

LAS LOMITAS DISTRICT is first in state
in API test scores. PAGE 9

The Almanac

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

SEPTEMBER 23, 2009 | VOL. 45 NO. 4

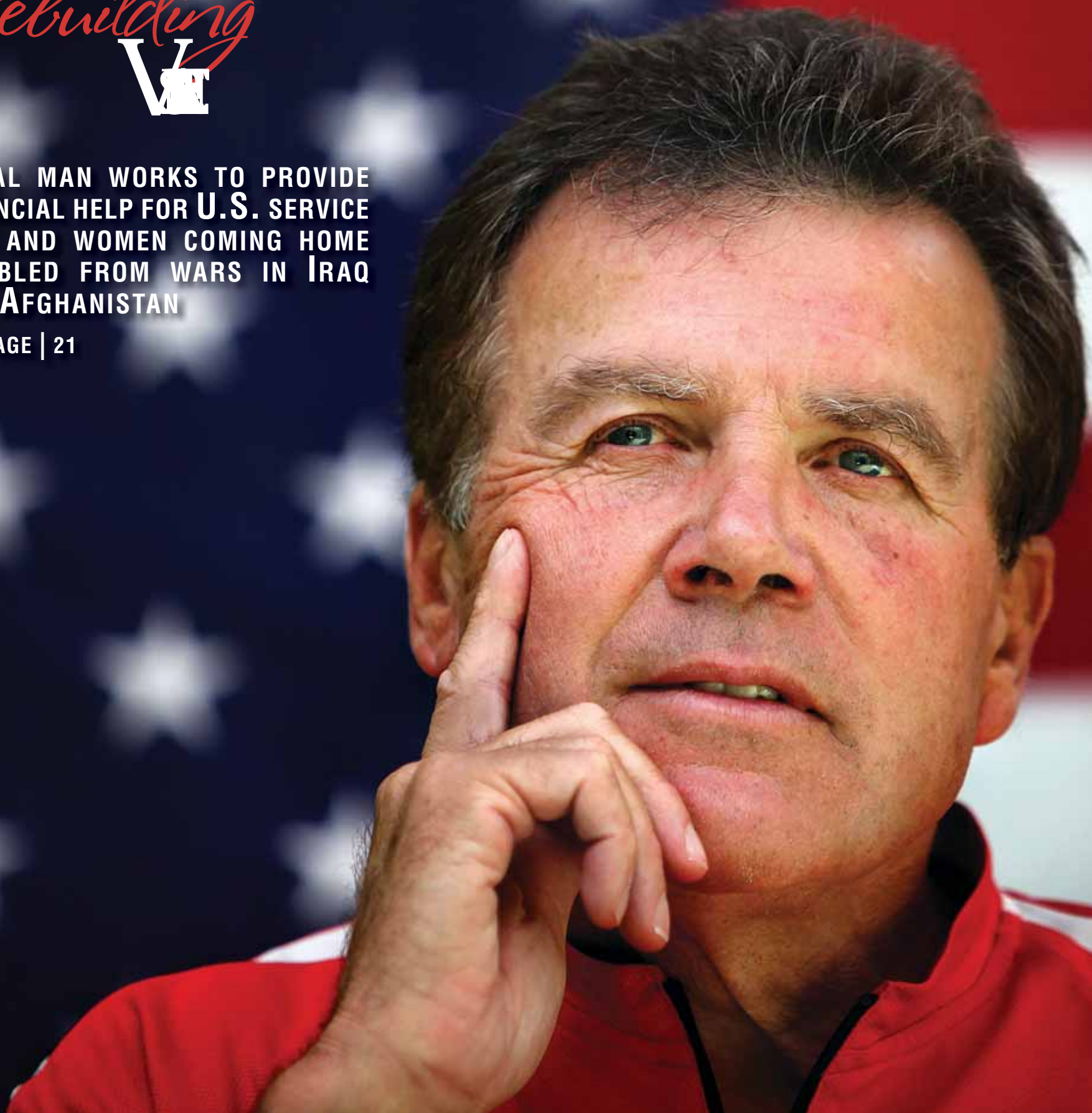


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SEE PAGE | 21



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Inside

This week's news, features and community events.

FIRST SHOT



Photo by Brianna Weiss

Riding for Woodside High

Cyclists take a breather at Kings Mountain Road and Skyline Boulevard in September 2008 during the Tour for Woodside, a set of bike rides to raise money for Woodside High School. This year's tour is Sunday, Sept. 27. See story, **Page 13**.

Atherton

■ Are proposed town fees too high? **Page 6**

Menlo Park

■ How should city address employee costs? **Page 5**

■ Prospects dim for Habitat housing development. **Page 7**

Woodside

■ Photo of horses rises on Woodside's Village Hill. **Page 8**

Regional

■ Train whistles to be moved to original position to reduce noise. **Page 5**

Schools

■ Local school districts score among top 20 in state API test. **Page 9**

■ T-Mobile seeks OK for antenna atop Corte Madera School building. **Page 12**

Community

■ Individuals aren't the only ones to benefit from building English literacy skills through Project Read. **Page 5**

■ Experts discuss plight of stressed-out teens. **Page 7**

Sports

■ MA-Vikings Pop Warner football report. **Page 12**

Also Inside

Calendar 25
Letters 18
Obituaries 17
Police Calls 16

On the cover

The conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan are creating disabled veterans in greater numbers than in previous wars, thanks to advanced life-saving techniques and greater awareness of the emotional impact of war. Menlo Park resident Dana Hendrickson helps some of these men and women until they get situated and start receiving disability benefits. Photo by Michelle Le. See **Cover, Section 2**.

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Local News

MENLO PARK | AHERTON | WOODSIDE | PORTOLA VALLEY

How should city address employee costs?

■ City to hold meeting on hotly debated issue.

By Sean Howell

Almanac Staff Writer

Finally, former Menlo Park council member Lee Duboc and city management found something they could agree on when it comes to how Menlo Park negotiates contracts with its employees.

Sort of.

The city has consented to hold a public meeting to address the rising — some say unsustainable — cost to the city of salaries, benefits and pensions for its employees. Ms.

Duboc has spent months stumping for the city to hold such a meeting in e-mails she sends to her supporters.

But while Ms. Duboc portrayed the meeting as a chance for residents to convince their council members to take a hard line in the city's upcoming negotiations with its non-police unions, the city is approaching it as an opportunity to inform residents and correct "misinformation" — some of it propagated by Ms. Duboc, according to some City Council members.

"What we're trying to do here is to give them facts," said City Manager Glen Rojas. "If people still have an issue, at least they do it based on the facts." City employees

feel that residents are "attacking their livelihood," he said.

The difference in emphasis regarding the purpose of the meeting provides a simple illustration of the chasm between the way the city is addressing employee costs, and the way Ms. Duboc would like it to do so. While she has pressed for the city to take a hard-line negotiating position with unions and scale back benefits, city management has argued that such an approach would put it at a competitive disadvantage in hiring.

Mr. Rojas agrees with Ms. Duboc that employee costs will break the bank if they continue to escalate at current rates. But

he also said that turning back the tide will require regional cooperation or state intervention.

Intractable problem?

The question of how public agencies should deal with rising employee costs has been the subject of some interest since the San Mateo County Civil Grand Jury released a report on the issue in June.

In the report, the grand jury pressed for agencies to renegotiate contracts with unions, to scale back what the grand jury sees as overly generous benefits; to consider setting a separate set of compensation

See **CONTRACT**, page 8

Building confidence, strengthening community

Individuals aren't the only ones to benefit from building English literacy skills through Project Read

By Renee Batti

Almanac News Editor

"Learning to read changed my life." It's a refrain heard over and over again as students describe their experiences with Project Read-Menlo Park, the literacy program that provides free English-language tutoring to adults determined to learn to read and write.

But Project Read helps to bring about another important change that isn't always as obvious as the improved life of an individual student who now can earn a GED or enroll in college, fill out a job application, or acquire knowledge about any number of things by reading a book or a newspaper. With the support and encouragement of Project Read volunteers and staff, many students are also becoming active members of their communities, in some cases helping to improve the lives of others and the world around them.

"They're taking literacy to the next step, and giving back to their communities" says Roberta Roth of Project Read-Menlo Park.

Since its founding in 1985, the local Project Read program has helped more than 1,200 adults learn to read, according to staff. Some of the students are native English speakers who, for one reason or another, managed to get through school without learning to read. Others are ESL (English



Photo by Michelle Le/The Almanac

Martin Reyes, a custodian at Belle Haven School, got a hefty boost in self-confidence from a leadership program for English literacy students, leading him to become more involved in his community.

as a second language) students, struggling to improve their spoken English while trying to learn reading and writing skills.

