



PORTOLA VALLEY loses an icon: Tommy Simpson ran the hardware store, raised a family and cared for animals *PAGE 7*

The Almanac

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

DECEMBER 9, 2009 | VOL. 45 NO. 15



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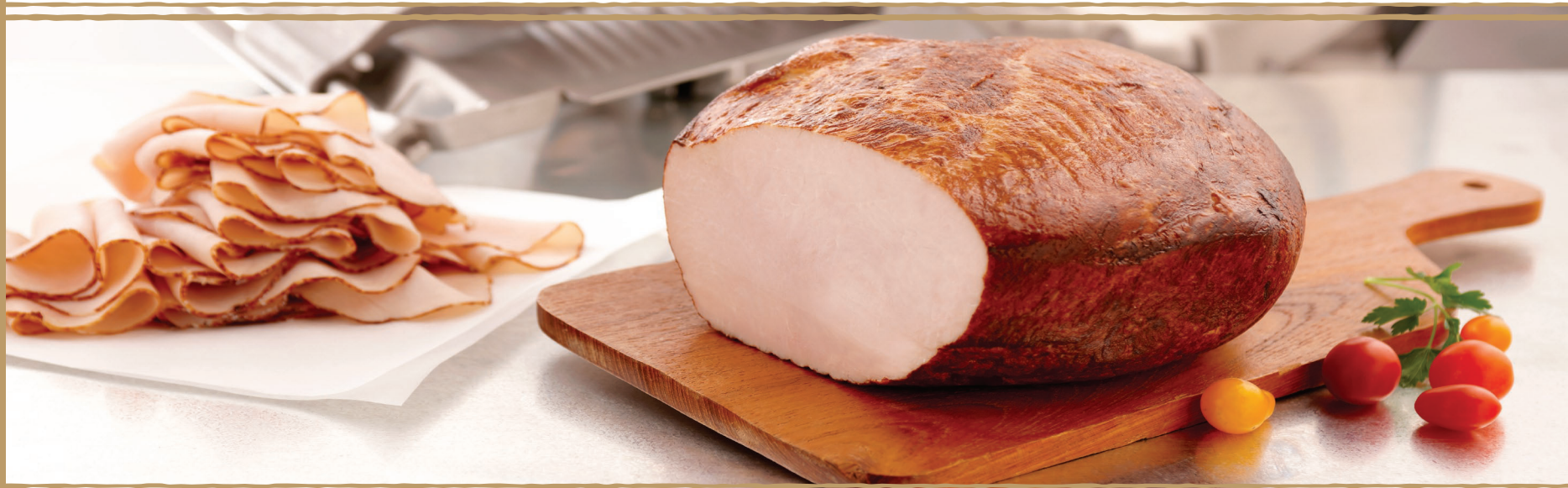
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Inside

This week's news, features and community events.

FIRST SHOT



Photo by Terry Blaine

Christmas ballet

Shannon Broderick, left, and Nicole Wein of the Menlo Park Academy of Dance perform in the "Twas the Night Before Christmas" ballet on the Woodside High School performing arts center stage last year. The ballet will be performed again this year by the Dancers Repertory Theatre and the Menlo Park Academy of Dance on Saturday and Sunday, Dec. 12 and 13, at the Woodside High School performing arts center at Churchill Avenue and Woodside Road. Performances are at 4 and 7 p.m. Saturday and 1:30 and 4 p.m. Sunday. Tickets are \$20 for general admission and \$12 for seniors and children under 12. For more information or to purchase tickets, go to TwasTheNight.org.

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On the cover

Jerzy and Aniela Gregorek pose in the extended twisted crunch position near their home in Woodside. The Gregoreks are personal fitness trainers whose new book, "The Happy Body: The Simple Science of Nutrition, Exercise, and Relaxation," is being released next month. Photo by Michelle Le. See story, **Section 2**.

People

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Artscene

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CALLING ON THE ALMANAC

The Almanac Editorial offices are at **3525 Alameda de las Pulgas, Menlo Park, CA 94025**. Classified ads: **854-0858**
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Sides

Traditional Stuffing

Mushrooms, onion, celery, water chestnuts and sage
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Cornbread Stuffing

Dried cranberries, apricots and green onion
\$10.75 qt **\$5.50** pt

Mashed Potatoes

Fresh potatoes whipped with cream, and butter
\$12.00 qt **\$6.25** pt

Porcini Mushroom Gravy

Rich and creamy made with turkey drippings
\$12.00 qt **\$6.25** pt

Beef Au Jus

Made with Pan juices, red wine and beef stock
\$12.00 qt **\$6.25** pt

Onion Sage Gravy

With red wine, caramelized onion and sage
\$12.00 qt **\$6.25** pt

Green Bean Almandine

Sauteed shallots, butter and almonds
\$11.75 qt **\$6.00** pt

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Local News

MENLO PARK | ATHERTON | WOODSIDE | PORTOLA VALLEY

Don't let meter maid steal Christmas

If grandma comes to visit this holiday season, don't let her park on Menlo Park streets without a permit.

The city has traditionally refrained from enforcing its overnight parking ban for a two-week period at the end of the year, but that's not the case any more, according to the police department. Meter maids will be out in the early morning writing up tickets, regardless of whether you've been naughty or nice. There's nothing like an unexpected ticket to put a damper on an otherwise jolly holiday.

Visit menloparkpolice.org/parking to buy permits, or call the police department at 330-6300.

Just like old times

Round Table Pizza is going to party like it's 1959. To celebrate the 50th anniversary of the opening of the first Round Table Pizza, which happened right here in Menlo Park, large cheese and pepperoni pizzas will be on sale at 1959 prices — \$2.26.

The special throw-back prices are only good for one day, Monday, Dec. 21, at the Menlo Park and Palo Alto locations. Only one pizza per person, and the price applies only to dine-in and carry-out pies, not those that are delivered.

"This is our way of celebrating the pizza and the people that have made Round Table a family and community gathering place for 50 years," said Bob Larson, son of Round Table founder Bill Larson, and the owner of the Menlo Park and Palo Alto Round Table Pizza restaurants.

Holiday lights go LED

If the strands of lights on trees in downtown Menlo Park seem especially lustrous this season, that doesn't necessarily mean you've been overcome by the holiday spirit. More likely it's due to the efforts of the Chamber of Commerce, whose members have covered over 30 trees with festive strands composed of miniature light-emitting diodes (LEDs).

Anthony Rose not at fault in death of bicyclist, jury finds

By **Dave Boyce**
Almanac Staff Writer



Rodney Smith

Anthony Rose, a former superintendent of the Portola Valley School District, was not at fault when his car struck and killed bicyclist Rodney Smith in a May 2007 accident on Sand Hill Road, a San Mateo County jury decided Dec. 1.

Mr. Smith was a resident of Portola Valley and the former chief executive of San Jose-based Altera Corp.

His widow, Mary Smith, filed a wrongful death lawsuit against Mr. Rose, a resident of Woodside,

seeking \$7 million to \$8 million in damages.

The jury, which deliberated 10 hours following a 10-day trial, voted 9-3 to reject her claim.

The key issue was whether Mr. Smith, 67, turned his eastbound bike into the path of

Mr. Rose's eastbound car, or whether Mr. Rose, 87, turned his car into the bike lane and struck Mr. Smith.

Making a case

The accident damaged the front fork of Mr. Smith's bike, and left his left leg slightly injured, said Mr. Rose's attorney, Kevin Chola-



Photo by Dave Boyce/The Almanac

Anthony Rose is a former superintendent of the Portola Valley School District. In this 2006 photo, he speaks to a gathering at the Portola Valley Town Center.

kian of Cholakian & Associates in South San Francisco.

Such evidence, and the habits of typical drivers, supports the notion that Mr. Smith turned his bike into the path of Mr. Rose's car, Mr. Cholakian told The Almanac.

