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The Almanac

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

DECEMBER 1, 2010 | VOL. 46 NO. 14



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Photo by Stacey Keare

Ayla Elam, left, and Ryan Hodge, fifth-graders at Woodside Elementary School, participate in the Girls on the Run program, which aims to help girls learn social and personal skills.

Local girls build confidence through running

By **Samantha Bergeson**

Special to the Almanac

Sophia, Katie, and Chloe say they enjoy their track practice. These kids, along with 14 other girls in the third-through fifth-grade at Woodside Elementary School, spend their Monday and Wednesday afternoons learning about life through a program that involves running and confidence-building.

Coached by moms whose kids go to the school, these 8-to-10-year-old girls make up Woodside Elementary "Girls on the Run" team, a branch of Girls on the Run Bay Area, which aims to help girls express themselves and learn social and personal skills in a non-competitive environment.

Girls on the Run Bay Area, founded in 2002, has more than 500 girls participating, ranging in age from 8 to 13.

Fifth-grade parent Shana Middler introduced the program this year to Woodside Elementary after volunteering for a team at her daughter's previous school.

The Woodside team practices 90 minutes twice a week for 10 weeks. At each practice, the team runs from one to three miles around the elementary

school campus.

Practices include discussions on topics such as drug-avoidance education, friendship advice, and social skills. In addition to learning the importance of maintaining a healthy body, the girls learn how to lead a healthy life, said Ms. Middler, the head organizer and coach.

Through group challenges, the girls are taught social skills, responsibility, and the importance of cooperation within a team. "They've just met every challenge we've put in front of them," she said.

The program has a strong community service component. The team has organized a drive to collect new or gently used sports equipment, such as basketball shoes, footballs, and soccer jerseys, to donate to such organizations as Kids 4 Sports, EPA Tennis and Tutoring, and Woodside Elementary School's partner, Ravenswood Elementary School District.

The Woodside girls are training for the 5K Lollipop Run, the Girls on the Run celebratory "fun run" through Golden Gate Park in San Francisco, set for Saturday, Dec. 4, from 10:45 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. Following the race, a festival of

music, face-painting, and family scavenger hunts will take place.

The girl runners say they have greatly enjoyed the experience, and hope to advance the program. "You get to know how to become a better you," said Katie.

Ms. Middler hopes to bring the program back in the spring with the help of more volunteers. ■

Samantha Bergeson is a sophomore at Menlo School.

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Local News

MENLO PARK | AHERTON | WOODSIDE | PORTOLA VALLEY

High-speed rail delay may benefit Peninsula

By Sandy Brundage

Almanac Staff Writer

Local high-speed rail watchdogs think recent announcements by the rail authority will give Peninsula residents more time to evaluate the design options for the segment running through their own cities.

After deciding in November that high-speed rail construction would start in the Central Valley, the California High-Speed Rail Authority board also announced that the release of the preliminary environmental impact report for the Peninsula segment would be delayed. The authority had planned to release the report for the San Francisco-to-San Jose line of the \$43 billion rail project in December.

Menlo Park Mayor Rich Cline chairs the Peninsula Cities Consortium, a coalition of elected officials

from Menlo Park, Atherton, Palo Alto, Burlingame and Belmont that advocates for the five cities, all of which will be heavily impacted by construction of the Peninsula segment of high-speed rail.

Mr. Cline said getting more time to evaluate the project has been one of the top priorities this year for local leadership, but that time alone won't resolve major concerns that include how to build the tracks, and whether the right people are running the project.

In 2008, voters passed Proposition 1A, which allowed the state to dedicate \$9.95 billion in funding to high-speed rail. "HSR was voted in and it may still have a majority approval, but that doesn't mean that we shouldn't critically evaluate this 100-year rail project that will end up being the largest and most expensive infrastructure project in our state's history," said Mr. Cline.

He pointed to flawed ridership

studies as a sign of the need for continued scrutiny.

"We need to start zeroing in on the ridership studies that have justified the amount of trains, the width of the tracks, the routes of the trains, and the cost to the state and to each individual rider in the future," Mr. Cline said. "When [Palo Alto] Mayor [Pat] Burt and I sat in front of senators Simitian and Lowenthal last January, we asked how Merced and Gilroy could have more trains projected in 2035 than Boston and Baltimore."

The time gained by the project's starting construction in the Central Valley rather than closer to home is time that the mayor thinks could be used to demand a new, peer-reviewed ridership study conducted by a third party.

"The worst thing we can do is to allow the HSRA to keep moving ahead as they are until they end up building a train system to nowhere

... which will make that bridge to nowhere look like a cute mistake," Mr. Cline said.

In a Nov. 25 letter to the City Council, Menlo Park community activist Don Barnby said he supports the need for a unified local front on high-speed rail, but called doing another ridership study unnecessary.

"We don't need another independent ridership study when one has already been done by the Institute for Transportation Studies, UC-Berkeley; we don't need to 'inform the scope of design alternatives' when we already know there is no way expected ridership can justify ANY design alternative," Mr. Barnby wrote.

The Berkeley study concluded in July that the rail authority's projections were unreliable because of multiple flaws in the mathematical models used to estimate ridership.

In a letter to local newspapers,

former Menlo Park mayor and high-speed rail advocate Steve Schmidt agreed that the ridership projections were exaggerated. He also stated the delay could provide a chance to analyze alternative designs, but that pressure from local leaders might push the rail authority to leave out one viable option — elevated tracks.

"These same elected officials complain of the high cost of HSR to the State and yet they support alternatives such as tunneling that are so prohibitively expensive that they will break the HSR bank and in the end, keep Caltrain operating in its current state like a heavy, noisy, dangerous and polluting dinosaur," Mr. Schmidt wrote. "Our elected officials can stop the grandstanding and obstruction and start working with HSR officials to design and build the most affordable and most broadly beneficial segment of HSR here on the Peninsula." ■

High-speed rail may debut between two small towns

By Gennady Sheyner

Embarcadero Media

California's proposed high-speed rail line, which state officials say will compete with airports and connect San Francisco to Los Angeles, would make its debut with a 65-mile segment between the small Central Valley towns of Borden and Corcoran under the latest proposal from California High-Speed Rail Authority engineers.

The staff recommendation, which the rail authority's board of directors is scheduled to consider on Dec. 2, also calls for construction of two high-speed rail stations — one in downtown Fresno and another one east of Hanford. Staff estimates this 65-mile segment will cost about \$4.15 billion.

The rail authority decided in November to begin construction of the rail line in the Central Valley — a decision driven by a Federal Railroad Administration grant that earmarked \$715 million

for this region. The rail authority was widely expected to choose either the Fresno-to-Merced or the Fresno-to-Bakersfield segment as the first piece of the project.

Instead, staff is now recommending that the project kick off with the 65-mile segment that begins just south of Madera (about 40 miles southeast of Merced) and ends at Corcoran, between Fresno and Bakersfield. The staff report claims the route would give the rail authority the "flexibility to build in either direction — north and west to the Bay Area or south to Los Angeles — as more federal dollars become available."

The recommendation has already run into intense opposition from one Central Valley lawmaker. U.S. Congressman Dennis Cardoza, a Democrat whose district includes Merced and parts of Fresno and Madero counties, immediately blasted

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Woodside Fire Protection District solicits private donations

By Renee Batti

Almanac News Editor

Taking a cue from nonprofit education foundations that support public schools,

Woodside Fire Protection District officials are hoping to ease some of the district's financial strain with the support of private donations.

Residents of the district —

which serves Woodside, Portola Valley, Ladera, and other nearby unincorporated areas — are being asked to support the district through donations to a

recently formed nonprofit: the Woodside-Portola Valley Fire Protection Foundation.

Although nonprofit foundations formed to support public agencies aren't unusual these days, the fire protection foundation may be standing on uncommon

ground in that all four officers on its 12-member board of directors are also district employees. They include Chief Armando Muela, who serves as vice president, and Fire Marshal Denise Enea, who

See FOUNDATION, page 8



Photo by Michelle Le/The Almanac

Storytime takes a break

Portola Valley librarian Angela Luis last week closes Preschool Storytime for the year with the reading of the book, "Thanksgiving is Here!" by Diane Goode. Storytime programs at the library will be on hiatus for the holidays and will return Jan. 10.




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Fire board to appoint Ohtaki successor

By Sandy Brundage

Almanac Staff Writer

With Peter Ohtaki departing the Menlo Park fire district board to take a seat on the Menlo Park City Council, the fire board is working on appointing his successor.

The board chose to appoint because it didn't want the expense of a special election, said Chief Harold Schapelhouman of the Menlo Park Fire Protection District. Four people have shown an interest in the position. The board plans to conduct interviews Thursday, Dec. 9, and then make a decision.

"I'm sad to see Director Ohtaki leave, because he provided real service and was a great benefactor for the district," said Chief Schapelhouman. "But it will be good to have someone familiar with the fire protection district on the council, because sometimes it feels like they're not paying attention to our issues."