A few years ago, Project Read-Menlo Park began urging some of its learners to enroll in a state-wide program, the Adult Learner Leadership Institute, to help them improve their public speaking, networking, and advocacy skills. The program was started in 2003 by the California State Library, and Project Read-Menlo Park has sent 10 students through the institute in the last three years.

Those students can often be seen staffing booths at the Menlo Park farmers' market and Connois-

seurs' Marketplace, and wrapping gifts at Kepler's bookstore, with donations for the service going to Project Read.

These projects "give learners a chance to engage with the community, and use their new English skills," says longtime Project Read volunteer Betty Meissner, who plays a major role in the effort to get students involved in public activities. Not all of the community project participants are leadership institute grads — Ms. Meissner urges Project Read

students in general to participate. "But the leadership group are role models for the others," she says.

Blossoming with confidence

Martin Reyes, a custodian at Belle Haven School in Menlo Park, knew little English when he signed up for Project Read about four years ago. A native of Mexico, Mr. Reyes was 40 and looking to improve his life.

Last January, he began the six-month leadership institute program, and the effects were astonishing.

See **READ**, page 8

Train whistles to become less noisy soon

By Sean Howell

Almanac Staff Writer

Amid sustained complaints from residents since Caltrain moved its train whistles to the tops of its engines, the rail agency has begun work on a project to return the whistles to their original location beneath the engines.

Caltrain has ordered the necessary equipment and hired a contractor to do the work, according to Caltrain spokeswoman Christine Dunn. She said she didn't know when the project would be completed, but that the whistles have already been moved on some trains.

The rail agency moved the whistles to the tops of the engines about two months ago, when it became aware that the sound they produced didn't comply with federal regulations.

That made the whistles much louder, and elicited a stream of complaints from nearby residents. Those complaints continued after the rail agency announced that it had installed regulator valves that reduced the volume to the previous level, with residents saying it still bothered them.

After the initial decision to move the whistles to the tops of the engines, it took "a couple of weeks" for the rail agency to realize that it would have to return them to their original position, according to Ms.

See **CALTRAIN**, page 9

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New fees unfair?

■ Atherton seeks input from residents on fee schedule.

By **Andrea Gemmet**
 Almanac Staff Writer

Nobody said passing a new master fee schedule in Atherton would be easy—or particularly interesting.

Despite the fact that the proposed fees would affect everything from building permits to facility rentals at Holbrook-Palmer Park, the town's four public meetings on the topic were largely ignored by residents. But in the face of withering criticism by a single resident at the Sept. 16 meeting, the Atherton City Council decided to postpone a decision on the fee schedule and try once again to get some residents involved.

"I think we all agree that we'd like additional public input," said Councilwoman Kathy McKeithen at the meeting. "We had public meetings, but they were not attended by the public."

The council decided to postpone its decision until November, and have its consultant conduct one or more public meetings in the meantime.

The revised fees are intended to improve the town's cost recovery for services ranging from issuing permits for heritage tree removal to providing certified copies of documents. An exhaustive study of the town's fees was conducted by San Francisco-based consultant NBS.

Atherton resident Carol Flaherty spoke at the Sept. 16 meeting, saying she hired her own attorney to review the proposed fees. As a result, she said, she discovered the town is trying to pass along too much of its indirect

overhead costs.

"That is the fatal flaw in the NBS study," Ms. Flaherty told the council. "You're trying to recoup too much."

Ms. Flaherty and her husband are the owner-builders of several houses in Atherton. She offered a detailed analysis of the proposed fees associated with building projects, using her own current home-building project as an example.

Atherton calculates many of its building permit fees based on the assessed value of the construction using a per-square-foot multiplier. Over the years, that per-square-foot number has been raised, and there have been repeated complaints that it's too high, and that builders should be allowed to document the actual cost of construction and use that number instead.

"I don't care if you change it to \$500 per square foot, as long as there's the caveat that (builders) can show what it cost and you give them a refund," Ms. Flaherty said.

But NBS consultant Jeanette Hahn told The Almanac that the purpose of coming up with a construction value isn't to determine the actual cost of a building, but to calculate the appropriate fees, consultant Jeanette Hahn of NBS told The Almanac.

"We're essentially trying to classify different sizes of projects, different scales of projects, into a fee structure that produces fees in an amount proportionate to the costs incurred by the town to review and inspect the project," Ms. Hahn said.

"It's tough to say that, in any agency, the value a project assigned is reflective of the project cost," she said. "It's attempting to drop the project in the appropriate classification." ■

Pension costs on the rise

The costs to local jurisdictions of employee pensions are on the rise.

With the fund for the California Public Employees' Retirement System (CalPERS) dropping 23 percent in the 2008-09 fiscal year, local jurisdictions will be asked to shoulder more of the burden of paying for pensions in coming years, according to the city of Menlo Park.

Under current projections, the city estimates it will be paying \$5.91 million annually by the 2014-15 fiscal year—\$1.63 million more than it currently pays into the fund. Those estimates are based on the assumption that employees will not receive any additional pay raises by the 2015-16 fiscal year.

■ MENLO WATCH

City could approve waste contracts

Menlo Park's City Council could approve a contract for a waste management company to operate a new regional recycling center at its Sept. 22 meeting.

It could also authorize City Manager Glen Rojas to execute a franchise agreement with Recology Waste (formerly Norcal Waste) to begin waste collection services in Menlo Park in 2011.

The meeting is scheduled to begin at 6 p.m. in the council chambers, in the Civic Center complex between Laurel and Alma streets.

Prospects dim for Habitat development

■ City turns attention to different Belle Haven site for housing.

By Sean Howell
Almanac Staff Writer

Menlo Park needs affordable housing. But it doesn't appear likely to build it as part of a joint project with Habitat for Humanity, on a site city officials have been interested in for nearly a decade — at least not in that project's current configuration.

After hearing repeated, vociferous opposition from Belle Haven residents over the idea that the city would encourage the construction of below-market-rate housing on a thin strip of land behind Terminal Avenue, City Council members admitted during a study session Tuesday, Sept. 15, that the future of the project looked dim.

Instead, the city will begin planning for a housing or mixed-use development along Hamilton Avenue, near Willow Road, where it owns a 2.1-acre parcel. Owners of nearby parcels indicated at the council meeting that their land might be available for purchase, potentially enabling the city to hold roughly six acres of contiguous property — four times the size of the Terminal Avenue parcel.

City management and council members have stressed the city's need for more housing, and especially for affordable housing. The parcels on Terminal and Hamilton avenues are the only two in the city's possession that would be suitable for that use, they say.

Un-done deal

City officials were caught off-guard when Belle Haven residents offered a blistering critique of the proposed Habitat project in November 2008. The city had been working to develop plans for housing at the site since 2001, with different councils affirming their

support for it in separate votes — apparently not realizing that nearby residents opposed the idea.

The project would have featured a row of 11 duplexes built in a cul-de-sac, sandwiched between a defunct railroad line and a row of existing houses.

Speakers stressed their admiration for Habitat's work in general, but argued that the site was

'I don't know how to characterize the baton-passing. ... The person who just ran that lap, where'd they go?'

MENLO PARK COUNCILMAN RICH CLINE, ON STALLED PLANS FOR A HOUSING PROJECT THAT HAD BEEN "PASSED" BETWEEN DIFFERENT ITERATIONS OF THE CITY COUNCIL.

inappropriate for a large housing development. Many said they were concerned the development would block the expansion of Beechwood School, adjacent to the parcel.

"Beechwood is the only academic light we have in this community," Rose Bickerstaff said at the meeting. "That little piece of ground should be given to that school."

On paper, it's easy to see why the project appealed to city leaders. Because Habitat would have borne the brunt of the cost for the development, the city would have been able to add 22 below-market-rate units — which represents over a third of its current stock — for only \$2.5 million, not including the value of the land.

"I know we're under a crunch to add more units, but I think the quality of the neighborhood, the quality of life, is not just about

numbers," Ash Vasudeva, president of the Belle Haven Homeowners' Association, said in an interview. "It's about doing it in a way that strengthens the community."

Nixing the project could be costly. The city has already sunk \$1.3 million into the parcel in environmental remediation, and would likely be required to reimburse Habitat for Humanity nearly \$500,000 for a home the nonprofit had purchased to provide access to the site.

But "it would be very difficult, given the strong opposition, to go forward with the Habitat project," Mr. Robinson said. "And I'm very disappointed that that's the case."

Council members struggled to preserve the possibility of housing at the site, with Councilwoman Kelly Fergusson saying she hated to think that all the time and money the city had poured into the project would go for naught. Maybe it would be a good place to house senior citizens, some suggested, given the proximity to the city-run senior center.

Residents would welcome "creative, thoughtful solutions that get us beyond the impasse we're at," Mr. Vasudeva said. "We're certainly not opposed to creative thinking on this idea. What we are opposed to is this plan."

