

**MENLO PARK** looks at renovating Burgess Park to accommodate a full-size soccer field. Page 8

# The Almanac



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July 19-20

THE HOMETOWN NEWSPAPER

FOR MENLO PARK, ATHERTON, PORTOLA VALLEY AND WOODSIDE

JULY 16, 2008

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## Missed connections

With gas prices and environmental awareness on the rise, shouldn't it be easier to get around on public transit?

PAGE 10



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### ATHERTON

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# Inside

This week's news, features and community events.

## FIRST SHOT



Photo by Veronica Weber/The Almanac

### Lowering temperatures to raise money

Brenten Brandenburg serves up a snow cone to quench his thirst during 90-degree heat in Menlo Park on July 9. He was working a snow cone booth with friends on Monte Rosa Drive at Avy Avenue in Menlo Park to raise some money over the summer.

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### Family Almanac

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### On the cover

Almanac staff writer Rory Brown rode public transit to, from, in and around Menlo Park for five days and wrote about his experience. He lowered his carbon footprint, but nearly lost his mind. Photo by Veronica Weber. See story on **Page 10**.

### CALLING ON THE ALMANAC

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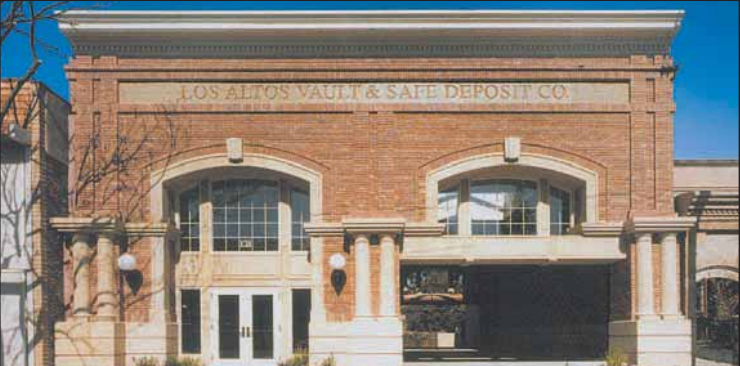


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## Roberts Tip of the Week

### RASPBERRIES REIGN

It must be summer when the ruby red raspberry is in season. This luscious fruit is delicious when eaten right out of your hand or used in vinaigrettes, sauces, or dessert toppings. Raspberries do especially well when paired with chocolate, fish, chicken, meats, or lamb. Top cereal or waffles with some fresh berries, or for a fruity flavor stir them into the mix when making pancakes, breakfast breads, or muffins. Drop some into yogurt or puree them to pour over cheesecake or angel food cake. Make a fresh raspberry vinaigrette to pour on salads or vegetables or to marinate grilled meats or fish. A raspberry sauce can also do wonders for simple chicken and fish dishes.

At ROBERTS MARKET, our seasonal produce is beautifully displayed in our large produce department. We have some of the best fruits available in the area including fantastic raspberries that go great with a wide variety of summer foods and wines. You should also know that our wine department is the most extensive in the area, more than most liquor stores. So come in and grab some fresh fruit for your next picnic, lunch, or dinner event. You won't regret it!

Hint: Choose plump, soft, brightly colored raspberries with no signs of mold, and handle this fragile fruit with care.



## Wine

### 2007 GERMAN RIESLING KABINETT

Since the turn of the century, Germany has enjoyed an unparalleled quality and success of vintages. Perhaps global warming is to blame, but we haven't seen an under-ripe vintage for many years, and '05 will go down in history as one of the greats of all time. Enter the 2007s. This is the first "classic" year, for the lighter, drier Kabinett for some time. These are dazzling, refreshing delights, perfect for taking the edge off high heat.

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- |  |
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| <b>MARY ELLEN RED RASPBERRY JAM</b> \$2 <sup>49</sup>            |
| 18 oz. — Also Apricot — Strawberry — Blackberry                  |
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| 4 oz. — Also Light Wedges  |
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| 32 oz. — Plus Calif. Redeem Value                                |
| <b>IAMS PROACTIVE HEALTH DOG FOOD</b> \$8 <sup>99</sup>          |
| 8 lb. Bag — Mini Bites — Puppy                                   |





# Local News

MENLO PARK | AHERTON | WOODSIDE | PORTOLA VALLEY

## How green is my bus stop?

SamTrans “continues to go green” with new bus shelters, the transit agency claims in a news release. The shelters will feature an interior panel for advertising, a map, and a small, solar-powered light. The ads are expected to pay for the installation and maintenance of the new shelters.

So, what was so eco-hostile about the old, advertising-free, unlit shelters? It’s nice to have lights, but it’s a little hard to see how adding solar panels to power lights that weren’t there before counts as going green.

“I don’t know that we can say that it does reduce our carbon footprint,” SamTrans spokeswoman Christine Dunn told *The Almanac*.

But they will literally be green — in order to highlight their “eco-upgrade,” the new shelters will be coated in green paint.

## Power to the people

Tyler MacNiven’s latest stunt left him dependent on the kindness of strangers to push him through the streets of San Francisco from his Mission District apartment to the Golden Gate Bridge on July 9.

Mr. MacNiven, son of Buck’s restaurant owner Jamis and winner of the reality show “The Amazing Race,” ensconced himself in an easy chair affixed to a dolly at 9 a.m. and chatted up a series of strangers who scooted him to the bridge before his target time of 5 p.m.

He arrived at 4:43 p.m., according to an account of his exploits on the San Francisco Chronicle’s Web page.

All in a day’s work for Mr. MacNiven, who gives his profession as “adventurer.”

## Can’t drive 55?

Drive more slowly, save gas and money — that’s the thinking behind Rep. Jackie Speier’s proposal to create a national speed limit of 60 mph on highways in urban areas and 65 mph out in the sticks. Going faster than 60 mph decreases fuel efficiency, studies say. Check out [www.fueleconomy.gov](http://www.fueleconomy.gov).

# Should \$91 million for Dumbarton Rail be given to BART in East Bay?

■ Two key meetings on this topic are set for this week and next in Menlo Park and Palo Alto.

By Marion Softky

*Almanac Staff Writer*

Amid rising gas prices, escalating construction costs, and shrinking budgets, the regional infighting over who should get limited transit funds is reaching new heights.

The latest squabble could take \$91 million allocated to bringing rail service across the old Dumbarton railroad bridge by 2012, and give it to BART for an extension from Fremont to Warm Springs near the Alameda-Santa Clara county line.

From Warm Springs, it could take \$4 to \$5 billion more to get BART to its goal in San Jose, said Jim Bigelow, chair of the Menlo Park Chamber of Commerce Transportation Committee. “BART can cost \$100,000 per foot.”

The \$91 million would come from funds provided under RM-2, the 2004 ballot measure that raised tolls on seven Bay Area bridges by \$1 to improve traffic flow across the Bay. These funds are currently committed to the ongoing project to rebuild the Dumbarton Rail bridge so that East Bay commuters have a new way to get to jobs on the Peninsula.

The shift in RM-2 funds to BART was recommended by the staff of the Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC), at the instigation of BART supporters in the East Bay and parts of Santa Clara County. The staff suggests that Alameda County will repay the funds in 10 to 15 years.

Now supporters of Dumbarton Rail and better transit across the Bay are pushing back. The MTC staff is re-evaluating its recom-

mendation, and the full commission will take action at its meeting Sept. 10. The MTC is the regional agency responsible for allocating funds to transportation projects based on its regional plans.

“This (Dumbarton rail) is an important link in the regional rail network,” said Sue Lempert, representative of San Mateo County’s 20 cities on MTC. “This is the most cost-effective place (in the Bay) to put a railroad.”

Two community meetings in the next week will help shape input to the MTC decision in September. The Citizens Advisory Panel will meet Wednesday, July 16, at 7 p.m. in the Menlo Park Senior Center, 110 Terminal Ave. in Menlo Park; the Dumbarton Rail Policy Advisory Committee, made up of public officials from communities served by the rail project, will meet Tuesday, July 22, at 2 p.m. in Palo Alto City Hall, 250 Hamilton Ave.

While Menlo Park is conflicted

about the project to restore rail service, it wants to keep the money. Residents support better transit, but many, particularly those who live near the old railroad, don’t want trains; they support alternatives, such as buses or light rail.

“I’m against moving money out of the Dumbarton Corridor,” said Menlo Park Councilman Heyward Robinson, who serves on the policy advisory committee. “When voters passed RM-2, they intended for the money to help cross-Bay travel. That money is coming from tolls on the Dumbarton Bridge.”

## Dumbarton Rail

The dream of passenger service across the 1914 rail bridge dates back more than 30 years to Malcolm Dudley, then a councilman in Atherton. Cross-Bay trains would allow East Bay passengers

See **DUMBARTON**, page 8

## Woodside director of planning resigns

Hope Sullivan, Woodside’s planning director and assistant town manager, resigned effective June 26, said Town Manager Susan George.

Ms. George would not comment on the reasons for the departure of Ms. Sullivan, who had been with the town since January 2002 and on leave since the end of May. “She asked that we respect her privacy,” Ms. George said.

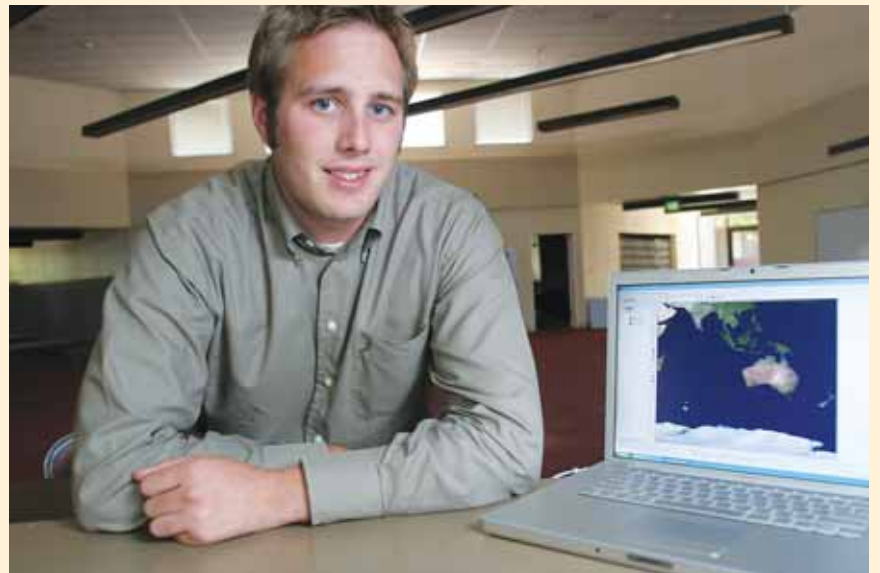
A few months before Ms. Sullivan’s promotion to assistant town manager in May 2007, the town staff had been reorganized to increase Ms. Sullivan’s responsibility by having the development services engineer and the town geologist report to her.