San Carlos a no-go

The board also decided to not

pursue a contract to provide fire services to San Carlos, given the challenges of the economy.

"We didn't want to weaken or disadvantage our district while helping San Carlos save money," Chief Schapelhouman said. He described emergency services in the county as a quilt, thanks to automatic aid agreements between jurisdictions, and said that when one piece acts independently — as San Carlos did in October when that city's council voted to outsource its fire department — the structure of the entire network weakens.

Randy Royce, mayor of San Carlos, said change, through competition, doesn't have to weaken services. "I come from high-tech in Silicon Valley, and many times, change un-weakens. Sometimes when there's change it's a tense moment, but if you operate a city more like a business — we changed our parks and recreation maintenance, for example, which was costing us \$744,000, and we're now doing it for \$281,000," he said. "A lot of people used the word 'weaken.' But if you go through city hall right now the

grass looks pretty good and it's costing us one-third as much.

He remains optimistic about the city's options for fire services, with more than a month left before the request for proposals expires.

The state's Cal Fire also decided to not bid on the contract, but Redwood City and San Mateo remain options for San Carlos, among others. Chief Schapelhouman said the other departments are already challenged; Redwood City in particular is using a ladder truck on medical calls instead of reserving the specialized equipment for fires.

"We won't be negatively impacted by neighboring agencies who need to reduce services. That's a real key thing for us," the chief said. "We're one of the largest fire agencies in the county. We can fully staff a first-alarm assignment, so we're big enough to handle not only our own emergencies, but also big enough to help our neighbors and we're happy to do it. But San Carlos has myopically done an analysis of their own response area. You have to consider the impact on everyone, not just San Carlos." ■

City names winners of environmental quality awards

The five winners of Menlo Park's annual environmental quality awards have been announced.

Boy Scout Troop 109 won in the cultural/historical category for restoring the signage along the Great Spirit Path in Bedwell Bayfront Park, and creating a permanent orienteering course in the park. Eagle Scouts Daniel and Philipp Kopisch led the effort.

In the heritage tree category, the Sharon Park Homeowners Association won for its dedication to caring for more than 200 heritage trees in their gated neighborhood at the west end of Sharon Park Drive.

The Dailey Method, an exercise studio at 3528 Alameda de Las Pulgas, got top honors for resource conservation. Owner Erin Paruszewski renovated the studio with the goal of making it as green as possible by using high-efficiency lighting, bamboo towels, energy-saving hand dryers, and other features.

Two pairs of homeowners received awards. Bobbie and Joseph Carcione won for sustainable landscaping improvements at 1817 Oakdell Drive. The couple created a Victorian-style garden, complete with bocce ball courts and vegetable

■ MENLO PARK

beds for the community.

Finally, Chris and Trudy VanIngen won in the architectural category for home improvements at 1835 Oakdell Drive that earned the home a place among the top five green-rated houses in California, according to Build It Green's rating system.

The winners will receive their awards at the City Council meeting on Tuesday, Dec. 14. The meeting starts at 7 p.m.

Toys needed

Starting on Tuesday, Nov. 30, the Menlo Park Chamber of Commerce will have a collection barrel at its office for donations of new, unwrapped toys for disadvantaged children in San Mateo County.

Toys may be dropped off at the chamber offices at 1100 Merrill St. Monday through Friday, from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. The drive will run through Thursday, Dec. 16.

No council meeting

Menlo Park's City Council won't meet again until Tuesday, Dec. 7. That will be the

final night on the dais for council members John Boyle and Heyward Robinson, as incumbent Rich Cline, attorney Kirsten Keith, and former Menlo Park Fire Protection District board president Peter Ohtaki will be sworn in.

That night also ends Mr. Cline's first term as mayor, although no one knows yet who will replace him. Council policy suggests that the title rotate among members who have served at least one year, with priority going to whoever has had the most amount of time go by since last holding the position. That leaves Kelly Fergusson as the likely choice — if the council follows the non-binding policy.

Chamber mixer

The Menlo Park Chamber of Commerce will have a toy drive with holiday spirits at its mixer on Wednesday, Dec. 1, at Marche restaurant, 898 Santa Cruz Ave. in downtown Menlo Park.

The chamber asks those attending to bring a new, unwrapped toy or a donation for the Menlo Park Firefighters Association's food and toy drive. The mixer starts at 5:30 p.m. ■

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HSR

continued from page 5

the recommendation, calling it a “fundamentally flawed” choice and a case of “Thanksgiving Day fraud” by the rail authority.

“The Authority staff has never vetted the Corcoran-to-Borden route with the public, and instead has wasted the community’s time and good will with endless public workshops and meetings on the other routes,” Mr. Cardoza said in a statement just after the rail authority announced the staff recommendation. “This deceit harms the long-standing trust and support that the Merced community and others in the Northern Valley have provided.

“This will completely undermine future support of the

project,” he added.

The high-speed rail line, for which California voters approved a \$9.95 billion bond measure in 2008, is slated to ultimately stretch between San Francisco and Los Angeles. But the authority estimates that the project will cost about \$43 billion, and it’s not clear where the rest of the money will come from.

The estimated price tag for the Borden-to-Corcoran segment is \$4.15 billion. If future funding doesn’t materialize, the authority would connect this segment to existing rail service.

Recently, the authority decided to delay its environmental analyses for the Peninsula segment of the line because of the recent decision to begin construction in Central Valley. ■

Atherton council opts for its own compromise on Parker Avenue

By Renee Batti

Almanac News Editor

Almanac News Editor
It’s only one, short street made up of small lots, but Parker Avenue in Atherton has been the source of one big, prolonged headache for the town’s staff, Planning Commission and City Council. Although it appears that the headache might finally be over, the medicine is bitter for many to swallow.

The council on Nov. 17 considered the latest recommendation by the Planning Commission for resolving the house-size regulations issue that has for years divided the street’s residents almost evenly. But with Mayor Kathy McKeithen taking the lead, the council rejected the compromise the commission had hammered out after conducting two public hearings in October.

On a 4-1 vote, with Councilman Jim Dobbie opposed, the council introduced an ordinance that reflected its own, less restrictive compromise plan worked out in September.

After the meeting, Mr. Dobbie expressed frustration that the council rejected the commission’s work and recommendation, saying the commissioners looked at the matter in a thorough way, and it was “just ridiculous” to ignore its proposed solution. “Some of the planning commissioners are very, very unhappy with this,” he said.

The lots on Parker Avenue — a dead-end street off Stockbridge Avenue — are less than 10,000 square feet, making them atypical of most lots in town, which are about one acre. Some residents have argued that the R-1 zoning rules that govern the street are so restrictive for small-lot homeowners that they have been unable to build garages and other reasonable additions to their homes.

Those residents have pushed for either changing the street’s R1-A zoning to the less restrictive R1-B zoning that governs the few other smaller lots in town; or creating special rules, known as an overlay district, within the R1-A zoning district for their street.

During a series of public hearings before the council and the commission over the past several years, residents opposed to changing the rules argued that allowing larger houses on the small lots would adversely alter the unusual neighborhood’s ambiance and lead to houses that are too large for the cul-de-sac, with garages protruding toward the street.

When the issue came before the council again, earlier this year, members directed the commission to review it and recommend a solution. Twice, the commission voted not to change the rules. But the issue wouldn’t die.

With several residents continuing to push for change, the council majority in September agreed on a compromise plan that

would change the front setback requirements of the current zoning, allowing residents to extend their houses toward the front. The compromise also would allow homeowners to build an additional 547 feet of floor space, among other changes. The council sent that plan to the commission for review.

The commission voted unanimously to alter the council’s compromise plan, arguing for its own version that would, among other things, retain all existing setbacks and allow more square footage for houses.

In arguing for the council’s own compromise plan crafted in September, Mayor McKeithen on Nov. 17 noted that the commission failed to treat the matter as a land-use issue rather than a neighbor-against-neighbor dispute. The council’s compromise plan, she said, “is what’s right for the town,” not just for a few residents of one small street.

Parker Avenue resident Duane Wadsworth criticized the decision, noting that one or two residents on his street seemed to hold an unreasonable amount of sway with some council members. “We’ve got to compromise, that’s fine. ... But (the council ignored) the Planning Commission three times in a row.”

The ordinance creating a Parker Avenue overlay within the R1-A district will come before the council for a second reading on Dec. 15 before becoming law. ■

FOUNDATION

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heads the board.

Ms. Enea and Mr. Muela could not be reached for comment.

Woodside resident and foundation board member Jessica Lonergan said in a written statement that the district, like local public schools, is faced with decreasing government funding and increasing costs. “Private funding and support are critical,” she said. “The foundation’s immediate goal of \$250,000 over the next year will enable the continued success of the district’s services and programs.”