Ms. Fergusson compared the project to the baton in a relay race, with one iteration of the council handing it off to the next.

"I don't know how to characterize the baton-passing," Councilman Rich Cline said. "The person who just ran that lap, where'd they go?"

Hope for new site

Mr. Vasudeva said he's hopeful about the prospect of a mixed-

See HABITAT, page 16

Experts discuss plight of stressed-out teens

Is school stressing out your child? A free public event on the topic featuring two best-selling authors, Stanford lecturer Denise Clark Pope, local students, and Facebook's chief privacy officer is set for 7:30 p.m. on Friday, Sept. 25, at Memorial Auditorium on the Stanford University campus.

The panel discussing academic stress and coping strategies for middle and high school students includes psychologist Michael Thompson, author of "Raising Cain: Protecting the Emotional Life of Boys" and "The Pressured Child: Helping Your Child Find Success in School and in Life"; and child development expert Madeline Levine.

Ms. Levine is a clinical psychologist and the author of "The Price of

Privilege," a book that explores the reasons why teenagers from affluent families are experiencing epidemic rates of emotional problems.

Ms. Pope is a senior lecturer at Stanford's school of education and the author of "Doing School: How We Are Creating a Generation of Stressed Out, Materialistic and Miseducated Students."

Chris Kelly, who is chief privacy officer and head of global public policy at Facebook, guides Facebook's efforts to make the Internet a safer and more trusted place.

An RSVP is required to attend; go to <http://www.challengesuccess.org>.

The public discussion is a kick-off event for a conference at Stanford on Saturday, Sept. 26, entitled "The

Long View: Preparing Our Children for 21st Century Success."

It's designed to address the rising concern that adolescents are often compromising their mental and physical health, personal values, and commitment to learning as they try to contend with the pressure for high achievement in U.S. schools. Many educators, mental health professionals, and business leaders have also expressed concern that this narrow vision of success is leaving young people without the skills to adapt, interact, and collaborate in a rapidly changing world, according to Maureen Brown of Challenge Success, the event sponsor.

REAL ESTATE Q&A

by Gloria Darke



Aggressive marketing?

Q. We are, of course, aware of how hard the housing market has been hit so we weren't expecting miracles. However, we have no choice and do have to sell at this time. Our house has been sitting on the market now for over four months with no offer. What would you recommend that we do to at least generate an offer?

Al and Jan

A. The majority of homes that sit on the market month after month have one thing in common and that is that they are priced too high for current market conditions. Even in a robust market such as we experienced in 2000 there were houses that didn't sell because the seller did not price realistically. Obviously, we are in a market that is dramatically different from 2000. Buyers are challenged to get financing as easily as

in the good old days, move-down buyers can not be assured of selling their own houses, move-up buyers have to sell before they can buy, foreign buyers have been greatly diminished in numbers. You are also competing with foreclosures and short sales, which are bringing prices down. Add to that the unemployment and buyers negativity about the economy in general and it all points to pricing very realistically if you really have to sell your house.

So besides setting the right asking price, you must also consider the overall condition and appearance of the home. It's unrealistic to expect the best offers on a home needing a myriad of cleaning up and repairs. If your house is in great shape, priced right and there still is not sufficient activity, an aggressive marketing campaign may be required. You need much more than sticking a for sale sign in your front yard!

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



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Applications are available at the Portola Valley School District Office at 4575 Alpine Road or can be obtained by calling (650) 851-1777, ext. 3010. Completed applications must be submitted by 5:00 p.m. on Thursday, October 8, 2009, and should be sent to:

Ms. Anne E. Campbell
Superintendent
Portola Valley School District
4575 Alpine Road
Portola Valley, CA 94028

Candidates will be interviewed by the Board between 6:00 and 9:00 p.m. on Wednesday, October 14th. Final selection will be made by a majority vote of the Board Members at the regular Board meeting on October 21, 2009.

For additional information, contact Anne Campbell at 851-1777, ext. 3010.

Employee costs

CONTRACT

continued from page 5

standards for new employees; to outsource non-essential services; and to increase public discussion surrounding contracts.

It recommended that governments form a non-elected “task force” to address the issue, and suggested that cities could put certain decisions related to employee pay to a vote of the people.

In its response to the report, approved by four of five council members, city management said it was willing to consider some of those recommendations, but not if it would put the city at a competitive disadvantage with neighboring jurisdictions. It rejected the call for a task force.

“A lot of the things we have to deal with, and all cities do, are things that are not in our control — state laws, and so on down the line,” Mr. Rojas said. “We’ve got to work within those parameters.”

“Extremely disappointed”

Mickie Winkler, a former Menlo Park council member who helped author the grand jury report — and an ally of Ms. Duboc — said in an interview that she was “extremely disappointed” by the city’s response.

“A lot of other cities have made

drastic cuts in cost, and in the number of employees,” she said, arguing that other cities would follow suit if Menlo Park implemented some of the grand jury’s recommendations.

If the council majority Ms. Winkler sat on didn’t enact the measures she now advocates, it was only because the situation was not as dire as it now appears, she said.

Members of the current council majority, however, have blamed the previous council’s unwillingness to pay competitive salaries for sparking an exodus of officers from the police department.

Councilman John Boyle, who voted against the city’s response to the grand jury report, said Mr. Rojas has “got a point” that the city should be wary of putting itself at a competitive disadvantage. He’s not arguing that the city should necessarily implement the grand jury’s recommendations, he said.

But he said he felt that, in responding “defensively,” the city missed a chance to build a regional collaboration and push for state involvement. In separate venues, Ms. Duboc, Ms. Winkler, and Mr. Boyle all suggested that if Menlo Park can work to address global warming, it should be able to take the same approach to employee compensation.

“That was a mentality that said, ‘We’re going to start addressing a

global problem at a local level,” Mr. Boyle said. “Maybe the same thing applies here.”

Will people come?

After pushing for a public meeting, it remains to be seen whether people will actually show up. Ms. Duboc won’t attend — she’s on vacation, and couldn’t be reached for this story.

People flooded the council e-mail log with complaints about a sizable raise for police sergeants — but no one spoke on the item at the meeting. When city officials ran out of questions from residents at a session on the city’s budget, the mayor started quizzing the city manager.

“People are typically busy,” said Mr. Rojas, before adding: “To come out and complain about somebody’s compensation in public is maybe a little scarier to do.” ■

■ INFORMATION

Responding to calls to hold a public hearing on the issue of employee costs as the city enters negotiations with its non-police unions, Menlo Park will do just that prior to the regular City Council meeting Tuesday, Sept. 22. The city’s presentation will begin at 6 p.m. in the council chambers, located between Alma and Laurel streets in the Civic Center complex.

Mr. Neves and fellow institute grad Thelma Gonzalez are also on the organizing committee for the dessert-tasting fundraiser.

Ms. Meissner says community involvement of Project Read learners “de-isolates literacy, stretching it out into the community, with students becoming a part of it.”

A former school teacher, she says she knows that many parents with limited English skills “are afraid to approach their children’s schools,” but becoming engaged in community projects, supported initially by Project Read volunteers and fellow learners, “empowers them to understand that (in spite of their) limited English skills, they should still be able to do anything open to the rest of the community. There should be no doors closed to them.” ■

phone, and he was at a food kitchen, working as a volunteer.

Mr. Reyes will offer a “testimonial” of his Project Read experiences at a Sept. 26 fundraiser for the literacy program. “Taste Desserts! For Literacy” is set for 7 to 9 p.m. at the Burgess Recreation Center.

Another leadership institute graduate, Olegario Neves, will help emcee the event. “In Brazil, where I’m from, I used to do this (program presentations) all the time, but in Portuguese, not in English, Mr. Neves says. By studying with a Project Read tutor, he improved his English skills, but it was the leadership institute that “gave me the confidence to go forward, to go farther,” he says.

That confidence came in handy last year, when he lost his job with FedEx and started driving a cab in San Francisco. “Thank God for the institute, because you have to talk a lot if you drive a cab, and you have to have the confidence to talk.”

He says he’s doing anything he can to help Project Read “because they helped me so much.” He now participates in community outreach programs to spread the word about the literacy program. But, he says, “I’m never going to be able to give back all they gave to me.”

Strengthening community

READ

continued from page 5

“Martin and Thelma (Gonzalez, another institute grad) are amazing,” Ms. Meissner says. “If you had met them two or three years ago, you never would have known they were in the room. They were quiet and withdrawn — but they have just blossomed.”

Mr. Reyes says that when he started the leadership program, he wasn’t sure what he would do with the skills he might learn. But the huge boost in his self-confidence has emboldened Mr. Reyes — a naturally shy man — to reach out to his own neighbors and the Belle Haven School community, “offering my help to people who need the help,” he says.