Ms. George recently announced that the organization chart would be returning, more or less, to its earlier structure following a planned review of the reorganization. Ms. George said she had had no conversations with Ms. Sullivan on the topic.

A recruiter is on the job finding a replacement, a process that will likely take three or four months, Ms. George said. She said she plans to hire an interim planning director shortly.

**Art Eisberg** with a map he created from NASA satellite data, which can serve as a tool to aid in disaster preparedness.

Photo by Veronica Weber/*The Almanac*



## Local graduate takes on storms, high water

By Selena Simmons-Duffin

*Special to the Almanac*

With increasing public attention on climate change and natural disasters, one local graduate has returned to the Peninsula to address these very concerns.

Art Eisberg, a 2004 graduate of Woodside High School

with a recently completed bachelor’s degree in geography from UC Santa Barbara, is spending his summer as a DEVELOP intern at NASA’s Ames Research Center in Mountain View. There, he and a team of students from all over the country are turning NASA satellite data about Pacific storms into easy-to-understand visuals that could

aid in disaster preparedness efforts.

Specifically, the team is examining information such as wind speeds, rainfall, and water temperature, and using that data to build an interactive computer program that renders the information visually. The program produces visuals that look simi-

See **NASA**, page 8





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## Ex-finance director John Johns cleared in criminal probe over outside work

By Andrea Gemmet  
Almanac Staff Writer

■ **ATHERTON**

Atherton's ex-finance director John Johns took on outside consulting jobs while working for the town, but the San Mateo County District Attorney's Office won't be pursuing any criminal charges against him.

After a months-long investigation, Inspector Ivan Grosshauser told The Almanac that he found nothing in Mr. Johns' conduct that would merit criminal prosecution.

George Camerlengo, Mr. Johns' attorney, said through his receptionist that he had no comment about the case.

The District Attorney's Office checked into allegations that Mr. Johns used town computers or time that should have been spent working for the town to pursue outside jobs, actions that could constitute a theft or misuse of public funds.

In searching through 18 months-worth of e-mail sent out by Mr. Johns during normal business hours, Mr. Grosshauser said he could find only one dozen to two dozen e-mails related to Mr. Johns' consulting jobs.

"It's not voluminous, it's occasional," he said. "Technically, there are violations there, but in my investigation it became clear to me that it didn't rise to the level that (the DA's) office should become involved in it."

Almost every employee takes the occasional personal phone call or non-work-related e-mail while on the job, even if employers have policies prohibiting it, Mr. Grosshauser said.

Mr. Johns freely admitted to taking consulting jobs, but sorting out the work hours is a bit more complicated. As a management employee, Mr. Johns was not paid overtime and could theoretically balance out

his hours for the town throughout the week, Mr. Grosshauser said. Atherton also had no written

policy prohibiting outside employment, he noted.

"Apparently, Mr. Johns was doing a fine job, so there's no apparent loss on the part of the town of Atherton," Mr. Grosshauser said.

Former City Manager Jim Robinson, who retired shortly before Mr. Johns was placed on leave last August and subsequently fired, said he was satisfied with Mr. Johns' performance, Mr. Grosshauser said.

"The city manager basically said that (Mr. Johns) did so well for Atherton that he had no idea that (Mr. Johns) had outside employment, too," said Mr. Grosshauser.

The allegations about misuse of town property first turned up in private investigator Mary Topliff's report made last fall. Ms. Topliff was hired by the town to investigate complaints that Mr. Johns was creating a hostile workplace.

Her investigation of Mr. Johns failed to substantiate the hostile workplace claims, but Ms. Topliff reported that the then-finance director allegedly used town property to work on his outside consulting jobs, and did some of his outside work when he was supposed to be working for Atherton.

Mr. Johns served as the town's top financial officer from November 2001 until he was fired in late October by Atherton's interim city manager, Wende Protzman.

His public profile rose during the 2006 audits of the Atherton Building Department and the concurrent investigation by the San Mateo County Civil Grand Jury. Mr. Johns recently resumed a \$500,000 wrongful termination lawsuit against the town. He withdrew the lawsuit in March, due to the ongoing criminal investigation, but re-filed it last month. ■

## St. Joseph's School in Atherton names new principal

Bridget Collins, a native of Houston, Texas, who for the past 13 years was principal of St. Cecilia Catholic School in that city, has been named principal of the lower and middle school of St. Joseph's School of the Sacred Heart in Atherton.

Ms. Collins started July 7, replacing Mike Murphy, who served as interim principal during the 2007-08 school year, said spokeswoman Dawna Houston in a news release.

Prior to serving as principal at the K-8 St. Cecilia, Ms. Collins taught elementary school at St. Francis Desales School and at Queen of Peace Catholic School, both in Houston.

"I'm excited about moving to

a new place," she said about moving to the Bay Area after spending her entire life in Houston.

Ms. Collins is a graduate of the Duchesne Academy of the Sacred Heart in Houston, an all-girls Catholic school, and holds a bachelor's degree in history from the University of Houston and a dual master's degree in educational administration and elementary education from the University of St. Thomas in Houston.



Bridget Collins

"The goals and criteria of a Sacred Heart education are fundamental to her educational philosophy," said Rich Dioli, director of Sacred Heart Schools in Atherton, which includes the high school, Sacred Heart Preparatory.

Mr. Murphy, the former interim principal at St. Joseph's, has served as a teacher and administrator at Sacred Heart Schools for 16 years. He will return to the classroom at St. Joseph's to teach religion and math in the middle school.

The Sacred Heart Schools campus is at 150 Valparaiso Ave. in Atherton. For more information, go to <http://www.shschools.org>.

## Adoption fees for shelter cats waived

The Peninsula Humane Society is waiving the adoption fee through August for all shelter cats at least 5 years old.

This is the time of year when mature cats are often passed over due to the abundance of kittens. "We're saying that finding a home is far more important than collecting a fee," says the society's president Ken

White.

The seasonal program was made possible by donors Charlotte Toerck and Johannes Hoeh of Redwood City.

Adoption hours are 11 a.m. to 7 p.m. on weekdays and 11 a.m. to 6 p.m. on weekends. The Humane Society is located at 12 Airport Blvd., San Mateo. For more information, call 685-8510.

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## REAL ESTATE Q&A

by Gloria Darke



We Have to Move Now!

Dear Gloria,

We are in the unfortunate position of having to make a move now which as I understand it, is about as bad as it gets timing wise. What is the formula for selling for top dollar in a downward trending market? What do we need to do to get our house in selling shape?

Margaret T.

Dear Margaret,

It is an interesting market right now. If you believe everything you read, yes, it's not good. But if you look at our local statistics, it's not bad. There have been several houses in the last few weeks which have had multiple offers. So what do you do to position your home to be one that also attracts many buyers? The absolutely most important thing you can do is price it right from the very beginning. "Testing the market" doesn't

work and you never really recover from that first pricing mistake. You can lower your price but it's too late to get the interest and activity that you get from the initial first time on the market excitement.

The way the property is presented is the second most important element to successful marketing. You should paint every room in your house to give it a new fresh look and smell. Add that new carpet and flooring to immediately perk up a home. Replace things that need replacement such as faucets, switch plates and light fixtures. Make sure the house is really clean and that it sparkles. Hire a professional cleaning service and include the windows.

If you pay attention to these main things, you should attract some of the buyers who lost out on the last house! And don't believe everything you read. Talk to the local experts who know this market.

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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# Renovating Burgess Park for a full-sized soccer field

By **Rory Brown**  
Almanac Staff Writer

Menlo Park's Parks and Recreation Commission is set to decide what combination of lights, artificial turf, and natural grass should be at the core of a plan to remodel Burgess Park to provide a full-sized soccer field.

On Wednesday, July 16, commissioners will weigh three proposals, all of which include filling most of the park's baseball dirt infield with grass or artificial turf to make way for a full-sized soccer field that would share space with the baseball diamond. Commissioners are expected to choose one plan to recommend to the City Council for approval.

The meeting is set to start at 6 p.m. in the Burgess Recreation Center at 700 Alma St.

The park, at the center of the city's Civic Center complex, underwent drastic renovations

in 2004 that were paid for by the first wave of Measure T funding, the recreation bond measure passed by voters in 2001.

The city planned to build an adult-sized soccer field — something sports groups say the city desperately needs — at the site, but the late addition of a basketball court and skate park to the park's design led to less field space devoted to soccer.

A subcommittee of city staff, parks commissioners and a consultant has come up with three plans to get a full-sized soccer field at the site:

- Replacing the baseball field's dirt infield with grass at a cost of \$211,000.

- Replacing the baseball field's dirt field with grass and adding lights to the baseball/soccer field and adjacent Little League field at a cost of \$671,000.

- Replacing the existing grass fields and infield dirt with arti-

**A full-sized soccer field** could fit at Burgess Park if the baseball infield dirt is replaced with grass or artificial turf. The two sports would continue to share space.

Courtesy Callander Associates



cial turf, and adding lights to the baseball/soccer field and adjacent Little League field at a cost of \$2.68 million.

According to the first two plans, the only portion of the

baseball infield that would remain dirt would be the first- and third-base paths.

In June, parks commissioners voted unanimously to recommend a plan to add a full-sized

soccer field and running track to Kelly Park in the city's Belle Haven neighborhood — another park that was recently renovated, but is underused, mainly due to design flaws. ■

## Giving Dumbarton Rail money to BART

**DUMBARTON**

continued from page 5

from the Altamont Commute Express, Capitol Corridor, BART, and buses to connect directly with Caltrain stations on the Peninsula

Now, SamTrans has purchased the right of way as far as Newark, \$300 million in funds have been secured, and planning is well under way for trains to begin running by 2012.

Partial engineering, and an environmental impact report should be complete by late 2009, and construction could start in 2010, Mr. Bigelow said.

Initial service would consist of six round trips per day. Six morning trains from the East Bay would travel to Redwood City, where three would go north toward San Francisco, and three would head south to San Jose. They would return in the evening.

"We're only talking about six trains a day. We're not talking about trains at night," Ms. Lempert said. "It won't have freight; that's what people are worried about. The line will eventually be electrified."

Nevertheless, a host of problems still face the project, even if it hangs on to the \$91 million. The estimated cost has doubled to \$600 million, and there are tricky negotiations with Union Pacific, which still owns the right of way between Newark and Union City.

At the same time, changes in the economy may make expansion of transit even more important. Ms. Lempert cited population growth, the revival of Silicon Valley, and soaring gas prices. "There will be gridlock on the Dumbarton (highway) Bridge," she said. "Getting on and off the Dumbarton Bridge is already a problem. All this will intensify in the coming years."

Ms. Lempert suggested the MTC might fund a rapid bus line across the highway bridge in the interim before trains are ready to run.

Mr. Bigelow suggested the projects could be phased to allow service to begin on schedule and postpone less critical components.

There also remains substantial opposition to reviving train service, particularly from the communities of Lorelei Manor, Suburban Park and North Fair

Oaks that are threaded by the tracks

Hearings on the environmental impact report in 2009 will allow opponents to push for alternatives, such as buses.