The funds will be used to augment the district’s budget, which in 2010-11 is about \$12 million; the funds will go toward fire prevention and training, up-to-date equip-

ment, and facilities, according to a letter sent to residents of the district from the foundation board.

In addition to district staff and Ms. Lonergan, board members include Bill Butler, Lorrie Duval, Adolph Rosekrans, and Carter Warr.

According to the foundation’s website, the fire district has been cutting its annual budget since 2006. “Among those cuts are: No pay raises since 2007, the elimination of two positions and the reduction of supplies and services.”

Ms. Lonergan said that, in addition to the recent mass mailing seeking donations from residents, the foundation plans to hold a fundraising and awareness event next year.

Go to firedistrictfoundation.org for more information. ■

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Michelle Le/The Almanac

Rich woods, red wallpaper, and a cozy fireplace enhance the warm atmosphere of Station 1 restaurant in Woodside, which focuses on seasonal organic food.

Station 1 restaurant opens in Woodside

By Jane Knoerle
Almanac Lifestyles Editor

It's a new era for Woodside's first firehouse. The little red building, built at 2991 Woodside Road in the 1920s, has reopened as a new restaurant, Station 1.

For 16 years, it was the site of John Bentley's restaurant. Last spring, Mr. Bentley sold the restaurant to Kristi Borrone and her husband, Zu Tarazi, who both come from Cafe Borrone in Menlo Park. Mr. Tarazi is also

a former general manager at the Redwood City John Bentley's.

The 50-seat dining room has been remodeled with reclaimed oak floors and a fireplace, creating a cozy atmosphere.

The chef is Zack Freitas. The restaurant focuses on seasonal organic food. The menu is a three-course prix fixe for \$49. Among items recently featured were smoked kale soup, squid with barley, salmon

with cauliflower and mushrooms, Muscovy duck with brown rice and apricot, artisan cheeses with pear honey and fig preserve, white chocolate brioche, and Meyer lemon panna cotta. The menu changes frequently.

Cocktails and wine, by the glass or bottle, are available.

Station 1 is open for dinner Tuesday through Saturday, from 5 to 9:30 p.m. For reservations, call 851-4988.

Lobster Shack coming to Ladera County Shopper

The Old Port Lobster Shack is coming to the Ladera Country Shopper, according to the online Portola Valley Forum. The Lobster Shack will replace the Red Lotus restaurant, which has closed in the shopping center at 3130 Alpine Road.

The Lobster Shack, with a location at 851 Veterans Boulevard in Redwood City, is owned and run by Portola Valley residents Lynn and Russell Deutsch.

Mr. Deutsch had experience in the lobster import business when he came up with the idea of opening a New England-style lobster shack in the Bay Area. The Redwood City shop opened in 2006 to an enthusiastic response from transplanted New Englanders, especially those pinning for an authentic lobster roll.

Besides its signature lobster roll, the Lobster Shack provides an assortment of fresh seafood, including shrimp, clams, mussels,

and oysters; sandwiches; seafood salads; and clam chowder.

As to an opening date for the Ladera location, Ms. Deutsch says on the Portola Valley Forum: "Opening is highly dependent on

the permit process as well as plans we are reviewing with the architects. One of the things we will focus on is creating meals to take home after a long day. There are more choices than seafood, too."

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Because "Trust" Is Our Middle Name

Rich May sports field OK'd amid emotional exchange

By Sue Dremann

Embarcadero Media

Despite residents' concerns about traffic impacts, the East Palo Alto Planning Commission approved on Nov. 22 a \$3 million playing field for East Palo Alto's youth — a memorial sports complex to be named for slain police officer Richard May.

Commissioners approved the field 4 to 1 during an acrimonious and emotional hearing.

The soccer and rugby field, which would replace a dirt and weed-strewn lot behind St. Francis of Assisi Church on Bay Road, has been four years in the planning by Mr. May's family and friends through the Rich May Foundation.

The family wanted to establish the field as a way to help keep youth in the city engaged and out of gangs, foundation member Frank Merrill, Mr. May's stepfather and a resident of Atherton, has said in previous interviews. Mr. May was shot and killed in 2006 by Alberto Alvarez, an East Palo

Alto gang member who has been sentenced to death for the killing.

Planning commissioners have been hesitant to allow the playing field, with some citing traffic congestion.

Tami McMillan, Mr. May's sister, said the traffic issue is being mitigated by a 500-foot setback for the passenger drop-off area. During the meeting, an emotional exchange erupted between Ms. McMillan and commission Chairwoman Renee Glover Chantler.

Ms. McMillan said a small group of people within the city were supporting the status quo. "The status quo killed my brother," she said.

Ms. McMillan said the issue was scheduled for the end of the meeting, when kids and other supporters would not be able to stay because of the late hour. A few people in the community were letting small political issues get in the way of helping the kids, she said.

She said she believes opponents will appeal the decision.



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Shelter Network graduate Karen Van Pelt, right, and her three daughters.

Families find shelter at Haven Family House

Submitted by Michele Jackson, executive director, Shelter Network.

Shelter Network's Haven Family House is an expansive and welcoming shelter located at the end of Van Buren Road in Menlo Park. Since opening two decades ago, the shelter has served as a home away from home for more than 1,000 families in need.

In the past year, nearly 100 families, including nearly 250 children, found safety and support at Haven Family House. The majority of the families said they became homeless following the loss of a job or after their hours were cut at work, and they were unable to make ends meet.

Each of these families was referred to Shelter Network and Haven Family House. As a result of the support they received, 96 percent of the families that graduated returned to stable housing quickly — within an average of 112 days.

Karen Van Pelt and her three daughters were just one of the families that found shelter at Haven Family House this year.

Karen was born and raised on the Peninsula and had always worked to support herself.

"I never imagined that I would ever be homeless," she says. "But after being laid off from my job and losing my mom to cancer, it happened — my children and I became homeless.

"Thankfully, we were referred to Shelter Network. But there was a waiting list. They placed my girls and me in a motel so that we would be safe until there was space at the shelter. Not long after, we were provided with a temporary home — an apartment at Haven Family House. It was beautiful and the staff were so understanding and helpful."

trauma of being homeless."

Last month, Karen's job became full-time and with Shelter Network's help, she was able to find and move into a new place. "It's just a one bedroom but to us it is home," she says.

Today, Karen is a grateful and proud person, mother and employee. She is currently participating in Shelter Network's Follow Up program and looking forward to joining the Alumni Group. And her daughter Aaliyah is still spending her days in the program's child development center. Karen enjoys going back each evening to pick her up.

"The staff are like family," she says. "And I am so grateful for all they did for me."

"We are proud of Karen, her girls and all of our graduates," says Michele Jackson, Shelter Network's executive director. "We are also grateful for the generous support we receive from so many in the community. Without it, our efforts and the success of those we reach would not be possible. So on behalf of the 4,397 men, women and children we helped this past year, Thank You!" ■

Visit shelternetwork.org or call 685-5880 for more information. Your donations to the Holiday Fund benefit Shelter Network and nine other community-service organizations.

■ HOLIDAY FUND

Donations to the Holiday Fund benefit Shelter Network and nine other community-service organizations.

Within a few weeks of arriving, Karen found another job — though part-time, there was a possibility for it to become full-time. For the next four months, Karen and her kids took full advantage of all of the programs Shelter Network has to offer.

"I received coaching and endless support from my amazing case manager," Karen says. "I also participated in life and financial skill workshops, and my older daughters got counseling and participated in the teen group as well as after-school activities. And, while I was working, Aaliyah, my youngest daughter, stayed in the free on-site child development center, which also helps children overcome the

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Sarah Barnard, right, site director for the Art of Yoga Project, assists a girl in the relaxation pose.

Using yoga and art to help incarcerated teen girls

Submitted by *Mary Lynn Fitton*, founder, *the Art of Yoga Project*.

Have you seen Nike's campaign called the "Girl Effect?" It aims to improve the lives of adolescent girls in developing countries. "Why girls? Because when we all invest in girls, everyone wins," the website reads.

At the Art of Yoga Project (AYP), we completely agree. But we believe it's important to start with girls who are at-risk in our own communities, right here in east Menlo Park, Redwood City, and East Palo Alto. Because girls here need us, too. They need to know they matter to us and that there is hope for them to become productive members of society.

The Art of Yoga Project uses an innovative year-round curriculum combining health education, character development, yoga, meditation, creative expression, and writing to give girls in the San Mateo County juvenile justice system tools to prepare for a positive future.

Simply said, the goal is to reduce recidivism, to keep teen girls out of adult women's prisons. Each year, AYP serves more than 500 girls in county detention, and last year began mentoring the girls after they are released.

"Most of the girls in the juvenile detention centers have been abused and neglected at home," says Lisa Pedersen, AYP executive director. "They run away and turn to gangs for a sense of community. On the streets, the girls commit what we call 'survival crimes,' like prostitution and selling drugs, to get by. A cycle of victimization continues.