A typical lane change requires a 1-degree to 2-degree turn of the steering wheel, he said. The accident reconstruction showed that Mr. Rose would have had to make something like a 15-de-

See **VERDICT**, page 8

New contract with city has salary freeze

By **Sean Howell**
Almanac Staff Writer

Following calls by residents for Menlo Park employees to share in the city's financial burden, the city has struck a deal with the union that represents 33 city supervisors aimed at doing just that.

The agreement calls for a two-year salary freeze, and for middle-management employees to share in unanticipated increased costs to the city of pensions and health care benefits.

While it does not scale back retirement benefits that the city acknowledges are unsustainable in the long run, it includes concessions that City Manager Glen Rojas said were unprecedented.

"This is the first time where (the union) actually took back something without having to get something in return," Mr. Rojas said in an interview. "It's a big step."

"Balancing our appreciation of the work (managers) do with the budget realities was really the task before us in these negotiations," said Councilwoman Kelly Fergusson. "The employees really stepped up and showed some leadership in the negotiations."

The city's middle managers



Photo by Jeff Hurn

Holiday concert

April McNeely rehearses the Menlo Park Chorus for a holiday concert at the Menlo-Atherton High School performing arts center at 7:30 p.m. Friday, Dec. 11. For more information on this and other holiday events, see pages 12 and 23; or go to TheAlmanacOnline.com.

make an average of \$120,860 per year in salary and benefits, according to Personnel Director Glen Kramer. Menlo Park's costs would be "essentially flat" over the two-year period, with slight increases in health care costs, and some employees moving to a higher salary echelon.

Under the contract, if the city's

scheduled payments to the state pension fund increase above the rate currently projected in 2011, management employees would match the city's contribution over that threshold rate.

The union has also agreed to pay half of any health premium cost increase in 2011, up to a specified cap.

That could mean that management employees will help to share the burden of rising costs to the city. It could also mean that their contributions to retirement and medical funds won't change at all.

"I think it was a reasonable

See **CONTRACT**, page 8

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Local towns top scales for consumption of residential energy

Energy efficiency is often about numbers. Here are some that the Town Council of Portola Valley will consider at its Wednesday, Dec. 9, meeting in the Historic Schoolhouse.

■ Portola Valley ranks seventh of the 10 communities with the largest residential consumption of energy per household in the service area of Pacific Gas & Electric Corp., according to Acterra, the Palo Alto-based environmental nonprofit. (Holding down first and second place are Atherton and Woodside, respectively.)

■ Portola Valley is eligible for \$25,000 in state grant money for residential energy audits, enough to evaluate 150 homes. (This program also will evaluate 240 homes in Atherton and 180 in Woodside.)

■ Audited homes tend to reduce electricity use by 20 percent and natural gas use by 10 percent. If all 150 homes were audited, Portola Valley could

■ PORTOLA VALLEY

reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 184 metric tons.

The council will consider a resolution that would include authorizing Acterra to publicize and arrange the energy audits.

Field fee hike

The council will also hold a public hearing on a proposal to increase fees for the use of athletic fields. The increase would raise a total of \$65,900 in 2010, up 62 percent from the \$40,650 raised in 2009.

The proposal for 2010 would raise \$84,300, still short of the council's goal of having those who use the fields pay about half the \$168,600 cost to maintain two ball fields and two soccer pitches.

A staff report included a 25 percent fee increase for 2011, but the council chose to consider that at a future meeting.

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Baykeeper sues West Bay Sanitary over sewage spills

By Andrea Gemmet

Almanac Staff Writer

An environmental watchdog group has filed a lawsuit against the West Bay Sanitary District and two Peninsula cities over violations of clean water laws. San Francisco Baykeeper, in a lawsuit filed Dec. 2 in U.S. District Court, contends that thousands of gallons of sewage overflows reached the San Francisco Bay over the past five years.

The Menlo Park-based West Bay Sanitary District has a rate of spills that's twice as high as the California average, said Deb Self, the executive director of Baykeeper.

San Carlos and Millbrae were also named in the lawsuit.

Vivian Housen, the interim director of the West Bay Sanitary District, said the problem is not as bad as the lawsuit purports, and that the district is "working proactively" to improve its aging network of pipes.

Baykeeper relies on a city's or district's own mandatory reporting of sewage overflows, usually caused by blockages or failed pipes, to compile evidence for its lawsuits.

"Particularly with the rain,

it hits a clog — tree roots or diapers — and it backs up the drain, into the streets and into the Bay," said Ms. Self.

The organization goes after the worst offenders, filing suit in order to force better maintenance and upgrades to the sewer system, she told The Almanac.

Ms. Housen said that the information in Baykeeper's complaint isn't entirely accurate.

"We've found quite a few errors," she said.

As for West Bay having twice the average rate of spills, Ms. Housen said she's worked for a number of districts throughout California and that reporting standards are not as rigorous elsewhere.

However, she acknowledged that West Bay's clay pipes are subject to failure, especially from tree root intrusions. The district has set up a meeting with Baykeeper to discuss its plans to make about \$3 million a year in capital improvements.

"Many of the pipes are over 100 years old, and there's an accelerated program to replace them over the next five to 10 years," said Ms. Housen. "The district was taking action proactively before they filed the lawsuit."

Portola Valley loses an icon

By Dave Boyce
Almanac Staff Writer

A new Wednesday morning routine has settled in at Portola Valley Hardware at the corner of Alpine and Portola roads: the absence behind the register of former store owner Helen “Tommy” Simpson.

Though Ms. Simpson, 92, had sold the store long ago, she’d been working part-time for a few hours a week until recently. She died Nov. 25 surrounded by family, friends and her four cats at the family home of more than 50 years on Grove Court, relatives said.

Councilman Richard Merk, who went on to become a general contractor, worked for Ms. Simpson during the first half of 1960s, when inventories were counted by hand, and if a customer wanted a piece of pipe threaded, it was done at the store.

“Tommy was just this wonderful person,” he told *The Almanac*. She ran the store, while her husband Bob had a full-time job. The store had been an investment should their kids find it interesting, her son Jim Simpson said.

A woman in a pre-feminist era running a hardware store? “You wouldn’t expect this woman to answer questions about plumbing or electrical stuff, but she really knew the answers,” Mr. Merk said.

For a time, Mr. Merk said, he and an elderly man named Mr. Johnson were the only employees. Mr. Johnson would propose a rearrangement of the store’s interior, Ms. Simpson would agree, and the three of them, after hours, would shove display units around, Mr. Merk said.

Sometimes, a break was called for. “It’s a hard life, running a retail store. You’re married to that store,” Mr. Merk said. “She was not above having a drink once in a while.”

Ms. Simpson kept a bottle of vodka in the refrigerator, Mr. Merk said, and on occasion she would call out, “Would anybody like a drink?” Mr. Johnson obliged, as did Mr. Merk — after he turned 21, he said.

“I enjoyed working there,” he said. “I loved working there. It was fun to figure out peoples’ problems. She trusted you to do your job. She told you what needed to be done and pretty much would leave you alone.”

The vodka “wouldn’t surprise me,” said her son Chris Simpson, who though unaware of it at the time, noted that his mother liked to have a glass of wine with dinner.



Photo by Virginia Bacon

Tommy Simpson, who could be found most Wednesday mornings behind the register at the Portola Valley Hardware store, died Nov. 25 at her Grove Court home. She was 92 years old.

Ms. Simpson stayed involved with the store over the years because “she just loved the people” she encountered there, town historian Nancy Lund said in an interview. Fighting back tears, she added: “She loved her house, she loved the town, she loved the people who live here.”

Sweetness for two

Helen grew up in Pennsylvania and graduated with a bachelor’s degree in sociology from the University of Wisconsin, relatives said. She learned horsemanship at the Ogontz Summer Camp, a retreat known for educating the whole girl.

She married Bob Simpson, moved to Portola Valley in 1954 and raised four sons. Her husband died in 2000.

Her sons would swim in the creek behind the house, on their own recognizance, her son Jim said. “She was a very independent lady,” he said. “That’s probably one of the things that she instilled in all of us, is independence.”