Mr. Robinson supports bus rapid transit as cheaper and potentially better. "I'm open to whatever the best solution is," he said. "There are not enough transit dollars to go around. We need to use the transit dollars we have most effectively."

Santa Clara County is split, with the San Jose area committed to BART, and northern communities more favorable to Dumbarton solutions. This year's Santa Clara County Civil Grand Jury slammed the Dumbarton rail project and recommended that Santa Clara County withdraw.

Meanwhile, Palo Alto Mayor Yoriko Kishimoto, a member of the Dumbarton policy advisory committee and also the Valley Transportation Authority board, blasted the proposed transfer of funds to BART, in an opinion piece in the Palo Alto Daily News. "BART to Warm Springs is in itself a bridge to nowhere," she wrote, since the county can't afford the further extension to San Jose. She called for a more regional vision, including improvements to modernize Caltrain.

Anything to do with BART in the East Bay seems to be unpopular on this side of the Bay. "I don't support expanding BART anywhere," said Mr. Robinson.

Ms. Lempert questioned MTC's commitment to BART. The real damage BART is doing, she said, is to "take money away from all other transit projects."

"Is it better to get people to Warm Springs? Or to get them across the Bay?" ■

### ■ INFORMATION

Two key community meetings are planned to deal with the issue of diverting funds from Dumbarton rail to BART. The Citizens Advisory Panel will meet Wednesday, July 16, at 7 p.m. in the Menlo Park Senior Center, 110 Terminal Ave. in Menlo Park; the Dumbarton Rail Policy Advisory Committee, made up of public officials from communities served by the rail project, will meet Tuesday, July 22, at 2 p.m. in Palo Alto City Hall, 250 Hamilton Ave.

## PV man reports mountain lion attack

A 50-year-old man from Portola Valley hiking alone in Foothills Park at about 4 p.m. Saturday reported being knocked down from behind by a mountain lion. He told police he tumbled down a 15-foot slope and struck a tree, and then saw the lion tumble down the same slope into Los Trancos Creek.

The big cat then scampered away, according to Palo Alto Police Agent Dan Ryan. The hiker had "scrapes and bruises" but did not require medical

attention, Mr. Ryan said.

The hiker's name was not disclosed at press time. Check [TheAlmanacOnline.com](http://TheAlmanacOnline.com) for updates.

Officials from the California Department of Fish and Game and the U.S. Department of Fish and Wildlife were brought to assist city park rangers. They believe the mountain lion may have been an adolescent that "misjudged his prey."

— Don Kazak, Palo Alto Weekly

**NASA**

continued from page 5

lar to a TV weather forecast.

Mr. Eisberg's team is working with historical information from severe Pacific storms from the last few years, but the computer program they create might have use in making predictions on what to expect when a storm is threatening, he says.

For example, in an emergency, coastal communities could input information about a developing storm or flood into the program, and use the visuals it produces to predict the course of the storm and its likely effects.

These timely predictions would help coastal emergency workers make decisions on how best to prepare for the storm, ideally lessening damage to property and livelihoods.

Although Mr. Eisberg's internship is a NASA program, his

project is actually part of Pacific Regional Integrated Climatology Information Products, a program of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. Mr. Eisberg's team is building off of work done by last year's interns.

The internship started in early June, and Mr. Eisberg says it's been going well so far. At this early stage, he says, his team is mostly doing a lot of brainstorming: "We're trying to get our hands dirty a little bit in terms of looking at the raw data from the satellite."

After they've explored the data, they can come up with ideas on what kind of visuals would be the most helpful and informative to communities affected by storms on the Pacific. ■

### ■ INFORMATION

For more information about the DEVELOP internship, go to <http://develop.larc.nasa.gov>. Information about PRICIP can be found at [www.pricip.org](http://www.pricip.org).



# County could shield schools, towns from \$20 million clerical blunder

By **Andrea Gemmet**  
Almanac Staff Writer

A clerical blunder may cost San Mateo County and its schools and towns \$20 million, which is what a judge says is owed to South San Francisco-based Genentech.

School funding accounts for approximately 40 percent of the \$20 million due to Genentech, according to County Counsel Michael Murphy. The county's share is about \$3 million, he said.

The refund could mean a financial blow to school districts, cities and agencies in the county — or, under a proposal by Supervisor Jerry Hill, the county's reserve fund could absorb the entire amount.

Essentially, Genentech won a lower assessment of some of its property on a technicality. In 2005, a clerk accidentally omitted the parcel numbers on a legal notice of the assessment appeal filed by the bio-tech giant, said Mr. Murphy.

Lawyers for Genentech argued that this screw-up caused the county to miss the deadline to hear the company's appeal. If the deadline is missed, the property value defaults to whatever the appellant — in this case, Genentech — claims the property is worth.

A Superior Court judge agreed with Genentech, and now county officials are reeling at the thought of paying back an estimated \$20 million in property tax overcharges dating back to 1994.

Genentech's massive campus accounts for nearly 1 percent of all property taxes collected in the county, said Mr. Murphy.

Supervisor Hill told The Almanac he hopes the county can negotiate a more favorable settlement with Genentech, but barring that, schools and cities should be shielded from paying back their share of the money. Cities and schools rely on the county to properly assess property taxes and distribute the tax money to them, he said.

"If we didn't do that correctly, or a mistake was made in the process due to no fault of theirs, (cities and schools) shouldn't be held responsible," Mr. Hill said.

Mr. Hill said that, since the Genentech issue is an ongoing legal matter, he can't say whether his idea was

discussed by the Board of Supervisors in last week's closed session meeting about the judge's decision.

San Mateo County's budget has a structural deficit projected to last for several years, Mr. Hill said, but there is a healthy reserve fund.

"The county is in a rough situation in the long run," he said. "But we do have a comfortable level of reserves. We've been very fiscally responsible."

In a recently adopted budget, reserves were projected to remain healthy at almost \$210 million, or 21 percent of spending.

## School districts

The idea of the county absorbing the financial blow sounds good to Tim Hanretty, the acting superintendent of Woodside Elementary School and the assistant superintendent of the Portola Valley School District.

"I think that's a wonderful idea. The worst-case scenario is that it has to be all paid back in one year, and the best case is what Supervisor Hill is proposing," Mr. Hanretty told The Almanac. "This comes two weeks after we've all adopted our budgets, so the timing couldn't be worse."

Portola Valley has some experience with painful property tax reassessments. The district expects to lose about \$300,000 this year, its share of a \$3 million hit to the county when Larry Ellison successfully challenged the valuation of his Woodside estate this spring.

If schools do end up chipping in to pay back Genentech, "basic aid" districts such as Portola Valley, Woodside Elementary, Las Lomitas and Menlo Park will have to take the hit, said county Supervisor Rich Gordon. Poorer school districts — so-called revenue limit districts that receive per-pupil funding from the state — can apply to the state for reimbursement, Mr. Gordon said.

"Revenue-limit districts would have to have funds back-filled by the state. They have to be made whole," he said.

Mr. Gordon said he's still waiting to see a breakdown of exactly where the \$20 million would come from, but it wasn't available as of The Almanac's press deadline on Monday. ■

# Menlo's Derry project denied state funds

By **Rory Brown**  
Almanac Staff Writer

The California Housing and Community Development Department has rejected a request for up to \$4.02 million of state funding for the Derry project, but the developer behind the 108-condo project proposed for downtown Menlo Park says it will still get built.

Citing rising construction costs and sub-prime mortgage trends, the San Mateo-based O'Brien Group said earlier this year that there was a "significant risk" the project, estimated to cost \$34 million, might not get built without additional funding. In May, the City Council voted unanimously to co-sign an application for the state funds.

The state designates the funds for multi-home projects proposed near transit stations. To be eligible for the funds, the O'Brien Group

had to prove that the project was not economically feasible without additional funding — a claim that didn't hold in the eyes of state officials.

"Ultimately, the Derry project didn't fare well against the state's criteria for this particular grant," said Justin Murphy, the city's development services manager.

Possibly validating the state's decision, Jim Pollart, spokesperson for the O'Brien Group, said the project will still move forward, and go to the City Council for consideration later this year.

"We were disappointed to not

receive the state grant funding, but we believe the project is viable without the funds and we're moving forward with the project," Mr. Pollart told The Almanac. "The fact we did not receive the state funds does not affect the timing of the project."

In addition to one-, two-, and three-bedroom condos, the project includes plans for about 25,000 square feet of commercial space and a public plaza. The project is planned for a 3.4-acre site bounded by El Camino Real, Oak Grove Avenue, Derry Lane and the train tracks. ■

## Program celebrates science at SETI

Scientists who study Mars, meteor showers and search for life in the universe will be on hand at the SETI Institute on Saturday, July 19, from 1 to 3 p.m. at 515 N. Whitman Road in Mountain View. TeamSETI members can come at

11:30 a.m.

Fun, interactive crafts, and science-based activities relating to the search for extra-terrestrial life will be available for the whole family. For information, go to [www.seti.org](http://www.seti.org).

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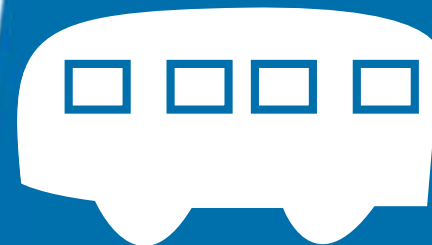
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With gas prices and environmental awareness on the rise, shouldn't it be easier to get around on public transit?



# Missed connections



**By Rory Brown**  
Almanac Staff Writer

It's 8:58 a.m., and I'm not having the smoothest of mornings.

I'm bursting through the just-opened doors of a Caltrain

station to chase after the 295 SamTrans bus — a bus I'm supposed to be on — as it rolls out of the station, crosses El Camino Real and chugs down Santa Cruz Avenue.

I clench my tote bag against my chest, and I take off after the bus — a chase that lasts all of

one minute before the El Camino Real traffic light changes with the bus on one side of the street and me on the other.

I'm on day one of a five-day experiment of riding public transportation to, from, in and around Menlo Park, and writing about my experience for The

Almanac. No car, no rides, no bike — just public transit from San Francisco, where I live, to The Almanac's Alameda de las Pulgas office, and anywhere else I need to go.

With gas costing more than \$4.50 per gallon and environmental awareness hitting a fever

pitch, I figured it was a good idea to live the public transit experience and write about it.

But as I catch my breath on the corner of Santa Cruz Avenue and El Camino Real, I'm not giving one iota of thought to my carbon footprint or the money I saved this morning by riding



## SO, WHAT CAN WE DO ABOUT THIS?

At a time when more riders on public transit could help reduce greenhouse gases and dependence on foreign oil, what can transit agencies do to reduce the missed connections reported on these pages and encourage more people to ride trains and buses.

Many people in local communities have ideas, and *The Almanac* will be reporting these online and in future issues of the paper.