"A girl's eventual arrest is an opportunity to stop the pattern and

to begin to address her many and complex needs."

How can yoga and creative expression turn a girl around? Through a disciplined and rigorous regimen, AYP focuses on building self-awareness, self-respect and self-control. Backed by judges and probation, AYP helps girls become accountable to themselves, to others, and to their communities. This changes behavior and it changes lives.

"Serena" studied with AYP four days a week for seven months while incarcerated. Since her release last year, she has been mentored by an AYP teacher.

"I'm more aware of what I'm feeling inside," Serena says. "I want to be a lot more than what I thought I could be. I just have to focus."

Recently, the Art of Yoga Project was invited to attend the Governor and First Lady's Conference on Women in Long Beach. AYP was asked to display some of the girls' artwork as part of a California Arts Council project.

"The girls were thrilled to have their art appreciated by so many inspiring women and leaders," says Ms. Pedersen. "I think it gave them a stronger sense of self-worth."

After the event, Maria Shriver told us: "Your work is truly changing lives... I look forward to working with you all to continue to change lives, one woman, one girl at a time." ■

Visit theartofyogaproject.org for more information. Address: *The Art of Yoga Project*, 555 Bryant St., #232, Palo Alto, CA 94301-1704. Phone: 650-996-1904.

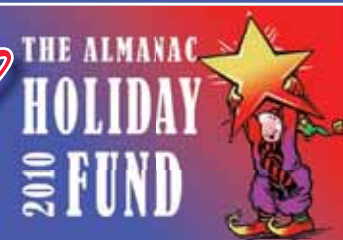
■ HOLIDAY FUND

Donations to the Holiday Fund benefit the Art of Yoga Project and nine other community-service organizations.

Giving to the

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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 about \$100,000, and with available matching grants, nearly \$130,000 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 Lucille Packard Foundation and the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation. No administration costs will be deducted from the gift, which are tax-deductible as permitted by law.

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

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.
- **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.
- **St. Francis Center**
Provides services for families in need with the goal of helping them to live in dignity and become self-supporting community members. The center assists some 2,000 people each month with such services as low-income housing, food and clothing, shower and laundry, counseling, community garden, and education.
- **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.
- **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.
- **The Art of Yoga Project**
Offers incarcerated teen girls a rehabilitation program of yoga and creative arts to instill greater self-awareness, self-respect and self-control. The project serves over 500 girls annually at four local sites, including San Mateo County's juvenile detention centers.
- **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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for young
readers

by Debbie Duncan

Children who are read to reap numerous benefits. And cold winter nights are a perfect time to curl up on the couch with a child and a book to read aloud. Remember, books make the best gifts!

"The Christmas Eve Ghost"

by Shirley Hughes; Candlewick, 2010; 30 pp., \$16; ages 2-8.

This heartwarming tale by a master British storyteller and illustrator is historical and also relevant to families today.

After her husband is killed in a coal-mining accident, Mam moves with young Bronwen and Dylan to Liverpool, where she supports the family by taking in laundry and painstakingly cleaning it in the washhouse out back. Mam warns her children not to speak to the O'Rileys next door, who go to a church "for a different sort of people." Yet it's Mrs. O'Riley who comes to the rescue when Bronwen and Dylan need help solving a scary Christmas Eve mystery.

Little ones will love the gentleness of the story and illustrations. That they may also appreciate poverty and learn tolerance are side gifts of the season.

"The Boss Baby"

by Marla Frazee; Simon & Schuster/Beach Lane, 2010; 32 pp.; \$17; ages 4-8.

Here's a laugh-out-loud book starring a baby who's the boss of the household from the day he arrives. "He put Mom and Dad on a round-the-clock schedule, with no time off." He makes demands. He holds meetings, "many in the middle of the night." All of this without saying a word — until he does.

Frazee's illustrations are reminiscent of classic 1950s and 1960s picture books, but the narrative is thoroughly modern.

"The Dreamer"

by Pam Muñoz Ryan, drawings by Peter Sís; Scholastic Press, 2010; 372 pp.; \$18; ages 8 and up.

Prose, poetry and illustrations sing off the green ink adorning the pages of this fictionalized account of the troubled childhood of Nobel Prize-winning Chilean poet Pablo Neruda. Neruda changes his name from Neftalí Perez "to save Father the humiliation of having a son who was a poet."

Neftalí finds allies in his younger sister, a newspaper editor uncle and a sympathetic stepmother and to a lesser extent his older brother, also a talented artist but who bows to their father's bullying and his demands.

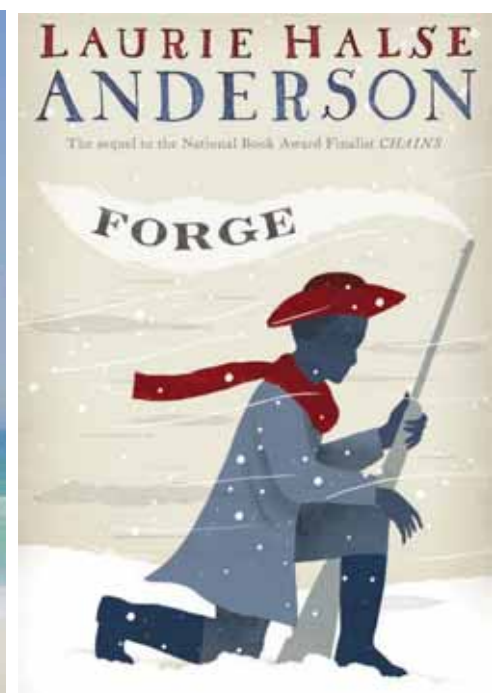
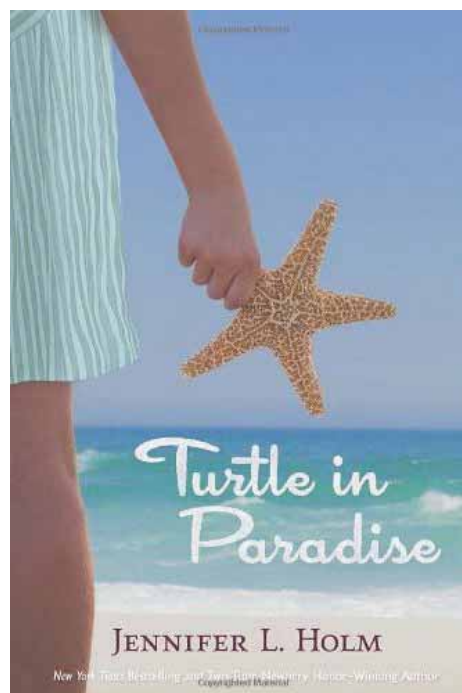
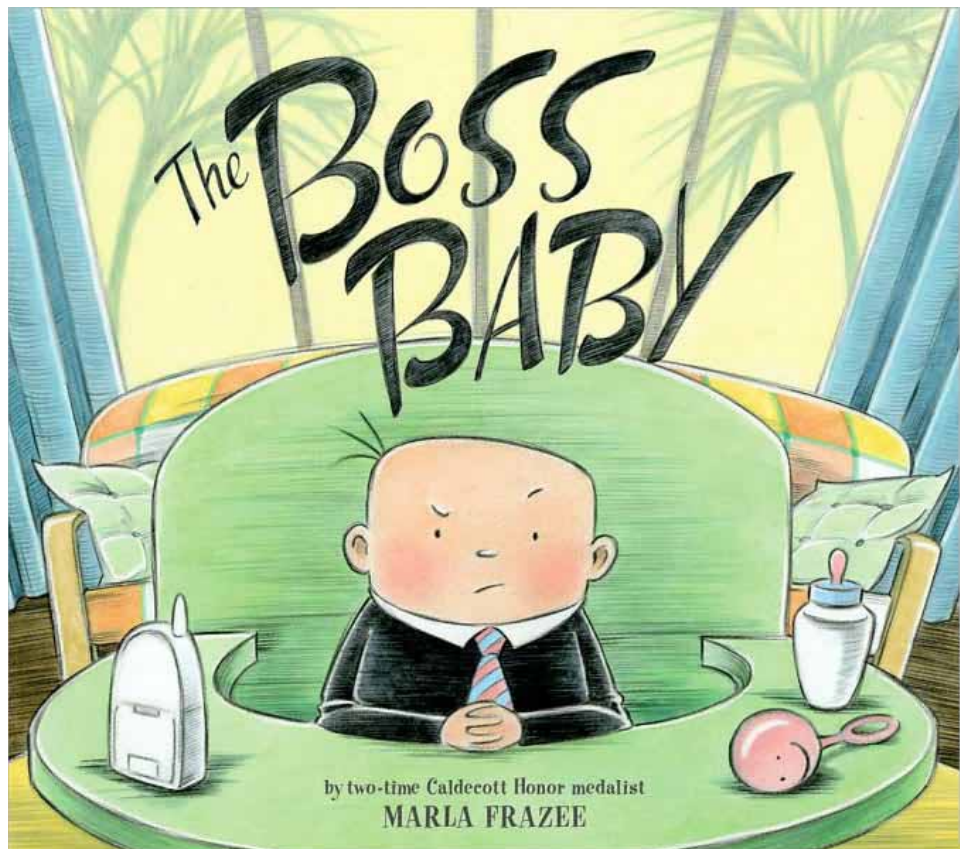
That young Neftalí is able to find beauty in his world is testament to the triumph of the human spirit, and makes "The Dreamer" a hopeful and inspiring work in itself.