Ms. Simpson also assisted Portola Valley dentist Dr. Bob Conlon part-time in his front office.

“She had enough sweetness for two people,” despite raising four boys, Dr. Conlon said. Of his assistants, “she was unflappable ... and the most punctual, dependable — I’ve already said ‘sweetest’ — and responsible.”

Ms. Simpson enjoyed a passion for the well-being of wild animals, and visited the Galapagos Islands, parts of South America, the American Northwest, and India and Nepal, relatives said.

“She would not invite but inveigle skunks and raccoons into her house to feed them,” along with pet dogs, cats, and feral cats that wandered through, Dr. Conlon said.

After advanced age inhibited travel, she involved herself with animal rights groups, including

Pets in Need.

Ms. Simpson is survived by her sons, John of Gold Hill, Oregon; Peter of Union City; Jim of Auburn; and Chris of Redwood City; 13 grandchildren and 10 great-grandchildren. A memorial is set for Saturday, Jan. 23, at 1 p.m. at the Town Center at 765 Portola Road in Portola Valley.

The family requests that donations be made to the Morris Animal Foundation, Pets in Need, the World Wildlife Fund or another animal rights organization. ■

REAL ESTATE Q&A

by Monica Corman



Short Sales

Q: I am interested in making an offer on a property that if accepted, will give the seller less than the amount owed to the lender; or, be what is called a “short sale”. Would you advise me to become involved in a short sale property?

A: There are more and more properties like the one you described coming on the market. Some are very good properties and it would be a shame to miss out on the opportunity to buy one of them simply because it is a short sale. But you need to be aware of the fact that you may wait for weeks before you know whether the lender and the seller have been able to work out an agreement. This

negotiation is out of your control and you will need to be patient if you want to complete the transaction. If you are getting a loan for the property you will have to be sure that you keep your loan approval current because you may exceed the time limit of any loan commitment.

If you are a seller in a short sale, you should be aware that the lender may want you to bring in additional cash to close the transaction, or the lender may want to put a lien on other assets to make up for the shortfall. You should look carefully at whatever terms the lender offers and consult an attorney to assist in the negotiation.

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

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Contract has salary freeze

CONTRACT

continued from page 5

compromise in that the city did get some significant concessions from the union, yet at the same time, mostly those concessions provide for a sharing of the pain if things get a lot worse," said Councilman John Boyle. "And that's probably appropriate. The reality is that the city is in decent shape right now. It's not time to panic."

Of all the council members, Mr. Boyle has perhaps lobbied hardest for the city to address its employee costs.

He called the agreement a step in the right direction, but said the city would have to do more in the long-term to address the issue.

"The council's thinking was that at some point, we want to get (to long-term sustainability), but we want to take care of the direct impacts now," said Mr. Rojas, the city manager. "They were looking at things that could save us money today, and in the next few years."

The contract does include one long-term cost-cutting measure: a reduction of medical retirement benefits by \$100 per month for all new management employees. Mr. Rojas said the

council would seriously consider trying to scale back retirement benefits for all new employees in future negotiations.

Former council member Mickie Winkler, who has pressed the city to address rising employee costs, congratulated the city and the union on the agreement. Though she still has questions about the

contract's details, she said she was "delighted" that the city followed several recommendations related to employee costs in a San Mateo County Civil Grand Jury report Ms. Winkler co-authored.

'This is the first time where (the union) actually took back something without having to get something in return. It's a big step.'

CITY MANAGER GLEN ROJAS

At its meeting Tuesday, Dec. 15, the council could formally ratify the tentative agreement it already approved in closed session.

The city is still negotiating with Service Employees International, the union that represents its non-management and non-police staff. Both unions have been without a contract since late October.

"The big thing is going to be when the SEIU contract gets negotiated," Ms. Winkler said. "If this is a harbinger, that's not bad."

Go to tinyurl.com/y9kgx5f to view the contract. The city released it a week before it would normally do so. ■

VERDICT

continued from page 5

gree right turn into the bike lane to produce the same damage and injuries, the attorney said.

At Mr. Rose's reported speed of 35 mph, he added, such a turn would have driven the car into the embankment in less than a second. The police report did not have Mr. Rose hitting the embankment.

Mr. Rose had also recently passed written and behind-the-wheel tests of his driving, Mr. Cholakian said.

Both men had bad vision in their left eyes, Mr. Cholakian said, and Mr. Smith would thus have been at a disadvantage in looking over his left shoulder.

The California Highway Patrol, which investigated the accident, did not charge Mr. Rose with wrongdoing.

Superior Court Judge Carol Middlesteadt, one of two "complex litigation" judges in the county system, presided over the trial, held in San Mateo.

The fight may not be over. "We're obviously disappointed

with the decision and we retain our right to appeal," said Ms. Smith's attorney, John Kristensen of O'Reilly Collins in San Mateo. "It was a close decision. It was a tough case."

An appeal would focus on whether it was appropriate for the judge to admit evidence as to whether Mr. Smith had a habit of turning his bike around near where the accident occurred, Mr. Kristensen said.

Ms. Smith had told a California Highway Patrol officer that, when riding as a couple, they often did turn near the site of accident, according to the police report.

The trial unfolded in a courtroom designed to accommodate technical presentations. This case revolved around the specific damage to the car and bike, Mr. Cholakian said. His defense included a reconstruction of the accident using the identical car and bicycle.

The defense offered to settle before the trial, but Ms. Smith refused, said Mr. Cholakian, who will seek to recover the costs of hiring expert witnesses. The costs "are dramatic," he said. ■



Photo by Michelle Le/The Almanac

Yolanda Patterson sits for a portrait in her Ladera home. She's wearing a Simone de Beauvoir T-shirt given to her by a friend.

Speaking of Simone de Beauvoir

Local scholar presents program on life, work and ideas of French author and philosopher

By Renee Batti

Almanac News Editor

When Yolanda Astarita Patterson was an undergrad at Smith College majoring in French, there wasn't much debate over who should occupy the pedestals erected in the world of letters. It was the 1950s, and the authors she read were men.

"I don't think I read anything by a woman," she says during a recent interview in her Ladera home, where she and her husband, Guy, have lived for 48 years.

But the world opened up for her, outside the classroom, when someone she knew asked her, "Have you heard of 'The Mandarins'?"

More than 50 years later, she recalls how that novel introduced her to an author who would be a major focus of her academic and creative life through the decades. Progressing from "The Mandarins" to the autobiographies and beyond—reading all the works in the original French—Ms. Patterson says that, reading Ms. Beauvoir's works as a young adult learning about the world, "I felt that she was talking to me."

She ultimately interviewed the prolific French writer, philosopher and women's advocate twice before her death in 1986, and published a book on Ms. Beauvoir's depictions of motherhood in her novels and nonfiction works.

Today, Ms. Patterson is president of the International Simone de Beauvoir Society, which she co-founded with two other scholars. She also is editor of the society's annual journal and its newsletter, and presents lectures on the influential writer here and abroad.

On Tuesday, Dec. 8, Ms. Patterson will give a presentation on Simone de Beauvoir at Little House Activity Center in Menlo Park as part of the center's Tuesday Tea series. The lecture is set for 2 to 3 p.m.

Winner of the French literary award *Prix Goncourt* in 1954 for "The Mandarins," Ms. Beauvoir is perhaps best known for "The Second Sex," a

groundbreaking work of feminist literature.

Ms. Beauvoir also wrote a book addressing the process and problems of aging, translated into English as "The Coming of Age." Ms. Patterson said her presentation will include reflections on that book, as well as an overview of Ms. Beauvoir's contributions to philosophy and literature, and her influence on the lives of women today in Western society.

A devoted "Beauvoirian"

Ms. Patterson was a professor of French language, French literature, and women's studies at California State University, Hayward/East Bay before retiring in 2006. While there, she also taught courses in Spanish and Latin.

After earning her undergraduate degree from Smith, she attended graduate school at Stanford University, where she wrote her master's dissertation on Simone de Beauvoir. Next up was her doctoral dissertation on author Albert Camus and existentialist philosopher and writer Jean-Paul Sartre, with whom Ms. Beauvoir had a decades-long relationship. Although the two never married, their relationship lasted until he died in 1980.

