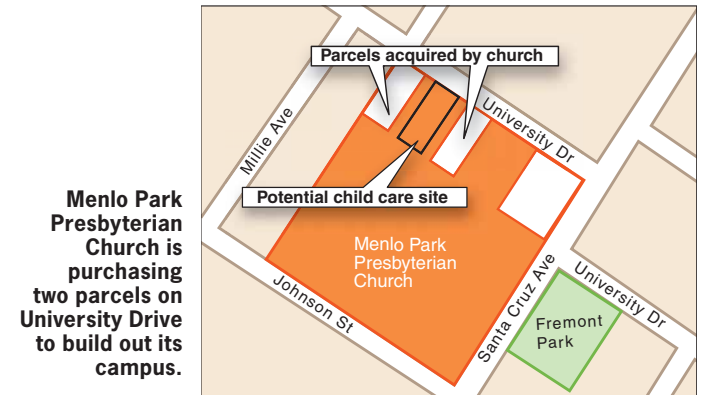
a gymnasium, and a recreation center for local youth.

Mr. Frimel said the church had already been planning to revamp its own facilities, and the purchase of the new sites provides the opportunity to build a resource for the greater community.

"Our facilities are tired, old, and dated, so we want to update," Mr. Frimel said. "And whatever we build, we want it to be for the entire community."

He noted that the church has sought after the University Drive properties for about 30 years, and in the past 30 days, the respective landlords have agreed to sell the parcels to the church.

The church will officially acquire the 1155 University Dr. site in August, and the 1187 University



Menlo Park Presbyterian Church is purchasing two parcels on University Drive to build out its campus.

Dr. site in March 2009, Mr. Frimel said. He would not disclose the cost of purchasing either site.

## Greater 'vision'

Church officials say they want the church's expansion to coincide with the city's efforts to revamp properties along El Camino Real and the downtown area.

"The city is in the middle of this downtown visioning process, and

we can help provide a transition from the residential part of town to the commercial," said Allen Phipps, the church's executive director. "It's very early, but we're excited for what we can do for the community."

Mr. Phipps said the church has already talked to city and school officials to try and gauge

See PRESBYTERIAN, page 8

# Church, Newton Centers may offer after-school care

By **Andrea Gemmet**  
Almanac Staff Writer

Elementary school students in the Menlo Park City School District may have another option for after-school child care when school begins on Aug. 25.

It's still in the preliminary stages, but if it works out, Superintendent Ken Ranella said that Foster City-based Newton Centers would run after-school programs at classrooms located at Menlo Park Presbyterian Church, with the school district coordinating transportation between the schools and the church.

The Menlo Park district's schools don't have on-site child care, and the city-run after-school program at Burgess has limited space and a long waiting list.

With major construction planned for all its campuses in the next few years, Mr. Ranella said he began looking at off-site options to help meet the huge demand. Since getting children from school to off-site facilities is a big problem for parents, transportation — whether using a school bus or a shuttle service — will be a key part of the program, he said.

The program at Menlo Presbyterian on Santa Cruz Avenue could accommodate up to 50 children and would be open to grades kindergarten through fifth, said Isaac

Soncino, Newton Centers' executive director.

"We want to make it happen," Mr. Soncino said. "We visited the church and it's a nice facility."

Newton's program at Menlo Presbyterian would be non-denominational and in keeping with the academic homework programs it runs at other Peninsula schools, including at Encinal in Atherton, and Henry Ford, Adelante and North Star Academy in Redwood City. Currently, between 10 and 15 children are enrolled at Encinal, where Newton has offered programs for the past 12 years, Mr. Soncino said. Newton is licensed as both a private school and a child care center, he said.

"A lot of parents are working, and when they get home they don't really want to deal with homework," he said, explaining the original idea behind Newton Centers.

Besides homework support, Newton offers math, reading and computers, plus snacks and short breaks for outside play, he said.

"We try to cram all of this into about three hours," Mr. Soncino said. "The most important thing every day is to finish homework, and the staff makes sure it's correct, as well. We don't do it for them, but we make sure that it's correct."

Kindergartners would have a

See CHILD CARE, page 8



Photo by Dave Boyce/The Almanac

## Fighting house fire

Firefighter Seth Johnson of the Menlo Park Fire Protection District steadies himself with a yellow pike pole, a device used to poke through plaster board and roofs so as to let out heat and smoke from an attic fire. See the story and more photos on Page 16



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Clinical Professor of Surgery,  
Division of Emergency Medicine,  
Stanford Hospital & Clinics

**Robert L. Norris, MD, FACEP**

Division Chief, Emergency Medicine;  
Associate Professor,  
Stanford Hospital & Clinics

## MODERATOR

**Shelley Hébert**

Executive Director for Public Affairs,  
Stanford Hospital & Clinics



## CO-SPONSORS





Photo by Veronica Weber/The Almanac

**Fourth-graders** Jack Hocker, left, and Aidan Misshula test out the aerodynamics of their paper airplane during science class at Phillips Brooks School. In back are the new modular buildings, a contrast to the original buildings, still on the campus, with tent-like roofs.

## School celebrates campus renovation

By Marjorie Mader  
Almanac Staff Writer

Phillips Brooks School has good reasons to celebrate after almost two years of renovation and construction on its leased campus, the site for the former Las Loma School off Avy Avenue in Menlo Park.

The school's 275 students — from preschool to grade 5 — and staff are now going to school in a handsome village-like setting with paths and landscaping unifying the new and old buildings on the 4.5 acre campus.

Cost of the renovation and construction was \$15 million, said Nancy B. Errichetti, director of development.

"We plan to be here for a long time," said Kristi Kerins, head of school. "We have no plans to leave this campus."

Her statement speaks to con-

cerns that erupted almost a year ago. That's when the news broke that the independent, coeducational school had purchased a 10-acre site for \$5 million off Arastradero Road in unincorporated Santa Clara County near Portola Valley in its search for a permanent site.

Now there are no plans for building a school there, and the property is in the school's investment portfolio, say school authorities.

Phillips Brooks School has a unique private-public relationship with the Las Lomas School District that owns the site. The school has a long-term lease with the Las Lomas district that could go through 2022 if the school extends its options, said De Modderman, Las Lomas district business manager. The school pays the district \$928,000 annually for use of the campus.

Some 500 Phillips Brooks students, alumni, grandparents, teachers, neighbors and community supporters came to the campus for a ribbon cutting ceremony May 9.

"This was a wonderful opportunity to gather our school family together to celebrate our newly renovated campus, honor our school's history, and thank our community for making it possible," said Ms. Kerins, head of school.

This also was an opportunity for attendees to tour the campus and see the six new energy-efficient buildings, including administration offices near the entry to the campus; a multi-use facility with space for school assemblies, art exhibits, plays, concerts and sports; and a new library.

Two classrooms were built for the two fifth-grade classes. Art, music and science classes, taught by specialists, have their own space, as does the media lab. An early-learning center with its own play area for 3- and 4-year-olds also was built.

All portable classrooms have been removed.

Specialists teach several subjects: first-year Mandarin and Spanish in the world language curriculum, as well as science, art, music, technology, communications, and spirituality and service. There's also a learning specialist.

All classrooms in the older "tepee style" block buildings were renovated for kindergarten through fourth grade. Playground areas also were improved. Students continue to use the large athletic field on the adjacent La



Photo by Jenn Circle/Phillips Brooks School

**Three heads of school** guided Phillips Brooks during the past 30 years. They are, from left, Kristi Kerins, 2005-present; Beth Passi, 1997-2005; and Elizabeth (Bitsie) Root, founder in 1978 and head until 1997. They joined hundreds of students, alumni, parents, teachers, grandparents and community supporters for a ribbon-cutting ceremony that celebrated completion of the renovated campus May 9.

See PHILLIPS, page 9



## NOTICE OF PUBLIC MEETING AND NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING CITY OF MENLO PARK PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING OF JUNE 2, 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/Nielsen Architects, Inc./839 College Avenue:**

Request for a use permit to demolish an existing one-story, single-family residence and construct a new two-story, single-family residence on a substandard lot in regard to lot width in the R-1-U (Single-Family Urban) zoning district.

#### **Architectural Control/Nancy Chillag/418 Willow Road:**

Request for architectural control to remodel the exterior of a commercial building in the C-2-A (Neighborhood Shopping, Restrictive) zoning district.

#### **Plan Line Abandonment/Jose Cotto and Peter Webb/337 Willow Road and 345 Willow Road:**

Consideration of abandonment of a portion of a Willow Road Plan Line for the length of the Willow Road frontage of the properties located at 337 Willow Road and 345 Willow Road.

### PUBLIC MEETING ITEMS

#### **2008-2009 Capital Improvement Program/General Plan**

**Consistency:** Consideration of consistency of the 2008-2009 Capital Improvement Program with the General Plan.

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, June 2 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: May 15, 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 May 21, 2008.

## Ex-Atherton cop charged with filing false reports

■ Reports involved theft of golf clubs from Atherton residences. The clubs were later found in his possession, says D.A.

A former Atherton police officer is facing criminal prosecution for filing false police reports as an officer.

Clark Yee, an Atherton police officer for five years, pleaded not guilty to two felony counts of filing false police reports in an arraignment held May 19 in San Mateo County Municipal Court.