"Penny Dreadful"

by Laurel Snyder, drawings by Abigail Halpin; Random House, 2010; 304 pp.; \$17; ages 9-12.

Penelope Grey is a bored big-city rich girl with an active imagination fueled by a healthy diet of children's literature. She wishes "something interesting would happen ... just like in a book." Soon her father quits his job and the mansion falls

Continued on next page



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Continued from previous page

into disarray. That isn't what she meant!

So she wishes again, and her mother inherits a run-down house in Thrush Junction, Tenn., with attached cottages that are home to an assortment of colorful, quirky characters. Penelope is so thrilled with her new home and new friend that she changes her name.

Penny's father also discovers he can cook, her mother becomes a garbagewoman, and all is hunky dory — well, except for a family money problem that Penny takes it upon herself to fix. Will she find the treasure? Or has she already?

The conclusion will surprise and delight readers of all ages.

“Doodlebug”

by Karen Romano Young;
Feiweil & Friends,
2010; 100 pp.;
\$15; ages 9-12.

Twelve-year-old Dodo, AKA the Doodlebug, figures out — after being expelled from her school in L.A. for innocently selling the Ritalin she didn't want to take — that she can keep her A.D.D. under control by doodling. She quickly establishes a new identity and makes friends in her much larger San Francisco middle school. The entire family loves S.F., in fact, but Mom, Dad and younger sister Momo all have to overcome personal obstacles to be able to stay.

This impressive graphic novel with a local touch is filled with humor, as well as insight into the impulses and learning style of kids who simply cannot sit still.

“Turtle in Paradise”

by Jennifer L. Holm;
Random House, 2010;
\$17; ages 9-12.

Family history inspired Newbery Honor author Holm, who lives in Foster City, to tell the story of a spirited girl sent to live with relatives on Key West during the Depression.



Turtle has a hard shell and a level head. Most people she meets seem to be related to her (except for a certain writer named Papa).

She hangs out with her cousin and his friends who run a babysitting business they call the Diaper Gang. She says they're “a bunch of dumb boys.”

In Turtle's world, kids find their own entertainment, make do with little to nothing and search for pirate treasure. Historical refer-



ences, including the Labor Day Hurricane of 1935, add authenticity and flavor to this charmer, perfect for reading aloud.

“Forge”

by Laurie Halse Anderson;
Simon & Schuster/Atheneum, 2010; \$17; ages 10 and up.

Multi award-winning author

HAPPY HOLIDAYS

Anderson told a Peninsula audience recently that she walked barefoot in snow to get a feel for the extreme cold her characters would have experienced as soldiers camped in Valley Forge, Penn., in the winter of 1777-78. As a result, I recommend readers have a blanket — and a warm snack — handy while reading this phenomenal historical novel. You will feel the cold, and be grateful not to have to subsist on a diet of firecake with a side of squirrel.

“Forge” begins with one escape and ends with another race toward freedom for a 15-year-old former slave, Curzon, who's stubborn, smart and loyal. He enlists in the Continental army, as was allowed by the Patriots. Still, he's far from free and indeed is enslaved again by his former master, also in Valley Forge and working for the young Congress. There he re-unites with Isabel, a fellow slave and friend from New York. Isabel is even forced to wear an iron collar around her neck. With a little help from Curzon's army buddies, the pair use their wits once again to escape the chains that bind them.



“Bamboo People”

by Mitali Perkins;
Charlesbridge, 2010;
\$17, ages 12 and up.

The teen soldiers in this gripping novel are fighting in a contemporary conflict, in the troubled country of Burma. When book-smart Chiko thinks he's applying for a teaching job, he's forced to join the army and its ethnic cleansing campaign along the Thai border.

Chiko makes friends with wily, street-smart Tai, who teaches Chiko how to handle beatings. Chiko, in turn, teaches Tai to read and write. They are separated, with Chiko sent into the jungle to be a land-mine clearer for a group of soldiers spying on the Karenni rebels. One of those rebels, Tu Reh, a teen seething from having his village burned by the Burmese army, finds a badly injured Chiko.

Tu Reh acts, but he also struggles for the rest of this thought-provoking book with whether he made the right decision for himself or for his people. ■

Stanford resident Debbie Duncan has been the Weekly's children's books reviewer since 1997. Her latest publication is an essay in the new book, “Filled with Glee.”

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Simple but meaningful

Local faith leaders suggest ways to add joy, reduce stress, in holiday celebrations

by Chris Kenrick

For local clergy, the December holidays — whether spent in secular, Christian, Jewish or other traditions — are all about reflecting on what's most meaningful in people's lives, and finding ways to celebrate that.

"A lot of people feel this tension because they realize what they're doing for the holidays doesn't match up with what's actually important to them," said the Rev. Amy Zucker Morgenstern, leader of Palo Alto's Unitarian Universalist congregation.

"Once you've answered that ques-

tion for yourself—and the answers are different for everybody—you have some clear implications about how you should spend your time and your money."

The quest for holiday simplicity is a timeless newsstand staple: "Feel Organized for the Holidays," beckons the cover of "Real Simple" magazine, with tips for table decorations, budget skin care and avoiding the common cold.

Countless books with titles like "Hundred Dollar Holiday" and "Unplug the Christmas Machine" have been published on the theme.

Local faith leaders suggested that families have a conversation in early December, or even before, to narrow down what each member thinks is important to celebrate — and then try to sustain focus on those specific observances through the busy season.



"Everybody wants the same thing, yet often in the end we end up consuming too much, stressed out and feeling sad about a holiday that should be about getting together as a family, having rest and celebration, renewing ourselves and sharing," said the Rev. Frances Hall Kieschnick, senior associate rector of Holy Trinity Episcopal Church in Menlo Park.

"We try to be more intentional — sitting down with family and saying, 'What are the three things about Christmas you really love the most?'"

"Kids will talk about toys, but usually it has to do with time spent with each other and some rituals — whether it's visiting Santa or whatever that might be — but simplifying by asking, 'What are the main things you care about and want to continue doing?'"



Vivian Wong

Madison Simonian, 9, examines banana-bark angels made by a Congolese refugee at the Heavenly Treasures gift market held at Menlo Park Presbyterian Church in late November.

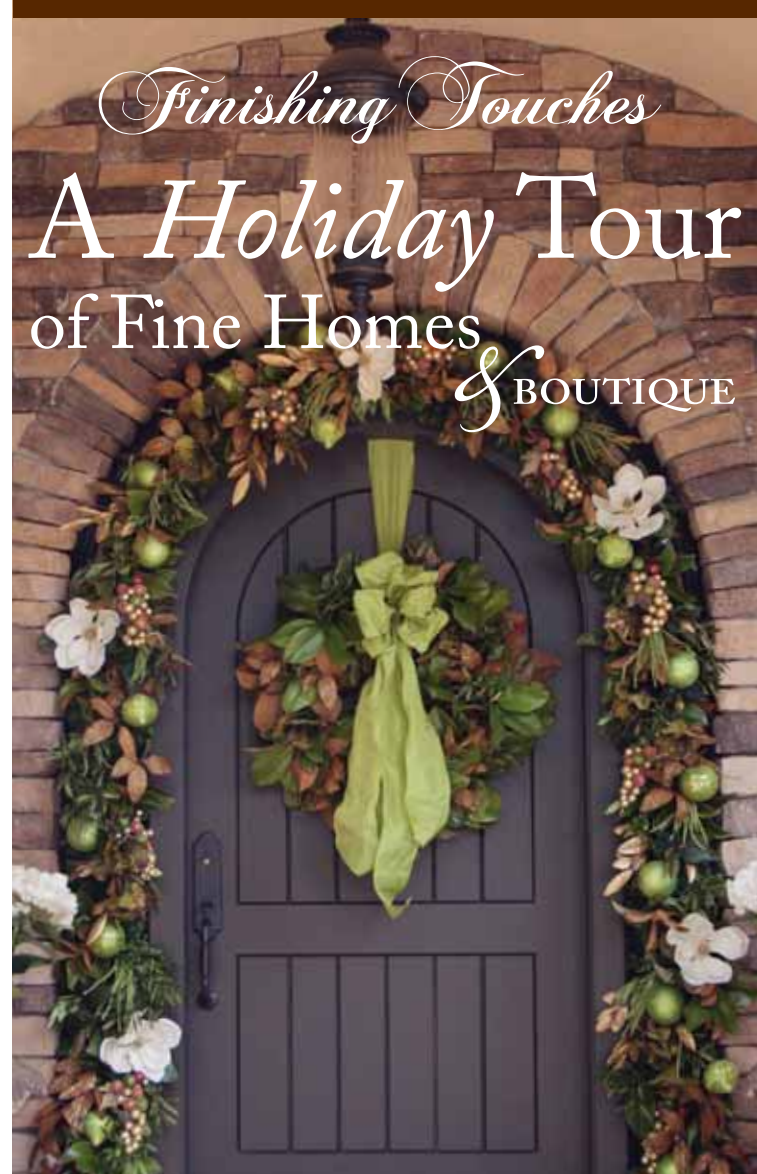
Kieschnick reassures that "you don't have to create all the memories in one year — you have your whole life."