Ms. Patterson interviewed Ms. Beauvoir for the first time in 1978, in Paris. After the local professor co-founded the Beauvoir society in 1981, the two women "had quite a correspondence."

In 1985, Ms. Patterson was nominated for the Outstanding Professor of the Year award at Cal State Hayward. University administrators were likely to have been more than a bit surprised to receive a letter of support for the nomination from Ms. Beauvoir.

While in Paris in September 1985, Ms. Patterson visited Ms. Beauvoir a second time, encouraged by the ailing author's sister, Helene, an artist the Pattersons had become friends with. It was an encounter that, in hindsight, Ms. Patterson was especially grateful to have had: Ms. Beauvoir died the following

See **BEAUVOIR**, page 13

New mayor stresses balanced approach

By Sean Howell
Almanac Staff Writer

If you haven't seen him before, Rich Cline is pretty easy to spot during Menlo Park City Council meetings. He's the one with his hands folded over his stomach, leaning back in his chair and admiring the ceiling panels as his colleagues meander toward a point.

"Impatience is a problem for me," he says. "I think, let's shorten this; cut the number of words down, get to your point. You've had your time, you've done your research; come in prepared, and make your statement. ... I get frustrated when I don't know where (the speeches) are going."

Mr. Cline speaks directly in both public meetings and interviews; from time to time, his honestly expressed opinions and frustrations get him into trouble.

So it's a bit puzzling that he has also earned a reputation for being wishy-washy, afraid to take a stand. His refusal to vote to put the brakes on the downtown planning process or the massive office/hotel project proposed by developer David Bohannon has cost him the support of some of the people who backed his campaign in 2006, he said.

But "since that election, I haven't changed, I swear to you," he said in an interview, a week before he was sworn in as the city's new mayor on Dec. 1. "I ran, not because I was against bigger buildings, but because the process had become too politicized. ... I have a nice job, a good family — I'm not doing this to stroke my ego. I'm doing it because I feel that people should have the proper representation."

The council is set to make decisions during Mr. Cline's term on what would be one of the largest single land development projects in the city's history, and on a project to develop what the city bills as a 30-year plan for the downtown area. Council members have been lobbied hard on both items by members of their political base, in public and in private.

Mr. Cline, however, says he doesn't plan to change his approach as he steers the council through those decisions. As he has said over and over again, to anyone who will listen, he is committed to a transparent public process, rather than a specific ideology.

"If you're going through a process and trying to do your



Photo by Michelle Le/The Almanac

New Menlo Park mayor, Rich Cline, is poised to steer the council through contentious land-use debates with perspective and an ear for dissenters.

best to stick to the feedback and data that you get, there are going to be some inconsistencies" in the council's actions, he said. "If you're doing it right, there *should* be a different outcome" from decision to decision.

While the mayor has no executive authority, Mr. Cline will be the public face of the council during a crucial period.

From his vantage in the thick of Menlo Park's ever-tumultuous political scene, he stresses that it's important to try to understand where peoples' strongly held opinions come from, and to steer the conversation onto common ground. In a speech during the Dec. 1 meeting, he stressed his respect for Menlo Park's history, couching the council's current efforts as a continuation of past policies, rather than a redirection.

Mr. Cline comes across as a "moderate" voice on the council, though he tends to vote in lock-step with Heyward Robinson and Kelly Fergusson. Asked if he had ever found himself in the minority on a vote during his three years on the dais, he thought for a moment before coming up with two instances: the city's decision to commit itself to allowing for a specified number of new housing units, and a housing development project on Willow Road, which Mr. Cline thought was too dense.

"Does that mean I'm soft?" he mused, before eventually concluding: "What I don't do is take liberties in my votes. ... I don't believe in abstaining."

Still, his conciliatory approach could influence the tone of meetings that have occasionally grown cantankerous. While Mr. Robinson once cautioned residents not to heed "naysayers and critics," Mr. Cline welcomes and even encourages dissent.

He credits his approach as a politician to his background as a journalist. He worked for several Bay Area newspapers before founding a public relations company, Voce Communications (pronounced voe-che). His stepfather worked as a reporter and a journalism professor.

"As a newspaper reporter, the first thing you learn to do is to take your opinions, and stuff them in your pocket," he said. "I admire journalists, and politicians who act like journalists. There are fewer every day, but those are the people I'm guided by."

He thinks that approach will make for a smooth transition to the mayor's seat, though he says he doesn't relish the "limelight."

Mr. Cline, 40, is married to Julie Pietrantoni, an attorney. The couple has two daughters: Chiara, 5, a student at Oak Knoll, and Gina, 3. They have lived in Menlo Park for 10 years. ■

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Mark Schmidt is an American Board of Opticianry and National Contact Lens Examiners Certified Optician licensed by the Medical Board of California. He can be easily reached at Menlo Optical, 1166 University Drive, Menlo Park. 650-322-3900.

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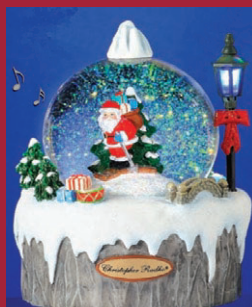
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★ Holiday Calendar

MEETINGS, MUSIC, THEATER, FAMILY ACTIVITIES AND SPECIAL EVENTS

Submitting items for Holiday Calendar Submit information online. Go to TheAlmanacOnline.com and on the green navigation bar on the left, click on "Calendar Event."

Christmas ballet at Woodside High theater

The Dancers Repertory Theatre and the Menlo Park Academy of Dance will present a ballet, "Twas the Night Before Christmas," Saturday and Sunday, Dec. 12 and 13, at the Woodside High School performing arts center, Churchill Avenue and Woodside Road.

Performances are at 4 and 7 p.m. Saturday and 1:30 and 4 p.m. Sunday. Tickets are \$20 for general admission and \$12 for seniors and children under 12. For more information or to purchase tickets, go to TwasTheNight.org.

Menlo Park Chorus

The city-sponsored Menlo Park Chorus will share the stage with the Vallombrosa Choir in a holiday concert at 7:30 p.m. Friday, Dec. 11, in the new Menlo-Atherton High School performing arts center at 555 Middlefield Road in Atherton.

The concert, "A Joyous Christmas," features area singers in a program of traditional music of the season.

The Menlo Park Chorus is directed by April McNeely, and accompanied by John Iosefa. Patrick Feehan directs the Vallombrosa Choir.

Concert tickets are available at the door. Prices are \$12 for general admission, \$10 for students and seniors, and free for children under 12.

Check TheAlmanacOnline.com and Page 23 in this paper for more holiday event information.

Holiday book sale

Selby Lane Elementary School, at 170 Selby Lane in Atherton, will hold its annual community book sale Dec. 11, 12 and 13 at the school. Books and gifts for all ages will be for sale. Hours are 3 to 8 p.m. Friday, 9 a.m. to 8 p.m. Saturday, and 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. Sunday. For more information, call 368-3996.

Concert at local church

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints will present its 35th annual Heritage of Christmas concert at 7 p.m. Sunday, Dec. 13, at the church, 1105 Valparaiso Ave. in Menlo Park.

The concert will feature readings and musical selections by the Heritage Choir, Women's Trio, Stake Children's Choir, Men's Quartet, and Handbell Choir. Admission is free and the public is invited.

Collects toys for tots

Friday, Dec. 11, is the last day to drop off new unwrapped toys at Coldwell Banker Residential Brokers offices for the Toys for Tots drive.

For 23 years Coldwell Banker has been a Toys for Tots gift-collection center, joining forces with the U.S. Marine Corps Reserve.

Also, Coldwell Banker is conducting its annual One Warm Coat drive until Dec. 18. The offices will accept coats, sweaters, jackets, sweatshirts, hats, mittens, towels and blankets. Donations will be sent to local organizations for those in need.