You can join the conversation on:  
[TheAlmanacOnline.com](http://TheAlmanacOnline.com)



Photo by Veronica Weber/The Almanac

**Sitting and staring** were common experiences for staff writer Rory Brown of *The Almanac* during his five-day public transit experiment. At left, he takes a 39-minute train ride from San Francisco to Menlo Park on a limited service Caltrain. Above, following the train ride, he waits about 30 minutes at a bus stop in downtown Menlo Park. His hand-written schedules, shown above, helped him track bus and train times.

the train. Instead, I'm laughing in disbelief at the bizarre nature of Menlo Park's public transit system.

You see, my train didn't arrive in Menlo Park late, and my bus didn't leave the station early — everything was right on time.

According to Caltrain's weekday schedule, a southbound Caltrain is supposed to leave San Francisco at 8:19 a.m. and arrive in Menlo Park at 8:58 a.m. According to the SamTrans 295-line weekday schedule, a bus is supposed to leave the same station and head toward the city's Sharon Heights neighborhood at 8:56 a.m.

Yes, that's actually the way the schedules read — a bus is scheduled to pick up people at the train station exactly two minutes before the train actually arrives. So when the bus and train are right on time (as they are today) the bus is on its way out before anyone sets foot on the Caltrain platform.

The next bus isn't scheduled to come until 9:53 a.m.

I saw the schedules the previous night so, to a point, I knew what I was getting myself into. But part of me didn't believe that Caltrain and SamTrans — two agencies that actually share staff and resources — could mesh so poorly.

Now I've seen it, I believe it, and rather than wait 53 minutes for a two-mile bus ride, I set out on the 40-minute walk to work.

### Connection problems

So why don't the train and bus systems connect any better in Menlo Park?

According to Caltrain and

SamTrans spokesperson Christine Dunn, people in this area don't use the train and the bus as part of their daily commutes; they tend to use one system or the other.

"I don't think a lot of people take trains and buses," Ms. Dunn said. "Plus, if we don't have a certain number of riders, we're not going to increase one service at the expense of another. ... This is mass transit, so we have to try and come up with solutions that meet the needs of the highest number of people."

But there lies the Catch-22 of public transit.

Agencies such as Caltrain and SamTrans wait for ridership to go up before increasing the frequency and improving con-

### 'We have such fragmented transit service, and connectivity is one of the biggest challenges.'

Menlo Park Councilwoman Kelly Fergusson

nections of any given service. Meanwhile, people who could take public transit but don't necessarily have to, aren't going to use a system that doesn't stop frequently enough or connect well. Until they see a change, they stick with their cars.

So in the end, the connectivity — or lack thereof — of the greater transit system remains unchanged.

"We have such fragmented transit service, and connectivity

is one of the biggest challenges," said Menlo Park Councilwoman Kelly Fergusson.

"If the connectivity isn't good, people go back to their cars," said Jim Bigelow, chair of Menlo Park Chamber of Commerce's transportation committee. "If the fuel prices stay up, all the agencies really need to look at their services and do everything in their powers to make those connections work."

The Bay Area is full of transit agencies, all with their own tickets, fares, maps and schedules. Along with SamTrans and Caltrain, there's BART, the Santa Clara Valley Transportation Authority (VTA), AC Transit in the East Bay, San Francisco's Muni system, and others.

Ms. Dunn acknowledged that connectivity is "one of the toughest issues" facing Caltrain and SamTrans, but she stressed that the agencies are always trying to make it easier for riders, evident in baby bullet trains, express bus lines, and Caltrain-sponsored free shuttle service to and from local stations. (Shuttles take people to and from Marsh and Willow roads in Menlo Park.)

And those efforts, coupled with higher gas prices, have led to higher ridership, she said.

According to system-wide data, Caltrain recorded 39,940 riders on an average April 2008 weekday — up 13.5 percent from the 35,200 riders in April 2007. Caltrain shuttle ridership also spiked more than 14 percent; bus ridership increased a more modest 3.7 percent to an average of 49,430 weekday riders.

"People have to get creative how they get to and from public transportation, and we're trying to help on both ends of the commute," Ms. Dunn said. "We'll just never be able to satisfy every individual need."

### The waiting game

It's 6:15 p.m., I'm sitting at the 295 bus stop on the corner of Avy and Cloud avenues, and it's looking as if I have some individual needs that public transit isn't going to satisfy — not today, at least.

After starting my day chasing a bus, I'm waiting for one that's late, bitterly accepting that I'm going to miss my 6:19 p.m. train back to San Francisco.

### I'm entirely dependent on a system in which planning trips takes far longer than the trips themselves.

I call SamTrans customer service, the operator tells me that the 295 bus, which was supposed to arrive at 5:48, is running 29 minutes late and should be here any minute. I ask if there's a way that I can check online to find out whether tomorrow's bus is actually running on time, to prevent another long wait, and the answer is a polite "no."

Sure enough, the bus comes just as my Caltrain is scheduled to leave the station. I pay \$1.50 for a six-minute ride, and then I wait some more — this time for

the 6:48 p.m. Caltrain.

I get to San Francisco at 7:24 p.m., about two hours after leaving *The Almanac* office, and I still have to get home from the train station. I am exhausted.

### Stress of the schedule

Over the next several days, I get more accustomed to life on public transit.

The connections are still tricky (I take a later southbound train, but still have to wait 30 minutes for a bus), but to an extent, I get used to them.

I run errands when I get off the train, the buses and trains are clean and relatively quiet, and I'm not spending \$15 per day on gas driving 35 miles to and from the office.

But I am stressed out.

I'm entirely dependent on a system in which planning trips takes far longer than the trips themselves. Instead of having the ability to make a 10-minute trip to the bank or grocery store, I must rely on a system that is sometimes on time, and sometimes not.

Getting north or south along El Camino Real and the Caltrain line is easy, but trying to get east or west from the center of the city (such as my daily trip to *The Almanac's* office from the Caltrain station) is not.

In an age where people can get updates for just about anything via e-mail, text message, or phone, there isn't an easy way to figure out if a local bus or train is running on time.

I have to carry around maps, schedules, my \$49 Caltrain pass

See **PUBLIC TRANSIT**, page 12





Photo by Veronica Weber/The Almanac

The 295 SamTrans bus usually has few — if any — people on it as it travels from the Menlo Park Caltrain station toward The Almanac's Alameda de las Pulgas office.

## PUBLIC TRANSIT

*continued from page 11*

(good for 10 trips), and dollar bills and quarters to pay the \$1.50 SamTrans fare and \$1.75 VTA bus fare.

Navigating transit Web sites is also complicated.

SamTrans.org refers to El Camino Real as a north-south road, while VTA.org refers to the same street as an east-west connection. SamTrans.org lists only some of its own bus stops in its online schedules, and VTA.org doesn't recognize SamTrans routes at all.

Even 511.org, operated by the Metropolitan Transportation Commission, which oversees Bay Area transportation, doesn't register The Almanac's address (or any nearby bus stops) thanks to a misspelling of "Pulgas" as "Pul-gus" in the Web site's database.

### Improvements coming?

According to local transit agencies, improvements to the system are coming.

Now it's a matter of when the agencies will follow through on those promises.

The SamTrans and Caltrain Web sites will be revamped some time next year so people can go online to check real-time train and bus arrivals and departures, Ms. Dunn said. She noted that riders will also be able to get updates via e-mail or cell phone about any delays or schedule changes.

MTC spokesperson John Goodwin said the "Translink"

card, a debit card of sorts that will eventually act as a ticket on every Bay Area transit agency, will be accepted by Caltrain in upcoming months, and the system could find its way to SamTrans and VTA buses by 2009 or 2010.

The Translink card is one way MTC is trying to achieve the greater goal of getting people to cut their driving by 10 percent by the year 2035, Mr. Goodwin said. Instead of keeping track of multiple tickets and fares, riders can board any type of transit with the swipe of a card.

Menlo Park Councilman Heyward Robinson said it's good for agencies like MTC to set high goals, but all agencies have to be on board to solve the regional issue of getting more people to board public transit.

"Do we have a public transit system that can meet people's needs? I think that's the big question and the answer depends on where you're going," Mr. Robinson said. "I'd like to see these agencies become a little more customer friendly and make an effort to increase ridership. This is a regional problem that needs regional solutions."

And increasing ridership, according to former Menlo Park councilman Steve Schmidt, requires increasing service.

"I would say that the transit agencies need to step up and buy more equipment and hire more people," Mr. Schmidt said. "We need people who think practically and can connect these services to each other — not put all our

transit dollars into one bucket."

### Crossing county lines

It's 4:15 p.m. on day four of my public transit efforts, and I am roasting at a bus stop on the corner of El Camino Real and Live Oak Avenue.

**In an age where people can get updates for just about anything via e-mail, text message, or phone, there isn't an easy way to figure out if a local bus or train is running on time.**

It's 90 degrees outside, and I'm waiting for the SamTrans 390, which rolls through Menlo Park on El Camino Real, and takes passengers to the Palo Alto Transit Center.

I'm taking this bus because this same route used to be covered by the VTA 22, which looped from the Menlo Park Caltrain station to Eastridge Mall in San Jose.

The route was one of the few ways for Menlo Park residents to get into Santa Clara County via public transit, but the VTA cut Menlo Park service in January, citing low ridership and overlap with the SamTrans 390 bus.

Now, riders have to take the

SamTrans 390 to Palo Alto and transfer to the VTA 22 to go any farther south.

Waiting for the SamTrans 390, I talked with David Carroll, a former Menlo Park resident who still works downtown, but now lives in Mountain View and regularly takes the bus to work.

"I work one block away from a [SamTrans] 390 stop, and I live one block away from a [VTA] 22 stop," Mr. Carroll said. "The system isn't as integrated as it should be and there are some discontinuities, but one day I decided I'd do my part and resist the temptation to jump in my car."

I got to see one of those discontinuities firsthand as the SamTrans 390 pulled into the Palo Alto station. Right as it pulled in, a southbound VTA 22 pulled out, sparking grumbling and groans from Mr. Carroll and a handful of others planning to transfer.

Mr. Carroll and the other VTA 22 riders had to wait nine minutes for the next bus.

### Another fare

Bernice Alaniz, a VTA spokesperson, acknowledged that the 22-line isn't the seamless trip it once was for Menlo Park riders, but said that people have adjusted to the change.

"We had some [duplication] with SamTrans, and we wanted to increase frequencies on other lines," Ms. Alaniz said. "People were apprehensive at first, but now that the change is in place, they seem to be OK with it."

But the casual rider also has

to pay two fares to switch from a SamTrans bus to a VTA bus. While the two agencies accept monthly and daily passes from each other, they don't accept single fares.

That means the trip from Menlo Park to anywhere south of Palo Alto would cost a casual rider \$3.25.

### Car culture

It's day five of my experiment, and I'm on my last Caltrain trip home. For the first time in three years of driving a 70-mile round-trip commute, I cannot wait to drive a car.

Sure, I cut my carbon footprint and saved some money, but I almost lost my mind in the process.

There were just too many connections, too much time spent waiting, and too much time spent worrying about waiting and worrying about connections.