According to the county District Attorney's Office, Mr. Yee's reports involved the theft of golf clubs from Atherton residences. The golf clubs were later found in Mr. Yee's possession, according to a memo on the case from Chief Deputy District Attorney Steve Wagstaffe.

Mr. Yee is free on \$100,000 bail. His attorney, William Rapoport, could not be reached by The Almanac's deadline.

Mr. Yee resigned from the Atherton police department earlier this year, before the conclusion of a personnel investigation triggered by a citizen complaint.

Atherton police Chief Bob Brennan said that Mr. Yee was a police officer in Palo Alto prior to working in Atherton.

"To all other appearances, he was a fine officer," Chief Brennan said. "There were no other citizen complaints (against him) that I can remember."

### CHILD CARE

continued from page 5

less academically oriented program, he said.

Nicole Laubscher, the church's spokeswoman, said the likely location of the child care program is in Building C, off University Drive. The two-story building houses Menlo Presbyterian's children's ministries, and has two large rooms on the second floor that are largely unused during the week, she said.

"The (church) elders are very excited," Ms. Laubscher said. "We'd love to do it."

The blackout driveway leading to the building could be cordoned off and used for outdoor play, or the children could be taken across the street to Fremont Park, said Allen Phipps, the church's executive director. Because the rooms are used for religious education on weekends, the walls will probably have some decorations of a religious nature, he said. Officials from the Newton Centers said that wouldn't be a problem for them, Mr. Phipps said.

"There are going to be some names up on the board like Jesus and God," he said. "We can't take it all down and put it back up every week."

Even so, the church isn't looking for converts and is happy to host a

non-religious child care program, he said. It's all part of Menlo Presbyterian's community outreach efforts as the congregation works on a master plan for its Menlo Park campus, which totals about five acres (see related story).

Newton Centers would be charged a nominal rent for the space, "in the hundreds of dollars a month," Mr. Phipps said.

Mr. Ranella said when he found out that Menlo Park Presbyterian Church was looking for outreach projects, he told church officials of the community's need for child care.

Since the school district is willing to organize the transportation — as long as costs are recovered — and Menlo Presbyterian has available classrooms, Mr. Ranella said he approached child care providers about the idea. CCLC, an organization that runs on-site after-school programs in the Las Lomas district, declined, Mr. Ranella said.

"I was highly sympathetic to the needs of young families at our schools, recognizing what difficulties they are having with child care," he said. "I think we all — the board and the superintendent — felt a sense of regret that this not the time for us to extend into child care, given the disruption (of construction) at all of the elementary schools." ■

### PRESBYTERIAN

continued from page 5

what members of the community would like to see get built at the church's campus at 950 Santa Cruz Ave. He stressed that the church's intentions are to give to the community — not to increase membership.

### More changes

As part of the renovations, church officials are also planning

to remodel the existing church, including updating the technology for sermons that are recorded on DVD and played at satellite locations in San Mateo, Mountain View, and the church's social hall, located at 700 Santa Cruz Ave.

The church is also looking to add space for children to play, and update its classrooms, said Nicole Laubscher, the church's director of communications. ■



Players and parents sit under a blue umbrella on a bleacher "dugout" during a Little League game at Ford Field in Portola Valley. The dugout under the tree is closed. The diseased oak will be the subject of a two-week committee study in a last-ditch effort to protect this beloved tree and the people under and around it. Several arborists have concluded that the tree should come down.

## Oak tree not out of the woods yet

By Dave Boyce

Almanac Staff Writer

The graceful oak that extends its canopy over the home-team dugout at Ford Field in Portola Valley and offers shade in the grass behind the dugout, will undergo an intense focus over the coming two weeks as a committee tries to determine its future.

The Town Council meets at 2 p.m. Wednesday, May 21, at Ford Field at the intersection of Alpine Road and Westridge Drive.

Six arborists in separate opinions have recommended that the leaning, diseased and hollowed-out tree come down. The town has been "put on notice" about its fragility and if it were to fall on its own and injure someone, the town could be liable even if protective steps were taken, Planning Manager Leslie Lambert said in a recent memo to the Town Council.

Councilman Ted Driscoll argued on April 9 to save the tree and a skeptical council came around to agree with him. They decided to close the dugout and trim and brace the tree, but Mayor Maryann Derwin put the tree back on the May 14 agenda at the request of Councilwoman Ann Wengert.

"I'm not a tree-killer. That's not how I view myself," Ms. Wengert said at the coun-

cil meeting on Wednesday. "Despite the emotional appeals, I think we're in a very difficult position."

The April 9 meeting, she said, left her with two assumptions: that the dugout could eventually be reopened, and that the 3-inch pole brace could be integrated into the field's perimeter fence and intrude into the dugout. Both assumptions proved incorrect, she said.

The tree branch that killed a woman in Stern Grove in San Francisco on April 14 fell from a tree that arborists had warned the city about, she noted.

Mr. Driscoll urged his colleagues to explore alternatives. "About every 25 years, we keep writing this tree off," he said. "We've got to be careful about (sounding) the death knell on this tree."

He and Councilman Richard Merk appeared to be in the minority with Mr. Toben and Mayor Derwin siding with Ms. Wengert, but advocacy from former mayor Jon Silver and residents Annaloy Nickum and Susan Thomas may have made the difference.

On a 4-1 vote, a majority agreed to a committee with a charter of about 14 days. Ms. Wengert dissented.

"We will make a decision in two weeks," Mr. Toben said.

Mr. Toben said the idea that if the tree hasn't fallen down

yet, it isn't going to fall down, reminded him of the arguments against tearing down the old and seismically vulnerable Town Center complex because an earthquake hadn't struck yet.

"We have a very significant problem here that I feel we have to finally come to grips with," he said.

### I'm not dead

No one seems to dislike the tree. Birds nest in its trunk. Its friends call it the "resurrection tree" because, having had its doom pronounced before, it has always bounced back with apparent health and vigor, they say.

A different reading of the tree's health may come from an arborist from San Mateo County government, Mr. Merk said. Arborists, he said, have a vested interest in dooming trees since they get paid to take them down and can be sued if a tree said to be healthy falls down.

Can the six arborists be trusted? "I would feel pretty darn confident that that's an accurate description of the tree," said Joe LoCoco, a deputy director in the county's Public Works Department. "I'd have a hard time imagining that as collusion or an actual distorting of the truth by six professionals."

Public Works has no arborists on staff, but does hire them on contract, he said. ■

# Property rights battle takes center stage in Atherton

By Andrea Gemmet  
Almanac Staff Writer



Lawsuits, youth sports and property rights were hot topics at a forum for Atherton council candidates sponsored by the Atherton Civic Interest League on the blisteringly hot evening of May 15.

The two candidates fielded four pre-approved questions from ACIL members, and then took a few questions submitted by the audience who filled the air-conditioned Pavilion at Holbrook-Palmer Park. Elizabeth Lewis' supporters wore T-shirts in her signature shade of kiwi green, while Jim Dobbie's supporters wore buttons.

Property rights, a perennial topic in a town with so much residential construction, forms a

kind of dividing line in Atherton politics. On one side are residents fed up with construction noise and traffic. On the other are residents who want the freedom to more or less build as they please.

One issue that's roiled Atherton in the past year is the lawsuit the town filed over environmental impacts from Menlo-Atherton High School's new performing arts center. ACIL panelist Sandy Crittenden asked the candidates what the town should do to improve its relationship with local schools.

"For one thing, we should stop suing our school districts," Ms. Lewis said. Atherton needs to be a good neighbor to its schools and

let organized youth sports teams use public school fields, she said.

Mr. Dobbie said Atherton has excellent relations with its private schools, as well as public elementary schools Encinal and Laurel. "The town is no longer suing Menlo-Atherton. That's in the past," he said.

About the thorny topic of Lindenwood neighborhood complaints about noise from Pop Warner football practices on M-A's field, Mr. Dobbie said, "The use of the Menlo-Atherton facility for non-school events is almost totally resolved."

As she has in her campaign literature, Ms. Lewis repeated her charges that the Lindenwood neighborhood has an undue influence over town affairs, and over Mr. Dobbie.

See **PROPERTY RIGHTS**, page 10

## Funding for Sausal Creek splits council

By Dave Boyce  
Almanac Staff Writer

### ■ PORTOLA VALLEY

Nearly three years ago, a unanimous Portola Valley Town Council enacted a policy to reinforce its practice of using revenues from the utility users tax for operating expenses, and not for capital improvement projects.

Some community members had been complaining loudly over the use of \$3 million from the town's general fund — and possibly more such revenues in the future — to help pay for a \$20 million Town Center complex that included a new library, Town Hall and community hall.

The utility tax is one of several revenue streams that feed the general fund. The policy did not address those other revenues. Is it OK to use them for capital projects? Is it OK to borrow from the fund? Or did the policy put the entire general fund off limits?

The issue seemed moot since the town raised \$17 million in private donations to pay for the complex, but it returned May 14 when the council voted 3-2 to proceed with plans to expose 280 feet of Sausal Creek to the air.

This addition to the project is expected to cost \$1.4 million; \$664,000 has been raised in a separate campaign. Facing a deadline, the council had to decide whether to daylight the stream this year, perhaps using the general fund to front the cost, or prepare the ground and daylight it next year.

Mayor Maryann Moise Derwin joined councilmen Richard Merk and Ted Driscoll in voting to go ahead. Council members Steve Toben and Ann Wengert voted to wait.