That includes providing information and direction to parents and other community members with little or no English skills who would benefit from programs offered at the library or other public agencies, but who don’t know the programs exist.

Ms. Meissner marvels at the transformation of the once-withdrawn Mr. Reyes, recalling a recent time she reached him on his cell



Photo by Dave Boyce/The Almanac

A cyclist passes peacefully by a rendering of two horses standing in for a bronze equestrian sculpture planned for Woodside’s Village Hill along Woodside Road. The photo cut-outs are on the hill as part of a fundraising campaign that is still short about \$20,000 for the \$100,000 sculpture, spokeswoman Phyrne Osborne said.

Photo of horses rises on Woodside’s Village Hill

By Dave Boyce

Almanac Staff Writer

A large photograph of a sculpture of two horses is now up on Woodside’s Village Hill, a publicly owned grassy slope along Woodside Road that overlooks downtown and is home to thousands of daffodils that bloom in the spring.

The fundraising campaign for the \$100,000 sculpture is about \$20,000 short, said campaign spokeswoman and Woodside Landscape Committee member Phyrne Osborne in an e-mail announcing plans to install the photograph.

In September 2008, the Town Council unanimously approved plans to install the slightly larger-than-life bronze renderings

of a mare and a foal, the work of Colorado-based sculptor Veryl Goodnight.

The committee will have a booth at the annual Day of the Horse celebration on Saturday, Oct. 10. The sculpture will not have riders, a council decision that sidesteps the issue of whether it would feature English or Western saddles.

Since it is a piece of public art, the project is set for a review by the town’s Architecture and Site Review Board on Oct. 5, Ms. Osborne said. To comment, send e-mail to ASRB planner Sage Schaan at sschaan@woodsidesidewalk.org.

For more on Ms. Goodnight’s work, go to www.verylgoodnight.com.

Indulge your sweet tooth while supporting literacy

Project Read-Menlo Park’s third annual dessert-tasting fundraiser is set for 7 to 9 p.m. Saturday, Sept. 26, in Room 105 of the Burgess Recreation Center.

“Taste Desserts! For Literacy” will feature cakes, pastries and other confections donated by local businesses and bakers. There will also be live music and a silent auction.

A number of students, tutors and community supporters will be honored during a program that

will be emceed by student Olegario Neves and volunteer Kristi Breisch.

Tickets are \$20 in advance, and \$25 at the door. All proceeds benefit Project Read-Menlo Park, which has helped more than 1,200 adults learn to read since its establishment in 1985.

The Burgess Recreation Center is at 700 Alma St., in the Menlo Park Civic Center.

For information or to buy tickets, contact Roberta Roth at 330-2525, or rlroth@menlopark.org.

Local school districts score among top 20 in state API test

■ Las Lomitas is first statewide; Menlo Park shows strong improvement.

By Andrea Gemmet
Almanac Staff Writer

Academic Performance Index scores are up and down, but overall, still very good at local elementary schools. And one district, Las Lomitas, is once again ranked No. 1 in the state.

API scores in the Las Lomitas and Menlo Park elementary school districts improved over last year, while scores in the Portola Valley and Woodside districts dropped. Even so, all four local elementary school districts in The Almanac's circulation area scored well over 900.

The state target number is a score of 800 or better.

The performance is enough to put the schools in the state rankings of the top 20 elementary school districts, according to the latest API results released Sept. 15 by the California Department of Education.

The API is a single-number indicator, ranging from a low of 200 to a high of 1,000, that reflects the students' performance level, based on the results of statewide testing.

For the second year in a row, the Las Lomitas Elementary School District ranked first in the state, with a score of 967 — up 11 points from last year's score of 956.

"It's pretty amazing," said Superintendent Eric Hartwig. "It's really a testimony to the kids and teachers. They're just bookin' all year long."

It's not that the district emphasizes the API scores so much as it focuses on the content underlying it, he said. In recent years, there have been changes to science and writing curricula, especially in the primary grades, which pushes the rigorousness and standards in the upper grades as the children progress through school, Mr. Hartwig said.

Academic Performance Index

(API) scores range from 200 to 1,000, with a state goal of 800 or above. The growth shows the change in score as compared with 2008 API data. API scores are compiled by the California Department of Education.

School district	2009 API	Growth
Las Lomitas	967	11
Menlo Park	934	20
Portola Valley	947	-2
Woodside Elementary	933	-18

School	2009 API	Growth
Las Lomitas	960	16
La Entrada	971	11
Encinal	918	6
Laurel	936	56
Oak Knoll	940	24
Hillview	940	17
Ormondale	948	5
Corte Madera	947	-4
Woodside Elementary	933	-18

Ups and downs

Of the four local districts, the Menlo Park City School District showed the most improvement, with a 20-point gain over last year. Its API score is 934, ranking it as 15th in the state, up from 20th.

Woodside Elementary School District dropped 18 points over last year, leaving it with a score of 933, down from 951. It now ranks 18th in the state, down from sixth last year.

"Although heartened by students' progress in some areas, we did see a drop in the API score," said Superintendent Diana Abbati.

She will present an in-depth analysis of the district's STAR scores, which are used to calculate API scores, at the Oct. 6 school board meeting, she said. The data will guide the district's curriculum goals for the school year, Ms. Abbati said.

Portola Valley dropped by two points, for an API score of 947. It's now ranked 10th, as compared with last year's seventh-place ranking.

Superintendent Anne Campbell noted that Ormondale school's API score improved, while Corte Madera went down by four points.

"Because we're such a small district, our sample size is small, and so several students can have a big impact — in both directions," Ms.

Campbell told The Almanac.

District officials will be looking closely at STAR test data, which is used to generate API scores, in order to discover where more efforts need to be made, she said. "Overall, we're pleased with the progress our students are making and with the well-rounded education they're receiving," she said.

Of course, parsing information from the scores is always a challenge. Menlo Park district officials are working to create an LPI — a local performance index — to better chart students' progress.

"Just using API scores and the state index is not fully reflective of the values of the school district," said Superintendent Ken Ranella at the Sept. 9 board meeting, before the API scores were released. "The state just says if students are proficient or advanced. Some of our students are advanced every year, but is there improvement? And the students who are below proficient, they may not reach proficiency in the short term, but we want to make sure they are achieving growth."

The goal of the LPI is to create a coherent testing and evaluation program that will make it easy to assess student progress and achievement, he said. ■

in the agency felt the heat.

"Anybody who lived along the Peninsula who had a neighbor who knew (someone who) worked at Caltrain" would complain to that person, she said.

"Nobody likes to be in the position where you're getting this kind of negative attention. We want to be good neigh-

bors, and this is not something that has been pleasant for us, either."

In an e-mail to Menlo Park City Manager Glen Rojas Thursday, Sept. 17, Caltrain spokesman Mark Simon apologized for the "aggravation" people who live close to the tracks have experienced. ■



NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING

CITY OF MENLO PARK CITY COUNCIL

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that the City Council of the City of Menlo Park, California is scheduled to consider the recommendation of the Planning Commission and take action on the following item:

Rezoning, Planned Development Permit, Lot Merger and Minor Subdivision, BMR Agreement, Heritage Tree Removal Permit, and Environmental Review/SHP Los Altos, LLC/1300 El Camino Real:

Requests for the following: 1) Rezoning the properties from C-4 General Commercial District (Applicable to El Camino Real) to Planned Development (P-D) District, 2) Planned Development Permit to establish development regulations including parking, building height, landscaping, and building setbacks, and conduct architectural review for the proposed development of 110,065 square feet of commercial space (51,365 square feet of retail/restaurant/service uses and 58,700 square feet of non-medical office uses), 3) Lot Merger and Minor Subdivision to merge the existing six lots and create up to four commercial condominium units, 4) Below Market Rate (BMR) Agreement for the payment of in-lieu fees associated with the City's BMR Housing Program, 5) Heritage Tree Removal Permits to remove one on-site and two off-site heritage trees, and 6) Environmental Review of the proposed project for potential environmental impacts.

An Environmental Impact Report (EIR), a Parking Study, and a Fiscal Impact Analysis (FIA) have been prepared for the project. Copies of these documents are available for review at the Community Development Department, Civic Center, 701 Laurel Street, Menlo Park, CA 94025 and the City's website. In addition to analyzing the proposed project, these documents analyze a mixed-use residential alternative for which the applicant has prepared plans at the request of the City Council. The residential alternative would require similar entitlements as the proposed project, and would consist of 36 residential units, 58,700 square feet of non-medical office, and 22,895 square feet of retail/restaurant uses. This concept utilizes density bonus square footage as provided for in section 16.96.040 of the Zoning Ordinance.

NOTICE IS HEREBY FURTHER GIVEN that said City Council will hold a public meeting on this item in the Council Chambers of the City of Menlo Park, located at 701 Laurel Street, Menlo Park, on **Tuesday, October 6, 2009, 7:00 P.M.** or as near as possible thereafter, at which time and place interested persons may appear and be heard thereon.