I took on this story to learn more about how public transit works in Menlo Park, but I also learned more about my own dependence on a gas-guzzling, single-occupancy, it's-there-when-I-need-it car.

"Maybe one of the reasons it's hard to pull people out of their cars is because our cars are part of who we are," Councilman Robinson said. "We depend on them, and couple that with how hard it is to get around in the current transit system, and we get addicted to driving."

Well, I went cold turkey for five days, and I need a driving fix. At least, I do in Menlo Park. ■



## Mindego Ranch transferred to open space district

Starting this fall, the public will be able to take docent-led hikes on historic Mindego Ranch, capped by landmark Mindego Hill just west of Skyline Boulevard, now that it has been acquired by the Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District.

On July 10, the open space district took ownership of the 1,047-acre working ranch from the Peninsula Open Space Trust (POST), which purchased it last October from the family of the late Admiral Arnold True, who bought it in 1954.

The ranch will be incorporated into the district's 1,978-acre Russian Ridge Open Space Preserve just west of Skyline Boulevard and north of Alpine Road.

"Mindego Ranch is a stunning addition to the central California greenbelt," said district General Manager Steve Abbors. "We are looking forward to our role in protecting it and making it available for public enjoyment."

POST engineered the deal by purchasing the land for \$28.5 million, and selling it to the district for \$22.5 million. POST more than made up for the difference through its GoMindego campaign. More than 1,300 donors gave \$7.2 million in contributions ranging from \$15 to \$1 million, according to POST President Audrey Rust.

The open space district paid

\$15 million of its own money for Mindego Ranch, and received a \$7.5 million grant from the California Coastal Conservancy.

Near the top of the district's priority list for years, Mindego Hill's 2,143-foot summit offers 360-degree views of the Bay and Coastsides as far as Monterey.

The property is connected to nearly 33,000 acres of other protected land, Ms. Rust said. It has hiking trails, and over four miles of perennial streams, plus lakes, ponds and springs in the watershed of San Gregorio Creek above La Honda. It is home to abundant wildlife and several rare species.

"Mindego Hill has been at the top of our list for high-priority protection for nearly 30 years," she said.

The name Mindego Hill goes back to 1859, when Basque farmer Juan Mindico established the first homestead and cattle ranch there.

The district plans to maintain grazing on the ranch. It is actively collecting data on natural and cultural resources before starting an open process to plan for preservation, public access, agriculture, and other uses for the property.

For more information, call the open space district at 691-1200 or go to [openspace.org](http://openspace.org).

POST can be reached at 854-7696 or [www.openspacetrust.org](http://www.openspacetrust.org) or [gomindego.org](http://gomindego.org). ■

## Case dismissed in train-station fire

■ Key prosecution witness is called away to fight a wildfire.

By Dave Boyce  
Almanac Staff Writer

Fortune appears to have smiled this week upon Jun Yin, 19, of Palo Alto, who had been accused of setting a fire that caused about \$60,000 in damage to the Atherton train station in April 2007.

On the second day of Mr. Yin's jury trial, a key witness for the prosecution — Menlo Park Fire Protection District firefighter Dave Dickinson, who had inspected the train station after the fire — was called away for two weeks to fight a wildfire in Butte County.

Mr. Dickinson's absence was a key factor in the judge's decision to dismiss the case on Wednesday, July 9, Chief Deputy District Attorney Steve Wagstaffe said in an email message.

Mr. Yin, who had not been jailed, was free to go after retired Judge John Schwartz of San Mateo County Superior Court dismissed the case. Mr. Yin is not subject to further criminal prosecution since he cannot be tried twice for the same offense, said his attorney Edward Rojas.

The prosecutor, Christopher Feasel, asked the judge to continue the trial, presumably to a date after his witness returned, Mr. Wagstaffe said, but the judge denied the request, principally out of concern for retaining the jury after he had told them that the case would be over by the end of the week. Mr. Feasel declined to

### ■ ATHERTON

talk about the case.

The judge also offered to reduce the charge from a felony to a misdemeanor, but the defense declined, rightly surmising that a dismissal was in the offing, Mr. Wagstaffe said.

Mr. Dickinson had been subpoenaed, but in the year since the train station fire, he had requested reassignment and is now on a strike team that, when called upon to assist in a major fire, has just minutes to drop everything and go, fire district Chief Harold Schapelhouman said. The strike team got the call on Wednesday, the second day of the trial.

### Facts in dispute

Mr. Yin had been charged with "unlawfully causing a fire of a structure," Assistant District Attorney Morley Pitt said, adding that arson was too strong a word to describe the April 1, 2007, incident.

Mr. Yin and two companions

had been kicked off the train in Atherton after having boarded without tickets in Redwood City, Mr. Wagstaffe said.

They arrived at the station at 4 p.m. and were there for 15 to 20 minutes, defense attorney Rojas said.

At some point, Mr. Yin picked up a paperback book from the ground, set it on fire, stomped on it in an attempt to put it out, then left the station with his companions, Mr. Wagstaffe said.

The book continued to smolder, ignited a recycling bin, then spread to the station at about 4:45 p.m., he said.

Whether "this so-called book" was, in fact, a book, and where it ended up are in dispute, Mr. Rojas said. The fire was reported to have begun 20 to 30 minutes after Mr. Yin left, ample time for someone else to have caused it, Mr. Rojas noted.

The fire damaged the station's roof, side walls and windows, Atherton Police Chief Bob Brennan said.

Caltrain owns the station and repaired it at Atherton's request, he said. ■

## Boys & Girls Clubs celebrate anniversary

Hundreds of people showed up Saturday at the Menlo Park branch of the Boys & Girls Clubs of the Peninsula to celebrate the organizations 50th anniversary, said spokesman Christiaan L. Canter.

Among those present were Menlo Park Mayor Andy Cohen, former mayor and club board member Billy Ray White, and long time

club director Jacqueline Glaster.

The organization now has nine locations and serves more than 3,000 children a year, he said.

Two more community festivals are planned: July 26 in Redwood City and Aug. 2 in East Palo Alto. The organization is also hosting a 50th Anniversary Golden Gala Celebration in October.

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#### CLARINET

Anthony McGill

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Dennis Godburn

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#### BARITONE

Robert Gardner

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## Ladera church seeks to envision life in East Africa

By Dave Boyce

Almanac Staff Writer

The punishing and seemingly intractable realities of life in an impoverished community in East Africa are a world away from the agreeable climate and lifestyle of the average Bay Area resident.

So it would seem particularly difficult to meaningfully address the differences between life here and life there, but a group of Ladera residents is trying anyway. Their mode of transport: compassion.

Members of the Ladera Community Church United Church of Christ are meeting throughout the summer to consider compassion — what it is, how to elicit it, and its relationship to Christianity, said spokeswoman Elisabeth Bellows in a statement.

The public is invited to the summer-long “Compassion in Action” program, which includes discussion of the conditions of poverty in Africa, how to increase one’s empathy and how to take action, Ms. Bellows said.

July’s guest speaker will be Anne Firth Murray, a Stanford University biology professor and an advocate for women’s health, status and well-being, who is scheduled to speak on successive Sundays at 11 a.m. at the church at 3100 Alpine Road.

Her July 13 talk addressed the need to focus on women when trying to make a difference in poorer countries, she said in an e-mail message. On July 20, she plans to talk about love as a force for social change. For more on the speakers, go to [www.ladera.org](http://www.ladera.org).

A “hunger banquet” around noon on July 20 will allocate lunch with world-wide dietary realities in mind. Diners draw tickets, with 15 percent receiving “a sumptuous meal,” 35 percent receiving rice and beans, and the remaining 50 percent



Photo courtesy of Ladera Community Church.

**A raffia roof**, walls of tomato stakes and twine, and a clay floor capture African style in this 6-inch-tall version of a Mozambiquan hut, the work of Elisabeth Bellows of the Ladera Community Church. The miniature huts, being made by youths under Ms. Bellows’ direction, are part of a summer-long project meant to encourage compassion for people living in poverty.

making do with small portions of rice and water, according to the Oxfam America Web site.

A discussion is planned for after the meal. “Few participants leave with full stomachs, but all possess a greater understanding of the problems of hunger and poverty and will hopefully be motivated to do something about them,” the Web site says.

### Eliciting compassion

The church’s youths began a hands-on effort in June to create a miniature village that will include a school, a clinic and an orphanage.

The idea, Ms. Bellows said, was to help envision village life, including agricultural development and the need for water.

Each completed building becomes a focus for fundraising, with donations intended for two nonprofits: Heifer International and the Church World Service Water Project.

The youths are also working on a documentary video of the project, Ms. Bellows said. Experienced guidance on filmmaking is welcome, as are unaffiliated youth, she said. The group meets on Sunday mornings.

For more information, go to [www.ladera.org](http://www.ladera.org) or call Donna Lindsay at 854-5481 on Mondays, Tuesdays or Thursdays after 9:30 a.m. ■



## HOW TO DISPOSE OF HAZARDOUS WASTE PROPERLY!

**Household Hazardous Waste** such as paint, chemicals, fluorescent bulbs, automotive fluids, poisons, etc. cannot be put in the trash.

All of these items are accepted at Hazardous Waste Drop-Off Events (no charge for San Mateo County residents). For more information and to register for an event, call 363-4718 or visit [www.smhealth.org/hhw](http://www.smhealth.org/hhw).

Many **electronic products** are also hazardous and cannot be put in the trash. Computer equipment, TVs, stereo equipment, VCRs, phones and answering machines must be given away (if usable) or taken to a Goodwill donation center (<http://locator.goodwill.org/>). If not usable, contact RecycleWorks (below).

**Batteries and cell phones** are now collected from single family homes at curbside with recyclables (must be put in secured plastic bag on top of the mixed paper recycling bin).

Please contact the San Mateo County RecycleWorks Program for donation location information, options for recycling, and proper disposal at 1-888-442-2666 or visit [www.RecycleWorks.org](http://www.RecycleWorks.org).

CLIP AND SAVE!

## HOSTS FOR INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS



Eurocentres Silicon Valley, an English school in Menlo Park, is looking for hosts for summer students from Italy, France, Japan, Spain, Korea, and other countries. Each host provides a private room, breakfast and dinner, and a friendly home atmosphere. Compensation is provided. Please call (650)321-1840 for more information.

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# Parking banned on narrow stretch of Tripp Road

■ Signs to target early-morning athletes who make noise and compromise safety.

By Dave Boyce  
Almanac Staff Writer

Parking restrictions are coming to a section of Tripp Road in Woodside where visitors have been parking, often in the predawn hours, and heading off to trails in Huddart Park and elsewhere to run, bike or hike.

The Town Council, at its July 8 meeting, unanimously approved the installation of no-parking signs on Tripp Road between Kings Mountain Road and Tripp Court.

(Mayor Ron Romines and Councilman Peter Mason were not present for the vote; Councilwoman Sue Boynton chaired the meeting.)

Trails in and around Huddart Park are popular with running teams, and residents of Tripp Road have been complaining about being awakened as early as 5:30 a.m. by slamming car doors, noises associated with car doors locking and unlocking, and loud conversations.