Ms. Wengert sat on an ad hoc committee in 2006 that advised

the council against using public money to daylight the creek. "No one wanted to utilize the town's general funds to make that (creek) happen," she said in an interview.

"When I make a promise, I keep it," Mr. Toben said in an interview, referring to the utility tax policy, which he says was meant to apply to all general fund revenues.

In an interview, Mr. Driscoll said he's "perfectly happy" to honor the policy, but that general fund money not earmarked for a specific use constitutes a reserve that he is willing to draw on. The Town Center complex started with incomplete funding, he noted. He said he is confident the donations will come.

As is Mr. Merk, who said at the meeting: "I want to see this finished while the momentum is there so that we can have a complete Town Center." ■

### PHILLIPS

continued from page 7

Entrada School campus.

The San Francisco-based BDE Architecture designed the new buildings and renovations. The builder was the Wentz Group in Redwood Shores.

Classes are small — 18 students per class — with two classes at each grade. Each class has its head teacher and share an assistant teacher for each grade level.

Annual tuition is \$21,700 for grades K-5.

Stan Drake, physical education specialist and well known for his

role in community sports, has been teaching at Phillips Brooks School since it was founded 30 years ago.

Thirty years ago, Elizabeth (Bitsie) Root, head of school at the former Trinity Parish School at St. Bede's Church in Menlo Park, and a group of parents in search of more space, relocated to the Las Lomas district site. They named it Phillips Brooks School after the American Episcopal bishop, best remembered for his Christmas carol, "O Little Town of Bethlehem."

"We're delighted with our new facilities," said Ms. Kerins. "They

enable us to sharpen our vision, give our teachers more resources, and do even more to enrich our program in ways that we could never do in our old buildings."

However, she continued, "A school's excellence is never a product of its fancy buildings. You judge it on what goes on inside."

Phillips Brooks ethos — its spirit, culture or guiding beliefs — is alive and well in its new campus, said Ms. Kerins.

"Our kids learn to love one another and love learning in a fancy new outfit. Both matter in equal importance," said Ms. Kerins. ■

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## Neighbors slam plans for 48-condo project

■ Developer gets an earful for proposing four-story buildings adjacent to homes.

By **Rory Brown**  
Almanac Staff Writer

No, no, no. That's the message conveyed loud and clear by residents of Menlo Park's Allied Arts neighborhood regarding a developer's rough plans to build a nearly 60-foot-tall condo-commercial project at the former Anderson Chevrolet truck lot on El Camino Real.

About 100 people, many of whom live on College and Partridge avenues adjacent to the former truck lot site, attended a May 13 City Council study session to blast plans to build 48 condos and 5,080 square feet of commercial space on the 1.23-acre lot, located at 389 El Camino Real. The Redwood City-based Matteson Companies is the developer behind the project.

Twenty-two of the 25 people who spoke at the meeting opposed the project, as many neighbors said the cluster of new homes would dramatically increase neighborhood traffic, and the four-story, 59-foot

buildings would cast shadows over nearby homes.

"I'm adamantly opposed to this project," said Tracy Van Ligten, a College Avenue resident. "[The developers] want to put four stories on El Camino Real to maximize their profit."

"I can't think of too many projects that would be more objectionable to the neighbors than this extremely high-density project at the end of the street," said Frank Piscaro, another College Avenue resident. "Perhaps a casino, or a small prison with a Starbucks underneath."

One of neighbors' chief complaints was that Matteson Companies didn't inform residents of plans to develop the former Anderson site until mandatory notices were mailed to nearby homes several days before the meeting.

That led some people to think the developer was trying to skirt the city's months-long process of creating a comprehensive plan for developing properties along El Camino Real.

John Baer, a Matteson Companies spokesperson, said that isn't the case.

"Our intent is to work in complete co-operation with the visioning process," Mr. Baer told The Almanac. "We're going to spend a lot of time in dialogue with the neighbors about this project."

He said the study session — which was requested and paid for by the Matteson Companies — was "very constructive," and the firm was aiming to get some

initial feedback regarding the proposed project.

The condos would vary from the mid-\$500,000 range for one-bedroom units to the high-\$800,000 range for three-bedroom units, Mr. Baer said.

### Density debate

Mr. Baer said that following input from neighbors, the size and scope of the condo project could change, but he acknowledged that Matteson Companies, like other developers, want to build at higher densities than the city's current 18.5-units per

acre in order for "the economics to add up."

"Small sites are tough," Mr. Baer said. "Once you allot space for your setbacks, curb cuts, and utilities ... the space you're left with can be very restricted."

But some residents aren't fully convinced that developers deserve the privilege of building projects that call for exceptions to the city's zoning.

"If [the developer] can't build at 18.5 units per acre, as far as I'm concerned, the developer paid too much for the land," said Morris Brown. ■

### PROPERTY RIGHTS

*continued from page 9*

"My opponent says he's not being supported by special interests, but his record clearly shows that he's influenced by a special interest neighborhood," said Ms. Lewis, who lives on Emilie Avenue. "I'm not affiliated with a special neighborhood."

Mr. Dobbie called himself an independent and said he would seek to balance resident's rights, property rights and community interest if elected.

"I believe residents' rights are being subordinated to special interests," Mr. Dobbie said.

Ms. Lewis called the right to do what you want with your property "one of the basic freedoms in this country."

"What I hear my opponent saying is that he wants to restrict residents' rights to do what they want with their property," she said.

Mr. Dobbie countered tartly by saying that anyone seeking unrestricted development ought to build in the Sahara desert, because no beautiful town had ever been built without some sort of regulations in place.

Ms. Lewis and Mr. Dobbie also aired contrasting views of the town's financial health. If the town continues to rely on the parcel tax

for revenues, it should be renewed for a longer term, Mr. Dobbie said. The current parcel tax runs five years and expires in June 2010.

Ms. Lewis said she prefers the five-year term for the tax.

"I think that's a good thing (because) it acts as a report card to the council," she said.

Mr. Dobbie was dubious about the possibility of annexing adjacent county land to Atherton in order to provide the town with commercially zoned property, but seemed open to exploring the idea. Ms. Lewis said that adding commercial zoning goes against the town's general plan for land use and development. ■



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## Council considers bike tunnel study

The once controversial idea of building a bike tunnel under the Caltrain tracks in Menlo Park is expected to resurface at the City Council's May 20 meeting.

Council members will consider paying Berkeley-based consultant Alta Planning & Design about \$41,000 to study where a bike tunnel could be built.

The meeting is set to start at 7 p.m. in the council chambers at the Civic Center, between Laurel and Alma streets.

The tunnel is tentatively planned for somewhere between Ravenswood Avenue and San Francisquito Creek. The study would identify a more specific location and determine the cost.

The city last considered a bike tunnel in 2002, when Councilman Steve Schmidt pushed building a tunnel under the railroad tracks at Cambridge Avenue and Willow Road.

### New city employee

Alex Andrade has been hired as the city's first business development specialist to help Business Development Manager David Johnson attract and keep businesses in Menlo Park.

He will be paid approximately \$82,800 a year, said Person-

### ■ MENLO WATCH

nel Director Glen Kramer. Mr. Andrade has worked for redevelopment agencies in San Jose, Los Angeles, and most recently, San Francisco.

### Park keeps name

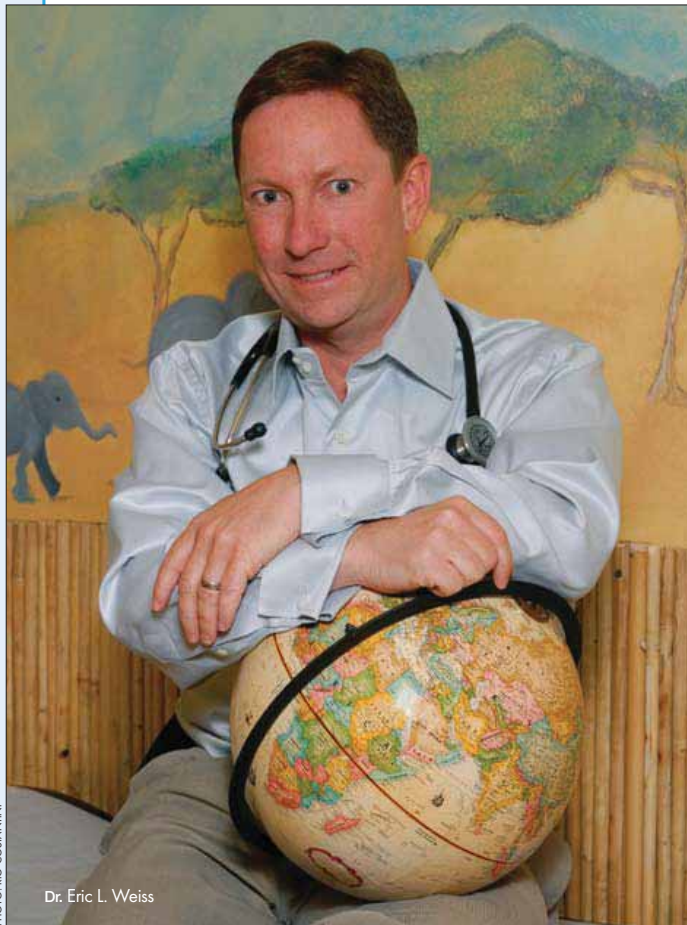
The new 0.92-acre park off Hamilton Avenue in Menlo Park's Belle Haven neighborhood has been referred to by residents as Hamilton Park, and it looks like that name will stick.