Local Coldwell Banker offices are located at: 800 El Camino Real, Suite 300, in Menlo Park; 930 Santa Cruz Ave. in Menlo Park; 116 Portola Road in Portola Valley; and 2969 Woodside Road in Woodside.

Concert at Stanford

The Palo Alto Chamber Orchestra will feature guest artist Sharon Wei on viola in a holiday concert at 8 p.m. Saturday, Dec. 19, in Dinkelspiel auditorium at Stanford University.

Both the Palo Alto Chamber Orchestra and its sister ensemble, the Sinfonia Orchestra, will perform under the direction of PACO music director Benjamin Simon. The program will include Corelli's "Christmas Concerto." The final piece performed will be Tchaikovsky's "Symphony No. 2 in C Minor."

For ticket information, call 856-3848 or visit www.pacomusic.org.



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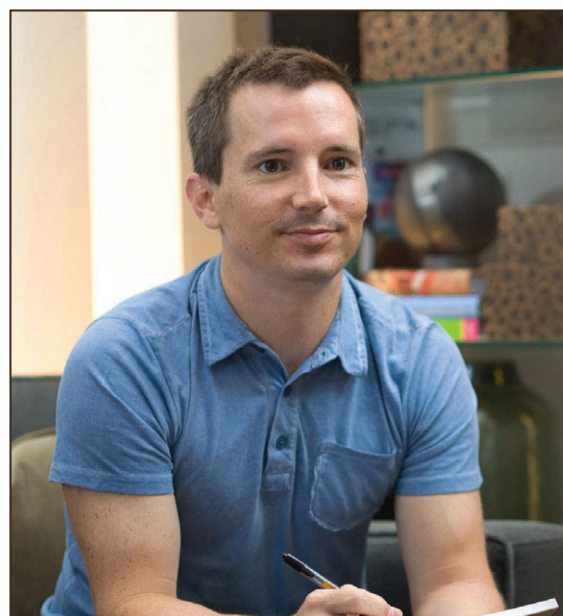
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Menlo Park: Political maneuver kicks off celebratory meeting

By Sean Howell

Almanac Staff Writer

While Menlo Park's City Council followed its order of succession in naming a mayor and vice mayor at its Dec. 1 meeting, the largely ceremonial procession wasn't entirely without politicking.

Before the toasting and chair-swapping commenced, the council dealt with one item of business added to the calendar by outgoing mayor Heyward Robinson before his term expired, at the request of council members Kelly Fergusson and Andy Cohen. The item was a vote to determine whether the city would recommend Mr. Robinson or Councilman John Boyle for an appointment to a key regional transportation board.

Both men are running to represent the southern end of San Mateo County on the nine-person board of SamTrans, which runs buses throughout the county.

One member of the SamTrans board also sits on the Caltrain board. Menlo Park council members (though not Mr. Boyle) have said they doubt the board will keep the city's inter-

ests in mind in its negotiations over plans to run high-speed trains up the Caltrain corridor.

The vote fell along party lines, with Mr. Boyle the only council member supporting his own candidacy. The council passed a resolution asking him to withdraw.

While the outcome may not have been unexpected, the fact that the council debated the item at what is usually a purely ceremonial meeting rankled Mr. Boyle. He asked for a two-

week delay so that he and Mr. Robinson could gauge support from members of the San Mateo County Council of Cities, which makes the appointment.

After the vote, former councilman Steve Schmidt, who served on the board, asked why the council felt it had to make the choice at all.

"I think this little activity you engaged in earlier this evening to express a preference of one candidate over another for this

board was... rather weird," he said, arguing that voters would consider Mr. Boyle's and Mr. Robinson's divergent perspectives on transit-related issues, rather than their city of origin. "I think to suppress that choice at this point is a mistake, I'm sorry you did this. I think it makes Menlo Park look bad."

Ms. Fergusson disagreed.

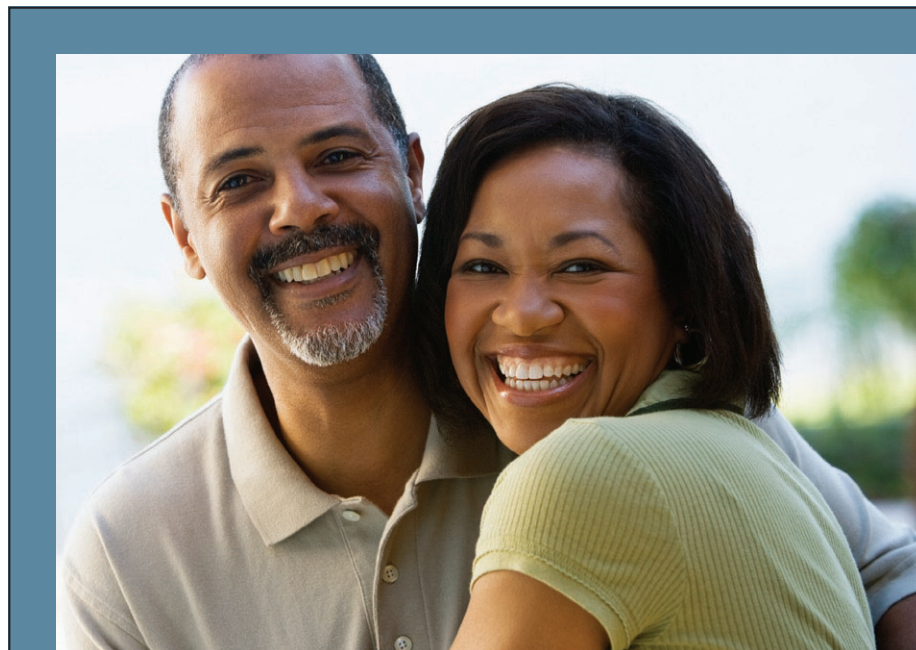
"The city can't afford any confusion about who the city feels would best represent" the southern end of the county on the SamTrans

board, she said in an interview. "The stakes are too high."

Mr. Boyle has since decided to "honor the (council's) resolution" and withdraw his name from consideration.

"I guess it's fair to say that on a lot of (transit-related issues), high-speed rail or transit-oriented development, my views haven't always been aligned with the council majority's," he said in

See **MANEUVER**, page 15



BEAUVOIR

continued from page 8

spring in Paris at age 78.

Ms. Patterson's book, "Simone de Beauvoir and the Demystification of Motherhood," was published in 1989. In an e-mail, Ms. Patterson explains that she "became interested in the topic because I had a very different view of motherhood from Beauvoir's, having had a very positive experience with the example set by my own mother ... and also having found a great deal of pleasure in my own experience as a mother ..."

In addition to her involvement as president of the Beauvoir society, Ms. Patterson also is a member of the mostly French panel that chooses recipients of monetary awards from a fund "established to recognize those fighting for the cause of women in the world," Ms. Patterson says. The fund was established in 2008 — in honor of the centenary of Ms. Beauvoir's birth. ▀

■ INFORMATION

Yolanda Astarita Patterson will give a presentation on the late French author and philosopher Simone de Beauvoir from 2 to 3 p.m. Tuesday, Dec. 8, at Little House Activity Center, 800 Middle Ave. in Menlo Park. The lecture will be followed by a tea. Admission is \$2 for nonmembers, and \$1 for members.

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Friend will remember Ryan Ferrari for his honesty and reliability

By Dave Boyce
Almanac Staff Writer

One of Ryan Ferrari's particular talents was his deft handling of a paintball gun on weekends out behind his Woodside home. One of his particular gifts was his candor with friends.

"He was an excellent paintballer," his friend James Ronstadt told *The Almanac* in an interview. "I think, above all, Ryan was a great friend, a high-quality person who is just going to be tremendously missed by friends and family alike. We still can't believe he's gone."

Mr. Ferrari, 21, died in a car crash early on the morning of Nov. 28 in the Woodside Hills neighborhood. He was buried in Gate of Heaven Catholic Cemetery in Los Altos on Thursday, Dec. 3, after a memorial service at Our Lady of the Wayside church in Portola Valley, according to a mortician at Spangler Mortuary in Menlo Park.