"They slam the door, they

push their (alarm) button and the car horn beeps," said resident Gary Willard. "They go for a run and they come back all hyped up on endorphins."

Meanwhile, residents from other parts of town had asked the council to avoid a total parking ban. The early-morning athletes will respond if told about their behavior, said Brian Pinkerton, who resides in Woodside Glens.

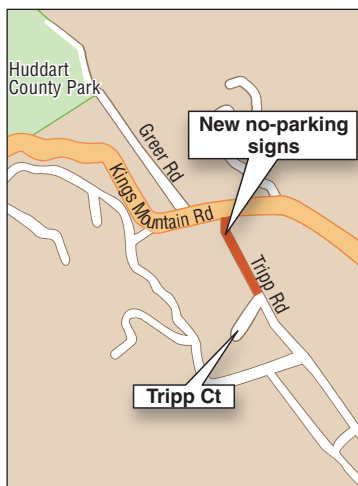
They'd lock their cars with keys rather than with alarm systems, he said. "I'm very surprised that you'd take this draconian step with very little notice to the users."

Safety is also an issue. Emergency vehicles have to wend around parked cars on the narrow road. Equestrians can be forced off the adjacent trail and on to slippery pavement amid traffic, said Fentress Hall, who chairs the Trails Committee. Kids have been bucked off horses, she said.

"Nobody's died, but it's dangerous," she said.

Council members expressed

## WOODSIDE



**Runners, hikers and bikers** who have been parking on Tripp Road and heading off to exercise will have to make other arrangements. The Woodside Town Council voted on July 8 to install no-parking signs between Tripp Court and Kings Mountain Road.

concern that their action will push drivers to find other places to park and simply move the problem without solving it.

The early birds could park in Huddart Park if it opened at 6

rather than 8 a.m., but Town Manager Susan George said the county Parks Department would probably not do that.

In its discussion, the council repeatedly sought alternatives: boulders on the road's shoulder or landscaping, or telephone poles laid flat. People nudge away boulders and poles and run over landscaping, residents replied.

The idea of restricted parking hours would not work, Councilman Dave Burow said, because emergencies are a 24-hour concern, and if safety is a priority, the parking ban should be around the clock, too.

Before the vote, Councilwoman Deborah Gordon tried to include a mandate for an ad hoc committee that would engage the broader community, but the consensus was to wait and see how people respond to the new signs.

Asked to elaborate on what a committee could contribute to a seemingly intractable problem — finding public parking when existing spaces and possibilities for new spaces are at a premium — Ms. Gordon said that Woodside's problem isn't new or unique.

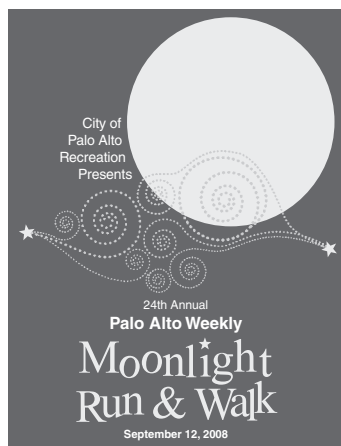
She said in an interview that she didn't know how involving all the competing interests would work out, but said that "we need to be a little bit more creative. ... The worst case is we'd be better educated on the complexity of the issue. If you don't try, you've already lost." ■



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## City of Palo Alto Recreation Presents 24<sup>TH</sup> ANNUAL PALO ALTO WEEKLY MOONLIGHT RUN & WALK FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 12, 2008

### TIME & PLACE

**PLEASE NOTE TIMES: 5K walk 7:15pm, 10K run 8:15pm, 5K run 8:45pm.**

Race-night registration 6:15 to 8:00pm at City of Palo Alto Baylands Athletic Center, Embarcadero & Geng Roads (just east of the Embarcadero Exit off Highway 101).

**Parking** — go to [PaloAltoOnline.com](http://PaloAltoOnline.com) to check for specific parking locations.

### COURSE

5K and 10K loop courses over Palo Alto Baylands levee, through the marshlands by the light of the Harvest Moon! Course is flat, USAT&F certified (10K run only) on levee and paved roads. Water at all stops. (Course map available at [www.PaloAltoOnline.com](http://www.PaloAltoOnline.com))

### REGISTRATIONS & ENTRY FEE

Pre-registration fee is \$20 per entrant (postmarked by **September 5, 2008**) and includes a long-sleeve t-shirt. Late/race-night registration is \$25 and includes a shirt only **while supplies last**. A **scantron card must be filled out at race-night registration**.

**Family package:** Children 12 and under run free with a registered parent. A completed entry form for each child must be submitted with adult registration. **Please indicate on form and include \$10 for an adult small t-shirt. No confirmation of mail-in registration available. Registration also available online at [www.PaloAltoOnline.com](http://www.PaloAltoOnline.com). Refunds will not be issued for no-show registrations (and t-shirts will not be held).**

**SPORTS TEAM/CLUBS:** Pre-registration opportunity for organizations of 10 or more runners; contact Amy at (650) 326-8210 ext. 285.

**MINORS:** If not pre-registered Minors under 18 **MUST** bring signed parental/waiver form (below) on race night to participate. **In addition scantron card must be completely filled out at race-night registration.**

### DIVISIONS

Age divisions: 9 & under; 10-12; 13-19; 20-29; 30-39; 40-49; 50-59; 60-69, and 70 & over with separate divisions for male and female runners in each age group. Race timing provided for 5K and 10K runs only; not 5K walk.

### COMPUTERIZED RESULTS by A Change of Pace

Race results will be posted on the Internet at [www.PaloAltoOnline.com](http://www.PaloAltoOnline.com) 10am on 9/15. Registration forms must be filled out completely and correctly for results to be accurate. Race organizers are not responsible for incorrect results caused by incomplete or incorrect registration forms.

### AWARDS/PRIZES/ENTERTAINMENT

Top three finishers in each division. Prize giveaways and refreshments. DJ, Efen Ayala. Pre-race warmup by Andre Bobo.

### BENEFICIARY

Palo Alto Weekly Holiday Fund. A holiday-giving fund to benefit Palo Alto area non-profits and charitable organizations. In April 2008, 37 organizations received a total of \$240,000 (from the 2007-2008 Holiday Fund.)

### MORE INFORMATION

Call (650) 463-4920, (650) 326-8210, email [MoonlightRun@paweekly.com](mailto:MoonlightRun@paweekly.com). or go to [www.PaloAltoOnline.com](http://www.PaloAltoOnline.com).

For safety reasons, no dogs allowed on course for the 5K and 10K runs. They are welcome on the 5K walk only. No retractable leashes! Please bring your own clean-up bag. Jogging strollers welcome in the 5K walk or at the back of either run.

Flashlights/head lights recommended.

Register online at [www.PaloAltoOnline.com](http://www.PaloAltoOnline.com)





## OBITUARIES

**Dorothy M. Losey***Community volunteer*

A memorial service will be held at 1:30 p.m. Saturday, Aug. 2, at Christ Episcopal Church in Portola Valley for Dorothy M. Losey. Ms. Losey died peacefully at her Woodside home on June 28. She was 88.

**Dorothy Losey**

Ms. Losey had been a resident of Woodside since 1955. She married Frank J. Losey in 1940 before he left to serve in World War II. After the war, the couple settled in San Mateo before moving to Woodside.

Ms. Losey was active in the community, serving as PTA president of Woodside Elementary School, spearheading an annual auction fundraiser for the school, and singing in the Christ Episcopal Church choir. She took part in many Woodside Follies productions and played leading roles in the community theater productions. She also took her civic responsibilities seriously, say family members, playing an active role in issues involving the town of Woodside.

As a docent for the San Mateo County Historical Association, she spent many years teaching schoolchildren how San Mateo County evolved.

Ms. Losey is survived by her four children, Richard Losey of San Rafael, Nancy Losey Yewell of St. Helena, Bob Losey of Laguna, and Michael Losey of Redwood City; and 13 grandchildren. Her husband, Frank J. Losey, died in 1995.

The family prefers that donations in Ms. Losey's memory be sent to: Pathways Hospice Foundation, 585 North Mary, Sunnyvale, CA 94085.

**Robert D. Lobdell***Former L.A. Times executive*

Robert C. Lobdell of Menlo Park, a former vice president and general counsel for the Los Angeles Times and Times Mirror Co., died Monday at Stanford Hospital from complications of a bacterial infection. He was 82.

Mr. Lobdell worked for the Los Angeles Times and its former parent company from 1965 to 1986.

"Bob exemplified the very best qualities in those chosen by (former publisher) Otis Chandler to serve the Times' senior management," former Times Publisher Tom Johnson said in a memo to former associates. "A mild-mannered, kind colleague, Bob fiercely supported the Times' editors and journalists. He also protected us from more potential legal land mines than most of us know."

Mr. Lobdell worked to free Times reporter Bill Farr from jail after Mr. Farr refused to tell a judge his source while covering the Charles Manson case in 1973.

Born in Mankato, Minnesota, in 1926, Mr. Lobdell moved with his family to Manhattan Beach in 1942.

He served for two years in the Army Air Force during World War II and graduated from Stanford University in 1948, earning a law degree in 1950.

He married Nancy Lower in 1952 and they lived in Long Beach for more than 30 years before moving to Menlo Park in 2004.

In addition to his wife of almost 56 years, Mr. Lobdell is survived by four children, Jim of Portola Valley, John of Sunset Beach, Hawaii, Terri of Palo Alto (the wife of Palo Alto Weekly publisher Bill Johnson), and William of Costa Mesa; and 11 grandchildren.

Funeral services were held July 12 at St. Mark's Episcopal Church in Palo Alto. The family prefers donations to the Orange County Chapter of the Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation, 17872 Mitchell North, Suite 100, Irvine, CA 92614.

**Yuri Mason***Painter and poet*

Yuri Mason, a resident of Portola Valley for more than 50 years, died July 2 at the Palo Alto Veterans Affairs hospital of complications from a stroke. She was 87.

Ms. Mason was born Yuriko Uchida in Tokyo in 1920 and lived there until the end of World War II. She survived the bombing of Hiroshima, and soon afterward met her future husband, serviceman Russell Mason, according to friend Monica Olson.

The couple was married in California in 1948.

Ms. Mason was an artist, and many of her paintings address her vision of the atomic bombings in Japan, says Ms. Olson. She also painted portraits and Portola Valley landscapes.

Her husband, Dr. Russell Mason, worked at the VA Hospital in Palo Alto for many years. The couple founded the Ethical Society, an organization promoting ethical living as a means to a better society.

Ms. Mason lived a quiet life of the mind, studying literature and French, painting in her studio, writing poetry, and attending the opera with her husband, Ms. Olson says. She led a secluded existence and showed her art to the public in the late 1960s only at Stanford University and at a gallery in Palo Alto, she says.

Ms. Mason is survived by her daughter and granddaughter,

Reiko and Eiko Wada, who reside in Tokyo. Her husband, Russell Mason, died in 2006.