For some local congregations

the impulse for greater meaning at Christmas has taken the form of craft fairs or "alternative gift

Continued on next page

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HAPPY HOLIDAYS

Continued from previous page

markets.”

Trinity Parish, at 330 Ravenswood Ave., Menlo Park, invites the public to theirs, to be held Sundays, Dec. 5 and Dec. 12, from 11 a.m. to noon.

Shoppers will be able to buy gifts that support causes ranging from mosquito nets to prevent malaria in Africa to supporting micro-loans to entrepreneurs across the globe.

They can buy hand-made ornaments made by potter Kate Dutton-Gillett, wife of Holy Trinity's Rector, the Rev. Matthew Dutton-Gillett, with a portion of proceeds going to the parish's outreach granting ministry.

Or they may contribute — and purchase — “orphan ornaments,” cleaned-up tree decorations that are recycled among church members.

“The alternative gift market feels like an antidote to much of the holiday stress,” Kieschnick said.

“There's a lot of talk these days about ‘the story of stuff,’ materialism, reduce, re-use, recycling, being sensitive to the environment.

“The alternative gift market is a way to respond to our desire to be more environmentally considerate, intentional, being generous, thinking about others besides ourselves, modeling a way of giving more than receiving, which are all themes we raise up at Christmas.”

The nonprofit Heavenly Treasures, which brings handicrafts from developing countries to market in the United States, sponsored an alternative gift market for the large congregation of Menlo Park Presbyterian Church in late November.

Shoppers could choose from Kenyan rag dolls, coconut jewelry from the Philippines, handbags from Guangzhou, silk scarves from Thailand, and much more.

Robert James of Redwood City admired wood-carved tree ornaments with his 8- and 5-year-old children.

“My wife and I have been coming here every year,” James said.

“We can buy stuff for the kids' teachers — something that's unique and you're not going to find anywhere else, and it's always fun to shop here.”

Sorting through an array of colorful Thai scarves, Signy Johnson of Menlo Park, a member of Menlo Park Presbyterian, said she shops at the alternative gift market every year.

“I love the fact that I can buy gifts here and know the money will go to people in Third World countries, and still buy gifts that people will value,” Johnson said.

Whether it's a family hike on Christmas Day, volunteering in a soup kitchen or going to the movies, people customize holiday traditions to provide meaning and fit their circumstances.



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Santa at Konditorei
Photos by Susan Thomas

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- The UPS Store - Holiday ornaments and Toys for Tots
- Mike's Cafe - Holiday Baked Goods
- Round Table Pizza - Madrigal Singers
- Willis & Company - Ornament making
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- Portola Valley Holiday Fair 10 AM - 4 PM,
Old School House
- Kid's Gala 1:00 PM - 3:30 PM,
Portola Valley Town Center

Following family tradition, Julie Reis of Palo Alto, a teacher of English as a Second Language, for years baked 10 different varieties of Christmas cookies to share with friends and family.

A few years ago she decided there could be a better way. She asked her husband and two sons each to name their favorite kind of cookie, and now bakes just those varieties.

In their own special holiday spirit, Kieschnick, her husband Michael and their two now-grown children for years have made a traditional Christmas Day pilgrimage to San Francisco's Tenderloin neighborhood.

Wearing Santa hats and armed with brownies, dozens of pairs of new socks, wool hats, umbrellas and pop-top cans of soup, tuna fish and fruit cups, they drive around and stop wherever they see homeless panhandlers.

"We'll go up to a group and give them socks and they'll say, 'How long can you stay? I've got a friend down the road who needs a pair of socks'" Kieschnick said.

"It's such an education for the kids to realize how human it is. People ask, 'Do these brownies have walnuts? I can't eat walnuts.' They're so polite.

"Every year the kids feel shy. They say, 'You go first.' But wearing the hats helps, and after the

first approach, everybody wants to jump out of the car and have these conversations with people.

"We've done this throughout their childhood and we did it last year," she said. "The thing that's so amazing is that they're 20 and 23 and they're driving

their own cars, but they still want to do it.

"It's only for one day, but our idea is, 'We're not going to drive by these people on this day.'" ■

*Palo Alto Weekly Staff Writer
Chris Kenrick can be e-mailed at
ckenrick@paweekly.com.*



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Begins on Wednesday, Jan. 12 – Mar. 30,
6 to 7:15 p.m.

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First Tuesday of each month,
10:30 a.m. to noon



Living Well with Diabetes

Tuesdays, 4:30 to 7 p.m., or Fridays,
9:30 a.m. to noon

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month, 5:30 to 8:30 p.m.

Healthy Eating Type 2 Diabetes

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5:30 to 8:30 p.m.

Gestational Diabetes

Wednesdays, 2 to 4 p.m.

Prediabetes

First Monday of the month,
9 to 11:30 a.m., and third Wednesday of
every other month, 4:30 to 7 p.m. Also in
Redwood Shores, fourth Wednesday of
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Saturdays, Dec. 4, 11 & 18, 9 a.m. to 1 p.m.

Wednesdays, Dec. 8 – Jan. 12, 7 to 9:15 p.m.

Preparing for Childbirth Without Medication

Sunday, Dec. 5, 9:30 a.m. to 1 p.m., 650-853-2960

New Parent ABC's – All About Baby Care

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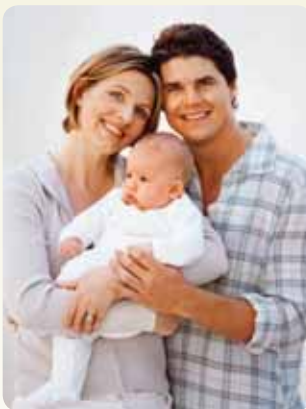
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Diabetes Class (two-part class)

Tuesdays, 9:30 a.m. to noon and Wednesdays, 2 to 4:30 p.m.

Prediabetes

Third Thursday of each month, 2 to 4 p.m. Fourth Tuesday of each month,
3 to 5 p.m.

Sweet Success Gestational Diabetes Class

Wednesdays, 9 a.m. to noon

Pregnancy, Breastfeeding and Child Care Classes

Baby Care

Dec. 1, 7 & 16, Weeknights, 6:30 to 8:30 p.m., Saturday, 10 a.m. to noon

Infant Emergencies and CPR

Wednesday, Dec. 1 & 15, 6 to 8:30 p.m.

OB Orientation

Wednesday or Thursday, Dec. 2, 15, 21, 30, 6:30 to 8 p.m.

Childbirth Preparation

Dec. 3, 4 & 9; Thursday, 6:30 to 9:30 p.m., Friday, 6 to 9 p.m., and
Saturday, 9 a.m. to noon

Breastfeeding

Mondays or Tuesdays, Dec. 6 or 7, 6:30 to 9 p.m.

Feeding Your Toddler/Preschooler

Tuesday, Dec. 7, 7 to 9 p.m.

Introduction to Solids

Monday, Dec. 13, 10:30 a.m. to noon

Preparing for Baby

Tuesday, Dec 14, 6:30 to 8:30 p.m.

What to Expect with Your Newborn

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Housing rules given preliminary OK

By Renee Batti
Almanac News Editor

ATHERTON

The City Council has given the nod to zoning ordinance amendments that will allow Atherton residents to build second dwelling units that encroach slightly into the existing setbacks of their lots, and exceed certain floor-area limits.

The amendments are needed to bring the town's zoning code into compliance with the town's 2007-2014 housing element update, which encourages the development of livable second units by easing certain restrictions, and increasing their allowable size to 1,200 square feet.

The changes were certified by the California Department of Housing and Community Development as being in compliance with state housing law, according

to Lisa Costa Sanders, deputy town planner.

The council unanimously approved the ordinance changes at its Nov. 17 meeting. A second reading to finalize approval is set for Dec. 15. The ordinance would take effect Jan. 15 if final approval is given.

The housing element is a town's blueprint for future housing development, and must meet certain state requirements, including the provision of dwellings for low- to moderate-income people.