Documents related to this item may be inspected 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 Community Development Department, 701 Laurel Street, Menlo Park. Please call Megan Fisher, Associate Planner, if there are any questions or comments on this item. She may be reached at 650-330-6737 or email at mefisher@menlopark.org.

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

DATED: September 17, 2009 Margaret Roberts
City Clerk

PUBLISHED: September 23, 2009

Visit our Web site for City Council public hearing, agenda, and staff report information: www.menlopark.org In addition, the City has prepared a project page for the proposal, which is available at the following address: http://www.menlopark.org/projects/comdev_1300ecr.htm. This page provides up-to-date information about the project, allowing interested parties to stay informed of its progress. The page allows users to sign up for automatic email bulletins, notifying them when content is updated.

CAL TRAIN

continued from page 5

Dunn. Caltrain was inundated with e-mails, letters, and phone calls about the noise. Ms. Dunn said she couldn't quantify the number of complaints Caltrain received, adding that everyone

A community health education series from Stanford Hospital & Clinics

Making Miracles: Perfecting Techniques Overcomes Obstacles

Melissa Michelson knew before she married that she would have difficulty becoming pregnant. Scar tissue from surgery 10 years earlier blocked the passage of eggs down her fallopian tubes. No longer, however, do such challenges end the dream of parenthood. Reproduction is more science than ever before, enabling with more sophistication and reliability, the conception of a much-desired child.

Michelson's obstetrician recommended the Stanford Fertility and Reproductive Medicine Center, just a couple of miles from her home in Palo Alto. The help she and her husband, Christopher Gardner, found at the center gave them Joshua, now 4, and Zachary, 20 months. "I love being a mommy," Michelson said. "I love my boys."

The process was not easy. She went through several cycles of hormone injections so her body would release more eggs than usual, and then, after a carefully selected few were fertilized and implanted, endured that difficult state of limbo between fertilization and pregnancy. "You're trying not to worry, but you're worried," she said. "You think, 'If I could just think positive I will get pregnant.' You get your hopes up and when they don't stick you're disappointed, but you know you have to think happy thoughts and it's important not to be stressed."

IVF "is a roller coaster of emotions," Michelson said. "You walk around and it's as if every woman in America is pregnant. It's hard to want it so bad and for it to take a long time and you're hyper-aware of everyone else."

Mysteries Unveiled

Understanding the elements of human fertility, a complicated set of interactions between biochemistry and physical structures, did not truly begin until the late 19th century, when a Swiss physician created the first accurate representations of a developing human embryo. Almost a century later, researchers were able to fertilize egg

with sperm outside a woman's body and then to replace the fertilized eggs in her uterus. In 1978, Louise Brown was born, the first child conceived by IVF, or, in vitro, meaning "in glass," fertilization.

"We try to look at everyone as an individual. We know this is never going to be an easy process."

— Lynn Westphal, MD, Stanford Fertility and Reproductive Medicine Center

In 1993, a technique called ICSI, intracytoplasmic sperm injection, allowed sperm to be directly inserted into eggs, conquering the infertility of many men. In the decades since then, more and more of the reproductive process has been discovered, and, ultimately controlled, in ways that have made 3 million such pregnancies successful since Brown was born. Assisted reproductive technology (ART) is picking



Scar tissue from colon surgery prevented Melissa Michelson from becoming pregnant without the assistance of in vitro fertilization. More than 3 million babies have been born through IVF since the technique was introduced in the late 1970s.



Melissa Michelson holds son Zachary, 20 months, and her husband, Christopher Gardner, shoulders son Joshua, 4, for a family portrait made possible through advanced reproductive medicine care.

away, bit by bit, at the mysteries of eggs and sperm.

Stanford Hospital began to offer fertility treatment to patients in the early 1980s. Lynn Westphal, MD, Michelson's physician, and Barry Behr, PhD, helped expand the clinic's programs in 1998 to include fertility preservation for cancer patients. The center is now one of the largest on the West Coast and has added fertility preservation for healthy women and couples. The

center serves about 20,000 patients each year. Often, they are people who have been elsewhere first without success or been told there would be no point in even trying, Westphal said. "We take patients with medical conditions that no one wants to deal with because we are willing to try new techniques and do things that maybe are a little bit out of the ordinary. Patients come to us and have unusual situations and we try to look at everyone as an individual. We know this is never going to be an easy process."

An estimated 15 percent of American couples will fail to conceive a child after one year of trying. That infertility can have many explanations, most with clear physical origins. It may be that previous or ongoing medical issues have adversely altered either partner's reproductive physiology. It can be one tiny failure in the environment or process that prevents successful conception. In 10 to 20 percent of infertile couples, physicians can find no definable reason.

Refining Knowledge

Michelson and Gardner already knew what was going on, which removed the extra stress of uncertainty. Michelson went through standard rounds of egg stimulation and retrieval, and, later, embryo implantation. When her eggs were removed, "you go to sleep so it's pretty easy," she said. "When you wake up, you go home."

Implantation was not much more difficult. "You don't get sedated and you can watch what's happening on a screen," she said, and added jokingly, "then your husband is forced to let you lie around in bed all day eating bonbons."

What Stanford physicians accomplished with Michelson, and what many others accomplish at other fertility clinics, is an almost unbelievable feat considering the scale of the objects involved. An ovary is about the size of an almond. Twenty million sperm would still only fill a one-milliliter tube and an egg is just 120

To Learn More About Fertility and Reproductive Medicine

For more information about the Stanford Fertility and Reproductive Medicine Center, phone 650.498.7911 or visit stanforddivf.com. The Web site includes detailed information on clinical services, staff, financial services and pregnancy rates. It also has a lengthy list of links to outside information sources, among them the American Fertility Association, National Embryo Donation Center and the Reproductive Genetics Institute.

Once a month, the Center hosts a presentation about reproductive options that includes talks by

women and couples who have experienced those options. For more information, call the Center or visit its Web site, or call Penny Donnelly, director of support programs, at 650.724.6408, or email her at pdonnelly@stanfordmed.org.

The Center offers stress reduction lectures, a six-session stress reduction course and several support groups that include those for people who are considering third-party reproduction support and those who have experienced repeated pregnancy loss. Individual and couples counseling is also available.

microns across, barely the width of two human hairs.

Nor is every fertilized egg one that will succeed as a pregnancy. In the last few years, researchers have identified hundreds of genetically transmitted conditions. Pre-implantation analysis of an embryo's genetic make-up is now possible with great accuracy and less threat. Behr, director of the Stanford center's IVF/ART Laboratory, contributed an important piece of knowledge to that part of reproduction aimed at selecting the healthiest possible embryo—a recipe for a support medium to meet the special requirements embryos need to live outside a mother's body.

"I knew I could be pregnant. My brain knew it. My body knew it. A lot of the anxiety wasn't there any more."

— Melissa Michelson, patient, Stanford Fertility and Reproductive Medicine Center

As the fertilized egg develops, its nutritional needs change in the same way infants graduate from liquids to solids as they grow into toddlerhood. Behr and his colleagues discovered what those changes were and figured out how to match those different needs to support two additional days of fertilized egg growth.

That extra time exposes information crucial to predicting a pregnancy's success. Behr said, "is like being able to judge marathon runners at mile 22 instead of mile 2. At the start of the race, you know the winner is someone in the group, but it's much easier to pick the winner toward the end of the race."

Beyond that better preview of the future, the extra days also gives as-

sisted reproduction technicians, if a pre-implantation genetic diagnosis has been requested, the ability to remove an embryonic cell at a stage before all the cells begin to differentiate.

Engaging All Elements

Stanford has always taken a comprehensive approach to treatment, Westphal said. The center's team includes embryologists, reproductive endocrinologists, clinical nurses, therapists and highly trained technicians. And all the lab technicians can do every step in the clinic's various procedures. "We have to be able to step in when needed," said the lab's manager and senior embryologist Janice Gebhardt, who has watched IVF/ART evolve since she began in the field almost 20 years ago. Most people, she said, "take pregnancy for granted."

In the clinic's phone center, voices murmur quietly as patients are given results of various tests or of pregnancy status. It's another part of the process that requires a delicate approach; the news can be bad as well as good. "But when they finally bring their babies in," said the clinic's nurse manager, Amanda Schwartz, RN, "that's the best part of my job."

Schwartz and her colleagues are an important part of the clinic, helping patients through loss, when necessary. That stress and emotions can affect fertility is a definite possibility, said the clinic's therapist, Penny Donnelly, RN, MFT. She runs groups and workshops for men and women to give them a safe place to talk about what they are going through, and to give them ideas about what they can do that pharmaceuticals and medical expertise cannot. "I use the analogy of a three-legged stool," Donnelly said. "The third leg is what you as an individual can do to create

your best well-being by managing your diet, nutrition, stress and thinking patterns."