**Aaron Lopez***Longtime Portola Valley resident*

Aaron Lance Lopez of Portola Valley died peacefully at home on July 7 at the age of 40.

Mr. Lopez grew up in Portola Valley, attended local schools, and graduated from Menlo-Atherton High School and the University of Arizona. He served in the U.S. Marine Corp from 1990 to 1998 and in the U.S. Air Force Reserves from 2002 to 2007.

He was a juvenile probation officer at Hillcrest Juvenile Hall in San Mateo County.

Mr. Lopez enjoyed hiking, biking, fishing and all outdoor activities, say family members. He was a loyal fan of the San Francisco Giants and 49ers sports teams.

Survivors include Mr. Lopez's parents, Anthony and Olga Lopez of Portola Valley; sisters Lori Norwood of Portola Valley and Adrienne Lopez of Roseville; and brothers Rick Lopez of Rocklin and Greg Lopez of Saratoga.

Services were held July 11 at Our Lady of the Wayside Church in Portola Valley. Memorials in Mr. Lopez's name may be made to the American Heart Association, 1710 Gilbreth Road, Suite 100, Burlingame, CA 94010; or the Peninsula Humane Society, 12 Airport Blvd., San Mateo, CA 94401.

**Adelaide Johnson***Former Menlo Park resident*

Adelaide Rideout Johnson, who lived in Menlo Park from 1970 to 2003, died June 22 in Medford, Oregon, where she resided in the Rogue Valley Manor. She was 97.

Ms. Johnson was born in Hudson, Ohio. She attended MacMurray College for Women in Illinois and graduated from Ohio State University. While living in the Bay Area, she was a partner in West Coast Advertising in San Francisco. She later worked as a sales representative with Arway Furniture Co. and as a buyer at Barbara Dorn & Associates Interior Design. Both firms were located in San Francisco.

Ms. Johnson had a vacation home in Squaw Valley. In preparation for the 1960 Olympics, she became involved with the Placer County Planning Department for the preservation and beautification of Highway 80 from Sacramento to Lake Tahoe, say family members.

After retiring, Ms. Johnson took classes in genealogy and jewelry-making at Little House. She wrote a book, "The Trefrey Family," about her family's history. She also traveled extensively in Europe and Asia.

She is survived by her sister, Sarah Condie; a brother, Lester Rideout; and six nieces and nephews. Burial was in the family plot in Markillie Cemetery, Hudson, Ohio. Memorials may be made to the American Cancer Society.

## Fatal shooting shocks, saddens community

**By Marjorie Mader***Almanac Staff Writer*

Friends and colleagues of Portola Valley architect Kevin Schwarckopf were shocked and saddened by the fatal shooting of his wife, Cher Xia Zhao, in San Jose on July 1.

Ms. Zhao, an attorney practicing in the San Francisco Bay Area, was shot in the parking structure of her office while arriving to work. The suspect, Jason Cai, now in custody, was charged with killing his wife in 2003. A jury acquitted him of murder charges in that case, but deadlocked on voluntary manslaughter.

Ms. Zhao had been representing the mother of the suspect's late wife's in a wrongful death lawsuit against him. This type of case was not her usual practice, but she took the case out of sense of justice and to help a grieving mother, said Carter Warr, who owns CJW Architecture in Portola Valley, where Kevin Schwarckopf, associate architect, has worked since 1999.

Mr. Schwarckopf was the project architect of the redesign and construction at Woodside Elementary School, completed last January, and the Ladera Oaks renovation project. He has been involved in CJW Architecture projects to expand the Woodside Priory School in Portola Valley and to design private residences in the Bay Area.

His wife, a first generation immigrant, was a nurse in Hangzhou, China, before coming to California. She worked evening shifts as a registered nurse to put herself through eight years of education, earning a bachelor's degree in economics at the University of California, Los Angeles, and a law degree from the University of California, Hastings College of the Law, in San Francisco.

Ms. Zhao started Pacific Crossing Law Offices in Burlingame in 2003, and expanded the practice to San Jose in 2006.

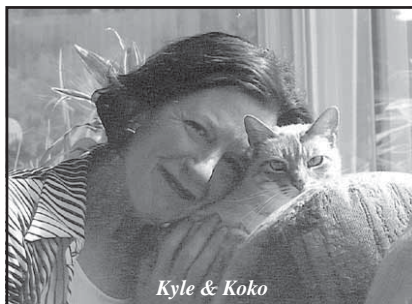
"All those who knew Xia remember her as a warm, ear-

nest, smart, courageous, and remarkable lady," said Mr. Warr. She was involved in the Bay Area legal and Chinese communities and was the president of the Chinese American Lawyers of the Bay Area, known as CALOBA.

Ms. Zhao is survived by her husband; her two-year-old son Kael; a brother; and her parents, Mr. Lisheng Zhao and Ms. Jinfeng Zhu, who lived with them in their San Jose home.

Friends have established a fund in Ms. Zhao's memory for her son and her parents, aging and recent immigrants who only speak a Chinese dialect and were wholly dependent on their daughter for support.

Contributions may be made by check to Xia's Memorial Fund, P.O. Box 10399, San Jose, CA 95130. Donations also may be made to her parents and son through Google Check on CALOBA's Web site, [www.caloba.org/xia.html](http://www.caloba.org/xia.html). Donors should specify whether the contribution is for the parents or child. ■

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## ADVERTISEMENT FOR BIDS

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PROJECT NO. 08-001

Notice is hereby given that SEALED BIDS will be received at the office of the City Clerk, 91 Ashfield Road, Atherton, California 94027, until 3:00 p.m. JULY 31, 2008, at which time they will be publicly opened and read, for performing the following work:

**LAYOUT OF WORK, REMOVAL AND REPLACEMENT OF ASPHALT CONCRETE PAVEMENT ON STREET, REPLACEMENT OF DRIVEWAY APPROACHES, REPLACEMENT OF CONCRETE VALLEY GUTTERS, INSTALLATION OF CONCRETE APRON, INSTALLATION OF GRADED AND ROCK SWALES AND PLACEMENT OF PERMANENT STRIPING FOR THE FOLLOWING STREETS:**

- SELBY LANE CUL-DE-SAC (356-374)
- REBECCA LANE CUL-DE-SAC
- JUNIPER DRIVE

Bids must be for the entire work, and shall be submitted in sealed envelopes clearly marked: "Bid of (Contractor) for STREET RECONSTRUCTION - PHASE 4, Project No. 08-001", along with date and time of bid opening.

Plans and specifications may be obtained at the Town of Atherton Public Works Department, 91 Ashfield Road, Atherton CA 94027, for a non-refundable fee of \$30.00. Additional important information is contained in Town of Atherton Standard Specifications, which are available for an additional \$20.00. If shipping is requested, there will be an additional charge of \$20.00.

Bids must be accompanied by a bid security in the form of cash, a cashier's or certified check or bid bond for not less than ten percent (10%) of the amount of the bid, as a guarantee that the bidder, if awarded the Contract, will fulfill the terms of the bid. The Town of Atherton reserves the right to refuse any or all proposals.

Bidders are hereby notified that, pursuant to California Civil Code Sections 3247 and 3248 and Standard Specifications Section 3.02, the successful bidder will be required to provide payment and performance bonds in the amounts stated in Section 3.02 of the Standard Specifications.

Bidders are hereby notified that provisions of California Labor Code regarding prevailing wages are applicable to the work to be performed under this contract. Pursuant to Section 1773 et seq. the general prevailing wage rates have been determined by the Director of the California Department of Industrial Relations and appear in the California Prevailing Wage Rates. Copies are on file at the office of the City Engineer and are available to interested parties upon request. The successful bidder shall post a copy of the wage rates at the job site.

The Contractor may elect to receive 100 percent of payments due under the contract, without retention of any portion of the payment by the Town of Atherton, by depositing securities of equivalent value to the retention amount in accordance with the provisions of Section 22300 of the California Public Contracts Code.

The successful bidder must be licensed under the provisions of Chapter 9, Division 3, of the California Business and Professions Code to do the type of work contemplated in the project at the time the contract is awarded and shall be skilled and regularly engaged in the general class or type of work called for under the Contract. Failure of the bidder to obtain proper and adequate licensing for an award of the contract shall constitute a failure to execute the contract and result in the forfeiture of the bidder's bid security.

Each bidder shall submit with this bid a statement setting forth his/her/its experience and qualifications. The statement shall be made on the forms provided by the Town and must accompany each bid. The three lowest bidders will be required to submit subcontractor's experience and qualifications statements within 48 hours of the bid opening, on forms provided by the Town.

By submitting a bid in response to this advertisement for bids, the bidder shall be conclusively deemed to have read, understood and agreed with all of the information and materials contained in the bid documents, including but not limited to the construction contract, the standard specifications, the special provisions, the required nature and amount of insurance and the documentation evidencing said insurance.

Any questions regarding the project should be directed to the City Engineer, 91 Ashfield Road, Atherton, CA 94027, telephone (650) 752-0532, preferably no later than five days before bid opening. Requests for Information may be faxed to (650) 688-6539. Plan holder's lists may be obtained by calling (650) 752-0570.

By: \_\_\_\_\_  
Duncan L. Jones, P.E., City Engineer

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Published in THE ALMANAC on July 9, 16, 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

**Institutional burglary report:** Three juveniles arrested on charges of burglarizing a school library, Encinal School at 195 Encinal Ave., July 3.

**Grand theft report:** Jewelry valued at \$100,000 stolen while in process of moving, Selby Lane, July 8.

**Fraud report:** Brokerage firm advised resident of unauthorized use of his Social Security number, Mandarin Way, July 9.

## MENLO PARK

**Residential burglary reports:**

■ Window broken and Social Security card and driver's license stolen, 1300 block of Modoc Ave., July 3.

■ Entry via unlocked window with cash and money orders totaling \$2,500 stolen, 1200 block of Madera Ave., July 4.

■ Laptop computer and camera stolen and recovered, and arrest of Shaka Pahulu, 18, of Menlo Park on burglary and battery charges, 300 block of Terminal Ave., July 5.

■ Tools stolen from garage, backyard and house, 1500 block of Laurel Place, July 6.

■ CDs stolen, 800 block of Laurel Ave., July 6.

**Auto burglary reports:**

■ Satellite radio and navigation device

stolen, 1200 block of Laurel Drive, July 6.

■ Laptop computer and power washer stolen, 100 block of Arbor Road, July 6.

■ CDs, iPod and iPod charger stolen, 200 block of Gloria Circle, July 7.

**Commercial burglary reports:**

■ Computer missing after forced entry, Battery Ventures at 2884 Sand Hill Road, July 6.

■ Change stolen from air and water vending machines, Union 76 station at 710 Willow Road, July 10.

**Grand theft reports:**

■ DVD/VCR player stolen, 1000 block of Menlo Oaks Drive, sometime in March.

■ Laptop computer stolen from unlocked vehicle, Gloria Circle, July 5.