He was on his way home at about 2:30 a.m. when he lost control of his car in the 200 block of Woodside Drive. In a series of collisions, the car hit two trees and another vehicle before it flipped over, according to Sgt. Wes Matsuura of the San Mateo County Sheriff's Office.

Mr. Ferrari was pronounced dead at the scene due to multiple blunt trauma injuries, the county coroner said. The driver of the other vehicle escaped injury, but was arrested on DUI charges, Sgt. Matsuura said.

"Really honest"

Candor and sincerity were among Mr. Ferrari's strong points, and his friends are "heartbroken" over his death, Mr. Ronstadt said. "He had a great heart. He was always someone you could really rely on. He was always up front with you and really honest with you, whatever you were talking about."

Mr. Ferrari's godfather, Andrew McIntyre, concurred. "You could always count on Ryan for an honest opinion," he said. "It was always in a polite way. He was just a really nice guy."

Mr. Ronstadt had met with Mr. Ferrari shortly before the accident and resolved a strain that had tested their friendship, Mr. Ronstadt said. A rapprochement had begun with a hug and a handshake. "Our friendship



Photo by Sheeva Nazhand

Ryan Ferrari, 21, of Woodside.

was headed on the right course for the first time in several months," Mr. Ronstadt said.

"Once you hung out with (Ryan), you wanted to hang out with him more," he said. "He just had that kind of rare personality that you couldn't forget."

While Mr. Ferrari was "very private," he was also "very personable and social," Mr. Ronstadt said.

Mr. Ronstadt and Mr. Ferrari had been school buddies since they met in the sixth grade at Hillview Middle School in Menlo Park, Mr. Ronstadt said. They attended Menlo-Atherton High School, but both left M-A before graduating. Mr. Ferrari graduated from a private school in Palo Alto, Mr. Ronstadt said.

Mr. Ferrari attended the University of Arizona, Menlo College in Menlo Park, and Cabrillo College in Santa Cruz, and had plans to study viticulture and oenology at the University of California at Davis, Mr. McIntyre said.

"He loved to cook," he added. "He was a really bright young man, a real loss."

Mr. Ronstadt referred to Mr. Ferrari's somewhat peripatetic college career as "turbulent," and Mr. McIntyre noted that his godson had recently discovered his focus for college.

Mr. Ferrari's driving habits depended, perhaps, on the beholder. "I always knew he was a very risky driver, which is why I wasn't surprised that this happened," Mr. Ronstadt said. "He was always someone who drove a little too fast."

On this point, his godfather disagreed, having ridden with him and allowed his children to as well. "I never thought of Ryan as being a risky driver," Mr. McIntyre said. ■

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■ POLICE CALLS

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

ATHERTON

Fraud report: Unauthorized use of Social Security card, first block of Flood Circle, Nov. 27.

MENLO PARK

Residential burglary reports:

■ Stolen items valued at \$18,600 included TV, video game player, cash and jewelry, 1300 block of Willow Road, Dec. 2.

■ Attempted burglary, first block of Heritage Place, Nov. 27.

■ Bicycle stolen from garage, 300 block of Waverley St., Nov. 30.

■ Stolen items valued at \$890 included school supplies and Barbie dolls, 600 block of Willow Road, Nov. 30.

■ Stolen items valued at \$21,000 included two TVs, video game player with remote, three laptop computers, two iPods and iPod touch, digital camera and jewelry, 100 block of Durham St., Nov. 30.

■ Computer stolen, 200 block of Walnut St., Dec. 3.

Grand theft reports:

■ Two locked bikes with total of \$1,000 stolen from apartment building railing, 1000 block of Noel Drive, Nov. 28.

■ Two gold chains valued at \$2,000 stolen, 100 block of Newbridge St., Dec. 3.

Robbery report: Victim struck on back and \$30 stolen but no injury, 100 block of Hamilton Ave., Nov. 29.

Stolen vehicle report: Dark green 1994 BMW 525i, first block of Callie Lane, Dec. 1.

Adult Protective Services report: 700 block of Windsor Drive, Nov. 29.

Auto burglary reports:

■ Palm Treo valued at \$100 stolen, 500 block of University Drive, Nov. 27.

■ Stolen items valued at \$1,300 included Mercedes Benz key fob, briefcase, birth certificate and Social Security card, 1100 block of Hollyburne Ave., Nov. 27.

■ Satellite radio controller valued at \$150 stolen, 300 block of Sharon Park Drive, Nov. 28.

Fraud reports:

■ Identity theft connected with \$20,000 in unpaid federal taxes, first block of Riordan Place, Nov. 27.

■ Credit card fraud for loss valued at \$226, 600 block of Sharon Park Drive, Nov. 30.

■ Counterfeit \$100 bill received, 800 block of Willow Road, Dec. 2.

WOODSIDE

Burglary report: Tools of unknown total value stolen after lock cut on construction trailer doors, 100 block of Fox Hollow Road, Nov. 30.

WEST MENLO PARK

Residential burglary report: Door alarm went off then reset and resident found splinters on floor and damage to door in morning, 2000 block of Avy Ave., Nov. 28.



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Thanks. *The* Almanac

City plans to rely on attrition to balance budget

A report issued by Menlo Park reveals plans to rely heavily on attrition to balance the city's budget in coming years.

The report comes as the city looks at reducing a projected \$1.1 million deficit in the 2010-11 fiscal year. The deficit could very well be larger than that, the report notes, if tax revenue continues at its current slow pace.

The report identifies \$425,000 in savings on employee costs, largely through restructuring around retirements. It also suggests that the city replace the academic summer school program with a recreational one.

The City Council will weigh in on the report at a goal-setting meeting Tuesday, Dec. 8. The meeting begins at 6 p.m. in the council chambers, located between Laurel and Alma streets in the Civic Center complex.

MANEUVER

continued from page 13

an interview. "I'm not convinced, by the way, that my views aren't aligned with my city's."

Councilman Rich Cline, who assumed the mayor's seat shortly after the vote, called the situation "kind of a mess." He said he had promised Mr. Robinson his vote before he knew Mr. Boyle was interested.

"How do we do this without obviously insulting someone up here?" he said in an interview. "It doesn't need to be that way. ... It was probably the wrong night to do it." ■

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Holiday Fund

Helping to multiply your donations to local charities



Sonya Chaudhry (center), San Mateo County Young Woman of the Year, is shown with Rina Abrams (left), the Youth and Family Enrichment Services' program manager for Your House South and Daybreak; and Daniela Alduina Tempesta, the YFES transitional housing program manager.

Giving young people, families tools to achieve independence

By Michael Garb

CEO, Youth and Family Enrichment Services

Sonya is now a freshman at Stanford University, and her accomplishments are all the more remarkable because of the challenges she had to overcome as a young person in the foster care system.

Only 50 percent of foster youth graduate from high school, let alone go to college. Youth and Family Enrichment Services helps these young people by providing housing and case management, and supporting them in learning how to be independent, manage their finances, pursue their education, and achieve their dreams.

Our programs gave Sonya a place to call home, and the support she needed to achieve her goals.

Youth and Family Enrichment Services (YFES) provides local programs serving more than 34,000 people a year in San Mateo County. Among the services:

- Round-the-clock suicide prevention and crisis phone lines for all ages, and online teen support.
- Mental health and substance abuse treatment for

adolescents and families.

- Home visiting and family support for at-risk families with young children.

- Housing, living skills training, and case management for runaway, homeless and foster youth.

- School-based mental health, youth development and support services.

Our work with families and young people helps them to find their strengths and become self-sufficient.

"Mandy" is another example: a 15-year-old girl who came to YFES's Your House South for a six-week stay, at a point when conflicts with her father were escalating and she was at risk of running away from home.

Your House South is the only refuge in San Mateo County designed for young people who need intensive individual and family counseling, and a safe and structured place to live while their home situation is resolved.