It took Michelson and Gardner four cycles of egg harvesting and seven cycles of implantation to have Joshua. As soon as he reached his first birthday, the couple tried again, using embryos left from one of their previous rounds of IVF. Although another cycle of retrieval was needed, the second pregnancy came much more quickly. Michelson's attitude with this IVF procedure was far different. "I knew I could be pregnant," she said. "My brain knew it. My body knew it. A lot of the anxiety wasn't there any more."

Michelson, like many parents, is keeping scrapbooks for her children, including the very first photograph of them, as embryos just before implantation. "They look like little flowers," she said. "As they get older they will say, 'Mom, what's that?' It'll be a fun part of their story. First they were flowers and then they were babies!"



One egg about to be fertilized with one sperm (small speck in glass pipette) in a technique called intracytoplasmic sperm injection. The egg is about the width of two human hairs. This very direct approach makes a successful pregnancy much more likely.



Dr. Barry Behr's research increased the odds of selecting embryos with the best chance of success.



After first-born Joshua came along, his younger brother Zachary, soon followed.


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T-Mobile seeks OK for antenna atop Corte Madera School building

The school board is set to decide on a plan to install a cellular phone antenna atop the Portola Valley School District office, located at Corte Madera School, at its Sept. 30 meeting.

A proposal to rent the rooftop space to T-Mobile would net the district \$30,000 a year in unrestricted revenue, according to a report by Assistant Superintendent Tim Hanretty.

A public hearing held Sept. 4 brought up community concerns about radiation, cell phone coverage and the operations of the cell phone equipment, said board

member Judy Mendelsohn.

It also provoked some casual discussion at the Sept. 9 meeting of the Portola Valley Town Council.

Schools are generally sovereign when it comes to on-campus development, but in this case the town likely will require a conditional use permit since the cell tower is not part of the school's "educational mission," Councilman Ted Driscoll said.

The Woodside Priory has such a permit for the cell tower on its campus, Councilman Richard Merk said. Priory officials were

not available for comment.

The spectrum of opinion ranged at the public meeting from xenophobic to expert, and there was "definitely a NIMBY problem," Mr. Driscoll said about the discussion, referring to the phrase "not in my back yard."

"This will be very, very controversial," he said. "There were some aggressive speakers."

The tower would be hidden behind a "parapet," Mr. Driscoll said, noting that it could lead to other carriers asking for space up there. The school's roof has plenty of space, he said.

MA-Vikings Pop Warner football report

This report is from Adam Greenlow of Menlo Park, a player on the Pee Wee Vikings' team. He is a seventh-grader at St. Raymond School. All players named are with the Vikings.

The Menlo-Atherton Vikings swept Sunnyvale in the third game of the season. The games took place on Sept. 19 at Peterson Middle School. Following are the game summaries.

Tiny Mites: In a game where you don't keep score of the points, Justin Sinclair rocketed across the goal line twice in the first half. In the second half, Trevor Wargo scored after a drive down the field, and Justin also scored with a long

carry. Darien Houston, Ezra Bazan, Albert Westbrook, Reid Keenan, and Jordan Jernigan played a great game.

Mitey Mites: The Mitey Mites triumphed over Sunnyvale. Keyshawn Ashford stormed down the field and put points on the board with four touchdowns. The win was made possible because of the down-field blocking of Dylan Williams. Reed Woods, Emilio Simbeck, Kahari Williams, and Kaukaola Fifita overwhelmed the offence when they were on defense. The final score was 24-6.

Junior Pee Wees: The JPW won 20-14. Tre'sean Bishop scored after an explosive first drive. Lavell Gates scored on a kickoff return. Will Beasley popped in a touchdown after another

kickoff return by Gates. Will Tarr and Evan King led the offensive line. Marcelous Chester, PJ Lopez, and Charlie Ferguson had big games on defense.

Pee Wees: The Pee Wees defeated Sunnyvale with a 20-14 victory. Benjamin Burr-Kirven and David Teu both scored on amazing runs. In the second half, the Vikings played a pounding running game and drove the ball 80 yards down the field. Charlie Roth did a spectacular job moving the ball down the field during the long drive. He also finished it off by punching in the touchdown. The drive was also made possible by the outstanding blocking of John Guiragossian and Nate Montes.

Junior Midgets: The Junior Midgets won 8-0. Matt Odell caught the pass from Royce Branning to score the winning touchdown.

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Fundraising bicycle tour for Woodside High on Sunday

It's a challenge to climb a major hill on a bicycle, though when you're part of a group of cyclists, maybe your endurance goes up.

You may test this theory, or one of your own, on Sunday, Sept. 27, at the fourth annual Tour for Woodside, a bicycle riding fundraiser for Woodside High School that offers a choice of three routes: 32, 55 or 100 miles.

An end-of-the-ride meal, with food from Draeger's market, will await riders at the school and is included in the ticket price.

A \$40 ticket gets you a 32-mile trip, with 1,800 feet of uphill riding that includes a visit to the Pulgas Water Temple on Canada Road in Woodside, plus once around the circuit of Sand Hill,

See photo, Page 3

Portola and Alpine roads.

The \$50 ride covers the same route, plus a trip up Kings Mountain Road, over to Alice's Restaurant and down Highway 84. The climb is 4,160 feet, considered a moderate to difficult route.

The century ride, labeled difficult, is \$60 and includes the Water Temple, then a mountainous ride to the coast via Tunitas Creek Road to San Gregorio, with a return loop around returning via La Honda and Sky Londa, for a total elevation of 8,600 feet.

For more information, go to www.tourforwoodside.com.



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POLHEMUS AVENUE STORM DRAIN IMPROVEMENTS PROJECT NO. 08-011

Notice is hereby given that SEALED BIDS will be received at the office of the Town Clerk, 91 Ashfield Road, Atherton, California 94027, until 3:00 p.m. October 15, 2009, at which time they will be publicly opened and read, for performing the following work:

LAYOUT OF WORK AND INSTALLATION OF A NEW STORM DRAIN SYSTEM ON POLHEMUS AVENUE WITH PIPING SYSTEM AND INLETS, REMOVAL AND REPLACEMENT OF ASPHALT CONCRETE PAVEMENT SECTIONS AT STORM DRAIN CROSSINGS, REPLACEMENT OF DRIVEWAY APPROACHES AT STORM DRAIN CROSSINGS, INSTALLATION OF NEW EROSION CONTROL MAT IN EXISTING STORM DRAIN ROADSIDE DITCH, AND REPLACEMENT OF STRIPING

The Engineer's Estimate for the project is: \$252,233

Bids must be for the entire work, and shall be submitted in sealed envelopes clearly marked: "Bid of (Contractor) for POLHEMUS AVENUE STORM DRAIN IMPROVEMENTS, PROJECT NO. 08-011", 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 reject any and all proposals and/or to waive any irregularities therein.

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 Town 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 Town Engineer, 91 Ashfield Road, Atherton, CA 94027, telephone (650) 752-0555, 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., Town Engineer

Date: _____

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History Makers event pays tribute to Roth family, donors of Filoli estate

The William P. Roth family will be honored at the History Makers dinner to be held from 6 to 9:30 p.m. Thursday, Sept. 24, at the Hyatt Regency Hotel in Burlingame. The event is a benefit for the San Mateo County Historical Association.

In addition to a reception and awards, a documentary film on the Roth family will be screened at the event. Tickets to the benefit are \$150 per person.

The Roth family is best known for donating their Filoli estate in

Woodside to the National Trust for Historic Preservation.

Lurline Matson Roth was the daughter of Captain William Matson, founder of Matson Navigation Co. In 1913 she met her future husband, William P. Roth, who would later become the president of Matson Navigation. The Roths had three children: a son, William Matson Roth, and twin daughters, Lurline and Berenice.

In 1937 the Roths purchased the Filoli estate in Woodside,

built in 1915-17 by William Bowers Bourn II. Ms. Roth not only preserved and renewed the estate's original plantings, but enhanced the gardens by adding new plants and structures, according to the San Mateo County Historical Association's Web site.

Mr. Roth died in 1963, and Ms. Roth remained at Filoli until 1973. She donated the 125-acre estate, along with the house and gardens, to the National Trust in 1975.

Ms. Roth and her son, William, also played an important part in the restoration of Ghirardelli Square in San Francisco in 1962, according to the historical association's Web site. They hired an architectural firm to convert the former chocolate factory into a retail complex. Ghirardelli Square was later listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

For more information, or to secure tickets for the benefit, call 299-0104.