The Parks and Recreation Commission voted unanimously April 16 to officially name it Hamilton Park, and City Council members are expected to agree at their May 20 meeting.

Commissioners had asked residents to come up with a new name, but the commissioners decided the "general preference" among Belle Haven residents was to continue calling it Hamilton Park, according to a city staff report.

### No meeting

The Menlo Park City Council will not meet May 27. Meetings are scheduled to resume June 3, when the council is expected to discuss the 2008-09 fiscal year budget.



Dr. Eric L. Weiss

PHOTO: RO COSANTINI



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- JIM DOBBIE** is a creative, independent and objective thinker
- JIM DOBBIE** has 40 years of business management and financial experience with start up, established and public companies
- JIM DOBBIE** has 3 generations of Family living in Atherton
- JIM DOBBIE** is a long-time member/supporter of Holbrook Palmer Park Foundation and Atherton Community Library
- JIM DOBBIE** lives in rural Atherton and wants to keep it that way for the present generation and their children

#### JIM DOBBIE'S PRIORITIES

1. Make Residents' Rights a Priority
2. Improve Communications with Residents
3. Ensure Close Oversight of Town Management
4. Keep up the Financial Progress of the last 6 years
5. Increase Collaboration within the Council
6. Preserve the Rural Character of Atherton

## JIM DOBBIE ATHERTON COUNCIL VOTE FOR JIM DOBBIE ON JUNE 3 ✓

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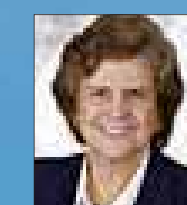
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COVER STORY

# At home in the limelight

Woodside boy takes the stage with Broadway veterans



Woodside resident **Tony Sinclair** waits outside the stage just before his debut as Chip in “Disney’s Beauty and the Beast” at the Center for the Performing Arts in San Jose.

**I**n a San Jose rehearsal studio, members of the cast of “Disney’s Beauty and the Beast” are taking a break, telling jokes and teasing each other. Dancers lounge on the floor, stretching impossibly limber limbs as they chat on cell phones. Tony Sinclair, of Woodside, is laughing at “yo mama” jokes before he breaks away from the group to check the fit of his costume for the elaborate American Musical Theatre of San Jose production.

Tony, age 10, snagged the part of Chip, the enchanted tea cup. It’s the only child’s role in the show. He shares the part with Will Haubl of Campbell, performing on alternating nights.

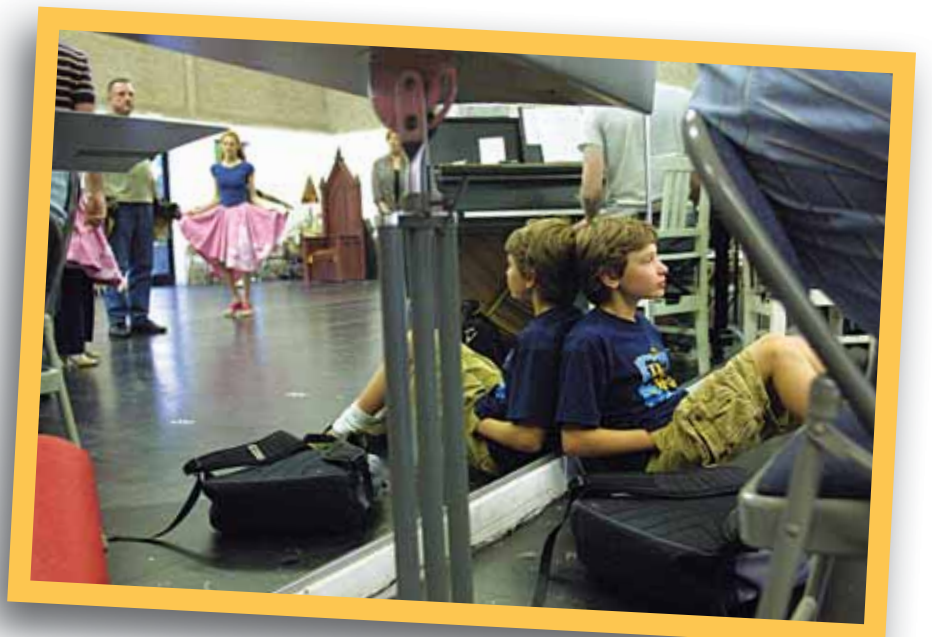
Although his stage career began less than a year ago, Tony holds his own with his fellow cast-mates as if he’d been brought up backstage by a theatrical family. His parents,

Lori and former Woodside council member Pete Sinclair, have no theatrical background. Even so, the main visible difference between the other actors and Tony, besides his tender age, is that during the breaks he races around and plays with Will while the grown-ups sit around and gossip.

“Disney’s Beauty and the Beast” runs through May 25 at the San Jose Center for the Performing Arts, but before the show even ends, Tony’s got an audition for another show. It’s clear that this kid has been bitten by the theater bug in a big way.

In the week leading up to opening night, Tony’s putting in 12-hour days rehearsing the show, as well as going to school and doing his homework. With an easy, impish smile, he says he’s not nervous about opening night. “It’ll all be smooth,” he promises.

At the moment, what isn’t terribly smooth



Ten-year-old **Tony** waits to go on during a work-through rehearsal of the song “Human Again.”

By **Andrea Gemmet** Almanac Staff Writer • **Photos by Veronica Weber** The Almanac



**Tony Sinclair** shares the role of Chip with Will Haubl of Campbell, taking the stage on alternating nights.



**Tony's face peeps** out of his costume as Jesse Vail, prop master for American Musical Theatre of San Jose, chuckles.



**Tony** waits in the wings with his costume just before the show starts on May 14.

is the tea trolley that forms the larger part of his costume. Jesse Vail, the prop master, promises that a new set of casters will make Tony's entrances and exits less jerky — as long as Chip's teapot-shaped mother, Mrs. Potts, pushes the correct side of the trolley.

To play the part of Chip, a boy transfigured into a magic teacup in the Beast's castle, Tony crouches inside the trolley and pokes his head through a hole in the top. Once ensconced, he is fitted with a saucer-shaped collar and a headpiece in the shape of a cracked cup. All that the audience can see of Tony is his face.

His favorite bit is when he gets to squirt a jet of water at marauding villagers who have stormed the castle, he says. Tony scrunches up his face comically as he mimes the action. It's his favorite bit, he says.

"It's the dramatic denouement of the show," agrees Michael French, American Musical Theatre's publicist, as they traipse past busy seamstresses in the costume shop and go into the sets warehouse.

Most of the elaborate sets, props and fanciful costumes have already been shipped over to the theater, with a few exceptions — Tony's costume, Madame de la Grand Bouche's enchanted bureau costume, and an elaborate mechanical wood-chopping machine, among other things.

Then, it's time for the boys to rehearse with the show's musical director, Craig Barna. There's a little subtle one-upsmanship between the boys as they go over the high notes in the song "Be Our Guest." When

Tony nails it, Will, in a slightly patronizing tone, says, "I remember when I could hit those notes."

Tony got his first taste of performing in third grade, when he sang a duet in a school performance at Corte Madera, says his mom, Lori Sinclair. He really loved it, so she took him to see a performance of Children's Musical Theater in San Jose, she says.

"He was on the edge of his seat the entire performance," Ms. Sinclair says. "I asked him, 'Do you want to do something like that?'"

Tony did. While many of his cast-mates have Broadway credits, Tony's first role was playing Winthrop in last fall's Woodside Community Theater production of "The Music Man." He followed that with a part in the Peninsula Youth Theater's "Peter Pan." He's also a member of the Ragazzi Boys Chorus, and takes singing lessons with Michael Taylor in Redwood City.

Back in the main rehearsal room, a work-through of "Gaston," a big ensemble piece, is setting up. With the ease of a New York native reading a subway map, Tony interprets the complicated array of colored tape on the floor that marks the location of scenery and scrim during the various acts. He watches the action as tavern patrons and "silly girls" do an exuberant polka while clinking alarmingly heavy beer mugs made out of chunks of

metal pipe with soldered handles.

Then, Tony's on for the rehearsal of "Human Again," a song cut from the animated Disney movie that was resurrected for the Broadway musical. Tony clammers into his tea trolley as dancing napkins in triangular brocade skirts waltz around. Actress Marsha Mercant hurries across the room in her rolling bureau costume, and then Tony is wheeled on stage. He delivers his lines, sings and is wheeled off while the number continues.

He crawls out of his costume, still singing along with the cast, and then it's time to run through "Be Our Guest," another big ensemble number. Ron Wisniski, as Lumiere, an enchanted candelabra, makes over-the-top flourishes with his arms, his hands hidden by giant candle-shaped mitts outfitted with fans and lights to mimic flickering flames. Dancing dinner plates twirl and then Belle — the titular Beauty, played by Nikki Renee Daniels — dances a polka with Lumiere. A dancing tissue box hands out oversized

hankies and the salt and pepper shakers dance a duet.

It's 8 p.m. and Tony has several more hours of this before his mom will pick him up and take him home. He doesn't seem a bit tired.