■ Bicycle stolen from yard, 1100 block of Sherman Ave., last two weeks in June.

■ Portola shed stolen from home under construction, last week in June.

■ Canoe stolen from side of house, 1000 block of Almanor Ave., July 9.

## WOODSIDE

**Residential burglary report:** 200 block of Mountain Home Road, July 8.

**Theft report:** Seven pairs of new shoes valued at \$560 stolen from backyard, 100 block of Eleanor Drive, July 8.

## WEST MENLO

**Theft report:** Attempt made to transfer \$1,000 from resident's checking account into PayPal account, 1000 block of Bellair Way, July 6.

## Man killed in tractor accident

Robert Wallace, 58, of La Honda died Sunday after a tractor he was driving near Alpine Road south of Portola Valley overturned and crushed him, according to the California Highway Patrol.

The incident was reported around 5:30 p.m. at 9645 Alpine Road. Neighbors rushed to the scene and tried to give the man

CPR, the CHP reported.

Wallace was apparently driving the John Deere tractor along steep and uneven terrain when it overturned, ejecting and crushing him, officers said.

He was pronounced dead at the scene when paramedics arrived.

— Bay City News Service

## Cyclist side-swiped on Kings Mountain Road

A woman on a bicycle headed westbound in the 700 block of Kings Mountain Road became a hit-and-run victim on July 8 at about 6:10 p.m. when a westbound black Honda Civic reportedly side-swiped her, causing her to fall, then left the scene.

The cyclist complained of pain to her neck and left side, but

refused medical treatment at the scene, said Lt. Marc Alcantera of the San Mateo County Sheriff's Office. The collision slightly damaged the bike's rear wheel, he said.

The collision also broke the Honda's passenger side mirror, he said. Sheriff's deputies were unsuccessful in trying to locate the vehicle.

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**John McAfee CLU ChFC CPCU, Agent**  
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846 Portola Rd Suite D  
Portola Valley, CA 94028  
Bus: 650-851-3276  
john@johnmcafee.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.

**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.

## Big plans for kids' room at library

Anyone who has been fortunate enough to see children in the thrall of a library storyteller knows the magic that books can bring at that age. It happens seven times a week in the children's section of the Menlo Park Library, where the children get their first taste of one of the city's most treasured institutions.

**EDITORIAL**  
*The opinion of The Almanac*

And now there are major renovation plans for this inviting area, one of the most popular in the building. When fundraisers reach their \$500,000 goal, work will begin to improve the entire children's area. Among the many changes coming are:

- A new homework center with six computer work stations, including Internet access;

- Improvements in the space dedicated to "storytime" and other children's programs;

- Moving the young adult section, with books that are appropriate for the high school age group, into the main section of the library;

- A general facelift of the area that will include painting, carpets and better shelving that will increase capacity.

The planned renovations at the library are a perfect example of the much-ballyhooed term "public-private partnership," which in this case describes a fine working relationship

between the city's first-class library and the Menlo Park Library Foundation, which is doing its best to raise another \$128,000 to reach its goal of \$500,000.

A key grant — \$100,000 from Friends of the Menlo Park Library — recognizes that "more children use the library every year, but the children's area has had no major renovation since 1992, and it shows," said William Harris, the group's president.

Many of the improvements will be paid for with city money that has long been earmarked for the library, including \$145,000 in reserves that have grown since the last renovation in 1992. Smaller amounts have been set aside from a library endowment fund, and a public works fund that will pay for painting and carpet.

For Menlo Park families or others who use the library, now is the time to step up and contribute to keep this marvelous resource fresh and up to date. Fundraising will begin in earnest in late August, although major donors are being sought now. The library is a tremendous asset to the community, but especially to youngsters who often embark on their earliest reading experiences after storytime in the children's section. This program is free and open to everyone, but help is needed to complete the fundraising so renovation work

can begin early next year. Help support a resource that is so important to children and families in Menlo Park.



Photo by Veronica Weber/The Almanac

Dee Ellman presides at a "baby storytime" session at the Menlo Park Library.



Joseph A. Donohoe



Emilie Blain Donohoe



Menlo Park Historical Association

### Our Regional Heritage

Joseph A. Donohoe, at left with his family beneath the tree, built this stately Victorian east of Middlefield Road. Called Holm Grove, the 40-acre property was located on the site occupied by Menlo-Atherton High School today.



# Rail backers not talking about impacts

By John Wilson

One of the major issues for high-speed rail on the Peninsula is environmental impact. I have yet to see an honest discussion of this topic, in spite of the fact that several Menlo Park City Council members have referred to high-speed rail as “environmentally advantageous.”

For this statement to be true, one would have to ignore the serious, adverse, and permanent consequences that high-speed rail will bring to us. The most substantial of these is the grade separation fallacy. According to this line, grade separation will spare everyone from these negative consequences.

In order to expose this sleight-of-hand for what it is, you have to ask why grade separation is needed. Well, that’s obvious, right? Cars, people, and trains don’t mix if they’re at the same level. It seems Caltrain shows that nearly every week, with an awful record of killing people so far this year. In all fairness, a train is an impersonal killer, and it’s usually the humans at fault, but all the same, the record is terrible and something should be done. The proponents of high-speed rail claim a perfect safety record for their technology in this regard, but that’s not strictly true either; plenty of people have perished from fast trains. So, as in many permanent disputes, it’s better to separate the warring elements.

If you wish to separate trains and traffic, you can only

go up or down. Either way, the consequences are permanent. Unfortunately, up is very expensive, and down is not cheap, so how do we choose?

If you go up, trains are very heavy, and must be supported on a large earthen berm. Union



would have to accommodate all four of these, if Union Pacific allows high-speed rail into its right-of-way, and they share use of the tracks.

The base width of the required berm with four tracks on top is likely to be too wide for the existing right-of-way, requiring confiscation of adjoining land all along the route, not to mention rebuilding all the stations along the way. If Union Pacific does not cooperate, the high-speed rail berm would have to be built beside the existing railroad. This would also mean eminent domain and the taking of even more land all the way down the Peninsula. The cost of either of these options is difficult to contemplate.

A berm constructed alongside these lines would permanently

divide the Peninsula, creating perpetual classes of first- and second-class citizens. I call this option “the Great Wall of California.” I expect the California High Speed Rail Authority would try to avoid any public discussion of the genuine likelihood of this before the election, but they should be forced to declare their position on this, instead of mouthing the usual platitudes about the benefits of high-speed rail. Instead, as stated by Ron Diridon in a recent interview, the authority wants everyone to believe that street traffic will go down, under the railbed, at significant intersections. This, too, is a nonstarter.

Just as with the berm option, there will be only a finite number of crossings, and it’s very likely that there will be far fewer than at present, for cost reasons. So, commerce in cities along the route will be affected, as these crossings become bottlenecks in already congested traffic. In between the crossings, the train tracks will have to be completely and totally fenced, particularly if the high-speed rail is able to send trains as frequently as planned. So, those traffic undercrossings will be the only way to get from one side to the other. Drainage, safety, and cost will make this a very unpalatable scheme, even if the effect on commerce is ignored.

When you think about it, this entire scheme was not well thought out with respect to the choice of the Peninsula route, thereby calling into question the reasoning and soundness of the logic of all the arguments for high-speed rail.

**John Wilson lives on College Avenue in Menlo Park.**

which an expensive tunnel is the solution?

**Henry Rowen  
Wisteria Way, Atherton**

## Look again at Seminary Oaks water project

Editor:

Now that the Seminary Oaks NIMBYs have succeeded in derailing the water reservoir construction project by criticizing its location, it is time to look at the project itself.

The bottom line is that it will, if built, provide an eight-hour supply of running water in the event the water supply to Menlo Park is interrupted due to an earthquake. After eight hours, the reservoir is empty, and that’s it.

For this, we must sustain a major capital expense, followed

by years of personnel and maintenance expense in perpetuity. All for eight hours of water, if the supply line breaks.

I would submit that many days of water are already available in Menlo Park reservoirs without any city expense.

Every swimming pool in town has been filtered and sanitized to potability levels exceeding the municipal supply, and the water is readily available without needing electricity for pumping. Personally, I have 30,000 gallons (it’s ready right now) that I would be willing to share for the asking in an emergency.

Let’s use this unscheduled pause in the reservoir project to kill this public works boondoggle once and for all.

**Jim Harvey, president  
Friends of Common Sense  
Cotton Street, Menlo Park**



## NOTICE OF PUBLIC MEETING AND NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING CITY OF MENLO PARK PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING OF JULY 28, 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/Chris Romero/19 Buckthorn Way:** Request for a use permit to demolish an existing single-story, single-family residence and construct a new two-story, single-family residence on a substandard lot with regard to lot area and width in the R-1-U (Single-Family Urban) zoning district.

**Use Permit/David Crouch Custom Homes/800 Olive St:** Request for a use permit to demolish an existing single-story, single-family residence and construct a new two-story, single-family residence and detached garage on a substandard lot with regard to lot width in the R-1-S (Single-Family Suburban) zoning district, and for excavation into a required side yard setback for a lightwell and egress associated with a basement. As part of this development, the following heritage tree is proposed for removal: a Hollywood juniper in the middle-right yard with a 17-inch diameter at breast height (DBH) in poor condition.

**Use Permit/Nancy Boaman/1885 White Oak Drive:** Request for a use permit to construct single-story and basement additions to an existing single-story, single-family, nonconforming residence that would exceed 75 percent of the replacement value of the existing structure in a 12-month period in the R-1-S (Single-Family Suburban) zoning district.

### PUBLIC MEETING ITEMS

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, July 28 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: July 10, 2008 Deanna Chow, Senior Planner  
PUBLISHED: July 16, 2008 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 July 16, 2008.

## LETTERS

Our readers write

### Cyclist says no tunnel needed

Editor:

Speaking about the City Council deliberations on the downtown visioning project, Reginald Rice says in his July 9 letter that consultants say a bicycle tunnel is “definitely needed under the tracks.”

I probably ride a bike across the tracks more than most of your readers (about eight crossings a week). I usually cross at Oak Grove Avenue, sometimes at Ravenswood, and less often at Glenwood. The automatic barriers work fine and ensure safety.

What is the problem for





**Agnes Williams**  
650.543.1176  
awilliam@apr.com



**Menlo Park** **\$1,595,000**  
Expanded and updated throughout this 3bd/2.5ba town home is located in desirable Park Forest.



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3bd/2ba townhouse on the quiet 18th fairway of Sharon Heights Country Club.

**SALE PENDING**



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Charming, split-level, 3bd/1.5ba home with a large backyard located in desirable Mt. Carmel neighborhood.



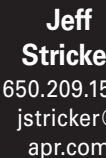
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**Atherton** **\$1,598,000**  
Private haven on secluded lane. 4bd/2ba with remodeled kitchen and bath. Pool.



**Dean Asborno**  
650.255.2147  
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monikad@apr.com



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Elegant, traditional 5bd/3.5ba home + au-pair unit. Quiet cul-de-sac locale. Los Altos schools.



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