The Roth family is pictured aboard the S.S. Malolo as it arrived in Los Angeles on its first voyage in 1927. William P. Roth is shown releasing a carrier pigeon with a message to Los Angeles Mayor James Rolph, Jr., inviting him to inspect the ship. With him are his wife, Lurline, son William Matson Roth, and twin daughters Lurline and Berenice.

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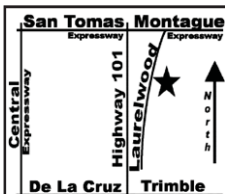
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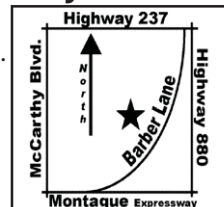
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HABITAT
continued from page 7

use, housing-intensive development along the eastern stretch of Hamilton Avenue.
 "If you can put an east Hamilton

project on the table that has green elements, that has mixed-use to build on the commercial (development) that's already on that corner, and has some access to transit ... I think you would get a ton of support for that," he said.

tion there, too."
 A Habitat for Humanity spokesperson wrote in a statement that the organization hopes its proposal for housing at Terminal Avenue will proceed, and that it is open to compromise.

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Mayor Robinson was less hopeful. Council members argued that housing developments always seem to run into opposition, regardless of their merits or location.

"This is really going to be a challenge as we move forward," he said. "If we start talking about adding serious density to (the east Hamilton Avenue site), I'm guessing we may end up running into opposi-

Correction

An article on below-market-rate housing in the Sept. 16 issue of The Almanac referred to the Hamilton Park development in Belle Haven as both a "mixed-use" and "mixed-income" development. It is a mixed-income development, not mixed-use.

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.

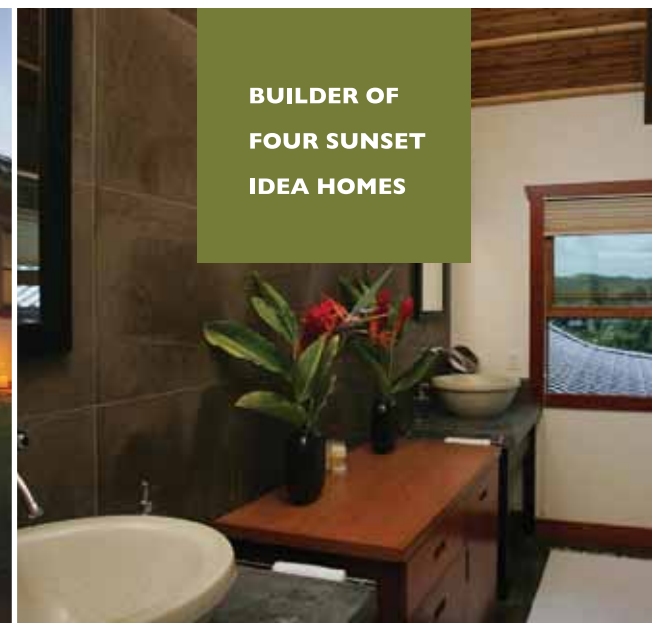
ATHERTON

Residential burglary report: Concrete pipe and cell phone stolen, first block of Placitas Ave., Sept. 17.
Auto-burglary report: Window smashed and purse, wallet and cell phone stolen, Alejandra Ave. and El Camino Real, Sept. 17.

MENLO PARK

Residential burglary reports:
 ■ Mountain bike, pressure washer and

tool box and drill stolen with total value of \$2,500, 1300 block of Mills St., Sept. 11.
 ■ Video game console, silver bracelet and cash stolen with total value of \$565, 200 block of Van Buren Road, Sept. 11.
 ■ Tools stolen from construction site, first block of Palm Court, Sept. 14.
Commercial burglary report: \$160 in cash stolen, Stanford School of Medicine Office of Facilities Planning and Management at 555 Middlefield Road, Sept. 14.
Auto-burglary report: Two boxes of bronze keys and copper wire stolen with total value of \$500, 2100 block of Santa Cruz Ave., Sept. 17.
Grand theft report: Single-speed bicycle stolen with value of \$2,000, 400 block of Oak Grove Ave., Sept. 11.
Adult Protective Services report: 2100 block of Santa Cruz Ave., Sept. 16.



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OBITUARIES

Arthur Krakower

Atherton artist

Arthur J. Krakower, an Atherton resident who found success as a painter late in life, died June 10. He was 88.



Arthur Krakower

Mr. Krakower had a life-long interest in painting, and after retiring — for the second time — went back to school, earning a bachelor's degree in fine art from San Jose State University in 1999. At the age of 80, he became the oldest graduate of the California College of Arts and Crafts (now called California College of the Arts), where he earned his master's degree in 2001.

Many of his evocative paintings and monotypes drew upon memories of his childhood in New York City in the 1930s. Successful solo shows at City Picture

Frame Gallery in San Francisco drew art collectors by the bus-full. The gallery manager, Andra Norris, praised the innocence and enthusiasm evident in his work. Mr. Krakower was invited to make monotypes at Smith-Andersen Editions in Palo Alto, and etchings at Crown Point Press in San Francisco. He also was invited to artists' residencies in Otranto, Italy, and San Gregorio Ranch.

Two of his monotypes are part of the Smith-Andersen permanent collection at the deSassiet Museum at Santa Clara University. He once said that one of proudest accomplishments was when one of his paintings won a coveted spot on the wall in his own house.

Mr. Krakower's first career was as a department store merchandising executive. He followed that with a second career in commercial real estate. Throughout that time, he took art classes on weekends, over a span of about 47 years.

"I kept doing things while I was working, until finally I decided I had to learn more, had to do more. I wanted to see how far I could go," he told The Almanac in 2003.

Family and friends said they will remember him for always living life to the fullest, and for his energy and good humor.

He is survived by Jean, his wife of 54 years; his children Susan, Carole and Tom; and three grandchildren.

Services were held at Temple Beth Jacob in Redwood City. Memorial donations may be made to the California College of the Arts.

Mary Louise Miller

Former Atherton resident

Mary Louise Miller of Palm Desert died Sept. 9 at Eisenhower Medical Center in Rancho Mirage after a brief illness. She was 85.



Mary Lou Miller

Ms. Miller was a graduate of the University of Mary Washington in Fredericksburg, Virginia. Raising a family, she and her husband, Robert Miller, lived in Upper Montclair, New Jersey, before moving to Atherton.

While living in Atherton, Ms. Miller was a member of Allied Arts Guild Auxiliary, the Junior League of the Mid Peninsula/Palo Alto, and the Menlo Park Presbyterian Church. She and served as president of Menlo-Atherton United, a parent organization that supported diversity at Menlo-Atherton High School.

After retiring to Palm Desert, she assisted children in the reading program at Jimmy Carter Elementary School.

She is survived by her husband, Robert Miller, of Palm Desert; sons Robert Miller of Sun City, Palm Desert, Peter Miller of Reston, Virginia, and Mark Miller of Reedsport, Oregon; a daughter, Margaret Miller of Boise, Idaho; seven grandchildren; and two great-grandchildren.

Private services were held. Memorial donations may be made to the Coachella Valley Rescue Mission, P.O. Box 10660, Indio, CA 92202.

County public health department prepares for flu season

With two varieties of flu to deal with this winter, the San Mateo County public health department has set up a Web site, a telephone hotline, and material on how the seasonal flu this year differs from H1N1 flu, otherwise known as swine flu.

In addition to vaccination programs available from regular health care providers this fall, the county has announced plans for flu shots at "a large number of alternative sites," though a vaccine for the H1N1 flu was not yet available, according to a Sept. 16 statement.

The Web site www.smhealth.org/swineflu notes that there have been 146 confirmed cases of swine flu in the county as of Sept. 15 and that seven people have died from it.

Public health spokeswoman Robyn Thaw said that all residents over the age of six months can benefit from flu vaccinations. To find a list of clinics by ZIP code and date, go to the county's swine flu Web site, click on the Vaccines link, and then on flucliniclocator.org.

Dr. Scott Morrow, the county health officer, noted the standard flu season precautions: wash your hands frequently; cover coughs and sneezes; avoid touching your mouth, nose and eyes; and stay home if you or a family member is sick.

The flu hotline phone number is 573-3927.

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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.

Subscriptions are \$60 for one year and \$100 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 and note this it is a letter to the editor in the subject line.

MAIL or deliver to:

Editor at the Almanac,
3525 Alameda de las Pulgas,
Menlo Park, CA 94025.

CALL the Viewpoint desk at 854-2690, ext. 222.

Menlo Park schools overflowing

Something is attracting families with young children to Menlo Park and Atherton, a migration that is wreaking havoc on enrollment projections for the elementary schools in the Menlo Park City School District.

And it isn't as if the district has been conservative in its growth estimates, which were the driving force in selling a \$91.1 million bond issue passed overwhelmingly by voters in 2006. The ambitious remake of Hillview Middle School and expansion of Oak Knoll, Encinal and Laurel elementary schools was designed to accommodate the expected growth for another five years at least.