As for Ms. Sinclair, she says she doesn't mind all the chauffeuring because Tony is so clearly enjoying himself. Rather than being nervous about his opening night, Tony is feeling a bit down, because once the show opens, it will soon be all over, she says.

"He's very, very excited, but he's also sad because he doesn't want the rehearsals to be over, because he's had such a great time," she says. "He really connects with people."

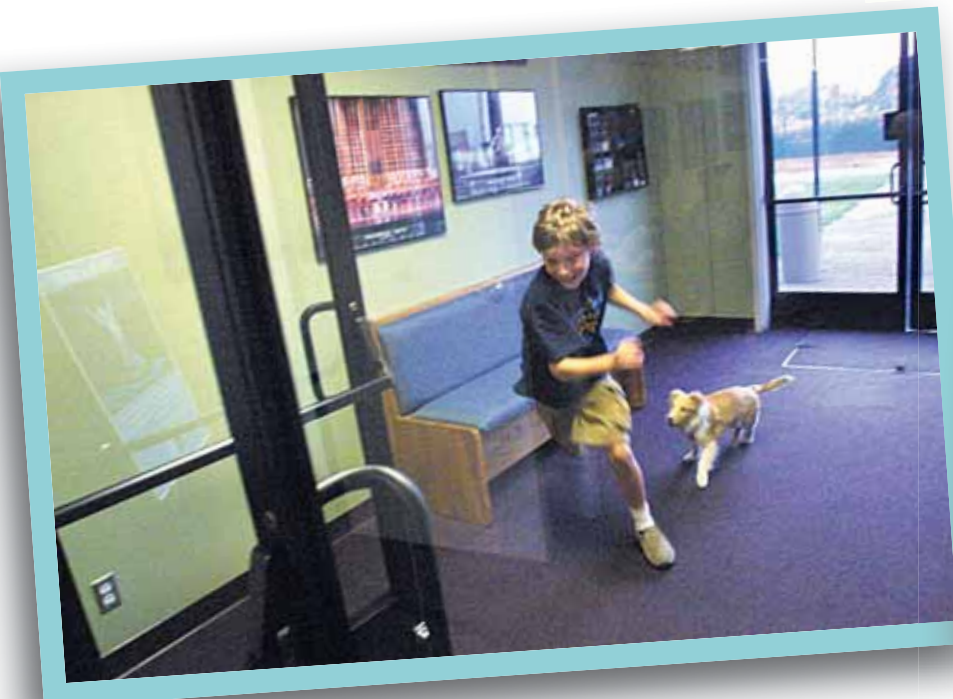
Ms. Sinclair says it doesn't matter whether Tony ends up a professional actor as a result his enthusiasm for the theater.

"Regardless of what he ends up doing in life, the ability to get up on stage in front of people, and have that confidence, will serve him well in the board room, or the doctor's office, whatever he decides to do," she says. "How can it be a bad thing?" ■



**INFORMATION**

Woodside resident Tony Sinclair is performing the part of "Chip" in American Musical Theatre of San Jose's production of "Disney's Beauty and the Beast" at the San Jose Center for the Performing Arts, 255 Almaden Blvd. in San Jose. Tony appears in alternating performances. The show's closing performance is at 6:30 p.m. on Sunday, May 25, with nightly performances at 8 p.m. through Saturday. Matinees are at 2 p.m. on Saturday and 1:30 p.m. on Sunday. Tickets prices range from \$14.75 to \$74. Tickets and information by phone at (888) 455-7469 or online at [www.amtsj.org](http://www.amtsj.org).



**Tony races** through the rehearsal studio in San Jose with a cast-mate's puppy.



**Actors**, from left, Michael Ray Wisely (Cogsworth), Nikki Renee Daniels (Belle) and Stephen Pawley (Maurice), watch a movie clip with Tony Sinclair of Woodside.

Photos and story by Dave Boyce

## Volatile vapors in garage triggers fire that destroys MP house, says fire chief

Ignition of volatile vapors in a closed garage started a fire that destroyed a two-story, single-family home at Chateau Drive and Valparaiso Avenue on Thursday evening, May 15, said Fire Chief Harold Schapelhouman of the Menlo Park Fire Protection District.

No one was injured. Ginger, a 2-year-old Labrador retriever that suffered smoke inhalation, was rescued and is doing well, according to a veterinarian nurse.

"She's breathing a lot better," Karen, a nurse at South Peninsula Veterinary Emergency Clinic in Palo Alto, said Friday, May 16.

The couple who lived at the house were out to dinner at the time, said Chief Schapelhouman. He would not disclose their names and they declined an interview.

A dangerous combination of factors led to the fire starting in the garage, Chief Schapelhouman said. The garage contained volatile vapors from a just refinished entertainment center, it was a 98-degree day, the garage door was closed, and the heat from a recently driven car helped

raise the temperature. The water heater's pilot light provided the flame.

"It wouldn't have been a problem if it had been a well-ventilated space and the door had been open," Chief Schapelhouman said in an interview.

The fire caused about \$1.3 million in damages, including destruction of a Lexus automobile in the garage, he said. The fire also slightly damaged the house to the rear, about 20 feet away from the one that burned, he said.

The home next door was six feet away but was not damaged, the chief said.

As requested by the wife, firefighters did find and recover the couple's wedding album. They also brought out a wedding ring.

Firefighters had the fire under control by about 7:40 p.m.

### Walk-in report

A fire crew suited up at about 6:30 p.m. after a pedestrian banged on the door of the firehouse two blocks away at Oak Grove Avenue and Hoover Street, saying that he saw smoke coming from the first and second floors



Firefighter Seth Johnson (right) and other firefighters from the Menlo Park Fire Protection District battle a three-alarm house fire at the corner of Chateau Drive and Valparaiso Avenue in Menlo Park.

of the house, the chief said.

A battalion chief on Interstate 280 called in at about that time to report seeing smoke rising from that vicinity, the chief said.

Three minutes later, firefighters carrying hoses kicked in the front door and entered the house, the chief said. Three firefighters worked the first floor, three worked the second and three more looked for occupants, he said.

About 45 firefighters gathered at the scene, including 12 engine

companies, three ladder trucks, a breathing support unit and several battalion chiefs. Emergency vehicles with red lights flashing packed Valparaiso Avenue between Crane Street and El Camino Real.

Firefighters fought the fire in shifts of 12 firefighters each, the chief said. The second floor was particularly difficult. "The smoke and heat up there was really pushing our guys back," he said.

"There was zero visibility and

it was pretty hot," firefighter Rob Johnson said in an interview.

The attic was ablaze, but firefighters could not fight it from the inside, the chief said. So they fought the flames from up on the roof until they were ordered down when a roof collapse seemed a possibility.

Wood shakes, which burn well, covered the roof, as they do on the other homes in the subdivision, Chief Schapelhouman said.

"I think the neighbors should feel very fortunate that we didn't have heavy winds," he said. Flammable roofs help to create "communities built to burn," he added.

Chief Schapelhouman also used the opportunity to advocate for a residential sprinkler ordinance in Menlo Park. This house was too old to have had them installed, but a rebuilt house should be outfitted with them, he said. ■



Firefighter Brendan Murphy and a resident of the house destroyed by the fire comfort Ginger, a 2-year-old Labrador retriever suffering from smoke inhalation. Ginger recovered and is doing well, says a nurse.



Capt. Ben Marra of the Menlo Park Fire Protection District takes a breather after fighting the three-alarm house fire.



This Lexus was destroyed in the house fire, which started in the garage when volatile vapors ignited, says Fire Chief Harold Schapelhouman.

# Sewer bills could double as regional system is rebuilt

By Marion Softky

Almanac Staff Writer

It will take \$339 million over 10 years to rebuild the aging sewer system that serves more than 200,000 people and businesses from East Palo Alto to Belmont.

The South Bayside System Authority (SBSA) has announced a major capital improvement program to upgrade and rebuild its 25-year-old sewage plant and the aging pumps and pipes that transport wastewater from the Peninsula communities to the plant at the tip of Redwood Shores.

SBSA operates the regional wastewater treatment plant owned by the cities of Redwood City, Belmont, San Carlos, and the West Bay Sanitary District, which serves Menlo Park and portions of Atherton, Portola Valley, Woodside, East Palo Alto, and unincorporated areas of San Mateo County.

"After 25 years, things need rebuilding, replacing, and repairing," said Ron Shepherd, chairman of the West Bay district and its representative to SBSA.

Over the life of the plant, SBSA has concentrated on keeping rates down and has not built up funds for capital improvements, Mr. Shepherd noted. The plant was built in 1980.

"The SBSA facility is now over 25 years old and has reached the end of its designed life," said Manager Dan Childs in his announcement. "Many structures and most mechanical equipment are beyond the point of reasonable repair and require replacement."

The new capital improvement program has 131 projects. The SBSA will cover the costs by issuing revenue bonds as the money is needed over 10 years.

Residents and businesses in the West Bay district will be responsible for about 25 percent of the costs. "Our share of the bond issues is going to be about two Burgess Gyms," Mr. Shepherd commented.

The first \$50 million in bonds will be issued this summer, Mr. Shepherd said. The district has enough reserves to cover the costs this year without raising rates from the present \$400 per year for a single-family home. But starting next year, "rates will probably double in 10 years," he said.

## Capital improvements

To improve the reliability and efficiency of the regional wastewater system, upgrades are focusing on fixing pipes, pump stations, and the treatment plant.