Thanks to the dedicated staff who worked with her and her family, Mandy returned home safely with after-care support, and wrote to her counselor: "I came here

lost, scared and confused. Now I have my head up high and am a changed person in so many ways."

Many children and families in our community depend on the services of Youth and Family Enrichment Services. With the generous support of the community through the Holiday Fund, YFES is able to ensure that young people like Sonya and Mandy can achieve their goals.

Thank you for changing lives by donating to the Holiday Fund. ■

For more information about YFES and its many programs and services, go to www.yfes.org. Address: 610 Elm St., 2nd Floor, San Carlos, CA 94070. E-mail: yfes@yfes.org. Phone: (650) 519-9623.

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James Brice	150	Catholic Worker Houses	**
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■ HOLIDAY FUND

Gifts to the Holiday Fund help Youth and Family Enrichment Services. To contribute to the Holiday Fund, use the coupon on the next page or go to TheAlmanacOnline.com.



Students at East Palo Alto Charter School during a Teen Talk session.

Teen Talk program aims to prevent teen pregnancies

By Perryn Rowland

Senior Health Educator, Teen Talk Sexuality Education

Being the mother of three athletic sons, I carpool their friends to various sporting events and often hear a giggle when I pop open my car's trunk for them to drop in their backpacks.

The trunk holds all the supplies I need to teach our comprehensive sexuality education programs: birth control samples, plastic reproductive anatomy models, role-playing costumes/props, and our Jeopardy game, to name a few.

For the past six years, I have worked as the senior health educator for Teen Talk Sexuality Education (formerly the Teen Pregnancy Coalition of San Mateo County).

Each weekday, I drive to public schools in places such as East Palo Alto, the Belle Haven neighborhood of Menlo Park, Redwood City and Hillcrest, the juvenile detention facility in San Mateo.

Classes full of eager and curious teens await me. My goal is to teach them how to make healthy choices and decisions regarding their bodies and relationships, and to provide information and answer questions that often no other adult wants to tackle.

"Does it tickle when the sperm is swimming through the fallopian tubes?" was one of my favorites last week.

Our Teen Parent Panel program brings trained pregnant/parenting teens to schools to share their experiences on the realities of teenage parenthood. After one of our Teen Parent Panels, a student wrote: "Now I know that being a teen mom isn't just like babysitting. I'm going to wait until I'm much older!"

Given the fact that San Mateo County estimates that the societal cost of teen pregnancy is \$3.2 million a year in the county, the investment in prevention efforts is crucial.

Teen Talk Sexuality Education has served more than 3,500 stu-

HOLIDAY FUND
 Gifts to the Holiday Fund help Teen Talk Sexuality Education bring comprehensive sexuality education programs to thousands of students in San Mateo County.

dents a year with our 8-to-10 hour comprehensive sexuality education course.

We have trained hundreds of teachers from around the county and state, and provided many classes to parents and guardians on facilitating conversations with their children about sex and sexual decision-making.

All of our educators are bilingual and we offer all of our programs in English and Spanish.

State and county health and education funding has been severely cut this past year due to the recession. In addition, funding from foundations is significantly down.

Teen Talk Sexuality Education is prepared to weather this economic downturn and continue to provide our programs, but donations from individuals and the Almanac Holiday Fund are crucial.

Prevention programs such as ones provided by Teen Talk Sexuality Education are both essential and desired by parents, teachers and students in our schools.

I encourage you to make a donation to The Almanac's Holiday Fund to support the local efforts of Teen Talk Sexuality Education, and I will keep educating our youth, even those giggling boys in the backseat. ■

For more information on Teen Talk Sexuality Education, go to www.teentalkca.org. The office is at 703 Woodside Rd. Suite 7, Redwood City, CA 94061.

About the author: Perryn Rowland, a resident of Menlo Park and parent of three sons, is the senior health educator for Teen Talk Sexuality Education.

Giving to the Holiday Fund



Your gift helps children and others in need

Contributions to the Holiday Fund go directly to programs that benefit Peninsula residents. Last year, Almanac readers contributed \$146,045, and with available matching grants, over \$170,000 was raised for 10 agencies that feed the hungry, house the homeless and provide numerous other services to those in need.

Contributions to the Holiday Fund will be matched, to the

extent possible, by generous community corporations, foundations, and individuals, including the Rotary Club of Menlo Park, the David and Lucile Packard Foundation, and the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation. No administrative costs will be deducted from the gifts, which are tax-deductible as permitted by law.

All donations to the Holiday Fund will be shared equally among the 10 recipient agencies.

This year, the Almanac's Holiday Fund will support these nonprofit organizations in the community

- **Boys & Girls Clubs of the Peninsula**
 Provides after-school academic support and enrichment activities for 1,000 youths each day, ages 6 to 18. Operates clubhouses in Menlo Park's Belle Haven neighborhood, East Palo Alto and Redwood City, and after-school programs at schools in these communities designed to extend the learning day and supplement the school's curriculum.
- **Ecumenical Hunger Program**
 Provides emergency food, clothing, household essentials, special children's programs and sometimes financial assistance to families in need, regardless of religious preference, including Thanksgiving and Christmas baskets for more than 1,500 households.
- **Teen Talk Sexuality Education**
 Provides educational programs for youth and adults to help teens make healthy choices that will result in lower rates of teen pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases. Its "Teen Talk" program last year served thousands of youth at public school sites in San Mateo County.
- **Project Read-Menlo Park**
 Provides free literacy services to adults in the Menlo Park area. Trained volunteers work one-to-one or in small groups to help adults improve their basic reading, writing and English language skills so they can achieve their goals and function more effectively at home, at work, and in the community. In 2007-08, a total of 120 tutors assisted more than 300 students.
- **Ravenswood Family Health Center**
 Provides primary medical care, behavioral health services and preventive health care for all ages at its clinics in Belle Haven and East Palo Alto. It also operates a mobile clinic at school sites. Of the 22,700 registered patients, most are low-income and uninsured.
- **Second Harvest Food Bank**
 The largest collector and distributor of food on the Peninsula, Second Harvest Food Bank distributed 30 million pounds of food last year. It gathers donations from individuals and businesses and distributes food to some 162,000 people each month through more than 700 agencies and distribution sites in San Mateo and Santa Clara counties.
- **St. Anthony's Padua Dining Room**
 Serves hundreds of hot meals six days a week in a social and friendly atmosphere to anyone in need. Funded entirely by contributions from the community, St. Anthony's is the largest soup kitchen between San Francisco and San Jose. It offers groceries to take home and distributes clothing to families.
- **Fair Oaks Community Center**
 Serves more than 2,500 households each year with services ranging from food assistance to shelter referral to rental and crisis assistance. The center also has a subsidized child-care program and a fully operating senior center, and offers a variety of other social services and programs throughout the year.
- **Shelter Network**
 Provides short-term shelter and transitional housing services to more than 3,700 people and children each year. Offers programs for families and individuals to become self-sufficient and return to permanent housing.
- **Youth and Family Enrichment Services**
 Provides many programs to help people who struggle with substance abuse, domestic violence, and mental health, relationship and communications issues. Helps strengthen youth, families and individuals to overcome challenges through counseling, education, and residential services.

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WHAT'S YOUR VIEW?

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

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

Another U-turn in Atherton

If, as expected, the Atherton Town Council decides on Wednesday, Dec. 16, to refund about \$130,000 in road impact fees, it will be the third in a sad line-up of laws gone bad to extract revenue from home owners and builders.

This time around, the council should listen to the advice of City Manager Jerry Gruber and City Attorney Wynne Furth, who see some dark clouds ahead if the fee is kept on the books.

Their nervousness comes from a recent court decision that said the state vehicle code trumps local impact fees based on damage to roads. In other words, the case appears to say towns and cities like Atherton cannot justify charging a fee or tax based on construction-

related damage done to its roads.

Unlike refunds issued for the business license fee (\$680,000 approved about a year ago) and excavation off-haul fee (\$350,000 in 2006) the sting from a road impact fee refund will be a relatively mild \$130,000. That's if the council decides to limit the refunds to fees paid after Aug. 20 of this year, as town staff advises. Opening a wider window, say back to Jan. 1 of 2009, could easily bump the refund outlay to \$500,000 or more, obviously a scenario that the town would like to avoid.