But now, Superintendent Ken Ranella is saying that if current growth continues it is very possible that there will be 2,150 elementary students by 2014, far more than the three schools can handle if current small class sizes and other amenities are continued. It amounts to 64 percent growth in incoming kindergarteners over the last 10 years, and nearly 32 percent during the last five.

And it means that the district would simply need another elementary school if it is to stay within the ideal size range of 400 to 500 students. The alternative would be to add a glut of portable classrooms, something that all the recent construction is designed to eliminate.

The district does have one ace up its sleeve — the 10-classroom O'Connor School in the Willows neighborhood, which is now leased out to the German-American International School. To reclaim it

when the lease expires in 2011, the district must notify GAIS by January, a move that is looking increasingly likely.

In fact, board member Jeff Child is already looking for ways to finance any remodeling work that would need to be done at O'Connor, suggesting that the board look at saving whatever money possible on the soon-to-begin Hillview construction project.

Under the district's current projections, enrollment is expected to level off after 2014 (only five years away) but there is no guarantee. If once again the district's best guess on enrollment growth falls short, more space will be needed.

Other than new housing, it has been difficult to pinpoint exactly what is causing the increased enrollment. Some indicators show many more district students are bypassing private schools, perhaps due to the economic downturn. And certainly, the trend of younger families moving into the district as retirees move out contributes to the rise in students.

At nearby Las Lomas School District, enrollment is also growing, according to Superintendent Eric Hartwig, who noted that it's increased from about 2 percent to 4 percent annually in the last few years, but still, far short of the explosive numbers seen in the Menlo Park City district.

In the meantime, district officials will continue to carefully monitor enrollment over the next few years as renovations at all schools are completed and the campuses settle down. The big question will be what the numbers say in 2014.

EDITORIAL

The opinion of The Almanac

LETTERS

Our readers write

No point in agonizing over Burgess deal

Editor:

Thank you for your last week's article entitled "A Swimming Success" with the cheeky question mark.

It is awfully tiresome when a job brilliantly done is not acknowledged. I fail to see the point of lamenting what Burgess Pool used to be in the good old days — a sorry and embarrassing facility the one and only time I swam there in 2000. Nostalgia is nice, but dismissing the tireless efforts of the current staff to create a thriving community pool is not.

As a member of a family of devoted swimmers, I believe the city of Menlo Park and its residents ought to be thankful that their pool is run by a thoughtful, community-minded, innovative, and inspiring company, offering services we value and benefit from that impact our lives in only positive ways.

The fact that the pool is buzzing with activity at all times of the day is testament to its success. Period. No question mark.

**Donia Bijan
Menlo Park**



Our Regional Heritage

Menlo Park Historical Association

This tiny office housed the Wells, Fargo & Co. Express office in downtown Menlo Park during the 1890s. Completion of nearby Stanford University caused a mini-boom in the city in 1891, described by some historians as a boom similar to the Gold Rush.

Menlo Park poised to renovate its downtown

Editor:

It's very true that Redwood City, Palo Alto, San Carlos and Mountain View have all rejuvenated their downtowns.

They've added parking structures, in some cases paid park-

ing, mixed use, mixed-income housing and wonderful public spaces for people to gather. They've made excellent use of their proximity to transit and their public spaces invite the community into their downtowns for all sorts of events and to shop. And they each have at least one farmers' market.

From the beginning, the Menlo Park downtown vision has insisted on keeping small businesses in the plan, as is the case of the farmers' market. By housing people closer to those shops, jobs, clinics, doctors, and transit, by wisely incorporating

See **LETTERS**, next page

Jury report off base, councilwoman says

By Kelly Fergusson

The 2009 San Mateo County Grand Jury report on county-wide employee costs addressed a serious problem facing fiduciary stewards of cities. Unfortunately, the report was largely inaccurate, and particularly unfair regarding Menlo Park. It oversimplified and locally politicized this important issue.

Normally, grand jury investigators interview credible sources, including professional city staff, to create a sound factual basis for reports. Instead, this report neglected such sources, relying heavily on opinion pieces and newspaper articles, particularly by the Palo Alto Daily Post. Consequently, the report is replete with errors and misstatements, requiring over four pages of corrections by city staff. The report is over-eager to find fault and guided by ideology rather than facts.

The reality is that many cities, including Menlo Park, have actively pursued a balance between controlling employee costs and ensuring an ability to recruit and retain quality employees with competitive wages and benefits. If we ignore this balance, we'll lose our best and brightest, and lower the quality of service provided to the public.

Menlo Park has demonstrated leadership in controlling employee costs and in public involvement:

- 2008 — City manager starts working closely with the Municipal Employee Relations Committee (MERC) to develop and evaluate employee cost policy options;

- 2008 — The city pre-funds its post-retirement medical obligation, saving taxpayers \$370,000 annually;

- 2009 — City Council continues its practice of taking public input in advance of employee union



(SEIU/AFSCME) negotiations;

- 2009-10 — City budget freezes salaries and allocates \$0 for raises;

- Ongoing — limiting extent of post-retirement medical coverage limits spending.

Instead of acknowledging this pro-active record, the report takes particular aim at Menlo Park, its staff, and employee unions. Why?

One of the principal authors is a former Menlo Park council member, one of two defeated in their 2006 re-election bid. Instead of accepting the voters' will, they both keep trying to make scapegoats of city employees and unions.

Their campaign war chest was funded generously by developers. Did that make them ineligible to participate in land use decisions? Their assertion that accepting union contributions disqualifies council members from employee compensation decisions is without merit. They accepted union funds themselves.

But watch them try to tar and feather any candidate who has any hint of labor support in the 2010 election. Already, one former council member is quoting the report in a misleading way, citing the grand jury to give her statements a false aura of credibility.

I have the highest regard for the grand jury's track record and its citizen volunteers, so I hate to see the institution abused this way. I was surprised and disappointed by the lack of balance and lack of recognition in the report for the positive strides cities have taken. Sadly, this issue is being politicized in a way which doesn't advance the interests of taxpayers.

Looking ahead, despite the report's shortcomings, several of its recommendations are reasonable. The employee relations committee is analyzing these topics and is the better forum for a rational, informed, and orderly assessment of policy options for further controlling employee costs.

Kelly Fergusson is a member of the Menlo Park City Council.

true green standards for buildings and parking structures, we can reduce car trips, save energy, and produce a more vibrant downtown. We can offer new housing options for residents who wish to be closer to all of those amenities and/or jobs.

Yes, Redwood City, Palo Alto, San Carlos and Mountain View downtowns are alive — with people and lots of small independent businesses. Rather than disparage them, we should learn from their successes.

**Elizabeth Lasensky
Fremont Street
Menlo Park**

Education fads did not interest Sally Stewart

Editor:

I want to thank Sally Stewart for her service on the Sequoia Union High School District board of trustees.

She always saw the big picture and did not fall for the latest fad in politics and education ideas.

She also helped the district to recover from the disastrous results of Proposition 13. We

who believe in education for all students will miss her.

**Malcolm B. Mitchell
Corte Madera Road
Portola Valley**

Sally Stewart will be missed

Editor:

Last week's article on the retirement of longtime Sequoia Union High School District board member Sally Stewart correctly notes some of her strengths: ample intelligence, independence, and honesty.

Having worked with Ms. Stewart for many years, I would like to add that she was always a highly informed, prepared and dedicated public servant, not always the case with many board members.

She was one of the few members who regularly visited school sites and actually interacted with those closest to the students. Her values and positions have been consistently student-centered.

A particularly revealing remark in the article was Sally's feeling that her critical views

on charter schools, especially Everest, would "not be very well represented by your paper," therefore, she would have no comment.

I strongly concur, since I feel that The Almanac's coverage of the complex and highly charged issue of charter schools has been consistently biased and simplistic and that your paper has served as an embarrassingly reliable propaganda vehicle for Diane Tavenner and many of her followers, who have preyed upon the district's sadly limited budget to further their elitist, self-centered, and often transparently racist motives. They continue to do so with their current lawsuit against our struggling, cash-strapped high school district.

Sally Stewart's voice will be greatly missed.

**Paul Williams
Santa Maria Avenue
Portola Valley**

TOWN SQUARE

Post your views and comments on TownSquare: www.TheAlmanacOnline.com

NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARINGS

The County Committee on School District Organization will hold Public Hearings on a petition to transfer territory from the Redwood City to the Las Lomas School District. The meetings will be Sept. 29 in Cano Hall at Las Lomas School, 299 Alameda de las Pulgas, Atherton and Oct. 6 at the Redwood City School District Board Room, 750 Bradford Avenue, Redwood City. Each meeting is at 7:00 p.m. For details, contact pburchyns@smcoe.k12.ca.us

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