The biggest single expense in the capital improvement program

is \$125 million to repair and upgrade the big force main that carries sewage from the pump station at Marsh Road in Menlo Park to the treatment plant.

The 40-year-old cement pipe that runs through Bay mud east of Bayshore Freeway is built in 12-foot sections, Mr. Shepherd said. "It moves around and sometimes leaks." He noted it will be replaced with modern plastic-type pipe that can be cemented together with no seams.

The highest priority project is to upgrade the pump stations that keep the sewage flowing. They are all 40 to 50 years old and suffer frequent failures. "Without improvements to the pump stations, there is a real risk of spills," Mr. Child said.

The southernmost pump station is in Menlo Park off Marsh Road at the entrance to Bayfront Park.

Also important will be rebuilding the tanks at the treatment plant, where chemicals in the

wastewater have severely corroded the cement and metal storage tanks and plumbing.

The SBSA administration and control offices also need to be replaced; they were built over four storage tanks, using steel studs, which have also corroded from sulfuric acid. "The building is now held up by sheet rock and stucco," Mr. Child noted.

The capital improvement program includes other upgrades to the system. There will be auto-

mation throughout the facilities that will reduce staffing needs by 10 to 15 percent.

SBSA will double the use of cogeneration — using the methane generated by the breakdown of solids to generate electricity — from 450 to 900 kilowatts. It hopes to generate more than 50 percent of its power.

Officials at the West Bay district are supporting the capital

See **SEWER**, page 18



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## MP mayor calls for forum on homelessness

By Rory Brown

Almanac Staff Writer

Although the word “homelessness” is rarely mentioned in Menlo Park City Council meetings, it’s no secret that the city has its share of people without homes.

Some panhandle outside Draeger’s market and Peet’s Coffee and Tea. Others sleep on the Civic Center lawns, and some camp along the banks of San Francisquito Creek.

Mayor Andy Cohen has decided it’s time for Menlo Park to start talking about homelessness, and he’s asking nearby cities to join the discussion.

Homelessness will be the focus of a “Healthy Communities” forum organized by Mr. Cohen, scheduled to run from 7 to 10 p.m. on Wednesday, May 28,

in the council chambers at the Civic Center, between Laurel and Alma streets.

Mr. Cohen said he hopes the event will spark residents to start thinking about homelessness, as well as other issues, on “a more regional scale.”

“Homeless people in Menlo Park may cross the creek twice a day, once a week, who knows,” Mr. Cohen told the Almanac. “They don’t have a regular address, so the only way to deal with it is to take a regional approach.”

Mr. Cohen said he has been organizing the forum for several months, and has compiled a panel of speakers to answer the public’s questions about homelessness. He has invited officials from nearby towns to attend, and asked San Mateo Supervisor Rose Jacobs Gibson to speak at the event, he said.

“What do you do to help a homeless person?” Mr. Cohen said. “Do you give them money? Do you give them food? Do you volunteer for some organization? These are all good questions that I think people want answered.”

The panel includes:

■ Dr. Don Barr and Dr. Lars Osterberg of the Palo Alto Opportunity Health Center, both of whom have researched and written about homeless trends and services in the Bay Area.

■ Kathy Espinoza-Howard

of Palo Alto’s Office of Human Services.

■ Dr. Keith Harris of the Veteran’s Affairs’ Homeless Veteran Program.

### Next steps

If all goes according to Mr. Cohen’s plan, the forum will be the first of several aimed at spurring Menlo Park and nearby cities to work together to tackle complicated issues facing the Peninsula and the greater Bay Area.

A second forum, devoted to keeping local youth out of gangs, is scheduled for June 11 in the council chambers, Mr. Cohen said.

That event is expected to have a panel made up of Menlo Park Police Cmdr. Lacey Burt and Sgt. Eric Cowans; Boys and Girls Club Executive Director Peter Fortenbaugh; and David Cherniss, the manager of juvenile mediation programs for the San Mateo County Superior Court.

Mr. Cohen said a future forum could focus on how to address the impacts of the construction of large residential basements in Menlo Park, Atherton, Portola Valley and Woodside.

“There’s a tradition of [cities working together], but for the most part, it’s been for isolated issues,” Mr. Cohen said. “I think if we team up, and take a sub regional approach to problems in general, more things will get done.” ■

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### SEWER

*continued from page 17*

improvement program, even though the district prefers the pay-as-you-go approach it has followed.

“It’s something that needs to be done,” said Mr. Shepherd. “In the future we want to fund improvements on a pay-as-you-go basis”

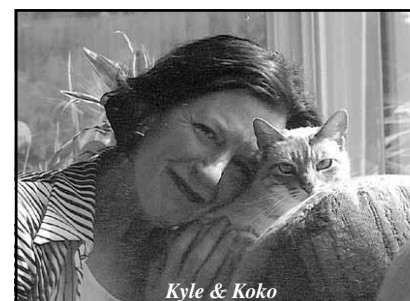
General Manager Tim Clayton added: “You can’t just keep putting it off. You can’t risk sewage spills into the Bay.” ■

### INFORMATION

For information, contact the West Bay Sanitary District at 321-0354 or [westbaysanitary.org](http://westbaysanitary.org), or the South Bayside System Authority at 591-7121 or [www.sbsa.org](http://www.sbsa.org).

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## Menlo Park assistant city manager resigns

■ Audrey Seymour Ramberg leaves to spend time with family.

By Rory Brown  
Almanac Staff Writer

Audrey Seymour Ramberg, Menlo Park's assistant city manager since 2001, is leaving the city so she can spend more time with her family.

She told The Almanac that Menlo Park is a "great organization" full of "great people" and a "dedicated council," but she wants to spend more time with her newly adopted daughter.

"I'm looking for a better work-family balance," Ms. Seymour Ramberg said. "It's a struggle a lot of parents have — trying to balance their careers with family."

Ms. Seymour Ramberg

announced her decision to city staff in late April, and her last day on the job was Friday, May 16. She said it's "highly likely" that she'll re-enter the world of civic government at some point.

City Manager Glen Rojas said Ms. Seymour Ramberg's departure is "a big loss to the city."

"I was very impressed with her grasp of not only city government, but Menlo Park in particular," said Mr. Rojas. "She's able to take complicated issues and put them into terms people can understand. ... She's a great manager."



Audrey Seymour

Mr. Rojas noted that he's undecided how the city should go about hiring a new assistant city manager, but would make a decision soon.

Mayor Andy Cohen said Ms. Seymour Ramberg "made Menlo Park her highest priority for seven years," and was well liked by all city employees.

Before coming to Menlo Park, Ms. Seymour Ramberg was assistant to the city manager in Palo Alto for three years. ■

## Schools honor 'pillars of community'

More than 50 people — who have made a significant and positive impact on Menlo Park district schools and the community — will be honored at a "Pillars of the Community" event Thursday, May 29.

This annual celebration will be held from 4 to 6 p.m. in Jennings Pavilion at Holbrook-Palmer Park in Atherton. Community members are invited.

Awards will be presented by four Parent Teacher Organizations, the PTO Council and the Menlo Park-Atherton Education Foundation.

The "Golden Oak Award," reserved for people who are

leaving the district after years of outstanding service, will be presented to: Lezlie Glare, librarian at Laurel and Encinal for 21 years, and Mary Rudolph, parent-volunteer for leadership roles at the schools, district, and PTO levels.

State Sen. Joe Simitian is among the PTO Council honorees. In addition to his commitment to public education, he helped the district qualify for \$1 million in state funding for its construction program.

The event also recognizes teachers who have won Jeanie Ritchie grants, designed to promote innovation in the classroom.

## Global warming focus of geology lecture

"Global Warming: Western Style" will be the subject of the free monthly lecture at the U.S. Geological Survey at 7 p.m. Thursday, May 22, in Building 3 on the Menlo Park campus at 345 Middlefield Road.

Research hydrologist Michael Dettinger will focus on if and how climate change is affecting Western lands and waters, particularly in California. He'll also look at changes, predicted by climate models, that are still to come — and when they will get here.

For more information, call 329-5000.

## POST lecture is Rachel Carson play

Actress and writer Kaiulani Lee will perform her play, "A Sense of Wonder," based on the life and works of pioneer-

ing environmentalist Rachel Carson, on Tuesday, May 20, at 8 p.m. at the Mountain View Center for the Performing Arts, at 500 Castro St.

Ms. Lee's portrayal of Rachel Carson around 1963 when her seminal book, "Silent Spring," was beginning to attract public notice, is the final lecture of this year's Wallace Stegner Lecture Series, sponsored by the Peninsula Open Space Trust (POST) in honor of the late Pulitzer Prize winning novelist and conservationist.

Tickets at \$22 each may be ordered through the box office at 903-6000. For information about POST and the lecture series, call 854-7696 or go to [openspacetrust.org](http://openspacetrust.org).

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# Tennis court/sport court plan remains on track

WEDDING

By Dave Boyce  
Almanac Staff Writer

The root system of a stately Portola Valley heritage oak had been threatened by plans to put part of a tennis court under its canopy, but the threat has been neutralized — and without a significant change to the layout of the courts.

Councilman Ted Driscoll announced at the May 14 council meeting that the design team will stick with the original court

plan, just moved several feet to the west.