Atherton has been working on its housing element update for about two years — an effort that has involved members of the public, the Planning Commission and the City Council,

Ms. Lisa Costa Sanders noted in a press release.

In addition to changes in the second-unit restrictions, the zoning ordinance changes allow multiple-family units for very low- and low-income people on private school sites, which could include dormitories and teacher housing on those campuses.

The amendments also allow residential care facilities, serving a maximum of six people, in residential zoning districts. ■

Pediatrician recognized for leadership

Kaiser Permanente has awarded Dr. Chynna Bantug of Menlo Park with the Dr. Cecill Cutting Award for her work as chief of pediatrics at the Kaiser Permanente San Jose Medical Center.

Born in the Philippines and a graduate of the UCLA Medical School, Dr. Bantug oversees a department of 39 pediatricians and about 90 staff members.

The award recognizes her leadership skills, said a Kaiser Permanente spokesman, including her work to modify clinical schedules to allow her staff to have a better balance between work and family life.



Dr. Chynna Bantug

A mother of two young children, Dr. Bantug instituted a family panel to get feedback about new medi-

cines in San Jose.

She commissioned a muralist to create whimsical scenes in the waiting areas of Family Health Center at Kaiser Permanente in San Jose.

— Hannah Totte

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DR. HUBERT UPTON



Dr. Hubert Upton died Nov. 16 in Roseville, Calif. He was 85.

The memorial service will be at 2:30 p.m. Sunday, December 12, at the Trinity United Methodist Church in Mountain View.

He was born in 1925 in Omaha, Nebraska to Hubert Allen Upton and Mildred Mabery Upton.

After his family moved to California, he received officer training in the U.S. Marine Corps, where he served as a second lieutenant during World War II and then served as a naval medical officer during the Korean War.

He attended University of California, Berkeley, for three years in engineering, and in 1945 changed his course of study to medicine. He graduated from the University of Rochester Medical School in 1951. Medicine became his lifelong career.

He married Jean Cornell after meeting in Rochester, N.Y. The couple moved to California, and Dr. Upton

set up a family practice in Mountain View, Calif. He was one of the founders of El Camino Hospital, where he served the community until he retired in 1996.

Dr. Upton was active in the California Academy and American Academy of Family Practice, the Boy Scouts of America and was a trustee for the United Methodist Church in Mountain View and Nevada City.

He had a passion for music and started an Explorer Scout Jazz Band called the Blue Saints, which toured the world between 1964 and 1973. His interests included Japanese gardens, woodworking, boating, model and historical trains, aviation and music.

Hugh and Jean had a happy marriage of 62 years and loved raising their family and traveling the world.

He is survived by his wife, Jean Cornell Upton; his four children, Hubert Allen Upton, Bruce Arnold Upton, Gary Cornell Upton and Janice Upton Blumer; eight grandchildren; and brother, Dwight Upton.

Memorial contributions can be made to the Trinity United Methodist Church, 748 Mercy Street, Mountain View, CA 94041.

PAID OBITUARY



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Nativity School will be selling Christmas Trees & Wreaths beginning Friday, November 26th and ending on Sunday, December 12th. This is a fundraiser for Nativity School.

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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.

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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.

Holiday came early for high-speed rail critics

All of a sudden the multi-billion dollar high-speed rail juggernaut that has dominated the Peninsula transportation agenda since voters approved Proposition 1a in 2008 vanished into the Central Valley last week.

Instead of releasing its long-awaited draft environmental impact statement for the project's Peninsula segment in December, the EIR "...will need to be rescheduled for

a future date," said Robert Doty, director of the Peninsula Rail Program, a partnership of Caltrain and the rail authority. Without

the EIR, no decisions will be made on whether Peninsula trains will run on elevated tracks, at grade, in a tunnel or open trench.

The stunning news came soon after the Federal Railroad Administration designated a \$715 million grant specifically for a Central Valley segment. Now the Peninsula portion of the project has been pushed back, and already two Peninsula mayors have used the delay to call for much better analysis of the project's viability before it is put back on track.

At this stage, no one knows how long the Peninsula EIR will be delayed, but it easily could be a number of years, rather than months. And already the newly rejuvenated Republicans in Congress are saying funding for some of President Obama's high-speed rail initiatives may be in trouble.

Mayors Pat Burt of Palo Alto and Terry Nagel of Burlingame are now asking their counterparts to "come together as a powerful force dedicated to moving forward on transportation planning on the Peninsula. Menlo Park Mayor Rich Cline also backed the effort.

But along with seeking better research to lessen the impact of the rail project, it appears there may be pressure from Washington for all Peninsula cities to accept a work-

able high-speed rail plan.

In an open letter, Msrs. Burt and Nagel said that in a meeting with five Peninsula mayors, Congresswomen Anna Eshoo and Jackie Speier emphasized the need for local cities to agree on a plan for moving forward with high-speed rail.

"They made it clear that our region will not receive federal funds for transportation projects until we demonstrate that we have a common vision for future transportation," the mayors said, adding that the U.S. Department of Transportation is more likely to fund projects where local leaders have reached agreement.

At this point it is not clear if agreement is necessary for local communities to receive any federal transportation funds, or just high-speed rail grants. Either way, it looks like at least Palo Alto and Burlingame and almost certainly Menlo Park and Atherton, will want the rail authority to authorize new, independent research before they can support the project.

Specifically, the mayors want new studies of estimated ridership, a budget and business plan, assessment of freight issues on the Peninsula, restoration of the alignments originally sought by the cities, and more thorough vetting of alternative transportation options.

Unless there is a change at the top, it is highly unlikely that the High-Speed Rail Authority will vote to redo this much of its original research. That will leave Peninsula communities in a bind, to either support a plan they don't like, or oppose it and risk losing federal funding, which could kill the project.

Menlo Park, Atherton, Palo Alto and other Peninsula cities may have an opportunity to make a tremendous impact on the design and execution of the Midpeninsula segment of the high-speed rail line. The big question is whether they can take advantage of it.

EDITORIAL

The opinion of The Almanac

LETTERS

Our readers write

Cyclists need designated bike path to be safe

Editor:

I agree with Don Fabiano (Letters, Nov. 17) that "no amount of striping or addition of bike lanes" will change the danger posed to bicycle riders when riding on the road, especially at the Interstate 280 mergers.

We can be careful, vigilant, safe riders and still be hit by cars or trucks as I was at the Sand Hill Road and I-280 interchange. I have been commuting by bike to Stanford from Woodside, where I live, for over 15 years. Stanford encourages its employees to bike to work with cash incentives, but we do not have safe routes to ride.

Bicyclists have been killed at the Woodside Road and now the

Our Regional Heritage

Louise Hahn (Fletcher) is Queen Polly of the Menlo Circus in the opening act of the 1922 Menlo Circus and Horse Show in Atherton.

Atherton Heritage Association



Alpine Road intersections of I-280, and I was badly injured on Sand Hill Road.

There must be a safe way to cross for bikes and that can only mean a

designated bikeway — a path for bikes alone, at the very least, at one of these three intersections. If we are serious about preventing future deaths and accidents, we must find

the money for true safety.

Carole Mawson
Romero Road, Woodside

See **LETTERS**, next page

Peninsula rail: clarify the problem

By Russ Peterson

Steve Schmidt's recent Guest Opinion, "Rail foes: don't forget about Caltrain," starts the entire community down the wrong path.

I say wrong because politicizing the issue and making broad negative generalizations about "those people," will not lead to solving high-speed rail issues nor to solving Caltrain issues. Caltrain's future is dependent on a community solution but as our first priority let's understand the problem(s).

First, we need a little clarity on the seven-year, ongoing high-speed rail-plus-Caltrain discussions. Describing opponents of the existing high-speed rail "plans" as rail foes is wrong. Besides, having to include the state auditor, treasurer, inspector general, legislative analyst's office and the transportation experts at Berkeley/UC Irvine, this also assumes local opponents of high-speed rail are against Caltrain.

I'll admit, people are calling for Caltrain to uncouple themselves from trying to serve the California High-Speed Rail Authority, but that is precisely to engage Caltrain in doing its job. Caltrain has staff that serve two masters — high-speed rail and local commuter service — that's Problem No. 1.

Talk of directing federal dollars to the Peninsula for high-speed rail is merely a front for using American Recovery and Reinvestment Act funds to make good on Caltrain capital improvement projects. State leaders specifically excluded all requests for infrastructure that were not high-speed rail specific. This is just one of many opportunity costs with high-speed rail.

Now, with all the management, environmental, contractual and ridership "issues" Mr. Schmidt is going to blame the messengers for high-speed rail funding going to the Central Valley. Understand that Prop. 1A legally requires the least costly high-speed rail segments to be built first so the feds are following California's law. I did not support Prop 1A, but to the 67 percent of local voters and 52 percent of statewide voters who did support 1A, do we change the law or vote again? — which is Problem No. 2.