And just deciding to rescind the fee will carve a significant \$650,000 hole in the budget that ends June 30. However, Public Works Director Duncan Jones told The Almanac that the fees collected are plowed right back into road repair projects. Without income from the fee, we doubt if the town will be doing much road work in the next fiscal year.

The legal case that worries the town comes from Southern California and touches indirectly on the Atherton issue. It says that the state vehicle code pre-empts impact fees for damage to roads — something that critics of the fee have said all along.

And while an analysis by Ms. Furth concludes that the decision isn't binding on Atherton, it could have a bearing on future cases, including a potential case that could be brought against the Atherton ordinance. It is no surprise that Atherton officials are eager to distance the town from this fee and hoping that their town does not become the precedent-setting case that abolishes all road impact fees.

Given its history in these situations, the town might get a second legal opinion just to be sure that starting the refund clock Aug. 20 provides sufficient cover to avoid any legal action. If not, a lawsuit to collect all road impact fees paid since 2000 could be disastrous if found for the plaintiffs. This is risky business and Atherton should do everything it can to limit recovery of all road impact fees.

EDITORIAL

The opinion of The Almanac

TOWN SQUARE

Here's what they're saying on Town Square online forum

Friend will remember Ryan Ferrari

The Almanac Online
Ryan Ferrari, the 21-year-old Woodside man who died in a car crash early on the morning of Nov. 28 in the Woodside Hills neighborhood, will not be forgotten by those who knew him. "I think, above all, Ryan was a great friend, a high-quality person who is just going to be tremendously missed by friends and family alike," his friend James Ronstadt told The Almanac in an interview. "We still can't believe he's gone."

Comment posted by Father of 2, a resident of the Ladera neighborhood.

Why, oh why did you need to add this final line to the lovely article? "I always knew he was a very risky driver, which is why I wasn't surprised that this happened," he said.

Posted by take your blinders off, a resident of the Central Menlo Park neighborhood.

I understand the inclination to want to put the best face on someone who dies tragically. I tend to



Menlo Park Historical Association

Our Regional Heritage

Staff members and patients at the Veterans Administration Hospital at Willow Road and the Bayshore Freeway take part in an entertainment program in this undated photo. In the early 1920s, 21 modern buildings were dedicated on the site to treat veterans with neuropsychiatric illnesses.

do it myself. But come on, people, pointing out that this young man was a risky driver in an article about his death in a driving accident is not unwarranted, especially when all indications point to risky driving being the cause of his death. And don't forget, even though the other driver and his passenger who became unwilling participants in this tragic event weren't killed, they could have been. Ryan's risky driving could

have cost others their lives as well as it cost him his. Why is Ryan's tendency to drive recklessly wrong to point out in the context of this reporting?

Eshoo opposes Afghan troop surge

The Almanac Online.

Calling Afghanistan "the graveyard of nations," Rep. Anna Eshoo, D-Menlo Park, announced

Wednesday her opposition to President Barack Obama's plan to increase the number of U.S. military troops in that country.

Comment posted by Against the surge, a resident of the Allied Arts/Stanford Park neighborhood.

I'm grateful that Rep. Eshoo is speaking out against the troop surge, but the story and her statement don't address an important question: Will she

Chief stands up for municipal unions

By Edward Raymond



A recent (Nov. 11) letter to The Almanac by Mary Gilles of Menlo Park castigated unions and the San Mateo County Central Labor Council for supporting city council candidates who work to uphold the good benefits and living wages that unionized public employees work hard to earn.

The labor council represents 110 unions in the public and private sector and stands proudly with the city, county and state employees who serve the public good. We are proud of the public sector workers who choose to serve with grace and commitment to maintain the excellent quality of life we enjoy in San Mateo County.

The union workers the writer condemns are the very ones she and her neighbors rely on for preserving that quality of life — the firefighters who respond to emergency calls and save lives, the public works employees who repair streets and fix lights, the worker who answers her 911 call, the groundskeeper who maintains neighborhood parks. Many of the people who choose to work in the public sector earn less than they would in the private sector and can't even afford to live in the cities whose quality of life they enhance.

Opponents of unions like to demonize public sector workers as somehow getting rich at the public trough with what Ms. Gilles calls "out-of-balance union benefits," including retirement. But the average public employee pension is less than \$30,000 a year after 20 years on the job — hardly a lavish amount given the high cost of living in San Mateo County. In fact, 80 percent of retirement costs are paid by the employee's contributions and investment returns. Public workers should not have their retirement put at risk due to corporate abuse, while those responsible for the crisis receive government bailouts

with our tax dollars they don't deserve.

The letter-writer attacks the labor council for opposing city council members who do not support public employees. She fails to mention that these candidates lost labor's support in 2006 after breaking their promises to the unions that they wouldn't outsource the much acclaimed city child care services. She calls for additional outsourcing of public employee work, presumably to private contractors who pay low wages and offer no benefits.

While supporters of privatization claim it will save money by reducing labor costs, a series of studies by Cornell University, the University of Maine, and Economic Policy Institute point to a different reality: Outsourcing doesn't always cost less and often adds to costs. Private contractors might save in labor costs by paying lower wages but those savings are negated by the profit the contractor makes.

Public sector workers often have to do extra work to clean up the mess left by private entities that do not perform to the high level of the well-trained, unionized workforce that has the experience and institutional memory to do the job right the first time. And laid-off public employees who lose health care benefits are forced to join with their private sector non-union brethren to use public facilities like county hospital emergency rooms for health care, an added cost to taxpayers.

Fortunately for Ms. Gilles and other San Mateo County residents, she is wrong that candidates and elected officials are "running from" labor support. In the recent local elections, the Labor Council's endorsed candidates won in over three-quarters of the races. Those elected officials will continue to stand up for their constituents who benefit from work done by public employees for the cities, school districts, and fire districts not because of "an incestuous relationship between the candidate and the local labor council," but because it's the right thing to do.

Edward Raymond is president of the San Mateo County Central Labor Council.

vote against funding this misguided action? That's the real test, to my mind.

Posted by Scholar, a resident of the Sharon Heights neighborhood. She just lost my vote.

Third French Laundry in photo, not first

The Regional Heritage photograph published Nov. 11 incorrectly noted that the French Laundry was founded in the building pictured at 1893 El Camino Real.

Martha Lancestremere, a descendent of the laundry's former owners, wrote in to say this location was the company's third, in the block where Su Hong is now located. The first laundry was at the former Stanford Cadillac site on El Camino Real, and the second was on El Camino in the space recently occupied by Feldman's bookstore.

Jury rejects claim in wrongful-death suit

The Almanac Online.

A San Mateo County jury, after 10 hours of deliberation, voted 9-3 on Dec. 1 to reject a claim that Woodside resident Anthony Rose was at fault in a May 2007 accident on Sand Hill Road that resulted in the death of bicyclist Rodney Smith.

Comment posted by John McDonough, a resident of Woodside.

Why do we always have to find someone to blame for the vagaries of life. That's like trying to find someone to blame for cancer or a heart attack. Will \$8 million bring this man back? All it did was punish the other victim of the accident, the driver, and clutter the courts and cost the taxpayers money needed for other programs. What a waste. Looking for someone to blame? Look to lawyers.

Posted by Moe, a resident of the Central Menlo Park neighborhood.

John, you said it very well. There was a time when society expected integrity and you could trust someone after a handshake. Now a different attitude pervades our culture. Few seem willing to take responsibility for their own actions and there are too many shysters willing to prove somebody else liable when something goes wrong.

Posted by Steve, a resident of another community.

It is sad that a person lost his life in an accident, but that is what it was. The Highway Patrol didn't charge the driver with the accident or a violation of any law. I agree. Why do people always want to blame others and try and get money. Money doesn't bring back the person or bring comfort for a loss.

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