The plan calls for two tennis courts and a “sport” court striped for basketball and racket sports, including tennis. By moving them slightly and raising the grade of the easternmost court, the oak’s root system would be out of danger, he said.

“We’re very confident that it can work,” he said.

The shifted courts will take up space at the western end that would have been used for

vegetation along a north-south walkway.

Resident Kathy Feldman of Grove Avenue noted to the council that the sport court, with its combination of stripes for different games, might not qualify for a league tennis match.

The town should have three dedicated courts, she said. The old Town Center had three, albeit of mediocre quality.

“It was all that we had,” she said. “Not everybody belongs to a tennis club. We need to have

public courts available.”

A layout that includes a sport court is a result of much community input and is “very delicately balanced,” Councilmember Steve Toben said in reply. League play was not a consideration, he said.

“We do have a community that perhaps will be dominated by kids with basketballs,” he said, adding that a 10-year-old hacking around at tennis won’t be bothered an oddly striped court. ■

## McKenzie-Beugelmans

Sara Michelle McKenzie and Mauricio S. Beugelmans were married May 3 in Tempe, Arizona, with the Rev. Gwen Waring officiating.

The bride is the daughter of Rhonda McKenzie and Gordon McKenzie III, of Scottsdale, Arizona. She is a summa cum laude graduate of Arizona State University and the University of California, Hastings College of Law. She is an associate attorney at the accounting firm WTAS in New York City, where she practices domestic and international tax law.

The bridegroom is the son of Dr. Daniel Beugelmans of Portola Valley and the late Juliette Beugelmans. He is a graduate of the University of California, Santa Cruz, and the Golden Gate University School of Law. He is an executive director and attorney at Morgan Stanley in New York City.

The young couple met while working for Morgan Stanley in San Francisco. They currently live in Manhattan.

## Signup time for environmental event

Ten businesses will be honored by the environmental organization, Acterra, at the 2008 Business Environmental Awards reception on Tuesday, June 3,

at 5:30 p.m. at the Arrillaga Alumni Center at Stanford.

May 23 is the deadline for making reservations for the annual event, which recognizes

businesses that have made outstanding contributions to the Peninsula environment.

This year’s honorees range from CoolEatz Restaurants and Catering run by Menlo Park’s organic food maven Jesse Cool, to the PG&E Pacific Energy

Center, which promotes public education on sustainability and environment.

A reception featuring healthy local food will be followed by the awards ceremony at 6:15 p.m. Tickets are \$30 per person. \$20 for Acterra members, and \$10 for full-time students.

To sign up, call 962-9876, ext. 350, or send an e-mail to: awards@acterra.org. And leave your name and a phone number.

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**■ POLICE CALLS**

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

**MENLO PARK**

**Burglary reports:**

- Maroon bicycle stolen from garage, 800 block of Partridge Ave., May 9.
- Vehicle registration stolen from vehicle, Willow Road and Coleman Avenue, May 10.
- Laptop computer stolen from vehicle after window was smashed, first block of Willow Road, May 10.
- Computer, cell phone and personal items stolen from vehicle after window was smashed, first block of Willow Road, May 10.
- Portable navigation unit stolen from vehicle after window was smashed, first block of Iris Lane, May 10.
- Car stereo stolen after window was smashed, 800 block of Pierce Road, May 11.
- Cell phone and stereo system stolen after vehicle window was smashed, 1600 block of Marsh Road, May 13.
- House broken into via sliding glass door, 100 block of Bay Road, May 13.
- GPS device stolen from vehicle, 800 block of Coleman Ave., May 14.
- Grand theft report: Personal property stolen from police squad car, 700 block of Laurel St., May 15.
- Stolen vehicle report: 1995 white Ford F-150 pick-up truck, 1100 block of Willow Road, May 12.
- Child protective services report: 200 block of Market Place, May 10.

- Fraud report: Unauthorized use of credit card, 800 block of Santa Cruz Ave., May 14.

**WOODSIDE**

**Weapons report:** Students found carrying brass knuckles, Woodside High School at 199 Churchill Ave., May 9.

- **Theft report:** Two motorized scooters valued at \$900 stolen from unlocked garage, 100 block of Olive Hill Lane, May 10.

**PORTOLA VALLEY**

- **Theft report:** Gaming and computer items valued at \$1,500 stolen from pool house, 100 block of Fawn Lane, May 10.

**LADERA**

- **Burglary report:** Items valued at \$920 stolen from vehicle after window was smashed, 2500 block of Sand Hill Road, May 8.

**WEST MENLO PARK**

- **Burglary report:** GPS device and radar detector, together valued at \$750, stolen from vehicle after window was smashed, 2000 block of Valparaiso Ave., May 7.
- **Theft report:** Items valued at \$220 stolen from unlocked vehicle, 1000 block of Sherman Ave., May 7.

## Christopher Huang attains Eagle Scout rank

Christopher Huang of Menlo Park was recently awarded the highest honor in Scouting: the rank of Eagle Scout.

For his Eagle Scout project, he supervised a team of scouts to build and install five spectator benches at Flood Park, around the horseshoe pits and baseball field.

The scouts were from Troop 222, which meets at the Menlo Park Presbyterian Church. Older scouts from Troop 222 formed Venturing Crew 222 so they could continue to participate in scouting activities until they are 21.

Christopher is a member of Venturing Crew 222, which focuses on high adventure activities, such as wilderness backpacking, mountain biking, skiing and camping trips. Among his scouting leadership roles, he led a high adventure crew on a 10-day canoe excursion.

Christopher is a senior student at Summit Preparatory Charter High School in Redwood City and lives with his family in Menlo Park.

He plans to attend the University of California at Irvine in the fall and to study psychology.

More information on Venturing Scouts is at [scouting.org/venturing](http://scouting.org/venturing).



**Scouts who helped** with the bench project are: front, from left, Michael Ongko, Christopher Huang and Ian DeLisle; back, from left, William Schultz, Dan Kozlowski, Kevin Moore and Grant Mahan.

### LUCILLE RITA BUELL

Passed away peacefully on April 22nd, 2008 in her home in San Carlos, CA of 55 years at the age of 88. Born on August 3, 1919 in Sunnyvale, CA, the first of two children of George and Lucille McGinnis. Married in 1948, and proceeded in death by her husband Bernard G. Buell in 1953. Lucille is survived by her daughter, James & Linda Staggs of Redding and her twin sons Patrick Buell and Michael & Luanne Buell of San Carlos. Three grandchildren and two great grandchildren.

A celebration of her life will be announced

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

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



## WHAT'S YOUR VIEW?

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

### TOWN SQUARE FORUM

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

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

**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.

## Why cameras for red-light runners make sense

It is no surprise that the Menlo Park Police Department is moving ahead with a new photo enforcement program that will depend on cameras instead of cops to catch red light violators.

The first camera is already installed for northbound traffic on Bayfront Expressway at Willow Road, and more are planned at other busy intersections. The camera has been issuing warnings to red-light runners since May 6, but will issue real citations, which can cost nearly \$400, beginning June 10.

The city has received criticism about using "spy cameras" to catch red-light runners, but when entry-level police officers can earn more than \$70,000 a year, such automated systems have to be part of the law enforcement mix. Not only can the cameras be

operated at very low cost, but the police department will receive about \$150 for each citation issued. In addition, the city has negotiated a cost-neutral agreement, so charges

for the equipment and administration can never exceed income from the citations.

But to police officials, the safety factor is far more important than the income. In its first week of operation, the Bayfront Expressway/Willow Road camera caught 57 red-light violations. The lucky drivers will only receive a warning, but on June 10, the city will start issuing live tickets and hopefully begin to bring down the number of serious accidents.

According to data compiled by the department in the last

two years, red-light running has contributed to 20 percent of the major-injury collisions and 17 percent of fatal collisions in Menlo Park. In addition, Menlo Park ranks 11th out of 97 similar sized cities for speed-related injury collisions in a 2006 state study, according to police officials.

Here are some key facts about the photo-enforcement system:

- The automated camera takes four photos of the vehicle in the intersection, including of the license plate and the driver's face.

- The camera only becomes active if a vehicle enters the intersection after the light has turned red. No citation should be issued for a vehicle entering on a yellow light.

- The duration of yellow light time is set by Caltrans standards, which range from 3 to 5.8 seconds, depending on the speed of the approach to the light.

- Only one or two approaches will be photographed at each intersection. And each intersection with a camera will have a sign warning that red-light running will be enforced by an automated system.

For more information and a list of frequently asked questions, go to the department's Web site at menloparkpolice.com and then on the Police Services drop-down menu, select "Photo Enforcement."

Anyone who drives in Menlo Park knows there are far too many drivers who ignore red lights. Photo enforcement appears to be a way to help control these scofflaws, and make them pay for their violations. There is a simply way to avoid a ticket from this system: stop for all red lights.

## EDITORIAL

The opinion of The Almanac

## LETTERS

Our readers write

### Shameful to see healthy oak trees taken out

Editor:

Although the negative environmental declaration with respect to the Oak Knoll school expansion project may pass technical muster, loss of the iconic oak on the Vine Street side of the school is the least of the adverse environmental impacts.

It is shameful in these days of global warming for the school district to remove healthy emissions-guzzling trees along Oak Avenue and not replace them with equally mature specimens elsewhere on the school site.