A new group, Friends of Caltrain, is launching a series of discussions about securing a steady, reliable source of funding for Caltrain. This is really what Caltrain needs. It is the Caltrain problem. Despite Measure A funds and other sources of

transit money, Caltrain service has regularly lost millions of dollars every year it operates. So, we subsidize Caltrain but why do we now face a \$30 million hole for next year?

Here's what one Peninsula leader with county government/transit experience said who spoke at the recent Friends of Caltrain meeting in Menlo Park: "SamTrans reduced their funding of Caltrain and then (SF) Muni and VTA (Santa Clara)" decided to reduce their funding of Caltrain, as well. This is the problem Friends of Caltrain and anyone else who wants to see Caltrain live is going to have to solve, operational funding — Problem No. 3.

But key questions remain:

What about capital projects and electrification? You'll hear a lot about better operational efficiency (lose money at a slower rate) but no one is realistically planning to get away from a subsidized commuter service. The fare box return is 40 to 50 percent, which is considered good in the industry, but making up the entire subsidy — you better read the fine print.

Who at SamTrans decided to cut Caltrain funding, putting us into this mess? That would be Mike Scanlon, the executive director of both SamTrans and the Joint Powers Board (Caltrain). Making \$400,000 a year and sitting at the head of both organizations, Mr. Scanlon chose to defund Caltrain and then claim Caltrain was in a tailspin and not likely to survive. (See news reports starting in April 2010.)

Not only is Mr. Scanlon conflicted about SamTrans vs. Caltrain — Problem No. 4, but remember he's also conflicted about Caltrain vs. high-speed rail — Problem No. 1.

Why do we create artificial divisions of our transit rather than creating a system to get us where we need and want to go? Recent news reports compared the ramp-up in SamTrans salaries to the amount of services being cut on Caltrain? Deny the connection if you must, but if money is the problem and funding is the solution let's fund what we value, and I suggest more staff is not the answer.

Mr. Schmidt does close with a better tone and focus than where he starts and I, too, hope many will stay tuned to this issue. But let's ask the tough questions, get meaningful reforms at Caltrain, and stay focused on the problem. If we also want to spend on capital improvement, then let's openly discuss options, like a personal rapid transit system, but that avoids the key issue. Stick to funding Caltrain efficiently. That comes first.

Russ Peterson
Felton Gables, Menlo Park



GUEST
OPINION

LETTERS

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'There goes the neighborhood' signs

Editor:

I am angry and frustrated by the anti high-speed rail signs lining my street and other streets throughout Menlo Park and Palo Alto. It is unacceptable to use the phrase, "There goes the neighborhood," as a political slogan.

I'm not sure if those who have chosen to display the signs in their front yards are aware of the phrase's history, but these words

sound familiar for a reason. Beginning in the 1950s, "There goes the neighborhood" was the refrain of white homeowners as they moved out of their homes to avoid contact with the black families who began to move in. They feared the dropping property values and general "contamination" that blacks would bring to their neighborhoods.

Residents who display this sign may not be familiar with its connotations. However, it is the responsibility of all citizens to educate themselves before making political decisions. "There goes the neighborhood" is not an obscure slogan buried deep in history books. Housing discrimination and residential segregation did not end in

the 1950s. This slogan still wields power today.

My multiracial family has always felt welcomed in our largely white neighborhood and town. However, these signs lead me to believe that my own neighbors don't care to consider the discriminatory power of their words. The signs make me feel like an unwelcome outsider in the neighborhood I grew up in.

I don't want to live in a community where I have to pass by signs that harken wistfully back to the days of segregation. Those who display "There goes the neighborhood" signs should take them down immediately.

Emily Taylor
Menlo Park



NOTICE OF PUBLIC MEETING AND NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING CITY OF MENLO PARK PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING OF DECEMBER 13, 2010

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

PUBLIC HEARING ITEMS

Use Permit/Julie Figliozzi Wong/271 Hedge Road: Request for a use permit for first- and second-story additions to an existing single-story structure that would exceed 50 percent of the existing floor area, on a substandard lot with regard to lot area and width in the R-1-U (Single-Family Urban) zoning district. The proposed expansion is considered to be equivalent to a new structure. As part of the proposal, the applicant proposes to remove a multi-trunk, 25-inch diameter heritage curly willow tree (noted as tree #6 on plans) located near the front property line.

Use Permit/Christian Hilty for Geron Corporation/200 Constitution Drive: Request for a use permit for a diesel generator, associated with a biopharmaceutical company that develops products for the treatment of cancer and other chronic degenerative diseases. The proposed generator would be located behind an existing building in the M-2 (General Industrial) zoning district. In addition, as part of this application, the applicant is requesting approval for outside storage of hazardous materials, associated with an existing, approved chemical inventory. The applicant is also requesting a use permit for temporary outside storage of storage containers for non-hazardous materials.

PUBLIC MEETING ITEM

Architectural Control and Environmental Review/City of Menlo Park/700 Alma Street: Request for architectural control for exterior modifications and construction of an approximately 1,200-square-foot addition to the existing 14,900-square-foot recreation center and associated site improvements located at the Civic Center Complex in the P-F (Public Facilities) zoning district. The Planning Commission will also be reviewing the Burgess Gymnasium and Gymnastics Center Environmental Impact Report (EIR) Addendum that compares the potential environmental impacts of the recreation center addition proposal with the previously analyzed environmental impacts discussed in the certified EIR to confirm that the impacts would remain unchanged and that no new environmental impacts would result from the completion of the proposed project.

STUDY SESSION ITEM

Study Session/Tyco Electronics/300 Constitution Drive: Study Session for a proposal to upgrade the 58-acre Tyco Electronics campus. The campus has over one million square feet of existing building area. As part of the upgrade, up to 10,000 square feet of building area would be added to the campus, the building facades would be updated with new architectural treatments, the parking lots would be reconfigured, new landscaping and recreation areas would be installed, and new signage would be installed. The applicant is considering the addition of a right-turn-only truck and emergency vehicle exit on Chilco Street. The proposal would require a master use permit for the addition of square footage, nonconforming parking, and the use and storage of hazardous materials and architectural control for the exterior building modifications and additions in the M-2 (General Industrial) and M-2-X (General Industrial, Conditional Development) zoning districts.

NOTICE IS HEREBY FURTHER GIVEN that said Planning Commission will hold a study session in the Council Chambers of the City of Menlo Park, located at 701 Laurel Street, Menlo Park, on **Monday, December 13, 2010, 7:00 p.m.** or as near as possible thereafter, at which time and place interested persons may appear and be heard thereon. If you challenge this item in court, you may be limited to raising only those issues you or someone else raised at the public hearing described in this notice, or in written correspondence delivered to the City of Menlo Park at, or prior to, the public meeting.

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

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

DATED: November 24, 2010 Deanna Chow, Senior Planner
PUBLISHED: December 1, 2010 Menlo Park Planning Commission

Visit our Web site for Planning Commission public hearing, agenda, and staff report information: www.menlopark.org

FOR SALE



96 Clay Drive, Atherton

Classic new 5-bedroom home by Persicon Company – complemented by a guest house with kitchen – offers a resort-like setting with pool and spa on a level, one-acre lot in West Atherton; award-winning Las Lomitas schools.

OFFERED AT \$9,900,000

EXCLUSIVE



170 Stone Pine Lane, Menlo Park

Urban-style living close to downtown with private garden terrace and backdrop of towering redwoods; great room kitchen with fireplace and surround sound; large master suite, and numerous skylights. Association pool; Menlo Park schools.

OFFERED AT \$1,195,000

FOR SALE



68 Adam Way, Atherton

Currently under construction, this stunning three-level home features 6 bedrooms with 7 full and 2 half baths, a cabaña, and a pool, all built with extraordinary detail and craftsmanship. Ready to move-in before year end.

OFFERED AT \$11,500,000

PENDING SALE



68 Walnut Avenue, Atherton

Charming bungalow with upgraded finishes including hardwood floors, a remodeled kitchen, and fresh paint inside and out; large backyard with room for expansion; excellent Menlo Park schools.

OFFERED AT \$849,000

PENDING SALE



978 Menlo Avenue, Menlo Park

Fabulous opportunity to live in downtown Menlo Park just off Santa Cruz Ave. Stylishly updated and bright multi-level townhome with luxurious master bath, hardwood floors, cathedral ceilings, and wonderful rear terrace.

OFFERED AT \$949,000

SOLD



21 Atherton Avenue, Atherton

Prime West Atherton beautifully remodeled two-story home with casual elegance, hardwood floors, 4 custom fireplaces, numerous skylights, and 2 master suites, one up and one down; pool, spa, and rock waterfall; excellent Menlo Park schools.

OFFERED AT \$3,395,000

To view these properties and others, please visit my website at www.tomlemieux.com