James Madison

Holly Avenue, Menlo Park

### Plenty of good reasons to back Measure O

Editor:

I was among the 200-plus volunteers from Rebuilding Peninsula who recently gathered for a post-community workday BBQ at Flood Park.

On that beautiful spring evening, the rest of the park

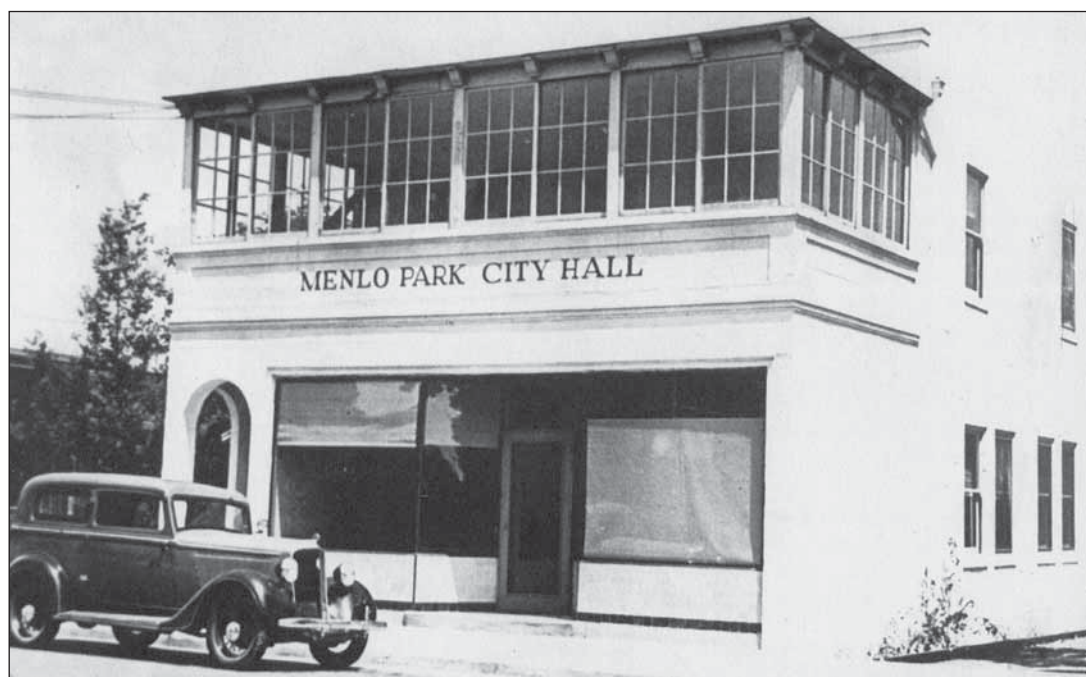
was filled with family picnics and children joyfully running around. That brought home to me the real importance of parks in the lives of ordinary people, not only in our community but throughout our county. I

am pleased that the League of Women Voters of South San Mateo County has again pledged its support for Measure O, the "Parks For The Future" campaign to secure a dedicated funding source for our commu-

nities' parks.

Increasing San Mateo County's sales tax by 1/8 of one cent will provide some \$16 million annually for desperately needed main-

See **LETTERS**, next page



Menlo Park Historical Association

## Our Regional Heritage

Menlo Park's first city hall was located at 1036 Doyle St., between Menlo and Santa Cruz avenues. Historians say there was room for the city clerk's desk, a few bookshelves and the police department at the rear, behind a partition. The photo is from the 1920s, after the city was incorporated in 1923.

**LETTERS**

*Continued from previous page*

tenance of and improvements for our city's parks as well as county parks and recreation districts.

At a time when public funding is tight, helping keep our parks a great — and free — place for families could not be easier or more cost effective.

**Jamie Shepard, president  
League of Women Voters  
of South San Mateo County**

**On propositions,  
be sure to vote for 99**

*Editor:*

Peninsula voters need to be informed about two competing propositions on the state ballot that could have a profound and lasting impact on the lives of Californians.

Props 98 and 99 are both ostensibly about eminent domain reform, but Prop 98, funded primarily by landlords and mobile home park owners, would eliminate a host of protections for the environment and for seniors, veterans, and working families who rent their homes or live in mobile home parks.

Because Prop 98 is extreme

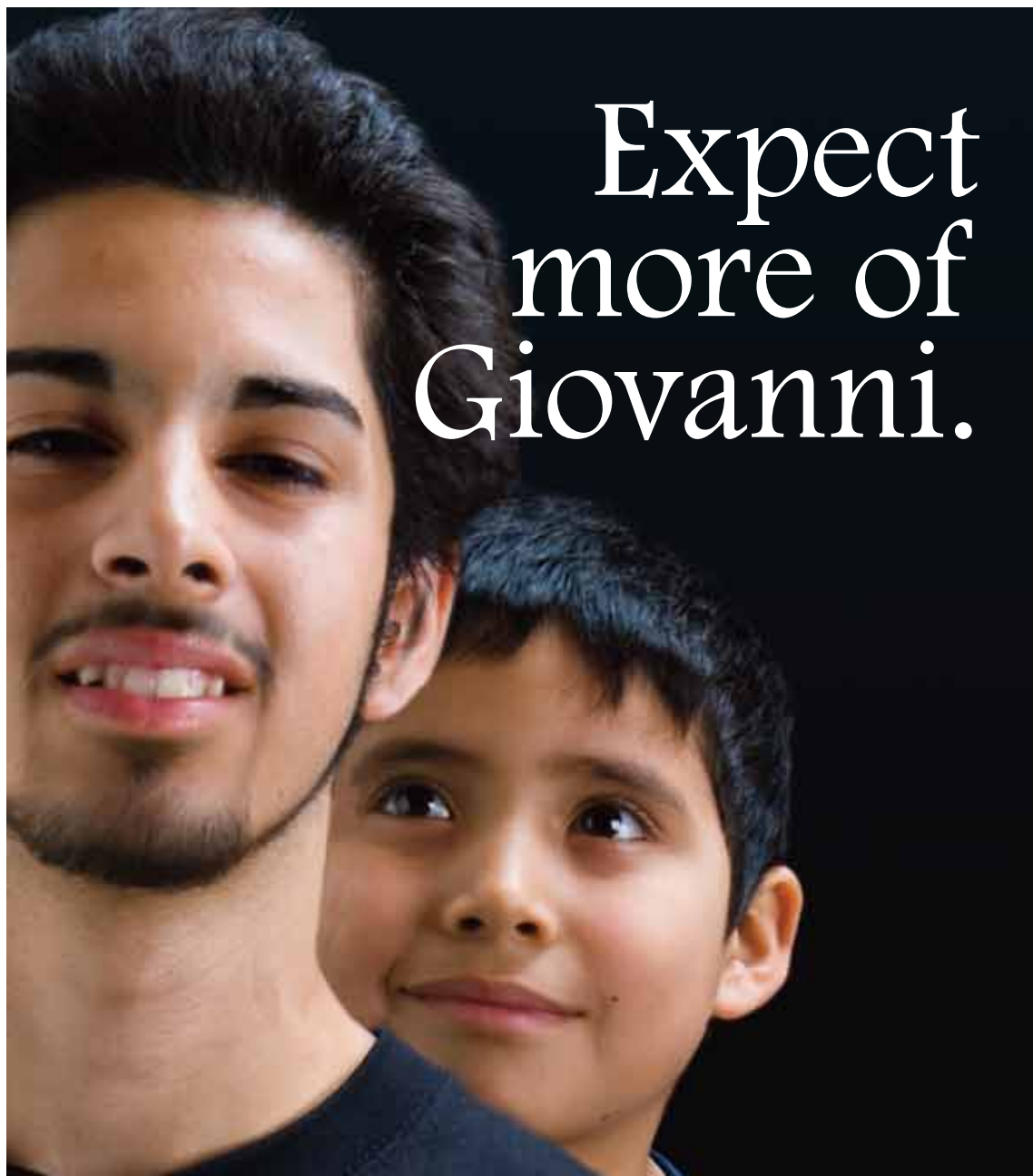
and far-reaching, a broad coalition has united to oppose it, including the California Chamber of Commerce, League of Women Voters, AARP, California Teachers Association, Gov. Schwarzenegger, Sen. Dianne Feinstein, every major environmental organization in the state, and numerous others.

Proposition 99, the Homeowners Protection Act, is a straightforward measure that would prohibit the government from using eminent domain to take a home to transfer to a private developer. It would not diminish renter and environmental protections in any way.

Proposition 99 is supported by the California Alliance for Retired Americans, League of Women Voters of California, the League of California Homeowners, and dozens of respected organizations representing seniors, business and labor, public safety, environmental groups, and many others.

Proposition 99 would protect homeowners from eminent domain abuse. Prop 98 would have dramatic consequences for the well-being of seniors and working families and for the health of our environment. Please vote on June 3.

**Andy Blue  
San Francisco**



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Francisco Espinoza, 19, wasn't always as lucky as Giovanni. Once a boy of streets and gangs, Francisco heard about the safety, friendship, and the life-building academic and arts programs of the Boys & Girls Clubs of the Peninsula. The club's mentors and peers moved him. Now he's on staff, helping kids beat the Opportunity Gap that defeats so many in his low-income neighborhoods. Francisco is a role model: with club coaching, he graduated from high school, made Foothill College, is a good musician, and created an inspiring video shown at the 2008 Sundance Film Festival.

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